

## EHJC – Website Strategy, UX & Architecture

### Purpose: What's the website supposed to do?

For many, the EHJC site will serve as the organization's "face," both during the merger period and in the years that follow. So it needs to communicate our new identity AND function practically to help folks engage with us in the years to come.

In order of priority, the new site must:

1. **Clearly present our new mission and identity.** For many in our network, the homepage will be where they first learn who we are after the merger. And it will reinforce that on subsequent visits in the future. If folks can't explain
  - a. what we do
  - b. why it's valuable, and
  - c. how to get involvedall within seconds of visiting the site, then we're doing it wrong.
2. **Convert word-of-mouth referrals into email contacts.** The right people need to find and complete the right forms:
  - a. Prospective volunteers sign up to volunteer
  - b. Prospective donors give money
  - c. Prospective clients begin the application process
  - d. Prospective referral partners get on our email list
3. **Educate.** We're dealing with issues of systemic injustice, generational poverty and community dysfunction – and we're doing it in a highly individualized culture, where it's hard to see and understand problems that are bigger than me and my family. For those that care to learn, we'll want to highlight the core problems and philosophies that underscore our work – and back them up with data and research.

### Vision: How will the website do that?

This should be an elegant, but technically straightforward, Wordpress (or similar) site.

- **Home page** highlights our mission front and center, through core copy and (optionally) also through a video that explains mission and purpose in a similar way. Opportunities to convert and learn more are presented in descending order of importance as we continue to scroll down the page.

- **Contact forms** on the site are based on a *problem*, NOT on a program. I'm proposing three contact forms:
  - a form for people who need **help with debt** OR want to **buy a home** (clients)
  - a form for those who want to **volunteer**
  - a **general contact form** for those who aren't sure what they want
  - plus, an **email signup** for potential partners who just want to stay in touch

Note that this strategy requires folks in the EHJC office to "sort" clients according to their needs. So a client won't apply for the Networked Savings program right away; they'll fill out a more general "I want help buying a home" form and then we'll need to follow up to decide whether they are a fit for education, Networked Savings or something else. (We could include a few checkboxes on the form like "I'm struggling with debt" or "I want to buy a home" to get the conversation started. But there would still have to be a conversation.)

This approach felt right to me since we may be adding or subtracting programs in the near future, and it's already pretty difficult for most clients to know which program is right for them. Clients know their problem, but they'll need us to decide the solution. And those solutions may change as we grow and change post-merger.

If the time comes when programs are very clear, we could let the website "pre-sort" more clients for us, either by creating sub-pages ("click here for help with a down payment, or click here for help with homebuyer education") or by adding more complex questions so the client contact forms so they function more like applications. This would require less personal attention from employees because the website would do the work. But my sense is, it's too early for that. I don't think we can precisely define which programs we'll have in 6 months or which clients will qualify for each program. I think it's better to match clients with services personally than to ask them to self-select on a website, at least for now.

- **"Core principles"** is how I'm labeling our more educational content. If we were running for office, this would be our platform. I've named 3 ideas on the homepage (see below) that I think are worth fleshing out with their own educational sub-pages.

The next logical step from here would be to include a blog with either additional educational material, or (more powerfully) real-life stories and examples of the core principles in action. "Core Principle" pages should link to posts that support or exemplify those principles, allowing folks who wish to swim on out into the deep water and keep reading or watching on a topic.

**I haven't included blogging as a strategy for now, but your site should certainly have that functionality.** At the least, you'll want to move valuable assets like videos and client stories from the old site to the new one and add links from Principle pages. The blog will serve as a platform to publish any future content, but you'll be always be doing that to support your network – not to attract new partners. (In other words: Your blog's audience is your email list, not Google.)

- **Survey results as email bribe:** Email signup is a secondary type of conversion – if folks aren't ready to volunteer, donate or apply, we still want their email address. We usually get better results if we offer something in return, so I'm proposing we turn our merger survey results into an email bribe.

Take the charts that answer the survey questions about "Aurora's problem" and "your problem," put them in a PDF (or into the body of an email) with a little explanation, and you'll have a short read that would be pretty compelling for most of our target Partners. Make this the "welcome" email that folks receive for joining the email list, and promise it in exchange for email signup.

