TOWN OF RIDGEFIELD, CT

COMPANION APP PROJECT

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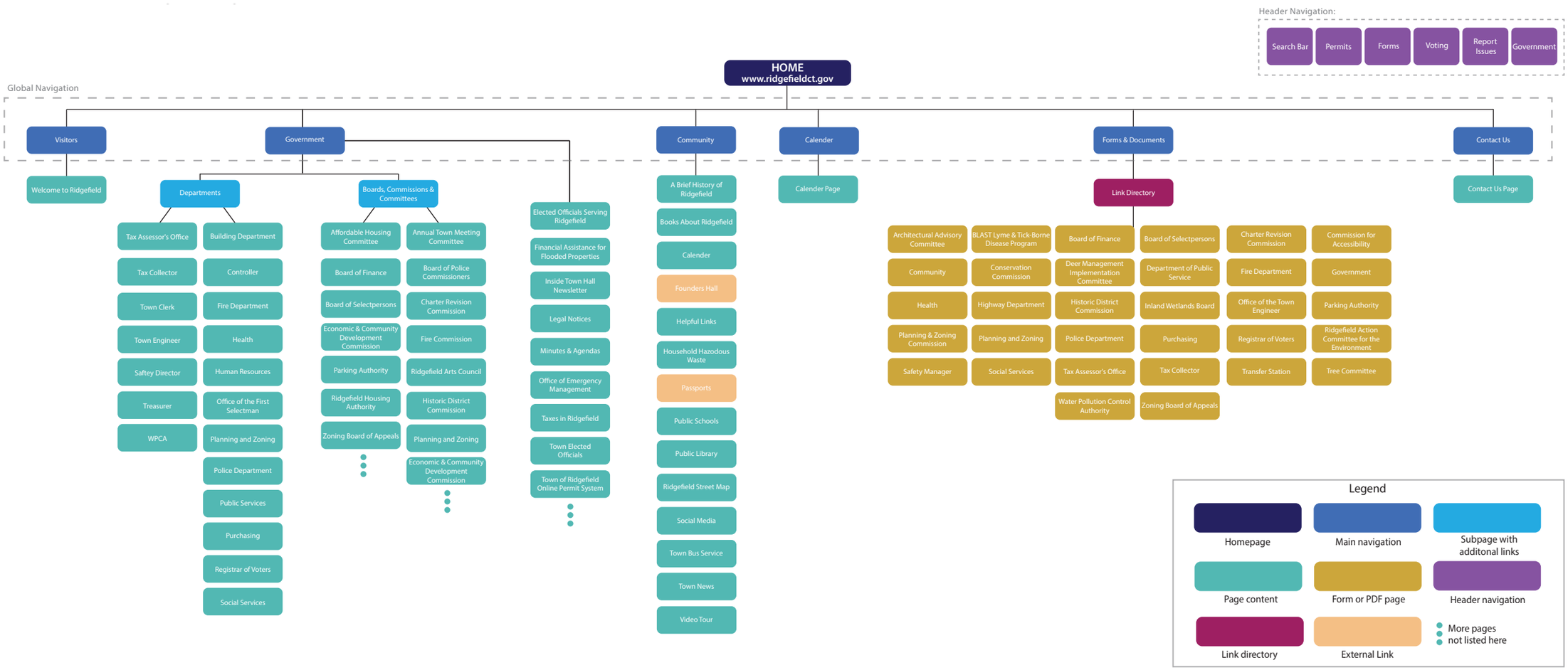
PROJECT SCOPE

This is a proposal for the Town of Ridgefield, CT. It entails the reorganizing and restructuring of the town's municipal website *https://www.ridgefieldct.gov* while also building a companion app. The goal of this project is to examine and find better solutions for the existing website structure, that will also correlate to the app seamlessly. The town's app will focus on providing better information architecture (IA) and follow user's mental models when classifying categories. This new application will help the town engage with their local government more and allow residents to quickly find important information.

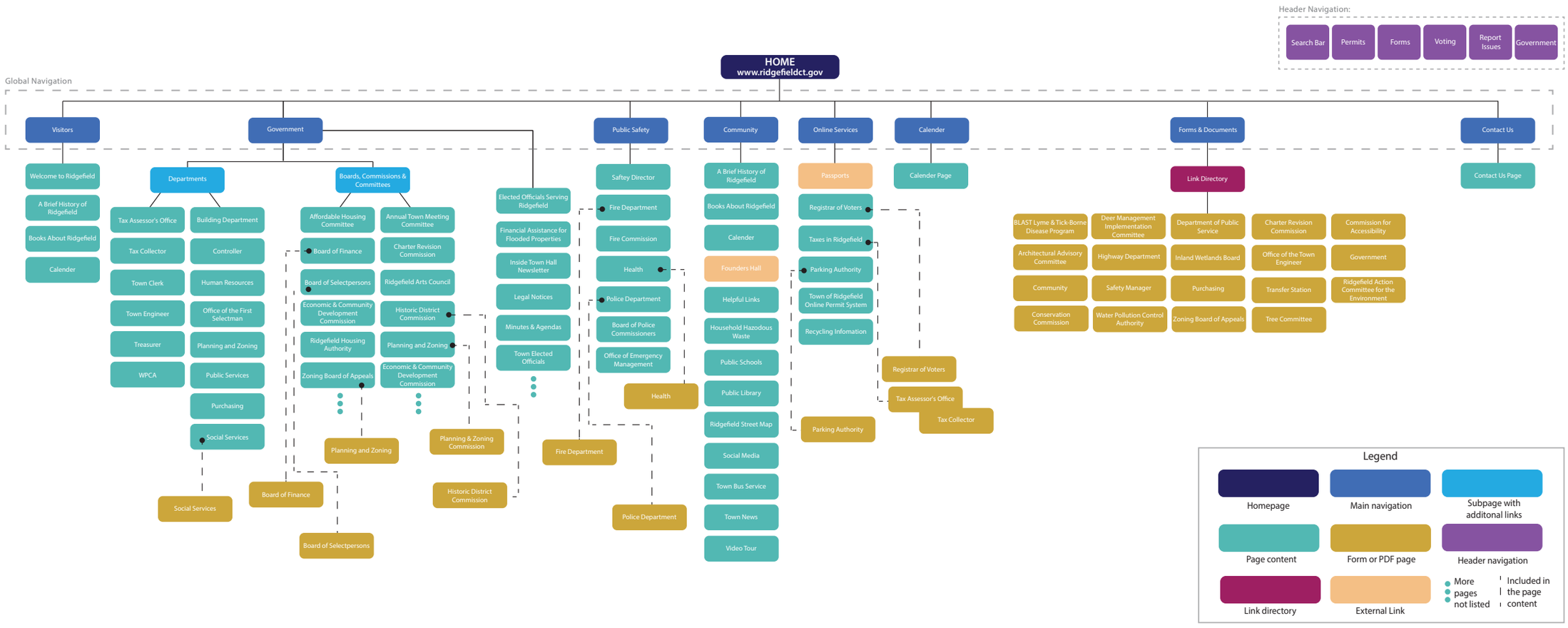
The Tasks:

- Study the website's current information architecture and draw up its current site map.
- Edit and restructure the website with a new site map by relabeling, moving content, and further classifying categories.
- Create and propose a site map for the companion app.

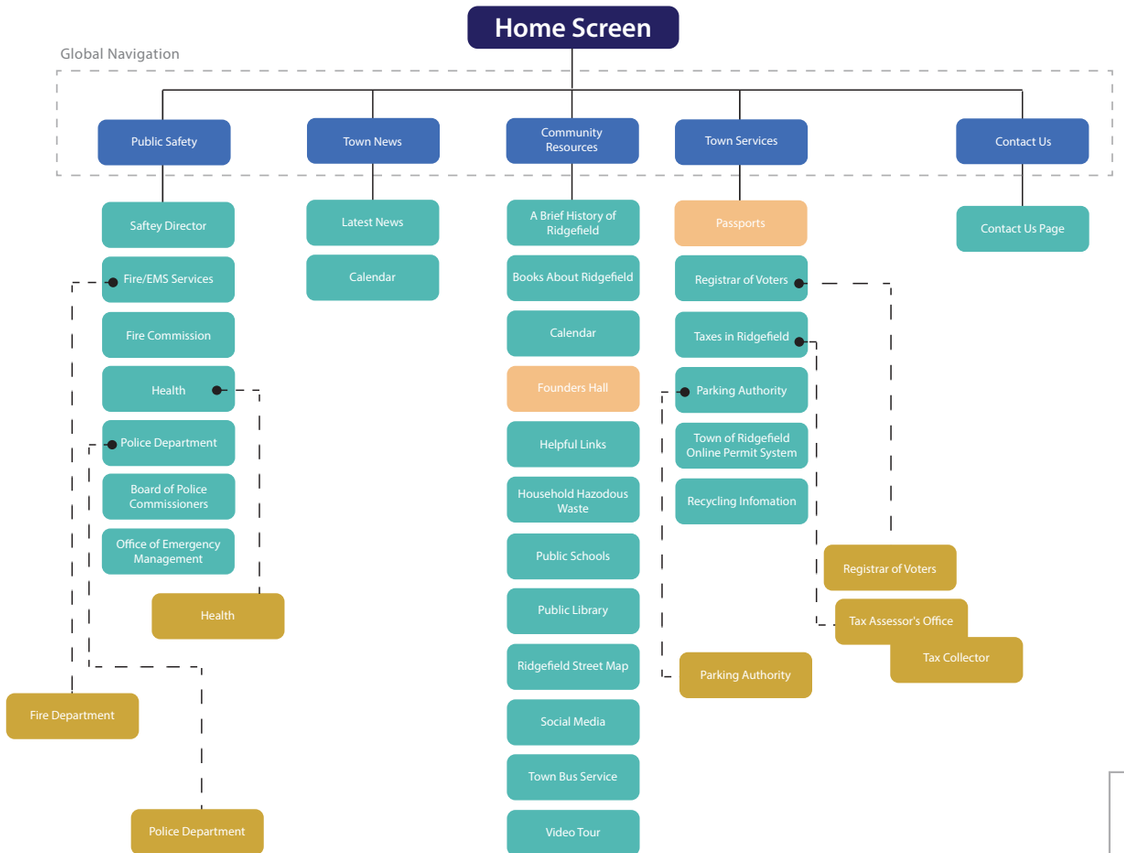
CURRENT WEBSITE SITE MAP



NEW WEBSITE SITE MAP



APP SITE MAP

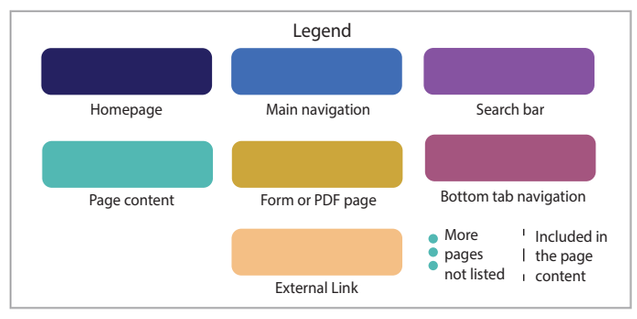


Will appear on all pages

Search Bar

Bottom Tab Navigation: *appears on all pages*

Home | Calendar | Notifications | Settings



THE APP AND ITS PURPOSE

The name of this app is simply called *Town of Ridgefield.* The purpose of the app is to serve its residents and community as a resource for town happenings and latest news. The app will also help residents with certain tasks such as paying taxes or filling out important city forms. The app should be an easy tool to navigate and allow all users to find information quickly and stay connected to their community on the go. The app will allow enhanced engagement between town government and residents, while also providing users with a better user experience when dealing with town inquires.

PRIMARY FUNCTIONS

- To learn information about community resources like the library or bus service.
- View information related to public safety.
- Can complete certain tasks like paying taxes, applying for permits or find where to register for voting.
- Read about the latest news going on in the town.
- Connect users with others in their community by providing direct links to Town of Ridgefield's social media accounts.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience for this app are Ridgefield residents who are looking for community resources. Since the average age in Ridgefield is 45, it can be assumed that most residents own property in this town, needing to pay bills like taxes and will register to vote here. This means that the town will have many locals that are invested in their community, will need to stay up to date on property taxes, and are the right age to attend city run events.

The *Town of Ridgefield* app will help users meet their needs and goals by providing up to date information on events, local resources, and connecting them to social media channels where they can interact with the town and neighbors. Without having to go to the website, community events and latest news will be easily available, with less click through. Residents will also be able to use the online services portal to pay taxes or parking tickets at their earliest convenience. Viewing this service on the app rather than trying to view the webpage on a smartphone will be more comfortable for these aging users.

USER STORIES

I just bought a new house in Ridgefield and need to pay my first property tax bill this month. I want to be able to pay it easily on my phone rather than having to visit the website or mail in a check.

I've lived in Ridgefield for 15 years, but recently I became an empty nester. I'm looking for community events at the local library or any free events around town to meet other locals.

As a new resident to Ridgefield, I'm concerned about town safety. I want to be able to get emergency alerts on my cell phone and follow the town on social media channels so that I can interact with the city and community.

USER SCENARIOS

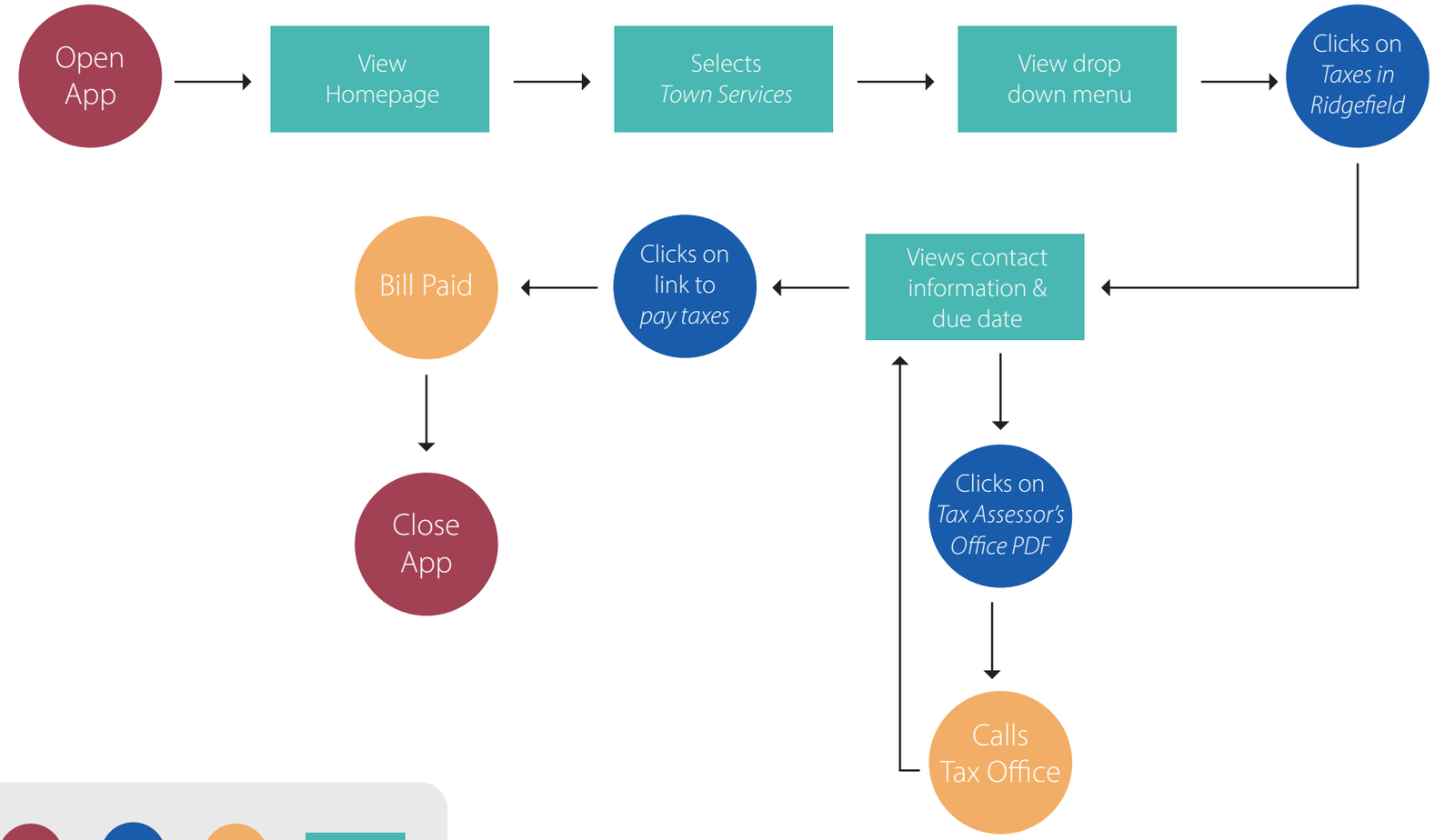
Stacy recently bought her first home in Ridgefield, Connecticut. She is excited to be a homeowner, yet nervous about staying on top of her bills. Now that she owns property, she wants to be able to view and pay her property taxes easily and on a timely basis. Since Stacy is busy working full time and is a mom to two children, she doesn't always have time to sit down at the computer to pay her bills. Most days she will complete tasks like this in the school pick up line. Therefore, she is looking for the easiest way to view and pay her tax bill from her smartphone. First, Stacy would like to find the tax office number to call, to confirm the due date and to save this number in her phone for any future needs. Then she would like to be able to pay the bill online with her credit card.

Jeff and his wife have sent their last child off to college and are now empty nesters in their house. With his kids grown, and out of the house, he has become lonely and now has a lot of free time, which he hasn't had in the past. Jeff has decided that it's time to meet more community residents and to get out of the house more. But because he is still paying for his child's education, he is on a budget and looking for free events. His first idea is to look on the town website to see if the local library is having events he would like to attend. He would also like to see if there are any other free events the town is running where he could meet others around his age, in his community.

Richard recently moved to Ridgefield for his dream job and plans to stay in the town for the foreseeable future. He fell in love with the town's charm but is concerned about staying safe downtown. He wants to stay informed on the latest happenings, preferably in the morning, on his way to the office. But he will only have his smartphone with him when commuting. He is looking for a way to become an informed citizen, while also engaging with the community. Richard is interested in signing up for town alerts, and following the town socials, if they exist. He wants to make sure he is prepared for an emergency and to be the first to know of any breaking news.

