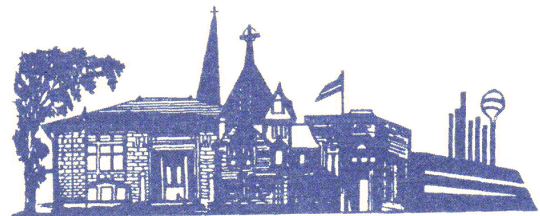


# **Belvidere Planning Department FY 2022 Annual Report**



**BELVIDERE, ILLINOIS**

Established 1881

**Gina DelRose, Community Development Planner**  
**Cathy Crawford, Administrative Assistant**



# CITY OF BELVIDERE

## **Planning and Zoning Commission**

Paul Engelman, Chairman  
Daniel Druckrey, Vice- Chairman  
Art Hyland  
Robert Cantrell  
Andy Racz  
Alissa Maher  
Carl Gnewuch

## **City Council**

Mayor Clint Morris  
Alderman Tom Porter 1<sup>st</sup> Ward  
Alderman Clayton Stevens 1<sup>st</sup> Ward  
Alderman Natalie Mulhall 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward  
Alderman Dan Snow 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward  
Alderman Sheryl Prather 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward  
Alderman Wendy Frank 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward  
Alderman Mike McGee 4<sup>th</sup> Ward  
Alderman Matt Fleury 4<sup>th</sup> Ward  
Alderman Marsha Freeman 5<sup>th</sup> Ward  
Alderman Ric Brereton 5<sup>th</sup> Ward

## **Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission**

Claudia Colla Chairman  
Sonya Dobberfuhl  
Dawn Brooks  
David Larson  
Alexandra Omiotek  
Vacant  
Vacant



## **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 and up until December 31, 2021, 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 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.

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 fourth Wednesday of each month at 6:00pm. 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 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.

### **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 requests, text amendments and subdivisions. The Village Board members make their decisions based on the recom-

mendations 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 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 2022 fiscal year with a positive outlook based on the amount of speculative conversations staff participated in. Ultimately, Covid-19 had a massive impact on the department's case load and job duties for both fiscal years 2020-2022. 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; revenue was 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 purchased by the general public.

The projected revenue for the department for the 2022 fiscal year was \$9,950; \$8,600 in application fees and \$950 in miscellaneous fees (letters, contractual services, etc.). The actual revenue for the 2022 fiscal year was \$19,780; \$17,075 in application fees and \$2,705 in miscellaneous fees. Projected revenues and number of zoning cases were up and staff remained busy with all of the other department's responsibilities. The department's actual expenses were below projections as well.

The planning department processes the various zoning applications for the City of Belvidere and, for the majority of the 2022 fiscal year, 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 thirty-two Belvidere and Poplar Grove planning cases during 2022 fiscal year (May 1st to April 30th); twenty-eight cases were reviewed for the city; and four 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 Village and City) 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 but is accessible via telephone if needed.

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. During the 2022 fiscal year, staff processed five map amendments, a 400% 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 2022 fiscal year, staff processed one map amendment, the same as last year.

### **Variations**

Variations 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 variations require a public hearing before the Belvidere Planning and Zoning Commission. They are not decided by the city council. Notifications for variations 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 2022 fiscal year, staff processed one variance, a 66% decrease from the previous year.

Poplar Grove variations 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 variations are done by notifying adjacent property owners and publishing the public hearing in a local paper. During the 2022 fiscal year, staff processed one variance, an 100% increase from the previous year.

