



Mecklenburg County and the City of Charlotte, North Carolina, Report That Use of Autodesk Digital Solution Saves Time and Money Throughout the Plan Review Process

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Local Developers, Engineers and Surveyors Support the New Paperless Process to Improve Overall Coordination Between Review Agencies, Cut Review Cycle Times and Expedite Approvals

SAN RAFAEL, Calif., Jun 2, 2003 (BUSINESS WIRE) -- Despite the slow economy nationwide, Mecklenburg County and the City of Charlotte, North Carolina are experiencing strong business growth and a vigorous expansion in local construction. In 2002 alone, Charlotte awarded nearly 20,000 building permits representing roughly \$2.3 billion of new construction. Not content to simply enjoy their good fortune, government planners and building administrators have been proactively working to maintain and improve the favorable economic climate for developers and contractors. Key to this strategy was the recent implementation of a digital development plan submittals process built around an integrated collaboration and design review solution from Autodesk, Inc. (Nasdaq:ADSK).

Introduced in February of 2003, the digital submittals solution incorporates a secure Autodesk(R) Buzzsaw(TM) collaboration site with Volo(TM) View software and Design Web Format(TM) (DWF(TM)) technology, a web-based distribution format for quickly, accurately and cost-effectively reviewing and redlining digital designs. The Autodesk solution enables developers to submit plans as DWF files, thereby largely eliminating the need for bulky and expensive paper plans. Once city and county staffers have checked plans for code and zoning regulation compliance using a viewer supplied by Autodesk, they simply email a notification back to the developer directing them to the redlined plans stored on the Buzzsaw project collaboration site. After making any needed changes, developers can then resubmit plans immediately because the Buzzsaw site is available 24/7 -- unlike city and county offices, which close at 5 p.m.

Linda Beverly, subdivision administrator with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission, noted that the Autodesk solution will also bring significant cost savings. "We expect to see an enormous reduction in the amount of paper being used in the process. If all submittals are done using Buzzsaw, we'll see a reduction in paper usage of 63 percent overall and as much as 88 percent for record maps. That's not only good for the environment, but it will save taxpayers and developers money as well. Also, because Autodesk provides a fully hosted solution, we didn't have to figure out who would be responsible for housing and maintaining the software and hardware or for systems and database administration. Those issues can slow down even the best initiatives. In choosing Autodesk, we were able to focus our energy on developing a program that would really work."

"Managing plans and keeping the approvals process moving forward is much easier with the Autodesk solution," remarked Patrick Noonan of PJN Consulting, a firm that assisted in the implementation of the project. "With plans stored in one central location, staff have wherever, whenever access. Review teams can confer by phone while looking at the same document at the same time, ensuring greater consistency in redline comments, cutting travel time and reducing miscommunications."

Launched initially as a pilot program, the city and county are currently using their Autodesk solution to process single-family subdivision and plat maps, though they plan to expand the review process to include other document types, including such as multi-family, mixed use, and ultimately commercial/industrial plans. With Autodesk's new and simple tools that allow customers to distribute and receive digital design information, it is expected that developers will soon have the option of sending final approved documents to the Register of Deeds for recording electronically.

"The need for extensive paper-based documentation and stringent but necessary submittal procedures have long slowed the planning and permitting process," said Amar Hanspal, senior director, Autodesk Building Collaboration Services. "Using our collaboration and viewing technologies, Autodesk creates tailored solutions that smooth and expedite interactions between developers and government agencies. As the building community in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County have learned, Autodesk delivers value across the entire industry and at all points in the building process."

Mecklenburg County and the City of Charlotte

The City/County are looking to solicit the interest of other local engineering and surveying firms in the hopes of further shaping the future of the digital development plan submittal program. In order to participate, contact Mike Kemp of Mecklenburg County at 704/336-4918.

About Autodesk

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