# City of Madison

# Information Services

# Web Policies, Standards, and Guidelines

# City of Madison
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# City of Madison
# Web Policies

## Introduction

The City of Madison's website is the official site of the City of Madison and all material and graphic images on the site will meet and maintain the highest standards of accuracy, fairness and access. Special care will be taken to ensure that the information is current and that the site portrays the City of Madison in a positive light. The City of Madison is committed to presenting a positive image of the City. The City's website is another avenue for which we promote and share the many programs, services, and attractions the City has to offer to its citizens, businesses, and visitors. There should be ease in the accessing of online services and programs, conducting City business and seeking additional information electronically. The website will present a fresh design, will be user friendly, accessible, and have clear navigation and search tools.

## Purpose

The purpose of these policies is to ensure consistent navigation, branding, and user experiences throughout, maximize the use of online technology, and to provide transparent multi-agency business transactions and reusable objects, while keeping costs to develop and maintain the website manageable.

## Coverage

These policies will cover all City of Madison official websites, both Internet and Intranet, regardless of where they are hosted, and all sites hosted by the City of Madison, and anyone developing any of these sites including vendors, volunteers and any other 3rd party.

## Specific Policy Items

### ADA Requirements

As a government site, all pages will be designed to meet requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Information about the Web Accessibility Initiative can be found at www.w3c.org/WAI. Any information presented on the web that is in anyway related to federal funding must follow these requirements. See our Web Standards at ADA Requirements for more information.

### Blogs, Chat Rooms, Forums, etc.

Creating blogs, chat rooms, forums, or any other avenues for content to be posted without prior review are prohibited on any sites associated with or hosted by the City of Madison. The City would be liable for the content and does not have the resources to review or monitor what gets posted.

Current Network and Security Policies prohibit City employees from using personal email accounts, chat rooms, and instant messaging.

**Freeware, Shareware, Free Code, Open-Source, Free Images, Etc.**
The use of free software, shareware, open-source code and tools, code snippets, and images are not allowed unless it can be demonstrated to adhere to our security standards. These items many times contain security vulnerabilities, including un-secure coding practices, viruses and other malware. Further, care should be taken to ensure they are free of copyright concerns that the distributor may be unaware of.

**Language**
The default language of cityofmadison.com shall be English. Providing pages and information in other languages, while it may be desirable, is not required unless there is a specific APM, Ordinance, or Policy that mandates it.

**Licensing**
Information Services will serve as the central administrator of all licenses for all software used within cityofmadison.com. Purchasing, upgrading, and renewal of all software licenses must be coordinated with and receive the approval of Information Services Webmaster.

**Portability**
Sites will be created to allow portability across the major browser platforms as defined in Portability in our Web Standards. They should have essentially the same functionality regardless of the browser being used.

**Questionable Content**
Questionable content and images can be defined by answering yes to any of the following nine questions.

1. Does the content and/or image violate any of the criteria set forth in the Web Guidelines – Page Design Focus Guide?
2. Does it violate any of our Web Standards?
3. Will the content and/or image severely effect page download times or server storage capabilities?
4. Is there a risk to the security of the City's computer resources? Adherence to the City of Madison Network and Security Policies is required.
5. Are the content and/or image inappropriate in anyway? Does it contain objectionable statements or remarks that may be offensive?
6. Does it constitute endorsement or favoritism of a specific organization, agency, or business?
7. Could it reflect negatively upon the City of Madison?

8. Does it fail to meet the standards set forth in [APM 3-13, Web Linking Policy](#)?
9. Does it violate any City Ordinances or other [APM](#)'s?

The City of Madison IS Webmaster will, upon request, consider content that has been determined to be questionable and take necessary actions to protect the City of Madison.

**Security**

All software on any City of Madison websites or on any sites hosted by the City of Madison shall follow our [security standards](#) as outlined in our Web Standards.

**Site Names, URL's, and Domain Names**

The City of Madison uses the second level domain of cityofmadison.com. All official City websites, including those of agencies, divisions or other fiscal or operating units of the City, as well as staff performing City functions, should use names within cityofmadison.com for websites or other use of the Internet.  Since agencies, divisions and other units are a subset of the City, domain and host names are expected to reflect an association with the City, a unit or a service to the City, and as such good taste should be used in name selection.

Use of a domain name other than cityofmadison.com should be rare and will require the approval of the Information Services Director for purchase, and also when the domain name comes up for renewal.  Information Services may refuse a name if it is deemed inappropriate or if it may cause confusion about the true nature or purpose of a system.

The funds required to purchase or renew other domain names will come from the agency requesting it, however, registration of the domain name will remain within Information Services since they will need to be directed to specific IP addresses.  This also allows for keeping a central inventory of all domain names being used by the City of Madison.  Also, IS has several staff that can administer the names helping to ensure that we receive notification about them and that they do not expire unknowingly.

The default behavior for additional domain names will be to set them up as a re-direct back to the appropriate site within cityofmadison.com.  For example the site at halloweenmadison.com will take you to cityofmadison.com/halloween.

Setting up separate domains involves more than just registering the name and paying the fee.  DNS routing needs to be established, along with page-not-found and broken-link behaviors for each domain name as outlined in the Web Standards.  A decision needs to be made if we will

have a separate IP address for each domain or redirect it back to the City's site.  Fewer IP addresses are easier for administration and when we have to make server changes.  Further, logging and statistical configurations need to be established for each domain.

