

Quality and Productivity Commission
33rd Annual Productivity and Quality Awards Program
"Empowering Innovative Solutions"

2019 APPLICATION

Title of Project (Limited to 50 characters, including spaces, using Arial 12 point font):

NAME OF PROJECT: Goodbye Yellow Manila Folder, Hello Connectivity

DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION/ADOPTION: FEBRUARY 1, 2017

(Must have been fully implemented for a minimum of at least one year - on or before July 1, 2018)

PROJECT STATUS: Ongoing One-time only

HAS YOUR DEPARTMENT PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED THIS PROJECT? Yes No

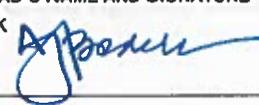
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Describe the project in 15 lines or less using Arial 12 point font. State clearly and concisely what difference the project has made.

1 In mid-2014, the Department of Regional Planning (DRP) undertook an ambitious
 2 program to digitize and archive ministerial(i.e., by-right) documents, totaling more than
 3 31,000 to date. Nearly two-thirds of the approvals are Business License Referrals
 4 required for businesses prior to business license issuance by the County Treasurer and
 5 Tax Collector (TTC). Initial staff access to the digitized approvals was through the
 6 Internet-based DRP geographic information system (GIS). Building on the digitizing
 7 momentum, beginning in late summer 2016, ministerial Site Plan Review land use
 8 approvals issued since early 2015 were scanned and made available through DRP's
 9 online public portal in addition to the Business License Referral approvals. By early
 10 2017, the public had immediate online access to ministerial site plan approvals for
 11 various land uses, including new residences, residential room additions, accessory
 12 dwelling units (ADU), affordable mixed use residential developments, and commercial
 13 developments. Since late summer 2016, more than 7,000 ministerial Site Plan Review
 14 land use approvals as well as 24,000 Business License Referrals have been made
 15 available through the GIS web mapping application and DRP online public portal.

BENEFITS TO THE COUNTY

(1) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST AVOIDANCE	(2) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST SAVINGS	(3) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL REVENUE	(1) + (2) + (3) = TOTAL ANNUAL ACTUAL/ESTIMATED BENEFIT	SERVICE ENHANCEMENT PROJECT
\$	\$	\$	\$	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

ANNUAL = 12 MONTHS ONLY

SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS Department of Regional Planning 320 W Temple Street, Rm. 1360 Los Angeles, CA 90112		TELEPHONE NUMBER
PROGRAM MANAGER'S NAME Mark Herwick, AICP 		TELEPHONE NUMBER 213 974 6470 EMAIL mherwick@planning.lacounty.gov
PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME AND SIGNATURE (PLEASE CALL (213) 893-0322 IF YOU DO NOT KNOW YOUR PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME) Hsiao-Ching Chen 	DATE 6/24/2019	TELEPHONE NUMBER 213 974 6559 EMAIL hchen@planning.lacounty.gov
DEPARTMENT HEAD'S NAME AND SIGNATURE Amy J. Bodek 	DATE 6/24/2019	TELEPHONE NUMBER 213 974 6401

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1st FACT SHEET – LIMITED UP TO 3 PAGES ONLY: Describe the **challenge(s), solution(s), and benefit(s)** of the project **to the County**. What quality and/or productivity-related outcome(s) has the project achieved? Provide measures of success **and specify assessment time frame**. Use Arial 12 point font.

Yellow manila folders are symbolic of bureaucracy in government operations. An application submitted to the Department of Regional Planning is likely to be put in a manila folder and then passed from one hand to another until it gets approved. Because preservation of records is essential to operations, the folder sits in a cabinet until it is packed away with other folders to be sent to a storage facility. At these facilities millions of boxes filling a 20-foot ceiling warehouse is a sight to behold.

