

San Francisco tapping into tech-savvy citizens

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The Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, California. San Francisco has a new App Showcase for programs that make use of government information available online at DataSF.org.

San Francisco is letting citizens create software tools to exploit city data for the public good.

Apple has its App Store for mini-applications tailored for iPhones and [iPod Touch](#) devices. Now, San Francisco has an App Showcase for programs that make use of government information available online at DataSF.org.

Freshly-launched Showcase has been such a hit that San Francisco will host a first DataSF App contest on November 7, Mayor Gavin Newsom said Thursday.

"We were not sure what people would create with the data, but we knew that many of our talented developers wanted to help improve San Francisco," Newsom said in a release.

"Now, our community is coming together to help fill our app store with even more civic apps."

Showcase has a Mom Maps application that lets people use iPhones to find child-friendly spots in San Francisco and an EcoFinder program that lets people use the Apple smart phones for recycling guidance in their neighborhoods.

A Routesy application provides real time information about getting around on public transit. Crimespotting software turns police activity information into an online, interactive map of crime in the city.

"This is just the beginning," Newsom said when Showcase launched last week.

"We are trying to turn San Francisco's government into an organizing platform for civic engagement by giving our residents the tools to build the kind of government that works for them."

Craigslist founder Craig Newmark, a San Francisco resident, and The Center for Investigative Reporting's California Watch are among those teaming with the city for the DataSF App contest.

The day-long app-building contest is open to "developers, journalists, community organizers, policy wonks, students and others interested in building a better San Francisco" from datasets available on DataSF.org.

Judges will pick a top app at the end of the day and award a cash prize or Apple gift certificate to the winning team.

"We're thrilled that the City of [San Francisco](#) is defying convention by preemptively releasing data about its operations," said Shaw Allen of Stamen Design, the company behind the Crimespotting application.

"Open data empowers people like us to create pictures of the city that better allow its citizens to understand how and why it works."

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