

## **PLANNING, BUILDING AND CODE ENFORCEMENT**

The mission of the Planning, Building and Code Enforcement Department is to facilitate the preservation and building of a safe, attractive, vibrant and sustainable San José through partnership with and exceptional service to our diverse communities and customers.

## PLANNING, BUILDING AND CODE ENFORCEMENT

The Planning, Building and Code Enforcement (PBCE) Department guides the physical development of San José. Through its three divisions, it reviews construction applications and issues permits consistent with law and policy.

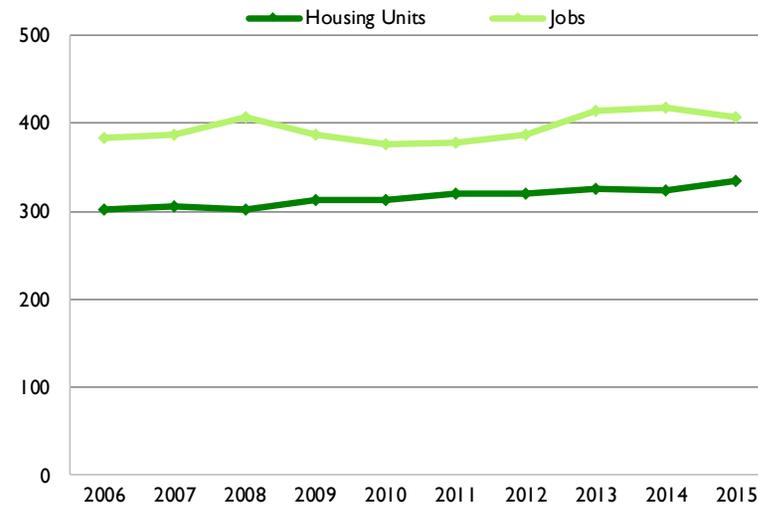
PBCE's 2015-16 operating budget totaled \$49 million across all funds. The Department's staffing, at 305 authorized positions, remained 16 percent lower than it was in 2007-08, when it had a peak of 363 authorized positions.

Under the collaborative umbrella of Development Services, PBCE works with other City departments to deliver the City's permitting function. Subsequent pages of this chapter discuss Development Services.

### PLANNING

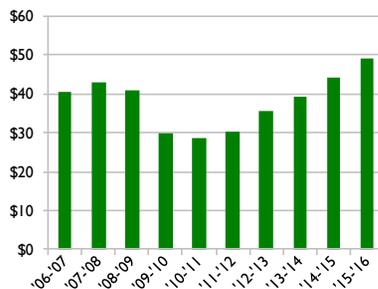
PBCE's Planning Division administers the City's long-range planning projects and processes land development applications to match the City's planning goals. Five years ago, the *Envision San José 2040 General Plan* identified twelve major strategies which promote active, walkable, bicycle-friendly, transit-oriented, mixed use urban settings for new housing and job growth. The U.S. Census estimates that San José had 407,000 jobs and 335,000 housing units in 2015. The City has begun reviewing the goals developed during the Envision 2040 General Plan process. See the *Development Services* pages of this chapter for more on the Planning Division's work. Also see *Planning in San José: A Community Guide* available online.

San José Housing Units and Jobs (thousands)

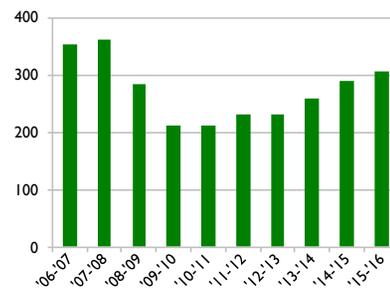


Source: American Community Survey, U.S. Census

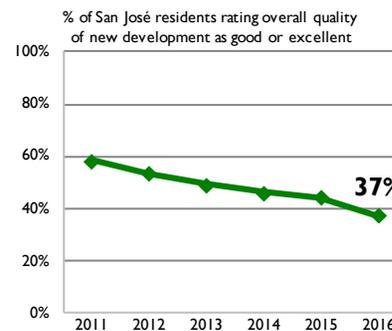
Adopted Operating Budgets (\$millions)



