Marin Council Redesign Report Draft

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Marin Council, Boy Scouts of America

http://www.boyscouts-marin.org

1.0 Executive Summary

This report presents our team's user-centered redesign of the Marin Council, Boy Scouts of America website. The current site constrains important information for Scouts, families, volunteers, and donors, but its structure, clarity, and navigation make it difficult for users to find what they need. Our team consists of 4 members from the San Jóse State University Master of Science in informatics program: Oluchi Egbo a digital resource librarian, Evan Luu an Engineer, Patrick Samuels Eagle Scout, Geek Squad Agent and Photographer, Nam Tran Eagle Scout and Operations manager. Through our early analysis and user research, we found several issues that create barriers for both new visitors and returning members of the scouting community.

This project focuses on improving the website's overall usability by reorganizing its information architecture, strengthening navigation pathways, and modernizing the way content is communicated. To guide the redesign, we first examined the key problems of the existing site, identified the main target audiences, and established both organizational and design objectives aligned with the council's mission. We used card sorting, surveys, and environmental scanning of similar scouting websites to understand user expectations and mental models.

The recommendations and prototype materials created for this project include a revised sitemap, user journey maps, and wireframes that reflect what users reported needing the most: clearer categories, easier access to important actions, and a more consistent, credible layout. While the final deliverable does not replace the actual Marin Council website, it provides a structured roadmap that the organization could use to improve the user experience for its community.

2.0 Problem Statement

The Marin Council Boy Scouts website does not provide a clear user experience. It lacks definition, leaving scouts, families, donors, and volunteers unsure of how to engage. The content is not easily learnable, valuable, or clearly communicated, and important information is difficult to find.
Design issues compound the problem. Outdated styling, inconsistent themes, and poorly aligned elements make the site uncomfortable to navigate. The affiliation with larger scouting organizations is buried, weakening credibility and trust. Key opportunities to highlight community value, such as ways to give back, which are hidden from the front page as well as menus.

Overall, the site does not meet basic usability heuristics. It lacks clarity, consistency, and findability, and it fails to delight users. While it has the potential to be a valuable community resource, its current design does not meet that possibility.

Existing design elements, such as the abundance of whitespace, improper content sizing, and inconsistent styling throughout the pages of the site, call for professional restructure. Bearing users in mind, the team has put the heuristics mentioned above to create a design that is user-centered based on research we have carried out.

3.0 Target Audiences

The new Marin Scout website the team designed will be used by different in the scouting community, mostly especially our targeted audience will be current scouts and their family members, new or intending scouts and their family members,volunteers and leaders and finally donors and community supporters.

Current Scouts and their families, this group of targeted users includes scouts who are already a part of the Marin Council and their parents or guardians. These users could use the website to check event schedules, sign up for activities like camping trips, find forms, and read news or updates. Most of these families live in Marin County and nearby areas. They are often middle-income families who value teamwork, outdoor learning, and community service. They will mostly visit the site on their phones or computers after school, in the evening, on weekends or whenever is most convenient for them. With this group in mind, we are exploring communicative and accessible heuristics because we want to make sure they receive program information and updates in a timely manner. We also want them to easily access the site through any device.

New or interested families, this set of users are parents and children who are thinking about joining the Marin Scout. They are very important because that is how the Marin scout grows and its values live on. They use the site to learn what scouting is, what programs are offered, and how to sign up. These families may come from many different social and cultural backgrounds. Some may not know much about scouting or may have limited English skills, while some might want to join because a family member or friend was or is in the Marin Scout. For them, the site needs to be simple, learnable, welcoming, and easy to follow, with clear buttons that say things like “Join”, “Learn More”, “Contact for further enquiries”. Labelling is most important for this group of users as with findable portions; it provides an easier navigable site, creating a more joyful experience.

Volunteers and leaders, this group includes troop leaders, parents, and helpers who plan and organize activities for scouts. They visit the site to get forms, share updates, post event details, or check information about upcoming programs. Volunteers are often busy people who use the site in their free time to help the marin community. They will also upload details about upcoming events, meetings and other promotional activities.They need quick access to important tools and clear navigation to save time.

Donors and Community Supporters, These users are people or local businesses who want to support the scouting program with donations or sponsorships. They visit the site to learn about the council’s work, see how donations are used, and make safe online payments. Most donors are adults who care about youth programs and helping the community. They want to see a professional, trustworthy website that shows how their support makes a difference. The site should provide ease, controllability, delight, and a safe transaction to this group of users.

4.0 Project Objectives

This section outlines the objectives that guided our redesign work for the Marin Council Boy Scouts website. These objectives functioned as a charter for the project and helped focus our user research, analysis, and prototype development. The objectives fall into two categories: Organizational Objectives, which describe what the Marin Council aims to achieve for its community, and Design Objectives, which explain how the website’s structure, navigation, and information architecture supports both users and the organization.

4.1 Organizational Objectives

The redesigned site aims to support the Marin Council’s mission by improving how information is shared to its audience of scouts, families, and supporters. Based on our analysis and the site’s current challenges, the organizational objectives are to:

- Increase recruitment and new family engagement by spotlighting programs, benefits, instructions for signing up, and activities in a clear format.

- Support volunteers and leaders through better organization of resources, training materials, camp information, and leadership contact information.
- Strengthen donor trust and transparency by highlighting the impact of donations and improving credibility by simplifying the online donation process.
- Build community trust and identity by offering a consistent and reliable presence that reflects the values of the Boy Scouts of America.
- Serve diverse social, cultural, and economic backgrounds by providing clearer language, intuitive pathways, and thoughtful content organization.

The effects of the redesign:

- New families are more informed and motivated to join.
- Current scouts and parents have access to information without needing to seek the staff.
- Volunteers have a platform that makes planning and communicating easier.
- Donors are informed and become more willing to support the council's program.

4.2 Design Objectives

These objectives describe the improvements needed to address the website's usability and accessibility issues. The design objectives focus on reorganizing content, improving findability and ensuring a more consistent user experience across devices.

The redesigned site will:

- Simplify the site's navigation so categories reflect real user experience. This includes reducing redundant pages, clarifying labels, and establishing a coherent top level structure.
- Create a clear information hierarchy with proper sizing, spacing, headings and visual grouping to help users quickly understand page content.
- Improve findability by placing actions such as the join, donate, calendar, camps, and programs on the home page.
- Have consistency throughout the page by having similar fonts, colors, layouts, and spacing, which addresses the issue with visual inconsistencies.
- Increase clarity of labels and content organization, which would reduce the cognitive load and would make it easier for users to understand where information belongs.
- Improve communication of key tasks, such as registering for events and learning about programs, by making the pathways linear.

5.0 User Research

Methods we chose:

For this project we selected to use three different methods: card sorting method + survey + environmental scan.

What the methods are:

The first method that we decided to use was the card sorting study, which is taking a set number of cards with labels that represent the site content on them. We then ask participants to sort them based on the category which they think the cards should fall under. Some cards were more ambiguous so we put them under general information.

Why do card sorting: The reason why we chose to use the card sorting method is to have a sense of what comes naturally to users in the website's main category's structure. As when it comes to the more ambiguous cards in

the stack provided, there were many different valid answers. Thus by asking people to gather their opinions, we could provide a sense of best fit for how the contents fit under the different categories. This type of study was set up to prevent scope creep, given the project timeline, we decided to stick to more general categories such as General Information, Leadership, Other, Resources, and Support. The reason behind “Other” is that it felt like there could be some cards that do not have a sense of best fit under any of the given categories and to avoid adding complexity, “Other” was used as a category catch for any unforeseen results. As a further catch-all, we also decided to use surveys.

Why do a survey: Surveys were the second method that we chose, which, like the name insists, is using surveys to ask people questions in order to gain information about the website. However, what makes our survey different from other surveys is that we focused on people’s interactions with the website to see where people’s focus is using the website. The reason why we decided to use the survey method is that it was simple to gather people to conduct the survey since the card sorting study was already being performed. We also believed that it could serve as a necessary supplement to the card sort since information was being gathered on how the categories were being sorted, knowing which categories are the most popular and having more free form responses to gather information on what issues users have could only benefit the project. Which leads into the third method that we used.

