



**City of Waterloo, IA
Waterloo IA, 50703**



Date: May 7, 2021
To: City of Waterloo, IA
From: Bridget Wright, Natalie Miller, Sophie Stover, Ellie Chen, and Alec Bell
Cc: Mayor Quentin Hart, Waterloo Housing Authority, and Waterloo Community Development Office.
Re: Creating a Waterloo Housing Website

INTRODUCTION

The City of Waterloo's website needs to be organized in a more efficient and accessible way, which serves as the guiding principle for the creation of the housing website.

SUMMARY

The Waterloo website currently has housing-related information scattered around, leaving it hard to navigate for the website's primary user, the residents of Waterloo. The website also contains an abundance of non-functioning links, which proves to be an ineffective means to an end.

BACKGROUND

Tasked with the project of creating a "one-stop shop housing website" for Waterloo, our group started with an inventory of resources on the current Waterloo website. We found that the current website is organized in a manner geared toward funding and bureaucratic structure, leaving housing resources dispersed in various locations across the website. Upon review of other city websites, we structured the new Waterloo housing website to reflect a person-first, user-friendly approach. With the goal of increasing accessibility, our housing website is organized intuitively by categories reflecting housing resources for users with various needs.

STAKEHOLDERS

- **Citizens of Waterloo**
 - Individuals in Waterloo, including homeowners, renters, and landlords, would benefit from an all-encompassing website for housing resources.
- **Potential Waterloo Citizens**
 - Prospective residents need a good resource full of housing information to help make decisions about moving to Waterloo.
- **City of Waterloo Funding**
 - Weighing the low cost to implementing our plan and the resulting benefits for the Waterloo, we believe the benefits outweigh the costs. Therefore, funding is anticipated to coincide with the implementation of a housing resource website.
- **Waterloo's Housing Taskforce**
 - The Housing Taskforce will benefit from having a Waterloo housing website because the website serves as a platform for accessible information to their intended audience.



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BEST PRACTICES

- *Seattle, Washington*
 - The tabs on the Seattle page were more geared towards the people who are living within the community, making the website easy to navigate for the website's primary users.
- *Detroit, Michigan*
 - Detroit's website had an email subscription option in which a person could fill out the information and automatically get added to the city's educational email list. Another thing we liked was the Housing Stability Resources PDF that they have attached to their site due to the centrality of information.
- *Cedar Rapids, Iowa*
 - The tabs for Cedar Rapids started with "For Residents" and then carried out into the other parts of the website. This aspect provides easy direction to information from the users standpoint. The website also has extensive translation options, making the website accessible to every individual.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Implement the website & Designate someone to monitor the site**
 - The link to the mock-up housing website can be found here: <https://travis-kraus.wixsite.com/my-site>
 - If unable to hire someone into a new position, or give a current employee the task, we recommend hiring an intern, or multiple to maintain and update the website with informative details regarding housing in Waterloo.
- **Waterloo Community runs the site**
 - Our group discussed having people other than city workers run the site for the purpose of ultimate engagement with community needs. We suggest having the Waterloo Housing Task force be in charge of the site; however, the website should be linked on the existing site so community members know it exists.

NEXT STEPS

1. Buy the Wix Premium Plan of our mock website

- a. The cost of getting our website is \$14.95 per year and an additional \$23 a month for the "Business Basics" package.
 - i. We believe this is a small price to pay for a website that is already done.

2. Update the website regularly

- a. We recommend the website be updated as soon as pertinent changes occur, but it should also undergo a bi-yearly (2 times per year) inspection to be sure all of the links, resources, etc. are up to date and working.