

Goal #6 – Enhance Citizen Engagement

Obj. 1 - Enhance citizen engagement

Obj. 2 - Enhance City public safety communications systems and services

Engaging Citizens through Government Transparency

The City of Houston is committed to more actively engaging citizens in the delivery of services and providing adequate visibility into our business initiatives. To strengthen its citizen-centered approach to government, IT has begun to develop a strategy for citizen engagement. One component of this strategy is intended to increase public transparency about IT projects, particularly those highly impacting our citizens.



Publishing this information as Open Data through Internet and/or social media will bring citizens closer to their government. However, Open Data is more than just government transparency; it puts citizens in an active role of improving local government.

A newly established citywide Open Data advisory board identified and prioritized over 200 data sets. An Open Data infrastructure will be created to connect these data sets from disparate systems and provide meaningful insight and statistics. This information will empower citizens, non-profits, private business, students and entrepreneurs to find innovative ways to use our data to benefit the community, fuel efficiencies and increase economic growth in Houston.

Public Safety Communications

Another priority of citizen engagement is to expand and improve interoperable broadband and wireless networks to advance public safety communications; which will enable first responders to communicate efficiently and, consequently, save lives. An upgrade to NICE® systems, our audio recording solution that records incoming calls and radio transmissions, will increase accountability and maintain integrity of service delivered by all first responders.

As we focus on citizen safety solutions, the Valcom® initiative, a state-of-the-art intercom system, will deliver mission-critical paging between fire stations and upgraded voice-over IP (VoIP) phone systems to reduce response times.

The Emergency Telehealth and Navigation (ETHAN) initiative enhances our public safety mission and elevates the level of healthcare using video-conferencing technology to bring doctors straight to the scene. ETHAN improves patient triage decisions of first responders on calls involving non-emergent patients, reduces the number of transports to area emergency centers, and enables mobility challenged citizens to receive alternate transportation to access healthcare services. The program also provides automatic social service follow-up without overburdening emergency care professionals.

The City understands the need for continued 311 services in the event the main call center is deemed inaccessible or during a natural disaster. 311's Business Continuity Plan will nurture collaborative working relationships and provide agent mobility and augmentation to support demanding call volumes during such emergency events.