Expert Review
The City of Ann Arbor
http://www.a2gov.org

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Executive Summary

INP Associates was hired by the City of Ann Arbor to perform an expert usability review of the city's web site, www.a2gov.org. The review focused on usability issues found on top-level index pages as well as subpages deeper within the site. Due to the site's great number of pages the review focused on the most important pages and sections of the site. The review also identified practices that are currently implemented on the site that should be continued or expanded when possible.

The most significant usability issues identified in this evaluation include:

- **Placement of the majority of the site content under the 'Government' section**
  While cross-linking subpages is a usefully tool for users, major navigation paths should be separate to create a logical organization for the site content.

- **Inconsistent page layouts on subpages**
  The look and feel of pages change often as users navigate through the site. This can make locating information difficult for users. Recommendations include standardizing layouts and using a style guide document.

- **Inconsistent link styles across the site**
  The site uses different colors, hover styles, and underlining styles to represent links on different pages. This can significantly hamper user experience. Additionally, on certain pages the site uses identical styling for non-link and link text making them indistinguishable to users.

- **Disorganization of content on the home page**
  Currently there are many separate modules on the home page, without a clear logic behind their organization. This makes the home page hard to understand and use, since users can't easily assess the purpose of a module without giving it a great deal of attention.

- **Scattering of content over the right-hand side bar**
  The right-hand side bar of the site doesn't have a specific function and often contains content that should be in the main content area or in the left navigation. This creates a serious usability issue since users can never be sure what they will find in the side bar without reading the entire content on it.

- **Lack of HTML title tags**
  Title tags allow users to determine the title of a page when they leave a page open and move on to work in another tab. The lack of title tags significantly hampers this aspect of the site's usability.

While this list identifies the most critical areas in need of improvement, many other issues are addressed within this document. Suggested solutions to these issues have been provided.

Terminology & Conventions Used

Different terms are often used when referring to the same part of the browser window or web page. To facilitate understanding of this analysis, one term was used consistently for each browser/web page element. The terms are:

Field name: Field names are the labels that go with text input boxes, drop-down menus, and other form elements.

Global navigation: Links/buttons available from every page, leading to major sections of the website and/or significant pages.

Link label: The label in this case is the word or words that are linked. These words can be in graphical form (such as the graphical buttons at the top of the a2gov.org interface) or HTML text that is linked.

Local navigation: Links/buttons for moving between pages within a section of the website (such as within a module).

Page name: The primary heading for the page, often shown in larger text and located between the global navigation buttons at the top of the layout and the text content of the page.

Window name: The text at the upper left of the browser window, specified through the (X)HTML <title></title> tags.

Single quotes are used to indicate link labels, page names, and window names. Double quotes indicate non-linked body text, field names, alt text, and are used when generally referring to a page. Any divergence from these conventions is noted in the analysis and is done for the purpose of improving clarity.

Priority Levels

The issues identified through user testing are grouped into three levels of priority:

high priority: These issues are likely to impact a large number of users significantly. They should be resolved as quickly as resources allow.

medium priority: Issues at this priority level are also likely to affect a large number of users but generally are less disruptive to the user experience, relative to the high priority issues. If resources are available to address these issues, they should be addressed.

low priority: Low priority issues typically impact a small subset of the overall user base, although they may impact a larger group. Regardless of the number of users affected, these issues carry only a minor negative impact. Low priority issues are generally easy to resolve. There is less time pressure to fix low priority issues, compared to medium priority issues and especially high priority issues.

Usability Guidelines

Efficient Navigation

Navigation refers to browsing a website, clicking links to move from page to page. Navigation should be an intuitive experience, so the user does not take the wrong path, get lost or disoriented, or have difficulty retracing their steps on a future visit.

Suggested Changes

High Priority

- **Standardize the way the local navigation performs.** Local navigation changes on a page-by-page basis. This layout offers no visual path or structure to the user as they move deeper into the site. On some pages, local navigation disappears completely. Ideally, the local navigation should function much like a sitemap, expanding as the user visits lower lever subpages.

