

# **Community Information Project (CIP)**

## **Yellow Springs Website Analysis**

### **Report of Findings**

Prepared by: Ven Adkins, Synergy-One Resource Group

10/24/05

# Community Information Project - Yellow Springs Website Analysis

## **Executive Summary**

The Advisory Committee of the Community Information Project (CIP) contracted with Ven Adkins (Synergy-One Resource Group) to perform a study to analyze the current web environment in the Yellow Springs Community and to suggest possible solutions for the creation of a definitive Community Web portal to serve as a central point of information, with the focus being on the following interest areas...

1. Local Community Information
2. Visitor information
3. Education Information
4. Business Information
5. Relocates/Investors

The study reveals that there has been considerable work performed by conscientious individuals and groups within Yellow Springs to provide information to residents and visitors via their websites. While the information provided is helpful, none of the sites present a comprehensive source for community information.

This report presents an analysis of existing Yellow Springs websites. It includes a listing of desirable components for a community website. It also includes samples of community sites that have been selected as "models" for appearance and content. It concludes with recommendations for the implementation and maintenance of a comprehensive community website for the Village of Yellow Springs.

## **Background**

With the advent and increased use of the Internet, websites (sites) have evolved to serve specific needs of specific businesses, groups and individuals. These sites have generally been created in solo efforts with little coordination with other businesses, groups and individuals.

In regard to Community information, this methodology does not readily serve the community as the effort to provide needed information is scattered among individuals and groups or may not exist at all. The CIP's interest is to possibly develop a comprehensive community website that will serve as a centralized portal to inform, educate and connect the community.

## **The Process**

In the original proposal for this study process (Appendix A), the final task (*Contract with existing site to provide Community Information content or embark on development of separate Community Information website*) was beyond the scope of the study and should not have been included. This is a task for the CIP Advisory Committee subsequent to this study.

## **Community Information Project - Yellow Springs Website Analysis**

In addition, the interview process was not conducted as originally conceived. As the study developed, it became apparent that there were a minimal number of potential host sites. These sites are primarily owned/maintained by a few individuals and efforts to schedule the interviews proved unsuccessful.

The primary activities conducted were the gathering of information regarding existing Yellow Springs websites, analyzing their content, determining the viability of existing sites to become the community site, researching other community sites to determine the desired elements of a comprehensive community site and locating a model from which the community site might be developed. Specifically...

- The Internet was searched for "Yellow Springs Ohio" with the resulting links examined for community information. Over 40 sites were reviewed and the content documented.
- "Yellow Springs Ohio" sites containing significant amounts of community information were analyzed for their content and appearance. Six sites fell into this category.
- The Internet was searched to determine if there were other studies relating to community websites completed or in process. Only one such study was located and researched (performed by the Australian government)
- The Internet was searched for various commentaries on "community websites" with the resulting sites examined for content and appearance. While this topic was not extensive, there were numerous references, including documents referencing "top" community websites.
- A set of requirements deemed beneficial to a community site were established by reviewing the content of the community sites examined, as well as, input from members of the CIP Advisory Committee.
- Exemplary community sites were selected as models for appearance and content. These sites are described later in the report.
- Recommendations for the implementation and maintenance were developed.

### **Community Related Sites**

The Internet search for "Yellow Springs Ohio" revealed over 40 unique sites, ranging from local sites to commercial non-local sites (for example, yellowsprings.areaconnect.com). Each site was reviewed for community content. The majority contained minimal community information, but did provide some links to those sites containing a higher degree of information.