Why do an environmental scan: The third method that we used was an environmental scan of similar websites. An environmental scan in this case is perusing other similar websites to find current trends among similar actors in the space as well as looking for negative trends. Simply stated it's the same as reconnaissance on similar websites to gather general information on what companies should be aware of for the future. When it comes to using the environmental scan, the reason behind this decision is that, due to our inexperience knowing what other successful models look like, the scans help guide us in a direction.

These three methods worked together to provide us with a foundation of research to guide our design decisions and recommendations.

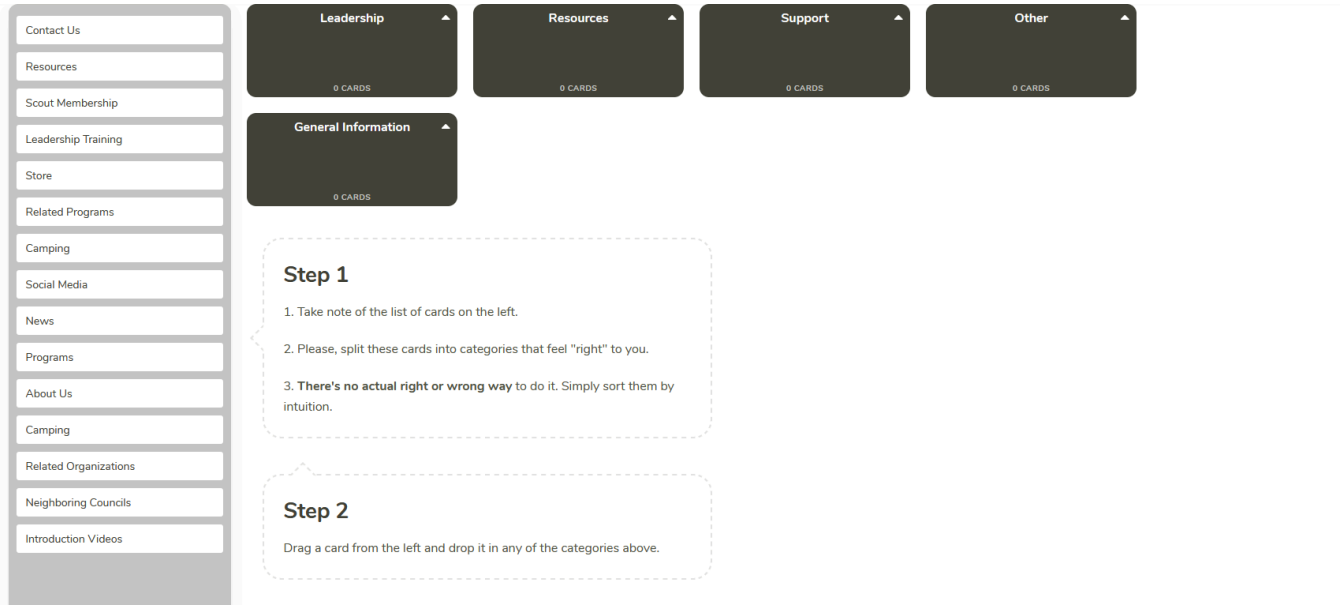
Results:

Card Sort Results:

The results are that there are 9 total participants in this study with eight of them successfully completing the study with the one incomplete test before realizing that there was a feature to test it without counting towards the participants. From here we find that there was a clear trend in how the participants sorted the cards. From here we are certain that we can trust the results that we were able to collect.

Card Sort Findings:

Out of the 8 valid respondents from our card sort, we discovered from our popular placements matrix that for some of the card topics there is a strong correlation for their main categories especially if it was a topic that had the title in the category name which showed that our results can be validated. Since it means that the participants were paying attention to the cards and not just randomly placing cards within categories. Yet the results show that there is a lot of leeway for cards that do not have a clear cut answer such as camping, neighboring councils, and related programs which although have a clear majority, it is not an overwhelming majority. However it should be noted that there was a mistake in the study’s setup where camping was listed twice but it should not pose a major conflict to the study. Overall though, it shows that while there are some concrete answers to which main topics belong under certain main topics, there are still some topics that are still up to interpretation.



Card Sorting Study Setup

Cards	Leadership	General Information	Resources	Support	Other
Leadership Training	88%	13%	0%	0%	0%
News	0%	75%	0%	0%	25%
Scout Membership	13%	50%	38%	0%	0%
About Us	0%	50%	25%	13%	13%
Introduction Videos	13%	38%	38%	13%	0%
Social Media	13%	25%	13%	25%	25%
Resources	0%	0%	88%	0%	13%
Programs	0%	38%	63%	0%	0%
Related Organizations	0%	13%	50%	0%	38%
Camping	0%	13%	38%	13%	38%
Neighboring Councils	0%	25%	38%	13%	25%
Related Programs	0%	25%	38%	0%	38%
Contact Us	0%	0%	0%	88%	13%
Camping	0%	13%	25%	0%	63%
Store	0%	38%	0%	13%	50%

Card Sorting Study Popular Placements Matrix Results

TABLE LEGEND

Total respondents

0% 100% (8 respondents)

Cards	Leadership	General Information	Resources	Support	Other
News	0	6	0	0	2
Store	0	3	0	1	4
Camping	0	1	3	1	3
Scout Membership	1	4	3	0	0
Camping	0	1	2	0	5
About Us	0	4	2	1	1
Related Organizations	0	1	4	0	3
Leadership Training	7	1	0	0	0
Resources	0	0	7	0	1
Social Media	1	2	1	2	2
Neighboring Councils	0	2	3	1	2
Introduction Videos	1	3	3	1	0
Programs	0	3	5	0	0
Contact Us	0	0	0	7	1
Related Programs	0	2	3	0	3

Card Sorting Study Results Matrix

Survey Results:

From our survey we had 11 people fill out the survey of which 2 people filled out the survey after we started doi. Of which we found that there were all verifiable. However, for our results, we needed to disqualify the first question from the results since there appears to be an issue where it did not record any results and was reproducible on our end. The second question appears to also run into an issue where we had at least one person mention that they did not see that question popping up on their end. We are assuming it because they took the survey on a mobile device. For the rest of the questions, it appears that they are still valid since answers

seem to be consistent outside of assumptions that the outliers are from people who ran into issues with answering the previous questions.

Survey Findings:

From the survey results it seems that there were some inconsistencies between respondents as some people did not answer all the survey questions. There were seven questions on this survey. The first question's issue disqualifies it from having any impact on the study. For the second question, we found that the place out of a potential that interested people was the youtube video, second was how to join the scouts, afterwards it was a mixture of other answers. For the 3rd question, there was a majority of responses that stated the sample page that we used for the survey was simply too cluttered. The 4th question seems to solidify this since when we asked to rank the four following website traits based on importance, respondents seemed to agree that usability is the important thing to them while engagement was ranked at the bottom. Which feels a bit strange since the next question asking for feeling of ease placed the majority of users scoring the sample page at the neutral to slightly uneased from the site. Which is also in line with the next question of seeing "Does the current layout make sense?" where an overwhelming majority said no along with agreeing that it also feels cluttered.

Survey Questions & Responses:



