



# The Computerworld Honors Program

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## Final Copy of Case Study

**Status:**

Laureate

**Year:**

2013

**Organization Name:**

City of Columbus – Department of Technology

**Organization URL:**

[www.columbus.gov](http://www.columbus.gov)

**Project Name:**

MyColumbus

**Please select the category in which you are submitting your entry:**

Mobile Access

**Please provide an overview of the nominated project. Describe the problem it was intended to solve, the technology or approach used, how it was innovative and any technical or other challenges that had to be overcome for successful implementation and adoption. (In 300 words or less.)**

The MyColumbus mobile application is part of a strategic mobile program developed by the City of Columbus Department of Technology under the leadership of Director and CIO Gary R. Cavin. With smart phone use already at 50% for much of the US, the MyColumbus App was the obvious next step in improving city-to-resident communication. The City of Columbus is using this innovative mobile platform to make public services more accessible and engaging to residents. The app has proven to be a very effective way of connecting residents with local governments, public services, community features and information. The application puts Columbus city services at the fingertips of residents, businesses and visitors, bringing to life many of Mayor Michael B. Coleman's initiatives. The MyColumbus mobile application uses integrated technologies, such as GPS for location services, RSS for City news feeds, and a social media center providing access to City of Columbus Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube accounts. Additionally, users can stream live video of City Council meetings, press conferences, and key City initiatives via government access channel CTV, Columbus Television.

MyColumbus encompasses four mayoral initiatives to engage city residents: MyNeighborhood is a mash-up of Google, CitySearch and City GIS data, providing a wealth of information. Citizens have access to Health Inspections, Refuse, Police/Fire and polling locations as well as Educational, Medical and Social Services and much more. GetActive provides access to healthy activities and resources such as biking and walking trails or maps, ArtWalks, healthy eating, exercise tips, healthy recipes and more. GreenSpot provides access to resources on sustainable practices such as energy and water conservation, and a pledge program where residents and businesses can commit to "get green." 311 mobile access to the city's call center allow residents to report or check on service requests.

**When was this project implemented or last updated? (Please specify month and year.) Has it incorporated new technologies and/or other innovations since its initial deployment? (In 300 words or less.)**

MyColumbus was officially unveiled by Mayor Michael Coleman in the presence of Columbus City Council on Monday July 25, 2011 at 4:30 PM at City Hall - Council Chambers. Numerous features and functions have been added since the app launched in July 2011. The interface was updated to include: better access to local news and events, inclusion of more walking maps, a consumer profile that updates users on trash collection and recycling information, and a live stream of government access television. Most recently push alerts have been incorporated into the app to directly notify users of their upcoming trash, recycling, or yard waste collection days as well as stay abreast of city news and alerts. We also expanded the 311 module to include the ability to search on existing service requests so users can verify if a request has already been opened prior to opening a new one.

**Is implementation of the project complete? If no, please describe the project's phases and which phase the project is now in. (In 300 words or less.)**

MyColumbus is an ongoing project that will incorporate many additional phases while making enhancements to the application. For example, city officials have already solicited input from residents and employees regarding the functionality of MyColumbus. Future versions of the MyColumbus application will expand resident engagement, and implement new components including: Neighborhood Pride enhancements for citizen engagement; Interactive display of Capital Improvement Projects; Make Payments to the City of Columbus; Snow Removal with plow tracking; Local transit schedules. Additional features and upgrades are an ongoing effort without a fixed timeline.

**Please provide at least one example of how the technology project has benefited a specific individual or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work. (In 300 words or less.)**

Columbus residents have taken advantage of submitting service requests through the app's "311" feature. Before smart phones (and the MyColumbus mobile application), individuals could only report issues or incidents via a phone call or via an email to the 311 Call Center, but with the mobile app's "311" functionality, the process of reporting becomes easy and engaging. Service submissions via the "311" mobile application have increased 65% in 2012. Including a picture with the service request gives city employees



a better idea of the size, location, and extent of the work required to resolve it. In some instances, the picture even eliminates the need for an inspector to visit the site prior to sending out a maintenance worker to complete the work order. Officials report that the average days to close for a service request submitted via the MyColumbus app is 3.067 days faster than other submission types (online, phone). Residents have used the app to report a variety of non-emergency services. The most commonly reported requests are: Abandoned Vehicle on Street; Trash and Debris in Yard; Weeds or High Grass on Property; Condition of Street; Fire Hydrant Repairs; Graffiti on Public Right-of-Way; Illegal Trash Dumping; Potholes.

**Would this project be considered an innovation, a best practice or other notable advancement that could be adopted by or tailored for other organizations and uses? If yes, please describe that here. (In 300 words or less.)**

MyColumbus was developed specifically as a proprietary mobile app solution by the Department of Technology. MyColumbus is a unique mobile app for local government due to its ability to combine multiple applications/modules into a single downloadable app. While many cities may offer a "311" mobile platform, users often have to download additional applications to access other city services. MyColumbus is a data rich aggregator that combines data from a variety of internal and external sources, such as the City's GIS repository, Columbus.gov, Google, CitySearch, etc. to make information on city services as well as neighborhood services available to users of the app. MyColumbus provides residents with a single app that provides access to all the mobile elements for the Columbus region.

**If there are any other details that the judges should know about this project, please note them here. (In 300 words or less.)**

Although the City of Columbus doesn't generate revenue from the mobile application the clear benefit is the ability to maintain consistent communication with the residents through multiple channels. Residents and visitors are connected to the City via the mobile application and can readily access City events, breaking news via Social Media and updates and the ability to locate police and fire departments. Residents have already shown keen interest and adoption of the app and the Department of Technology has only begun to scratch the surface of what the future can hold for this key resident engagement tool. Through the creation of the MyColumbus application, City officials aim to streamline service and enable resident-centric, collaborative government while creating a favorable user experience.