

Content Strategy Report

FOR CITY OF CHICO, CA WEBSITE

Brian Arfanis
ICM 513 | QUINNPIAC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Chico has awarded us with a contract in response to their RFP for website redesign services. We have decided to also do a content strategy report. This content strategy report explains how content impacts and determines a successful website. A thorough analysis of the site was made and laid out in this report. The analysis includes a summary of the current content on the site, recommendations on how to improve the content and solutions to better understand and relate to the audience.

Currently, the City is missing meta descriptions on each page which is critical for search engine optimization. The decentralized approach to content management has led to inconsistencies in design and writing styles from page to page. Though disorganized in some areas, a lot of the content can be re-used and improved to enhance the look and function of the website.

A more detailed audit of the content is displayed in the below 5 sections of the report:

- **Introduction**
- **Current Content Analysis** – A look at the current content and what condition it is in.
- **Content Goals** – Identifies the goals of the audience and examples of structured statements to reflect those goals.
- **Content Strategy** – Sitemaps, wireframes and writing guides to help improve the look and feel of the website.
- **Conclusion**

We look forward to working with the City of Chico and helping to improve the content and overall function of their website.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	Section I
CURRENT CONTENT ANALYSIS	Section II
CONTENT GOALS	Section III
CONTENT STRATEGY	Section IV
CONCLUSION	Section V

INTRODUCTION | SECTION I

This report is for the City of Chico California. Below are key terms that will be referenced throughout the report,

Key Terms:

Meta Description – Summarizes the Pages content. Appears under the pages URL in search results.

Title Tag – HTML element that describes the title of the webpage. Title tags are displayed on search engine results.

H1 Tag – The title of a post or other significant text on a page.

H2 Tag – A subheading to the H1 tag and contains similar keywords as the H1 tag.

SEO (Search Engine Optimization) – Increasing the amount of traffic to a website by making sure the site appears high on search engine lists.

URI, Uniform Resource Identifier – The official name for things the user sees on a website that begin with “http:” or “mailto:”

The RFP issued by The City of Chico is asking for website redesign. We have decided to put together a content strategy report due to the large amount content issues and goals mentioned in the RFP.

Below is a list of what the RFP mentions in terms of content needed:

- “Replace the existing content management system (CMS) with a modern CMS.. with better web based and mobile friendly content management tools to efficiently maintain the website, engage citizens, and improve the City’s brand and messaging consistency.” – Potential alignment Strategy.
- Content is currently categorized by city department and can be difficult to find
- content strategy to support this decentralized approach to content management.
- “has a robust search engine optimization (SEO) structure;”
- well documented, content strategy to support this decentralized approach to content management
- Work with city project team to determine a new website content information architecture, sitemap, and navigation framework to achieve consistency and support ease of navigation.
- Develop theme designs and page templates that are functional and easy to navigate.
- Develop and implement a content management strategy establishing content types and views.
- Robust search engine optimization (SEO) structure.
- Robust website analytics tools
- News/press release postings.
- Events calendar
- Photo slideshows/albums/galleries.
- Image management tools

A content strategy report helps create meaningful, cohesive content that will last and attract a core audience. Content is essential for a website and can maximize search engine optimization which is

mentioned in the list above. This report will also provide examples of site structure that will best compliment content such as press releases, calendars and images.

To fully take advantage of a website re-design, a content strategy report is essential because it helps deliver the main portion of a good website...quality content.

CURRENT CONTENT ANALYSIS | SECTION II

The website already contains a lot of content. A scan we performed using the screening application ScreamingFrog, identified over 280,000 URI or pages/resources where content was found. Some other findings include:

- 413 images
- 4364 PDF's
- Over 280,000 HTML elements
- Page Titles ranging from 30 to 50 characters
- Over 80% of H1 tags are duplicates
- None of the pages seem to have Meta Descriptions
- There is Financial information and other past documents that can be used and archived in the new site.
- A lot of images can be re-used as well as maps that indicate locations of the city.

