

BREAKING THROUGH THE **NOISE**

Creating a Centralized News Site
for City Communications

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2026 3CMA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Wednesday, September 9, 2026
Denver, CO

Where Would You Put It?

THE SCENARIO

Your city is proposing a property tax increase to fund critical needs, including transportation, aging facilities and equipment, and public safety. Residents need to understand what is proposed, why it's needed, how it could affect their tax bill and how they can weigh in.

The Communication Environment Had Changed

Local governments no longer communicate through a **predictable media environment**.

- Traditional newsrooms had fewer reporters and less capacity for detailed local-government coverage.
- City information was often shortened, edited or presented without important context.
- Social media algorithms rewarded conflict, emotion and controversy.
- Community pages and unofficial accounts could spread incomplete or inaccurate information quickly.
- The City was increasingly responding to someone else's version of its story.



LOCAL MEDIA



CITY CHANNELS



SOCIAL MEDIA



COMMUNITY PAGES



COMMENTS / SHARES

The background of the image features three concentric circles in shades of gray, centered on the page. The circles are of increasing size from the center outwards, creating a subtle radial pattern.

“

Even when we communicated clearly,
we did not control how—or whether—
that information reached the public.

— Julie Brechbill

”

We Had Plenty Of Information, But No True Newsroom



Important city
information
was **scattered**.

Residents had **no
single destination** for
current city news.



OFFICIAL WEBSITE

Primarily transactional

News competes with services, forms,
agendas and department pages



PRESS RELEASES

Useful for media relations

Depend on an outlet choosing to publish or
cover the story



EMAIL NEWSLETTER

Direct to subscribers

Reaches the audience already opt-ed in our
contact database



SOCIAL MEDIA

Immediate reach

Short lifespan; complete context is difficult to carry

03 The Strategic Question



What if **residents** could get timely, understandable City news directly from the **source**?

- A city-owned news platform
- Separate from the formal government website
- Designed and written like a community news site
- Searchable and shareable
- Accessible without a social media account
- Clearly identified as city-produced content

“

THE CONCEPT:
one city-published home for the
complete story.

— Tiffani Armstead

”

Why We Did Not Just Improve the Government Website

RoswellGov.com

A MUNICIPAL SERVICE PORTAL

Permits + Licensing

Make A Payment

Report An Issue

Agendas + Meetings

Departments + Divisions

Current Projects

RoswellConnections.com

A DIGITAL NEWS SITE

Resident-focused Stories

Project Context + Updates

Mayor & Council Recaps

Featured + Trending Stories

Video Storytelling

Searchable News Archive

“

Different jobs. The government website helps residents transact; the news site helps residents understand.

— Tiffani Armstead

”

Establishing the Purpose

1.

INFORM

Provide accurate information directly from the City

2.

EXPLAIN

Explain—not simply announce—government decisions

3.

CONTEXT

Give projects and issues appropriate context

4.

UNDERSTAND

Make City information easier to understand

5.

RECORD

Create a permanent, searchable public record

6.

TRUST

Strengthen community understanding and trust

RoswellConnections.com gives residents direct access to timely, accurate and useful information about **City decisions, projects, programs and services.**

