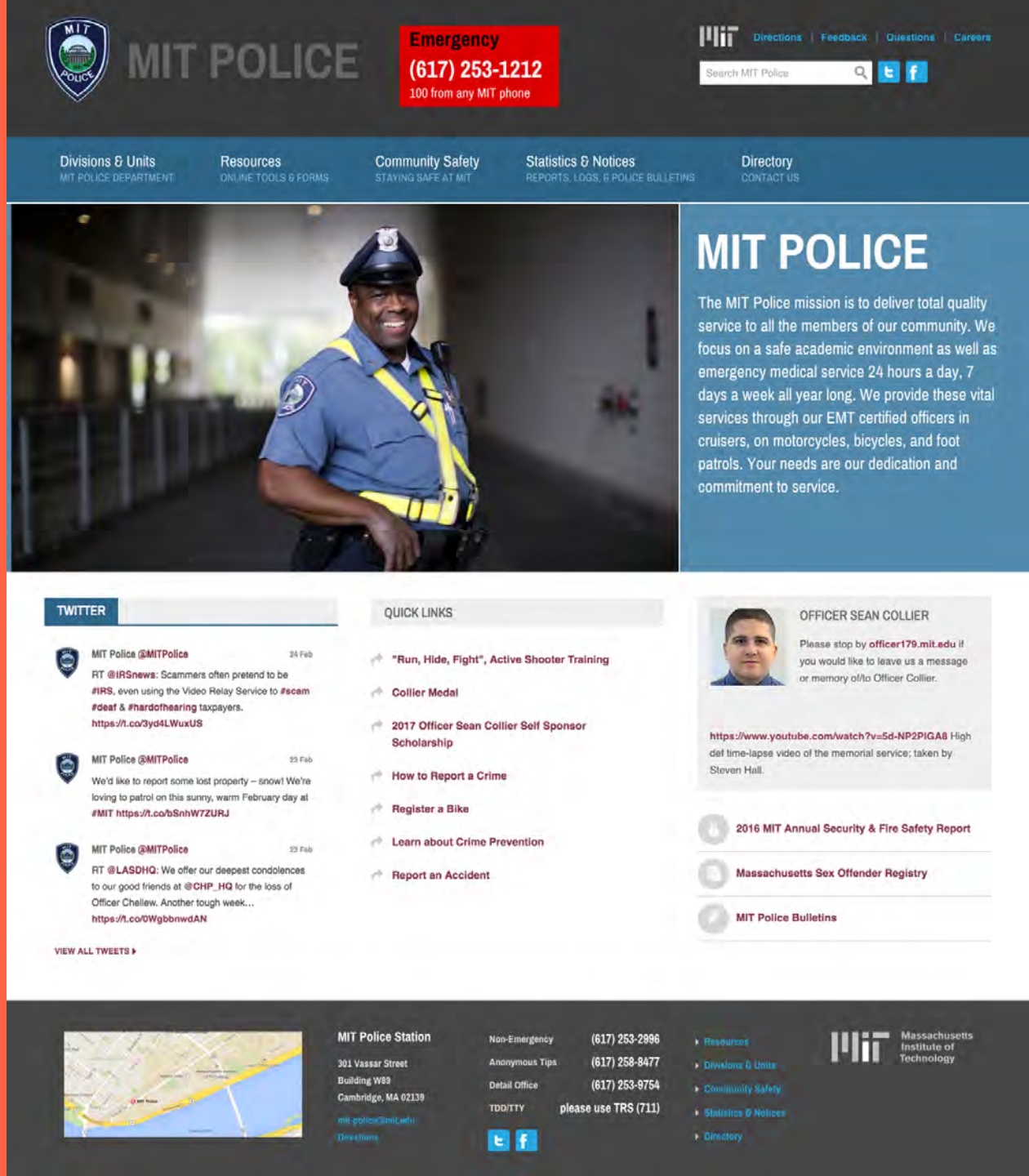# POLICE.MIT.EDU USER EXPERIENCE AUDIT

Content First

User Experience & Design

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# REDESIGN vs REFACTOR

The scope of this deck is to share usability findings about specific aspects of the police.mit.edu website. Focusing on key areas of user interaction, content consumption and value creation.

