

CASE STUDY

AvalonBay Communities, Inc.



CLIENT: AVALONBAY COMMUNITIES, INC.

CHALLENGE: Large project teams, lengthy approval processes, and document distribution challenges left AvalonBay searching for a better construction project management software application.

SOLUTION: Procore's cloud-based construction software provided AvalonBay with access for an unlimited number of team members, streamlined and shortened the various approval processes, and managed documents in a centralized and easy to access fashion.



AvalonBay Communities, Inc. is a publicly traded real estate investment trust that focuses on building, redeveloping, acquiring, and managing high-quality apartment communities in the United States.

Tony Joyce is a project engineer with AvalonBay’s Bay Area construction group. Joyce’s team is building a 17-story, concrete high-rise in downtown San Francisco that will be home to hundreds of people in 273 apartments.

The company also does a lot of redevelopment, as well. “We rebrand the property and change all the amenity spaces, remodel kitchens—whatever needs to be done to get the old property up to standard,” Joyce says.



AVALONBAY DEPENDS ON PROCORE

A typical new-construction project can last more than three years—about eight months for design, followed by 18 to 24 months of construction. Throughout that process, AvalonBay depends on Procore.

“A key use of Procore is for sharing drawings,” Joyce notes. “In construction, people either have to send out huge sets of drawings or try to send PDFs. Having drawings in the cloud where people can access the file they need, makes document sharing effortless. Procore also does document distribution. That’s really the strongest value that we’ve been getting from Procore.”

In the days before Procore, those drawings were sent by “snail mail a lot of the time,” Joyce remembers.

With its expansive operations, AvalonBay needed construction management software with centralized document control accessible via the Web. About five years ago, AvalonBay chose to use Procore on some pilot projects.

“We needed to use the cloud so that everybody could access information as easily as possible,” says Joyce.

“Now we just post documents to Procore. Project team members pull off the file they need, do their review, and post it back up. It saves a lot of time.” Whereas the review process used to take weeks, now that even the largest documents can be shared immediately, the review process can be completed in days or even hours. And, says Joyce, that’s “crucial.”

THE FUNCTIONALITY OF PROCORE SPEEDS UP THE PROJECT

“We’re in a very fast-moving business,” he explains. “So if we have changes in the field, we need to be able to coordinate as quickly as possible.”

Take RFIs, for example. “Now when we get a question from a guy through an email, we upload it to Procore,” Joyce says. “All of the correspondence is documented, and it’s immediate.”

“You just pick your distribution list, you upload your RFI, get your response, close it out, and that’s the end of it. Everybody gets the information that they need.”

Document sharing and the submittal process were two of Procore’s main selling points for AvalonBay.



“The way that the construction industry works,” Joyce explains, “they used to send sets of shop drawings. So, let’s say you had steel-shop drawings, a contractor would review it, stamp it, package them, generate transmittals, and send it off to the architect. The architect reviews it, stamps it, etc. Then it goes to a structural engineer. So the workflow—and the logistics—were a pain.”

Procore has sped everything up, he says. “Now it’s, ‘Here’s a submittal and here are the approvers.’ We do our stamps electronically, too. We’re just stamping a PDF and then it’s immediately sent to the architect or to the structural engineer or whoever the approver is.”

With the Procore workflow, physical distance is no longer an obstacle.

“Our structural engineer is in Washington and we work in San Francisco. So when we have to get things mailed to them and stamped, that’s always a pain. And it’s expensive shipping all those documents around, right?” Instead, AvalonBay does it all online now—and without waiting for one approver to physically send the documents to the next approver on the list.

ROBUST PERMISSIONS ALLOW AVALONBAY TO CUSTOMIZE ACCESS TO PROCORE

In order to shelter its architects from a barrage of unnecessary, time-consuming queries from subcontractors, AvalonBay uses Procore's permission structure to restrict access to the RFI tool.

