



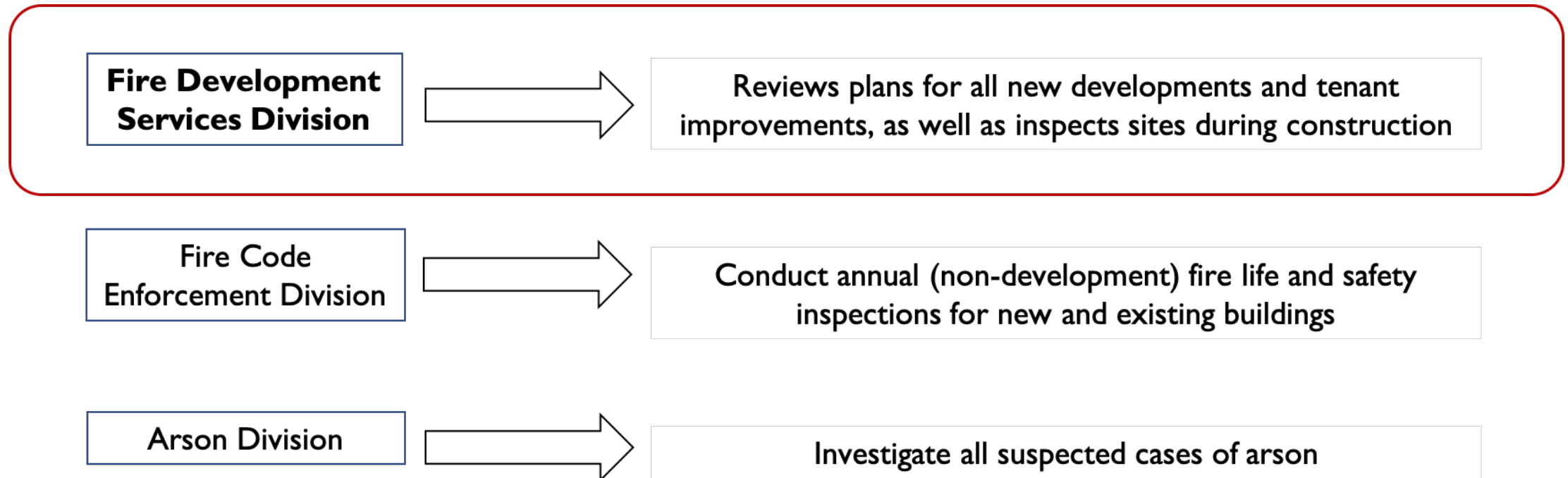
# Fire Development Services: Staff Resources and Process Efficiencies Will Help Reduce Backlog

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A Report from the City Auditor  
Issued August 2020

<http://www.sanjoseca.gov/auditor>

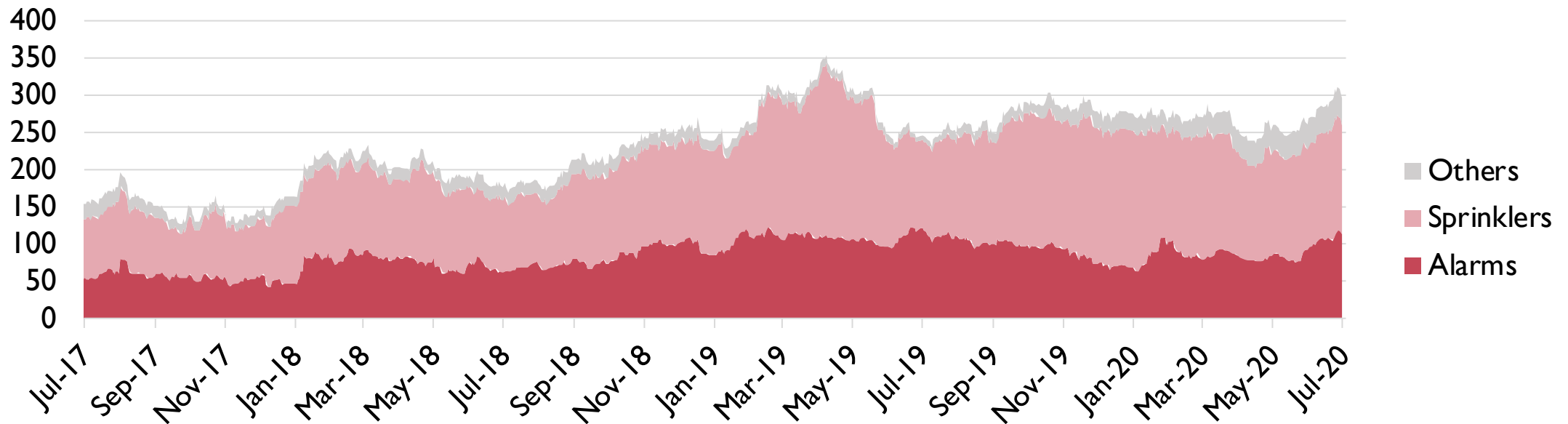
## Exhibit 1: The Bureau of Fire Prevention is Divided into Three Divisions



