Searching for Citizen Engagement and City Hall:

200 Municipal Homepages in the United States and Their Rhetorical Outreach to Audiences

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**Abstract:** U.S. cities rely on their websites to enhance citizen engagement, and digital government portals have been promoted for decades as gateways to participatory democracy. This study, through rhetorical and qualitative content analyses, focuses on 200 municipal homepages from 2017 and the ways they address audiences and invite participation. The findings reveal very few cities have: platforms for interactive discussions; representations of citizen activities; or ways to call citizens into being for the important work of shared governance.

**Keywords:** Citizen engagement, municipal communication, websites, audiences, digital townhall

**Images on next pages:** Figure 1 and Appendix 1

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Appendix 1: List of 200 cities in study, in order of Google search rankings by state.



\*Denotes city is also in sub-group of 50 for mobile and Facebook analysis.