

LOB #79:

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT**

### **Purpose**

DPZ Information Technology supports the Department of Planning and Zoning Lines of Business and citizens directly on land development and administration activities. These activities rely on timely information dissemination and exchange via web and other technologies such as GIS, 3D modeling, ePlans, database and reports. These technologies facilitate input, analysis, collaboration, citizen outreach, and ultimately the communication of BOS/BZA/PC public hearing information, process, and decision.

### **Description**

The DPZ-IT staff provides daily operational support, training, and coordination as a means to meet land use technology requirements for the department towards the end of serving the public interests with maps, graphics and webpage content and information. Often meeting these needs involves deadlines that are driven by public meetings, public hearing dates, and information requests by BOS, BZA, and PC. In addition, the role of DPZ-IT is to plan, design, and execute solutions, automation, and modernization in support of efforts to improve the speed and efficiency of the planning and development review processes.

Currently, the department is involved in automating input and manual processes as well as digitizing the County land records in order to increase efficiency and eventually reduce evaluation and processing times in support of economic development initiatives. The scope of this effort involves close to 400,000 parcels and their related plats, permits, and other documents being converted, cataloged, and eventually web published. Progress so far has reached 15 percent of historical residential land records being converted and made accessible via the WebTop system. The automation and digitization process will also facilitate making these resources available to the public online.

ePlans is another key project that the department is piloting. This technology allows for the submission, upload, and review of plans that will facilitate the migration of a paper-based, labor intensive, costly processes into digital form. It will enable land application web submission as well as building and site review, automating these processes and facilitating County staff and developer collaboration. The department is also working on modernization efforts to replace the legacy FIDO and Land Development Services (LDS) systems that are overdue for upgrade. The department will coordinate aspects of business needs as selection and implementation of a modern system is achieved.

### **Benefits**

Benefits are directly realized in staff labor savings, printing material costs, self-service of information for citizens mitigating trips to government offices, transparency, and better analytical and communication tools in use by a more technically savvy department. Most of the land use and administration information is posted on the DPZ website for citizen and applicant in a self-service form.

The DPZ website is used as a clearing house for land application and use information, analysis information, public outreach, and hearings and decision information. Formerly, print media, telephone calls, and walk-in visits were standard venues for obtaining land application information. For the last five years, DPZ-IT has aggressively moved most of its public information to the DPZ website in an easy to use, self-service format. The success of this has been demonstrated in a decrease in walk-ins and telephone calls by citizens seeking this information. Over the last year, DPZ-IT has been involved in automating the production of this information via web reports and programming enhancements so that this information can be published with minimal staff intervention.

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As land use applications have grown in complexity due to infill and revitalization type environments, the need to use GIS and 3D modeling technology has become vital in envisioning and communicating the intended development and its impact on neighboring parcels. The use of this technology has made it easier for officials and the public to consider ramifications of development options; better analyses and decisions are rendered than without the use of these tools. DPZ-IT supports many of these land use cases for the BOS, PC, and BZA via pictorials, maps, and oblique imagery 3D scenarios.

ePlans is a key factor in supporting the County's economic development initiative and is highly desired by the development industry. Key returns on investment include expedited development review, staff labor savings, printing cost savings, higher quality graphics, and collaboration via current technology.

## **Mandates**

Land development, administration, and management are regulated by state and federal law, the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, and the Zoning Ordinance. Changes in the regulatory land development and management process need to be implemented in computer systems, and communicated via the web. These often require system changes in fees, process, and policy. Some legislative level changes require public hearing and decision. Mandates create tasks for programming staff to accomplish in the core land development and administration systems FIDO and LDS, the DPZ Web Applications. These updates include Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to support the creation and updates to website pages. These programming changes are made by DPZ IT staff and are coordinated with DIT for their implementation. These computer changes and web updates are performed in a timely manner to meet the demand for current information while tending to the agency's business needs and ensuring compliance with Information Security, Public Affairs, and legislative requirements.

