

## Harford County Web-Enables Mainframe Application for Constituent Web-Self Service



A department of Harford County government, the Department of Inspections, License and Permits (DILP) is responsible for the administration and enforcement of all laws and regulations pertaining to licenses,

including those relating to building and construction, plumbing, electrical installations, mobile homes, abandoned buildings and animal control. Department responsibilities include administering and issuing all county licenses and plumbing and electrical permits, except those specifically required by law to be issued by another county agency.

### Challenge

Typically, when people need to interact with a government agency to obtain information or conduct business, they prepare themselves for the possibility that they may encounter red tape, inefficient processes and long response times. The Department of Inspections, License and Permits (DILP) for Harford County in Maryland wanted to change this perception, adopting a technology strategy to provide citizen-centric, self-service capabilities over the Web.

The DILP is responsible for administering and issuing a multitude of county licenses as well as plumbing and electrical permits—including those relating to building and construction, plumbing, electrical installations, mobile homes, abandoned buildings and animal control. This multi-step permit approval process is dependent upon a regulated sequence of events, involving county inspectors and state agencies as well as commercial and residential contractors. The complex business process is managed by the county's legacy mainframe application.

To better serve their constituents, the DILP wanted to create a Web-based self-service inquiry system for determining the status of individual permits and licenses. The county also aimed to streamline operations for the DILP clerks, who manipulated a minimum of four screens of data on any given inquiry call, by re-engineering the application workflow to present the information in a more concise and intuitive format.

### Solution

The county developed a self-service inquiry system for accessing time-sensitive data from the department's mainframe server through the county's public Website. Using LegaSuite Integration®, a component of Seagull Software's LegaSuite®, the county automated the development of legacy connectors to the homegrown mainframe application, enabling real-time integration between the mainframe and the county's Website using XML and COM interfaces. The county benefits from the sophistication, integrity, reliability and scalability of the foundation mainframe application, while the back-office environment is completely transparent to the end-users.



"We've been able to get a lot of things done in a short amount of time, spending a lot less money than other people. We have definitely gotten our money's worth out of our investment in LegaSuite and our relationship with Seagull."

— Bill Wheeler  
Manager of IS  
Hartford County, Maryland

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“Rewriting the mainframe application was not an option as the processes are highly customized to meet the specific government regulations for the county,” said Bill Wheeler, IS manager for Harford County, Maryland. “LegaSuite Integration enables us to accelerate the successful delivery of a major e-government initiative that benefits our three core constituencies—citizens, commercial businesses and other government agencies.”

### Results

The e-gov initiative has expedited the administration and issuance of regulated permits and licenses. Today, contractors, county agents, inspectors and citizens access permit and license information through the county Website at their convenience, resulting in a significant decrease in overall inquiry calls and more efficient interaction with constituents. Clerks are provided with a snapshot of a permit’s status through an intuitive browser interface as opposed to scrolling through multiple screens of data. The result—they are able to provide faster resolution to telephone inquires.

“Prior to deploying LegaSuite Integration, the only thing our citizens could do from the Web was print out an application for a permit. They still had to call the Planning and Zoning office to check the status of the permit or to get questions answered. Now, by offering 24 x 7 access to permit information over the Web, the number of phone calls has dropped significantly and the permits department is a lot happier,” Wheeler said.

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