



**City of St. Joseph Michigan
Planning Commission
Annual Report
Calendar Year 2021**

**Approved March 3, 2022 by
City of St. Joseph Planning Commission**

Background.

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires the Planning Commission to complete a report annually to the City Commission discussing three specific areas. Following are the three reporting areas and the Planning Commission's report for 2021

- A. The operations of the Planning Commission during the past year.
- B. The status of any ongoing planning activities.
- C. Recommendations regarding City Commission actions related to planning and development.

February 3, 2022, the City of St. Joseph Planning Commission reviewed the draft Annual Report. After finding it to be appropriate, they directed staff to forward the finalized document to the City Commission.

Planning Commission Membership, Attendance and Training.

2021 continued to be a unique year with the COVID-19 pandemic which required changes to public meetings. The City of St. Joseph was able to quickly move to virtual meetings using Zoom software beginning in March 2020 in addition to following State of Michigan rules for hosting such meetings through June 2021. In person meetings began in July 2021 with social distancing provided.

In February 2021, Ms. Bridget Cook and Mr. Thaddeus Hackworth were introduced to the Planning Commission to fill two vacant spots. In May 2021, Mr. Aaron Miller chose not to be reappointed and Ms. Julee Laurent was reappointed to another term along with Ms. Kathy Burczak who was reappointed after one year being on the Zoning Board of Appeals.

With one remaining vacancy to be filled, Mr. Anthony (Tony) Uhrick was introduced to the Planning Commission in June 2021. In October Ms. Julee Laurent resigned from the Commission due to increase work commitments. At the end of 2021 there was one vacant position on the Planning Commission.

During the annual organizational meeting in June, Ms. Hartzell was re-appointed to serve as Chair for the 2021-2022 term and Ms. Wipper was appointed to be the Vice Chair.

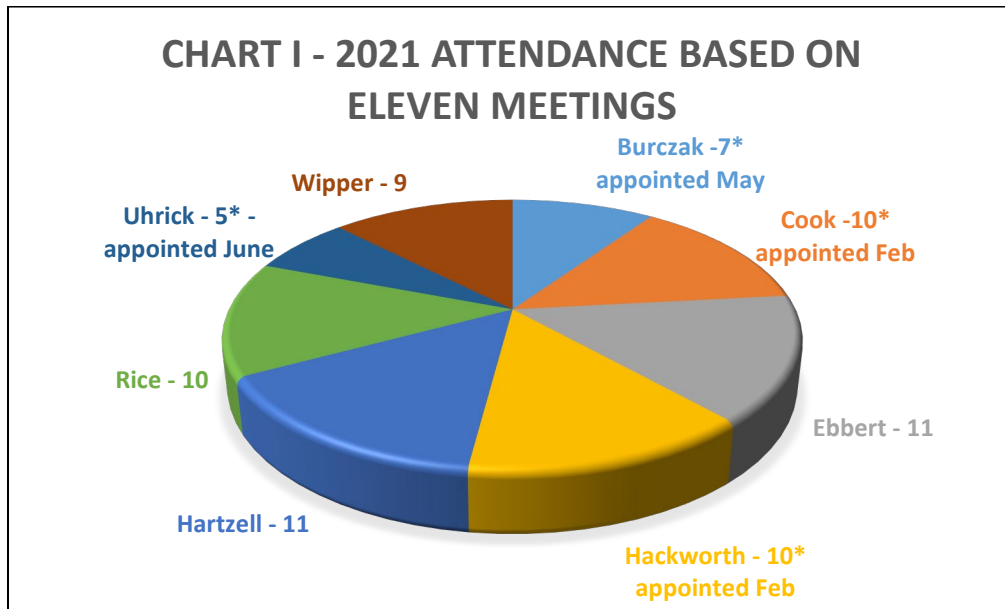
The eleven meetings ranged from 2.0 to 2.75 hours for a total of 21.75 hours. Planning Commissioners spend additional time reviewing the agenda packets prior to the meeting and visiting the site. The overall member meeting attendance rate for the year was approximately 94%. Staff was informed of absences prior to the meeting.

Below is a list of the members with attendance rate, appointment dates, years of service and term expiration dates.

