SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT BEING SUBMITTED

Pitt Meadows B.C. – The Natural Place!

A quick look around and you'll know why families and businesses are attracted to this thriving community. It's a City where you'll find a unique blend of urban-appeal and rural-charm. Currently home to 16,500 residents, the City's population is expected to grow to 20,000 by 2020. Pitt Meadows has been experiencing significant change over the past decade, not the least of which was becoming BC's newest City on January 1, 2007. Keeping up with the rapid growth, the municipal government has undergone a major transformation, as well, including significant staff growth and the roll out of a corporate strategic plan, vision, logo and community brand.

One of the key communication tools for the municipality has been the website. The original District of Pitt Meadows website was launched in 2000 and had become cluttered, difficult to navigate and out of date.   It also did not reflect the community's new image or fulfill constituents' and staff's increasing requests for easier access to current information. Late in 2006 a request for proposals was made and eight web design companies responded. The redesign and upgrade was intended to provide customer service improvements, streamline internal maintenance processes and launch the new "City" of Pitt Meadows website www.pittmeadows.bc.ca

GENERAL INFORMATION
The City of Pitt Meadows is a Municipal Government located within the Lower Mainland of Vancouver. We currently have a staff complement of 60, an IT department of 1.5 persons, making it one of the smallest municipalities within the Metro Vancouver Regional District. As a City we service a community with a population with the same expectations as the much larger municipalities that surround us.

TECHNICAL OVERVIEW

Original District Website

New City Website

WWW.PITTMEADOWS.BC.CA

The original public website was hosted by an outside vendor, maintained and updated by self taught "administrative" staff using MS Frontpage. With the ever-increasing need for up-to-date information, the decision was made to host the website internally, on a City supplied server running Windows 2003. The website needed to be secure, compatible and able to import from our Geographic Integrated Systems and financial/property systems (VADIM), as well as, connect in real-time to the property taxation system (VADIM).

Development Tools: Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, ElementCMS, Adobe Acrobat and Macromedia Dreamweaver.

Software and Application Platform: Operating System / Microsoft Windows 2000,Webserver / Cygwin, Database / MS SQL Server Application Layer / asp/php, Development Environment / asp/php

BACKGROUND AND SCOPE- PURPOSE OF THE WEBSITE REDESIGN

The City sought to contract with a professional and experienced local web design company for the redesign of its website. The project's purpose was to completely revise the look and feel, navigation and presentation of the site in order to create a web destination which projected the municipality's goals and vision. The design process needed to involve consultation and collaboration with various departments, external users, as well as, a website redesign committee comprised of staff members from across the municipality.

THE CHIEF DELIVERABLES OF THE DESIGN PROJECT WERE AS FOLLOWS:

1. Develop site information architecture map and design criteria through consultation with internal municipal staff and representatives of Council, external users and the web redesign committee.

2. Create graphic images and page layouts for the main page and sub-page templates in accordance with the design criteria and project goals.

3. Deliver code templates which can be imported into the content management system.

4. Produce a style guide and style sheets for the site, to be used by administrative staff.

5. Transfer the tools, materials, and knowledge necessary for our staff to implement changes to the site and create new templates and new pages and design of the home page, and a set of templates and graphics to be used for the new site.

All of this was to be done within six months and on a budget of $32,000. Included in the budget were: software costs; website redesign and branding, installation and training; and consulting fees.

BACKGROUND

The original District of Pitt Meadows website was launched in 2000. The site, historically, had been developed and maintained by a limited number of technical and administrative staff and outside consultants. New sections and content had been added ad hoc to the existing design/framework, which had resulted in a site that was cluttered, difficult to navigate and where content and organization were inconsistent, redundant and/or out of date. In some cases, information was no longer relevant or links to content no longer existed. Pitt Meadows was experiencing significant change including a commitment by Council to ensure more timely and accurate release of information. Council in its strategic plan identified that in the process of delivering services "we strive to provide responsible community leadership and stewardship, and to operate in a fair, honest, open and transparent manner by involving and communicating with all citizens and stakeholders, and to be accountable by demonstrating the results achieved with the resources entrusted to us". As well, sound governance should imply effective and efficient operations, which is a theme that underlies the provision of all City services. The new website has proven to be a regular source of information for citizens, business owners, media, and other stakeholders. In addition to the enhanced communication abilities we have seen a reduction in administrative time greeting customers, answering phone calls/emails and reduced operating costs for the new website.