- Finding 1** Increased Development and Staffing Shortage Led to a Backlog
- Finding 2** Further Process Improvements Can Help Reduce Plan Review Workload
- Finding 3** Fire Can Better Support Customers to Reduce Inspection Wait Times and Re-Inspections
- Finding 4** A Quality Assurance Program and Standardized Training Would Support Consistency in Staff Comments
- Finding 5** Fire Management Does Not Currently Have Easy Access to Workload and Performance Data

# Finding I: Increased Development and Staffing Shortage Led to a Backlog

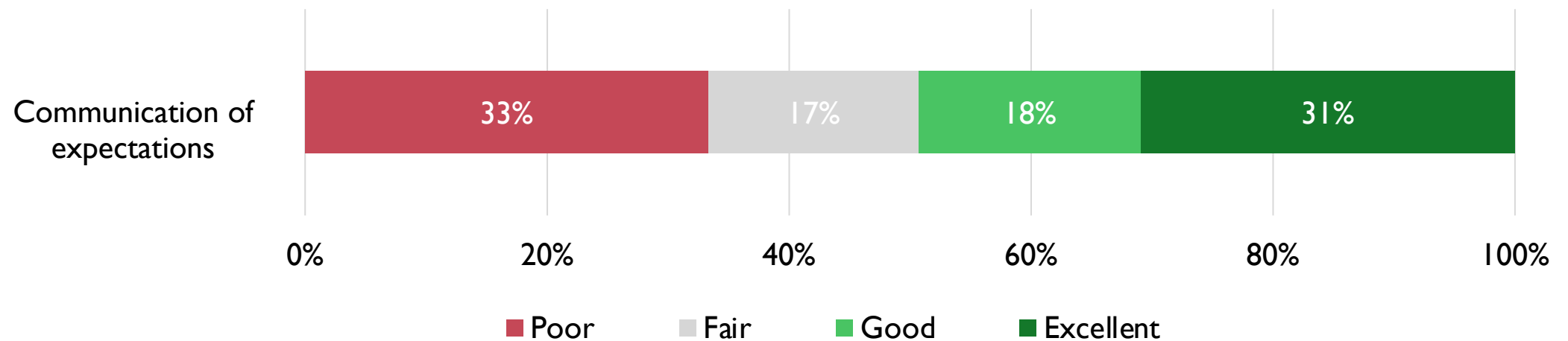
**Exhibit 8: As Applications Built Up, Delays in Reviewing Led to a Backlog of Plans In-Queue, Spiking in Spring 2019**



Source: Auditor analysis of AMANDA data. Graph displays the net number of plans within a discipline, based on the application intake date and the issue date (if applicable), on a given day. Does not adjust for interim review by contractors.

