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Kristy Parker
Permit Center Coordinator
Salinas, California Permit Services Center



INDUSTRY

- Local Government – Planning & Building

LOCATION

- Salinas, California

CHALLENGES

- Single microfiche copy offered no disaster recovery solution
- Inability to easily retrieve permit plans, structural calculations and inspection results across microfiche; digital files stored on zip drives; paper archives

BMI PRODUCTS & SERVICES

- 50,000 microfiche and paper permit records converted at BMI facility
- Existing digital records migrated into Digital ReelL application
- All records hosted at BMI's secure data center and replicated off-site
- Digital ReelL Web-based app offers central repository for all information

BENEFITS

- Disaster recovery requirements met with multiple record copies stored in Sunnyvale and Sacramento
- Fast search and retrieval from the web enables staff to provide timely service to citizen requests

Case Study



Overview

The Salinas Permit Services Division preserves public safety by ensuring that both residential and commercial building projects are built according to applicable building codes, city ordinances and state laws. The Permit Services Division is comprised of permit clerks, plan check staff and building inspectors that seek to provide timely intake, review and inspection of all private development projects to help stimulate community development and growth.

The Division was heavily reliant on microfiche, paper and unstructured digital files as a means to archive and store permit plans and other information. Permit Services had a desire to digitally convert these assets and centrally store them but it took a few years to generate the required budget.

Kristy Parker, Permit Services Coordinator, states “We met with BMI prior to any funds becoming available. We kept in touch and were impressed with BMI's comprehensive offering to scan microfiche, paper and existing digital records into a single, hosted repository.”

A Digital Photo Frame Sparks a Fire and Leads to a Close Call

Parker explains, “Our building is an old bank and the archived microfiche was stored on trays in the vault, alphabetized by street name. We would use an aging reader printer to search for and locate needed records.”

This was the only copy of the information and in 2002, it was nearly lost in a fire triggered by a plugged-in digital photo frame. The microfiche was chemically cleaned and recovered, but it took close to a year. It also exposed the possibility of complete loss without an effective disaster recovery plan that included an off-site copy.

Parker states, “BMI folks stopped by our office to discuss converting these records. We had microfiche, paper and existing, digital documents that we wanted digitized and easily retrievable from a central repository. They offered the full solution, including scanning and the hosted application.”

Microfiche, Paper and Existing PDFs Converted into Hosted Digital Reel Application

The Permit Center archived legacy permit plans and associated documentation on approximately 50,000 jacketed microfiche. In addition, the Permit Center had newer records that had been scanned from paper to digital PDFs and stored on CDs and zip drives. Current plans, in paper format, were in the queue to get digitally scanned.

Parker states, “Once I sat down with the BMI account team to discuss how we’d work together, I knew that BMI could handle all the media formats that we had our records stored on. This, along with their close location and the detailed way they implement projects, made working with BMI an easy choice.”

Hosting Enables Web Access to All Records from a Centralized Interface

Parker states, “The information is now digital and stored with BMI. Multiple copies of information are stored in Sunnyvale and Sacramento so that no single copy of the information is at risk in an event like a fire or earthquake.”

The Permit Center has approximately ten staff employees that log in to the system. Access to records is through the Digital Reel application, accessible from a browser, such as Google Chrome. Security is such that only a few on-site workstations are able to access the Digital Reel application and the data.

Parker continues, “An example search might be triggered from a commercial building getting converted from one restaurant to another restaurant. The new restaurant contractors may want to view old plans on file with us so that they can discover where a septic tank or water piping originated to help facilitate appropriate changes to the kitchen.”

When such a request is made, a staff member will access the records in Digital Reel. “In the past, we’d be using the old reader printer and combing through physical microfiche to locate the information,” comments Parker. “With Digital Reel, we pull the interface up and search using keyword searches or index values like address or permit numbers. We’re typically able to locate relevant information in minutes and provide the digital copies to the requestor very quickly.”

Conclusion

Parker concludes, “Overall, we’re very pleased with the solution. We’ve met our disaster recovery requirements and all of our information is centralized and easily accessible from the Web with the Digital Reel application.”