



February 2013

## Lean/Kaizen Case Study – Kitsap County Single Family Housing Permit

Kitsap County cut the time it took to approve a new home permit from 26 days to eight days. The County achieved this significant reduction without adding staff or major new resources.

Using the Lean philosophy and an intense five day review, the Kitsap County team analyzed their processes and completely reshaped their operations, redesigned the lobby, moved their offices, and eliminated more than 50 steps in their process.

Kitsap County's performance inspired the State Auditor's Office's Local Government Performance Center to try to see if the same results could be reproduced elsewhere. The Center is hosting a Lean Academy to help Clark County and Island County officials streamline their permitting processes.

Fourteen counties applied for the slots in the Academy, which started in October 2012. They launched their own one-week review processes in December and January and streamlined their processes. Everyone involved is seeking to replicate Kitsap County's success.

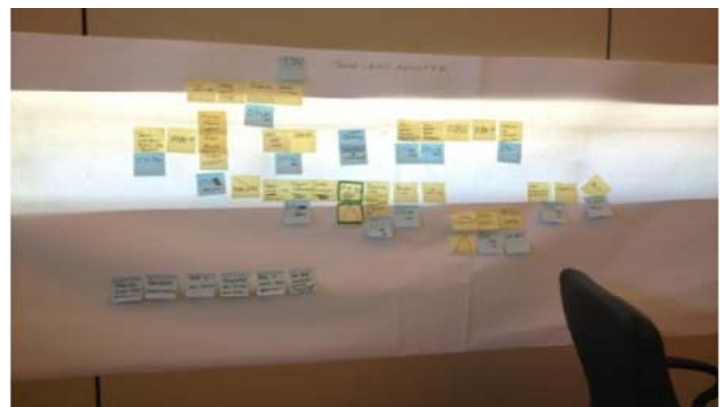
Taking a deep look at how the county did business was demanding and exhausting work that paid off, said Kitsap County Fire Marshal David Lynam, who compared the exercise to a week spent digging holes for fence posts.

"It's a great way to reestablish faith in government," said Larry Keeton, director of the Kitsap County Department of Community Development. The process now works faster, without changing the criteria, he said. "This will give you more speed and it will give you more capacity."

The County redesigned its permit application to make its requirements more clear, and so applicants provide more complete information. They moved offices so the main permitting employees sit together. The permitting team now meets each morning to review all the permits that came in the day before, starting the reviews sooner.

"I can't wait to submit a permit," said Karla Cook, Vice President of Cook Construction and a member of the Kitsap County Homebuilders' Association. "They really wanted to hear input from the customer, the homebuilder, and they implemented systems to correct waste ... and better move the process."

**Kitsap County's single family residence permit process before (top) and after (bottom) its Lean review.**



# Local Government Performance Center

## By the numbers – Huge time savings in Kitsap County’s new processes

**Approval – From 26 days to 8 days** – 69 percent cut in the single family residence permit approval time

**Completion – From 41 days to 18 days** – 56 percent cut in the time to issue the permit

**Notification – From 21 days to 6 days** – 71 percent cut in the time to notify the applicant if more work is needed

The time saved translates into more capacity to process greater permitting volumes faster and also frees time to do a quality job on the more complex or challenging permits.

Larry Keeton is eager to help others learn the new approach. He helped kick off the Lean Academy by saying the changes can be transformative, but not without hard work and the staff wanting to change the processes.

“I want to look at every single permit we have in the county to streamline them for better process times,” said Lisa Lewis, a Kitsap County environmental planner who participated in the review in July.

The Kitsap County Commissioners authorized funding for the project. A process management expert, Carlos Venegas of Lean Office Innovation, led the Kitsap County event. Venegas also facilitated the Lean events for Clark and Island Counties.

“The Lean Academy is part of a broader effort to share leading practices with local governments to help make government work better and cost less and serve citizens in a way that is efficient and effective,” said Larisa Benson, the State Auditor’s Office director of performance audit.

## Resources for more information

**Great resources on Kitsap County:** Learn more about Kitsap County’s experiences from videos on the Department of Community Development’s website: [http://www.kitsapgov.com/dcd/permit\\_process\\_kaizen.htm](http://www.kitsapgov.com/dcd/permit_process_kaizen.htm)

**Environmental Protection Agency Lean Government webpage:** [www.epa.gov/lean/government/index.htm](http://www.epa.gov/lean/government/index.htm)

**Minnesota’s LEAN Online:** [www.lean.state.mn.us](http://www.lean.state.mn.us)

**King County’s Lean Toolkit:** <http://www.kingcounty.gov/employees/Lean/Toolkit.aspx>

**Ken Miller’s Blog on Governing Magazine:** [www.governing.com/blogs/public-great/lean-government.html](http://www.governing.com/blogs/public-great/lean-government.html)

**Washington’s Government Management and Accountability Performance Lean page:**  
[www.accountability.wa.gov/leadership/lean/default.asp](http://www.accountability.wa.gov/leadership/lean/default.asp)

**State Auditor’s Office Local Government Performance Center:** [www.sao.wa.gov/PerformanceCenter](http://www.sao.wa.gov/PerformanceCenter)