When there are domains separate from cityofmadison.com, gathering comprehensive statistics becomes more laborious and less practical.  Staff would have to spend time manually compiling numbers from multiple reports to get a true reflection of individual site and page usage.

All domain names must adhere to these policies.

**Standards**
Standards for such things as coding requirements, general website design, listservs, naming conventions, page layout, security, etc. will be developed and maintained as needed by Information Services.

**Surveys**
Because citizens coming to our website view the City as a single entity regardless of what agency they are dealing with, it is important that any surveys being conducted be presented as being on behalf of the City of Madison.  Any requests for surveys must first be approved by the Mayor's Office for content, presentation, duration, and placement.

**Web Development Tools**
All website development and content management will use the City's Web Development Tools as determined in the Web Standards Guide which is maintained by Information Services.

**Web-based Applications (Software).**
All web-based application software that is developed, leased, hosted by or on behalf of the City of Madison must first require the approval of Information Services and must adhere to these policies.  As part of that approval, IS will require the application be reviewed specifically for adherence to our Network and Security Policies and Security standards as outlined in the Web Standards Guide.

# Staff Responsibilities

**Agency Heads**
Agency Heads are ultimately responsible for the content that is specific to the agency or service they have responsibility for.  They should develop and enforce policies and procedures within their agency so they can review and approve the web content related to their agency.  They are responsible for designating who will be their Agency Web Content

Editor(s) and ensure these individuals are afforded sufficient training and are sufficiently competent to do the work.

**Agency Web Content Editors**

Agency Content Editors are an extremely important link in the chain of maintaining the overall effectiveness of the City's website. Because there are often training issues and learning curves involved in performing the work of content editors, these staff should be permanent, non-rotating positions. Staff that are known to be in the position for less than two years are discouraged from being involved in these duties, which include:

- Ensure that all information on the Web conveys the agency's message in a consistent, accurate, and timely manner.
- Provide feedback to appropriate sources regarding the type of comments, complaints, or inquiries that are received from citizens in order to identify citywide issues.
- Ensure that all content submitted for inclusion on the agency's website has completed the agency's internal review process prior to being submitted. The agency head is ultimately responsible for the content that is displayed by his or her agency.
- Organize the content in the format to be placed on existing pages.
- Identify who will prepare the content.
- Keep web content organized, and current – removing any pages that are obsolete, inaccurate, or are not timely.
- Follow the City of Madison Web Policies and Standards and all APM's and City Ordinances.
- Fix broken links they find or that are reported to them.

**Webmaster (IS)**

The City Webmaster – as designated by Information Services - has overall responsibility for the City of Madison's website and City hosted sites. The Webmaster's duties include but are not limited to:

- All e-government and e-commerce applications.
- Approval of all in-house developed web applications.
- Approval of all new websites.
- Maintaining the Web Policies, Standards, and Guidelines as necessary to address issues such as link approval, questionable content, overall site design and organization, tools used, and duties and responsibilities of the IS Web Team and Agency Web Content Editors.
- Leading the IS Web Team.
- Approval of the use of any outside resources for website development.
- Approval of the use of any outside developed web-based application software.

**Web Team (IS)**

The City IS Web Team operates under the direction of the City Webmaster. Their duties include, but are not limited to:

- Manage content on the City's homepage, and on all portal pages.
- Design, creation, and deployment of City websites and web-based applications.
- Participate in the review of web-based applications.
- Develop and maintain content that is not agency specific.
- Review and approve layouts and format of new content. This is limited to new pages that are being introduced and not content updates to existing pages.
- Provide support for the standard web development tools.

# Exceptions

Any exceptions to these policies or standards will require the approval of the Information Services Director. Requests for exceptions shall be in writing and will state the specific policy or standard that is being challenged and the business reason for the exception. The decision of the Information Services Director shall be final.

# Failure to Comply

Any Agency, Organization, Group, or Application that represents the City of Madison or that is hosted by the City of Madison that fails to comply with these policies and standards may be required to take their website down until it is in compliance.

# City of Madison
# Web Standards

## Introduction

The purpose of these Web Standards is to provide members of the City of Madison with a complete tool for creating and maintaining the City's website. The standards outlined are essential to maintaining a consistent, professional, and well-maintained site. These standards will be periodically reviewed and updated as necessary by Information Services.

## ADA Requirements

As a Government site, all pages will be designed to meet requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Information about the Web Accessibility Initiative can be found at www.w3c.org/WAI. Any information presented on the web that is in anyway related to federal funding must follow these requirements.

At a minimum, the following City of Madison guidelines must be met:

1. A text equivalent for every non-text element shall be provided (e.g., alt tags, descriptions for every image).
2. If possible, equivalent alternatives for any multimedia presentation shall be synchronized with the presentation.
3. Web pages shall be designed so that all information conveyed with color is also available without color, for example from context or markup.
4. Documents shall be organized so they are readable without requiring an associated style sheet.
5. Redundant text links shall be provided for each active region of a server-side image map.
6. Client-side image maps shall be provided instead of server-side image maps except where the regions cannot be defined with an available geometric shape.
7. Row and column headers shall be identified for data tables.
8. A text-only page, with equivalent information or functionality, shall be provided to make a website comply with the provisions of this part, when compliance cannot be accomplished in any other way. The content of the text-only page **must** be updated whenever the primary page changes.
9. When pages utilize scripting languages to display content, or to create interface elements, the information provided by the script shall be identified with functional text that can be read by assisted technology.
10. When a web page requires that an applet, plug-in or other application be present on the client system to interpret page content, the page must provide a link to a plug-in or applet that complies with the requirements

for Software applications and operating systems listed above.  See Links, Plug-ins, Readers for more information.

