

Harris County, Texas

Electronic Permits Management (e-Permits)

Information Strategies developed the Harris County Electronic Permits Management system using the Microsoft CRM development platform, which provides scalability, flexibility, and extensibility.

BACKGROUND

Harris County is the 3rd most populous county in the U.S. and covers over 1,700 square miles. The Harris County Public Infrastructure Division reviews development plans and project information to mitigate the impact of development on county assets, resources and infrastructure. While the Permits Office of Harris County actually issues the permits, a number of other city and county agencies are involved in the life cycle of land development to include: city planning commissions, the county fire marshal, the flood control district, the appraisal district, the county clerk's office and federal agencies like the EPA and FEMA.

PROBLEM

When engineering consulting firms, architects and contractors need plans reviewed or permits issued they must apply in person and submit paper documents. Given the exponential growth that Harris County is experiencing, service needs are growing faster than the County can attract the talent required to handle the growth and replace experienced workforce that are reaching retirement age.

Some key system requirements include:

- External Users must be able to submit documentation and check on the approval process of their applications online.
- Managers must be able to monitor workload and monitor process efficiency to ensure that service standards and regulatory requirements are met.
- Managers must be able to reassign tasks when users fall behind and when employees are out sick or on vacation.
- Users need to track all activities associated with processing applications and reviewing development plans.
- The system must integrate with other city, county, state, federal and private organizations and solutions and facilitate interagency communication.

Organization Profile

Harris County, TX
3rd Largest County in the U.S.
with 15,000+ employees

Solution at a glance

Microsoft CRM based application for internal users and external applicants

Technologies Involved

Microsoft Dynamics CRM, SQL Reporting Services, Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007 and Microsoft Office, .NET framework

SOLUTION

Infostrat developed an electronic permitting solution that enables engineering consulting firms, architects and contractors to submit applications, documentation and payments online through the development life-cycle to include platting, plan review, permitting, case management and inspection activities.

Because Microsoft CRM offers an Outlook interface, the learning curve for users has been significantly reduced. From online application processing to document versioning, Infostrat's e-Permits solution allows state and local governments to meet their service objectives while reducing overall processing costs of project reviews, permitting, surety bond recording, and other licensing activities. Because the Microsoft CRM platform allows users to implement powerful workflows that streamline processes, this solution may provide a vehicle for increasing fee based revenues as a result of the value that permit and licensing users derive from the enhanced and expedited service offerings.

By leveraging Microsoft Dynamics CRM's powerful customization capability as an application development platform, both internal and external users have been able to participate in the design and functionality of the system so that the solution utilizes existing approved forms and procedures, while streamlining other time consuming processes tied to paper bound documentation.

Many features are built into the e-Permits system to simplify the many activities associated with the permitting life cycle. These features include:

- Outlook Integration- the e-Permits workplace is fully integrated with Microsoft Outlook which allows e-mail to be stored with subject and contact information, as well as synchronization of tasks and calendars.
- "One Source of the Truth"- Multiple departments and external users can now access the most current information as it is updated, eliminating voluminous department files, spreadsheets and stand-alone databases.
- GeoSpatial Reporting- External and Internal users can view property and project information on a map with GIS layers.
- Integrated Workflow- Workflow and approval processes are automated and queued to facilitate workload balancing and speed processing times.

FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION

As a leading implementation partner for Microsoft technologies in the public sector, we enable our state and local government clients to leverage the power and versatility of Microsoft Dynamics CRM at a time when many organizations face increasing pressure to provide better service and quality at a lower cost. The synergy created by the implementation of these integrated Microsoft technologies, provides a "state-of-the-art" permitting solution at an easily justified investment cost.