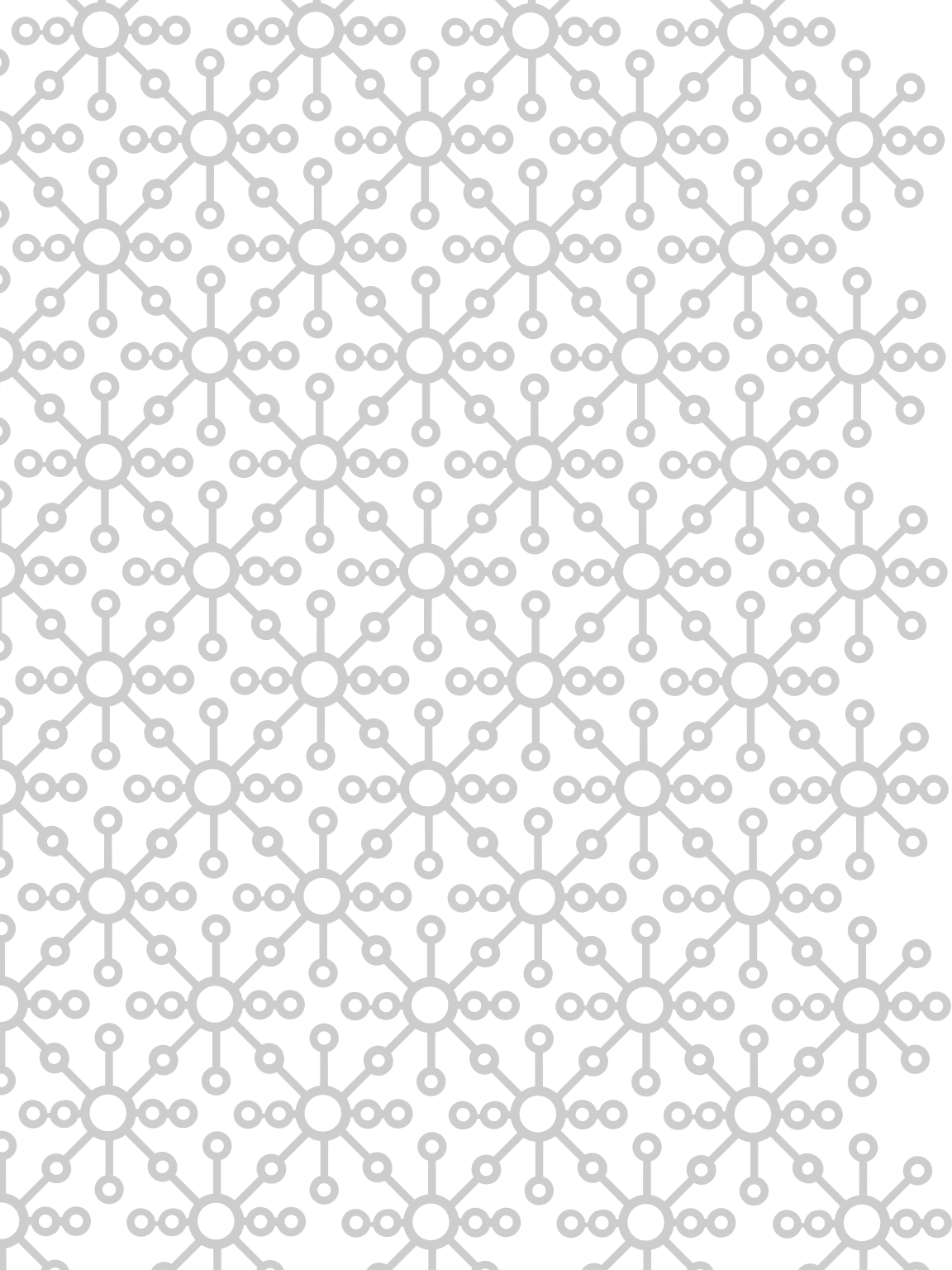


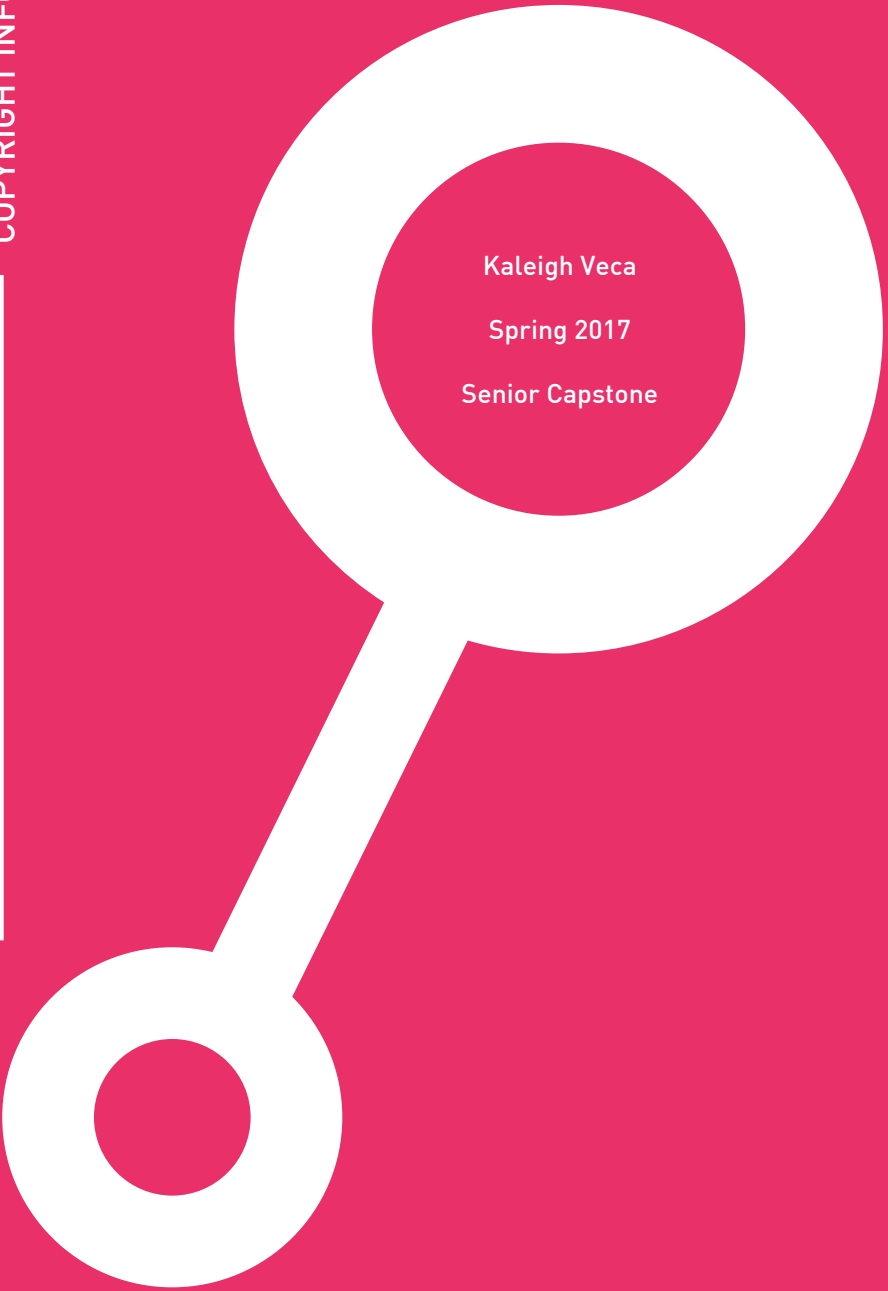


SPOKE



SPoKE

Kaleigh Veca, Spring 2017



Kaleigh Veca
Spring 2017
Senior Capstone

To Mom, Dad, and Kelsey

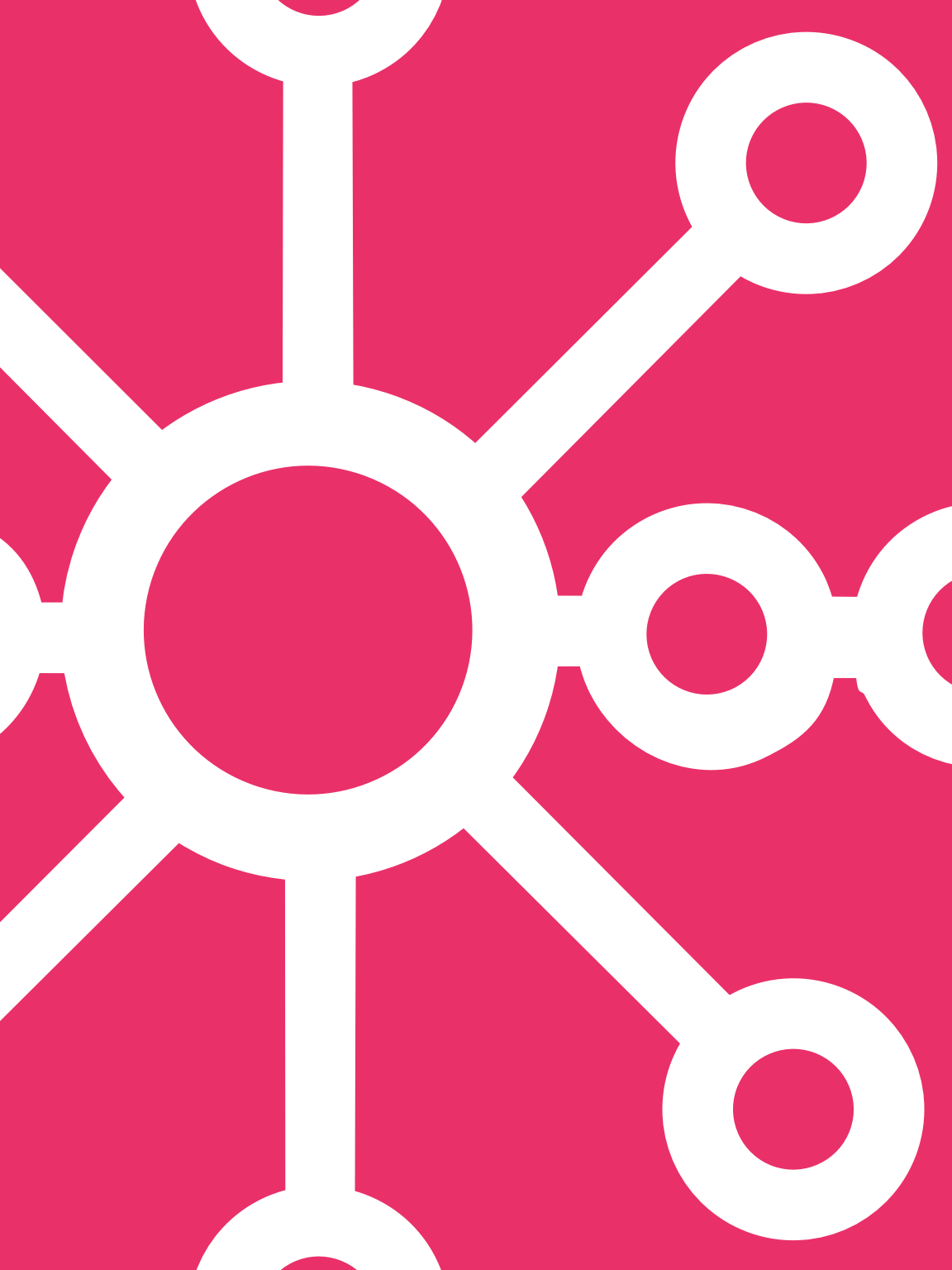
To Jared

To all the pals along the way

To everyone reading,
laughing at how quickly technology changes

and to everyone else (including YOU!)

You guys are cool. You've helped me through undergrad
and through life up until now more than I can fit on a stupid
dedication page anyway.



Menu

Intro	8
Brief	12
Research	18
Precedents	24
Interview with a friend	28
Interview with professionals	34
Presentation Feedback	46
Logo Development	50
Logo, Progress, and Screens	54
User Testing	86
Final Presentation	80
Sources	109
Final Thoughts	110

DEB,



I have always had an interest in design, from branding fake companies when I was a kid to being a graphic designer in my final semester at UT. I've always known this would be my career path, but I have learned a lot about how I operate and how I can improve as a student in my final semester and continue as a lifelong learner in design.

I am enthralled with information, and I see design as a way to communicate, truncate, and symbolize larger amounts of information. From communicating brand ideals to guiding users through digital realms, design is a friendly hand to hold for everyday people trying to navigate their world and make choices. As a designer, I feel it is my responsibility to make people's lives a little easier, better, or brighter by creating work that helps them understand information more clearly and reframe the way they see things. After all, everything in our world is information, and it can be overwhelming to sift through all of it.

In the past, the projects that resonated with me the most have been passion projects; I am the most excited when I can latch onto a project and fine-tune the details. This past semester, I made a project about Oxford commas, and the copyright notices, social media links, and further information in the footer of the webpage were all haikus (I know that it's a small detail that will be overlooked, but I appreciate when projects leave me with room to add extra tidbits). I like getting excited about the details so everything is meticulously crafted. Projects I get to choose, like my screen printed cheeseburger or my Excite Sign from Experimental Typography, interest me because I can implement my own vision, and I waited the entire semester for each of these opportunities to roll around because I knew I wanted to make them when I signed up for the classes. When the project has a lot of facets, it's fun for me to create a working system.

I'm excellent at researching, and I stand behind my copy-writing, my intentionally placed commas, and wordsmithery.

My pitfall (and my saving grace) is my ability to brainstorm ahead. I have project ideas, and they come pre-bundled in my mind at the onset of the idea, which is helpful for implementing short-term projects and increasingly detrimental as the project length is extended.

I'm motivated by fear and procrastination. I tend to overthink things and to get ahead of myself. I tend to overcomplicate projects and abstract them from the intended audience. I am trying to become more thoughtful in regards to how I plan projects and to embrace the unknown. I am trying to pare down and keep things only as complicated as the path of least resistance dictates. I am trying to get more sleep and to work ahead all of the time, not just the week before a deadline. I want to improve my process to include more expansive brainstorms instead of pigeonholing myself too early into choices that I haven't considered thoroughly enough. I aim to eradicate cliché solutions and instead make things that I'm passionate about and feel connected to. Above all, I want to make my thesis something that I feel can make a difference in some way.

Deadlines have always dictated my lifestyle for as long as I can remember being a student. I tend to brush off "fake deadlines," where I tell myself something is due, and I tend to kick myself into gear when the deadline is real and measurable by someone else. I work great under pressure, but I often find that it's hard for me to simulate the pressure without something at stake.

I'm not afraid of criticism because it's how I improve. I'm afraid of people sugarcoating the truth while I'm working and then voicing discontent when the project is complete. I'm a perfectionist, I take pride in my work, and I want it to be its best, without exception. Please give me cut-and-dry advice. If something is working, I want to know what it is that makes it successful so I can keep conquering.

I'm looking forward to an insightful, awesome semester with you!

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink. The name 'Kaleighveca' is written in a cursive, flowing script. The 'K' is tall and thin, while the 'veca' part has a large, looping flourish that extends under the rest of the name.

My three initial observations were:

People in younger, more digital generations have fewer written mementos from people significant to them.

Entrepreneurial, creative children don't have adequate resources and knowledge to develop their ideas into a business (unless they have a parent doing all the work).

With shorter attention spans and more content to peruse than ever before, people don't seem to be as invested in the media they consume.



I started researching the "digital generation," and I found a jarring statistic that only 19% of millennials trust others! I thought that it was a really low, disappointing number, and I started to move forward with that idea, after encouragement from Deb.

I hit a dead end fairly quickly researching business education for children. Even though I didn't think I had adequate resources as a kid, they're out there on the internet now. There are a lot of resources, and even though they don't seem to be well-designed or in too large of sets, there is already a saturated market of curriculum to get kids thinking about businesses and all of the components of running and facilitating them. It would be difficult to differentiate myself in a large enough way to justify doing a capstone project where I make another version of stuff that's already accessible and on the market for people to find.

After talking through my ideas with Deb, we decided together that the third idea of trying to find ways to synthesize content that people get from multiple platforms is a really difficult task to tackle, and a solution for it is an elusive ticket to becoming a billionaire.



OBSERVATION Even though a mere 19% of my generation (“millennials”) say that others can be trusted, they still crave meaningful relationships (Pew Research Center).

ARGUMENT If the millennial generation had more trustworthy, transparent ways to communicate or get reliable information, they would become more trusting of others and could form deeper relationships.

OBSERVATION Despite living in a hyper-connected world, people are more disconnected than ever in the communities in which they live.

ARGUMENT If people could communicate better, get to know one another, and trust each other more, it would strengthen interpersonal relationships in communities.

My first observation was based on a statistic that I stumbled across while looking at how millennials communicate. I got pleasantly derailed into looking up trust. I researched a lot about how people view others in societies and form bonds of trust. I wanted to start out very vague and slowly start narrowing down ideas and weeding them out. I gave an extremely vague presentation and realized that I needed to start narrowing down even faster than I thought based on the feedback I received.

I started looking at ways that people can build trust, and it came as no surprise that communication and knowing people builds trust over time. I wanted to find ways for people to feel involved in a network of others in a way that I feel like is lacking right now. Sure, Facebook has everyone connected online, but it lacks the closeness of an actual community. I want to find a way to improve face-to-face communication, even if it has to have a digital catalyst or facilitator. It's awesome that people have friends over the globe and with technology like video chatting, people can have conversations from anywhere in the world. People get to choose for the first time who is in their immediate circle in real time, without having to worry about geography. However, neighbors are important. Your friend in London can't lend you a cup of sugar, and you can't borrow a ladder for the afternoon from your friend in another state. Sometimes, it really helps to have neighbors around to lend a helping hand, to visit, or to share some barbecue with.

OBSERVATION

Despite living in a hyper-connected world, people are more disconnected than ever in the communities in which they live.

ARGUMENT

If people could get to know their neighbors more personally and have more frequent, real life interactions with them, it would strengthen interpersonal relationships and better the community as a whole.

RESEARCH

- People who know and trust their neighbors report higher levels of health and well-being (Bjornstrom).
- 53% of people (and only 40% of millennials) know their neighbors' names (Trulia).
- People who know their neighbors' names trust them 27% more than people who don't know their neighbors (Trulia).
- One third of Americans don't know their neighbors (Cortwright).
- People are more likely to do more favors for people they have previously done favors for, and favor-doers like the favor-receivers more than they did (Jecker and Landy).

AUDIENCE VALUE

People will have a deeper sense of belonging to their community by having meaningful, intentional interactions, which will foster a sense of trust and create deeper connections with their neighbors.

INTENTION

To connect people with their real-world neighbors by leveraging social media to make people more social

DEFINITIONS

- Social Network — an interrelated group of people and the connections they share
- Micro-Network — a small collection of inter-connected people

PRECEDENTS

NeighborHood is an iPhone app that lets people buy, sell, trade, and look for missing items. I like the idea of the centralization of community, although the scope of the app is small and the userbase seems like it is not downloading the app.

Touchtown is a senior living app that allows seniors to check shared, community information. Having an app that supplements information and drives interactions (by telling seniors about community events in their nursing homes) in the physical world is a good way to keep a community connected.

Next Door is an app that a classmate brought to my attention that has a similar goal, but it serves as more of a message board, and the app has poor organization for information people post. The app lets users live on their actual street on an app in the map and has a map with all of the users in a neighborhood. The app seems to be missing key features that I think are important for connecting in real life with neighbors.

EXPERT

Debbie Sharp, Assistant Neighborhood Coordinator, Knoxville Government — to understand the relational needs and the preexisting social landscape of Knoxville neighborhoods

DELIMITATION

This project is not another Facebook.
This project is not a crutch to replace face-to-face interaction.
This project is not a garage sale app.