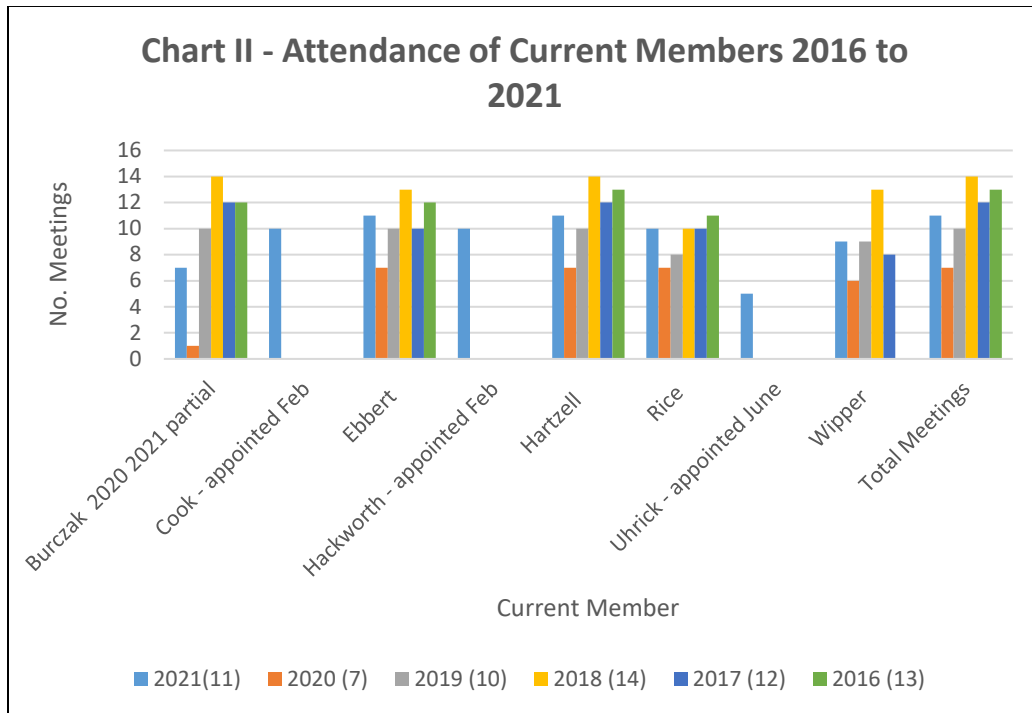
<u>Member</u>	<u>Attendance</u> 2021	<u>Appointed</u>	<u>Years' Service</u> as of Dec 2021	<u>Term</u> <u>Expires</u>
Kathy Burczak	100%	4/2021	8 (includes previous)	2024
Bridget Cook	100%	1/2021	1	2023
Sean Ebbert	100%	3/2007	14	2022
Thaddeus Hackworth	100%	1/2021	1	2022
Patsy Hartzell (<i>Chair</i>)	100%	7/1985	36	2023
Becky Rice	91%	2/2006	15	2022
Anthony Uhrick	83%	5/2021	1	2024
Ceile Wipper	82%	3/2017	5	2023
Vacant				2024

Resignations during 2021

Julee Laurent	75%	3/2019	3	2021
Joe LoPresti	100%	3/2019	3	2021
Aaron Miller	100%	7/2005	16	2021



Below is Chart II which depicts attendance for the current members since 2016. It shows that members are consistently attending meetings and understand the commitment when accepting appointments.



All members of the Planning Commission are encouraged to participate in additional learning opportunities. In past years, on-site training has been provided through the Michigan Association of Planning, unfortunately no on-site training was provided in 2021. Ms. Cook, Mr. Hackworth and Mr. Uhrick were all registered for the on-line Citizen Planner Course through Michigan State University Extension. Money is budgeted annually for members to complete additional training. There are several organizations that provide on-line training free of charge or at reduced rates. In addition, many previously recorded training opportunities can also be found on YouTube for viewing.

Ms. Burczak has maintained her designation as a Master Citizen Planner through Michigan State University Extension while a member of the City of St. Joseph Zoning Board of Appeals before resigning as part of appointment to the Planning Commission and a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects attending the following educational opportunities: Getting Ready (Finally) to Build Local Climate Resilience (May 2021); What is a Walkability Study, and Why Should You Do One? (April 2021); A New Approach to Parks and Recreation System Planning (April 2021); Main Street’s Comeback (April 2021); Future of Plan: Technology Integration (March 2021); The Landscape Design Practice in a Remote Condition (June 2021); Green Alternatives to Hard Armor for Demanding Erosion Control Applications (May 2021); and The 5 Elements of a Successful Turf Project (October 2021).