The most recurring issues based on the screening include:

A need for more unique H1 and H2 tags that are easily identified. Stronger and more engaging page titles and descriptive and easy to read meta descriptions.

Based on some of the above findings, let's make some revisions to Chico's heading tags, page titles and meta descriptions.

H1 tag review:

Page titles and heading tags help with Search Engine Optimization as it is important to have keywords in them, H1 tags are also one of the most visually noticeable pieces of content on the page.

The H1 tag for Chico's "Living" Page is much too long and reads as a paragraph rather than a catchy title. Also, it doesn't do a good job of describing the topic of the page. The current heading is:

"Living in Chico is a dream for those who love the outdoors. Winters are generally mild with lows dipping into the 20's during the coldest months with highs touching the low 100's during the hottest. No matter the time of year, there is always something to get you outside."

<https://www.choosechico.com/outdoors>

The text is bold and stands out which is good but a better example in terms of wording would be "Chico offers one of kind sites and attractions!"

This example is short, to the point, describes the topic on the page and peaks the user's interest.

Competitor Analysis- Santa Cruz County in northern California uses heading tags to promote their parks. Some of the headings include, "FROM THE MOUNTAINS TO THE SEA: NATURAL BEAUTY THRIVES IN STATE PARKS" and "PAIR YOUR FAVORITE PATH WITH A PINT." Other nearby cities are using shorter headings that describe the content and peaks the user's interest.

Page Title review:

Page titles are one of the first things a user sees. It is at the top of the page and it summarizes the general topic of the whole page in a few words. Some of Chico's pages do not have a standout page title such as the Business- Sector page - <https://www.choosechico.com/business-sectors>.

In the Business Sector example think of what the customer wants. Customers want opportunities where they can be successful and strive in. A good title for this page would be "Business for Success" or "Business Sectors for your Passion to grow"

Competitor Analysis- Other Cities such as Vallejo California use simple titles such as "Animal Care Services" and "Museums." These are fine, simple and describes the content on the page, but this could be an opportunity to separate Chico from other City websites. Create fun and intriguing titles that are short and describe the topic of the page.

Meta Description review:

Google tends to truncate meta descriptions that are longer than 160 characters

The current meta description for Chico's main site that is listed on google cuts off "...", it is also and copy and paste from content on the page. Create a mini add and sell your site! Below is the current meta description,

*"Dedicated to the business of government for the **City of Chico**, including Public Safety, Public Works, Parks, Business and Building Permits, City Council and ..."*

For a meta description, it is important to be specific and relevant to the page and to have actions words to have users excited to click on it.

Let's look at a good example from another city. The city of Bristol CT's meta description reads *"See how the Bristol's various departments work to maintain and promote the city on a day-to-day basis."* - It is short, to the point and provokes action using the words "see how."

A Good Example that Chico can use is "The official Home of the City of Chico where we create a safe, informative and welcoming environment for all to succeed"

CONTENT GOALS | SECTION III

Currently, The City of Chico has the below content on their website:

- Maps
- Images
- Stock photos
- Videos
- Social Media icons and links
- Ill in forms on Contact us page
- Text
- Excel Spreadsheets
- Financial reports such as valuation statements

Some missing content includes:

- Master list with all contacts and contact information.
- More prominent Call to Action buttons
- Blog
- HTML functions for a lot of the pages such as meta descriptions

Main visitors to the site are residing in the city, looking to reside in the city or looking to do business with the city. This website is their main source of information and contact to the cities departments and officials. Users want easy access and to be updated on current conditions and announcements. Having good and functional content such as maps, calendars, contact lists, page titles, etc., will keep the user happy and will allow for you to have an engaging and functional site. The City of Chico is a safe and reliable place to live, and we want our content to show that.

Having a core strategy statement and a messaging framework for the site will help lay out the direction you want to go in for your content and what you want to portray to your audience. Below is a statement and framework for the city.

A core strategy statement for City of Chico Website

The Chico Website looks to offer City information and services, by providing user friendly and robust content that makes the residents who live and work in Chico feel safe, well informed and engaged with the city.

