

Rescue Rover: Mobile App

Concept Project for Google UX Design Certificate Program

Role: UX/UI Designer

Date: Nov-Dec 2022 (2 months)

Team: Lauren Aliman

Tools: Figma, Procreate

Roles & Responsibilities

As this project was a requirement for the Google UX Certificate Program, I worked on it individually, as both the UX Researcher and UX/UI Designer. I worked on the following deliverables:



Deliverables

UX

- Surveys
- User Research
- User Personas
- User Stories
- User Flows
- Wireframes
- Low-fidelity Mockups

UI

- High-fidelity mockups
- Color palette
- Typography
- Style Guide
- Interactive prototype
- Usability Testing



Tools

- Figma
- Procreate
- Google Forms
- Google Drawings
- Jamboard
- WebAIM - Contrast Checker
- Material Design Tools

Project Overview

Rescue Rover is a mobile app concept I worked on while following the UX Design Google Certificate Program. I designed it as a mobile app that can help local dog rescue organizations maintain up-to-date profiles of their adoptable dogs and help interested adopters find dogs that are compatible with their needs.

Problem Statement

As someone who has adopted a dog from a small rescue organization in the Bay Area, I felt particularly motivated to address the challenges faced by foster-based dog rescue organizations in California.

Adopting a dog can be a lengthy process, often relying on websites like PetFinder or independent research. While apps like PetFinder and WeRescue are great resources, they often only showcase larger, established rescue organizations, leaving many local foster-based groups without a platform to showcase their adoptable pets.

The Challenge

Design a streamlined pet adoption app that allows potential adopters to connect directly with foster volunteers, making communication and coordination much easier and ensuring successful adoptions

Scope & Constraints

I worked on this project for two months, following the course progression in the program, with the initial plan of making a mobile version of BASH, a rescue organization specializing in husky and northern dog breeds in the Bay Area. However, through interviews with adopters and volunteers, I discovered common frustrations - outdated website information and inefficient communication - that couldn't be solved by optimizing the BASH website for mobile.



Scope Change

It became clear that a dedicated mobile app for a local foster-based rescue organization wouldn't increase visibility to potential adopters, nor ensure regular website updates. To address this, I realized the importance of assigning the responsibility of updating pet profiles and bios to the foster volunteers, who have more up-to-date information.

This realization shifted my project's focus from creating a dedicated mobile app for one rescue organization to developing a mobile platform that could serve multiple organizations - both rescues and shelters - and alleviate these pain points. The result is a more comprehensive solution that can benefit many more people and pets.

Design Process

I followed the 5-step Design Thinking process that I learned from the course.

Empathize

Interviews
User groups
User personas

Define

User story
User journey
Competitive analysis

Ideate

Paper wireframes
Digital wireframes

Prototype

Low-fidelity prototype
Usability study

Iterate

Changes to prototype
Key mockups
High-fidelity prototype

Empathize – Understanding the User

Conducting interviews

User groups

User personas

Conducting interviews

I interviewed 2 people who identified as “interested adopters”, 1 person who volunteers to foster dogs for adoption and 1 person who works at an animal rescue. These are some of the quotes that stood out to me:

Interested adopters

“It’s frustrating getting your hopes up for a dog that’s supposedly available on the website, but has already been adopted”

“I didn’t really interact with the rescue much, but the foster parent had been very helpful and provided all the info I needed”

Foster parent

“Communicating with the rescue can sometimes be very disorganized”

“I need to post on social media regularly to increase visibility for my foster dog”

Rescue worker

“The shelter is understaffed so we don’t have a dedicated social media team that’s focused on increasing social media engagement or updating pet bio’s”

Creating user personas

Based on the interviews I conducted, I formulated two user personas:



Luisa

Age: 43
Education: College graduate
Hometown: Santa Clara, CA
Family: Married, 3 kids
Occupation: Freelancer, pet rescue volunteer

"Every dog deserves a loving home!"

Luisa is a busy parent who also volunteers for rescues in the Bay Area, as a foster parent for homeless dogs. Interested adopters can email her, but response times vary. To expand her outreach, Luisa posts to multiple online communities. Despite her efforts to screen applicants, some foster dogs still end up back in the shelter.

Goals:

- To rescue and foster as many homeless dogs as possible
- To place foster dogs in good homes with responsible owners, and reduce the likelihood of being returned to the shelter

Frustrations:

- "When I'm busy, I don't see emails from interested adopters right away"
- "My fosters aren't getting enough visibility on the website so I have to post on social media"



Omar

Age: 32
Education: Master's degree
Hometown: San Francisco, CA
Family: Single
Occupation: Software developer

"I want a dog that matches my lifestyle"

Omar, a software developer working from home, is an avid runner and wants a dog to accompany him on runs. Additionally, he needs a dog that doesn't bark much to avoid disrupting his Zoom meetings. Despite browsing rescue websites, he finds the information too generic and not enough for him to make an informed decision.

Goals:

- To have companionship while working from home
- To adopt an active dog breed to support his running habit

Frustrations:

- "I wish there were more specific information about each dog, like their personality traits, their history, etc."
- "I wish there were a more streamlined way to meet each dog"

Define – Defining the target user and product key features

User story
Competitors
User journey
Key features

For this project, I decided to focus on the user story of Omar - a young working professional who wants to adopt a dog from a local shelter or rescue in the Bay Area. Omar wants to adopt a dog that matches his lifestyle. However, he finds information on rescue websites too generic and sometimes outdated.