An immediate improvement to the site will be noticed if these concerns are addressed:

1. How content is discovered.
2. Consistent designs applied site wide.
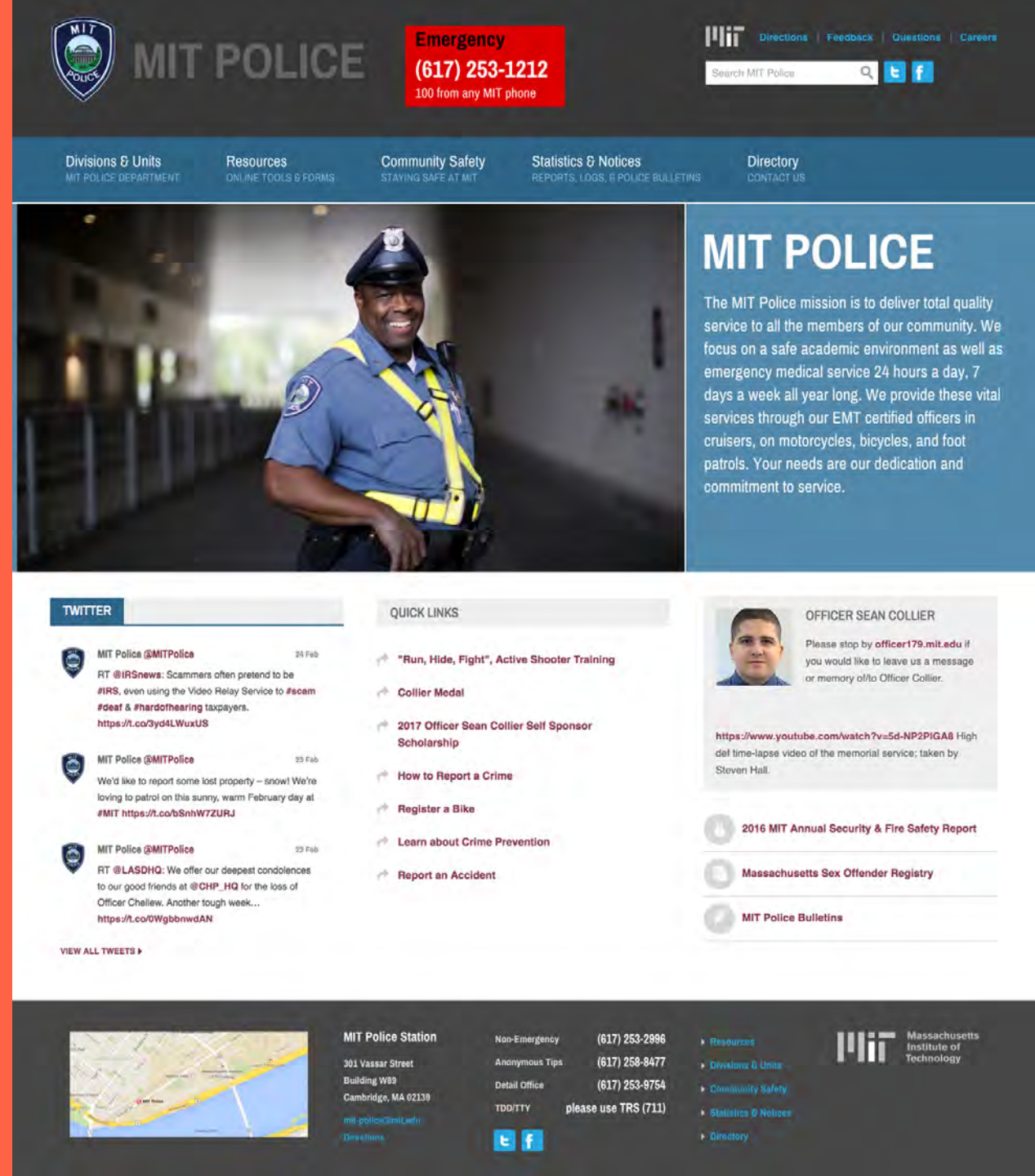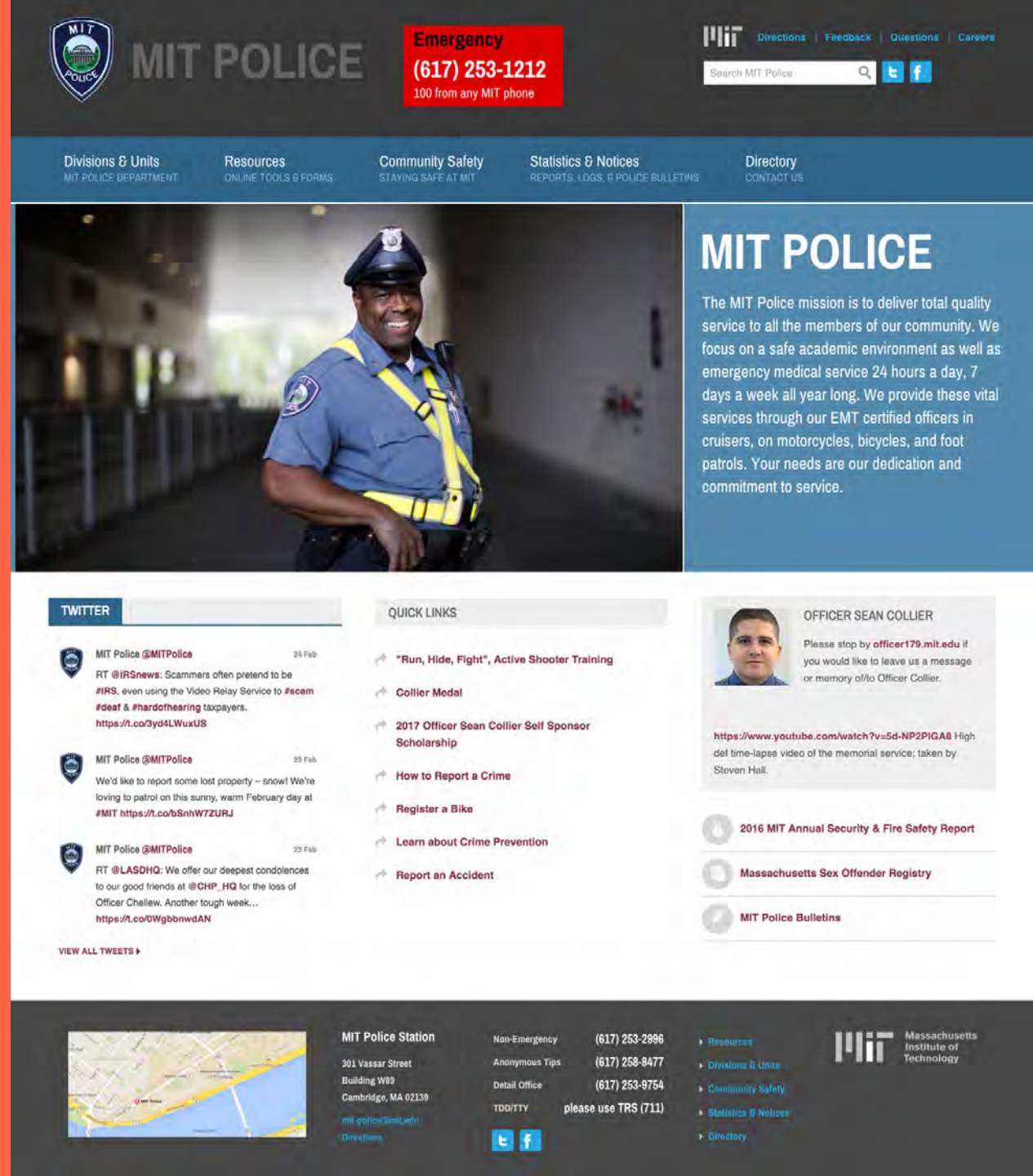
WHAT WORKS

Briefly…

MIT Police Dept. has a distinctive brand. Colors, purpose, and helpful content is present.