FORM

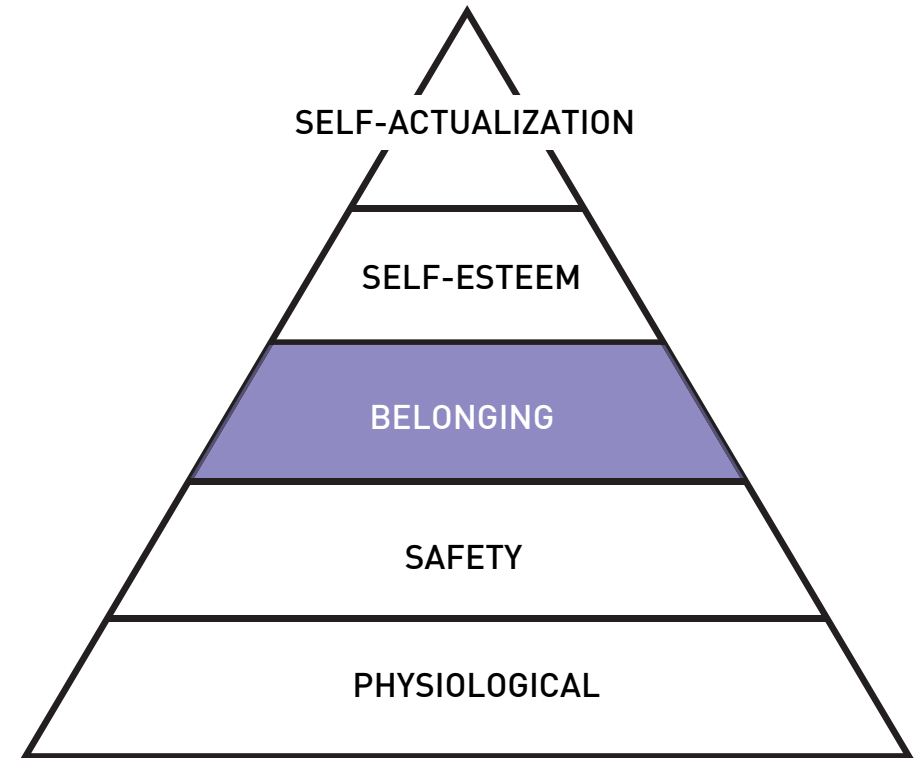
This is an app that will boost and facilitate neighborly interactions outside of the app.

DELIVERABLES

Logo, brand system, and high-fidelity app prototype screens

Social psychologist Abraham Maslow developed a pyramid that represents the relative importance of human needs. Dubbed “Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs,” it describes the priorities and goals of people. The first two tiers are physiological and safety related, for example finding ample food and a secure shelter, respectively. Next is the “belonging” tier, where social interactions with others build a foundation for self-improvement. Without having secure relationships with others, it is hard, if not impossible to achieve personal goals. Finally, self esteem and self-actualization are the top tiers, such as believing in yourself and setting out to accomplish the goals you set. Sure, it probably be done without a supportive community, but support and acceptance from others is an even more basic need than achieving personal goals.

Since this project is about the middle tier, I wanted to highlight the importance of belonging in the context of a neighborhood. Houses and property are some of people’s largest expenses, and it only makes sense that people would want to feel like they belong and feel at home— at home. If they’ve invested their finances and resources to live there, it seems like they can afford to emotionally invest in relationships with their neighbors as well.





Only 53% of people know their neighbors' names (Trulia).



33% of people have never even met their neighbors (Cortwright).



People who know their neighbors' names trust them 27% more than those who don't (Trulia).

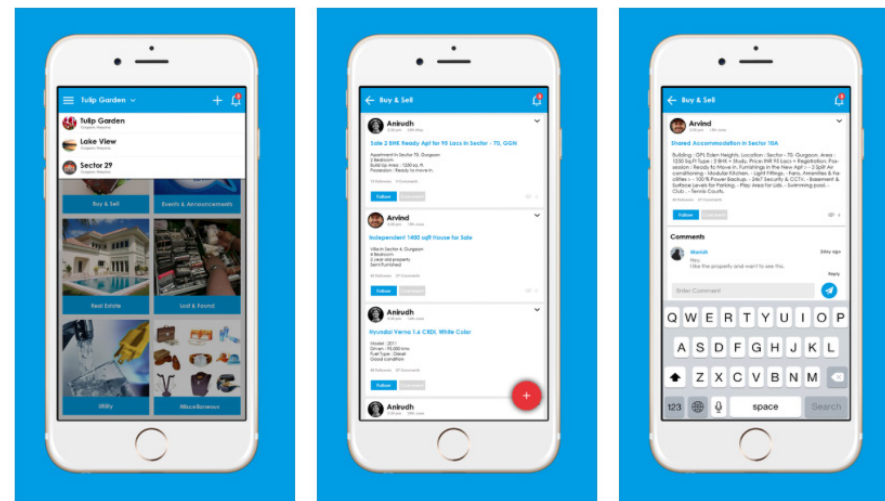


People who know their neighbors report higher levels of health and well-being (Bjornstrom).

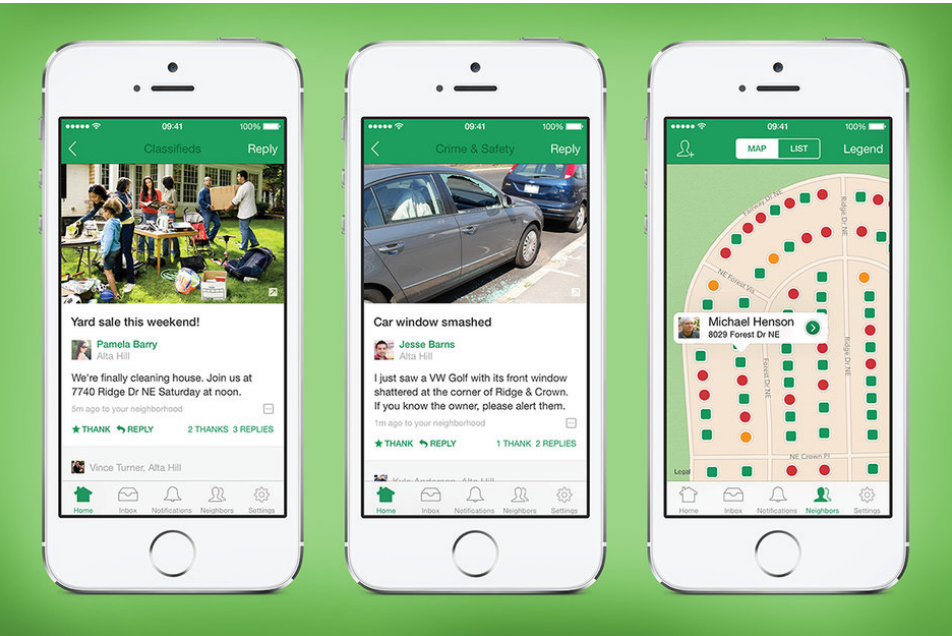
I found some apps that already fit the need to some degree. However, the three of them have different audiences and intended uses that aren't exactly what I was aiming for when I chose my topic, so there is room in the marketplace to accommodate my plan. It is important to take design cues from the apps and figure out my next steps, using their strengths as ideas in my toolbox and using their weaknesses as cautionary tales that I can fail vicariously through. I want to make sure that my app has the features I think are necessary and that my research proves, but I also don't want to bog down the app with features that will weigh it down and cause it to be inoperable, especially by less technologically literate generations.

These three apps all offered a multi-user platform that allows people to interact with others, but the interactions seem constrained to the app. I like that NeighborHood has people meet up to buy the products and that Touchtown lets people RSVP for upcoming events. However, I want my app to encourage people to connect with their neighbors and to build deeper relationships with them.

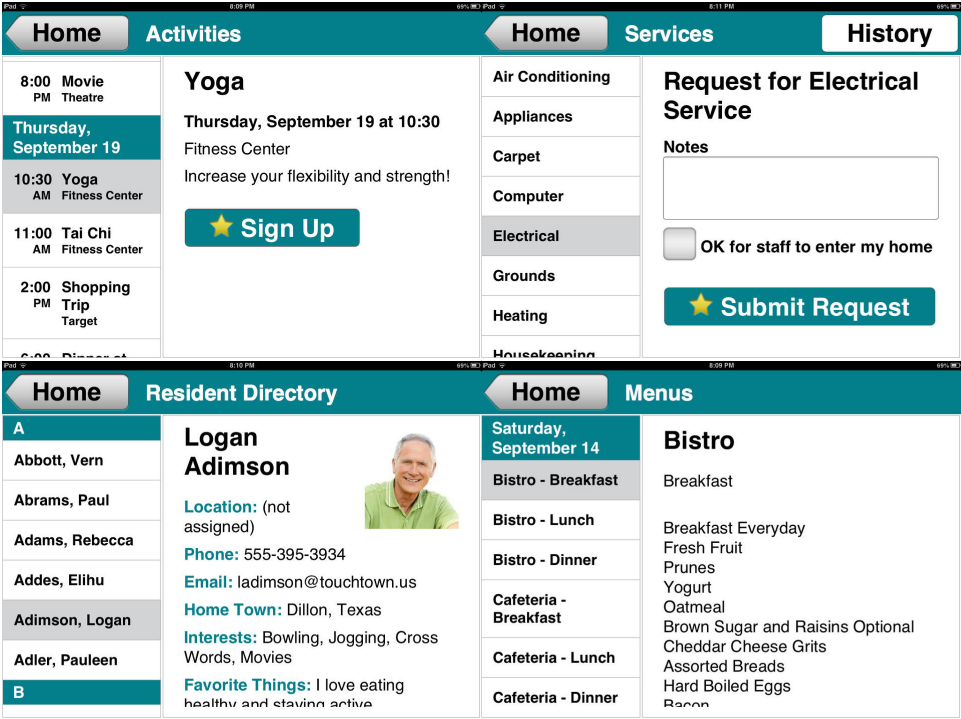
I want people to go outside and meet their neighbors or invite them in for a cup of coffee, not just make a dozen more digital friends.



NeighborHood is an extremely unknown app, but I think it still sets an important precedent for local communication. However, it's made out of different types of buy/sell/trade categories, and it doesn't seem like it would be appropriate to report a missing pet or borrow a cup of sugar. Functionality-wise, the app seems really narrow-sighted, and it doesn't align with what I'm looking for, in terms of my vision for the app's scope and reach.



NextDoor offers an app that lets people make posts in a central feed in their neighborhood. It has a high adoption rate, although I have never heard of the app personally. My classmate, Alex, showed me his neighborhood's group in the app. I noticed immediately that the central feed had no filters, so it was full of everything from lost dogs to multi-level marketing products for people trying to make a sale. It seemed cluttered to me. Alex also explained that it works based on invitations, so if you get an invite to join, only then will you be allowed officially into the app. Although exclusivity helps with adoption rates, it also led to me never hearing of the app, and I couldn't even find it when I was researching apps that were related to my theme of connecting neighbors. I think the app is on the right track with the type of app I envision myself making, but I also want it to encourage and foster authentic conversations and real world relationships.



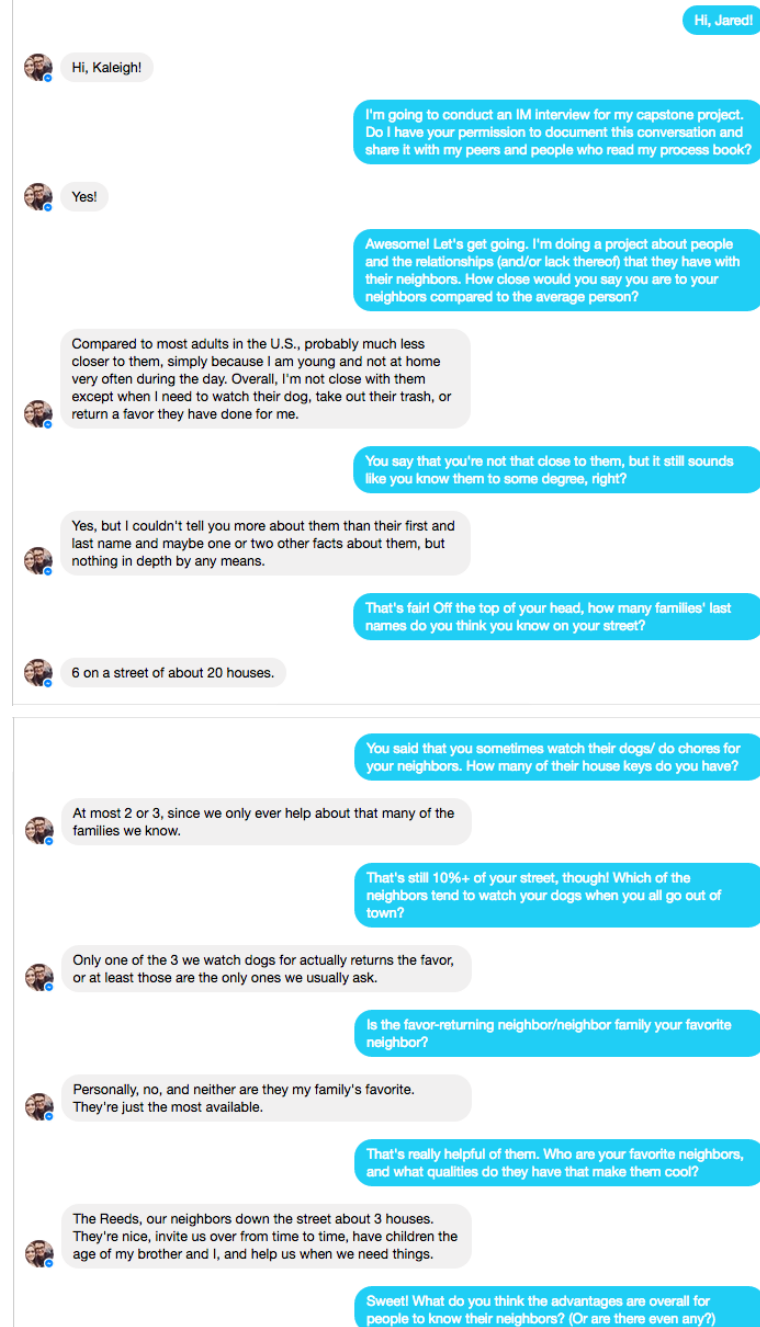
Granted, the UI for Touchtown is dated and the app is intended for an aging demographic who would more likely appreciate the skeuomorphic button styles in the app, but this app is intended to connect senior citizens in a senior living community. It serves as an active message board, letting people create profiles, browse menus, find events, and ask for help. The main focus of the app is integrating technology in the senior center to allow an easier way to distribute information as well as boosting technological literacy. For my project, I have a more technologically advanced audience, which will give me more room to make the app functional and more aesthetically pleasing. However, I really appreciate the ease-of-use that the app seems to have, and I want to make sure that my UI is equally easy to interact with.



I chose my friend Jared Smith for my interview because he's really insightful, gives honest feedback, and I've known him long enough to know that he has really great neighbors. I tried to ask him questions that got a good landscape of his neighbors and what they mean to him before I asked him about the project; I thought it was crucial to have a foundation we agreed upon relating to neighbors before I asked how my project could benefit. I also tried asking questions that got meatier answers than just a yes or a no; I wanted to be able to see from Jared's perspective the value of having strong relationships with neighbors in the hope that it would give me a better direction to aim the project.

Jared was a trooper and answered a lot of questions that probed into why having close ties with neighbors is important to problems he saw with me creating an app. He even offered to help test the app later on, which I thought was incredibly kind, even after I bogged him down with a lot of interview questions.

Deb, here it is in all of its rasterized glory. I'll be figuring out how to get better screenshots soon and replacing these since they will probably print badly.



I think 1) it provides a support network of people to lean on in the case of family struggles, car troubles, when going out of town, etc. 2) the older you are, having friends gets harder, so having friendly neighbors that are willing to hang out can fill your time with fun things to do, 3) especially if you have kids, having friendly neighbors that you are close to helps keep your children busy with neighbors' kids to play with and even more important, it provides a network to keep a watchful eye over your children when they are outside and potentially at risk of getting hurt or kidnapped, and 4) having close neighbors satisfies an innate need to fit in with society in the place that matters most, at home.

I really like what you said about belonging and feeling "at home" at home! Do you think that most people would benefit from knowing their neighbors in the type of way you just described?

I think so, again especially if they're older and home at nights after work. I know my family gets positive benefits out of it (as described earlier). I also know that growing up as a kid, the friends I had my neighborhood were some of my closest childhood (pre-HS/MS) friends I had, with whom I would play with for hours every day after school in the outdoors around my house, and inside on rainy days.

I know from talking with you before about Marcos, one of your neighbors from when you lived in Florida. Was your neighborhood as tight-knit there as well?

Yes, even more so. However, there were only about 4 or 5 people on our street, which was in a growing and lesser developed part of the city on the outskirts of the major center. Of the 4 or 5 people there, we were extremely close with the children of the families in 3 of them, and would spend everyday hanging out both at school and after school. Eventually, my uncle even moved onto the same street when he moved back to Florida, and we spent many days with him. Due to it being Florida, when the round of 4 major hurricanes hit in 2004 and we were out of school for 4 weeks straight, we other neighbor and close friend of mine, Pamela (she moved there from Brazil, and Marcos from Honduras, several years before in 2000). Between our three families and my Uncle's family, we shared food and drinks, power from generators, and spent many hours together when the roads were blocked and we couldn't get out of our neighborhood. I don't know what we would have done without all of them.

You mentioned that Marcos was Honduran and that Pamela was Brazilian— did they teach you at all about their countries, and/or did you learn about their culture through living near them?

Definitely so. They both even gave me gifts from their countries when they went on trips and came back.

I really wish I had that kind of relationship with my neighbors. So switching tracks a little, you lived in UT housing your freshman year. What did you think of your neighbors there?

They were great! I met many, many wonderful people and experienced a lot of diversity in things I did by living on campus for a year.

How close would you say you were with your hallmates?

Very close. Many of them ended up becoming my best friends for some period of time, others are still very close with me, and those I am not as close with now I would still lean on if I needed to.

How did you get to meet them initially?

My roommate was my best friend from high school, and the others I met through activities that first week of school.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but if I remember correctly, you left your door open for the first few weeks and were able to meet neighbors by being open to meeting them, right?

Yes, we did.

Since you took a step toward meeting them, would you say that they were more comfortable reaching out to you and getting to know you?

Yes, I think so. We were very welcoming and also kept music playing to create a more welcoming environment.

I knew you during this time, and everyone was always at your dorm. What do you think made your dorm the hotspot for your neighbors to hang out in?

I think it was a combination 1) leaving the door open, 2) establishing ourselves on the floor as open and welcoming, 3) having music on, and 4) having the right environment (we had laser lights)

If a semi-random group of college neighbors were able to get to know each other and hang out, do you think it's possible to recreate this experience among neighbors in other types of living situations?

Yes, absolutely! I think with some of the conditions I have described in my situation at my family's home and within a college dorm would be applicable to bringing together any given group of people in close proximity.

That's encouraging. I haven't had similar luck in any of my neighborhoods I've lived in, and I'm really jealous that you've had 3 sets of neighbors who you really got to know. I'm thinking about making an app to connect neighbors to other neighbors, to try to create small networks within neighborhoods. Do you think this could provide a catalyst to help people start conversations with their neighbors?

Yes, definitely. As someone who has had luck by simply walking into situations with the right conditions, I don't think everyone else has had that same luck. With some kind of solution to help facilitate discourse and interaction between neighbors of all kinds, hopefully everyone could see what it is like to have the kind of support network I have had.