### **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. During the 2022 fiscal year, staff processed twelve special uses, a 9% 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 2022 fiscal year, staff processed two special uses, the same as last 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 2022 fiscal year, staff processed two text amendments, an 100% 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 2022 fiscal year, staff processed zero text amendments, an 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 re-



quired. During the 2022 fiscal year, staff processed five subdivisions, a 400% 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 2022 fiscal year, staff did not process any subdivisions, the same number as 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 2022 fiscal year, staff processed three annexation requests for the City of Belvidere, a 200% 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. 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 2022 fiscal year, the planning department reviewed 19 site, landscaping and lighting plans for 13 projects in the City of Belvidere and 4 sets of plans for 1 project in the Village of Poplar Grove. In the 2021 fiscal year, the planning department reviewed 17 site, landscaping and lighting plans for 12 projects in the City of Belvidere and two sets of plans for 2 projects in the Village of Poplar Grove.

Some of the larger projects reviewed in the 2022 fiscal year include the expansion for Crusader Clinic, façade renovations for Brechon Dental and new construction for self-storage units.

### **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. In the 2022 fiscal year, the planning department reviewed 6 plans for 4 downtown projects for signage, windows and façade improvements compared to 9 plans for 8 downtown projects in the 2021 fiscal year.

### **Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission**

The Commission held its ninth annual awards program to recognize organizations and individuals that had completed outstanding renovation projects. The program was held at the Boone County Museum of History on October 14, 2021. 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, dinners, ad space, 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 \$2,500.00 each year that funds are available. In the 2022 fiscal year, 4 grants were awarded for a total of \$3,750.00. One project was completed and reimbursed \$500.00, one project was partially completed and reimbursed \$432.00, two projects were not commenced.

Fundraisers in the 2022 fiscal year were difficult due to lingering Covid-19 concerns, however, the Commission was able to host a successful stained glass window tour that included four local churches within Belvidere.

One certificate of appropriateness was approved for 628 Buchanan Street. The Leath Building was partially demolished. No new landmarks and districts were approved, however, staff discussed the possibility of applying for national register status with several 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. A Commissioner researched the History of Lustron Houses and wrote an article for the Boone County Journal while staff reached out to the four homeowners of Lustron Houses and provided them additional information. One issue of The History Keeper newsletter was distributed and 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, which has highlighted Belvidere in several of their promotional events.

### **Other Duties**

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. Through this project it was determined that the Planning Department was missing hundreds of cases. These cases were processed when Belvidere and Boone County not only had a joint planning department but their planning and building departments were combined as well. When the planning and building departments were separated, planning files were accidentally kept by the building department. As part of the summer intern's responsibility, a list was created of missing files (based on a list of historic case numbers), the majority of those files were found and completed by adding missing minutes, ordinances and location maps. Additional storage space was obtained in fiscal year 2022 and staff anticipates beginning to digitize, link the files to GIS and close out the paper files in fiscal year 2023.

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. The Department was able to purchase a used large format scanner and printer in fiscal year 2018 to replace the one that stopped working in January 2016. When that one began having significant maintenance issues, the Department was able to purchase a new one with a warranty in 2021. In the 2022 fiscal year, the department scanned 12 plats for the Recorder's office, 10 plats for the general public and 3 plats for other departments. Some departments have the ability to scan their own documents as well.

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. 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 issued thirty-nine zoning verification letters for the City of Belvidere and three 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 two letters for the City of Belvidere and none for the Village of Poplar Grove. There is no cost for this service.

A new program adopted by the City Council in the 2020 fiscal year is the Downtown Façade Improvement Grant. 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 2022 fiscal year, letters were sent out to 113 property owners announcing that \$19,290 was available in grant funds. A total of 14 applications were received and reviewed and 10 of the projects were awarded grant funds, four of which have been fully completed. Although extensions were granted for the remaining projects which were delayed due to lack of affordable and available materials (a consequence of Covid-19) time has run out and the 13,665.20 in unused funds will be rolled into the fiscal year 2023 grant. Since projects were not begun, the property owners will be eligible to reapply for the grant. The total amount of available grant funds in fiscal year 2023 is \$38,665.20.

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 assists with data collection and provides lists of potential properties for the Land Bank. In the 2022 fiscal year, a minimal amount of properties met the requirements for acquisition, therefore only one property was acquired. Repairs have been made to one of the properties while permits were obtained to begin renovations on the other two properties acquired in fiscal year 2021.