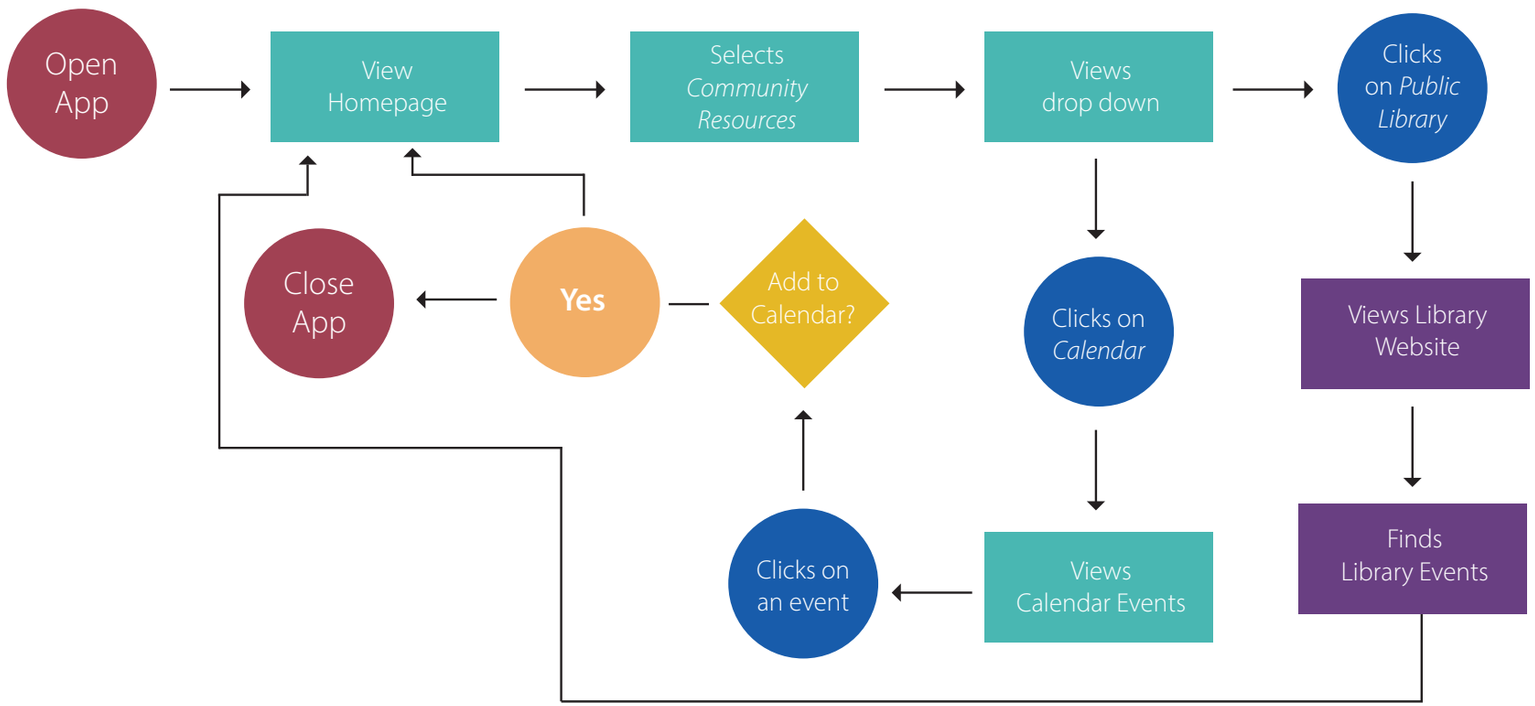
USER FLOWCHARTS

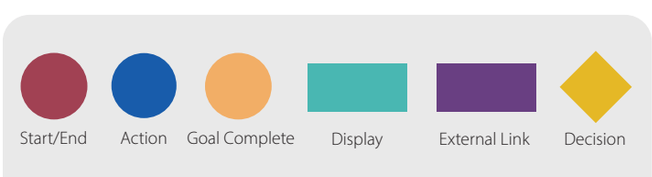
Stacy I just bought a new house in Ridgefield and need to pay my first property tax bill this month. I want to be able to pay it easily on my phone rather than having to visit the website or mail in a check.



USER FLOWCHARTS

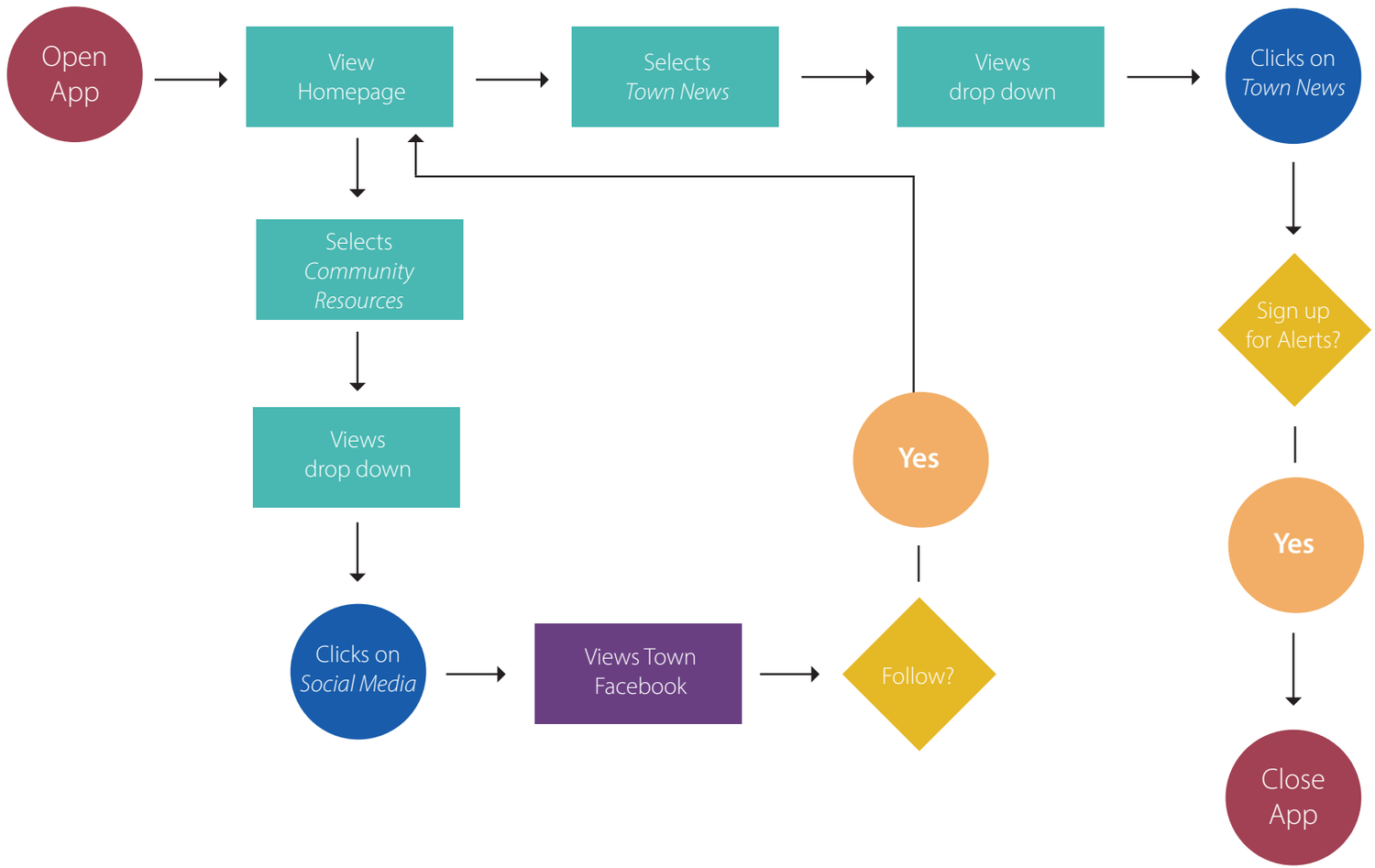
Jeff I've lived in Ridgefield for 15 years, but recently I became an empty nester. I'm looking for community events at the local library or any free events around town to meet other locals.

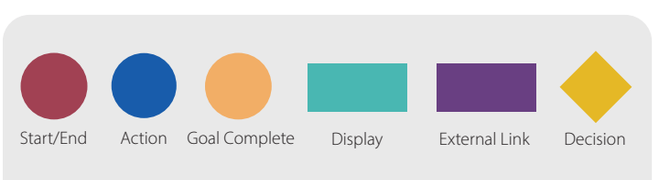




USER FLOWCHARTS

Richard As a new resident to Ridgefield, I'm concerned about town safety. I want to be able to get emergency alerts on my cell phone and follow the town on social media channels so that I can interact with the city and community.





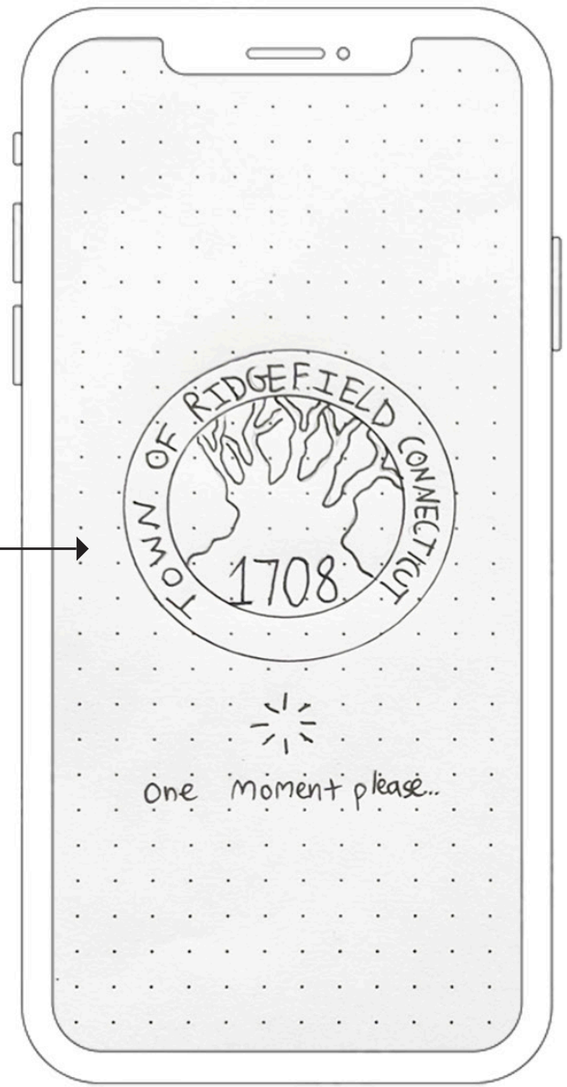
LOW-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

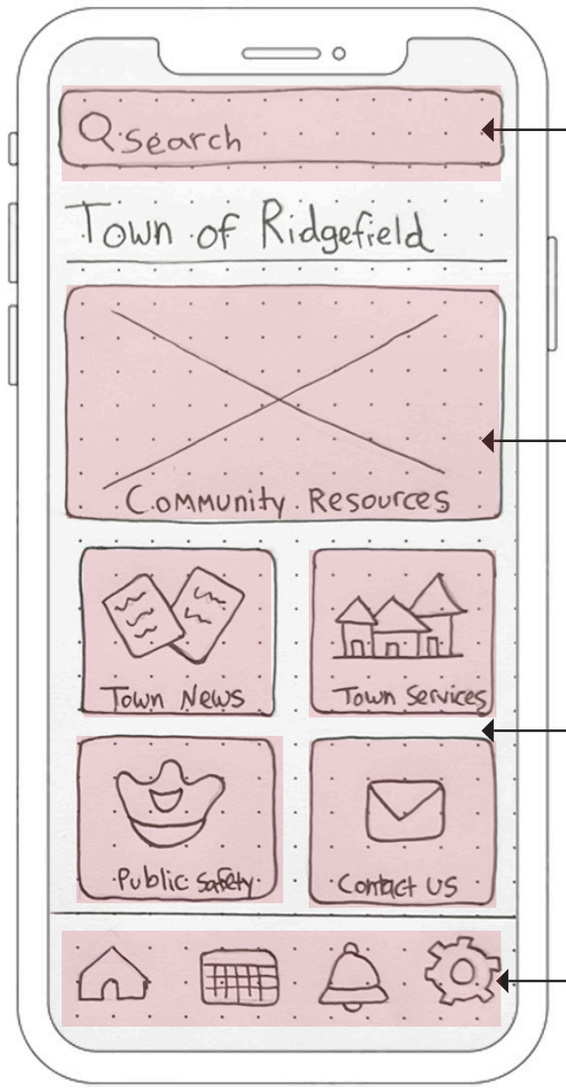
Screen Guide

Splash screen opens when user opens app.

= *clickable buttons*

= *User's path*





Search bar appears at the top of every page and goes away once users scroll. This will allow users to search if they aren't finding what they are looking for, yet make room if users are scrolling or reading on a page.

Large top button since it holds the most amount of content and will most likely be used as most starting points for users. These home screen buttons can be moved around based on user preferences. So, for instance if a user visits town services more, it can be swapped with community resources (done in the settings page).

Main navigation categories are all here and visible. No need for additional menus and no scrolling to see all possible starting points.

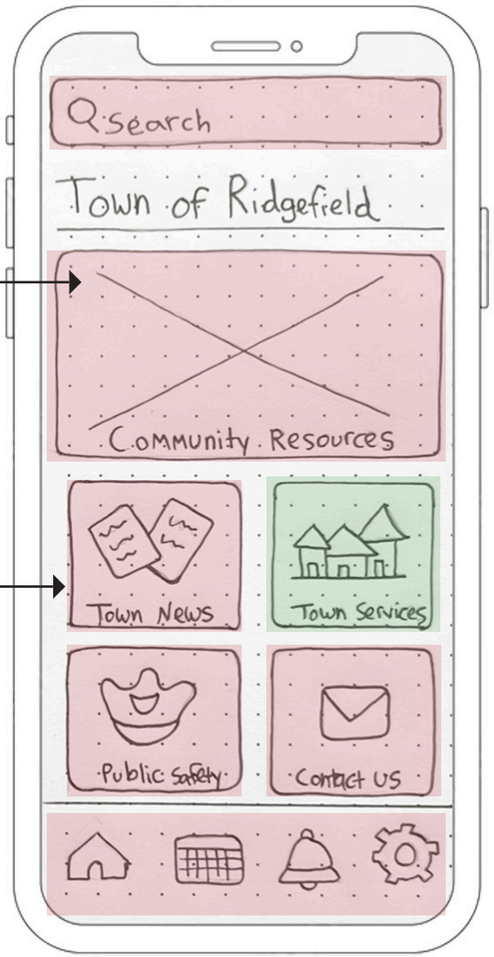
Bottom navigation tab with clear identifiable buttons for home, calendar, notifications, and settings. This will allow users quick access to these pages no matter where they are in the app.

LOW-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

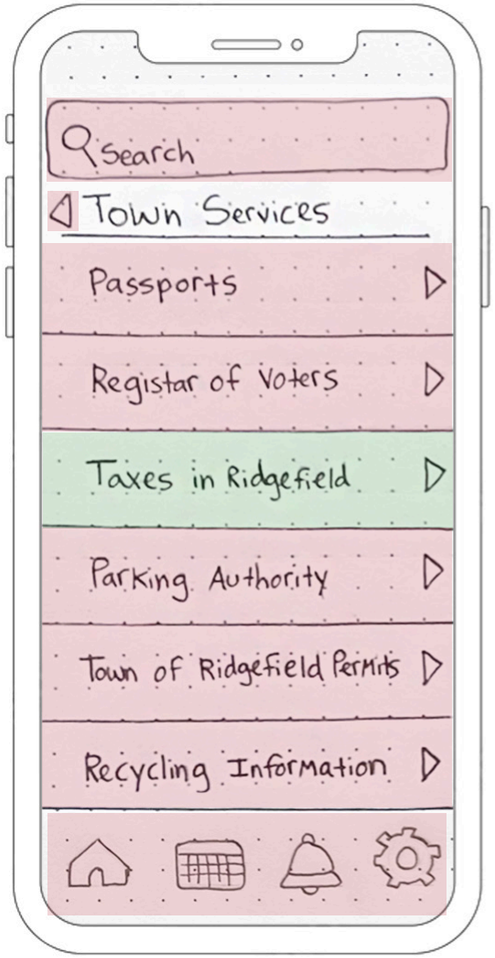
Paying a tax bill

Boxes with "X" represent an image. I chose to create the home screen with a large top photo for one button. To create visual hierarchy.

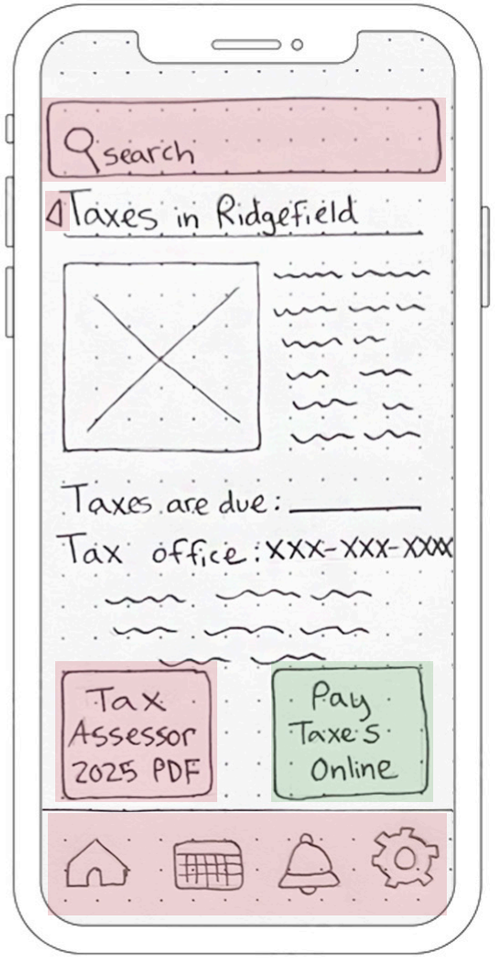
The rest of the main navigation buttons will be icons/vector images. Users will have the option in their settings to adjust the home page tiles, allowing accessibility and personalization.



User starts on the home screen with the main navigation. Search bar and bottom navigation tab are also available, allowing the user to start from every possible location.



