



Citizen Interaction Design: Downtown Construction Project

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Executive Summary

Purpose

This report was prepared by Chris Bulin and Cara Bloom (Team Dig) as a detailing of the data gathering, research and recommendations made to the City of Jackson with regard to the upcoming downtown construction project. The team was tasked with creating an educational exhibit based on City processes involved in construction. Research was completed about citizen engagement, downtown construction projects in other cities and data was gathered from interviews with City employees and stakeholders. The primary concerns regarding the construction project were:

- ▶ Signage and wayfinding are VERY important
- ▶ Clearly mark and route to available parking
- ▶ Maintain sidewalk access as much as possible
- ▶ Information should be clear, concise, and accurate while not being overly optimistic
- ▶ Use a variety of communication channels
- ▶ Businesses want to be able to give feedback as well as get up-to-date information all in one place
- ▶ Participants were more concerned with duration, delays and accessibility than an educational component
- ▶ Continuous and On-Demand Information is required

In response to these concerns, the team has created a two (2) phase plan and made four (4) recommendations to the City for where to begin their efforts. Phase I of the plan creates a foundation for communication and messaging for the City. This addresses the primary concerns identified in the data gathered by the group. Phase II creates the educational interactive component on top of the communication foundation. The best program could be built, but if no one knows about it, then it is a failure. Creating this two (2) phase design helps mitigate worries of failure related to communication barriers. All four (4) recommendations from the team relate to Phase I.

Recommendation 1: Communication Plan

The communication plan presented in the report requires that the City work with the DDA to develop a strategy for downtown revitalization and this construction effort. That vision will inform the branding used when communicating about the project. The components of the Communication Plan include:

- ▶ Create a vision for the project
 - Includes logo and tagline
- ▶ Hire a public relations or marketing agency
 - Create mailing campaign
 - Create billboard messages

- Create graphic designs for posters and website regarding parking and progress on construction
- Create a timeline for initial and ongoing communication with stakeholders
- Create content in advance of the beginning of the project to be released throughout the duration
- Shape the message and release it to primary business constituents to boost the signal

The team provided examples of vision statements, timeline and advance content.

Recommendation 2: Business Contact Registry

This recommendation requires the City to collect information for the primary and secondary contact persons at downtown businesses. This information will be used to create mailing lists, an email listserv and a Facebook group to facilitate communication between key downtown stakeholders and the City as well as among the various downtown business owners. The Registry will be used to populate the website discussion (see Recommendation 4) forums as well as a channel for communication to the wider audience that includes the customer base for downtown businesses.

Recommendation 3: Signage and Wayfinding

The team recommends that there be extensive signage and wayfinding techniques used downtown for the duration of the construction project. This includes, but is not limited to, posters depicting available parking, signage that highlights handicapped accessible parking, routes and entrances, alleyway signage to help pedestrian and vehicular traffic determine the best route to take to access a particular venue.

Recommendation 4: Website

Finally, it is recommended that all information about the city construction effort be centralized on a website devoted to Frequently Asked Questions, Discussion Forums, Press Releases, and Events. The team hired a web developer to create a prototype of the site which will be further developed by the summer intern. The website facilitates knowledge generation, storage and dissemination with regard to construction related queries. Using a polling feature, the site will allow the City to collect feedback and quantitative data on the fly and adjust accordingly. This feedback along with the two-way communication involved in the forums will make it a uniquely citizen centered solution.

Sustainability

The team has also provided a plan for the continuation and culmination of the project to fulfill the original task set forth in the project dossier. This involves a University of Michigan School of Information (UMSI) student as a summer intern as well as a second Citizen Interaction Design (CID) group in the fall to see the project through the remainder of Phase I and into and through Phase II. The second group will make recommendations regarding long-term sustainability and conduct an assessment of what has and has not worked in the project.



Introduction

As part of the three (3) year partnership between the City of Jackson and the University of Michigan School of Information (UMSI) a team was formed to tackle the challenge of community engagement surrounding the upcoming downtown construction project. This “town and gown” partnership relied on a, “paradigm that encourages the creation of innovative partnerships between the government sector, the private sector and the non-profit sector in order to harness the collective energies and strengths of all partners.” (Martin, 2005)

The original project description was,

“Construction starting in the fall of 2014 will be a centerpiece of downtown for about six (6) months as the main street is torn up for a sewer project. The City hopes to turn the traditional view of street construction on its head by inviting people to see the guts of our community and learn how they are maintained in a way that draws people to the downtown. This winter, a student team will develop the information tools that will turn this construction project into a life-sized, active exhibit in downtown.”

The project intersects with all three town and gown sectors. Because of the nature of this unique partnership, it was of utmost importance to ensure the centrality of citizenship in the project. The team began with research surrounding citizenship and civic engagement. Civic engagement is, “all the ways in which individuals attend to the concerns of public life, how one learns about and participates in all of the issues and contexts beyond one’s immediate private or inner sphere.” (Gordon, 2013)

This project was an excellent example of how to inform citizens and also create an avenue for active participation. The team was tasked with creating the conditions necessary for meaningful engagement with the citizens. Foremost, individuals need to trust in the group, collective or institution with whom they are engaging. That trust will allow them to acquire and process information on which they can formulate opinions and take action. Citizens should also have a space to voice and debate opinions about civic matters, and be able to take action, “in concert and/or tension” with social institutions. (Gordon, 2013)

As Hemment, et. al. note, “People want to get involved in shaping their cities. Often the most visible display of people’s passion for their

immediate environment is a display of NIMBYism or (Not In My Back Yard). In many cities the only time people get to have a say in their physical environment is when they are presented with a big construction project on their doorstep.” (2013) This project is a perfect example of that process. Rather than provoke NIMBYism, the City would like to inform and engage citizens to make the construction process understandable and easier to live with.

To determine the best way to accomplish the project, the team began by researching the way other cities have treated downtown construction projects. This was followed by gathering data from City employees, business owners and citizens of Jackson. That data informed the design, sustainability and assessment of the final products.

Research

Research for this project began with a search for other, similarly sized, downtown construction projects and their presentation to the citizens of the owning cities. Initial research lead the team to look at the recent subway tunnel excavation project in Toronto, Ontario (Canada).¹

This project anthropomorphized the two large-bore tunneling machines used for the project as well as a website, multiple videos of the construction effort, frequently asked questions, and a visualization for the progression of the project. The coverage in social and conventional media was quite extensive for this project and the city was very proactive in sharing information and

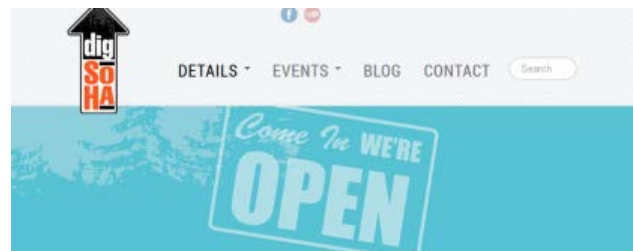
1

http://www.ttc.ca/Spadina/Tunnelling/Tunnelling_Progress.jsp

presenting it in easily digested tidbits. For example, none of the videos were longer than five (5) minutes and most were in the 90 second to two (2) minute range.

The team also reviewed information that was available about the Rochester, Michigan downtown construction project, branded “Main Street Makeover.” This project also had its own web presence (that has since been removed from the Rochester DDA website) and significant press coverage.² A review of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) social media shows that sporadic updates occurred via social media, but the local paper seemed to contain the majority of the coverage. This project relied heavily on historical information and recollections from folks involved with downtown. They also utilized videos and apparently had some events (ribbon cutting, finish celebration, etc.)

