

CASE STUDY

# Denton, TX

Provides a user-friendly experience to residents when submitting service requests

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**POPULATION:** 151,219

**SOLUTIONS:** OneView Essentials, OneLink Mobile App, Service Request Management, Messaging, Waste Reminders

**CUSTOMER SINCE:** 2017



## OPPORTUNITY

### Optimize the Citizen Request Process

Residents would attempt to submit service requests but get lost in the process

Home to two universities, Denton, TX is just a short drive from Dallas-Fort Worth that boasts a friendly, small-town feel paired with big-city amenities. Residents enjoy 30 parks, 300 acres of open space, three rec centers, a water park, and community swimming pools, but prior to 2018, this thriving town had a customer service issue.

Vigilant residents would notice issues around their beautiful city such as potholes, sidewalks in need of repairs, or debris in the road and want to report them to keep their community looking and functioning at its best. They would sit down at their computer or pick up the phone, but then what? There was no clear process, so many who called the City's main line only got lost in a phone maze of automated prompts. Most people simply gave up.

If callers did get a human on the phone, they often had selected the wrong department and would get bounced around or get an earful on how internal departmental divisions are structured. But residents do not care who fixes what, they just want it done. Even the most persistent individuals who did manage to share their requests were then unsure if any progress was being made or if the issue was even being addressed.



Citizens were frustrated. In today's environment where individuals are used to having the world at their fingertips, to being able to interact and engage on the go, this gap between residents and their government had to be bridged somehow.

# THE SOLUTION: OneView by Rock Solid

Today, the City of Denton uses OneView Enterprise with Service Request Management, Messaging and Waste Reminders as well as the OneLink mobile app. With this powerful combination of Rock Solid solutions, Denton has put in place a centralized location to submit and receive citizen requests. Critical to the City's core value of enhancing customer service, OneView enables the City of Denton to deliver an effective customer service tool, making it easy for residents to communicate whatever is on their mind and improve their city right from their phone.

## Engage Denton

The City of Denton branded their OneLink mobile app as Engage Denton. Engage Denton allows citizens to submit requests with pictures, track the progress of those requests, and access other online City services. Users can create an account to track their submissions and receive timely updates as their request is processed and the app provides users the ability to submit requests anonymously as well.



To launch the new resource, the City of Denton relied heavily on social media to create a buzz. The team at Denton's government access channel, Denton Television (DTV), also helped create a series of videos demonstrating and promoting the app's ease-of-use and impact.

Engage Denton had a solid adoption rate early on and continued to grow steadily. Gone are the inefficient days of residents calling the main line or emailing council members for service requests; Engage Denton is the primary way to connect the City of Denton with the community's needs.

