



# How College Station Broke Free From Template Restrictions and Slow Support

**In just 6 months, the City of College Station launched a modern, customizable website built around resident feedback.**

**Client name:**

City of College Station

**Website:**

<https://www.cstx.gov>

**Products Featured:**

Govstack CMS, Forms, Parks & Facilities, Treejack Testing, Sitemap Process

## Overview

For municipalities trapped in a restrictive CMS or exploring their options among familiar government website solutions, College Station's story offers a roadmap: you don't have to sacrifice customization for ease of use, and you don't have to accept rigid templates and approval processes as the cost of working with established website vendors.

*"It was the best CMS backend that we found. Other platforms made you choose between an easy, clean back end that locked you into templates, or a very complicated back end meant only for web developers. This had the mix—easy enough for non-web people to figure out, but powerful enough for us to do everything we need."*

— Carlos Elarba, Website Coordinator, City of College Station

→ [govstack.com](https://govstack.com)

## The Challenge

The City of College Station's existing CMS was painfully outdated; support requests moved at a crawl, and the platform locked them into rigid templates that prevented even basic customization.

For Assistant Director of Public Communications [Bobbie Lehrmann](#) and team, the pain points went far beyond aesthetics. The city's website search function — arguably the most critical feature for citizen self-service — was fundamentally broken.

"You could search for the exact page title, and it wouldn't pull up in the top three results," explained Website Coordinator Carlos Elarba. "Our biggest feedback from citizens was that the search didn't work, and it really didn't."

But the problems ran deeper:

- **Locked Down Templates:** The team couldn't customize their site without paying extra fees. Want to update your brand colors? That's an additional charge. Need a redesign before your four-year contract expires? Pay up or wait.
- **No Test Environment:** Changes went live immediately with no preview option. One wrong click, and the mistake was visible to 125,000 residents.
- **Mobile Unfriendly:** In an era when most citizens access government services on their phones, College Station's website provided a subpar mobile experience, with no way to optimize content for different screen sizes.
- **Limited Control:** The platform was either too simple for their experienced team or required them to go through a slow support queue for changes that should have taken minutes.

As Multimedia Manager Joelene Tomecek put it: "If we have the capability to do more, I want to do more. Template-focused systems didn't allow us that freedom."



## Why Govstack

When their contract finally neared its end in 2024, College Station launched an RFP process. The options included familiar industry names like CivicPlus and Granicus.

Then an in-person meeting with Govstack turned out to be a pivotal moment.

*"We were blown away from the first time we met with Govstack and saw the product. After that, it was a very easy decision." Joelene recalled.*

What won them over wasn't just a sales pitch. It was seeing how Govstack addressed their specific pain points:

- **True Customization:** Full control over design without tiered pricing for basic features
- **Smart Search:** Integration with Cludo search that became a central component of the new home page
- **Mobile Optimization:** The ability to hide or show specific content based on screen size — a feature unique among the government CMS platforms they evaluated
- **Approval Workflows:** Departments could edit content, but everything flowed through the web team for approval before going live
- **Test Environment:** Preview changes before publishing to eliminate the risk of live mistakes



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**"Based on my experience working on websites, the back end is just very simple. The CMS is what we wanted and why we went with Govstack — because it gave us that flexibility to do what we needed. It was simple to understand. Most of the things aren't complicated. It was the best CMS back end that we found."**

— Carlos Elarba

→ [govstack.com](https://govstack.com)

## Implementation: Moving Fast Without Breaking Things

College Station faced an aggressive timeline as they needed to be live by Fall 2025. That meant going from contract signing to launch in just six months — roughly half the time of a typical government website project.

Despite the compressed schedule, the project stayed on track. Two elements proved particularly valuable:

- **TreeJack Testing and Site Mapping:** Rather than simply migrating their department-focused navigation structure, Govstack conducted research with citizens and city employees to create a service-focused navigation. “Our site map is completely different now,” Joelene noted. The team worried departments would resist losing their dedicated sections, but the data-driven approach made the case.
- **Dedicated Support:** The Govstack Implementation Team understood their urgency and kept the implementation moving. “They were on top of it,” Carlos said. “They understood our expectations and got releases to us as soon as possible.”

**“Honestly, the Treejack study was so helpful to have the citizen and employees’ responses and help us make a new site map that is completely different than what we had on the previous site. I think it works very well for the citizens because it’s service-focused rather than department-focused.”**

— Joelene Tomecek

## Results: Modern Design, Powerful Control, Happy Departments

College Station launched their new website in mid-September 2025. While it’s early for comprehensive metrics, the initial response exceeded expectations:

- **Zero Vendor Lock-In:** Full control over design and content with no restrictions on updates or redesigns
- **Intelligent Search:** Prominent search bar powered by Cludo that returns relevant results
- **Mobile Optimized:** Responsive design with granular control over how content appears on different devices

→ **Streamlined Structure:** Service-focused navigation designed for citizens that is truly user-friendly, featuring a consolidation of old, underutilized pages.

→ **Controlled Collaboration:** Departments can edit content while the web team maintains quality control through approval workflows

→ **Faster Implementation:** Six-month timeline from contract to launch

The internal feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. “We expected a lot more pushback from people saying, ‘this is all wrong, move our page here,’” Joelene said. “But everyone was very understanding. When Carlos explained the reasoning, they got it.”

Perhaps most importantly, the team finally has the freedom they need. “The CMS really gives us the ability to do what we need,” Carlos explained. “We can figure out the best solution for every department depending on their needs. If we want to do a complete rebrand and change every single color, we can do it ourselves.”