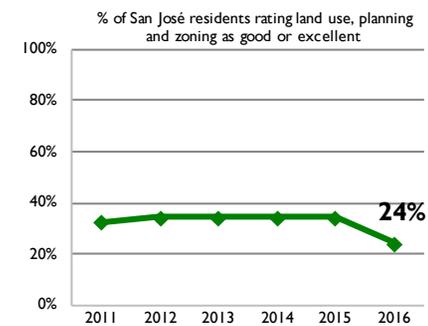
Authorized Positions



RESIDENT SURVEY



RESIDENT SURVEY



# PLANNING, BUILDING AND CODE ENFORCEMENT

## BUILDING

PBCE's Building Division reviews new construction projects within the City, ensuring they meet health and safety codes and City zoning requirements. It is the largest Development Services program. With nearly 36,800 building permits processed, 2015-16 marked the sixth consecutive year of growth in the number of building permits. This increased workload, and staffing challenges in the department contributed to the Building Division falling short of its timeliness targets. It achieved 78 percent of plan checks within cycle times and 33 percent of building inspections within its goal of 24 hours. See *Development Services on the next page for more on the Building Division's work.*

## COMMUNITY CODE ENFORCEMENT

PBCE's Code Enforcement Division enforces laws that promote the health, safety, and appearance of existing buildings and neighborhoods. It also inspects businesses selling alcohol or tobacco; property and business owners fund these inspections with fees.

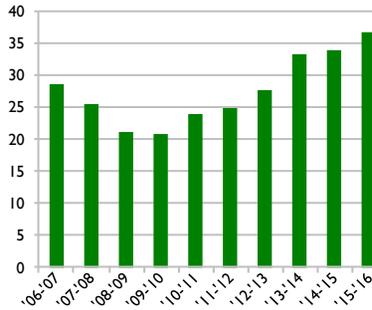
In 2015-16, PBCE opened over 6,000 general code enforcement cases. Code Enforcement staff responded to all 98 emergency complaints within PBCE's 24-hour target, and 78 percent of the 1,499 priority complaints within the 72-hour target.\* However, in response to budget and staffing shortages, staff now send letters in response to other types of complaints and only respond personally on an as-available basis.\*\*

Previously, PBCE provided routine inspections on a 6-year cycle of multiple unit housing properties. Back in 2013-14, PBCE inspected 15,300 of the 90,100 units in the Residential Occupancy Permit Program. In 2014-15, the department implemented a risk-based tiered inspection program whereby inspections are targeted to properties at higher risk of violations. Based on this approach, in 2015-16, PBCE inspected buildings that cumulatively had 5,050 housing units out of the 96,264 units in the Residential Occupancy Permit Program.\*\*

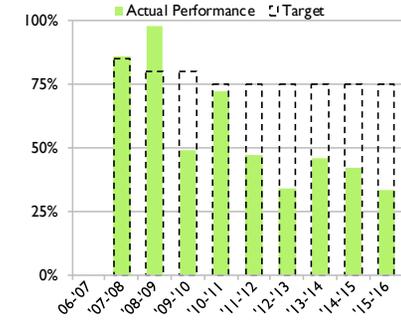
\*Emergency complaints involve an immediate threat to life or property, such as unsecured pool fence. Priority complaints involve possible threats to life or property, such as unpermitted construction.

\*\*Also see the November 2013 audit report: ["Code Enforcement: Improvements are Possible, But Resources are Significantly Constrained."](#)

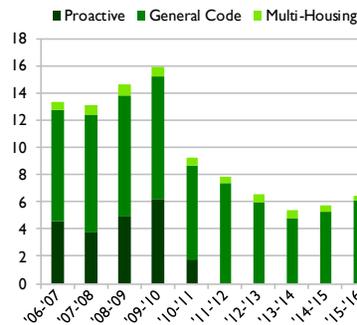
**Building Permits (thousands)**



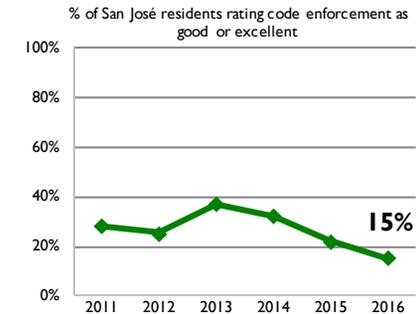
**% of Building Inspections Completed Within 24 Hours**



