A night-time photograph of the Memphis skyline, showing illuminated buildings and a street scene with lights. The image is partially obscured by a dark blue diagonal overlay on the left side where the text is located.

DigEplan[™] Case study Memphis and Shelby County

With a population in the region of 650,000, Memphis and Shelby County wanted to create more efficiency in how they delivered services to citizens. Having created a five-year road map, they aimed to make significant changes in their business model and chose Accela and DigEplan to improve the administration of land and building development.

Navigating a dense regulatory environment and having to incorporate several departments and organizations in the process, Memphis and Shelby County needed to improve both internal and citizen communication.

The combination of Accela and DigEplan enabled the County to realize their digital journey, with an integrated approach to digitize and streamline permitting processes.

Customer-centric planning vision

“Our goal was to create an administrative system that met regulatory demands, in addition to the current and emerging needs of our customers,” said Nidia Logan Robinson, Deputy Division Director, Division of Planning and Development, Memphis and Shelby County.

“To ensure our customers remained at the core of our process enhancements, we constantly evaluated the project to ensure that the organizational structure and the staffing were adequate to meet the short and long-term customer needs. At all times we needed to maintain a hyper-focus on customer service delivery, and we wanted to maximize the use of technology to aid our operational success.”

“Our vision was to create an experience for the customer and staff, along with our development partners.”

“We wanted to provide greater convenience, as well as increase clarity and transparency in the development process for everyone involved.”

Building plan review collaboration

"In a regulatory environment many cities and states can be involved, therefore ease of collaboration was a key requirement for an electronic plan review solution. We wanted to eliminate the majority of paper submissions, whilst delivering value to citizens," continued Nidia.

"As we walked through refining our processes, we looked for a solution that tracked approvals at various steps in the development process, in addition to reducing the time to review, issue, and inspect. We wanted to manage projects from start to finish."

The deep integration of DigEplan in Accela was key for the County to ensure the smooth end-to-end process. Nidia explained: "Accela had an efficient administration development process, so when we looked at plan review, a big factor in our final decision was the seamless integration into Accela. What we mean by 'seamless', is a login and interface built into the Accela platform, with automated data and document management that doesn't require any manual labor."

"It was essential that the selected solution would leverage the functions of Accela, including the workflows and tasks involved. We were impressed with DigEplan's deep integration and how it complemented Accela."

Feature-rich DigEplan

Memphis and Shelby County had an extensive list of thirty-two requirements for their Electronic Plan Review, twenty-four being essential and eight optional. For the County, it was important to ensure the plan review functionality met the needs of the daily users.

"We first looked at desktop options, but quickly established that with so many different parties involved, we needed a more flexible and robust tool. When we evaluated cloud-based tools, we were attracted to DigEplan because the user interface was intuitive and easy to learn, which is essential for a large number of users," said Nidia.

"We love DigEplan's commenting capability, it's the real power of the tool. That, coupled with the corrections report, merges all comments for the reviewers. It meant nothing that is noted is missed, everything is addressed."

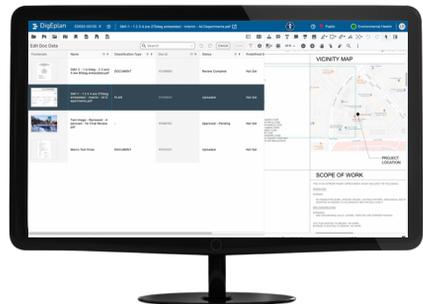
"A plan can go through four reviews before final approval. So, the versioning feature is also important for us. It provides a simple and easy way to track all the different versions of the plans," added Nidia.

Citizens were central to the vision for Memphis and Shelby County when they looked to improve their services:

"Excellent customer service has always been a priority and DigEplan helps us deliver this."

Implementing DigEplan

Memphis and Shelby County worked to implement the technology with TruePoint Solutions as the Accela and DigEplan implementation partner.



Nidia spoke highly of the benefits of working with an implementation partner who had expertise in both systems: "TruePoint Solutions was there to guide us throughout the whole process and their experience working with other municipalities played a key role. They were familiar with challenges and well-rehearsed in both DigEplan and Accela."

"During the implementation, DigEplan was tailored to fit our business rules. TruePoint really pushed us to explore new ways to leverage DigEplan with Accela. One of the key benefits was that the integration to Accela removed complexity for staff. The power of having an integrated tool that works seamlessly with Accela, but also having an expert implementation partner, allows you to customize the solution specifically to your needs."

DigEplan & Accela delivers significant time savings

Memphis and Shelby County tracked key performing metrics to ensure they were achieving their set goals and objectives.

"With DigEplan and Accela, we consistently achieve our plan review goals of under 10 days for commercial plans and under five days for residential plans."

Nidia continued: "Before we started our digital journey, implementation times were routinely over 14 days. The ability to review a plan and add mark-ups simultaneously, significantly contributes to reducing the time it takes. There's no longer a back-and-forth of emails, we now have a central tool that provides full visibility to everyone."

"We are now doubling down on electronic plan review, so any paper submission is accompanied by the electronic plan review. We want to continue to facilitate the seamless review and efficiency we gained through our digital transformation - electronic plan review is necessary for that. We consider DigEplan to be a major factor in helping us modernize our process."



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