## Finding 2: Further Process Improvements Can Help Reduce Plan Review Workload

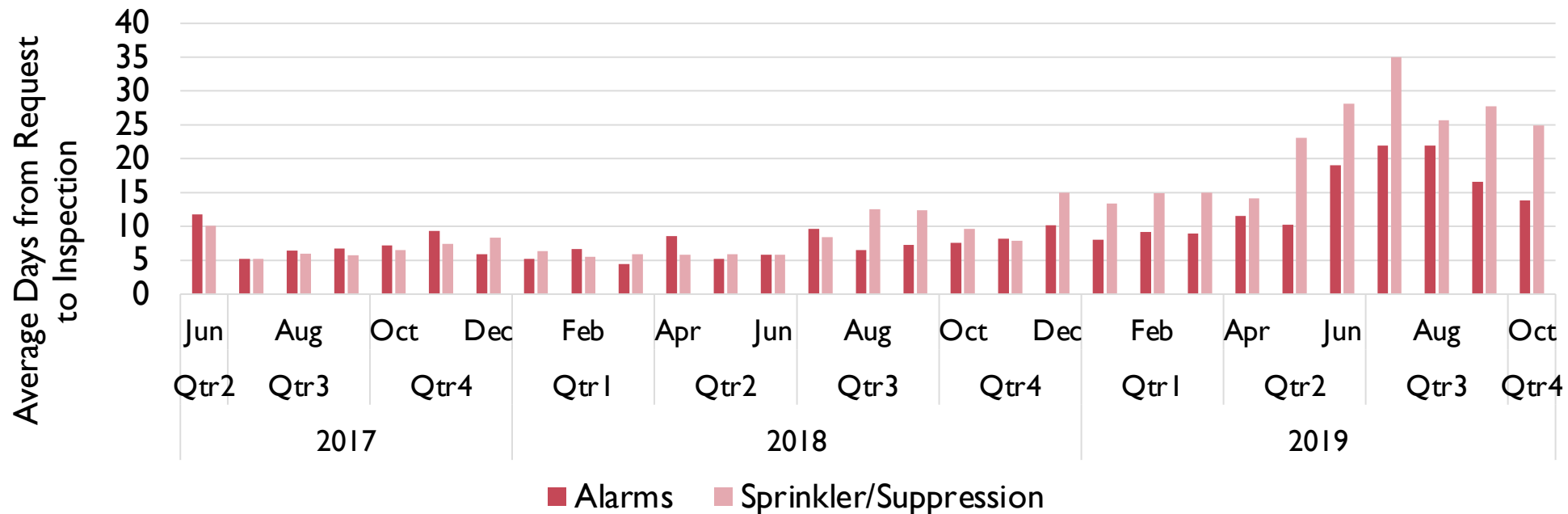
**Exhibit 12: About Half of the Responses Rated the Communication Of Expectations For A Successful Plan Review Or Inspection As “Poor” Or “Fair”**



Source: Auditor-conducted survey of Fire Development Services customers. Question posed was: *Thinking about the service you have received from SJFD in the past year, how well did staff **communicate what was expected** for a successful plan review/inspection?*