A messaging framework for City of Chico Website

When a user first goes to our site, we want them to feel engaged. Once they have navigated the site for a little, they should feel comfortable and understand that Chico is a welcoming place to live with easy access to every department. Our content clearly shows what our users need because it is well-organized, concise and informative.

CONTENT STRATEGY | SECTION IV

Now that we have an idea of what content is present, what content is missing, a direction of where to take it and knowledge of what makes good content, let's look at some wireframes, sitemaps and matrices. This section will be concluded with a writing style review.

Site Matrix – Organizes goals of each page and objects on the page.

Site Map – Organizing and labeling content so the user can find what matters to them.

Wireframes – Sketches of what the user sees on a webpage and what pieces of content they see. *

*The wireframe pages below include the "About Us" page, the "City Manager" Page and the "Bidwell Park" Page. The structure of these pages can be carried over to other pages.

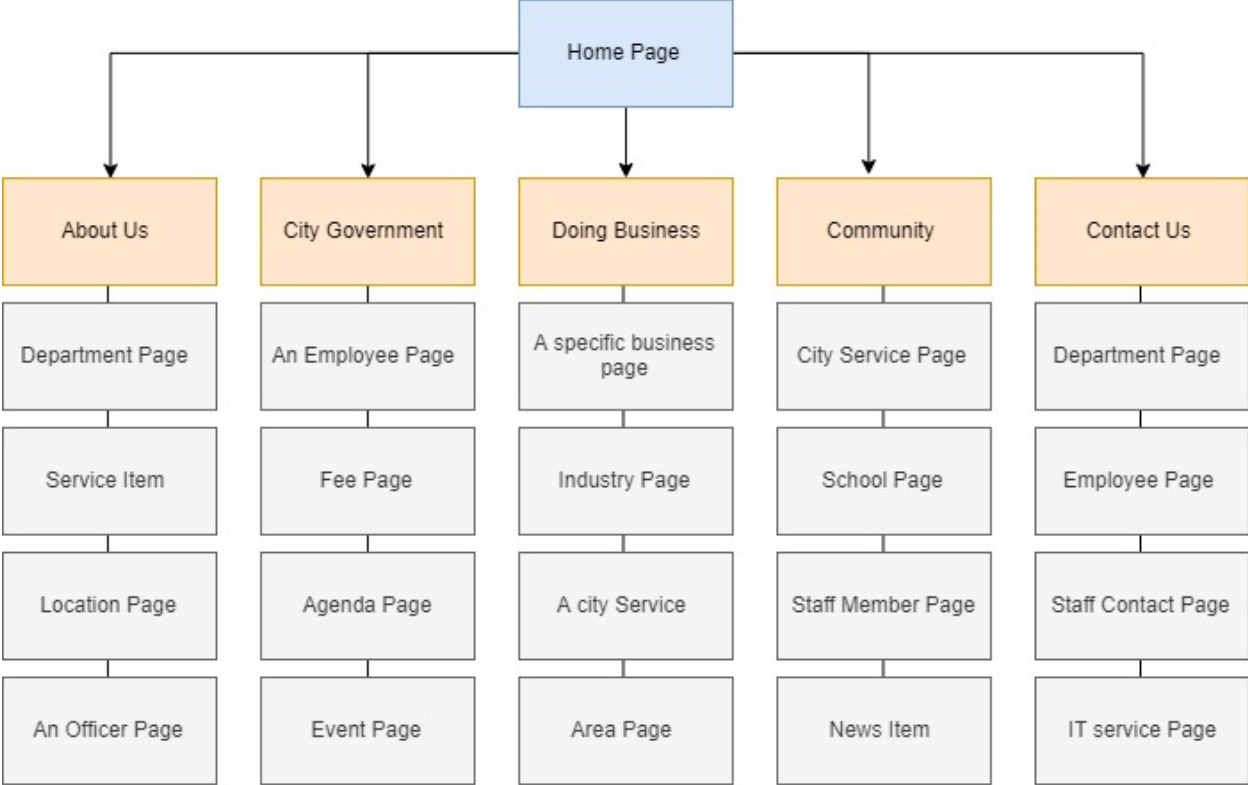
Each one will provide you with a base to begin designing your pages and an understanding of what content is most important.

