



# From Ideation to Occupancy:

A Guide to Building in San José,  
Permitting, Timelines, and  
Coordination

April 20, 2026

Development Services Partners  
PBCE | Public Works | Fire



# Outcome:

The outcome of this study session is to build a shared understanding of the development permitting system and define the priority actions, investments, and performance expectations needed to advance the City's Focus Areas of Building More Housing and Growing Our Economy by making San José's permitting process faster, more predictable, and more effective.



# San José Permitting History:

**Application For Building Permit**

The undersigned herewith makes application for the

Erection of 12 Story Bank Building, of class A construction with basement

Foundation to be concrete of 1 to 6 mixture;

With a footing of in in. top, and in. high,

Outside wall to be

Partitions to be

Bearing partitions will be

The roof will be covered with

laid on in. supported by x rafters in. on centers, longest span not exceeding ft.

Trusses will be built up of spaced ft.

The building will be heated by with flue

Estimated value of building or improvements, \$ 800,750

I, *Chas. Prentiss* hereby agree to save, indemnify, and keep harmless the City of San Jose, against all liabilities, judgments, costs and expenses which may in any wise accrue against said city in consequence of the granting of this permit or from the use or occupancy of any sidewalk, street, or sub-sidewalk place by virtue thereof, and will in all things strictly comply with the conditions of this permit.

Owner \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Agent \_\_\_\_\_ " \_\_\_\_\_

Architect \_\_\_\_\_ " \_\_\_\_\_

Contractor *McDonald and Kahan 130 Montgomery St. S.F. by Chas. Prentiss*

**BUILDING PERMIT**

No. 2269

Inspector's File No. 6

City of San Jose

Department of Building and Inspection

PERMIT is herewith granted *McDonald & Kahan Inc* to *Build 12 Sto class A Bank Building* on *S. E. First & Sta Clara* or M *Bank of Italy* in accordance with plans and specifications approved, and now on file in this office.

Not valid, as a receipt, until countersigned by the Auditor.

Countersigned *Phyllis Water* Auditor.

Receipt for *Six Hundred Sixty 75/100* Dollars, as fee, is hereby acknowledged.

Dated *Dec. 3, 1925*

*M. C. Goodrup* Inspector.



# Agenda

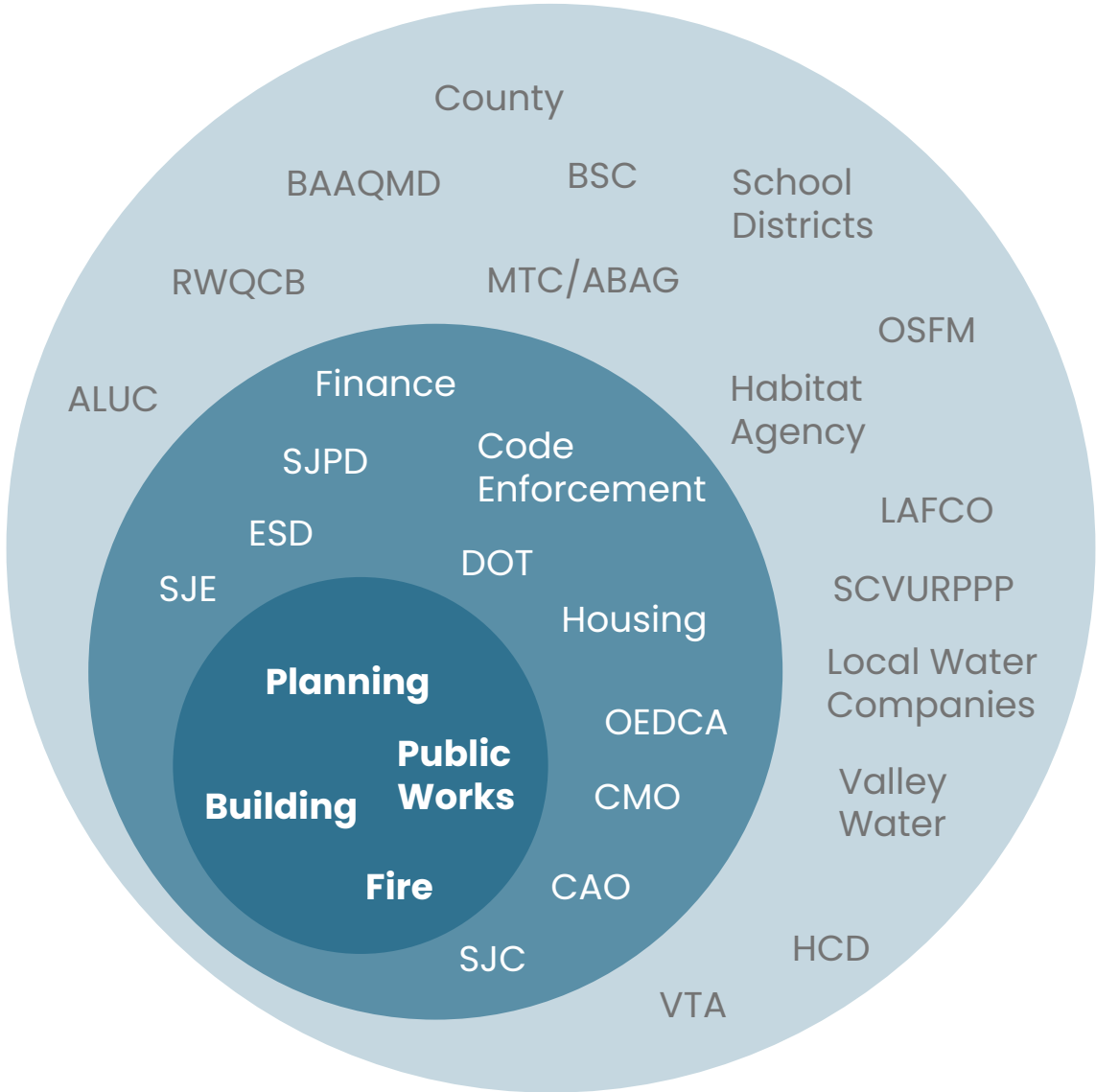
- 1.** Development Services at a Glance  
James Dobson
- 2.** The Development Permitting Continuum  
Chris Burton
- 2.a** Customer Voice  
Samida Thakral
- 3.** Enhanced Service Pathways: Case Study on Affordable Housing  
Lisa Joiner
- 3.a** Customer Voice  
Chris Neale

- 4.** What Drives Time to Completion: Where Time is Added and Where Time is Reduced  
Manira Sandhir
- 4.a** Customer Voice
- 5.** Fees and Requirements: Understanding Cost Recovery and Project Obligations  
J. Guevara
- 5.a** Customer Voice
- 6.** Tools and Technology Supporting the Work  
Alex Powell
- 7.** Continuous Improvement: What's Underway and What's Next  
Chris Burton

