



# A Century of Service Centennial

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## HISTORY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

From the mega resorts on the Las Vegas Strip to the many homes dotting the landscape across unincorporated Clark County, the Department of Development Services works to ensure minimum safety standards are met in the construction of the buildings in which we live, work and play.

With the protection of the public as its main goal, the department provides the plan review, permitting and inspection services that help ensure all structures in unincorporated Clark County are built according to locally adopted building codes and standards.

The department's plans examiners, engineers and inspectors not only play a key role in ensuring the safety of new construction, but they also oversee the demolition of structures – including the hotel/casinos on the Strip that are built one day and demolished the next to make room for the next greatest mega-resort project.

In order to effectively provide services that range from concept to demolition, Development Services operates as an enterprise fund supported only by fees collected for the review of plans, issuance of permits, and performance of inspections.



Development Services' fleet of vehicles used in the inspection of construction in Clark County consists of 226 vehicles.

## THE DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES MILESTONES

**November 11, 1944**

The County Commission adopts Ordinance No. 7 establishing the 1943 edition of the Uniform Building Code (UBC) as the building code of Clark County. The UBC is a publication of the Pacific Coast Building Officials. The permit fee for new construction or remodeling is set at \$5 for projects with a value of up to \$1000, and \$2 for each additional \$1000 in value thereafter. The cost for a plumbing or cesspool permit is \$3. The penalty for building without a permit is established as either a fine of \$250 or 60 days in the Clark County Jail, or both. The 1943 edition of the UBC is later replaced by the 1952 edition in February 1955, which is subsequently replaced by updated UBC editions every few years for decades after.

**December 17, 1945**

The County Commission appoints one building inspector, one plumbing inspector and one electrical inspector after the city of Las Vegas notifies the Board that it can no longer participate with the county in conducting building, plumbing and electrical inspections. The three inspectors appointed by the board are hired on a month-by-month basis, until their appointments become permanent in May 1946. The building inspector is paid a salary of \$175 per month, while the plumbing and electrical inspectors receive a salary of \$165 per month. The building inspector is also allotted \$50 per month in car expenses, while the plumbing and electrical inspectors receive no such benefit.

**April 5, 1946**

One telephone is installed for use by the inspectors.

**August 20, 1951**

The Department of Building & Construction is established.

**June 21, 1954**

Building & Construction purchases one car for the department's use.

**March 5, 1962**

Building & Construction is reorganized as the Office of Building & Safety within the Public Works Department. The reorganization is deemed necessary due to an "unprecedented increase within and without the unincorporated cities and towns in Clark County."

**June 20, 1968**

Building and Safety's director requests permission from the County Commission to attend the 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Business Meeting of the International Conference of Building Officials in Houston, Texas. The director lists the "innumerable changes" within building codes, standards and materials as justification for this trip. However, the emergence of high-rise construction on the Strip is of particular concern to the director, specifically the 14-story addition proposed by Caesars Palace, as well as additions to the Desert Inn and Sands hotels.

Building and Safety is split into three divisions to better control the major

**July 1972** functions of the department: Administration, Engineering and Inspections. The department consists of 32 employees at this time.

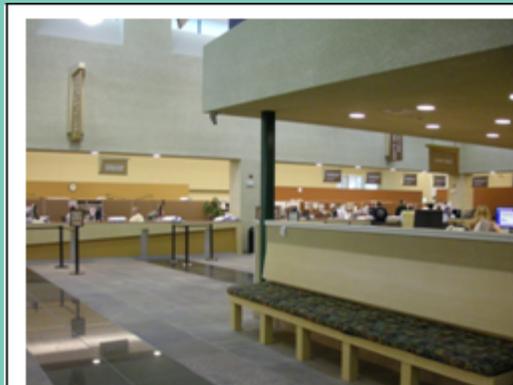
**March 2, 1976** Building & Safety installs an automated system to support the permitting, inspection and accounting functions of the department. Approximately 1,800 permits are issued and 7,000 inspections conducted each month. Before automation, all permits and inspection tickets were handwritten.



An artist's rendering of the 5<sup>th</sup> Street School.

**August 15, 1978** The Office of Building & Safety is integrated with Zoning Administration, which was part of the Department of Zoning and Comprehensive Planning, becoming the Department of Building & Zoning. The new department is located in the old 5<sup>th</sup> Street Grammar School at 4<sup>th</sup> and Clark.

