



City of Duvall

City Website Redesign Case Study



Small town. Real life.

The Project ▾

Designer

Chancellor Gardiner

Location

Western Washington University

Timeline

5 Weeks

What is Duvall?

Duvall is a city in King County, Washington. Home to an estimated 7,675 people located halfway between Monroe and Carnation, it is approximately 25 miles East of Seattle. The community is made up of tech workers that commute to nearby cities, farmers, and other local workers. The population prides themselves in their family oriented tight-knit lifestyle.

Problem

The project tasked us with redesigning a city website to enhance it's tourism and overall web presence. Primarily with a focus on promoting local events, activities, accomodations, etc. that attract visitors while touching on content flow, usability, and updated visual design. The current site is a chaotic mess of information, multiple navigation bars, and overwhelming dropdown menus that throw the user into a maze of web pages.

Solution

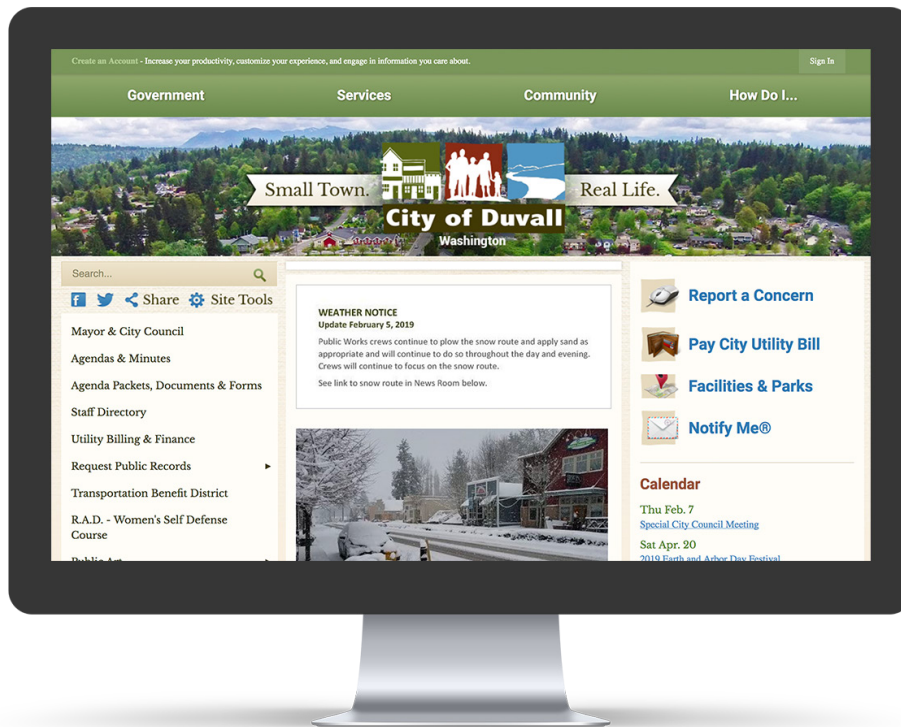
Duvall has been in the process of renovating it's main street to make it more appealing to tourists. While it may look wonderful for locals, prospective visitors need to be able to see and hear about the city to want to visit it. So, the new website design puts Duvall on display. Large beautiful photography draws in visitors and gives locals something to be proud of. The cleaned up modern interface allows simple and quick navigation for the informative site.

Why Redesign? ▾

Current Logo:



Current Site:



“Where do I look?”

The site may load quickly, but once its open your eyes jump all over the screen. Three different navigation bars, a large banner with a distracting logo, and a large photo pulling you to the center of the page. The page pulls you apart and gives you no room to squirm.

“So 2000 and late!”

The structure of the page is reminiscent of the simple 2000 HTML web design structure scene across many unupdated city websites. The site also uses many relics of web design past such as drop shadows, inner glows, and gradients.

“I can’t find...”

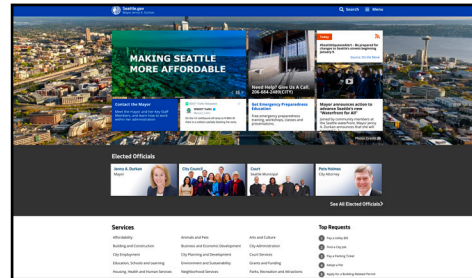
The hierarchy of the page is all over the place. Even when you think you are under the right drop down menu, it fills your screen with even more information to shift through.

Carnation



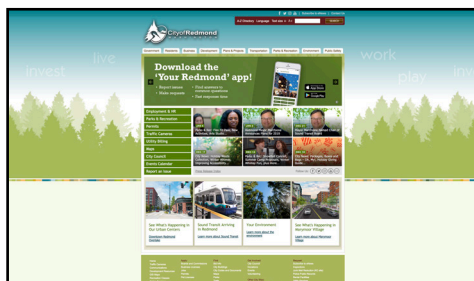
Straight out the 2000's. Looks like a stereotypical city sight. Lots of clutter, no hierarchy, needs some carnation love.

Seattle



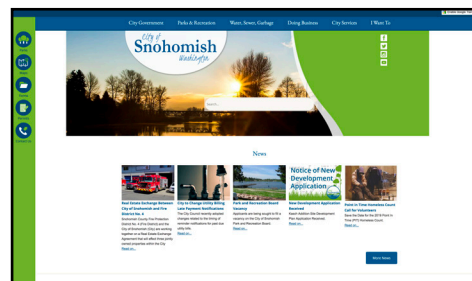
Not the worst one here, but disappointing to say the least. Uninspired design, gray block is disgusting. Bottom services section is clean, blocks over photos are interesting, but clash a bit too hard.

Redmond



Background needs to be touched up; looks dated, too detailed and has gross transparent words. Too busy, hard to lock your eyes on anything.

Snohomish

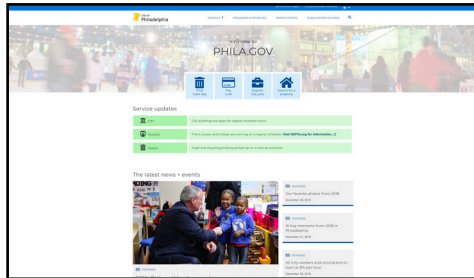


A bit too childish, reminds me of the bellingham flag. White space isn't balanced. Social media just kinda floating.

Competition

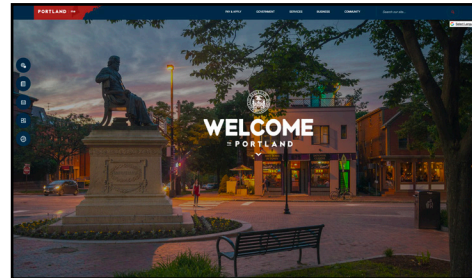
I began by familiarizing myself the neighbors of Duvall. Answering questions like “how are they organizing information?”, “how do they let me navigate the site”, “What is successful, what isn't?”, etc. Here are a few examples of neighboring websites with some quick notes of things that stuck out to me when going over them. As you can see Carnation, the closet of the four to Duvall, has many similar problems I identified for the Duvall website. Seattle, while it may seem organized, visually is not pretty at all and hides a lot of information once you start digging for details. Snohomish looks like an attempt at modernizing a site, but visually it just completely missed the mark. It doesn't create a city identity, it just continues to ride the lime green/blue combo the seahawks popularized in the region a few years back.

