

City of Mansfield, TX



Delivering Our Citizens the User-Friendly Digital Service Platform They Expect

The City of Mansfield, Texas is a suburban community in the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area with a population of approximately 70K. The City brought on a new Director of Building Services in early 2019 with the specific charter of implementing a digital platform to replace the dated and inconsistent plan review process in place at the time. Mansfield's population has a median age of 35 and the citizens expected online access and a digital service level that the inefficient paper-based submission and review process was not providing.

“Our citizens asked for a more accessible process. We needed something that was more holistic that would integrate our customer portal, electronic submittal and review - and permitting and inspection.”



Image provided by City of Mansfield TX, <https://www.mansfieldtexas.gov/>

Population:

73,000

Permitting/LMS System:

MyGov

Workflows:

Building, Engineering, Planning

Avolve Solutions:

OAS, ProjectDox, PlansAnywhere

The City of Mansfield had an aggressive timeline of getting an automated system live by the end of 2019. They knew they needed to move the procurement and implementation forward quickly once a solution was chosen. The City evaluated three different solutions that were a potential fit for their needs and considered several key factors in this decision:

- 1) Ability to implement quickly
- 2) Quality and ease of online service to their citizens
- 3) Successful training and adoption for staff

Avolve's Online Applicant Service portal (OAS) and ProjectDox for ePlan review were the stand-out solutions to best meet these needs.

Mansfield's new Director of Building Services, Wade McLaurin's previous role provided regional experience overseeing large airport projects. He knew firsthand the value Avolve's ProjectDox electronic plan review solution was bringing to other cities in the region like Dallas and Houston. He felt confident that Avolve's solution was the right one for Mansfield.

Critical Success Factors

A Solution That Could Be Phased In

The City was originally interested in exploring replacing the current land management/permitting tool as part of a new combined solution, but quickly realized such an endeavor would require a minimum 18 month implementation - time they did not have. Instead, they determined that selecting a solution that could be implemented in phases was the best choice. A phased approach enabled meeting the year-end timeline of automating the highest volume permit flows for Residential and Commercial Buildings as phase one. McLaurin recommended starting with OAS and ProjectDox, and then look at replacing the permitting back end at a later date, "Cities are averse to change, and I felt it would be a much smoother process if phased."

Ability to Implement Quickly

The City's predominant factor in selecting Avolve was the proven quick turnaround for implementation. Avolve has over 1000 deployed plan review processes. With 15 years of domain expertise, Avolve had the capacity to get the City running and live in the condensed timeframe required. Implementation began in August of 2019 and the City went live with the online submission portal (OAS) and electronic plan review of Residential and Commercial Building permits in January 2020. The City would very quickly realize just how critically beneficial that timing was to their permitting operations.

Accelerating Procurement with Purchasing Vehicle

Due to effective foresight and planning, the City was fortunately able to avoid the lengthy time delays often incurred in a municipal procurement process. City Council approval was quick because the members had been kept up to date on the history of the needs and intent to go digital. Council had also been shown examples of the Avolve solutions during the evaluation process. By involving Council early and often during the process to go digital, the approval was handled as a directive versus a debate, and Capital funds had been set aside ahead of the selection. The City was able to avoid a time-consuming RFP process by working through the State of Texas BuyBoard Cooperative. This enabled a direct procurement through the technology provider, SHI.

Proven Training Ensures Technology Adoption

Another key factor to the City's success was Avolve's robust and developed training program for both staff and citizen applicant users. Both onsite and virtual training was critical for buy-in and the effective use by staff and the community. According to McLaurin, "Don't ever underestimate your team's ability to learn something new. Our team learned quickly that even though they were used to turning pages of these massive plan sets that they could see everything they needed to see easier through the electronic process."

Navigating a Pandemic and Envisioning the Future

When the global pandemic hit in the Spring of 2020, the City was in the fortunate position of having the online system in place and staff and community trained to continue operating safely online. Both April and June of 2020 were record setting months in number of permits issued. Residential and commercial building projects were able to continue and keep their economy moving.

“Avolve's product speaks for itself, but I would say the customer service that we received from everyone from the original proposal/sales, implementation, training and everyone has been the best that I've dealt with throughout my 30 years. – Wade McLaurin, Director of Building Services”