

Visual Redesign of TheHill.com: 3 Iterations

Scott Abromowitz, abromo@umd.edu
Master of Human-Computer Interactions Student
College of Information Studies
University of Maryland, College Park

Goals

In TheHill.com’s original layout it depicts a lack of whitespace, thus an increase is necessary for a visual redesign. Redundant menus that create confusion are removed and now unified under one top-menu. Therefore, I sought to make the menu more bold by using larger font. The sidebar detracts from the homepage, which is why I have removed it. Also, I think a differentiation between current articles and focus article is greatly lacking in the current design, thus I made a clear distinction with the timeline and highlighted article feature. I limited the use of colors for text and made heading fonts a san-serif and paragraph fonts a serif. The design is not a radical departure because of the demographic of politicos who might resist change and limitation in displaying news content without being too artistic. I am consistently reminded of design constraints such as the reliance on ad revenue, thus I re-centered the logo. For the technology news section I removed lots of content since it is cluttered and could easily be found by search. Many of the articles are also several months old. I further wish to spotlight articles that might be liked or relevant. Additionally, I added color to the sub-menu that is the same as its color on the homepage timeline for better coordination. I want to make it as easy as possible for people to associate a color with a particular section. The sidebar is also kept in the design because I consider it an important UX element and necessary to not radically break from TheHill’s current design. Nevertheless, the sidebar is redefined to change depending on the content section (technology focus in technology news section or senate focus in senate news section, etc.).

Homepage

Original



- Left aligned logo and simplification of menu (**orange**).
- Enhancement of search (**blue**) functionality.
- Shows highlighted articles (**green**).
- Three newest articles (**blue**).
- Important to show articles about each branch of government (**purple**)
- Removal of sidebar.
- Differentiation of homepage layout
- Removal of header date.
- Kept purple color scheme since distinct look

The original has an over abundance of information such as a redundant menu system (**purple**). Also, it lacks any distinct style compared to other pages.

Iteration 1



This iteration seeks to reduce content on the homepage and better focus the user to specific articles.

- Re-centered header and addition of an arrow under a section designate it is the current section (**orange**).
- The 4 newest articles with photos (**turquoise**).
- Reposition of featured articles (**green**).
- Additional links to specific sections in the footer (**gray**).

