



Memorandum Planning

May 8, 2013

To: Planning Commission
From: James Pechous, City Planner
Subject: Citizen Outreach and Survey Methods
Copies: James Holloway, Community Development Director
Jeffrey Hook, Senior Planner - Ltd Term

The Draft Centennial General Plan includes polices and implementation measures that encourage meaningful community involvement in the public decision-making process. With this in mind, I have invited Maryann Mooney of Granicus to share with us some of the services they provide cities to improve public outreach and community involvement. Granicus is a company that specializes in using automated tools, social media and other resources as an important part of citizen engagement and to increase transparency in city processes. Maryann will provide examples of how other cities are using their products to improve communication and public involvement.

Attachments

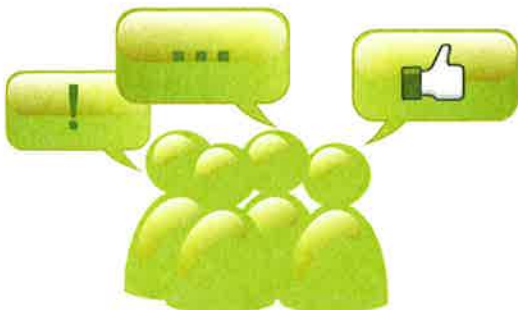
CivicIdeas™

Collect and prioritize community ideas



Productive citizen collaboration

- Collect open ideas for community improvement through an online portal.
- Effortlessly prioritize ideas - citizen votes and comments indicate what's most important.
- Contribute to the conversation and let your community know you're listening.
- Reach a broader audience using a Facebook integration and widgets.
- Implement a cloud-based social ideation platform in a matter of days.



Overview

Government organizations often struggle with sustaining productive citizen involvement. The old way of doing things - holding a meeting in the evening at a local government building - doesn't produce the results government agencies want today. In an effort to engage a broader audience and generate fresh ideas, governments are implementing online technology to make it easy for more members of their community to contribute. CivicIdeas helps governments engage citizens beyond in-person meetings and discover what matters most.

By offering a convenient and more autonomous space to share ideas - a website dedicated to community idea sharing - organizations can capture input and create a collaborative environment between citizens and their government.

CivicIdeas combines the power of social innovation and crowdsourcing with an online forum to help agencies prioritize projects and make the best decisions for their community. Citizens can vote, comment and share other citizen-submitted ideas.

Granicus' social ideation platform encourages positive collaboration and offers a meaningful way for residents to contribute online.

Benefits & Functionality

Collect new ideas from your community



Give residents a convenient way to suggest new ideas for community improvement through a website dedicated to social idea sharing. Posting an idea is easy and if similar ideas already exists, our system will automatically display those results.

Let your residents manage and prioritize ideas



Other residents, and even government staff, can prioritize ideas by voting, commenting and sharing. Crowdsourcing helps you effortlessly discover and rank the most important ideas for your community, helping improve outcomes and build greater public trust.

Promote your site through social media and widgets



With our Facebook integration, extend your reach beyond your CivicIdeas portal to connect with a broader audience. Take promotion to the next level by embedding widgets throughout your website and capture your audience's attention as they browse.

Get focused answers on important topics



With forums and groups, post a topic and get feedback on a specific initiative. All responses are related to your subject, helping you focus citizen ideas to what's most important to the organization. For more specific ideas, survey users and quickly build analytics.

Features for Staff

Acknowledge Ideas

Create Public & Private Discussion Groups

Create Forums

Post Surveys

Run Analytics & Export Results

Additional Features

- Showcase an Idea, Forum or Discussion
- Single Sign-On
- Multiple Language Support
- Design Customizations
- Widgets
- Profanity Filter

Benefits to Citizens

Create an Idea

- Auto-Search for Duplicate Ideas
- Add Tags, Images and Links to Supporting Resources

Contribute to Other Ideas

- Vote for Ideas
- Leave a Comment
- Agree with Other Comments
- Share Ideas to the Social Grid
- Subscribe to Ideas

Sort Ideas

Additional Benefits

- Facebook® Integration
- Leader Board

Dependency

Citizen Participation Suite

City of Austin, TX

Award-winning citizen collaboration



Fast Facts

Agency Type: City
Population: 790,390
Solution Type:
Open Platform
Citizen Participation Suite
Active Since: 2011

Success Highlights

- ✓ Engaging 1,100+ citizens online
- ✓ Generating 420+ ideas to improve governance
- ✓ 50+ community ideas have been put into action
- ✓ 18 Ideas have been completed
- ✓ Fully integrated civic engagement, reaching 10,000+ citizens
- ✓ 2011 GovFresh winner for citizen collaboration

Community engagement has always been a top priority for the City of Austin, TX because it supports their vision to become the most livable community in the country as well as the best-managed city in the country. Austin is already achieving impressive results in these areas. Their citizen satisfaction ratings are higher than the national average and they were recently recognized as having one of the best job markets in America by *Forbes Magazine*.

