



# FAIRFAX COUNTY LAND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES



## ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2021

JULY 1, 2020, to JUNE 30, 2021



## FAIRFAX COUNTY LAND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

As members of the Land Development Services team, we accomplish our mission by embracing our values in a work environment that 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: Reston Gateway Tower A (left); Tower B (right).  
Photo courtesy of Pat R. Carletto, Carletto Aerial Photography, LLC.

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# Message from Land Development Services Director William D. Hicks, P.E.

When I look back on fiscal year 2021 (FY21), I am especially proud of our work because it was completed during, and despite, a global pandemic. After a brief adjustment in the last quarter of FY20 when there was a pause in the normal flow of work, the construction industry came back strong and so did Land Development Services (LDS).

Taking the “Safer at Home” sentiment to heart, homeowners in Fairfax County added new decks and pools, finished basements, added rooms, enclosed porches, remodeled homes and upgraded the infrastructures of their homes. At first the commercial side of our work, including site development, saw a slowdown, but eventually commercial work began to pick up.

Beyond the numbers, FY21 was about finding new ways of doing business while keeping staff and customers safe. It was about maintaining good customer service when permitting was done entirely online and questions were answered via phone, email or virtual meeting. It was about learning to work while kids were home, with a deadly virus spreading and without any sense of normalcy. It was about being innovative and creative and supporting customers who were uncomfortable with the new virtual world, as well as those who lacked access to the tools that make virtual work possible.

Although not apparent within the annual report, LDS faced many challenges with staffing. Turnover, resignations and retirements continue to impact the workforce throughout the country, and we felt it here in LDS.

It was a challenging year.

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

# New Construction in Fairfax County

**1,731** New addresses added in Fairfax County

**5,594**  
↑  
**3,656** New Dwelling Units Permitted in FY21 increased by 53% (single-family homes, townhouses and multi-family units)

New dwelling units permitted in FY20

**\$2.1Billion**  
↑  
**\$1.7Billion** Estimated Value in FY21 increased by 19% (Residential and Commercial Construction)

Estimated value in FY20

**70** Bonded public improvements completed

**27** New commercial buildings permitted



Rendering of Residences at North Hill

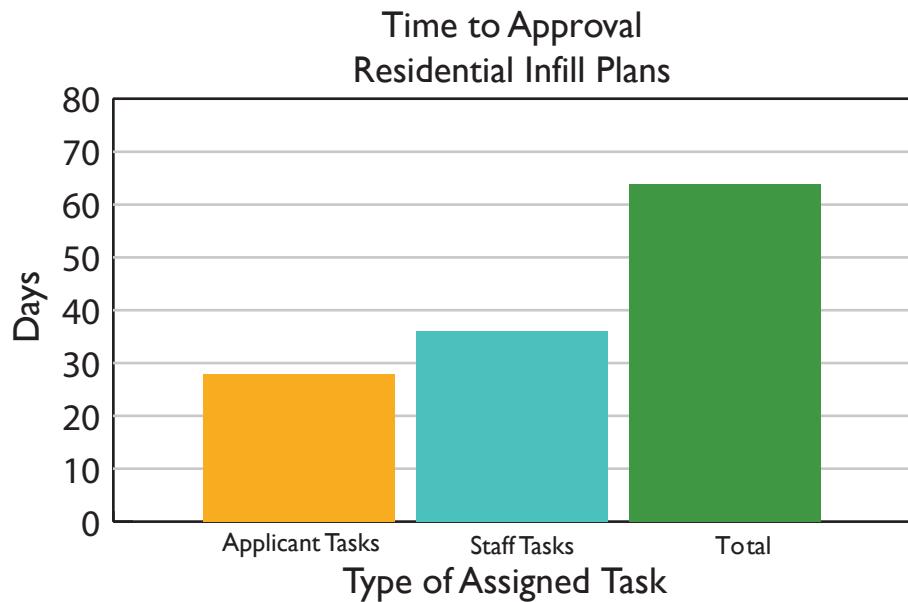
Photo: Fairfax County Department of Housing and Community Development

The North Hill Residences Project consists of approximately 33 acres in the Mount Vernon District. Through the Public-Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Act of 2002, Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority was able to pursue a public-private partnership that is transforming North Hill into a mixed-income, affordable and market-rate housing community, featuring 216 affordable multifamily apartments, 63 affordable senior independent living apartments, 175 market-rate townhomes and a 12-acre public park. LDS staff follow standard permitting, plan review and inspections for the North Hill property coordinated by the LDS Project Management Team. Pre-construction work occurred throughout FY21. Construction began in spring 2021.

In FY21, LDS began processing digital permits as well as continuing to process paper permits. All metrics on this page are based on digital permits issued on or after December 1, 2020. Paper permit volume is not included.

# Completed Single Family Home - Site

Much of the developable land in Fairfax County has been built upon previously. Consequently, most new single family home development occurs one house at a time by dividing lots or razing an existing home and building a new one on the same lot. To do so, developers typically submit Infill Lot Grading Plans (plan type INF) for county approval. In FY2021, LDS approved 584 such plans. For each plan, staff review for compliance with today's environmental standards, which include stormwater management and tree preservation.



Total infill plans approved: **584**

Typical number of submissions required: **2**

Average days from submission to approval: **64**



Clearing and grading for a single family home in Providence District, Fairfax County, Va.  
Photo: Wahaj Mohammad, LDS.

