

BOSTON PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

about the company

The Boston Preservation Alliance is a nonprofit organization that protects and improves the quality of Boston's distinct architectural heritage. Through advocacy and education, they bring people and organizations together to influence the future of Boston's historic buildings, landscapes and communities.

the challenge

The Boston Preservation Alliance's current site is holding it back. Visitors are not clear as to what it is that the Alliance does and therefore, their organization is missing valuable opportunities to engage users in their advocacy efforts and turn them into members and donors. Another critical issue is that their website is not responsive for mobile and it is important for them to turn their social media subscribers into advocates for their important work.

research

In an effort to get to know the organization and the challenges they are facing with their website, I spoke with the team's Communications Manager. She was able to give the Alliance's perspective on what the most important issues are.

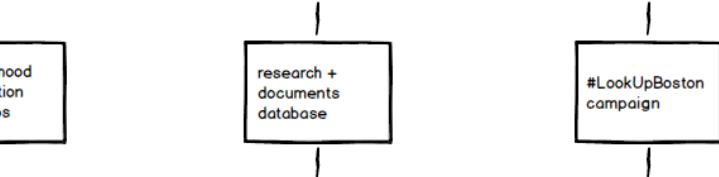
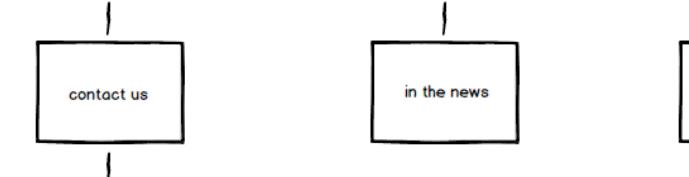
If I had access to their users, I would have also liked to do a series of user interviews to determine how visitors use the site and if there are any common pain points.

I began by doing my own analysis of the site and compiled an inventory of their site's contents into a spreadsheet to get a basic understanding of the framework upon which the site was built. I also did competitive research using the sites of historic preservation nonprofits such as Portland Landmarks, Historic Richmond, Historic Boston Inc., etc.

As a result, I hypothesized that an updated navigation menu would be the first step in addressing the issues of mission clarity and visitor engagement.

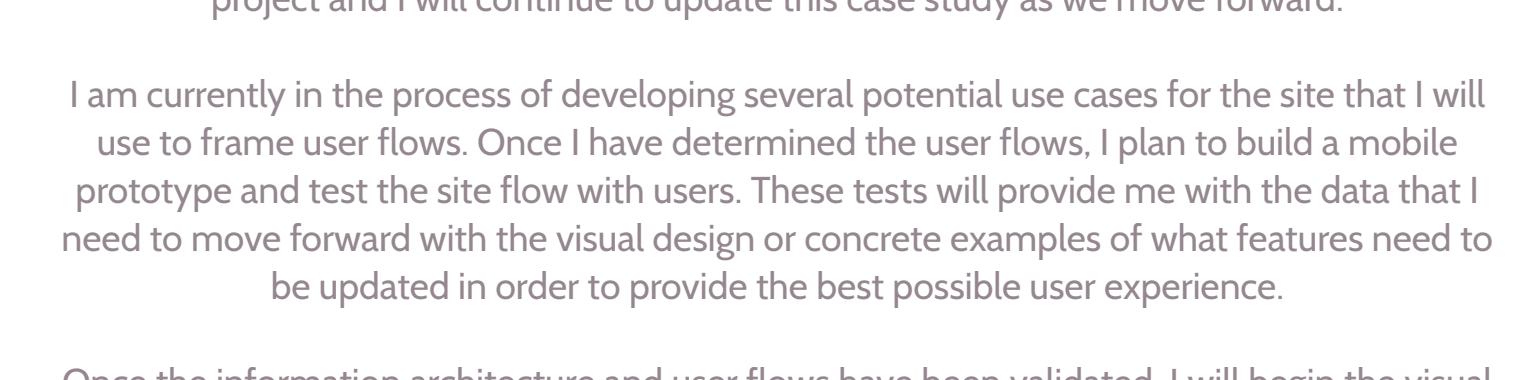
design process

To determine the design of the navigation menu, I tested users with a card-sorting exercise. I pulled terms from the site content inventory, from competitor sites, and incorporated my own suggestions based on my research. Below are examples of final results from two of the card-sorting tests:



The card sorting tests ultimately helped me to understand how users group terms and information together, as well as what information is most important to them. I used patterns discovered during the exercise to reframe the navigation.

Below is a diagram detailing the first iteration of the navigation bar's information architecture:



next steps

My previously detailed work with the Boston Preservation Alliance is part of an ongoing project and I will continue to update this case study as we move forward.

I am currently in the process of developing several potential use cases for the site that I will use to frame user flows. Once I have determined the user flows, I plan to build a mobile prototype and test the site flow with users. These tests will provide me with the data that I need to move forward with the visual design or concrete examples of what features need to be updated in order to provide the best possible user experience.

Once the information architecture and user flows have been validated, I will begin the visual design process and create high fidelity mock-ups of the site in mobile and desktop versions.

These versions of the site will also be put through user testing before being built out by a front-end engineer.