



## CITIBOT CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

# The City of Citrus Heights

**Citrus Heights is a new city that earned its incorporation in 1997. Situated in the suburbs of Sacramento with a growing population fueled by surrounding employment hubs and the Bay Area exodus (thanks to the new work-from-home lifestyle), Citrus Heights wanted to find a way to reach and engage with residents to meet their needs and better serve them. Understanding that 97% of residents own a cell phone, Citrus Heights turned to Citibot to employ text chat, text notifications, and webchat to bridge the gap between the residents they were reaching and ones they weren't.**

### CHALLENGE

The city saw a spike in digital engagement when COVID-19 hit in 2020 and Citrus Heights' small communications division wanted to ensure equitable and easy access to information and provide



- Wanted to find a way to further engage and connect with residents
- Needed a way to increase efficiency for the small communications department
- Realized they were not reaching a key demographic and sought a solution to reach that audience

answers quickly, without bogging down an already busy team. To help with this, Nichole Baxter, Communications Officer for Citrus Heights, leveraged the city's Public Information Team (PIT), a group of volunteers from various departments across the city government who provide information from each sector. "At the height of the pandemic, the PIT crew met once a week, to ensure the communications division received and shared as much important information as possible. This added to PIT members' workloads, during an already busy time. When we started learning about AI and how it could use existing information on our website to answer resident queries, we were hooked," Nichole said. "It's like having an extra person on our team that can answer questions quickly and efficiently. When it's after working-hours and a resident has a question, they can get an answer without having to wait for normal business hours."

Although digital engagement spiked during the pandemic, Nichole discovered there was a subset of senior residents still not digitally connected with the city. "These residents are a high priority to us, and that was especially true during the pandemic. We created a senior COVID-19 webpage with information on special senior grocery store hours, free meals, county public health information, and tips on how to stay digitally connected with loved ones while staying home. We then thought, if this group can learn how to use Zoom and FaceTime, they are capable of receiving city updates and asking questions from their cell phone," said Nichole. To reach this "unconnected" audience, Citrus Heights had been relying on news outlets, local cable channels, grass-roots efforts like going door to door, and costly mailers. Nichole and her team knew there was a more efficient way to reach residents, so they turned to Citibot.

## SOLUTION

Citrus Heights implemented Citibot's web chat solution on its website, CitrusHeights.net, in October of 2021. Nichole and her team appreciated how the chatbot became an extension of the city's branding - naming their new service Hello, CH - and also liked that the communications team didn't have to preload AI responses.

"Implementing Hello, CH allowed us to answer resident inquiries quickly, but it also created a new system to ensure our website content was up to date. Before launching, our PIT crew asked the AI bot their frequently asked questions, and some of the responses pulled in information that needed to be updated. Explaining search engine optimization (SEO) to non-communications professionals can be a difficult task, but Citibot simplified the process. Our team could see first-hand the importance of keywords, phrasing, and keeping web content updated to better-serve our residents." Nichole noted. Now, with an optimized website, the chatbot delivers accurate information to residents without them having to navigate through several pages, therefore improving the overall customer experience.

Offering text chat to residents gave the city the opportunity to



I was looking to elevate our foundational communications tactics and increase engagement by closing the feedback loop and meeting people where they are. Citibot makes it easy.

**NICHOLE BAXTER,**  
**COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER,**  
**CITRUS HEIGHTS**



further showcase its dedication and commitment to residents while also allowing residents to ask questions they might be hesitant or unwilling to ask on the phone. “We’ve really grown our audience and made people feel like the city is there for them - in their pocket or their purse - whenever they need us,” said Nichole. “It’s like we have an extra team member. We receive inquiries after business hours the chatbot can answer and it’s a good feeling to know we’re supporting our citizens even when we’re not in the office.”

In addition to receiving city updates and being able to text in questions, Nichole’s team found other ways to further connect Citrus Heights’ residents to their city. From sharing COVID-19 information to voting for “Best of” nominations, Hello, CH helped develop comradery with residents and increase event participation around the city.

## RESULTS

Since launching Hello, CH, Nichole and her team have improved the city’s website SEO, making it easier for the chatbot to deliver information a resident requested and making the resident journey shorter and more enjoyable. Hello, CH enabled Nichole and her team to effectively connect and engage with citizens to answer questions and funnel requests to the appropriate departments. Additionally, they were able to reach the formerly under-engaged group of senior residents.

Since implementing Citibot’s services in October 2021:

- An average of 255 residents engage with Hello, CH each month
- 87% of all communications are done via the Hello, CH web chat solution on the city’s website
- 43% of resident communications are questions answered automatically by the chatbot
- 16% of resident communications are escalated to the Citrus Heights Public Information Team for further assistance

“The team that comes with Citibot is excellent and so responsive. They are always willing to collaborate and truly deliver on all their services. They understood how important branding was to us and took our branding kit and goals to develop a comprehensive plan,” Nichole said. “And they were the best service for the price, so it was an easy decision to make.”



### ABOUT CITIBOT

Citibot is a leading provider of AI-powered chatbot solutions for citizens and their governments to use for efficient and effective communication and civic change. Using smart text messaging and web chat technology, Citibot helps residents get answers to questions, report issues, send messages directly to staff, and receive real-time alerts.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT [WWW.CITIBOT.IO](http://WWW.CITIBOT.IO).**

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