Site Matrix

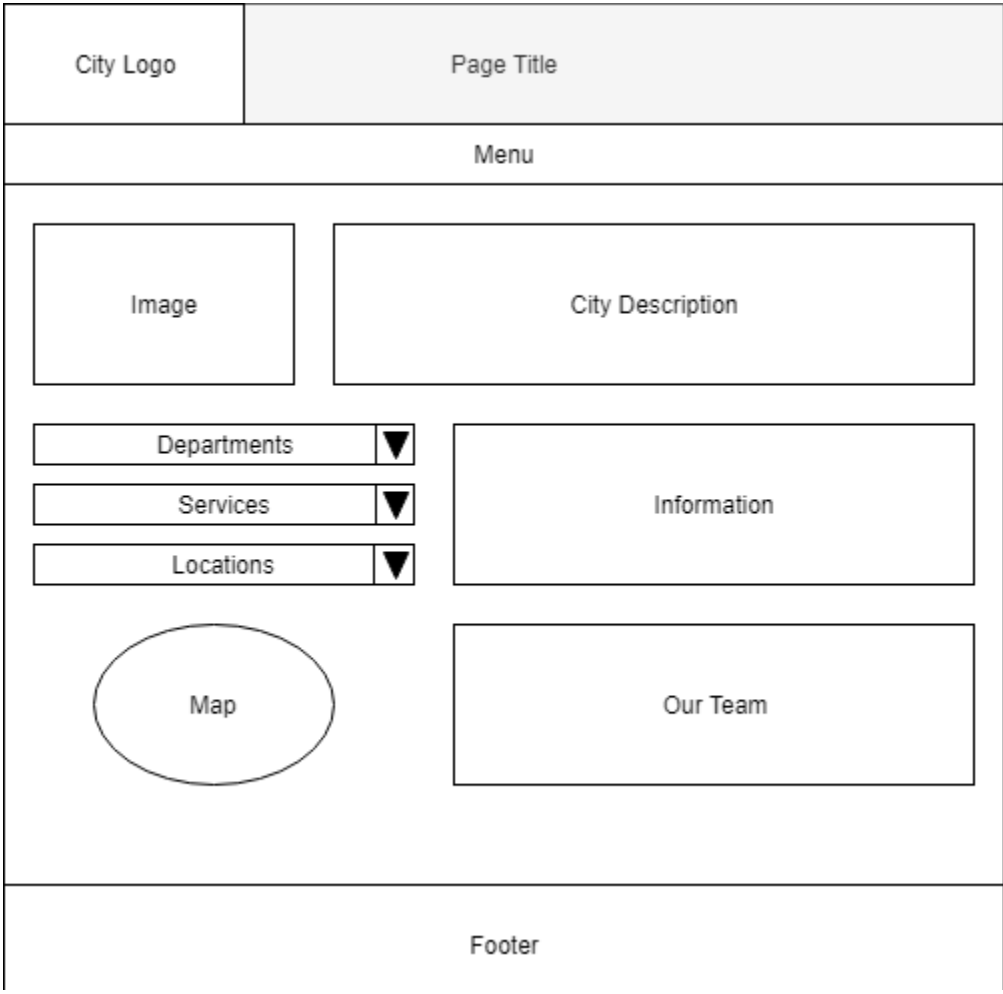
Business Goals	Core Page	Content objects	Taxonomy
Garner attention to increase web trafficking.	<i>Home</i>	Announcements Alerts Calendar Quick Links City Descriptions	City Description Announcements Alerts Calendar Quick Links
Encourage people to visit Chico	<i>A Department Page</i>	Name Department Services Location	Department Location
Educate and spread awareness on City Fees, Agendas and Departments	<i>A fee Page</i>	Fees Agendas Emails Candidates	Directory Agenda Fees

