

Roundtable: FY 2013 Development Application Submissions and Processing

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Description

A major function of the Development Applications and Regulatory Coordination (DARC) Division is the processing and tracking of all development applications submitted to the Planning Department. Staff will provide the Planning Board a synopsis of the number of plans submitted; plans approved; and review times for various application types. Wherever possible, staff will compare fiscal year 2013 data to previous years' data.

Summary

- Number of development applications accepted are consistent with previous years
- Number of building permits accepted increased by 37%
- Number of record plats accepted decreased by 24%

Plans Accepted

The number of development applications accepted by the Planning Department for fiscal year 2013 is relatively consistent with fiscal years 2012 and 2011. The number of new site plans has increased as more master plans come online and as projects advance from the preliminary plan to the site plan stage. The data show little deviation in the number of development applications. However, the number of building permit applications has increased substantially since fiscal year 2011. Exhibit 1 below identifies the number of plans accepted by plan type for the past three fiscal years.

Exhibit 1. Plans Accepted by Application Type and Fiscal Year			
Application Type	Fiscal Year 11	Fiscal Year 12	Fiscal Year 13
Preliminary Plans			
New Applications	38	38	26
<u>Amendments</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>30</u>
Subtotal	56	58	56
Site Plans			
New Applications	14	19	25
Major Amendments	3	3	2
Limited Amendments	8	13	19
Consent Amendments	13	3	6
<u>Administrative Amendments</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>36</u>
Subtotal	68	66	88
Project Plans			
New Applications	1	4	7
<u>Amendments</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>
Subtotal	6	7	10
Sketch Plans	3	5	1
Pre-application Plans			
Staff Review Only	8	2	7
<u>Staff and PB Review</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Subtotal	11	6	12
Record Plats	151	204	155
Subdivision Review Waivers	2	2	0
NRI/FSDs			
New Applications	87	76	84
<u>Recertification</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>6</u>
Subtotal	98	83	90
Forest Conservation Exemptions	140	122	131
Forest Conservation Plans			
Preliminary Plans	29	36	32
Site Plans	4	10	25
Special Exceptions	8	9	2
Mandatory Referrals	18	18	9
Park FCP	6	5	5
<u>Sediment Control FCP</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>17</u>
Subtotal	87	97	90
Special Protection Area Plans	5	9	4
Special Exceptions	41	38	23
Development Plan Amendments	3	4	2
Local Map Amendments	2	5	2
Mandatory Referrals	36	44	38
Building Permits	737	1,022	1,397
TOTAL	1,446	1,772	2,099

The lack of increase in the overall number of development applications can probably be attributed to a change or redirection in development. Applications submitted in the past few years have focused on areas recommended for redevelopment than on new green field developments. Green field developments are still being submitted but the overall number has declined.

The data indicates a 24 percent decrease in the number of plats submitted in fiscal year 2013 as compared to fiscal year 2012. This is not surprising since there was a belief in the development community that many project's validity period was going to lapse during fiscal year 2013, however the County Council granted an additional preliminary plan validity period earlier in the calendar year.

In fiscal year 2013 the Department received 37 percent more building permits when compared to fiscal year 2012. This was on top of an already 38 percent increase between fiscal years 2012 and 2011. Since the end of fiscal year 2011 the number of building permits received by the Department has nearly doubled to 1,397. The increase in building permit applications received by the Department represents a continued confidence in the housing market and the ability of developer's to sell and lease residential units.

Last year we were concerned with a 15 percent decrease in the number of natural resource inventories/forest stand delineations (NRI/FSDs) from fiscal year 2011 and a 14 decrease in the number of applications for forest conservation plan exemptions. The fiscal year 2013 data, when compared to fiscal year 2012, shows an 11 percent increase in the number of NRI/FSDs and a 7 percent increase in the number of forest conservation plan exemptions. The number of NRI/FSDs and forest conservation exemption plans are not at the same level as fiscal year 2011 but it shows that the submission of future preliminary plan of subdivisions, mandatory referrals, and special exceptions will remain nearly constant. So far it appears that fiscal year 2012 was an outlier and not evidence of a new trend.

Overall, the number of applications accepted by the Planning Department increased by 18 percent in fiscal year 2013 when compared to fiscal year 2012.