Omar's User Story

"As an interested adopter, I need access to more detailed and up-to-date information about each dog, such as their personality, energy level and training history, so that I can make an informed decision about whether to adopt"

Competitors

There are many ways of going about looking for a dog to adopt. Petfinder is a popular pet database that's widely used for browsing adoptable pets. I also considered SF SPCA and Norsled - two local pet rescue organizations in the Bay Area. Here, I wanted to compare the user experience of viewing adoptable dogs and starting the adoption process.



About

Petfinder.com is the largest online pet adoption website which shows listings from shelters and rescues nationwide.

Petfinder has a website and a dedicated mobile app.

SF SPCA is a shelter that operates in San Francisco that rescues all breeds of dogs and cats and also advocates for animal welfare.

SF SPCA has a website which provides resources on dog/car behavior and allows the user to browse adoptable pets.

Northern California Sled Dog Rescue (Norsled) is another organization in the Bay Area that also rescues primarily huskies.

Norsled has a simple website that allows users to view adoptable dogs and contact the foster parents

Strengths

- Most popular pet adoption website
- Well-designed website and app
- Ability to create a profile and save animal profiles to a "Favorites" list

- Well-designed website with lots of resources
- Offers resources such as free vet care and training classes

- Familiarity and experience with northern breeds (huskies, malamutes, samoyeds)
- Closely involved with a tight-knit community of volunteers and husky enthusiasts

Weaknesses

- Adoption process cannot be done on the website
- Doesn't list all the animals available in a given shelter or rescue
- Information listed can be inaccurate or outdated

- Inability to create a user profile
- Website needs improvements in navigation
- To adopt pets in private homes, user needs to contact the pet guardian directly
- Adoption process cannot be started on the website

- Website needs improvements in usability, navigation, accessibility and branding
- Adoptable dogs list not updated regularly
- Inability to create a user profile
- Cumbersome application form

Mapping Omar's user journey

Persona: Omar

Goal: To meet and get information on an adoptable dog in a rescue organization

Action	Browse adoptable dogs	Contact foster parent	Coordinate meetup	Meet the dog	Wait for decision
Tasks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Go to rescue website 2. Look at the bio's of each adoptable dog 3. Choose a dog 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Send email to foster parent 2. Ask questions about dog 3. Fill up application form 4. Wait for response 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask about availability 2. Check schedule 3. Agree on date, time and place 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Drive to meetup location 2. Meet foster parent 3. Ask more questions 4. Meet the dog 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wait several days for the foster parent's decision 2. Receive decision from by email
Feeling	<p>Excited, Curious</p> <p>"I wish there were more specific information on each dog"</p>	<p>Uncertain, excited, apprehensive, overwhelmed</p> <p>"What if someone else already adopted him?"</p> <p>"So many questions on this form!"</p>	<p>Happy, unsure, excited</p> <p>"I'm so happy the dog is still available!"</p> <p>"The meetup place is kind of far from where I live"</p>	<p>Curious, excited, slightly disappointed</p> <p>"I wonder if the dog likes me"</p> <p>"The dog seems perfect but others are interested in him too"</p>	<p>Impatient, disappointed, annoyed</p> <p>"Someone else adopted the dog"</p> <p>"Guess I have to start the process again..."</p>
Could Improve:	Add more specific information on each dog, like personality traits, history, daily habits and quirks, etc	Save Omar's time by incorporating the form into the website/app, so that he doesn't have to repeat the process with each organization	Add info on the meetup place earlier in the process, so that Omar can decide whether it's too far for him before he gets too invested	There could be information describing what the "ideal home" for each dog is	Streamline the process of matching and coordinating with foster parents

Key features

After comparing similar websites and apps, and identifying pain points in Omar's user journey, I came up with a list of key features that I wanted to incorporate in the product concept.

★ Key Features

- ☐ Foster parents have complete control over dog profiles and can add posts with updates about each pet
- ☐ Links to all documents and application forms required for adoption
- ☐ Dedicated messaging platform that allows potential adopters to communicate with foster parents
- ☐ Users can follow rescues or shelters and see updates in a news feed format
- ☐ Search functionality that allows users to filter dogs by breed, size, age, and location
- ☐ Integration with social media platforms for easy sharing of dog profiles and updates
- ☐ A "favorites" feature that enables users to save dogs they are interested in for later reference.



