From Legacy Systems to Ultimate Citizen Experiences

Seven Planning, Permitting and Licensing Must Haves When Replacing Your Legacy System

It's been said that it's impossible to optimize a complex system by optimizing individual parts.

But that's exactly the challenge many agencies face as they continuously work to update and improve the disparate legacy systems that power planning, permitting, and licensing activities – all while trying to deliver high-quality citizen services and experiences.

By focusing on legacy system patches and workarounds, agencies can fall further behind as they struggle to keep pace with today's connected customers who expect user-friendly tools and government services on demand.

City, county, and state governments around the world operating on outdated systems recognize that they can no longer rely on a mixed bag of online and on-premises technologies. Many agencies are evaluating cloud-based systems to modernize operations and better serve current and future citizen needs.

But while it's simple to identify current process issues, it's more difficult to choose a technology vendor that is reliable and capable of supporting the delivery of services with digital experiences that customers will love today and scale with their growing expectations.
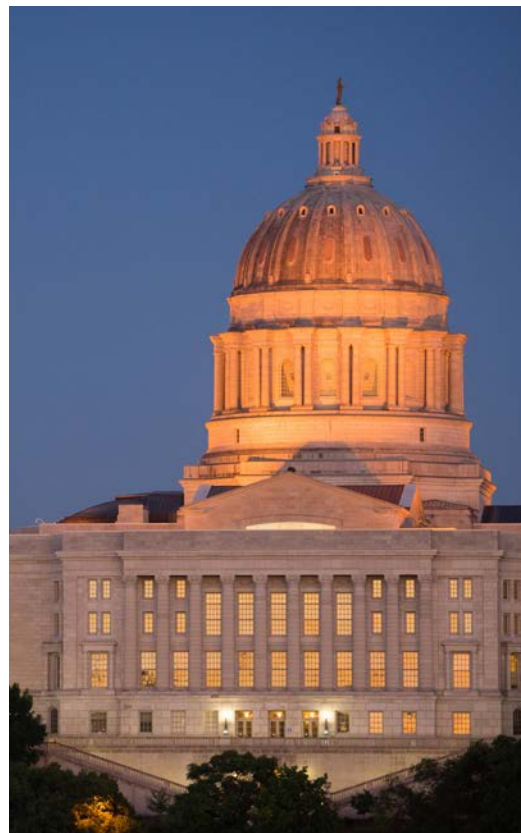
The seven "must haves"

Key considerations when evaluating community development and regulatory (CDR) solution providers.

01: CDR at the core of the business

02: Expert SaaS implementation

03: Citizen portal access

04: Robust system agility and extensibility

05: Visual and intuitive workflow design

06: Mobile solutions for field staff

07: Predictable and painless upgrades

01

Demonstrated expertise in community development and regulatory applications

An important "must have" for evaluating vendors is a strong focus on CDR applications. This focus is key to building agencies that support and streamline community growth and development, rather than holding it back. Streamlined planning, permitting, licensing, and code enforcement workflows can help forward-thinking governments accelerate community development.

For example, building inspection backlogs can quickly become overwhelming with outdated systems and in-person office visits. Your vendor should be committed to driving out the inefficiencies and usability issues of traditional permitting solutions. To determine this focus, some good question for vendors are:

• What percentage of revenues are coming from CDR applications?

• How many staff members are dedicated to your CDR initiatives?

• Can you provide examples of government agencies you have helped transition to a SaaS platform supporting CDR initiatives?

• Do you provide a visual and intuitive workflow engine to automate processes involving multiple departments and process components?

• Can the workflow engine automate the assignment of user tasks and the routing and tracking of approvals?

• Can you provide examples of quantifiable savings in processing, turnaround times, or freeing up staff to perform higher-value tasks?

