Fannin County Land Development puts a stake in its future with document management, imaging and workflow software

FileVision automates the Land Development approval process - permits growth and preserves the eco-system

Customer Profile

Located in the beautiful foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Fannin County was founded in the mid 1800s. It was formed from portions of surrounding counties, Union and Gilmer, and has a rich history dating back to occupation by the Cherokee Indians and early immigrants from the Northern United States.

Today, much of Fannin County's land (known as the Chattahoochee National Forest) is protected under Forest Service management. Fannin County's Land Development department enforces the laws that were created to manage the remaining land that is designated for the development of homes, jobs, and recreational facilities and helps to preserve from overuse ecologically sensitive areas such as beautiful Lake Blue Ridge and the Toccoa and Ocoee Rivers.

Fannin County Land Development's primary mission encompasses the issuance of Land Disturbing Permits, Septic Permits (through the Health department), Driveway Permits and Building Permits. In addition, they offer assistance with environmental concerns such as illegal dumping, litter, chemical spills, soil erosion, solid waste, and air/water pollution.

Managed by the proficient and resourceful Marie Woody, Department Head, who has worked for Fannin County 25 years, Land Development provides a valuable and necessary service to the residence and business developers of Fannin County while remaining compliant with the Environmental Protection Division (EPD) of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

Initial Objective

Initially the FileVision information relationship management solution was purchased to digitize paper documents and to keep electronic records of Building Permits. According to Marie Woody, "We initially planned to do away with the massive amounts of paper being stored after the Building Permit application and approval process. However, we quickly realized we could automate the Building Permit process and decrease the amount of paper being generated as well. We have realized many more benefits than we ever hoped for. The more we use FileVision, the more we understand ways of utilizing it to improve other procedures."

Business Case

Three departments within the Fannin County Government have a stake in the Building Permit application and approval process:

- Land Development
- Tax Assessor
- Health Department

Building permits are applied for at the Land Development office. Land Development processes approximately 50-80 Building Permit applications per month. Prior to FileVision, Land Development managed a very paper-intensive application process. Marie and her staff were responsible for making three copies of each application and providing paper copies to the Tax Assessor's office and the Health Department, a very time-consuming and cumbersome process.

The Tax Assessor's office handwrote the parcel map number on the paper copy of the application, made another copy of the application, kept one copy for the field agent and sent the original back to the Land Development office. The Tax Assessor is also charged with keeping up with the open Building Permits and physically visiting each work site to determine the status of projects, in process or approved. Land needs to be re-assessed for tax purposes when the building is complete.

The Health Department also received a paper copy of the Building Permit Application and a 3-part Septic permit application in order to approve the site selected for septic installation and for final inspection and approval of the septic system. The Health inspectors made copies with hand written notes and original signatures to be sent back to the Land Development office for completion of the application process.

The Problem

By the time a Building Permit was approved (typically 2-3 weeks), the Land Development office had accumulated a paper file folder with 10- 15 pages of documentation and spent numerous hours processing the approval of a single building permit. Multiply 15 pages by 80 open applications by 12 months by countless years and it is easy to understand how Land Development had accumulated rooms full of filing cabinets and struggled to keep up with this complicated process.

- Numerous phone calls from applicants checking on the status of a permit meant numerous phone calls between departments. Each time paper files would have to be pulled from the file cabinet and 10-15

pages sorted through to answer the frequent question, "Has my permit been approved?".
- Applications were sometimes lost or misfiled because files were often retrieved countless times during the approval process.
- Land Development was unable to report (without physically counting) how many permits were outstanding at any give time.
- The Health Department is currently keeping three separate log

Solution

Fannin County Land Development implemented FileVision just over a year ago to completely automate the Building Permit Application process. Now, as applications arrive, they are entered into the Land Development System (an Access database) which is integrated with and automatically updates FileVision. They are then printed for signature and scanned back into FileVision along with accompanying documentation such as Warranty Deeds and Soil Erosion & Sedimentation Plans as well as checks for payment. Once the documents are scanned, all the paper work is handed back to the applicant to keep for their record. The FileVision Workflow system automatically notifies the Tax Assessor's office that a new application has arrived and needs to be processed. The Tax Assessor's office receives the application and instead of printing it out and handwriting the map and parcel number, now they simply annotate that information on the digital image using FileVision. No more paper copies for Land Development and the Tax Assessor offices!