- **Use different ('pressed') styles for global and local navigation links to indicate the user's current location within the site.** Currently the 'breadcrumb' trail is the only means a user has to know what section they are in within the site. By changing the styling of active buttons, it helps to identify under what section the users is currently located.

- **Add different styling to the global and local navigation buttons when a user hovers their mouse over them.** Global navigation buttons do not change when moused over. Users typically expect a button to have some form of styling change when hovered over. This practice adds to quick navigation of sites.

- **Populate local navigation links with links currently found in the content area of section index pages.** This is both a navigational and organizational issue: Many links that are found within section index pages (such as 'Government', 'Living in') are not listed in the section's local navigation, rather they are linked to within the content area of the section's index page. Users expect the local navigation to reflect the content found under a site section. A returning user may have difficulty remembering if a link was positioned in the local navigation or within the content area of the section's index page itself. For this reason it is important to have the section's local navigation reflect all of the content under it.

Medium Priority

- **Indicate when a user has moused over a global navigation button by using JavaScript for an image rollover to modify text link appearance.** This change reduces navigational confusion, specifically situations where the user wonders what they clicked to reach a certain page.

- **Link the site logo to the home page.** Currently an empty rectangular area above the logo is linked to the home page, while clicking on the logo itself does nothing. Some users click on the logo to return to a site's homepage, and for this reason it is important to implement this correctly.

- **Add a 'Home' button to the site's global navigation.** The lack of a 'Home' button can be hinder navigation for those users who aren't used to clicking the logo or the breadcrumbs to return to the home page.

Low Priority

- **Remove the link to the home page from the slides how.** Clicking on a slide show image on the home page reloads the home page, for no useful reason. Either unlink the images in the slideshow, or link them to relevant content.

Organizational Clarity

Organization refers to how content is chunked (broken up into sections and discrete units), sequenced, and grouped. The quality of an organizational system is dependent on how well content is divided, as well as how easy it is for the user to see and understand the system being used.

Suggested Changes

High Priority

- **Include links found on the homepage under 'Living in', 'Visiting', and 'Working in' columns on the pages that the 'Living in', 'Visiting' and 'Working in' global navigation links lead to.** When the user clicks on one of the 'Living in', 'Visiting', and 'Working in' buttons in the global navigation of the homepage, they are no longer able to access the links that were listed under these links on the home page. Users expect to have access to this content within the subpages that it was originally listed under.

- **Reorganize and relabel the location of pages to match the section users are currently on.** According to the breadcrumb links and URLs, link destinations within the 'Service', 'News', 'Contact Us' ''Living in', 'Visiting', and 'Working in' sections reside within the 'Government' section of the website, but each one of these links has its own global navigation button, along with the 'Government' button, suggesting that they are at the same hierarchical level as the 'Government' section and not under it. Pages found under these links should be relocated and re-categorized to better fit into their respective sections. For example the content that can be found under 'Government> Public Services' can be relocated to 'Services'.

- **Determine a specific function for the right-hand side bar.** At present there are three columns (left local navigation, main content area, and right-hand sidebar), but content that should be part of the main content area is frequently found in the right-hand sidebar, such as clarifications, notifications, and additional information on the topic, and sometimes a third local navigation. There is no logically distinct function for the right-hand sidebar, and this creates confusion for users. The right-hand side bar could serve one or more of the following functions:
    - Quick links
    - Social media buttons
    - News
    - Links to help pages or frequently asked questions on this current topic

- **Reorganize content on the City Administration' subpage.** On the 'City Administration' sub-page, the content under the listed positions ("City Clerk', 'City Administrators Office') is mostly a re-wording of the content found under the links

to those positions. The index page should be re-organized to a basic list of departments with a brief description of each department's responsibilities. Additionally, the individual department pages follow no standard formatting which may lead to users being unable to locate content. These pages should be standardized to include:

- A brief description of responsibilities
- Contact information for key staff and departments within
- Address and hours of operation
- Links to relevant content specific to the department

- **The main content areas on the index pages for all departments (police, fire) should be changed to include information that users will find most relevant.** Links to much of this content is currently located in the local navigation and should be relocated to links within the main content area.

