

City of Victoria Case Study Proposal

The City of Victoria is responsible for issuing building, plumbing, and electrical permits for all construction projects in the city. This function encompasses a fairly wide range of documentation and actors.

The processes involved, traditionally all paper-based, currently consist of a hybrid mix of hardcopy and electronic forms of documentation. The City would like to move further toward digitization of applications and approvals, particularly with regard to the architectural plans.

Several issues come readily to mind.

One of the perceived advantages of digitizing architectural plans is to shorten the overall process of approval by streamlining the submission of plans (a DVD is perceived to be more compact and efficient than a 200-sheet roll of paper plans weighing 50 lbs.), while at the same time streamlining their distribution to City engineers, planners, and inspectors (many could view a set of digital plans at once rather than passing the 50 lb. roll from one desk to the next). But what would be required to ensure that plans received from third parties are what they purport to be and meet standards that will help the City to ensure their preservation for however long they may be required?

In addition, architectural plans typically have a long retention period -- currently, for the life of the building -- before being transferred to Archives for selection. What hardware, software, and other issues need to be addressed to be able to maintain the integrity of digital plans over the long run?

These, and a variety of related, issues will require considerable investigation and testing over the next several years to ensure that digitization of this aspect of municipal business proceeds in a practicable manner and that the people of Victoria can depend on the system and the related documentation for a considerable period of time.

City of Victoria, Proposal 2. Building Permit System

Agenda questions: “Feedback”

What do we want to “get out of” our participation in the project?

Want to develop a fully functional system for electronic submission, review, approval, and inspection of building permits and ensure that the integrity of the electronic documentation (especially architectural plans) can be provided and maintained for a minimum of 100 years.

What do we think is feasible?

If all aspects of the project were to come together in a timely fashion, the system outlined above. Otherwise, a fairly detailed and comprehensive plan for developing such a system.

What do we think is the best approach for our particular situation?

For the City to plan and develop such a system internally, as an extension of the existing Tempest enterprise land system, using the project management skills and IT expertise developed over the last several years. An InterPARES project resource person would be required from the earliest stages of planning, through development of the system, through to final testing and review to ensure that existing knowledge concerning authenticity, integrity, and preservation of electronic records are considered and championed throughout the project. Because the conversion of at least some existing building plans from paper to electronic format will also be required to make the system fully functional, we would want to request some financial assistance, if available, to help offset the costs of media conversion.

What are our concerns?

Potential Archives staff time required for TEAM Canada commitments (meetings, committee work, dissemination activities), as opposed to time devoted directly to the City of Victoria project. Potential difficulties involved in initiating and carrying through an enterprise project, especially given that Archives staff can only be expected to play a small consultative role overall (with preservation and media conversion issues) and assist with InterPARES liaison.

What assessment criteria should be used to evaluate (a) whether our participation goals have been met, and (b) whether the end products meet our current or future needs?

(a) Performance indicators as determined by IT and other professional project staff familiar with related applications, and standard quality control measures related to media conversion; (b) the degree of confidence with which applicants, adjudicators, and inspectors are able to transact everyday business, and the clarity and comprehensiveness of a long-term preservation plan for the documentation.

What level of time commitment do we expect to be able to contribute?

Corporately, some 20 hours/week of staff time (programmers, departmental resource staff, Archives staff, project management, project supervision, consulting): ca. \$50,000/year over three years plus media conversion (\$50,000) and hardware (\$10,000). Personally, about 2 hours/week.