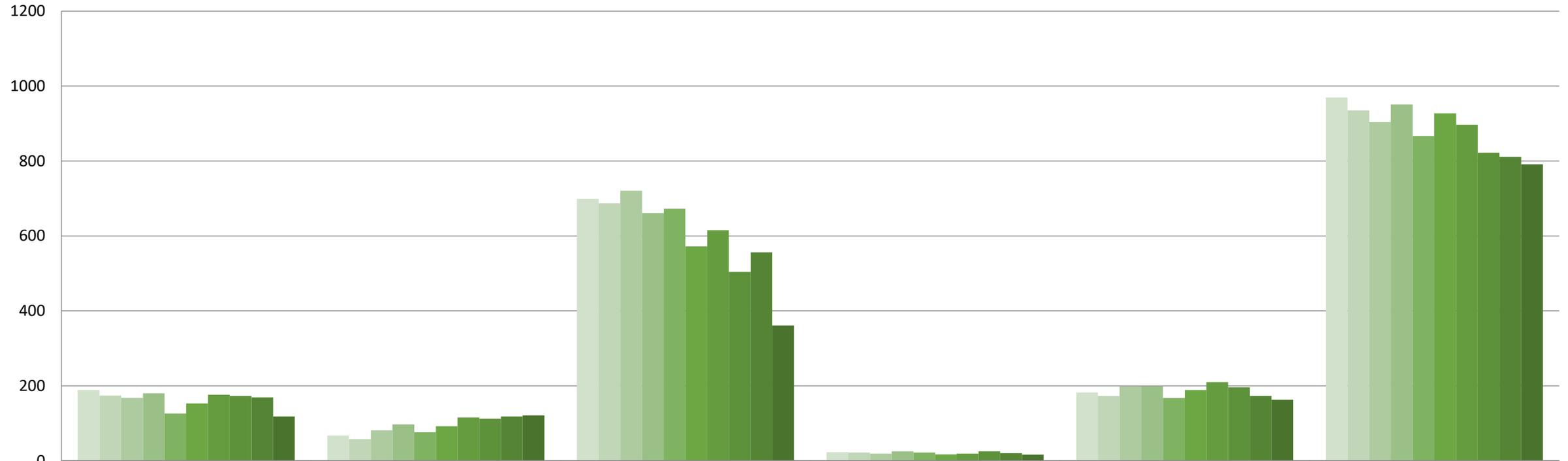


# Planning & Development Services

Permitting in 2025

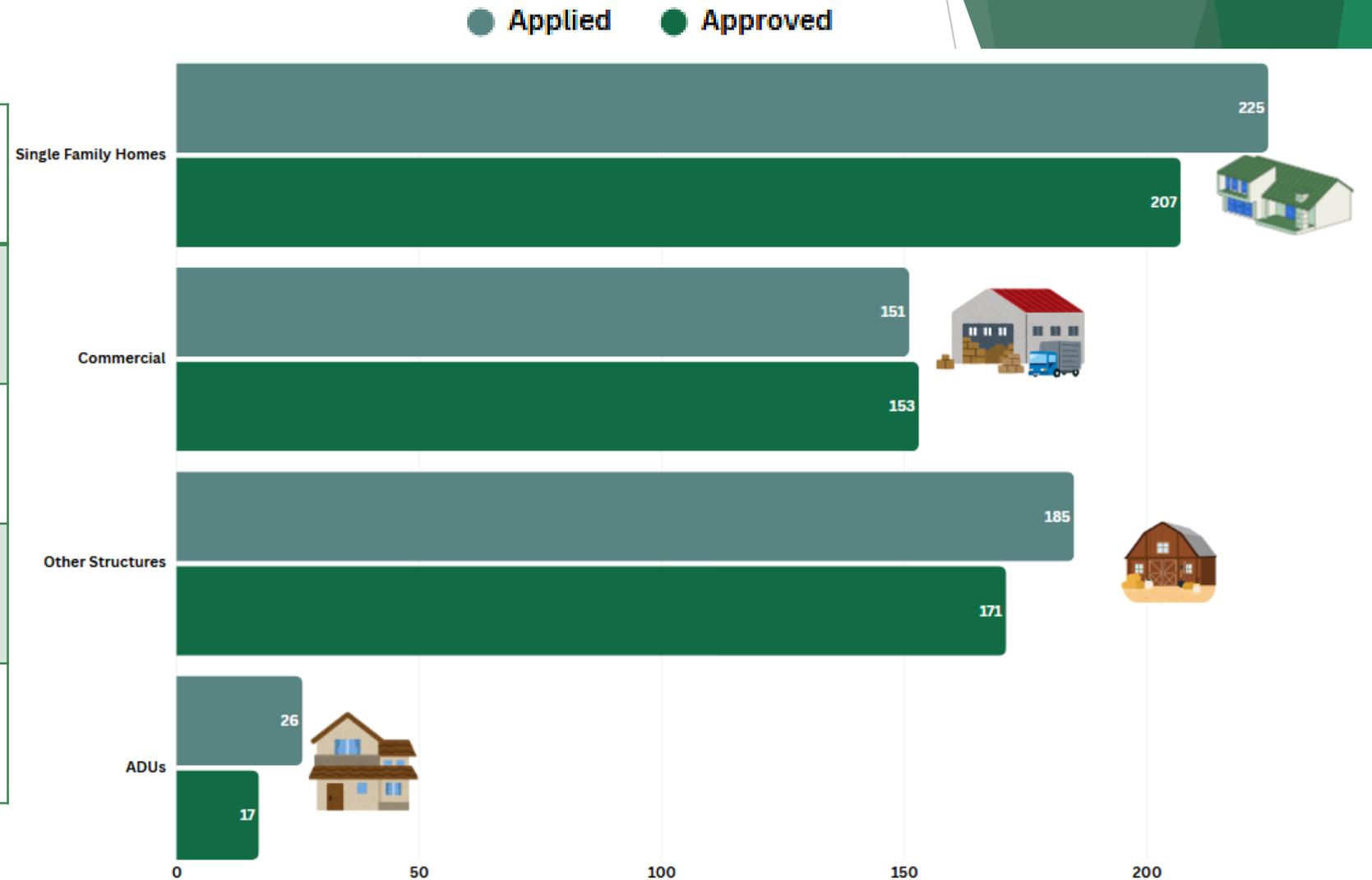
# Applications Received 2016-2025



	Shoreline (SHC, SHR, SHV, SHX)	Pre-Applications	Natural Resource (LFG, SPR, MIT)	Plats (LSS, SSS, BSP, PUD, MPP)	Land Use (ADM, APL, CUP, ExE, NON, VAR, LOR, BLA)	Building (COM, SFR, SFR-S, DET, MOB)
2016	189	67	699	23	182	969
2017	174	58	687	22	173	935
2018	168	81	721	19	199	904
2019	180	97	661	25	199	951
2020	126	76	673	22	167	867
2021	153	92	572	17	189	927
2022	176	115	615	19	210	897
2023	173	112	504	25	196	822
2024	169	118	556	20	173	811
2025	118	121	361	16	163	791

