

An aerial photograph of Seattle, Washington, showing the city skyline, the waterfront, and the Space Needle. The image is split into two horizontal sections. The top section shows a wide view of the city and the water, with a semi-transparent white banner overlaid. The bottom section is a closer aerial view of the downtown area, featuring the Space Needle and various buildings.

SDCI PLAN TO REDUCE PERMIT BACKLOG

Presentation to the Planning, Land Use, and Zoning Committee
Nathan Torgelson, Darlene Edwards, Andy Higgins | July 17, 2019

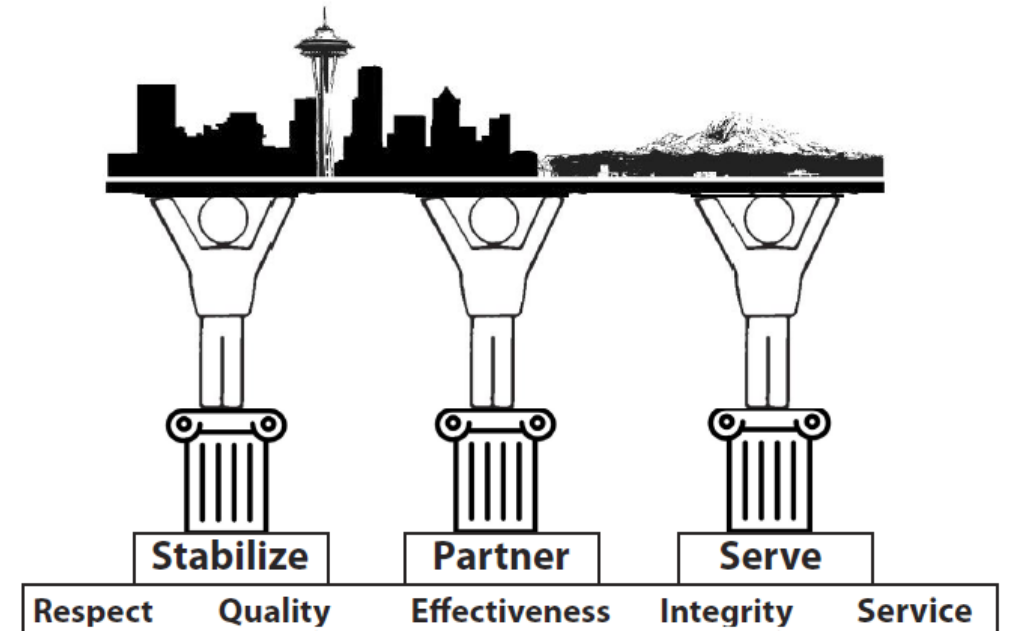
PURPOSE AND VALUES

Our Purpose

As stewards and regulators of land and buildings, we preserve and enhance equity, livability, safety, and health of our communities.

