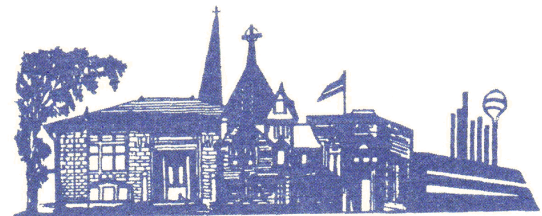


# **Belvidere Planning Department**

## **FY 2017 Annual Report**



**BELVIDERE, ILLINOIS**

Established 1881

**Gina DelRose, Community Development Planner**

**Cathy Crawford, Administrative Assistant**



# CITY OF BELVIDERE

## **Planning and Zoning Commission**

Art Hyland, Chairman  
Rich Weigel, Vice-Chair  
Andy Racz  
Robert Cantrell  
Ken Redeker  
Paul Engleman  
Anthony R. Phelps

## **City Council**

Mayor Mike Chamberlain  
Alderman Clint Morris 1<sup>st</sup> Ward  
Alderman Clayton Stevens 1<sup>st</sup> Ward  
Alderman Daniel Arevalo 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward  
Alderman Dan Snow 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward  
Alderman Thomas F. Ratcliffe 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward  
Alderman Wendy Frank 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward  
Alderman George Crawford 4<sup>th</sup> Ward  
Alderman Ron Brooks 4<sup>th</sup> Ward  
Alderman John Sanders 5<sup>th</sup> Ward  
Alderman Mark Sanderson 5<sup>th</sup> Ward

## **Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission**

Becky Tobin, Chairman  
Kris Bryan, Vice-Chair  
Anna Pivoras  
Filitsa Platopoulos  
David Kummerow  
Lisa Kummerow  
Alexandra Omiotek

# VILLAGE OF POPLAR GROVE

## **Planning and Zoning Commission**

Jake Dykstra, Chairman

Nate Skora

Jesi Ellwanger

Don Sattler

Ed Wethington

Keith Richard

George Waddell

## **Village Board**

John W. Neitzel, Village President

Don Bawden

Neely Erickson

Jeff Goings

Ron Quimby

Owen Costanza

Judi Zangs

## **Planning Department Overview**

The Belvidere Community Development Department includes the Planning and Building Departments. The Planning Department provides professional municipal planning services pertaining to land use and comprehensive planning for the City of Belvidere and the Village of Poplar Grove. The planning staff serves as liaison to the Planning and Zoning Commissions for both entities and the Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission. The planning department is a member of the technical committee of the Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning (RMAP) as well as participates in RMAP's Planner's Network. 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.

The Belvidere-Boone County Planning Department serves as liaison to numerous boards and commissions for Belvidere and Poplar Grove.

### **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 the 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.

The Village of Poplar Grove Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) is made up of seven members appointed by the Village President with the consent of the Village Board; the PZC convenes once a month on the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm. The Poplar Grove PZC functions the same as the Belvidere Planning and Zoning Commission. The Planning and Zoning Commission makes recommendations to the Committee of the Whole and ultimately to the Village Board.

### **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 permits; 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 Com-

prehensive Plan.

### **Poplar Grove Village Board**

The Village Board of Poplar Grove consists of six members and a village president elected at large; Poplar Grove also has a village administrator. Similar to the City of Belvidere, the role of the Village Board is to make the final decisions on all cases other than variances and appeals. The Poplar Grove Village Board reviews annexations and pre-annexation agreements, map amendments, special use permits, text amendments and subdivisions. The Village Board members make their decisions based on the recommendations of the planning staff and of the Planning and Zoning Commission, the outcome of the public hearing, the standards set forth in the Village of Poplar Grove Zoning Ordinance and the Poplar Grove 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, Kishwaukee Riverfront and RMAP**

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 Rockford Metropolitan Agency on Planning (RMAP) on various projects. When requested, staff will attend Growth Dimensions' committee meetings such as their community group and RMAP's committee meetings. Planning staff also was a regular participant in the Kishwaukee Riverfront Committee when it met. The planning staff is expected to continue to be involved in existing and future committees associated with Growth Dimensions and RMAP.