Quick website Stats since April 25, 2007 (launch)

443,073 page views; 92,968 unique visitors; average 339 visits/day over 40% of site traffic are return visitors – this shows that the website is an effective resource for site visitors.
Top 5 pages: Home page, Careers, Flood Protection, Events, Parks & Recreation

Key Features:
1. ElementCMS – web-based content management system that allows staff to update the website on-the-fly; no need to be behind the City's firewall to make website updates; allows staff to clearly define specific roles and areas of responsibility for all those involved with the website. This ensures that each employee can only create, edit, or delete information they are responsible for.
2. Navigation System – detailed information is categorized into multi tracks so that users can find information quickly and easily. Special attention was applied to ensure the architecture was suitably scalable to handle the anticipated expansion of the site in the future.
3. Home Page – automatically populated with What's New items (top 5); staff update the What's New section and the system automatically populates the home page
4. Site Map – dynamically generated site map based on the site architecture that allows for a quick snapshot of the website
5. Search Engine –The interface for the search and associated results was developed to provide ease-of-use, relevancy and intuitiveness. The search logic provides Google-like results by indexing HTML, PDF, DOC,PPT, XLS, SWF files to provide accurate and comprehensive search results
6. Online services – several key features – EHOG, RecReg4U, Mapview

RESULTS ACHIEVED - WHY THIS PROGRAM DEFINES EXCELLENCE

Approach to the new Website Development:

With Pitt Meadows' increase in status, we wanted to create a website that displayed some of the virtues that the new City held: it had to be practical, cost effective, modern and attractive. It also had to enhance the City's identity and strengthen community pride while maintaining all the useful aspects of the old site. Community polling indicated that an enhanced level of web communication with residents, businesses, visitors and investors would be well received and an enhanced presence on the web could provide information and feedback on City services, activities, plans and issues. The vast majority of residents (81%) who have visited Pitt Meadows' website said that the content of information and services available was useful.[1]

A list of some of the user identified internal limitations of the old site that were addressed include:

1. Doesn't have the same look as our updated branding imagery.-much care was taken to not only incorporate the new brand but include a mix of urban and rural imagery and style.
2. Hard for customers to find information on certain items.- the enhanced search function and new navigation systems and tools allows for much more efficient searching.
3. Difficult to update content and maintain technically with a limited number of staff trained to make changes-changes can be made by 10 trained staff members online over the web based content management system.
4. Hard to get usage statistics for number of hits on specific items-the new system integrates well with such tools as Google analytics for review and revision based on user demand and visits.
5. Has links which are obsolete (dead links)- by starting fresh the development team was able to clean up dead links and also streamlined the site focusing on appropriate links rather than recreating information.
6. Some of the information is stale and out of date-the site is reviewed daily by staff and changes made immediately. An approval system is now in place to ensure two sets of eyes are reviewing content. No more reliance on outside bodies
7. Support and service by external web master (who originally developed the site) is a challenge-staff wanted more ability to make their own changes. The user friendly content management system allows for staff to make changes as required.
8. Site should offer more – site includes all new information on park details, upcoming events, emergency information and key contact/community directories, the City unveiled an online utility to

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[1] 2006 Ipsos Reid Citizen Satisfaction Survey

enable eligible property owners to claim the Home Owners Grant, also we launched Meadows MapView an online service providing residents with basic property information including zoning, Official Community Plan and Agricultural Land Reserve designations, as well as, topographical and aerial imagery; Recreg4u, in cooperation with the District of Maple Ridge allows users to register online for all arts and recreational programs within our two communities. Re-organized Council minutes, agendas, bylaws and complete corporate business profiles have enhanced the site.
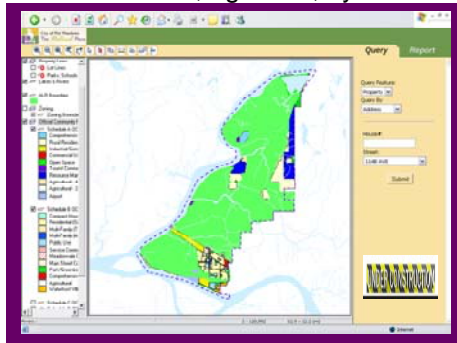
MAP VIEW
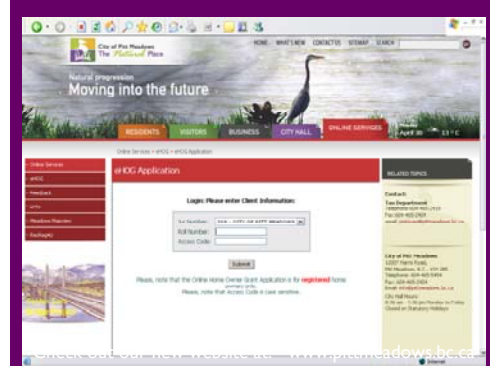
ELECTRONIC HOME OWNER GRANT APPLICATION
USED BY NEARLY 8% OF 2007 GRANT CLAIMANTS

OBJECTIVES

Role in Development:

Selected after an extensive search and Request for Proposal process, Atomic Crayon was chosen to provide the re-design and to implement a content management system (CMS). The system selected, Element CMS, empowered staff to easily and quickly update all areas of the website. Atomic Crayon provided CMS training to City staff, allowing them to ensure the site's formatting stayed uniform, subsequently leaving the site looking clean and organized.

