

Policy Discussion Papers Preliminary Discussion

Request for Recommendation Priorities Committee




Type of Decision									
Meeting	April 18, 2007				Report Date	April 10, 2007			
Decision Requested	x	Yes		No	Priority	x	High		Low
	Direction Only				Type of Meeting	x	Open		Closed

Report Title
Improving City Websites - Constellation City Recommendation #3

Budget Impact / Policy Implication	Recommendation		
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>x</td> <td>This report has been reviewed by the Finance Division and the funding source has been identified.</td> </tr> </table>	x	This report has been reviewed by the Finance Division and the funding source has been identified.	
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<p><u>Financial Impact</u> A one time cost of \$25,000, which would be drawn from the Constellation City fund approved by City Council during the 2007 Budget Deliberation meetings.</p>	<p>THAT Council endorse the redevelopment of City websites, so as to enhance usability, as recommended by the Community Solutions Team in the Constellation City report, and</p> <p>THAT the temporary contract position be approved for 6 months to support the recommendations identified in this report.</p>		
Background Attached	Recommendation Continued		

Recommended by the Department	Recommended by the C.A.O.
 Caroline Hallsworth Executive Director, Administrative Services	 Mark Mieto Chief Administrative Officer

Report Prepared By	Division Review
 Ghislain Lamothe Manager of Corporate Communications and French-language Services	Ghislain Lamothe, Manager of Corporate Communications and French-language Services Ron St-Onge, Manager of Software and Business Applications Jody Cameron, Coordinator of Technical Integration

Executive Summary

The Constellation City report's third recommendation (City Websites) identified that the City of Greater Sudbury establish an advisory group and develop a strategy to evaluate, revise, improve and promote municipal websites in order to enhance usability.

In the Constellation City report, the Community Solutions Team (CST) identified four major issues related to the City's websites. They are:

1. Confusion between three websites (sudbury.ca, greatersudbury.ca and mysudbury.ca);
2. Portions of the websites remain stale and outdated, the use of large PDF files show that little consideration is given to those citizens with no access to broadband;
3. Navigation and search are either restrictive or produce a myriad of incomprehensible results; and
4. Need to create an evaluation process by the public.

This report presents solutions to address all four issues identified by the CST. Should Council decide to adopt these recommendations, the financial impact will be a one-time \$25,000 expense, which would be drawn from the Constellation City fund approved by City Council during the 2007 Budget deliberation meetings.

Issues and Recommended Solutions

Issue #1: confusion between three websites (sudbury.ca, greatersudbury.ca and mysudbury.ca)

Recommended Solutions:

- Develop a single point of access (i.e. one home page) for the three websites (sudbury.ca, greatersudbury.ca, mysudbury.ca). The new single point of access would direct users to a web page that would provide menu options. From that point, users would be able to choose where they want to go next on the websites. This single point of access model will bring us in line with the model type used by nearly all mid and large-size single tier municipalities in the country.

- Develop a communication strategy to ensure the public is aware of the services offered by the community portal and the new municipal government site.

Issue #2: portions of the websites remain stale and outdated, the use of large PDF files show that little consideration is given to those citizens with no access to broadband

Recommended Solutions:

- There currently is not a dedicated resource for website quality control. The City has over 70 employees that provide content for the website. These people conduct research, prepare the material and post information online. While we will continue to use the services of these 70 employees to research, draft messages and post information online, one employee from Corporate Communications will be dedicated to review website materials, ensure consistency and provide quality control.
- Develop a Website Content Policy. This policy will outline requirements for: (1) posting PDF documents, (2) eliminating stale and outdated information, and (3) providing considerations for citizens with no access to broadband.

Issue #3: navigation and search are either restrictive or produce a myriad of incomprehensible results

Recommended Solutions:

- The municipal government website (www.greatersudbury.ca) will be converted to a service oriented model which would consist of using the stream system (i.e. Visitors, Residents, City Hall, and Businesses). This change would eliminate the current organizational structure model. The service oriented model is the type of model that is used by nearly every single mid and large size municipality in the country.
 - This new model will reduce the number of clicks needed to find information on the site. Citizens will no longer need to know which department provides the services/programs because categories will be identified by themes (e.g. Transit, Garbage and Recycling, Parking, Arenas, Pools, etc.) rather than by departments (i.e. Growth and Development, Solid Waste, Community Development, etc.)
- Municipal government and Community portal websites contain a great deal of information for citizens but search engines only provide results based on the website a citizen is browsing. Improved search engines will be implemented allowing citizens to search both the Municipal government website and the Community portal website. The service oriented model for the Municipal government website and new improvements recently added to the Community portal website will provide citizens with better search results and one point of access for any Municipal or Community information they wish to find.

Issue #4: need to create an evaluation process by the public

Recommended Solutions:

- Create focus groups to review and evaluate the website improvements and identify areas that require further improvements. Members of various Community Action Networks, the Young Professionals Association, the Accessibility Advisory Panel and the Mayor and Council's Roundtable on Seniors Issues would be asked to participate in focus group tests to evaluate the new municipal government website.
- Create a Task Force of local communications and information technology experts to review the City website. To date, the following individuals have agreed to participate:
 - Sandy Siren, Communications Manager, Sudbury and District Health Unit
 - Michel Béchar, Director of Public Affairs, Laurentian University
 - Cory McPhee, Manager of External Relations, CVRD Inco
 - Nigel Leith, President, Pen Systems

Financial Impact

While some of the work identified can be conducted without additional resources, the majority of the recommendations would require additional short-term support. A temporary full-time body is needed to review, modify and provide quality control for the websites. This person would also be tasked in developing the communication strategy to promote the municipal government website, developing the website content policy and conducting the focus group testing.

We are asking City Council to create a temporary contract position for 6 months to support these initiatives for the period of July to December 2007. The financial impact is \$25,000, which would be drawn from the Constellation City fund approved by City Council during the 2007 Budget Deliberation meetings.

Should Council decide to accept this recommendation, a review will be conducted in 2007 to determine if this position should be converted to a permanent full-time position for 2008. Should this be the case, an option would be presented to the Finance Committee during the 2008 Budget Deliberation meetings.

Project Timeline

- Hire new contract position (July 2007)
- Website content review (July to October 2007)
- Convert to service oriented model (October 2007)
- Develop a single point of access for City websites (October 2007)
- Focus group testing (November 2007)
- Review by Task Force (November 2007)
- Demonstration of revised website to City Council (November 2007)
- Finalization of new website model (December 2007)
- Completion of website content policy (December 2007)
- Begin to implement communication strategy to promote website (January 2008)