Figure 1: South Haven Downtown Construction Website



Frequently Asked Questions

Change doesn't have to be hard. In fact, we're working hard to make the necessary changes to Phoenix Street as pain-free as possible for our businesses, our residents and our visitors. When all the digging is said and done, we promise you'll dig the results. To give you added peace of mind, here are answers to some frequently asked questions about Dig SoHa.

surrounding the project.

Finally, the team reviewed efforts from the City of South Haven. Dig SoHa is still in progress and the city has quite an extensive

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<http://rochester.patch.com/search?keywords=main+street+makeover>

website dedicated to information delivery, but not much in the way of interaction or feedback. They are also using traditional and social media to disseminate information on a regular basis. The website features videos, photos, frequently asked questions, parking graphics and more. The site emphasizes that the downtown is still open for business during the construction project and features a page to highlight events and promotions that include weekly construction progress meetings, a variety of festivals and holiday celebrations. The “Contact Us” page is particularly relevant as it outlines the multitude of ways citizens can remain updated during the project.³

All three projects had aspects that could be applied to the problem area in Jackson. In order to determine the best fit for the community, Team Dig conducted interviews with City employees, business owners and citizens throughout the winter. This data gathering is discussed in the next section.

Data Gathering

The data gathering phase began with interviews of City employees. Employees interviewed included:

- ▶ Jonathan Greene
- ▶ Jon Dowling
- ▶ Troy White
- ▶ Pat Burtch
- ▶ Jeannette McDonald

These interviews were meant to determine the previous and current plans for the construction efforts, the stakeholders and the resources available for communication and educational efforts by the city.

Due to Jonathan’s position as Director of the DDA and Economic Development Director for the city, there are very close ties between the DDA and the City. The DDA is one of the primary stakeholders and members would like to see the organization take a role in the project. DDA events that would normally take place downtown will remain scheduled there to encourage use of the space during construction.

The City particularly wanted to maintain current traffic levels during the construction period. It was noted that the non-city utilities work by other

³ <http://digsoha.com/contacts/>



organizations such as Consumer’s Energy often caused confusion for citizens who believe the city is responsible for all construction efforts downtown. This particular construction project will have multiple contractors so all of the utilities work can be completed at the same time. When work has been done previously, the Jackson Connect system has been used to update residents on a weekly basis along with monthly letters. Jackson Connect requires opt-in from stakeholders in order to receive the messages. Citizens are notified by e-mail, phone and door hangers when utilities will interrupt services to their homes.

The final interview was conducted with the local history librarian at Jackson District Library. Ms. McDonald provided the group with recommendations for materials that could be used for an historical exhibit or educational program. The library also has a significant number of scanned historical images of downtown Jackson available on their website. The resources recommended by Ms. McDonald can be found in [Appendix A](#).

“I want to see it get done as quickly as possible, but I would prefer if the City under-promises and over-delivers. It’s easier to deal with good surprises than bad ones.” ~Focus Group Participant

Following the completion of interviews with city employees, four (4) groups of

stakeholders were interviewed via focus groups. The stakeholder groups were:

- Chamber of Commerce Business Owners
- DDA Business Owners
- Downtown Residents
- County Residents who visit downtown

“I find out about construction when I drive into it.” ~Focus Group Participant

With help from Jonathan Greene, the focus groups were scheduled in downtown venues on weekdays. Ideally, the groups contained no more than ten (10) and no fewer than four (4) people. The Chamber of Commerce group was slightly larger than anticipated due to a last minute change in venue, but their contribution was valuable nonetheless. Each group had one moderator and one note-taker. With the exception of the Chamber of Commerce group, no City employees were present at the focus groups.

The entire protocol for the focus groups can be found in [Appendix B](#). The questions focused primarily on the frequency, type and channels for communication about city projects and activities or information participants would like about the downtown construction project in particular.

After completing all of the focus groups, the responses were carefully reviewed by the team to determine similarities, differences and trends in the answers. In general, the trends were similar in all groups while there was a split between residents and business owners in

the type and frequency of communication they wanted to receive. The main takeaways from the focus groups were:

- ▶ Signage and wayfinding are VERY important
- ▶ Clearly mark and route to available parking
- ▶ Maintain sidewalk access as much as possible
 - Offer back entrance access and consider accessibility for emergency personnel and the differently abled

Participants in both groups requested that specialized signage be constructed that included access to buildings and parking. They also wanted road signs about construction to begin several miles prior to the beginning of the construction area. This aspect of the project will be addressed in the section [Design: Signage and Wayfinding](#).

- ▶ Information should be clear, concise, and accurate while not being overly optimistic
- ▶ Use a variety of communication channels including:
 - Jackson Connect
 - Social Media
 - Print Media
 - Radio
 - JTV

[Design: Communication Plan](#) will detail the channels and components that will satisfy the needs of the participants in all of our interviews. Much of this content can be prepared in advance and then released as needed. It is also important that rich channels of communication, such as town halls or update meetings are maintained and that new

methods are added in order to encompass the widest possible audience for communications.

“It can be nerve-wracking to come downtown if you don’t live here. Residents get used to finding their way around, but for others it can produce anxiety to be detoured.” ~Focus Group Participant

- ▶ Businesses want to be able to give feedback as well as get up-to-date information all in one place

The downtown business owners have very particular needs for communication that are not generally required for residents. Both the residents and the business owners agreed that the businesses should be used as points for disseminating information. For example, the city could publish a status update on Facebook that the businesses could then share on their own pages. The businesses also want a very close and responsive relationship with the city and each other. This will be explored further in [Design: Business Contact Registry](#).

- ▶ Participants were more concerned with duration, delays and accessibility than an educational component
- ▶ Continuous and On-Demand Information is required



Finally, all parties were interested in continuous information that is posted by the city on a regular basis. Most agreed that once per week is plenty for regular status updates. Respondents preferred that these updates occur on social media and Jackson Connect. There was consensus that Jackson Connect, or any “unavoidable” (push) communication be used sparingly compared to social media (pull) which can be accessed on an as-needed basis. [Design: Website](#) will address the variety of requests for communication style and channel.

All of this feedback informed the design of information systems and tools to help the City manage the upcoming construction project while including citizen engagement as a top priority. It was also clear after analyzing all of the collected data that this project would need sustained support from the University going forward, which is addressed in [Looking Ahead: Sustainability](#).

For this semester, the team concentrated on creating a structure for communication with stakeholders regarding City construction efforts. Known as Phase I, these systems are aimed primarily at communication and outreach. Phase II then builds off of those systems to create an educational and interactive layer related to construction efforts. Phase I begins with the Communication Plan.

Design: Communication Plan

Of all the feedback received from stakeholders, the most overwhelmingly requested feature was consistent and clear communication. To this end, Team Dig recommends the following:

- ▶ Create a vision for the project
 - Includes logo and tag line
- ▶ Hire of a public relations agency
 - Create mailing campaign
 - Create billboard messages
 - Create graphic designs for posters and website regarding parking and progress on construction
- ▶ Create a timeline for initial and ongoing communication with stakeholders
- ▶ Create content in advance of the beginning of the project to be released throughout the duration
- ▶ Shape the message and release it to primary business constituents to boost the signal

Each of these areas will be reviewed in depth, beginning with a vision for the project. Each of the case studies we reviewed had an overarching theme from which they took their cues when crafting messages for stakeholders. Two of the three created logos and tag lines associated with that vision that helped convey the overall tone to stakeholders.

