



# AAPA 2021 Communications Awards Submittal

**Submitting Port:** Port of Everett

**Entry Classification:** Website

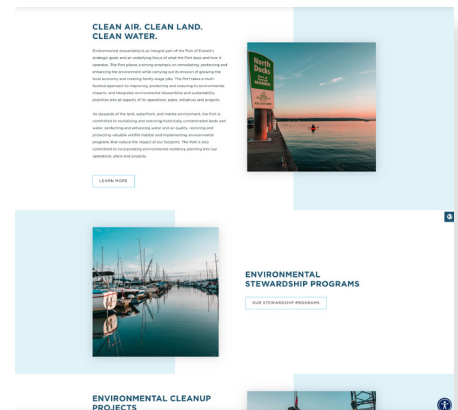
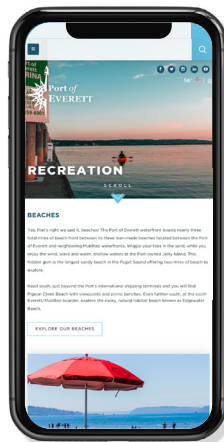
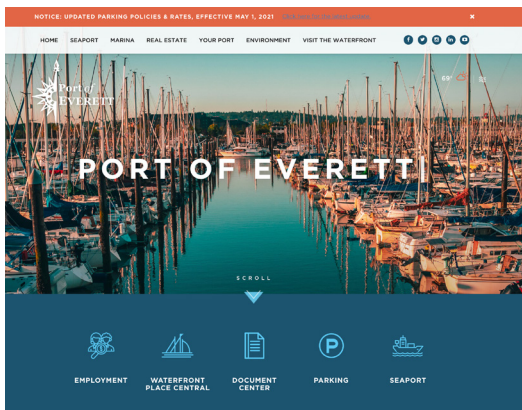
**Entry Title: Port of Everett:** Redesigned Port of Everett Website

[www.portofeverett.com](http://www.portofeverett.com)

## Descriptive Summary

*In January 2021, the Port of Everett launched a new and improved website to better meet the needs — and expectations — of its constituents and customers in today's ever-evolving digital era. The website overhaul took just over a year to complete, and included all the key steps for creating a new website the Port and community desired, from researching and selecting a new cost-effective web developer/host that could provide a modern take on government websites to the full revisioning of the Port's website wire frame template and site map, creation of all new custom written and visual content and development of new tools and features to better support the needs of our business lines and mission.*

*The Port's newly redesigned website, hosted by Revize Website Design, is now a highly visual communications tool that reflects today's best practices for websites. It modernized our site functionality and streamlined key information for our variety of site users from Port District residents and waterfront visitors to shipping customers, recreational boaters and others. Some of the new features include easy navigation with quick link icons, hover animation, parallax imagery and video integration, directories, easy fill forms, animated quick facts bar, automatic language translation and enhanced ADA options available on every page to create a better overall user experience.*





# PORT OF EVERETT

SCROLL

DOCUMENT  
CENTER

PARKING



SEAPORT



MARINA

SHIPPING  
SCHEDULE

## 1. Communications Challenges/Opportunities

In today's digital age websites are an expected and essential component to any organization's communication toolbox. The same holds true for the Port of Everett — a special purpose government tasked with economic development and job creation in its Port District community and surrounding region. The Everett Port District serves about 100,000 residents (and counting), as well as a variety of customer and stakeholder groups with the operation of its unique mix of business lines ranging from international shipping terminals, a public marina and real estate development.

