

A wide-angle photograph of the Seattle skyline, featuring the Space Needle prominently on the left. The city is filled with various high-rise buildings, and the foreground is partially obscured by green trees. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

SDCI Permitting Status and Quarterly Report

Photo by John Skelton



Seattle Department of
Construction & Inspections

Land Use and Neighborhoods Committee
March 24, 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

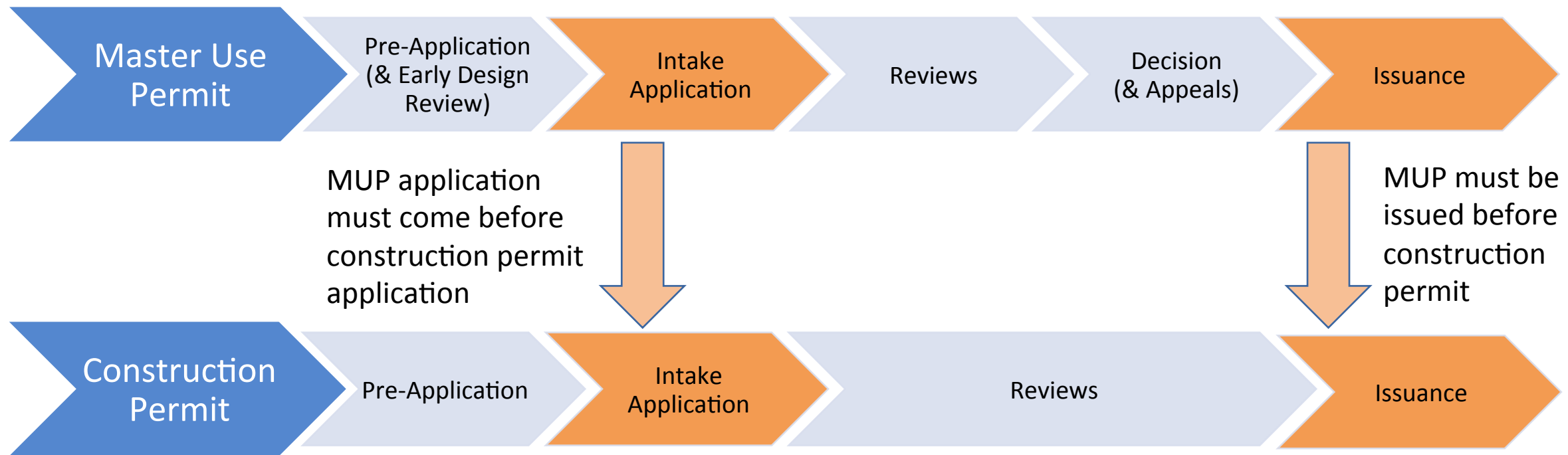


OVERVIEW OF PERMITTING SYSTEM

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 DEPTS

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



OVERVIEW OF PERMIT SYSTEM

ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT APPROVALS




Some types of development reviews and approvals are done through other permit systems

Currently processed through separate system

- Light Hook Ups from Seattle City Light
- Street Use permits from SDOT
- Water Meter Hookup permits from SPU
- Plumbing approvals from King County
- Special Events Permits processed by OED

OVERVIEW OF PERMIT SYSTEM

WHY WE'RE INTEGRATING OUR PERMIT SYSTEM

Customer Experience 	City Effectiveness 	Creates Value 
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All transactions and applications in one place• Available 24/7• Only have to sign-on once• Tools for applicants:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Dashboard of transactions– “To do” list– Status of requests– Shopping cart to pay– Renewal reminders– Common scheduling tool– Links	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Automates processes• Better data sharing and alerts across Depts• Mobile, real-time data capture for field staff• Better reporting and performance metrics• Customer and location-centric data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Easier to share data with public (<i>with controls</i>)• Easier to integrate with maps (GIS)• Streamlines maintenance & support for systems• Better integration with existing systems (<i>e.g. Summit, NCIS</i>)

OVERVIEW OF PERMIT SYSTEM

TRANSITION TO NEW PERMIT SYSTEM IN 2018

Many processes are now automated, with turnaround times most directly impacted by staffing capacity

Old System (Hansen)