Philadelphia



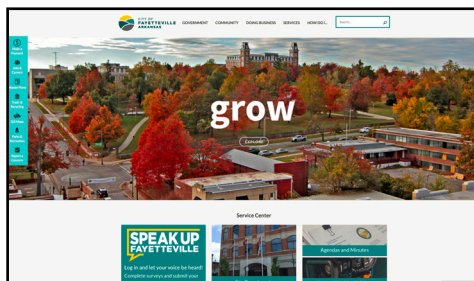
Gorgeous city logo, noticeable service updates, easy to navigate, good use of white space and use of images as white space.

Portland



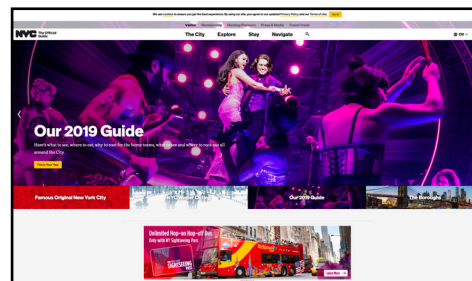
Basically a better version of the Chattanooga site. Better photo, great welcome page without being a “welcome” page. Great navigation bar, interesting left tool bar (but may get lost).

Fayetteville



Feels very welcoming. Color is nice on the eyes. Good navigation bar, obvious blocks for news, and visible task bar on the left with more details.

NYC Travel Site



Really intriguing website to navigate. Even though the page is packed, it still feels very open and full of ‘white space’.

Inspiration

Once I finished visiting Duvall’s neighbors, I looked out of state to find successful city websites that could help me strengthen Duvall’s site. I found a lot of success down the east coast of the United States. Philadelphia is a beautiful design of the “traditional” city website we know today. Portland’s (Maine) website is a work of art in the city website design field in my opinion, I was disappointed to find out it wasn’t Oregon’s Portland. Many of the sites I found to be successful both visually and in navigation included large full screen photos and hot topic icons for quick access to frequent information. These trends can be found on the Duvall website redesign.

Research: User Personalities ▾



Stew Alberton

32 year-old Male
Married with 2 kids

Hobbies: Cycling, Golf, Reading, Watching TV

Income: 80k/yr (110k/yr Household)

Lifestyle Values: Caring for family, Working hard, Well mannered, Reliable friend, Tad Materialistic, Not very political.

Enjoyments: Making others happy, Entertainment(TV, film, books, etc), seeing his children succeed, repairing his home, family dinners, stocks.

Goals: Next promotion, Saving up for a vacation, Write that book they never started.

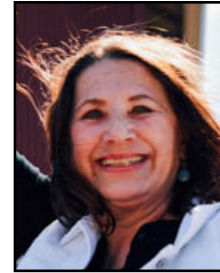
Demands of products: Work well, decent quality, looks reliable, Not too expensive (but will go over budget).

Pain Points: poorly design UI, a tech problem, cleaning up, neighbor kids, non-transparent information, Commuting into the city they work in.

Brand Touchpoints: Paying bills, checking town events, researching city services

Media Use: Mostly uses phone and smart-TV for media usage. Has a laptop they dust off occasionally.

Personal Motto: Guess that's just life



Lisa Wenner

56 year-old Female
Married with 3 kids, 1 grandkid

Hobbies: Sewing, Reading, Dance Class, Assisting with events

Income: 40k/yr (140k/yr Household)

Lifestyle Values: Being a strong mother and active grandmother, Being a supportive and positive influence, Being someone to talk too, the sweetest person.

Enjoyments: Getting involved in local affairs, Tending to her garden, Cleaning up local roads, Running work out classes

Demands of products: Wants a product to have character, enjoys ornamental products, doesn't mind if someone doesn't work completely.

Pain Points: Disrespectful actions, ill-manners, complicated UI, Smart phones, too many options, being overwhelmed

Brand Touchpoints: Paying bills, checking town events, keeping up with city news, advertising classes.

Media Use: Has an older desktop and a TV with cable. Uses a tablet to use social media

Personal Motto: Love life and life with love you

Goals & Strategy ▼

Business Goals

1. Spread Town News
2. Ease Up Public Record Access
3. Simplify Utility Payments
4. Advertise Town to Potential Residents

Brand Goals

1. Modernize Site
2. Simplify Web Content
3. Represent Residents
4. Rebuild Site Navigation

User Goals

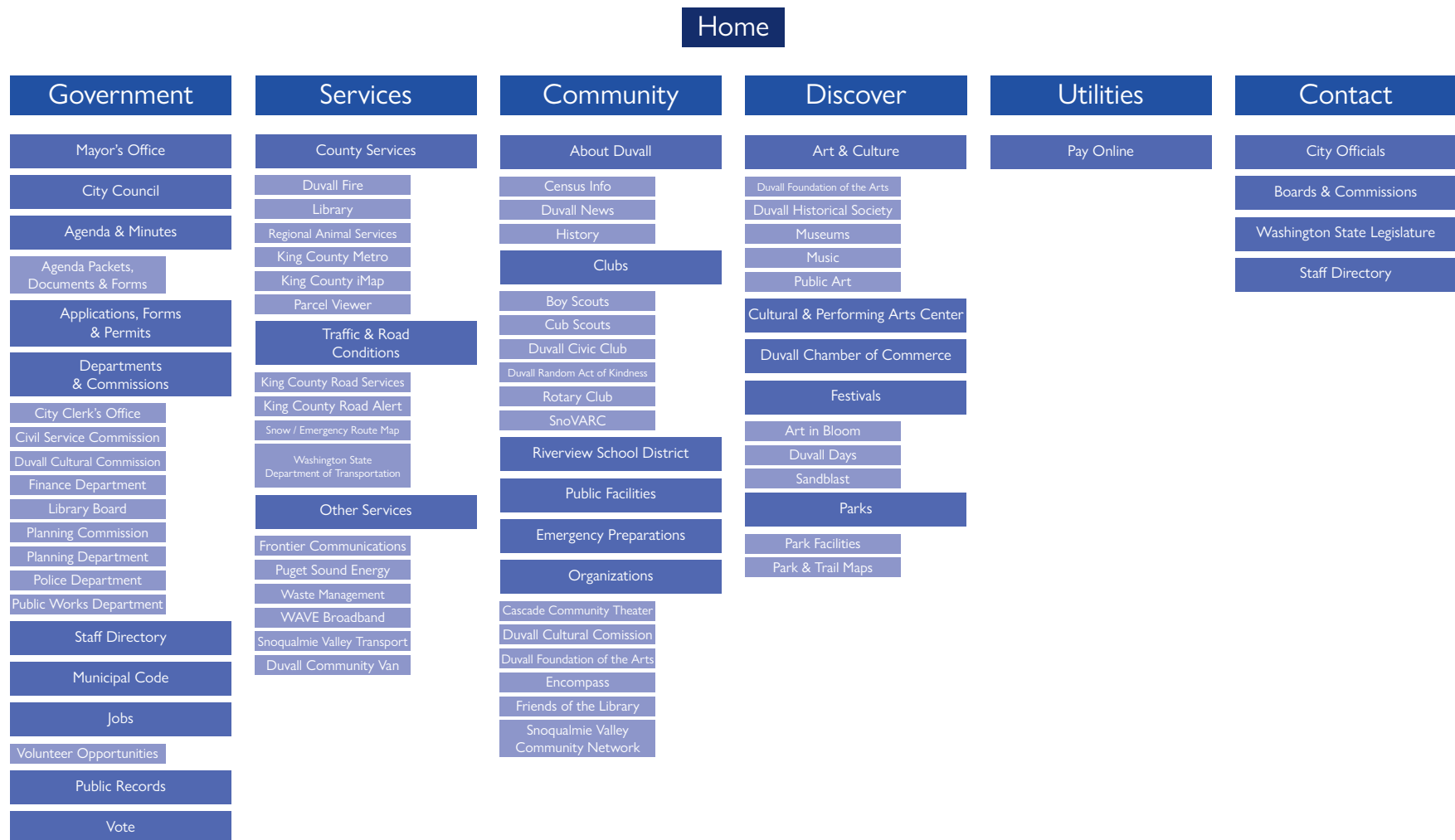
1. Pay Bills
 2. Access Services & Information
 3. Contact the City
 4. Get Involved in the Community
-