Ideate – Starting the design

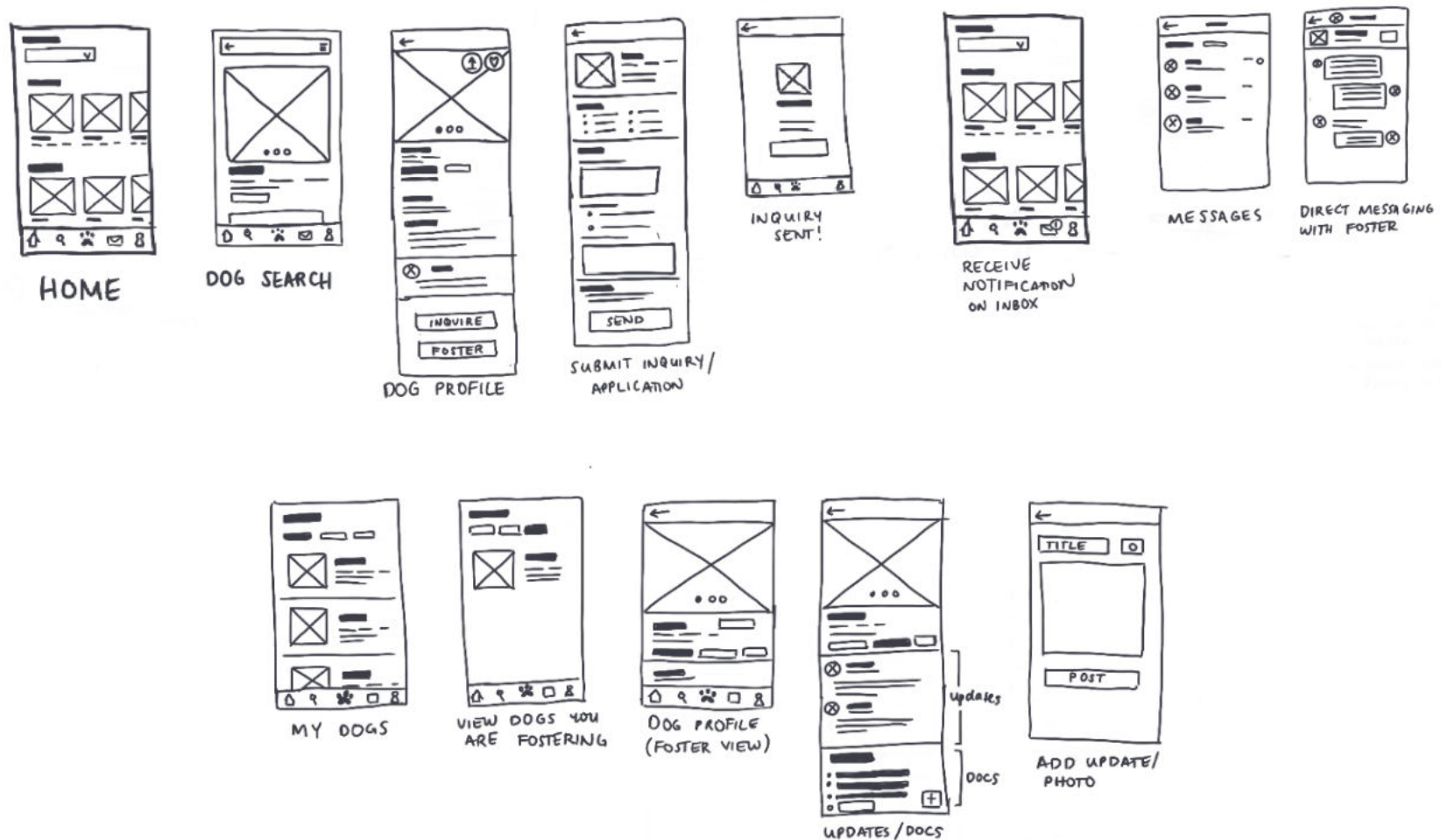
Paper wireframes

Digital wireframes

I sketched multiple ideas on paper, created a wireframe, and a low-fidelity prototype for testing. During this phase, I was able to visually represent the layout of the app and highlight the key features that I wanted to focus on.

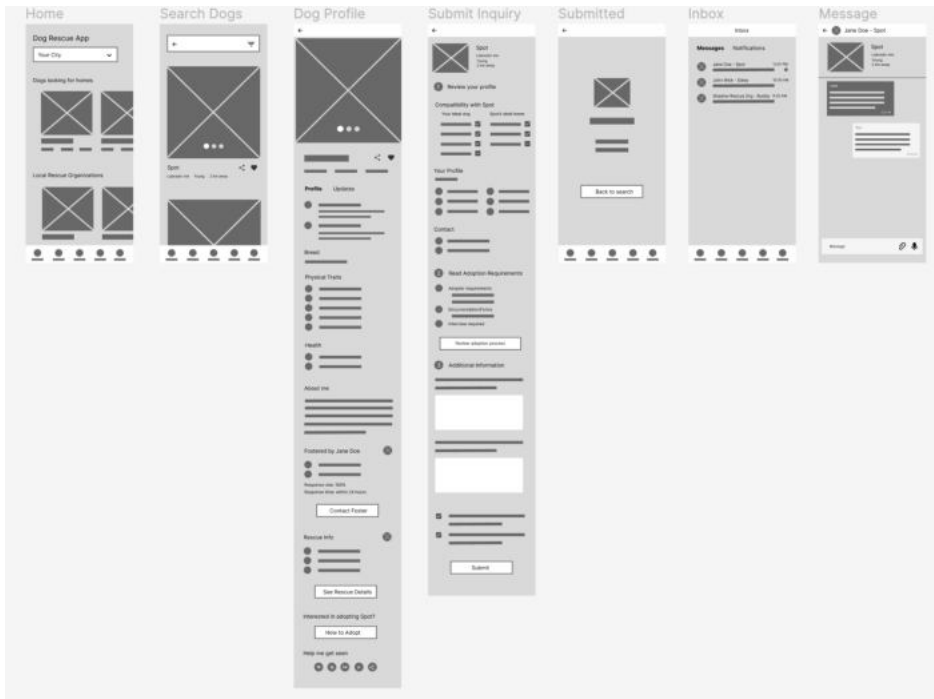
Paper wireframes

I sketched out preliminary ideas for the primary user flow of searching for a dog and submitting an inquiry. I also sketched out some pages demonstrating the user flow for how a foster parent might add a post on their dog's profile.

