APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2016.** Please include this application form with electronic entry.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Albemarle County

Program Title: Digital Plan Review – Providing Customer Service Using Electronic Collaboration

Program Category: Customer Service

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: Thomas C. Foley

Title: County Executive

Signature: _____ Thomas C. Foley _____

State the problem, challenge or situation faced by the locality and how the program fulfilled the awards criteria (innovation, partnering or collaboration and a model for other localities). Tell how the program was carried out, including financing and staffing, and the program's results.

Digital Plan Review – Providing Customer Service Using Electronic Collaboration

Through CountyView, Laserfiche, and BlueBeam

One of the many daily activities for the Albemarle County Planning Division of the Community Development Department is site plan, subdivision plats, road plans and Watershed Protection Ordinance (WPO) plan reviews. Gradually, paper based processes are being replaced by digital process. With the paper site plan review there were and in some cases still many rolls and sheets of paper involved in submitting and resubmitting an application. We realized that this use of paper is costly & wasteful, so we set out to change it.

What we accomplished

We were looking for a software package to enable digital site plan, subdivision plats, road plans and WPO plan reviews. The County has a great program called the Innovation Marketplace. The Innovation Marketplace is a county wide web site where staff can submit ideas for internal grant funds. The purpose of the grant funds are to allow innovative ideas to go beyond the "free" stage and purchase products and/or services to help the government become more efficient through innovation. As a team we submitted and received Innovation Grant funding to purchase a system for digital site plan reviews.

With our grant, we looked at what other localities were doing and ultimately went with Bluebeam, a product that was affordable and aligned with our existing CityView (CountyView) and Laserfiche systems.

We began using Bluebeam and took advantage of many of its capabilities right away. The main functions we're using include:

- Mark up features
- Comparison tools
- Real time collaboration (Studio session)
- Vu – free version – enables other departments and outside agencies to participate at no cost
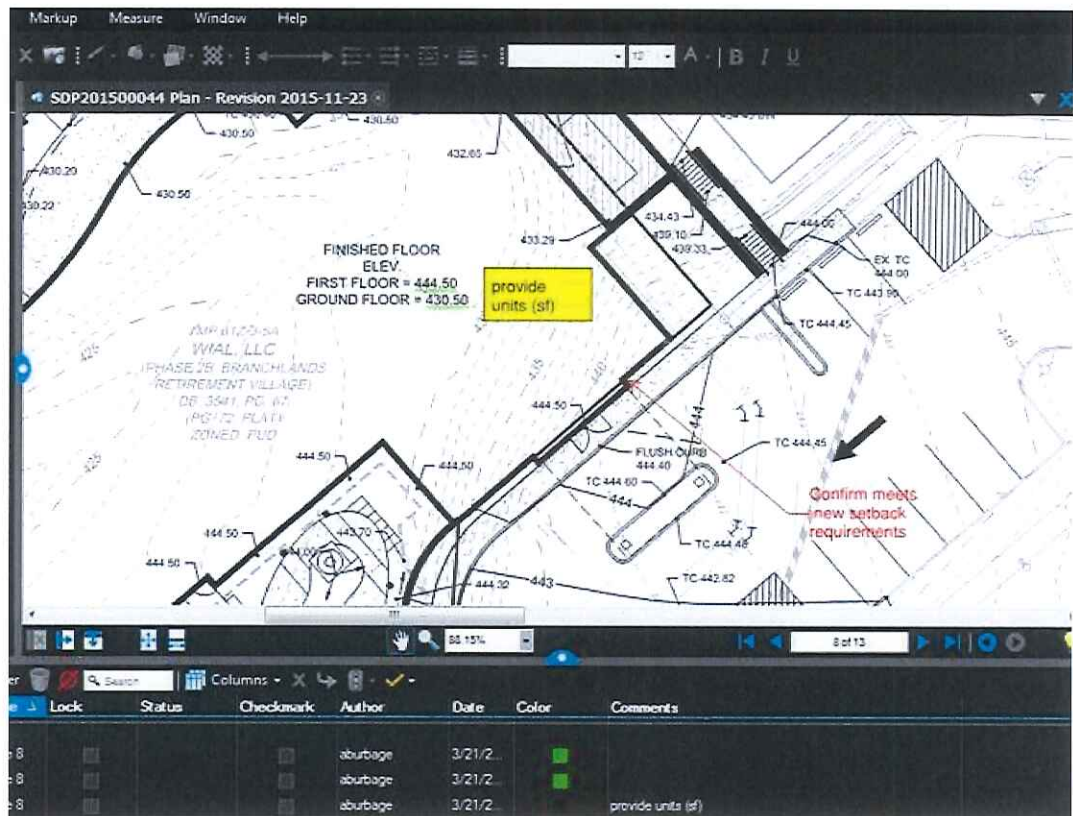

Figure 1- BlueBeam Interactive Mark-up on Digital Site Plan

After a significant amount of internal testing, we created an intake and review process modeled after paper review. This approach is something we would be glad to share with other planners so they could learn from our success and mistakes.

Lessons Learned

- Talk to everyone involved start to finish – from intake staff to IT to PC & BOS members

- Start off slowly – handpicked our participants, allowed us to make sure our process was working

- Challenges – (internal) reluctance to embrace new technology, (external) developers don't like to be guinea pigs!

Results

- 16 applications submitted to date

- 8 licenses, including Vu software on our CDD laptops so we can take plans to meetings for everyone to review easily

- Have buy in from Fire Rescue, VDOT, water & sewer authority, service authority

- Has reduced the amount of paper involved in reviewing a plan

- Time savings – quicker to distribute plans, compare versions

- Improved coordination of review comments

- Public can view submittals easily through Laserfiche without coming in; ordinarily an electronic version isn't available until after the plan is approved

What's on the horizon

- More customers, more plans

- Electronic fees

- Web based application - seamless integration with CountyView and Laserfiche

Since we have the ability for the public to look up status of plans on our CountyView web application:

http://countyviewweb.albemarle.org/ and we have many of our plans already digitized and linked from

CountyView to Laserfiche; the next step is to link BlueBeam into the start of the process – providing our goal of a 100% digital plan review process with all the review notes included as they happen rather than created on paper, scanned, stored, and linked to our other systems. This provides great customer service – efficiently propelling the site plan review process forward and with more transparency.

SHORT OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM

Over the years the Albemarle County Community Development Department (CDD) has made significant investments in technology to streamline operations. CDD is an avid user of CountyView and Laserfiche software and worked with CityView (CountyView) and Laserfiche to successfully integrate those software packages.

Leveraging that success, CDD submitted and received an innovation fund grant to purchase and try a new software package – BlueBeam. BlueBeam allows for digital site plans, subdivision plats, road plans and WPO plan review and thereby reduces the time for application and reapplication. BlueBeam is reducing paper production and involving many partners in plan reviews from the onset.

The goal now is to tie the BlueBeam process directly into the CountyView and LaserFiche processes and completely digitize the plan review process.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF PROGRAM

Albemarle County Community Development Department (CDD) continues to streamline the site plan review process. In recent years, CDD put all completed site plans, subdivision plats, road plans and Water Protection Ordinance plans online through the use of CountyView Web – and tied the process to Laserfiche where paper based plans have been scanned in and indexed for public view. CDD is now embarking on the next stage of the process, using BlueBeam software to enable the digital review of plans; and in the process improving customer service, reducing paper production, and providing ease of use for multiple planning partners.