

CASE STUDY

Building at the Speed of Tampa

How the City modernized inspections, data, and disaster response on the Accela Civic Platform®

City of Tampa, Florida

POPULATION

413,000

CHALLENGE

A fast-growing city,compounded by back-to-back hurricanes, needed to process record construction volume and inspect it without adding headcount, vehicles, or wait times

SOLUTION

Accela Civic Platform® for all permitting, with VuSpex virtual inspections

RESULTS

- $3.68 billion in building permit value processed in FY2025
- ~30,000 permit applications processed in FY2025
- 3,613 live virtual inspections since the October 2025 launch
- 6,058 offline field reports (OFR) completed

On Florida's Gulf Coast, Tampa has become one of the fastest-growing cities in the Southeast, a waterfront economy of roughly 413,000 residents where cranes now punctuate the skyline and entire districts like Gasworx are rising from former industrial land. The city added more than 23,000 residential units between 2019 and 2026, and in 2025 alone residential permit activity jumped nearly50% year over year, putting Tampa at the front of the state for construction.

Supporting that growth takes coordination across a number of city departments. Behind every crane and every kitchen remodel is a permit, a plan review, and an inspection, and among the partners making that possible is the City's Construction Services Division, the one-stop shop responsible for reviewing plans, issuing permits, and inspecting the work that keeps Tampa building safely. The division had to keep up with record demand, and the disruption of an active hurricane season, without simply adding headcount.

Tackling the volume: one platform, one workflow

Prior to Accela, permitting was a manual process built on paper submissions of applications and plans. Tampa's approach to service modernization started with consolidation, unifying permitting on one platform to support the Construction Services Division's and the development community's goals for growth. Every permit the division touches, whether residential, commercial, or trade,

RESULTS (CONT.)

- 9,671 total virtual inspections since the October 2025 launch
- 70% reduction in call-center contacts requesting inspection-scheduling help since the VuSpex launch
- ~124 trade-permit inspections performed daily
- Up to 2× inspector throughput on offline field reports (30+/day vs. ~15 in person)
- ~18,000 unique Accela users supported
- Chief Building Official named 2026 Building Official of the Year
- ICC accreditation in progress

"Our goal is to make the permitting process as clear and accessible as possible for our applicants, contractors, and residents. Having a single, consistent workflow through Accela allows them to complete their business with the City more efficiently while giving our staff the tools to provide consistent, high-quality service."

ZULEMA RODRIGUEZ
CSD Standards and Practices Specialist, Construction Services Division, City of Tampa

now runs through the Accela Civic Platform. Applicants, contractors, and citizens complete their business through a single, robust online workflow, with in-person assistance available when needed.

The division processed roughly 30,000 applications in FY2025, representing $3.68 billion in construction value, without adding staff to keep pace.

Move to virtual: inspections without the windshield time

When Tampa first explored remote inspections, the division chose not to move forward with the solution available at the time. It did not interface with Accela, and a disconnected two-step process would have created more work, not less. Once VuSpex interfaced with Accela and supported a seamless workflow within the City's governance model,Tampa moved quickly to implement it.

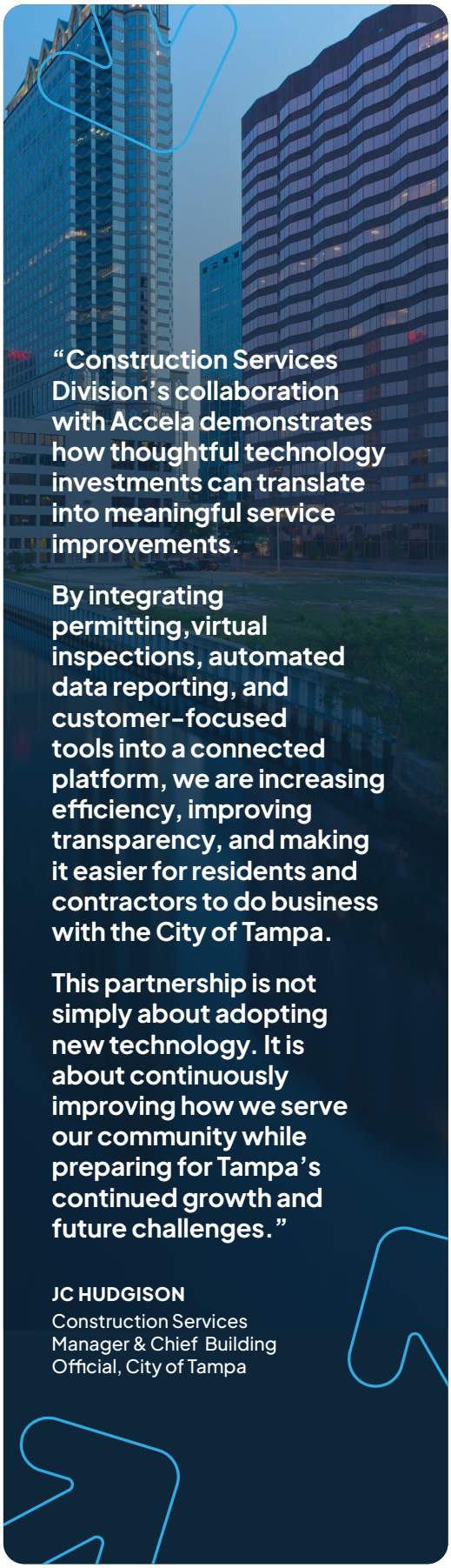
Today, trade-permit finals such as A/C change-outs, water-heater swaps, window replacements, and other Building, Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing, and Roof inspections are augmented by VuSpex's capabilities. When a contractor submits photos and documentation through the app, an inspection is automatically scheduled in Accela; inspectors review and result it right there in the same system, with no duplicate data entry.

