

# Cincinnati saved 8,098 hours of staff time using OpenCounter, a Euna Solutions brand.

## THE CHALLENGE

Just a few years ago, the City of Cincinnati was facing serious customer service obstacles:

- The permitting process was decentralized
- Individual departments controlled specific knowledge on each permit
- A single construction project could involve as many as seven different departments
- Every department had its own systems, processes, and fee schedules

Residents and small business owners were left to navigate all of this on their own, which led to high call volumes, emails, and extensive counter visits at each step of the way. It could take weeks to figure out what permits were needed. No one was happy about this. Permitting, a central function of all governments, was creating a huge, annual, unrecoverable loss of critical staff time for the City.

“ Instead of taking weeks to figure out what they need, citizens answer 10 to 20 questions and get a customized report in minutes. It’s a much better experience for them and much more efficient for the city. ”



**Nicollette Staton**  
Director & Chief  
Performance Officer



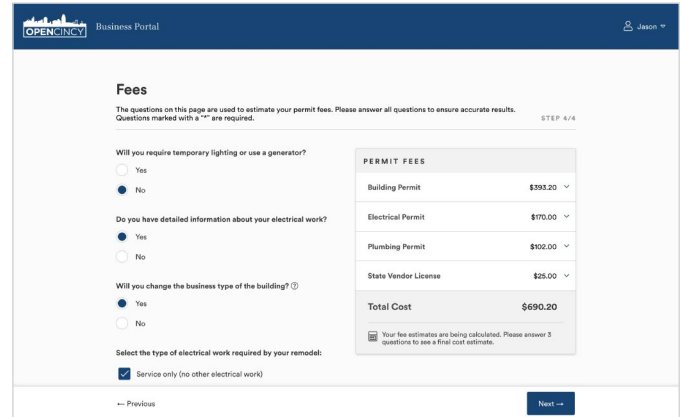


## THE SOLUTION

Given these challenges, the Mayor set out to discover a simple, cost-efficient, and transparent way for homeowners, special event planners, and entrepreneurs to quickly discover permit requirements without visiting City Hall.

The task was assigned to the Office of Performance and Data Analytics, who looked nationwide for examples of what other communities had done to solve this challenge. Several cities stood out for their user-friendly and simple interface, including Oakland, Indianapolis, and Asheville. The team noticed all three of the communities shared one thing in common: they had worked with OpenCounter.

The project team invited OpenCounter to do a demo for the seven permitting-focused departments, the City Manager, and the Chief Procurement Officer. At the end of that first hour, it was unanimous. They loved it, and procurement was easy as OpenCounter qualified for sole sourcing.



*Cincinnati.OpenCounter.com*

## THE RESULTS

In 2019, the city:

- Serviced 40,432 zoning, residential, and business permit inquiries through their OpenCounter portals.
- Freed up 8,098 staff hours to devote to higher value-added activities as permit discovery emails, calls, and counter visits have been redirected to the online, self-service functionality of OpenCounter
- Did not have to change internal workflows or alter policies

### 12 MONTH RESULTS

Permit inquiries  **40,432**

% Self service  **97%**

Completion time  **< 6 minutes**

Staff hours saved

 **8,098**

There have been other tangible benefits for Cincinnati as well. Deploying OpenCounter has helped the Innovation Team spread the message that technology can be helpful...and that not every technology deployment needs to be disruptive, laborious, or over-budget.

**“** For the end-user, OpenCounter provides an umbrella across all departments, yet keeps every process where it is internally. We can now move the needle towards providing a modern digital experience while being able to work with each department to transform their internal processes when it's right for them.

**”**

**– Nicollette Staton**  
Director & Chief  
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