In FY21, LDS began processing digital plans as well as continuing to process paper plans. All metrics on this page are based on digital plans issued on or after December 1, 2020. Paper plan volume is not included.

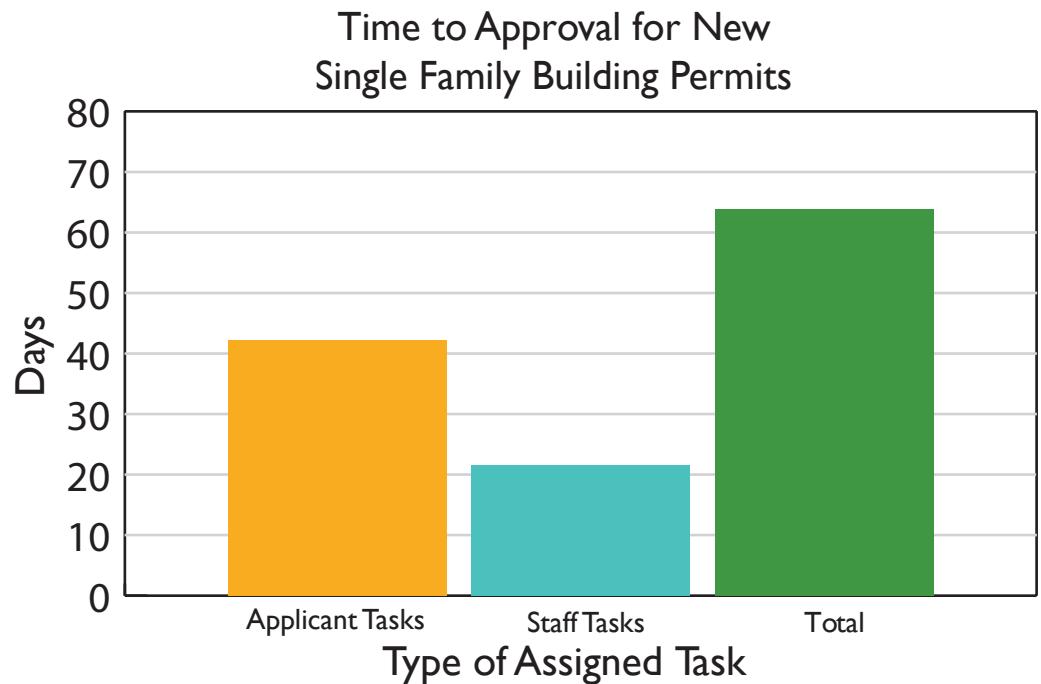
# Completed Single Family Home - Building

Fairfax County builders develop single-family home projects in two manners: custom, uniquely designed homes or production homes permitted under a common “masterfile” design.



Single-family home in Providence District, Fairfax County, Va.  
Photo: Wahaj Mohammad, LDS

In FY21, LDS began processing digital permits as well as continuing to process paper permits. All metrics on this page are based on digital permits issued on or after December 1, 2020. Paper permit volume is not included.



Total number of permits: **255**

Typical number of submissions required: **2**

Average days from submission to approval: **64**

# Completed Residential Additions

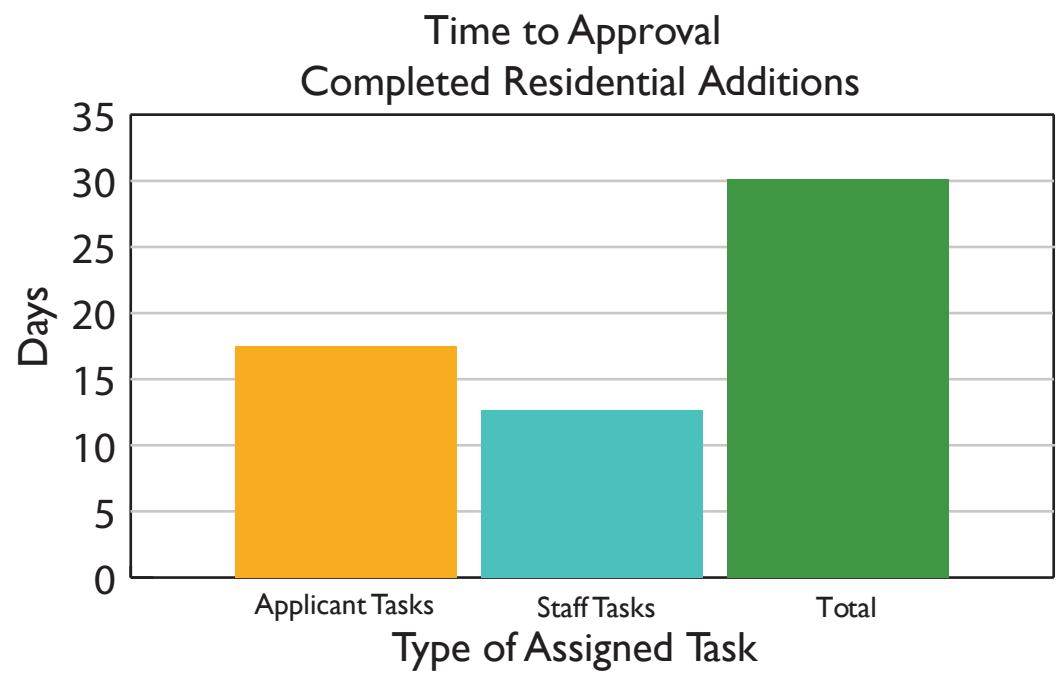
Residential additions include basements, decks, screened porches, sunrooms and one- and two-story additions. Many projects successfully achieved permit approval in a single submission. The chart depicts the average review time from application submission to plan approval.



