



City of Dallas

Building Permit Overview

**Transportation and
Infrastructure Committee**

September 21, 2020

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City of Dallas

Presentation Overview



- Background/History
- Purpose
- Issues/ Operational Concerns
- Proposed Action
- Next Steps



Background/History



- The Permit Center is located at the Oak Cliff Municipal Center (OCMC) at 320 E. Jefferson
- Issued over 50,000 permits in FY18-19
- A master permit is required prior to the following: erect, construct, enlarge, add to, alter, repair, replace, improve, remove, install, convert, equip, use occupy or maintain a structure or building service equipment



Background/History



- Other permits issued include:
 - Barricade
 - Demolition
 - Electrical
 - Fence
 - Fire extinguishing system
 - Flammable liquids
 - Landscape
 - Lawn Sprinkler
 - Liquid petroleum
 - Mechanical
 - Paving / Excavation
 - Plumbing
 - Septic tank
 - Sign
 - Tent
- Certificates of Occupancy (CO) are issued for the first use of land, a building, or portion of a building; a change of use; a change of tenant on an existing CO; or if an existing use increases or decreases floor area



Background/History



- Historically, residential permit applications and plans were submitted on paper and delivered to the Permit Center
 - Turnaround time was typically 1-3 days (10-15 days for drop offs of larger quantities) if the plans and documents were submitted per requirements
 - Line would form very early in the morning to get a “spot” each day
 - At intake, staff would assist applicants with minor revisions, missing documents, etc. OR reject the submission



Background/History



- Residential Team
 - Manager II
 - Supervisor III
 - Six (6) Senior Plans Examiners
 - Three (3) Permit Clerks
 - Customer Service Representative



Background/History



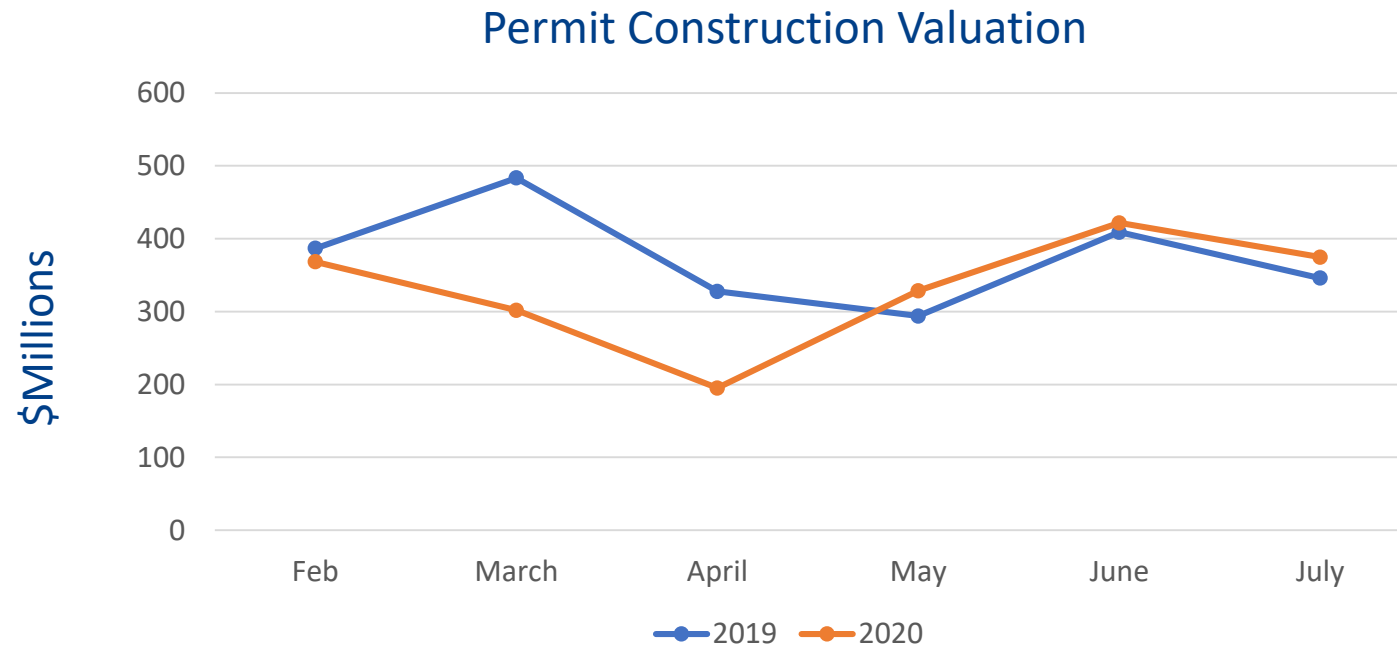
- Electronic Plan Review System (ProjectDox by Avolve) implemented in 2019 with plan to gradually move away from paper submittals
 - Has provided the ability for permitting and construction to continue in the city during pandemic
 - Allows concurrent review of plans instead of routing them to each discipline
 - With the online system, plans can be submitted 24 hours a day, 7 days per week



