Cloud-based Technology Delivers a Silver Lining

When Southeast Ohio Building Department (SEOBD) faced significant financial decisions to keep its code enforcement and community development program in service, new Chief Building Official (CBO) Rick Dostal chose a more effective solution.

"I already wasn't happy with our system because it was cumbersome to use," he said. "Then, when the company changed hands and announced programming changes requiring us to upgrade with costly software systems, I knew it was time to go to the mothership—ICC."

ICC Community Development Solutions Account Executive Bryan Fatka and the Municity team offered Dostal a cloud-based solution with more capabilities for less money out of pocket. When Dostal showed his County Commissioners how the switch would save money in the long run, they approved without hesitation.

SEOBD's Municity solution includes four fully digital programs that can grow with the department:

Application to Certificate to identify, approve, track, and monitor changes and enhancements to all structures in the jurisdiction.

Code Enforcement to identify violations, issue tickets, and prescribe fees and timeframes for compliance.

Licensing Management to track and manage multiple aspects of professional contractor licensing and Workman's Compensation Insurance.

Connect allows the public to apply for plan approvals, request inspections, and review their project status online.

Content transfers between systems began in March 2022 with ongoing support from the Municity team to ensure a smooth transition. As technical or process issues arose, the team alleviated them quickly.

Seamless workflow from the office, field, or remotely

With thousands of square miles to cover, Dostal said he likes Cloud-based Municity because many areas in Southeastern Ohio have no phone service. "Being online gives my staff the power to handle plan reviews and inspections more effectively, regardless of location," he explained.

Simplicity:

From start to finish, Municity provides the team with online access, capabilities, and notifications to move plan submissions, reviews, and approvals forward. Applicants electronically receive the completed documentation.

Connectivity:

Inspectors can use iPads or Surface tablets to gather and access information, take photos, and download drone footage to Municity, which automatically logs the content to the individual job file. Even in rural areas without cellular service, inspectors can still use their tablets to gather information and send emails that Municity will forward as soon as they have Internet access.

Immediacy:

Every job application requests the names and email addresses of the associated contractors, developers, and designers so the inspectors can send them inspection reports and documentation. Also, they can log in anytime to see appointment schedules and check the status of their permits, plan approvals, and Certificates of Occupancy.

Efficiency saves everyone time.

When Dostal left construction to become an inspector, he vowed to be friendly and put customer service first. Tools like Municity help him keep his promise.

"As a state-certified building department for non-residential and residential projects, we provide the same services as the State of Ohio Division of Industrial Compliance in Columbus," Dostal said. "Our proximity and familiarity with the river allow us to provide a faster turnaround time and speed up the entire process."

Constituents can schedule inspections most of the time as fast as the next day and receive plan approvals in less than 30 days as is state mandated.

Shared values around customer service.

Office Administrator and Permit Technician Traci Zimmerman spends the most time in Municity. She gives the training and tech teams high marks for making the transition and her job more manageable. For example, when she needed a data query developed to create the annual year-end report for the State of Ohio Board of Building Standards, the tech team quickly made programming changes so she could access the required data. Throughout the process, the Municity team has been receptive to Zimmerman's input and willing to revisit and fine-tune that query to automate it further.

From the start, "accommodating" is the word Dostal uses to describe the relationship between SEOBD and the Municity team. "They've made it easy for us to learn and use," he added. "Traci has been able to cross-train our staff so anyone can step in immediately and get the job done. It makes my supervisory position much easier."

Having Municity has helped Dostal and his team enhance their excellent customer experience so much that SEOBD now serves six counties and 24 municipalities, with more coming!

In addition, the Washington County Health Department now shares SEOBD's Municity solution because plumbing inspections fall under its jurisdiction. This move supports a healthier bottom line for both departments.

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