Great brand photography adds a human face to the department.

Design still ties in with the parent MIT brand.

Works on many devices with responsive techniques.

Noted a few modern interface practices (2011+)

WHAT DOESN'T WORK

Briefly…

Flow: Content discovery is confusing. Link duplication doesn't fix the confusion, and only adds to the "choice overload."

Structure: Page content structure is not well defined. Placement of copy, images, and links are confusing. Discoverability of key items is obscured.

Navigation: A heavy reliance on linking between pages has the user bouncing around to find the desired content. Navigation is clunky.

WHAT DOESN'T WORK Cont.

Style: Page style elements are inconsistent making it hard to differentiate certain elements from each other. Screen is filled but, useful content isn't present.

Discoverability: Confusing segmentation of content makes it hard to find out exactly which content the MIT Police think is a priority.

Accessibility: We tested the site for ease of use with screen readers and basic inclusive techniques. There are key issues that need to be addressed.
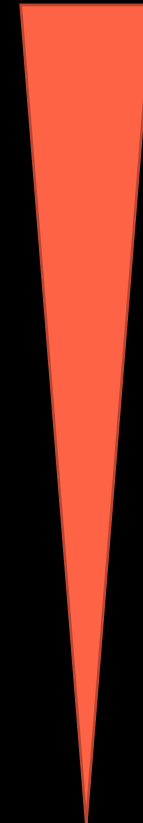
Recommendations

Fastest to Impact

1. **Clean up the header section of the site:** Refine top header to take up less vertical space and transition smoothly. At the same time address accessibility concerns.

2. **Refactor Navigation Patterns:** Make your page content easier to discover. Refine existing navigation to be more easy to use and address accessibility concerns.

3. **Make images matter on the page:** Make sure the right image is used for the story told on a page. Reduce amount of visual space images use while increasing their utility and delight.

4. **Make page structure more natural to read:** Structure pages with clear calls to action and purpose. The layout needs to drive users to their goals with the least amount of distraction possible.

5. **Refine the design:** Refine the design to reflect a more consistent aesthetic that represents MIT's finest in uniform to the community.

Slowest to Impact

FLOW

Wayfinding the site: The Home page acts as the first place for content discovery. It is observed that the navigation, links, and calls to action on a page do not guarantee easy access sitewide.

Sitewide but important on homepage: The header, tab row and large images are overwhelming at first glance. Content is pushed off the screen (below the fold).

At the page level: While navigating to specific Nav items, the page that loads tends to be sparse. When a destination page is filled with content, its structure is "airy," that is low density content. Pages then become small chunks of quickly consumed content, at times leading the user to click elsewhere to discover more relevant content. (see Bike Registration example)

FLOW

External links abound: Many categorically important links are external. In some cases this may be unavoidable given MIT's silos, but from a visitor's perspective it leaves a negative impression .

How content is consumed: The site uses a traditional front-page > linking Mega Menu Nav > page > sub-page drill down. The current template structure requires a lot of click-thru to discover the contents of each section. Each Nav item is a category or topic, with unclear distinction.

We found that content discovery happens not at the NAV dropdown, but instead an errant click down into a Nav Link. A quick perusal then a click back either in the Nav or the sub-nav present at each page. This duplication, while designed as an affordance, exposes a lack of clarity in site organization.

STRUCTURE

Parts of the page: While the content model is logical, the over reliance on small pages as the main consumable item (the thing being read) creates small chunks of disconnected content, hurting discovery.

Clarity issues: Content structure is hard to understand, partly due to how many clicks it takes to find content.

STRUCTURE cont.

Parts of the page: While the content model is logical, the over reliance on small pages as the main consumable item (the thing being read) creates small chunks of disconnected content, hurting discovery.

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NAVIGATION

Main Navigation with Dropdown:
Collapses on mobile to a dropdown triggered by a hamburger style button. Some main pages are not accessible on mobile viewports.

Top Utility Nav: Gone on mobile, the search bar constrains itself to the Main Nav (doesn't work in iOS 10), MIT logo and Utility Nav which go to low information pages. This creates an over-abundance of click steps.

