



**City of Seattle**

Edward B. Murray, Mayor

**Department of Construction and Inspections**

Nathan Torgelson, Director

# Code Compliance Division 2015: The Year in Review

**Seattle DCI Code Compliance Hotline: 206-615-0808**

**RRIO Helpline: 206-684-4110**

M, Tu, Th, F: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

W: 10:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

<http://web6.seattle.gov/dpd/complaintform/>

# Message from the Director

Three main themes appear when looking back on the work of the Code Compliance Division in 2015.

1. 2015 was busier than 2014.
2. Our work made a positive difference.
3. We had some big successes and face some ongoing challenges.

The report that follows offers a glimpse of the day-to-day work we do. To my regret, the report does not do a good enough job of highlighting the extraordinary team work and prodigious efforts of the staff who work here. I wish I had better ways to share how every staff member on this team helps maintain quality of life in our neighborhoods, the safety of rental housing and the built and natural environment, and how they serve marginalized populations, providing help when living situations become untenable. Here's a sampling. (Read details within.)

- Initial contacts to the division up nearly 50%, approaching 25,000
- 101 Just Cause Eviction cases (85% resolved through voluntary compliance)
- 205 Relocation License applications
- 236 tenant households qualified for relocation assistance under TRA0
- Registrations and verifications for on-water dwellings began in June 2015 when the new Shoreline code took effect
- 68% of all violations resolved through voluntary actions
- Five inspectors certified for inspection and sampling of lead paint
- RRIO program expands
  - Registered properties top 15,000; more than 214,000 registered units
  - Random inspections start; 2000 inspection notices sent
  - City Council calls for more attention to auditing the performance of the program
- City collects nearly \$3.5 million dollars from a property owner with many neglected properties in the Roosevelt Neighborhood.
  - Three vacant homes demolished; RR Hardware building demolished (in January 2016) after a fire in December 2015.
- 66 households received emergency relocation assistance
- Vacant buildings fostered public safety hazards and highlighted problems with “squatters”
- Marijuana laws are updated; SDCl works with Finance and Administrative Services Department to close or regulate marijuana businesses
- Significant accumulations of garbage and junk abated at ten different properties after obtaining court orders

I hope you enjoy reviewing our year. Please contact us if you have questions, ideas, or a problem in your neighborhood. Although we don't have magic wands, we're a great resource and we make a difference for issues related to the codes that SDCl enforces. (See appendix 1).

Best regards,  
**FAITH L. LUMSDEN**  
Code Compliance Director

# What We Do

People contact us when something is not right where they live or work or in their neighborhoods. Our job is to help resolve problems involving land use, housing, building, tenant protections, and a wide range of other related codes. We also provide information on issues and services provided by other departments and help make sure the people who contact us can find and connect with the right resource.

Our Housing and Zoning Technicians are the front door to the services we provide. These staff manage six main channels of communication:

1. the Complaint Hotline,
2. the Department's online complaint form,
3. referrals from the City Customer Service Bureau (CSB),
4. the RRIO Helpline,
5. an online Q&A tool, and
6. a walk-in RRIO Help Desk.

Table 1 displays contact volumes for the past five years. Figure 1 provides a graphic display of the increase in business at the code compliance division.

**Table 1: Contacts to SDCI Code Compliance Division**

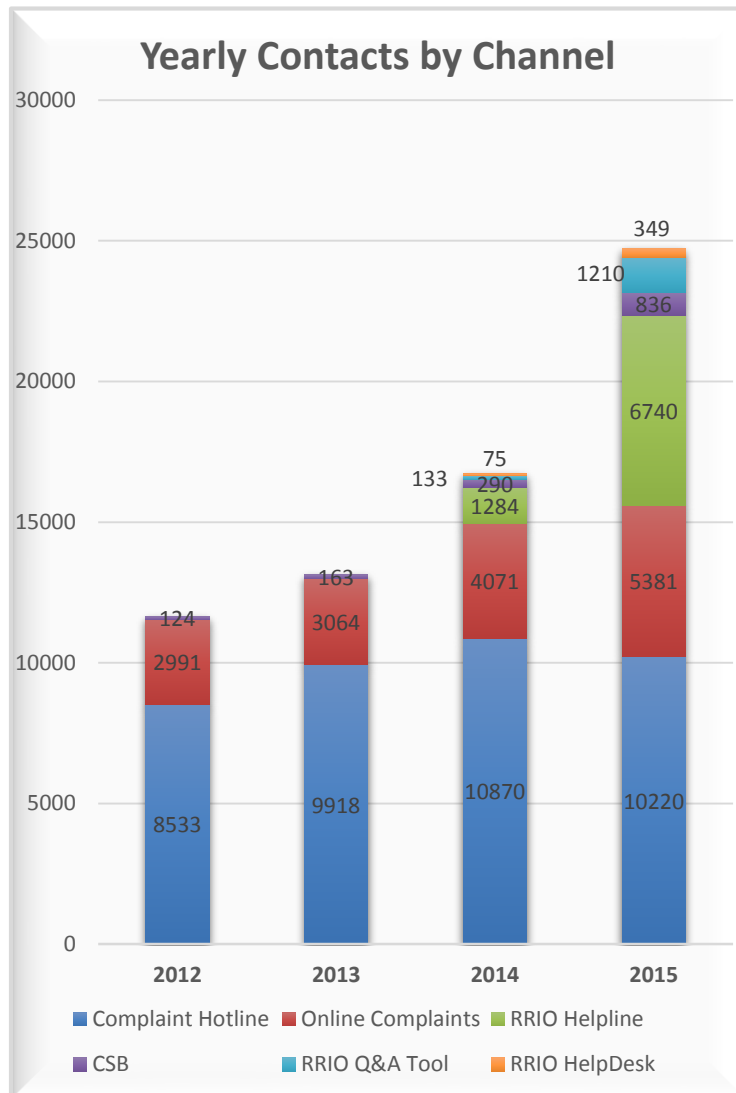
	2012	2013	2014	2015	One year % Change	Four year % Change
<b>Complaint Hotline</b>	8533	9918	10870	10220	-6 %	20%
<b>Online Complaints</b>	2991	3064	4071	5381	32%	80%
<b>RRIO Helpline</b>			1284	6740	425%	- -
<b>CSB</b>	124	163	290	836	188%	674%
<b>RRIO Q&amp;A Tool</b>			133	1210	810%	- -
<b>RRIO Help Desk</b>			75	349	365%	- -
<b>Totals</b>	<b>11648</b>	<b>13145</b>	<b>16723</b>	<b>24736</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>212%</b>
<b>+/- over prior year</b>	-	12.9%	27.2%	47.9%		

*The three channels for RRIO contacts, the Helpline, Q&A Tool, and Help Desk, opened in 2014.*

## Catching all contacts

In addition to these contacts which are systematically tracked, some staff receive calls and email directly from customers. This is particularly true for the Property Owner and Tenant Assistance (POTA) group. Each year, the POTA team has hundreds of direct contacts in addition to those coming through the standard channels.

