



County of Santa Cruz

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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ALVIN D. JAMES, DIRECTOR

March 2, 2001

Agenda: March 13, 2001

Board of Supervisors
County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, California 95060

SUBJECT: Planning Department Second Quarterly Report

Members of the Board:

At the conclusion of budget hearings last June, your Board directed the Planning Department to prepare quarterly reports on the permit workload in the Department. Subsequently, on October 17th, your Board considered a comprehensive report on Planning Department operations, which included a series of recommendations to improve our services to the public. We indicated that our quarterly reports would include an update on our progress in implementing these recommendations. Our first quarter report was filed and accepted by your Board on November 21st, 2000. We are pleased to submit our second quarter report to your Board.

STATUS REPORT ON CUSTOMER SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

Attachment 1 to this letter is a table which summarizes our progress in implementing the various customer service improvements which your Board approved last October. Significant progress has been made in most program areas. Geographic teams have been established; services at our North County Permit Center have been expanded; a lease has been signed and planning efforts are underway to open a South County Permit Center; numerous personnel appointments have been made; a training officer has been designated and various training efforts are now underway; we are presently interviewing for our Customer Service/Quality Control program manager and Urban Designer; development of the One-Stop Program for Minor Projects is underway, and a number of physical space projects have been completed or are in progress to implement the various customer service initiatives. Our future quarterly reports will include ongoing progress updates in all of these program areas.

PERMIT WORKLOAD STATISTICS

As your Board is aware, there are two distinctly different permit processing systems which are coordinated by the Planning Department- the Building Permit process and the Discretionary Permit process. In our last report, we presented only the building permit statistics. We indicated that we would be working with our Information Services Department to produce similar data for

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discretionary permits. That work has now been completed. Attached you will find summary statistics for both building and discretionary permits for the period from October through December, 2000, along with the first quarter statistics.

In terms of building permit activity, 850 permit applications were received during the second quarter --- 284 fewer (25 percent) than the first quarter. Fifty-two percent of applications received were in the Over-the-Counter category which largely consist of applications that do not require plans, such as: re-roofs, water heaters, etc. Minor applications, such as room additions, represented approximately 35 percent of the total. Major projects (such as commercial remodels) and single family dwellings collectively represented the remaining 13 percent.

The application rate decreased in all categories in the second quarter, reflecting the normal seasonal slowdown. Over the counter applications declined by 151 representing a 25.7 percent reduction (Attachment 2). Minor applications declined by 68 or 17 percent and applications for Major permits and Single family dwellings declined by 41 (48.8 percent) and 42 (36.4 percent) respectively.

The rate of decrease in building permits issued was only a modest 4 percent which, taken together with the reduction in new applications, indicates that progress is being made in the department's effort to reduce the application backlog in this area. The decrease in building permits issued occurred exclusively in the area of Over-the-Counter permit issuance which is a further indicator of the slowdown in service demand. Building permit issuance actually increased in the "Other" category (permits for room additions, remodels, accessory structures, and commercial remodels) by 36 applications or 7.9 percent relative to the first quarter. It remained virtually unchanged for single family dwellings. Building permit application processing times remained fairly constant for both the first and second quarters (Attachment 3).

Relative to discretionary permit activity, overall applications received remained essentially constant between the first and second quarter (126 and 125 respectively). This category of permits typically tends to represent a low percentage of the overall number of applications received (9.9 percent for the first quarter and 13.5 percent for the second). However, it takes the greatest amount of time to process due to the myriad requirements, criteria, standards, and due process considerations that attend the discretionary permit approval process.

The application rate per individual category of discretionary permit remained relatively constant between the first and second quarters. The slight reduction in Administrative Permit applications received was essentially offset by minor increases in the remaining discretionary application categories.

The number of discretionary permit applications completed in the second quarter declined slightly (5 percent) overall relative to the first quarter. However, mixed results obtained among individual application categories. Some categories experienced an increase in the number of applications processed in comparison to the first quarter; others declined.

Processing times increased for all discretionary permit application categories in the second quarter in comparison to the first quarter which is largely attributable to the inexperience of new staff. It is anticipated that processing times will reduce again in the third quarter as both training and experience increases staff efficiency.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that your Board accept and file the second quarter report for the Planning Department.

Sincerely,



ALVIN D. JAMES
Planning Director

RECOMMENDED:



SUSAN A. MAURIELLO
County Administrative Officer

Attachment:

1. Implementation Status Of New Initiatives
2. Building Permit Statistics
3. Discretionary Permit Statistics

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IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF NEW INITIATIVES**Geographic Teams:**

- Geographic Teams have been established and service area boundaries have been established
- Team Leaders have been selected
- Existing Development Review Project Caseloads have been re-allocated by Geographic areas, except for projects which are nearing completion, which are still assigned to the original Planner
- Management in process of reconciling caseload imbalances
- New applications are being assigned by geographic area

Satellite Permit Centers:

- **Felton Permit Center**

The Felton Permit Center is now open weekdays from 8:30 am to 12:00 p.m. and from 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Individuals can stop in at any time during these hours to obtain general land use information, make appointments to submit permit applications, check on the status of a permit and drop off electronic or paper application materials or revisions to plans.