Credibility Had to Be Designed Into the Platform



Writing Like a News Site

TRADITIONAL PRESS RELEASE

Organization-focused Headline

Announcement-first Opening

Quotes + Background

Media Contact

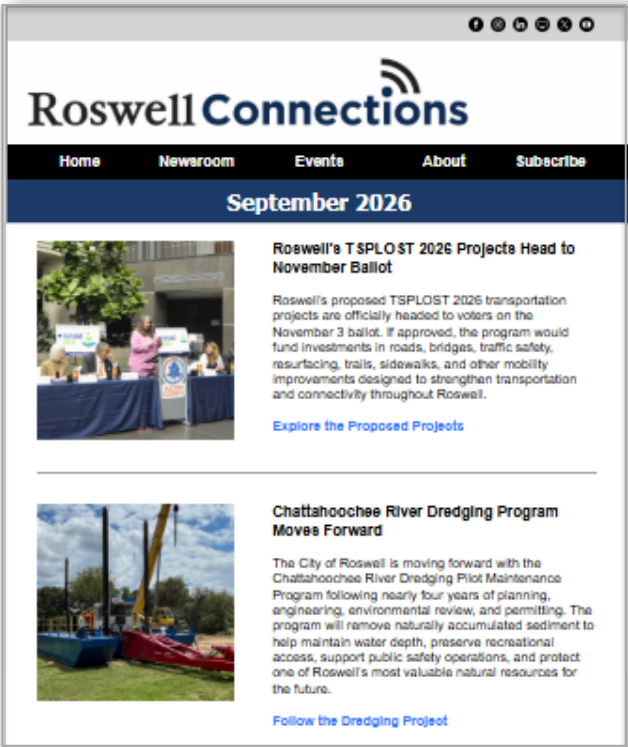
- RESIDENT-FOCUSED HEADLINE •
- STRONG LEAD •
- SHORT SECTIONS •
- HISTORY/CONTEXT •
- COST/SCHEDULE/IMPACT •
- SOURCE LINKS •



Building the RoswellConnections.com Brand

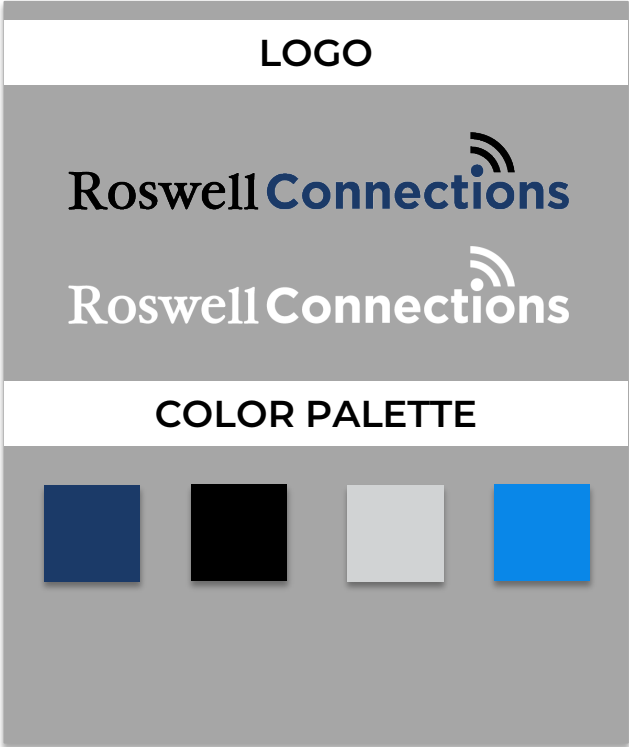
EXISTING NEWSLETTER

Roswell Connections already existed as the City’s resident newsletter



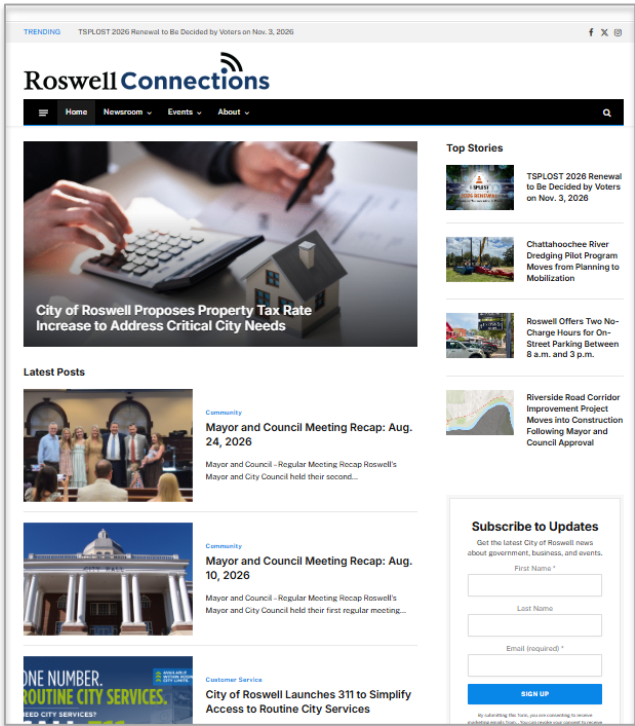
VISUAL IDENTITY

A distinct, approachable identity that remained connected to the City



DIGITAL NEWS SITE

Created a unique domain and WordPress site as recognizable destination for Roswell, GA news

