



FAIRFAX COUNTY
LAND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES



ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2023
JULY 1, 2022, TO JUNE 30, 2023

LDS Mission, Vision, Values

As members of the Land Development Services team, we accomplish our mission by embracing our values in a work environment that advances racial and social equity and protects the health and well-being of each other and the public.

Mission

Facilitate the safe and sustainable building of our communities.

Vision

Be the best partner in creating a thriving Fairfax County.

Values

Empowerment

Trust and support employees to lead and make decisions that align with our mission

Accountability

Fulfill your obligations and expect others to do the same

Collaboration

Work together towards a common goal and support innovation

Safety

Adhere to safe working practices on and off the job

Respect

Value others by demonstrating fairness, appreciation and understanding

Environmental Stewardship

Promote environmentally responsible development

Integrity

Consistently demonstrate honesty, sincerity, openness and moral uprightness

Front Cover Photo: Lorton Community Center in Lorton, Va.;
designed by Grimm + Parker Architects (Photo/Sam Kittner)



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Message from Land Development Services

Director William D. Hicks, P.E.

Fiscal year 2023 (FY23) delivered impressive innovations and proactive employee engagement for Land Development Services (LDS). The launch of the Planning and Land Use System (PLUS), a new online tool to help streamline the permitting process for customers, became fully operable as of Oct. 31st, 2022. LDS made it a top priority to provide ample in-person training opportunities and YouTube tutorials to help customers and staff navigate any learning curves resulting from this transition. There were 27,000 records that needed to be converted from ProjectDox to PLUS at the time of the PLUS launch including 4,721 with active plans. The records with active plans required manual intervention after transferring to PLUS. For the first few months after the PLUS launch, the entire LDS staff shifted gears to focus their full attention on supporting this intervention and ensuring customers continued to receive speedy, consistent, and predictable services. I am proud of the way our staff stepped up to solve the conversion issue and successfully make PLUS a reliable tool for our customers.

Equity and accessibility are core values at LDS. In FY23, LDS staff made an extra effort to address any equity and accessibility issues related to the launch of PLUS by providing more easy-to-read online content and in-person services. LDS relocated the customer experience team (CET) to a space that was better equipped to accommodate a queue of customers with a variety of needs. Those who struggled with digital literacy were assisted through the online permitting process either over the phone or in-person to ensure they had access to our services. The “Getting Started with PLUS” YouTube training videos for PLUS were translated into the top seven languages spoken in Fairfax County: Spanish, Arabic, Korean, Amharic, Mandarin, Vietnamese, and Urdu. This translation effort aligns with the One Fairfax equitable community development goal. To date, the PLUS YouTube channel has received 37,000 views and 383 subscribers.

To round out the successes of FY23, the NAIOP Research Foundation ranked Fairfax County number one for the best building permitting process in the United States. The three main categories accessed in the ranking include transparency, accountability, and consistency. I am proud of the work we’ve done as an agency to earn this standing. LDS plans to work as a team to maintain this standing.

I look forward to the accomplishments and innovations LDS will deliver in fiscal year 2024!

William D. Hicks, P.E.
Director, Fairfax County Land Development Services

(Photo/Danielle Badra)



“

“I am proud of the way our staff stepped up to solve the conversion issue and successfully make PLUS a reliable tool for our customers.”

—William D. Hicks, P.E.
Director, Fairfax County
Land Development Services

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LDS Overview

Revenue: \$44,903,144

Fees are the primary source of revenue for LDS and are based on costs required to perform our core services and operate the agency. This fee revenue fluctuates each year depending on the volume of plans submitted and permits issued.

Expenditures: \$48,363,497

Expenditures include personnel, contracts, utilities, training, other operating costs and an overhead rate for occupancy costs, interagency coordination and county oversight.

Cost Recovery Rate: 93%

LDS' cost recovery rate is determined by comparing the total annual expenditures to the total annual revenue. This rate is used to determine how fees are calculated. In working with the county's Department of Management and Budget (DMB), LDS aims to achieve 100% cost recovery. However, actual revenue and expenses vary based on work volume. In FY23, LDS expenditures exceeded the revenues from permits. As a result, the county's General Fund subsidized the LDS budget in FY23 to continue to provide needed, agency-related services. LDS has contracted with a firm to examine LDS expenditures and revenue with a goal to more precisely align these fees with expenditures.