Our Values

- Respect
- Quality of work
- Effectiveness
- Integrity
- Service



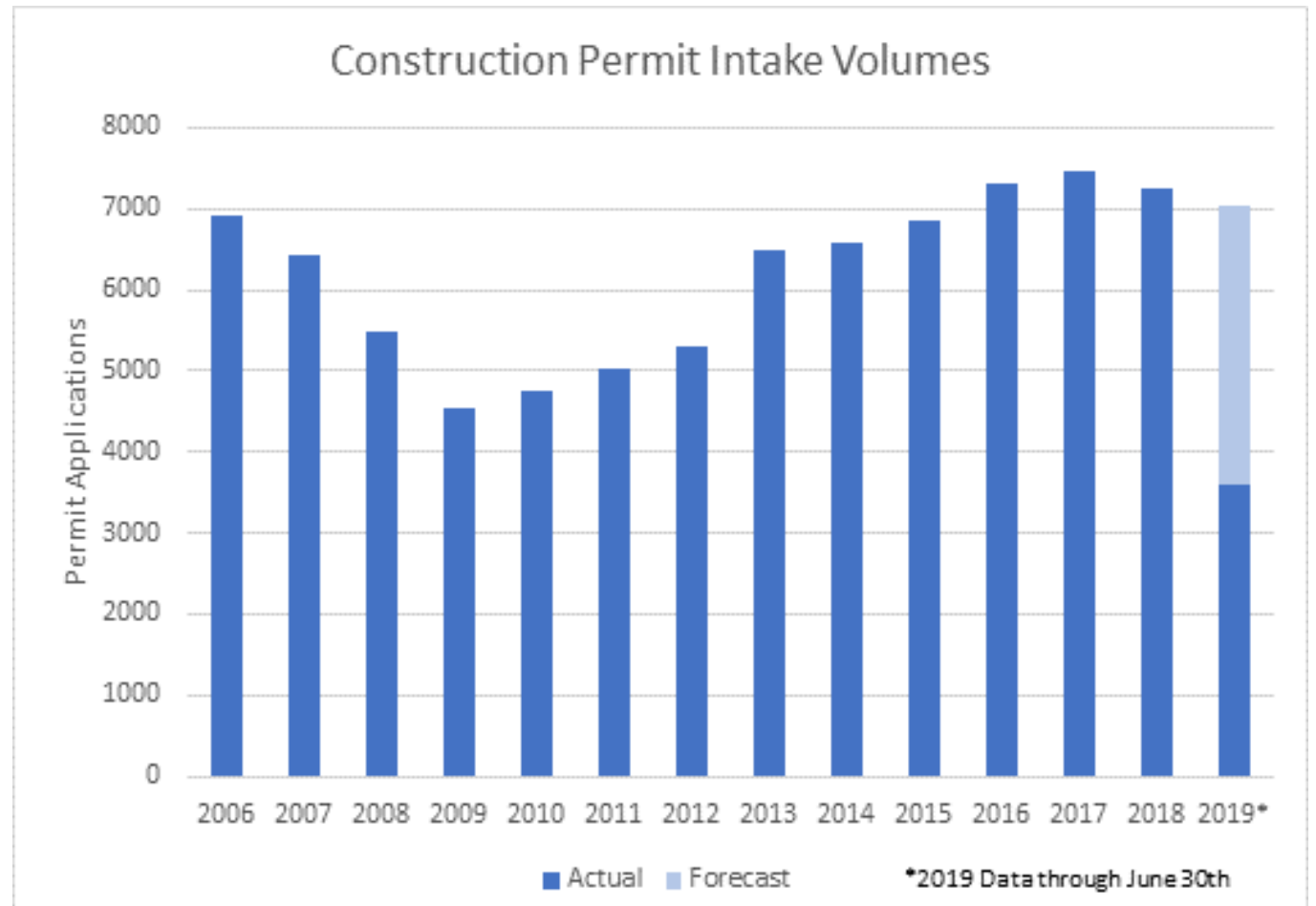
SDCI OVERVIEW

- 2019 adopted \$89M budget (91% funded by permit and other revenues)
- 51,472 permits issued in 2018
- 9,821 enforcement complaints in 2018
- 31,142 registered rental properties comprising 155,031 units
- 1,765 eviction or tenant protection contacts in 2018



