

# Competitive Analysis: SouthMich Bank

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## Executive Summary

To assist in the development of the online presence of the regional bank SouthMich, a competitive analysis was performed. This analysis focused on two competitors: Alpine Bank of Colorado and Peoples First Community Bank.

Both banks had very similar schemes; some areas of the sites even used the same titles (e.g. “personal banking” “business banking” etc.) This suggests that certain labeling is standard and expected. Therefore, staying closely to this organization would probably be best for the users already accustomed to online banking.

There were certain functions of both banks’ websites that were found to be the same. Some of them include:

- Providing online banking – both personal and business
- The option to personalize your online account preferences
- The use of several different financial calculators
- Forms available for download
- Offering high levels of security while performing banking functions online
- Being able to apply for things online, such as mortgages, loans, etc

Alpine Bank of Colorado had a few things unique to them. These included:

- A Spanish version of the site.
- The option to purchase an alpine e-gift card
- A community newsletter
- A community event search

Considering that SouthMich is a regional bank, the community functions that Alpine Bank’s website offered might be a positive thing to provide for local users.

Competitor 1: Alpine Bank of Colorado (<http://www.alpinebank.com>)

Alpine Banks of Colorado

Online Banking | Personal Banking | Business Banking | Mortgage Center | Trust & Asset Management

Alpine Bank will be closed Monday February 20, 2006 in observance of Presidents' Day.

**Alpine Online**  
[Login](#) | [Apply](#) | [Learn More](#)

**PAL (Portfolio Account)**  
[Login](#) | [Apply](#) | [Learn More](#)

**Alpine E-Gift Card**  
[Login](#) | [Purchase](#) | [Learn More](#)

**Community Events**  
 Search for events in your area by either:  
 Date: [v] [v]  
 Town: [v]  
[Search](#)

[Community Newsletter](#)  
[Press Release](#)

**Your family just got larger!**  
 It took us over 30 years to find another bank that shares the same community and family values, and customer relationships that we do. Those relationships and values were exactly what we found in First National Bank (FNB) [Telluride](#), [Ridgway](#), [Ouray](#), [Montrose](#), and its employees.

You now have four new bank locations and six new ATMs to help make your life easier and save you time. We invite you to stop by if you are in the area and say "hello" to your new extended family.

Visit our [Bank & ATM locations](#) pages for more information.

**Alpine Bank Goes Green**  
 At Alpine Bank, we have a strong sense of corporate social responsibility that affects everything we do. This year, we will introduce our Green Team commitment to sustain and help preserve our natural environment. [Learn More...](#)

**Bank & ATM Locations**  
 -----Select One-----  
[List All Bank Locations](#)  
[List All ATM Locations](#)

**Fraud Center**  
[Alpine Bank Observer](#)  
[Phishing Email Scam](#)  
[Fraud News!!!](#)  
[Safeguard Your Info](#)  
[Safe Banking Online](#)  
[Fraud Tips](#)  
[Email Fraud](#)

**Helpful Tools**  
[Applications & Forms](#)  
[Order Foreign Currency](#)  
[Order Savings Bonds](#)  
[Calculators](#)  
[Vehicles for Sale](#)

[About Alpine](#) | [Careers at Alpine](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Fraud Center](#) | [Terms of Use](#)

Alpine bank Home Page (home page slightly extends bottom of screen at 1024x 768)

## Alpine bank Sub Page (at 1024x768)

Alpine Banks of Colorado

Online Banking | Personal Banking | Business Banking | Mortgage Center | Trust & Asset Management

Back to: [Home Page](#) > [Business Banking](#)

[Business Checking](#)  
[High Yield Checking](#)  
[Money Market Choices](#)  
[Health Savings \(HSA\)](#)  
[Business Check Card](#)  
[Line of Credit](#)  
[Commercial Loans](#)  
[Payroll Processing](#)  
[Cash Management](#)  
[Merchant Services](#)

[Learn more about HSA](#)  
[Publication 502 \(Medical and Dental Expenses\)](#)

**Health Savings Account (HSA)** [Print Version](#)

**Do you wish you could offer your employees a better health care plan?**  
 Let us help you save money and help your employees take control of their own health care expenses.

**You can now offer your valued employees:**

**Security** – Your employees will feel more secure with the additional protection that an Alpine Bank HSA can provide to them and their family.

**Affordability** – You may be able to lower your employee health insurance premiums by switching to health insurance coverage with a higher deductible.

**Flexibility** – Funds in the account can be used to pay for current qualified medical care expenses or save for future unexpected medical costs.

