

Town Witnessed Significant Increase In Building Permits in the 1990s With New Developments

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for This Is Westfield

The 1990s was a big decade for both new construction and expansion of homes in Westfield. In fact from 1992 through 1999, the town witnessed a 400 percent increase in building permits from 505 to 2,058.

Town Engineer Kenneth B. Marsh, who oversees the engineering, public works and building departments, said the rising economy coupled with the resurgence of Westfield's downtown shopping district has had a big impact on the demand for new home construction in town.

"These (new people moving into town) are young successful people who have money," explained Mr. Marsh, a town resident since 1978.

Over the past decade, the town has seen a number of new developments completed.

One of those occurred on Clarence Street, a road which had existed for years on maps, but was never developed until only recently.

Carl and Bill Villane, of the D. Villane Construction Company in town built 17 homes on Clarence, with builder Charles Higgins of Spring Lake constructing nine homes. Mr.

Higgins started the ball rolling when he bought a parcel of land and then gained approval of the Planning Board to subdivide the parcel into four lots.

Mr. Higgins built the first section of

the road off Scotch Plains Avenue. The Villane family then built their section of the road along with builder Michael Mahoney of Edison who developed a few lots.

More recently, the Harbt seven-lot

subdivision, a family-owned parcel, was approved for Rahway Avenue, opposite Normandy Drive.

The Messercola Brothers Building Company of Westfield built four lots resulting from a subdivision on Whittier Avenue off Glenn Avenue on the Scotch Plains boundary. The rear yards of the subdivision border properties on Edgewood Avenue.

In the mid-1990s, the town sold off a 60,000 square-foot parcel on Dunham Avenue, which was developed by Vincent Papatatto of Kenilworth, who built four homes on the cul-de-sac.

On Lawrence Avenue, a large parcel near Barchester Way was subdivided and developed into four homes.

The biggest development, however, was the 19-lot Lexington Heights subdivision in a piece of land known as the Ewan Tract. The town, which had owned the land located off Prospect Street, subdivided the parcel before selling off the individual lots to private builders during land auctions.

The development is accessible either through Lawrence Avenue and



HARD AT WORK...The Westfield Department of Public Works was busy this year maintaining trees outside of the Municipal Building around Mindowaskin Park.

Ingrid McKinley for This Is Westfield

Munsee Way or Prospect Street. Sedgewick Court, located next to the subdivision, was developed for three additional lots.

Mr. Marsh also said additions to existing homes and "tear downs," replacing a home with a new model, have become popular among Westfield property owners. The engineer noted that an increase in land values made tear downs "economically feasible."

In terms of the downtown, Mr. Marsh said there is now a "eclectic" mix of architectural styles in the business district from Arcanum Hall to stores on Quimby Street. New high scale retailers such as Williams-Sonoma and The Bombay Company have storefronts that are pretty compatible to existing architecture.

The streetscape in the district is also changing with new receptacles now in place and new street light fixtures and plants on the way.

"The streetscape design has to be compatible, obviously, with the facade designs," Mr. Marsh told *This Is Westfield*.

In the same regard, the town engineer stated that the facade of the parking deck the town is currently considering must blend in with the surrounding buildings. So, he reasoned, a deck behind Baron Drugs on Elm Street must have a different look than one that would be built off Prospect Street.

In order to keep up with the work load in the building department, Mr. Marsh has proposed the creation of an assistant director in charge of Public Works. This department would be formally known as the Division of Maintenance and Construction.

A second assistant director would oversee the Division of Building Inspections and the Division of Engineering.

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Please place recyclables at curbside by 7 a.m. on your recycling dates. Pickups will take place every other week as follows:

Thursdays: North of railroad tracks
Fridays: South of railroad tracks

APRIL
North: April 6, 20
South: April 7, 11

SEPTEMBER
North: September 7, 21
South: September 8, 22

MAY
North: May 4, 18
South: May 5, 19

OCTOBER
North: October 5, 19
South: October 6, 20

JUNE
North: June 1, 15, 29
South: June 2, 16, 30

NOVEMBER
North: November 2, 6, 30
South: November 3, 17

JULY
North: July 13, 27
South: July 14, 28

DECEMBER
North: December 14, 28
South: December 1, 15, 29

AUGUST
North: August 10, 24
South: August 11, 25

JANUARY 2001
North: January 11, 25
South: January 12, 26

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