Alameda Reduces a 4-Week Permit Backlog By Launching Camino (Alongside Accela)

The City of Alameda is a unique island community of over 78,000 residents in the San Francisco Bay Area. The City was listed as one of the "2020 Fast Growing Cities". As COVID-19 surged in the area, there was immense pressure on the city to figure out how to serve its bustling community remotely.

Camino worked with the City of Alameda to launch an online Permit Application Portal alongside their existing Accela permit system. With the Portal, users are able to upload documents, submit digital forms and pay fees, enabling staff to respond and collect applications. Additionally, the City has access to a chat feature, where communication between permit techs and residents is centralized, making it easy for staff to respond to residents quickly.
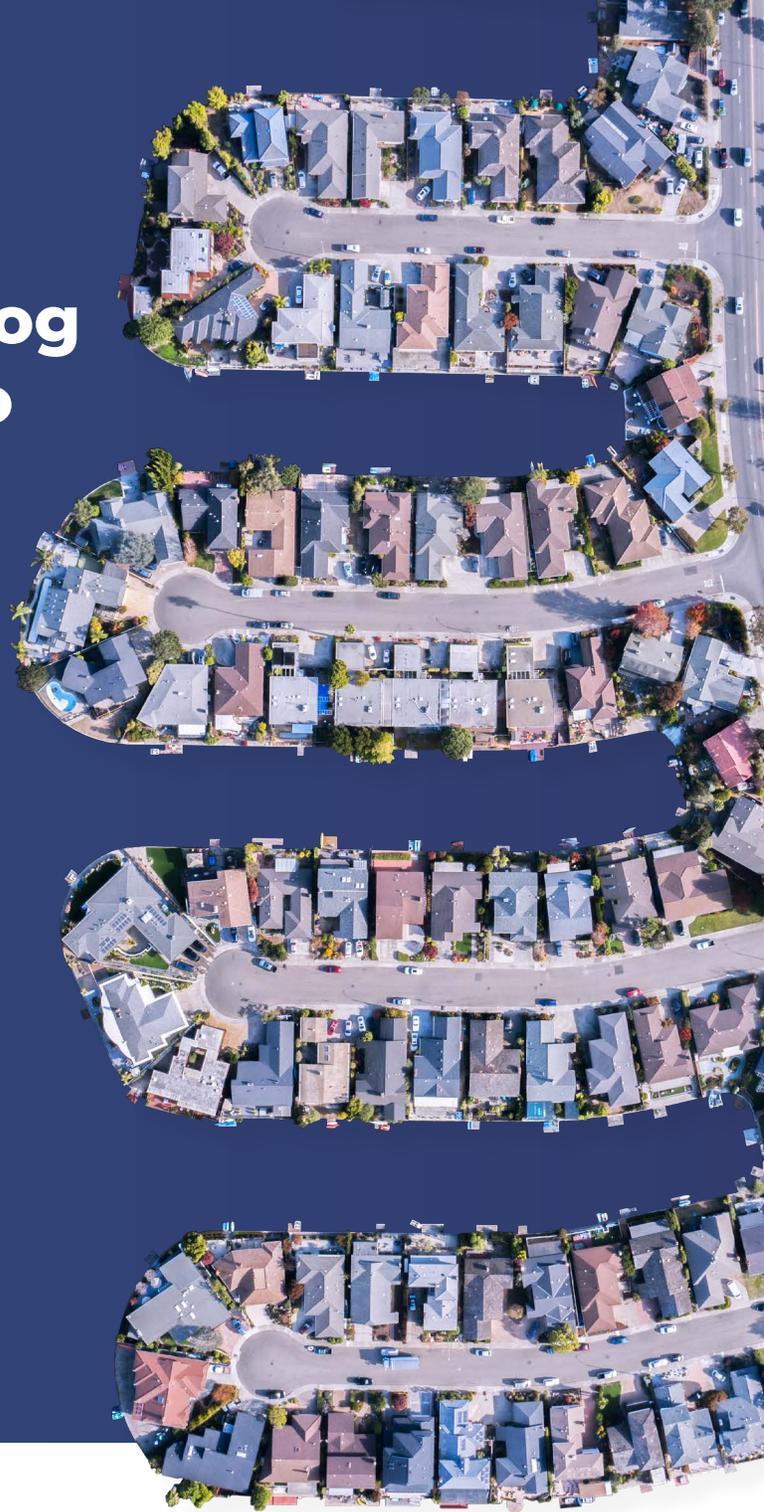
Challenges Before Launching Camino

In March of 2020, the City of Alameda closed the doors to City Hall as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, the City transitioned to a hybrid system, using Accela and other channels for permit applications and processing.

