

## Adams County Website - Redesign

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# Introduction

## An information-heavy county website gets a facelift

#### THE ASSIGNMENT

For this project, I was asked to redesign the website for Adams County Iowa (<a href="http://www.adamscountyia.com">http://www.adamscountyia.com</a>).

The purpose of this assignment was to explore information architecture and how it can be used to successfully and quickly direct a web user to the information they are seeking.

## **PROJECT REQUIREMENTS**

Design all screens for laptop width (a minimum of 960 pixels wide), and for mobile as well (480 pixels wide). Include a landing page and the ability for a county resident to:

- · find out where their voting precinct is located.
- find out the hours and place to take the written drivers test
- · find a photo history of the county

Your site must enable visitors to search for and find information about specific topics for which county constituents need information. You'll need to ensure that busy citizens who visit your site can search for, and easily find, specific information; and that the typography you employ is both easy to read and aesthetically pleasing.

This project will use typography to help you establish information architecture (meaning: helping the reader know what look look at first) as well as how to use type in effective and beautiful ways on the screen. It will also include a historic photo section, and maps of voting districts.

# ADAMS COUNTY IOWA Assessor 322–312 Attorney 312–4006 Auditor 322–3340 Clerk of Court 322–3710 Conservation 322–3793 Engineer 322–3751 Legislators Magistrate 322–3751 Recorder 322–3764 Sheriff 322–3764 Supervisors Treasurer ADAMS COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Absentee Ballot Area

Area Cities County Services Election Informati Election Precincts Election Results Extension

The first Adams County seat was established by act of the Iowa Legislature on January 12, 1853, at Quincy, Iowa (now non-existent). The courthouse was a frame building but official court records were kept in private dwellings. Quincy would remain the county seat for the next eighteen years. The building was later used as a schoolhouse and in 1932 it was torn down. In November, 1872, the people voted to remove the courthouse from Quincy and locate the county seat in Corning.

The first courthouse in Corning was built in 1872 at the present site of the Adams County courthouse. It was also a wood frame structure. The county jail was built in 1877 and used until 1955. This courtho was destroyed by fire on February 1, 1888. Business buildings Corning then served as temporary quarters for the county offices.

On November 5, 1889, Adams County voters approved a bond issue of to exceed \$30,000 for construction of a new courthouse. Money was

#### Courthouse Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m

Mondays at 9 AM

register to vote online at sos.jowa.gov.

Effective January 1, 2016 the new SAFE AT

Assessment Rolls

2018 **Holiday Closings:** 

## What is Information Architecture?

#### **EMPATHY FOR THE USER**

According to Usability.gov, Information Architecture (or IA) "...focuses on organizing, structuring, and labeling content in an effective and sustainable way." In other words, it helps the user find information and complete tasks. This means structuring websites that tell the user "...where they are, what they've found, what to expect, and what's around."1

While it may sound like Information Architects are only helping the user, good IA really helps businesses succeed. It guides customers to the information and products they want, and does it in a way that is guick and efficient.

#### WHAT DOES IA DO?

Information architecture results in the creation of site maps, hierarchies, categorizations, navigation, and metadata. When a content strategist begins separating content and dividing it into categories, she is practicing information architecture. When a designer sketches a top level menu to help users understand where they are on a site, he is also practicing information architecture.2

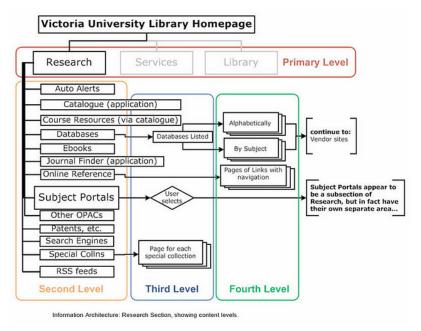
#### **VARIABLES IN IA**

An Information Architect starts a project by determining what the three following variables are:

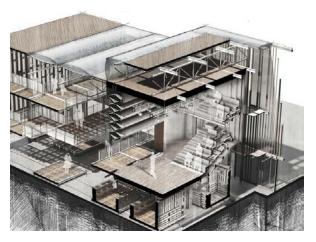
- · Target Audience
- · Technologies used
- · Data to be presented

IAs must take on a number of responsibilities to complete a project. Much of it is research-audience goals, usability tests, stakeholder interviews, etc. Then the data resulting from the research must be analyzed, and formed into recommendations for the project owner. These can be in the form of:

- Wireframes
- · Site Maps
- · Tags and Metadata
- Data Models
- 1. Peter Morville, https://prezi.com/aafmvya6bk7t/understanding-information-architecture/
- 2. Abby Covert, http://www.uxbooth.com/articles/complete-beginners-guide-to-information-architecture/



Example of information architecture in the form of a site map



Information architecture is similar to traditional architecture, in that wellorganized information should have a solid foundation.

## Typography on the Web

"More than 95% percent of information on the web is in the form of written language."1

The main reason why people visit a website is to read text: to find information. In a medium where reading is such a large part, it becomes immensely important that the text is readable and well-designed.

Nick Babdich, a writer for UX Planet, gives some tips for good typography on the web2:

- · Keep the number of fonts used to a minimum. Using more than 3 fonts makes a website look unstructured and unprofessional.
- Keep line lengths around 60 characters for a good reading experience on a desktop screen. Mobile text should be around 35 characters long.
- · Use fonts that look good in various sizes. Sans-serif fonts are usually best for reading, and serif fonts should only be used in large headers.
- Leading (or line height) should be about 30% more than the character height for good readability. Proper spacing between paragraphs is important, too.
- Make sure there is sufficient color contrast. The W3C recommends that small text should have a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1 against its background. It is also advisable to not use red or green as text colors. People who are color blind often cannot distinguish between those two colors.

### **WEBFONTS**

For a long time, web safe fonts were basically the only option for web designers. These are common system fonts that are available on almost any computer/ device. While they are still highly recommended as the safest option, it is now possible to use webfonts through Google fonts and CSS @font-face queries.

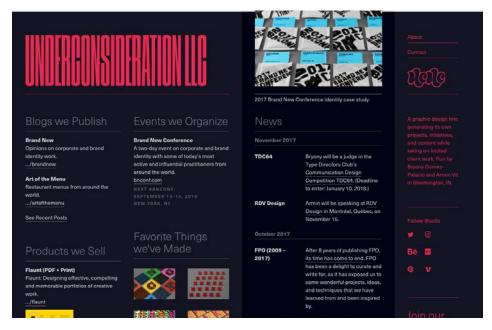
- 1. Oliver Reichenstein, Web Design is 95% Typography
- 2. Nick Babdich, UX Planet, https://uxplanet.org/10-tips-on-typography-in-web-design-13a378f4aa0d





### TYPOGRAPHY AND INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE

Typographic hierarchy is a large part of IA. Headers, subheaders, body copy, articles, footers, etc. are all major elements in HTML. The sizing of these elements helps the user notice and read the most important parts of a web page first.



Underconsideration is a graphic design firm that publishes articles and blogs on design. Naturally, they have an excellent eye for typography. Even though there is a large amount of text on this site, the hierarchy is made clear through color, size, and weight.



