



Information Architecture For New Village Properties Web Site

New Village Properties

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1 Introduction

ExcellentWorks in partnership with New Village Properties will successfully redesign their current web site to meet their business goals and requirements.

The number one goal of the newly designed New Village Properties web site is to attract new users who may become buyers of your product. This will involve redesigning the current content structure of the site as well as adding new content. The site will be created in such a way that information is easily accessible to all users and will reflect New Village Properties' image and philosophy.

Information Architecture is the process of organizing information on your site such that the user can effectively find the information he or she needs. From a business perspective, this is the information you, as a company, want your clients to find. Particularly for New Village Properties, improper Information Architecture can affect your bottom line. It can affect sales of existing homes as well as potential sales of new homes. The ExcellentWorks team will evaluate the current architecture of your site and change it based on studies of similar sites, as well as research in the area of usability. Through user studies of sites in the home building industry, ExcellentWorks has gained much knowledge in how Internet users navigate through homebuilders' websites and what they expect to find. Through user profiling, we will study your target market segment and design the site according to their needs, but also create a site that is easily navigated for all types of users.

An example of an Informational Architecture change would be changing the number of navigational links on the home page of your site. Studies have shown that there is a range in the number of buttons a user wants to see in a navigation bar. Another would be moving content off the main navigation structure to a sub navigation structure. Most users in a particular market tend to categorize information in the same way. Information architecture will give direction to the New Village Properties project by acting as a roadmap that will lead to a successful site, a site that is usable and efficient.

1.1 Key Features of the Document

This document contains the following:

Web Site Requirements - These requirements are what the user will need to view your site at it's best, as well as standards that will guide ExcellentWorks in designing a site that meets your business goals.

User Personas – User Personas will help define your user.

User Scenarios – User Scenarios will help determine the best navigation for your site

Site Map – The site map will display a graphical representation of the pages of your site as a whole.

Interactive Wireframes – Interactive wireframes will allow you to interact with the navigation of your site to determine the best information structure.

2 Web Site Requirements

Below are what we refer to as web site requirements:

Business Requirements are the goals and objectives of the business

User Requirements describes what the user will need to navigate the site.

Design Requirements defines the standard “rules by which ExcellentWorks will design your site for optimal viewing.

Functional Requirements are the features and functions that the user can perform on your web site.

2.1 Business Requirements

New Village Properties’ Business Requirements are the following:

Make better use of your site as a marketing tool. Specifically, the objective is to increase internet traffic by a minimum of 50% within one year of the site’s launch.

Create a new look and feel to the site that represents New Village Properties image and philosophy.

Make better use of their site as a sales tool. Specifically, the objective is to increase sales revenue by a minimum of 20% within one year of the site’s launch.

2.2 User Requirements

Users must have a computer with Internet Explorer 4.0 or higher and Netscape 4.1 or higher for an optimal view of your site.

Users don’t have to have a JavaScript enabled browser, but it is preferred.

Users must have an Internet connection. Preferred modem speed is 56K or higher.

2.3 Design Requirements

ExcellentWorks will design a site that is compatible with both major browser types, Internet Explorer 4.0 or higher and Netscape 4.1 or higher. Your site will look the same in either of these popular browsers and versions listed above.

ExcellentWorks will design a site that contains JavaScript, but will be functional even if the user web browser is not JavaScript enabled.

ExcellentWorks will design a site in which the screen resolution a minimum of 800x600 pixels for optimal viewing. This will prevent the user from scrolling left to right in order to see the entire contents of your site.

2.4 Functional Requirements

Users will be able to search for a home that already exists by selecting among certain criteria determined by New Village Properties as well as current home buying research conducted in-house.

Users will also be able to view home elevations and floor plans if they are interested in having a home built.

Users will be able to contact New Village Properties via an online form as well.

3 User Personas

There are one or more categories of customers that may be interested in both purchasing your product or researching your services. ExcellentWorks uses “Personas” to represent these categories of potential customers in designing your site. This allows the design to be centered around the needs of your target market. These representative users do not stand for all users, but rather have many lifestyle characteristics that are representative of a particular group or market.

Below you will see three categories represented.

Category/Group – Home Business Owner

Persona #1 Leslie Krone
Personal Chef
33 years old

Category/Group – Retiree

Persona #2 Jack Taylor
Retired
67 years old

Category/Group – Thirty-Something Family

Persona #3 Dana Mudd
Full-time Mom
30 years old

3.1 Category/Group: Home Business Owner



Leslie Krone

Occupation: Personal Chef

Age: 33

Technology: Experienced

Quote: "Bon Appetit!"

Leslie, a 33-year-old Personal Chef, recently started her business. Her job is her passion. She prepares meals for several customers on a regular basis as well as caters parties and special events. As well, she prepares and sells food baskets for gifts or for Real Estate agents' client gifts.