Beginning Monday, March 5, staff will be available each afternoon to provide general information and to issue building permits for projects which do not require construction plans such as replacing a hot water heater, repairing a deck, re-roofing a house or doing minor repairs. For more complex types of building permits that have approved applications, staff is available to issue permits by appointment.

- **Aptos Permit Center**

The Board of Supervisors approved the lease for the Aptos Permit Center on February 13, 2001. The lease documents have been executed. Permits for tenant improvement by the landlord are in process and should be issued in the first week in March. Staff will request on the Board's March 13, 2001 agenda, authorization to implement administrative and budgetary actions necessary to complete establishment of the Center.

One Stop Permit Processing for Minor Projects:

- Two projects are in the planning and development stages, one for "minor" building permits, and one for discretionary projects.
- Discussions have commenced with reviewing agencies regarding minor building permits. Effective March 19, 2001, a Plan Checker will be stationed at the Felton Permit Center. This additional staffing resource is key to a successful program.
- Anticipated implementation of this new service at the end of May at the Felton Permit Center.
- The one-stop concept for minor discretionary projects is also being refined. In the coming

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quarter, we will select a few projects in the San Lorenzo Valley as test cases for the new program. The program will generally model the Development Review Group (DRG) process for larger projects.

Customer Service/Quality Control:

- The Senior Department Administrative Analyst position assigned responsibility for Customer Service/Quality Control is currently under recruitment.
- Three meetings have been held with representative users of the department's services since October, 2000 to discuss customer service/quality control issues. Additional meetings will be scheduled.

Staff Training:

- Recently, the department appointed a training coordinator; department training needs are being assessed.
- Two comprehensive orientation training programs have been conducted for new employees.
- New Planners are presently participating in an intense in-service training concerning the County's development regulations.
- Professional staff have attended or are enrolled in classes on land use law, subdivisions, CEQA, and similar courses.

Urban Designer Services:

- Initial interviews were conducted in December, 2000, for the existing list. A new recruitment was conducted and interviews are scheduled for the week of March 5th.

Phone Changes:

- Three meetings have been held with ISD Telecommunications staff to review options for improving staff's telephone responsiveness. Training related to equipment usage is being planned for existing staff. Physical modifications to accommodate new staff specifically assigned to improve phone response are being implemented. Recruitment for the new positions has recently been concluded and the new hires are expected to arrive shortly. Response standards will be evaluated when the Senior Department Administrative Analyst position is filled.

Organizational Management:

- Support Services staff and Planning Technicians have been reassigned to the Planning and Building Divisions.
- Responsibility for the Felton Home Elevation project has been assigned to the Building Division.
- Space and Personnel issues are being coordinated to support Planning Department new initiatives.

Personnel Actions:

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Update of Personnel Activity Since October, 2000:

Support Services - New Hires:

- 3 Typist Clerk II
- 1 Clerical Supervisor II
- 1 Records Clerk
- 1 Imaging Technician
- 1 Accounting Technician
- 1 Dept Info Systems Analyst

Support Services - Promotions:

- 1 Planner IV to IV/B - Trainer
- 1 Typist Clerk III

Building - New Hires:

- 1 Bldg Permit Tech I
- 1 Bldg Inspector I

Building - Promotions:

- 1 Bldg Permit Tech I
- 1 Sr Bldg Permit Tech
- 1 Planning Tech

Code Compliance - New Hires:

- 1 Code Compliance Investigator I - Code
- 1 Code Compliance Investigator III - Code
- 1 Planning Tech

Development Review - Counter - Promotions:

- 1 Planner I (Transfer)
- 2 Planner IV
- 1 Principal Planner

Development Review - Projects - New Hires:

- 1 Planner II
- 3 Planner III
- 3 Planning Tech

Development Review - Projects - Promotions:

- 3 Planner IV
- 1 Principal Planner

- 2 Planning Tech

Advanced Planning - New Hires:

- 1 Planner III

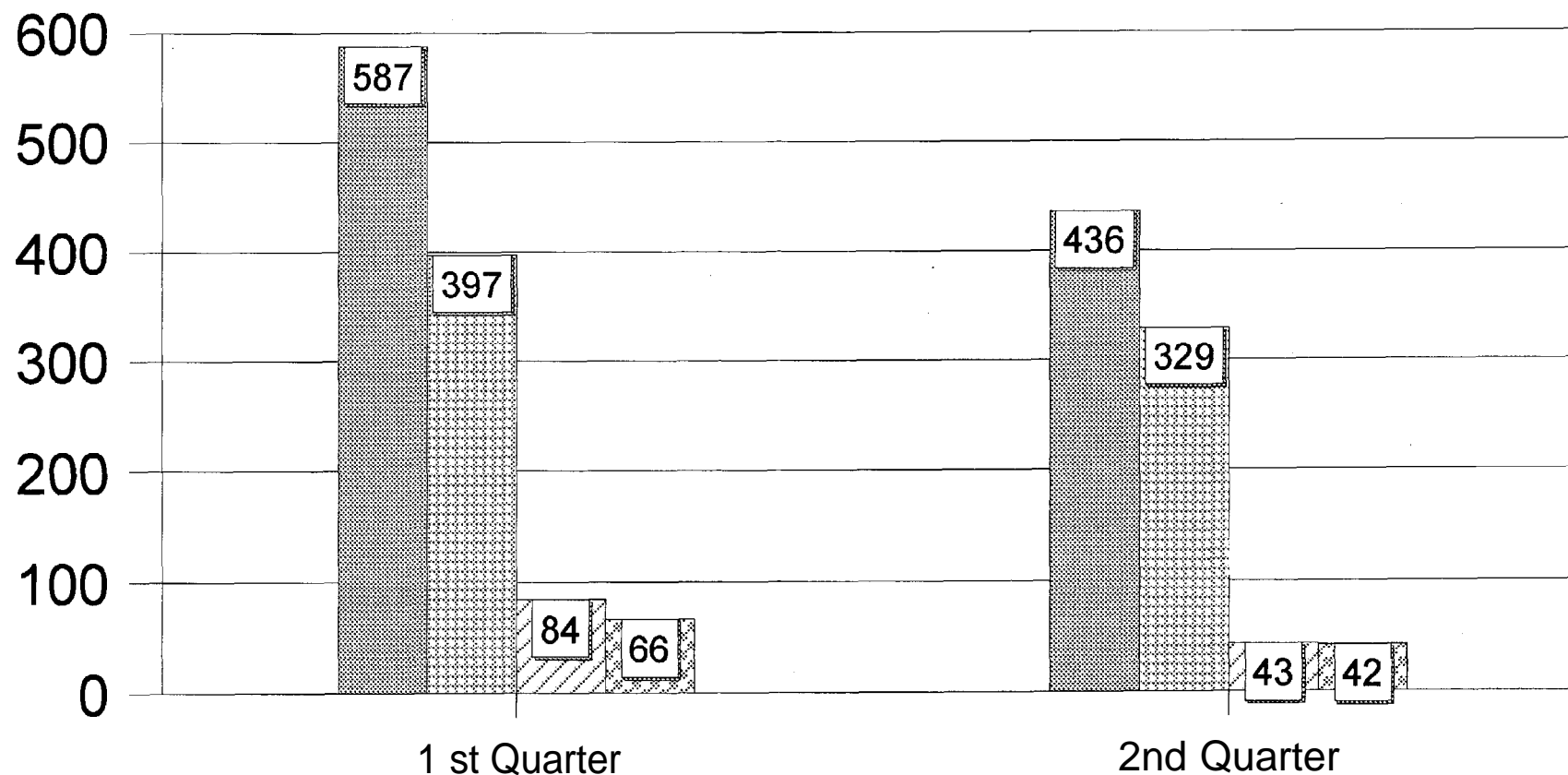
Resources Planning - New Hires:

- 1 Res Planner II

BUILDING PERMIT APPLICATIONS

By Type Fiscal Year 2000-01




- ☐ Over-the-Counter (Applications with no plans, such as re-roofs, water heaters, or wood stoves)
- ☐ Minor (Room additions < 500 sq. ft, remodels, etc.)
- ☐ Major (Room additions > 500 sq. ft., accessory structures, commercial remodels)
- ☐ Single Family Dwelling