Staff Support and Packet Creation.

In 2021 the Planning Commission was staffed by Kristen Gundersen, Community Development Director/Zoning Administrator; Laurie Schmidt, City Attorney; Trudy Wilder, Building Official and Tony Riegel, Building Inspector.

All packets were created using the Granicus Legislative Management Software. Once completed, packets were typically delivered to each member the Friday before the scheduled meeting and are posted to the City of St. Joseph's "Public Hub" website section the Monday before the meeting. By utilizing the software-package it has allowed for the packets to be available to the public prior to the meeting in an easily searchable format that also includes the City Commission packets and other appointed Boards and Commissions.

The Community Development Director/Zoning Administrator attended the following training and workshops:

1. Michigan State Floodplain Virtual Annual Conference in March 2021. Obtained continuing education credits necessary for designation as a Certified Floodplain Manager.
2. Michigan Downtown Association Virtual Spring Workshop in March 2021
3. Michigan Association of Planning – State Conference, virtual conference in October 2021. Obtained continuing education credits necessary for AICP membership.
4. Michigan Downtown Association State Conference, conference in November 2020 in Detroit.
5. In addition, numerous other virtual webinars to maintain membership in the American Institute of Certified Planners, Certified Floodplain Managers and to gain additional knowledge regarding downtown development.

The City Attorney attended several municipal law conferences and seminars virtually.

The Building Official and Inspector attended several on-line training opportunities. In person annual training held by the State of Michigan to help obtain continuing education credits was attended as necessary. In October 2021, the Building Official received the Certified Commercial Building Inspector designation.

2021 Planning Commission Meeting Information and Agenda Items.

During 2021, the Planning Commission reviewed 10 requests. In addition, the Planning Commission began discussions regarding preliminary draft language associated with access and parking in the Zoning Ordinance.

Following is Chart III which lists the different types of action items along with special projects the Planning Commission reviewed in 2021. As in the past, requests for sign modifications/variances and special sign approvals have the largest percentage actual requests, however, time involved in the review of these applications is typically less than those requiring a public hearing.

