

Los Angeles City Councilman Launches 311 iPhone App  
*Apr 20, 2010, By [Karen Wilkinson, Staff Writer](#)*

[Los Angeles](#) City Council President [Eric Garcetti's](#) district is diverse, densely populated and an ongoing graffiti battleground. About 250,000 people reside in the roughly 13-square-mile district that stretches from Hollywood to Glassell Park. Tagging remains one of the city's more visible woes.

To combat such eyesores, Garcetti started [UNTAG](#) (Uniting Neighborhoods to Abolish Graffiti) in 2004, but another recent project may make reporting and ridding neighborhoods of graffiti and other nuisances even easier.

Dubbed "Garcetti 311," a free iPhone app for those in L.A.'s 13th District became available April 16. Users can snap and submit photos of potholes, graffiti and even dead animals for the city to fix and clean up. The phone's GPS will automatically provide the city with a location, eliminating many time-consuming steps in reporting 311 issues over the phone, in person or via e-mail.

"In government, you can't wait for people to come to you -- you need to give residents the tools to empower themselves in the most convenient way," Garcetti said in a press release. "Whether it's blogging, tweeting or just good old-fashioned door-to-door canvassing, I love promoting government at people's doorstep or even better, in the palm of their hand."

Developed by CitySourced and to be tested in Garcetti's district for a year, 311 requests submitted through the app will be filtered through staff members, who will then submit the requests via e-mail to the appropriate city departments for action.

"We want to make sure in the pilot phase, that we can provide quality customer service," said Garcetti's spokeswoman Julie Wong. One employee is managing and distributing the iPhone 311 requests, she said, and the city wants to ensure those are handled in a timely manner before taking the app citywide.

If the project goes smoothly, it's possible the city will develop a system that integrates incoming 311 requests with a centralized distribution system, eliminating the need for staff to direct them to individual public works departments, Wong said.

For the immediate future, or at least the next three months, CitySourced (powered through FreedomSpeaks.com) expects to expand the technology's availability to other mobile platforms like the Google Android, BlackBerry, Palm and Windows mobile.

The simplicity of the process is astounding, Wong said. "Essentially you press the app, it opens and you just start taking pictures," she said. "Once you take a picture, a box opens up and asks what you're reporting, and it gives you options."

There are about 20 options or categories, ranging from abandoned bicycles and vehicles, illegal dumping and even overgrown trees. An "other" category is built into the app in case the issue isn't easily definable, Wong said.

"It's another extension of the government or way to engage residents with their local government," she said.