Especially for people who are shy and feel weird talking to neighbors and/or people who have lived in subdivisions for years without knowing some of their neighbors, does this seem like it may be able to help break the ice between strangers who live on the same street?

I think so, though it depends on how the conversation is facilitated. I think focusing on the things neighbors can provide each other, like dog watching or watching the house when families are gone, or even connecting families with lots of similarly-aged children is the right place to start, rather than diving into something more akin to a Tinder-like experience.

That brings up a really great point that I was about to ask you— what few key features do you think are the most important for an app like this?

I think the most important is linking up neighbors into a central feed of activity/posts/etc., whatever that may be. Followed by connecting people somehow based on what people need. Then maybe a feature revolving around children if it's a neighborhood and not a dorm. I'm not exactly sure, but I would use it if it helped facilitate the conditions of good neighbors: there for you when you need it (especially in times of crisis), a social network that you interact with regularly of people closest to your distance-wise, and support structure for your children or other visiting friends.

Yeah, I agree. There should definitely be a community aspect to the app. What are some problems/pitfalls/challenges that you think might arise with creating something like this? I want to make sure that I'm considering everything on the front end before I get too far along, so feel free to be as honest as you want!

I think you may find people that don't want to interact directly, which is why I think building in functionality to connect people based on what they need is important for gathering the cases where people don't want to interact. I also think building functionality for people with children is important, since that's such an important part of many families lives and the social life of their young children will drive many parents to move to a location simply for a neighborhood with many other large families. Another challenge will likely be deciding how large to limit a particular cluster of the social network to, as in how many people will one person using the system see at a maximum. Too many and you will hurt people's ability to grow close, and too little and there won't be enough room for organic interaction. I think keeping the networks to neighborhoods, or in the case of large neighborhoods, then keep it to groups within the neighborhood and having an overall group for the whole neighborhood (with some kind of filtering to allow people to zoom out to see the broader picture, rather than just their subset of their neighborhood) would limit the network to a viable size. Then, you could have tags or filters within a neighborhood (or neighborhood group) that pulls you down to a street or block level, since you wouldn't need a neighbor on the other side of your neighborhood to watch your dog when your nextdoor neighbor is free at the same time and can do it. Finally, as with any system facilitating interaction between humans, there should be spam and malicious message filtering to prevent bullying, threats, or generally bad behavior that can and will arise at sufficient scale.

Jared, thank you so much for your insight into the project and for taking the time to help me out. You rock! 🙌

You're welcome! I'd love to be a beta tester!

Thanks again! I'll definitely keep you in the loop when I'm looking for more feedback!

This conversation with Jared led me to realizing the variety of neighbors that a person can have. Jared has had three major sets of neighbors in his life that we talked about — the Floridians, the Maryvillians, and the people in his freshman year residence hall. His neighbors were very different than him in his multi-cultural Floridian neighborhood, but he also had neighbors in college that he had a lot more in common with.

He reiterated what I already knew, that neighbors are helpful to have when you need a helping hand or don't mind saving the day, like Jared's family's dog-watching neighbors.

getting hurt or kidnapped, and 4) having close neighbors satisfies an innate need to fit in with society in the place that matters most, at home.

Most importantly, Jared stumbled onto a point I've been investigating in my presentations. People want to fit in and feel comfortable, especially where they live. Everyone wants to feel secure and accepted. It's how people are wired, and it's sad that more people don't know more about the people who are physically the closest to them.

I thought Jared did a great job at providing answers that had depth and can be revisited as I move throughout the project to use as guiding ideas to keep the project in perspective.



Debbie helped me realize that outside of my collegiate bubble, there are still people with flip phones in the everyday world. I knew that flip phones are still on the market, but I guess I assumed that smartphones were ubiquitous, and I forgot to account for the laggard groups who still are holding onto older technology. She mentioned that especially the elderly aren't as tech-savvy, and David helped reframe the app as part of a larger toolbox or initiative. Now, I'm starting to reconsider the app. Although it could offer push notifications, a website that's mobile-friendly would be more accessible to more people, but print media is still the most inclusive. They made me realize that it's impossible to reach everyone with one technology, so I either need to pivot toward a web app instead to try and reach more people or to pivot the product toward neighborhoods with younger demographics of people who do have the technology but still aren't connected. Also, I had been thinking of neighborhoods as subdivisions, more or less, but Debbie taught me that a neighborhood is however big or small that people want it to be.

Overall, I was inspired by Debbie's love for connecting neighbors and David's surprising knowledge of technology and the critical suggestions he gave about how to improve my project. I need to take their advice with a grain of salt, however, since it's coming from a government office and has the lens of people bureaucratically trying to solve problems. They emphasized community resources and fundraising, and although those are important things to consider, I doubt the general public would give those issues as much weight as they did.

Debbie — http://media.jrn.com/images/south_11708051_ver1.0_640_480.jpg
David — http://i.vimeocdn.com/video/510335143_1280x720.jpg



Interview with Debbie Sharp, Assistant Neighborhood Coordinator. (She's abbreviated as D, and I'm K.) Also, there was a surprise interview at the end with her boss, David Massey, the Neighborhood Coordinator, who will be referred to as "David" in the interview.

K: Hi, I'm Kaleigh Veca.

D: I'm Debbie.

K: Nice to meet you! I'm a senior at UT, and I'm doing my capstone project about how to connect with neighbors face-to-face. Studies show that 53% of people don't know their neighbors' names, and 33% of people don't even know their neighbors at all! My project is about connecting with neighbors in real life. Like, I don't want people in basements being happy that they went out and met people when they sat around the computer all day. I want people to actually know their neighbors and connect with them regularly.

D: We actually have a workshop coming up about connecting with neighbors! It's March 11, and we're even giving out our Neighbor of the Year award! Here— I'll send you an invite! What's your email address?

K: kveca@utk.edu.

D: Okay, it should be sending. Also, would you mind giving me the sources for your statistics later, if you can remember them? I think that might help us, in the office with things we're doing.

K: No problem! To start things off, this is my project, but what are some possible pitfalls you see in it?

D: There's a neighborhood that has a Facebook group that's so involved that they never have face-to-face contact. Also, I'm sure you know that any time someone hides behind one of these [computer], they say meaner things than they would otherwise. So there's some cyberbullying and dissent on Facebook.

K: How does your office pick neighborhoods?

D: Neighborhoods pick their own space, but sometimes they can be too big to manage.

K: Okay, what is too big to manage?

D: Well, if you can't go door-to-door, people without internet will be left behind, so it's important to make sure that you can talk to everyone door-to-door.

K: What's the biggest challenge you all currently face?

D: How to get people involved. There are people working 2 jobs with 2 kids, and how can they volunteer? Usually, we have facilitators who are Stay At Home Moms, people who are retired, etc. If you could get more people involved...

K: What is the minimum level of involvement to make things work well?

D: One person per road for flyers. We call them "block captains." But it's hard for some people to see why it's important to be involved. They think we're the homeowner's association, and they think we're out there measuring my grass telling me I can't do certain things, but they're different than a neighborhood association.

K: Actually, that's an important thing to clarify. I'm sure this is a rookie question, but what is the difference between a homeowner's association and a neighborhood association, then?

D: With a neighborhood association, people say, "Oh, wait. My neighborhood is doing fun stuff!" A homeowner's association is a confined, neighborhood development. There's a mandatory fee that goes toward stuff like maintaining a shared area, like a pool, the street, paying a mower, or upkeeping a detention pond. It's part of the home ownership, so it's not a surprise when you move into somewhere new. If there's no homeowner's association, there's usually a voluntary neighborhood organization, but they have no shared space, like we talked about. They're voluntary, and they have no dues. Well, some do dues if you want to vote.

K: Okay, so we talked about the Neighbor Of the Year award, but what kinds of qualities does that person have? Like, what makes the BEST neighbor?

D: The award is named after Diana Conn, who volunteered to do things regularly. She was a real humble leader. We need more humble leaders. It keeps improving the more you have.

K: This is probably an obvious question, but what exactly improves?

D: There are fewer fights. People are more concerned about what's best for their neighborhood, their neighbor, and being kind.

K: How do humble leaders affect the neighborhood?

D: What I've noticed about relationships in the best neighborhoods is that how you make the decision is more important than what you decide. David, my boss, says something like that. I forgot exactly how it goes, so I'll ask him what it is in a bit. But anyway, if it's unfair and hostile, it's not fair to people who are volunteering their time.

K: That makes sense. What do you think the best form for my project should be? Is an app the right tool to reach people and connect them?

D: I would go with a multimedia approach. Door-to-door, face-to-face, and some social media. We always try to get people to not talk about sensitive things online. In person helps deescalate the situation, but it needs to be private, away from social media if it's serious.

K: Totally. What are some activities that the more successful neighborhoods put on?

D: We have the benefits of seeing what a lot of neighborhoods are doing. A lot of them do simple but fun activities. One has a Fourth Of July mailbox decorating contest. Another neighborhood has a tradition of taking their pumpkins to a field and lighting them one last time. It's a tradition now, and it's always the day after Halloween, so it's Día De Los Muertos. They do it so the pumpkins don't rot on everyone's porches. Other neighborhoods do home tours, in the spring, in the fall, or even for holidays. They do it as a fundraiser, even. Some neighborhoods have their own parks, but the parks and recreation department doesn't pay the upkeep. Sometimes, they have neighborhood garage sales, which also could be a fundraiser. It's always better when everyone sells things because more people come to neighborhood garage sales if they know they don't have to drive all around town looking for garage sales. They can even have speakers come in and educate about community issues. And my neighborhood was the first neighborhood in the state of Tennessee to be certified as a wildlife habitat!

K: Okay, that's really cool. What all does that entail?

D: Well, we have about 600 homes in my neighborhood, and 50 houses have to be certified as wildlife habitats. There have to be berries on trees, a bird-bath or standing water, a birdhouse, or similar accommodations for squirrels or even beekeepers' houses can count as a wildlife habitat. My neighborhood asked for city backing, and now the city of Knoxville is trying to get certified too. We've been certified for 2-3 years now.

K: I know that wildlife habitat certification takes a lot of time, but I imagine your neighborhood also has other activities or things it does. Are there any more things that are unique to your neighborhood?

D: We've done fundraisers. There's a local church that lets our neighborhood meet there, so we've done lunches after church. We had a taco bar for Cinco de Mayo, and we've also had a spaghetti lunch. We also do fundraisers to help schools, like a back-to-school school supply drive.

K: That sounds great, but I'm sure people still wonder why neighborhood involvement matters. At the end of the day, how would you say that it helps?

D: When you have a strong neighborhood, everybody benefits. When a neighborhood is organized, it is stronger, and when it's stronger, it's safer.

K: What would you say is the ideal size for a neighborhood?

D: It depends. There are neighborhoods that are two streets all the way up

to...well, we have one with twelve hundred houses. That's huuuuuge.

K: That's a lot of variation. Is one inherently better than the other?

D: It's better to start small. Then, you can grow. You can have security, police, programs, and advocacy.

K: How large should a subset be of a larger, say 1200 house, neighborhood?

D: There's the neighborhood watch program, which the Police Department actually runs because it deals with crime. Neighborhood watch tends to be smaller subsets; they use block captains. [Contextually, it made sense that one street, with a block captain, was the ideal subset of a neighborhood.]

Actually, there's one neighborhood that got so good at neighborhood watch that there was no crime anymore, so the group stopped meeting, which was bad because the all of the neighbors stopped meeting after that.

K: You mentioned that neighborhood watch is smaller subsets of a neighborhood. How many committees are in a typical neighborhood?

D: A neighborhood organization has about 3-4 neighborhood watches.

K: ...and you mentioned that they are run by block captains. Do the block captains get anything out of it? Are they compensated, or do they just want a better place to live?

D: 100% of what happens, well, I feel weird saying 100%, because 100% is all the time, but 100% of what happens is voluntary. When they help, it helps everybody.

K: We've been talking about neighborhoods for quite some time, but we I just realized that we never defined it. Would you mind giving a basic definition of what a neighborhood means to you or to your office?

D: A neighborhood is any group of people living in the same proximity. There are people of different races, backgrounds, and religions— all kinds of diversity! We can work on being open towards [sic] diversity. I guess it's just a geographic area that chooses to work together. Does that help?

K: Totally. What's the lowest hanging fruit that you think my project could help fix? Like, what is one thing that is doable that has the highest payoff?

D: Well, that's the problem is that people aren't involved. If we could get across to folks... more hands on deck would make for a lighter load.

K: So, be honest, is an app the right solution to fix the problem of "un-involvement"?

D: What an app could do is help involve younger folks. Folks like me...look at my phone. [She held up a flip phone.] If we had an app, I couldn't use it. Maybe if there were multiple platforms, so we could meet people where they are.

K: What types of demographics tend to be the most uninvolved?

D: College students. It's not their settle-down-home yet. We want young folks too! We want to see all age ranges! Young folks, under 18, we're trying to do a push for that. We have two workshops coming up that are geared toward young folks. Lots of people don't understand local government, and we're trying to get young folks to understand it and be part of it. We don't really see anyone in their twenties, either. We're starting to see someee in their thirties, but that's when they start having kids and want to make sure their neighborhood is good for their kids.

K: Would you say that young people... don't know? Don't care? Or maybe they have different priorities?

D: I'd say all three. They don't know. They don't care, and what was the third thing?

K: Different priorities?

D: Yeah, all three. But we definitely want them to understand how to do this. We want them to be able to make changes when they see something happening. Maybe it'll help keep younger kids in Knoxville.

K: That they start to make a change and already set roots?

D: Yeah, we want them to feel like they're connected to their neighborhoods. Our dream is that the older kids can teach the younger kids, who grow up and can then teach the younger kids about how to be involved.

K: While we're talking about demographics, are there differences between urban and rural neighborhoods? Well, I'm sure there are, but could you talk about the differences you see a little bit?

D: We don't have a lot of rural. Well, we have some, but it's not too rural-rural. In urban neighborhoods, it's easier to get around.

K: You've described fundraising lunches and fun activities, but I imagine that some neighborhoods can't do activities like that. You mentioned that some people work a lot and have young kids so they can't be too involved.

D: Some neighborhoods just don't have what they need for a neighborhood. East Knoxville is a food desert, meaning that there aren't good grocery stores other than convenience stores. It's inequitable.

K: That's a problem, but how can they fix it?

D: Help give them have a voice. They can have meetings and get things moving. It's a slow process, and we can try to connect them to the people they need, but we can't do a lot to fix it. [The way Debbie described it sounds like they're the middle men, or maybe the phone operator that connects them with the right resources within other departments.]

K: Especially in urban neighborhoods, where you said the people are closer together, is there a thing as too close? Is there too much tension because

they know too much about their noisy neighbors and can't get away?
D: A neighborhood comes to mind. They were having issues with zoning. There were a lot of new apartments coming up. There were problems with traffic—where you gonna put the cars? They rezoned.

K: So like somebody kept taking a parking spot, and instead of fighting the person who kept taking it, they worked together to prevent other people from taking their spot?
D: Pretty much. They rezoned so no one else could build there. Instead of growing out, they grew up. They seemed to work well together since they had a common goal. We should ask David about this if you want to know more. [We forgot to ask David.]

K: That sounds like a really good resolution, but it doesn't seem like all issues are that clear-cut. What do you do when things are more tense?
D: You can have half of an entire neighborhood think one thing, and the other half could disagree completely. In situations like that, it's best to find common ground.

K: So instead of compromising on difficult issues, you try and distract them with other things they can work together on?
D: Yeah. At least they can start moving forward on something.

K: You mentioned earlier that one of the best things about neighborhoods is that they encourage diversity. Are there any neighborhoods you know of that do it right? Like, where people can learn from their neighbors about other cultures or ways of life?
D: We have a neighborhood that's heavily Hispanic. They put on an international festival every month in the spring, summer, and fall. There are a lot of refugees in the community, and they try to include everyone. It's not a Hispanic festival— it's for everyone. They have crafts and food from their countries. I've been trying not to say names, but actually, I'm pretty sure you could figure it out. It's Lawnsdale.

K: You talked about the apartments that banded together to rezone. Can an apartment be a neighborhood too?
D: Some people think that if you're renting, it's not a neighborhood? So some people don't see apartments as neighborhoods. We also have a complex of apartments that are part of a bigger neighborhood organization that I can think of. In the end, people determine the neighborhoods, not us.

K: So dorms are kind of like apartments. I know you said earlier that college kids aren't really looking to settle down yet, but could a dorm also be a neighborhood, in a sense?
D: I think it'd be wonderful if dorms were a neighborhood! I don't think

we'd turn anybody down if they came to our office and wanted help. There's a neighborhood by the river near an apartment complex that has been trying to engage the students there and involve them.

K: What if there was a way in the app to separate the newsfeed into different channels? The NextDoor app has one big newsfeed, with lost pets and "multi-level marketing" products for sale. Would it help if we could separate the content into different channels?
D: I think it would be great and helpful if there were channels. It's all about the pets. Or somebody passed away, can we raise funds to help cover the costs? It would help if we could filter some of that.

K: What sort of channels would be best?
D: Crime. Lost pets. Activities, fun events. Input— young folks wanna see...? A volleyball tournament, maybe? They could pitch ideas for what they want to see. Resources. For sale or small businesses, somewhere you could sell an old, metal bed. That'd be really cool. Also, we have open meetings. You could come to one and see how things go. The neighborhood advisory council meets the second Wednesday of every month.

K: Thank you. I'd like to go to one if it works out with my schedule! So you said that there's some channels everyone could use, but is there a way to make it more tailored to the community? Like, Lawnsdale I'm sure would like a place to plan their international festivals that's customizable to their neighborhood. Or like, even things that are unique elements of a neighborhood's subculture. My teacher said that there was a thing where they put a flamingo in a friend's yard.
D: Ahhhh, "flocking."

K: ...and they threw parties at whoever had the flamingo's house. Is this a thing in more places?!

D: Oh. I've seen it done as a fundraiser. With a flock of 50 flamingos. They put flamingos in the yard at night, and it costs \$1 per flamingo, or \$50 to get rid of all of them. They pay the donation to get them moved. [So basically, it's like hot potato.]

K: Was there a problem with that? Is that not embarrassing if people can't afford to get them removed right away? What if people didn't want to be involved? I guess, right now, I'm picturing a crotchety old man, like "you kids get those flamingos off my lawn!" Was it like that at all?
D: No, people only did it to their friends and people who they knew would be okay with it.

K: Are there any other quirky things like that?
D: Actually, there was this thing called [laughs] porch_hops. It was funny because everyone kept going "Porkchops?!" because the sounds run

together. But these porch hops worked so everyone served a small course, or hors d'oeuvres—

K: —like a progressive meal?

D: Yeah, exactly like that. Maybe 5 or 6 houses would host it, and everybody knew where to go. But we still laugh about it because it sounds like pork-chops. [laughs]

K: Well great! I... think I have everything I need now, and I really appreciate the time you took to meet with me!

D: You're welcome! Also, if you have a sec, we could see if my boss, David, is free, if you would like to meet with him.

K: Of course! I think that would be great!

D: Hold on a sec. [leaves the room]

K: ...should I follow you, or...?

D: Yeah, come on this way. David, this is Kaleigh. She's working on a project—

K: Hi! I'm Kaleigh Veca, a senior at UT. I'm a graphic design major, and I'm working on an app for my senior capstone project. Well, the app won't be real, but it'll be designed like an app that could help improve communication between neighbors, face-to-face.

David: Yeah, that makes sense. We also struggle around here with issues with social media. It has to be very, very useful tools, BUT it has to be used wisely. There was a Facebook page that was so successful that there was no neighborhood watch.