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

The Belvidere Planning Department began the 2017 fiscal year with a positive attitude after a tumultuous 2016 fiscal year. In February 2016, the Boone County Board voted to dissolve the Belvidere-Boone County Planning Department, a regional department that had existed for decades. The dissolution triggered many changes and questions. In response to the county's actions, the City Council created the Belvidere Planning Department in 2016 and hired a Community Development Planner. The Planning Department consists of the Community Development Planner, a part-time land use planner provided by the Rockford Metropolitan Agency on Planning (who began in February 2017) and an Administrative Assistant that is shared with the Building Department as the Community Development Administrative Assistant and Transcriber.

Funding for the department is provided by the City of Belvidere; revenue is also contributed by the Village of Poplar Grove for contractual services. 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.

The projected revenues for the department for the 2017 fiscal year were \$10,000; \$9,000 in application fees and \$1,000 in miscellaneous fees (letters, contractual services, etc.). The actual revenues for the 2017 fiscal year were \$23,521.25; \$21,925 in application fees and \$1,596.25 in miscellaneous fees. In addition to the department's revenues far exceeding the projection, the department's actual expenses were below projections as well.

The planning department processes the various zoning applications for the City of Belvidere and the Village of Poplar Grove; 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 forty-four Belvidere and Poplar Grove planning cases during 2017 fiscal year (May 1st to April 30th); thirty-eight cases were reviewed for the city; and six cases were reviewed for Poplar Grove. Staff generally has in-depth phone conversations or meetings with applicants before they submit a zoning petition. Planning and Zoning Commission (both entities) meetings and Belvidere City Council meetings occur after regular business hours. Staff is not required to attend Poplar Grove's Committee of the Whole or Village Board meetings.

Application fees pay for the newspaper publication, Commissioner's 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. During the 2017 fiscal year, staff processed two map amendments, a 100 percent increase from the previous year.

Poplar Grove map amendments are very similar. They require a public hearing before the Poplar Grove Planning and Zoning Commission prior to being heard by the Committee of the Whole and the Village Board. Notifications for map amendments are done by notifying adjacent property owners and publishing the public hearing in a local paper. During the 2017 Fiscal year, staff processed one map amendment, a 100 percent increase from the previous year.

### **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. During the 2017 fiscal year, staff processed six variances, a 14.3 percent decrease from the previous year.

Poplar Grove variances are very similar. They require a public hearing before the Poplar Grove Planning and Zoning Commission. They are not decided by the Committee of the Whole or the Village Board. Notifications for variances are done by notifying adjacent property owners and publishing the public hearing in a local paper. During the 2017 Fiscal year, staff processed one variance, a 100 percent increase from the previous year.

### **Special Uses**

Special Use 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 what 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. During the 2017 fiscal year, staff processed eighteen special uses, a 50 percent increase from the previous year.

Poplar Grove special uses are very similar. They require a public hearing before the Poplar Grove Planning and Zoning Commission prior to being heard by the Committee of the Whole and the Village Board. Notifications for special uses are done by notifying adjacent property owners and publishing the public hearing in a local paper. During the 2017 Fiscal year, staff processed three special uses, a 200 percent increase from the previous year.

### **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. During the 2017 fiscal year, staff processed four text amendments, a 300 percent increase from the previous year.

Poplar Grove text amendments are very similar. They require a public hearing before the Poplar Grove



Planning and Zoning Commission prior to being heard by the Committee of the Whole and the Village Board. Notifications for text amendments are done by publishing the public hearing in a local paper. During the 2017 fiscal year, staff did not process any text amendments, a 100 percent decrease from the previous year.

### **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. During the 2017 fiscal year, staff processed seven subdivisions, a 250 percent increase from the previous year.

Poplar Grove subdivisions are very similar. They do not require a public hearing but are reviewed by the Poplar Grove Planning and Zoning Commission prior to being heard by the Committee of the Whole and the Village Board. Since there is no public hearing, notices are not required. During the 2017 fiscal year, staff processed one subdivision, the same amount from the previous year.