## The Good

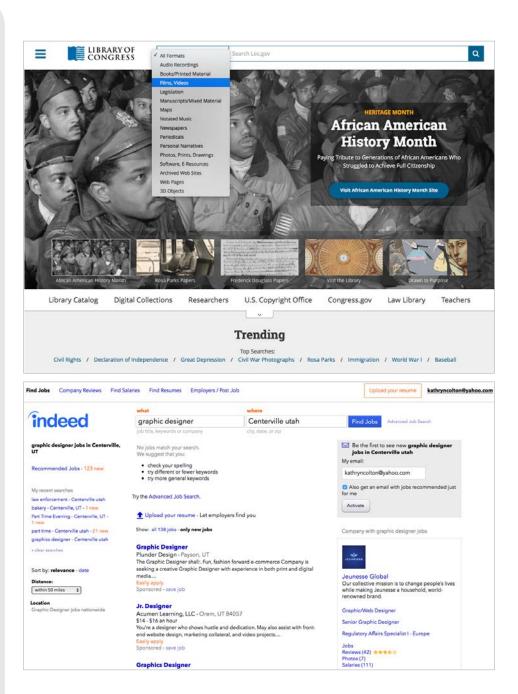
### LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

The Library of Congress should be the most well-organized website on earth, based on the amount of information it contains!

It has a drop-down menu, as well as a main menu bar that includes links to the most commonly used subpages. I liked how there were links for "Researchers" and "Teachers" as those are two groups of people who use the site often.

#### INDEED

Indeed is my favorite job listing site, primarily becase of it's clean design and ease of navigation. It uses effective typographical heirarchy in it's search listings. I like that there is white space between sections of the page.





## The Good

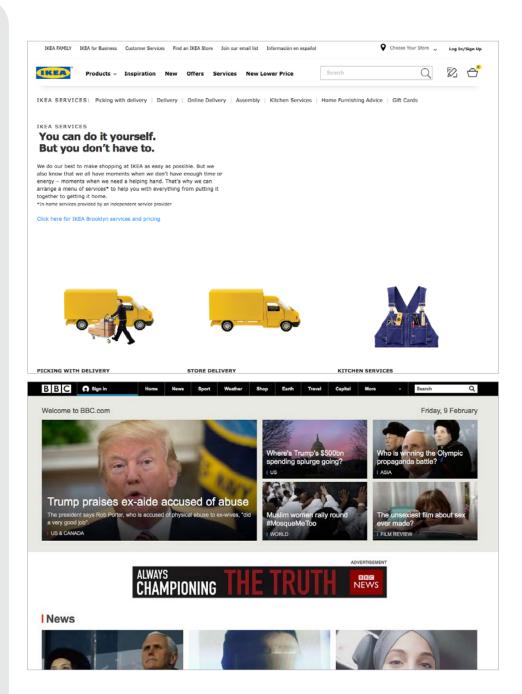
### IKEA

This website has a constant nav bar at the top that provides most structure for the site. Other clickable items like specials, essentials, and recall notices are in rectangular sections toward the bottom. The footer bar has links to store locators and other general help links.

### BBC

The BBC is great at using the smallest amount of text possible to get their point across. The main nav is all one-word buttons, and each headline is succint and communicates the story behind the article clearly.

Unlike other news sites I visited, the layout is fairly clean. Each news story on the front page is grouped together by subject matter, with one larger photo surrounded by smaller photos.





## The Bad

### STANFORD UNIVERSITY

At first glance, the information architecture of this site appears nice. The top nave buttons are fairly well-organized. However, there are several sections of links at the bottom of the page that take the user to pages with no way of navigating back to the homepage.

## UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC

This site has inconsistent side navigation bars on almost every page. And the dropdown menu that appears at the top doesn't match the corresponding pages' side navigation bars, which makes for a confusing experience.







## The Bad

#### **FRYS**

### LOS ANGELES TIMES

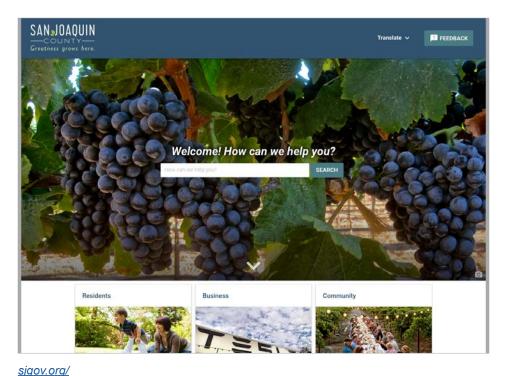
Both of these sites weren't too bad in terms of information architecture. The navigation was farily simple and uncomplicated. However, the visual design was poor. Ads on the LA Times page were distracting and prevented me from finding the actual stories I wanted to read. Frys lacks visual appeal and crams far too many images into a small space.

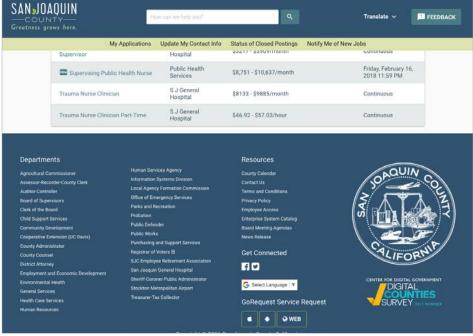
It was interesting to see that, even with decent IA, the visual design of a website can affect how well the user can navigate through the page.





## County Website Research





San Joaquin County, CA I liked the "How can we help you?" search field. It feels personable. The main links are divided between residents, business, and community.

San Joaquin County, CA The most commonly used links were all contained in the footer of the website in small text.

## County Website Research



## daviscountyutah.gov/

## Davis County, UT

This site had a block menu for commonly searched info that could be brought up on the homepage. Unfortunately, it wasn't available on any subsequent page.



### lacounty.gov

## Los Angeles County, CA

I liked the design and simplicity of this site. There are tabs for news, popular services (for things like obtaining permits), and a map feature. The popular services tab used icons and a sub nav on the left side that was clear and easy to read.

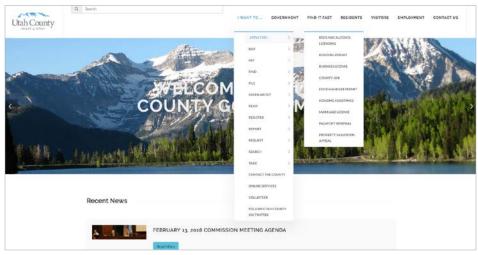
## County Website Research



### saccounty.net

### Sacramento County, CA

This site had an extensive dropdown menu system that was fairly well-organized, but when I started clicking through to deeper pages, there were some that were difficult to navigate back to the home page from.