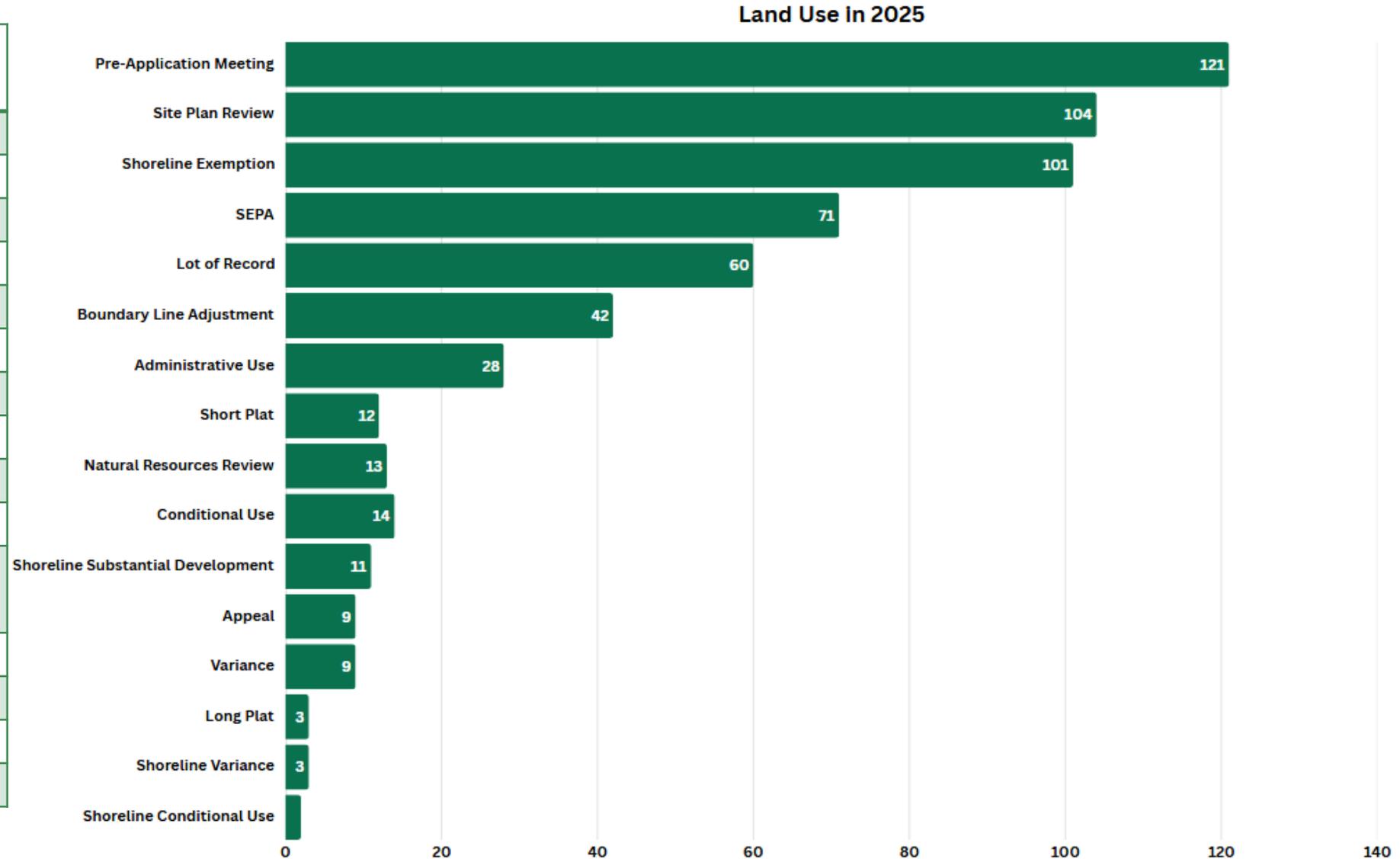
# Building Permits in 2025

Category	Description	Applied	Approved
Single Family Homes	New Construction only	225	207
Commercial	New Businesses, Tenant Improvements, Additions	151	153
Other Structures	Manufactured Homes, Additions, Alterations	185	171
ADUs	Accessory Dwelling Units	26	17