Plans Approved

Once an applicant submits a development application and it is accepted by the Planning Department relevant application data is entered into Hansen, our electronic tracking database, and given a unique identifier number. Hansen requires that the date the application is accepted, the date regulatory clocks are started and the date the application is approved or completed be recorded in the database. This data then allows the tracking of applications by numerous means including the number of plans accepted and approved, by division, during any specific timeframe including fiscal year. Exhibit 2 below indicates the number of plans received for fiscal year 2013. The exhibit also shows the number of plans, by plan type, that received a "final decision" in fiscal year 2013. Please note, plans with a final decision in fiscal year 2013 could have been accepted by the Planning Department in earlier fiscal years and, therefore, the number of plans with a "Final decision" may be greater than the number of plans received for a plan type. "Final decision" includes Planning Board approvals and denials on development applications, Planning Board recommendations and referrals on special exceptions, mandatory referrals, and zoning cases, and staff approvals and denials of certain forest conservation plans, NRI/FSDs, and forest conservation exemptions.

**Exhibit 2. Plans Accepted with a Final Decision by Application Type
and Division for Fiscal Year 2013**

Application Type	Area 1		Area 2		Area 3		DARC	
	Accepted ¹	Final Decision ²	Accepted ¹	Final Decision ²	Accepted ¹	Final Decision ²	Accepted ¹	Final Decision ²
Preliminary Plans								
New Applications	10	12	6	7	10	18		
<u>Amendments</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>11</u>	n/a	n/a
Subtotal	13	15	14	11	29	29		
Site Plans								
New Applications	13	8	10	5	2	9		
Major Amendments	1	1	1	0	0	0		
Limited Amendments	4	4	3	1	12	6	n/a	n/a
Consent Amendments	3	1	2	3	1	0		
<u>Administrative Amendments</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>15</u>		
Subtotal	30	21	25	15	33	30		
Project Plans								
New Applications	7	3	0	0	0	0		
<u>Amendments</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	n/a	n/a
Subtotal	9	3	0	0	1	0		
Sketch Plans	0	0	1	1	0	0	n/a	n/a
Pre-application Plans								
Staff Review Only	0	0	2	1	5	0		
<u>Staff and PB Review</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	n/a	n/a
Subtotal	0	0	3	2	9	3		
Record Plats	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	155	160
Subdivision Review	0	0	0	0	0	2	n/a	n/a
Waivers								
NRI/FSDs								
New Applications	13	11	25	21	46	34		
<u>Recertification</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	n/a	n/a
Subtotal	13	12	27	23	50	37		

**Exhibit 2. Plans Accepted with a Final Decision by Application Type
and Division for Fiscal Year 2013**

Application Type	Area 1		Area 2		Area 3		DARC	
	Accepted ¹	Final Decision ²	Accepted ¹	Final Decision ²	Accepted ¹	Final Decision ²	Accepted ¹	Final Decision ²
Forest Conservation Exemptions	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	131	129
Forest Conservation Plans								
Preliminary Plans	5	1	8	6	19	17		
Site Plans	6	0	11	5	8	4		
Special Exceptions	0	0	1	0	1	1	n/a	n/a
Mandatory Referrals	4	0	2	2	3	5		
Park FCP	0	0	1	2	3	4		
<u>Sediment Control FCP</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>13</u>		
Subtotal FCPs	15	3	29	21	48	44		
Special Protection Area Plans	0	0	3	1	1	0	n/a	n/a
Special Exceptions	5	6	14	13	4	1	n/a	n/a
Development Plan Amendments	1	0	0	0	1	0	n/a	n/a
Local Map Amendments	2	0	0	0	0	1	n/a	n/a
Mandatory Referrals	10	5	10	5	18	19	1	1 ³
Building Permits	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,397	1,602
TOTAL	98	60	126	71	194	166	1,684	1,855

1. "Accepted" refers to the number of new plan types submitted and accepted as complete.
2. "Final Decision" refers to plans approved, denied, or forwarded with a recommendation to other branches of County government, and plans that were approved, denied, or not confirmed by staff.
3. These plans were reviewed and processed by the Functional Planning (FFP) Division and not the Development Applications and Regulatory (DARC) Division.

The data indicates that Area 3 has received 47 percent of the development applications accepted in fiscal year 2013. Exhibit 3 below shows the percentage of applications received by each area team.

Exhibit 3. Number and Percent of Total Development Applications Accepted and Assigned to Area Teams for Fiscal Year 2013		
	Plans Accepted¹	
	Number	% of Total
Area 1	98	23
Area 2	126	30
Area 3	194	47
Total	418	
1. Number of plans accepted does not include plans assigned to DARC or FFP divisions.		