Although the City already had Accela for managing the permit process, Accela did not provide a simple and intuitive way for residents to apply for a permit. Staff found the hybrid system to be overly complicated and unable to keep up with the volume of applications received. Towards the end of the year, permit processing had ground to a halt. The City found itself with a four week backlog for application review. The Permit Center staff were spending a considerable amount of time emailing and calling applicants who had submitted incomplete or incorrect applications.

The Camino Solution

In 2021, the City partnered with Camino to streamline the permit intake process by adopting Camino's Guide and Application Portal, alongside their Accela permit system. With the pressure of a 3 to 4 week backlog rising, there was a need to get Camino up and running as quickly as possible. The City of Alameda worked with Camino's Implementation team to set up the portal and **go live in just a little over a month**.
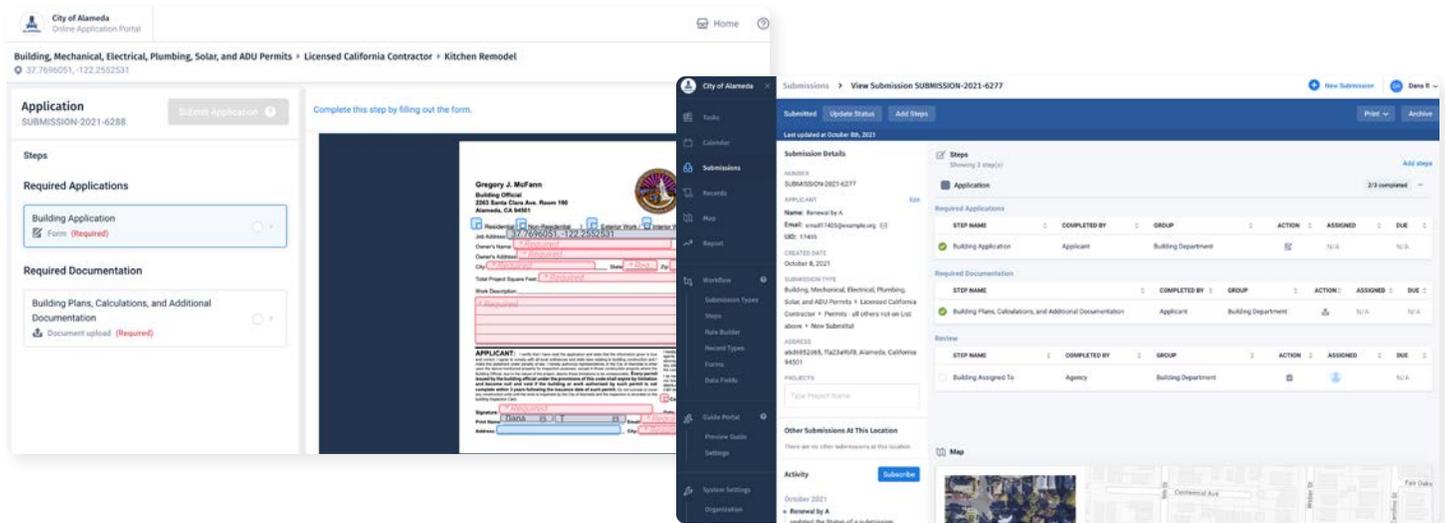
The City of Alameda can now review submissions online, approve them digitally, and enter the data into the City's Accela system. Before Camino, staff spent a significant amount of time sending emails, following up with residents and playing "phone tag" with applicants. Camino implemented a chat feature on their portal which allows permit techs to keep track of, and follow up on, previous conversations related to a specific application. The Portal also allows the City to select pre-submission requirements that prevent residents from submitting applications with missing information. Camino's Guide functionality provides residents a clear set of instructions for how to apply, based on their project.

Results

Shortly after the Application Portal went live, the City began to utilize Camino alongside their Accela system. There has been a reduction in the backlog of applications, and residents can use the Guide functionality to access all of the required information for their application.

> " *Prior to implementing Camino, as our permit intake portal, we were unable to keep up with the level of permits being applied for. Permit Center staff were becoming buried by the large number of incomplete applications being submitted. Camino gave us one place to accept applications as well as one place to communicate with those applicants.*

Greg McFann
Building Official, Alameda CA

Additionally, Staff were able to see how many applications were started but not completed due to residents not having the needed info to complete the process. Since the roll-out, The City of Alameda has seen:

✅ Alameda has Saved Over $180,000 and 3,600 Hours in Staff Time

Before Camino, residents had the ability to submit an incomplete application and staff would spend additional time searching for the missing required information. This would cause delays for both the staff and residents in processing applications.