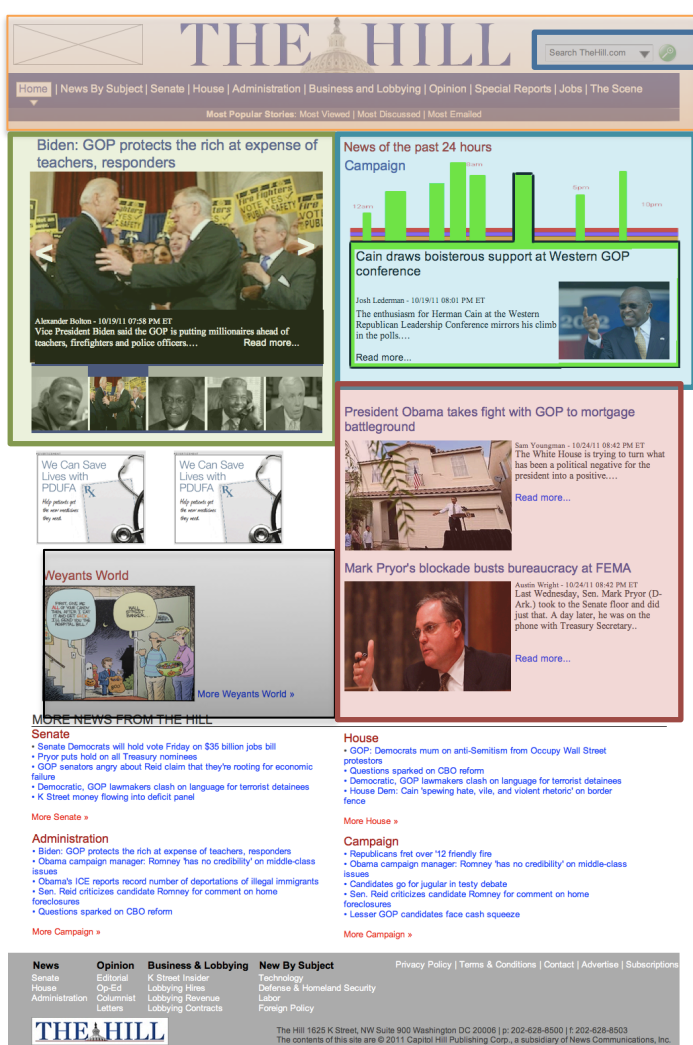
Iteration 2



I reintroduce some content to the homepage that the 1st iteration removed. Depict newest articles alongside featured. No apparent structure in the original design to see newest articles.

- Highlighting of page’s parent (**orange**).
- Addition of arrow to select further search options (**blue**).
- Refinement of select articles styling with selected article now in color and non-visible in B&W (**green**).
- Timeline feature that shows articles by section to show more relevant information (**blue**).
- Reintroduced political cartoon (**black**) – better focus that is lacking in current design.
- Display 2 newest articles (**red**).

Iteration 3



This iteration introduces a timeline feature so users can see stories relevant to his/her interest. Each section has a specific color.

Technology News Section

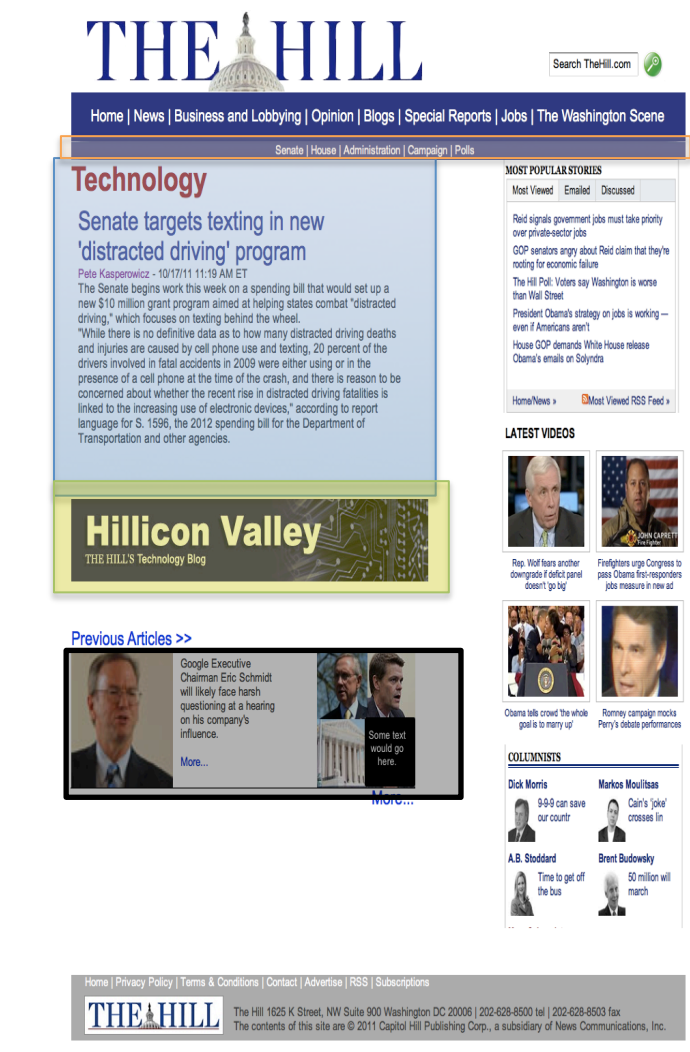
Original



- Section for all branches of government (**orange**)
- Focus on only the newest article (**blue**).
- Technology blog more visible (**yellow**).
- Greater focus on most read technology articles (**black**).

The original layout has an extraneous list of previous articles that should be a separate link. Irrelevant info in sidebar.

Iteration 1



I feel the need to limit scrolling content for each section. Users may not know where to find popular articles.

- Introduction of categories in sub-header (**black**).
- Merger of Hillicon Valley blog with technology news (**blue**).
- Removal of focus articles section (unclear)
- Headers become standard purple color. All headers san-serif and content serif.
- Addition of social media links (**yellow**).