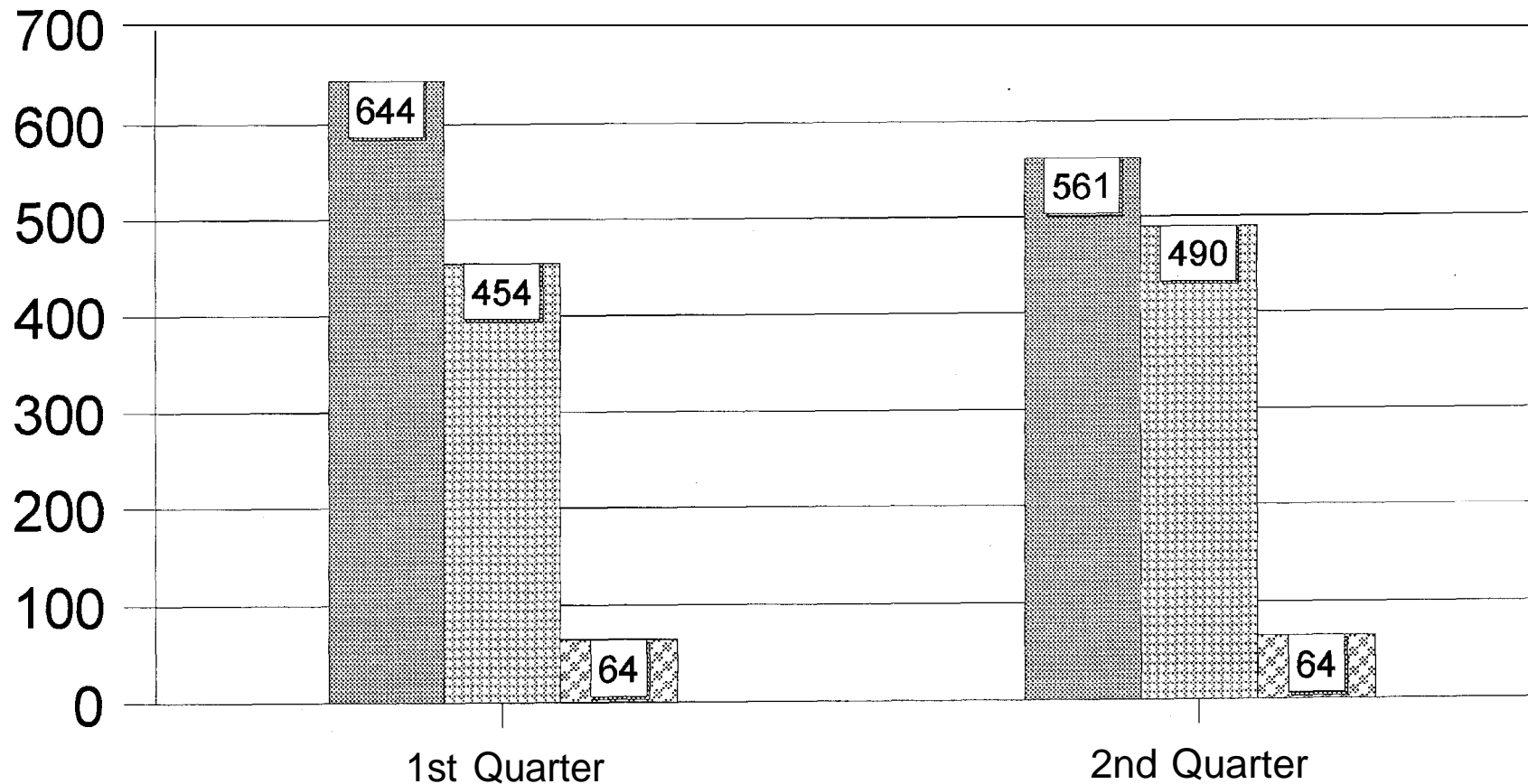


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BUILDING PERMITS ISSUED

By Type Fiscal Year 2000-01

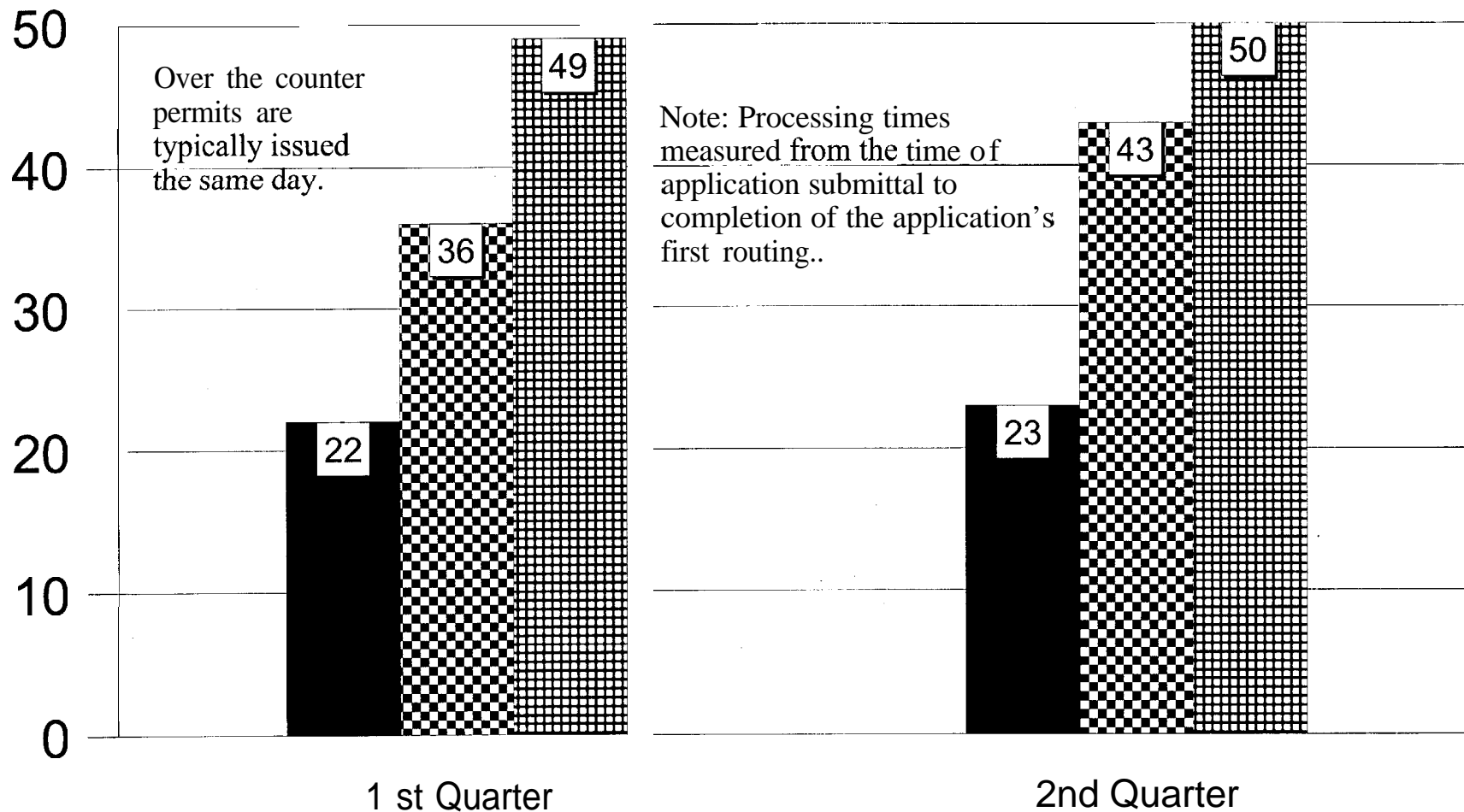
-  Over-the-Counter (Permits with no plans, such as re-roofs, water heaters, or wood stoves)
-  Other (Room additions, remodels, accessory structures, commercial remodels)
-  Single Family



AVERAGE BUILDING PERMIT APPLICATION PROCESSING TIMES IN DAYS

By Type Fiscal Year 2000-01

- Minor (Room additions < 500 sq. ft, remodels, etc.)
- Major (Room additions > 500 sq. ft., accessory structures, commercial remodels)
- Single Family Dwelling

