

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.

In 2013-14, the Department's operating expenditures totaled \$35.1 million. This budget followed two years of increases. The 2013-14 budget was just shy of the \$37.6 million peak of 2007-08. However, in 2013-14, the Department's staffing, at 260 authorized positions, remained 28 percent lower than it was in 2007-08, when it had 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. The recent [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. See the *Development Services pages of this chapter for more on Planning's work*. Also see [Planning in San José: A Community Guide](#) available online.

THE NATIONAL CITIZEN SURVEY™

46% of residents surveyed rated the overall quality of new development in San José as "excellent" or "good"

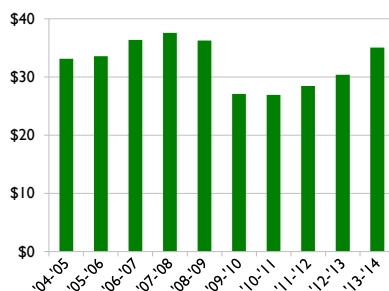
34% of residents surveyed rated land use, planning and zoning in San José as "excellent" or "good"

32% of residents surveyed rated code enforcement (weeds, abandoned buildings, etc.) as "excellent" or "good"

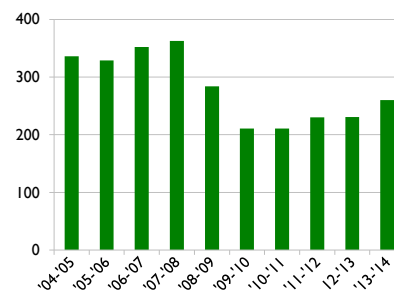
Examples of Planning Timelines

- ≤ 30 days: single family house permit, dead tree removal, sign permit
- ≤ 60 days: retail site modifications, residential addition
- ≤ 90 days: church, school, child care conversions; some commercial & industrial sites
- ≤ 120 days: gas stations, nightclubs
- ≤ 180 days: high density residential permit (> 3 stories), large hotels/motels
- ≥ 180 days: project requiring an Environmental Impact Report, large public/quasi-public uses

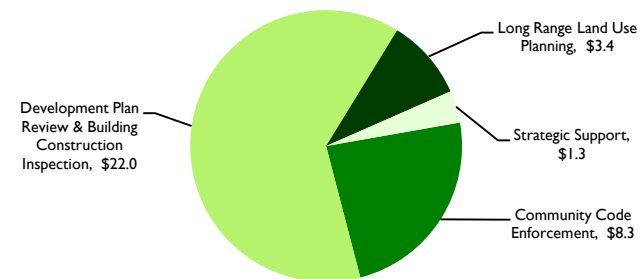
PBCE Operating Expenditures (\$millions)



PBCE Authorized Positions (Fulltime Equivalents)



PBCE 2013-14 Expenditures by Service (\$millions)



PLANNING, BUILDING AND CODE ENFORCEMENT

COMMUNITY CODE ENFORCEMENT

PBCE’s Code Enforcement Division enforces laws that promote the health, safety, and appearance of existing buildings and neighborhoods.

In 2013-14, PBCE opened 4,800 general code enforcement cases. It responded to all 45 emergency complaints within 24 hours, and 68 percent of 1,200 priority complaints within 72 hours.* 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.**

PBCE provides routine inspections on a 6-year cycle of multiple unit housing properties and charges an annual Residential Occupancy Permit Fee for those inspections. In 2013-14, PBCE inspected 15,000 of the 90,000 units that qualify for the Residential Occupancy Permit Program.

PBCE also inspects businesses selling alcohol or tobacco; the property or business owners fund these inspections with fees.

