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1. PURPOSE

Overview

The Website and Digital Services Governance Policy outlines the management and governance of the City of San José website, sanjoseca.gov, its multiple subsites, and transactional applications that connect to sanjoseca.gov for the purpose of providing digital service delivery to our residents.

This policy promotes Citywide standards and rules informed by authoritative best practices; provides a framework for establishing clear content and digital service management responsibilities; and supports consistency, efficiency, and effectiveness across the City's omnichannel approach to informing, engaging, and transacting with our users and providing inclusive access for users who face accessibility or limited English proficiency challenges.

The outcome of this policy will ensure that website and digital service users can find and use the information they need quickly, easily, and intuitively, and conduct digital transactions with a high-quality user experience through digital services portals and applications while keeping underlying technology current and supported. This policy ensures that staff responsible for maintaining websites and digital service applications will keep them accurate, current, maintained, and useful.

Guidelines/Compliance

sanjoseca.gov is a rich platform that provides City services and information to the public, offers channels for productive community engagement, and showcases the City's achievements and innovations. It is a strategic communications and digital service delivery asset for all aspects of the City's operations to serve both the people of San José and the world. With the sanjoseca.gov platform's broad reach, and over 170 City staff members administering portions of the website, the Website and Digital Services Governance Policy establishes standards and guidelines that encourage clarity, accuracy, consistency, regulatory and policy compliance, and ease-of-use throughout the website, its subsites, and connected transactional applications.

2. SCOPE

Governance Structure

The **Website and Digital Services Governance Advisory Board**, created by the City Manager, sets the direction and oversees policies for the City's website, digital service applications and the web operating environment based on best practices.

The Board is co-chaired by a designee from the City Manager's Communications Office (Communications Office) and Information Technology Department and has an Executive Committee that includes the co-chairs plus one designee from the Finance Department, one designee from Human Resources Department, and one designee from the City Manager's Office of Employee Relations. The Board oversees a Citywide Departmental Leadership Committee that meets quarterly and includes the Executive Committee and representatives from: City Clerk's Office; Airport Department; Environmental Services Department; Library Department; Parks, Recreation & Neighborhood Services Department; Planning, Building & Code Enforcement Department; Police Department, Fire Department; and Transportation Department.

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Representatives from other departments may be added to the Citywide Departmental Leadership Committee or exchanged, as appropriate.

Campaign Websites

Pursuant to any applicable Federal, State, or Local laws, and pursuant to the [Code of Ethics Policy](), the City cannot use public funds to distribute any type of campaign materials including, but not limited to, the hosting of campaign websites. Any domains used for campaign purposes will not be managed by the City and will not be considered by this policy.

3. AUTHORITY

Responsibilities of Website and Digital Services Governance Advisory Board

In response to industry trends, changes in technology, and the needs of users of the website and digital services and staff who maintain websites and transactional applications, the Advisory Board has the following responsibilities:

- Develop and implement strategies for internal and external facing websites and transactional applications regarding goals, purpose, and feature sets, including producing an annual workplan for future releases, modifications, and enhancements.

- Review and establish appropriate Citywide policies, processes, and procedures to govern current and future website and digital services standards related to content and technology.

  o Ensure compliance with all legal and regulatory standards (Federal, State, and local), including accessibility, privacy, and security issues.

  o Establish, review, and update standards and guidelines related to content and file retention (including size limits, attachment of videos, copyright compliance) and ensure the website is not the sole repository for City records or files.

  o Review and recommend global changes as needed to taxonomy, structure, branding, navigation, styling, etc.

  o Advocate for site quality and content integrity.

  o Advocate for and ensure consistent branding for all website and transactional applications and technologies.

  o Recommend additional templates or changes to existing templates.

- Establish clear roles and responsibilities for content authors/stewards and owners of transactional applications.

  o Ensure optimization and maintenance of all website and transactional applications and technologies.

- Ensure high standards are upheld for user experience across all websites and transactional applications.

- Review and advise the Procurement Prioritization Board on all requests for procurement for website or transactional applications that connect to internal or external websites.

- Ensure Citywide awareness and compliance with all social media policies, including the Web-Based Communications Policy.

- Facilitate and resolve non-compliance issues.

