



SDCI 2021 Q2 Permitting Report

Photo by John Skelton



Seattle Department of
Construction & Inspections

Land Use and Neighborhoods Committee
June 23, 2021

SDCI PURPOSE AND VALUES

Our Purpose

Helping people build a safe, livable, and inclusive Seattle

Our Values

- Equity---We lead with race, and look at permitting through the Race and Social Justice lens
- Respect
- Quality
- Integrity
- Service

WHAT WE DO

- Permits: Review, Issuance & Inspections
 - Master Use Permits (Land Use)
 - Construction
 - Trades
- Design Review Program
- Code Development
- Code Enforcement
 - Tenant Protections / Rental Registrations
 - Vacant Building Monitoring
- Community Engagement

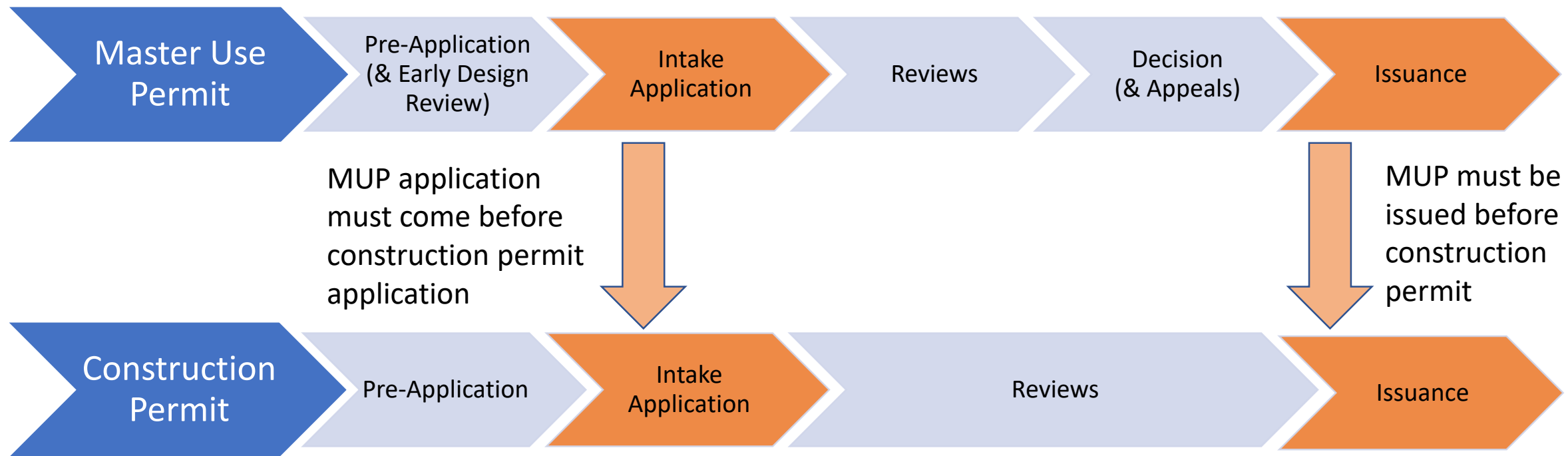


OVERVIEW OF PERMITTING SYSTEM

OVERVIEW OF PERMIT SYSTEM

OVERLAPPING PERMIT PROCESSES

The reviews of master use/land use permits and construction permits can sometimes happen in parallel



OVERVIEW OF PERMIT SYSTEM

PERMIT REVIEWS COORDINATED THROUGH ACCELA

Most types of permit reviews are coordinated through our permit software system (Accela)

SDCI

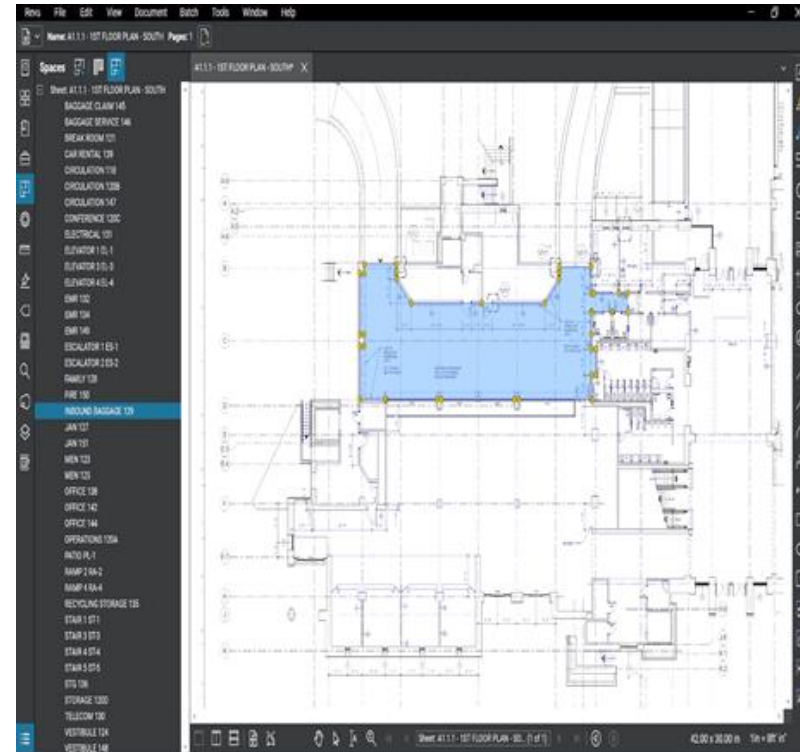
Zoning	Revegetation
Discretionary Land Use	Trees
MHA & Incentive Zoning	Shoreline
Structural/Ordinance	Environmental Critical Areas
Mechanical	Floodplain
Electrical	Geo Soils
Conveyance (Elevators)	Geotechnical
Energy	Drainage
Noise	Side Sewer
Development Site/Addressing	

OTHER CITY DEPTS

- SDOT
- FAS (ADA)
- Fire
- Public Utilities
- City Light
- Housing
- Neighborhoods
- Parks

OVERVIEW OF PERMIT SYSTEM IN THE WORKS: BLUEBEAM PROJECT

- New software allows enhanced tools for collaboration between SDCI staff and project architects while reviewing corrections to plans
- Partial rollout is underway, full rollout targeted for July
- Other jurisdictions have experienced reduced corrections cycles after moving to Bluebeam