As far as technology is concerned, Leslie uses her computer to surf the net for recipes, store coupons and to shop for the latest cooking gadgets. She visits the Personal Chef's site at www.personalchef.com/ as well as <http://www.uspca.com/> on a regular basis. She is learning to maintain her business records on-line as well as pay her bills online. Email is her preferred method of communication with her clients. She will email menu plans weekly as well as confirm appointments. She also has a personal website offered through the Personal Chef Association, but is thinking of having someone develop her own site and will maintain the content herself.

Leslie is married with no children and two cats – plans to keep it that way! She drives a Sports Utility Vehicle to haul around all her cooking supplies. She found her vehicle online. Leslie is interested in finding a house that has a "chef's kitchen" or one in which she can expand or remodel to suit her needs. Her husband Matt, as the recipient of many good meals, is all for it!

3.2 Category/Group: Retiree

**Jack Taylor****Occupation:** Retired**Age:** 67**Technology:** Newbie**Quote:** "Want to play horseshoes?"

Jack has been living in Myrtle Beach since retirement two years ago. Less than a year ago, he became a widower. He now spends his days playing in Horseshoe Tournaments, Poker Games, attending antique car shows and playing golf. He is Italian and spends many mealtimes with relatives that live locally.

Jack hates computers, but recently has set up his son's old computer for internet service, specifically to chat with his family spread across the Southeast. He does not surf much but has eased into it a little since his daughter told him that he can research antique cars online at www.classiccar.com. He has also recently discovered www.ebay.com and is almost at the point of buying collectible card game items.

After living in a large house for most of his adult life, Jack is ready to scale back and find a house he can manage by himself. He is interested in a one level house as well so he doesn't have to climb steps all the time. He is also interested in amenities such as a golf course.

3.3 Category/Group: Thirty Something Family

**Dana Mudd****Occupation:** Stay at Home Mom**Age:** 30**Technology:** Experienced**Quote:** “Being a Mom is a FULLTIME job!”

Dana has been a fulltime Mom since her daughter was born a year ago. Her husband manages a home building supply store. Their home choices are based on what’s best for their family. They want a safe neighborhood and a house with enough room to expand their family. They are interested in “younger” neighborhoods with good schools.

Dana frequently surfs the net for items related to being a Mom. She is interested in children’s health and frequently visits www.kidshealth.org/ and www.childrennow.org

Dana shares photos and keeps her friends and family updated via email...even those friends who live in the same city. She also has created a family website with a free web creation tool she found through her Internet Service Provider.

4 User Scenarios

User Scenarios are situation that our Personas might experience on your site. We gain a better understanding of how information needs to be categorized when we walk through the process and decision making of each of our Personas. Each have different needs, different lifestyles, but the site should be designed to accommodate them all.

4.1 Use Case 1: Leslie Krone

Use Case Name:	Customized kitchen.
Use Case Goal:	Find out if you can customize a kitchen in a new home.
Summary:	The user wishes to build a house with a customized kitchen for her business.
Conditions:	Leslie has a computer that is less than 6 month old with a 56K dial up connection. She is viewing in Internet Explorer 5.0 and has a browser that is JavaScript enabled.
Basic Course of Events:	<p>The user must first go to the new Village Properties website.</p> <p>At the end of the Flash intro, the user is automatically directed into the site.</p> <p>Click on Home Designs from the top global navigation.</p> <p>See the listing of Home Designs for either one level or two level plans.</p> <p>Select a plan to view.</p> <p>From that plan click on link that says, "Want to customize your home?"</p>
Alternate Path:	Click on Quality Home Standards. Click on "Want to customize your home?"

4.2 Use Case 2: Jack Taylor

Use Case Name:	One Level Home – Golf Course
Use Case Goal:	Find an existing one level home in a golf course community.
Summary:	The user wishes to buy an existing one level home in a golf course community.
Conditions:	Jack has an old computer with a 56K dial up connection. His browser is not JavaScript enabled but he will be able to see graphics for all the buttons as well as "pop up" tags that will display over the images.
Basic Course of Events:	<p>The user must first go to the new Village Properties website.</p> <p>At the end of the Flash intro, the user is automatically directed into the site.</p> <p>Click on "Homes For Sale" from the top global navigation.</p> <p>See the selection list on the Home Search page. Select the radio buttons beside "Golf Course Community" and "One Level Floor Plan."</p> <p>Results page will reveal a list of homes that match that criteria.</p> <p>Click on the camera next to the home that is of interest to view the home and details.</p>
Alternate Path:	Click on Home Designs, click on "Search Homes for Sale."

