



City of Tukwila
***Planning and Community
 Development Committee***

- ◆ **Kathy Hougardy, Chair**
- ◆ **Verna Seal**
- ◆ **Thomas McLeod**

<u>Distribution:</u>	
K. Hougardy	Mayor Ekberg
V. Seal	D. Cline
T. McLeod	R. Bianchi
K. Kruller	C. O'Flaherty
	A. Youn
	L. Humphrey

AGENDA

MONDAY, MAY 3, 2021 – 5:30 PM

HAZELNUT CONFERENCE ROOM
 (At east entrance of City Hall)

**THIS MEETING WILL NOT BE CONDUCTED AT CITY FACILITIES
 BASED ON THE GOVERNOR'S PROCLAMATION 20-28.**

**THE PHONE NUMBER FOR THE PUBLIC TO LISTEN TO THIS
 MEETING IS: 1-253-292-9750, Access Code 697075721#**

Click here to: [Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](#)
For Technical Support during the meeting call: 1-206-431-2179.

Item	Recommended Action	Page
1. BUSINESS AGENDA		
a. COVID-19: Extend Emergency Rules to Allow Tents in Parking Lots and to Allow Temporary Signage. <i>Brandon Miles, Business Relations Manager</i>	a. Forward to 5/10 C.O.W. and 5/17 Consent Agenda.	Pg.1
b. Highline College, Small Business Development Center update. <i>Rich Shockley, Center Director.</i> <i>Brandon Miles, Business Relations Manager</i>	b. Discussion only.	Pg.5
c. Economic development plan budget. <i>Derek Speck, Economic Development Administrator</i>	c. Discussion only.	Pg.37
d. Development review permitting status. <i>Nora Gierloff, Community Development Director</i>	d. Discussion only.	Pg.39
2. MISCELLANEOUS		

Next Scheduled Meeting: *May 17, 2021*



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INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning and Economic Development Committee

FROM: Brandon Miles, Business Relations Manager

CC: Mayor Ekberg

DATE: April 26, 2021

SUBJECT: Extending the City's Interim, COVID-19 Policy on Outdoor Seating and Temporary Signage

ISSUE

Affirm the extension of the interim policy regarding outdoor seating and temporary signage for businesses in response to COVID-19.

BACKGROUND

On July 20, 2020 the City Council affirmed the Mayor's emergency rules regarding temporary outdoor seating and easing the requirements regarding the display of temporary signage. These emergency rules were put in place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated rules put in the place by the Governor's Office to promote social distancing in public settings. Outdoor seating provided certain benefits to restaurants in meeting the requirements of the Governor's orders.

In response to the November rollback of the easing of pandemic restrictions, the City Council extended the interim policy through June 30, 2021. Additionally, City streamlined the process for larger tents to obtain permit from the City by providing one permit for all required reviews and inspections for tents.

Several restaurants and casinos have taken advantage of installing tents on their property to allow them to serve customers, while also maintaining social distancing requirements and meeting capacity limitations.

City Administration has made the following changes to the emergency rules:

1. Extend the date of the emergency rules to January 15, 2022.
2. Updated signatures blocks for Council President and DCD Director.

DISCUSSION

As the Council is aware, the City is currently operating under a State of Emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Tukwila Municipal Code (TMC) 2.57.040 (3) requires the City Council to affirm any rules or regulations related to the protection of life, environment, and property affect the emergency. These emergency rules for tents are needed to allow businesses in the City to operate in a safe manner. In addition, the rules for temporary signage are needed because many businesses are doing pick up and drop off to encourage social distancing. Signage will help direct motorists to businesses and pickup/drop off points.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Minimal and would include a small amount of loss revenue related to temporary signage permits.

RECOMMENDATION

Affirm the revised emergency policy provided by City Administration. Forward to the May 10, 2021 Committee of the Whole meeting and the May 17, 2021 consent.

ATTACHMENTS

- Revised, Interim Outdoor Seating and Signage Allowance for Businesses in Response to COVID-19.

City of Tukwila

Interim Outdoor Seating and Signage Allowance for Businesses in Response to COVID-19

SUBJECT: Temporary policy to allow outdoor seating and temporary signage during the Public Health Emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this policy is to temporarily allow outdoor seating and temporary signage and issue any approvals in an expeditious manner while ensuring safety protocols are in place. This policy will be effective on June 15, 2020 and will expire on January 15, 2022 ~~June 30, 2021~~ unless otherwise terminated or extended.

SCOPE: This policy applies to all City of Tukwila businesses.

DEFINITIONS:

1. "Public Health Emergency" shall mean any such emergency declared by the Governor of the State of Washington pursuant to his or her powers under chapters 38.08, 38.52 and 43.06 RCW, any such emergency declared by the King County Executive or the Mayor of the City of Tukwila pursuant to chapter 38.52 RCW.

