

Name: City Website Redesign and Cloud Migration

Completed: Fiscal Year 2023/2024

Goal Alignment:

DIGITAL - Expand access to city services to anyone, at any time, from anywhere (responsive, touchless, accessible, and mobile).

INNOVATIVE - Transform the City's service delivery through new and creative solutions.

Summary: The City of Sacramento's website serves as a vital hub for information, services, and engagement with its residents, businesses, and visitors. However, over time, the website faced several challenges that necessitated a comprehensive redesign project:

- Information architecture constraints
- Poor mobile experience
- Accessibility/responsiveness issues resulting from freeform content model
- Security/reliability issues and network infrastructure cost due to on-prem hosting
- Codebase structural problems and manual deployment of updates
- Reliance on http for some functionality
- Outdated design aesthetic

The decision to embark on the redesign project was driven by the commitment to enhance the overall user experience and accessibility for all visitors. The Web Team took on this project using a hybrid approach. The information architecture, site functionality, and high-level design/UX concepts were created in-house by the Web Administrator in collaboration with a core team of City stakeholders, while the visual design and development were handled by FullStack Labs, Inc.

The new website introduced a new topic-based navigation system, significantly improving the user experience and ease of content discovery by enabling visitors to bypass the City's departmental structure. The menu is driven by a system of topic tags which were determined in a collaborative process with City staff from all departments. To determine the top-level categories, we conducted a card sorting study with the public. The hundreds of groups they suggested were composited together and analyzed, allowing us to derive the semantic relationships across all our subject matter as perceived by our customers.

During the development process, our accessibility partner analyzed the design on our test server, itemized any compliance issues, and provided remediation plans. The process ensured a solution that meets all WCAG 2.1 AA standards, and which accommodates all visitors regardless of ability.

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A new search interface was developed driven by Elastic Search, improving performance and introducing new features such as advanced filters and typeahead. The search platform is also cloud-hosted, further reducing the City's network utilization.

The migration to the new site was coordinated between IT and more than 75 primary stakeholders throughout the City as departmental staff were trained on the new platform, produced their new content, and completed their transitions from the old website.

Benefits:

- Improve user experience with a more intuitive navigation system and architecture
- Ensure accessibility and security through structured content creation and design best practices
- Improve the mobile experience by implementing fully responsive templates and content system
- Enhance website scalability and reliability as well as City network efficiency and security with a move to cloud-based infrastructure
- Improve search, delivering more relevant and higher-quality results with more filtering options
- Streamline maintenance and updates with a new content management system, codebase, and deployment pipeline
- Improve security with migration of all functionalities to HTTPS-only
- Present a modern aesthetic, reflecting the City's commitment to progress and innovation
- Transition from .org domain suffix to .gov to enhance security and trust

Completion of this project has diverted most of the City's traffic off of the City's network, saving significant infrastructure costs and increasing network security.