



Planning and Land Services

Activity Report for March 2009

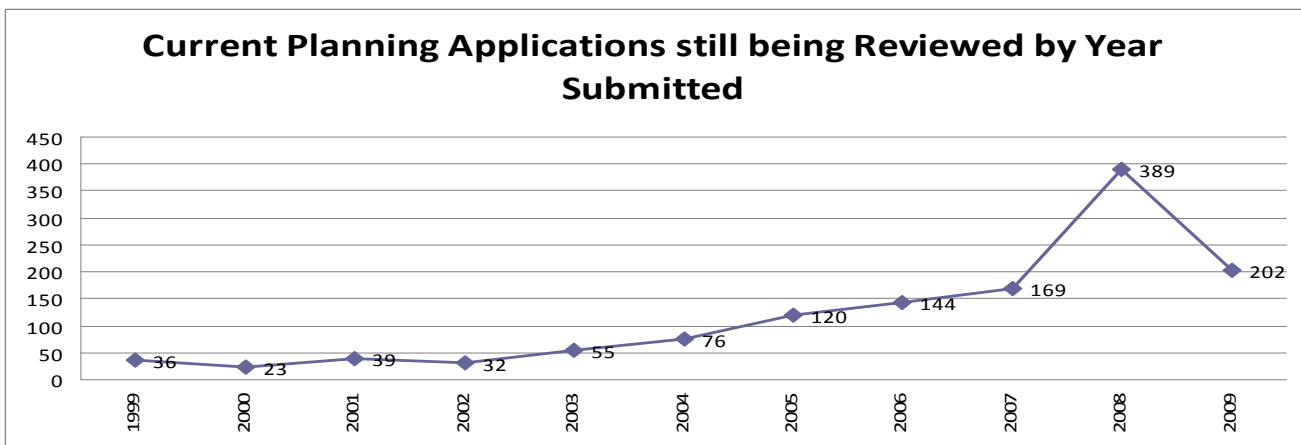
This month's report includes follow up information to questions raised on Monday April 6th, during the County Council Rules and Operations Committee meeting. In that meeting the first [quarterly report](#) for 2009 was presented. That report and a copy of the 2004 Performance Audit recommendations [final action](#) can be viewed at www.piercecountywa.org/PALS "Performance Audit".

Why the backlog in Current Planning?

There are at least two parts to the answer. Staffing is a key part of an increasing backlog. PALS began freezing vacant positions in late 2007. Combined with some attrition and placement of staff in other Departments or Sections, PALS will have 43 fewer positions than at the end of 2007. Current Planning has lost 8.5 FTEs, almost a 40% reduction.

The other part of the answer is workload. The drop in residential building permits in the later months of 2007 and through 2008 is only a partial indicator of the workload within Current Planning. Their workload is comprised of projects that involve multiple applications, with multiple reviewing departments, with multiple regulations.

Complex applications like Conditional Use Permits, Plats (Formal and Short), Planned District Developments, Shoreline, and Master Planned Communities require up to five years to complete the review process. Routinely, staff can be working on the initial review of an application accepted a month ago, as well as the review of requested information/studies for applications submitted years ago. This graph illustrates the number of active applications that were applied for prior to 2009.



When we refer to old applications it is a reference to its application date and not an indication that the review is old or late. There can be several stages to a complex application. There may be LUAC hearings and well as public hearing before a Hearings Examiner. Several months may pass between each of these steps.

So, when looking at the number of new applications (graph on page 7) it shows a fairly level amount of activity. However, added to that are the applications made in previous years that are still making their way through the process.

A steady level of permit activity and a sharply decreasing staffing level is starting to have an impact on performance in Current Planning. Later in this report you will see that on-time plan review has dropped to 54% and backlog has risen to 84. The oldest application in backlog status was 49 days late.

Preferred Customer Appointment

Currently we use this as a way to provide assistance to applicants with complex projects or those that need special help. An alternative model is to create a preferred customer list. If you go through a specialized training and consistently bring in complete applications you can be on the list.