Paper Plan Sets

Lost Paper Copies

Manually Move Plan Set to Next Review Locations

Limited Milestone Data

Throughput Impacted by Process



Accela

Electronic Plan Sets and Transmission

Automated Processes

Detailed Workflow History Recorded

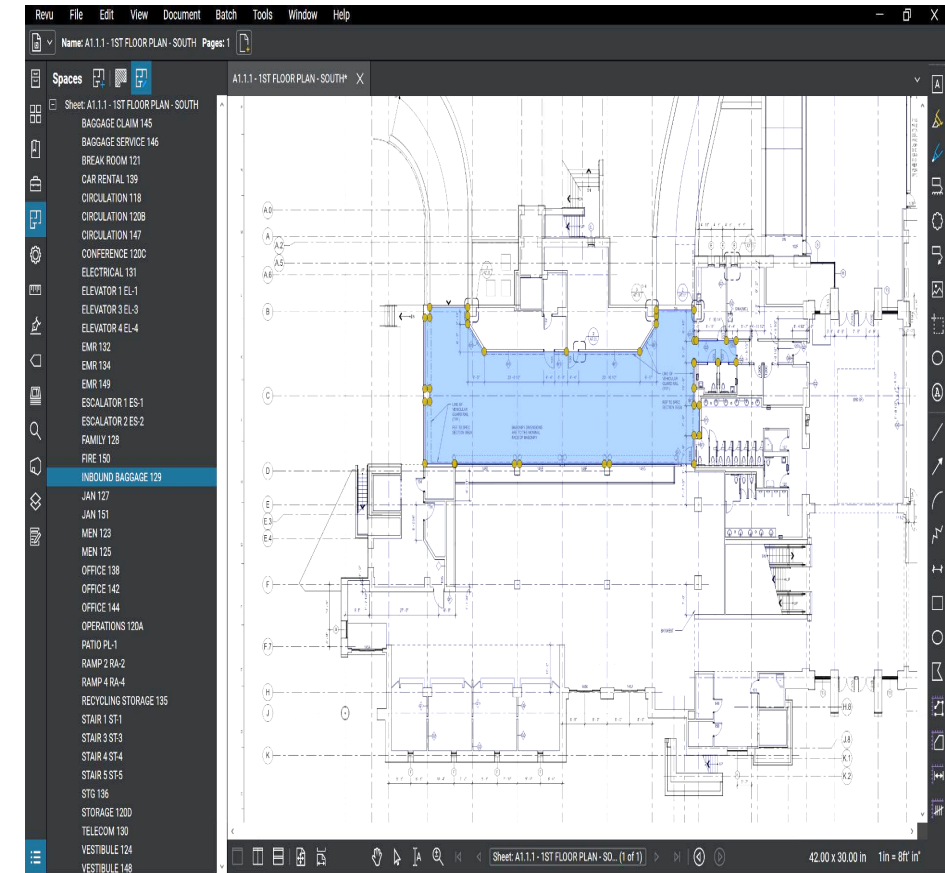
Greater Amount of Data for Analysis

Throughput Impacted by Capacity

OVERVIEW OF PERMIT SYSTEM

IN THE WORKS: BLUEBEAM PROJECT

- New software allows real-time 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



OVERVIEW OF PERMIT SYSTEM

ADDITIONAL PERMITTING SUPPORT

Small Business

- SDCI's Small Business Liaison supports small business permitting
Goal: reduce permit time by 30%

Arts and Cultural Spaces

- SDCI'S Arts Liaison supports arts-related permitting projects

Affordable Housing

- Affordable housing projects prioritized in review process.
- Monthly IDT tracks progress on permanent supportive housing projects
- Now have standard plans for Detached Accessory Dwelling Units, to help shorten permit time. Actively monitoring these applications.