Strategy Statement

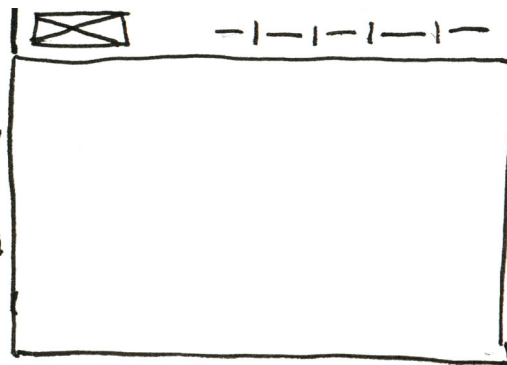
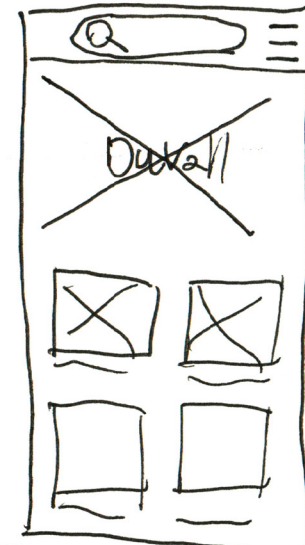
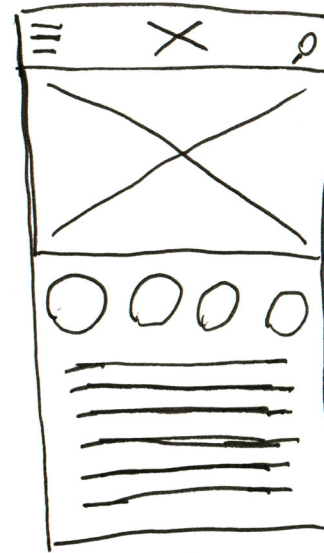
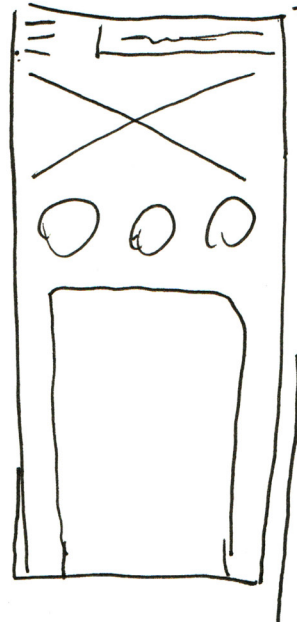
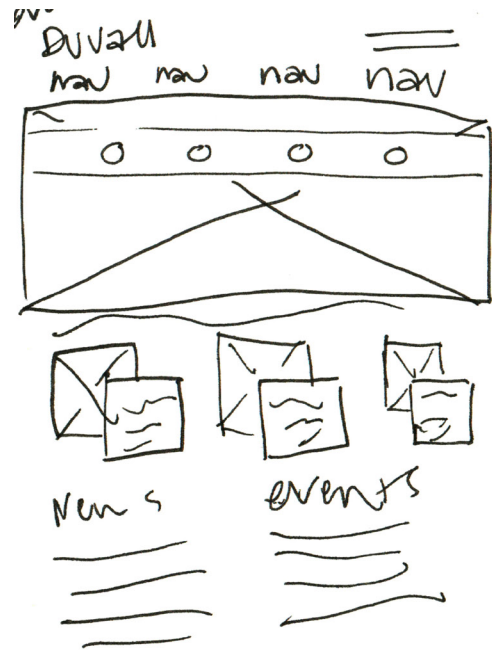
The City of Duvall website needs to be redesigned to provide an organized, accessible, simple, and pleasing experience for residents to get involved in their community, contact the city and its services, and pay their bills. This will be done by combining the 3 unique task bars, reducing the number of links that overwhelm the user, and create a natural flow of information that your eyes can comprehend quickly.

