

Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections

Office of Planning and Community Development

2015 Annual Report

*from the former
Department of
Planning and
Development*



Edward B. Murray City of Seattle Mayor



Seattle is among the fastest growing cities in the nation, growth that supports our booming economy and vibrant culture. At this crucial juncture, the City is revising its Comprehensive Plan to prepare for the additional residents we expect over the coming decades to ensure that neighborhoods remain affordable and livable for all.

As Seattle grows, the Office of Planning and Community Development and Seattle's Department of Construction and Inspections will play a role in implementing my Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda. The goal of our comprehensive strategy is to create 20,000 affordable housing units over the next decade, ensuring that Seattle can remain an affordable, walkable, and equitable community for people of all incomes and backgrounds.

About the Departments

Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections

The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections is responsible for the regulatory and compliance functions related to building and land use activities in the City of Seattle. We are responsible for development and administration of 17 policies and codes for public safety, environmental protection, land use, construction and housing. We have an annual budget of \$72 million and over 370 employees. You can find us on the 18th through 22nd floors of the Seattle Municipal Tower.

Office of Planning and Community Development

In 2015, the Mayor announced the creation of the new Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD), to integrate long range planning across multiple City departments. The goal is to create robust and equitable communities, by coordinating programs and public investments in transportation, parks, housing, and other areas. OPCD is primarily composed of staff from the City Planning division of the former Department of Planning and Development. In addition to planning and implementation functions, a research and analysis division helps to inform strategic, data-driven decision-making in how we grow and invest. The Seattle Planning Commission and the Seattle Design Commission, independent review and advisory bodies, are physically located with OPCD.

Nathan Torgelson

Seattle DCI Director



I am honored to lead the new Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI). Although we have a new name and a new director, for most of you your experience with our department will not change. We continue to oversee the City's regulatory development functions: permitting, construction inspections, code compliance, tenant protections and rental housing registration and inspections. We will also have a small land use code development team.

One of our major initiatives in 2015 that will launch at the end of 2016 is a new permit tracking system which will make following permits easier for you and for staff. Also this year we will forward legislation to the City Council to improve our existing design review program, and we will complete the registration phase of our rental registration program.

Diane Sugimura

OPCD Interim Director



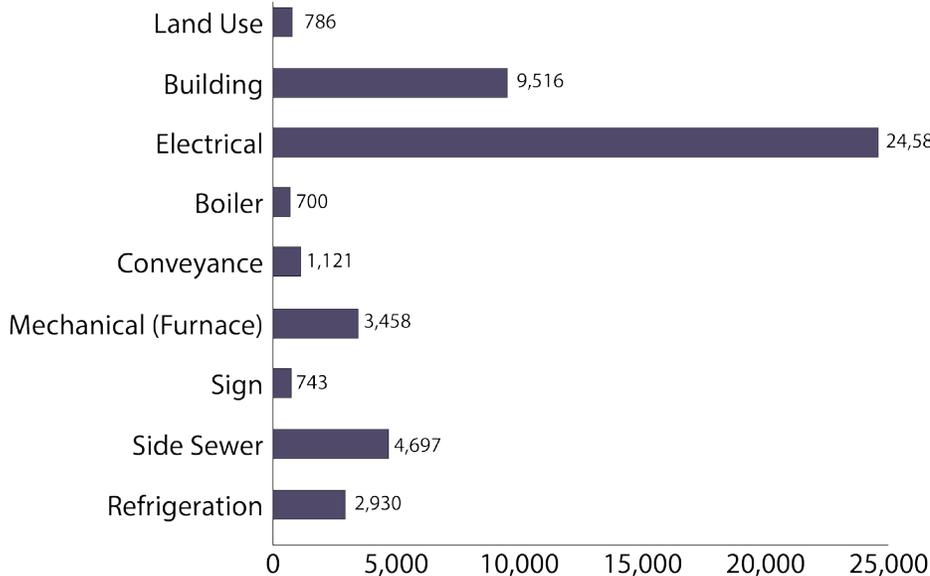
City Planning was busy with a multitude of community development activities across the city. In addition to ongoing work, several major actions in 2015 significantly affect the direction of planning in Seattle. In May, a report entitled Growth and Equity was published. This report presented analysis of the City's growth strategy and impacts on displacement and access to opportunity. In June, the Mayor announced his vision for the new Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD). In his announcement, he emphasized two key words for the new office: "integrated" and "equity." He envisioned a planning office that would better integrate strategic planning across departments, and help coordinate public investments to create livable neighborhoods and an equitable city. In July, the draft Comprehensive Plan—Seattle 2035—was published. Also in July, the Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda Advisory Committee Recommendations were published, as well as the Mayor's Action Plan to Address Seattle's Affordability Crisis. Each of these directives present clear policy direction that will shape planning in Seattle for years to come.

