Hudson County, NJ

Population

672,391

System Replaced

Spatial Data Logic (SDL)

GP Modules Deployed by Hudson County

- Planning
- Site Use
- Street Opening

CUSTOMER CASE STUDY: PLANNING

Hudson County is the most densely populated and fastest growing county in New Jersey. It lies west of Manhattan and was named for Henry Hudson, the sea captain who explored the area in 1609. The county is home to municipal GovPilot customers, Jersey City, North Bergen, Union City, and Hoboken - where GovPilot is headquartered.

Nine of the ten tallest buildings in New Jersey are located in Hudson County, and the county's planning department is among the busiest in the state, often having to process complex planning and zoning applications. As the county has become increasingly developed, planning officials found themselves in need of a more capable, efficient solution for processing applications than the inefficient software they had been using.

Challenge

With a population of more than 650,000 and frequent dense mixed-use commercial and residential development and redevelopment, Hudson County receives numerous complex planning requests per month. For several years the county relied on software from a well-known national government software provider which Hudson County officials found to be inefficient as it was geared toward municipalities and could not handle the complexities of the planning applications that Hudson County often receives. Because the system was not sophisticated, records and applications often had to be shared among staff as paper documents, and one employee of the ten-person staff was fully dedicated to manual data entry responsibilities which took up 5-8 hours per week.

Critically the officials found that the software did not meet the complex needs of their county planning board, and more troubling, it was desktop based which meant that outside consultants, inspectors and commissioners could not access data and plans. Employees had to be at their desk in the office in order to log in which became a problem when work suddenly shifted to remote settings at the outbreak of COVID-19.

Solution

Hudson County's Planning Department implemented GovPilot in March 2020, just as the COVID-19 pandemic was spreading across the northeast. Staff immediately saw the benefits of GovPilot's cloud-based planning module including a significant decrease in phone and email traffic. According to Francesca Giarratana, Division Chief of Planning, GovPilot helped the department, "seamlessly carry on business throughout COVID. Public entities submitted applications online, and all staff worked remote. It was really critical to business continuity."

Since implementing GovPilot, the planning department has seen a big improvement in capabilities and metrics, and the manual data entry responsibilities assigned to one employee have been eliminated, freeing up 5 - 8 hours for that staffer each week.

In a typical year, Hudson County receives more than 90 planning applications, many of which are complex - for skyscrapers or other large development. Prior to GovPilot, the full application process from submission, to hearing, to memorialization often took 2 - 3 months. After implementing GovPilot, the planning department has been able to regularly save two weeks on the processing of each application by uploading documents for review by planning board consultants instead of mailing physical plans.

Now with GovPilot, all employees can log in to GovPilot - remotely if need be - and easily access digital files and records. This includes six staff out of the nine person office who are directly involved with the planning board, one planning engineer, and the commissioner. Ten staff can edit data and there are ten planning board commissioners who can view applications.

Speaking of GovPilot, Giarratana said, "With GovPilot there is a seamless way to send messages to colleagues, and it even solved some internal communications issues we had with our engineering staff. We are now able to view road opening permits that must be reviewed by the division of engineering which has been very helpful."

Results

2 Weeks

By uploading and sharing plans via GovPilot instead of passing physically, the planning process was shortened by two weeks.

40 Hours Per Month

GovPilot saved one employee 40 hours per month of manual data entry from paper forms. Now she focuses on higher-level tasks - no data entry necessary.

Instant Updates

With GovPilot, staff can instantly pull up the records and status of any planning application, and provide a real-time update.

Business Continuity

Hudson County Planning implemented in the middle of COVID-19, enabling staff, inspectors, and commissioners to work remotely.

> " We implemented GovPilot at the end of March [2020] and were able to seamlessly carry on business throughout COVID. Constituents submitted forms online, and our staff worked remotely. GovPilot was really critical to business continuity. "
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> **Francesca Giarratana,** Division Chief of Planning
> Hudson County, NJ

For more information
Call **800-491-6732** or visit **www.govpilot.com**

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