



Request for
Web Site Design Services

FOR:
**Erie County
Industrial Development Agency**



Submittal Deadline: *May 20, 2009*

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About Us

The Erie County Industrial Development Agency is a corporate governmental agency, constituting a public benefit corporation of the State of New York ("NYS"). The ECIDA has been authorized by New York laws to promote, attract, encourage and develop economically-sound commerce and industry for the purpose of preventing unemployment and economic deterioration. The ECIDA may acquire, construct, reconstruct, lease, improve, maintain, equip or furnish and dispose of real property interests and industrial and commercial facilities. The ECIDA may exercise appropriate financing powers, including the issuance of bonds or other obligations and securing of such obligations by the granting of mortgages and indentures of mortgage.

The ECIDA has a related party relationship with the Buffalo and Erie County Industrial Land Development Corporation ("ILDC"), the Buffalo and Erie County Regional Development Corporation ("RDC"), and the ATC of Buffalo and Erie County, Inc. ("ATC"). The same personnel manage all four entities. The ECIDA and RDC share the same Board of Directors as their oversight body. The Executive Committee of the Agency acts as the oversight body for ILDC and ATC. These entities share the same business objective, which is the stimulation of the local economy through the funding of ventures which ultimately result in job creation, retention and/or investment in Erie County.

The Board of Directors of the ECIDA is set forth by the New York State Legislature to include senior representatives from the local political, business, minority, union and school communities. A schedule listing the ECIDA Board of Directors is included in Exhibit A.

The ECIDA's current procurement policy indicates the following:

"It is the preference of the Agency to provide opportunities for the purchase of goods or services from (i) business enterprises located in Erie County, and (ii) certified minority or women-owned business enterprises. To that end, ECIDA will utilize available lists of M/WBE's certified by the County and/or State of New York and will, whenever possible, solicit bids and proposals from such businesses by notifying them of opportunities to submit proposals and bids for goods and services. MBE and WBE firms will be provided with sufficient time to submit proposals in response to solicitations."

The firm should include in its Response the total number of employees and the total number of women & minorities employed. Firms should also describe any programs or arrangements they sponsor or support that further the development of women or minority-owned business enterprises in the region.

Firms should provide a statement that the firm does not discriminate against employees or applicants for employment because of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation or citizenship status.

Designated Individuals – Procurement Lobbying Law

Brian Krygier Systems Analyst 856-6525, ext. 501 bkrygier@ecidany.com

Pursuant to State Finance Law §§139-j and 139-k, this Request for Proposal includes and imposes certain restrictions on communications between ECIDA members (including employees and Board members) and a Bidder during the procurement process. A Bidder is restricted from making contacts from the earliest notice of intent to solicit Request for Proposals through final award and approval of the Procurement Contract by the ECIDA (“restricted period”) to other than the above Designated Individuals unless it is a contact that is included among certain statutory exceptions set forth in State Finance Law §139-j(3)(a). ECIDA members (including employees and Board members) are also required to obtain certain information when contacted during the restricted period and make a determination of the responsibility of the Bidder pursuant to these two statutes. Certain findings of non-responsibility can result in rejection for contract award and in the event of two findings within a 4 year period; the Bidder is debarred from obtaining governmental Procurement Contracts.

Bidders are required to complete Form 2 regarding their understanding and agreement to comply with procedures on procurement lobbying restrictions regarding permissible contacts in the restricted period in accordance with State Finance Law §§139-j and 139-k.

This Project

The Erie County Industrial Development Agency (ECIDA) is interested in redesigning its current website -- www.ECIDANY.com. The project is being defined as follows;

- Following the recommendations contained in the web site review document attached as Appendix 1, redesign the ECIDANY web site. The site currently contains over 110 pages of content.
- Support the business objectives of the ECIDA in terms of existing business services, loan assistance, export assistance, international trade development, and others.

The site which will be designed under this RFP will use the URL:

www.ecidany.com

Web Site Goals

The ECIDA's web site must be designed with the following goals in mind:

- To give the site's target audiences easy access to current information and data so they fully interact with the ECIDA.
- To improve the functionality and layout of the existing ECIDA web site.
- To support the goals and objectives of the ECIDA's local and regional economic development partners.
- To enhance the ability for businesses to access, apply for, and receive administrative support concerning the variety of grants, loans, bonds available through the ECIDA.
- To build upon a national market for the international credit reports and export credit assurance available through the ECIDA.
- An important output of this site will be that tables, maps, and other information, as selected by the user, can be easily included in the user's customized report and printed. This data will be flexible in download formats, e.g., Excel, PDF, HTML.
- To improve the quality of responses to the many last-minute requests for information on the area thereby increasing the region's chances of being considered for a site location.
- The site needs to include a robust, fully supported content management system.
- The site needs to be optimized for search engines, including separate page titles, meta data, keyword density through alt tags, directory submittals and the like.

Target Audiences

There are several tiers of decision makers involved with the site selection process. They are as follows:

- Company employees, i.e., 'end users'. CEOs, CFOs, senior management; corporate real estate executives; site selection committees that include a cross-section of department managers, workers and corporate decision makers.
- The business owners and management of existing employers in the ECIDA's area.
- Economic development allies throughout the ECIDA's region, including the six Industrial Development Agency's throughout Erie County. Ensure that the new web site is a strong resource in support of their program of work.
- Corporations and affiliated service providers, e.g., freight forwarders, credit issuers, etc. involved in export and international trade development.
- Others seeking community and economic development data.

Project Outline

Below is a general outline of the site. It is not meant to reflect the final navigation elements, but rather to provide a sense as to the number of likely pages and their navigational elements.

- ✚ Existing Business and Industry Services (Industry Cluster information)
 - List of existing businesses by type, employment, etc. including a search feature for businesses by type, SIC or NAICS code – **Include links to each company**
 - Export Assistance
 - Manufacturers directory – searchable
 - Loan Information and Qualifier
 - State and local resources for expansion/relocation assistance, grant and other funding sources, training, etc.

- Contact information for area services (building commission, department of transportation, fire, police, utilities) and government offices
- Legislative alerts and/or briefings
- On-line retention/expansion survey and/or information request form
- RSS feeds
- Contact information
- ☞ About the Erie County Industrial Development Agency
 - Services- How we work, what we do
 - Member Recognition Activities
 - Goals and Objectives
 - Board
 - the ECIDA staff – profiles and photos
 - Contact us
- ☞ Resource Room
 - Worldwide Credit Reports
 - Real Estate
 - Financial Assistance
 - Online Application for Tax Incentives
- ☞ Local News & Events (remember- position the ECIDA as trusted partners with the business community)
 - News releases & newsletters
 - Recently published articles about recent locations/expansions
 - Case studies – expansions, locations (role of the ECIDA and staff)
 - Contact information
- ☞ Partner Organizations
- ☞ Site Map

Home Page

- Define the ECIDA's location geographically, both graphically (map) and in text.
- Clearly articulate in text, the purpose of this site and what may be found here. Who is the audience?
- Differentiate the site and the area with some text.
- A series of icon links to the resource room, e.g. worldwide credit reports.
- Clear navigation elements.
- Full Contact information (global element).
- Clean, professional look.
- Text which includes search engine description tag text.
- Quick links header or footer.
- Limit graphics and movement, e.g., Java, Flash.

Navigation Elements

Existing Business and Industry Services

This section of the site is designed to provide not only information on public and private resources, tools and services to help the ECIDA's existing businesses expand locally, but also to provide data about available workforce and local businesses. This section will also be useful for the company considering locating in the area through the identification of potential suppliers and customers. Lastly, this section should allow the visitor to identify potential supplier, vendor or customer contacts from among an inventory of local firms.

About the ECIDA

These pages should describe the ECIDA as a whole, our mission, strategy, and services, how we are organized. It will need to clearly communicate that the ECIDA is a professional, well-

managed organization who provide a number of important economic and community development services to the Erie County region. Also, these pages need to position the ECIDA staff as subject matter experts. Pages should include:

- Program of Work- Text, links to documents
- Our Staff- Text, links, thumbnail pictures of staff, bios of staff, contact information
- Economic development Allies- Text, links, possibly interactive (GUI) location map
- Links to Case Studies
- Contact Us- Same as others.

Local News and Events

These pages will be driven either via the content management tool and/or streamed onto I-frames or XML feeds from existing media services and will contain articles of potential interest to the site visitor. This is also the location for case studies about projects undertaken by the ECIDA.

- News/ Case Studies (Must be archived, searchable, distributable and printable).
- News Releases- Lists of recent news items, Links to larger articles.
- Case Studies- Text, Links to write-ups on projects in which the ECIDA was involved. Documents should be downloadable in PDF file format.
- Articles of Interest- Text, Links containing national publications and others containing information of interest to the visitor, e.g., international trade development opportunities, local business expansion support and others.
- Contact Us- Same as others.

Design Elements

The site should contain the following design elements:

- Be consistent in graphic design and message throughout the site. Be easy to read and navigate. Though this project does not include media development activity, some attention to branding will be valued, especially as it relates to creating the opportunity for the "house of brands" concept with the other corporations within the agency.
- Flash and other movement technologies should be used sparingly.
- The site needs to have a speed to load time of not greater than 12 seconds at a 56K baud modem speed (or less than 3 seconds at a cable modem speed).
- While the site does not need to be Bobby approved, it should not contain exceedingly small font sizes.

Functional Elements

- The site needs to contain robust content management functionality so multiple members of the ECIDA staff may maintain sections of the site.
- A database server will be established to house the various tables and reports. Typically this information will be in Excel spreadsheets.
- Java script tags will need to be inserted so that the site may be tracked by www.developmentresults.com.
- Print this page functionality should appear on each page. This functionality should involve the use of a cascading style sheet with header and footer (logo and contact information) and not simply be a browser print command. Bottom of pages not to show browser information but to show page numbers and a completed footer denoting ECIDA address, telephone, etc.
- Bread crumbing navigation should be utilized.

- The site map will need to be dynamically generated.
- RSS feeds should be made possible on each page-
`<link rel="alternate" type="application/rss+xml" title="Site or RSS title" href="link-to-feed" />`

Programming Elements

- We will be looking for the successful firm to provide us direction on the programming tools to be used in the site. However, given the amount of dynamic content, it appears it may be useful to build this site using Microsoft Visual Studio and Microsoft .NET technologies.
- All code should be accompanied with adequate documentation so that another technology company can maintain and change the code.
- All code must be tested thoroughly in the major browser platforms (Explorer, Firefox, Safari, Opera, and Google Chrome) and the last three versions of each.
- We will want to add a favicon to the site- `<link rel="icon" type="image/x-icon" href="/favicon.ico" />`

Project Work Flow

Content for the tables and copy for the text portions of the site will be generated while the site is under construction. A portion of the content for the new site will come from the existing ECIDA website. Please quote on copywriting for the site though we may use other services for this work in which case we will need to understand any pricing for uploading the content to the site. We recognize the need to develop copy in a timely manner.

The following is a desired timetable for the completion of this project.

