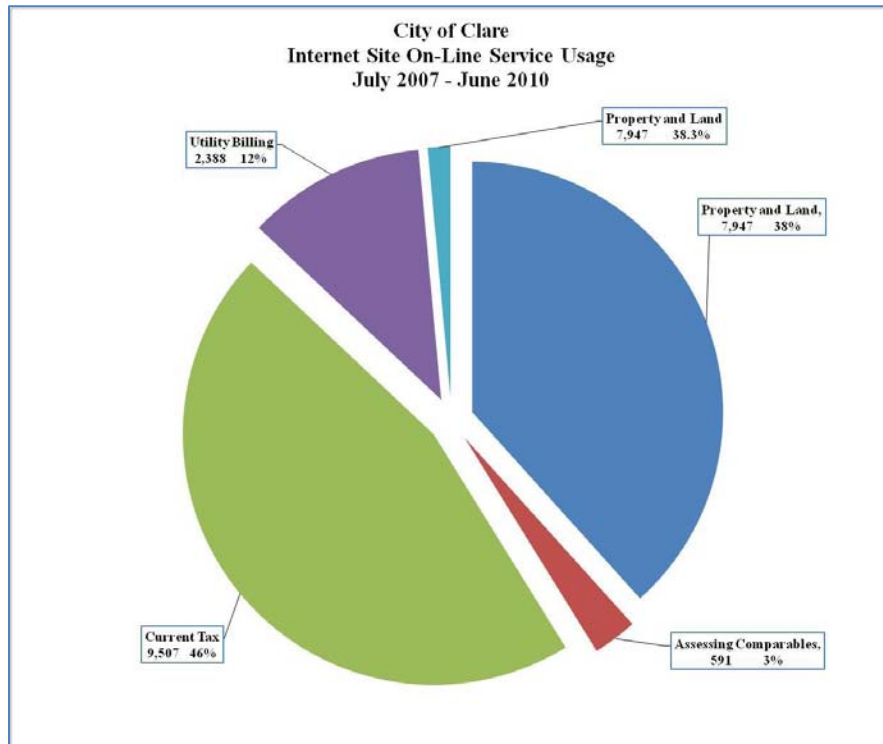


To: Mayor Pat Humphrey and the Clare City Commission
From: Steven J. Kingsbury, Treasurer and Finance Director
Date: September 1, 2010
Reference: Treasurer's Report for September 7, 2010

Information Technology Update:

- **Annual on-line services report.**
 - Included below you will find usage statistics from the City of Clare's On-Line Internet Services for the past four-years. Use of these services by the public continues to be in very high demand and it very efficiently provides the desired information in a cost-effective manner.



On-Line Service	Total Usage 7-1-09 to 6-30-10		Cumulative Usage 7-1-07 to 6-3-10	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Property and Land	2,840	37.3%	7,947	38.3%
Assessing Comparables	203	2.7%	591	2.9%
Current Tax	3,681	48.4%	9,507	45.9%
Utility Billing	755	9.9%	2,388	11.5%
Building Department	130	1.7%	302	1.5%
Total	7,609	100.0%	20,735	100.0%

Treasurer's Report for September 7, 2010 - Page Two

- **City of Clare's Internet Site Report.**
 - Enclosed for the City Commission's review and reference is a Performance Report as prepared by our Webmaster Nate Credit for the City's Internet site for the period ending June 30, 2010.
 - In summary the report affirms that our site is well received and used, is well designed and intuitive to use. There are some recommendations for expansion of the information and services provided, some of which we have already been considering. We have also identified additional uses of this communications tool to continue expanding the availability of information for the public.

- **Clare County Intergovernmental/Broadband Computer Network.**
 - Work is continuing on the expansion of services and sharing of technology of the nine member governmental entities that are connected with fiber optics. At this time all are connected or have connectivity to the fiber and are actively using the shared communications system.
 - On Wednesday, September 1st the Clare County Board of Commissioners unanimously approved the development of a contractual agreement between the County and ISP Management for the establishment and expansion of what is effectively the second phase of the high-speed governmental computer network. This second phase will be completed wireless and will be implemented as each individual township establishes their desired access and use of the network. This second phase will also provide an opportunity for the each township within Clare County to partner with ISP Management if they so desire to make high-speed Internet service available to their residents and businesses thereby serving the unserved and underserved.

