

U.S. SNAPSHOT

YOUR CITY IN CYBERSPACE

MUNICIPAL BUDGETS ARE tight, so many cities are beefing up their websites with powerful search tools and ways to improve access to government services at a lower cost. Of 183 cities surveyed by the Center for Digital Government, 77% provide a portal linking you to their departments for such transactions as paying taxes or reserving a tennis court. Some even let you crunch police data for your district's latest crime stats. Not to mention surfing in Spanish or Chinese. Here's a sampling of cities with the coolest websites. —By Marjorie Backman

SEATTLE View 911 dispatches in real time on seattle.gov. Follow other urgent matters on live webcasts of city council meetings (highlights indexed by topic).

▶ **ST. PAUL** Barking dog again? On stpaul.gov, report a gripe and track its progress online. Learn how to "adopt" new Hmong refugees (5,000 expected in '05) by helping with rent.



▶ **SAN FRANCISCO** Want to locate a school, a homeless shelter or a public artwork, like the Keith Haring sculpture, right? Unlike most city sites, sfgov.org lets you search by simply plugging in a name.

NEW YORK On nyc.gov, scan vintage photos (the city shot all home façades circa '39). Offer your digs for a film shoot. View health-inspection reports of 19,000 restaurants. At lowermanhattan.info, glimpse ground zero's future via animation.

CHICAGO The City of Broad Shoulders opts for transparency on www.cityofchicago.org, listing city vendors, contracts and lobbyists. Still doubt Chicago's gone clean? Watch city trash get recycled live.

