

Welcoming Language Diversity: Sunnyvale Enables Everyone to Have a Voice While Reducing Translation Costs 55%



Challenge: Fostering Active Engagement, Regardless of Language Spoken

Nestled in the heart of Silicon Valley, Sunnyvale is a thriving city with 159,673 residents. As the seventh largest city in the Bay Area and a major high-tech center, it has a diverse and multilingual population.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, nearly 60% of Sunnyvale residents speak a language other than English at home. While Spanish, Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), and Hindi are among the most commonly spoken, there is no single predominant language.

Given the range of languages spoken throughout Sunnyvale, ensuring inclusive communication and participation in City Council discussions posed a challenge. A key consideration was a Spanish-speaking Human Relations Commission Member who without real-time translation, faced barriers in fully engaging in live commission discussions. This language barrier prevented them from contributing meaningfully alongside peers, thereby withholding valuable perspectives from both the Commission and the City.

The City's approach to ensuring all residents could participate in public meetings was primarily limited to providing interpreters upon request. However, this method proved inefficient for the following reasons:

- **Disrupted Conversations:** Pauses during interpretation disrupted the flow of conversation.
- **Lost Tone:** Since interpretation wasn't simultaneous with the speaker, the tone often failed to carry over. This made it harder for residents to fully understand the nuances of discussions.
- **High Costs:** Hiring multiple interpreters to cover a range of languages would be expensive and often impractical, especially when language needs varied from meeting to meeting.

"We knew our traditional interpretation model wasn't working for a city as linguistically diverse as Sunnyvale," said David Carnahan, City Clerk. "It was expensive, inconsistent, and can leave residents feeling like outsiders in their own community meetings."

“Too often, residents who didn’t speak English fluently were sidelined,” said Fernanda Perdomo-Arciniegas, Equity, Access, and Inclusion Manager. “It wasn’t intentional, but without the right tools, they were disconnected and left without a meaningful way to contribute to the decisions affecting their lives.”

Solution: AI Translation Transforms Sunnyvale City Meetings, Creating Equal Access for Residents and Elected Leaders



In response to these challenges, Sunnyvale adopted Wordly in July 2023. With the help of AI translation, the City aimed to create a truly inclusive environment where every resident could actively engage, regardless of the language they spoke.

Wordly benefits to Sunnyvale include:

- **Expanding the Voice of the City with Multilingual Leadership:** Wordly enables translation that not only supports bilingual leaders but also expands the voice of the City by allowing more presenters to communicate in their preferred language.
- **Supporting the City’s efforts to meet Title VI* requirements:** Wordly amplifies the City’s capacity to comply with both the Language Access Plan (LAP) and the Public Participation Plan (PPP), particularly for Multilingual Learners. *Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
- **Authentic, Multilingual Communication:** Wordly delivers seamless AI translation in dozens of languages - including Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Hindi - so all Sunnyvale residents can fully engage in discussions. Beyond just words, it captures nuances, preserving context and promoting deeper **understanding and empathy across language barriers.**
- **Uninterrupted Communication Flow:** Translation in real time, ensuring that the pace of the meeting continued without disruption or delay.
- **Unified Experience for Every Participant:** The ability to keep all residents in the same room ensures that no one feels excluded based on their language.
- **Effortless Setup and Accessibility:** Wordly integrates seamlessly into meetings, providing real-time translation from the start. Residents can simply scan a QR code to access translations on their personal devices, such as smartphones and tablets, ensuring everyone stays engaged without disruption.

Results: Sunnyvale Saves 55% on Translation Costs While Elevating Civic Participation and Multilingual Leadership



Adopting Wordly brings a transformative change to how city meetings are held and how residents interact with the government. Integrating Wordly into Sunnyvale’s City Council and other public meetings has been both seamless and cost-effective:

- **Stronger Representation in Leadership:** Wordly has enriched the diversity of perspectives shaping Sunnyvale. For example, a Spanish-speaking Commissioner can now engage fluently during meetings, offering insights, raising questions, and responding to colleagues without delay. The result is a more inclusive, multilingual environment that mirrors a mini ‘United Nations Council,’ fostering equity, representation, and diverse leadership.
- **Cost Savings:** The City saves up to 55% compared to the costs of hiring multiple interpreters. This reduces taxpayer expenses while expanding service.
- **Empowered Participation:** More residents feel included and engaged, with the ability to participate in real time. Civic participation is growing among non-English-speaking residents, who now feel they have a voice in how decisions are made and issues are debated.
- **Enhanced Compliance with Federal Regulations:** Wordly has improved the effectiveness of the City’s Language Assistance Plan (LAP) and Public Participation Plan (PPP), resulting in more inclusive, equitable, and accessible public engagement.

“Many of our residents have said this is the first time they feel like they truly have a say in the decisions shaping their community,” said Perdomo-Arciniegas. “It’s not just about understanding the conversation; it’s about being part of it. This effort is transforming the way our community sees local government: not as something removed or out of reach, but as something they can participate in.”

“Wordly has made it possible for us to serve more residents,” said Carnahan. “We’ve significantly reduced the logistical and financial burdens of live interpretation without sacrificing quality or inclusivity. It’s a smarter, more efficient way to run our meetings and engage our diverse community.”

Future: Sunnyvale's Vision for the Future: Smarter Engagement, Stronger Communities with Wordly



Sunnyvale is committed to expanding Wordly's use beyond City Council and Human Relations Commission meetings. The City is looking into adding Wordly to create more engaging activities, reinforcing its dedication to inclusive and accessible governance.

Looking ahead, Sunnyvale aims to leverage Wordly more to understand engagement patterns among its multilingual communities, making smarter policy decisions that better reflect the needs of all residents.

With Wordly, Sunnyvale is proving that AI-powered translation can do more than just translate words. Wordly empowers voices, bridges divides, and creates an empathetic, inclusive community where every resident's voice is heard and respected.

About Sunnyvale, CA

Sunnyvale is the heart of Silicon Valley. With a population of 159,673 Sunnyvale is the seventh largest city in the Bay Area. It's a center of technology and innovation, but also a town of quiet family neighborhoods, strong schools and a diverse community of people. The city has 26 parks; facilities for golf, tennis and swimming; a library; and an arts complex. Sunnyvale's historic downtown is home to a variety of local eateries and merchants, hosts frequent art festivals, concerts and a year-round farmers' market. Sunnyvale has almost 11,000 local businesses that provide a rich mixture of goods and services, including many icons in tech, manufacturing, retail, and R&D.

About Wordly

Wordly is the pioneer and leader in AI translation, providing a high-quality, secure, easy-to-use, and affordable live AI translation and caption solution for communicating across multiple languages. Wordly translates dozens of languages in real-time, making in-person and virtual meetings and events more inclusive, accessible, and engaging. Its SaaS platform meets enterprise-grade security & privacy standards and eliminates the need for human interpreters or special equipment. Millions of users across thousands of organizations - including corporate, nonprofit, government, education, and religious sectors - trust Wordly for their multilingual communication needs.

For more information, visit www.wordly.ai.