Survey Question 1

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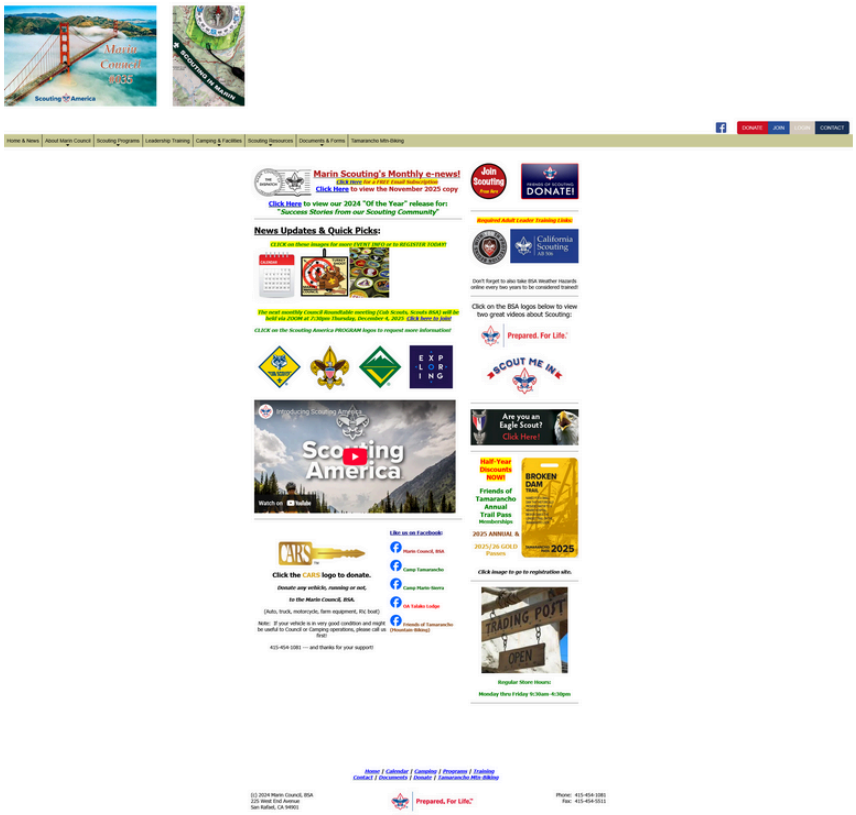
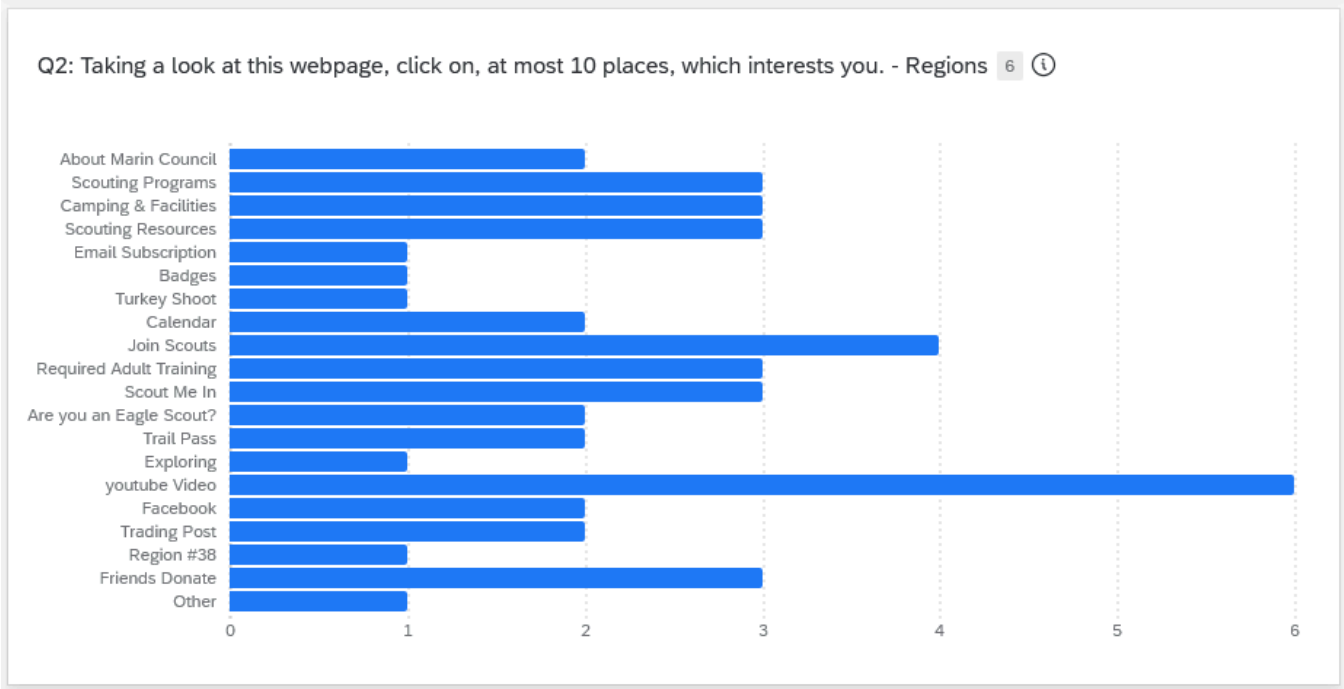
Taking a look at this webpage, click on, at most 10 places, which interests you.

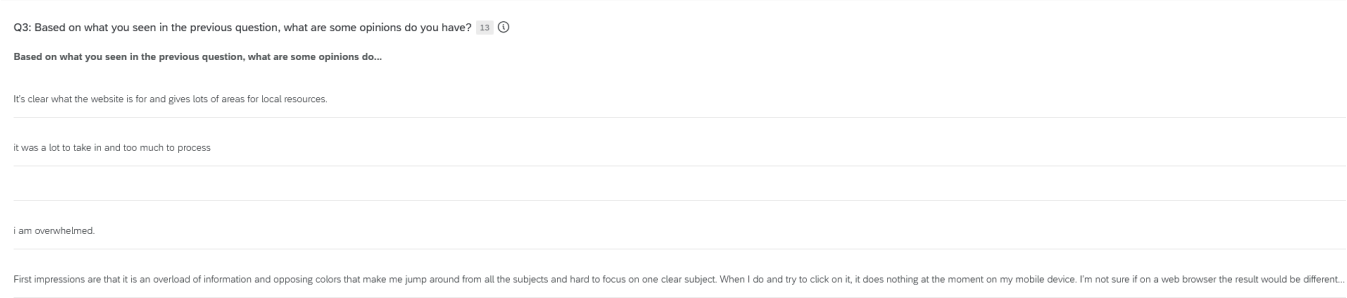


Based on what you seen in the previous question, what are some opinions do you have?