This pool house in McLean, Va., is an example of a structure that required a residential addition permit.

*Photo: Anthony McMahan, LDS*

In FY21, LDS began processing digital permits as well as continuing to process paper permits. All metrics on this page are based on digital permits issued on or after December 1, 2020. Paper permit volume is not included.



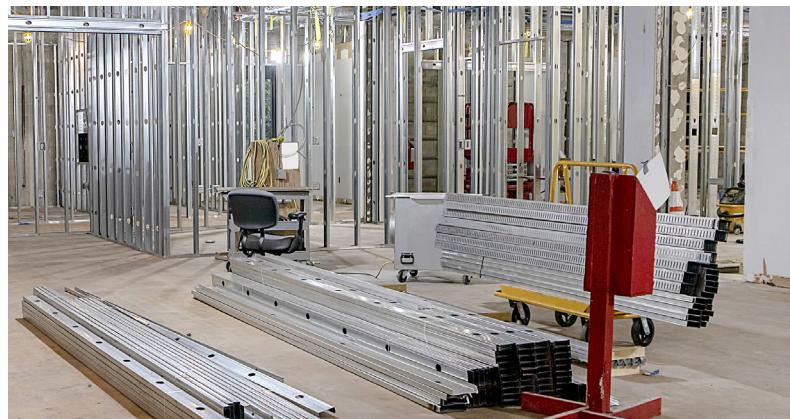
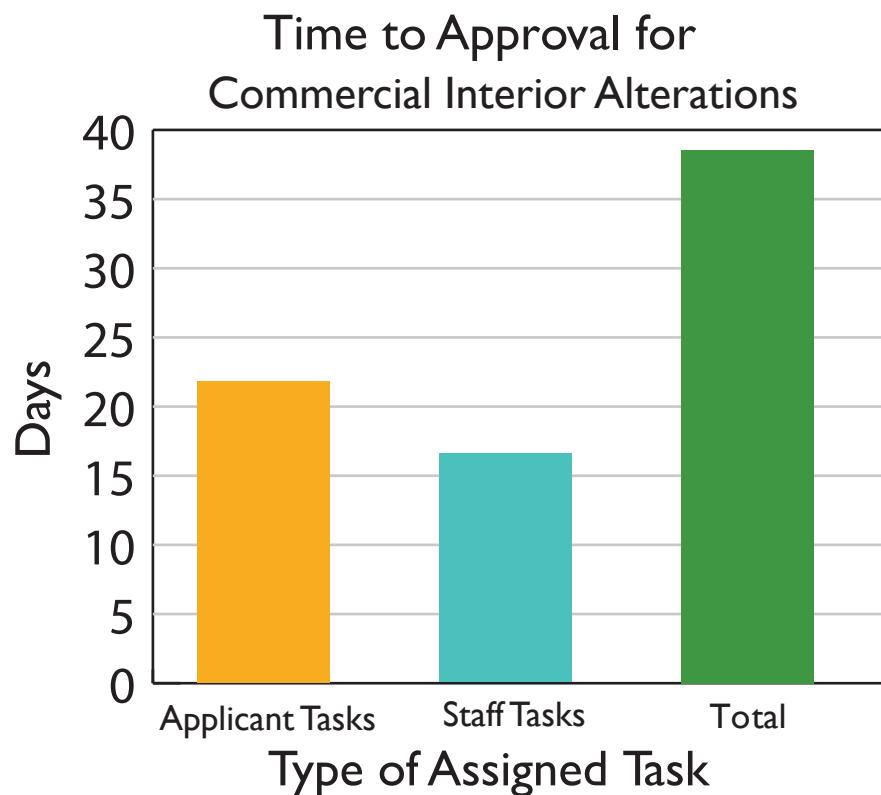
Total number of permits: **1,213**

Typical number of submissions required: **2**

Average days from submission to approval: **30**

# Completed Commercial Interior Alterations

Commercial interior alterations include projects to redesign interior space. This may include office or storefront modifications to accommodate a new occupancy. The chart depicts the average review time from application submission to plan approval.