LDS Staff Stats

Employees: **290**

Professional engineers: **36**

Virginia Department of Environmental

Quality certifications: **100**

American Institute of Certified Planners: **4**

International Society of Arboriculture (ISA)

Certified Arborists: **7**

Plan Review Staff: **98**

Virginia Department of Housing and
Community Development
certifications: **621**

Certified floodplain managers: **4**

Architect licenses: **2**

LEED-certified professionals: **5**

Average Tenure of

Building Review Staff: **4.6 years**

Inspections Staff: **94**



LDS Success



Out of 100 communities surveyed by NAIOP across the U.S. and Canada, Fairfax County ranked number 1 for the best building permitting process!

Read more on page 7.



LDS launched a public-facing Flood Risk Analysis Tool. This tool helps property owners identify the flooding risks to their property.

Read more on page 18.

*Flooding in Fairfax, Va.
(Photo/Fairfax County)*



One of the most successful training tools to help customers navigate the new PLUS permitting system has been the PLUS YouTube page. Read more about the PLUS launch on page 19.

Most popular video (Reviewing Issues, Conditions, & Notes) total views:

3,200

Total number of videos available to customers:

135

PLUS YouTube webpage average views per day:

100



Keep up with LDS metrics throughout the year via the metrics page on the LDS website, including:

- » Residential Building Permits - Time to Completion by Task
- » Commercial Building Permits - Fast Track - Time to Completion by Task
- » Commercial Building Permits - Non-Fast Track - Time to Completion by Task
- » Commercial Building Permits - Peer Review - Time to Completion by Task
- » Trade Permits - Time to Completion by Task
- » Site Plans - Time to Completion by Task



Fairfax County “Best Building Permitting Process” in U.S.

Fairfax County ranked number one for best building permitting process in the United States by the NAIOP Research Foundation. This ranking was decided after comparing the site plan and building permit review process of 100 communities across the U.S. and Canada. The study’s researchers evaluated three critical pillars during their investigation: transparency, accountability and consistency. Fairfax County demonstrated exceptional performance across all three aspects, earning the top position and specifically receiving recognition for its accountability measures.



*New commuter transit center in Fairfax, Va.
(Photo/Danielle Badra)*

Urban Forestry’s Forest Conservation Branch Joins LDS

The Forest Conservation Branch (FCON) is now part of the Site Development and Inspections Division (SDID) of LDS. The restructuring improves collaboration between review disciplines and streamlines the plan review process by moving forest conservation review to an “inside agency” improving efficiency of plan review.



*Forest conservation in Fairfax, Va.
(Photo/Fairfax County)*

Number of Forest Conservation branch inspections:

584

Number of potentially hazardous trees on private property reported to the county:

67

New Construction in Fairfax County

Non-residential certificates of occupancy issued: **1,528**

Residential and commercial construction (est. value): **\$1.57 billion**

New addresses added in Fairfax County: **2,216**

Residential certificates of occupancy issued: **3,488**

Bonded projects completed: **52**



Reflection of construction at Reston Station in Reston, Va. (Photo/Danielle Badra)

After the PLUS launch, LDS rebuilt metrics reports from a new data source. As a result, for the metrics in this FY23 annual report, there may be a 5% margin of error for the first two quarters of FY23 (July-Dec. 2022).



Completed Single-Family Homes

Residential infill development happens when a builder constructs new homes, new pools or large additions as an individual project (i.e., not as a part of a large subdivision development). This type of development applies to all residential construction disturbing more than 2,500 square feet, the construction blocks or alters existing drainage patterns and when the land grade will be changed by more than 18 inches. To receive a land disturbance permit for this construction, an applicant submits a series of plans for county review. Multiple agencies, both within and outside the county, review these plans for compliance with applicable regulations. On-site inspections occur to ensure compliance continues even during construction. The target time needed for staff review of an INF is 24 business days. There were a total of 489 infill lot development plans approved in FY23.