**Figure 1: Yearly Contacts by Channel**



### Increasing work outpaces staffing

Workload coming in the front door went up nearly 50% over 2014 and has doubled since 2012. Although RRIO accounts for many contacts, complaint volumes also increased. See Table 2. In 2015 the Division added 4 new positions but due to retirements and other turnover, had to bring on 11 new employees.

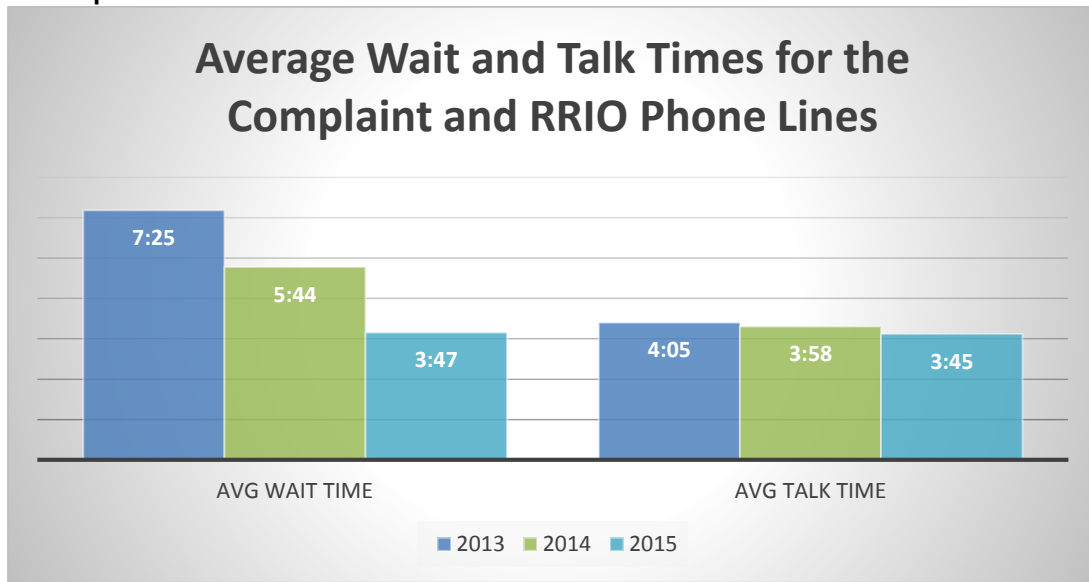
## Telephone Metrics

The Division staffs two separate telephone lines: the Complaint Hotline and the RRIO Helpline. The combined average talk time between customers and technicians for both telephone lines was 3:45 (minutes:seconds). This is a slight drop compared to the average talk time over the last four years. The average wait time decreased by just over a third from 5:44 in 2014 to 3:47 in 2015. Technician staffing increased from four to five employees last year which accounts for the large drop in wait times.

For the Complaint Hotline only, average wait time for customers decreased by just under two minutes from 5:55 in 2014 to 4:06 in 2015, a 30% reduction. The average talk time also decreased from 3:52 in 2014 to 3:42 in 2015.

For the RRIO Helpline, the average wait time dropped by almost a minute and a half or 33% from 4:11 in 2014 to 2:47 in 2015. The average talk time also decreased from 4:49 in 2014 to 3:56 in 2015.

Figure 2: Telephone Metrics



## Complaints

After the initial contacts, staff consolidate any duplicate complaints, refer to other departments as needed, and, for issues within the authority of SDCI, create a trackable complaint or service request in the department's permit tracking system.

These complaints are grouped by type or category, including housing, zoning, construction/site/trees, weeds, vacant buildings, shoreline, tenant relocation (TRAO), just cause eviction (JCEO), noise and others. Some land use categories of special concern such as junk storage and marijuana complaints are specifically tracked. RRIO contacts are typically managed outside the complaint system.

Table 2: Complaints created (Service Requests)

Type \ Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	1 year % change	4 years % change
CONST/SITE/TREES	917	1075	1219	<b>1315</b>	8%	43%
HOUSE	441	493	474	<b>465</b>	-2%	5%
NOISE	294	292	407	<b>656</b>	61%	123%
SHORE	19	25	19	<b>97</b>	411%	411%
UNFIT	1			<b>3</b>		
VACNT	238	263	284	<b>364</b>	28%	53%
WEEDS	1257	1057	1305	<b>1654</b>	27%	32%
ZONE-OTHER	825	997	1045	<b>1230</b>	18%	49%
ZONE-JUNK	421	394	501	<b>528</b>	5%	25%
MARIJUANA			0	<b>56</b>		
TENANT ASSIST.	147	152	264	<b>349</b>	32%	137%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>4560</b>	<b>4748</b>	<b>5518</b>	<b>6717</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>47%</b>

Yearly totals have been adjusted down from prior years to correct for errors recently discovered in the SDCI automated reporting system.

Table 2 provides a four year breakdown of complaints received. In 2015 the division saw notable increases in shoreline complaints, along with many issues related to noise, vacant buildings, and weeds. The City's new Shoreline Code took effect in 2015, which may be related to the increase in shoreline complaints. Increases in noise and construction complaints are likely related to continuing high levels of development activity. Construction/Site/Trees totaled 85% other construction, 10% site, 5% trees, respectively.



**Vacant Building** complaints also showed steady increases and in 2015 generated especially high concern on buildings that were illegally occupied by trespassers. SDCI worked closely with the Seattle Police and Fire Departments, who also coordinated with human services providers, in efforts to secure these structures and minimize public safety hazards. The issues with trespassers continue in 2016 and have led to the assignment of an additional inspector to work on vacant building complaints.

