

# **Branding and Public Relations at Commonsense Trust**

**A Major Qualifying Project**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The London nonprofit organization Commonsense Community Development Trust (CCDT) works in three deprived wards in the borough of Merton to facilitate social regeneration. My project's goal was to increase visibility and name recognition of CCDT. Based on my analyses of national and local British history, for-profit and nonprofit rhetorical situations, and the branding process, I created brand and marketing materials for CCDT. Project products include a website analysis, marketing templates, and visual design classes for employees.

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Ian, for time and effort. And finally, my parents, who deserve recognition somewhere.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The nonprofit Commonside Community Development Trust (CCDT) works in London's Borough of Merton. 185,000 people live in Merton, an outer borough that is split dichotomously with regards to affluence and poverty. The wealthy population inhabits the north-east half of the borough; poorer people live primarily in the south-west region of the borough. The Commonside Trust works to improve three wards in the deprived area of Merton—Pollards Hill, Figges Marsh, and Longthornton—by increasing local involvement in community activities and by providing educational opportunities to local residents.

Established in March 2001, the Trust remained unknown even to nearby residents because it had no unified advertising style and no brand. The current project was organized at the request of Commonside Trust employees, who wanted to raise community awareness of their organization. The beginning of the major qualifying project involved research on branding of both for-profit and nonprofit organizations. Branding, the process of associating an organization with a set of ideas, allows the audience to form a relationship with an organization. A brand forms the basis for communication between companies and customers, and as such dictates the style of marketing materials a company uses.

The project analyzed the affect of British history on deprived areas such as the Pollards Hill estates. Mitcham is the largest city center in Merton near Pollards Hill, Longthornton, and Figges Marsh; yet Mitcham itself is quite some distance from the center of London. Because of its remote location, that area had a history of industrial use. Chemical plants, factories, and quarries all disfigured the landscape; people who lived in the area tended to work for those factories, and lived there of necessity. Because of its working-class population, housing tended towards rented homes. After World War II, the government built and administered housing estates; over time, residents of those housing estates came to be stigmatized by non-residents.

This reputation increased with the election of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister in 1979; her policies encouraged individualism and home ownership. Those policies removed from housing estates citizens capable of affording a home, leaving only the poorest people renting from the local authority. New Labour, which came to power in 1997 with Tony Blair's election to Prime Minister, has focused on providing housing estate residents with opportunities to engage in economic, social, and political regeneration through community involvement. The focus has become one of using local people working in community organizations to affect improvement in their areas. Commonsides Community Development Trust is one of the local groups working towards regenerating its corner of London.

The Commonsides Trust, however, lacked brand recognition with its audience—indeed, lacked recognition with the audience at all. Therefore, the project investigated the background behind for- and nonprofit rhetoric. The purpose of nonprofit organizations' rhetoric is twofold: it addresses the potential helping audience, and also the audience in need of help. To create this rhetoric, nonprofits use exigence, timing, delivery, logical arguments, organization presentation, and a specific rhetorical stance.

Finally, this project examined practical means of creating a brand for the Commonsides Community Development Trust. Designer D.K. Holland's suggestions for creating a nonprofit's brand provided the basis for Commonsides's brand. But brands are ideas, and the Trust needed tangible changes. These changes came in the form of the products, all of which reflected a common background in their styles, designs, color and font choices, and tone.

I applied the research in the form of a website analysis and recommendations for website improvement. Suggestions included simplifying the website's design and adhering to web usability standards. Additionally, the project produced more than fifty marketing materials based on the "Commonsides Style," which incorporated the Gill Sans font family, standard green and white

coloring, and a CCDT logogram. The materials included templates for a newsletter, letterhead, business cards, brochures, posters, and membership cards. All the templates conform to the “Commonside Style” as well as the employees’ specifications. The employees requested templates that they could not easily “break,” as well as templates that provided modifiability and flexibility, included a look of youthfulness or funkiness, and supplied space for photographs. To continue the maintenance of the “Commonside Style” after the MQP ended, I also taught employees the visual design principles of contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity. To illustrate the value of implementing careful visual design in Commonside Trust publications those specific principles, I redesigned old CCDT posters.

These products enable the Commonside Trust to create effective advertising materials that appeal to their diverse audience. Commonside Community Development Trust now has the materials it needs to begin positively influencing the community it works in. The employees can create their own posters based on templates; can send out letters on Commonside letterhead that matches their quarterly newsletter; can produce official business cards that match their posters; ultimately, employees of CCDT can now create visual designs that reinforce their organization’s mission to enhance the community through involvement and education.



# **1. INTRODUCTION**

This Major Qualifying Project results directly from a need expressed by a nonprofit organization in London, the Commonsides Community Development Trust (CCDT). This development trust, which was founded in March 2001, seeks to improve living and social conditions in a poor area of London by drawing the community together and by providing educational opportunities local residents. Employees at the Commonsides Trust felt that their organization needed to develop better public relations and marketing materials to advertise itself, but they had no funding or people to devote to the project. This MQP developed as an opportunity to help publicize CCDT to a small area of Merton—Pollards Hill and the surrounding neighborhoods.

Residents have been classified as “deprived,” which means they lack not only basic necessities, but also social opportunities; they are stigmatized for their situation. London boroughs are semi-autonomous areas of London with populations of around 100,000 residents. London is divided into 33 boroughs, which are in turn divided into smaller neighborhoods called wards. The Council is the borough’s governing body and is led by a mayor, much like a city council in the United States.

The Commonsides Trust works in London’s borough of Merton, serving three “deprived” south-eastern wards: Figges Marsh, Longthornton, and Pollards Hill. Merton encompasses a wide variety of cultures, ages, and income levels within its borders. Its 185,500 residents come from all over the world; students speak 101 different languages in Merton schools. Cultures represented include black and white Britons, blacks originating in the Caribbean and Africa, Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and natives of other Asian nations. Non-whites tend to experience higher unemployment rates than their white counterparts. The age range of Merton residents runs the gamut from twenty-five per cent youths under age eighteen to twenty-five per cent adults over age fifty-five (Making the Merton Case). The map in Figure 1, a ward-level map of Merton, indicates

high-deprivation areas in dark purple. Notice Pollards Hill, Figges Marsh, and Longthornton in the lower right of the map.

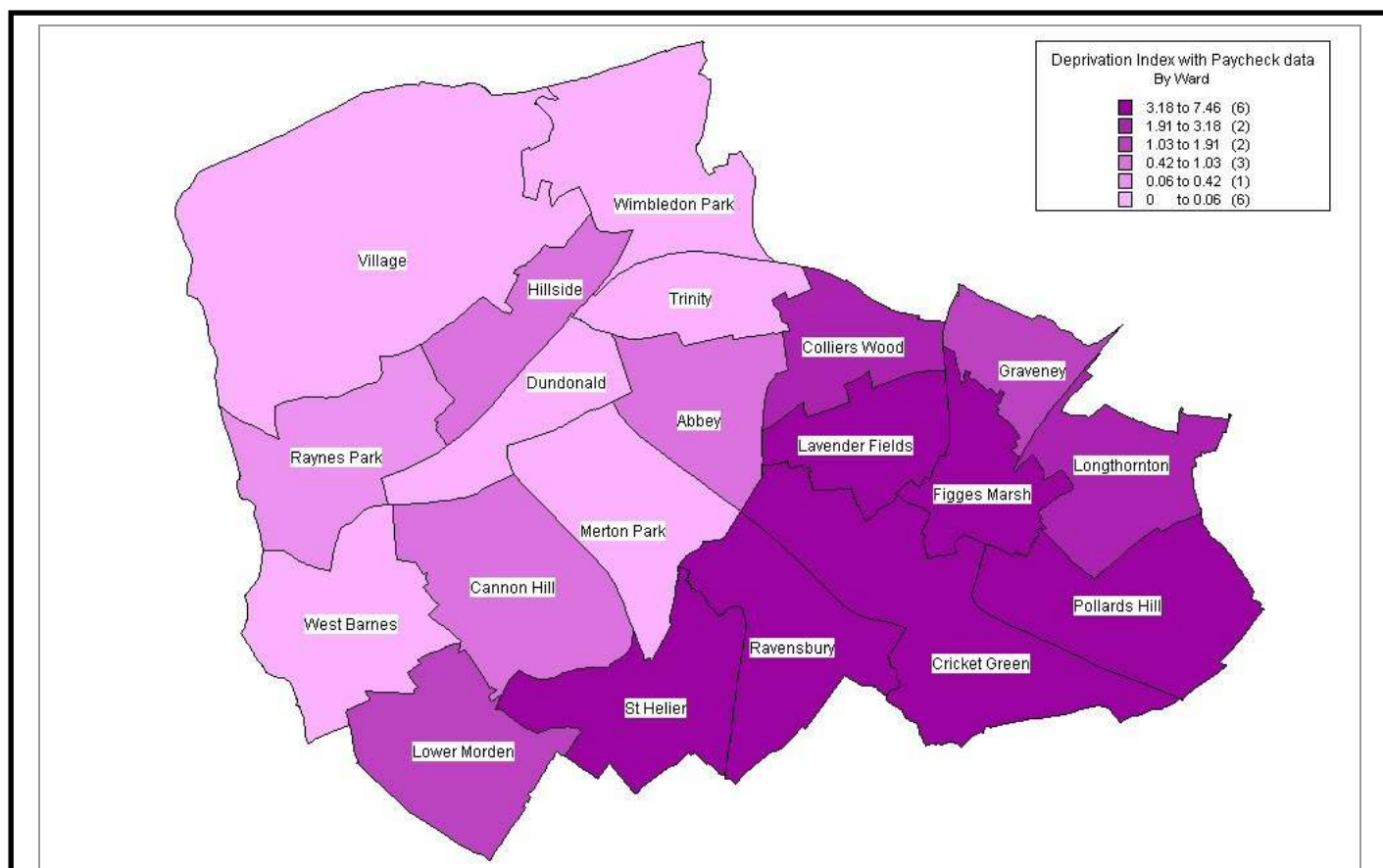


Figure 1: Overall deprivation in London's Borough of Merton, courtesy of Ferguson et al.

In addition to enormous cultural and generational diversity, Merton's residents experience economic situations ranging from affluence to poverty. Some live in fine, expensive single-family dwellings; others crowd into poor-quality social housing estates, which are the British equivalent of low-income housing in the United States. The west side of Merton generally contains higher concentrations of affluence, while the eastern part experiences higher poverty levels. Merton has an "affluent and green" reputation (Merton Case 15), but that fails to account for the eastern wards' poverty. A previous study that investigated Merton's deprivation levels found that "[a]t the ward level the west appears completely affluent while the east appears terribly deprived" (Ferguson et al. 70). The study found that Merton contains "pockets of deprivation" located amidst more wealthy

environments (Ferguson et al 72); and according to “Making the Merton Case,” the borough has two faces: the affluent and the deprived. In particular, Ferguson et al. identified the Mitcham town center as “part of a large pocket of deprivation spanning across eastern Merton and into the surrounding boroughs” (73). Mitcham is quite near Pollards Hill.

Situated in one of Ferguson et al’s “scattered, concentrated pocket[s]” of “deprivation” (81), the nonprofit Commonsides Community Development Trust, seeks to improve life for residents in the wards of Pollards Hill, Longthornton, and Figges Marsh by drawing the community together in social and educational events.

To accomplish that mission, the employees realized that they needed to raise the Trust’s visibility. Thus far it had failed to be effectively advertised. This failure resulted in part from the Commonsides Trust employees failing to present their organization to the community in an orderly way. Employees made no significant effort to present a unified front in its various publications; as a result, posters, brochures, and the website seemed visually unrelated. Because of this disarray, the first and key element that Commonsides needed was to develop a brand.

In brief, a brand serves as an organization’s representation to the public about itself: this representation is then mirrored through its posters, pamphlets, brochures, website, and all other facets of its public face. Branding a nonprofit organization can improve its image significantly, since a well-designed brand can make the difference between a person retaining the organization’s name or entirely forgetting the organization moments after encountering it. Commonsides employees wanted to create a vital, funky, young, creative, and fun public image of the Trust, so this project focused on beginning to formulate that image through branding and marketing (Trimbur email 2/9/05). Having a “Commonsides Style” brand provides the public with a coherent image for area residents to latch onto; creating it entails crafting a consistent, concentrated image of the Trust’s ethos, which members of the Trust have particularly desired to be a youthful image.

Creating a new brand for the Commonsides Trust to appeal to a younger audience was particularly crucial because of the high percentage of young people in the Figges Marsh, Longthornton, and Pollards Hill area of Merton (Belliss et al). Those young people tend to judge companies and organizations on the basis of their logos or slogans, the professionalism and effectiveness of their websites, and other facets of their public faces. A well-designed, “cool” logo and catchy name or slogan—both components of a successful branding process—greatly improves the Commonsides Trust’s odds with its youthful audience. Young adults won’t find Trust-sponsored events attractive if, based on the Trust’s website or publications, they perceive the Commonsides Trust as unappealing or associate it with what they regard as boring older people.

The Pollards Hill area could benefit significantly from increased community involvement, which could lead to internal regeneration—that is, revitalization of the area economically, socially, and environmentally. The Commonsides Community Development Trust hopes to facilitate that community bonding; its stated goal in the Development Trust Member’s Directory is becoming “the conduit through which concerted community planning and action can take place” (10). Yet that goal will remain elusive if residents don’t know about the organization’s existence or if they discount its value. If the Commonsides Trust hopes to succeed in its mission to improve the lives of the many diverse residents of Pollards Hill, Longthornton, and Figges Marsh, the Trust must become recognizable, familiar, and trustworthy in the minds of area residents. A distinct brand and advertising scheme provides the Commonsides Trust with that crucial recognizability and thereby benefit the organization greatly.

This project sought to address the problem of publicizing the Commonsides Community Development Trust. It provided the organization with suggestions for increasing its visibility in the three wards it covers and for producing advertising materials to improve publicity in the area. The materials used recognizable images as well as words, due to the varied nature of the audience’s

English language skills. The use of images and basic English sought to overcome the difficulty that could arise with differing cultural responses.

To increase the Commonside Trust's visibility once it obtained a distinct brand, the MQP focused on three major publicity areas: online presence, written publications, and advertising techniques and gimmicks. Each of these sections was based on the Commonside Trust brand for consistency and improved public recognition of the organization.

- **Online presence.**

The Commonside Trust's online presence is determined by the feel its website produces and the website's effectiveness in conveying information. Visitors' initial impressions of the site's user-friendliness and design quality can strongly color their impressions of CCDT. Effective websites provide easy information exchange. In addition to the website's personal impression, every link from another site—for instance, from the Development Trusts Association and other, similar development trusts in other boroughs—to the Trust's website helps form online presence. On the Internet, links serve as a form of currency: the most influential, powerful sites are most frequently linked to. Increasing the number of other sites linking to the Trust's site will improve the Commonside Trust's online visibility. The project analyzed Commonside Trust's web site and provided distinct suggestions for improvement or reconstruction of the site.

- **Written publications.**

The project's work on written publications included implementing one distinct brand across the Commonside Trust's letterhead and various brochures, display boards, larger posters, and leaflets. Employees expressed an interest in producing "an informative leaflet and a high quality newsletter that people actually want to read" (West email 4/11/05). The newsletter attempted to achieve an impact analogous to that of the Merton Council's *My Merton*, which a previous project found improved residents' connection with their community (Charmichael et al). This MQP created a document with a similar aim—that of forming community bonds and informing the neighborhood

about the organization—but took the newsletter form, rather than the *My Merton's* slick magazine format. This newsletter was created and delivered as a template in Microsoft Publisher for Trust members to use in the future.

- **Advertising techniques.**

Finally, the project suggested possibilities for advertising techniques and gimmicks such as brochures, display boards, and large posters. In addition to these common methods of advertising, the project planned to increase the Commonsides Trust's visibility by investigating alternative advertising techniques that appeal to audience-specific groups. The MQP produced a document of brainstorming that listed items the Trust could emblazon with their name or logo, which included:

- **For children and to attract lone (single) parents**

- Free balloons, stickers, bibs, and pins

- **For parents**

- Canvas tote bags or grocery bags and the clothing items listed under “For teenagers”

- **For teenagers**

- Free or inexpensive T-shirts, sweatshirts, sweatpants, scarves, Frisbees, hats, stuffed animals, backpacks, and playing cards

- **For Internet users**

- An online store selling Commonsides Trust paraphernalia

A successful online store offers the advantage of bringing in revenue for the Trust.

However, regardless of revenue, exposure for the Commonsides Trust when people wear, play with, or otherwise use an object with the Commonsides Trust's logo on it is invaluable. And after distribution, those items act as free advertising. This increases brand recognition; recognition combined with a positive image generates helpful word-of-mouth advertising for the Commonsides Trust. This method of advertising can effectively reach people not otherwise influenced by outside advertisements—for instance, it can lead to contact with non-English speakers and with women who rarely leave their homes.

The remainder of this MQP document will explore the history and social circumstances as they affected CCDT, as well as elaborate on the rhetorical situation faced by nonprofits in communicating their message. Additionally, the report will provide an analysis of several nonprofits' brands, comparing them to the Commonsense Trust. Next, the report will explain in detail the many marketing and public relations products, ranging from a website analysis to an array of templates to visual design teaching sessions and photographs, produced for the Commonsense Trust. The final section of the MQP document will discuss conclusions as well as offer suggestions for additional research and projects related to this one.

## **2. BRITISH HISTORY AND THE COMMONSIDE TRUST**

The Commonsides Community Development Trust exists because Pollards Hill, Figges Marsh, and Longthornton experienced a long, painful history. Although development trusts of this sort represent a fairly recent move on the part of area residents to improve their situations, the Mitcham area of Merton has long needed such an agency. With the formation of the Commonsides Trust, the opportunity for significant positive change in that area increased dramatically. This section examines broad English political history, local Mitcham and Pollards Hill history, and the history of Commonsides Community Development Trust in order to prove the exigence in the Trust's existence.

### **National Context: British Political History**

In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, strong unions and the socialist-leaning Labour Party held power in Britain. The Labour Party rose to prominence with the post-World War II Attlee government in 1945; Cronin describes that government as “a resounding success. Labour had been elected in 1945 on a series of pledges that were fulfilled almost to the letter” (20). The pledges moved towards socializing public policies, stabilizing employment, and generally made “Britain a fairer and more egalitarian society” (Cronin 20).

This successful Labour government proceeded to obtain support from the working classes, so that Cronin described Labour as “the party of the working class and had as its aim the representation of working-class interests in British politics”—particularly those of unions, which came to have great strength within the party (22). Many of the socialist policies that developed during Labour majorities resulted from the “virtual [partnership]” between the Labour government and unions, and the working classes represented thereby (Cronin 25). Soon unions and the working



class became almost synonymous with the Labour Party; socialism “interpreted through ‘a marked anti-doctrinal and anti-theoretical bias’” was the Party’s major plank (Cronin 26). The government privately owned housing estates, utility companies, and transportation companies. During Labour’s heyday, social housing played an enormous role in the housing of World War II soldiers and those who had lost homes to the German bombing of London. Yet even as it socialized policies, Cronin noted that the Labour’s policies were marked with “stasis” that meant any major changes to that policy would “necessarily entail a decisive break with the party’s past” (19).

The Labour party’s very loyal working class constituents felt well-served by the Party, which established the National Health Service and price, land, and controls (Cronin 20). As Labour policies evolved, it took on what Cronin describes as a “distinctive set of preferred policies,” not the least of which emphasized the “important [...] role of the state” in solving social problems (30). When Labour controlled government, the focus became socialism that “closely identified with nationalism, planning, and the state” (Cronin 33). Under Labour leadership, Britain shifted towards becoming nearly socialist country that favored governmental solutions for social problems and placed special emphasis on the role of unions with the working classes. That bent shifted, however, with the election of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister and the rise of the Conservative Party in 1979.

This section will focus on providing a brief political overview to begin explaining the necessity of the Commonsense Trust’s existence. The overview will include a review of the politics from approximately 1979 to the present, particularly focusing on how those political activities affected areas such as the one in which the Commonsense Trust works. I have chosen to begin at about 1979 since that is the year Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister and significantly altered British political behavior, particularly regarding the deprived housing estates. After examining Thatcherism, the National Context section will conclude with a discussion of how Thatcherism’s predecessor, New Labour, affected life for poor London residents.

## **THATCHERISM**

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's terms, which spanned the years from 1979 to 1990, were marked by a decrease in big governmental controls and an increase in private, corporate management of a wide variety of services. Thatcher distrusted the government and promoted individual responsibility, stating, "[w]hat we need now is a far greater degree of personal responsibility and decision, far more independence from the government, and a comparative reduction in the role of government" (qtd. in Riddell 2). Riddell noted that the emphasis on "personal responsibility" extended from housing to money to "social provision" and generally promoted people seeking "a measure of independence from the state," which meant that, for Mitcham and area residents, what little government help they had rapidly vanished (2). Like the conservatives in America, Thatcher's policies involved scaling back the government rather than expanding public services, which included reduction of welfare. This reduction negatively affected what would become CCDT's wards by removing a major source of income. Increased governmental regulation coupled with the scaling-back of public services resulted in less governmental attention and no more aid for people in housing estates..

Thatcher's privatization schemes reflected her middle-class experiences and strong belief that people given responsibility would shoulder that burden willingly. These schemes included selling what had been government-owned companies, including British Telecom, British Rail, British Steel, and British Gas (Riddell 94). The Thatcher administration expected that an increase in productivity and money-earning would occur when corporations took over previously state-owned and operated companies, so that by 1989 the government had sold two-fifths of the British state-owned holdings to the private sector (Riddell 87)—Martin and Parker estimate that approximately £50 billion (US\$92.26 billion) in governmental assets were replaced by private companies over the course of Thatcher's terms in office (225). According to Bishop and Kay, these vast sales resulted in

substantial change. Output and profits [grew], margins [...] increased, employment [...] declined. [...] The privatized industries [...] tended to be faster growing and more profitable, but it seems that the causation runs from growth and profitability to privatization. (qtd. in Martin and Parker 226)

Similarly, in 1991 Hartley et al. “found that privatization did not necessarily guarantee improved performance” (qtd. in Martin and Parker 226). Although the Thatcher government strongly promoted privately owned businesses and monopoly-busting as beneficial to the economy, in their comparative study of eleven companies before and after privatization, Martin and Parker found that six of those privatized companies underperformed in terms of productivity compared to the rest of the economy. They concluded that “it is difficult to sustain unequivocally the hypothesis that private ownership is preferable to nationalization on efficiency grounds” (235): privatization didn’t provide all the economic benefits Thatcher’s government claimed it would when they sold off publicly-owned companies to private businesses. British privatization appeared to thrive initially, but as it aged it proved no more efficient—and perhaps less so—than public ownership of major utilities. It is instructive, however, to note that in their broad study, D’Souza and Megginson found that “privatization yields significant performance improvements” despite a drop in employment (1397).

Privatization, like all of Thatcher’s policies, sought to “defeat socialism and challenge the traditional bases of Labour and trade union movement in big city local authorities, council housing estates and nationalized industries” (Riddell 12). This meant that instead of further government help for the poor residents in Mitcham, a wave of capitalism swept away what help deprived residents had attained, leaving them with little public aid. Even as Thatcher espoused a strong belief in her nation, its greatness, and its interests, her government’s policies did little to significantly aid the more deprived British citizens. While Thatcher claimed to further Great Britain’s aims around the world

(Riddell 4), her government's focus on revitalizing Britain's global image left a deficit for the revitalization of British citizens and their social situations. Thatcher hated Britain's decline and formulated her politics around breathing new life into British prominence in the global arena with less care for the poorer Britons (Riddell 7).

According to Riddell, Thatcher held "a prejudice against the public sector" that appeared to conflict with the goal of improving Britain's standing around the world (4). Furthering Britain's global standing and reducing welfare, however, were only two of the themes that flowed through Thatcher's policies. According to Riddle, she also strongly backed law enforcement, rebuilding Britain's "defense capacity and [dealing] with rising crime," with a particular emphasis on the concern of terrorism (9). For many Mitcham residents who lived daily with crime, the focus on controlling criminal acts through punishment did little to improve their lives. The tarnish of crime began to darken the reputation of housing estates, rather than the polish from decreased offense rates.

Thatcher's government was well known for its strong anti-socialist, pro-market politics; Riddle recounts that she fought against the Labour Party's favored trade unions and moved to curb their power during her tenure, pressing for independent workers (9). This marked shift from unionization to individualized workers sapped the unions' strength considerably, a weakening that the National Union of Mineworkers strike in 1984 and 1985 exemplified. In 1984, the union leader declared a nationwide strike to protest the closing of 20 coal mines, but failed to call for a ballot on the subject ("UK Miners' Strike"). Thatcher's government seized on that fact, calling upon recent laws that required a ballot before each strike. Ultimately, the government used the ballot laws to deny striking miners pay and government benefits. Customers took their business elsewhere, forcing many of the mining pits to close—a result of Thatcher's policy of reducing reliance on coal as well as privatization that facilitated switching among suppliers ("UK Miners' Strike").

Thatcher's support of individual health and education programs also illustrated her emphasis on individualism, a move that resulted in significant cuts in public spending on healthcare and educational facilities (Riddell 9)—cuts that significantly impacted Mitcham area residents who relied on those policies. To strengthen the capitalist market, Thatcher committed to sound money and during her eleven years in office attempted to “get on top of inflation via a tight monetary policy” (Riddell 9), a policy that Pearce described as “restricting the money supply” to reduce inflation. In conjunction with that policy, Thatcher supported entrepreneurs with her government's creation of Enterprise Zones, areas where private investment was encouraged as a way of encouraging urban renewal (Hansen).

Overall, Thatcher's capitalist values promoted “rolling back the frontiers of the State” to force people to take responsibility for themselves and their economic situations (Pearce), but because Thatcher's policies focused more on the country as a whole and less on individuals, many of the people who needed special help—such residents of Pollards Hill, Figges Marsh, and Longthornton—were left without a helping hand to get them on their feet. Thatcher's signature phrase about ridding people of the “nanny state” suggests as much, carrying the ideas of reducing governmental control over such activities as smoking and drinking to allow people to prosper themselves (Pearce). Thatcher described her individualistic politics as providing a ladder so people can climb upwards. For those who successfully began the climb, the ladder included what Thatcher described as “fundamental safety net below which no one can fall,” while still maintaining some number of “basic social services” (qtd. in Riddell 3). But the ladder was broken: it lacked the bottom rungs for people at the very base, leaving those climbers without any way to pull themselves up.

## **THATCHERISM'S EFFECT ON HOUSING**

In conjunction with her other individualism-promoting policies, Thatcher pressed for home ownership rather than renting or housing estates. This promotion involved selling off government-owned housing estates (Riddell 8), such as the ones built in Mitcham between World War II and the 1970's, to the buildings' tenants so that people could, as Thatcher said, have "their own personal property stake" rather than relying on landlords (qtd. in Riddell 3). As with Thatcher's other privatization schemes, the sell-off of homes was intended to raise the public's personal responsibility. Thatcher and her supporters claimed that homeowners would take more care of their surroundings than renters. This plan supposedly freed residents from permanent ties to their local authorities and was supposed to have encouraged greater personal responsibility in homeowners (Riddell 65).

Additionally, Thatcher intended that privatization of housing "aid labour mobility by providing incentives for the revival of the private, or more significantly socially owned housing associations," so that people rented from other people rather than from the government (Riddell 65). Riddle elaborated that "tenants were also encouraged to opt out of local authority control, and there were general pressures to raise council rents nearer to market levels, thus removing artificial barriers to mobility" (65). Removing government cushioning from council housing rent would encourage families who could not afford the new rent to take up the government's offer to purchase homes. Indeed, instead of renting, the Thatcher government encouraged people to buy their flats and offered significant pricing discounts to enable people to do so (Riddell 115).

