CASE STUDY · BRAND IDENTITY + SHOPIFY WEBSITE

Ruby's Dream: building a brand and an online store from scratch

A new cat collar company came to me with a concept and a feeling: **whimsical and cozy**. I turned that into a brand identity, planned the site structure, designed the pages, built the site in Shopify, and organized its public-facing information so first-time visitors could find answers on their own.

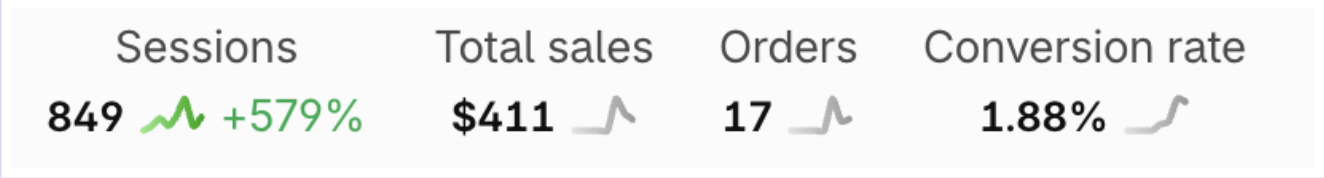
My role	Platform	Scope	Live site
Brand & web designer (freelance)	Shopify	Research, brand identity, site structure, wireframes, mockups, Shopify build	rubysdreamstore.com

Results, Q1 2026

+579%
growth in site sessions vs. the previous period

849
sessions for a brand-new site with no existing audience

1.88%
of visitors completed the site's main task (17 orders)



Shopify Analytics, Q1 2026, compared with the previous period.

The process

1 Research	2 Brand	3 Structure	4 Design	5 Build	6 Review
Audience, competitors, market position	Personality, visual directions, logo system	Sitemap and low-fidelity wireframes	High-fidelity page mockups	Shopify pages and public-facing content	Accessibility, analytics, iteration

01 · THE BRIEF & RESEARCH

Starting from an idea, not an existing brand

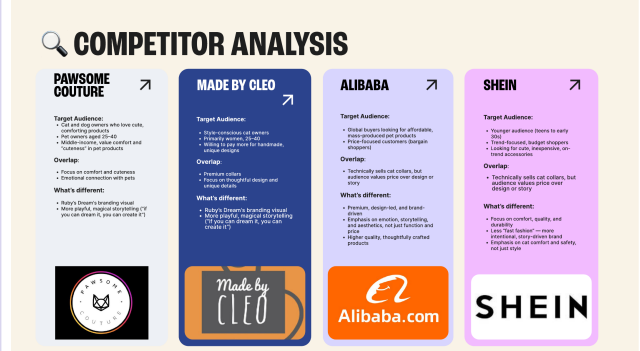
“Whimsical and cozy.”

The client had a product idea and a mood, but no name treatment, visual system, or website. Before designing anything, I defined who the store was for and where it would sit in the market, so every later decision had a reason behind it.

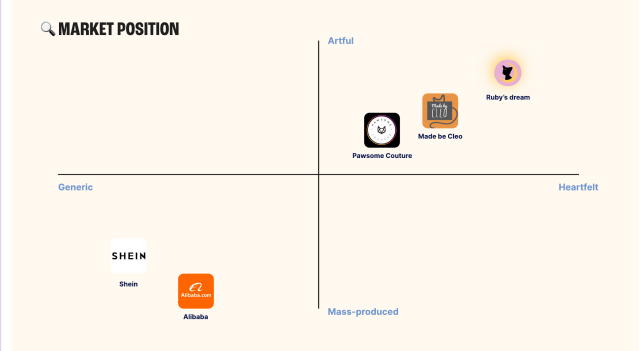
Who it's for

Cat owners in their 20s and 30s, mostly women, who see their cat as part of their personal style, share photos online, and will pay a little more for something well made rather than mass-produced. Their main frustration: pet accessories that feel cheap and generic.

