



MyGoNorth App: The Complete Design Journey

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ICM 517—Ideation, Prototyping, and Testing; M6&7

Companion App Overview

North Country Chamber + MyGoNorth Integration

The North Country consists of multiple municipalities in Northern Coos County, NH and Northeastern Essex County, VT—near the border of Canada in Northern New England. Municipalities include but are not limited to: Colebrook, NH and Canaan, VT.

To see what's happening in the North Country, there are currently two sites: The North Country Chamber of Commerce and MyGoNorth. The former has more chamber and development information, while the latter is marketed towards a wider tourist audience.

The MyGoNorth companion app would be designed to help tourists, residents, chamber members, organizations, and development contractors alike learn more about what goes on in the North Country and get more involved. This app will integrate the information and features found on the current MyGoNorth site as well as the North Country Chamber of Commerce site. Some features are built into the app while others will be external links to the browser sites. Regardless, everything one needs to access concerning North Country business will be conveniently available in one's pocket!

Companion App Overview

Main App Functions:

1. View current and upcoming events in the North Country.
2. Receive the latest news on what's happening.
3. Learn more about the activities and hotspots available in the North Country.
4. Find all types of businesses and organizations via the Member Directory.
5. View available career and volunteer opportunities.
6. Access most important MyGoNorth and North Country Chamber of Commerce site features for members and guests alike on the go.

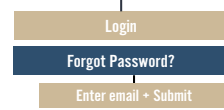
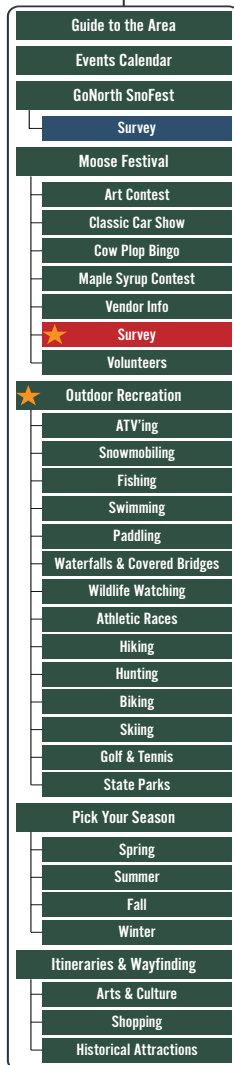
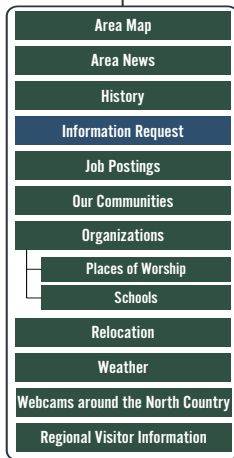
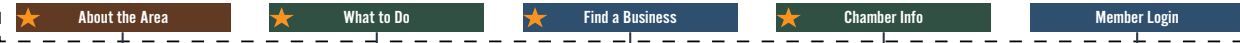
Information Architecture — Current Site Map*

NORTH COUNTRY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE WEBSITE INFO ARCHITECTURE / SITEMAP

TOP HEADER (on every page)



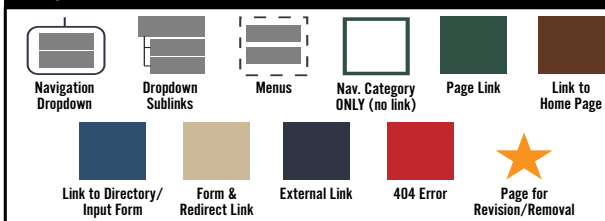
NAVIGATION MENU



FOOTER ("Quick Links")



LEGEND

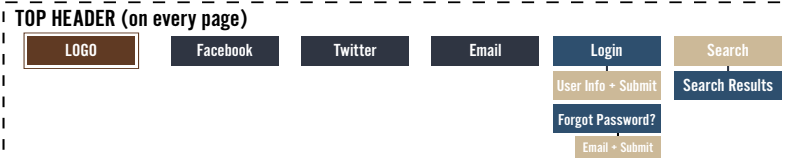


*This was the IA of the site prior to its complete revamp, which is now live as of May 5th. Although this is not the site's true IA anymore, the new site did give me some ideas for revising my companion app's IA, which I will discuss.

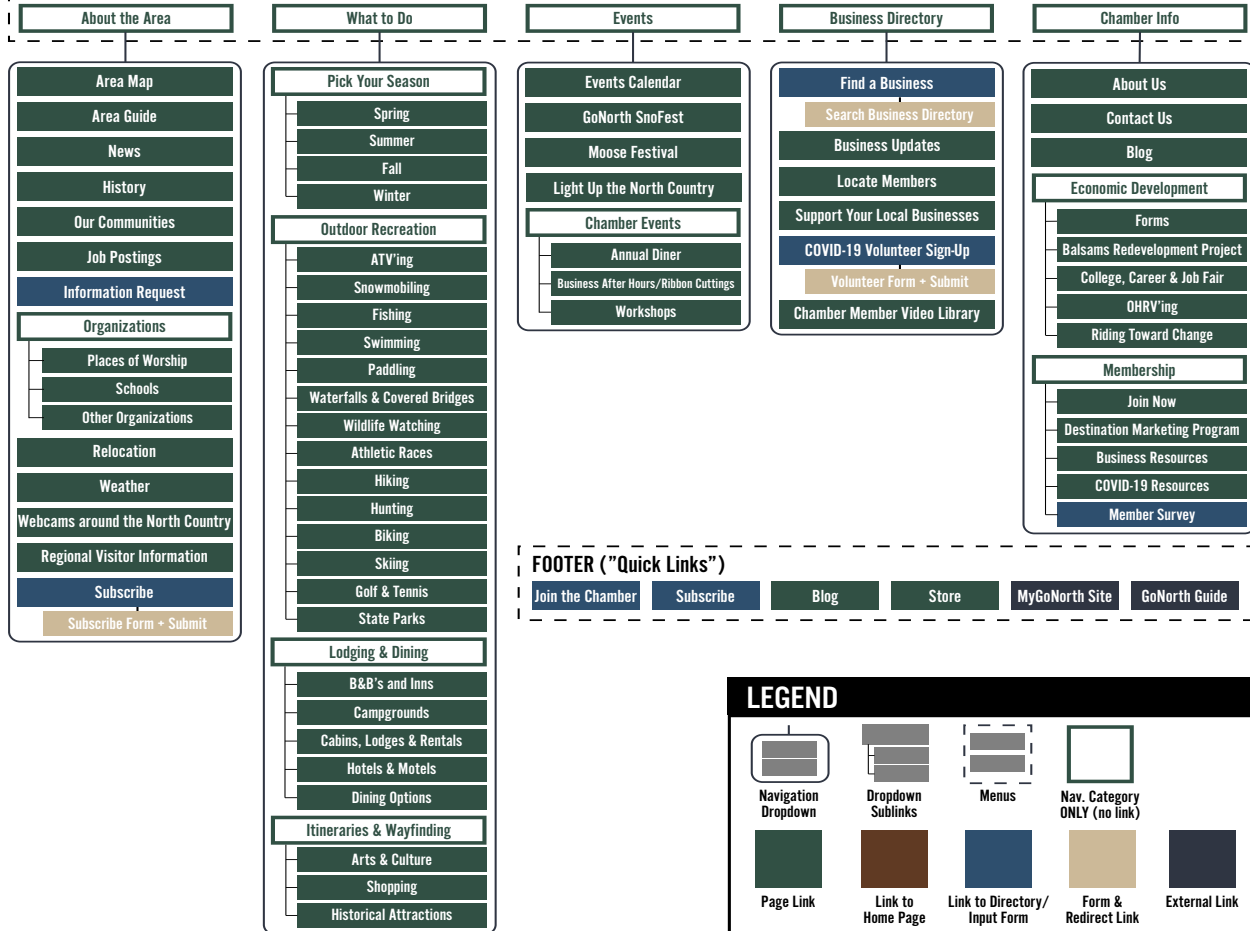
On the old site, it was not too difficult to find helpful links; however, the main menu had perhaps too many dropdown links and subcategories, which made it feel cluttered and overwhelming. Also, some of the links were redundant or had 404 errors on them. I knew that I would have to make the IA much simpler for the app.

Information Architecture — Proposed Site Map

NORTH COUNTRY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE — PROPOSED INFO ARCHITECTURE / SITEMAP



NAVIGATION MENU

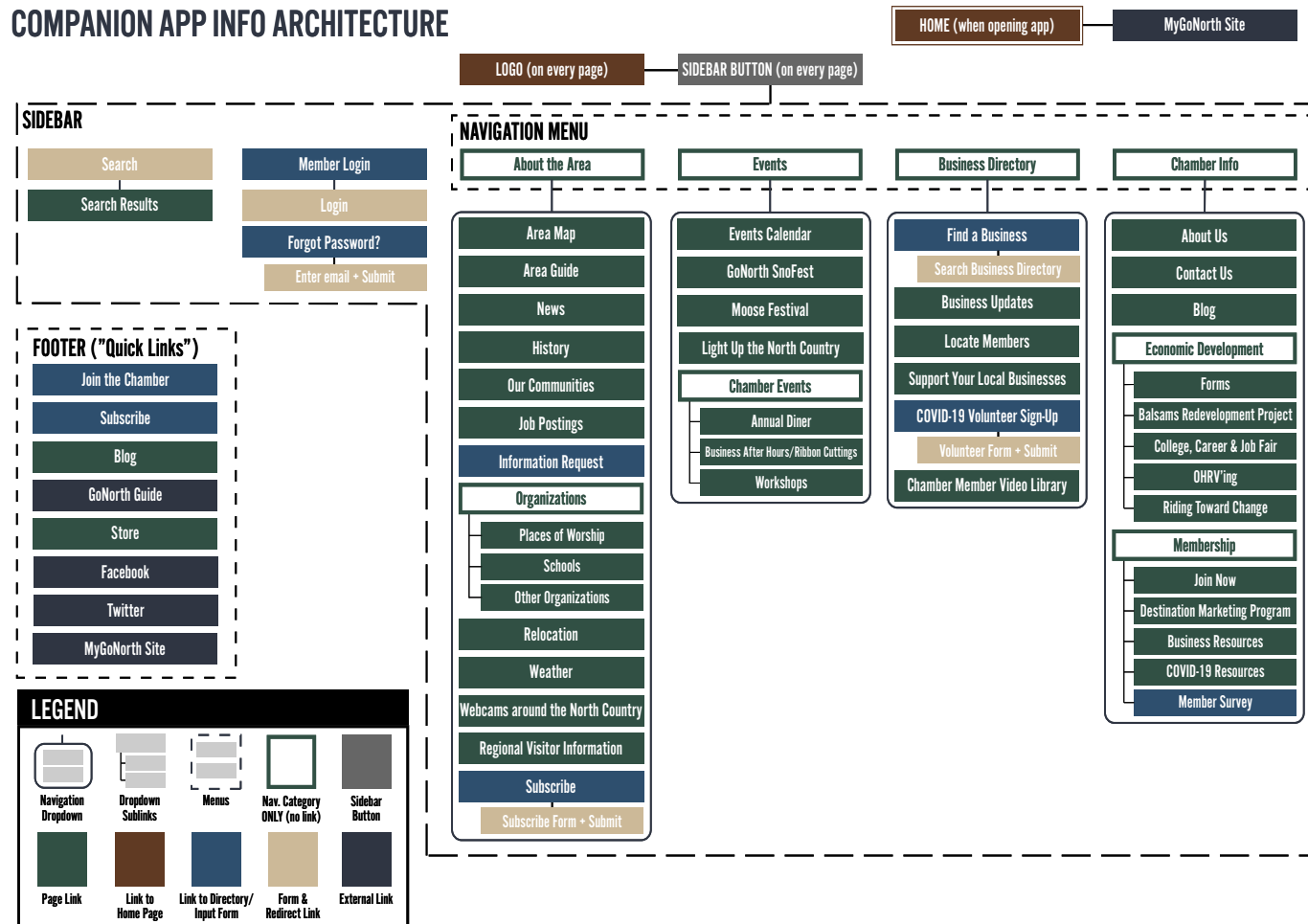


This is what I came up with for the proposed site map, which is based on the old site. I tried to simplify it by moving links around, deleting some redundant links and creating a separate 'Events' tab. However, there was still more room for improvement, as I would learn through feedback and user testing on what works and what doesn't.

Information Architecture — Companion App v1

This was my first attempt at creating the IA for the NCCOC companion app. Initially, I designed the app to be solely based on the NCCOC site and not MyGoNorth. Hence, I got rid of some features available on MyGoNorth (including the 'Things to Do' category) in attempt to simplify the IA. However, I failed to consider the audience's desire for some of that information as well as the large volume of footer links, which would be impractical to have on a mobile screen.

NORTH COUNTRY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE COMPANION APP INFO ARCHITECTURE



User Flowcharts — Stories & Scenarios

MARY (THE TOURIST)

I love to travel, and I love the great outdoors. I want to visit somewhere different and more remote, especially since I enjoy hiking, biking, fishing, and sightseeing. A friend told me about the North Country and I really want to check it out, but I don't know much about it.

I hope to be able to see what activities are offered in the North Country as well as find good dining, lodging, shopping, and activity locations.

★As a new visitor to the North Country, I want to know what there is to do and what (and where) the good destinations are so that I can plan my trip, contribute to the local economy, and have a blast.

JACOB (THE RESIDENT)

I just moved up here in the North Country from New York. I recently retired, and I wanted to settle down somewhere remote in contrast to the busy lifestyle of New York.

I hope to be able to see what's going on in my new community, get more involved, and meet new people.

★As a new resident of the North Country, I want to be able to view all upcoming events and subscribe to the newsletter so that I can get more involved in the community.

GREG (THE BUSINESS OWNER)

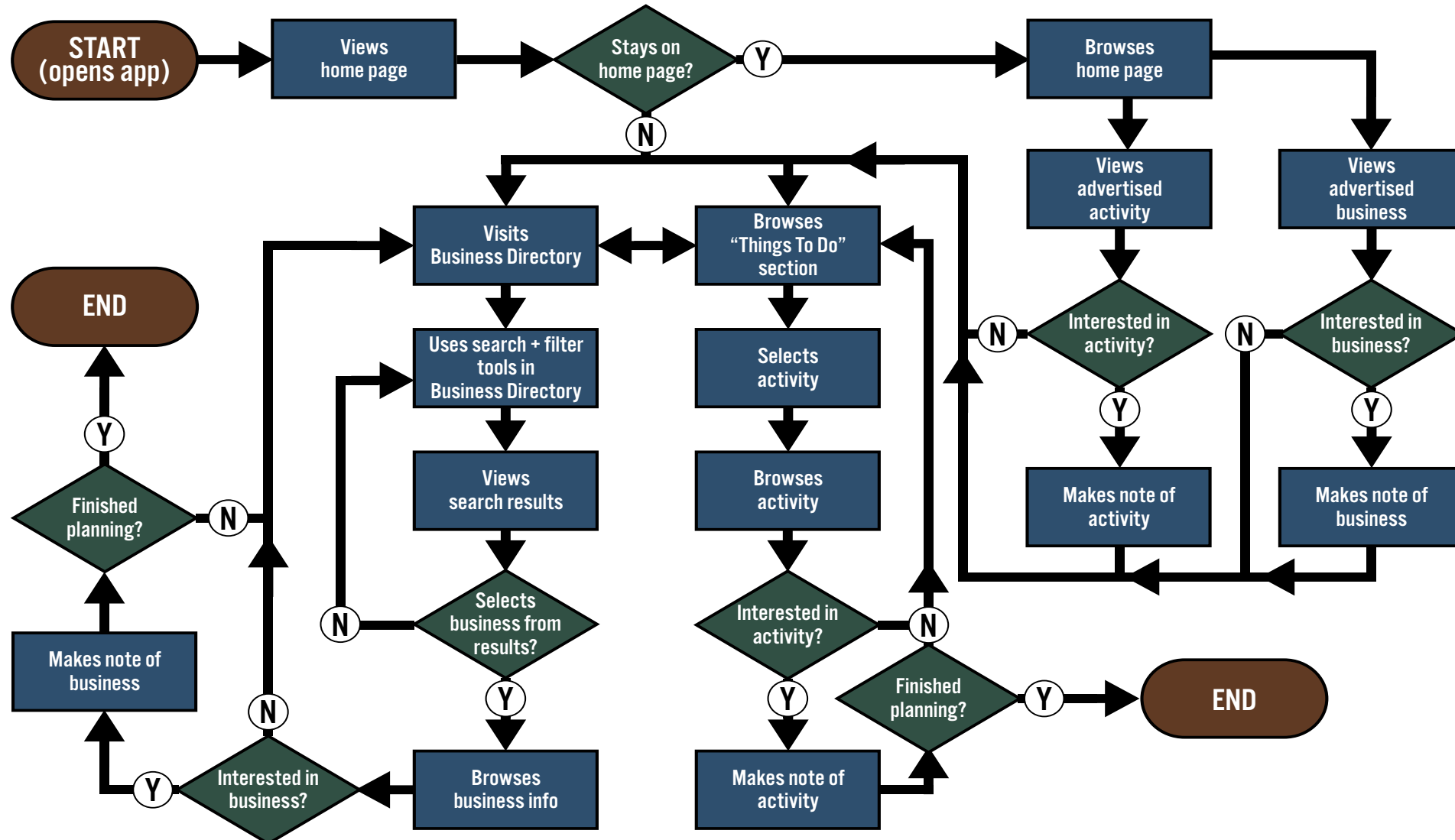
I recently founded a restaurant as well as a small inn up here in the North Country because I love the area and I want to be part of a quaint community and culture. That being said, my businesses are not yet fully immersed in the community because I am not yet a chamber member.

I hope to be able to apply to—or at least access the forms of—becoming a chamber member on my mobile device because I am always moving and I rarely have time to be on a desktop computer.

★As the owner of a newly-established inn and restaurant in the North Country, I want my businesses to become chamber members so that I can put them on the map and have them be part of the North Country community.