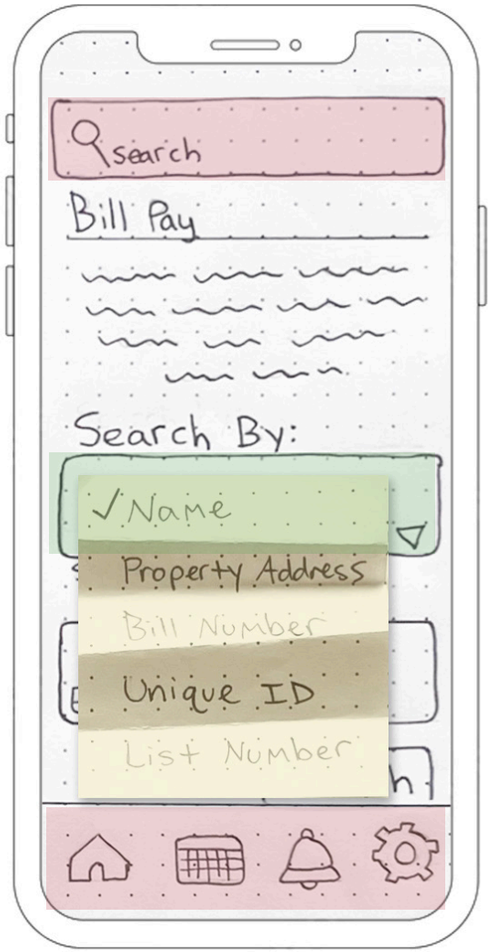
User clicks on town services and a horizontal slider of choices is presented. User can see all choices at once. A back button is present at the top left of the screen in case of error.



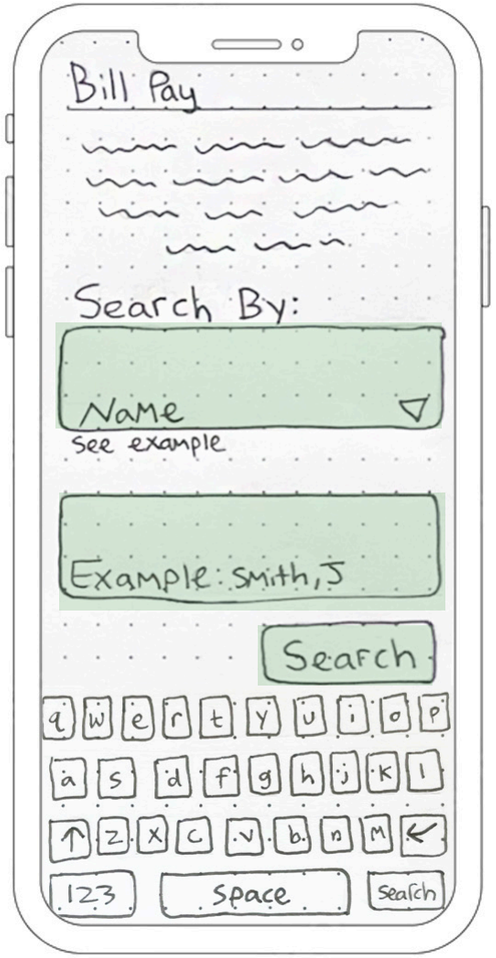
This page provides information on the tax office, downloadable forms and allows the user to pay their bill. Button is large so that its visible upon arrival.

LOW-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

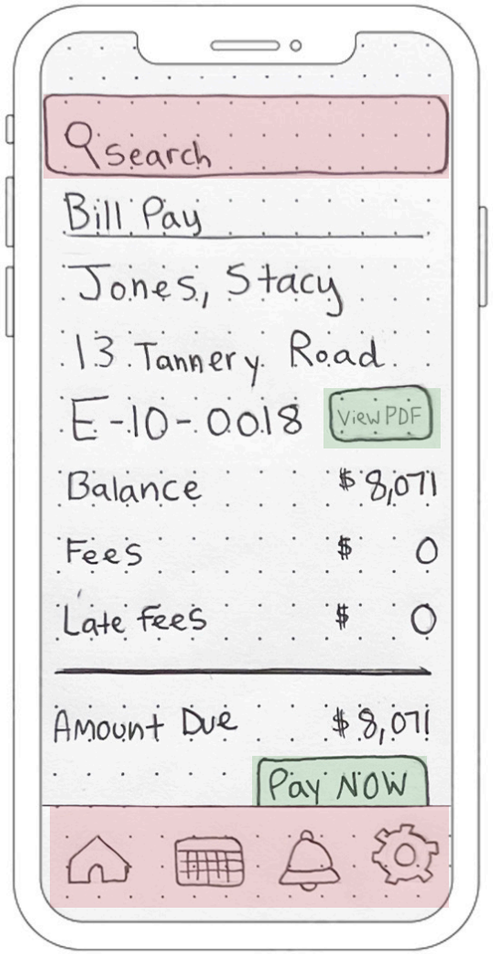
Paying a tax bill



User is met with a few options to search for their bill. A simple down arrow in the box communicates there are more options to choose from.



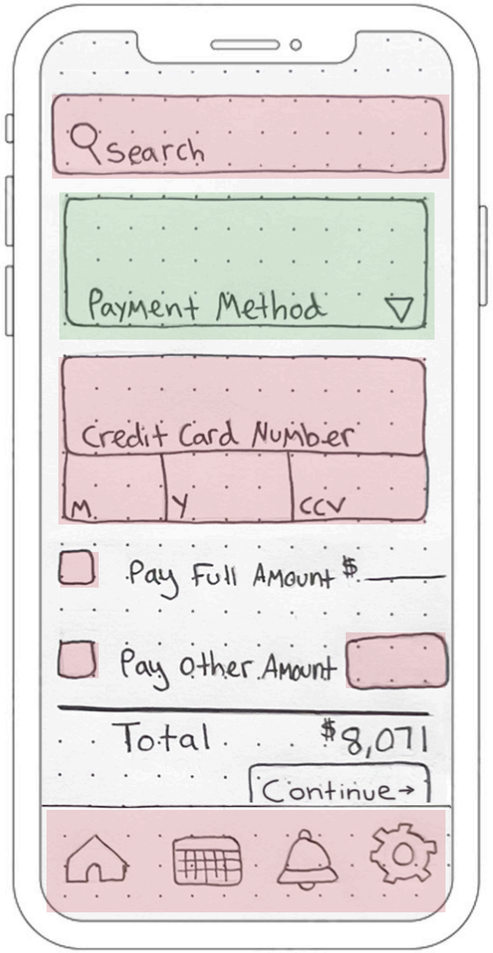
When the user clicks on the name field, it becomes highlighted, and the keyboard pops up.



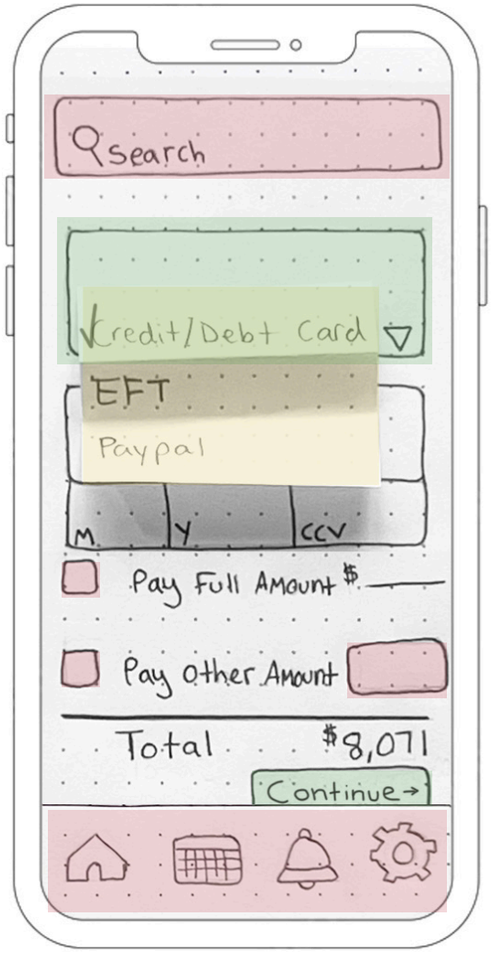
This screen shows the bill breakdown with an option to view a PDF of the mailed bill. Users can see the balance and fees attached before moving on to the next step.

LOW-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

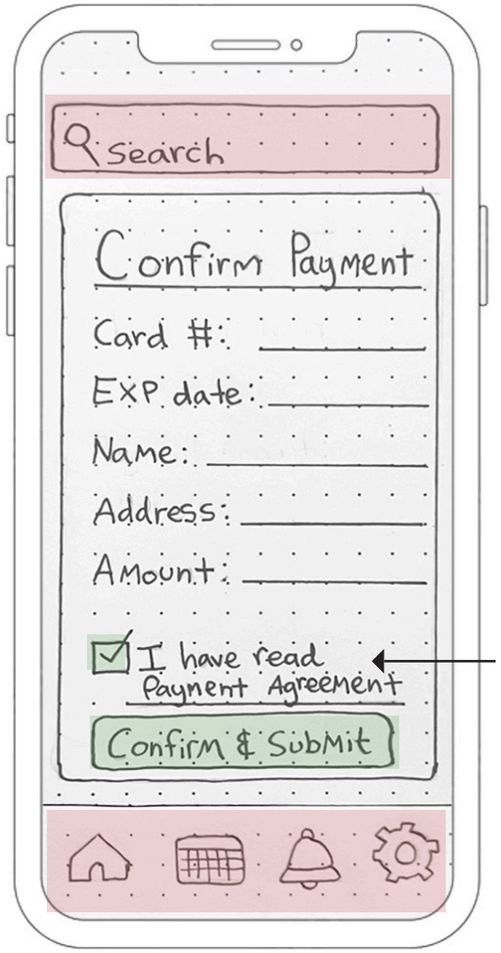
Paying a tax bill



User has reached the payment screen where they can choose their form of payment and amount they will pay.



User clicks on the payment method box. Their choice has a check next to the method, so they clearly know which is selected.



User can confirm all information is correct before submitting. This reduces errors and builds user confidence.

Payment agreement is a link that can be clicked on to read the disclaimer if needed. Must be checked for submit button to work.

LOW-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

Paying a tax bill

If user clicks back to Taxes in Ridgefield, they will be brought to that page. Allowing the user to choose where to go next.

When the user hits submit, they are greeted with a popup and receipt number. From here they can exit and will be brought back to the home screen.

LOW-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

Find and add an event to your calendar

User starts on the home screen with the main navigation. Search bar and bottom navigation tab are also available, allowing the user to start from every possible location.

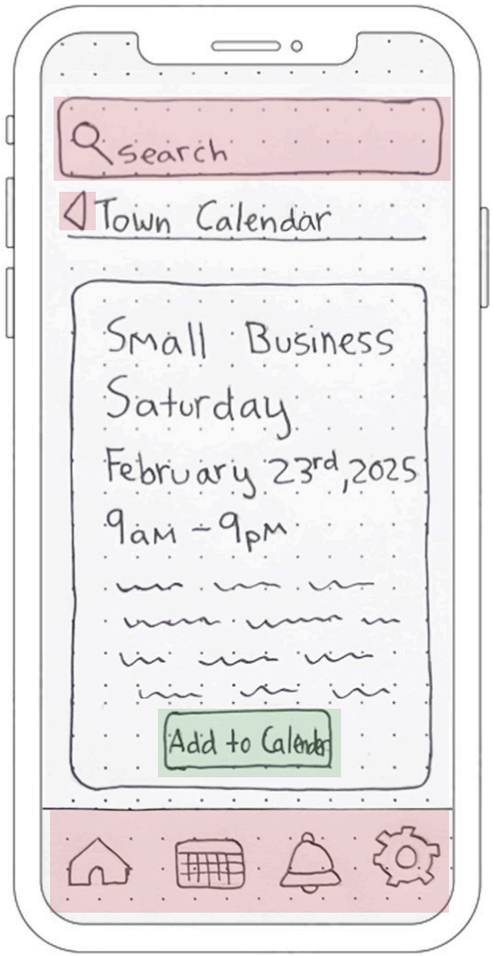
User clicks on community resources and a horizontal slider of choices is presented. Minimal sliding to see all choices. User chooses calendar.

Minimal amount of clicks from home screen to calendar page!

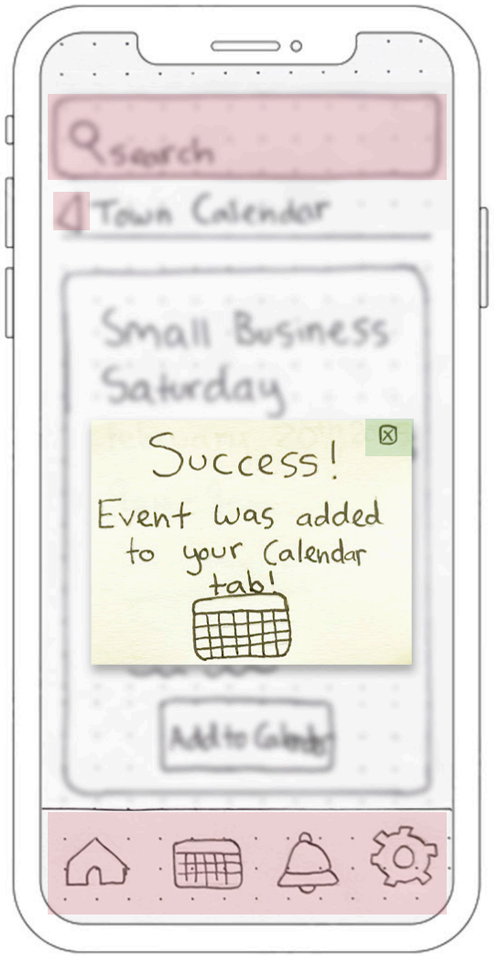
User arrives at the town calendar. Each day is clickable and intuitive. They can navigate between month, week, year or list view. Events will be shown in blue underline, so users recognize that its clickable.

LOW-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

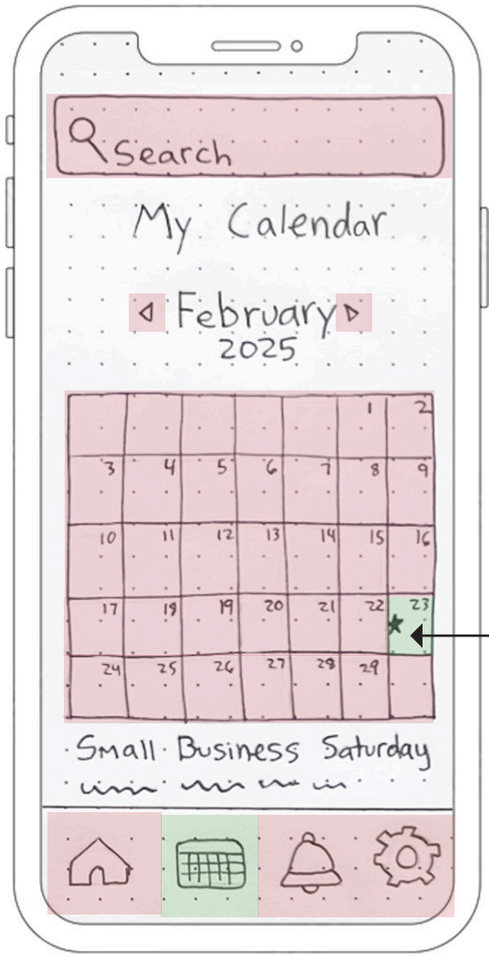
Find and add an event to your calendar



This screen shows more details and an option to add to the user's calendar in this app. There is always an option to easy exit in the top left corner if they don't like the event.



When an event is added, a pop up will appear, confirming the user's choice.



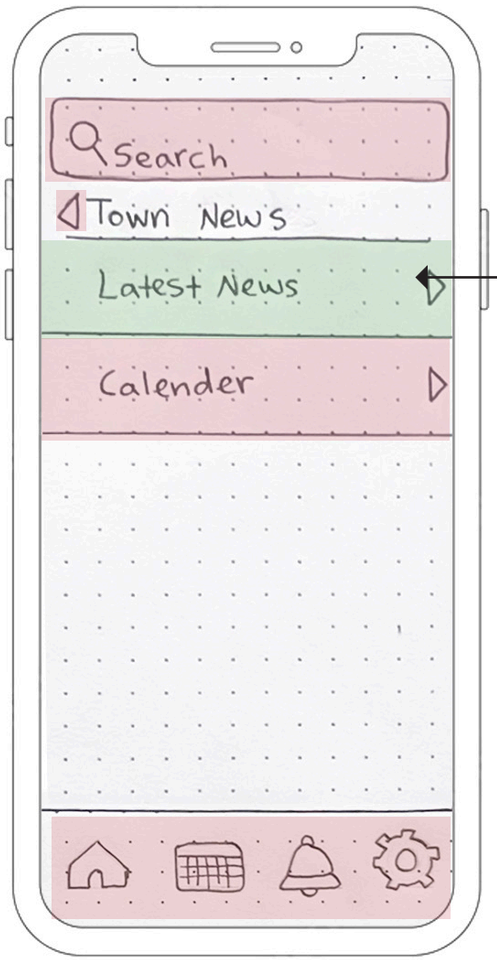
The "my calendar" page from the bottom navigation tab looks very similar to the town calendar, making it user-friendly.

Event markers are clearly shown, and the date will be highlighted when clicked on. This way users can quickly identify what is on their calendar.

LOW-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

Sign up for town alerts

User starts on the home screen with the main navigation. Search bar and bottom navigation tab are also available, allowing the user to start from every possible location.



User clicks on town news and a horizontal slider of choices is presented. User can see all choices at once.

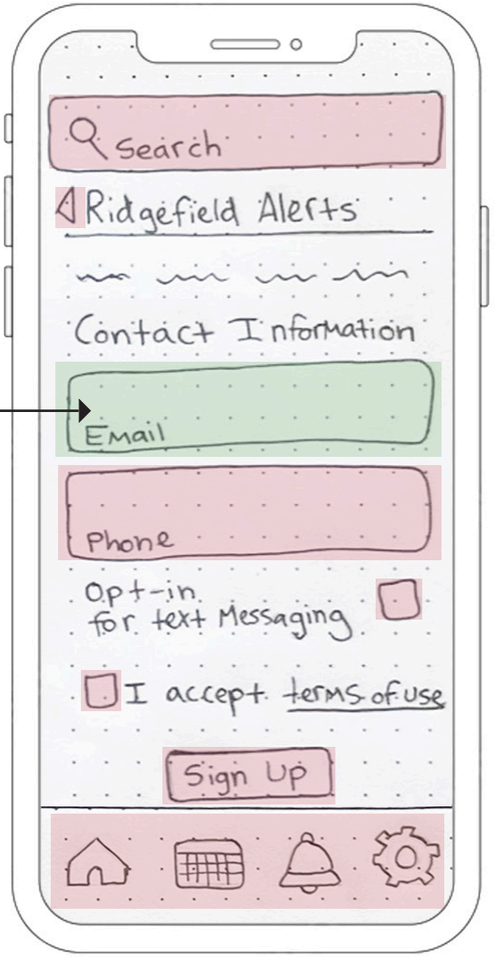
Since users visiting this part of the app are searching for news, they will also probably be interested in following social channels and signing up for alerts. The pop up allows for a quick exit, if they choose not to sign up, without losing their place.