All respondents that were interviewed responded very positively to revitalizing downtown and wanting to participate in creating a more vibrant community there. To that end, the vision should be positive and future-oriented. It is recommended that the City work with the DDA to craft a vision, logo and tagline that they feel best captures the essence of downtown revitalization. The logo and tagline can be simple and still be effective. Note that this could also be turned into a contest for Jackson citizens to submit ideas. If elements of the logo (colors, shapes, etc.) can be identified, a graphic artist can be hired to create proofs for review prior to hiring a public relations firm.

The following tagline suggestions can be used to begin brainstorming:

- ▶ Build the future of Downtown Jackson
- ▶ Building on our strengths, revitalizing Downtown
- ▶ Constructing our future together in Downtown Jackson
- ▶ Setting foundations for the future in Downtown

This work needs to be complete by the end of May 2014 so it can be handed off to the public relations agency. The public relations agency would need to complete the following no later than 8 weeks prior to the beginning of the project:

- ▶ Initial postcard for mailing (color) to all County residents
- ▶ Posters (color) that contain the same information as the postcard with a more detailed rendering of parking access
 - Posted in business windows and in large format on level 3 barriers closest to high traffic areas
- ▶ Flyers (black and white) or brochures that can be handed out at the Post Office, Library and City Hall.
 - An electronic version should be provided to business owners to provide copies to their customers.
- ▶ Billboards (color) should be erected on I-94 and US-127.
 - The primary message on these should be related to downtown businesses being open, rather than focusing on the construction itself.



- ▶ Banners (color) should be placed at each end of the construction above Michigan Ave in high traffic areas.
 - Again, this should be focused on the logo and tagline, rather than the construction itself.

Print materials should contain the proposed start date, a rough time for completion (for example, you could say 18 months rather than March, 2016), the immediately affected area(s), and alternate parking. They should also have the logo, tagline and a link to the City Facebook page and website.

All materials should be available to the City in electronic formats. These can be used on social media as well as the [website](#) proposed later in this report.

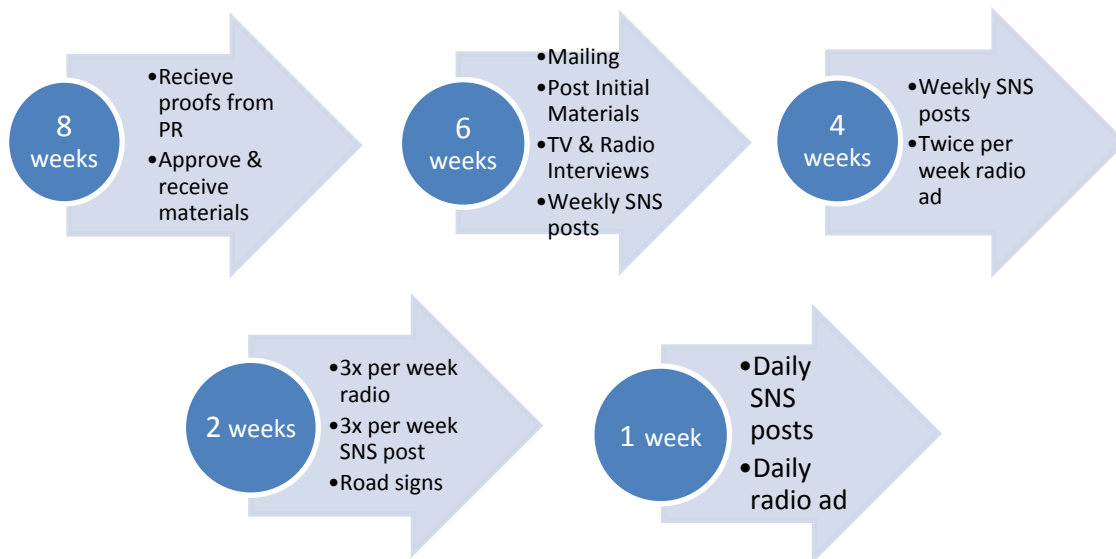
The initial communications push should come six (6) weeks prior to the beginning of the construction project. This would include an interview on JTV as well as short commercial

slots or interviews on WKHM AM 970 and FM 105.3. The mode of exposure for all of these media will depend on budget. If commercial slots fall within the budget, it is recommended that they are played during morning and evening commute for the radio stations twice per week for the first three (3) weeks, three (3) times per week for the fourth and fifth weeks and daily for the final week prior to the kick off.

If the budget is limited, an interview during commute hours at least two times between the six week mark and the one week mark are recommended with commercials as budget allows during the week leading up to the kick off. Social networking sites (SNS) should be used extensively during this time to push this initial communication out to constituents.

This would be a once per week communication for the first four weeks, three times in the fifth week and daily in the final week. A timeline for the proposed initial communications is available in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Initial Communication Timeline



When a finalized start date has been chosen, this timeline should be updated to include exact dates for completion of each component. For instance, if the construction is to begin on August 22, then the initial mailing should be sent on July 11 and so forth.

In order to combat a flurry of activity near deadlines, some content can be created in advance. As noted in the [sustainability plan](#), a summer intern will be available from UMSI to help create this advance content. This content includes Frequently Asked Questions, concept art for the future streetscape, proposed timeline, parking maps, short (2 minutes or less) videos introducing components of the construction or streetscape, and milestone announcements.

Finally, the initial communications should be shared with all business stakeholders in an electronic format. This can be done via the proposed Business Contact Registry as well as the proposed website. Those stakeholders can use that information to “boost the signal” and get the information out to a greater portion of the citizenry. They are also likely to provide the questions that will be used to populate the Frequently Asked Questions portion of the website.

Upon beginning construction, communication efforts need to continue. These ongoing communications should be no more than weekly via Jackson Connect, daily on social media and at least weekly on the website. Radio and TV can be utilized sparingly if there is a particularly urgent situation or when a milestone has been reached. If there is an unexpected delay or urgent situation, all channels should be utilized as appropriate. If the delay is localized (toilets can't be flushed in one building for a few more hours, for instance) then using social media is not necessary. However, if a delay like poor weather results in a setback that means an intersection will be blocked for longer than expected, a broad spectrum channel like social media should be employed.

This communication plan is dependent upon the participation of downtown businesses. They are information hubs for many of their customers and patrons. Without their cooperation, it will be much more difficult to reach stakeholders in a timely manner. To that end, the team is proposing that a Business Contact Registry be used to increase two-way communication between the city and the business owners.

Design: Business Contact Registry

It was clear from speaking to downtown business owners and managers that they want to be involved in the success of the project. In order to facilitate that participation, Team Dig recommends that the second priority be the creation of a Business Contact Registry. This will facilitate communication with the citizens that are the most affected by the construction

and allow for outgoing notifications, in-group communication and feedback. The Registry will allow the City to create an efficient system for immediate notification of problems, issues or delays that could affect downtown businesses and their customers.

The initial collection of contact information was started this semester with the use of a



Google form. It was sent out via the DDA and will need to be completed, as noted in the [sustainability plan](#), by the summer intern. While many businesses have added their contact information (25 at the time of this writing) others will need to be visited in person. The easiest way to do this would be to equip the intern with a tablet on which the form is displayed and walk that to each business that has not yet responded then ask them to provide the information needed on the form at that time.