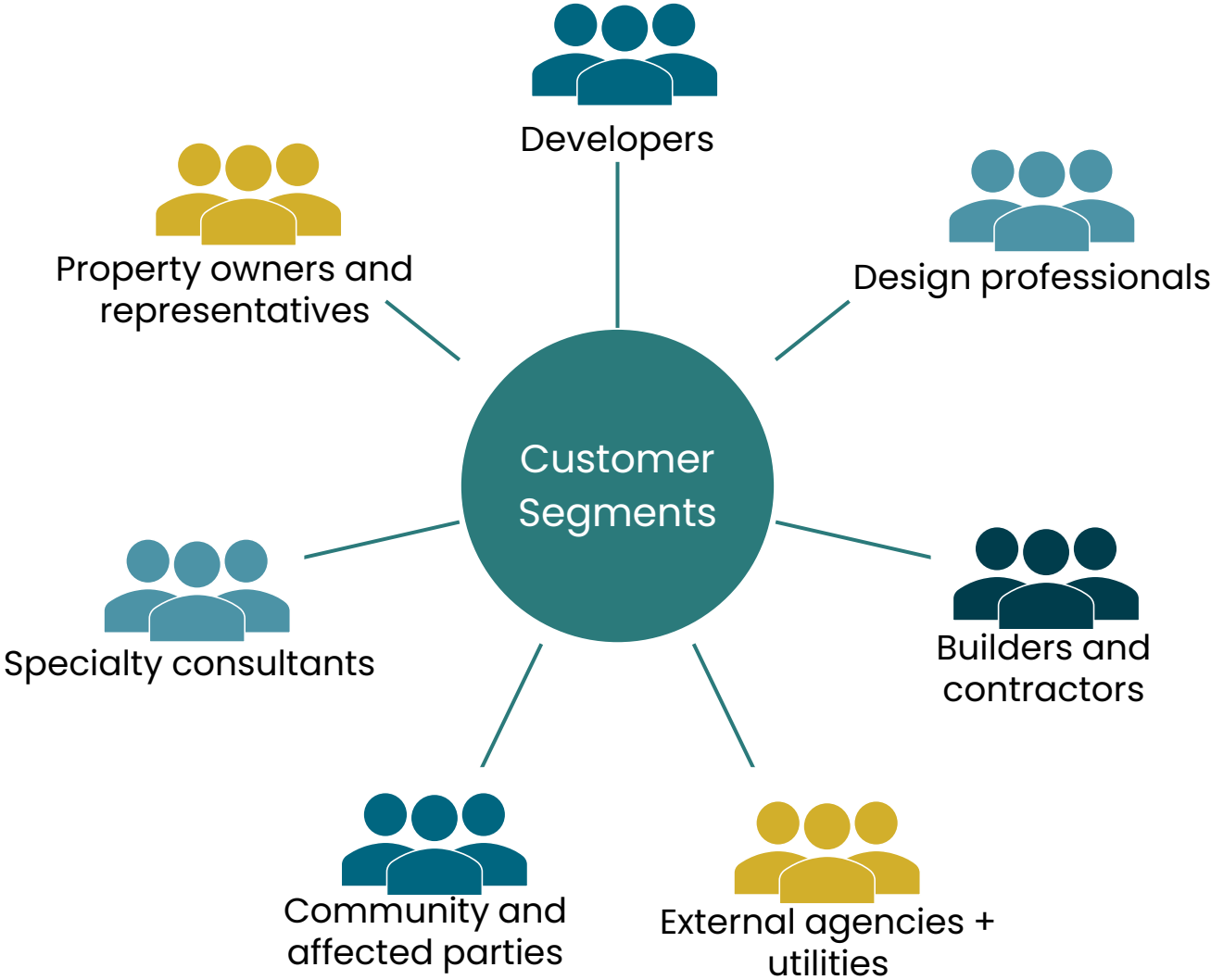


# 1. Development Services at a Glance

# Development Services at a Glance



# A Big City = Diverse Customers



# A Diverse Portfolio for a Diverse City

Permits Types

##

## Why is the portfolio broad?

### Council priorities

Housing, safety, sustainability, mobility, and neighborhood quality

### Project types

From reroofs to major development, street work, and hazardous materials

### Customer groups

Homeowners, businesses, developers, utilities, and public agencies

### Service pathways

Online permits, OTC review, discretionary review, and annual permits

## How that shows up across departments:

38

### Planning (PBCE)

- Legislative actions and discretionary land use approvals including CEQA
- Administrative permits tied to zoning, historic resources, signs, tree removal, and special use cases
- Implements policy direction through entitlement decisions

22

### Public Works

- Subdivision maps and lot adjustments
- Grading, drainage, street and utility improvements, and stormwater compliance
- Encroachments and work in the public right of way

41

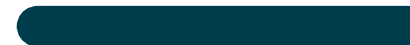
### Building (PBCE)

- Life safety and Building Code compliance
- Permits for Building, Electrical, Mechanical, Plumbing Work
- Includes compliance with accessibility, green, energy requirements

19

### Fire Prevention

- Life Safety and Fire Code compliance
- Permits for Fire Protection and Hazardous Materials Systems
- Includes compliance with Fire access, hydrants, and commodity storage
- Supports development review at the Planning and Building phases



# How permitting supports the City Council Priority Focus Areas:



**Increasing Community Safety:** San José residents live in a community with responsive emergency services and safe streets and roads.



**Reducing Unsheltered Homelessness:** Move toward functional zero in unsheltered homelessness by proactively and effectively managing the shelter system, increasing throughput into permanent housing, and improving data systems to guide investment.



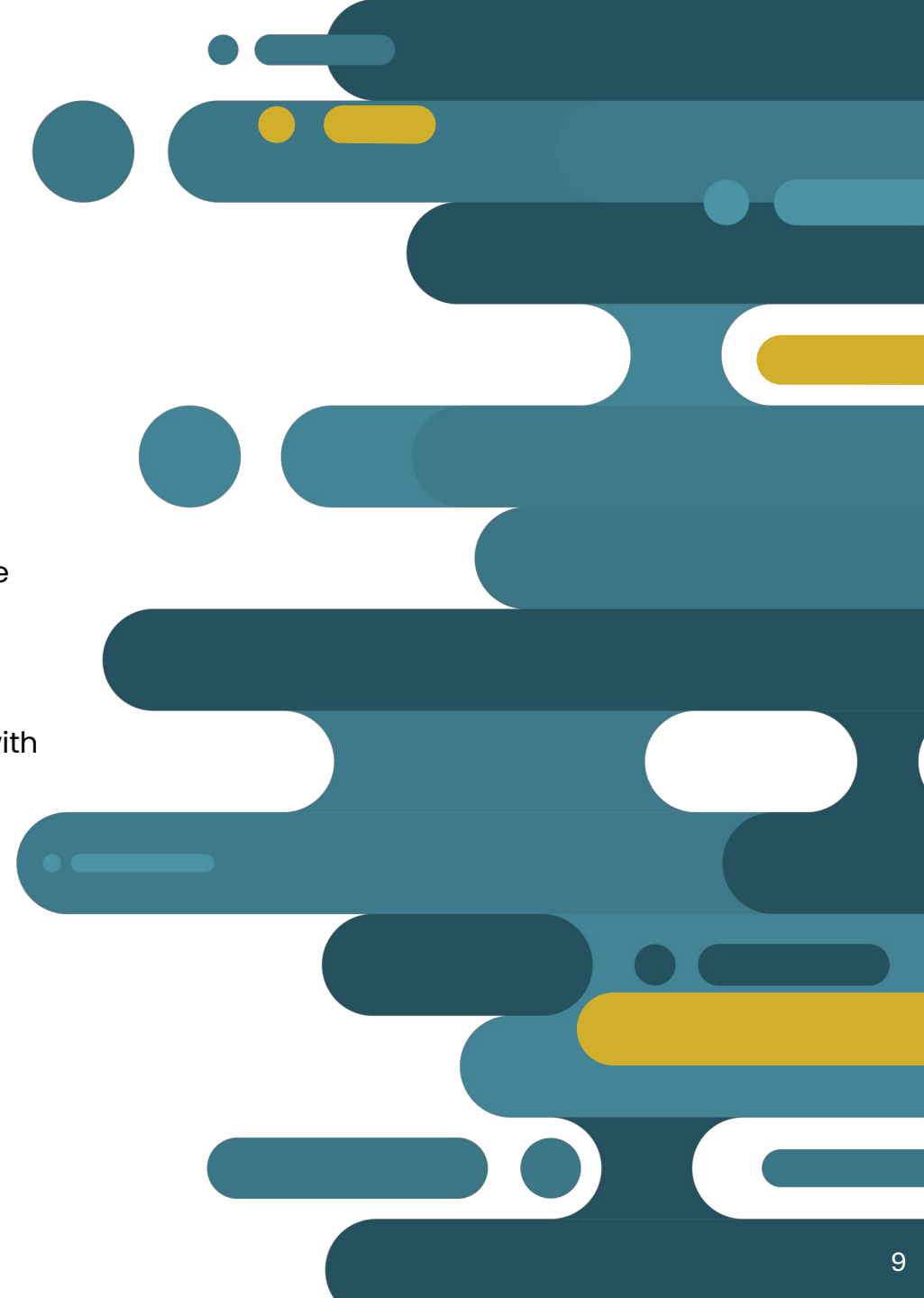
**Cleaning Up Our Neighborhoods:** San José residents can enjoy a city with clean public spaces and well-maintained private property.



**Building More Housing:** Meet resident's housing needs across income levels by making San José a great place to build housing.



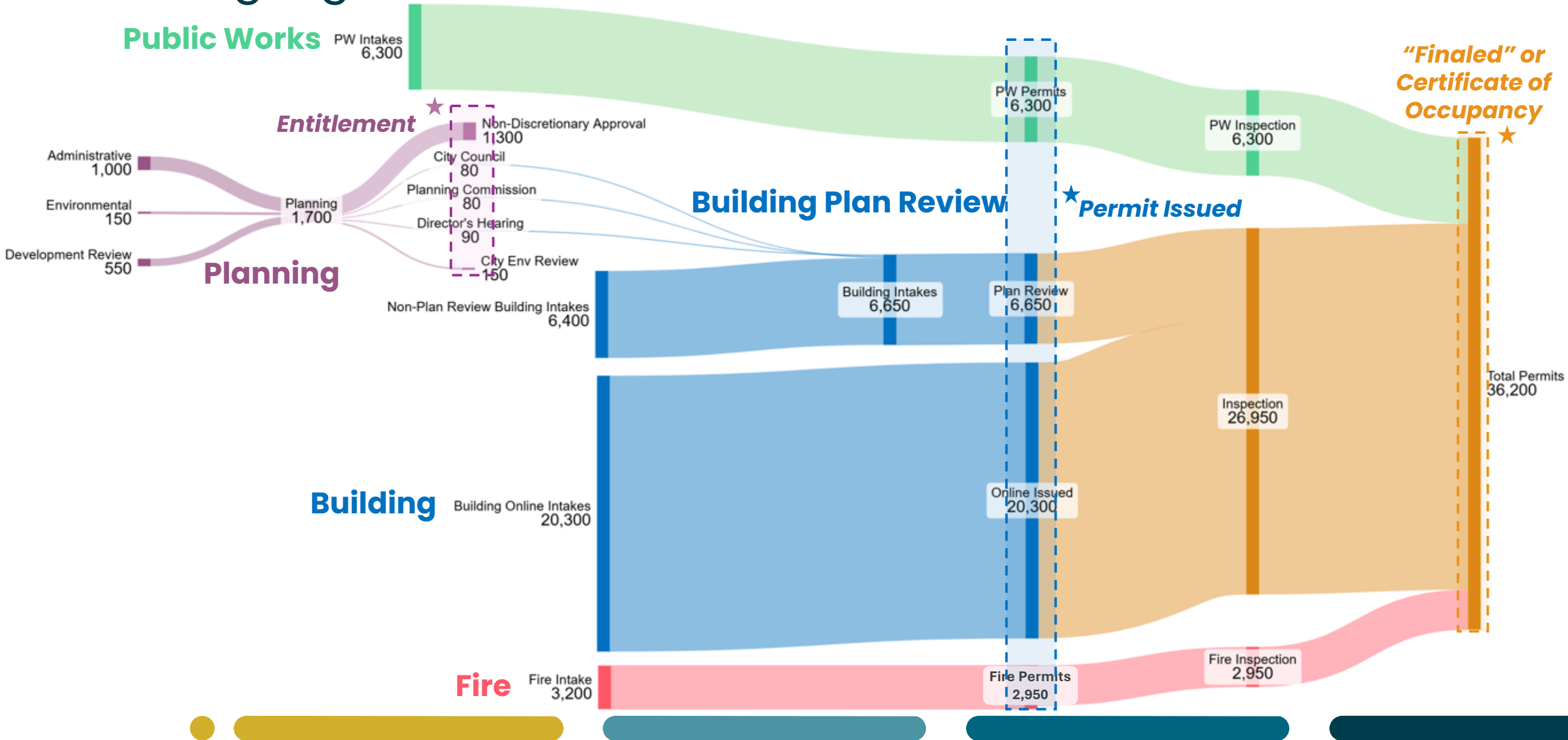
**Growing Our Economy:** Cultivate an ecosystem for thriving businesses and resident prosperity.



