

COMMUNITY LEARNING SPACE PROJECT
Canada's Technology Triangle – Pilot #2
Site Review #1
Tuesday July 15, 2003

URL: <http://csg.uwaterloo.ca/beta/learningspace/>

And follow the link to **economic development**

User Name/Password: ctt/ctt

The economic development learning space is under development. This initial view shows “proof of concept”. Your feedback will provide direction for the development.

This site is not intended to replace or duplicate the CTT web site. It accesses the same data but provides another view of the data and provides additional features such as geo-mapping. During development of the learning space, we are using a copy of the CTT database taken several months ago. For production the learning space will either connect directly to CTT's database or synchronize with it frequently.

Site Design

Colour Scheme

The colour scheme for titles, background, links etc. is a combination of colours from the three cities' sites and CTT.

Do you have a preference for another colour scheme or more use of CTT's scheme?

Ultimately, I think the colour scheme is suitable, some colour resonance is good, but as a separate web site I believe a separate scheme is totally suitable.

Topic menu

The list of topics is generated. Topics can easily be added, modified and deleted. The current list is based on the pilot objectives. These topics can change as the pilot progresses.

Suggested Topics:

Please review the content for “about this site” that includes the logos for the data partners. Is it appropriate to include the logos?

I believe it is critical to use the data partner logos. In fact, if possible I would suggest those logos be more prominent and exist perhaps at the bottom of each content page, or the like. CTT's logo is notably absent! While the Townships are part of the capture area, they are not partners in the data management, so whether they should be represented might be the subject of some lively debate. Usually, CTT would err on the side of caution and either assume the Region logo covers the Townships, or ensure the Township logos are 'less prominent' than the other partners, although again – this is all debatable. The Logos should be accompanied by text descriptions other than ALT tags. The correct logos should be used; we need permission but we can provide those at a later date.

Applications

Business Directory

1. List all businesses – uses a generic display format and lists 3 fields.

What fields are important to display?

I would hesitate to include the email (even masked as it is) in this initial list.

What should be the sort order?

I think this sorting order is fine alphabetical for this ‘default “List all businesses”’ area. I can’t think of anything which might be more logical.

Do you have formatting preferences (e.g. more consistency with the CTT site)?

I think a break with the look and feel with the CTT web site is important; I think the format for the most part is fine. As previously discussed, I have some questions about how we are linking back to the CTT web site to provide value to data partners. The assumption here for me is that while this may be fine for the CLS web site, the tie at the techtriangle.com web site might be a pop-up window or similar, with a shared hit tracking system.

2. Each business name links to the details for the business.

What fields should be included?

These fields seem to be appropriate. I like the fact that this record is a little truncated from the one displayed at the techtriangle.com site. Suggestions: masked email addresses should appear here; a link back to the fuller record on techtriangle.com might also be appropriate.

3. One of the proposed applications is a form to submit a business directory information change.

Where should the “information change” link be included (e.g. link from the detail page, link from the topic menu, or both)?

I think the link to the “Information Change” should be a fourth link under the heading “Business Directory” – I think that would be the most intuitive and trouble-free for businesses. Although that’s probably not technically the most convenient, because it means duplicating the search function? Otherwise, I would suggest placing it within the “Business Search” results page. Not sure. Up for debate.

4. The current site contains a “generic” submit an information change form that can be accessed from the “contact us” page. (Submit information has not yet been implemented.)

Should the business directory information change be a copy of the business directory data form or should it be a generic like the “submit an information change” form?

I don’t think this should be housed in the ‘Contact Us’ area, but rather directly related to the Business Directory in some way, which would make it easier (I suspect) for businesses to find it. I think that it would be advantageous to provide a full business directory data form so that businesses could completely manage all of their own information. The ideal would be a means

for a visiting company to view their current record and make changes directly to that presented data; the proposed changes would be sent to the relevant EDO or data manager for approval.

5. Business Search - This form currently has only one field. More fields can be added.

What are key searchable fields?

Key Fields: Business Name, Company Profile, NAICS. Perhaps the Qualifications field.

6. Business map search – By zooming and selecting an area, you can find all businesses in that area. The application could be refined by adding additional criteria; for example, “type of industry”.

Would additional criteria be useful? If yes, what would be useful criteria?

I don't know what literal use there might be to adding more criteria to an area search. In the case where this would be an easy available option, NAICS or Type of Industry would be valuable.

Real Estate

The building and land use applications will be extended to include detail listings, map search and search forms.

1. “List all available land” displays all records formatted for display with a stylesheet.

Should the listing be consistent with the CTT site or is another format preferable?

Heck, I like this format better than our web site format... other than the sorting, which appears to have no apparent default order.

2. “List all available buildings” displays several fields.

Should the listing be consistent with the CTT site or is another format preferable?

Heck, I like this format better than our web site format... other than the sorting, which looks like it's trying to be alphabetical?