Background/History



- Following a sharp decline from mid-March through April, permitting activity increased significantly during the three-month period May through July



Purpose



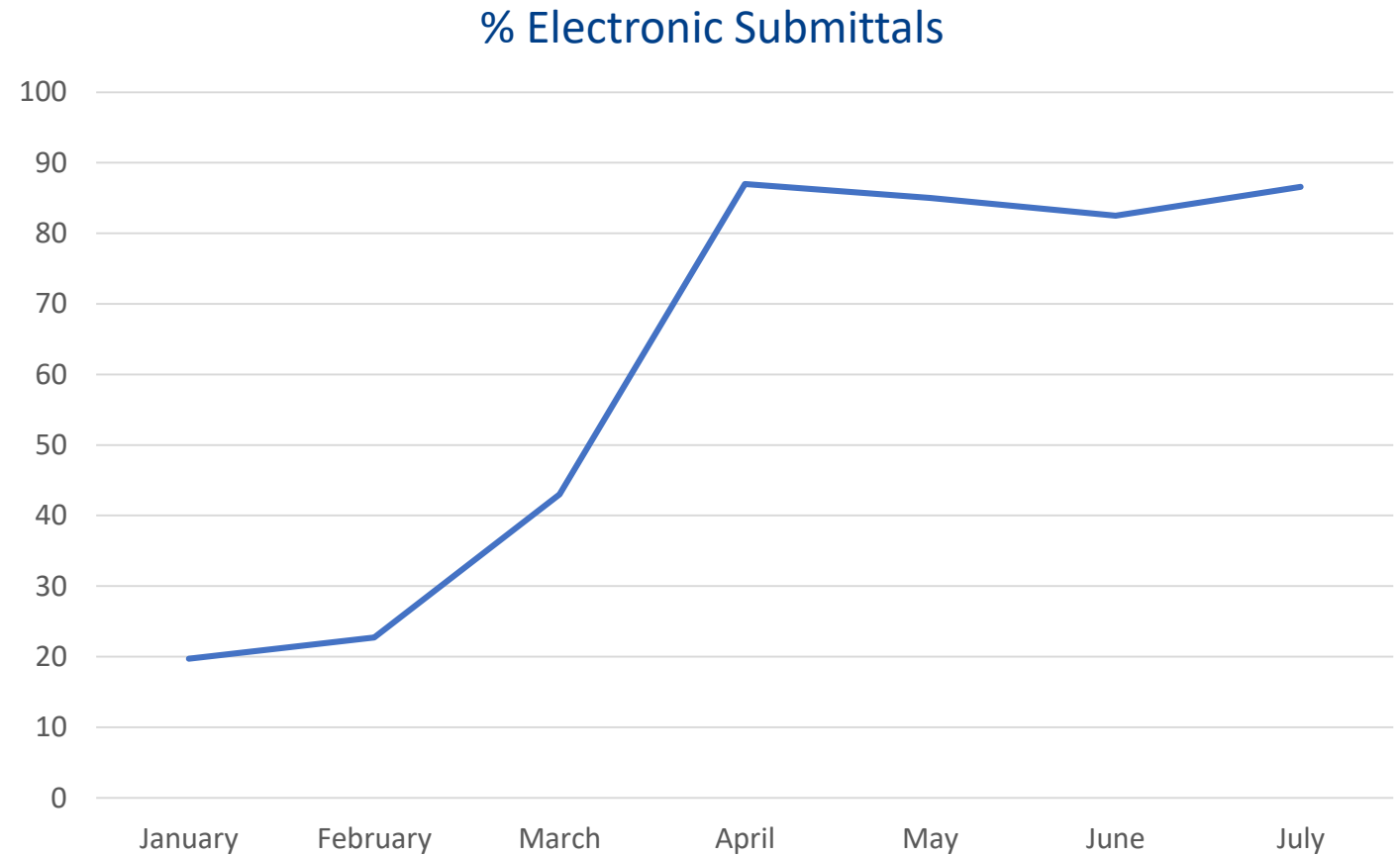
- Construction industry has been a bright spot in the economic downturn
- As an “essential” function during the pandemic, the construction industry has helped keep residents employed
- Long-term property tax growth results from construction today
- Sustainable Development & Construction must partner with the community to build a safe and dynamic Dallas