I changed this subcategory to "latest news". Originally, the main and sub-category were both labeled town news. This seemed too confusing.

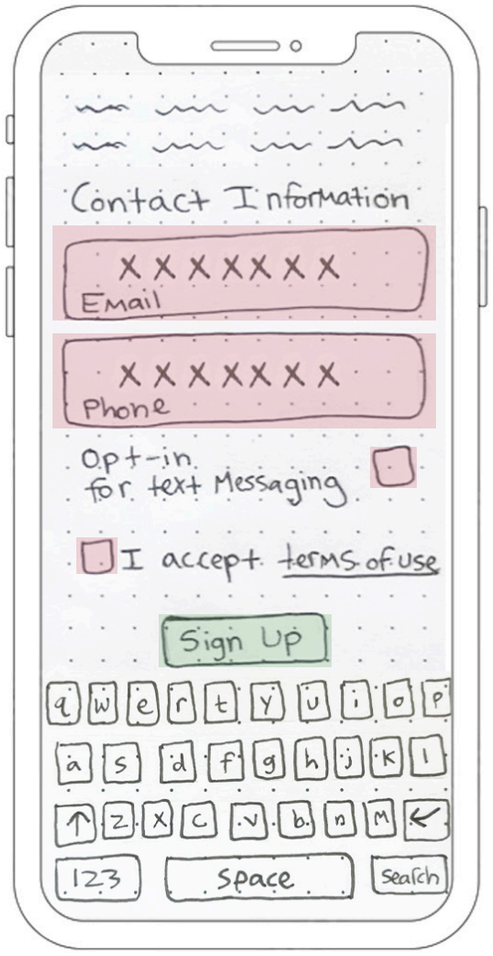
LOW-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

Sign up for town alerts

This page will have a minimalist feel since the sign up is quick.



Fields are highlighted when clicked on, so user knows where they are at all times.



Keyboard slides up when a field is clicked on.

Once the user hits submit, they get a pop up confirming their actions. Clicking out of it brings them back to the homepage.

Clicking "back to latest news" will bring the user back to this page. Allowing them different options on how they can proceed. *(I may make it an arrow instead, to sit next to the "X" button.)*

LOW-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

Article page

Easy way back to article page for a smooth reading experience.

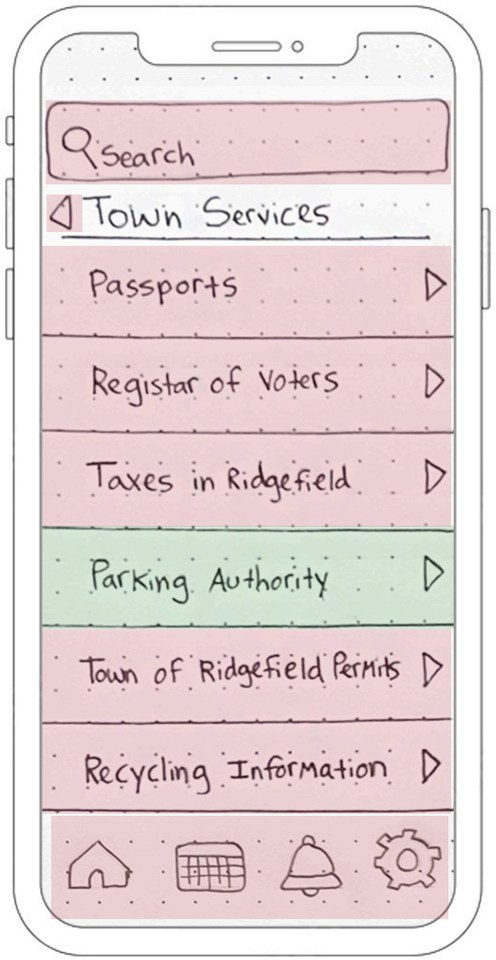
Scroll for article. Bottom of article to have a “back to article page” button so that the user won’t have to scroll back up to go back.

This is an article page that the user would see if they clicked out of the “Stay Connected” pop up and clicked on an article instead.

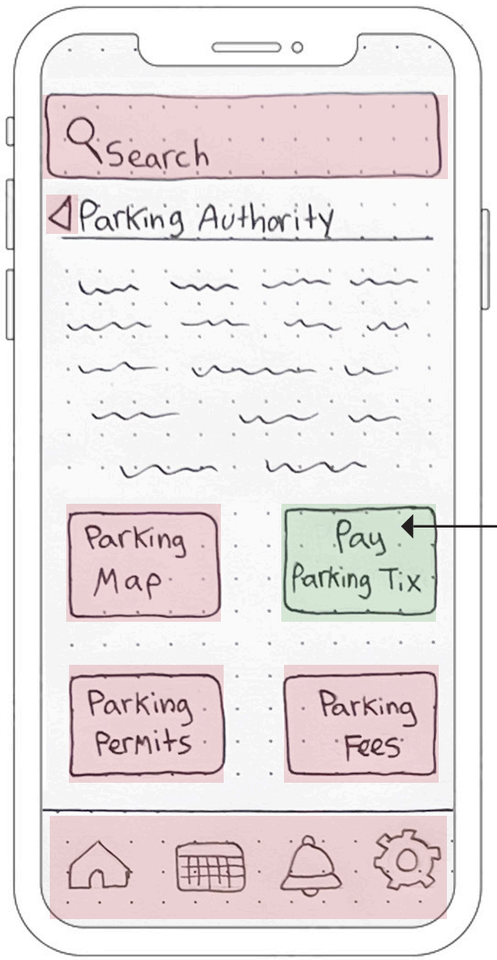
LOW-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

Paying a parking ticket

User starts on the home screen with the main navigation. Search bar and bottom navigation tab are also available, allowing the user to start from every possible location.



Once clicking on town services, a horizontal slider of choices is presented. User can see all choices at once.



The parking authority page contains multiple buttons at the bottom, signaling a decision point and making it easier for users to use the app with one hand.

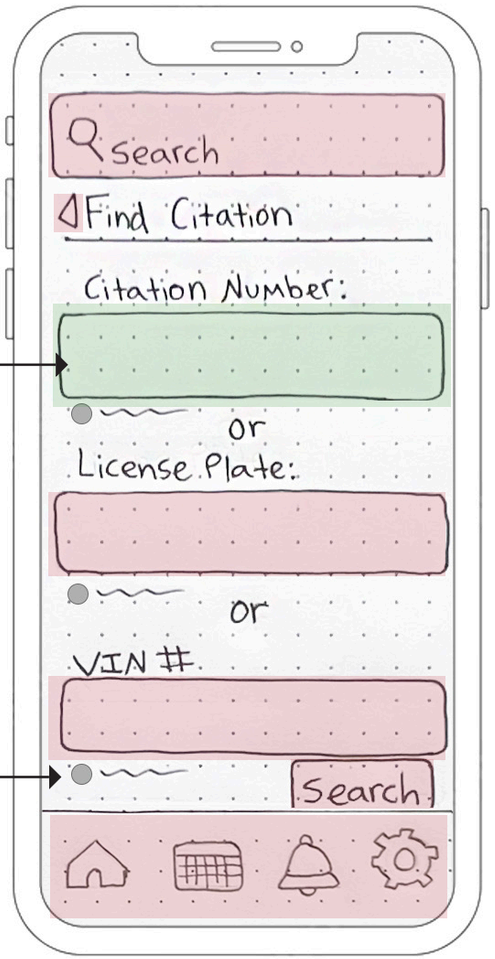
This consistent button style is shown here, on the taxes in Ridgefield page, and on the fire/EMS services page.

LOW-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

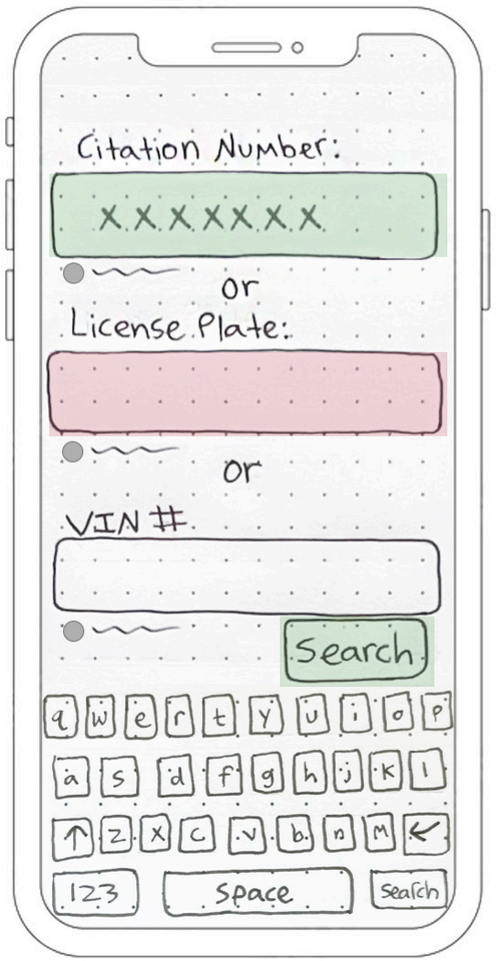
Paying a parking ticket

I decided to show all three options instead of a drop-down menu to help users understand the range of choices better.

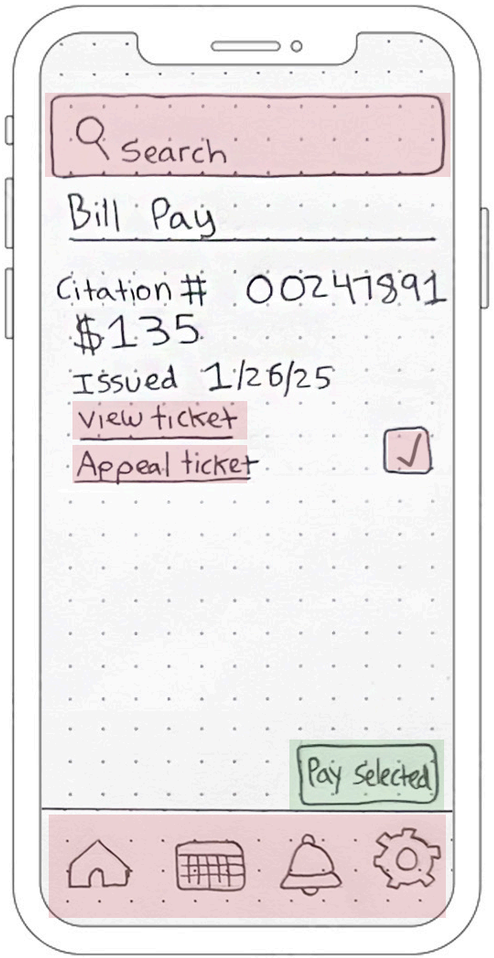
There are examples of how to submit or find this information for input underneath each box.



Fields are again highlighted when clicked, so user knows where their cursor is at all times. User has the option to search by various methods allowing flexibility for a variety of residents or visitors.



Once a field is tapped, the keyboard can slide up.

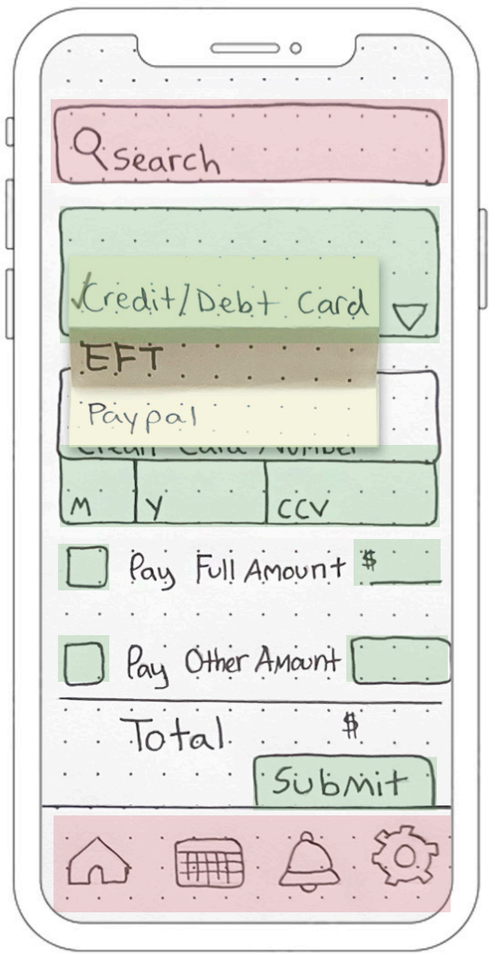


This screen allows you to see a quick breakdown of the ticket. But there is also a link to view the full bill or appeal the ticket before continuing, limiting user error.

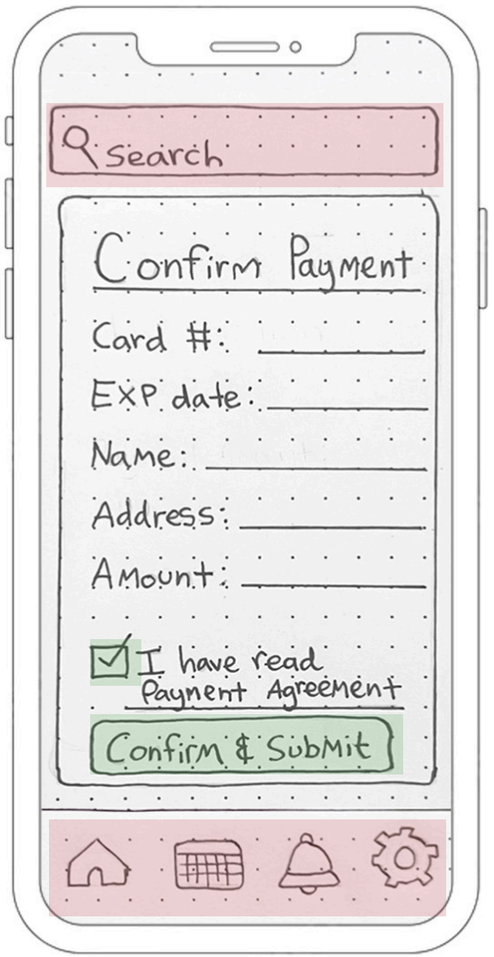
LOW-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

Paying a parking ticket

User is brought to a quick and painless, one-page checkout. This is so they can complete the task with as few taps as possible.



When the user clicks on the payment method box, they have a drop down of options. They can easily see the one selected is the one with the check mark.

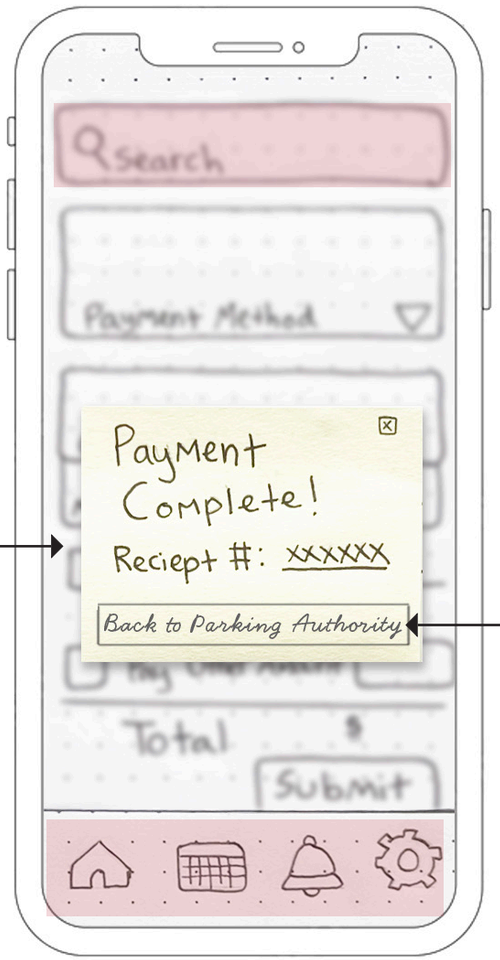


User can confirm all information is correct before submitting. This reduces errors and builds user confidence.

LOW-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

Paying a parking ticket

The process from searching to paying is streamlined with only 5 screens!



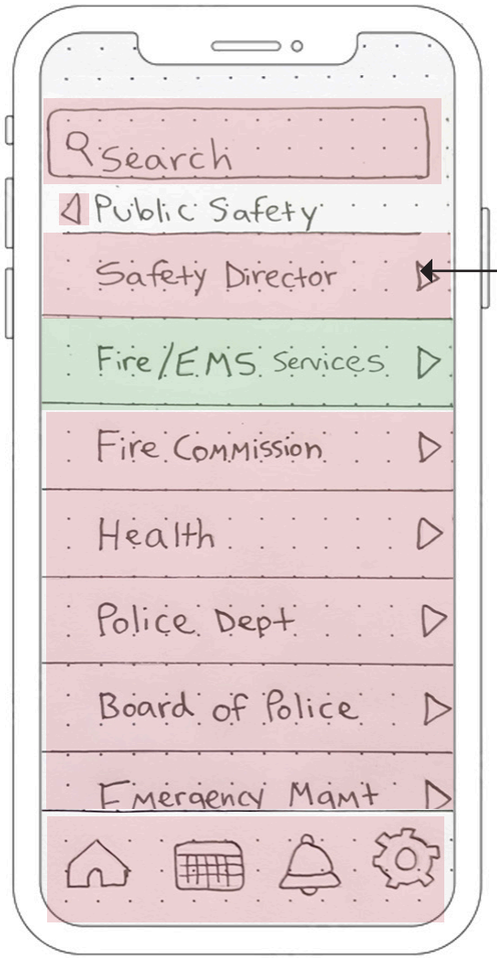
User has options: to exit out which will direct them to the homepage or click here to go back to the parking authority page.

Once information is entered and submitted, the user is greeted with a confirmation of receipt.

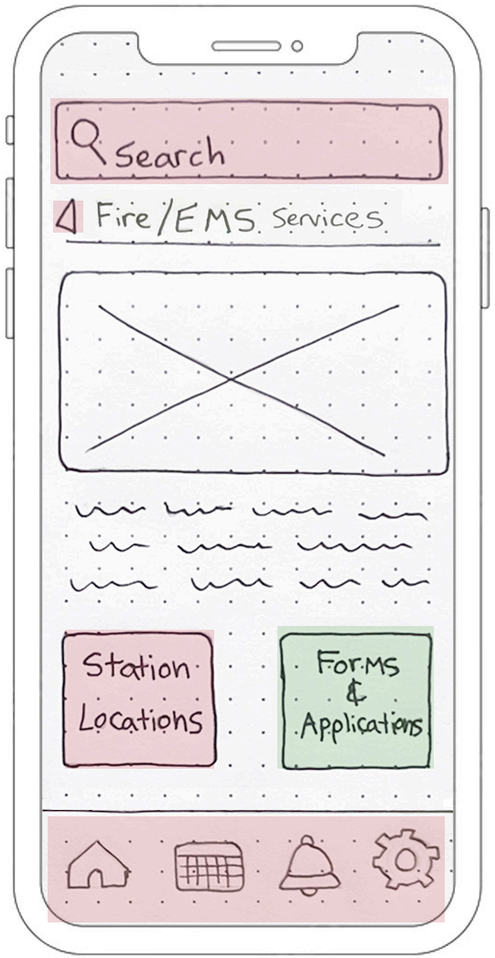
LOW-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

Finding the EMS services application

User starts on the home screen with the main navigation. Search bar and bottom navigation tab are also available, allowing the user to start from every possible location.