But this program, like many others, developed its own momentum so that "[s]elling off state assets became a virtue in itself" (Riddell 12). Instead of improving the housing situation, things simply grew worse, with increasing inflation in the housing market, until Riddell wrote in 1991 that housing ranked as "one of the main failures of the Thatcher Government for most of its term in

office” (64). The inflation, partially a result of what Henley described as a “dramatic tightening of UK monetary policy[, ...] plummeted a vigorous housing market into a dramatic downturn” (363). Those who owned houses watched with dismay as the value of those dwellings dropped and kept dropping (Henley 364).

Another aspect of the failure involved what Riddell called a consistent “decline of the private rented sector,” in which only the worst-off were left behind in authority-owned housing estates (65). Since anybody who could afford a home bought one, only the very poorest people remained in council housing. This resulted in whole swaths of housing peopled by unemployed and struggling residents; rented housing in government-owned housing estates thus garnered a stigma of slumminess, crime, and dirtiness, so that people thought of it as a place for only the downwardly mobile poor. Upwardly mobile young people today would never live in a housing estate, and regeneration takes place only after great travail.

Thatcherism’s focus on individualism, particularly in the realm of home ownership, set up the system for the extreme stigmatization of social housing estates that has now developed. By leaving only the poorest people in rented housing and encouraging those capable of living independently to eschew community responsibility, Thatcher’s housing policies paved the way for today’s problems. The sense of public responsibility that vanished as people focused inwards was replaced with middle-class condemnation of the poor for being irresponsible. Instead of helping the deprived people who landed in housing estates, homeowners blamed their poverty-stricken neighbors for their inability to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps. Stigmatization of social housing estates their occupants began with Thatcher’s housing policies and resulted in Hastings and Dean’s 2000 findings that “stigma impoverishes all areas of residents’ lives”: residents believe the stigma of living in a housing estate causes them to be “economically disadvantaged and [to] receive lower quality services” (1).

## **NEW LABOUR AND POLLARDS HILL**

The New Labour government, which has held power since Prime Minister Tony Blair's election in 1997, marked a significant shift in British politics from Thatcher's "deregulation and attacks on corporatism" (Narin 48). "Old" Labour consistently allied itself with blue-collar workers and the trade unions, working to push forward union agendas; James Cronin, a history professor at Boston College, describes the "close link to the trade unions [as] the foundation of Labour's peculiar constitutional structure" (8). Since the turn of the century, and particularly in its heyday after World War II, Labour existed wholly "to defend...a very concrete set of institutions, the most important of which [were] the trade unions" (Cronin 7)—indeed, working so closely with unions that Cronin described the union/Labour relationship as a governing "partnership" (10). In fighting for the common man and his union representatives, Labour quickly gained a socialist leaning. Soon Labour came to ground its policies in socialism, maintaining a

framework that was basically hostile to capitalism and sceptical of its ability to generate sustained economic growth and social justice; they shared [a] ...fundamental preference for collective solutions over market mechanisms and the...belief in collective provision over privately organised welfare (Cronin 9).

However, this tendency to favor unions and socialism failed so miserably to draw in non-working class voters that the Labour Party experienced several crushing defeats during the decades that Conservatives controlled the government.

These defeats convinced some members of the Labour Party that their party needed to change—not just in a few policies, but radically. Because the idea of Labour had become so firmly entrenched in socialism and unions, advocates of a new Labour Party called for "total and...comprehensive [change]...because...no mere programmatic adjustment would suffice" (Cronin 2). Tony Blair and Gordon Brown emerged as the leaders crusading for a new Labour Party.



Blair quickly latched on to the idea of turning Labour into what Cronin calls “self-consciously ‘modern’” (11), with the ultimate goal of creating a rejuvenated Party that strove to “distinguish itself from the historic Labour Party” (Cronin 2). Modernism, Blair claimed, could only improve the Labour Party, and resistance to modernizing the Party marked the resisters as exhibiting either a “stubborn and irrational attachment to tradition or an unhealthy reluctance to face reality” (Cronin 4). According to Eugene McLaughlin, a social sciences professor at the Open University, “New Labour indicated its desire to modernize all things British. ‘Cool Britannia’ would be replacing ‘Rule Britannia.’” Yet modernizers did not want to abandon *all* of the old Labour Party; the New Labour Party wanted, instead, to distance itself from old Labour’s failures while still claiming its successes—such as the post-World War II government that revitalized Britain.

Where Thatcher sought to revitalize Britain through political and individualistic means, New Labour believed in revitalizing Britain through cultural and marketing means. Prime Minister Tony Blair emphasized the “importance of showcasing Britain as a young and stylish post-imperial nation with leading-edge creative cultural industries” (McLaughlin); Britain’s old traditional image underwent an intense rebranding campaign and came out as a heavily branded, trademarked image.

The ideas of modernization and marketing, however, sounded rather vague to a voting public. Blair solidified the changes to the Labour Party into a series of more concrete ideas that all centered on *community*. For Blair, the

notion of community also fitted well with the emerging rhetoric of responsibility and reciprocity and so helped to justify New Labour’s new departures on crime and social policy.

...It seemed to open up towards a grander vision of a one-nation Britain in which social inequalities would be much reduced and old divisions replaced by a renewed sense of solidarity. (Cronin 394)

To enhance community, the New Labour Party spoke of certain values that, when emphasized, would draw the nation together. These values consisted of “equal worth; opportunity for all; [and] responsibility” (Cronin 426). When all citizens had the opportunity to become workers, all workers were considered equal, and all workers took responsibility for themselves, for their families, and for following the law, the community of Britain would truly flourish. The pre-election idealizations of these values, along with vows to “reduce class sizes, to provide jobs for the young, to introduce ‘fast-track punishment’ and to ‘cut waiting times’ in the NHS” as well as to strengthen the economy appealed not only to traditional Labour supporters, but also to white-collar workers and the middle classes that had until that point remained unreached by the Labour Party (Cronin 406).

Modernization coupled with the campaign promises succeeded. In 1997 the New Labour Party came to power with a resounding triumph, crushing the Conservative opposition. Once in office, New Labour instigated social and political policies that its leaders believed would revitalize struggling areas in Britain. These policies included significantly altering to the welfare program and introducing what New Labour leaders described as “devolution” of power.

During the old Labour years, socialism allied with welfare and people did relatively well. Then during Thatcher’s and the Conservatives’ years in power, self-reliance and individualism overtook welfare, relegating its role to a fraction of what it had been. With the rise of New Labour, welfare attained yet another face: that of remedying social exclusion of the poor. This stemmed from the belief that deprived people—those in need of welfare—were excluded from society and need to rejoin society socially, economically, and politically in order to escape from the cycle of poverty. Where the government had previously doled out money to solve a problem, a belief emerged that “the era of big government had past, that simply enlarging the state would be counter-productive.... As Stephen Byers, then at the Treasury, insisted in late 1998, “The old days of throwing money at a problem and hoping that it goes away are gone.” (Cronin 429)

The idea of community came to play a crucial role in solving that problem. New Labour's policy towards welfare became one of using community organizations to "[counter]...social exclusion" (Cronin 428) by helping people in deprived areas become reattached to the workplace, "the education system, networks for the provision of housing, social services and transport, the National Health Service and the government itself" (Cronin 422). Instead of "throwing money" at deprived areas, organizations sprang up that came to know the people, their needs, and what actions would most effectively meet those needs. Thus welfare became much more than just giving poor people money. With the advent of organizations whose existence focused wholly on improving local communities, the role of welfare was reduced. Instead, the focus turned towards using non-governmental groups for "reinforcing a sense of civic responsibility, strengthening the link between 'rights and responsibilities,' and working to reduce crime and combat 'anti-social' behaviour" (Cronin 428). The state played much less of a role in this new welfare program. Its part became to better educate its citizens, to train them to take the jobs on offer in the information economy; and...simultaneously prod people into the labour market and provide the social services that make risk-taking and work feasible and attractive. It would also encourage entrepreneurship, police the market in order to facilitate wider participation, and create a stable macro-economic framework for large and small business. (Cronin 427)

In New Labour's plan to revitalize deprived areas, the government created the right conditions for people to improve their situations. The people themselves, in conjunction with community-regeneration organizations, actually effected the improvements. A large national government, however, could administer this process less effectively than local Councils. Hence the necessity for devolution and its power-switching.

Devolution was introduced with the New Labour movement in an attempt to decentralize the British government. It provided the background for the welfare—or non-welfare aid—outlined

above, as well as providing the impetus to perhaps coalesce many Britons' fractured self-images. Since the United Kingdom includes England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, people living in those areas have to decide how to think of themselves—whether to answer “British” or “Welsh” to the question of nationality, for instance. Devolution introduced a stronger emphasis on each of the United Kingdom's subsections by “pooling of powers from central government to government at regional or local level” (“Devolution”). This meant that Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland all received stronger parliamentary powers; for instance, in Wales the Welsh Assembly was established to provide stronger Welsh governmental control. The hope was that, in introducing stronger local governments, area residents would begin to feel more strongly associated with their heritage.

Devolution took place on a more local scale, too, with increased power going to local authorities and the central government undergoing major changes. The hope was that with increased power for local government, local issues would receive better attention and more prompt solutions: Councils could attend to development trusts within their borough borders, providing support and funding as necessary for local areas to be regenerated from the inside out.

New Labour's plans to regenerate deprived areas included Merton's wards of Pollards Hill, Longthornton, and Figges Marsh. The new programs relied “more on communities and civil service” working in deprived areas to effect regeneration (Cronin 426); the challenge then became how to effectively draw in deprived people such as those living in Pollards Hill into society. Development trusts, which had existed for years before the New Labour Party and its New Labour rhetoric entered the political arena, provided the perfect opportunity to integrate the government's plans into poorer communities. The similarity between the trusts' and New Labour's community-based agendas allowed them to mesh together smoothly. These development trusts, already having gained the trust of resident and having worked for years in deprived communities, provided New Labour's changed welfare plan with the perfect introduction into those areas. For residents of

deprived wards like Pollards Hill, those updated welfare promises would have sounded very hopeful, offering a new, potentially effective opportunity to improve their social situation.

The hope offered through development trusts was not the standard one of governmental handouts. Instead, organizations such as Commonsides Community Development Trust were established in deprived areas with the specific mission of furthering regeneration and reducing social exclusion through a wide variety of means. Trusts focused on everything from improving the environment to providing continuing education for those who couldn't afford it. Ultimately, these community-improving organizations, working in tandem with such services as the revised welfare, sought to help poor, unemployed people find work. Jobs were "the antidote to 'social exclusion,' absence of work its key cause and most visible consequence," where "social exclusion" was believed to be the root of deprivation (Cronin 431). They weren't to be just any jobs, however. Instead, deprived citizens would rejoin society by working for private companies, thereby improving the economy as well as their personal situations.

Yet despite the high hopes, all the power shifting did not mean much in the housing estates of Pollards Hill, Commonsides East, and Lonesome. Residents there continued to struggle with petty crimes, low employment rates, high immigrant populations, and most particularly with the stigma associated with many housing estates. Increased local control couldn't remove the stain associated with Council-run housing estates, and even diligent development trust activities take time to make a significant difference.

Where local governmental control failed, however, image control took over. Since housing estates and everything associated with them marred the new definition of Britain as "a dynamic, progressive, sophisticated nation and a world leader in creativity and innovation" (McLaughlin), the public view of housing estates needed to change. Image control has come to be seen as an integral part of revitalization of stigmatized housing estates. The idea of regeneration itself involved kick-

starting deprived areas economically, socially, and in the eyes of potential residents; to some extent this could be accomplished if those stigmatized areas can “attract and retain young, employed households” of people who choose to live there (Hastings and Dean 2). Because people’s perceptions housing estates had so much to do with its low social standing, Hastings and Dean suggested the inclusion of an image manager in regeneration projects—pouring money into a housing estate, or rebuilding its crumbling buildings, was not enough. The public needed to be made aware of the non-obvious regeneration efforts through “media and advertising” (Hastings and Dean 3-4); that way, the “regeneration initiatives [that] have the potential to affect how the estate is perceived” could have an opportunity to overcome the stigma associated with the estates (Hastings and Dean 3).

The best way begin this image control was through residents. But area residents, disgruntled from years of neglect and social disgust, felt there was a “gap between rhetoric that demands community participation” and the reality of their participation (Anastacio 1). This rhetorical gap, coupled with high antagonism “between local authorities and local communities” (Anastacio 1) in London, meant that regeneration—and the image management to be coupled with it—simply was not taking place. Development trusts like the Commonsides Community Development Trust played an important role in maintaining what little regeneration *did* occur (Anastacio 2).

New Labour’s non-welfare community aid programs and devolution continue apace, but much work remains to be done: the stigma of housing estates and their residents continues strongly; residents still struggle to obtain decent jobs, housing, and attention. Development trusts and other organizations have begun to instigate changes that, over time, may prove helpful. The final effect of New Labour and its policies on areas such as Pollards Hill, Lonesome, and Figges Marsh have yet to be seen.

## **Local Context: Development Trusts**

Commonside's three wards have long existed as a backwater, overshadowed by London years before their incorporation and experiencing the banes of city life with few of the boons. Because of their remote location, the wards hosted heavily polluting industries that Londoners refused to accept in their backyards. For instance, in 1872 a firework factory that required a remote location due to the danger of explosions found its place: "60 acres of rural land in Mitcham" (Bruley and Edwards 13). Local historian E. N. Montague found that during approximately the same time, a chemical works "permanently [blighted] all prospects of developing Lonesome into a desirable residential area," an early occurrence that factored negatively for the area's social history (33). Quarries and herb farms also operated at various times between the 1800s and 1950s in the area where the Commonside Trust now labors, and although some beautiful individual homes sprang up as a result of those activities, much of the housing accommodated renters: primarily poor, working class families who labored at the factories nearby. Later, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a toy factory, sweets factory, and meter factory joined in the industrial complex in London's once-rural outskirts. These operated through the World Wars and only began declining and closing between 1920 and 1970 as housing took priority in the area. As a result, Parker noted that at one time Mitcham had accumulated "one of the largest industrial developments in Surrey" (4).

The relatively low-population outskirts in Pollards Hill, Figges Marsh, and Longthornton offered lots of space for new housing developments. Thus, between World War I and World War II housing sprang up in the area so quickly—nearly doubling the number of houses between 1920 and 1921 (Munday 3)—that the local infrastructure couldn't keep pace with the demand. In Longthornton, Munday described "many people of relatively modest income [who] moved out from the overcrowding of city centers to become owner occupiers on suburban estates" (1). Although people quickly took up residence in the houses, the roads, schools, stores, and bus routes necessary

for daily life did not arrive with the new population. Indeed, Munday noted that at times this infrastructure wasn't even planned when people moved into their new homes (1).

These “children of the wilderness” who had sought to escape London’s busyness found themselves more isolated than they expected, with nobody listening to their calls for roads and bus routes (Munday 5). Eventually they took matters into their own hands, forming associations that pressed for action. Community involvement in the area climaxed from the 1920’s through the mid-1930’s, with numerous social activities taking place. Area associations, particularly the Long Thornton and District Improvement Association, enjoyed high membership numbers and steady income; they provided many of the services that development trusts seek to offer today. Munday states that “the [Long Thornton and District Improvement] Association helped to foster community spirit” in an area with little else going for it (11). The Longthornton Ratepayers’ Association spent six years persistently tackling the issue of lack of bus service before the Ministry of Transport supplied the means for a bus route to Mitcham (Munday 5).

This type of governmental neglect led to strong community solidarity among homeowners. They developed a distrust of government that still lingers in the area today. Yet Munday found that by 1936 many of the privately-owned homes “had been sold to landlords or sub-let and [...were] occupied by families who often did not have the same interest in local affairs” that the earlier, more permanent residents (10). The area’s tone shifted during and after World War II; by 1938, half of residents rented their homes. A disengaged feeling, possibly related to the transience of renting, developed among residents who knew they could move out at any time. With the increase of renting, interest in local activities and welfare waned. By the early 1940’s most community-run associations’ positive contributions diminished until the associations simply vanished.

By the end of World War II, the space available for housing developments in Pollards Hill, Commonsides East, and Lonesome meant that those areas received a significant share of what



Montague described as government-managed “good modern housing” (110). These buildings provided a rapid housing solution for the large population rendered homeless by bombing in London during the war as well as accommodations for returning soldiers. Large numbers of inexpensive prefabricated homes sprang up, setting the tone for the area as a cheap renter’s zone. These houses’ construction coincided with the destruction of many of the notable old homes that had provided a more upscale tone to the neighborhood. Additionally, during that time the population skyrocketed, bringing London rushing into the long-isolated corner of Merton. Council-built and -managed housing continued to expand, eventually overtaking and razing the quickly assembled prefabricated homes to replace them with what Montague described as “high density low-rise” housing for young families (112). This renting population continued to have the same frustrating issues with government disinterest and with resident disinterest in local happenings.

The Commonsides Trust is a local solution to some of the problems that arose with the Thatcher and New Labour policies. Large-scale governmental changes degraded the conditions around Pollards Hill, and the Commonsides Community Development Trust was a localized response to those conditions that focused on improvement by drawing the community together.

## **PHILOSOPHY**

Development Trusts, which usually arise in “London’s most deprived communities where market failure [and] poor social and environmental conditions” plague residents, exist to improve life for area residents in a wide variety of activities (DTA Members Directory). Local citizens form Trusts by banding together to address “local ‘pockets of need’” through various avenues, focusing on everything from environmental improvement to economic revitalization (DTA Members Directory). These nonprofit organizations always aim to support themselves without significant funding, although for many years after their inception they often operate various programs based on funding

availability. Some Development Trusts grow large and powerful in their own right, but many remain small and extremely local, employing just a few people and working primarily with area volunteers.

The underlying development trust ethos involves people working with people to find “practical answers to local problems, and aim to achieve lasting, significant benefits” (DTA brochure), forming a stronger community through the process. They are “accountable to the community” for their actions; unlike governmental agencies, development trusts maintained no agenda other than improving their local areas (DTA brochure). They achieve this goal through many different avenues: by providing eco-friendly housing nearly at cost to poorer areas of London; offering sound job-search advice for struggling employment seekers; organizing community festivals; running low-cost daycare services; providing direction or support to people who need it; coordinating youth events, repairing bikes, encouraging economic growth, providing recreation facilities; and many more activities. To categorize development trusts is to categorize the nuances of light refracting from a prism. Any definition would be too broad or too focused to apply to all trusts and still retain meaning. In essence the development trust philosophy—one to which Commonsense subscribes—is to achieve long-term social, community, and economic regeneration in their area by the most efficacious means.

Commonside Community Development Trust (CCDT), established in March 2001, follows the typical Trust format. It operates in an area that have a reputation for poverty: the Pollards Hill, Figges Marsh, and Longthornton wards in the southern area of London’s borough of Merton. Housing estates dot the area, while many homes sport weed-filled or paved-over front yards; boarded windows and failed businesses blockaded with metal screens are a common sight. As a small trust, Commonsense’s staff size fluctuates based on funding availability. Employees at Commonsense work towards fulfilling their mission statement “to create a better future for ourselves, our families, and our community.” The Trust seeks to promote a stronger, more cohesive

community within its wards; it achieves this goal through community events featuring a wide range of activities as well as specific activities and programs focused on a specific demographic. Unlike some development trusts, CCDT's operating philosophy tends towards partnering with other organizations to bring much-needed services to the area rather than running those services itself. To this end the Trust acts as an event organizer, coordinating programs such as Aiming High, a European Union-sponsored, six-borough-wide outreach for people Londoners describe as Merton's "lone teen mums."

## **HISTORY**

Commonside Community Development Trust emerged as the exit strategy for the £5 million (approximately \$9 million) Pollards Hill Single Regeneration Budget's (SRB) program "Building Connections," which began in 1997 and was scheduled to end in 2002. Implemented to begin regeneration programs in the Pollards Hill area, early CCDT documents suggest the SRB did not actually effect much. According to the Member's Directory of Development Trust Association, which is an organization that keeps track of all the development trusts, this type of founding a development trust from "public spending programmes" commonly occurs; it serves as a type of long-term independent continuance that acknowledges the area's needs by beginning to address them.

Since Pollards Hill and Figges Marsh rank "as 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> most deprived wards overall in Merton" (Hewitt 2004), and because Longthornton lacked any major community buildings and activities, those wards clearly required the additional social and economic attention that a development trust could provide (Dalton 2001). Additionally, the authorities' observation of "a pattern of social isolation, suspicion of authority, pessimism about the possibility of change, and apathy" (Dalton 2001)—possibly the result of decades of governmental neglect, failure to carry

through on promises, and inconsistency—evinced by local residents strengthened the argument in favor of establishing a development trust. Finally, almost three times as many of the residents in those three wards lived in social housing as compared to the national average; that population supported a significantly larger number of minorities and lone parents than average (Hewitt 2004). Thus, with a clear need for community revitalization and with the precedent of existing SRBs establishing development trusts, Commonsides Community Development Trust was founded.

The Pollards Hill SRB focused on Pollards Hill and its people in particular, since it was the second-most deprived ward in Merton. But Commonsides Trust founders decided to broaden the catchment area for the new development trust. The larger area, encompassing 25,000 people, would enable the Commonsides Trust to benefit a wider population. The founders reasoned that “the more people that pay for, or benefit from, the activities that the Trust provides, the more money it will make to secure its financial future” (“What Area”). This larger area provided the “economies of scale” and “use of local resources and buildings” for Commonsides Community Development Trust in a way that the smaller Pollards Hill ward could not (Leask 2001). Yet at that time the development trust did not employ any staff, instead existing through Trustee representatives from each ward. They hired Phil Leask, a contractor, to employ the first staff and begin publicizing the Trust’s existence.

Leask also prepared all the documents outlining goals for Commonsides Trust’s first few years. Leask’s draft business plan described Commonsides’s mission as promoting “urban regeneration in an area of social and economic deprivation” (2000). This involved CCDT partnering with other organizations to act as “a conduit through which concerted community planning and action [could] take place” (“What Area”); the original founders particularly anticipated a close working relationship between Commonsides Community Development Trust and the Pollards Hill Housing Association (PHHA). With the PHHA’s funding, manpower, and advice, the Commonsides

Trust would create an “area with safe, strong, active confident communities” and co-ordinate effectively with “public and community facilities and open space” (Leask 2001).

Additionally, the Trust would provide “services of the highest quality” to “people of all ages and interests” (Leask 2001). These services included what Leask described as the Commonsides Café, which would provide significant funds for Commonsides’s operations and an “advice shop” in the Day Centre, which had been used by elderly people as a gathering place to play bingo (“What Area”); community programs for education, and youths; local events; the Parent Gateway program to provide education and companionship for lone parents; and continuance and governance of existing childcare facilities. Leask anticipated the new Trust would take over the Pollards Hill Community Centre, the Day Centre, and the Youth Centre to “ensure that local assets are used as effectively as possible” as well as facilitate all the activities listed above (Leask 2000). Commonsides was expected to begin with three buildings, and possibly a fourth, an old dentist’s surgery, at 70 South Lodge Avenue. Leask’s documents also anticipated the swift purchase of additional property in Longthornton and Figges Marsh to provide more local gathering-places in those areas.

CCDT documents indicated that the Trust initially intended to charge for consulting work on various events as a way to obtain funding for these purchases and for running programs; money would also come from the proposed Café. Early documents indicated that the founders also anticipated receiving pay for managing the Community, Day, and Youth Centres. This money would support the Trust’s early mission of “*Local* people delivering *local* solutions to meet *local* needs” (Leask 2001). Yet none of this work really began until Leask hired Selena Gardiner in November 2002 as project manager for the Commonsides Trust.

Instead of the three buildings, Gardiner received the old dentist’s surgery which she described in the first Annual General Meeting (AGM) letter as in need of significant “maintenance and decoration” (2003)—including repainting the building’s interior. Despite the initial basic

difficulties, the first year resulted in progress on the Parent Gateway project, which was started by the SRB, as well as beginning to design and implement a website and marketing materials and a door-to-door campaign conducted to alert residents of Commonsides existence (Gardiner 2003). Funding arrived from corporate funders and governmental sources rather than not the sources idealistically envisioned in 2001.

The original goals laid out proved more elusive than expected: only after 18 months of hard work, has the Trust moved into the Pollards Hill Day Centre. The Trust has not instigated the wide positive effects anticipated before its inception, since many of the projects taken for granted in the proposals have proved much more difficult to begin than was expected. No easy property handovers occurred, and the Café and advice center remain a dream for another day. Trust employees reworded the mission statement—“to create a better future for ourselves, our families, and our community”—to be more indicative of Commonsides current projects as it shifted its focus to bringing the community together through various events. It grew slowly but surely, hiring three new staff members in 2004 and 2005. The Trust now offers free training on bike repairs, organizes well-attended community events, has begun a program to help teen mothers ages 16 to 19, and is in the process of organizing an environmentally-friendly diaper service. These projects, although smaller in scale than the original proposals anticipated, benefit the area by drawing people out of their individual homes and reminding them of the larger community around them.

## **NECESSITY**

From the polluting chemical works of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the lack of infrastructure for the first settlers in the prefabricated houses of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Pollards Hill, Figges Marsh, and Longthornton areas have received primarily the negative aspects of life as an outer London borough. The poor infrastructure of the first major housing in the area that began a long history of resident

mistrust in the government; the transience of renting that engendered disinterest in area life; the post-World War II rented estate housing that brought an inrush of people; the Thatcher house-owning plan that left only the poorest, most needy families renting in areas like Pollards Hill; and the recent increase in immigrant populations that has led to social isolation of those people all contributed to the aching need in the Pollards Hill, Longthornton, and Figges Marsh wards. The disappointment and apathy described in one of the early Commonsides documents surely springs directly from the events that have long marred life for the area's inhabitants. Years of governmental neglect have left these three wards in need of some non-governmental community-building agency.

In light of this clear need, Commonsides Community Development Trust was established to shoulder that responsibility. As a development trust focused on improving the community, Commonsides has begun to address the difficult task of drawing out people who live in this long-neglected, oft-disappointed area. As local residents, Commonsides employees understand the troubles their neighbors face. They organize events that begin building trust between themselves—as an organization and as individuals—and the local residents. These events have historically taken place in the rather run-down, drab Pollards Hill Community Centre's main meeting hall, although with their July 2005 move to a larger facility, the Trust will hold events in its own building in the future. These events often include fashion shows, feature local rappers, provide educational information of some sort—for instance, by featuring countries around the world and providing unusual information about those nations—as well as entertainment involving food and music.

Although the Trust's task has proved more difficult in its two and one-half years of existence than the original planners anticipated, Commonsides's current employees have successfully started to coax residents out of their protective shells into the wider world of positive community involvement. Although Commonsides Community Development Trust's existence springs directly from the need for community development in their three-ward area, it has remained fairly invisible

in the community it serves so diligently. Residents attend Commonsense events with zeal but they often remain unaware of the Trust's integral role in organizing those events. The organization hasn't taken the time or the opportunity to launch an all-out branding and marketing campaign to promote its visibility. The next sections will discuss the need for such branding and why the Commonsense Trust will benefit from the creation of a coherent brand and associated marketing campaign.



### **3. BRANDING**

**Hey what's up? I'm Carrie.**

**Hello, my name is Carrie.**

**Greetings and salutations. You may call me Carrie.**

While each of these introductions identify Carrie by name, they project a distinctly different *feels* of the speaker's personality. Solely based on these greetings, we can infer her personality: she could vary from laid-back and easygoing to stiff-necked and formal. Extrapolating from the possible personalities, each phrasing conjures up a different image of the speaker. She could be relaxed, wearing jeans and a T-shirt; or average, with professional dress and an efficient mien; or stiff, nose firmly planted in the air, with an expensive suit and an extravagantly large hat. Based on these projections, the hearer will respond emotionally—perhaps indignantly at the first introduction's impertinent informality or amusedly at the archaic final introduction. The emotional response that began with a feel for the speaker and progressed to forming beliefs about her personality and appearance will cause the hearer to react in a certain way—perhaps by seeking a deeper relationship with Carrie, opening business dealings with her, or eschewing further contact with her.

