> " Objective Trapeze has been phenomenal. **It saves the assessment team a huge amount of time and effort.** "
>
> Simone Plummer, Development Assessment Manager, Sutherland Shire Council

ORGANISATION

Sutherland Shire Council

INDUSTRY

Local Government

USERS

~100

SOLUTION

/\\ Objective TRAPEZE

BENEFITS AT A GLANCE

Greater efficiency: In one year, council planners processed 36% more applications without any additional staff

Elimination of paper: The myriad of documents involved in development applications (DAs) are handled digitally at every stage of the process

Better application handling: Despite the complexity and value of DAs more than trebling, planners are only taking 15% longer to evaluate them

Economic growth: Faster approval of larger, more complex projects improves the council's appeal to investors, delivering substantial economic benefits

Sutherland Shire Council processing 36% more development applications with same number of staff

Facing surging volumes of development applications and restrictions on its manpower, Sutherland Shire Council turned to digital processing to improve its work efficiency. It determined 36% more development applications in 2016 than the previous year – with an average value per application three times greater - without any additional staff.

As New South Wales' second most populous local government area and the eighth largest in Australia, Sutherland Shire Council is a focal point for population growth and economic activity. Its 225,000 residents enjoy a broad range of services and lifestyle options that have attracted unprecedented development investment in recent years.

A surge in development activity during 2015 saw a sharp increase in the number of development applications (DAs) being lodged with the council. The Development Assessment teams at the time were relying on fully paper-based processes to handle the masses of documents, forms, drawings, calibrations and plans involved in each application.
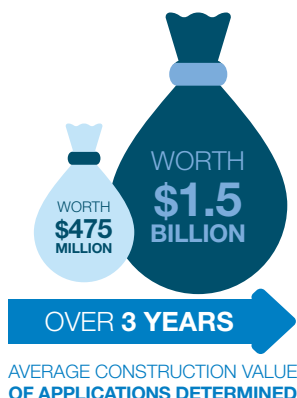
The team was also seeing a growing number of complex, higher-value applications lodged as developers pivoted towards increasingly high-density multiple dwelling units and associated infrastructure; this saw the average value of applications nearly treble within a year.

Despite the growth in demand for their services, budget constraints meant the Development Assessment teams could hire new assessment staff but could not afford additional support staff to handle the considerable administrative workload.

"We were facing a tsunami of work," said Development Assessment manager Simone Plummer. "We witnessed an exponential growth in workload, and we were feeling really overwhelmed."

The team also was being squeezed by the state government mandate that councils be prepared to move lodgement of development applications online by the end of 2017. This would require a comprehensive online platform for managing complex workflows and providing better communication with applicants throughout the process, and for the Development Assessment team, an effective way to process and approve these applications digitally.

GREAT GOVERNANCE >>>
BETTER BUSINESS

Objective

KEY METRICS

WORTH
$1.5
BILLION

WORTH
$475
MILLION

OVER **3 YEARS**

AVERAGE CONSTRUCTION VALUE
OF APPLICATIONS DETERMINED

1,705
DEVELOPMENT
APPLICATIONS
IN 2016

PRODUCTIVITY
↑36%
IN ONE YEAR

**NO ADDITIONAL
STAFF HIRED**

BUILDING A DIGITAL WORKFLOW

Recognising that a technological solution was in order, the Development Assessment team began exploring its options and learned that the council was planning the implementation of an electronic document management system (EDMS).

When it learned about the digital DA processing and approval capabilities of Objective Trapeze, the team began discussing options with local government expert Redman Solutions. The timeframe for the EDMS implementation was longer than the Development Assessment team wanted to wait however, and it began implementing Objective Trapeze as a stand-alone solution for its eApproval process.

The implementation raised a range of challenges, including the allocation of work and naming conventions for files. It was also important to assist some staff who were accustomed to the previous processes to engage in extra training sessions, get support from champion users, and receive tips and tricks to ensure adoption of the new platform and processes.

Ultimately, the Development Assessment team went live with Objective Trapeze and rapidly began to realise the productivity benefits the software offers. Rather than forcing applicants to submit multiple paper copies of their plans – and then distributing marked-up paper copies within the team and back to applicants – those applicants could now submit just one digital and one paper (field file) copy of each development application.