Permits

Permitting activity remained very strong in 2015 with over 10,000 building permit applications and 9,500 building permits issued, both valued at just over \$4 billion. 2014 and 2015 were two of the largest recorded volume and value totals in the last 20 years, even when inflation adjusted values are used. The \$4 billion value of issued permits is an indication that construction continues to be strong. The combination of back-to-back years of high volume and high value (i.e. project complexity) makes it an ongoing challenge to meet our review and inspection targets. However, the staff we hired in 2012-2014 are trained and helping get the work accomplished. In 2015 we received applications for 786 Master Use Permit applications, an 11% increase over the number received in 2014 (709). The net number of units permitted rose again from 6,816 in 2014 to 11,015 in 2015. The volume of electrical permits remained high, holding steady with the number of applications in 2015 at around 24,500. Permitting remained strong again for boilers, conveyance devices, mechanical equipment and systems, and side sewers. All of the permitting activity continued to keep our construction inspection groups very busy. We continued to conduct 98% of building and electrical inspections within 24 hours of receiving the inspection request.



Issued Permits



Total Permits Issued

48,536



Net Number of Units Issued

11,015



Value of Building Permits Issued

\$4.07 Billion



Value of Building Applications

\$4.09 Billion

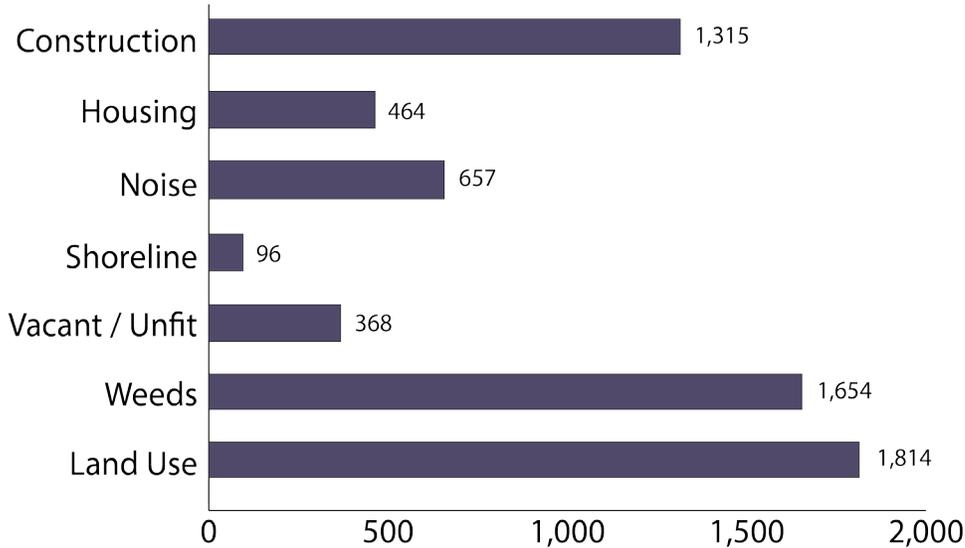


Code Compliance

The code compliance team works to resolve complaints on a variety of community safety and quality of life issues. These include conditions in tenant housing, construction without permits, unauthorized uses, junk storage, and unsecured vacant buildings. The volume of complaints and cases has increased every year since 2010, reflecting the increases in development, population, and accompanying pressures on land and buildings. Tenant relocation applications as well as assistance payments to low-income tenants displaced by new development increased in 2015. With new regulations for medical marijuana we saw an increase in complaints about medical dispensaries and are working with other departments to manage these complaints. Vacant building complaints rose by 28% in 2015. The code compliance team also began to implement new regulations in the updated Shoreline Master Program for verifying and registering on water residences. We also started doing required inspections under the Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance program. 2,000 properties were selected for inspections in 2015.



Violation Complaints



Total Complaints

6,368



Tenant Relocation License Applications

205



Households Receiving Relocation Assistance

236



Department Administration

The Administration Division is responsible for Human Resources, Information Technology, Finance, and Accounting activities for the department. In HR, hiring continues to be a focus due to the sustained high construction activity in the city. Positions added last year resulted in many internal promotions which necessitated more hiring activity. In IT, we continue to work to replace our major technology system, which is essential for coordinating and tracking our permitting and enforcement actions. Technology improvements will provide improved access and information for our customers and allow for more efficient permit processing. IT continues to facilitate Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance (RRIO) program and efforts toward complete electronic plan submittal and review. Finance & Accounting continues to develop the SDCI budget, monitor revenues, ensure that fees are received, charged, and used for appropriate expenses, and make certain that our fees reflect the cost of service.