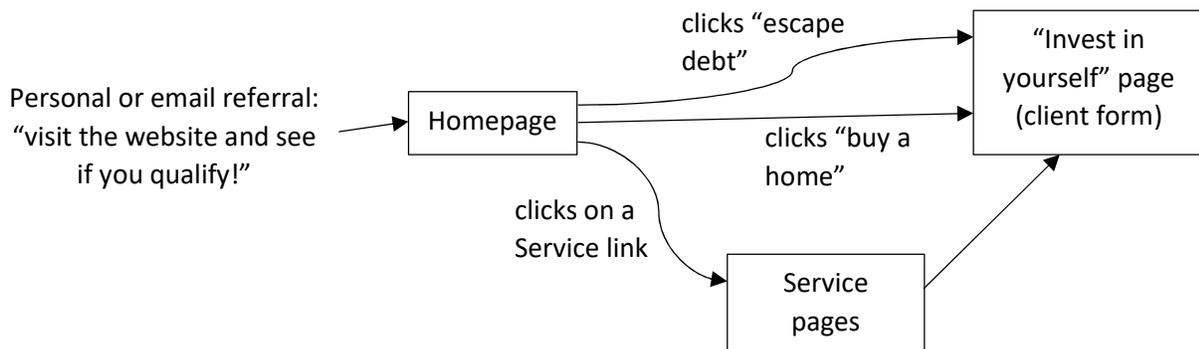
We'll get far more email addresses this way than by writing "join our mailing list" – and the email itself could start meaningful conversations with future Partners, too! But if we don't want to do this right away, we could leave it at "join our mailing list" for now.

## User Experience: How will visitors use the site?

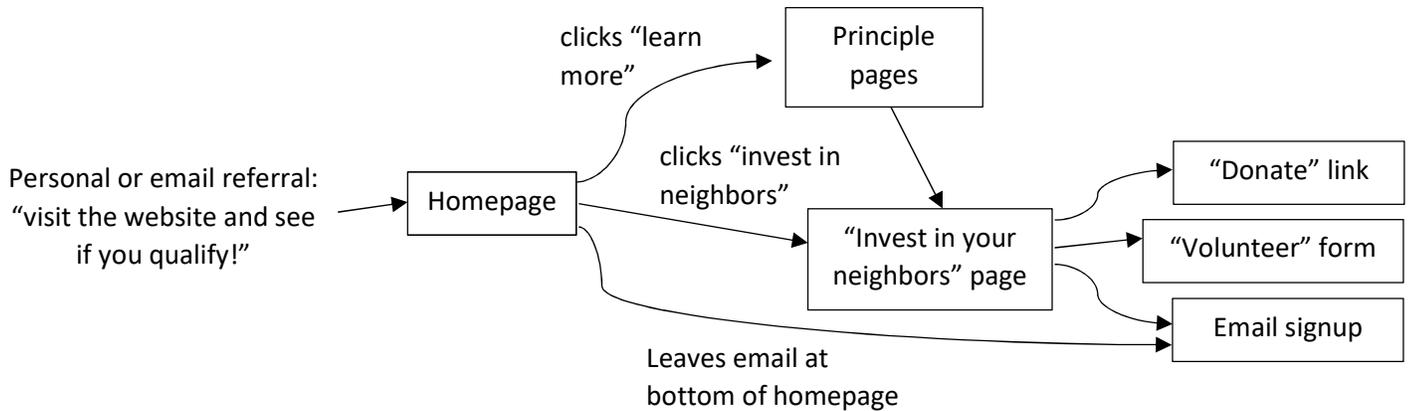
The Home page has a single audience, as defined in the Charter: **Anyone who considers themselves part of the Aurora story.** Core messaging should inspire based on that shared identity.

But... to turn inspiration into action, the rest of the site needs to sort visitors into two groups:

1. **Clients** either want help with debt or want to own a home. Here's how they'll move through the site:



2. **Partners** are either here to learn, or because they've already decided to give or volunteer. Here's how they'll move through the site:



The roadmaps above should be used as a guide in writing content and building links on each page. The biggest, most obvious link is always the one that points to the next page on the map. The purpose of each page is to help the reader take that next step.