Where it fits



Competitor analysis. Two premium, design-led brands and two mass-market sellers, compared on audience, overlap, and difference.



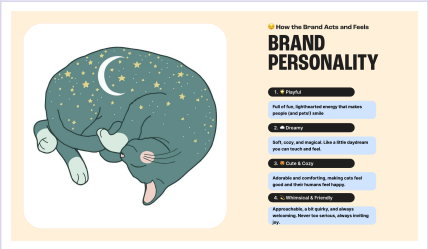
Market position. The gap: a collar brand that is both artful and heartfelt, away from generic, mass-produced options.

Takeaway for the website: the site had to feel personal and crafted, not like a marketplace listing. That shaped everything from the copy voice to how reviews are shown.

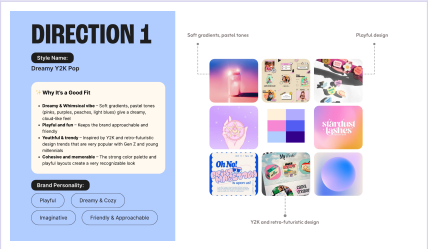
02 · BRAND IDENTITY

Turning “whimsical and cozy” into a visual system

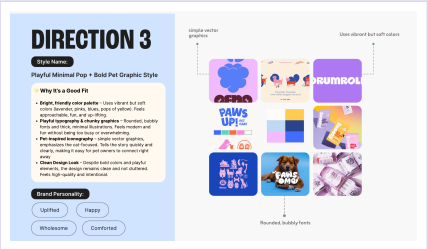
I defined the brand personality (playful, dreamy, cute and cozy, whimsical and friendly), then explored visual directions with the client before designing the logo system.



Brand personality



Direction 1: Dreamy Y2K Pop



Direction 3: Playful Minimal Pop



Logo system. Primary wordmark, horizontal and stacked lockups, badge versions, and a sleeping-cat icon that scales down to a favicon.

Why a full system, not one logo

A website uses a brand at many sizes: header, footer, favicon, product packaging, social profile images. I designed lockups for each use so the brand stays consistent wherever it appears.

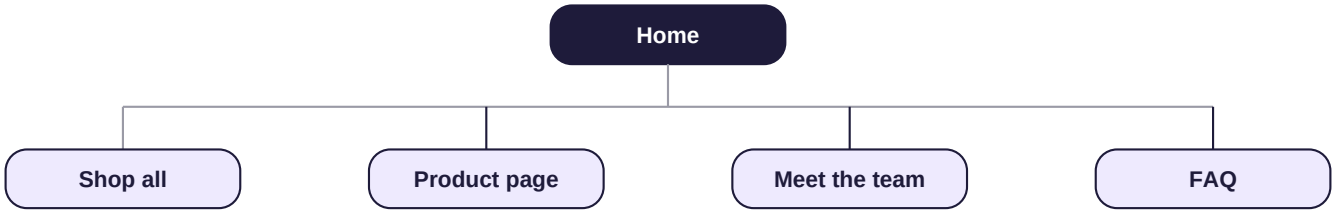
The circular badge and cat icon were made to work as social media profile images, where a long wordmark becomes unreadable.

This is the same discipline a city needs across departments: one identity, applied consistently across the website, app, social channels, and printed materials.

03 · SITE STRUCTURE & WIREFRAMES

Planning what goes where before how it looks

I mapped the pages a first-time visitor needs, then wireframed the three most important templates in grayscale, so layout and content priority could be agreed on before any visual design.



Cart, account, and search sit in the header on every page. Footer repeats the main links plus privacy policy and newsletter signup.



