



ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: Friday, April 3, 2026.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. Contact [Gage Harter](#) with any questions.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Fairfax County

Program Title: Fairfax County Sanitary Sewer Reimbursement Policy

Program Category: Community Development, Economic Development, & Land Use

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: William Barrack

Title: Director, Wastewater Planning and Monitoring Division

Department: Public Works and Environmental Services

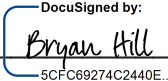
Telephone: 703-324-5025 Website: fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/wastewater/sanitary-sewer-reimbursement-program

Email: William.Barrack@fairfaxcounty.gov

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Bryan Hill

Title: County Executive

Signature:  5CFC69274C2440E...

Fairfax County Sanitary Sewer Reimbursement Policy

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/wastewater/sanitary-sewer-reimbursement-program>

Executive Summary

Fairfax County has a long history of reimbursing developers for enlarging sanitary sewer pipes beyond the needs of their development. The County and development community partnered on numerous reimbursement projects in the 1980s, but by the mid-1990s, the program no longer aligned with the pace or financing realities of modern development. To better align the program with today's infrastructure and redevelopment challenges, the County adopted a new Sanitary Sewer Reimbursement policy in December 2022. The updated policy introduces a fair and transparent reimbursement formula, ensures payment of necessary and reasonable costs, and allows for timely reimbursement during construction, making the program more accessible and appealing to private partners while strategically supporting the sewer capacity needs of Fairfax County.

Since adoption, the County has executed seven reimbursement agreements that will result in approximately 8,900 linear feet of enlarged sanitary sewer pipes installed across the County. These improvements enhance system capacity, support redevelopment, and promote long-term infrastructure resilience. The modernized program demonstrates effective coordination between County leadership, staff, and development partners, and serves as a replicable model for other Virginia localities seeking to simultaneously strengthen public-private cooperation and sewer infrastructure resilience.

The Challenge

When development occurs in Fairfax County, developers must upsize existing sanitary sewer infrastructure that lacks capacity for their project. When sizing the new infrastructure, the developer must also account for the future flows that will be generated by development anticipated in the [Comprehensive Plan](#) in the contributing sewer shed. Since the 1950s, the County's sewer reimbursement program has helped offset these costs through a public-private agreement. However, in 2021, two proposed residential projects revealed significant shortcomings in the existing program.

The reimbursement policy in place at that time was based on a 1981 framework, which no longer reflected how development occurs today. Concerned that the outdated policy was placing residential projects at risk, the Board of Supervisors challenged Wastewater staff to reassess the program and develop a modern, equitable approach. This directive launched a 14-month redesign of the reimbursement program, which required collaboration across many different County agencies and the development community.

While development and sanitary sewer needs continued to exist, there had been no reimbursement agreements executed since 1994. The 1981 policy provided no guarantee of reimbursement and repaid developers only if nearby future development occurred within 20 years and contributed flow to the enlarged pipe. As the County became more built-out and development shifted from acquiring new parcels of greenfield land to redevelopment and vertical growth of existing parcels, the likelihood of full reimbursement declined. The payment delay, uncertainty, and the absence of timely repayment discouraged participation.

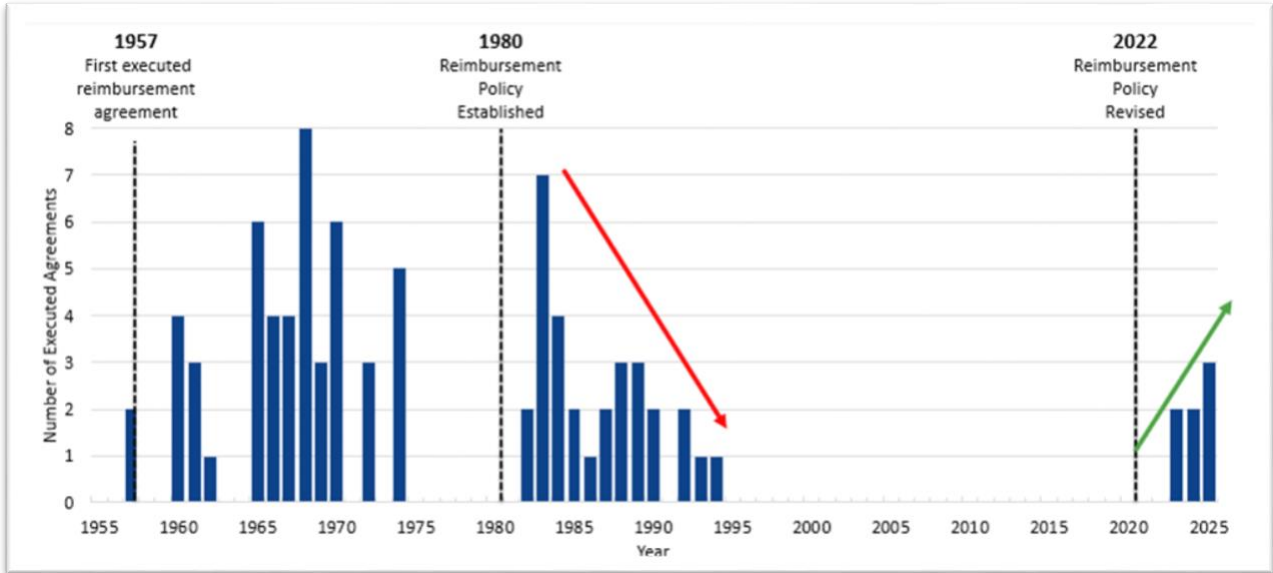


Figure 1: Developers were not opting into the Reimbursement Program after 1994, due to the limitations of the old policy.