From public safety, a horizontal slider of choices is presented. User can see all choices at once, minimal scrolling.



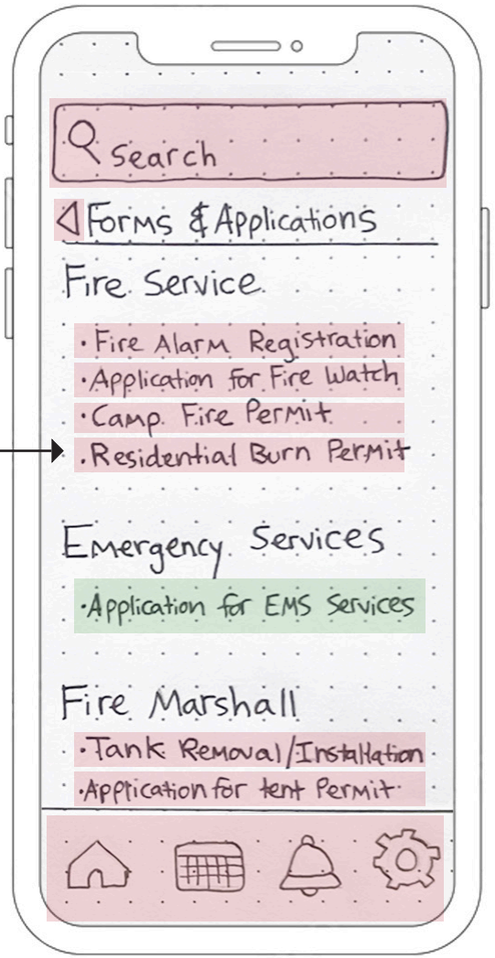
This page includes a top image and large links at the bottom. The sizing for these buttons allows for easy accessibility and is considered good UI practice.

After doing more research on the Ridgefield website, I discovered that the fire department has a variety of links and form within its page and that the label needed to encompass more than just fire service. I changed the label to Fire/EMS services.

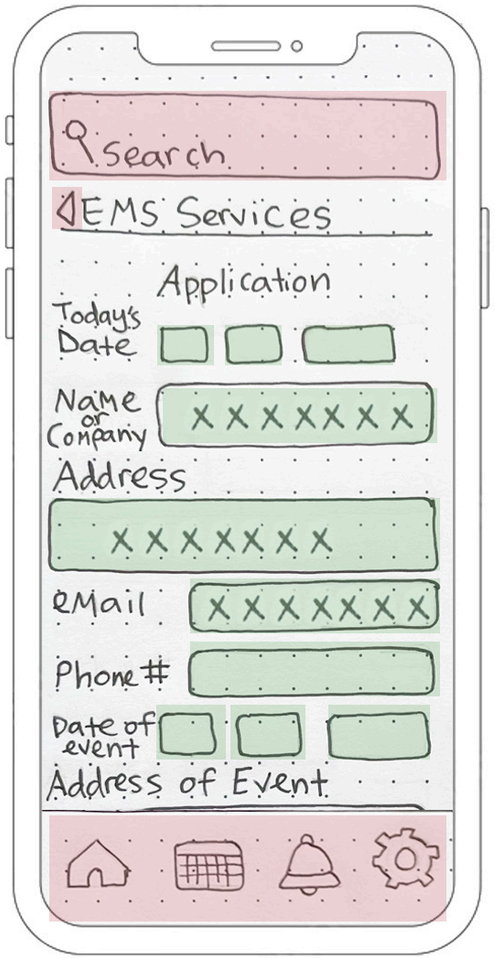
LOW-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

Finding the EMS services application

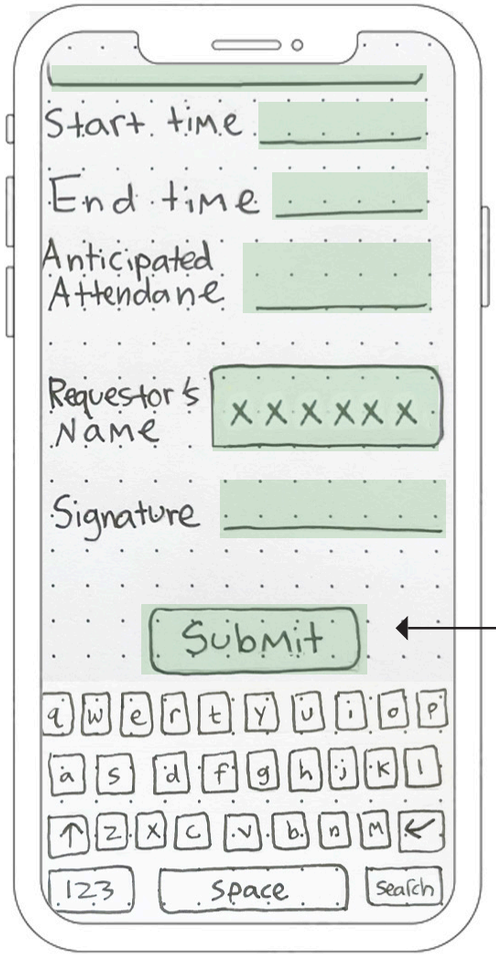
There were a lot of forms to show on this page, so I chose to show them as a list instead of larger buttons/icons.



A list of forms are provided. While there are quite a few, they are organized by department. Each form is shown in a blue text - showing that it is a clickable link.



The application can be filled out right on the app.

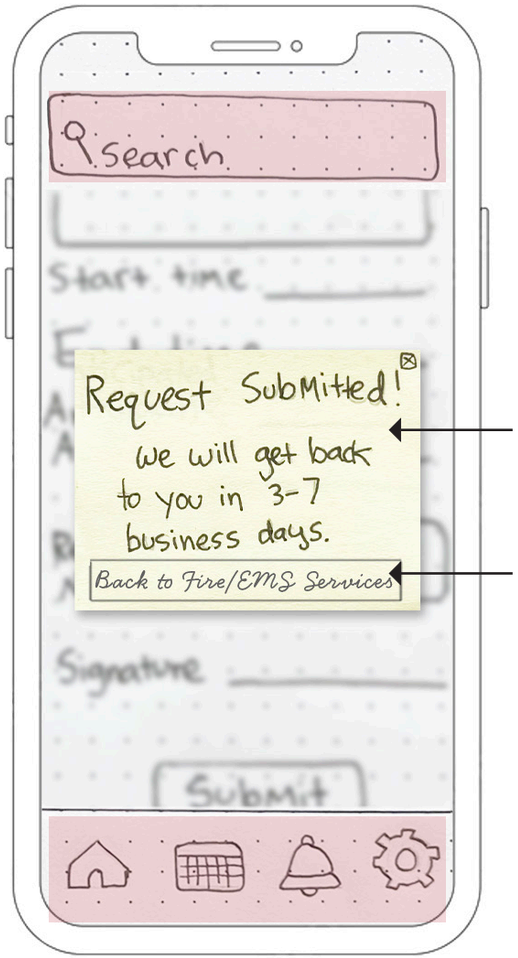


When fields is clicked on the keyboard slides up. A large submit button on its own line helps the user know when they have reached the end of the form and what the last step is.

While the application is one page, user must scroll vertically to get to the bottom here.

LOW-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

Finding the EMS services application



Let's the user know the task was completed.

User has the choice to go back to Fire/ EMS services page.

Once submitted, the user will see a pop up confirming their request. Additional information is given. Exiting out returns them to the homepage screen.

USER TESTING PLAN

The *Town of Ridgefield* is the official municipal app of Ridgefield, Connecticut. It aims to serve all residents as an easy-to-use resource for paying bills, catching up on local news, and finding events around town. The goal of the app is to keep residents engaged with community while also providing users with a seamless experience when dealing with town inquires.

Keeping users at the forefront of this app development is important, so it's vital to start user testing early. This study will be conducted using the POP link provided (Prototype on Paper app) and include low-fidelity mock-ups of screens that will later be developed for the app. There will be two separate tests, with two different users who are both around the median age of most Ridgefield residents. Each participant will be asked to complete the same four tasks and asked to give honest feedback of their experience.

The goal during user testing is to see how users navigate within the app, and it will reveal any areas that may need improvement. The test will help decide if certain design choices are working and if users are interpreting the screens with ease or difficulty. With the results from these participants, changes can be decided on and implemented.

To view the POP test screens, visit the link: https://marvelapp.com/prototype/1c162539/screen/97057493

SCRIPT

Thank you for joining me today. As I mentioned, this study is for an app called the *Town of Ridgefield.* It will be the official app for the town, and we need your help to test the beginner prototype created thus far. This entire activity should take no more than forty minutes. I will give you four tasks to complete within the app and ask you for open-ended feedback of your findings.

As I also mentioned, I will be filming the test and taking notes, for research purposes. I may have some additional questions once you are finished with the task and would love your honest opinion and thoughts. Remember we are interested in testing this digital product, so there are no wrong answers in this study. Please speak freely, your feedback will only help us design a better app experience.

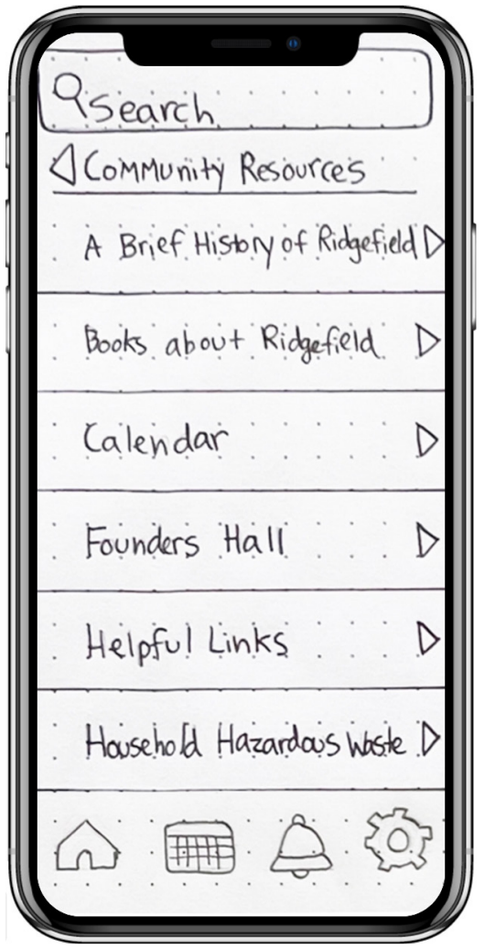
For this study you will be using the POP link I sent you in your email, where you will be able to click and browse through the prototype in your browser window. What you see will mimic how you would interact with it on a phone. As you go through each task, please speak out loud, providing feedback on your experience and any thoughts that come to mind.

You can ask questions at any time during this process and leave at any time if necessary. We can either begin with a small tutorial or we can get right into the testing, up to you. Let's get started!

Homescreen of POP test.

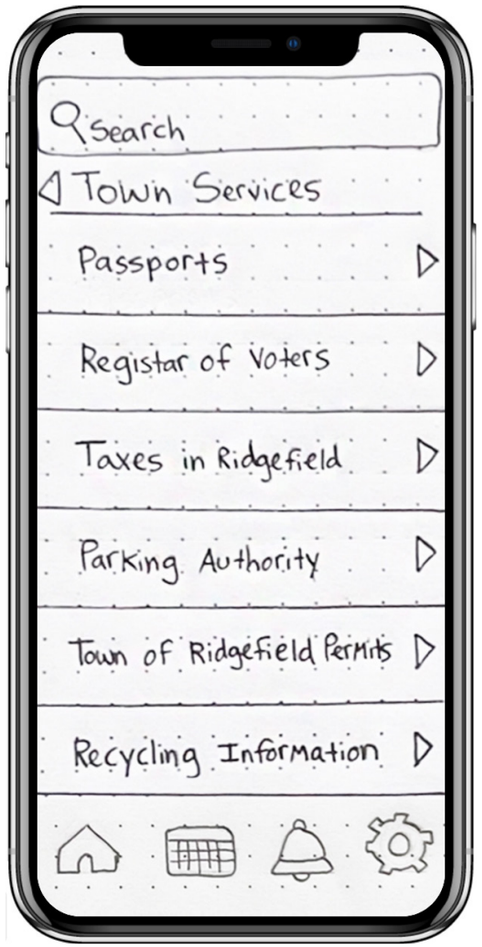
TASK SCENARIOS & SCREENS

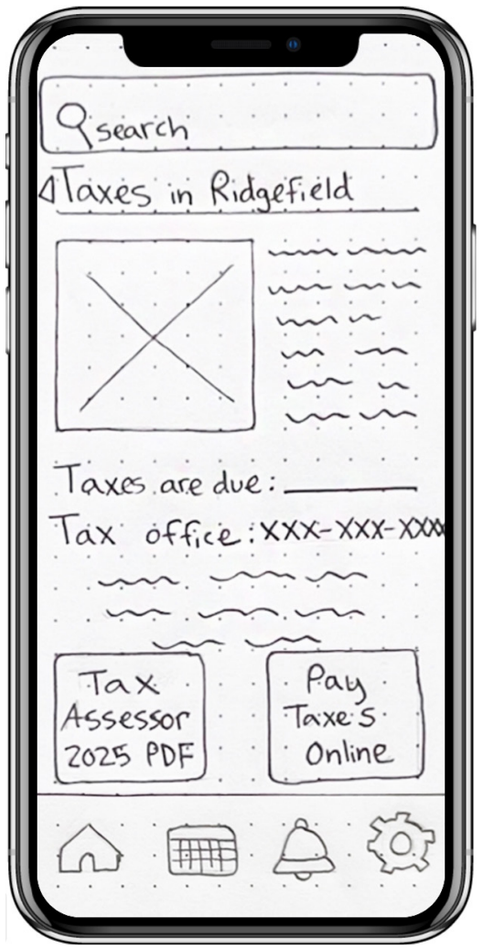
1) Find the calendar page and add an event to your calendar



TASK SCENARIOS & SCREENS

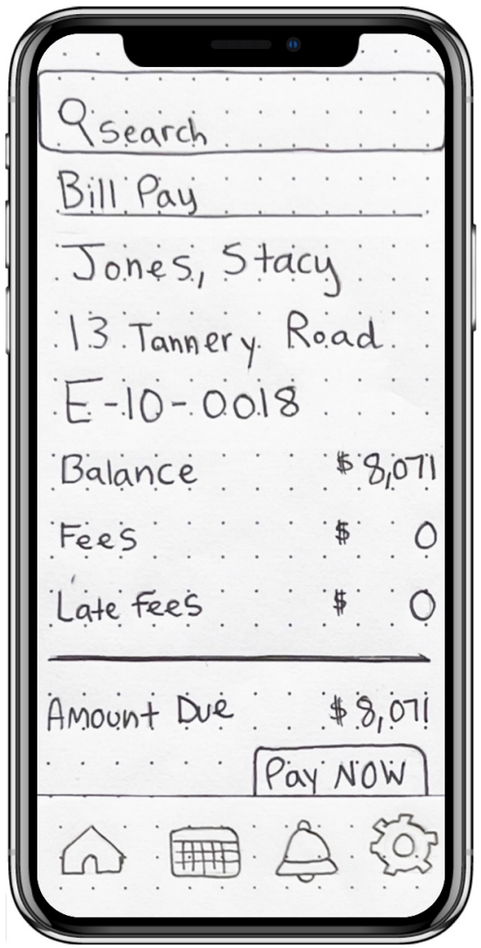
2) Find and pay your tax bill in the app via credit card

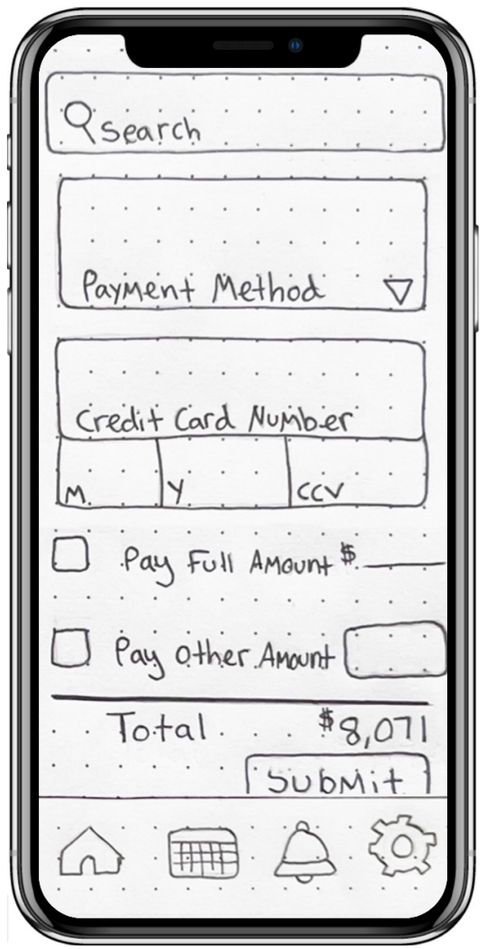




TASK SCENARIOS & SCREENS

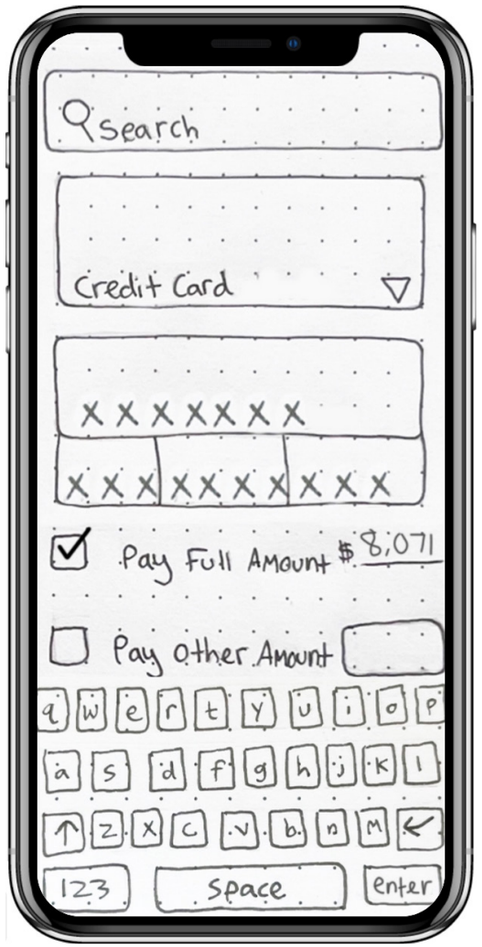
2) Find and pay your tax bill in the app via credit card *(continued)*