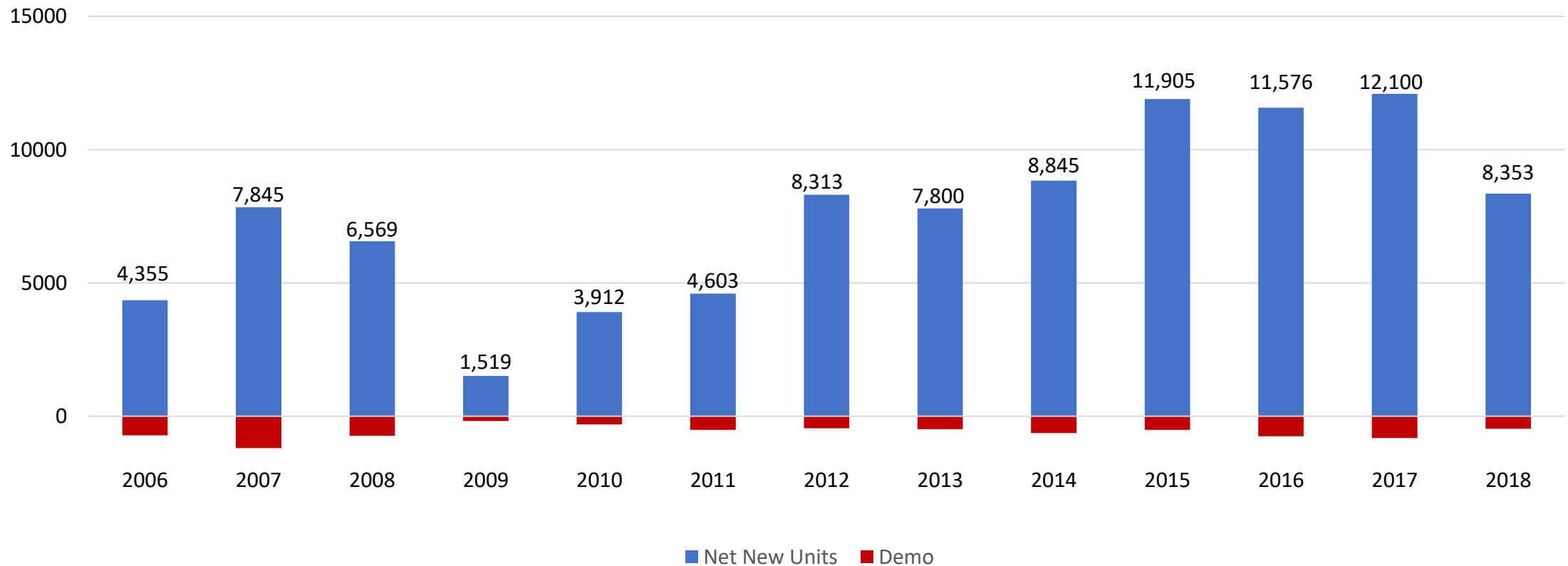
SDCI FORECASTING

- Permit application volumes have been at record levels since 2015.
- 2016-2017 marked peak in intake volumes which have been difficult to manage



RESIDENTIAL UNITS

Residential units reported in the year the construction permit was issued
(includes units completed and those that are permitted, but not yet built); 69,000 gross units in last 7 years



PERMITTING SYSTEM UPGRADE

April 2018, launched new permitting system using the Accela platform; in parallel with major Seattle IT consolidation

- Previous system was out-of-date, unsupported, and failing daily
- Accela allows for a city-wide platform to integrate services and provide a single interface for customers
- Accela will make systems and processes more streamlined
 - Better automation progresses permits through the system
 - Better process efficiencies and better tracking
 - Increase coordination with other departments (Fire and SDOT)



PERMITTING SYSTEM UPGRADE

The initial roll-out negatively impacted our customers. We worked to immediately improve the system by:

- Prioritizing system enhancements for implementation, including adding fields to the customer records
- We created a short-term customer support team and increased IT staffing to address immediate issues
- Developing a feedback loop to continue gathering customer suggestions for improvements
- Created short videos on selected topics
- Adding to the Help Center as we get new information
- Automating current manual processes and removing bottlenecks from complex workflows



PERMITTING SYSTEM UPGRADE

Implementing a \$3.1 million investment with Seattle IT to add staff and resources

Current and Forthcoming enhancements:

- Working to bring back Shaping Seattle Mapping Application
- Allowing applicants to add contacts and delegate authority
- Auto assignment of records—quicker staff response
- Ability to pre-assign SDCI and other department reviews during intake, rather than after fees are paid
- Notifications now sent to side sewer contractors when their credentials expire
- Better reporting and performance metrics—will help us identify bottlenecks
- Legislative driven enhancements: Vacant buildings, MHA, ADU/DADUs, Demolition, EV Readiness

