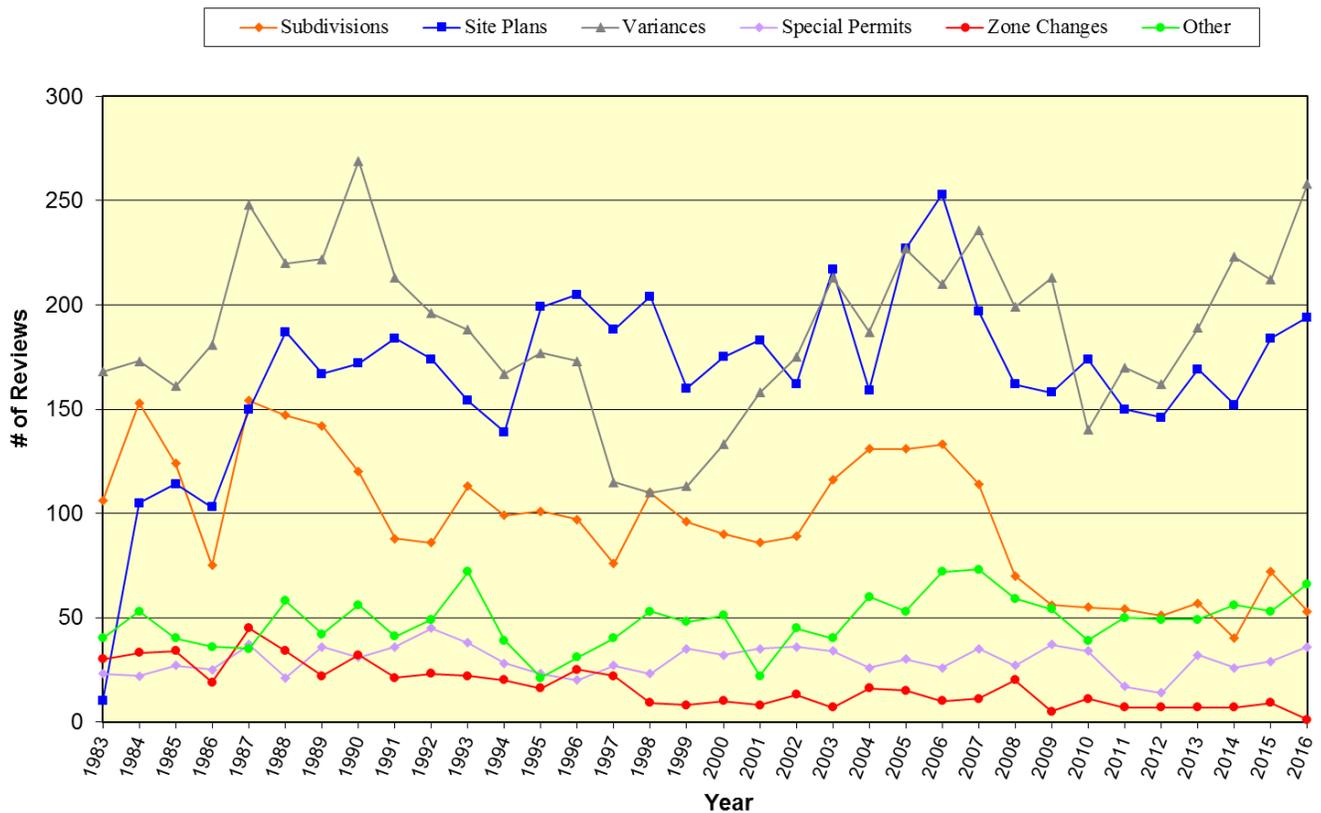


## Line Graph by Year

The line graph in Figure #2 illustrates the number of each type of application reviewed by the Planning Department in the last 34 years. The major categories of reviews include subdivisions, site plans, variances, zone changes, special permits, and “other” (such as zoning code amendments). The number of subdivisions declined steadily from 1987 through 1992, reflecting the economic downturn during that period and the decrease in prime lands to develop. From 1993 through 2002, the number of subdivisions reviewed remained generally constant, then increased in numbers from 2002 to 2006. The increase from 2002 - 2006 may be attributed to the lower interest rates and the improvement in the economy, as well as an upturn in the number of small subdivisions (two-lots) proposed, in which a single-family parcel was subdivided to help offset high taxes while taking advantage of the increased land value. Beginning in 2007 and continuing through 2012, both the real estate market and the economy were on a downward trend, shown by the great decrease in the number of subdivisions and site plans reviewed. Developers were waiting for the economy and real estate market to improve before constructing new buildings and expending their investment funds in the development process. Subdivisions hit an all-time low in 2014. Fortunately, 2015 saw an 80% increase from the previous year as the real estate market

**Figure 2. Number of GML Applications by Type and Year Reviewed by the Rockland County Planning Department 1983-2016**



Source: GML Access database maintained by the Rockland County Planning Department, Land Use Unit  
 Prepared by the Rockland County Planning Department - August 2017

continued to recover. This trend in subdivisions however, did not continue, as 2016 saw a return to numbers similar to the 2009 to 2013 period. This decrease may be the result of the natural limits on the number of available parcels that have the potential to be subdivided, and not necessarily reflective of the county real estate market, as increases in site plan reviews, variances, and special permits point to continued strength in the market.

