
EQUITY IMPACT PLAN ANNUAL REPORT

CALENDAR YEAR 2024

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Department Name: Land Development Services

Equity Lead(s): Helman Castro and Ellen Gray

Date: 10/31/24

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DEPARTMENTAL GOALS

Review your department's Equity Impact Plan for CY 2024 at [Equity Impact Plans | Topics \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](#). Add each departmental 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 listed in your CY 2024 Equity Impact Plan, report them. Add more goals as needed.

Goal 1: Outreach – Provide outreach and education on permitting, plan review and inspections that reach all communities within Fairfax and consider race when developing communication channels.

Goal 1 Progress

1a. *Training our staff on racial and social equity including the application of the equity lens toolkit.* A member of the LDS Equity Team, Danielle Badra, was selected for the inaugural Inclusive Leadership Institute Racial Equity Training hosted by Leadership Fairfax. She started this training in October 2024 and will continue to attend training sessions through Spring 2025. Additionally, the Public Information Officer created a monthly department-wide newsletter that included an “equity corner” which highlighted racial and social equity history, guidance and important cultural dates. Several training sessions were held this year with the department’s Site Code Research and Development Branch (our primary policy research group) to help them view policy changes with an equity lens. Furthermore, language interpretation and translation training was conducted for our customer-facing frontline staff, the majority of whom attended.

1b. *Promote community education by reaching out to customers from underrepresented populations.* LDS completed 66 educational outreach sessions for the community regarding the permitting process, deck details bootcamps, resource protection area awareness, tree preservation practices, fraud and scam protections for the elderly, an affordable housing community conversation, a small business information session breakout table, and building safety month information sessions. These educational outreach sessions occurred across the county at multiple venues including government centers, stores, churches, district offices, libraries, conventions, community centers, HOAs, and manufactured home communities. One in-person

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session about the permitting process was held entirely in Spanish. We have created numerous publications this year including rack cards about elevator and escalator safety, nonprofit and religious use permitting guidance, electric vehicle charging station (EVCS) fee waivers, deck safety, permit library access, tips for hiring a contractor, and resource protection areas. Several of those publications were translated into both Spanish and Korean including the deck safety, permit library, and EVCS rack cards. The permit library rack card was translated into Braille.

Goal 2: Access to Services – Provide access to services in a fair and equitable manner to accomplish safe and sustainable development in Fairfax County for all community members.

Goal 2 Progress

2a. Continue to enhance customer in-person and online access to the Customer Information Center (CIC) and Customer Experience Team (CET) to better serve our customers. LDS developed and implemented a queue system for in-person customers that is available in the top seven languages spoken in Fairfax County. This new queue system helps to streamline the in-person experience. Language access services through this queue system have been utilized 75 times since June 2024. This system allows us to connect with customers in their preferred language to provide them with surveys for in-depth feedback. We continue to improve online resources such as the permit library and the webpage that help customers find out if they need a permit. Several updates were made to the online permitting system, the Planning and Land Use System (PLUS), and the phone system. A customer relationship management (CRM) tool was added to the phone system to allow staff to connect to a customer’s history with the department when they call in, showing staff who they have spoken with and the questions that they asked, to provide a better understanding of their inquiry.

2b. Evaluate fee study recommendations for income-based fee rates. A fee study was completed; however, the scope of the work done by the consultant was very narrowly focused and could not accommodate equity assessments.

2c. Provide language interpretation services training to all frontline staff. Frontline staff at LDS includes all of the Building Division staff, Permitting and Code Administration staff, the Director’s Office staff, a majority of the Site Development and Inspections Division staff, and a handful of staff in Operations, Finance and Human Resources. Fifty-six percent of LDS frontline staff received language access training in 2024.

Goal 3: Workforce Development – Increase staff diversity through recruitment and promotion.

Goal 3 Progress

3a. Conduct trend analysis of underrepresented populations recruitment and hiring. As of a few months ago, LDS and Fairfax County have recently updated their business practices to ensure that

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interview panels are representative of the applicants who meet the preferred qualifications. LDS has implemented measures to guarantee diversity in its interview panels, ensuring the inclusion of at least one man, one woman, and one minority member. These efforts aim to create a panel that reflects the diversity of the applicant pool while fostering equity and inclusion in the hiring process.

3b. Develop internship programs with educational institutions. LDS contracted two unpaid interns during calendar year 2024.

3c. Establish career maps. LDS created two new layers of management in 2024 that did not previously exist. This allows for a step between the branch chiefs and division directors. For the Site Development and Inspections Division, the two layers of management created are assistant division director and branch chief roles, providing new steps on the career ladder maps. There is an intent to do the same thing for the Building Division in the near future.

3d. Conduct a follow-up workforce survey to collect staff's perspective on the recruitment process and satisfaction assessment (employee engagement survey). Second Wave Learning has been contracted to conduct a follow-up engagement survey in early Spring 2025.

Goal 4: Policies & Practices – Internal business operations policies and practices are equitable.

Goal 4 Progress

4a. Continue to train staff on how to include Equity Impact Assessments (statements) in BOS Agenda Items. Several training sessions were held this year with the department's Site Code Research and Development Branch (our primary policy research group) to help them learn how to write equity impact statements. They were also trained to consider equity at the outset of a policy change. Since January 2024, all required Board packages have included an equity impact statement.

4b. Review standard operating procedures on handling complaints to establish consistency and identify inequities in current complaint process. The 2023 vendor proposals could not be considered because of funding issues. This goal will be removed from the 2025 LDS Equity Impact Plan.

COUNTYWIDE GOALS

Report progress on Countywide goals related to the Regional Fair Housing Plan, if relevant to your department. As above, copy in each Countywide goal from your CY 2024 Equity Impact Plan, and describe progress made in CY 2024. If none, write "Not applicable."

Goal 1: Regional Goal One – Increase the supply of housing that is affordable to low- and moderate-income families in the region, particularly in areas that have historically lacked such housing.

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Goal 1 Progress

1a. *Increase the supply of affordable housing by continuing to exercise effective and efficient permitting and review.* LDS has created a liaison relationship through the Project Management Program which works with the Department of Housing and Community Development. This collaboration has created a streamlined program with tools to assist with permitting, inspections and occupancy of affordable housing projects.

1b. *Increase the supply of affordable housing by reviewing overall county parking requirements that benefit developments including affordable housing (Parking Reimagined).* A parking standards amendment was passed by the Board of Supervisors on September 26, 2023, which became effective on January 1, 2024. An additional parking amendment relating to accessible parking standards was approved by the Board of Supervisors on December 3, 2024, and became effective on December 4, 2024.

OTHER EQUITY-RELATED WORK

Was other equity-related work completed in addition to the goals above? If so, please describe.

- Each LDS division continues to review the implementation of the standard comment policy to help provide continuity, standardization of language and readability of review comments.
- A Salary Determination Form was revised within the past year to make sure that it is more equitable across the board for all applicants. This form ensures consistency when completing the salary determination for all supervisors. The old worksheet allowed for supervisor discretion, leading up to a 20% variance in offered salaries. The revised worksheet aims to calculate starting salaries more objectively.