Issues/Operational Concerns



- Prior to the pandemic, approximately 20% of all permit applications were being submitted electronically
- That number spiked to nearly 90%
 - Immediately put strain on staff, applicants, and the system itself



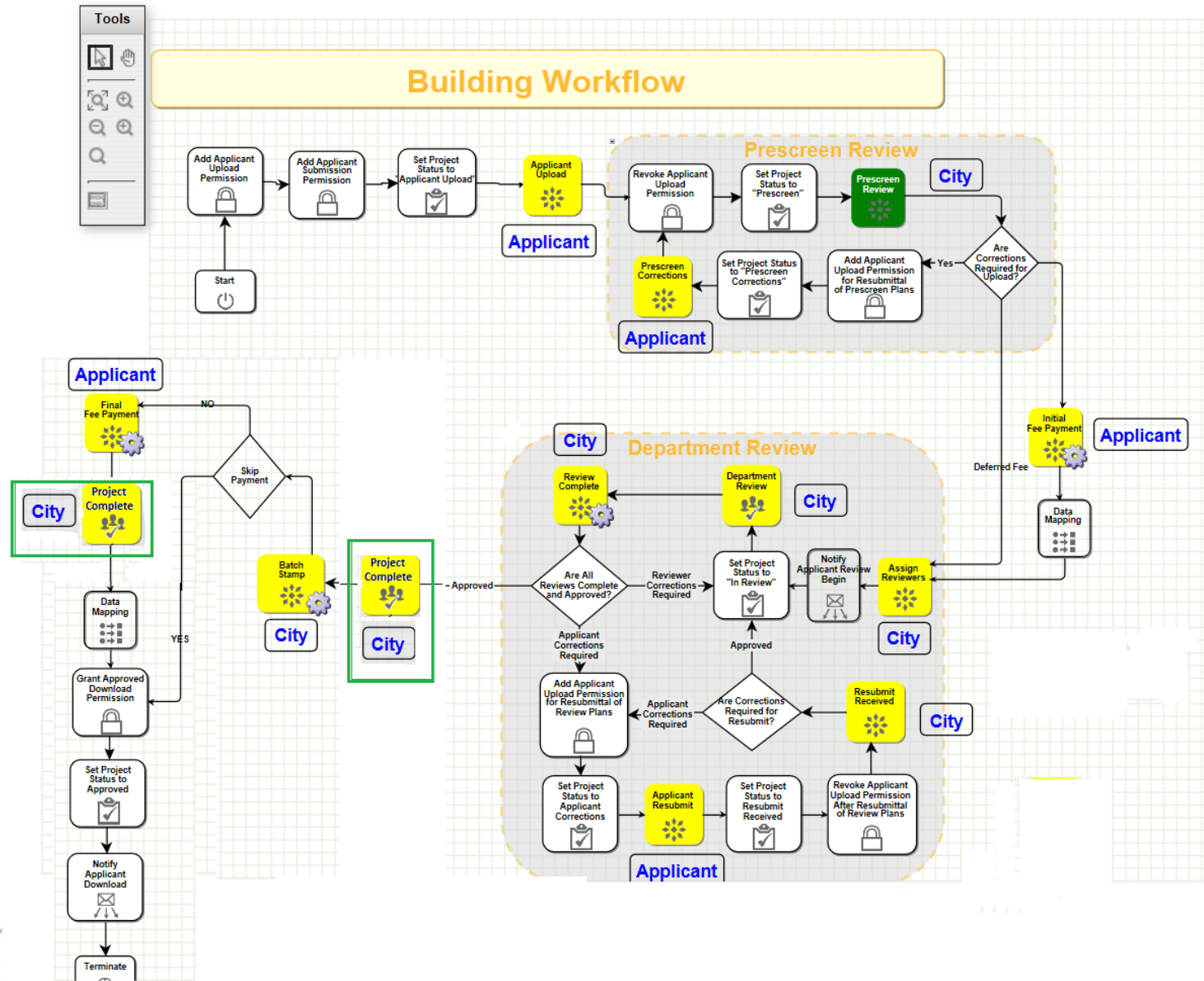
Issues/Operational Concerns



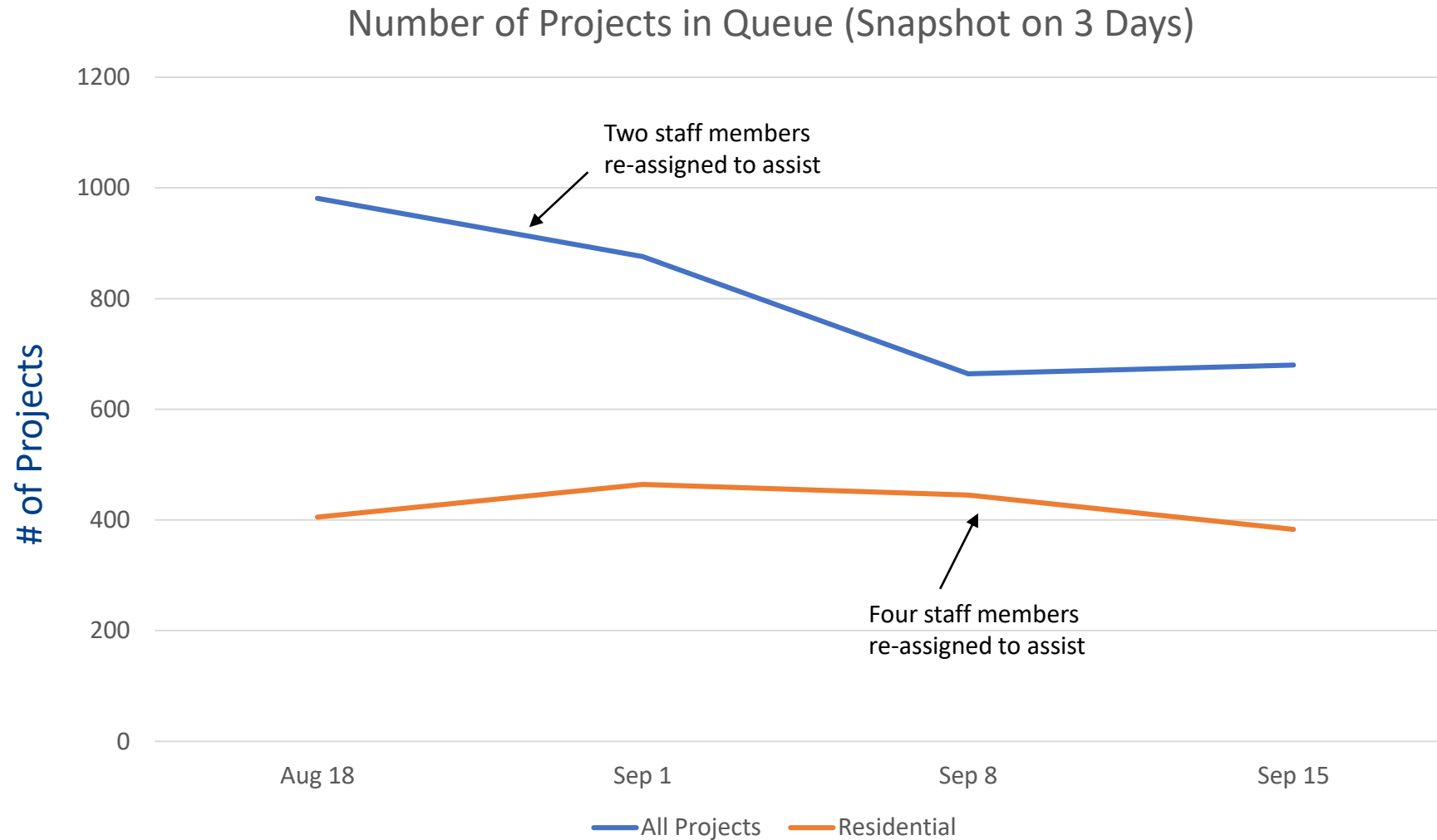
- The current delay in permitting is primarily for residential new construction and additions
- Backlog in the “pre-screen” function
 - Every submission goes into the pre-screen queue
 - Following applicant electronic submission, staff checks to ensure all required documents and plans are uploaded, complete, and in the required format
 - If not, a task is sent back to the applicant with comments noting the deficiencies
 - Applicant makes the corrections, resubmits, and the project enters the pre-screen process again at the back of the queue
 - Multiple rounds of submittals extend the timeline and consume staff time