PERMITTING REPORTS

KEY PERMITTING TAKEAWAYS

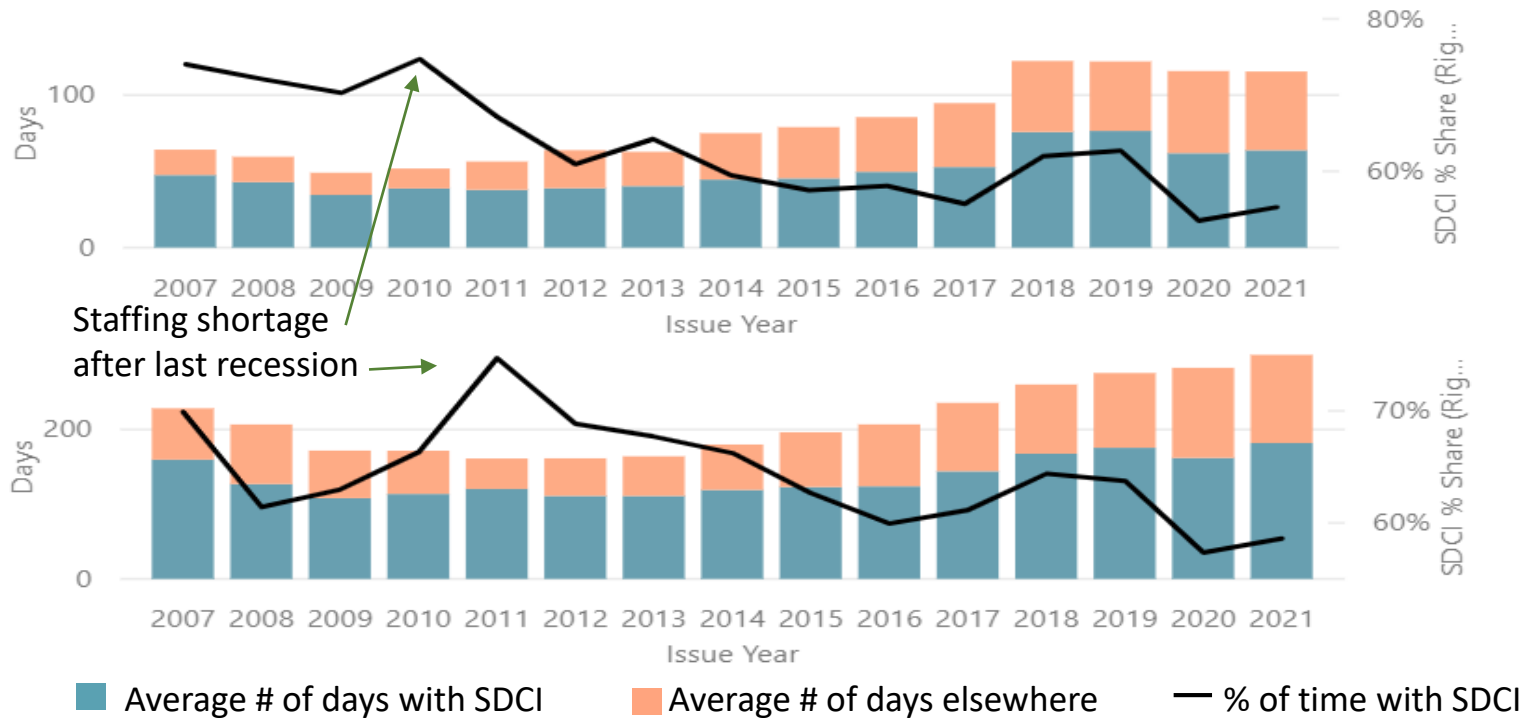
- SDCI is meeting many permitting goals, though we are currently behind in Initial Plan Review performance due to staffing shortages in key review locations
- SDCI experienced a significant vesting rush of large projects before new building codes went into effect on March 15, 2021 that has boosted intake valuations for the first quarter of 2021
- Despite the vesting rush, Construction and MUP volumes continue to trend at lower levels than we experienced pre-pandemic. The vesting rush is likely resulting in a "shadow" of lower permitting volumes/valuations that will impact the second quarter of 2021.
- Most trade permit types have returned to their pre-pandemic issuance volumes
- Despite the challenges of the last year, SDCI's Intake-to-Issue review times and the number of review cycles have been fairly consistent for MUPs and construction permits.

PERMITTING CHART #1

CONSTRUCTION PERMITS: SDCI SHARE OF TOTAL REVIEW TIME

Over the last ten years, construction permits are taking longer to review, but are spending less of that time with SDCI

Average # of days from permit application intake to issuance (2007– 2021 May)



Simple and Medium Construction permits

(Alterations and additions to existing buildings, minor tenant improvement permits, accessory dwelling units, etc)