**Savings** – Money that is not used in the account will "roll over" to be used for future expenses. The "use it or lose it" rule does not apply to HSAs.

**Tax Savings** – An HSA can provide tax savings for qualifying contributions and qualifying withdrawals.

[About Alpine](#) | [Careers at Alpine](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Fraud Center](#) | [Terms of Use](#)

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Member FDIC | Equal Opportunity Lender | Equal Housing Lender  
 Our bank complies with Section 326 of the USA Patriot Act

Content/Functionality:

Alpine Bank's website offers a variety of services. While most of these services pertain to the "online banking" function, there were a few others that offered additional help to the banking customer.

Specific content/functionality is listed under subjective groups and described in more detail below:

**Services Offered:**

- Online Banking:
  - Review all of your accounts - including checking, savings, CD's, IRA's, consumer loans, and home equity loans.
  - See if checks have cleared or deposits have posted.
  - View actual photos of cashed checks.
  - Transfer money from one account to another.
  - Download statement information into Microsoft Money™ or Quicken™.
  - Pay bills
  - Apply for several types of loans online, including:
    - Consumer Loan
    - Commercial Loan
    - Student Loan
    - Home Equity Loan/Line of Credit
    - Mortgage Loan
- Financial Calculators including:
  - Loan calculator
  - Mortgage calculator
  - Investment calculator
- Community event search
- Community newsletter
- Business newsletter
- Create a portfolio account
- Purchase an e-gift card online

**Technology Used:**

- Secure banking through cryptographic technology
- Spanish-language versions of the pages are available.
- Demo that allows users to see how the online banking area functions.
- Financial calculators
- Being able to subscribe to the business newsletter

- Payment Express, which offers bill paying options to account holders for free.

**Search Functionality:**

- Basic keyword search
- Does not allow phrase searching, only individual words
- Entered search words are shown in bold within the returned matches

**Supporting Content:**

- Fraud Center
- Contact phone numbers and email addresses
- Privacy Policy
- Banking demo
- Terms of use
- Bank and ATM location list
- Applications and forms including:
  - Alpine Online & Payment Express Application
  - Cash Management Application
  - Add or Remove Accounts Form
  - Regain Online Access Form
  - Close Online Access Form
  - New Account Application
  - Loyalty or Business Check Card & Ready Reserve Line of Credit Application
  - Consumer Loan Application
  - Student Loan Application Request Form
  - Commercial Loan Application
  - Home Equity Loan/Line of Credit Application
  - Mortgage Loan Application
- Help Page with content such as:
  - Shortcuts to most of the materials mentioned above
  - FAQs
  - Browser Requirements
  - Online Check Ordering
- Job/Career Listings

## Strengths:

Alpine Bank's strengths mostly related to its clear and simple page layouts as well as the consistency of design. This primarily showed in the navigation and sub-navigation, which remained stable throughout the site. Another strength was its appeal to the community.

Specific strengths include:

- Alpine bank's logo always links back to the home page, as well as the written link that says "back to [Home Page](#)."
- The Search bar remained stable at the top of the page, no matter what area of the site the user is in.
- Pages are kept short, so there is minimal use of scrolling.
- Clear and easy to read background, without too many distracting graphics.
- Clearly labeled sub-navigation, that remained in the same position and style throughout the site.
- The option to turn any page into the "print version."
- Offering an online community newsletter, as well as a community event search box.
- A business newsletter that users may subscribe to, that gives information pertaining to the local Colorado area.
- Good use of shortcuts on the home page.
- The top navigation bar stayed there, no matter what area the user moved to within the site.