Timetable (2009)

	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct.
Issue RFP	5/6					
Proposals Due	5/20					
Review Proposals/Check References		5/21-28				
Finalist Interviews		6/4-5				
Select Web Design firm		6/12				
Site Development Commences		6/19				
Beta Testing Begins					8/19	
Launch!!						9/1

Prior Experience

The ECIDA seeks a team with programming, design, management experience to produce the Web site described in the proposal.

The team members will each have significant experience in the development and marketing of at least 4 or more complex web sites with the following features:

- 50 or more static and dynamic pages
- Extensive database solutions particularly in the content area
- Security for all users
- Content management tools to maintain and update multiple portions of each site

The company should have extensive demonstrated experience to develop in much of the following:

- Microsoft .NET environment
- SQL Server Applications
- Microsoft Access and other standard database programs

- JAVA, other similar applications
- All modern Microsoft and Apple-based web browsing platforms
- HTML, XML and other standard Website development languages
- Macromedia FLASH

It is our expectation that in preparation for the development of a response to this proposal, a fair amount of time was devoted to exploring and becoming familiar with the ECIDA's existing site. The ECIDA expects all proposals to be based, in part on such a familiarity.

Project Management

Brian Krygier, Systems Analyst with the ECIDA, (716)856-6525, bkrygier@ecidany.com, will be the programming firm's lead contact on the site development work.

This RFP includes a vast majority of the items needed to start programming. However, we expect the chosen firm to be flexible in handling changes and revisions that inevitably come up in a project of this type and scope. In addition, we encourage inclusion of options or suggestions that may enhance the site or reduce costs.

Billing and Budget

The ECIDA will pay for time and materials used with a not-to-exceed cap fee for this project. We will expect each month's progress bills to be completed by the 10th of the following month.

The ECIDA will not pay any deposit, kill fee, lump sum or other ongoing royalty payment.

Please include any out-of-scope and contingency pricing structure.

Proposal Responses

We appreciate the time and effort each respondent will put into their response. We ask that you keep responses brief. **For your proposal to be considered complete, it must include the completed sections beginning with page 17 and ending on page 27.**

Electronic versions of all proposals are due to the ECIDA offices at the close of business on **May 20, 2009.**

Please provide an electronic submission of your proposal to:
Brian Krygier- bkrygier@ecidany.com

The ECIDA will carefully review and rank your response based upon the following criteria:

Background of Company – 50%

Experience and performance of company (team) in similar projects, experience of project manager/team, relevant experience in economic development websites

Approach to Scope of Work – 20%

Understanding of ECIDA programs and intent for the project, understanding tasks and deliverables.

Cost of Services – 25%

Fees and hourly rates of involved personnel

Development of Women & Minority employees and Partners – 5%

We will then develop a short list of candidates with whom we may schedule a follow-up discussion. From there we will make a final recommendation and select a firm. Our goal is to have a firm selected by **June 12, 2009.**

Ownership

All programming and proprietary database/graphic content produced under this contract will be solely owned by the Erie County Industrial Development Agency. It may only be used with their express written consent. Specifically, by agreeing to this contract the developers will not sell, exchange, promote, share or otherwise utilize any of the code for any other purpose without prior permission of the ECIDA. This is a full buyout contract. Upon completion of the project the ECIDA will be provided one copy of all files associated with the site's development. Should the proposal include the use of a proprietary site builder and content management tool, the vendor will be expected to both provide irrevocable, rights to the tool and may be asked to escrow source code for it.

The ECIDA reserves the right to reject any and all proposals. The ECIDA will select the firm it judges best for the project. The selected firm may or may not provide the lowest price.

Proposals and bid dollar amounts must be valid for 120 days from receipt by the ECIDA.

Proposal Estimate Response Form

Contact Information

Please provide the following information:

Firm Name: _____

Total number of employees and where located (if multiple locations list all): _____

Street address, city and state: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Website: _____

Main contact: _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail address: _____

Please provide the names, titles, e-mail addresses, location and phone numbers of the main project management person(s).

Legal Issues

Has any of the employees of the firm been indicted or convicted of a felony crime? (If yes, please describe incident, date and judgment)

☐ Yes

☐ No

Has your firm or the individuals working directly on this project (as their own parties or in previous firms) ever been or currently involved in any legal action by another business or individual in connection with a technology development project or service over the past 10 years? (If so provide the party's names, dates, brief description of issue, outcome and settlement date).

☐ Yes

☐ No

Describe briefly the legal status of your firm (Partnership, LLC, corporation, etc.) and provide legal address and contact information.

Please provide a sample contract agreement.

Ownership

Please provide the names, titles and contact numbers of each owner of your firm and percentage owned.

Firm history

Please provide a short description of the size of the firm, number of employees, number of current clients served, year of founding and any other general information about your firm.

Employees

Please provide a Bio on the main project management person and all personnel to be assigned to the project if awarded. If Subcontractors are to be used, identify the subcontractors name, address and contact information

Client references

Please provide the following information for 4 current clients of your firm-

- Name of contact and title
- Company name
- Work performed for client in past year
- Contact phone number
- Contact e-mail address

Estimate Sheet

The following estimate sheet should be used to generate your proposal. In this approach we ask that you provide both your project costs of hourly labor and the proposed billable hourly cost for various phases of the site. The minimum to maximum range shows your best estimate to date of the number of hours that would be involved at minimum and maximum to produce the task noted. Assume that there will be up to three rounds (pre-beta, beta, final) of corrections. Provide an allowance for some revisions to the plan as presented—mostly minor ones relating to site order of pages for example.

Task	Min Hours	Max Hours	Billed Min \$	Billed Max \$
Kick off				
Meetings (for project)				
Wire frame				
Database development				
Database uploads				
Produce .com pages				
Produce back end forms				
Project management for this project				
Administrative				
Search Engine Optimization				
Test/Revisions pre- beta and beta				
Test final				
Elevate site to host vendor				
Follow up consulting				

after elevation				
Technical assistance 1 st year				
Design/Graphics				
Copywriting Services				
Static Map Development				
Web Hosting Services*				
Content management tool (if applicable)*				
TOTALS				

* Please quote on a monthly basis

Position	Proposed billable hourly rate*	Proposed team members	Full time employee (s)?
Database Developers			
Database Jr. Developers			
Sr. Programmer (ASP)			
Jr. Programmer (HTML)			
Internal project manager			
Graphics artists			
Proofreaders			
Hosting/Network Admin			

Flash developer			
Static Vector maps**			
Copy writing			
Testers			

*Please do not present an average blended rate for this section.

**Please provide costs on a per map basis

Questions

Please answer the following questions in 300 words or less. ***Bullet points are preferred.***

1. List and describe three reasons why your group or firm is the best choice for this project.
2. Please provide links to the last three sites you have developed and provide the launch date and final cost for each.
3. Provide links to the three best sites you have ever developed and provide the total cost for each.
4. Briefly describe your recommendations of the programming languages and type of database you would propose using for this project and why.
5. Please list any caveats, conditions or comments on your cost and time estimates.
6. Please list any additional questions you may have.
7. How can we improve our future RFPs to your firm?

Please submit 1 copy of your response in electronic format and e-mail it to the project manager.
Thank you for your response to this proposal.

Form 1: Non-Collusive Proposal Certification

By submission of this proposal, each Bidder and each person signing on behalf of any Bidder certifies, and in the case of a joint proposal each party thereto certifies as to its own organization, under penalty of perjury, that to the best of their knowledge and belief:

- a) The prices in this proposal have been arrived at independently, without collusion, consultation, communication, or agreement, for the purpose of restricting competition, as to any matter relating to such prices with any other Bidder or with any competitor;
- b) Unless otherwise required by law, the prices which have been quoted in this proposal have not been knowingly disclosed by the Bidder and will not knowingly be disclosed by the Bidder prior to opening, directly or indirectly, to any other Bidder or to any competitor, and
- c) No attempt has been made or will be made by the Bidder to induce any other person, partnership or corporation to submit or not to submit a proposal for the purpose of restricting competition.

SUBMITTAL OF PROPOSAL

The undersigned submits the following proposal, which is in conformity with the intent of the RFP. The Bidder agrees that should it be awarded a contract on the proposal through the issuance of a contract from the Erie County Industrial Development Agency, it will provide the services in strict compliance with the contract documents for the compensation stipulated herein. The Bidder agrees that its proposal shall remain effective for a period of 90 days from the formal proposal receipt date.

Bidder

Name

Signature

Title

Date

Form 2: Permissible Contacts

Bidder affirms that it understands and agrees to comply with the procedures of the ECIDA relative to permissible Contacts as required by State Finance Law §139-j (3) and §139-j (6) (b) – see page 3 & 4 for further information.

By: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____

Bidder: _____

Bidder Address: _____

Form 3: Disclosure of Prior Non-Responsibility Determinations

Name of Bidder: _____

Address: _____

Name and Title of Person Submitting this Form: _____

1. Has any Governmental Entity made a finding of non-responsibility regarding the Bidder in the previous four years? (Please circle):

No

Yes

If yes, please answer the next questions:

2. Was the basis for the finding of non-responsibility due to a violation of State Finance Law §139-j (Please circle):

No

Yes

3. Was the basis for the finding of non-responsibility due to the intentional provision of false or incomplete information to a Governmental Entity? (Please circle):

No

Yes

4. If you answered yes to any of the above questions, please provide details regarding the finding of non-responsibility below.

Governmental Entity: _____

Date of Finding of Non-responsibility: _____

Basis of Finding of Non-Responsibility: _____

(Add additional pages as necessary)

5. Has any Governmental Entity or other governmental agency terminated or withheld a Procurement Contract with the above-named individual or entity due to the intentional provision of false or incomplete information? (Please circle):

No

Yes

6. If yes, please provide details below.

Governmental Entity: _____

Date of Termination or Withholding of Contract: _____

Basis of Termination or Withholding: _____

(Add additional pages as necessary)

Bidder certifies that all information provided to the ECIDA with respect to State Finance Law §139-k is complete, true and accurate.

By: _____ Date: _____

Signature

Name: _____

Title: _____

Exhibit A – Board of Directors

As of April 21, 2009

Mr. Philip Ackerman	Chair – National Fuel Gas Company
Mr. Barry Brandon	Senior Vice President & General Counsel – Seneca Gaming Corp.
Hon. Byron W. Brown	Mayor – City of Buffalo
Ms. Mary Busse	Chair – Erie County Assoc. of School Boards
Hon. Anthony Caruana	Supervisor – Town of Tonawanda
Hon. Chris Collins	Erie County Executive
Mr. Philip Corwin	
Mr. Jonathan Dandes	President – Rich Baseball Operations
Mr. James Doherty	Area General Manager – Laidlaw Transit
Hon. David Franczyk	President – Buffalo Common Council
Ms. Ramona Gallagher	
Mr. Mike Hoffert	President – AFL/CIO Council
Hon. Mary Holtz	Supervisor – Town of Cheektowaga
Hon. Timothy Kennedy	Chair–Economic Development Committee/Erie County Legislature
Hon. Lynn Marinelli	Chair – Erie County Legislature
Mr. Lawrence Meckler	Executive Director – NFTA
Mr. Frank Mesiah	President – NAACP – Buffalo Chapter
Hon. Satish Mohan	Supervisor – Town of Amherst
Dr. Andrew Rudnick	President – Buffalo Niagara Partnership

Appendix 1- Web Review

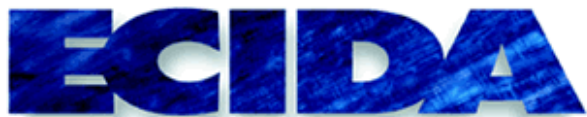
Provided for your use to help identify the needed elements on this site is the web review conducted by ED Solutions, Inc.