Even with storage facilities there are instances when files are misplaced and thus no longer accessible to anyone until located. Staff may reach out to allied County departments, such as Public Works (DPW) or TTC, to obtain a copy of the original DRP approval document, which they may have retained after processing their own approvals. However, this arrangement is inconvenient for all departments involved and retention policies may have led to disposal of such documents. Having these DRP approvals digitized and available through Internet-based systems alleviates slowdowns in processing because they are immediately available through network connectivity to staff and others in allied permitting departments such as TTC and DPW; increases public access to these files; and contributes to a DRP operational shift in managing data and planning documents more effectively through digital technologies. Furthermore, digitizing paper documents contributes to alleviating cluttered work environments; freeing up office space for more effective work and customer service uses; and reducing the costs for maintaining offsite storage. Presently, DRP stores more than 7,700 file boxes offsite at a cost of nearly \$14,000 annually.

The objective of the program was to digitize the full historical record of hard copy ministerial Business License Referral approvals dating back to the 1970s housed onsite in the Land Development Coordinating Center (LDCC) and to create a digital system that could be expanded to all DRP documents that require archiving and subsequent access by staff and the public. This program, developed completely in-house by planning and GIS staff, digitized ministerial approvals and allowed all County employees and the public to access approvals at any time in a matter of seconds.

From mid-2014 through early 2015, planning and GIS staff coordinated efforts to obtain historical Business License Referral approvals housed onsite, scan them into Adobe PDF format, and upload them into DRP's file servers. Through an extensive correlation process conducted by the GIS team, more than 21,000 historical Business License Referral approvals were uploaded to the DRP file servers, linked with parcels, and made available in the GIS web mapping application. By early 2015, all historical Business License Referral approvals were available through the GIS web

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mapping application to County staff for on-demand digital access. Planning staff had simultaneously initiated work processes whereby new reviews and approvals of Business License Referrals were immediately scanned and made available through the GIS web mapping application. Throughout 2015, more than 600 new Business License Referral approvals were uploaded to the servers, and this has continued at the same rate throughout subsequent years. Building off the success of scanning Business License Referrals and making them digitally available, the DRP staff subsequently initiated the Site Plan Scanning Program in late 2016. Modelling the Business License Referral process, ministerial Site Plan Review approvals were scanned and uploaded, ready for immediate digital access. To date, more than 7,000 ministerial Site Plan Review approvals have been scanned and uploaded.

The digital availability of more than 31,000 ministerial planning approvals has tremendously enhanced the work process for planners counseling the public and conducting research. This innovation led to further improvements, including greater access to planning approvals by allied agencies such as TTC and DPW. The availability of Business License Referral approvals at the touch of a button in early 2015 led to a palpable change in planners' work at the LDCC public front counter. Previously, planners kept customers waiting at the counter for a long period of time while they researched paper files. After the records were digitized, planners quickly scrolled through multiple approvals to get the information necessary to assist the customer. Subsequently, the availability of ministerial Site Plan Review approvals further enhanced the research process. Paper plans no longer had to be shuffled between DRP and DPW staff during the land development process because staff from all County agencies could find them on County Internet portals in early 2017. Aside from law enforcement records, land use records are the most sought after. DRP processes about 300 public records requests every year. Until recently, requested files had to be shuttled from the storage facility to headquarters where the files were viewed in person. A growing number of public records requests can now be accommodated through online means.

The program to digitize planning approvals enabled DRP employees to consider better ways of managing their work and improving customer service. Employees were motivated to implement creative uses of technology that improved efficiency in their work processes and the public was empowered with greater access to planning approvals through digital mediums. Synergies from the program improved allied County agencies' access to planning approvals necessary for their own customer service.

The cost for the program is tiered off existing resources such as the County's long established Internet infrastructure and extensive digital connectivity in the workplace. Costs directly attributable to the program over four years were two large format scanners including maintenance for \$14,000 and \$288,000 attributable to staff time.

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Staff time included training DRP staff on the new methods of saving and handling digital approvals. In total, DRP now has at least one scanner at its headquarters and at each of its eight field office locations.

