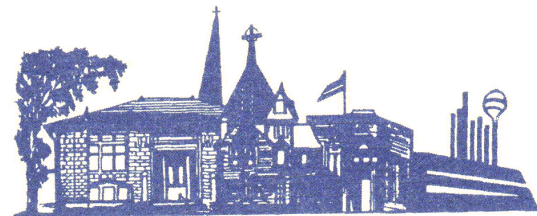


# **Belvidere Planning Department FY 2025 Annual Report**



**BELVIDERE, ILLINOIS**

Established 1881

**Gina DelRose, Community Development Planner**  
**Kim Whitt Administrative Assistant**



# CITY OF BELVIDERE

## **City Council**

Mayor Clinton Morris  
Aldersperson Clayton Stevens 1<sup>st</sup> Ward  
Aldersperson John Albertini 1<sup>st</sup> Ward  
Aldersperson Natalie Mulhall 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward  
Aldersperson Dan Snow/Rory Peterson, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward  
Aldersperson Sandra Gramkowski 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward  
Aldersperson Wendy Frank 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward  
Aldersperson Mike McGee 4<sup>th</sup> Ward  
Aldersperson Matt Fleury 4<sup>th</sup> Ward  
Aldersperson Marsha Freeman 5<sup>th</sup> Ward  
Aldersperson Ric Brereton 5<sup>th</sup> Ward

## **Planning and Zoning Commission**

Paul Engelman, Chair  
Robert Cantrell, Vice-Chair  
Carl Gnewuch  
Daniel Druckrey  
Art Hyland  
William Bieber  
Alissa Maher

## **Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission**

Dawn Brooks, Chair  
Kim Coniglio, Vice-Chair  
Alexandra Omiotek  
Sonya Dobberfuhr  
Lisa Kummerow  
David Kummerow  
Natali Monaghan



## **Planning Department Overview**

The Belvidere Community Development Department includes the Planning, Building and GIS Departments. The Planning Department provides professional municipal planning services pertaining to land use and comprehensive planning for the City of Belvidere. The planning staff serves as liaison to the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission. The planning department is a member of the technical committee of the Region 1 Planning Council (R1PC). Additionally, the planning department advocates and coordinates the implementation of the region's established planning goals and objectives as expressed through various plans, policies and ordinances.

### **Planning and Zoning Commissions**

The Belvidere Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) is made up of seven members appointed by the Mayor with the consent of City Council; the members meet once a month on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:00pm. The PZC functions as both the City of Belvidere's Planning Commission and the Zoning Board of Appeals. In addition to making recommendations on matters based on their consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, the PZC functions as the public hearing body for planning and zoning applications related to map amendments, text amendments and special use permits. The PZC holds the public hearings, adopts findings-of-fact and makes recommendations to the City Council based on standards set forth within the City of Belvidere Zoning Ordinance and guidance from the Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, the PZC hears variance requests and appeals to the City of Belvidere Zoning Ordinance.

### **Belvidere Building, Planning and Zoning Committee of the Whole**

The City of Belvidere has the Committee of the Whole (Building, Planning and Zoning Committee) consisting of each member of the City Council to discuss and focus on the issues regarding planning and zoning matters. To reduce review time of city planning cases, the cases go directly to the City Council for review on the third Monday of the month. If the City Council has questions or concerns regarding a planning case, the case is referred to the Committee of the Whole on the fourth Monday at 6:00pm. The Committee of the Whole reviews the case and forwards their recommendation to the City Council for final action.

### **Belvidere City Council**

The City Council consists of eleven elected officials, including the mayor; two aldermen are elected from each of the five Belvidere wards. The City Council determines the final decisions on all planning cases other than variances and appeals. The types of planning cases that the City Council rules on include: annexations and pre-annexation agreements; map amendments; special use requests; text amendments; and subdivisions. The City Council members formulate their decisions based on the recommendations from the planning staff and of the Planning and Zoning Commission, the outcome of the public hearing, the standards set forth in the City of Belvidere Zoning Ordinance and the policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

### **Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission**

The Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) consists of seven members appointed by the Mayor with the consent of City Council; the members meet once a month on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 5:30pm. The (HPC) is tasked with reviewing certificates of appropriateness, conducting surveys, performing community and educational outreach regarding historic preservation, and other preservation-related matters.

### **Growth Dimensions and the Region 1 Planning Council (R1PC)**

The planning staff collaborates with Growth Dimensions, a non-for-profit economic development agency funded in part by the City of Belvidere and Boone County and the R1PC on various projects. When requested, staff will attend Growth Dimensions' committee meetings such as their community group and R1PC's committee meetings. The planning staff is expected to provide assistance to Growth Dimensions on future projects by providing data for RFPs, directing development inquiries to them and attending project meetings.

