

## PROBLEM

Ottawa Chinatown BIA's (the client) current website is outdated and users are having difficulty with navigating within the site to find key information. The client has not updated the site in years and is in need of a solid foundation and UX feedback so that they can later hire a web designer to continue the project.

### Project Goal & Constraints

They are looking to improve the user experience and design of their current website. The design should be modern and user-friendly while communicating the organization's brand values. Through an optimized navigation, the website should allow users to easily find restaurants, shops, and attractions within their business improvement area. Writing and implementing new content is not an option for this project, thus, designing simple and effective layouts for existing content is key.

The desire was to integrate a Wordpress business directory plugin to be able to filter, sort, and search business listings. Nonetheless, it was not feasible to input all of the business listings within a 2-week timeline and implement all of the desired functionalities without a budget.

## PROCESS

As the sole UX/UI designer for this project, my main focus was to restructure the existing content, improve the design and layout, and better implement the organization's branding elements. In terms of timeline, I utilized the first week of the engagement to find solutions that would bridge the gap between the user needs and the brand intention. This implied leading stakeholder meetings to determine brand attributes, conducting a competitor analysis, developing user profiles, and presenting a proposed site map. I also created a list of prioritized features for the website ranked by its obtainability based on project scope and the desirability for the client. This helped me create a couple iterations of possible layouts followed by a presentation of a high-fidelity prototype. After a few modifications, I handed off the design specs to the web developer so that we could build the site pages in Wordpress for the last week.

## SOLUTION

The final solution consisted of new parent pages: Home, About, Eat, Shop and Experience. I kept the business listings from the original website but separated them depending on whether they were a restaurant vs a shop. On the original website, subpages within the Experience page were in the form of a blog post with little text and large amount of whitespace. My goal was to identify appropriate layouts (i.e. continuous Z-pattern, single column, boxes) that would best fit the existing content while taking advantage of Elementor's free widgets (i.e tabs, toggles, carousels).

## REFLECTIONS

The most challenging aspect of this project was the time constraint and having to work with existing content. While developing user personas, I found it difficult to create solutions that met all user needs due to the limited amount of features that were available. For this reason, the final solution focuses more on the design and appearance as opposed to the usability. If I were to do this project again with more time, I would have developed user flows to predict how the personas would navigate within the new website and include suggestions and placeholders for future content options. With this being my first project working alongside a web developer, I learned the importance of having the developer involved in the early stages of the project and being able to effectively communicate the client's expectations. I'd appreciate any feedback for this project, but more specifically, I am looking to assess the gaps within my design process and how they may have affected the final outcome.