### **Comprehensive Plan Review**

The fiscal year 2023 budget includes funding to hire a consultant in order to complete the City's Comprehensive Plan re-write.

### **2020 Census**

In fiscal year 2019, planning staff continued to work with the Boone County GIS Department in preparing documents for the 2020 Census. Every year staff has to submit BAS (Boundary and Survey) Maps to the Census Bureau so that they can update their municipal boundaries and road systems. For the decennial census, staff must participate in the LUCA (Local Update of Census Addresses) program which verifies every single address and housing unit in Belvidere. Since the Census Bureau is gradually becoming paperless, the GIS Department has been extremely helpful in submitting the data in an acceptable mapping format.

Covid-19 posted a significant challenge in not just conducting 2020 Census promotional efforts but in assisting residents in completing the census form. Even though the 2020 Census could be completed online, many residents were unsure how to navigate the website or had difficulty finding access to a reliable internet source.

According to the 2020 Census, the City of Belvidere lost 0.9% of its population, one of the smallest decreases in the region. The official population for Belvidere was 25,339, allowing for the City to maintain its home rule authority.

### **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 and the Boone County Fair. 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.

#### **Buchanan Street Strolls**

Buchanan Street Strolls take place primarily on Sundays throughout the summer and fall. In the 2022 fiscal year, there were six Strolls, four on Sunday afternoon and two on Saturday night. Attendance levels varied based on the bands and weather. Planning Staff's involvement with Buchanan Street Strolls consists of obtaining vendors and sponsors, ordering marketing and fundraising materials, helping set up and take down the festival area, administration of the Belvidere Buchanan Street Strolls' Facebook page which is monitored during and outside of office hours and being present during the entire festival to monitor events and assist where needed. Beginning in the 2023 fiscal year, the Belvidere Area Chamber of Commerce will be responsible for Buchanan Street Strolls with the City providing support.

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

Throughout the years staff has taken a lead role in the Belvidere Area Chamber of Commerce's Hometown Christmas festival and now is part of the organizing committee. Due to the Chamber's efforts to restructure themselves, staff has become more of a position of support than lead organizer. In fiscal year 2022, staff assisted in handing out approximately 1,000 cups of hot chocolate at the Belvidere Fire Station. Staff also assisted with securing vendors, verifying logistics, assisting with marketing materials and administration of the Belvidere Hometown Christmas Facebook page which is monitored during and outside of office hours. Staff is present during the entire festival to monitor events and assist where needed.

#### **Community Outreach**

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.

A new event for the 2022 fiscal year was the Belvidere Area Chamber of Commerce's Downtown Trick or Treat. City Staff decorated Little City Hall and handed out candy and toys to over 2,000 children downtown.

Another community outreach event that staff participates in is the Boone County Fair; a booth is manned by Belvidere staff as well as many others.

#### **Training**

Staff attended the Illinois Governor's Conference on Travel & Tourism held at Navy Pier in December 2021. This conference was originally planned for 2020 but was postponed due to Covid-19.

## Appendix Tables

- I. Population Estimates
  
- II. Case Comparisons
  - A. FY 2017-2019 Belvidere Case Comparisons
  - B. FY 2017-2019 Poplar Grove Case Comparisons
  
- III. Case Load Summaries
  - A. FY 2019 Belvidere Case Load Summary
  - B. FY 2019 Poplar Grove Case Load Summary
  