PERMITTING REPORTS

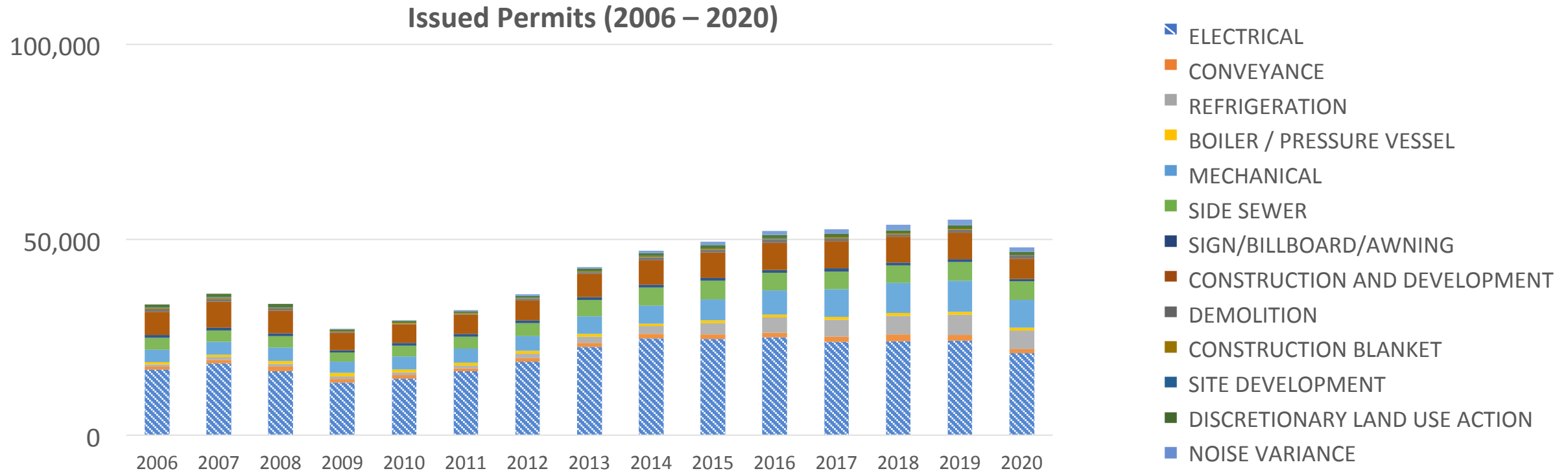
KEY PERMITTING TAKEAWAYS

- SDCI is meeting many but not all permitting goals
- We issued fewer smaller types of permits in 2020, such as tenant improvements, but expect to see more in 2021
- We received fewer MUP applications in 2020, but are still well above the levels during the last recession
- We received fewer construction permit applications in 2020, but the estimated dollar value of the buildings for those permits spiked
- Over the last ten years, construction permits are taking longer to review, but are spending a shorter percentage of that time with SDCI and Master Use Permits are also spending a shorter percentage of time with SDCI
- Despite the challenges of the last year, SDCI's review times and the number of review cycles have been fairly consistent for MUPs and construction permits
- Construction permits now need more review cycles before they can be issued (over half required 4+ review cycles)

PERMITTING CHART #1

NUMBER OF SDCI PERMITS ISSUED OVER TIME

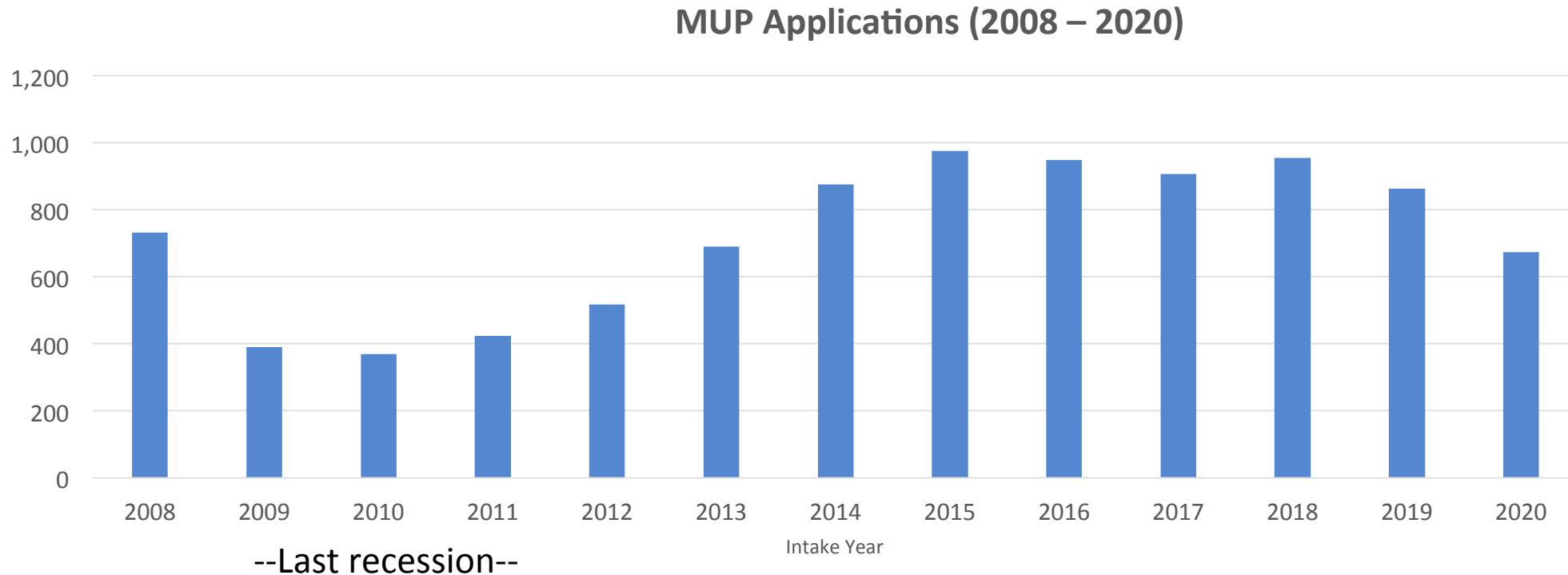
We issued fewer smaller types of permits in 2020, such as tenant improvements, but expect to see more in 2021



PERMITTING CHART #2

MASTER USE PERMIT APPLICATIONS OVER TIME

We received fewer MUP applications in 2020, but are still well above the levels during the last recession



