For Citizens Advisory Board

City of Venice – Website Experience

I. LIKES
1. Scrolling pictures of Venice area on Main Page.
2. The topics of News, Events, Spotlight listed on Main Page.
3. The links on the main page to the most often used topics.
4. The "I want to…" Option.
5. Easy set-up to pay bills.

II. DISLIKES
1. Main page not welcoming. Too matter of fact.
2. Main page Search Option often leads to exhaustive list which is not easy to sort or find what you are looking for in the first place.
3. Difficult to find specific Articles of Land Use Regulations.
4. Difficult to find separate City documents such as the Comprehensive Plan, Capital Improvement Schedule, etc.
5. Overall, website contains a lot of information, but it is difficult to navigate to find specific topics or items.

III. City of comparable size with user-friendly website: Dunedin, Florida.

Submitted by Steve Carr

Comments on City of Venice website

Submitted by Mary Davis

Homepage

1. Links at top of page
   a. Need better descriptions of the links instead of the name of the application (e.g., report a problem, get a map)
   b. The Accessibility link is at the bottom of the homepage
2. Blue ribbon menu
   a. Dropdown lists are too busy and difficult to find what I need
   b. Include better marketing of the city instead of lists (e.g., City of Sarasota website has short descriptions of departments and other categories)
3. Events calendar
   a. Accessible only by going through Events tab to "Other events". Just open with a calendar of events.
   b. Not up to date
   c. Categories and departments are mostly blank
   d. Should include government meetings
4. Meetings quick link
   a. Need a direct link to a comprehensive calendar of all council and board meetings
   b. Need a link to live streaming of meetings
   c. Link should include the meeting agendas instead of having to go to calendar/meeting/agenda

General observations

1. Need a direct "Hurricane prep" link to the Fire/hurricane information page during hurricane season
2. Our Gulf Environment beach water quality links to test results do not work.
3. There is no mention of the Shark Tooth Capital of the World!
4. There is no mention of Florida Friendly plantings and yard maintenance practices
5. The website does not feature our residents – especially our youth.

Other city websites:

1. Sarasota has a very good website that is a good model for Venice. It is less cluttered with clear titles, descriptions, and links. It has easily accessible resources like the city council meeting archives.
2. North Port's website may have had the same designer as Venice. It is ok, but takes a long time to scroll through information that could be more effectively presented.
3. Decatur, GA's website
   a. homepage is clean and simple.
   b. The events calendar is comprehensive and available with one click.
   c. Links to videos of live government meetings are on the homepage!
   d. Makes government transparent (e.g., gives calendar of budget process)
   e. Decatur at a glance gives good marketing information to businesses
   f. Organization of topics under main headings is not so good

Quick Links

Permitting

Meetings/Agendas/Email Council-Advisory Boards

Pay Online

Report an Issue

GIS/Maps

Calendar of Events

Hurricane Info (only during Hurricane Season)

Observations

Provide hours of operations! I went to City Hall at 4:40p to drop something off thinking it was open till 5p. It was closed and it was not a holiday.

Improve search, way too much information (and old information) comes up, especially with respect to documents. Limiting the number of search "tags" that can be placed on a document might help. Consider limiting the number of documents that can be searched for using the search bar (are documents older than say 3-5 years beneficial?), that's what public records requests are for.