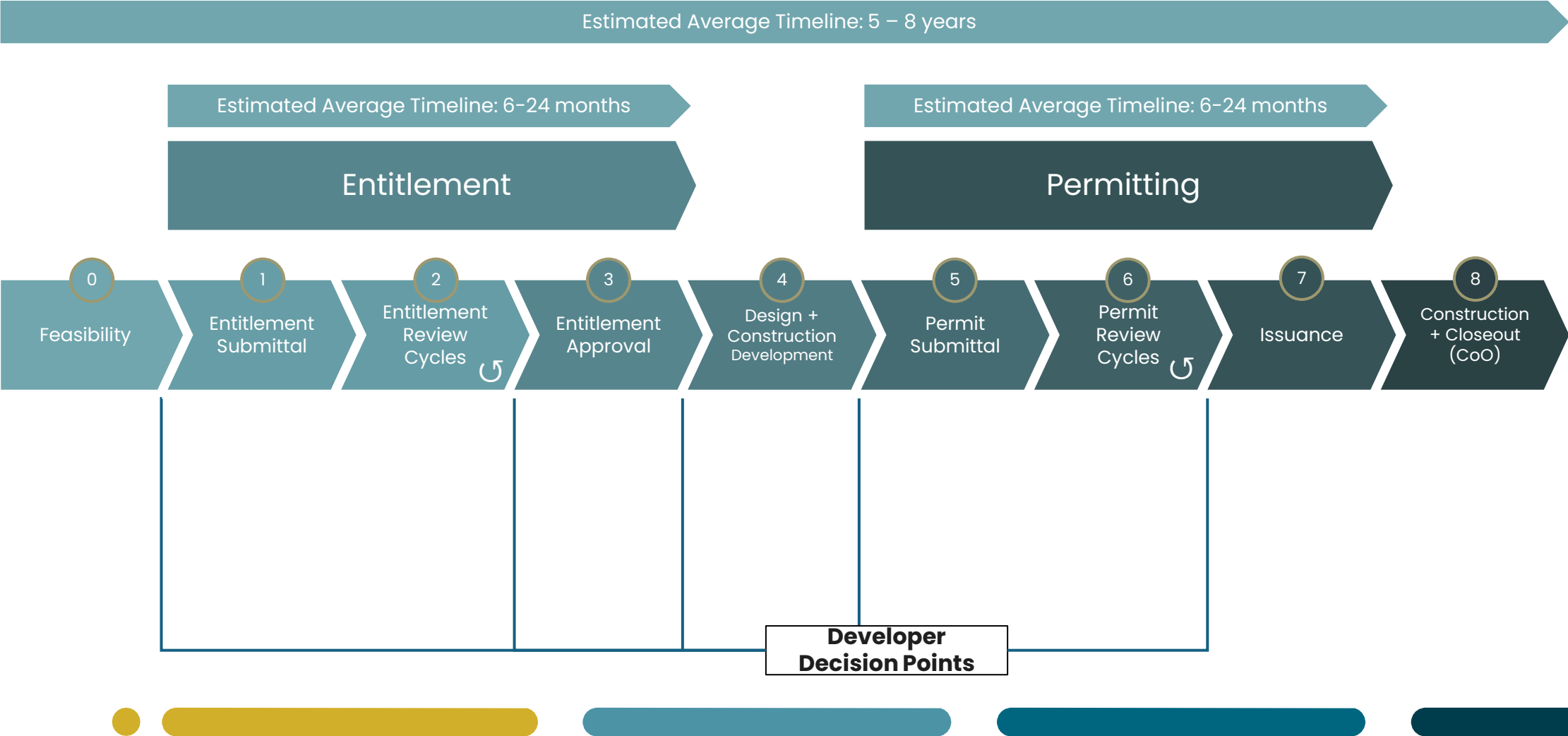


## **2. The Development Permitting Continuum: City Perspective and Development Community Perspective**

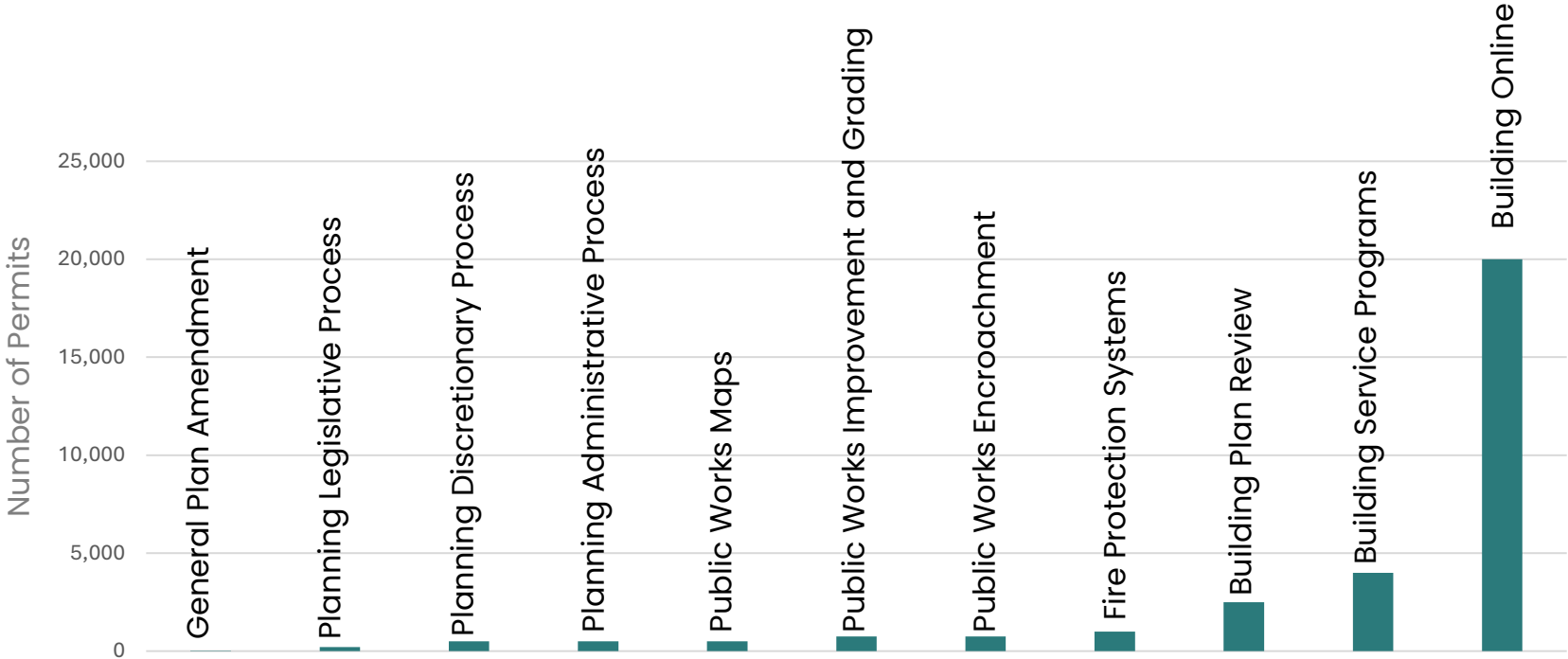
# Providing High Volume Customer Service at Scale:



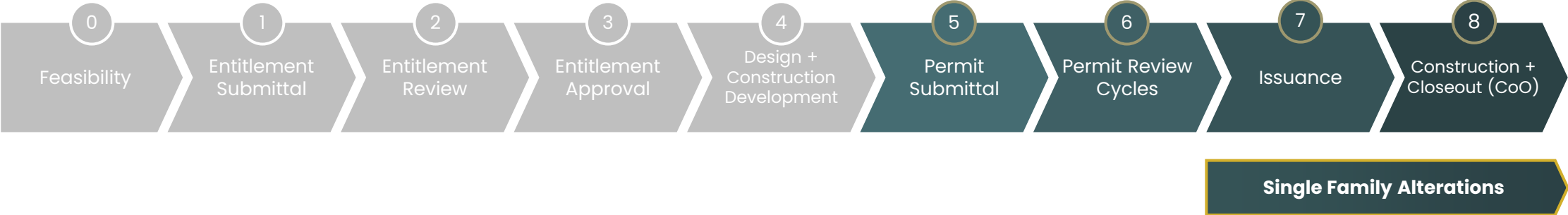
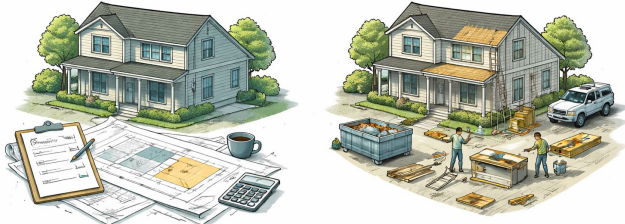
# The Development Continuum:



# The Development Continuum: Volume by Service Pathway



# The Development Continuum: Simplified process for Minor Alterations/ Online Permits



# The Development Continuum: Simplified process for less complex projects



**Commercial Tenant Improvement**



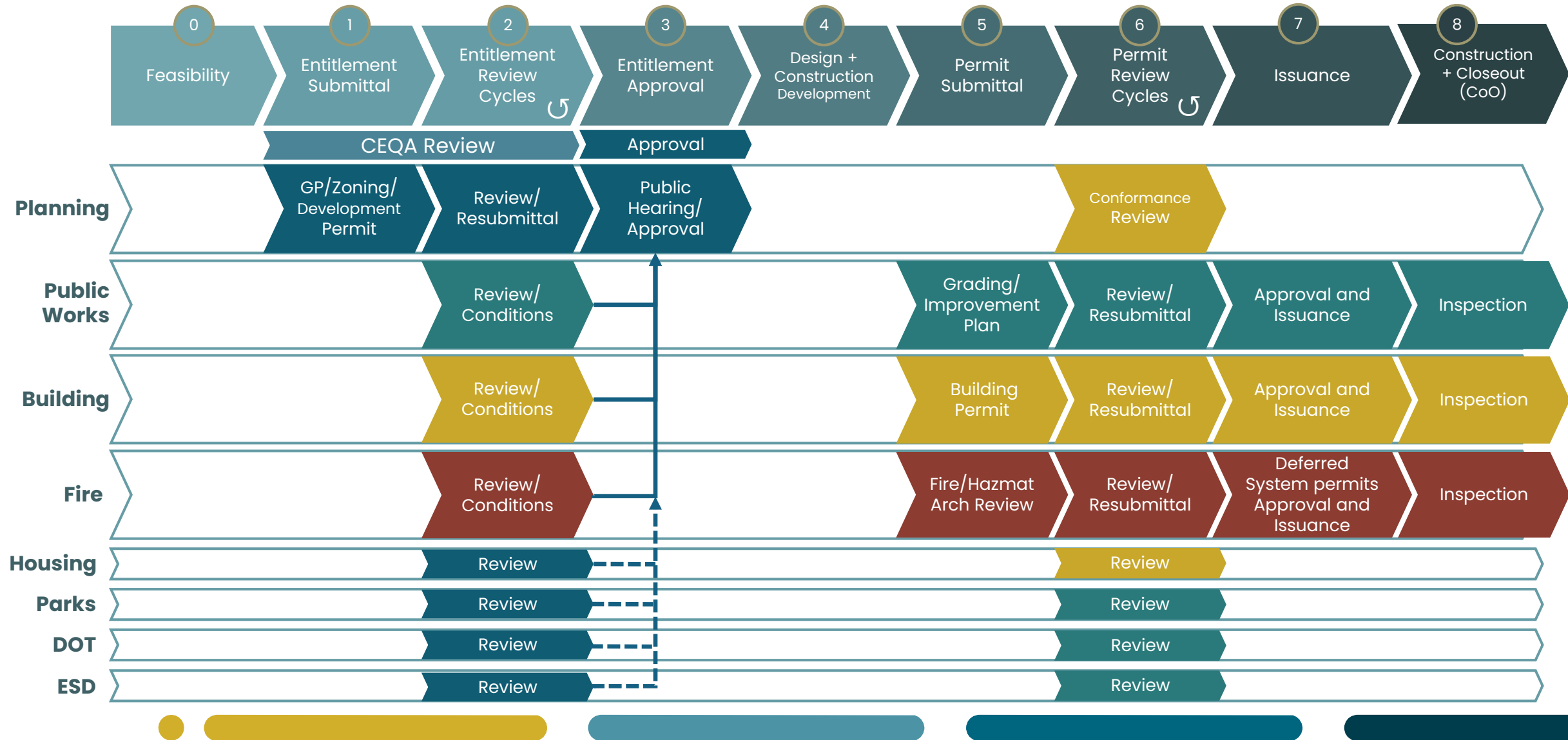
# The Development Continuum:



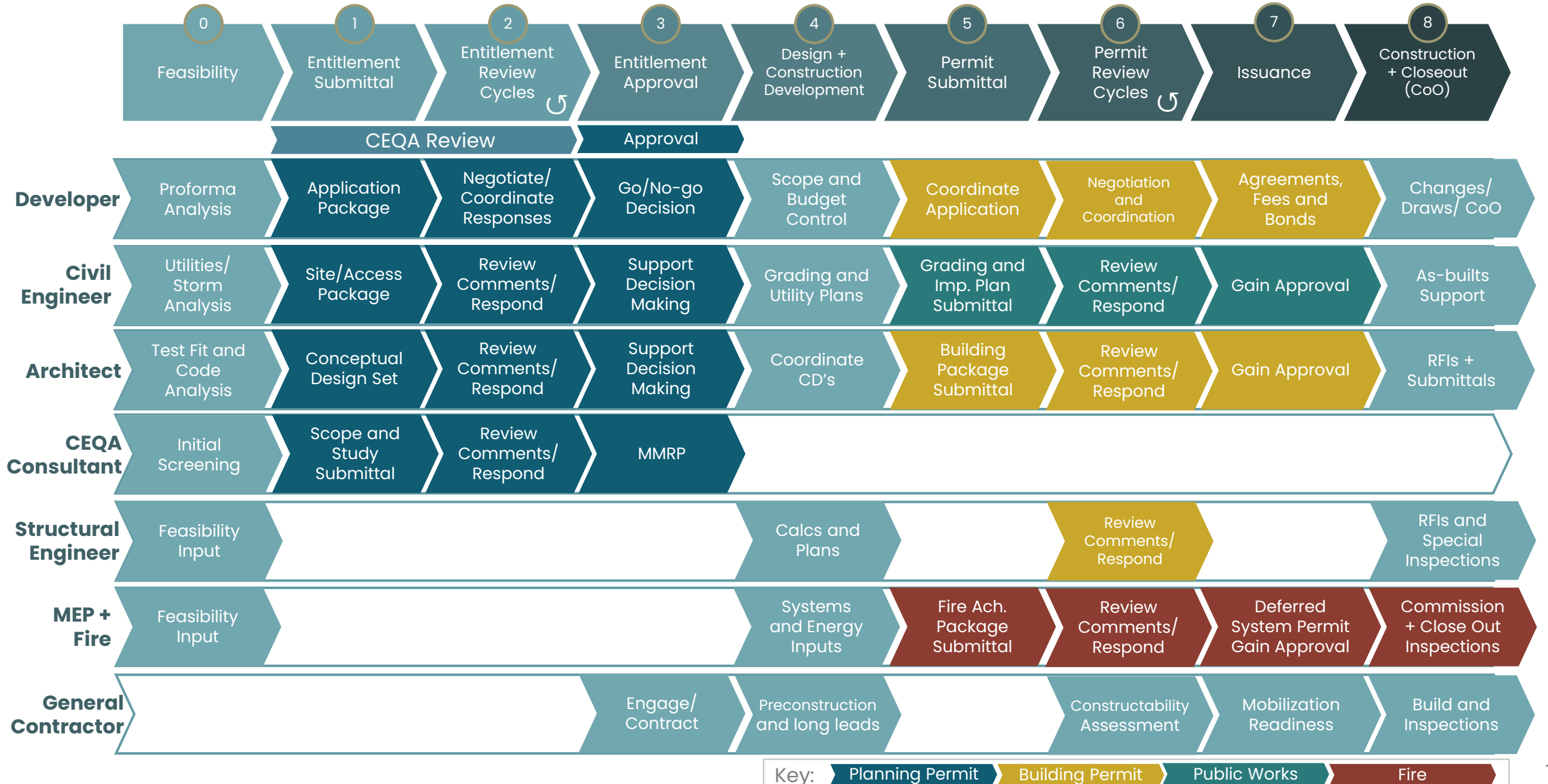
**Ideation to Occupancy: Full Entitlement through Construction**



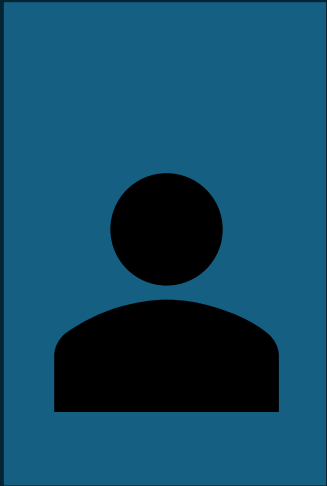
# The Development Continuum: The City's Role



# The Development Continuum: The Applicant's Role



# Customer Voice: Industrial/Commercial



**Name:** Samida Thakral

**Company:** Prologis

**What's working well?**

**What's not working well?**

**What are other City's doing better than us that we should consider?**



### **3. Enhanced Service Pathways: Case Study on Affordable Housing**

# Using Service Pathways to Manage Volume and Diversity

- San José processes many different types of projects – do not all need the same permitting pathway.
- Level of service is matched to the size, complexity, and impact of the project.
- Simpler projects can move through faster, more streamlined pathways.
- More complex projects need deeper review, coordination, and sometimes public process.
- Focus and prioritization helps improve service, focus resources, and support timely project delivery.

