BUILDING A DESIGN SYSTEM

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THE CHALLENGE:

How can we create a system where developers can easily access design assets and brand guidelines, and designers can easily add new components and styles?

BACKGROUND

Timeline
10 weeks

My Role
Information architecture
Design systems strategy
UI design
Usability testing

Tools
Adobe XD
Airtable
Notion
zeroheight

DESIGN GOALS

The design system would:

1	2	3
Define principles and guidelines	*Become a home for all design and development resources*	*Serve as a collaborative component library*

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Name	Logo	Site	Purpose	Main Nav	How to Access	Features/Strengths	Weaknesses	Overall	Potential Features to Incorporate
Government of UK Design System	GOV.UK	https://design-system.service.gov.uk/	"Use this design system to make your service consistent with GOV.UK. Learn from the research and experience of other service teams and avoid ...	- Get Started - Styles - Components - Patterns - Community	GitHub Direct download Website	- Top nav panel has main categories, left nav within each category has more subcategories (i.e. color, images, layout) - Color contrast includes WCAG guidelines - Includes HTML and CSS code in style section...	- Components not organized into sections the way the COB file is (might be hard to tell where to use a certain component unless you click into that component's page where it specifically explains when to use it) - Very text heavy explanations of when to ...	★★★	Help improve this page More text explanations for component use
Estonian Brand (brand estonia)	estonia	https://brand.estonia.ee/?lang=en	"Here you'll find everything you need to introduce Estonia in an inspiring way. We have mapped the main strengths of Estonia and...	- Messages - Brand - Toolbox - In use - Help	Website Direct download	- Subscribe to get email updates - Well organized subsections, explanations of how to use colors, type, components, easy to download - Toolbox of assets is searchable - Top nav has main categories like Gov UK, ...	- Very well rounded design system, no weaknesses found; potentially some issues with auto-translation to English, but overall very good	★★★★★	Searchable assets in design system Feature print and digital work?
City of Amsterdam	City of Amsterdam	https://designsystem.amsterdam.nl/7awj1hc9f/p/20eba...	"The Design System contains the design principles and the most recent style information, atoms, components and patterns for Amsterdam'...	- Overview - Style - Atoms - Components - Forms - Resources	Direct download Figma plugin Sketch	- Also built in ZeroHeight, so a good reference for the COB system - No top nav, only left side nav; very simple - Lots of text explanation and images in addition to the components	- Not easy to translate from Dutch to any other language; graphics are only in Dutch - Wordy; might be too much text - Not all components are marked for export and downloadable	★★★	Left bar navigation structure
Aurora Design System (Government of Canada)	Aurora	https://design.gccollab.ca/	"Aurora design system is a central design guide created by the Digital Enablement Division within the Government of Canada for our digital ...	- Overview - Components - Content - Data	GitHub Direct download Website	- From homepage, it's organized by your role: "I'm a designer/developer/writer/data scientist" - Simple explanations of what a design system is, how it was built, who can use it - Version control/explanations of updates...	- Little to critique; not the most visually interesting design system but efficient and simple to use	★★★★★	FAQ section
Australian Government Design System	Australian Government	https://designsystem.gov.au/	"The Australian Government Design System provides a framework and a set of tools to help designers and developers build ...	- Home - Get Started - Components - Templates - Community - Support	GitHub Direct download Website	- Quick links from the homepage: Community, Components, Templates - Shows usage stats: 48 active/live projects using the system, 258,961 downloads in the last year - Easy to navigate: shows you where to go ...	- Type for several Australian Government websites is different from the whole design system; distracting - Very thorough; almost no weaknesses to spot, perhaps a little text heavy?	★★★★	Display usage statistics
Poncho (Argentina Design System)		https://argob.github.io/poncho/	"The library of official styles and components to design and develop websites and mobile applications of the Government of the ...	- Start - Identity - Components - Templates	GitHub Direct download	- Searchable icon library - Displays HTML for components - Templates show common layouts for things like login, recover password, email templates, and responsive tables	- No detailed explanation of when to use secondary colors - Component library is small and doesn't feel comprehensive - Must download assets or go through GitHub	★★★	Searchable assets in design system