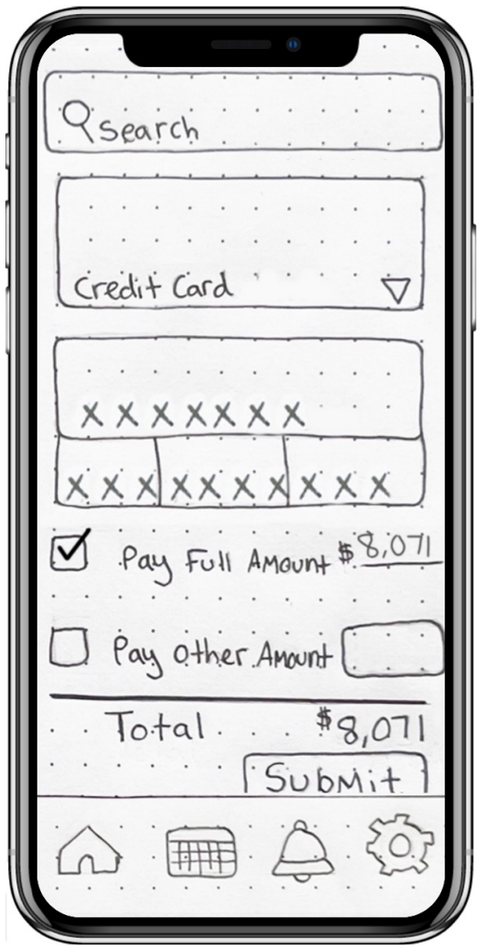


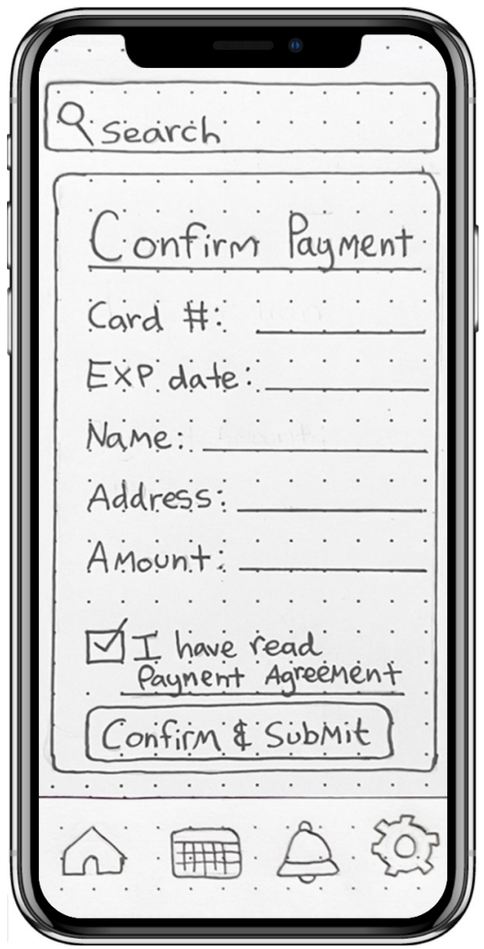


TASK SCENARIOS & SCREENS

2) Find and pay your tax bill in the app via credit card *(continued)*

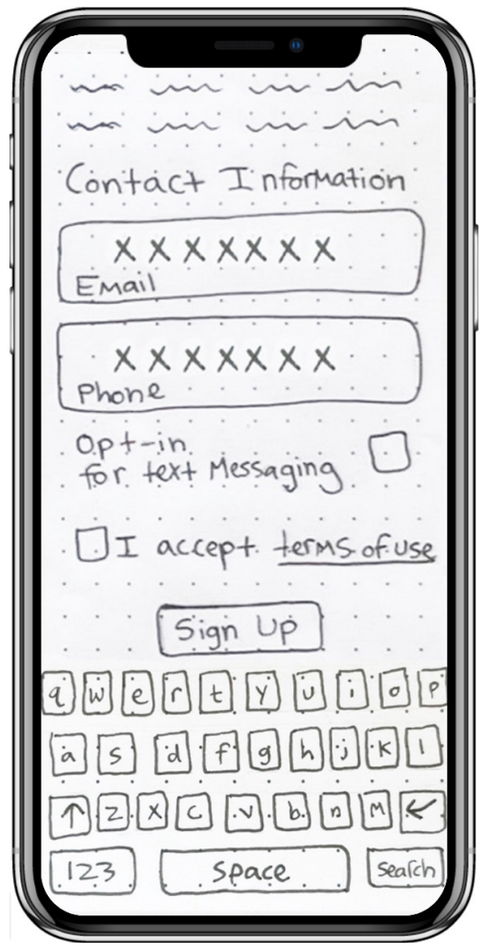






TASK SCENARIOS & SCREENS

3) Sign up for town alerts

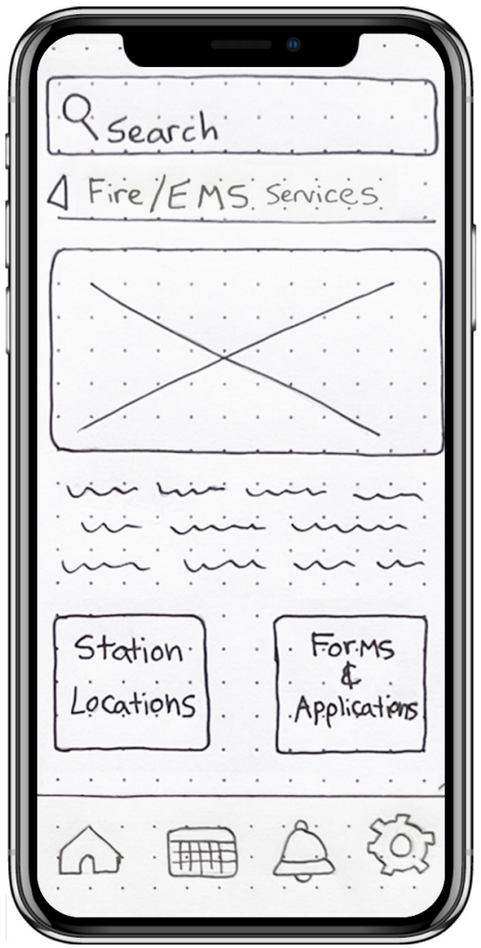


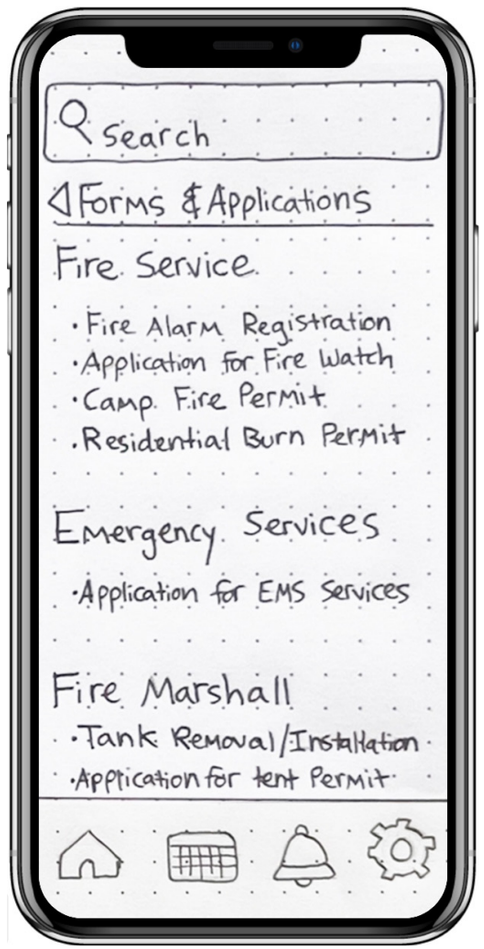
TASK SCENARIOS & SCREENS

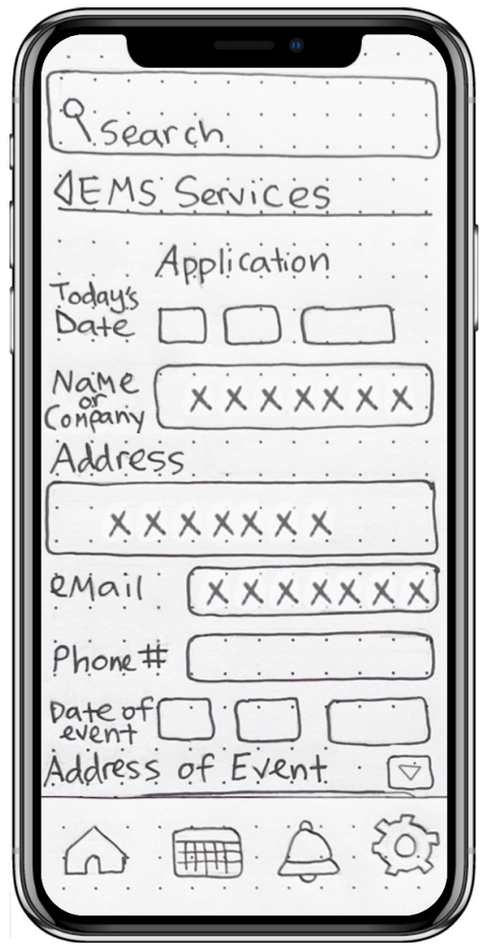
3) Sign up for town alerts *(continued)*

TASK SCENARIOS & SCREENS

4) Find and fill out the EMS services application







TASK SCENARIOS & SCREENS

4) Find and fill out the EMS services application *(continued)*

USER 1 FEEDBACK

Tara was the first user to be tested. She was able to complete all tasks and was not confused by any labels in the main categories. When asked to find and add an event to her calendar, she first clicked on town news where there is a calendar link, but it wasn't the route that was set up. She then decided to try community resources where she found the calendar again on the navigation screen and was easily able to find the event and add it to her calendar. I'm glad I kept the calendar in both main categories for this reason.

She found the form for paying taxes simple and *"...not busy, making it easy to go through"*. She did mention that after she was done with the task, she would want to go back to the content page rather than the clicking the "X". It seems the "X" button on the pop up makes this user think that it will only take away the notification. Redirecting them to the homepage is not clear enough on this pop up.

This user was able to go from screen to screen quickly. When searching for town alerts, she assumed the bell button in the bottom bar would contain this, which makes sense and got me thinking about adding this feature somewhere on the notifications page as well. When I asked her why she clicked there first, she replied that she was hoping for a shortcut and likes when apps have these bottom bars for quick access. The bell image also makes her think of alerts, so if this doesn't get added to the notifications page, the icon may have to change.

Overall, she felt the app was easy to navigate and found that being able to access city forms and submitting them through the app would be helpful, and she wishes her own town had these options.

To view the video, vist the link and click on User Test 1:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1x52Ww8lXty5apLcoxpRWbvgb87BuyvlB/view?usp=sharing

USER 2 FEEDBACK

Phyllis was the second user to be tested. She also found the tasks easy to locate within the main navigation. When asked about her first impressions of the homepage, she replied with “It’s welcoming, and not overwhelming for me”. She clicked on the right category the first time for all four tasks! However, she was confused on what to click on to get out of the pop ups. This may be because the “X” button was too small, or she was looking for a more detailed “back to the home page” button.

She mentioned that she appreciated the examples of how to input information when she was searching for the tax bill and went through the process easily. She initially wanted to search by property address instead of by name, but she understood the drop down and was able to get to the next screen. At one point she did struggle to move to the next screen because she clicked on the continue button rather than the enter button on the keyboard. Going forward, the continue button should not be shown if the user is still inputting information. It should only appear when all fields have been entered, and the keyboard slides out of the way.

When she was going through the EMS services application, she was also unsure how to continue to the rest of the form. When asked, she said she didn’t see the button and only completed this task because the link eventually lit up and she knew where to click.

The big takeaway is that the alerts button on the pop ups should be larger, since it was hard for her to notice. She also mentioned that a home page button instead of just an “X” button would be more useful. Phyllis would also benefit if the EMS services application was just one page. Instead of having to click continue all the time, this user would like to scroll to complete the application.

To view the video, vist the link and click on User Test 2:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hXxKIUH62ziggnLtmUxKcV9eDcKKIjn-/view?usp=sharing

USER TESTING SUMMARY

The user testing was very insightful. Even though the testing was done virtually, both participants had a positive experience with the app and with the overall test. While the two users had different methods, they both were able to complete all tasks. However, based on the results, there are some improvements to be made.

The first revision is going to be adjusting the pop ups. For the town alerts, the pop up in general should be larger. That way there is more room for social media icons and the newsletter and alerts button. Right now, the newsletter and alerts button are small, and they aren't being noticed quick enough by users. The sizing of the social media icons verses the alerts button should be swapped. With larger pop ups, all icons will have enough room to be visible and there will be clear distinctions between buttons. The task completion pop ups should also be larger and include a "back to home page" button instead of just an "X". This way users know for sure, that this button will bring them back to the homepage. Right now, users are confused where the "X" button will take them, so that needs to change.

User testing also revealed that the bell icon in the bottom navigation should include not just app notifications but include the same town alerts that would be sent to a cell phone or email. With this change, the notifications page can have a button option or the same pop up to sign up for these alerts. It makes sense that most users would click on this button for quick updates rather than checking an email inbox, which is usually more cluttered. This gives users multiple chances within the app to sign up and gives them a shorter, more direct path to complete this task.

The last change will be to make some forms and applications (like the EMS application), one page instead of two. Users seem to get hung up on where to click after they have inputted information. This is probably from having a small continue button, that gets lost on the page and from showing this button even when all fields have not been entered yet. To counteract this, it seems that a one-page application where they scroll instead, would be a better option to eliminate user confusion. This change should speed up task time and hitting submit will signal that the task is complete.

HIGH-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

After assessing user testing and figuring out what needs fixing, it's time to create high-fidelity prototypes. The importance of this step is to provide a more functional prototype that is visually appealing. It was also essential that I use industry software, so that I could create the most realistic screens effectively. With digital, high-fidelity prototypes, I was able to make refinements and was able to have it mimics the final product. While there are many UI programs, I chose to work in Figma for this step since it is a popular application for professional UI/UX designers, and I have been looking to improve my skills within in this program. Learning this application would expand my skill set and I knew it would be challenging and much different than the Adobe programs I am use to designing in. Figma is specifically used for design and prototyping digital products, so I knew I would have success creating my screens in this application, once I got my bearings.

After playing around in the program, and understanding what each key does, I was ready to take my low-fidelity screens and turn them into a high-fidelity prototype. Once I had the initial home screen built and the navigation treatment decided on, I felt the design move quickly. From my sketches, I was able to quickly see my vision and implement it further with color, images, and font selection. Of course, there were some changes that had to be made after user testing, but the heavy lifting was done.

The following pages in this chapter show all my high-fidelity screens, which include the four tasks that were tested on users. These screens take my initial designs to the next level with a more detailed version, and allowed me to create an interactive, clickable prototype that I can test again or show to stakeholders. I was able to complete this all within Figma, and now have a detailed version of my app.

HIGH-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

Splash screen and Home page

Town logo from their municipal website.

Search bar size was reduced but stays on all pages.

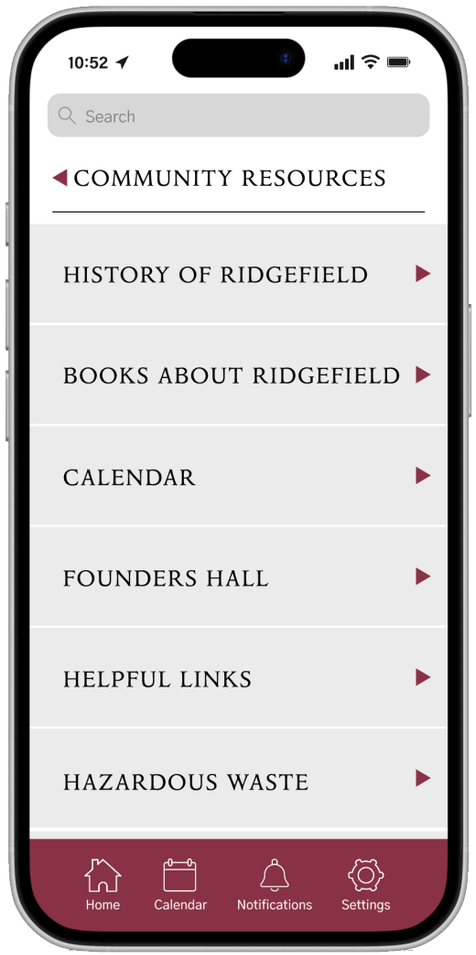
Photo added to home screen and is part of the community resources button.

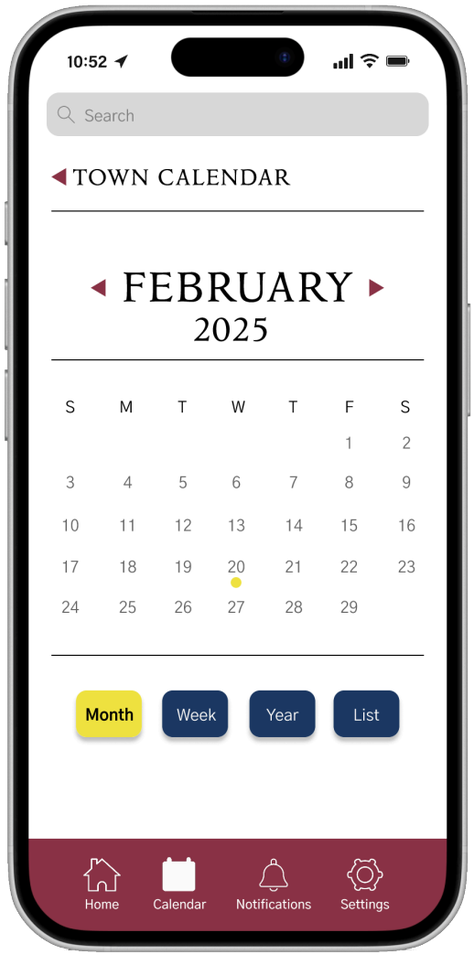
Icons match and provide easy identification for first time users.

Bottom navigation button turns white when the user is on that page.