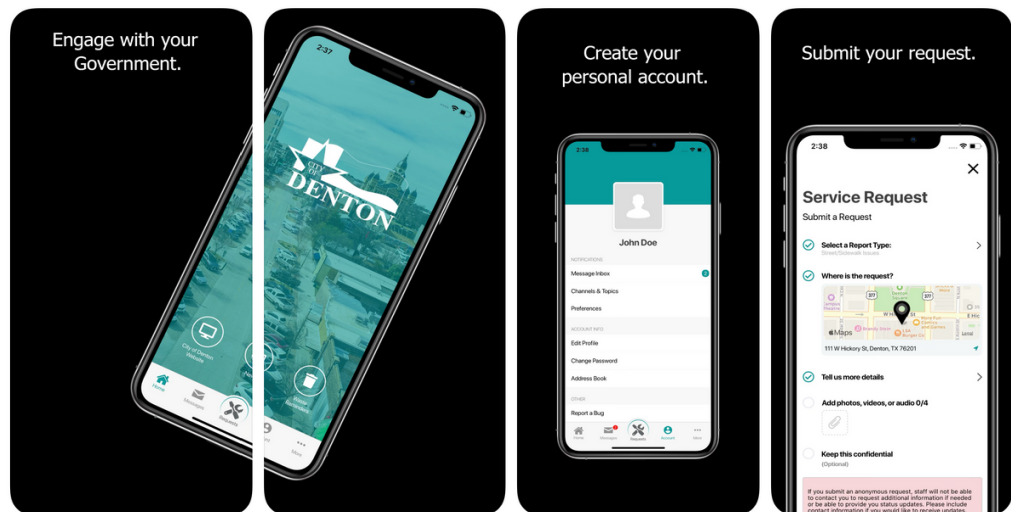
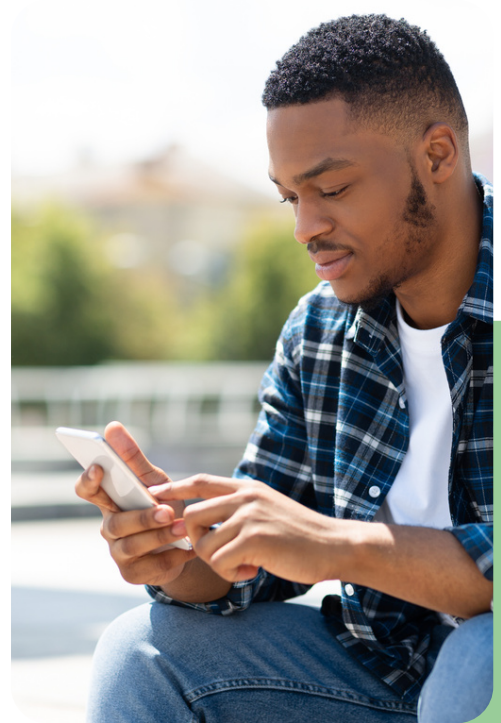
## A Residents-First Approach

Other municipalities often structure their service request systems via traditional means, focusing on inter-departmental business processes. Denton chose to switch things up, focusing on the humans behind the requests and their customer service expectations.

The City of Denton launched its service request tool with a three-month pilot program with a limited number of service requests available, most of which were Code Enforcement-related. The strategy was to save users from feeling overwhelmed with a laundry list of request types that did not apply to them.

While often undervalued, the ever-present Other request type not only captures general suggestions such as “It would be wonderful to have a mural on this building,” but is also a

purposeful catchall to ensure that citizens have a good user experience. If someone’s request does not fall into the available options, there is always the chance that they would categorize requests incorrectly or leave the app and never return.



## Strategic Scaling

Data from the pilot program was used to direct future expansion of Engage Denton's functionality. The Engage Denton team monitored the Other category data for request trends and purposefully added additional request types. Slowly but surely, more and more departments came on board, allowing residents to request city services for zoning, street, and solid waste issues. As they introduced new categories and request types, DTV would create a video on how easy it is to take a picture, send it in, and show repairs.

The more success other departments saw, the more wanted to join. Animal services jumped in. Denton Municipal Electric, the hometown electric provider owned by the residents of Denton, even joined to manage power outages and non-functioning streetlights. By cultivating a record of success instead of mandating departmental participation, departments asked to join, creating better adoption.

While there are now 10-15 different departments managing requests within OneView, the Admin team also strategically turned departments down. Keeping the resident user experience in mind, they held strong to the goal of OneView being external-facing and customer-driven. Permitting and Economic Development where the entire transaction cannot be completed within the app did not make the cut.

“

There are a lot of business processes that were not included because we felt that having too many choices for the public would have caused a lot of confusion. We also strategically used common language to name the request types so that they were easily identifiable by the community, rather than using our internal language.”

- Stuart Birdseye,  
Deputy Director of Customer Service and Public Affairs



## Intentional Project Assignment

To better fit the internal organization of the City, the City of Denton chose to bypass the majority of OneView's automated workflow routing capabilities. Requests are initially routed to area coordinators, who then manually assign the correct project manager by simple selection from a drop-down list. Although not fully automated, this process serves the City of Denton well as they are able to quickly get the request into the right hands, avoiding potential misroutings and consequential delays.



