



PLANNING BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT

Noel C. Taylor Municipal Building
215 Church Avenue, SW, Room 166
Roanoke, Virginia 24011
540-853-1730 fax 540-853-1230
planning@roanokeva.gov

COVER SHEET

Alliance for Innovation – Imagining Innovation application

- “Electronic Submission – A Green Approach”
- City of Roanoke, Virginia
- Darlene Burcham – City Manager
- Bane Compton, Jeff Shawver & Ryan McHugh - Applicants
- 215 Church Avenue, S.W.
Noel C. Taylor Municipal Building
Room 170
Roanoke, VA 24011
- phone: 540-853-1730
- fax: 540-853-1594
- email: ryan.mchugh@roanokeva.gov

Synopsis

“Electronic Building Plan Submission – A Green Approach”

Online Permit Center, eCheck payment, Electronic submission and intake of plans.

The City of Roanoke is pressing forward with a campaign of innovation and sustainability to have a positive effect on our environment. The Clean and Green campaign is a citywide community program working to make our City attractive and environmentally sound. With this initiative the City of Roanoke’s Planning Building and Development Department has implemented a paperless “Green” approach to our building plan review and intake procedures. Intake of plans, applications and payment in electronic form are not only beneficial to the environment, but are helpful to our customers as well.

The City’s Online Permit Center is a positive addition to our green approach. Through this part of our website, customers are able to download forms and fill them out electronically for submission. This paperless service saves valuable time for the customer and our permit intake professionals. Through this site, customers are also able to check on the status of their work and request inspections. These helpful procedures not only reduce paper consumption, but save travel time for customers and inspectors.

The use of eCheck payment is also being implemented online. This eCheck payment is a simple way to pay online by transferring funds from a personal checking or savings account without the use of paper checks. Credit Card payment is also available. These payment forms are a safe and secure option, with no paper consumption.

Submission of building plans and permits electronically is being applied through the use of email, disc and FTP (File Transfer Protocol) options. Through this program, we can reduce paper consumption and seamlessly forward files to other parties involved in the process. Plan review applies digital stamping and comments on the plans. This procedure diminishes ink and paper consumption. Plans are then able to be digitally signed with author information. Other parties may then view specific comments and be aware of all modifications of files. This process enables us to keep secure documents in our database and update information digitally. We are one of the few localities in the State of Virginia using electronic submission of documents.

Components

Innovation/Creativity

The City's comprehensive plan, Vision 2001-2020, has made the increase of information technology to improve services, reduce the reliance on paper and provide greater access and sharing of information a goal for all City departments. The City of Roanoke is partnering with local agencies, educational avenues and national councils to create the Clean and Green campaign, and has further encouraged departments to follow green guidelines and recommendations. The City of Roanoke's Planning Building and Development Department has taken this program into consideration in developing our electronic submission procedure.

The methods and applications we have incorporated for our electronic submission are relatively new (within the past 3 years). We are matching relatively new procedures with existing media, a commercially available electronic permit management system, and laptop computers for field inspectors and large screen monitors to enhance accurate plan review. Saving documents to disc, attaching files to emails and the use of file transfer protocol have been in use for the better part of a decade. In an effort to streamline the process and go green, this method has been initiated.

An outside consultant was not used in the creation of either the Clean and Green campaign or the electronic plan submission option. The Clean and Green proposal was started by City Council members on the behalf of the Mayor of the City of Roanoke. Electronic plan submission and review was initiated by the Building Inspections Division of the City's Planning, Building and Development Department.

Citizen Outcomes

Customer needs and expectations are of the most importance to the City of Roanoke. The customer's need for accurate and expedited submission and intake have been enhanced. The security of eCheck payment options and electronic submission of documents has been improved. The convenience of checking the status of permits and inspection requests is having a positive impact on customers and citizens.

This initiative improved access to our department by allowing citizens and customers to submit documents electronically at their convenience, without the need to come to the office. Forms and documents are available online encouraging ease of the intake process. Equally important is the ability to electronically mark up plans during review and exchange précised comments with architects and engineers to facilitate rapid and accurate corrections and resubmittals as necessary.

Applicable Results and Real World Advice

Most facets of our electronic submission and intake procedures could help all government building departments. Payment by eCheck is safe and secure with a cut down of paper documents. Electronic intake saves time and consumption of paper. Permits and forms are available online for ease of use. Submitting multiple page plans through FTP, disc or email, greatly cuts down the time and need for scanning of documents. Since most documents are created digitally, the convenience to keep these documents as electronic files would save time and money. There would be no need to print these documents to then submit in paper form. Most design firms already have access and the media knowledge to initiate these procedures. No additional training or software purchases need to be made. All of these new procedures would also increase work productivity and streamline the intake process.

As one of the few Building Divisions currently using these procedures, other localities have showed interest in our program. For example, the Chesterfield County Building Department of Virginia has contacted us for information about our electronic submission and review processes.

The results shown in this application have revealed the ease and green advantages to using electronic submission and payment. The City of Roanoke Planning, Building and Development Department feels that through these initiatives, an efficient and environmentally conscious program is having a positive effect in business and in the community.

Case Study Presentation

Our presentation will include an informational PowerPoint slideshow, explaining the different facets of our programs as well as background information about the City of Roanoke.