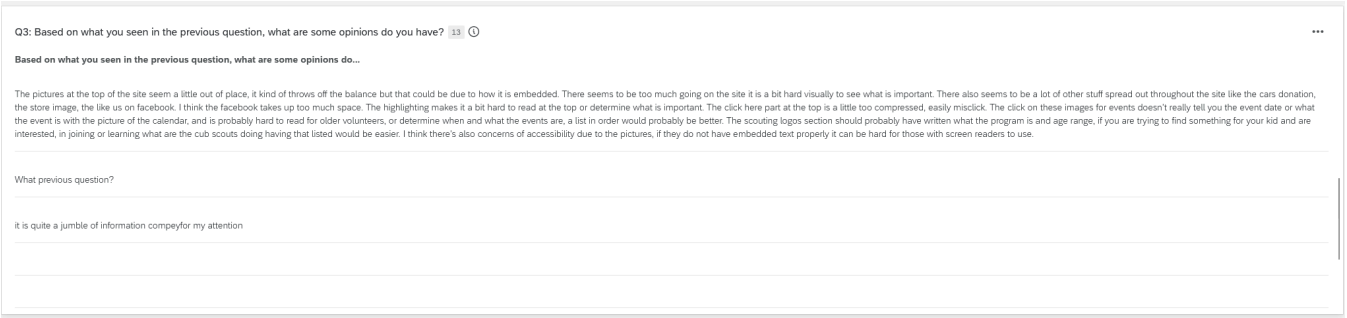
Survey Question 2 & 3



Survey Question 2 Responses



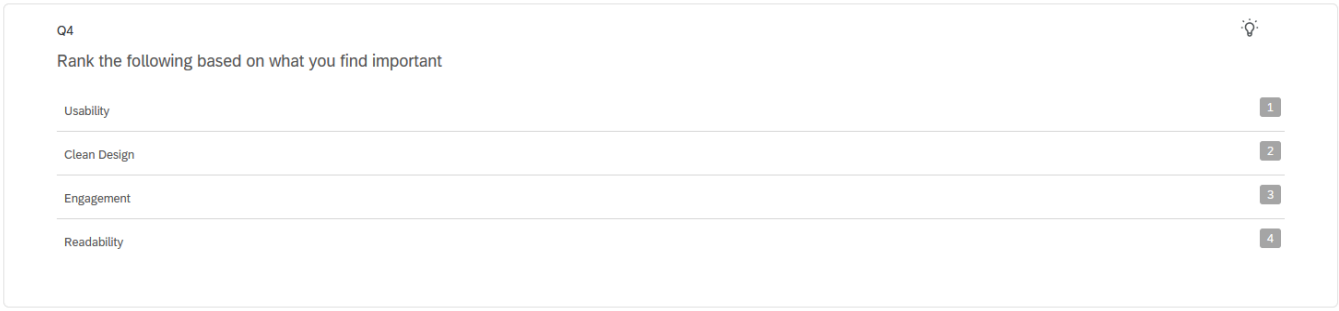
Survey Question 3 Responses Part 1



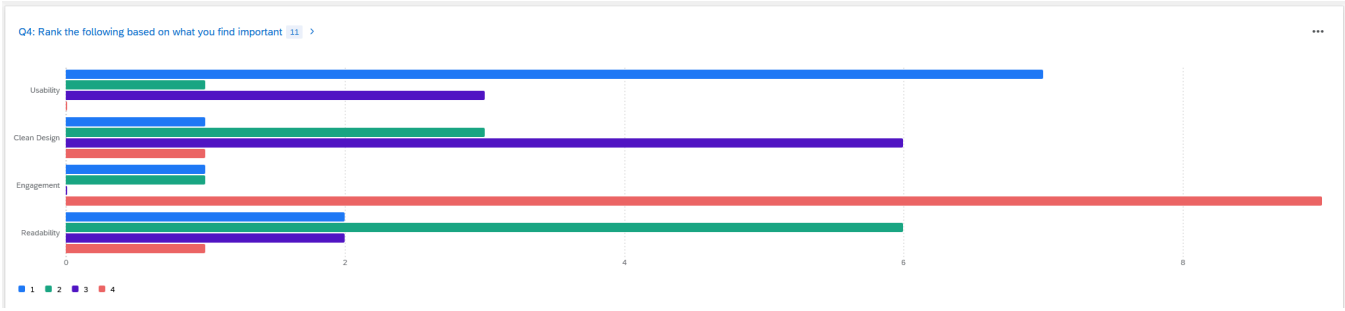
Survey Question 3 Responses Part 2



Survey Question 3 Responses Part 3



Survey Question 4



Survey Question 4 Responses

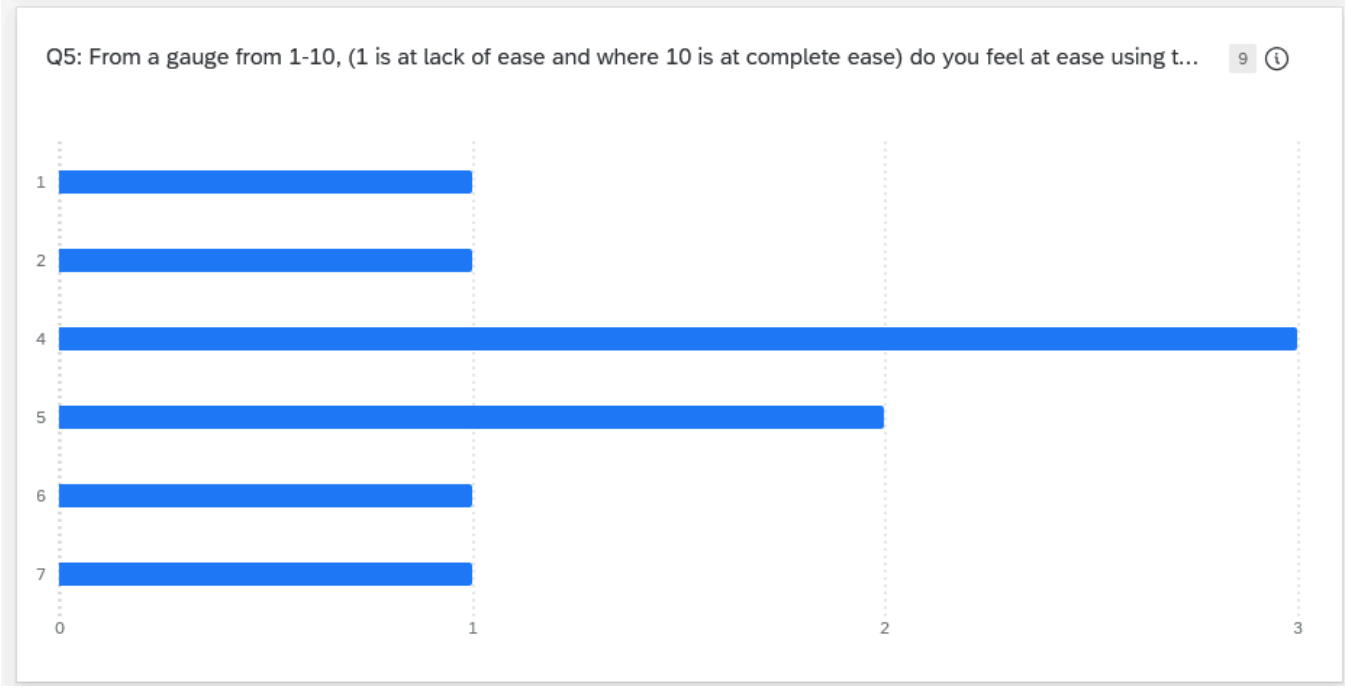
From a gauge from 1-10, (1 is at lack of ease and where 10 is at complete ease) do you feel at ease using the website?



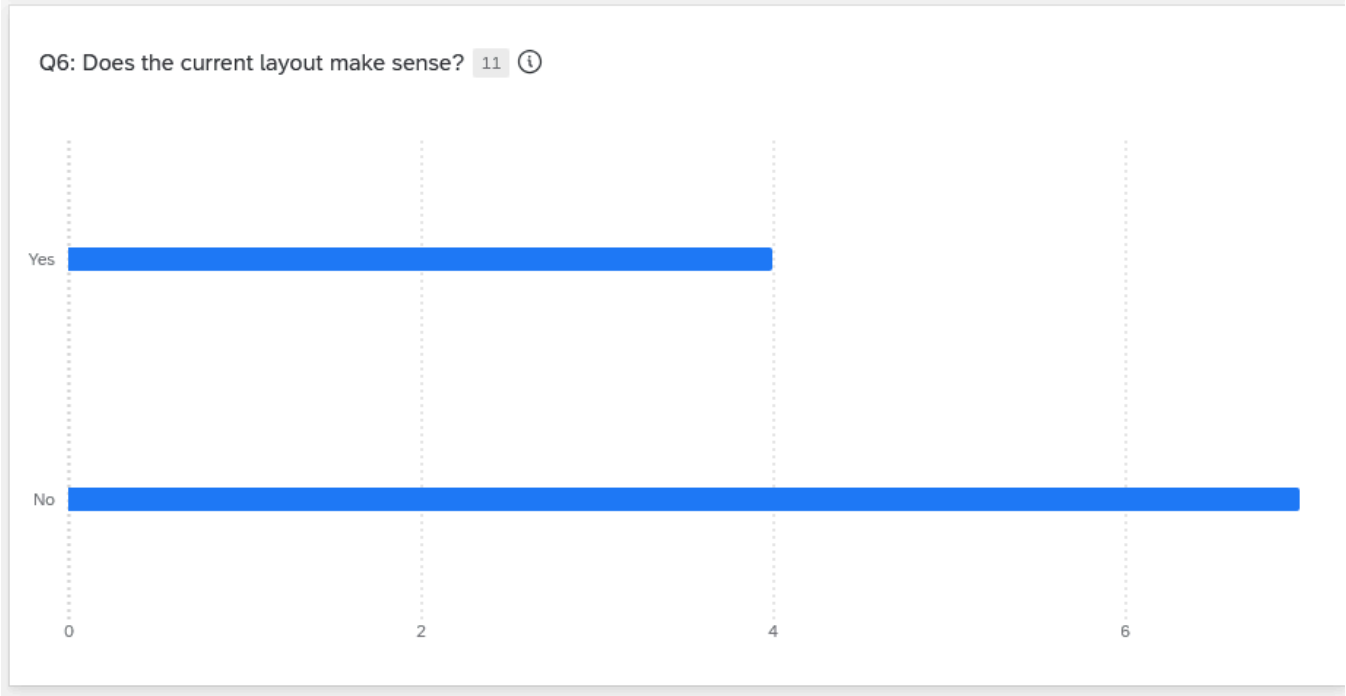
Does the current layout make sense?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

