



*City of Cortez  
Planning & Building Department  
Interoffice Correspondence*

January 24, 2019

Welcome to the City of Cortez Planning & Building Department's Year End Report.

This document will give the reader an overview of how land development, code enforcement, building permitting, code enforcement, and administrative processes have been progressing in Cortez for the 2018 calendar year.

Despite a decline in size and scope of projects, 2018 was an active year for the Planning & Building Department, and for development in general. The following pages highlight the events of the year.

Thanks for visiting our webpage!

Jerril G. (Sam) Proffer  
Director of Planning & Building

### **New Land Use Code Update**

The re-writing of our Land Use Code (LUC) began in earnest in May of 2015 when the City hired the firm of Kendig Keast Collaborative (KKC) out of Sugarland, Texas. (Sugarland is part of the Houston metro area). This project was started with the aid of a grant from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs. KKC received information from the city's 'Heart and Soul' community outreach project that solicited public input that was used in the development of the new LUC. Further public input was sought during 2015-2018 to aid in the writing of the LUC.

Major goals of the new LUC are:

- Streamlined regulatory processes (via administrative review and approvals)
- Reasonable exterior aesthetic requirements for new commercial buildings
- Reasonable landscape requirements for commercial development
- More regulatory flexibility for existing structures and uses

Originally slated for completion in 2017, the process carried over into 2018 and now into 2019. Much of the delay can be attributed to unplanned extended absences from some of our own key staff members along with the KKC re-write staff in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey in 2017.

Despite multiple unforeseen set-backs, staff began presenting the final draft for review and consent to the Planning Commission in late fall of 2018. Multiple public meetings are tentatively scheduled through summer 2019. Staff has created a defined public meeting timeline to follow in order to present a final draft to the Council no later than fall of 2019.



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**Land Use Code Permit Activity**

In addition to the work on the new Land Use Code, our city planners administered the following Land Use permits in 2018:

<b>LUC Permit Activity</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>
Amended Plats	6	2
Conditional Use Permits	6	3
Home Occupation Permits	1	1
Site Plan Reviews	1	5
Sign Permits	30	24
Temporary Use Permits	2	3
Permits in Progress or Withdrawn	4	NA

As you can see by the table above, our planners were quite busy in 2018 in comparison to 2017 even though construction valuation was down.

One of the projects that staff worked on this year was the demolition, subdivision, and ultimate city purchase of the old Cortez High School on W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Our staff members were fully engaged at every step overseeing the demolition of the school which included working with state and local regulators for hazardous materials and clean-up to final grading, etc.

Planning staff worked closely with the school district administration as well as our own grant writing team and our Parks Department during this process in order to make a smooth transition of the purchase of the property. This opens the way to move forward with a new public park on a portion of the now vacant land.

Staff has been in discussions with the Housing Authority regarding moving forward with an apartment complex to be located on the second parcel that was created and still owned by the City. Hopefully this dream will become a reality in the next few years.

**Three-Mile Plan Update**

Colorado state law requires that all municipalities have a ‘three-mile plan’ in place. A three-mile plan is a guiding document that serves as a long-range planning tool that encompasses an area of up to three miles around the corporate boundaries of a city. This plan serves as a tool to help guide future roads, infrastructure, public utilities, etc. The intent is to ensure that land that is being developed both within the city and the adjoining county works in harmony as areas grow.

City Planning staff met with Montezuma County Planning staff and the county planning commission back in 2017. After all comments were taken into consideration our staff had a work session with our own Planning and Zoning Commission that same year. Staff has a good draft plan



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put together, and will be seeking final public input in the coming months of 2019. Staff will take the final plan to City Council to vote on adopting the document by mid-year.

### **Building Code Update**

Our former building code was the 2009 family of International Building Codes. We adopted the 2015 version of the I-codes in early 2018. We are happy to say that the transition to the new code went extremely smooth. Contractors felt little to no impact, and our local architects and engineers were happy to see that we are now on the same version as Durango, Bayfield, and other communities.

To stay current with new construction materials, methods, and technology, we must periodically adopt one of the later versions of the I-codes. The I-codes are updated every 3 years. To stay ahead of the curve, our office is currently reviewing the 2018 version.

