MEET ANC FINDER: CODE FOR DC'S NEW PROJECT THAT HELPS DISTRICT RESIDENTS SHAPE THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD

Code for DC's latest website allows District residents to find out about, and participate in, some of the most important decisions impacting their neighborhoods.

Some of Washington, DC's most important local government decisions are made or shaped by 40 elected bodies known as Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs). Despite ANCs' important role in addressing local issues, it is difficult for citizens to engage with the ANCs that represent them.

To solve this problem, Code for DC is launching ANC Finder, a website that lets anybody look up and submit information about the city's ANCs. The new site allows anyone to easily upload information about an ANC, its commissioners, and the issues being discussed and decided on by the commission. It also explains the basic facts about ANCs; a system of hyperlocal representative government that is unique to Washington.

Until now, there was no single reliable resource for residents to look up which ANC served them, to contact their commissioners, see meeting minutes, view grants they've distributed, or even to find out when and where their ANC meetings are being held.

"Most DC residents are deeply affected by their ANCs but don't know much about them," said ANC Finder's Joshua Tauberer. "We want to help people understand what is happening in ANC meetings and empower them to participate in that process."

The idea for ANC Finder arose after the last ANC elections, which took place in 2012. Several Code for DC members tried to find out more about their ANCs online, but experienced the frustration with which many residents are familiar: they found three different sets of official websites that contained conflicting, and sometimes inaccurate, information.

"The District provides few resources to ANCs, and so each ANC builds its own website. They should be able to spend their time on local issues, not web design. We hope ANC Finder can be a helpful tool so the commissioners can focus on the work they were elected to do," said Tauberer.

The ANC Finder team built a website that is modern and mobile-friendly. The code is open source and available on Github.com. The team also created a Twitter account, @ANCFinder, that automatically sends out alerts for upcoming ANC meetings and new ANC documents as they are added to the website.

Code for DC is the Washington, DC chapter of Code for America's Brigade program, an effort that brings together citizens and local governments around the world to collaborate around using technology to solve some of the most significant challenges facing cities.