*Infill development in Braddock district.
(Photo/Danielle Badra)*

Total infill plans approved:

489

Completed Single-Family Homes - Building



*Single-family home in Sully district.
(Photo/Danielle Badra)*

Single-family homes fall into two categories: custom built with plans unique to one particular home, or production built based on masterfiles. The latter type of home requires only a cursory review before a permit is issued. There were a total of 1,380 new residential permits issued in FY23. The target time needed for staff review of a single-family home is 14 business days.

Total number of permits issued:

1,380

Typical number of submissions required:

2

Completed Residential Additions/Alterations



*A screened-in porch addition in Fairfax, Va.
(Photo/Danielle Badra)*

A residential addition is either attached to a home or detached, and it might be a deck, sunroom, gazebo, shed, garage or a second story over a home, among others. Residential alterations include finished basements, interior alterations, and carport enclosures. Many homeowners apply for residential addition/alteration permits because of the popularity of building decks and renovating basements to expand living space both outdoors and indoors. There were a total of 6,213 residential addition/alteration permits issued in FY23. The target time needed for staff review of a residential addition/alteration is 9 business days for fast-track projects and 14 business days for non-fast track projects. For more information about whether or not your project qualifies for the fast-track review program scan the QR code below.



Total number of permits issued: **6,213**

Typical number of submissions required: **1**



Major Site Plan Approvals

Site-related plans include commercial, mixed-use, single-family detached, single-family attached, multi-family and public improvement project plans and plats. To ensure that sites are developed in accordance with their approved site-related plans, the Site Development and Inspections Division reviews, inspects and evaluates new public infrastructure, control of erosion and sedimentation, storm drainage, stormwater management, and tree preservation.

The Designated Plans Examiner (DPE) program was created to reduce the time it takes for plan approval. Since the DPE is a trained professional, the quality of submitted plans is much higher than plans not submitted by a DPE. Typically, fewer plan submissions are needed, thus expediting the plan review process. The target time needed for staff review of a non-DPE major site plan is 74 business days. The target time needed for staff review of a DPE major site plan is 59 business days. There were a total of 39 DPE major site plans and 12 Non-DPE major site plans issued in FY23.



*A subdivision development in Fairfax, Va.
(Photo/Danielle Badra)*

Total number of Non-DPE Major Site Plans Approved:

12

Total number of DPE Major Site Plans Approved:

39

Commercial Permits Issued: New Build, Additions & Alterations



*Woodlands Park East in Herndon, Va.
(Photo/Danielle Badra)*

Commercial projects include new builds, commercial additions, and commercial alterations. Commercial alteration projects include the redesign of interior space, such as modifications to offices or storefronts to make them ready for new occupancy. Commercial new builds range from a new restaurant to a new apartment building and other non-residential uses. The total number of non-residential use permits (non-RUPs) issued in FY23 is 3,156. The total number of non-RUPs over 10,000 sq.ft. issued in FY23 is 251. Of those 251, Woodlands Park East (pictured above) in Herndon, Va., stands out as an incredible revitalization project that both incorporated green building elements and created affordable housing. The target time needed for staff review of a commercial project is 14 business days for fast-track projects and 43 business days for non-fast track projects. For more information about whether or not your project qualifies for the fast-track review program scan the QR code below.



Total number of non-residential
use permits (non-RUPs) issued over
10,000 sq.ft.:

251

Total number of non-RUP permits
issued:

3,156

Typical number of submissions required:

2



Critical Structures

Fairfax County classifies projects for specific building safety inspections or “special inspections” as critical structures. The special inspections program was established in 1973 after a 26-story concrete building under construction collapsed. The program began with a focus on high-rises and tall retaining walls. However, it currently includes all new major commercial and multi-family residential construction (beyond townhomes).

During building construction, the special inspections program inspectors conduct observations, inspections and tests based on Chapter 17 of the Virginia Construction Code to ensure safety. The special inspections must be completed by a registered design professional. The Critical Structures branch of the Building Division at LDS works directly with industry throughout construction to maximize public safety for these structures.

