Brightly

Client Success story

Longwood Streamlines Building Services Department with SmartGov

Client

City of Longwood, Florida

Vitals

Northern suburb of Orlando with:

- Population of 16,451 in 2021
- 8 Building Department staffers handling permits, inspections and code enforcement

Challenges

Longwood needed an easy, scalable solution for managing and simplifying all the tasks involved in building permitting, planning, zoning and code enforcement.

Results

By implementing Brightly's SmartGov, Longwood Community Development Department is now able to:

- Manage all building permitting, planning, zoning and code enforcement online
- Allow residents and contractors to apply for and receive permits remotely
- Increase productivity, accomplishing more in less time and with fewer employees

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The Concerns

Like many desirable towns in Florida, the City of Longwood is growing. Longwood has grown by more than 20% since 2010 and is currently experiencing population growth of about 3% each year. Typically, population growth translates into a construction boom—and Longwood's building department is busy.

When Building Official Philip Kersey joined Longwood in early 2019, the city was using a platform built for finance to manage its permitting process. The tool "wasn't in tune with community development," Kersey says.

That platform required staffers to download construction plans, convert them to a different format to be reviewed, manually email to various reviewers, and move the plans back into the platform after they'd been reviewed.

Longwood needed a solution that would allow reviewers to interact with building plans on the review site and allow for simultaneous reviews, while continually updating to maintain compliance with changing regulations and codes.

The Solution

Within six months after taking over permitting for the City of Longwood, Kersey started pushing the city to move to a more robust digital platform. The team spent about a year examining various software solutions before choosing SmartGov.

"We were looking for a program that would help us eliminate the manual work of moving plans between reviewers and provide a more user-friendly experience for both our staff and our customers," Kersey says.

It was also important for the City of Longwood to find a true partner. Kersey said he wanted to "find a company that wants to grow, that wants to improve… a company that is going to listen and understand that we need to continue to develop the program for tomorrow, next week, next year." Kersey ultimately decided to move forward with Brightly's SmartGov solution stating that, "SmartGov meets our needs, and everybody raves about the user-friendliness."

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Philip Kersey
Building Official for Longwood, Florida

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The Results

Longwood rolled out SmartGov on August 31, 2021, for all building permitting, planning, zoning and code enforcement. Within six months of going live with SmartGov, the city saw a drastic improvement in the time required to review and approve building permits.

Rather than having to convert permit application documents to new formats and send them around to internal reviewers one by one, staffers can simultaneously review the documents within SmartGov. "Because of the ability to do concurrent plan reviews across the city, the building department, fire department and zoning department can all be looking at the same package at the same time," Kersey says.

One of the major values in SmartGov for the City of Longwood is its efficiency. "The system itself is methodically moving through the process for you alerting users, which is where I've quantified I'm gaining half a person right now," states Kersey.

In addition to a more efficient internal process, SmartGov also allows for better communication with external customers. "Residents and contractors appreciate receiving an automatic communication every time a workflow is satisfied, inspection is completed, or another part of the process is finished," he says.

Because the portal provides detailed information and is so easy for residents and contractors to use, city staff spend less time explaining the process. "The customer knows what they need to submit, and that saves my staff time because they're getting all the necessary information upfront, and that speeds up the process," Kersey says. "We now have a lower volume of calls and a lower volume of emails, because everyone is using the portal and things are getting done quicker and more efficiently."

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