- **Reorganize the links found on the 'Living In' page.** The links found under the 'Living In' page are grouped together in ways that confuse users. The suggested reorganization of these links is placed in Appendix A of this report.

- **Move relevant content spread across the site under the 'Visiting' page.** Currently this important section of the site feels sparse even though there is a lot of useful content that could be placed under it. The suggested expansion and reorganization of this section is placed in Append B of this report.

Medium Priority

- **Relocate the 'Community Services' page to the Services section.** 'Community Services', listed under the 'Government' tab, contains information about services that an individual can use directly. While these services are part of the government, moving them to a location under the 'Services' tab in the global navigation would assist users in finding this content.

- **The content listed under 'Links' should be relocated to a sub-page.** On the 'Government' index page, content is broken up in to two sections, 'Service Areas' and 'Links'. It is unclear why 'City Council' is not listed under the 'City Administration' link. Moving these links to subpages will help to organize informational groups. Additionally, the inclusion of 'City Clerk' under the 'Links' section is unnecessarily repetitive since this content already resides under 'City Administration'.

- **Content that is present in the 'Government' tab should be removed from the 'Services' tab.** The content located under the 'Services' page is largely a repatiotion of the content found on the government pages. Many of the links under this section link directly back to the government page. Content that is clearly a service, ('Community Services', 'Safety Services') should remain under this section.

- **Relabel or re-orgazie the 'News' page.** The main content area on the 'News' page currently displays a list of news items. While sorted by date, these items are not broken down in to sub categories. This makes the page difficult to scan. One solution would be to develop categories and group related news stories within them. Another approach would be to move some of the local navigation links (calendar, road closings) to the main content section and divide the main

content page in to sections (Announcements, News, Events). This would enable the users to quickly scan the page and not have to refer to the local navigation.

- **Replace the content of the index page of the 'Government' section with information on what can be found in the 'Government' subpages.** When users click on the 'Government tab, the heading for the index page is labeled 'Mission Statement' and the city's mission statement is displayed below it. Users will expect this page to have useful information and links to the government subpages. A link should be added to this page for the mission statement and this content should be relocated there.

Low Priority

- **Replace the list of HR staff with links that mirror the local navigation on that page.** Much of the content on the 'Human Resources' page is not of immediate necessity. The content linked to in the local navigation for this page is more valuable and should be represented in the main content section, with the list of HR staff moved to a different page, linked to in the local navigation of this page.

- **Information on the 'Police' page is incorrectly grouped, incorrectly categorized and should be relocated.** The content regarding snow removal should be moved to a City Ordinances page. The content under vehicles is confusing when grouped together in the manner it is now. 'Auctions', 'Taxi Cabs', and 'Towed Vehicles' should be separated and placed on their own pages.

- **Safety Services' should be relocated to the 'Services' tab since these do not clearly fall under government.**

- **Remove and relocate the sitemap link located under 'Visiting' home page links.** This link should be removed from this section and be relocated to a utility navigation section located at the top and/or bottom of ever page.

- **Move the 'Ann Arbor Parks Classes' page to the 'Parks and Recreation' section.** It's current placement under the 'Living in' and 'Visiting' sections is unnecessary when those pages also contain links to the 'Parks and Recreation' page.

Clear Labeling

The choice of labels is vital to website usability. Most online activity involves reading, so the name given to part of a page or a link label is crucial to accurately understanding and using the website. Poorly chosen and/or vague labels confuse users, leading them down the wrong paths on websites or causing them to leave the website because none of the labels appear to represent the desired content. Labeling issues that pertain to other guidelines may be mentioned under that guideline and are therefore not mentioned here.

Suggested Changes

High Priority

- **Provide meta title tags.** None of the pages on the site other than the homepage seem to have meta title tags, which are very important in helping users know what page they are on when they look at the title bar of the browser window they are on, especially after users have switched to another tab.

