REVERSE PITCH

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, PARKS & STREETS
PARKS & RECREATION

Andrew Rabb, Deputy Commissioner
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PROJECT:
PARK SHELTER/GREENSPACE RESERVATION

CHALLENGE

The City issues park shelter rental and greenspace permits. Shelter rentals are covered picnic shelters with grills for parties up to 50 people. Greenspace permits are for designated space in a park for smaller events such as prayer vigils and demonstrations for up to 50 people.

Applications are available for download online or available in the Parks Office. Permits are issued when the Parks Department receives a completed application, a signed hold harmless agreement, and payment. Applications are currently paper-based and residents can submit by mail or in person and information from all applications is compiled in an Excel spreadsheet.

OPPORTUNITY

A park shelter and greenspace reservation management software system that helps the public find and apply for shelters/greenspace in a user-friendly way would allow City staff to review and/or mitigate potential conflicts, which would allow for a quicker response time.

The system should be simpler and more efficient than the current paper-based application and Excel spreadsheet recording system.

Both City staff and the public would utilize the app. It should be accessible on mobile and/or web-based devices.

This solution could be scaled to include other park reservation types, including sports fields, buildings, and indoor pools.

VALUE PROPOSITION

This would provide a better overall park experience for residents and provide a more efficient system for City staff.

For additional documentation regarding pitches and contest details, visit: buffaloinnovates.com

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, PARKS & STREETS ENGINEERING DIVISION

Don Poleto, Senior Engineer
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PROJECT:
STREET RATINGS

CHALLENGE

Approximately every 18 months, engineers from the Engineering Division drive and inspect every street in the City of Buffalo and issue a score based on the condition of the road surface. Those scores are then placed on a City map and used by our Paving Office to determine which streets meet the City's criteria for a mill and overlay which we develop into a proposed paving list for the upcoming construction season.

Currently, this is an entirely handwritten, paper-based process. All results are recorded by hand on a paper map.

OPPORTUNITY

A mobile app would better facilitate inspections and street pavement ratings. The proposed app would be an electronic map of the City would allow the engineer scoring the road simply clicks on the street segment that is being scored. This action then opens a writable menu that the user can insert the appropriate pavement score. Please note that each segment of each street will need an individual rating as the pavement score may differ block to block for a particular road. Scoring each street segment will ensure the information being input into the database is most accurate.

Contestants can use the Roads dataset on the City's open data portal to inform the development of their app.

Additional functionality would be to incorporate a way to filter by street score and council district (data layer available on open data portal).

The app will be used by our construction and operations engineers. Android tablets are available for their use.

VALUE PROPOSITION

The road scores will be clear and searchable through the development of the app, which would provide the City with the most accurate information when developing our paving program to ensure efficient and equitable resource allocation.

For additional documentation regarding pitches and contest details, visit: buffaloinnovates.com

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, PARKS & STREETS ENGINEERING DIVISION

Phillip M. Pecoraro, Senior Engineer
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PROJECT:
SIDEWALK INSPECTION

CHALLENGE

The City's 311 Call & Resolution Center receives 2,000 to 2,500 calls to inspect sidewalks and curbs annually. The current process is as follows: one Inspector prints out each individual case, goes to each location to do a field inspection, inspects the sidewalk and/or curb, manually logs results on paper, and then closes out the case on the 311 system when they get back into the office.

As the spring/summer/fall sidewalk inspection season slows down, an inspector manually inputs the information from the paper inspection reports on an Excel spreadsheet.

When the City has the funding every year, using the compiled sidewalk inspection data, a bid proposal is created and released for contractors to bid on to restore Sidewalks and Curb locations that were damaged and are the responsibility of the City of Buffalo.

OPPORTUNITY

A mobile solution would allow inspectors to log inspection results electronically in the field. The app would show 311 cases in the Sidewalks and Curbs queue as they come in and/or keep a log of the cases (contestants can use the 311 open dataset on data.buffalony.gov).

Desired functionality that would be of use to the City would be: a map of cases, route optimization, voice entry of comments, and adding a closeout field to current form.

The app would be used by DPW inspectors and supervisors who are responsible to inspect, respond to, and log the 311 cases. Android tablets would be used in the field.

VALUE PROPOSITION

A digital solution will save money in office supplies, overtime costs, and manual data entry associated with the current inspections workflow. It would also allow the City to respond to residents' calls in a timelier manner.

Some of these cases (sidewalk damage, missing curbs, and sink hole) may be a hazard and responding to 311 calls in a more timely fashion is important to ensure the safety of our residents.

