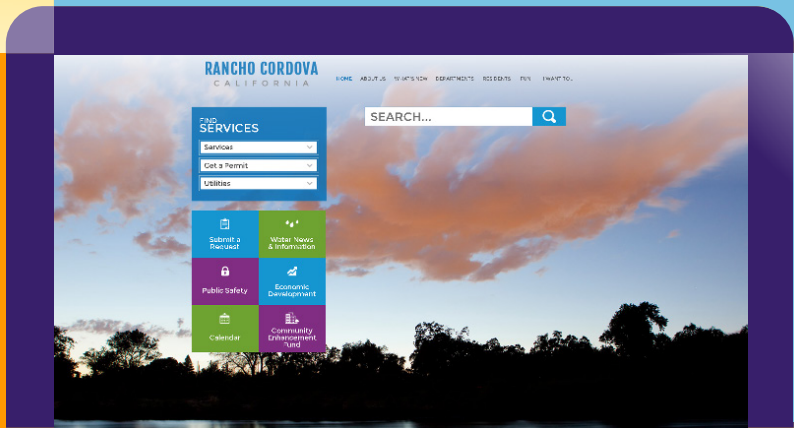




City of Rancho Cordova
Case Study



Rancho Cordova Gets Proactive, Makes WCAG 2.0 Compliance a Redesign Priority

City partners with Vision to stay ahead of the curve and make its website accessible for all residents.

Situated along U.S. Route 50, halfway between Sacramento and Folsom, the city of Rancho Cordova, California is accessible in more ways than just its geographic location. For more than a year, city government leaders have focused on Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance and finding ways to make its entire community – including its website – accessible to everyone.

Redesign Addresses the Needs of a Diverse Community

The city's focus on accessibility was sparked by the commitment of a few community members and staff. While the discussions began with a focus on the physical accessibility of City Hall and the community, the scope grew to include the municipality's online presence after the appointed ADA coordinator discovered the website requirements for ADA.

"This is a conversation many local cities are just now starting to have," said Ashley Downton, communications specialist for Rancho Cordova. "It's becoming more common for local government to discuss what accessibility means for a website."

For Rancho Cordova, with a population of more than 72,000, it meant creating a new website that was fully mobile friendly, promoted the city's new brand and had a built-in navigation that made it easy to find information. After fully vetting multiple website providers, Vision was selected as the best fit for the redesign process.

"When we began, our goal was not to just meet federal requirements, but to shoot for the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, which are a bit higher," said Downton. "We set our sights on that standard so anyone with a disability or special need would be able to get the same information as the rest of our citizens."

"Our overarching goal was to find areas where we could improve our website content, make it easier to use and ultimately accessible to everyone. Vision went above and beyond in addressing WCAG standards and helping us move into ADA compliance."

Ashley Downton

Communications Specialist
City of Rancho Cordova



Accessibility Standards Look Towards the Future

Proposed updates to the U.S. Access Board's Information and Communication Technology Standards and Guidelines, coming out later this year, are expected to impact how municipal websites meet modern accessibility standards. Access is addressed for all types of disabilities, including vision, hearing color perception, speech, manual dexterity, and strength.

User Experience Analysis Helps Improve All Visitor Interactions

The Vision development process included a user experience analysis, which gave Rancho Cordova a solid understanding of what information people were seeking on the City's website, which had received 100,000 site visits in the past six months.

Because a large part of accessibility compliance involves understanding the standard itself, Vision developed a Digital Accessibility Checklist to help guide cities like Rancho Cordova. Checklist items include special technology, color contrast and a color palette for people with color blindness, images that can be read by people who use screen readers, and standards for the words used in descriptions and making information easy to understand.

In its planning process for Rancho Cordova's new site, Vision created usage heat maps and conducted surveys and interviews to get a sense of what information users were looking for. The Vision team then made recommendations for how to make that information easier to find. Research uncovered usage patterns and insights that guided Vision and the City in creating the content and design of the new website.

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Flexible Content Management System Built to Evolve with Agency's Needs

Accessibility is built into Vision's sixth-generation proprietary content management system designed specifically for local government. The functionality and tool set have evolved over time with input from local government users, and continues to evolve to enable content editors to comply with new accessibility standards and other technical requirements that are common for online government.

As accessibility standards grow in scope and complexity, more cities like Rancho Cordova are appointing ADA coordinators and making accessibility a bigger priority internally. Having a baseline understanding of what accessibility is and why a city is doing it is helpful when it comes to creating content and adding information. Vision provides the tools cities need to make their websites accessible and the works with them as internal teams take the reins to maintain their websites.

Training and Support Facilitate Continued Growth

As part of visionLive™, Rancho Cordova receives ongoing education and training about trends and best practices, including training and updates on new accessibility standards and tips on what they can do internally to make a site more accessible. Vision then shares experiences and best practices of cities like Rancho Cordova on its website to benefit all municipal governments.

"We're really glad to be on the cutting edge," said Downton. "We were one of Vision's first clients to take a deep dive into website accessibility, and we want to continue to be in the forefront of allowing everyone with disabilities to be able to use our website."