The form asks for basic contact information (name, title, email, phone, etc.) for the primary and secondary contact person at that business. The business name and classification are also requested. A copy of the form can be found in [Appendix C](#). This information is then stored in a spreadsheet on Google Drive that will be accessible by Jonathan Greene and the summer intern.

Upon completion of the Registry, that spreadsheet can be used to populate a simple database. The database can be used to generate mailing lists and email listservs to help connect all of the business owners. It is a good practice to share that information with the primary and secondary contact persons for each business. Allowing them access to this data shows a willingness to consider them partners in the well-being of downtown and will encourage them to maintain open lines of communication with each other and the City.

The Registry should also be used to create a **closed** Facebook group for downtown business owners. All of the business owners we spoke to had business pages on Facebook and a personal page is required in order to create a business page. The primary contact person for each business should be invited (via email or personal Facebook account) to join the group and given the ability to invite their designees. The description of the group and the invite email should be very clear that the group is meant to be for downtown business owners and their designees only. This group can be used to distribute social media updates about construction, delays or coordinate upcoming events.

The Registry should also be used to add primary and secondary contact persons to the password protected portion of the forum featured on the proposed [website](#). A specific forum can be set up to aid in answering questions and concerns for the business owners as well as facilitate communication within the community of downtown businesses.

Finally, ongoing collection of Registry information needs to be addressed. As businesses change hands, move into downtown or grow they should be able to add or update information in the Registry. This can be done by embedding the Google form in the proposed website or incorporating it in the existing DDA website. The forum moderator, Director of the DDA and Economic Development Director will be

given privileges to remove members from the forums if they move out of downtown.

Once this group has been established, they can be solicited as alpha testers for signage, language and information tools associated with the construction project.

Design: Signage and Wayfinding

The third priority recommendation is to create specialized signage and wayfinding to facilitate ease of use downtown during construction. This section also contains some recommendations that would ease parking restrictions or more clearly signal when certain parking areas may be used.

The first step toward meeting this priority has already been discussed in the Communication Plan. Weather-resistant posters (this could be vinyl, laminated, etc.) with easy to understand graphics depicting available parking should be posted near parking lots and construction barriers. An example of this can be found on the Dig SoHa site⁴ (Figure 3). A larger version can be found on their website. This design can then also be used to create flyers which can be

posted in downtown businesses and handed out to visitors.

The next step would be to work with Wade Renando to create maps to post to the website, social networking sites and local news. These maps update as parking becomes available or is restricted during the course of construction.



Figure 3: Parking Diagram Dig SoHa

There were several requests for a visual system to be put in place that makes it easier to determine when parking lots are open for all visitors to park or to represent the time limits on certain parking spaces. One system that may work and cost relatively little would be to install LED lights controlled by a small inexpensive computer such as Raspberry Pi. This would change the color of the light depending upon the hour of the day. For example, a yellow light may be on from 8 a.m to 6 p.m. for a restricted lot that changes to

⁴ <http://digsoha.com/parking-lots/>

unrestricted at 6 p.m. when a green light is switched on. While this is likely not feasible during the construction effort, it would be a relatively simple and inexpensive fix following the completion of the project.

Team Dig recommends that during construction, in order to increase access to businesses downtown, regular parking restrictions and ticketing be suspended. This will eliminate one of the barriers identified as anxiety producing by the focus groups. In addition, clear signage stating that is the case, should be available at each lot.

Another focus group identified barrier to visiting downtown during construction was clear designation of how to get to businesses and the accessibility of their entrances. This is another area in which the new Registry will be useful. Business owners can help with signage and creating “back door” entrances. If the city could find a way to add signs to alleyways that let folks unfamiliar with downtown get their bearings and find what they are looking for more easily, that would greatly enhance the user experience.

Clearly marked handicap accessible routes, parking and entrances are critical to ensure continued foot traffic to downtown businesses. There are many seniors living in the downtown area and many who enjoy visiting. However, if it is unclear whether walkers, scooters or wheelchairs can be accommodated, they may opt not to visit. This is also true for back door entrances to businesses. If there is a steep stair way or other obstacle, alternate entrances that are more accessible should be noted.

Wayfinding aids for pedestrian and vehicular traffic should be posted on construction barriers, sign posts or bulletin boards, entrances and exits of parking lots and alleys, shop windows and on the website. If there is uncertainty about the placement of signage, have some friends or family test out the design to ensure it meets their needs. An important component for each of these recommendations is the ability to have a central location in which citizens can find the information. For this, the team recommends a website repository.

Design: Website

The final recommendation and deliverable for Team Dig is the creation of a website. The site is modeled after the Honolulu Answers⁵ website

⁵ <http://answers.honolulu.gov/>



Figure 4: Press Release Page Example

News/Press Releases	
Current Releases	Date
MCCC BAND, CHORALE TO HOST SEASON FINALES	4-23-14
MCCC ANNOUNCES 1ST ANNUAL BUSINESS IDEA PITCH COMPETITION	4-21-14
MCCC STUDENT NEWSPAPER WINS FIRST PLACE IN STATE FOR GENERAL EXCELLENCE	4-11-14
MCCC TO HOST ELECTRIC VEHICLE EXPO	4-11-14
MCCC HOSTS 'CELEBRATE DIVERSITY MONTH' EVENT SERIES	4-8-14
MCCC HOSTS 'NATIONAL ARAB-AMERICAN MONTH' EVENTS	4-8-14
FALL SEMESTER REGISTRATION FOR NEW STUDENTS BEGINS APRIL 17	4-5-14
FAMILY FUN NIGHT SET FOR APRIL 25	4-5-14

that was designed by Code for America as open source software. It was also influenced by the look and feel of the Dig SoHa website. Both sites keep the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) and topical information at the center of the design. In speaking with Jonathan Greene and Lori Lewis, the team determined that the site should be developed on the UMSI servers in order to maintain access to it during the anticipated transition of the City and DDA websites to new hosts. This also gives priority access to UMSI students who will be sustaining the content of the site.

Sketches of the proposed site are included for the FAQ ([Appendix D](#)), Discussion Board ([Appendix E](#)) and Events Page ([Appendix F](#)). The FAQ page allows a visitor to type in a question and directs them to best answer. This page should also contain an interactive timeline which could include historical events like the installation of the sanitary sewer line being replaced, as well as current and future events like construction milestones and installation of the new streetscape. Ideally, this website could be transitioned into a city-wide FAQ as denoted by the category designations that are outside of the scope of the current project.

Navigation for the site is simple with only six (6) pages in the whole site. The FAQ is the landing page. In the lower left is the link to the About page which would include the basic information about

the construction effort and the partnership between the City and UMSI that resulted in the creation of the site. Also in the lower left hand navigation is the Contact Us page, which would look very much like the Dig SoHa contact page. The social network site icons at the top right would be available on every page so citizens could share information within their own networks as well.

The main navigation bar is at the top center of each page. The remaining three (3) pages include the Discussion forums, Events and Press Release pages. There is no sketch for the Press Release page as it would contain simply headline links to PDFs of City issued statements. An example of what that type of page might look like can be found in Figure 4.⁶

The Events Page can be arranged in many ways. The sketch shows items in a list format with tabs for sorting with a simple search feature. It is generally not recommended that a calendar view be used. As seen on the Dig SoHa site⁷, when you have a month with fewer events the calendar can look desolate compared with busier months.