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, PARKS & STREETS ENGINEERING DIVISION

Eric Schmarder, Senior Engineer
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PROJECT:
SIGN INVENTORY

CHALLENGE

While the City currently has paper records of sign installations performed by City workers, there is no digital record of street sign types and their locations. The City will often use Google Street View as a snapshot in time to review site locations and current state of signage. The limitations are that Google can be many years old. Collecting digital information would allow us to integrate it with our sign work order system. There are approximately 180,000 signs of any type in the City right-of-way.

OPPORTUNITY

An app for sign inspectors to inventory signs in the City right-of-way and log any currently existing unresolved sign issues (missing, damaged, faded, etc.) would allow sign inspectors to create a data point for any and all street signs in the City right-of-way and make note of any existing unresolved issues. Associated data that would be helpful to collect would be: sign type; street address; precise geographic information/coordinates; photo; timestamp; unresolved issue; pole number; type of pole, etc.

Having a way to quickly filter all inventoried information by all data types right on the app would be beneficial to field workers and supervisors. Additional functionality would be to dictate notes to a comment field, and auto-populate fields with defined values.

Sign crews, traffic engineers, and field inspectors would utilize this app. Users will have access to iPhones, and Android phones and tablets.

VALUE PROPOSITION

Having a comprehensive database that relevant City staff could utilize for inspections would be helpful because it would save time on manual data entry. Having more actionable, accurate information will make our streets safer for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.

For additional documentation regarding pitches and contest details, visit: buffaloinnovates.com

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, PARKS & STREETS

Kerron Johnson & Danielle Rizzo, Special Events Coordinators
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PROJECT:
SPECIAL EVENTS MANAGEMENT

CHALLENGE

The City of Buffalo Special Events Office coordinates any outdoor event that is open to the general public that utilizes City services and ensures all events are properly permitted. There is currently an online form to apply for a special event, however, this form has limited functionality which causes many of the permitting processes to be done manually and on paper.

Event organizers have to submit an application for each individual event and have to resubmit all information every time they apply for an event. Once received by the Special Events Office, each application form (garbage tote, parks, road closures, do not stand, parade/motorcade) has to be manually sent (scanned and e-mailed, or physically dropped off) to the appropriate department (Police, Fire, Streets, Sanitation, etc.).

OPPORTUNITY

A software that digitizes the workflows of the City's Special Events Office would allow event organizers to create a profile and save their information. This profile would auto-fill special events applications when they want to submit for a new event. All special events forms and associated documentation, including insurances, could be filled out or uploaded on the software.

The solution would create an environment where all special events-related processes are managed in one central location to minimize the use of paper and manual processes. It would create an approval workflow so that the various departments and agencies that sign off on events are notified of new applications and can approve through the software, and event organizers are notified of approvals. Administrative users would have the ability to update information on an event application on an event organizers' behalf if information came via mail, e-mail, or fax.

Event organizers, special events coordinators, and associated departments that are involved in the special events approval process would utilize this software. A software that can be accessed on both PCs and mobile devices would be ideal.

VALUE PROPOSITION

A special events management software solution would reduce the time associated with both applying for and approving the events, improve interdepartmental communications, and eliminate redundancies and duplicative entry for event organizers, which would provide a more streamlined and enjoyable experience for people who are putting on events in the City of Buffalo. Having a solution that could be accessed from anywhere would allow special events coordinators to manage events in the field or out of the office.

For additional documentation regarding pitches and contest details, visit: buffaloinnovates.com

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, PARKS & STREETS
STREETS & SANITATION DIVISION

Susan Attridge, Director of Refuse/Recycling
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PROJECT:
TOTE AUDIT

CHALLENGE

The City of Buffalo has over 100,000 blue garbage totes in circulation. The User Fee (garbage pickup) pricing structure is based on the number and size of totes one has at their property. The blue totes have RFID tags but we currently do not have a way to read them. Therefore, the only way to audit a property is to have Department of Sanitation staff conduct a visual inspection.

OPPORTUNITY

A mobile app that can scan RFID tags on totes and addresses associated with the location would give the City the ability to complile, store and maintain inventory. The app would upload the tote numbers and the addresses (via geotagging) to a user-friendly database for the City to track and maintain inventory.

The app will be used by Division of Sanitation tote auditors. In addition, there are Supervisors and Superintendents that can be trained to use the application. The total   staff would be 30-40 people. Workers have access to cell phones and tablets.