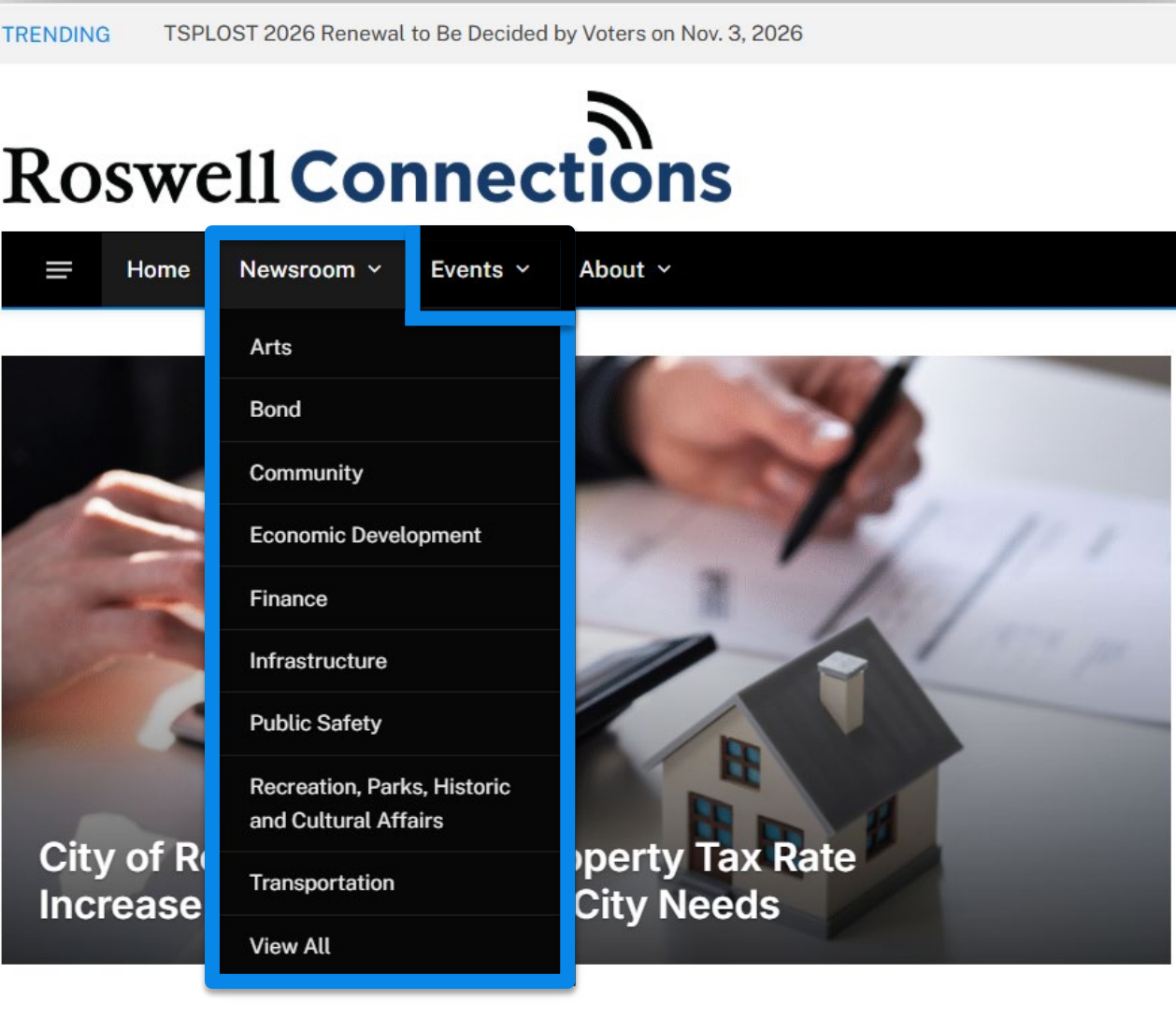


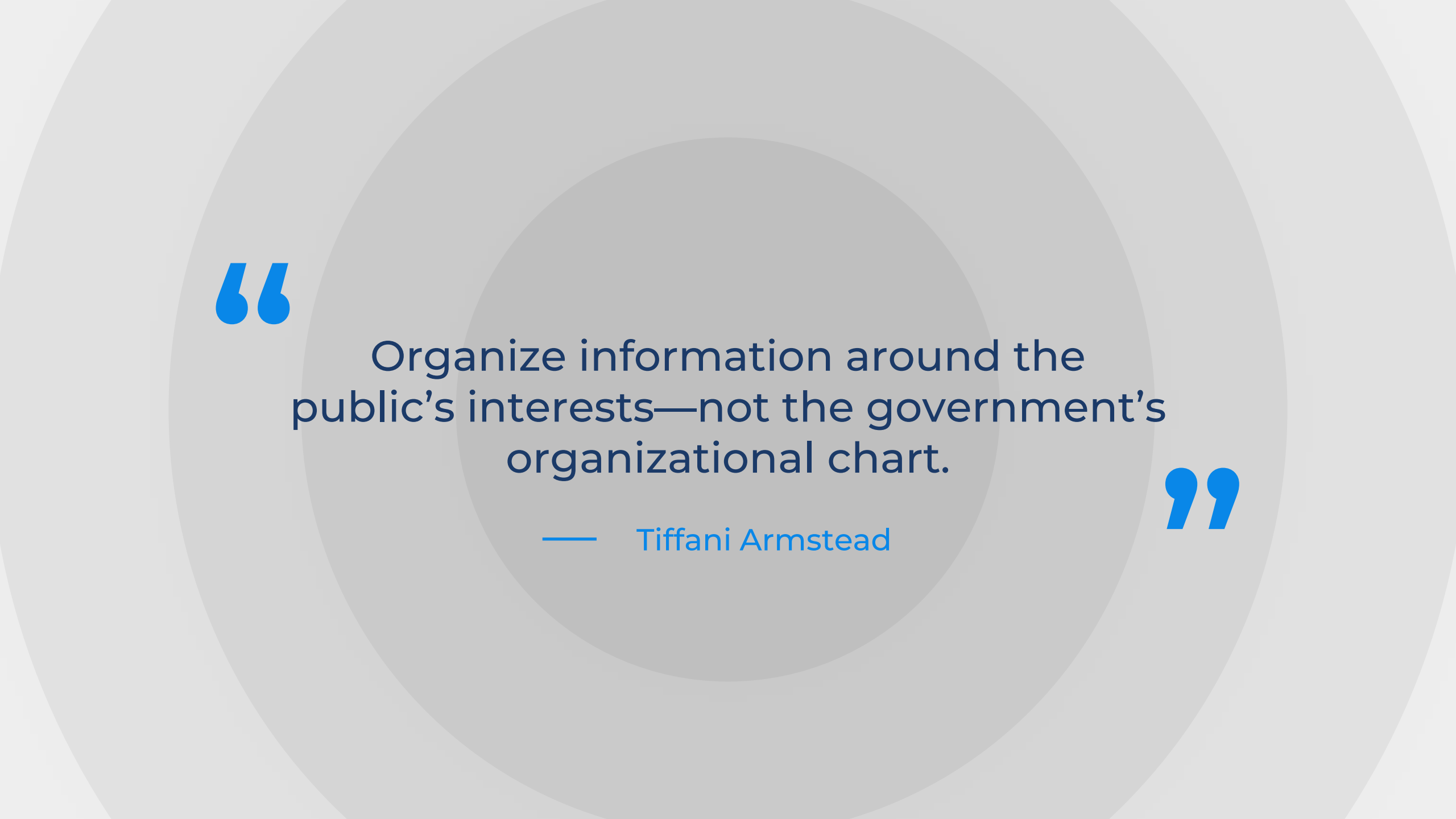
Designing the Site Around What Residents Want to Know

MENU NAVIGATION BY CATEGORIES

- Arts
- Bond Projects
- Community
- Economic Development
- Finance
- Infrastructure
- Public Safety
- Recreation, Parks, Historic & Cultural Affairs
- Transportation