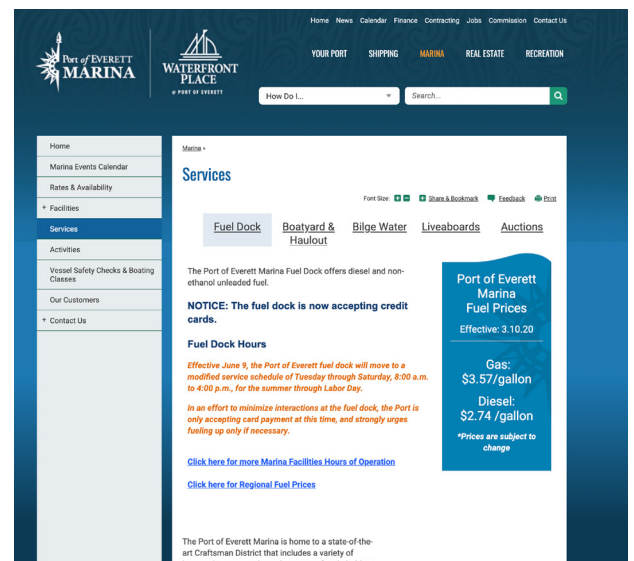
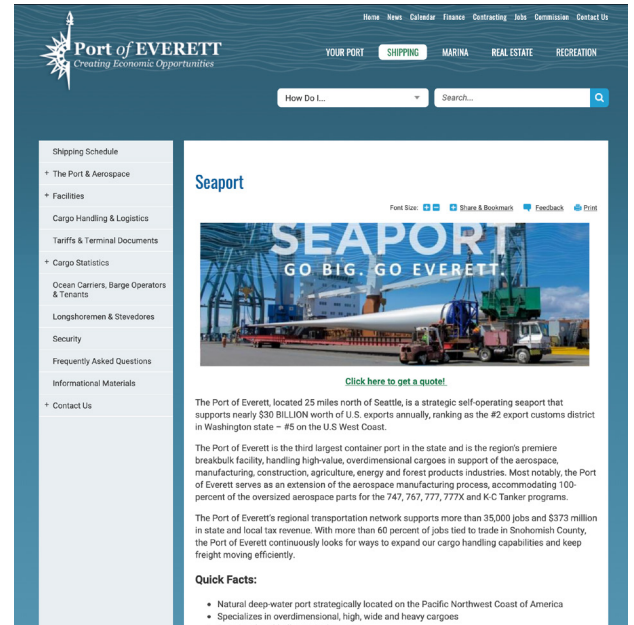
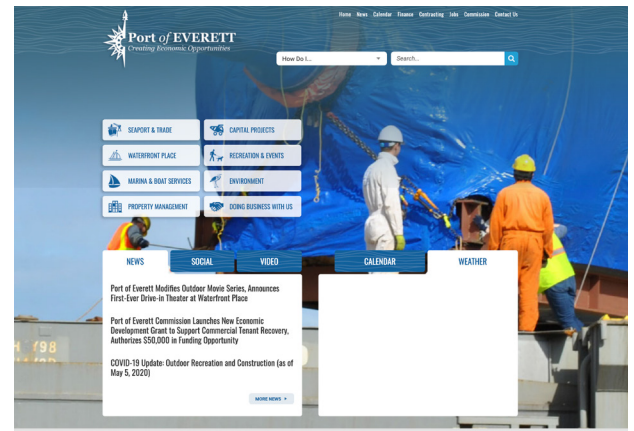
The Port of Everett supports a balanced waterfront that caters to a working waterfront to the south with the international shipping activity and U.S. Navy Base, and a destination waterfront to the north with the largest

public marina on the West Coast and a transforming 65-acre mixed use development underway where people can live, work and play.

Over the past decade, the Port has been in a growth period and a lot of what had once been future plans is now complete or underway. In 2018/2019, the Port took on a nearly two-year outreach effort to update its Strategic Plan and better understand what the community wanted the Port to focus on in the coming decade. As part of that process, we asked how we could better communicate with our constituents. The Port's website redesign project manifested as a result of the overwhelming community and stakeholder feedback received during this outreach process with many seeking an enhanced Port website that was easier to navigate and that was more reflective of current technologies and functionality.

At that time, it had been just about five years from the Port's last website redesign completed in 2014 (see images of previous site to the right). Before that, the website hadn't been redesigned since 2006. The Port's communications team was not shocked by the findings. The deficiencies our website had as technologies evolved so quickly during that time period were glaring. The team had been working within a budget where a full custom website redesign was not feasible (quotes had ranged from \$50K - \$100K). The team had tried to find ways to implement minor updates in those years, including a home page redesign and a realignment of the site map within the current website wire frame (about \$5,000), incorporating one-off splash web-pages, and even launching a simple template-based mobile app for about \$5,000 so we had a better mobile option. Nothing seemed to meet the mark, and the reality was we needed to start fresh.