## A Consistent Experience

Clear customer service expectations are established with all departments when joining OneView to set a standard across the organization. Citizens know that they will get a response quickly, and from a friendly individual. Staff communicates through the system as if they were speaking to someone over the phone: saying hi, introducing themselves, giving the current status and a timeline for future steps. They also share phone and email contact information in case of future questions to make sure residents know how to follow up with genuine people and not a chat bot.

# 48 hr

## INITIAL RESPONSE TIME REQUIREMENT

These standards help residents truly feel a human connection, where although the process has been digitized, they know they are interacting with real, live, local staff – not an outsourced call center.

The Admin team uses OneView to monitor response times and has found that most departments blow their 48-hour initial response time requirement out of the water, often sending initial responses within two hours. Denton implemented escalation rules that alert staff to service requests that have not had a status change within two days. If five days pass with no change, the Admin team will review the request to see if there's a reason for the delay.

While some supervisors wanted a more punitive system for escalations, the Admin team chooses to simply remind their team, knowing their staff is well trained and not intentionally dropping the ball.

If a recurring issue does arise, the Admin team collaborates with the appropriate department to determine if a system adjustment needs to be made or if expectations need to change based on the work a department does. They truly lead with the question “Is there something we can do to help you support our residents better?” The staff works together to deliver exceptional customer service to their residents.

In a recent survey of U.S. adults by the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES), only 36.5% of those who report having directly contacted their local government at least once in the last year rated their local government’s response time to the request or inquiry as either somewhat fast or very fast.



### Waste Reminders

Prior to moving waste reminders to OneView, Denton used a separate app to remind their community about weekly recycling and trash pickups. The two solutions had a similar cost year to year, but by consolidating waste reminders into Engage Denton, the City was able to simplify the resident experience and add an additional 1,500 waste reminder users. As a bonus, city staff discovered that the OneView waste reminder system made it much easier to load collection dates and information as well as make quick adjustments due to weather or other service interruptions.



## Annual Engage Denton Staff Event

Once a year, the Engage Denton team hosts an annual meet-and-greet for city staff who work within OneView. The event allows staff to socialize--putting faces with names of individuals they regularly digitally interact with--and creates an opportunity to share feedback to gain internal alignment and highlight successes.



Engage Denton Staff

In opening the floor for discussion, the simple group prompt of “How can we make YOUR

experience better?” produces many interesting ideas. Some are simple fixes! For example, staff would often move roles between different departments. Instead of only listing the staff member’s name as the routing recipient, Denton added the department first, then a person’s first name. That way, when considering the dropdown list to find a recipient, it was even easier to find the correct individual.

## How can we make your experience better?

Another key part of the event is recognizing individuals for outstanding customer service on tickets, using the opportunity to highlight efforts as well as reinforce expectations. These events have proven to be a successful way to keep the staff engaged and invested in the system’s success.



## RESULTS

# Happy, Engaged Citizens and Improved Efficiency

A more user-friendly and efficient way to address requests for city services

- ✓ **CENTRALIZED CITIZEN RESOURCE** Residents have a go-to location to quickly and easily access city services
- ✓ **SPEEDY RESPONSES** Response time mirrors if a resident called in and immediately reached the correct person.
- ✓ **INTERNAL EFFICIENCIES** Departments are able to quickly address standalone requests and strategically partner on larger projects
- ✓ **VALUABLE DATA** Collected data provides deep insights for depts and elected officials to make strategic improvements

Using OneView to help centralize citizen requests--paired with a keen focus on customer service--the City of Denton has created a user-friendly resource for their residents. City staff is once again easily accessible and residents feel a connection to the success of their town as potholes, power outages, and community improvements are quickly addressed.

In fact, having cultivated such a positive interaction for residents, Denton is now able to rely on word of mouth from other residents as the primary promotion source for Engage Denton.

“

We have a very active community, and in the social media groups, someone might say ‘Have you seen that really big pothole on X road?’ and multiple people will respond saying ‘Put it into Engage Denton.’ People have had success with it, and they’re telling other people they can have success with it.”