**June 19, 1979** The Board of County Commissioners approves the creation of a Building and Enterprise Fund, making Building and Zoning a self-supporting department financed by fees collected for building inspections and permits, zoning application filing fees, and various miscellaneous items.



The PAC today at Development Services' 4701 W. Russell Road facility.

**1980** Building and Zoning creates a Permit Application Center (PAC) within the 5<sup>th</sup> Grammar School for the intake and routing of building plans for new construction. The PAC receives an award from the National Association of Counties in 1981 for its innovation.

**1980 to 1986** Building & Zoning takes the lead in setting fire safety standards in Clark County in the wake of the 1980 fire at the MGM Hotel/Casino. In 1981, staff begins a manual survey of existing hotel and assembly buildings for fire safety issues, which leads to the implementation of the Retroactive Life & Fire Safety Program in 1986. This program sets standards for retrofitting 38,000 hotel/motel rooms, 40 resort hotel properties, 13 high-rise

condominiums, 310 major building properties, and hundreds of smaller commercial properties, for fire safety issues. Building & Zoning's work setting fire safety standards locally has a major impact on building and fire safety codes nationally.

**1982 to Present**

Special Inspection Program is initiated. At the time, Building & Zoning is one of very few building departments in the nation with such a program, which entails hiring and training private enterprises to perform building inspection and testing services. This award winning program is currently used as a model by the ISO Building Code Effectiveness Grading System to rate the special inspection activities of other building departments. The Special Inspection Program today consists of 60 agencies and 960 inspectors that have been trained and certified to provide third-party services for Clark County.

**May 3, 1983**

The County Commission separates zoning from building and creates the Building Department. Zoning is incorporated into the Comprehensive Planning Department.

**1985**

The Building Department establishes a temporary trailer on Casino Drive in Laughlin to house two building inspectors who will provide inspection services to support growth in the area. In 1992, the Laughlin inspection staff moves into the newly opened Regional Government Center.

**December 3, 1985**

The County Commission adopts Ordinance No. 955 establishing the Building Administrative Code of Clark County, which sets forth the procedures, fees and penalties for the administration and enforcement of the county's construction codes. The Building Administrative Code is next updated in 1987, and every few years thereafter.

**January 1, 1993**

The Building Department unveils a new automated computer system that tracks plans, issues permits and schedules inspections.

**1995**

In response to requests from the development industry to reduce the backlog of plans waiting for zoning review and to speed up zoning plans check services, Zoning Plans Examination transfers from Comprehensive Planning's Current Planning Division to the Building Department. The transfer of Zoning Plans Examination out of a general funded department to the Building Department is deemed necessary due to the fact Building's enterprise fund allows more flexibility to hire additional plans examination staff to meet industry needs.

**June 19, 1995**

The Building Department's Permit Application Center, plans check and administrative staff relocate from the 5<sup>th</sup> Street School to the newly opened Government Center at 500 S. Grand Central Parkway.

The Building Department institutes the Building Inspector Apprenticeship

**1996 to Present**

Program, which consists of two-years of on-the-job training and education that assists apprentices in obtaining certifications as residential inspectors. This program is in the process of achieving accreditation from the Department of Labor, making the current Development Services Department the first building department in the nation to achieve such status for an inspector trainee program.

**1996**

Moapa Valley services are expanded to include both zoning and building plans check, as well as permit issue, essentially providing Overton, Logandale and Bunkerville with a one-stop shop for residential building permits. Although the Building Department has had an assigned residential inspector providing services in the Moapa Valley area for more than 30 years, citizens are required to come to Las Vegas to apply for building permits prior to 1996.

**1997**

Zoning Plans Examination creates an Addressing Services Team to provide more personalized customer service for addressing issues due to the growing need of the home building community.

**January 1999**

The Building Department implements a new digital imaging system for the storage of all permits, plans and associated data, which results in a more efficient method of completing requests from customers and staff for building and inspection records.

**1999 to Present**

The Addressing Services Team works diligently to ensure several outlying areas become incorporated into the E911 system to increase emergency response times. This effort includes establishing addressing grids for outlying towns or extending the valley's existing grid to include them. Areas that have so far been incorporated into the E911 system include Sandy Valley (1999), Moapa (2001), Searchlight (2005), and Bunkerville (2005). Goodsprings and Mt. Charleston are currently in the review process. These steps are crucial to ensuring all of Clark County is provided with the best possible emergency services response times.