D: Yeah, I was telling her that... but she wants to make the app connect neighbors in real life.

K: I know it sounds counterintuitive to make an app, but I think people have a hard time meeting new neighbors. Like, studies have shown that 53% of people don't know their neighbors' names, and 33% of people have never even met their neighbors, so I want to try and help them branch out. I was talking to a friend the other day who was like "why do you need an app...to help people meet people? Can't they just go next door and meet them?", and I explained that people have friends with trucks who live 45 minutes away, and it's more comfortable to ask the friend, who's an hour and 30 minute round trip to borrow a truck than to ask your next door neighbor, and he said that the same thing happened to him the other day! He was too shy to talk to his neighbor, and he's one of the loudest, most outgoing people I've met, and he couldn't even go over and meet his neighbor. So it really seems to be a problem, and I think an app could help break the ice since people would be more

comfortable branching out that way.

David: A tool to help with face-to-face is really the key. Have you seen the meetup app stuff?

K: Yes, and I want it to be like that, but focused on the people nearby. Maybe there's even a way to have something personal, like a few neighbors, then a street, then a subdivision.

David: It can be tricky in developing the radius, especially in building trust. My neighborhood uses the NextDoor app, and you can view everything. People can invite their neighbors, and they can invite people close to them to join the neighborhood, and soon, I started getting emails about a lost dog that's 2 miles away. I mean, I like dogs, and that's bad that they lost it, but it's 2 miles away. I get emails all the time for dogs that are lost 2 miles away. There's a lotta [sic] noise out there.

K: What if there was a way to filter things into different channels, like a channel for lost dogs, where everyone could talk about it in one place, but otherwise, you wouldn't have to get the notification unless you checked it?

David: It needs to be very, very targeted, maybe two to three tabs. Maybe they could be customizable?

D: Well, actually, Kaleigh talked about that to me. That there could be ways to customize the tabs a little for the needs of the community.

David: That's the thing about technology— it just takes off. Look at Twitter. When it started, everyone was sharing too much information. Like, "I've just been to the doctor, and everything came back negative!" But now the president uses it! There's a natural evolution to everything in technology. Are you thinking this app would be a "push technology" or a "pull technology"?

K: Sorry, could you explain that a little differently? I want to make sure that I understand what "push" and "pull" mean, the way you're using them.

David: Well, a push technology is like an email, a subscription. A pull technology is accessible, so you can go to it on your own.

K: I view it as a combination. Maybe there's a push notification, like in the case of an emergency, or maybe you can subscribe to push notifications from a few places, like "Lost Pets" and "Crime," if you're interested in staying the loop about it. Otherwise, people can just go the channels when they want. Are there any filtered channels that you think are necessary to include?

David: Neighbors in need, announcements, of course a sale/give away tab.

K: Anything more fun, that could build culture?

David: 4th and Gill does a porch hop with 4-5 porches a few times a year, and that's pretty fun. [laughs] People thought they were saying "porkchop!"

K: Debbie was telling me about that! [These people think it's the funniest thing— it's obviously an inside joke around the office.]

David: I guess what you gotta ask yourself, is "How is it better than what's already out there? How will you reach market penetration?"

K: That's an excellent thing to keep in mind.

David: If the goal is "to bring people together," how can you include people without smartphones? Like, people who are older or just don't have the money? Right now, neighborhoods use newsletters so neighbors know what's happening. No one method of doing outreach should be relied upon. You should look at the app as part of a total toolbox— the newsletter can advertise the app, like "for those of you who don't have the app, here's the newsletter." You should consider cross-promotion. You could mention the app to the newsletter or mention the app at a meeting. A lady put a meeting on the Channel 12 calendar...do you have Channel 12?

K: No, I live in a dorm, and my TV is weird about the channels I get.

David: Well, it's a public broadcast, local channel. And she put the meeting on the channel's calendar, and no one came. For it to be successful, it has to be part of the larger toolbox.

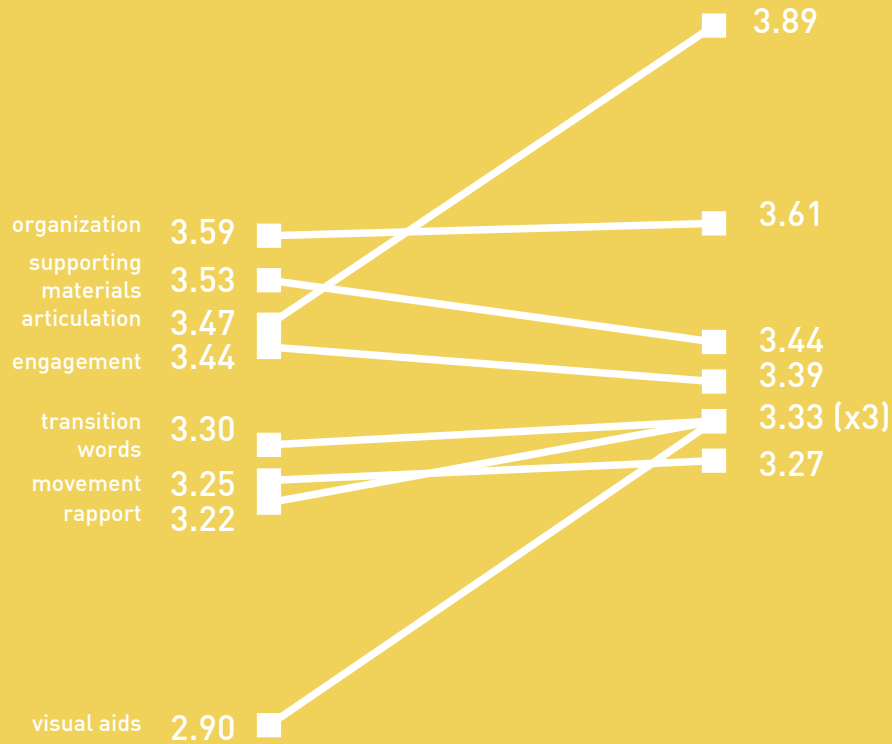
K: A final question— do you think there could be a way where the app could work like a newsletter, where people can star the most important messages and make a newsletter out of the most important stories of the week?

D: Ahhh, that could work.

David: The biggest thing you can do is show how the app helped solve problems and bring people together, and that will convince people to download it. Always celebrate your victories and say why it's a good thing!

K: Well, I think that's all of the questions that I have. Thank you all so much for meeting with me!

PRESENTATION FEEDBACK



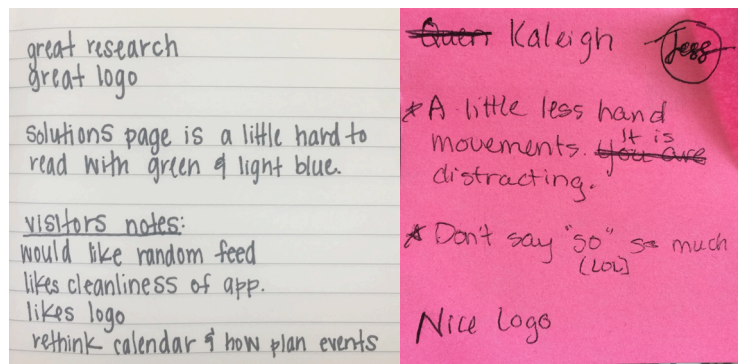
My classmates provided feedback on our presentations, and I've logged the feedback they've given me. Here is the average of their scores for the first presentation compared to the second presentation. Overall, I seem to improved on most of the categories. I used the charts to gauge what needed the most work so I knew how to best improve the presentation as well as how to fine-tune my idea.

I have worked on improving my articulation and making the presentation more visually engaging (the two biggest increases). At the end of the semester, we stopped using these sheets, but it's still nice to note the changes that have taken place in my speaking abilities.

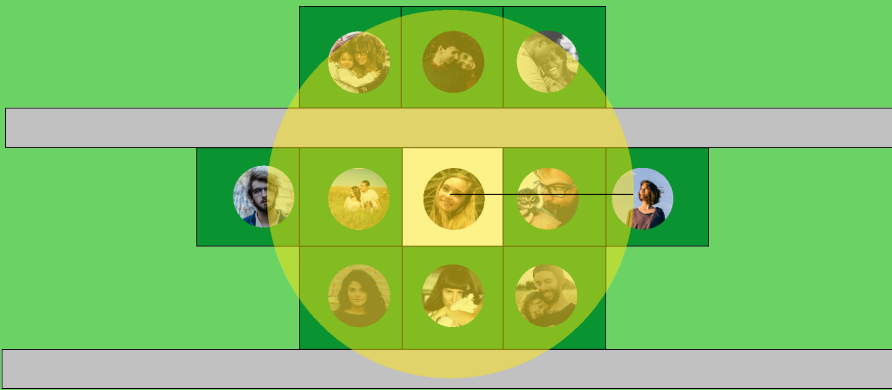
I finished my presentation 2 minutes ahead of time and couldn't figure out a way to stretch it meaningfully without rambling for 2 minutes at the end. I was afraid of running over, but I hadn't had a plan for running significantly under. I think that with more practice, I can definitely pull myself up and be able to present and analyze how long it's running simultaneously. Regardless, I think it went well. The panel, Robin Easter and Brayan Zavala, understood my concept and offered positive feedback about how to stretch the idea and build a stronger app.

I got feedback from a few peers, who said I had a great logo, a great app, too exaggerated of hand gestures, and an over-reliance on the word "so," so I'll have to monitor that more consciously in the coming weeks.

Deb pushed for an animation for the logo, so it would click with people that it was a spoke with motion, and not one sad, isolated connection. She also encouraged me to look into recruitment and evangelism strategies to raise awareness of the brand and our app.



My final feedback from Deb was that it was good overall, but that I should focus on the depth of the events more and figure out how to continue making engaging events without becoming too big (a small city) or too small, risking engagement. I don't know what the future holds for the project, but I'd be down to revisit it in my free time, if even to practice coding in Swift and trying to recreate screens "for real."

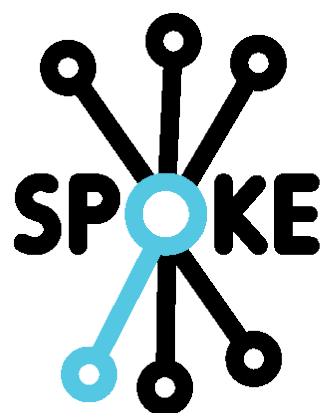


Before I set out to make the app, I decided to do additional research into social communication theories to make sure that I was researching the problem and the possible solutions as fair as I could. Through a serendipitous Google search, I found the *pièce de résistance* of my app— the Allen curve.

MIT professor Thomas Allen researched computer programmers in the 1970s and found that the larger the distance between the people, the less frequently they communicated. He also noted that their weekly communication with each other was only a 50 meter radius (or 164.5 feet) from their desks, and they didn't talk to anyone outside of that range.

I figured the same structure could be applied to a neighborhood, so I did the math.

The average lot size in the US is approximately 92 feet by 92 feet, and according to urban planning standards, 35 feet is a reasonable suburban street width. With this, I realized that the Allen curve can be centered around a house lot to pinpoint the 10 neighbors (or technically 10 houses' worth of neighbors) that a person is most likely to interact with. I made sure that this was the home feature of the app, because these 10 neighbors are the ones who most directly affect the homeowner. Sure, there are other neighbors, but when the homeowner checks the mail or mows the yard, these 10 are the neighbors that he/she is the most likely to encounter.



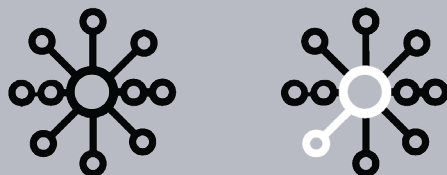
**connecting neighbors
to neighbors**



I had a few names I liked, but although Spoke was a showerthought, it stood out to me. I thought it was nice because it conveyed connection and communication, the two main ideas of my app.

I wanted a round “O,” so I found a font with round O’s to start drafting the overall shape of the logotype. The font was chunky, and it felt a little more juvenile than I was anticipating. I showed it to Deb, and she agreed that there was still some drafting to go. I was happy with how the early exploration went, although I knew I needed to push the logo to become something I was happier with, since it’s the face of my project.

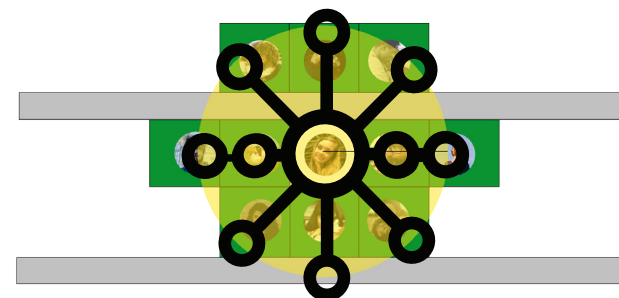
SPoKE



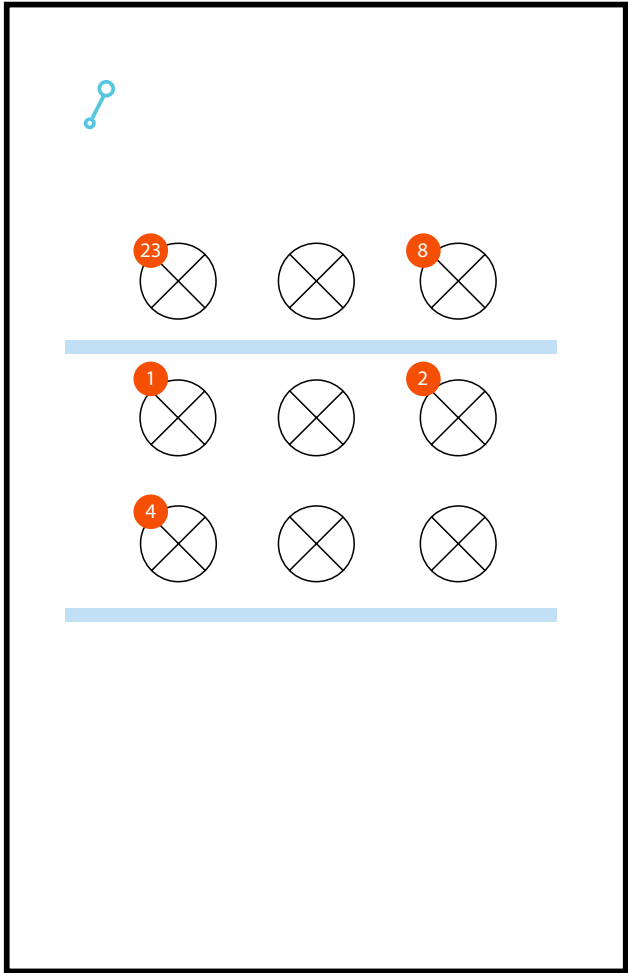
I cut down on the clutter and focused on the word itself. The large wheel from the previous version was too excessive and clunky. Furthermore, the spoke O was too large, so I tried shrinking the scale a little so that the descending spoke part wasn't as big of a drain on space wherever the logo gets put.

I wanted simple and minimal.

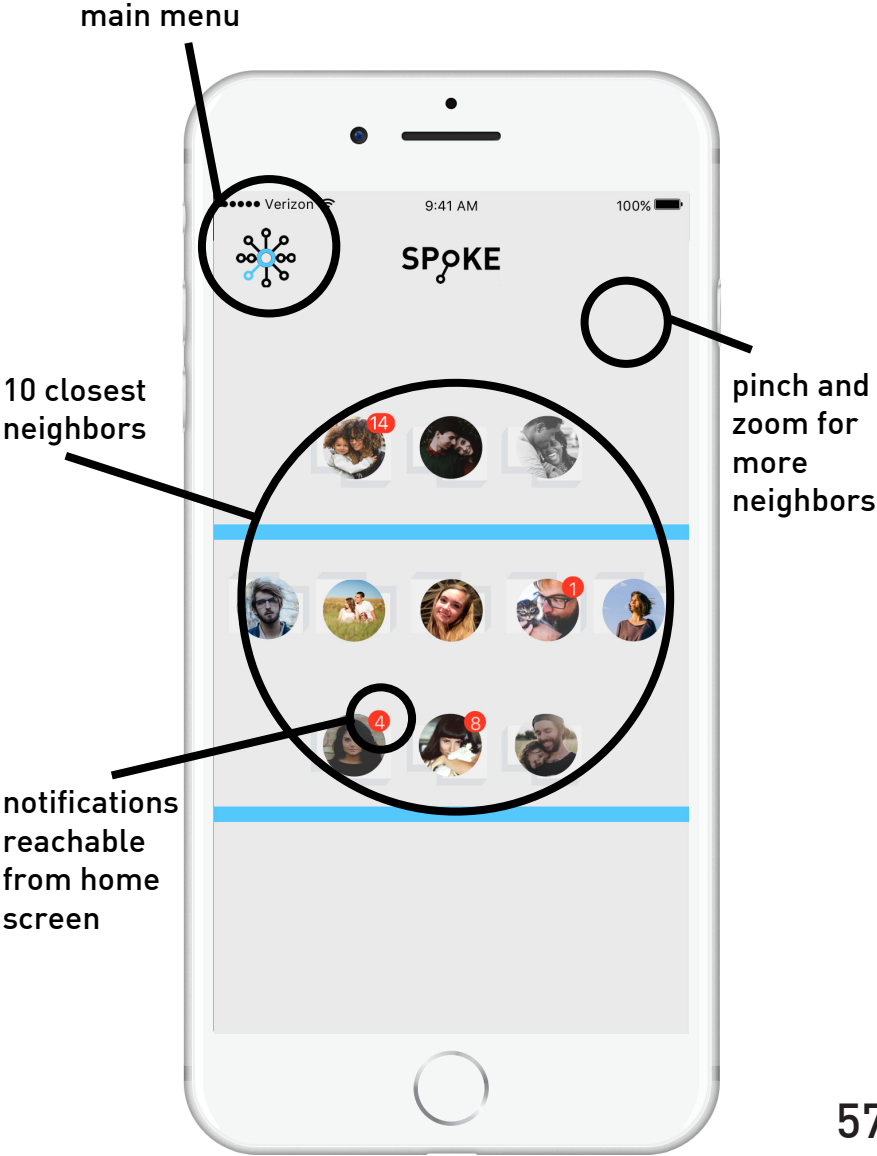
I also made a mark based off of the Allen curve and my app home screen. I wanted a simple way to convey the curve without taking up too much horizontal space. I compacted the side neighbors to fit the curve more closely. The 8:00/ bottom left spoke can change color, depending on the context.