Residents should not need to know which department owns an issue before they can **find the information.**





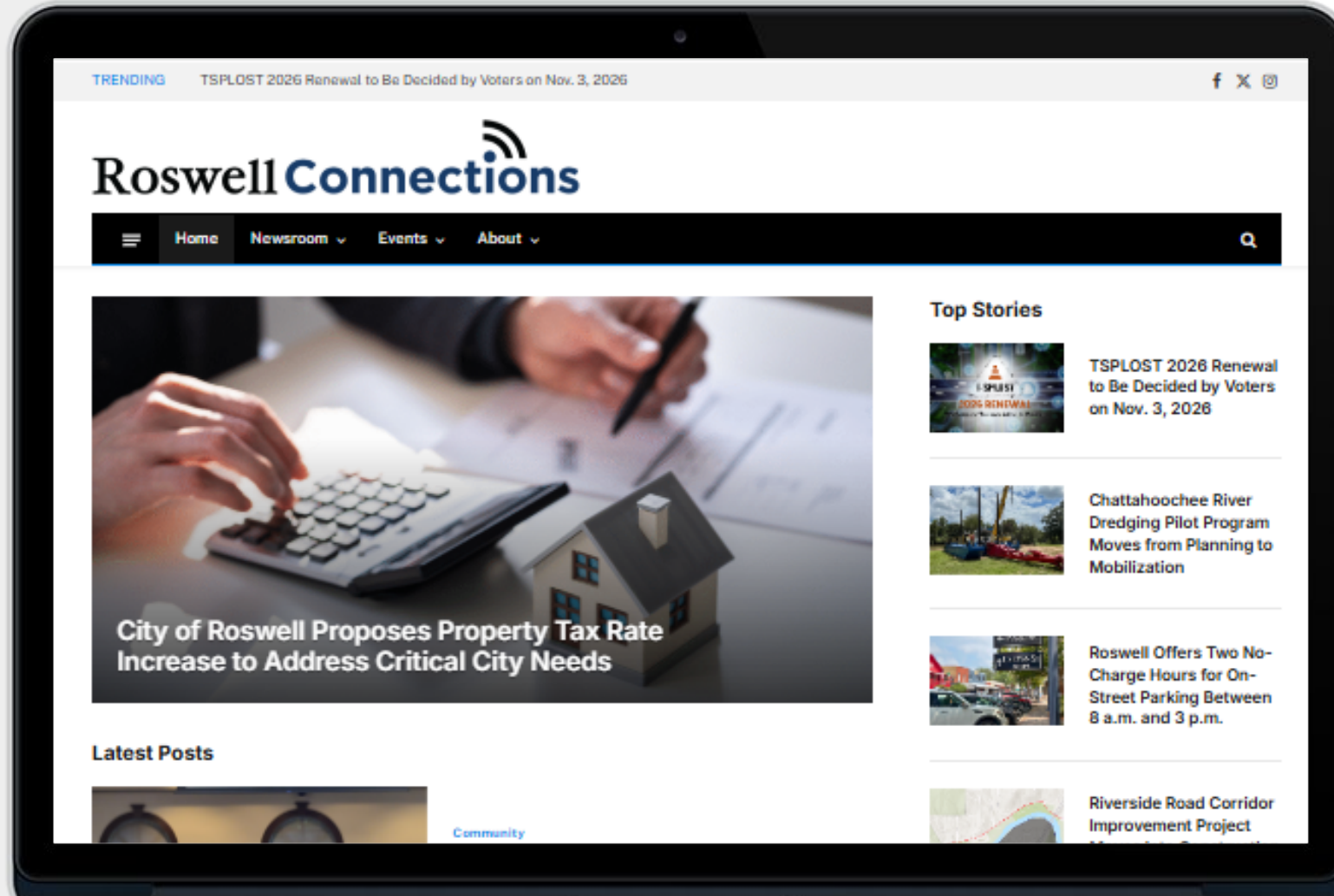
“

Organize information around the
public's interests—not the government's
organizational chart.

— Tiffani Armstead

”

We Built More Than a News Blog

[VIEW LIVE SITE](#)


1.

TOP STORIES

Surface timely and high-interest information

2.