What's going in Zero Height: (non XD file stuff)
- brand strategy ✓
- colors ✓
- logos and seals ✓
- typography ✓
- icons (experiential, departmental/developer, small circle) ✓
- photography (Flickr, stock, library of congress, city archives) ✓
- employee toolkit
- layouts for media platforms
- writing guide (or just link?)
- video guide (or just link?)
- language and communication guidelines
- components from XD (waiting on latest craft file)

all in brand guidelines

Questions so far: (as of 6/28) *some of these can't be answered right now*
- colors: are we uploading primary colors and primary colors for contrast?
- Black Tea hex code doesn't match the asset already uploaded to ZH
- Hex codes on the greys don't match: the 3rd grey (medium grey #8C2639 in XD) is reading as #D2D2D2 in ZH and the light grey (#585858 in XD) is also wrong, most likely #E0E0E0 in ZH which is right — update: everything in ZH is right, XD being updated
- inconsistency with "grey" and "gray" on website and XD file
- clarity on when to use which sets of colors?
- logos: how do we upload these? ✓
- do we want to upload individual components, or artboards? or does it depend on the type of component? ✓
- ★ what goes on style guide and what goes on components?
- should there be other sections? i.e. employee resources is on the

Questions. Misc. Continued↴
- brand guidelines - should we add?
- should individual icons (experiential, departmental, circular) be uploaded as SVG and PNG to ZH? my recommendation is no, this will take too long [HOLD]
- need the BOS·311 mark for the navigation on the footer
- what should be done with the birth cert wireframes and the "my neighborhood" search wireframes? what's the plan for those?
- Mobile layouts: assuming these get uploaded as different sizes in their component category? the latter