Site Performance Report

Usage through June 30, 2010

Prepared for:

Steven Kingsbury

City of Clare

202 W Fifth St

Clare, MI 48617

www.cityofclare.org

Via email: skingsbury@cityofclare.org

Submitted **July 12, 2010**

Executive Summary

Continuing Strength as an Online Presence

With its new design and features in place for nearly a year (launched on August 21, 2009), the City of Clare's site has grown into a strong example of municipal Web design, and a well-used resource for City residents, visitors, and business owners. The mechanisms in place to ensure return visits have been shown to be effective, and the data show that the user interface design helps users to navigate the site efficiently.

Highlights

Visitor Loyalty	Wide Usage & Recognition	Top Content
Since launching, more than 47% of visitors have returned to the site more than once. In fact, more than 3,600 individuals have returned to the site 9 or more times. Additionally, a strong base of users is cultivated by the email update service, with more than 30 subscribers participating, and 0 users unsubscribing since the site launched.	The City of Clare's new site was accessed by 14,325 times by 7,647 absolute unique visitors in 41 states and 24 countries. 45,106 pages were viewed. These data indicate that the site has become a destination for users looking for information on the City. Paired with the data on traffic sources, it is clear that there is strong recognition of the site as a resource within the community.	The City's offerings of online services, such as property tax information as well as information on Parks & Recreation programs are the most popular items on the site. Usage patterns indicate growing credibility and usefulness of the site for residents. The site has become a first-choice destination for local information.

The data analyzed in this report were collected using Google Analytics, the industry standard tool for gathering site performance data. In line with the City's published privacy policy, all data are collected anonymously, and individual user information is not tracked. Rather, the data from all users is aggregated to compile a complete picture of the site's performance.

For the purposes of this study, the statistics identified throughout this report are those of the most recent quarter, Q2 of 2010, the period April 1 through June 30. The only exception to this is the contextual data listed in the table above regarding the full picture of site usage since the launch day.

In its first year, the data show that the City of Clare's Web site has become a key destination that users find valuable when looking for information on the City.

Key Terms

- **Visitors:** A Visitor is a construct designed to come as close as possible to defining the number of actual, distinct people who visited a website. There is of course no way to know if two people are sharing a computer from the site's perspective, but a good visitor-tracking system can come close to the actual number.
- **Absolute Unique Visitors:** The number of unduplicated (counted only once) visitors to the site over the specified time period. Once a unique visitor is identified, any future visits to the site are counted separately.
- **Bounce Rate:** Bounce rate is the percentage of single-page visits or visits in which the person left the site from the entrance (landing) page.
- **Referrer:** A site external to the City that refers visitors to the site through a direct link.
- **Keyword:** A significant word or phrase, relevant to the web page or document in question. Keyword searching is the most common form of text search on the Internet.
- **Search Engine:** A Search Engine is a program that searches documents for specified keywords and returns a list of the documents in which those keywords were found, often ranked according to relevance. Although a search engine is really a general class of programs, the term is often used to specifically describe systems like Google that enable users to search for documents on the World Wide Web.
- **Session:** A period of interaction between a visitor's browser and a particular website, ending when the browser is closed or shut down, or when the visitor leaves the site.

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Site Visitors

Data

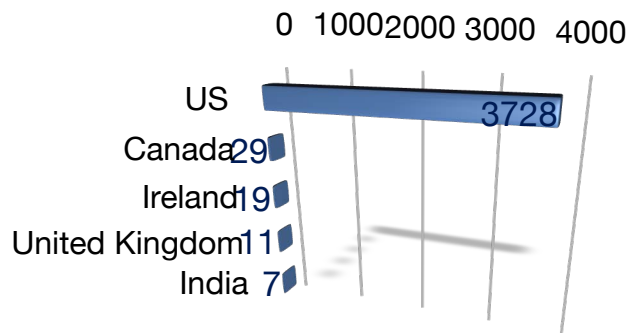
In the time period studied, the site was visited 3,832 times by 2,442 absolute unique visitors, and 12,132 total pages were viewed. Visitors came to the site primarily from Michigan (81%), as well as 41 other states and 24 different countries. The top 5 visitor countries, states, and cities are depicted graphically at the right. As would be expected, most US Visitors came from Michigan, and most Michigan visitors were from the Mid-Michigan area. (Please note: location-based tracking data is based on the user's Internet service provider's [ISP] location, not necessarily the actual physical location of the user. For example, Charter Communications subscribers will show as Mt. Pleasant on the tracking data, regardless of where the user actually resides.)

