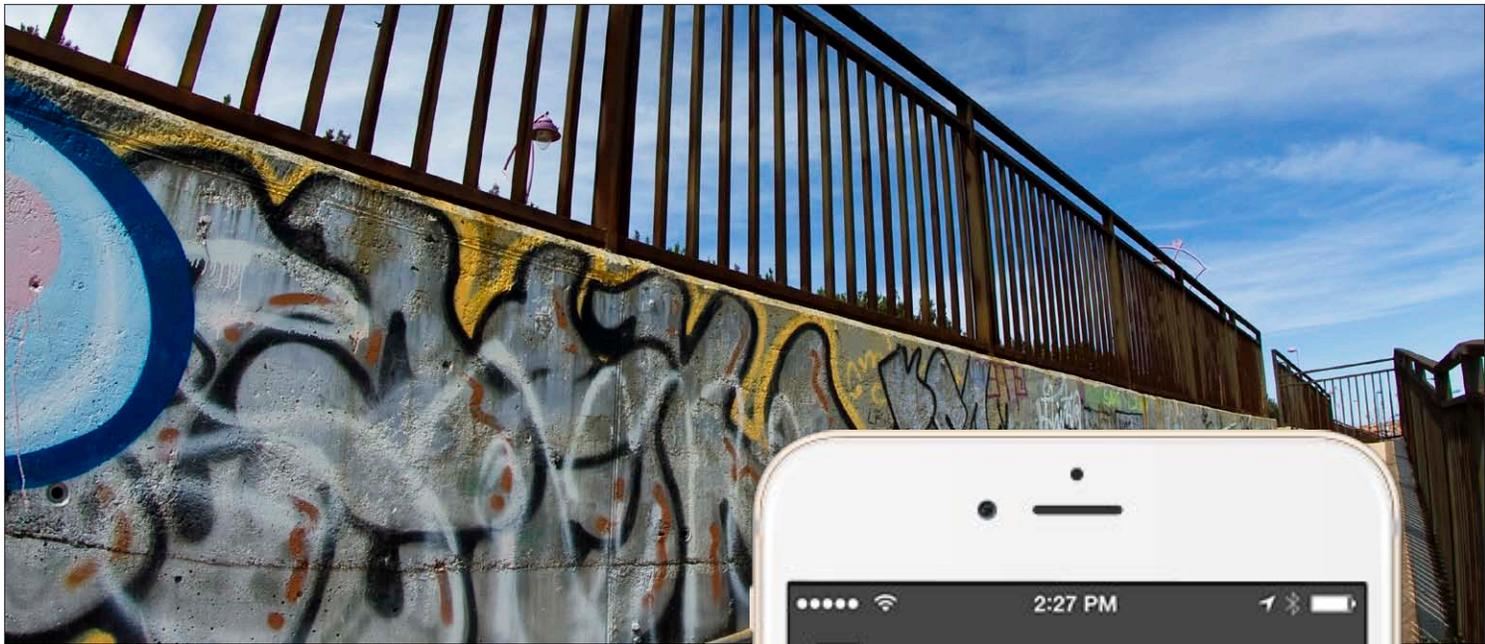# Improving
Citizen Engagement

Gov 2.0

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.
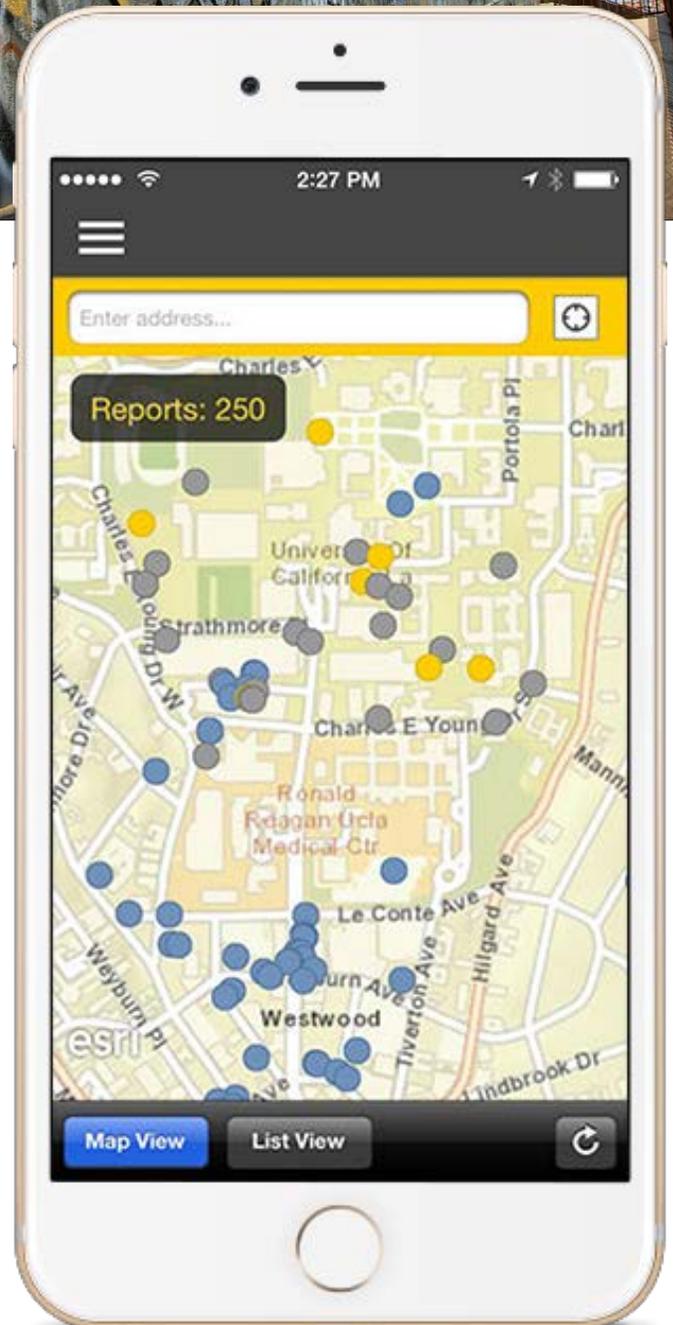
CitySourced.com

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.

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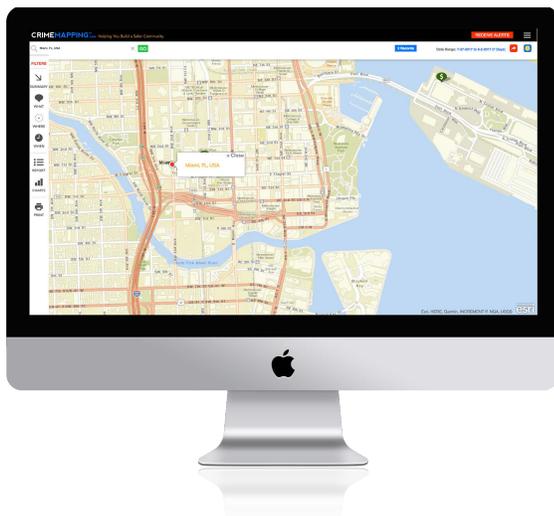
As citizen-generated data becomes part of the government workflow, operations become smoother and more responsive. Ongoing connection between citizens and government also helps organizations achieve accountability and transparency.
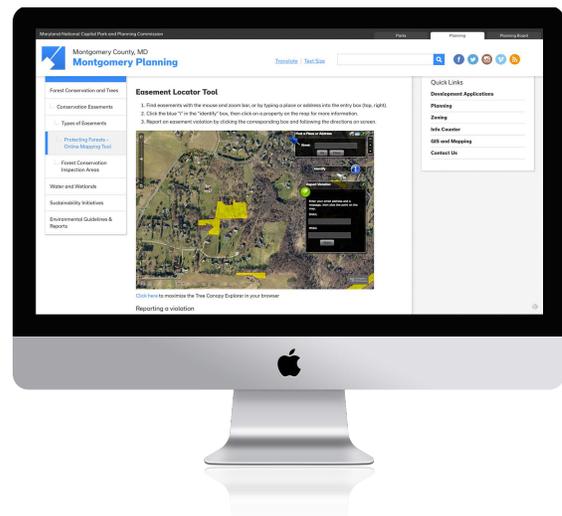
Crime Mapping

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.

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.

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

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