

# A Smoother Road to Tech Adoption

How the city of El Cajon, Calif., jumpstarted community engagement with the My Civic app

®



**POPULATION**  
107,000

**CLIENT SINCE**  
2018

## PROFILE

The city of El Cajon, California, located 17 miles east of San Diego, has a total area of 14.4 square miles and employs 450.

## SOLUTIONS USED

Enterprise ERP (powered by Munis®), Enterprise Permitting & Licensing (powered by EnerGov™), My Civic, Cashiering

**500%**

Increase in service requests since My Civic implementation

**550**

Potholes filled in five days

**534**

Number of potholes filled the entire previous year



*We spoke with Sara Diaz, director of IT for the city of El Cajon, California, about how her city has fostered community engagement via an app. In her story below, she shares how El Cajon has benefited from community adoption.*

## OUR CHALLENGE

Here in the city of El Cajon we have a challenge from our elected officials to engage our community. We think it's important that our community understands what local government does and that they see measurable outcomes from our services.

One way we are addressing that challenge is through Tyler's My Civic — or what we call our My El Cajon app. We had a goal to increase the number of citizens using the app by 10% during 2023. That's important because it links to social media contact information for staff and elected officials and highlights programs that we're very proud of that people may not be aware of.

We're also looking at it in terms of service requests. Our citizens can submit requests and report issues that range from broken streetlights to potholes to homeless encampments. We think it's important to have these requests and issues centralized so we can have quantifiable metrics for what's happening with issues.

## MY CIVIC

Part of Tyler's Public Administration suite, My Civic is a comprehensive, customizable solution that promotes civic engagement and enhances the quality of life in communities. Through a single, public-facing app, residents and business owners have access to all the services, resources, and information an organization has to offer.

## OUR SOLUTION

We did the standard things to try to increase the number of people using our app. Every time there was a street fair or something, we had our little booth, and we'd scan the QR code. But that would get us consistently low numbers.

So, we decided to do a Pothole Challenge. We're in southern California and had record rains last winter, and record rains in Southern California mean potholes. So, we challenged our citizens: "You tell us where the potholes are, and we will fill them within 48 hours."

They had four or five days to report all the potholes via My El Cajon (My Civic). We went on local news, posted on social media, and just about everywhere that we could find to get the word out.

## OUR RESULTS

The community response to our Pothole Challenge was overwhelming. It meant that our phenomenal public works team needed to fill the equivalent of a year's worth of potholes in five days. The Pothole Challenge engaged our citizenry, which is one of our goals, and it also cut down internal silos because we had a volunteer system where any city staffer could volunteer to fill potholes that day.





*“It made the community feel like we were taking care of business and doing what we should do. It doesn’t seem like much, but if you’re having a hard time making ends meet and your car gets ruined because you’re driving over potholes daily, that’s an extra expense. A simple app made their ride to work, home, or grocery store a little better.”*

— Sara Diaz, Director of Information Technology for the City of El Cajon, California

Every public works truck had asphalt, and every single public works person was driving two or three city staff from other departments that don’t fill potholes all day. The public works staff taught us how to fill them, and we went out there for half-day or full-day shifts to get this done.

It was an amazing opportunity for the city. We were reporting on it on the news every day, and it brought to light some infrastructure issues and how the rains were affecting California roads.

I rode with Ralphie, a public works guy who taught me how to fill potholes. We spent four hours in the truck driving around. I heard all about his kids, and he heard about mine. We’ll be lifelong friends because of that experience. I have so much respect for Ralphie and what he does every single day.

Ralphie and Ruben are usually the only two who go out and fill potholes on a daily basis. The challenge helped us become a more connected community both internally and externally. Internally, Ralphie and Ruben got to see that other city staff value the work they do. Externally, the citizens saw immediate feedback on their concerns.

If citizens entered a pothole location via My El Cajon (My Civic), they got a notification via the app and email immediately when it was done.

Ralphie and Ruben usually fill 534 potholes a year. El Cajon staff filled 550 in a five-day time span. By investing for one week in potholes, we probably saved over \$100,000 just in labor time, not having to add extra workforce to fill the record high number of potholes. In the end, we completed a year’s worth of work for almost free by chipping in and helping out one of our fellow departments.