11. When electronic forms are to be filled out on-line, the form shall allow people using assisted technology to access the information, field elements, and functionality required for completion and submission of the form, including all directions and cues.

12. Underlined text is not allowed except to designate a link.

13. All links, buttons, navigational tools, or other "click-able" items should be able to be activated from the keyboard in addition to mouse controls.  If this is not possible, then the same information needs to be available in another ADA compliant format as well.

You can go to http://validator.w3.org to check your site for compliance.  You can also find more information on the subject of accessibility by going to: http://www.section508.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=Content&ID=12#Web.

## Coding Requirements

Having a coding standard will reduce opportunity for error. To eliminate inconsistencies in coding and possible errors when creating pages, all developers that will write code should follow the ColdFusion coding conventions maintained for the Macromedia Web Technology Group, at: www.livedocs.macromedia.com/wtg/public/coding_standards/contents.html/. Pages not conforming may not be accepted.  The content management system may have specific guidelines as well that will need to be followed.  If so, Information Services will provide those.

## General

### Architecture

The City of Madison website, as developed and/or maintained by City staff, will be in ColdFusion .cfm files as opposed to other file types such as .htm, .html. .asp, etc.

### Contacting Us

The use of the "mailto" option is prohibited.  A general form will be provided to allow someone to explain why he or she is contacting us. Customers may be using a web browser without a local email client installed and that would render the "mailto" option useless, or it may select the wrong client if more than one is installed.  It may also attempt to set up or install an email client causing confusion and frustration for our customers.   By doing this, the notifications can be coded and automatically directed to the appropriate contacts.

### Customer Interactions

Online forms for submission of information, requests for information, and contact information will be routed to a general no-reply mailbox and not

individual mailboxes.  This general mailbox will be set up with an auto-reply to let the citizen know their submission was actually received into an internal mailbox.  There should be an explanation on these pages telling the submitter to expect at least an auto-generated reply within 24 hours.  If they do not, there should be a phone number to contact.  There can be many reasons why an external email would not be delivered.  Rules will then be set up on the general mailbox to forward to agency mailboxes, which in turn can forward to appropriate staff.  This allows agencies to be flexible on whom they designate to respond without the need for IS intervention and protects individual mailboxes from being the target of SPAM.  This also prevents those who contact us via this method from receiving unnecessary auto-reply messages such as "out of office".

**Documents - Formats**

Documents that are text or text and graphics combined will be in text searchable .pdf format.  For spreadsheets, use .xls.  For streaming video use RealMedia (.ram).  Next to the link for documents, the type and size will be indicated in parenthesis as shown in the example.  Documents that are not embedded should open in a new window.  If plug-ins, readers, or other software is required, follow the standard as defined in Links, Plug-ins, Readers.

Example:
Mayor's Annual Report (PDF 26.6 KB).

**Forms**

Online forms for submission of information, requests for information, and contact information will designate any required fields with a bold red asterisk "*" and the field label will be in **bold.**  Further, at the top of the form the following text will be included in bold, red:
**(* indicates required fields)**

**Links, Broken**

The City of Madison website has been developed in such a way as to have any "broken" links be automatically reported to the Webmaster, and the customer notified that this is taking place.  It should further give our customers a link to our home page and provide for contacting us if assistance is needed.  Agencies will be notified of broken links within their sites and it will be their responsibility to fix them.  To check your site for broken links, go to http://validator.w3.org/checklink/.

**Links, External**

An external link is defined as any reference to an external location.  All external links will follow APM 3-13, Web Linking Policy, and they should be set up to open in a new window.  Links that do not meet the link policy criteria will be removed.

Links should be periodically reviewed to confirm that the link policy criteria are still being met and the site still exists.

**Links, Internal**
Internal links should open in the same window.

**Links, Plug-ins, Readers**
If a plug-in, reader, or other software is required for viewing a document, standard wording and a link (which should open in a new window) should be provided as follows:

**Adobe .pdf**
To open a PDF, you must have Adobe® Acrobat® Reader version 7.0 or higher.  You can download Acrobat® Reader for free by going to www.cityofmadison.com/plugins.
The link will be http://www.cityofmadison.com/plugins.

**Microsoft .xls**
To open an Excel Spreadsheet XLS files, you will need to have Microsoft® Excel® or compatible spreadsheet software to edit.

**RealMedia .ram**
To watch streaming video on your computer, you will need the minimum of the RealPlayer 8 plug-in installed on your computer.  You can download RealPlayer for free by going to www.cityofmadison.com/plugins.
The link will be http://www.cityofmadison.com/plugins.

**Page Not Found**
See Links, Broken.

**Photos and Images**
Using photos that contain identifiable images of people is discouraged.  If photos are taken that will contain identifiable images of people, the Permission and Release for Use of Photograph should be used to ensure that you have the subject's permission.  An exception could be for a public event that is being covered by local news media.

To reduce storage space and download times, all design or promotional images will be created or shrunk to fit in the space required using an image-editing tool such as Paint Shop Pro or Photoshop.  All images will be labeled with alt tags for compliance with Federal accessibility guidelines.

Limit image types to .gif and .jpg (not .jpeg).  The use of animated .gif's is not allowed.

