



Case Study

City of Dallas, Texas – Development Services

Overview:

The City of Dallas' Development Services Department (DSD) is responsible, among many other things, for accepting, reviewing, approving and monitoring all of the City's construction permit applications. This singular task typically involves the submission of a completed Building Inspection Permit Application form with any supporting documentation. For the City of Dallas, while the volume of new applications is substantial, the existing volume of applications, either already processed or in archives is huge.

The Challenge:

As with many other documents submitted by the public or by commercial developers, a requirement exists to provide the City with the submitter's Social Security Number(s) (SSN) as part of the application package. Having a SSN on a document that will be available as a public record creates a challenge for the Department to ensure the privacy of this sensitive data.

Under Texas' current public records law, citizens are responsible for requesting that their private information be removed (or redacted) from public documents to minimize the potential for identity theft. Dallas' Development Services Department made a decision, fully in compliance with the existing US Federal and Texas State law, to take proactive steps to ensure the privacy of their customers' information. The Department currently redacts all new application forms during initial processing with UBiQuati MScan Software written by CompuScan. However, the challenge was to find a solution that would enable them to redact their very large historical paper archive repository of between 3 to 4 million forms in a timely and efficient manner, and which could ultimately be applied to other departments and documents for the same purpose. Additionally, the Department is planning to convert an even larger microfilm archive of between 60 to 80 million pages into digital image, and apply the auto-redaction process to those images as well.

The Solution:

To address this challenge, the City of Dallas' DSD department supervisor, Debbie Jones, contacted their existing document management vendor, CompuScan in Dallas, Texas to determine if a solution was available that could be easily be added to their existing CompuScan document capture and management program, TheUBiQuati MScan solution. Sonny Baca, the Principal of CompuScan, explained that an automated redaction solution developed by Peladon Software, Inc. of San Diego, California could be easily and tightly integrated into the existing UBiQuati MScan solution, and would address the department's requirements for auto-redaction of SSNs from the Building Inspection Permit Application forms. The solution could also be applied to the department's existing paper archives, as well as to the microfilm archive once they had been converted to image format.

Description of Process:

The historical application forms and their associated supporting documents are scanned into the system through the UBiQuati MScan capture module. The images are then cleaned and presented to a form identification process where any images that are not identified as valid application form images are separated from the images of valid application forms. The application forms are then automatically processed by the Peladon redaction engine, where the redaction is applied to the appropriate zone(s) on the form.

Once processed, the forms are presented for an optional quality check through an interactive user interface for quality verification or edit of the redaction process. Given that redaction of information is a process where any errors can potentially expose a legal liability if not properly executed, all redacted documents are presented for this verification process. However, an operator having a reasonable amount of experience with the process can verify forms at a very high rate, and still achieve a 100% quality check on the process.

When the forms have been redacted and verified, they are recombined with their respective attachments, and passed to the UBiQuati document repository.

Results:

The CompuScan/Peladon solution has proven to be an excellent tool to address the auto-redaction needs for the Dallas DSD, while providing both an exceptional return on investment and generous labor savings. Prior to implementing the auto-redaction solution, the DSD operators were manually redacting approximately 5,000 application forms per week. With the new system, that same 5,000 application forms takes approximately four hours to complete – a labor savings with a factor of ten! Given the compensation rates for the Department's seven redaction operators, this represents a cost savings of over \$5,000 per week, or over \$260,000 per year in labor savings alone.

The operators particularly like the Quality Inspection module, as it gives them both a sense of confidence in the system's redaction process, as well as a very fast method to address any issues or additional redaction requirements on a form by form basis. With as little as 30 minutes of training on the system, operators were confident and proficient in using the system.

"The addition of the Peladon Software auto-redaction capability to our UBiQuati solution allows us to achieve complete, accurate redaction of our archived application forms within a much shorter timeframe than would ever have been possible without it. We are very pleased with the ease of use and powerful features of the software as well as flawless customer support from CompuScan/Peladon.", stated Ms. Jones, adding "It is our intention to look around at other departments' redaction requirements, and apply the new solution wherever it can provide a cost savings."