HIGH-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

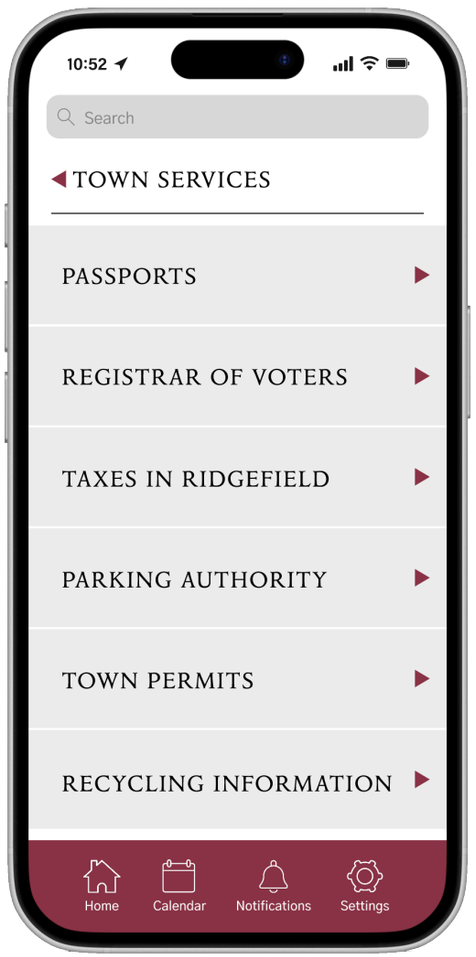
Find an event and add it to your calendar

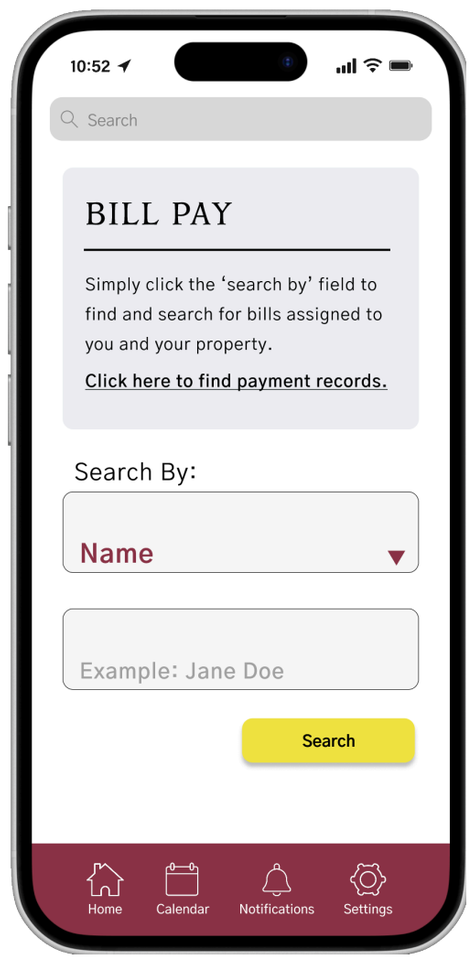


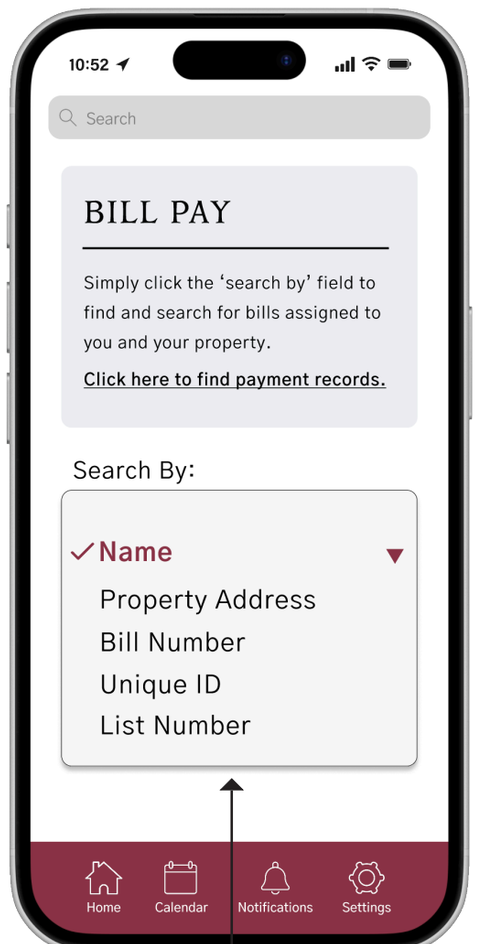


HIGH-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

Find and pay your tax bill







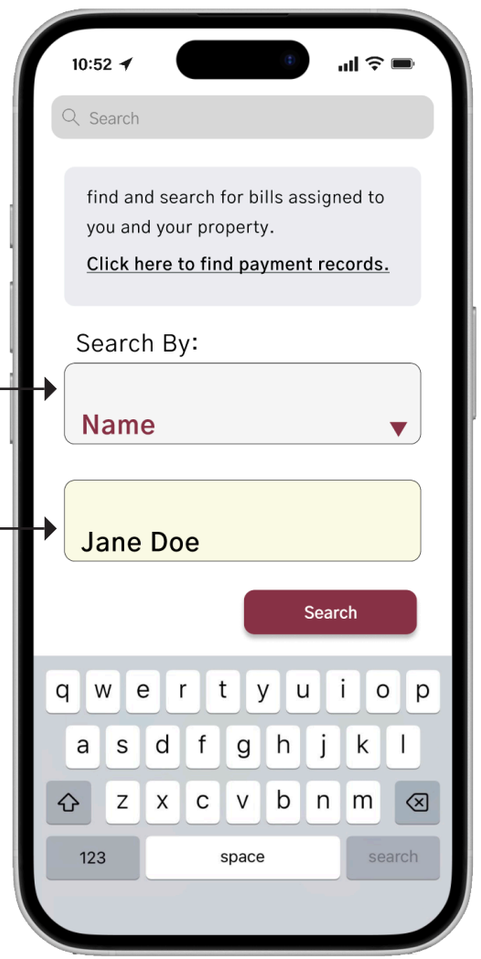
The checkmark and red font clearly shows what is selected in drop down menu.

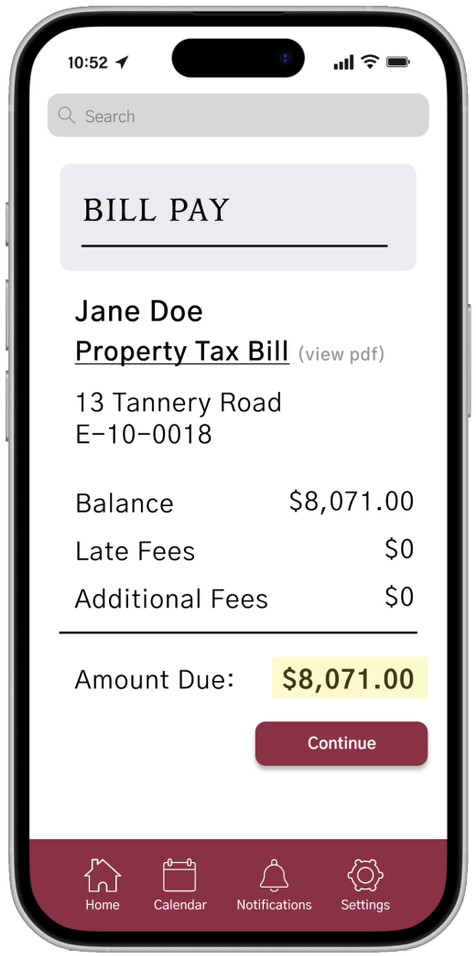
HIGH-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

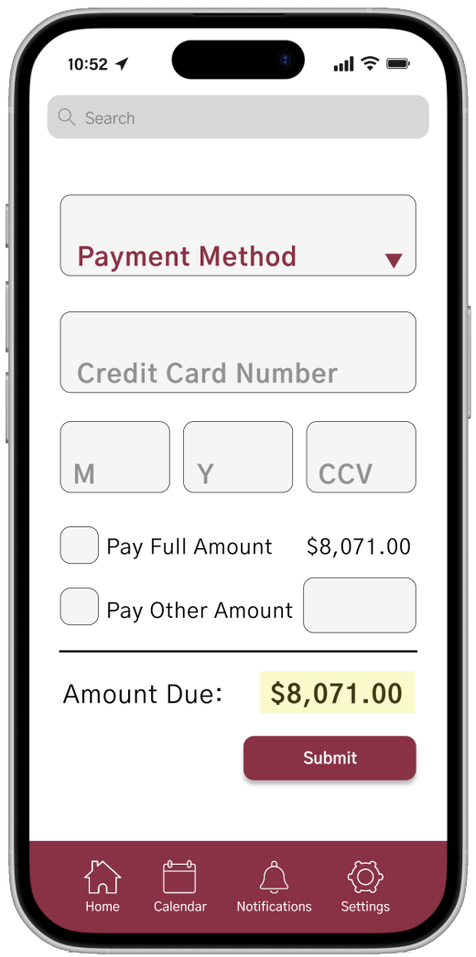
Find and pay your tax bill *(continued)*

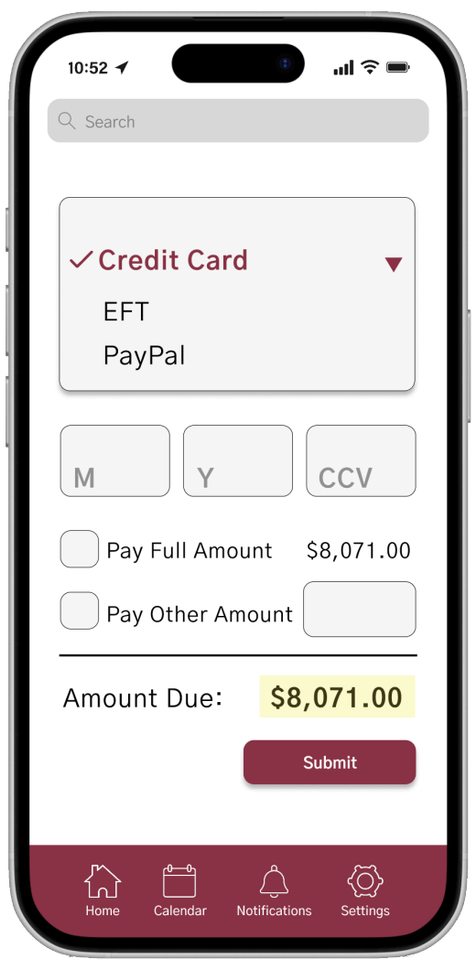
User knows it's a dropdown because of arrow.

Whichever field is being typed in turns yellow, so the user knows where they are on the page.



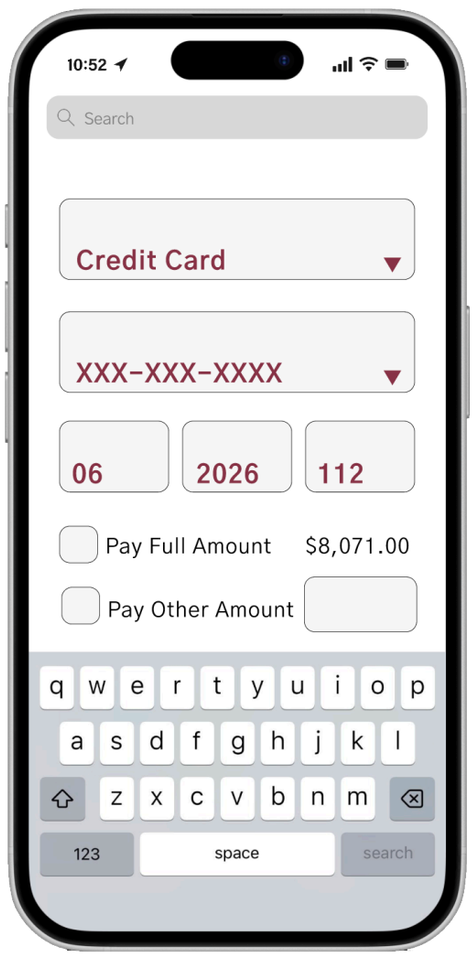


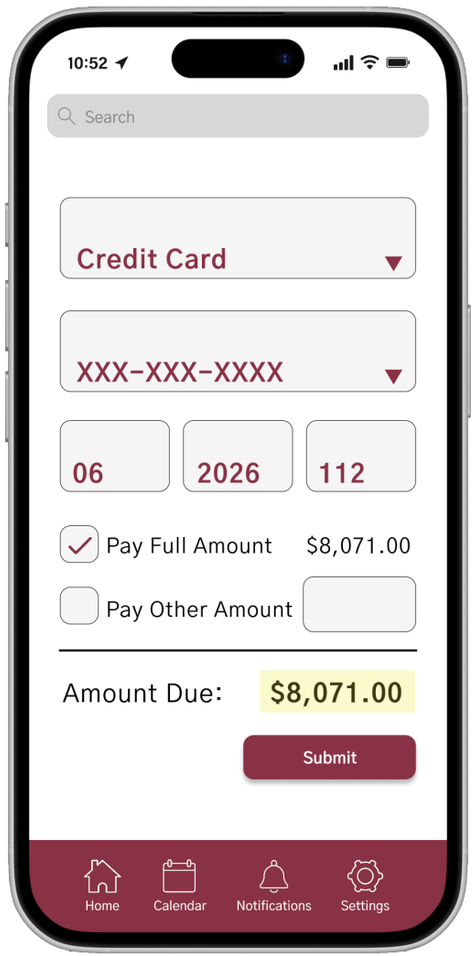


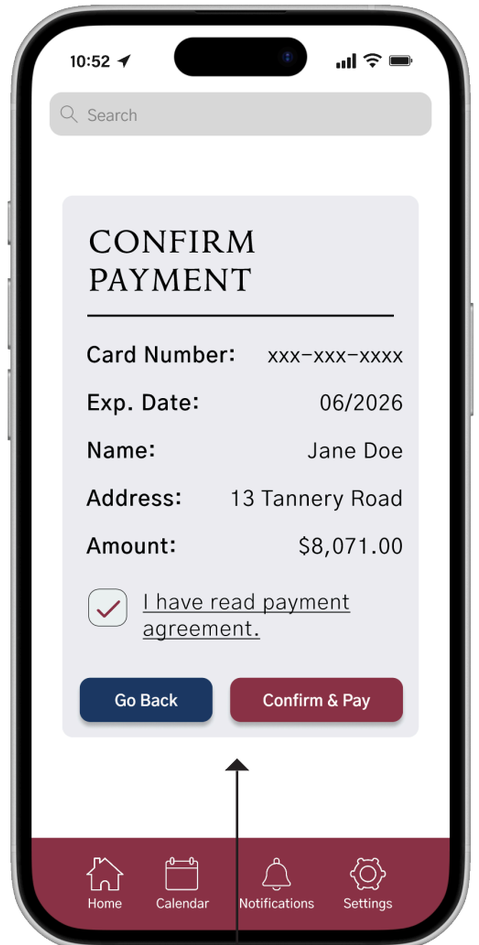


HIGH-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

Find and pay your tax bill *(continued)*



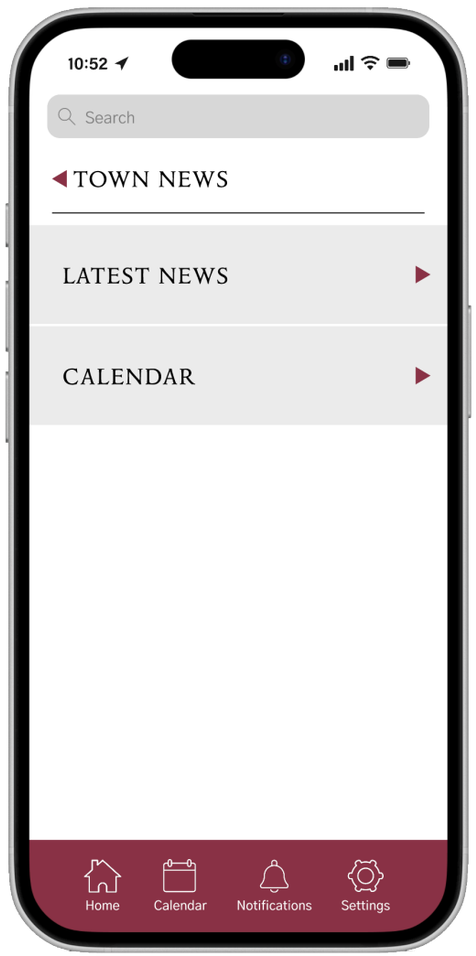


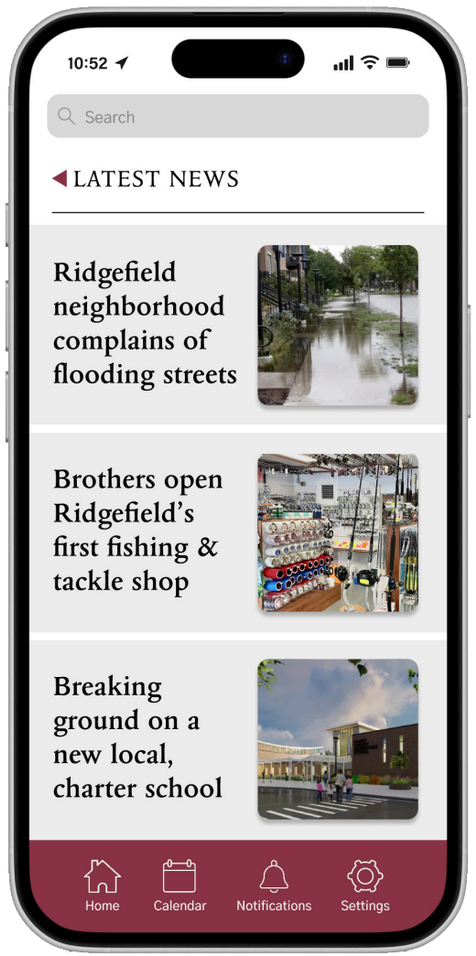


A confirm payment screen to reduce user error before hitting submit.

