

**HOW TO:**

# GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR CITY WEBSITE



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**BY ROD MARTIN**

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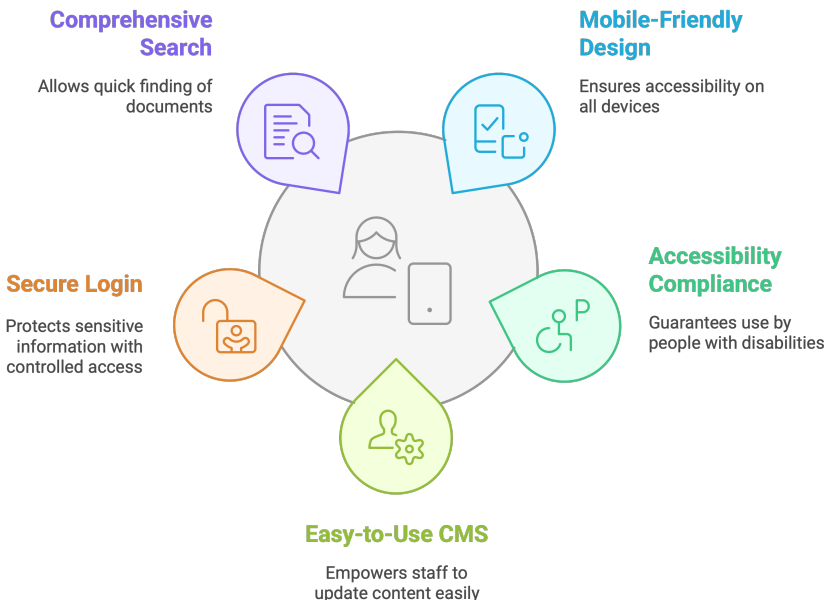
A city website is more than just a digital presence—it’s a **central hub** for communication, services, and community engagement.

This checklist outlines the essential features that help a small city website serve residents, support staff, and promote transparency. From **online forms** and **event calendars** to **council minutes** and **public alerts**, these features ensure that the website functions as a reliable, accessible, and user-friendly resource for all.

This guide can help prioritize the tools and content that matter most to your community. **Check off each one your current site provides and let’s see how you’re doing!**

# CITY WEBSITE FEATURE CHECKLIST

## CORE SITE FEATURES



❑ **Clean, mobile-friendly design**

A responsive, clean design ensures all residents can access city information easily on any device, from desktops to smartphones.

❑ **ADA/WCAG accessibility compliant**

Accessibility compliance guarantees that everyone, including people with disabilities, can use the website without barriers.

❑ **Easy-to-use CMS for staff**

A simple backend system empowers city staff to keep the website current and relevant without requiring technical expertise.

❑ **Secure login with user roles/permissions**

Controlled access protects sensitive information and allows each department to manage their own content efficiently.

❑ **Search that includes PDFs and minutes**

Comprehensive search ensures residents can quickly find documents like council minutes or city ordinances without hassle.

## Enhancing Community Communication

**News/Announcements**

Keeps the community informed and builds trust

**Events Calendar**

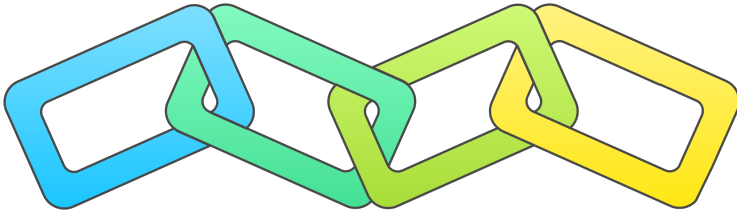
Organizes community events and promotes engagement