⁶ <http://monroeccc.edu/news/index.htm>

⁷ <http://digsoha.com/calendar/>

Finally, the unique portion of this website is the Discussion forums. This feature differentiates the Jackson site as citizen centric compared to others. The forums invite participation from a variety of stakeholders and give the City the opportunity to create a space that encourages positive contributions. The forums are meant to be moderated in part by the city, but also by the participants themselves through the use of a “Report Abuse” feature as well as up and down voting of comments by participants. It is crucial that the summer intern take the time to begin populating the forums with general behavior rules and recruit alpha users via the Business Contact Registry. She will be able to add the business contacts to the password protected forum as well as asking them to begin posting and using the features of the forums.

Citizens can slowly be added to the site as early adopters until the point that the first mailing goes out. Because the web address will be on that mailing, norms need to have a good foothold prior to the influx of new users. It is likely that the forums will require rather heavy moderation for the first four (4) to six (6) weeks. It will take at least that long to reinforce the supportive community the City wants to foster on the site.

This is a space where user information should be transparent in order to foster trust in the system. Users should be able to see who else is logged in to the system (as shown at the bottom of the main frame in [Appendix E](#)) as

well as the most recently logged discussions so they know where they can find activity in the community.

One feature that cannot be seen in the sketches is a polling feature. This feature serves two purposes. First, it allows a mechanism for quantifiable feedback. With just one question posted every one (1) to two (2) weeks, a plethora of quantitative information can be collected over a year. This gives project managers information on the fly so they can adjust their messages, signs, website or other aspects of the project as needed. The second purpose it serves is assessment for the project as a whole. This will be discussed further in the next section. Depending on the nature of the question, the polling feature on Facebook may also be used to gather some quantitative data about the project.

The team hired a web developer to help create a functioning prototype of the site by the end of the semester. It will be debuted at the hand-off meeting. As noted in the sustainability plan, it will be up to the summer intern, working with city partners to populate the site with the correct information and ensure full functionality in time for public use of the site six (6) months prior to the kick off of the construction.

Looking Ahead: Sustainability

As we consider the trajectory of this project beyond this semester, this advice comes to mind, “Embrace self-organization and civic initiative, but help to make the results

sustainable and scalable. Bureaucracies can never muster the passion and energy that citizens have to start new ventures, but do play an important role in further



implementation and scaling.” (Hemment, 2013) It is our hope that having the help of a summer intern and another working group of UMSI students in the Fall will create significant momentum that will be sustained by the City for the remainder of the project.

As such, we recommend the following steps to carry the project through the end of Phase I and into Phase II. [Appendix G](#) contains an outline version of the sustainability plan that can be used for tracking purposes by the students and partners involved in the project.

First, the summer intern will complete the Business Contact Registry by collecting all of the remaining businesses’ information and adding the primary contacts to the closed Facebook group mentioned previously. It is recommended that the name of the group be “Downtown Revitalization” or some variance thereof (Downtown Jackson Revitalization, etc.). This signals an ongoing commitment to the well being of the group and its contribution as something beyond the scope of this single project.

The intern will also need to utilize the Registry to create mailing lists and email listservs. Once that is complete, she will need to consult with Jonathan and Pat to determine how they would like to distribute the contact information to the business owners. All of the primary and secondary contacts will also need to be added to the invitation only portion of the forums on the website.

The majority of the information that will be used to populate the website will need to be gathered and entered by the intern. This includes populating the FAQ with information gathered from Jonathan, Pat and the City engineers. The construction timeline information will need to be added, along with parking and construction maps. Ideally, the intern would work with Jonathan and Pat to create a bank of questions that could be used for the website and Facebook polling features for the extent of the project. Advanced content for the forums should also be gathered from them.

The intern will need to determine the rules of conduct for the forum and post them prominently, recruit early adopters to begin populating the forum with threads and interactions, verify answers to questions with Pat or Jonathan and respond appropriately to posts that have content not covered by the FAQ or other resources. Finally, if the Business Contact Registration form is to be added to this website, that will need to be done by the intern also.

It is likely that these tasks and moderation of the forums will use the majority of the allotted time for the intern over the summer. However, if she finds that she has extra hours, she could begin some of the Phase II preparations. The first priority would be adding historical and future information to the interactive timeline. If there is still time remaining, the creation and posting of the short videos to the website and YouTube would be the next items of order. These videos could be “Dirty Jobs” style in which the viewer is introduced to a new piece of equipment or technique used in the construction process or a personal profile or interview with the City employees that help keep the construction process running smoothly. They could also be short videos from milestone achievements like the construction kick-off, billboard unveiling or the completion of the first block.

Any of those items that the intern is unable to complete would be turned over to the Fall CID group (referred to as Group 2) as well as the remainder of Phase II preparations. Group 2 will be creating the educational and interactive layer of the project on top of the foundational layer built by Phase I. They will be attempting to draw people downtown to participate in activities that highlight civic information and engagement. Finally, they will also be creating a plan for sustaining engagement as well as soliciting and responding to feedback.

It will be up to Group 2 to determine the best group to handle the remainder of the Phase II following the end of the Fall semester. It is likely that the DDA or the newly formed Facebook group will be taking over to create events and promotions that keep citizens engaged in the remainder of the project. Group 2 will make the final determination on that however.

The summer intern and Group 2 will have access to the report and all data collected by Team Dig. The Google Drive folder with the results of the focus groups, notes from interviews and research materials will all be shared with the incoming students. This will ensure a continuity that will diminish the amount of overlapping, redundant work completed by each group when beginning their portion of the project.

The final piece of the puzzle will be to measure the success of each of the recommendations and make decisions about their continuation based on that assessment. As mentioned previously, the polling feature on the website and on Facebook will allow some aggregate quantitative data to be collected during the construction project. That information can be



“If we want every citizen to contribute, we must create compelling engagement opportunities. Making the absurd, the fun, the visionary, or the poetic part of “official” civic life may sound paradoxical, but if done properly, we could see our communities and our lives improve in measurable and immeasurable ways.”
(Hemment, 2013)

used to determine the efficacy of the communication plan as well as solicit feedback around specific features of the website.

In addition, a qualitative study of the discussion forums can yield information about what is and is not working. A suggestions forum would be a critical component for this type of study. If there are multiple requests

Summary

“Experimentation always carries some risk of failure and public officials, whose actions are under public scrutiny, have much to lose if they support an idea that fails. This creates an incentive for people in government to maintain the status quo.

for the same thing, like a parking graphic to be added to the parking lot near the bus station, then you know that you need to adjust the signage to cover that recommendation. On the other hand, if you are seeing multiple requests for a feature that has already been implemented, it would be worth the time to have some usability testing completed to find out what barrier is keeping people from finding and using that feature.

Six (6) months into the project, follow-up focus groups should be held with the same cohorts as the first groups (Chamber of Commerce, DDA, Downtown Residents and County Residents Who Visit Downtown). The parameters should be the same for the groups, while the protocol could change slightly based on any feedback you may have already received.

At the conclusion of the project, a larger survey should be sent to as many stakeholders as is feasible to ascertain the overall effectiveness of the project. This survey should be part of the sustainability plan submitted by Group 2. This would help gauge the current project but would also be helpful as a tool for determining how best to approach future citizen engagement projects.

In addition to risk aversion, there are also embedded interests, hidden agendas, and procedural barriers that block innovation and change in government.” (Hemment, 2013)

In reaching out for the partnership with UMSI, the City of Jackson has already shown that it is willing to engage with citizens in

creative ways and leave some room for productive failure.