Once on the list you can get appointments for your applications. If you maintain this high level of competence and come prepared with complete applications, you stay on the list. If not, you are taken off the list until you can show competence again.

This model is in place in other communities in this region. We have not pursued development of a preferred customer program. It is an issue that we remain open to pursuing.

How is the training of Land Use Advisory Commissions (LUAC) working out?

Current Planning has reduced training for the LUAC membership due to budget constraints. We canceled the two Continuing Education sessions and the one Chairperson training proposed for 2009. We are still planning on providing one New Member training session in 2009, probably in July. We requested feed back from the LUAC membership on the proposed reduction in training in March of 2009 and received minimal responses. The Key Peninsula Advisory Commission has requested additional training on specific issues, and we are looking into how we could provide this without great expense. Additionally, the Peninsula Advisory Commission vice chair provided comments which were supportive of the temporary reduction in training.

We are also requested by Michael Esher, Airport Administrator, to provide training to the Thun Field Advisory Commission (TFAC) and the newly created Commission for the Narrows Airport Advisory Commission. PALS is required to make a presentation before these Commissions for discretionary land use applications within 1,000 feet of the airport boundaries. The Airport Commissions also hear cases, instead of the respective Land

Use Advisory Commission, for cases within the boundaries of the Airports, to provide a recommendation prior to the public hearing before the Hearing Examiner.

How do drop boxes work?

Any applicant may drop off any type of application. The only exception to this will be commercial building permit customers, who will still be required to make appointments. In addition, we will encourage some applicants with complex applications to wait for the next available Permit Technician.

Base Plan Permit applications in newer plats will only be accepted as drop-offs, and will still be processed within three days.

At least one Permit Technician will be assigned to accepting application packets that are dropped off. Each application packet will be assigned a number that can be tracked in PALS Plus and via the internet.

Once the packet has been accepted in PALS Plus it will be reviewed for completeness. This part of the process has not yet been fully developed, but could be performed by Technical Support staff by statusing them within PALS Plus. Applications will be deemed complete or incomplete within five days (28 days maximum) and the customer will be notified. Incomplete application packets will be returned to the customer with a submittal standard. Complete application packets will be routed to a Permit Technician to create and process the applications.

What happens when the industry rebounds and activity picks back up?