### **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.

During the 2017 fiscal year, staff processed one annexation requests for the City of Belvidere, a 100 percent increase from the previous year but did not process any annexation request for the Village of Poplar Grove, the same amount from the previous year.

### **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, and the Village of Poplar Grove. The Belvidere Building Department purchased a computer program (WebQA) to manage comments generated during the permitting process. This program has replaced the Comments and Review System (CRS) that was previously used during plan review. 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. In the 2017 fiscal year, the planning department reviewed 37 site, landscaping and lighting plans for 23 projects in the City of Belvidere and none in the Village of Poplar Grove. In the 2016 fiscal year, the planning department reviewed 30 site, landscaping and lighting plans for 14 projects in the City of Belvidere and 5 site, landscaping and lighting plans for 1 project in the Village of Poplar Grove.

Some of the larger projects reviewed in the 2017 fiscal year include Chrysler suppliers Yanfeng and Magna; new businesses Speedway and Little Caesars; and renovations for businesses such as Belvidere Ultrasound Clinic and the Z-Mart gas station.

## **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. The planning department discontinued using the multi-part application process in order to make the submittal and review process easier for downtown business owners. In the 2017 fiscal year, the planning department reviewed 10 downtown projects for signage, canopies, façade improvements and new windows compared to 18 in the 2016 fiscal year. The majority of the 2017 projects were for new signage and façade enhancements. The planning department has a photographic record of the downtown buildings from 2009 and 2013.

## **Grant Administration**

### **Certified Local Government (CLG) Grant Intensive Survey—Phase II (2015-2016)**

The commission submitted an application in November 2014 for a CLG Grant for Intensive Survey to continue survey work in the Court House Square area. The Court House Square Phase II area is located east of the Phase I project and includes the blocks east of Hancock Street to Gardner Street between Lincoln Avenue and Marshall Street. The Phase II area contains about 52 acres and approximately 150 sites. Currently there are no identified local landmarks or National Register properties in the Phase II area. Most of the structures were constructed between the 1850s and the 1950s. The commission is requesting a grant of \$9450 with a local match of \$4050.

In spring of 2015, the city received notification of the CLG Grant award ending September 2016; in June of 2015, the grant agreement with the city and the Illinois Historic Preservation agency was completed and signed. The request for proposals for a consulting firm to perform the intensive survey was distributed and five proposals were returned in September 2015. In December of 2015, Duane Hagerty with Heritage Works, Inc. of Dubuque, Iowa was selected as the consultant to complete the survey; the contract with Heritage Works, Inc. was completed in January, 2015. The project began in January 2016 and was completed September of 2016.

### **Certified Local Government (CLG) Grant Historic Preservation Plan (2016-2017)**

The commission submitted a grant application in February 2016 seeking professional consulting services to develop a Historic Preservation Plan that develops effective action strategies for Belvidere's historic preservation activities for the next decade. The purpose of the plan is to identify and assess the community's resources and current preservation activities; encourage community visioning for the development of plan strategies and to develop a final plan highlighting community goals with long range goals and implementation strategies regarding historic preservation activities for the community for the next ten years.

In September of 2016, request for proposals were sent out to applicable companies and in November of 2016, the Lakota Group was awarded the contract for the Historic Preservation Plan. The Lakota Group has conducted stakeholder and steering committee meetings and have made multiple visits to Belvidere for research. The Plan is anticipated to be finished in September 2017.

## **Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission**

During the 2017 fiscal year, the Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission adopted a work plan for the year focusing on preservation education, promotion and recognition. The Commission held its fifth annual

awards program to recognize organizations and individuals that had completed outstanding renovation projects. The program was held at the Apollo on May 12, 2016 (in recognition of preservation month). A booklet was designed highlighting the projects with advertising sponsorship received from contractors and supporters of the preservation efforts. The event was well attended and appreciated by the recipients and the community.