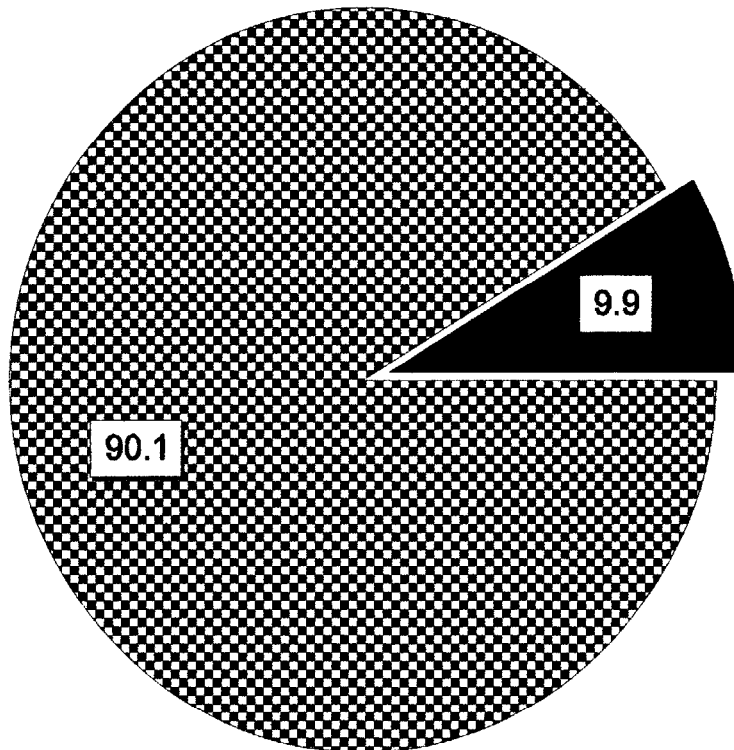


DISCRETIONARY AS PERCENT OF TOTAL APPLICATIONS

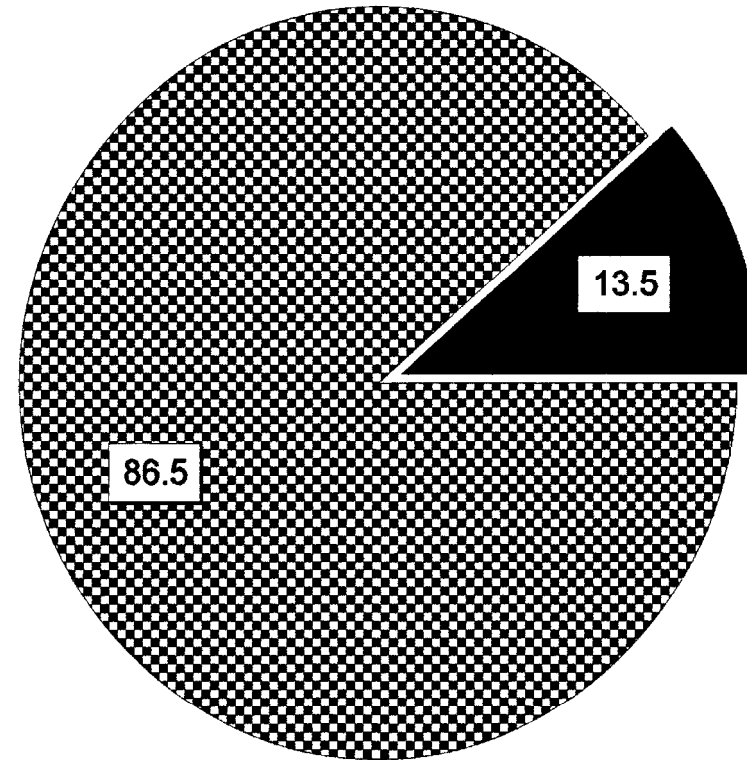