An example of tenant improvement  
(stock photo)

Total number of permits: **631**

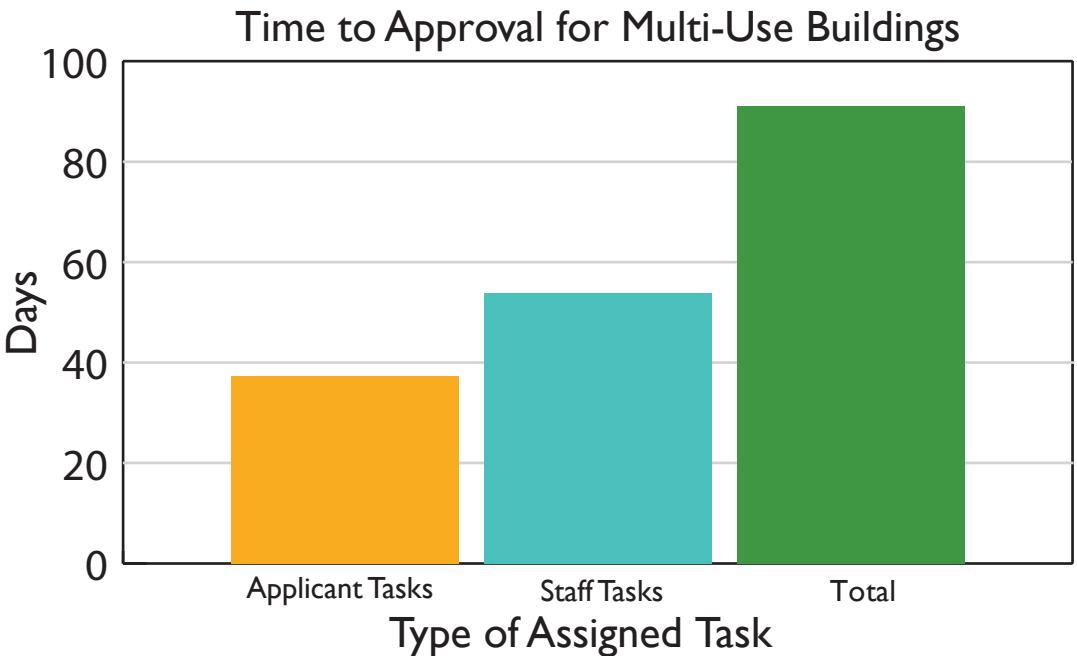
Typical number of submissions required: **2**

Average days from submission to approval: **38**

In FY21, LDS began processing digital permits as well as continuing to process paper permits. All metrics on this page are based on digital permits issued on or after December 1, 2020. Paper permit volume is not included.

# Completed Commercial Buildings Over 10,000 Square Feet

(Listed as multi-use buildings in previous reports)



Halley Rise - The Edmund - Exterior Rendering in Reston, Va.  
Photo Courtesy of Brookfield Properties.

Total number of permits: **4**

Typical number of submissions required: **3**

Average days from submission to approval: **91**

In FY21, LDS began processing digital permits as well as continuing to process paper permits. All metrics on this page are based on digital permits issued on or after December 1, 2020. Paper permit volume is not included.

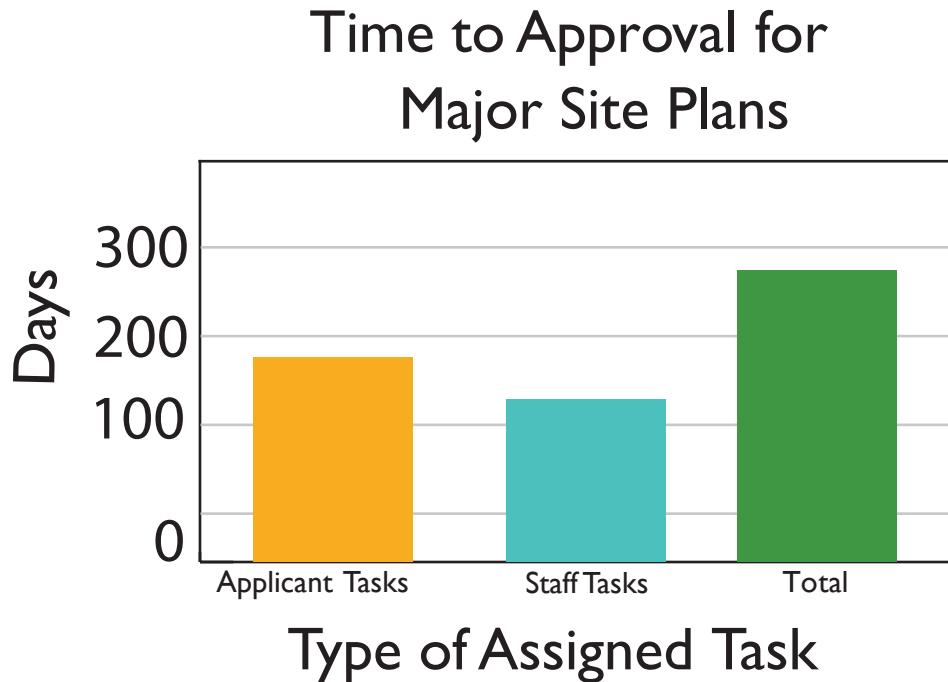
# Major Site Plan Approvals

The major site plan category includes site plans, subdivision plans and public improvement plans.

In FY21, the average size of projects with site plans reached nearly 13 acres (280% greater than the FY20 average). Within those acres, multiple factors complicate site design and plan review and, ultimately, the inspection process. These issues include stormwater management, re-grading, tree preservation and erosion control.

LDS continues to work with industry and other partner agencies to shorten review times. If a site-related plan is very close to approval, an applicant may submit a “signature set” with no associated fees. A “signature set” can be submitted when minimal changes are needed to achieve approval and allows for expeditious processing of a small number of plan sheets.

Major plans approved in FY21 included Brentford at the Mile Building A and Arrowbrook Centre Landbay Block D2.



