



Heuristic Evaluation Report

City of Shoreline

<http://www.cityofshoreline.com>

By Mario Gomez, Manilyn Cabrera, Bella Chen, Ethan Nissley, Dini Nadzaruddin

1. Background & Objectives

Heuristic evaluation is a usability inspection method where a group of usability experts evaluate user interface (UI) of a website and judge its compliance with recognized usability principles (the "heuristics").

Our team will be using [10 Usability Heuristics for User Interface Design](#) to guide us in identifying usability problems with the current site.

2. Procedure & Material

To complete a heuristic evaluation, our team will be conducting a test where we identify two tasks that are commonly performed by users of the website. Our team will then go through the steps necessary to complete the task, along the way noting the issues we encounter according to the ten heuristics and giving a score of 0-4. With this data, we will be able to evaluate the results and make recommendations on how to improve the experience that users have in accomplishing the task at hand.

1. **Visibility of system status:**

The system should always keep users informed about what is going on, through appropriate feedback within reasonable time.

2. **Match between system and the real world:**

The system should speak the user's language, with words, phrases and concepts familiar to the user, rather than system-oriented terms. Follow real-world conventions, making information appear in a natural and logical order.

3. **User control and freedom:**

Users often choose system functions by mistake and will need a clearly marked "emergency exit" to leave the unwanted state without having to go through an extended dialogue. Support undo and redo.



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4. **Consistency and standards:**

Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing. Follow platform conventions.

5. **Error prevention:**

Even better than good error messages is a careful design which prevents a problem from occurring in the first place. Either eliminate error-prone conditions or check for them and present users with a confirmation option before they commit to the action.

6. **Recognition rather than recall:**

Minimize the user's memory load by making objects, actions, and options visible. The user should not have to remember information from one part of the dialogue to another. Instructions for use of the system should be visible or easily retrievable whenever appropriate.

7. **Flexibility and efficiency of use:**

Accelerators—unseen by the novice user—may often speed up the interaction for the expert user such that the system can cater to both inexperienced and experienced users. Allow users to tailor frequent actions.

8. **Aesthetic and minimalist design:**

Dialogues should not contain information which is irrelevant or rarely needed. Every extra unit of information in a dialogue competes with the relevant units of information and diminishes their relative visibility.

9. **Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors:**

Error messages should be expressed in plain language (no codes), precisely indicate the problem, and constructively suggest a solution.

10. **Help and documentation:**

Even though it is better if the system can be used without documentation, it may be necessary to provide help and documentation. Any such information should be easy to



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search, focused on the user's task, list concrete steps to be carried out, and not be too large.

Severity Scale

The team will be performing a few tasks on the website and use the 10 usability heuristics as a guide to help assess the level of difficulty to perform the tasks on the City of Shoreline's website. We use a scale method where each evaluator can measure the usability of the website by giving the task a score between 0-4. This scale method is based on [Nielson's severity ratings for usability problem](#):

- 0 = I don't agree that this is a usability problem at all
- 1 = Cosmetic problem only: need not be fixed unless extra time is available on project
- 2 = Minor usability problem: fixing this should be given low priority
- 3 = Major usability problem: important to fix, so should be given high priority
- 4 = Usability catastrophe: imperative to fix this before product can be released

The Heuristic Testing Scenarios

Scenario 1: A business owner looking to expand his bakery business. He is in the preliminary stage of scouting for a suitable city to be the base of his next business venture.

Task:

- I. Find information that talks about the neighborhoods, the amenities and recreation in the city, the school, population and other relevant topics.
- II. Look for the process to set up a business in the city and apply for the business license
- III. Search for the list of offices for lease

Scenario 2: User parents recently moved to a retired community in shoreline and he wants to learn about things to do for senior citizens. The user's parents are from India and they speak very little English.

Task:

- I. Find information about recreational programs for senior citizens.
- II. Look for reviews from other people.



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- III. Find out about fees and schedules.
- IV. Find out about multicultural events.
- V. Find out about English lessons for adults.
- VI. Look for volunteering opportunities for seniors.

3. Findings & Results

Scenario 1: A business owner looking to expand his business. He is in the preliminary stage of scouting for a suitable city to be the base of his next business venture.

Task:

- I. Find information that talks about the neighborhoods, the amenities and recreation in the city, the school, population and other relevant topics.
- II. Look for the process to set up a business in the city and apply for the business license
- III. Search for the list of offices for lease

Screenshots:

CITY OF SHORELINE

Home Community **Business** Government Emergency I want to...

