

Scranton online



Website is portal to access city services, tool to grow economy

The city of Scranton has recently redesigned its website. A website for a city should serve multiple purposes. For residents, it should connect them with the people, services and resources the municipal government has available to assist them. For businesses, it should give them access to the departments, regulations, forms and



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InSites

other information necessary to start and conduct their business. And for visitors, it should offer information, directions and history on attractions, dining, accommodations, transportation and any other amenities that may be of interest.

Our fair city's website, **Scrantonpa.gov**, meets these needs by either having the information available on the site or providing links to other sites that have it. The homepage has a contemporary look that's designed to be utilitarian rather than visually stunning. A photo showing some of the architectural details of City Hall graces the top of the page. Right below that is a navigation bar with links to the sections.

The Your Government link has a drop-down menu featuring city departments. Each one has names and contact information for department heads and other elected officials or employees. Some have descriptions of what the department does, hours, forms or other information specific to that department.

As you click on the departments you encounter my main criticism of the site, which is

inconsistency. Some links take you to a page that's part of Scranton's site and some take you off the site to the department's own website. That's not always a bad thing, but when a site does that I prefer that it opens it a new tab, rather than leaving the original site. I think the city site should have a description of the department's function with contact information and provide a link to the department's own site.

There are also some inconsistencies in the information for each department. Most sections start with a name, contact information and sometimes a photo. I came across a few sections where the contact information wasn't listed or the section was still under construction. Many don't have photos, which aren't necessary, but they add a nice touch.

The next section in the navigation bar is Services. A drop-down

menu displays links to all the services on the site. There are forms and applications that can be downloaded. There's information on refuse and recycling, as well as how to pay bills from the city. There's also information on storm water management, floodplains, parking and city archives.

The Business section has information on bidding for contracts, financial programs, starting a business and more. The Our Community section lists resources available for people who need help with food, shelter, and personal issues. The News section has press releases of stories related to Scranton.

The About Scranton section is meant to attract people to the city, either for a visit or to live here. It has three subsections: Work From Here has information about why it's a good idea to live here and work remotely

from a job in a higher-paying region; Visit Scranton! lists area attractions and events with links to more robust sites; Partner Cities has a photo and a blurb about the connection between Scranton, the President's hometown, and Oakland, the Vice President's hometown.

There's an Events link on the homepage with a calendar for upcoming happenings. I know there's a pandemic happening, but the calendar has nothing on it. They should at least put First Fridays on it. The lower portion of the homepage has some announcements and redundant links.

Scranton's site is a work in progress. It provides some valuable information and resources, but it needs some refinement.

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