## **The Belvidere Planning Department Year End Summary**

The Belvidere Planning Department began the 2025 fiscal year with a positive outlook based on the growth occurring along US Route 20. The Planning Department consists of the Community Development Planner and an Administrative Assistant that is shared with the Building Department. The Administrative Assistant has three key functions, Transcriber for the Planning Department (PZC minutes), Administrative Assistant to the Community Development Department and Permit Technician for the Building Department.

Funding for the department is provided by the City of Belvidere. The department receives revenue through application fees for zoning petitions and subdivision reviews, the creation of zoning verification letters and any printed maps, scanned plats or copies of ordinances purchased by the general public.

The projected revenue for the department for the 2025 fiscal year was \$26,200; \$25,000 in application fees and \$1,200 in miscellaneous fees (letters, contractual services, etc.). The actual revenue for the 2025 fiscal year was \$13,367.50; \$12,637.50 in application fees and \$730.00 in miscellaneous fees. Revenues were down due to a variety of reasons. However, staff remained busy with several large projects and all of the other department's responsibilities. The planning department's actual expenses were below projections as well.

The planning department processes the various zoning applications for the City of Belvidere. The department is responsible for the preparation of agendas and minutes for two commissions in addition to participating in five other boards, commissions and committees. The planning staff works closely with the public to answer questions regarding zoning, development, setbacks, addressing, etc. The planning staff continues to work with the 911-board to update the addresses for the city and coordinates with other municipal staff and governmental agencies regarding planning, zoning and technical issues.

### **Land Development Cases**

The planning department processed twenty planning cases during the 2025 fiscal year (May 1st to April 30th). Staff generally has in-depth phone conversations or meetings with applicants before they submit a zoning petition. Planning and Zoning Commission meetings and Belvidere City Council meetings occur after regular business hours.

Application fees pay for the newspaper publication, Commissioners' meeting per diems and staff time involved in processing the request.

### **Map Amendments**

Map amendments rezone a property from one district to another. The Comprehensive Plan is a guiding tool when determining map amendments.

Belvidere map amendments require a public hearing before the Belvidere Planning and Zoning Commission prior to city council. Notifications for map amendments are done by posting a sign on the property, notifying property owners within 250 feet and publishing the public hearing in a local paper.

### **Variances**

Variances are deviations from specific bulk regulations of the Zoning Ordinance such as the square-footage of a sign, setback of a building or paved area, height of a structure, etcetera. A hardship must be proven to allow a variance.

Belvidere variances require a public hearing before the Belvidere Planning and Zoning Commission. They are not decided by the city council. Notifications for variances are done by posting a sign on the property, notifying property owners within 250 feet and publishing the public hearing in a local paper.

### **Special Uses**

Special Uses are land uses that are generally acceptable in a zoning district but at times may need conditions put in place to make them appropriate. The Zoning Ordinance decides what uses are permitted, what are allowed by special use and which ones are prohibited.

Belvidere special uses require a public hearing before the Belvidere Planning and Zoning Commission prior to city council. Notifications for special uses are done by posting a sign on the property, notifying property owners within 250 feet and publishing the public hearing in a local paper.

### **Text Amendments**

Text Amendments are changes to the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance and/or the Comprehensive Plan. Text amendments can be requested by staff or the public.

Belvidere text amendments require a public hearing before the Belvidere Planning and Zoning Commission prior to city council. Notifications for text amendments are done by publishing the public hearing in a local paper.

### **Subdivisions**

Subdivisions create new lot lines and right-of-ways. There are three kinds of subdivisions; a preliminary plat is the approved draft of a development; a final draft which can occur in phases makes the preliminary plat official; a replat alters properties that have already been final platted.

Belvidere subdivisions do not require a public hearing but are reviewed by the Belvidere Planning and Zoning Commission prior to going before the city council. Since there is no public hearing, notices are not required.

### **Annexations**

Annexations occur when land is incorporated into the limits of the annexing municipality. This can occur for multiple reasons such as needing municipal services or wanting to develop under the municipality's zoning ordinance.

Annexation requests do not go before a Planning and Zoning Commission. Their public hearings and determinations are conducted by the City Council/Village Board. The State Statutes outline notification requirements which are not handled by planning staff.

### **Temporary Uses**

Typically, the Building Department processes temporary uses. However, if the temporary use is expected to occur outside of daylight hours than it must be approved by the City Council. In such cases, the planning department sends out a request for comments and compiles a brief staff report to present to the City Council.

During the 2025 fiscal year, staff did not process any temporary use requests.

### **Site Plan Review**

The planning department is responsible for site, landscaping and lighting plan review for construction projects that are commercial or industrial within the City of Belvidere. Once a construction project is completed, the planning staff inspects the site to insure that the site is improved according to the submitted and approved plans.

Some of the larger projects reviewed in the 2025 fiscal year include Extreme Car Wash, Baikozy Service Facility, Chipotle and Starbucks.