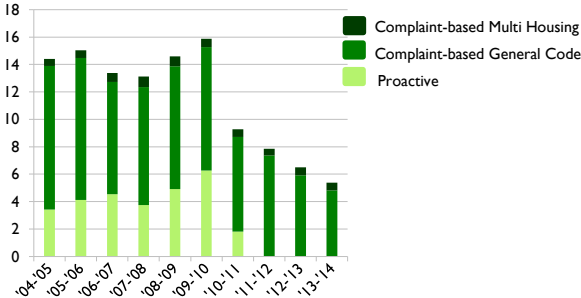
BUILDING

PBCE’s Building Division reviews new construction projects within the City, making sure they meet health and safety codes, and City zoning requirements. It is the largest Development Services program, processing over 33,000 building permits in 2013-14, and seeing gains in construction volume and value for three consecutive years. This increased workload, and staffing challenges in the department, may have contributed to the Building Division falling short of its timeliness targets. It achieved 84 percent of plan checks within cycle times and 46 percent of building inspections within its goal of 24 hours. See *Development Services on the next page for more on Building’s work.*

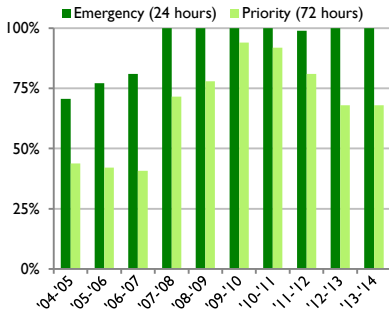
*Emergency complaints involve an immediate threat to life or property, such as unsecured pool fence. Priority complaints involve possible threats to life or property, such as unpermitted construction.

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

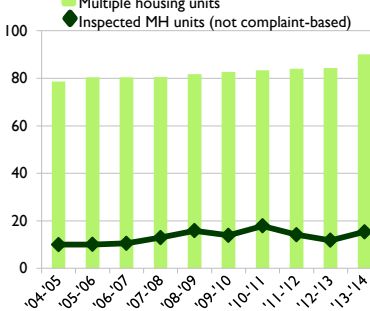
Code Enforcement Cases Opened (thousands)



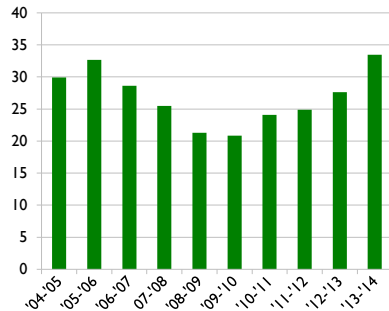
Response Timeliness for General Code Cases



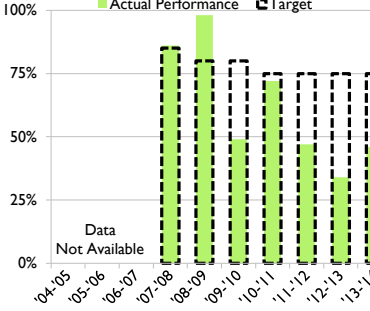
Multiple Housing Units and Inspections (thousands)



Building Permits (thousands)



% of Building Inspections Completed Within 24 Hours



DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

The Permit Center at 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 2013-14, Development Services:

- issued over 33,000 building permits,
- served over 30,500 Permit Center customers, and
- processed over 2,500 planning applications and adjustments.

Planning applications, plan checks, field inspections, and building permits all bottomed out in 2009-10, but have since been on the rise. The City provided 58 percent more plan checks, 153 percent more field inspections, and 60 percent more building permits in 2013-14 than five years ago. Also, a growing number of large, complex projects have led to a 46 percent increase in construction volume — 16.7 million square feet from 11.5 million a year ago. The value of building projects has grown even more dramatically, with the value of new building projects more than doubling to \$1.2 billion from \$545 million in 2012-13.

The Permit Center located in City Hall

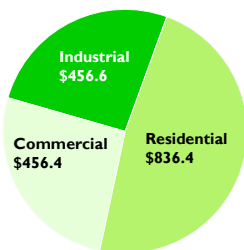


Development Services 2013-14 Summary

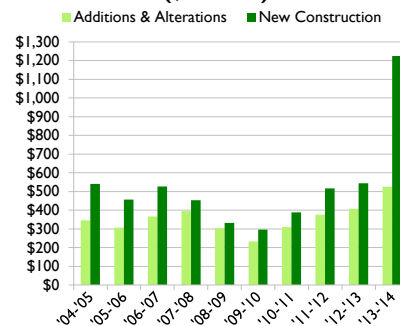
Partner	Revenue (\$millions)	Positions (rounded)
Building	\$32.5	150
Public Works	\$6.6	37
Fire	\$7.1	30
Planning	\$4.7	18
TOTAL	\$50.9	235