Department Highlights

Technology Improvements

One of our major initiatives in 2015 that will launch in late 2016 is the **Permitting, Regulation, Enforcement and Property Project (PREP)**. PREP will implement a new system—Accela—that will replace our current permit tracking system (Hansen) and many of the Department's existing Web applications. The system will track all permitting, code compliance and property management processes. This is a huge and important undertaking for the Department and will improve your ability to track permits.

In 2015 we launched **Shaping Seattle**, a new website that displays and tracks all of the design review projects in Seattle and allows you to leave comments on specific projects.

Tenant Conditions and Improvements

We are now a city of more renters than homeowners. Our goal is to improve the conditions in Seattle's rental stock. In 2015 we registered 14,241 properties with 124,050 units as part of the **Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance (RRIO)** program, and in 2016 we will complete the registration process. In 2016 we will also forward to City Council new **tenant protection** legislation and will propose minor changes to improve the RRIO program.

Design Review

In 2015 we assembled a 16 member Advisory Group comprised of architects, project applicants and community members to explore key issues and develop recommendations to improve the **Design Review Program**. In 2016 Seattle DCI and OPCD will propose legislative changes to this program.

Seattle 2035, the Comprehensive Plan Update

Over the next 20 years, Seattle expects to accommodate a significant share of the region's growth. Our Comprehensive Plan contains goals and policies to guide future growth and decisions in a manner that reflects the City's core values and enhances the quality of life for all – seeking a just and equitable city. The Draft Plan was published July 2015. Since then, we have received hundreds of comments; people suggested big changes in some directions of planning for our city. The Mayor's recommendations will be published in early May 2016.

Growth and Equity

This report accompanied the draft Comprehensive Plan, an analysis of Seattle's growth strategy and how it affects displacement of residents and businesses, and access to opportunity. The analysis asked "how does growth benefit or burden marginalized populations?" This analysis also informed the development of strategies to reduce impacts and maximize opportunity for our most vulnerable populations.

Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA)

The HALA Advisory Committee report stated that "Housing affordability must remain a cornerstone of our city's commitment to an equity agenda that ensures a fundamental fairness for each individual and community that calls Seattle home." Seattle's housing inventory continues to experience significant growth; rents continue to rise. The Mayor challenged the HALA committee to create a plan to generate a net increase of 50,000 units of housing – 20,000 units of affordable housing and 30,000 units of market rate housing – over the next ten years. The Committee developed more than 60 recommendations, recognizing that the solution to housing affordability must be a multi-pronged approach. First steps on implementation began in 2015 with framework legislation for a Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) program for commercial development, and renewal and expansion of the Multifamily Family Tax Exemption (MFTE) program.

Community Planning

Significant planning with numerous communities continued during the year, including working with residents, businesses and cultural communities in Lake City, Ballard, U District, Uptown, 23rd Ave. at Union/Cherry/Jackson, Little Saigon, North Delridge and Rainier Beach. We worked closely with Seattle Department of Transportation and a number of other City departments.

Shoreline Master Program

In 2015 the City adopted significant new legislation for the City's Shoreline Master Program update, the first major update since 1987. New policies governing the use and protection of our valuable shorelines protect water-dependent uses and shoreline habitat, and provide public access and enjoyment for all.

Pedestrian Zones

In 2015 the City adopted new legislation for the City's pedestrian zones, to encourage new and protect existing compact, walkable neighborhood business districts.

Land Use Code Development

A number of code amendments were adopted over the year, including those that: 1) update the regulation for marijuana-related businesses; and 2) allow the establishment of transitional encampments as an interim use on City or privately-owned properties.

Contact Seattle DCI

Applicant Services Center	684-8850
Community Engagement	684-8880
Construction Permit Review	684-8950
Code Compliance Division	615-0808
General Department Information	684-8600
Land Use Planners, Construction Inspection	684-8860
Licensing & Testing	684-5174
Microfilm Library	233-5180
Office of the Director	684-8899
Public Resource Center	684-8467
Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance Helpline ...	684-4110
Side Sewer Program	684-8860
Site Development Services	684-8860
Technical Code Development	233-3892

www.seattle.gov/sdci

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Contact OPCD

General Information	684-8880
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Departments at a Glance

Seattle DCI

Director: Nathan Torgelson
 Budget: \$69.8 Million
 Staff: 372

OPCD

Director: Diane Sugimura (interim)
 Budget: \$6.6 Million
 Staff: 38