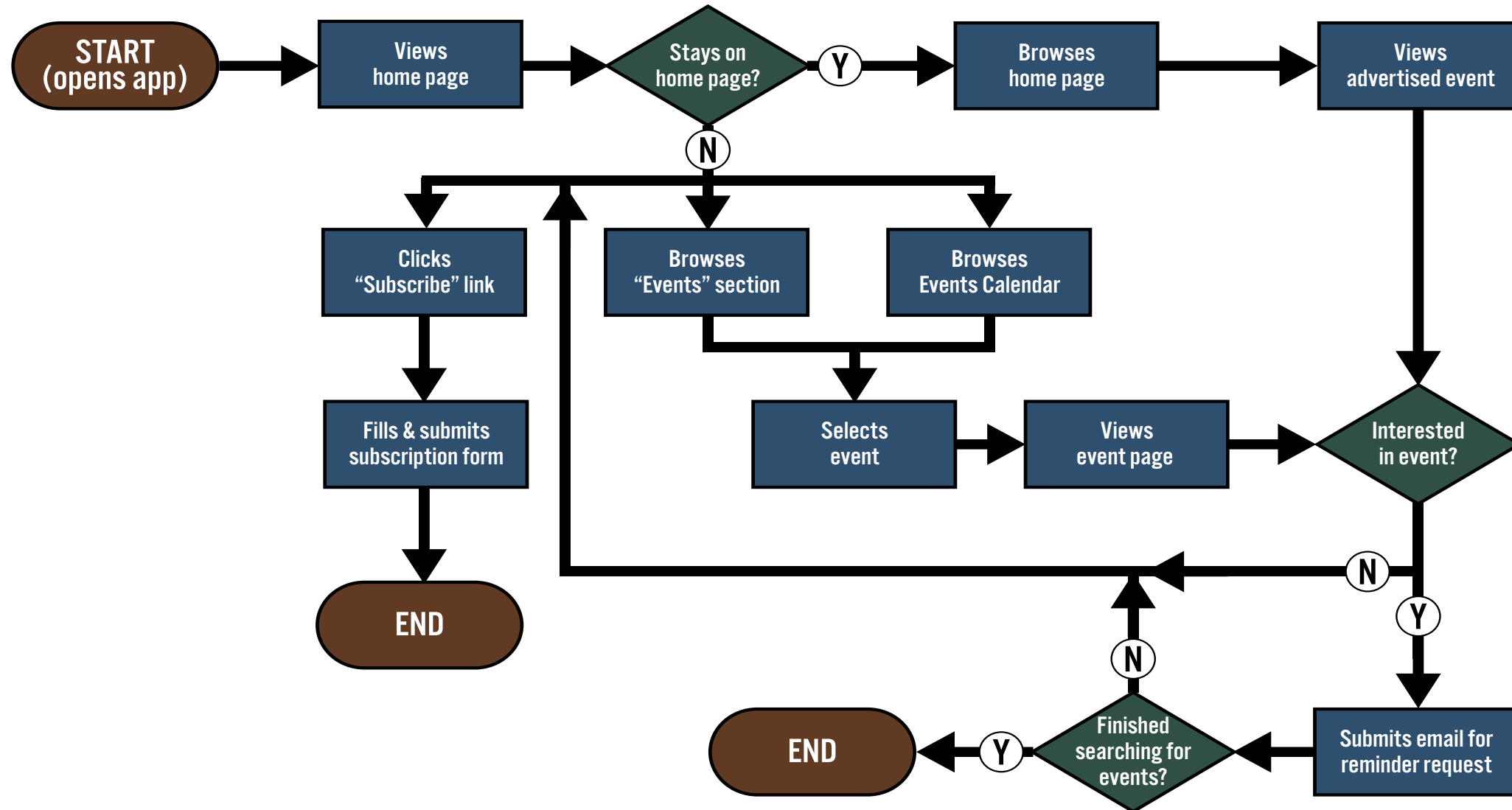
Flowchart #1 — Mary

★As a new visitor to the North Country, I want to know what there is to do and what (and where) the good destinations are so that I can plan my trip, contribute to the local economy, and have a blast.



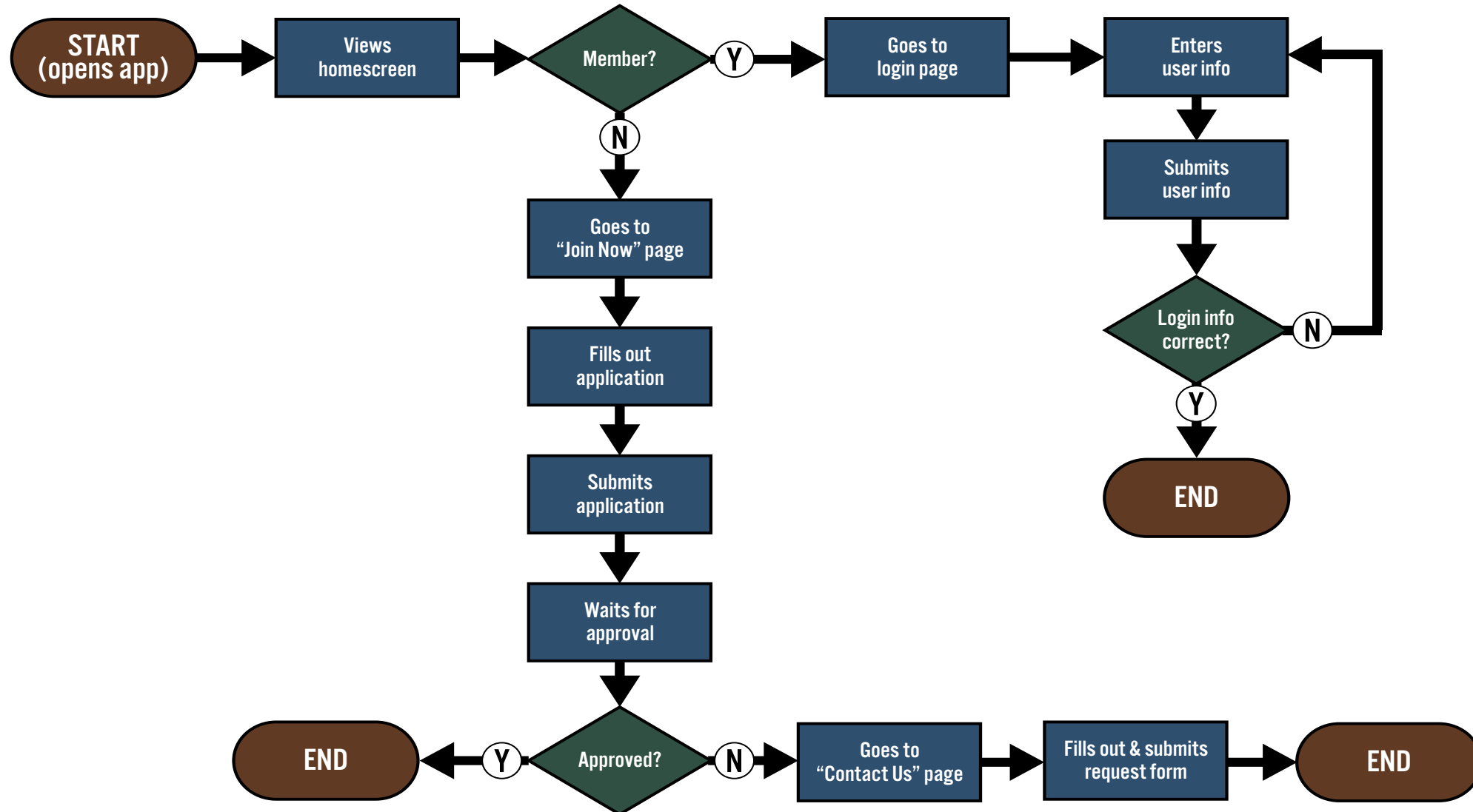
Flowchart #2 — Jacob

★As a new resident of the North Country, I want to be able to view all upcoming events and subscribe to the newsletter so that I can get more involved in the community.



Flowchart #3 — Greg

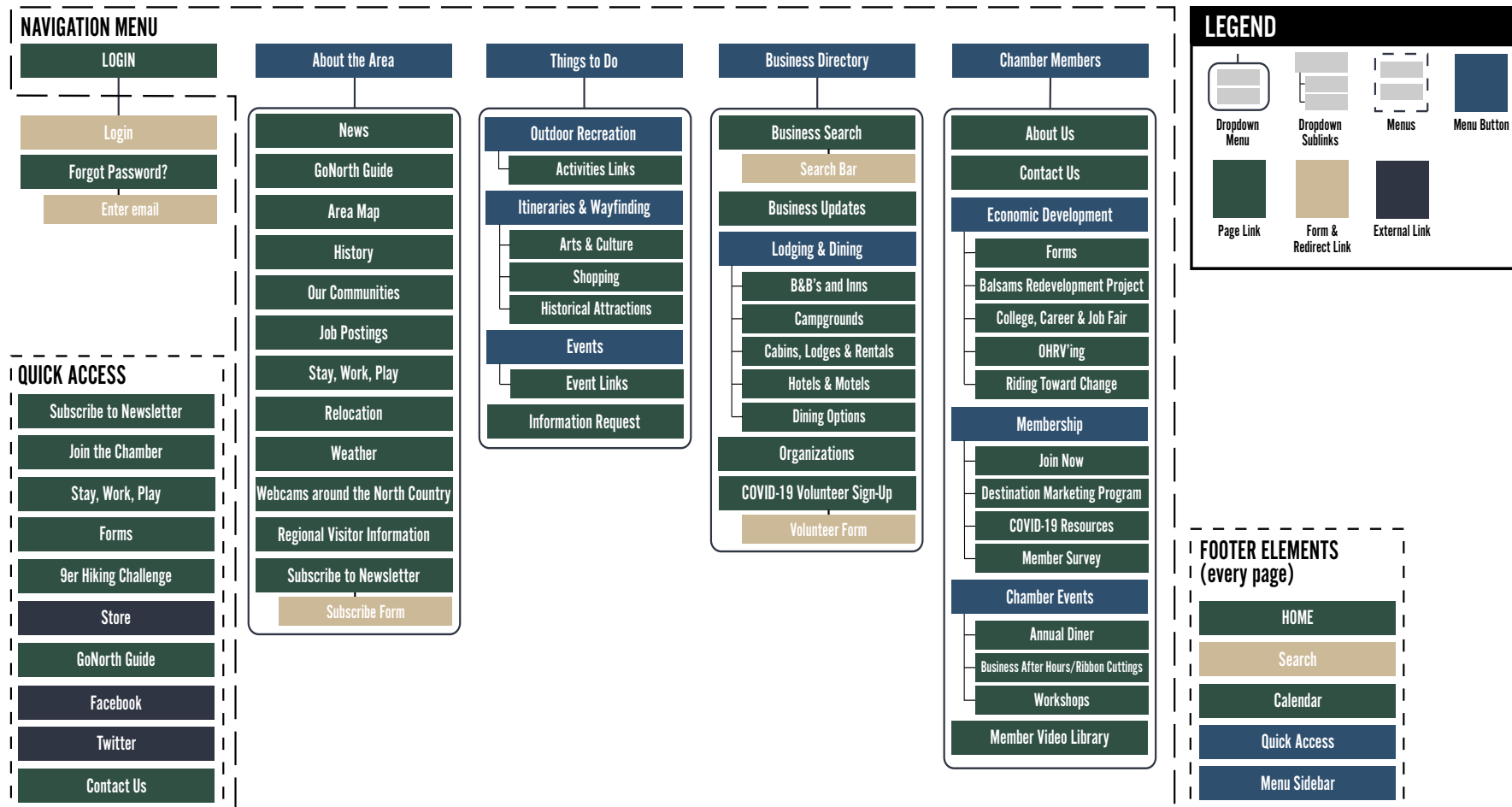
★As the owner of a newly-established inn and restaurant in the North Country, I want my businesses to become chamber members so that I can put them on the map and have them be part of the North Country community.



Information Architecture — Companion App v2

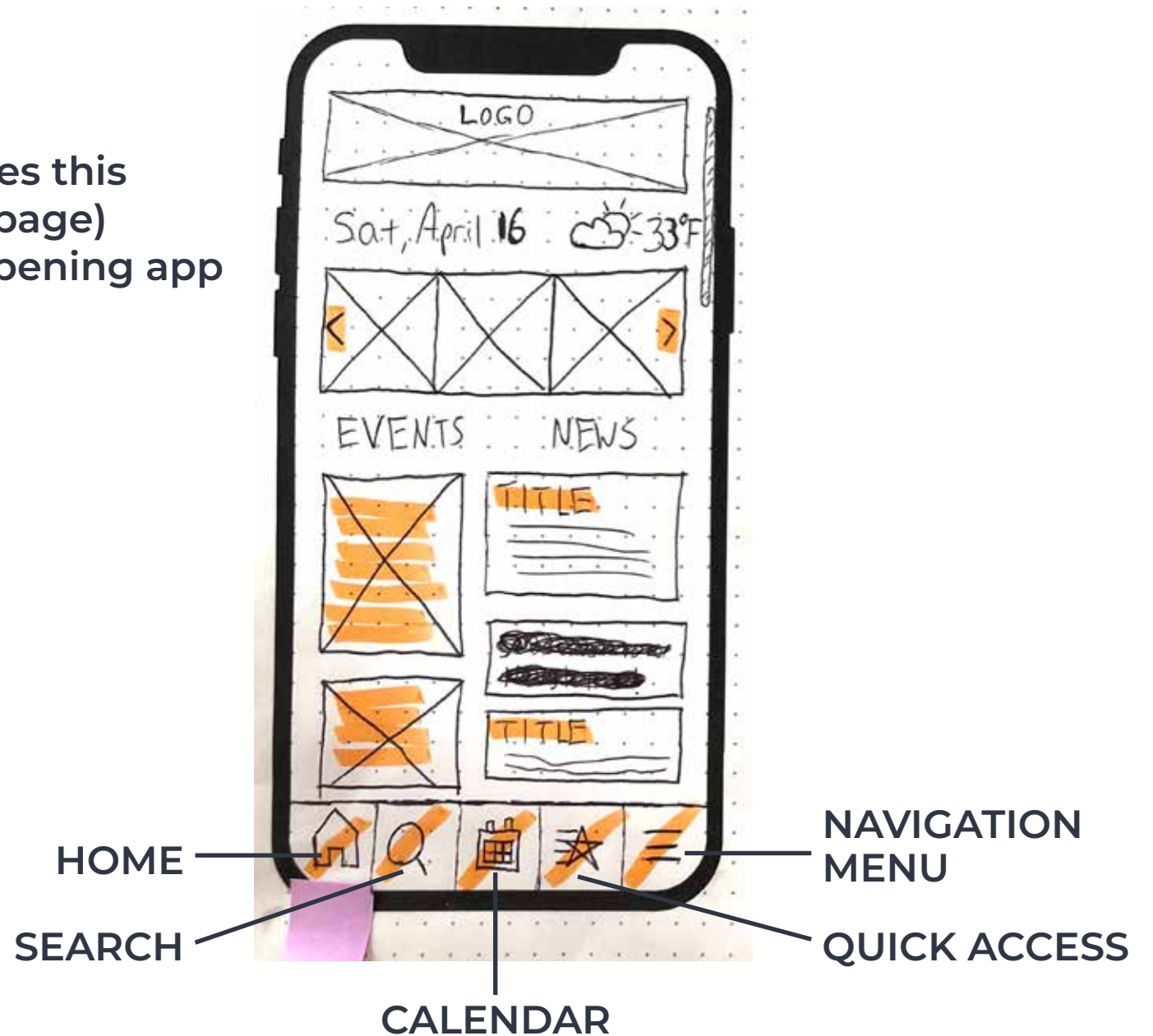
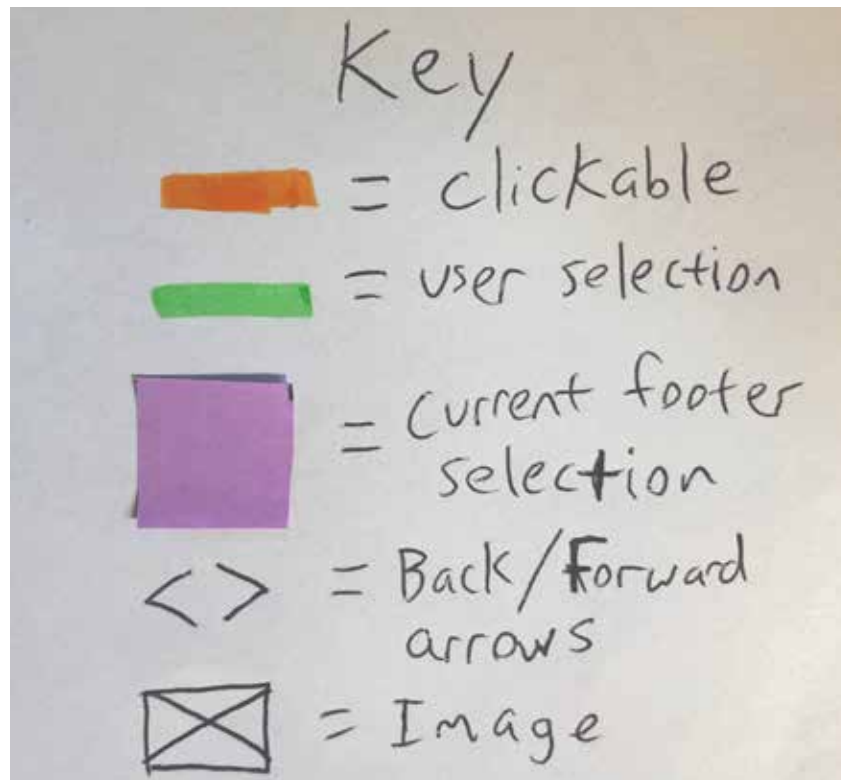
After receiving feedback, at this point I decided to go in a new direction. I would now be integrating the NCCOC site with the MyGoNorth site to reach a wider audience and create an all-in-one convenient app, especially given that both sites are very similar in many ways. I would revise my companion app IA to reflect these changes, adding back the 'Things to Do' category while also simplifying in other areas, including the footer tabs. I also decided to include a Quick Access tab for popular links.

MYGONORTH / NORTH COUNTRY COC COMPANION APP INFO ARCHITECTURE

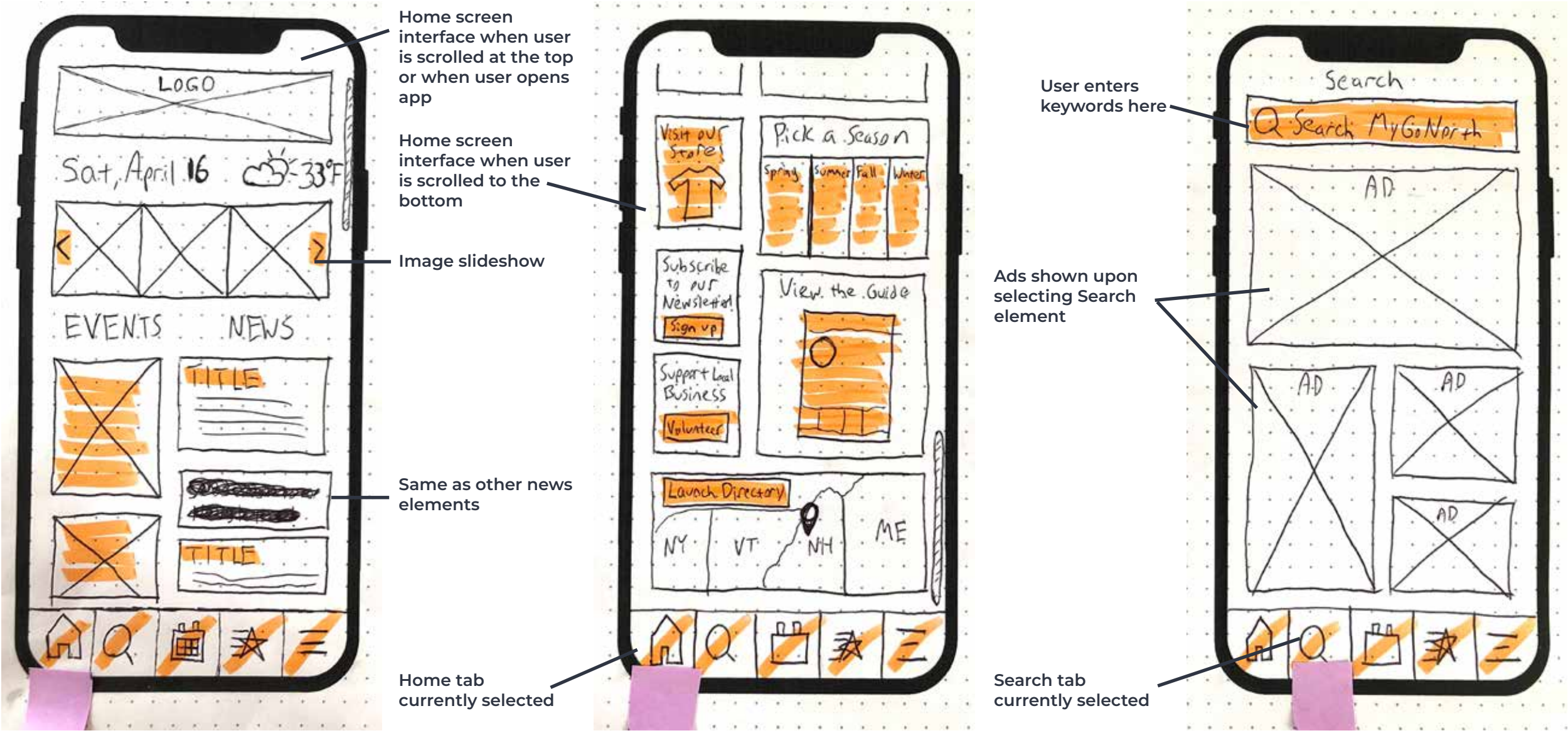


Low-Fidelity Prototype — Key & Footer Tabs

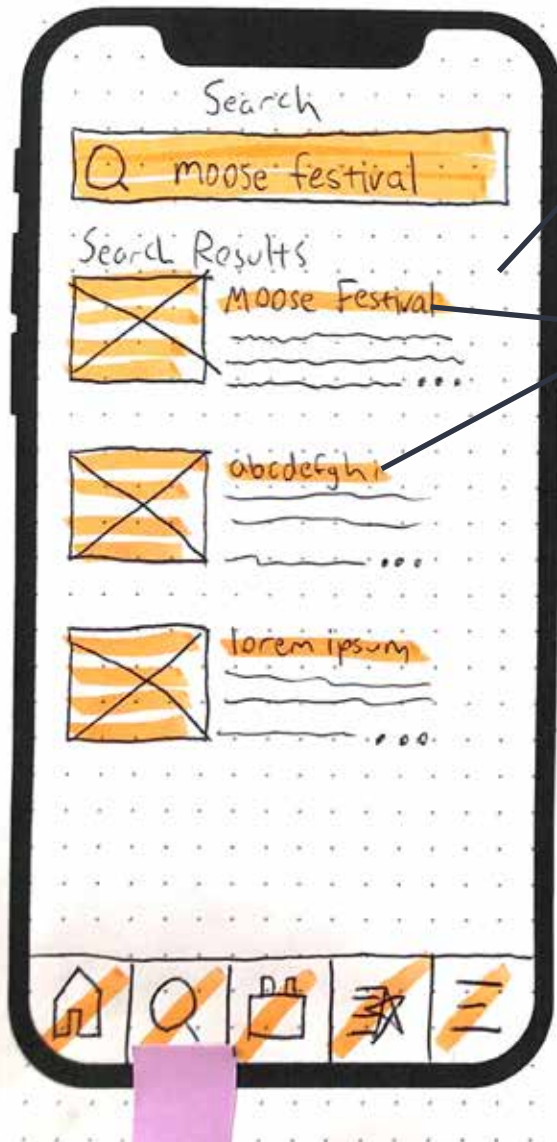
User sees this
(home page)
upon opening app



