As the largest city in the Rio Grande Valley, Brownsville is the second most historic city in Texas, with a diverse population, beautiful landscapes, and miles of walking, hiking, and biking trails. The city is full of life and regularly honors its rich history and unique culture with lively festivals and celebrations the entire city enjoys. Now home to SpaceX, Spaced Ventures, and the 24/7 streaming Space Channel, Brownsville has developed a space ecosystem, making the history-rich city primed to make history.

CHALLENGE

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, information and misinformation circulated the nation causing confusion. With many citizens experiencing health issues prior to the pandemic, it was important to the City of Brownsville to communicate timely and accurate information so citizens could protect themselves and their loved ones.

- What started as a way to streamline employee communication, grew to a city-wide service

- Wanted to establish trust between citizens and the municipality through open communication lines

- Citizen feedback and engagement drives decision-making, solves problems, and continually benefits the community

CITIBOT

"We needed a way to share factual information in real time," said Felipe Romero, Director of Communications and Marketing for the City of Brownsville. "Before Citibot, we relied on media and social platforms, but there was a lag in information distribution, so we had to pivot our approach."

Felipe was the first member of Brownsville's Communications department and, prior to his arrival, the city was not regularly communicating information, leaving citizens without a regular, accessible, and reliable resource for city updates. Under Felipe's leadership, the Communication department grew from an army of one to a team of ten with several community-facing divisions that provide valuable city resources, allowing citizens to be more connected and receive updates in real time.

"It was important to us to provide easy access through a strong communication resource like Citibot," Felipe noted. "By providing consistent city updates, residents can communicate and have their concerns addressed. With these conversations, citizens understand how the City of Brownsville is listening to the community while strengthening engagement along the way."

SOLUTION

The City of Brownsville was no stranger to Citibot's text messaging platform, they were already utilizing text alerts to streamline employee communications. Once the pandemic hit in early 2020, the City of Brownsville switched to emergency communication methods. Felipe and his team were ready to take their CItibot partnership to the next level to efficiently communicate with citizens and provide updates and news as it became available. Later that year, the Brownsville Communications team furthered their partnership with Citibot and built a plan to efficiently provide updates and news to citizens as it became available.

"The Communications and Marketing team had to determine the best way to share critical information with the community in real-time. Understanding the connectivity and broadband issues our city was facing, we saw the benefits of introducing city-wide text alerts because almost everyone has a cellphone and felt it was the most impactful way to communicate emergency notifications in addition to our other communication platforms," said Felipe.

When vaccines became available to a portion of Brownsville's community in February 2021, Felipe and his team turned to Citibot to leverage their new platform, BTX Engage, to mobilize their community in real-time after they were given 48 hours to launch their first vaccine clinic. "Innovation happens when you take a risk and dive into the deep end. We worked rapidly with the Citibot team and within 36 hours, we messaged eligible and registered citizens, informing them of vaccination locations in the area," said Felipe. "It was a tremendous achievement for us to strategically use Citibot technology to distribute messaging during a pivotal time at the height of the pandemic."

While the text alert system is initially what appealed to Felipe, he also appreciated the web chat that acted as an additional resource for citizens on their website, www.brownsvilletx.gov.After implementing the webchat feature into their website in March

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Citibot has been a fantastic resource to engage with our citizens using tools that streamline communications and give us the opportunity to build trust through an innovative platform.

FELIPE ROMERO,
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING FOR THE CITY OF BROWNSVILLE

2021, citizens can easily find answers online, reducing incoming department calls, and allowing employees to work more efficiently. Additionally, implementing the text chat, citizens text their questions, request information, or submit work orders, making Brownsville's systems more efficient.

"We wanted to find creative solutions to residents' concerns. A lot of the time, city information was simply hard to find or citizens wanted someone to follow up with. We now address these concerns and resolve issues by streamlining our efforts through texting and web chat to close the feedback loop with our community," said Felipe.

RESULTS

"It's important to have a strong team, so being able to contact Citibot to develop a solution for a problem has been beneficial for the city. Now citizens are more informed and, because of that, we are establishing more trust with our citizens. We want everyone to know that we're here, we're listening, and we want to help. There's always room for improvement, but our goal is to make Brownsville the shining star of Texas."

Since implementing a full city-wide rollout of BTX Engage in March 2021:

- An average of 141 residents use BTX Engage each month

- Nearly ⅓ of inbound communications are questions the bot can automatically answer with information readily available on the City's website

- 92.3% of communications are received through BTX Engage's web platform

- 17% of those communications are service requests and messages processed by our conversational AI and routed directly into the city's GovQA CRM

"The people you work with matter both for internal and external teams. You have to be committed and passionate about what you're doing, and I see that in Citibot," Felipe noted. "I know the Citibot team is available to support us and help discover solutions that work for our community. Having them as a resource to discover solutions together and being able to pivot in real time, what more can you ask for? Citibot is here for us. We're here for our citizens, and Citibot is helping us communicate that."

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.

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