

# Tame the Content Beast: Transform Your Content from Unread to User-friendly

Lynn Stuart, PMP | City of Sunnyvale, California

Wednesday, September 18, 2019

# Today's Agenda

- **Project background**
- Define goals
- Establish standards
- Identify issues and develop solutions
- Takeaways
- Questions & Answers



Sunnyvale



# City of Sunnyvale Website Redesign

## 2014

- Age of site: 7 years
- In-house hosting & development
- Not mobile friendly





# Excessive Content – same page...

**Mailing address:**  
Public Works  
Parks and Street Trees Division  
P.O. Box 3707  
Sunnyvale, CA 94088-3707

- Residents are expected to maintain any debris in the right-of-way, water their street tree as needed and report any problems regarding their street trees.
- City staff also helps to sustain the street tree population with new and replacement tree planting.
- The Street Tree Program only provides limited maintenance for trees planted in the right-of-way. We do not provide services for trees planted on private property or root issues on private property.
- For more information on how to properly maintain street trees or to look for a local arborist for tree help, visit [TreesAreGood.com](http://TreesAreGood.com).

Some of the [benefits trees provide](#) our community include:

- Trees help to keep houses and the public right-of-way cooler in the summer.
- They also provide overall beauty to the street, and increase property values.
- 100 trees remove 53 tons of carbon dioxide and 430 pounds of other air pollutants from the environment each year.
- Neighborhoods with trees experience fewer crime related incidents and are safer and more sociable.
- View an [article recently published](#) in the New York Times on how trees improve our health.

### City Awards Contract for Pruning of Street Trees

The City of Sunnyvale has recently awarded a contract to West Coast Arborists for the pruning of all public street trees on an average interval of every 7 years. All trees on a street block will be pruned at the same time to improve the structural integrity of the trees for the purpose of public safety. This website will be updated regularly as additional streets are identified for pruning. Advance notification to each property on scheduled streets will be provided via a door tag and street signage. The streets/blocks are not necessarily listed in the order they will be serviced. Lists are created based upon a number of criteria and if your block/street is not on the current list then it has not been determined when it will be pruned. If you have a concern about work that West Coast Arborists has performed, please contact them directly at 408-855-8660. If your concern is not resolved, please contact the Parks Division/Street Trees at 408-730-7506 or via email at [Parks](#).



### (SUFA)

With the Council adoption of The Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP), a new volunteer group has formed. [Sunnyvale Urban Forest Advocates](#) (SUFA) is a volunteer group supporting the City and its residents in the planting and care of the City's Urban Forest. The emphasis will be on planting trees in the public right-of-way and public open space, such as schools and City parks. For more information, call 408-465-9465 or email [SUFA](#).

### Liquidambar Street Tree Removal Program Information

[Liquidambar removal applications](#) for fiscal year 2016/17 and 2017/18 are no longer being accepted. The \$50,000 limit has been reached for both fiscal years. Applications can be submitted for fiscal year 2018/19 on a first come, first serve basis. The City's fiscal year cycle begins on July 1 and ends on June 30 of the following year. Tree removals, stumping and replanting are done throughout the entire fiscal year cycle and are scheduled accordingly. All three steps may not happen at the same time and can happen several months apart.

### Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP)

Council adopted the [Urban Forest Management Plan](#) (UFMP) in 2014. This plan will help sustain

# Excessive Content – still same page...

## Scheduled Streets for April - May

Bodega Drive  
Bidwell Avenue  
Butano Avenue  
Carson Drive  
Carbonera Avenue  
Coolidge Avenue  
Corral Avenue  
Lewis Avenue  
Leota Aveune  
Lomita Avenue  
Muender Avenue  
Piedra Drive  
Vasquez Court  
Viscaino Avenue  
W. Washington Ave - Bernardo to Mary

## City Maintained Trees in the Public Right-of-Way

The public right-of-way is a unique piece of land. It is land granted for public use but it is not owned by the city. As long as the street exists so does the right-of-way. The street itself and the off road space, i.e. beyond the curb is where all of the public utilities exist. The sidewalks, fire hydrants, street lights, water line, gas and electric lines sanitary sewer and street trees all reside in the right of way. Sunnyvale provides maintenance services for the street, the sidewalk, curb and gutter and the street trees. Street trees are not owned by the city but reside in the right-of-way. Sunnyvale maintains the street trees as a service for the benefit of the public.

