

Interface Redesign

Village of Dexter

*Christina Fleming
Information Architect
Christina Fleming LLC*

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Analysis of Current Interface.....	4
Layout.....	4
Color and Graphics.....	4
Interface Elements	4
Interface Design: Strengths	4
Interface Design: Areas for Improvement.....	5
Redesigned Interface Wireframes.....	6
Analysis of Redesigned Interface	8
Implementation Options.....	8
Approach 1: Fixed-Width, Left-Aligned.....	8
Approach 2: Fixed-Width, Centered	8
Approach 3: Fixed-Width and Variable-Width Columns.....	9
Recommended Implementation.....	9
Appendix A	10
Figure 1 Home Page.....	10
Figure 2 Sub Page	11

Executive Summary

The Village of Dexter contracted with Christina Fleming LLC to create a new interface layout for their website (<http://dextermi.gov>). Usability testing results, combined with a history of user complaints concerning the current interface design, prompted this redesign. The interface redesign targets these issues, as well as others, offering a solution that addresses and resolves the problems.

This report is organized into four major sections, with an appendix containing screenshots of the current home page and sub page design. The sections are:

Analysis of Current Interface

The current interface is deconstructed into component elements and the existing design is evaluated based on interface design principles.

Redesigned Interface Wireframes

Digital wireframes, showing placement and arrangement of interface elements, are presented for both home page and sub page.

Analysis of Redesigned Interface

Improvements in the proposed interface are discussed, as well as how the new interface addresses limitations in the existing design.

Implementation Options

Three approaches to implementing the redesigned interface are presented, with a consideration of their advantages and disadvantages. The recommended approach is identified.

The redesigned interface offers a number of advantages over the existing interface, including the following enhancements:

- Page lengths are narrowed to reduce negative space.
- A responsive design targeted for smaller mobile devices to aid in speed and efficiency of the interface.
- The addition of PDF document icons to distinguish hyperlinks and content.

Analysis of Current Interface

Layout

- The interface for dextermi.gov uses a fixed width centered design, designed for optimal display at 1280x1024.

Color and Graphics

- Colors on the website are muted, which is beneficial for long viewing.
- The existing page weight of 883k is over the optimal recommendation for connections less than 56k or 3G/4G mobile device. Much of the page weight is used for graphics.

Interface Elements

The dextermi.gov interface contains the following elements, many of which will be brought forward into the redesigned interface.

- Search box
- Global navigation
- Local navigation
- Graphics
 - Header logo and background
 - Village photos

Interface Design: Strengths

The primary strength of the current Dextermi.gov interface is its adherence to certain interface design principles and to some of the Gestalt rules of visual perception.

- The site maintains **consistency** in the location of interface elements throughout the home page and sub pages (e.g., the global navigation buttons and logo maintain the same position) and left-aligns columns used for sub navigation, applying the principles of consistency and **alignment**, respectively.

- The Gestalt rules of **proximity** and **similarity** are used to good effect in the global navigation. The global navigation buttons are located closer to each other than to other elements, providing proximity cues to their shared relationship, and have a similar appearance due to their coloring and font.
- Global navigation is mirrored on sub navigation also creating **consistency** with links and page titles.
- Sub navigation links (see Appendix A, Figure 2) in the same section are also located in close **proximity** to one another, in close proximity to the global navigation category to which they belong, and share a common color.
- The content area uses good **contrast** for text and background colors making the text readable.
- The interface uses colors that are **aesthetically** appealing and relaxed.