"Let's say our electrician has a question, they'll send it over in an email, Joyce explains. Once my team has looked it over and determines it's something the architect actually has to weigh in on we create the RFI in Procore. Then that's when the architect gets their Procore notification. They'll respond and we'll get the notification that they responded."

Everyone has different requirements and AvalonBay Communities needs the extra layer of scrutiny at the outset of the RFI process, Joyce says. "We have people that are going to ask redundant questions. Things that, if they had taken the time to do a little research, they could find the answers to themselves. So a lot of times we'll get questions that we know the answer to or for which the answers are already available."

In such cases, the question doesn't need to become an RFI. Instead, members of his team answer the question themselves. "We don't need to bog down our architect," he explains. "Their time's so valuable to us, because there is always a pressing issue." It's a question of prioritizing, he says.

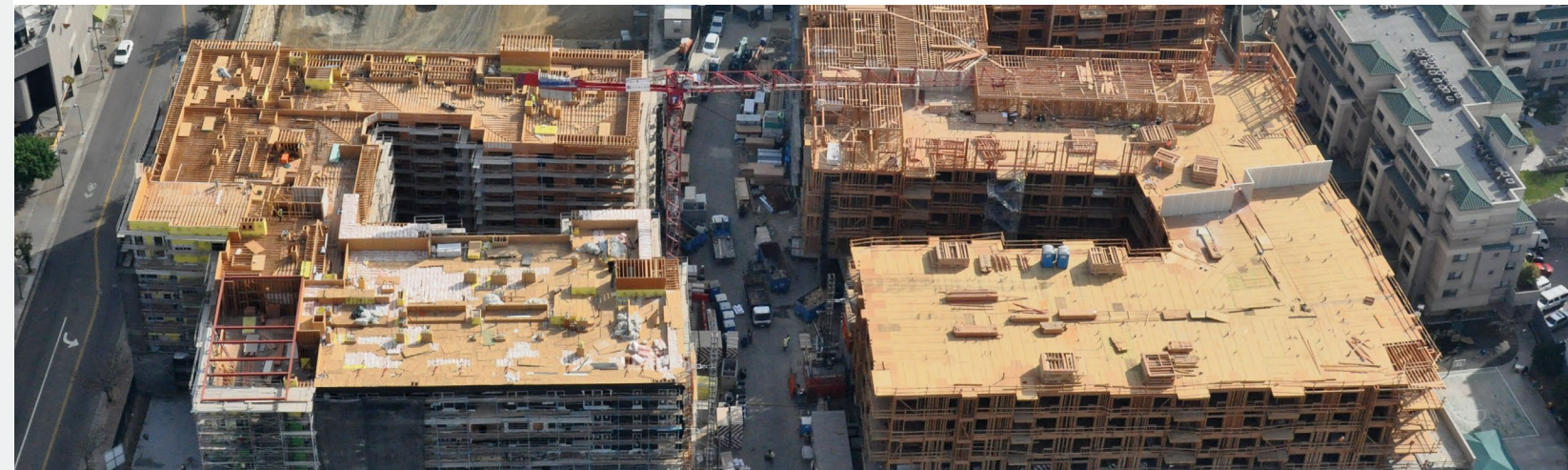
While AvalonBay doesn't give its subcontractors direct access to RFIs in Procore, on a typical project the company still might have hundreds of project team members logging on to Procore. Joyce appreciates Procore's access control and permission templates, which allow him to make sure people only see the documents they're supposed to see. And with so many users, Procore's flat-fee pricing structure was very important.

"If users were charged on a per-seat basis, that would be a major impact," Joyce notes. "We have hundreds of users that are looking at these documents, and if there were a fee for each one, that would just blow it out of the water."

AvalonBay has hundreds of users on each project. There are typically multiple bidders for each scope of work. So Joyce, who's heavily involved in the bidding process and the document-control aspect of his project, relies heavily on Procore.