By Quarter - FY 2000-01



1 st Quarter

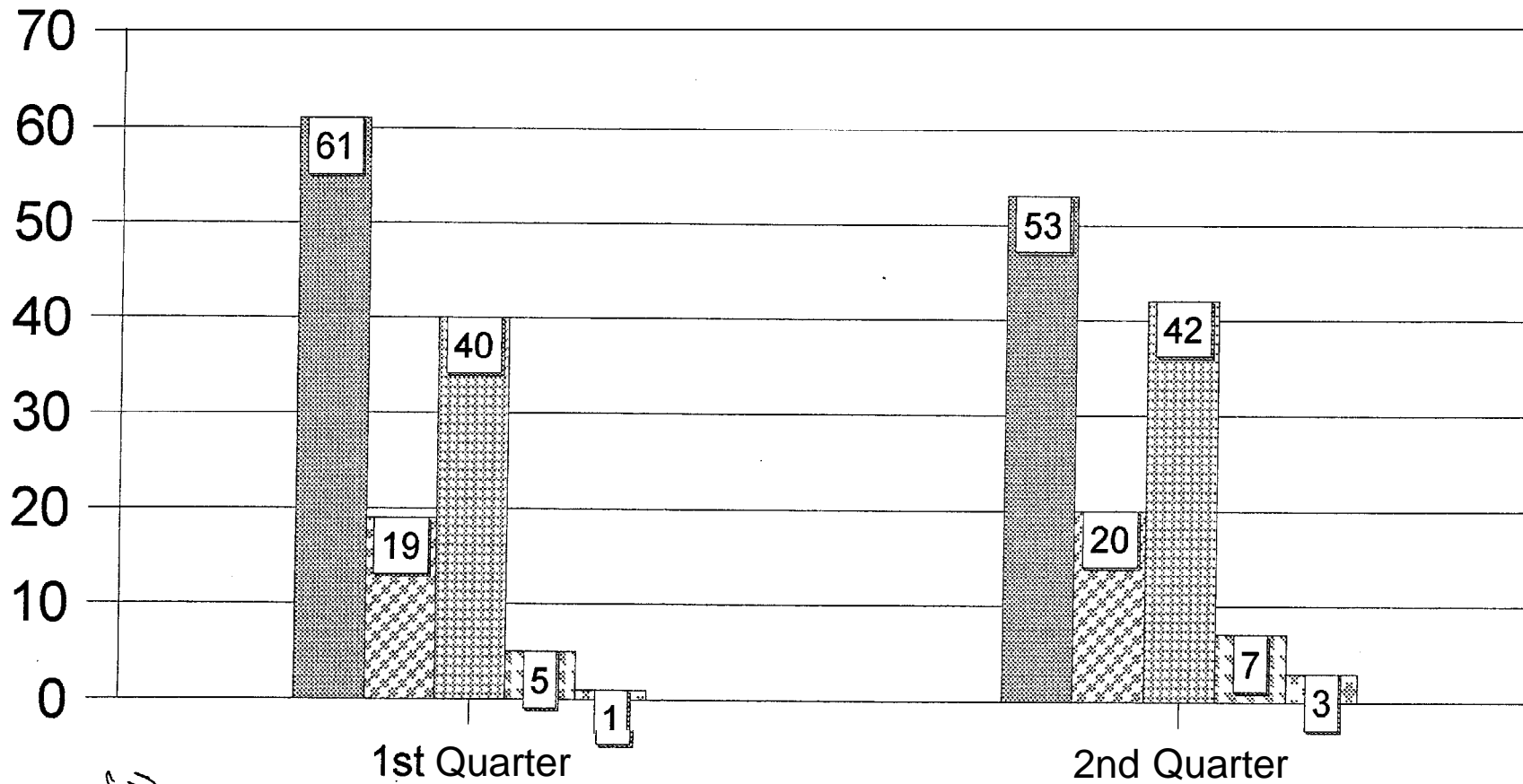
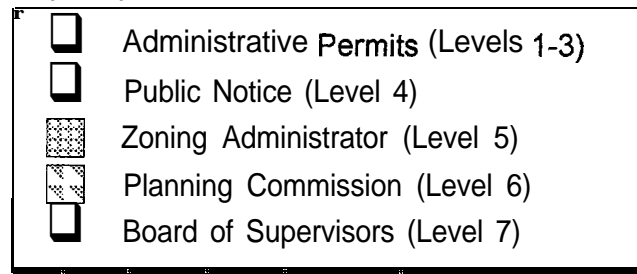