POLICY:

During the current Public Health Emergency and in compliance with the Washington State Governor's "Safe Start" phased approach to business reopening, the City of Tukwila shall establish the following policy to expedite approval of any outdoor seating areas and to relax temporary signage requirements:

- 1) Businesses are allowed to set up outdoor seating areas in parking spaces on private property, and no land use approval is required to deviate from the number of parking spaces required by City code, provided the following conditions shall be met:
 - a) No fire lanes are blocked
 - b) No fencing nor other containment feature is to be placed around the outdoor seating area that does not allow openings for safe egress/exiting from the seating area. In case of an emergency, people seated in the outdoor area should be able to exit the premises without passing through the building.
 - c) Outdoor lighting shall be provided to ensure safe exiting from the dining area. Any outdoor lighting fixtures shall be rated for outdoor use. Note: electrical work will still require a permit.
 - d) Tents may be used, subject to the following requirements:
 - I. Tents and membrane structures up to 400 square feet do not require a permit. Other permits for hearing, plumbing, and electrical may still be required.

II. Tents and membrane structures having an area greater than 400 square feet require a permit. The City will charge a flat \$50.00 (not including credit card fees). The permit shall cover the building, mechanical, electrical, plumbing plan reviews, inspections, and permit requirement of the Departments of Community Development, Fire, and Public Works.

- 2) Temporary signs informing the public that the business is open, or other directional signs, such as designating curb side pickup areas, shall not require a temporary sign permit, provided the following conditions shall be met:
- a) Up to a maximum of 4 signs per business are allowed, and the maximum size of the signs shall not exceed 64 sq. ft. total for all 4 signs. These signs can only be placed on the premises of the business. Signs are not allowed to be placed off premises or within public right of way or sidewalks.
 - b) Sight distance for cars entering and exiting the driveway shall not be blocked, and signs shall not be placed on sidewalks.
 - c) Enforcement of the following prohibited signs is temporarily suspended:
 - i) Strings of pennants, balloons, and similar devices.
 - ii) The use of portable signs (A-boards, wire frames).

All other Tukwila Sign Code regulations remain in effect.

EFFECTIVE DATE: June 15, 2020, Amended April 30, 2021

APPROVAL:

Mayor Allan Ekberg

Kate Kruller, Council President

Nora Gierloff, Director, DCD

Kari Sand City Attorney

Jay Wittwer, Fire Chief



INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning and Economic Development Committee

FROM: Brandon Miles, Business Relations Manager

CC: Mayor Ekberg

DATE: April 26, 2021

SUBJECT: Small Business Development Center

ISSUE

Briefing by Highline College on the services provided at the Small Business Development Center.

BACKGROUND

The City of Tukwila partners with other south King County cities to help fund the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Highline College. The City's annual contribution included in the Economic Development budget is \$12,000.

DISCUSSION

The SBDC provides essential services to small businesses in the City. Staff from Highline College will provide a briefing on the various services offered by SBDC, including providing an overview of the services offered in response to COVID-19.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

N/A. The City has already approved the budgeted funds for the SBDC for 2021 and 2022.

RECOMMENDATION

Discussion only.

ATTACHMENTS

- Presentation prepared by SBDC staff at Highline College.

Highline College Economic and Business Development Programs



Our Services & Who We Serve



Our Services & Who We Serve

StartZone: Underserved Communities -
limited English proficiency (LEP),
minority, immigrant, low-and-moderate
income

Group training, one-on-one business
advising geared towards pre and early
startups.



Our Services & Who We Serve



"They (SBDC advisors) are everything you would want when you need advice, are trying to grow your business, or are applying for a loan."

Danny House, Owner
Dan the Sausageman



Verjee, a 2009 graduate of the entrepreneurship program at Babson College in Massachusetts, said he understands business plans and scalability and executing a good idea to its fullest potential. He also understands the value of the good advice and an experienced sounding board, both of which he found at the Washington SBDC.



Grant Jones, owner KukuRuza

Shockley helped... "This is where we are now, this is where we want to be. How do we get there?"

Grant Jones, co-owner
KukuRuza Gourmet Popcorn, Seattle, WA



Three Trees Yoga owners: Jeni Martinez,
Suzy Green and Karen Schwisow

"We never leave our advisor's office without at least three great ideas, three action items and renewed focus and energy for our business."

Suzy Green, Co-Founder
Three Trees Yoga, Federal Way, WA



Jack Walsh, owner
Sub Zero Ice Cream

"Rich gave advice and feedback and helped us significantly," Walsh said.