Web Site **Review**

Economic Development Corporation for Erie County

www.ecidany.com



The economic development corporation for Erie County



Mark J. James, CEcD
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Powell, OH 43065
614.792.9102
614.578.6702 cell
614.223.3800 e-fax
mark.james@solutionsED.com
www.solutionsED.com



December 17, 2008

Brian Krygier
Systems Analyst
Erie County IDA
275 Oak St., Buffalo, NY 14203

Dear Brian,

The following report was prepared for The Economic Development Corporation for Erie County by ED Solutions, Inc., following a review of the organization's web site: www.ecidany.com.

The review examined not only the content but also the technical aspects of the existing site in order to assess performance in a number of areas. Taken together, the components of this review should provide The Economic Development Corporation for Erie County with an executable document useful for making functional upgrades to the site as well as guiding its redesign.

As a value added service to you, we have also included as Section Two a primer on ED web sites entitled Web Site Fundamentals. We hope it will help make your web site project more successful.

It is a pleasure to provide this report to you. We look forward to providing additional assistance on your web site redesign.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads 'Mark J. James'.

Mark J. James, CEcD

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SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are ED Solution, Inc.'s top recommendations for improving the ecidany.com web site:

- Get a running start on application design and content needs before contracting with a Web design firm, thinking carefully about navigation and content designed around your audience.
- Shop carefully for a web design firm that can supply you with the strong database construction and the support you will need for the tools and information you plan to supply and share.
- Create a thematic map and a keyword-rich central paragraph on the home page to locate Erie County, emphasize the site's audience and purpose, and increase search optimization.
- Put globally positioned contact information (including phone) at the top of each page and on all downloadable material.
- Add an emphasis for the credit reporting service
- Emphasize services (especially for existing businesses) and create case studies to show off the EDC for Erie County's skills and expertise
- Translate a general services publication (1 to 2 pages) into those languages whose countries the EDC is active in for trade and inward investment.
- Work on creating keyword-rich content as you give context to your tools and information, and annotate links to improve search engine ranking.

Detailed web-site analysis, findings and more information on these and other recommendations are included in the sections that follow.

CONTENT

The content of this section analyzes the existing ecidany.com web site and gives suggestions for enhancements and upgrades.

Audiences

The current ecidany.com web site serves an unusual niche in the New York State economic development world, and has the potential to be a resource to the entire profession. Your partner, Buffalo Niagara Enterprise, serves as the local recruitment site for site selection consultants and corporate end-users, so your primary audiences are existing businesses, potential loan recipients, regulatory agencies (aka “the proxy for the general public,” as you put it), your board of directors, and service-provider professionals such as attorneys and accountants who assist existing businesses. Other audiences for the site include partners, economic development allies, stakeholders and investors (including foreign direct investment). In addition, considering the tools and services a newly designed website could launch, the larger economic development profession, banks, and related service providers outside the New York region could be important visitors to your site. In other words, audience is something you’ll want to consider strongly as you go about redesign.

This focus on the audiences is something we discussed in some detail during the web-based conference call. However, it is recommended that the organization undertake an exercise to fully examine this issue. Conduct an exercise whereby the various functional units within the organization prepare a list of audiences then assemble a leadership team to review this, find common areas and include this thinking during the redesign.

When the focus is on existing businesses/retention, consider the following content and functionality:

1. Detailed listing of existing employers, including SIC/NAICS (with lookup/search functionality.) Also links to employers and contact information is valuable.
2. Content around services, programs and events specific to existing businesses, e.g., permitting officials, incentive programs for existing businesses, access to workforce investment boards, etc.

3. Perhaps include an online expansion/retention or opinion survey, or at least specific Contact Us template form for them to reach out to staff.
4. RSS feed for relevant local content that might help drive supply chain.
5. To assist in trade development, a specific resource guide for trade development is an often provided piece of content.

Since focusing on the Region is a priority (Erie County, Western New York, Buffalo, Niagara, Interstates 90 and 290, etc.), consider a common branding and content-sharing activity with regional sites. Make the connection stronger than just links, in rich data-sharing through i-frames (content from one site into another site), etc. Also make sure reciprocal linking is done.

Overall, the site should be rich in content to support the Economic Development Corporation for Erie County staff, as well as allies and partners. It should provide the information existing businesses need to access resources. It should serve as a virtual file cabinet of resources used by the Economic Development Corporation for Erie County staff, regional/state/local officials, and economic development partners to respond to inquiries and as a resource for daily work. Ask yourselves, “When I need information to fulfill a request that comes directly to my office, where do I go to get the information?” When the answer is the web site, you have arrived!

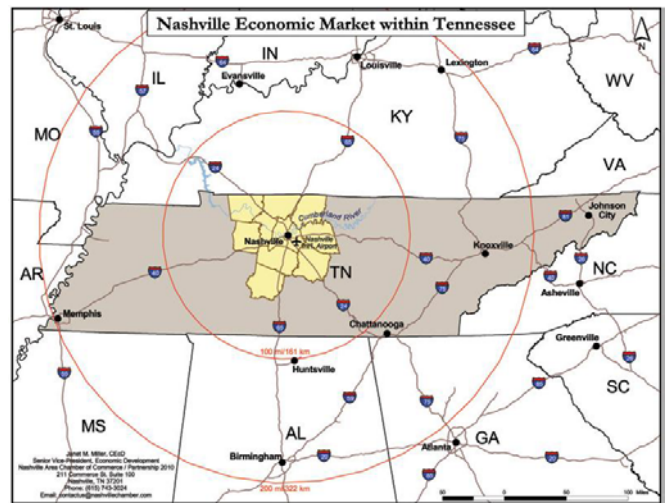
Data

Because regulators and existing businesses will be large parts of your target audience, the depth, breadth, accuracy, completeness and flexibility of the data on the site are crucial. You can provide data that they can't find anywhere else that differentiates Erie County and the site itself.

The Economic Development Corporation for Erie County should consider enhancing the already rich assortment of data on its site to focus on that which is key to its target audience of existing business professionals:

- The capabilities of the organization to support their business and facilitate projects. This is a key goal for the redesign
- Existing business data and local business contact information
- Information on partners who provide services
- Information on the services themselves (loans, investment, permitting, incentives, trade development, etc.)

A vital addition to the ecidany.com site is a geographic reference or two on some pages. Make sure the Home Page has a quality, regional, *static* map outlining the State relative to markets (see below), optimized so it doesn't affect load speed. Economic development sites are searched most often by geography, and remember that visitors will not know county or community names, so illustrating their locations in terms of market access points (highways, larger metro areas, existing industry investment) is helpful to the



visitor in evaluating Erie County from a supply chain perspective. You could also consider static thematic maps for project and/or loan activity, fiber/POP access, rail, colleges and universities, airports, population centers/major markets, transportation, etc. Continually think of ways to graphically represent unique sales propositions and partnerships in relation to geography. Visit www.nashvilleareainfo.com and www.chooseneindiana.com for more examples of the types of maps that can be created and stored in a resource room. Sources for custom map development include www.cirrusabs.com and www.ccintellect.com. Give your audience, which may well be unfamiliar with the state and its placement among other important markets, the bigger picture of the advantages of your location (optimize it for speed to load and make it static). Doing even more to highlight the other large metro and commercial areas, transportation hubs and infrastructure, and the hot spots for particular industries within Erie County will make your map communicate your advantages instantly (see right). A Google platform could give you the added bonus of more functional scroll and zoom features to let your audience 'explore' Erie County. And what a tool for staff to have at their fingertips in their daily work as well as in consultations with clients!

Make maps on the site available as downloadable PDFs (be sure to mention file size on the link) to enhance the site's functionality; you could add more detailed contact information and branding to each map.

Finally, the Economic Development Corporation for Erie County's phone and email contact information should appear on every page in a highly visible and

consistent spot (global position). All downloadable pages, data tables, maps, etc. should also include the EDC for Erie County's logo and contact information.

Content Areas

Though ecidany.com already does impressive things, you can do even more to make it efficient and useful not just for your audience, but for your office as well. Existing businesses come to the table with a series of requirements, and focusing on those requirements *first* puts the emphasis on their needs before yours. But as you consider revision, think about ways you can also make life at the EDC for Erie County easier. Reconsidering the *purpose* of each navigation element (with input from your highly entrepreneurial staff) is a worthwhile exercise before you approach a web design firm; knowing what you want will help determine what you will need a design firm to do for you.

For instance, the Current Projects section, currently a repository for projects in various stages of completion, is outdated and used mostly as an information source for the media. Could it instead become a location for true "snapshots" of current projects, a series of case-studies-in-the-making with a process schematic showing metrics on cost and time analysis, comparisons, economic impact modeling, etc.? Clients could log in to see details of their project's status, but all visitors could see enough to recognize you as subject-matter experts for businesses in Erie County. A series of Google mash-ups could present the information in an organized way, and from that template you could create a process schematic for the site that would help clients self-qualify for similar projects (saving your staff valuable time). With the right design firm, all of it could be managed through a CRM system. Once those projects were no longer "current," they could become case studies with links in the About Us pages on the site.

Instead of a simple list of partners on your Partners page, make it really useful by expanding the list with annotated, clickable links that will draw your visitors to investigate. We talked about the possibility of a clickable map with a Graphic User Interface for showing partner locations, and you mentioned "showing towns with IDAs on a map so visitors can self-refer." Using geography to drive visitors will also add searchable keywords to the site. Consider enhancing partner information further by providing a template partners can fill out that will become a page of content for each organization, mini-websites (especially valuable to those partners without them) with both uniformity and consistent, quality content. We discussed cost-sharing for this service because of the benefit

to the individual IDAs, but this addition would also be valuable for you because of the message it would send about your high level of partner support.

Through our research firm www.developmentresults.com, we have learned that one of the most valued content areas is a description of the services of the organization itself. Your About Us page includes an efficient description of your role and the services you offer, and includes helpful links. But you could use About Us even more effectively, letting it serve as a sort of “traffic cop” to direct visitors by listing your many partners and providing links to appropriate sites that cover areas you don’t (this would help with cross-linking and search optimization, and might reduce some of the “distraction by the public” that plagues the office). Given the range of expertise of your staff, About Us is also a great page to provide bios and pictures of each staff member and descriptions of their specialties (and direct email links). This will present the EDC for Erie County staff as subject matter experts and strong business partners existing (and prospective) businesses can trust to give them the information they need. Creating case studies with links on the home page reinforces this strategy.