Inspection reports received
for critical structure projects:

38,677

Critical structure shop drawings
reviewed:

2,070

Inspections performed:

910



Apartment building in Fairfax, Va. (Photo/Danielle Badra)

Permit Volumes & Inspections

Building and Trade Permits Applied versus Issued

FY22	FY23
Applied: 72,260	Applied: 64,426
Issued: 66,782	Issued: 64,525

The differences between permits applied for and permits issued can be attributed to timing around the change of fiscal years and a percentage of permits abandoned by the applicant prior to issuance.

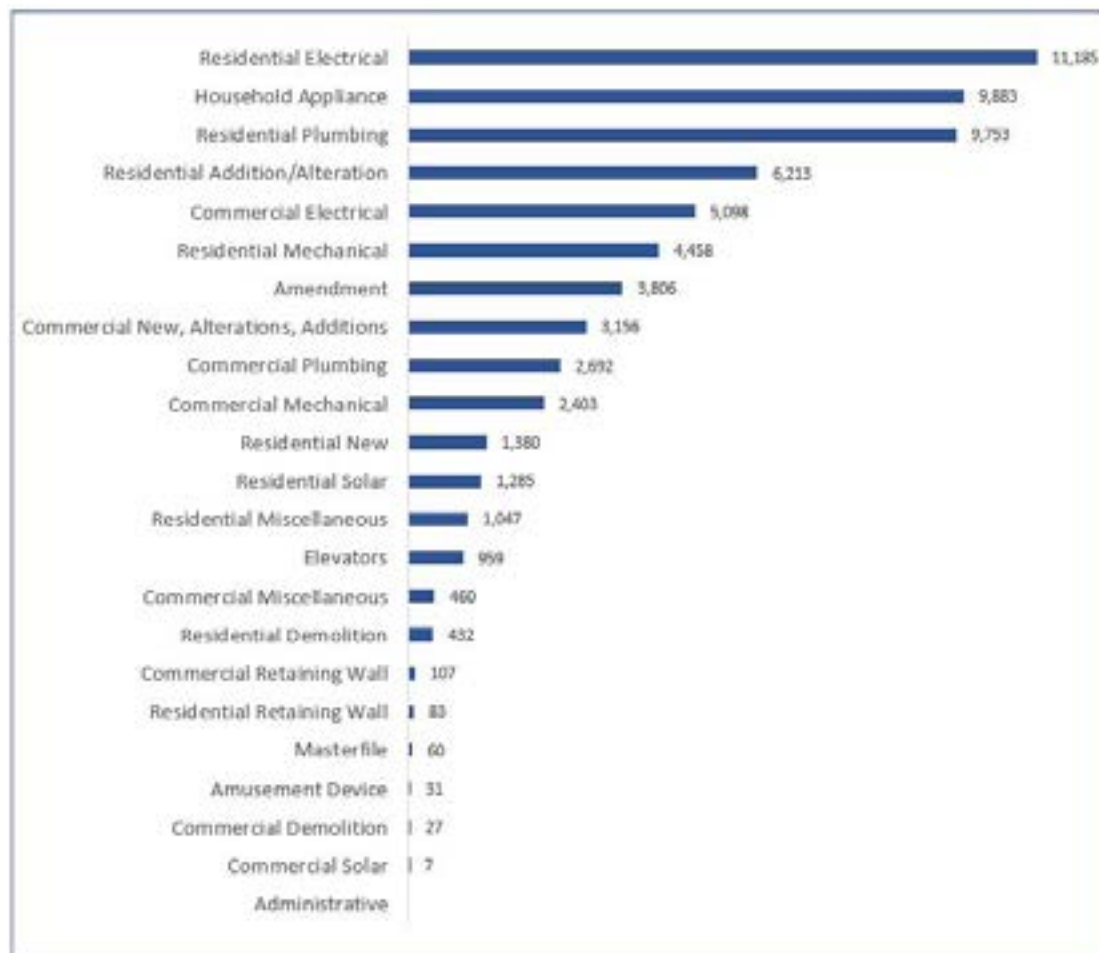
Permit numbers include permits that did not require a plan review.