Total major site plans approved: **40**

Typical number of submissions required: **3**

Average days from submission to approval: **289**

The “typical number of submissions” number presented above includes “signature set” submissions, which we are unable to breakout separately.

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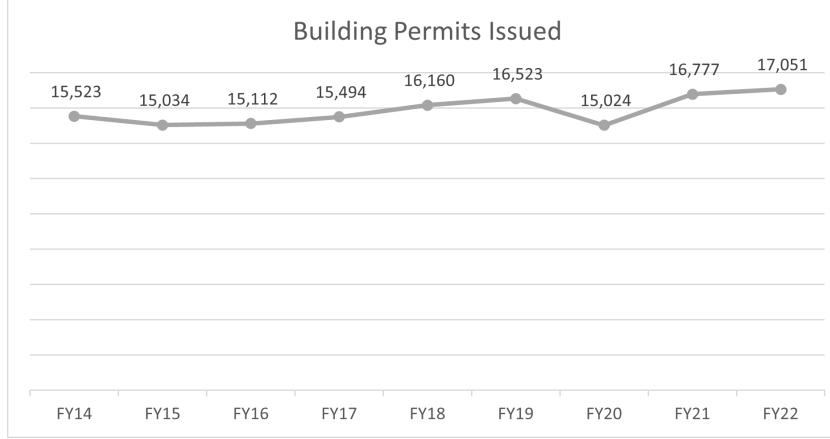
# Building and Trade Permits Issued

## Building and Trade Permits Applied versus Issued

**FY20**  
Applied:  
**69,219**  
Issued:  
**63,453**

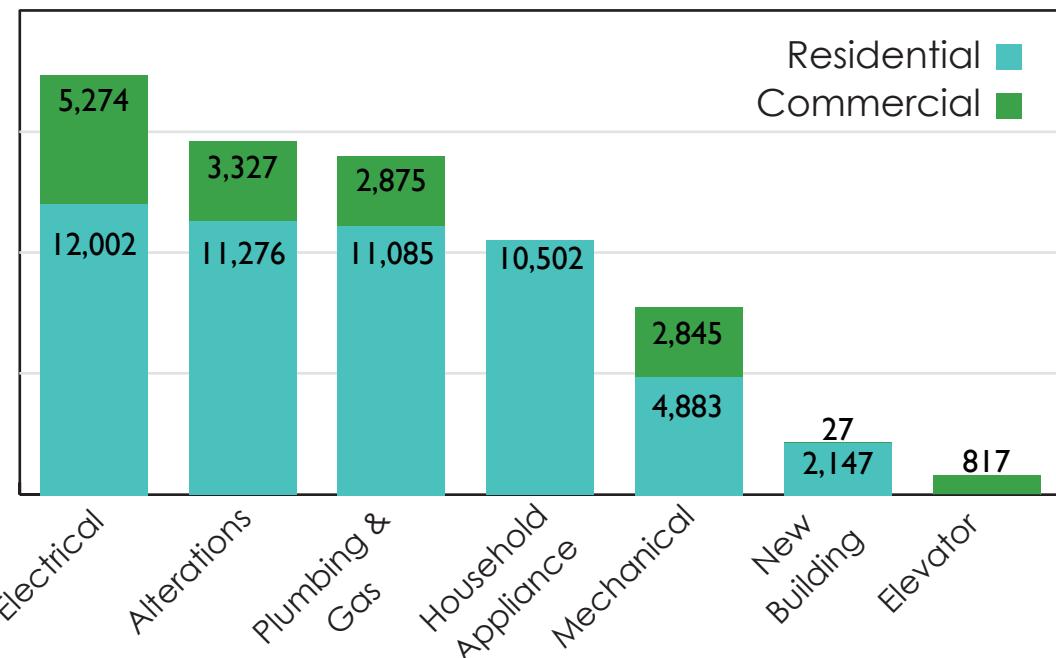
**FY21**  
Applied:  
**73,652**  
Issued:  
**67,060**

The numbers for applied versus issued permits include abandoned and canceled permits and do not imply a backlog processing time.



The numbers in the "building permits issued" chart include alteration and new building permits only. Trade permits, household appliance and elevator permits are not included in this total.

## Building and Trade Permits Issued



**77%**  
of all building and trade permits issued  
are residential permits

**75%**  
of all permits issued  
are trade permits

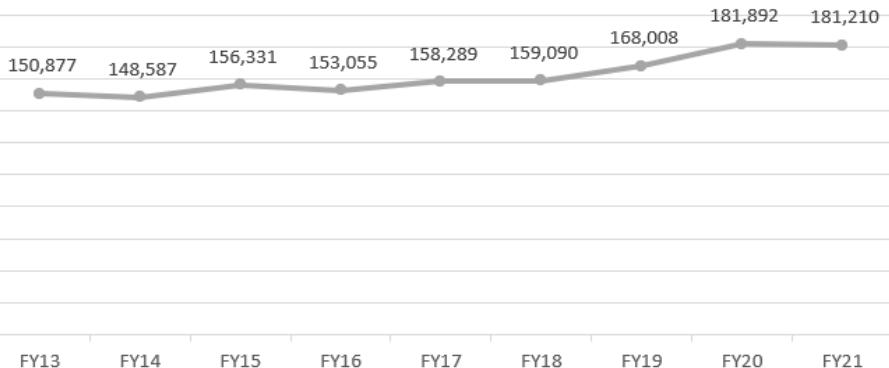
Permit numbers include permits that did not require a plan review.