CONSTRUCTION PERMIT APPLICATIONS OVER TIME

Building Permit Application Volumes and Values 2007-2020

62% Drop in Building Value from 2007

30% Drop in Permit Count from 2007

2016 Value Spike

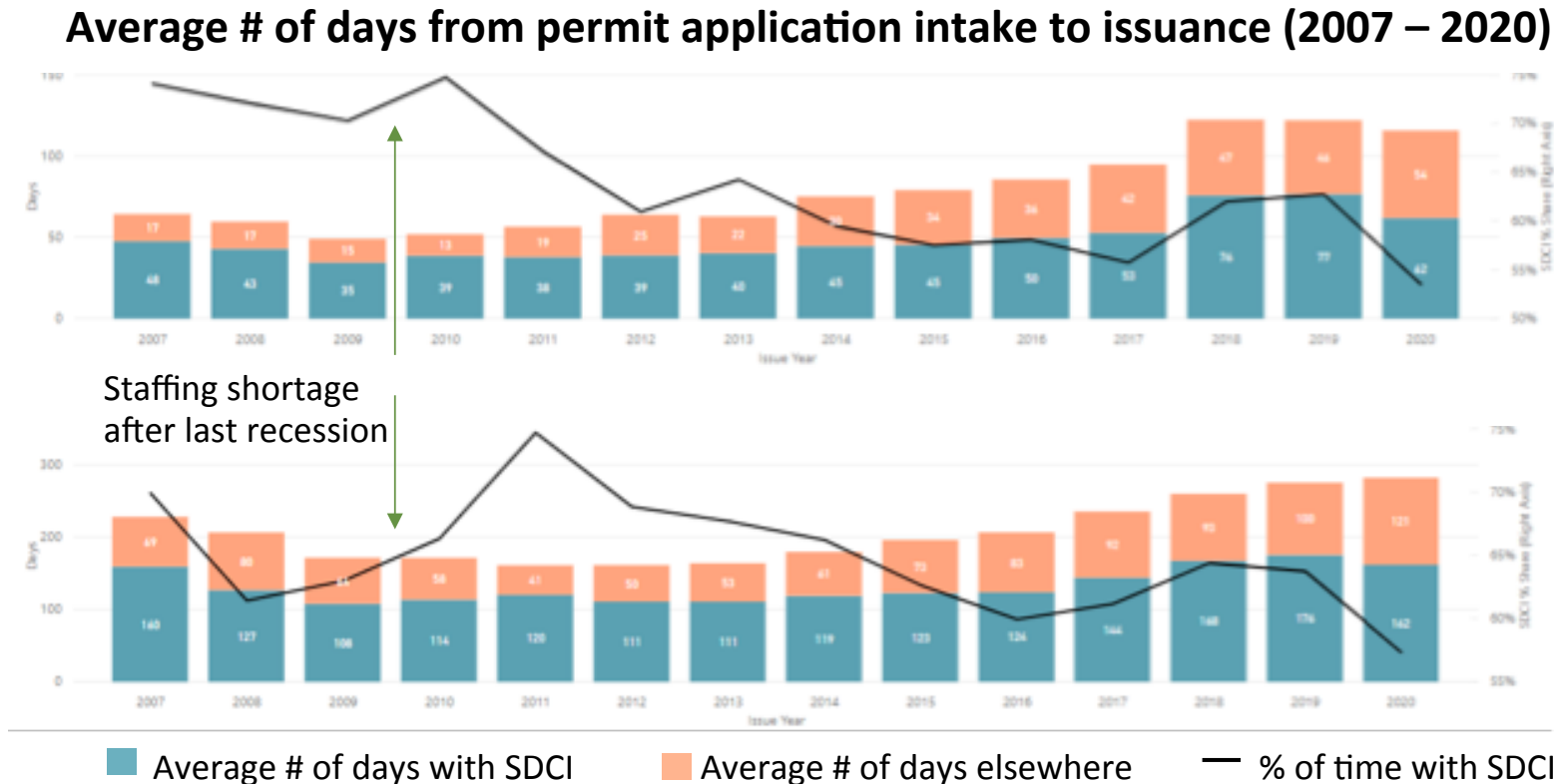
2020 Value Spike

Year	Total Project Value (2020 \$, Billions)	Building Permit Intake Count
2007	4.6	6400
2008	3.7	5500
2009	1.8	4600
2010	2.5	4800
2011	2.4	5100
2012	2.9	5300
2013	4.8	6500
2014	4.0	6600
2015	4.3	6900
2016	7.4	7300
2017	4.6	7500
2018	4.5	7300
2019	3.9	6700
2020	5.8	5600

PERMITTING CHART #4

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



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)

