

# Design Recommendations and Resources

## Background

This document provides an overview of design standards that you should follow as you work to develop Dane County Park signage. These are the same standards used by professional designers and will help you develop a more professional looking final product. Following these standards will also help our signage look more uniform between parks.

Information in this document was compiled from the following sources:

- *Non-designer's Design Book by Robin Williams*
- <https://www.thepapermillstore.com/>
- <https://uxengineer.com/principles-of-design/>
- <http://davidhall.io/design-for-non-designers/>

## Design Principles

### Proximity

The proximity, or closeness, of items on a page implies a relationship. When several items are in close proximity to each other, they become one visual unit rather than several separate units. Items relating to each other should be grouped together. On the flip side, unlike or unrelated items should be spaced further apart to emphasize their lack of relationship.

**Grouping** is the cornerstone of the proximity principle. Organizing similar information and separating dissimilar information improves the readability of your design, and it also creates white space between your groups. In the example on the right below, you can see the information has been grouped together in logical chunks:



Example from: <https://blog.thepapermillstore.com/design-principles-proximity/>

**White space** refers to the areas of your design that do not contain content. White space is the space between grouped elements in your designs. These spaces prevent your design from

appearing over-crowded, and they help guide your reader's eye towards key information by contributing to your visual hierarchy. <<[Learn more](#)>>

## **Alignment**

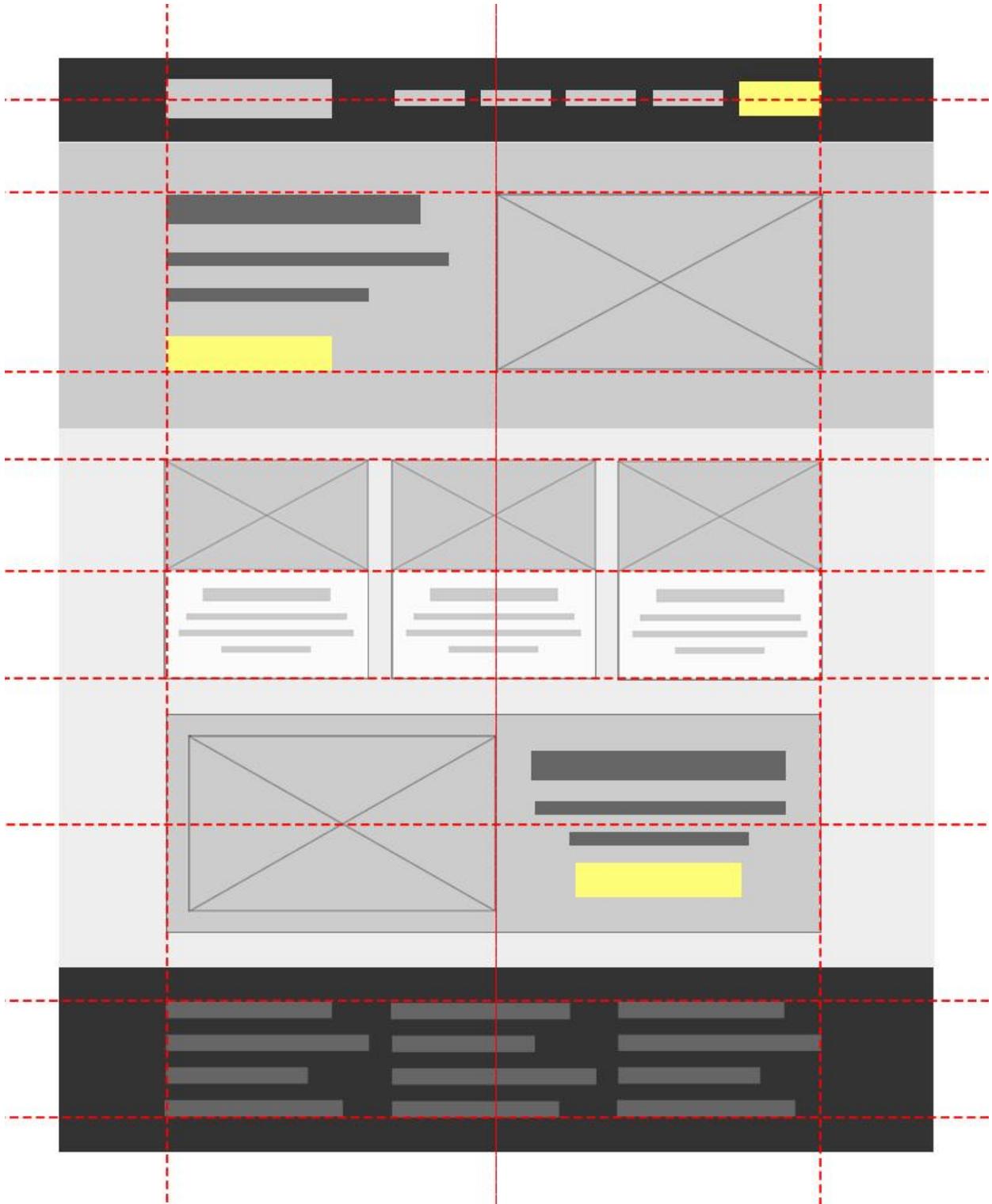
Alignment helps us to create a sense of unity by providing structure and connecting elements in a subtle, yet powerful way. When items are aligned on the page, the result is a stronger cohesive unit. Even when aligned elements are physically separated from each other, there is an invisible line that connects them, both in your eye and in your mind.