4.3 Use Case 3: Dana Mudd

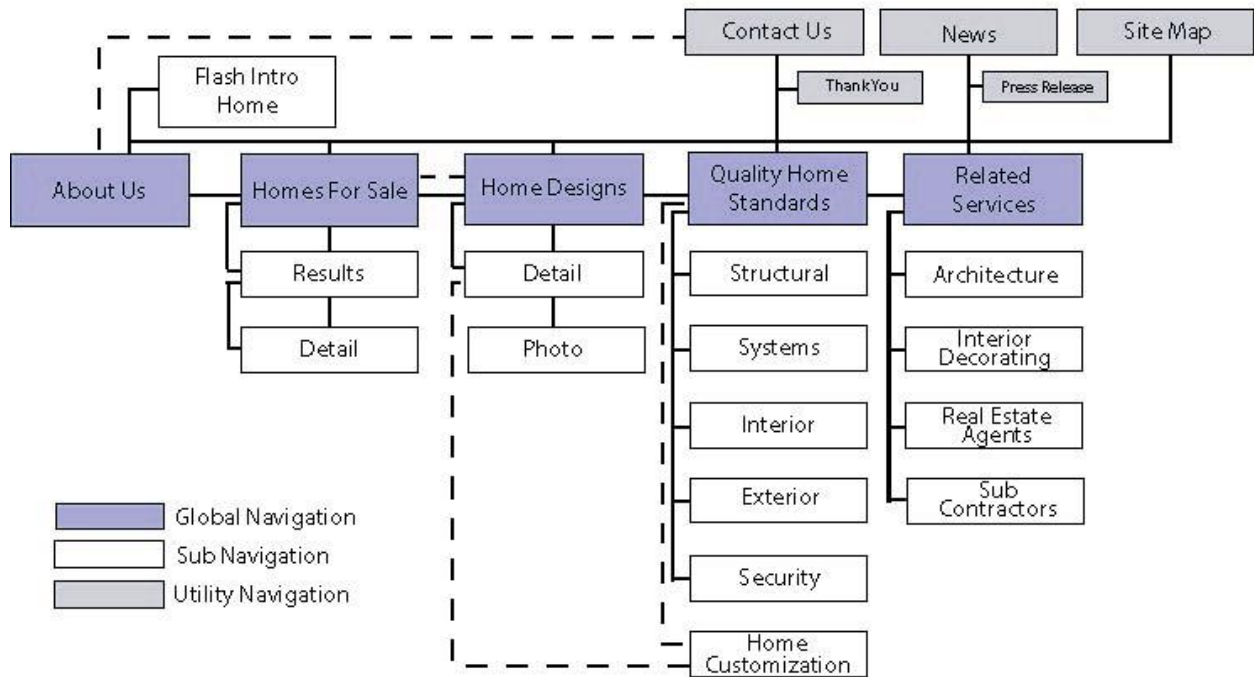
Use Case Name:	One Level Home – Good Schools
Use Case Goal:	Find an existing one level home in a community of good schools.
Summary:	The user wishes to buy an existing one level home in community with good schools.
Conditions:	Dana has a computer that is approximately one year old and is connected to the internet via DSL Service. Her browser is JavaScript enabled.
Basic Course of	

Events:	<p>The user must first go to the new Village Properties website. At the end of the Flash intro, the user is automatically directed into the site. Click on “Homes For Sale” from the top global navigation. See the selection list on the Home Search page. Select the radio buttons beside “Show School Information” and “One Level Floor Plan.” Results page will reveal a list of homes that match that criteria. Click on the camera next to the home that is of interest to view the home and details.</p>
Alternate Path:	Click on Home Designs, click on “Search Homes for Sale.”

5 Site Map

A site map is a graphical representation of the page of your site. It shows the relationship between pages and the different levels of navigation. Laying out the pages in conjunction with studying User Scenarios and applying usability standards of navigation ensures that information on the site is easily accessible.

New Village Properties Site Navigation



Global navigation Descriptions:

- ❑ **About Us** This is the first page your user will see after the animated introduction page. It will contain the most important information about New Village Properties. The page will contain the history of the company as well as the company's philosophy and commitment to quality.
- ❑ **Home Designs** This page will showcase all the home designs offered by New Village Properties including a floor plan layout as well as a drawing of the front elevation.
- ❑ **Homes For Sale** This page will contain a search screen that will allow the user to search for a home based on criteria he/she has selected.
- ❑ **Quality Home Standards** This page will let the potential buyer know that New Village Properties builds every home with quality features. The user will be able to view these standards by category.
- ❑ **Related Services** This page will contain information on accessory services such as architecture, real estate and subcontracting services.
- ❑ **Home** This page is simple the sites introductory animation. In most cases this page will be seen only once upon entering the site.

6 Wireframes

A wireframe is simply an interactive representation of your site's navigational structure. It is free of imagery, free of text and anything else that might distract from analyzing the quality of the site's navigation. After all the research is done a wireframe is created and tested before a final decision is made on the final navigation structure.

See the New Village site's wireframe at: <http://www.susand.com/NewVillage/clickthrough/home.html>

7 Conclusion

In conclusion, this document will serve as a roadmap to your site's development. Our graphic artist will use it to design imagery around the navigation. Our web developer will use it to code the pages and make sure they are linked together properly. And finally, our content manager will use it to determine what content is needed on each page and how it will be organized across the site. In the end you will see that this document will ensure that the user has a pleasant and efficient experience on your site.