

The City of Westfield Moves All Municipal Applications and Services to Nutanix

Xtreme Computing Platform Provides Faster Performance and Lower OpEx in a Much Smaller Footprint

The City of Westfield, MA

The City of Westfield is a growing community of 41,000 residents located in the foothills of the Berkshires in Western Massachusetts. Known as the “Whip City”, Westfield has a long tradition of innovative businesses that began in the 19th century with the manufacturing of bricks, whips, and cigars. Today, Westfield is known for its prominent position in the precision manufacturing industry.

IT and Business Challenges

Steve Zawada is the network and server administrator for the City of Westfield. “We serve as the hub site for all city IT services, including our public safety departments and schools,” he explained. “Most of the servers and communications between buildings and the Internet go through here. Our department now supports 33 remote sites, 2,500 end users, and 5,800 students in our district.”

The City of Westfield started virtualizing its server environment several years ago. “We originally went with an HP EVA storage C7000 enclosure with six blade servers and VMware,” Zawada said. “That environment was reaching end-of-life, so we started looking for better options to replace that aging infrastructure.”

Finding Nutanix

“I meet with a local working group of my peers in western Massachusetts to share technology information on a regular basis,” said Lenore Bernashe, Information Technology Manager for the City of Westfield. “One of my colleagues recently purchased a Nutanix system and has been very pleased with its performance and ease of use. Based upon his recommendation, we researched the product and made the decision to purchase a Nutanix NX-3060-G4 Series for our city services.”

An Easy Deployment

The initial installation went very quickly, according to Zawada. “Nutanix Global Services Organization helped us with the install and several of our production VMs were up and running in less than three hours,” he reported. “We migrated the rest of our workloads over slowly because it was brand-new platform for us and we wanted to make sure everything was working correctly. We finished moving all of our applications—including our mission-critical financial server—over to Nutanix four weeks later.”

Rackspace and Cost Savings

“The small size of the Nutanix unit is quite deceiving,” Bernashe noted. “We replaced half a rack of HP equipment with just 2u of Nutanix—with room to spare. We now have about 50 VMs running on the NX-3060-G4 Series, including our Windows-based environment, Active Directory, and file servers. The only thing we haven’t moved over yet is our public safety backbone, since it was just installed two years ago. When that infrastructure comes up for renewal, we are considering migrating it over to a separate Nutanix environment as well.”

“I am looking forward to hearing what’s on the horizon for Nutanix. We are extremely impressed with the product now, and it just keeps getting better. We are very happy with our decision to move to the Nutanix Xtreme Computing Platform.”

- Lenore Bernashe, Information Technology Manager, City of Westfield, MA



Industry

City Government

Business Needs

Existing HP storage environment was due for a refresh

Solution

- Nutanix NX-3060-G4 Series
- Nutanix Prism management solution

Benefits

- Shortened time to create financial reports by 5-10x
- Reduced VMware licensing and maintenance costs
- Cut two to three hours off nightly backups
- Enabled seamless, non-disruptive upgrades



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The move to Nutanix also enabled the City of Westfield to reduce the number of VMware vSphere instances. “We were able to power down four of our six existing HP blades by moving to Nutanix,” Zawada said. “As a result, we were able to release four of our existing VMware licenses, substantially reducing our recurring costs for support and maintenance.”

Better Application Performance and Non-Disruptive Upgrades

“Our end users are reporting that everything is running much faster on Nutanix, especially our financial services application,” noted Bernashe. “Reports that used to take ten minutes finish in just a minute or two on Nutanix.”

“All of our Nutanix systems are located in one central hub,” Zawada explained. “We are still using 1GE switches in our data-center since we don’t have the funds available to upgrade to dual 10GE switches yet. I can’t imagine how fast everything will run when we upgrade the network, because even with the lower bandwidth, the Nutanix systems are incredibly fast. Software and firmware updates also happen quickly on Nutanix. I performed a Nutanix NOS update yesterday with no down time at all. I did it during production hours and it was seamless--our end users never noticed that anything was happening in the background.”

Increased Visibility with Prism

“System management is a breeze using the Prism interface,” said Zawada. “We can see much more detail at the storage and VM level than we could previously. Just by opening the Prism interface, I immediately know that the Nutanix environment is up and running and there are no problems. The increased visibility and simplicity of the architecture have significantly reduced the amount of time I spend managing the storage and VMs.”

Faster Backups and Restores

“We back up a large amount of data every day,” Zawada reported. “Nutanix has cut at least two to three hours off of our nightly backup times. This is significant, because our backups used to run from early evening well into the next morning—if everything went as planned. With Nutanix, they always finish within the allotted timeframe. We now do nightly snapshots on our critical servers. We recently had to restore one of the servers and the process was amazingly fast.”

Proactive Nutanix Support

The City of Westfield’s IT team has been very impressed with the level of support they are receiving from Nutanix. “The Nutanix support reps are very responsive to our needs,” noted Zawada. “I have only called tech support a few times, but in every instance they were able to quickly solve the problem. Our sales engineer, Adam Provost, has been great too. I can call him anytime I have a question. He keeps track of us and touches base every now and then just to see how we are doing. With most other companies, once you complete the installation, you never hear from them again. That’s not the case with Nutanix.”

Enabling New Projects

“We provide a wide variety of applications and services for the city’s end users,” Bernashe said. “There’s always a new project going on that requires additional IT infrastructure. We just relocated a school and will be opening a large senior center this year. We were running out of data storage in our old environment and adding capacity was time-consuming and expensive. We don’t have any of those storage issues anymore. Nutanix is enabling us to launch new services for our constituents very quickly now.”

Implementing Shared DR

“I have been brainstorming with several of my IT counterparts about creating a shared disaster recovery/data storage system,” Bernashe reported. “So far, seven of our neighboring communities are on-board with a common DR center. All of these organizations are located in Western Massachusetts, but we are geographically separate so it’s an ideal set-up for business continuity. If we’re all on the Nutanix platform, we’ll be able to easily leverage our resources across the multiple clusters. We can all improve our DR capabilities in this scenario.”

Looking Forward to New Features

“Nutanix sponsors a series of local conferences where they share information on new product features that are coming in the next three to six months,” concluded Bernashe. “We attended the event in Foxboro, Massachusetts. I am looking forward to hearing what’s on the horizon for Nutanix. We are extremely impressed with the product now, and it just keeps getting better. We’re very happy with our decision to move to Nutanix Xtreme Computing Platform.”



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Using Nutanix, customers benefit from predictable performance, linear scalability and cloud-like infrastructure consumption.

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