The average visitor viewed 3.17 pages per visit, spending 2:19 on the site, and 56.52% were new visitors to the site. In terms of trending, the period studied showed a decrease of 8.4% in the number of absolute unique visitors, as well as 20% decreases in both total number of visits and total pageviews, when compared to the previous quarter. Conversely, this quarter saw an increase of 4.2% in the amount of time the average visitor spent on the site (2:19), an 11.3% increase in the percentage of new visitors (56.52%), and an 8.6% decrease in the bounce rate (36.48%). While some of these statistics are negative, specifically the decreases in visits and pageviews, the other positive figures shed light on the situation.

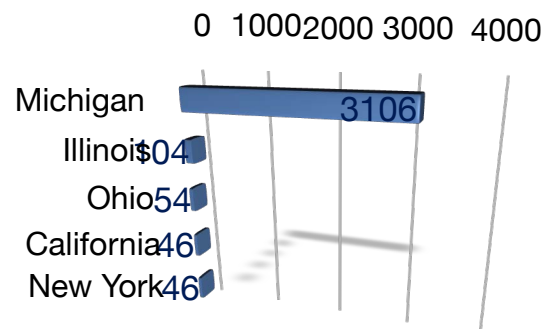
Analysis

As the site's pageviews and visitors have decreased, the time users spend on the site has increased. Additionally, the bounce rate has decreased significantly. These figures indicate that users are able to find the information they seek using the site's navigation. As they have become more familiar with the site, they are less likely to "hunt" for the page they want (thereby decreasing pageviews) and may have even bookmarked specific pages of the site for direct access. Additionally, the site's email subscription service has been very successful, to the point that no subscriber has unsubscribed since the start of the service. These users impact traffic patterns because the emails they receive provide direct links to specific pages with the exact information they have requested. These users are less likely to visit the site to check for additional new information, since

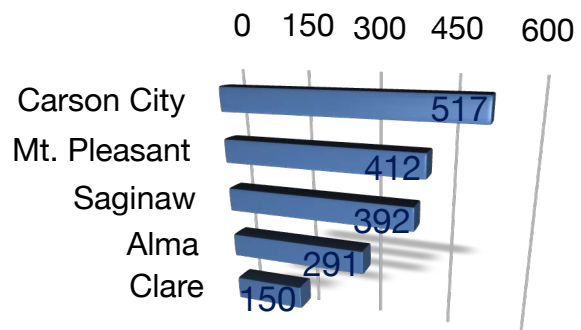
Visitors By Country



Visitors By State



Visitors By ISP City



they know they will be notified of updates to pages important to them. Taken together, the data on visitors and traffic show a picture of a site that is heavily trafficked for a municipality Clare's size, and that is seen as useful and easily navigable. To further increase the number of visits and absolute unique visitors, the City should make a concerted effort to inform residents and other interested parties of the site and its features. Examples would include mentioning it in public notices published in local newspapers, describing it on the local government access channel, and including the address on all forms, applications, bills, and other paper documents provided by the City. One final consideration with regard to the decrease in traffic is that most Internet sites generally experience less traffic in the summer months. In fact, the number of visitors was highest in April, then decreased in May and June. This is a standard trend in the industry, and is likely to reverse as the fall nears.

Visitor Loyalty

As mentioned above, 56.52% of visitors were new to the site in the time period studied. This means that the rating for visitor loyalty was 43.48%, or that just over 43% of our visitors came back to the site after their initial visit. This number has steadily grown since the site launched, and is a positive trend.

Notably, among those who returned to the site, nearly 800 users visited the site more than 9 times in the period studied, indicating that they likely found the site useful and returned for further information. Given the nature of the site, and the fact that its chief purpose is to provide information and resources to City residents and visitors, this figure should be viewed as a positive sign. The site's content appears to be working as a quality resource and a reason for users to return. It is clear that those who need to access information on the site choose to use it repeatedly as a primary source of City-related information.