## Community Information Project - Yellow Springs Website Analysis

Among the sites reviewed were:

<a href="http://www.yso.com">www.yso.com</a>	<a href="http://www.yellowspringsohio.org">www.yellowspringsohio.org</a>
<a href="http://www.yellowsprings.com">www.yellowsprings.com</a>	<a href="http://www.wyso.com">www.wyso.com</a>
<a href="http://www.greenecountyohio.org">www.greenecountyohio.org</a>	<a href="http://www.antioch-college.edu">www.antioch-college.edu</a>
<a href="http://www.yellowsprings.com/cr">www.yellowsprings.com/cr</a>	<a href="http://www.yellow-springs.k12.oh.us">www.yellow-springs.k12.oh.us</a>
<a href="http://www.antiochschool.org">www.antiochschool.org</a>	<a href="http://www.ysnews.com">www.ysnews.com</a>
<a href="http://www.45387.org">www.45387.org</a>	<a href="http://www.youngsdairy.com">www.youngsdairy.com</a>
<a href="http://www.yshistory.org">www.yshistory.org</a>	<a href="http://www.yscitizens.org">www.yscitizens.org</a>
<a href="http://www.connect.yellowsprings.com">www.connect.yellowsprings.com</a>	<a href="http://www.greenecountyohio.net">www.greenecountyohio.net</a>
<a href="http://www.cedarvilleohio.net">www.cedarvilleohio.net</a>	<a href="http://www.yellowsprings.areaconnect.com">www.yellowsprings.areaconnect.com</a>
<a href="http://www.thespringsmotel.com">www.thespringsmotel.com</a>	<a href="http://www.tonyarnett.com">www.tonyarnett.com</a>
<a href="http://www.yellowspringsrealestate.com">www.yellowspringsrealestate.com</a>	<a href="http://www.miamitownship.net">www.miamitownship.net</a>
<a href="http://www.hearthstone-inn.com/yellow%20springs.com">www.hearthstone-inn.com/yellow%20springs.com</a>	

The sites with the most significant amount of community information were...

<a href="http://www.yso.com">www.yso.com</a> -	The Village of Yellow Springs (Government)
<a href="http://www.yellowspringsohio.org">www.yellowspringsohio.org</a> -	The Yellow Springs Chamber of Commerce (Non-Profit)
<a href="http://www.yellowsprings.com">www.yellowsprings.com</a> -	Yellow Springs.com (Commercial)
<a href="http://www.yellowsprings.com/cr">www.yellowsprings.com/cr</a> -	Community Resources (Non-Profit)
<a href="http://www.45387.org">www.45387.org</a> -	Yellow Springs Men's Group (Non-Profit)
<a href="http://connect.yellowsprings.com">connect.yellowsprings.com</a> -	Connect.YellowSprings.Com (Commercial)

These sites were found to provide a variety of well-needed and desired, community information. Many of the other sites reviewed provide links to the above sites, with some providing links to the commercial site, while others provide links to the government and/or non-profit sites. Much of the community information provided by YellowSprings.Com is presented by way of links to the Community Resources site.

### **Findings/Commentary on Yellow Springs Community Sites**

The following are general findings and comments relating to the specific sites mentioned above.

#### **www.yso.com (The Village of Yellow Springs - Government)**

This site is the official site of the Village of Yellow Springs. It is operated by the Village and hosted and primarily maintained by Bruce Cornett, Servlet, Inc. It provides the Community with a broad spectrum of information directly related to Village business. Specific categories include...

Building/Permitting, Channel 13, Council, Community, Economic Development, Employment, Government, Income Tax, Mediation, Library, Mayor's Court, Ordinances, Parks and Recreation, Phone Numbers,

## **Community Information Project - Yellow Springs Website Analysis**

Police Department, Public Works, Schools, Utilities, Village Manager,  
Wellhead Protection, Visitor Information

The section on Economic Development provides some brief information and a "more information" link to the Community Resources site, as well as, information on the Cooperative Economic Development Agreement (CEDA) and a listing of available commercial property.

The section on Visitor Information is a minimal narrative. It also contains an Upcoming Events section (no events were posted at the time of review).