### **Downtown Overlay Review**

The planning department is responsible for the administration of the Downtown Overlay District according

to the requirements of the Belvidere Zoning Ordinance. The intent of the Downtown Overlay is to preserve the character of the historic downtown while encouraging additional development in harmony with existing buildings. Any building façade improvements or signage in the Downtown Overlay District require plan review and approval by the planning department prior to the issuance of a building permit. However, if a building permit is not required for the work, a review does not always take place. The planning department discontinued using the multi-part application process in order to make the submittal and review process easier for downtown business owners.

### **Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission**

The Commission held its twelfth annual awards program to recognize organizations and individuals that had completed outstanding renovation projects. The program was held at the Ida Public Library on November 14, 2024 and recognized eight property owners and/or individuals. A booklet was designed highlighting the projects with advertising sponsorship received from local businesses and supporters of the preservation efforts. The event was well attended and appreciated by the recipients and the community.

The Commission designed a 50/50 matching grant program with the funds raised from the various fund-raising events held each year (tours, scavenger hunts, ad space, book sales, etc.) and royalties from the Images of America book sales as an incentive for restoration projects. Landmark property owners are eligible to apply for project reimbursement for up to \$1,500.00 each year that funds are available. The Commission made the difficult decision to place the program on hold in the 2025 fiscal year in order to build-up its funding reserves. This tactic was successful and the Commission will be able to provide up to \$3,500 in grant awards during the next fiscal year.

The 2025 fiscal year was spend discussing and planning fundraisers for the 2026 fiscal year. The Commission intends to host a series of Victorian Era picnics, a scavenger hunt, stained glass window tour, Chef's Nights and more. Book sales of A Walk For All, South State Street edition continue to exceed expeditions and a North State Street edition is being researched.

There were no certificates of appropriateness requested in the 2025 fiscal year. No new landmarks and districts were approved, however, staff continues to discuss the benefits of national register status with property owners. Staff completed the Certified Local Governments annual report

The commission continued its community outreach programs. The Boone County Museum of History provided the Commission a table during Hometown Christmas so commissioners could sell books and hand out literature. Staff administers the Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission's Facebook page which is monitored during and outside of office hours. Staff continues to meet and communicate with the Historic US Route 20 Association.

### **Other Duties**

Digitizing all case files and linking them to GIS is a continued project. The digitization of the case files had made the research of parcel history and the popularity of a land uses much easier. A future goal of the department is to finish completing the older misplaced files (missing maps, ordinances, minutes, etc.) digitize, link the files to GIS and close out the paper files in fiscal year 2025.

Planning staff continues to assist the Boone County Recorder's Office by digitizing their plats so that they can be searchable by the general public. Scanning and printing of plats and large plans is available to the public as well for a minor fee. Some departments have the ability to scan their own documents as well.

The planning staff issues both zoning verification letters and addressing letters. Zoning verification letters are often-times requested by financial institutions representing a buyer. The letters state whether a property is conforming, legal non-conforming or non-conforming. The status of a property can impact its value. Buyers will also request the letters in order to confirm that their intentions for the property are allowable. Staff charges a minimal fee for this service. Address letters are issued when there is new construction or an existing structure needs an additional address or corrected address. Staff works closely with 911 and the fire de-



partment regarding addressing matters and will issue an official address and notify all utilities and governmental agencies so they can update their records. There is no cost for this service.

The City Council adopted the Downtown Façade Improvement Grant in the 2020 fiscal year. This grant is a 50/50 matching grant (up to \$5,000-\$7,500) for façade work and exterior improvements to the property and is funded by video gaming revenue. It is administered by the Planning Department and reviewed by the Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission and Belvidere City Council. In the 2025 fiscal year, letters were sent out to 112 property owners announcing that \$27,060 were available in grant funds. A total of 4 applications were received and reviewed and all of the projects were awarded grant funds totaling \$24,249. All the projects have been reimbursed. The total amount of available grant funds in fiscal year 2026 is \$27,373.

In 2019, The Illinois Housing Development Authority awarded the R1PC a grant to form the Northern Illinois Land Bank Authority. This Land Bank services Boone and Winnebago Counties in addition to select municipalities, such as the City of Belvidere within those counties. Planning Staff, upon request, assists with data collection and provides lists of potential properties for the Land Bank.

## **Community Events**

### **Heritage Days**

The department is active in many community events. For Heritage Days, staff is part of the organizing committee and is in constant communication with vendors and other organizers making sure all logistical matters are taken care of. Staff assists with fundraising efforts such as applying for grants and tie-dyeing over 100 t-shirts at home to be sold during Heritage Days. Staff's involvement with marketing includes radio interviews, advertisements and administration of the Belvidere Heritage Days' Facebook page which is monitored during and outside of office hours. Staff also participates in creating the City Hall float, walks in the parade and is present during the entire festival to monitor events and assist where needed. Planning for the festival is a year-round responsibility.

### **Belvidere Area Chamber of Commerce's Hometown Christmas**

In past years, staff had taken a lead role in the Belvidere Area Chamber of Commerce's Hometown Christmas festival and now is part of the organizing committee as a position of support than lead organizer. Staff also assisted with verifying logistics, the tree lighting and setting up selfie-spots. Staff is present during the entire festival to monitor events and assist where needed. Due to renovations at the Belvidere Fire Station, staff was not needed to distribute hot chocolate.