About us
Promoting Shoreline
Bids & RFPs
Online Property Search
Regional Resources
Permits, Fees, Utilities and Taxes
Initiatives and Incentives
Property Tax Exemption (PTE) Program
Shoreline Film Office
Aurora Square Community Renewal Area

Business

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The City of Shoreline is rolling out the welcome mat to business investors:

- \$140 million invested to rebuild Aurora Avenue
- Expert staffing to handle permitting and planning needs
- Form-based zoning in commercial areas
- New light rail station area zoning



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“Surprise by Shoreline” is a marketing website created by City of Shoreline as a way to promote the city

Business

Promoting Shoreline

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Resources

- [Introducing Surprised by Shoreline](#)
- [Promoting Shoreline FAQ](#)
- [Marketing Glossary](#)

Shoreline residents love living in Shoreline; however, the success of the City's Vision 2029 plan depends on continually attracting new residents and businesses to invest in the community. Unfortunately, these people may currently know little about Shoreline or - even worse - maintain negative misconceptions about it. To complement the City's placemaking and economic development efforts, in 2015 an initiative to promote Shoreline was launched to strengthen the City's image beyond Shoreline's borders.

The [Surprised by Shoreline website](#) and related videos, infographics, and downloads are designed to reach beyond our borders directly or through the support of Shoreline residents and businesses. If you, your business, or your organization would like access to use Surprised by Shoreline images so that you can help promote Shoreline through print or social media, please contact Dan Eernisse [by email](#) or by phone at (206) 801-2218.

Another way to access the “Surprised by Shoreline”

CITY OF SHORELINE

[Home](#) [Community](#) [Business](#) [Government](#) [Emergency](#) [I want to...](#)

Calendar

- Find Your Future Resume Building Workshop**
February 2, 2017
- Planning Commission Meeting *CANCELLED***
February 2, 2017
- Richmond Beach Saltwater Park Volunteer Work Party**
February 4, 2017

About Shoreline

- [Surprised by Shoreline](#)
- [Quick Facts](#)
- [Shoreline History](#)
- [Citizen Satisfaction](#)

Human Services

- [Census Information](#)
- [Home Repair](#)
- [Internet For Low Income Households](#)
- [Senior Services](#)
- [Utility Assistance Programs](#)

Parks and Recreation

- [Parks and Facilities](#)
- [Recreation Programs](#)
- [Shoreline Pool](#)
- [Spartan Rec Center](#)
- [Special Events](#)

Shoreline4Health

- [Eats4Health](#)
- [Recreates4Health](#)
- [Plans4/Builds4Health](#)

Community Directory

Customer



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Third party site, www.surprisedbysoreline.com, offering relevant information to businesses and residents



- About us
- Promoting Shoreline
- Bids & RFPs
- Online Property Search
- Regional Resources
- Permits, Fees, Utilities and Taxes**
- Initiatives and Incentives
- Property Tax Exemption (PTE) Program
- Shoreline Film Office
- Aurora Square Community Renewal Area

Business

Permits, Fees, Utilities and Taxes

[Print](#) [Share & Bookmark](#) [Font Size: + -](#)

Shoreline charges no impact fees for parks or schools. In addition, Shoreline does not charge a Business and Occupation (B&O) Tax. Of course, other typical charges and fees apply to support the infrastructure of the community.



Resources

- [Business Licensing](#)
- [Permitting and Development Information](#)
- [Development handouts](#)
- [Current fees](#)
- [Utility providers](#)
- [Taxes](#)



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Another way to go to "Business License"

	Mario	Bella	Ethan	Manilyn	Dini	Avg.
1. Visibility of system status	2	2	3	2	2	2.2
NOTES	The gateway pages needed major visual redesign. Some menu options can be confusing and could have been broken down into simplified terms. This process of finding what you are looking could also become more efficient.					
2. Match between system and the real world	2	2	3	2	2	2.2
NOTES	It would be nice if the website offered translations from english into several other languages. The site structure didn't make the task of finding					