Low-Fidelity Prototype — Footer Tabs



Low-Fidelity Prototype — Footer Tabs



Search results for 'moose festival'

User may select from results to view page

User may select day to view more on that day

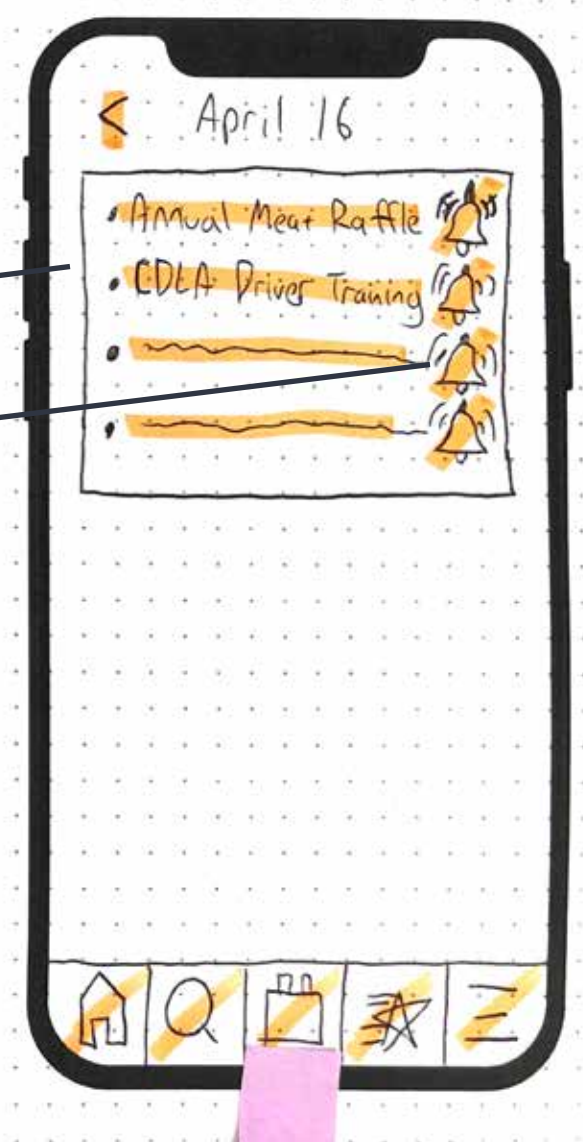
Calendar tab currently selected



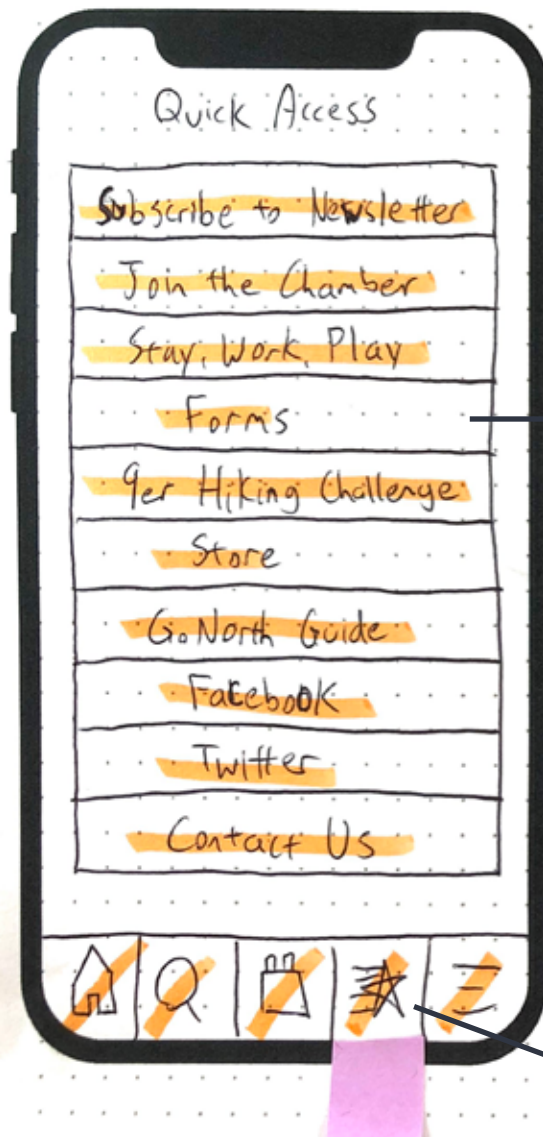
User may filter by keyword, category, and month

List of events on April 16 if user selects that

User may set reminder for that event



Low-Fidelity Prototype — Footer Tabs



List of important 'quick links' within this tab

Quick Access tab currently selected

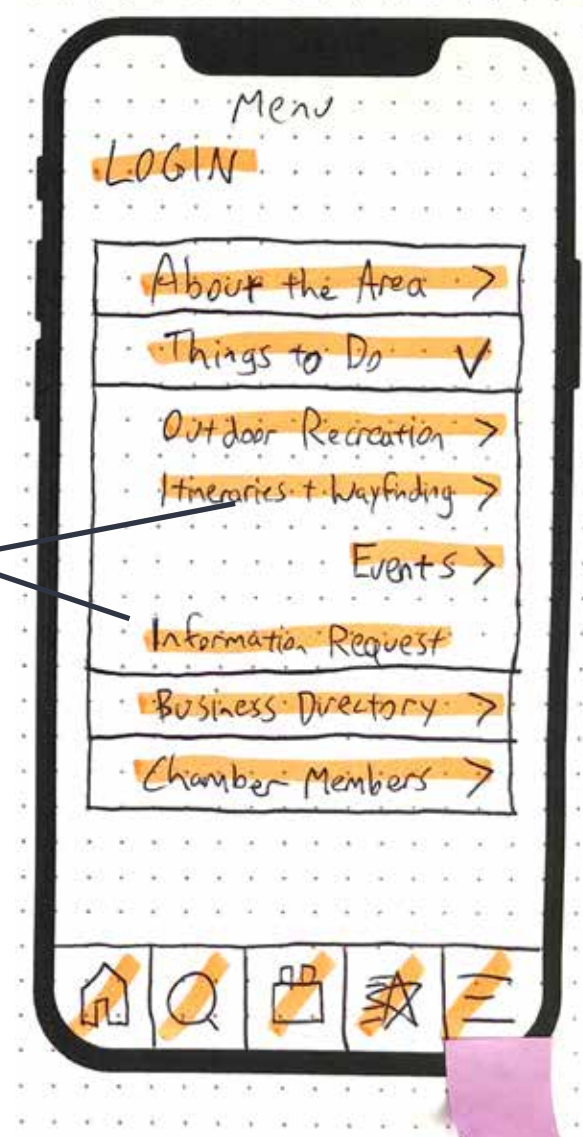


If user is not logged in, a 'LOGIN' button will show here

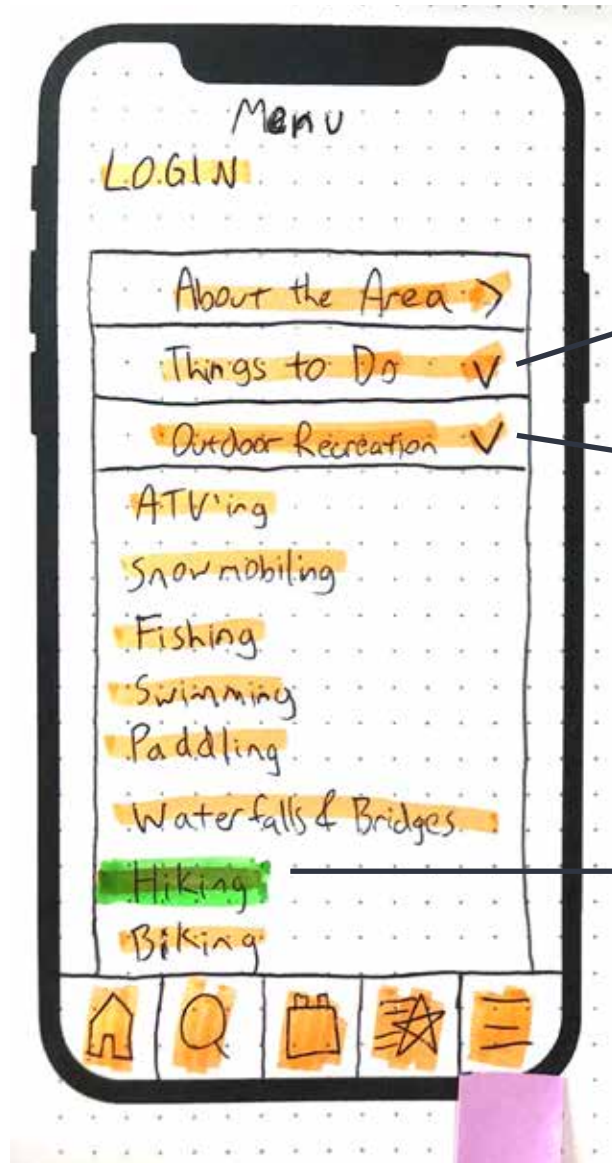
User selects one of these for dropdown links

Information Request is a page link, while the other 3 elements are dropdowns of their own

Navigation Sidebar tab currently selected



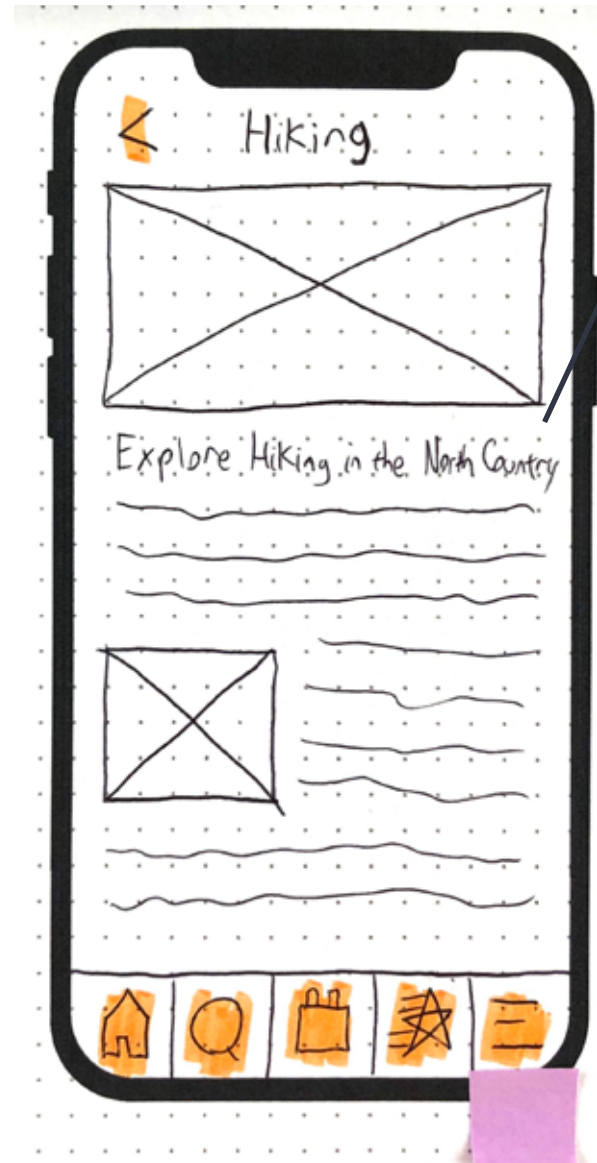
Low-Fidelity Prototype — Finding Things to Do



For example, user selects 'Things to Do'...

...then selects 'Outdoor Recreation'...

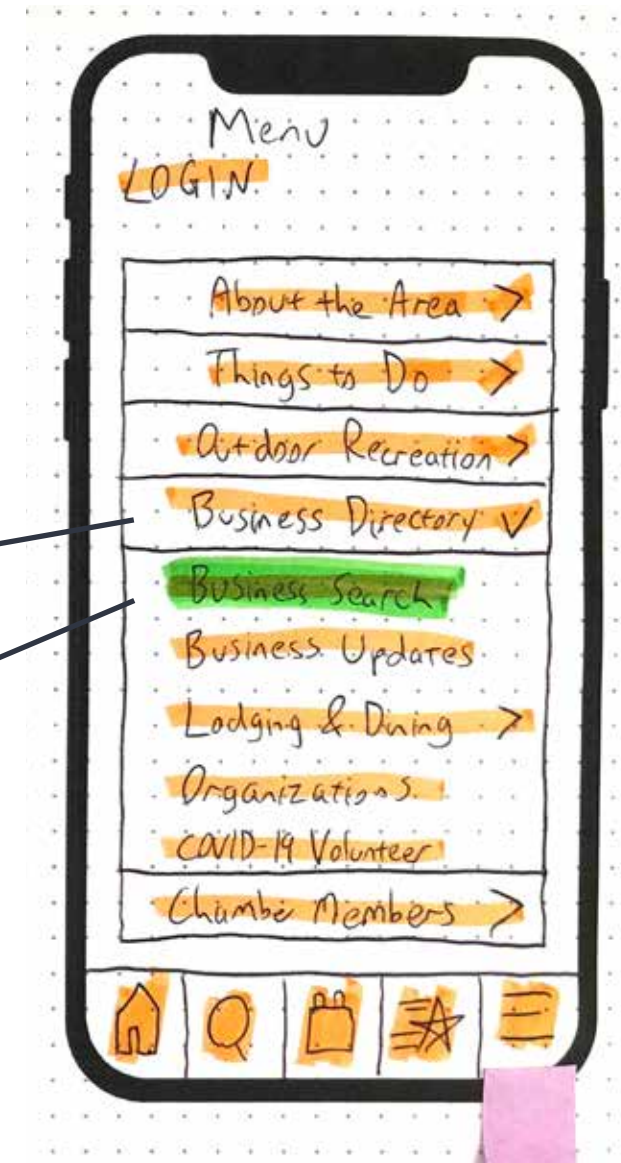
...then selects 'Hiking'



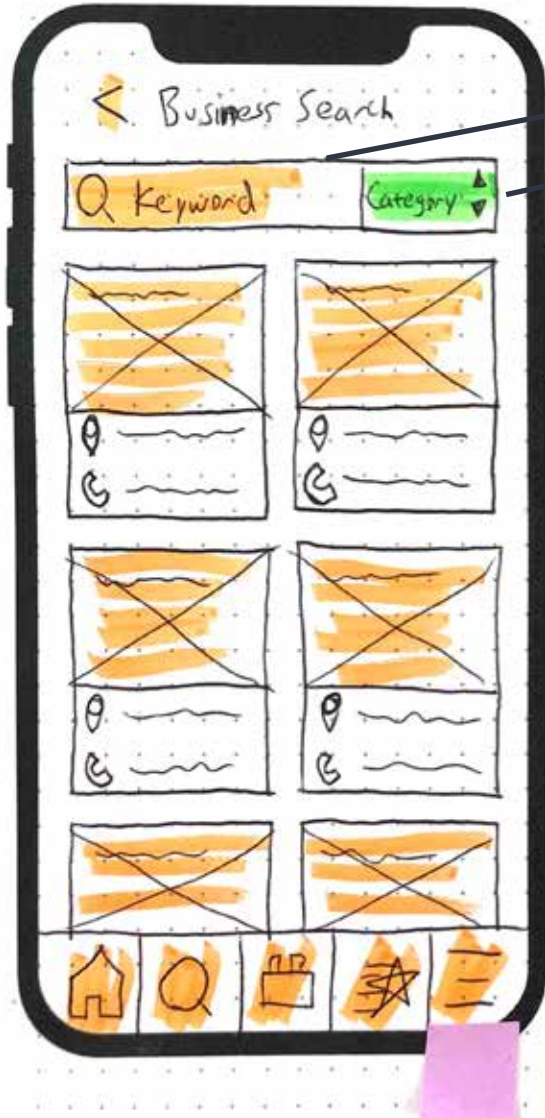
Hiking page describes hiking in the North Country and lists destination recommendations

Alternatively, user selects 'Business Directory'...

...then selects 'Business Search'...

