



Aurora, Illinois

Movers, shakers, change-makers: How the City of Aurora, Illinois, transformed its interactions with residents

OVERVIEW

The City of Aurora faced a comprehensive modernization overhaul head-on. Needing to reach a wider demographic of residents in its growing community, the city leveraged a strategic stack of government technology to launch a new Granicus-powered website, robust resident engagement hub, expanded communications program, and a revitalized 311 customer service system — all in just 14 short months. The team's hands-on page migration, rapid turnaround work, and cross-department coordination secured award-winning results.

SITUATION | A DESIRE FOR DIVERSE DEMOGRAPHICS

Prior to working with Granicus, Aurora's digital infrastructure was outdated, inconsistent across departments, and insufficient for serving a diverse and rapidly growing population. The city's outdated website limited access for younger and multilingual residents.

MUST HAVE SOLUTIONS

Service Cloud:

- Communications
- Forms & Workflow
- Sentiment & Feedback
- Service Request Management
- Websites & CMS



28%

increase in online service requests

10x

growth in active subscribers



1.9M+

pageviews in the first year

160k+

visits to engagement site

“

It's a complete game changer. From a government experience perspective, this level of communication has completely changed the way that Aurora can interact with its residents. With all of these tools at our disposal, we can reach as many people as possible and get people more engaged in the day-to-day process of local government.”

Jon Zaghloul | Communications Manager | The City of Aurora



“The old website was not ADA compliant,” explained Communications Manager Jon Zaghloul. **“It extremely limited how we could interact with the public. The design itself was outdated, and it wasn’t mobile-friendly, either. Also, the Spanish-to-English translation was rather unreliable. Putting all these factors together, the gaps made it difficult for Aurora to maintain transparency, respond quickly to resident needs, and support equitable access to information across its 42% Hispanic-Latino population.”**

Communications were equally constrained. The city’s previous email service could only store a limited number of contacts — far too few for a city approaching 200,000 residents — and used antiquated templates that limited engagement. Meanwhile, the city lacked any centralized platform for two-way engagement, and its previous 311 system provided an unintuitive user experience with limited backend capabilities for routing requests.

“For us, it’s about modernizing our government experience so we can interact with every single person imaginable,” stated Zaghloul. “There was clearly an engagement and communication gap because we did not have the tools in place to truly interact with all members of our community. You can only do so much on an outdated website.”

SOLUTION | NEW ERA OF TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

Aurora implemented Service Cloud, connecting four key Granicus capabilities that together created an integrated, modern digital experience.

The city **launched a new website** powered by Granicus Websites & CMS (OpenCities) that improved navigation through ADA compliance and a mobile-first design. With sleek branding and optimized search engine optimization (SEO), the site immediately improved online visibility and public usability.

Your Voice Aurora, powered by Granicus Sentiment & Feedback (EngagementHQ), enabled an evolution of two-way communication. The city has created more than 50 live project pages that allow them to update the community on a number of different projects taking place within the city. **On these pages, residents can complete tasks such as:**

- ✓ Accessing town hall discussion recordings.
- ✓ Reviewing FAQs and submitting anonymous or known questions.
- ✓ Providing feedback to the city.
- ✓ Subscribing for email updates about city projects.
- ✓ Viewing a robust news feed and events calendar.

At the same time, the city modernized outreach using Communications (govDelivery), drastically expanding its distribution list. This allowed Aurora to launch its first-ever weekly newsletter, and later segment audiences into more than 10 topic-specific lists.



“It was truly a team effort around the city,” said Zaghoul. **“We lacked one centralized spot for our contact information, so we worked with every single department head in the city to combine all the emails and phone numbers they had collected into one specific master list in Communications. It really helped us out by streamlining communication efforts between city departments, the city itself, and all residents.”**

Finally, the rollout of Service Request Management (OneView) transformed customer service delivery one step further through the new system, myAurora 311. Residents gained a user-friendly mobile app, faster routing of service requests, and access to a growing knowledge base of self-service resources. Backend improvements enabled staff to process requests more efficiently, contributing to a dramatic change in call volume and online submissions.

RESULTS | ILLUMINATING THE POSSIBLE

“The new site is mobile-friendly, anybody can navigate it, it’s certainly ADA compliant, it has a nice, sleek design, and it’s very on-brand for us,” said Zaghoul. “I think by virtue of cleaning it up and adding new information, it has allowed more people to not only visit the site but spend more time on it. It has led, in my opinion, to a more engaged and informed public.”

The city of Aurora reported impressive results from its digital overhaul:

- **More than 1.9 million pageviews within the first year after launch**, including more than 598,000 new user visits.
- **The average time on site increased from less than two minutes to more than three**, with SEO scores now in the high 90s.
- **Subscriber lists grew from 16,000 to more than 160,000**, supporting Aurora’s first-ever weekly digital newsletter that reaches 70,000–80,000 residents with a consistent 40% open rate.
- **Ten segmented newsletters were created for specialized audiences across the community** — such as Farmers Market, Film Festival, and the city’s Financial Empowerment Center.
- **More than 50 live project pages were created for “Your Voice”** — tallying more than 160,000 views and more than 500 community registrations.
- **710 responses to the city’s communication survey** — the most successful in Aurora’s history.
- **28% increase in online service requests**, and the average call wait time dropped to 20 seconds.



Although the numbers speak for themselves, the city's efforts have earned two awards to boot. Aurora was granted the **Granicus Digital Government Award** for "Total Government Experience," while Zaghoul received the "Changemaker" award for his project leadership — including hands-on page migration, rapid turnaround work, and cross-department coordination.

When asked about the award-winning success, Zaghoul said, **"It's all about the team effort. I'm just glad that we had so much support. At the end of the day, it's critical to have your team's support."**

*This story highlights the hard work and innovation that earned Jon Zaghoul and the City of Aurora recognition in the 15th Annual **Granicus Digital Government Awards**, honoring exceptional achievements in digital government.*

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