NEWSROOM + CATEGORIES

Browse by public-interest topic

3.

MAYOR & COUNCIL RECAPS

Translate meeting actions into readable summaries

4.

PROJECT UPDATES

Keep capital improvement and bond stories current

5.

FEATURE VIDEOS

Add visual storytelling

6.

LANDING PAGES

Build direct audience + searchable record

7.

SUBSCRIBE + ARCHIVE

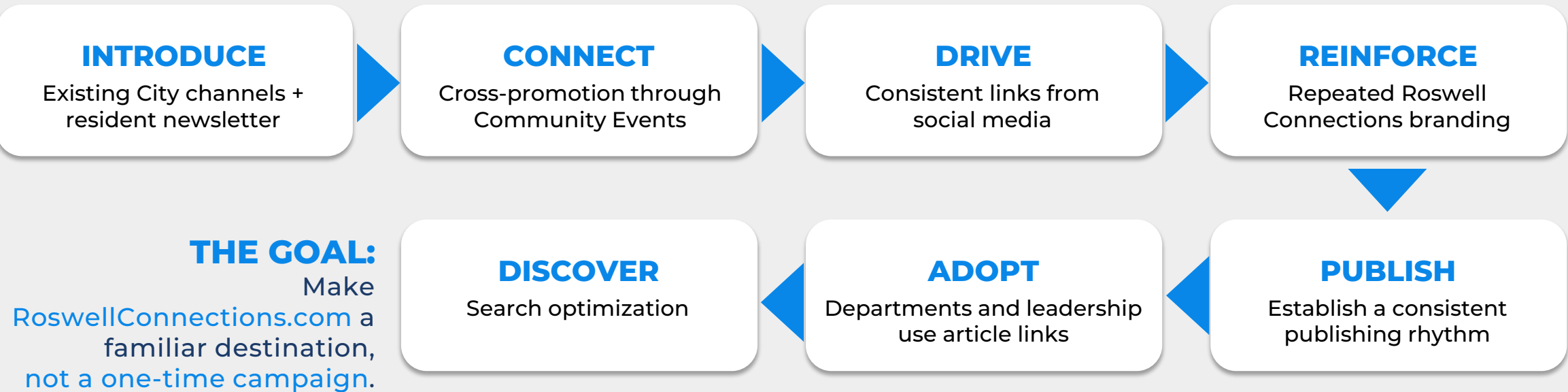
Build direct audience + searchable record

Creating the Editorial Workflow



A municipal news site is a **publishing operation**. Not simply a website.

Launching and Building an Audience



Launching the **website was only the first step.**
We had to **teach people** where the complete
City story now lived.