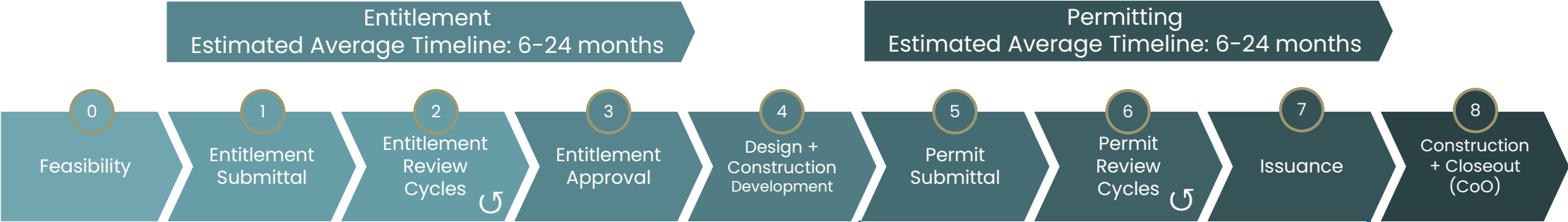
## Other enhanced Service Pathways:

<b>Service Pathway:</b>	<b>Customer Segment</b>
ADU Ally	Homeowners
Over-the-Counter (OTC)	Homeowners/Contractor/Designers
Residential Express	Contractor/Designers
Special Tenant Alteration Review (STAR)	Office and Industrial Tenant Improvements
Small Business Ally	Small Business Owners
Streamlined Restaurant Program	Restaurant Owners
Best Prepared Designer (BPD)	Designers and Architects/Engineers

# Prioritizing Affordable Housing

- Affordable projects using tax credits operate on tight external financing deadlines, so delays between approval and permit issuance can put the project's funding and delivery at risk.
- Prioritizing these projects to advance the Building More Housing Focus Area and Housing Element Goals.
- Involve multiple departments and technical disciplines, so enhanced coordination helps resolve issues earlier and keep review moving on a shared timeline.
- A coordinated pathway gives affordable housing teams clearer milestones, faster problem solving, and a more predictable route from entitlement to building permit.
- Focused resource on these projects supports faster delivery of deed-restricted affordable homes, which is directly aligned with the City's broader housing production goals.

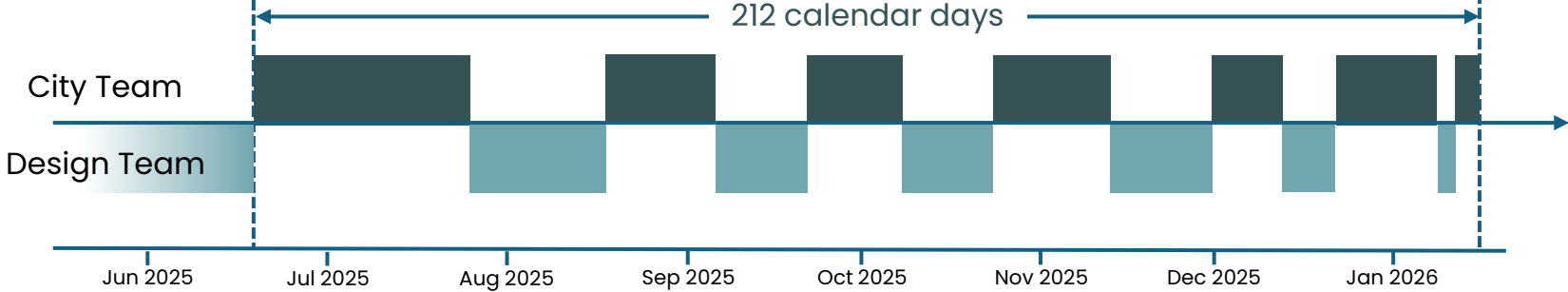
# Case Study: Gateway Towers (15-story, 220 units)



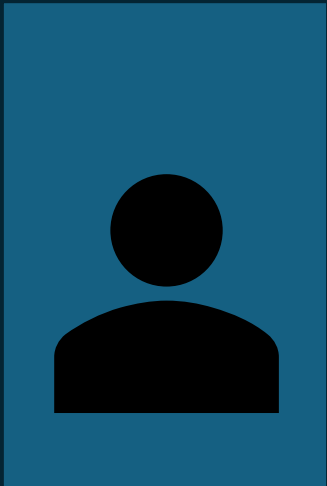
**Entitlement**  
Estimated Average Timeline: 6-24 months

**Permitting**  
Estimated Average Timeline: 6-24 months

294 calendar days  
**Entitlement**  
06/20/2024 - 04/09/2025



# Customer Voice: Affordable Housing



Name: Chris Neale

Company: CORE Companies

Recent Project: Gateway Towers

What's working well?

What's not working well?

What are other City's doing better than us that we should consider?



## **4. What Drives Time to Completion: Where Time is Added and Where Time is Reduced**



# Why Permitting Timelines Matter:

- **They drive project feasibility:** Timelines directly affect financing, carrying costs, and whether a project moves forward at all.
- **They shape coordination across teams:** Designers, contractors, lenders, and owners all plan around when approvals are expected.
- **They influence cost and risk:** Delays can increase construction costs, extend schedules, and introduce uncertainty.
- **They affect delivery of housing and services:** Timelines determine how quickly homes, businesses, and community-serving projects come online.
- **They impact the public as well as the applicant:** Projects deliver infrastructure, safety improvements, and community benefits over time.
- **They operate within a structured but complex system:** State law sets expectations, but timelines ultimately reflect project complexity and coordination across multiple requirements.



## Where time gets reduced:

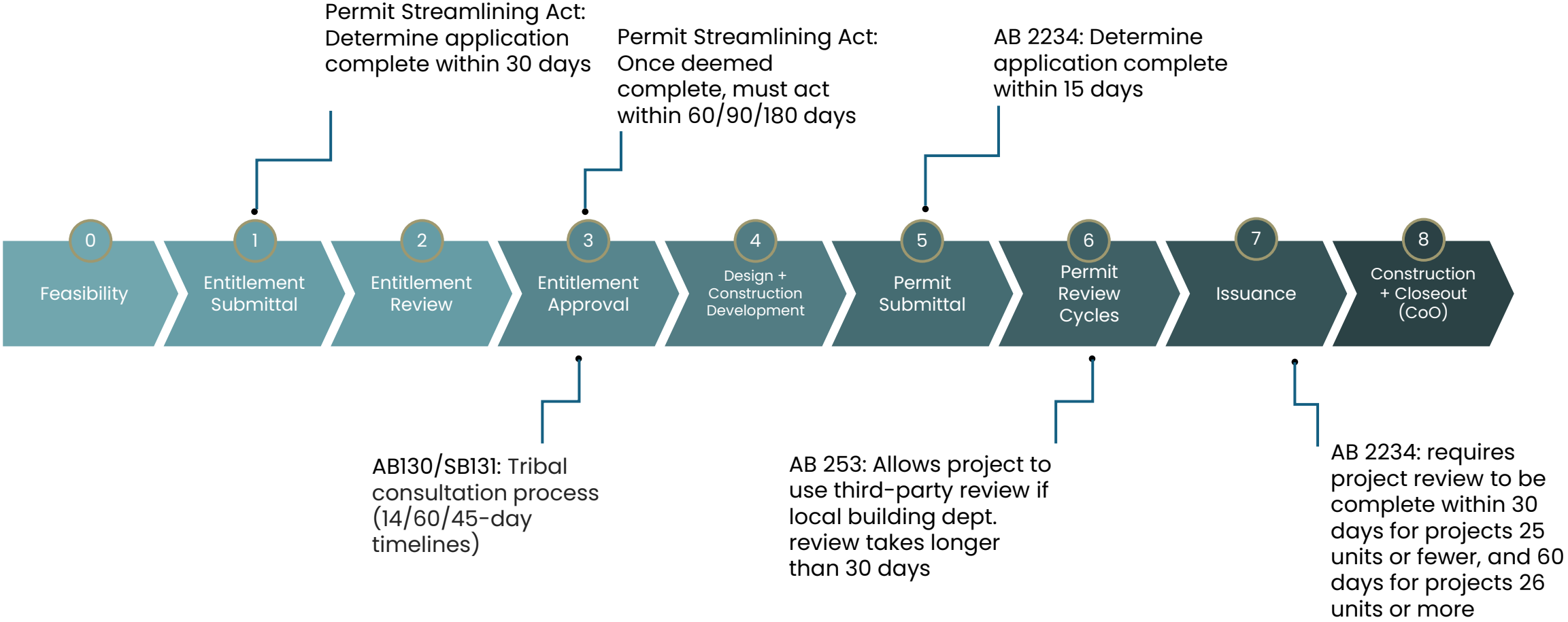
- Better applications on the front end
- Early issue identification
- Parallel review where possible
- Clear correction comments and disciplined resubmittals
- Standardization
- Technology and transparency
- Triage and differentiated services