## Web pages to create

For site launch, we'll need 11 pages – including 3 contact forms and two e-mail signup boxes.

- **Home**
  - **"Invest in yourself"** at /apply (includes client contact form)
  - **"Invest in your neighbors"** at /help (includes volunteer form, donate link and email signup)
  - **Budget & Credit Counseling** service page
  - **Homebuyer Education** service page (include event registration links if they're different from the /apply contact form)
  - **Downpayment Savings** service page (includes explanation of Networked Savings)
  - **Foreclosure Prevention** service page
  - **Neighbors** principle page (argument: Working families are assets to community.)
  - **Freedom** principle page (argument: Families must have assets to be assets.)
  - **Unity** principle page (argument: When I love others, I love myself.)
  - **About** page (includes general contact form)

## Navigation

Here's the navigation menu. Titles in bold link to pages; "Services" and "Values" expand into submenus but don't need their own pages.

- Services
  - **Budget & Credit Counseling**
  - **Homebuyer Education**
  - **Downpayment Savings**
  - **Foreclosure Prevention**
- Values
  - **Neighbors**
  - **Freedom**
  - **Unity**
- **About**
- **Volunteer** (links to /help)
- **Apply**
- **Donate** (links to /help or a separate donation link)

# Homepage wireframe

[EHJC logo]

services | values | about | volunteer | apply | donate



Our greatest asset is each other.

[explainer video doubles as lead photo/headline]

## When your neighbors prosper, you do too.

Aurora’s challenge isn’t poverty; it’s participation. A disproportionate number of Aurorans have income, but not stability. We earn a living. But without assets like a home or savings account, we’re not financially secure enough to invest in the city where we live.

So we keep paying debt instead of supporting local business. We keep relocating when we could be renovating. And Aurorans’ hard work doesn’t benefit Aurora.

Change that, and you change the city. That’s Homefree Aurora’s mission. We help people escape debt, save money and purchase homes – so they can be full participants in their communities. We’re helping our neighbors prosper, so our neighborhoods can prosper too. We’re taking back the city’s greatest asset: The people who already live here.

[INVEST IN YOUR NEIGHBORS]

[ESCAPE DEBT]

[BUY A HOME]

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<p>[ICON]</p> <p><b>Fix your credit.</b></p> <p>Escape debt and build a better budget with one-on-one credit counseling. Sometimes, it takes someone else to show you the way forward.</p>	<p>[ICON]</p> <p><b>Prepare for homeownership.</b></p> <p>Ready to buy? Homebuyer education gets you the knowledge you’ll need to purchase – and keep – your home.</p>	<p>[ICON]</p> <p><b>Save for a down payment.</b></p> <p>Ready for a mortgage, but can’t seem to save for the down payment? Networked Savings can help break the cycle.</p>	<p>[ICON]</p> <p><b>Avoid foreclosure.</b></p> <p>Your house may be your greatest asset. The foreclosure prevention program shows you ways to keep it you may not have known about.</p>
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[Homepage wireframe continues on next page]

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## A city's greatest asset.

EHJC's work is built on 3 core principles:

**1. Neighbors build neighborhoods.**

The people who could make the biggest difference in Aurora aren't outsiders; they're our neighbors. Research shows that ordinary working people have the greatest power to transform a city. [\[LEARN MORE\]](#)

**2. Assets build financial freedom.**

For a typical working family, the difference between financial freedom and financial vulnerability isn't lack of income – it's lack of assets. Work should pay, but cycles of debt and disadvantage keep assets like savings or a home just out of reach for many. [\[LEARN MORE\]](#)

**3. We're here to help each other.**

Human beings were made to love their neighbors. When I set you free, I set myself free too. We need each other. And when we embrace that, we can actually change the world. [\[LEARN MORE\]](#)

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## Where do we start?



We asked 100 leaders from Aurora's business, civic and nonprofit communities what the city's most urgent challenges are. For a graph of their answers, just leave your email in the box.

[ your email ]

[\[SEE THE SURVEY\]](#)

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