As you redesign the site, strongly consider going back to clients who have negotiated the current site, filled out forms there, and followed links, and ask them what would help in a redesign. Since the site doesn’t follow the pattern of a typical economic development site, your audience needs as much *context* as you can provide. Though you already do a good job of annotating some links (that is, providing a sentence or two of context about what visitors will find if they follow the link), consider doing a more thorough job to help orient your audience. Rather than suggesting, as you do on your links page, that clicking on the links may provide “additional valuable information,” provide a brief caption describing where they are headed if they click the link, and exactly what valuable information they may find there. Sometimes you may be better off extracting and summarizing selected information from linked sites or data tables on each page rather than sending clients off to sort through material that may be irrelevant to them.

Do the work *for* audience members so that they can simply download information from your site (in easy-print and extract format), and give them the compelling arguments they need as they make their case for working with the EDC for Erie County. Automatically append the EDC for Erie County services pages to downloads, so the information is not just compelling, but *supported*. Make them your partner, not just your client.

Show how you support local business by including case studies on projects in Erie County, especially if you can be specific in showing what the EDC for Erie County has done to streamline projects. Demonstrate how the EDC for Erie County, regional/state allies, as well as other area industries/organizations have worked together to contribute to the success stories in the area is even better. This really helps position the dedication and resources that the EDC for Erie County provides, and again makes you subject matter experts on the challenges of tax abatement, expansion, trade development, etc. Repeating case study links on the Contact Us page reinforces your reputation as economic development subject-experts.

Finally, plan carefully for your presentation of the many excellent tools (including the Project Benefits Estimator, Credit Reports, and Tax Incentives Estimator) on your site—they are the ingenious heart, and as we discussed, a potential revenue source, of the site.

Think about two audiences as you present the context for each tool: the user, who will fill out the forms, and the economic development and professional organizations that will want the tools on their own sites. Refine each tool with input from the EDC for Erie County staff and clients who have used them, making them as highly functional and automated as possible—consider how other professionals (ED, banking, planners, etc.) might use them so they can be made functional on a broad scale.

Think about ways to brand these tools for resale to several professional groups, how you could encourage linking to your site (to improve your search ranking), and how you might blast the news to potential buyers. You could even set up

the icons
for each of
these tools
to load on
other



organizations sites. Again, plan this out enough in advance that you can choose a web design firm capable of carrying out your vision. As we said in the interview, you have huge potential here to “do well while doing good” by providing these useful tools to other professionals.

As you consider these changes, consider a united pair of larger goals: how to make the site useful and interactive for visitors looking for specific information, and how to reduce your own workload by making it easy for visitors to help themselves. Of course, a huge added benefit to this approach is the way it

converts the site into a “file cabinet” of downloadable forms your staff will use every day.

Since some of the organization's services and programs are targeted toward an international audience, consider translating a 1 to 2 page general publication about the services and programs offered. It is common in customary to launch these translated pages through flag icons on



the homepage. ED solutions, Inc. has negotiated an inexpensive business translation package will from a world-class firm, Asist Translations, www.asisttranslations.com if assistance is of interest.

Ecidany.com should definitely make better use of Alt tags. Alt tags are the text boxes that appear on some sites when you scroll over an image or button. These provide keywords for search engines to crawl. Search engines are just beginning to be able to crawl flash elements and cannot “see” text in graphics, so they will not pick up any element that is not HTML text unless it has an Alt tag attached to it.

Always remember to place *the source and date* for all downloadable data, tables, documents and tools on the site, especially since much of your data and several of your tools are primary and proprietary. Source and date information enhances credibility for viewers, and the presence of primary data will only increase your status as ED experts. Keeping data up-to-date is a challenge for all ED organizations, but is addressed by the best of the best.

Being able to create and maintain a website that can accurately and nimbly updates information as demographics, business climate and economic factors shift and change requires a hands-on approach, and we applaud the EDC for Erie County staff’s desire to “bring pages in-house” and increase control over content in a revision.

Flexible Formats

The Economic Development Corporation for Erie County could do more to use flexible formats where possible to allow a broader range of use for the visitor. Try making data available in HTML, PDF and downloadable Excel formats when possible. Also, develop a style sheet for the printer-friendly version which strips out as much of the web page items (navigation, header, etc) and is branded with

logo and contact information. Currently, much of the best information on the site is locked into multi-page, slow-loading files that a viewer may choose to bypass.

In addition, check out the PDF-on-the-fly technology discussed in the section on Interactivity.



Links

As we discussed, the number of links to and from the site are helpful in two ways: They enhance the utility of the site, and they improve the site's ranking with search engines.

The Economic Development Corporation for Erie County should pursue reciprocal links.

- Links to major employers, educational facilities, partners, allies, etc. should be reciprocal.
- Consider a strategy whereby ecidany.com offers to exchange links with relevant others' sites. See the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce site for an example of a site that offers a link exchange program:
http://www.scrantonchamber.com/membership/link_exch.html
- Make sure to annotate all outbound links – providing a sentence or two about the linked organization – to help visitors find the resources they are looking for without unnecessary clicks.

STRUCTURE & NAVIGATION

Navigation

The navigation structure and content on ecidany.com should be considered carefully in redesign so that it appeals to your primary audience but provides ways to send secondary audiences in profitable directions, too, via easy links with smart annotation. Aligning content to audience needs and presenting it in an easy-to-access fashion is a good way to get people coming back to your site, and will make the site easier for your staff to use as well. Because of the particular needs of your audience, consider how navigation can be fine-tuned to be useful to many players, and consider navigation to guide audiences who have very specific needs to their destinations as expeditiously as possible. For instance, the schematic for your incentives application is very effective—can you adapt this kind of navigation in other places? We discussed

www.chooseneindiana.com or www.accessomaha.com as models to study for navigation ideas as you reconsider the design of the site. You should also employ bread crumbing as part of the navigation strategy.

Home > Map Room > Target Industries Maps
--

An example of a navigation structure oriented around audience type might be:

- Existing Business and Industry Services (Industry Cluster information)
 - List of existing businesses by type, employment, etc. including a search feature for businesses by type, SIC or NAICS code – **Include links to each company**
 - Export Assistance
 - Manufacturers directory – searchable
 - Loan Information and Qualifier
 - State and local resources for expansion/relocation assistance, grant and other funding sources, training, etc.
 - Contact information for area services (building commission, department of transportation, fire, police, utilities) and government offices
 - Legislative alerts and/or briefings
 - On-line retention/expansion survey and/or information request form
 - RSS feeds
 - Contact information
- Community Development Services
 - About Erie County's CD Services
 - Community Development Block Grants
 - Housing programs
 - Rehabilitation
 - Housing Code Enforcement
 - Down payment Assistance
 - Additional Resources
 - Community Cleanup
 - Community Development Resource room
 - Contact Erie County's CD Office
- About the Economic Development Corporation for Erie County
 - Services- How we work, what we do
 - Member Recognition Activities
 - Goals and Objectives
 - Board
 - the EDC for Erie County staff – profiles and photos
 - Contact us

- Resource Room
 - Worldwide Credit Reports
 - Real Estate
 - Financial Assistance
- Local News & Events (remember- position yourselves as trusted partners with the business community)
 - News releases & newsletters
 - Recently published articles about recent locations/expansions
 - Case studies – expansions, locations (role of the EDC for Erie County and staff)
 - Contact information
- Partner Organizations
- Site Map

Content Management

Currently, the Economic Development Corporation for Erie County can create site content changes in select paragraphs on the site. Plans for redesign include more content responsibility and control in the future, bringing pages “in house.” We encourage staff to continuously update the site and make it the “file drawer” for the EDC for Erie County and a resource for your partners.

Traffic Reports

Obtaining and reviewing regular (monthly or quarterly) traffic reports is recommended. This will help the staff see what areas of the site are most popular and what visitors are looking for. When reviewing options in traffic reports, request that the following be included:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| • unique visitor sessions, | • keywords searched by, |
| • which pages visitors go to, | • time of day, and |
| • where they enter and exit, | • referrer links. |
| • how long they spend on each page, | |

Look for trends in the traffic reports; e.g., did traffic increase during a marketing campaign or did traffic increase when the State conducted a campaign, etc.?



The Economic Development Corporation for Erie County has subscribed to the premier web site metrics services for economic development offered by Development Results, LLC. This was developed by ED Solutions, Inc. and ccintellect to meet a need in our profession. For more information visit: www.developmentresults.com.

VISUAL DESIGN

Look and Feel

The clean design of ecidany.com is slightly dated, with an appropriate business-to-business look. Using waterfall formatted navigation, more “contained” areas in pages, and more Web 2.0 formats for navigation and content will both update and improve the quality and functionality of the site.

Given the relative complexity of the site, plus the goal of recognizing sponsors and having other organizations make use of some of the tools on the site, e.g., worldwide credit reports, the initial design comps for the new site will be a critical activity. Be sure to accurately communicate with the web firm about the complexity of the audiences and perhaps negotiate for more than the usual 2 to 3 home design comps with one edit on the chosen design .

When adding visual elements such as photos or illustrations, consider whether they add to the informational/communications value of the site. Graphics are important for visual interest, but should also help communicate a specific message to a specific audience. Think business-to-business, product (site, building, and community), services, etc. Make sure the visuals tell a story about the place and help communicate the site’s content.

All graphics should be optimized for size so as not to negatively impact load time. Graphic files should be no more than 9k to at most 12k in size, and most should be smaller. **The site should take no longer than 17 seconds to load** using a 28k modem (or 3-4 seconds at a cable modem speed). This will make it fly for

those using high speed and acceptable for those having to use dial-up to connect to the site.

Home Page

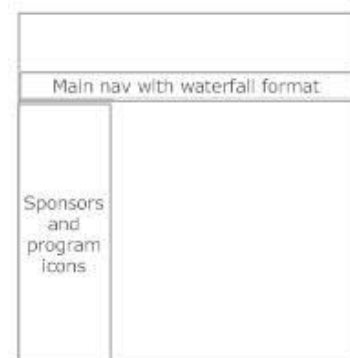
The site's home page is the front door to the organization's virtual presence and needs to make a good first impression, but most of all it needs to communicate where and what the site is about.

Ecidany.com's current Home Page needs a stronger home page central paragraph to clearly state what can be found on the site and whom it is intended to serve, especially given its unique set of audience requirements. Defining what you and other Industrial Development Agencies currently do could be part of that paragraph, and may help visitors self-select for the site, again reducing irrelevant phone calls for the office. In any case, careful wording assists in returning better search engine ranking results (think of keywords and links to embed in the text).

As we discussed, navigation elements may need to change to reflect your audience of existing businesses, and some items that slightly misrepresent your mission (such as the Buffalo Waterfront photo and caption) may be taking up precious real estate. Instead, put in a static map that helps orient your audience to the New England location and reinforces your new geographically-oriented logo. List the EDC for Erie County services, links to case studies, and links to sponsors or partners. Don't forget to give a high, global position to the EDC for Erie County's phone number (not just a link to contact) to enhance the B2B look and make it easy for people to reach you from handheld devices.

Since both sponsors and some of the tools the organization offers generate revenue, consider a vertically oriented design feature which highlights these.

Finally, optimize the map and photos to speed loading and you'll have a Home Page that lives up to the potential of the rest of the site.