Ultimately, the community's call for a new website is what we needed to be able to show the importance and value of prioritizing and budgeting for another redesign. It was an opportunity to see what was now available on the market that could address the issues we were currently facing, while also considering future needs. This project also provided an opportunity to evaluate our external facing content on the website as opposed to just merging pages and transferring all the documents over for ease — this is what we did with our previous redesign in 2014, which didn't allow us to really "clean house!" We had nearly 250 webpages and 4,000+ documents housed on the website, many of which no longer served a purpose. It would be a challenge to sort through the clutter, but our goal was to cut content in half and take a less is more approach to address the community's navigation of content concerns and keep this a marketing tool. It was a chance to start fresh and focus on what our stakeholders wanted and needed from our website with a revised site map, new custom content and visuals.



**Three examples of the Port's previous website showcasing the hurdles needed to overcome when building the new site.**



## 2. Complement to Overall Mission

The Port of Everett's mission reads, "Enhancing maritime commerce, jobs and a healthy community." The essence and overall vision of this mission is the creation of quality jobs and supporting a healthy and attractive quality of life for Port District residents and businesses. We do this, in part, by investing in a balanced working waterfront that improves the region's economy, commerce, community, environment, recreation, and supporting high-functioning infrastructure.

The Port Commission adopts a Strategic Plan that guides how the Port is to fulfill this mission to the community. The plan establishes six strategic focus areas, one of which is Outreach and Partnerships. This strategic focus recognizes accountability and transparency are critical components necessary to build public confidence and support the Port in its effort to bring the community better economic and quality of life opportunities. Port activities are complex and involve a myriad of business, government, tribal, labor force, environment, and community interests. The Port recognizes that much of its success and overall social license to operate relies on meaningful outreach and community engagement to all of its constituents and stakeholder groups, so they understand the "why" as well as the "what" the Port is doing and the "how" it operates.

The Port continues to invest in a robust outreach program to communicate its mission and the website is a critical piece of this work. This is the central hub of external facing communication that must be up-to-date and user-friendly, keep current with the technology of the times, and be accessible for all. Below are three of seven Strategic Action Items listed in the Outreach and Partnerships section of the Port's Strategic Plan that support the importance of the Port's website and of which had influenced the website redesign project. Further, the Strategic Plan was community vetted with feedback specifically desiring an updating website.

- ✓ Continue to advocate and improve regulatory framework, and communicate the benefits of, a balanced Everett waterfront that values both the working waterfront, recreational waterfront and quality of life
- ✓ Continue to develop a deeper relationship with the community by illustrating the value the Port provides in the economy, community and environment through a variety of in-person, print, digital, and technological tools
- ✓ Maintain and enhance a variety of communication tools to reach diverse audiences, such as user-friendly website, social media, print and in-person communications

## 3. Planning & Programming Components

### GOALS

- ✓ Design a user-friendly, easy to navigate website that is visually appealing and functionally relevant
- ✓ Ensure the new website addresses today's best practices and meets ADA compliance
- ✓ Create a website that functions as an effective digital communications tool that addresses needs of our various stakeholders and customers
- ✓ Select a website platform that is cost effective and easy to maintain

### OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Cut content (i.e. pages, documents) by 50% over previous website
- ✓ Reduce website bounce rate by 10%
- ✓ Increase pageviews by 10% for each business line
- ✓ Increase average time on page by 15 seconds

### AUDIENCES

#### PRIMARY AUDIENCES

**Port District Residents:** The Port of Everett was created by a landslide vote of the citizens of Everett in 1918. Then, just like now, the community desired an entity to reclaim the waterfront from private industry, protect the interests of the residents, create family wage jobs and serve as a steward of the waterfront. It's important to the Port that we keep this audience well informed about who the Port is, our operations and our value, events, project impacts and other community engagement opportunities. An accessible and transparent website is a vital tool in this effort.

**Marina Slipholders:** The Port operates the largest public marina on the West Coast with 2,300 slips. Our permanent moorage holders and visiting boaters are their own community at the Port with their own interests related to boating and waterfront amenities. Boater retention and growth is critical to keeping this business line profitable. Slipholders need a way to access marina and boating resources efficiently and pay through the website and online portals. Through the redesign we were able to improve their access to information and add new benefits like facility and marine-service provider directories.