**2001**

The construction of a new 51,000 square foot facility at 4701 W. Russell Road is completed. The new facility includes a large Permit Application Center and unifies most of the Building Department's inspection and plans examination staff under one roof.

**July 2002**

The Building Department, the Community Development Division of the Public Works Department, and the Current Planning Division of the Comprehensive Planning Department are merged to create the Development Services Department in an effort to streamline and expedite Clark County's role in the development process. Development Services consists of three divisions: Administration, Civil Engineering and Building. Civil Engineering remains at the Government Center, while most of Administration and all of Building continue to function out of the Russell Road facility.

**2003**

Current Planning merges back into the Department of Comprehensive Planning. The balance of plans examination staff, all of zoning plans examination, plans submittal, inspection scheduling, and permit issue relocate to the Russell Road facility. Civil Engineering remains at the Government Center.



Development Services' Civil Engineering Division and Records Office are located in the Clark County Government Center.

**July 7, 2003**

The County Commission adopts the 2000 edition of the International Building Code (IBC) as the building code for Clark County. The 2000 IBC was created after the three existing model code organizations in the United States combined to create one model building code.

**January to December 2005**

Development Services issues a record 99,355 permits and conducts a record 716,125 building, mechanical, plumbing and electrical inspections all within one year.



Development Services' Russell Road facility. The Permit Application Center, Inspections, Engineering and Plans Examination services are located here.

**2007**

Development Services' Civil Engineering Division spearheads an effort with other Clark County departments and the Regional Flood Control District that results in Clark County earning a Class 6 rating from FEMA in its latest Community Rating System audit. A Class 6 rating translates into all Clark County residents being eligible for a 20% discount on flood insurance.

<p><b>2007 - 2008</b></p>	<p>Development Services' Building Division works with northern Nevada jurisdictions to establish a program similar to the Building Division's long-standing Master and Journeyman Card Program, which helps raise the level of competence at local construction sites by ensuring plumbers and electricians obtain Clark County licensing as a master or journeyman. The creation of a similar program in northern Nevada, which involves testing plumbers and electricians on local codes, includes reciprocity between the southern and northern jurisdictions.</p>
<p><b>April 2007</b></p>	<p>Development Services expands building services in Laughlin and is now capable of providing a one-stop shop for permit issue at the Laughlin Regional Government Center.</p>
<p><b>May 2007</b></p>	<p>In an ongoing effort to enhance and provide state-of-the-art customer service, Development Services institutes the In-Facility Plan Review program to assist large hotel/casino developments by providing on-site plans examination services and structural reviews. Since its inception, the program has been successful in reducing timeframes for initial review from roughly one month to one day, with the actual building plan review completed on average in just six days.</p>
<p><b>July 3, 2007</b></p>	<p>Development Services' Engineering staff begins a first-of-its-kind, 3-year project with the Nevada System of Higher Education to collect shear wave data to create a seismic map of the entire Las Vegas Valley. The collection of this data will help predict how much the ground will shake during seismic activity and will assist in planning for future construction. This project will be used as a model for other seismically active jurisdictions.</p>
<p><b>2008</b></p>	<p>A senior planner is added to lead the Addressing Services Team to accommodate the construction industry's ever diversifying high rise condominium, mixed use development, and complex commercial projects, such as City Center and Town Square.</p>
<p><b>April 1, 2008</b></p>	<p>Development Services creates a new section within the Building Division to handle the department's response to construction complaints, to perform annual inspections of resort properties and bi-annual inspections of life-safety systems within high-rise structures, and to regulate ongoing maintenance at hotel/casinos within unincorporated Clark County.</p>
<p><b>At Present</b></p>	<p>As Clark County continues to expand, Development Services works diligently to provide sufficient plans examiners, inspectors, engineers, permit specialists, information technology specialists, and administrative staff to the meet the needs of growth in our jurisdiction. Plans are in the works to add on to the existing facility at 4701 W. Russell Road, which will allow remaining staff at other offices to relocate to Russell Road and create a one-stop shop for permit issue in urban Clark County.</p>

