

## Staff Report

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**Report To:** Corporate Services Committee  
**Report From:** Carly McArthur, Communications Advisor  
**Meeting Date:** April 10, 2025  
**Report Code:** CM-25-006  
**Subject:** Corporate Website Analytics and Overview

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### Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CM-25-006 respecting Corporate Website Analytics and Overview, the Corporate Services Committee recommends that City Council receive the report for information purposes.

### Highlights:

- OwenSound.ca, the City's corporate website, has had 230,000 online visits in the past year.
- 61% of website users visit on a mobile device, underlining the importance of the City's migration to a device-adaptive platform.
- The website and online City news subscribers serves as the main communications channel for sharing information with Owen Sound residents and visitors.

### Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: This report supports the delivery of Core Service.

### Climate and Environmental Implications:

This supports the City's Climate Mitigation Plan objective to reduce the amount of energy consumption through technology and utilization of renewable energy sources.

## **Previous Report/Authority:**

[Report CM-24-012 City Website Transformation](#)

## **Background:**

In March of 2024, the City's corporate website (OwenSound.ca) migrated to an improved content management system (CMS) platform that increased the site's performance, accessibility, and user-intuitive design. OwenSound.ca is known as the City's corporate website and includes the Tom Thomson Art Gallery's online site, but does not include Owen Sound Tourism or the Owen Sound River District, Owen Sound Police Services, and the Owen Sound and North Grey Union Public Library.

As stated in the previous [report CM-024-012](#), the City has engaged Google Analytics to capture usage statistics and trends online. The corporate website also engages an Online Accessibility Module – Monsido, a part of Acquia Optimize – to ensure online accessibility requirements are met and enable changes as required.

## **Analysis:**

As the City moves forward with data-driven communication efforts, this report outlines ways residents and visitors are currently interacting with OwenSound.ca – the best online resource for up-to-date information.

The analytics below capture online data between March 3, 2024 and March 3 of 2025 collected through Google Analytics, unless otherwise noted. The migration to the City's current CMS platform went live on March 20, 2024.

### **Website Traffic Analysis:**

- Total visits: 230,000 over the year.
- The average engagement time per active user is 1 minute and 1 second.
- Seasonality and events certainly affect the number of visitors to the site, with the days leading up to July 1st garnering the most visits throughout the year.

### **Content Performance:**

- The top five most visited web pages (over the whole year) include:
  - The home page (25 seconds average engagement time per user)

- Guelph Owen Sound Transit page (1 minute and 12 seconds average engagement time)
- Careers or Employment Opportunities (36 seconds average engagement time)
- Garbage and Recycle (32 seconds average)
- Waterfront Camera View (26 seconds average)

### **User Demographics & Behaviours:**

- Of the 230,000 site visits throughout the past year, most were tracked as new visits and unique visitors. These visitors are broken down by country of origin as such:
  - 85% from Canada
  - 8% from the USA
  - 3% from Indonesia
  - 1% from China
  - 0.8% from Germany
  - The remaining are from UK, Ireland, India, Sweden, France and others.
- Age, gender and other defining demographic information are not captured.
- Device type that visits the corporate website include:
  - Mobile devices (61.30% of users)
  - Desktop computer (34.35%)
  - Tablet (4.30%)
  - Smart TV (0.05%)
- Users first arrive at the corporate website through the following main channels:
  - Organic Search, such as unpaid listing on Google (59% of first visits come through here)
  - Direct, by typing OwenSound.ca in the address bar (24% of first visits)
  - Organic Social, unpaid posts on Facebook, LinkedIn, etc. (12% of first visits)
  - Referral, users who arrived by clicking a link from another website such as a blog (3.7% of first visits)
  - Display, such as banner ads on third-party websites (0.5% of first visits)
  - Email, links in newsletters, etc. (0.4% of first visits)

## **News Subscribers:**

- 457 individuals are subscribed to the 'Emergency Alerts' news category
- 919 individuals are subscribed to 'General City News'
- Since the migration to the current CMS platform on March 20, 2024, City news subscribers have increased by 134%, with 787 new subscribers added in the past year.

## **Search Engine Optimization (SEO) & Google Search Analytics:**

- Over the past year, 5,060,000 total impressions (or the number of times a user saw a link to OwenSound.ca) in Google Search results.
- 227,000 clicks through from Google into OwenSound.ca.
  - Most click-throughs happened before or on Canada Day weekend at the start of July, mid-February around the Family Day Weekend and early December (presumably during budget meetings).
- Top 10 queries used before landing on the City's website on Google Search include:
  - Owen Sound, City of Owen Sound
  - GOST bus, GOST, GOST bus schedule, Owen Sound Transit
  - City of Owen Sound jobs, Owen Sound jobs
  - Owen Sound Webcam
  - Tom Thomson Art Gallery

These queries show there is great familiarity and high customer intent of users actively seeking direct City information.

## **Accessibility Insights:**

The City implemented a third-party software last spring, Acquia Optimize, to assist in online accessibility compliance auditing, updating, and enhancing user experience on OwenSound.ca.

Staff has used these weekly reports to make improvements such as:

- 64% reduction in broken link errors, even with an increase in the total number of web pages scanned (from 430 pages to 642 pages).
- Zero broken images on the website.

Staff remain committed to using and deepening understanding of the online accessibility module and its capabilities to improve accessibility features, optimize layouts and elevate engagement for all types of users.

This annual review of OwenSound.ca's website traffic and user behaviours help staff understand how people currently use the site, what information they most often seek, and how effective current content and strategies are. This information is helpful as the City expands online services, such as Virtual City Hall, to see how the data shifts or changes.

The website is crucial for sharing up-to-date information with residents and visitors year-round, and it's essential for it to continuously adapt to meet user needs. Its metrics will also serve as a resource during the creation of the City's External Communications Strategy, set to be created later this year.

### **Financial Implications:**

Website and Online Accessibility Module fees are included in the annual Operating Budget.

### **Communication Strategy:**

This report to the Corporate Services Committee serves as a communications tactic to share the website traffic analysis and information.

### **Consultation:**

The Senior Manager of Strategic Initiatives and Operational Effectiveness was consulted in the drafting of this report.

### **Attachments:**

None.

### **Recommended by:**

Carly McArthur, Communications Advisor

Michelle Palmer, Senior Manager of Strategic Initiatives and Operational Effectiveness

### **Submission approved by:**

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Carly McArthur, Communications Advisor, at [cmcarthur@owensound.ca](mailto:cmcarthur@owensound.ca) or 519-376-4440 ext. 1211.