The Solution

The new Sewer Reimbursement Policy was adopted on December 6, 2022, to address several of the limitations in the previous policy. Primarily, the new policy sought to remove uncertainty by addressing three concerns from the development community: (1) will the developer be reimbursed, (2) when will they be reimbursed, and (3) how much will they be reimbursed. Together, these changes provide a clearer, more predictable framework that strengthens collaboration with the development community and encourages wider participation. County staff developed a Sewer Reimbursement [website](#) that serves as a resource for developers, providing details on the process and frequently asked questions.

Key Concern	2022 Reimbursement Policy Solution
Will the developer be reimbursed?	Yes. The new policy allows the County to commit to reimbursing developers for necessary and reasonable costs outlined in the agreement.
When will the developer be reimbursed?	The developers do not need to wait for new development to “tap in” to the enlarged sewer. They can be partially reimbursed at 40% construction completion, 80% construction completion, and once the infrastructure is officially accepted into the County system.
How much will the developer be reimbursed?	The updated policy establishes a fair and transparent reimbursement formula that compares the flow generated by the proposed development to the existing and future flows within the sewer system. Under this formula, the developer is responsible for the proportion of costs that corresponds to the percentage of flow their project contributes.

How The Reimagined Policy Fulfills Award Criteria

The updated Sewer Reimbursement Policy offers an innovative solution using a replicable model to meet the needs of today’s development community.

1. Innovative Solution & Customization of an Existing Concept

Fairfax County’s approach to modern sewer reimbursement is innovative and uniquely tailored to the needs of both the development industry and the community. The revised policy has significantly increased participation in the reimbursement program.

Before the Reimbursement program was reimagined, the County had to anticipate and prioritize capacity-related sewer projects by estimating when developments would be constructed. However, the County is not always aware of the developers’ shifting schedules and priorities. The reimagined program shifts the construction responsibility to developers, which gives them the responsibility to deliver the enlarged infrastructure on time for their proposed developments.

2. Intergovernmental and Private-Enterprise Cooperation

Developers bring the expertise, staff, and equipment needed to carry out upsizing projects efficiently to meet the needs of the development. The County ensures the new infrastructure meets public standards and accounts for the Comprehensive Plan vision.

3. A Replicable Model for Other Localities

The policy and standard operating procedures developed for this program could be adopted by other jurisdictions facing similar challenges. County staff have presented this innovative policy at both state and Mid-Atlantic region conferences, highlighting the program's efficiency and the benefits it provides to developers and sewer ratepayers.

Staffing and Financial Impacts

The policy execution is led by a dedicated Reimbursement Program Lead within the Wastewater Planning and Monitoring Division (WPMD) of DPWES. To implement the program effectively, new standard operating procedures were published covering policy implementation and execution, review of easement-related costs, post-construction CCTV services to confirm asset quality, future growth data for every project to support accurate cost-share calculation, and GIS-enabled capacity and flow analyses.

One challenge that prospective localities should be aware of is interannual variability in program costs, as developer timelines do not align with government fiscal year planning. By consistently adopting small, incremental increases each year to sewer service charges (SSC) and availability fees, we have demonstrated that this type of program can be fully funded while ensuring predictability in rates for existing customers. For example, the

Board approved an SSC rate increase of just 0.17% (approximately \$0.01 per 1,000 gallons) per year, and an additional \$91 (1.1%) increase to availability fees per year.

Program Results

Since adoption, the County has executed seven reimbursement agreements that will result in approximately 8,900 linear feet of enlarged sanitary sewer pipes across the County. Two reimbursement agreements representing 1,110 linear feet of construction have been completed, while five projects are under construction. County staff are tracking 14 additional projects anticipated to be executed within the next five years, including a sewer pump station expansion.

Case Study: Alta Crossroads Project

The Alta Crossroads Sanitary Project is one of the County's first projects under the new policy. The project was necessitated by an upstream residential development and resulted in 925 linear feet of enlarged infrastructure in one of the busiest County bus corridors. The developer had this to say about the County's revised reimbursement policy:

"The County was collaborative and responsive throughout the entire process—from participating in calls to review construction methods and address field issues, to efficiently processing reimbursements. Their team was consistently professional, courteous, and helpful." – Robert Wohead, Senior Vice President of Construction, Wood Partners."

- **How much was the developer reimbursed?** The executed Reimbursement Agreement established a cost share of 20.1 percent for the developer, and 79.9 percent for the County, calculated based on the flow contribution from the development.

- **When was the developer reimbursed?** The developer opted for partial payments and received payments of 40 percent, 80 percent, and upon construction completion. Payments were typically made within 60 days of request after a thorough review of the documentation, much faster than the previous multi-year process under the prior policy.
- **Was it efficient?** Design and construction were completed within three years and cost the County approximately \$2,700 per linear foot, both faster and less expensive than anticipated.

Conclusion

The reimbursement policy adopted by the Board of Supervisors in December 2022 created a streamlined, cost-effective approach for developer-led sewer upsizing in Fairfax County. Its success reflects the Board's informed decision-making, the technical expertise of County departments, and the strong collaboration with the development community. The updated policy revived participation in the reimbursement program without creating financial hardship for the County, thanks to fair and carefully designed rate and fee adjustments. Close coordination among County agencies and the Board ensured that adapting the policy to meet developer needs would still deliver high-quality wastewater infrastructure and meet all the needs of the County. Proactive engagement with the development community throughout the redesign process produced an efficient, innovative solution to a complex infrastructure problem. The Board of Supervisors merits

this nomination for their leadership, strategy, and communicative efforts, which resulted in a robust program that other jurisdictions should model their policies after.