Complex Construction permits

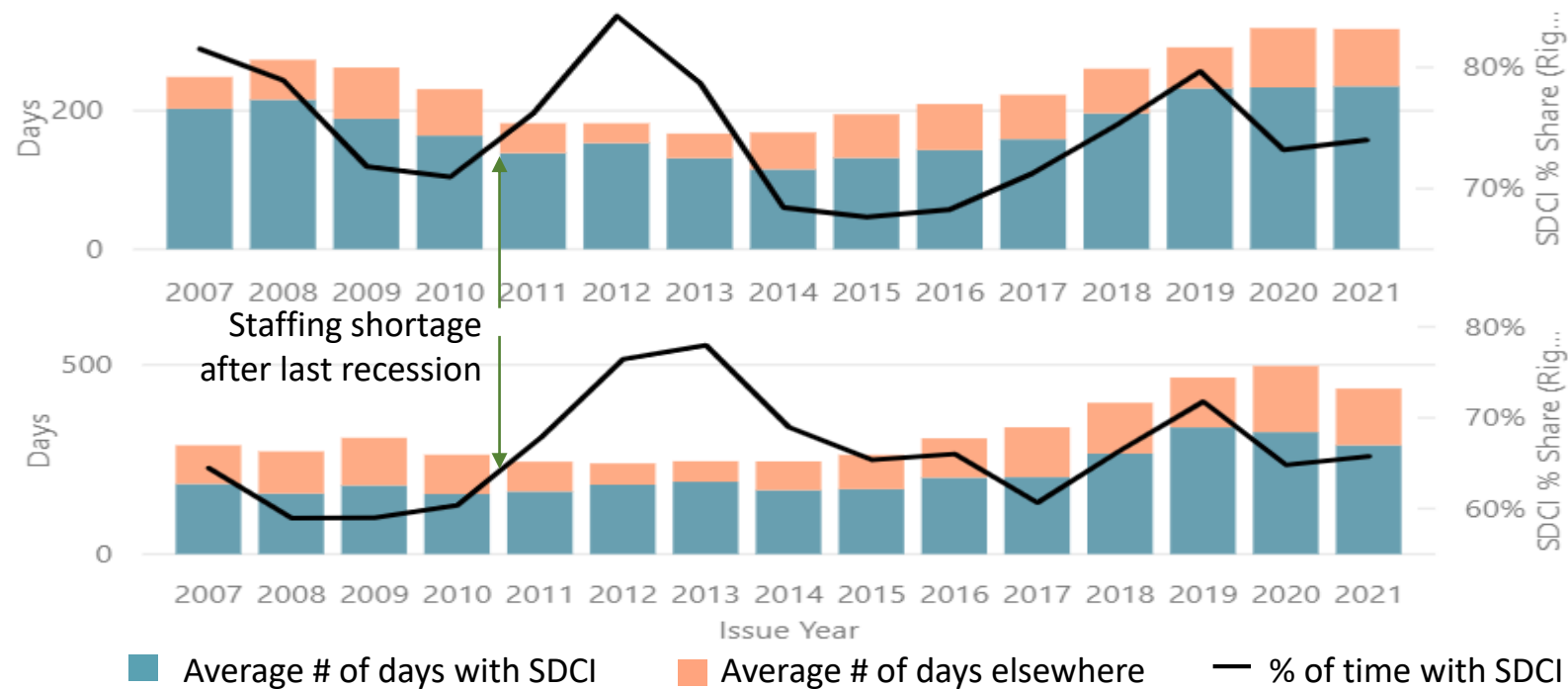
(New buildings, structural alterations, larger tenant improvements, etc)

PERMITTING CHART #2

MASTER USE PERMITS: SDCI SHARE OF TOTAL REVIEW TIME

Over the last ten years, master use permits are also spending less time with SDCI

Average # of days from permit application intake to issuance (2007 – 2021 May)



Simple and Medium Master Use permits

(Conditional Uses, Temporary Uses, Lot Boundary Adjustments, Short Plats, Shoreline Variances, etc)

Complex Master Use permits

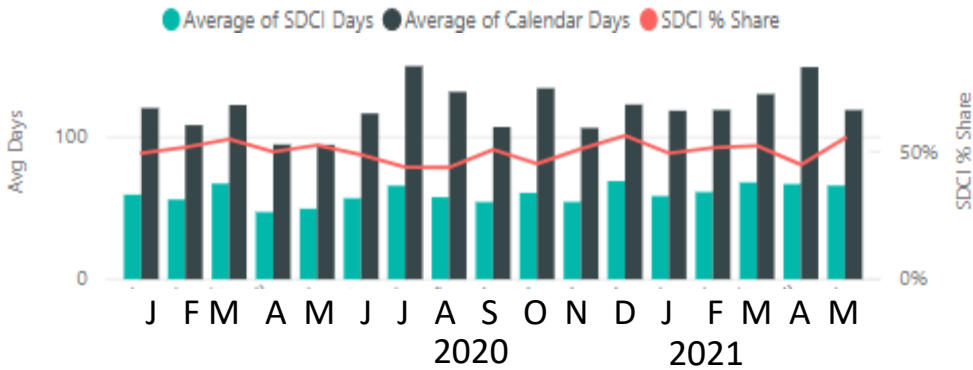
(Design Review, Environmental (SEPA) Review, Council actions)

PERMITTING CHART #3

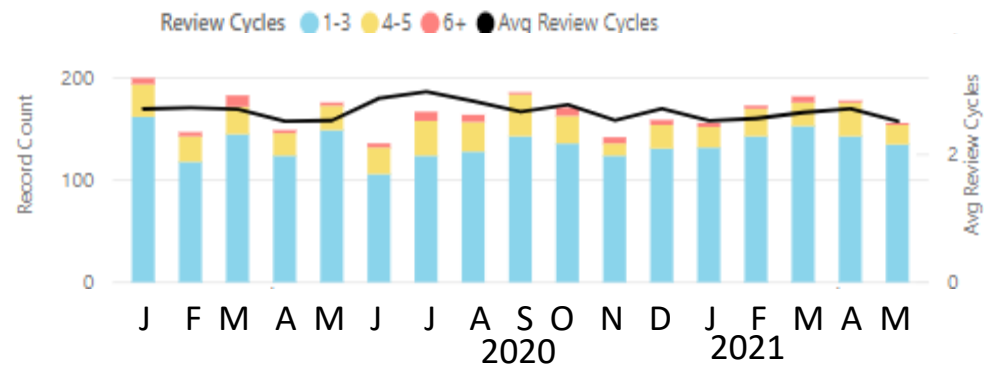
CONSTRUCTION REVIEW PERFORMANCE REPORT

Over the last year, SDCI's review times and the number of review cycles have been fairly consistent