The commission designed a small 50/50 matching grant program with the funds raised from the various fund-raising events held each year 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 \$1000 each year that funds are available. In the 2017 fiscal year, one \$1,000 grant was awarded to the Pearl Place Apartments for concrete work.

The commission submitted its annual Certified Local Government report to the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency as part of its Certified Local Government Agreement; the commission received a letter of compliance from the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

One certificate of appropriateness was approved for 117 West Hurlbut Avenue. There were no National Register Districts designated during the fiscal year; however discussions regarding the Leath Warehouse continue to take place.

The commission continued its community outreach programs. The commission set up its annual display at the Boone County Museum of History during Belvidere's Hometown Christmas and sponsored live music. Two new programs include the Friends of Preservation meetings, where historic land owners and preservation-minded residents are brought together to share stories and provide insight. The commission arranges for preservation-themed presentations at each meeting. For those that can not attend the meetings, the commission has created a newsletter called the History Keeper that highlights discussions from the meeting, historic residences in Belvidere and provides a resource corner for information.

### **Comprehensive Plan Review**

There was no work by the planning staff on updating the Belvidere Comprehensive Plan or finishing the Poplar Grove Comprehensive Plan during the 2017 fiscal year. However, plans are already underway to begin the updating process for the Belvidere Comprehensive Plan in the 2018 fiscal year.

### **Other Activities**

Aside from meetings, land development cases and historic preservation, the planning department has other job duties. One on-going project has been the digitization of all case files and linking them to GIS. This makes researching the history of a parcel or the popularity of a land use much easier. 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. In the 2017 fiscal year, the department scanned 27 plats for the Recorder's office, 4 plats for the general public and 57 plats for other departments. In January 2016, the department's large format scanner stopped working. Staff worked with a local company to secure a new one which will be purchased in the 2018 fiscal year.

The planning staff issues two kinds of letters. Zoning Verification letters and addressing letters. Zoning verification letters are often-times requested by financial institutions representing a buyer. They 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 their intentions for the property

are allowable. Staff issued 22 zoning verification letters for the City of Belvidere none for the Village of Poplar Grove. 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 department regarding addressing matters and will issue an official address and notify all utilities and governmental agencies so they can update their records. Staff issued 14 letters for the City of Belvidere and 1 letter for the Village of Poplar Grove. There is no cost for this service.

New activities in the 2017 fiscal year include the APA Ambassador Program and the Summer Food Service Program. The APA Ambassador Program is overseen by the American Planning Association and organized locally through the RMAP Planner's Network. The program is aimed at introducing the public to the planning profession and planning efforts in their community. Staff along with other local planners presented to a elementary school classroom and two high school classrooms. Efforts are being made to continue the presentations into the 2018 fiscal year. The Summer Food Service Program is a USDA program that is organized locally by the Community Action Agency. Planning staff assists the City Clerk with handing out free lunches and monitoring the lunch site once a week from May to August. This program will be continued in the 2018 fiscal year.

The department is active in Heritage Days, the Chamber Chili Cook-off and Hometown Christmas. For Heritage Days, staff is part of the organizing committee, assists with fundraising, administers the Facebook page, 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. Staff has in previous years handed out hot chocolate on the City's behalf during Hometown Christmas but will be more involved and taking on a bigger role in the festival beginning in 2017. The Chamber Chili Cook-off is a good community outreach event and staff participates in creating the booth space and serving chili to the public. Another community outreach event that staff participates in is the Boone County Fair by manning the Belvidere booth along with many other people.

In February of 2016 the Boone County Board voted to dissolve the planning department that was shared with the City of Belvidere. In March of 2016 the City of Belvidere created their own planning department as part of the Community Development Department. While the City of Belvidere was able to addressing their community's planning needs, Boone County was not prepared. In an effort to ensure that citizens and businesses in the county could get their needs met, the Community Development Planner continued to provide weekly advice and guidance to the County as a courtesy until September 2016.

