One Year Anniversary – Salinas Connect App
Monterey Herald Op-Ed
March 4, 2019
By: Steve McShane
Word Count: 562 with bio

Let's Empower Residents with an App!

This month marks a year of the Salinas Connect App, and what a year it has been. This app is a breakthrough technology, changing the way residents engage with their local government.

The City of Salinas launched the Salinas Connect App in March 2018 based on a platform I originally put in place nearly six years ago. The app makes a direct connection between residents and City services. With a few clicks, the app allows residents to create accounts, submit claims to the city, and track their status as city staff respond, all on their Apple or Android devices.

From reporting uneven sidewalks and street potholes, to parking violations, abandoned buildings, or a street light needing a new lightbulb, the Salinas Connect App has made a big impact on our city over the last 12 months. Since March 2018, residents have filed 13,000 claims and the city has resolved more than 11,700 of them.

I'm proud that this app has made it easier than ever for residents to contact the city and to see change in their neighborhoods.

Salinas resident Jerry Landesman is just one example of our success. Jerry is an avid walker, averaging three miles every day. Along his walks, he notices when things are dangerous for pedestrians. Jerry remembers the old system of reporting before Salinas Connect. "You would call the city clerk, and give them your name, your address, your phone number – every time," he said. "It would be at least a five-minute exchange if you were lucky."

A year into the Salinas Connect App, Jerry says his experience is completely different. No more phone calls, no more submitting personal information, and much less lag time. "The app makes it a painless transaction," he says, "much more effective." Since last March, Jerry estimates he has filed hundreds of requests, and he estimates that many of them are responded to within 48 hours to a week.

It's a win-win for the city. The app helps staff batch requests in neighborhoods, helping Code Enforcement and Public Works work as efficiently as possible, and it helps residents see things get done.

Salinas resident Dave Clark, the man behind the Facebook group, Neighborhood Watch Help In Salinas, says the app makes taking care of your community more effective and satisfying. "The app helps you build a better community," Dave says. "You want your

neighborhood to be better, from street lights, to people parking their cars on the sidewalks, on the grass area, or graffiti."

Seeing the responsiveness of the city helps, too. I'm working with Monterey City Councilman Tyler Williamson to bring this technology to the City of Monterey. I've also spoken with Seaside Mayor Ian Oglesby about the platform. The more engaged residents are in their local government, the stronger our communities are.