To continue to grow and prosper, the City of Austin keeps community engagement and citizen empowerment at the forefront of their initiatives. Recently, Austin's Communications and Public Information Department revolutionized the City's citizen engagement strategy by adding a new way to gather feedback from their residents online using Granicus' new CivicIdeas™ application included in the Citizen Participation Suite. The tools are already helping Austin improve the quality of its public services by actively involving over 1,100 citizens in government planning and decision-making.

The ideas we generate are catalysts for action. We now have a tool to help us learn about the topics that matter most to our citizens.

- Larry Schooler,
Community Engagement Consultant, City of Austin, TX



To continuously improve the quality of life for “Austinites,” the City realized they needed to make significant updates to its community engagement strategy. Their current process was undefined and lacked uniformity across 30 departments. Also, they wanted to expand public participation channels beyond just in-person hearings, email, and phone.

“Our goal was to create a more convenient and meaningful way for the public to participate in City government,” said Larry Schooler, Community Engagement Consultant for the City of Austin. “We also wanted to be able to solicit feedback from our entire community – not just those who could attend in-person meetings.”

Traditionally, the City hosts in-person community hearings to gather public input on policy and programs. These face-to-face interactions are extremely valuable, however, only small segment of their population would show up. “We needed to make the civic engagement process more accessible to people who couldn’t or wouldn’t get involved before,” said Doug Matthews, Chief Communications Director for the City of Austin. “Empowering citizens with an easier way to voice their opinions and ideas through the web became a top priority,” added Matthews.

After testing various systems, the City found the flexibility and usability of the CivicIdeas platform to be better than the rest. They seized the opportunity to design a system that met their exact specifications. “We wanted to build a user-centric and intuitive online forum that complemented our traditional participation methods,” said Matthews. “CivicIdeas gives us more control over our civic engagement process. We are able to create idea forums on the fly. Additionally we can easily manage and measure citizen engagement from a central dashboard,” he added. Using this platform, the City designed and launched a forum called SpeakUpAustin! in the summer of 2011.

“SpeakUpAustin! allows us to facilitate powerful two-way public participation that’s either initiated by the City or by citizens,” said Schooler.



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vote



Improve last-mile and recreational transit by installing bike share hubs throughout the urban core

A managed bike share system should be an integral part of the transit discussion. For distances of less than one-mile, these are cost-effective systems of getting urban-Austinites and visitors where they want to get to.

Citizens can quickly submit ideas to help the City improve services or public policy. For instance, one resident had the idea to install a bike share hub. Because Austin has a very active biking community, this idea quickly became one of the highest rated in the forum. Since then, the Public Works Department is in the midst of building a plan to implement a bike share program. “The ideas we generate are catalysts for action,” said Schooler. “We now have a tool to help us learn about the topics that matter most to our citizens. We also have a way to quickly prioritize ideas and put productive plans into action. All of this enables us to actually show our residents that we’re responsive,” Schooler added.

Discussion forums are also frequently used by the City to solicit feedback on timely policy or service initiatives. Recently, City staff was asked by City Council to gather community input to develop a new plastic bag ordinance. They created a discussion forum to encourage the public to provide feedback on targeted topics such as timeline, enforcement, and unintended consequences. They received more than 150 responses from citizens which helped them create an action plan. “The conversation we started helped our Solid Waste Advisory Committee start to draft an ordinance that took community concerns, priorities, and suggestions into consideration,” said Schooler.

Since launching SpeakUpAustin!, productive two-way community engagement has surged. The City has engaged over 1,100 citizens, generated 424 ideas, put 50 ideas into action and fully implemented 18 of them. Also, by fully integrating their on-line forum with traditional civic engagement channels, they have been able to attract over 10,000 citizens to participate in City Planning efforts. Overall, the forum serves as a critical link between active citizens and City government.

CivicIdeas gives us more control over our civic engagement process.