Our long range plan is to have the 2018 version fully vetted and ready for adoption sometime in 2020. This also has an effect on our Insurance Services Organization (ISO) Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule (BCEGS). The ISO reviews public entities to monitor administration of fire departments, flood plain management, and others risk management related departments. This information is used by insurance companies to help establish insurance rates.

Our department is reviewed by ISO every 6 years. Adopting the 2018 I-codes by 2020 will help upgrade our BCEGS report when we review again in 2022 while keeping us abreast of the latest trends in construction.

### **Construction Activity**

Building construction was steady by actual number of permits issued, but size and scope of projects dropped significantly from approximately \$21.3 million construction valuation in 2017 down to approximately \$7.4 million in 2018.

Significant projects completed in 2018 were:

- The Cortez Fire Station
- The South West Memorial Hospital Patient Wing
- The South West Memorial Hospital Medical Office Building.
- Beehive Memory Care Assisted Living Facility

Projects permitted in 2018 that are currently under construction include:

- The Bridge Emergency Shelter
- The Children's Kiva Remodel of the old Justice Center building



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With the 27,000 sq. ft. Osprey project completed in 2017 along with the completion of the remaining 2 hospital expansions and the Beehive project, we saw an additional approximate 75,000 – 85,000 sq. ft. of new business space opened up in 2017-2018. Even with the reduction in force in 2018 by Southwest Memorial Hospital, the overall increase in business space is still anticipated to provide many good paying jobs for our community. Taken in total over the last few years, we should still see more new homes being built in the months ahead to accommodate for the growing work-force, even though we saw a slight decrease in 2018.

Finally, staff performed approximately 760 building inspections with associated construction site visits for the year, approximately 39 plan reviews and made approximately 140 consultation visits onsite to visit with contractors, homeowners, etc., to answer questions and aid them in their projects. Overall we had a very active year despite the reduction in size of projects.

The table below gives a comparison of how activity was distributed in the various construction permit classes in the 3-year period 2016-2018

<i>2018 Permit Summary</i>			<i>2017 Permit Summary</i>		<i>2016 Permit Summary</i>	
<b>Permit Type</b>	<b>Issued</b>	<b>\$ Valuation</b>	<b>Issued</b>	<b>\$ Valuation</b>	<b>Issued</b>	<b>\$ Valuation</b>
Residential Addition	7	\$ 179,794.24	2	\$ 1,500.00	9	\$ 174,701.00
Manufactured Home	7	\$ 224,379.82	11	\$ 90,336.80	11	\$ 158,031.96
Commercial Addition	3	\$ 186,318.08	3	\$ 12,725,205.68	3	\$ 99,508.00
Foundation Only	na	na	2	\$ 45,000.00	1	\$ 380,000.00
Accessory Structure	21	\$ 324,379.96	23	\$ 273,072.40	23	\$ 99,535.13
Commercial Remodel	11	\$ 202,700.00	7	\$ 412,372.14	18	\$ 3,412,761.50
New Residential	14	\$ 2,945,930.23	18	\$ 4,314,765.18	18	\$ 4,744,086.30
Change of Occupancy	3	\$ 7,800.08	3	\$ 31,500.00	1	\$ 15,000.00
New Commercial	4	\$ 1,876,102.12	4	\$ 3,011,905.04	5	\$11,040,140.80
Cell Tower Modifications	1	\$ 150,000.00	2	\$ 20,000.00	na	na
Other	79	\$ 386,015.00	56	\$ 192,792.00	77	\$ 387,320.00
Residential Remodel	12	\$ 229,060.65	13	\$ 180,180.00	8	\$ 50,800.00
<b>Total Permits &amp; Valuation</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>\$ 7,373,527.60</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>\$ 21,298,629.24</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>\$20,561,884.69</b>



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### **Administrative Processes Progress**

Several years ago, our department began the process of going through old archived files from many years past. When we began, we had 26 filing cabinets filled with old building permits and a similar number of other cabinets filled with old land use files. Staff has systematically been going through these files and purging duplicate paper copies, organizing, digitizing, and when appropriate in conjunction with state records keeping law, destroying files. (Destroying files is limited to unnecessary records such as old resolved nuisance cases such as tall weeds violations, etc.)

