

Design Plan Review Goes Electronic at Montgomery County Parks Department



ProjectDox Helps Montgomery County (Maryland) Parks Raise the Bar for Public Service Excellence

Located just a stone's throw from Washington, D.C., Montgomery County, MD is a 495-square mile business, cultural, and research center. Over one million people enjoy access to more than 400 parks, hiking trails, athletic fields, campgrounds, nature centers, conservation preserves, and other recreational areas that encourage people of all ages to enjoy the outdoors and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Montgomery Parks' mission is two-fold: To provide a safe, accessible, and green park system that benefits all Montgomery County citizens and to conserve the County's rich natural resources.

The Need for ProjectDox

The Park Development Division is responsible for managing park design, refurbishment, and review from project inception through construction. A team of project managers, landscape architects, architects, engineers, drafts people, and consultants work through a multi-step business process for each park project in the pipeline. To streamline this process, the Park Development Division Chief wanted to implement electronic project management to enhance efficiency and improve plan approval throughput.

ProjectDox enabled Park Development to achieve a faster time to value by cutting three weeks off the design plan review cycle. Reviews now take one quarter of the time, and project managers receive stakeholder comments 75% sooner. Furthermore, moving to ePlans reduced paper consumption and printing costs.

"Throughout my tenure at Parks, I've had a long-term vision: To digitally transform our current business process from a paper-based strategy to an all-electronic workflow," commented Division Chief Mitra Pedoeem. "Doing so would improve collaboration between internal reviewers and external stakeholders while establishing an easily accessible, centralized hub for all project-associated information for the complete project lifecycle."

ProjectDox Benefits

Before Park Development started using ePlans, design plan review was a manual, paper-intensive process. The bottom line today: ProjectDox enabled Park Development to cut three weeks off the design plan review cycle. Reviews now take one quarter of the time, and project managers receive stakeholder comments 75% sooner.

As one Parks Project Manager puts it, "Working with ePlans is so much easier than the old manual process. We no longer have to pull things together from diverse sources. Instead, all project-related information – Word documents, PDFs, specifications, drawings, construction plans, building plans, videos, spreadsheets, photos, and manuals – lives electronically in ProjectDox. We simply compare plans online to determine which comments don't jibe and communicate with the project team through ePlans to resolve all conflicts. And, let's not forget accountability. With ePlans, we know exactly where process bottlenecks are. This helps me move projects forward more efficiently."

ProjectDox Time to Value Features

ProjectDox helps Montgomery Parks improve plan development and approval throughput.

- **Comprehensive collaboration tools** stimulate electronic communication between internal and external stakeholders for faster and more accurate project review. Files managed in ProjectDox are sharable and easily accessible by Parks project participants at any time.
- **Over 150 document types supported** enhances usability. Consultants can create initial drawings with their existing in-house tools such as AutoCAD, while internal Parks reviewers can mark up the renditions with ProjectDox instead of the native application.
- **Open access** allows Parks stakeholders and authorized citizens to access ProjectDox via a standard web portal. On the IT side, open access also means that ProjectDox can integrate with back-office applications such as permitting and land management software. This approach simplifies job operation and preserves investments in existing technical infrastructure and workflows.



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ProjectDox can be integrated with other government software and e-permitting products. Talk to your Avolve Software sales representative for details.

Two other important ProjectDox benefits are portability and transparency. With ProjectDox, it doesn't matter where one works. Reviewers and Project Managers can view projects anywhere there is Internet access. In addition, ProjectDox supports transparent operation. Team members can make more informed decisions because they are all looking at the same information. All information about a project is recorded and reported upon. Furthermore, moving to ePlans reduced paper consumption and printing costs.

How ePlans Works

Powered by ProjectDox, ePlans enables Parks project participants from diverse business units operating at different sites, disciplines, and schedules to perform concurrent review of the same plan documents, thereby promoting better communication and increased productivity. The software tightly controls the flow of data from one reviewer to another based on business rules, or workflow, to keep the project on track and enforce accountability.

A Park Development project manager initiates a Parks project (for example, a playground renovation or a trail extension) and sends an email invitation to consultants and internal stakeholders to access ProjectDox via the ePlans website portal. The project manager assigns specific tasks and due dates to each invitee. He/she uploads existing project files, and consultants upload the first round of plan drawings. Thus begins a back-and-forth, workflow-driven electronic conversation among team members until the project manager okays the final design. At that point, the workflow sends the plans for quality assurance approval and division chief signoff.

Throughout this iterative electronic process, reviewers read each other's comments, mark up drawings, and overlay document versions to view all changes simultaneously, generate reports, and resolve potential conflict with minimal effort. ProjectDox provides the intelligent workflow and the necessary collaboration, viewer, and markup tools. The software also maintains a complete audit trail of project activity to reinforce individual accountability.