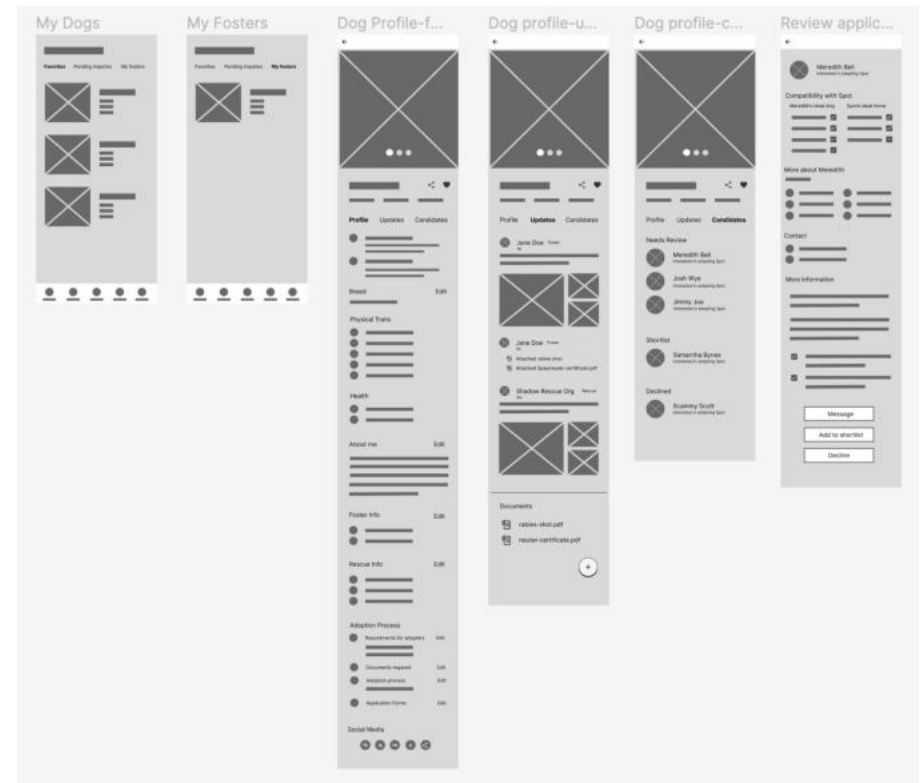


Digital wireframes

Using the paper sketches as reference, I created digital wireframes on Figma.



User flow 1: searching for a dog and submitting an inquiry



User flow 2: selecting dog profile and comparing interested adopters (point of view of foster parent)

Prototype – Testing early concepts

Low-fidelity prototype

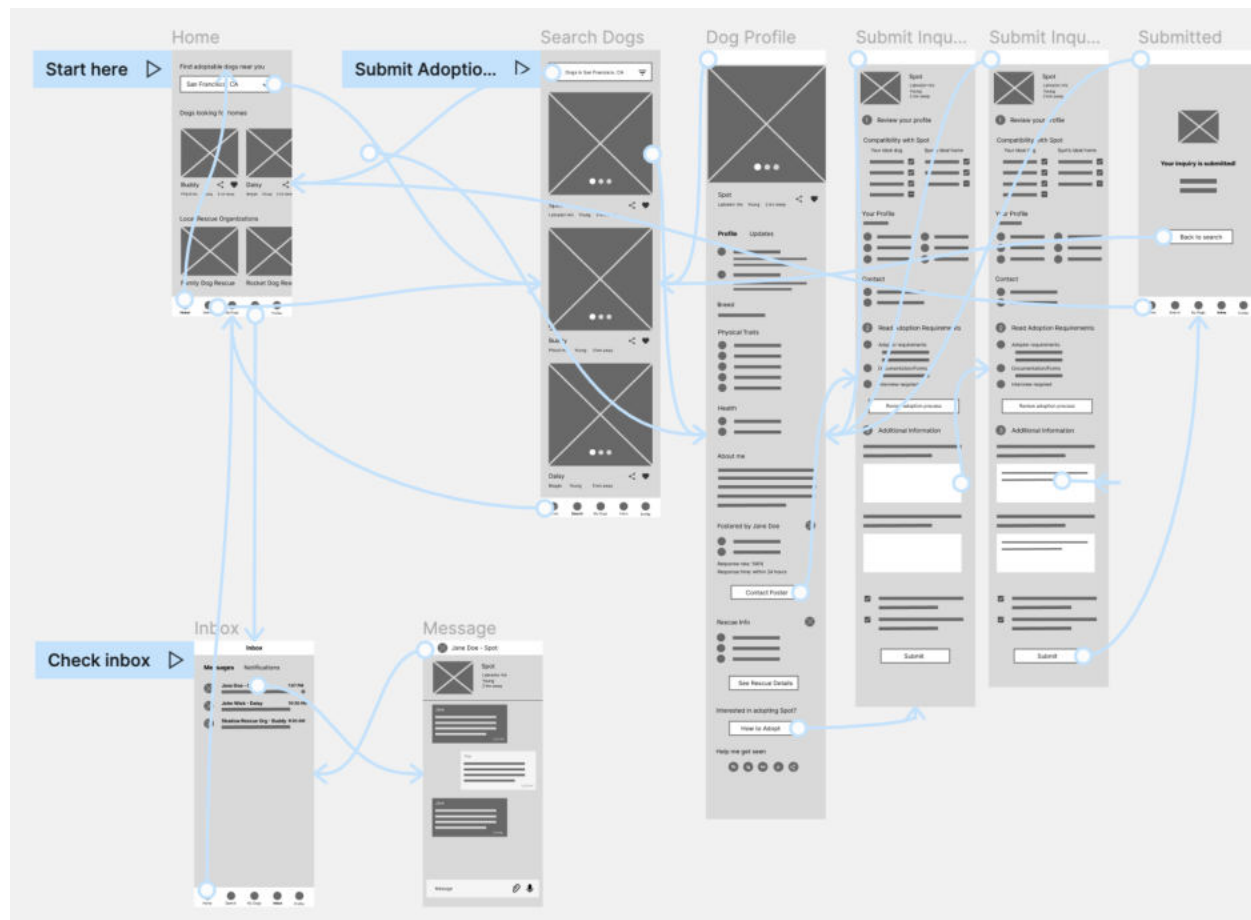
Usability study: research method

Usability study: findings

In the prototype phase, I created a low-fidelity prototype and conducted a usability test to identify potential issues early on in the design process. For the usability test, I focused on the primary user flow of searching for a dog and submitting an inquiry. The goal of this phase was to gather feedback from users and make necessary changes before getting too invested creating a high-fidelity prototype.