It is the hope that the recommendations made in this report will support citizen engagement in meaningful ways and encourage residents and business owners alike to view the City through a new lens.

Political knowledge is the first step toward civic action and Team Dig believes that the tools presented in this report will help citizens find and create knowledge about their local government. At the same time, we hope that these systems also give the City a new way to think about their interactions with citizens. When considering systems from the users' perspective and taking time to think strategically about how to connect authentically with stakeholders the benefits can be significant.

Team Dig would like to thank all of the people who made time to attend our focus groups and interviews; you made this project a success. This project would not have been completed without the expertise of Cliff Lampe and Kelly Kowatch. A special thanks goes to Scott Tenbrink for jumping in with a helping hand whenever it was needed, to Jonathan Green for meeting with us every two weeks and to Pat Burtch for being such an enthusiastic partner. You were all committed to the vision of this program and it allowed us to create a system that will provide a foundation for this, and we hope other, great City projects.

“Political knowledge and action are intricately intertwined. Knowledge is an impetus for political participation and the act of staying informed is itself a form of participation in civic life. Meaningful action necessitates, and can further develop, knowledge. In general, knowledge acquisition through media use is positively correlated to an individual's increased awareness of civic issues and increased probability of political participation” (Gordon, 2013)



APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Library Resources

Call No.	Name	Years covered	Description
	Pictures of store fronts	1880-1900	Mostly news paper pictures. Low quality.
R MVO 711.4 J12	Downtown Jackson Facade Study and Use Recommendations	pre-1960	The study was conducted in 1989(?). The photos are of building facades in downtown evaluated for refurbishing. All buildings were built pre-1960.
R MVO 912 035	Standard Atlas of Jackson County Michigan 1911	1911	map atlas of the county in 1911 including downtown lots, streets, some lots are numbered only
R MVO 977.428	Images of America: Jackson County	1850s to recent	First chapter is all about main street. Includes all of Jackson County. Written by a librarian.
R MVO 977.422	Peeks at the Past	1850s to recent	Jackson daily life in pictures. Especially parades. Compiled with Jackson City Patriot.
R MVO 917 P967 1918	Polk's Jackson City and County Directory	1918	Phone book including street guide
R MVO 977.428 P769	Polk's Jackson City and County Directory	1925	Phone book including street guide
R MVO 977.428 044	Old Jackson Town	1820s-1960s	Maps, sreets, businesses on main street, etc.
R MVO 977.428 H433	Headlight Jackson, MI	1895	Railroad published magazine many pictures of downtown buildings

Call No.	Name	Years covered	Description
R MVO 977.422 V671	Views of Jackson and Vicinity	Early 1800s	Great intro about jackson and many old pictures, some of main street.
R MVO 977.428 B677	The History of Business and Industry in Jackson, Michigan	pub 1993 covers 1881-1960s	Mostly pictorial history, some text
Binder	Photo Archive Index		
Binder	Post Card Index: North and Old Town Photos		

APPENDIX B: Focus Group Protocol

Welcome! Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. My name is Chris Bulin, I am a Masters student in the School of Information at the university of Michigan. Cara Bloom, [indicate her] is an undergraduate at Michigan, studying informatics among other things.

We are working with the City of Jackson to help them determine community interest and concerns related to the upcoming sewer, water and utilities construction that will take place downtown. Please be as open and frank as possible in your answers to the following questions, because they will be considered as we plan ways to maintain interest in downtown during this process. There are no right or wrong answers, we're just interested in your opinions.

First we'll give you some background information on the construction project. The sanitary sewer and water mains underneath Michigan Ave. are over a hundred years old and need to be completely replaced between First and Francis. This construction will start in August of this year and continue in to the winter. During the construction all businesses will remain open and accessible, though there will be a detour around Michigan Ave. for car traffic.

We are conducting interviews with a variety of individuals from all facets of the community to better understand how the City interacts with people, especially around issues like this construction project. Cara will take notes during these interviews, which will be kept on file by the City without any identifying information. This information is intended to be used only for the evaluation of services and materials to be offered during the construction. The interview is expected to take one hour or less to complete.

I will ask a series of questions. There is no need to raise your hand unless you feel you are having difficulty being heard. Please be respectful of everyone's opinions. You can add or counter other answers, but all answers should be directly related to the question asked. There is no right or wrong answer. We want you to do most of the talking. Are there any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions:

- ▶ What is your primary concern about access to downtown while the construction is in progress?
- ▶ What do you think is the most pressing issue for the city when communicating about this process?
- ▶ How do you receive most of your information about the downtown?
 - How about city construction initiatives?
 - What would be your preferred method to learn about these things (in a perfect world)?
- ▶ What kind of activity or information would keep you coming downtown during the construction? (examples can be provided if needed)

- ▶ Is there anything you would like to learn about Jackson if an educational component were offered?
- ▶ How often would you like to receive updates on the progress of the construction (in a perfect world)?
 - How much communication is too much?
- ▶ What should we have asked about this and didn't?

Conclusion:

Thank you again for participating in this effort to further meet the needs of the community. If you would like to make further suggestions, alert the city to your needs, or ask questions about the construction project, please contact me via email or phone [provide business card]. Are there any questions or concerns before you leave?

APPENDIX C: Business Contact Registry

Downtown Businesses Contact Information

<https://docs.google.com/a/umich.edu/forms/d/1xbSdvAXA0fOqAJ0TK...>

Downtown Businesses Contact Information

The contact information entered below will be used as a shared directory among all downtown businesses for internal use during the downtown construction beginning this summer. External use will be limited to the University of Michigan project team and the City of Jackson to contact downtown business with updates about the construction project. The information will not be made available to the public.

* Required



Downtown business

1. Business name: *

2. Business classification: *

Mark only one oval.

- Restaurant
- Retail
- Bank or other financial institution
- Government
- Non-profit organization
- Other: _____

Primary contact

3. Primary contact name: *

4. Primary contact title:

The position of the primary contact within the downtown business

5. Primary contact telephone number: *

6. Primary contact email address: *

7. Best way to contact: *

Mark only one oval.