**Marijuana.** In 2015 we also saw an increase in complaints related to marijuana businesses. The City adopted new marijuana licensing requirements that are administered by the Finance and Administrative Services Department (FAS). Those regulations along with Land Use Code changes adopted in January 2016, establish a new City framework for regulating both recreational and medical marijuana production, processing and sales. SDCI established a team approach in 2015 to ensure we can promptly respond to questions or complaints regarding marijuana businesses and to provide assistance to FAS regarding marijuana licensing issues.



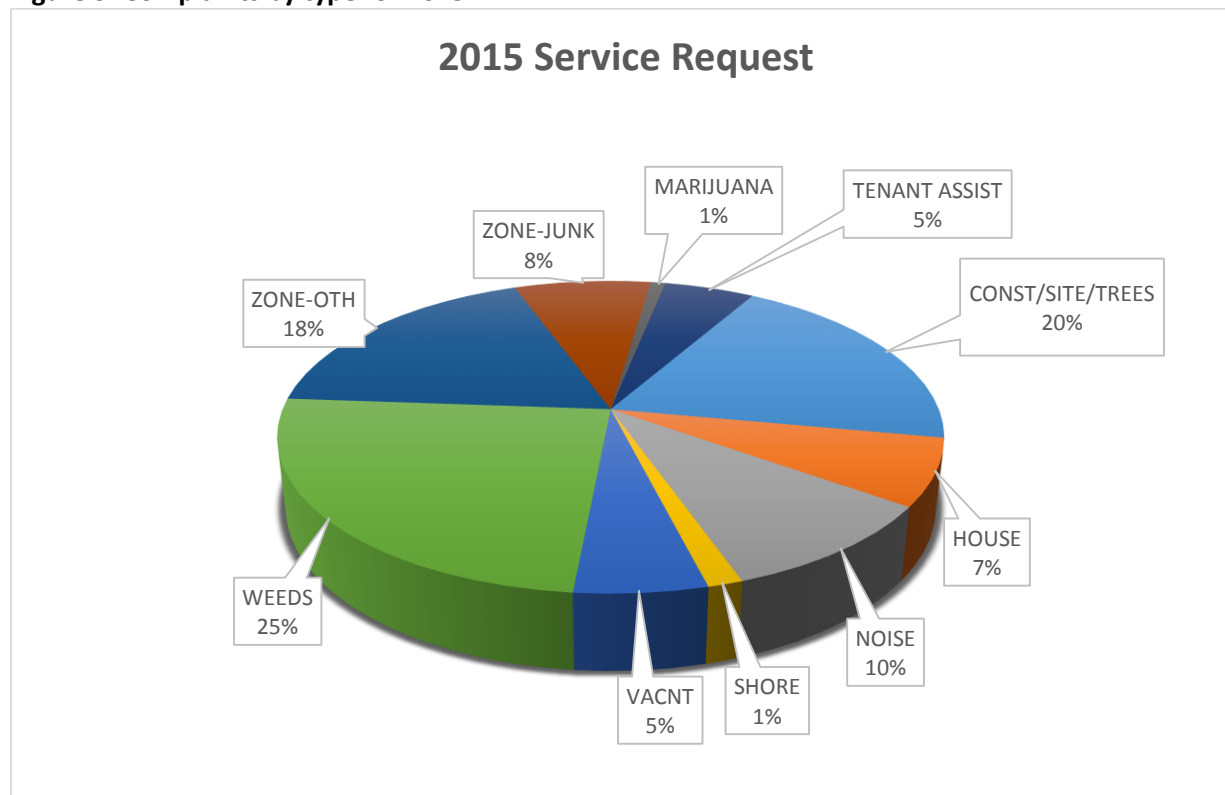
**Weeds and vegetation** are another area of consistently increasing complaints. City code requires property owners to keep vegetation from blocking or seriously impeding travel on adjacent sidewalks. Overgrown vegetation on private property, however, is not regulated. Most weeds and vegetation complaints are handled by mailing an alert to the owner of the property. As a result of increasing use of online tools including the Find It Fix It mobile phone app, many people are now sending photos that help SDCI staff evaluate weeds complaints before deciding whether to send just the vegetation alert or whether to assign an inspector to the complaint.

**Tenant Assistance issues.** The SDCI tracking systems were not used in previous years to record complaints about tenant relocation, emergency assistance, just cause eviction, and other tenant-related questions not directly tied to physical conditions at the property. For 2016, staff are tracking complaints or service requests by hand, and in 2017 these will be included in the new SDCI permit and complaint

tracking system. The figures in Table 2 (Complaints created) for tenant assistance reflect only the actual cases where violations were found and appear to significantly undercount actual complaints.

See Figure 3 for a one-year snapshot of workload by type of complaint (Service Request).

**Figure 3: Complaints by type for 2015**



## After the Complaint

All complaints are assigned to an inspector, with the exception of weeds complaints, which are mainly handled via mailed notices to property owners. Some complaints, such as those related to the housing code, require inspectors to schedule appointments with the complainant. Other investigations such as those for construction without a permit or outdoor/junk storage can be worked into the schedule without appointments. The Department prioritizes complaints so that its response to potential emergency situations such as rental housing with no heat or power or a structure damaged by fire or landslide is immediate or at most a one-working-day turnaround. General construction complaints such as working without a permit or not following the approved plans are targeted for a five-day turnaround, and less urgent issues including land use or zoning issues such as outdoor/junk storage receive a ten-day turnaround. Non-emergency housing code complaints have a seven-day response target.

Approximately 48 percent of complaints are closed with a No Violation finding after investigation. Complaints where the inspector finds a violation may be resolved quickly in the complaint stage through voluntary compliance or turned into an enforcement case. Table 3 shows the number of enforcement



cases opened over the past four years. Table 3 also shows the number of Tenant Relocation License applications and Floating Residence applications. These applications are tracked as cases but do not indicate code violations. If a case is closed before a citation or notice of violation is issued we consider the closure voluntary compliance.