Low-fidelity prototype

The low-fidelity prototype shown here connects the primary user flow of searching for a dog, submitting an adoption inquiry and checking for messages.



Usability study: research method

I conducted two rounds of usability studies. Findings from the first study were used to inform design changes from wireframes to mockups. The second study used a high-fidelity prototype and revealed which aspects of the design the users liked and which aspects needed further refining.

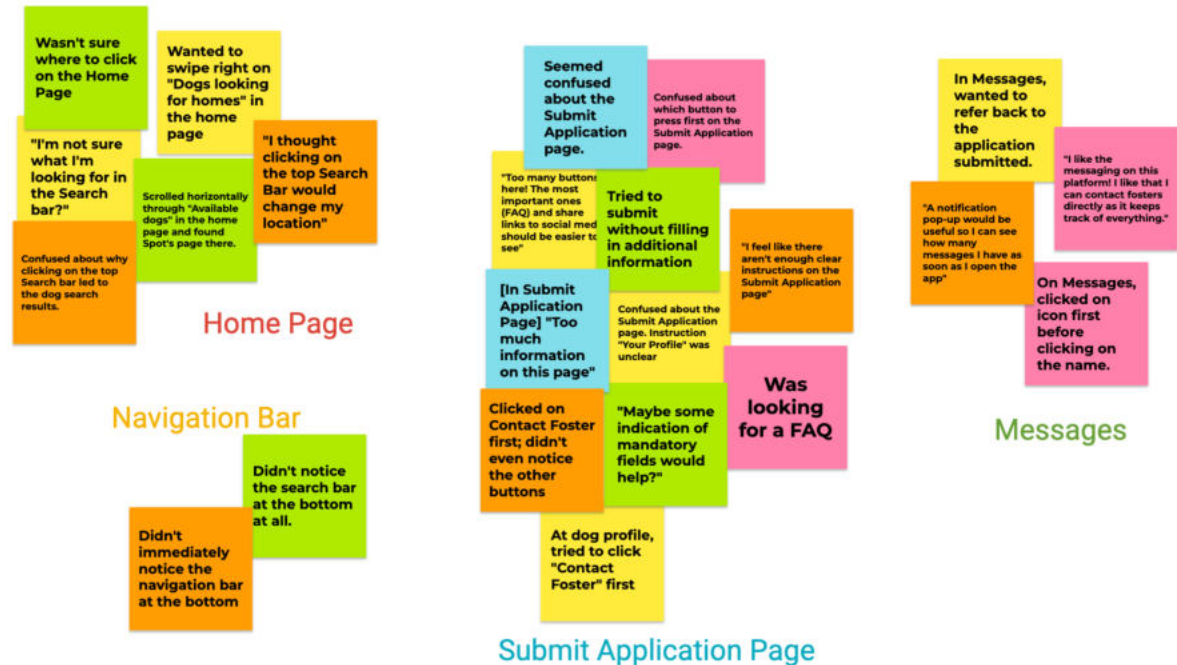
Research Questions	Participants	Methodology
How long does it take the user to complete a search and inquiry process?	5 participants	10-15 minutes per participant
Are there any parts of the process where the user is getting stuck?	2 males and 3 females between the ages of 29-35.	Remote
What can we learn from observing the user interactions?		Unmoderated usability study
		Participants were asked to complete tasks in a low-fidelity prototype

Usability study: findings

By grouping together some of the feedback I received from users, I was able to come up with common themes and insights.

Insights

1. Most users looked for information on the homepage rather than use the search bar
2. Some users didn't understand where the main CTA button was
3. Most users thought the "Submit Application" page too overwhelming



Iterate – Refining the design

Changes to prototype
Key mockups
High-fidelity prototype

After conducting a usability study, I used the insights gained to develop a more refined high-fidelity prototype, which underwent a second round of testing.

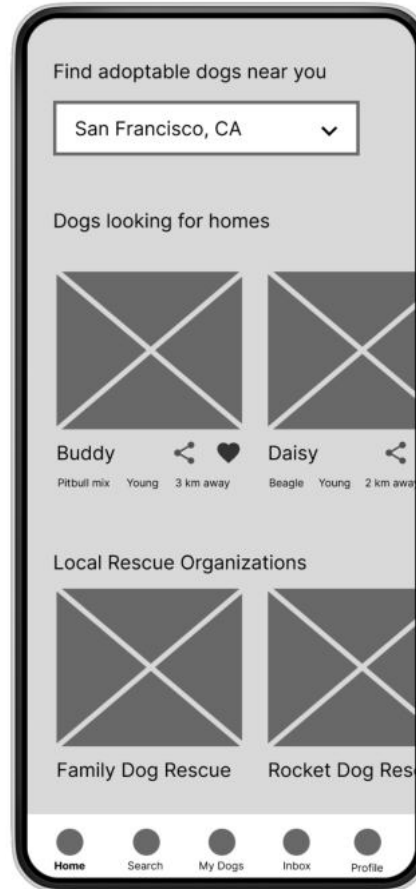
Changes to prototype

Below are some of the changes I made in the prototype after analyzing the results of the first usability study