As a general rule:
- Use .gif for illustrations, clip art, and images with large areas of flat color or when the back ground needs to be made transparent.
- Use .jpg for photographs or other images where the color must not be reduced.
- In general, it is best to use .gif when a transparent background is desired, or a lined image (vector graphics), and .jpg for photos.

If you have a large image, or one that distorts the page design, consider using a thumbnail image that will open in a new window if clicked on.

See Web Guidelines at Image Dots Per Inch, or dpi for more information concerning images.

**Portability**
Sites should be created to allow portability across the major browser platforms.  As of January 2006 these include:
- Microsoft Internet Explorer with 85.31% of market
- Firefox with 9.50% of market
- Mozilla with 3.00% of market

These three combine for 97.81% of the market.  While Netscape is often mentioned to us, it now has only 1.17% of the market, down from 1.98% twelve months prior.
Sources:     http://marketshare.hitslink.com/report.aspx?qprid=3

If a page or application will not be compatible with the platforms listed above, then the page needs to have a disclaimer stating what browser versions it is restricted to.  For help on making your site cross-browser compatible see Portability in our Web Guidelines.

**Web Services**
Where practical, all database transactions conducted via the City of Madison website shall be with a Service Oriented Architecture and make the use of Web Services and XML tagged data.  Postings of new information such as job notices, press releases, etc., should be set up to be subscribed to via XML-based RSS feeds.

# ListServs

The City's Listserv resource is WiscNet.  At the time of this writing, the cost for a listserv is: $75 - One time $50 setup fee, $25 annual fee.  Fees are to be paid by the agency.  As with domain names, registration and renewal functions for listservs will reside with Information Services staff.
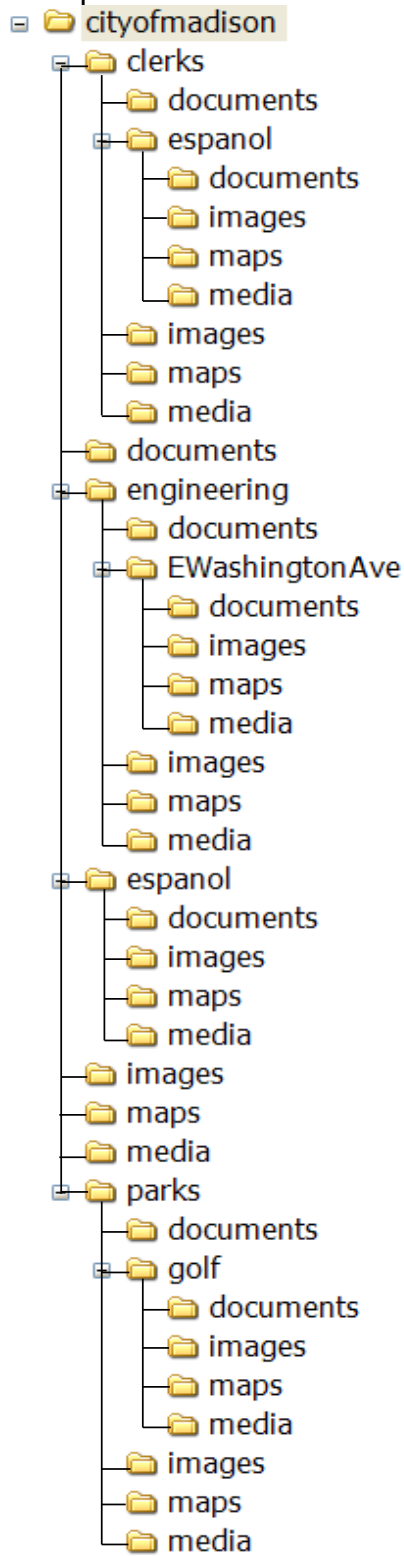
A listserv name will need to be established. For example: snowemergency@wiscnet.net. The agency requesting a listserv will need to designate someone to be the administrator of that list. Those duties include but are not limited to approving requests to subscribe, unsubscribe, and approving messages that are posted.

# Naming Conventions

### Directory Structure and Names

1. All style sheets and client side scripts will be created and stored by the IS Web Team in a central repository under the website primary directory. Storage of server side scripts is dependent upon server requirements and will only be accessed by the City of Madison IS Web Team.
2. There will be a main folder known as cityofmadison. This will be the City's main site directory.
3. Each agency will have a folder underneath cityofmadison. The names of the agency subfolders will follow official City of Madison Agency designations.
4. If an agency is subordinate to a larger department, their folder will be underneath the department folder. Example:
5. cityofmadison / parks / golf
6. Agency folders may be subdivided if there are significant numbers of files that warrant a specific classification and will be given a meaningful name. Example:
   cityofmadison / engineering / ewashingtonave.
7. Each folder indicated in items 2 thru 6 above will be organized as follows:
   a. There must be an index file index.cfm. This will be the default 'homepage' for that site and allows for promoting URL's such as www.cityofmadison.com/streets.
   b. Documents (.pdf, .xls) will be organized into a "documents" subfolder.
   c. Images (.gif, .jpg) will be organized into an "images" subfolder.
   d. Maps – other than static .pdf – will be organized into a "maps" subfolder.
   e. Media files (.ram) will be organized into a "media" subfolder.
8. If parts of a site have been translated into a language other than English, there will be a folder underneath that site indicating this. The language folder will be further organized as indicated in item 7 of this section. For example:
   cityofmadison / parks / golf / espanol / documents