**Emergency Alerts**

Provides critical updates for public safety

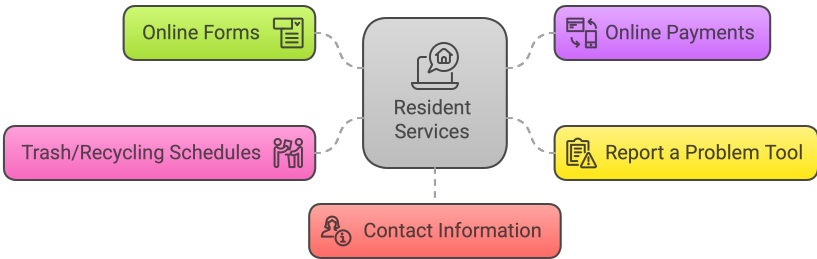
**Notification Signup**

Offers residents choice in how they receive updates



- News/announcements section**  
Keeping the community informed builds transparency and trust, especially when timely updates are needed.
- Events calendar with filters**  
An organized event calendar promotes civic engagement and helps residents stay involved in local happenings.
- Emergency and citywide alerts**  
A system for alerts provides critical updates during emergencies or urgent citywide notices, protecting public safety.
- Email/text notification signup**  
Subscription options let residents choose how they want to stay informed, fostering better communication.

# RESIDENT SERVICES



- ❑ **Online forms (permits, licenses, etc.)**  
Digital forms reduce in-person visits and paperwork, streamlining city services for both staff and residents.
- ❑ **Online payments**  
Accepting payments online adds convenience and speeds up processing for utilities, permits, and other services.
- ❑ **Report a Problem tool**  
A user-friendly way to report issues like potholes or code violations encourages civic responsibility and faster resolution.
- ❑ **Trash/recycling schedules**  
Clear, accessible service schedules help reduce missed pickups and improve community satisfaction.
- ❑ **Contact info for departments/services**  
Easy access to contact details ensures residents can reach the right person or office when they need help.



# GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY



## ▶ Council Bios

Providing information about elected officials to promote accountability

## ▶ Meeting Records

Ensuring public access to decision-making processes

## ▶ Public Documents

Offering a centralized repository for vital public records

## ▶ Records Request Forms

Facilitating easy access to public records

- Council bios, contact info**  
Sharing information about elected officials supports accountability and encourages public engagement with local government.
- Meeting agendas, minutes, and recordings**  
Public access to meeting records ensures transparency in decision-making and lets residents stay informed.
- Public documents library**  
A searchable repository of city documents gives residents a one-stop location for vital public records.
- FOIA or records request form**  
An easy process for public records requests supports open government and legal compliance.



# BUSINESS & VISITORS



## Business Licenses

Centralizing business information to encourage economic development and support local entrepreneurs.



## Zoning Info

Providing clear guidelines to help residents and developers understand regulations for smart growth.



## Tourism Section

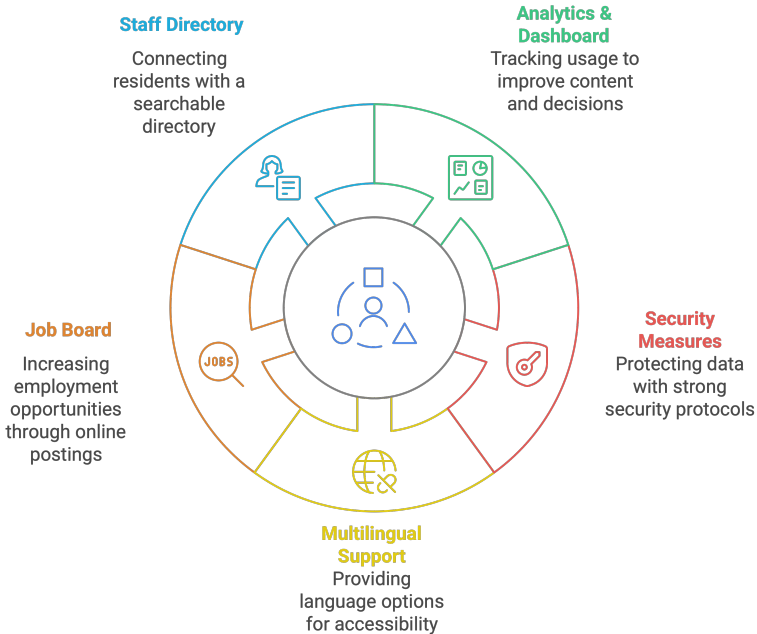
Highlighting attractions and amenities to invite visitors and boost local pride and tourism.