- Doug Matthews
Chief Communications Director, City of Austin, TX

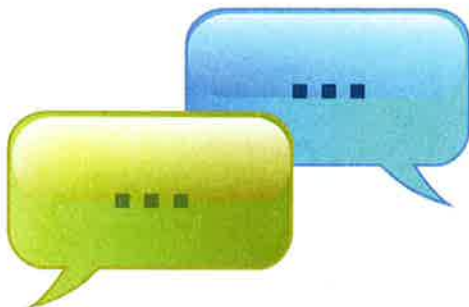
eComment

Productively add new voices to the democratic process



Give citizens a convenient way to get involved

- Save time collecting, maintaining and distributing citizen feedback.
- Gather input from citizens on the topics at hand.
- Allow residents to request to speak on agenda items.
- Deliver a comprehensive report of public opinion to elected members.
- Stay in compliance with open meeting and open records laws.



Overview

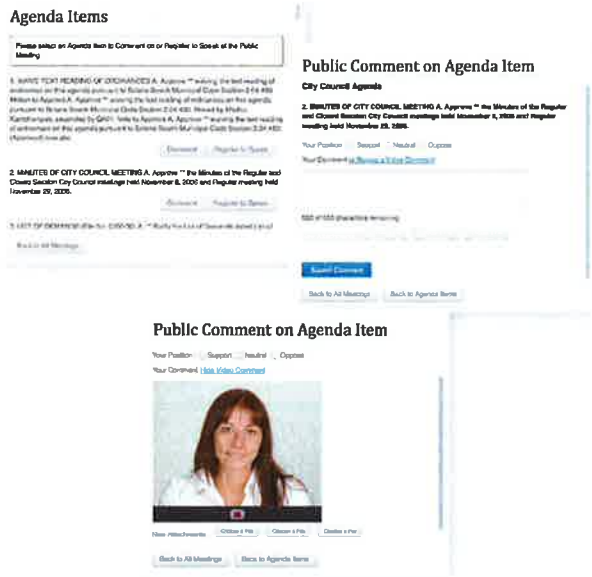
With busy schedules, it's difficult for members of your community to attend public meetings, speak during public comment periods and stay involved in the governing process. Instead, citizens choose other avenues to voice their opinions and many agencies struggle to maintain the multitudes of feedback. Now, there's a way to effortlessly collect, consolidate and deliver citizen input on current and upcoming topics.

eComment provides an easy way to add voices to the democratic process and makes participation in public meetings convenient. eComment is a web-based form that's tightly integrated with your published agenda. Residents can review agenda item details, indicate their position on an item and leave feedback.

All comments can be consolidated into a report and delivered to elected members prior to a meeting, helping them better understand the views of their constituents. Reports also help staff reduce the administrative burden of consolidating feedback and tying them to actionable items.

Benefits & Functionality

Collect comments from citizens on agenda items



Let residents weigh-in on current topics through an online form integrated with your agenda. Citizens can submit a video and/or written comment on an agenda item and indicate their position - support, oppose, or neutral. The form is easy-to-use and helps residents voice their opinions without having to attend a meeting in person.

Deliver a comprehensive report of public opinion to elected members



Reports indicate the top discussion item, provide a summary of all comments received, and give a detailed account of citizen comments and positions. These reports can be distributed prior to a meeting to give elected members a snapshot of public opinion before they make important policy decisions.

Configure eComment to meet your needs

Configure eComment and control which items can receive comments; set the length of responses to reflect in-person comment periods; enable eComment for multiple meeting bodies, and more.

Allow residents to request to speak during meetings

Through the comment form, residents can select agenda items to speak on during the meeting. A reminder email is sent to the speaker with the date and location of the meeting. Government staff can report on requests to speak- the agenda item, speaker name, and the time of the request are all available in one document.

Features for Staff

Website and Agenda Integration

Review Comments

- Monitor Comments in Real-Time

Build Reports on Citizen Feedback

- Reports Include:
 - Top Discussion Item
 - Summary of all Comments and Positions
 - Visual Graph of Top Positions
 - Requests to Speak During the Meeting
- Export Results to Excel or PDF Documents

Publish Comments to the Public Record (optional)

Configure eComment

- Select Agenda Items for Comments
- Set Text or Video Comment Length
- Enable Request to Speak
- Set Comment Submission Period
- Allow Citizens to Upload Documents

Benefits to Citizens

Comment on Agenda Items

- Text or Video Comment

Dependency

Citizen Participation Suite