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Design Summary

**Visual Site Map**

My visual site map is shown below. The thicker black line from Home to Molly’s Trolley, Plan Your Visit, About Us, Contact Us, and Rivers of Steel represents the main navigation bar at the top of every page. The thinner lines below represent the footer, which is on each page, and contains links to other pages on my website. The reason why I added so many interconnections was to help my user navigate my website as easily and efficiently as possible (see information architecture section for more details).

A diagram of a website

Description automatically generated

**Information Architecture & Navigation**

Similar to my site map above, I have created a graph displaying the information architecture that displays what information is on what page (shown below on the next page).

A diagram of information architecture

Description automatically generated

When designing my website, I began by narrowing down the most important information that the standard visitor would need to know. My framework was the following: (1) Understand my user and their needs, (2) locate the overarching sections of information for main pages, and (3) organize each page based on the most important information.

To execute this framework, I began by creating my user stories and deciding how I split information across each page. I found that most users who visited the site would be either unsure about the information they were searching for, interested in planning a visit to the Duquesne Incline, interested in the history of the Incline, or looking for contact information. This helped me split the information across four main pages: Home, Plan Your Visit, About Us, and Contact Us.

After I had my four main pages, I began to divide the information based on what I imagined the user would expect to find and focused on creating a clear information hierarchy. For example, my home page contains quick advice for visitors (the weather, waiting time, and incline hours) at the very top of the page since the home page is the first page that visitors will see. Similarly, I imagined that the most important information for planning a visit would be the price information. This general procedure I followed throughout each page.

One specific element I would like to focus on is my footer since it is a large part of user experience. I imagined that this website would receive a wide range of users, so I wanted to make it friendly towards every demographic. I used my footer as an opportunity to provide brief contact information, visiting hours, social media links, and links to other pages on my website (including the citation page). I was inspired by the Statue of Liberty website and thought that this would be a good use of space to help direct users who were not sure how to find the information they were looking for. Additionally, it also answers the most looked for questions (hours). I know that on some webpages (specifically the Contact Us page), it can seem very repetitive, however I’d argue that it is important to have regardless. Additionally, repeated information does not take up that much visual space since it is in the footer, rather than in the middle of a page. I debated removing repeated information from the footer based on what page the user was on but preferred to have consistency to not confuse users.

**First Time vs. Returning Visitors**

I spent a lot of time focusing on how to assist first time visitors in finding what they need while simultaneously engaging returning visitors who already understand the website. For example, a design element that is a perfect example of this is my information box at the top of my home page. While the box contains the hours (information first time visitors are often looking for), the other two pieces of information (Information to Know Today, Waiting Times) change periodically. The information to know today showcases the weather, pulling from Weatherstack API, helping returning visitors decide what to wear to the incline. Additionally, the Waiting Times changes based on the weekday, and time of day.

Another interactive element is the Essential Experience section on the home page. The gallery borders change color based on if the user is hovering over it or not. This helps all visitors focus their attention on the box that they are most interested in. Additionally, it helps show the user where they are clicking, which is useful for the images since every image is linked to a different website.

Outside of creating interactive elements and carefully organizing the information on my website, I also focused on design. I used a consistent color pallet, font heading, and layout for each page, helping my user navigate my website without getting too visually stimulated or overwhelmed.

**Design Evolution**

As I transitioned from my wireframes to developing my code, I realized there were a few issues in my initial design. The first and most obvious error was that my designs on Figma were done on an extremely small frame. While this didn’t impact my layout, a lot of the images that I had initially chosen were too blurry when sized up. I had to spend a bit of time searching for and replacing the images. Although this seems like a small mistake, it impacted other areas of my design. My navigation header color and overall color scheme was purple to match the banner image on my home page. However, since I had to change that image, the dark purple header no longer made sense. I made the decision to make my header background color white instead. I also made the decision to remove the title words on top of my banner images since my new images had less free space to put the title. Finally, I chose to remove my initial idea of an interactive carousel and replace it with an image gallery with a mouse hover interactive piece instead. I found that this was more helpful in directing users to click on the images.

In terms of actual code, my code was structured primarily with flex boxes. I created a new flex class for each page “section.” For example, my About Us page had four sections: the header, the history, the fun facts, and the footer. This helped me easily format my images and create a more reactive website.

After majority of my website was designed, the user testing feedback helped me pinpoint small changes that would improve usability. Most of these changes were to my gallery on the home page, although there was a small change to my form as well since my participants were unable to pass the form validation on their first try.