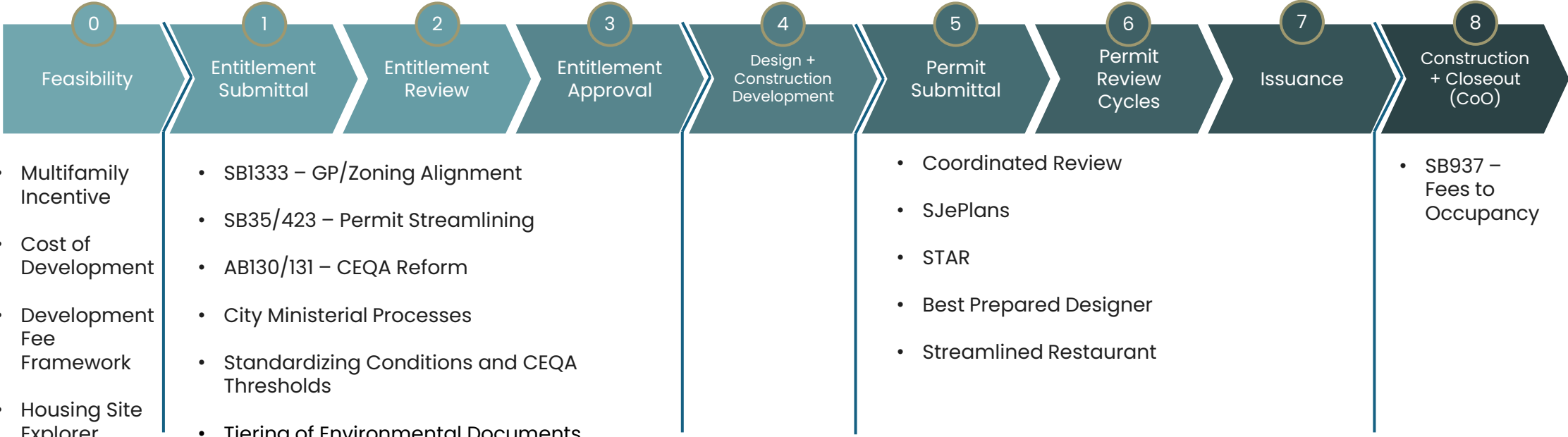
## Where time is added:

- Project complexity
- Land use and environmental requirements
- Application quality and readiness
- Review cycles and redesign
- Public outreach and engagement
- Multi-agency and multi-discipline coordination
- Capacity and workflow constraints
- Construction-phase realities

# State laws dictating permitting timelines, including for housing:



# The impact of regulatory and programmatic changes – removing steps in the process:



# Three types of time with any project:

## Category 1: Time required by law or policy

- State housing laws
- CEQA
- Noticing and hearings
- Appeals
- Regulatory steps
- Entitlement conformance review
- Life safety review

## Category 2: Time driven by project-specific choices

- Applicant redesign/scope creep
- Incomplete plans/submittals
- Complex site constraints
- Financing-driven revisions
- Consultant coordination issues

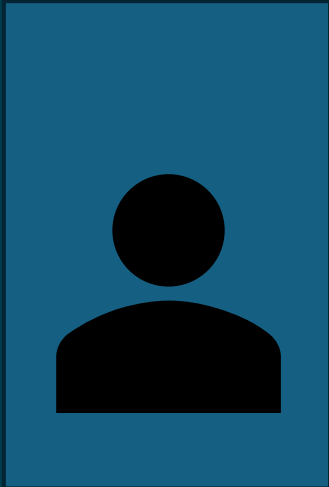
## Category 3: Time the City can improve

- Intake quality control
- Review coordination
- Comment consistency
- Queue management
- Staffing deployment
- Service pathways
- Digital workflow improvements

# Continued Focus on Category 3 Time:

<b>Areas to Improve:</b>	<b>Work in Progress</b>
Intake quality control	Website updates
Review coordination	Ongoing interdepartmental meetings
Comment consistency	Onboarding and training
Queue management	Project prioritization
Staffing deployment	Improved development forecasting
Service pathways	Special programs, including Development Facilitation
Digital workflow improvements	Technology investments

# Customer Voice: Market Rate Housing



Name:

Company:

Recent Project:

What's working well?

What's not working well?

What are other City's doing better than us that we should consider?

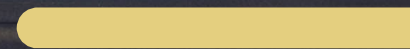
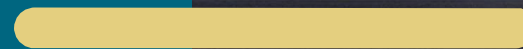




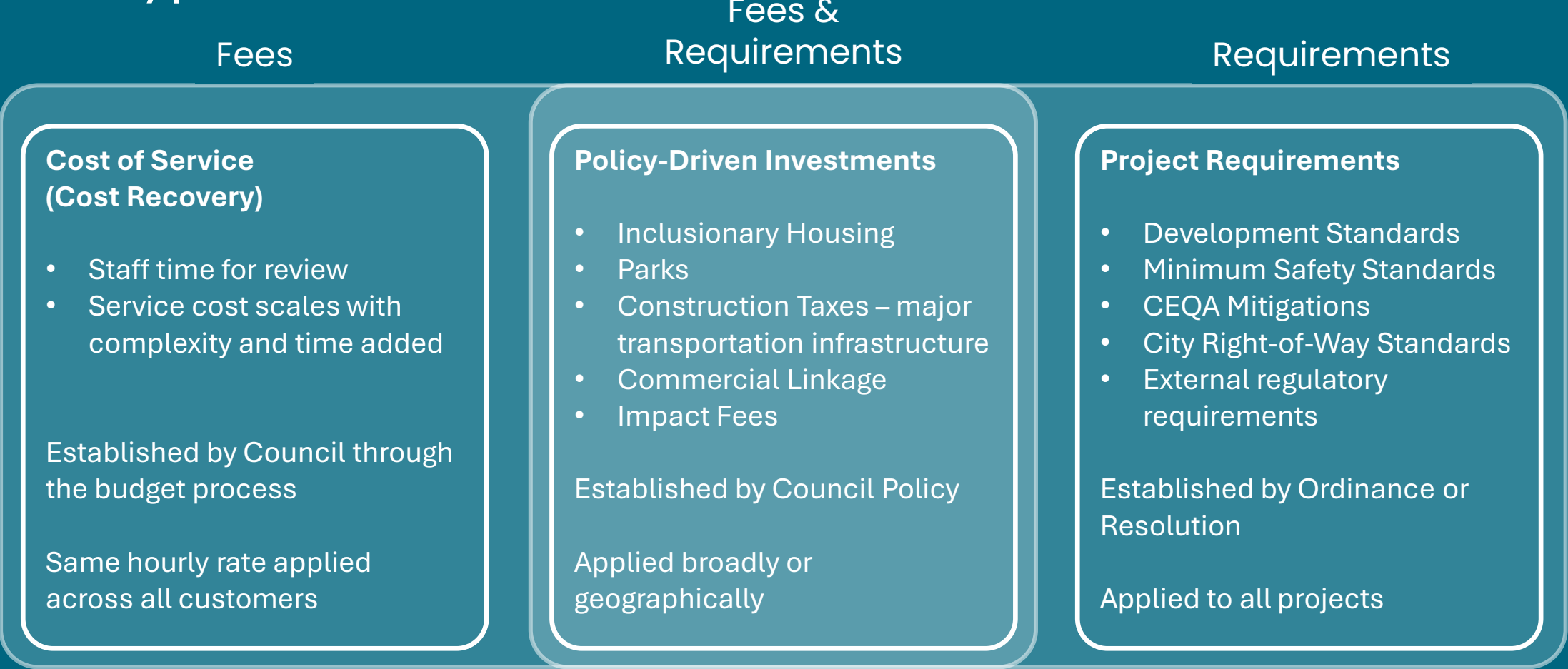
# 5. Fees and Requirements: Understanding Cost Recovery and Project Obligations

# How Private Development Shapes the Public Realm:

- Streets and Sidewalks
- Utilities and Infrastructure
- Public Safety and Access
- Environmental Performance (CEQA Mitigations)
- Neighborhood Character and Quality
- Public Amenities and Community Benefits