## Free Street Tree Planting Available

To request a free street tree to be planted in the right-of-way adjacent to your home download a [Street Tree Planting Agreement](#) . Street trees are planted at no cost for Sunnyvale residents. The street tree planting season begins November and ends in March. For residents with newly planted street trees, download a [guide on how to water and care for your new street tree.](#) 

2014. This plan will help sustain, protect, and enhance the urban forest in the City of Sunnyvale in order to maximize the many benefits that it provides to residents.



# Excessive Content – still scrolling...

## Street Tree Work Permit Application

For residents who want to hire a licensed arborist to prune an adjacent street tree more frequently to control leaf or acorn drop, or to provide building clearance, or to keep a more open canopy and allow more sun through, a [no-cost permit application](#)  to perform work on a street tree is available for download. Permits can take up to 14 business days to process once all required documentation is received. Please plan ahead.

Download the City's [Street Tree Planting List](#) . This list includes all of species of trees that are used in planting of street trees in the public right of way. **Note:** This list is provided as an information source only. Prior to the planting of all street trees, the Street Tree Program takes into consideration many factors in street tree selection. Right-of-way grow space, vertical clearance [power lines], underground utilities, street lights, traffic signs and lights and species suitability to the site are all factors. Generally, the same type of tree species are selected for entire blocks. This is done primarily for uniformity of maintenance and cost effectiveness. The City Arborist makes the final determination of type of tree species planted.

## Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Street Trees

Street Tree Program staff have posted several of the most common questions they get from residents regarding street trees. [View all the questions and answers.](#)

## Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Private Trees

### My neighbor's tree is dead. What can the City do about it?

Most issues pertaining to trees on private property do not constitute a violation of the Sunnyvale Municipal Code but are rather a private civil matter. In you have not done so already, you may consider sharing your concerns about the tree with your neighbor. If the tree is believed to be causing a dangerous situation in the public right of way or damaging a City street tree, contact [Neighborhood Preservation](#) or call 408-730-7610.



# Excessive Content – finally, bottom of page

**My neighbor's tree branches are hanging over my property and drops leaves and/or needs to be trimmed. What can the City do about it?**

If you have not done so already, you may consider sharing your concerns about the tree with your neighbor. If talking to your neighbor does not result in the action you desire, you may trim the tree branches that are encroaching your property as long as you do not damage or kill the tree. Prior to pruning a tree that does not belong to you, it is recommended that residents familiarize themselves on the [California Good Neighbor Law](#).

### Trees on Private Property

The Street Tree Program does not provide services for trees located on private property. To obtain a permit to remove a private tree, contact the Planning Division at 408-730-7444 or visit the [One Stop Permit Center](#) or visit City Hall, 456 W. Olive Ave, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

## City of Sunnyvale

Normal City Hours of Operation are  
8 a.m. until 5 p.m.

**(408) 730-7500**

### Can't Find It?

**Search**

### Frequently-Used Links

- [Jobs with the City](#)
- [Garbage and Recycling](#)
- [Downtown Development](#)
- [Economic Development](#)

### About the Web Site

The City of Sunnyvale Web Site is maintained by the Sunnyvale Communications Office and the Department of Information Technology.



# Walls of words

The Washington Community Swim Center Project will replace the existing pool with an aquatics facility with a focus on recreational swimming, lessons, water play and therapeutic uses. The target construction budget for the project is approximately \$5.5M. There are other pool facilities in Sunnyvale that meet the communities needs for top and competitive swimming, but there is no aquatics facility available with a focus on recreation. A community input meeting was held on December 15, 2016. This meeting provides an opportunity to comment on desired features for swim center projects. A second community input meeting Scheduled for Thursday, March 23, 2017 will provide attendees the opportunity to comment on three conceptual plans that were created based on input received at the first public meeting. The agenda for the second meeting will be to select a preferred conceptual plan or combination of plans, that will then be used to advise the Parks and Recreation Commission who will make recommendations to the City Council.

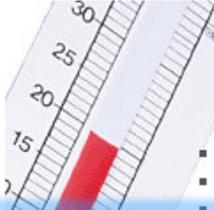
# Content users expect?