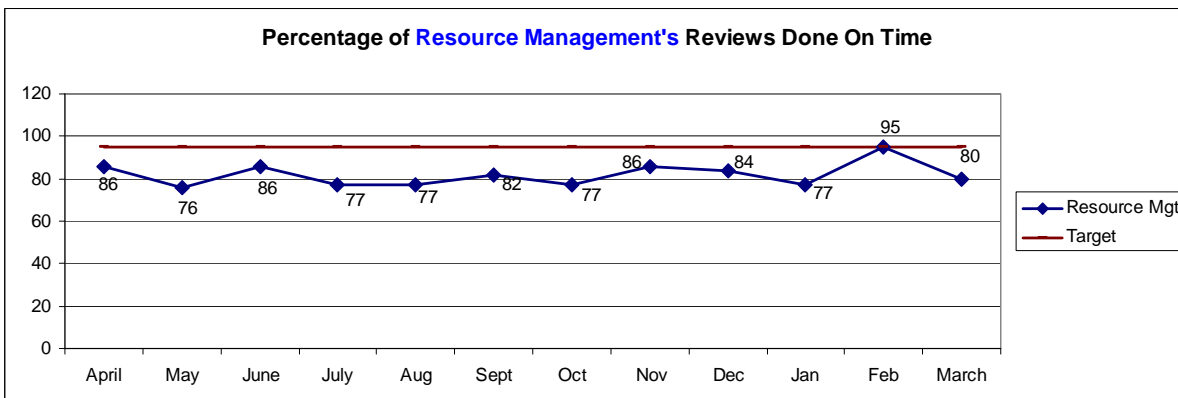
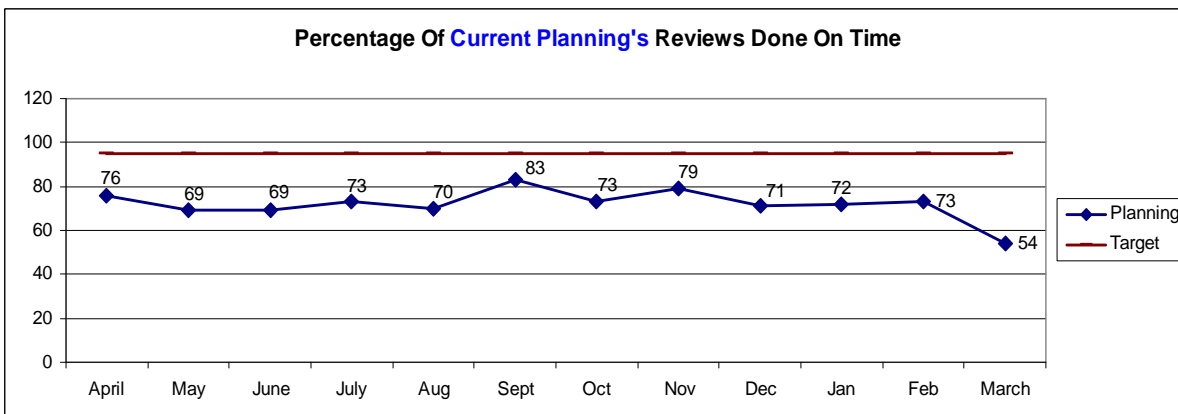
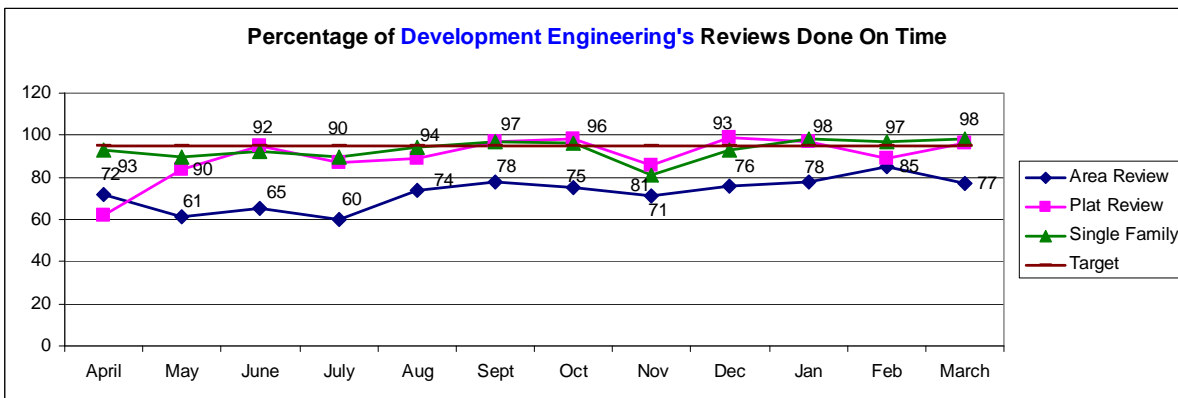
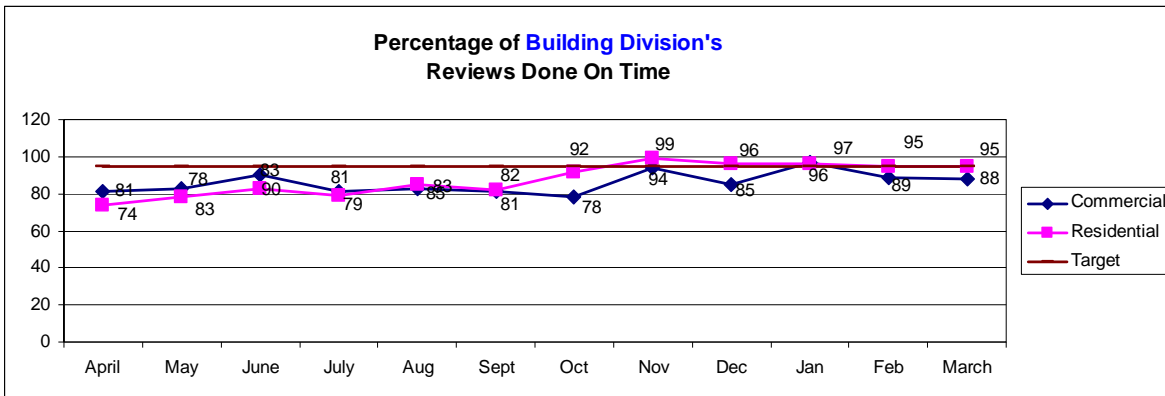
A lot depends on the speed of the recovery. As noted earlier, we may soon have 43 fewer positions than at the end of 2007. The staffing model in the 2004 Audit was based on an average year. If applications rise to an average and rise quickly, our on-time performance will be impacted until staffing can be restored.