Phone

Email

Other: _____

Secondary contact

8. Secondary contact name:

9. Secondary contact title:

The position of the secondary contact within the downtown business

10. Secondary contact telephone number:

11. Secondary contact email address:

12. Best way to contact:

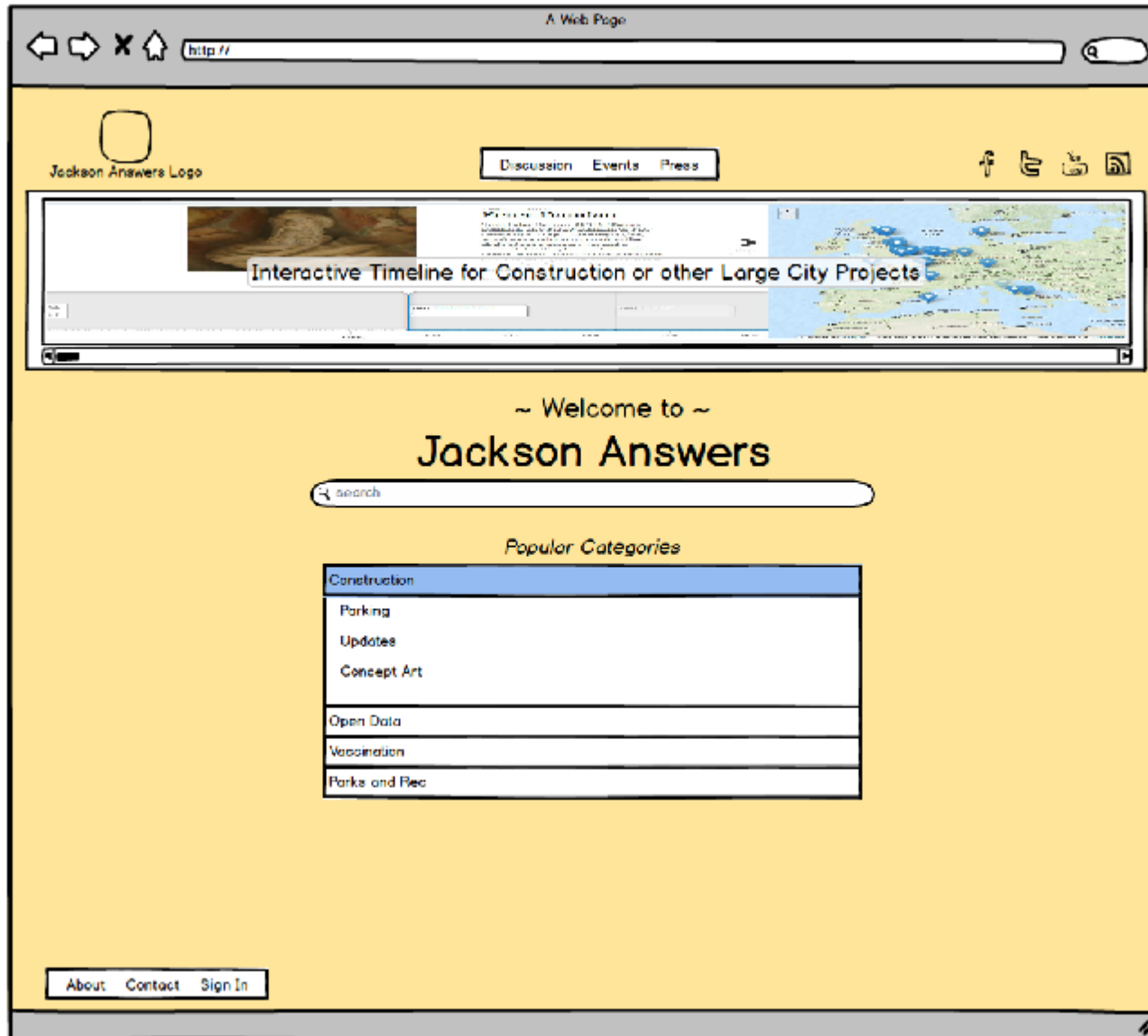
Mark only one oval.