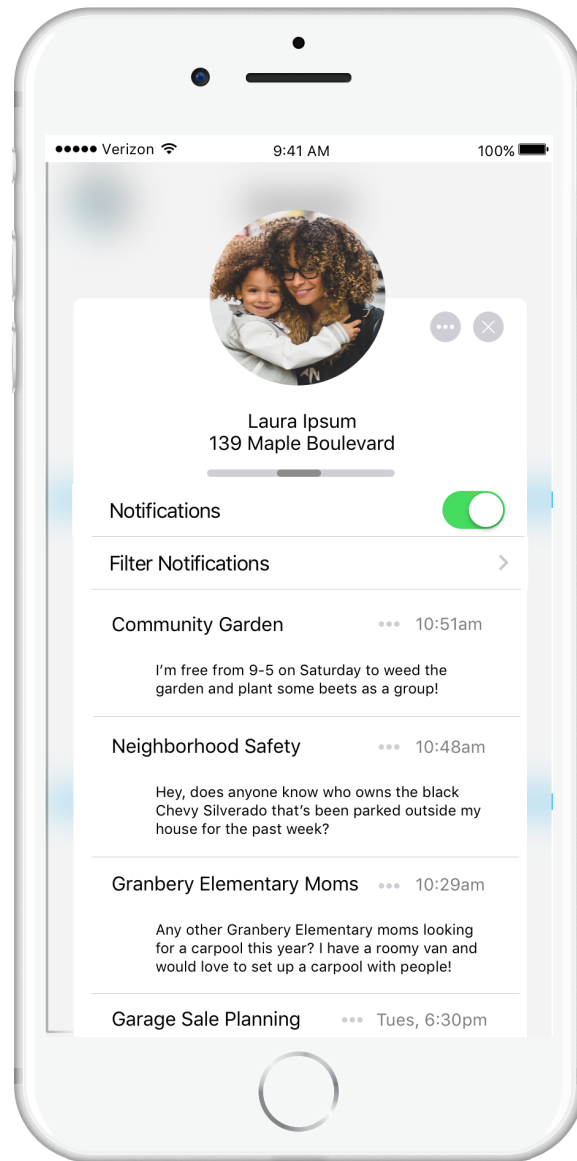


This was the earliest version of the home screen UI that I have. I made a low-fidelity prototype to flesh out what the app should look like. I also made this based on how many fit the screen. Only after I found the Allen curve did I start playing around with the number of neighbors. Also, I made the following drafts in Sketch, a prototyping tool. The sad wireframes are quick Illustrator mock-ups, and the iOS native prototypes are rendered using Sketch.

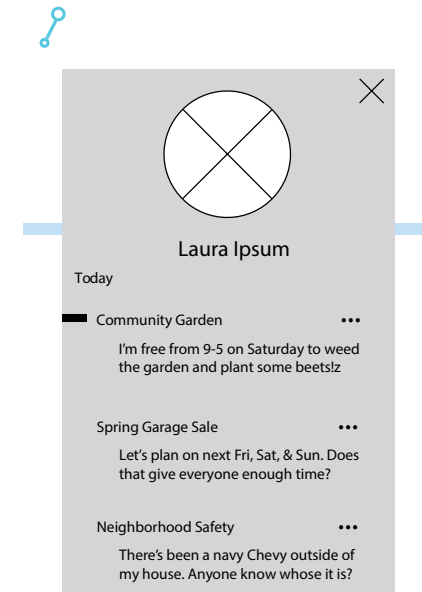


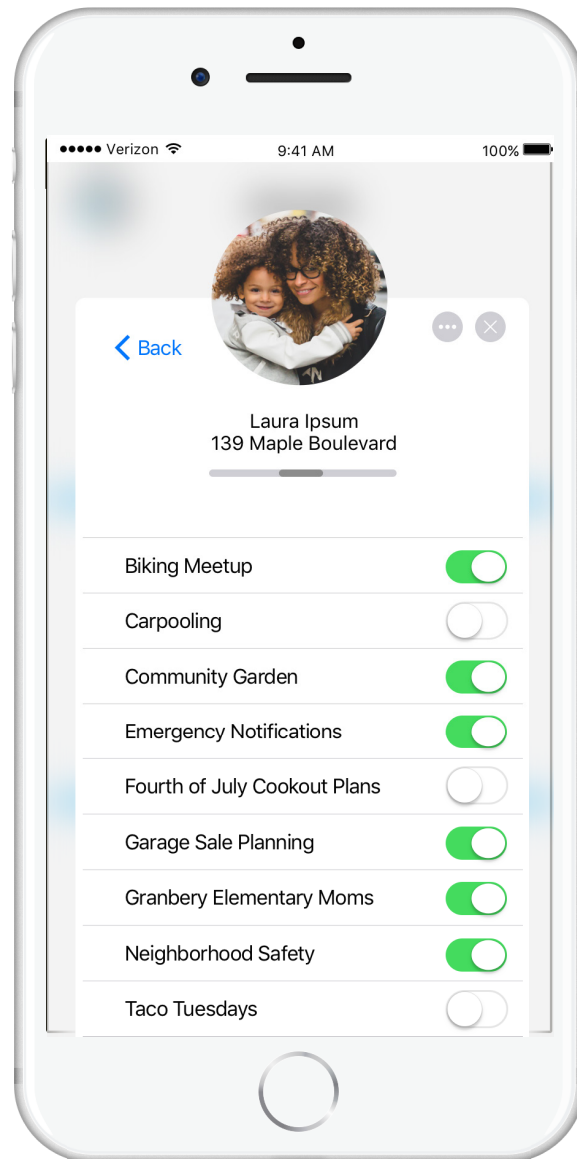
This is the home screen of the app. It showcases the neighbors you're most likely to see so that you can quickly stay updated with them.



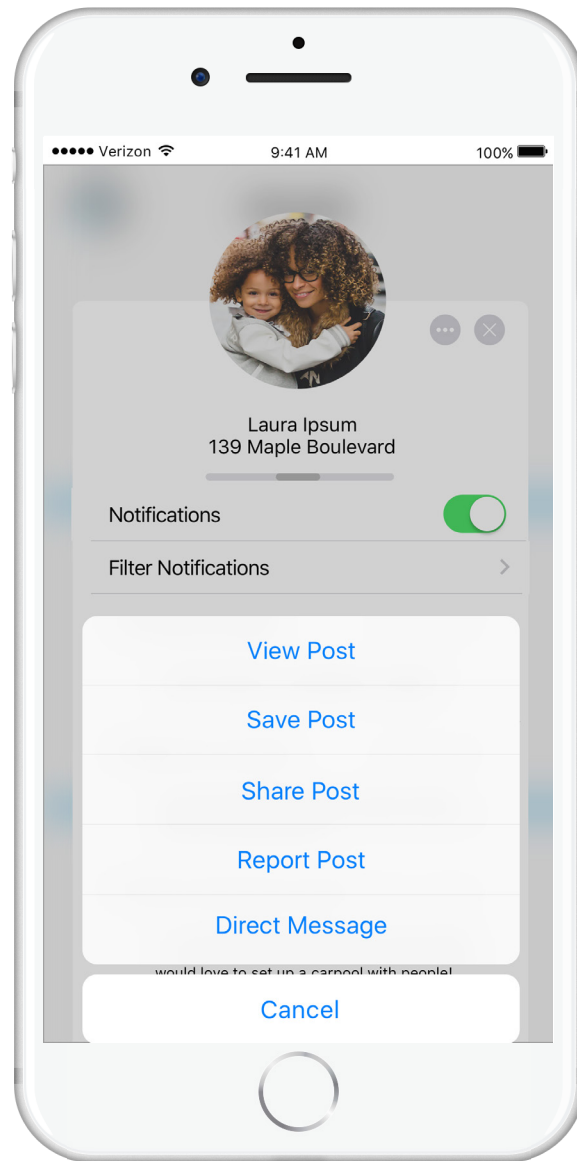


I always knew that the neighbors should be clickable, but in an early meeting where I was proposing the project to Deb, she mentioned that I might want multiple channels of entry to the channels of conversation. I think it's important to hear from your geographically closest neighbors. (Does anyone know why the car with tinted windows keeps stopping on our street?) Below is the original wireframe for the page that I made in Illustrator. The finalized pages were created using Sketch.



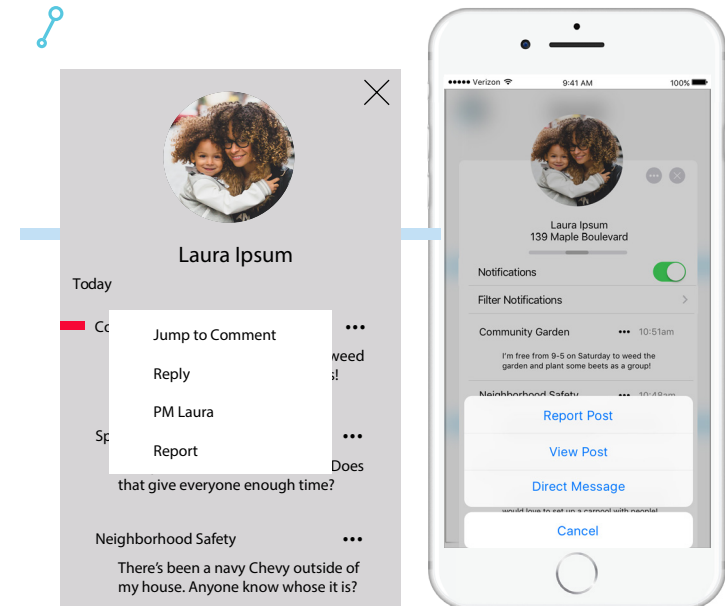


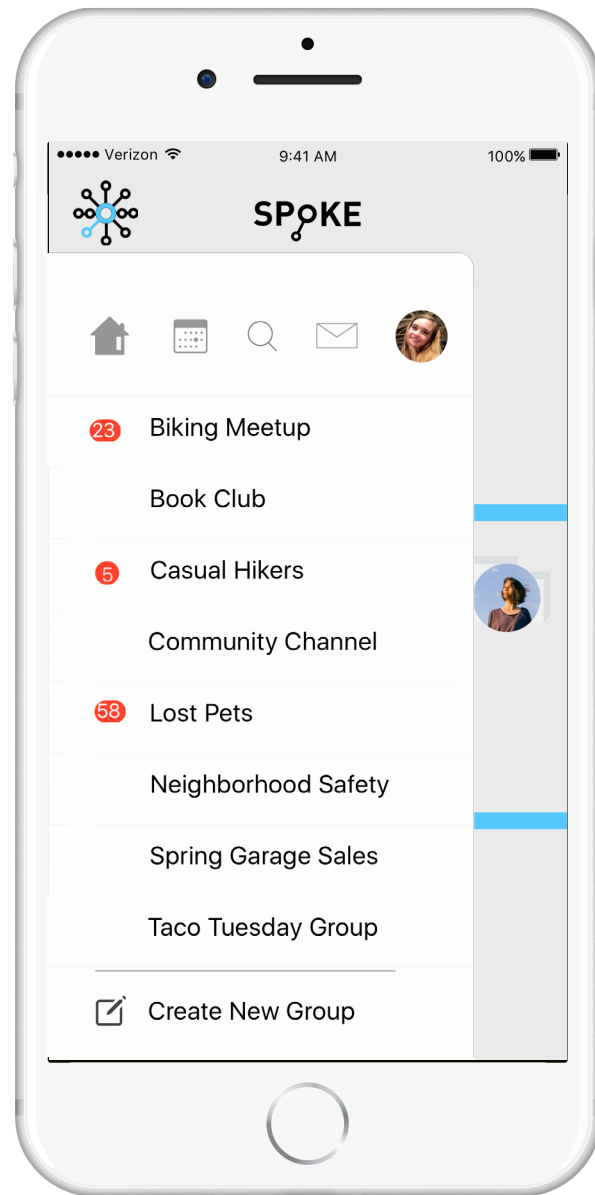
I knew also that people love to talk on social media apps, and I made a mute notifications toggle so you can stop hearing your neighbors if they post trivial things non-stop. Classmates suggested that I have a “mute channels for this person” feature, where users can pick what specifically they want to be notified for, if anything. It made a lot of sense— after all, everyone wants to know urgent information, but not everyone wants to know what books the book club is reading or whose kid needs a ride home from school Tuesday afternoon. For this reason, I included a page that allows users to modify the content they hear from their neighbors. They can still see the comments, but they won’t get the notifications for every last thing the neighbor says.



Some people don't have filters. Although I want the app to be a place where anyone can say anything, there is still a moral line with what is and isn't okay. Especially since people's addresses are listed, this is personal. People know where you live.

I think a report button is less than ideal, but it is necessary since it's a real-world app. For anonymous websites or apps, it's not as big of a threat, but if your next door neighbor is saying inappropriate things, there should be a process to get rude, vulgar, or overall offensive comments removed, as to not damage the community.

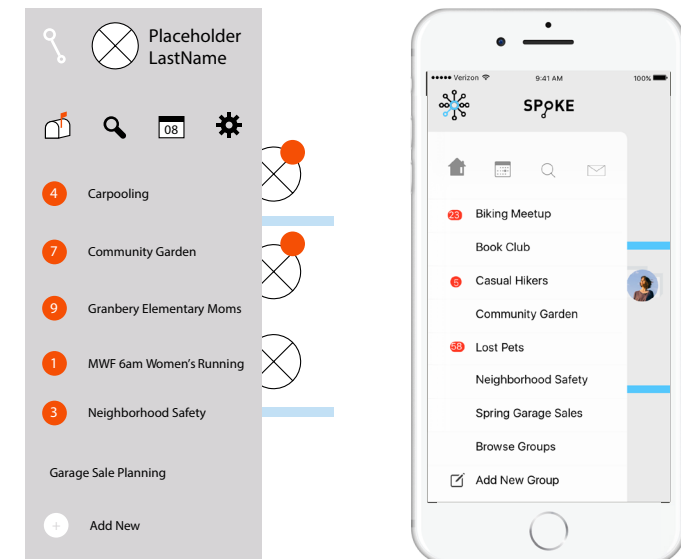


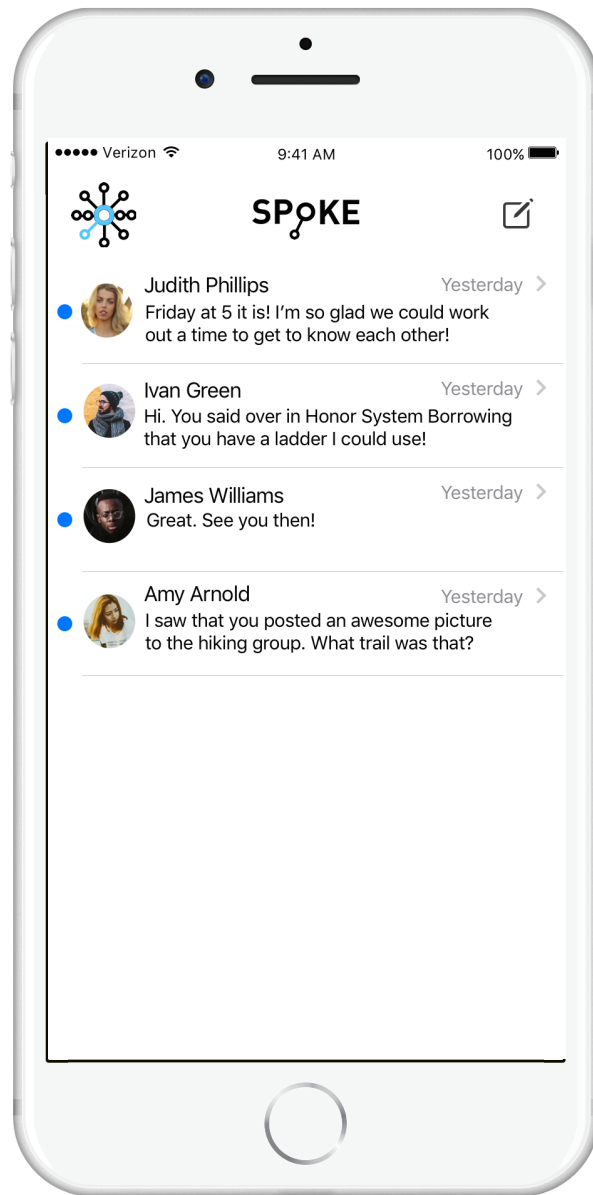


The main menu is clickable by the Allen curve snowflake logo in the top right corner. Instead of having handy tabs, which take up real estate on every page of the app, I decided to go with a collapsing, hamburger menu. Although these aren't as trendy anymore, I think for my map, buttons at the bottom would take up too much room.

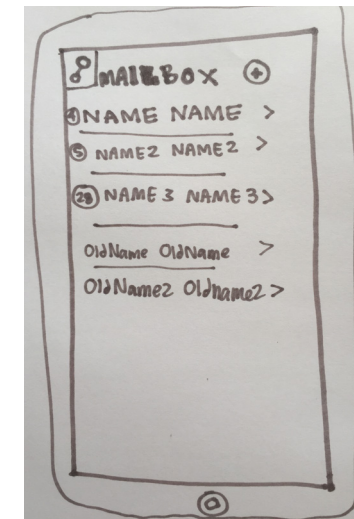
There is a home button, a calendar tool, a search function, and a mail portal for direct messages. Additionally, all of the groups are listed, and if you want to join a new group, you can browse or create one tailored to your interests.

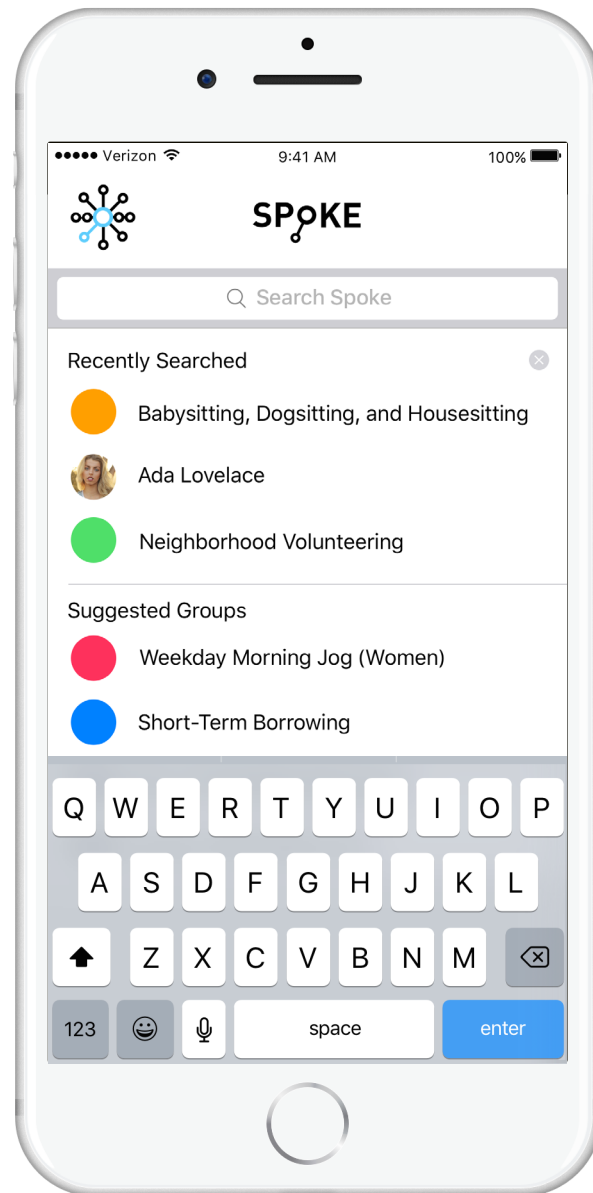
There'll be a tutorial video in the app to make sure it's intuitive and easy for EVERY user to understand and use.