Performance Report

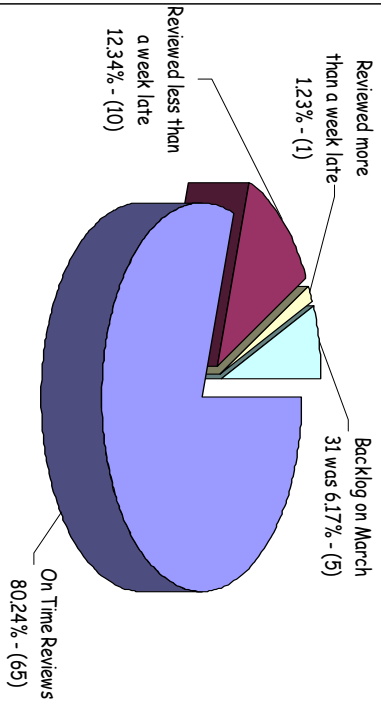
The following performance data is a continuation of our 2008 report format. We continue to include at least a years worth of data for comparative purposes. Older data is available on the PALS web site as are more detailed reports from each PALS Section.

www.piercecountywa.org/PALS "Performance Audit"

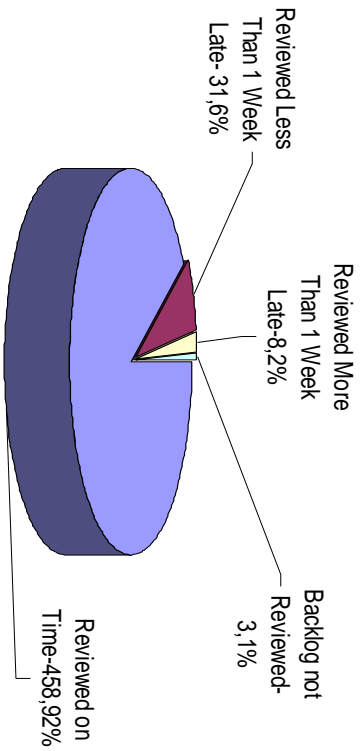
Performance of Reviews for March 2009



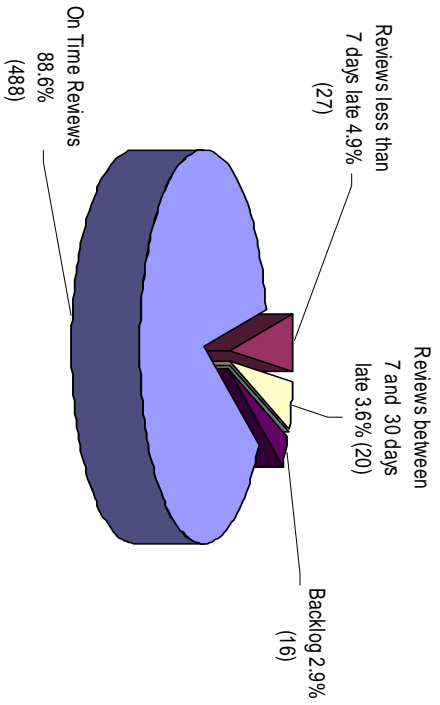
Resource Mgt Performance Review March 2009