## PRIMARY AUDIENCES:

## PORT OF EVERETT WEBSITE

## SECONDARY AUDIENCES:



**Real Estate Tenants:** The Port owns 3,300 acres of land with more than 50 commercial and industrial lease tenants throughout its properties. This audience provides the many services and amenities that make our working and recreational waterfront thrive and these business owners are key advocates for the Port. It is critical that we keep this audience informed and engaged in Port operations and events. They not only access information on the website, but also share information readily available on our website as needed to support their business operations and customers.

**Seaport Customers:** International trade is a key part of the Port's operating mix and our shipping terminals represent our largest business line, bringing in the bulk of revenues. Making sure we have up to date and easily accessible information about our shipping facilities online is key and adding in features like language translation is another step to support this effort for our international customers. It's also a great tool to promote the Port's major Seaport modernization underway as customers like to plan ahead for break bulk and other project cargoes, which are part of the Port's niche.

**Waterfront Visitors/Tourism:** The Port of Everett waterfront is one of Snohomish County's top 10 visited sites featuring various regional attractions including the longest sandy beach in Puget Sound, Jetty Island, and the largest public Marina on the West Coast with 2,300 slips and 10 guest moorage docks, surrounded by restaurants, hotels and recreation amenities. We host 75+ annual events that bring more than 100,000 people to the waterfront each year. All of these attractions support the Port's mission by way of promoting tourism to the Port District to support jobs and local spending. The website needs to house quick and easily accessible information for visitors that are not interested in the day to day operation of the Port.

**Private Developers:** The Port is underway on a new 1.5 million square foot mixed-use development located on 65-acres at the waterfront. At full build out, the development will include 63,000 square feet (sf) of retail/restaurant space, another 20,000 sf of marine retail, 447,500 sf of office, two waterfront hotels, and up to 660 waterfront housing units. The \$550+ million in public/private investment is expected to support nearly 2,100 family-wage jobs and generate \$8.6 million annually in state and local sales taxes. With development underway now and a full-fledged effort to attract more quality developers, our website needs to offer a central hub of information for potential developers.

## SECONDARY AUDIENCES

**Political Leaders:** The Port has various legislative priorities directly related to its mission and lines of business. Educating elected officials and other government representatives of the critical role the Port plays at a local, regional and national level is crucial. Keeping this audience informed and engaged as it relates to their priorities helps the Port in gaining support on policy change, budget appropriations, competing for federal grant and loan programs, etc. The website is a key tool in having information readily available for this audience.

**Business Community:** The Port has worked tirelessly to create goodwill with the community, including the greater business community outside of the Port's commercial tenant base. This group is highly engaged and generally supportive of the Port and its operations. Keeping the website up to date for the business community to access information on new infrastructure and projects going on at the Port allows us to maintain and build confidence in the Port's value to the community.

**Employees:** While the Port's operations support nearly 40,000 jobs in the community, its employee base is lean with around 90-100 employees who support all operations. Our team is made up of very hard working and creative people who are passionate about what they do and the mission of the Port. Port employees use the website as a reference tool, while also using it to support their business dealings with external parties. Port staff are key in helping the communications team keep the website up to date, and a select few also edit the back end of the website in specific areas, so it is important it is user-friendly.

**Media:** The Port has experienced exponential growth in the past five to 10 years. Nearly every month we have new announcements to share. Local, regional and national media contacts need to be able to navigate our website with ease and understand our brand story quickly with concise information and impactful visuals available.

## 4. Actions/Outputs

### STRATEGIES

- ✓ Select a modern, template-based website designer to keep design costs down
- ✓ Get buy in from Port staff and select stakeholders on website design, functionality and features
- ✓ Use analytics from existing website to drive decisions on what content is valuable and what is no longer needed
- ✓ Use more visuals and concise content to enhance views/readership

### TACTICS + IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

After receiving overwhelming feedback from stakeholders and community members desiring a new website, and subsequently getting the green light from leadership to move forward, the Port's communication team was full steam ahead.