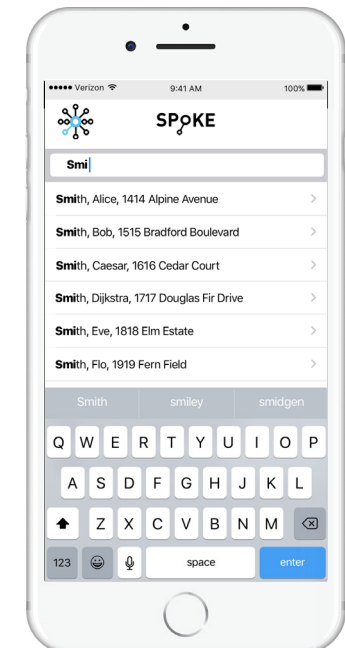
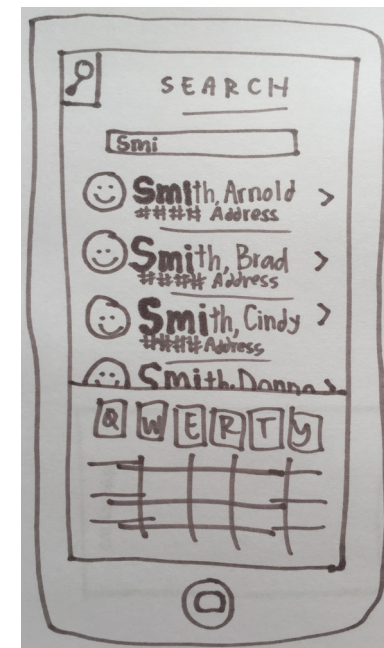
Direct messages are a huge part of any messaging app because they allow people to talk about things privately without wasting everyone else's time and newsfeed space. If you're trying to plan a lunch with someone cool, 20 other people don't care. If you're heading out of town and want someone to dogsit, you can reach out to him or her personally without letting everyone know that you're leaving town for the week.

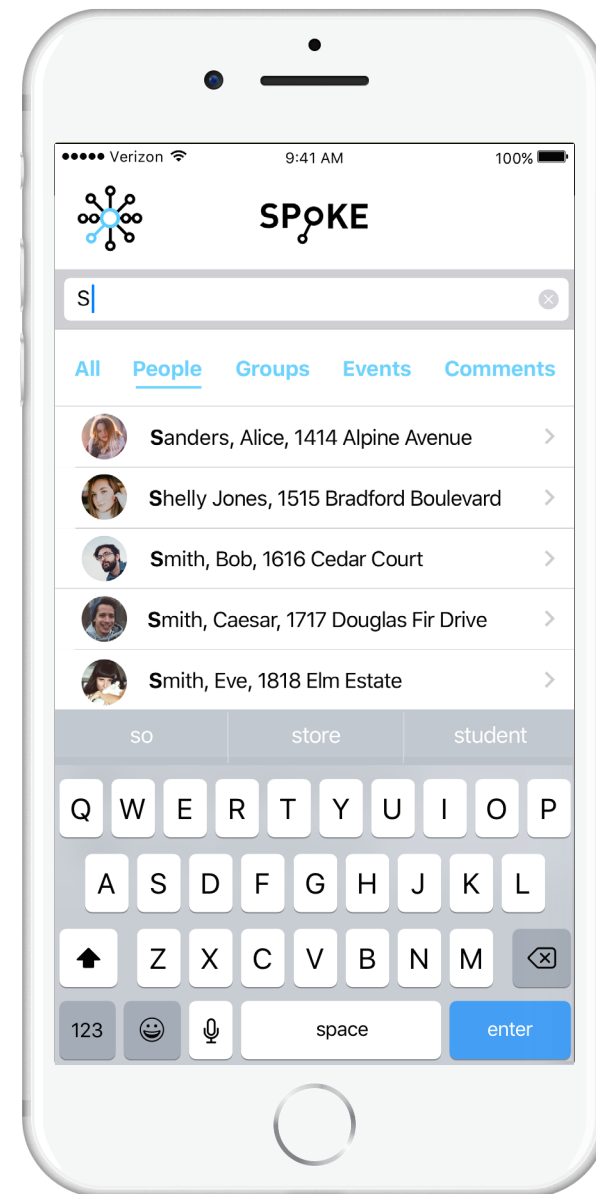
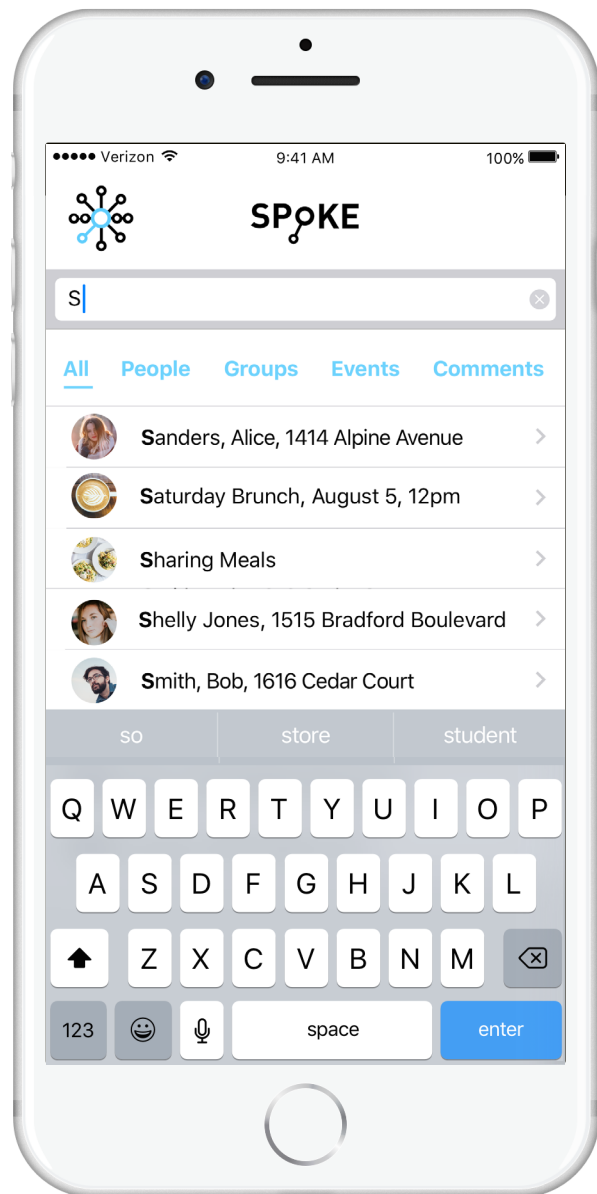


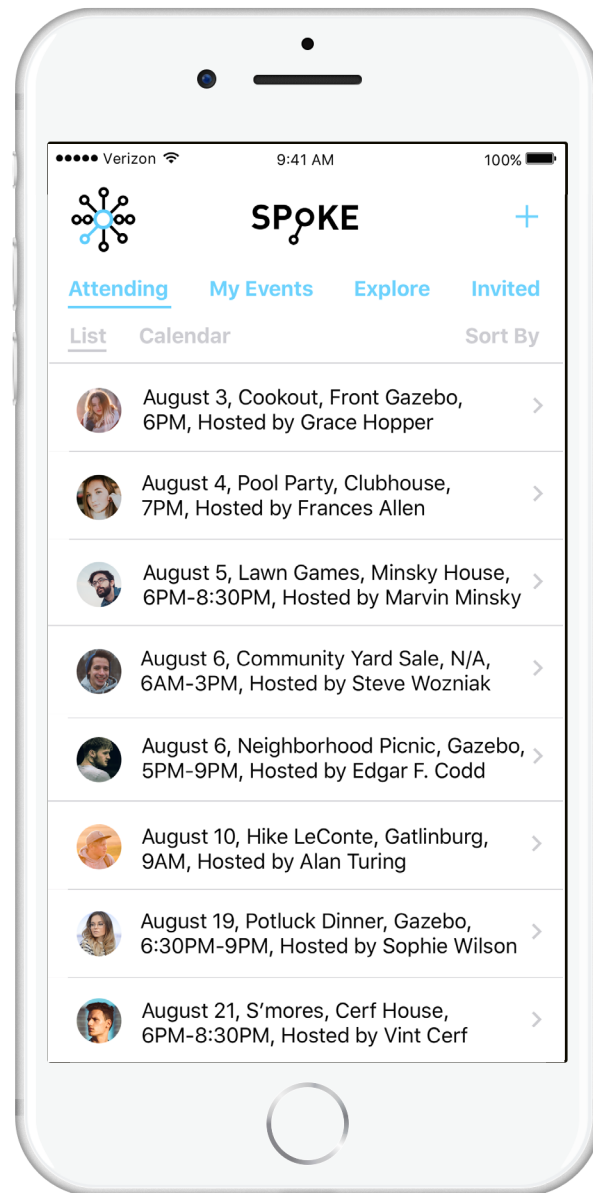


Through an early meeting with Deb, she mentioned that there should be a user lookup function, so if you meet a cool Smith while you're walking your dog, you can work backwards and try and find the person's name. She also reasoned that with more common names, you'd want to have addresses or streets listed since there probably isn't only one Jones or Smith family in a neighborhood.

The names will link to their profile page, which will have only as much information as they feel comfortable sharing.



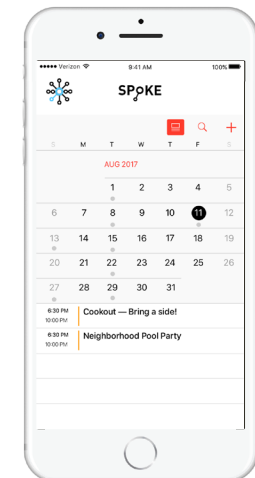


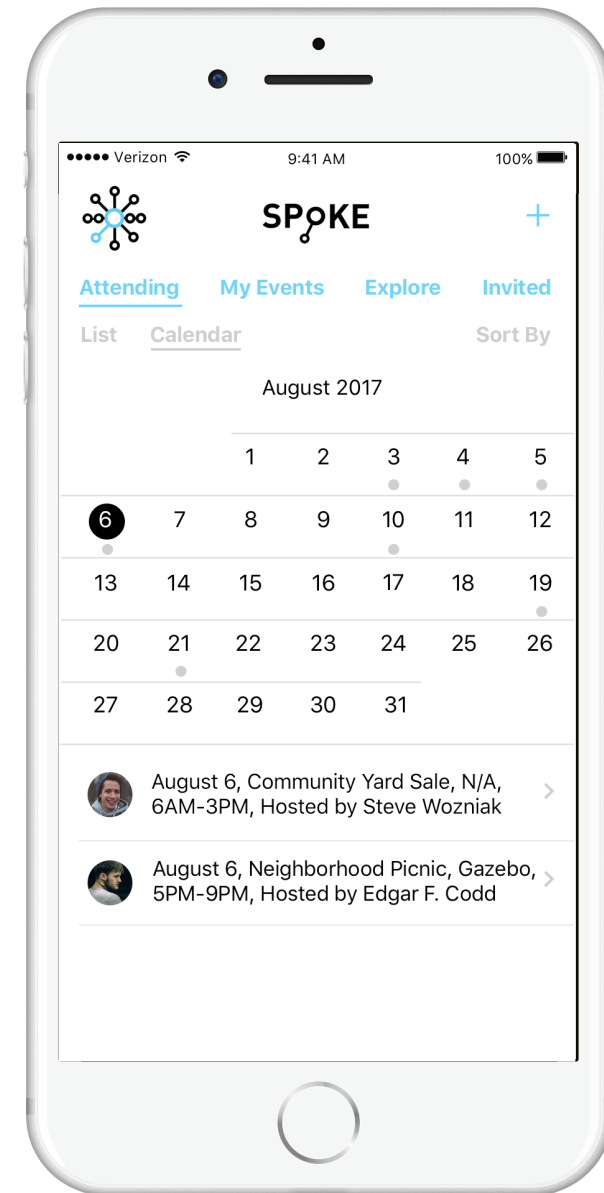
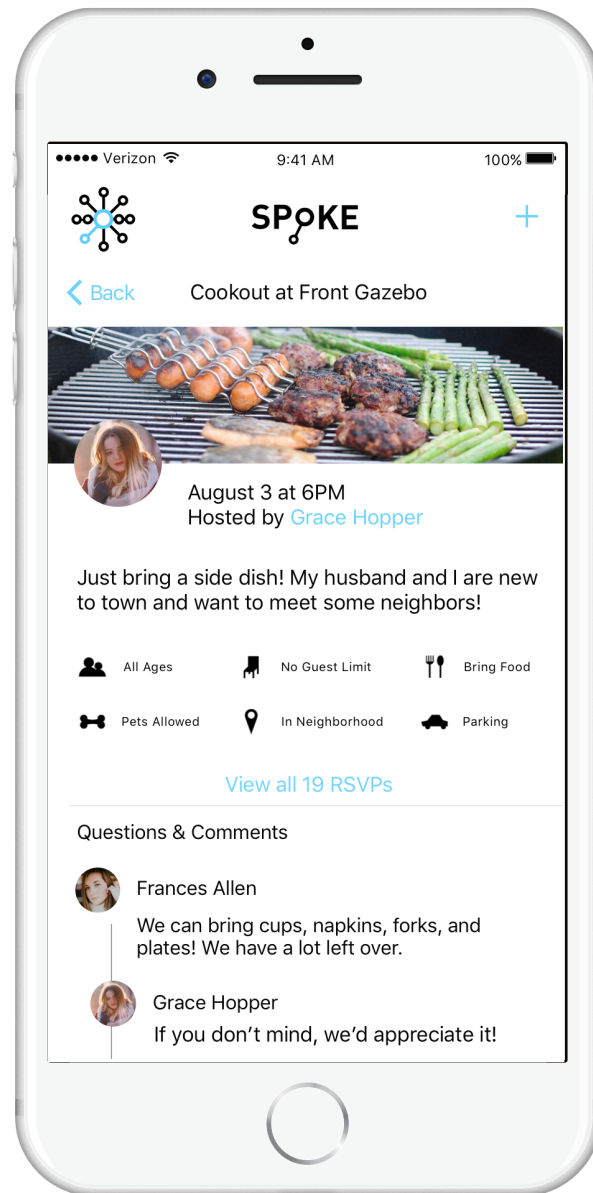


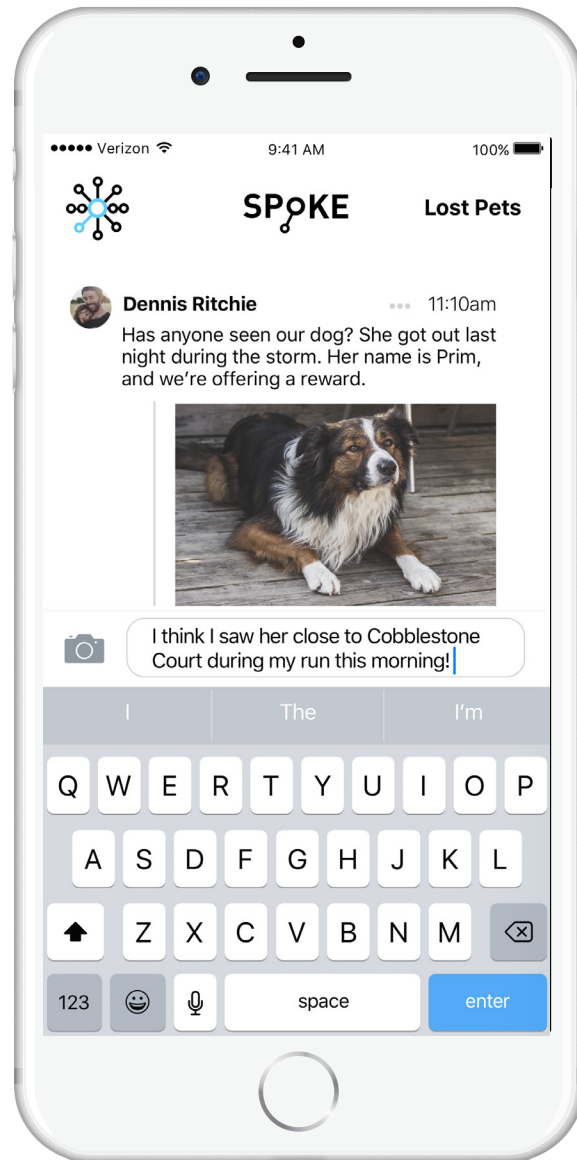
In the same planning meeting with Deb, she suggested a calendar function to unite the community so they can meet at events to bring them closer together. I think that events are a lot more effective at getting people to meet than just waiting for it to happen organically, without a catalyst.

People can add events and be aware of what's coming up— after all, you don't want to be the only guy who didn't hear about the cookout until you saw everyone at the front of the neighborhood having a good time.

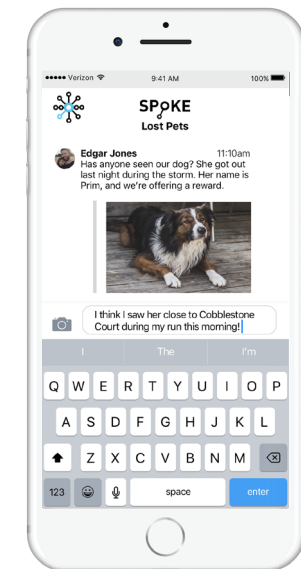
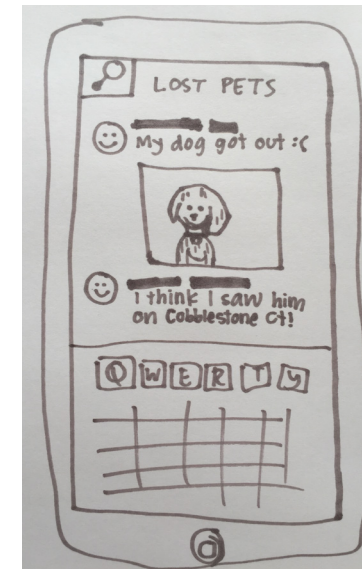
I revamped the layout with list views and calendar views, and I created a sample event page to show the variability it would have for events.

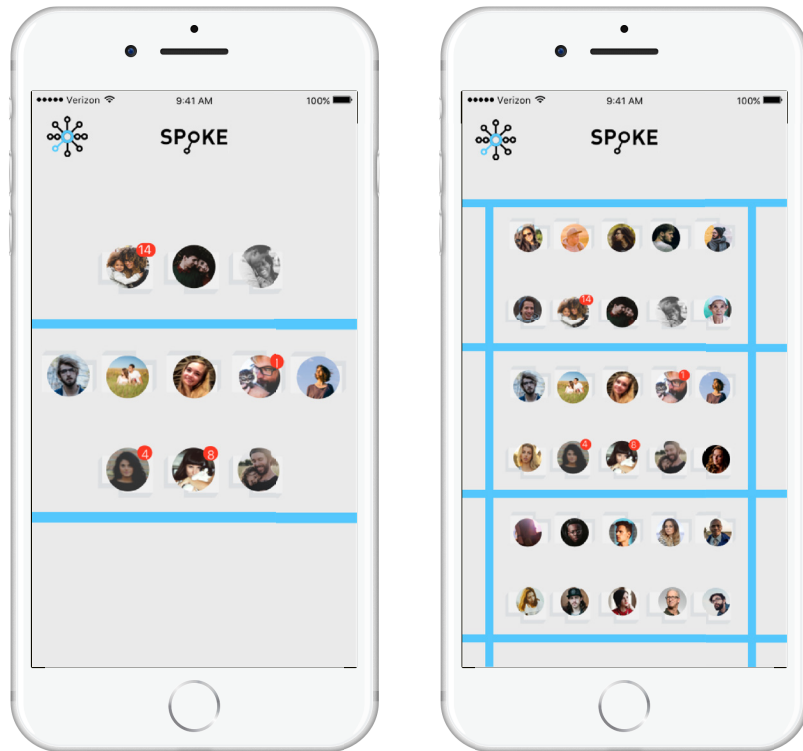




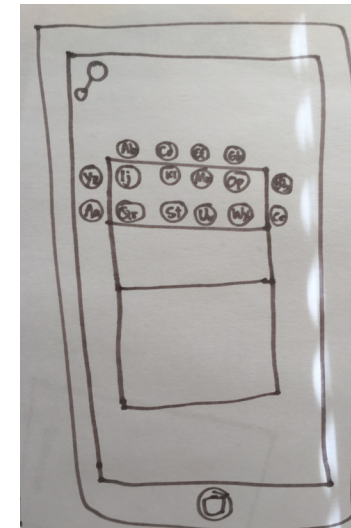


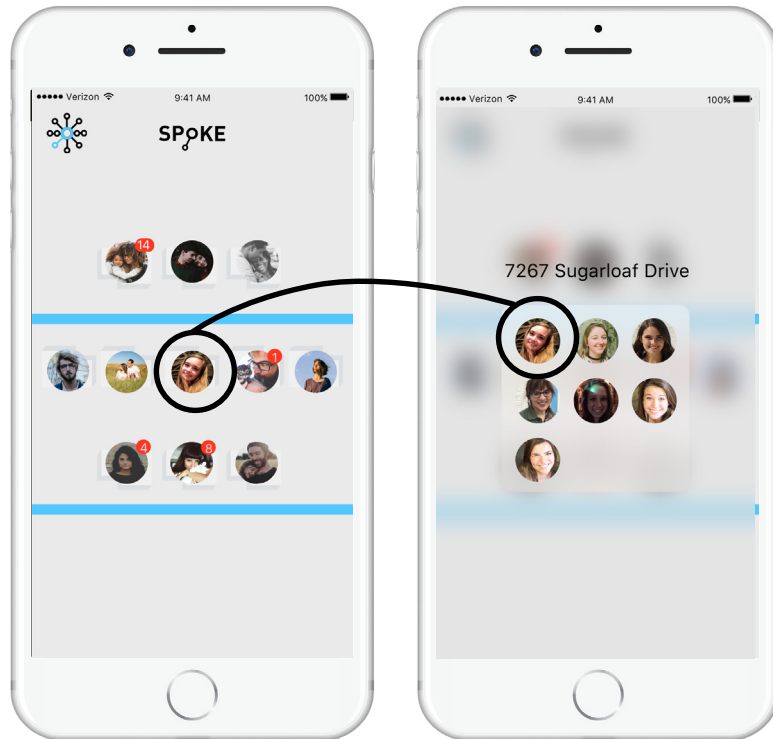
Channels are wildly important. I don't want to have to scroll through one newsfeed to figure out if someone asked the question I was planning on asking or to check for updates. I saw NextDoor, a competitor app, with weight loss, multi-level marketing products for sale, and I wanted to make a time and a place for these types of conversations to filter out into subjects. If I'm helping someone find a lost dog, I don't need to know what weight loss shake will make me shed 15 pounds in 15 days. I have image uploads available so people can post pictures related to the topic they're talking about. And of course, with any picture submitting app, there will be a report button, should inappropriate content be posted.