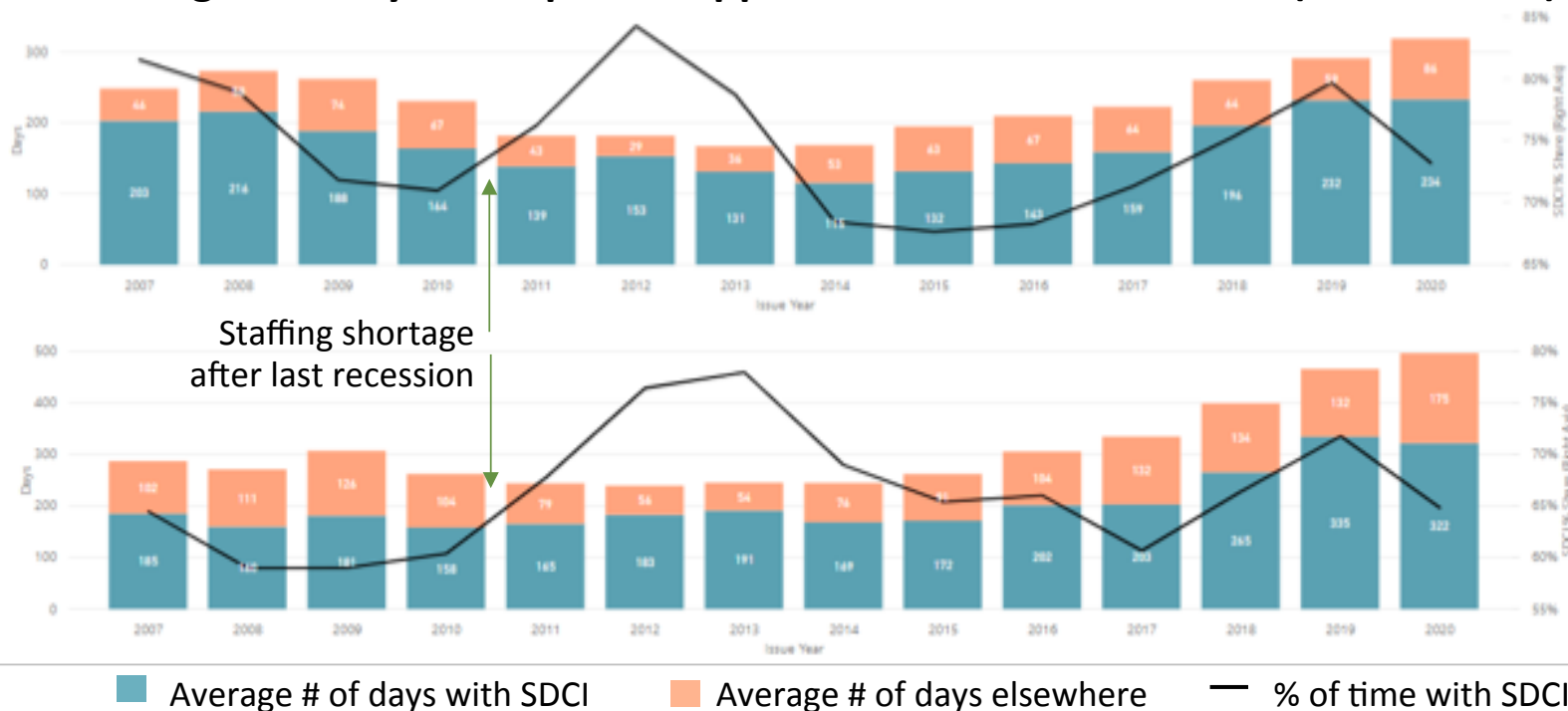


PERMITTING CHART #5

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 – 2020)



Simple and Medium Master Use permits

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

Complex Master Use permits

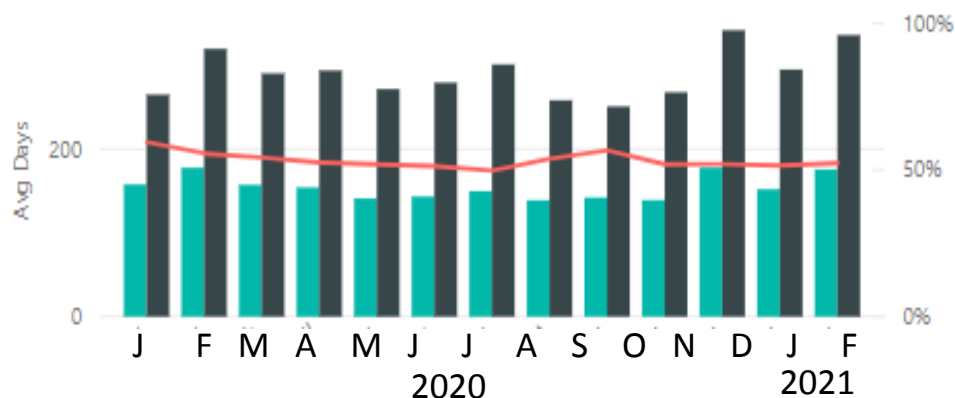
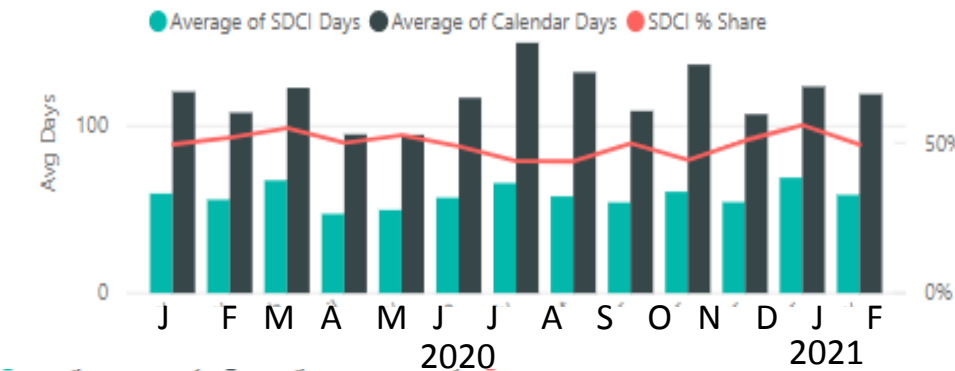
(Design Review, Environmental (SEPA) Review, Council actions)