That's New Government Departments Living Services Doing Business Newsroom I Want To ...

You are here: [Departments](#) > [Public Safety](#) > [Emergency Preparedness](#) > [Freezing Weather](#)

## FREEZING WEATHER



### HELP PROTECT AGAINST SEVERE COLD AND FREEZING TEMPERATURES:

- 1) Preparing your home and family
  - Review and update your family emergency plan.
  - Replenish your emergency supply kits including battery-operated radio and flashlights.
  - Have extra blankets on hand.
- 2) Dressing for the Weather
  - Wear several layers of loose fitting, lightweight, warm clothing rather than one layer of heavy clothing. The outer garments should be tightly woven and water repellent.
  - Wear mittens, which are warmer than gloves.

- Gray, white or yellow skin discoloration, numbness or waxy skin are symptoms of frostbite.

# Agenda: Define goals

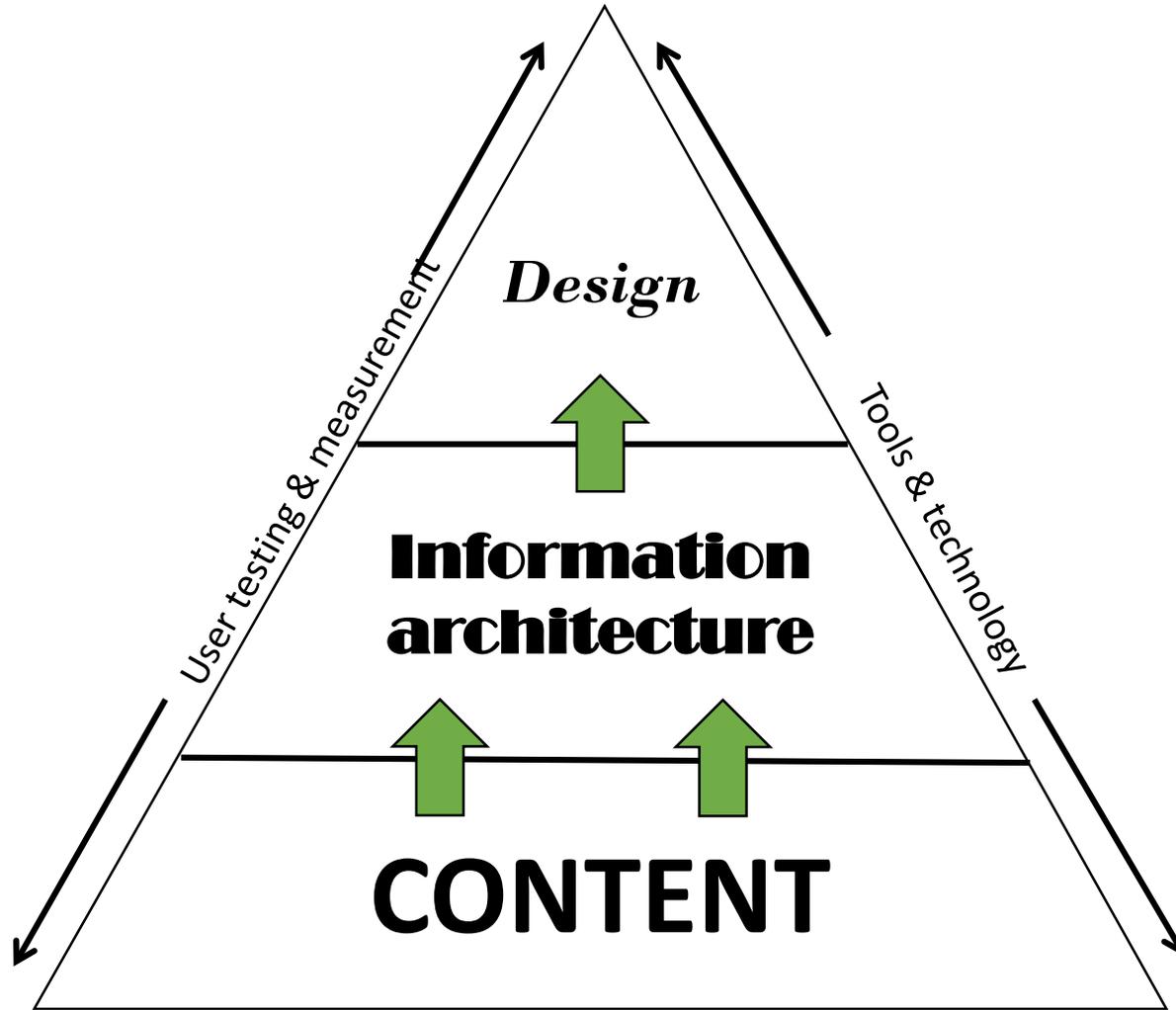
- Project background
- **Define goals**
- Establish standards
- Identify issues and develop solutions
- Takeaways
- Questions & Answers