## **Community Outreach and Support**

The Belvidere Area Chamber of Commerce's Chili Cook-off is a good community outreach event and staff participates in creating the City of Belvidere's booth space, preparing food and drinks and serving the public.

Due to scheduling issues, staff was not able to participate in the Belvidere Area Chamber of Commerce's Downtown Trick or Treat event. Staff does intend to have a City Hall booth at the 2025 event.

Staff presented at the Belvidere Area Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Academy, a local girl scout troop and the Environmental Science classes at Belvidere High School.

Staff assists the Boone County Health Department with their Boone County Wellness Fair and their Hunger Coalition's Walkability Survey.

Staff has participated in the Boone County Comprehensive Plan and UDO stakeholder taskforce.

Staff has assisted with the Downtown Banner Program.

The Boone and Winnebago County Community Action Agency meets bi-monthly and offers funding assis-

tance and outreach services to residents of both counties. Planning Department staff represents the City of Belvidere on the Agency's Board and also participates in their annual scholarship review committee.

Staff became a board member of the Belvidere Area Chamber of Commerce as the City's representative.

Staff was appointed to the Quad Cities Regional Economic Development Authority by the Boone County Board.

Staff is a member of and participates in events for the Boone County Committee of the Family Violence Coordinating Council.

### **Training**

Staff did not attend any training in the 2025 fiscal year.

## Appendix Tables

- I. Population Estimates
- II. Land Development Cases
- III. Site Plan Reviews
- IV. Downtown Overlay Reviews
- V. Plat and Large Plan Scans
- VI. Zoning Verification Letters
- VII. Address Letters
- VIII. City of Belvidere Zoning Petition Flow Chart

***\*Estimated Population***

|            | 2010   | *2015  | *2016  | *2017  | *2018  | *2019  | 2020   | *2021  | *2022  | *2023  | *2024  | *2025 to date |
|------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------------|
| Belvidere: | 25,588 | 25,734 | 25,755 | 25,773 | 25,791 | 25,797 | 25,339 | 25,513 | 25,618 | 25,624 | 25,695 | 25703         |

\* The estimated population numbers were based solely on the amount of building permits granted for single family residential structures and multi-family units and did not take into account fluctuating vacancy rates.