# Land Use Cases in 2025

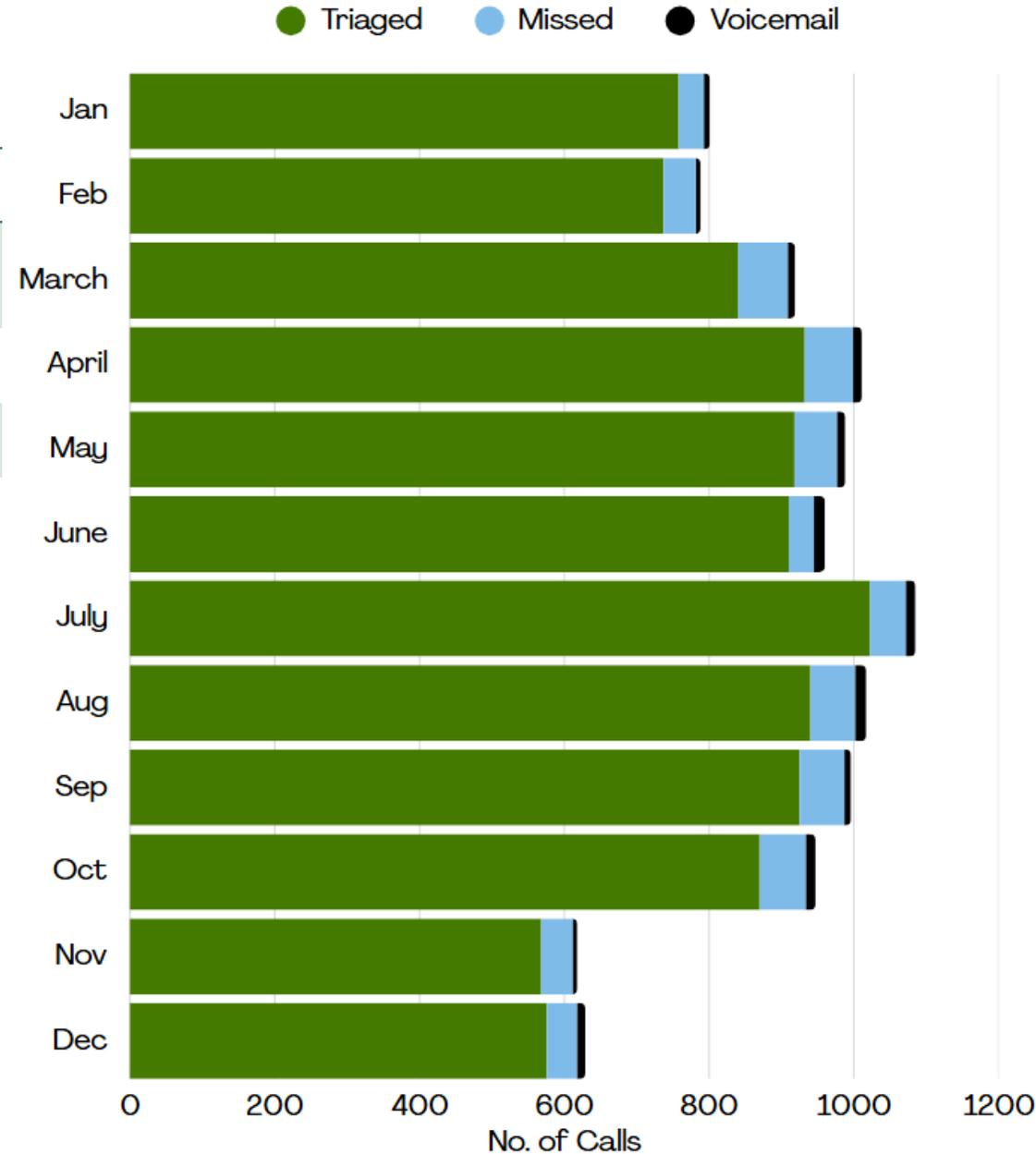
Case type	Applied
Pre-Application	121
Site Plan Review	104
Shoreline Exemption	101
SEPA	71
Lot of Record	60
Boundary Line Adjustment	42
Administrative Use	28
Short Plat	12
Natural Resources Review	13
Conditional Use	14
Shoreline Substantial Development	9
Variance	5
Long Plat	3
Shoreline Variance	3
Shoreline Conditional Use	2