## Appendix Tables

- I. Population Estimates
  
- II. Case Comparisons
  - A. FY 2015-2017 Belvidere Case Comparisons
  - B. FY 2015-2017 Poplar Grove Case Comparisons
  
- III. Case Load Summaries
  - A. FY 2017 Belvidere Case Load Summary
  - B. FY 2017 Poplar Grove Case Load Summary
  
- IV. City of Belvidere Zoning Petition Flow Chart

I

*Estimated Population*

	2010	*2011	*2012	*2013	*2014	*2015	*2016	*2017 to date
Belvidere:	25,585	25,603	25,666	25,701	25,716	25,734	25,755	25,773
Poplar Grove:	5,023	5,029	5,034	5,037	5,037	5,037	5,043	5,043

\* 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.

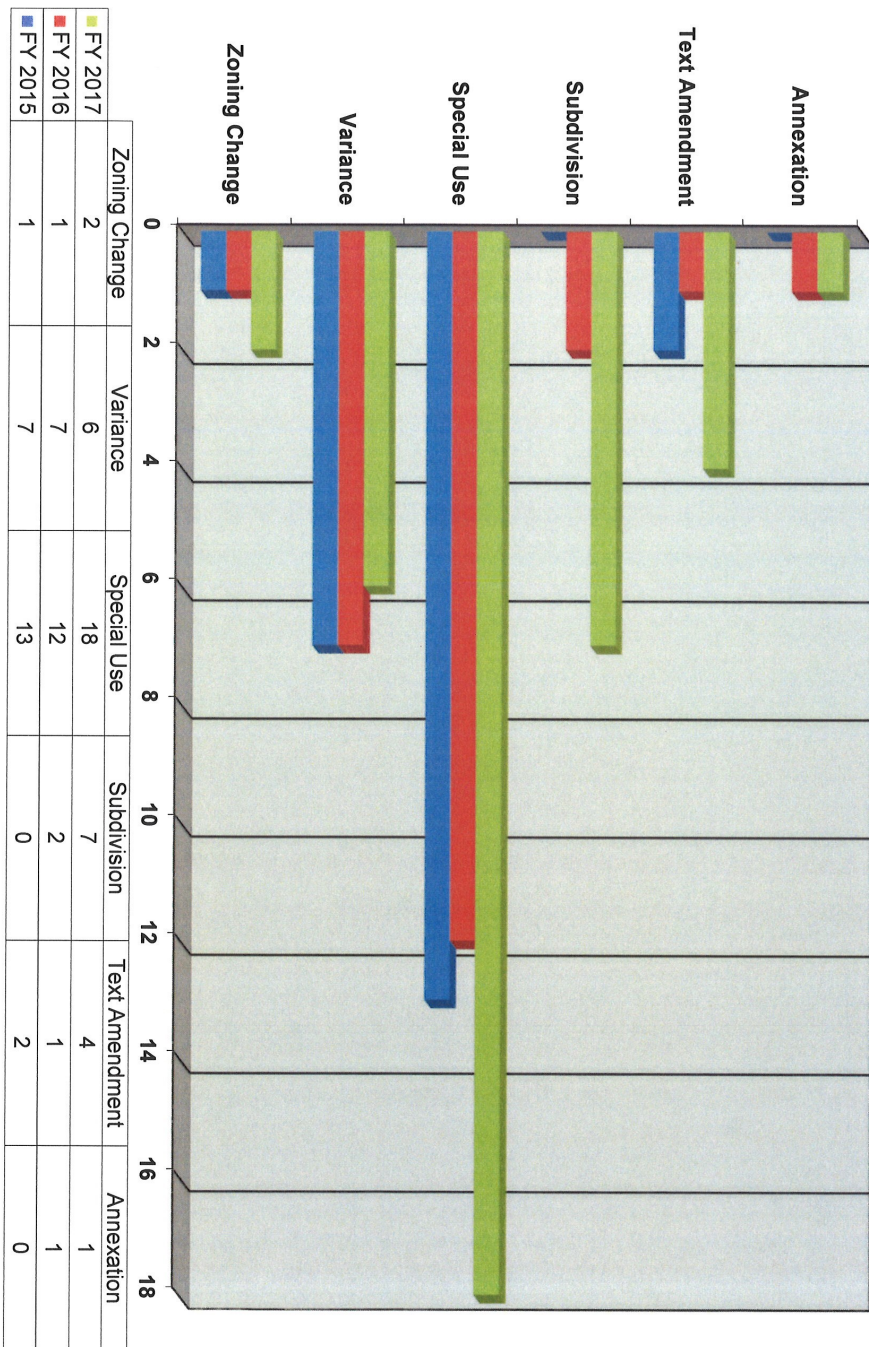
*Census Estimates*

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Belvidere:	25,588	25,680	25,371	25,339	25,282	25,092	25,070	n/a
Poplar Grove:	5,023	5,087	5,096	5,115	5,169	5,056	5,54	n/a

