Economic Development Website Self-Assessment

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

In an increasingly digital world, the internet has become an important platform for investors and potential residents to obtain services and information. To adequately serve the audience, communities must ensure their websites provide the information necessary to keep the visitor engaged and informed.

A well-constructed website has other benefits. In addition to providing the right information, websites can free up town staff time by answering frequently asked questions and processing common requests and forms. It can effectively and inexpensively communicate about doing business in the community and opportunities. It can serve as a central information source for investors and potential residents on a broad range of topics such as starting a business, moving to the community and what support services exist.

Businesses planning to begin or expand operations in a community will often look to the municipal website for important information such as licensing and permitting, availability of utilities, and land uses in different zones. Communities that provide this information online demonstrate their support of economic development and increase their investment readiness.

Instructions

The Economic Development Website Self-Assessment is designed to provide feedback on your community's economic development website as it relates to investment and economic development. For each statement in the self-assessment, rate how true that statement is regarding your community's economic development website from 1-5 based on the scale below.

1	2	3	4	5
Not true at all	Not very true	Somewhat true	Fairly true	Very true

After you have completed the Economic Development Website Self-Assessment, sum the ratings, and compare the summed score to the scoring key found after the self-assessment to better understand how your community's economic development website scored. You can then use the self-assessment to evaluate how much improvement is needed and in which areas your efforts should be focused.

Contact Information

Community Name:	
Contact Person:	
Title:	
Address:	
Telephone:	
Email:	
Website:	

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Self-Assessment

1	2	3	4	5
Not true at all	Not very true	Somewhat true	Fairly true	Very true

	Rating
1. Your URL/domain name is short, simple, and to the point	
2. Your website is fast to load (See Appendix A for measurement tools)	
3. Your website uses colours and graphics to create an appealing look and feel	
4. Your home page is on one screen (above the fold)	
5. No software needs to be downloaded to view your website	
6. Your website sparks curiosity and makes users want more information	
7. The personal contact information of an economic development professional is easily on every page of your website	
8. Your website contains a clear and visible statement of purpose (vision, mission)	
9. Registration is not needed to view your website	
10. Your website tells a story	
11. Users can quickly and easily take action from your website (request additional information, contact a representative, etc.)	
12. Your website is easy to find and navigate	
13. Your website is structured in a way that makes sense (similar pages together, pages linked together in an intuitive way, etc.)	
14. Users can return to the home page from any page of your website	
15. Your website has a functional, easy to find, and easy to use internal search engine	
16. Your internal links:	
16.1. Are not broken	

16.2	Contain both text and graphic links	
16.3	Are easily visible	
17.	Your website contains information on:	
17.1	Your location	
17.2	Your demographic	
17.3	Your key sectors	
17.4	Your property availability	
17.5	A business directory	
18.	This information is customizable (it can be filtered and sorted by user defined criteria)	
19.	Your website contains business success stories	
20.	Your website highlights community successes	
21.	Your website highlights the advantages of your community (incentives)	
22.	Your website has a news or blog element	
23.	Your website uses video effectively	
24.	The information on your website is up to date	
25.	Useful information is available to download from your website	
26.	Your website is available in multiple languages	
27.	Specialized information from different viewpoints is available (site selector vs. entrepreneur)	
28.	When viewed on a mobile device:	
28.1	Your website is easy to use	
28.2	Your website's structure makes sense	
28.3	Users can easily return to the home page	
28.4	Your internal search engine is easy to use	
28.5	Your internal links work	
29.	Your website highlights your planning/development services	
30.	Your website utilizes GIS (Geographic Information System)	
31.	Your website showcases your community's key employers	
32.	Your website showcases your community's key industries	
33.	Your website showcases your regional connectivity	

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34. Your website highlights your business assistance services	
35. Your website emphasizes the quality of life in your community	
36. Your website contains testimonials from local businesses	
37. Your website has links to other organizations	
38. Your website integrates social media	
39. Your website has a "Why Us?"/"Our Advantages"/"Locate Here" page	
40. Your "Why Us?"/"Our Advantages"/"Locate Here" page:	
40.1 Is the 1st thing someone sees after landing on your website	
40.2 Is found in the top left of your website's navigation	
40.3 Contains an "elevator pitch" for your community that is immediately visible	
40.4 Is made up of small text blocks (100-150 words)	
40.5 Highlights the strengths of your community to a site selector	
40.6 Utilizes appealing data visualizations that back up your elevator pitch	
Total/275	

Assessment Conclusions

Scoring Key	
Great website – Maintenance Mode	220+
Good website but can still improve	165 – 219
Website is needs work but is functional	110 – 164
Website lacks functionality	0 – 109

It is important to note this website assessment is to evaluate overall content as it relates to investment and economic development – it is not a website audit. The assessment does not cover factors that determine the site's visibility in search engines (i.e. page errors, indexed pages, and site speed). If your community is interested in a website audit, it is suggested contact be made with a SEO specialist, or there are several available website audit tools.

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Appendix A: Supplementary Materials

URL

The URL for your economic development website should be unique and specific. Example of this would be "invest*yourcommunity*.com" or "choose*yourcommunity*.com"

Website Load Speed

The load speed of your website can be measure using Google's PageSpeed Insights. This tool does not perfectly capture user experience, but it does provide a good approximation as well as suggestions on how to improve your website's performance. The tool will default to testing your website on mobile devices, but that can be changed to desktop by clicking the icon on the top left of the dashboard. Any desktop score above a 80 should be rated as a 5, anything above a 70 should be rated as 4, anything above a 60 should be rated as a 3, anything above a 50 should be rated as a 2, and anything below a 50 should be rated as a 1.

Website Audit Tools

Some of the website audit tools that you can use if you are interested in a website audit for your community's economic development website include MySiteAuditor and Hubspot Website Grader.