



## Information Resources Management

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## PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

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James City County launched a new website in 2016, bringing the County's old site—which had seen many incremental iterations over 15 years—into the modern era of online communication and engagement. Our previous site was built and maintained in-house using an outdated Dreamweaver template system to manage tens of thousands of pages, documents and images. Moving to a content management system with CivicPlus was the most extreme overhaul our web presence had ever seen, and forced us to evaluate every piece of content and online service we provided. Our team built the content for the new site entirely from the ground up; we re-wrote and constructed thousands of new pages over a six-month period and introduced dozens of new features to improve online engagement for citizens, businesses and County staff.

## INTENDED GOALS OR OUTCOMES

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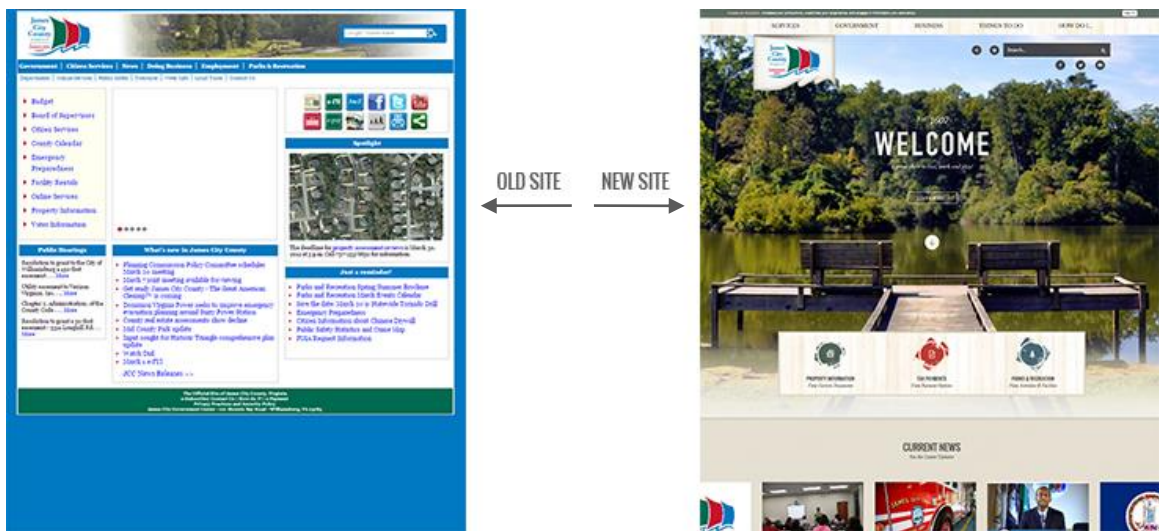
Our key objectives were to have a visually dynamic site that highlighted the unique history and vibrant community of James City County, while improving accessibility by making the site available to all users anywhere. We are now fully mobile responsive, servicing nearly 50% of daily users visiting our site from a smart phone or tablet. Many new online components allow citizens to receive email, text or push notifications through subscriptions when new information is posted—subscribers are automatically reminded of upcoming events and important deadlines, and receive instant notice of the latest County news.

The County government and local businesses saved thousands of dollars in 2016 through our new bid procurement system, which allows vendors to apply for and download bid documents electronically, cutting down on significant printing and postage costs.

Citizens also benefit from reduced paperwork—many forms have been converted to electronic versions that are sent to the right County employee when submitted online. This new online form service has been a hugely popular tool, with over 5,300 submissions since launching the site in 2016. Every form that is submitted online is one less phone call that a citizen has to make to a County office, or one less letter delivered—which amounts to an average of 21 per work day.