Technical Characteristics

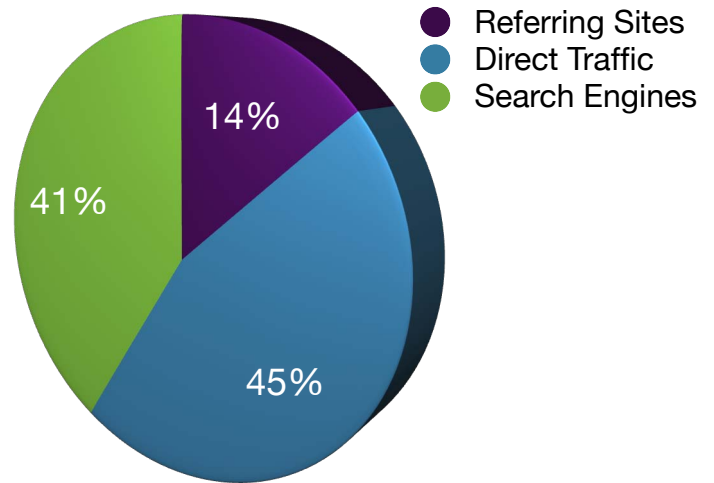
The data collected show that visitors in the quarter studied primarily accessed the site from high-speed connections. Only 2% of visitors used dialup connections, which are the slowest connections a visitor will have. The rest used cable, DSL, T1, or other methods that provide high-speed access. Interestingly, dialup visitors accessed more pages per visit, spent longer on the site, and returned to the site more frequently on average than high-speed users. The bounce rate was statistically equal for both sets of users. This sends a strong message that technology and connection speed are not barriers to access for anyone in the community, and that dialup users are able and willing to access the site as much as, if not more than, high-speed users.

In terms of specific technical details, 77.64% of visitors accessed the site using Microsoft Internet Explorer, 14.82% used Firefox, Chrome and Safari accounted for 6.76% of the browser share, and a small percentage of visitors accessed the site using their mobile devices, such as BlackBerry phones and Apple iPhones. 93.82% of visitors were using Microsoft Windows as their operating system, while 4.46% use Macintosh, and a negligible percentage use Linux, iOS, or another system. Overall, the data indicate that the site is meeting the needs of its visitors' technical capabilities, and technology-related barriers to access are as minimal as possible.

Traffic Patterns

All Web sites are visited in one of three ways: direct traffic, search engines, or referring sites. Direct traffic indicates those who specifically enter the Web site address in their browser and intend to go directly to the site. Search engines allow users who may not be familiar enough with the site to know the exact address to search using keywords and find the site. Referring sites are those with links that direct users to the site. For the City's site during the month studied, 45% of users were direct traffic who specifically entered www.cityofclare.org into their browser software. This is a strong, positive number which shows there is significant knowledge of the site among visitors, and that the site has made a memorable impression for many people who can recall the site's URL.

The search engine figure is also positive, and shows that the keywords embedded within the site code are matching the keywords users search for when they are trying to find the site. For a site of this nature, a general rule of thumb is to aim for roughly equal percentages for direct traffic and search engines. This shows that both those who need to can find the site easily through a search engine, while there is also immediate URL recognition among users. The search engine figure has grown steadily, and shows that the site is easy to find. The search strategy for the site is successful, and specifically, the top five keywords directing users to the site were: City of Clare, City of Clare Michigan, City of Clare MI, Clare, and Clare MI. The 14% of users who found the site by following an external link came mostly from the following sites (listed in order of frequency): clarecountyonline.com, clareco.net, yourmichjobs.com, clarecounty.com, and wikipedia.org. Also important to note is that the 9th top referrer, sending 18 visitors, was facebook.com. This indicates that not only are visitors finding content on the site so compelling that they want to share it with friends using the "Share This" link at the bottom of the site, but also that their friends are clicking the shared links.



Once visitors are on the site, they view an average of 3.17 pages, and spend an average of 2:19 on the site. For a non-commercial site of this nature, these are positive figures, in that they show that visitors are able to quickly find the information they seek, and have a good understanding of how to navigate the site, and reduce viewing unwanted pages. This number coupled with the high direct traffic percentage indicate that the site is also becoming a destination site for visitors, and that they check it regularly for information, news, and updates that may be available.

Content

Top Performing Content

As would be expected, the home page is the most visited page within the site, composing 24% of all pages viewed. After that, the landing pages for the city government, online services, and our community sections are the next most accessed. Rounding out the top ten, other frequently-visited pages included property tax records, employment, the site map, the latest news page, and information on Parks & Recreation.