- Identify service delivery process improvement and/or process reengineering opportunities to continuously improve service delivery.

4. POLICY

4.1 Maintain a Unified Website

It is the policy of the City of San José to maintain a single, unified website consisting of:

1. a single URL and domain name
2. a standard for web templates
3. a consolidated infrastructure environment.

The City uses the domain sanjoseca.gov for external-facing purposes. The Mayor's Office, Council districts, and all City departments, divisions, programs, services, or other operating units of the City will use the official City domain: sanjoseca.gov. All subsites that serve City programs should be entered through sanjoseca.gov with no other visible URL unless exempted as noted in Section 4.2.

4.2 Domain Exceptions and Subsite Requests

In recognition of the diverse offerings and people's informational needs, this policy provides a mechanism to allow limited exceptions under special circumstances to the use of the City of San José primary domain name.

This policy establishes exception criteria, an exemption process, and a reconsideration process for exemption requests that have been denied.

Exceptions will be reviewed by the Website and Digital Services Governance Advisory Board and require written approval from the City Manager's Office (CMO). The CMO retains complete discretion. To make a request or ask for reconsideration of a denied request, please email webrequests@sanjoseca.gov.

When determining to grant domain exceptions, subdomains, and subsite requests, the CMO will consider various criteria including, but not limited to the following. Applicants may also suggest additional factors that might be appropriate for consideration.

Exceptions and domain management criteria for the City's unified website standards may include:

4.2.1 Sites for departments or programs that operate as an enterprise that competes with non-City entities

   a. The site provides or markets services that are unusual for municipal government.
   b. The site competes with organizations in the private sector or other public organizations in our region.

4.2.2 Regional partnerships or intergovernmental efforts

   a. The site is an intergovernmental organization or a partnership whose target audience is a regional audience.
   b. The majority of the site's content is provided or maintained by organizations outside the City.
   c. The site's content is maintained by both City and non-City sources.
   d. The site's sponsoring organization has a separate governance structure.

4.2.3 Other factors

   a. The site replicates a "best-practice" model in municipal web service delivery.
   b. The site under the City's brand would impair its primary purpose.
   c. The applying organization has a long-term, stable mission and plan with ongoing funding.
   d. The site does not conflict with the City's branding efforts.

4.2.4 Exceptions generally will not be granted for:

   a. Special events or short-term activities that would require an impractical investment of resources to market the site for a limited period.
   b. Personalized domains that include first or last names.
   c. "Dot com" and "Dot org" domains for business purposes that are inappropriate for a municipal or non-profit activity.
   d. Requests violating State of California law 50034 (a)(1) which states, "No later than January 1, 2029, a local agency that maintains an internet website for use by the public shall ensure that the internet website utilizes a ".gov" top-level domain or a ".ca.gov" second-level domain." In addition, 50034 (c) states, "For purposes of this section, "local agency" means a city, county, or city and county."
   e. Entire or substantial parts of City departments. Currently, San José Mineta International Airport, San José Police Department, and San José Public Library Department are exempted based on the departments' independent technology environments, however, as the City's website evolves these departments will be required to transition to a subdomain of the City's sanjoseca.gov domain.

Domain exceptions that have been granted per this policy must continue to meet the necessary criteria including, but not limited to, the criteria above and any criteria deemed admissible by the Website and Digital Services Governance Advisory Board and the CMO. Exceptions will be revoked for any domain that no longer meets the necessary criteria required for a domain exception. The CMO will retain complete discretion.

Domains that have been granted a domain exception will be audited at least once every 18 months by the Website and Digital Services Governance Advisory Board to ensure high standards are upheld for user experience across all websites and transactional applications.

4.2.5   Domain Exception Audits

a.   Department to provide compliance reports to ensure compliance with all legal and regulatory standards, including accessibility and security issues.
b.   Department to provide updated site work plan.
c.   Department to provide annual analytics reports.

4.3 Information Technology Department Coordinates Exempted Domains

All domain names exempted by the Website and Digital Services Governance Policy shall be owned and registered by the City and managed by the Information Technology Department.

The Information Technology Department is responsible for acquiring and retaining any reasonable alternative domains to protect these domains from misuse by others. The Information Technology Department will follow all Federal, State, and local laws and regulations when acquiring and retaining domains.