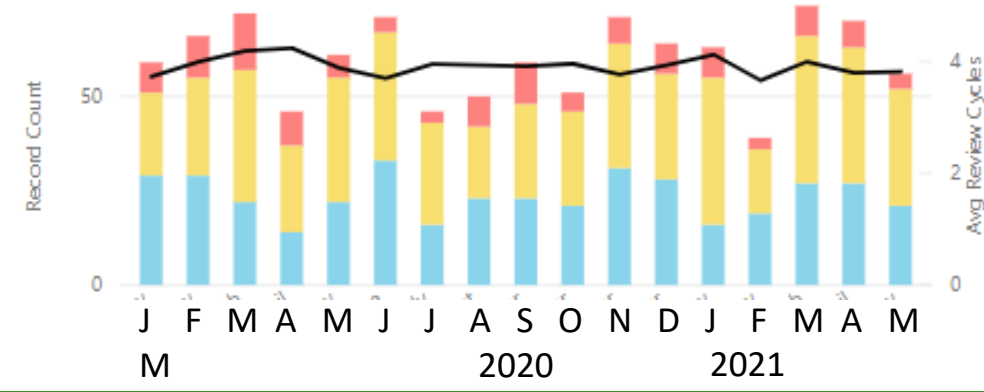
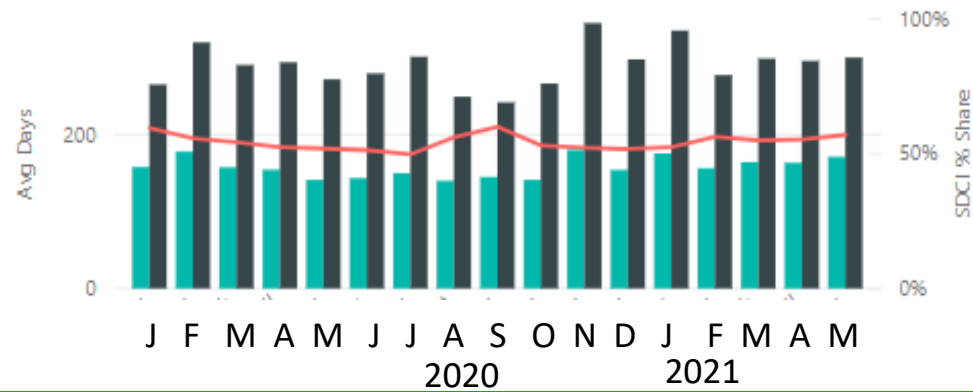
of days from permit application to issuance



of review cycles needed



Simple and Medium Construction permits



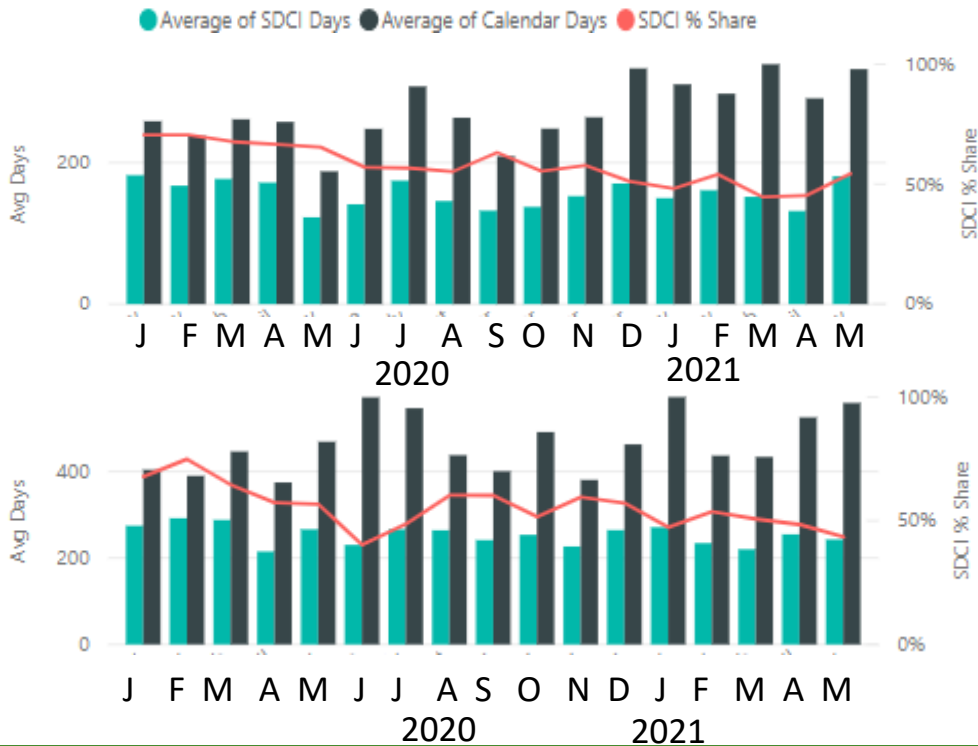
Complex Construction permits

PERMITTING CHART #4

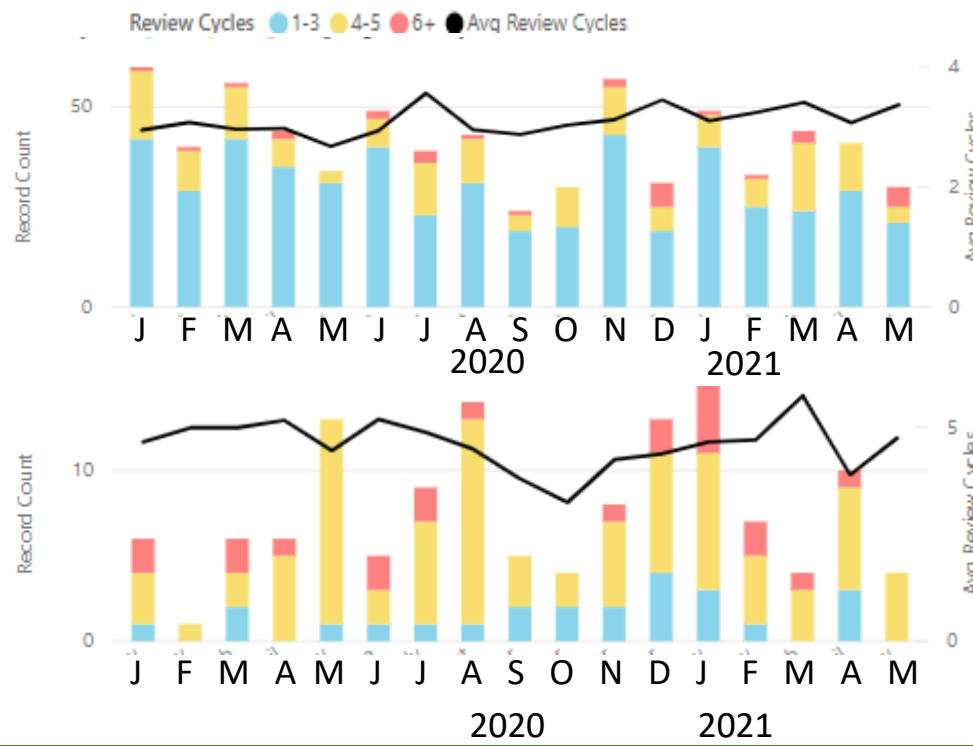
MASTER USE PERMIT REVIEW PERFORMANCE REPORT