Site plan applications generally rose steadily from 1983 to 1998, fluctuated between 1998 and 2006, and then began a downward trend from 2006 through 2009, paralleling the downward subdivision trend. The earlier increase in site plans through 1988 reflects the continual growth in the County. However, as mentioned above, the late eighties and early nineties witnessed an economic recession with interest rates climbing. Development slowed down during this period reflecting the tentativeness of the market. In 1995, the number of site plan applications increased to over 200, and then continued to fluctuate between 150 and 200 applications per year. Site plan reviews in 2003 rose 34% from those reviewed in 2002 (162), dropped again to 159 for 2004, and then started to climb to a record high in 2006 of 253 applications. The consistently lower interest rates, an increase in the number of proposed senior housing facilities, and the sale of State surplus lands (Letchworth Village and Rockland Psychiatric Center) could account for this jump in site plan reviews. However, as with the subdivision trend, site plan applications began to decline in 2007 and continued through 2009, reflecting the downturn in the real estate market. In 2010, there was a slight increase in the number of site plans reviewed, as well as in the overall percentage, but the trend did not remain on the upswing in 2011 as the number of site plans declined 13 percent. Site plans fell slightly more in 2012 to 146. In 2016, however, the number of site plan applications numbered 194, an increase by 33% from the low in 2012, and is 16% more than the 34-year average. The overall trend for site plans seems to parallel the subdivision trend. It remains to be seen if 2016 represents a divergence between the two trends or is simply an aberration.

Variances on the other hand, were on the rise from 1985 to 1990 and experienced an all-time high of almost 275 applications in 1990. The rising interest rates and increased housing prices of the late 1980's and the scarcity of prime vacant land available for new development explains much of this fluctuation. Residential building additions requiring variances became more commonplace as new development responsible for most site plans and subdivisions declined. However, from 1991 through 1998 the number of variances continued to decline, to a record low of only 110. Perhaps this reflected more reviews meeting the criteria for the waiver agreements, or the residential population returning to the past ways of buying larger homes instead of building additions since the economic conditions and interest rates were in their favor. An upward trend began from the low in 1998, reaching the third highest on record, of 236 in 2007, and meeting the levels seen prior to the late 80's and early 90's. This upward trend in variances coincides with the more than doubling in the number of applications reviewed in the Town of Ramapo, of which 69% were for variances in 2007. The Town of Ramapo continues to have the highest percentage of variances, both countywide, with 45% of the total, and 62% of the total town applications. In 2009, variances comprised 78% of the total development applications submitted by the Town of Ramapo. In 2016, there were 258 variances, the second highest number of this type of application, falling just short of the record high of 269 in 1990. This represents a one-year increase of 22%. Variances led all categories for the types of applications reviewed for all municipalities during 2016 at 42.4%. The five-year average for variances was 208.8 reviews, and the number reviewed in 2016 was about 37.1% more than the average reviewed over the 34-year period.

Until 2011, the number of special permit applications remained relatively constant since 1983. The number of special permit applications dropped 50% from 2010, and again almost 18% from 2011 to 2012. The highest number of special permit applications received was 45 in 1992, and the lowest number occurred in 2012 with only 14. There were 36 special permit applications in 2016, compared to 29 the previous year and a 34-year average of 29.5.

There has been a slight decline in zone change applications since 1983, but since this number is relatively small overall, this decrease is insignificant. However, there was an 82% increase from 2007 to 2008 in the number of zone changes, mostly from the rezoning of land to some sort of active adult residential zoning district. In 2009, the number decreased by 75%, from 20 zone change reviews to only five. In 2010 the number of zone change applications increased by 110% to 11 reviews, before stabilizing at seven from 2011 to 2014, 9 in 2015, and only 1 in 2016. This compares to a 34-year average of 17 zone change applications.

The “other” category, which includes zoning code amendments, review of performance standards, building permit applications, official map changes, comprehensive plan reviews, and interpretations of the zoning ordinance, has remained relatively constant from 1983 through 1992. However, this category increased in 1993 before declining in 1994. Since 1994, except for the drop in 2001, the number of “other” reviews steadily increased through 2007, perhaps reflecting the zoning ordinance changes that have been made by many municipalities in their attempt to keep their codes updated. The highest number of “other” applications was attained in 2007 with 73 reviews. In 2008, the “other” category decreased by approximately 19%, reflecting the overall slowdown in the economy. This figure continued to drop in both 2009 and 2010. However, the number increased by 28% in 2011 and has remained relatively the same through 2015. 2016 saw a significant bump of 24.5%, increasing from 53 in 2015 to 66. This figure is 36.4% greater than the 34-year average of 47.85.