Working with Atomic Crayon, the website redesign team reviewed and updated the entire site architecture, performed a functionality analysis and created a new navigation structure. With hundreds of pages and thousands of documents, creating a lean site architecture meant users could more easily find what they needed; and developed the overall look and feel for the completed Website re-design. Website redesign members sought input from various user groups and colleagues to identify what others liked and disliked about the current site and further research was conducted on private and public websites "best practices". All of these were completed with technical considerations of the fact that site would have an enterprise-level CMS integration.

Next, we worked out where we could add the most functionality while still allowing the greatest number of constituents the ability to view the information.   We selected attractive, powerful and widely usable functions that improved the power and style of the site, while leaving no users out.

Having just gone through an extensive branding and logo exercise, the City felt strongly that the website must easily integrate into its new imaging campaign. Corporate colors, rich design and an emphasis on the "the natural" setting were crucial elements in the overall design of the site. The current site incorporates the use of many of the same graphical elements that are already in use in our family of published materials. The website became one more tool in capturing the uniqueness of the community. But the website needed to be more than "pretty". With limited staff resources, the goal was to make the website efficient for both internal and external users.

Just as the corporation was growing, so were the expectations of both staff and residents on technology and access to information. The new

corporate culture embraced more of a customer service approach that was responsive to customer needs while needing to be efficient, current and useful. In addition to the current online services, a number of electronic or e-commerce initiatives and RSS and newsfeeds have been identified and will roll out over the next four years.

1.   **ENHANCE COMMUNICATION WITH RESIDENTS, BUSINESSES, VISITORS AND INVESTORS TO PROVIDE INFORMATION AND FEEDBACK ON CITY SERVICES, ACTIVITIES, PLANS AND ISSUES.**
      Quick links are established for more popular areas of the website and upcoming news and events are prominently displayed on the front page of the site. A feedback system is available on every page and contact information for follow-up is available in a special panel on the right. The information has been reconfigured and both search and navigation tools enhanced.

2.   **ENCOURAGE AND PROMOTE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND VOLUNTEERISM**
      The online registration process (RECREG4U) for leisure services through the shared partnership with the District of Maple Ridge has afforded citizens convenient access to both leisure and volunteer services, as well as, a complete listing of parks, upcoming events and a community directory allows visitors and residents to quickly identify opportunities for participation.

3.   **OFFERS EXPANDED OPPORTUNITIES FOR INFORMATION FLOW AND ESTABLISHES AND PROMOTES A CUSTOMER SERVICE CULTURE THAT IS RESPONSIVE TO CUSTOMER NEEDS**
      Whether it's the staff directory, the annual report, corporate strategic plan, road closures, park information, or garbage schedules, the information is accessible 24 hours/day 7 days a week. Copies of Council minutes and agendas are accessed by media and citizens and enquiries from other local governments. Online requests are forwarded for response and reviewed by members of the website redesign committee.

4.   **PROMOTES IMPROVED RESULTS AND EFFICIENCY FOR OUR CUSTOMERS/CLIENTS**
      In 2007 for the first time, property owners could submit their Homeowner grant claim online at the City of Pitt Meadows website avoiding lengthy line-ups at City Hall. Folio numbers, access codes and directions for use were sent out with the tax notices and over 5% of homeowners took advantage of this new tool. The second year saw an additional 2% increase in online grant claimants. Also the City offered for the first time access to our Meadows MapView, - an online service providing residents and agents with basic property information. Meadows MapView provides zoning, Official Community Plan and Agricultural Land Reserve designations, as well as topographical and aerial imagery. The feedback from both homeowners looking for property information, or realtors or developers using the information for clients has been very positive. Here again, this utility creates access to information outside the normal operating hours in the comfort of the individuals' own home or office and eliminates counter enquiries allowing our staff to focus on other customer service transactions.

5.   **ACTS AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL FOR STAFF AND PUBLIC**
      The power of this newest technology was tested to the extreme when late April of 2007 the community was facing the very real threat of catastrophic flooding. Fortunately, the spring freshet did not occur but the new website was flooded with over 20,000 unique visitors to the Floodwatch section of our website in less than 45 days. Teachers were using the daily river gauge readings for class projects and families were checking in on each other and offering assistance where needed. We were able to provide instantaneous information not only keeping residents, businesses up to date but other concerned citizens, provincial agencies and the media. With a small staff compliment we could not have kept up with phone or walk-in requests.