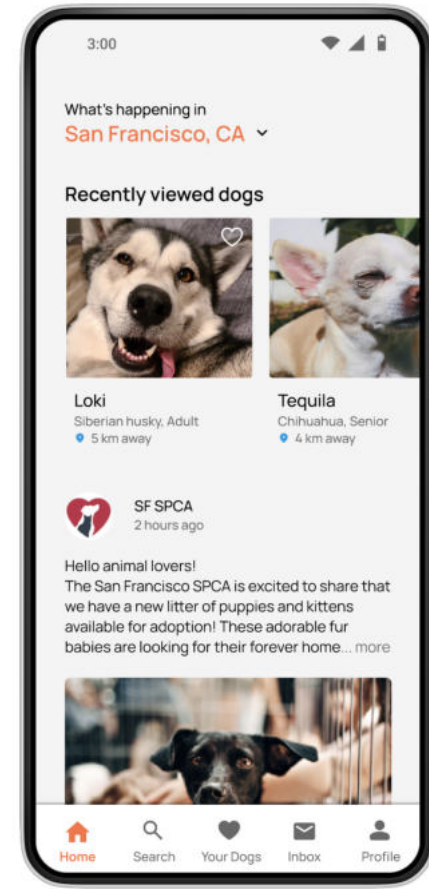
Improved homepage usability

According to the usability study results, users weren't sure about how to proceed from the homepage, despite the prompt to use the "Search" function to find a specific dog.

- To address this, I enlarged the bottom navigation bar and used colors and icons to improve the visibility of menu options.
- Additionally, I added a new section for "Recently viewed dogs" to assist users in resuming their search from where they had left off.



Before usability study



After usability study

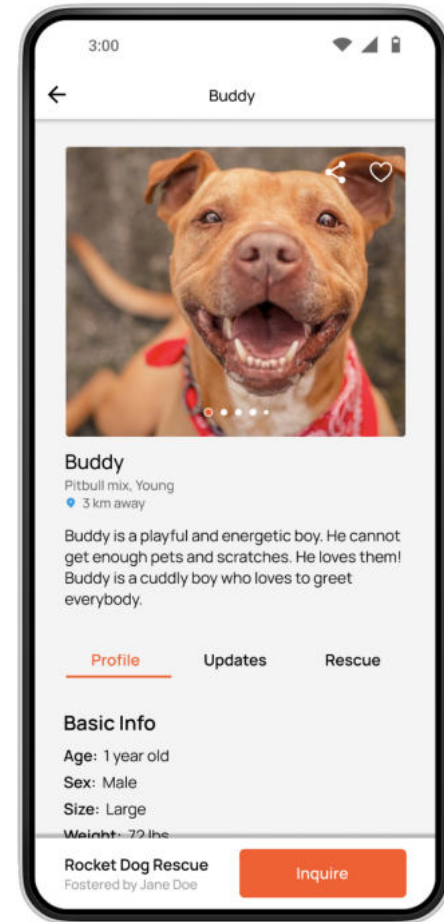
Improved findability of CTA button

The first usability study revealed confusion due to multiple Call-to-action (CTA) buttons in the “Dog profile” page.

- I fixed this in the second iteration by having only one CTA button (“Inquire”) and fixing it to the bottom of the page so that it’s always visible.



Before usability study



After usability study

Simplified “Submit Inquiry” page

The first usability study revealed frustration with the “Submit Inquiry” page. In particular, users reported feeling overwhelmed and confused.

- In the second iteration, I removed some unnecessary content and used iconography and dividers to organize the page better.

←

Spot
Labrador mix
Young
2 km away

1 Review your profile

Compatibility with Spot

Your ideal dog	Spot's ideal home
<input type="text"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Your Profile

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Contact

<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>

Before usability study

3:00

← Submit Inquiry

Buddy
Pitbull mix, Young
3 km away
Rocket Dog Rescue
Fostered by Jane Doe

Adopter Requirements

- Must be a resident of San Francisco Bay Area
- Must be at least 18 years of age

Documentation and Forms

Rocket Dog Rescue requires all interested adopters to fill out an adoption application.

