



City of Littleton
Case Study



City Initiates Redesign to Improve Mobile Experience, Comes Away with Much More

Littleton, Colorado is a city that thinks ahead. As soon as the city launched its new official website early in 2013, government leaders began planning for the site's next upgrade, which occurred three years later.

The Challenge: Taking a New Approach

Website analytics guided the city from day one. Members of Littleton's communications department noted that more than a third of website visits originated from a mobile device. In fact, that percentage was on the rise – increasing to 38 percent in 2015 from 34 percent in 2014. By 2015, questions from community residents as to why the site looked so different on their mobile devices also increased as smartphones became more widely used.

While their current website was “mobile-accessible,” it became clear that Littleton needed a fully responsive website that would automatically adapt to a variety of devices. In the process of evaluating their site for mobility, however, the application of advanced analytics led city leaders to completely rethink the site; this time, from the citizens' perspective.

The Solution: Think Like a Citizen

“We stopped looking at it like a typical government website, which is organized by department,” said Kelli Narde, director of communications for the city. “We wanted to organize the site based on how citizens think and access it. This is what made Vision's research and analytical tools so valuable to our planning process.”

Having had a “great experience” working with Vision for their site redesign only three years earlier, Narde said “there was no question” the city was going to work with them again.

“Vision is always on the leading edge of innovation, and their data-driven approach helped us be more innovative and to reorganize our site architecture in a way that best serves the interests of our citizens,” said Narde.

Ask any group of people how a website should be organized, and you most likely will get as many opinions as there are people in the room. Littleton Webmaster Cathy Weaver noted that when their group of 12 first met to discuss the website redesign in January 2016, the initial conversation centered on each person's individual usage. While the input from such a diverse group was helpful, the final design could not possibly encompass all the ideas and suggestions.

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“Web design by a committee is not an easy process,” said Weaver. Initially, many team members felt their own department should be represented on the homepage. But research, analytics and Vision’s heatmapping helped us determine what our website visitors are actually looking for, and guided our decisions.”

Working closely with Vision, the Littleton team took the time to better understand their community. They began with Vision’s User Experience (UX) Analysis, which uses several different data sourcing techniques to discover who their visitors are, what information they seek and how they prefer to access it.

To the committee’s surprise, Google analytics revealed that the No. 1 search term typed into the website’s search field was “sales tax,” followed by jobs, museum, zoning and library, respectively.

A survey, emailed to more than 1,000 residents, listed 100 random website pages and asked people to place each page into one of four categories they thought best fit the topic. When the team redesigned the site architecture, those categories were included as main navigation buttons for the new customer-centric homepage.

A five-question survey, which Weaver described as “simple and enlightening,” asked respondents for their age, how often they visited the site, what information they typically looked for, if there were any features or services they would like added to the site, and how they typically navigated a website. Results revealed that 93 percent of Littleton’s residents used the search bar “all or some of the time.” This information influenced the city’s decision to prominently position the search bar as a large focal point in the center of the homepage.

Usage heatmapping was especially helpful in guiding the development team’s decisions on what to keep and what to get rid of.

“Heatmaps don’t lie,” said Narde. “Analytics were really helpful in separating fact from perception so we could move beyond internal opinions on what needed to be front and center on the homepage. Seeing those tiny heatmap dots that represented where people were clicking on the site was very helpful in pointing out the need to keep certain links and pieces of data.”

The Result: A Community-Driven, Mobile Responsive Site

In July 2016, the City of Littleton launched its new website.

“We are thrilled to offer visitors a responsive site that’s easy to use on any device and puts the most important information front and center,” said Narde. “You can be home watching a city council meeting on your cell phone, and it streams beautifully. But more than that, we created a site that is organized the way people actually use it.”

Colorful navigation buttons on the homepage link to the most-visited pages. User-friendly URLs and new accessible navigation menus place the most-viewed pages within a click or two of any page. And a big new search bar is featured prominently on the homepage, with a smaller search bar at the top of every page on the site.

The new navigation tabs are intuitive and innovative. Rather than expecting visitors to understand which departments do what, city services now are grouped together under one button, the “My Littleton” button provides a drop-down menu with the most popular links for Littleton residents, and some of the most-visited pages now have their own buttons: Building & Development and Business Resources.

“We are always working to improve and enhance the visitor experience,” said Narde. “Now that we have visionLive™, we will automatically receive updates as Vision continues to evolve and change with new technology. A graphic redesign is also included every four years if we want it. This means we can keep our site fresh and exciting, and we will always be on the leading edge.”