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	respective forms and permits too difficult.					
3. User control and freedom.	2	3	3	3	3	2.8
NOTES	Many of the links on the site will open up in a new tab and some will take you to third party sites. Links that take you to other pages on the site will often provide breadcrumbs while others do not. The user can always click back but this inconsistency can be annoying.					
4. Consistency and standards	2	2	3	3	2	2.4
NOTES	<p>The way many of the text links on the site are labeled can be confusing to users. For instance (file a business license online vs business license application). Some users may think that “business license application” is a pdf that must be printed out and handed in person and not a submittable online form.</p> <p>The breadcrumbs users use as a guide can also be misleading as seen on the business license page (Government>Departments>City Clerk’s office). This doesn’t make sense here.</p>					
5. Error prevention	0	1	2	1	0	0.8
NOTES	Error messages are not found on the website					
6. Recognition rather than recall	1	2	2	2	3	2
NOTES	The website itself is very text heavy and almost every page looks the same. The ‘business license’ page for example, contains a lot of links which leads to either a different destination page or third party websites. There is a lack of iconography usage, that could really guide users along the way. As a user, it’s difficult to navigate through the website and remember where links will lead you to.					
7. Flexibility and efficiency of use	2	3	3	4	4	3.2



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NOTES	<p>There is some degree of flexibility. For example, there is a “I want to” link at the top level of navigation, that allows you to jump to certain pages. But for the most part, the site is very linear. The website offers basic customization such as font size and language selection. These functions however are not prominent on the website which can be one aspect to improve on.</p> <p>In some cases, if a user were to perform a specific task, there is almost no other way to do it rather than clicking through links that will eventually lead the user to the right page. (i.e: HOME - business - Permits, fees, utilities & taxes - business licensing - file a business license online). Alternatively the site offers a simple search feature if a user wants a short cut.</p>					
8. Aesthetic and minimalist design	2	4	3	4	4	4.2
NOTES	<p>It is nice to have information for users to read about the city. But too much information may result in clutter. There are a lot of text, unnecessarily large and poor quality images which are irrelevant to the website. Irrelevant information/features might overwhelm users and end up confusing them. There should also be a difference between the important features and side features. The prominence of a certain features should be considered for this website so that the website looks cleaner and user friendly.</p>					
9. Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors	2	2	2	2	0	1.6
NOTES	<p>Not applicable since the website relies on third party URL's to access information or to fill out forms relevant to business activities.</p>					
10. Help and documentation	2	3	2	3	2	2.4
NOTES	<p>Not Applicable.</p>					



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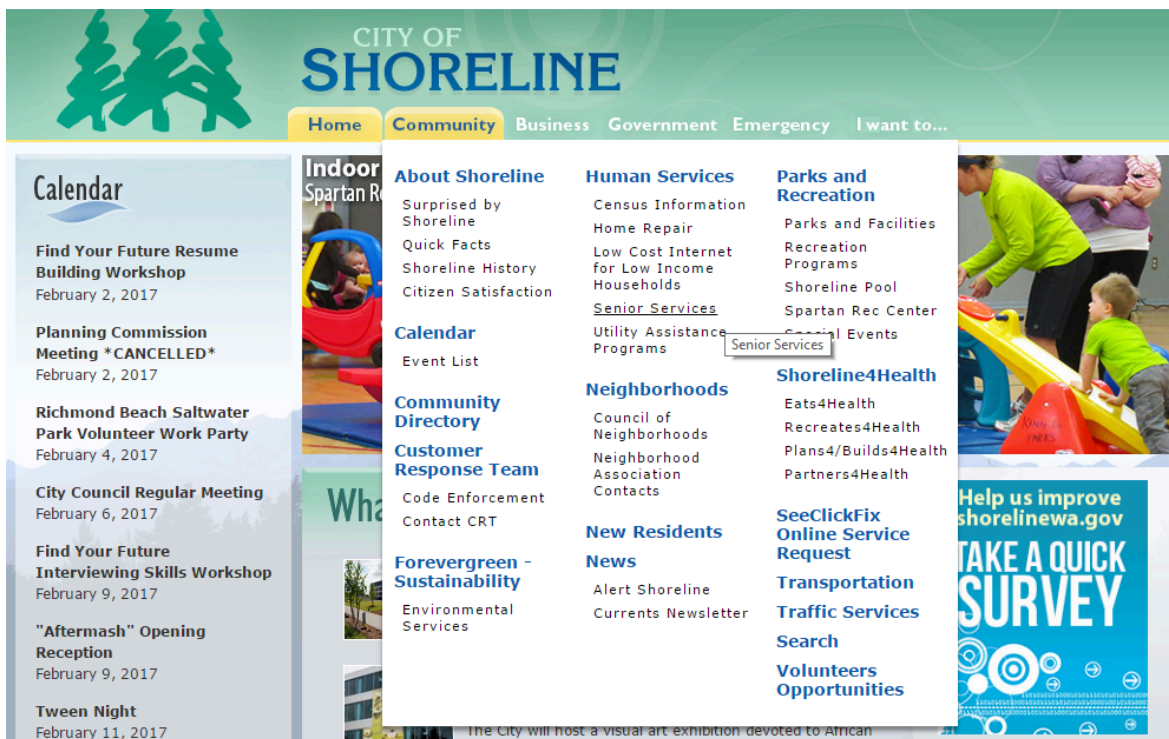
Scenario 2: User parents recently moved to a retired community in shoreline and he wants to learn about things to do for senior citizens. The user's parents are from India and they speak very little English.

