

From paper to peak performance:

Lynnwood, WA's entirely online permitting process

100s

of permits consolidated
into a seamless process

85%

reduction in daily
walk-in traffic

5,140

permits submitted
entirely online in first year

30-40%

reduction in average
permit processing time

OVERVIEW

Faced with outdated systems and mounting inefficiencies, the City of Lynnwood, Washington, embarked on a mission to modernize its permitting process. Under the leadership of the Director of Development and Business Services David Kleitsch and Deputy Director/Building Official Robert Mathias, the city transitioned from paper-based workflows to a fully digital, customer-centric model using Permitting & Licensing Enhanced (SmartGov) by Granicus — resulting in a dramatic improvement in turnaround times, transparency, and public satisfaction.

SITUATION | FRAGMENTED AND FRUSTRATING

When Mathias joined the City of Lynnwood, much of the permitting process was entirely paper based, with plans mailed out to third parties. The existing digital infrastructure needed a complete upgrade, which would have required years of work, pulling in consultants and incorporating third-party modules.

Staff and customers alike were frustrated by building delays, lack of transparency in public construction, and a fragmented system that required separate permits for each discipline — sometimes up to hundreds of different permits. The inefficient and cumbersome user experience caused increased call volumes and in-person visits, which added strain on staff bandwidth.

SOLUTION | FROM SILOED TO SMART

After a request for proposal (RFP) process, Lynnwood selected Granicus for the solution's flexibility and customization. Unlike other systems, the Granicus solution allowed Lynnwood to build workflows tailored to its needs. "I put 143 specific items into the RFP that I wanted a program to do," said Mathias. "Granicus was the only one that hit over 85% of them."

MUST HAVE SOLUTIONS

Permitting & Licensing
Enhanced

“The nice thing about [Granicus] is that we build it to meet our requirements; whatever our processes are, however we want to build it, that's how the system will receive it.”

– Robert Mathias,
Building Official, City
of Lynnwood



Launched in fewer than five months, the platform enabled concurrent reviews, consolidated hundreds of permits into a single application, and provided a user-friendly online portal for customers to apply, pay, and track permits. “With [Granicus], we’re doing things as a team, as opposed to in silos. It reduces our turnaround times, and our customers are ecstatic about it.”

The Permitting & Licensing solution also supports multilingual access and robust reporting tools, including Exago Report Writer, which helps with budgeting and data-driven decision making.

“Typically, when you buy an on-site server-based program, you have to build your system to meet their requirements,” said Mathias. “The nice thing about [Granicus] is that we build it to meet our requirements; whatever our processes are, however we want to build it, that’s how the system will receive it.”

– Robert Mathias | Deputy Director/Building Official

Lynnwood elected to move away from a siloed enterprise resource planning (ERP) system for their permitting needs to a Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) program that incorporated everything into a single module. “We ended up with a program that has the public facing portal, has the workflows, has the tie into electronic plan review — all of those different factors in one,” said Mathias. “We didn’t have to hire third-party modules or consultants to come in and add certain things. We just found it a lot easier to use.”

RESULTS | EFFICIENTLY AND ENTIRELY ONLINE

In their first year using the solution, Lynnwood has processed more than 5,000 permits entirely online. Average permit turnaround times dropped from 83 days to just seven thanks to the intuitive online portal, and walk-in traffic and phone inquiries have plummeted.

“While testing it out, we had an architect online with us to show him how to go through the process,” said Mathias. “It’s so intuitive that we couldn’t keep up with him — he went ahead and did his application while we were talking to him, trying to explain how to do it, and then he was done. We were like, ‘Well, wait a minute, you didn’t even wait for us!’”

The Permitting & Licensing solution’s mapping and proximity tools streamline public notices, while real-time reporting empowers city leadership with actionable insights. Most notably, digital transformation has earned praise from council members, the mayor, and the community — and staff reports few issues post-launch since the city now operates as a more cohesive unit.

Because there are more capabilities available in the program, the department is now working to incorporate other departments of Lynnwood and external customers as well into the solution so they will automatically be notified of new permits. “Our hope is that Lynnwood will be the most progressive permitting, customer service-forward, transparent program in the state, if not the country,” said Mathias.

**Interested in finding out how Granicus can
work for your organization?**

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