# Building and Site Inspections

## Building and Site Inspections Conducted

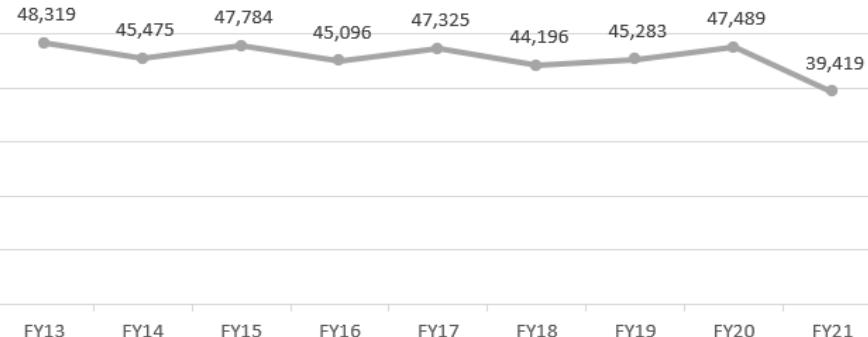
Building Inspections

FY21: 181,210



Site Inspections

FY21: 39,419



Site inspections dipped this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and necessary safety-related changes to our business process for site inspections.

## LDS Streamlines Establishment of Memorial

Land Development Services played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial at Occoquan Regional Park, coordinating permitting, plan review and inspections for a streamlined development process.

The memorial was accepted into the Project Management Program in 2019, with an expected ribbon cutting in August 2020; however, the pandemic delayed the dedication of the project to 2021.



Turning Point Suffragist Memorial in Lorton, Va.  
Photo: Land Development Services

# Critical Structures

Most major commercial projects and multifamily residences are considered critical structures. Given safety risks with these building projects, the county requires special inspections by a registered design professional. The Critical Structures section of the Building Division works directly with industry throughout construction to maximize public safety for these structures.



Left and above: Cranes in Reston, Va.  
Photo: Stefani Graf

**1,608** Shop drawings reviewed

**33,702** Inspection reports received for critical structure projects

**618** Critical structure inspections

# Elevators and Escalators

There are approximately 7,800 verticle 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.

**6,900** (Approx.) Elevators/escalators in Fairfax County

**817** Permits issued for new elevators/escalators

**15,152** Total inspections performed



Elevators at the Herry Building in Fairfax, Va.  
Photo: Land Development Services



Escalator in McLean, Va.  
Photo: Stefani Graf

# Resources Overview

**Revenue \$46,995,995**

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 \$41,446,236**

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

**Cost Recovery Rate | 13%**

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, LDS aims to achieve 100% cost recovery. However, actual revenue and expenses vary based on work volume. Any excess revenue, with Board of Supervisors approval, is invested in capital needs to efficiently processs permits. Currently, this is focused on the Planning and Land Use System (PLUS).

# LDS Staff Stats



**FAIRFAX COUNTY  
LAND DEVELOPMENT  
SERVICES**

**Employees: 298**

**Professional Engineers: 47**

**Architect Licenses: 3**

**LEED-Certified Engineers: 5**

**Professional Land Surveyors: 1**

**Certified Floodplain Managers: 5**

**Virginia DEQ\* Certifications: 99**

**Virginia DHCD\*\* Certifications: 701**

\*DEQ stands for Department of Environmental Quality

\*\*DHCD stands for Department of Housing and Community Development

# Environmental Stewardship

As environmental stewards of the community, LDS is responsible for ensuring proposed development meets the regulatory obligations of both site- and building-related codes. This includes energy conservation, erosion and sediment control, Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas and stormwater management. LDS works with the community and other stakeholders to ensure compliance throughout the development process. The metrics identified below represent the various points in which LDS applies an environmental lens to a project.

**21,655** Erosion and sediment inspections performed

**846** Land disturbing activities approved

**764** Acres of land disturbance approved

**394** Stormwater inspections performed

**423** Stormwater facilities brought online treating 702 acres

**180** Erosion and sediment control violations issued

**53** Water Quality Impact Assessments (WQIA) approved\*

**39** Resource Protection Area (RPA) violations issued

**1,785** Units ready for occupancy in buildings that have earned green building certification\*\*

**630** Solar panel permits issued

**16** Sidewalk/trail waivers (sidewalk/trail waivers address necessity, walkway modifications and construction deferrals)

**8** Stormwater violations issued



A stream in the Leigh Meadow Stream Restoration project. Run by the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services' Stormwater Planning Division, the project aims to restore approximately 1,600 feet of eroded stream.