- **Change all headings to match the links that users clicked on to arrive at that content.** Many page headers do not reflect the name of the link used to get to the page. For example, the 'Public Services' page has a header that reads 'Public Services Area Home'. This is inconsistent with the wording of the link on the previous page and seems to be a label description that was added **as** a place marker for the developers of the site. Changes in section headings and the links used to arrive at that content are very confusing to users. Examples of similar inconsistencies can be found at the following links, however, these are only a fraction of the labeling issues found on the site and each page should be reviewed:
    - Administration for Community Services
    - Community Development
    - Parks & Recreation
    - Planning and Development
    - Information Technology
    - Procurement Services
    - Human Resources
    - Customer Service and Payment Center Unit
    - Field Operations Service Unit
    - Systems Planning Service Unit
    - Wastewater Treatment Service Unit
    - Police Department - Police Chief Barnett Jones Fire Department – Interim Fire Chief Barnett Jones
    - Solid Waste
    - Planning Commission

Medium Priority

- **Combine drop down menus found on the home page into a module labeled 'Quick Links'.** The 'Select Department' and 'Select Online Service', and 'Top Searches' are extremely useful functionality but their purpose currently is unclear to users. A quick glance suggests that all three are related and perform a single operation. Adding a 'Quick Links' label above these form elements would help clarify their purpose.

- **Add labels to the news and events module at the lower right hand side of the home page.** Currently this module has no label, causing users to perceive the links inside the module as random. Adding a 'News & Events' label to the module would clarify its purpose. Additionally, the icons that lead to the 'News' and 'Events' pages respectively do not look like buttons, and for this reason users may ignore them. Changing the icon labels from 'news' or 'events' to 'more news' and 'more events' would clarify their purpose, or these icons could be removed to be replaced by more useful links titled 'more news' and 'more events' at the bottom of the module.

- **Add a header for the 'Community Services' page.** This page currently has no header, making its purpose unclear to users. A header should be added, as well as a description about what information can be found within its subpages.

- **Label the 'Services' page as 'Services', 'News' page as 'News', and the 'Contact Us' page as 'Contact Us' rather than 'Government**. Users clicking on the 'Services', 'News' and 'Contact Us' main navigation links are directed to page with the header 'Government', which may confuse them into thinking that they pressed the wrong navigation link, since there is another navigation link labeled 'Government'. These pages should be labeled 'Services', 'News'. and 'Contact Us' respectively to avoid confusing users.

Low Priority

- **Remove the word 'City' from the beginning of section labels on the 'Contact Us' page to ensure proper alphabetical order of the list.** While the contact information is organized in alphabetical order, the addition of City in front of several of the departments and not others disorganizes the list.

Consistent Design

Consistency pertains to all aspects of a website: layout, labeling, error messages, whether something is (X)HTML text or graphical text on all pages, even the choice of colors. Widespread (multi-page) inconsistencies are noted here, with issues specific to a given page provided in Additional Usability Issues by Page & Section. As the module content is still in development, inconsistencies in style (such as capitalization and punctuation) are not mentioned.

Suggested Changes

High Priority

- **Create a consistent global navigation.** The 'Living in', 'Visiting', and 'Working in' global navigation items are below the search module on the page, while on the rest of the site they move up and are on the same line as the rest of the global navigation. This is confusing to users and makes their purpose and functionality unclear.

- **Standardize the layouts of subpages across the site.** Currently, headers are coded with different sizes and fonts. Some pages are left aligned and others center aligned. Lists are coded with various sizes, fonts, spacing, and colors. All of these issues lead to poor consistency and readability when moving from page to page. The layout of the subpages should be re-coded to have a more consistent content flow. The use of a style guide document is recommended to ensure that all sections of the site follow the same styles and layouts.

- **Ensure consistent positioning of the site logo.** The of the site isn't consistent across the site, moving up and down, left or right depending on the page.

- **Ensure consistent appearance of the local navigation links across the site.** The coloring, underlining, and hover effects of the local navigation changes from section to section. The appearance of the links is also inconsistent when hovered over. These issues create an inconsistent experience across the site.