The Health Department is located in a separate building and is connected to the State of Georgia computer server. They are currently in the process of implementing FileVision in the Health department. For now the Health Department continues to use paper copies and log books to handle their part in the processing of permits.

Other processes, documents and information related to Land Development and Building Permits automated by FileVision for the Land Development department are:

- Land Distribution documentation
- Warranty Deeds
- Septic Permits
- Soil Erosion and Sedimentation reports - must be accompanied by a copy of the applicant's soil erosion and sedimentation plans
- Preliminary Final in Subdivision
- Driveway Permits
- Electrical Permits
- Mobile Home Inspections
- Flood Plain Permits
- Variances
- Driving directions to the building site
- Complaints such as garbage dumped on roa
- Receipts for Permit Payments

Benefits

With applications digitally scanned and easily retrievable, Land Development has tremendously improved their customer service and efficiency without adding staff.

- The time it takes to process one permit has decreased from 2-3 weeks to approximately 1 week.
- Instead of keeping 10-15 pieces of paper per application, they keep only two pieces of paper per application until the permit is approved. Once the permit has been approved, those paper copies can also be thrown out due to the fact that everything is scanned and kept digitally in FileVision. Marie plans to eliminate these two pieces of paper completely.
- Handling customer phone calls and looking up the status of a permit takes only a matter of minutes as opposed to hours or even days. This has eliminated the need for callbacks and

increased customer satisfaction.
- No more multiple printed copies of applications and supporting documentation. It is scanned once and distributed electronically to both departments. This has reduced the volume of physical storage, freeing up work space and has greatly improved interterdepartmental communications.
- Using the FileVision workflow solution, Land Development now has more control over the process. Land Development sends new applications with notes (if applicable) to the Tax Assessor's FileVision Notice Board (or inbox). Once the Tax Assessor has completed the tasks related to the permit, they simply click an "action completed" button and FileVision automatically triggers a message with the attached documentation back to Land Development. Once the application has been approved, the permanent Building Permit number is assigned and the applicant is notified of the status. FileVision provides the ability to add electronic notes, stamps and actions to any digital image, eliminating the need for handwritten notes and rescanned paper copies.
- With the ability to report on the number of open and closed applications, the County Commissioners now have a better understanding of the volume of work being done in each of the departments.
- Land Development is now able to provide reports to the County Commissioners on the number of permits processed over a given time period, the status of each and many other valuable details about Building Permits.

Training and Implementation

Access Consulting made the decision to implement FileVision without the onsite support of the FileVision support team, a service FileVision offers its clients. But the independent and tech-savvy Guilliams wanted to try it on his own and states that implementation went quite smoothly. Although he did have to call for help a few times, the FileVision team always responded and easily gave him the guidance he needed over the phone.

Future Plans

Marie Woody also stated, "The implementation and training process was a breeze. Implementation took only a couple of days. FileVision trained the Land Development and the Tax Assessor's offices onsite,giving us individual attention based on our unique processes and needs. Also, anytime we've needed technical assistance, they've been very responsive and able to assist us both onsite and remotely."

About FileVision

FileVision is a global software company that develops information relationship management software. Our solution, FileVision, enables organizations to bridge the gap between digital content and paper documents by easily and strategically creating relationships between important, disparate pieces of information. Government, healthcare and financial services organizations worldwide rely on our technology to help them intelligently link and match documents to important data objects such as people, companies, processes and assets, resulting in improved communications, enhanced customer service and immediate access to information and relationships within the data.

FileVision is headquartered in Atlanta, GA with offices in the UK, Australia and New Zealand. For more information, please visit us at www.filevision.com.