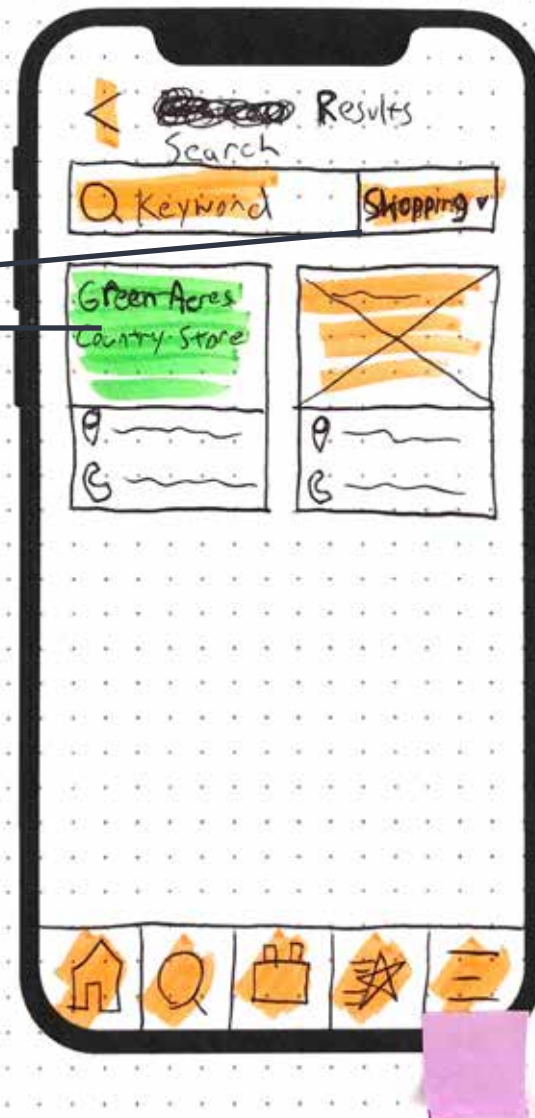


Low-Fidelity Prototype — Finding Things to Do



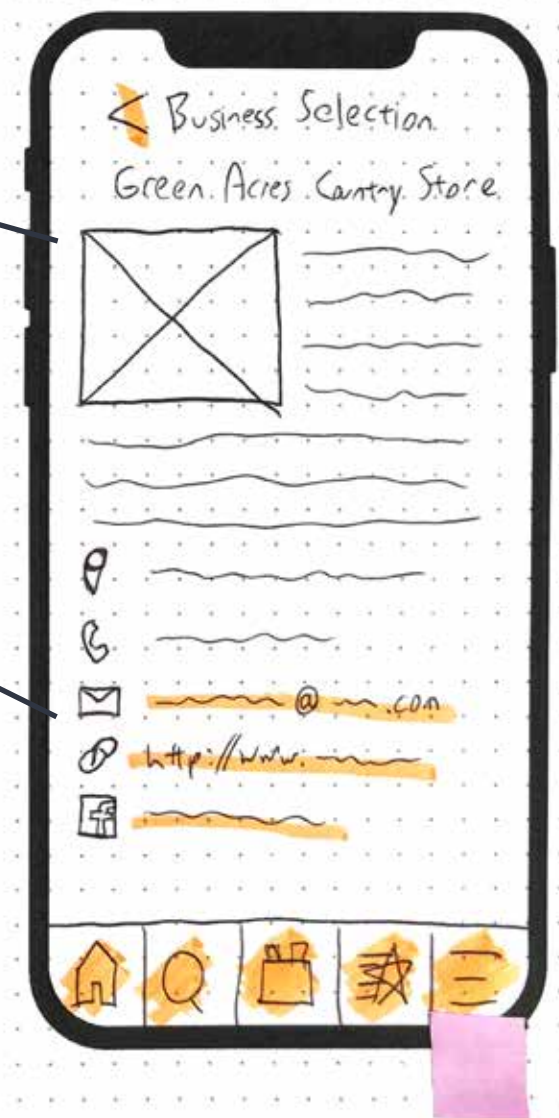
In 'Business Search' user may enter keywords or select category

If user selects 'shopping' category, the results narrow down and user selects business

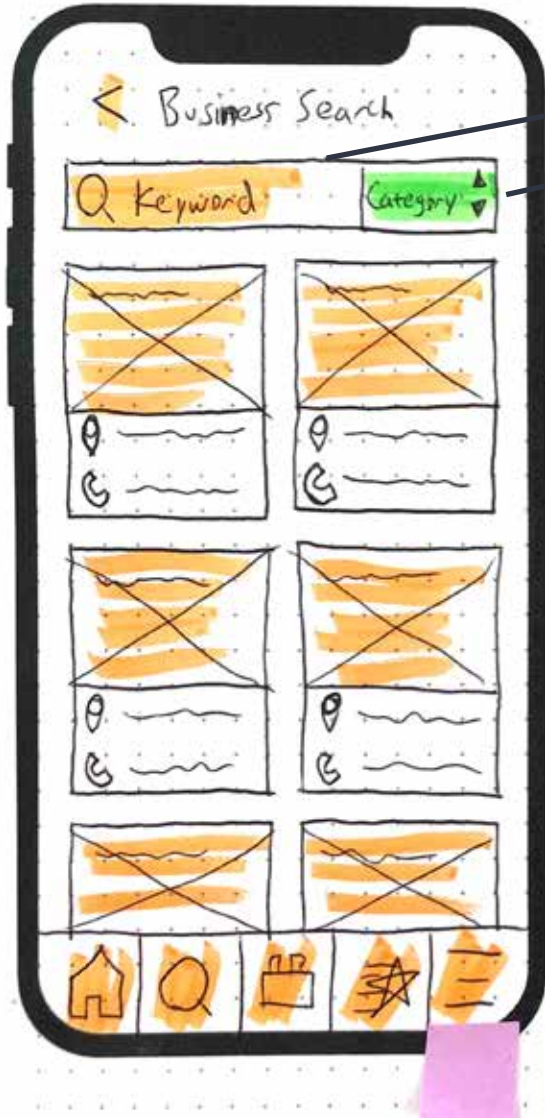


Page for selected business with description

Location, contact info, website, social media

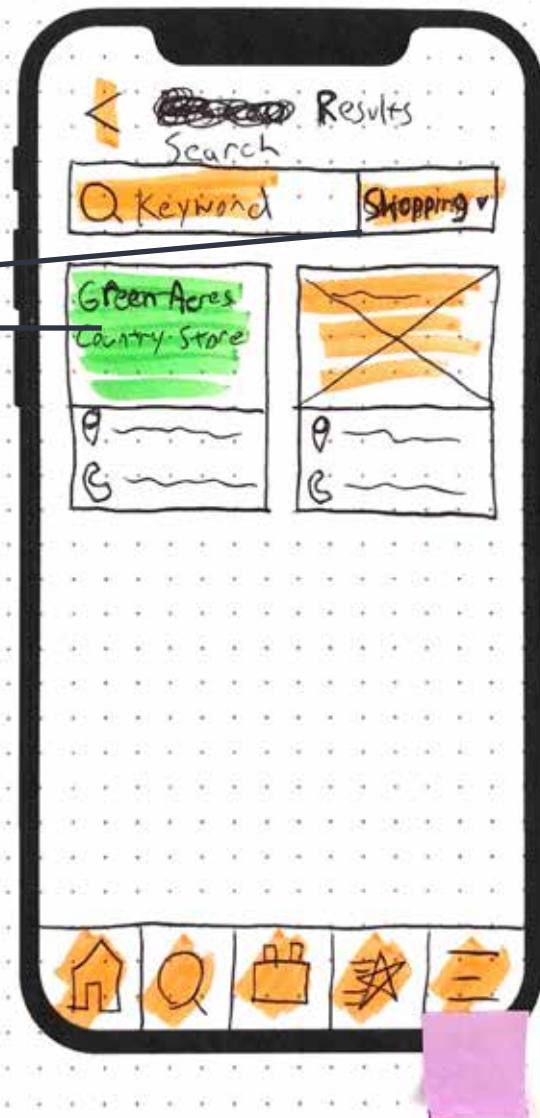


Low-Fidelity Prototype — Finding Things to Do



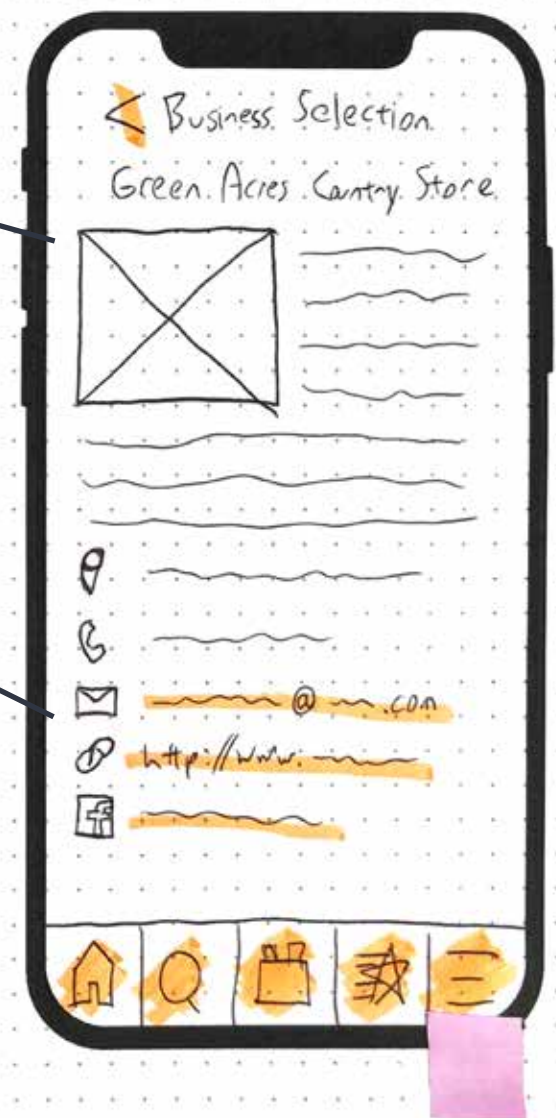
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Page for selected business with description

Location, contact info, website, social media



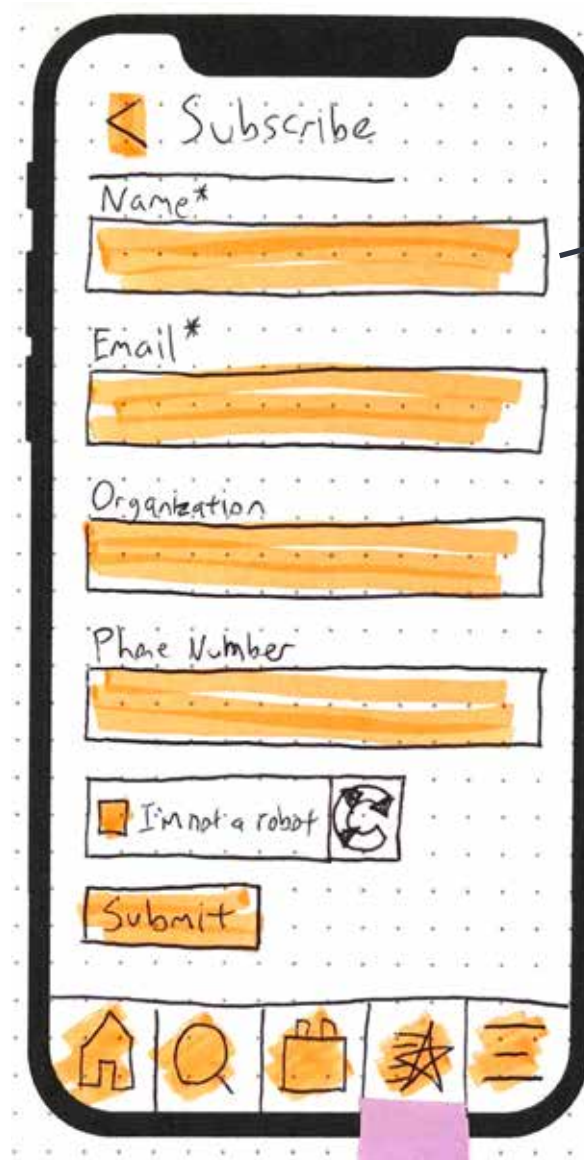
Low-Fidelity Prototype — Getting More Involved

User selects 'Subscribe to Newsletter' under Quick Access*

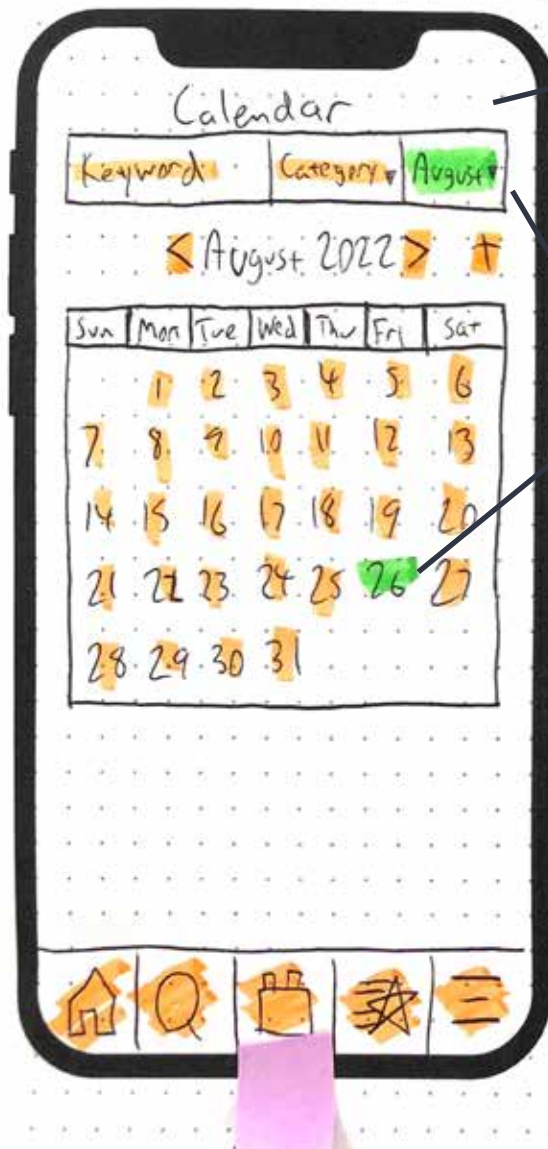
*Alternatively, user may find same link either on the Home page or under 'About the Area' in the Navigation Menu



Newsletter subscription form for user to fill out and submit

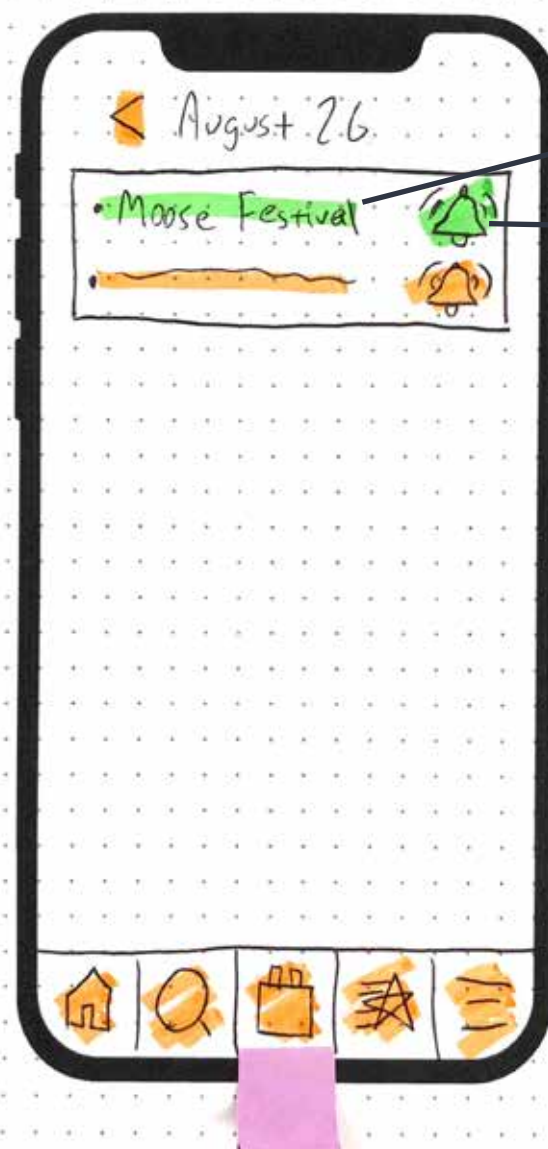


Low-Fidelity Prototype — Getting More Involved

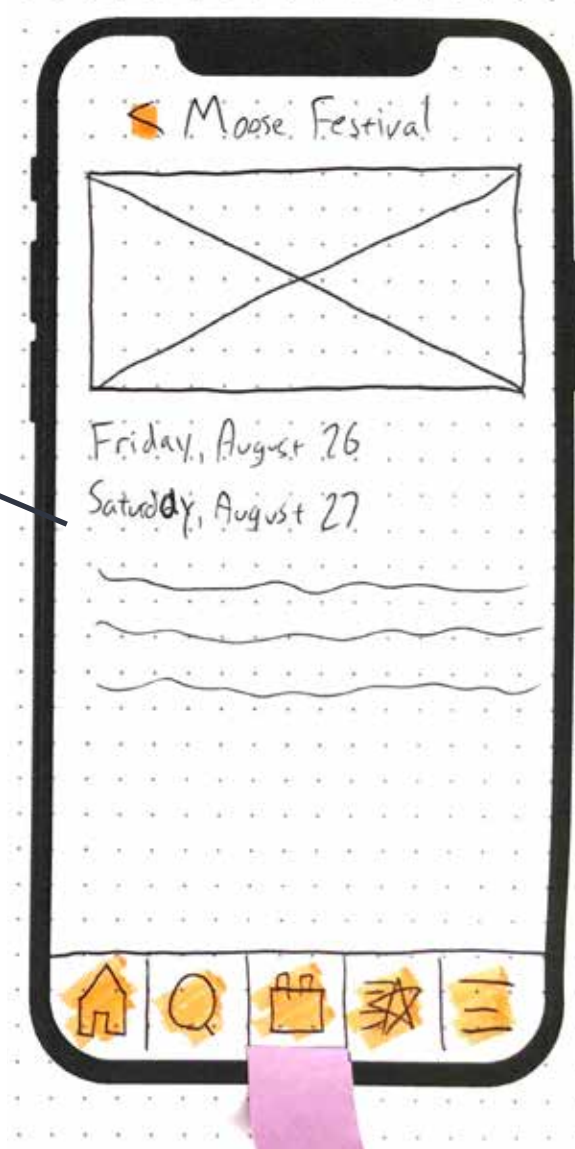


For example, user goes to Calendar to find events.