Jack Walsh, owner
Sub Zero, Federal Way, WA

Our Services & Who We Serve

SBDC: Established businesses & startups with industry experience

Primary service is confidential, no cost one-on-one business advising



What We Do

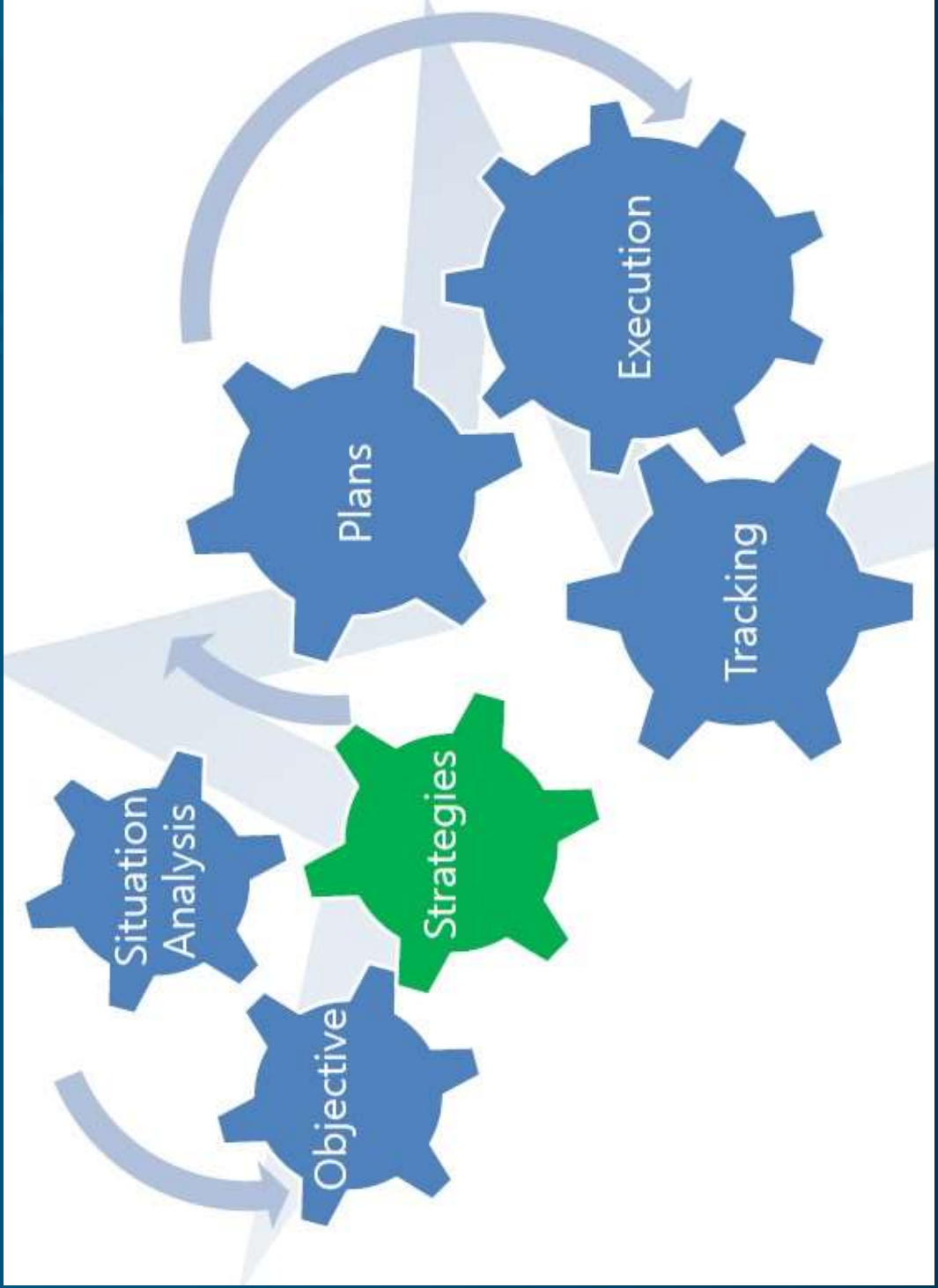
Business focused training & technical assistance

Areas of Focus;

- Financial planning and cash flow management
- Access to capital
- Marketing
- Business Strategy and Planning
- Research



How We Do It



Meet the Team

Njambi Gishuru – Microenterprise Specialist
– English and Swahili

Jaqueline Garcia – Microenterprise Specialist
– English and Spanish

Phon Sivongxay – Certified Business Advisor
– English and Thai

Rich Shockley – Center Director and Certified Business
Advisor – English

Meet the Team



Njambi Gishuru – Microenterprise Specialist
– English and Swahili



Meet the Team



Jaqueline Garcia – Microenterprise Specialist
– English and Spanish



Meet the Team



Phon Sivongxay – Certified Business Advisor
– English and Thai



Meet the Team



Rich Shockley – Center Director and Certified Business
Advisor – English



How We Are Funded



Since – COVID-19

Tukwila Clients Served

59 Unique Clients

*35 direct service one-to-one assistance

*24 online training and webinars



COVID Impact on Small Business

Three Separate Groups

Businesses hit hard through closures

Restaurant, Bar, Hospitality, Travel, Childcare

Businesses who have profited through closures

Construction, technology, already established
online sales and pick up / deliver service

Businesses that were marginal prior to COVID

Impacted by change in buying patterns

The Gap in Stimulus

Immigrant and Refugee communities

- Lack of awareness of stimulus money
- Language and cultural barriers
- Challenge with application & documentation
- Ineligible due to business structure or immigrant status



Technical Assistance During COVID-19

Five Primary Areas

- How to secure stimulus funds
- We got the money, now what
- Management, control & forgiveness
- Reopening and Rebuilding
- Added focus to underserved