Reorganization

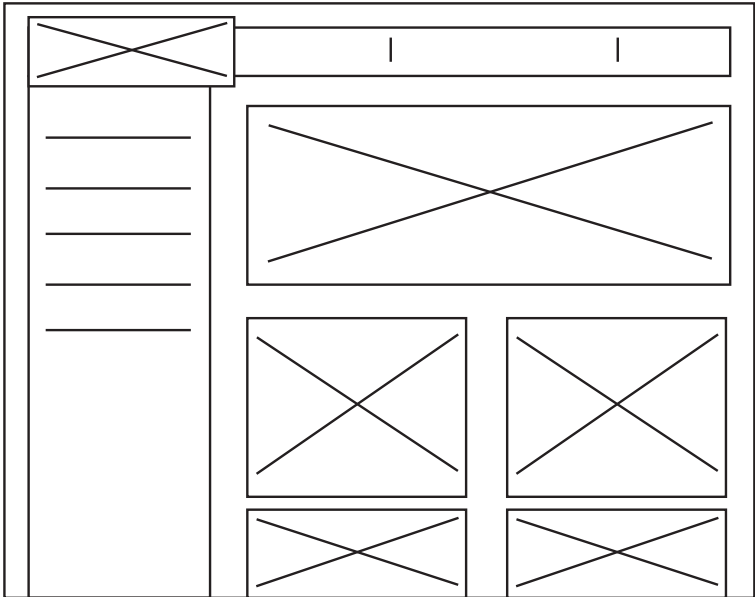
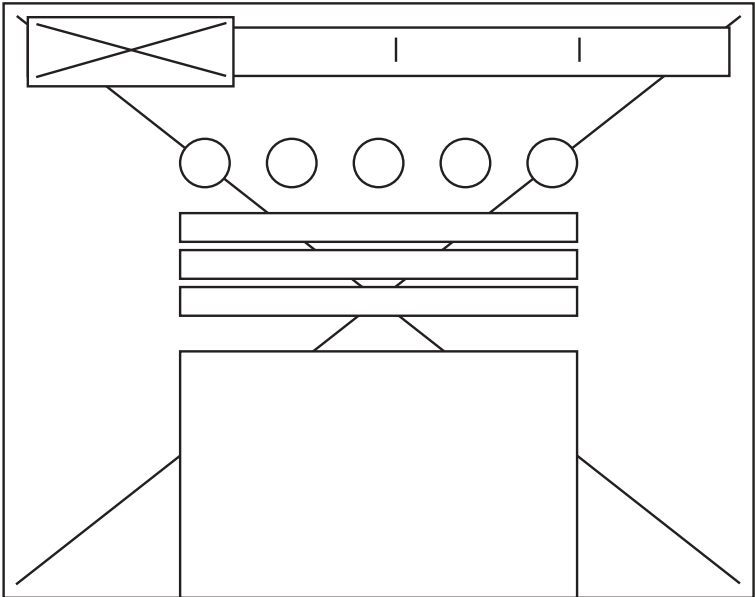
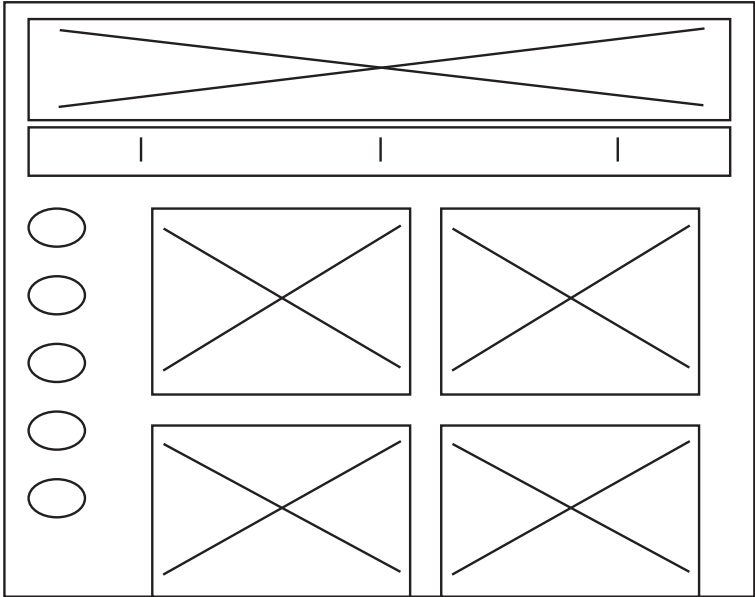
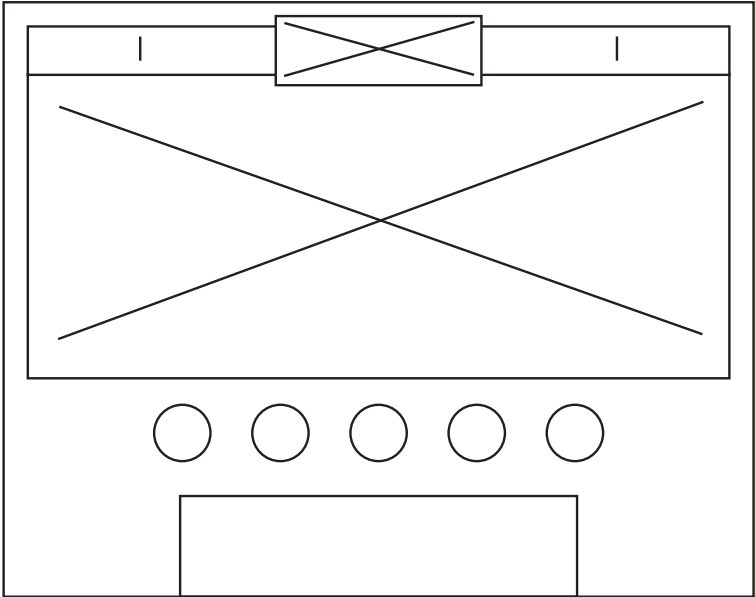
One of the big priorities when redesigning this site was cleaning up the use interface and information provided to the user. Below is a cleaned up site map to create a smooth intuitive navigation experience.



Wireframe Sketches ▾

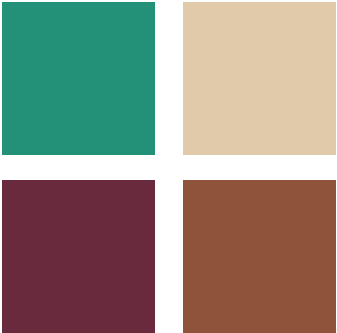


Wireframe Sketches ▾

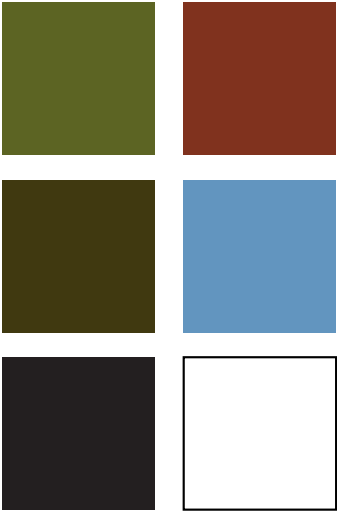


Initial Moodboard ▾

Color Concept



Flag Colors



Type

Baskerville Extra Bold

Futura Book

Display Serif + Sans Serif

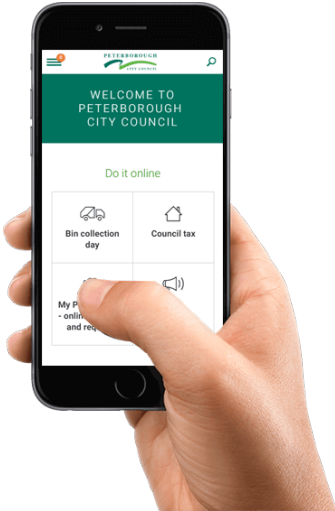
or

Slab Serif + Sans Serif

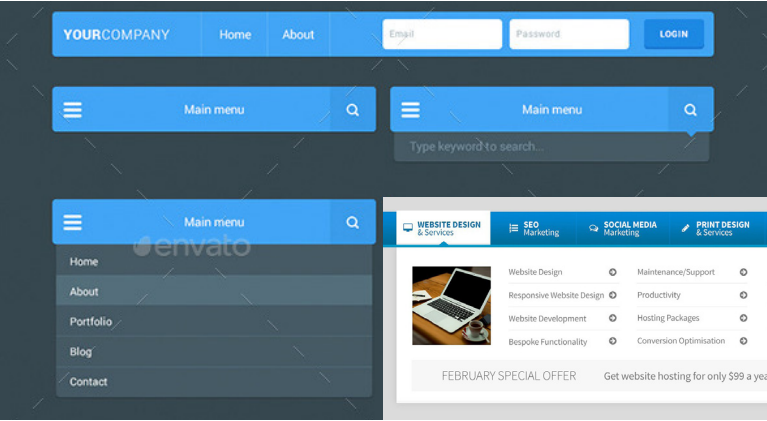
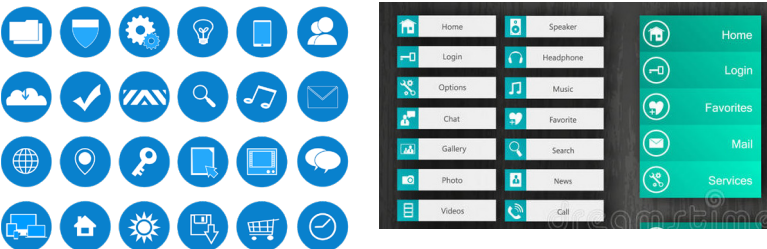
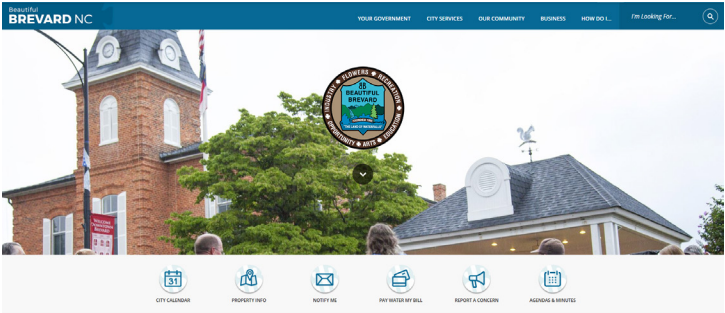
Rockwell Bold