User selects August and selects the 26th because he heard of the Moose Festival happening that day



User selects 'Moose Festival' under events listed on August 26th and may set a reminder for it

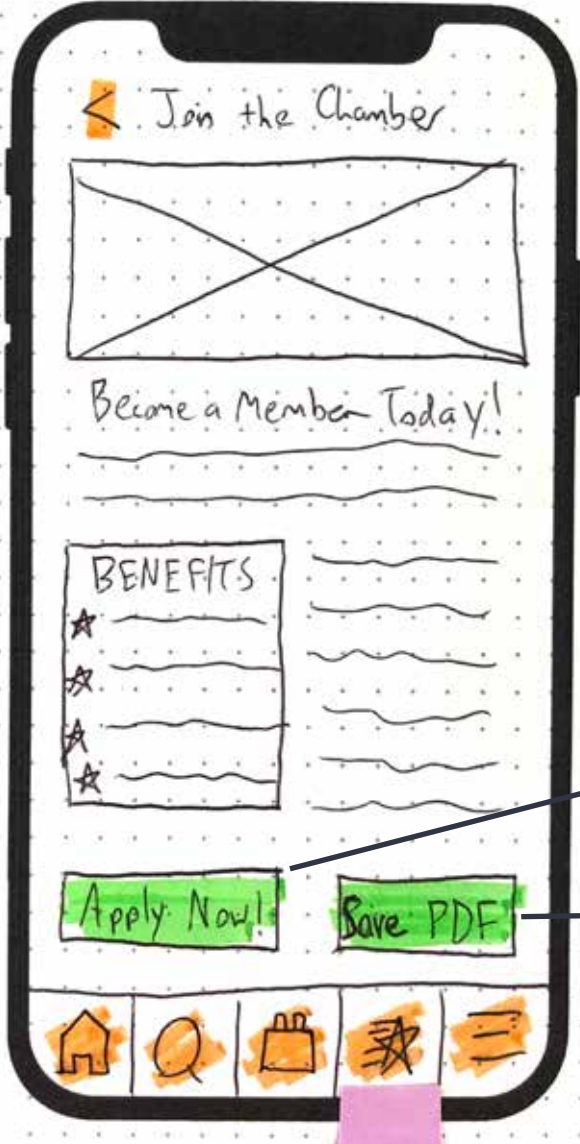


'Moose Festival' page as selected by user, with information

Low-Fidelity Prototype — Becoming a Member

User selects 'Join the Chamber' under Quick Access*

*Alternatively, user may find same link under 'Chamber Members' in the Navigation Menu



User may apply and fill out application form

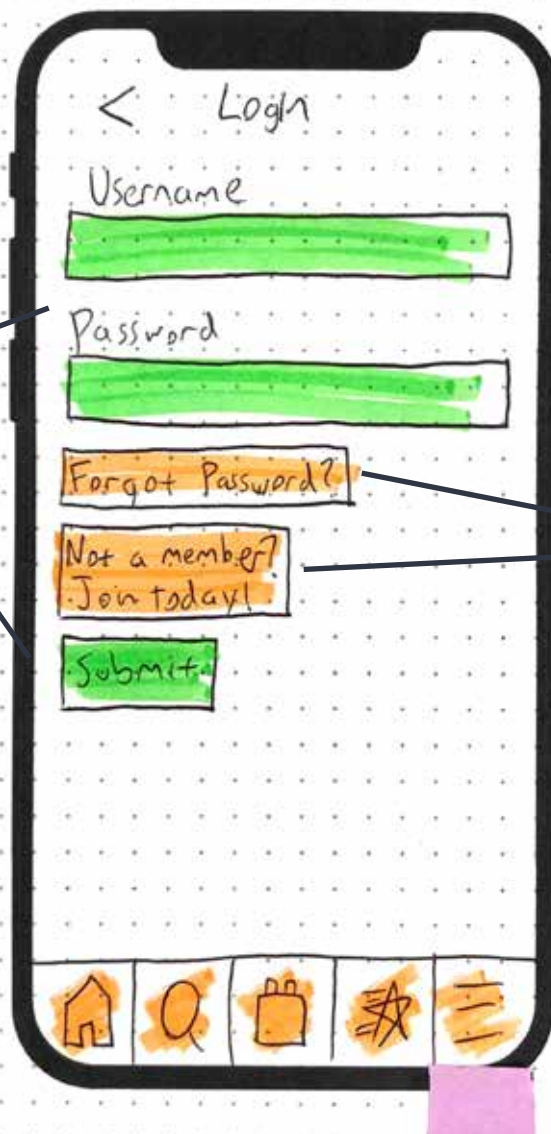
OR, user may save the PDF to access later and fill out on the web or print

Low-Fidelity Prototype — Becoming a Member



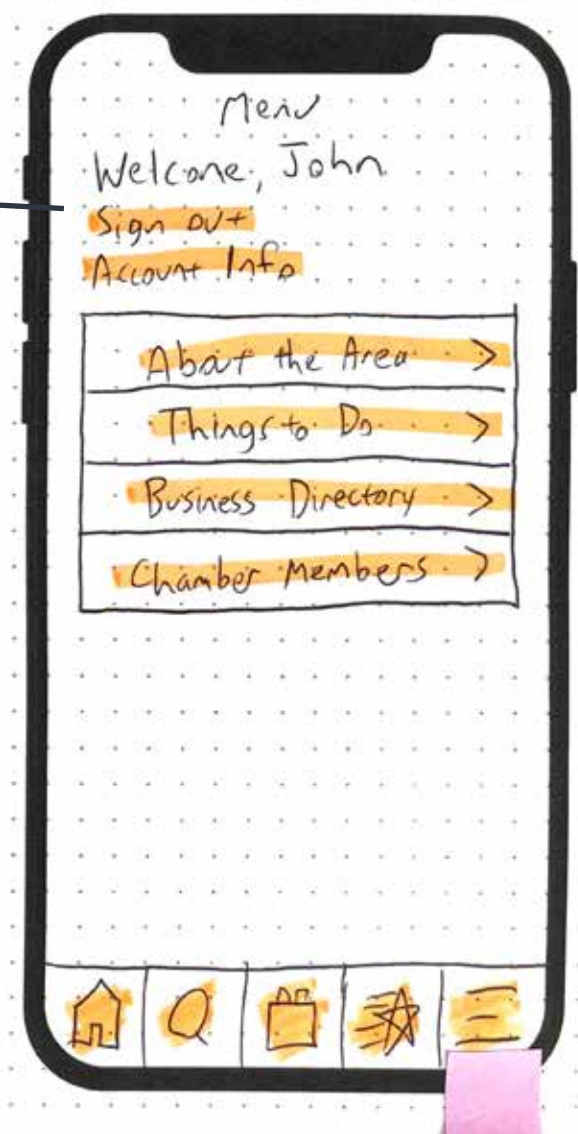
If membership application is approved, user may login by selecting LOGIN from Navigation Menu

User enters username & password and submits



What appears on the Navigation Menu element when user is logged in. User may access account info or sign out

User may select these if he forgets password or is not yet a member



User Testing — About

The user tests were designed to observe how users would interact with the current vision of the app from my paper prototype as well as to discover areas of excellence and opportunities for improvement or adjustment.

The prototype tests were constructed using the Marvel Prototype on Paper (POP) app and conducted via Zoom screen sharing. Two people were involved in the study, albeit separately. Both users consented to being recorded for research purposes prior to the beginning of the tests.

The users were given 3 user tasks and were asked to voice their observations and any questions they may have as they navigated the app and user tasks. After the tasks were completed, they were given an open-ended session to provide feedback, criticisms, compliments, and questions.

User Testing — Script

I appreciate you agreeing to taking the time out of your day to help test and offer feedback for a rough prototype of the MyGoNorth and North Country Chamber of Commerce companion app. This should take only about 10 minutes.

Today, we will be testing the prototype by having you try to complete three user tasks that I have shared with you. The main goal here is to see whether you would be able to reasonably complete common user tasks given the prototype's current interface and functional limitations.

You will be sharing your screen with me. Feel free to describe what you see and ask any questions at any time; the more user feedback, the better.

There is no right or wrong way to use the app, and you can technically complete each task in more ways than one. Mistakes are completely acceptable because they will show how I need to improve the user experience and screens for the app. Any questions?

Before I assign the tasks, I'll have you quickly go through the footer tabs to get a feel on how the app is structured, so you can do that now.

user navigates footer tabs and gives observations and questions

Now that you have a general idea of what each tab contains, you can now go ahead and start the first user task.

User Testing — Script (cont.)

User tasks:

- 1. You are looking to visit the North Country for the first time. You want to find out what there is to do up there. You also want to find good businesses using the Business Directory.*
- 2. You are a new resident in the North Country. You want to subscribe to the newsletter so that you're in the loop on what is happening in the area. You also want to check out an event that you heard of and that you wish to attend.*
- 3. You are the owner of a new inn in the North Country, and you want to become a chamber member so that your business is put on the map. You will need to apply to become a member. Then let's say your application was approved; you would then need to login as a new chamber member.*

You have now successfully completed the user tasks. Now you may provide feedback and ask any questions you may have.

First off, what did you like about the app?

What could be improved upon?

Any other questions or concerns?

User Testing — Important Links

Marvel POP prototype:

<https://marvelapp.com/prototype/dd912e3>

User Test #1:

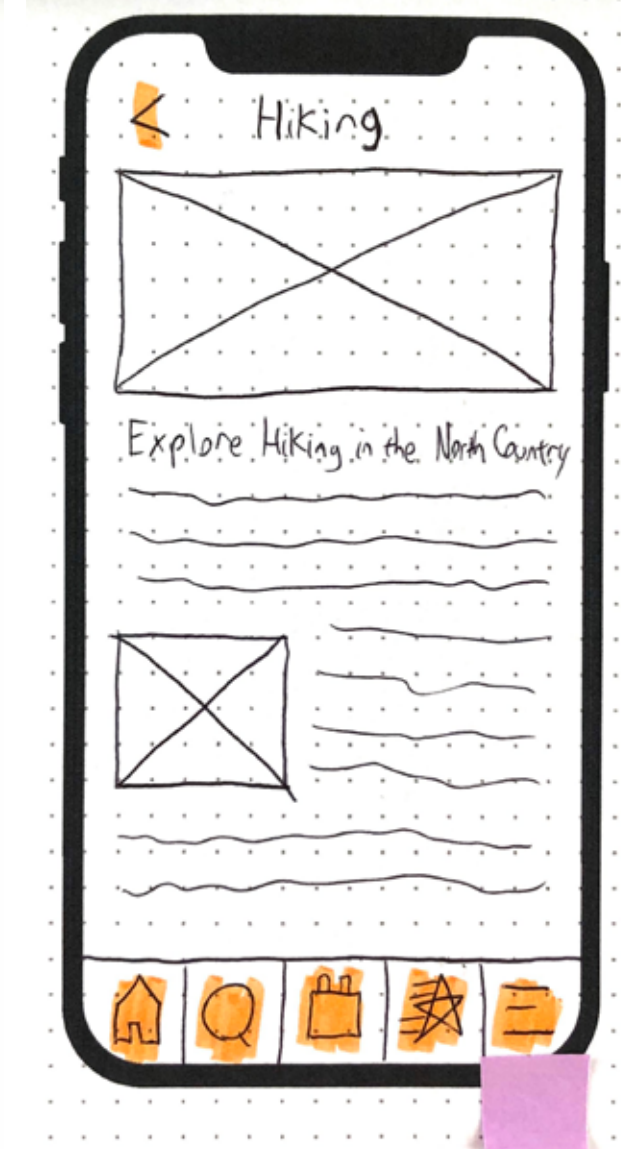
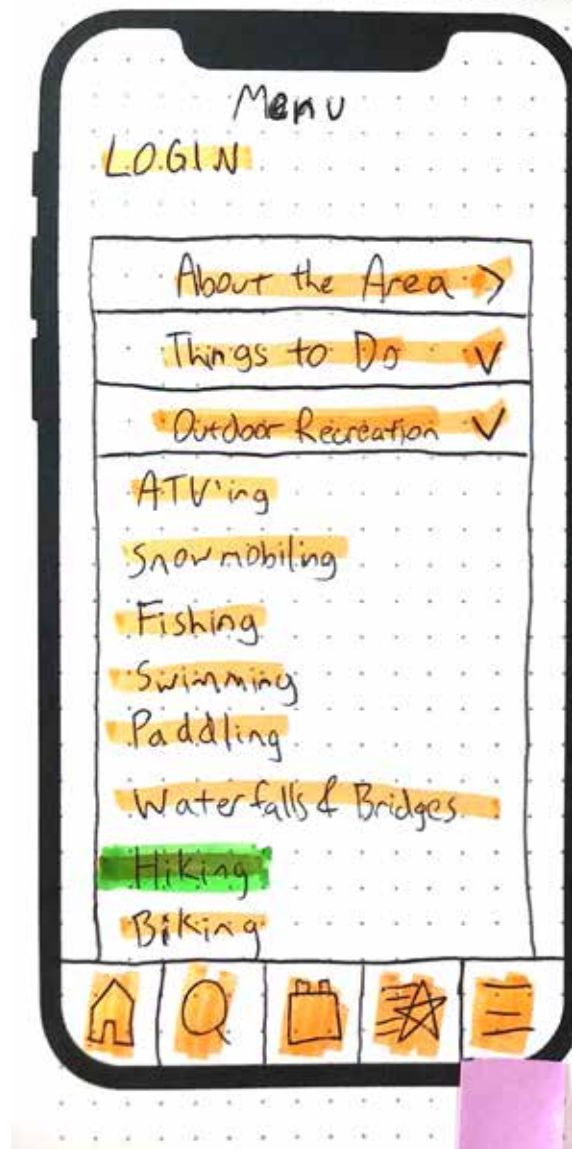
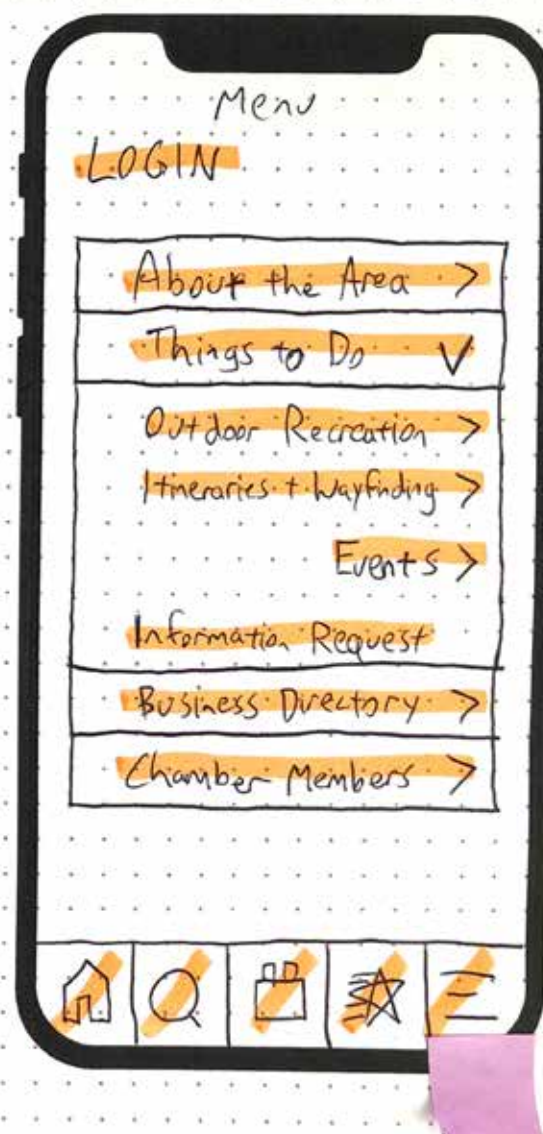
https://youtu.be/0Fo_-u5Cd8M

User Test #2:

https://youtu.be/tCg_vFISkMU

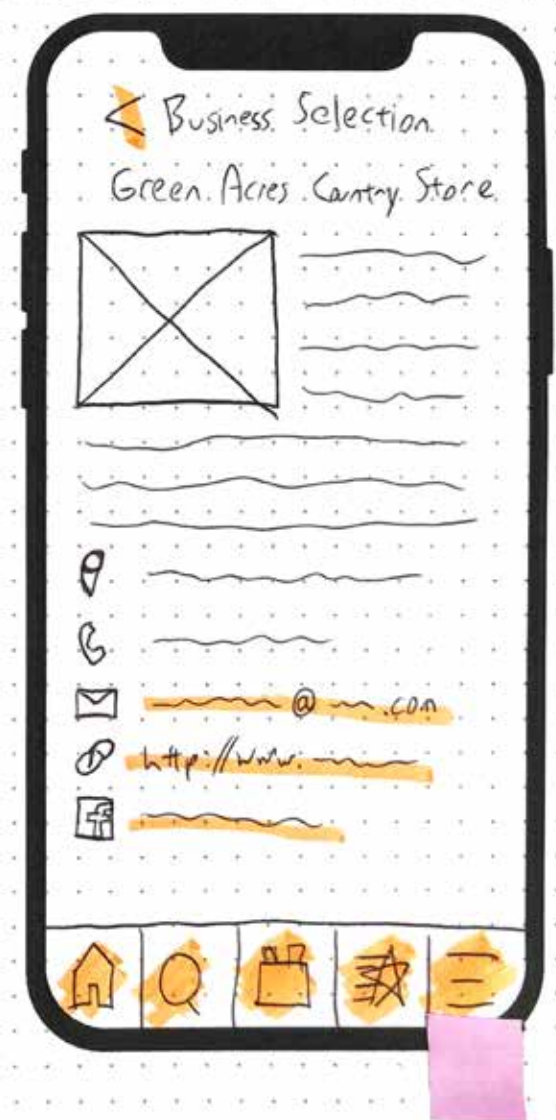
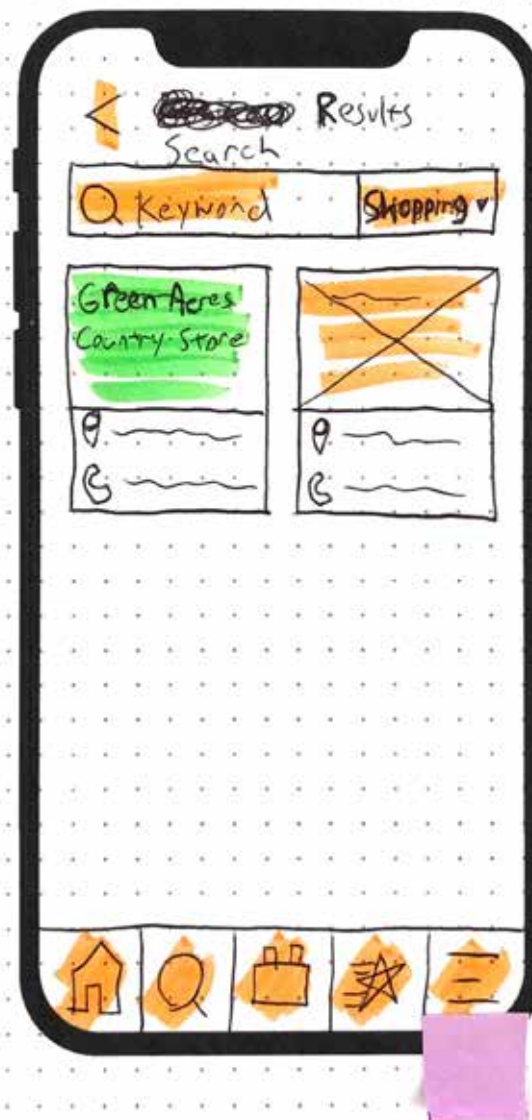
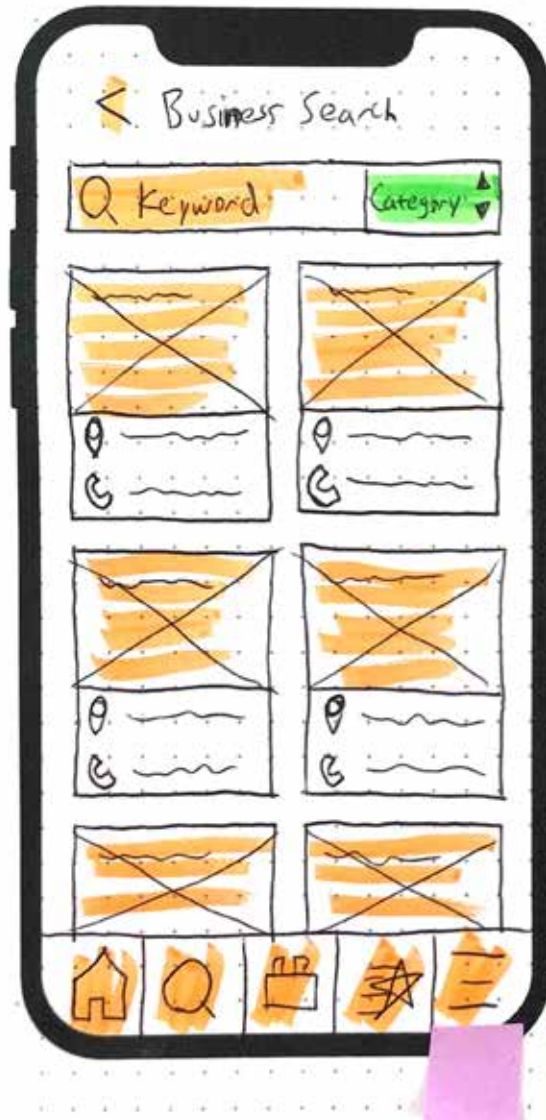
User Testing — Task #1

You are looking to visit the North Country for the first time. You want to find out what there is to do up there. You also want to find good businesses using the Business Directory.