Technical Assistance During COVID-19

Loan Forgiveness

Access to stimulus funding

Cash flow management

Essential costs vs non-essential costs

Cash balances

Use of loan funds

“What if’s” – business assumptions

Stress the cash flow to consider alternatives

Stimulus Loans and Grants

PPP draw 1 & 2

EIDL, EIDL Advance, Targeted EIDL

Working Washington Grant 1, 2, 3, 4

Local City grants

RRF Restaurant Revitalization Fund (May 3rd)

SVOG – Shuttered Venues



Why Focus on Cash Flow & Financials During COVID-19

- 1) Annually - when they have to give their accounting records to their CPA to do the taxes = 25%-35%
- 2) Monthly - because they have come to believe they should = 75%-80%
- 3) Weekly – 52 times a year without fail = 95%+



Looking to the Future

Faulty assumption,
two legs of a stool is
enough.

- Retention / Expansion
- Attraction
-

3rd Leg: Entrepreneur
Development System



Going Forward

Reopening
Safety and Sanitation
Cash Management
Adaptation to Changing Markets



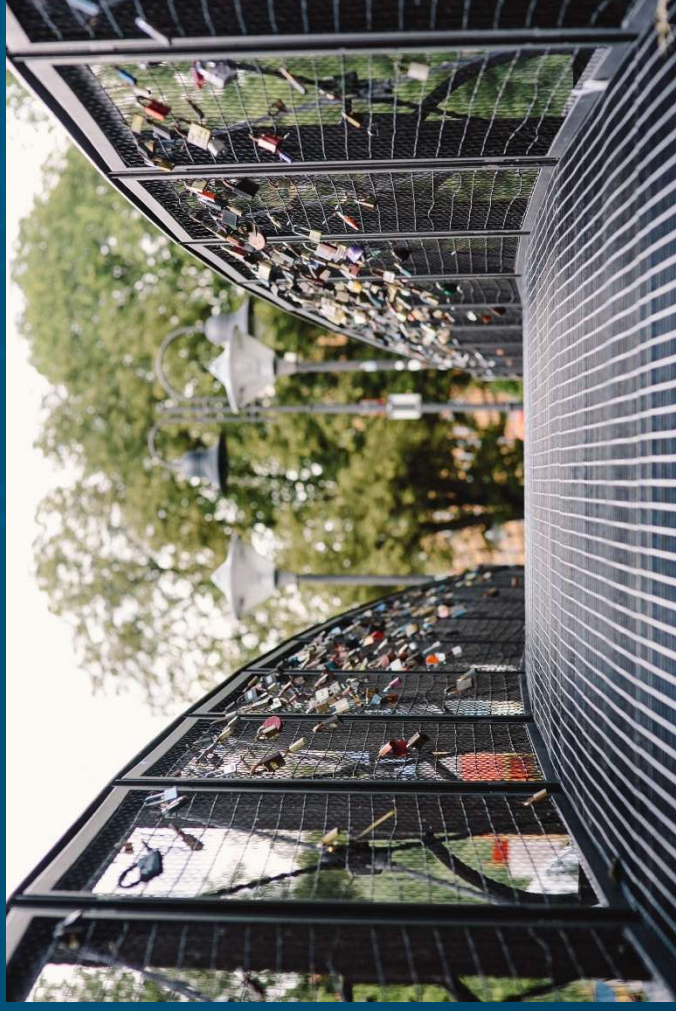
Turnaround, Survival & Exit Strategies

No one is saying
this will be
easy.....