Task:

- IV. Find information about recreational programs for senior citizens.
- V. Look for reviews from other people.
- VI. Find out about fees and schedules.
- VII. Find out about multicultural events.
- VIII. Find out about English lessons for adults.
- IX. Look for volunteering opportunities for seniors.

Screenshots:

The third party website for senior residents can be retrieved through the 'senior services' link on the menu





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This page contains breakdown of the services for senior residents. The link to the senior website is listed here.

	Mario	Bella	Ethan	Manilyn	Dini	Avg.
1. Visibility of system status	2	2	2	2	2	2
NOTES	The amount of information found under the Community section of the main navigation can be a bit overwhelming for the user. The website did not include “Senior Citizen” in the main navigation structure and is instead found under community director. It requires the user to scroll down the page to find the link to a separate third party site, The Shoreline Lake Forest Park Senior Center.					



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2. Match between system and the real world	2	2	3	2	2	2.2
NOTES	The Shoreline website could offer more helpful information regarding senior residents and services available to them around the city. The Shoreline Lake Forest Park Senior Center site provides covers more ground on this particular information but I think it would be helpful if some of this information was also available on Shoreline's senior services page as well.					
3. User control and freedom.	2	2	2	2	1	1.8
NOTES	Navigating around the City of Shoreline's website is a bit confusing but still manageable to go back and forth in performing different task, even users accidentally click a wrong button. However, from the third party senior center website, there is no link or button to return to the Shoreline's website without clicking the browser's back button or opening up the City of Shoreline's site again.					
4. Consistency and standards	2	3	2	3	3	2.6
NOTES	The City of Shoreline's seniors services page is consistent in its structure but doesn't cover anywhere near the amount of services and assistance available to senior citizens as the third party site users are directed to.					
5. Error prevention	0	0	0	0	0	0
NOTES	Our team didn't encounter any experience with this.					
6. Recognition rather than recall	2	2	3	3	2	2.4
NOTES	The City of Shoreline's website lacks of iconography and it contains too many words. The user of this site may experience difficulty in remembering or recognizing the location of their previous action.					
7. Flexibility and efficiency of use:	2	3	2	3	2	2.4



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NOTES	There is not a great deal of flexibility and efficiency when it comes to navigating through the City of Shoreline’s website. There are limited means for users to shortcut through the website to get to the information they are looking for. The most obvious method would be to click on the “I want to” link on the top navigation level. From this link users can get to certain destination pages. But for the most part, the site is very linear, and requires users to go from one page to the next to arrive at the desired destination page.					
8. Aesthetic and minimalist design	1	3	3	3	3	2.6
NOTES	The Senior Services page on the City of Shoreline’s site is lacking in design and readability. There is too much text, and no imagery or iconography. It’s presented in a list format, but it reads more like paragraphs due to the length of the information presented. The third-party Senior Center site however is well thought out. It’s straightforward and has a good balance between visuals and text. Users can maximize and minimize the font size, which is appropriate considering the clientele’s of the site. However, the site could benefit from incorporating tables when presenting information such as events and fees.					
9. Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors	0	0	0	0	0	0
NOTES	Not applicable as our team did not experience any of this when running through the tasks.					
10. Help and documentation	3	4	3	4	4	3.6
NOTES	There are limited help features on the site. And the existing help features are not particularly helpful. For example, there is a search bar in the utility menu, but surprisingly, when our team typed in “Senior,” the first thing that came up in the search results was not the gateway page titled “Senior Services,” but rather, a link for “Accessible Transportation in Shoreline.”					