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# Streetlight need fixing? There's an app for that

By [Meaghan Kilroy](#)

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On Monday, Boston Mayor Thomas Menino celebrated the launch of Citizens Connect 2.0, an improved version of a smart phone application that brings residents' service requests to the attention of the local government.

Much like the original version launched last year, Citizens Connect 2.0 enables residents to take photos of problems in their neighborhoods such as potholes, graffiti and broken streetlights. They can send the photos to city officials to be resolved, according to a statement from the mayor's press office.

But because the new version allows users to share service requests with each other, the connections the app initiates have grown even stronger, said Bill Oates, Boston's chief information officer.

"[2.0 is about] building a community, not just making a request," he said.

The launch party was held at Faneuil Hall.

Matt Gross, founder of Mobile Monday, a networking organization for members of Boston's mobile industry, called 2.0's launch a high point for the tech-savvy community.

"[Mobile Monday] has had mobile events in Boston for five years. [This one is] a milestone," he said.

Other possible benefits include accessibility for Android users, along with the ability to make "favorites," Tweet and follow service reports, said Oates.

For example, the app may eventually provide more opportunities for social networking, said Gross.

"We're pretty motivated to keep expanding," he said.

Since 2009, more than 6,000 requests have been made with the app, the majority of which were resolved, said the statement.

The purpose of the original Citizens Connect app, said Menino, was to make neighborhoods better and to connect the city and its users.

"You become our eyes and ears," he said.

He shared Oates and Gross' optimistic attitudes.

"We can and will do more with our apps," he said.

Other cities have expressed interested in using Citizen Connect to strengthen their own community, according to the city's statement.

According to the statement from the mayor's office, more than 50 cities have expressed interest in the application.

The effectiveness of the app in a city like Boston, Oates said, stemmed from the fact that it was developed by ordinary users.

"It worked for the public because it was developed by the public," said Oates.

For instance, the app's developers held various testing events where "super users," of the application shared their opinions on the technology. Improvements were made based on these users responses, said Oates.

Menino said he also believed it was necessary for the public to be involved in the development of Citizen Connect.

"It's the peoples' business on how [government officials] connect with people," he said.

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