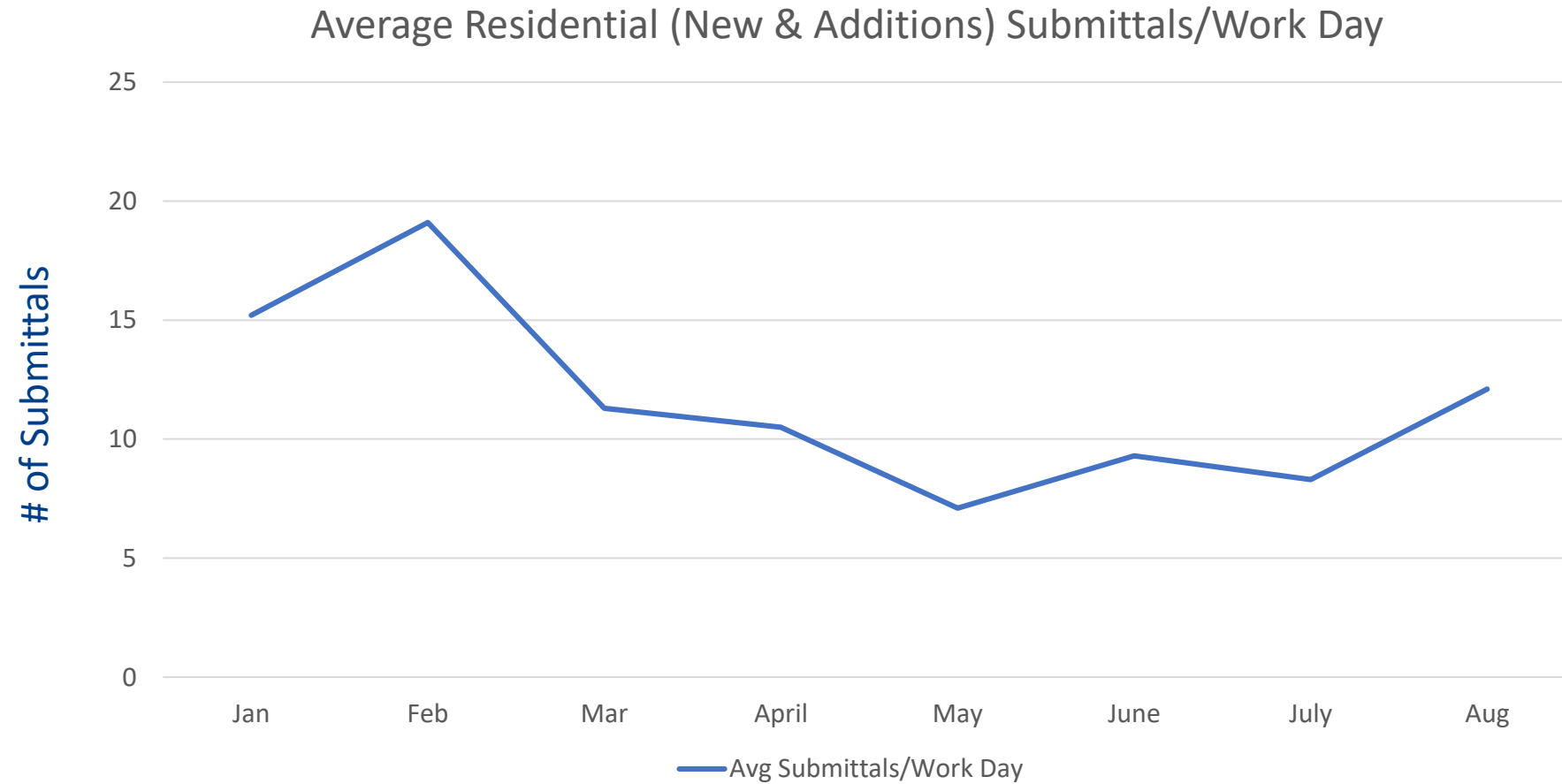
Issues/Operational Concerns



Issues/Operational Concerns



Issues/Operational Concerns



Proposed Action



- Four additional staff members allocated to the **pre-screen function** on 9/8 to work through the backlog
- Utilizing existing Dal-Tech contract for additional resources
 - Contract used primarily for engineering, staff is working with the Office of Procurement Services to extend the current 12/31/20 contract expiration
- ITS is working on improvements to actual system performance that has greatly slowed tasks both by applicants and staff due to the volume of transactions as a result of the pandemic



Proposed Action



- Actions taken to date have reduced the number of errors received, but system performance remains slow (mid-term improvements expected to significantly address speed)

Began Implementing 8/13/20 and Completed	Mid-Term	Long Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Escalated issues with the PDOX vendor, Avolve, for increased tech support in resolving technical issues and problems• Resolved several reported problems by clearing error processing queues• Added indexes to the system database to improve performance and remove bottlenecks• Increased the frequency of database maintenance to ensure error queues and other logs do not create bottlenecks• Vendor's technical staff updated and streamlined existing stored procedures that PDOX uses to address identified delays• Updated the SQL Servers to improve performance• Planned and designed new process for attaching documents with conversion to links• Conducted an assessment of the PDOX application and associated databases for purposes of reconfiguring both to optimize for increased utilization experienced since COVID-19• Reviewed current McAfee anti-virus agent and exclusion rule settings for PDOX information and file-flow to determine potential reconfigurations to reduce bottlenecks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• (September) Planned