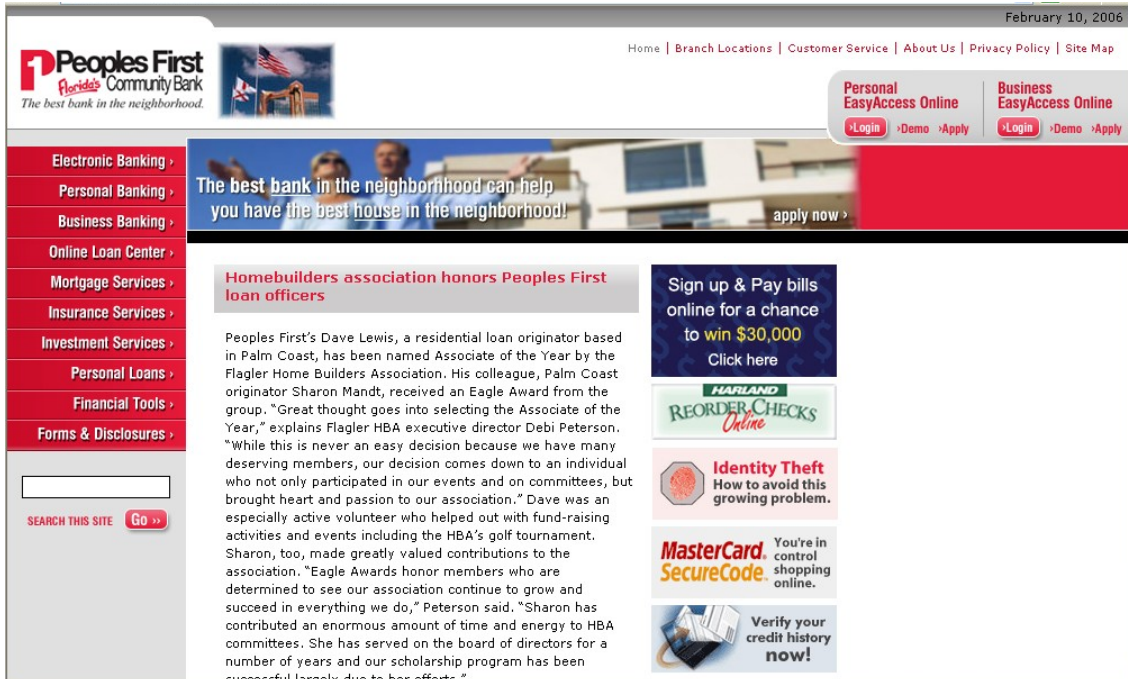
## Areas for Improvement:

This website only had a few issues. Most of them did not have a large effect on the overall use, but if improved, would increase the clarity of the website even more.

Some of the specific areas for improvement include:

- The Spanish version of this site had the top navigation still listed in English.
- When clicking on “Alpine Online Login” it takes the user to an area that breaks away from the consistent layout design that is prevalent throughout every other section of the site.
- Some of the links that seem like they should bring the user to the named part of the website, instead only bring up a page describing what that service does. (For example, the “Payment Express” link does not go to the Payment Express Services page, but instead brings up a description of what Payment Express is.)

Competitor 2: Peoples First Community Bank (<http://www.peoplesfirst.com>)



Peoples First Community Bank' Home Page (home page slightly extends bottom of screen at 1024x 768)

February 10, 2006

Home | Branch Locations | Customer Service | About Us | Privacy Policy | Site Map

Peoples First Florida Community Bank  
The best bank in the neighborhood.

Personal EasyAccess Online  
Login Demo Apply

Business EasyAccess Online  
Login Demo Apply

Electronic Banking >  
Personal Banking >  
Business Banking >  
Online Loan Center >  
Mortgage Services >  
Insurance Services >  
Investment Services >  
Personal Loans >  
Financial Tools >  
Forms & Disclosures >

The best bank in the neighborhood can help you have the best house in the neighborhood! apply now >

**Homebuilders association honors Peoples First loan officers**

Peoples First's Dave Lewis, a residential loan originator based in Palm Coast, has been named Associate of the Year by the Flagler Home Builders Association. His colleague, Palm Coast originator Sharon Mandt, received an Eagle Award from the group. "Great thought goes into selecting the Associate of the Year," explains Flagler HBA executive director Debi Peterson. "While this is never an easy decision because we have many deserving members, our decision comes down to an individual who not only participated in our events and on committees, but brought heart and passion to our association." Dave was an especially active volunteer who helped out with fund-raising activities and events including the HBA's golf tournament. Sharon, too, made greatly valued contributions to the association. "Eagle Awards honor members who are determined to see our association continue to grow and succeed in everything we do," Peterson said. "Sharon has contributed an enormous amount of time and energy to HBA committees. She has served on the board of directors for a number of years and our scholarship program has been successful largely due to her efforts."

Sign up & Pay bills online for a chance to win \$30,000  
Click here

MARLAND REORDER CHECKS Online

Identity Theft How to avoid this growing problem.

MasterCard SecureCode You're in control shopping online.

Verify your credit history now!

SEARCH THIS SITE Go >>

People First Community Bank Sub-Page (sub page slightly extends bottom of screen at 1024x 768)

### Content/Functionality:

Peoples First website sticks to the traditional options offered by a bank's website. While most of these options apply to personal online banking, this site offers a significant selection for those interested in business online banking as well.

In addition to banking, People's First has an insurance company that is also a part of this site. While there are no actual options to purchase insurance online, there is a lot of information to view, as well as the ability to get a quote, contact an agent, or find a local insurance office.