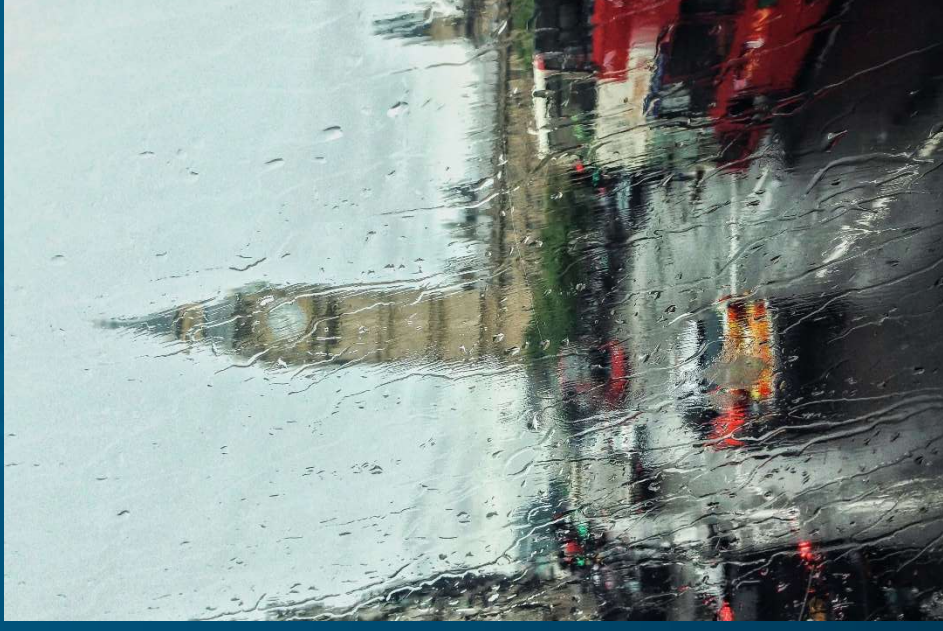
Turnaround, Survival & Exit Strategies

**No one can
guarantee
the outcome**



Turnaround, Survival & Exit Strategies

**Funding alone
will not be sufficient
to weather the storm**



Turnaround, Survival & Exit Strategies

**Develop your
individual action
plan**



Turnaround, Survival & Exit Strategies

If it's time to exit,
what is my strategy



Looking to the Future

Partner with African Chamber to engage immigrant communities in South King County

Partner with Seattle Southside Chamber for outreach to immigrant communities

Expand StartZone service capabilities – training and one-to-one support



Highline College Economic & Business Development





INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM

TO: Community Development & Neighborhoods Committee

FROM: Derek Speck, Economic Development Administrator

CC: Mayor Ekberg

DATE: April 27, 2021

SUBJECT: Economic Development Plan Budget

ISSUE

Staff requests Committee feedback on a potential budget request for the economic development plan.

BACKGROUND

On February 1, 2021 the Economic Development Division presented its workplan for 2021 to the Community Development & Neighborhoods Committee (CDN). One of the items on the Division's workplan is to create an economic development plan for the City (the "Plan"). An economic development plan is one of the strategies included in the City's Comprehensive Plan's economic development chapter. The Plan would provide additional context and guidance to staff, policy makers, and the community to enhance the City's economy.

DISCUSSION

Currently there is no allocated budget for creating the economic development plan (the "Plan"). Staff recognizes the significant budget challenges facing the City due to the pandemic and is willing to create a plan within whatever budget is available. However, as the City anticipates some additional revenue such as the federal government's American Rescue Plan, staff may request a budget allocation for the Plan and welcomes council feedback on the scope.

Staff anticipates requesting \$150,000 to include the following components:

1. **Basic Plan:** This work includes hiring a consultant to conduct research, analysis, writing, graphic design, and producing a document. It would also include standard community outreach such as an online survey, a limited phone survey, and some public meetings. Estimated cost \$50,000.
2. **Expanded Outreach:** This work includes hiring multiple community-based organizations or firms to assist with outreach to various groups based on culture, language, age, etc. It would include tailoring those contracts to work with those groups on outreach methods appropriate for each group. These methods may include surveys, conversations, interviews, focus groups, or other ways. As appropriate, methods would include interpretation, translation, childcare, and participation incentives. The intent would be to engage the multiple communities and not be transactional. Estimated cost \$50,000.
3. **Improved Business Contacts Database:** This purpose of this component is to improve our business contacts database which would improve outreach to develop the Plan but would also improve ongoing outreach. The component would include a combination of purchasing a software tool and contacting our businesses to update and/or collect their contact information. In the private sector the software tool would be called a customer

relationship management system (CRM) and would track a company's interactions with their customers. In addition to purchasing software, we would hire a firm to fill in the gaps and expand upon our current business license database by contacting businesses directly. Estimated start-up cost \$50,000. There would be an ongoing maintenance cost but we do not yet have an estimate for that.

The third component, the business contacts database, is the least critical component to developing an economic development plan and we can develop a plan without it. Currently, we download business license data from the State and save it into Excel. This method is easy to use but there are some challenges. The State's data is incomplete and may be missing email addresses, phone numbers, size of business, etc. If a business has multiple locations, the contact information may not be for the Tukwila location. The contact information may only be for the company's accounting staff who processes the business license. We would benefit from having contact information for functions such as management, marketing, human resources, emergency response, etc. We do not have information on which language the local business management prefers and that may be very beneficial to promote equity.

The benefits of an improved business contacts database can support economic development by enabling staff to easily contact businesses when we learn of resources, want to invite them to participate in programs or events, are seeking their input, reinforce their connection to our city, etc. As an example, during the pandemic one of the ways we have been trying to help our businesses, especially small businesses, is to email them with information on financial and other resources. It is likely there are businesses in Tukwila who are not in our database. Also, it is likely we have some small businesses who are not taking advantage of available resources such as the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) because of language barriers. If we knew which businesses preferred a language other than English, we could translate important emails into their language or facilitate language-based webinars.

The benefits of an improved business contacts database may be able to serve the City in other ways. For instance, it could be a good tool to quickly contact businesses in times of emergency. In the past there have been times where the City has needed to contact business and property owners in a particular neighborhood due to a specific emergency. If we start to work on this component, we would engage with other city departments to see if they would like to share this database and if it's feasible to develop it jointly.

It is important to note that if we improve the business contacts database, it would need to be updated at least annually to continue to be useful. At this time we don't have an estimate for the ongoing cost but we know it would be something. If we are not able to maintain the database, it is not worth the up-front cost to make the initial improvements.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

This particular item is not seeking a budget allocation at this time but this request may be included as the Council considers restoring other city services. If approved in its current scope, this request would be for \$150,000.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff seeks Committee discussion and feedback.