As I mention in my presentation, it's incredibly naïve to assume that the 10 people who live closest to you are automatically your best friends— they're just the ones who live the closest, who will have more insight about the "word on the street." The app lets you pinch and zoom, so that you can see everyone. You can scroll around your neighborhood and get to see everyone, but you can also use search to access specific people's profiles or browse groups to see what people are talking about in general.

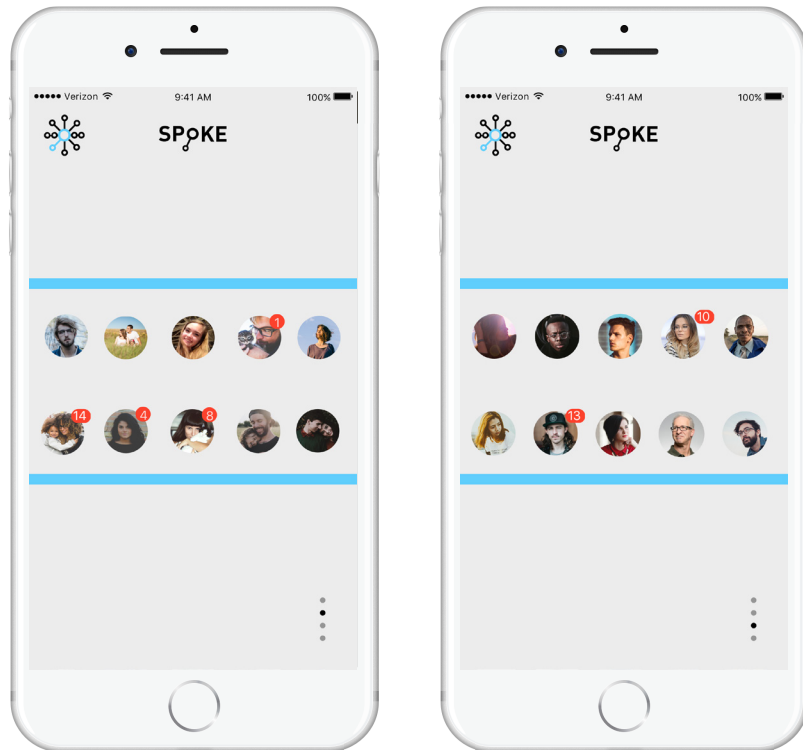




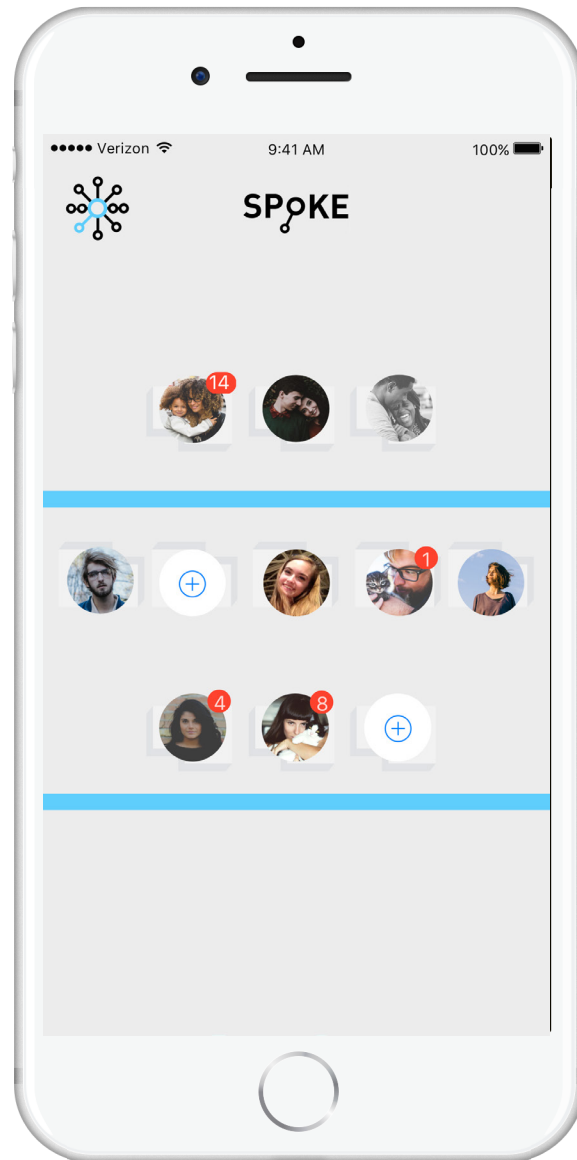
The suburbs is the ideal location for this app, but it's also naïve to assume that that's the only audience because everyone has neighbors, except for people in extremely rural or isolated areas. For instances where people have roommates (or spouses or adult children who live at home), either for a house or an apartment, there should be a solution so that everyone in the household gets a say in things.

If you click on a person with roommates, this box of roommates pops up. Notifications will accumulate on the house lot, no different than any other user's notification bubble, and the person pictured as the figurehead for the lot is whoever posted most recently.

Many classmates continually asked about the feature and wanted it included, so it was one of the later (but still crucial!) things I made. I didn't sketch it out first because I knew that I wanted to work the same way that iPhone folders natively worked.



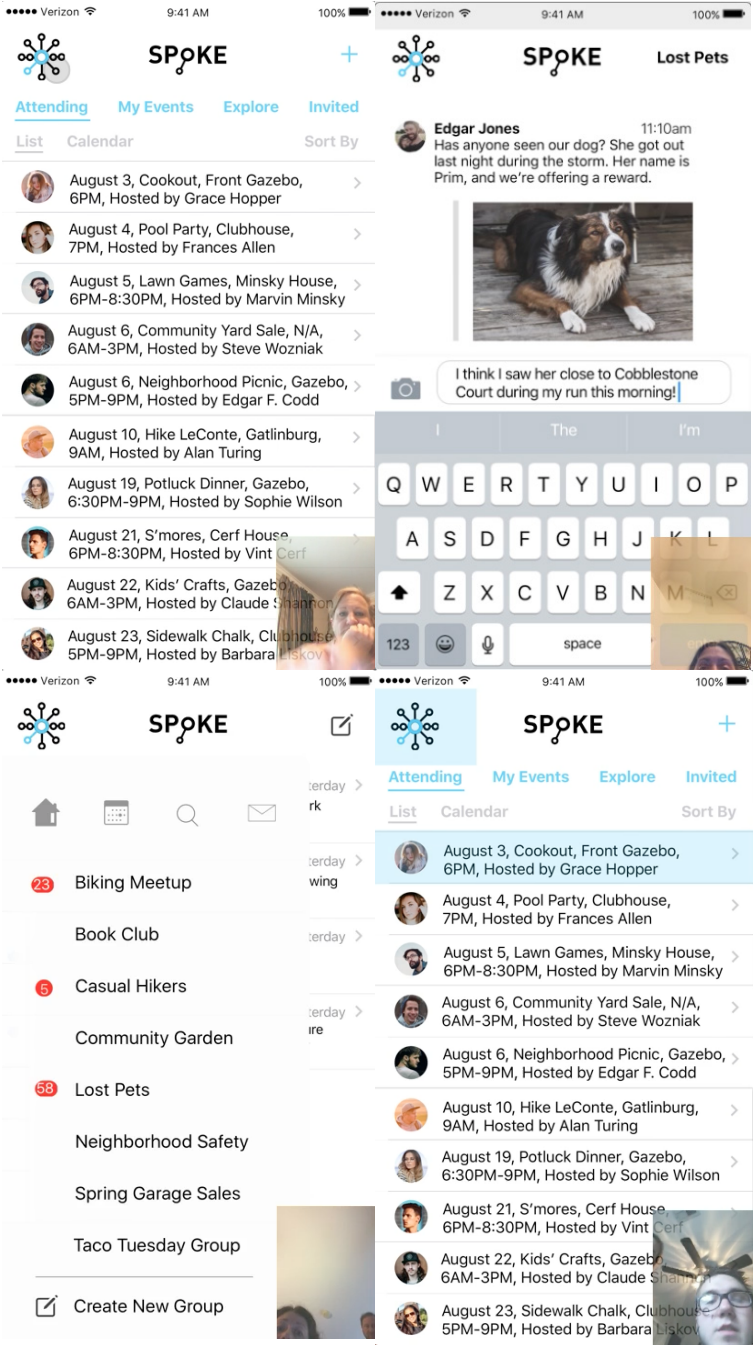
Not everyone's home is a house. Some people live in apartments, condos, and dorms, and for this reason, I've made an alternate home screen for "vertical neighborhoods." This allows people in apartments to network as well, and they are able to access the other floors in their building (so they can tell their upstairs neighbors to stop jumping on the floor and inviting some circus-rescue elephants over). I did the math to factor in for average apartment sizes, so I used the same number of neighbors (5 wide) to show the people in the hall, since 11 wide would have been very hard to see on a phone, especially if it had a small screen.



User invites are arguably the fastest way to promote growth in apps, since referrals from friends are taken more seriously than ads. I have plus signs on empty houses so that people can invite their neighbors to the app if they already know them to help make their community more of a community. Also, people naturally want to fill in blanks and complete sets, so they'll want to invite neighbors since there will be a blank space next to them, which might encourage them to take it upon themselves to invite their neighbors. User acquisition strategies were the last part of the project that I worked on, so I already had a good mental image of how it would work since I had a good fundamental understanding of how the app, as a system, worked, making it easier to decide how to invite new users.

I didn't have a lot of time at the end of the project, but I was adamant on user testing. I prototyped the app using Marvel, an In-Vision competitor, and there was an integration available with Lookback, a startup that records users' faces and videos of their on-screen interactions simultaneously. I got a convenience sample of the people around me, so it's by no means statistically significant, but I was able to get feedback and make tweaks to the UI based on user behavior I observed. I tested it on mainly middle-aged homeowners, and surprisingly, they were able to navigate the app very well, which was encouraging since I was targeting the app originally at specifically people in their 20s and 30s to avoid having to deal with users who I assumed (incorrectly) would have a harder time using the app than people in younger neighborhoods. I tried to make the app user-friendly, native, and intuitive, and apparently, it worked and exceeded my expectations.

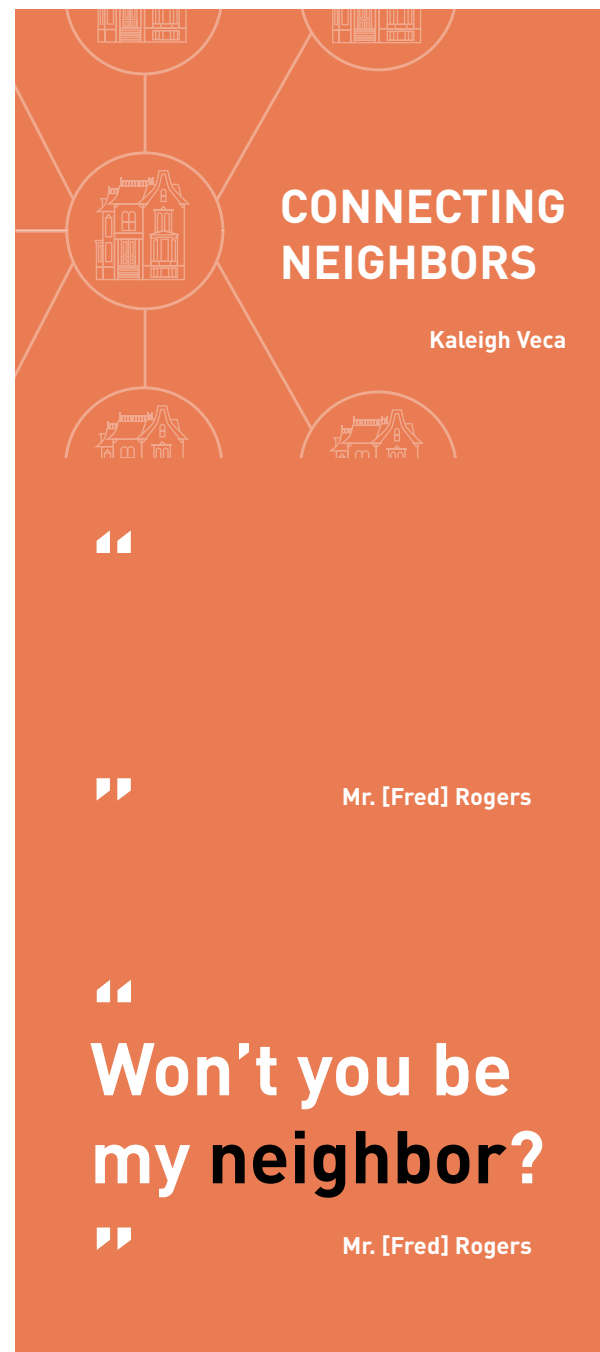
Here are some of the recordings I made. For obvious reasons, I can't include them in the book, but they shaped how I changed navigation throughout the app.



A large part of the class revolved around presenting the information, since it doubled as an Oral Communication general education class. For this reason, it felt odd to not include thumbnails from the final deck.

These slides were what I used for my presentation, and I tried organizing them by color to help break up the presentation into subtly more logical chunks. There wasn't a lot of rhyme or reason to why I chose the colors, but I wanted the precedents to seem drab (gray) and for my idea to seem innovative and fresh (green). Other than that, I didn't meddle too much in color psychology, and I wanted a clean deck with colors that flowed together. I decided to not show all of the edits that went into my deck, since that's a somewhat unrelated rabbit hole, but essentially, they went from vague presentations about trust to community networking to this final app.

Without further ado, here's my deck.



53%



(Trulia)

33%

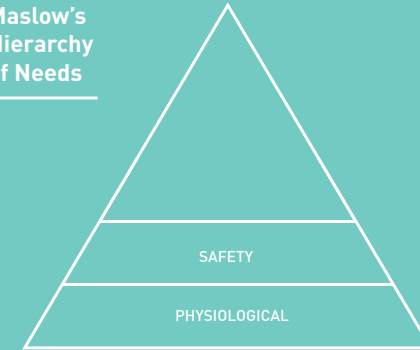


(Trulia)

Observation

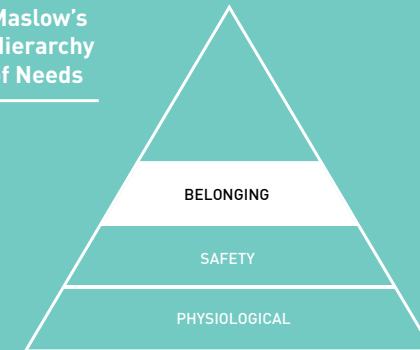
Despite living in a hyper-connected world, people are **more disconnected** than ever in the communities in which they live.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

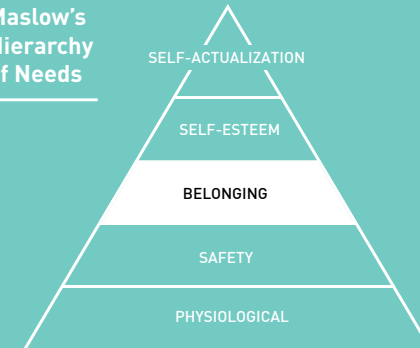


(Maslow, Abraham, 1943)

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Argument

If people could get to know their neighbors more personally and have more frequent, **real life interactions** with them, it would strengthen interpersonal relationships and better the community as a whole.

Audience Value

People will have a deeper sense of belonging to their community by having **meaningful, intentional interactions**, which will foster a sense of trust and create deeper connections with their neighbors.

