



Hamilton

INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	December 9, 2020
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Hamilton.ca Website Redevelopment (CM20011) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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SIGNATURE:	

INFORMATION

The City of Hamilton website is a key communications tool that provides a variety of information about programs, services and operations to its citizens, businesses and their stakeholders.

More than 3.5 million people this year have come to Hamilton.ca to tap into all sorts of city services such as learning about the status of COVID-19 cases in Hamilton, applying for a City job, paying a parking ticket and checking waste/recycling schedules.

	Users	Page Views
2020	3,740,340 (Jan to Nov)	17,371,284
2019	3,486,981	15,743,300
2018	2,895,244	15,266,060
2017	2,582,456	14,745,054

The City's website user engagement numbers have been increasing year-over-year since the current version of Hamilton.ca launched in 2015, as have citizen expectations for what they can find and do on the City's website.

The City's web redesign project was first approved in 2012 with a budget of \$954,800. Additional funding was approved in 2014 for \$1,350,200. The first iteration launched in 2015 and the project was subsequently delayed due to significant structural shifts and leadership changes within the Communications division. Given the increasing traffic the City's website is experiencing, citizen satisfaction level with the current site, and the

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

increasing digital experience expectations, the relevance of the City's website refresh project has only increased in relevance with time.

Pandemic response tool

The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly shed light on the increased need and demand for a more robust digital presence to help our residents access services and get critical public health information. This has prompted us to take a much needed look at and re-evaluate self-serve options, proactive messaging and accessible communications.

Stakeholder consultation

City staff launched a consultation process this fall to uncover user motivations and needs for 2021 and beyond. The feedback gathered through engagement opportunities provided staff with valuable insight into what's working, not working and ensuring any updates and redevelopment work requested meets the needs of our residents and stakeholders.

Key insights:

- The current search tool does not return relevant results or crawl 3rd party systems and applications and is the cause of much user frustration and negative feedback. Public consultation revealed that poor search performance is exacerbating trust and transparency issues in government.
- It was identified that the City does not present a seamless experience across applications (visual or UX) resulting in perceived trust issues when submitting information via off brand forms and online applications.
- When asked what features and/or functionality residents would like to see improved on the City's website – 57% of those surveyed answered "Searchable document libraries or repositories for bylaws, reports, records etc."
- Many citizens use search engines such as Google to find information on the City's website instead of using the City's website itself.

Staff has prepared a Request for Proposal for bid to receive a recommendation and rationale for a web content management system (CMS) that is best fit for our needs and documented requirements. Solutions must address the following focus areas that were identified in these sessions:

- Findability (site organization)
- Searchability (robust search tool)

- Mobile experience (70% of traffic is mobile/tablet users)
- Opportunities to increase the direct delivery of communications to residents (subscriptions, notifications, custom alerts etc.) as opposed to asking them to visit the site for items of ongoing interest

We will be seeking an end-to-end solution, with a vendor providing an ongoing maintenance agreement for software upgrades/implementations, new development, technical support and website hosting. Day to day content management and messaging will remain with the Digital Communications team in the City Manager's Office.

City staff will advance hamilton.ca by focusing on delivering valuable content, an efficient CMS and a commitment to an improved user experience. We are estimating it will take until the end of 2021 to complete this project.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In June 2015, the City launched what is the current Hamilton.ca after a comprehensive web assessment, municipal benchmarking exercise and CMS review recommended Drupal 7 as the CMS platform of choice.

Operational management and maintenance of the site was split between multi-disciplinary teams with Digital Communications based in the City Manager's Office overseeing the day-to-day publishing of content and public messaging and Information Technology based in Corporate Services overseeing site maintenance, development (internal and local vendors who delivered specific components), security and hosting contracts.