The Village's domain name does not effectively reflect a government site. General naming conventions for government sites end with .gov, as in the case of Clark County, Ohio ([www.clarkcountyohio.gov](http://www.clarkcountyohio.gov)). Still another convention used is similar to Greene County's domain ([www.co.greene.oh.us](http://www.co.greene.oh.us)). To more clearly establish itself as the "Official" government site and to reduce confusion relating to other Yellow Springs sites, Village government should be encouraged to register a more meaningful domain name (e.g., [www.yellowspringsohio.gov](http://www.yellowspringsohio.gov) or [www.ci.yellowsprings.oh.us](http://www.ci.yellowsprings.oh.us)). Village government should also seek to establish itself as "Official site" and properly categorized in Yahoo's Search Directory (see comment in [www.yellowsprings.com](http://www.yellowsprings.com) section below regarding their listing with Yahoo).

### **www.yellowspringsohio.com (The Yellow Springs Chamber of Commerce)**

The Yellow Springs Chamber of Commerce maintains this non-profit site. It has been upgraded within the past few months to reflect a more attractive, easily navigated, format. The Chamber has emphasized the importance of current events to the community and has begun providing current event information on its home page, as well as providing an events page.

The current format provides the Chamber with a structure that allows it to broaden to supply more information and functionality. Michael Cannon (MPOWERD) currently maintains the site under contract to the Chamber. Currently there are no designated enhancements planned or under development.

The current site format was developed by Bruce Cornett and his associates, and donated free of charge to the Chamber. It is also hosted by Servlet, Inc. (Bruce Cornett), on a gratis basis to the Chamber.

### **www.yellowsprings.com (Yellow Springs.com)**

This commercial site is owned by Servlet, Inc. (Bruce Cornett) and maintained by Tony Arnett. It is, most likely, the first site that was created providing information relating to Yellow Springs. By the nature of its domain name, with it's more explicit naming, it is more likely to be used as the common site for Community information (of which it contains much). It's includes...

## Community Information Project - Yellow Springs Website Analysis

Village News, The Grapevine, Community Soapbox, Calendar, Classifieds, Weather, Moonscopes, Visitors, Business Directory, Community, Local Links, Government, Village Ordinances, Charter, Community Organizations (link to Community Resources sub-site), Area Schools, Street Fair Information, Community Round Table Forum (link to [www.45387.org/forum](http://www.45387.org/forum)), Links to affiliate sites and the Little Art Theatre (non-functioning).

The Visitors section includes links to Community Resources Directories for Business and Organizations, Shopping, Dining, and Lodging, and Realtors, as well as a new link to Houses For Sale. It contains a currently non-functioning link to a Village web page, "Interested in locating your business in Yellow Springs?"

This site is mis-categorized on the popular Search Directory, Yahoo, as the "Village of Yellow Springs" and as an "Official site" in the Category: Ohio > Yellow Springs > Government. This is misleading to visitors who may be seeking the true "Official site" of the Village of Yellow Springs. Encouragement of Servlet, Inc. (Bruce Cornett), owner of [www.yellowsprings.com](http://www.yellowsprings.com), to re-categorize their site is highly recommended.

### **[www.yellowsprings.com/cr](http://www.yellowsprings.com/cr) (Community Resources)**

This sub-site of [www.yellowsprings.com](http://www.yellowsprings.com) is operated by Community Resources and provides community, visitor, business and organization information. It includes...

Center for Business and Education, Business Directory, Visitor Guide, Resident Guide, Business for Sale, Commercial Real Estate, Business and Organization Directory.

The Visitor Guide provides a narrative of the business and cultural climate, local government, demographics, infrastructure, tax structure, the community's desire for "community-friendly" business.

The Resident Guide provides a narrative on such topics as the business history of the village; the role businesses play in the tax base and infrastructure needs, and demographic information.

The directories may not be all-inclusive, as each business or organization. The site was initially seeded with information and businesses and organizations were given the charge of maintaining their own information. New businesses and organizations have an option on the site to add their information. The information contained on this site is maintained by the individual businesses and organizations at their discretion. For this reason, it is uncertain as to whether or not the information is current.