A brand works like the reaction a person has when meeting Carrie. Both for-profit firms and nonprofit organizations seek to project a certain personality onto a product or service, accomplishing this in various ways, with marketing serving as the brand's megaphone. Perhaps the term *brand* brings to mind a Nike Swoosh or some other company's logo. Although logos are part of marketing a brand, they're only the tip of the iceberg for a comprehensively designed brand. The brand serves as the power behind the name or logo, which then simply reflects the company's ethic. Marc Gobé, author of *Emotional Branding*, explains that a brand is something that has the ability to relate a company to its customers, and he describes brands like living organisms, with their lives endowed by parent companies (xv). The organization's personality forms the basis for the brand and brings the brand to life for consumers (Gobé, xv). According to designer D.K. Holland, a brand

becomes the liaison between the public and an organization. It displays the company’s “identity and underlying values” to such an extent that consumers form personal attachments to certain brands (“What’s that Branding?”). A brand becomes an almost living embodiment of a company’s mission and communicates that mission to a skeptical public.

Branding also serves as a means for companies to set themselves apart from competitors, to

**“Think of the brand as the core meaning of the modern corporation, and of the advertisement as one vehicle used to convey that meaning to the world.”**

– Naomi Klein, *No Logo*, pg. 5

help consumers distinguish their products from similar or identical products based on brand image (“What’s that Branding?”). With modern manufacturing techniques, competing products were often fabricated in the same factory, which Naomi Klein explains necessitated the parallel production of an “image-based difference [...] along with the product” (6). Branding allows

differentiation—what Klein calls a counteraction of the “unsettling anonymity of packaged goods” (6)—among identical offerings in the form of the slightly varied *feeling* among brands.

The books *Integrated Branding* and *Emotional Branding* both indicate that the brand plays a crucial role in building a relationship with an organization’s customers. Company culture forms the basis of brands, which reflects that culture consistently through the employees’ constant commitment. Even the best brand may not succeed without the whole company’s full support, but a consistent brand lives through the cooperation of an entire organization. When employees cohesively support and promote their brand, it will begin experiencing such benefits as increased recognition among the public and the target audience, increased word-of-mouth publicity, and increased volunteerism. Implementation of an effective branding design can play a crucial role in the success or failure of any organization, whether for-profit or nonprofit; consequently, projecting a unified image will greatly improve any organization’s public face.

A brand forms the link between internal corporate culture and external consumer culture, playing the role a telephone line does between phone users. An organization implements a brand when it realizes the importance of connecting with the people they intend to serve (Gobé xxvii). People trust brands because they form an emotional attachment, a relationship, with the organization that produces the brand. The company has earned the consumer's trust, and the company logo affixed to a product ensures its trustworthiness for the consumer. While all brands allow consumers feel that they know a company and can become friends with it, for-profit groups emphasize the final aspect that a brand provides: the feeling that, as a result of brand loyalty, consumers have an obligation to their brand-friend.

## The For-Profit Rhetorical Enterprise

For-profit companies have a specific, peculiar rhetorical situation with which to cope. While most

### **12-Second Rhetoric Tutorial**

**Rhetoric**, the art of persuasion, starts with an **exigence**. Exigence is the situation that demands a rhetorical response.

Classical rhetoric also includes three major aspects: **ethos**, the way the rhetorician projects his image; **pathos**, the emotional appeals employed in the rhetoric; and **logos**, the logical appeals utilized.

Rhetorical analysis also asks about the rhetor's **rhetorical stance**, which is made up of his **available argument**, the audience's interest, and the image he projects. It also examines the **rhetorical situation**, which is what drives the exigence in the first place.

rhetorical situations begin with exigence, companies selling their product or brand must *create* a rhetorical situation and its exigence.

Their exigence is not their audience's exigence. Instead of

addressing the audience's needs, a for-profit company's rhetoric must convince the audience that it feels a desire for the product.

Companies operate in a world where their target audience has no inclination to hear their message, so they must stimulate a desire

convincing enough to induce tired-eyed consumers to brighten up and spend some money.

- **Exigence.**

For-profit companies create exigencies that sell the image

associated with a brand. They convince consumers to satisfy a need that doesn't exist by denigrating,

however subtly, the consumer's current situation. Every advertisement suggests the consumer's inferiority by offering, or perhaps demanding, to remedy that situation. People want to project a certain vibe, a personal image, and companies reflect that desire by offering brands that create The Complete (or New) You. They harness the dual powers of marketing and advertising to create nonexistent exigencies for their products. Companies often imbue these purported exigencies with a sense of realism and attractiveness by associating their brands with cultural events (Klein). For example, a company that sponsors a rock-concert series seeks to reflect the image of rock music back to its products and services. People want to associate with that event, or with that lifestyle, and companies capitalize upon the fact, creating brands that suggest that by using a certain product, the consumer can associate with that rock concert. The brands allow companies to create an advertising exigency out of that situation. But these exigencies are always of a condemning sort, suggesting:

**You don't own product X (or associate with event Y), therefore you are not desirable. Remedy that by purchasing product X (or associating with event Y through product X) and to become the X you truly are.**

While an exigence usually simply arises, for-profit exigence of branding is never passive. For profit companies actively seek to woo audiences and to inspire those audiences to consumer action.

In *Phaedrus*, Plato indirectly raises a question about the morality of using persuasive talk to convince the audience to believe a lie. For-profit companies cannot raise such questions, since their rhetorical endeavor is based in creating brands to distinguish themselves from identical competitors. The marketing department, not the factory, creates the much-vaunted differences in various products. Companies must fall back on rhetorical techniques to distinguish the indistinguishable because in reality many products truly *are* identical, even produced in the same factories.

Although T-shirts and shoes cannot truly change a person's life, a Tommy Hilfiger shirt and Nike shoes *suggest* something about the consumer wearing those items, a suggestion that those companies have carefully molded into that brand. Companies use rhetoric to create a brand image,

which allows for differentiation between identical products as well as the correlation of a brand with a cultural niche. This section will analyze five major rhetorical moves that companies undertake to further unpack the for-profit rhetorical enterprise.

- **Timing.**

First, companies carefully time their rhetorical forays. Marketing experts plan their assaults on the public consciousness down to the last detail, leaving as little to chance—and the consumer’s whim—as possible. In a reversal of the typical rhetorical situation, companies create demand around timing. They seize every opportunity to strengthen a product’s brand; seasonal timing becomes just one more tool in the marketer’s toolbox. Consider the enormous advertising push around seasonal fashions. We associate bright colors with spring because vast corporations have spent billions of dollars for decades to convince us of that fact. Similarly, the enormous push for brand recognition occurs *before* the product ever appears on the market, with the product’s actual release carefully timed to coincide with peak consumer interest.

- **Delivery.**

Companies deliver their persuasive rhetoric through a vast array of different media. Each company projects a different image, which can even vary among the company’s different brands. To emphasize the differences, companies must use a wide variety communication styles. For instance, while a clothing store selling outdoor-wear could legitimately deliver its message by hosting nature walks or kayaking tours, a clothing store selling wedding gowns would not choose that method of delivery. Similarly, a car company advertising its minivans in women’s magazines would emphasize the vehicle’s size and safety, while the same company advertising its sports cars in a men’s magazine might display show the vehicle draped with attractive women.

Delivery also includes such details as how realistic a photograph appears, the amount of copy (number of words) on a page, the tone an announcer takes on a TV or radio advertisement, the positioning of subjects in a print advertisement, and numerous other particulars that all blend to

produce a feeling in the consumer. There is no standard method of delivery among for-profits, but the marketing department always heavily-researches, carefully plans, and deliberately designs the message to induce a particular reaction in a particular audience.

- **Logos.**

Third, the logos—the logical appeal—of the situation is based in the fact that companies have to convince jaded, experienced buyers that another product deserves to join the vast collection of stuff inhabiting the consumer’s shelves. Because few corporations sell truly *necessary* items, the companies must make a clear, subtle logical argument—while also being bound the culture’s norms against complex thinking. To avoid overtaking consumers’ patience, most companies do not often overtly employ logic in the copy of their advertisements. They avoid arguments because true logical arguments rarely change consumers’ minds, and because by and large people aren’t interested in logically considering which products they purchase. As a result, most for-profit companies use essentially the same logical syllogism:

**Brand X is desirable. If you purchase brand X, you become desirable too.**

This syllogism is based in the fundamental rhetorical situation facing for-profit companies. Since they base their success on selling personal improvements, for-profits must first convince people that their brand-name product does improve the purchaser in some way. Although this is a logical syllogism, it taps into the deeper emotional longing for acceptance, happiness, and love. Even the most logical for-profit appeal ultimately relies on the human emotional needs, and taps into those needs by implying:

**You are undesirable right now. If you do not buy brand X, you will remain undesirable.**

This aspect of companies’ logos rarely appears overtly, but consumers respond to it on a gut level nonetheless. Brands and brand loyalty are not based on logic; they are built on emotional appeal and a relationship with the consumer.

- **Ethos.**

Fourth, the ethos of the situation refers to how the company presents itself. Although this project's scope does not include analyzing various means by which the vast numbers of companies present themselves to consumers, it will discuss some of those means because many employ similar means, primarily all types of advertising. Voice and other rhetorical moves play a crucial role in those advertisements. Companies also enhance their image by funding events—think how often you've heard “This program is brought to you by...”—as well as by hosting their own events and associating with certain culturally acceptable ideas. For instance, a cosmetics company that wants to portray itself as Earth-friendly might employ a “natural-looking” website with greens, browns, tans, and yellows; use rough, brown, obviously recycled paper; and sponsor Earth Day activities around the country to project that natural feeling onto its cosmetics.

Additionally, for-profits all present themselves as endowers of the audience's personal image. They want to be thought of as the group who aids the consumer in “becoming who you really are,” as long as that involves utilizing the company's brand-name products. The ability to endow people with their desires comes from the cultural and social associations between brands and events. Successful brands carry meaning with them, meaning that has been carefully crafted and integrated into that brand by the company through heavy marketing and association campaigns. Ultimately, every for-profit company must present itself as appealing to the consumer's pocketbook. To do this, they all feed the consumer's belief that if you *buy* brand X you *become* the ideas that have been associated with brand X, and are therefore a more complete person.

- **Rhetorical stance.**

Finally, companies can take only a limited rhetorical stance due to the nature of their rhetorical enterprise. Their available argument is restricted to the syllogism discussed above, based on offering a product to fill an often non-existent need. A for-profit company's audience often has little or no interest in the product except as a result of the company's intense advertising efforts. The

for-profit's image and voice always claim to offer an improvement, but in reality demand the consumer's collaboration in a self-deceiving enterprise that condones the company-inspired consumer desire to reflect the for-profit company's image onto that consumer. The for-profit's persuasive power extends from the emotional investment consumers make in those companies: its rhetoric relies primarily on pathos.

A for-profit rhetorical enterprise ultimately seeks to create a successful brand. "Success" means that a brand has garnered a great deal of equity and that inspires a loyal following. Such a brand has many qualities, which Holland describes as: rooted in and expressing "core values" of the organization, exhibiting "clarity and depth" for the most efficaciousness; utilizing design in a way that attracts the desired audience while simultaneously "differentiating" itself; projecting a "clear and simple" brand identity (Holland). In short, a successful brand synthesizes and distills an organization's goals, its credo, and its potential offerings into one simple, understandable, highly recognizable idea or feeling.

The brand becomes more than an idea: often companies use it to satisfy an emotional longing people feel. In this way the brand allows a company to ascend from simply manufacturing to personifying an intangible idea. As Klein notes in *No Logo*, "advertising [isn't] just scientific; it [is] also spiritual. Brands could conjure a feeling[, ...] but not only that, entire corporations could themselves embody a meaning of their own" so that people (6), in obtaining personal meaning by purchasing a product, gratify more than the physical desire to own an object. They can also fill an intangible emotional desire. A person who encounters a brand immediately thinks of the brand's feeling in addition to associating it with the distillation of the company's overall mission.

To create a brand, an organization must go about *branding* itself—associating itself with the company in the target audience's mind. According to Bill Nissim, author of "Nonprofit Branding:



Unveiling the Essentials,” branding involves “creating a clear, consistent message about your organization, so that when people see your logo or hear your name, they’ll think of your mission and programs in terms you have defined.” Branding is the process of ingratiating *your* organization’s signature logo and slogan—in short, company culture—into the public consciousness.

Companies accomplish integration in part by associating themselves with certain public events. For instance, Klein describes the association of beer companies with rock concerts, clothing brands with outdoor events, and shoe companies with sporting activities. While at first “culture [...] [added] value to brands,” eventually brands took over cultural events, becoming a “lived reality” where people attend sporting events at Safeco Stadium and enjoy Tommy Hilfiger concert series (Klein 29). For-profit branding moved into the realm of creating real experiences around their brands; Klein suggests that brands have shifted from drawing image from culture to *being* culture (30). This aspect of branding coincides with companies’ moves to create emotional desires and immediately offer the fulfillment of those desires through their products. Instead of simply existing on a need-arises, need-met basis, companies can begin to generate emotional desires as well as offering the satisfaction of those desires through lived experiences that transcend merely the suggestion of an idea.

Both Gobé and Holland emphasize that “branding is 90 percent emotionally driven” and that the “objective is to hit the sweet spot” that actively reflects the corporation’s values through color, design, logo, and text (“Finding the Sweet Spot”). Based on the brand’s image, many of the target audience members will infer a company’s values and mission, as well as forming an opinion about that organization. As brands become increasingly culturally salient and entwined with culture itself, the acceptance of forming an emotional relationship with brands follows an increasing parallel path. Successful branding gives companies a face and endows products deeper with a significance than mere things, so that people recognize and respond to corporations that reflect carefully chosen

aspects of culture. Branding is a point of intersection and communication, and for-profit companies use the relationship formed by a brand between the company and the consumer to increase profits.

Just as for-profit companies need brands, nonprofit organizations can benefit from branding as well. Although for-profit companies may perpetrate good works in the process of moneymaking, they exist solely to capitalize upon the culture's desire to fulfill advertisement-inspired desires.

Nonprofits, on the other hand, spring up from well-meaning people who want to improve the world somehow. They don't advertise to create desires and they don't brand to offer consumers the New You. But nonprofit organizations still need to present a coherent image to the public. If an image isn't consciously provided for people, the audience will assimilate one from the organization's unconscious self-representations.

Consider, then, the slightly different rhetorical situation facing nonprofit organizations as they approach brand-forming.

## **The Nonprofit Rhetorical Enterprise**

In contrast to the for-profit rhetorical condition, nonprofit organizations seek to address an exigence that results directly from a rhetorical situation. Although they must create a brand just as surely as for-profits, nonprofits often focus on attending to a unique need, so their situation allows for legitimate differentiation. Instead of responding to the immediacy of brand creation, nonprofit rhetoric focuses primarily on obtaining money or time from their audience.

- **Exigence.**

The nonprofit company's rhetoric is based in a context of associating their brand with the process of addressing a particular need. Instead of having to create a desire in the audience to complement a brand's offerings, the nonprofit organization has to use its rhetoric to convince an audience to help remedy an extant problem. Nonprofits distinguish themselves by the manner in

which they formulate issues. Because the problem can best be understood in terms of personal experience, nonprofits employees who lived through the issue their organization addresses will quickly recognize an exigence and expand upon it to reach a wider audience. For those types of employees, the exigence becomes more than the driving force for the organization's existence; bears the additional weight of a lived experience so that they empathize with the audience.

This is true for the recipients of the nonprofit's efforts, as well. The exigence of their situation—living in abject poverty, suffering from disease or injury, enduring physical abuse—looms large in their lives. The nonprofit's must reach two audiences: those who will provide help, and those who will accept help. In the two different rhetorical approaches that a nonprofit uses, which

### **The Commonside Trust's Rhetoric**

Commonside formulates its rhetoric around the exigence of its perception of a deficit in community involvement in the Pollards Hill area, with the added exigence of the necessity of regeneration for that area. The organization's rhetoric is based in the members' personal experiences; the employees live nearby, and viscerally understand the isolation in the community. When employees verbalize the need for community events, their rhetoric springs from lived experience that allows them to see that exigence clearly.

Commonside's employees invent this exigence for others by verbalizing the problem as one of apathy and isolation within their wards. As a result, their rhetoric focuses on the value of drawing community members together in various activities. They talk about involving people, about the need for connection, when they discuss their mission and exigence. It all hinges on the belief that bringing the community together through events will strengthen the area and lead to regeneration as locals take increasing interest in their neighborhood.

spring from the two different exigencies, audience is equally pressing: the nonprofit can use similar rhetorical to reach each, but differences must be acknowledged and addressed.

Thus the exigence that drives a nonprofit organization, at least to some extent, is based in personal experience of that situation. For instance, the project leader at the Commonside Community Development Trust recently hired two employees to run a program for single teen mothers. The two employees are both single mothers, and as such have much deeper ties to other women in that situation, of whatever age. They can relate to the challenge of raising a child alone and their personal experiences provide them with a deeper understanding of the needs experienced by "lone teen mums" than other people,

however compassionate, can achieve. For them, the exigence is not just the esoteric understanding

that the skyrocketing numbers of teen mothers in the UK needs curbing; it is much more personal understanding of the difficulty of raising a child alone. They understand the necessity of helping teenagers who undertake that task.

For people who have experienced the problem they seek to alleviate, the rhetorical situation becomes much more immediate and meaningful. The sincerity of their concern, which can spring from a deeply personal encounter, endows the rhetoric they employ with power greater than that of merely convincing words. Their rhetoric sounds more earnest than for-profits' because it *is* more earnest, the result of a deeper personal understanding of the exigence than anybody can achieve regarding commercial exigencies. Employees who can recognize the exigence of a situation with their own eyes as a result of personal experience provide a heartfelt tone to the rhetoric produced by nonprofits.

Generally this earnest rhetoric is one of exposure rather than invention. Nonprofits seek to raise awareness of themselves and their solution to a rhetorical situation that produced the exigence of communication. This rhetorical enterprise is inherently different from the for-profit company's, even if their methods of creating a brand follow parallel paths. Instead of selling a belief in inadequacy and the need to personally improve, nonprofits sell themselves and their cause. Their rhetoric promotes an image as well: one of philanthropy and city-wide, nation-wide, or world-wide improvement.

- **Timing.**

A nonprofit's timing usually results from an external source. For instance, consider the enormous response by thousands of organizations after the December 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean. Many nonprofits (and for-profit companies as well) rapidly produced rhetorical pleas to their various audiences, exhorting some type of action from the audience. Such opportune rhetorical

responses to immediate problems often dictate the timing of a nonprofit's rhetoric. This timing strengthens a nonprofit's brand based on what the organization chooses to respond to and when.

Timing is particularly meaningful for those the nonprofit seeks to aid. In the case of the December 2004 tsunami, nonprofits' timeliness meant the difference between life and death for many of the injured survivors. Nonprofits that rushed to help hurried precisely because victims would die without intervention. Unlike the timing involved in for-profits, nonprofit timing in relation to those they seek to help tends to depend on acting swiftly and decisively in the aftermath of a disaster—whether that disaster is thousands of deaths or one abused wife.

- **Delivery.**

The nonprofit's delivery often must come more cheaply than a for-profit company's, due to the nature of nonprofits. Although some nonprofits grow to wield both money and power, most remain small, with equally tiny budgets. They often cannot afford focus groups, expensive marketing campaigns, or glossy print advertisements; their delivery tends to have a less experienced but more sincere ring than many for-profit companies. Nonprofits rarely splash gorgeous advertisements across whole pages of widely read magazines. Small nonprofits produce homemade or less-professional flyers or posters and try to get written up in newspapers for publicity.

Nonprofits use essentially the same rhetorical methods to reach to reach the audience they hope to help as they do to reach the audience providing help. The difference may be in the wording or lack thereof, with ad designers attending carefully to the audience's communication abilities. Nonprofits want to avoid the problem one for-profit canned food company experienced in Africa. The company printed a happy baby's face on all the different can labels—and learned later that in that market, the pictures on the cans showed what was inside. Nonprofits benefit from paying close attention to the communication style variations of those they seek to help.

- **Logos.**

Disregarding advertisements for events, which suggest that “you ought to attend event X because you will enjoy yourself and help others,” the nonprofit organization’s logos-appeals tend to take more overt forms than for-profit companies’ appeals. Even when for-profits sponsor positive, nonprofit-type improvements, a stigma of pandering to the audience often clings to their good deed. Nonprofit organizations do not have this problem. They communicate sincerely because they exist to solve a perceived problem, such as feeding undernourished people, as opposed to problem like too few millionaires taking Caribbean cruises. The image of helping people plays a crucial role in building a nonprofit’s brand and can provide a basis for their logical appeal as well. That appeal often appears in the following form:

**Here is need X. You have the ability to meet need X. Therefore you should help us meet need X.**

The appeal simply says “help us help others.” Such arguments aim at good-hearted, giving people by laying out the situation logically; that logical elucidation brands a nonprofit as effective and cool-headed. Additionally, the brand expands based on what need nonprofits choose to address. In formulating this appeal, nonprofit organizations use rhetoric to touch the audience’s conscience as well as their logical mind. They frequently use emotional appeals. How often have you felt sorry for less-privileged people, or for endangered animals, or any number of other worthy parties as a result of nonprofit advertising? Calling upon the audience’s conscience strengthens the nonprofits’ the rhetorical appeal that began based upon the fact that people like to help others.

In *Phaedrus*, Plato describes logic and emotions as the two horses pulling the soul; the one a steady and consistent worker, the other providing impetus for swift action in times of need. The emotional appeal taps both the audience’s guilt and compassion and thereby harnesses a powerful non-logical force. People often make impulsive decisions based on an emotional response. An organization’s rhetoric can target that aspect of the audience’s response mechanism to impel an

audience to action. Harnessing logic and emotions in rhetorical discourse, organizations provide the audience with an opportunity to not only logically appreciate the positive contribution they make by supporting a nonprofit, but also to feel warm and fuzzy inside at their good-heartedness.

Yet a logical appeal also can contain this additional sub-appeal:

**Good people meet need X. By supporting our organization, you will also be a good person.**

This harkens back to the syllogism employed by for-profit companies, which offers the consumer a way to personally improve. Nonprofit organizations offer consumers a similar arrangement, only with intangible goods instead of physical gratification. A person might choose to help a nonprofit based on the sub-logical appeal that guarantees the individual's "goodness." Volunteering or monetarily supporting a nonprofit might provide the consumer with one more way produce the New, Real You. For example, a person who wanted to project an environmentalist image might support the Sierra Club or the Nature Conservancy, borrowing from those brands to reflect the desired image. In addition to the clearly articulated primary appeal, nonprofits offer the undercurrent of a logos that promises consumers a New You through community involvement, volunteering, shared interests, charity, and by allowing consumers to act as benefactors to other "deprived" people.

The logos appeal for the audience in need of help is much simpler. It states:

**You have need X. We can help meet need X. Let us do so.**

The issue comes when the audience does not want to acknowledge need X or refuses help in meeting that need. Often logical appeals to the helping audience and emotional appeals blend, combining aspects of the two into one rhetorical enterprise.

- **Ethos.**

The ethos of the nonprofit situation asks, "How does this organization present itself?" Like for-profit companies, such a wide variety of nonprofits exist that any generalizing would be over-

generalizing. Organizations project their image through design of their advertisements, through what events they host, through activities they sponsor, and through what type of people they target to attract. A small, grass-roots nonprofit run by volunteers will present itself quite differently from how a well-endowed, celebrity-supported nonprofit would present itself. The small organization would probably remain local, advertising in area periodicals and putting up neighborhood fliers, while the large one could place ads in *The Times* and *Vogue* and could sponsor enormous events.

Regardless of their differences, all such groups work towards creating positive change. They project an image of their organizations as endowers of aid-giving. Nonprofit rhetoric must support the organizations' brand image as helpers, emphasizing the good that they hope to achieve with the audience's help. Such rhetoric emphasizes that nonprofits enable the underprivileged to live better lives in some manner, or enable people to form communities together, or enable dog-walkers to walk together. Nonprofits project an image of enabling good to happen, and that reinforces the nonprofit's brand.

For the audience in need of help, the ethos appeal is less necessary. They already feel the emotion associated with their suffering and are less concerned with the details of how a nonprofit presents itself. However, nonprofits must prove themselves worthy of trust and confidence that they ask their helped audience to place in them. Helping organizations must project an image of impeccable integrity for those in need of aid, so that audience can truly believe in the organization's goodwill. Plenty of companies exist to scam people out of money, land, or other intangible assets; a true nonprofit must always present an unimpeachably trustworthy image to the audience it seeks to help.

- **Rhetorical stance.**

Finally, nonprofit companies are also limited in their rhetorical stance based on the situations they address. Their available argument tends to run along the lines of:



**Meet this need and not only be a good person but *feel* like a good person.**

While for-profits actively attempt to change consumers' desires, nonprofits appeal to extant concerns. They often attempt to alert an audience to their cause, but spend no time and or money actively manipulating the audience into supporting a cause. Nonprofits tend to rely on an interested audience, not on creating an audience.

The audience, compiled from a collection of individuals drawn together by the organization's rhetoric, could be considered *created*. Without the nonprofit's rhetorical intervention, those people are unlikely to have spontaneously assembled, clamoring about a rhetorical situation. Yet the nonprofit organization's rhetorical activities gather a readily available audience and channel its potential. The nonprofit's audience-forming activities "[turns] them into a socially aware collective" that contrasts starkly with the for-profit's simultaneous creation and utilization of its audience's desires (Trimbur 7/18/2005). Almost all nonprofits project a similar character—that of helping a community. Their rhetoric particularly addresses this and formulates the brand around that aim.

A nonprofit's rhetorical stance towards those it seeks to help states an argument thus:

**Let us, trustworthy organization X, meet need X in your life and you will live a better life.**

The goal is to convince people that they truly do need a nonprofit's help. The rhetorical stance may have to change the audience's mind (as in the case of a Christian group proselytizing) or they may simply need to state explicitly their willingness to provide aid. The audience, based on the nonprofit's goals for helping, determines the nonprofit's rhetorical schemes as well as the organization's other helper audience.

Compare the helper audience rhetorical situation to for-profit companies' rhetoric. For-profits invent a rhetorical situation and concoct an appropriate exigence to go with it; nonprofits respond to rhetorical situations and build a brand image through their choice and manner of

responses. For-profit companies and nonprofits alike must distinguish themselves, a process that involves using carefully chosen ethos, pathos, and logos appeals in conjunction with specific rhetorical stances to enhance a brand’s equity. Nonprofits, like for-profit organizations, include a promise with their brand: the promise to deliver a service. The rhetorical enterprise of non-profits is often a less-sophisticated, cheaper response to a naturally occurring event; the branding that occurs happens similarly to for-profits but for very different reasons.