# Calls Handled by PDS Admin Staff in 2025

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Accrued Call Duration	12hr 10min	13hr 35min	18hr 8min	22hr 37min	20hr 20min	17hr 44min	20hr 50min	19hr 19min	16hr 54min	14hr 51min	11hr 11min	11hr 35min
Avg Call Duration	57sec	1min 5sec	1min 17sec	1min 27sec	1min 19sec	1min 9sec	1min 13sec	1min 13sec	1min 5sec	1min 1sec	1min 10sec	1min 12sec
Handled by Agent	758	737	840	932	918	910	1022	940	925	870	568	576

- Triaged calls on this graph include all answered calls coming to the central phone queue at PDS which is handled by 1 of 4 of our administrative staff at any given time while they are also responsible for performing their other duties.
  - These callers are triaged, assisted when possible, and typically forwarded to other appropriate staff.
- Missed calls are incoming calls to the queue which are not answered, and Voicemails include only voicemail messages which are left on the central queue voicemail box.
- This data does not include calls going directly to PDS staff extensions or any outgoing calls from staff reconnecting with callers.
- Less than 10% of calls are missed, and less than 2% of callers leave a voicemail on the central phone line.



# Customer Service Resources

PDS provides a wealth of educational resources to the public in efforts to guide applicants through their permitting pathway and instruct them on how to meet department requests as required by Whatcom County Code

Many of these resources are found listed on the [Forms, Guides & Links](#) page of the PDS website. Included are links to other agencies, fee structures, departmental guidance, state requirements as well as PDS-created materials guiding applicants on subjects like how to design a site plan, requirements to setting up a Manufactured Home, thresholds for removing a tree, and generally how to begin permitting when you're not sure how to start.

**WHATCOM COUNTY WASHINGTON** Planning & Development Services  
5280 Northwest Drive  
Bellingham, WA 98226  
360-778-5900

**How to Start Permitting**  
A Guide to Permit Review at PDS

**Recommended Permit Pathway**  
There are often multiple permit "pathways" for a property owner to arrive at their final desired outcome. One of the first steps in permitting is determining what type of

owner to jump to a Building Permit right away; a type may be recommended or even required. In addition, there may be restrictions that would require property owner commits to architectural plans, the evaluation of a proposed use through an application. A quick reference list of the most common includes:

If in the Planning Department before a formal application can learn what development of their proposal is feasible to pursue. Pre-Application Meetings are available for permit types.

Land Use Approval  
Project Design  
Construction

**WHATCOM COUNTY WASHINGTON** Planning & Development Services  
5280 Northwest Drive  
Bellingham, WA 98226  
PDS@co.whatcom.wa.us  
360-778-5900

**Manufactured Home Set-Up Guide**

- Home must be a [Washington State Department of Labor and Industries](#) approved Factory Assembled Structure.

**WHATCOM COUNTY** Health and Community Services  
Champ Thomaskutty, MPH, Director  
Amy Harley, MD, MPH, Co-Health Officer  
Meghan Lelonek, MD, Co-Health Officer

**Whatcom County Health & Community Services Guidelines for Planning & Development Services Application Requirements**

**Table of Contents**

**Single-Family Residence or Mobile Home on Vacant Lot** ..... 2  
Health Documents Needed: ..... 4  
**Single-Family Residence, Mobile Home, or Detached Structure - Requirements**

**WHATCOM COUNTY WASHINGTON** Planning & Development Services  
5280 Northwest Drive  
Bellingham, WA 98226  
360-778-5900

**Tree Removal Guide**

**Site Plan Requirements**

- Location and species of any trees to be removed - also flag trees on site
- Existing and proposed tree canopy areas
- All buildings on site
- Parking, access roads and driveways
- Drainages or Critical Areas (e.g. wetlands, streams) located on site
- Property lines, corner pins
- Utilities
- Erosion and Sedimentation Control Measures

**WHATCOM COUNTY WASHINGTON** Planning & Development Services  
5280 Northwest Drive  
Bellingham, WA 98226  
PDS@co.whatcom.wa.us  
360-778-5900

**Engineering Guide**

**Overview**  
Building construction is becoming increasingly complex, and buildings are using materials and construction methods. Updated structural stability and address potential damage from fire, earthquakes, wind, snow and other many factors that would require a building to be designed in accordance with engineering practice. The following are some of the most common factors.