Digital applications are allocated to an assessment officer within 24 hours, with the information pack published to the council's DA tracking website. Hard-copy notifications are posted to neighbours, who are given the opportunity to comment by email or paper, which is scanned into the file.

BUILT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT PLANNING AND BUILDING

Using Objective Trapeze's purpose-built assessment and measurement capabilities, assessment officers and planners can not only easily process complex applications, but can instantly measure dimensions and areas to evaluate compliance with all relevant planning, environment protection, and other regulations.

Engineers can rapidly conduct accurate swept path calculation and analysis to verify a vehicle's ability to safely perform turning manoeuvers, while Objective Trapeze's light-table tool has allowed planners to overlay various types of plans to visually compare them and easily discuss amended developments. Planners can also measure and overlay tree protection zones on top of digital diagrams, and use annotations to clearly show encroachments and propose amendments, which has been known to save precious discussion time between engineers and applicants, and to save trees.

Ultimately, the Objective Trapeze environment has allowed the various disciplines of the Development Assessment team to work better together – with each other as well as with external referral agencies such as water, fire, and other authorities – by sharing clear and accurate mark-ups and annotations. All annotations, measurements, and digital stamping are performed within Objective Trapeze, with final digital plans published on the DA Tracking website and stamped plans emailed to the applicant using a large-file sharing tool.

KEY BENEFITS

DIGITAL WORKFLOW MEETS
NSW STATE MANDATE
FOR ONLINE SERVICE DELIVERY
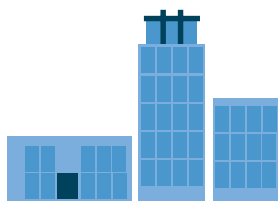
FASTER APPROVALS
HELP COUNCIL KEEP UP WITH
SURGING DEVELOPER INVESTMENT

HAPPIER COMMUNITY THROUGH
EASIER DA PROCESS
AND BETTER COMMUNICATION

BETTER EFFICIENCY FOR A DIGITAL FUTURE

Despite the massive increase in the complexity and construction cost of the applications, Sutherland Shire Council's Development Assessment team was able to maintain average determination times of 64 days, up slightly from 56 days under the previous process.

This represents "phenomenal" time savings for assessors that must check and double-check every design decision and measurement on the proposed plans. "Trapeze saves the assessment team a huge amount of time and effort," Plummer said. "In just a few clicks, planners can calculate the floor space ratio, land space ratio, and more – and have faith in those calculations." Finalised plans are stamped digitally in Objective Trapeze, taking a 30-minute job down to a minute and a half. "Our Trapeze Champ loves not having to fill all the stamps with ink and stamping the plans one by one."

By all but eliminating the use of paper, pencil and printouts, the direct cost savings from the transformation have been significant. Sutherland is also exploring the broader use of the Objective Trapeze application in a mobile context, allowing council staff to bring their planning and evaluation activities into the field for discussions with related stakeholders.

Word travels quickly in an organisation like Sutherland Shire Council, and the success of the Development Assessment team's digital transformation has already spawned strong interest in other parts of the council. As further government mandates drive online lodgement and other interactions with the council, it will be well prepared to meet those requirements head on.

The efficiency improvements provided by the new environment have proved even more significant: expediting the approval of larger and more complex DAs translates into direct economic benefits for the council region, creating more jobs and attracting even more residents to the area.

"Trapeze has become a driver of change within the organisation," said Plummer. "Once the Building & Planning Department goes digital, the rest of the organisation follows."

> Once the Building & Planning Department goes digital, **the rest of the organisation follows.**
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> **Simone Plummer,**
> Development Assessment Manager,
> Sutherland Shire Council

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Simone Plummer,
Development Assessment Manager,
Sutherland Shire Council

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ABOUT OBJECTIVE CORPORATION

Objective Corporation (ASX:OCL) creates information and process governance solutions that are effortless to use and enable organisations to confidently advance their own digital transformation.

Designed for regulated industries, these solutions turn the imperative of compliance, accountability and governance into an opportunity to streamline business processes and deliver the innovative services that customers expect.

With a heritage in Enterprise Content Management (ECM), Objective's expanded solutions extend governance across the spectrum of the modern workplace; underpinning information, processes and collaborative work-spaces.

Through a brilliant user experience, people access the information they need to progress processes from wherever they choose to work.

Objective