	<b>For-Profit</b>	<b>Nonprofit</b>
<b>Exigence</b>	Created through advertising	Naturally occurring
<b>Timing</b>	Created through advertising	Related to occurrence that caused exigence
<b>Delivery</b>	Expensive, carefully planned	Simpler, more down-to-earth, less expensive
<b>Logos (Syllogism)</b>	Currently undesirable; buy X to fix that	Because you can help us meet need X, you should
<b>Ethos</b>	Expensive; as endower or enabler of improvement	Variable; as aid-givers or helpers of the needy
<b>Rhetorical Stance</b>	Critical, offering to fix what they’ve broken	Appealing to obtain help for extant concerns

## **THE NONPROFIT BRANDING SITUATION**

Holland claims that “branding can’t be avoided, and, in fact, it should be embraced – by all nonprofits” (“Branding Buzz”). Since forming a brand works for nonprofits and can be accomplished cheaply, nonprofits do benefit from creating a brand that forms a “cohesive ‘voice’” for the organization. That brand acts as a tone that runs through the entire organization and its interactions with the intended audience (“It Takes a Village”).

Branding communicates directly along audience-specific lines, appealing directly to a particular audience chosen by reflecting the nonprofit organization's main theme ("Branding Buzz"). Nonprofits, like for-profit companies, must organize their brands to "to convey the key values of [the] organization," which is one way to attract potential donors or volunteers ("Design Brief"). Additionally, nonprofits and for-profits alike must avoid overreaching themselves.

Although nonprofit organizations rarely have funding to hire an expensive graphic designer to produce a comprehensive branding strategy and brand, branding *can* work for them. It even works when nonprofits cannot raise enough money to pay staff-members, relying instead on volunteers who find the organization's mission attractive. A solid, equitable brand can improve the nonprofit organization's status. Just as with for-profit companies, nonprofits should work to project a cohesive brand because audiences will create a brand in their minds, whether or not the organization consciously projected one. It's better to make a planned effort to create a single cohesive image for the audience than to unconsciously create a scattered, disorganized image that negatively impacts everybody.

## **FEATURES OF NONPROFIT DESIGN**

Nonprofit organizations, just like for-profit companies, benefit from branding. The question then arises: How do we, nonprofit employees, implement this branding business? In his article "Nonprofit Branding: Unveiling the Essentials," Bill Nissim outlined four major steps to branding a nonprofit company:

- **Define "your overall brand perception today"**

Objectively ask how people think of the nonprofit. What does it look like from the outside?

What do people say about it? *Do* they talk about it? What do they know about the nonprofit's mission?

- **State the “goal for your brand”**

Focus on the “*one thing* that we do better than anyone else.” A nonprofit’s brand “must be a *first*—a new category, approach, or service.”

- **Create “a plan to reach the brand goal”**

Take the time to sit down and evaluate how you to go from the current perception to the desired perception of the nonprofit.

- **Make “the brand live throughout your organization”**

Consciously implement the brand in every piece of literature, every brochure, and every event. All the members of the nonprofit need to work together to support and promote the brand.

Following these steps, a nonprofit organization can reasonably expect to create and maintain a successful brand that projects the desired image. Yet implementing Nissim’s suggestions requires “top-down commitment and involvement” of all the organization’s members as well as “daily attention” to produce significant branding success (Holland). A brand is only as good as the people implementing it; even the best one cannot overcome neglect or carelessness from employees.

A brand is only as good as its organization because a brand cannot exist without an organization. As time passes and the organization changes, the brand will age. One generation’s youth will not respond the same way as the next generation’s youth. What’s cool or appealing now will eventually become passé. For-profits constantly work to stay on top of the cool curve, and although nonprofits cannot devote the same effort as for-profits to that endeavor, they should be aware that brands need replacing over time. Today’s new brand will one day become dated; perhaps people will start thinking, “That’s so ten years ago.” When that happens, the organization must again re-evaluate its brand and begin the branding process anew to keep its image ever fresh and relevant.

## Nonprofits Need Brands, Too

Often it seems that only billion-dollar, high-rolling multinational corporations need brands. It's true that for-profit companies have jumped on the branding bandwagon, to the point of selling brands instead of products. Companies found that branding helped people form an intimate relationship with their products, which benefited their money-making schemes as well as improving their public standing. For-profits based branding in the culture, tapping into cultural events that they wanted their brands associated with, thereby enabling people to vicariously associate with those cultural events through purchasing a particular brand. For-profit brands have come to make up a significant portion of culture, becoming tightly integrated in the public consciousness. For-profit brands offer consumers the chance to become a New You by purchasing brands involved in certain branded cultural events

***“Corporations may manufacture products, but what consumers buy are brands.”*** —Naomi Klein, *No Logo*, pg. 7

Communication occurs through brands and logos in this day and age. Brands are a potent way—and possibly the only effective way—of distributing a nonprofit's message, mission, and goals. It's clear that nonprofit organizations can benefit greatly from branding and projecting a cohesive image just as for-profits have. Yet though they may use the same means of communication, the message and outcome of that communication will vary greatly between for- and nonprofits.

Nonprofit organizations aim less to take over culture, seeking instead to raise public awareness and interest in their ventures, or to build reputation with the audience they seek to help. Their brand exists to obtain volunteers or funds, relying on the organization's positive contribution to society. It also helps nonprofits prove themselves trustworthy to the helped audience as well as providing legitimate differentiation among nonprofits. Despite the difference between goals, however, nonprofits benefit from branding just as surely as for-profits do. Without a solid brand, even the finest charitable organization will fail to speak coherently to the public. Unfortunately, the

public rushes so hurriedly to get along with life that it won't stop to listen to a group that comes across as poorly organized. In addition to providing a holdfast for a company in fast paced society, nonprofit organizations do have the opportunity to offer a New You to people, the New You who volunteers and associates with this group that produces positive change in society.

Nonprofits have a responsibility to appeal to their chosen audience in any way possible, and since they exist in the new Rome created by the modern advertising culture, they must do as the new Romans do. People—both those they seek to help and those they hope to convince to help—have become accustomed to brands, to logos, to associating feelings and relationships with faceless companies. Nonprofits can, and should, capitalize on that by projecting a coherent image with which the public can connect.

## **4. ANALYSIS OF NONPROFITS' BRANDS**

By now it is clear that an effective brand presents a cohesive, single idea for consumers to identify with. Commonsense Trust, however, prides itself on saying “yes” to an wide variety of programs; it plans activities ranging from talent shows to community gatherings to bike-repairing events to group walks. This diversity presents a unique challenge in branding the Commonsense Trust, since one simple word or phrase cannot easily embody its purpose. Until this project, the Trust took little initiative to consciously brand itself.

In this section I will outline my criteria for judging brands, which I based partly in a discussion of Robin Williams' book *The Non-Designer's Design Book* and the principles and underlying rhetoric therein, as well as briefly examining two successful development trusts' brands to determine strategies for the Commonsense Trust to emulate. Then I will analyze the overall cohesiveness and effectiveness of the Commonsense Community Development Trust brand, as based on its two brochures, approximately 40 posters produced for various Trust-sponsored events, and website.

### **Rhetoric of Visual Design Principles & Brands**

Although much discussion regarding the idea of a brand as the *essence* of an organization has occurred, creating a brand for Commonsense Community Development Trust remained less theoretical. The brand places its finger on the pulse of the organization, but implementing the beat of the brand took place through small, simple changes to Commonsense's daily publication production. Robin Williams' book *The Non-Designer's Design Book: Design and Typographic Principles for the Visual Novice* provided guidelines for these changes, which involved primarily improving employees' visual design creation styles.

Williams believes that “once you can name the problem, you can find the solution,” an idea tied very closely to the modernists’ belief that technology could solve many of the world’s ills (9). Having identified an issue, as Williams advocates, the modernists’ technological solution comes within grasp. Williams lays out four major principles for novice visual designers to follow—proximity, alignment, repetition, and contrast—in the belief that an understanding those principles will help inexperienced designers identify problems in their designs. After a detailed explanation of this quartet, Williams proceeds to provide additional tips for visual designs and offers rules for typography usage.

Williams’ suggestions all reflect her strong modernist bent. She advocates use of proximity grouping for comprehensibility, strong alignment for ease of reading, element repetition for consistency, and distinct contrast for simplicity of understanding. *Clarity* reigns in her book; the four principles all increase readability and understandability, which she considers paramount. That Williams advocates the use of these four principles as a method for providing cohesiveness and unity within a design indicates her assumption that modernism’s tenets can provide those features.

Modernism emerged at a time when the world was running amok. The irrationality of World War I, coupled with technological leaps facilitated by the conflict, enabled many artists within avant-garde to turn to technology, rationality, and homogeneity for a brighter future. Although a few parties, including those experimenting with Dada and those focusing on Surrealism, focused on the inverse of the traditional modernist’s view of the future, many people believed with the utmost optimism that the synthesis of the rational and mechanical could solve many of the world’s problems.

These tenets underlay Williams’ promulgation of modernism’s styles: she encourages similarity in visual design styles as well as use of white space and the grid, which all took on greater importance with the rise of modernist design. Modernism turned from the earlier organic style and



rejected the historical precedent of Medieval and Renaissance artistic standards, urging a break from the past (Bayer). The modernist movement denigrated “commercial mass culture” and “sought to create a better world” (Poynor, 11); they established legibility and clarity of meaning as paramount (Moholy-Nagy), a principle that Williams strongly adheres to.

They emphasized the universality and impersonality of sans-serif fonts, which modernists described as “neutral and reserved” (Ruder). These values epitomized the modernist movement in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Each word in a sans-serif font was joined in meaning and appearance, yet remained distinctly individual. As a result, that typography embodied the modernist ideal of using technology to design something beautiful *and* useful for life—a method that Williams extols in her exhortations for novices to create clear, legible designs that simultaneously provide utility and visual appeal.

Williams assumes that modernism, with its straight lines, simplicity, optimism, rationalism, sans serif fonts, and reliance on white space provide the cohesive unity that an organization needs in its publications. Every time she explains a rule, every time she reminds the reader to align items and to use contrast to clarify, every time she exhorts the reader “don’t be a wimp,” Williams reinforces classic modernist styling (63). The power of modernism in today’s culture, and the reason that *The Non-Designer’s Design Book* took such a primary role in changing Commonsense’s design styles, is that modernism’s styles still appeal to the public. In the aftermath of postmodernism, and with the rise of a computer-centric generation, today’s youth have begun to regain the confidence in technology that their parents lost. Now, more than ever, technology plays a central role in daily life. The tight bond between man and technology means that modernism and its styles continue to offer legitimate, effective design options for advertisements. The styling of 50 years ago resurges in William’s book because the simplicity of design and the current intimacy with technology provide handholds to a generation that expects slick, perfect advertisements.

Williams' modernist design principles offer the opportunity to create marketing products that appeal to the current generation, but with sincere rhetoric behind the design. The simplicity of the four principles helps novice designers create professional-looking, homemade designs. And the underlying modernist rhetoric of these principles provides a historical basis for even the simplest designs, a depth that some randomly-jumbled-together poster would fail to achieve. The younger generation responds to the rhetoric of technology's meaningfulness in our lives, the possibility of its redeeming value, and the many opportunities that spring from it. The strength of Williams' suggestions lies in its modernist precedent.

Yet the modernism promulgated in *The Non-Designer's Design Book* is not the ascetic modernism of El Lissitzky and the Bauhaus. Instead, Williams has integrated modernism's broader styles with postmodernism's best traits—playfulness, a willingness to break out of a strict adherence to gridlines. Grids and alignment play an important role in Williams' work, but she also advocates placing images off-kilter, breaking the text up, and including small, carefully-placed but erratic-looking repeated elements to draw a piece together. She encourages designers to use serif fonts for body text because of its readability, an interesting simultaneous promotion and reversal of modernism's call for clarity and sans-serifs.

Williams' modernist design principles provide the Commonsense Trust with the opportunity to project their brand image effectively. It coincides with the Trust's desire to appear funky and up-to-date, yet supports new Commonsense materials with the strength of simple, historically sound design. Additionally, the ease with which employees can understand and implement principles of contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity increase the value of these design principles to the project. The Commonsense Trust employees are too busy to spend significant time creating careful visual designs, but they have time to consider four simple ideas for their new posters.

The simple implementation and the significant change in neatness available via Williams' suggestions make them ideal for the Commonsense Trust to work with. CCDT staff can tap into consistency and straightforwardness, both appealing to their audiences. Their audience sees many poorly-organized homemade advertisements; the consistency, simplicity, effectiveness, and professionalism available to the Commonsense Trust through a modernist approach will help their work stand out among the body of homemade advertisements.

The poster redesigns implemented in this project offer strong examples of the change following Williams' principles can produce. Consider, for instance, the poster on the left in Figure 2. Although clear and communicative, it fails to draw in distinct



Figure 2: sample posters, before (left) and after (right) branding

visual references to the Trust. Replicating this style of poster, which could provide cohesion in the future, would be difficult because it lacks a strong pattern to refer to. The poster on the right, which draws on the Commonsense Trust's new brand image, utilizes the Commonsense Style in font, layout, use of logo, and provides a template for future similar posters. It begins to offer a strong base from which a brand can develop. These changes are further discussed in Chapter 6.

Although the modernist rhetoric available through Williams' suggestions provides a baseline for redesigning Commonsense's marketing materials, development trusts as a group face a particularly challenging rhetorical situation. Their public relations materials and their advertisements address specific issues faced by development trusts alone. The following section will compare the materials produced by two well-known trusts—the Environment Trust and Westway Development Trust—in an effort to learn from their materials what visual design moves could benefit the Commonsense

Trust. A comparison of the two brands will provide a more accurate, development trust-specific baseline that will apply more closely to the Commonsense Trust than Williams' design principles. Analyzing materials from the Environment Trust and the Westway Development Trust can provide a more accurate view of how prominent development trusts publicize themselves. The CCDT's materials can then draw on some of the strongest points from each of these development trusts, thereby creating designs based not only on Williams' modernist rhetoric but also on development trust-specific rhetoric that has worked well for two highly-visible London trusts.

## **The Environment Trust's Brand**

First let us examine Environment Trust's brand. The Environment Trust is a community trust based in east London that focuses on finding ways "improve the environment, educate people about the environment and build environment friendly housing, primarily in London's East End" (Environment Trust Annual Review). The Environment Trust has produced numerous pamphlets and handouts, including two fun "Top Ten Ways" lists that discuss how to reduce energy and water usage. Those handouts are designed to be put up next to a heater or on a refrigerator, becoming a permanent Environment Trust presence in the individual's homes. This first step—creating publications that people want to keep—immediately provides a connection between the brand and the target audience, which allows for stronger relationship-building. The Environment Trust's brand reflects their mission in several important ways.

First, in their publications they maintain a consistent use of paper: their publications come on green or obviously recycled paper, which immediately reinforces the environmental feel of the publication. Second, the Environment Trust makes ample use both photographic and iconographic images in its publications. Photographs are of area people participating in Environment Trust-sponsored events and draw viewers in with their humanity. Additionally, the photographs provide

the Environment Trust with a local connection to people who live in the area, thus strengthening the relationship between those people and the Trust. A photograph of a viewer's acquaintance draws the viewer in and establishes a contact point for communication.

Third, their publications generally adhere to good proximity grouping practices, clearly grouping like ideas together. This includes placing text in boxes and using spaces between different ideas. At times this proximity is violated, however, when a simple return separates two ideas, as in this excerpt from their pamphlet "Improving Your Local Green Spaces":

[...] If you have, you may have felt that problems involved, the money required and the work needed were beyond you, and you could not do anything.

**It's Too Difficult**

We know that problems are often formidable. But they may not be as insurmountable as they seem.

This type of layout confuses the viewer as to what "It's Too Difficult" means. Does it relate to the sentence below or above? How does it connect to the surrounding text? Although the Environment Trust usually maintains an excellently consistent grouping of ideas, at times confusing elements such as the example appear.

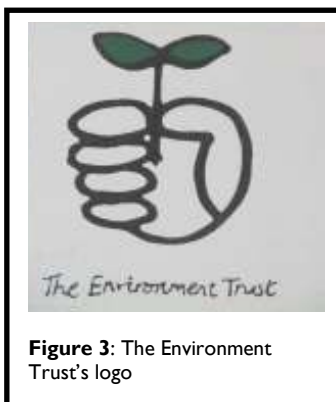


Figure 3: The Environment Trust's logo

Fourth, the Environment Trust uses contrast well by placing heavy text on light background, as well as consistently varying text size based on the text's importance. At times the publications overuse words set all in capitals, but the publications generally contrast ideas and words effectively.

Finally, the Environment Trust uses repetition well by including its logo (Figure 3) prominently on every piece of literature, from the Annual Report to "Ten Top Tips for Wildlife" to "East End Flowers." This strongly associates their logo with those activities

and programs, helping the viewer to connect the hand holding a tree with environmental improvement and education.

The Environment Trust does not, however, adhere to other marketing and design principles. There is little consistency among font choices, aside from generally tending towards sans-serif styles. Four pamphlets use the decorative Comic Sans MF for titles, while others employ Arial, Arial Bold, Verdana, or other standard sans-serifs. This creates dissonance that competes with the similarities of paper style and logo display; the inconsistency in text makes it difficult to associate different pamphlets with the same organization. Additionally, the pamphlets do not consistently align text one way or another. At times the Environment Trust uses left alignment in its pamphlets, but randomly throws in centered alignment.

Overall, the Environment Trust creates a strong brand that communicates the idea of environmentalism through its many publications. Use of paper, consistent emphasis of the logo, and photography all contribute to enhancing the Brand. The Commonsides Community Development Trust would benefit from following the Environment Trust's lead in these areas, including seizing the opportunity to produce many small, useful flyers. The Commonsides Trust would also benefit from avoiding the Environment Trust's inconsistency issues in alignment and font choices.

## **Westway Development Trust's Brand**

A second London-based development trust, the Westway Development Trust, offers a useful comparison to the Environment Trust's materials. The Westway Development Trust almost entirely lacks printed publications to analyze for brand consistency. This immediately hampers brand development, since obtaining an overall "feel" for the organization, its mission, and its activities is difficult with only an annual report, sign, and website (Figure 4). However, what Westway *has* produced remains consistent and effective in terms of branding.

Westway Development Trust came into being when citizens, outraged at the construction of



Figure 4: Westway Development Trust's sign and website

a major highway through their neighborhood, took over the empty land under the road and converted it into a useful commercial and public space. The marketing materials capitalize upon this history, emphasizing through photographs and

drawings the Westway Development Trust's unique location—beneath a road.

This analysis cannot examine the publications' paper use since the Trust provided only one publication for inspection. Photography, however, plays a key role in the Trust's image just as it does with the Environment Trust. Westway's website displays two pictures per page, while its annual report includes numerous images of the vast array of Westway-associated activities. These images play the same role as photos in the Environment Trust's publications: They form a bond between the viewer, particularly the local viewer, and the organization's brand. Somebody looking at the Trust's images feels included in Westway's endeavors, and as a result begins to move into a relationship with the brand.

Proximity remains consistent through Westway's annual report and website; grouping of text using spacing and bold text works well in the annual report, while the website's geometric layout naturally provides divisions for information. Alignment in the annual report, on the organization's sign, and on the website remains the standard left alignment. This provides strength and consistency, while a shared color scheme—variations on purple—clearly mark the pieces as originating from one organization.

Contrast in the annual report remains consistent, since it is only one publication, but varies significantly throughout the website. Sometimes on the website tiny, all-capitals text appears as headers to standard-sized body text, which creates competing text and a visually confusing page. Similarly, Westway’s annual report does well with repetition in its entirety, but that does not carry through to the website. Font usage varies between the website and the annual report, so although each employs sans-serif text, they clash and create dissonance that competes with the consistency earlier observed.

The Commonsides Community Development Trust would do well to follow Westway Trust’s lead in consistent color usage throughout its brand, as well as Westway’s standard alignment and its intuitive website design. The Commonsides Trust would also benefit from producing and distributing more publications than Westway has. This way, Commonsides can begin to form a stronger brand personality and interact directly with the target community.

## **Commonsides Community Development Trust’s Brand**

Although the Commonsides Trust works to promote “concerted community planning and action” (DTA Member’s Directory 10), with Merton’s diversity, the issue of communicating with residents presents a serious challenge for the organization. Because each culture relates differently to other cultures and to information, organizations within the borough face a unique communication challenge. The Trust must project a cross-cultural identity, one that speaks clearly to all people, regardless of language. The exigence of multicultural communication means that any brand identity has to be simple and straightforward, without any complex mono-cultural references that would inadvertently ostracize or isolate community members. This composite audience strengthens the necessity for Commonsides’ brand to communicate clearly.



Before the project began, the Commonsense Community Development Trust already begun



displaying some aspects of a brand. Its publications all featured a prominent logo, Figure 5, and its website consistently utilized shades of green. These publications most frequently used Arial for its font, although the weight varied and several other fonts also appear brochures. However, the Trust's brand fails to cohesively gel in any comprehensive way.

One crucial aspect of a successful brand is its cohesiveness—how the materials focus on and communicate one single aspect of the branded

organization. Overall cohesiveness springs from adherence to four major design elements Williams outlines in *The Non-Designer's Design Book*: proximity, repetition, alignment, and contrast. These four elements not only provide the basis for continuity within a company's publications, but they also facilitate the creation of appealing visual designs—posters that people will stop to look at.

Commonsense's invisibility within the community may partly result few people reading their unattractively designed posters. Inadequate use of the Trust's name and logo also contribute to this problem.

- **Proximity**

This refers to information grouping—joining items by putting them close to each other. Unlike Westway Development Trust, which maintains consistent grouping throughout its publications and thereby forms a unified feel for varied publication forms, Commonsense's publications tend to scatter information or bring it all into proximity in a single group. Consider the poster at in Figure 6. The “FREE” stands out distinctly, but the rest of the information remains forms one largely undifferentiated graphical block.



The text reading “Course in website design” competes directly with the phone number, while all the intervening information jammed together doesn’t help the reader determine the information’s relative importance. All the text in such close proximity with all the other information gives the reader no easy way to pick out the pertinent information on the basis of a hierarchy of importance. This is a problem similar to the Environment Trust’s, which can be avoided by simply spacing and tabbing text into logical arrangements.

- **Repetition**

This refers to consistently using visual elements. Williams states that repetition “develops the organization and strengthens the unity” of a design (13). The sample poster in Figure 6 makes no attempt at repetition. It uses blue three times, but was probably accidental because none of the blues match each other. This random repetition use occurs often in Commonsense publications; little conscious thought went into using repeated elements, so their existence in a publication is probably meaningless.

Commonsense could improve its use of repetition by following Westway Development Trust’s example in color repetition. Publications would also benefit from increased emphasis on repetitive typography usage through all materials. Neither the Environment Trust nor the Westway Development Trust maintained consistent text style or size repetition, a failure that created problems for overall cohesiveness of those two brands. Commonsense can learn from these two development trusts by implementing consistent text and color usage as well as repetitive alignment to create a unified brand.

- **Alignment**

This refers to the “visual connection” between elements on a page, specifically in terms of their right-, center-, or left-alignment (Williams 13). Most Commonsense posters feature numerous alignment types, often in an attempt to separate elements or create interest on the page. Center

alignment appears frequently, a move Williams strongly recommends against because of its deadening effect on design.

The alignment changes twice in Figure 7 as text shifts from centered to left.



Figure 7: sample poster

Although the diagonal move provided space to include the icons, it traps white space rather than using the blank areas to create energy. Often the alignment appears arbitrary in the quickly-produced posters.

The Commonsides Trust would benefit from observing the negative effect of Environment Trust’s struggles with different alignments, as well as the positive effect of the Westway Development Trust’s strongly left-aligned text. This provided a very definite line for the viewer’s eye in all its publications and generally made the website and Annual Report *feel*

connected through one organization. According to Williams, and based on Westway’s alignment strategies compared to the Environment Trust’s, it’s clear that consistent, non-centered alignment would greatly enhance Commonsides’s visual designs and thereby strengthen its brand.

### • Contrast

Contrast provides energy and, along with alignment, helps readers differentiate information. Williams advocates contrast when she says, “if the elements [...] are not the *same*, then make them **very different**” (13). Unlike the Environment Trust’s contrast of text size and weight, which works well to emphasize various publications’ points, Commonsides’s publications do not emphasize contrast. Instead, they tend to use a wide variety of colors and fonts to catch attention. In Figure 6, for instance, only color differentiates the centered, similarly-sized lines of text. The word “Free” strongly contrasts with everything else, but the rest of the text offers so little contrast that picking out the term “Free” proves difficult. Similarly, in Figure 7, “Wildabout” stands out, but little differentiation occurs between the different sections of text. The bold text begins to contrast with

the regular text, but their size similarity significantly reduces the contrast's effectiveness. Following the Environment Trust's lead in contrast would benefit Commonsense, as would standardization of contrasting techniques.

- **Logo and name promotion**

Commonsense Trust employees have expressed concern about the organization's lack of visibility within their wards. Yet unlike the Environment Trust's promotion of its logo and name on every publication (including pin-up flyers designed to post on refrigerators!), the Commonsense Community Development Trust rarely promotes itself in its publications. Often, the Trust's logo blends in alongside other sponsors' logos, while at other times no logo appears at all. If the organization's name is mentioned, it appears in a sentence of text along the lines of:

**Contact [person's name] at the Commonsense Trust for more information.**

This type of obscure reference reduces the Trust's visibility in the events it organizes. The Westway Development Trust's logo *is* its name, so every publication that bears its logo bears its name—automatic Westway name promotion. Instead of following the Westway Trust's style of prominence, Figure 6 exemplifies Commonsense's type of reference and the consistent exclusion of their logo. Figure 7 illustrates a case in which the size of the Commonsense logo places it on equal footing with the cosponsors' logos, as if each group put in equal amounts of work, while in reality Commonsense organized and ran the event. In these two cases, and in many other Commonsense publications, the name and logo fail to strongly register with the viewer. This contributes to the obscurity of the Trust even within Pollards Hill.

Overall, Commonsense's publications do not enhance its brand. Combining problems from both the Environment Trust and the Westway Development Trust, Commonsense's publications fail to maintain consistency in proximity, repetition, alignment, or contrast. They do not promote its

brand through logo or name recognition as the Environment Trust and Westway Development Trust do.



Figure 8: six sample posters

Consider the six posters in Figure 8. The designers clearly intended all of these posters to make a visual impact. They incorporated a variety of colors, fonts, and text alignments to grab the viewer's attention. Unfortunately, the schemes only served to clutter the page: that many differences only produced chaos, killed interest, and looked unsophisticated. Because of inconsistent use of proximity, repetition, alignment, and contrast, these posters could have come from six different organizations. Additionally, this random approach to poster design fails to cohesively gel the

organization's brand, since many of the posters de-emphasize the Commonsense Trust's role in these activities.

Although the creators seek to grab the viewer's eyes with bright colors and scattered text in their posters and brochures, the materials appear more amateur than interesting. Based on Williams' four design principles, it's clear that Commonsense's largest marketing interaction with the public—via posters—fails to make a strong brand impression. Few elements link the Trust's two brochures, aside from the large logo and the appearance of "Commonsense Community Development Trust" somewhere. It is difficult to obtain a specific feel based on the brochures; they fail to project a cohesive voice with their publications. Probably few people actually read the posters, and those who do may never connect the event with Commonsense Trust because of the posters consistently fail to emphasize CCDT's logo and name.

The other crucial aspect of a brand is its effectiveness. However, the scope of this project does not include taking surveys of Commonsense's popularity and visibility, which would be the ideal way to go about assessing effectiveness. Instead, this analysis will focus on examining Commonsense's brand based on the organization members' perception of the four brand markers Holland described—reputation, esteem, relevance, and differentiation. The Commonsense Community Development Trust Interactive Qualifying Project's (IQP) findings will supplement this analysis.

In terms of reputation, which is defined as how much people trust and know of the brand, Commonsense ranks distressingly low. People who know of CCDT generally find it helpful, and several people have joined the Trust as a result of their interactions with the organization at a CCDT-sponsored event. Commonsense's reputation among people who know about the Trust remains high, but an overwhelming majority of people in the area don't know it exists and thus cannot evaluate its reputation.