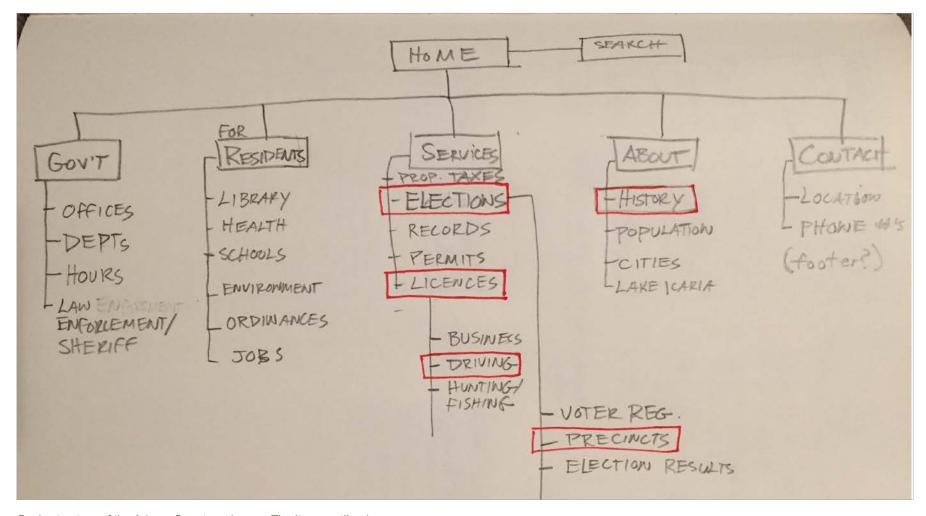
### utahcounty.gov

### Utah County, Utah

This site was also nicely designed on the home page, but getting back to the main navigation was a problem as well. Some of the links went to outside web pages, so it's probably not completely their fault.

I liked the names of the links in the main nav, such as "I want to...", with a sub nav that popped up with links such as "Apply for", "Volunteer", and "Pay Bills".

# Site Map



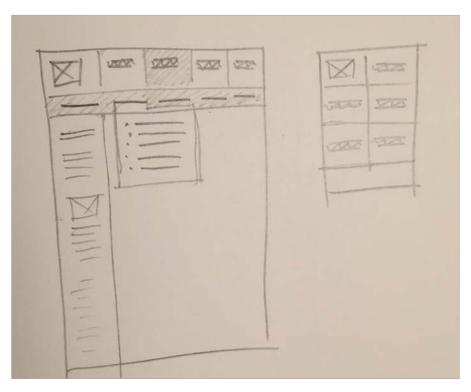
Basic structure of the Adams County webpage. The items outlined in red are the scenarios that I will be designing screens for.

## Initial Sketches - Homepage Screens



Option 1

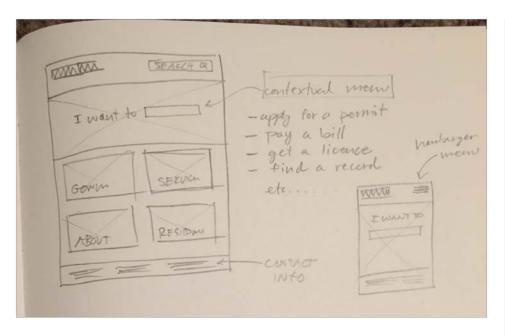
This option has a main nav at the top containing drop menus for every link. It also has image links for the most popular pages. The mobile version has a vertical nav.



Option 2

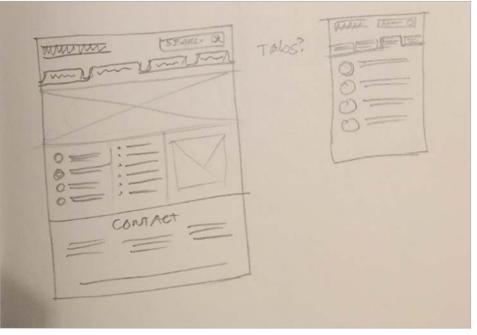
This option has a three-layered menu at the top, with a main nav and sub nav that corresponds to it's main nav button. Each subnav button also has a dropdown menu. The mobile version would start as simply the logo and 5 main nav items.

## Initial Sketches - Homepage Screens



Option 3

This option allows the user to choose a popular link from a contextual menu, "I want to....". The main navigation would be in the form of large pictures with overlayed text. The mobile version would have a hamburger menu.



Option 4

This option uses tabs for the main nav, and related links are listed with a submenu next to them. The contact info is in the footer.



## Visual Inspiration

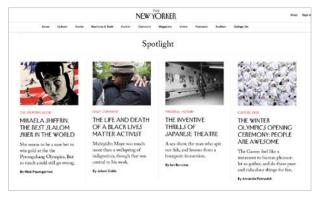
## **VISUAL DESIGNS FROM OTHER INFO-HEAVY SITES**

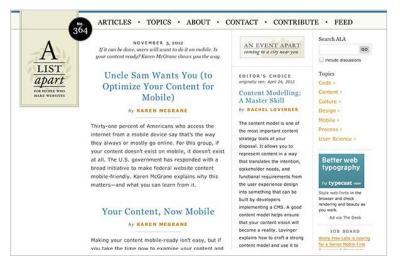
A common theme among almost all the informationheavy websites that I viewed was the use of photography to create divisions/links.

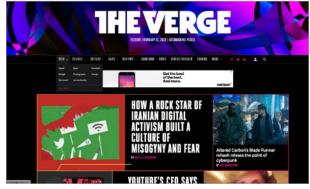
I also noted the excellent use of typography on these examples.

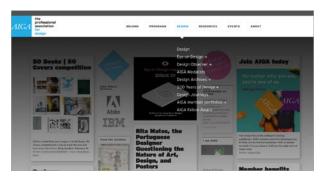














## **User Testing of Current Site**

#### THE SCENARIOS

I asked 2 users to try and complete the following tasks on the current site:

- · find out where their voting precinct is located.
- · find out the hours and place to take the written drivers test
- find a photo history of the county

### USER 1

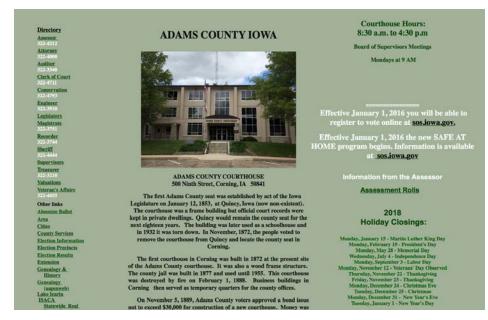
My first user was able to find the voting precinct map, and the photo history of the county fairly easily. But was unable to locate the hours and place to take the written drivers test. The Directory of Services page is very difficult to navigate, and has no signifiers to tell the user that the link to the treasurer also includes information about the drivers test.

#### **USER 2**

User 2 was able to find the precinct map, and the photo history. She was also able to find the written driver's test page, but only after clicking on the wrong county on the county map. The "treasurer" link and map of counties is a really ineffective way of bringing the user to the DMV information.

### USER 3

User 3 was able to find the voting precinct information, but was lost once she reached the treasurer link for the driver's test.