SUPPORTING

SUPPORTING

SUPPORTING

CDR
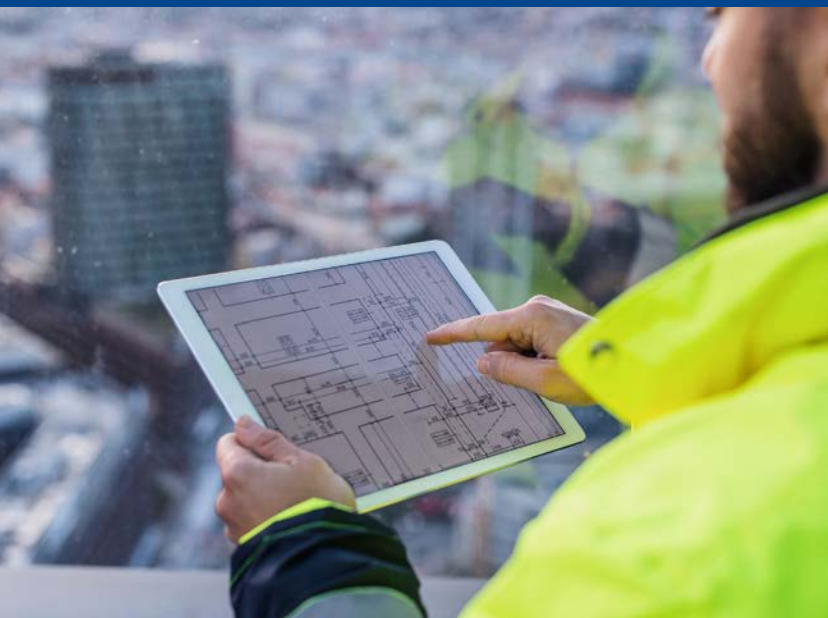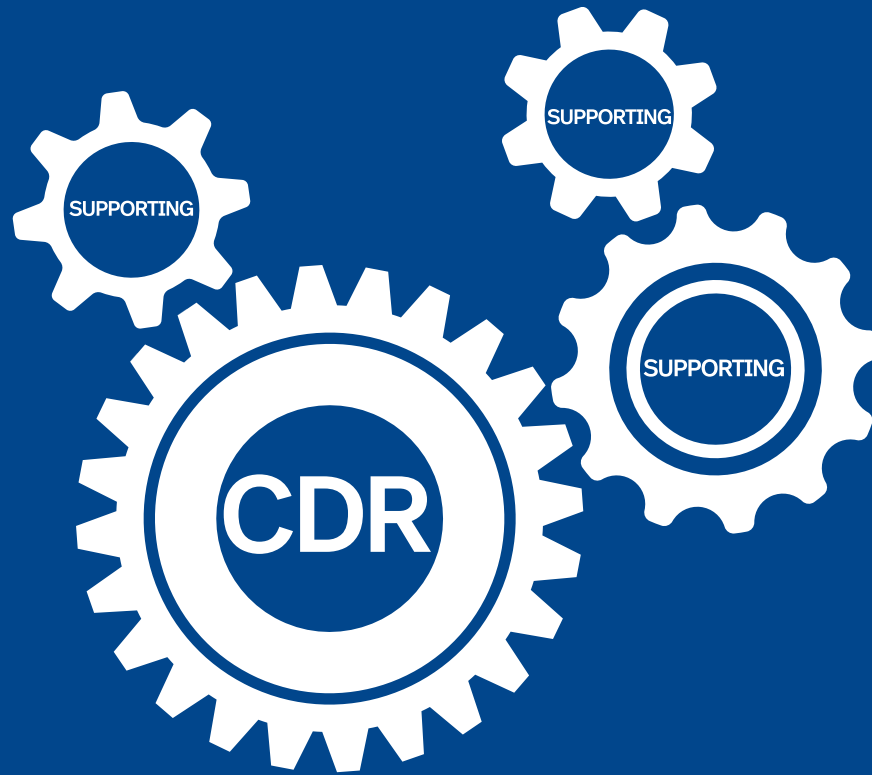
At 3SG+
Accela's best-in-class CDR
is our core business.