Similarly, the community's esteem—how highly they value the organization—remains low for the Commonside Trust because of its obscurity. It provides valuable services, such as Community Fun Days and talent shows, but often people associate officials from other organizations with the event. Probably if the community knew that Commonside organized the free food people received at the library, the rap shows, and the fashion shows, they would hold CCDT in higher esteem. But as it is, esteem does not play a role in Commonside's brand because local residents remain largely unaware of the Trust's existence.

The organization exists to be relevant: its "yes to anything" nature means that when employees hear of a need, they seek to address that need. Commonside exists to serve the community, to provide helpful information, services, and activities. The organization's relevance is quite high for those people who participate in its events since the group's work responds directly to a need perceived in the community.

Finally, differentiation occurs as Commonside tries to stand out from other development trusts and nonprofits in the area. The Trust's unique feature is its willingness to agree to almost any community request for events or services, particularly regarding teaching. CCDT focuses on continuing the education of people who might otherwise not receive that opportunity, particularly lone parents. However, this commitment does not come across in Commonside's leaflets, which include such vague claims as "anything that concerns you concerns us," and statements that it sponsors "social activities," "parent support," "fundraising/finance," and "further education" ("Parent Gateway").

Instead of differentiating the Commonside Community Development Trust from other development trusts, the publications actually obscure Commonside's role as compared to other organizations. Similarly, the Trust's website offers broad information: hospital addresses; church meeting times; links leading to children's daycare center websites. But the site rarely states what the

Commonside Trust actually *does* in terms of programs. The organization's posters focus on single events, rarely touching upon Commonside's uniqueness among development trusts. Generally, then, the Commonside brand is not well differentiated as compared to the brands of similar organizations.

Although the Commonside Trust does an excellent job providing relevant services to its community, its lack of visibility means that the organization has failed to achieve reputation, esteem, or differentiation. The lack of consistency among publications, the reduced logo and name prominence in those publications, and the obscurity of the organization combine to indicate that the Trust's brand does not exist in any strong form: aside from its predetermined name and logo, the Commonside Trust is an totally clean slate in terms of brand.



## **5. WEB ANALYSIS AND REDESIGN**

Although much research went into the project, creating products became the primary focus during the seven weeks working with the Commonsense Community Development Trust. Over time, the type of product created expanded from a website analysis and newsletter template to creating a wide variety of advertising templates, as well as teaching visual design principles and photographing Commonsense Trust events. This section details the first part of the project, which involved an analysis of the CCDT's website in order to provide concrete suggestions to improve the Trust's online presence.

### **Website Analyses**

An accessible, well-laid out, distinctly branded website is essential for a group that desires to create a strong impression on the younger segment of the market. People often judge an organization by its site, asking: Is it easy to use? Does it look as if an HTML novice threw it together in a day? The Internet increasingly plays a crucial role in first contact between an organization and its audience, so the web designer must consciously design the organization's brand into that site. This section will analyze three development trust websites—those of the Environment Trust, the Westway Development Trust, and the Commonsense Community Development Trust—for visual design quality, information organization, and usability; in addition, this section will outline suggestions for Commonsense to enhance its website's appeal to younger audiences.

### **THE ENVIRONMENT TRUST'S WEBSITE**

A poorly executed website can seriously hurt an organization's chances of favorably impressing its target audience. Consider the Environment Trust's website, located at <http://www.envirotrust.org>.

The Environment Trust has an income of over £750,000 (US\$1.36 million) a year and has completed numerous community-enhancing projects including the production of “green homes” for area residents (DTA 15). Londoners think of the Environment Trust as one of the pre-eminent development trusts in the city, yet its website ambiguously reflects its status.

The website’s design immediately grabs attention. Because of its environmental bent, the Trust chose a layout that looked like a notebook. This suggests the idea of scientists in nature with their spiral-bound notebooks, seeking solutions to environmental problems. The fonts emulate handwriting, which combined with the background bring to mind an outdoors-oriented, down-to-earth organization. The site feels friendly. The Environment Trust’s website looks unique, although its highly unorthodox design may strike some viewers as amateurish.

The site’s pages are arranged in a logical organization. It offers all the pertinent information either on the front page or only one link away from the homepage. The designers laid out the site’s content based on side- and bottom-tabs extending from the notebook page. These tabs are labeled with self-explanatory terms such as “Contact Us,” and “About the Trust.” Clicking on tabs links the user logically to associated pages so that overall navigation on the site proved simple.

Although the Environment Trust successfully created a website that is effective in organization and look, its usability ranks quite low because of its overdone graphics. There are numerous types of navigational animations that many sites successfully employ to enhance the visitor’s experience; the Environment Trust uses all of them. Every button, mouse-over, and mouse-click on a link results in a time-consuming animation. When users know exactly what information they want, they can find it easily thanks to the clear organization—but they cannot reach the page quickly because of the numerous long animations, which test users’ patience.

Every button executes a fancy flash animation before linking. For example, the user has to wait for the “page” to “turn” to see content from one of the side tabs (top two pictures and bottom

left picture in Figure 9). Similarly, every time the user clicks a gray button, it does a fold-up-bounce-around routine that soon becomes annoying; likewise, moving the mouse over a side tab results in the text turning or folding diagonally before it appears (see the red circle in the bottom right of Figure 9).



**Figure 9:** The Environment Trust's website

Individually, some of the animations may have enhanced the site. But the Environment Trust web site only annoys its visitors through overuse of these cutesy touches. I personally began going out of my way to avoid clicking the gray buttons because they took so long to link to the next page. The issue of overdone button and link animation may seem minor, but it leaves the user with a negative overall impression of both the site and the Trust. The bottom line is that the Environment Trust's site would be eminently more usable and would make a stronger brand impression without all the special effects. Commonsense Community Development Trust could benefit from this

example by emulating the Environment Trust’s careful content layout, while avoiding their actual implementation.

## **WESTWAY DEVELOPMENT TRUST’S WEBSITE**

The Westway Development Trust’s site, located at <http://www.westway.org/>, achieves a more successful balance between design, organization, and usability than the Environment Trust’s site does. Westway’s site designer took a more conventional approach to the layout, with navigation



**Figure 10:** The Westway Development Trust’s website

buttons at the upper left and a mix of content and images for the rest of the page. At the same time, creative use of color, hue variation, geometric patterns, and lines endow the site with interest and energy.

Each page uses one dominant color—purple for the front page, for example—then mixes lighter and darker shades of that color in each content box to define different informational and functional spaces on the page (Figure 10). Artistically modified images provide the human interest that the Environment Trust’s site lacks.

The largest visual issues on Westway’s site relate to its use of text. First,

the site exhibits a propensity to use small or all-capitalized text in news items, and the use of white text on a colored background. Often older users find small text, or light text on dark-colored

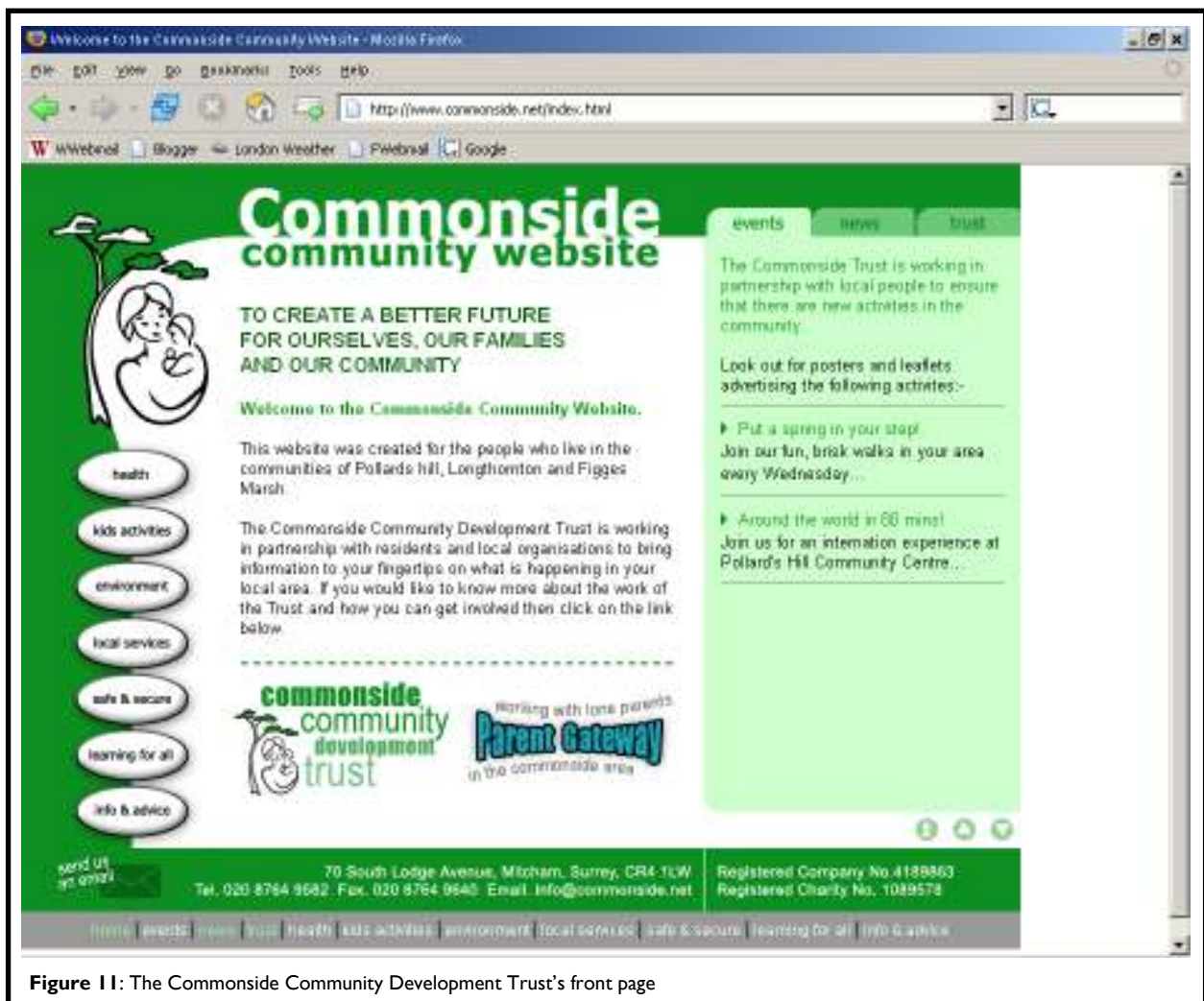
backgrounds, difficult to read. Inclusion of those text features narrows the profile of possible users significantly, not an action development trusts want to make. Second, text on the Westway Development Trust's site often exhibits strange irregularities. At times the text hovers around 5 points in size, while other times it is set in all capitals, and often these two features to combine to produce almost unreadable content. This visual move marks the Westway site as geared towards younger or middle-aged users since it excludes those whose eyes cannot handle small words, light words on a dark background, or large sections of text in all-capitals.

Despite its text troubles, the Westway Development Trust's website is easy for visitors to use. Like the Environment Trust, Westway's site provides information in a clear, logical organization that audiences will readily understand. Buttons link directly to the expected pages, while a "Quick Links" drop-down box provides rapid answers to common searches. Sidebar links are placed well, but are smaller than expected; the user must click on the exact word rather than the box surrounding the link, which looks like a button but fails to act like one. The Westway Trust's webpages are well-organized and facilitate navigation thanks to the clarity of their layout.

Notably, Westway prominently displays up-to-date news items on its front page, which endows the site with the timeliness and vitality that are crucial to maintaining an interesting, engaging website. The Trust's online presence provides an intuitive design which allows easy access to information even for first-time visitors. Westway's page succeeds in terms of both usability and organization, barring only the text size and irregularity issue. The Commonsides Community Development Trust would benefit from following the Westway Development Trust's lead in terms of design and organization, while avoiding the text errors.

## **COMMONSIDE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TRUST'S WEBSITE**

The CCDT website, available at <http://www.commonside.net/index.html> and shown in Figure 11, looks visually appealing. Its text, black on white, allows ease of reading. The color scheme, which employs various shades of green, imparts a feeling of peacefulness and serenity that coincides with the organization's mother-and-child logo. A sidebar on the right presents new information, while buttons on the left allow for quick navigation around the site. The buttons' rounded styling echoes other rounded-style sections on the site and serves to further the webpage's graphic cohesiveness.



**Figure 11:** The Commonsense Community Development Trust's front page

Conversely, the site does have some significant design issues. The worst visual design problem is inconsistency in link marking. Links appear often as plain black text that is impossible to

discern as a link until the user moves a mouse over the text, at which point the link turns green and the cursor indicates a link. Other text, however, is marked in that same green color for emphasis; this confuses the user, because some text looks like a link but isn't, while some links look like plain text. At other times, links are variously marked as underlined text, buttons that change color, or buttons with a small pointing hand appears when the user places the cursor over them. This inconsistency in marking links creates confusion in both look and usage, which should be remedied. Overall, the Commonsides Trust website has a fairly well-conceived but poorly executed visual design scheme.

With regard to the organization, the original webpage creator organized Commonsides's site content around services, which are listed in the left-hand buttons. These buttons lead to information that works well in those categories; information does not appear misplaced under any of the pages. However, the webpages exhibit the confusing feature of mixing CCDT materials and events with information about partner organizations.

Because of its small size, Commonsides tends to partner with other nonprofits to plan and execute events. These partners receive an equal share of space on Commonsides's site, with information about partners fully integrated into the webpage's organization. This leads to user confusion; the tight weave of information about Commonsides and its partners means differentiating between the each is not easy. A viewer who had never seen or worked with the Trust before would find separating Commonsides's services from its partners very difficult indeed. Thus the site would benefit from a reorganization that separates out the partners' information from the Trust's information. Because this is CCDT's site, it should emphasize the Commonsides Trust and simply provide links or telephone numbers for partners.

Trust members' unwillingness to advertise themselves is one of the greatest causes of the Trust's ongoing lack of visibility. Yet since this is the *Commonsides Trust's* website, it is crucial that the



site emphasize the Commonsense Trust's services while deemphasizing CCDT's partners; that way, users would come away with a stronger feel for what Commonsense does, rather than the confused, nebulous feel that comes across now.

Usability presents the most problems for users of CCDT's webpages. I found four distinct usability issues to address.

- **Frames.**

The designer, Mal Meehan, used iframes in the site, thus allowing multiple scrollable areas on every page. Many designers, however, eschew heavy use of frames because they can produce a confusing, difficult-to-use page. Figures 12 and 13 mark iframes with red boxes in two sample Commonsense pages.

The iframe pictured in Figure 12 is far too small. Although it does not contain much text, the user still has to scroll numerous times to read the content. The frames and their constrained scrolling only create user frustration, especially among users accustomed to webpages where the whole page scrolls as one unit, and ultimately a negative impression of Commonsense Community Development Trust.

Reorganization, however, could render the frames would be unnecessary, since such content as "Local Services" and "Worship" (Figure 13) could simply appear on separate pages. Many well-



Figure 12: Frames in CCDT's site.

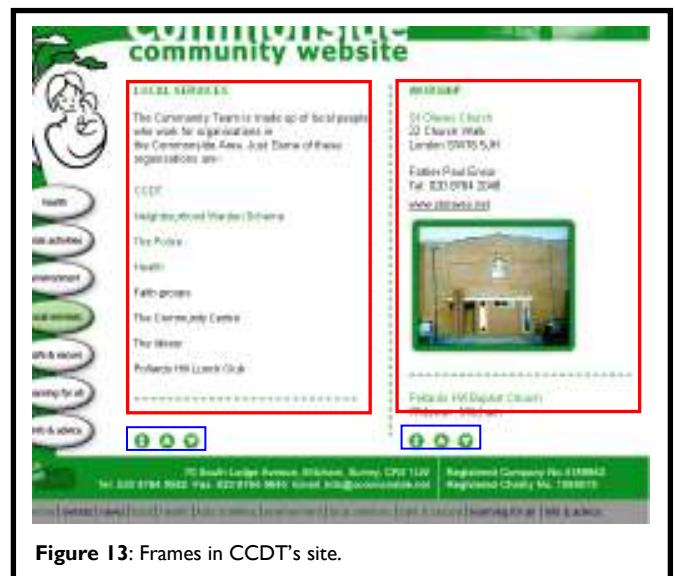


Figure 13: Frames in CCDT's site.



branded sites opt to display reduced content per page, creating clear delineations of information on each HTML page.

Additionally, the site's current reliance on frames simply does not work, because scrolling within those frames is exceedingly difficult. Many viewers use the mouse's scroll-wheel to navigate up and down webpages, but this feature has been disabled within the page's frames. Instead the user is obligated to click the small round up- and down-arrow buttons (boxed in blue) to read more text. These buttons do not always work. At times, the scrolling stops before the user reaches the end of the text.

- **Broken links.**

At times Commonsense's link back to the homepage does not work. Clicking on the logo, which serves as a link back to the homepage, often produces an error stating that the page could not be found, possibly due to an incorrect URL. While using the site, I also noted that it wasn't clear that clicking on the logo would return me to the homepage. Failure to pay attention to these types of details annoys users and creates a negative impression of Commonsense.

- **Browser incompatibilities.**

The Trust's site does not conform to basic web standards—it looks different when viewed with different browsers. At times browsers other than Internet Explorer have serious problems displaying some of the website's pages. Problems include: broken buttons, misaligned text, and missing images, among other problems. These issues occur as a result of the page's coding; it does not conform to World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) standards, which all browsers are supposed to follow. The website also fails to work for disabled users who have special browsers, such as text-only browsers. Because Commonsense seeks to reach the *whole* community, not only those using Internet Explorer, they must resolve these incompatibilities.

- **Opening the page in a new window.**

When a user types in “www.commonside.net,” the page that opens is white with the Commonsides logo in the middle (Figure 14). The user must click on the logo to go to the Trust’s homepage. When the initial white page opens, it resizes the browser to fit on an 800x600 pixel monitor display, although many monitors can run at a resolution of 1024x768. This means the browser window shrinks from full-sized on a high-resolution monitor. When the user clicks to enter

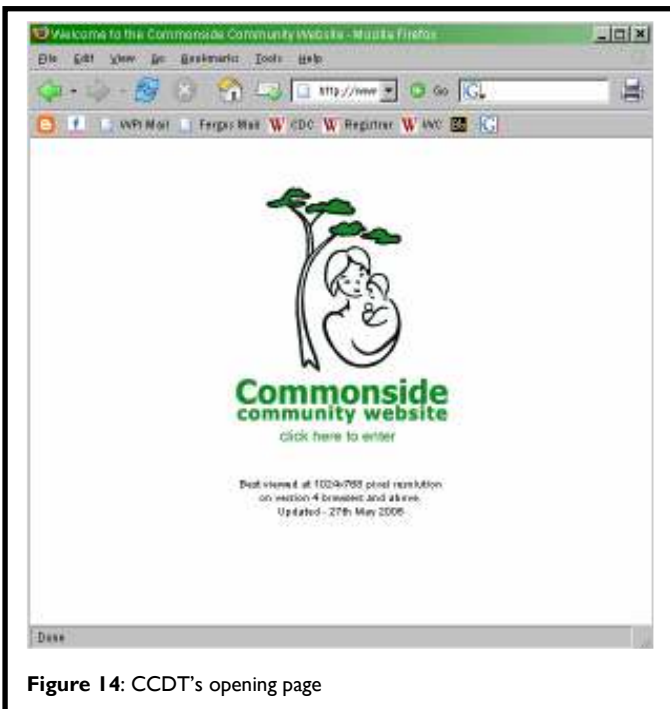


Figure 14: CCDT’s opening page

the site, it opens the homepage (Figure 15) in a new small window. This window does not have any of the standard browser buttons and lacks the address bar and any other standard browser features (see red box in Figure 15).

This is an extremely inconvenient feature for users who want to look at the site but continue browsing elsewhere using the same window. After interacting with the site, I began typing

“http://commonside.net/index.html” in the

address bar to go straight to the homepage without all the hassle of manipulating this annoying feature.

I have listed the Commonsides’s site with the index reference to allow other users to bypass their

welcome page. The window still resizes when users open the /index.html page, but at least it still

provides the standard browser tools.



Figure 15: CCDT’s homepage, as reached from the opening page

- **Lack of physical directions.**

Although the organization's mailing address appears at the bottom of the page, the site lacks directions to Commonsides physical location. Clicking on the mailing address does not take the user to a map or directions but instead serves as a link to email [info@commonsides.net](mailto:info@commonsides.net). This presents a dual problems: First, without a map or clear directions, users seeking to find Commonsides would have to rely on their own resources, which could prevent some people from contacting the organization. Second, the email link is unexpectedly large and should be constrained solely to the small envelope icon in the bottom left of the page.

## **Suggestions for CCDT's Website**

Commonsides website looks fine, but reorganization and redesign could greatly improve its usability and impact in establishing the organization's brand. Frustrating features overwhelm the site's many positive aspects. The following suggestions, based on my reaction to the site, include simple changes such as improving link consistency and major changes such as total content reorganization.

- **Address the scrolling issue.**

The most important change involves improving scrolling control via the mouse scroll wheel and reducing dependence on the scroll buttons would significantly improve the site. Few users will take the time to click a button six times to read the full content on a page, while they might read the page if they could simply mouse-scroll down.

- **Address the page resizing issue.**

Second in importance is removing the features that resize the window and remove browser buttons. The website should remain as standard as possible; resizing the window and removing the browser bars are totally unnecessary actions. Users feel aggravated when webpages change their personal settings (some pages, for instance, reset the user's homepage to the site they just visited), and CCDT wants users to feel the opposite of aggravated when visiting commonsides.net. Since the

issues raised here do not improve the website at all, the Commonsense Trust would do well to remove them on the next version of their site.

- **Address the frame issue.**

Removing or significantly reducing the presence of frames in Commonsense's site would not only improve usability, but would also increase its effectiveness. Consider Westway Development Trust's site: professionally designed, effectively incorporated the brand, with many different HTML pages, each of which scrolls as one unitary page. Very few for-profit companies' websites utilize frames; they simply employ many separate HTML pages. Commonsense's website would benefit from adopting this strategy as well.

- **Address the link inconsistency issue.**

Links on the CCDT site ought to have a single distinctive look. No other text should look remotely like a link. To reduce confusion, links must stand out clearly and always work—Commonsense's site has some dead links that should be removed or repaired. Few users are willing to work hard enough to discover the "hidden" link back to the homepage or other links "hidden" within small arrows in the sidebar.

Additionally, another link inconsistency appears between the side buttons and the bottom links: there are more bottom links than side buttons, although it *looks* as if two sets of navigational devices ought to be identical. At times the links change or vanish without warning, which breeds confusion for users trying to navigate the site. Finally, the CCDT's site needs clearer link navigation that allows users to backtrack easily. This could include a trail of links at the top:

**Home > Events > Walkabout**

This type of trail would allow users to easily click back to "activities" or "home" as well as providing a map of their earlier movements. Accidental deception and inconsistency such as that often found on CCDT's site reduces the organization's credibility among Internet users. It is unnecessary, and should be assiduously avoided.

- **Make the site W3C and disabled-user compliant.**

This is standard practice among websites that seek to reach a broad audience. Conformation to W3C standards will make the page viewable in many more browsers. An analysis conducted in December 2004 of Commonsense's website also found its design failed to comply with Web Accessibility Initiative priorities for disabled users.

Problems resulting from that compliance failure include difficulty viewing the site in text-only or Microsoft Magnifier browsers as well as inconsistencies in labeling images with text. Quite apart from Commonsense's need to maintain a site available to the whole community, according to the analysis, these failures to comply errors mean that the site fails to follow Great Britain's laws regarding disabled-user accessibility (Tetridia 7). For additional information on these issues, please see Digital Appendix B for a complete copy of the Commonsense website analysis.

- **Make the site more interactive.**

Because Commonsense exists to serve the community, it would be logical to include a way for community members to interact with their online presence more than just by reading content. Such features as games, instant messaging with Commonsense staff, commenting on articles, or user message boards could attract a younger audience as well as providing a forum for ongoing discussion.

A message board, for instance, could allow community members to air their ideas in a public area and for other people to respond in a more interactive way than a simple email to Commonsense staff. This feature would also draw users back to the site frequently to see if anybody replied to their ideas or comments. It could create an online community parallel to the physical, real community. This type of outreach would attract a younger audience as well, since many young people find online discussions as natural as physical interactions. Allowing the community to interact with content on the site could produce a website that feels alive.

- **Update the content more frequently.**

People have little cause to frequently visit a site that never changes. Although CCDT constantly organizes events, the organization's website lags months behind those events and is constantly outdated. Updating the webpage daily or weekly will endow it with a living feel that will draw users back day after day to see what's going on with Commonsense. This could be accomplished by prominently posting a weekly calendar on the homepage containing links to pages advertising upcoming events as well as creating a special "News" page.

- **Reorganize the content.**

This would not only provide the opportunity to eliminate frames, but would allow for separation between Commonsense and information about partner companies. A reorganization could enable the Commonsense Trust to emphasize its activities, services, and events on the page and simply provide one page with links to partners. Additionally, much of the shared content on the pages has little relation to each other, and would do well on a page by itself. Reorganization would also provide the opportunity to add content for younger audiences—games, links to fun sites, etc. Following this suggestion would require a bottom-up change that could take a great deal of work and time, but would ultimately pay off in visitors finding the site easier and more enjoyable to use.

## **CONTENT REORGANIZATION SUGGESTIONS**

The content reorganization primarily focuses on making the site more intuitively navigable as well as creating a site for the whole community by allowing people in the community to have an opportunity to influence the site's content. Hence the idea of a message board.

The goal of the site reorganization is to reduce the levels of complexity and number of HTML pages viewers encounter. Thus in Figure 16 only six major navigation buttons appear at the top of the page: Projects, Events, News, Community Info, Links, and About Us. These each lead to

their logical destination, so that Projects leads to links for long-term projects such as the multi-year Aiming High endeavor. Similarly, Events leads to weekly activities, News takes the user to news updates about the Trust, and so forth. The Links button allows Commonsense to cite its sources of funding, for many require some sort of citation, but without cluttering Commonsense's homepage with other organizations' logos and names. The Funders link under Links leads to a constantly changing list of people who have provided money to Commonsense for various events. The idea of a Fun link under Links stems from the idea that Commonsense's site should appeal to all ages. Thus that page could serve as a repository for any links that lead to entertaining sites—games, stories, jokes, etc.—that Commonsense employees find.

The Community Info button shown in Figure 17 addresses the problem with Commonsense's current site regarding the mixing of Commonsense Trust and sponsor information. Currently the Commonsense site contains so much information about other organizations that the user has difficulty distinguishing what falls within Commonsense's bailiwick and what is helpful external information listed on the Commonsense site. Thus the Community Info button gathers all non-Commonsense information into one place. Clicking that button takes the user to a set of sub-links—Health, Worship, Community Safety, Library, Schools, and Children—that can serve as a directory for the area. Each sub-link leads to a page of related information: for instance Worship would lead to a page with a list of places of worship, their addresses, and phone numbers.

This reorganization also eliminates much of the text and extra information that appears in the form of blurbs and images on the Commonsense site, streamlining external information into a simple, almost a yellow pages-like entity.

