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## REPORT TO GOVERNANCE AND FIRST NATIONS RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2025

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**SUBJECT**    Public Website Redesign Update

### **ISSUE SUMMARY**

This report provides an update on the Public Website Redesign Project, which remains on schedule for its planned launch in March 2025.

### **BACKGROUND**

The CRD public website ([www.crd.bc.ca](http://www.crd.bc.ca)) remains a crucial communication tool with more than 2 million visits per year. The current design and navigation systems have been in place since 2014, and a redesign project was brought forward as part of the service planning process to better meet community needs and expectations.

The Public Website Redesign Project began in 2023 and is reflected in the Corporate Plan as initiative 12b-3: Modernize the [crd.bc.ca](http://crd.bc.ca) website. The project aims to modernize the CRD website's design and navigation systems and create a user-friendly, dynamic and accessible virtual front counter that will serve the organization for years to come.

The project includes a change in content management systems from Sitefinity to Drupal and has been designed to meet international accessibility standards, WCAG 2.2 AA. It also aims to update the current URL to a shorter, modern URL ([www.crd.ca](http://www.crd.ca)) and includes five microsites:

- Capital Region Housing Corporation
- Panorama Recreation
- Prepare Yourself
- SEAPARC
- SSIPARC

Additional information about the project goals and objectives are included in Appendix A, Project Presentation.

### **Planning and Design Phase**

Following competitive procurement, work with the vendor (Upanup) began in January 2024. They started by analyzing data already collected and identifying ways to engage with residents to help inform decisions.

The first engagement with residents began in March 2024 with sitemap usability testing. The CRD invited residents to take a quick online test of the sitemap through website banners and social media. The tests gave residents a set of scenarios and asked them to click through a menu of links to tell us where they would click to find information or where they would get lost. This feedback led to several changes to the sitemap and how pages are organized.

Next, seven residents participated in 1:1 moderated design usability sessions in May 2024. These 1-hour sessions gave the project useful insights that informed changes to the home page and other layouts ahead of final designs approved in June.

Conducting this research both with internal and external user groups was important to get a holistic understanding of how users with different needs and levels of experience navigate the website.

The outcome of this phase included delivery of design concepts for the main CRD website and each of the microsites. An overview of the concepts is provided under Appendix B.

### **Content Phase**

The content phase started with an audit of all pages from May to October 2024. In November, content started being moved to Drupal. During migration, content was checked against accessibility standards and styling was applied for consistency.

### **Development Phase**

Development began in July 2024, with regular check-ins between the vendor and staff on components requiring integration with other systems or clarification of requirements prior to delivering the website to the CRD for testing during the beta phase.

The Technology & Digital Transformation team has been advancing the “myCRD” account concept in tandem with the website project. A “myCRD” account will provide residents with a single login to access a variety of CRD online services.

The new website will be the first tool to use the “myCRD” account, starting with utility billing and business opportunities. This integration marks a significant step in building a seamless and scalable system for managing resident and business interactions. Further details about additional integrations and their progress can be found in Appendix C.

### **Beta Testing & Training Phase**

The beta testing & training phase started on January 6 and runs until February 27. During this phase, staff are reviewing all six websites before they go live and documenting any bugs, issues or enhancements for the vendor to address ahead of launch.

### **Launch Phase**

CRD staff and the vendor will coordinate steps required for a successful launch and operational handoff. This includes coordination related to search optimization and indexing by major search engines. Communication activities related to launch include an update to the home page of each website, social media messaging and an internal lunch and learn session.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### *Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities*

The website redesign project aligns with Board Priority initiative 5d) Foster greater civic participation among diverse community members, and is in the Corporate Plan as initiative 12b-3) Modernize the crd.bc.ca website.

### *Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies*

The new websites once launched are foundational to both the Communications & Engagement Strategic Plan and a Digital Strategy for the CRD. They also support the CRD Accessibility Plan objective to “ensure communication materials are more accessible.”

### *Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Implications*

A key goal of the project is to design a website that meets internationally recognized web standards set by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). Their Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) set the standard for making web content more accessible to people with disabilities and we aim to meet WCAG version 2.2 level AA across all pages.

The project also focused on reducing the reading level of web pages, knowing that plain language can reduce barriers and build trust. Efforts to simplify language will not end when the website launches given the amount of content staff create, update and publish on a regular basis.

A ‘translate’ feature has been added to the website and microsites in support of our commitment to inclusion, and a feedback form has been added to every web page to proactively invite feedback to identify areas where content needs to be improved or simplified for all users.

### *Financial Implications*

The total combined capital and one-time implementation budget for this project is \$754,000, including additional internal short-term staff resources and the vendor contract. The project is on track for completion on time and within budget.

There are no ongoing changes to operational funding for the web team, which consists of two staff members within Corporate Communications & Engagement. These staff will continue to receive project and change management support from the Technology & Digital Transformation (TDT) team. Additionally, a hosting and maintenance agreement with Upanup ensures continuous technical support to complement the efforts of internal staff.

### *Service Delivery Implications*

The domain name change from [www.crd.bc.ca](http://www.crd.bc.ca) to [www.crd.ca](http://www.crd.ca) is limited to the public website at this time. Changes beyond the website such as email addresses and other platforms are not planned at this time.

The website introduces several new features designed to enhance how residents interact with CRD services and stay informed. Email subscription options allow users to receive updates on topics of interest, ensuring they remain aware of important changes, events, and service updates.

Additionally, the website includes dedicated community pages that provide tailored information for specific areas within the CRD, helping residents quickly locate relevant resources and updates.

The hosting and maintenance agreement with Upanup provides 24x7 support and a highly available, resilient cloud-based hosting solution.

Beyond the project, the Board Portal that CRD Directors use to view correspondence will have a new website URL. Further details will be shared with Board members closer to the change.

**CONCLUSION**

The CRD is modernizing its public website with an updated look and feel, along with improved navigation and accessibility features. The Public Website Redesign Project is progressing as planned and remains within budget and on track for launch in March 2025.

**RECOMMENDATION**

There is no recommendation. This report is for information only.

Submitted by:	Zoe Gray, Manager, Website & Public Engagement
Concurrence:	Andy Orr, Senior Manager, Corporate Communications
Concurrence:	Chris Hauff, Senior Manager, Technology & Digital Transformation
Concurrence:	Ted Robbins, B. Sc., C. Tech., Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

- Appendix A: Presentation
- Appendix B Part 1: Design Concept – CRD
- Appendix B Part 2: Design Concept – CRHC
- Appendix B Part 3: Design Concept – Panorama Recreation
- Appendix B Part 4: Design Concept – SEAPARC
- Appendix B Part 5: Design Concept – Salt Spring Island PARC
- Appendix B Part 6: Design Concept – PrepareYourself.ca
- Appendix C: Integrations