Specific content/functionality is listed under subjective groups and described in more detail below:

### Services Offered:

- Online Banking - Personal:
  - Review your accounts - including checking, savings, money market accounts, CD's, IRA's, consumer loans, and home equity loans.
  - See if checks have cleared or deposits have posted.
  - View actual photos of cashed checks.
  - Transfer money from one account to another.
  - Download statement information into Microsoft Money™ or Quicken™.

- Pay bills online.
- Apply for several types of loans online, including:
  - Personal Loans
  - Auto Loans
  - Home Equity Loans
  - Mastercard/Visa
- Generate custom reports
- Receive e-mail alerts when your account reaches a balance you designate.
- Online Banking – Business:
  - Review account information
  - Set up automatic e-mail alerts
  - Move funds between accounts via book transfers
  - Initiate wire transfers
  - Concentrate and disburse funds via ACH2
  - Originate payroll via ACH2
  - View your accounts
  - Place stop payments
  - Pay bills over the Internet
  - Export a file of your transactions to QuickBooks, Quicken, Money, a comma-delimited or an HTML file format.
  - Provide different functionality to different staff members, and control the accounts and services they may access.
- Financial Calculators including:
  - Loan calculator
  - Loan comparison calculator
  - Mortgage calculator
  - Savings calculator
  - Retirement calculator
- Insurance center:
  - Get a quote
  - Contact an agent
  - Locate an office

**Technology Used:**

- Secure banking through SSL technology
- Demo that allows users to see how both the personal and business online banking areas functions.

- Financial calculators
- Personal and business EZ access

**Search Functionality:**

- Offered search tips, as well as an extensive help page centered around searching.
- Basic or advanced search option.
  - Basic search offered to sort by date, show summary, or group by location.
  - Advanced Search offered:
    - Sort by specific date, such as on or after “x” and before “x,” as well as within the last week, month, 60 days, etc.
    - Show “x” amount of results
    - Show with or without summary
    - Search by phrase or individual words
    - Search for a word in the body, title, link, URL, etc.
- Sorted by percentage of relevancy
- Option to search word or phrase on entire web

**Supporting Content:**

- Site Map
- Customer Service page that offered contact phone numbers and email addresses
- Privacy Policy
- Banking demos
- Terms of use
- Bank and ATM locations
- Forms and Disclosures, including:
  - Fee Schedule
  - Patriot Act
  - Check 21
  - Overdraft Protection Transfers
  - File Maintenance Request
  - Personal Financial Statement
  - Mortgage Clause
  - Add-Delete Account For Online Access
  - Guestbook
  - Online Banking Tracking Form
  - Employment Application

- Career Opportunities
- FAQ's on Banking, Internet Banking, Bill Payment and Security
- Tips for safe banking over the Internet
- Extensive customer service page centered around searching.

### Strengths:

The strengths of Peoples First website were based around their clear navigation and good organization, as well as easy to access functions, such as the Personal and Business EasyAccess Online shortcuts at the top of every page.

Specific strengths include:

- The bank's logo always links back to the home page.
- The Search bar remained stable at the bottom of the left side of the page.
- The comment/suggestion phone number and email at the bottom of every page.
- Clear white background, without too many distracting graphics.
- Clearly labeled global navigation
- Good organization. Information was easily accessible and simple to find.
- Clear accessibility to the important "Personal EZAccess Online" and "Business EZAccess Online." This was enhanced by the graphic shortcut at the top of every page.
- Good search functionality, with helpful advanced features.

## Areas for Improvement:

Most of the issues on this website were technically related, with things like page errors, some navigation issues, and window problems (pop-ups, etc) making this site slightly less user-friendly.

Some of the specific areas for improvement include:

- The “Online Loan Center” tab breaks away from the navigation used on all the other tabs. Instead of the sub-links rolling out and to the right of the tab, it lists the sub-links directly down and under the tab.
  - After clicking on “Online Loan Center” the search box disappears.
- The demo for the Personal EZAccess Online opens up in a new pop-up window, but does not warn the user of this. Therefore, if pop-ups are blocked, the demo will not work.
- When using the search function, clicking on “highlight” brings up a page error.
- The navigation menu can be hard to work with, as there is little room for error in clicking on the roll out sub-menus. If the user accidentally moves their hand too much to the left, right, up or down, the sub-menu disappears.
- Some pages required excessive scrolling.
- There are no quick links on the home page.
- Some functions open up in an entirely new window, with no warning to the user.

