STREAMLINING TOOLS - TOOLS TO MAKE GOVERNMENT MORE EFFECTIVE and EFFICIENT

ELECTRONIC PLANS SUBMITTAL, REVIEW AND TRACKING

ABOUT THIS TOOL

Over the past five years, more jurisdictions are accepting building plans electronically via CD-ROM or online. Internally, jurisdictions have been tracking building plans, either blue prints or in electronic format, via software programs. These tracking systems have either been available just to the building department employees and/or also to the clients giving them up-to-the-minute information on the status of their project. The actual review of building plans electronically has been slow to develop. Few software programs have been written and those that are available tend to apply to only limited aspects of the building, compliance with the energy code, accessibility for the disabled, structural calculations, and not for the entire structure.

BENEFITS

Electronic plans submittal, tracking and review reduce traditional plan processing times by 20 to 40 percent by making these services available 24/7/365. While few plan review tools are currently available, electronic submittal and tracking are growing in use in major jurisdictions across the nation.

SAVINGS TO GOVERNMENT

- Reduced staff time accepting and processing plans by 50 percent enabling jurisdictions to shift staff resources to other areas in need of attention.
- Improved accuracy of data transmitted contained in permit and reduced number of applications being filed by non-licensed contractors.
- Enhanced collection of revenues owed to the jurisdiction.

SAVINGS TO PUBLIC AND TO PRIVATE SECTOR

- Increased customer satisfaction with jurisdictions' services by saving costs associated with repeated trips to one or more jurisdiction office and the convenience of being able to access the online permit application and tracking system 24/7/365.
- Typical time savings reported were reductions from two days to four hours of total time for application for commercial permits.

BACKGROUND

Available Hardware and Software

Approximately 20 of the vendors providing e-permitting software packages include component packages that also accept electronic submissions of plans and or have plan tracking and status reporting capabilities. No vendor currently has available software that goes through the additional step of performing a complete electronic review of the submitted plans for compliance with the adopted state or local building code.

Electronic Plans Submittal

Less than one percent of the jurisdictions adopting and enforcing building codes accept plans electronically. Approximately three percent tracks plans electronically. Of those accepting plans electronically, most do it through either acceptance of a CD- ROM from the licensed architect or engineer or as an electronic PDF file. One of the major barriers to the acceptance of plans electronically has not been one of technology but of statutes on the books that will only allow plans to be officially submitted under a wet seal.

Electronic Plan Tracking

A far more common application of IT has been in the tracking of the plans once they have been submitted to the building department. When coupled with electronic plans submittal, this facilitates the ability of the plans to be reviewed simultaneously by multiple sections within the building department and/or multiple agencies within the jurisdiction–fire, environmental, public works, etc.

Most jurisdictions have expanded electronic plan tracking to include access to information on the current status of the plans within the jurisdiction to the client. Where it has been combined with electronic plan submittal, electronic plan tracking has on average reduced the amount of time a plan takes to move through the regulatory process by 15 to 20 percent, largely due to the reduction in delays that occur by not knowing where the plans are from the inability of multiple agencies to perform parallel plan reviews.

Electronic Plan Review

The lack of software to conduct complete technical reviews of all of the relevant codes to a specific structure (electrical, mechanical, plumbing, structural, accessibility, fire, etc.) has held back true electronic plan review. In 2006, the International Code Council (ICC) launched a SMARTCode initiative to place all of the I-Codes into electronic plan review software.

EXAMPLES OF APPLICATION AND JURISDICTION CONTACTS

City of Los Angeles, CA - Accepts both CD-ROM and online plan submittals which has led reduced staff time to process and track plans submittals from one hour to five minutes and customers wait time from two hours to 10 minutes. Contact: Steve Ikkanda, P.E., Code Development Engineer, LADBS; Phone: 213-482-6715; Email: sikkanda@ladbs.lacity.org

SUMMARY

The least utilized of the IT applications to the building codes administration and enforcement processes, electronic plans submittal, review and tracking however is growing in demand from the architectural and engineering communities.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: VISIT THE ALLIANCE'S WEBSITE AT: **www.natlpartnerstreamline.org** and click on "TOOLKIT." On the "Toolkit" homepage, click on Electronic Plans Submittal, Review and Tracking.