ADAMS COUNTY IOWA  DIRECTORY OF SERVICES		
WHAT DO I WANT?	WHERE DO I GO?	
ATV Registration	Recorder	
Beer & Liquor Licenses	Auditor	
Birth Certificates	Recorder	
Boards or Commissions	Board of Supervisors	
Boat Registration	Recorder	
Bridge Construction/Maintenance	Engineer	
Budget Information	Auditor	
Camping Information	Conservation	
Case Management	Case Management	
Claims and Warrants	Auditor	
Concealed Weapons Permit	Sheriff	
Conservation	Conservation	
Conservator	Auditor	
County Auction Information	Auditor	
County Code of Ordinances	Board of Supervisors	
County-Owned Property	Auditor	
County Regulations and Policies	Board of Supervisors	
Death Certificates	Recorder	
Deeds and Contracts (copies)	Recorder	
Drivers License	Treasurer	
Drivers Permit	Treasurer	
Driving Record Check	Sheriff	
Election Information	Auditor	
Employee Information	Auditor	
Pl	ette	



## User Testing with Wireframes

## USER 1

The first user was able to find the voting precinct and DMV information fairly easily, after trying both the "government" and "services" links. He wasn't able to find the photo history because he didn't think to check the "about" link for that. This user didn't think to click on the hamburger menu on the mobile version.

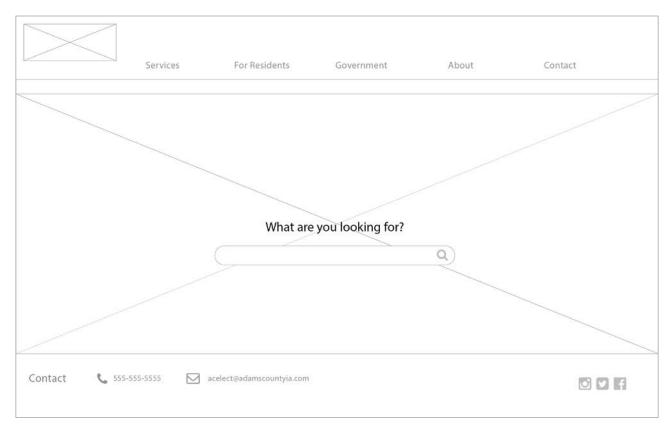
### USER 2

User 2 wanted to click on "government" to find both the voting and DMV information. This user wasn't familiar with mobile web browsing, so the hamburger menu didn't mean anything to her.

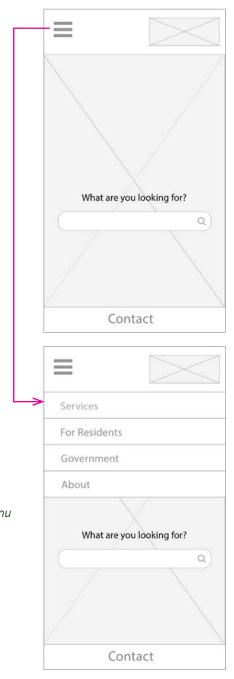
The main thing I've learned from these user tests is that the hamburger menu is still unfamiliar to some people, which is why the search field is important on the mobile site. Also, the word "government" may not be the best descriptor because it seems all users feel drawn to click on it for everything, because they are searching for government services on a government website. That is something I may change in the next version.



# Wireframes - Homescreen

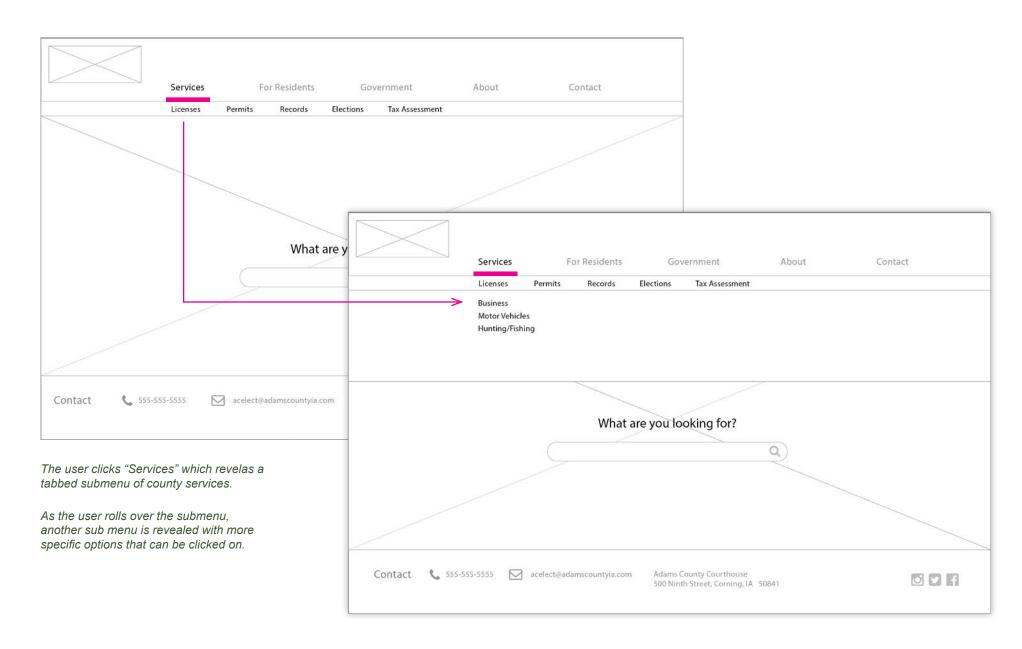


Homescreen on desktop - will have a large photo background that will rotate between different images Homescreen for mobile - hamburger menu opens dropdown menu options