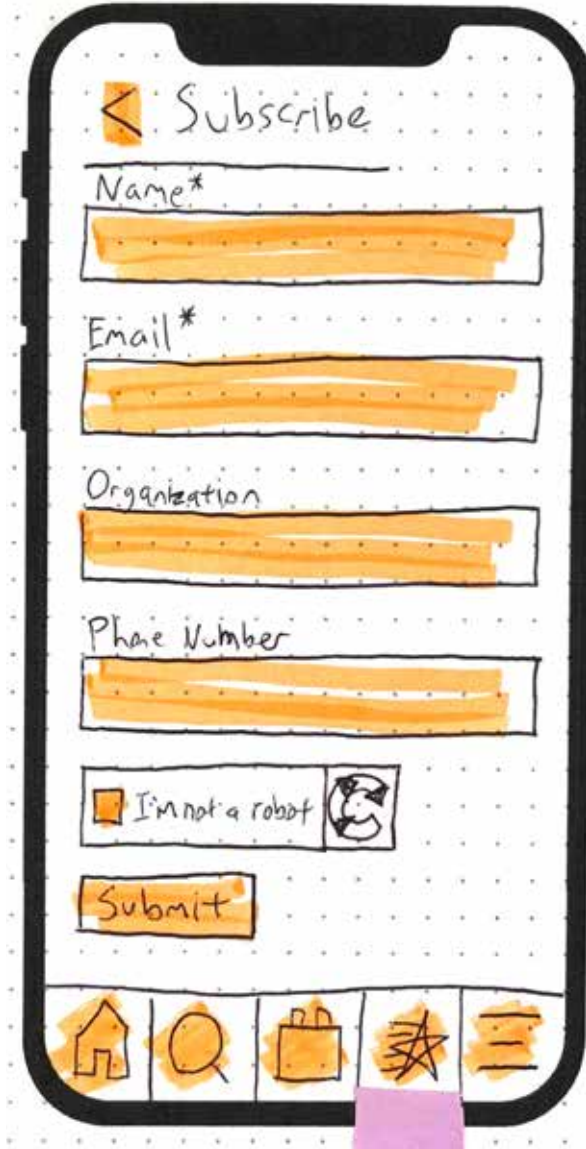
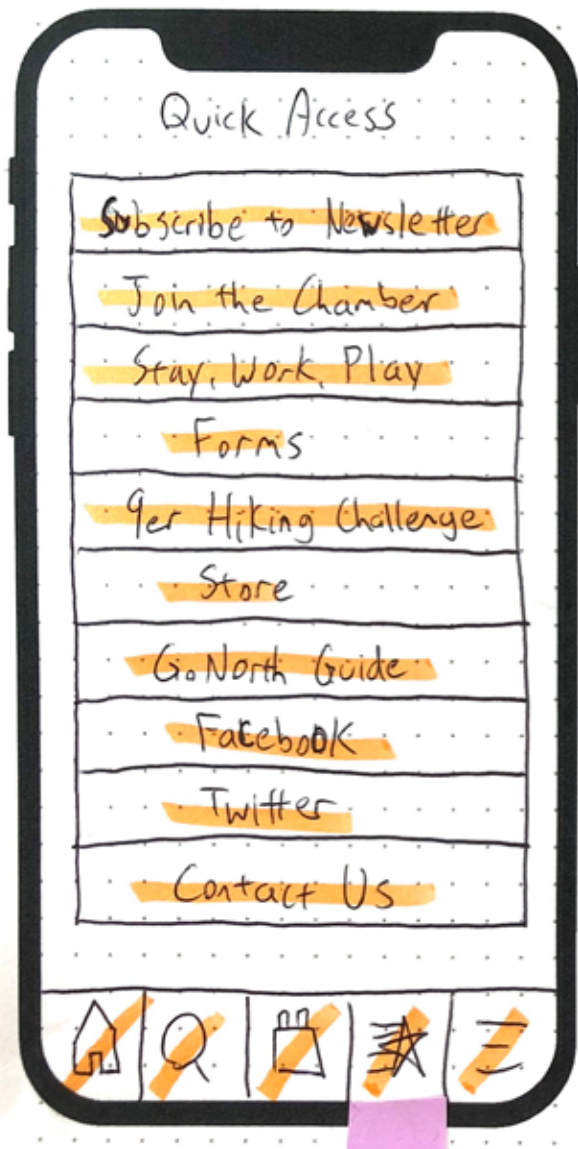
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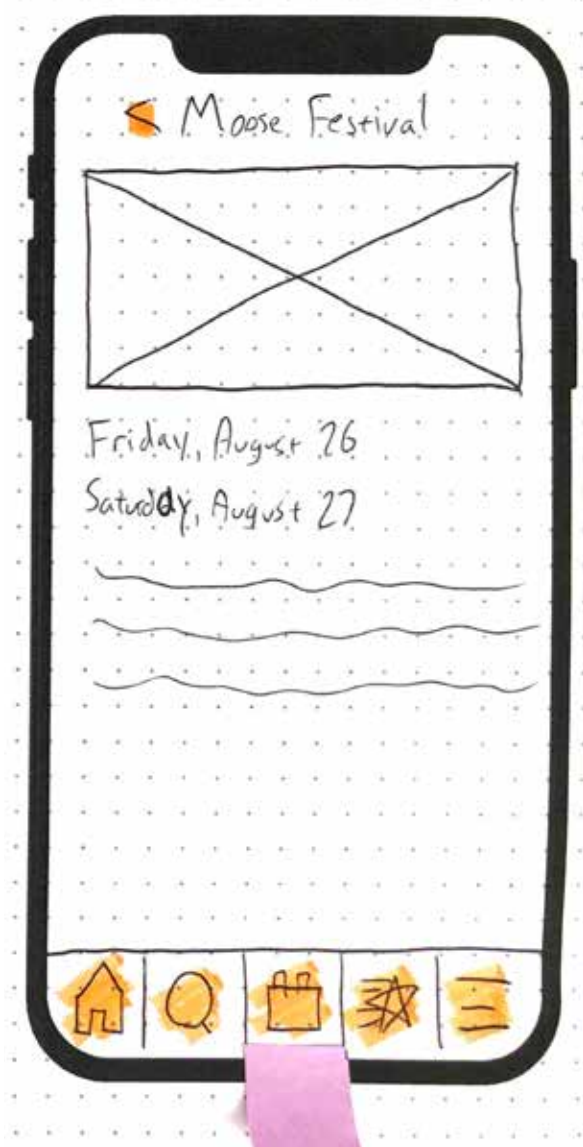
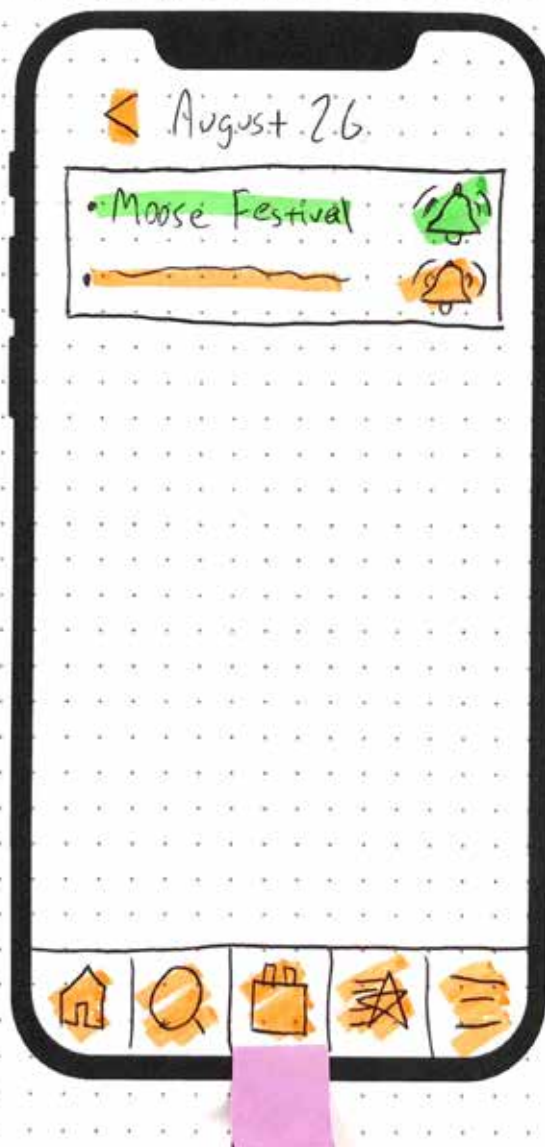
User Testing — Task #2

You are a new resident in the North Country. You want to subscribe to the newsletter so that you're in the loop on what is happening in the area. You also want to check out an event that you heard of and that you wish to attend.



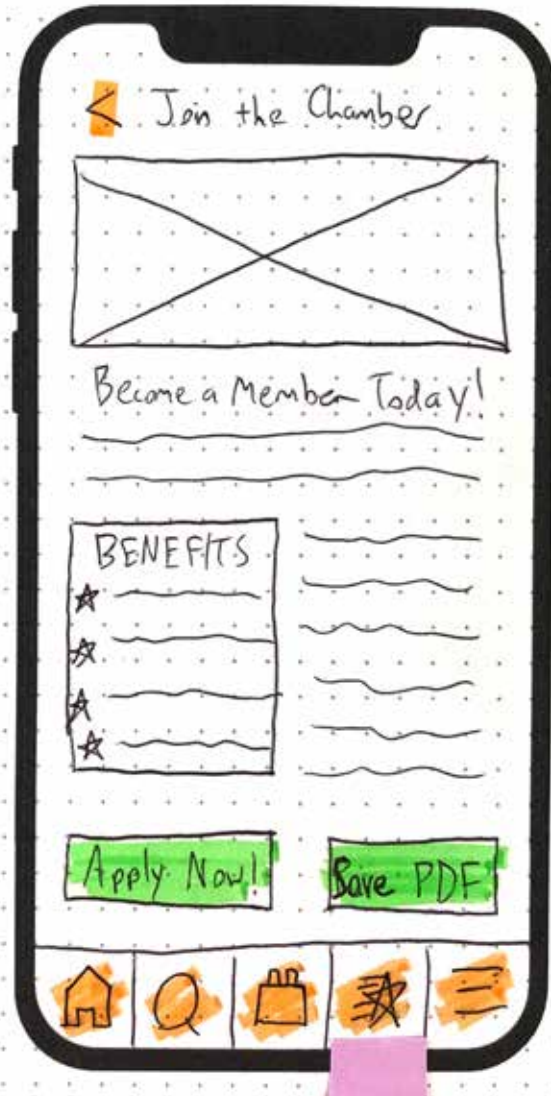
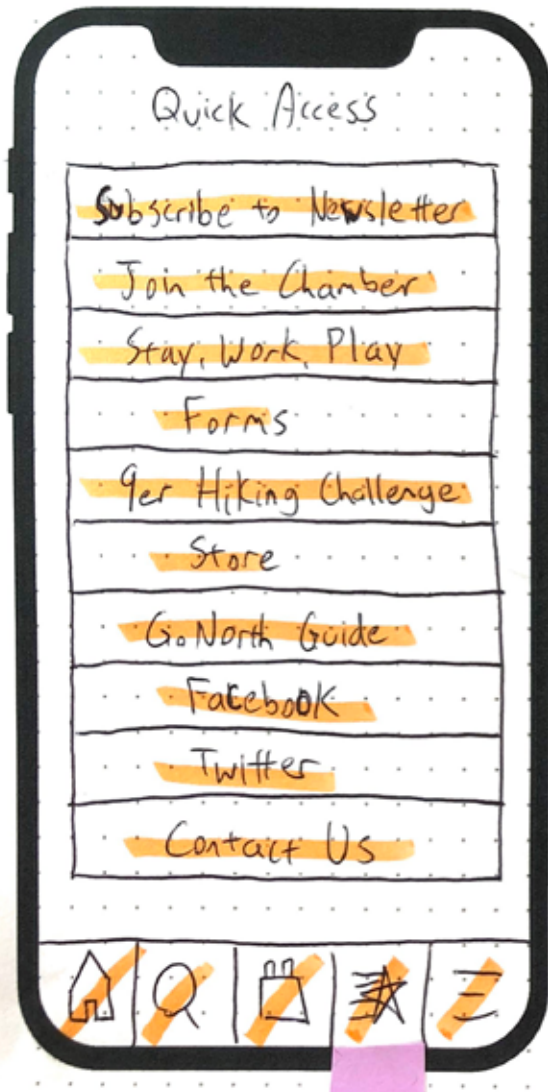
User Testing — Task #2

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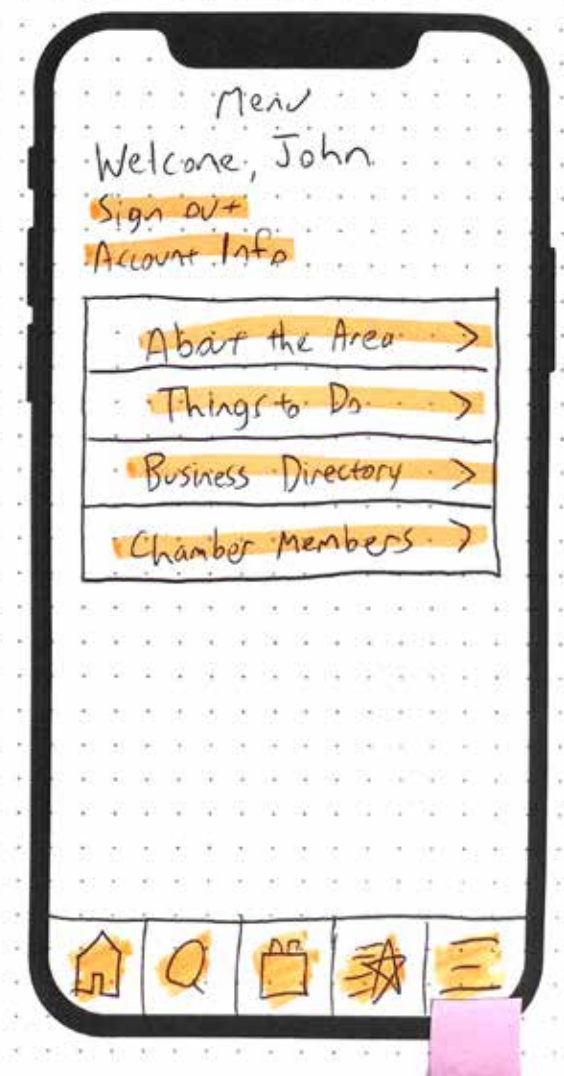
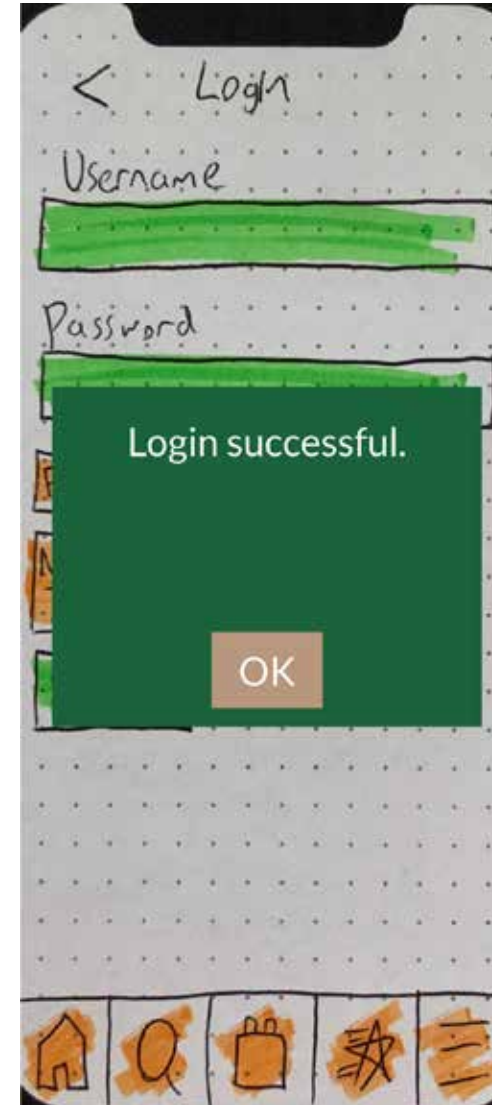
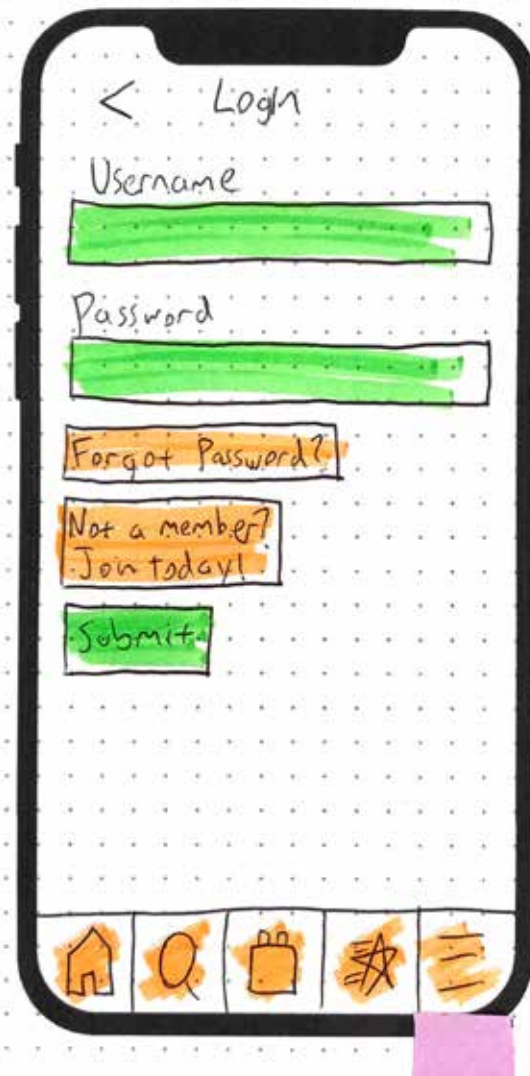
User Testing — Task #3

You are the owner of a new inn in the North Country, and you want to become a chamber member so that your business is put on the map. You will need to apply to become a member. Then let's say your application was approved; you would then need to login as a new chamber member.



User Testing — Task #3

You are the owner of a new inn in the North Country, and you want to become a chamber member so that your business is put on the map. You will need to apply to become a member. Then let's say your application was approved; you would then need to login as a new chamber member.



User Testing — Summary of Findings

The user tests allowed me to discover what works and what doesn't for the MyGoNorth companion app prototype. They—especially the first one—also allowed me to point out errors that came from glitches I encountered in the POP app or *my own* mistakes with creating the test, such as missing links or incorrect screens to which the links were directed. I even had to fix a few of these errors during the first test.

Overall, the feedback was positive from both users. Both participants were able to reasonably complete the user tasks within the prototype, with only a few hiccups mostly due to missing links and my own mistakes. Otherwise they had the right ideas.

For Task 1, both users successfully found a "thing" to do under the Things to Do dropdown menu, and then they successfully found a business in the Business Search under Business Directory dropdown menu—as intended.

For Task 2, user 1 had a small hiccup due to my mistake with updating the link in the POP app, but otherwise had the right idea of going to the calendar and selecting an event from there. Both users found the subscription form with relative ease.

For Task 3, both users found the application form with relative ease; however, user 1 had some difficulty finding where to login (there was a button located on the menu tab).

The users then asked interesting and valuable questions, such as what the Chamber Members dropdown is supposed to do (I did not yet have a screen for this) and what the thought process was behind having Quick Access versus the regular Navigation Menu.

High-Fidelity Prototype — Introduction

After going through a number of high-fidelity prototype software options including InVision and Sketch, I decided to use Adobe XD. Although InVision and Sketch seem like the more popular choices, and there are many advantages to them such as the first project being free, I chose XD due to my Adobe Suite subscription under the student discount. This way, I would have access to my fonts and color libraries under the Adobe Suite, making my prototype-building process much smoother. I also figured that XD would be a powerful enough software that provides at least some of integrated features found on Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign—all which I use frequently.