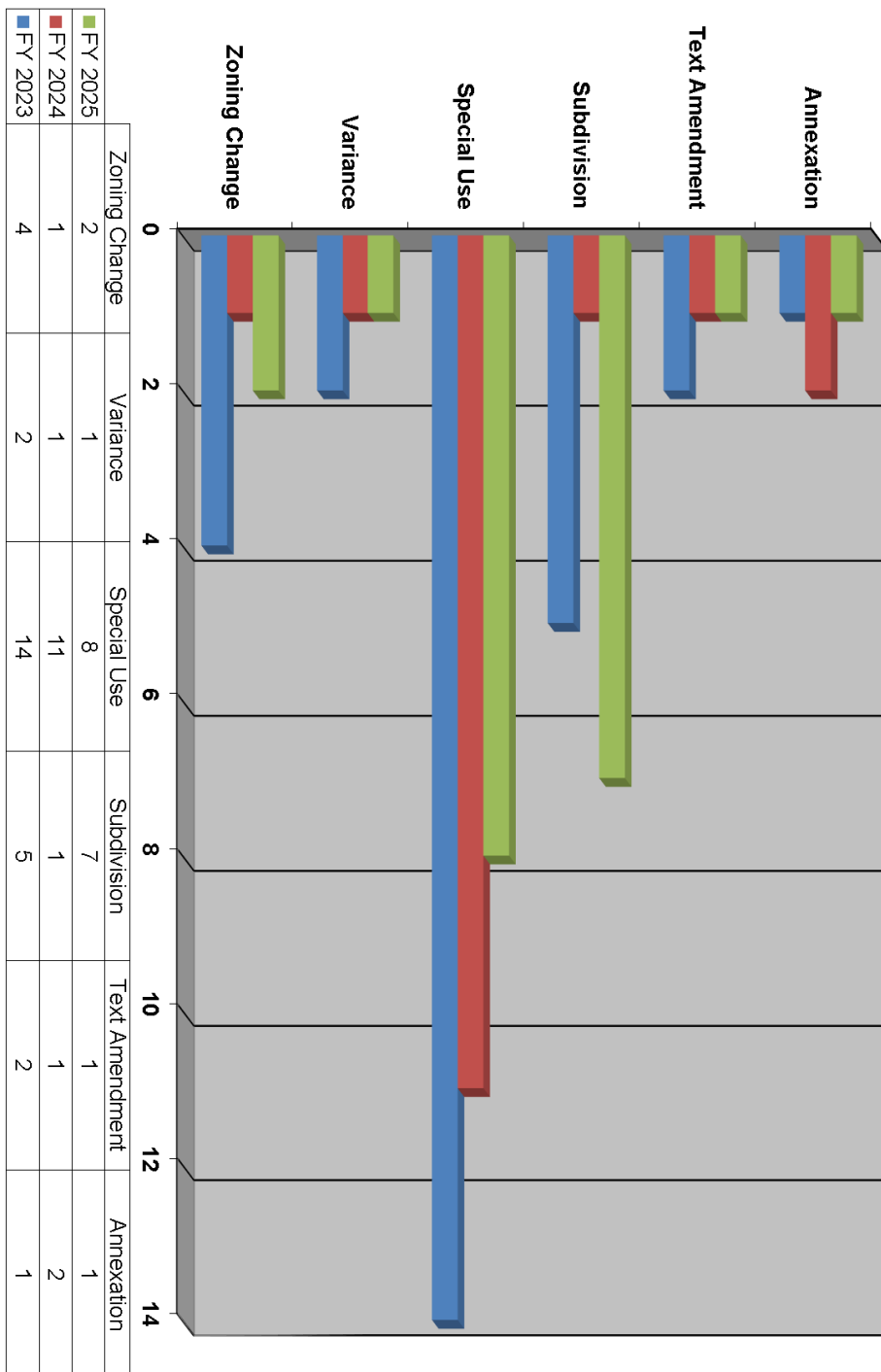
***\*Census Estimates***

|            | 2010   | *2015  | *2016  | *2017  | *2018  | *2019  | 2020   | *2021  | 2022   | 2023   | 2024 | 2025 |
|------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------|------|
| Belvidere: | 25,588 | 25,092 | 25,070 | 25,181 | 25,194 | 25,143 | 25,339 | 25,134 | 25,169 | 25,297 | n/a  | n/a  |

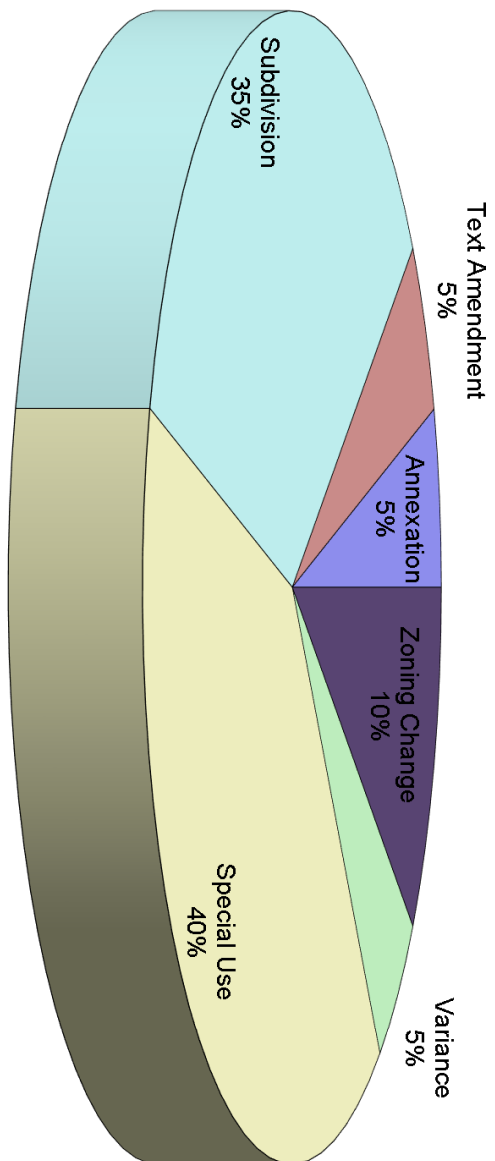
***\*Percentage of Growth***

|            | 2000 | 2004 | 2010 | 2015 | 2020 | 2025 |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Belvidere: | 0    | 13   | 8.7  | -1.9 | 0.9  | n/a  |