Medium Priority

- **Keep the position of the search box constant across the site.** Currently, the placement of the search box is different on the home page compared to local pages and may be confusing to users.

Low Priority

- **Correct padding issues on the breadcrumb navigation.** The top margin of the breadcrumbs changes when users move from the rest of the site to the 'Living in', 'Working in' and 'Visiting' pages.

Matching User Expectations

The Web has been in existence long enough for users to develop consistent, widespread expectations concerning web page behavior, such as what underlining and colors represent. Underlines are interpreted automatically as indicating a link and the color blue is interpreted automatically as indicating a link.

Suggested Changes

High Priority

- **Change the color of headers and content text to black.** The use of the color blue, or colors similar to blue (aqua, light blue, light green) for content text or headers is very confusing to users. Typically, users interpret the color blue as a link to another page. Many will become frustrated when a perceived link results in no action. Examples of this practice can be found on, but are not limited to, the following pages:

    o   Main 'Government' page and subpages

    o   Main 'Living In' page and subpages

    o   Main 'Visiting page and subpages

    o   Main 'Working In' page and subpages

    Text that is not a link should be changed to black. If a header currently links to a deeper sub page, its link should be removed and a link to that content should be added below it and re-colored to re-enforce that it is a link. An example of this practice would be:

    "City Administrator's Office [no link attached]

    <u>View the City Administrator's Office page</u> [colored blue and links to 'City Administrator's Office' page]

    The City Administrator also serves in a highly visible capacity as an ambassador for the community…"

- **Use a single color to represent links.** In addition to the above issue, the use of multiple colors and styling to represent links makes navigating a site confusing for users. On many subpages up to 3 colors are used to represent links. An example of this can be found on the 'Solid Waste and Recycling' page.

- **Change the appearance of links when hovered over or given focus.** When hovered over, links should always change some aspect of their styling. Many links on the site display no change in styling or color when hovered over. Hover-

over and focused styling should be added and should remain consistent throughout the site. Global navigation links should also change their styling when hovered over.

- **Underline links across the site**. Links should also always be underlined except if placed in a navigation module such as a global navigation, local navigation, or footer navigation. This practice makes the determining of links much easier and assisits with sub page navigation. Currently, many links across the site do not follow this format and should be re-coded.

Medium Priority

- **Reposition the global navigation so that it is under the site logo.** Users expect the global navigation to be located below the site logo, which allows them quicker access to the important global navigation buttons. By making this change, many issues with the layout of the upper portion of the site can be resolved as well such as consistently placing the search bar in the upper right hand corner of the screen.

- **Reposition the breadcrumb links to the main content section of a page.** Users looking for the breadcrumb links may be confused as to why it is positioned in the header of the website. Typically this functionality is found at the top portion of the main content section. Its placement there provides the user with a quick reference for knowing their located on a website.

Low Priority

- **Add important addresses and phone numbers to the footer of all pages.** Many users expect to see contact information located in the footer of a website. Adding this information here will save users from searching deep within the site.

Effective Visual Design

Visual design concerns the 'look and feel' of the website, specifically how well interface design principles have been applied or followed. Adherence to these principles improves both aesthetics and functionality, because users are able to locate desired information more readily. This section covers widespread (multi-page) interface design issues; consideration of interface issues that are unique to a given page are provided in Additional Usability Issues by Page & Section.

Suggested Changes

High Priority:

- **Add negative space between left local navigation and content area.** Currently the CSS background of local navigation links spills over into the content area, creating an unbalanced and visually unappealing appearance. This can be remedied by adding more whitespace between the left-hand sidebar and the content area.

- **Reorganize placement of content on the home page.** Currently there are many separate 'islands of content' on the home page with distinct functionalities and appearance. The visual design of the home page can be improved by implementing these changes:

  - **Move the logo above main navigation, without letting the three columns of 'living in', 'visiting', and 'working in' to breach the area.**

  - **Move the footer to the bottom of the page and prevent it from moving up.**

- **Improve footer alignment.** The site's footer is not aligned with any section of this site, creating an imbalanced look on most pages. The footer should either span the entire width of the site or be aligned with the middle content area.

