

Nicolas Watkins

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SUMMARY

Lead Front-End Developer with eight years of agency and consulting experience delivering responsive, accessible digital experiences from discovery through launch. Brings hands-on command of HTML5, CSS3, SCSS, JavaScript, TypeScript, React, and Next.js, paired with practical leadership across architecture, design systems, **component libraries**, and client delivery. Builds semantic, search-conscious interfaces aligned with **WCAG 2.2** and **Core Web Vitals**, including Contentful integrations and resilient content models. Partners closely with strategists, designers, architects, editors, and clients, creating space for clear decisions when requirements shift. Eager to bring thoughtful technical direction, generous mentorship, and disciplined **AI-assisted development** to Northstar Digital Studio's Chicago team.

EXPERIENCE

Lead Front-End Developer

January 2023 - Present

Brightline Interactive

Chicago, IL

Leads front-end delivery across six concurrent client engagements, shaping architecture, implementation standards, accessibility practices, design-system governance, staffing input, and developer growth. Connects technical choices with client goals, delivery risk, performance, and long-term maintenance.

- Directed six concurrent client engagements with React and **Next.js** patterns, balancing editorial flexibility, launch timing, accessibility, and maintenance needs.
- Established typed domain models and shared TypeScript interfaces for content-heavy platforms, reducing handoff ambiguity across front-end, CMS, and API workstreams.
- Governed a reusable SCSS component library linked with **Figma variables** and libraries, giving design and engineering teams consistent responsive implementation guidance.
- Translated **Figma Design, Dev Mode**, and FigJam explorations into pixel-considered desktop, tablet, and mobile experiences, resolving conflicts before build milestones.
- Introduced WCAG 2.2 checkpoints for keyboard behavior, focus management, **semantic markup**, contrast, and screen-reader output before client acceptance testing.
- Coached four front-end developers through pairing, **code review**, and architecture discussions while applying Git branching standards for predictable parallel releases.

Senior Front-End Developer

June 2021 - December 2022

Civic Pixel Group

Evanston, IL

Owned production delivery for public-facing React and Next.js platforms serving nonprofit, education, and professional-services clients. Combined content modeling, bespoke styling, search readiness, mentoring, and release discipline across discovery, implementation, review, and launch.

- Owned **React** and Next.js website delivery from technical discovery through production release, giving client teams dependable milestones and clear implementation tradeoffs.
- Modeled Contentful content types with strategists and editors, then built integrations supporting localized pages, reusable modules, previews, and controlled publishing.
- Reworked bespoke **CSS** and SCSS around composable components instead of utility frameworks, improving visual consistency across more than 40 page templates.
- Partnered with designers in Figma to resolve spacing, interaction, and responsive-state conflicts early, turning approved intent into maintainable production code.
- Applied semantic **HTML**, structured metadata, image optimization, and **Core Web Vitals** checks, improving search readiness and perceived performance without sacrificing visual fidelity.
- Reviewed pull requests, documented implementation standards, and mentored two developers on **TypeScript** modeling, **browser testing**, accessibility, and Git workflows.

Front-End Developer

July 2019 - May 2021

Mosaic Web Works

Milwaukee, WI

Delivered responsive React interfaces, campaign sites, and content platforms for brand-led client work. Supported estimation, sprint planning, integrations, animation, accessibility review, and release readiness while building reusable front-end foundations.

- Built responsive React interfaces from approved designs, using reusable components and clear prop contracts for consistent browser-tested behavior.
- Developed **SCSS** tokens, layout utilities, and component styles from scratch for experiences where visual detail and responsive consistency shaped client approval.
- Integrated **Contentful** and third-party SDKs for forms, analytics, search, and media delivery, documenting configuration decisions for future maintainers.

- Added GSAP and **Framer Motion** interactions selectively for storytelling and product navigation while preserving **reduced-motion** preferences and page performance.
- Used Lighthouse audits and manual keyboard testing to find semantic, **Core Web Vitals**, and WCAG issues before demonstrations and release candidates.
- Supported estimation and sprint planning by breaking **Figma**-driven features into technical work, identifying integration risks, and explaining tradeoffs to project managers.