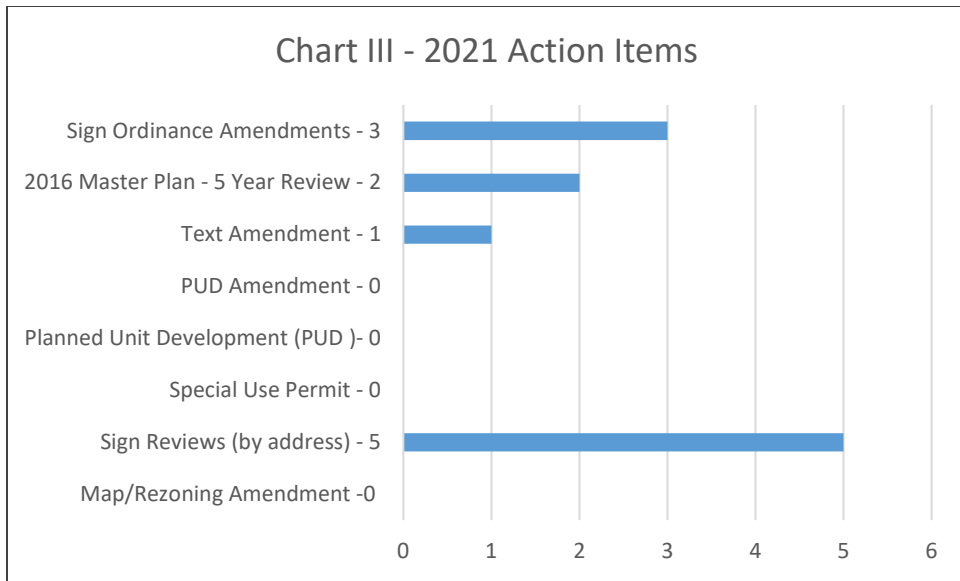
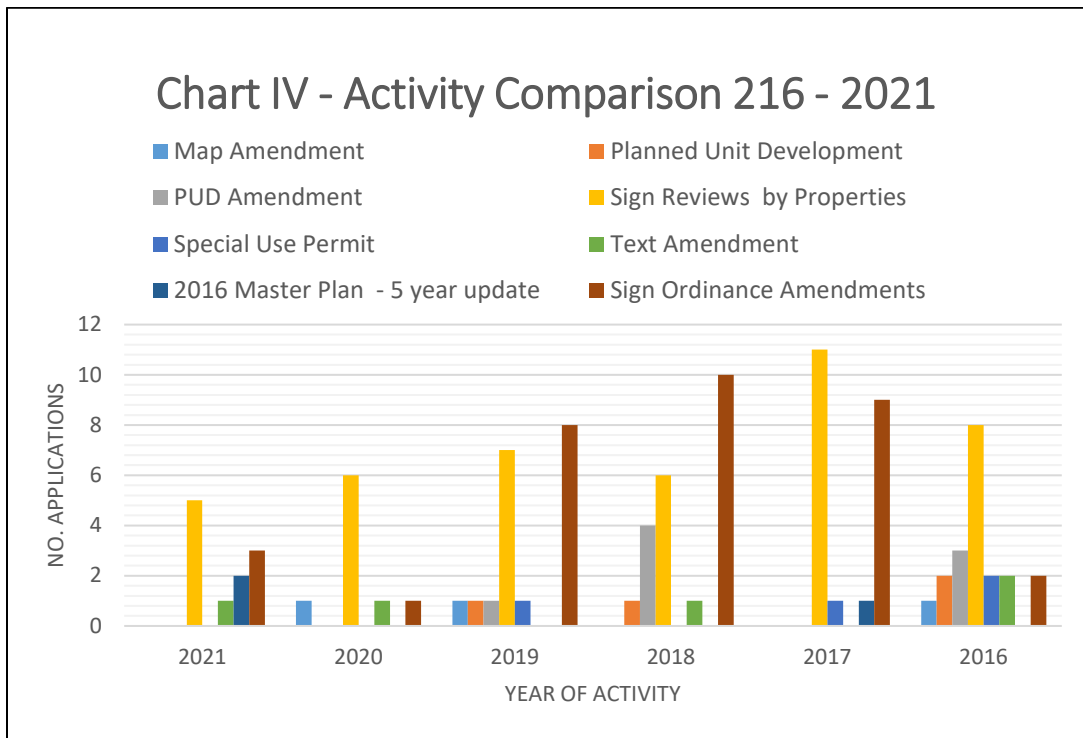


Chart IV provides a comparison of activity from 2016 – 2021. It appears that the number of requests being processed has remained relatively consistent over the last six years with the number of sign requests decreasing from highs in 2016 and 2017.



Following is a complete list of the applications acted upon in 2021. This list provides the address, applicant name, brief description of request, month of review and action taken by the Planning Commission.

Zoning Ordinance Amendments – Map Amendment (rezoning).

No requests.

Planned Unit Developments.

No requests.

Planned Unit Development – Amendments.

No requests.

Special Use Permits.

No requests.

Text Amendment – Zoning Ordinance.

- Section 9.8 of Zoning Ordinance MS-OD Main Street Corridor Overlay District new language to allow residential uses on the ground floor under certain condition on Main Street. City of St. Joseph was the applicant. Planning Commission recommended approval on July 1, 2021. *City Commission approved first reading of the ordinance on July 12, 2021 and second reading of the ordinance on July 26, 2021.*

Text Amendment – Sign Ordinance.

- Chapter 25 Signs of Code of Ordinances changes to Section 25-33 Modifications – height of wall signs. Planning Commission recommended approval February 4, 2021. *City Commission approved first reading February 22, 2021 and second reading March 8, 2021.*
- Chapter 25 Signs of Code of Ordinances changes to minimum clearance, maximum projections and address numbers. Planning Commission recommended approval on July 1, 2021. *City Commission approved first reading July 12, 2021 and second reading on July 26, 2021 with no change to address numbers.*
- Chapter 25 Signs of Code of Ordinances changes to Section 25-33 Modifications – height of wall signs and minor clarifying language. Planning Commission made no recommendation to wall signs and recommended approval of minor clarifying language on September 2, 2021. *City Commission approved first reading and Option 2 language for wall sign modification on September 13, 2021 and the second reading on September 27, 2021.*