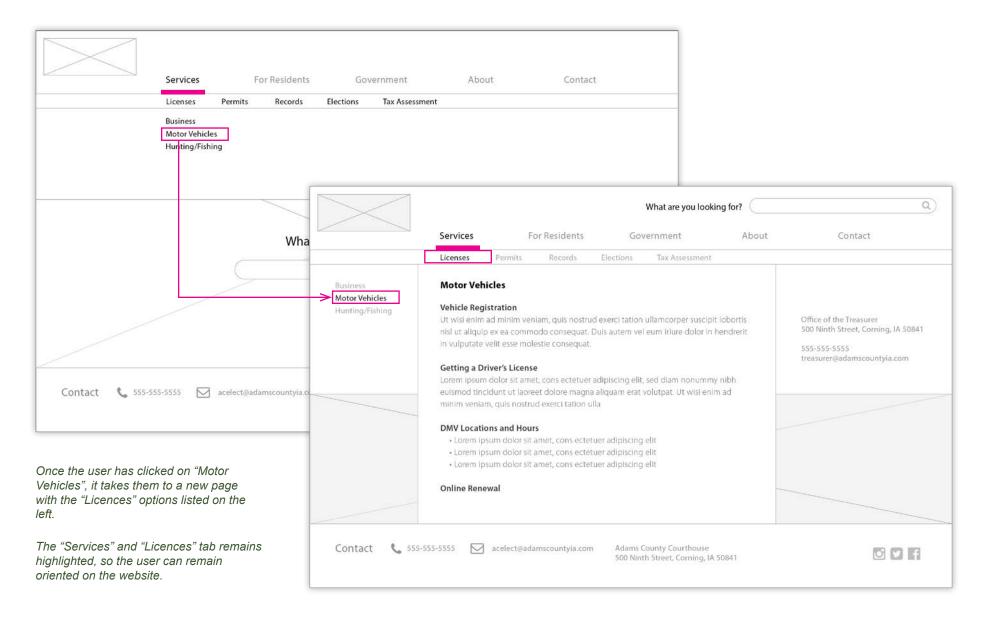


## Wireframes - Desktop Navigation

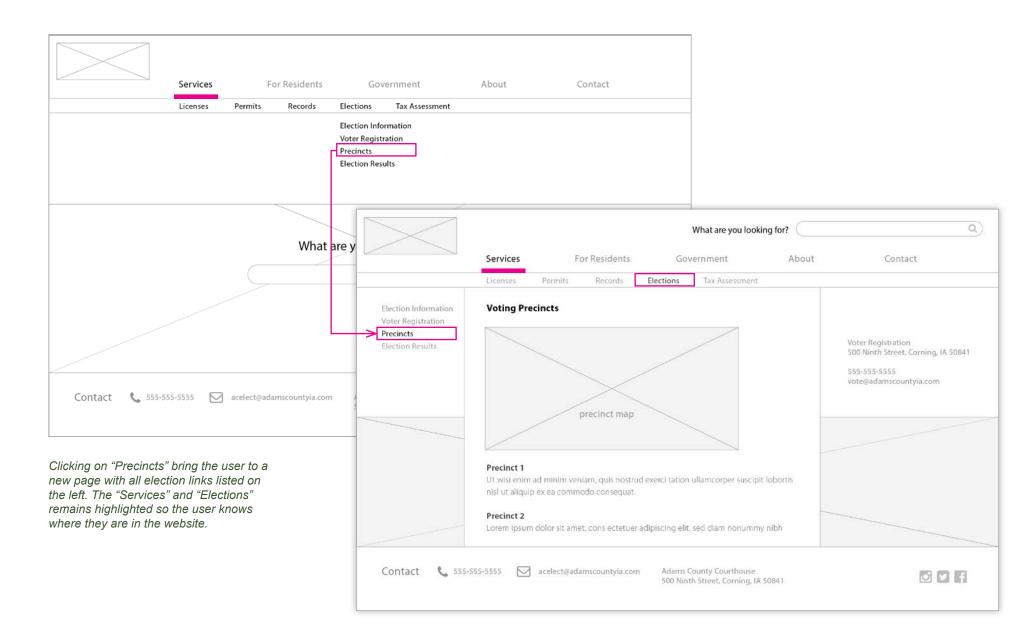




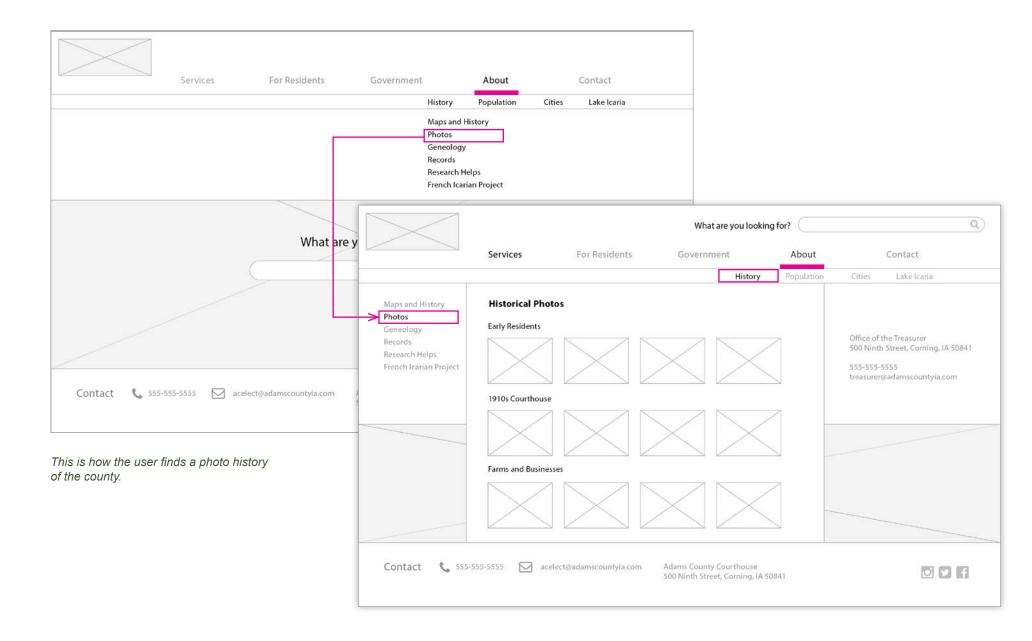
## Wireframes - Finding DMV information



## Wireframes - Finding Voter Precincts

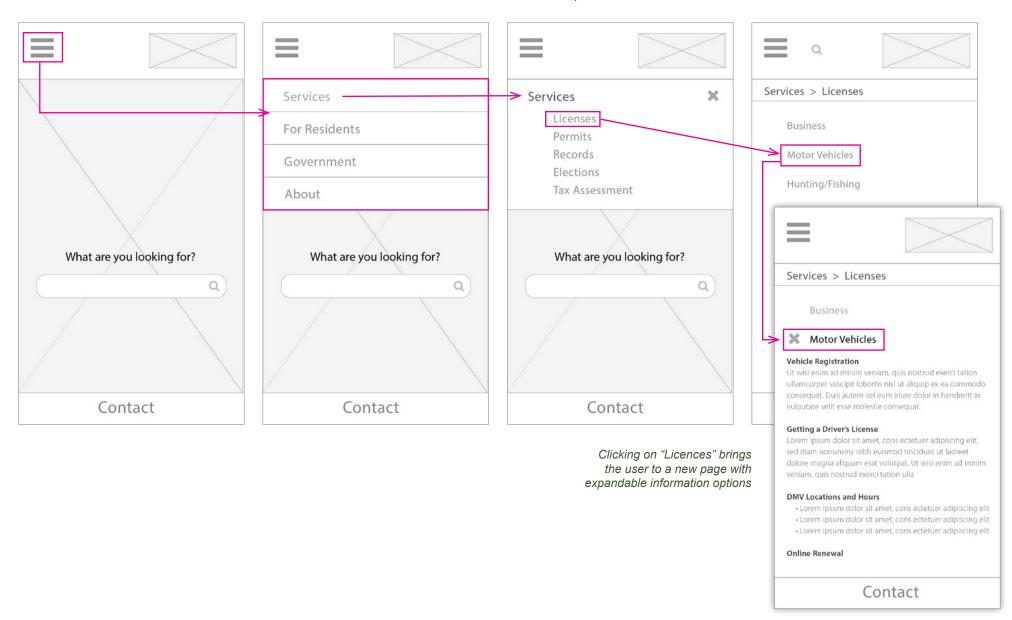


# Wireframes - Photo History



## Wireframes - Finding the DMV Information on Mobile

Each item in the hamburger menu expands to reveal more specific options. The "X" collapses the sub menu.



## Adams County Research

## **HISTORY**

During my research of Adams County I learned that the area was settled by French Icarians. They were a group of immigrants trying to live by a code of utopian laws. Currently, there is a project underway to restore some of the original buildings and create a museum.

