Brightly

Client Success Story

City of Delano Speeds Up Permitting and Gets Council's Approval

Client

Jerome Keene,
Senior Planner, Subcontractor
to City of Delano

Geography

Delano, CA (approx. 40,000 residents)

Challenges

The inefficiencies of their previous permit tracking process caused a backlog that resulted in frustrated customers and staff. Getting out from under that load and making sure it didn't happen again was vital.

Results

Using SmartGov™, Delano was able to improve communication and procedures so much so that they not only completed their backlog, but made their processes more efficient than ever.

Fast Stats

Permit wait time reduced from 181 days to three; 70 percent reduction in phone calls; 14 permits issued in 45 minutes

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In 2013, the City of Delano, CA had found themselves in a mess no government wants to face. Their previous permit tracking system had stopped being supported, leaving them to resort to a manual process. What that process quickly led to was a permit wait time of 181 days, constant phone calls from unhappy customers and permit correspondence being lost. It was clear they needed to get control of their operations before they drowned in them.

In looking for a system to turn their permit tracking around, they had a clear set of community development objectives:

- Better tracking of permits

- Consistent fee issuance

- Digital records retention

- Automated permit issuance via use of reports

- Real-time review by various departments and outside agencies

- Auditing capabilities to track permit actions

- Ability to leave notes regarding communications with the applicant

- Inspection scheduling and ability to review inspector corrections

- Ability to expand permitting and processes to other departments in terms of automation and improved efficiency with existing staff

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Jerome Keene
Senior Planner

In addition to permit tracking and reporting, city workers also needed to be able to set reminders for plan review assignments and key dates for permits, licenses and violations. They found their solution in SmartGov™, a product that allows permitting, licensing, code enforcement and more to be managed in one centralized, cloud-based system. Not only did it meet their checklist of objectives and offer GIS integration that could easily create maps viewable by citizens using a public portal, but it did it all within budget.

"For a permitting software, it's not horribly expensive," says Jerome Keene, Delano's Senior Planner. "For a little city of our size that was looking to get going, there wasn't a lot of upfront investment or startup costs."

From there, they launched the solution in March of 2014, and it's made quite a difference. The payoff on their investment was seen immediately.

"First, I would say we're much more efficient, and we can handle a much larger workload by being more efficient. Second, we're being better stewards of the environment by decreasing our carbon footprint due to not requiring paper plans or forcing people to drive unnecessary miles. And third, we're being held accountable because everything we do is logged and can be reviewed. For the most part, everybody uses it, and things get done exponentially faster," says Jerome.

Using SmartGov, the city can now track all aspects of zoning and codes in a single workflow: permitting, planning, inspections, code enforcement, licenses, fees, parcel contracts and more. In addition to saving time and resources, the solution has greatly improved customer satisfaction through clear and efficient communication with all stakeholders.

Employees are now able to state with confidence how long the city has managed an application. The entire record of the permit history, phone calls, emails and submittals is easily tracked and viewed by multiple departments, so they can quickly communicate the status and timeline of an application.

"The ability for increased collaboration and accountability across departments has allowed for staff to process permits more efficiently with a smaller number of staff than in previous years, leading to increased efficiency in the use of taxpayer dollars," says Jerome.

Some major business wins since using the solution include:

- **Reducing issuance from their previous lag of 181 days to just three to 10 days**

- **Decreasing phone calls from frustrated customers significantly**

- **Keeping up with demand even during peak summer activity**

- **Issuing 14 permits in 45 minutes, something that would have previously been impossible**

This change in permit processing times and all-around better service isn't lost on their customers. "Our reputation has improved with the development community where we're getting larger projects in town, and they're not coming in skeptical," says Jerome. "We just finished a large movie theater in town and a 100-room hotel. If we didn't have SmartGov, I don't know how we would have done it."

Council members have taken notice, too. "They love it," Jerome says. "One council member told me the first month we had the solution, it cut down on his phone calls by 70 percent. Another thing to note is what callers are complaining about. They're not complaining about timelines or something being lost or getting the runaround — their comments are about the project details itself, which is normal."

Delano's success is a story that can give other cities hope. They've gone from a team that was on everyone's bad list just a few years ago to a department that's getting large building projects and logging record permit processing times.

When asked what he would tell other local governments considering whether to invest in a community development solution like SmartGov, Jerome ends by saying, "What's your credibility worth? If you don't mind being badmouthed at city council meetings, if you don't mind being badmouthed at the counter, then don't implement it."

Learn more: Brightlysoftware.com

BETTER WAIT TIMES

111 DAYS

AS SHORT AS 3 DAYS

AVERAGE WAIT PER PERMIT

120 / 100 / 80 / 60 / 40 / 20 / 0

SEPT OCT NOV DEC JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUNE JUL AUG

2015 - FIRST YEAR OF USE