Application Form Not Started

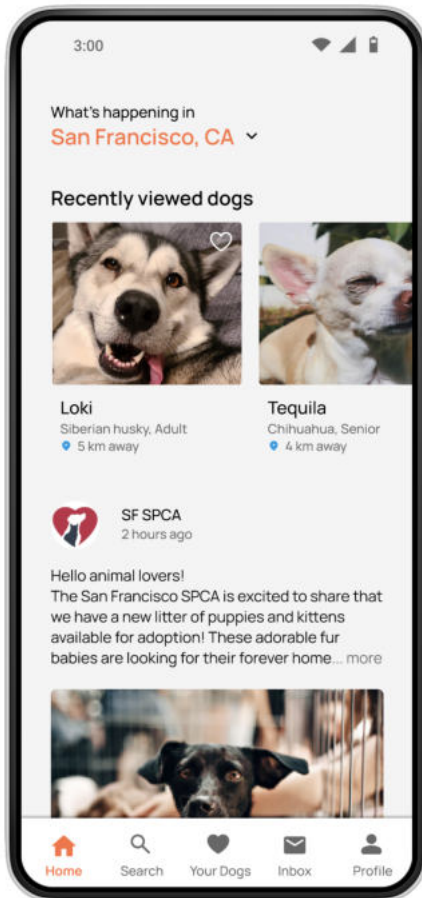
Adoption Fees

Dogs: \$200
Puppies: \$400

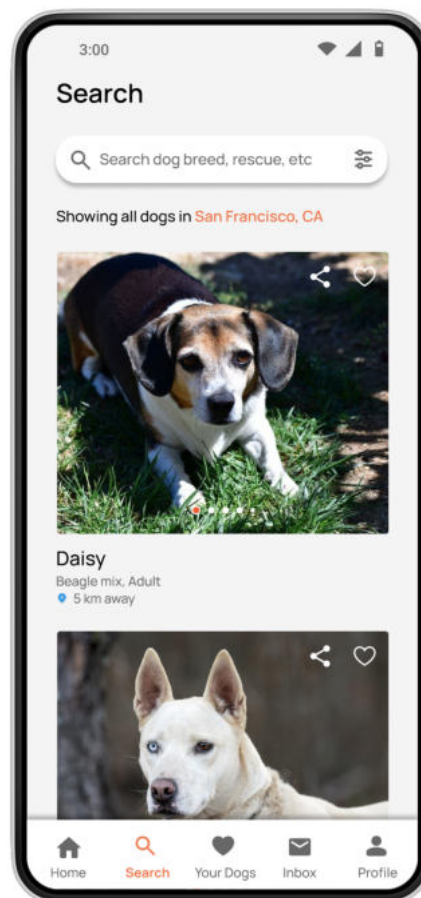
After usability study

Key mockups

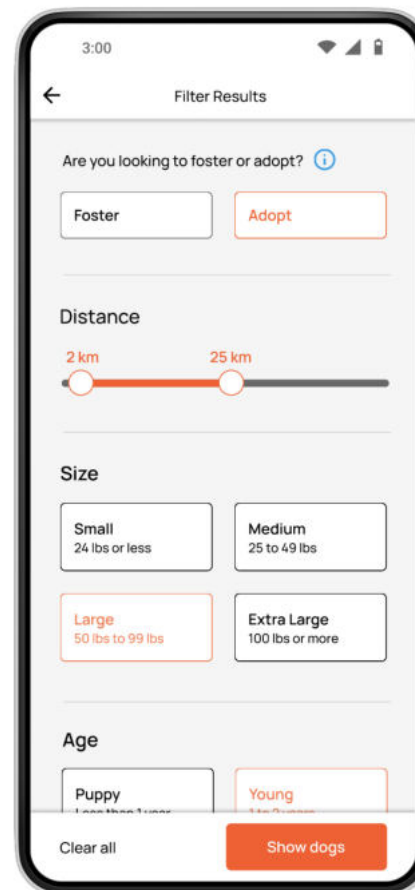
Putting together the basic structure used in the low-fidelity mockups, findings from the usability study and design elements, I made the following high-fidelity mockups which demonstrate a detailed view of all the screens in the primary user flow.