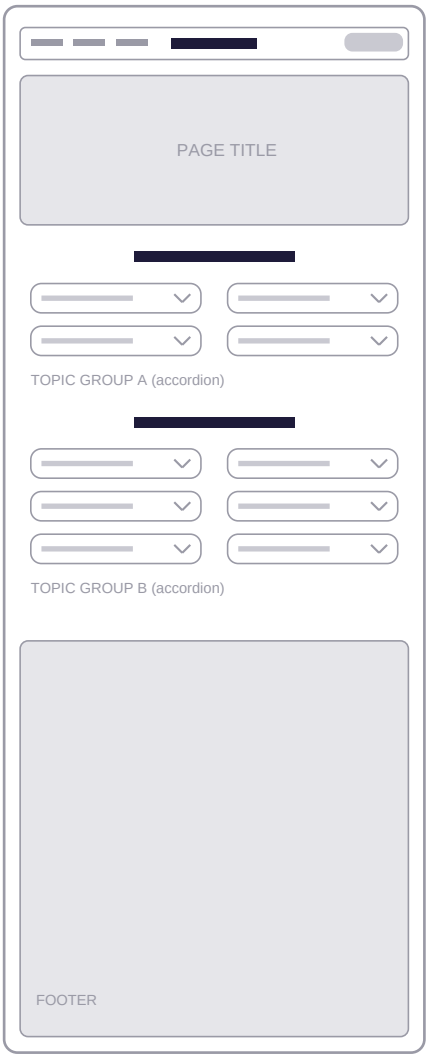
Home

Home: explain the brand in one screen and move people to the collection.



Product page

Product: answer every buying question (fit, safety, care, shipping) on one page.



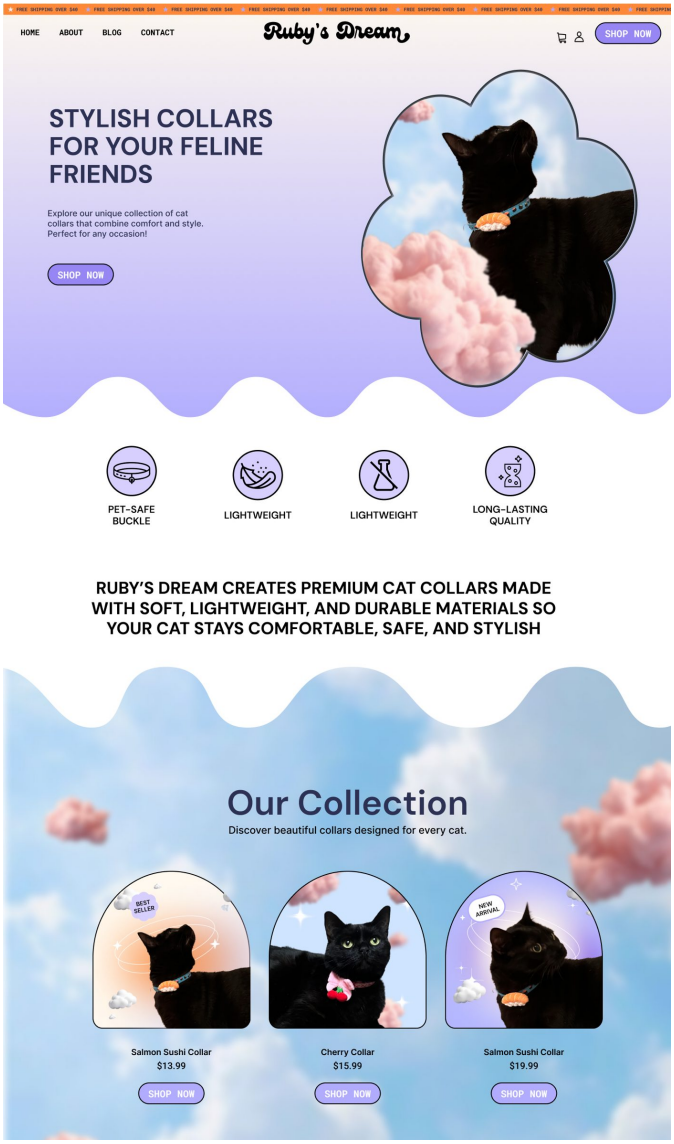
FAQ

FAQ: group common questions by topic so customers find answers before emailing.