Interface Design: Areas for Improvement

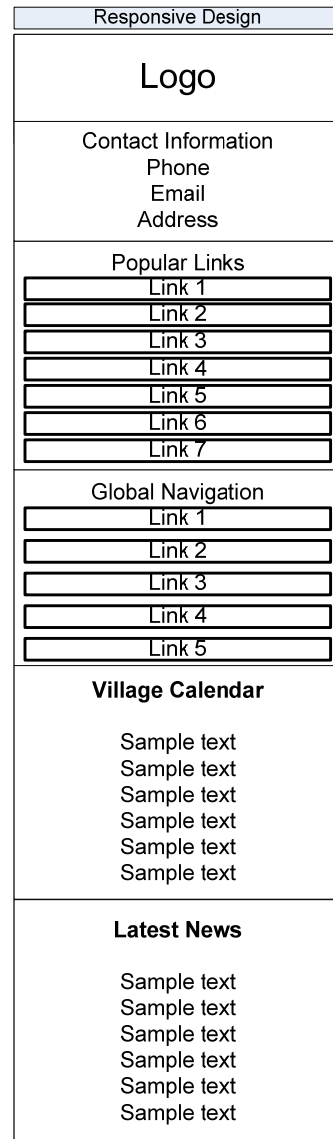
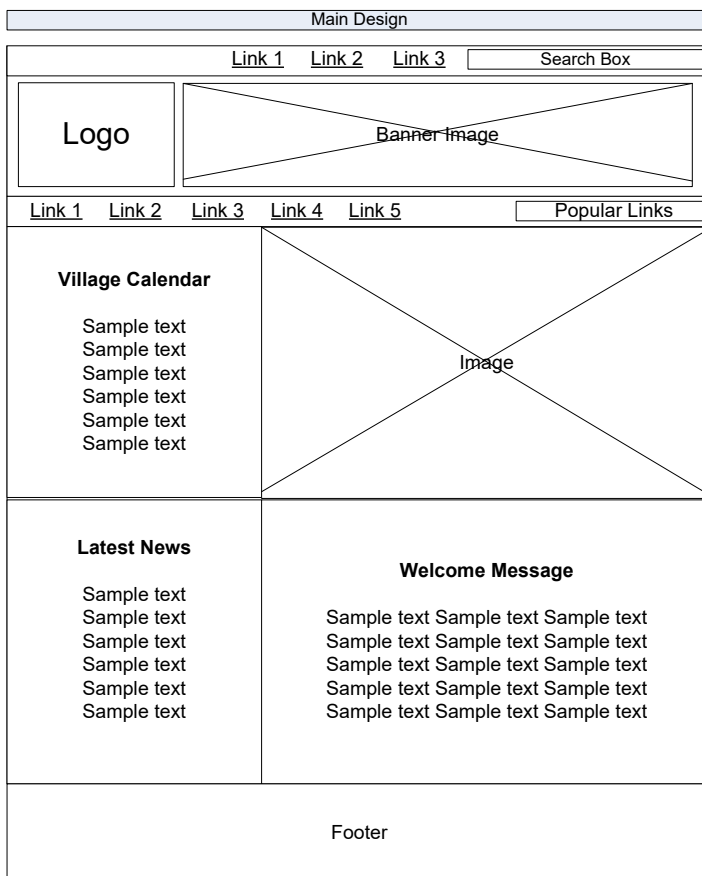
Limitations in the current interface center on inefficient use of screen real estate, including issues with white space and creating a more mobile friendly interface.

- The home page could be narrowed to eliminate some of the **negative space** to the left and right of the main body.
- On many of the secondary pages too much **negative space** can be a problem if content does not fill the vertical space available. Narrowing the width will help fill in the vertical space and **balance** the left column with the content area.
- A **simplified** design geared for mobile use would make links more clickable and contact information more accessible.
- **Simplifying** for a mobile design should include the elimination photos and graphics allowing for faster download and rendering of the pages.
- There are several links to PDF document on sub pages. A small Adobe icon should be added to indicate the document type providing the user with a visual cue for the links content and download expectations.
- The dominant **focus** for the home page is the photo and welcome message. Moving these items down and bringing items such as the Latest News and Village Calendar up would help re-**focus** attention to the news and calendar.

Redesigned Interface Wireframes

Home Page

On the left is the full screen design;
the right is a mobile responsive design.