Over the last 5 years the City has faced challenges and issues with the current Drupal 7 implementation. At a high level these are:

1. Lack of internal resources to work on Drupal development to support new business requests is a challenge.
2. The current website lacks robust search capabilities and is very hard to find information. Content from our subsites and external applications/systems are not included in search results.
3. The current implementation is very static and provides little flexibility for site designers and authors to create engaging layouts, dynamically driven content and to automate publishing processes.
4. It is very hard to onboard new staff to perform Drupal authoring and development activities. The current implementation is hard to learn and consists of multiple

customizations that requires a significant amount of knowledge transfer to explain processes and how things work.

In 2019, City staff received leadership approval to move forward with a plan to decouple content management and online services/products from the same platform and move to a simplified platform and best tool for function solution to be able to satisfy customer requests more effectively.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS/LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

New or revised policies are being developed as required for this iteration of the City's website. Internal operating policies and procedures will be developed or revised in accordance with the policy recommendations presented and approved at November 5, 2020 Audit, Finance & Administration Committee.

A Privacy Breach Review (FCS20097) (City Wide):

- Review and update the privacy statement on the City's website to ensure it governs the collection, use, storage and protection of personal data provided by users of the City's website.
- Develop a web policy to ensure all software integration on the City's website is vetted by the Digital Communications Team prior to implementation.
- Develop a web content strategy to guide the planning, creation, delivery and governance of web content.

Through this project we are also able to resolve any outstanding inclusivity and accessibility issues and ensure we are making every reasonable effort to comply with Ontario Regulation 191/11 made under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005* as it pertains to the Information and Communications Standard.

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r11191#BK15>

The new site will result in service improvements for users of all abilities and disabilities including but not limited to:

- Sighted or non-sighted users can understand what is on the screen (i.e. text, video, buttons etc.)
- All users can operate regardless of hardware (i.e. assistive technologies)
- All users can understand content and meaning (i.e. headings, labels, instructions, error messages etc.)

- Code/content and design are responsive and supports a variety of devices (mobile, tablet and emerging technologies)

The City will aim for WCAG 2.1 criteria (released June 2018)

<https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/>

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

Public Consultation Phase 1 yielded a 25% engagement rate:

- 521 Aware Visitors - Visited at least one Page
- 218 Informed Visitors – performed an action (clicked a link, downloaded a document)
- 134 Engaged Visitors – contributed and interacted with an engagement tool (survey, contributed ideas)

Phase 2 consultation yielded a 17% engagement rate:

- 213 Aware Visitors - Visited at least one Page
- 66 Informed Visitors – performed an action (clicked a link, downloaded a document)
- 37 Engaged Visitors – contributed and interacted with an engagement tool (survey, contributed ideas)

Internal stakeholder interviews completed August 31 to September 15, 2020 with representatives from HSR, Clerks, Records & Privacy, Recreation, Communications, and Public Works Outreach. These stakeholders were identified in Phase 1 consultation as a current top used service provider and/or were identified as a service for comprehensive review in the original capital budget approval from Council (2013).

An internal staff/stakeholder survey was available from August 19 to September 11, 2020. Stakeholders were invited to provide comment on content quality and purpose, goals and KPIs, features and functions that would improve ways of doing business and internal processes.

ALIGNMENT WITH TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES 2018-2022

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

The City is committed to creating and nurturing a city that is welcoming and inclusive.

Goal: Equity-seeking communities will feel safe, supported and have an enhanced sense of belonging through strengthening community capacity, City responsiveness and creating inclusive engagement opportunities.

Trust & Confidence in City Government

The City of Hamilton is committed to promoting an open approach to government. Ensuring public information is readily available and accessible, by promoting partnerships and by strengthening and improving its ability to consistently undertake coordinated, transparent and inclusive, evidence-based engagement practices, the City is committed to enabling residents, business owners and community stakeholders to become more involved in decision-making processes and find value in partnering and investing in City programs.

Goal: Provide the public with greater access to City government information and opportunities to become more engaged in decision making processes that impact their community.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix “A” to Report CM20011 - Hamilton.ca Public Consultation – What We Heard