Example:
```
cityofmadison
    clerks
        documents
        espanol
            documents
            images
            maps
            media
        images
        maps
        media
    documents
    engineering
        documents
        EWashingtonAve
            documents
            images
            maps
            media
        images
        maps
        media
    espanol
        documents
        images
        maps
        media
    images
    maps
    media
    parks
        documents
        golf
            documents
            images
            maps
            media
        images
        maps
        media
```

**File and Folder Naming Conventions**
To avoid compatibility problems when naming files and folders follow these guidelines:

- Always use lower case letters for file names and extensions.
- Use only alpha characters: a-z and numbers 0-9 in names.
- Never use special characters except the underscore "_" for files only. Do not use in folder names.
- Never use spaces or dashes in a name, instead use a "_" for files only. Do not use in folder names.
- Save all web pages as .cfm.
- Use descriptive names and when possible limit them to one word; however avoid creating unreadable filenames for the sole purpose of limiting name length.

Once a name is selected, to ensure that links remain intact continue using the name and its extension in all subsequent references.

Each folder that contains web pages will have one file named index.cfm. This document will be the default 'homepage' for that folder.

# Page Layout

**Accessibility Statement**
A link to the City of Madison's Accessibility Statement will be displayed on each page within all sites that are part of the City of Madison website.

**Cascading Style Sheets**
When working with text from within web page editors such as Contribute, text styles may not appear to be defined. This is because font characteristics including color and type are defined inside Cascading Style Sheets stored external to the web page. To see what text will look like preview web pages in a web browser.

All web pages must have the link to the CSS file in the document header.

Example:
<head>
<link rel="stylesheet" href="/main_styles.css" type="text/css">
</head>

To check compliance with CSS2 specifications as defined by the W3C, go to http://jigsaw.w3.org/css-validator/.

**Conditions & Use**

A link to the City of Madison's Conditions & Use will be displayed on each page within all sites that are part of the City of Madison website.

**Copyright**

A copyright notice will be displayed on each page within all sites that are part of the City of Madison website.

*Example:*
© 1995-2006 City of Madison, Wisconsin

**Español**

A link to an Español version of the City of Madison's website will be displayed on each page within all sites that are part of the City of Madison website.  For assistance in translating sites to Spanish contact the Department of Civil Rights.

**Font:  Serif versus Sans-Serif**

City of Madison will have style sheets that will be all Sans-serif typefaces. These have been shown to work better on monitors as they have a cleaner look.  However, if a separate print style sheet is used, it should be Serif as that works better for printing.

**Page Size 800 x 600**

The target minimum monitor resolution is 800 x 600.

**Privacy**

A link to the City of Madison's privacy policy will be displayed on each page within all sites that are part of the City of Madison website.

**Search Engines**

All pages will contain the following minimum search engine indexing tools. This information is crucial to a page being found by not only our site's search engine but also the major Internet search engines, such as Yahoo or Google.

a. **Page Titles – to be maintained by the Agency Content Editors.**
   Example:
   <title>City of Madison, Wisconsin Home Page</title>

b. **Page Description – meta tags – to be maintained by the Agency Content Editors.**
   Example:
   <meta name="description" content="The City of Madison Wisconsin's official website. Perform business transactions,

resident services, City hall, business services, view services, agency information, online payments, transportation, visiting, upcoming meetings and events.">

**Security Policy**

A link to the City of Madison's Security policy will be displayed on each page within all sites that are part of the City of Madison website.  See also Security as a Standard

**Templates**

All web pages on the City's website will be displayed using defined templates as created by the IS Web Team.  The templates will provide the basic formatting, navigation, and required policy content to ensure that pages are properly developed.  Each template will have a specific area where the Agency Content Editors can modify content.

The primary template is the one that will be used most often and is designed primarily for standard text content and small images. Editable areas include:
- Page title (see Search Engines).
- Page description (see Search Engines).
- Primary content.  This is the editable region where content will be displayed.

# Security

All software on any City of Madison websites or on any sites hosted by the City of Madison shall follow secure coding practices as outlined in "A Guide to Building Secure Web Applications and Services" by the Open Web Application Security Project.  These include:
- Protecting database queries from SQL injections.
- Using SSL to protect secure transmissions of logins and secure data.
- Integrating any sites requiring authentication with Active Directory services.
- Documents should not contain information in the document headers, footers, or anyplace else that can disclose a login id.  For example: a document footer with f:\users\isxyz\ should not be allowed.
- Document properties should not contain initials or the login id of the document author.
- Adherence to the City of Madison Network and Security Policies is required.

# Web Development Tools

All new website development and website redesigns will use the tools outlined below.  IS will develop a plan to port existing sites that were developed with other tools.

### Web Team (IS)
The City's standard Web development tool is Adobe (Macromedia) Dreamweaver, which will be used by the IS Web Team.

### Agency Web Content Editors
All Web Content Editors will use Adobe (Macromedia) Contribute Content Management System to create pages, delete and update content.

### Maps - Interactive
For interactive mapping and GIS applications, use ArcIMS from ESRI, accessing the official City of Madison GIS repository as administered by Information Services.

### Video - Streaming
For streaming video use RealNetwork's RealPlayer.

All media streaming files must be placed on the Media Server by either Madison City Channel 12 (MCC12) or the IS Web Team. No media streaming files are to be placed on the Internet Server.  Pointer files will be placed on the Internet server to point to the correct files on the Media Server.