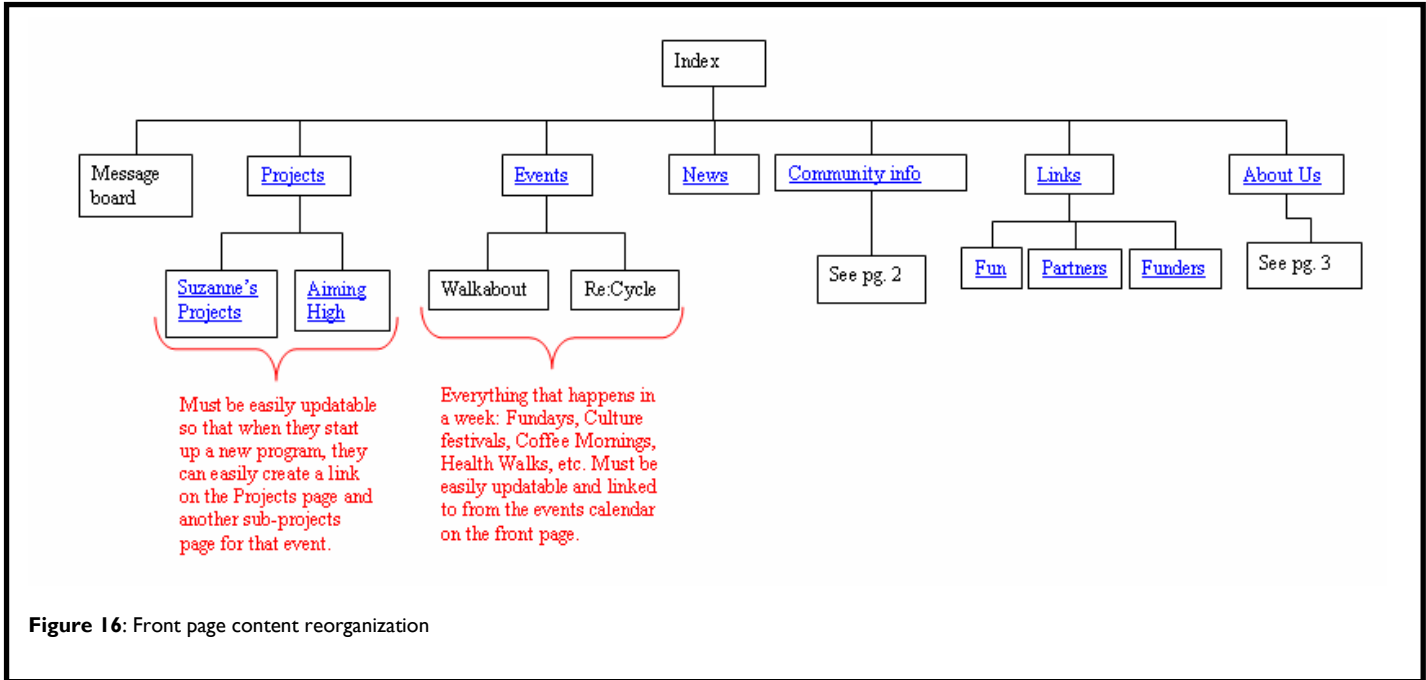


Figure 16: Front page content reorganization

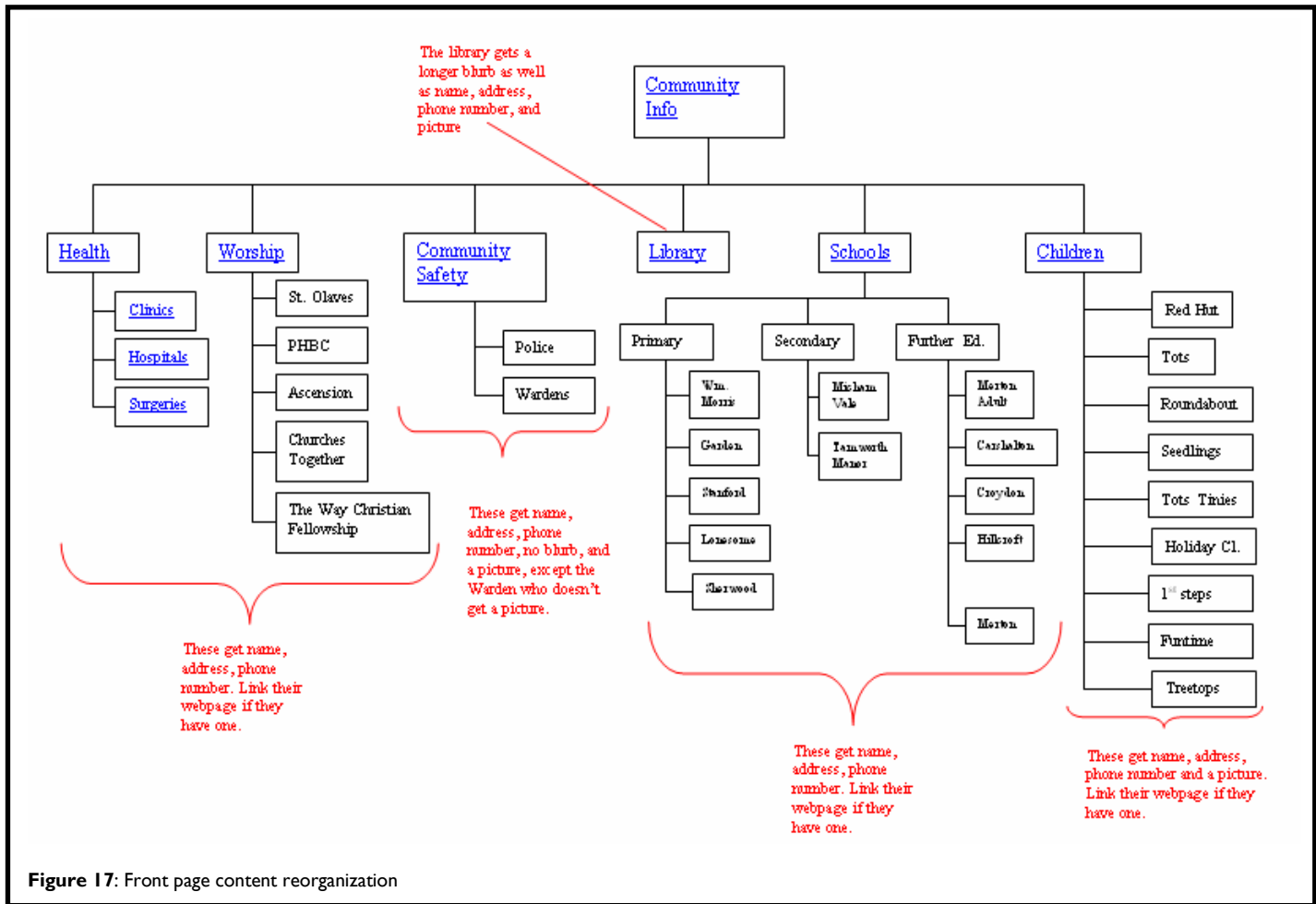


Figure 17: Front page content reorganization



Finally, the About Us link (Figure 18) provides crucial information only hinted at on the

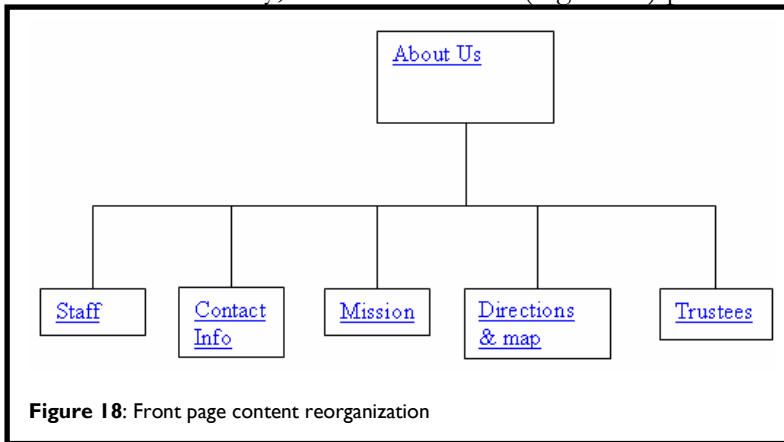


Figure 18: Front page content reorganization

Trust’s current website. Currently, contact information is located at the bottom of each page, while a small amount of staff information shares the page with a list of trustees. This information can only be accessed if the user clicks on an image

**Commonside Community Development Trust**

News Projects Events About Us Community Info Links

Search:

Welcome to CCDT's Website!

We're here for you, blah blah blah introduction possible link blah blah blah blah

**Commonside**  
Pollards Hill, Longthornton, and the Exe fields area of Exeter, Devon  
Am I in Commonsense?

**Community**  
Working towards a better future for all of us: for individuals, for families, and for the environment

**Development**  
Partnerships to develop the community and fundraising to empower ourselves.  
Full Mission Statement

**Trust**  
We're local people seeking to make a difference in the area we serve.  
Who Are We?

**EVENT CALENDAR**  
Week of May 23, 2005

Sun	Event name...
Mon	
Tue	
Wed	Event name...
Thu	Event name...
Fri	
Sat	

**Chat Log:**

**Person1** (12:22): Hey, could you do an event featuring pets?  
**Person2** (1:06): I'd like to bring my dog along to the June 1 event, would that work?  
**CCDT** (3:38): Sure, dogs are part of the community too.  
**Me**: What if I'm allergic to dogs?  
**Person2** (3:45): Just stay away from dogs, then.  
**CCDT** (4:02): We can have a designated dog area.  
**Me** (4:17): OK sounds good.

**Name:**   
**Email:**   
**URL:**

**Sidebar Content:**

Intro to event with something interesting, then mention name of **Event...**

Intro to event with something interesting, then mention name of **Event...**

Intro to event with something interesting, then mention name of **Event...**

Figure 19: Model of proposed Commonsense website index page redesign

called “Commonside Community Development Trust.” The image is unmarked as a link until the user moves a mouse over it, which brings up a message telling the user to click for more information. The organization’s mission statement appears on the index page. My suggested reorganization gathers all that information into one place, marking it with the label About Us, which people instantly recognize. About Us pages appear on nearly every corporate website in existence, and users have come to expect

standard information from those pages. Standard information includes contact information, staff information, and one feature lacking entirely on the Trust’s current site: directions to their office. Additionally Commonsense Trust believes that the nature of their organization demands a listing of trustees as well as the mission stated here. The redesigned website could look like Figure 19. The website’s header matches all the other publications, maintaining continuity between the site and Commonsense’s newsletter, flyers, business cards, and so forth. Notice the clear navigation buttons at the top, along with a search feature that Commonsense does not currently offer on its homepage. A picture occupies the upper left-hand corner to draw the viewer in, while additional information about Commonsense (taken from the Trust’s brochure) sits directly below that image. In the center column, a welcome and message board provide space for Commonsense employees to speak to the community and for the community to respond. In the far right column a weekly event calendar provides a clear visual summary for viewers of Commonsense events broken down by day. The names listed on the calendar link to related information on the Events page. Beneath the events

calendar, space is provided in the Sidebar for any stray pieces of information or announcements.

Figure 20 shows what the page would look like if a user clicked on the News button. When selected, the News button changes color and the word News becomes bold and white. This gives viewers a clear indication of where they have navigated to. The buttons all consistently appear in the same place on the redesign. This continuity of top buttons allows for easy navigation to any other part of the site at any time. Additionally, as soon as



Figure 20: Model of proposed Commonsense website news page

the user navigates away from the homepage, a list of the user's clicks appears at the top of the page (marked by the red oval, which would not appear on the real web page). That allows the user to easily return to previously visited pages or to the homepage, a feature currently unavailable on Commonside's site.

Implementing these changes should move the Trust's site towards greater usability, even though this analysis has not represented a comprehensive compilation of every possible improvement that could benefit CCDT's site. With information laid out clearly, frequent updating, and heavy site promotion on printed publications, the Commonside Trust's site could prove a valuable resource for the community it seeks to serve.

## **6. TEMPLATES AND IDENTITY-FORMING PRODUCTS**

In addition to offering improvement suggestions for Commonsense's website, the project also sought to provide the Trust with what Trimbur described as its own "identity package" that included templates for a newsletter, brochures, posters, business cards, letterhead, and many other publications (email 7/18/2005). These make up the Commonsense Trust's self-representation to the public and represent a physical manifestation of its brand. The products reflect the Trust's brand, which focuses on CCDT's appeal to all people; its ability to provide educational opportunities; and its heart for improving the Pollards Hill community. This package serves as the foundation of the organization's public relations; the templates are the Trust's means of communication with sponsors, co-workers, the government, and the community. Effective, brand-based design of the following materials is the cornerstone for the "Commonsense Style."

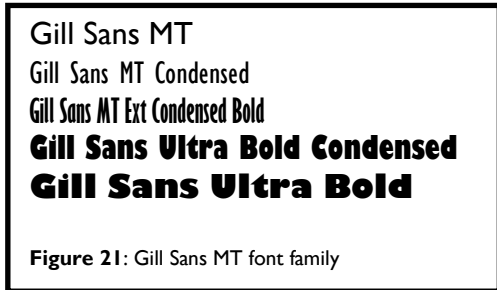
### **Templates**

One of the primary goals of the project at the Commonsense Community Development Trust was to create a newsletter template to enable direct communication between employees and their audience. This job evolved into my creating, upon request, templates for everything from business cards to compliment slips—which they used in place of business letters for more informal correspondence—to fax sheets to invitations. In the process of creating those templates, I established a "Commonsense Style" and accompanying style sheet (see Appendix A, Other Products). This basic style formed the backbone of all the templates created and allows the Commonsense Trust to create new, matching documents with relative ease.

For the "Commonsense Style" I chose the font Gill Sans MT as the standard font (Figure 21); it will appear on every Commonsense document produced in the future. This font family offers a

wide variety of text styles that range from very narrow to quite thick and wide, yet they all look related when combined in the same document. Such relatedness allows the font to fit in many situations.

Additionally, Gill Sans originated in London as the highly readable font for all transportation



signage and still appears both in officially and unofficially throughout the city. Londoners recognize and feel comfortable with Gill Sans; for them carries both the weight of authority and the ease of familiarity. Commonsense’s marketing materials seek

to associate those feelings with the Trust and its mission.

During several of our meetings, the employees at Commonsense Tryst expressed particular concern with the possibility that they might break the templates I created. None of the staff members possess the computer skills to repair major damage, so the designs needed to incorporate “unbreakability” along with style and utility. Grouping as many elements as possible into one unit for all the templates provided this feature. By creating templates with items grouped together, I enabled the user to modify the text without having the ability to move any of the major design elements around on the page.

All the templates created for the project are available as PDF documents in Digital Appendix A under Templates.

## **NEWSLETTER TEMPLATE**

I started by modifying standard Microsoft Publisher newsletter templates to fit with Commonsense’s requirements. However, after discussing what the employees believed they needed, I created a template from scratch (Figure 22) based on their requests.

One primary concern the Commonsense staff expressed was the need for the Trust’s newsletter to accommodate lots of pictures: they felt that pictures would draw in readers more effectively than dense text would, especially for non-native English speakers. Thus much of the page leaves space for icons (marked by watermelons) and for photographs of events. The text plays a supporting, rather than primary, role in CCDT’s newsletter.

Additionally, the project manager requested that the newsletter look funky and hip,



Figure 22: Newsletter template

appealing to a younger audience but legible to all ages. To this end the newsletter sports a wide variety of text sizes, colors, and alignments. Interest and energy among the various headings come from the matching-yet-different texts within the Gill Sans family. At the same time, the body text is Garamond, a highly readable serif font that people of all ages can read without difficulty.

In addition to many images, the Commonsense Trust employees wanted the newsletter to be a versatile space that could serve one purpose—for instance, as a place for the project manager

to provide an update on activities—but could also be adapted to other purposes as needed. The staff wanted to be able to change names and sections, so template titles such as “Programs Update” and “New Developments” are easy to modify. This meant that I left space in the design around the titles and did nothing particularly fancy with that text. Every word in the newsletter, barring the front page header, can be modified for any purpose.

The project manager also specified that she would like to see staff members’ names, photos, and information in the newsletter. This would allow community members a chance to see their faces and possibly recognize CCDT employees in person, associating staff members at events with the Commonsense newsletter. I placed those on the final page, ranking their importance low in comparison to news about the Trust, upcoming events, and so forth.

Finally, the Commonsense Trust employees wanted the newsletter to give readers a place to respond. Given Commonsense’s focus on *community*, it’s logical to provide the community reading their newsletter an opportunity to write back their ideas and comments. I therefore put a reply box on the bottom of the last page, also leaving space for postage information.

## **AIMING HIGH TEMPLATES**

Within Commonsense Community Development Trust, two employees work for a broader project called Aiming High. This project receives funding from the European Union and encompasses six London boroughs; Commonsense’s Aiming High branch covers the entire Borough of Merton.

Because of its high-profile nature and affiliation with broader, well-funded organizations, the Aiming High program provided the Commonsense employees with two pre-designed marketing publications: a poster and a postcard. They did not, however, receive any additional publications or marketing materials, such as business cards or customized letterhead. Thus they requested special Aiming High templates within the “Commonsense Style.”



The posters provided already employed a particular style and font (Figure 23) that I had to



incorporate into the Aiming High documents for Commonsense.

The font used in official Aiming High marketing materials was

Bradley Hand ITC. Because that font comes standard on many

computers, I was able to match it exactly for their Commonsense-related templates.

The European Union and another funder, the Learning and Skills Council, required that their logos appear in very specific places on each document. The Aiming High employees at Commonsense received a very detailed, restrictive packet of rules for the location of funders' logos—for instance, 10 mm from the top and 10 mm from the right margin. The packet offered suggested templates which looked hideous and did not correspond with the “Commonsense Style” I had begun producing.



Figure 24: Aiming High basic template (business card)

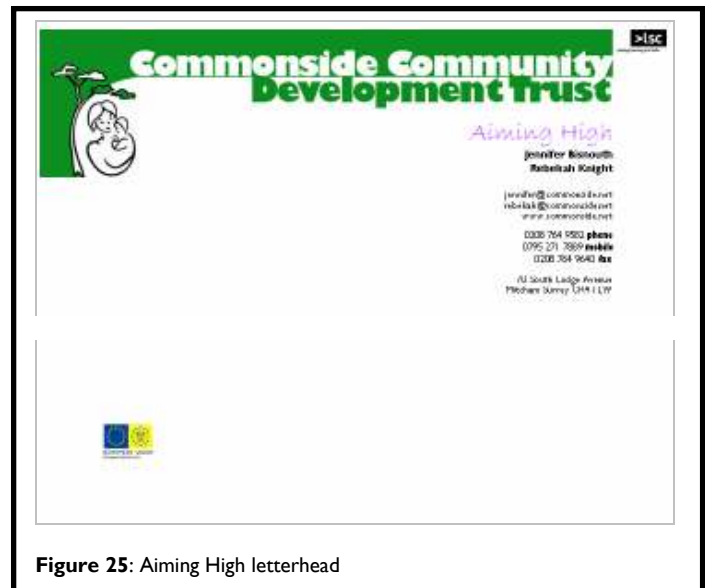


Figure 25: Aiming High letterhead

Following the restrictive logo-placement guidelines, I created first a business card template, then additional materials. The business card, shown in Figure 24, incorporates the Commonsense mother-and-child logo and features the Trust's name most prominently. “Aiming High” also receives its place on the card directly beneath the Trust's name and the funders' logos appear in specific places. Because the guidelines did not stipulate a particular logo size, I minimized them as much as possible while leaving the logos visible.



After experimentation I settled on right aligning all text, which became standard for all Commonsense letterheads and business cards. The Aiming High letterhead in Figure 25 illustrates the impact that strong right-alignment provides for Aiming High’s and Commonsense’s materials. The Aiming High letterhead became a standard letterhead which I used, sans the “Aiming High” name and two sponsors’ logos, for all Commonsense letterheads.

## **BROCHURE TEMPLATES**

I produced three brochure templates for Commonsense. First I redesigned a brochure that the

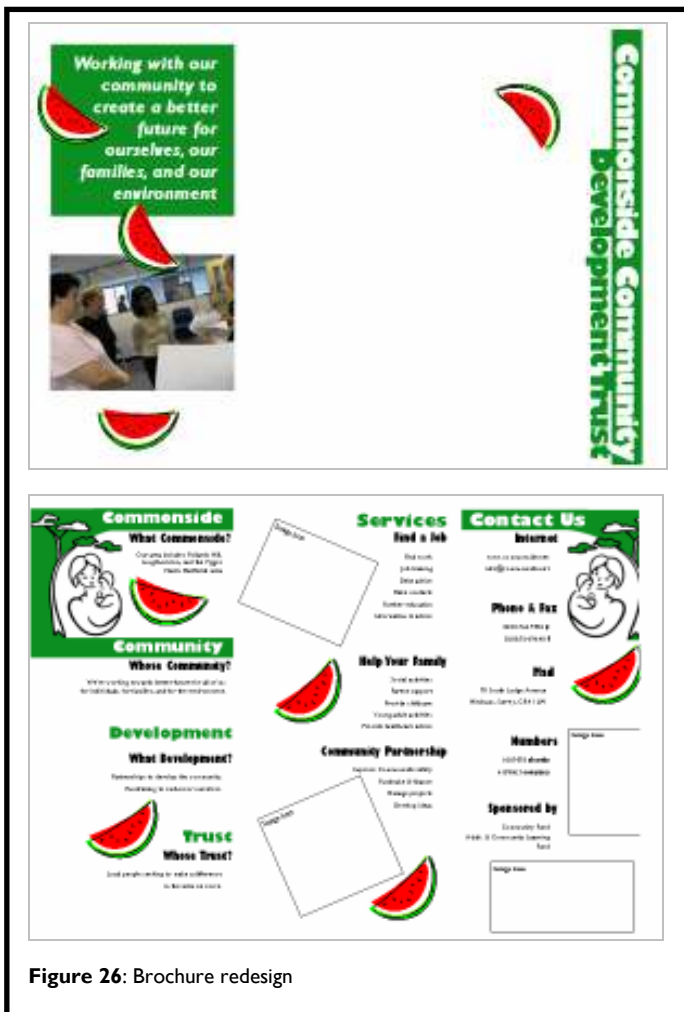


Figure 26: Brochure redesign

organization had produced in its first year. The project manager correctly believed that the public needed information about Commonsense, and she produced a brochure that provided that information. However, the publication did not look visually appealing. It also did not coincide with the new “Commonsense Style” that my project introduced.

Early in the project I created a draft redesign of that brochure. After revisions, it became the product shown in Figure 26. This brochure contains the same information as the original brochure the project manager created, with simple re-organizational changes that

increased its user-friendliness. These reorganizations included:

- **Standardizing text color.**

The text in the original brochure featured text in navy blue, maroon, and black. The new brochure employed white and green text for major headings, with standard black for all body text.

- **Standardizing font usage.**

The original brochure employed three fonts: Arial, Times New Roman, and Comic Sans. This made the front panel of the brochure, which used Arial and Comic Sans, and the interior, which used Times New Roman text, look completely unrelated. The new brochure employs styles from the Gill Sans family, which not only matches the standard “Commonside Style” but also maintains continuity throughout the whole brochure.

- **Conforming the brochure to the “Commonside Style.”**

The original brochure had little internal consistency, let alone consistency with other Commonside marketing materials. The new brochure employs the Commonside logogram—a stylized version of CCDT’s name—on the front, with the standard green and Gill Sans Ultra Bold for headings. Body text is Gill Sans MT.

- **Conforming the brochure to Williams’ design principles.**

The original brochure employed centered and left alignment, and many words appeared in all-capitals. It sported maroon text against a periwinkle background, spaced all information equally, and failed to repeat any elements from page to page or panel to panel.

The new brochure aligns everything to the right, which is the alignment on many of the new Commonside marketing materials. It also uses words with standard capitalization, emphasizing importance through text size and color rather than through text set in all capitals. It employs repetition through optional images on each page, through the standardization of text style and color, through the consistent color usage, and through the appearance of the Commonside logo on the inside pages. Finally, the new brochure puts text on the inside front panel, which the original brochure had left blank. The blank page had given the original brochure an empty feeling, whereas the new brochure’s addition of images and text on that page adds liveliness to the publication.

In addition to redesigning the existing Commonsides brochure, I created two brochure templates that reinforce Commonsides's new image. These feature the Commonsides logogram;

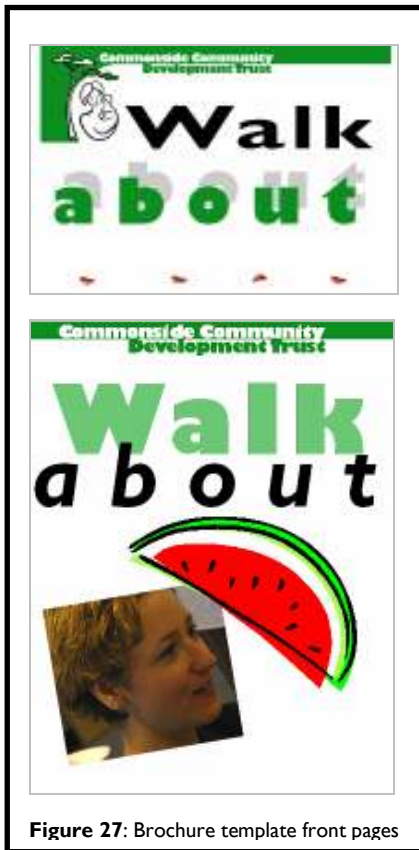


Figure 27: Brochure template front pages

Additionally, one splashes the Commonsides logo across the front, while the other displays the logo on the back. The Gill Sans family supplied the font. Figure 27 shows the front page of each brochure. They maintain consistency on each page by featuring the same pictures and text, as well as a green bar that runs along the top of each page. Emphasis comes through font style and size, rather than all uppercase text.

Because of the organization's desire to come across as youthful and fun, the brochures also experiment with text size, shape, and color. Words are elongated, shadowed, and sized to give a feel of newness. The design should appeal to a younger audience, catching their eyes with text that looks active and with dynamic use

of images. Information is placed logically and clearly, with contact information for Commonsides—including email, website, mailing address, phone and fax numbers—taking up the final page. The prominence of this information allows for easy later reference, and standardization between all three brochures in this area means that not only is consistency preserved but the reader will easily know where to find Commonsides information in all publications.

## **LETTERHEAD TEMPLATES**

Although wealthier organizations usually print up specific letterhead paper, the Commonsides Trust saves money by printing out its own letterhead on an as-needed basis. Because of this, my design needed to be both compatible on all computers and simple to personalize.

The design came directly from the marketing materials I designed for CCDT's Aiming High program. Creating the Commonsides letterhead simply involved consolidating the information and removing Aiming High-specific information. All text is Gill Sans MT, with the phone and fax identified in Gill Sans Ultra Bold Condensed. The letterhead (Figure 28) features the familiar logo



Figure 28: Letterhead template

and the Commonsides logogram, along with right-aligned contact information, which is grouped to provide viewers with logical proximity associations. The letter-writer's name in bold, slightly larger text contrasts with contact information. The contact information is in grouped text boxes that the user cannot separate, but they can click on words to modify the text. This allows one template to serve for any employee, who has only to change the name and email address to personalize letterhead.

In addition to the letterhead template, I created personal letterhead for each employee and one including both Aiming High employees' names and email addresses. This helps reduce confusion and amount of work Commonsides staff have to do when using their new marketing materials.

## **POSTER TEMPLATES**

I designed four poster templates (Figure 29) for Commonsense. The templates, created in Publisher and converted to Word documents for every Commonsense computer, feature simple poster designs that apply to a wide variety of situations. Simplicity emerged as the best poster style, since my designs needed to remain as applicable for advertising teen moms' get-togethers as for bike repair classes. A space for a headline, some small amount of body text, and an image make up the sum of the editable content in these posters.

The Commonsense name appears in its familiar logogram, along with a different version of the logo, since the arching nature of the letterhead logo did not lend itself well to a poster. This prominent display of the Commonsense Community Development Trust's name should increase public recognition of the Trust. When every poster and flyer from the Trust appears with the recognizable green-and-white feature at the bottom, the audience will increasingly associate the Trust with its activities. Additionally, I included a small statement just above the prominent name providing Commonsense's web address in an attempt to increase number of visitors to the site.