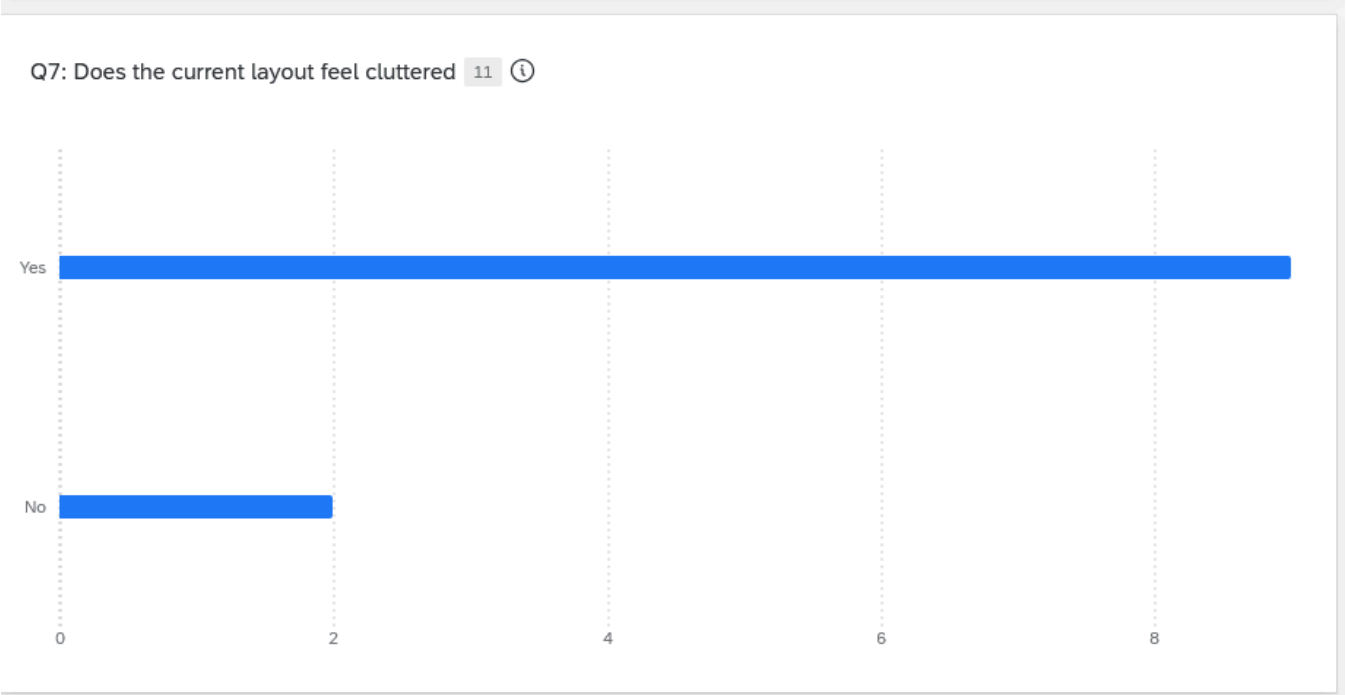
Survey Question 5



Survey Question 5 Responses



Survey Question 6



Survey Question 7

Environmental Scans Results:

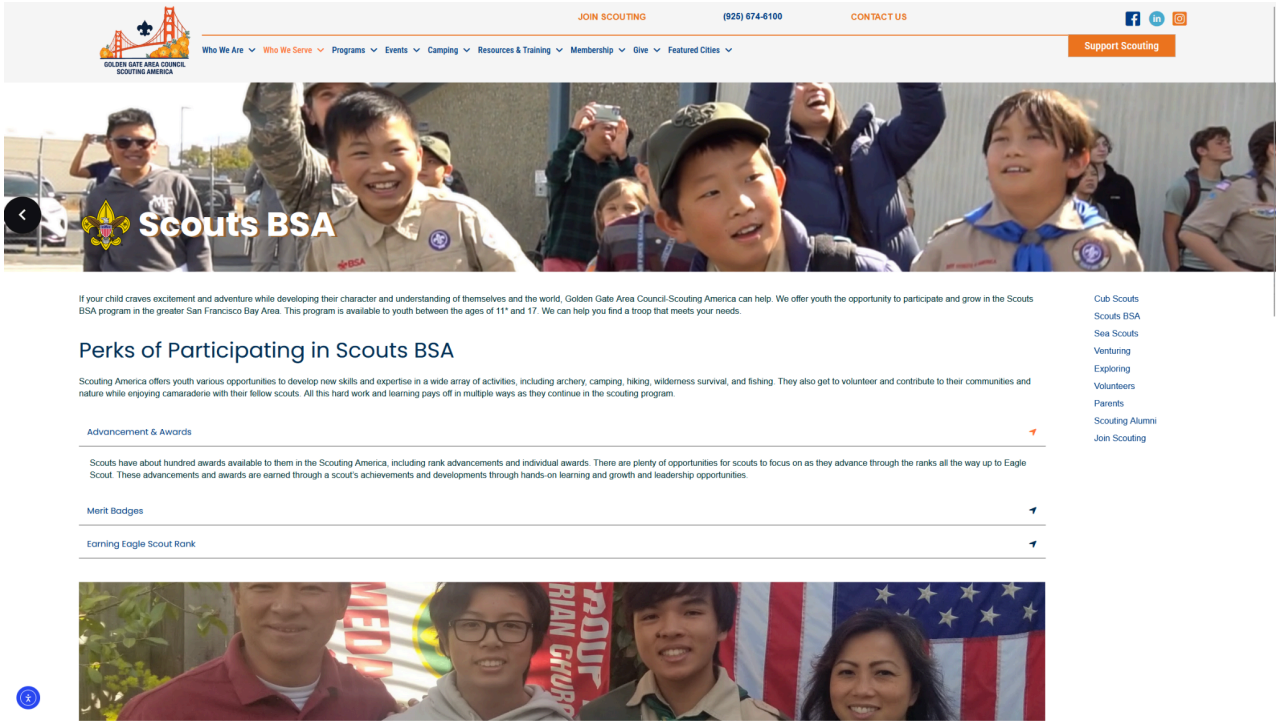
Our team found there were variations of each site's view on what a scouting site should look like. We all agreed that there were improvements to be made on each site and that some needed a redesign more than others. Specifically the Marin site needed many elements of design and usability that it was currently lacking. We focused on elements of heuristics, looking at what was controllable, as the collective sentiment of using some of the sites was confusion or overwhelm.

Environmental Scans Findings:

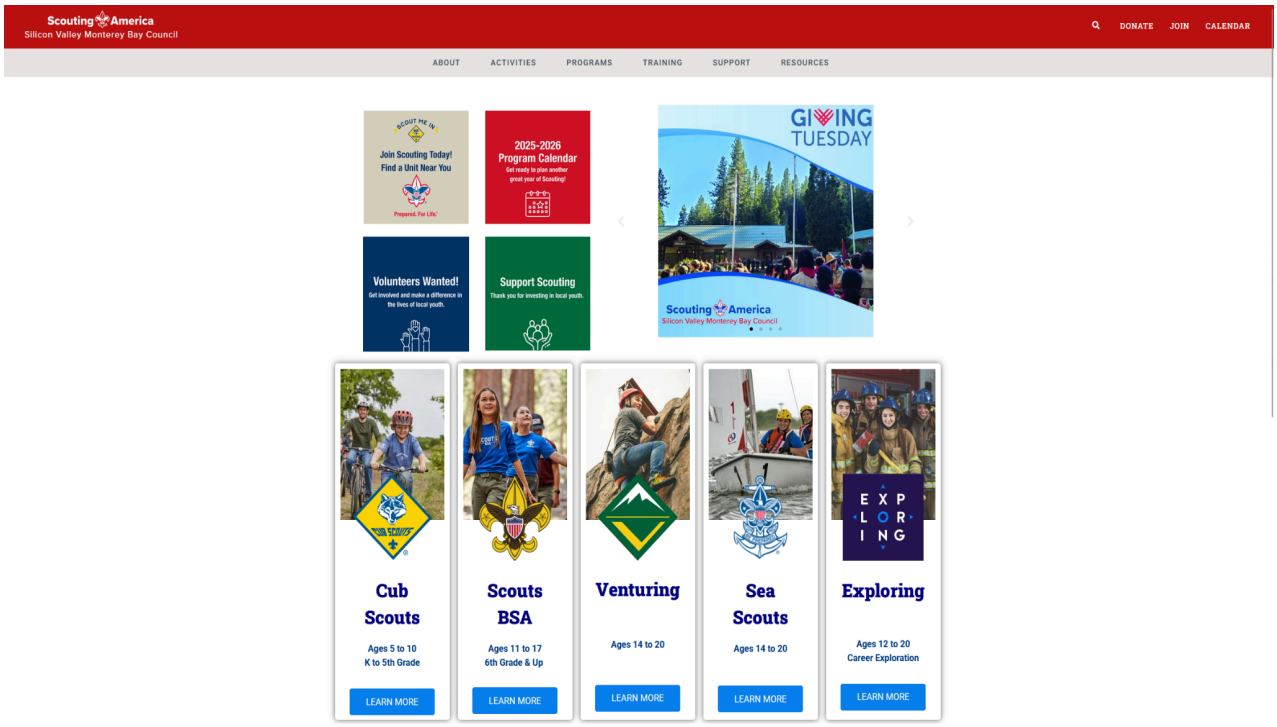
Some of the local sites had older looking sites, such as the Silicon Valley & Monterey Bay Council (https://svmbc.org) , where things felt cluttered, antiquated and generated confusion and unease when using. The Golden Gate Area Council (https://goldengatescouting.org/scouts-bsa/) was a nice mix of old and new. The site was easier to use, and more organized, navigable and readable than the Marin Council site and the Silicon Valley & Monterey Bay Council sites, however, looked aged and used muted colors. It also did not list any upcoming events.