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# Content is the foundation



# Define Goals

- Necessary content only
  - Focus on City services
- Scannable
- Mobile-friendly
- Single source of truth
- Plain language



# Necessary content only

Content supports City services and programs

No

- Mission statements
- Content duplication
- Multi-topic pages
- Unnecessary links

**Do not compete with Google!**



# Succinct scannable content

Pay & Apply   Access Sunnyvale   Subscribe   color contrast   low graphics   a a a   Translate   Search

Sunnyvale   Your Government   Recreation and Community   Homes, Streets and Property   People and Programs   Business and Development   City Services

Home » Homes, Streets and Property » Trees   Share

## Explore

- Trees Home
- Tree Removal

## Trees

The City provides maintenance services for approximately 37,000 street trees, with the assistance of property owners. The City provides pruning services for street trees to maintain structural integrity and to avoid branch or trunk failure as much as possible. Residents are expected to maintain any debris in the right-of-way, water their street trees as needed and report any problems regarding their street trees.

### Street Tree or Private Tree

Before working on a tree, you need to know whether it is a street tree or a private tree. The City regulates the care of these trees differently.

#### What is a Street Tree?

A tree whose trunk is within the City right-of-way area starting from the face of curb and extending approximately 11 feet into a property. Measurements can vary depending on the size of the street.

- In many older neighborhoods, the street tree is in a patch of land between the curb and the sidewalk. In newer neighborhoods, the curb, gutter and sidewalk are all one piece, so the street trees are located on the residence side of the sidewalk.

Any tree in any public green space, such as parks, center medians in roadways and City campuses.

#### What is a Private Tree?

A tree whose trunk is completely outside of the City right-of-way. The City does not provide services for private trees.

#### Who is Responsible for Street Tree Clean up?

Website Feedback



# Same page – one scroll

Residents are expected to clean up debris in the right-of-way and water their street tree as needed.

## Who Should I Call About my Neighbor's Tree?

Most private tree issues are a private civil matter. If your neighbor's tree is dead or impacting your property, contact your neighbor. If you believe the tree is causing a dangerous situation in the public right of way, call the City's Neighborhood Preservation unit at 408-730-7610.

## How Can I Request a New Street Tree ?

To request the free planting of a new street tree in front of your home, you will need to download and fill out a [Street Tree Planting Agreement and Request Form](#).

## Can I Prune My Street Tree?

Residents can prune low-growing limbs or brush on street trees from the ground using non-power hand tools to raise limbs less than 1-inch in diameter without obtaining a tree work permit. Any other type of pruning requires a street tree work permit.

[No-cost Street Tree Work Permit Application and Requirements](#)

## How Do I Report Problems with Street Trees?

For broken limbs or fallen trees, Monday to Friday, 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., call 408-730-7506.

For **hazardous conditions only** after hours, contact Public Safety at 408-730-7180.

If your street tree looks unhealthy, call 408-730-7506.

Last Updated: Jun 24, 2019



456 W. Olive Ave.  
Sunnyvale, CA 94086

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[Website Feedback](#)

# Single source of truth

Pay & Apply   Access Sunnyvale   Subscribe   color contrast   low graphics   a a a   Translate   Search   GO

Sunnyvale   Your Government   Recreation and Community   Homes, Streets and Property   People and Programs   Business and Development   City Services

Home » Homes, Streets and Property » Flood Protection   Share

## Explore

- Flood Protection Home
- Flood Zones
- Flood-safe Building

## Access Sunnyvale

## Utility Services

## How to Get Rid of Anything

## Street Sweeping Schedule

# Flood Protection

There are many considerations to living in a flood zone, even if you are not within an **area designated as a special hazard** by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Learn how you can protect yourself and your property from floods.