For MUPs, SDCI's review time and the number of review cycles have also been fairly consistent

of days from permit application to issuance



of review cycles needed



Simple and Medium Master Use permits

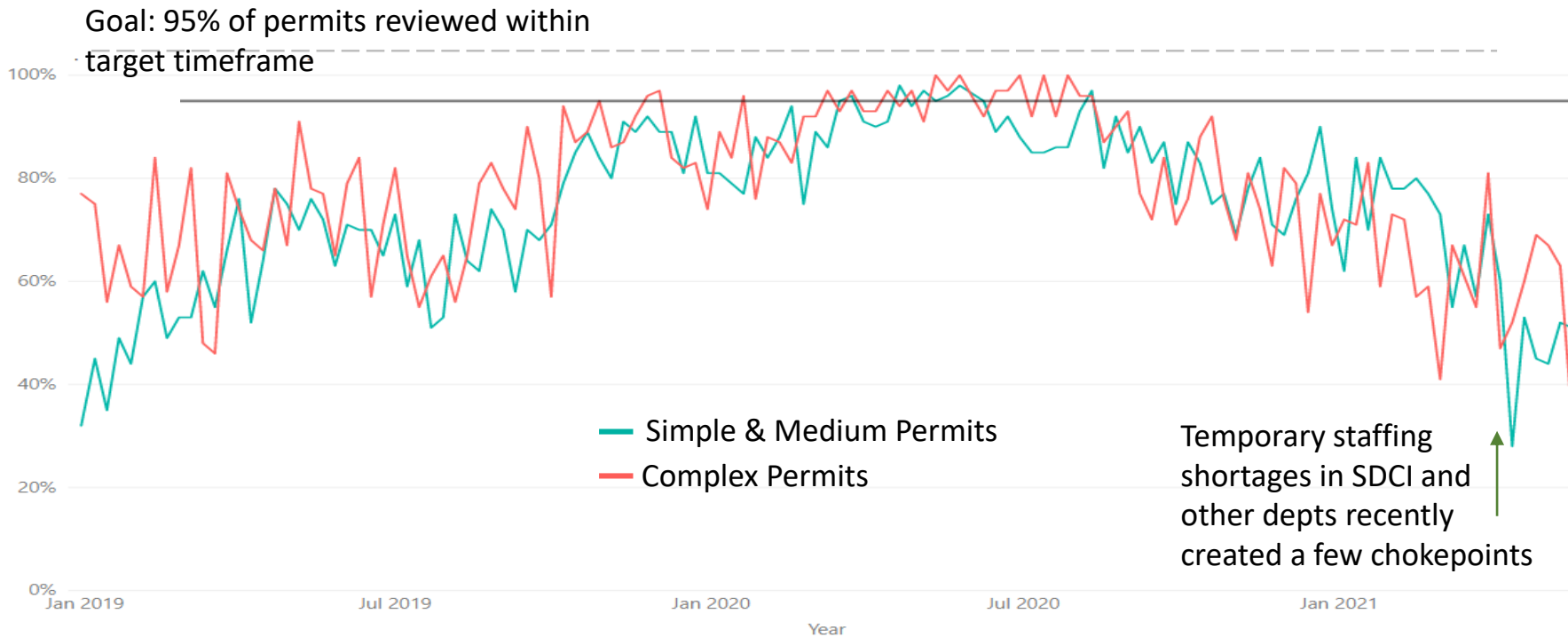
Complex Master Use permits

PERMITTING CHART #7

INITIAL REVIEWS OF APPLICATIONS

Despite the challenges of the past year, we remained very close to our review targets for new construction applications – until recently

Percent of permits meeting targets for initial review (2019-May 2021)



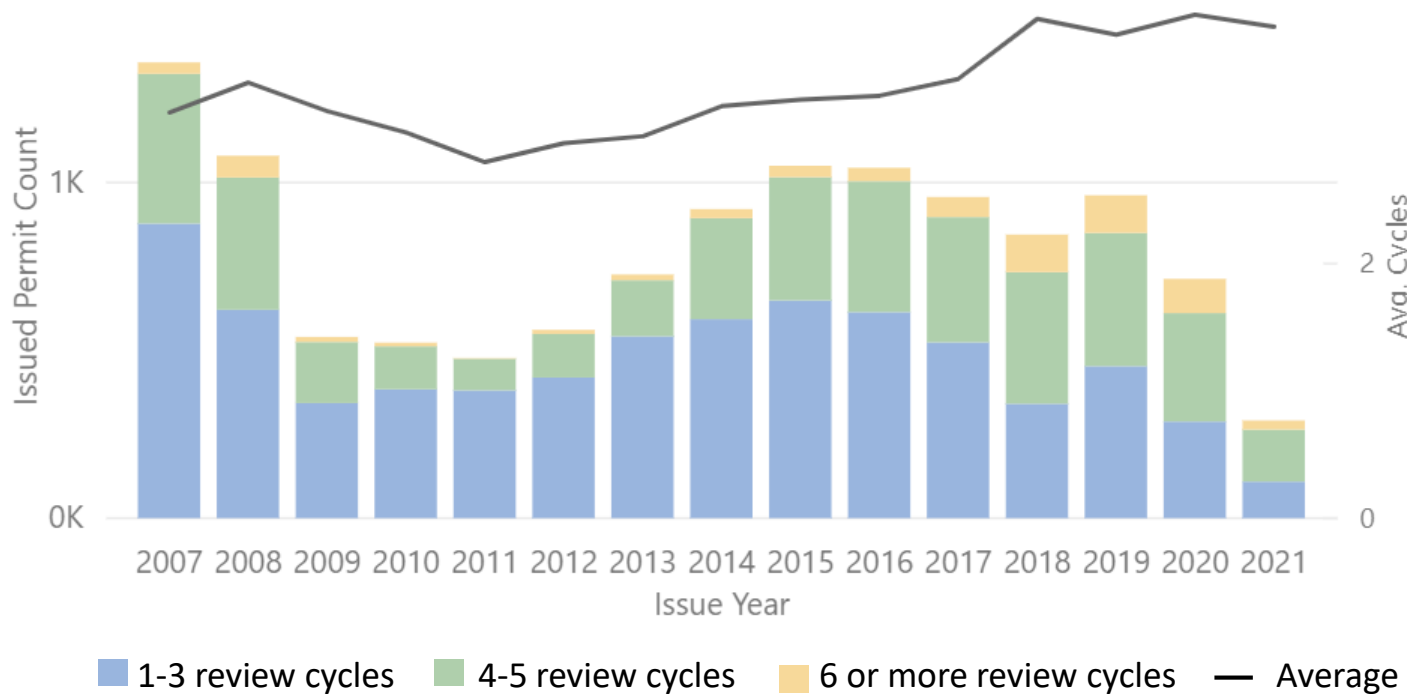
- Target review time for Simple/Medium Permits: 4-weeks
- Target review time for Complex Permits: 12 weeks