Source: Development Services partners' financial tracking reports

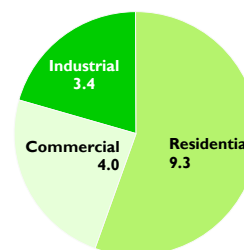
Value of 2013-14 Building Activity (\$millions)



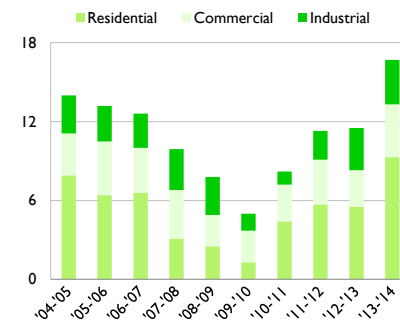
Value of Construction (\$millions)



Volume of 2013-14 Building Activity (millions of square feet)



Volume of Construction (millions of square feet)

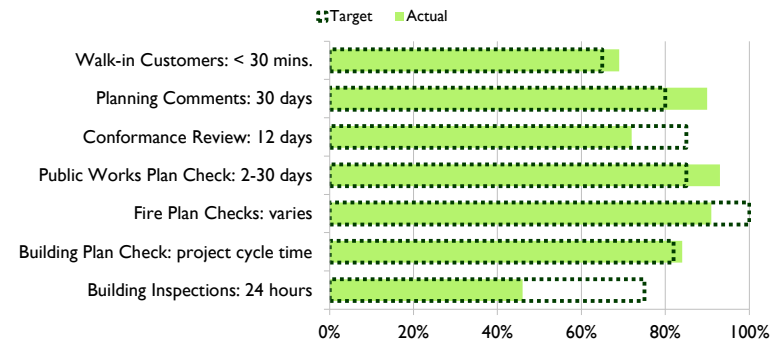


Across all the partner departments, Development Services was a \$51 million business of the City of San José in 2013-14, with revenues up 20 percent over the previous year, and 34 percent from 2011-12.

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. In some cases, significant time goes by before City staff can review applications. Other causes of delays include unavailable appointments, and multiple plan submittals. These issues and others are discussed in a September 2014 audit report, "[Development Services: Improving the Experience for Homeowners.](#)"

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 development projects require approval through a public hearing, but most (an estimated 82 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.

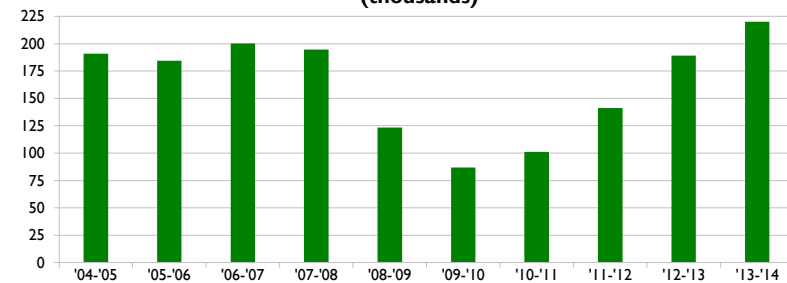
Timeliness of Development Services*



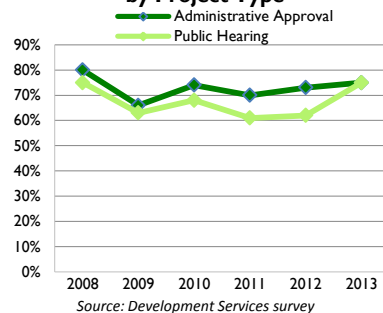
Source: PBCE from the City's Permits Database

*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.

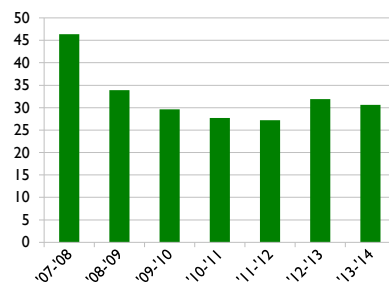
Field Inspections (thousands)



Development Services Overall Customer Satisfaction by Project Type



Permit Center Customers (thousands)



Planning Applications and Plan Checks

