

Gwinnett County, Georgia

Saying Goodbye to Costly Upgrades and Creating a Path for Future Growth

Gwinnett County is a suburban county of Atlanta in the north central portion of the U.S. state of Georgia. In 2020, the population was 957,062, making it the second-most populous county in Georgia.

They have been a customer of Accela's products since the late 2000s, starting with Accela's Tidemark software and now using the Civic Platform. They use their Accela software for planning, development (permitting), code enforcement, fire, transportation, and other functions as well, and have deployed over 300 seats of Accela Software.

The Issue

Gwinnett has traditionally been a self-hosted agency, managing their Accela software within their own data centers. The Civic Platform solutions they have deployed have been configured and customized for very specific needs within the County. While the solutions worked well for them, the customizations made it hard to maintain the software over time as major platform upgrades would require some reworking of their solutions. This has made it difficult to stay on current versions.

In 2019, while on Version 9 of the Civic Platform, they wanted to expand usage of the software, with new departments, third-party integrations, and overall functionality. The problem was they did not want to do that work on a version that was so many releases behind. The last thing they wanted was to make it even more difficult to maintain their solution going forward.

Gwinnett considered their options. They knew a major platform upgrade to their systems, utilizing Accela's Civic Applications, would be a good way to go for supportability in the future. Civic Applications are prebuilt configurations on the Civic Platform that meet the needs of customers, but also ensure those systems can be more easily updated over time without breaking customizations.

They also knew that the needed upgrade, in conjunction with a move to SaaS, was another option on the table. It would solve the problem of staying on current versions but would change the way they supported their software.

Which Way to Go

In making the decision, they consulted with Accela's SaaS Migration team, who helped them fully consider the nature of the options. The move to SaaS was scoped and further defined to truly understand the costs, timing, and likely outcomes.



Gwinnett

Population

957,062

Challenge

Improve the citizen experience when collaborating with development services department by supporting internal staff and the customer with innovative solutions

Solutions

Accela Planning
Accela Building

Results

- Plan issuance turnaround times have gone from 20 to 3-5 days
- Each plan examiner saves eight hours a week by not needing to stamp plans
- They reduced inspector expected time of arrival (ETAs) by 62.5%
- Significantly decreased office foot traffic and phone inquiries, saving money and time



After consideration, Gwinnett decided to move to SaaS.

The decision was based on three primary objectives:

1. Moving to SaaS would ensure they were always on the most current version now, and in the future. No more expensive and painful upgrades.
2. It would allow them to refocus IT resources on innovation and new citizen services vs managing data center infrastructure.
3. This would allow them to tune up their solution at the same time, including upgrading processes, moving off Oracle Forms to save money, and improving certain integrations with other internal systems.

The decision to either upgrade and tune their solutions and stay on premises or move to SaaS was also driven by the fact the costs were comparable. The additional value they would get from the move to SaaS vs staying on premises was significant and made the decision an easy one.

The Benefits of SaaS

The project started in September of 2020 and included updates. This included a number of system enhancements that improved usability, reduced costs, and improved system performance.

Now live in Accela's Azure cloud environment, the transition has given them a strong foundation for expansion of deployment of the technology, and increased value over many other projects.

Other benefits they've realized with the move:

- A system that brings higher degrees of security and compliance, without the cost and effort of maintaining those system elements in house
- A transition to Accela Mobile, and the improved functionality it brings to their field workers
- The move to Accela's Business Licensing Civic Application from their old SAP system, to improve citizen engagement for licensing and reduce costs

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- The utilization of Accela's Enhanced Reporting Database option, which ensures they have a near real-time data store of transaction data always available for broad reporting requirements
- A move to PowerBI with Accela's Accela Insights, to improve their data analytics and visualization capabilities
- Implementation of ePermitHub for electronic plan review in the new SaaS environment, eliminating the need for manual and paper-based plan reviews
- And finally, a total of 36 other Accela projects planned, to maximize the value of the platform to various departments within the County

Conclusion

Many companies have faced the same decision as Gwinnett County, when considering an upgrade of enterprise software within their data centers or a move to SaaS.

At Accela, we've consulted with many of these agencies and have found the costs comparable. But the move to SaaS brings so much more and the decisions end up being quite easy. Many have modeled costs over time, and SaaS subscriptions have proven, in many cases, to be lower than the costs of maintaining a data center. Also, the upgrades of infrastructure software, hardware, and applications create significant and unpredictable spikes in capital expense well into the future.

Gwinnett has a better, more secure system, and this upgrade is the last upgrade they will ever have to do.



About Accela

Accela provides market-leading solutions that empower state and local governments to build thriving communities, grow businesses, and protect citizens. Powered by Microsoft Azure, Accela's open and flexible technology helps agencies address specific needs today, while ensuring they are prepared for any emerging or complex challenges in the future. Accela is headquartered in San Ramon, California, with additional offices around the world.

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