

Improving Citizen Engagement



The Citizen as a Sensor

Governments are increasingly developing online geographic information system (GIS)-based applications to engage with citizens. These applications are helping the public easily connect with government and in turn helping government better understand the citizenry it serves.

Web and mobile apps allow government organizations to receive immediate feedback from citizens including reports of incidents, suggestions, and general comments. A person walking through a park can pull out a smartphone and provide a real-time report on problems or ideas for improvement.

Casting a wider net for citizen input, these apps help government know what's happening on the ground in a community so it can maximize existing resources and improve services.

esri.com/citizenengagement

“We were getting criticism from the public about lack of access to the data associated with the program including comments that we weren’t taking care of the easements dedicated to our organization. Now that we are providing transparency to the data, that criticism has evaporated. In fact, it’s turned around, and we’re getting compliments from our elected officials and the general public for this application.” — Katherine Nelson, Planner/Coordinator, Montgomery County, Maryland, Planning Department

The Geographic Connection

Geography connects citizens and the people who serve in government, and GIS naturally facilitates communication about place-based issues. With a steady stream of public input, governments have an increased ability to base operations on need in the community, whether it involves repairing a broken streetlight or creating safe bike lanes.

As citizen-generated data becomes part of the government workflow, operations become smoother and more responsive. Ongoing connection between citizens and government also helps organizations achieve accountability and transparency.

Crime Mapping

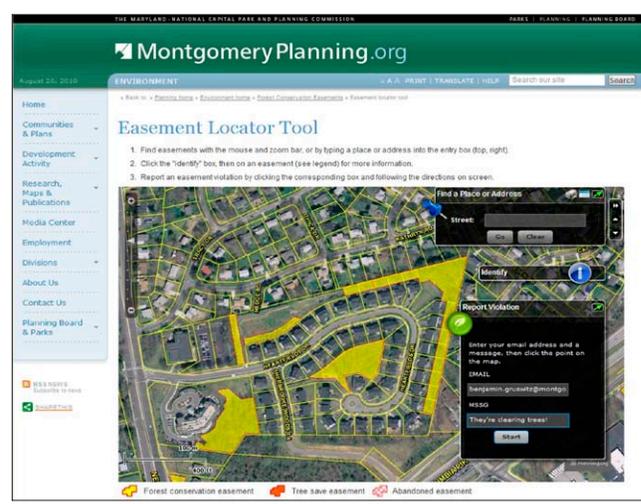
The Omega Group’s Crimemapping.com allows law enforcement agencies to automatically upload crime data for public consumption online. Citizens can learn about crime activity near their homes or businesses on the site or by subscribing to Crime Alerts, automated e-mail notifications that are sent out when new activity occurs in a specified area.



Crimemapping.com displays incidents in Miami, Florida. Clicking an icon reveals details about the crime.

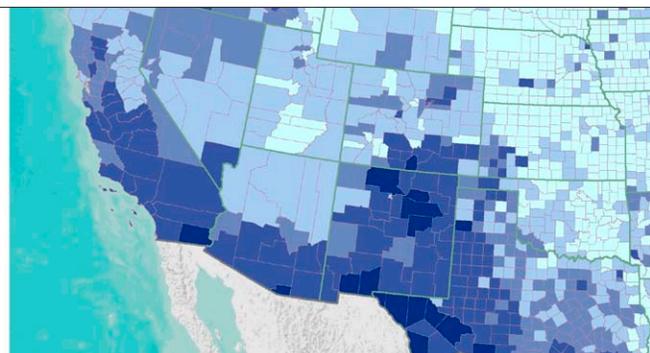
Reporting Easement Violations

The Montgomery County Planning Department in Maryland created an online forest easement map (montgomeryplanning.org/easements) that shows information including the land record, ways to protect easements, and boundaries. Additionally, people can report easement violations through the map.



People can click a forest conservation easement (yellow) and report a violation directly to the planning department.

To learn more about GIS and open data, visit esri.com/citizenengagement.