Analysis of Redesigned Interface

The redesigned interface for Dextermi.gov offers a number of benefits over the existing interface design and addresses the limitations identified by users of the current website. One of the most significant improvements allows user easier usage for mobile devices.

- A responsive design aimed at mobile users will improve load times on slow connections and make the interface more accessible.
- Eliminating vertical white space by narrowing the width for content.
- Eliminating negative space on the home page by narrowing the fixed width.
- Improved focus on the news and calendar.

Implementation Options

The redesigned Dextermi.gov interface can be implemented a few different ways, with each approach offering different advantages and disadvantages.

Approach 1: Fixed-Width, Left-Aligned

- The design could be coded in a left-aligned and entirely fixed-width fashion, using three columns of fixed size.
- The left-most column contains the logo, Village Calendar, and Latest News.
- The advantage of this entirely fixed-width approach is that there is exact control over alignment of the elements within columns and the line lengths remain reasonable. This layout also remains balanced, because page elements retain the same relative positions when the window is resized or screen resolution is increased.
- The most significant disadvantage of an entirely fixed-width approach is that there will be a fair amount of 'dead space' to the right of the page at higher resolutions.

Approach 2: Fixed-Width, Centered

- The second approach to coding this interface is substantially similar to the first approach, except that the entire design is centered on the page.

- This approach confers the benefits noted for Approach 1, while reducing the appearance of ‘dead space’ at higher resolutions by spreading the white space out to either side.

Approach 3: Fixed-Width and Variable-Width Columns

- The third approach combines both fixed-width and variable-width elements.
- The left-hand and right-hand columns would be fixed-width, while the middle column would become variable-width, expanding to fill the available window space.
- The benefits of this approach are that ‘dead space’ is no longer an issue, at higher resolutions more page content is visible, and printing should also not be an issue as long as the fixed-width columns are not too wide.
- The disadvantages are that elements in the right column could become too wide, thus creating a dead space problem. Content that exists in a flexible column can be more difficult to read as well if the eye needs to travel too far across a wide screen.

Recommended Implementation

Of the approaches described, the second approach is recommended. This approach maintains consistency with the current design since it is also fixed width centered. The main benefit is reducing dead space to the left and right of the page.

A fourth option, an entirely variable-width layout, is not advised as control over page element alignment is seriously compromised.