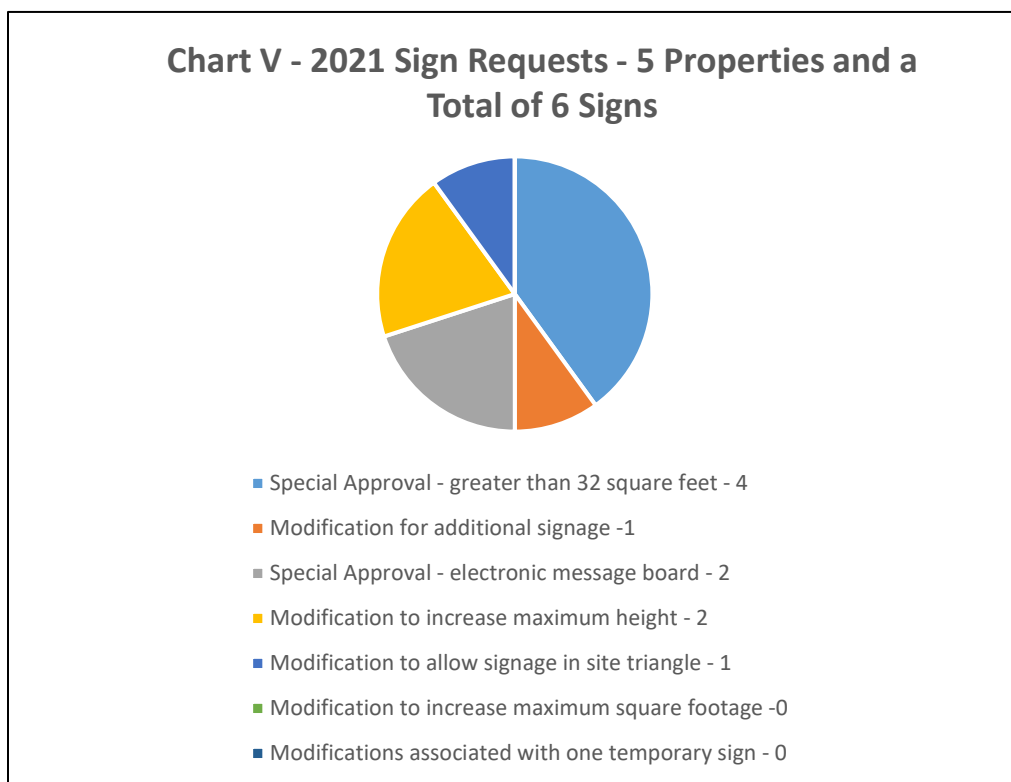
5-Year Review of Master Plan

- The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires communities to review the adopted master plan every five years. The Master Plan was adopted in June 2016 and after review and discussion the Planning Commission determined to changes were necessary at the present time. The next review will take place in 2026. Master plans are typically designed looking 20 to 30 years into the future. The Planning Commission recommended that no changes were necessary during the July 1, 2021 meeting. *The City Commission supported the Planning Commission recommendation during their July 12, 2021 meeting.*