		Directory	
Build relationships that will improve business and brand	<i>An Industry Page</i>	Areas Industry Tourism City Services Events	Type of Business Industry City Services Areas
Improve the satisfaction of customers through better service	<i>News Item</i>	News Releases School Listing Transportation Staff directory Services	Services Staff Directory
Direct user questions and inquires to website owner	<i>An Employee Page</i>	Email Phone Number Name Mailing Address Comments Section Employees	Email Phone Number Department Employees

Site Map



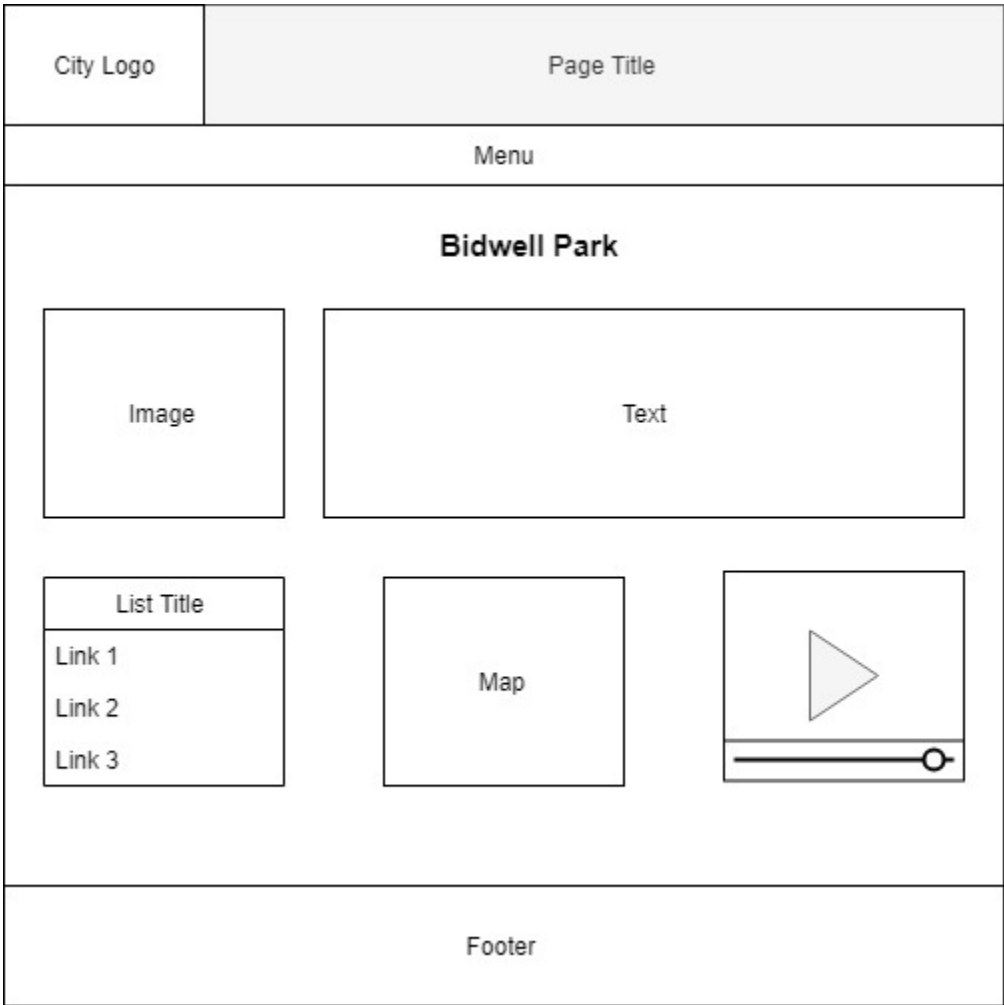
Wire Frame for About US Core Page



Wireframe for City Manager Page

City Logo	Page Title	
Menu		
Employee Headshot	BIO - Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur	
Employee Name		
Employee Title		
Department		
Phone Number	Email	Fax
Footer		

Wireframe for Bidwell Park



Writing Style Review:

Writing Style for a website should not be overlooked. It is important to understand that writing for the web is not the same as writing for print. Web writing should be short and to the point. According to UMB (University of Baltimore Maryland), research shows that people scan web text rather than read every word. This makes it easy for users to scan for information quickly.