- IV. City of Belvidere Zoning Petition Flow Chart

**I**

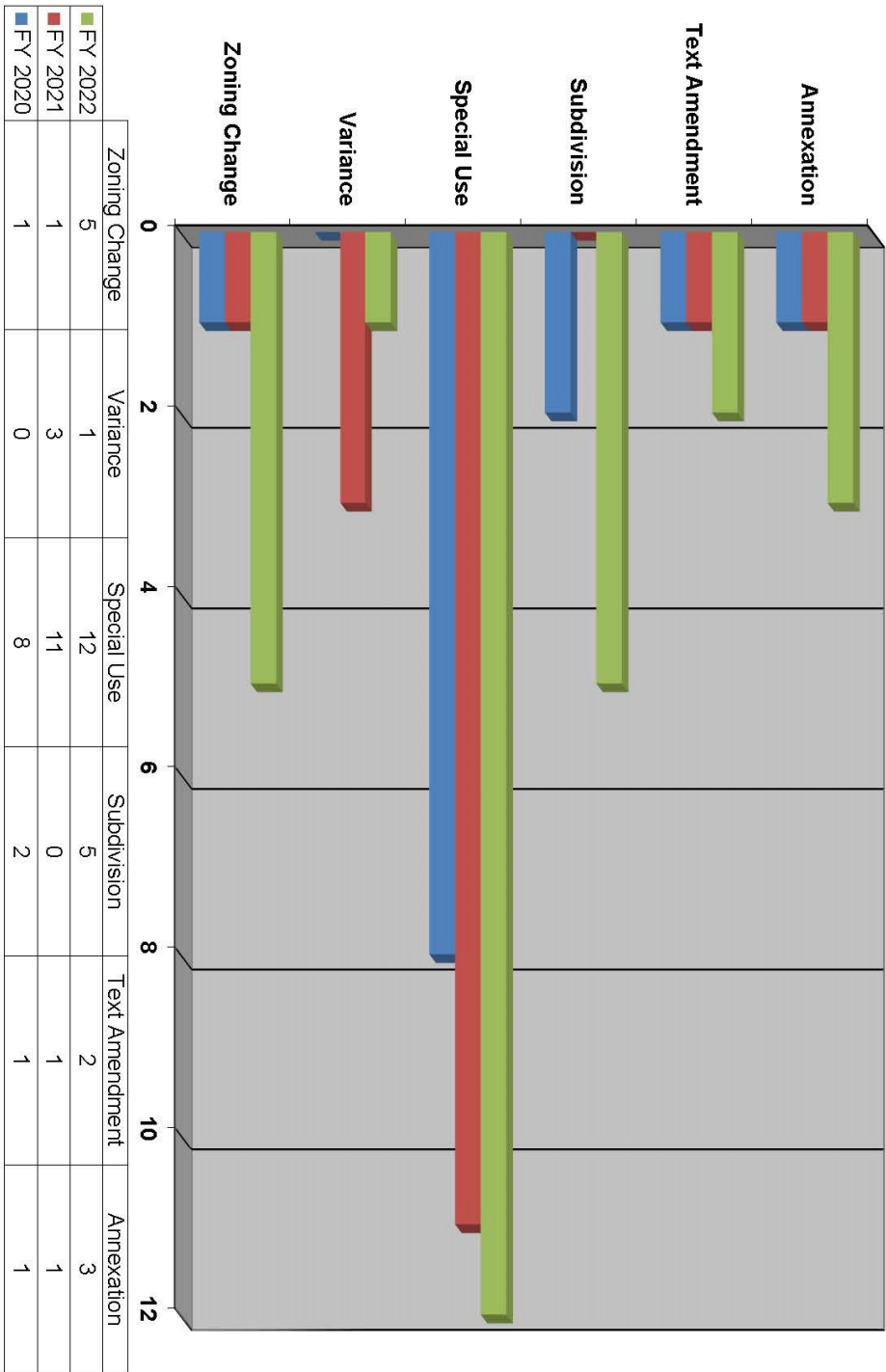
	<b>*Estimated Population</b>												
	2010	*2011	*2012	*2013	*2014	*2015	*2016	*2017	*2018	*2019	2020	*2021	*2022 to date
Belvidere:	25,585	25,603	25,666	25,701	25,716	25,734	25,755	25,773	25,791	25,797	25,339	25,513	25,618

\* 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.

