

/makeover www.kitchenwalk.org

Mitch Williams created fundraising site kitchenwalk.org with a budget of \$0 and no web design training. We asked **Samantha Warren** from Northern Virginia agency Viget Labs to lend a hand

The brief

Site kitchenwalk.org

Site owner Baird & Warner
GoodWill Network

Brief Mitch is looking for a visual upgrade to help this event meet its fundraising goals.



The designer

Name Samantha Warren
Company Viget Labs

URL www.viget.com and
www.badassideas.com

Areas of expertise Web
typography; clean, interesting,
standards-based web design

The Glen Ellyn Kitchen walk is an unique event in which people are given tours of kitchens in their community in order to raise money for the Bridge Communities charity, which helps homeless people to learn skills and become self-sufficient. This event currently has no budget, and 100 per cent of the money raised goes directly to the charity.

For many charity organisations, the web is a conundrum. When leveraged effectively, any marketing site can reach a vast array of participants, volunteers and donors – but the challenge is getting there without a budget.

Mitch Williams does a fabulous job maintaining the website, especially considering he has no formal training in web design, nor funding for the site. Being that this site supports a good cause, it was a no-brainer for me to evaluate.

This site could be an effective marketing tool that engages advocates and donors so they can purchase tickets to help the cause. But I believe three predominant issues need to be addressed.

● **FIRST:** The site does not clearly define what the event is or why the user would want to attend.

With this information being difficult to find, it's unlikely the user will realise the walk is for charity.

● **SECOND:** The site needs to establish a clear visual brand. While there are very direct references to 'kitchens', with the whisk iconography and marble textured backgrounds, the overall look needs to be more refined and cohesive.

● **THIRD:** The site is redundant, with overly complex information architecture. For a relatively straightforward marketing site, the main goal should be to drive people to buy tickets; the navigation needs to support that overall goal.

Visual hierarchy

Currently, many of the elements on the page hold equal visual weight, making it difficult for the user to distinguish what they should interact with first. On this site, finding out what a 'kitchen walk' is and clearly articulating the benefit of participating in it is important to entice the user to buy a ticket. That should be clearly communicated, which makes reorganisation essential.

In the redesign, I categorise the elements in order of importance, and the 'About Summary' is

The original colour scheme has a tie-in with the local community's high school colours, so maintaining that aspect of the brand retains that emotional connection with the people involved. The remainder of the colour scheme is the same, translating the grey tones from Mitch's design into the stainless steel kitchen utensils, and warming up the negative space with a slight touch of cream.

The logo retains the same design, minus the bevels and wire whisk, as simplifying the mark helps to make it more legible for quick identification. The whisk continues on the site in the form of a detailed accent, giving the logo some space to breathe. Overall, I made the site inviting, with subtle references using texture and detail.

How should I navigate?

The current site presented too many choices on the homepage, and clouded matters with a navigation that was overly wordy. I simplified the wording of the navigation and divided it into global navigation and footer navigation, arranging it in an order determined by how the user will discover the information they need in order to buy

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Samantha Warren

by far the most important thing to the user when landing on this page.

Also important to this goal are two elements: a large colour photo of a featured kitchen on the walk, which helps to give the summary page more context, and a 'call-to-action' button where the user can quickly and easily purchase a ticket.