**Table 3: Cases Created**

	2012	2013	2014	2015	1 year % change	4 years % change
CONST/SITE/TREES	408	388	488	479	-2%	17%
HOUSE	348	407	382	332	-13%	-5%
NOISE	28	21	45	42	-7%	50%
SHORE	11	10	13	44	238%	300%
UNFIT	8	7		3		
VACNT	182	178	200	245	23%	35%
WEEDS	171	226	211	278	32%	63%
ZONE-OTHER	373	449	441	469	6%	26%
ZONE-JUNK	410	410	421	469	11%	14%
MARIJUANA		2	9	43	378%	
JCEO	38	47	78	101	29%	166%
TRAO-APPLICATION	66	89	161	205	27%	211%
TRAO-CASE	42	15	23	36	57%	-14%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2085</b>	<b>2249</b>	<b>2472</b>	<b>2746</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>32%</b>

Floating Residences created work similar to case work but are not a violation. Registration began in 2015 and should be complete in 2016.

	2012	2013	2014	2015	1 year chg	4 years chg
<b>Floating Residences</b>				453	---	---



The number of Shoreline cases increased notably in 2015 compared to prior years. Other types of cases generally grew, matching increased numbers of service requests. Construction/Site/Trees cases were 69% Construction cases, 28% site/grading/drainage case, and 3% tree cutting cases

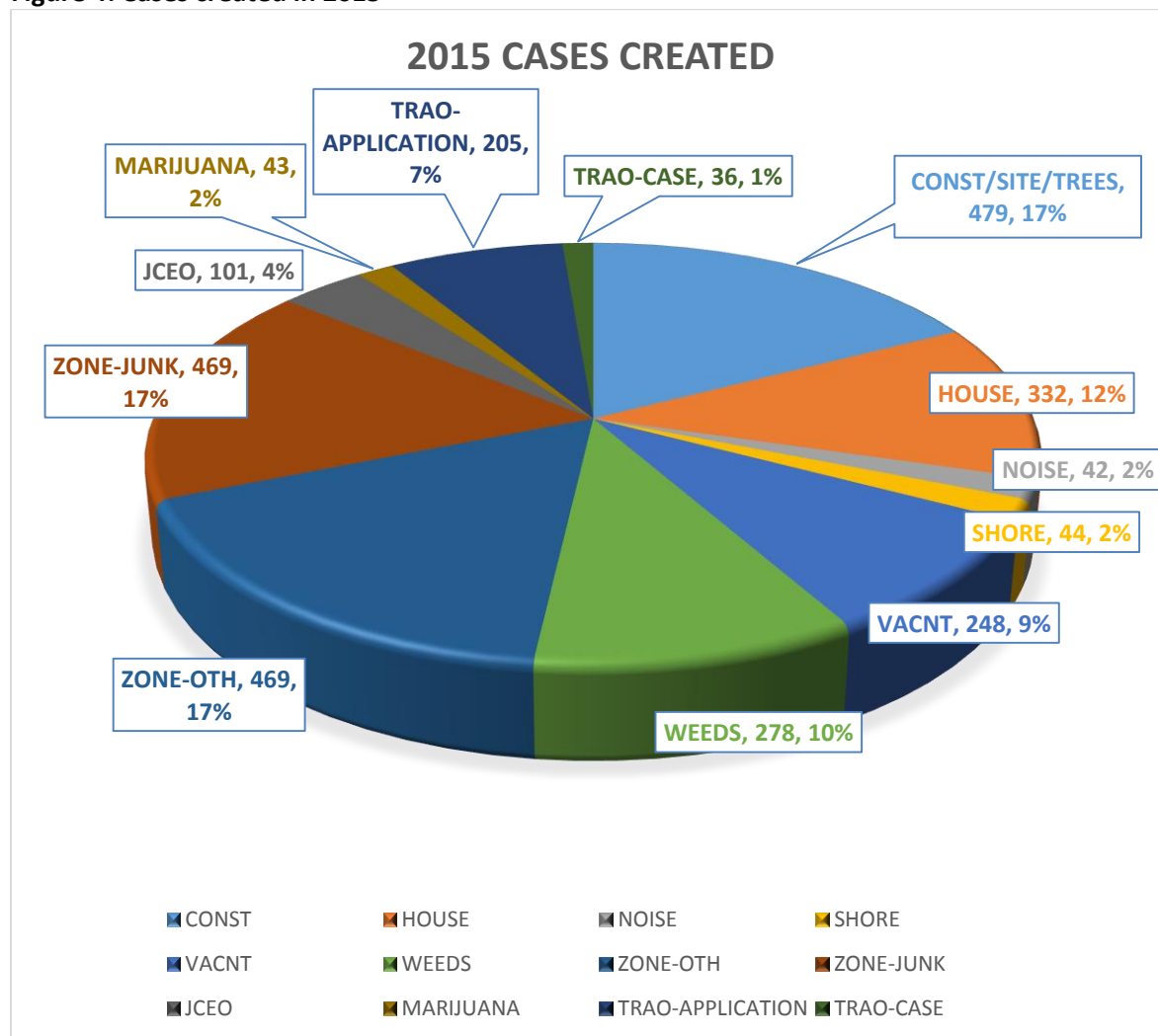
Only in the area of housing code violations did the division see a small drop in the number of cases created over four years. This trend may be related to better property maintenance because of the Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance (RRIO), or to higher levels of voluntary compliance by landlords. The drop could also be a chance occurrence. Even though housing code cases



decreased, other tenant issues related to just cause eviction and tenant relocation have increased significantly over the four year period.

Figure 4 graphically displays the types of cases in 2015.