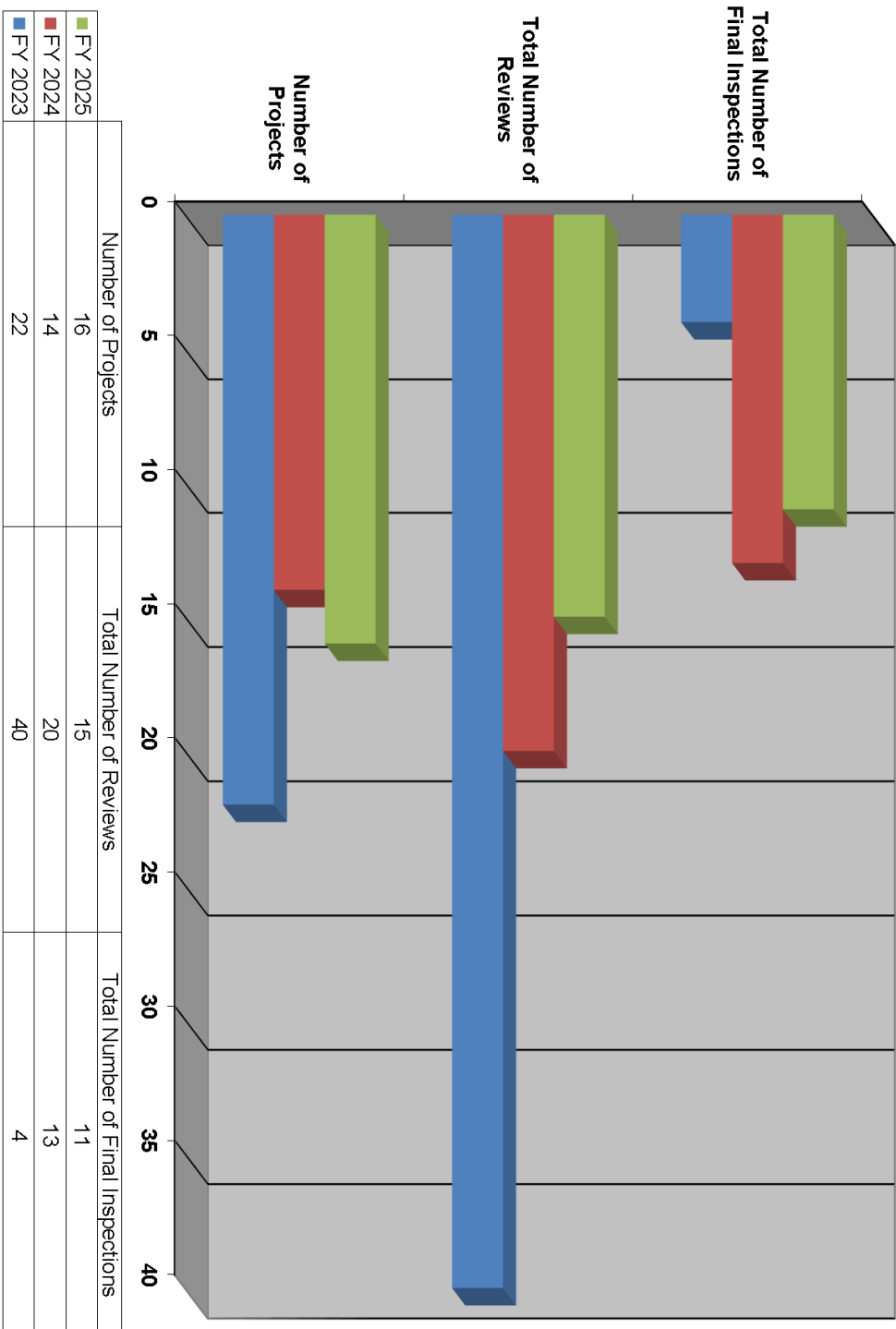
## II A FY 2023-2025 Zoning Cases



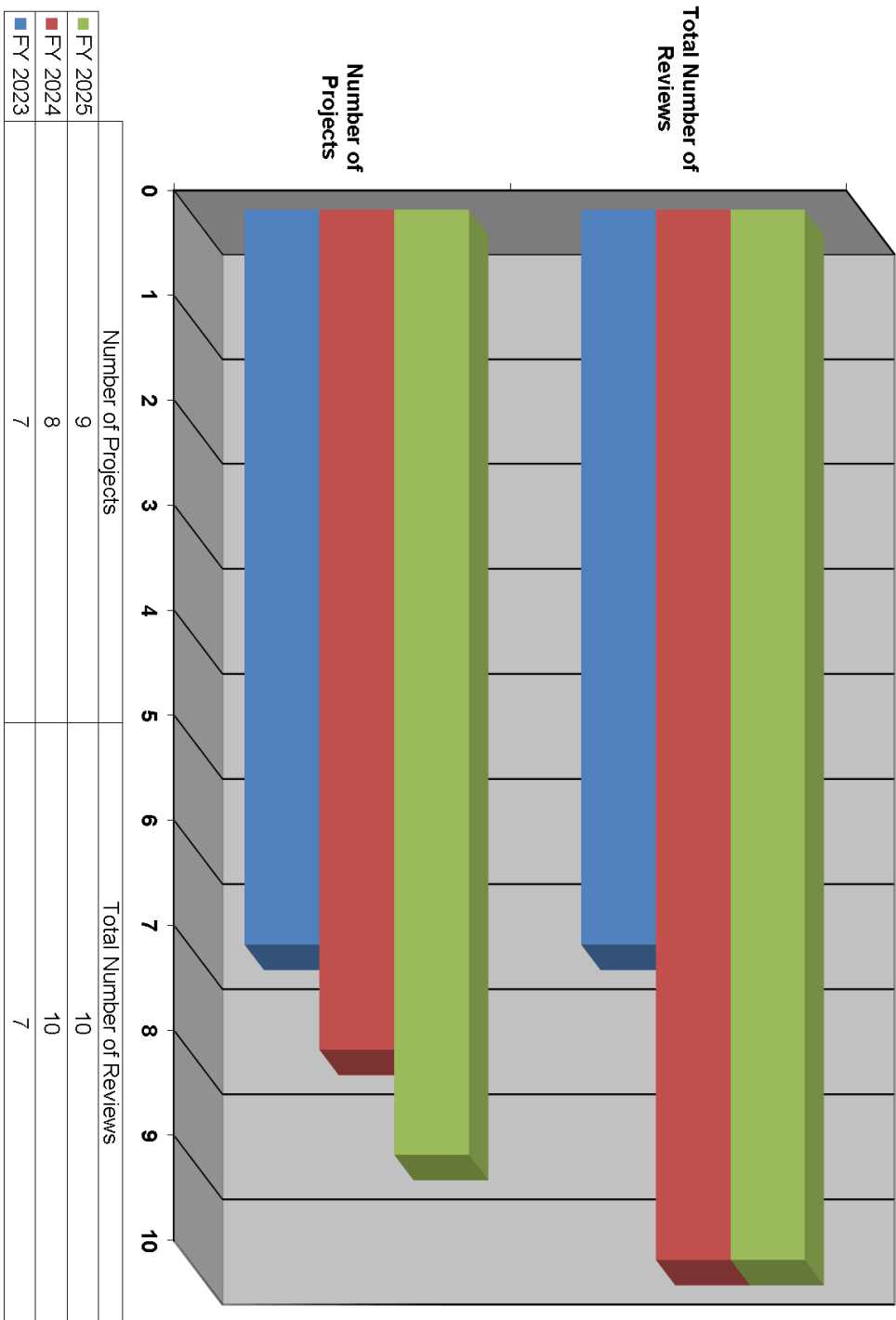
## **II B** **FY 2025 Zoning Case Summary**



