



E-Democracy.Org

Elected Officials on Neighborhood Forums

Why should an elected official participate in an online neighbors forum?

- **Share information** about community programs, events, or opportunities.
- **Tap into the “pulse”** of the community and learn more about issues that are of importance, interest, or concern to your constituents.
- **Build connections with constituents.**
- **Gather input or feedback** on projects, options, actions, or decisions.
- **Share information and resources** that are important and relevant to constituents.
- **Show your commitment** to the community with this additional form of communication.



How can an elected official participate in a neighborhood forum?

- **Join the forum** and start “listening” to the conversations. Once you are a member of the forum, its value and benefits will be easier to identify.
- **Select the best format for reading the forum posts.** Decide if you (or your staff) want to receive forum messages via email, as a daily digest of topics, or via the web.
- **Share information.** Use the forum to share important information of interest or value to forum members/constituents. Post Information about activities related to your elected position, constituent communications, and add the forum to your press release distribution list. Remember, forum members will amplify your voice by forwarding information to their own contacts via social media and face-to-face conversations.
- **Be patient and listen.** Accept that just like everywhere else in your elected life, you are not going to agree with everything that forum members post. If something you did or said is criticized, elected officials currently on our forums advise that you handle it just like you would in person: Invite people to participate at an upcoming meeting or event, or to contact you directly to discuss issues in more depth.
- **Use private channels of communication as necessary.** Sometimes it’s easier or more efficient to reply to an individual’s question or concern with a private message. Public responses are nice when addressing issues of general interest, but don’t hesitate to reply in private when appropriate.
- **See the E-Democracy.org website** for additional tips and suggestions, or email us for contact information for other elected officials on our forums to learn from their experiences.