Medium Priority:

- **Improve alignment of form elements on the home page.** Currently there is no padding to the left of the form elements on the home page. Additionally the field name of the 'Property Information' form element is breaching the area above it. This makes the page seem to be malfunctioning. Increasing the left padding and giving each form element an appropriate amount of space above and below it will improve the visual design of the area.

- **Increase the size and contrast of local navigation headers, and make them consistent across pages**. Above each local navigation section there is a header that states the name of the page. This header is often the same size as the local navigation links, this confuses users about the information hierarchy of the links. The header is also often blue on darker blue, making it difficult and sometimes impossible to see. Additionally, the size of the header's background changes from page to page, sometimes being as long as the local navigation, other times smaller. Increasing the font size and giving it a lighter color, and ensuring a consistent look across the site would make these headers more useful to users.

- **Change the alignment of the quick links drop downs.** The three quick link drop downs should be arranged horizontally, not vertically, since vertical arrangement suggests that the drop downs are related.

- **Improve the visual design of the search module on the home page.** Currently the label that says 'Search' has a white background, while the rest of the home page has a blue background. Additionally, this label is not aligned with the search box and search button. The look of this module can be improved by implementing one or more of the following suggested changes:

    o Horizontally align all of the elements

    o Make the 'Search' label's background the same as the surrounding area and change its color to white to make it more readable.

    o Add a border around the entire search module to show users the logical grouping of the elements

Low Priority

- **Add padding to the right of the news box on the home page.** Currently the content seems to almost spill out of the page.

- **Remove programming errors and artifacts from various pages.** Under the local navigation of many pages a small gray rectangle can be seen that when clicked leads to annarabordesign.gov. The Farmer's Market page contains an image that's not displaying, creating a lot of unnecessary white space. Correcting these problems will give the site a more professional feel.

- **Ensure the clear visibility of the links on the local navigation and footer section across the site.** On certain pages, such as 'Visiting' page, the footer links are white, which is the same color as the footer background, making the links invisible. Again on this page, the local navigation links are white on a light green background, which makes them difficult to see.

- **Avoid triggering horizontal scrollbars.** Currently the site triggers horizontal scrollbars at a resolution of 1024x768, which is a popular viewing resolution. While none of the site's requires horizontal scrolling, the appearance of the horizontal scrollbar can be discomforting to users, making them think there is content hidden at the right side of the screen. Decreasing the site's width by a small number of pixels should help avoid this problem.

Supporting Readability and Scannability

Most of the time users spend online is spent reading and a good portion of that reading is done by scanning through pages, looking for headings and links to follow. The a2gov.org modules, however, require reading for comprehension, which is a much more careful process than most web surfers typically follow. The extra time required for this type of reading, combined with the fact that reading from a screen is slower and more taxing than reading from a printed page, suggest that the a2gov.org content should be designed for optimal display both online and in printed format.

Practices to Continue

- **Providing good text color/background color contrast.** Optimal contrast is black text on a white background, which is generally used for the body text area.

- **Using bullet points to facilitate visual scanning.** Bulleted items are much quicker to read than the same text presented in paragraph format.

Facilitating User Tasks

Web users are task-oriented and users of the a2gov.org modules are certainly no different in that regard. Websites that support these tasks by facilitating access and reducing the time required for the task are best positioned to keep visitors returning and satisfied with the experience.

Practices to Continue

- **Preserving the search query by not clearing the search box when a bad address is entered in the 'Property Search' module.**

Suggested Changes

High Priority

- **Provide progress bars where necessary.** When users click on 'Make a Tax Payment' on the 'Property Tax Online Payment' page, the next page takes more than 10 seconds to load, and during this time there is no indication of progress. Adding an intermediate page that shows a progress animation to let users know that the tax payment application is loading would greatly improve the user experience of this area of the site.

- **Ensure proper cross-browser compatibility.** The 'Property Information' tool does not function in Mozilla Firefox, the second most popular internet browser in the United States. This renders this tool unusable for a large segment of the site's users.