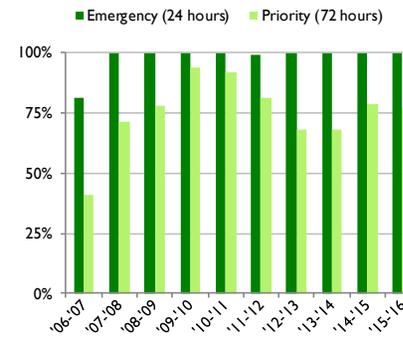
**Code Enforcement Cases Opened (thousands)**



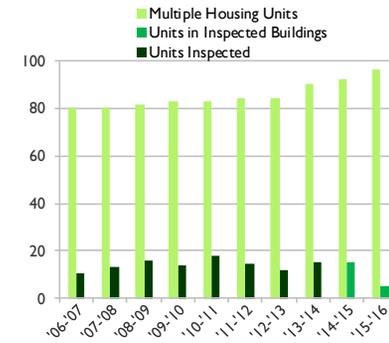
**RESIDENT SURVEY**



**Response Timeliness for General Code Cases**



**Multiple Housing Units and Inspections (thousands)**



## DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

The Permit Center in City Hall provides one-stop permit services for new building projects and changes to existing structures.

The **Development Services partners** in the Permit Center are:

- Building Division
- Public Works Department (*also see Public Works section*)
- Fire Department (*also see Fire section*)
- Planning Division

In 2015-16, Development Services:

- issued nearly 36,800 building permits (11,700 online),
- served over 33,300 Permit Center customers, and
- processed over 2,800 planning applications and adjustments.

Planning applications, plan checks, field inspections, and building permits all bottomed out in 2009-10, but have rebounded. 2015-16 saw sustained workloads from 2014-15, when plan checks and building permits were higher than they had been in at least ten years. In fact, planning adjustments, plan checks, and building permits all saw slight increases from 2014-15. Building inspections were slightly lower.

Although the value and volume of construction remained lower than 2013-14's historic levels, it remained higher than it had been in 2012-13 and earlier years. Trends varied across residential, commercial, and industrial categories, with new industrial development nearly doubling in value from 2014-15 levels.

### The Permit Center located in City Hall



Source: Auditor photo from Fall 2015

#### Development Services 2015-16 Summary

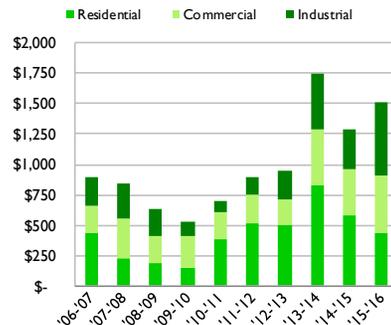
Partner	Revenue (\$millions)	Positions (rounded)
Building	\$29.5	168
Public Works	\$10.3	60
Fire	\$6.9	34
Planning	\$5.9	32
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$52.6</b>	<b>294</b>

Source: 2015-16 Modified Budget as outlined in the City's 2016-17 Adopted Operating Budget

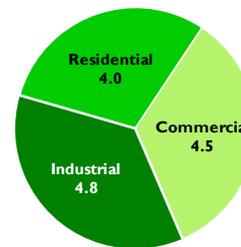
#### Value of Building Activity (\$millions)



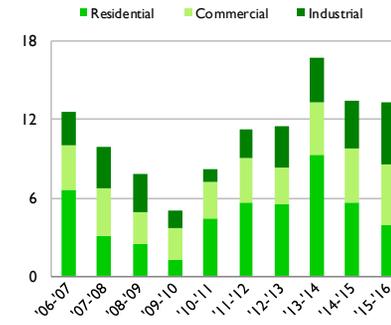
#### Value of Construction (\$millions)



