



# San Jose, California

The San Jose Clerk's Office modernizes by eliminating paper



## OVERVIEW

After a call by the mayor of San Jose to make it the most technically-advanced municipality in the country by 2020, the City Clerk's Office decided it was time to make some changes. By embracing modernization and digital tools, they were able to streamline the citizen board process, increase applications to those boards, cut back dramatically on paperwork and devote less time to document shuffling.

## SITUATION | OLD SCHOOL THINKING IN THE HEART OF SILICON VALLEY

The City of San Jose sits in the heart of Silicon Valley – the epicenter of innovative tech that shapes our world. The City itself, 10th largest in the Nation and the largest in the region with over 1 million residents, serves as the headquarters for startups and tech giants alike.

But while tech dominates the region, the city government was behind when it came to modernization. The Clerk's Office was overwhelmed by paperwork for the city council and the municipality's many citizen boards.

The council met weekly to discuss and vote on agenda items. A single agenda item could require 20 to 50 pages, and meetings often had as many as 100 such agenda items. It meant a lot of wasted paper printed, and it required a significant amount of manual work from staff, who sometimes had to physically lay out agendas page by page to organize them.

Meanwhile, its 23 citizen boards were similarly stuck in non-digital processes. Applications to these boards were paper-based, and the process was managed on a series of spreadsheets that required manual updates.

On top of that all, California has so-called "sunshine laws," which are intended to help make government information available to citizens in a timely manner—so all the work needed to be done quickly.

## MUST HAVE SOLUTION

Boards & Commissions  
Legistar  
SpeakUp  
eComment

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Anh Tran, Deputy Clerk,  
City of San Jose.

## SOLUTION | A VISION FOR A SMARTER, DIGITAL CITY

In 2016, the mayor of San Jose announced the Smart City Vision with the goal of making San Jose the most technologically advanced municipality in the country by 2020. The Clerk's Office saw this as an opportunity to reexamine the work they were doing and how it was accomplished. This became even more salient when the Clerk's Office had to move into even more cramped quarters.

They started the modernization process with their 23 citizen-appointed boards. Using Granicus' Boards and Commissions solution, they quickly turned a paper-and-spreadsheet process into a digital one. Staff can now easily monitor the status of the boards and if any openings are coming up. If there is an opening, they can quickly post an application online and begin receiving them in minutes.

"Once we started using Granicus, we saw an enormous increase in the number of applicants to our citizen boards," says Anh Tran, Deputy Clerk for the City of San Jose. "And, importantly, the pool of applicants was more diverse and representative of the city."

Since then, San Jose has embraced further modernization by using Granicus solutions for city council meetings. They create and manage agendas with Legistar, take comments about proposals with eComment and use SpeakUp to crowdsource information and make the best decisions for their community.

By switching to digital processes, the Clerk's Office went from full filing cabinets and endless paperwork to one that's more efficient and can refocus its priorities beyond document shuffling. By becoming a modern digital government, the City also made itself more accessible to those with visual or other impairments.

"When we used paper, we didn't really take into consideration people with physical or cognitive disabilities that might require screen readers, large print or braille," say Tran. "By going digital, we can provide all of that. And if someone needs a physical copy, it's much easier to go from digital to print than from print to digital."

## RESULTS | LESS PAPER AND LESS STAFF TIME NEEDED FOR ORGANIZING

- With the city's use of Boards and Commissions, over 340 people applied to the city's 23 citizen boards board positions in 2017 compared to 100 in 2016. Additionally, the number of appointments increased to 82 in 2017, compared to 39 in 2016.
- By using a comprehensive digital approach with various tools including Boards and Commissions, Legistar, eComment SpeakUp, the Clerk's Office eliminated nearly all physical paperwork. What once consumed at least 14 filing cabinets now takes up just a single filing cabinet resulting a 90 percent difference in paperwork tracking.
- Prior to moving to digital options, the Clerk's Office required two full-time staffers working to deal with it. Now that the office is digitized, it requires just half of one person's workweek. That's opened up 1.5 FTEs to focus on other important tasks.