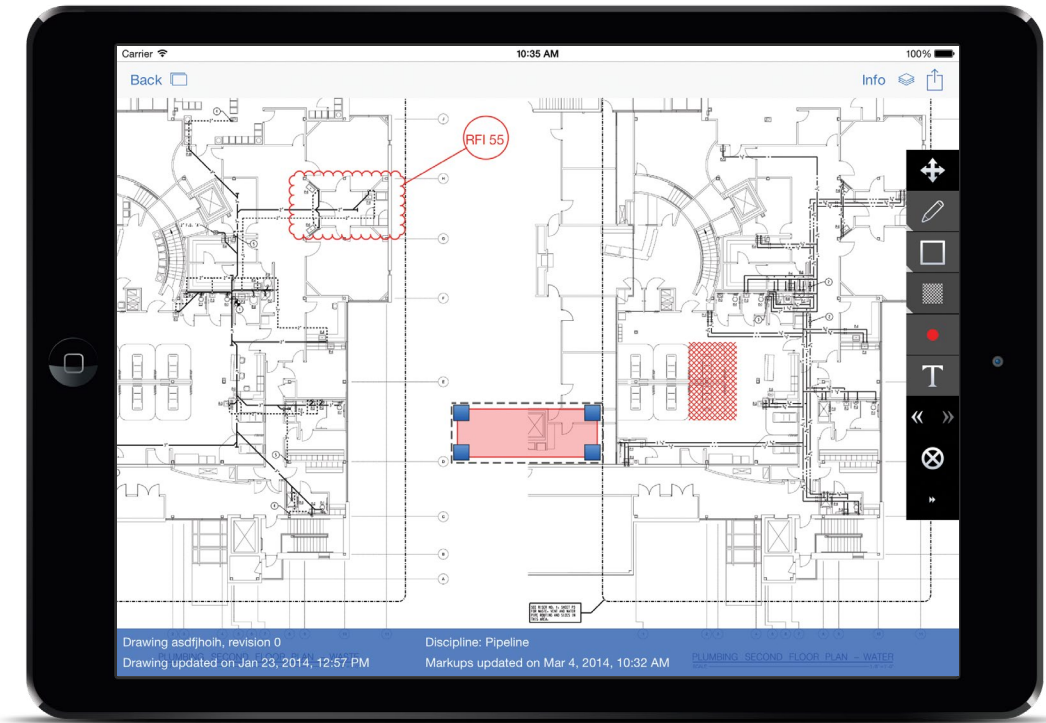
"Things from RFIs, submittals, transmittals, change orders, and the bidding feature—I'm working it across the board," he says. "The search function within the RFI log is very handy—I can sort by open or closed. The RFI tool and the submittal tool are extremely beneficial, and they're very user-friendly."

He gives an example. "We will throw in the lump-sum contract fee and then just start tracking change orders off of that," Joyce explains. "So it's a good way to track your exposure or track your costs that you've had associated with each sub."

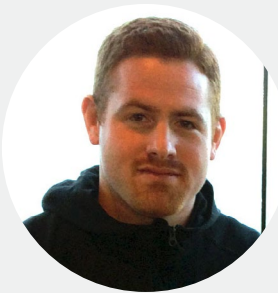


Another Procore feature that AvalonBay takes advantage of is the mobile app. On Joyce's current project, they have four iPads on site.

"One of the things that we find most handy is Procore's Photos tool," he notes. "You just generate an album. Let's say you're walking the job site snapping photos with your iPhone, when you get back to the office you have your album with all of the photos you took in the field. That's been very useful."



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Tony Joyce
Project Engineer

WHO USES PROCORE?

General Contractors // Owners // Engineering Firms
Specialty Contractors // Construction Management Firms

BENEFITS

Improved Communication
Mobile Access
Increased Productivity
& Accountability
Flat Rate Pricing
Unlimited Users
Unlimited, Secure File Storage
Easy to Use
Superior Customer Support
Risk Prevention

FEATURES

Drawing & Document Management
Accounting Integration
Contract & Change Management
Bidding
Daily Logs
RFIs
Submittals
Punch List
Meetings
Photos