## **Trends and Challenges**

Significant challenges facing DPZ are large inventories of paper-based records, manual business processes that do not make full and efficient use of technology (and produce greater need for storage space). These feed into antiquated core systems and their manual processes that are often overdue for redesign and replacement, and are staff labor intensive.

Additional challenges exist in the form of complex requirements and law that is sometimes difficult to translate into automation, pockets of culture that are resistant to change, and the increasing demand by industry for more automation and decreased review timeframe that may encourage the skipping of checks and balances in place to counteract mistakes.

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## Resources

Category	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Adopted
<b>LOB #79: Information Technology Support</b>			
<b>FUNDING</b>			
<b>Expenditures:</b>			
Compensation	\$670,643	\$754,367	\$743,759
Operating Expenses	50,954	41,203	41,082
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$721,597</b>	<b>\$795,570</b>	<b>\$784,841</b>
General Fund Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Net Cost/(Savings) to General Fund</b>	<b>\$721,597</b>	<b>\$795,570</b>	<b>\$784,841</b>
<b>POSITIONS</b>			
<i>Authorized Positions/Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)</i>			
<b>Positions:</b>			
Regular	8 / 8	8 / 8	8 / 8
<b>Total Positions</b>	<b>8 / 8</b>	<b>8 / 8</b>	<b>8 / 8</b>

## Metrics

Metric Indicator	FY 2013 Actual	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Estimate	FY 2017 Estimate
ePlans land-use applications submitted online	NA	NA	NA	30	180
Land-use, litigation, workload indicator, and other ad-hoc report requests	195	136	147	150	160
Land record pages digitized, indexed, and catalogued	NA	150,000	275,000	500,000	700,000
DPZ website visits	235,990	268,651	273,924	275,000	300,000

Staff members of the information technology branch directly support DPZ staff in their activities relating to information exchange, analysis, and dissemination for the Board, Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, and developers. Much of this work is time sensitive, some is on an ad-hoc basis and needs to be expedited, and some is routine. The metrics above are a sampling of relevant services rendered in support of the agency mission and its efficient operation.

ePlans is a key project that the department is piloting and is considered a factor of economic development. This technology will enable submission, upload, and review of plans that will facilitate the migration of a paper-based, labor intensive, costly process into digital form. It will allow for land application web submission as well as building and site review, automating these processes and facilitating County staff and developer collaboration. The metric of number of cases processed through ePlans will be an indicator of progress from a manual labor-intensive process to an automated process saving staff labor, printing costs, and citizen time.

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Report requests are received both from within the agency and externally from other County agencies or board offices and involve retrieval and analysis of data. They may encompass data snapshots from several web applications, permit and other transactions, GIS and map information, complex queries for historical and current types of rezoning, special permits, and other land use cases, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and statistical data on topics such as workload or staff performance level. This report request metric measures the output level of this effort in providing information services to DPZ and its related business agencies.

Staff in this LOB is also involved in an aggressive initiative to digitize and catalog into a database, all land records for the entire County, currently contained in degrading paper form. The scope of this effort involves approximately 366,000 County addresses and their related plats, permits, and other documents. This metric will measure percent completion of the whole, and database mining value (as it starts to capture a comprehensive portion of land records only contained on paper). The availability of this information on the Local Area Network (LAN), will increase staff efficiency in quickly finding and retrieving lot and parcel information for research, violation and compliance issues, setback certifications, land development, and permitting information. Once the project is completed, these land records will be made available to citizens via the web for permitting and other services.

The DPZ website, both internal and external, are becoming a primary means of information exchange for DPZ. The internal website also provides staff work-tools that yield greater efficiency. The external website provides land use case and process information formerly only obtained via phone calls, walk-ins, brochures, pamphlets, print media, and other static communications methods. This metric is measuring the effectiveness of this transition for DPZ and is related to efficiency and service quality in that it enables self-service of information for the user in a timely and effective fashion.