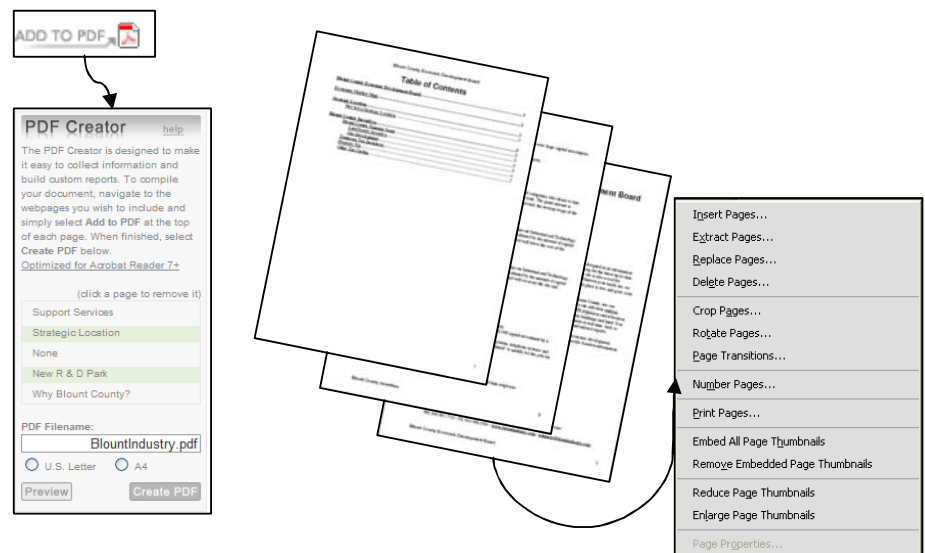
INTERACTIVITY

As mentioned above, the Home Page might be enhanced if the central paragraph were edited to more clearly state what can be found on the site and who the site serves. It is usually recommended that the **first 150 characters** in the center element on the home page serve as a stand-alone paragraph of HTML text describing the site's content and the audiences it is intended to serve (adding embedded links in the text to relevant sub-pages on the site also creates more interactivity.) This will give the search engines a useful "description tag" to be used in search engine results listings.

As mentioned earlier, having content on the site available in flexible formats will make it more accessible and user-friendly to meet various visitors' needs. A

quality Print this Page function would be a strong asset to this site--consider adding a branded style sheet to further enhance the site's interactivity.

Also recommended is the addition of "PDF on the fly" technology. This allows a visitor (and staff) to construct a document from content they choose and download a finished product.



Take a look at how the Blount IDB (www.blountindustry.com) does this. This tool aggregates user-selected pages into a pre-designed PDF which also includes a table of contents, cover letter from the organization's exec, a title page, etc.

Seek out video clips that highlight the community and orient the audience to Erie County and post these videos on Youtube for additional coverage. Idea: Do a Youtube segment on a time lapse showing a successful rehab project!



Please allow visitors to sign up for your newsletter by placing a sign-up icon on several pages, and encourage other activity that creates a client relationship that continues over time (see the section on RSS feeds below — the next natural step to sharing content on your site).

Drive to Contact

If you don't count the clickable Contact Us link on the upper right header, contact information is currently buried at the bottom of the page. It is a major recommendation that at least the phone number and a general email address be added in a more visible location on each and every page, such as in a very visible portion of the header.

The Contact Us page could include a feedback or intake form (make all fields optional) in addition to email, call, and fax choices. Having all of these options available on one contact page facilitates ease and flexibility of contact. Staff photos, bios, and other information could be terrific additions. Include links to staff services, plus case studies once they're written.

- Peppering the site content with "for more information, please contact us" linked to the contact page is another way to help drive visitors to get in touch with The EDC for Erie County.
- Biographies and photos of the EDC for Erie County staff on the Contact Us page would add a personal touch and more searchable keywords (ED is a relationship business).
- Consider adding a form to ask the visitor for feedback on the site: "Did you find what you were looking for?" "How are we doing?" "What else would you like to see on this site?"

New & Updated Content

Having new and updated information on the site keeps it fresh for search engines and is highly regarded among site selection consultants. Adding news content and announcements and keeping them refreshed is a good way to accomplish this. Though news may not be the most vital element for your site, significant changes in Current Projects might be worth announcing to your clients and partners.



RSS feeds could signal updated content on the site for that audience. RSS or *Really Simple Syndication* is a useful tool for keeping updated on your favorite web sites. RSS makes use of an XML code that constantly scans the content of a web site for updates and then broadcasts those updates to all subscribers through a feed (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RSS>).

Idea: You could use a direct-mail piece to encourage active clients and partners to sign up to receive email when a new Current Project hits the site.

Driving Visitors to the Site

Driving more traffic to ecidany.com can be enhanced by optimizing the site for search engines. However, the EDC for Erie County might also consider more traditional marketing approaches for the site as well.

- ecidany.com is currently listed on-line Economic Development Directory: www.ecodevdirectory.com/. The initial listing is free, but premier listings can be purchased for more exposure.
- Implement an aggressive keywording activity when writing content for the site, especially the central paragraph of the home page. There are two basic types of keywords for economic development sites. These relate to content and location. The following are some suggested phrases:
 - Erie County
 - Buffalo, Niagara
 - New York
 - Economic development
 - Credit reports, business loans, tax incentives
 - Interstate 90
 - Business expansion
- Through the site Search Engine Watch, submit the site to the various search engines on a semi annual basis: <http://searchenginewatch.com/>. **This would help the results delivered by search engines.**
- The organization might also consider paying Yahoo! an annual fee (approximately \$300) for a premier listing consideration through the browser's Yahoo! Directory Submit section. This significantly enhances the site's results on this browser. At the very least, consider Yahoo! Submit Express (\$50).
- Registering separate, logically worded URLs for **each page on the site** and submitting each page to search engines is a great way to enhance results.
- A reciprocal link program would also help promote the site, while enhancing search engine optimization.

- Direct marketing is also effective to drive traffic to the web site, and the site has the excellent content to support it—consider a monthly direct mail piece to existing businesses and partners.
 - Direct mail – Postcards are quite effective and an inexpensive approach to direct marketing
 - Personal contacts – Telephone calls and visits
 - Advertising placements & marketing materials – Focus these on driving traffic to the web site
 - Conduct online surveys of key audience types, e.g., loan applicants

FUNCTIONALITY & DIAGNOSTIC RESULTS

Below are the diagnostics run on ecidany.com, with comments on each as appropriate.

Load Time

The current ecidany.com home page takes just over 26 seconds to load. This is slower than it should be. It is recommended that load time does not exceed 17 seconds on a 28K modem. Many hotels and other locations still use dial-up and slower connections, and many site selectors travel often and must use slower modems to access the web. In addition, many use cell phone modems, which, while not as slow as dial-up, are not nearly as quick as DSL or cable.

If a site loads too slowly, regardless of the quality of the data on the site, it may be overlooked and Erie County may lose a potential project. And even if most of the visitors access the site with higher bandwidths, a well-optimized site will “fly,” reflecting positively on the organization.

Tool	Rating	Summary	
Load Time	☆☆☆☆	26.35 seconds, height/width problems	Detailed Report
HTML Check & Repair	☆☆☆☆	17 errors	Detailed Report
Browser Compatibility	☆☆☆☆	8 problems	Detailed Report
Spell Check	☆☆☆☆	7 possible errors ECIDA, NYS, Countywide, BuffaloNiagaraWIFI...	Detailed Report
Link Check	☆☆☆☆	0 bad links	Detailed Report
Bad Links Summary Report	☆☆☆☆	0 bad links	View a Demo Report
Remote Links Summary Report	☆☆☆☆	0 bad links	View a Demo Report

Test Information
URL: http://www.ecidany.com/
Date Tested: Wednesday, Nov 12, 17:03 EDT
Page Rating: ☆☆☆
URL: http://www.ecidany.com/
Total Page Size: 91260 bytes
Total Graphics: 75815 bytes - 6 images
Server Connections: 1
Connection penalty: 2 seconds

As is illustrated below, the photos and logo on the site impact the load time. Optimizing the photos, font pieces, and the future home page map will help improve the speed-to-load.

Load Time by Connection Speed	
Connection Speed	Download Time
14.4Kbps	52.70 seconds
28.8Kbps	27.35 seconds
56Kbps	14.90 seconds
ISDN (128Kbps)	7.70 seconds
Cable (512 Kbps)	3.43 seconds
T1 (1.44 Mbps)	2.51 seconds
SDSL (1.544 Mbps)	2.47 seconds
ADSL (2.0 Mbps)	2.37 seconds

Server Connections
www.ecidany.com

Page Objects		
Size	Object Type	URL
21525	IMG	http://www.ecidany.com/graphics/bwp_icon.jpg
15715	IMG	http://www.ecidany.com/graphics/banner_survey.jpg
15445	HTML	http://www.ecidany.com/
12887	IMG	http://www.ecidany.com/graphics/ecida_logo.gif
11500	IMG	http://www.ecidany.com/graphics/buff_nia_logo2.jpg
7207	IMG	http://www.ecidany.com/graphics/microloan_banner2.gif
6981	IMG	http://www.ecidany.com/graphics/calc_banner.gif

Original: JPEG
Size: 21525 Bytes
H: 214
W: 255
DL Time (28.8): 0:06



Buffalo Waterfront Projects
Summary and Update Report
[Click Here to Download Presentation](#)

Section	www.ecidany.com
Website Grade	65
Google Page Rank	4
Google Indexed Pages	532
Traffic Rank	6,679,794
Blog Rank	Not Ranked
Inbound Links	994
del.icio.us Bookmarks	0

The chart above gives ecidany.com a grade of 65, and the ones below indicate it is not listed in the DMOZ Directory and may have minor HTML/spelling issues.

G. DMOZ Directory: No Entry Found

ecidany is not listed in [DMOZ](#).

DMOZ, The Open Directory Project, is the largest and most comprehensive human-edited directory of the Web. It is constructed and maintained by a vast, global community of volunteer editors.

Test Information
URL: http://www.ecidany.com/
Date Tested: Wednesday, Nov 12, 17:03 EDT
Page Rating: ★★☆☆☆
URL: http://www.ecidany.com/
Total Errors: 17
Total Warnings: 6
Total Problems HTML Repair Cannot Fix: 3

Misspelled Words			
Word	Context	Line(s)	Suggestions
BuffaloNiagaraWiFi	ifi.org" target="_blank"> BuffaloNiagaraWiFi .org	412	no suggestions.
Countywide	y_policy.asp"><center>Countywide IDA Eligibility Policy</	363, 399	County wide, County-wide, Countrywide
ECIDA	<title> ECIDA - Erie County Industrial	4, 345, 367	EC IDA, EC-IDA, ACID
NYS	= "174" height="130" alt=" NYS Map" border="0"> --></p>	352	NYSE, NAYS, NUS

Tags

The following tables show the Title, Meta and keywords tags currently in use on the ecidany.com site.