Accela is committed to leadership in planning, permitting, licensing and code enforcement systems, and has more than 450 people dedicated to developing and improving CDR solutions - and 3SG+ is committed to Accela as a preferred reseller and implementation specialist.

The ability to deliver quick turnarounds for applications, plan reviews and approvals can be a game-changer for agencies tasked with supporting growing cities. 3SG+ ensures that your Accela platform is dialed in perfectly and extended as needed to cover your unique needs.

" We would rather you be online than in line.

—Ryan Fernandes, Director of Technology ServicesWeston, Florida

One CDR success story comes from the City of Weston, FL. Prior to the pandemic, the city would have nearly 200 customers walk into their office each day to submit applications, make inquiries, and pay outstanding fees. Since adopting the Accela platform, Weston has seen an 87.5% reduction in in-person foot traffic and adopted the slogan, "We would rather you be online than in line."

In addition, before Weston implemented Accela, 75% of a permit tech's time was spent on data entry, keying in information submitted on paper forms. These permit technicians have since become plans coordinators, spending more time working on quality assurance and focusing on strategic initiatives.

02

Deep SaaS implementation experience

Digital transformation in government is accelerating, and Accela's Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) platform helps agencies realize the benefits of this rapid modernization of technology. Many agencies continue to struggle with the costs and resources required to maintain older systems.

Your SaaS partner should provide:

- Proven, pre-built functionality and frameworks and solutions that can streamline implementation and control costs

- A technology environment that's proactively secure and supports end-to-end encryption and compliance with rigorous data security standards

- Automatic, prescheduled hardware and software upgrades

- Capabilities to manage your entire agency infrastructure, including hardware, software, security, and applications

SaaS hosting and service delivery saves time and money, and ensures you are receiving all the benefits of technology advancement without the expense of maintaining hardware and software in-house.

Implementation questions for prospective SaaS partners include:

• How many successful cloud implementations has your organization completed?

• What training is available for SaaS solution users to facilitate adoption and time-to-value?

• Does the platform meet data security and compliance requirements, such as ADA, for your agency and partners?

• Are the SaaS application offerings designed specifically for government use?

• Can applications be easily configured for unique agency requirements, or is additional custom development required?

• Can our agency take advantage of multi-tenant setup with single-tenant database isolation to enable simultaneous scaling and isolation?

• Does the vendor's SaaS platform use a multi-tier architecture to support future scaling without changing the software architecture?
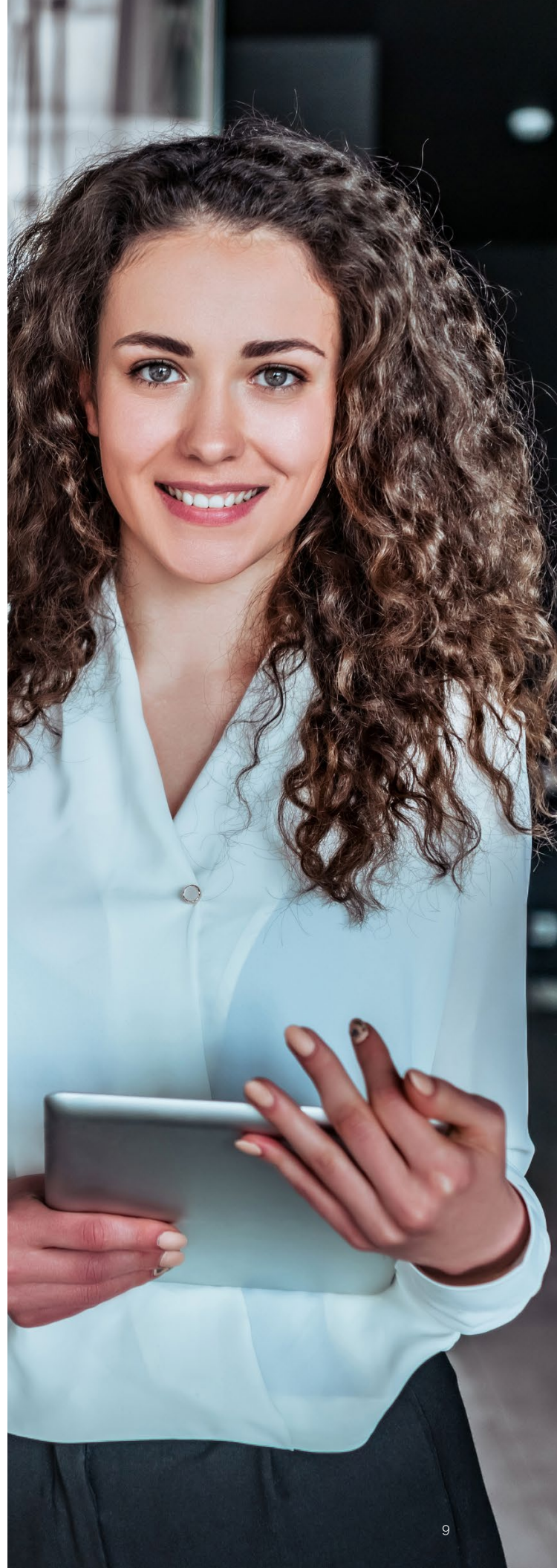
03