**Design Criteria**  
As stated in R301 of the International Residential Code (IRC): Building

**WHATCOM COUNTY WASHINGTON** Planning & Development Services  
5280 Northwest Drive  
Bellingham, WA 98226  
PDS@co.whatcom.wa.us  
360-778-5900

**Basic Site Plan Guide**

The description below is an inclusive list of all possible site plan features that may be part of a project proposal. Your project may not include all of these features. When preparing your site plan, please ensure that all applicable features are included for your application submittal to be considered complete.

This Guide is an excerpt from the [Administrative Manual, Chapter 4.1A](#)

**Requirements include:**

**General Standards**

- Linework - Use "solid" lines for all improvements at grade. Use "dashed" or "broken" lines for all improvements below grade (septic systems) or above grade (roof lines).

[Home](#) · [Your Government](#) · [Departments](#) · [Planning & Development Services](#) · [Applications](#) · [Forms, Guides & Links](#)

## Forms, Guides & Links

Find links below to third-party resources as well as other Whatcom County Department pages that have information or guidance to assist with permitting questions you may have. Further down the page are lists of PDS Guides for things like Farm Plans, navigating the Parcel Viewer, Site Plan Requirements, building codes, etc. If you need additional assistance identifying which resources you need, you may call our office at 360-778-5900.

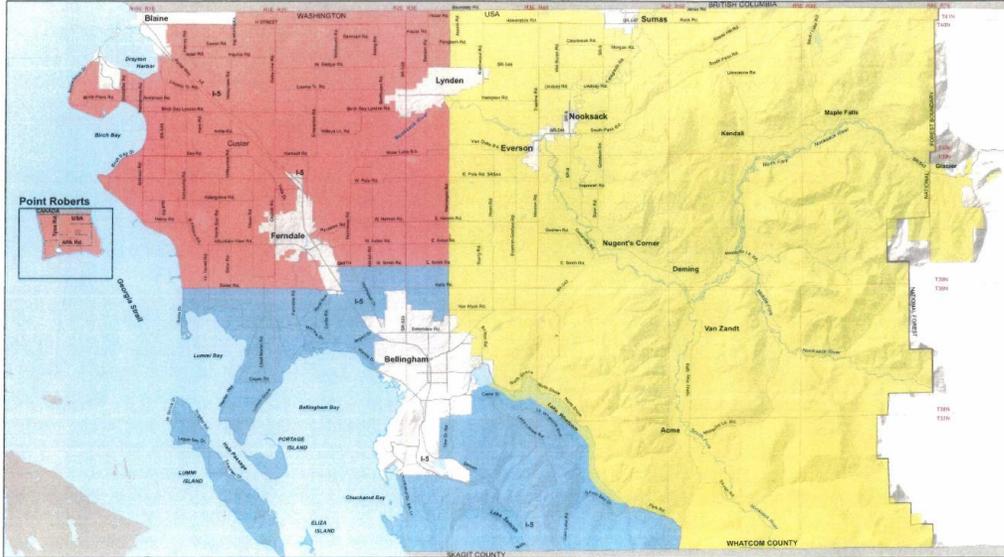
**Helpful Links**

- [2025- Unified Fee Schedule - Planning, PW Engineering, Environmental Health](#)
- [2023- Unified Fees Schedule - Planning, PW Engineering, Environmental Health](#)
- [Public Works Encroachment Permit FAQ](#)
- [WCHCS Septic and Drinking Water Resources](#)
- [WCHCS Water Permit Forms](#)
- [WCHCS Onsite Sewage \(OSS\) Code Updates](#)
- [WA State Department of Archaeology and Historic Sites](#)
- [Code Enforcement Investigation Request](#)
- [Health and Community Services Water Permit](#)
- [WA State Licensed Hydrogeologists](#)
- [WA State Energy Code - WA State University](#)
- [Public Records Disclosure Information](#)
- [SEPA Guidance - WA Department of Ecology](#)