Title Tag Analysis
Current Page Title: 
<title> ECIDA - Erie County Industrial Development Agency </title>
The Tag processed is 49 characters in length
Status: This Tag is considered acceptable and search engine friendly. Our recommended maximum number of characters for this tag is 60 . Search engine friendly does not mean high rankings on search engines. Proper and ethical search engine optimization is what it takes to rank high in search engines.
Title Tag Recommendations:
Sorry, this information is for our Members only...

Meta Description Tag Analysis

Current Meta Description Tag: 

Warning: This Tag is **NOT** being used or used incorrectly. Consider using our free [Meta Tag Builder](#) to resolve this issue

- **Warning:** The **Meta Description** Tag found in this document is not correct. Our analysis found **0** Meta Description Tags. You are allowed to have one Meta Description Tag
- The Tag processed is **0** characters in length

Meta Description Tag Recommendations:

Sorry, this information is for our [Members](#) only...

Meta Keywords Tag Analysis

Current Meta Keywords Tag: 

Warning: This Tag is **NOT** being used or used incorrectly. Consider using our free [Meta Tag Builder](#) to resolve this issue

- Note - Find the best keywords for your meta tags with Wordtracker's [keyword suggestion tool](#).

- **Warning:** The **Meta Keywords** Tag found in this document is not correct. Our analysis found **0** Meta Keywords Tags. You are allowed to have one Meta Keywords Tag
- The Tag processed is **0** characters in length
- No words were repeated more than **5** times

Meta Keywords Tag Recommendations:

Sorry, this information is for our [Members](#) only...

While most search engines tend to no longer use Meta tags to crawl for information, but instead pull text directly off sites, some still use Meta tags in performing a search and many will revert to the information contained in tags for various reasons. Incorporating programmed tags is good discipline to maintaining a site that is as visible as possible to search engines. For the description tag, consider matching the first 150 characters in the opening home page paragraph proposed earlier to ensure the desired result, no matter where the search engines crawl.

Keywords

The report below shows the keywords currently in use on the existing ecidany.com home page.

Keyword	Occurrences	Percent
buffalo	6	11.32%
development	5	9.43%
niagara	4	7.55%
loan	3	5.66%
buffalo niagara	3	5.66%
links	3	5.66%
qualifier	3	5.66%
news products	2	3.77%
news	2	3.77%
buffalo niagara enterprise	2	3.77%
estimator	2	3.77%
qualifier quiz	2	3.77%
products partners	2	3.77%
economic	2	3.77%
quiz	2	3.77%
info	2	3.77%
tax	2	3.77%
enterprise	2	3.77%
contact	2	3.77%
ecida	2	3.77%
Total	53	100%

[Check Another URL](#)

[Place this Tool on Your Site](#)

Enhancing the use of keywords **throughout the text on the site** will aid in search engine placement. When choosing keywords, the staff should consider which words target audiences are likely to use when performing a site search and work those words into the relevant portions of the site text as it is updated. Keywords should focus specifically on geographical terms relative to Erie County (including interstates and state highways) and should also refer often to the site's content (the tools it provides, etc.). Remember, geographic references and terms used by the site's primary audience(s) may be just as important as county references or place names that might be recognized by existing businesses

familiar with the region. Use interstates, large markets and other easily recognizable geographic features in your keywords.

In addition, as mentioned earlier, keywords can be incorporated into Alt tags for each graphic, map or clickable item (i.e., the navigation buttons.) Alt tags could be used creatively to enhance the site's search engine optimization by including relevant keywords in their descriptions.

See the text on the location assistance page of <http://www.daytonregion.com> as a reference for good writing with keywords in mind.

Search Engine Results

The report below shows where ecidany.com URL ranked with Google, Yahoo and MSN when searched using the keywords "New York, economic development." It is clearly needs better indexing. Keywording the text on the site will help.

Get Keyword Rank Data for Your Site

Enter a URL and Keywords

URL

e.g. "traficzap.com"

Keywords

e.g. "free traffic"

Searching Google.com for 'New York, economic development'

No positions found.

Provided by **iWEBTOOL**



[Advanced Search](#)
[Preferences](#)

Web

Results 1 - 10 of about 132,000 for [New York, economic development, Erie County](#)

[New York Economic Development Directory](#)

Directory of **economic development** agencies in **New York**. ... **Erie County** Industrial **Development** Agency · Amherst Industrial **Development** Agency ...

www.ecodevdirectory.com/new_york.htm - 45k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

12

[ECIDA - Erie County Industrial Development Agency: Links](#)

Cheektowaga **Economic Development** Corporation ... **Erie County** Office of **Economic Development** ... Western **New York** Venture Association, www.wnyventure.com ...

www.ecidany.com/links.asp - 25k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

The site comes up reasonably well for “Erie County, New York, economic development,” indicating its strong keyword linkage as long as the name Erie County is present in the search. As you can see, the descriptor tag for the site could be better; keywording and a careful rewriting of the central home page paragraph will make the descriptor tag clearer for viewers and positively influence search results. During a content rewrite, make every attempt to impact the description listing for search engines.

[Links](#)

The report below shows that AltaVista found 158 sites linked to www.ecidany.com, a decent return for a site of this type. But the more links the better in search engine ranking (especially to those who are well ranked themselves). A campaign to create reciprocal links with the EDC for Erie County members, economic partners, state resources, and clients will build the link number even higher—shoot for 250.

 **altavista** Web Images MP3/Audio Video News

link://www.ecidany.com **FIND** [Advanced Search](#)
[Settings](#)

SEARCH: ☐ Worldwide ☒ USA RESULTS IN: ☒ All languages ☐ English, Spanish

AltaVista found 158 results

[Page Title](#)

Town of Tonawanda Development Corp. - A Member of the Economic ... Erie County Industrial Development Agency. January 1, 2006—The Empire Zone Administrative ...

www.tonawanda.com

[More pages from tonawanda.com](#)

[NY Loves Bio - We're Better Together!](#)

The 2008 BIO International Convention drew more than 20,000 attendees from 70 ... For the New York Pavilion, it was the most successful BIO Show yet. ...

www.nylovesbio.net

[More pages from nylovesbio.net](#)

[New York Economic Development Directory](#)

Directory of economic development agencies in New York. ... Designed for business people, company real estate departments, and site selection consultants. ...

www.ecodevdirectory.com/new_york.htm

[More pages from ecodevdirectory.com](#)

[Buffalo Urban Development Corporation](#)

The BUDC's mission is to create a dynamic and responsive project development process and team, capable of meeting the special needs and challenges associated with ...

budc.ecidany.com

[More pages from budc.ecidany.com](#)

WEB SITE FUNDAMENTALS

The following is a primer on solid economic development web site content. It can be used to illustrate some of the specific suggestions made in the 1st section.

CONTENT

Data

The need for timely, accurate and comprehensive data is paramount in recruitment sites. Perhaps two of the most data intensive sites in the United States are those in Virginia and the State of Washington.

www.YesVirginia.org
www.choosewashington.com

On a local level, two sites presenting deep data are:

www.chooseneindiana.com
www.gobep.com

Standards for economic development web site data were established by a committee of economic development consultants, research experts and site selection consultants through the International Economic Development Council (IEDC.) The complete IEDC recommended data standards can be found at:

[http://www.iedconline.org/index.php?p=Data Standards](http://www.iedconline.org/index.php?p=Data_Standards).

A condensed version of the IEDC data tables, developed by ED Solutions, Inc., is presented on the next few pages. This can serve as a template of sorts for the creation of a data rich site. Remember: Provide source and date for all data presented on your site.

Site and Building Data

Since site and building data is considered one of the top three data elements of a quality economic development site, this data is important to include. It should contain the following characteristics.

- Searchable database-driven content.
- Database generated from potentially four sources: regional, state, broker and local ED offices.
- GIS data layers.
- Flexible printing and emailing of selected records.

Demographics

(Regional/MSA data is included in recognition of the need to present data in a scale useful to the site visitor).

Again, as an exhaustive data checklist, the following should be considered.

These are taken from IEDC tables 1 and 2:

- Aggregate population totals by region.
- Population w/growth estimates by county/municipality.
- Population by age/ median age by county.
- Median household income by county/municipality.
- Labor force size by region.
- Labor force size by county.
- Labor force participation rate by county.

Workforce

- Workforce by region; graduation data.
- Workforce by county; graduation data.
- Occupational breakdown by region.
- Occupational breakdown by county.
- Unemployment rate history by region.
- Unemployment rate history by county.
- Occupational Wage Rates by MSA.
- List colleges and universities in the region.
- Number of graduates by institution/degree type (NCES).
- Aggregate number of graduates by curriculum/degree type (NCES).
- List technical and trade schools in the region w/ major programs of study.
- Show first by region, then by county or community:
 - o Percent of adults graduated from high school.
 - o Percent of adults with some college.
 - o Percent of adults graduated from college.
 - o Median years of education.

Cost of Doing Business

The following data tables are taken from IEDC tables 15 and 17:

- An overview of federal taxes for the benefit of international firms considering an American presence.
- State business taxes possibly with links.
- Local business taxes by county and municipality.
- Local real estate taxes by county and municipality.
- List major elected officials, political affiliation, and link to official web site for jurisdictions.
- Workman's and unemployment compensation perhaps linked to state database to calculate rates.
- Utilities:
 - o Electric.
 - o Natural gas.
 - o Telecommunications.
 - o Water/sewer, region and local. Include contact information for each.
- ACCRA cost of living estimates showing cost savings over time.

Transportation

- Major highways, list and map.
- Major highway improvement projects underway/planned. Include links.
- Major improvement plans.
- Freight rail.
- Airport(s). List airlines and markets served (domestic & international). Number of direct flights to domestic and international markets.
- List of commuter airports in the region, map
- Mention the various freight air service providers.
- Truck terminals. Number of common carriers. Sample pricing by illustration.
- Ports/ port activity.

Regional Access

- This is a placeholder for information on access to markets. The use of maps and data tables is a good way to illustrate market access and the transportation infrastructure to access these markets.

Industry

Here again is an exhaustive listing of the most important data taken from the IEDC standards, tables 3, 4, 5, 10 and 11:

- Industry breakdown by region.
- Industry breakdown by counties.
- List largest employers/number of employees in region.
- List largest employers/number of employees by county.
- List new businesses w/more than 50 employees in region (3 yrs).
- List recent downsizings of more than 50 employees in region (3 yrs).
- Targeted Industry Clusters. For each cluster:
 - o List advantages of the region.
 - o List top firms in the region by number of employees.
 - o Business/Financial Services.
 - o List advantages of region.
 - o List top firms in the region by number of employees.
- Manufacturing:
 - o List advantages of the region.
 - o List top firms in the region by number of employees.
- Warehouse/Distribution:
 - o List advantages of the region.
 - o List top firms in the region by number of employees.
- The Knowledge Industry:
 - o List advantages of the region.
 - o List top firms.
- International Business:
 - o List advantages of the region.
 - o List of foreign owned firms with an American presence in region.