Delivering Citizen-centric Services

There are several ways to develop successful applications for citizen input and some key guidelines to keep in mind. For a dependable, accurate foundation for your citizen-generated data, build apps based on your authoritative data. Then make sure those apps work seamlessly with existing GIS workflows, which ensures that the data you collect will work with back-office systems and prevents citizen data silos.

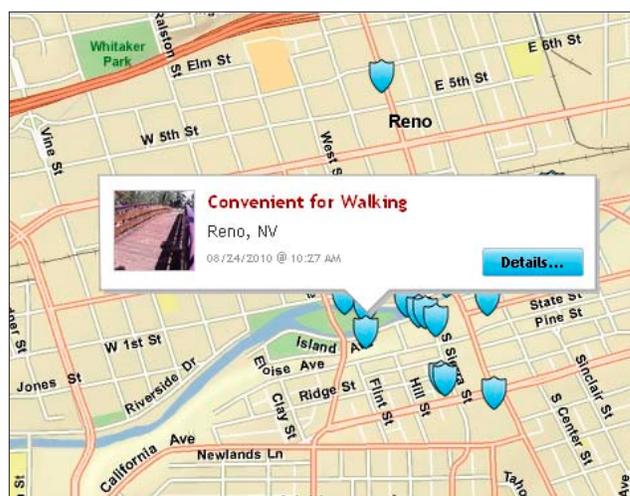
Once the apps are developed, market availability and let citizens know what you're monitoring. When people alert you to an issue or concern, generate automatic responses that let them know you've received their input and keep them up to date on the issues as they progress and are resolved.

As you look for the best way to develop the apps, your organization can consider these options:

- **Create apps in-house** with Esri's web mapping APIs that support the creation of rich, interactive applications using JavaScript™, Flex™, or Silverlight®. Embed applications in web pages or launch stand-alone web apps from a web page.
- **Work with Esri partners** that have experience building GIS-based web applications that tie in to existing systems.
- **Make your data available to third-party developers** that are eager to build interactive applications that meet citizen needs.

Planning

The Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County worked with Esri partner CitySourced and transportation consultants Fehr & Peers to gain public input on the Reno Sparks Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. At renosparksbpp.com, stakeholders in the cities of Reno and Sparks can view a map of public feedback on issues such as where bike lanes and curb ramps are needed. People can submit their comments and photos on the website or via a free smartphone app.



A web-based map provides a convenient way for citizens to comment on bicyclist and pedestrian master plans.



Smart Cities

Smart cities recognize citizens as important data sources. As such, these cities are making it easy for the public to deliver real-time comments online or via mobile devices, which is a stark contrast to the time-consuming processes of calling or visiting city hall.

Adding citizens to vast sensor networks of cameras, smart meters, and other data-collection systems gives government a more detailed understanding of a community. Input can be automatically fed into a GIS to help agencies improve processes and analyses.

Citizen Reporting

The City of Glendale collaborated with Esri partner CitySourced to create a smartphone application that allows citizens to report community issues, such as graffiti, potholes, and broken streetlights, on the spot. Residents can take a picture, categorize it, comment on it, and send this along with the GPS-captured location to the city government. Once the report is submitted, the citizen sees a map showing the location of the incident.

The citizen-reported data is automatically incorporated into the city's customer request system to ensure that the complaint is routed to the appropriate city service, tracked, and resolved. The citizen is informed of its progress. Residents can also go to citysourced.com and search for Glendale, California, to see a map of all reported incidents.



Esri inspires and enables people to positively impact their future through a deeper, geographic understanding of the changing world around them.

Governments, industry leaders, academics, and nongovernmental organizations trust us to connect them with the analytic knowledge they need to make the critical decisions that shape the planet. For more than 40 years, Esri has cultivated collaborative relationships with partners who share our commitment to solving earth's most pressing challenges with geographic expertise and rational resolve. Today, we believe that geography is at the heart of a more resilient and sustainable future. Creating responsible products and solutions drives our passion for improving quality of life everywhere.



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