## **INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT ADAMS COUNTY:**

- Corning, the county seat of Adams County, is the birthplace of comedian Jonny Carson. The home he was born in has been turned into a museum.
- The French Icarians settled in many areas throughout the midwest, including Nauvoo, Illinois after the Mormons left the area.
- Adams County is the least populated county in the state of lowa, with approximately 4,000 total residents







I loved the photos of the settlement buildings. The green, rolling plains and white-sided houses are something I want to reflect in the identity.

## Visual Research

### **IDENTITY**

Because of the county's rural feel and quaint buidlings, I researched other farming-related logos and visuals for inspiration









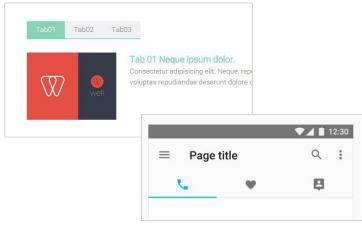




## **TABS**

I also researched different styles of navigation tabs.

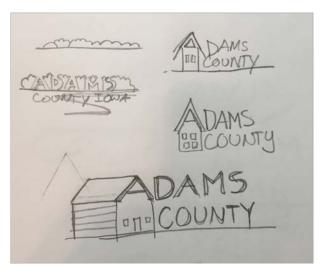


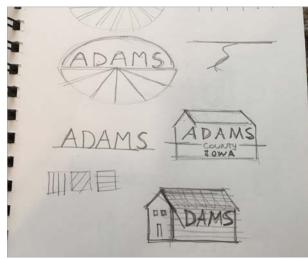


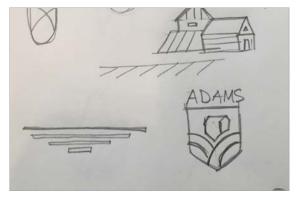
## **Identity Exploration**

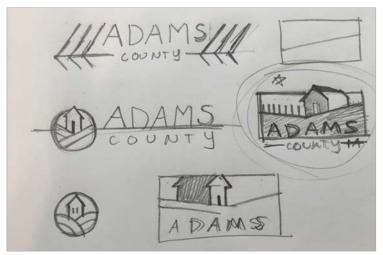
## **SKETCHES**

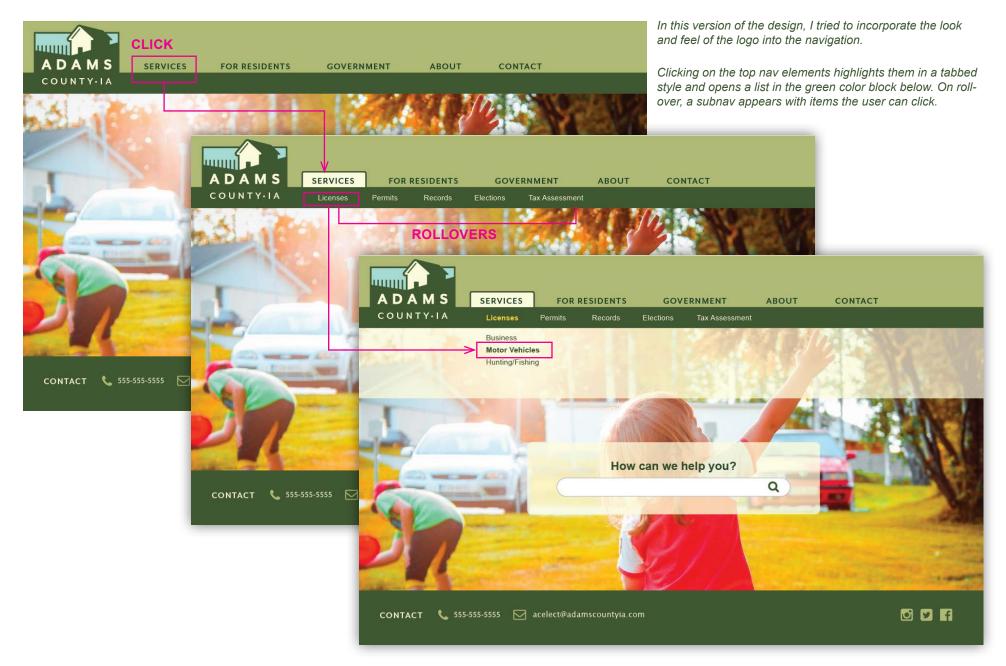
These are some quick sketches for logo ideas.



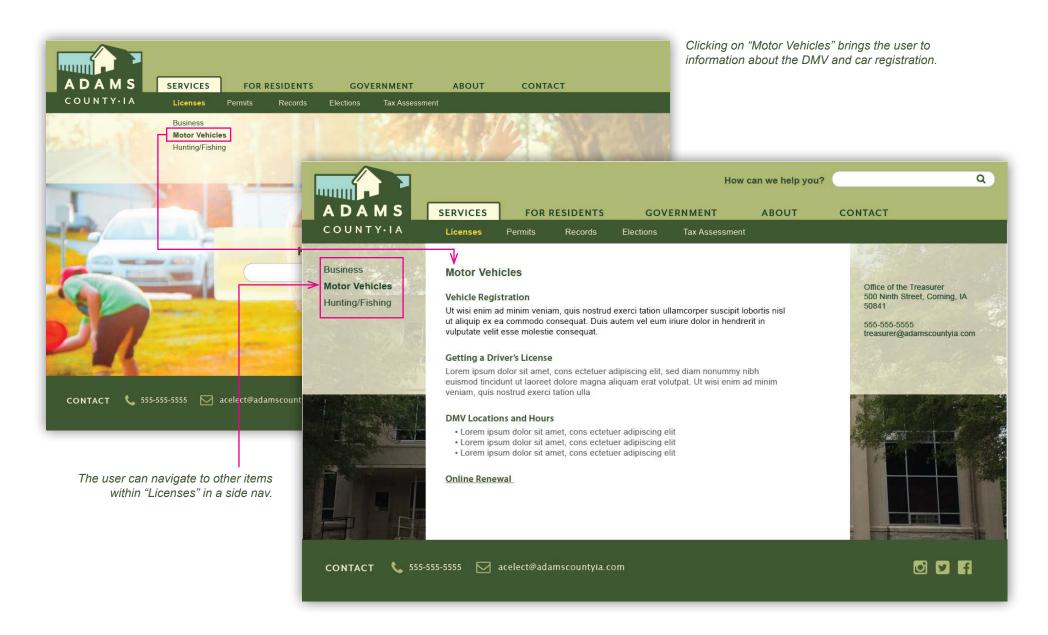






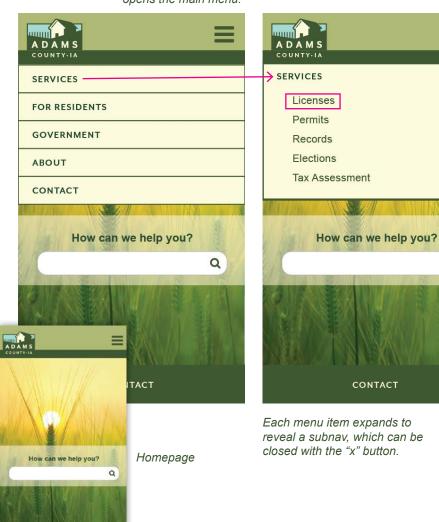


# Visual Designs - Version 1



## Visual Designs - Mobile

The hamburger button opens the main menu.