Exhibit 4 shows the number of applications with a final decision by area team. Please remember, plans with a final decision will include plans accepted in previous years.

Exhibit 4. Number and Percent of Total Development Applications with a Final Decision by Area Team for Fiscal Year 2013		
	Plans with Final Decision¹	
	Number	% of Total
Area 1	60	20
Area 2	71	24
Area 3	165	56
Total	296	
1. "Final Decision" includes approvals and denials made by the Planning Board and recommendations to other government agencies. It also includes approvals and denials of natural resource inventories/forest stand delineations which are made by the Director's designee.		

The data shows that Area 3 receives the most development applications and correspondingly has the greatest percentage of plans with a final decision. Staff further analyzed the approval times to determine the percentage of plans approved within 6, 12, 18, 36, and 60 months from the date of application was accepted. Exhibit 5 below shows the results of this analysis. The final column in Exhibit 5 above indicates the numbers of plans pending that were submitted in that particular fiscal year.

Exhibit 5. Decision Rates from FY 2009 to FY 2013

	Approvals 0 to 6 months		Approvals 0 to 12 months		Approvals 0 to 18 months		Approvals 0 to 36 months		Approvals 0 to 60 months		Pending	
Submitted in FY2009												
36 Preliminary Plans	6	17%	19	53%	26	72%	32	89%	34	94%	2	6%
14 Site Plans	4	29%	11	76%	11	76%	12	86%	12	86%	2	14%
2 Project Plans	2	100%	2	100%	2	100%	2	100%	2	100%	0	0%
77 NRIs	69	90%	70	91%	72	94%	74	96%	74	96%	3	4%
<u>134 FCP Exemptions</u>	<u>120</u>	<u>90%</u>	<u>127</u>	<u>95%</u>	<u>130</u>	<u>97%</u>	<u>133</u>	<u>99%</u>	<u>133</u>	<u>99%</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1%</u>
263 Total	201	76%	229	87%	241	92%	253	96%	255	97%	8	3%
Submitted in FY2010												
30 Preliminary Plans	8	27%	20	67%	21	70%	25	83%	28	94%	2	6%
12 Site Plans	8	67%	10	83%	11	92%	11	92%	12	100%	0	0%
5 Project Plans	5	100%	5	100%	5	100%	5	100%	5	100%	0	0%
85 NRIs	74	87%	78	92%	78	92%	79	93%	82	96%	3	4%
<u>118 FCP Exemptions</u>	<u>101</u>	<u>86%</u>	<u>110</u>	<u>93%</u>	<u>114</u>	<u>97%</u>	<u>114</u>	<u>97%</u>	<u>115</u>	<u>97%</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3%</u>
250 Total	196	78%	223	89%	229	92%	234	94%	242	97%	8	3%
Submitted in FY2011												
30 Preliminary Plans	9	30%	15	50%	21	70%	26	87%	NA	NA	4	11%
13 Site Plans	8	62%	11	85%	13	100%	13	100%	NA	NA	0	0%
1 Project Plans	1	100%	1	100%	1	100%	1	100%	NA	NA	0	0%
87 NRIs	76	87%	82	94%	83	95%	86	99%	NA	NA	1	1%
<u>134 FCP Exemptions</u>	<u>118</u>	<u>88%</u>	<u>127</u>	<u>95%</u>	<u>127</u>	<u>95%</u>	<u>128</u>	<u>96%</u>	<u>NA</u>	<u>NA</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>4%</u>
265 Total	212	80%	236	89%	245	92%	254	96%	NA	NA	11	4%
Submitted in FY2012												
38 Preliminary Plans	7	18%	19	50%	28	72%	29	76%	NA	NA	9	24%
19 Site Plans	8	42%	18	95%	19	100%	19	100%	NA	NA	0	0%
4 Project Plans	2	50%	3	75%	3	75%	3	75%	NA	NA	1	25%
70 NRIs	60	86%	68	97%	68	97%	68	97%	NA	NA	2	3%
<u>113 FCP Exemptions</u>	<u>112</u>	<u>99%</u>	<u>113</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>113</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>113</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>NA</u>	<u>NA</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0%</u>
244 Total	189	77%	221	91%	231	95%	232	95%	NA	NA	12	5%
Submitted in FY2013												
24 Preliminary Plans	3	13%	5	21	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	19	79%
25 Site Plans	7	28%	10	40%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	15	60%
7 Project Plans	1	14%	1	14%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	6	86%
82 NRIs	57	70%	58	71%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	24	29%
<u>119 FCP Exemptions</u>	<u>115</u>	<u>97%</u>	<u>115</u>	<u>97%</u>	<u>NA</u>	<u>NA</u>	<u>NA</u>	<u>NA</u>	<u>NA</u>	<u>NA</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3%</u>
257 Total	183	71%	189	74%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	68	26%