**Figure 4: Cases created in 2015**

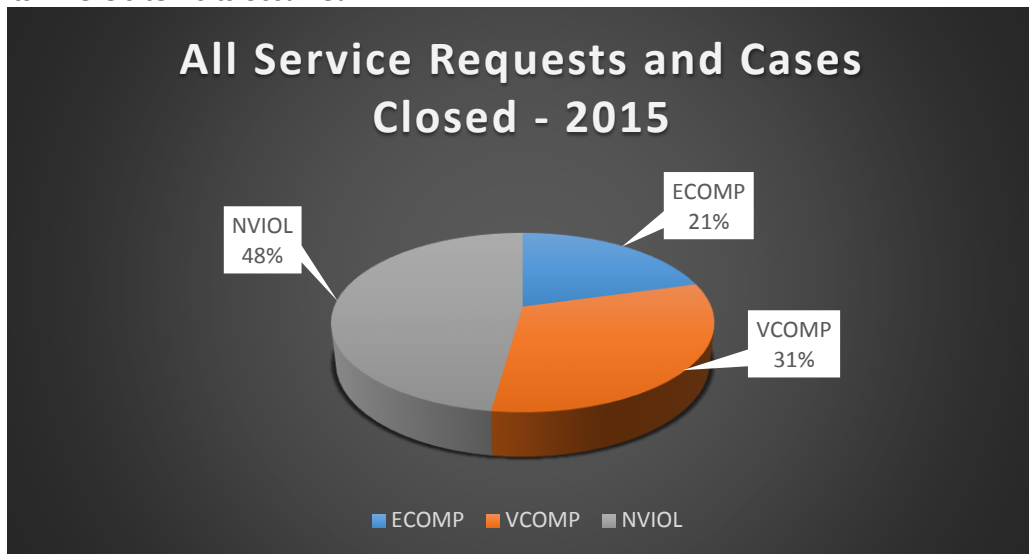


JCEO = Just Cause Eviction Ordinance. TRAO = Tenant Relocation Assistance Ordinance.

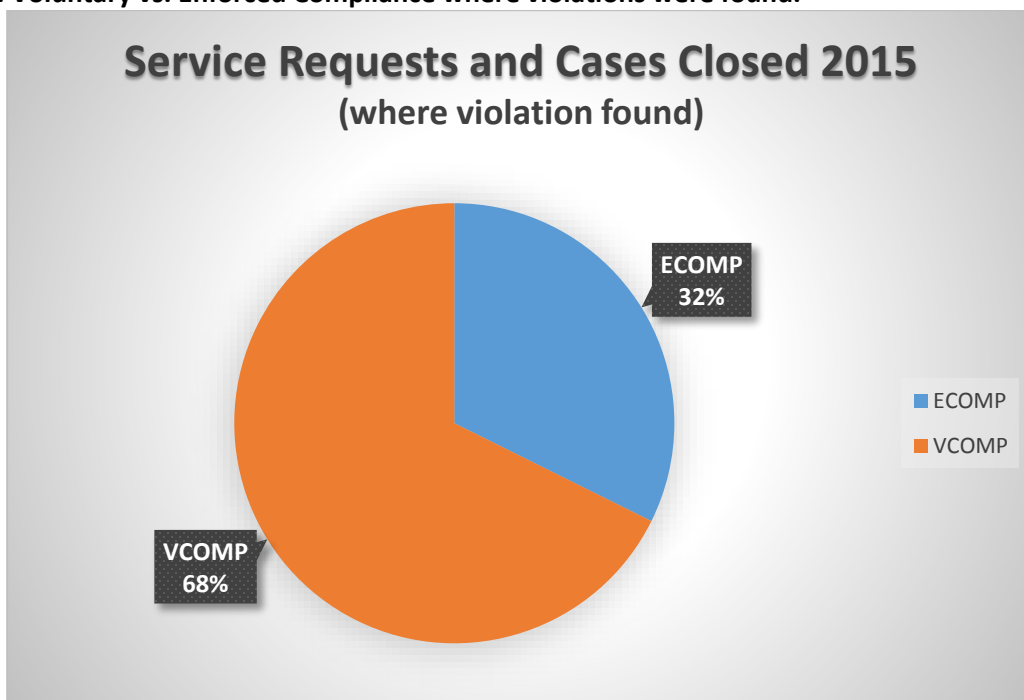
## Resolving complaints and cases

Every service request, with the exception of many weeds complaints, requires a site visit by an inspector. Figure 5 shows that in just under half of complaints (48%) that we investigate we do not find a violation. Figure 6 displays the breakdown of voluntary compliance versus enforced compliance where a violation is found.

**Figure 5: Voluntary compliance (VCOMP), Enforced Compliance (ECOMP) and No Violation (NVIOL) on complaints where site visits occurred.**



**Figure 6: Voluntary vs. Enforced Compliance where violations were found.**



# Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance (RRIO)

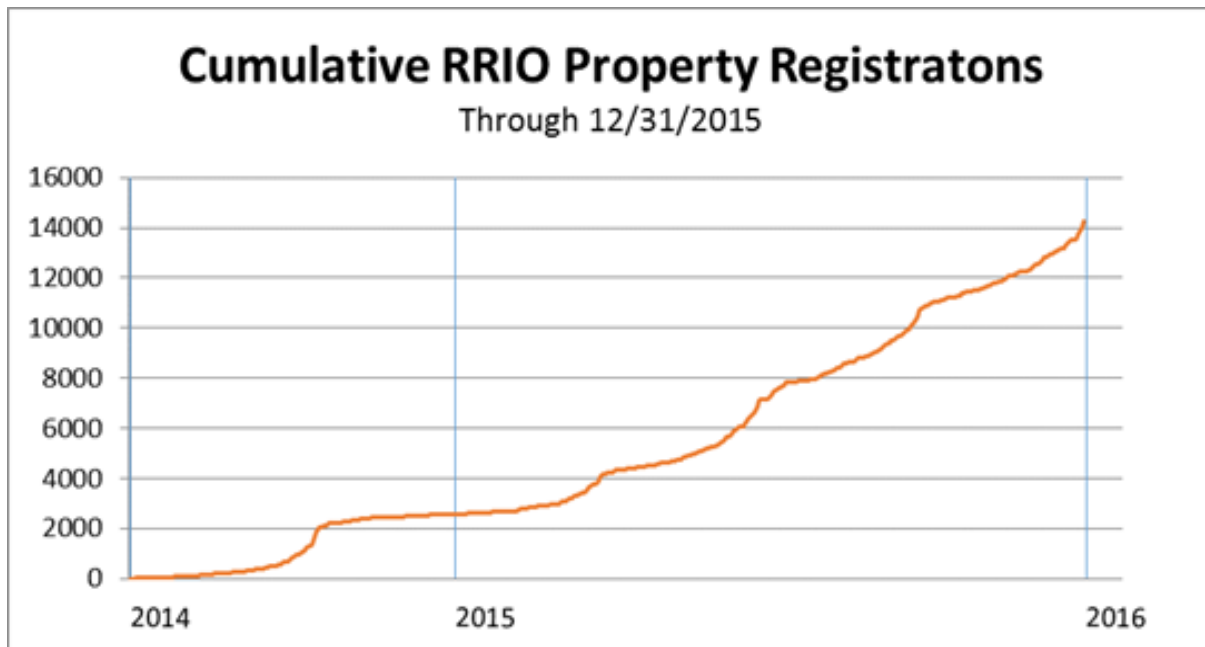
2015 was the first year of significant property registration volumes. Properties with 5-9 units were due to register in March of 2015 and three of seven registration due dates for properties with 1-4 units were due quarterly after that. 63% of registrations were completed online. Other registrations were completed by mail or in person and processed by cashiers and administrative staff. Many customers received assistance via phone calls to SDCI staff and with the on-line registration by process.

