



DigEplan

Integrated electronic plan review

Case study City of Missoula, MT

The City of Missoula has streamlined the submittal and review cycle process with DigEplan

Scanning in each and every paper plan, was the job of a full-time dedicated member of staff at the City of Missoula, MT. During peak construction seasons, this process was often backlogged by anything between two and five weeks – causing significant delays. DigEplan electronic plan review is integrated into the Accela Civic Platform, so the City of Missoula has now removed the need for scanning - streamlining the submittal and review cycle process.

The City of Missoula, Montana, USA has a population of 69,000. Missoula introduced DigEplan in 2017 to work alongside Accela to digitalize their paper-based plan review process. The implementation was completed by Accela Business Plus Partner, TruePoint Solutions.

Feeling the paper cost

Using a paper-based system for plan check reviews, Missoula's slow process was labor-intensive with the requirement for every plan to be individually scanned into the system. On top of this, the storage of paper plans was becoming unmanageable and a financial burden.

Aaron Bowman, Development Services, City of Missoula explained: "By converting to a digital review process, we were able to reduce files sizes by nearly 50 times, compared to scanning in the paper plan – vector files vs raster files.

"We needed to move to an electronic system to improve costs and efficiencies. DigEplan was chosen because of the full integration to Accela and the Citizen Portal, and we were impressed with the powerful set of mark-up and notification tools. The support provided by DigEplan was also a key factor in our decision."

With support from DigEplan and the TruePoint Solutions team, Missoula quickly moved to an electronic process. "The implementation itself was very smooth. However, we encountered complexity, as we had to convert our paper-centered processes into electronic-centered processes," added Aaron.

"In our paper process, when a set of plans were placed in a reviewer's bin, they physically saw the plans and reviewed them. With the digital review, we had to create a notification system for the review staff, customers or management, so they were aware that plans required their attention.

"The configuration with the Accela Civic Platform was the most complex aspect of the overall implementation of our EDR system. But this was resolved with the help of DigEplan and the TruePoint implementation team, ensuring that the overall implementation was completed smoothly," commented Aaron.

Parallel reviews critical factor

Central to Missoula's desire to move to an electronic digital review process was to ensure that parallel reviews were possible, which has been achieved with DigEplan. "The overall efficiency of the EDR process has increased over our old paper process. While this is important, the real benefit has come from the increased transparency of our review process.



"DigEplan has given us the ability to make the process easier and more cost effective for our customers. Customers are now able to follow the review process of their plans through each department and are instantly notified when a reviewer requires additional information or revisions," added Aaron.

"Equally, DigEplan provides a clear audit trail, allowing us to easily track the history of all revisions from original submittal to final stamping of the plans, this is due to the close integration to Accela."

Seamless Accela integration

DigEplan is 100% integrated into the City of Missoula's Accela platform. With deep integration into Accela workflows, standard comments, documents tab and screens, DigEplan enhances the existing investment in Accela enabling users to efficiently work with electronic plans.

Aaron explained: "DigEplan allows us to speed up the process for initial submittal and re-submittals because of the full integration to Accela and the Citizen portal. With only a few short training sessions we were ready to start using DigEplan.

"With change, there is an element of fear. But my colleagues at the City of Missoula have thoroughly embraced our new EDR system and are actively discovering new ways to utilize DigEplan that were not initially envisioned."

DigEplan has enabled the City of Missoula to significantly improve the efficiency of its plan check review processes, reducing administration tasks and costs.

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