additional upgrades/improvements to PDOX servers to include increased memory• (September and October) Implementing several fixes to the PDOX application to address failed connection condition resulting in disconnects or delays in system• (December) Redesign and rehost the current E-Plan environment for better performance and scalability• (December) Using CARES Act funding implementing an integration to POSSE permitting system to ensure critical documents are available to staff and provide transparency and clarity to the public looking for information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The City released an RFCSP on 8/20/20 for the replacement of the backbone permitting system, POSSE. Vendor responses are due by September 24th. The responses from the RFCSP are critical for reviewing the end-to-end processes and determine the long-term technology to support these processes.



Proposed Action



- Training and reference materials have been provided and are available online both on our website and on the ProjectDox login page with instructions on how to properly submit a project
- Webinars have been and will continue to be conducted by staff to assist applicants on how to effectively use the system



Proposed Action – Longer Term



- Proposed in the FY20-21 budget, a third-party Staffing and Efficiency Study to help determine appropriate staffing levels and additional opportunities for improvements
 - Release RFCSP in September
- Very large project to replace Posse, the backbone permitting system
 - Vendor responses due September 24th
 - Critical for reviewing the end-to-end processes and determine the long-term technology to support these processes



Next Steps



- Memo sent to City Council on 9/11/20 responding to “Sustainable Development Directives to Staff” memo signed by five Councilmembers
- Continue implementing improvements
- Track backlog and provide periodic update memos to Committee





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