**Table 4: Registration totals**

Total Property Registrations as of 12/31/15	14,241
<b>Property Registrations in 2015</b>	<b>11,676</b>
Total Units Registered as of 12/31/2015	124,050
<b>Units Registered in 2015</b>	<b>34,895</b>

The number of rental housing units newly registered in 2015 was 34,895 which contributed to a total of 124,050 units registered at year end. Registration will continue with four more registration deadlines through the end of 2016.

**Figure 7: Properties registered under RRIO program**



## RRIO Inspections

RRIO inspections started in 2015. The RRIO program randomly selected 2,000 properties over the course of the year. Property owners could choose to have a Code Compliance inspector or a private inspector complete the work. Property owners could also submit “alternate” inspections such as evidence of a Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) inspection to complete the inspection requirement. Code Compliance inspectors did about 1/3 of the inspection work in 2015.

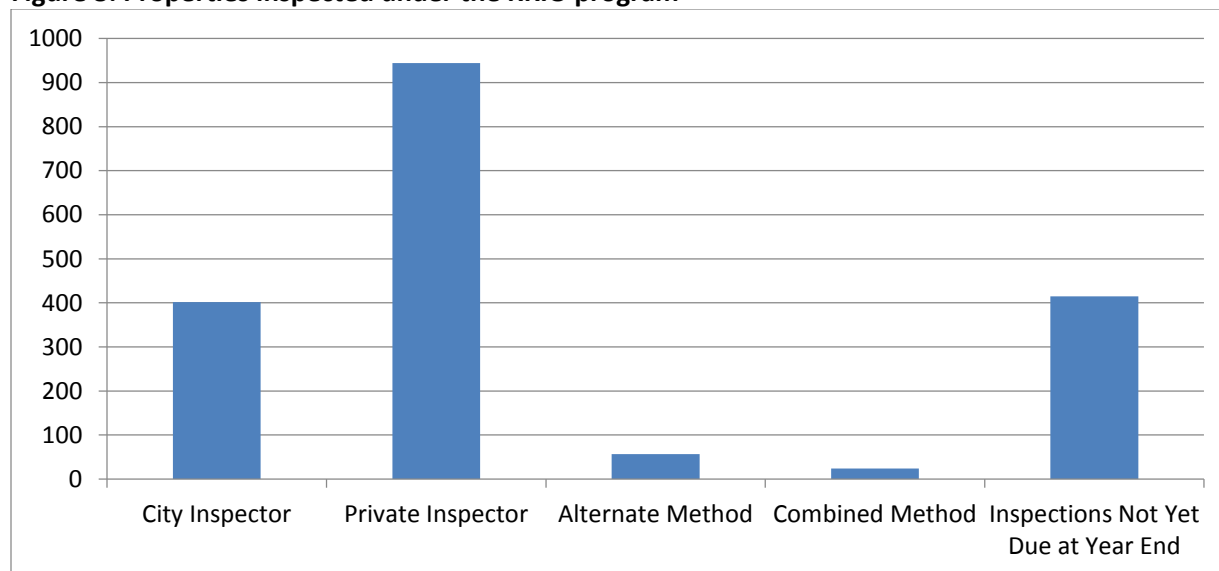
### The RRIO program is working

*At one of the first inspections a City Inspector completed, she discovered that the emergency releases for the bars on the ground floor windows were not functional. Although we had only inspected three units, we could see that all the windows needed repair to allow residents to escape in case of fire. The owner corrected the problem and the property passed its inspection.*

**Table 5: RRIO Inspections 2015**

Properties Selected in 2015	2000
Inspections Completed by Private Inspector	944
Inspections Completed by City Inspector	402
Inspections Completed by Alternate Method	57
Inspections completed by more than one method	24
Inspections still in process at year end	415

**Figure 8: Properties inspected under the RRIO program**



## Enforcement

When voluntary compliance efforts fail, the division issues warning, citations, notices of violation or emergency orders, depending on the type of violation and severity of the condition. Table 6 provides a four year history of formal enforcement actions. The emergency order (EO) totals include Housing Code violations, Vacant Building orders to close, and Construction orders typically related to fires or landslides.

**Table 6: Enforcement Actions 2015**

	2012	2013	2014	2015
EO	79	115	110	109
NOV*	866	846	930	965
RRIO NOV				323
Junk Citations	203	217	210	211
Weeds Citations	24	24	42	60
Noise Citations	39	26	41	38
Other Citations	22	23	23	23
Code Compliance Warnings	517	425	405	573
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>1,750</b>	<b>1,676</b>	<b>1,761</b>	<b>2,302</b>
RRIO Registrations – Late Warnings				3,587
RRIO Inspections – Late Warnings				466
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,750</b>	<b>1,676</b>	<b>1,761</b>	<b>6,355</b>

\*NOV = notice of violation

## The Legal Process

When enforcement efforts fail, the division refers cases to the Law Department for a civil court law suit. Table 7 provides a five year history of law referral actions.