Other sites, such as the Western Los Angeles County Council (https://scouting-la.org) and the greater New York Council (https://nycscouting.org) had more modernized sites, with motion graphics, slideshows on the front page, testimonials and up to date and future events posted. Their menus felt more engaging, the events showed photos of activities at the location from the past, and information was easy to find. On the "about us" page of the New York Council site, the about us page had a newsletter sign-up form, enticing users to stay up to date with current events. Finding anything similar on the Marin Council, GGAC or SVMBC page was impossible or hard to find, the exception being the running footer at the bottom of the SVMBC page which is constantly asking for sign ups for their newsletter, regardless of whether or not it is already received.

Environmental Scans Finding Pictures:



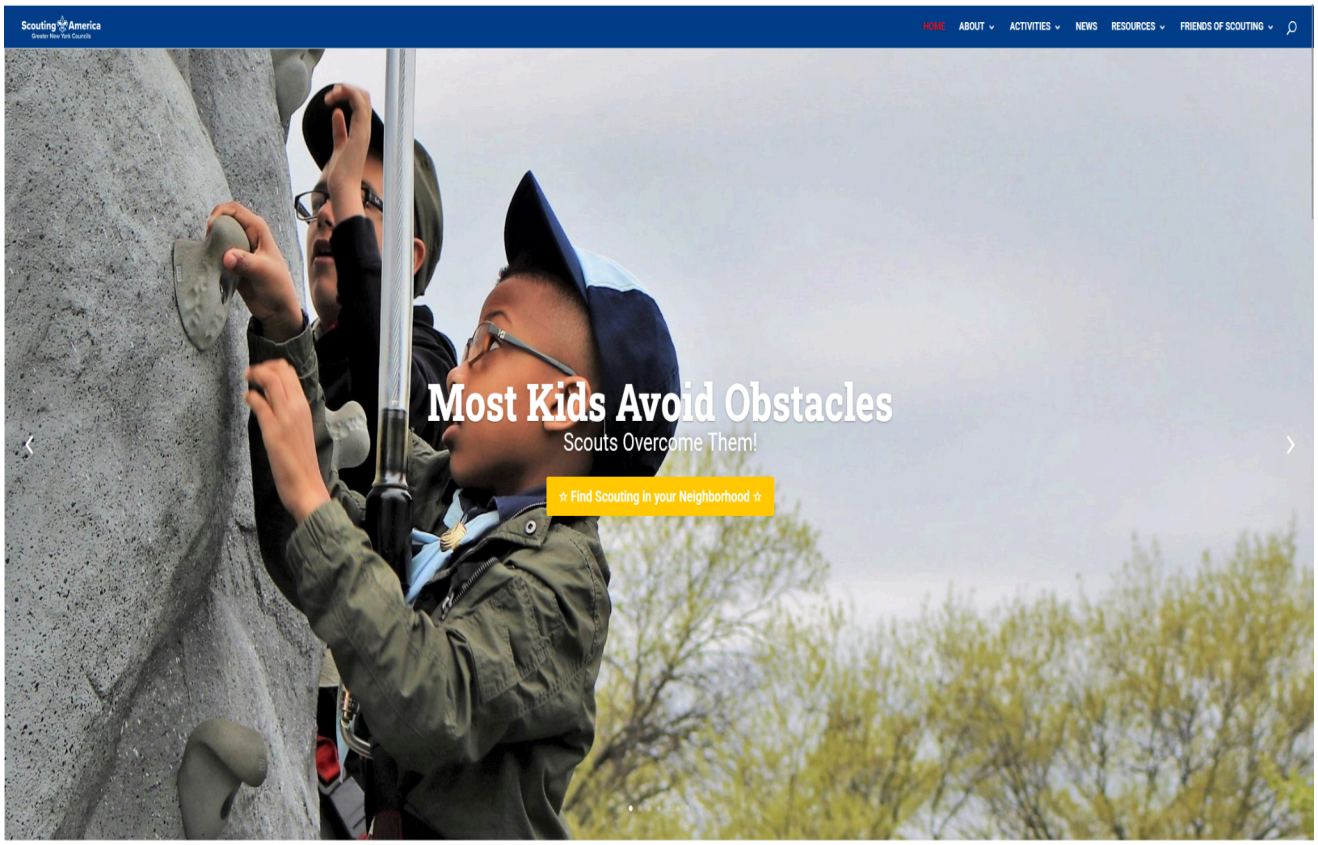
Golden Gate Area Council



Silicon Valley & Monterey Bay Council



Western Los Angeles County Council



Greater New York Council

6.0 Prototype Materials

Stakeholders should be aware of the redesign's intention of simplification of the currently obfuscating menu and journeys users take pathways to use. Due to the nature of the research our team curated, a need for clear and straightforward topics, such as resources, a need to declutter and align design elements, and the vast difference between this site and more modernized scouting sites, we found it was necessary to restructure the site's user experience. Our team made each of the prototypes for this project using separate tools.

For the creation of the new sitemap, we chose to utilize the tool Lucidchart. The new sitemap conveys structure and functionality within its design, keeping simplicity and findability in mind to make the user's navigational journey more pleasant and effective.

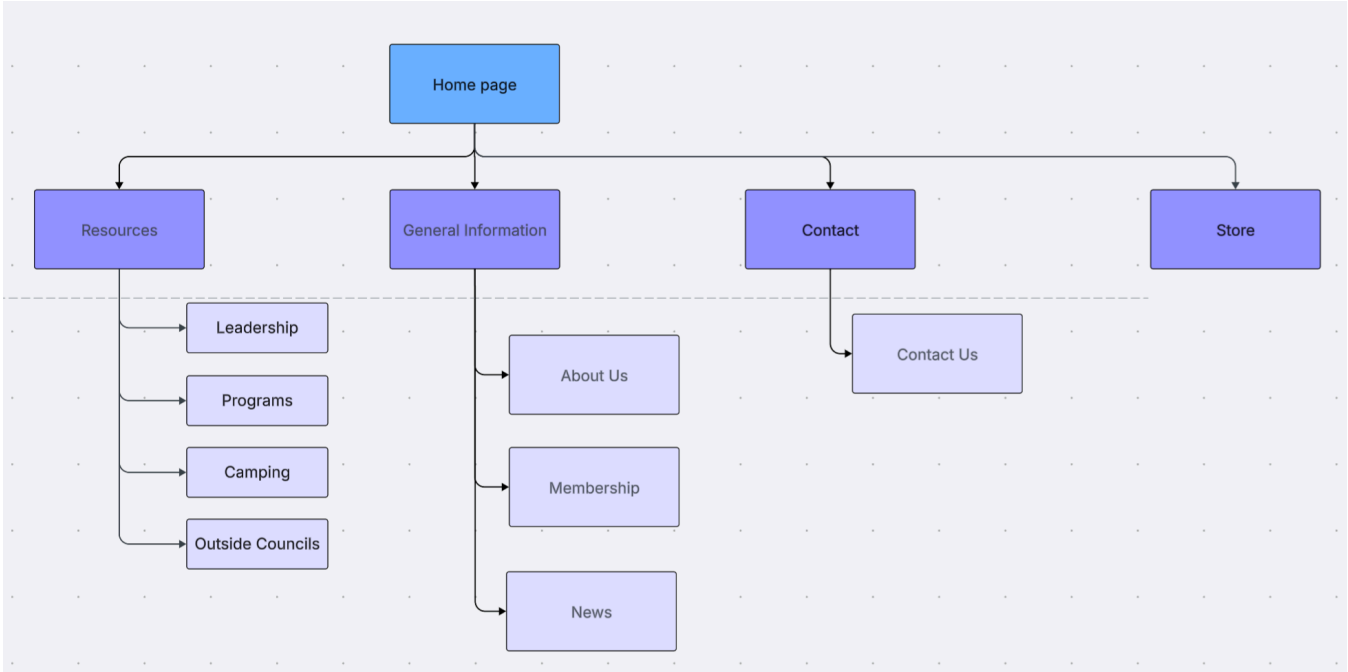
The journey maps were created using LucidChart, and illustrate the need for a simplified navigational styling, keeping relevant information accessible, findable, and present as necessary. The redesign keeps in mind the survey's findings of user responses indicating the site felt cluttered, and brings information to the relevant pages, nested within simplified menu navigation, as illustrated in the new sitemap.