Citizen portal access and enhanced user experience

From the public's point of view, accessing government services should be as simple as ordering groceries or a rideshare. People that also use Amazon and Doordash expect an engaging and responsive experience from any device, at any time – including government websites.

Citizen portals that are cumbersome to navigate and filled with outdated and incomplete information have no place in modern government agencies. Ask vendors if their portal enables citizens to:

• Easily complete forms with pre-fills, online guidance, and qualifications

• Search and find answers to frequently asked questions

• Pay fees, schedule inspections, and conduct other transactions

• Submit and track permit applications electronically

• Have full visibility into application workflow and status

• Connect via mobile phones, tablets, or PCs

• Use self-service features any time of the day or night

• Easily operate the portal without training or assistance

• View guidelines, policy documents and resources

• Meet ADA compliance requirements

MUST HAVE 03

Enabling citizens to engage and complete their transactions online lets you reduce costs and human resources, while increasing customer satisfaction.

Cost of engaging citizens

Face-to-face
$10.90

Telephone
$3.15

Online
$0.25

Citizen portal must haves for agencies include:

• A user-friendly interface that enables users to manage and update content

• GIS integration that provides intuitive visualizations to access land parcel permit history, view code and zoning details, and map and route inspections

• Simple integration and a flexible user interface that makes it easy to create a portal that matches your agency's colors and brand image

• Low code/no code development environment for ease of implementation and maintenance

• Full HTML 5 compliance with fully responsive design

Accela & 3SG+ | From Legacy Systems to Ultimate Citizen Experiences   11

04

Robust system agility and extensibility

System extensibility is the capability to extend your solutions through integrations with cloud-based and on-premises applications that help streamline operations and deliver citizen services and resources across a jurisdiction.