	<b>*Census Estimates</b>											
	2010	*2011	*2012	*2013	*2014	*2015	*2016	*2017	*2018	*2019	2020	*2021
Belvidere:	25,588	25,680	25,371	25,339	25,282	25,092	25,070	25,181	25,194	25,143	25,339	n/a

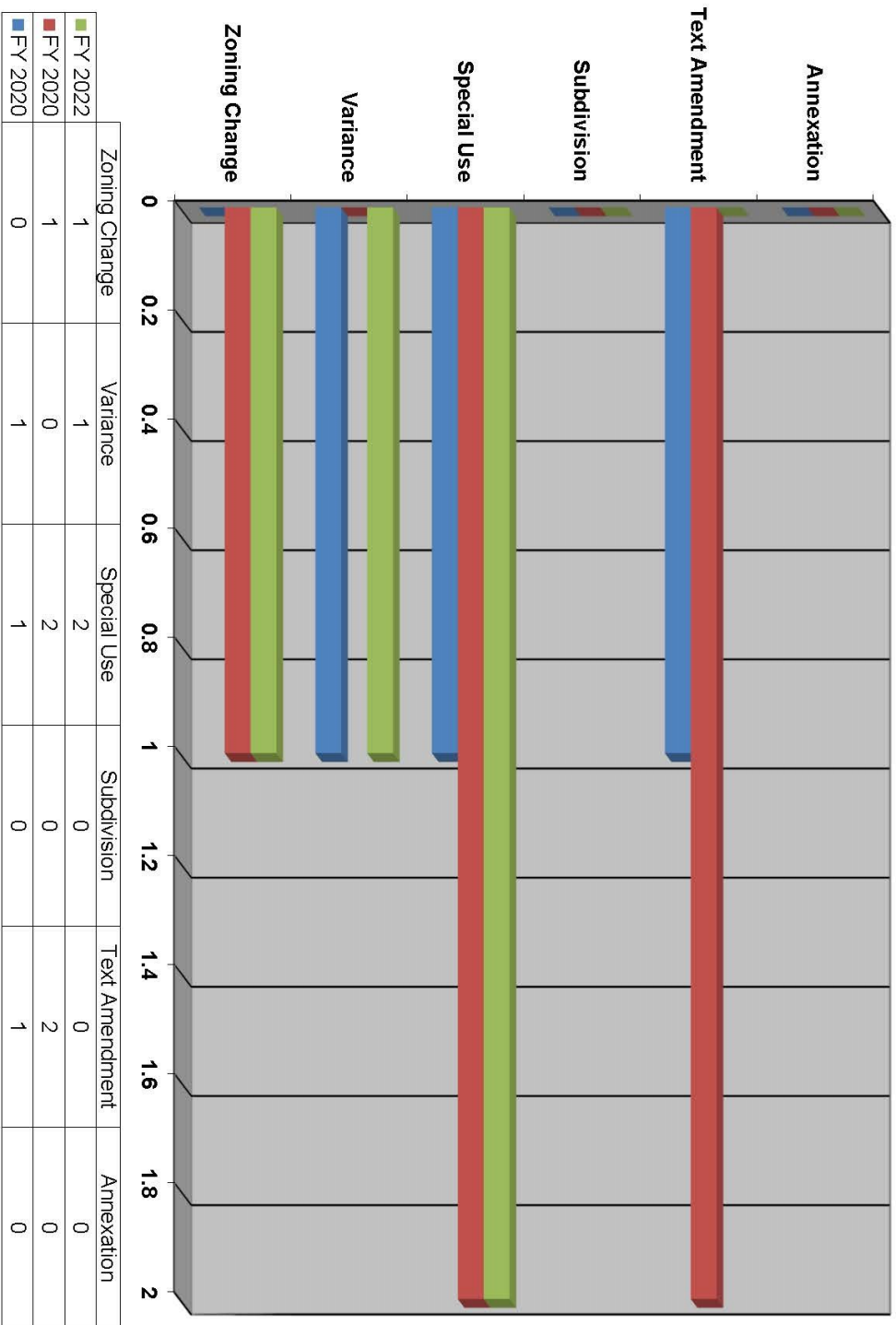
	<b>*Percentage of Growth</b>				
	2000	2004	2010	2015	2020
Belvidere:	0	13	8.7	-1.9	0.9