Avenir Roman

Icons & Navigation



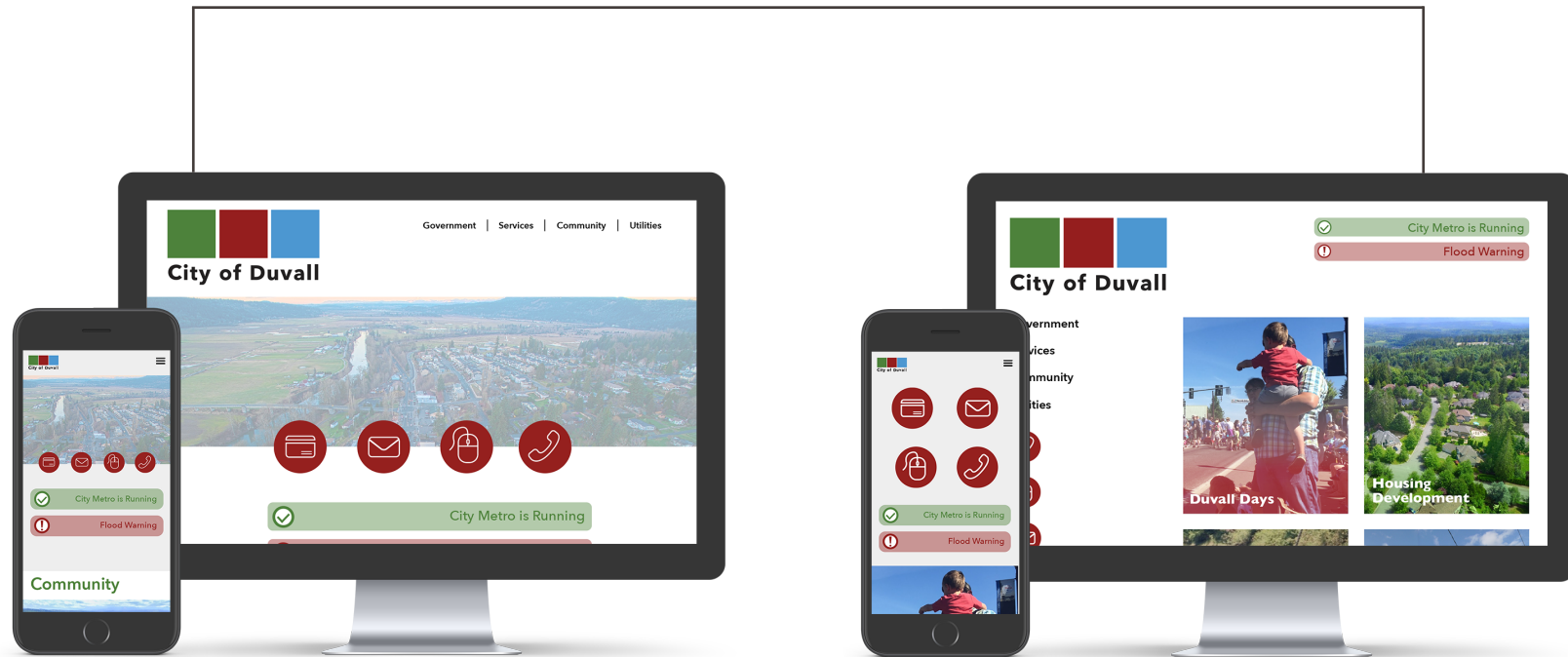
Layout Style



Initial Website Concepts ▾

Initial Problems

One thing I struggled with almost immediately was how to design a beautiful city website that broke the monotonous structure and look of a stereotypical city website. I also found difficulty in working with sketch initially and everything I created was oversized. As you can see below, the website is cleaned up and structured. However, the visual language is boring, stale, and ugly. Basically everything I didn't set out to do.



Initial Website Concepts ▾

It Got Weird

While trying to understand sketch better and break out of my creative rut, I created these next two website concepts. The left was as minimal as I could visually create a site. This allowed me to hone in focus on the organization of the page without worrying about the visuals too much. This site came as good practice for the work ahead. The site on the right is fun, loud, and way too bold for a city site. It was a good opportunity to see how far I could push a city site, but in the end I still had not found a direction.



Initial Website Concepts ▾






Last Ditch Effort

Before discovering my finale direction. I took all the elements I liked from the last four designs and combined into one page. Yet, laid out together it still felt outdated. Who would have thought combining outdated looking websites would create one just as outdated (hint: I didn't). Yet, you will see that I took many of these elements and did apply them to the final site. This last ditch effort to stay connected to the original Duvall brand brought me the arrow motif, icons, and Optima typeface that I carried over to the city redesign.