Features

In addition to a traditional search bar, I liked this search feature on the home page for City of Sarasota. Very easy to find what you are looking for.
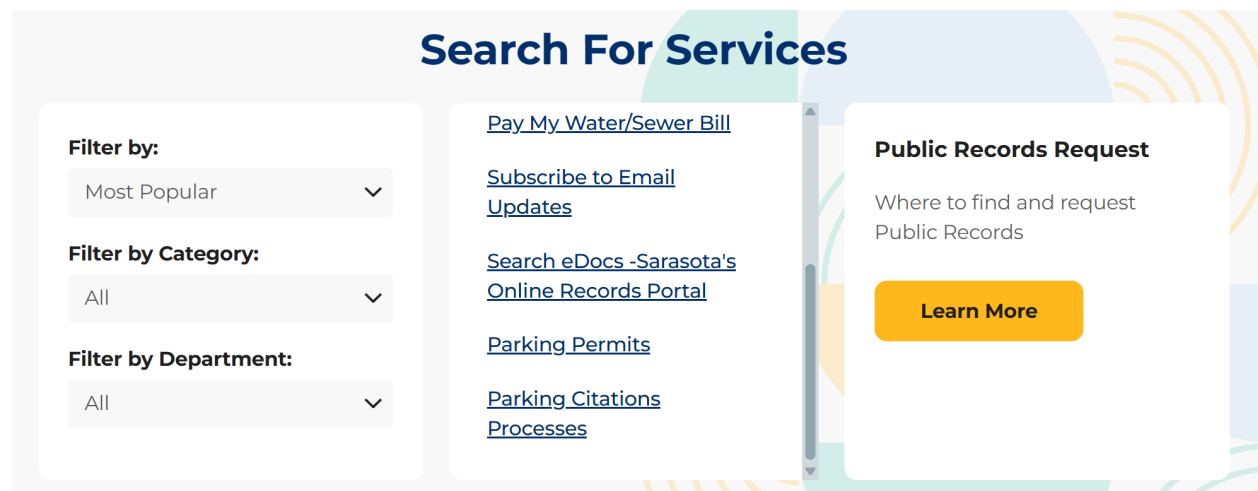
Regarding the website, frankly, it needs a redo in order to be more customer friendly. It also needs more color and inviting to be more attractive to our customers, especially visitors. Add more pictures, especially those of the council.

I asked some individuals at the VGRC to provide feedback regarding the city's website. Below are their responses.

Sometimes I find difficult to Navigate. The sidebar does not always take you where you think it will. People are looking for simple straight forward websites that allows them to view what they need in the fewest steps possible. Sometimes it reminds me of our Ciranet. If you don't know how to drill down you may never get to where you want.

without taking a tremendous amount of time to check every page and link, I can say that I have found the city's website to be outstanding. From the start, it is attractive with the rotating photos of attractive local venues. There is a clear menu at top that quickly takes the user to topics of interest. Want to know when the next City Council meeting and what the agenda is? Click on Residents then Meetings – done! Want to know something about your water bill or how water is treated? Click on Services, Utilities and voila! All you need to know is presented. I just learned about "See Click Fix" – are you kidding? An app that lets residents quickly and easily report problems like potholes or poor drainage.

If you don't like menus, there is a search function that is quick and gives you several choices in response.

Overall, I think I would have to dig pretty deep and hard to find anything negative to say about this superior website. As good as it is, the council is interested in how to improve it -- we are lucky to live in such a City! \

For your questions:
Were analytics, i.e., the views and users of the Venice gov website, provided by the city council or staff as a start? What is the trend, what are the most popular pages, least popular, etc.? I note that there is a portion of the website that gives trending searches of it, which leads me to believe that the data is available.

If not, could the CAB make a request for that information? I am near certain that the IT staff will have the means to obtain that information. That basic information can provide a

more significant view of issues with the website. The result may be what is working and what is not.

First observation is that there is an overwhelming number of links on the front page. Navigation is really tough. There are too many categories to navigate with too many sub-categories, etc. If all of those categories are required, which I doubt, then a fully functional search site with AI input must be available. It is not.

Based on personal use of it to obtain information on the status of the Venice water booster station and other quests, the really useful information is incomplete or not usually available. Of course, that deficiency in websites is universal.

To evaluate its utility, there should be an effort to provide 'use' cases of the need for a resident or visitor to access, i.e., how is it being used and more significantly 'what are the various requests that it might be used for conceptually?' Then, how to go about that and what are the resultant design modifications to improve such a community website.

Two city websites which consistently come out best in breed are Austin and Seattle