## II-A FY 2020-2022 Belvidere Case Comparisons



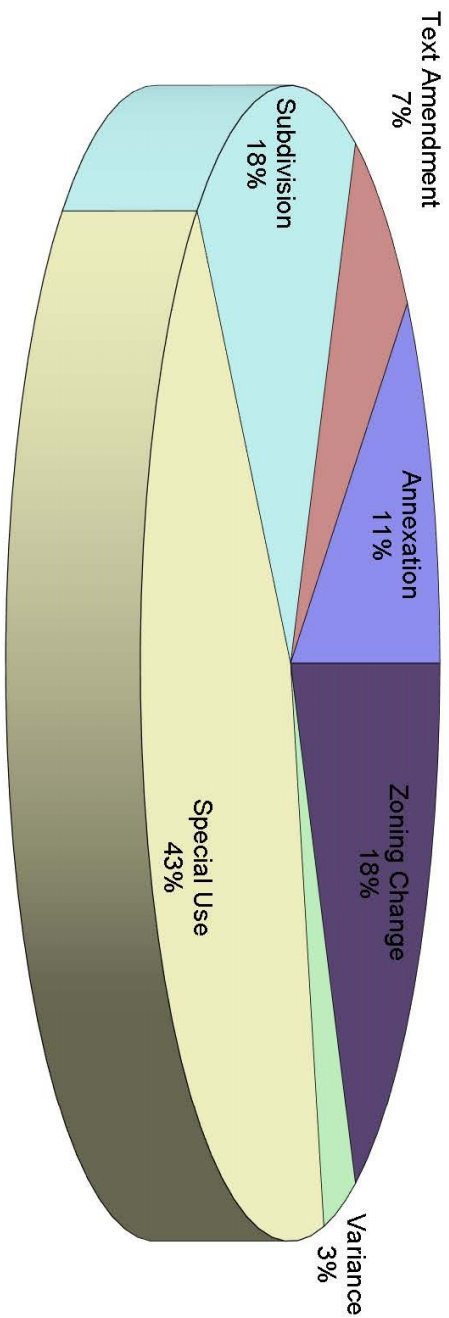
## II-B FY 2020-2022 Poplar Grove Case Comparisons