3. Would it be useful to add menu items for listings such as “list all for lease”, “list all for sale” or some other category?

I think this would be best located under the search form; again, I think that might be the most intuitive location, and might serve to keep things simple.

4. A search form will be added for buildings and another for land.

What are key searchable fields for buildings?

Available Space, Office Size, Zoning, Type of Building, Qualifications, City/Township.

What are key searchable fields for land?

Available Size, Zoning, Qualifications, City/Township.

5. Map search will be added when we resolve geo-referencing issues. There could be a map search to find all land in the selected area and a map search to find all buildings.

What is the preferred geo-referencing mechanism for land and buildings (e.g. postal code for urban entries, UTM for rural, UTM override for urban entries)?

Postal Code may be problematic; it's not currently information supplied. GeoCoding also presents a problem because it isn't how the relational database fields are currently designed (Street Number, Street Name, Street Type, Street Direction, Other Information). 911 (UTM) numbers are also a possible consideration, but again, we run into a data problem. Postal Codes are not preferable because they are not specific enough.

Would a single map search with criteria to select land or buildings be better?

Normally, these searches are far more valuable separated.

Would additional criteria be useful?

If yes, what would be useful criteria?

Resources

Resources contains an archive of news items. This application was not one of the agreed pilot applications.

1. Would this application be useful to include for "business" research?

Perhaps. Where would the news items be entered/maintained? If this is here because it would be a simple CFM 'pull' from the CTT web site, then 'yes!' by all means.

2. Keyword search could be added to search the archive to look for information about a business. Would this be useful?

It could be. See above. Is this new functionality? Could links be applied to the "Business Record" itself indicating the presence of a related news article?

3. Is there other information that could be included as a useful resource?

Feedback Form

The feedback form is intended to allow comments regarding the site. The information is stored in a database table and an email message is sent to the site administrator (currently CSG).

Is there additional information that would be useful to record?

We would be more than interested in WHERE the enquiry is coming from in the world. A capture of IP addresses doesn't quite cut it. I've found that most are willing to enter into a field what City they're calling from – but not the whole address. This would be a boon to us. Also, what INDUSTRY the feedback visitor is coming from is often useful. Lets us know if Site Location researchers or company CEOs are using the utility. But I'd like to caution against asking for too much, or making providing the information mandatory.

Data

Working with the sample data has generated some questions regarding display criteria for the data.

1. What are the criteria for including (or excluding) business records (e.g. are businesses that no longer exist removed) ?

Data managers or administrators maintain criteria for what businesses are acceptable in the database. Data managers 'unapprove' records when businesses go out of business, or delete them outright.

2. Real Estate Buildings – The data contains records with many empty fields such as city and address and also includes “test” data.

Is the criteria for including (or excluding) building records the “Approved” column?

As above, the 'approved' column is normally used when indicating whether a building is still on the market. Unapproved records should not appear in search returns or downloads.

How do you know which records have been leased/sold? Is “Approved” set to “No”?

When a property is leased or sold, the record is either (1) marked as unapproved, or (2) deleted. Unfortunately, this process of 'removing' records is not uniform across data management processes.

3. Real Estate Land

How do you know which records have been leased/sold?

Quarterly, data managers solicit real estate offices and small office realtors for updates to real estate records. They then reconcile the database with the new information, which can include updating, deleting and/or creating new real estate records.

Lot size value will be rounded; some of the values are shown with numerous decimal places. How many decimal places should be displayed?

Acreage is really only relevant to two or three decimal places. In fact, when acreage information is entered, only two or three decimal point values are entered. It is an error in the system that additional values are included afterward. In the latest version of the

database and dataset, the acreage problem should be resolved, although the source of the problem has never been satisfactorily identified.

Additional Comments

Only additional comment I have right now is the question of how the CLS web site and tools are accessed by visitors whom discover the link from the techtriangle.com web site. In discussion, it was suggested that we needed to be concerned about the perception of the data being 'hijacked' from techtriangle.com to a new web site. This is not a new issue; it revealed itself early in the process of meeting with EDOs and data managers/administrators. It is significant in the aspect of garnering buy-in from the data owners.

In a recent meeting, some suggestions to tackle this aspect were to have a small pop-up for the mapping application. Also, web tracking of hits which could be shared, thus justifying traffic for both Economic Development offices and for the CLS project was discussed. Other possibilities may be available.

Also, please give some thought to the 'templates' which exist at the Cities' web sites. If the CLS project provides mapping to the City web sites, they might feel more 'involved' in the dividends of the process...

City of Cambridge

http://www.city.cambridge.on.ca/cs_econdev/directory.php?work=1

City of Kitchener

http://www.city.kitchener.on.ca/working_kitchener/publications.html

City of Waterloo

<http://www.city.waterloo.on.ca/CS/EDM/directorysearch.html>