**Guides**

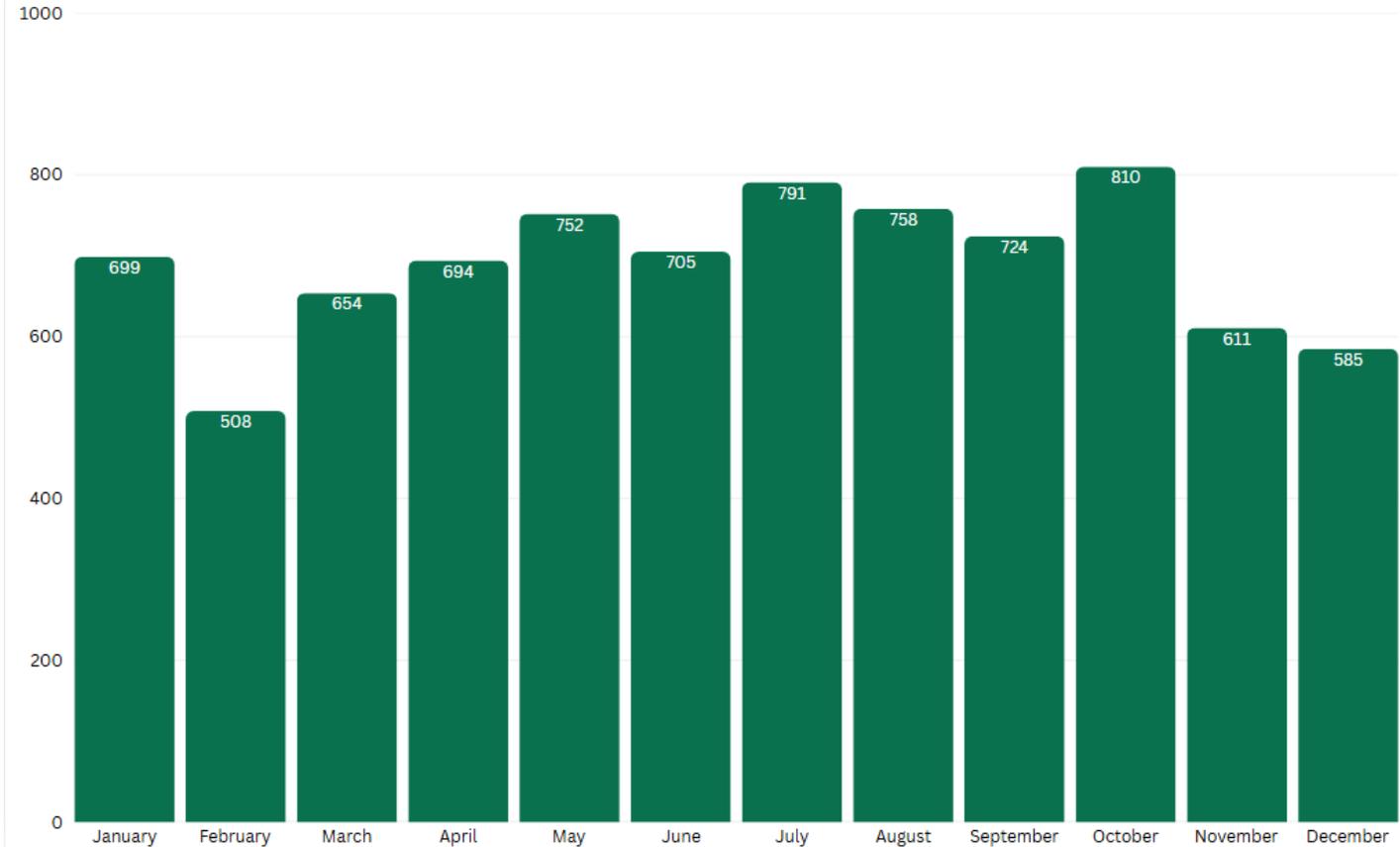
- [Administrative Manual](#)
- [Basic Site Plan Guide](#)
- [Basic Structural Plan Requirements](#)
- [Building Plans Example](#)
- [Building Services Handbook \(2021 Building Code\)](#)
- [Commercial Buildings - General Conditions](#)
- [Engineering Guide](#)
- [Farm Plan Workbook](#)
- [Fire Marshal Permit Information Packet](#)
- [Fire Turnaround Details](#)
- [Fire Turnout Details](#)
- [Health Guidelines for PDS Permits](#)
- [How to Start Permitting](#)
- [Lot of Record Guide](#)
- [Manufactured Home Set Up Guide](#)
- [Native Growth Protection Area Signage](#)
- [Preliminary Stormwater Guide - PDS](#)
- [Preliminary Traffic and Concurrent](#)
- [Public Notice Sign Posting Instructions](#)
- [Qualified Consultants List](#)
- [Resource Links for Property Search](#)
- [Shoreline Revision Guide](#)
- [Structural Engineering Waiver Request](#)
- [Tree Removal Guide](#)

# Inspections in 2025



- Averaging almost 700 inspections per month, this inspection data includes inspections by Whatcom County Building inspectors to ensure compliance with Whatcom County Building Code, International Building Code, and International Residential Code regarding safety, to both life and property. In addition to life safety requirements, these inspections focus on foundation, framing, plumbing, and mechanical components of structures.
- Not included in this data are mitigation monitoring, fill & grade inspections, erosion control and stormwater inspections, or fire equipment and road inspections - which are all performed by other groups of PDS staff.