2nd Quarter



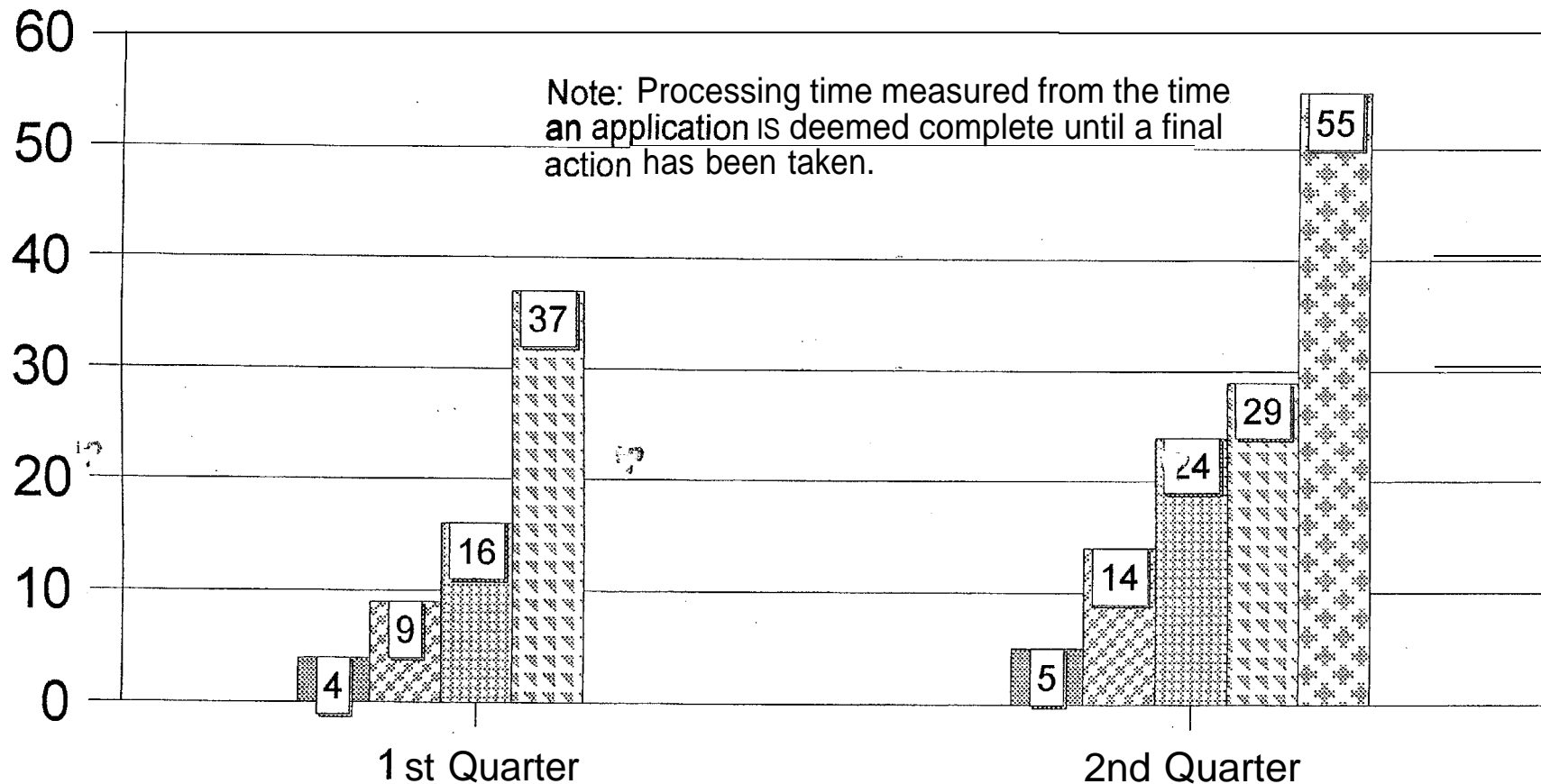
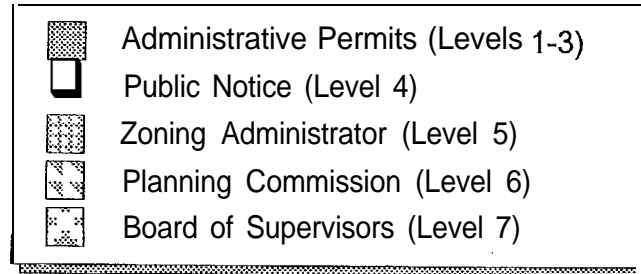
DISCRETIONARY PERMIT APPLICATIONS