4.3.1   Technical Procurement and Purchasing Procurement Necessary for Exempted Domain Services
a.   If an exempted domain requires additional technology or services such as hosting, the requesting party must submit a Help Desk ticket to the Information Technology Department for Technical Procurement review of the technologies requested.
    i.   The Information Technology Department may require specific technology and/or services to ensure compliance and security adherence at the expense of the requesting party.
        1.   If the requesting party declines the use of required technology and/or services, the exception request will be denied, and the requesting party must utilize the City domain sanjoseca.gov.
    ii.   All technology and/or services will remain City property and may not be transferred.
b.   If the Technical Procurement is approved and additional technology and/or services are requested, the requesting party must follow the Finance Department procurement process to initiate a Purchasing Procurement. Information regarding the procurement process can be found on the Finance Department Intranet page.
c.   Elected offices, such as the Mayor's Office and City Council Offices, will coordinate Technical and Purchasing Procurements through the City Clerk's Office.

4.3.2   Subdomain Requests

Subdomains may be used to represent a department or City program/service. Good subdomains are easy to remember. Departments will be granted subdomains with priority

(e.g., housing.sanjoseca.gov or prns.sanjoseca.gov) and programs/services will need to adhere to, at a minimum, the following criteria:

  a. Be available
  b. Relate to your program/service
  c. Be clear, not generic or overly specific.
  d. May not be personalized to include a first or last name.

Subdomains that clearly represent a program/service are more likely to be approved. Acronyms may be approved based on the use case provided. Please provide comprehensive documentations to expedite the review and approval process.

Subdomain requests will be reviewed by the Website and Digital Services Governance Advisory Board and require approval from the CMO. The CMO retains complete discretion. To submit a request or a request to reconsider a previously denied request, please email webrequests@sanjoseca.gov.

4.4 Website Roles and Permissions

The Communications Office has access to all areas of sanjoseca.gov. To ensure consistent quality, the CMO will work with Web Content Managers in all departments to ensure conformance with the City's style, conventions, and branding.
Permissions for the Web Content Management system (Web CMS) are determined by user groups, which are generally the same for all publishers & editors assigned to specific areas (e.g., all users in the DOT Publishers user group have the same privileges). Departmental web content managers should maintain a current list of web publishers & editors and their access privileges.

No third-party access will be permitted in the Web CMS for sanjoseca.gov. All users must have an @sanjoseca.gov email address in order to be granted Web CMS permissions. Additional principles will be followed per the Information and Systems Security Policy.

For the following scenarios, please email webrequests@sanjoseca.gov for the City website:

- To get a copy of department's Web CMS user list.
- To change staff member's permission level for Web CMS.
- To revoke staff member's access level to the Web CMS (employee switched departments or roles, or no longer works for the City).

4.5 Departmental Quality Control and Workflow

Web Content Managers for each department are responsible for determining their own internal workflow. Depending on the size and complexity of the department's webpages, the department web content management structure may include:

- **Department Web Content Manager, Web Administrator,** and/or **Department Webmaster** who oversee department/office's navigation, content, and Web CMS users.

  o This position is considered the content owner for the entire departmental website.
  o Responsibilities include:

- Designating staff for overseeing specific content within the department's site.
- Conducting departmental web content quality reviews, with a minimum of one review per year.

- **Website Publisher** who can make edits and publish live to the site.

- **Website Editor** who can write and edit web content but must get approval before content is live on the site.

The Communications Office will regularly audit department sites for quality, such as spelling, grammar, and style. Departmental web audits, conducted by this office, will take place at least once every 18 months. Web Publishers & Editors must work together to prevent typos, grammar errors, and content errors. The following practices are recommended:

- When a Website Publisher or Editor makes changes to existing pages, a second person should review the content before the page is published.
- Website Publishers should use the "Check Spelling" box within the Body Text area before submitting changes.

4.6 Training/Education

Only Web Publishers and Editors who have taken formal training will receive access to the Web CMS. The department Web Content Manager is responsible for initial training, after which Web Publishers & Editors may use various support documents and training webinars.