**Table 7: Violation Cases Referred to the Law Department**

	2012	2013	2014	2015
Civil abatement (citation junk storage)	8	9	10	9
Building Code violations	30	8	29	25
HBMC* (not including Vacant Buildings; includes emergency orders)	17	7	5	3
Vacant Building violations	3	1	10	5
Abatements	3	0	2	
Land Use Code – Illegal units	10	3	0	2
Land Use Code – other	19	14	14	10
Tenant Relocation Assistance Ordinance	2	3	2	1
Shoreline Code	4	0	2	4
Grading/Critical Areas/Tree	5	1	4	3
Sign Code	5	0	4	1
RRIO (registrations)				5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>68</b>

\*HBMC = Housing and Building Maintenance Code

## Judgments and Settlements; Money collected

When violation cases are referred to the Law Department, we continue to press for compliance with applicable codes. In some cases, before a lawsuit is filed, or before a case goes to trial, we are successful in gaining compliance and settle for a small penalty amount. Other cases are closed through a default judgment because the responsible party does not show up in court. These often result in large judgments that may sit on the books uncollected for quite some time. Following a judgment, the Department, in consultation with the Law Department, may settle for less than the full judgment when we see that compliance has finally been achieved.

Total judgments entered in 2015 were **\$544,278** excluding the Sisley cases noted below, the department collected **\$174,160** in 2015 from judgments, settlements, and agreements not to sue.

### Sisley cases: **\$3,485,762.05.**

The City collected nearly \$3.5 million in 2015 from prior judgments (plus interest) entered against Hugh and Martha Sisley. The properties tied to the violations were all in the Roosevelt neighborhood. This money was distributed under a special ordinance passed by the City Council to fund acquisition of property for a neighborhood park, outreach and education for tenants, and \$80,000 to SDCI to help fund increased work with vacant properties.



# The Rest of the Story: or why the numbers matter

**Housing code emergencies.** In 2015, the division issued 55 emergency orders to immediately repair housing conditions such as lack of heat, water, or power or backed up sewage. In 12 cases, we followed up with orders to vacate and close housing units or full residential buildings because the emergency conditions were not corrected. These cases included a residential property seriously damaged by fire (Boylston Hotel) and several houses with multiple tenants in the Roosevelt neighborhood that lacked power or water. In connection with the vacate and close orders the Department issued checks to 66 low income tenant households for emergency relocation assistance. (This type of emergency assistance is recoverable from the property owner.)

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## **Vacant buildings and trespassers (squatters).**

With Seattle's development boom has come an increase in the number of buildings that sit empty waiting for permits to be issued. In addition, the remnants of the foreclosure crisis continue to plague some neighborhoods.



In 2015, our vacant building inspectors issued 65 orders to close or secure a vacant building. This compares to 15 in 2014 and 16 in 2013—a 400% increase over 2014.

When vacant buildings are inadequately maintained or monitored, they become ripe for occupation by squatters. A prominent example this past year was the old Seattle Times building on Fairview Avenue North. (See photos this page).

When the building was targeted by squatters and the property owners' efforts to secure the building proved inadequate, SDCI worked with other agencies including police, fire, human services and the utility departments to try to keep the building closed against trespass.

This building has been a particular challenge with trespassers using power tools to break through secured doors and even welded barriers to re-enter the building.





**Marijuana Complaints.** Changes in laws relating to marijuana at the state and city levels meant that SDCI staff had new and different work in 2015. Medical marijuana stores came under regulation for the first time with an emphasis on licensing and permitting.

In 2015, SDCI inspectors partnered with licensing staff at Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) to identify existing marijuana businesses and prepare and mail informational letters.



SDCI staff researched and inspected 72 properties approved under I-502 for compliance with city land use requirements, as well as an additional 131 unlicensed medical marijuana businesses. Sixty-five Notices of Violation were issued as a result of this canvassing effort, with a goal for the businesses to either gain permit approval or close.

SDCI inspectors continue their work of evaluating the location and permit history of marijuana businesses. This information helps FAS and the Law Department make recommendations to the state Liquor and Cannabis Board regarding state license applications, and also supports City licensing decisions.

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**Floating homes, house barges, floating on-water residences, and vessels containing dwelling units.**

In 2015, an updated Shoreline code took effect. Like the prior code, the new Shoreline code prioritizes uses that are water-dependent or water-related. This means the presence of floating residences on our waters brings special regulatory challenges to balance industrial, commercial and recreational uses with the interests of those who enjoy a unique lifestyle in floating residences.

The new code requires SDCI to establish record of the floating residences that were present prior to June 15, 2015. To meet this requirement, SDCI staff photo-surveyed 148 Shoreline District properties with floating dwellings, to document the presence of nearly 800 floating homes, vessels containing dwelling units, house barges, and floating on-water residences.

By the end of 2015, SDCI had received 592 applications to register or verify floating dwellings (all types), and 453 of these were approved as of the end of 2015.



**Premises Abatements: Junk Storage.** Storage of junk and garbage at residential properties does more than depress neighbors' property values—it also can present public health issues. Our inspectors monitor clean-ups of problem properties after SDCI obtains court orders allowing us onto the property. We cleared ten properties in 2015.

The photo to the left shows a small portion of a property whose owner had stored meat, fish and other organic and non-organic items outside for many months. Neighbors were grateful to have the horrible smell from the property finally cleaned up.

The department also cleared the outside of a vacant 7 unit apartment building in West Seattle that was overflowing with junk and garbage. Rats have heavily colonized this property and we are working with the

King County Public Health Department to secure a court order to abate the inside of the structure. Ultimately, this structure may need to be torn down.

The department also cleared other locations where the debris included drug paraphernalia such as hypodermic needles and organic wastes.



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**Demolition Orders.** We ordered three vacant residential buildings in the Roosevelt Neighborhood demolished in 2015 after making a finding they were unfit for habitation and that the cost of repair would have exceeded the cost to completely rebuild the structures. In 2016 we are seeing increased numbers of buildings unfit for human habitation, partly due to the destruction caused by trespassers who illegally occupy vacant buildings.

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**Tenant Protections: Relocation Assistance.** 2015 saw a record number of Tenant Relocation License applications (205). The previous high of 197 was set in 2007. These License applications are submitted by developers who plan to demolish or completely re-model a residential property. Additionally, a record 237 low income tenant households received relocation assistance under the Tenant Relocation Assistance Ordinance (TRAO). TRAO payments are funded one half by the developer or property owner and one half by the City.

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**Tenant Protections: Just Cause Eviction.** Just Cause Eviction cases spiked to 102, up dramatically from the historical averages. This increase flows from increased public awareness of city tenant protections and increased staff availability to investigate complaints.