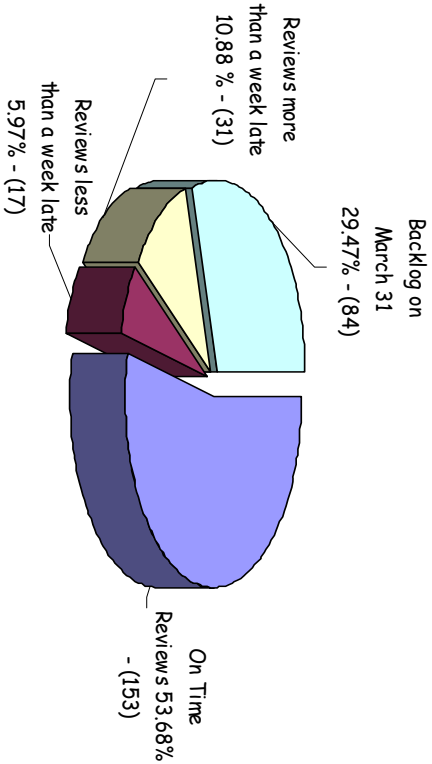
BLDG Plan Review Performance for March 2009



Development Engineering Review Performance March 2009

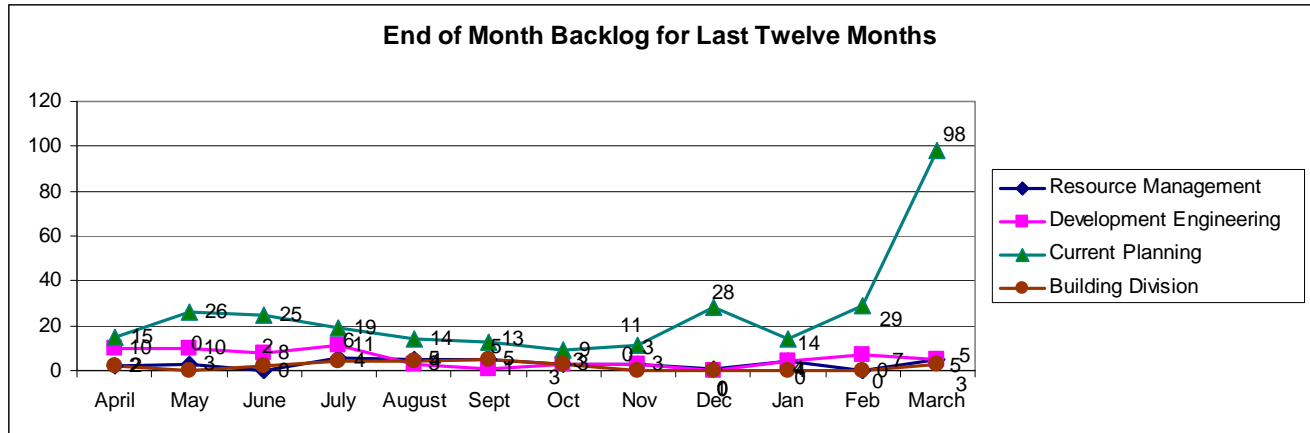


Current Planning Performance Review March 2009



Backlog Summary

Backlog represents those applications on the last day of the month that should have been reviewed. As noted in the pie charts on page 5, most of these applications are days late not months late. **On-Time Performance** is our measure of success not just backlog.

