

# Operation Better Block

## Executive Summary

### Community Partner

Taili Thompson

### Student Consulting Team

Clarice Du

Adrienne Li

Elaine Wang

## Background

Operation Better Block (OBB) is a non-profit organization located in Pittsburgh that seeks to raise up the Homewood community through technical and community development. As stated on their website: *The mission of Operation Better Block, Inc. is to strategize, organize and mobilize, block by block, to benefit the Homewood Community.*

The primary focus of this project was on Realistic ReEntry, a new initiative under OBB that is led by our community partner Taili Thompson. This initiative seeks to support returning citizens in Allegheny County by connecting them to relevant and vital resources. The original website was outdated and had limited capabilities, so Taili had to defer to other systems to manage Realistic ReEntry operations.

## Project Description

### Project Opportunity

During our first meeting, our community partner described this project as a last effort to save the Realistic ReEntry website, as the original website served little purpose and functionality. We identified two key problem areas to solve, the first being the website's low usability. Specifically, there were barriers to accessing relevant resources and the website's design and branding felt misaligned with the organization's mission. The second key problem area was the lack of an internal database and internal features, such as features for resource posting, resource sending, and documentation.

### Project Vision

Our project vision was to create a new Realistic ReEntry web application with 1) an improved user interface and experience for all users, and 2) an internal system for staff to manage organizational operations. We built the website using Django and Bootstrap, leveraging the codebase of another website under Taili's program that CMU IS student consultants developed over the past years. Our solution has several key benefits, such as allowing RR staff much greater autonomy in management, enabling business scalability in the future, increasing the business opportunities of RR and more.

## Project Outcomes

Compared to its predecessor, the revamped website stands as a significantly more refined, efficient, and tailored tool that serves both the employees of Realistic ReEntry and its public users. Internally, the site now features capabilities that allow employees to add and edit resources, tags, caseloads, referrals to resources, meeting notes, users, and organization. Furthermore, various management tasks across six newly defined user roles were streamlined, a new map tracking feature was implemented, and a more modern and professional system layout was created. Externally, we introduced a new branding theme that better aligns with the organization's mission and purpose. We also implemented the member sign-up form and automated its internal process. Additionally, we have revised and updated the resource database along with the website's organizational content to ensure greater accuracy and clarity. This ensures that external users receive reliable and relevant information, which enhances their engagement and trust in Realistic ReEntry.

## Project Deliverables

Our final deliverables include the Realistic ReEntry Github repo and a folder of the project plan, final report, sorted resource database, user testing feedback, wireframes and meeting notes.

## Recommendations

We recommend that user roles be expanded on in the future, and for features specific to each user role to be implemented. If each internal user has a well-defined and structured set of permissions on the website, future developers will be able to add more personalized functionalities for each user type. We also recommend that future developers improve the usability of the site to allow for more accessibility. One such suggestion would be to display tags into three categories as per our wireframes: Employment, Housing & needs, Support & services, to alleviate the tasks of searching through a large list of filters and fully take advantage of the new resource categorization system.

## Student Consulting Team

**Clarice Du** was the Designer and Client Relationship Manager. She's a 4th-year Information Systems student with an Additional Major in Human-Computer Interaction and a Minor in Art. She will be on a gap this coming summer but previously enjoyed internships at Microsoft.

**Adrienne Li** was the team's Quality Assurance Manager and led most of the development work. She is a 3rd-year Information Systems major and Computer Science minor. This coming summer she will be working at SIG as a software engineer intern.

**Elaine Wang** was the team's Full-Stack Developer. She is a 4th-year Information Systems student with a Minor in Computer Science. She previously had experience working at IBM and Atlassian. After graduation, she will be working as a software engineer at Atlassian.