PERMITTING CHART #6

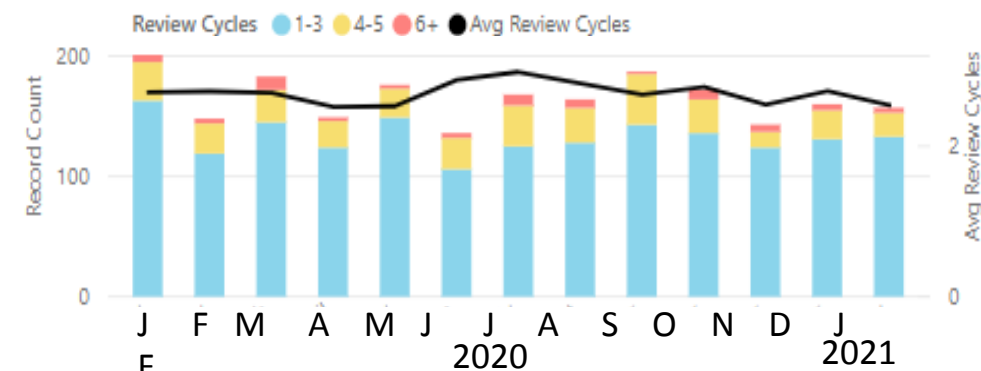
CONSTRUCTION REVIEW PERFORMANCE REPORT

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

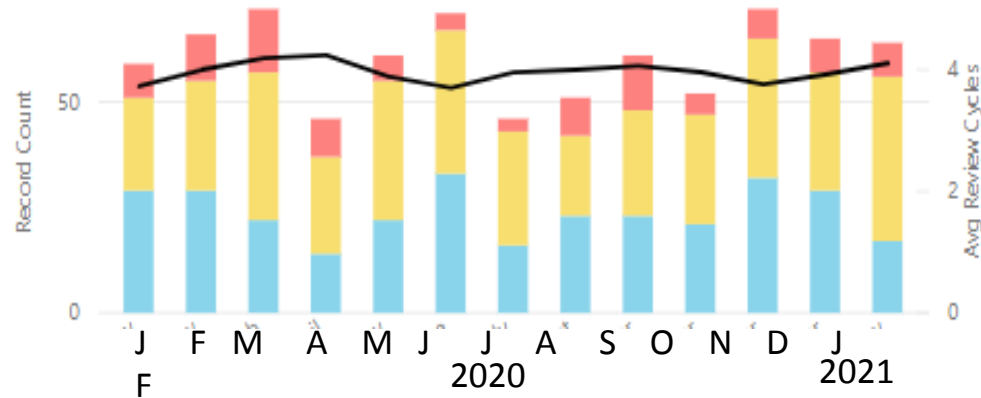
of days from permit application to issuance