Inspections by Month

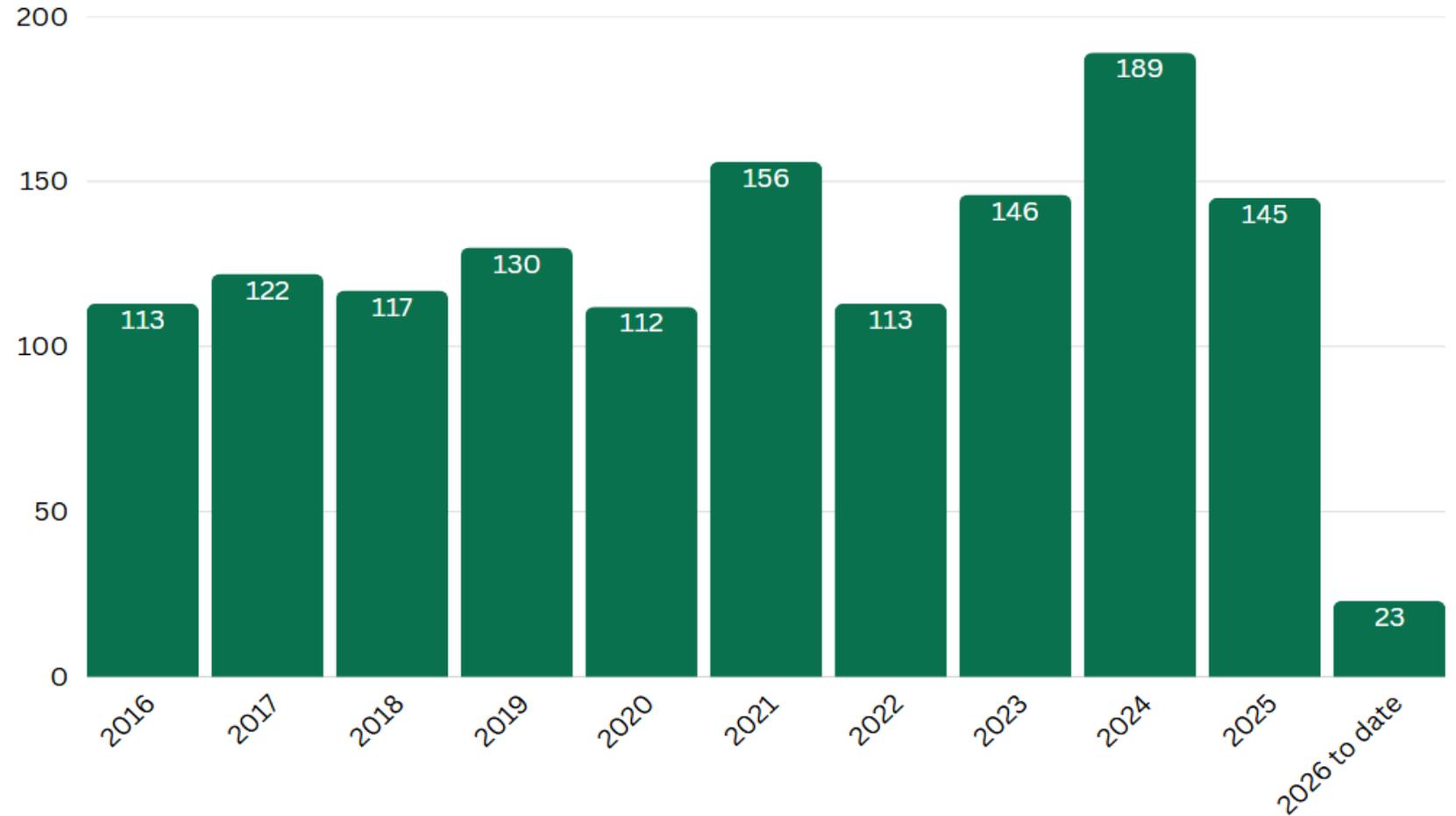


- These inspections are vital for maintaining safety throughout the construction process. Inspections are conducted in phases to ensure that all work is reviewed and approved before it is covered by subsequent construction.
- Inspections are typically scheduled next-day and the three or four inspectors cover huge areas of Whatcom County on a daily basis including Lummi Is, Eliza Is. Point Roberts and Newhalem.