Six poster redesigns, created for a visual design teaching session, supplement the original poster templates. Figure 30 shows four of the designs, with the Commonsense employee's poster design shown on the top and my redesign directly below it at the bottom.

The redesigns will serve several purposes. First, I had created the designs in response to a request for concrete examples of Williams' principles in action, since much of the initial discussion confused the Commonsense employees. To clarify Williams' principles, I redesigned six bad Commonsense posters and included an explanation on a third page describing how I applied each principle in the redesigns. Packet of posters, their revisions, and explanation pages can act as a quick reference for what styles to encourage and what styles to avoid future designs.



Figure 29: Poster templates 1 – 4

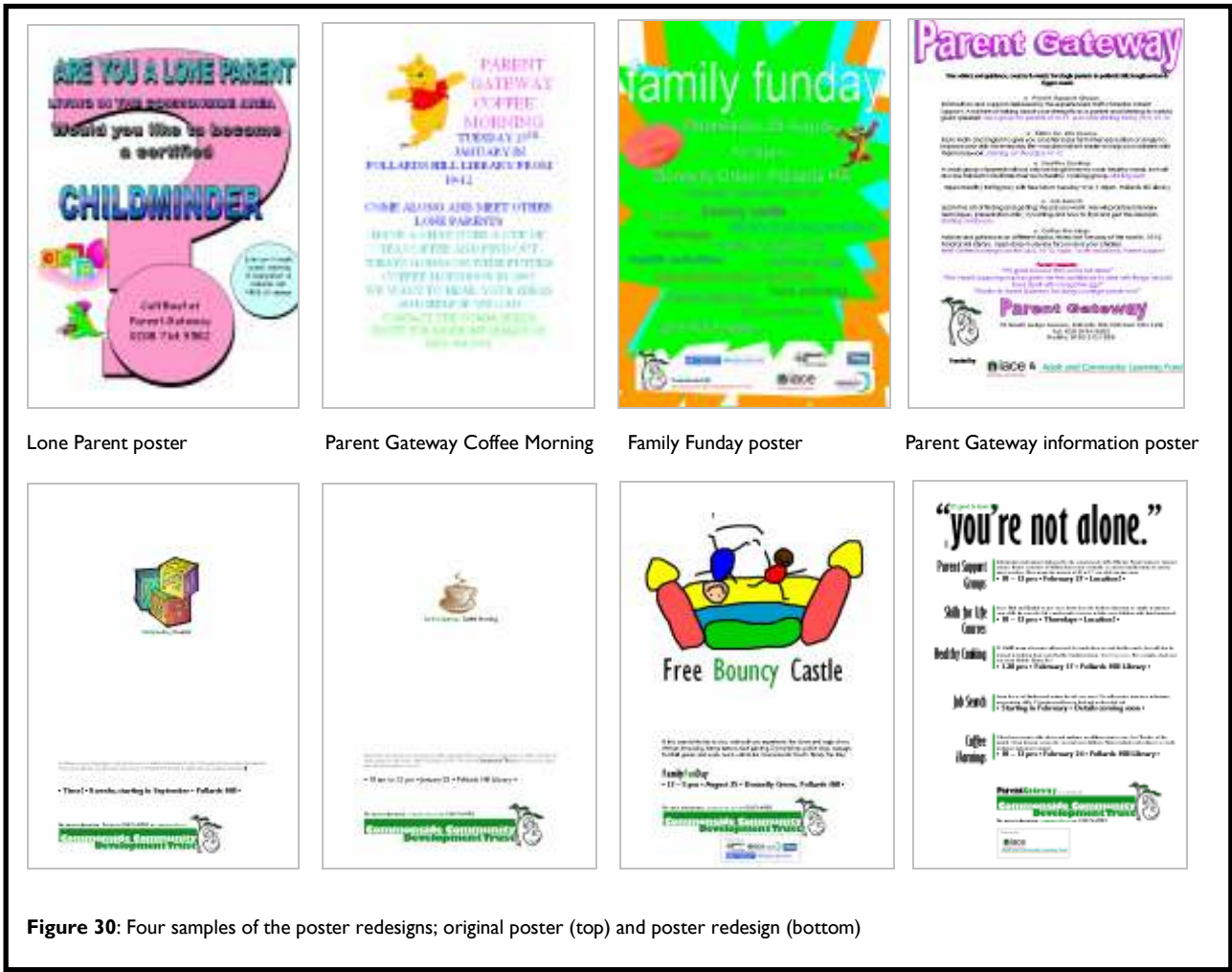


Figure 30: Four samples of the poster redesigns; original poster (top) and poster redesign (bottom)

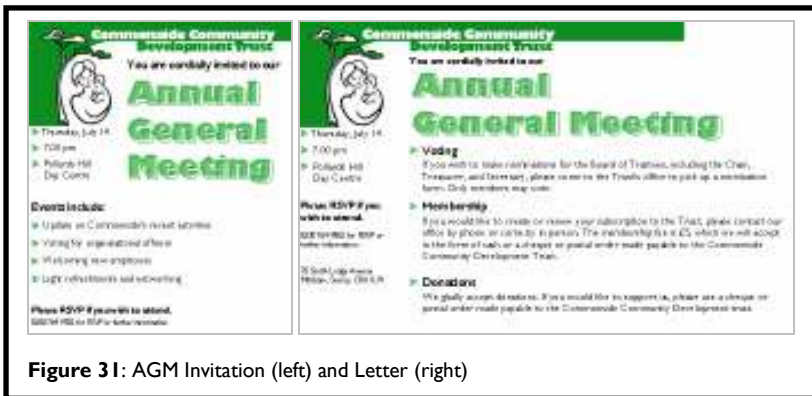
Second, these redesigns can also serve as poster templates, with their Microsoft Word-compatibility and editable content. As will be discussed in greater detail in the Design Teaching Sessions section below, one of the posters I redesigned (Figure 41) was in use at the time. The

employee immediately implemented the redesign and, based on that pattern, created several of her own posters in that style. This adaptation proved quite effective and she produced several similar posters that clearly originated from one organization.

Finally, the poster redesigns serve as powerful examples of my work at Commonsense. My goal was to create appealing, fun-looking marketing materials that will not only increase attendance to Trust events but improve name and logo recognition among the community. These redesigns vividly demonstrate the positive effect of simple changes and will serve as a strong reminder to Commonsense employees after I leave of what I've tried to do for them.

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING INVITATION & LETTER**

The Commonsense Community Development Trust holds an Annual General Meeting (AGM) in July



**Figure 31:** AGM Invitation (left) and Letter (right)

to update its trustees and members on activities, to publicize its activities to potential members, and to elect officers. To announce this meeting, the project manager requested that I create specific quarter-page invitations and half-page

letters that also begin to introduce the new “Commonside Style” that this project has created. These included standard information about date, time, and location as well as a listing of events. I introduced the retro-style text and arrows in the AGM publications; the Commonsense employees immediately affirmed its use. They agreed that it gave the materials the youthful, energetic, funky look that the project manager had specifically desired for the new public relations materials.

The invitation was printed on marbled yellow cardstock and the letter was printed on normal white A4 paper. Commonsense sent out copies early in June with one invitation and letter per



envelope. This mailing introduced recipients, including trustees and partners, to the new font and design styles that will be the Trust’s new public image.

## **SMALL ITEM TEMPLATES**

Over the course of the project, Commonsense employees came up with many small projects for me to complete. Often they simply involved applying the “Commonside Style,” with its combined logo and logogram and font styles, to each piece. All of these can be found in Digital Appendix A under Templates. Various products included:

- **Business cards.**

Based on the Aiming High design I produced for Commonsense, I created business cards for every staff member. Employees can simply add their names and email addresses to the template to create personalized cards. The cards feature mostly white space, with an emphasis on the Commonsense name and logo, and small but clear Gill Sans MT text for the name and contact information. This file only works in Publisher, which limited its use to one of the Commonsense Trust’s four computers.



**Figure 32:** Compliment slip template

- **Compliment slips.**

Compliment slips are an official communication, but come across as less formal than a business letter. My design, in Figure 32, appears as a small version of the letterhead. The slips occupy approximately one-third of an A4-

sized page. When I completed the compliment slips, I grouped all the items, leaving the name and email address available for personalization. I created this template in Publisher and converted it to Word, making it available for all employees.



- **Binder labels.**

To keep track of their many programs, Commonsense employees fill three-ring binders with their information, labeling the binders with the official logo. My template for the labels (Figure 33), originally created in Publisher, applied the standard header and created a space within that to put the name of the binder. Later I converted this into a Word document for all Commonsense computers.



**Figure 33:**  
Binder labels

- **Fax template.**

The fax template, requested particularly by the Aiming High group and modified for Commonsense in general, looks like Commonsense letterhead, but includes blank lines for such standard faxing information as sender, receiver, subject, etc. I created the template in Word and it is available to all Commonsense users.

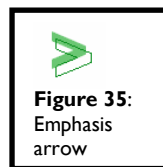
- **Invitation templates.**

The project manager specifically requested this template, and asked that it look exciting and

interesting. As Figure 34 shows, the template employs the name and logo combination, which ties all Commonsense publications together; the font and colors remain in the “Commonsense Style.” It also features small arrows pointing towards pertinent information (Figure 35); the arrows are designed to look both retro and up-to-date. I created them



**Figure 34:** Invitation template



**Figure 35:**  
Emphasis  
arrow

to be reminiscent of a popular style that appeals to a younger audience. I also employed this style in the Annual General Meeting (AGM) invitations and letters,

discussed below. This design, which I made in both quarter-page and half-page sizes, can serve both as a template for future invitations and as a more abstract model or source of ideas for other invitations.

- **Invoice template.**

This template involved modifying the Commonsense letterhead to include the word “Invoice” within the header. The project manager specifically requested an invoice template. It is available in Word document format for all Commonsense employees.

- **Postcard/ mailing template.**

The postcard template (Figure 36) looks similar to the AGM invitation and the invitation



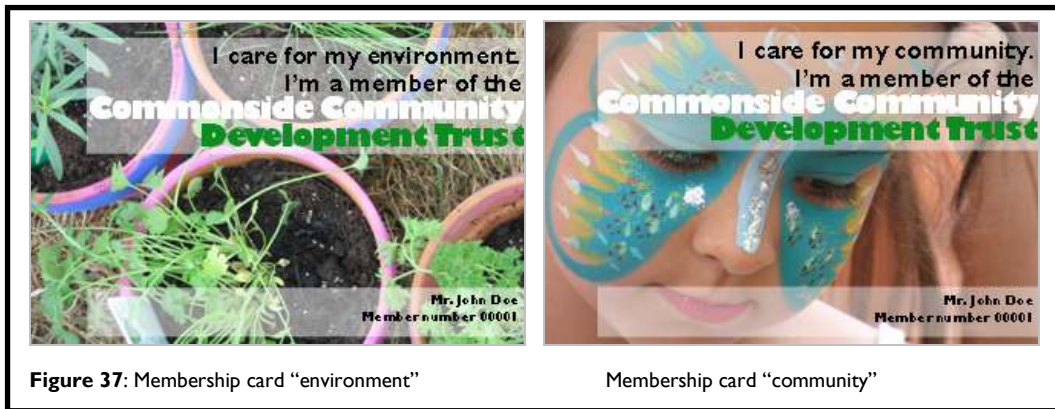
Figure 36: Postcard template

template. The invitation’s text focuses on energy and looking funky, with “Event” written in the same style as the emphasis arrow in Figure 32. This style of offsetting has appeared lately in popular magazines and advertisements. It channels the recent upsurge in interest about all sorts of retro styles, and sports “funky” printing that looks slightly off—that is, with a word’s outline slightly

set off from the word’s color. The italicized Gill Sans text directly atop “Event” adds energy through its angle and through its smooth technological look as compared to “Event.” This template provides space for a list of activities and for several images or logos. However, since it’s only a tiny, unsolicited postcard, it also remains simple to catch the eye of any normal person sorting through his or her mail. This template is only available in Publisher.

- **Membership card templates.**

Near the end of my tenure at Commonsense Community Development Trust, the trustees met. They requested that I design membership cards for people who paid a £5 fee to join the Commonsense Community Development Trust. This would serve as some type of confirmation, giving members some tangible evidence of their contribution in addition to the intangible benefit of supporting a development trust.



I created several different templates, each a variation on the theme “I care for my...” with a different background picture to support each template. This means that there are cards that say “I care for my environment,” with a background picture of plants, while “I care for my community” has a picture of a small child on it, and “I care for my world” has a background picture of a map. Commonsense employees could modify that theme and image to fit any number of different situations; this flexibility means that the membership cards would appeal to all sorts of different people.

- **Moving announcement.**

On July 1, 2005, the Commonsense Trust moved from the former dentist’s surgery at 70 South Lodge Avenue to the Day Centre across the street. To begin the launch of the new building and to start spreading the word about the move, project manager sent out an email announcing the move. She requested



that I create an accompanying announcement (Figure 38) to attach to the email, and provided

precise information to include. The document was not intended for modification, but instead for this one-time use.

In the moving announcement, I utilized the arrows shown in Figure 35, this time making them a repeated element and placing them at different angles for viewer interest. I used Gill Sans Condensed, Gill Sans MT, and Gill Sans Ultra Bold Condensed for the text. I created the announcement in Publisher, converted it into a JPG image to serve as the emailed attachment.

## **IMAGES**

Initially I created all the headers and logograms for the new Commonsides materials in Microsoft Publisher with textboxes, an image of the logo, and color boxes. However, not only did this present a problem with computers that didn't have the correct font—they substituted a "similar" font that did not match at all—but resizing one of the headers caused huge problems with the text inside the boxes. Microsoft Word also could not handle some of the text effects that Publisher allows, so the text also changed when I transferred the header from Publisher to Word.



Figure 39: Commonsides name in their logogram

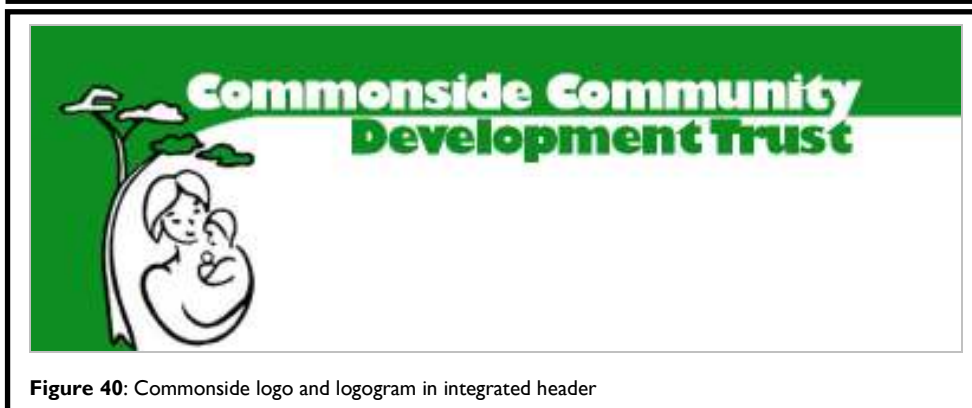


Figure 40: Commonsides logo and logogram in integrated header

Because many computers do not come equipped with the Gill Sans font family, I converted all of the headers into images. The images, saved in the widely accepted JPG format, are versatile and allow Commonsense people to adjust sizing easily, without creating errors in the text. These images appear on every one of the marketing publications I created and form the backbone of the “Commonsense Style.”

Figure 39 shows the basic Commonsense logogram image, while Figure 40 shows the standard page header that I applied to the newsletter, letterhead, business cards, brochures, poster, AGM invitations, webpage redesign, and nearly all the other products. These images are conservative, appealing to the older generation, but with enough funkiness and pizzazz to attract a younger demographic. They incorporate Commonsense’s long-standing logo with a new logogram that adds a youthful, more playful aspect to the mature and soberer mother with her child. As such, the images balance Commonsense’s challenge: to appeal to as many audiences as possible while not simultaneously repelling other groups. They must face this challenge in their rhetoric as well, writing for all audiences yet maintaining efficacy and meaningfulness.

The images are also practical: they’re impossible to break and easy to use in many different situations. They are an effective symbol for the Trust’s broader endeavor and challenge.

## **Design Teaching Sessions**

When the project commenced, my sponsors and I focused on me creating widely applicable templates. However, it quickly became clear that I could not begin to create templates for *every* situation that might arise. Yet without either impossibly comprehensive templates or some type of training in visual design principles, the people at Commonsense could not continue and maintain the “Commonsense Style” I began to implement for them. Their new posters would emulate the pre-project designs, with all the same design errors.

To rectify this situation, I scheduled three design sessions with the Commonsense staff: one with all of them, and two with each half of the organization. For the first session I created a visual design handout (available in Appendix A) that summarizes Robin Williams’ four design principles, as well as many of her document-specific suggestions. The handout provides small examples of text usage, and consolidates many useful design tips into three pages. It is a tangible reminder of the visual design principles, and can act as a simple visual design reference for Commonsense employees in the future.

During the first session, which took place on June 2, 2005, I discussed the handout with the employees and explained in detail why each of the principles would improve their marketing products. I outlined the importance of consistency among different publications, the need for standardization, the value of alignment, contrast, repetition, and grouping by proximity. I referred to the handout and talked about not mixing different fonts within the same style. However, they found the discussion confusing and requested clear examples of the principles in action. Although I showed them examples from *The Non-Designer’s Design Book*, they still found it difficult to visualize ways to implement the principles in their work.

The end of the first session left me with a mandate to begin revising some of Commonsense’s



Figure 41: Original poster (left) and redesigned poster (right)

old posters based on the June 2 discussion. I chose six posters at random from the 41 I had obtained earlier and redesigned them (see Poster Templates on page 109), including explicit explanations of my actions for each redesign. Coincidentally, the redesigned poster featured in Figure 41 was still running

when I presented the revised versions. When the organizer of those events saw the redesign, she understood more clearly the value of using basic design principles to create appealing posters. She implemented the redesigned poster into her advertising for the events and, extrapolating from that style, created several other matching posters in a similar vein.

The second visual design teaching session took place on June 8, 2005. The project manager and the environmental officer took part. It served as a follow-up to the first session, and I based it around the six poster redesigns. We examined each original poster and discussed design problems; I asked questions about the original posters, and they answered based on the design principles discussed in the previous meeting. Several times they exclaimed on the hideousness of an old poster, or expressed some embarrassment at having created a poster. They quickly began to recognize the basics of alignment and grouping by proximity, offering comments and suggestions before I asked. To reinforce these ideas we also went over explanations of the changes. By the end of the second session, the employees possessed a clearer idea of what a carefully designed poster could look like and how they could create that type of poster themselves.

The third visual design teaching session took place on June 23, 2005. The Aiming High employees took part. It followed a similar format to the second one with the project manager and environmental officer, but I focused more carefully on assessing each poster for contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity. We discussed each poster and its revision in detail. I primarily asked questions along the lines of, “How does this poster use contrast?” and “How effective is this in conveying its message?” The employees answered and extrapolated from my initial questions, spontaneously offering suggestions and changes. In addition to this discussion, I provided an old Commonsense poster for the employees to redesign. They sketched their redesigns, focusing specifically on the four design principles, and afterwards we discussed those as well.

This meeting also provided a forum for them to express concerns about designs—primarily that, by simplifying and reducing the size of text on their posters, that fewer people would attend their events. By the end of the session, which lasted approximately an hour and a half, they claimed a much stronger understanding of basic ways to improve their designs.

Although the posters began as examples of applying design principles to Commonsides’s marketing situation, they became an important part of the portfolio produced during my tenure at the Trust. They, perhaps more than the original handout, will provide the basis for future marketing materials because instead of trying to explain in words how to group or align or contrast, they actually *show* those principles applied. The clarity with which redesigning the posters demonstrated the value of thinking carefully about design even in a thrown-together flyer leave a stronger impression than any number of pages of mere words. The images spoke more eloquently than all the explanations in my first visual design session. I left those redesigns at Commonsides as the second, probably more useful, group of reference materials on visual designs that will enable the employees to continue the “Commonside Style” that I initiated.

## **Photographs**

Photographs play an important role in the Commonsides Trust’s publication materials. From the start the employees insisted that all the products needed to leave room for pictures of community members. Viewers who recognize friends, family, or acquaintances on Commonsides’s publications feel more connected to the Trust. Because Commonsides’s exists for people, the materials I created had to incorporate those people to be true to the organization’s mission.

Even so, this project did not initially involve photography; instead, the Commonsides Trust simply wanted to revise and improve their marketing materials and update their website. However,



early on in the project staff members requested that I take pictures with my Canon S1 IS digital camera to document the Aiming High launch.

Later, during their major event *Around the World in 80 Minutes*, the project manager requested that I take pictures to allow her to concentrate on coordinating event activities. I took care to obtain photos of all the events: African drumming, Australian story telling, Chinese opera dancing, henna tattooing, international food, display tables, mancala playing, the fashion show—and most of all, community members enjoying themselves. I photographed the environment officer's *Re:Cycle* event, the children repairing their bikes, the officer and her partner teaching and working, and youths enjoying themselves. Finally, I photographed the Commonsense Trust's presence at the Mitcham Fair, where the Commonsense Trust provided an opportunity for children to paint a flowerpot and to plant an herb in the personalized pot. There I photographed many children, the Commonsense employees, and the new Mitcham Mayor at Commonsense's tent. These events produced between 400 and 450 documenting digital images, which were left with the Trust as the beginning of a digital library.

At the project manager's behest, I also created a large collage of the best pictures from that library, as well as four digital collages. The large collage, which is over six feet tall and three feet wide, showcases Commonsense's events. It can act as a backdrop for future Commonsense displays, so that people see what Commonsense does and its influence on people. The poster showing so many people and faces emphasizes Commonsense's liveliness and provides many opportunities for viewers to recognize somebody.

## **7. CONTINUING THE DIALOGUE**

This Major Qualifying Project began with the simple goal of branding a relatively unknown London nonprofit, Commonsense Community Development Trust, in an attempt to publicize its existence more widely. The project evolved, however, into a tripartite marketing campaign for the Trust. One part of the project focused on conducting an analysis of the Commonsense website and redesigning the website based on that analysis. Another significant portion of the project focused on creating public relations and marketing materials: a newsletter template to the Commonsense Trust staff's specifications; templates for individual CCDT programs; templates for brochures, letterhead, and posters; a portfolio of photographs; and publications for specific upcoming events. The last portion of the project involved teaching employees of the Commonsense Community Development about visual design and leaving them with workable knowledge about their advertising campaign.

Ultimately the Commonsense Trust MQP sought to provide CCDT with the opportunity to reach its audience more effectively through all possible means. Since an unpaid student worked on the project, Commonsense employees could continue focusing on their work while obtaining the tools they need to reach their community.

These tools provide a rhetorical base from which the Commonsense Trust could begin a discourse with community members. Because the nonprofit's rhetorical situation was by necessity double-pronged, seeking to reach both donors and the audience in need, the Trust's new brand and marketing materials had to address both audiences. While the products sought to draw in wealthy residents to provide financial and volunteer assistance, they primarily served to communicate with the deprived people living in Pollards Hill, Figges Marsh, and Longthornton. The brand and marketing materials influenced by that brand provided the Trust with a coherently, carefully-designed image with which audiences could connect. Despite the accomplishments of this project,

however, much work remains for future student groups who seek to complete their project with a nonprofit company.

## **Future Projects**

The Commonsides Trust is a small organization working to accomplish big goals. This MQP began to facilitate Commonsides' accomplishing those goals, but much work remains that CCDT employees simply have not the time or expertise to accomplish. Worcester Polytechnic Institute students completing Interactive or Major Qualifying Projects can continue this legacy in numerous ways. The following section outlines eight possible future projects for students to undertake.

- **Follow up this MQP directly with analysis and modification**

The goal of my project was to improve the Commonsides Trust's communication with its two audiences. Yet the project only began that work by providing a first-generation series of analyses and templates; the success of those products remains to be determined. Future projects could address questions such as: How effectively has the new Commonsides Style reached its audiences? Has the community begun to recognize the Trust? What changes—additions, removals, modifications—could improve these marketing materials?

Such a project could create, distribute, and analyze a survey designed to answer those questions. It could also further the work of increasing the Trust's profile, creating second-generation materials to continue a discourse with the community and to ensure that people know who Commonsides is. It could focus on creating marketing materials involving well-designed window displays that avoided the distribution of single-page posters as well as formulating a brief but descriptive message of what the Trust is for the community audience.

- **Develop the Day Centre's brand image**

On July 1, 2005, the Trust moved into the Day Centre, a larger facility that greatly expands their opportunities for reaching the community. The project manager has suggested a WPI project

involving branding the Centre, which employees named “Commonside,” specifically as the Commonsides Trust’s. The Day Centre has heretofore provided a space for elderly community members to play bingo and hold a lunch club. Now that the Commonsides Trust has taken it over, the community needs to understand that the Day Centre has become a place for learning, improving oneself, and bonding with neighbors. This project would seek to develop the Centre as a learning place. Simultaneously, the project would need to emphasize that the Day Centre is not competing with the nearby Community Centre or the Pollards Hill library. This emphasis would include planning and organizing a launch for the Commonsides Centre, a bash to begin the serious business of branding the Day Centre as the Commonsides Trust’s new home.

In essence this project would involve officially presenting the new Centre to the public, giving it a face and showing what CCDT is doing in the new building. Additionally, such a project would focus on clarifying the Centre’s role in the Commonsides Trust; the students working on the project would provide a simple, straightforward explanation of the Trust and its organizational activities with relation to the Centre. Finally, students would brainstorm ideas for maximizing revenue from the Centre while maintaining it as Commonsides’s, not simply a rental space.

- **Teach IT skills to employees**

This project would involve students investigating the most pressing technical needs of Commonsides employees, determining the best way to communicate those skills, and designing and conducting teaching sessions to broaden technical skills. Because the Commonsides staff does not have much time to devote to IT classes, a major product from such a project would be a technical reference manual, outlining simply and clearly how to run programs that employees currently use. A searchable web or computer-based manual, in addition to a paper copy, could save Commonsides employees from having to re-learn a certain program every time they sought to use that program.

This project could also focus on reducing CCDT employees' need to use technology by creating databases or other helping programs that feature simple interfaces.

- **Discover and write grants**

As a grant-reliant nonprofit organization, the Commonsides Community Development Trust must constantly find and complete requests for money. Often they enter a large pool with very stiff competition for the available funding. A project in this area could focus on finding means of funding CCDT, particularly the small, low-competition grants that the Trust is likely to win. The WPI student(s) participating in the project would not only find these grants, but conduct the research to complete them as well. This project would also include compiling an extensive list of possible grants, beyond what the students could complete during the project, for the Commonsides Trust employees to investigate more extensively on their own time.

- **Write professional articles for the newsletter**

This MQP created a first-draft newsletter for the Commonsides Trust, but its scope did not include researching or writing articles for the newsletter. A future project could involve conducting serious investigative research for news articles as features of the Trust's newsletter. Such articles could focus on the Commonsides Trust and various aspects of its impact on the local community. The project would also involve personal interviews, highlighting prominent community members since featuring local people would draw in the audience very effectively.

- **Create an environmental database**

The old Commonsides Trust website featured a disorganized list of environmentally-friendly programs in which community members could partake. A project focusing on the environmental aspect of the Trust would involve organizing the Trust's environmental information into an organized digital database, possibly available via CCDT's website—a Yellow Pages for local environmental services and concerns. This would index not only recycling opportunities, but also the wide variety of pro-environment governmental and nongovernmental waste-minimization

techniques available to residents. The project would involve working closely with the Environment & Community Development Officer, Suzanne West. West also suggested that the project involve showing waste minimization videos at schools with her.