The Actual Rebrand ▾

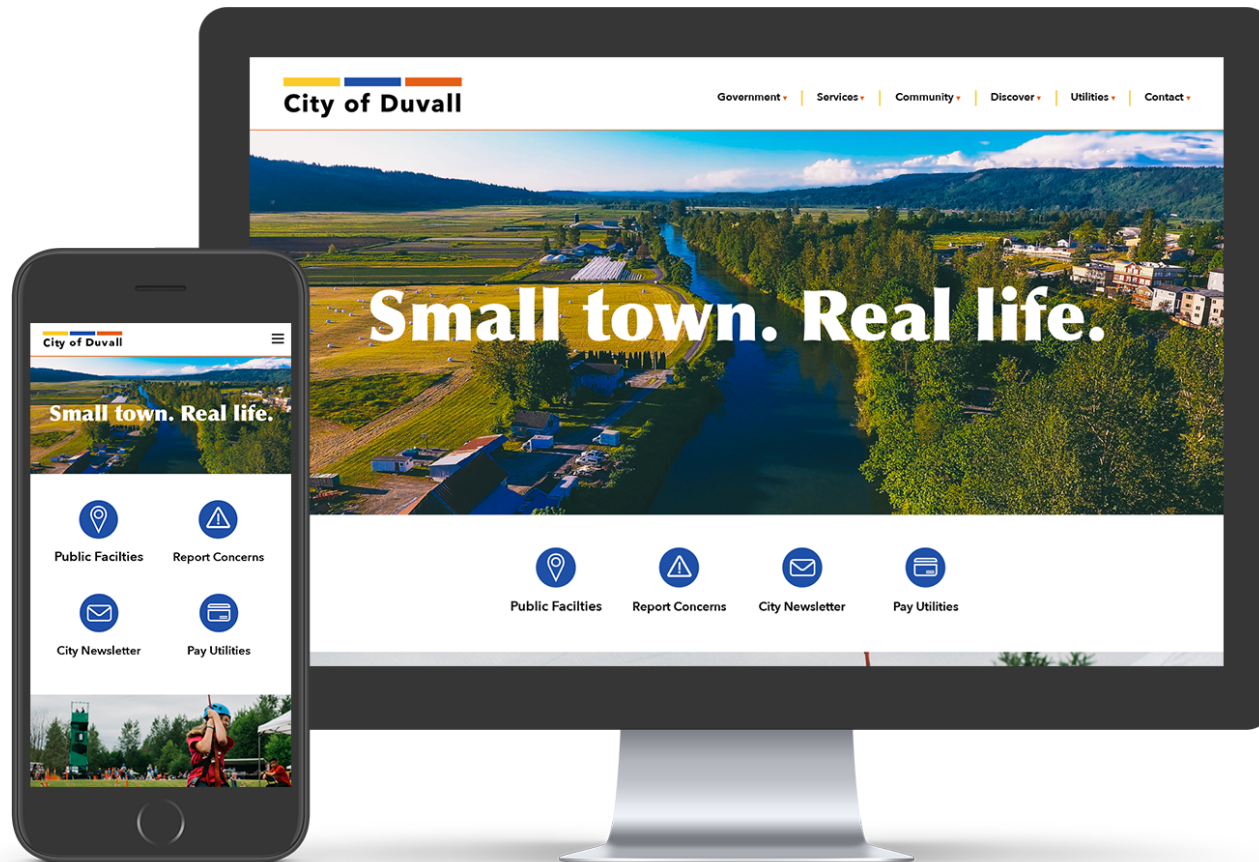


-  **Fall Leaves** - This yellow represents the golden color the valley turns during the Fall
-  **Snoqualmie River** - This blue represents the Snoqualmie river that flows through Duvall
-  **Duvall Family** - This orange represents the community of Duvall, drawn from the local pumpkin patch visited in mass each fall

Rebuilding The Visual Language

I realized I needed a structure. I had to sever the connection between the old Duvall brand and the one I was creating. While I did keep the three boxes of color, I shrunk them down to create a better mark shape seeing how the squares weren't actually relevant to the old brand. I also changed the colors to provide a stronger color scheme for the city, while also keeping it in line with the community values and the land.

Visual Design: Home Page ▾



Small town. Real Life.

I scrapped the moodboard colors, went back to my wireframes, and built up a brand new site with the new Duvall identity. The site highlights the beauty of Duvall, while keeping navigation quick and simple. The top bar uses layered drop down menus to organize information in a conscious manner and the icons allow for quick access to hot topic pages that reoccurring visitors need to visit.

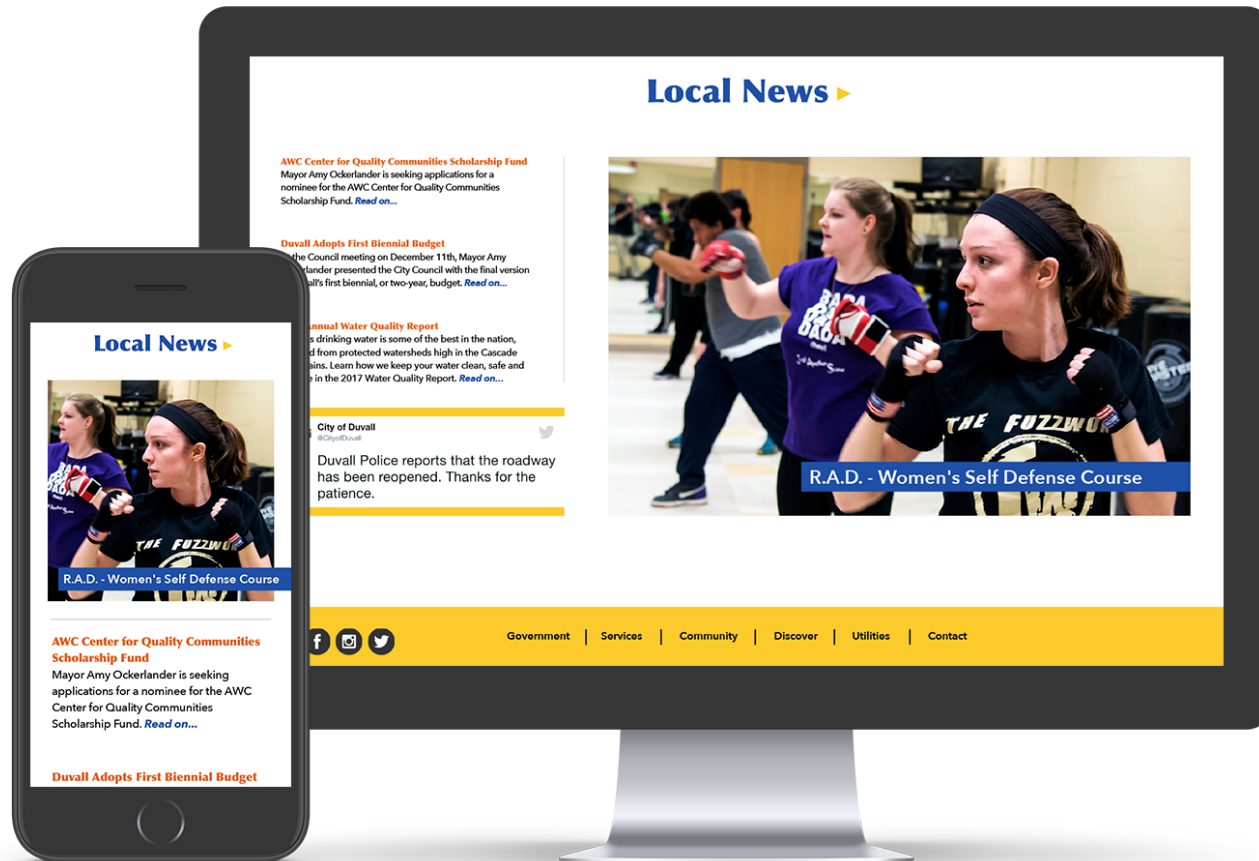
Visual Design: Home Page ▾



A Good First Impression

Anyone new to Duvall will be blown away by the immediate content and visuals drawing them towards the city. Duvall is not an incredibly well known town, so a first impression is incredibly important. This new website does just that, greets you at the door and welcomes you on a great adventure.

Visual Design: Home Page ▾



Thinking About The Locals

The Duvall resident is not forgotten at all with this site. The local news is put on the home page to allow easy access for residents looking for a quick brief on things going on in their city.

Visual Design: Tourism Page ▾



A Need To Discover

Whether you are a prospective visitor, a current visitor, or even a bored resident Duvall has something for you! Exploring what to do in Duvall has been made an adventure in itself with beautiful intriguing photos.

