



Office of the City Manager

May 31, 2023

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: *DWR* Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager

Re: Berkeleyca.gov recognized with a California top government website award

We are pleased to let you know that our ambitious effort to overhaul and build a foundation for our web presence into berkeleyca.gov has been recognized statewide for the top website award for a mid-size agency by the California Association of Public Information Officers, the leading statewide organization dedicated to advancing public sector communicators across all levels of government.

Alongside [recognition from the National Association of Government Web Professionals](#), our website has now been honored by the national and statewide standard bearers for government websites, particular honors given our state's role in digital communications and technology.

Our Web Reinvention Project effort focused on four very distinct and very technical areas: information architecture, design, technology, and content. We developed content strategy, content standards, style guide, and governance. Every piece was designed to maximize usability, accessibility for all and sustainability by staff. Using analytics and 500+ hours of meetings with staff, we reduced 8,000 pages to 400 – each of which was then written from scratch with a consistent voice to be user-centered, easy to read, and less technical.

The result isn't just a static object. berkeleyca.gov is a dynamic, constantly evolving publishing system that enables staff across the city to publish pages that reflect the startling and unparalleled breadth of services offered by the City of Berkeley. Staff show the status of [capital projects](#), such as Cedar-Rose Park Playground Renovation, Waterfront Specific Plan, University West Bus Stops, and the Civic Center Vision Plan. Community members can [learn of events](#), such as our Mother's Day Hats and High Tea, our 3-on-3 youth basketball tournament, or the East Bay Green Home Tour. We get out critical information, such as free vegetation removal services for wildfire season or rebates for seismic retrofits. We put out agendas and minutes not just

[for Council](#), but for our more than 30 [boards and commissions](#). All are designed with consistent look and feel, a marked change from the past that makes it easier for users to navigate and use over time.

The nearly 100 staff who edit our pages don't necessarily come to the city with technical web skills. But they continue to learn to serve our community through digital information. This is possible thanks to practices and tools that didn't exist previously a year ago: a greatly simplified back-end, governance tools and guides, monthly trainings, and daily support.

The impact on our community is also dramatic. Community members can seamlessly access the full site on mobile, the principal device for most and a huge leap forward for the City from the previous site.

All aspects of berkeleyca.gov are designed to make it easier for the community to be able to help themselves get to the tasks they need. One example is our [Report and Pay tool](#), curated to guide people to essential online transactions with the City, like paying a garbage bill. Forms to [report issues](#) with graffiti, potholes, and illegal dumping now integrate with back-end systems, meaning less work for 311 staff. Use of these previously existing self-service tools has increased by 37 percent—over 2,000 more people annually who were able to help themselves without needing to make a call to staff, email Council, or come to City offices.

Building a culture of communication takes time. We continue to build and grow, even amidst a time of unprecedented staff turnover and churn. The support of Council and engagement of staff Citywide has helped bring us this far. The goal is to continue to develop going forward.

We are proud of the transformation, a communications foundation for the future that has now brought us national and statewide acclaim.

cc: LaTanya Bellow, Deputy City Manager
Anne Cardwell, Deputy City Manager
Jenny Wong, City Auditor
Mark Numainville, City Clerk
Matthai Chakko, Communications Director
Senior Executive Team