### III FY 2023-2025 Site Plan Reviews

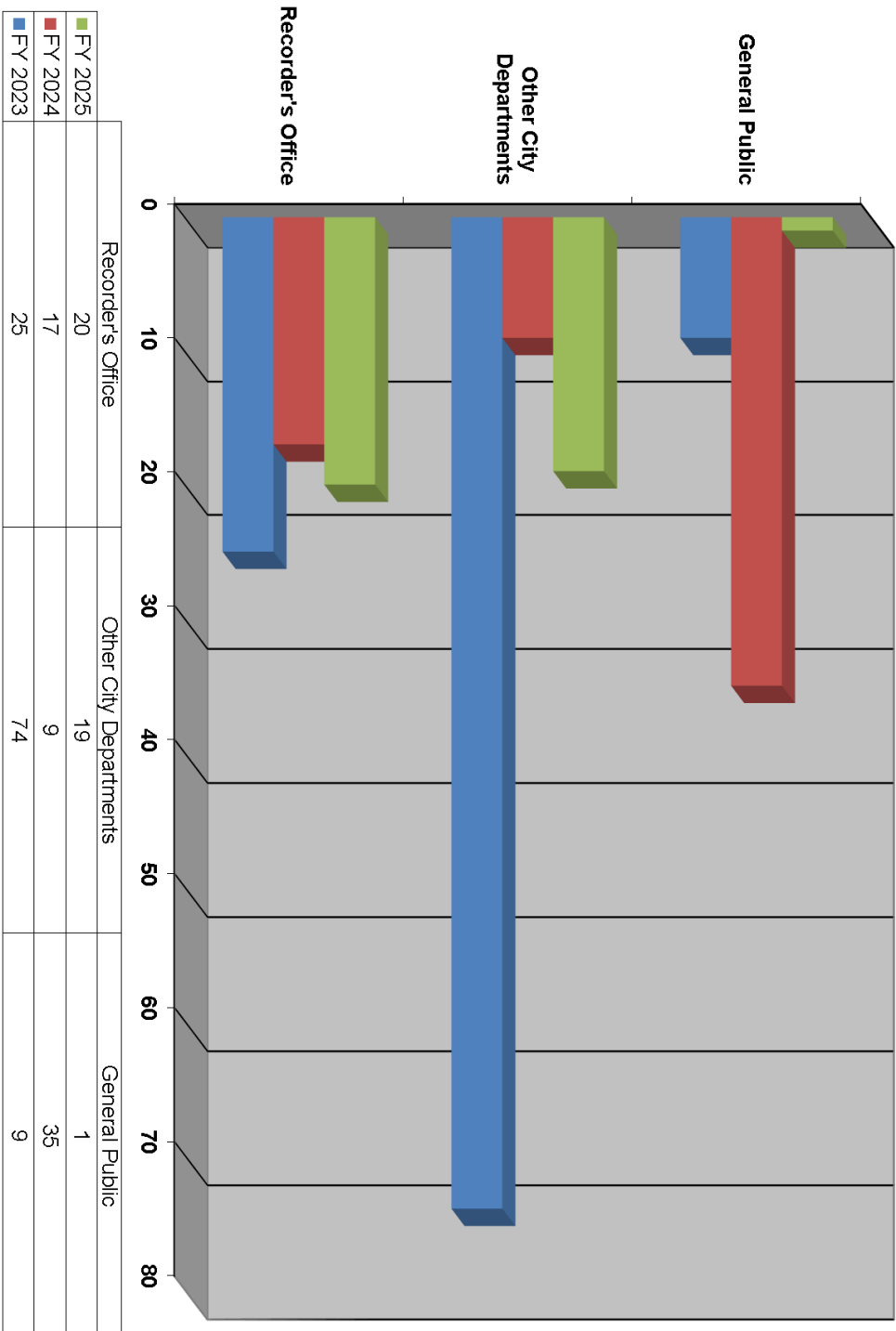


# **IV** **FY 2023-2025 Downtown Overlay Reviews**