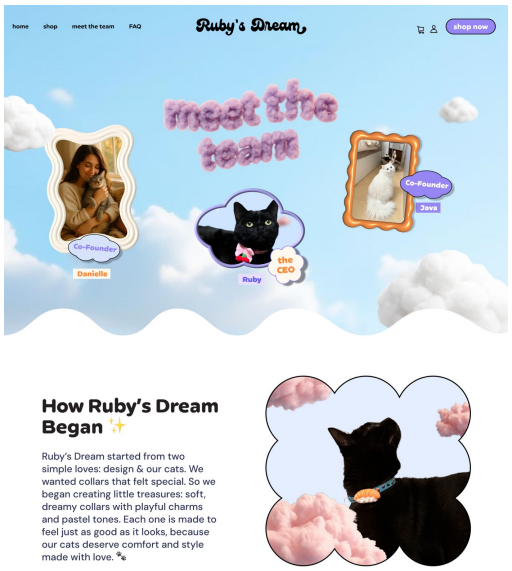
04 · HIGH-FIDELITY MOCKUPS

Applying the brand to the wireframes

Clouds, soft pastels, rounded shapes, and a wavy section divider carry the “whimsical and cozy” brief across every page. The mockups used placeholder copy and sample prices so the client could review layout and look first.



Home mockup



Meet the team mockup

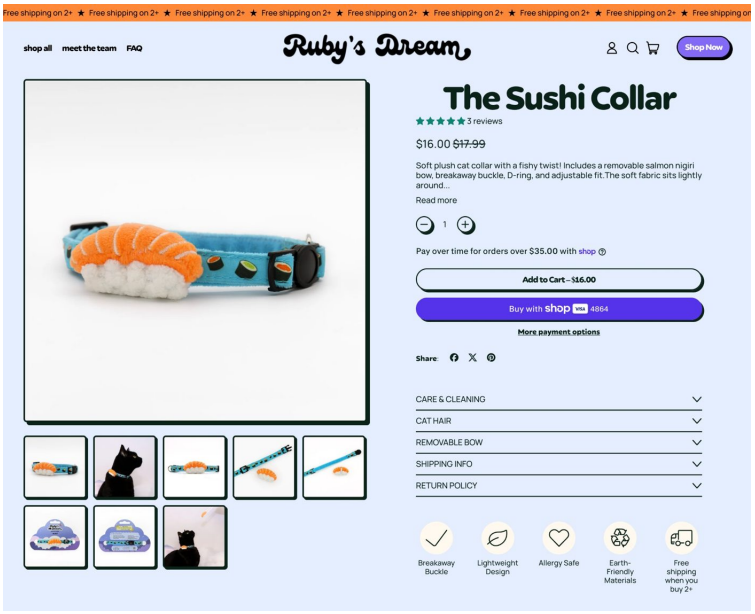


FAQ mockup (placeholder questions)

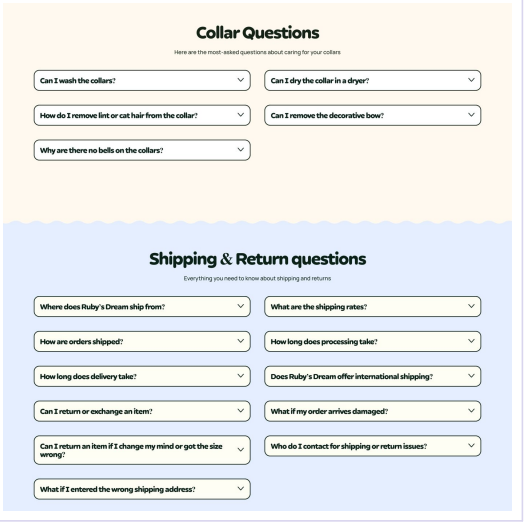
05 · THE SHOPIFY BUILD

From mockup to a working store

I built the site in Shopify and refined it as real products, content, and customer questions came in. Below is the live product page and FAQ.



