



DigEplan[™] Case Study Brenham, TX

Brenham, a vibrant city in east-central Texas, is home to more than 18,000 residents. After a first attempt at digitalizing their plan review process went sour, the City took a methodical approach to finding a new solution and settled on DigEplan.

Antiquated Paper-based Plan Review Presented Significant Challenges

Before implementing DigEplan in 2022, the City of Brenham relied on manual processes for plan review and permitting. “We were a paper heavy department with an antiquated submittal and review process for all types of applications and permits,” said Stephanie Doland, Director of Development Services.

Without a unified system for plan review, Brenham relied on a mix of patchwork processes of email, word processing, and file sharing software, which resulted in delays, re-work, and general inefficiencies.

Comments were saved in Microsoft Word via OneDrive, which should have made them accessible by all, real-time but failed to do so. “Someone would put their comments in, and they wouldn’t show up for another user at a different location for between 24-48 hours,” said Doland.

This meant individuals had to complete extra steps. “We’d have to export everything back to the file server, format it correctly, and then return it to the customer. And we would do this one, two, three, four times per submitted project,” which Doland noted, was “not ideal.”

Brenham Brought in Staff for Buy-in Early On

When the City of Brenham decided to seek out an electronic plan review solution, Doland knew the process needed to be handled delicately. Brenham had previously explored online planning and permitting solutions, and it was never implemented.

The failed first attempt had created skepticism among staff. To manage this, Doland engaged agency personnel in the selection process.

"There was a lot of apprehension to go paperless. So rather than it being a top-down decision made on behalf of the whole team, the team was involved in the demos and in the selection process. That resulted in buy-in early on," said Doland.

The City of Brenham reviewed other digital options but ultimately went with DigEplan for the strength of its markup, comment, reporting capabilities, and integration with their permitting solution, Accela.

"We knew DigEplan would allow us to articulate our comments so clearly that it would result in time and efficiency savings for both the City and the customer. They would be able to understand the first time what we were asking," said Doland.

DigEplan Offers a One-stop Solution, Even for Third-party Consultants

The centralized hub provided by DigEplan and Accela has significantly improved the efficiency of Brenham's plan review process. Reviewers, including external consultants, now use a single platform to enter comments, enhancing coordination and preventing conflicting directives.

Brenham engages a third-party engineer for city engineer services, who can join in on review sessions as if they were an in-house employee. "It's so cohesive, and it's great because we don't have to do any file sharing. Previously we had two different systems for how internal and external people would access the plans," said Doland.

The single hub for plan review and real-time comments capabilities has allowed reviewers to leave comments directly on the plans, making it easier for all departments to see and respond to each other's feedback in real-time.

"The plan sheet lets you see other reviewers' colors, so you can see who put what comment on the plan set," said Doland, noting that this has further enhanced visibility for the review process.

"DigEplan has elevated our experience in terms of how we notated or marked up the plans, resulting in a time and efficiency savings for both the City and the customer."

Stephanie Doland, Director of Development Services, City of Brenham, TX

Now if engineering says the parking lot must be expanded to meet city standards, then the sanitation department can see the dumpster location is going to change because of the engineering comment and not leave a counterproductive comment," Doland offered as an example.

DigEplan Enables Brenham to Maintain Turnaround Times Despite Staff Shortages

The City of Brenham maintains strict 10-day turnaround time for commercial plan reviews and same-day processing for over-the-counter permits.

After the team member who managed commercial plan review went on unexpected leave earlier this year, Doland said that it's thanks to DigEplan and Accela they've been able to keep up.

"I don't think that we would have been as organized and able to maintain our 10-day turnaround process without DigEplan because of all of the steps associated with intake and coordination".

Digital Services and User Interface Make for a Better Citizen Experience

Shifting to DigEplan has created a better citizen experience for the City of Brenham's applicants. "I think the biggest win for this transition has been that the customer can submit their application, plans, and payment digitally," said Doland.

"Before we had to manage that through email, phone calls, Excel documents, and paper inspection logs. Now, the customer can truly access us at any time," she added.

Tradespeople, who often require quick permit approvals for electrical, mechanical, plumbing, and irrigation work, have been especially fond of this change.

“The over-the-counter trades really appreciate the software and the ability to submit the application, the scope of work, payment and inspections all in one location and see it for any given record — we’ve received a lot of positive comments on that,” she added.

“I don't think that we would have been as organized and able to maintain our 10-day turnaround process without DigEplan because of all of the steps associated with intake and coordination”.

DigEplan Brings the Visibility and Functionality Brenham Was Looking For

After previous challenges with electronic plan review solutions, Brenham found the functionality, customer service, and accessibility it was looking for in DigEplan.

Since Brenham implemented DigEplan in March of 2024, they've transformed their community development services into 100% paperless processes.

Best of all, citizens can now access community development services at their own pace.

“They can actually go on to the software and do what they need to do without even calling us. It's increased the access between the customer and permitting department, and also streamlined the process while ensuring less touch points,” said Doland.

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