An El Cajon police officer with the city’s My El Cajon app.

## OUR COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

The feedback from the community was really, really positive. They loved seeing it. We had media going on pothole ride-a-longs, and I saw daily updates on the local news. What our community saw was their city doing something proactive and being represented in a positive way on the news.



It made the community feel like we were taking care of business and doing what we should do. It doesn’t seem like much, but if you’re having a hard time making ends meet and your car gets ruined because you’re driving over potholes daily, that’s an extra expense. A simple app made their ride to work, home, or the grocery store a little better.

## IN THE FIELD

We’ve outfitted staff with iPads so they know where they need to go. They see it on a map. They select it. They figure out their routes for the day. They do what they need to do. They take a picture, and they hit resolve. It takes 10 seconds to close it out once the work’s done.

It’s not like they have to take copious notes, go back to the office, and then type everything in and remember what they’ve done. It’s all right there in the field. It’s also more efficient for them because if something comes in down the street while they’re out working, instead of going back and scheduling it for tomorrow, they know about it in real-time.

We're seeing amazing efficiencies. Workers still have control of what they're doing and when, but they have the visibility in the field, in the trucks, and with the supervisors to prioritize and take care of so many more issues than they would have if they just checked in in the morning and, "Here's your list, and I'll see you at lunch."



The Pothole challenge earned local media coverage.

## LESSONS LEARNED

We find that people download My El Cajon (My Civic) for the first time for something they are frustrated about. To make a request, community

members didn't have to call some elected official, talk to some secretary, or get bounced around a phone tree. They could take action with three clicks, get it reported, and immediately see that information returned to them. We see that once they do that, they're more likely to report in the future.

Our stats for pre-My Civic versus post-My Civic is that our number of service requests has increased by 500%.

A lot of change equals a lot of stress. Right? It does stress our teams out sometimes, but we've also seen that we now have specific statistics. We know that for one issue type, the average time is maybe two days to fill it. For another issue type, it's maybe five days, maybe longer. We now have quantifiable metrics that help us determine if we have the right staffing levels, support, and tools. Seeing department directors take the stat from these requests and issues and use those to make good business decisions to support the employees helps with the buy-in.

*"Implementing something like My Civic is absolutely a game changer."*

— Sara Diaz, Director of Information Technology  
for the City of El Cajon, California

## IMPLEMENTATION

Implementing My Civic was a unique experience. When the pandemic hit in March 2020, we decided to prioritize two different places, both having to do with citizen self-service and information sharing with our citizens. We did citizen self-service through Enterprise Permitting & Licensing because permits and construction were still considered essential services. We wanted to make sure that none of that was being held up because of us.

We felt it was safer for our employees and our citizens to be able to do that via an application instead of having to come into the office. Same with My Civic. It was something that we meant to do, but when the pandemic hit, we upped the priority.

We were going to do it later that summer, but I was working from home. I called my Tyler project manager and said, "I know you didn't plan for this, but I want to move up My Civic. We think it's important."

And my project manager said, "We got you. I'm going to send you everything I can as far as documentation, and I'm going to give you a contact. They'll talk you through the basics in maybe a couple of hours, get you started, and then you do as much as you can. And then we will email back and forth or jump on calls when we need to get you going." So I sat home and implemented My Civic in two weeks. Tyler knew how El Cajon worked and how we implemented projects. They gave us exactly what we needed, and they made it work.

The fact that they, on the fly, fit me in and found a way that worked for both of us was a great partnership and one I personally really appreciate. Our city also was very appreciative because we were able to get out there and highlight some of our Covid-specific projects, such as our virtual park and recreation programs, business grants, and even locations for food donations. Everything that we were doing, we were able to get out there and make it more organized and easier to find, in a way that citizens could quickly get what they needed.

Implementing something like My Civic is absolutely a game changer.

For more information about My Civic, contact us at [info@tylertech.com](mailto:info@tylertech.com), 1.833.895.3783, or [tylertech.com](http://tylertech.com).



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