- Business licenses/resources info**  
Centralizing business information encourages economic development and supports local entrepreneurs.
- Zoning and permitting info**  
Clear zoning guidelines help residents and developers understand regulations, supporting smart growth.
- Tourism section**  
Highlighting attractions and amenities invites visitors and boosts local pride and tourism.





# TECHNICAL & ADMIN



- Analytics/dashboard**  
Tracking usage and behavior helps staff improve content and make data-informed decisions.
- SSL, security, and backups**  
Protecting the site with strong security safeguards residents' data and ensures reliable access.
- Multilingual support (if needed)**  
Language options ensure non-English-speaking residents can access vital services and information.
- Job board and application form**  
Posting jobs online increases access to employment opportunities and makes hiring more efficient.
- Staff directory**  
A searchable directory helps residents connect with the right city employees, improving service delivery.

How many boxes did you check?

Does your current site make the cut?

# LET'S CHECK ALL THE BOXES!

**C**reating an amazing website for your city is in our DNA. We know what it takes, how to make it look great and most of all - make it easy to maintain to the highest standards.

## BENEFITS:

### 1. Flexible Content Structure



We create custom content types, fields, and taxonomies (ways to categorize and group information) that allow you to structure complex data—like agendas, staff directories, service listings, or public documents—without custom code. You can easily organize and display content in ways that match how cities operate.

### 2. Granular Permissions for Staff



With built-in role-based access control, you can assign permissions to different departments or users. That means Parks & Rec can manage events, while the Clerk's office handles council minutes—all in the same system, securely.

### 3. Strong Accessibility & Multilingual Support



We understand the new federal mandate around accessibility. Our websites support WCAG accessibility standards out of the box which makes it easy to maintain. If you need a multi-lingual site, we can help you serve *all* residents, including those with disabilities or who speak languages other than English.

#### 4. Scalable and Secure



The content management system we use is implemented by governments worldwide for good reason—it's secure, actively maintained, and scalable. Whether your city has 1,000 or 50,000 residents, our solution can grow with you without needing a platform switch.

#### 5. Powerful Community & Add-ons



Need calendars, document libraries, alerts, or online forms? Our solution has mature, well-supported modules like Views (easy to use query wizard), Webforms, and a great Layout Builder that provide these features—saving time and cost compared to custom development.

# SOLUTION:

We use the same Content Management System that powers government websites around the world.

The CMS is Drupal - and we're experts.

Some examples of the CMS in use:

- [USA.gov](https://www.usa.gov/) - <https://www.usa.gov/>
- The Department of the Treasury - <https://home.treasury.gov/>
- Federal Government of Australia - <https://www.pm.gov.au/>
- New York State Education - <https://www.nysed.gov/>
- Orange County California - <https://www.ocgov.com/>
- Martin County Florida - <https://www.martin.fl.us/>
- Osgood, Indiana - <https://osgoodindiana.org>
- Benton AR Police - <https://bentonpolice.org>

As you can see, government agencies both very large and very small (and everything in between) can be powered by Drupal (<https://drupal.org>).

Our government/city implementation of Drupal features **all of the benefits listed above** and can be customized for your city.

We style the site according to your style guide and add any features you need.

**We're leading the way with the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)** in our websites that includes automatic alt-text for images, summaries of PDF's for accessibility requirements, adjusting the tone of the text to match your city's style and more.

We can provide a **Chatbot for your site visitors** to find things quickly and answer questions based on the information on **your** site (not ChatGPT).

We also provide **world-class hosting** so your site is **always** there for your constituents when they need it.

# WE'D LOVE TO MEET WITH YOU!

Head over to <https://drupalhelps.com/meet> to schedule a consultation - let's get the ball rolling!