ATTACHMENTS

None



INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning and Community Development Committee

FROM: Nora Gierloff, DCD Director

CC: Mayor Ekberg

DATE: April 27, 2021

SUBJECT: Development Permit Volumes, Review Status and Recommendations

ISSUE

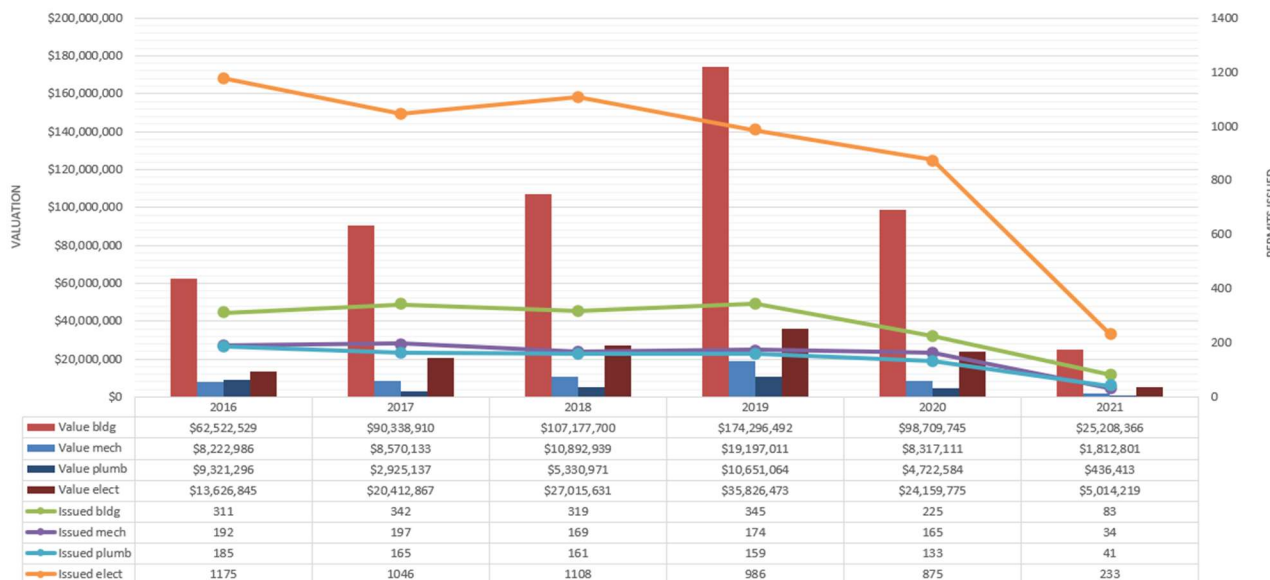
Timelines for review and issuance of both construction and land use permits have increased over the past year.

BACKGROUND

Permits related to construction include development (building), mechanical, plumbing, electrical, land altering, public works, and fire permits and are the focus of this memo. The Planning Division also processes land use permits, which include conditional use, design review, SEPA environmental review, special permission, and critical areas approvals which are facing many of the same processing challenges as described in this memo.

The graphic below shows that the number of mechanical and plumbing permits applied for was quite stable from 2016 through 2020. Building and electrical permit applications were fairly consistent, but then dipped in 2020. Building permit valuation showed a strong increasing trend through 2019 before dropping back to 2017-18 levels in 2020. This volatility is often driven by the timing of one or more large projects such as the Dermody Oxbow and Prologis warehouse developments.

Permit Trend by Permit Type
2016 - 2021



The number of permits issued from January through April 2021 is similar to the pre-pandemic numbers for that period in 2019 and 2020.

2019-2021 COMPARISON

JANUARY 1 – APRIL 20

2021 ISSUED PERMITS - LAST UPDATED 4/20/2021							Select Date Range: 1/1/2021 - 4/20/2021	☰
PERMITS ISSUED	AVG DAYS TO ISSUE	PERMIT JOB VALUE	D: 94	EL: 287	M: 49	PG: 49		
621	42.3 DAYS TO ISSUE	\$44,297,962	DEVELOPMENT PERMITS	ELECTRICAL PERMITS	MECHANICAL PERMITS	PLUMBING PERMITS		
	AVG DAYS TO APPROVE	PERMIT FEES PAID	PW: 37	PWF: 16	F: 67	S: 19		
	30.7 DAYS TO APPROVE	\$1,006,141	PUBLIC WORKS PERMITS	FRANCHISE PERMITS	FIRE PERMITS	SIGN PERMITS		
2020 ISSUED PERMITS							Select Date Range: 1/1/2020 - 4/20/2020	☰
PERMITS ISSUED	AVG DAYS TO ISSUE	PERMIT JOB VALUE	D: 68	EL: 262	M: 35	PG: 40		
548	28.7 DAYS TO ISSUE	\$39,590,743	DEVELOPMENT PERMITS	ELECTRICAL PERMITS	MECHANICAL PERMITS	PLUMBING PERMITS		
	AVG DAYS TO APPROVE	PERMIT FEES PAID	PW: 33	PWF: 47	F: 45	S: 17		
	21.5 DAYS TO APPROVE	\$1,233,263	PUBLIC WORKS PERMITS	FRANCHISE PERMITS	FIRE PERMITS	SIGN PERMITS		
2019 ISSUED PERMITS							Select Date Range: 1/1/2019 - 4/20/2019	☰
PERMITS ISSUED	AVG DAYS TO ISSUE	PERMIT JOB VALUE	D: 107	EL: 332	M: 54	PG: 51		
659	29.6 DAYS TO ISSUE	\$80,560,819	DEVELOPMENT PERMITS	ELECTRICAL PERMITS	MECHANICAL PERMITS	PLUMBING PERMITS		
	AVG DAYS TO APPROVE	PERMIT FEES PAID	PW: 42	PWF: 46	F: 0	S: 25		
	16.6 DAYS TO APPROVE	\$2,140,329	PUBLIC WORKS PERMITS	FRANCHISE PERMITS	FIRE PERMITS	SIGN PERMITS		