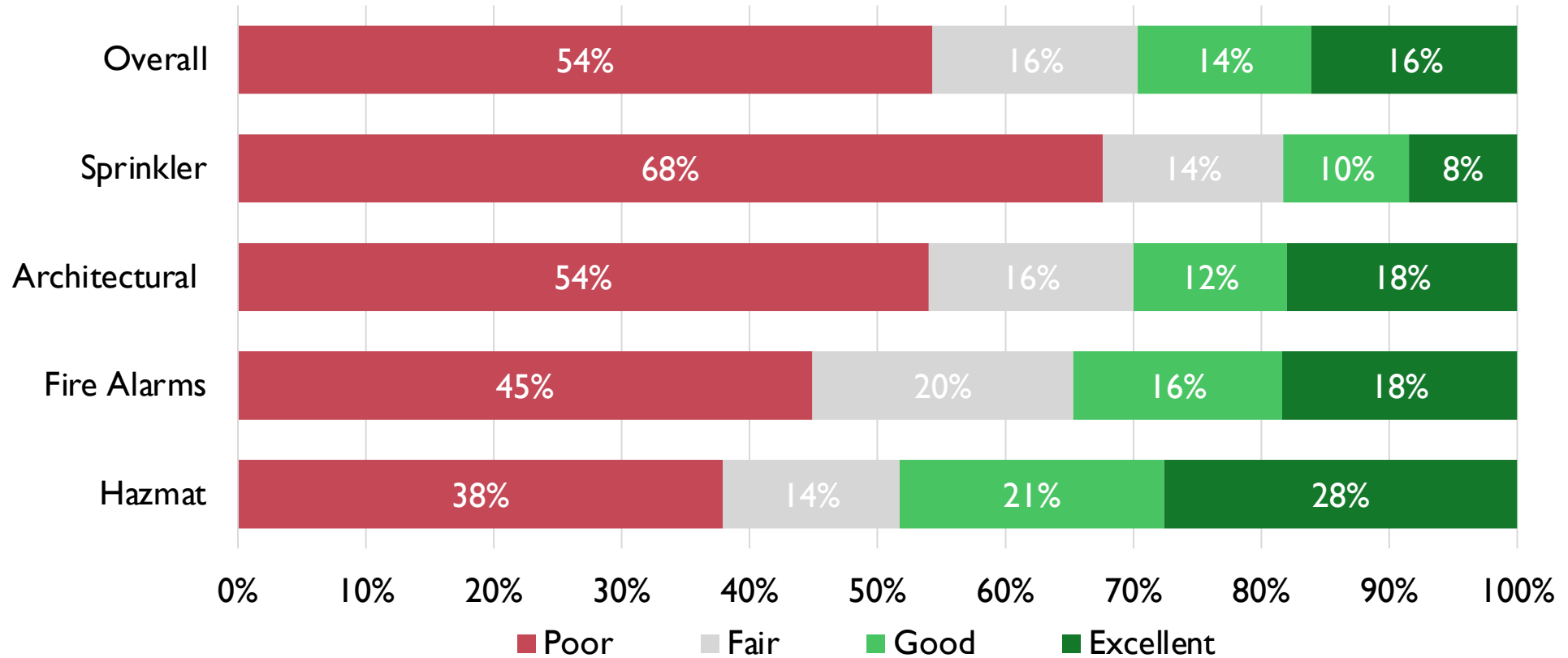
## Finding 3: Fire Can Better Support Customers to Reduce Inspection Wait Times and Re-inspections

**Exhibit 15: Wait Times for Fire System Inspections Peaked at Three to Five Weeks**



Source: Auditor analysis of AMANDA inspection record data.

**Exhibit 18: Seventy Percent of Responses Rated Inspection Scheduling as “Poor” or “Fair”**



Source: Auditor-conducted survey of Fire Development Services customers. Question posed was: *Thinking about the service you have received in the past year, how would you rate your experience **scheduling inspections** with SJFD?*

## **Finding 4: A Quality Assurance Program and Standardized Training Would Support Consistency in Staff Comments**

We found:

- Most customers rated staff knowledge and expertise highly, but some expressed concerns about consistency among staff.
- The Bureau does not have a formal system for quality assurance in plan review to make sure that comments are complete and consistent.
- Fire Development Services does not have a standardized staff training program.



## **Finding 5: Fire Management Does Not Currently Have Easy Access to Workload and Performance Data**

We found:

- Fire management does not currently have easy-to-use report that show project progress, assignments, distribution of staff hours, etc., though this data could be made available through AMANDA.
- Inaccuracies in preconfigured AMANDA reports on workload and cycle times for inspections and plan review misrepresent performance measures.

## Conclusion

- Our audit report includes a total of 14 recommendations to improve the timeliness, efficiency and consistency of fire plan review and inspections for new construction.
- We would like to thank the Fire Department; the Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement; the Office of Economic Development; the City Attorney's Office; and the City Manager's Budget Office for their time and insight.

The audit report is available at [www.sanjoseca.gov/auditor](http://www.sanjoseca.gov/auditor)