We chose to create a new wireframe for the redesign. The wireframe shows the efforts we took to make an increase in readability for the site's most important information and users. It shows the current events of the week, keeps a video on what scouting is for interested parties, and new member information is just as accessible as the current and past Eagle Scout element, opposite the new/existing member information page.

Each of these elemental pieces of the site's redesign show the project's central goals: aligning design elements, decluttering the site, and restructuring navigation to meet user needs. Our intended result is a simplified user experience which delights visitors through our efforts in response to our environmental scan, surveys, and insights gleaned from card sorting activities. These design choices show our commitment to supporting growth and engagement with the site while still honoring scouting tradition and keeping users informed, without getting lost or confused.

6.1 Sitemap

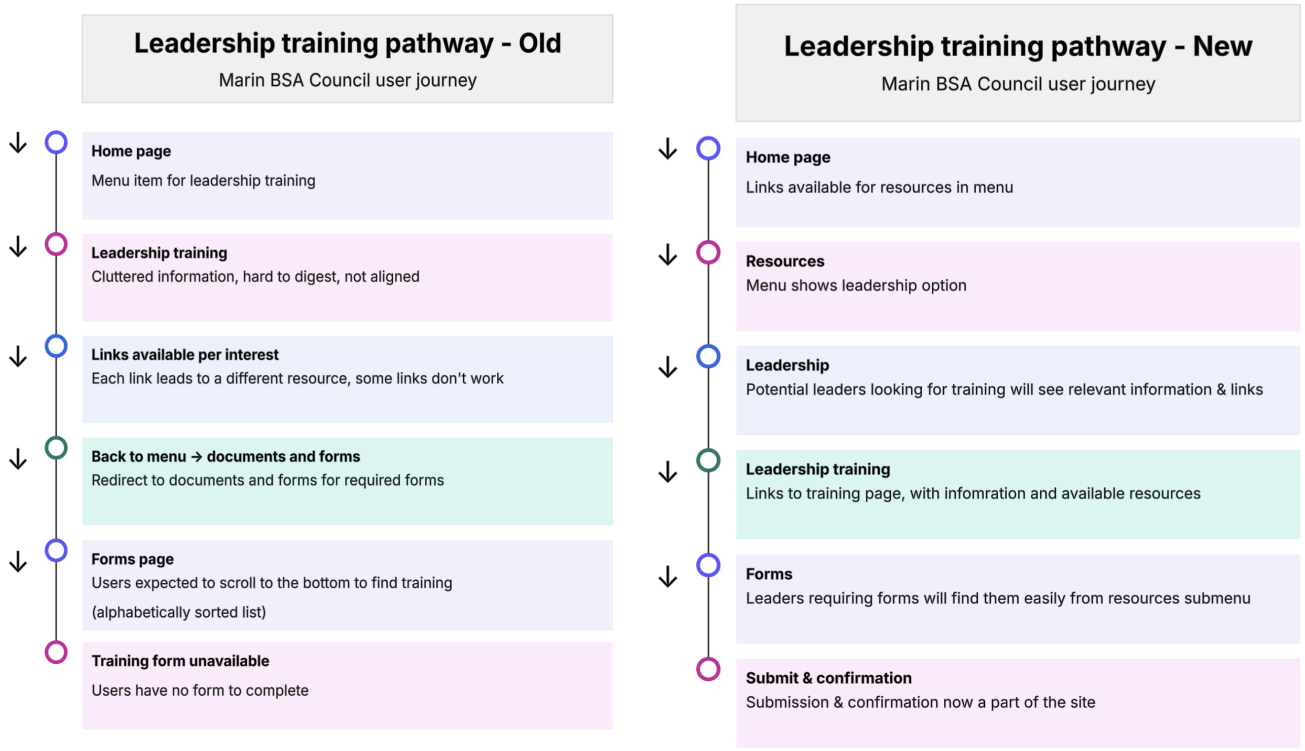
The sitemap we created was designed to make the user experience easier to navigate and find information. We reduced the navigational tree menus to parent and child relationships, keeping the most important information accessible by menu items. We further simplified the resources menu to only four categories, keeping only the most important information available, intending to place relevant forms and information about the resource on each page. General information's submenu had been reorganized to show the three most important menu items to new visitors, current events, membership information, and the about us section. There is a contact us section under the contact menu, and a store menu item.



Redesigned Site Map

6.2 User Journey Maps

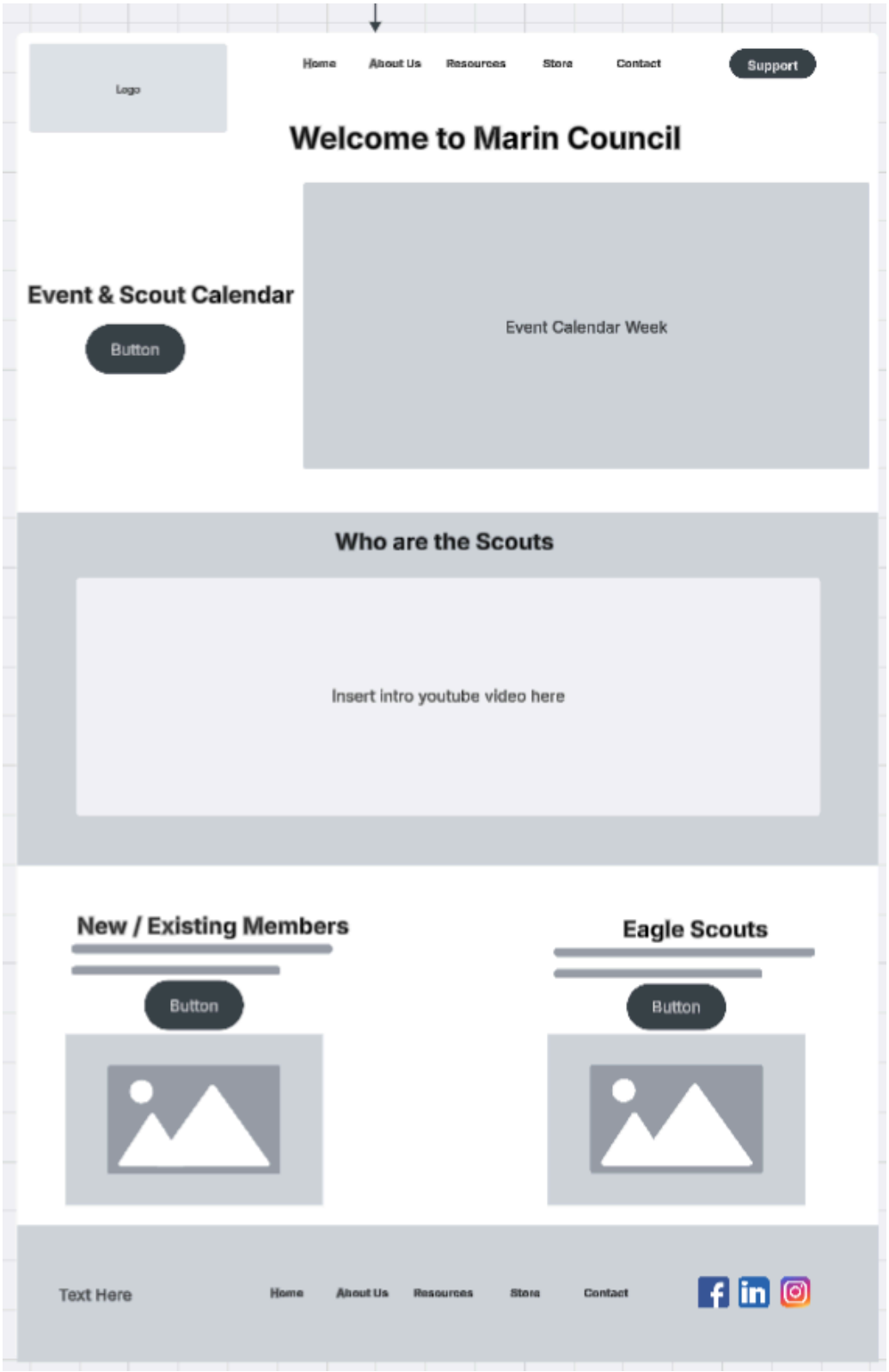
Our journey maps were created for a before and after comparison of the paths taken for the same navigational purpose by a user. Using the old navigational pathway, the journey's purpose was to provide resources for a user to find information and become prepared to be a leader. The journey took place in a series of menus, compounded with hard to find resources, it ultimately led the user to be unable to find the required informational form for leadership training. The new leadership training pathway has a streamlined navigational pathway, taking users to relative information and forms with a submit and confirmation button on the page in the final step of the process, using only one menu to find the leadership information, all on one page.