For the most part, the data indicates that more than 90% of the plans submitted receive a final decision within 18 months of the application acceptance date. Few plans remain to be acted upon after 18 months. The data for fiscal year 2013 can be misleading since any plan submitted after January 15, 2012 would still be within the first six month period but falls into the pending status if it has not received a final decision. Those plans can still potentially receive a final decision within the first six months of the Planning Department acceptance of the application.

Outstanding Plans

In Exhibit 6 below, the last column in Exhibit 5 above is further broken down by area team to show the number of pending plans. The majority of the plans waiting a DRC response or a final decision are located within the Area 3 geographic boundary. Exhibit 6 further indicates the number and percentage of all development applications where applicants need to submit revised plans in response to DRC comments or are waiting for a final decision from the Planning Department. The second and third columns represent the number of development applications that have already received comments from the Development Review Committee (DRC) and the Planning Department is waiting for applicants to respond to those comments. These are plans in which the Hansen review clocks are stopped. Columns four and five show the number of plans where the applicant has submitted information in response to DRC comments but the staff still needs to review the submitted information, obtain other agency approvals, and schedule a hearing with the Planning Board.

Exhibit 6. Number and Percent of Total Development Applications Waiting for DRC Response or Final Decision Since July 1, 2007				
	Plans Waiting for DRC Response		Plans Waiting for a Decision¹	
	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total
Area 1	22	31	33	18%
Area 2	16	23	53	28%
Area 3	33	46	100	54%
Total	71		186	
1. Does not include 294 plans waiting a decision from DARC and FFP. 2. Data as of July 9, 2013.				

For plans that have had no activity within the previous 12 months, the Department sends letters to the applicant apprising them that they have 30 days to provide a justification as to why the plan should not be withdrawn. During fiscal year 2013, the Department sent out letters to 26 applicants informing them that their plans were withdrawn because of inactivity. All withdrawals were done in full accordance with the Development Review Manual.

Application Review Times

The Hansen database allows staff to track application processing and review times. Exhibit 7 below indicates the average number of review days for various plan types for fiscal years 2013 and 2012. The data does not include any time or delays that may have occurred while waiting for an applicant to respond to comments, or when the Planning Department is waiting for other agency approvals before scheduling a Planning Board hearing. The average review times refer to the time it takes staff to process all applications of a particular type from plan acceptance to the Planning Board hearing.

Exhibit 7. Number of Plans with a Final Decision and Weighted Average Review Days by Plan Type for Fiscal Years 2013 and 2012				
Application Type	FY 2013 Plans with Final Decision¹	FY 2013 Weighted Average Review Days²	FY 2012 Plans with Final Decision¹	FY 2013 Weighted Average Review Days²
Preliminary Plans				
New Applications	37	102	30	117
Amendments	18	68	17	76
Site Plans				
New Applications	22	105	16	156
Major Amendments	1	35	4	114
Limited Amendments	11	76	12	77
Consent Amendments	4	62	6	62
Administrative Amendments	29	48	22	67
Project Plans				
New Applications	3	75	2	109
Amendments	0	n/a	2	78
Sketch Plans	1	112	2	89
Pre-application Plans				
Staff Review Only	1	40	1	84
Staff and PB Review	4	95	4	88
Record Plats	160	328	139	431
Subdivision Review Waivers	2	250	1	100
NRI/FSDs				
New Applications/ Recertification	65 6	31 19	85	46
Forest Conservation Exemptions	115	9	131	17
Forest Conservation Plans				
Park and Sediment Control FCP ³	27	32	19	109
Special Exceptions	20	102	8	184
Mandatory Referrals	31	41	35	56
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Final Decision" refers to plans approved; plans with a recommendation to other County government agencies; and plans that were approved, denied, or not confirmed by staff. 2. Review days are calculated from plan acceptance to final decision minus all review stops. 3. Data is only available for forest conservation plans associated with a park permit application and sediment control plans. All other forest conservation plans are subordinate to the parent plan such as a preliminary or site plan. 				