Notably, the City Commission agendas and packets are further down the list. Obviously, not all visitors are interested in downloading City Commission packets, but it appears that those who do are finding them. This has remained an issue since the site launched. Out of 118 total pages on the site, the most-accessed packet (June 7, 2010) ranks 35th, with 70 downloads. Other packets range from 0 to 52 downloads, with an average of roughly 25 downloads per document.

Knowing the amount of work that goes into preparing the online packet, these figures should aid in determining the worth of continuing to provide that service. There is clearly a loyal following, and the trending shows that the more recent packets are receiving more traffic, indicating that more people are using this feature as they become aware of it.

Another area of heavy traffic on the site that stands out among the rest is the pages related to Parks & Recreation programs and events. The Parks & Recreation Department page ranks sixth on the list of most-visited pages, and has seen an increase in traffic of 42.35% since the previous quarter. In June, a specific Summer 2010 Parks & Rec Programs & Events page was created in response to the large number of upcoming events during the summer months. This page has become very successful, and ranked 11th in traffic for the quarter, even though it existed for only a fraction of the total period studied. Additionally, "parks and recreation" and other related terms rank third among keywords used on the site search engine, only behind "zoning map" and "jobs." Clearly, there is a strong interest in Parks & Recreation information on the site.

Recommendations

While the site is largely successful, there are always areas for improvement. Based on the traffic and data patterns present in the time period studied, here are some key recommendations to consider:

- **Reconsider chat service.** With the site up for nearly a year, many individuals external to the City have inquired as to why the chat service is not used. If it is not going to be used, perhaps it is time to consider something else for that space, as it is a prominent element of the site. One idea would be an interactive neighborhood alert system, such as the one offered at seeclixfix.com. This free service would place a map on the site and allow residents to pinpoint neighborhood issues, reinforce existing issues, and generally alert the City to items like potholes, blight, etc. This service also includes an application for smart phones, and would add to the cutting-edge resources available on the site.
- **Enhance Parks & Recreation online offerings.** The demonstrated demand for information on Parks & Recreation events and programs, as well as the success of the new seasonal page for summer programs, indicate that this is an area of the site worthy of further consideration. A larger portion of the site should be dedicated to this department, and perhaps a feature link from the home page should give direct access to a slate of upcoming programs and events at all times. Additionally, the department could make use of online registration applications to allow for greater participation and interactivity with the site. These would allow residents to sign up for programs in an easier, automated fashion, and could even allow for online payment of applicable registration fees. Other ideas for expanding this department's online presence could include a departmental calendar, designated graphics and logos for each event, or a photo/video gallery of past events. In any case, users are telling us that they would like to see more from this department, and I believe the way program and event information is currently presented (as part of the general news stream, plus a long list of PDF links on the department page) is not adequately addressing the needs of users. Careful consideration should be given to this, and I think a reconfigured format for this area of the site is called for. The current method of providing event information is inadequate in that it is difficult to find information on specific events without reading through a long list, and one page simply is not enough to fully deliver the content produced by this department.
- **Integrate or upgrade Main Street site.** With the visual and technical strength of the City's site, as evidenced by the statistics in this report, it is clear that visitors from around the state, and even the world, are interested in Clare. As a result, it is important that prospective tourists and visitors, as well as potential downtown business owners, see a unified, strong online presence. Currently, the Main Street Clare site (www.mainstreetclare.com) presents a great opportunity for improvement and advancement. The site lacks visual appeal, has a design that is neither complementary to the City's official site nor uniform across pages, includes pages with outdated information, has links that do not work, and is not a strong indicator of the quality of the Main Street Area. When compared to similar sites from peer cities such as Howell (<http://www.downtownhowell.org>) and Rochester (<http://www.downtownrochestermi.com>), Clare's site falls dramatically short. Now that most travel planning is done online, it is important to have a successful site in order to attract visitors. Therefore, I would recommend a complete overhaul of the Main Street Clare site, with a thoughtful, intentional planning phase to consider the features and functionality that could be included based on recent technological advancements.

Alternatively, the site could be integrated within the City's current Web site infrastructure, to project a unified vision of Clare as a destination community. In either case, I understand the desire of the Main Street Manager to maintain administrative control of the site in order to manage content and provide quick updates. Should a redesign or integration project be launched, a content management system could be implemented. Such a system would provide a cost-effective solution to allow the Manager to quickly update content and add/maintain rich user features without

technical knowledge or expensive software. Other communities and organizations use these systems and have great results. I would be happy to provide further consultation on this or any other matter contained within this report.