If a Content Editor has video that they would like to have placed on their site it will need to be streamed by MCC12 (please see their streaming policies and costs: www.cityofmadison.com/mcc12).   Once the file has been streamed and compressed, MCC12 will need to provide a URL of where the file resides on the media server to the Content Editor.  If the Content Editor needs assistance setting up the URL, they should contact the IS Web Team for assistance.

### Reports – Results from Queries
For reports or results from database queries, use Crystal Reports from Business Objects.  This is an industry standard reporting tool, and allows for some interaction with the end user to save the reports in various formats and do limited sorting of data as well.  If assistance is needed, contact the IS Web Team for assistance.

# City of Madison
# Web Guidelines

These guidelines are designed as an aid to anyone who edits content or develops websites for the City of Madison.  While they are only guidelines, we strongly encourage you to follow them.  Doing so will enhance the experience of our visitors to our City of Madison website.

## Checks - Quick:

- **Check spelling:** It is as embarrassing to have a typo on a web site just as it is in a printed document.  Proof read all documents prior to posting it on the web.

- **Check links:** Test every link.  It is easy to inadvertently omit a quote or a colon when typing in a URL.

- **Check for timeliness:** Check pages regularly to see that the material is current or timely.

Poor spelling, grammar, bad URL's, and pages that are out-of-date can quickly turn off any visitors and erode confidence in the entire City of Madison website.

## Forms

What agency can manage without forms?  Make life easier for clients by using online forms.  However, before going through all that trouble, please think about how the form might be classified another way and look around the City's website to be sure it doesn't already exist someplace else.  Take a look at the forms already in use on paper and then look on-line for some ideas.  When practical, your forms should look the same on paper, as an email attachment, or online.  This facilitates ease of understanding by all parties involved in the form processing as all are using a single version.  Working with the IS Web Team we can produce on-line forms that the user can print out at home, fill it out, and mail, fax, or email it back.  It is also possible to have customers enter information on-line, allowing for database interaction to validate data entered, and to programmatically pull the data off of forms submitted electronically.  Think about forms that are currently processed without requiring a payment, as these are potential forms for easier online adaptation.  If paper versions of forms will be distributed, work with the IS Electronic Document Management staff to include design features that facilitate ease of scanning and data collection from paper.

## Headlines, Announcements, and Calendar of Events

The goal of the City of Madison Headlines is to keep content fresh and timely. Every effort will be made to post all requests for main page links, however all content displayed on the City's home page must meet the following criteria and be displayed in accordance with the following guidelines:

- Short term in nature.
- Timely topic.
- Will benefit our citizens and/or visitors.
- Will benefit the City.
- Will normally not be displayed earlier than two weeks prior to an event.
- Will normally be removed promptly after the event.
- Announcements will normally run for a maximum of two weeks.

## Making it Easy to Read and Understand

A Web page is not the same as a page of printed text; think of it as a screen rather than an 8½-inch by 11-inch piece of paper. As a rule, people skim web pages rather than read them in depth.

Try to keep pages as short as possible.  If it is more than one screen in length, keep the main points at the top of the screen.  People can't flick through a web page as they can through a book.  It helps to "bullet" points throughout the page.

Don't assume that people are reading the pages in order—they do not. Avoid using such words as "continued from," "return to," "go back to," "next," and "previous."  Instead use links that direct them back to the referenced information.  Always have a title or header at the top of each page to clarify where a user is on the site.

Users are not always familiar with City agencies or the City's website so don't assume they can easily navigate their way around the mass amount of information being offering.  Provide a clear, precise way to navigate.

Summarize whenever possible.  Wordy documents are for print, not web pages.  Create a PDF for long documents.  For more tips, see:

- "*Writing for the Web*" by John Morkes and Jacob Nielsen at http://www.useit.com/papers/webwriting/
- "*Writing Well for the Web: Quick and Easy Tips for Non-writers*" by Catherine Titta at http://www.webreference.com/content/writing/

Follow the City's policies on linking to outside sites and copyright as outlined in APM 3-13, Web Linking Policy.

## Page Focus Guide

**Purpose of an Agency's Presence on the Web**
The primary purpose of an agency's presence on the web is to communicate with its customers.  This is an opportunity to create a new service delivery mechanism.  If pages are viewed as no more than a computerized marketing brochure, the chance to serve the public and to increase productivity will be minimal and visitors may not return.  They want service.

**Thinking About Customers**
To design a good Web page, start with the customer. Who is going to read this? What will they want to know? What problems are they looking to solve?

**Who is going to read this?**
Users accessing an agency's pages will include:

1.  City of Madison citizens of all ages.
2.  Taxpaying users of City services.
3.  Professionals, such as architects and storeowners, complying with City regulations.
4.  Investors and the international business community.
5.  Those looking to do business with the City.
6.  City/County/State employees.
7.  Professionals looking for data they need to carry out their jobs.
8.  Students and academics researching government activities.
9.  Tourists and potential tourists.
10. Members of the press.
11. Government officials and their staffs.
12. People looking to relocate their home or business.
13. Various first languages:  English, Spanish, Hmong, etc.
14. Worldwide Web surfers.

While these may seem like very different groups of people, all are looking for substantive, useful, and well-presented material. Remember that information is being produced for a wide variety of people rather than targeting a specific audience. There is nothing wrong in including technical material but make sure it's highly focused in nature and is reflected in links on the home page.  It is frustrating for the general user to be directed accidentally to this kind of information.