Providing Help

Even the most carefully designed website may need a help section, especially if the site functionality is fairly complex and users are expected to step through various processes. Unfortunately, the label 'Help' is generally off-putting to users, who resist visiting that area of the website because of previous 'Help' experiences with desktop software or other websites that were not satisfying. Users may also associate 'Help' with only technical problems and not visit that area for more content-based questions, such as where to find something or what module to complete next.

Practices to Continue

- **Providing back to top links on content pages.**

Suggested Changes

High Priority
- **Update the 'Help' page to reflect the current version of the site, and add more helpful content to it.** The navigation help provided on the 'Help' page is outdated and doesn't reflect the current version of the site. Additionally, the page doesn't contain helpful information that is normally expected to be on a site's 'Help' page, such as Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section, and articles explaining how to get common tasks done.

Medium Priority
- **Provide indication when links lead to PDF files.** Several links on the site lead to PDF files but there is no indication to the user that they will be opening a pdf file. It would help users greatly if an indication of this fact along with the file's size is provided, as in the following example:
  - File title [PDF - 500 Kilobytes]

Additional Usability Issues by Page & Section

Further usability issues specific to a page, module, or section within a module are indicated. Some repetition may occur with issues noted in the general analysis, if the page or section in question requires significant and/or specialized assistance with that issue. Only the pages, modules, and sections with further issues are considered.

Home Page

High Priority

- **Correct critical Internet Explorer issue caused by the slideshow widget on the homepage.** When the site homepage is opened in Internet Explorer, the browser opens a download prompt asking users "What do you want to do with mainPage_pics.swf?", and they are given options to either save or open the file. It is extremely confounding and discomforting for users to experience this.

Medium Priority

- **Make the search box larger and move it to a more accessible area.** The size of the search box and its placement at the top right hinders the users' ability to quickly locate it. Moving it to the top left of the page (under the logo), or to the middle content area suggested earlier, and making its size larger, would help users locate it more easily.
- **Debug the slideshow.** The various controls on the slideshow behave unpredictably and generally don't seem to work correctly, for example clicking on an image thumbnail loads a different image in the slideshow. Fixing this module would help the site have a more professional look and feel.

Government

Medium Priority

- **Prevent the 'Skip navigation' from appearing in In Mozilla Firefox.** All pages in the 'Government' section show the 'Skip navigation' at the very top of the page, which is not meant to be seen by users.

Parks and Recreation

Medium Priority

- **Use a different slideshow widget.** The current slideshow widget has 'My Business Cards' written above it, and 'View my Card Gallery' below it, which are misleading and out of place in that context. These labels are provided by the site that provides the widget, and for this reason they cannot be changed. An in-house slideshow application should be developed in its place or a widget from another site should be used that doesn't provide misleading labels.

- **Provide a text download link for the Fall & Winter Activities Guide.** Currently the only way to download the guide is to click on the cover image present at the top of the page. There is no indication that this cover leads to the guide. Providing a text download link under the guide such as 'Click to download guide [PDF - 2.9 Megabytes]' would greatly help the usability of this section.

Employment

Medium Priority

- **Provide a way to get back the main 'Employment' page after a user clicks on a job.** Currently when a user clicks on one of the jobs listed on the 'Employment' page, they are shown the details of the job listing, but they are left without an intuitive way for getting back to the job listings other than clicking the browser back button. It's always important to provide users with ways to regain their previous content without clicking the browser back button, especially on the 'Employment' page because the job listings area resembles a web application which can make users think that the browser back button wouldn't function correctly when used on that page, and for this reason they may feel stuck with no way to get out of a job listing once they have clicked one.