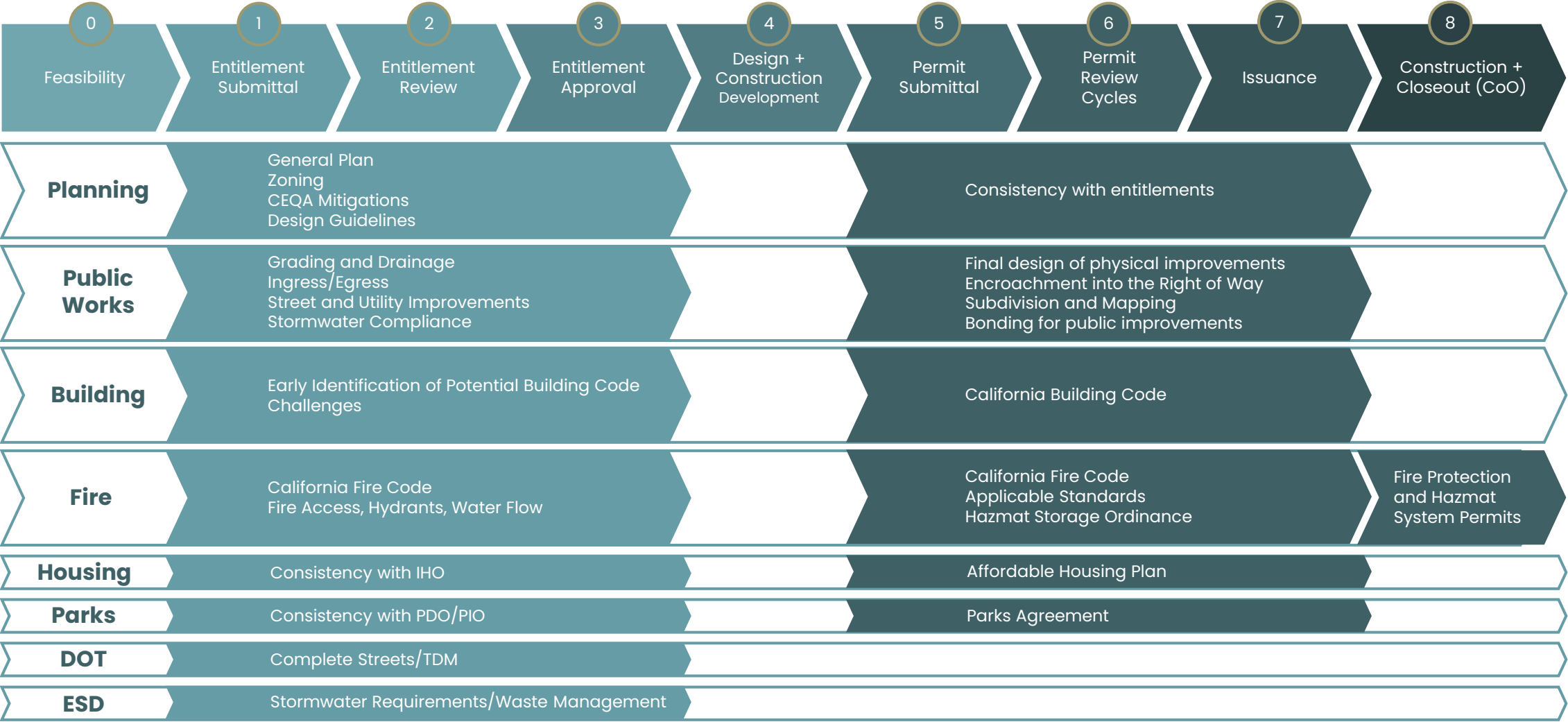
# How Development Invests in the Community: Three Types of Costs



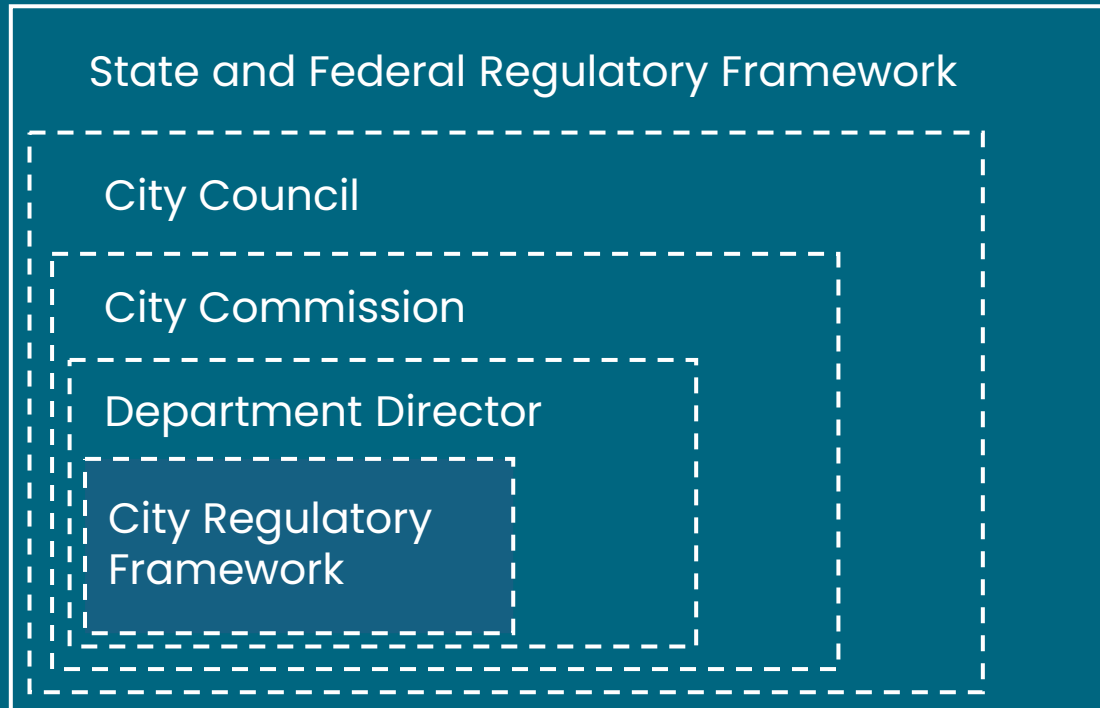
Regulatory Environment



# Where these requirements show up in the process:



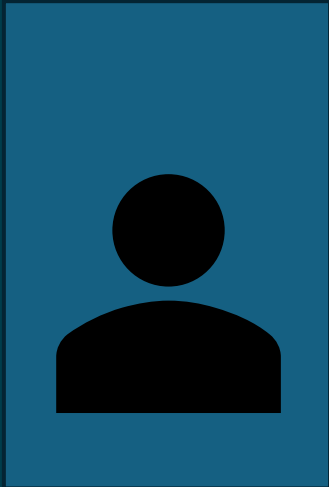
# How decisions get made:



- Projects and permits that are consistent with the City's Regulatory Framework are reviewed and approved by staff (vast majority of permits)
- Projects that are inconsistent or require discretionary approvals add time and complexity
- Clearly defined regulatory framework provides transparency and predictability for development



# Customer Voice: Small Business



Name:

Company:

Recent Project:

What's working well?

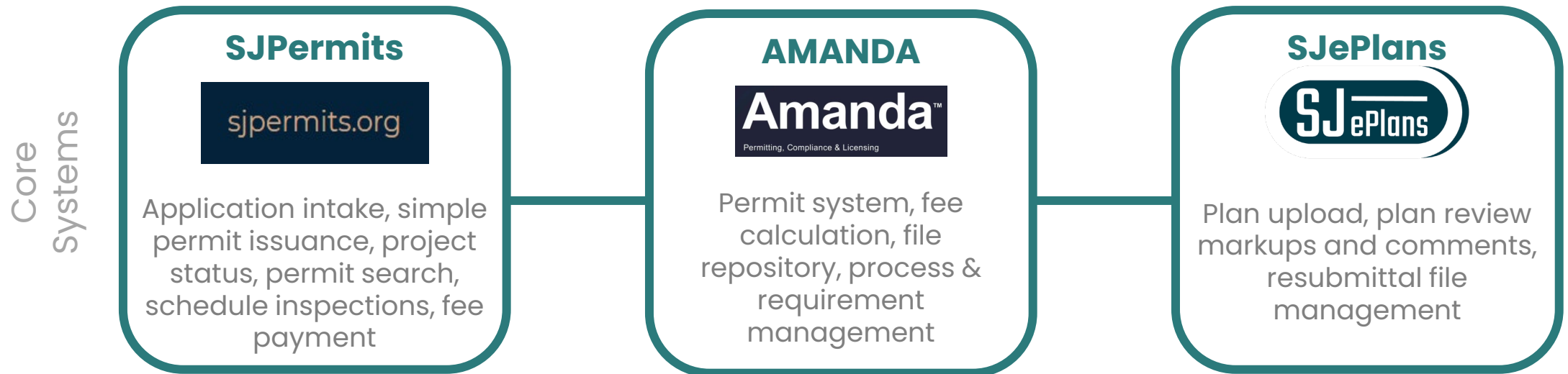
What's not working well?

What are other City's doing better than us that we should consider?



## 6. Tools and Technology Supporting the Work

# How We Manage a High-Volume, Multi-Department System



# Customers Digital Front Door

Online Permits

**56 Types of Permits**

Available for online permit issuance in ~15 minutes

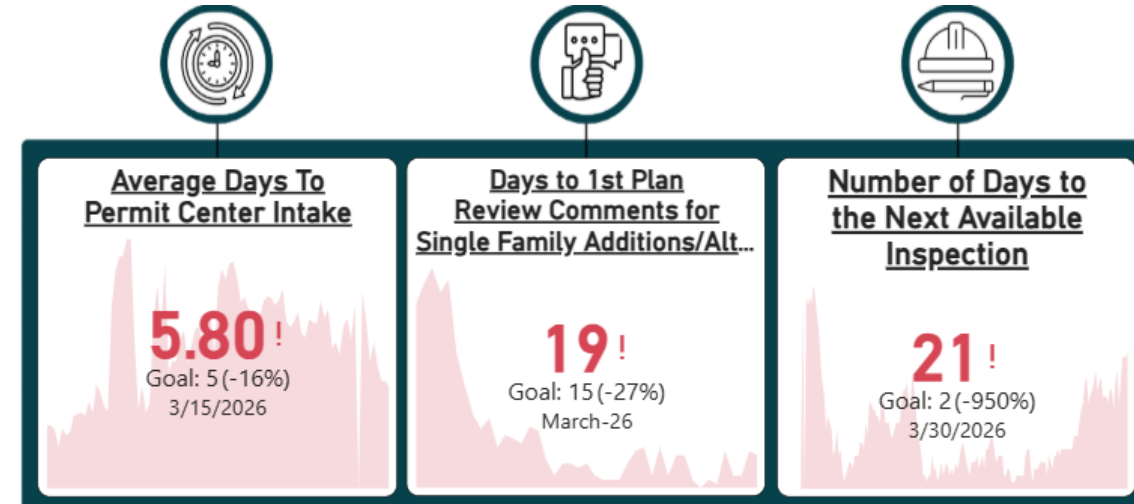
Self-Start Permits

**~80% Permits**

Of the remaining permits, about 80% can be self-started online without CSJ Staff

Transparency

- ✓ **Online Permit Status**
- ✓ **Customer Service Dashboards**
- ✓ **Process Expectations**



Customer Centric Dashboards

# Future State – Continued Enhancement of the Customer Experience

## Technology Vision

- Modern Digital Experience
- Operational Efficiencies
- Process Navigation

## Sample Initiatives

- ✓ Application Wizard
- ✓ Fee Estimator Tool
- ✓ Pre-Submittal Instructions



# Helping Customers Navigate Our System: New! Building Permit Pages launched this month

OLD: Pick from our menu of forms.