## Prepare for Storms

- **Develop a family emergency plan** ← **Ready.gov**
- Sign up to receive public safety and weather alerts on your phone
- Keep gutters free from debris
  - Know your street sweeping schedule
  - Know how to handle extra yard trimmings and leaves
- Pick up free sandbags

## Flood Tips and Resources

- **Find out what to do before, during and after a flood or storm** ← **ValleyWater.org**
- Get emergency preparedness apps from the Red Cross
- Download the FEMA app for safety, weather and shelter information
- If you see a blocked storm drain, call our 24-hour Sewer and Storm Drain Response Hotline at 408-730-7400.

## Related

- Report broken limbs or fallen trees Monday to Friday, 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., call 408-730-7506. For hazardous conditions only after hours, contact Public Safety at 408-730-7400.



Apply plain language principles and use:

- Active voice
- Pronouns: “we” and “you”
- Simplest form of verbs
- Everyday words
- Short sentences and short paragraphs
- Headings, tables, lists and white space

*I never write  
'metropolis' for  
seven cents  
because I can get  
the same price for  
'city.'* – Mark Twain



# Measure success

## Readability targets

- Average American reads at the 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade level
- 43% of adults in U.S. have Basic or Below Basic literacy skills = 6<sup>th</sup> grade or lower
- Website audience = busy + short attention span

Data: National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) – Demographics: nces.ed.gov

# Agenda: Establish standards

- Project background
- Define goals
- **Establish standards**
- Identify issues and develop solutions
- Takeaways
- Questions & Answers

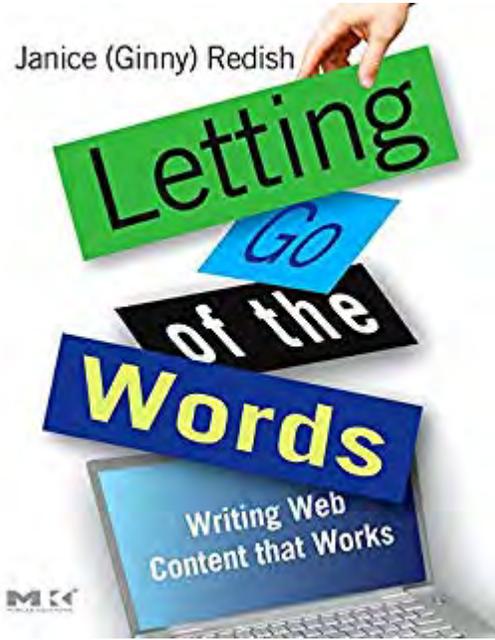


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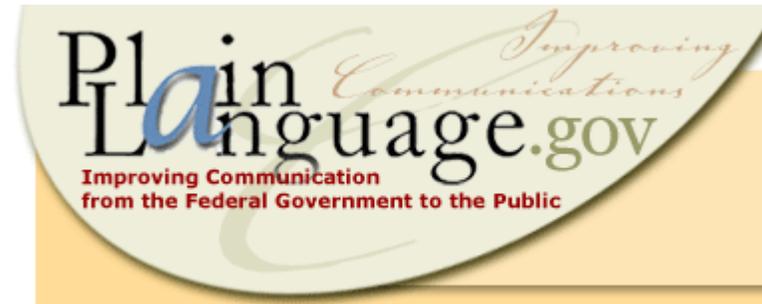


**NN/g**  
Nielsen Norman Group

**W3C**<sup>®</sup>  
WCAG 2.0



GOV.UK



# Standards: Put it in writing

- Website Policy (public-facing)
  - Website purpose
  - External linking policy
- Administrative Policy (internal)
- City Writing Style Guide
  - PlainLanguage.gov
- Website standards documents



# Agenda: Identify issues & develop solutions

- Project background
- Define goals
- Establish standards
- **Identify issues and develop solutions**
- Takeaways
- Questions & Answers



Sunnyvale



# Identify issues

- Content ownership
- Staff capacity and capability
- Manage writing process
- Organizational resistance



# Content ownership: Partners, not opponents



**“If I had more time, I would have written a shorter letter.”**

*Blaise Pascal*



# Support the content

Organizational support exists?