Learning to use XD was not too challenging, partly due to my familiarity with other Adobe software. Using the iPhone 13 template, duplicating screens, establishing links, and testing are made simple. However, there are some desired features that I felt were missing, such as an efficient way to override repeat grid elements. Nonetheless, the software does its job at creating high-quality screens with a large variety of UX tools.

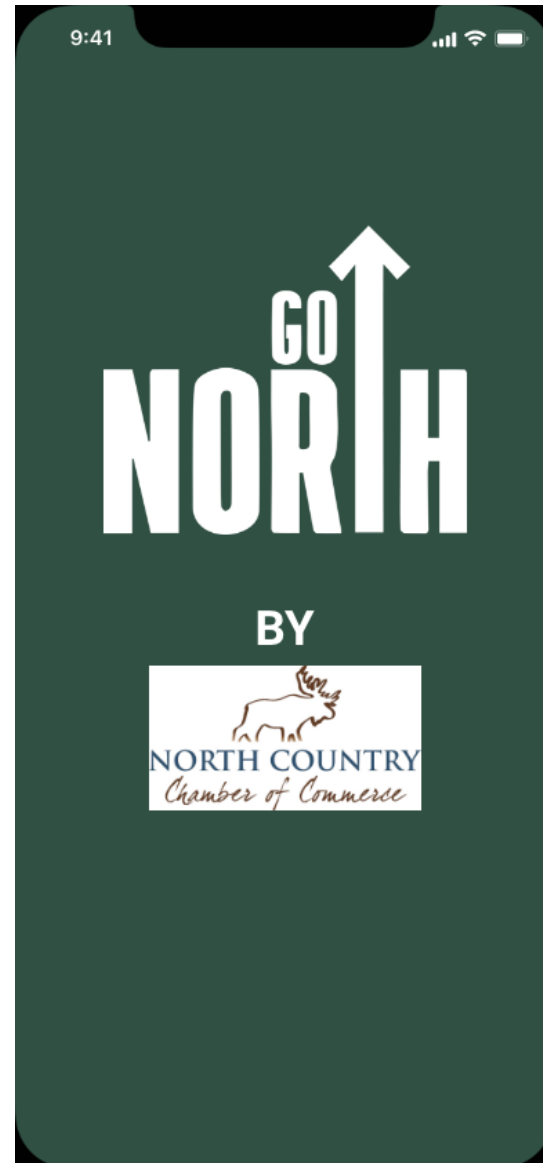
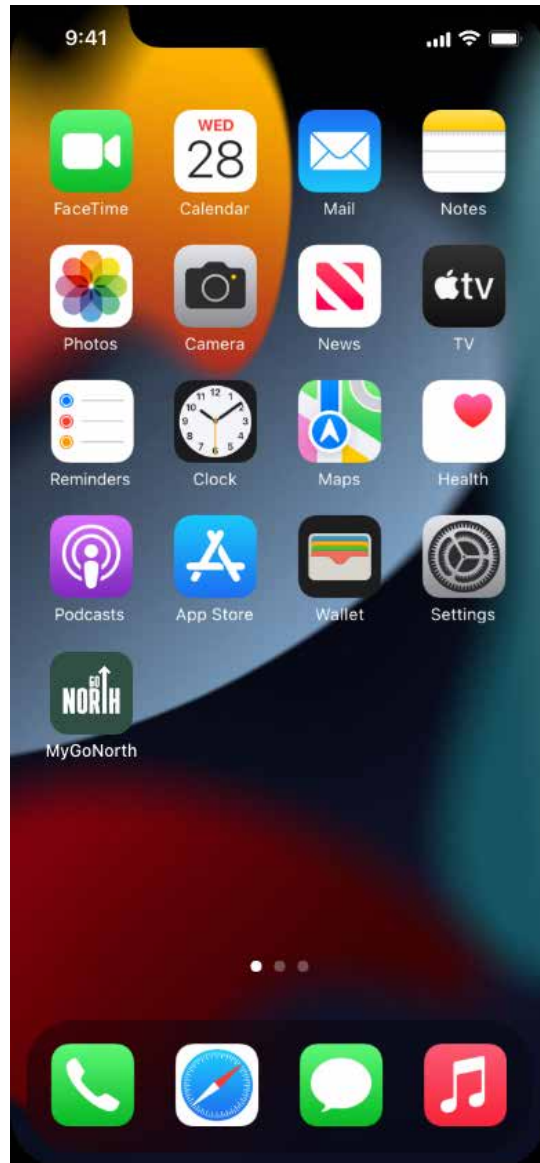
High-Fidelity Prototype — Revisions

Based on the user tests, I decided to make a few revisions regarding the IA and general UX:

- One of the raised concerns was the purpose of the Members category, so I made sure to add user screens that help better explain the category and to explain it in the walkthrough video.
- For further simplicity and to better reflect the IA of the new NCCOC website, I decided to readd the Events category while moving the Business Directory and its helpful resources under the Members category.
- I added the 'Work, Play, Stay' category which reflects what is currently live on both sites and is a sponsored message featuring helpful resources such as job postings.
- I made the login its own menu category under Login / Account Info for more convenience.
- Because the full application process involves a large number of steps and potential attachments, I decided to use an external link to the browser website rather than have the form built into the app.

High-Fidelity Prototype — Screens

Start

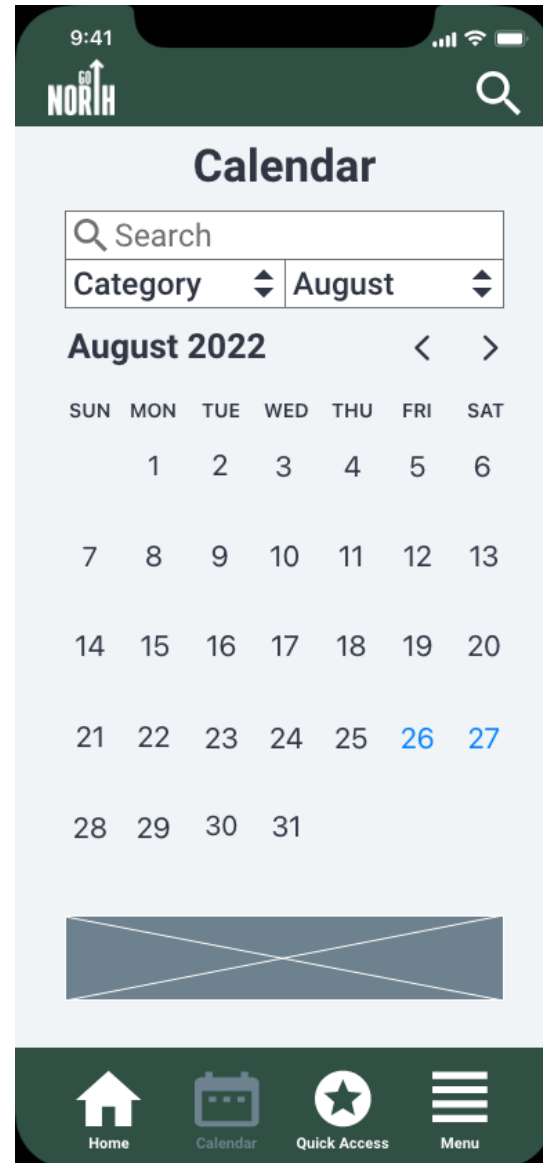


High-Fidelity Prototype — Screens

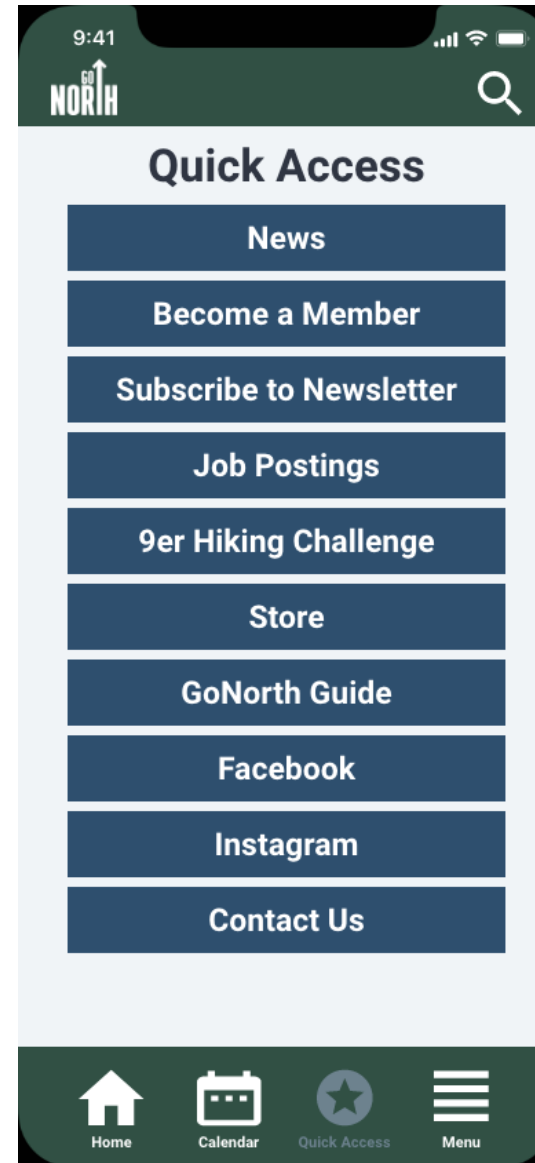
Home



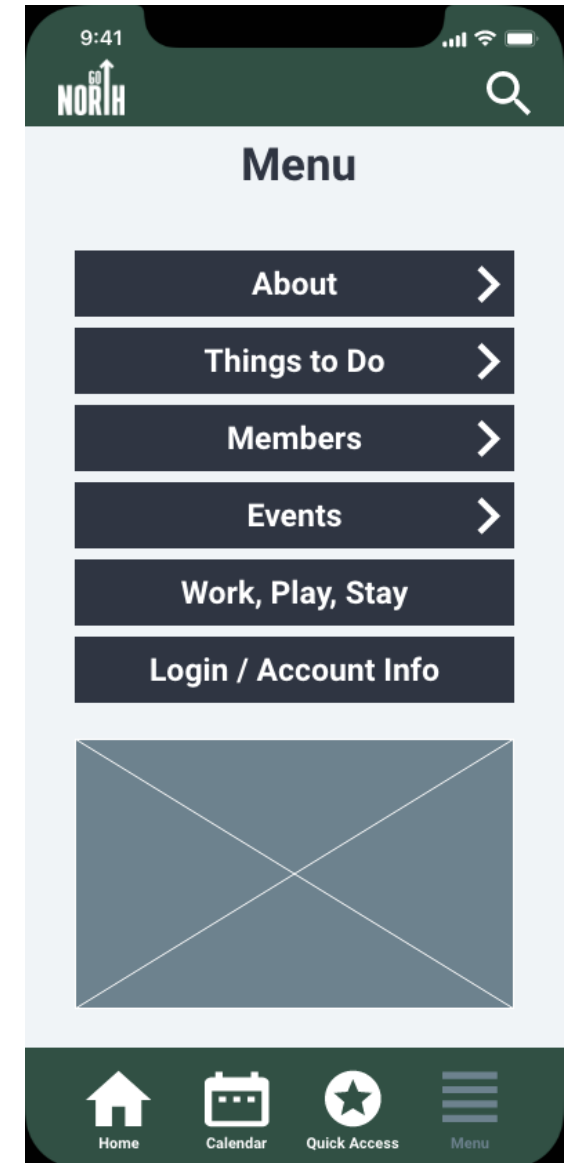
Calendar



Quick Access

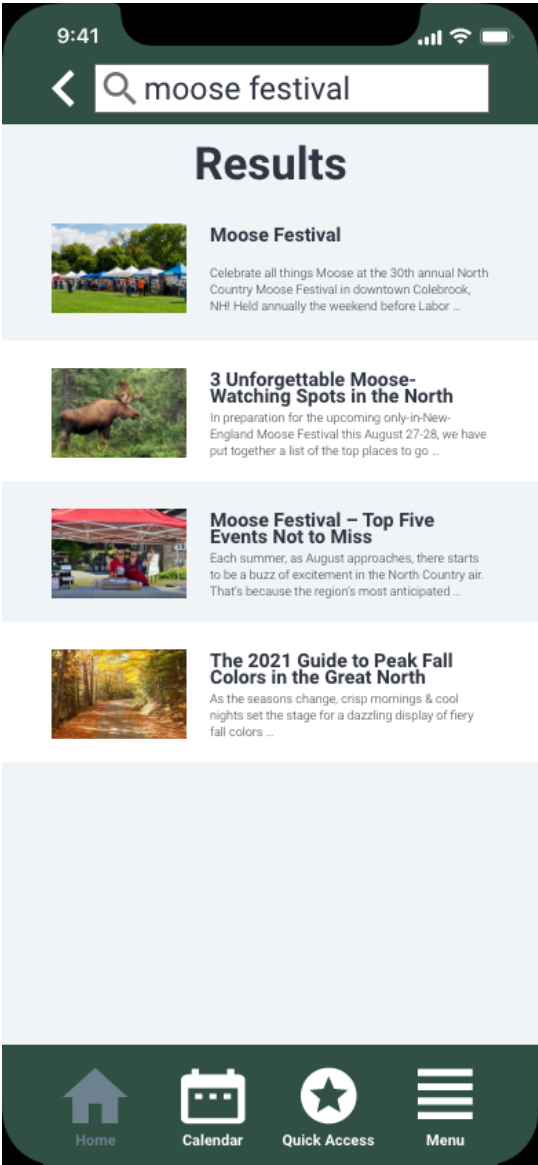
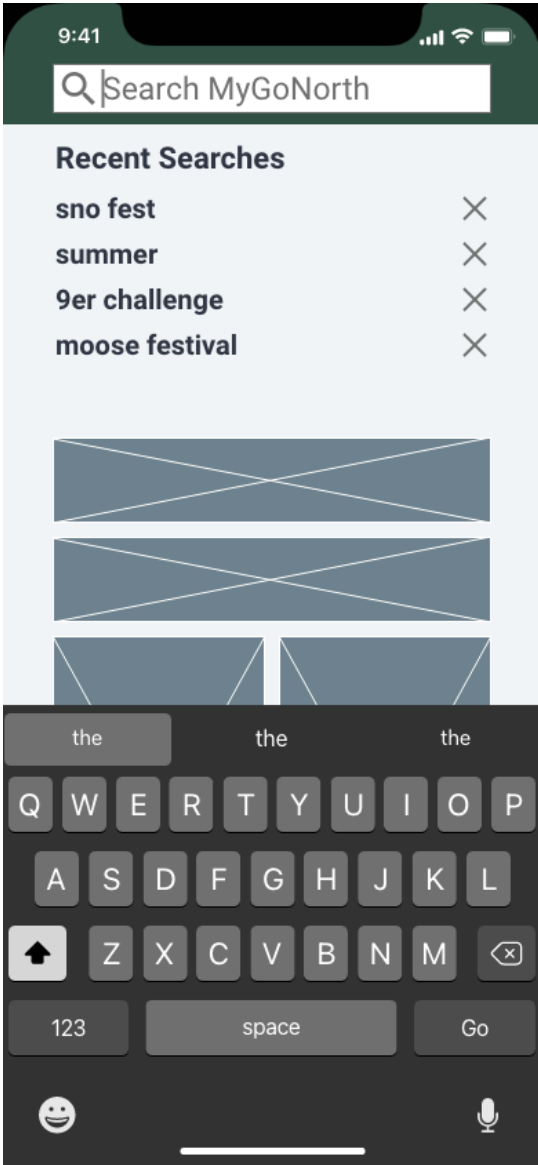
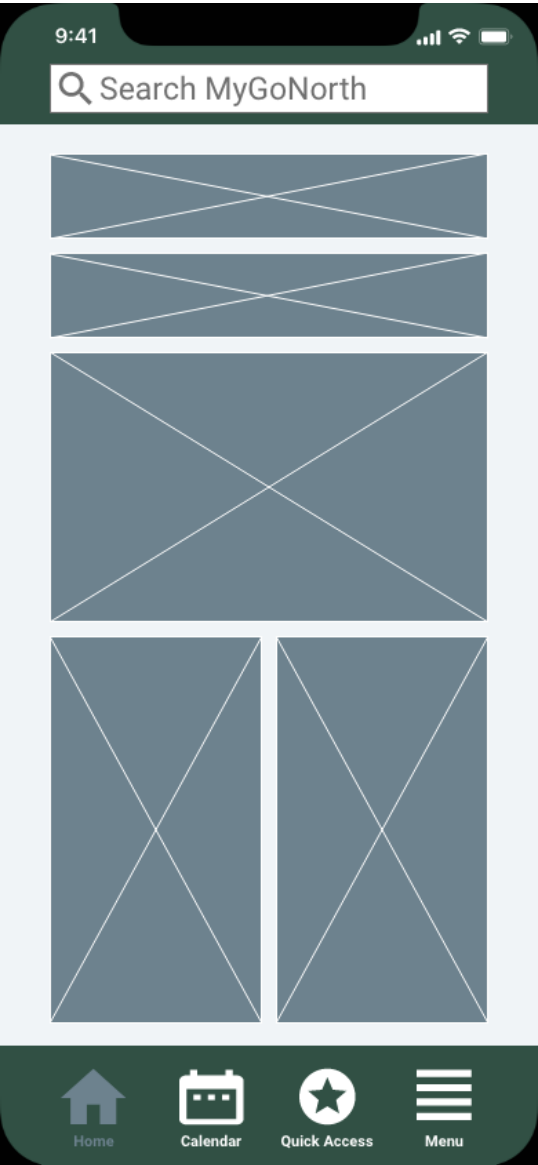