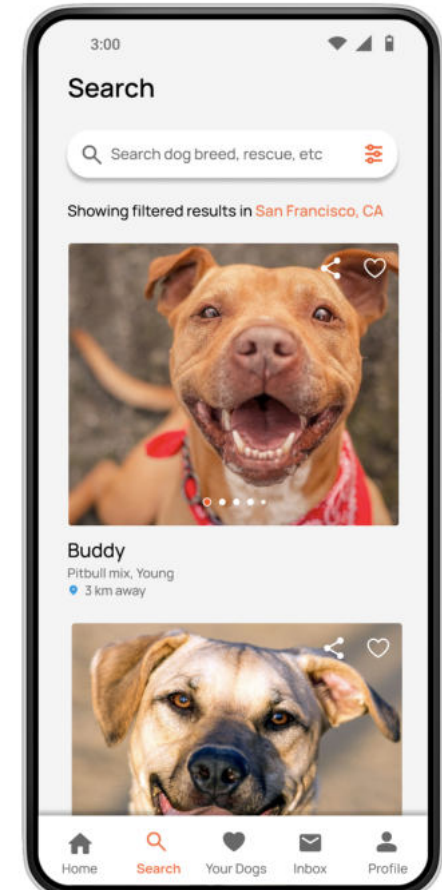
Homepage



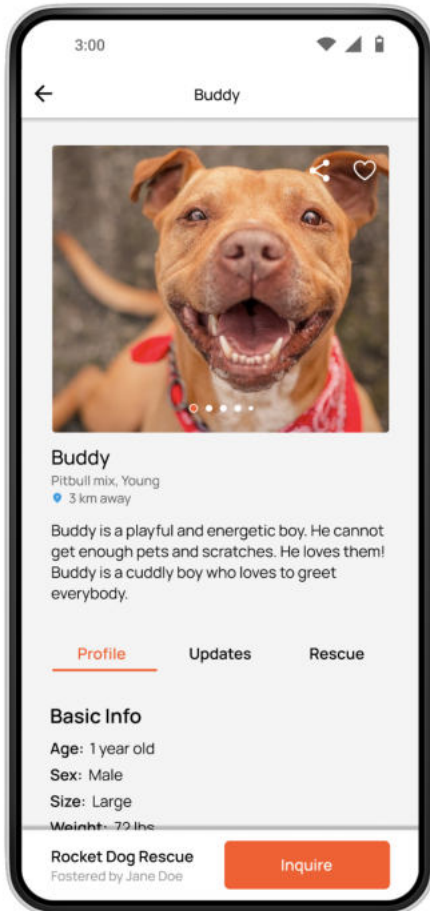
Search dogs



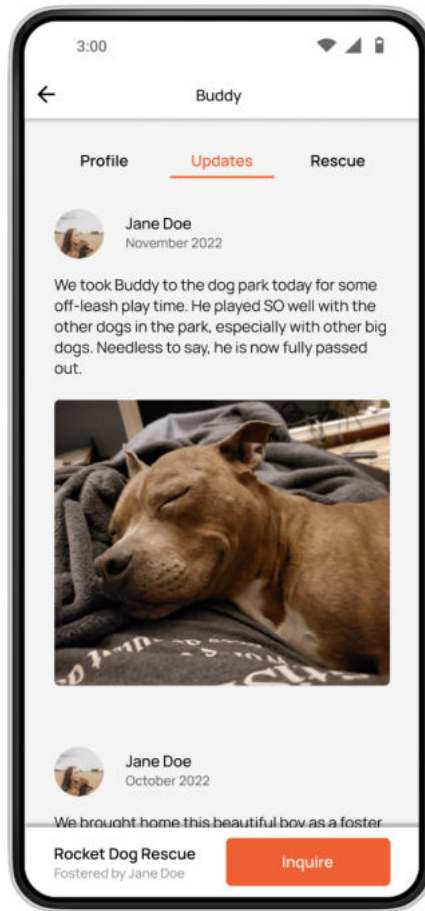
Filter Search



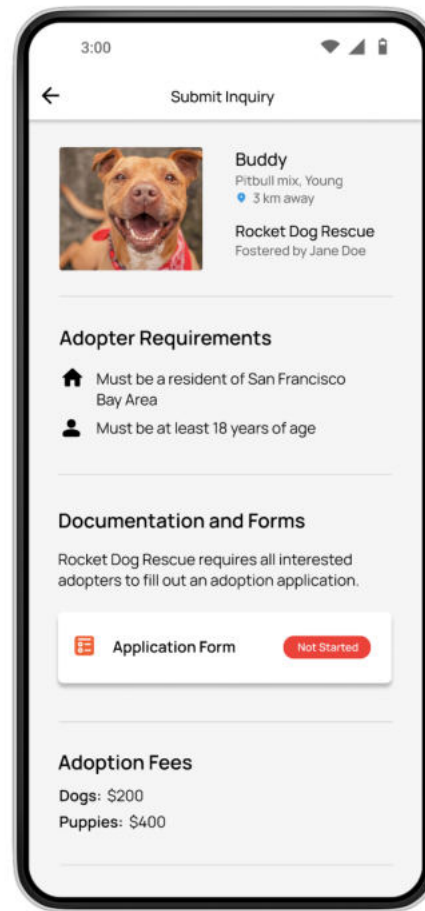
Filtered results



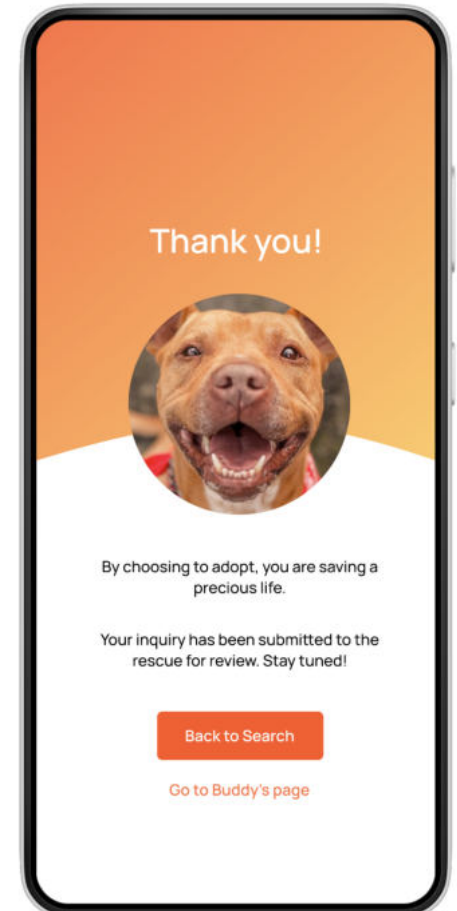
Dog profile



Updates

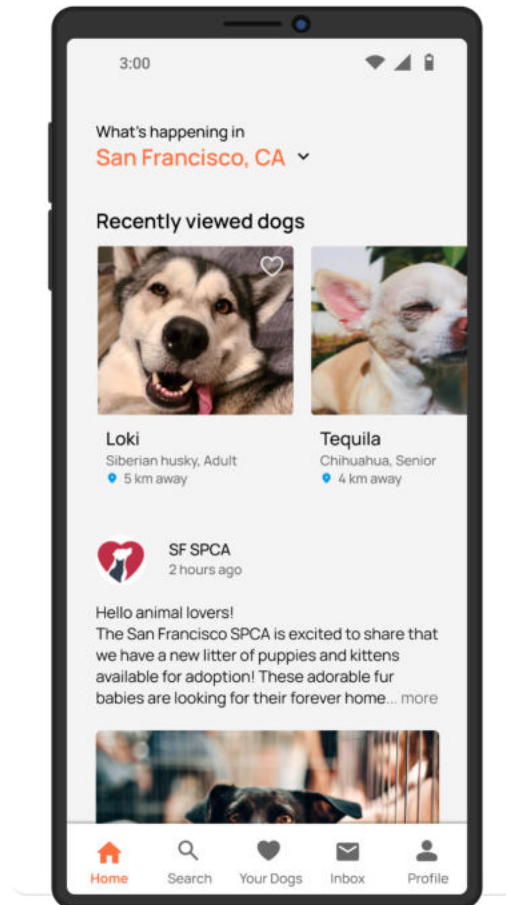


Submit inquiry



Thank you

High-fidelity Prototype



User flow: browse adoptable dogs and submit an inquiry

[Launch mobile prototype](#)

Outcomes & Lessons Learned

While going through the courses of the UX Design certificate program, I gained a solid understanding of the basic concepts of UX design and learned how to use Figma to create a concept for a mobile app that can make the process of adopting a rescue dog more streamlined and enjoyable. I designed interactive mockups for the primary user flow, incorporating my learnings from the course - user-centric design, research methods and conducting usability studies.

One of the highlights of the course was learning how to use Figma-specific features to create mockups that were both visually appealing and highly functional. Auto Layout, component management tools such as Variants, and experimenting with different frame-to-frame transitions allowed me to bring my vision to life in a tangible and engaging way.