- **Create a film or photography documentary of CCDT's activities**

Early on in the Commonsides Trust's existence, the Trust commissioned a video that highlighted the Trust's activities with the community and featured interviews with various employees. The film has proved an invaluable resource for the Commonsides Trust that they use to explain their mission. This video's success has raised awareness that a similar but updated film could provide an additional effective method for proselytizing about the organization. Thus a project in this area could involve creating a documentary featuring CCDT's activities in schools, its community events, and the daily working lives of Commonsides employees and community members.

A new video could serve not only to supplement the old film, but also to update it with the current staff and programs. This project could also create audience-specific films such as a documentary geared for a younger audience that looks more artistic or "funky," one for an adult audience, and one specifically for young students. Students would focus on featuring local community members, to draw in the local audience and emphasize the Commonsides Trust's activity in the everyday life of locals. Seeing interviews of people from the area, watching older people reminisce, watching children play during recess—these things tie into the audiences' daily lives and would provide a rhetorical stepping-stone into a relationship.

A similar or concurrent project could focus on the same aspect of the Trust, but document it in professional-quality still photographs. A photography project could focus on intergenerational documentation as well as documentation of CCDT event and area and projects.

- **Create and run community projects**

This project would involve designing and running projects or classes to draw in local people. This could be teaching classes, creating large Commonsides Trust posters focused on particular

activities, or any number of other products. The focus would be on the student's actually designing, running, and evaluating the event's success. Project members could do research on what would intrigue community members, then create events that their research indicates would be beneficial: craft projects, running outdoors activities for kids, information technology classes or projects, training the more elderly audience in how to use Internet. The project could also include research on the history and heritage of the area by drawing in older community members for interviews, then creating documentaries to publicize those memoirs.

This would be a two-part project that involves conducting information-gathering surveys from the community and then creating events based on the information obtained. Such surveys would also provide the Trust with valuable information about what future events, beyond the scope of the project, could successfully draw in local people.

The completion of any of these projects would enhance the Commonsides Trust's ability to bring community members together for the regeneration of the area.

## 8. MY CLOSING THOUGHTS

Rhetorically and socially this project took me out of my comfort zone. In this section I will discuss the challenges that I faced in both those areas.

I had very limited experience in rhetorical analysis before the project; much of my groundwork research involved discovering upon which criteria I could reasonably base rhetorical decisions. I did not completely resolve this issue until I began investigating other London development trusts and their rhetorical stances. My decision regarding what type of stance the Commonsides Trust should take required me to understand and appreciate the complexities of advertising in both the corporate and nonprofit worlds. I only attained that understanding after examining the standard set by other development trusts could. Only after encountering both audiences at Commonsides did I fully understand the duality of the nonprofit's audiences: when I personally met each audience, the difference in rhetorical tasks became quite evident.

Before working with the Commonsides Trust, I thought I understood the Trust's rhetorical and social function. Once I started working in Pollards Hill, however, I came to understand that the Commonsides Community Development Trust serves not only as an organization that draws the community together. It also acts as a liaison between Pollards Hill residents and the government. Trust employees speak directly to locals, yes; but they also speak on behalf of their community in a language that politicians can understand. While on the one hand employees work to provide educational programs for community residents, on the other hand they negotiate the tricky, shark-infested political waters that swirl around places like Pollards Hill and produce words like "deprivation," "housing estates," "regeneration," and "stigma." My work with the Commonsides Trust provided employees with more effective means to communicate in both of these rhetorical situations.



Thus when setting out to create the actual products, I had to confront the challenge of communicating with both audiences through similar publications. The newsletter particularly offered a rhetorical challenge: Trust employees wanted a publication that would appeal to both groups. It had to draw in community members as well as showcasing CCDT's strengths to possible donors, which meant walking a very fine rhetorical line in the design and layout.

I quickly developed the ability to grasp the spirit of a project's exigency in order to incorporate that into the design of the document, as with the newsletter. As I developed the ability to imagine the situations in which a Commonsider employee might use a publication, my aptitude at creating truly applicable templates for the Trust increased dramatically. The rhetoric required in many situations extended beyond my experiences, but once I had started getting a feel for the audience—particularly after meeting local residents at Around the World in 80 Minutes—I developed the ability to create basically usable public relations templates. The Commonsider Trust staff corrected my misinterpretations or technical errors, which decreased in number as the project progressed. The skill of learning, more than anything else, served me well in this project.

Tricky rhetorical situations often arose as a result of the nonprofit's goals and limitations, particularly in the job of creating a brand for the Commonsider Trust. The visual designer D.K. Holland offered many practical suggestions for creating a nonprofit's brand, but from the beginning I saw that implementing those suggestions as she described would be impossible. The Commonsider Trust needed advertisements and marketing materials; they would have accepted whatever I produced whether or not a brand supported the materials. When I arrived and learned this, I had to review the knowledge I collected during my pre-MQP research and what of that applied to the new situation. Applying my understanding of branding ultimately resulted not in a series of conferences and *then* my application of the results of those discussions; instead, my sponsors expected me to begin creating products immediately.

For the employees of the Trust, most of my work was very tangible and closely involved in their daily operations. While at the Commonsides Trust's office, I spent a great deal of time creating documents on request. My experience had previously centered on technical writing, and only the term before my MQP did I receive any training on creating visual designs. During the project I learned very quickly what visual design styles worked well and what to avoid. As I worked to generate materials that would go out into the real world, both my design sense and my appreciation for the Trust's specific needs for their advertising materials expanded vastly. This broadening of horizons didn't impede basic work; instead, as I designed each document I increasingly bore in mind the underlying goal of branding this nonprofit.

Although CCDT employees did not specifically speak of the desire for a brand image, they shaped it in their requests and requirements for the templates I created. Often branding and the public relations materials seemed to blend, with the brand providing the impetus to drive a template's design. Branding for this real-life nonprofit resulted in much less discussion and much more hands-on implementation than I had anticipated from my early research.

I also failed to anticipate the impact of actually spending time in areas that I had first heard of described as "deprived." The word suggested hints and ideas about what I would find the area and people like; it implied, indeed, a whole stereotyping scheme. I imagined my workplace as not far different from the worst areas of Worcester that I had seen: crime-ridden postindustrial areas, littered with trash and crumbling, neglected tenements, peopled by dangerous, vacant-eyed locals. When I arrived and found that image far off-base, I began to realize that deprivation involved not only physical estate, but also social position.

Although worn-down, in need of repair, and often sporting weedy front yards, the style of poverty evinced in Pollards Hill, Figges Marsh, and Longthornton diverged widely from my expectations. Deprivation for locals came in the form of poor public transportation, few readily

available resources, difficulty in finding gainful employment, and the constant struggle to overcome the stigma attached to living in government-owned housing estates. As I commuted the hour and a half from posh Chelsea to impoverished Mitcham, I began to gain a fuller, deeper, more intuitive appreciation for the difficulty locals experienced. Only two bus routes serviced the Pollards Hill area, with a 30 to 45 minute ride to the nearest Tube station. Locals needed to find jobs, but faced excruciatingly long commutes to places where they could work. Poverty came not from the residents' personal deficiencies but from the lack of opportunities available in neglected areas like the wards in which the Commonside Trust works. After spending time in Pollards Hill I could readily understand the Trust's and local resident's frustrations with the political, social, and economic stagnation in that area.

The Commonside Trust itself embodied some of the struggles residents faced. Space at the Commonside Trust was quite limited; although I needed only an outlet and a chair, the Trust employees found clearing space for me difficult. My work site ended up in a frequently-traversed pathway not much larger than a closet. I began to understand that people who needed more space—for instance, to maneuver a wheelchair through—would experience significant limitations in such a place. Additionally, the Trust's technological limitations, evinced primarily by their older computers and operating systems, basic software, and frustrating printers, and their inability to easily rectify technological problems that arose made me realize that not all people are as privileged as WPI students. The Trust's fully adequate technology was cutting-edge in deprived Pollards Hill. These small but personal experiences greatly deepened my understanding of how “deprived” citizens live, particularly those in the community that the Commonside Trust seeks to help.

Completing the Major Qualifying Project at the Commonside Community Development Trust project center provided me with not only excellent academic opportunities but also forced me to re-evaluate my approach to creating rhetorically meaningful publications, my expectations of the

Trust, and my beliefs about poverty. The project forced me to stretch my skills to create products that truly fit with the Trust and to stretch my social beliefs. Although this MQP began a discourse with the public that Commonsense seeks to reach, many more opportunities exist for WPI students to aid and improve the Trust in effectively in achieving its mission.

# APPENDIX A: MQP PRODUCTS & TEMPLATES

## Images & Templates

See Digital Appendix A under Images.

See Digital Appendix A under Templates

## Other Products

### **CCDT STYLE & INSTRUCTION SHEET**

CCDT Style Sheet & Instruction Sheet

June 23, 2005

## STYLE SHEET

### Fonts

Body text: Garamond, Goudy Old Style

Headlines: Gill Sans MT Family

**Gill Sans MT**

Gill Sans MT Condensed

Gill Sans MT Ext Condensed Bold

**Gill Sans Ultra Bold**

**Gill Sans Ultra Bold Condensed**

### Size

Body text: 10 or 12 point

Headlines: various

### Colors

Body text: black

Headlines: black, greens, various

Pale green: #CCFFCC; R: 204 G: 255 B: 204

Medium green: #6CC776; R: 108 G: 199 B: 118

Dark green: #0C8F20; R: 12 G: 143 B: 32

### Internet

Body text: Gill Sans or Verdana 10 or 12 point

Headlines: Gill Sans or Verdana 20 point or what's appropriate; matching body text

Alignment: left-aligned

Links: dark green, bold

Background: white

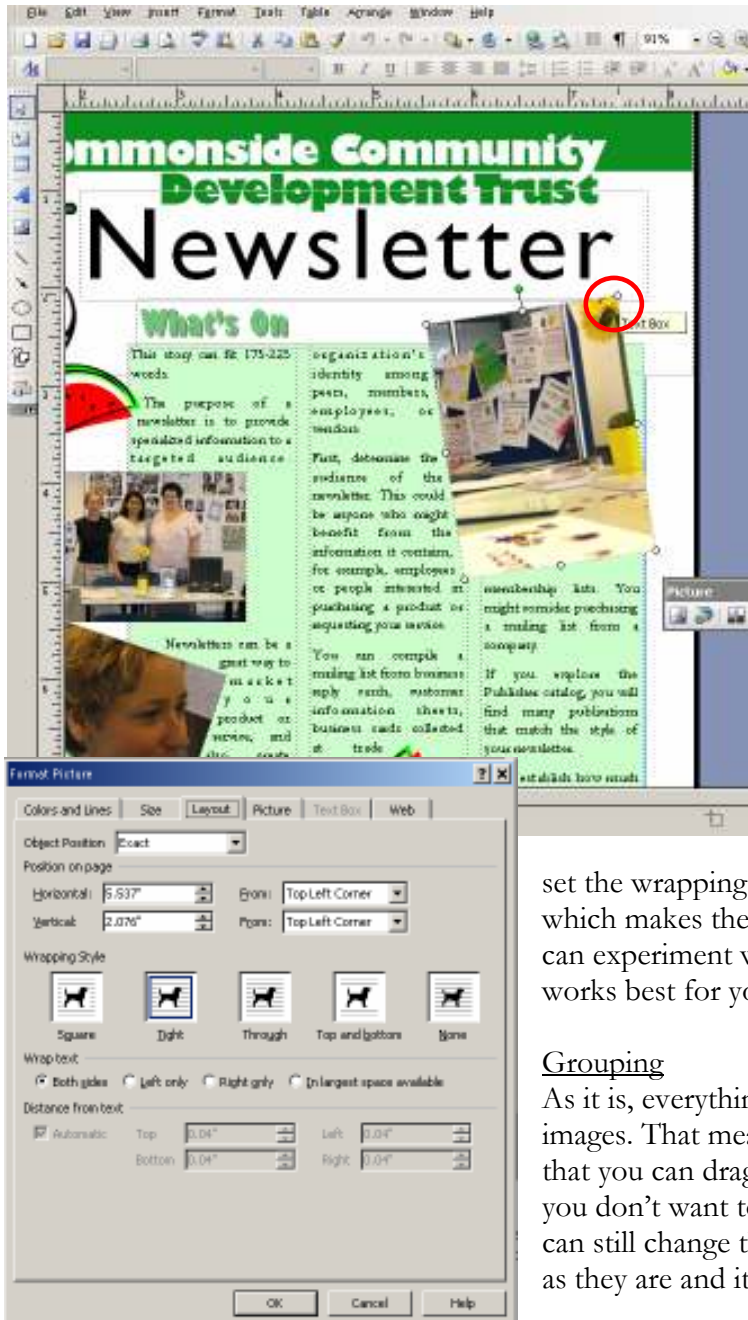
# INSTRUCTION SHEET

## Newsletter:

Click on the place-holder text. It will highlight all the text you can change in that box. Simply begin typing what you'd like to say. Bear in mind that you cannot increase the amount of space, so make sure your articles aren't longer than the available area.

## Usage tips

These apply for any Microsoft Publisher document. Some of these tips also apply for Microsoft Word, especially the stuff about text wrapping and grouping.



## Image resizing

To change the images, click on the pictures and delete them (either press the delete key or right-click and select Delete Object). Then paste in the images you'd like. You will want to resize your images by clicking on any of the small white dots that appear in the corners of images. You can see what I'm talking about in the picture below; the white dot(s) you want to click on or drag is circled in red. You will also want to set how text wraps around an image.

## Text Wrapping

To change how text wraps, double click on the small white dot—not the image itself. This will bring up a dialog box called "Format Picture" where you can change various settings. Click on the "Layout" tab at the top of this box. You want to change the wrapping style, which is marked by a dog with text around it, as you can see in the picture below. I have

set the wrapping in these stand-in pictures for "Tight," which makes the text go very closely around the image. You can experiment with different types of settings and see what works best for you.

## Grouping

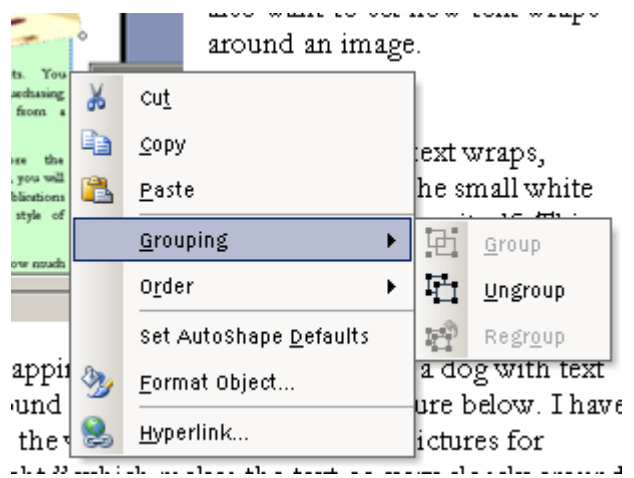
As it is, everything I've given you is grouped except for images. That means the computer thinks of it as one unit that you can drag or resize and it'll all stay together—but you don't want to do those. While items are grouped you can still change the text in them, so you can just leave things as they are and it'll work just like a solid template.

Grouping also means that you can't accidentally move any of those items, the text boxes or titles or anything, to the wrong place by accident. I recommend that you leave everything grouped unless you absolutely need to change the size of a text box for some reason.



If you do want to ungroup items, you can do so by clicking on the grouped items. In Microsoft Publisher this will bring up the white dots, which delineate the boundaries of the grouped items. Right-click on one of the dots and it will bring up a menu like the one in the picture at the left. You want to click “Ungroup,” which will separate all the items into individual bits. This is shown in the picture at left.

In Microsoft Word you can right-click on the grouped items and



it brings up a menu. You need to choose “Grouping,” then choose “Ungroup.” This is shown in the picture at the right.

Once you've ungrouped the items, you can move or change any item you'd like, but be careful—some of it is constructed in such a way that it'd be easy to accidentally disrupt. Remember that none of the pictures or watermelons have been grouped, so you don't need to ungroup to change those.

### Changing Documents

If you do plan to make major changes to documents, I recommend changing a copy rather than the original template. You can easily copy a whole document by going to the File menu and choosing “Save As.” Rename the document something else; you can make changes to that document and the original one will remain unchanged.

### Additional Issues

When other technical problems arise, whatever they may be, please feel free to email me. My email address is [katief@wpi.edu](mailto:katief@wpi.edu). I will provide all the assistance I possibly can.

# *Tips for* Creating Effective Visual Designs


## Consistency is key.

Don't just throw things together with Word Art so every publication from Commonsense looks different; stick to a look that people can glance at and think, "ah, that's the Commonsense Trust." The following four design principles will help.

## Contrast

Be brave and be very, very bold. Make different elements *really* different if they're not identical. This not only creates energy in the piece but helps differentiate separate items.

### Tips:

- *This includes, but isn't limited to, font size. Make some things really big, other things really small—but don't make things only a few points different.*
- *Don't use all capitals; this doesn't contrast well and makes the design harder to read.*
- *Create contrast with **Size**, **Weight**, **Structure**,  **Form**, **Direction**, and **Color**.*

## Repetition

Make sure some part of the design repeats to show that it's all one unified visual design. It's a matter of being consistent with how you make one whole publication, but also in how all your publications look together.

### Tips:

- *Pick one item and repeat it on every page or every poster for an event. It can be lines of a certain color, a clipart icon, whatever.*
- *Have fun with the repeated element; try sticking it weird places, at strange alignments, for fun.*

## Alignment

Alignment creates cohesion among elements. Instead of scattering things all over the page wherever there's space, right- or left-align all the text to group ideas together and to show that they all belong in the same poster.

### Tips:

- *Avoid centering information.*
- *Don't scatter information all over the place.*
- *Use one alignment per piece; if you use more than one, be very careful it works well.*
- *Align words flush with pictures, and try placing pictures so the words do align with it.*



# P

## roximity

Group ideas together. Think about what goes together and use spacing and grouping to make it very clear. If you have a list of events, then a contact name and number, clearly separate the events from the contact name and number.

### Tips:

- *Don't put information in corners.*
- *Use tabbing or headings and sub-headings to further organize information.*
- *Squint your eyes and count the number of elements on a page—you don't want more than about five. If you've got more than five, try to group more together using sub-headings.*

## Cool text tricks

There are six major styles of fonts, listed below. You can mix and match fonts to make really interesting designs, just be sure you mix and match right. The types of fonts are:

Oldstyle,

Modern,

Slab serif,

Sans serif,

*Script,*

Decorative

# M

## ix it up

You can create emphasis by using these different types of fonts together. For instance, this page I'm using a decorative font for the major headers, but I'm using an oldstyle font for the body text. See how it creates difference and emphasis?

### Tips:

- *Try using not only different sizes of fonts, but different font styles for greater contrast*
- *Try decorating with text—make symbols or appealing-looking single letters part of the design.*
- *Do not mix fonts in the same style (for instance, two different Modern fonts); instead of creating contrast, that'll just look a little "off."*
- *Do not slant text without thinking about why it's slanting. Use it to create energy, not just for the heck of it.*

# Control their eyes

Using these principles you can control the viewer's eyes. For instance, you can make the viewer's eye bounce between two types of information by making the font style, size, weight, and placement similar:

## Semicircular Reasoning

Like well-written **prose**?  
Appreciate excellent **photography**?  
Interested in **daily life** as a married college student?  
Care to engage in the occasional **mental workout**?

Give my blog a try. Check it out at

**marriage.analogcafe.net/\$r**

What do you look at? Think about where your eyes go. If you're like most people, they'll jump between "Semicircular Reasoning" and the URL. You can use this to make people keep looking at a couple different crucial pieces of information in a poster.

# Even more tips

Here are more tips I've collected on everything from brochures to posters to newsletters. I'd like to emphasize once again that the single most important thing is for you all to make posters that look like they've originated from the same organization.

## Flyers & Posters

- Experiment and have fun; make text or pictures big and interesting, and most of all, unusual
- Try using one enormous headline or one enormous picture, but don't make the body text big. If they don't get caught by the headline, big body text won't help.
- Use subheadings so the readers can scan for information quickly.
- Repeat header fonts in sub-heads.

## Brochures

- Use a layout similar to or the same as that on the business cards and envelopes.
- Think about where the folds are going to go and don't let text get lost in those folds.
- Think about what the reader will see first, second, etc., and sort/arrange information logically based on that. It can help to make a mock-up by hand first to visualize it.
- Strong alignment means you can occasionally break it for emphasis.
- Make this look similar or the same as your letterhead, flyers, business card...
- **Group** items together. Proximity in particular must be well thought out.

## Postcards

- Come to the point right away.
- Be creative. People receive tons of postcards all the time, so make yours stand out.
- Make it fit with all the other publications Commonsense produces.
- Don't try to cram too much information on. Only include exactly the pertinent details.
- Organize information very clearly.

## Business Cards:

- Don't use a lot of a second color; simpler is probably always better.
- Try different card alignments—both vertical and horizontal—and see which fits your information best.

- *Align everything consistently.*
- *Avoid the clutter of periods, parentheses, dashes, and such; replace what you can with lots of space. This includes writing out street names.*
- *Don't make the font sizes too big! Just because you can fit the name on the card really big doesn't mean that you should—in fact, probably you shouldn't. Even 10 or 11 point font can be too big on a business card.*

## Letterhead

- *Use a layout similar to or the same as that on the business cards and envelopes*
- *Avoid centering.*

## Newsletters

- *Consistency and repetition are your best friends.*
- *Make it look like one cohesive thing, so all the pages tie together somehow.*
- *Use strong alignments and if you break it, go all out.*
- *Don't indent the first paragraph. Put a hard return between paragraphs, or indent paragraphs slightly.*
- *Try bolding key points within the text to make scanning easier.*

## Newspaper Ads

- *Do not cram as much information as you can into the ad.*
- *Leave white space, which will contrast with the paper's text as well as other ads.*
- *Think of the cleverest headline you can.*
- *Be specific and clear in the copy as to what you're advertising.*
- *Don't write a novel in the ad.*

## Web Sites

- *Employ the four principles, particularly making sure that every page is related to the previous one.*
- *Logical organization is a must; make it clear what goes to where, and why it should.*
- *Try to reduce the amount of scrolling visitors have to do.*

From the second edition of *The Non-Designer's Design Book*, by Robin Williams.

## **POSTER REVISION: AN EXAMPLE**

The next three pages provide an example of the poster revisions discussed on under Poster Templates (page 109) and Design Teaching Sessions (page 118). The first page shows the original Commonsense employee's poster design, while the second page shows my redesign that employed Williams' four visual design principles. The third page explicitly details how I applied each of the principles in the new poster. All six of the poster redesigns follow the format below. Recall, however, that these designs were created for A4 paper, which is narrower and taller than the letter paper the posters are displayed on. I slightly reduced and modified their sizes to fit letter paper.

# family funday

Wednesday 25 August

Admission  
Free

12-5pm



Donnelly Green, Pollards Hill

Community Centre and Youth Club

football    bouncy castle  
massage    african drumming workshop  
health activities    clown & magic show  
polka theatre drama workshop    police dogs  
henna tattooing    face painting  
DJ workshop  
and much more....



**Commonside**

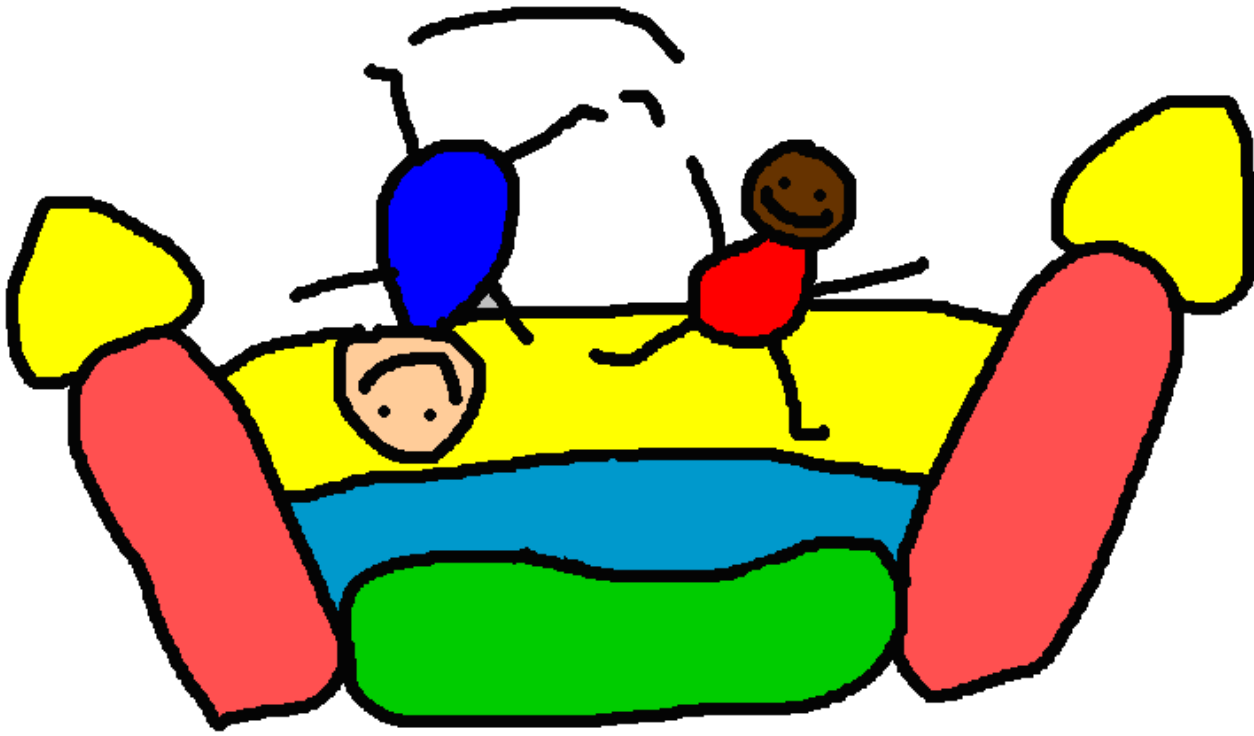


**COMMUNITY FUND**  
LOTTERY FUNDED



**niace**  
promoting adult learning





# Free Bouncy Castle

If this sounds like fun to you, wait until you experience the clown and magic show, African drumming, henna tattoos, face painting, DJ workshop, police dogs, massage, football games, and much more—all at the Commonside Trust's Family Fun Day.

## FamilyFunDay

• 12 – 5 pm • August 25 • Donnelly Green, Pollards Hill •

For more information: [commonside.net](http://commonside.net) or 0208.764.9582

**Commonside Community  
Development Trust**



Partnered by:



## *What did I change between these two posters?*

Before I tell you what I've changed, compare the two posters. Which one is more readable? Why? Where have I used contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity? What are the effects of those uses? What improvements could be made to the revised one?

### *The four principles in action:*

- I **contrasted** the headline with the rest of the text in size and style. Also the picture's size and its multi-coloured aspect contrasts with the black and green text in size and look. The green text of "Bouncy" and "Fun" also contrast the black text on either side.
- I **repeated** the style of text in "Free Bouncy Castle" and "Family Fun Day" to reinforce their connection. I also maintained the same pertinent information style as in the other posters, as well as the "for more info," Commonside name, and sponsors' box.
- I **aligned** everything to the left, including the picture, although it's large enough that you can't tell. I also aligned the sponsors' box with the end of the Commonside name.
- I grouped information by **proximity** by putting "Family Fun Day" directly next to the pertinent information, but leaving lots of space between that and the Commonside name and the body text. Also the "Free Bouncy Castle" is grouped closely to the image to tie them together, and the green in "Bouncy" is tied to the green part of the bouncy castle picture.

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