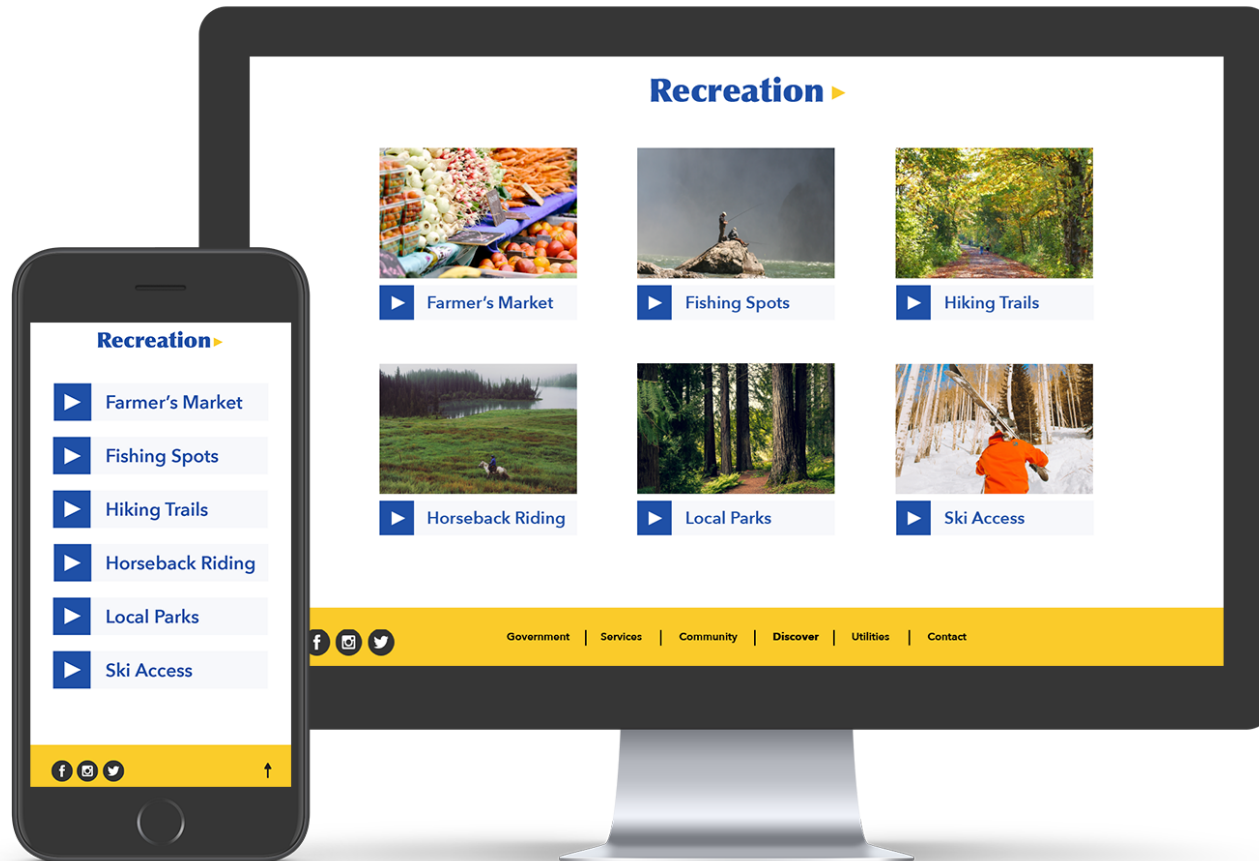
Visual Design: Tourism Page ▾



Keeping Up-to-Date

The discover page gets straight into the action with the big events at the top of the page.

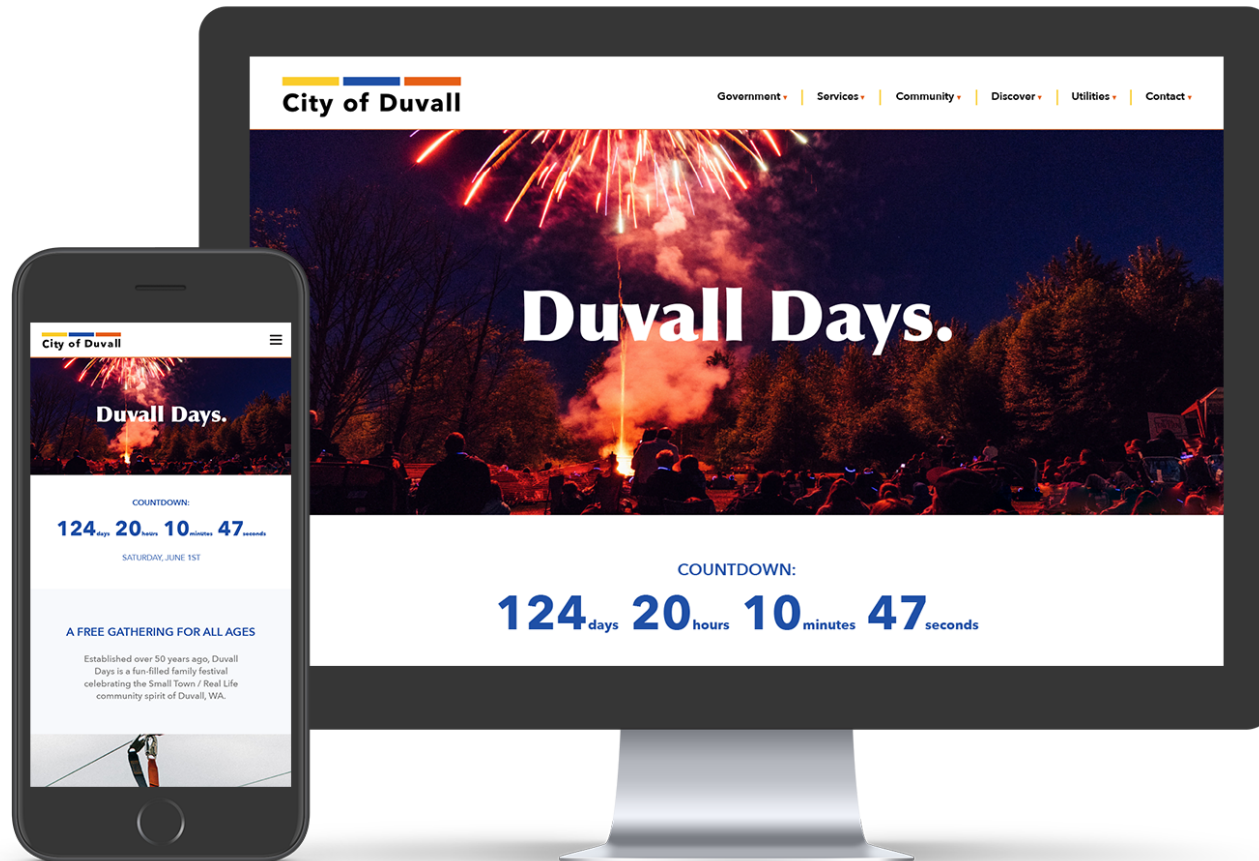
Visual Design: Tourism Page ▾



Recreation

At the bottom of the page are simple links to generalize recreation for those curious about local activities.