Another study by Harald Weinreich* of ACM Transactions, finds that users have time to read AT MOST 28% of the words during an average visit on a webpage A paragraph should consist of 70 words or less.

*The research paper can be found at (<https://www.nngroup.com/articles/how-little-do-users-read/>)

Some other things to keep in mind:

- Load the most important information at the top of the page/level of your site.
- Use Active voice(subject-verb-object) because it goes straight to the point. Avoid passive voice (object-verb-subject). Passive voice can make it difficult to know who did what to whom and can cause confusion for the reader.
- Make sure everyone can understand your words. Don't waste words and confuse the audience. Keep it simple, for example instead of using the word **commence** you may want to use the word **start** or **begin**.
- Above all else, understand your audience.

Let us look at some examples from the Chico website, specifically the government department:

Government

The City of Chico's mission is to protect and enhance our community's quality of life for present and future generations.

We are a customer-based, performance-driven, results-oriented organization, focused on finding the answer, solving the problem, and achieving positive outcomes., We partner with the Chico community, the California regional community, and the global community, to improve our world. We are trustworthy stewards of the public's resources. We constantly look for better, faster, and smarter ways to improve efficiency. We strive for exceptional customer service; through innovation, sound planning, and in some cases by learning from mistakes. We welcome diversity in our community and our work place. We conduct our work with dignity, respect, and open communication; to our community, to our customers, and to one another. We are accountable for our performance, the success of our organization, and we are recognized for our achievements. [Chico, a safe place to raise a family, an ideal location for business, and a premier place to live.](#)

The first sentence (highlighted) has too many words and drags on. A better example would be "We are a determined organization that aims to solve customer needs." This will also help shorten the length of the paragraph as it has over 140 words. A good range is around 70 words.

The fact that you use the word "we" is a good sign because it makes the audience feel a more personable connection to the site. This principle could be used more in your *About* section.

ABOUT

The City of Chico was founded in 1860 by General John Bidwell and incorporated in 1872. The City of Chico has grown to over 33 square miles with a population of 92,464 (January 2016) in the incorporated area and a greater urbanized area population of approximately 100,000. Chico is located in the Northern Sacramento Valley of California, ninety miles north of Sacramento on Highway 99, in Butte County, east of Interstate 5.

Chico is known as a well-managed city that values quality infrastructure and services, and maintains a special sense of community and small-town living as it has developed into a vibrant regional center for business, recreation and cultural activities. There are also many recreational opportunities in and around Chico. BIDWELL PARK one of the largest municipally owned parks in the nation (3,670 acres), is the focal point of the City's park system and offers numerous trails for biking, hiking and equestrian use.

The above paragraph lengths are good but instead of always saying City of Chico, use "we." For example, **we** have grown to over 33 miles with a population of 92,464 (January 2016) in the incorporated area and a greater urbanized area population of approximately 100,000

CONCLUSION | SECTION V

We look forward to furthering our relationship with the city. This report has highlighted the state of the current content and has offered a framework to begin optimizing the potential of the website for the city and the cities' audience.

This content strategy report will be your guide to a long lasting and successful website.

References:

<https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2012/02/content-quality-practical-approach-to-content-analysis/>

<http://graduateships.com/consulting-top-50/>

<https://hookagency.com/meta-keywords-seo/>

<https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2012/02/content-quality-practical-approach-to-content-analysis/>

Taxonomy references:

<http://strategiccontent.com/how-taxonomy-is-used/>

<https://www.beancreative.com/website-taxonomy-101-aka-the-art-and-science-of-classifying-your-content/>

Writing Style references:

<https://guides.service.gov.au/content-guide/writing-style/>

<https://www.umaryland.edu/cpa/toolbox/website-manual/prepare/web-writing/>

Meta description reference:

<https://www.seoclarity.net/resources/knowledgebase/write-perfect-meta-description-seo-17115/>

Headings reference:

<https://neilpatel.com/blog/h1-tag/>