The Communications Office will provide quarterly in-person or virtual training sessions for staff on how to edit their sites. Trainees are responsible for learning the material and tools, practicing what they learn, and utilizing best practices and City style documents.

Website standards and basic formatting rules are available on the City Intranet.

4.7 Content and Style

Use plain language on the website whenever possible. In addition, the Federal Government's Plain Language website, http://www.plainlanguage.gov/, recommends "communication your audience can understand the first time they read or hear it."

Web visitors are task-oriented; they skim and scan to get their informational needs met. Subheadings and bulleted and numbered lists enable efficient scanning by the reader. Please review the City Website Identity Guidelines and Website Accessibility Writing Standards.

4.8 Visual Content

Professional-quality photography and video help make the City's website attractive and useful and contribute to a positive image of the City of San José. For further guidance, review the City Website Image, Icons, and Logo Guidelines.

Departmental Web Publishers and Editors are responsible for all photos on their pages. It is recommended to keep photos under 1MB to allow for quicker page load times.

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Permission to photograph and/or videotape individuals for use in City materials, such as print, electronic newsletters, web, and social media, is recommended. A release form is available online. More videotaping/photography as well as image guidelines are available on the City's Intranet.

Web Publishers and Editors must also ensure accessibility compliance with visual content including, but not limited to, alternative text or alt text, closed captions and transcripts for videos, and color contrast. For example, Web Publishers and Editors must include alt text to ensure assistive devices or technologies can understand what pictures or illustrations convey. The World Wide Web Consortium Accessibility Guidelines suggest that authors imagine reading the picture/illustration aloud over the telephone. What would you say about the image to make your listeners understand it? Shorter is better: A good rule of thumb is to use 5 to 15 words. Additional information related to accessibility is covered in Section 4.11 of this policy.

4.9 Use of Social Media and New Technologies

The Web-Based Communications Policy currently contains the policy and guidelines related to social media and other web-based technologies.

Contact the Communications Office for approvals prior to setting up Facebook pages, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter/X accounts, and other social media sites. For additional information on guidelines, accessibility, standards, and request forms, visit the social media section of the City's Intranet.

4.10 Hyperlinks, iFraming and Connected Transactional Applications

sanjoseca.gov and the City's Intranet use Web Content Management Systems. No other software product may be used within the City's approved Web CMS and its architecture.

- Hyperlinks. All Web Publishers and Editors are responsible for ensuring that links are live and tested. Links should take users to sites that have current and accurate information.

  - Links will be set to open within the City website unless the hyperlink is a link to a page outside sanjoseca.gov. Documents such as PDFs are to open in a new window.
  - As outlined in the E-Government Policy, the City "will link to sites of its choosing which contain data regarding the City and the Bay Area, its residents, businesses, and visitors, if linking to the site furthers a specific purpose of the City that is articulated in an official written expression of City policies or purposes."
  - For additional guidance or questions about hyperlinking, please email webrequests@sanjoseca.gov.

- iFrame. Additional content may be "iFramed" when appropriate. This content is not searchable through sanjoseca.gov's search function. External hosting is required for iFrames. Please email webrequests@sanjoseca.gov for questions about iFrames.
- Connected transactional applications must be reviewed and approved by the Website and Digital Services Governance Advisory Board, must have a named responsible owner for the application and must conform with standards (accessibility, language translation, mobile responsiveness) set by the Advisory Board.

4.11 Accessibility

All Web Publishers and Editors should be familiar with and comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title II guidelines and requirements. The updated regulation, "…establish[es] specific requirements, including the adoption of the specific technical standards, for making accessible services, programs, and activities offered by State and local government entities to the public through the web and mobile applications." The standards established in the updated regulation include web content, documents, mobile applications, social media, and third-party content created for City use that is included on the web.

The Citywide Web Content Manager will run all site pages through a World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) compliant validation product annually to ensure Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA and Section 508C compliance. Web Publishers and Editors will receive an accessibility report from the Citywide Web Content Manager and will be responsible to enact all required changes to ensure accessibility compliance. In addition, the Department Web Content Manager, Web Administrator and/or Department Webmaster will have access to the W3C compliant validation product to run on-demand accessibility compliance checks and create reports.