### **[www.45387.org](http://www.45387.org) (Yellow Springs Men's Group)**

## Community Information Project - Yellow Springs Website Analysis

This site was developed by the Yellow Springs Men's Group. It includes...

Quicklinks to organizations (alpha listing with narrative, contact info and web links for each organization), Directory of Organizations (full alpha listing with narrative, contact info and web links for each organization; 204 total organizations), Interactive Community Calendar, Add your organization to our site, Documents (Public Information), Yellow Springs Community Forum sub-site (Community Information), and information regarding the Yellow Springs Men's Group.

The organization information on [www.45387.org](http://www.45387.org) somewhat duplicates, but enhances, the information provided on the Community Resources site, in that it provides additional information that is not provided on the Community Resources site. In addition, [www.45387.org](http://www.45387.org) also provides some Village Government documents which are also provided on the Village government site.

### **connect.yellowsprings.com (Connect.YellowSprings.Com)**

This is a relatively new sub-site of [www.yellowsprings.com](http://www.yellowsprings.com) and maintained by Michael Cannon (MPOWRD). It provides a digital bulletin board for the community including...

Freebies, Requests, Carpool, Events, Network, Chat, Links and Misc.

The site is in it's infancy and has minimal information and traffic as of this report.

### **General Comments Relating to Content of Existing Sites**

**Yellow Springs information** in the form of narratives about the Village of Yellow Springs appears on numerous sites including the Village of Yellow Springs, the Chamber of Commerce, Community Resources and Springs Realty.

**Business directories and information** can be found in varying degrees at the Village of Yellow Springs, the Chamber of Commerce, and Community Resources, as well as on the Antioch-College site in the form of the "Antioch College Survivors Guide."

**Non-profit organization directories and information** can likewise be found at the Village of Yellow Springs, the Chamber of Commerce, Community Resources and the Yellow Springs Men's Group.

**Business/Organization directories** for the majority of these sites categorize the businesses/organizations for ease of reference. For example, Shopping, Dining, Arts and Entertainment, etc.

**Village information** can be found primarily at the Village website, but can also be found on YellowSprings.Com and the Yellow Springs Men's Group.

## Community Information Project - Yellow Springs Website Analysis

**Calendars of events** can be found at the Chamber of Commerce, YellowSprings.Com, The Yellow Springs Men's Group and WYSO. They range from listings of events to interactive calendar's. The addition of events in all cases is screened by the respective webmasters.

**Visitor information** can be found in a wide range of formats at the Village of Yellow Springs, the Chamber of Commerce, YellowSprings.Com and Community Resources.

### **Desirable Content for Comprehensive, Community Website**

As described previously, a comprehensive community website should address the following constituents...

- local community (residents),
- visitors,
- education,
- business,
- relocatees and investors.

All with the concept of providing effective, accurate information that can improve lives and promote the sustainability of the community.

Content has been gathered from numerous sources/sites and is included in table format in **Appendix B**. This information is provided as a broad listing of desirable content and by no means should be considered complete. The information is offered as a menu and checklist for content to be included in the initial site design. The table lists by subject (or main topic) area, the functionality, keywords to assist in viewing/sorting, the interest groups to which the functionality applies and, whether the functionality currently exists on Yellow Springs websites and, if so, where. The table can be utilized to prioritize functionality and implementation by addressing those items that apply to the greater number of interest groups, and as a checklist in the development of a comprehensive site.

### **Desirable Content - Links**

To be effective, the Community site should provide and, therefore, maintain as much information as possible to ensure that visitors get the information they want when they need it. Where information is more appropriately provided by other Village websites (e.g., Village of Yellow Springs site) links should be provided to those sites. For the total success of the site, it will be important to encourage these "other" sites to also provide reciprocal links to the Community site. An important example of such a cross-link would be to the WYSO Radio site, which has a very high hit rate. A reciprocal link from WYSO to the Community site would help promote the site.



