CHARLOTTE COUNTY, FLORIDA

Charlotte County, Florida, Charts a Course to Government Transparency with CivicData

Charlotte County, Florida, is a quiet area located on the west coast of Florida. A combination of a small city, vast suburban areas and large rural spaces, it also contains the second largest natural harbor in Florida, bringing a growing population of tarpon fishers. The County also boasts the third oldest population by County in the United States, meaning many residents winter in Florida and spend the summers elsewhere.

Increasing demand for information online

The unique makeup of year-round and snowbird residents meant that the County was dealing with a number of challenges. They were experiencing an increase in demand for records to be available electronically and for the information to be easily accessible for citizens, whether they were in the County or summering elsewhere. They were also getting increased pressure from elected officials and advocacy groups to be more transparent and to provide more ready access to metrics. This snowbird population influx during the colder months means transparent access to data and information would be critical for planning resources and development purposes.

Claire Jubb of the Charlotte County Community Development Department was looking for a solution to solve the data and record access problems. "I started talking with Accela about open data and CivicData. We wanted to get data out in a way that's consumable, but also an easier way of getting data out to our public and enabling them, and us, to see metrics."

"Government agencies operate within a culture that demands our data be freely available to our stakeholders. CivicData allows us to make the data easily consumable without the need for additional effort or IT support. CivicData is easy to use, robust and flexible enough to provide enhanced functionality."

Claire Jubb, Customer Service Manager

Population
160,000

Challenge
Unreliable data caused the County to inefficiently track productivity, justify fees, monitor accounts and provide information to the State and other managing bodies

Department
Community Development

Solution
CivicData,
Accela Land
Management,
Accela Licensing and
Case Management,
Accela Analytics,
Accela Code Officer,
Accela GIS,
Accela Inspector,
Citizen Access

Results
Provided consumable data, making it easy to read and open to a wider audience

Improved access to information online, 24/7

Minimized staff time to perform research

Increased trust with citizens that extends throughout organization

Supports planning and resource allocation by reviewing trends and dashboards

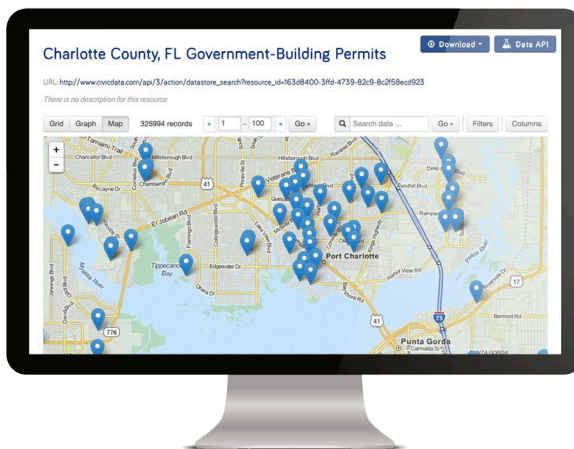### How Accela empowers Charlotte County

The County chose Accela's CivicData and began to populate the free open data platform with datasets, including building permit data. With this data, Jubb and her team were quickly able to build simple dashboards and view metrics that included real-time data.

"We started comparing use of online permitting compared to walk-ins. What we found is that of all permits we offer, 80 percent were being pulled online. Only 20 percent of our customers are coming into our offices. I didn't think we were anywhere near that number in terms of success. It gave us justification to go out to our elected officials and show them what we could do by automating these services, letting our citizens pull information online. Let's make it as easy as possible for them to access more information online, and that way we'll have time to deal with the customers that really need our help. That should be our focus."

Moving from trends to trust

Jubb is now using CivicData to look for trends in the data to assist the County in planning. "I deal with the budget, the planning and the resources for the Community Development Department, so from my perspective I can look at the data and determine what resources we'll need in the future.

Jubb hopes to use the open data capabilities to publish more information out to truly benefit the community. "I'm really excited about the streamlined datasets. In the future, Zillow can pick up our data and publish it to their website. It will make it easier for realtors and residents to get information about permitting and code enforcement without having to contact our office. It'll make people want to move to our community and could make the relocation process easier. Their first interaction with our County will be a positive one."

With CivicData, Charlotte County can quickly see where building permits have been pulled, and can narrow down their search by permit status, date range and other criteria.

About Accela

Accela provides civic engagement solutions for government. Accela's Civic Platform, which includes open APIs and mobile apps, enables and improves core processes for city, county, state and federal governments. Accela's solutions uniquely address the diverse needs of their constituents by making publicly available information more accessible. The Accela Civic Platform includes solutions for land management, asset management, licensing and case management, legislative management and more. With more than 1,000 customers worldwide, Accela is headquartered in San Ramon, California, with offices in San Francisco, New York, Melbourne and Dubai.

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