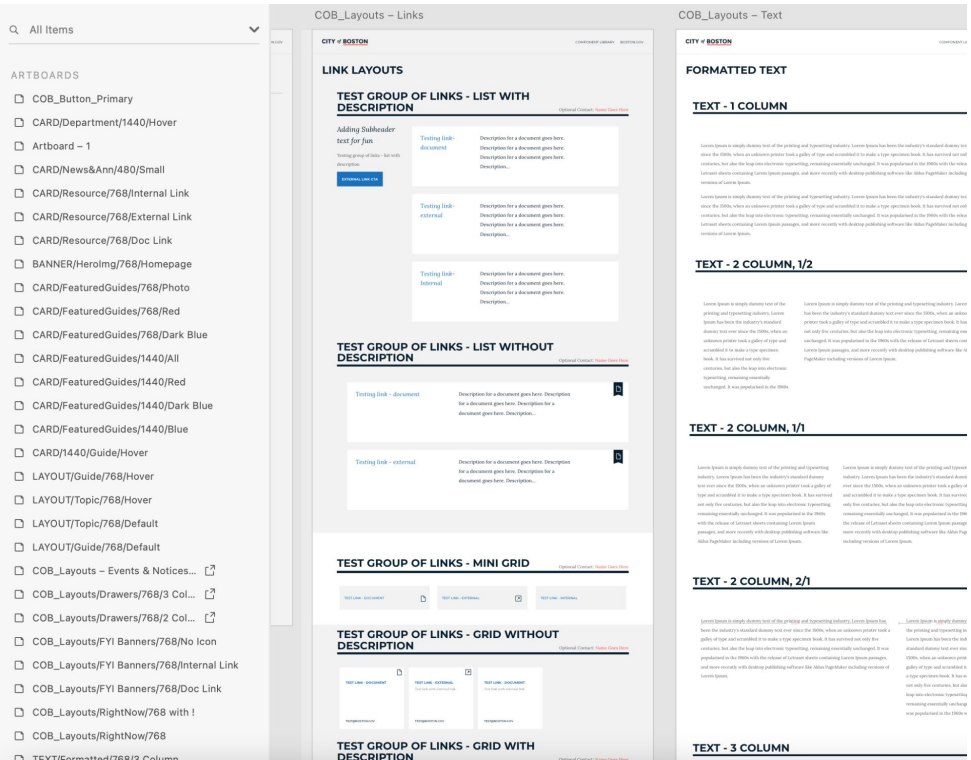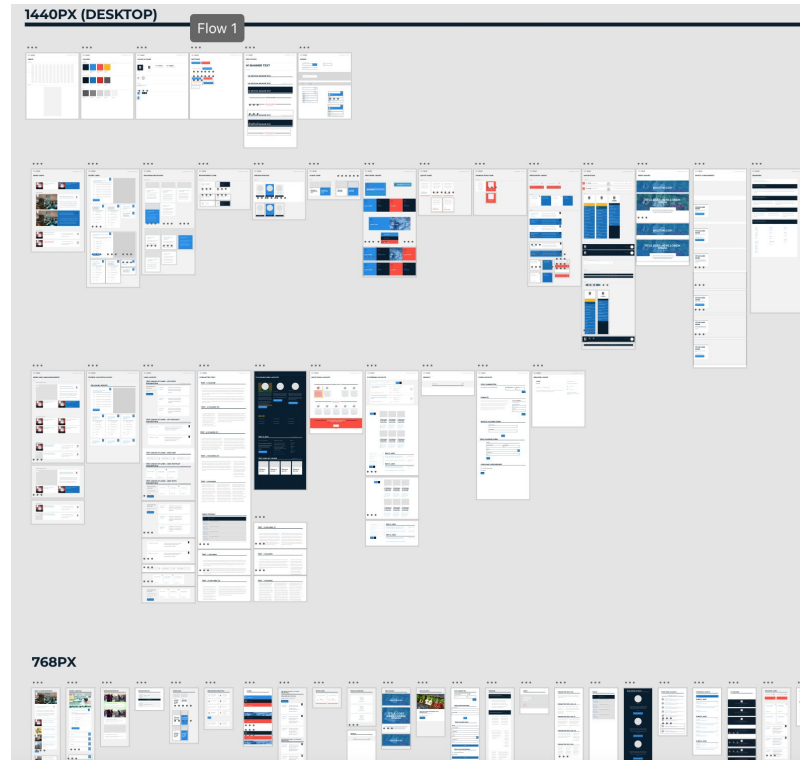 → having a meeting to discuss: should the ZH assets be reflective
★ of what is already created, even if that's not part of the craft audit, or should the assets dictate what we create?
  - when we build new stuff, should we be using what we already have to guide the process? isn't that the idea?

July 1, 2021 feedback: initial uploads into ZH (almost all assets in)
- looks good, great start; lots of questions around artboards vs. individual components - we prefer individual components when possible, but artboards where it makes sense
- icons: "I don't want another place to upload icons when I edit them" (up to Sebastian if we upload Google Drive folders or individually)
- employee toolkit of resources: up to Sebastian — might not be necessary; is ZH only for designers and developers to "talk to each other"? or is it for everyone in the city to use?
- birth cert file is not up to developer specs

BUILDING

CITY *of* BOSTON

Overview   Style Guide   Component Library | 🔍 Search

City of Boston

Updated about 24 hours ago

This is the design system for the City of Boston.

CITY *of* BOSTON

Start Here

Learn about our design system and how to use it.

Fleet

Fleet

The City of Boston's pattern library.

BRAND GUIDELINES

Brand Guidelines

Strategy, typography, colors, logos and seals, layouts and more.

WRITING GUIDE

Writing Guide

For writing content for the City of Boston.

USABILITY TESTING

"It looks user friendly and I cannot wait to use it more in my day-to-day work!"

Positive Feedback
Ease of use
Well organized
People are excited to use it

Opportunities for Improvement
More support and education needed to optimize design system usage

THANK YOU!

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