

CITY OF MORENO VALLEY

Transformed their business from 100% paper to 100% digital plan review overnight citywide with the digital plan room



City
Moreno Valley

Population
217,197



THE EVALUATION PROCESS

Implementing electronic plan review and providing a complete virtual services counter had always been the City's goal, but implementing in a time of uncertainty was not the plan. The City's consistent focus on customer service and innovation along with City Council's support of business-focused initiatives ensured Moreno Valley had the needed resources to overcome the project's many challenges.

Moreno Valley knew that for the solution to be effective, it had to be implemented Citywide. They quickly assembled a Citywide team of subject-matter experts, ensuring all City functions were represented.

The Citywide team created and prioritized their solution wish list: seamless integration with their Accela Civic Platform's Building, Code, Fire, Land Development, Parks, Planning, Special Districts and Transportation modules. Citywide solution, simple user interface, automated versioning and slip sheeting, easy to use plan review tools, automated and collaborative customer communication, and a long-term solution. The selection committee determined the seamless integration to the Accela Civic Platform was their top priority to ensure the best experience and reduce the learning curve for customers and staff.

OVERVIEW

Located in the western portion of Riverside County, the City of Moreno Valley with a population of 217,197 is the second-largest city in Riverside County, the 21st largest City in California, and one of the fastest growing cities in the region. On average, the City processes 1000 plan reviews monthly.

THE CHALLENGE

It was March 2020, and Moreno Valley faced the daunting challenge: how do you move at the "Speed of Business" during a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic and implement a long-term, innovative digital plan solution? City Hall was closed to the public, and employees were understandably preoccupied with their families' health and well-being. Protocols kept changing, and uncertainty became the norm.

While it seemed like the world was shutting down, the City refused to stop doing business and refused to stop innovating. That March, the Building & Safety Division experienced a 15 percent increase in plan check activity and a 20 percent increase in Certificates of Occupancy. The Planning Division also reported a 58 percent increase in applications, and the numbers continued to climb.

The pandemic exposed an existing issue: the process of paper plan submittal and review was archaic and tedious. Each review process cycle was expensive and time-consuming, costing weeks in time and thousands of dollars for all parties involved and the mountains of paper plans that had to be printed, stamped, folded, transported, and warehoused at City Hall generated a costly eyesore. Moreno Valley needed a better solution to allow employees to work more quickly, safely, efficiently, and remotely, if necessary.

The City prides itself on providing exceptional customer care by questioning the status quo and challenging the notion of "But that's how we have always done it." Moreno Valley approaches process improvement methodically and thoroughly, squarely focused on nimble solutions, and thus able to quickly evolve and adapt.

It was clear Moreno Valley would benefit from a full-featured virtual service counter with electronic validation of submitted plans, automated notifications, a simplified feedback method, and real-time project status availability to allow projects to process more quickly. Along with the benefits to the customers and staff, City management needed improved reporting capabilities to evaluate and measure efficiencies, review times, and project timelines more accurately.

The goals were ambitious even without a pandemic. To create a pandemic-proof solution and provide all its customers with the benefit of round-the-clock access, the City had to quickly develop a solution that would be easily accepted and welcomed by all its customers.

CITY OF MORENO VALLEY

Transformed their business from 100% paper to 100% digital plan review overnight citywide with the digital plan room



THE SOLUTION

The team reviewed available products and selected the ePermitHub Digital Plan Room as it seamlessly integrated into their existing permitting system, the Accela Civic Platform, and provided the best possible customer experience. After careful evaluation, the team determined ePermitHub's Digital Plan Room was the only true plug-in to the Accela Civic Platform.

As executive sponsors, City Management took a hands-on approach throughout the project and their oversight, input, and guidance was highly instrumental to the program's success. Additionally, they instructed staff to watch for and report any additional areas of improvement needed for a better overall customer and employee experience. The City designed the Digital Plan Room to be versatile, scalable, and able to quickly evolve, allowing Moreno Valley to move at the "Speed of Business."



THE RESULTS



Moreno Valley launched the Digital Plan Room in April 2021 fully transitioning from 100% paper review to 100% electronic plan review Citywide, overnight. The Digital Plan Room quickly became one of Moreno Valley's most successful initiatives, and as a result, development became significantly easier and faster.

The Digital Plan Room plug-in for Accela, positively improved the experience for the City and its customers by creating a collaborative experience, providing the ability to process projects virtually, online, anytime, removing the inconvenience of printing plan sets, and reducing costs by eliminating staff time spent on files with validation issues and lessening unnecessary travel.

The City reduced the number of incomplete submissions, time spent, and customer frustration using the Digital Plan Room's file validation as it automatically checks for validation issues such as encrypted files, password-protected files, and corrupt files. The Digital Plan Room validates uploaded files against submission requirements and provides customer-friendly specific instructions for a successful submittal. Within the first nineteen months of use, the automation eliminated more than 2,700 hours of manual review and reduced the overall turnaround time by nearly 50 percent.

Enhancing the virtual counter and including 24/7 Digital Plan Room virtual access, through Accela Citizens Access provided customers the flexibility to continue with their development projects and plan reviews, increased efficiency, and time saved through access to real-time project-related information at any time of the day.

Further, the Digital Plan Room supports interactive issue resolution communication, allowing customers to collaborate, view, and respond to identified issues on plans and supporting documents online. City plan reviewers can view and respond to comments submitted by the customer during review cycles directly within the Digital Plan Room plug-in for Accela, reducing the number of plan reviews and improving communication and efficiency.

The Development Community has embraced the Digital Plan Room, with large and small customers submitting positive feedback and encouraging support, and employee feedback remains positive. While initially envisioned as an immediate improvement in response to the pandemic, Moreno Valley's Digital Plan Room plug-in for Accela has become a successful long-term solution that continues to improve communication, increase efficiency, cost savings, and overall development.