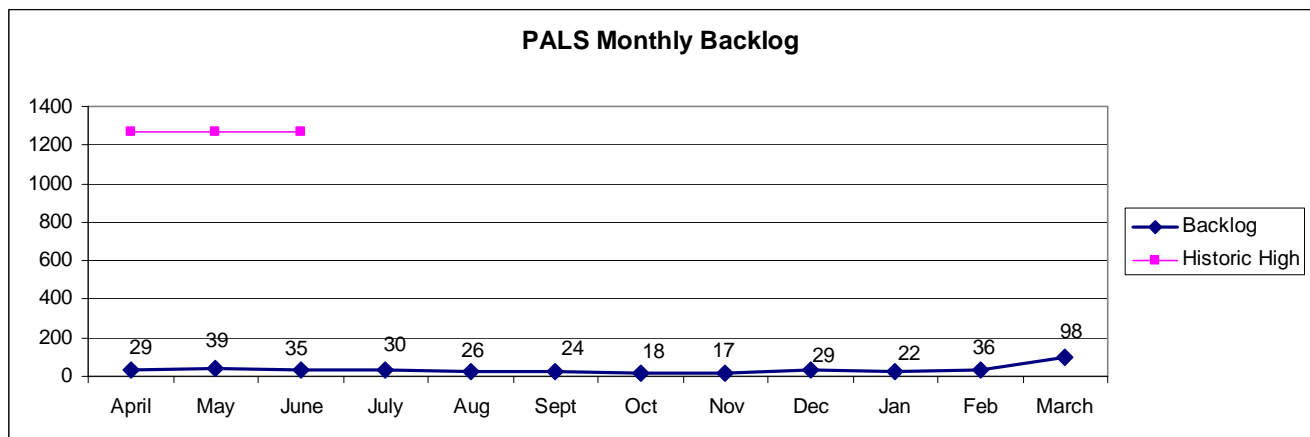


Additional details on backlog and what is being done to address the volume of applications will be in the individual Section reports. Those will be posted to the PALS web-page no later than the 15th of the month.

<http://piercecountywa.org/pc/services/home/property/pals/aboutus/reportsandstats.htm>

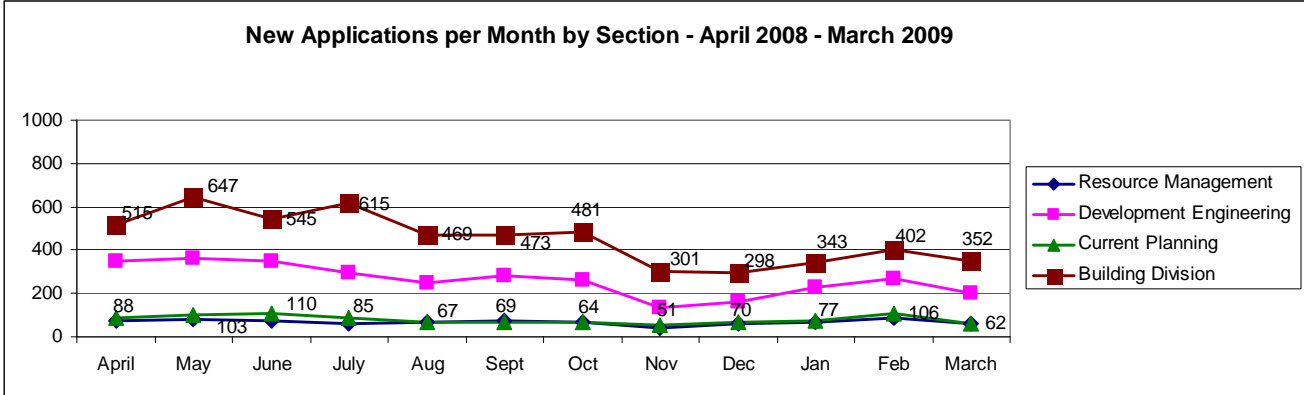
Meeting our performance goals of being 95% efficient is considered a success. At 95% there will always be some backlog.

	As of March 31 st
Building Division	3
Current Planning	84
Development Engineering	5 ¹
Resource Management	5
Total	98



¹ Of the 16 reviews shown in backlog in the pie chart on the previous page, 11 were reviewed by DENG and were waiting for PW&U to review.

New Applications in March



Each permit represented here generates a review by the other sections. For example, 100 building permits can generate 300 reviews within PALS. For details on workload by reviewing Sections please look at the Section reports on our webpage. www.Piercecountywa.org/PALS Look under "Performance Audit" in the left column.

Customer Service - Development Center

March 2009	Percent Seen in 20 minutes	Percent Seen in 60 minutes
New Applications and Information (walk-in) 474	92%	99%
Over The Counter (pick up) 309	98%	100%
Appointments (commercial) 17	94%	100%