71%
of all permits issued are
residential permits

72%
of all permits issued are
trade permits

Trade permits include both residential and commercial mechanical, electrical, plumbing and gas.

FY23 Building and Trade Permits Issued



48,803
total residential
building and trade
permits issued

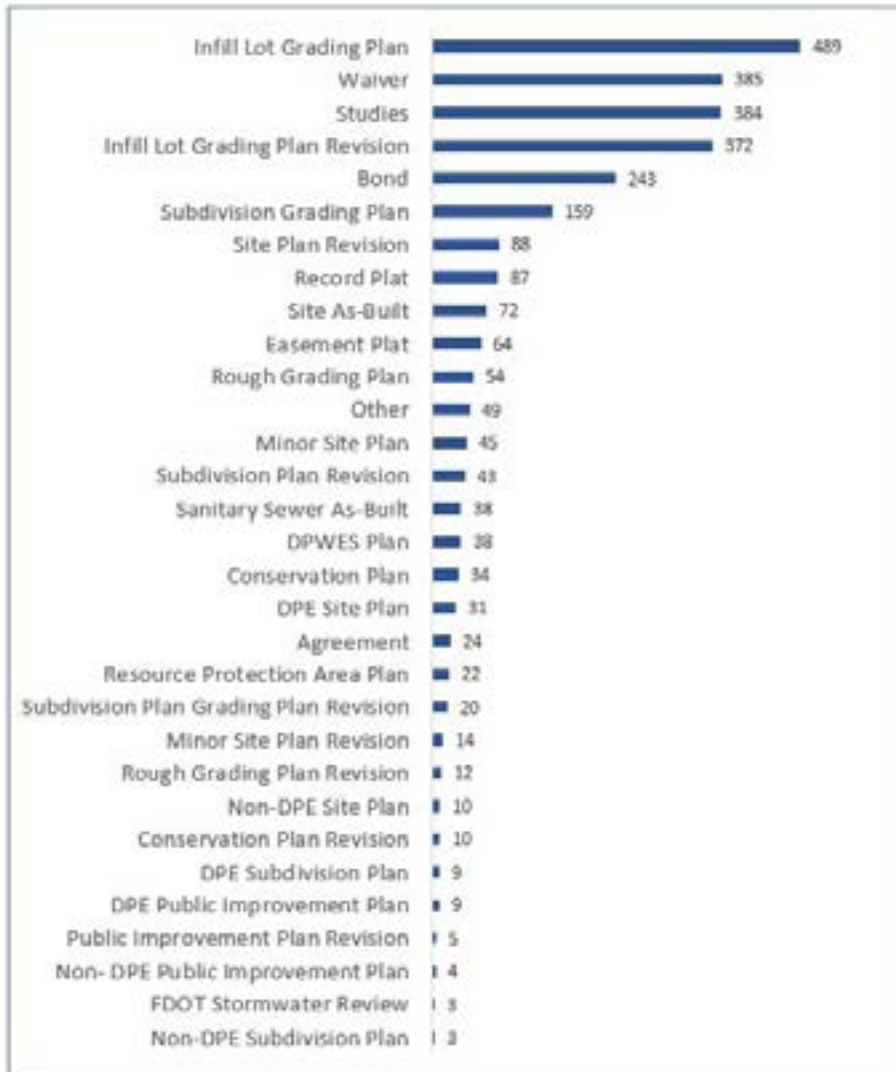
15,722
total commercial
building and trade
permits issued

183,279
total number of
building inspections



Permit Volumes & Inspections

FY23 Site-Related Records Approved



2,820
total site-related
records approved

381
major site plans
(site, subdivision, public
improvement plans)
and revisions approved

The waiver record type is used to process a wide variety of site-related records. Approximately 80% of waivers are related to resource protection areas (RPAs). Other waiver applications include various public facilities manual (PFM) modifications.



