

2008 Showcase in Excellence Award Recipient

Maricopa County Planning & Development Department “Expedited Production Permitting Program”



Digital submission capabilities result in rapid service to customers

Company Information:

Highest Ranking Official:

Joy Rich, Assistant County Manager & Director of the Planning and Development Department

Contact Person:

Suzanne Gray, Mgmt Analyst
(602) 506-7167

suzannegray@mail.maricopa.gov

Type of work:

The Maricopa County Planning and Development Department began issuing building permits after the Board of Supervisors adopted the first building code in 1975. The Department provides planning and development services to constituents of unincorporated Maricopa County in a safe and efficient manner so they can responsibly develop and enjoy real property.

Workforce: 127 employees

Testimonial of Value of Arizona State Quality Awards Program

A major contributing factor to the success of the Expedited Production Permitting Program is that staff has taken ownership of the results they produce. Employees from various sections of the department worked collaboratively to implement process improvements. It is important to mention that everyone involved - the permit technician, the Information Technology trainers, and the managerial staff - are proud of their efforts and I am appreciative of their desire to deliver such a great service to customers. Being able to add the technological feature of digital submission was icing on the cake for us because it helped deliver an even more efficient service to taxpayers.”

~Joy Rich, Maricopa County Assistant County Manager & Director of the Planning & Development Department

Highlights of Organizational Process:

The **Expedited Production Permitting Program** is a rapid, electronic permit process that provides for the issuance of construction permits within a set timeframe to pre-qualified applicants. This process serves development professionals who routinely construct a particular development product like standardized single-family homes.

To ensure public health and safety requirements are met, applicants must meet standardized pre-requisites and be pre-qualified to partake in the process prior to applying. Building permit submittals must be for single-family residences or small residential accessory structures in recently recorded subdivisions, with public water and sewer, and with approved building pad certification elevations. In addition, the applicant is required to use approved standardized construction plans that have already been approved as meeting building codes and maintain a structure for fee payment.

The Development Services Branch of Maricopa County’s Planning and Development Department has developed and deployed The Expedited Production Permitting Program (EPPP) to streamline home building permits for large-scale planned community development in unincorporated and undeveloped land.

Process and Results:

The EPPP has experienced various cycles of improvement resulting in better processing times: three weeks to seven days in 2006, three days in 2007, and is currently meeting or exceeding the goal of processing permit applications in one day.

While the program has experienced cycle time improvements from 93.3 percent in 2007 to 100 percent during 2008, it has also expanded its clientele. The onset of the program included one contractor in 1999 and served 56 contractors in 2008. It was used in 30 developments, 20 mobile home parks, and now includes other projects like swimming pools.

Customer input is pivotal to the success of this program because it provides for organizational learning. Feedback from customers is shared among all staff levels. Furthermore, this feedback information is retained electronically for future reference by anyone in the organization. The EPPP has been referred to as a “closed-loop” process that continues to meet the needs of its customer base. Users are trained before gaining access to the system and do much of the work up front, obtaining pre-approval for site development and residential plans.

Customer Driven Excellence

Driven to provide an excellent, cost-effective and highly efficient process for its customers, the EPPP continually refines and streamlines its processes in response to customer feedback and new technologies. Originally a paper-based permitting process, the EPPP is now entirely electronic. Once involving half a dozen staff who completed specific plan review tasks, the EPPP now utilizes one staff member to effectively and efficiently complete all permitting components.

Focus on the Future

The EPPP focuses on simplifying, standardizing and expediting building permit plan review. Noting housing industry trends toward high volume production building, the program specializes in rapid turnaround and process consistency. Business entities rely heavily on the program’s timeframes. New technologies from scanned building footprints to electronic submittals have been rapidly incorporated and the processes have been streamlined to maximize efficiencies and lower costs. Keyed to the Valley’s critical residential market, the program’s volumes detect market trends. Using available staff resources and portions of its reserve fund built up through the housing boom, the department has taken advantage of the recent housing slowdown to improve its EPPP .

Social Responsibility

The EPPP’s electronic permitting framework exemplifies the department’s focus on social responsibility. Using digital intake maximizes customer service access while minimizing costly customer travel. EPPP customers may submit their plans at any time from the convenience of their home or office. They can view status, pay electronically, and download their approved plans. These efforts demonstrate the department’s efforts to provide cost-efficient, necessary governmental services in a socially responsible manner. Energy costs for travel are minimized. Bureaucratic paperwork is eliminated. And, because the EPPP is available only to builders within approved subdivisions, the program fosters orderly, well-planned development.

Repositioning for Future

The Department began customer benchmarking and surveying practices in 2003. Knowing what drives customer satisfaction assisted with the process design that exists today, and in turn addresses important environmental issues. The paperless EPPP digital permitting process:

- saves customers time and money by reducing the time, travel and cost of submitting applications;
- promotes sustainable development and strengthens the environment by reducing vehicle trips and related air pollution; and,
- limits vehicle emissions that contribute to air-pollution related health conditions, such as asthma.