× Q

ADAMS COUNTY-IA Services > Licenses **BUSINESS** Ut wisi enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exerci tation ullamcorper suscipit lobortis nisl ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis autem vel eum iriure dolor in hendrerit in vulputate velit esse molestie consequat. MOTOR VEHICLES Ut wisi enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exerci tation ullamcorper suscipit lobortis nisl ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis autem vel eum iriure dolor in hendrerit in vulputate velit esse molestie consequat. **HUNTING + FISHING** CONTACT

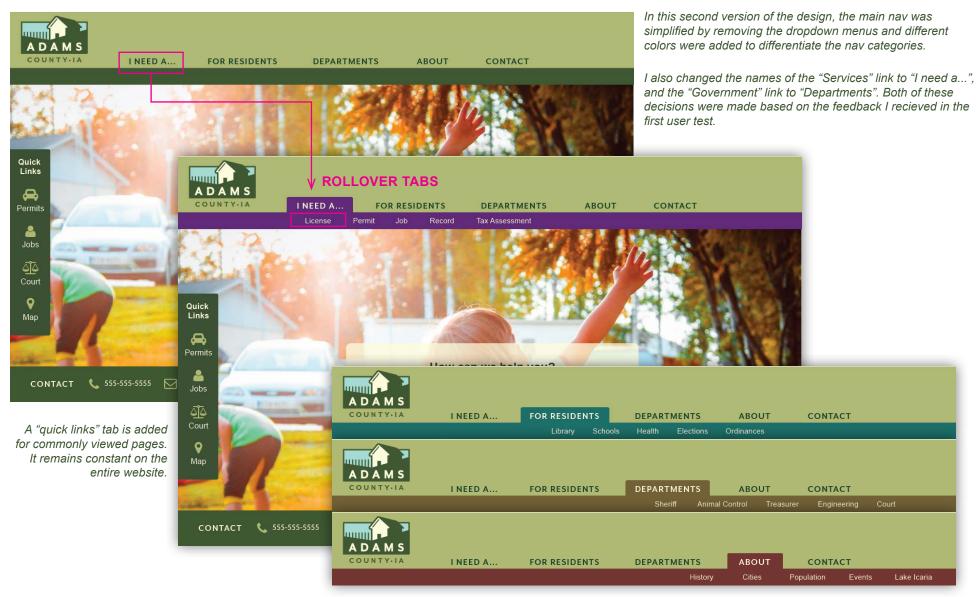
Mini site map shows the

user where they are.

MOTOR VEHICLES Vehicle Registration Ut wisi enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exerci tation ullamcorper suscipit lobortis nisl ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis autem vel eum iriure dolor in hendrerit in vulputate velit esse molestie consequat. Getting a Driver's License Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, cons ectetuer adipiscing elit, sed diam nonummy nibh euismod tincidunt ut laoreet dolore magna aliquam erat volutpat. Ut wisi enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exerci tation ulla **DMV Locations and Hours** · Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, cons ectetuer adipiscing elit · Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, cons ectetuer adipiscing elit · Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, cons ectetuer adipiscing elit Online Renewal CONTACT

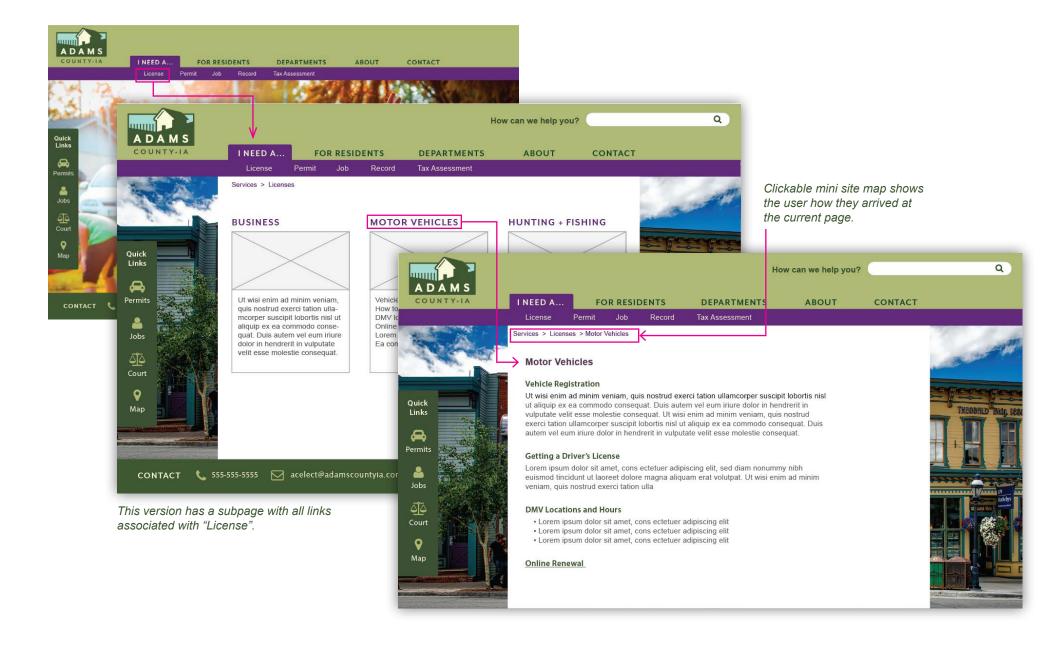
Sub page with all "Licenses" options.

# Visual Designs - Version 2



Each main nav item uses a different color.

# Visual Designs - Version 2



User Testing of Visual Designs

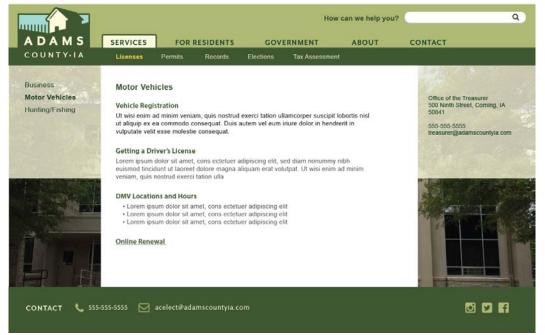
## **VERSION ONE OR TWO?**

I asked two users to test both versions of the desktop site with an Invision prototype. I asked them to find the DMV information. Some of the feedback I received:

- Liked the rollover navigation of version 2
- · Was able to find the DMV much faster with the "I need a..." link.
- · Couldn't decide whether they should click on "Services" or "For Residents" on version 1

Both users didn't have much trouble finding what they needed, overall.

There are aspects of both designs that I like, and some that I don't. My goal in my next design is to integrate the things that I like from both into the final website.



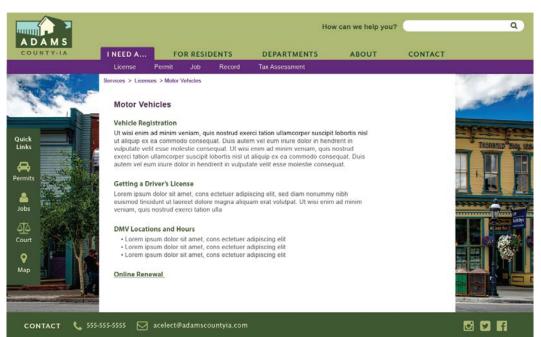
#### Personal likes and dislikes

Version 1 likes:

Visual style of the tabs and the logo that blends into the nav.