Cost savings have been achieved by the reduction in staff time to access the digital information. A simple calculation is one hour of staff time saved per month by the number of the DRP staff involved in the processing of ministerial planning approvals. Over two years, with 30 percent of the total DRP staff making use of the digital information, the cost savings is approximately \$172,800. The cost savings for the public having access to planning documents through Internet connectivity is qualitatively substantial with the need to drive to a planning office to pick-up plans no longer necessary. Nor do applicants need to drive to allied agencies such as DPW in the development permitting process because the plans are available to staff online. Furthermore, environmental impact costs attributable to traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions are mitigated by the reductions in trips necessary to retrieve documents.

This program harnessed Internet connectivity to provide on-demand staff and public access to ministerial planning approvals. It generated inter-department and intra-department benefits by improving information flow and communications regarding approved projects. It has improved the efficiency of the County’s professional staff and provided valuable time savings for applicants by not requiring them to pick up hard copies of approvals.

DRP processes approximately 600 Business License Referral approvals and 1,300 ministerial Site Plan Review approvals each year. The digitization program, which was in full swing by late summer 2016, established a new work process that no longer required staff or the public to request hard copies of these documents from offsite storage. The cumulative effect is tremendous with each passing day as new approvals are added for online retrieval. The total number of ministerial planning approvals online is more than 31,000 and continuing to grow. Planners at the front counter swiftly pull up approved plans to discuss matters ranging from yard depth requirements to oak tree encroachments, providing a customer service not available just two years ago. Planners consult with Public Works staff by examining the same records from different offices in real time while communicating with each other via email or telephone. When Building and Safety needs to review a planning approval to ensure compliance before issuing a building permit, it can be retrieved immediately online.

The program to digitize ministerial planning approvals created a new service for unincorporated Los Angeles County residents by facilitating immediate access to approved documents through the Internet. The program enhances customer service and improves planners’ work processes and communication and information sharing among County departments. Digital access to planning approvals and the resulting benefits have established a foundation for additional digital solutions and is a model for digitization efforts in more aspects of DRP’s operations and customer services.

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Linkage to the County Strategic Plan – 1 page only. Which County Strategic Plan goal(s) does this project address? Explain how. Use Arial 12 point font.

The program to digitize DRP ministerial planning approvals is in alignment with a number of the goals from the County’s Strategic Mission to “Establish superior services through inter-Departmental and cross-sector collaboration that measurably improves the quality of life for the people and communities of Los Angeles County.” The focused digitization effort of DRP had its genesis in ensuring historical archival data relevant to current-day land use processing activities related to the operations of other County agencies was readily available to shorten processing times among all agencies involved.

Goal III.2.2 “Leverage Technology to Increase Visibility of and Access to Service” was achieved through the digitized archives that have lessened the time required to research the planning history necessary for approving Business License Referrals which are required by TTC before their issuance of business licenses. As the digitization effort progressed ministerial Site Plan Review land use approvals were included and immediately available to customers via the DRP online public portal, alleviating the need for paper or traveling to pick up plans. Allied agencies such as DPW, which rely on DRP approvals as a condition for issuing permits have the same immediate digital access as does the public. Communication is heightened and consistent among allied agencies in the development process using Internet connectivity for access and review of ministerial planning approvals prepared by DRP.

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COST AVOIDANCE, COST SAVINGS, AND REVENUE GENERATED (ESTIMATED BENEFITS TO THE COUNTY): If you are claiming cost benefits, include a calculation on this page. Please indicate whether these benefits apply in total or on a per unit basis, e.g., per capita, per transaction, per case, etc. You must include an explanation of the County cost savings, cost avoidance or new revenue that matches the numbers in the box. Remember to keep your supporting documentation. Use Arial 12 point font

Cost Avoidance: Costs that are eliminated or not incurred as a result of program outcomes. Please indicate whether these are costs to the County or to other entities.

Cost Savings: A reduction or lessening of expenditures as a result of program outcomes. Please indicate whether these were expenditures by the County or by other entities.

Revenue: Increases in existing revenue streams or new revenue sources to the County as a result of program outcomes.

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