PERMITTING CHART #5

NUMBER OF REVIEW CYCLES BEFORE A PERMIT IS ISSUED

Construction permits now need more review cycles before they can be issued (over half required 4+ review cycles)

Number of Review Cycles needed for Complex Construction Permits



Likely due to:

- Increasing complexity of code and more regulations
- Lower quality of submitted plans due to industry capacity issues
- New City staff

When corrected plans are returned to SDCI they do not return to the bottom of the queue

2021 PRIORITIES

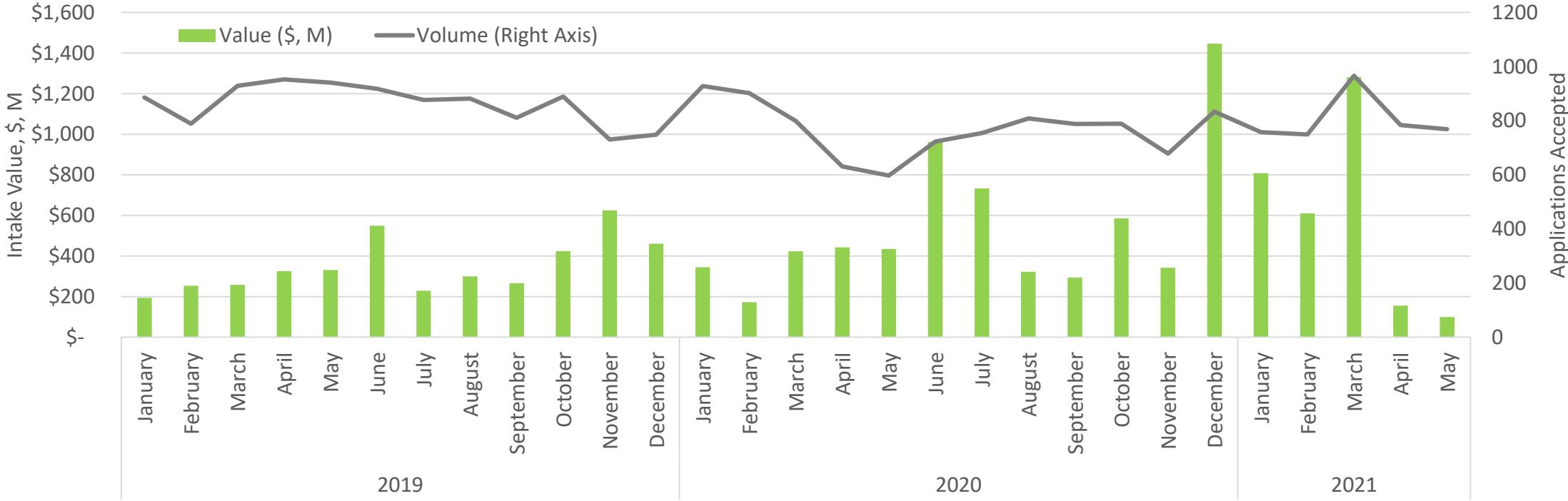
PERMITTING PRIORITIES FOR THIS YEAR

1. Carryforward best practices adopted during COVID, such as components of a virtual Applicant Services Center and in-person services at non-downtown locations, and develop process for resuming all standard services, including in-home inspections.
2. Continue to streamline permit processes and make reductions in permitting times.
3. Create a cross-departmental permit system governance model with Seattle IT to improve customer experience and functionality of permitting system

BUILDING DEVELOPMENT INTAKE

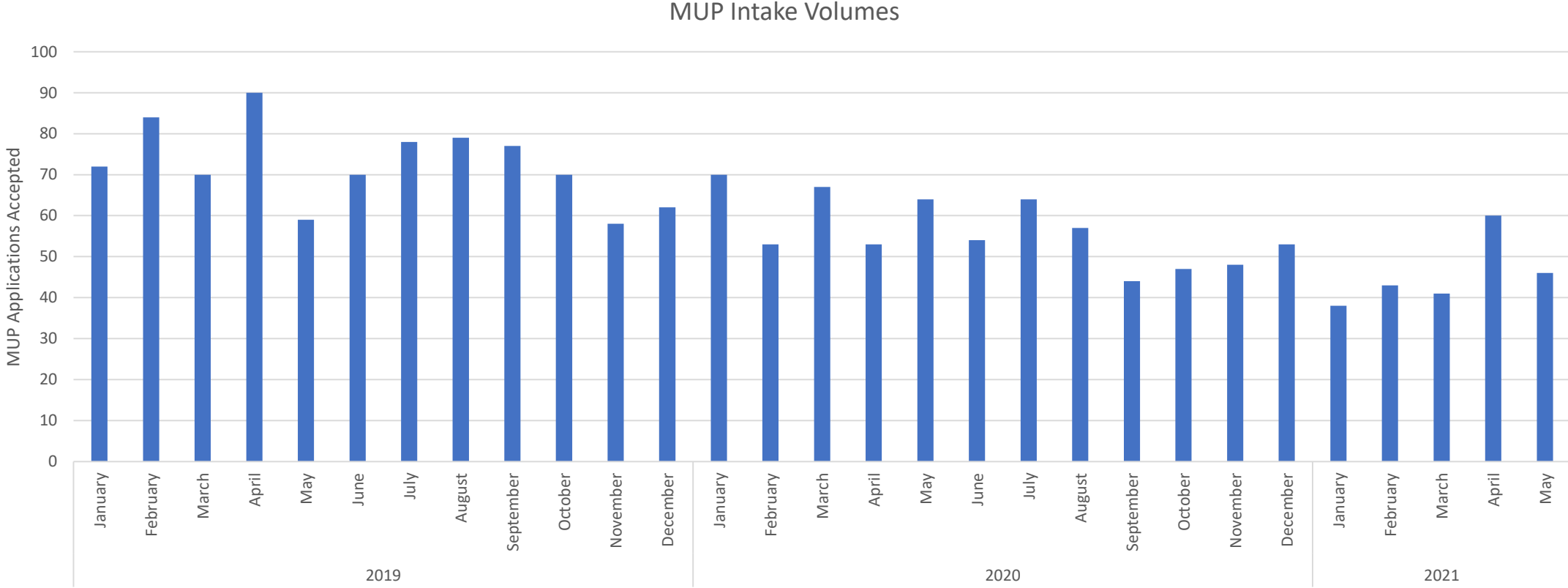
Building development project valuations are in a “shadow” of the vesting rush from December 2020 - March 2021, while volumes are slowly rebounding to pre-pandemic levels