Dislikes:

Monochromatic feel of the site overall.



### Version 2 likes:

The different colors in the nav bar, the sub-page with picture links, and the quick links icons on every page.

#### Dislikes:

The nav has lost the look and feel from the logo. The logo is no longer integrated into the nav bar.

# 13

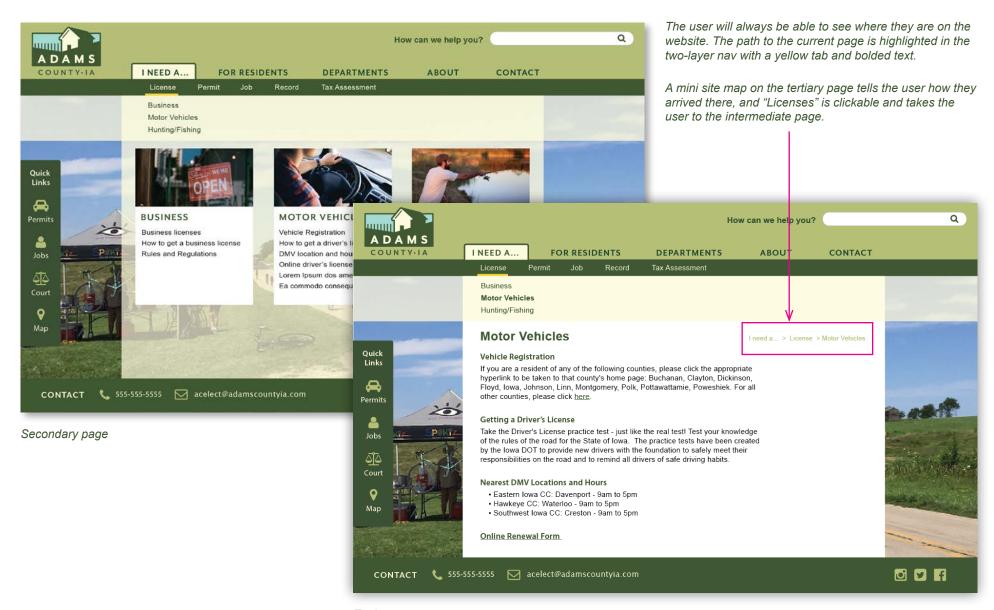
## Final Designs - Homepage and Main Navigation



Final Designs - Two-Layer Navigation Options - Finding the DMV



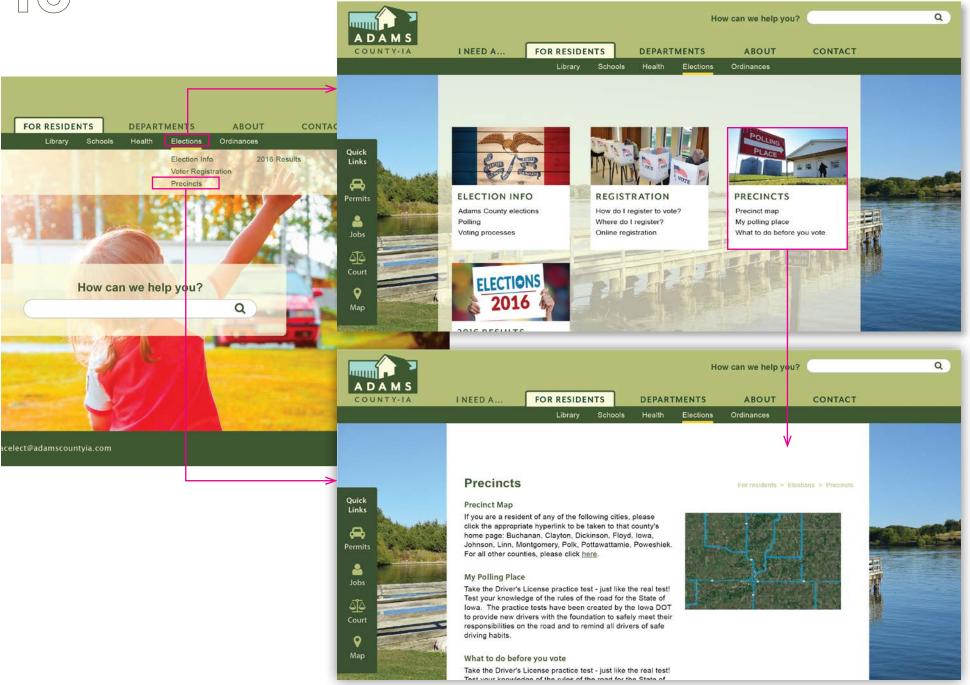
## Final Designs - Secondary and Tertiary Pages - Motor Vehicles (DMV)



Tertiary page

13

## Final Designs - Two-Layer Navigation Options - Finding Voting Precincts



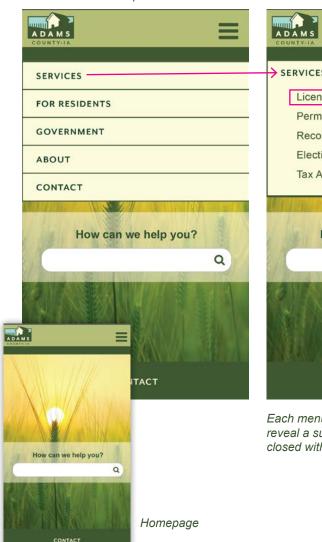
13

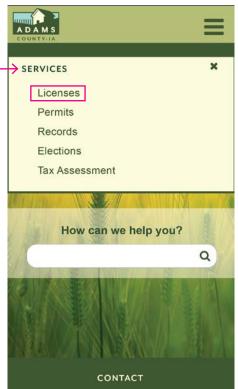
## Final Designs - Two-Layer Navigation Options - Photo History



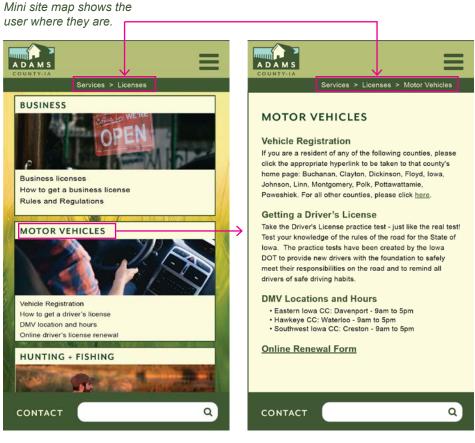
## Final Designs - Mobile Version

The hamburger button opens the main menu.





Each menu item expands to reveal a subnav. which can be closed with the "x" button.



Sub page with all "Licenses" options.

Link to prototype:

https://invis.io/GWG17KBTFKZ#/282846158\_Adams\_Desktop\_Home

Link to video:

https://youtu.be/yr8Sugj4-jY