New city app offers information, connection

By Kat Gore Staff Writer | Posted: Wednesday, December 2, 2015 4:12 pm

GoHealdsburg has access to community news, emergency alerts, events and more

The City of Healdsburg has launched a mobile app called GoHealdsburg to foster a connection between the city and its citizens and visitors. GoHealdsburg offers users access to utility billing, various city agendas, Parks and Recreation program information, bike safety and more. People also have the ability to report city-related concerns directly to staff.

City Manager David Mickaelian said that the GoHealdsburg app addresses the 2015-2016 City Council's goal of transparency and communication.

"Our hope is that [GoHealdsburg] will give the community an easier way to communicate with city staff in regards to issues they see around town. For example, you can take a picture of a pothole and send it to public works and they can respond personally," Mickaelian said.

Citizens can use the Report a Concern module in the app to report similar issues to what Mickaelian discussed, such as road conditions and traffic signal problems.

Mickaelian mentioned that GoHealdsburg has other capabilities besides reporting problems. Features include: News Flash, to receive official news about the local area;

There's an app for that

Screenshot from GoHealdsburg, a new smart phone app promoted by the city of Healdsburg.

Calendar, to see what's going on around town; Community Voic to share thoughts and ideas on how to improve Healdsburg; and Alert Center, to be informed about important community news, street closures, road conditions and emergencies. A Notify Me module allows users to sign up for notifications of various features on the app. At press time, the app had 16 modules.

Information Services Coordinator for the City of Healdsburg Kim Murray said that the city partnered with CivicPlus to create the app, a process that took about three months. "When we were sitting with CivicPlus, we started to talk about other cities who [have an app] and it's becoming relevant and an easy tool," Murray said. CivicPlus hosts and helped to develop the city's website, which shares similar features with GoHealdsburg.

"When we started to look at updating our website, we realized that a good portion of our citizens are

mobile; they have tablets and smart phones and they communicate in a million different ways. As part of that, we want to make our information as relevant and easy to get to as we can," Murray said.

Healdsburg resident Josie Gay works with the city as the community outreach coordinator. In GoHealdsburg's early stages, she helped to identify the functionality of the app and worked with Murray on its look and feel.

It was important to Gay for the app to serve as an additional way for residents and city staff to communicate and for it to contain relevant and easily accessible content.

Gay uses the app to get notified of utility bills and pay them, and to check out parks and recreation activities and the city calendar.

"I love it. I think it's great and I hope more residents, and even visitors, download the app." Gay said. "The city is making strides to stay current and use technologies that are new and useful."

Murray said that the city is looking at new features to add to GoHealdsburg as time goes on.

"GoHealdsburg is really so we can hear what people are saying and it's another way to have our feet on the ground and address the issues of our citizens," Murray said. "My goal is to open up transparency, give people a voice and promote how great the city is. We live in a lovely place. If people are thinking about visiting or moving here, it's another tool for them while they're researching our city."

GoHealdsburg can be downloaded for free directly from the app store on a smart phone or by visiting the iTunes App Store or Google Play store online.