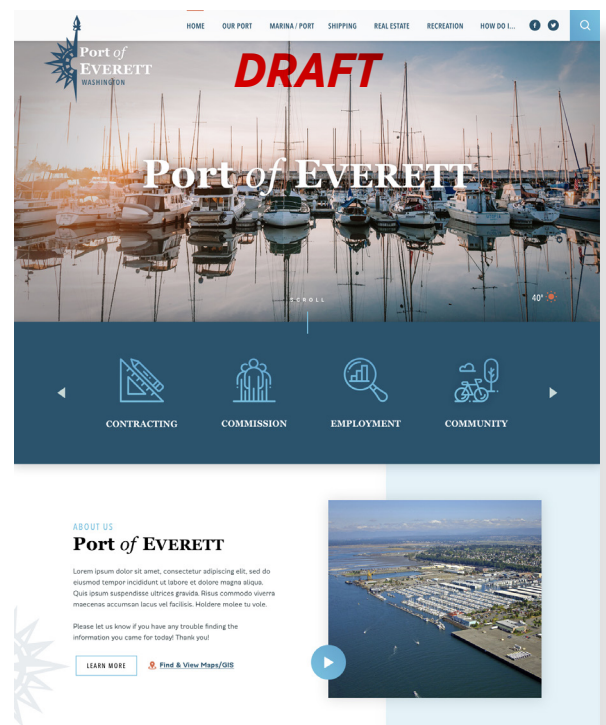
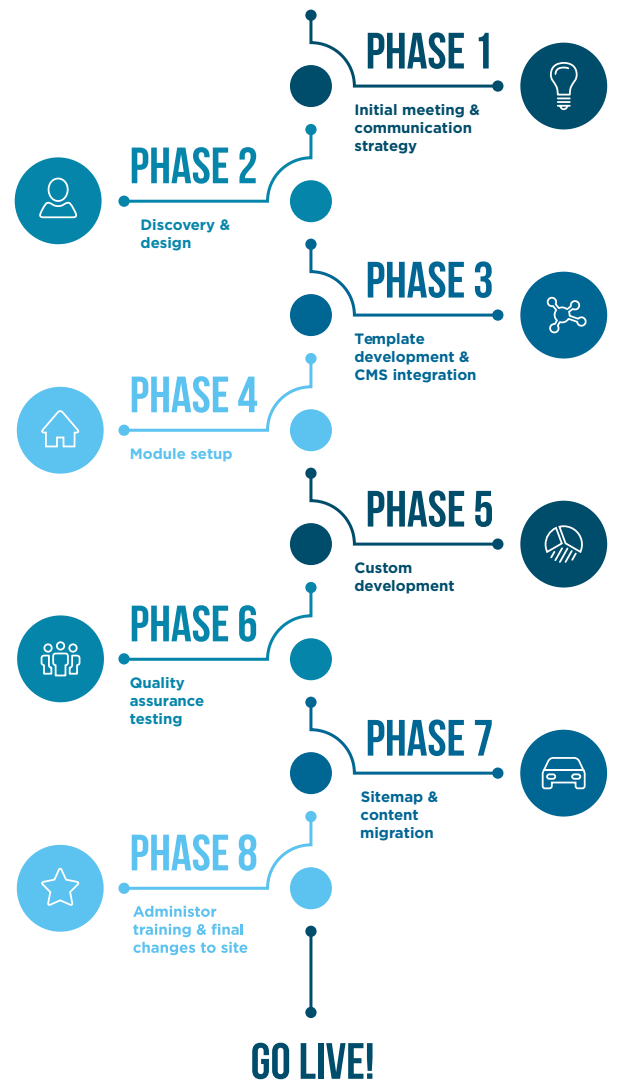
Here is our implementation timeline with the steps and tactics employed to bring this project to fruition.

**August/September 2019** - Explored new website design/hosting options; September 30, 2020 was the date our existing website contract was set to expire. This gave us roughly one year to select a company and buildout a website. During this time, we re-researched providers and developed a list of needs and wants, and gathered samples of design elements and features that would work well with our business lines. We requested quotes, demonstrations and design timelines from three companies to help us narrow down our search.

**October/December 2019** - Selected and entered into a contract with Revize Website Design to build and host our website. This provider specializes in government websites, and met our desires with regard to cost (providing a full redesign on a modern, template-based website for \$20K), and also with regard to modern design and visual appeal.

**January 2020** - Began initial phases of website design with Revize including sending Port brand assets, colors, and website examples we liked, special features we wanted to see, etc. We engaged in multiple conversations with the Revize team ensuring we were communicating our vision so they could then build out the first draft of the design.