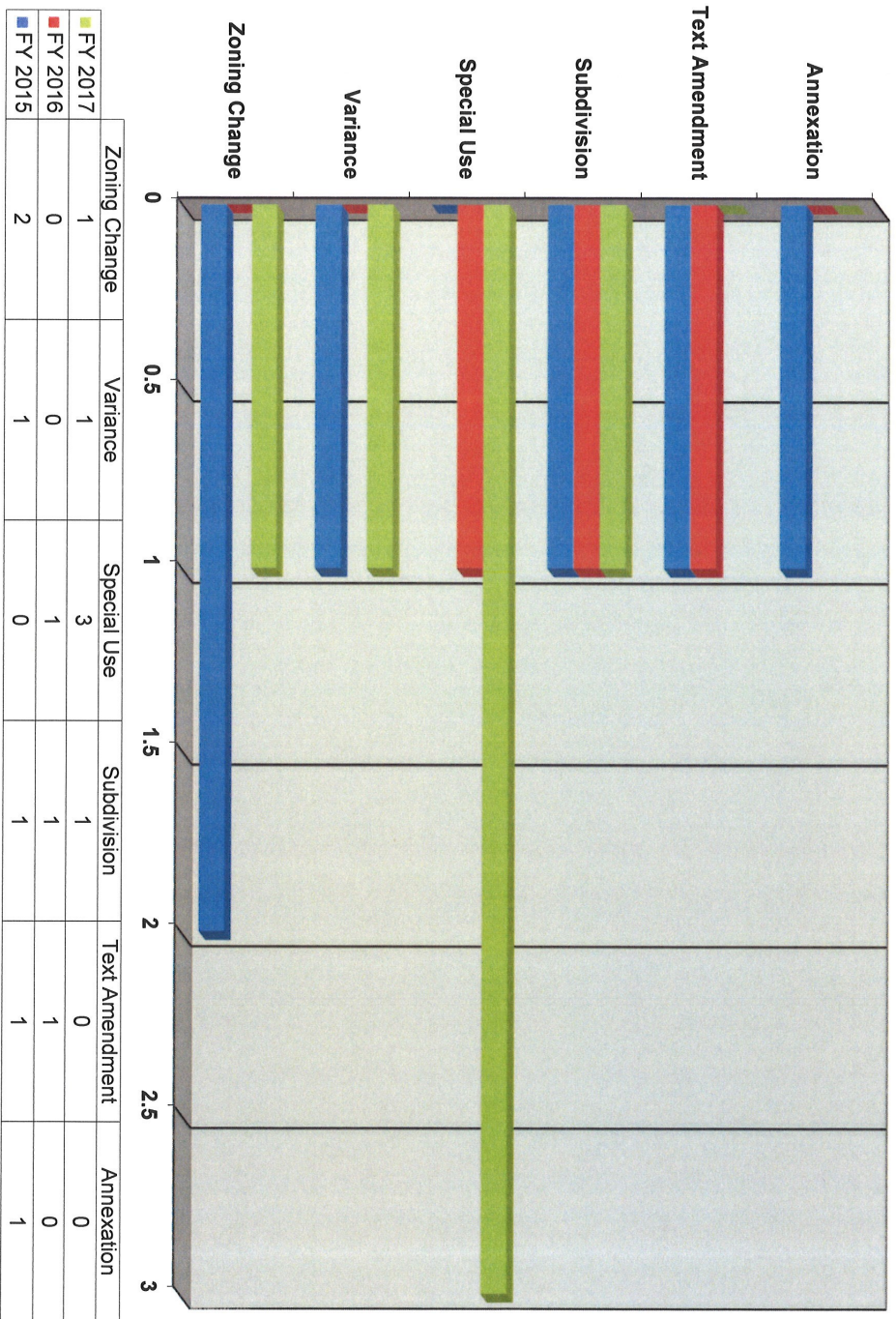
*\*Percentage of Growth*

	2000	2004	2010	2015	2020
Belvidere:	0	13	8.7	0.6	n/a
Poplar Grove:	0	114.9	70.8	0.3	n/a