## BULLETINS ABOUT SPECIFIC TYPES OF PROJECTS

#	NAME
209	<a href="#">Exterior Plaster and Water Resistive Barrier with Drainage Plane</a>
250	<a href="#">Accessory Buildings and Structures - Single Family Homes and Duplexes</a>
252	<a href="#">Basement Requirements for Residences</a>
254	<a href="#">Building Demolition Permit Requirements</a>
256	<a href="#">Condensate Disposal Requirements</a>
260	<a href="#">Electrical Service Panel Upgrades - Single Family Homes and Duplexes</a>
262	<a href="#">Electrical Receptacle and Switch Installation Requirements - Non-Residential</a>
263	<a href="#">Electrical Vehicle Charging Stations Permit and Plan Review Requirements</a>
265	<a href="#">Equipment Suspended or Mounted on Roofs, Floors or Walls</a>
267	<a href="#">Installation of Exterior Light Fixture Support Poles</a>
—	<a href="#">Fence and Retaining Wall Requirements (webpage)</a>
271	<a href="#">Gas Line and Piping Installations</a>
273	<a href="#">Generator Permit Requirements</a>
274	<a href="#">Minor Kitchen &amp; Bathroom Remodels</a>
—	<a href="#">SB 9 Duplex Project - Zoning Conformance Checklist</a>
—	<a href="#">SB 9 Owner-Occupancy Attestation Form</a>
—	<a href="#">SB 9 Prior Tenancy Attestation Form</a>
275	<a href="#">Sewer Backup Prevention &amp; Backwater Valves</a>
276	<a href="#">Sewer Installations: Plumbing Permit Requirements</a>
278	<a href="#">Septic Tank Removal Permit Requirements</a>
280	<a href="#">Skylight Permits for Single-Family Dwellings</a>
282	<a href="#">Solar Photovoltaic &amp; Stationary Storage Battery Installations</a>
283	<a href="#">Standby Generator Installations: For Emergency Backup Power Only</a>
286	<a href="#">Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Requirements</a>
287	<a href="#">Swimming Pool and Spa Setback and Safety Requirements</a>
288	<a href="#">Swimming Pool Construction and Inspections</a>
289	<a href="#">Swimming Pool Demolition Permit Requirements</a>
242	<a href="#">Swimming Pool Plan Review Requirements</a>
290	<a href="#">Tankless Water Heater Requirements</a>
292	<a href="#">Utility Meters: How to Get or Replace A Meter</a>
293	<a href="#">Water Heater Installation Information</a>
294	<a href="#">Water Heater Bollard Protection</a>
295	<a href="#">Water Re-Piping Projects - Residential</a>
297	<a href="#">Window Replacement Requirements</a>
298	<a href="#">Wood Burning Appliance Regulations</a>




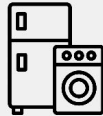










**NEW: What are you trying to do? Let's help get you there!**  
Easy printing, automatic translation, AI-proofing accuracy

## START A PROJECT

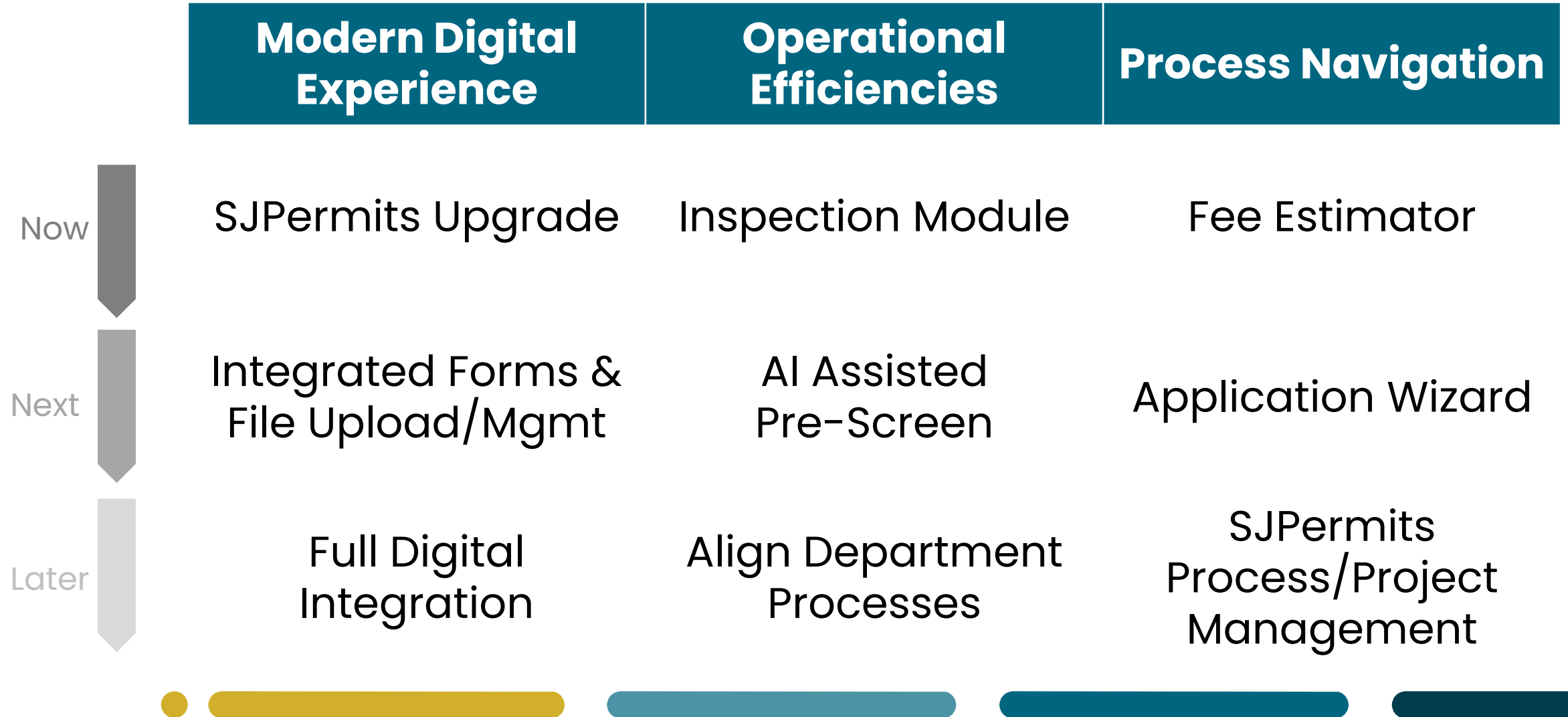
Here are common projects on single-family and duplex properties that need a building permit. If you are not sure a permit is needed, read [When Is a Building Permit Required?](#)

Click the button that matches your project.

 <b>ADDITIONS &amp; REMODELS</b>	 <b>ADU</b>	 <b>AIR CONDITIONING &amp; HEATING</b>	 <b>APPLIANCE INSTALLATIONS</b>
 <b>CHIMNEY REPAIR</b>	 <b>DAMAGE REPAIR</b>	 <b>DECKS</b>	 <b>DEMOLITIONS</b>
 <b>DRIVEWAYS &amp; SIDEWALKS</b>	 <b>EARTHQUAKE RETROFITS</b>	 <b>ELECTRICAL PROJECTS</b>	 <b>EV CHARGING STATIONS</b>



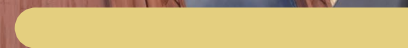
# Emerging Tools: AI and Guided Self-Service



# 7. Continuous Improvement: What's Underway and What's Next

# What Cities Are Doing Across California

- Improve application quality (AI pre-checks, better portals, standard plans)
- Reduce review time (parallel processing, priority lanes for housing)
- Improve coordination (one-stop centers, consolidated departments)
- Focus on transparency and predictability for customers



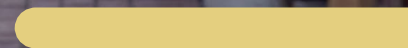
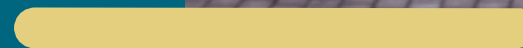


# Where San José Is Strong Today

- Coordinated review for affordable housing with structured timelines
- Development Facilitation Team provides single point of contact
- Early design feedback reduces late-stage redesign
- Development Tracker improves internal visibility of major projects
- Strong foundation for coordinated delivery system

# Where the Gaps Are

- Best practices not consistently applied across all projects
- Limited customer visibility into process and status
- Coordination across departments not always visible to applicants
- Gap between internal performance and external perception





## Continuous Improvement: What's Underway and What's Next

- Strategic realignment centered on strengthening coordination across departments
- Making it easier to understand our requirements and submit a complete application, first time
- Continue to improve the time we control
- Improve visibility, predictability for applicants



Follow Us!



Questions?

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