Live product page. Photos, price, buy options, and expandable care, shipping, and return details in one place.



Live FAQ. 16 questions grouped into collar care and shipping & returns.

What changed between mockup and build

Mockup	Live site	Why
Four nav links (home, shop, meet the team, FAQ)	Three links (shop all, meet the team, FAQ) plus search	Fewer choices; the logo already goes home
Placeholder FAQ in three groups	16 real questions in two clear topic groups	Organized by what customers actually ask
Sample prices that varied by section	One consistent price on every page	Conflicting information erodes trust
Short product blurb	Feature list, safety details, and care/shipping/return accordions	Answers buying questions without leaving the page
Sample reviews	Verified customer reviews with photos of their cats	Real social proof

06 · WRITING FOR THE PUBLIC

Turning product details into plain, friendly language

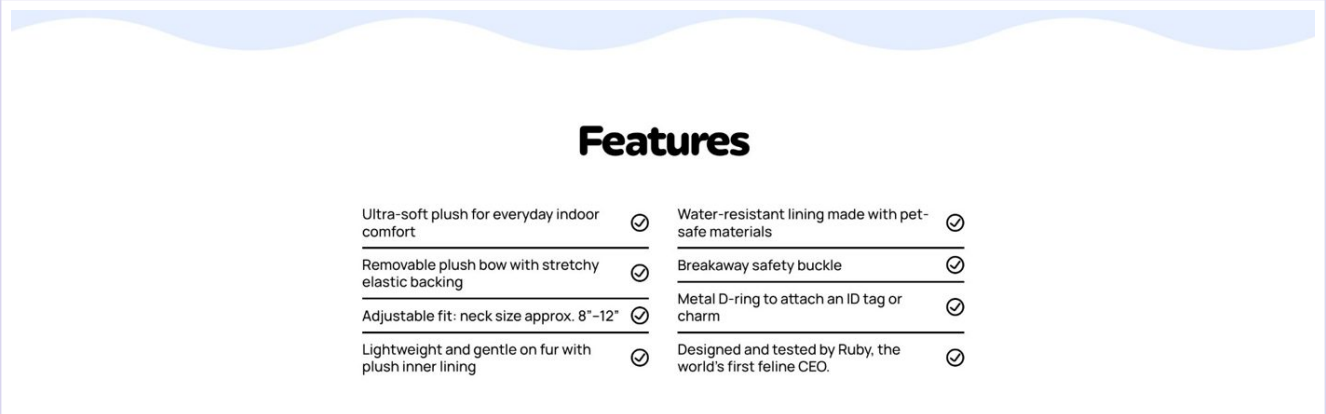
The mockups used generic filler text. For the live site, product specs (materials, buckle type, sizing) had to become copy a first-time visitor could understand in a few seconds, in the brand's warm voice. This is the same skill as turning a city policy into resident-friendly text.

Before and after: product description

Mockup (placeholder)	Live site
“Introducing the Ruby's Dream Cat Collar. A stylish and comfortable accessory for your beloved feline. Each collar is designed with soft, premium materials...”	“Soft plush cat collar with a fishy twist! Includes a removable salmon nigiri bow, breakaway buckle, D-ring, and adjustable fit.”
Problem: could describe any collar; no facts a buyer can act on.	**Better:** leads with the four facts buyers ask about (safety buckle, ID tag ring, fit, removable bow) in one sentence.

Writing principles I used

Principle	On Ruby's Dream	On a city website
Use the reader's words	FAQ questions written the way customers ask them: “Can I wash the collars?”	“Report a pothole,” not “Right-of-way maintenance request”
Most important fact first	Safety and fit before story and personality	Date, location, and what residents need to do, first
Specific over vague	“Neck size approx. 8″–12″” instead of “fits most cats”	Exact hours, fees, and deadlines
Group by topic	16 FAQs split into collar care and shipping & returns	Service pages grouped by what residents are trying to do
Answer before they ask	Care, shipping, and return details on the product page itself	Fewer repeat calls and emails to City Hall



Live feature list: each line is one concrete, scannable fact.

