



Title: Phase II Website Redesign – Design Directions

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Purpose:

At the May 18, 2022, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD or the District) Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting, staff will provide a briefing about the progress to date on redesigning the MCWD website. MCWD's Phase II vendor leading this work, Love Communications, will present two design directions and engage CAC members in feedback to help inform a final design recommendation that MCWD staff will bring forward to the Board of Managers on May 26, 2022. Securing organizational support for the new site's design direction will allow for continued design refinement ahead of the new site's development. The new site will launch in October 2022.

Background:

On February 10, 2022, the Board of Managers approved contracting with Love Communications, a Salt Lake City, Utah-based marketing agency, for the Phase II design and build of a new website for MCWD ([Res #22-009](#)). Love Communications was selected following a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process approved by the Board on December 16, 2021 ([Res #21-093](#)). The Phase II contract builds upon a Phase I Website Content Strategy approved and adopted by the Board on November 19, 2020 ([Res #20-088](#)). This plan defined the site's architecture, the key content items needed to achieve the District's goals for the website, and laid the foundation for a Phase II design and build. It was the product of nearly two years of work and engagement with staff, Board Managers, Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) members, and external stakeholders.

Phase I Content Strategy

MCWD selected the firm Vendi ([Res #19-060](#)) through a competitive process to develop a content strategy to guide the design and building of the new website. Based on the collection of diverse input, three goals were identified:

1. Connect people to the information they value
2. Highlight the value MCWD provides across the watershed
3. Provide transparency and organizational information

Through that process, a few key principles emerged for developing the plan:

1. Begin with a judicious focus on the most important content.
2. Weave in MCWD's brand position throughout.
3. Leverage high-quality third-party content whenever possible.

The Board-approved Phase I Content Strategy outlines the major sections of the website and the key content needed to achieve the goals of each section, and outlines guidelines for design, copywriting, and coding. At the time of approval, it was understood that design and copywriting decisions would occur during Phase II.

CAC Engagement in Phase I

The CAC was closely involved in the Phase I activities. This included:

- **Summer 2019:** CAC members participated in focus groups and an online survey to inform site redesign and engaged in the launch of an aligned strategic communications planning effort
- **Winter 2020:** CAC members were briefed on a new direction for MCWD's Outreach program and reviewed goals and core sections for new website through a website work session during a regular meeting

- **Spring 2020:** CAC members participated in a half-day planning workshop with Phase I vendor
- **Fall 2020:** MCWD staff presented the Phase I content plan to CAC for feedback and refinement

Outreach Strategic Direction

The Phase I work was aligned with an overall assessment and realignment of the Outreach Program (two former programs, Education and Communications, combined and refocused on Outreach to best support [MCWD’s Balanced Urban Ecology approach](#)). A Strategic Direction for the Outreach program was adopted on February 27, 2020 ([Res #20-018](#)), based on extensive input from Board and CAC members, stakeholders, staff, residents, and advisors.

The strategic direction called for an increased emphasis on supporting high-impact interpersonal outreach to advance key District initiatives, and a decreased emphasis on broad-based communications and education. The Outreach program’s purpose is to help the organization deliver value to its residents and stakeholders by providing more tailored and effective outreach around its key initiatives.

The strategic direction also recognized that MCWD has multiple stakeholder audiences to serve, including the general public. To achieve this shift in emphasis while continuing to meet the needs of residents and community partners, MCWD's updated website was recognized as playing an important role to effectively serve many of the common requests for information that were often addressed by MCWD's previous broad-based communications and education emphasis. The redesigned website will effectively connect MCWD’s constituents to the information they are looking for and help them better understand MCWD’s role and approach.

Phase II Website Redesign Summary:

Phase II Scope + CAC Role

The Phase II Scope of Work builds directly on the approved Phase I Content Strategy, while leveraging the value of a fresh perspective from the new vendor to vet and stress-test the product to ensure its direction is backed by data and best serving the needs of MCWD in 2022 and going forward.

The major project tasks are included below with summary notes for project status and the CAC’s role.

Task	Status / Timing	CAC Role
1. Review Phase I research, Content Strategy, and current organizational needs	Completed	Documentation of engagement in Phase I shared with Love Communications for review
2. Determine workplan to launch new site no later than October 2022	Completed	N/A
3. Establish design elements for website and MCWD communications based on content strategy	Happening	Focus of May 18, 2022 meeting
4. Create content for new website and edit current content selected for migration	Happening	Input shared in Phase I will inform content development
5. Build and develop new website	Summer 2022	N/A
6. Test site pre-launch and train staff for content management	September & Early October 2022	CAC will be kept up to date on website’s progress and invited to participate in beta testing this fall
7. Launch new website	October 2022	CAC will be notified of timing for new website launch
8. Create plan for on-going support, maintenance, and enhancement projects	Happening	Phase I and May 2022 input from CAC may help inform future enhancement projects not included for October 2022 launch

May 18, 2022 Meeting Focus:

At the May 18, 2022, meeting, staff will introduce the Phase II website redesign project briefly. Love Communications will walk the CAC through their process to date, including three major deliverables. Overall, the direction set in Phase I remains with some areas of evolution that better align with MCWD's current needs. The primary focus of the meeting and discussion with the Initial Design Direction for the homepage, which will inform design for the full of the site.

CAC members will receive and are asked to review the following Phase II products ahead of the meeting:

- **Website UX (user experience) Design Plan:** This provides an overview of the Love Communications discovery process to review Phase I outputs and research. Small areas of refinement from the Phase I Content Strategy are identified. The site users and goals are set at this point.
- **Website Site Map:** This deliverable reflects feedback from MCWD staff in response to the Audience & UX Research presented previously. The site map presents the overall "architecture" of the website, and the primary pillars of content that will give structure to the user's journey. This refined site map is streamlined and simplified compared to the Phase I site map. The overall structure is set at this point.
- **Initial Design Direction (Homepage):** The design direction for the look and feel of the new site is currently being explored and CAC feedback will be important as MCWD staff work to refine from two directions, which CAC members will discuss at the meeting, to a single design direction for the Board of Managers to approve on May 26, 2022. It is important to approach these designs with an understanding that they are not final products, and actual content (wording, specific stories/photos featured) will evolve. We are most interested at this point in understanding reactions to the style, layout, and where there is strong consensus or discord in the directions.

As CAC members review the Phase II deliverables, they should consider the following questions:

1. In February 2020, the CAC provided guidance to "focus on doing a small number of things well and then scaling up" to avoid historic issues of bloat and information overload. How well does the refined site map achieve this aspiration?
2. For each design direction,
 - What words come to mind to describe each as you review them?
 - What stands out to you the most, including colors, use of photos, graphics, and layout / presentation of information?
 - What isn't landing for you? Why?
 - Is anything missing that seems important to include on the homepage?
3. What isn't clear to you at this point when looking at the site map and designs?
4. What additional questions do you have?
5. Overall, which of the two design directions do you prefer? Why?