**What Will They Want to Know?**
1.  What does your agency and/or service do?
2.  What is its official mission?
3.  What type of programs and services does the agency offer to the public?
4.  How can the public access these services?

5.  How can the public contact the agency and the responsible people who work there by mail, by email, online form, in person, by telephone or by fax?
6.  How is the agency organized?
7.  What are its hours of operations?
8.  Are there 24-hour emergency numbers, complaint lines, and so on?
9.  How can a vendor do business with the agency?

**What Problems are They Looking to Solve?**
1.  Need to file a complaint.
2.  Need to respond to a complaint.
3.  Want to pay a fine.
4.  Want to apply for a permit or license.
5.  Want to apply for a program.
6.  Need information about a program.
7.  Need help in general, or on a specific issue.

**Encourage Return Visits**
The test of a good website is how often people come back to visit. Obviously some agencies lend themselves to repeat visits more than others, but there is much that even the most seemingly specialized (or niche) agency can do to encourage more traffic.

Provide a real service. Consider how the Web could make life easier for customers. Save them a visit or a phone call by offering valuable information, or by allowing them to print out a form to mail back or even to enter information on-line.

Make sure new content is posted on an ongoing timetable. It may seem that nothing changes in government, but programs are added and drop relatively often.

## Page Layout

**Dating of Pages**
The bottom of every time-sensitive page should have a date and/or time it was generated, last updated, or last reviewed.  All content should be reviewed for relevance and currency every six months.  When website visitors find pages that appear to be out-of-date, confidence in the entire site can be compromised.

**Horizontal Rules**
Limit the number of horizontal rules as break up the look of the page. When using horizontal rules that are graphics as opposed to the <hr> code, try to use no more than one graphic per page to speed up loading time.

**Image Dots Per Inch, or dpi**

For the web, save .jpg's and .gif's at 72 pixels per inch (dpi) resolution. If you are unable to save it to 72 dpi, please contact the IS Web Team for assistance. See Page Size below for more considerations.

**Page Size**

Not everyone has access to high-speed internet connections and/or fast devices. The goal should be to make the pages load as quickly as possible. Though it may not always be possible, aim to keep page content to around 20 K and keep the total size of the page – text and graphics – to no more than 60K. If the page is growing too large, break it up into two or more pages. With careful use of links, the user won't even be aware of the break. If you have a large image, or one that distorts the page design, consider using a thumbnail image that will open in a new window if clicked on.

## Portability

How do I Make My Site Cross-Browser Compatible?

To create a cross-browser compatible web site:
- Use only standard compliant code
- Don't use browser specific (proprietary) HTML tags and features. These work only in the browser they were created for and may even break your page when viewed in another browser.
- Validate your HTML/XHTML coding using the W3C free validation service found at http://validator.w3.org/.
- Validate your cascading style sheets using the W3C free validation service found at http://jigsaw.w3.org/css-validator/

Some have the "You can't please everyone" attitude. Yes, your site will look different in each browser because each one interprets the coding differently. The goal with cross-browser compatibility is to make your site viewable in the major browsers available and have the pages render correctly. One thing that will drive visitors away is a site that doesn't work in their chosen browser.

## Press Releases

Press releases are both a good source of material and, because of their time-sensitive nature, can provide updated material to keep pages from going stale. The title of a press release should be very succinct. The point of the release should be made clearly in the first sentence or two. If a URL is included in the press release, it should be shown both first and last in the press release, readers should not have to hunt for it in the text of the release. The purpose of a press release is to make a single point quickly and clearly. If there is a substantial amount of information being communicated it should

be placed on a website allowing the readers to obtain and peruse the information at their will.  See also URL's in Press Releases, Publications, Email Notifications, etc.

## Training Resources

The following is a list of training resources available to the City's Web Content Editors/Designers:

Macromedia Contribute

http://www.macromedia.com/support/contribute/documents.html

Webmonkey

http://webmonkey.wired.com/webmonkey/index.html

Webmonkey Color Codes

http://webmonkey.wired.com/webmonkey/reference/color_codes/

## "Under Construction".

Avoid "under construction" pages if possible.  People don't want to know what is tentative; they want to see a page and will quickly become frustrated with an apparently permanent "Under Construction" sign.

If you find the need to display an "Under Construction" page, a date should be given when the visitor can expect the site to be finished.  Every effort should then be made to deliver on or before that date.

## URL's in Press Releases, Publications, Email Notifications, etc.

URL's referred to in press releases, publications, promoting, business cards, email notifications, etc. should refer to a general URL such as www.cityofmadison.com/streets.  This makes it easier to remember and easier to type.  Also, deeply nested (long) URL's are more subject to change as websites get redesigned and reorganized over time.  The main or general URL is less subject to change.  Further, it the item is worth promoting, it is worth making it easy to find on the general URL.

# City of Madison
# Web Policies, Standards, and Guidelines
# Glossary

Like all new technologies the World Wide Web quickly developed its own jargon. Some words are technical, and some are just cute. We provide definitions for some of the most common terms here, but a search on the Internet will produce hundreds of Web dictionaries. Some good comprehensive on-line glossaries are The Internet Literacy Consultants' (tm) "Glossary of Internet Terms" and The McGraw-Hill "Internet Glossary."

**Bandwidth**
> While the word has a technical meaning, it is used to describe Internet airtime, as in "burning bandwidth" (wasting time) or "reducing bandwidth" (speeding up graphics.)

