



## INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM

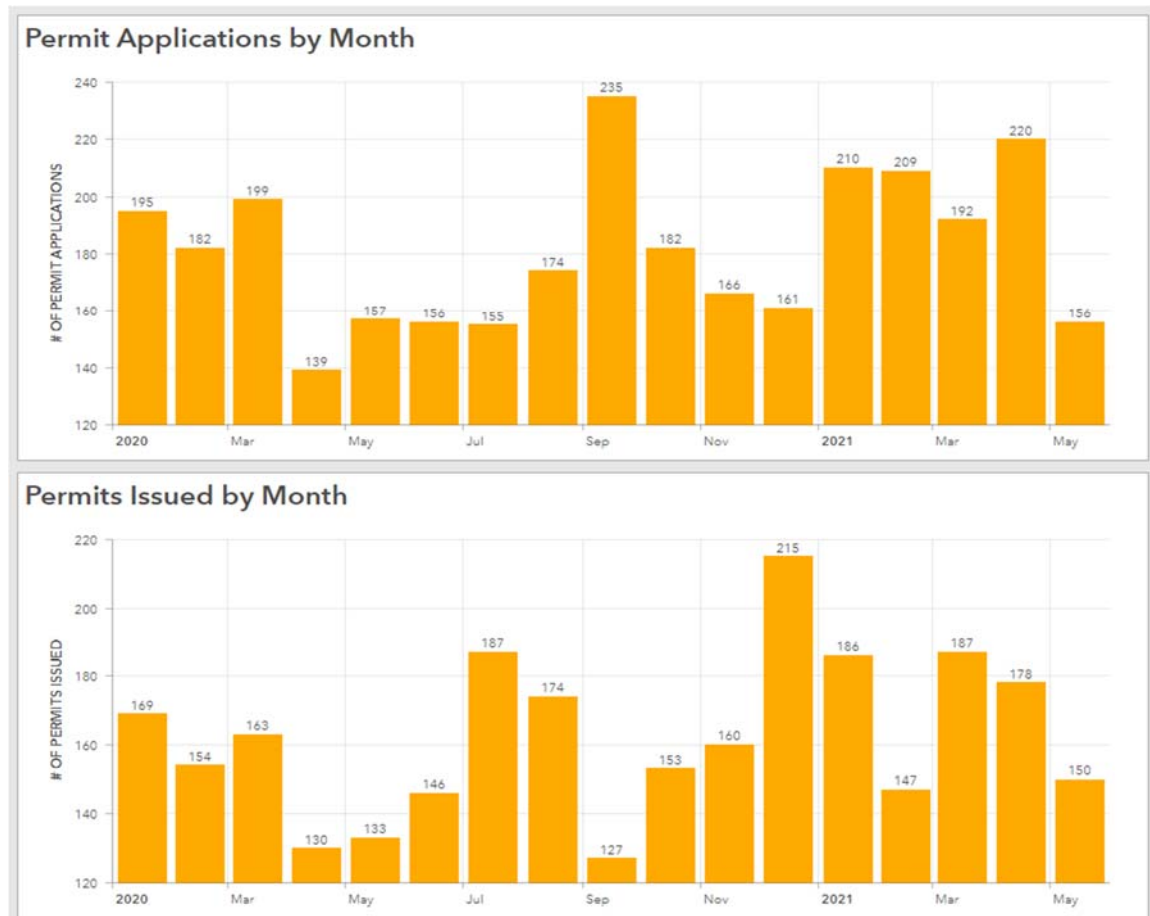
TO: Planning and Community Development Committee  
FROM: Nora Gierloff, DCD Director  
CC: Mayor Ekberg  
DATE: June 1, 2021  
SUBJECT: Development and Land Use Permitting Update