- Stuart Birdseye

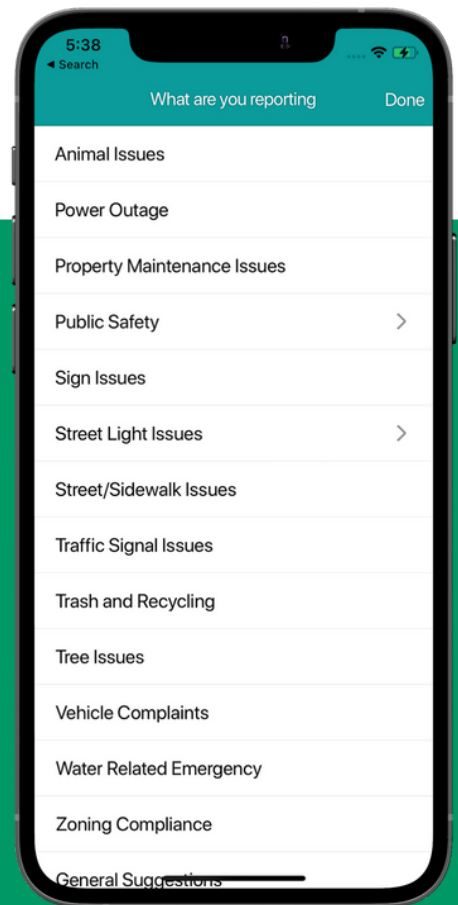
Deputy Director of Customer Service and Public Affairs

The City has also seen improvements in internal efficiencies. OneView has become a tool to help departments communicate with each other and coordinate projects. For example, Denton receives many requests to repair their roads. Instead of just going out and fixing a crack or pothole, departments now coordinate to determine if the water or wastewater infrastructure underneath the road needs to be addressed prior to resurfacing. Departments no longer work as silos and can collaboratively address more complex issues by looking at the whole picture, saving the City time and resources.

The data collected through Engage Denton provides deep insights for the City of Denton. The Community Improvement Services department can easily access a well rounded picture of all code enforcement requests, noting if there are areas that consistently have more issues. This opens up an opportunity to engage with that area by providing more proactive education or attending community meetings. Council members pull reports to get a tangible grasp on issues instead of anecdotal comments, using the information to better maintain their district and potentially address larger, systemic issues.

### Included Departments

- City Manager's Office/Public Affairs
- Police (Parking, Request for additional patrols)
- Streets
- Drainage
- Capital Improvement Projects
- Community Services/Community Improvement Services
- Development Services
- Customer Service
- Solid Waste and Recycling
- Denton Municipal Electric
- Animal Services
- Parks and Recreation
- Water Utilities



Council members also recognize the success of the tool and readily promote Engage Denton themselves. If they're out in the community and they meet a constituent with an issue, they encourage them to enter it directly into the app. Directing them to the app is by no means as a brushoff, but the best way to connect with the correct people at the city to get their issue solved quickly.

When looking to streamline your own city service requests, project leader Stuart Birdseye said, "My advice would just be to think of it less as a business process app, and more as a customer service tool. I think that people want to know that they're talking to a person and that what they put in is going to get done. The less canned generic responses you can give them, and the more personalized touch, the better." He went on to say, "I would also not only use the app to improve the customer experience, but also see if there's some business processes that could be improved by using the app as well. Don't just think how the app fits your business processes, think if there's simple tweaks to those [processes] if they'd work better with the app. Have that two-way road."

Finally, Stuart states, "I like the app because you can make it small and use it in a small community, but it also works for us at 150k as a medium-sized community and it can work for large areas as well. We use it in its simplest form, and it works really, really well for us."

## About OneView by Rock Solid

Rock Solid's OneView citizen engagement platform allows you and your constituents to work as one. Through our proprietary Microsoft Dynamics based CRM and Mobile Application PaaS, Agencies bring their citizens to one place for all service and information requests while seamlessly bringing the city's departments together to understand how and why constituents are making requests through robust reporting and analytics dashboards.

Contact us for more information on how to improve citizen engagement in your community through innovative technology.

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