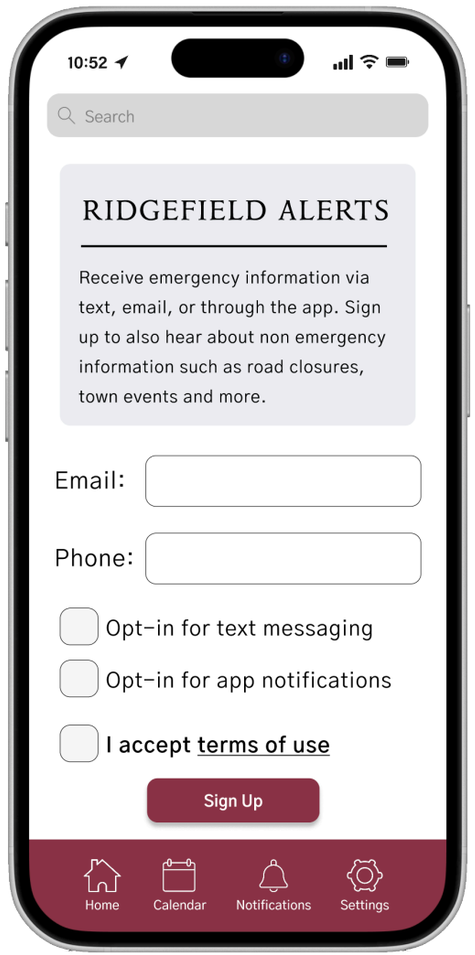
HIGH-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

Sign up for town alerts



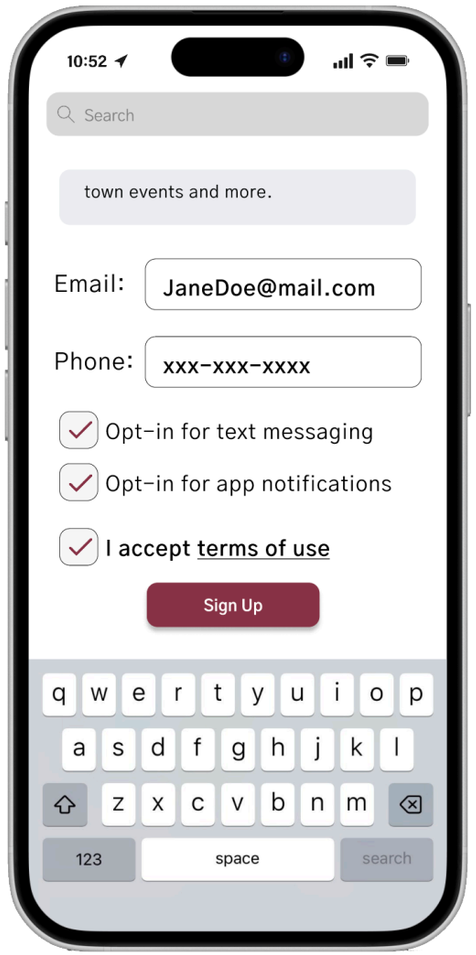


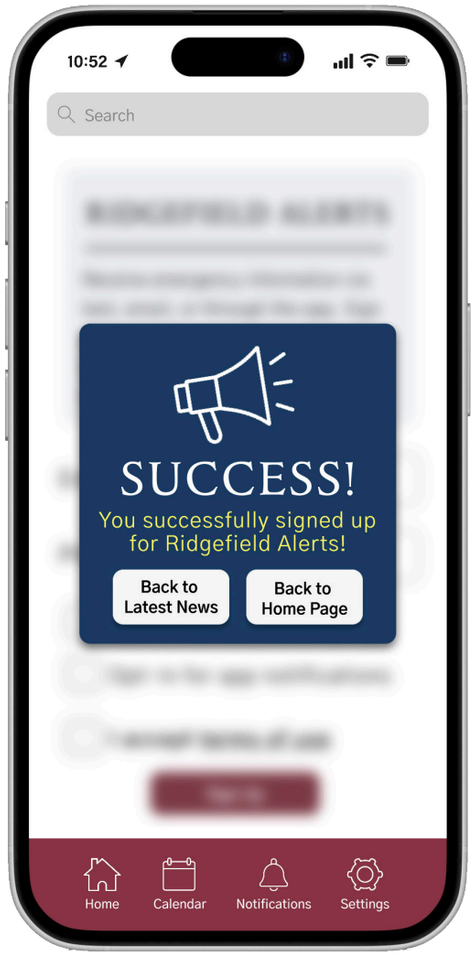
This pop up gives the user options. It allows them to sign up, or to ignore it by hitting the 'x'.



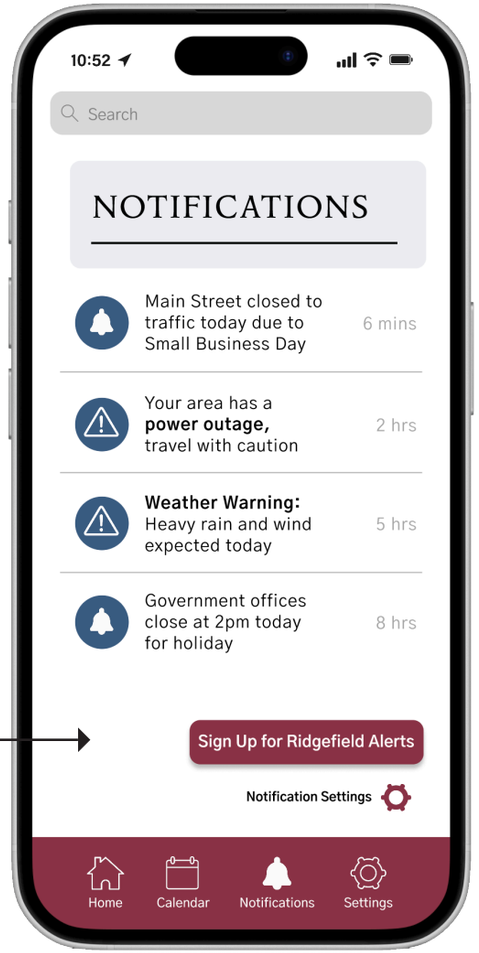
HIGH-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

Sign up for town alerts *(continued)*





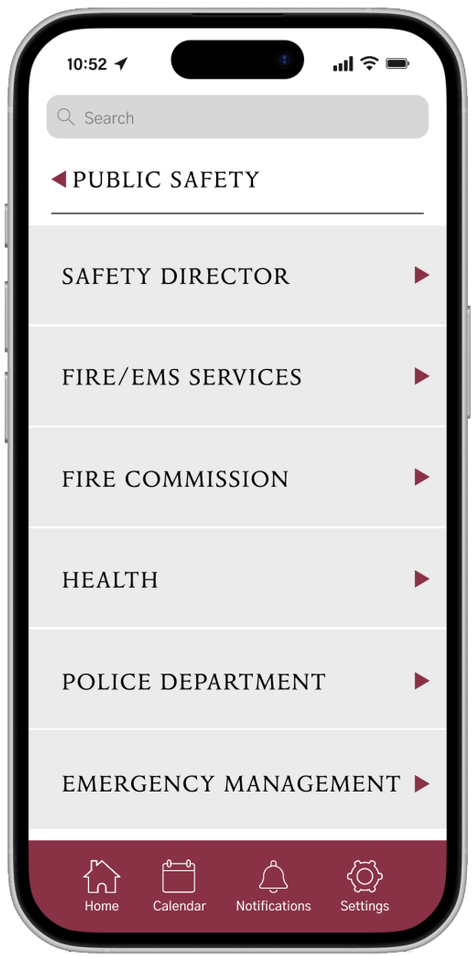
Notifications page

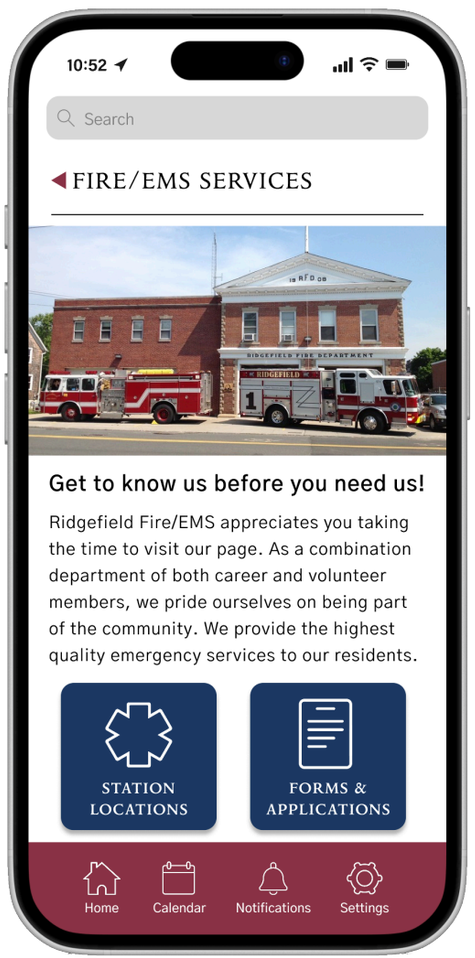


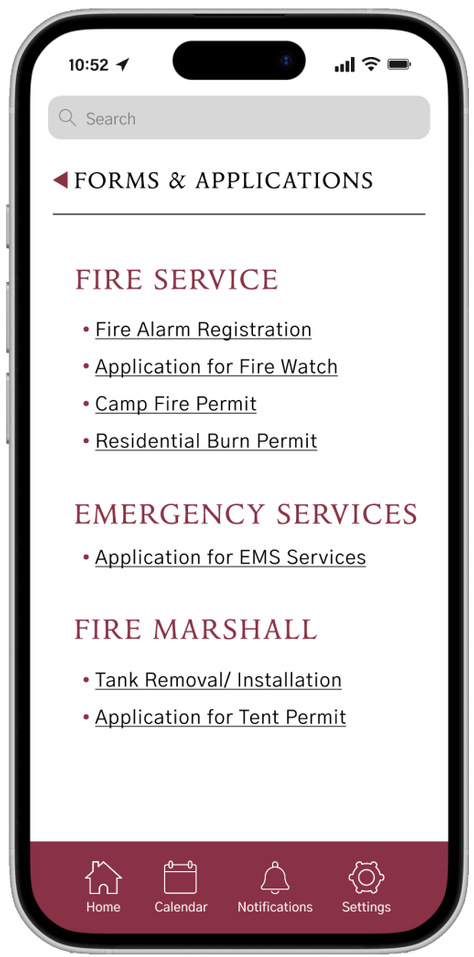
Based on user testing: the notifications button in the bottom navigation provides a quicker way to sign up for alerts.

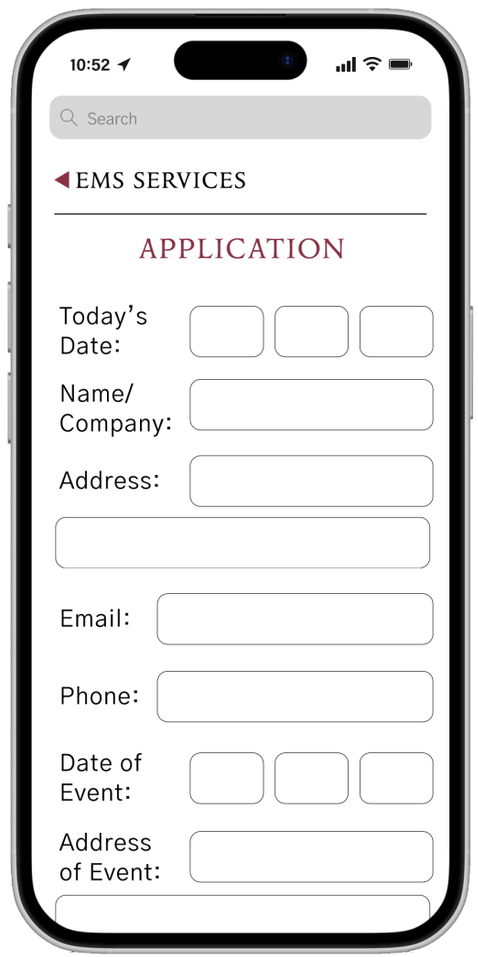
HIGH-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

Find and fill out the EMS services application





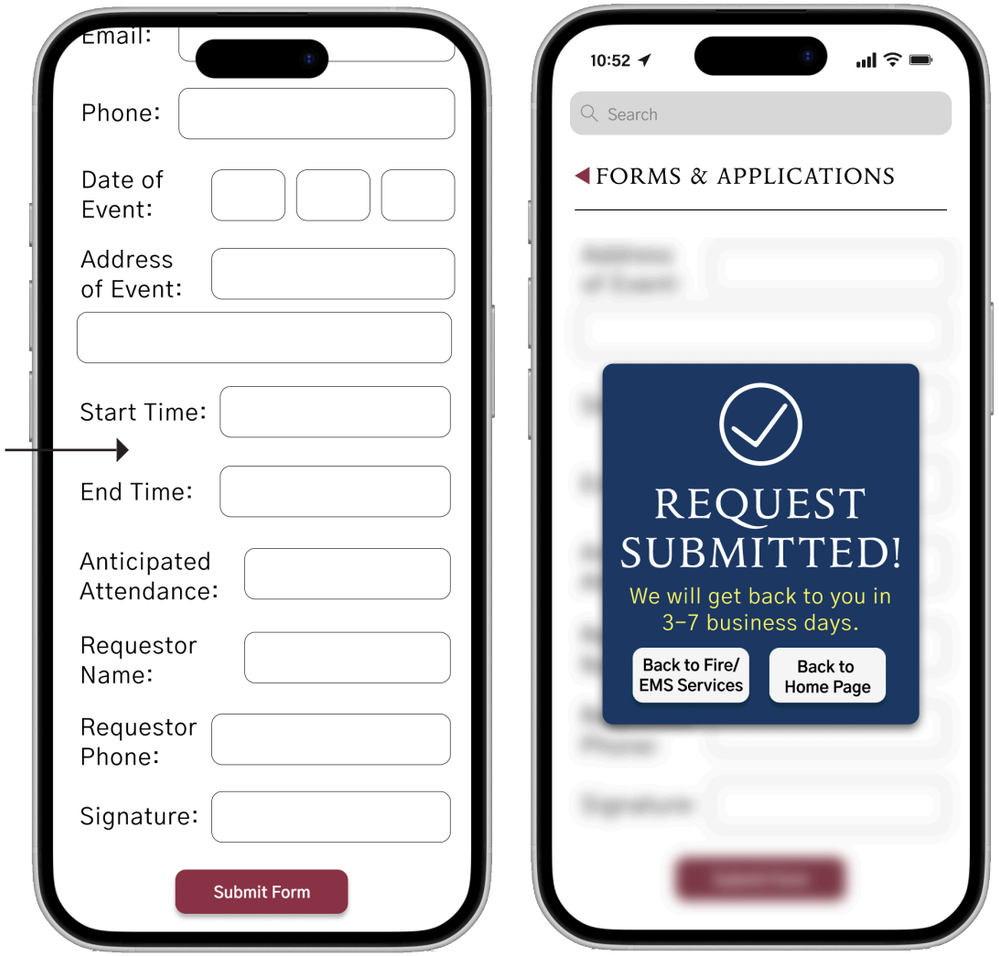




HIGH-FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

Find and fill out the EMS services application *(continued)*

Based on user testing: A scrollable, one page application works better. It allows them to see just how long the application will take to fill out.



FINAL REVISIONS

As you can see from the previous pages, creating the high-fidelity screens was a process. User testing was a part of that, which ultimately helped with many of my design choices you see in these final screens. Without testing my beginning prototypes, I would have developed an app with many potential issues. Listening to my users helped me see where my designs felt short and allowed me to create a digital product with better user experience. Below are the changes I found during user testing and how I implemented them when designing in Figma.

I first realized that each user will be using the app for a variety of reasons and that it is almost impossible to know what route users will take to finish a task. Therefore, when a pop up appears within the app, the user should have more than just one option for a next step. In my low-fidelity prototypes, I originally only had one button heading back to the topic page. I also had a small exit button in the corner, but the users seemed to not notice this. So, in my latest high-fidelity screens, I made sure to include not just the button to go back to the task page, but to also give them an option to go back to the homepage. This way users aren't confused by the buttons and know exactly where their next click will take them.

I also noticed that putting a calendar icon in the bottom navigation confused users when I asked them to find town events. Rather than having a "my calendar" in the app, it makes more sense to add the event to the calendar in their smart phone. Instead of having two calendars in the app, which was confusing to almost everyone, I decided that the town calendar under community resources should be the same calendar in the bottom navigation. That way users have access to town events more easily and will find it quicker to check back often. This finding also led me to give user's clues about where they are within the app's structure. So, if a user is on the calendar page, that icon will be highlighted in white.

FINAL REVISIONS

In the spirit of finding information easier, one user brought to my attention that signing up for town alerts should also be an option within the notifications tab. Since notifications and town alerts go together, this made sense for me too. I decided that I would design this page with an option to sign up for town alerts somewhere on it. That way if first times users don't currently see any notifications, they can easily be brought to the same sign-up page. This way is much quicker and will be targeted at users who are already interested in this type of information.

The last change I did during this design phase was to make the EMS application one long, scrollable page. In my sketches, I had broken it down into two pages, and since they still took up most of the screen, users stumbled when trying to find the button to continue to the next page. After doing some additional research on effective user interfaces, I realized that most users prefer to scroll rather clicking to move on. I figured with the size of the application, it was doable to make its scroll, rather than breaking it up to two pages. This way the user can instantly see how long it is and decide if they should fill it out now or later. This made me realize that sometimes a longer page is better than squeezing in a "next" button at the bottom of the page. Doing that can be bad UI practice.

To watch a walkthrough video of the app:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BFIG05GtJmgFnf5P3_1J1A1O6Qas3k2L/view?usp=sharing

To view the final, clickable prototype in Figma:
https://www.figma.com/proto/gIoE5NVZLFHnbcW2TwpVe0/Ridgefield-App?page-id=0%3A1&node-id=3-2&p=f&view-port=-193%2C-1101%2C1&t=MCGr3s1cemHhjnYE-1&scaling=scale-down&content-scaling=fixed&starting-point-node-id=3%3A2&show-proto-sidebar=1

REFLECTION

This type of project has brought me closer to thinking like a UX designer. Since this was my first UX project in every sense, I made sure to absorb as much as I could and to rework my project until it was right. But as I have learned, the UX process uses designing thinking and therefore, it's never really done. Being a UX designer means continuing to evolve your product over time. Continuing to design, test, and find issues, and then… do it all over again. A designer's job is never done.

In the past seven weeks, working on the *Town of Ridgefield* app has also proven that no matter how confident I am in my design decisions, there will always be a user who is confused or finds an issue with my design. No successful digital product gets noticed without rounds user testing. I learned that user testing doesn't have to be done with a fancy prototype or need a lot of money to fund. No matter how many participants you get, even one user is better than designing the product in a bubble.

This way of designing has allowed me to be more comfortable with feedback and made my early design sketches more creative. I knew that they would most likely change and improve as I went through each stage, so not having everything figured out the first time around was freeing. I knew I could always go back and revise. My entire project went thought rounds of organizing, structuring information, sketching, creating user flows, and then slowly added UI elements to my screens to create a more intuitive app with reasoning behind each design choice. Without each of these steps, I'm not sure I would have arrived at the same final piece I'm looking at now. I see a much stronger design project that I can defend and am proud of. My confidence in UX design has grown and I'm excited to create similar projects in my future, both professionally and personally.