

# **Web Sites that Don't Work: Don'ts and Do's!**

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**"Municipal Web Sites:  
The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly, and How to Make Yours Better"  
New Jersey State League of Municipalities  
PNC Arts Center  
December 7, 2005**

# Don'ts!

- assume you know what people want
- assume people know what you do
- overestimate technology
- overuse or underuse graphics, logos
- get in the way of your user
- forget the back door
- get into a rut or get stale
- forget you're part of a team

# Assume you know what people want

- Ask users what services and information they would like to see on your Web
- Check your numbers: what are most popular existing pages, what are most common search terms, what are most frequently asked questions
- Solicit input and suggestions from municipal employees, Web users, residents, businesses and media

# **Assume people know what you do**

- Explain simply what mayors, governing bodies and agencies do (and don't do)
- Use plain language, not government jargon
- Describe briefly information and services other levels of government

# Overestimate technology

- Web still is not the sole source of information
- Some users still not sophisticated in navigation, search, other tools
- Many users still using dial-up connections, may not have software for imaging, pdf, animation, etc.
- Complementary approaches, libraries, e-mail, snail mail

# ***Overuse or underuse graphics, logos, photos***

- Avoid unnecessary clutter that distracts and slows users
- Graphics, photos can help to improve overall user experience, evaluation of Web quality and content

# Don't get in the way

- Don't waste users time with fluff (e.g. Mayors welcomes, animation, etc.)
- Get to the point
- Well-designed websites allow visitors to understand immediately the best way to get information through tools such as
  - ✓ the search engine,
  - ✓ links to other pages and sites,
  - ✓ site maps and site indexes,
  - ✓ executive summaries of the website's content and structure, and
  - ✓ FAQs and most popular pages

# Forget the back door

- Don't assume users are entering your Web through its home page
- Use of Google, other search engines allow searches to internal content
- Make sure you keep internal pages with navigation, links to home page, site index, search tool, etc.



# Get into a rut or get stale

- Give users reasons to come back
  - ✓ news, surveys, updates, weather, traffic
  - ✓ keep content, including directories, up-to-date

# Forget you're part of a team

- Make the Web consistent in content, design through all agencies
- Solicit suggestions from each unit
- Give others feedback
- Emphasize that Web sites increasingly contribute to perception of public of how government does its job