Quality of Place

Additionally, ED organizations should consider adding navigation and content that will help the area attract talent to build its local workforce. Those seeking work these days are more interested than ever before in the amenities of the place they live and are more likely to locate somewhere that meets their tastes for recreation and lifestyle rather than simply locating for a job. Consider quality of **place** vs. quality of **life**. Highlight things to do in the area on your website and increase the interactivity of the site to allow those in the community (or seeking to relocate to the community) to connect each other through blogs, wikis,

Facebook versions on the community website, discussion threads/message boards, and RSS feeds.

Because location decisions for large companies or corporate headquarters are often made based upon the attractiveness of the community to the transferring and relocating staff from the company, information on cost of living; housing; recreational, social, and cultural endeavors; and opportunities for trailing spousal employment, may make or break a location decision.

Data Format & Flexibility

One of the most important features of top quality economic development sites is the flexibility of the site's data. The format should allow the visitor to extract the data for further study. There are three main formats in use in ED sites, namely:

- HTML
- PDF
- Excel, Word, etc

If possible the data sets should be made available in a downloadable format(s). This is a real trend in ED web sites, especially those focused on recruitment. Please visit www.gobep.com (the Regional Data and Statistics section) for an example of a site which makes heavy use of downloadable data tables. **This improvement is perhaps the single most important enhancement any site can make.**

A regional economic development group in Indiana provides an excellent example of the use of all three formats:

www.chooseNEIndiana.com

GIS Functionality

Geographic Information System (GIS) is a collection of computer hardware, software, and geographic data for capturing, managing, analyzing, and displaying all forms of geographically referenced information. With GIS, you can link information (attributes) to location data, such as people to addresses, buildings to parcels, or streets within a network. You can then layer that information to give you a better understanding of how it all works together. You choose what layers to combine based on what questions you need to answer.

Visitors can search:

Economic Development Board
Blount Partnership

Welcome to Blount County, TN
connecting business, technology, nature & people 865.963.7715
www.blountindustry.com

Sites & Buildings Maps County Profiles

Printable Email Acrobat Word Excel

TVAed.com
Blount County Economic Development Corporation

New Search
Instructions & Help
Home
About This Website
FAQ
Add Properties

Search available properties by use & size

Type: **All Property Types**
Office Building
Industrial Building
Call Center Building
Warehouse Building
Land

Minimum Size:
Maximum Size:
Units: **Square Feet**
Railroad Access: ☐
Minimum Ceiling Height: Feet (Please enter a number. Do not include any symbol ("))

Geography: **All Region**
☐ properties for lease
☐ properties for sale
☐ Search only Megasites
Search

DIRECTIONS:
To search for an available site or vacant building:
1. Select the type of property you want.
2. Type in a number for the minimum or maximum size property you want.
3. Select if you want the search to be in Square Feet (for buildings) or Acres (for land)
4. Select if you want a property with railroad access.
5. Select if you want a property that is for lease.
6. Select if you want a property that is for sale.
7. Click on the search button.

Results can be viewed on a map:

8 properties were found.
1-8

Directions: Click on a numbered property on the map to create a detailed property report.

	Address	City, State	Type	Min Size	Max Size	Rail Access	Min Ceiling	Max Ceiling
1.	115 N Calderwood - New Midland Plaza	ALCOA, TN	office, call center	10,000 SF	100,000 SF	no	10	20
2.	1709 Henn G Lane Street - Klotz International Facility	MARYVILLE, TN	industrial, warehouse	54,000 SF	54,000 SF	no	16	24
3.	2055 Alcoa Hwy - Tyson Centre Building One	ALCOA, TN	office, call center	2,500 SF	45,400 SF	no	8	8
4.	254 National Drive - Smith Woods Bldg	MARYVILLE, TN	industrial, warehouse	50,000 SF	110,000 SF	yes	25	30
5.	Fred Lawson Lane - Partnership Park South	MARYVILLE, TN	industrial	50,000 SF	150,000 SF	no	21	24
6.	Pearly Smith Road	LOUISVILLE, TN	land	1.00 Acres	42.00 Acres	yes		
7.	Stock Creek Blvd	ROCKFORD, TN	industrial	43,500 SF	43,500 SF	no	20	20
8.	Wrights Ferry Road	ALCOA, TN	land	1.00 Acres	48.00 Acres	yes		

View property records and aerial photos:



Street Address	Fred Lawson Lane - Partnership Park South
City	MARYVILLE
Type of space	Industrial
Available	yes
Site/Building Name	Partnership Park South Speculative Building
Minimum Available	50,000 SqFt
Maximum Available	150,000 SqFt
Divisible	no
For Sale	yes
For Lease	yes
Total Sq. Ft.	50,000
Site Acreage	unlimited
Sale Price	1,600,000 +property cost
Lease Type	NNN
Lease Rate	negotiable
Building Information	
Total Building Square Feet	50,000 - Expandable to 100,000
Available Building Square Feet	50,000
Contiguous Acres Available for Development	50
Number of Stories	1
Office Space	Expandable
Number of Parking Spaces	138
Ownership	public
Year Building Built	2005
Multi-tenant	No
Previous Major Tenants:	None
Building Construction Material	Tilt-up Concrete
Concrete Floor Thickness	No floor at this time
Ceiling Height Minimum	21
Ceiling Height Maximum	24
Number of Dock High Doors with Levelers	4
Number of Drive in Doors	2
Building Dimensions	200' x

And customized demographics:

Printable Email Acrobat Word Excel

DEMOGRAPHIC REPORT

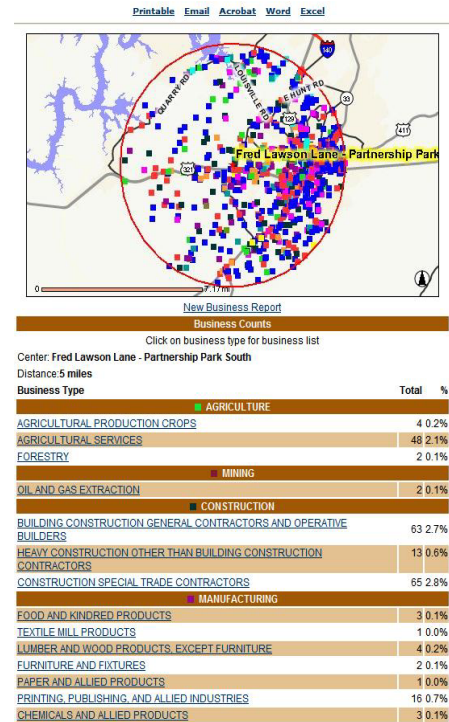
County: **BLOUNT, TN**

Report: **Demographics Report**
Consumer Expenditures
Business and Workforce

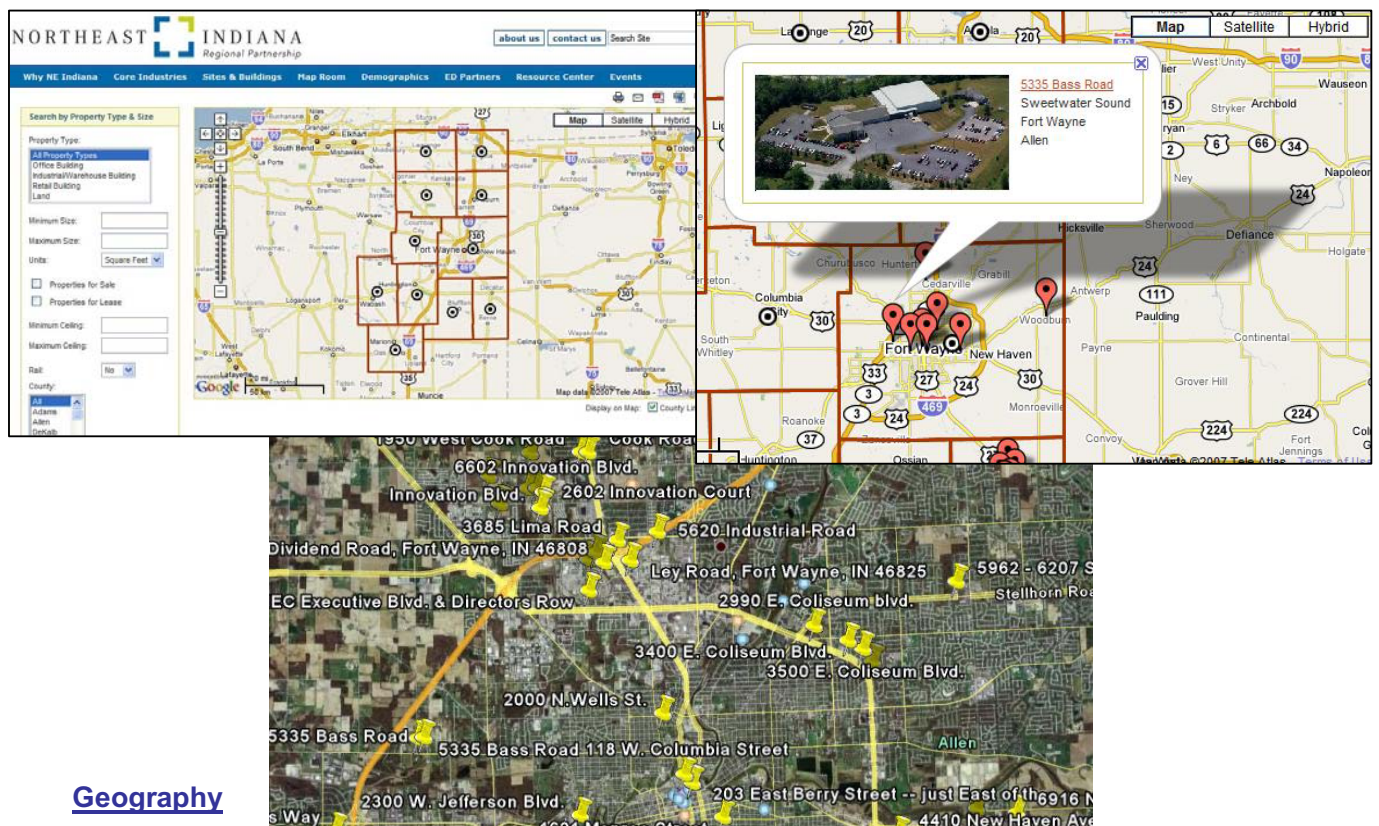
Calculate

DIRECTIONS TO CREATE A DEMOGRAPHIC REPORT:

1. Select a county.
2. Select the type of report from the pull-down menu.
3. Click on the "calculate" button and a demographic report will be created.