**Tenant Protections: TRAO Avoidance.** In November 2015 the Tenant Relocation Assistance Ordinance was amended to make it more difficult to use rent increases as a way to avoid applying for a Tenant Relocation License. SDCI investigated the first complaint under this new law in 2015. As a result, the property owner applied for a Tenant Relocation License and also reduced the rent increase. We learned that these investigations are difficult and very time consuming, but in this instance, well worth the effort. (See testimonial below from one of the tenants affected by this case.)

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**Tenant Protections: Emergency Assistance at Boylston Hotel.**

The Boylston Hotel suffered an electrical fire which caused widespread damage throughout the building and displaced 44 people from 39 units. Five people were hospitalized. The Boylston was one of the few affordable places in the downtown Seattle area that accepted marginalized tenants, including those with criminal records. Displacement for these vulnerable residents, many of whom were long-term, put them at real risk of homelessness. After DPD inspected and issued an Emergency Order to Vacate and Close, emergency relocation assistance was advanced to 26 households with a total disbursement of \$91,938.00. Almost all of the displaced tenants found new housing within a month of the fire and said that relocation assistance made it possible. The property owner worked closely with the City and has reimbursed the emergency assistance dollars we advanced.

### A tenant shares her story

*Not long after the change to the Tenant Relocation Assistance Ordinance, I got notice of a rent increase of about 40%, which came just two months after an increase of over 15%. This was truly catastrophic for me.... The new rent rate totaled more than 75% of my income, and paying this rate, even for a short period of time, would have put me in a big financial hole.*

*My landlord's compliance with the change to the law made me eligible for relocation assistance.... My landlord also offered to rescind the rent increase. Although I had already signed a new lease and could not take advantage of this offer, I was thrilled to learn that he had made the same offer to other tenants in the building who had received notice of similar increases.*

*This change to the law made a real difference in my life by transforming a housing crisis into a manageable situation*

N.B., tenant helped by TRAO Avoidance law



**RRIO Outreach.** RRIO completed another year of extensive outreach to rental property owners and renters, including:

- three landlord education workshops in cooperation with the Rental Housings Association,
- presented at two landlord conferences,
- online and paper advertising
- an earned media campaign that received coverage on King 5 news, KOMO 4 news, Dailey Journal of Commerce, and a handful of other papers
- developed renter focused [video](#) and [brochure](#)

RRIO will continue outreach efforts in 2016, with continued online advertising, landlord education workshops, enhanced distribution of the program brochure and video, and renter outreach sessions.

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**RRIO Race and Social Justice focus.** The RRIO program took several actions in support of the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI). Renter-focused [brochures](#) and a [video](#) were translated into 13 and 10 languages respectively. A portion of the advertising was placed with ethnic media. RRIO also helped initiate and staffed an outreach event at Goodwill Industries. RRIO continued to work with Seattle Chinatown-International District PDA on outreach and problem solving in Chinatown. Finally, the RRIO program did a two-year review and update of the program's Racial Equity Toolkit analysis.

RRIO will continue with inclusive outreach in 2016. In coordination with Department of Neighborhoods, RRIO has scheduled or is planning approximately eight outreach events like the Goodwill event. In addition, RRIO is working with the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs ethnic media liaison on an earned and paid media campaign in ethnic media.

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**Community Events.** Code Compliance staff participated in six Find It Fix It walks with the Mayor and other City Departments. The walks are a great way to bring attention to the services SDCI provides.

## In our own words...

*I got called out for a housing inspection to an early 1900's duplex in Ballard in the summer of 2015. This was one of those houses with the second unit up on top. It had an old two story exterior stairway to the upper unit that had taken a beating from all the rainy weather. Over the years, whenever the tenant (a retired school teacher) called the landlord because she had tripped on a rotting step, the landlord would come out and just fix the step(s) that failed. After our inspection and a discussion with the landlord, we were able to get the landlord to do a complete rebuild of the stairway. The tenant, who really could not afford to move, was elated and relieved that she and her friends could feel safe walking up and down the stairway.*

*This describes one way the work we do is so beneficial. It's why I enjoy this work and why it is so rewarding to me.*

- SDCI Inspector

# Looking Ahead

- A. 2016 brings an opportunity to fill vacant positions, train new staff and expand the levels of service the Code Compliance team provides.
- B. We are working with a stakeholder group to make improvements in the RRIO program's private inspection system. This will help avoid situations where a building passes the RRIO randomized-unit inspections but still has other units significantly below minimum housing code standards.
- C. We have increased staffing for monitoring vacant buildings and are working with an interdepartmental team to develop better strategies for dealing with trespassers.
- D. We will complete the floating residence verifications and registrations for all floating homes, house barges, floating on-water residences, and vessels with dwelling units in 2016.
- E. December 31, 2016 will mark the last of nine registration deadlines under the RRIO program. By year end, all rental housing properties in the city should be registered with SDCI and subject to property inspections verifying they meet minimum housing code standards.
- F. The Property Owner and Tenant Assistance team and the RRIO program will expand their outreach efforts to provide education to tenants and landlords about requirements related to the housing code, RRIO inspections, just cause eviction, notices of rent increases, and tenant relocation assistance.
- G. We continue to work with the Law Department and the Finance and Administrative Services Department to enforce revised land use code and licensing requirements for marijuana activity.
- H. Code Compliance, along with all of SDCI, will shift our records at the end of the year to a new electronic permit tracking system. This will allow us to merge our RRIO records (already on the new system) with all other department permitting, inspections and complaint records.

# Appendix 1

SDCI enforces the following codes and ordinances:

- Land Use Code and Shoreline Master Program
- Housing and Building Maintenance Code
- Tenant Relocation Assistance Ordinance
- Just Cause Eviction Ordinance
- Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance
- Noise Ordinance
- Tree Protection Ordinance
- Weeds and Vegetation Code
- Building, Existing Building and Residential Codes
- Environmentally Critical Areas Code
- Grading Code
- Electrical Code
- Energy Code
- Mechanical Code
- Stormwater Code
- Sign Code
- Condominium and Cooperative Conversion Ordinances
- Historic District requirements and Landmarks Preservation (in conjunction with Department of Neighborhoods)