



Case Study: City of Vancouver



Customer Overview:

The City of Vancouver, British Columbia, in the southwest corner of Canada, is a scenic coastal community with over a half million residents. While this vibrant port city is a major economic center, it also has a deep-rooted commitment to caring for its people and its environment, as well as fostering opportunities to live, work, and prosper.

Managing the many needs of a diverse community requires expert administration of municipal services and bylaws—from overseeing construction permits and safety, to providing low-cost housing, to ensuring that property owners keep their premises neat and tidy.

City of Vancouver streamlines administration of by laws with Global 360

Challenges

The City of Vancouver's Community Services Group is charged with managing City bylaws, all with specific processes and associated documentation. For example, the City maintains documents on more than 135,000 individual properties and must track and store all of the information related to each one—from the date it was constructed through the life of the structure, including permits, building plans and certificates of occupancy. This can add up to millions of documents.

Carlene Robbins is in charge of managing the bylaws for Vancouver's Community Services Group and understands the challenges well. "We manage over a dozen bylaws, each of which has specific processes and associated documentation," explains Robbins. "For example, we have about 135,000 individual properties in the city and must track and store all the information related to each one, from the date it was constructed for the life of the structure, including permits, building plans, certificates of occupancy, etc. This can add up to millions of documents."

With multiple bylaws and huge volumes of documentation to manage, manual paper-based processes were no longer effective and Robbins needed a more efficient solution.

Solution

Reducing processing time is central to delivering quality service to the Vancouver community, and the Global 360 solution has played a key role in streamlining processes throughout the Community Services Group. For example, in the enforcement area, Global 360 has shaved days off the time required to process complaints.

A typical complaint might be a tenant reporting that the landlord was not providing adequate heat," explains Robbins. "Prior to having Global 360, a complaint like that would be taken by phone, the paperwork filled out, and the documentation routed manually to an inspector. That might take a day or two. Then the inspector would investigate the complaint and write up a report, which would be sent over to a clerk who would draft a letter or order. This could often take another couple of days. So, several days would pass between the time a complaint was registered and when the order went out to the landlord.

Results

Now, everything is handled electronically, allowing us to handle most typical complaints in 24 to 48 hours. "With all the documentation in electronic form, the City is also able to save money by eliminating the need to manually search for records to answer inquiries. For example, if a landlord has contacted the Community Service Group to refute a complaint, service personnel would have to locate the original inspection report and associated order—a time-consuming and costly effort."

Challenges

Maintaining millions of documents on more than 135,000 properties, the City of Vancouver needed a process and document management solution to help them with records management, citizen requests, and processing of permits.

Solution

The City of Vancouver deployed Process360 to reduce processing time from weeks to days, eliminating the need to manually search for records to answer inquiries, and integrating with their permit system to process and route requests through the department.

Results

The city saves more than \$400,000 a year in time spent by staff retrieving paper documents, reduced processing time from weeks to days, and ensures compliance with hundreds of regulatory issues.



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"We'd have to walk to the file room, go through reams and reams of paper to find the documents, and then call the person back to discuss the issue," says Robbins. "We're talking hours and hours of time trying to find documents and responding to people over the phone. Now, a service person can simply type in the address of the property in question and all the information is right there in seconds. We calculated that we're saving about \$400,000 a year just as a result of eliminating the time spent by staff retrieving paper documents."

Further enhancing the effectiveness of the Communications Services Group is the ability of Global 360 BPM Suite to support a wide range of media. Rod MacDonald, who manages the Global 360 environment, explains, "One of the things that has really had a big impact is the ability to store items such as photos. If we are issuing an order to board up an unsafe building, photos are a key piece of evidence supporting that order. They give us a reference point for dealing with landlords ordered to clean up their property. And when working with contractors, we use before and after photos to determine if the contractor has completed the work properly and should be paid."

"It's important that we be able to have as much information at our fingertips as possible to address inquiries and resolve problems," adds Robbins. "Global 360 has made it much faster and easier for us to do that."

Ensuring Regulatory Compliance and Security

The Community Services Group must also ensure compliance with hundreds of regulatory issues, including retention requirements, and has developed a records classification system to work with Global 360.

"The records classification system allows us to maintain various document types and sub-types, which we use to archive documents in the Global 360 system," says MacDonald. "Each document type has a retention period attached to it. We've designed the records classification and indexing to handle all of these various requirements. We've also put flags in the Global 360 system to override default retention periods if a document is involved in a Freedom of Information request or litigation. It's a very flexible system that allows us to handle a wide range of requirements."

Security is another critical aspect of managing the documents and processes. "We have a number of records that are considered sensitive or highly confidential," says Robbins. "We have designed an index in the Global 360 system to protect those records by restricting access to only those individuals with proper authorization. The security capabilities of the Global 360 solution are very important to our ability to meet the needs of the Vancouver community."

Maximizing Efficiency with Web Services

Looking ahead, Robbins and MacDonald see great potential in leveraging the Web to further streamline their processes. They are currently developing a pilot in which Global 360 BPM Suite will be integrated with a permitting system that will accept permit applications via the Web and automatically route the application throughout the department.

"The application will determine the routing based on user input, so it will eliminate the indexing step and automatically route the application to the appropriate staff person," says Robbins. "Once the staff person reviews the application, he or she can then send out a notification through Global 360 to anyone else that needs to be involved in the approval process. We expect this approach to speed the process significantly."

"Work activities will be recorded in the permitting system," explains MacDonald, "but by delivering assignments through Global 360, we can present all the information in a consolidated interface—one that's familiar and easy to use. Since the Global 360 solution is built on Web services, all we have to do is add a tab to view data outside of Global 360. Then once the permits are finalized, they'll be stored in the Global 360 system so that everything is in one place."

"We're looking to streamline everywhere possible," concludes Robbins. "If we can save people from having to drive into the city to apply for permits, or if we can make it faster and easier for our inspectors to address complaints, then that means better service to the citizens of Vancouver. And that's our goal—to respond to the needs of our community efficiently and effectively. Global 360 is helping us do just that."