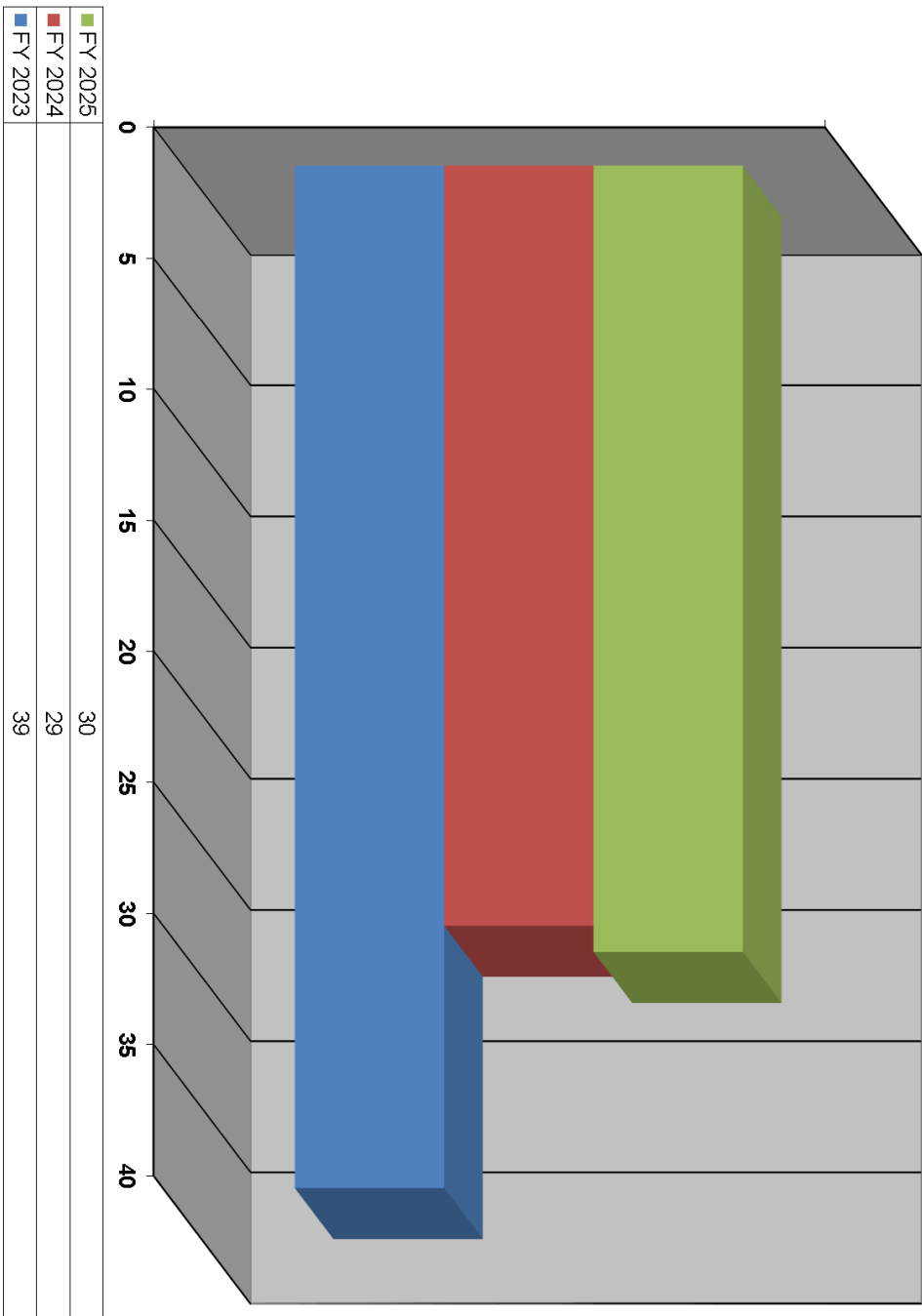




## FY 2023-2025 <sup>V</sup> Scanned Plats



## VI FY 2023-2025 Zoning Verification Letters



## VII FY 2023-2025 Address Letters

