

Sustainable Pittsburgh

Executive Summary

Community Partner

Autumn Secrest

Student Consulting Team

Alexander Nelson

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Background

Sustainable Pittsburgh is a non-profit organization dedicated to spreading sustainability. They want to achieve a stronger and more resilient Southwestern Pennsylvania through the policy and practice of sustainable development. They describe their organization's mission as, *"Sustainable Pittsburgh affects decision-making in the Pittsburgh region to integrate economic prosperity, social equity, and environmental quality as the enduring accountability, bringing sustainable solutions for communities and businesses."* After talking to members of this organization, it is easy to tell that they are dedicated and passionate about this cause.

Project Description

Project Opportunity

To accomplish their mission, Sustainable Pittsburgh uses a web platform where participating organizations can submit evidence of their sustainable actions, and the organizers (our clients) can receive the evidence and process them for the SP Challenge. Both stakeholders' felt that their work could be done much more efficiently if there were some changes made to the platform. Our client also wished to further expand and scale the SP Challenge competition, and the new features and usability improvements would help them achieve the scalability that they were looking for.

Project Vision

Our vision for the project was focused on making sure that we helped the participating organizations better plan and compete in the SP Challenge, but also to help our clients better understand the participating organizations' motives / hurdles and to improve the SP Challenge for the future iterations. To do so, we focused on two areas: 1. Action Planning feature to help the participants better organize their time agenda, ultimately helping them achieve more within the competition, and 2. User Experience improvements, where the tiniest improvements in the website helped create a smoother and more intuitive interface, ensuring that the platform doesn't hinder, but synergizes with the actual functionalities of the website.

Project Outcomes

Through our project, we have greatly improved the platform for the Sustainable Pittsburgh Challenge. The website is at the very core of this entire challenge. It is where actions are submitted, reviewed, accepted, and rejected. Without a highly functional website, the entire challenge comes to a halt. In our project we have made several meaningful UI changes in which we have improved the user flow of the website. We have made the website much more intuitive for users. We have gotten rid of extraneous features that created unnecessary clutter. We have added extremely useful features that will better facilitate participation in the challenge. We have created another administrator page in which the community partner can better monitor the website. These additions will definitely have an impact on the overall experience of the SPChallenge for both users and our community partners.

Project Deliverables

The final deliverable will be the deployment of the new website onto their servers. The website link will be found here: <https://www.spchallenge.org/>. There is also a GitHub repository and a link to the testing website.

Recommendations

The first recommendation we have in order to fully utilize the additional features is to use the administrator page in order to monitor the actions being planned. In this page, administrators are able to sort and search by keywords. This will enable the community partner program administrators to understand trends and analyze interests. This will enable the full utilization of this feature.

In order to create additional changes, we have suggested that the community partner hire OpenArc. This was the initial developer of the website. During the initial planning stages of the website, we decided that we would build upon the existing website. We did this for sustainability reasons. Instead of create a separate app, we thought it would be easier and more intuitive for future developers to understand and build upon a feature that was implemented into the already existing code base. We have left good comments and extensive documentation. Any changes that need to be made in the future can be easily done by the initial creators of the website.

Student Consulting Team

Alex Nelson was the technical lead. He is a senior in Information Systems, and will be graduating this year. He is extremely interested in app development, and has accomplished many side projects.

Antonio Song was the client liaison. He is a junior in Information Systems and will be graduating in 2020. He is very involved with user experience design. He is interested in creating websites that are user friendly, functional, and aesthetically pleasing.

Anusha Venkatesan served as project manager. She is a Junior in Information Systems with a minor in Computer Science, and will be graduating in 2020. She is especially interested in computer systems and machine learning.