

NO: R188

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REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **September 16, 2013**

FROM: **General Manager, Parks, Recreation & Culture**

FILE: **1400-03**

SUBJECT: **Surrey Website - Responsive Design Project**

RECOMMENDATION

The Parks, Recreation & Culture Department recommends that Council receive this report as information.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the redesigned, mobile-friendly (responsive) City website.

BACKGROUND

The responsive website was launched on May 7, 2013.

The City's website was re-launched in the spring of 2010. In the two years following the re-launch the website, www.surrey.ca, has grown to provide service to a large audience. In 2012, over 3 million people accessed the website with almost 20% being from a mobile device (mobile phone or tablet). The website currently has about 5800 pages of information.

Given the high number of City of Surrey website visitors utilizing mobile devices to access the website it was decided that the website needed to be enhanced to provide better service to the City's mobile customers.

In September 2012, staff with the assistance of the web support vendor, and with community consultation by means of the web, social media and in person commenced the Responsive Design Project (also called the Mobile Web Project).

There are key differences between a responsive website over a mobile website as follows:

- A mobile website may only be compatible with one or two mobile devices and may rely on the user to identify that they are coming from a mobile device. Such websites must be updated when devices are updated or when new devices are released resulting in larger maintenance costs.
- A responsive website automatically recognizes from which device a user is accessing the website and optimizes the site to suit that device, thereby guaranteeing an optimal user

experience. Such a website can adapt to a large variety of devices and does not need to be updated as often as a mobile website.

The Responsive Design Project was focused on improving the experience for current users and encouraging new visitors.

DISCUSSION

On May 7, 2013 the redesigned (Responsive) Website was launched. The launch has been very successful. The following summarizes the increased usage on the City's website by comparing the period from May 7, 2012 to July 7, 2012 with the period from May 7, 2013 to July 7, 2013:

- Total page views: +12.84%
- Mobile visits: +134.96%
- Tablet visits: +112.64%
- Returning visitors: +16.88%
- New visitors: +21.51%

Customer feedback on the information architecture has been very positive.

Key Project Outcomes

The following are the key outcomes of the project:

- enabled access to surrey.ca from any device;
- condensed the number of site navigation buckets from 6 to 5;
- completed a nearly 6000-page content inventory of the site;
- created a shareable database of content editors and approvers for every page on surrey.ca to facilitate workflow and expedite customer service;
- implemented a tool allowing users to share content pages through 4 major social media channels; and
- designed an improved workflow to ensure frequent updates to the site.

Areas of Focus

The following represent the four key areas of focus in relation to the project.

Increased Access for All Citizens

The City website is now available on any of the over 525 different devices used by the residents, whether it be on an iPhone, a Samsung Galaxy Tab, Nintendo DS, etc.

Broader accessibility improvements also included

- removing inaccessible hover menus,
- renaming and adding alternative text to nearly 1000 images across the site, and
- creating responsive and accessible tables.

Improved Ease in Site Navigation

This project included extensive review of navigation patterns, and interviews with users as to their priority content on surrey.ca. This resulted in the following:

- simplified navigation on the site, going from 6 navigation menus to 5;
- re-categorized content to create a Communities section; and
- consolidates Online Services to ensure all services are available through www.surrey.ca/onlineservices.

Reduced Time and Number of Phone Calls for Customers and Staff

A goal of the project was to encourage customers to use the website rather than phoning in to the City to receive service (i.e., encouraging self-help).

The time and cost of a phone call to the City is much higher than the cost to complete an online service request. For example, with respect to an Electrical Inspection Request it takes 75% longer to process a request in person than a request coming in from surrey.ca.

Since launch, the number of online requests submitted through www.surrey.ca (e.g., Electrical Inspection Request, Plumbing Inspection Request, and Bylaw Enforcement Request) has increased by 5.16%, indicating more citizens are doing their City business online, without having to call staff to receive services.

New Internal Partnerships Arising out of Information Architecture Changes

[Surrey.ca](http://surrey.ca) was formerly organized according to departmental organizational structures. User research led to 3 new content hubs on the new surrey.ca site. These include the Communities, Environment and Trees hubs. These are more intuitive to users than the previous menu of hubs.

As an example, previous environment-related content were distributed across 6 different domains as follows:

- Environmental Protection – Planning Section;
- Sustainable Living – Sustainability Office;
- Tree Protection – Trees;
- Wildlife & Habitats, Salmon & Trout, Streams & Water Quality – Drainage & Environment;
- Nature & Environment Volunteering – Community Services, Parks; and
- Parks.

All of this information now resides under the Community tab. This also creates internal efficiencies as follows:

- Easier and shared marketing - with one broader content hub, departments can share marketing time and budget;
- Editing time saved – all Departments are now able to link to other Department's content, rather than reproducing it on their own page; and
- Department collaboration is enhanced.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

The City's new responsive website supports the overall objectives of the City's Sustainability Charter; more particularly action item SC13 "Create an Accessible City". Residents, business owners and all other City customers can access information and process numerous service requests by way of the Online Services available at www.surrey.ca.

CONCLUSION

In May 2013, Surrey launched a new responsive, mobile-friendly website and in many ways transformed the way in which the City communicates and transacts business online. The website has become a major vehicle for communicating and engaging with the public.

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.

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