## II-A FY 2015-2017 Belvidere Case Comparisons

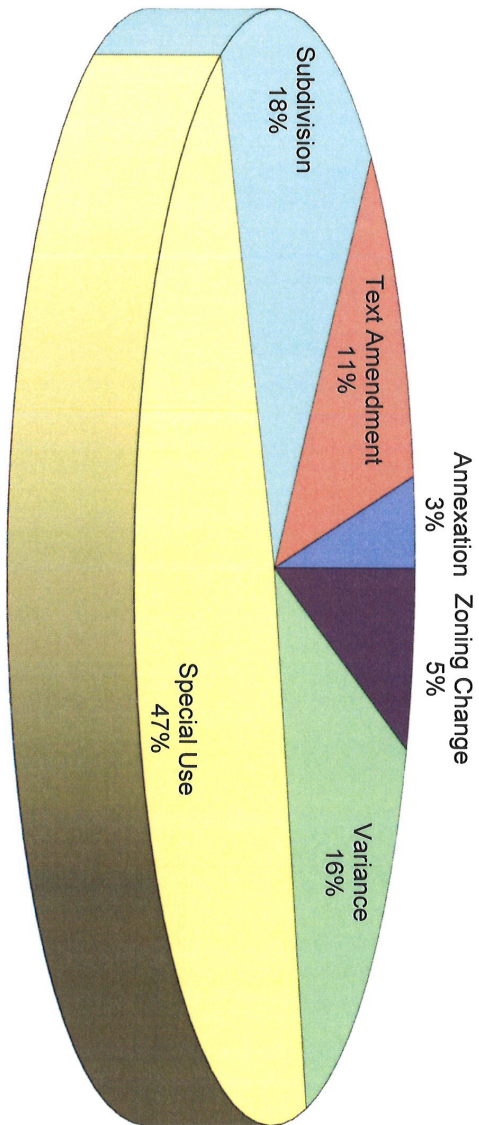


## II-B FY 2015-2017 Poplar Grove Case Comparisons

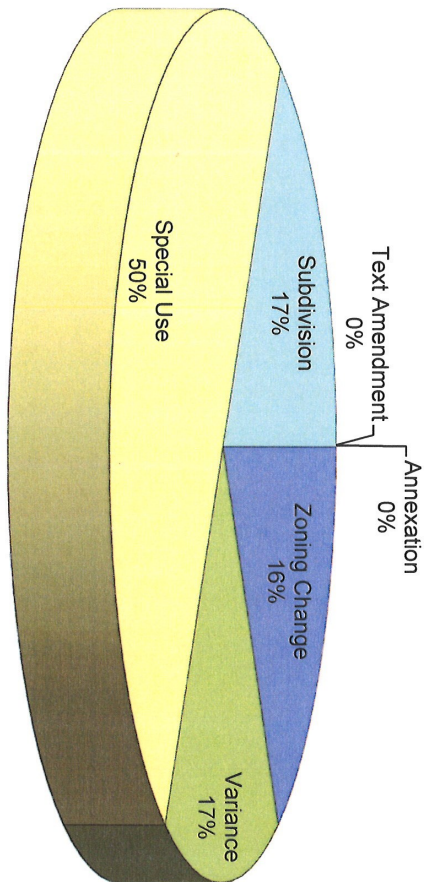


