

Tech startup City Sourced zaps gripes to city halls

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An iPhone 3Gs is displayed at an Apple store in San Francisco, California. Technology startup City Sourced is making it easy for folks to complain to city hall about anything from graffiti to drug dealers in their towns.

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City Sourced provides a free application for iPhone's that lets people in hundreds of US cities use the Apple [smartphone](#) to snap pictures of neighborhood blight and then fire off messages to officials responsible for the fixes.

"We are all busy and there are a lot of problems we notice as we go through our days," Kurt Daradics of City Sourced told AFP late Monday at the South By South West Interactive gathering here.

"We figured if we could make it so you could take a minute to easily let the city know we could crowd source data and make a difference," he said.

Tapping a City Sourced icon on an [iPhone](#) touch-screen activates a camera built into the smartphone.

People can then take a picture of an abandoned car, dumped trash, graffiti, broken street light or other problem and hit a virtual button indicating which of 50 categories it falls into.

The application enlists iPhone global satellite positioning capabilities to pinpoint where the blight is and sends a Twitter message with the picture to City Sourced, which forwards the information in email form to leaders in the appropriate city.

City Sourced is active in 1,900 US cities and in December the [Silicon Valley](#) city of San Jose began testing getting notifications directly from iPhones to the governments [computer network](#).

A tab in the application lets people use their smartphones to find out whether the problem was addressed.

City Sourced is adding a feature that will let cities use the complaints as fodder for alerts about street flooding, pot holes or other trouble to the smartphones of people in the vicinity of the problems.

"We are committed to transforming civic engagement," Daradics said. "That is our mission."

City Sourced plans to release applications for all major smartphone platforms by mid-year and is working to take the program into other countries.

City Sourced is a product of Freedom Speaks, a website that lets anyone compose a letter to their elected officials and then automatically sends copies to all the politicians that represent them.

"We'll send that letter free of charge to your officials' email boxes and fax machines," a message Tuesday at the [FreedomSpeaks.com](http://freedomSpeaks.com) website promised.

"Technology allows us to automate these processes so they cost a minimal amount."

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