## **Community Information Project - Yellow Springs Website Analysis**

### **Potential Locations (Existing Sites) for a Comprehensive Village Website**

The current web configuration within the Village indicates two potential hosts for a comprehensive Village website; The Village of Yellow Springs and The Yellow Springs Chamber of Commerce. A third alternative is the creation of separate website.

The **Village of Yellow Springs** website is comprehensive in regard to information relating to the operation and functioning of the Village and providing residents with needed information. In regard to advertising and promoting the Village itself and the local economy, it has its limitations. This site is currently maintained by Servlet, Inc. (Bruce Cornett), with possibly some content maintained by Village personnel.

Research of other community websites shows a strong presence in the official government site as the community portal. The Village site should be considered a strong candidate for the Yellow Springs comprehensive site.

The **Yellow Springs Chamber of Commerce** has recently upgraded its original website to a new, more attractive and functional format. The site now has the structure to allow it to broaden to supply more information and functionality. The Chamber website is currently maintained by Michael Cannon, MPOWERD, under contract to the Chamber. Currently there are no designated enhancements being developed, merely maintenance to Chamber and member information, and event information.

The Chamber is currently undergoing internal changes and is in the process of developing a Strategic Plan to present to its members for approval. There is an expressed desire amongst some individuals for the Chamber to expand its scope beyond its member base to a broader, Village/Township economic base. Should the membership approve such a change and move in that direction, the Chamber site could effectively become a comprehensive, community site.

In the event that neither of the above alternatives proves viable, a new website registered and developed, with an attractive domain name such as "DiscoverYellowSprings.com." Should this direction be chosen, the support of such a site should require promotion and cooperation with existing sites to create a supportive web community.

### **Selection of Potential Site Formats**

The process for selecting possible site designs was performed through general research using the Internet. Materials and information were gathered from as far away as Tasmania, where a government funded project ([www.rirdc.gov.au/reports/HCC/05-079.pdf](http://www.rirdc.gov.au/reports/HCC/05-079.pdf)) was conducted to help define the content and structure of a community based website. The site developed out of this study is [www.discoverlaunceston.com](http://www.discoverlaunceston.com). Launceston is the third oldest city in Australia. The site is being selected and presented as a top choice model for the Yellow Springs Community Website. It is visually appealing and comprehensive in its content and promotion of the community, Its pages,

## Community Information Project - Yellow Springs Website Analysis

relating to key interest areas (Local Community, Visitors, Education, Business and Relocates/Investors) are illustrated in **Appendix C, Exhibits 1 through 6.**

Additional sites selected for consideration are those for the cities of Seattle, Washington, ([www.seattle.gov](http://www.seattle.gov)), San Diego, California (<http://www.sandiego.gov>), Tucson, Arizona, (<http://www.ci.tucson.az.us>), Park City, Utah (<http://www.parkcity.org>), and Roswell, Georgia (<http://www.roswell.ga.us>) These sites have been selected as models for content. The visual format can be customized to be as simple or complex as meets the requirements for the comprehensive site. Sample pages of these sites appear in the following exhibits. Illustrations of these sites appear in **Appendix D.** Very impressive is the Roswell, Georgia, "Just For Kids" site, which includes city history, government information, puzzles, games, and safety tips, "just for kids."

### **Levels of Implementation**

There are two means by which a comprehensive Yellow Springs Community Website could be implemented. The first is for the CIP to partner with an existing organization in an effort to upgrade an existing site to a comprehensive site. The second is for the CIP to sponsor the development of an entirely new site from the ground up and then work to collaborate with existing sites to share links, reduce the need to maintain the same information in multiple locations, and to build on the concept of central community information availability.

Using existing organizations will, most likely, require additional sources of funding. Developing a new site will require that an organization be located to continue the maintenance at the end of the Community Information Project.