SDCI OUTLOOK

Since Accela Go-Live, Permit Intake-Issuance Times Have Remained High

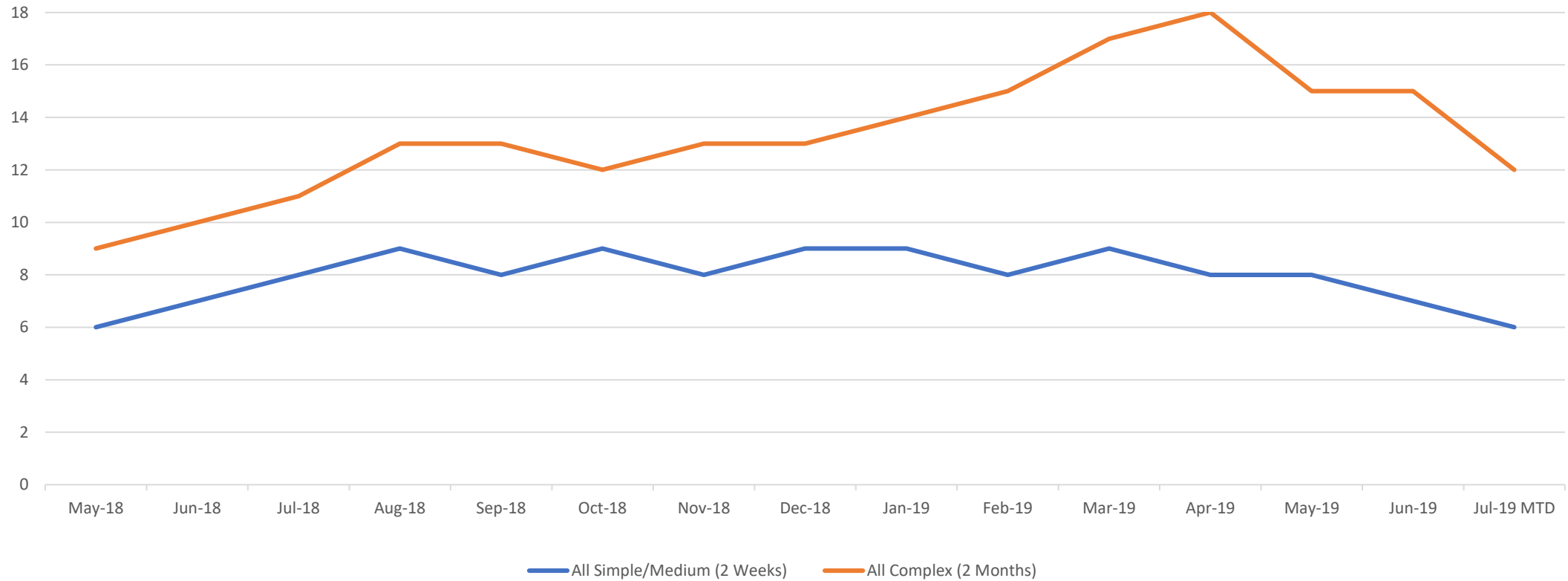
- Average number of review cycles increased with increasing code complexity
- Amount of time plans are out for corrections has *increased*
- Amount of time plans at SDCI for review has *increased* but has improved in last 4 months
- Percentage of overall permitting time in SDCI's possession has *decreased* over last decade

SDCI Positioned to Improve Performance Timelines

- Extension of existing sunset positions and addition of 13 term limited, contingent budget authority (CBA) positions. Majority of 13 positions in zoning review
- Adjusted fees for 2019 to fill funding gaps
- In Engineering Services Division, hiring processes underway for building plan reviewers, structural plan reviewers and permit specialists.
- Established core staffing reserve for eventual downturn