Junior Front-End Developer

August 2018 - June 2019

HarborTech Media

Madison, WI

Built foundational front-end experience through supervised delivery for editorial and marketing sites. Contributed HTML, CSS, JavaScript, React, SCSS, CMS updates, Git workflows, browser support, and early motion prototypes under senior review.

- Implemented HTML, CSS, and **JavaScript** updates for editorial and marketing sites under senior review, building dependable responsive development fundamentals.
- Converted Figma layouts into semantic page structures and SCSS modules, resolving cross-browser spacing and typography issues across desktop and mobile views.
- Created early React components for navigation, cards, and form states while documenting expected data shapes as team adoption of **TypeScript** began.
- Supported CMS template updates and content-entry testing with editors, catching broken links, missing metadata, and incomplete responsive states before publication.
- Used **Git** feature branches and pull requests for incremental delivery, incorporating review feedback and maintaining readable commit history during weekly releases.
- Presented a **GSAP** motion prototype with reduced-motion behavior, giving **designers** a reusable starting point for future interactive concepts.

PROJECTS

Accessible Design System Sprint 📅 2024

Partnered with designers, developers, and content specialists to shape a reusable component library from Figma variables through coded documentation. Shared decisions openly, tested keyboard flows together, and left teams with patterns that felt practical rather than imposed.

Headless Content Migration 📅 2023

Worked with editors, strategists, and engineers on a Contentful migration for a multilingual publishing experience. Content modeling sessions surfaced real editorial needs early, helping delivery teams reduce rework and give authors clearer publishing control.

Motion With Care 📅 2021

Collaborated with design and product teammates on GSAP and Framer Motion prototypes for a campaign experience. Performance checks and reduced-motion conversations kept interaction expressive, respectful, and ready for production review.

LEADERSHIP & AWARDS

- Client Craft Excellence Award, Brightline Interactive, 2024
- Accessibility Advocacy Recognition, Civic Pixel Group, 2022
- Dean's List, University of Wisconsin–Whitewater, 2017

EDUCATION

Bachelor's Degree in Web Development

2018

University of Wisconsin–Whitewater GPA: 3.7

Whitewater, WI

Coursework: Front-End Development, Web Accessibility, User Experience Design, Database Systems, Programming Fundamentals

CERTIFICATIONS

- Accessibility for Web Development 📅 2022
- Advanced React and Next.js 📅 2021
- TypeScript Fundamentals 📅 2020

TECHNICAL SKILLS

- **Front-End Languages:** HTML5, CSS3, JavaScript, TypeScript
- **React Development:** React, Next.js, React components
- **CSS Engineering:** SCSS, CSS tokens, responsive layouts
- **Design Systems:** Component libraries, design systems, Figma libraries

- **Figma Suite:** Figma Design, Dev Mode, FigJam, variables
- **Content Platforms:** Contentful, headless CMS, content modeling
- **Accessibility:** WCAG 2.2, semantic HTML, keyboard testing
- **Performance and SEO:** Core Web Vitals, Lighthouse, structured metadata
- **Animation:** GSAP, Framer Motion, Three.js
- **Source Control:** Git, branching strategies, pull requests
- **Testing:** Browser testing, manual QA, screen-reader testing
- **AI Development Tools:** Copilot, Cursor, Claude Code
- **Integration:** Third-party libraries, SDKs, APIs
- **Delivery Planning:** Estimation, sprint planning, scope definition
- **Engineering Practice:** Code review, pairing, technical standards

SKILLS

- HTML5
- CSS3
- SCSS
- JavaScript
- TypeScript
- React
- Next.js
- Figma Design
- Dev Mode
- FigJam
- Contentful
- GSAP
- Framer Motion
- WCAG 2.2
- Core Web Vitals

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- Front-End Practice Circle Facilitator, Brightline Interactive, 2024 - Present
- Volunteer Mentor, Chicago Web Professionals Meetup, 2023 - Present
- Web Accessibility Workshop Presenter, University of Wisconsin–Whitewater, 2018

LANGUAGES

- English (Native)
- Spanish (Intermediate)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Work Status : Authorized to work in United States. No sponsorship required.

REFERENCES

AVAILABLE ON REQUEST