Becoming a Smart Community: The City of Hartford

Back in the 1950s, the City of Hartford, Connecticut, had a bustling community center where citizens could shop, catch a movie, grab a bite to eat and – most importantly – connect with each other.

"When my parents first came to Hartford, downtown was seen as the hub of the city, a place people were really drawn to," Sabina Sitaru, the chief innovation officer for the City of Hartford, said. "Now, there's still some of that, and there are things that are scattered throughout the city, but there's so much more that we want to bring back. Drawing people to the city, revitalizing areas and really providing an enhanced quality of life for our citizens is what we work towards."

The idea of providing thriving community centers to citizens is a driving force for Hartford, a city that is at the forefront of using GIS technology to reach its goals. Hartford integrates GIS functionality to provide better reporting and analytics, in addition to other cool benefits. Newly elected Mayor Luke Bronin is spearheading a movement to help bring about positive change within the city by utilizing the technology and data at his disposal.

"We're committed to using technology and data not only to help us make smarter policy decisions, but also to help residents and businesses feel more connected to the decision-making process," Mayor Bronin stated. "We want to give our residents and our businesses the tools to access city services, provide feedback and information, and to become our partners in improving quality of life in our neighborhoods and economic development opportunities throughout our city."

Defining "Smart Community"

Sitaru explained that a smart community is one that can foresee what needs to be done by using data and provides important data to their citizens. Staying true to that definition, Hartford has implemented an open data portal which allows the city to make important information available to the public, while also allowing citizens to provide vital feedback. The information is used to help develop projects like smarter lighting concepts throughout the city and increased sensors and cameras for better analytics within the police department.

"A lot of it has to do with encouraging growth and economic development. We're a financially strapped city with sections consisting of low incomes, so we want to do what we can to get that figure up and bring more jobs into the city," Sitaru said. "The more development we have, the more jobs there are, which means more tax revenue that can be put to good use to draw more people into the city."

Esri Enhances Development

Development is key, which is why the city has turned to Esri® to help enhance developmental services throughout Hartford. Brett Flodine, the GIS project leader for Hartford, explained that they recently used Esri to host a GIS discovery workshop to showcase how it can help with planning and analysis, field mobility, location enablement, data management, operational awareness and constituent engagement.

"We are really working to incorporate GIS into the core function of businesses' practices," he said. "We want to train them and get them to use the system. We want to expand the use of GIS so that city departments are incorporating it into their everyday work. Esri allows you to do more within your departments because it puts that GIS functionality at your fingertips."

Utilizing GIS with EnerGov

As a smart community, Hartford leans heavily on GIS technology, which recently led them to sign a contract with Tyler Technologies' EnerGov™ software product, which opens up all kinds of new ways for the city to utilize the powerful functionality of GIS.

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"With EnerGov, we can use GIS to manage data in the background, we can get inspector and zoning information, we can look at flood zones and soil type, among other things. It plays a big part in what we do and it's easily maintained within GIS layers," Flodine said.

Better Reporting/Analytics

Sitaru explained that since open data has a GIS component to it, Hartford can use Esri and EnerGov to allow for better reporting and analytics, while empowering their citizens to use the data.

"It's huge to have that software in place. There's a framing component to it, people can see what's downloaded, they can create APIs and it's flexible to use the data. Since it's all processed within the software, it saves time and money for our staff," she said.

Revitalizing Hartford

In addition to the time and monetary savings enjoyed through the technology, Hartford citizens can rest assured that it's all being put to good use to make their community a better place to live.

For instance, Hartford offers a downloadable app to its citizens that allows them to track snow plows, fire trucks and other city vehicles on an interactive map. Hartford is also in the process of developing a project that would provide high-speed internet access throughout the city. It all goes a long way in providing Hartford residents with a higher quality of life.

"We really see Hartford as being the hub for revitalization of the regions around us," Sitaru said. "The mayor wants to see the city grow into that role of being the cultural hub it was. We want to help draw people to live here, and to do that we want to enhance the quality of people's lives. That's what being a smart community means to us."

These are just a few examples of recent industry trends that are affecting districts, but there are countless more! If you'd like more information on how to help your county operate at its most efficient, feel free to contact us at info@tylertech.com or visit us at **www.tylertech.com**

To find out more about Tyler's best-in-class solutions, email info@tylertech.com or call 800.646.2633

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