INITIAL PLAN REVIEW PERFORMANCE FOR CONSTRUCTION PERMITS

Weeks To Achieve 95% Complete- All Critical IP Reviews

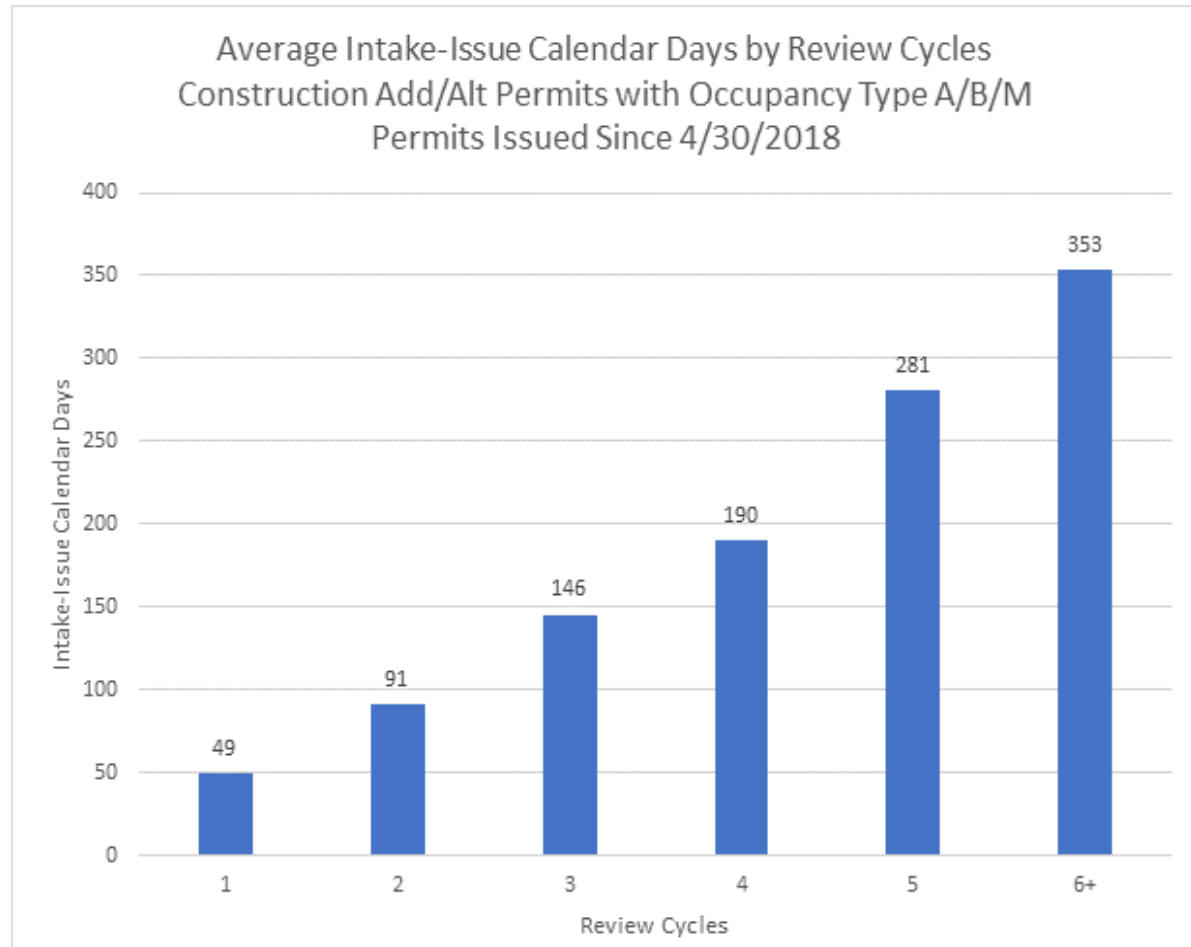


CREATING SUCCESS FOR APPLICANTS

- Upload application material when completed for significantly earlier intake appointment
- Encourage applicants for commercial projects to use free coaching services before signing a lease
 - Hire a design professional
 - Know the permitted occupancy/use of the space
 - Uncover unexpected life-safety improvements or costly upgrades
- Paid pre-submittal conferences are available for project-specific discussions
- Reduce the time for obtaining a permit with a code compliant submittal

CORRECTION ROUNDS IMPACT TIMELINE

- Additional correction cycles can add months to the permit process
- Designers/engineers are busy as well, leading to more time in their hands before we can review changes
- Working with Seattle IT to create permit milestone reporting table to get better views into how long each step is taking
- Identifying permits with minor corrections so they don't go to bottom of queue



IDEAS FOR PROCESS REFORM AND CODE SIMPLIFICATION

- Increasingly complex Land Use, Building and Energy Codes; Land Use Code is 867 pages long
- Recently adopted Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) measures and verifications, while important, require careful and time consuming calculations by SDCI staff
- Land Use Code simplification is one option
- Raising SEPA thresholds
- Preparing to pilot new review/collaboration tools (Bluebeam Revu) to improve our communication with applicants and reduce need for multiple correction rounds

QUESTIONS?

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