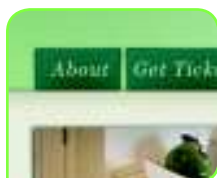
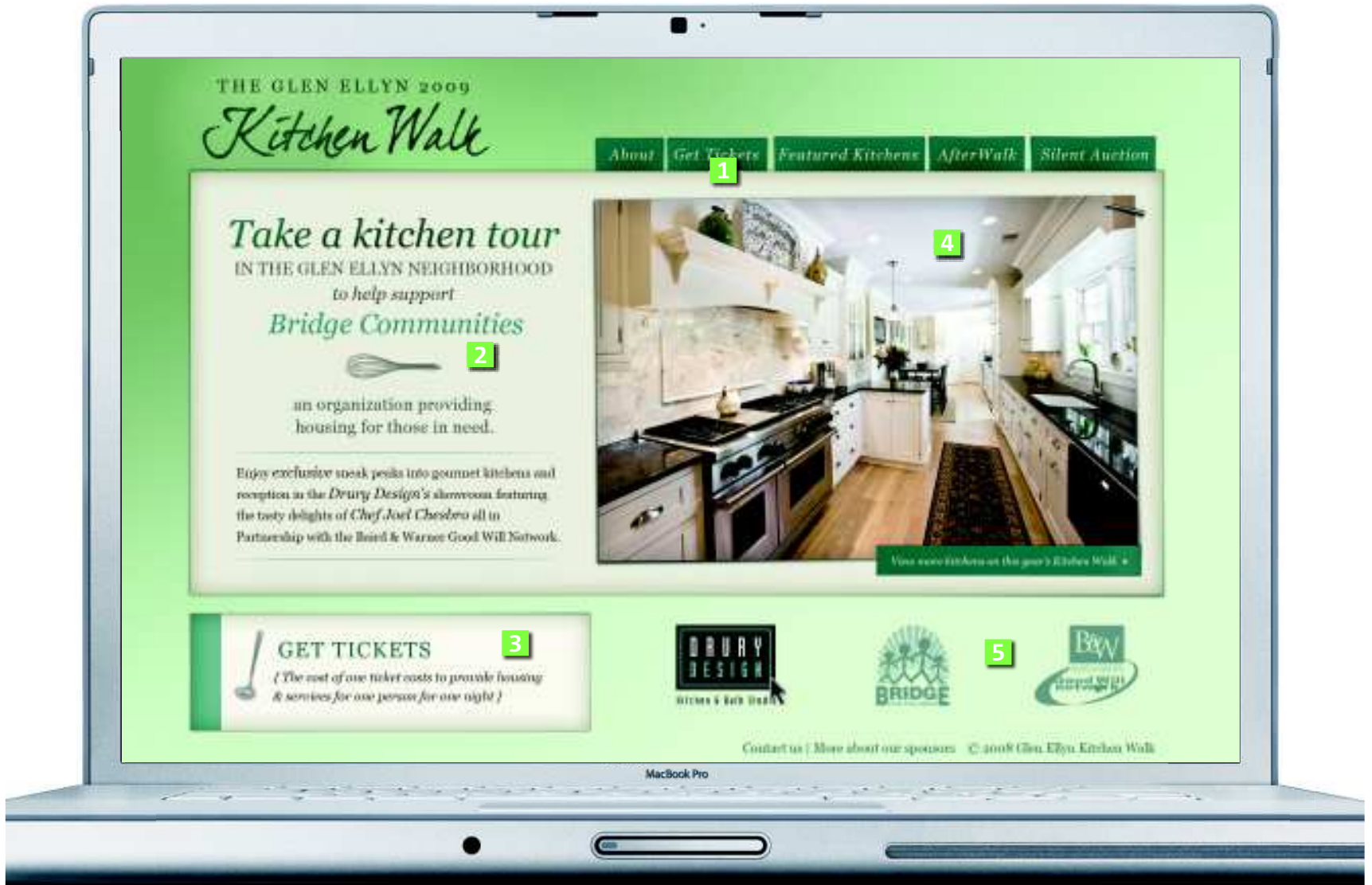
Displaying the sponsors establishes credibility, but logos of varying colours, shapes and sizes can sometimes interrupt the visual look and feel of the site. I would grey out the logos and have their original colours apparent upon a roll-over, which will help to integrate them into the established look hierarchy more seamlessly. Additionally, I'd have each logo link to a sponsors page.

The Kitchen Walk logo and colour scheme is not exclusive to the site, but has also been used in accompanying printed collateral such as brochures. So, to maintain that direction, I simply refreshed the colour scheme and logo, keeping the green but moving to a more subdued tone.

a ticket. Having all the navigation lumped together can present too many choices for the user at once. Chunking elements into smaller groups helps to cut down on that.

I also extracted the organisations that are represented by logos from the navigation to avoid redundant call-outs. (The navigation of any site should be a way-finding system, helping the user to get the information they need most in a timely fashion. A simple restructuring of this can really make a huge difference.) Displaying sponsor logos can be a challenge to a designer, but giving them purpose by making them interactive buttons helps them to seamlessly fit into the user experience.

Overall, with some visual hierarchical definition, brand personality and information reorganisation, this site could make a huge impact. While The Glen Ellyn Kitchen Walk has been a very successful event in the past years, a redesign will help strengthen recognition of the brand and improve the user experience of those who are participating. ●



1 Navigation
My redesign consolidates and reorganises the global navigation to help guide the user to the information they're seeking. In this situation, the user is most likely seeking information that will help inform whether or not to attend the event. Elements such as the sponsor logos can be moved from the global navigation into integrated links within the site. Any utility navigation such as the charity's contact details should appear in the footer to allow for clear, direct global navigation at the top of the page.



2 Summary
This is a unique event that gives tours of kitchens in a community in order to raise money for a charity. A visitor may not immediately understand what a 'kitchen tour' is or why they would want to take one, so making that clear is essential to enticing people to buy tickets. Clearly stating the purpose of the event, especially in the case of a charity fundraiser, will help the user understand the context of what they are supporting when purchasing a ticket.



3 Call to action
The current site has ticket information as a global navigation element, but since the primary goal of the site is to get users to buy tickets, it's really important that this button displaying the call to action plays a prominent role in the overall visual hierarchy of the site. Depth, detail and location help to emphasise this element as important.



4 Feature image
Placing a prominent, high-quality feature image on the homepage helps to unify the overall layout and bring context to the meaning of the event. I was pleasantly surprised to discover a gallery of high-quality images buried deep on the current site. Such valuable assets are unusual for a charity to have access to and should be used to their full potential. While having a gallery is useful, I recommend using great photography throughout the site to add visual interest to other text-heavy pages throughout the site.



5 Logos
Sponsor and associate logos can be a challenge for a designer who is making a valiant attempt to create a cohesive website layout. Logos can be contrasting colour schemes and can be displayed at a wide range of different aspect ratios. When faced with this challenge, I recommend greying out the logos and having them appear in their respective colours upon mouse-over. When placing logos next to each other, I'd consider using visual weight versus actual size to determine spacing.

Pimp my site!
Does your site lack lustre? Could it benefit from a few tweaks? To get an expert opinion, email your URL to netmag@futurenet.com