of review cycles needed



**Simple and Medium
Construction permits**



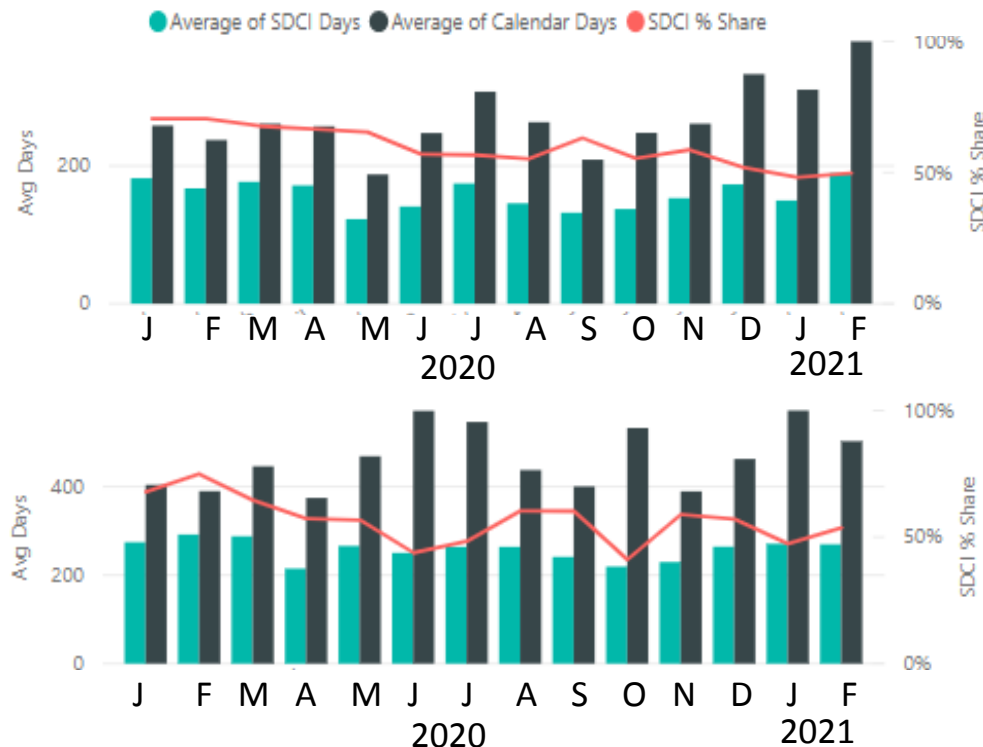
**Complex
Construction permits**

PERMITTING CHART #7

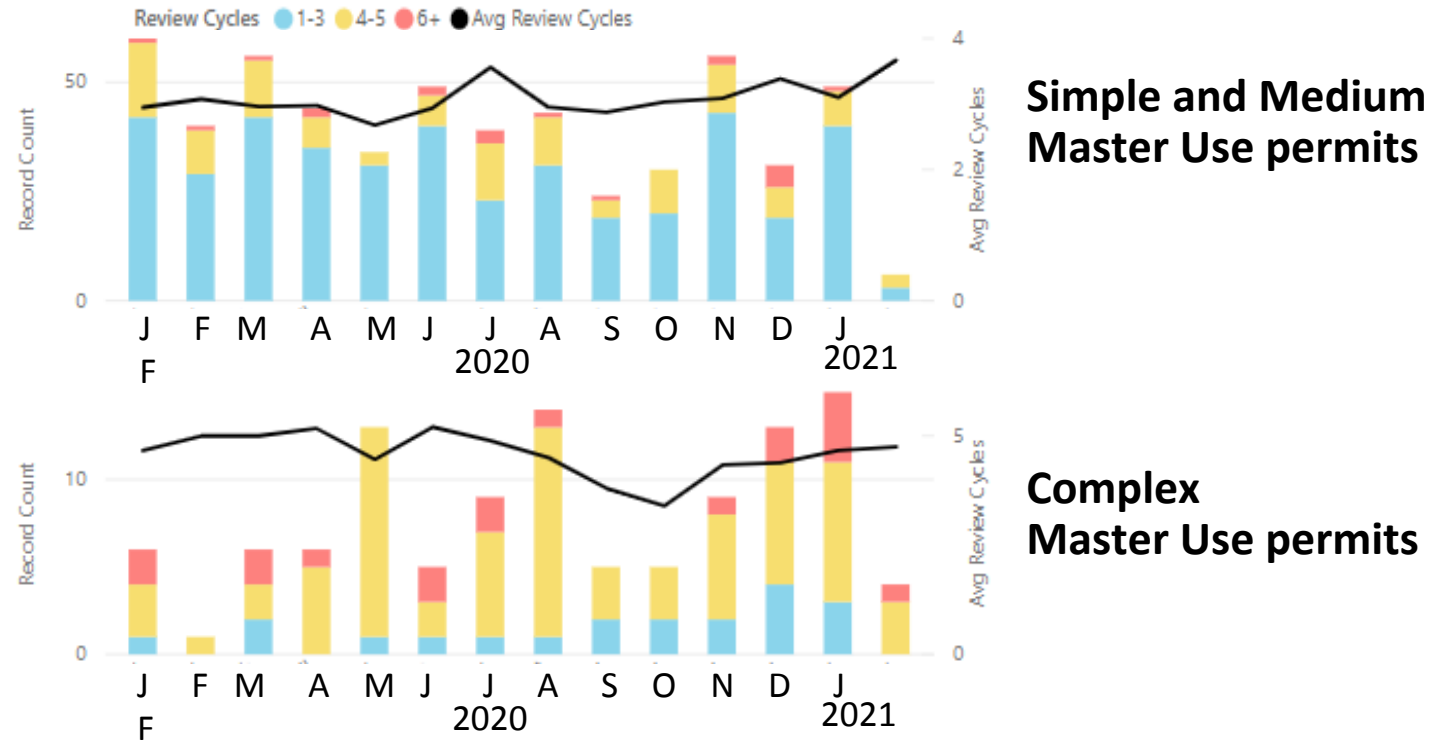
MASTER USE PERMIT REVIEW PERFORMANCE REPORT