Appendix A

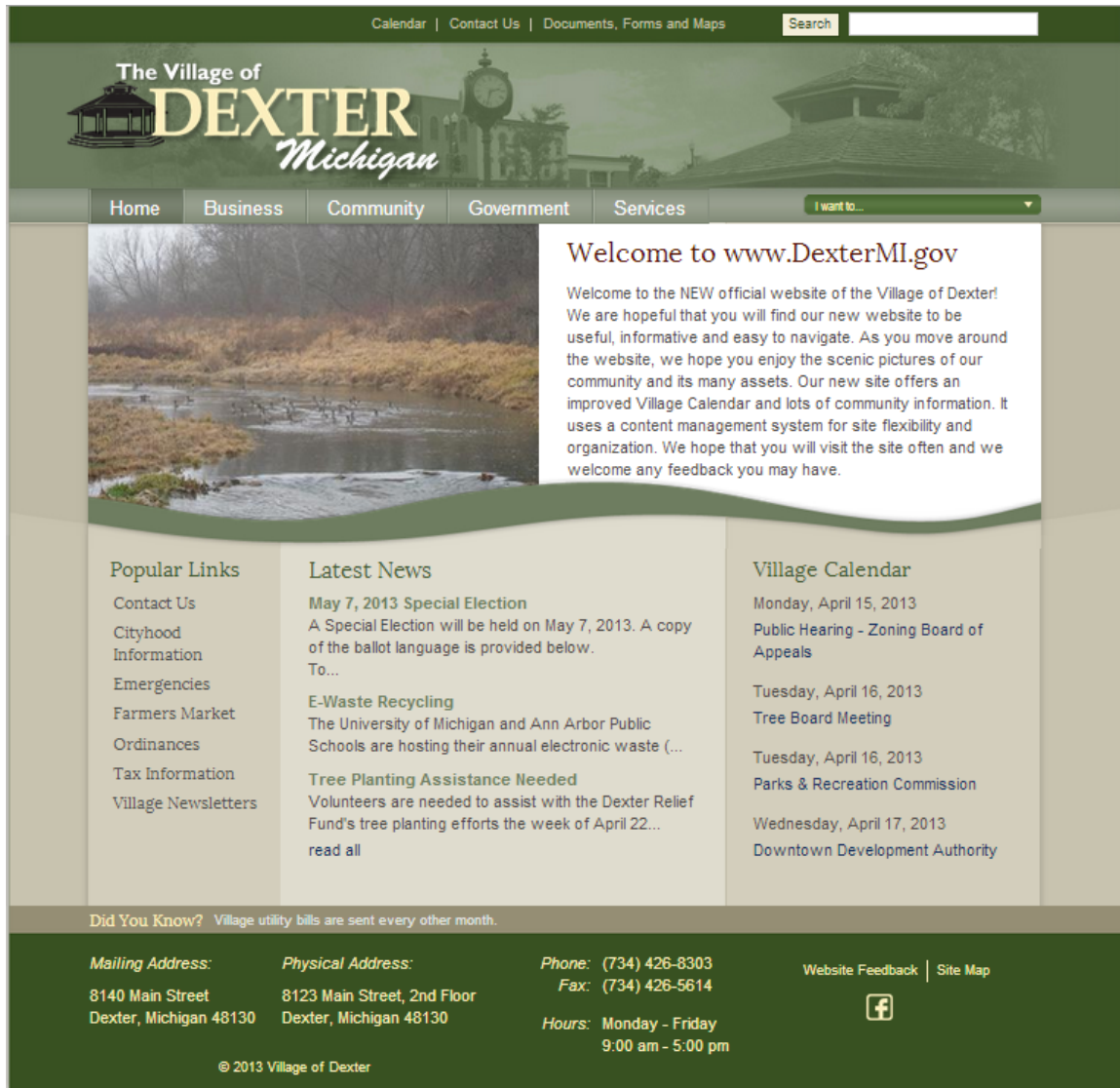


Figure 1 Home Page

Calendar | Contact Us | Documents, Forms and Maps

Search



I want to... ▼
Home | Business | Community | Government | Services

Government

- Overview
- Cityhood Information
- Council and Clerk
- ▼ Administration
 - Village Staff
 - Village Management
 - Community Development (building, planning, zoning)
 - Public Utilities - Water and Sewer
 - Public Works - Streets, Sidewalks and Drains
 - Treasurer/Finance
 - Boards, Commissions & Committees
 - Village Directory
 - Other Officials and Units of Government


Administration

The administration consists of the Village Manager, Assistant Village Manager, Village Treasurer/Finance Director, the Community Development Director, and the Superintendent of Public Services. Use the links on the left side of the page to access more information about each department.

The Village has four employees in the Department of Public Works, five employees in the Public Utilities Department, a utility billing clerk, and an administrative assistant. These employees are represented by Teamsters Local 214.



Did You Know? There are 290 fire hydrants in the Village of Dexter.

<p><i>Mailing Address:</i></p> <p>8140 Main Street Dexter, Michigan 48130</p>	<p><i>Physical Address:</i></p> <p>8123 Main Street, 2nd Floor Dexter, Michigan 48130</p>	<p><i>Phone:</i> (734) 426-8303</p> <p><i>Fax:</i> (734) 426-5614</p> <p><i>Hours:</i> Monday - Friday 9:00 am - 5:00 pm</p>	<p>Website Feedback Site Map</p> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;">  </div>
---	---	--	---

© 2013 Village of Dexter

Figure 2 Sub Page