Website Evaluation Checklist

Use this checklist to create a new website or as a way to evaluate your current website and identify opportunities for improvement.

The following are recommended tabs and content for a Main Street Downtown Program:

- ☐ Home Page
    - ☐ Intro paragraph about your community, why they should visit, what makes it unique.
    - ☐ Quick links to other focus areas on your site such as events, things to do and available properties
    - ☐ Consider putting an event calendar or at least a short list of upcoming events
    - ☐ If you have a strong presence on social media, consider showing your feed on your home page as that will allow them to see your social highlights without leaving your page to go to the social media platform
- ☐ About Us Tab
    - ☐ Intro Paragraph - About Town
        - ☐ Description on town, info or history so people know a little about your community. Remember this site will attract investors, residents and visitors
    - ☐ Your Plan of Work
        - ☐ Include other items including mission, vision, master plan and economic development strategies
        - ☐ This is a good place to put the national and state Main Street logos and verbiage
    - ☐ Our Leadership
        - ☐ Tell them about your Board of Directors and Staff
        - ☐ Give them an overview of the staff with contact information so they can easily reach you
        - ☐ Professional headshots will work well here! (see sample staff section below)
    - ☐ Our Volunteers
        - ☐ Highlight some of your volunteer opportunities and tell them how they can volunteer
        - ☐ Create a list of volunteer opportunities and how to sign up as a volunteer
        - ☐ Show pics of past events and volunteers
    - ☐ Your Main Street History & Success
        - ☐ Include history, cumulative statistics, annual reports
        - ☐ This is a good place to give more details about the Main Street programs at the state and national level - see template site for content

- [ ] Things to Do Tab
  - [ ] Town History
    - [ ] Include a brief history of your town and why they should visit
  - [ ] Directions - Make is so easy that all they must do is get in a car and GO
  - [ ] Parking - Take the parking stress away! Show them where to park
  - [ ] Accommodations - List your hotels, BnB's, etc. Include links
    - [ ] If your tourism has a great page for where people can stay, do a link to push them to that website page
  - [ ] Explore Downtown Tours & Trails & Other Things to Do
    - [ ] We recommend using a Blog page for Tours/Itineraries because it makes it easy to share on social and point them back to your page, but you should also highlight them here. Provide quick links to the blog story if you have one
  - [ ] Downtown Business Directory: Places to Eat - Shop - Services
    - [ ] List all your downtown businesses with links to their contact information
- [ ] Events
  - [ ] List your Events
  - [ ] Sponsorship Opportunities
  - [ ] Options for hosting an event downtown if you offer them
- [ ] Business Resources
  - [ ] Opening/Doing Business in your town
    - [ ] Consider developing a "Doing Business Guide" and then list the highlights here of why they should choose to do business in your downtown
    - [ ] Include resources, info on grants, marketing assistance, signage rules, etc.
    - [ ] Community Profile Information – Include why Downtown is unique. How can you sell your downtown to a prospective new business?
    - [ ] This is a WONDERFUL time to highlight your statistics
    - [ ] Steps for Business Opening Success – Include a step-by-step process of how someone opens a business in your community.
    - [ ] Historic Preservation Tax Credits
    - [ ] Facade Grants
    - [ ] Ordinances
    - [ ] Permits
  - [ ] Link to your Property Redevelopment Page that lists additional resources
  - [ ] Business Resources
    - [ ] Share links to both local, state and federal resources as a quick reference for businesses looking to move to your downtown. Some examples could include:
      - [ ] Business Link NC
      - [ ] Carolina Small Business Development
      - [ ] Grants

- [ ] NC Business Resource Guide resource_guide.pdf (ncsbc.net)
- [ ] NC Retail Merchant Association
- [ ] Score
- [ ] Small Business Center
- [ ] Promotional Resources
  - [ ] Share information about how Main Street can help promote their business
    - [ ] Training Classes
    - [ ] Business After Hours Events
    - [ ] Festivals
    - [ ] Sponsorship Opportunities
    - [ ] Mentorship Programs
    - [ ] Workshops
    - [ ] Downtown Dollars
    - [ ] Other Retail Promotions
  - [ ] Include your Main Street Director's contact information as well as any additional marketing or support services you offer for downtown businesses
- [ ] Available Properties
  - [ ] List Properties for Lease
  - [ ] List Properties for Sale
  - [ ] Link to your Property Redevelopment Page that lists additional resources
- [ ] Property Redevelopment Page
  - [ ] This page should contain information that allows potential investors or business owners too find out more about opportunities for redevelopment. Include things such as:
    - [ ] Shpo information
    - [ ] Tax credit information
    - [ ] Grants and incentives
    - [ ] Historic Property Listings Database

The above covers the main content recommendations for your site. Below are additional recommendations to help your site be successful and gain better visibility with search engines. Ask yourself the following questions:

- [ ] Does your website accurately represent your brand? For example, if you are an inn located on the coast, do the colors and pictures represent your location?
- [ ] Are your pictures high resolution and appear clearly for viewers?
- [ ] Is Google Analytics installed on your site? This is important to understand where your audience is coming from, how they found you and other info such as what pages they visit the most.
- [ ] Read your content, is it overwhelming, not descriptive enough, not clear, or just right to get across the information you want visitors to know? Try to read it as a visitor and someone that doesn't know the info.
- [ ] Are the following items included on your home page:
  - [ ] Clear, powerful images that set the mood from the minute visitors land on the site?

- [ ] Is there intro content about the business/town/organization that draws the visitor in and encourages them to continue exploring the site?
- [ ] Are your social media accounts represented with easy links to your pages or even a social feed?
- [ ] Is your contact information easy to find?
- [ ] When you land on your home page, where do you naturally want to click? Is that where you want your visitors to click? If not, you may want to reorganize your content.
- [ ] The items most relative to your business or most important for visitors should come first or be more predominant. Do you feel this is the case with your site?
- [ ] Is the site free of spelling errors?
- [ ] Navigation should be clear and easy. Ideally you want most information to be 2-3 clicks away. Think about the items on your site that are most important to your business. Now, find those items on your site. Are they within 1-2 clicks for visitors? If not, you may want to think about reorganizing them.
- [ ] Does your site work well on different browsers?
- [ ] Does your site work well on mobile platforms?
- [ ] Ask someone in your family or circle of friends, that has never visited your site, to go through your site as you watch and observe where they click or what questions they have as they go through the site. This will give you a new perspective on how others view your site. What things did you discover?
- [ ] Is your site set up with ADA accommodations such as alt tags that help those with disabilities to better navigate the site?
- [ ] Have you made sure to include keywords within your body text, headers and descriptions to make sure search engines can easily find you in queries?