

ICC Supports Mount Pleasant Building Department Commercial Construction Boom



Mount Pleasant Building Department worked with ICC Plan Review Service to complete code reviews of Regeneron complex expansion project.

ICC Supports Mount Pleasant Building Department Commercial Construction Boom *continued*

Located about 30 miles north of New York City, the town of Mount Pleasant, in Westchester County, New York, has undergone a remarkable commercial building renaissance in recent years.

Sal Pennelle, Mount Pleasant's Building and Fire Inspector, says he's never seen anything like it in the 14 years he's been with the Building Department. "Growth is good, though it's been a little crazy. A few years ago, we started to see significant interest and investment in commercial development and expansion of existing properties."

At that time, officials with Regeneron Pharmaceuticals sought to expand their corporate headquarters and laboratories, proposing to add 300,000 square feet of laboratory and office space. The project includes a main building, consisting of two five-story towers connected with a two-story bridge pavilion, and a 250,000-square-foot, four-story parking structure.

In the same year, Pace University, Westchester County's largest university, gained approval from the Town Planning Board to move forward on a \$100 million first phase construction project, part of a multi-phase program to transform and reposition the Pleasantville campus. Since that time, a number of other large build-outs have come along.

"I knew at that time we'd need a little help," adds Pennelle.

The Mount Pleasant Building Department—responsible for building and construction permits and enforcement of building, fire and zoning codes for commercial and residential construction performed in the town's 28 square miles—is a small, but highly experienced group.



Rendering of Pace University Residence Halls currently under construction in Mount Pleasant, NY



Rendering of Pace University Student Center currently under construction in Mount Pleasant, NY

Pennelle and two other building inspectors are responsible for reviewing and approving all commercial and residential permits. On average, the building department had issued 500 to 600 permits a year—until 2013 when that number jumped to 1,100 a year and to 1,800 a year by 2014.

"To help maintain our customer service goals of fast turnaround times, quality and completeness, we called in the code experts at ICC Plan Review Service," Pennelle said.

QUALITY CHECKS

After initial discussions with the ICC Plan Review team about the price, process and specific code assessments, Pennelle submitted the core and shell drawings for the new laboratory and buildings provided by Regeneron's design team.

Pennelle asked the Plan Review team to evaluate the design plans for compliance to 2010 New York State building codes in the following disciplines: structural,

mechanical, plumbing, electrical, energy and accessibility.

A few weeks later, ICC plan reviewers returned the drawings with a detailed checklist of compliance, non-compliance and code violations. The subsequent review results were eye opening.

“We were surprised that the core and shell drawings came back with over 30 code violations,” Pennelle recalls. “The reviewers clearly identified the areas of concern, which after we reviewed, were able to share with the developer’s design team.”

Not long after, the design team resubmitted the drawings with all the corrections made, and ICC provided a complimentary re-review of the plans.

“With the re-reviewed documents, I was able to sit down with the architects and engineers on the project to go over final code questions and issues,” Pennelle said. “The process was smooth and timely. It would have taken our team many months to complete this first review. It also gave us confidence that the permits we eventually granted to Regeneron will lead to top-quality structures.”

About six months later, Regeneron’s team followed up with the more comprehensive tenant improvement drawings that Pennelle also submitted to ICC for plan review. This time, they came back with nearly 100 code concerns. “It would have taken me a year or more to evaluate those drawings to the level of detail that ICC plan reviewers were able to do in a month,” Pennelle adds.

The Regeneron project is currently under construction. Since that first project in 2013, Mount Pleasant’s Building Department has reviewed in excess of \$500 million in commercial construction projects with help from ICC.

UNPRECEDENTED GROWTH

Soon after the Regeneron project, Pace University initiated its Pace Master Plan project, which includes Buildings A & B (new student housing), the expansion and renovation of the Kessel Student Center, new field house and fields, a relocation of the Environmental Center, as well as infrastructure and roadway improvements. Other commercial construction projects begun in Mount Pleasant recently include a \$9 million build-out of a New York

Department of Environmental Protection building and the \$5 million Cablevision interior build-out.

“Commercial structures are complex and need a careful eye to ensure they meet all the many building codes that insure occupant safety,” Pennelle says. “By using the experts at ICC, we’re assured that every large commercial construction project that comes through our doors meets our community’s high standards.”

To further streamline the submittal process to the ICC Plan Review team, Pennelle has begun taking advantage of ICC’s new cloud-based ProjectDox, powered by the Avolve plan review submittal system for easy plan review document submittal, storage and review.

“The cloud-based submittal process has streamlined our communication with the ICC Plan Review staff, provided a better digital record of our plan reviews and will save considerable money that would normally be spent on printing or mailing costs,” he said. “In these days of booming construction, we depend on partners such as ICC to meet our customer and community expectations of quality service and safety.” **BSJO**

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