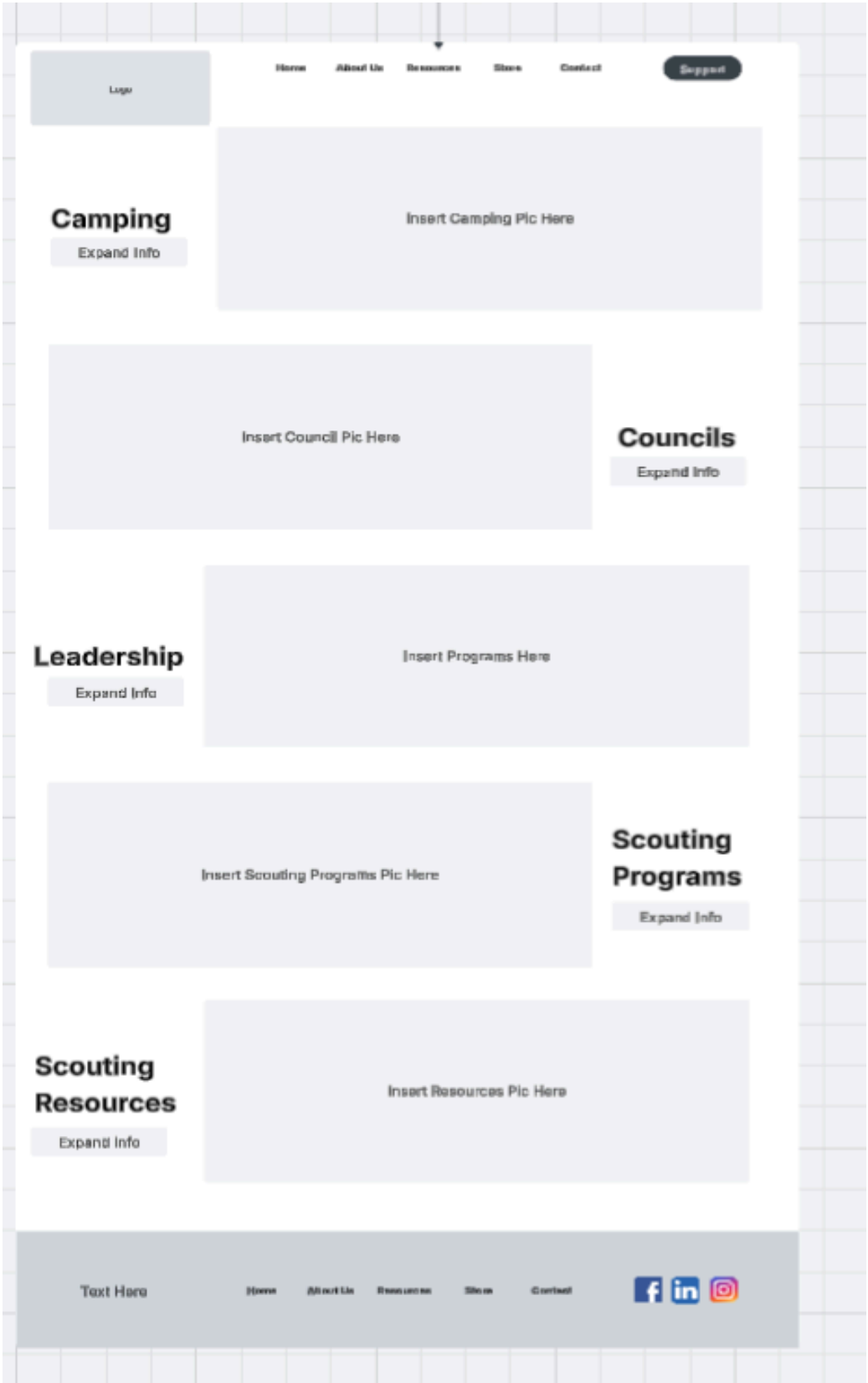
Journey Maps

6.3 Wireframes

The redesigned wireframes serve to provide relevant information and links previously hard to find, unaligned if found, and not well-laid-out in the original page. The new wireframe demonstrates how a simplified and blocked out version of the new website may appear, indicating what relevant information to users may be needed on the home page and resources page. The home page indicates the current event link, which shows the calendar for the current week and provides users with information on what the council is and has been doing, as well as its constituent parts. The calendar would be available as a feed for sync to calendar programs. There is also a provided portion of the page on a short video about who the scouts are, as well as links for new members and current as well as past Eagle Scout members and what they do.



Redesigned Homepage Wireframe



Redesigned Second Page Wireframe

7.0 Recommendations

Keeping the site up to date is paramount to keeping users informed. Placing information in the grasp of users is essential to the new redesign's success. Much of the information needs to be kept up to date, or the site will become irrelevant, outdated and inaccurately display information, which users depend on. Our intention is to increase credibility, however, and keep the trust of the community.

One method of keeping an up to date site means continuing to practice environmental scans, looking for relevant site examples for inspiration. Both inspirational and motivational, these scans provide examples which provide the design team with experiential starting points for what to accomplish with their intentions. If continued, they serve to provide the design team with relevant sites to the field of scouting which show the team how other scouting councils are presenting their site's information and maintaining their image as a pillar of the community.

The redesign also emphasizes reorganizing and simplifying the main navigation. We plan to accomplish this through iterative implementation practices, dependent on user feedback and research methods as previously mentioned in our report. By doing this, we hope to reinforce the highlighted key actions, join, donate, and calendar, which are essential to the council's mission and user engagement. This keeps users informed, readily provided with information which may aid their decision making practices when making considerations to support the Marin council. Simplified navigation ensures that users do not become overwhelmed as they can be now, or were from our research survey's findings. Instead, utilizing a clear, purposeful structure, directing users to control their journey in an enjoyable and aesthetically pleasing journey.

Our goal to improve clarity, spacing, and visual hierarchy will hopefully become accomplished with this redesign, however improvements will need to be made as the site grows, and evolves, keeping up with modern design practices. To ensure we are making correct decisions in design, we plan to continue site surveys, inciting user feedback and will provide users with delight when using the site through our redesign and iterative improvements over time.

To strengthen credibility and community trust, the site must have findable information, which is present when needed. To accomplish this, we plan to continue to keep relevant information in findable locations, nested within pages of easily accessible and navigable menus. Forms will be on relevant pages, instead of on their own page where a user has to do work in order to find the information they were searching for. Currently, users can encounter missing forms, or become lost in a maze of menus. We aim to provide an enjoyable experience when using the site, by keeping users engaged, primarily by increasing readability of the site through increasing findability, navigation, and usability.

To accomplish all of these objectives, we will continue iterative development through user testing, gathering feedback, and imparting this information to the design process. Constantly evolving the site to a better standard in relation to the user experience. In order to make this a reality, further research methods may need to be applied to the process of gathering input. Additionally, improvements to user engagement will continue to be practiced through redesigns, by keeping growth in mind, while maintaining traditional values of scouting practices.

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[1] Brown, Dan. (2011). *Communicating design.* p. 243.