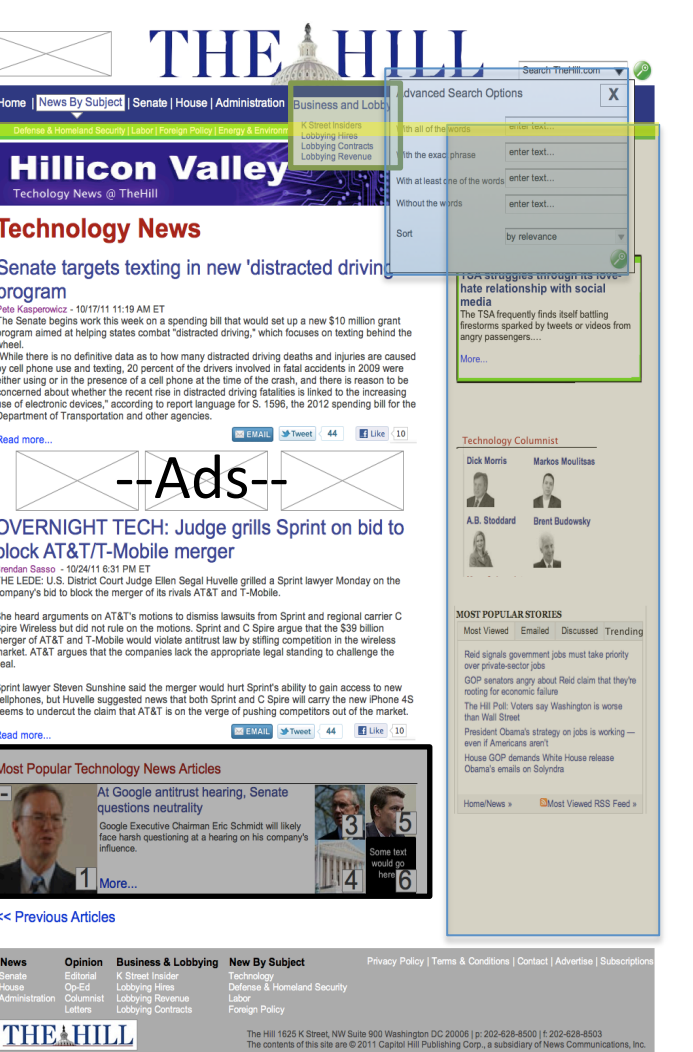
Iteration 2



Merger of blog and news since there is redundancy between them.

- Bottom menu color changed to green to designate technology section (**yellow**).
- Reintroduce scroll over menus, but color is now gray to demonstrate it is an active link (**green**).
- Reintroduce most popular articles with greater focus with a header (**black**).
- New method for advance search on same page (**blue**).
- Sidebar now unique to each section/category (**brown**).

Iteration 3



Focus to show top technology articles and create greater cohesion with the sidebar. Originally, the sidebar seemed tacked on.

A News Article

Original



- Introduction of purple sharing bar and commenting bar (**blue**).
- Removal of print and share button, as print method will automatically only print the article.
- Removal of ads in sidebar (**orange**).

The original layout lacked a social component that was visible. Layout was not focused for the technology section.

Iteration 1



Creation of a social bar and commenting bar that is a united destination for sharing and expression one’s thoughts.

- Made layout wider because of increasing widescreen usage.
- Add comment section to the bottom of the article (**orange**).
- Enlarged the author and date of the article – increases visibility (**blue**).
- Addition of related articles in sidebar (**purple**).

Iteration 2



I want to make it easier for users to find related articles. Also, how to comment more clear.

- Tech news logo for recognition (**purple**).
- Moved related articles to inside article for greater visibility (**red**).
- Introduction of technology news past 24 hours timeline (**green**).
- Share button removed and replaced with site specific look (users may be unfamiliar) (**blue**).
- Integration of login types into social bar (**gray**).
- List technology section columnist (**orange**).
- Addition of trending news (**black**).

Iteration 3



The related articles is now integrated, thus more cohesive. Addition of timeline to see the progression of technology news.