07 · ACCESSIBILITY REVIEW

Checking the live site against WCAG 2.1 AA

Public websites have to work for everyone, including people using screen readers, keyboards, or magnification. I reviewed the live site against common WCAG 2.1 AA checks, noted what is already in place, and listed the fixes I would make next.

Quick terms: a **screen reader** is software that reads a website aloud for blind and low-vision users. **Alt text** is a short hidden description of an image that the screen reader reads instead of showing the picture.

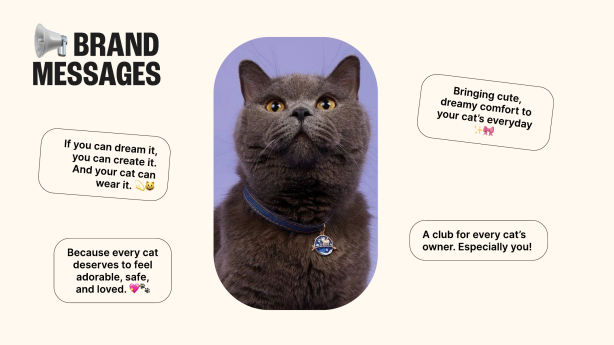
What I checked	What I found	Status
Can keyboard users skip the menu?	Yes. A hidden “Skip to content” link lets them jump straight to the page content.	**Done**
Are titles marked as real headings?	Yes. Each page has one main title and clear section titles, so screen reader users can jump between sections.	**Done**
Do product photos have descriptions?	Yes, but every photo just says “The Sushi Collar.”	**Improve: describe each photo (e.g. “Sushi collar on a black cat”)**
Do other important images have descriptions?	No. The homepage image and customers' cat photos have none. (Decorative clouds should stay blank on purpose.)	**Fix: add a short description to each**
Can page titles made from images be read?	No. The fluffy “FAQ's” and “meet the team” titles are pictures of words.	**Fix: add alt text or a real text title**
Is text easy to read against its background?	Mostly. White text on the purple buttons may be too light.	**Test: needs a 4.5:1 contrast ratio; darken purple if needed**
Does the site work without a mouse?	FAQ answers and product details open and close when clicked.	**Test: use Tab and Enter to make sure they open by keyboard too**
Do buttons say what they do?	Yes. Buttons read “Add to Cart” and “Shop Now,” not “Click here.”	**Done**

Why this matters for the City

City websites must meet ADA and WCAG 2.1 AA standards, and every department posts content. The habit shown here, auditing a live site, fixing what can be fixed now, and setting a checklist for future posts, is the same process I would bring to Westminster's website, intranet, and app content.

08 · ONE BRAND, EVERY CHANNEL

Website, social media, and community working together



Brand messages. Short lines written to be reused across the site, captions, and packaging so the voice stays consistent.

How the channels connect

The site links out to Instagram, TikTok, and Pinterest, and customer reviews on the site credit customers by their Instagram handles, so the website and social community feed each other.

The same logo marks, colors, and voice carry across the site header, social profile images, and posts.

How this applies to the City of Westminster

What I did for Ruby's Dream	Communications Specialist duty
Planned site structure around what visitors need to do	Organize content so the public can easily find information
Built and maintained the site in a CMS (Shopify)	Operate and maintain the City's website
Reviewed the live site against WCAG 2.1 AA and set next fixes	Ensure content meets accessibility standards
Rewrote filler copy into plain, specific, public-facing language	Write features, announcements, and informational content
Grouped FAQs by topic and kept details consistent across pages	Conduct content audits; keep information current
Designed one brand system for web, social, and print	Meet branding standards across website, app, and social
Tracked session growth and visitor behavior in Shopify	Track analytics; implement usability and SEO improvements