*Infill development in Fairfax, Va.
(Photo/Danielle Badra)*

21,252
total number of
site inspections

Elevators and Escalators

There are 7,867 vertical transportation pieces of equipment in Fairfax County. Vertical transportation equipment refers to elevators, escalators, lifts, dumbwaiters, hoists and moving walkways.

All new residential and commercial elevators or escalators to be installed in new or existing buildings must apply for an elevator installation permit. County contractors provide inspections necessary for vertical transportation permitting in Fairfax County. There were a total of 959 permits issued in FY23 for elevator maintenance and installation.

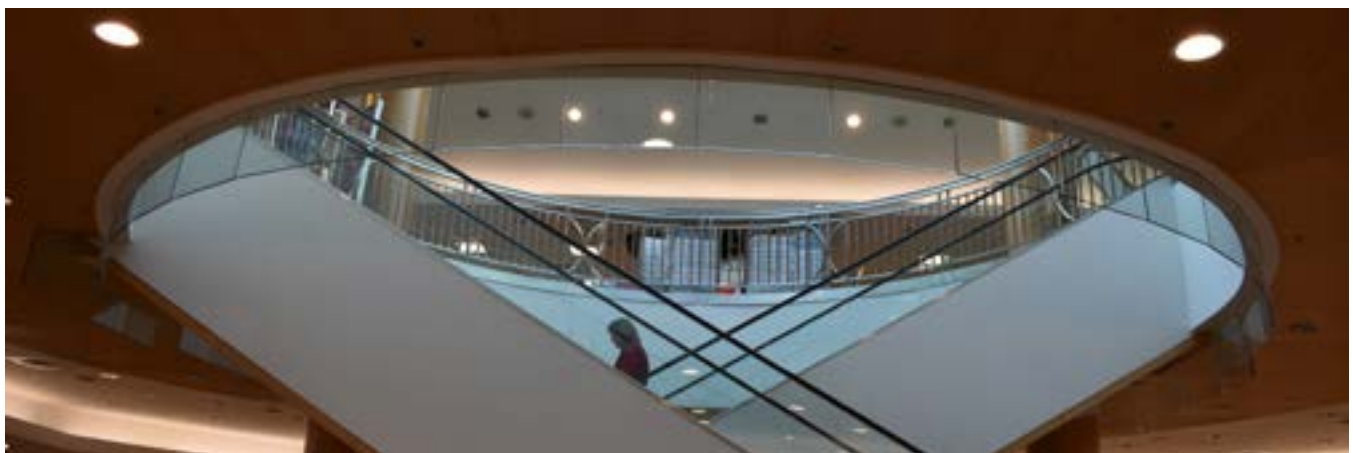
Elevators and escalators: **7,867**

Total number of permits issued: **959**

Inspections performed: **16,349**



*Elevator at Fair Oaks Mall in Fairfax, Va.
(Photo/Danielle Badra)*



*Escalators in Fair Oaks Mall in Fairfax, Va.
(Photo/Danielle Badra)*

Environmental Stewardship

Land disturbing activities approved: 1,007
Erosion and sediment inspections performed: 13,588
Stormwater inspections performed: 393
Erosion and sediment control violations issued: 126
Water Quality Impact Assessments (WQIA) approved*: 284
Resource Protection Area (RPA) violations issued: 35
Stormwater violations issued: 11
Green units built and ready for occupancy in buildings that have earned green building certification: 5,627

*WQIAs are submitted for evaluation of potential development impacts to the Chesapeake Bay RPA.



Environmental stewardship is one of the core values at Land Development Services. LDS promotes environmentally responsible land development throughout the county by ensuring proposed development meets the regulatory obligations of both site- and building-related codes. The environmental stewardship efforts underway at LDS align with the effective and efficient government goal as well as the environment and energy goal of the county's Strategic Plan.

A best management practice (BMP) was recently completed within the Fairbrook subdivision. BMPs refer to a practice, or combination of practices, that deliver an effective way to prevent or reduce the pollution of surface waters and groundwater systems from the impacts of land-disturbing activities.