Additional information about web accessibility, including resources and self-guided trainings, can be found on the City's Intranet. Federal guidelines can be found online: http://www.section508.gov/.

4.12 Language Access

To support San José's diverse community, following the Language Equity Policy & Guidelines, the City has a goal to continuously improve the translation of pages on sanjoseca.gov and within connected transactional applications. The City uses a variety of approaches including manual translation, use of the free version of Google Translate, and use of Google's machine learning language translation tool. While the City will strive for the highest level of quality translation, it cannot be guaranteed. Web Publishers and Editors should be familiar with and follow the Language Equity Policy & Guidelines as it relates to its recommendations and guidance for translation services.

5. DEFINITIONS

5.1 Digital Services

The delivery of information, including data and content, across multiple platforms and devices like websites, chatbots or mobile software applications and typically involves transactional services such as submitting requests, forms or transmitting payments.

5.2 iFrame

An iFrame is an inline frame used inside a webpage to load another HTML document or webpage inside the inline frame.

5.3 Intranet

An internal website that is only accessible by City of San José employees.

5.4 Omnichannel

A cross-channel content strategy to improve user experience and drive high standards of customer service across a variety of entry points such as websites, social media, transactional applications, chatbots.

5.5 Subsites

A website that is nested within and is subordinate to sanjoseca.gov, which is the top-level site. A subsite can have independent administration, content contributors and browsing permissions. Examples include Municipal Code and SJPermits.org.

5.6 Transactional Applications

A software application that enables electronic transactions of services such as requests, forms, or transmittal of payments.

5.7 Web Accessibility

Developing websites to be accessible to people with a diverse range of hearing, moving, sight and cognitive abilities.

5.8 Web CMS

A web content management system (CMS) is a software system that facilitates the creation, management, storage and display of web content.

5.9 Web Usability

Ease-of-use when a user accesses a website. Web usability includes the ability to understand a website's information and find answers to users' key questions before they leave the site.

6. PROCEDURES

6.1 Analytics

Web analytics are available for sanjoseca.gov. Departments wanting to track page views do not need to embed codes on their own. Departments that wish to use this data should submit a Help Desk ticket for the City Website.

6.2 Domain Exceptions and Subsite Requests

As stated in Section 4.2, exceptions will be reviewed by the Website and Digital Services Governance Advisory Board and require approval from the CMO. The CMO retains complete

discretion. To make a request or ask for reconsideration of a denied request, please email webrequests@sanjoseca.gov.

6.3 Domain Exception and Subsite Audits

As stated in Section 4.2, domains that have been granted a domain exception will be audited at least once every 18 months by the Website and Digital Services Governance Advisory Board to ensure high standards are upheld for user experience across all websites and transactional applications. Please email the information outlined in Section 4.2.5 to the email address webrequests@sanjoseca.gov.

In addition, as stated in Section 4.5, the Communications Office will regularly audit department sites for quality, such as spelling, grammar, and style. Departmental web audits, conducted by this office, will take place at least once every 18 months. Web Publishers & Editors must work together to prevent typos, grammar errors, and content errors. If there are questions regarding the auditing procedure, please email webrequests@sanjoseca.gov.

6.4 Transactional Applications

Departments, divisions, and programs must coordinate with the Website and Digital Services Governance Advisory Board to launch transactional applications to ensure they follow City of San José branding, technology, usability, and compatibility standards.

6.5 Working with Web Vendors and Requests for Proposals

All work orders for website work that require more than 40 hours of work on the City's public-facing website must be approved by the Communications Office.

Coordination with the Website and Digital Services Governance Advisory Committee is also required for any request for proposals (RFPs) issued for public-facing website work before the RFP is issued.

This coordination enables web project efficiency, compliance with the Web Governance Policy, reduced redundancies, and advance collaboration among departments with similar online service delivery needs.

6.6 Contact Information

For any questions concerning the Website and Digital Services Governance Policy, contact the Website and Digital Services Governance Advisory Board via email at webrequests@sanjoseca.gov.

Approved:

/s/ Carolina Camarena	June 3, 2025
Director of Communications	Date
City Manager's Office	

Approved for Posting:

/s/ Jennifer A. Maguire	June 3, 2025
City Manager	Date