Review times vary across the divisions as a result of a number of issues including the complexity and/or controversy of a specific plan; not maintaining the Hansen clocks; small data sets for specific plan types which means they are easily influenced by outliers; or when a plan presents a new or complex requiring more time for analysis. Therefore, instead of presenting the review times for each division, the review times in Exhibit 7 are weighted based on the number of plans approved by the various divisions. For some plan types the average number of days to get from an accepted application to an approval decreased in fiscal year 2013 when compared to fiscal year 2012.

In addition to the average review times by application type we are able to identify the number of hours spent on various plan reviews by all staff. Exhibit 8 below compares the hours staff recorded for various application types for the three previous fiscal years. The hours reported are derived directly from staff timesheets.

Exhibit 8. Comparison of Hours by Plan Type for Fiscal Years 2011, 2012, and 2013						
	Fiscal Year 2011		Fiscal Year 2012		Fiscal Year 2013	
	Applications Accepted¹	Average Hours per Application²	Applications Accepted	Average Hours per Application	Applications Accepted	Average Hours per Application
Preliminary Plans						
New Applications	38		38		26	
Amendments	<u>18</u>		<u>20</u>		<u>30</u>	
Subtotal	<u>56</u>		<u>58</u>		<u>56</u>	
Pre-application plan						
Staff Review only	8		2		7	
Staff and PB review	3		<u>4</u>		<u>5</u>	
Subtotal	<u>11</u>		<u>6</u>		<u>12</u>	
SRWs	<u>2</u>		<u>2</u>		<u>0</u>	
Total	69	150	66	204	68	248
Site Plans						
New Applications	14		19		25	
Amendments	54		47		63	
Certified Plans	NA		NA		NA	
Subtotal	<u>68</u>	<u>102</u>	<u>66</u>	<u>119</u>	<u>88</u>	<u>158</u>
Project Plans						
New Applications	1		4		7	
Amendments	<u>5</u>		<u>3</u>		3	
Subtotal	<u>6</u>	<u>167</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>170</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>268</u>
Site & Project Concurrent Sketch Plans⁶	NA		NA		NA	
	3		5		1	
Total	77	123	84	184	99	188
Record Plats	151	13	204	17	155	23
NRI/FSDs						
New Applications	90		77		84	
Recertification	<u>9</u>		<u>7</u>		<u>6</u>	
Total	99	12.0	84	17.8	90	17

Exhibit 8. Comparison of Hours by Plan Type for Fiscal Years 2011, 2012, and 2013						
	Fiscal Year 2011		Fiscal Year 2012		Fiscal Year 2013	
	Applications Accepted¹	Average Hours per Application²	Applications Accepted	Average Hours per Application	Applications Accepted	Average Hours per Application
Forest Conservation Exemptions						
New Applications	140		122		131	
<u>Recertification</u>	<u>0</u>		<u>0</u>		0	
Total	140	8.0	122	7.6	131	8.0
Forest Conservation Plans						
Preliminary Plans	29		36		32	
Site Plans	4		10		25	
Special Exceptions	8		4		2	
Mandatory Referrals	18		18		9	
Park FCP	6		5		5	
<u>Sediment Control FCP</u>	<u>22</u>		<u>19</u>		<u>17</u>	
Total FCPs	87	67	97	61	90	78
Special Protection Plans	5	85	9	112	4	95
Special Exceptions	41	153	38	212	23	315
Development Plan and Local Map Amendments	3	397	4	315	2	1089
Mandatory Referrals	36	146	43	69	38	100
Building Permits	737	2.5	1,022	2.8	1397	1.5
Table Notes:						
1. "Applications Accepted" refers to the number of plans accepted by the Planning Department.						
2. "Average Hours per Application" refers the average hours it takes for staff to review that particular type of plan.						

Exhibit 8 does indicate that the average number of hours per application has increased in the most recent fiscal year. In particular, the average number of hours to review preliminary plans and site plans continues to increase from fiscal years 2011 and 2012.

Change in GFA and Dwelling Units for Fiscal Year 2013

The Planning Department received many different application types for fiscal year 2013. Some applications are for the creation of new gross floor area (GFA) and dwelling units (DUs), some are for amendments to previously approved plans that change a plan element but have no impact on GFA or DUs. In fiscal year 2013 the Planning Board approved 38 development applications, which will add approximately 2.3 million square feet of gross floor area and 7,521 residential dwelling units to the pipeline.