Social Media Became the Doorway, Not the Destination

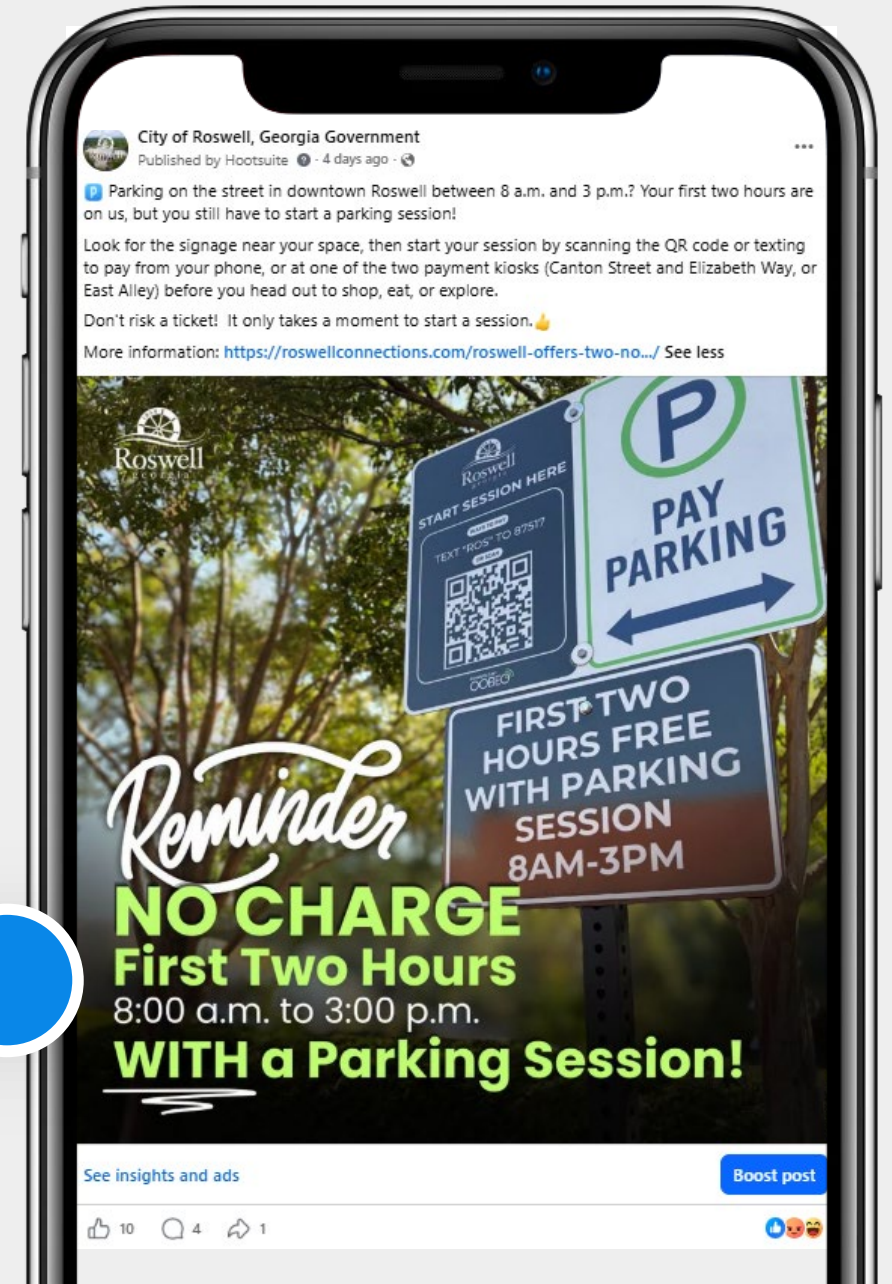
We stopped asking
social media to carry
the entire story.

DISCOVERY



CONVERSATION

SEARCHABLE •
CONTEXT •
SOURCES •
UPDATES •
ARCHIVE •



The Technology Behind the Site

PLATFORM	WordPress
HOSTING + MAINTENANCE	Hosting arrangement + security + maintenance responsibilities
ACCESSIBILITY	ADA accessibility + mobile-friendly reading experience
DISCOVERY + MEASUREMENT	SEO + analytics + email subscription integration
CONTENT OPERATIONS	Multimedia hosting + staff permissions + publishing roles
GOVERNANCE	Archiving + records-retention considerations

\$450
DOMAIN + HOSTING
+ FEATURES

40hrs
STAFF SETUP
+ DESIGN TIME

What Success Looked Like

TOP STORIES

- Mayor & Council meeting recaps
- Bond and capital-project updates
- Transportation / TSPLOST information
- 311 and routine City-service information
- Public-safety and infrastructure stories

81,000+
ACTIVE VISITORS

127,000+
PAGE VIEWS

41%
ORGANIC
SEARCH

36,000+
EMAIL
SUBSCRIBERS

What We Learned

1.

Consistency is more important than launching with large amounts of content.

2.

A municipal news site requires an editorial strategy—not simply a website.

3.

Department relationships determine the quality and timeliness of stories.

4.

Readers respond to clear explanations of how decisions affect them.

5.

Project updates can be as important as initial announcements.

6.

Difficult stories build credibility when handled honestly.

7.

The site must remain useful after leadership or staff changes.

8.

An owned platform does not eliminate criticism; it ensures the City's credible with true information is available.

“

THE CENTRAL LESSON:

Local governments cannot control every conversation, but we can provide residents a trusted source to turn to when they want to learn more.

— Julie Brechbill

”

THANK YOU!



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SCAN ME

Our local hub for news, events, and opportunities that shape Roswell's future.



ROSWELLCONNECTIONS.COM