NAVIGATION

Footer Nav Utility: Besides a benign map image that is a link to the directions link, the footer serves its purpose of looping user thru the site. This is necessary to help lost users find their way back into the flow. The fact that key phone numbers are here is good. But it feels lost around the many other links and details. We suggest keeping the footer focused on directions and emergency contacts.

Fig. 1

NAVIGATION

Footer Nav Utility: Besides a benign map image that is a link to the directions link, the footer serves its purpose of looping user thru the site. This is necessary to help lost users find their way back into the flow. The fact that key phone numbers are here is good. But it feels lost around the many other links and details. We suggest keeping the footer focused on directions and emergency contacts.

Fig. 2

NAVIGATION

Side Nav within Content Pages: Added as a secondary method of accessing different content pages, it is constrained to specific page category and changes based on the user's current location. In practice it acts as a band aid to solve the problem of fragmented content.

STYLE

Overall: Branding is effective, but its presentation has issues.

Inconsistencies noted:

1. Header and Footers
2. Alignment of page elements
3. Color and contrast
4. Icons
5. Links in content
6. Bullets and numbering
7. Gallery Formats
8. Image placements

STYLE

Images without purpose: The way images are used distracts from the quality of the images themselves.

Carousel animation of 10 images is distracting: While it is possible to stop the animation by manually clicking on the image a couple of times, but there is no affordance for this functionality. On small screens viewing site images push content off screen.