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

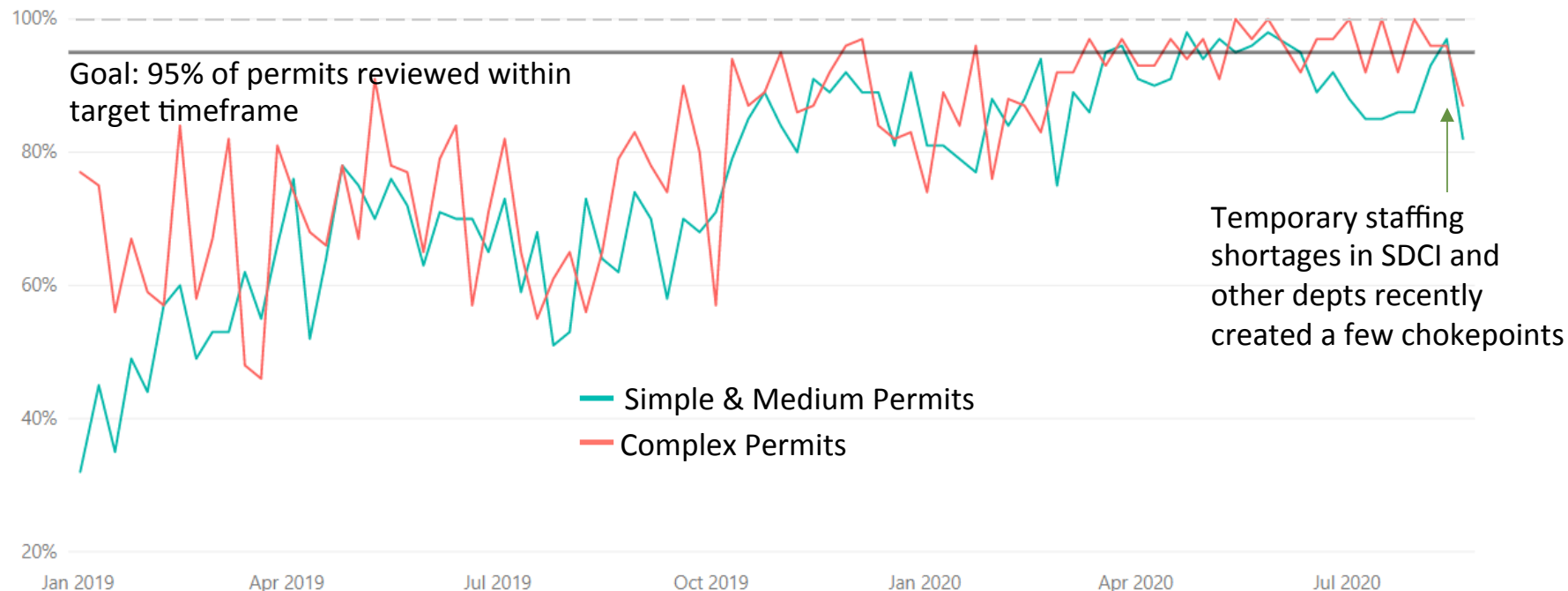
Complex Master Use permits

PERMITTING CHART #7

INITIAL REVIEWS OF APPLICATIONS

Despite the challenges of the past year, we remained very close to our review targets for new applications.

Percent of permits meeting targets for initial review (2019-2020)



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

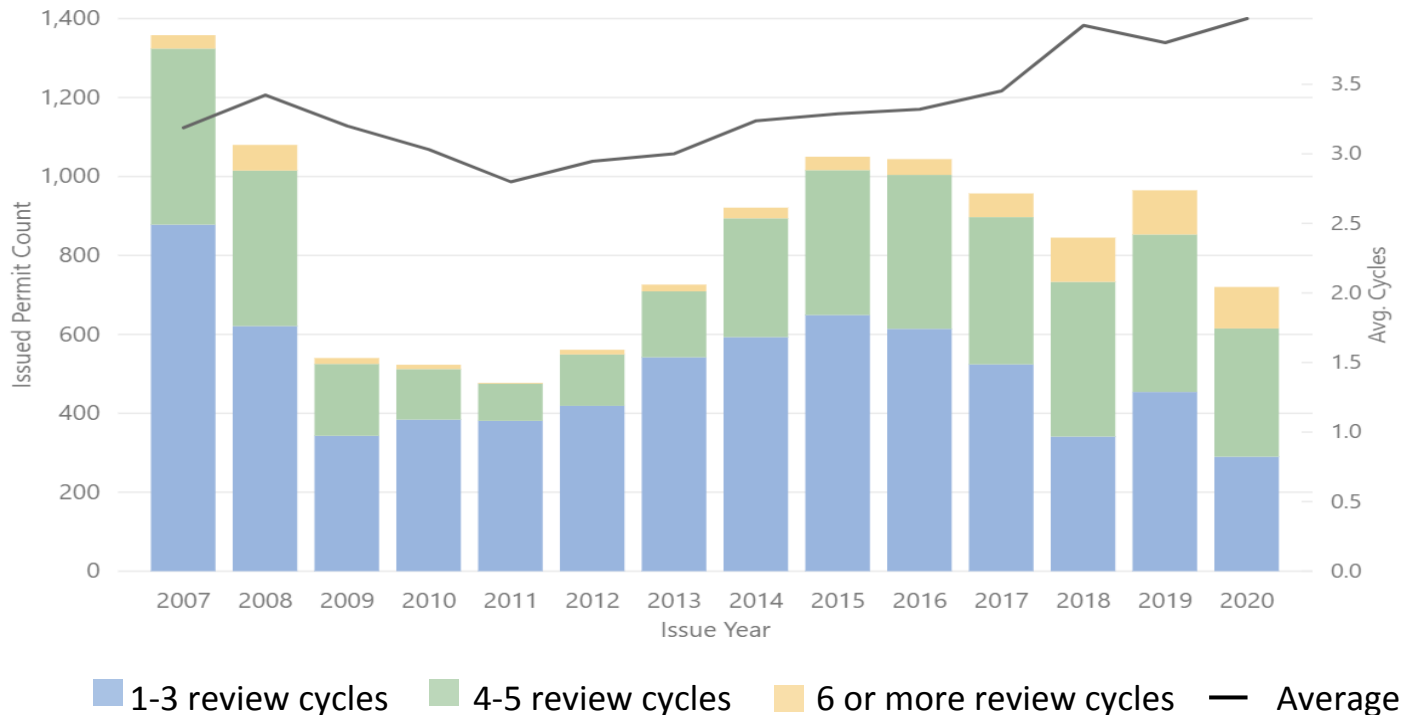


PERMITTING CHART #8

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