The 2019 permit valuation and revenue numbers were outliers from Tukwila’s trends. 2021 numbers are on track to be near the average levels seen in prior years.

2019-2021 COMPARISON

JANUARY 1 – DECEMBER 31 (*2021 UPDATED TO APRIL 20, 2021)

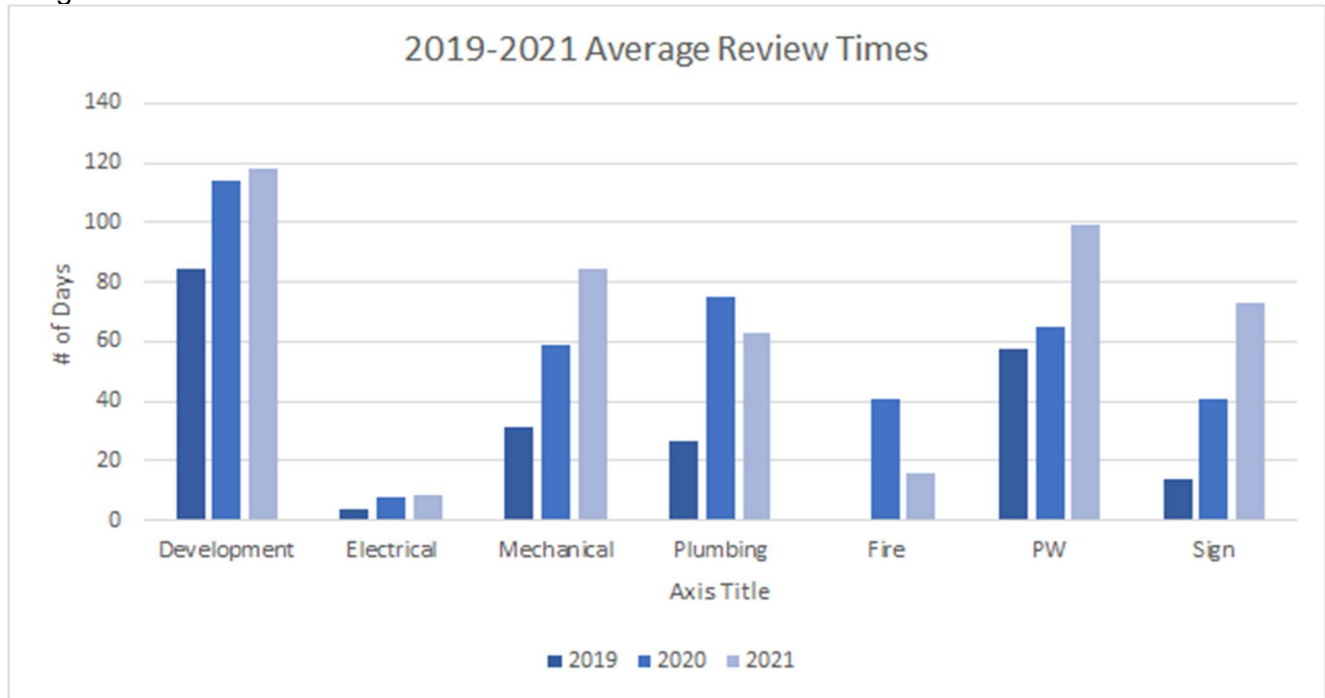
2021 ISSUED PERMITS - LAST UPDATED 4/20/2021							Select Date Range: 1/1/2021 - 4/20/2021	☰
PERMITS ISSUED	AVG DAYS TO ISSUE	PERMIT JOB VALUE	D: 94	EL: 287	M: 49	PG: 49		
621	42.3 DAYS TO ISSUE	\$44,297,962	DEVELOPMENT PERMITS	ELECTRICAL PERMITS	MECHANICAL PERMITS	PLUMBING PERMITS		
	AVG DAYS TO APPROVE	PERMIT FEES PAID	PW: 37	PWF: 16	F: 67	S: 19		
	30.7 DAYS TO APPROVE	\$1,006,141	PUBLIC WORKS PERMITS	FRANCHISE PERMITS	FIRE PERMITS	SIGN PERMITS		
2020 ISSUED PERMITS							Select Date Range: 1/1/2020 - 12/31/2020	☰
PERMITS ISSUED	AVG DAYS TO ISSUE	PERMIT JOB VALUE	D: 257	EL: 861	M: 164	PG: 129		
1,916	41.6 DAYS TO ISSUE	\$258,764,984	DEVELOPMENT PERMITS	ELECTRICAL PERMITS	MECHANICAL PERMITS	PLUMBING PERMITS		
	AVG DAYS TO APPROVE	PERMIT FEES PAID	PW: 117	PWF: 133	F: 205	S: 42		
	32.2 DAYS TO APPROVE	\$4,208,085	PUBLIC WORKS PERMITS	FRANCHISE PERMITS	FIRE PERMITS	SIGN PERMITS		
2019 ISSUED PERMITS							Select Date Range: 1/1/2019 - 12/31/2019	☰
PERMITS ISSUED	AVG DAYS TO ISSUE	PERMIT JOB VALUE	D: 372	EL: 1,030	M: 192	PG: 175		
2,155	29.3 DAYS TO ISSUE	\$217,446,717	DEVELOPMENT PERMITS	ELECTRICAL PERMITS	MECHANICAL PERMITS	PLUMBING PERMITS		
	AVG DAYS TO APPROVE	PERMIT FEES PAID	PW: 153	PWF: 148	F: 1	S: 80		
	17.9 DAYS TO APPROVE	\$7,380,632	PUBLIC WORKS PERMITS	FRANCHISE PERMITS	FIRE PERMITS	SIGN PERMITS		