When you place items on the page, make sure each one has some visual alignment with another item on the page. If lines of text are across from each other horizontally, align their baselines. If there are several separate blocks of text, align their left or right edges. If there are graphic elements, align their edges with the other edges on the page.

Lack of alignment is probably the biggest cause of unpleasant-looking documents. Our eyes like to see order; it creates a calm, secure feeling. Plus it helps to communicate the information. In any well-designed piece, you will be able to draw lines to the aligned objects. A problem with the publications of many new designers' is a subtle lack of alignment, such as centered headlines and subheads over indented paragraphs. All those minor misalignments add up to create a visually messy page. Find a strong alignment and stick to it. Strong alignment is often the missing key to a more professional look . Check every element to make sure it has a visual connection to something else on the page.

Check for illustrations that hang out over the edge just a bit, or captions that are centered under photos. Headlines that are not aligned with the text, rules (lines) that don't align with anything or a combination of centered text and flush left text. An easy way to check your alignment is to print out your document and draw lines on the page. How many lines do you draw? Are elements aligned with other elements on the page?

<<[Learn More](#)>>



Example from: <https://uxengineer.com/principles-of-design/alignment/>

## Contrast

Contrast is often the most important visual attraction on a page - it's what makes the reader look at the page in the first place.

Contrast has two purposes, which are inextricable from each other. One purpose is to create a point of interest on the page. If a page is interesting to look at, it is more likely to be read. The other purpose is to organize information. A reader should be able to instantly understand the way the information is organized - the logical flow from one item to another. Contrasting items should never confuse readers or create a focus on something that is not supposed to be a focus.

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"Inspiring read!"  
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**Cynthia Lee Katona** currently teaches all levels of English Composition and Literature at Ohlone Community College in Fremont, California.

**Book Savvy**  
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Paperback  
228 pages



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Example from: *Non-designer's Design Book* by Robin Williams

## Typography

At most you should only use two typefaces (fonts) in a design. Any more creates confusion in the viewer and creates a feeling of inconsistency. Legibility is key. Use two contrasting typefaces for visual interest. A good rule of thumb is to use a serif font, such as Georgia, for headings and a sans-serif font, such as Helvetica, for body text. We do not currently have specific fonts that you must use and the style will depend on the type of sign and your audience.

There are many online resources where you can download and install fonts for free. One example is: <https://www.dafont.com/>

<<[Learn More](#)>>

## Photography

Please try to select photos that represent the diversity of our park users. A few factors to consider are age, race, gender, physical ability, body type, and family makeup. Please use only high resolution, high quality photos. Reach out to Parks staff if you need help finding good photos for your sign. Do not stretch or distort the photos (see example below) – crop them to fit the space or choose a different photo.

**Yes!**



**No!**