Building Development Volume/Value Intake



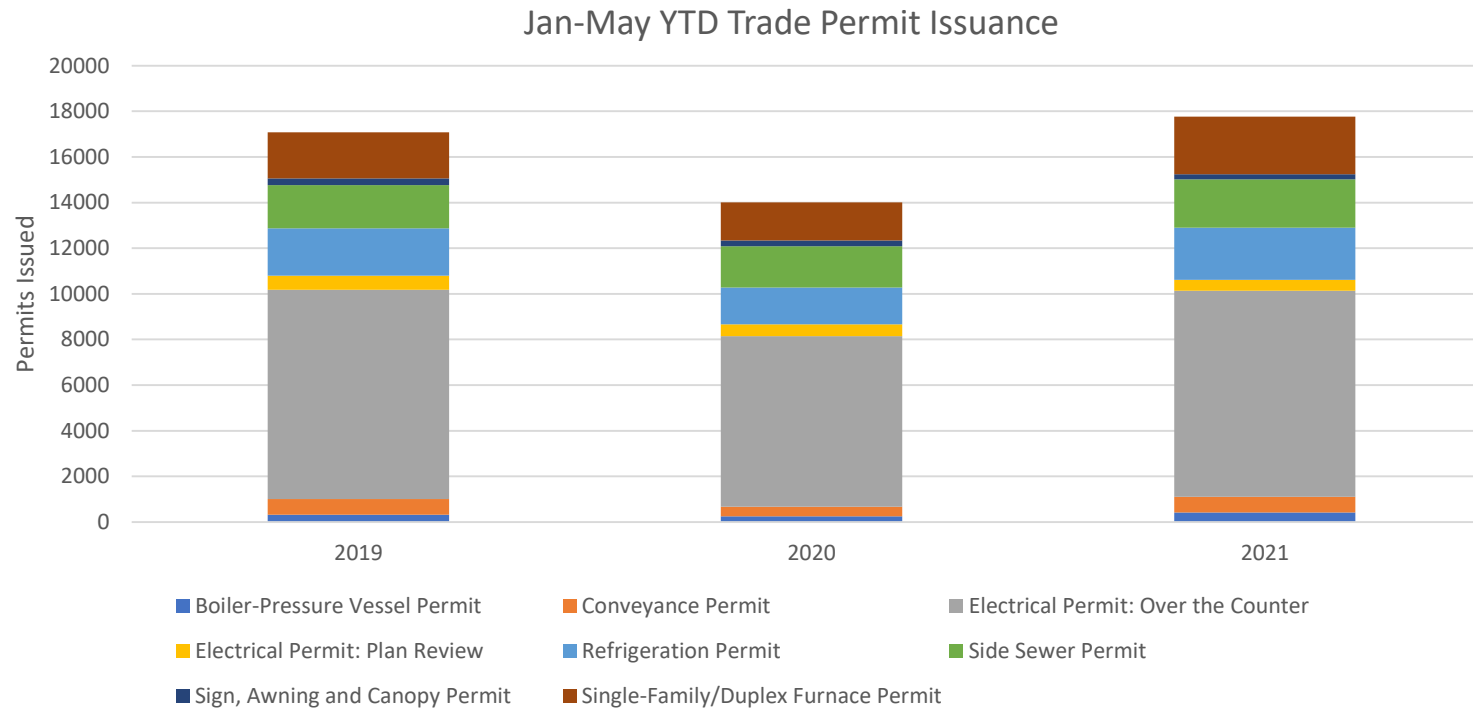
MUP INTAKE

MUP Intake has slowed since summer 2020 but remains steady



TRADE PERMIT ISSUANCE

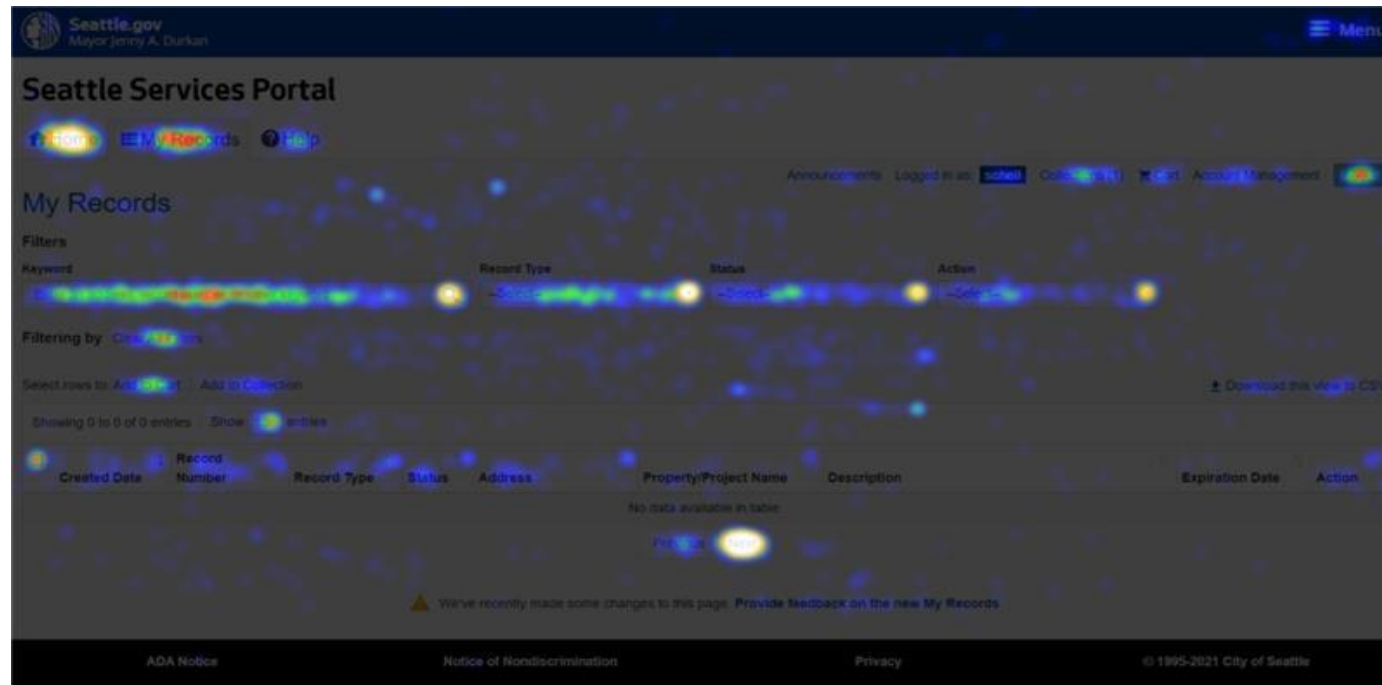
Trade permits have largely returned to pre-pandemic volumes