- Time to create the content
- Ongoing resources to maintain it



# Manage writing process

- Make content decisions
- Collaborate on content
- Track the content and the decisions
- Migrate content

# Validate need for the content

Is the content a good fit for the website?

- Topic is part of the City's core business or service
- Content is current
- There is a regulatory requirement
- Users expect this from us



# Involve topic owners in process

## Content analysis tool:

- Unique ID # by content item
- Page title
- URL
- Analytics (page rank, unique pageviews)
- Keep? (Yes, No, Maybe)
- Why?
- Who (decision-maker)
- Discuss?

# Content analysis tool - sample

BASICS		DEPARTMENT				WEB TEAM	
ID	Page Title	Focus	Primary content	Keep?	Why?	Keep?	Why?
4.10.4.1.1	Animal Control	Multiple topics	Program/department overview	Yes	Homepage for Animal Control.	Yes	This topic could be covered in a single, restructured page, though current content would not be carried forward.
4.10.4.1.1	Animal Control Ordinances	Single topic	Policy information	Maybe	Easy to reference summary of muni codes relating to Animal Control.	No	As per content, information exists elsewhere; no traffic.
4.10.4.1.2	Feral Cats	Single topic	Policy information	Maybe	Describes the City's stance on Feral cats.	No	No traffic and not a core city competency.
4.10.4.1.3	Humane Traps	Single topic	Resources and guidelines	Maybe	Describes humane trap rental program. Could be improved if people could request a trap online.	Maybe	If current service, this should live on the animal control page (4.10.1.1)
4.10.4.1.4	License Your Pet	Single topic	Resources and guidelines	Maybe	Information about animal licensing. Could be improved if public could actually renew their license online.	Yes	No traffic. Page needs to be redone, but topic should be represented and could be consolidated on animal control services page. (4.10.1.1)
4.10.4.1.5	Local Veterinary Services	Single topic	Resources and guidelines	No	List of local vets, provided as a courtesy. This page does not reference any city provided services.	No	Not a City core service; maintenance issue.
4.10.4.1.6	Local Wildlife	Single topic	Resources and guidelines	Maybe	Lists who to contact for various wildlife services.	Yes	Not a page, but we need to capture and move relevant content to appropriate places.
4.10.4.1.7	Lost and Found Pets	Single topic	Resources and guidelines	Maybe	Advice and resources for lost and found pets.	No	Not a City core service; maintenance issue.
4.10.4.1.8	Request Animal Control Services	Single topic	Resources and guidelines	No	Reference guide for various AC services.	No	Appropriate service information belongs on the animal control page. This page isn't needed.
4.10.4.1.9	Spay and Neuter Resources	Single topic	Resources and guidelines	No	Courtesy list of resources re: County spay/neuter program - does not reference any city provided services, but City encourages spay/neutering.	No	Not a City core service; maintenance issue.



# Content analysis tool – zoom in

Page Title	Keep?	Why?	Keep?	Why?
Feral Cats	Maybe	Describes the City's stance on Feral cats.	No	No traffic and not a core city competency.
Lost and Found Pets	Maybe	Advice and resources for lost and found pets.	No	Not a City core service; maintenance issue.



# Animal Control new page

## Animal Control

The Sunnyvale Animal Control Unit responds to calls for services for stray, sick, aggressive or injured animals, investigates reports of animal cruelty and oversees the animal licensing and rabies control programs. The City contracts with the Humane Society Silicon Valley (HSSV) and the Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley for animal sheltering services.

