

Inspecting the County's Inspections Process

Citizens think of permit inspections as the end to a long, arduous construction process. The County Building Inspector is an almost welcome sight as applicants and citizens eagerly wait to close out building projects or proceed to the next phase. With over 40 different inspection types and an average 200-300 inspections conducted daily, coordinating the routing of the County's 14 inspectors across more than 500 unincorporated square miles is no small task. "Certainly, we strive to make the process as seamless as possible, from inspection request to scheduling to providing timely inspection results. We want our citizens to know that we understand construction projects are often stressful and we strive to remove whatever hassle we can from the process," says Mike McCaughin, Chief Building Official.

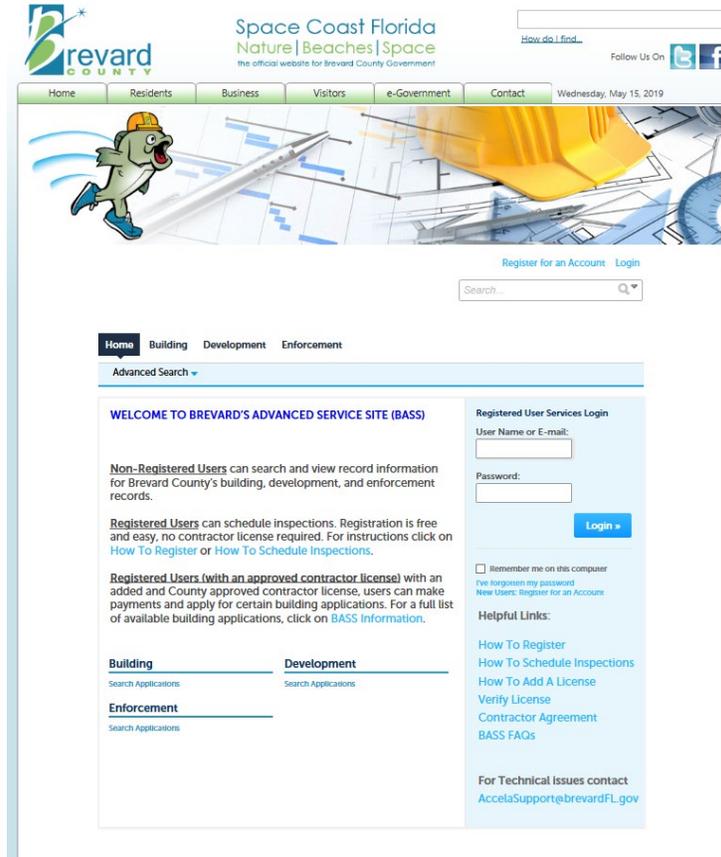


The County's Inspection Lean Six Team considers efficiencies.

The County has provided next business day inspections for some time. But until recently, the Building Department lacked the ability to accept requests virtually. "Permit submittal has continued to rise this spring, we are now exceeding last year's level. In two or three months, we will be very busy with the resulting inspection requests," adds Mike McCaughin. Managing those permit requests will be difficult and efficiencies must be found.

The County recently completed two Lean Six Sigma improvement projects focusing on inspection efficiencies. Selected County employees were organized into teams to dissect and examine every part of the process. The first project instituted online inspection requests through Brevard's Advanced Service Site (B.A.S.S.), the Planning & Development Department's online portal for permitting. Most permit applications, inspection requests and contractor licensing renewals can now be submitted through the website with instant confirmation. Expansion of the system to include inspection requests saved the County more than 2,000 hours per year and gives customers an extra two hours in the work day to schedule inspections. Inspection requests that are submitted by 4pm are inspected the next business day. Prior to the first project, citizens had to submit requests by 2pm and wait an average two

to three hours for inspection confirmation. “Instead of calling us or emailing an inspection request and waiting for us to respond, our customers now have the opportunity to schedule their own inspections and receive an immediate response. This change saves the customer time,” remarks Dawn Verostic, Customer Service Manager.



Brevard's Advanced Service Site (B.A.S.S.), online permitting portal

The online inspection request pilot program started small. “We visited various builders and contractors in their offices and really tried to understand their needs,” says Rebecca Ragain, Planning & Development’s Assistant Director and Lean Six team lead. Viera Builders was asked to test the online inspection scheduling feature given their permitting volume. The Lean Six Sigma Group theorized that just moving Viera Company from phone to online inspection requests would provide a significant time savings. But before the team could officially roll out the virtual request pilot program, other builders and applicants found the online inspection request feature on the County’s website. “We very quickly exceeded our 25% online inspection request goal. Now, more than one-third of our inspection requests are made virtually with instant confirmation. When compared to a five minute per average phone or email request, the convenience really begins to add up for our customers and employees,” says Ms. Ragain.

The second inspection project sought to ensure the assignment of the correct inspector to the inspection based on inspection type and location. This allows the customer notification of who to expect and when to expect them, allowing more coordination between inspector and customer. Improving how

inspectors are assigned has reduced the rescheduling of inspectors by half, and provided more process assurance for the customer.

The County has deployed more than 20 Lean Six Sigma teams to examine various County processes. "Lean Six Sigma is really about our desire for this organization to be one that can "self-correct" while allowing dedicated employees to acquire tools that facilitate their professional development and gives us a strike team for continuous improvement," Frank Abbate, Brevard County, County Manager. For more information regarding Brevard County's Lean Six Sigma Initiatives, please visit www.brevardfl.gov/LeanSixSigma