

NO: **R191**

COUNCIL DATE: October 17, 2011

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **October 12, 2011**

FROM: **General Manager, Investment and
Intergovernmental Relations**

FILE: **City Website**

SUBJECT: **City of Surrey Website**

RECOMMENDATION

The Investment and Intergovernmental Relations Department recommends that Council receive this report as information.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the experience with the redesigned City website in the year since it was launched. The redesigned website was launched at the Regular Council meeting on October 4, 2010.

BACKGROUND

In the Spring of 2010 the website redesign project commenced with a view to establishing a stronger online presence for the City of Surrey. In less than six months, four integrated domains, www.surrey.ca, www.surreylibraries.ca, www.surrey.ca/kids and www.surrey.ca/youth, were conceived, developed and launched. Community consultation was a key component of this project with the final product receiving strong positive feedback from residents, business owners, City Council and staff across all Departments.

The website redesign focused on increasing accessibility, establishing consistency, modernizing the design and consolidating all City of Surrey websites into a single cohesive site. The new design focused on optimizing usability, enhancing the availability of information and increasing frequency of communication from the City.

As part of the website redesign project, a Web and New Media team was established within the Investment & Intergovernmental Relations Department to lead the on-going maintenance of the site, to develop and implement an online communications strategy and to ensure the website continues to meet the needs of the community.

Today, visitors to the City of Surrey website are offered a compelling and interactive experience that meets the needs of an extremely diverse community. The website has become an important tool in engaging with the public and providing timely and accurate information to interested parties in an easily accessible format.

Immediately following the launch, traffic to the website increased significantly. Statistics show a 117 % increase in hits in the same time period in 2011 in comparison to 2010. The number of pages viewed per visit has also increased significantly, i.e., by 104%, while the number of unique pages accessed on the site remains the most impressive increase being 334%, which is a reflection of the amount of additional information now available on the website.

DISCUSSION

Feedback on the website redesign has been overwhelmingly positive. The City received an award of distinction from Canada's Government and Technology Event (GTEC) as well as a best practice award for the website redesign from the Union of British Columbia Municipalities.

Following the launch of the new site, the Web and New Media Team has introduced changes to further enhance the online experience for residents, business owners and staff. The following updates and innovations have been made to the website since its launch:

1. Development and launch of five unique domains for the Major City Events
 - www.surrey.ca/winterfest
 - www.surrey.ca/partyfortheplanet
 - www.surrey.ca/childrensfestival
 - www.surrey.ca/canadaday
 - www.surrey.ca/fusionfestival
2. Development and launch of a 'microsite' for the Municipal Elections
 - www.surrey.ca/election
3. Enabling live online streaming for the Mayor's State of the City address
 - Access provided through www.surrey.ca

Given the strong support from community members during the website redesign process, community engagement will continue to be part of the website strategy. Based on input received during community consultations in 2011, City staff are currently working on the following website enhancements:

1. The development of a Community Calendar:
 - Will allow Community organizations the ability to highlight their events on the City website.
 - *Estimated completion date: December 2011*
2. Implementation of Social Tools
 - Will enable visitors to the website to discuss information, ask questions and provide feedback within individual pages of the website;
 - Will enable visitors to the website to "share" content through social networking sites including Facebook and Twitter;
 - Will provide blogging capabilities, which will be rolled out in 2012 as part of a broader enhanced online communication strategy; and
 - Additional RSS feeds will be added to specific areas of the website to ensure visitors can easily stay informed on any updates made to different areas of the website.
 - *Estimated completion date: January 2012*

The Web and New Media Team will continue to make improvements and modifications to the website to ensure its continued high value to the City's citizens and customers. The Team will also continue to work with all City Departments to ensure that the information on the website remains relevant and accurate and that news and information is provided in a timely and easily accessible format. Community consultations will also be continued to shape website changes and enhancements.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

The city website supports the overall objectives of the City's Sustainability Charter; more particularly action item SC13 "Create an Accessible City". Residents, business owners and other City customers can access information and process numerous requests through the Online Services available at www.surrey.ca. Enabling the submission of requests online significantly increases the accessibility of City services and decreases service delivery time.

CONCLUSION

In October 2010, Surrey launched a brand new website and in many ways transformed the way in which the City transacted business and communicated online. The website has become a major vehicle for communicating and engaging with the public, increasing access to information and transparency related to City processes. As trends and technology continue to evolve, City staff will continue working to ensure the online strategy for the City remains current and the website continues to address the needs of the community.

Shaun Greffard
General Manager,
Investment and Intergovernmental Relations

SG/mc

q:\admin\managers\corporate reports\2011\city of surrey website.docx
MC 10/13/11 2:15 PM