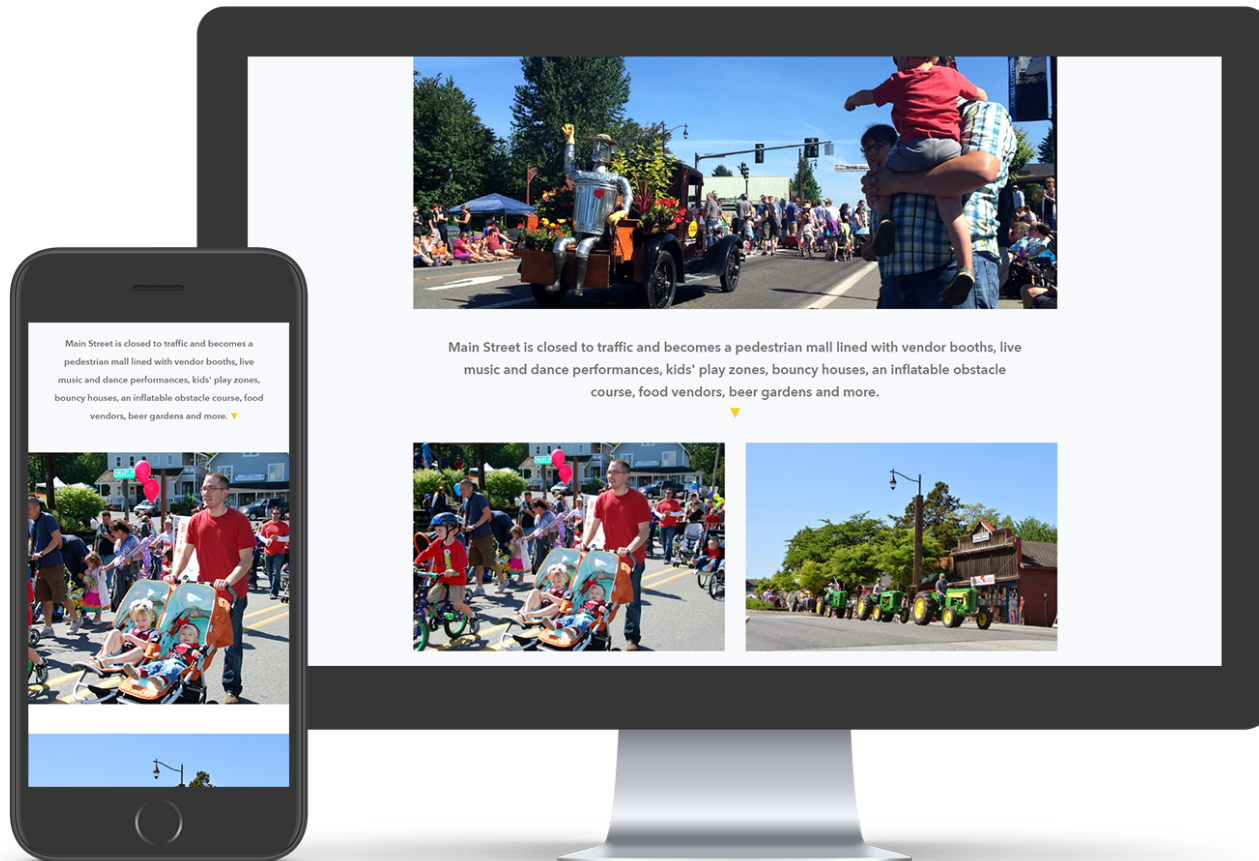
Visual Design: Duvall Days ▾



The Big Event

The final page is the final hook to secure any visitors interested in Duvall. The full screen photo and countdown give you plenty to get excited for.

Visual Design: Duvall Days ▾



Main Street is closed to traffic and becomes a pedestrian mall lined with vendor booths, live music and dance performances, kids' play zones, bouncy houses, an inflatable obstacle course, food vendors, beer gardens and more. ▾



Main Street is closed to traffic and becomes a pedestrian mall lined with vendor booths, live music and dance performances, kids' play zones, bouncy houses, an inflatable obstacle course, food vendors, beer gardens and more. ▾



Revisiting The Past

Details of the event are supported by beautiful local photography to look back at the old year and get excited for the future events in Duvall.

Visual Design: Duvall Days ▾

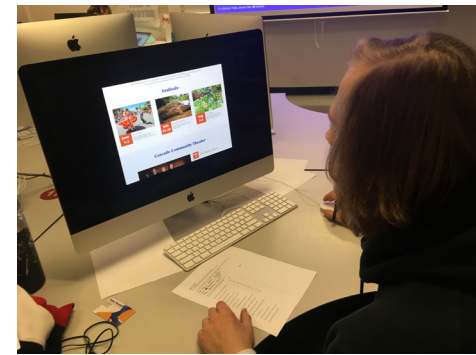
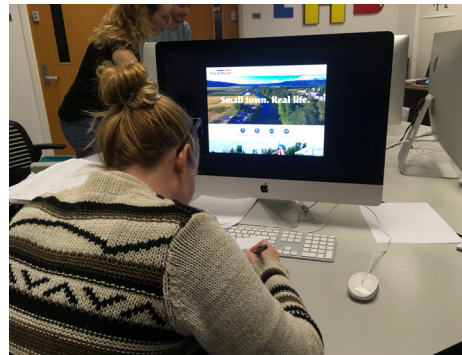
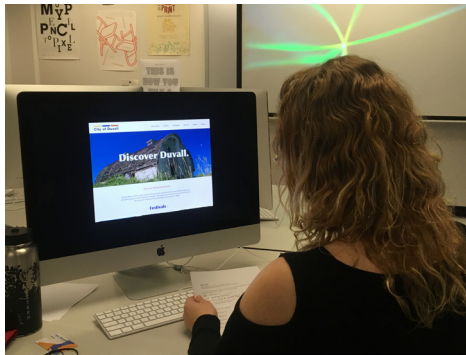


Can't Forget The Sponsors

At the bottom of the page you are welcomed with the supporters of the event.

User Testing ▾

User testing on the original site proved confusing for users, who often found themselves lost in a sea of links, webpages, and content.



Testing The Waters

Almost immediately progress was seen in the user testing of the updated site. A returning tester who struggled with the initial site completed their tasks at a record speed. There were a few hiccups from miscommunicating icons to a few uneventful layout designs, but navigation proved to be a success.

Outcome ▼

Challenges

Web design proved to be a bigger challenge than I expected. It is hard to escape the bubble of organization to embrace the aesthetics of the site. However, not cutting organization and usability for aesthetics is very important in that step, one which I found quite difficult to do the first half of the project.

Reflections

I learned that organizing your content earlier than later is a must for web design. Unlike print you can't just fill in placeholders as easily. Web requires very precise photo size, text size, and blocking for organization. Your content is not something you can discover halfway through. Taking care of the busy work early will make designing for the web much easier and simpler.

Future Goals

I would love to push this site concept even farther. Due to the nature of the project I didn't get the opportunity to explore information heavy pages. Creating a few more template pages to allow the website to be fully fleshed out would be an interesting exercise.

Thank You ▼