Open and flexible cloud-based platforms like Microsoft Azure simplify the process of creating automated workflows to integrate your agency's apps, data, services, and systems. Cloud platforms also enable the rapid development of scalable solutions and integrations with legacy and modern systems across cloud, on-premises, and hybrid environments.
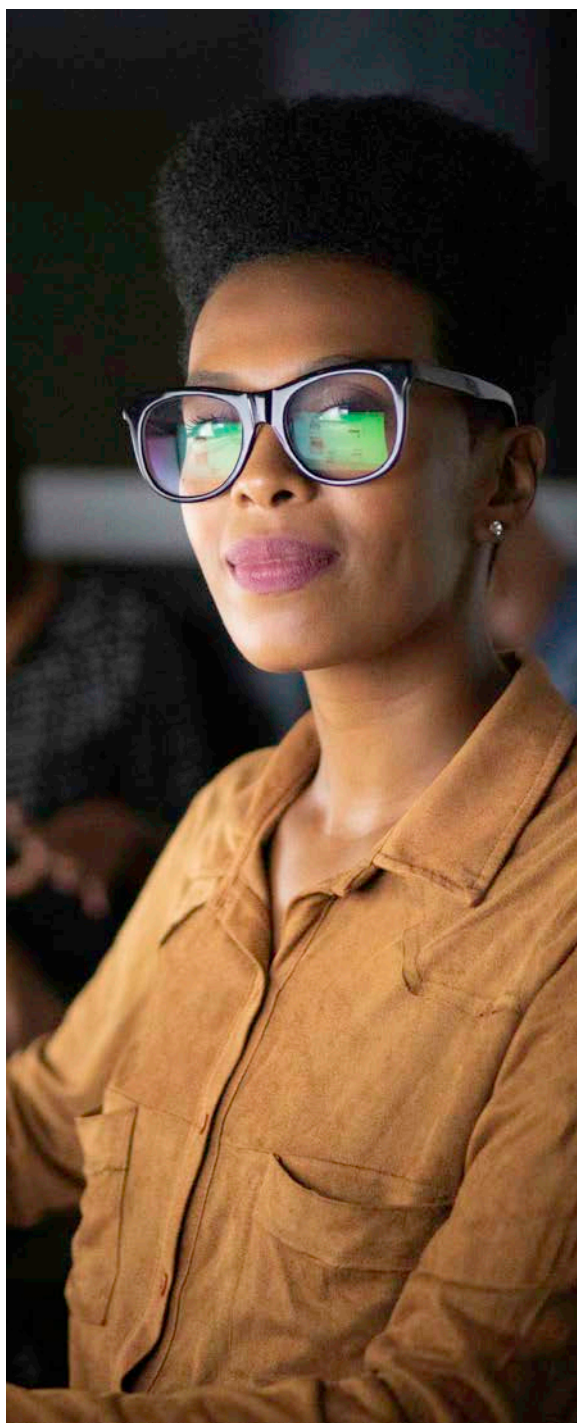
MUST HAVE 04

System extensibility must haves include:

- Flexibility to run in government, public, or private clouds

- A broad set of published, high-quality, actively maintained APIs

- Pre-packaged connectors to support extended functionality

- Linking government agencies across jurisdictions agencies and departments

- Connecting government employees and third-party partners for more responsive citizen services

System agility must haves include:

- Architecture designed to support unique agency requirements and shifting regulatory environments

- Pre-built configurations to speed implementation of defined solution areas

- Core-functionality reference models to provide clear starting points for custom solutions

- Workflows that can be repurposed to meet evolving licensing and permitting requirements

Accela's robust API management system and pre-built connectors are key to extensibility for modern government agencies. By using connectors, 3SG+ optimizes the capabilities for cloud and on-premises apps to make the most of your data. Our experience in integrating enterprise applications with your existing tech stack helps you make the most of current and future IT investments.

New types of permitting requirements such as short-term rentals, cannabis, solar permitting, and 5G sometimes appear very quickly. Will your agency be ready? Perhaps the ultimate test of agility and flexibility occurred in March 2020 when the pandemic struck and government workplaces around the world came to a halt.

MUST HAVE 04

How smart cities stayed resilient during COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic spurred governments around the world to urgently re-evaluate their operations and technology strategies. Agencies strived to safeguard their own teams while delivering essential government functions to help citizens navigate through significant challenges of their own.

Within two weeks, Accela was able to leverage its own cloud infrastructure and pre-built configurations to speed implementation of 13 purpose-built COVID-19 solutions to enable state and local governments to accelerate the delivery of safely distanced services to millions of citizens.

Accela's pandemic solutions garnered two 2021 Microsoft US Partner Awards for Government Partner of the Year and Community Response. Accela-powered agencies were able to take advantage of agile and flexible workflows to support remote employees and set up touchless services for citizens quickly, while agencies running on outdated systems struggled.