While we knew that the core content would be drastically revamped, we also wanted a significant focus on the cosmetic innovation of the site, and push the limit of what a government site should look like. We approached the homepage with the philosophy that simplicity is better than an abundance of choice. The home page was also our best opportunity to immediately present a wow-factor to visitors by showcasing what James City County has to

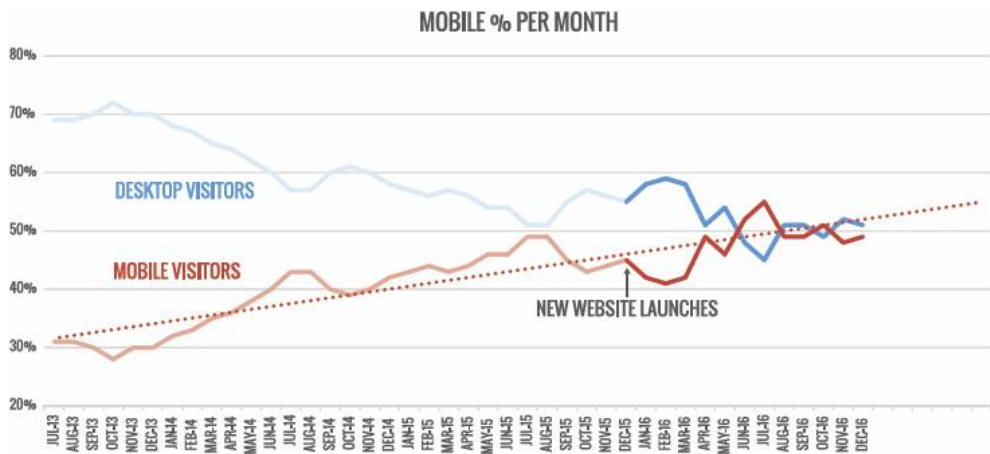
offer through a focus on local imagery. A rotation of background images updates randomly on refresh, so visitors are always greeted with something new when they visit the site.



Content is accessed through a fixed global mega-menu system, which we built and organized around services—we wanted these services to be as accessible as possible from as many places as possible, without citizens needing to know which departments those services are associated with. Through design and user interface, we tried to go beyond the familiar government web models, and present a site that is visually interesting and accessible.

DOCUMENTATION OF ACHIEVEMENT

Demonstrating the website’s strengths and weaknesses using analytics were fundamental during every stage of the redesign process. First, analytics proved our need for a new website by tracking the increasing number of mobile users. Our old site was not mobile responsive, and over 40% of users were trying to navigate it on a mobile device. It was clear that our new website must be mobile responsive to adequately serve a projected 50% of mobile users in 2017. Next, we collected detailed data for every County department, which allowed our staff to see which pages were performing well and which ones were not performing at all. Using this data, we deleted over half of the pages on the entire site, and consolidated many more to make our content more concise and our navigation more streamlined. We gave prominence and accessibility to high-performing webpages, and developed strategies for improving low-performing pages.



After the launch of the new site, we have monitored analytics closely, ensuring we hit projected monthly targets based on previous years' trends. We also track popular search queries, downloads and demographic information, among many other categories. Our analytics now show us that there are 71% less department webpages receiving 0.00% of total traffic compared to our old site, meaning that citizens are now seeing more services we're offering and visiting more pages instead of returning just to pay their taxes once every year.

## BUDGET & USE OF OUTSIDE RESOURCES

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The degree of contribution for realizing financial and operation efficiencies falls in the three areas: Reduced support on an annual basis, reallocation of a staff position to fund startup and an increased efficiency for staff providing content and maintaining the website. The cost of maintaining an in-house web server (hardware, software and bandwidth) amounted to about \$10,500 per year. The hosted solution cost amounted to \$8,900 annually, resulting in an annual cost reduction of \$2,600. Due to the efficiencies of the hosted content management system, we were able to reallocate staff funding from a Web Developer position to fund the startup of the website—salary and benefits amounted to \$89,700 for this position, while startup costs were \$75,000.

The implementation of the website utilizing the CMS also allowed us to distribute the responsibilities for content maintenance across many departments freeing the remaining web staff members to maintain design integrity, approving content for posting and monitoring performance. Putting the new web tools in the hands of our department web coordinators across all County departments allowed the content to be more precise and for County staff to have more awareness of their web presence and audience.

We cut down on the number of clicks by simplifying and consolidating our content; the total number of webpages was cut in half. We reduced download and waiting time by moving many services out of outdated PDFs and into interactive HTML environments. Our new website provides convenient services to citizens and businesses with more efficiency, speed and convenience. This project was done without additional budget allocation, on time and with an annual cost reduction.