We have reduced our building permit files down to 4 cabinets and about 8 land use file cabinets. These paper records consist of recent projects that are now rotated into electronic form as they are completed, with the paper files purged when appropriate. Often a records request that once might have taken an hour or more can now be accessed with a few clicks of a mouse. As time allows, staff continues to work on the old, large land use files organizing and preparing to put into electronic format. The end result is a better organized, more time and space efficient system.

Staff has also been in the process of working together to complete an administrative office manual. This document serves as a process referral guide for existing and any new and employees who may come on aboard. The goal is to have a manual that will give long-range continuity to the department. All of this has been hard, dreary work, but the results have been exceptional in terms of making research and records retrieval much easier and faster.

### **Code Enforcement**

The Planning & Building Department took over all Code Enforcement activity from the Police Department in 2017. We started 2017 with no staff, filling both the one full-time and one part-time position that spring. Since that time the full-time position has had staff turn-over twice and the part-time position once. The people that were hired did a great job while they were with us, but finding qualified long-term personnel has proven to be quite challenging.

As of this writing both our full-time and part-time positions are vacant; however, we hope to fill those positions again by early spring. As is typical with employee turn-over, there is a lag-time between hire date and productivity because of the training process.

While employee turn-over has had a negative impact on overall effectiveness, we have still managed to make significant impacts in terms of number of cases handled. The tables on the following page show the major activity for the years 2016 through 2018.



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<b>Major Code Enforcement Actions by Type</b>			
<b>Action Type</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016*</b>
Courtesy Notices	233	60	480
Court Hearings	32	7	26
Court Summons	59	22	27
Work Orders to Abate Nuisances	2	6	9
Personal Contacts	258	98	274
Notices of Violations	330	197	154
City Initiated Demolitions	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>914</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>970</b>

\*Denotes actions/info combined from PD and Planning & Building

Total actions of all classes (including those not listed) by all staff members totaled 2,014 actions in 2018, 830 actions in 2017, and 1,971 in 2016.

<b>Total Number of Code Enforcement onsite Field Inspections/Consultations</b>		
<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016</b>
1,569	1,079	Not available

<b>2018 Code Enforcement Violations by Type</b>		
Junk, Rubbish, Garbage	144	16.3%
Grass/Weeds, Yard Waste	141	15.9%
Weed, Nuisance	90	10.2%
Premises Identification	72	8.1%
Inoperable, unlicensed, dismantled vehicles	67	7.6%
Dilapidated furniture, appliance, machinery, etc.	63	7.1%
Accumulation of combustible waste	48	5.4%
Rubbish and Garbage	38	4.3%
Rodent Harborage	28	3.2%
Insect &/or Rodent Infestation	24	2.7%
Graffiti	19	2.1%
Structure unfit for occupancy	13	1.5%
Trees and Shrub Violation	9	1.0%
Dangerous Structure	9	1.0%
Inoperable/unlicensed vehicle	9	1.0%
No building permit or Certificate of Occupancy	9	1.0%
Over 30 day occupied RV	8	0.9%
Disrepaired Plumbing	8	0.9%
Owner allowed occupancy of structure w/violations	8	0.9%
All other	78	8.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>885</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



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**Fire Inspections**

Our Fire Inspector performed 190 annual fire inspections in 2018, up substantially from the 109 performed in 2017. Our Fire Inspection program requires that we inspect every commercial building in the City at least once every year.

Our Fire Inspector is also required to perform building inspections on new construction, plan reviews, fire hydrant testing, and other duties. The past two years of working with short staffing and busy construction seasons has been challenging to keep up with all that is required to provide excellent fire safety services. I am very proud of the way staff has been able to juggle all of the different and various tasks that have been required.

**Last Things**

Our Planning and Building staff fielded an unnumbered amount of phone calls, emails, inquiries, meetings, consultations and other activities with potential developers regarding future projects. I am pleased to say that we have received positive feedback from many members of the development community and the general public complimenting staff for their dedication and help. I am very proud of all of our staff members for their hard work and dedication to achieve these results. Based on tentative plans coming in from developers coupled with our proposed CHAMP development incentive program, 2019 promises to be another good year for our city.

Sam Proffer