*\*FY 2022 is a partial year*

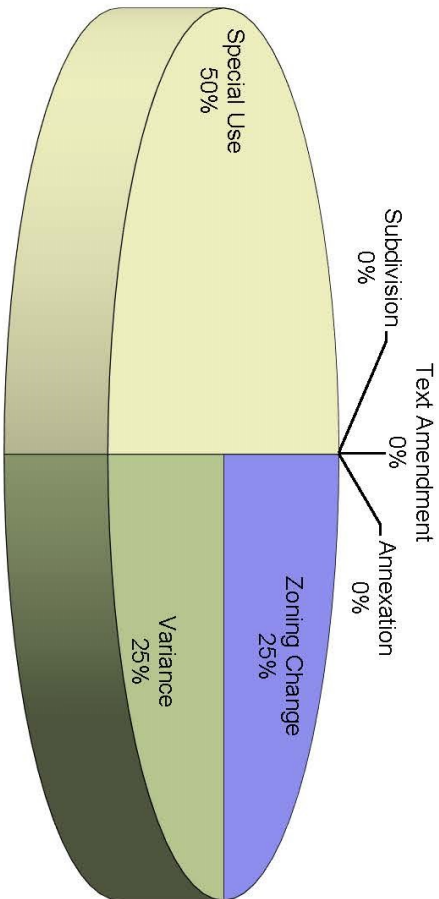


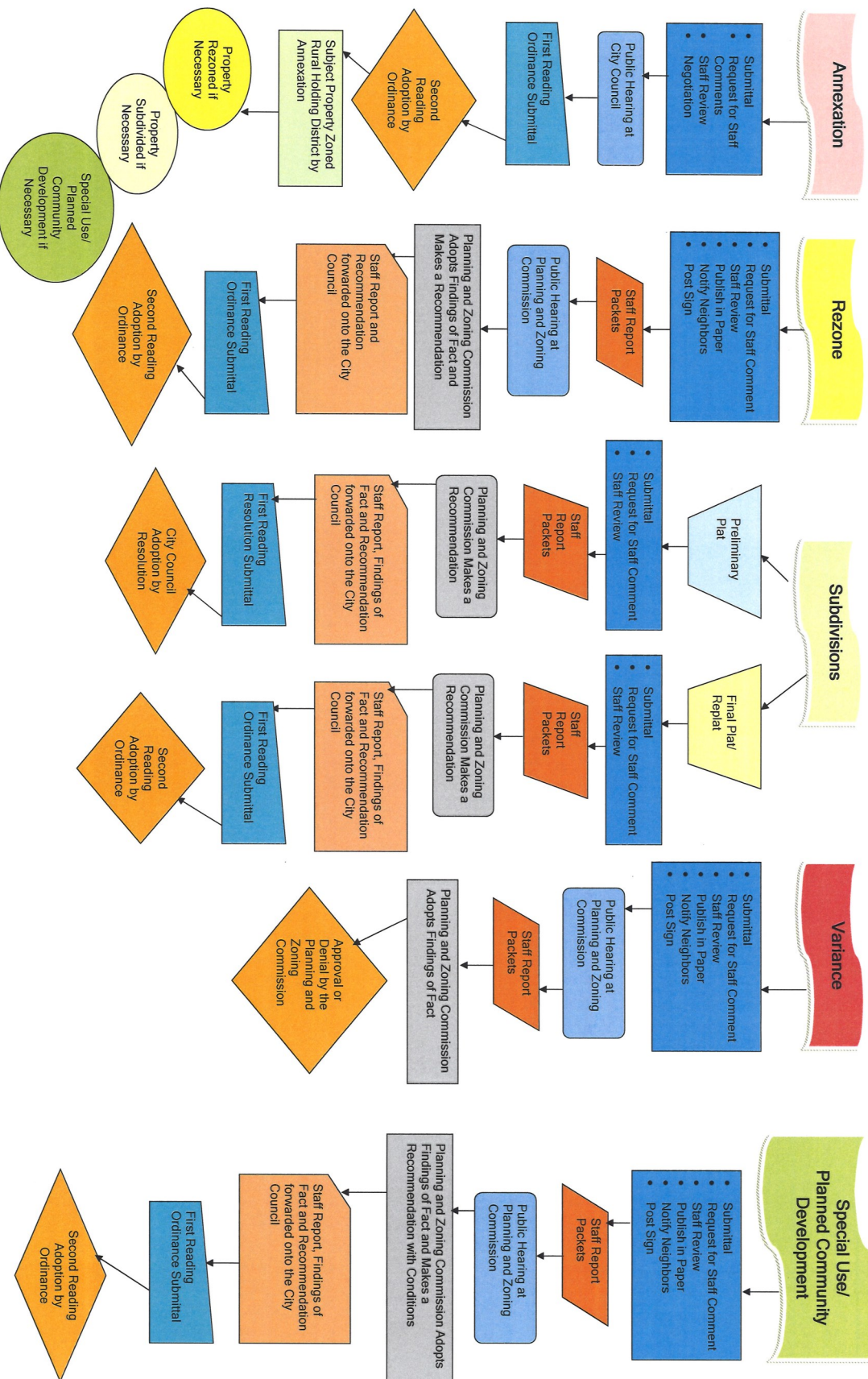


### III-A FY 2022 Belvidere Case Load Summary



**III-B**  
**FY 2022 Poplar Grove Case Load Summary**  
*\*partial year*





City of Belvidere Planning Process