*Photo: Christopher Mueller, Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services*

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

\*\* The methodology for calculating green buildings was updated in 2021

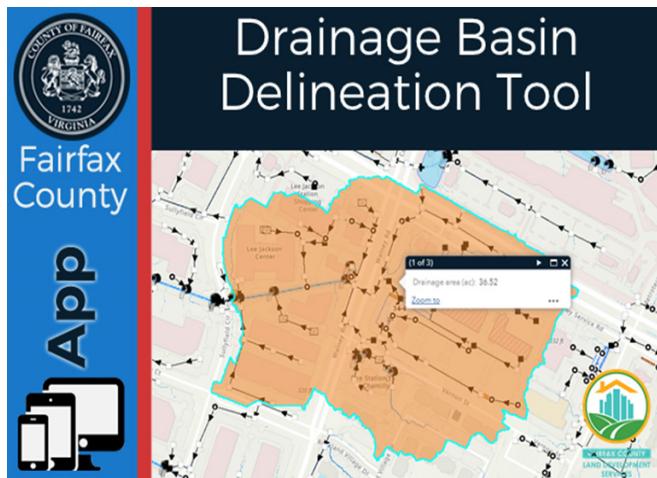
# Technology Boosts Efficiency and Access

## County Launches New Land Planning System

Fairfax County launched the new Planning and Land Use System (PLUS) in October 2020. PLUS is a major modernization to the land planning, development and environmental health online applications process. As of fall 2022, the new online system will be the central platform to create and submit applications online, pay fees, track application status and receive electronic notifications.

## Two New Mapping Applications Provide Access to County Data

These applications provide data for learning about and analyzing land development in Fairfax County. Two new geographic information System (GIS) tools were released in December 2020: the Drainage Basin Delineation Tool and the Mailing List Generator.



The Drainage Basin Delineation Tool allows users to drop a point on a map and delineate the drainage basin anywhere in the county. This is valuable data used by engineers to ensure that the county's stormwater management infrastructure is adequately sized. The data is also used by ecologists when evaluating relationships between land use and hydrology and their influence on stream condition, water quality and aquatic life.

Drainage Basin Delineation Tool Views December to June: 2,329

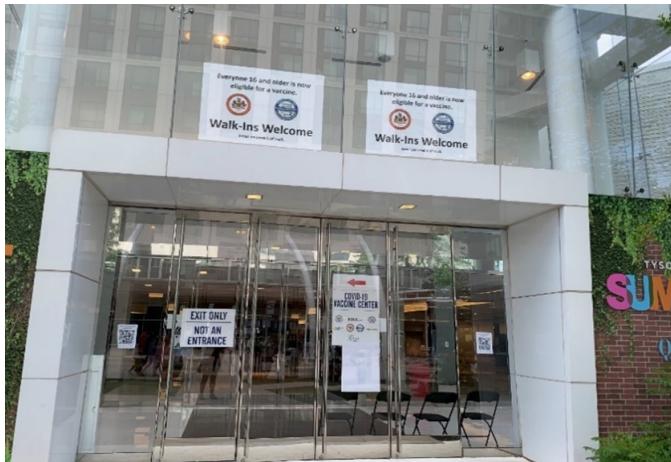


The Mailing List Generator allows users to identify a collection of properties and create mailing labels or a structured text file of owner or occupant addresses. This application has streamlined the process for staff and residents to generate mailing lists for Adjoining Property Notices.

Mailing List Generator Views December to June: 994

# Pandemic-Related Projects and Changes

## Land Development Services Assists in Opening of New Community Vaccination Center



The Lord & Taylor store at Tysons Corner Center became a new community vaccination center.

Photo: Land Development Services

To support health care facilities and others in their efforts to administer thousands of COVID-19 vaccinations, a new community vaccination center was opened in Tysons Corner Center. The Lord & Taylor department store was retrofitted to create space for the clinic, creating many additional opportunities for residents to receive vaccinations.

Time was of the essence, and LDS staff helped coordinate the urgent permitting and inspection process. All hands were on deck to quickly evaluate the initial list of sites, review the permit and plan submissions, and perform inspections. The entire process would have normally taken several months, but it took only about two weeks.

## Multi-agency Partnership Leads to Unique Health Laboratory



Photo: Land Development Services

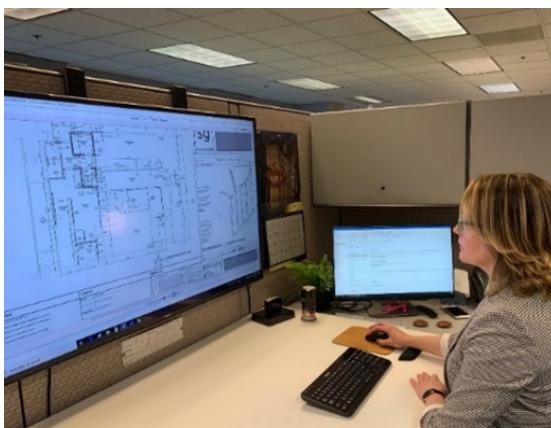
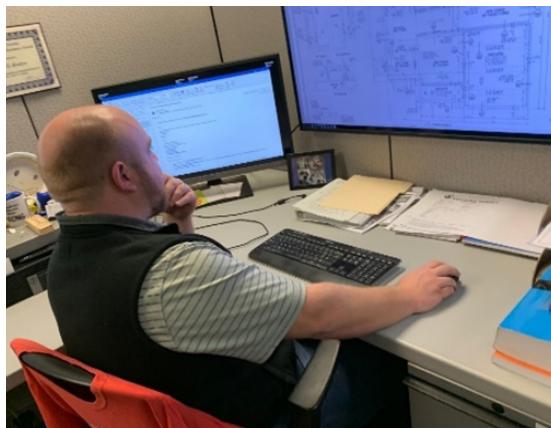


Photo: Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services

Under normal circumstances, the process of locating an appropriate site or building, putting contracts together and retrofitting or renovating a space can take months, even years. But during a pandemic when public safety is on the line, everyone works seamlessly to ensure deadlines can be met—without cutting corners. Fairfax County Health Department determined that a prefabricated structure would meet requirements for a Bio-Safety Level 2 Health Laboratory and save time. Specially constructed with five shipping containers, this lab was the first structure of its kind used in the county.