Farmers Market

High Priority

- **Provide a loading progress indication and a fall back for the slideshow.** The slideshow at the top of the page doesn't always load when the page is opened, and when it does it takes a very long time to load, even on a fast connection, creating a large area of white space at the top of the page. Implementing the following changes would remedy this situation:
    - **Provide a loading progress indication as a placeholder for the slideshow.**

    - **Add a CSS background image on the slideshow's container element.** When the slideshow completely fails to load, users would be greeted with a pleasant image instead of a large blank area.
- **Divide the page into logical sections and provide a table of contents, providing back to top links after each section.** Currently there is no logical organization for the large amount of content on the page. Dividing the page into different sections with clear labels, back to top links, and adding a table of contents at the top of the page would help users navigate the pager more easily.

Housing Commission

High Priority

- **Reorganize the page content and provide a table of contents or sub-local navigation.** Currently the content of this page doesn't seem to have any logical organization or grouping, and there is no way to easily browse the different sections of the page to find needed information. Implementing the following changes would greatly improve this area of the site:

  o **Divide the page into many subpages.** Dividing the page into 'Housing Commission News', 'Meeting Hours', 'Home Maintenance Workshops', and 'Special Events' would improve the accessibility of the information on the page.

  o **Provide a table of contents.** Instead of implementing the above recommendation, a table of contents could be provided at the top of the page to let users easily jump to sections of interest.

A2GOLF

Medium Priority

- **Change the location of sub-local navigation.** The current placement of the sub-local navigation at the lower right of the page (the bottom of the right-hand side bar) makes these important links hard to access. Moving the sub-local navigation to the content area, such as below the slide show, or merging it with the left local navigation would help users find them more easily.
- **Fix broken image links.** There are two images on the main content area that currently fail to load.

Low Priority

- **Link the 'Leslie Park Golf Course' logo to the corresponding page similar to the way the 'Huron Hills Golf Course' logo is linked**. This creates a consistent experience when clicking either one of the logos.

Pay Parking Tickets Online

Low Priority

- **Convert "Click here to continue to pay a parking ticket online." into a button since buttons suggest actions.**

Online Assessment and Property Tax Data

High Priority

- **Provide a helpful landing page when users click on 'Continue to Online Tax Data'.** Currently clicking the link takes users to an empty web application page with a completely empty content area. This is unpleasant for users since they don't see any obvious way to proceed. Adding helpful tips that tell users where to go next would greatly improve the user experience.

Contact US

Low Priority

- **Add the missing email addresses of city departments listed on the 'Contact Us' page.** While most departments have an email address listed, there are some that do not. Adding the email address of these departments would better match user expectations.

Appendix A

Reorganization of links in the main content area of the 'Living in' page.

About Ann Arbor:
- '2010 Census
- A2 City News Newsletter
- City Publications
- 2011 All-America City Award Finalist
- Newsletter: Ann Arbor Public Schools
- Public Schools
- Ann Arbor Facts (PDF)
- Citizen Survey
- Green Living
- Student Living

Community Resources
- Citizen Budget Guide
- Emergency Preparedness Guide
- Parks
- Ann Arbor Parks Classes
- City Permits and Licenses
- Transportation Information
- Voter Information
- Waste Watcher Newsletter
- Commuting Options
- Disability Resources
- District Court
- Road or Lane Closures
- Library
- Court-Police Facility
- Residential Parking Permit Brochure
- Voting Information

Services
- CodeRED Information
- Emergency Call Sign Up
- Customer Service
- Rental Housing Services
- Online Payments
- Solid Waste and Recycling
- Report Watermain Breaks, Sanitary Sewer Backups and Basement Flooding
- Wireless Washtenaw

Home Owners
- Assessment Information
- My Property Information
- Water Consumption
- GIS/Map Resources
- Graffiti Ordinance
- Stormwater Rates

- <u>Fall Leaf Management</u>
- <u>Sidewalk Inspection Program</u>
- <u>Compost Carts</u>

Appendix B

Reorganization and expansion of the 'Visiting' index page.

Arts and Culture
- Live music
- Museums
- Film
- Festivals and Fairs

Shopping
- Farmers Market
- Downtown

Dining
- Fine Dining
- Bars and Pubs

Recreation
- Parks
- Golf Courses
- Pools
- Canoe Liveries

Transportation
- Directions
- Parking
- Public Transportation

Lodging
- Hotels and motels
- Student Hostels