

# RESOLUTIONS FOR A NEW YEAR

Onward, 2021. Let's look at some predictions and plans for what's next.

To say that 2020 was an *annus horribilis* (that's "horrible year" in Latin) is just a vast understatement. But we're looking ahead to 2021 to be a wonderful year of recovery and rebuilding, powered by access to an affordable vaccine, unprecedented creativity, and the resilience of humanity.

Let's anticipate tomorrow together. When it comes to your municipality, it's important to consider what the next year might bring us in terms of pitfalls and potential. At Azavar and Localgov, we want to help you get in front of those challenges and make the most of 2021.

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## LOOK AT THE WHOLE REVENUE PICTURE

"Often, we hear from clients that they're sure their tax records are accurate," says Azavar analyst Bailey McAlister. "We like to say that it never hurts to check."

With 25 years of experience working with municipalities, our team understands where errors creep in and cause revenue leaks to occur. Download our checklist today to discover just how many opportunities you have to find incremental revenue for your municipality: <https://bit.ly/34GNpdt>

Once you're ready, Azavar can help your community undergo a complete analysis of all receivables and payables. Our **360-Degree Revenue Cloud** approach means looking under every rock—and delivering real dollars for your community.



## INVEST IN SECURE, ONLINE SYSTEMS

Municipalities are investing more funds into transitioning their legacy computing systems to cloud-based options. Muaz Othman, senior software engineer, anticipates that this trend—which has already been accelerating for some time—will continue to advance due to pandemic-related realities.

Cloud computing enables remote work as well as socially distant constituent services. Even after the pandemic is under control, the demand for this increased flexibility will surely remain. Read more from Muaz at: <https://bit.ly/3874w9a>

Continue your municipality's march toward the cloud by adding **Localgov**, our online tax filing & payment platform. This cloud-based tool allows taxpayers to remit payments remotely—direct to your city's accounts. Want to get started with Localgov? It's easy. Let's talk.

## EXPAND CONSTITUENT SERVICE THROUGH CREATIVE STAFFING

You need systems that help you do more. During this time of uncertainty, it's important for local governments to respond to changing demands quickly. That requires the ability to move staff around into different positions to better serve constituents, whether that's helping with COVID-relief applications, outdoor-dining permits, or even a mass-vaccine program.

But you can't have that flexibility if you're still shackled to old-school processes that require lots of manual labor, like opening payment envelopes, helping taxpayers waiting in line, or taking time-consuming help calls. With **Localgov**, you can offer taxpayers a convenient way to pay and trust that our peerless customer-service team has your back. Get started with this online payment platform today.

## DRIVE CHANGE THROUGH DATA

At its core, data is power. Because when you have key information to inform thoughtful planning, your community can develop in meaningful ways and improve quality of life for all. We really believe that. And that's why we've developed Localgov's **Insights & Analytics** tools to connect municipal teams with the most in-depth and useful data possible.

As the economic fallout from the pandemic continues to shake out, use municipal data to more actively monitor your commercial sectors. Are entrepreneurs not current with taxes, or increasingly delinquent? Are vacancies on the rise? This might point to signs of cyclical struggle and the need for focused attention, funding, or support programs.

Insights & Analytics information can guide your hand with investment programs such as business-improvement funds or grants, tax-increment financing districts, and other programs. By identifying and cataloging vacancies, your business-development team can more effectively market opportunities for other entrepreneurs or developers.

## STAY ON TOP OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENTS

One major source of lost revenue is through loopholes caused by out-of-date regulations. We have helped so many municipalities who were losing out because their existing hospitality regulations didn't cover a new business model: **short-term rentals**. And even when a community's ordinances did cover these types of lodging, municipal staff had no way of staying on top of the dozens (literally, dozens) of short-term rental and online travel agencies booking rooms, homes, treehouses, yurts, etc.

But our review team at Azavar? They're experts at identifying and closing loopholes like these. Tom Fagan, national sales manager at Azavar, says, "Often, municipalities just don't know where to start with short-term rental ordinances or how to get hosts into compliance. We have that experience and can help municipalities of all sizes manage their short-term rental industries."

## ACKNOWLEDGE TRAVEL IS DIFFERENT

Speaking of travel ... it's different now. No longer are many people jetting off for weekends in New York City or Las Vegas. People might still vacation, but with caution. Airbnb is seeing more rentals of whole properties so parties can properly socially distance from other guests.

Another trend is travel so people can audition new places to live, especially smaller communities with ample access to nature and recreation. Sound like your city? Your tourist bureau might consider developing a campaign to lure would-be residents.

In the meantime, a revenue review of short-term rental properties will ensure that you have dollars needed to support infrastructure in a growing community. Our analysts can get started on a **comprehensive report** that identifies any missed revenue—and make sure those funds get to your municipality ASAP.

## GET READY TO ROAR BACK

Finally, we need to reflect on what positivity might come in 2021 or 2022. There are vaccines rolling out around the world, promising a return to a more normal life. Right now, it seems difficult to imagine a time without masks, standing close together, talking too loud at a concert. But we will. Because that's what humans do.

Writing in *The Atlantic*, Yascha Mounk draws parallels between our time and a hundred years ago. Following the back-to-back horrors of World War I and the Spanish Flu pandemic, "The Roaring Twenties saw a flowering of parties and concerts. The 1918 virus killed more people than [the war], but it did not reduce humanity's determination to socialize." Mounk goes on to illustrate this point by detailing how many places in times of social or political violence (Mexico, Guatemala, Tel Aviv, Baghdad, Paris) still feature robust social scenes and nightlife.

We need this optimism right now. And more importantly, so do bar and restaurant owners. Chicago bar owner Michael Roper echoes this future-looking viewpoint while explaining why he's closing his business this winter in hope of surviving until spring. "Places that survive are likely to be rewarded with this incredible pent-up demand," he says. "I actually believe there will be a new roaring '20s when this ends. We plan to be here for that."

We hope that this optimism leads municipalities to consider **convenience-centric** tax filing & payment tools such as Localgov. Not only does the system allow business owners to save time via remote payments, your finance team will have ready access to funds and data to gauge your community's recovery.

# IN THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE

This has been an epic time of learning and growth, change and adaptation. We at Azavar and Localgov have been consistently inspired by state and local governments and their leaders. Our clients, from coast to coast, have responded to 2020's ups and downs with thoughtfulness and commitment to serve constituents in need. Our team is excited to live up to this example in 2021 and beyond.

Let's talk about how we can establish or enrich our relationship with your municipality. Together, we can work to make your community's resolutions a reality. Contact us today.

## Contact Us

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