



Office of the City Manager

June 12, 2024

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: *DWR* Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager
Re: Enhanced site search on berkeleyca.gov

A series of enhancements to our site's search function now make it easier for Berkeley community-members and stakeholders to find services and resources on berkeleyca.gov.

The site search improvements, which also improve subdomains operated by the Rent Board and Housing Authority, support our Strategic Plan goal of providing timely, easily-accessible service and information to the community.

The Communications team, in collaboration with our web development vendor Rolling Orange, have a user-centered approach to web improvements. Feedback from the community and our 311 Customer Service team helped find some specific pain points for a wide range of users, making it a top priority item to address.

A series of changes to the back-end code and search index configuration have made search more user-friendly:

- **Updated search bar styling to make it easier to identify:** Feedback from customers calling 311 let us know that some users did not understand that existing text on the site search bar could be typed over. In response, we coded the search bar placeholder text and styling to be more in line with industry standards.
- **Include issue reporting forms in site search index:** Rebuilt all eight custom forms for reporting issues to 311 so that they show up in site search results.
- **Updated search result text snippet:** In search results, a snippet of text now appears with each page link so users can scan for the page they're looking for. We updated the search settings to show more useful text snippets.

- **Added acronyms:** Uploaded list of common City acronyms to search configuration so that users can, for example, search RPP and get to the Residential Parking Permits page.
- **Boosted webpages over documents:** Configured search to prioritize webpage results over documents.
- **Added keywords:** A new keyword field allows us to tag pages with relevant search terms to help make sure they appear in search results.

We also continue to make regular tweaks to the search index settings to solve issues as they arise. Refining search is a continuous process, based on feedback from our community. If you find any issues with search, please email webmaster@berkeleyca.gov with:

- Search query: Search term you tried using
- Expected result: Link to page you were trying to find or description of what you expected to see in search results
- Actual result: Screenshot of actual search results

The Communications team logs every example of site search issues and takes a systematic approach to addressing problems.

This series of enhancements to search on berkeleyca.gov represents the Communications team's commitment to continuous improvements centered on user needs.

cc: Senior Leadership Team