Carousel runs continuously
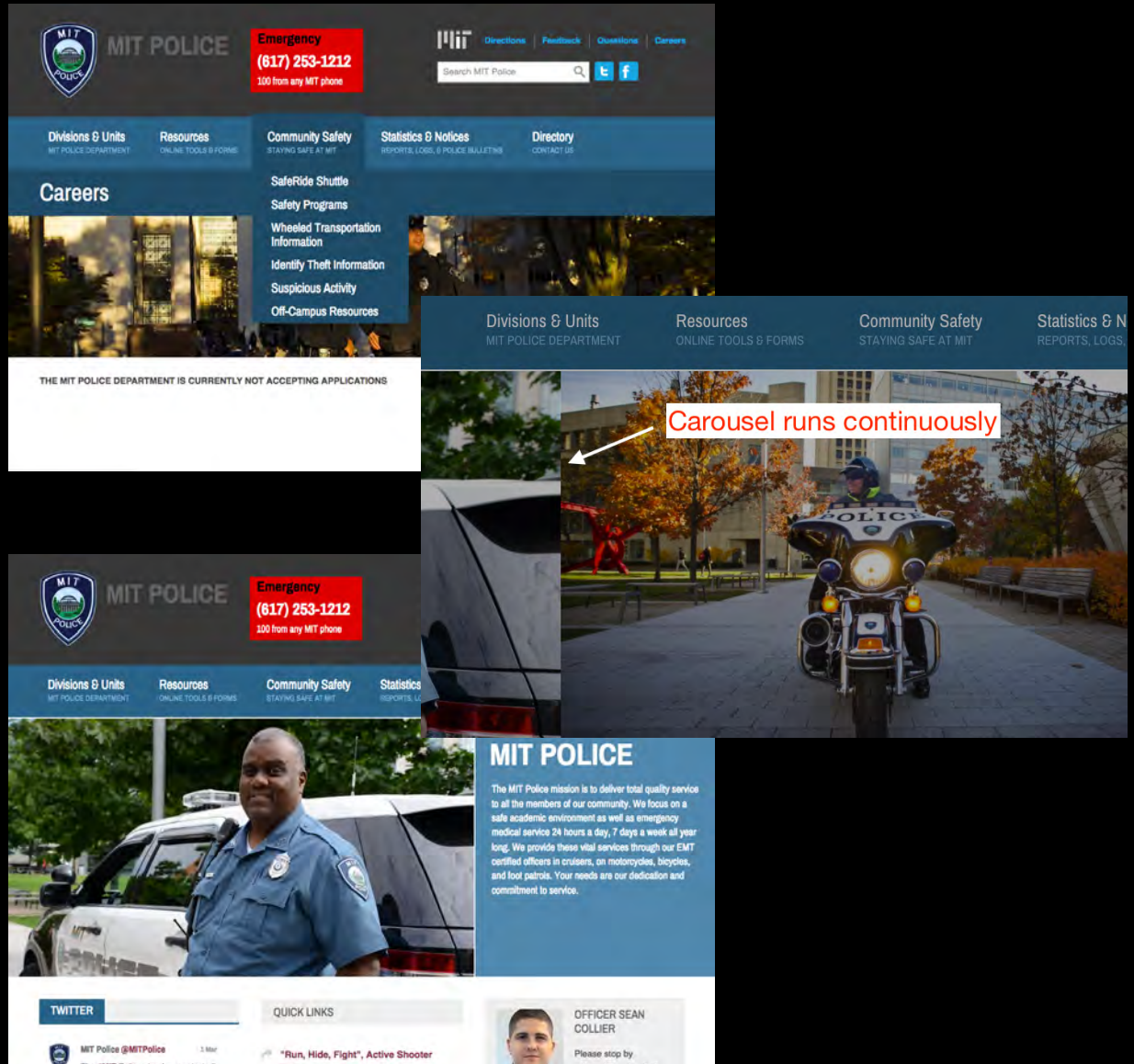
ACCESSIBILTY

Endless Loops for screen readers: Many of the elements on the page don't have the basic accessibility affordances. Some elements force the user into a loop.

Screen Reader accessing unseen content: Parts of the navigation are accessed on collapse. Which may or may not be intended, but may add many of steps to the consumption of the main content of the page.

ACCESSIBILTY

Color Contrasts: White on blue font appears too condensed; difficult to read. Reverse text fuzziness (halation) is an issue for 50% of the population. Legibility is poor for gray text on gray background, blue text on gray background, and on the areas with blue text on blue background.

RECOMENDATIONS

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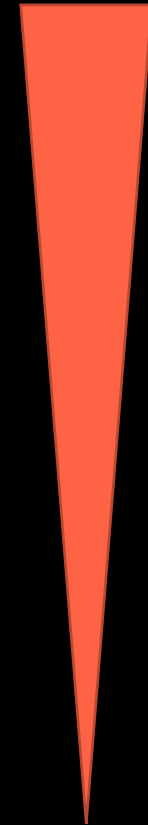
Slowest to Impact

FLOW

```
police.mit.edu
|
|  {{ Main Nav }}
|- divisions-units [no show mobile]
|    |- chiefs-welcome
|    |- patrol-division
|    |- special-services-division
|       |- investigation-unit
|       |- executive-protection-unit
|       |- crime-prevention-unit
|    |- administrative-division
|    |- honor-guard
|    |- history [broken]
|
|- resources [no show mobile]
|    |- report-crime-or-accident
|    |- bike-registration
|    |- clery-offense-reporting-information-and-
|       reporting-forms
|    |- event-detail [url?]
|    |- fingerprinting-service
|    |- anonymous-sexual-assault-form
|    |- criminal-history-request-cori
|    |- sexual-offender-registry
|
```

```
|- crime-prevention (Community Safety)
   [no show mobile]
|    |- saferide
|    |- safety-programs
|    |- wheeled-transportation-information
|    |- identify-theft-information
|    |- suspicious-activity
|    |- campus-resources
|
|- statistics-notices [no show mobile]
|    |- annual-safety-report
|    |- sean-collier-self-sponsor-scholarship
|    |- police-logs
|    |- police-bulletins* [date sensitive content]
|
|- mit-police-directory
|
```

```
|  {{ Secondary Utility Nav }}
|- directions
|- feedback
|- questions
|- careers
|
|  {{ Quick Links }}
|- Run, Hide, Fight, Active Shooter Training [external]
|- Collier Medal [non nav accessbile]
|- 2017 Officer Sean Collier Self Sponsor
   Scholarship [non nav accessbile]
|- How to Report a Crime [Nav accessible]
|- Register a Bike [Nav accessible]
|- Learn about Crime Prevention [Nav accessible]
|- Report an Accident [Nav accessible]
```