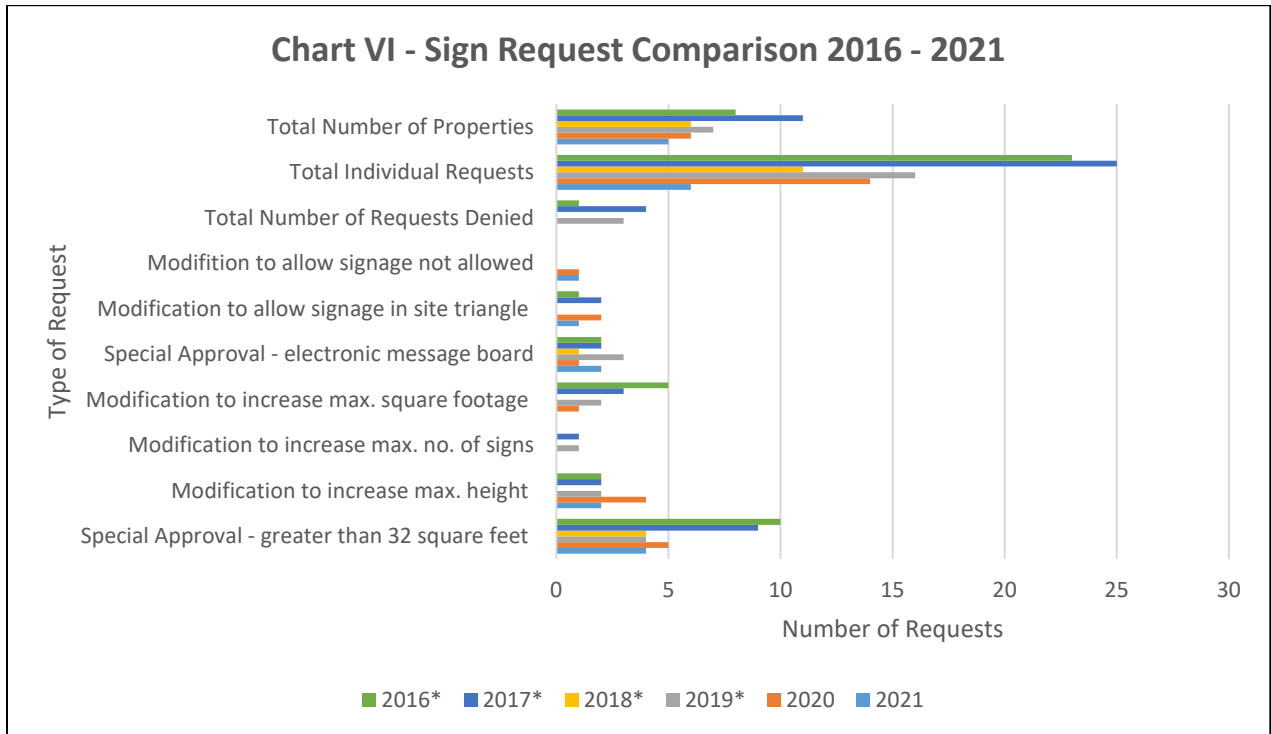
Sign Modifications and Special Sign Approvals (regulations found in Code of Ordinance).

- 500 Renaissance Drive #102A – RWL Sign and Edward Jones – Special Approval of a Sign Greater than 32 sf (36 sf) – *Approved with January 7, 2021*
- 321 Main Street – SignArt, Inc and United Federal Credit Union – 1) Sign Modification to allow a sign where one is not normally allowed (west side of building facing alley); 2) Sign Modification to allow free-standing sign within the 20-foot clear vision area; 3) Sign Modification to increase overall height of free standing sign from 15 to 18 feet; 4) Special Approval of a Sign Greater than 32 sf (49.44 sf) and 5) Special Approval of an electronic message board with conditions – *Discussed March 4, 2021 and Approved April 1, 2021 with conditions.*
- 119 Main Street – Zoup Eatery – Julie Thomson – Special Sign Approval greater than 32 sf (49.8 sf). *Approved May 6, 2021.*
- 2845 Niles Avenue – Shaza Mosier – Reflections Medical - 1) Special Sign Approval for a sign greater than 32 square feet in size (48.3 sf actual) and 2) Special Approval of an electronic message board. *Approved with conditions June 3, 2021.*
- 301 Main Street – Sign Division LLC - 1) Modification from Section 25-13 Table 25-1 to increase the overall height of a wall sign from 20 to 23 feet 3 inches. *Planning Commission requested additional information during May 6, 2021 meeting and approved the single request during the June 3, 2021 meeting.*

Chart V depicts the individual sign requests made that required Planning Commission action. There was a total of 14 individual sign requests on 5 properties for a total of 6 signs. The largest number of applications submitted was for special sign approval for signs greater than 32 square feet.



Below is Chart VI, a comparison of sign requests from 2016 to 2021. The comparison does not reflect all types of requests prior to the adoption of the Sign Ordinance in January 2020.



Future Activities for 2022.

In addition to the applications submitted for review and action by the public and development community, the Planning Commission will continue working on the tasks found in the 2016 Master Plan. Future planned activities include:

1. Review of the Zoning Ordinance in the area of lighting, parking, landscaping, screening and other areas as determined necessary.
2. Conduct required hearing process for adoption of updated FEMA Floodplain Maps.