**March 2020** - Received the first website design-provided feedback. During the month of March, the on-set of the COVID-19 pandemic affected our timeline. While the project was all virtual in nature, the Port communication team and Revize team both experienced some staffing capacity challenges.



**First design presented to us by Revize after engaging with them in multiple discussions about how we envisioned our site to look.**

**April 2020** – Received the second website design from Revize and held individual meetings with each Port department to discuss the design. In preparation for those meetings, our team surveyed analytics for each department's pages and documents and provided our recommendations (i.e. what to keep, what to enhance, what to remove). We asked departments to come prepared with the most frequent customer and staff feedback, as well as features on other websites that they like and thought could enhance their end user experience (i.e. forms, quick links, directories, etc.). We also did this process with a few select stakeholder groups, including our Marina Forum and inter-governmental communicator contacts in the community. This process informed feedback for the second draft.

**May 2020** - Received the third and final design, provided minor feedback but design was near desired results.

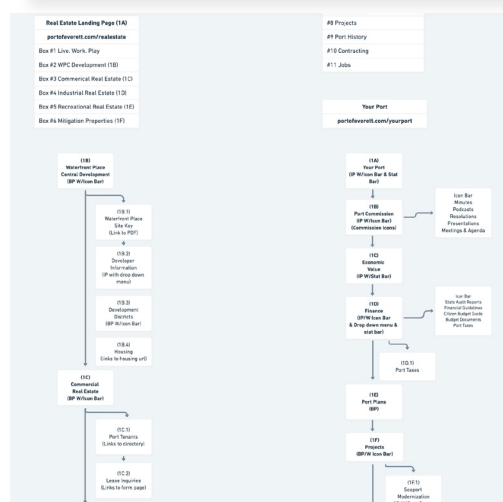
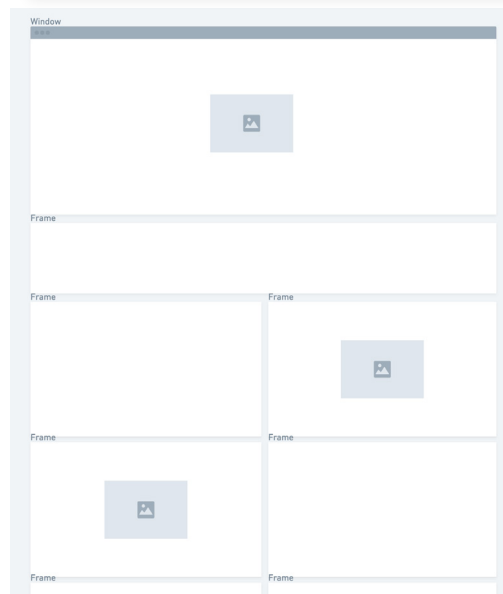
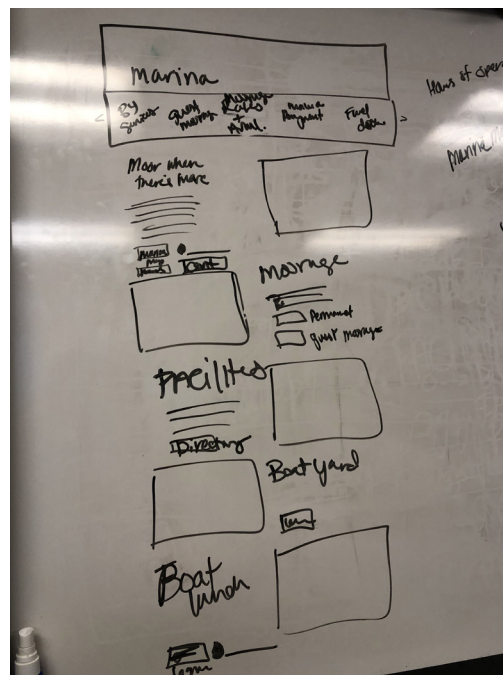
**June/July 2020** – Once we landed on the final design, Revize moved into custom web development, quality assurance testing and module setup phases, and the Port communication team began revisioning the overall site map. Our team had multiple day-long meetings to go through each page of the new site, drawing out what it would look like, establishing the appropriate template for each page and which photos and videos would be on the page.