## Plans Go Virtual

When the pandemic began in March 2020 (FY20), LDS staff had to do some retrofitting to transition a primarily in-person paper process to one that can be completed online.



Code Specialist Kyle Kratzer (left) and LDS Commercial Plan Reviewer Donna Hovis (right) review building plans.

A major development in the area of virtual plans was the upgrade of ProjectDox in November 2020 which added 10 new permit types to ProjectDox and streamlined the process for permit applications and plan uploads. As a result, all building plans could be submitted through the ProjectDox system.

Thanks to their enormous efforts, plan reviewers could review plans online using large monitors.



Cristina Idrovo Palacios scans paper plans so LDS can be 100% virtual.  
*All photos on this page: Land Development Services*



No more paper plans! LDS staff scanned more than one million items so all prior land-development-related plans and other documents could be accessed online.

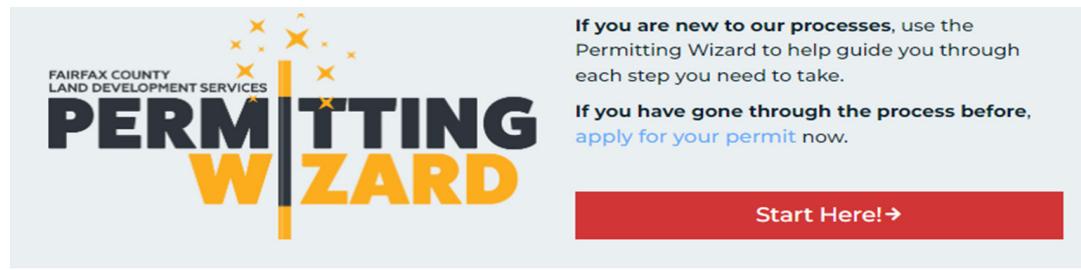
## Building Inspections Go Virtual

During the height of the pandemic, health protocols compelled building inspectors to turn to the newest technology to safely conduct all building inspections. Customers were able to schedule their inspections online, and inspectors could then contact them to perform the inspections virtually, with the customers simply using their smartphones or other electronic devices. As a result, building projects were not delayed but could be carried out within their normal time frame.

All building inspections were completed virtually at the peak of the pandemic. As vaccinations became available, however, most building inspections returned to the traditional in-person process.

Moving the entire permitting, plan review and building inspections process online was a major change for LDS customers and staff. The LDS website is continually updated to meet the needs of the new digital process.

## The Permitting Wizard Works Magic for Customers



To help customers understand the permitting process in the county, LDS introduced the Permitting Wizard. An interactive, online tool especially useful for homeowners and first-time users, the Wizard provides customers with a printable step-by-step guide. More than 2,000 customers created individualized guides in FY21.

## Launch of the Customer Experience Team

In July 2020, staff and customers were still adjusting to the new, all-virtual environment for permit application and processing and customer service. Calls into LDS, specifically the Customer Technical Support Center, on average had been about 150 per day before the pandemic. Once LDS went all-electronic, the average was around 300 per day, with some days reaching over 400. In November 2020, LDS established a new Customer Experience Team to answer all general, permit-related customer questions, allowing technical permit staff to process applications and conduct prescreen plan reviews. Updates to the phone system and phone trees continued throughout FY21 to handle and carefully direct customer calls.

# Building Safety and Rebuilding Safely



## Building Safety Month Proclamation May 2021

The Presentation of Building Safety Month Proclamation, May 2021. L-R: Deputy Fire Chief Willie Bailey, Fire and Rescue; Kyle Kratzer, Land Development Services (LDS); Acting Building Division Director Hiba Aziz, LDS; Sully District Supervisor Kathy Smith; Director William D. Hicks, LDS; John Walser, Office of the Fire Marshal

... WHEREAS our confidence in the resilience of these buildings that make up our community is achieved through the devotion of vigilant guardians—building safety and fire prevention officials, architects, engineers, builders, tradespeople, design professionals, laborers, plumbers and others in the construction industry—who work year-round to ensure the safe construction of buildings ... —2021 Building Safety Month Proclamation

## Rebuilding After Disaster



Fairfax County departments, including LDS, play an important role in disaster recovery. Inspectors assess property damage after a flood or fire, for example, to determine whether buildings are safe for occupancy when construction begins. The Belle View Shopping Center in Mount Vernon experienced a devastating fire in October 2019. Fortunately, there was no loss of life. Eight businesses could not reopen immediately after the fire due to unsafe conditions and extensive damage. Rebuilding occurred throughout FY20 and FY21. An LDS staff member coordinated permit review and inspections, leading to a streamlined rebuilding

All photos on this page: Land Development Services



Abby Turnbull, LDS, staffs the Herry Building information desk during the COVID-19 pandemic  
Photo: Land Development Services



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