The "model" sites researched and presented in this study are primarily government sites. This appears to be the most obvious host organization for a community site.

**Alternative 1 - The Village of Yellow Springs** is a top choice for the location of the community site. The Village site already contains much community information and has sections that touch on Visitation and Economic Development. The Village currently contracts with Servlet, Inc. (Bruce Cornett) for the maintenance of the site. It would need to be determined if the Village could assume the host role for the community site within its current website budget (amount unknown). If this could not be accomplished, the CIP could oversee and fund the development of the site and then perhaps turn over the site to the Village upon completion. Ongoing maintenance of the site would most likely be a financial limitation for the Village. An illustration of the Village website home page appears in **Appendix E.**

**Alternative 2 - The Yellow Springs Chamber of Commerce** is strong alternative for selection as the comprehensive site. This site already contains much information relating to local events, visitation and local businesses. Chamber Acting President, Don Hollister, has indicated a strong desire for the Chamber's to serve in this role. With the Chamber's current budget, it would require additional funding to take on the expansion

## **Community Information Project - Yellow Springs Website Analysis**

of their site to a community site and the subsequent maintenance requirements. Approval by a majority vote of the Chamber's membership would also be required. An illustration of the Chamber's new home page appears in **Appendix E**.

**Alternative 3** – The **development of a new Community website** is the third alternative, as mentioned previously. This alternative would require a small investment up front to register the domain name and obtain a host for the site. The initial development costs would be considerably higher than the other alternatives as the site would have to be designed and developed in its entirety.

### **Development and On-going Maintenance/Support**

The development of a comprehensive Yellow Springs Community website will require a concentrated team effort, regardless of the method selected (enhancement or new development). A developer should be hired to develop the site in conjunction with and supervised by a Website Committee. It would be highly desirable to contract with local developers for the design and development, however, an alternative that would perhaps be less expensive, is contracting with Wright State University. Antioch College's Glen Helen Ecology Institute contracted with Wright State several years ago for an affordable website development solution.

The on-going maintenance and support of the Community site will require a part-time staff person. It is recommended that the support position be proactive in that the individual(s) maintaining the site should seek out information in order to ensure complete, accurate, up to date information, rather than wait for information to be submitted.

As stated earlier, it is imperative for the success of a community site that it be accurate, up to date and reliable.

### **Phased Approach**

The Community Website can be implemented using a phased approach. Utilizing a rank ordering of the desired content defined in Appendix B, information/functionality can be provided that has the most impact to the community, with remaining content for implementation as time and resources are available.

### **Funding Options for Ongoing Support**

Ongoing support will be paramount to the success of the Community website. With the very nature of its purpose being a central site for Village information, it is imperative that the information be kept current and accurate.

To facilitate the funding of the maintenance function, a paid advertising section could be incorporated for businesses to promote specials. In addition, Organizations benefiting

## **Community Information Project - Yellow Springs Website Analysis**

from the site, could be solicited for donations, which, depending on where the site is located, could possibly be tax deductible. The site could also include a Classified section whereby residents could offer items and services at an affordable rate. Other options could include government contributions, philanthropic donations and grants.

### **Conclusion**

The material in this report is presented to summarize the current website information available in the Village of Yellow Springs and to offer suggestions on alternatives for creating a comprehensive Community website. The "model" sites selected were chosen based upon appearance and content and present an ultimate picture of what a Community website could be.

In summary, this report provides two alternatives for existing Yellow Springs websites to step up to becoming a comprehensive community website; the Village of Yellow Springs and the Yellow Springs Chamber of Commerce.

Each of these organizations at the time would have difficulty providing the resources (physical and financial) to maintain a community site at the desired level of functionality. For this reason, the development of a new, community website is the most likely choice for providing this level of service to the public. The major effort would be the development of the site. Once established and functioning, the potential to hand it over to either of these organizations could become more of a possibility, as is, the possibility of funding the site through one or more of Yellow Springs philanthropic organizations.