A field inspector handles roughly 15 inspections a day in person. With VuSpex offline field reports, that climbs to 30+ a day, roughly double, while live virtual inspections run 16–20 per inspector per day in self-scheduled, 20–minute windows. Across the division's ~37 inspectors (including four supervisors), the City now performs about 124 trade-permit inspections daily. The savings extend past labor: fewer vehicles on the road, less fuel, and a 70% reduction in call-center contacts requesting help scheduling inspections since the VuSpex launch.

The division phased in adoption after the October 2025 launch. It ran email-blast campaigns, published an extensive how-to website, then made virtual inspections mandatory on January 5, 2026 to ensure the investment actually delivered ROI rather than sitting unused beside old habits. Feedback from the trades has been overwhelmingly positive,with the only real learning curve being the photo checklist of what to capture.

"The biggest thing for the client is they're not waiting around for an inspector since they can set the time convenient for them and their contractor, or simply submit an Off-line Field Report that inspectors review without any contact with the citizen. Virtual inspections have also cut down on calls from permit holders contacting the call center asking when someone is coming."

TROY CHAVEZ
Assistant Building Official of Inspections and Compliance, Construction Services Division, City of Tampa



“Construction Services Division’s collaboration with Accela demonstrates how thoughtful technology investments can translate into meaningful service improvements.

By integrating permitting, virtual inspections, automated data reporting, and customer-focused tools into a connected platform, we are increasing efficiency, improving transparency, and making it easier for residents and contractors to do business with the City of Tampa.

This partnership is not simply about adopting new technology. It is about continuously improving how we serve our community while preparing for Tampa’s continued growth and future challenges.”

JC HUDGISON
Construction Services Manager & Chief Building Official, City of Tampa

Meeting residents where they are: the lobby and the storm

Modernizing didn’t mean abandoning the residents who still walk in. In the division’s lobby, self-service kiosks capture each visitor’s purpose and record number and route them to the right person: a client facilitator or plan reviewer. Dedicated public PCs let residents log into Accela to pay a bill or act on a record.

That same philosophy carries into disaster response. When hurricanes Helene and Milton struck, Construction Services didn’t wait for residents to reach them. Using a field-based damage-assessment and GIS-mapping capability, post-storm teams were on the scene in person going door to door, logging conditions into a live mapping layer, surfacing the hardest-hit areas in real time. Where neighborhoods couldn’t reach the office, the City set up pop-up permit intake centers, including at Marjorie Park Marina and DeSoto Park. Within Accela, the division designated storm-related records, a configuration change that let it waive permit fees automatically across the sixty-day recovery window and,later, relate properties back to FEMA substantial-damage determinations when residents came in to rebuild. Assessment data fl owed back to the system in real time instead of being hand-carried and re-keyed.

Running on data: transparency by default

By 2025, Tampa fully automated its public construction-services data. A nightly data refresh publishes issued permits, certificates of completion and occupancy, and other metrics to a public open-data dashboard, including an interactive map where any resident can enter an address and see nearby construction activity. The same fiscal-year permit value reporting that anchors this story, the $3.68B figure, is published openly to citizens.

Internally, the division layered in business-intelligence dashboards for virtual inspections, plan review, fire metrics, and accreditation, which leaders check daily to see where work is fl owing and where teams are struggling. These remain internal for now, pending a fully ADA-compliant design before public release.

“Our public dashboards empower residents with information, while our internal analytics help us continuously improve how we deliver services.”

KEVIN ROMANO
Senior Applications Programmer, Technology & Innovation, City of Tampa

Measuring success: recognition that validates the work

The, results are earning outside recognition. In June 2026,Construction Services Manager and Chief Building Official JC Hudgison was named 2026 Building Official of the Year by the Building Officials Association of Florida, cited for the leadership behind Tampa’s modernization, including its move to virtual inspections. The division is also pursuing International Accreditation Service (IAS) accreditation, a national standard for permitting, plan review, and inspections, which will make Tampa one of only 14 accredited jurisdictions in Florida and formalize a culture of continuous improvement.



“Innovation isn’t about technology for technology’s sake, it’s about delivering better results for our community. The City of Tampa’s investment in modern permitting, virtual inspections, and data-driven decision-making has made it easier for residents and businesses to navigate the development process. I’m proud of the Construction Services Division for leading this transformation and setting a new standard for customer service and efficiency.”

MAYOR JANE CASTOR
City of Tampa

Looking forward

Tampa’s modernization is tied to a larger civic ambition. The work supports the administration’s goal of creating 10,000 affordable homes and a citywide push to cut red tape and make it easier to build. With virtual inspections mandatory, data flowing automatically, and accreditation on the horizon, Construction Services is prepared for the next building season and the next storm.

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