BMPs in Fairbrook subdivision. (Photos/Danielle Badra)



Flood Risk Analysis

Fairfax County uses Flood Risk Analysis Tools to better assess and review flood risk. To identify these conditions, LDS staff developed two new Flood Risk Analysis layers for the Flood Risk Awareness Tool and the Drainage Basin Delineation Tool. The new data layers added to these tools include potential sump conditions and overland relief flow accumulation. These tools are used to:

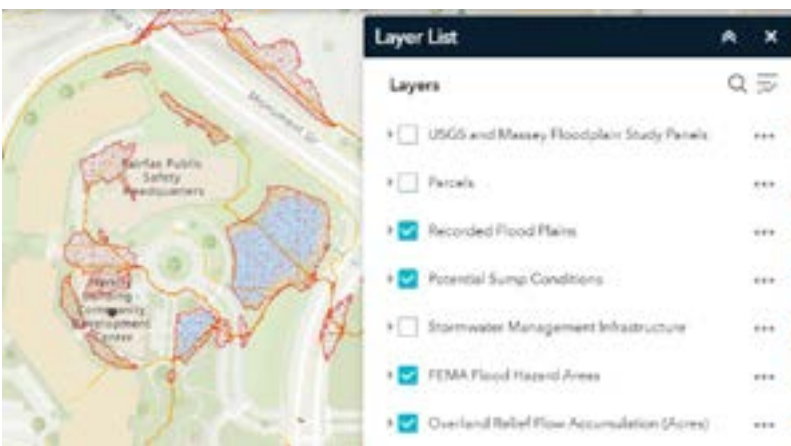
- Assess existing site conditions when responding to service requests for structural, yard and road flooding.
- Evaluate existing site conditions and potential impacts of localized changes in topography during redevelopment on adjacent properties.
- Assess potential impacts of overwhelmed stormwater inlets in sumps on adjacent structures due to ponding of stormwater runoff.
- Determine topographic features of the sump area including inflows, outflow and extents.
- Ensure that proposed elevations of entry points into new structures (i.e., areaways, walk-in basements, window wells) are adequately protected or situated away from the sumps.

This effort to raise awareness about flood risk aligns with the county's Strategic Plan goal of effective and efficient government. Scan the QR code below for a detailed explanation of the flood risk analysis tool.

The Flood Risk Awareness Tool is designed for public use to assess flood risk. Flooding is one of Fairfax County's most common hazards. Be prepared for flooding no matter where you live, but particularly if you are in a low-lying area, near a body of water, or in other areas



The drainage basin delineation tool delineates estimated drainage basins based off the best data available. The new potential sump conditions and overland relief flow accumulation layers help to refine this tool for the public.



PLUS Launch

Fairfax County converted its land use permitting, plan review, inspections and complaint systems to the Planning and Land Use System (PLUS) as of Oct. 31, 2022. Customers now complete all LDS-related transactions via PLUS.

PLUS was first released in 2020 with the goal of uniting unconnected and outdated systems to create a one-stop customer service portal for LDS, Department of Planning and Development, Office of the Fire Marshal, Health Department and Department of Code Compliance. This modernization created a more effective and efficient government - one of the key community outcome areas of the Countywide Strategic Plan.

The final 2022 launch marked the full transition from the legacy systems including FIDO, ZAPS, ProjectDox and PAWS to PLUS.



Welcome to PLUS, Fairfax County's Planning and Land Use System. PLUS allows customers to create and submit applications online, pay fees, track application status and receive electronic notifications.

To use these online services, please register for a free user account by clicking on the Register for an Account link above. For complaints, either register for an account or click on the Enforcement tab above to submit directly.

PLUS may be unavailable the third Sunday of each month between 6PM and midnight.

Average PLUS views per business day:

1,500

Total building records submitted since launch (Oct 31, 2022 - June 30, 2023):

41,714

Total site records submitted since launch (Oct 31, 2022 - June 30, 2023):

2,669





CONTACT LDS

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www.fairfaxcounty.gov/landdevelopment/



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If accommodations or alternate formats are needed,
please call 703-324-1780, TTY 711



The Herrity building in Fairfax, Va. (Photo/Courtesy of Fairfax County Park Authority)