# Gateway 311 App Assists With Citizen/Government Communication

Increasingly interconnected and dependent on technology, our world relies on apps. "Smart Cities" have been proposed as the future of urbanism, yet individual communities continue to wrestle with how to leverage new technology to facilitate a more convenient way of life.

According to James Ellsmoor of *Forbes*, "Smart cities bring together infrastructure and technology to improve the quality of life of citizens and enhance their interactions with the urban environment."

With a diverse population spread out over 523 square miles, St. Louis County sought accurate and timely two-way communication with constituents, but this was becoming more and more difficult each day for the County Administration.

Rick Nolle, CIO and technological pioneer for St. Louis County, recognized the need for easier, more effective communication with citizens. His passion to invest into his city led to the birth of the Gateway 311 app.

Contracting with Technology Partners, the incorporation of a new citizen-facing app makes it easier to share pothole locations, voter information, power outages, calendars and essential, non-emergency information for responsive results.

"With rapid advancement in technology and our lagging adoption of 21st-century technology, we knew it was time for a big change," said Nolle. "The Gateway 311 is a leap forward in how the County can communicate with each individual we serve."

Residents can download the application for free on Android and iPhone. This app, among other features, allows a resident to directly report potholes to the appropriate "pothole person." The resident simply uses the pothole reporting function within the app, snaps a picture of the pothole, and sends the picture through the application to the County. The geo-tagging function marks the location of the pothole and sends the information directly to the individual responsible for scheduling repairs.

This process does two things. For the public works group, it allows them to efficiently locate and schedule repair crews with detailed information on location. For the resident, the app is a simple way to easily communicate with the County.

"Increasingly citizens prefer mobile technology over phone calls and we are building to support that demand. Our goal is to provide personalized experience for residents of St Louis County using technology," said Nolle.

Future plans of St. Louis County include cultural enhancements, such as implementing a feature with QR codes on artwork in local parks. This will enable residents to scan the code and find out more details of the specific artwork. Further, the app will provide the ability to apply for permits, eliminating a trip to the Government Center. The consistent goal is to improve information flow between residents and the County.

As smart technology continues to evolve, citizen apps will be a strong way for cities to bring practical information to citizen's fingertips.

**Don Guenther** *is the vice president of Business Development for Technology Partners. He helps guide cities and municipalities on how to allocate their resources for digital transformation in the most cost-effective manner possible. Embodying a core value of Technology Partners, his initiative is to innovate and transform organizations through leveraging new technologies.*