05

Visual and intuitive workflow design

Strategic workflow management is the foundation of process automation. Flexible and intuitive workflows are a key aspect of efficient process automation. Your system should make it simple to design and create workflows that include all tasks required to implement complete end-to-end processes.

Your workflow management system should simplify the creation of tasks and subtasks to build more detailed workflow processes, manage documents, and track processing times. Time tracking can help unlock opportunities for your agency to improve efficiency.

For example, a commercial building permit workflow includes tasks such as application acceptance, building review, permit issuance, inspections, certificate of occupancy, and closure. The workflow can provide email notifications to different individuals depending on the type of status changes. For example, you can notify both contractors and public applicants after completion of a building inspection.

Without a robust visual workflow builder, many agencies struggle to stand up new permitting and licensing services to support regulation for 5G, cannabis, solar, and code enforcement. An agency's slow response can mean frustrated customers and lost revenue.

Ask prospective vendors if they provide:

- An intuitive workflow management system that non-technical staff can use

- A visual builder and editor that creates process transparency to better understand overall flows and relationships between tasks

- A visual workflow design that enables citizens to view process steps and the status of their permit and license applications

- The ability to adjust quickly to new operational requirements

- A system that enables you to save a history of workflows to audit your business processes for ongoing improvement

06

Robust mobile support for field workers

In addition to citizen and staff portals, it's essential for field workers to stay connected with robust mobile systems. Your vendor should have a mobile-first approach that provides instant access and connections to work crews, code officers and field inspection teams.

PUBLIC ACCESS

BUSINESS

RESIDENT

DEVELOPER

STAFF PORTAL

MOBILE ACCESS

WORK CREW

CODE OFFICER
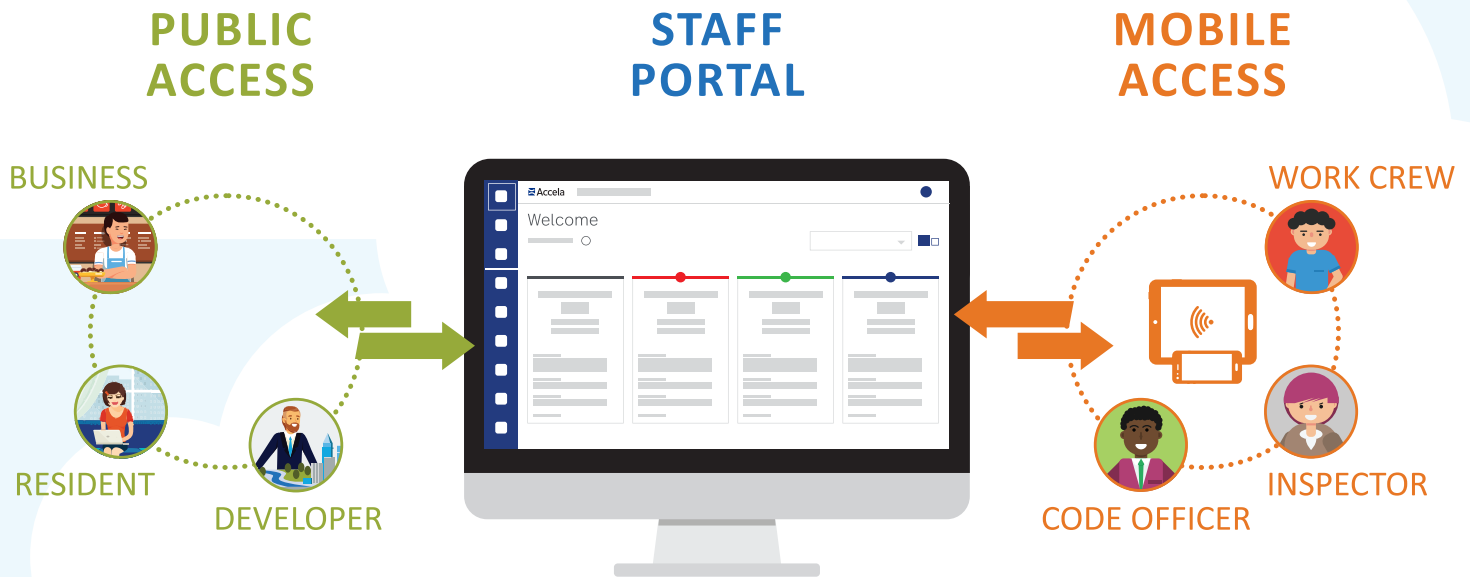
INSPECTOR

A robust mobile solution:

- Supports all aspects of code enforcement and field inspections

- Is built-in rather than bolted on, with tightly integrated online and offline capabilities

- Has pre-built forms and checklists, and scheduling tools that are customizable to support codes and comments

- Enables your team to attach and mark up supporting photos or videos and attach them to checklists to document issues

- Includes GIS integration that provides intuitive visualizations for efficient routing and violation location pin drop

- Is compatible with Windows, Android and iOS devices

- Supports on-site signatures and the ability to print hard copies in the field

Be aware that nearly all vendors claim to have tightly integrated mobile capabilities, but many have not built systems specifically around decentralized mobile workflows. Ask prospective vendors to explain specific features including prebuilt mobile capabilities for inspectors, work crews, and code officers.

07

Predictable and painless platform upgrades

Government agencies around the world are embracing SaaS models for various reasons. SaaS simplifies IT management, reduces costs, and strengthens enterprise security. For many IT teams, a key advantage of SaaS infrastructure is a predictable and secure upgrade path.

Upgrades are even more predictable when custom development is minimized. Accela solutions leverage the configuration of pre-built components as opposed to building core capabilities through extensive code-level customizations.

Ask your vendor if their upgrade process:

- Is backed by a team of experts with deep government sector experience

- Can reduce the IT resources currently required to support system upgrades

- Is priced into the service for predictability for IT budgeting

- Runs on a robust and future-ready cloud infrastructure like Microsoft Azure

Traditional enterprise software upgrades are often disruptive, risky, and expensive. SaaS upgrades are applied continuously and ensure that current software and security features are always available – a win for agency partners and citizen users.

Choose future-ready civic applications

Citizens can't see an outdated technology stack that's patched together from standalone systems and applications. But citizens can clearly see when government service delivery is inconsistent, confusing, or unresponsive.

Agencies around the world are making the switch from on-premises to SaaS models to better serve today's citizens and prepare for the next generation of government services. If you're looking to become future-ready, now is the time to modernize your infrastructure to optimize operations, empower your team, and deliver outstanding citizen experiences.

Civic Applications for today and tomorrow

It's crucial to ask prospective vendors what specialized applications are available to power your core services. Are pre-built solutions available to help your agency ramp up quickly to address growing planning and permitting challenges?

Accela features a suite of proven Civic Applications that are especially designed to replace legacy system processes with digital workflows and automated steps, including:

Building Communities	Growing Businesses	Protecting Citizens
Building	Business Licensing	COVID-19 Response Soltuions
Planning	Occupational Licensing	Fire Prevention
Service Request Management	Alcoholic Beverage Control	Environmental Health
	Short-term Rental Registration	
	Cannabis Regulation	

Replacing legacy systems with an integrated cloud solution saves time – speeding up current processes anywhere from 30% to 50%, depending on the agency's previous solution – while enabling you to increase service offerings and citizen satisfaction.

At Accela, we say it's critical to seek out vendors who sweat the details, who can have meaningful conversations around key issues including uptime, sustainability, and security – and how systems will scale to meet emerging regulations and customer expectations in the years to come.

Ready to implement remote government access, empower cross-agency collaboration, and deliver the next generation of innovative government services?

Accela solutions from 3SG+ empower your agency to build strong communities, support growing businesses, and protect citizens.

Learn how you can transform your planning, permitting, inspections and code enforcement services today.

Call 614-407-7990 or accela@3sgplus.com