Call the Public Safety Desk Officer at 408-730-7110 to report:

- Barking dog(s)

Call Animal Control at 408-730-7178 to report:

- Loose dog(s)
- Trapped feral or nuisance cats
- Nuisance animals
- Animal bites or aggressive animals
- Animal cruelty or injured animals

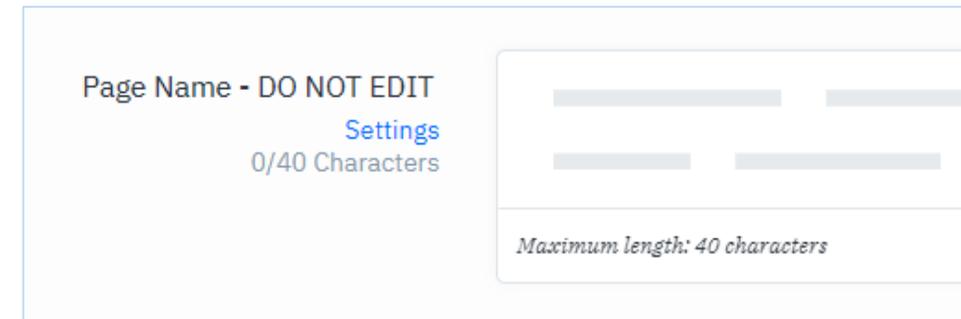
Pet Licensing	+
Report Lost and Found Pets	+
Borrow Humane Traps for Feral or Community Cats	+
Report Dead Animals	+
Wildlife	+
Pest Control	+
Resources	+

Comparison	Before	After
Pages	10	1
Word count	3,869	368
Visits (1-year period)	15 (all pages)	3,143

# Collaborative Content Writing Tool

**GatherContent:** Online platform to help organize, structure and product content.

- Gather and organize content in one place
- Customize templates, workflow and approval process
- Assign roles and permissions
- Collaborate internally and externally
- Export and import easily



Page Name - DO NOT EDIT  
[Settings](#)  
0/40 Characters

Maximum length: 40 characters

The screenshot shows a text input field with a placeholder for a page name. The text 'Page Name - DO NOT EDIT' is displayed above the field. To the right of the field is a 'Settings' link. Below the field, the character count '0/40 Characters' is shown. A note at the bottom of the field states 'Maximum length: 40 characters'. The input field contains several horizontal lines representing text that has been entered and is partially obscured.

# Overcoming resistance

Use a multi-pronged approach:

- Data
  - Content audit
  - Analytics
- Customer surveys
  - Internal and external
- Education
  - Presentations
- Phased approach
- Involve in process



# Let's just try it ...



Photo: by Charles on Unsplash



# Content usability testing

Many types of testing, from higher to lower effort:

- Moderated testing
- Remote (unmoderated) testing
- 5-second takeaway testing
- Cloze testing
- Recall testing
- Highlighting testing



# Highlighting test

## Short-term Rentals

A short-term rental (or vacation rental) is the renting out of your residence, rooms in your residence or an accessory unit (granny flat). Short-term rentals are for a period of 30 consecutive calendar days or less. Such rentals have become a popular option for visitors, and the City has regulations in place to ensure the needs of everyone in the community are balanced.

Sunnyvale has a two-step approval process for becoming a short-term rental host.

### Your Legal Requirements as a Host

If you host a short-term rental, you must collect and pay Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT). If you do not, you'll be subject to a penalty. Find details below on how to pay.

You are also legally required to:

- Reside on-site throughout your guests' (lodgers') stay
- Limit guests to a maximum of four adult guests per night
- Register as a host with the City

Learn about your legal requirements: [Municipal code 19.76](#)

### Step One: Pay the Transient Occupancy Tax

The Transient Occupancy Tax, sometimes called a "hotel tax," requires that any person or business engaged in the renting of any number of rooms for lodging, dwelling, or sleeping purposes, must collect, report and pay this tax to the City on any guest rentals.

The Transient Occupancy Tax rate for the City of Sunnyvale is 12.5%.

[Register for and pay Transient Occupancy Tax](#)

**Notice:** Effective Aug. 1, 2018, Airbnb will collect and pay TOT on behalf of hosts. Hosts must still pay TOT for non-Airbnb bookings.

### TOT Exemptions

Some guests may be exempt from paying Transient Occupancy Tax:

- Federal, California state or foreign government employees
- Guests who have stayed longer than 30 consecutive days

[TOT Exemption Claim Form](#)



Clear, easy to read and understand



Confusing, redundant, hard to read and understand



# Key Takeaways

- Start with defined goals and priorities
- Prepare the organization for the effort
- Use the right tool for content production



# Tame the Content Beast:

## Transform Your Content from Unread to User-friendly

# Questions?