Phone

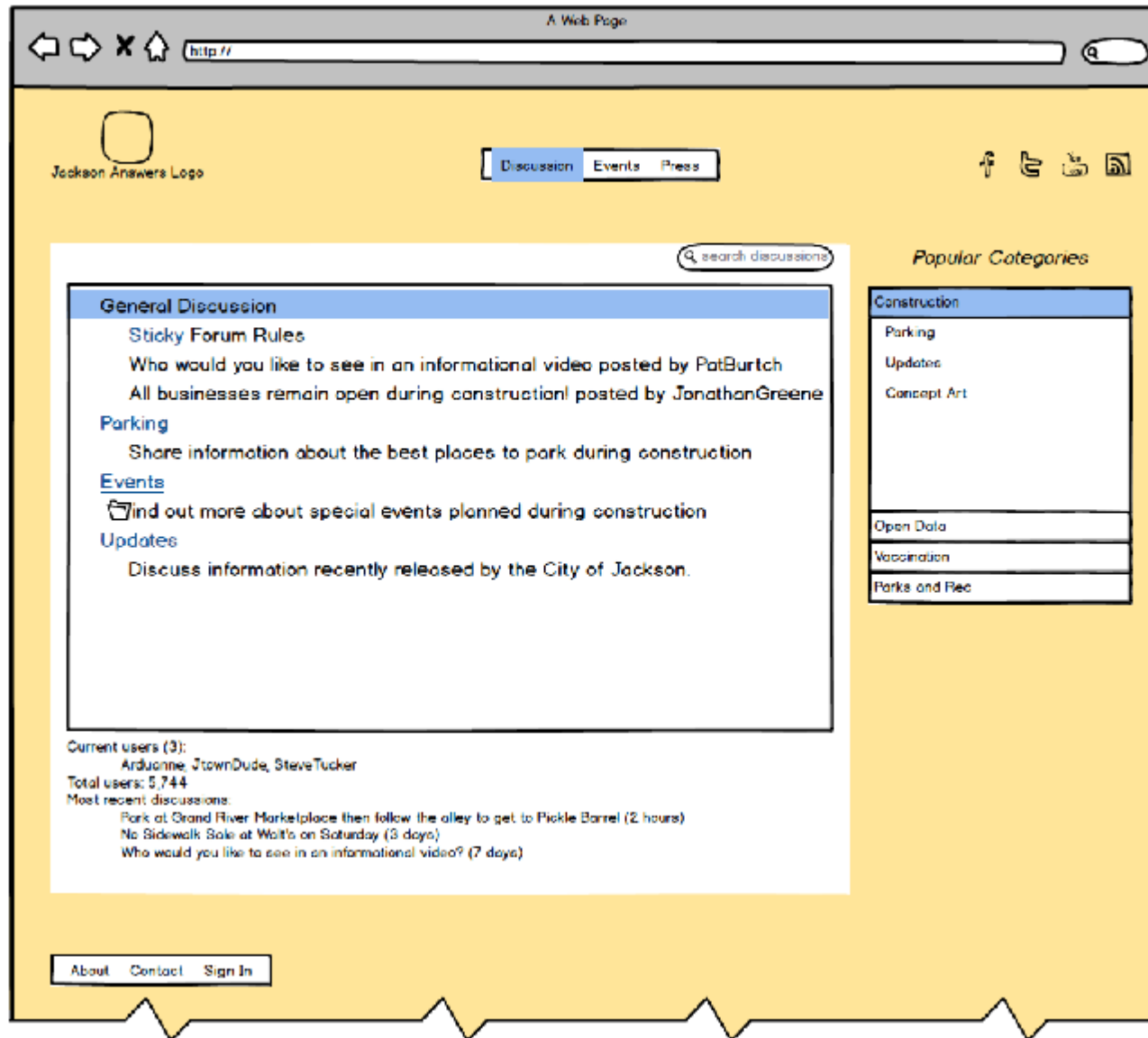
Email

Other: _____

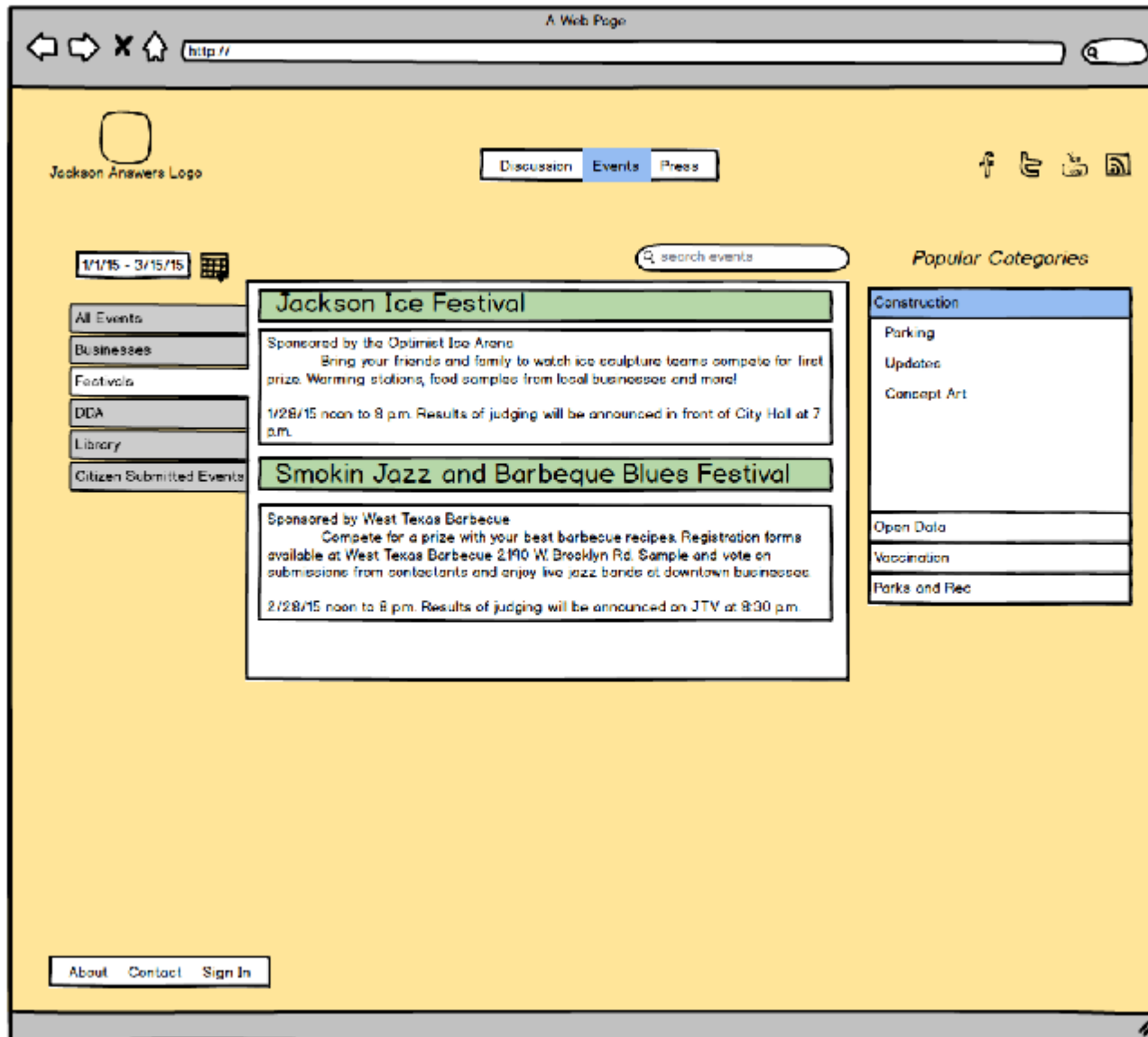
APPENDIX D: Construction Website Sketch FAQ



APPENDIX E: Construction Website Sketch Discussion



APPENDIX F: Construction Website Sketch Events



APPENDIX G: Sustainability Plan Outline

City Partners: Path for Progress

- ▶ Phase 1
 - Implement Communication Plan
 - Work with DDA on strategic underpinnings
 - Hire PR firm
 - Consider feasibility of suspending parking restrictions and ticketing during project
 - Create city signage as needed for alleys and wayfinding during project

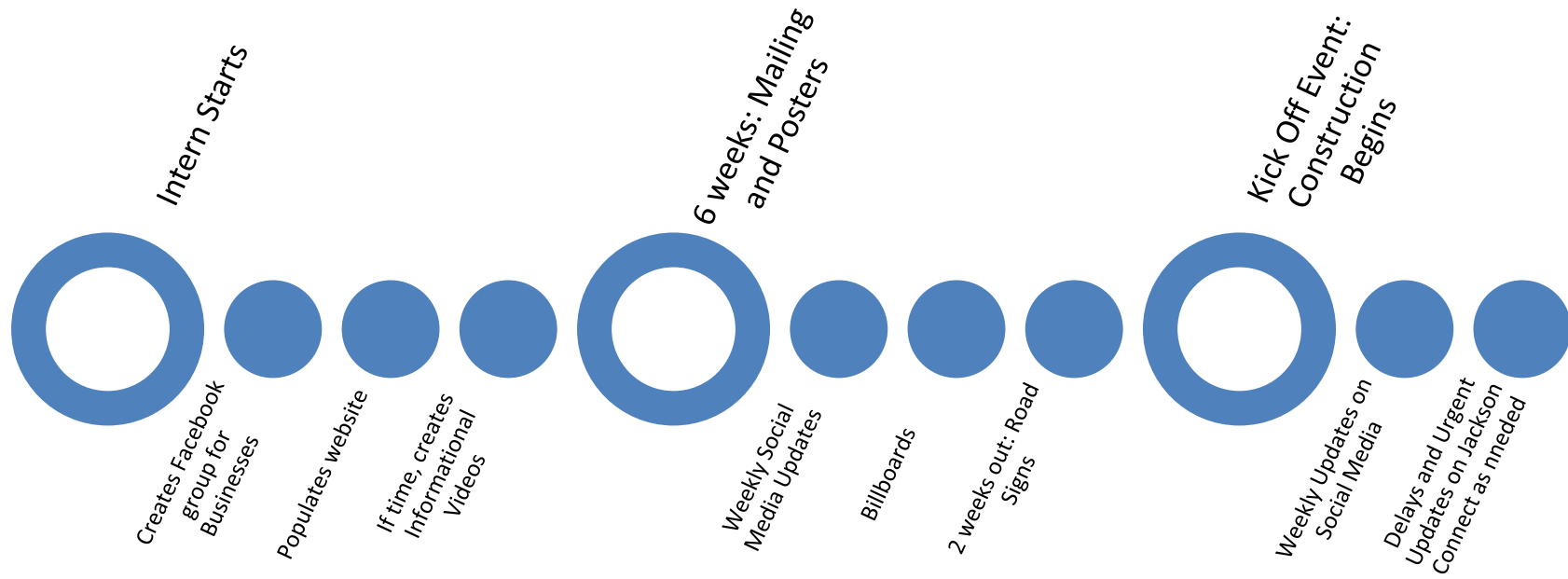
Intern: Path for Progress

- ▶ Phase 1
 - Complete Business Registry
 - Adds all primary business contacts to “Downtown Revitalization” closed Facebook group
 - Works with the city to distribute contact information to businesses
 - Populates FAQ portion of the website with construction information gathered from Jonathan, Pat and the City engineers
 - Adds present information to the timeline
 - Adds parking and construction maps to the website
 - Creates a question bank for the polling feature on the website and Facebook (questions released one per week for the duration of the project)
 - Populates discussion forums
 - Determines and posts community rules
 - Recruits early adopters to start populating the forums
 - Verifies answers to questions with Pat or Jonathan and responds appropriately to posts as needed
 - Populates the invitation only discussion group with primary and secondary contacts in the Business Contact Registry
 - Adds Registry Form to the website

Group 2: Path for Progress

- ▶ Phase II
 - Adds historical and future information to the website timeline
 - Adds short update/human interest videos to website and YouTube
 - Creates plan for moving forward with educational and interactive components to draw people downtown
 - Creates plan for sustaining engagement, soliciting and responding to feedback

APPENDIX H: Summer Timeline



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