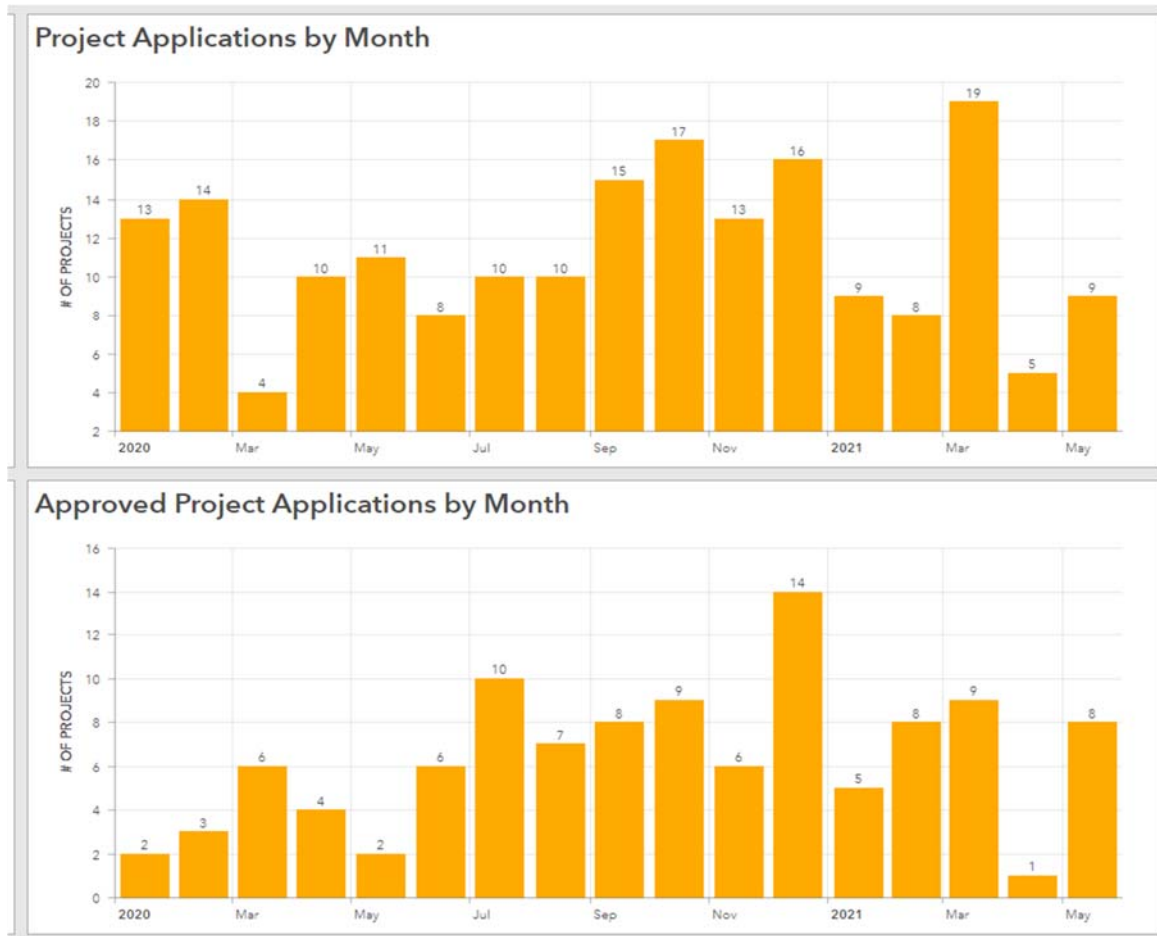
### ISSUE

Update on actions to reduce timelines for review and issuance of both construction and land use permits.

### BACKGROUND

There are two main categories of permits issued by the Department of Community Development. Permits related to construction include development (building), mechanical, plumbing, electrical, land altering, public works, and fire permits. The Planning Division also processes land use permits, which include conditional use, design review, SEPA environmental review, special permission, and critical areas approvals. The graphics below show the total number of development and land use permits that were submitted and the number that were issued per month over the last year and a half.





**DISCUSSION**

The Department is still recovering from the disruptions of the pandemic, conversion to online permitting, and staff shortages. With the support of Council we have begun the effort to restaff the Department.

We have six candidates for the Deputy Director position and will be conducting interviews on June 3rd. We only have two qualified candidates for the Development Supervisor which isn't a large pool so we will interview them and then see if we need to readvertise or modify the position. We have 60 plus applicants for the Associate Planner position so a much better pool of candidates. The Development Review Engineer and Code Enforcement positions are still open so we don't have final applicant numbers.

We have made an offer to a building inspector and hope to settle on a start date soon. The Building Official is expected to return to work part-time in June.

If we are successful in recruiting appropriate candidates in this challenging hiring environment we could have positions filled in approximately two 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 4 to 5 months, assuming no additional vacancies.

Other Proposed Solutions to Improve Customer Service

- Continue to cross train staff and document procedures to improve resiliency to unexpected events
- Offer online intake appointments to assist new applicants with the permit system
- 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 after the planner position is refilled and we have the capacity to oversee the student
- Continue efforts to fill the vacant Building Division Plans Examiner position

The six planning and development staff have the following projects in addition to permit review:

- Tukwila South/Prado District Residential Design Guidelines
- Transit Oriented Development Housing Action Plan review and adoption
- 5G pole standards and review procedure development
- Permanent ordinance to address federal small cell requirements, replacing the current interim ordinance
- Code amendments to address new state requirements for shelters and supportive housing
- Tukwila Village parking plan finalization
- Ongoing discussions with the SRO property owners and Sound Transit about the proposed pedestrian bridge over 518
- Ongoing discussions with Forterra about the Wadijir project code modification requests
- Discussions with King County about reasonable measures that will be required because Tukwila has not met its regional growth targets for housing units or jobs

**FINANCIAL IMPACT**

The unfreezing of the vacant Associate Planner and Code Enforcement positions 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.