Intention

To connect people with their real-world neighbors by leveraging **social media** to make people more social

Intention

To connect people with their real-world neighbors by leveraging **social media** to make people more social



Demographic Target

“

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David Massey and Debbie Sharp,
Knoxville Neighborhood Coordinator and Assistant
Neighborhood Coordinator

Demographic Target

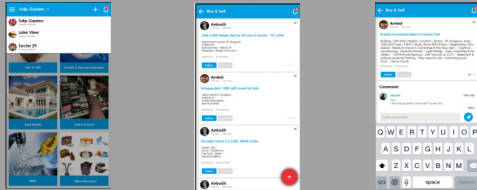
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The hardest demographic to reach is ‘young folks,’ people in their **20s and 30s.**

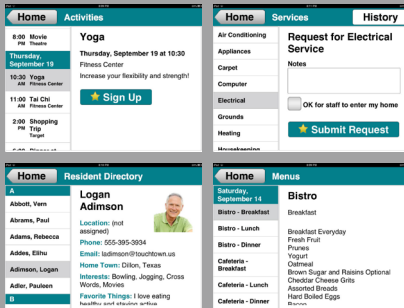
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David Massey and Debbie Sharp,
Knoxville Neighborhood Coordinator and Assistant
Neighborhood Coordinator

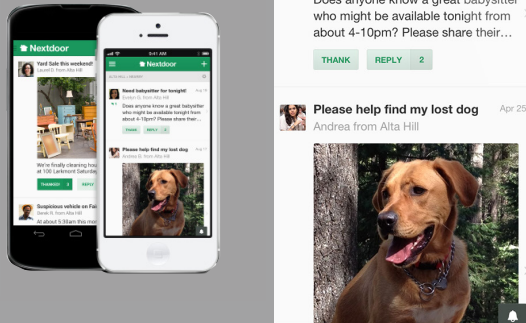
Similar Apps — NeighborHood



Similar Apps — TouchTown

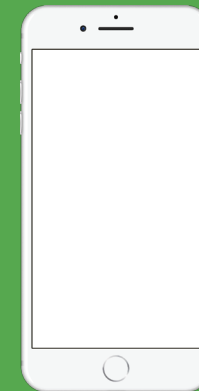


Similar Apps — NextDoor



Similar Apps — Problems

- One newsfeed
- Doesn't promote activity
- Isn't customizable by users themselves



Solutions

- One newsfeed
- Multiple, more focused newsfeeds

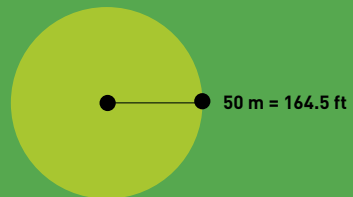
Solutions

- One newsfeed
 - Multiple, more focused newsfeeds
- Doesn't promote activity
 - Encourages people to meet each other

Solutions

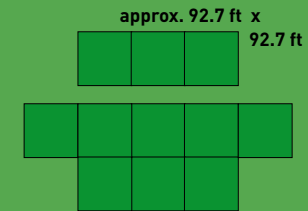
- One newsfeed
 - Multiple, more focused newsfeeds
- Doesn't promote activity
 - Encourages people to meet each other
- Isn't customizable by users themselves
 - Lets users customize their experience

Allen Curve

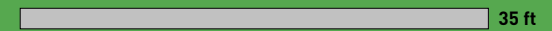


(Allen, Thomas J., 1984)

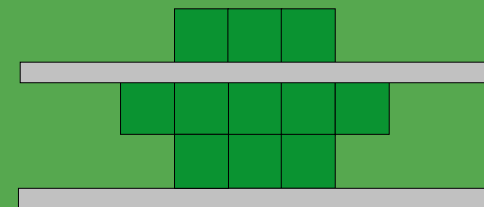
Allen Curve



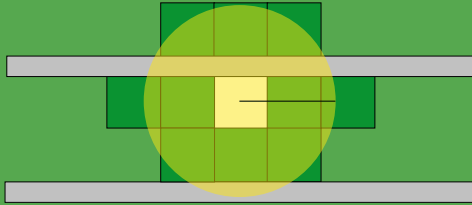
Allen Curve



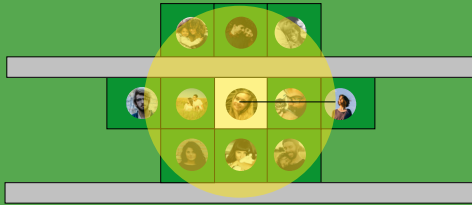
Allen Curve



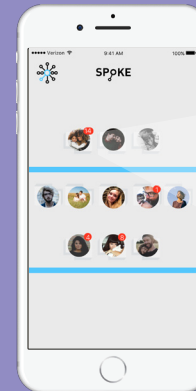
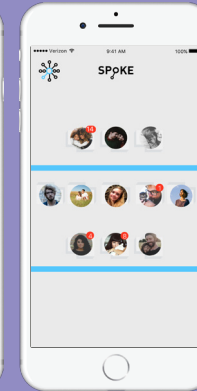
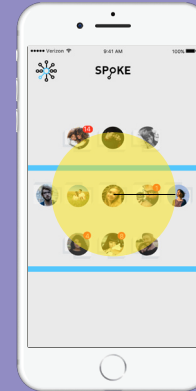
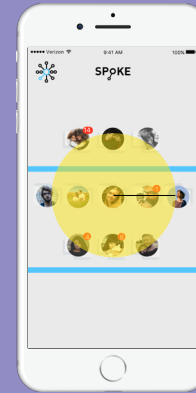
Allen Curve

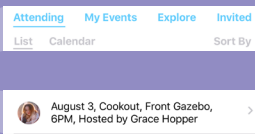
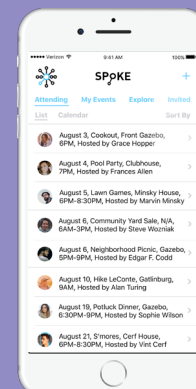
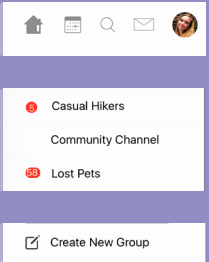
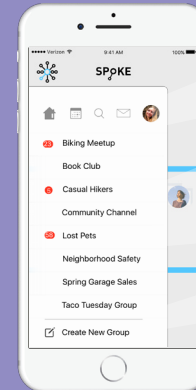
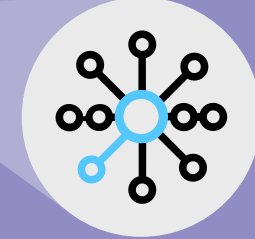
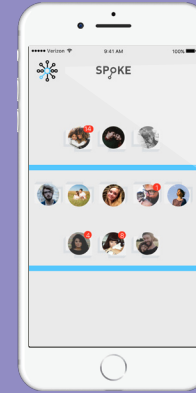
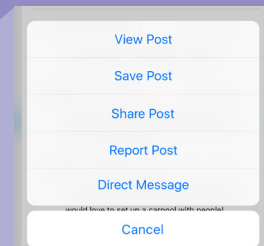
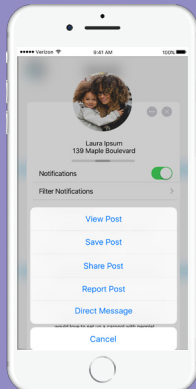
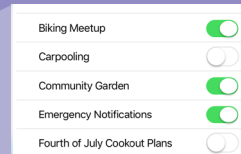
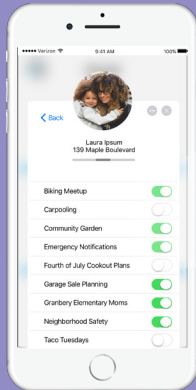
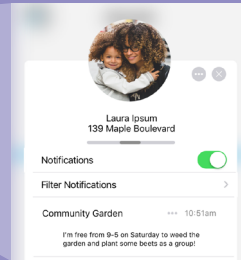
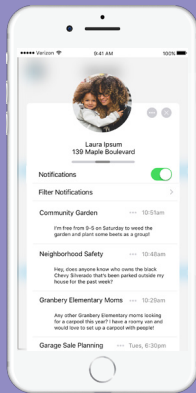


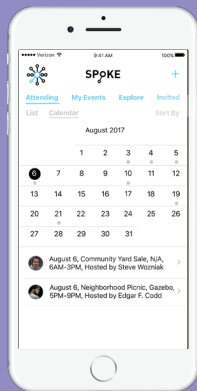
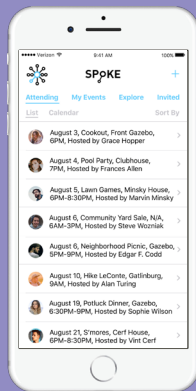
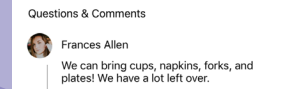
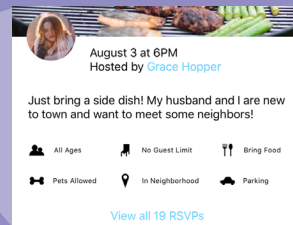
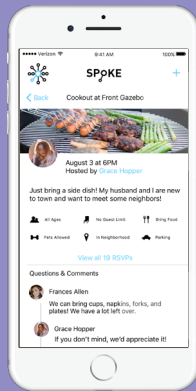
Allen Curve



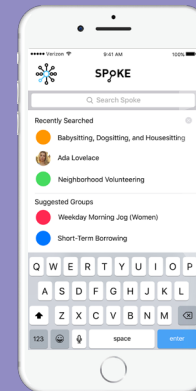
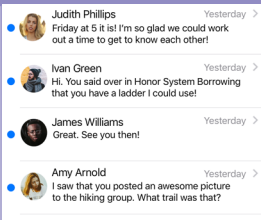
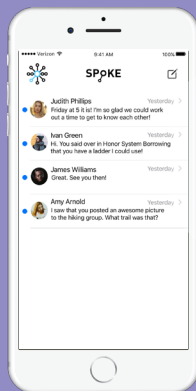
Allen Curve



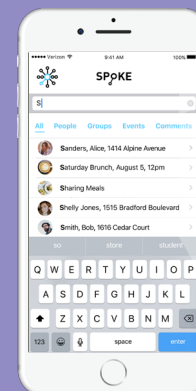
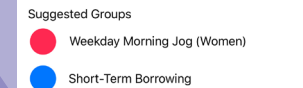
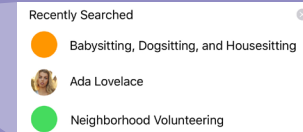




List Calendar

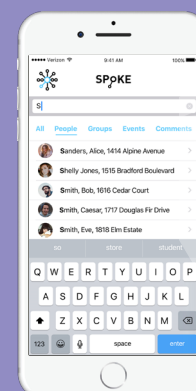


Search Spoke



Search Spoke

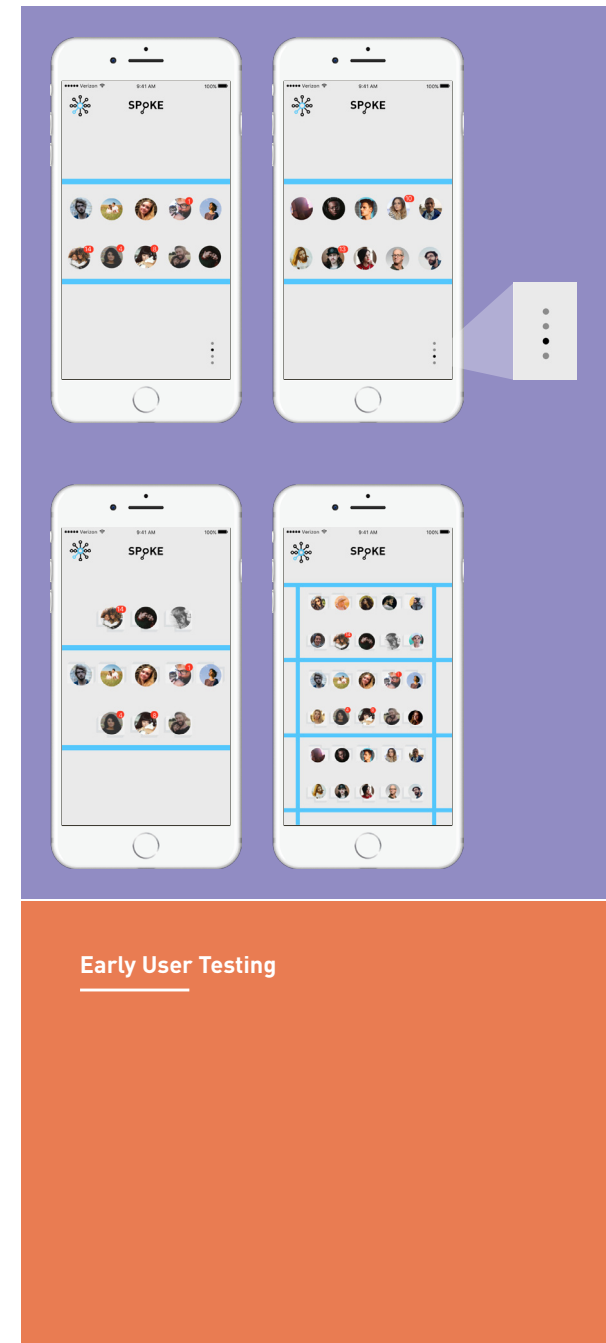
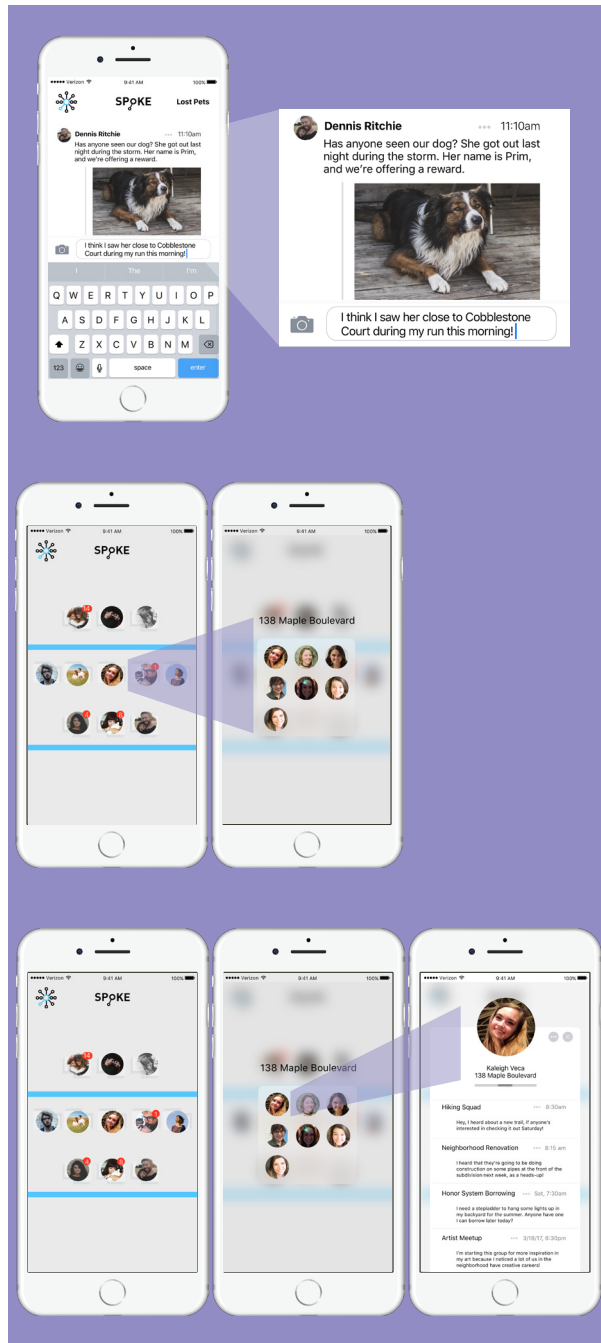
All People Groups Events Comments



Search Spoke

All People Groups Events Comments





Early User Testing

User Suggestions

- Be able to **save posts** for later for reference
- Make **settings** more intuitive/ easier to access
- Put a link to the **user profile** in the side menu too
- Make the “**add group**” feature more prominent

Feedback

“

”

— Tester in her mid-50s

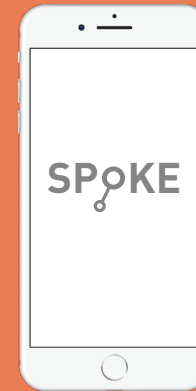
Feedback

“

For somebody that is **not very tech-savvy**, it was pretty easy to not mess up things and to **figure things out**.

”

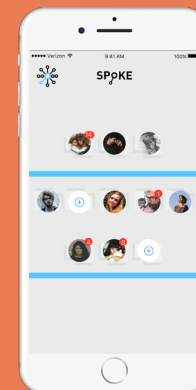
— Tester in her mid-50s



COMMENTS?

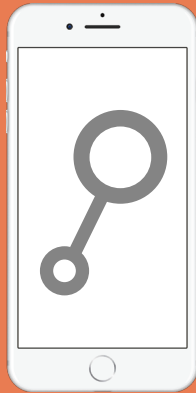


COMMENTS?



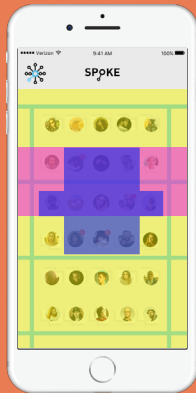
Onboarding

- Built around Google Maps
- User submits proof of address, and OCR recognizes and verifies the address
- User is asked to invite neighbors he/she knows to the app after a short tutorial



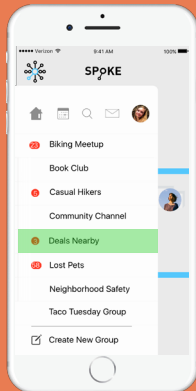
Publicity/ Growth Strategies

- Word of mouth
- Pitching at Homeowners' Association Meetings
- Partnering with Real Estate Agents to promote the app to people new to town
- Guerrilla/ Paul Graham ideas



Security

- Protected user information
- User can choose security preferences for different groups of neighbors
- Cybersecurity to prevent user information leaks



Monetization

- Add local promotions and activities into a "local offers" channel and/or onto the calendar
- Sell anonymized data (last resort)



FINAL REFLECTION

When I set out to do my thesis, I didn't really have an idea in mind. After all, I love dabbling in everything, and there wasn't any one thing I was particularly passionate about. I kept an open mind and found this project somewhere along the way. It allowed me to use Sketch and learn the software while still being "on task" with thesis. I know it will pay off in some capacity in the "real world" of UI/UX and beyond. I am grateful I got to try user testing as well, but I'm perhaps the most grateful that I get to start a new chapter after learning 4 years of stuff at UT about what it means to design things. I always knew that I wanted a job in design, but I am happy that I am now able to look for one and see what the next chapter (literally and metaphorically) holds (other than the Sources from my thesis). I grew a lot as a person through my time in design. I thought I had thick skin, but through critiques and getting my all-nighters' worth of work roasted, I learned that an honest critique can help propel projects more than empty praise, even if the empty praise sounds nicer. I'm happy to be graduating, and I'm happy for all I learned on this project and on every other project that led me to this point.

Allen, Thomas J. *Managing the Flow of Technology*. Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1984.

Allen's book was extremely helpful in structuring my app. I used his Allen curve to create a manageable home screen with the most relevant neighbors who fit in the radius he set.

Bjornstrom, Eileen E.s. "The Neighborhood Context of Relative Position, Trust, and Self-Rated Health." *Social Science & Medicine*, vol. 73, no. 1, 27 May 2011, pp. 42-49. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2011.05.014.

Bjornstrom's journal publication helped me realize the importance of finding correlations between well-being and neighbors, giving me new reasons that this is important beyond just "being nice."

Cortwright, Joe. "Less In Common." *City Observatory*, June 2015, cityobservatory.org/wp-content/files/CityObservatory_Less_In_Common.pdf.

Cortwright's guide made me aware that one-third of Americans don't know their neighbors, which was a crucial statistic when I first started researching everything.

Fred M. Rogers. "Won't You Be My Neighbor."

Though it's a simple song, it packs a punch. I reference it in my presentation as an intro, explaining that times are not as simple as singing for people to be your neighbors, in a fabricated, TV world.



Jecker, J. and Landy, D. (1969). Liking a person as function of doing him a favor. *Human Relations*, 22, 371-378.

Jecker and Landy mentioned the "Ben Franklin Effect," that people like people who they help out. This is valuable to note because a person will like his/her neighbors more if he/she helps them out. It's counter-intuitive, but it's important to keep in mind.

Sharp, Debbie, and David Massey. "Knoxville Office of Neighborhoods Interview." 24 Feb. 2017.

This interview was crucial in understanding the needs of neighborhoods, especially for aspects that I hadn't considered. Although they had a biased, professional view, I plan on taking a lot of their insight into my more grassroots app.

Smith, Jared. "Facebook Messenger Interview." 20 Feb. 2017.

I picked Jared's brain on what he thought was important about being a neighbor, if it even mattered, and how the app could move forward.

Trulia. "Trulia: 1 in 2 Americans Don't Know Neighbors' Names." *Forbes*, *Forbes Magazine*, 28 Oct. 2013, www.forbes.com/sites/trulia/2013/10/24/neighbor-survey/#3f6552386e7e.

As the title hints, this article was valuable for discovering some really jarring statistics about how little we know about the people we live near. This article's statistics will likely be the backbone of my project as I continue.