DISCUSSION

On February 29, 2020, Washington Governor Inslee declared a state of emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. On March 23, 2020, Governor Inslee issued a statewide “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” order which resulted in the closure of City Hall to the public and temporarily paused many construction projects.

One of the ways that the permitting departments (DCD, Fire and Public Works) responded to the crisis was by accelerating the transition to online permit submittal and review so that we could accept and issue permits remotely. While this was a long planned for improvement to customer service, implementing it on an abbreviated timeline in the midst of the other disruptions of the pandemic was a major effort that pulled staff away from permit processing. As shown in the data above, permit volumes did not slow down significantly in 2020 and therefore this transition contributed to a backlog of permits waiting for review.

Freezing the vacant Associate Planner position, staff furloughs, and letting go the extra labor planning intern were some of the measures taken in 2020 to reduce DCD’s budgetary expenditures in response to the financial impacts of the pandemic. While these measures were prudent in light of the uncertainty around the financial impact of the pandemic, they have also contributed to the permit backlog and significantly impacted permit review times as anticipated in the 2021-2022 DCD budget narrative.



These numbers show the overall time from permit application to issuance. For permits that require revisions in order to meet code requirements, some of that time is dependent on the applicant’s response time to the City’s correction letter(s). Architects, developers, and contractors have faced their own pandemic disruptions which in some cases has led to poor quality submittals or longer turnaround times.

Another unexpected event was the departure of three of the five members of the DCD leadership team during the early months of 2021, with a fourth now out on extended medical leave. We have appointed two staff into acting roles as an interim measure but that leaves them trying to fulfill two roles at once. Reduced staffing levels have resulted in a reduction of services due to the team’s reduced capacity.

Proposed Solutions to Improve Customer Service

- Allow DCD to rehire the frozen Associate Planner position
- Retitle the Planning Supervisor position as Development Supervisor to reflect the transfer of PW Development Review Engineers to the DCD permit team
- Recruit and hire for the vacant Deputy Director and Development Supervisor positions
- Send some development permits out for building code review by a consultant when review times for that division exceed targets
- Begin recruiting when notified of an impending vacancy rather than waiting to hire until the end of the vacation/sick leave cash out period, especially when we are “one deep” in that role
- Continue to cross train staff and document procedures to improve resiliency to unexpected events
- Continue to pursue agreements with neighboring cities for inspection back up to handle vacations and illnesses
- Continue working with TIS to improve the online permit submittal experience
- Improve the permit handouts and website to provide better direction to applicants
- Rehire the extra labor Planning Intern position if/when the frozen planner position is refilled
- Continue efforts to fill the vacant Building Division Plans Examiner and Inspector positions

If we are successful in recruiting appropriate candidates in this challenging hiring environment we could have positions filled in approximately three months. Onboarding and training would take another two to three months before new staff would reach full productivity. We could expect a reduction in the permit backlog and an improvement in processing times within 5 to 6 months, assuming no additional vacancies.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The proposed unfreezing of the vacant Associate Planner position would require applicable salary and employee related expenses to be added back to the DCD budget. Most of the other changes could be accomplished within the existing 2021 budget.

RECOMMENDATION

Information only. The Finance and Governance Committee held a discussion of service restoration priorities on April 26, 2021.