



CASE STUDY



City of Edmonton, Canada

Client:

Planning and Development Department,
City of Edmonton, Alberta

Business Challenge:

Creation of a web-based Land
Development Application (LDA) for
developers – eApps

Solution:

POSSE, POSSE Internet

Industry:

Public Sector – Municipal Government

Summary

The City of Edmonton (pop. 800,000) is the second largest municipality in the province of Alberta, Canada. The City has used POSSE since 1996. POSSE is one of the City's "pillar" enterprise applications. POSSE is used by over 2000 internal and external users to support over 400 different business processes in all City departments. POSSE is integrated with the City's GIS system (GeoMedia), and SAP.

Since June 2006, the City's Planning and Development Department has accepted land development applications only electronically via the City's website. As part of the e-Apps project, developers or planning consultants (applicants) apply, submit, pay for and track their planning applications over the Internet using the Land Development Application (LDA) in POSSE.

Up to 45 referral agencies may be notified of new applications via an e-circulation process through e-mail and by logging into the City's POSSE Internet site to view the application, associated documents and files such as CAD drawings. All referral agency comments and replies are captured into the workflow using POSSE Internet. City Planners ensure the application process proceeds and is completed as required. Applicants are able to track their application status in real time through secure access to the website and also view agency comments.

Project Goals

Driven by oil sands development, Alberta has one of the fastest growing populations and economies in North America. The LDA was implemented to improve service delivery to applicants and manage the approval process for ever-increasing land development projects for a rapidly growing Edmonton population.

The Electronic Applications project (e-Apps) is the latest phase of web-enabling subdivision applications. This latest project capitalizes on the success of the department's Electronic Circulations (e-Circ) project of 2005.

The Department's e-Apps project was designed to enable City Planning staff to process more applications faster and consistently to the final approval stage.

The LDA business process goals were to combine nine previous development business processes into a single workflow in the City's configurable POSSE system. The consolidation process includes rezoning, subdivision, closures and various plan amendment applications.

Paper applications with supporting documents and drawings were eliminated, reducing the need for filing cabinet storage space and multiple duplicates, and eliminating the need to bring applications and plans into the department or mailing plans to referral agencies for review. The use of online applications, digital documents and files, and established e-Circ processes would ensure a paperless LDA process. Contractors would also be able to pay for their applications online.

Methodology

Before the e-Circ implementation in 2005, applicants were required to submit 60 paper copies of their plan and a digital copy, and pay their fees at a cashier or by mailing a check. The department would circulate the plans by mail to the referral agencies for approval. The referral agencies would make any markups and comments on paper and then send them back to the planner. This process could take about three weeks.

Starting January 2005, the e-Circ application was used to distribute applicant plans to the referral agencies via e-mail notification (with a URL link to a secure web page), eliminating paper, mail distribution, and lag times. Applicants could also pay their fees online.

Once the e-Circ project was underway, the e-Apps project was started with a production "go-live" date of June 2006. Planning and Development Department business staff (planners) who are subject matter experts (SMEs) and trained in POSSE Configuration were able to configure the new LDA application in POSSE.

The basic LDA business (workflow) processes are:

1. Applicant uses POSSE Internet to apply for and track his or her application(s);
2. City Planners review the application using POSSE (client-server) and circulate the application to the referral agencies using a circulation list;
3. Planners open and review plans and accept or return the application to the applicant for revision;

Planners can open each application using POSSE, view the tentative plans of subdivision, create a list of referral agencies, write the e-Circ memo, and circulate the application in minutes.

4. Upon acceptance by the planner, POSSE automatically generates an e-mail with an attached copy of the invoice for payment (in PDF format) and e-mails it to the applicant and waits for payment online or by check;
5. Once all documents are in order and fees paid, up to 43 referral agencies are notified via e-mail to review the application;
6. The referral agencies use POSSE Internet to review and comment on the application and plans. These reviews occur in parallel;
7. Referral agents insert their comment in a comments field, and select a decision from a Status box;
8. Applicants are able to check the status of their LDA online;
9. When all referral agents have completed their review, POSSE automatically generates a summary of all agency review's and sends it to the referral agencies, the applicant and the planner processing the file;
10. After consultation with the applicant, the application will be moved forward using POSSE to continue processing to the decision authority.

Success Factors

Technology Benefits

For the e-Circ and e-Apps projects, the Department used existing POSSE BPM technology and expertise to engineer new business processes and configure POSSE to manage the new business processes. No new software or software licenses were required other than software for reading CAD files.

As part of the initial e-Circ project, a number of new work methods were imposed upon the referral agencies and some degree of "social re-engineering" occurred within the different agencies. Issues concerning agency equipment and third-party supporting applications (such as CAD viewers) had to be considered, but within the year many were using POSSE and the new processes comfortably. The review processes did not change with the e-Apps project and the LDA.

Certain applicants (such as small developers) are still able to bring plans into the City's Planning and Development office where staff will work with them over the counter and initiate the online LDA process together.

Stakeholder Benefits

Development Community:

1. Developers and planning consultants (applicants) apply, submit and pay for all planning applications over the Internet 24/7 – no more on-site trips downtown or waiting in line are required.
2. No software is required other than Internet access, e-mail, and software for required files and drawings.
3. Developers can track the application status through a secure Internet access and view agency comments and/or wait until the draft summary of comments is sent by e-mail.
4. They can revise the application during the LDA process, and the planner can create another e-Circ as many times as is required.
5. Developers have full access to all their current and archived LDA data.
6. POSSE security and configuration allows applicants to use personal keywords and applicant's internal file numbering system as well as City number system.

Referral Agencies:

1. Referral Agents can view (download) the tentative plans and all supporting documentation and write a response within minutes of receiving the notice
2. All comments and replies are inserted into the City's POSSE system using POSSE Internet.
3. All Referral Agents can view the comments of all other agencies and can revise their response.
4. No POSSE license or software is needed for referral agents. It was assumed that agencies had existing Internet and e-mail technology.
5. Software for review and markup of CAD drawings (.dwg files) is/was needed by some agencies.
6. No printing or mailing costs are incurred.

Department Staff:

1. Planners can open each application using POSSE, view the tentative plans of subdivision, etc., create a list of referral agencies, write the e-Circ memo, and circulate the application in minutes.
2. As digital information, the City Planner can copy and paste replies directly into reports, letters, etc.
3. The LDA process may create some inspection processes. City building inspectors connect wirelessly to POSSE from laptops and handhelds to complete their inspections.

Project Success

1. The E-apps LDA went live in June 2006 and over 700+ development applications were completed online within the first 10 months.
2. Notification of all applications is accomplished through the use of e-mail – no more paper processing.
3. Faster response for the applicant /customer, and fewer time lags in the administration of the data.
4. Instant access to the status of all circulations submitted by that specific applicant.
5. Online system for keeping and managing all responses with backup – never a "lost" response.
6. No more office duplication or mailing costs (printing, envelopes and stamps, etc.), saving about \$20 per application for the Department.
7. Electronic ease of access using personal keywords (applicants file/ project name) and using the developer's file numbering systems as well as our filing system.
8. Full access to all of the developer's current and archived applications from this date forward.
9. Into circulation within hours of application, not days or weeks. Agencies are able to respond quicker (even within minutes), and to shorter time-frames.

For more information on the City's E-Apps project, contact Don Read at (780) 496-3633 or by e-mail at don.read@edmonton.ca.

Visit the City's website at <http://www.edmonton.ca> and follow links to Infrastructure & Planning > Planning > Land Development Application.



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