Now, only complete applications may be submitted for review. Staff is saving at least 15 minutes per application. Over time, this equated to more than **3,600 hours** of staff time saved. Since early 2021, the City has saved over **$180,000** in staff time.

✅ Camino has been the Front Counter for over 14,000 Applicants

Camino has been the Front Counter for over 14,000 applicants providing answers to questions and creating customized guides, reducing the amount of calls, emails and walkins into the Permit Center. Of the **14,000** visitors, 13 percent were outside of normal business hours.

✅ Increased Customer Satisfaction with the Application Process and Reduced Wait Times

Camino's platform improved customer satisfaction with the application process and reduced customer and staff frustration. Previously, residents waited up to a month for permit techs to notify them of missing information on applications. Now, residents have access to requirements instantly.
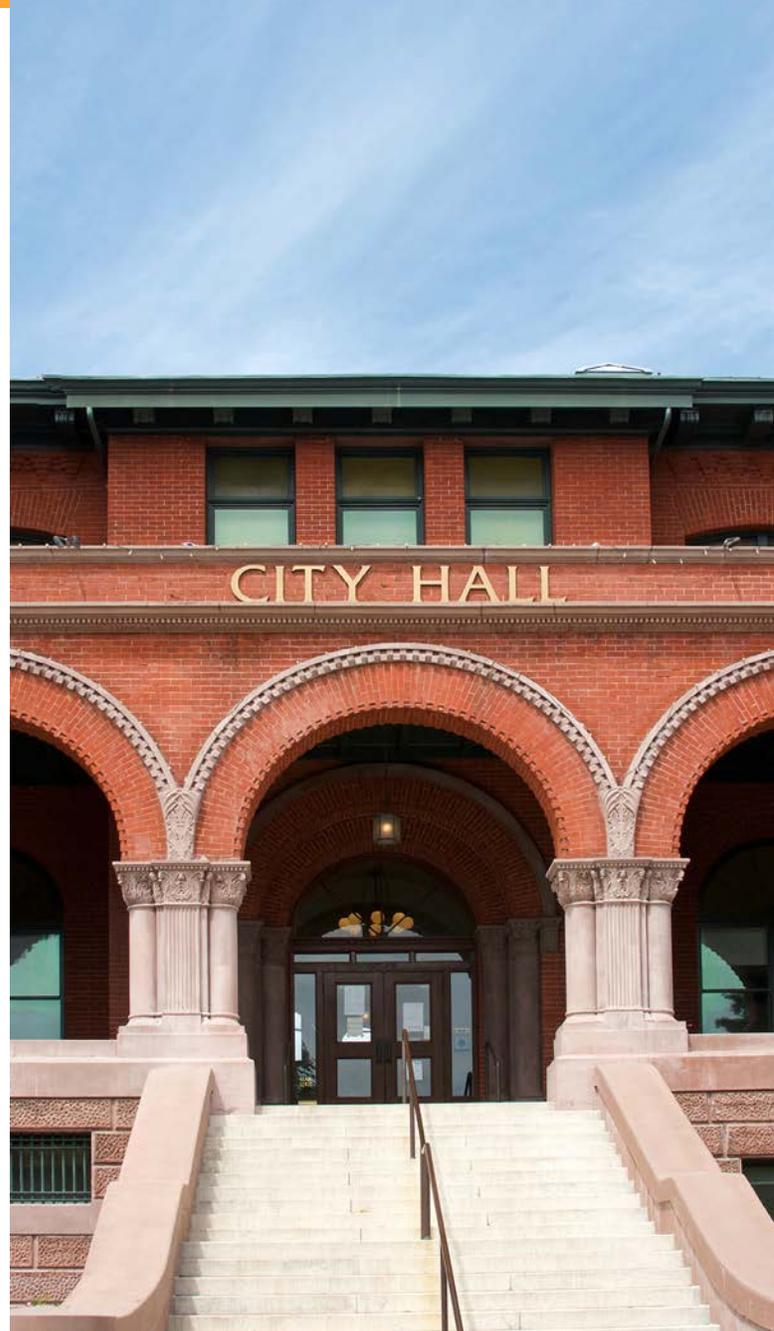
⫶ Camino

Camino is the technology platform that governments use to manage complex workflows. Our team of top engineers and designers is dedicated to one mission: building the world's best permit and license tracking system that's beautiful, easy to use, and layered with Artificial Intelligence to help staff tackle growing workloads.

Contact us today to learn more, or visit our website at camino.ai