**Bookmark**
> All browsers have a way for the user to tag their favorites sites, so they can keep going back with one keystroke.

**Browser**
> A program (for example, Microsoft Internet Explorer, Firefox, Mozilla, Safari) that allows information be read on the Internet in many different formats and connects easily to documents in other locations. Some read graphics, and some do not. Whatever you design will be viewed differently in the different browsers.

**Cookies**
> A method for keeping track of information that a visitor enters into a website; the information is written to a special Web-browser file on the visitor's hard disk, enabling a server to recognize that browser as a unique visitor. Cookies can be used to send personalized information to browsers, such as news headlines or stock prices, and to store visitor profiles, which can be sorted with special site-analysis software.

**Cyberspace**
> A nebulous name for the Internet.

**Firewall**
> A computer system between a computer or local network and the Internet designed for security reasons to screen out certain kinds of incoming and outgoing messages.

**Hacker**
   Someone who illegally breaks into a system by exploiting its vulnerabilities. (See also cracker.)

**Home Page**
   A Web page about a person or organization. Sometimes this is used to describe the index page of a collection of pages at a site.  Ours is www.cityofmadison.com.

**Hyperlink**
   The colored words and phrases in Web documents are hyperlinks. When clicking on a hyperlink, you jump to the location pointed to by the link.

**Hypermedia**
   Links to multimedia, not just text.

**HTML (Hypertext Markup Language)**
   The coding scheme used to format text for use on the World Wide Web. This language lets the text include codes that define fonts, layout, embedded graphics, and hypertext links. HTML coding can be seen by selecting "View Document Source" on your browser.

**HTTP (Hypertext Transfer Protocol)**
   The way in which World Wide Web pages are transferred over the Net.

**Image Map**
   A graphic that is coded so that you can click on various parts and go to another document.

**Internet**
   The general term used to describe the worldwide network of computer networks and services.

**Intranet**
   An enterprise-wide internal network that may or may not be linked to the World Wide Web.

**Java**
   The Java language, which is similar to C++. It provides a way to get around some of the limitations of HTML, and produces so-called "applets," small programs that work on any platform. However, these applets must still be embedded in an HTML page.

**JavaScript**
   A scripting language, that adds interactive elements to HTML, such as buttons that change appearance when the mouse pointer moves over them.

JavaScript is easier to program in than Java, but is less flexible.

**Link**

A link is a connection between one part of a hypertext document and another. (It can be a connection to another part of the same document or to another document.)  On the World Wide Web, links appear as text or pictures that are highlighted.  To follow a link, you click on the highlighted material.

**Page**

A document or collection of information placed on a Web Server.  Each page can contain text, graphics files, sound files, video clips--you name it.

**Plug-in**

A file, such as Real Audio, that enhances a parent browser. Sometimes called an add-on.

**Search Engine**

This is a program on a site that allows you to search on keywords.  It can search the entire Internet or be set up to search just a particular site.

**Shopping Cart**

A program on a Web server that keeps track of items that a visitor has selected for purchase.

**Site**

A person or organization's collection of documents placed on a Web Server. Sometimes referred to as "website".

**Spider**

A program run by the search engines that crawls through the Web, automatically registering new pages. Some spiders recognize meta tags, so be sure to code them in your pages.

**Surfing the Net**

Wandering around the Internet, having fun.

**URL (Uniform Resource Locator)**

A standardized way of naming network resources that is used for linking pages together on the World Wide Web. Ours is www.cityofmadison.com.

**World Wide Web**

An Internet service that links multimedia documents together using hypertext. Users can jump between documents using links to view text, graphics, movies, and other media. Invented by Tim Berners-Lee at the Center for European Particle Research (CERN) in Geneva, Switzerland.

**Web Server**
 The software used to manage documents and graphics for use on the World Wide Web. A server can host many websites.

**Website**
 A person or organization's collection of documents placed on a Web Server. Sometimes referred to as "site".

# Permission and Release for Use of Photograph
# On the City of Madison Website

I authorize the City of Madison to use the attached photograph of myself on the City of Madison website.  I understand that use of the photograph on the City of Madison website will make it unavailable for public viewing.

I certify that I have the right to permit the use of this photograph of myself on the City of Madison website.  I permit the City of Madison to use this photograph of myself on the City of Madison website for an unlimited period of time.  I acknowledge that the City of Madison is the owner of all rights in and to the City of Madison website, and that no monetary consideration or other consideration is due or owing to myself.

I hereby release the City of Madison and its officers, agents, officials and employees from any claims by me for any damage or injury of any kind or nature whatsoever to my person or property arising from or related to the use of this photograph on the City of Madison website.

I have carefully read the foregoing Permit and Release and I fully understand all of its provisions and agree to all of them.

_____          _____
Date                                                        Signature

 

                                       _____
                                       Name, printed

                                       _____
                                       Address

                                       _____
                                       _____

*(The parent or legal guardian of each person who appears in the photograph who is under 18 years of age must sign below.)*

I  h e r e b y  c e r t i f y  t h a t  I  a m  t h e  p a r e n t  o r  l e g a l  g u a r d i a n  o f



who appear(s) in the photograph that is the subject of this Permit and Release and that I agree to all of the provisions of this Permit and Release on behalf of the said minor person(s).

_____          _____
Date                                                        Signature of Parent or Guardian

                                       _____
                                       Name, printed

                                       _____
                                       Address

                                       _____