

Action Plan

Category # 8 – Flood Mitigation Planning and Coordination

Action # 8.2 – Improvements to DC Drainage Committee Processes



Overview and Implementation Strategy:

The Drainage Committee is an informal body of government staff from several District agencies that meets on an adhoc basis to document, investigate, and find resolutions for flood and drainage complaints submitted by District residents. Typical complaints include standing water in alleys or on sidewalks, clogged storm drains that cause flooding in nearby properties, runoff from nearby properties during or post construction, and sinkholes from suspected underground streams or broken pipes. Residents reach out to any number of agencies to address the issue. Sometimes the first agency contacted is in position to help, but in cases where the first agency cannot help, they refer it to the drainage committee for further review and investigation. Staff who participate on the Drainage Committee are from the DOEE, DDOT, DC Water, and DOB.

For standard complaints, this existing process works well. Many complaints can be handled quickly, and have clear solutions. However there have recently been more complex cases that require significant long-range investment (rather than a quick fix like cleaning a catch basin), leave District agencies confused over who has authority to act, and leave District residents frustrated over long communication delays and lack of a response.

To improve the effectiveness of the Drainage Committee, this action plan calls for the development of a Memorandum of Agreement between all relevant agencies. The MOA will:

1. Clearly outline which agency is responsible in various drainage complaint scenarios.
2. Identify drainage complaint scenarios where private citizens are responsible.
3. Establish clear communication protocols between agencies to include:
 - a. The usage of the centralized reporting database described in the “Mapping Interior Flooding” Action Plan
 - b. A process for elevating a complaint to senior leadership if responsibility cannot be resolved by agency staff.
4. Establish standard operating procedures for:
 - a. Investigating complaints
 - b. Tracking progress of complaint resolution
 - c. Ensuring complaints that require street-scale or neighborhood-scale solutions are added to relevant agency infrastructure and other long-range plans.

Impacted City Ward/ANC:

- All wards: The public and private infrastructure in all Wards can be subject to drainage issues.
- **Lead Agency:**
- DC Water

Supporting Agencies, Roles/Commitments:

- DOEE
- DDOT
- DOB
- DPW

Action Plan

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Background:

Impact of this Effort on Task Force Goal:

This Task Force Action will allow District agencies to more quickly and effectively respond and resolve interior flooding and drainage issues experienced by residents.

Historical Context:

- District residents submit their complaints through a myriad of government access points, including: 311, elected officials, Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), DC Water (“Report a Problem”), DOEE, DDOT, or other agencies. Each agency uses a different system for tracking the resolution of a complaint.
- The “responsible” agency for resolving a complaint is not obvious to the public and often complaints are sent initially to the wrong agency. While most complaints ultimately get to the right place, the process can take time and frustrate residents.
- In some complex complaints, there is disagreement among District agencies as to which agency is responsible. This leads to further delays and in some cases inaction.
- In some complex complaints, there is no available quick-fix, and the solution is a large street-scale or neighborhood scale infrastructure project. There is not a clear process for the Drainage Committee to ensure these complaints added to relevant agency infrastructure and other long-range plans.

Equity

How does this action assist vulnerable communities?

Equity is about improving outcomes for all, while prioritizing resources to those most impacted by an issue. Interior flooding and drainage issues are something that can happen anywhere in the District, but when it does occur, it will have greater impacts for low-income residents who are least able to handle the costs of repair and clean up. While the goal is to improve the process to resolve drainage complaints for all, the outcome is that a more vulnerable resident with a drainage issue will receive greater benefit than a less vulnerable resident with a similar issue.

Action Plan

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Timeline:

Fiscal Year	Responsible Agency	Action
2023	DC Water	Convene a series of meetings for all relevant agencies to draft the MOA as described above.
2024	DC Water / DOEE / DDOT / DOB / DPW	Sign the MOA
2024	DOEE	Develop communication materials for residents that can be shared with other agencies describing the responsibilities and the process of drainage complaint resolution
2024	DC Water / DOEE / DDOT / DOB / DPW	Consider budget enhancement requests to provide more staff and/or dedicated annual funding to help resolve drainage complaints.

Budget:

Total Estimated Cost: None

Long Term Budget Requirements: There may be a request for funding after the completion of the MOA, which will enable the District to more quickly handle complaints. Funding for street-scale or neighborhood-scale solutions will occur through separate capital budget requests that will be included annually in agency budgets and the “List of Infrastructure Projects” described in the Action Plan.

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Public Outreach and Input:

Public outreach & engagement approach/actions:

Once the MOA is complete, DOEE will take the lead on producing standardized outreach materials and messages that can be used by all agencies to explain the process for filing and resolving drainage complaints.

What were the Public Comments of relevance to this Action?

Residents have explained over the years that they are expecting a quicker and more coordinated response to drainage complaints. Some residents have experienced delays in response, been referred to the wrong agency, or left without actionable answers.

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