By Type Fiscal Year 2000-01



AVERAGE DISCRETIONARY PERMIT PROCESSING TIMES IN WEEKS

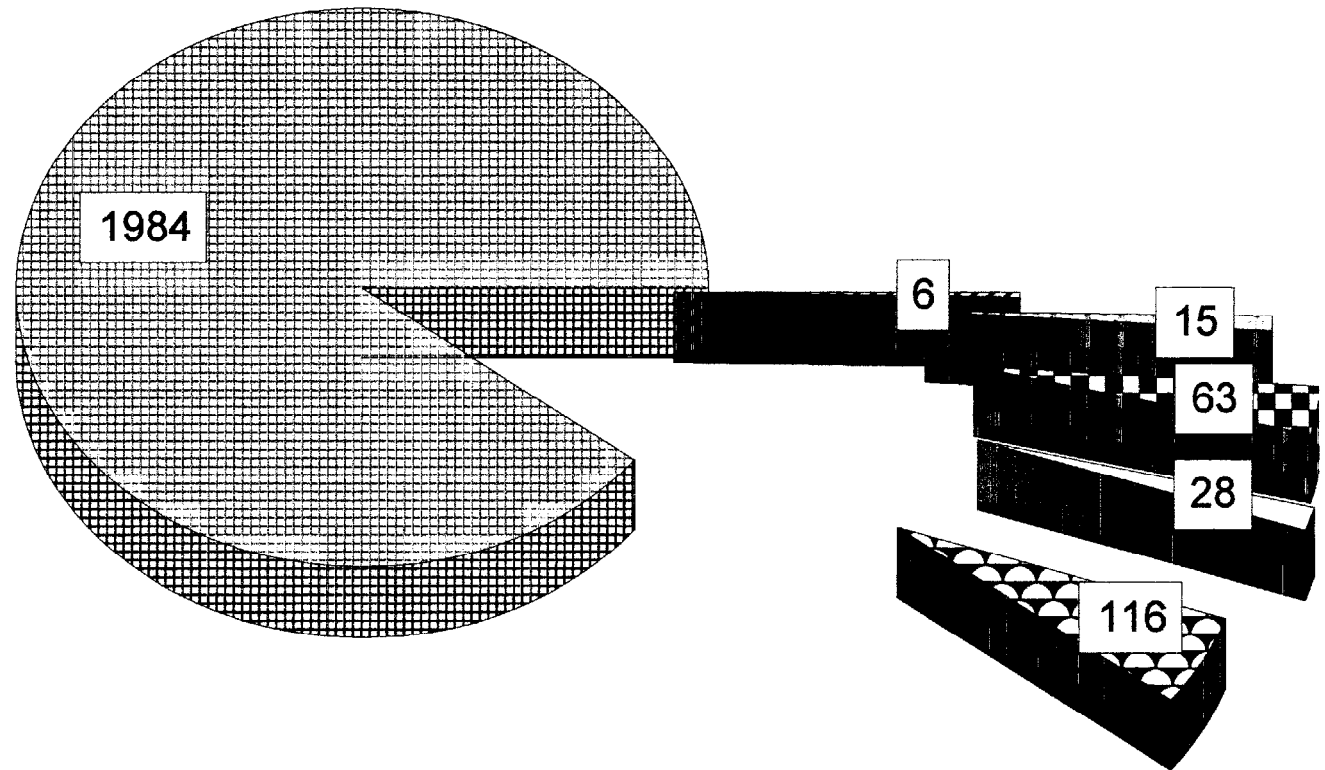
By Type Fiscal Year 2000-01









NOTE: The six Level VII projects were timber rezonings, and as legislative determinations, were not subject to the Permit Streamlining Act which requires applications to be processed within one year of the date of the determination of a complete application.

Total Number of Permits Issued/Approved By Type

1st And 2nd Quarters - Fiscal Year 2000-01



-  Building Permits
-  Public Notice (Level 4)
-  Planning Commission (Level 6)

-  Administrative Permits (Levels 1-3)
-  Zoning Administrator (Level 5)
-  Board of Supervisors (Level 7)