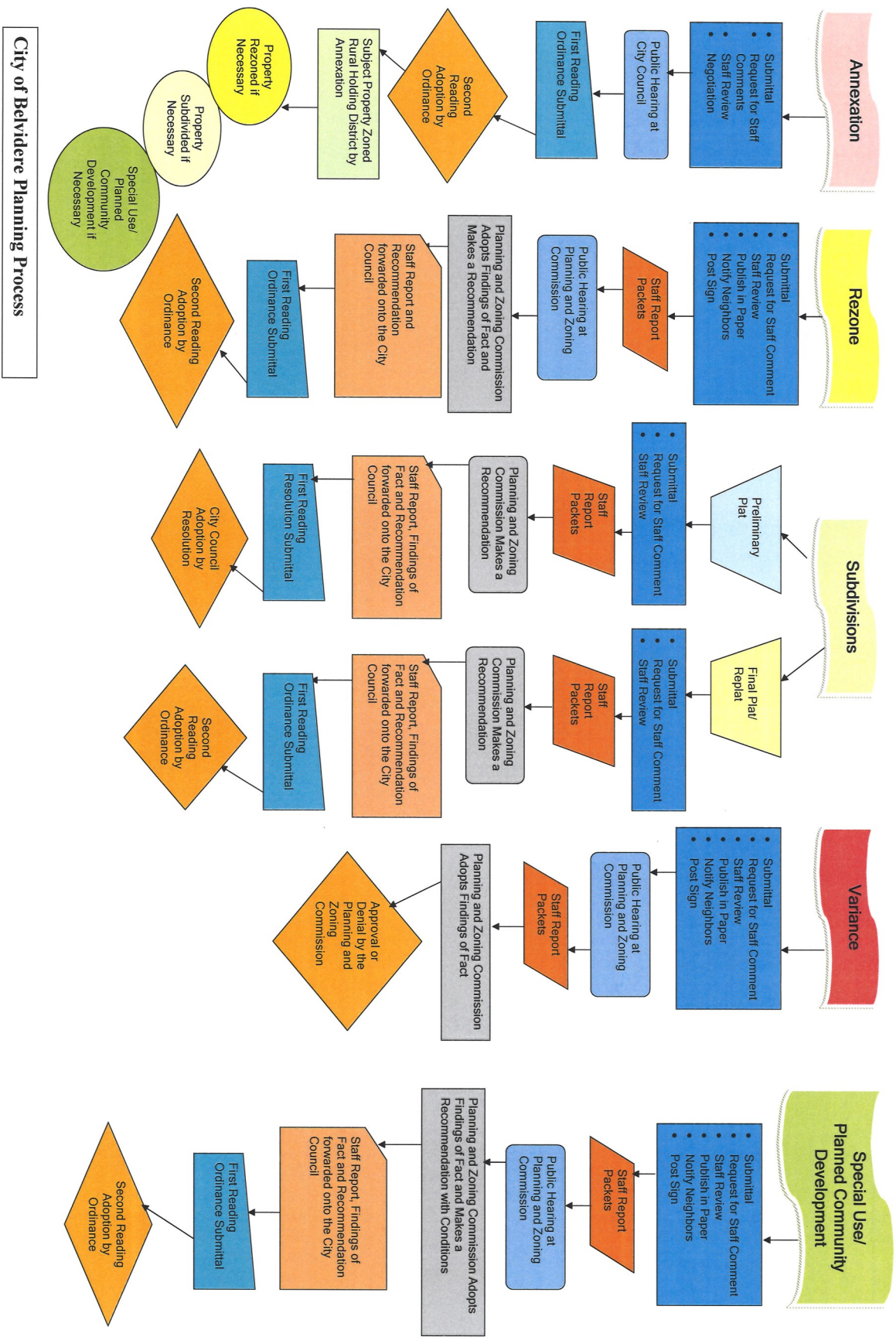


**III-A**  
**FY 2017 Belvidere Case Load Summary**



### III-B FY 2017 Poplar Grove Case Load Summary





City of Belvidere Planning Process