

City of Palm Beach Gardens, Florida

Increasing Code Enforcement Efficiency through Eden Citizen Services

Winner of 2009 Eden Public Sector Excellence Award

Industry: City Government

Employees: 500

Budget: \$90 million

Location: Palm Beach Gardens, FL

Tyler Products Used: Eden Citizen Services

Years as a Tyler Client: 6

The Facts: Incorporated in 1959, the City of Palm Beach Gardens comprises the largest land area in Palm Beach County at 55.7 sq. miles. Settled by insurance magnate John D. MacArthur who sought to develop 4,000 acres and provide homes for 55,000, 50% of the City's land mass is either forested with native Banyan Trees or landscaped green space. Today, the City is home to more than 50,000 citizens and many national businesses, including the headquarters of the Professional Golfers' Association of America (PGA).

Contact:

Matt Doherty, Software Systems Manager

www.pbgfl.com

Key Challenges

- Utilize existing resources to replace inefficient paper- and manual-based processes
- Create a smooth workflow for Code Enforcement Officers
- Address the issues of inconsistent documentation, tracking and follow-up of complaints and code cases

Benefits: Financial and Beyond

- Significant increase in the number of opened cases and amount of revenue generated
- Elimination of the need to purchase costly code enforcement-specific software
- Streamlined tracking of code enforcement cases from first complaint through Special Master and Fine Assessment Hearings

City of Palm Beach Garden's Best Practices

- Generate comprehensive procedures encompassing the full life-cycle of a code case
- Build reports to code enforcement user specification to ensure acceptance of new processes
- Provide the public with common code violation information in order to help citizens avoid future violations

Why Tyler?

- Tyler provides all consulting, product enhancement, implementation, training and support services
- The Eden suite is a fully-integrated software solution with dynamic features, rich functionality, and superior Web capabilities
- Tyler is the largest sole provider of software and services for the public sector, covering all solutions for Financial, Document, Pension and School Management; Land & Vital Records; Appraisal & Tax; Courts & Justice; Public Safety; and Citizen Services

In Their Own Words:

"In these challenging budget times, utilizing existing resources is something we're asked to do as much as possible. The Eden Permits & Inspections modules' ability for customization allows us to do just that."

—Jennifer Mikulski, Resource Manager

The Challenge: Inefficient Manual Processes

For the City of Palm Beach Gardens, code enforcement has never been a simple process. Code enforcement officers used hand-filled triplicate forms, a manual filing system and each had a different method for tracking cases—from spreadsheets to paper logs with photo documentation—and a different template for reports. Complaints about violations weren't always documented, and when they were it was usually on sticky notes or in e-mails.

...continued on reverse

These inconsistencies led to many challenges for code enforcement officers: it was difficult to track the status of cases; officers couldn't work on each other's cases; management didn't have access to statistics for required reports; and providing evidence for hearings was a time-consuming and frustrating process. Many cases went months, even years, without activity, resulting in the inability to prosecute violators and preventing the City from generating needed revenues.

In fact, for the Fiscal Year 2006/2007 only 50 code enforcement cases were opened by the City, generating less than \$10,000 in revenue. The Palm Beach Gardens Code Enforcement Department clearly needed to streamline processes and organize case data—and they did so by utilizing their existing Eden system in new ways. “In these challenging budget times, utilizing existing resources is something we're asked to do as much as possible. The Eden Permits & Inspections module's ability for customization allows us to do just that,” stated Jennifer Mikulski, resource manager for Palm Beach Gardens.

The Answer: Customization of Eden Permits & Inspections

Working together, personnel from the Building and Code Enforcement Departments and the City's Information Services staff developed comprehensive processes and procedures for the easy tracking, managing and follow up of the full life-cycle of a code case, from the first complaint through Special Master and Fine Assessment Hearings. “Accommodating the requests of the code enforcement users and building reports to their exact specifications has facilitated their acceptance of the system,” said Matt Doherty, software systems manager for Palm Beach Gardens.

The result: code enforcement officers at the City of Palm Beach Gardens now have complete command over case data. All complaints are entered into the Eden system, which automatically routes each case to the appropriate supervisor and schedules an inspection. The supervisor then assigns the case to a code officer who is responsible for tracking and managing the case from the first complaint to final hearing. Officers and supervisors can now:

- See the exact status of any case, work on any case in the system and access necessary reports and corresponding documentation with a click of the button
- Access important internal statistical reports that are crucial for informed decision making
- Run statistical reports that show how often a particular code is violated and use this information to educate the public and help citizens avoid future violations

The City's improved use of the Eden Permits & Inspections module has also had a tremendous effect on how officers defend cases during hearings. “Before we migrated to Eden, preparing for hearings was an arduous task, requiring several days of work to collect and organize necessary information. It now takes less than 20 minutes to prepare,” explained Mikulski.

Results: Increased Revenue & Cost Savings

For the 2008/2009 Fiscal Year, the City opened 920 cases generating over \$204,000 in revenue, a dramatic increase from previous years. “Not only were we able to increase the volume of cases and the associated revenues, we were also able to avoid purchasing a code enforcement-specific software package,” emphasized Doherty.