Or, GIS functionality can be interfaced with Google Earth, like this:



Geography

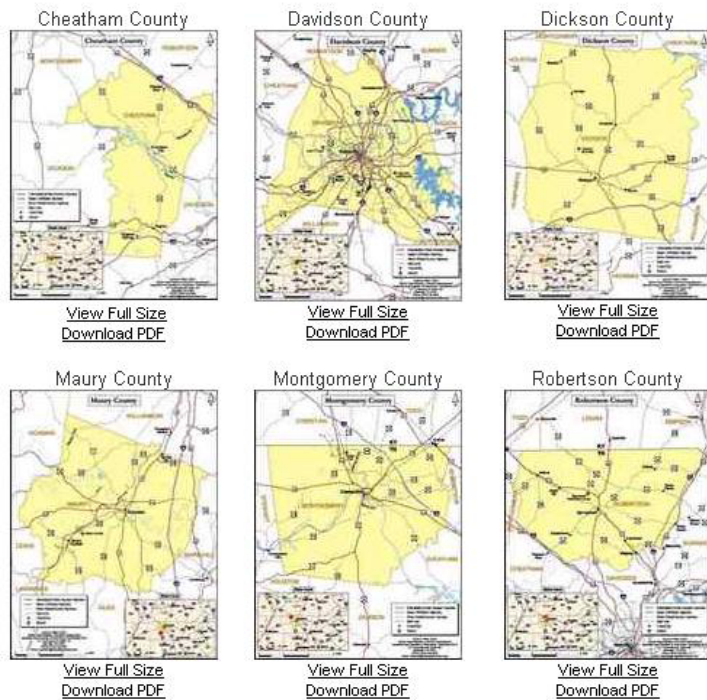
On ED sites, visitors need to be oriented to the geography being represented by the web site. The home page should contain a quality map image of the area covered, especially as it relates to the area's location with respect to other markets.

The Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership has a selection of maps on its site, including the one to the right, which helps orient the visitor geographically. www.chooseneindiana.com.



At www.nashvilleareainfo.com/Default.aspx?Page=MapRoom, the Nashville Area Chamber's site contains a map room with over 20 thematic maps, plus the locator map on the home page.

ED offices seeking to have maps designed have several options. Often times local technical schools and universities with graphic and web design programs are willing to give projects like this to students as assignments. This is a cost-effective way to get good maps done locally. In addition, there are several firms who provide mapping services online, including DeLorme Mapping (www.delorme.com/) and Atlas (fmatlas.com/atlas2). Alternately, there are some web firms with experience in creating maps for ED websites, like Cirrus ABS in Ft. Wayne, Indiana (www.cirrusabs.com.)



Links

Links serve an ED organization in three main ways:

1. They provide useful content to those sites which are linked to your site, and vice-versa.
2. They can help direct visitors to your site through direct navigation.
3. They aid in improving the search engine ranking as an indicator of the site's relevance to the search request.

A robust set of related links is a very powerful component for an economic development site. To take maximum benefit of links, they need to be considered two ways: Those links from your site to others and links from other sites to yours.

Take a look at the links page of the Pinellas County EDC in Florida for an example of a very robust links page:

<http://www.siliconbay.org/links/>.

These links serve as another business resource for a company considering the area, in that the links provide information relevant to area investigations and position the site as a comprehensive information resource.

And, the link exchange program by the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce: http://www.scrantonchamber.com/membership/link_exch.html is exemplary, offering a variety of link styles and formats as well as the HTML coding to link to its page a variety of ways.

Extras

Enhancing the “personal” connection with visitors to the site can be effective. Organizations should consider the development of more content on the Economic development staff, including bios, etc.

Take a look at how the South Central Kentucky Regional organization (www.southcentralky.com) does this.

Staff Biographies
James N. Hizer, CEcD
President/CEO
Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce



James Hizer

Since taking over the leadership role at the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce in June 2004, Jim Hizer has focused on continuing the Chamber's strong traditions of economic development, partnership growth and retention, and grass-roots assistance to its business partners. Through his career, Jim has played a lead in creating many thousands of new jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars of economic impact.

In his seven years as president/CEO of the Economic Development Corporation of Wayne County, Ind., Jim steadily improved the area's business environment to the point of being recognized as one of the top non-metropolitan areas in the country by Site Selection magazine. Building relationships in Europe and Asia, including an economic exchange relationship with a county in Germany, he was able to recruit foreign industries directly to Wayne County resulting in new jobs and significant economic impact. During his tenure over 3,000 new jobs were created and approximately \$250 million in new investment was realized through his attraction, retention and expansion efforts.

Prior to his stint in Wayne County, Ind., Jim spent a dozen years in the Chamber of Commerce industry, beginning his career as the Business Development Director at the Daytona Beach (Fla.) Area Chamber of Commerce, and progressing through the ranks to CEO of the Clinton County (Ind.) Chamber of Commerce.

STRUCTURE AND NAVIGATION

The following, taken from www.webbyawards.com, is a description of what structure and navigation is all about:

Structure and navigation refers to the framework of a site, the organization of content, the prioritization of information, and the method in which you move through the site. Sites with good structure and navigation are consistent, intuitive and transparent. They allow you to form a mental model of the information provided, where to find things, and what to expect when you click. Good navigation gets you where you want to go quickly and offers easy access to the breadth and depth of the site's content.

VISUAL DESIGN

Visual design refers to the overall appearance of the site. Here are a few examples of well-designed sites:

www.TreoAZ.com



www.LocationGeorgia.com



www.GoBep.com



www.YesMartinsville.com



INTERACTIVITY

Interactivity is really what separates the web from other media. It allows the visitor to participate in the site, communicate through it and not be merely a spectator.

Economic development sites generally do not do a very good job in this area. To enhance the interactivity of the site, one of the ideas below may be used.

1. "PDF on the fly" is unique technology allowing a visitor to construct a document from content they choose and download a finished product. Take a look at how the Blount IDB (www.blountindustry.com) does this.
2. "e-guides" is unique technology to help guide a visitor through the web site immediately after they enter. Examples of technology which may be used to construct e-guides may be found at:
www.solutionsed.com/page.php/training or
<http://conversation.i-op.com/topic/start/okcguide/intro>
3. Launching links - This does not mean that the links, when clicked, open another window, but instead open *within* the framework of the organization's site. This way, the visitor can browse other sites without leaving the organization's site, making navigation simple. If clicking on a link will open another window, visitors should be informed of this on the site and be given instructions on how to get back to the original organization's site.
4. Make it easy for the site visitor to sign up for your newsletter via the web site. Consider newsletters for different audience types with targeted content.
5. RSS Feeds- RSS or *Really Simple Syndication* is a useful tool for keeping updated on your favorite web sites. RSS makes use of an XML code that constantly scans the content of a web site for updates and then broadcasts those updates to all subscribers through a feed.
6. Construct a really useful Print This Page interface. Take a look at how www.southcentralKY.com does this.

FUNCTIONALITY

Functionality deals with how the site performs in regard to:

- ☒ Load Times

- ☑ Meta Tags
- ☑ HTML Issues
- ☑ Browser Compatibility

Load times

Research indicates the average amount of time a person will wait for a web site to load is just over 22 seconds. **The goal should be for the first page to fully load in no more than 17 seconds.**

Since it is a fact that many of the people to whom economic development web sites are directed conduct their research in the evenings from home or while on the road, where slower connections speeds are more likely, the 28.8k modem speed should be used in judging load times. In addition, using the 28.8k modem speed injects good design discipline.

The biggest contributors to slow page loading times are graphics. To enhance load times, graphics should be optimized using some of the following techniques:

1. Optimize the graphics by:
 - a. Eliminating colors in the graphic file that are not actually used in the graphic
 - b. Reducing the pixels per inch to match the resolution of the computer screen
 - c. Compressing the file itself (to the extent that is possible with the file type)
2. Make certain the graphics load “incrementally.” That is, that the text loads first and so, while the graphics are loading, a visitor can still navigate through the site and consequently not have to wait for the entire site to load.

Another impact to load times is the server on which the site is located. If it is not performing well, the site will not perform well.

Meta Tags

Although the use of Meta tags as a search engine ranking tool have been largely discontinued by the major engines, it is still a good idea to ensure these tags are

completed properly, as they provide key information about the site. Commonly used Meta tag types include **title**, **description** and **keywords**.

The keywords tag is important to ensure, to a certain extent, that the site is found by search engines. Google, for example, will look at how relevant the site is to the search keyword based on how often the keywords are found in the site itself as well as the relevance of other sites with links to the site being ranked. That being said, constructing keywords and placing them in the keyword Meta tags is a good discipline to follow, and recent research indicates that Yahoo does index keywords in Meta tags.

In determining what keywords to use, it is important to consider those which relate to geography as well as the menu headings of the site, plus words which may appear on other sites which may be linked to the organization's site. Then review the site itself for many of these to ensure they are found, thereby making them "indexable" by the search engines. Indexable means that the site contains keywords the search engines can easily find when comparing the site to those keywords being sought. Another tip: Place keywords behind graphics as "Alt tags", as these are picked up by search engines as well.

Refer to the www.searchenginewatch.com site for assistance on submitting web sites to the major engines. There are a number of firms which can help with search engine optimization on an ongoing basis. One such firm is www.bizresearch.com.

HTML Design

HTML or **H**yper **T**ext **M**ark- up **L**anguage is the "language" used by programmers (or software) to construct web sites. Standards have been developed to attempt to drive consistency in how HTML is used. Much like we have standards in how we are supposed to construct proper sentences and paragraphs in the English language, these HTML standards are the benchmark for proper web site design. The international organization www.W3c.org is the group tasked with creating these standards. The diagnostic used in this report judges the conformity of the site as it is judged against these standards.

A word of caution: Not strictly adhering to these standards does not mean the site doesn't work, or that it is broken. If a site has a great number of HTML

design errors, however, they can affect the way the site looks when viewed using different Internet browsers and different version of different browsers.

Browser Compatibility

As explained above, the www.W3c.org is the international consortium responsible for creating standards in web site design. Their main goal is to make sites “interoperable,” meaning they will all work with various browsers and different versions of these browsers. Therefore, when a site does not conform to these standards, i.e., has errors in the HTML design (above), the site may look or act differently with different browsers. As above, it doesn’t mean the site is “broken,” it simply means the site may not look the same, or appear at a different orientation on the screen, etc.

In any case, conformity to these standards is a good design style and numerous errors in these two diagnostics are one possible indication of poor design.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

In addition to those already mentioned other sites that may be helpful for content, design and structure include:

- ☑ www.expandinjax.com
- ☑ www.siliconbay.org
- ☑ <http://www.knoxvilleoakridge.org>
- ☑ www.southcentralky.com
- ☑ www.charlotteusa.com

CONCLUSIONS

It was a pleasure reviewing and analyzing The Economic Development Corporation for Erie County's web site. Again, the priority recommendations for this site are:

- Get a running start on application design and content needs before contracting with a firm, thinking carefully about navigation and content designed around your audience.
- Shop carefully for a web design firm that can supply you with the strong database construction and the support you will need for the tools and information you plan to supply and share.
- Create a thematic map and a keyword-rich central paragraph on the home page to locate Erie County, emphasize the site's audience and purpose, and increase search optimization.
- Put globally positioned contact information (including phone) at the top of each page and on all downloadable material.
- Add an emphasis for the credit reporting service
- Emphasize services (especially for existing businesses) and create case studies to show off the EDC for Erie County's skills and expertise
- Translate a general services publication (1 to 2 pages) into those languages whose countries the EDC is active in for trade and inward investment.
- Work on creating keyword-rich content as you give context to your tools and information, and annotate links to improve search engine ranking.

Don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or would like further assistance. As mentioned before, we also consult around helping organizations hire web design firms, the writing of money-saving RFP's, technology-based marketing strategies, web site redesign advisory services and work plan development.



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