
CALENDAR YEAR 2023 EQUITY IMPACT PLAN ANNUAL REPORT

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Department Name: Department of Code Compliance (DCC)

Equity Lead(s): Tina Quick, Ben Aiken

Date: November 30, 2023

EQUITY IMPACT PLAN REPORT

Review your department's Equity Impact Plan for CY 2023 at [Equity Impact Plans | Topics \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](#). Using that plan, fill in each goal below and describe: 1) what was done to make progress toward the goal, 2) with whom (partners), and 3) how work toward this goal was measured/evaluated and the results. If you have data for the performance measures in your CY 2023 Equity Impact Plan, report them. Add more goals as needed.

Goal 1: To capitalize on opportunities to engage in outreach efforts on the importance of code and safety requirements.

Goal 1 Progress:

As the 2023 DCC EIP details, many members of the public do not know exactly what DCC is, what we do, or why we enforce certain codes in the County. To address that information gap, the DCC Equity Team agreed that a renewed effort was necessary to refresh our website and other content, to include (among other things) the Department's logo and use of the County Seal. To begin that work, in 2023, a DCC Communications and Public Engagement (CAPE) workgroup was formed to review existing communication materials and begin work to update digital and print content. DCC CAPE has worked collaboratively with the Office of Public Affairs (OPA) and Land Development Services (LDS) as partner agencies.

A 2024 Communications Strategy and Outreach Plan is being developed, and workgroup products for 2023 include an updated agency logo; a revised "DCC Overview" flyer which more effectively expresses the department's commitment to seeking compliance through information sharing and collaboration; and an initial inventory of nearly 70 webpages and flyers, along with data collected from our intake team and systems of record to inform our communication priorities for 2024. Website improvements have also been made to make our informational resources more accessible by writing in plain language (i.e., non-technical/non-jargon), creating concise messages, and putting more content in website formats (versus PDF or printed) that are easily translated. Through ongoing updates, we aim to create a unified public message regarding the agency's principles of responsive stakeholder engagement; seeking voluntary compliance; prioritizing casework to address safety concerns; and not creating unnecessary burdens or

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complications for those found in violation. Over time, this will include language updates to our Notices of Violation templates and other formal written materials.

One major piece of work was the production of a series of hoarding videos done in collaboration with the Office of Public Affairs Channel 16 and featuring subject matter experts from several of our partner agencies. These videos offer an accessible and engaging way for stakeholders to obtain information about an area of significant public safety concerns.

DCC promotional items were also updated based on Board of Supervisors Office input – including a small but notable change to a popular item – pens featuring a construction worker that were purchased in multiple genders to reflect a more inclusive image of the agency.

While our specific outreach activities have continued in 2023, our focus has been more on establishing a strategic identity for the agency which is aligned with our stated commitments to equity.

Goal 2: Provide more regular DCC staff engagement opportunities and awareness on equity issues.

Goal 2 Progress:

The DCC Departmental Equity Team was reconstituted with new membership during 2023, offering additional staff the opportunity to engage with the topic of equity and the One Fairfax initiative. Equity Team staff took part in the Race – the Power of an Illusion training and are working to offer additional training to the broader DCC staff audience. Members of the Equity Team also participated in several training and professional development opportunities offered through the Government Alliance on Race and Equity, or GARE. Through the agency’s monthly “all hands” meetings, Departmental Leadership has made a point to emphasize the ongoing work and accomplishments of both the DCC Equity Team and the DCC CAPE Workgroup, and how the product of those activities is tied to the DCC EIP and One Fairfax Policy.

Goal 3: Evaluate all requests for legal action.

Goal 3 Progress:

In 2023, DCC made 286 legal action requests as compared to 506 during 2022 for the same time period (from January 1 through November 1).

Working with the County’s Attorney and Building Official, DCC also established a new standard operating procedure (SOP) which provides guidelines for investigators who conduct unpermitted construction inspections. This SOP covers instances in which prosecutorial discretion is appropriate – so that property owners can be made aware of violations without the necessity to pursue legal action – including fines and penalties – that may unintentionally harm vulnerable populations for minor infractions.

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Describe other equity-related work completed in CY 2023 (efforts that advance racial and social equity that your department was involved in within the department or countywide) not in the department's Equity Impact Plan.

In 2023, DCC undertook several investigative process reviews and updated guidance to staff on the following enforcement disciplines and operational areas:

- **Bamboo** – updates to clarify expectations for investigators. Provides discretion to defer legal actions under conditions of substantial compliance and avoid creating undue hardships for property owners.
- **Signage on private residential properties** – to simplify the investigation process and to ensure a content-neutral evaluation.
- **Accessory Living Units** – to simplify the investigation process and to streamline the enforcement of violations so that property owners found in violation have an easier path to compliance based on permitting standards.
- **Notice of Violations** – updated language to offer opportunities to discuss violations with investigators.
- **Anonymous complaints** – made several intake procedural changes and provided talking points to encourage complainants to leave contact information. This establishes relationships with complainants and ensures investigations can be conducted uniformly based on first-hand experience provided by complainants. Ensures that complainants understand rights to privacy and minimize fear of retaliation by landlords/property managers/neighbors.