**July – October 2020** – The Port team finalized the sitemap and sent to Revize to begin building out pages as established on the site map into the wireframe and migrating documents. The Port began building content and getting new images and video to populate onto the new site once it was handed off to us from Revize. By this time in the implementation, it was clear that the COVID-19 pandemic impacts were greatly affecting our schedule. We had to reach out to our current website provider at the time and begin discussion to negotiate and extension through the end of the year.

**October 2020** – Port staff completed content editing training in various sessions. We executed a contract extension with our previous website provider through December 2020.

**October – December 2020** – Port staff populated website with content, images, quick link icons, build forms, etc. We worked around the clock to meet the deadline.

**December 28, 2021** – Went live for beta test, with three days to spare of having our old website available. Once we were in beta test mode we used this time to work out any kinks and sent it out to our staff and select stakeholders to review for a week before announcing to the public. The switch from our old website to our new one was a group effort, including our IT staff, who helped make the transition behind the scenes.



**Various phases of the development that our communications team worked through including sketches, wire frames and site map integration**



**January 4, 2021** - We made the official public announcement and [issued a press release on January 4, 2021](#), letting the public know the new site was up and running. We also shared the information on social media, and with announcements in the local paper, our Portside newsletter that is mailed to approximately 52,000 households in the Port District and the Marina newsletter that is sent to 2,300+ boaters.

### **Budget & Staffing**

The website redesign process met our goals and we ended up with a cost-effective website design for \$20,000 including hosting for the first year, and hosting fees set at \$5,300 annually from then on. A free redesign is provided every four years to ensure the site is current with industry trends. Our previous site had a nearly \$8,000 annual hosting fee with annual escalations. In just three years, the new website redesign cost is set to pay for itself in what we would have paid in hosting costs over a three-year period. It was a success from a budget perspective.

Staffing for this project included our entire communications team of three staffers who divided up tasks and tackled the entire project from site map development and content writing to graphic design and photography. No outsourcing was used; however, we did enlist help from various staff during the implementation and launch phases (see above).

## **5. Outcomes & Evaluation Methods**

The Port's newly redesigned website has proved to be a huge success. This now highly visual communications tool reflects today's best practices for websites and is not just "mobile optimized" but also "mobile friendly" and the end project meets all of our listed goals. We achieved our objectives too, cutting content by more than the 50% with about 115 webpages and less than 1,000 documents on the final site, seeing a reduction in overall bounce rate, and an increase in page views. While we saw an overall decrease of time spent on our website, we believe that with the change in user interface on our site, visitors are able to find the information they are looking for faster and more efficiently.

The end product modernized our site functionality and streamlined key information for our variety of site users and incorporated new features including easy navigation with quick link icons, hover animation, parallax imagery and video integration, animated quick facts bar, automatic language translation and enhanced ADA options available on every page to create a better overall user experience.

We added easy-fill forms throughout the site and added directory pages for the various groups and facilities we

have onsite, including marina laundry and restroom facilities, Marine Service Providers Directory and Maritime Service Providers directories. These directories have helped our Seaport customers, boaters and waterfront visitors. The form pages have been one of the largest successes of the site, making it easy for folks to provide feedback, submit public comments or records request (which was handled by PDF form previously), seek marina moorage inquiries, and more. Port staff have also been able to see their feedback implemented and working to meet the needs of their customers.

Once the new site was live, we sought community and customer feedback. Mostly feedback has been anecdotal either in person or by e-mail. We received rave reviews from our Marina Forum and have heard primarily positive comments from boaters and community members. Below are a few samples of the feedback we have received to date, but the true test is that we have not received any overly negative comments, rather constructive feedback that we have quickly implemented.

**"The website looks awesome and is very easy to navigate! The icons are my favorite along with the beautiful images of the port. Great work!"**

**Jon Joiner**  
-Community Member

**"I love what is there at the bottom of the page with the "Your Opportunity" section. The new site looks great! Love the photo shots!"**

**Art Thomson**  
-NAI Puget Sound Properties

## **Summary**

While we had some hiccups with schedule due to COVID-19, the implementation of the new website has been seamless and easy to maintain. This project delivered the new website citizens (and staff) had been desiring, and the end result is a now a highly visual communications tool that reflects today's best practices for websites. We modernized our site functionality and streamlined key information for our variety of site users from Port District residents and waterfront visitors to shipping customers, recreational boaters and more.