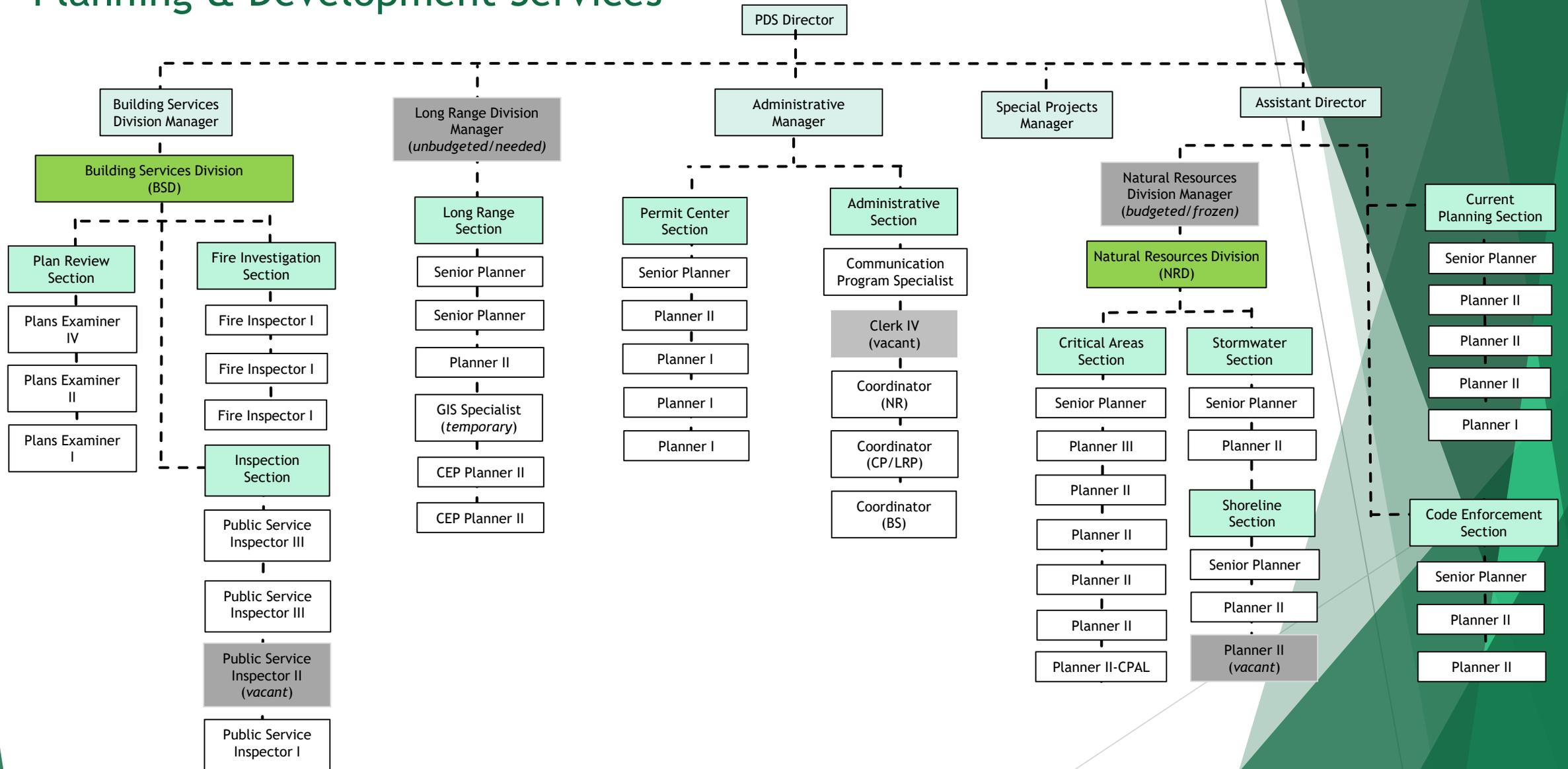
# Public Records Requests (PDR)

- The oversight and organization of PDR's (or "Records Requests") at Planning are primarily managed by one or two administrative staff who research, assemble, redact, and then submit all records to the Public Records Officer. The work effort and staff time involved in these request can be extensive, at times requiring multiple department employees to collect any and all responsive materials requested which may include documents, emails, and phone records.
- Records requests vary widely in their breadth and detail. Requests could include the documents within one discrete permit, all of a staff person's emails from a certain time period, or every permit that has been recorded on a certain property.
- Additionally, this data does not reflect incidental requests "over the counter," which individual staff are able to respond to themselves without routing through the official PDR process.

Public Disclosure Requests in PDS



# Planning & Development Services



## Recent Activity at PDS

- *Designing/Launching/Maintaining our New Electronic Permitting System's Public Web Portal*
- *Preparing & Facilitating the Comprehensive Plan Update*
- *Developing & Adopting an Internal Skills and Training Enhancement Program*
- *Increased Intra- and Inter-Departmental Integration and Coordination*
- *Special Projects Completed*
- *Major Permitting Projects in the Pipeline*

## Challenges for the Future

- *New Technology*
- *State Mandates*
- *Growing List of Legislative Priorities*