PROGRAM UPDATES

ACCELA ENHANCEMENTS & REPORTS

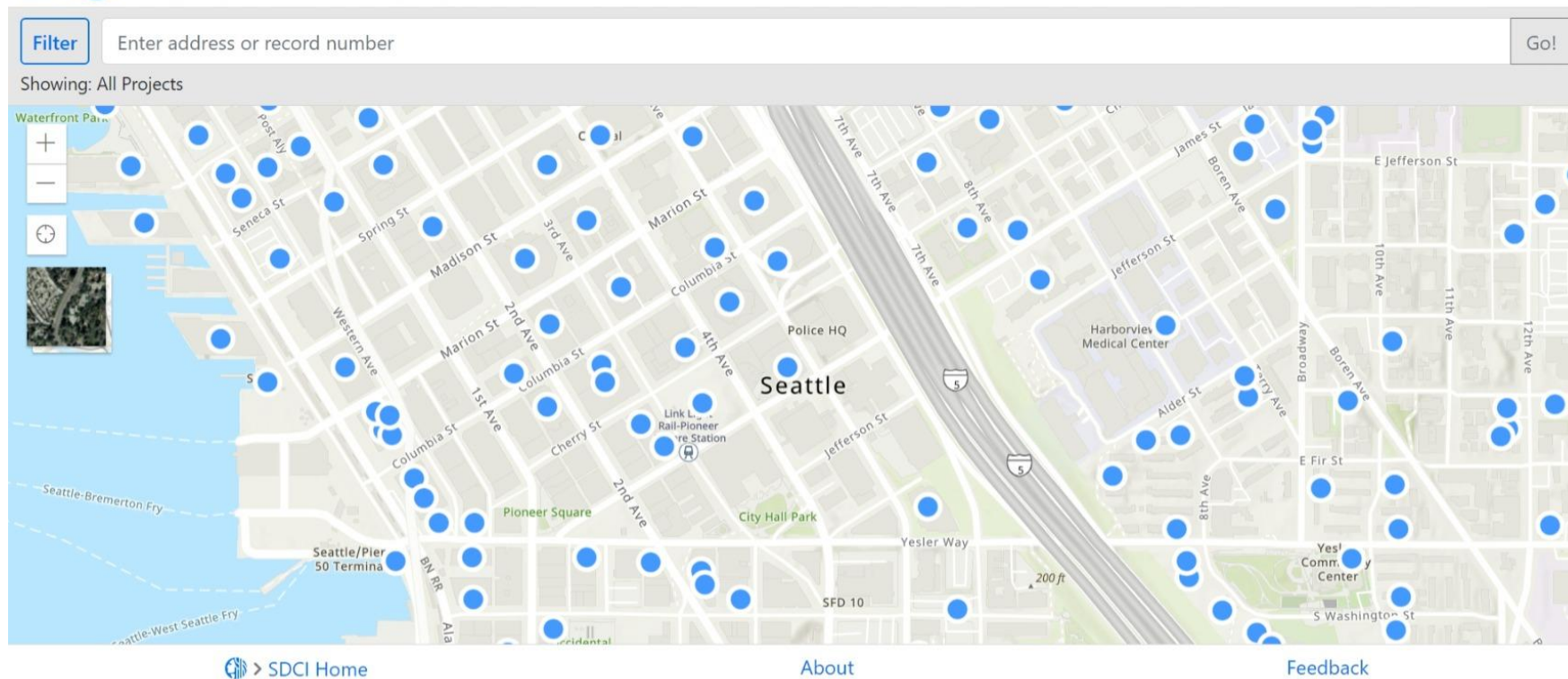
- Optimization of public-facing user experience
- Updates to My Records page – over 2,800 visits on first day of use
- Heat map shows usage:



SHAPING SEATTLE

- Continuing to fine tune user experience; work to refine instances of addresses with multiple registrations

  Shaping Seattle: Property & Building Permits



The screenshot displays the 'Shaping Seattle: Property & Building Permits' web application. At the top, there is a search bar with the text 'Filter' and 'Enter address or record number', followed by a 'Go!' button. Below the search bar, it says 'Showing: All Projects'. The main area is a map of Seattle, showing a grid of streets and numerous blue circular markers indicating project locations. Key landmarks and streets are labeled, including 'Police HQ', 'Harborview Medical Center', 'Link Light Rail-Pioneer Square Station', 'City Hall Park', 'Yesler Way', 'SFD 10', 'Yesler Community Center', and 'S Washington St'. The map also shows the waterfront and major roads like I-5. At the bottom of the map area, there are navigation links: '> SDCI Home', 'About', and 'Feedback'.

NEW HIRES TO SUPPORT PERMIT REVIEW

- 8 new Ordinance/Structural positions have been filled to help address permit backlog
- Hiring of 2 Process Improvement and Technology Managers
- 2 new Geotech reviewers have been hired; in the process of hiring 2 drainage reviewers
- Fire Department has hired a Plans Reviewer

Questions?

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