#### Volume of Building Activity (millions of square feet)



#### Volume of Construction (millions of square feet)

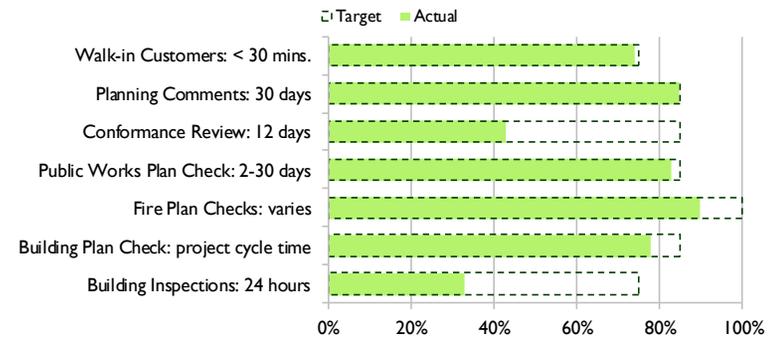


Development Services projects vary broadly, from replacing a residential water heater to large, mixed-use developments of many thousands of square feet. One project may require multiple permits and inspections. Some projects require approval through a public hearing, but most (an estimated 80 percent), require only administrative approval. Projects only go through Public Works or the Fire Department when they have impacts on public facilities (e.g., traffic, streets, sewers, utilities, flood hazard zone), or fire-related issues (e.g., need for fire sprinkler systems or fire alarm systems), respectively.

The City offers a number of programs to expedite project delivery for companies, small businesses, and homeowners. However, turnaround times continue to be a primary concern. Timeliness of individual steps in the development process varies depending on the scale and complexity of a given project, and can involve one to all four of the Development Services partners listed above. Annual timeliness targets were met for only one of the seven selected permitting processes.

Staffing levels in PBCE are still lower than they were when development activity was slower. The department continues to address ongoing staff vacancies. To free up staff and provide further convenience to customers, PBCE has expanded the availability of online permits. Of the 36,800 building permits PBCE issued in 2015-16, nearly 11,700 were online permits, many of which previously would have required more staff time and trips to the Permit Center.

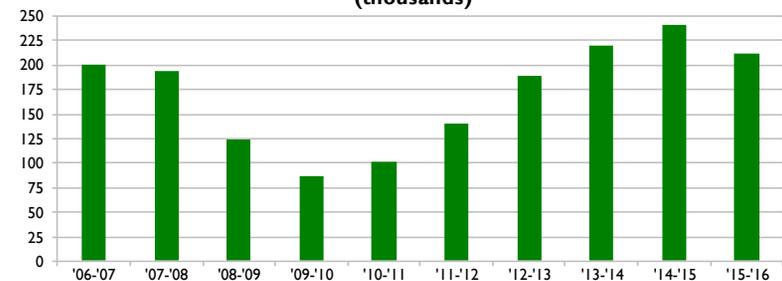
Timeliness of Development Services\*



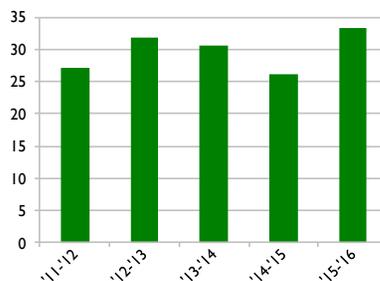
Source: PBCE from the City's Permits Database

\*These selected measures may occur simultaneously; some are dependent on completion of particular processes. For other Fire and Public Works measures related to Development Services, see the Fire and Public Works chapters.

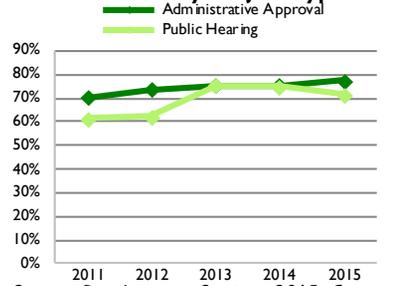
Building Inspections (thousands)



Permit Center Customers (thousands)



Development Services Overall Customer Satisfaction by Project Type



Source: Development Services 2015 Customer Satisfaction Survey

Planning Applications and Plan Checks