VALUE PROPOSITION

The City needs a way to track inventory that is more standardized and verifiable because User Fee billing is based on the present inventory. An accurate inventory will help the City to ensure adequate and appropriate funding for provided services.

For additional documentation regarding pitches and contest details, visit: buffaloinnovates.com

Mayor Byron W. Brown's Civic Innovation CHALLENGE

BUILDING TOGETHER | POWERED BY AT&T

REVERSE PITCH

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Ellen Grant, Deputy Mayor
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PROJECT:
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH RESOURCES

CHALLENGE

One in five U.S. residents is impacted by behavioral health issues, e.g., mental illness, alcoholism, substance abuse/drug abuse, bullying, depression, and general anxiety.

The Mayor's Office frequently receives calls that suggest a person may be in need of behavioral health assistance and City operators will route calls to the appropriate human services agencies.

OPPORTUNITY

A smartphone application to direct individuals to the appropriate resources to address the situation.

Users would be able to populate the app with their emergency contacts and provide users the opportunity to send customized support messages to their network when they are in crisis and/or directly contact local resources.

The solution would have an "I'm having a problem" button that directs users to a landing page that asks the user, "Who would you like to talk to?" If the response is Erie County Crisis Services, the app routes the call. If the response is to connect with their trusted contact(s), then further prompts will outline the situation to send a summarized text message to the user's support network.

VALUE PROPOSITION

Making it easier for residents having a behavioral health issue to alert someone - family member, friend, or Erie County Crisis Services - that they are in need of assistance will increase the overall wellbeing of our community and connect everyone to the help they need.

For additional documentation regarding pitches and contest details, visit: buffaloinnovates.com

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, PARKS & STREETS
DIVISION OF BUILDINGS

Francisco Guzmán, Deputy Commissioner
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PROJECT:
BUILDING MAINTENANCE

CHALLENGE

Currently, the tasks performed by City Hall maintenance staff (office cleaning, etc.) are being recorded on paper and information of completed maintenance activities is not stored digitally.

OPPORTUNITY

A solution would be a user-friendly app that can be used to log building maintenance tasks, and track the inventory of cleaning supplies/materials (toilet paper, paper towels, soap, etc.). It would give custodians a list all building maintenance tasks to complete on a day-to-day basis, which could be customized at the discretion of management.

The software would allow supervisors and management the ability to assign and reassign staff as necessary to complete all daily maintenance activities. The app would assist in keeping each individual floor stocked to adequate levels from the main supply room and track overall supply of materials and alert staff and/or management to reorder certain supplies.

Additional functionality to meet accessibility standards by utilizing speech-to-text and text-to-speech would be welcome. All maintenance staff, management, and supevisors would use this app. Android tablets would be available for use.

VALUE PROPOSITION

This solution would provide a safer and cleaner environment for City staff and the general public who visit City Hall. Collecting data on tasks completed in real-time will help with efficiency and identifying areas for improvement.

For additional documentation regarding pitches and contest details, visit: buffaloinnovates.com

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PERMIT & INSPECTION SERVICES

Joelle Spencer, Clerk
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PROJECT:
ASK AN INSPECTOR

CHALLENGE

The Department of Permit & Inspection Services receives frequent calls asking about what types of businesses need to be licensed, finding and interpreting building code and other city ordinance requirements, and other questions from businesses and the general public. Due to the sheer amount of information available on the Department's webpage, it can be time-consuming and challenging to find answers to narrow questions regarding City ordinances, business licenses, and building codes.

OPPORTUNITY

Both City staff and the public both need quick access to pertinent information. A solution would provide a way to access information and answer frequently asked questions about permits, licenses, inspections, and any services offered by the Department of Permit & Inspection Services, e.g., a web-based virtual assistant or search engine.

The solution could provide a search query function where users could ask specific questions like "Do I need a license for this business?" and results would quickly provide the requested information and/or provide links to existing information, e.g., links to specific sections of the Buffalo Green Code or other City resources. Ideally, the solution would capture keywords, search terms and user feedback to optimize future searches.

VALUE PROPOSITION

This solution will enable our department and the City to better serve and empower residents, businesses, and visitors with accurate and relevant information. There will be less uncertainty for business owners and investors about what they need to complete and adhere to when doing business in the City of Buffalo.

Streamlining knowledge transfer would reduce workload on behalf of City departments and lead to more efficient allocation of City resources.

A more informed and knowledgeable community could lead to a more prosperous and productive city and region.

For additional documentation regarding pitches and contest details, visit: buffaloinnovates.com