Menu



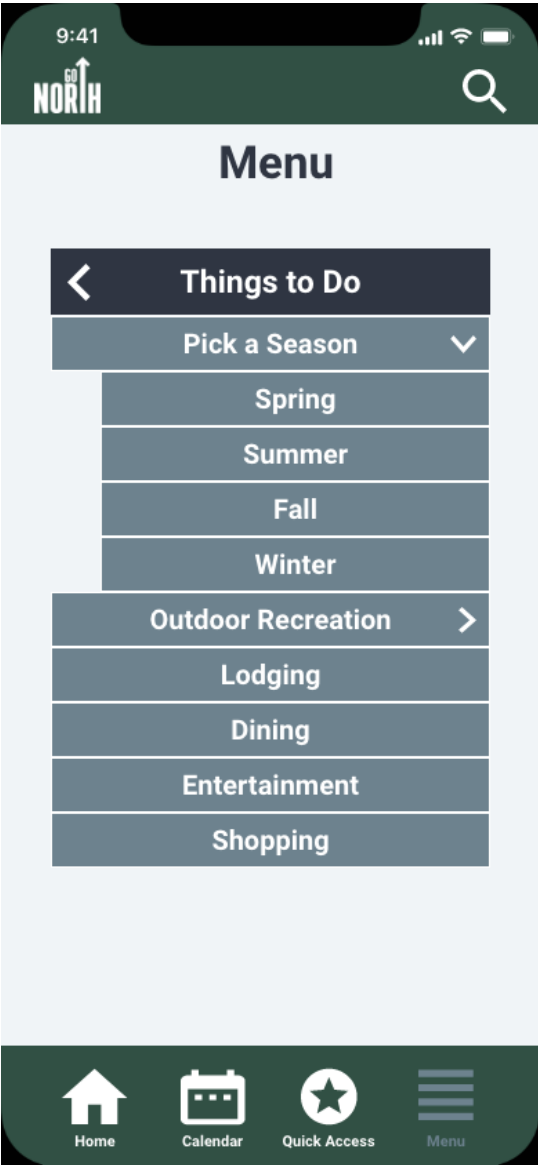
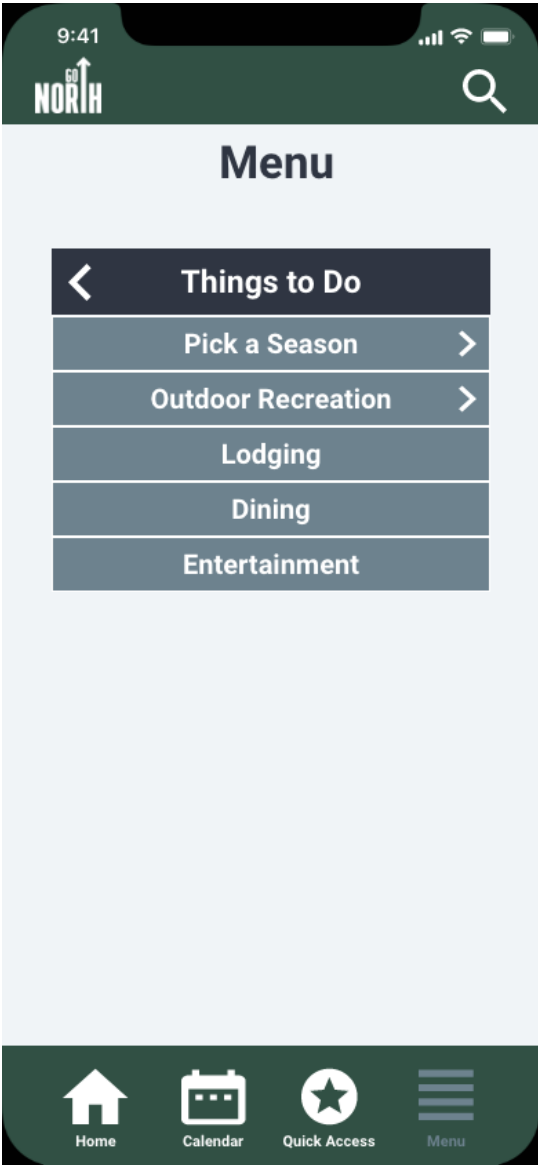
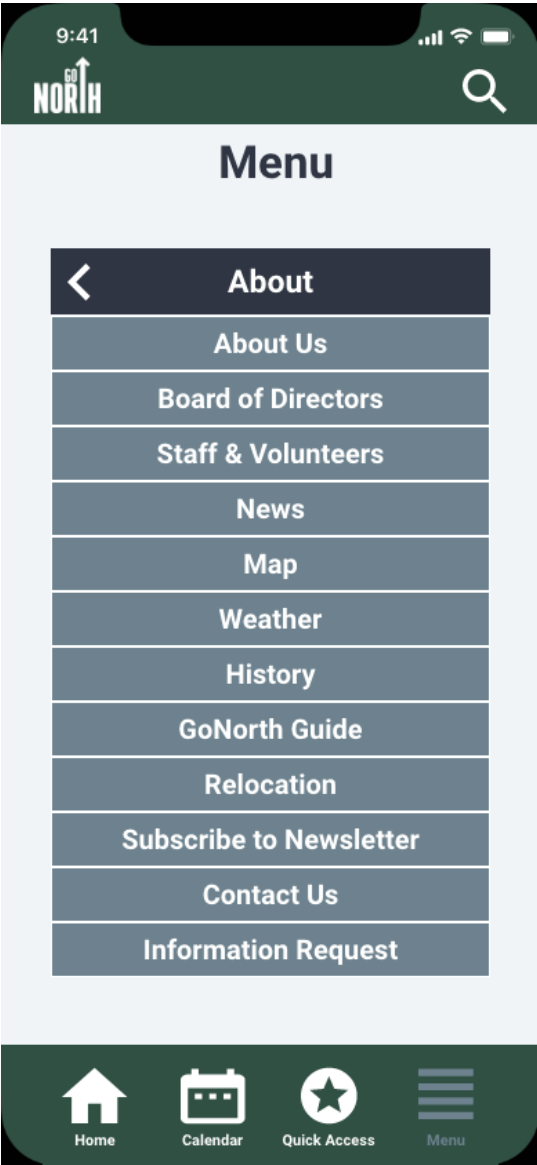
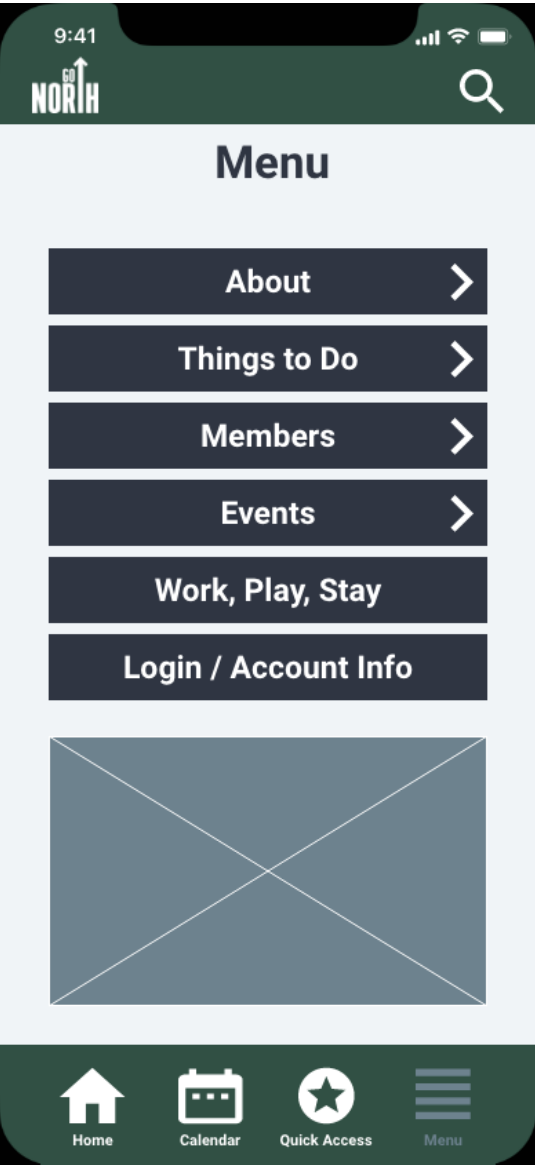
High-Fidelity Prototype — Screens

Search



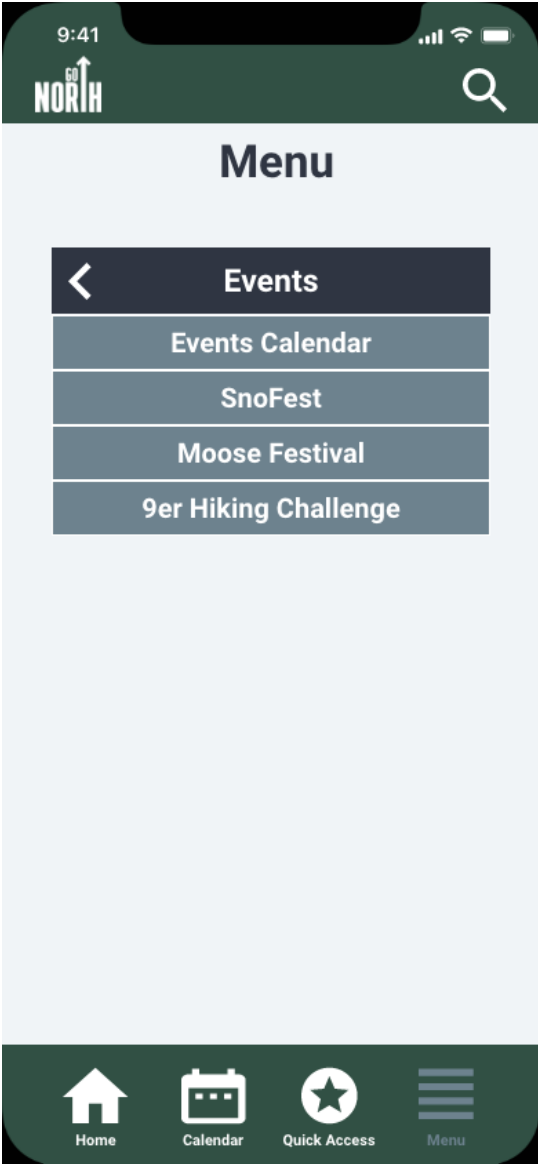
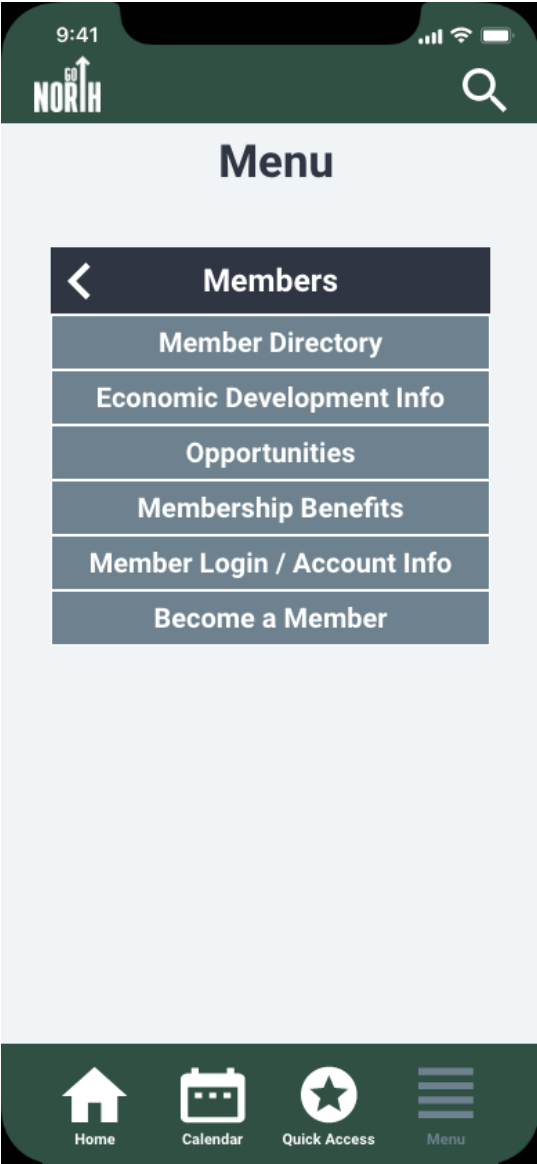
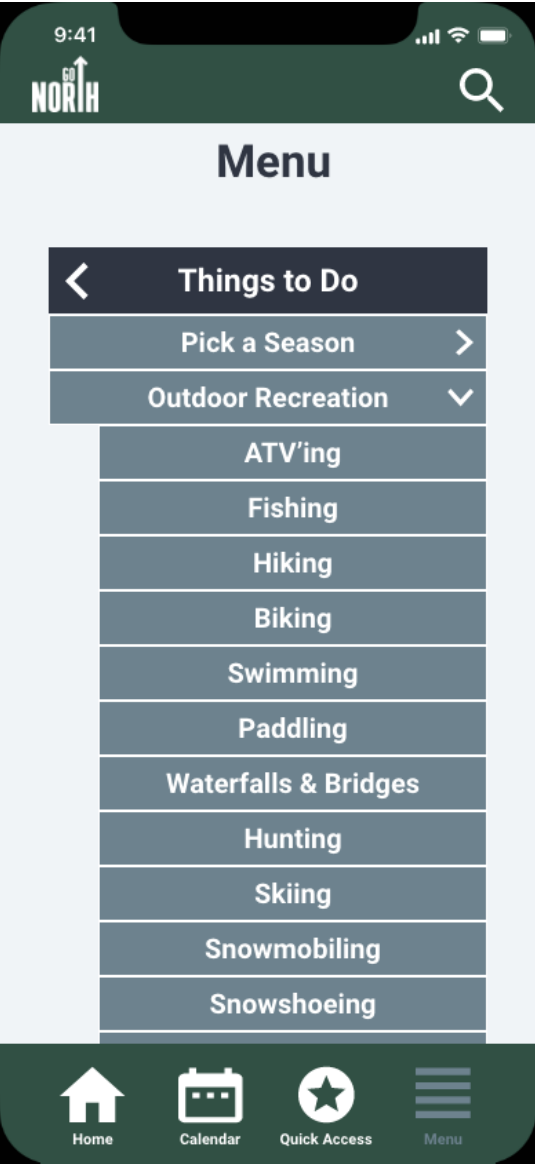
High-Fidelity Prototype — Screens

All Menu Navigation Screens



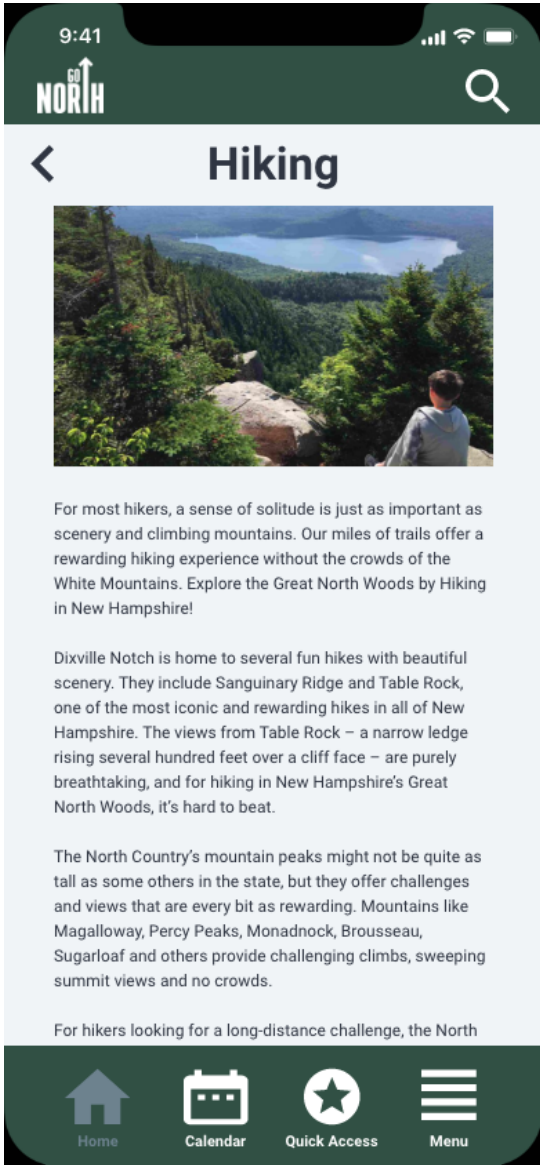
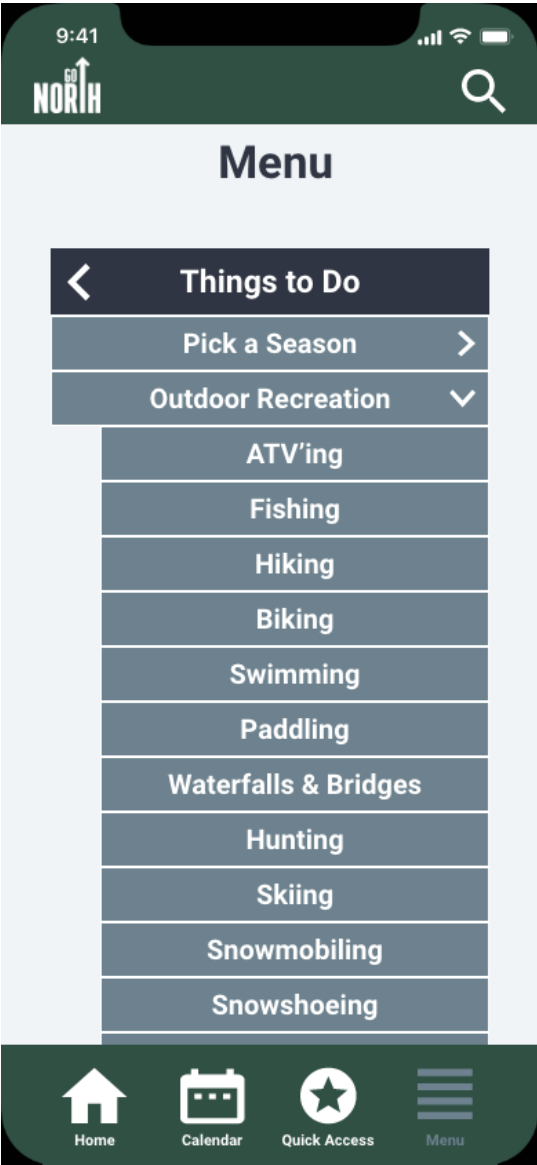
High-Fidelity Prototype — Screens

All Menu Navigation Screens (cont.)



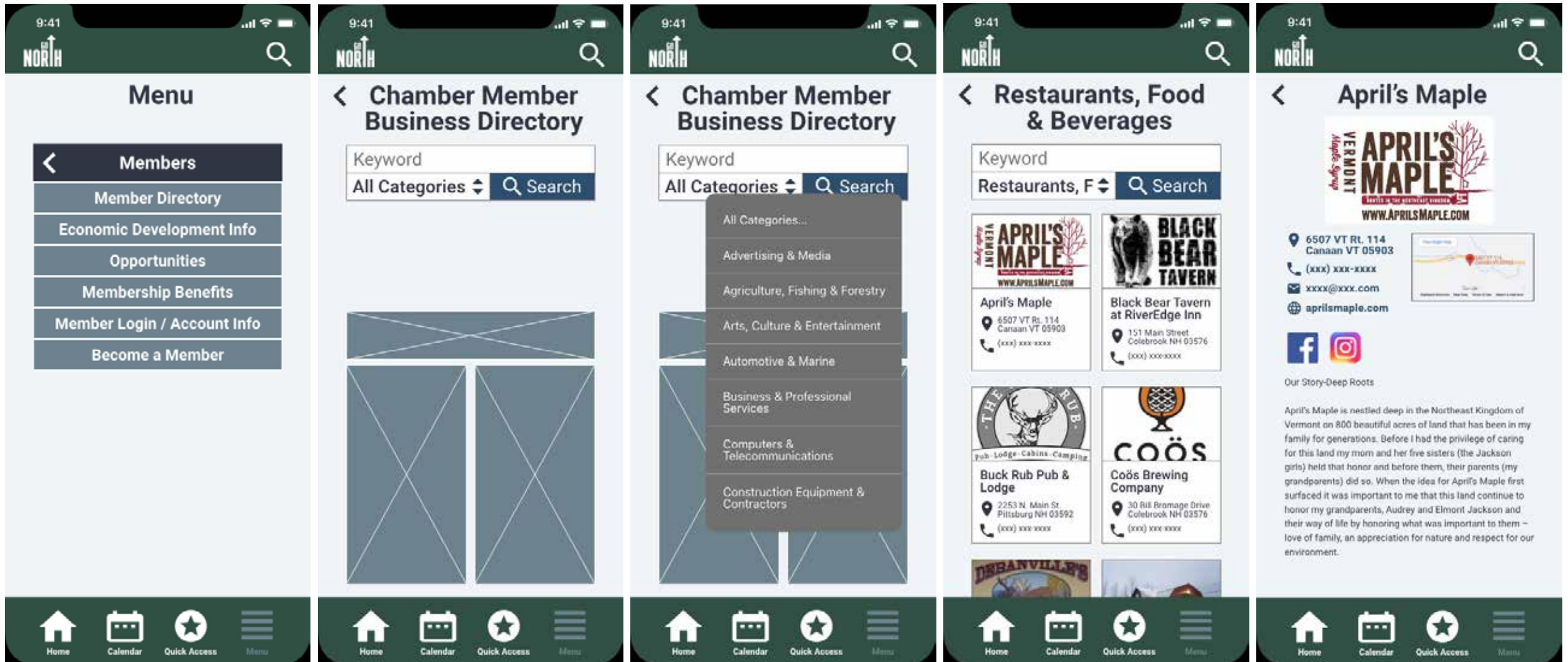
High-Fidelity Prototype — Screens

Finding/Learning About a 'Thing to Do'



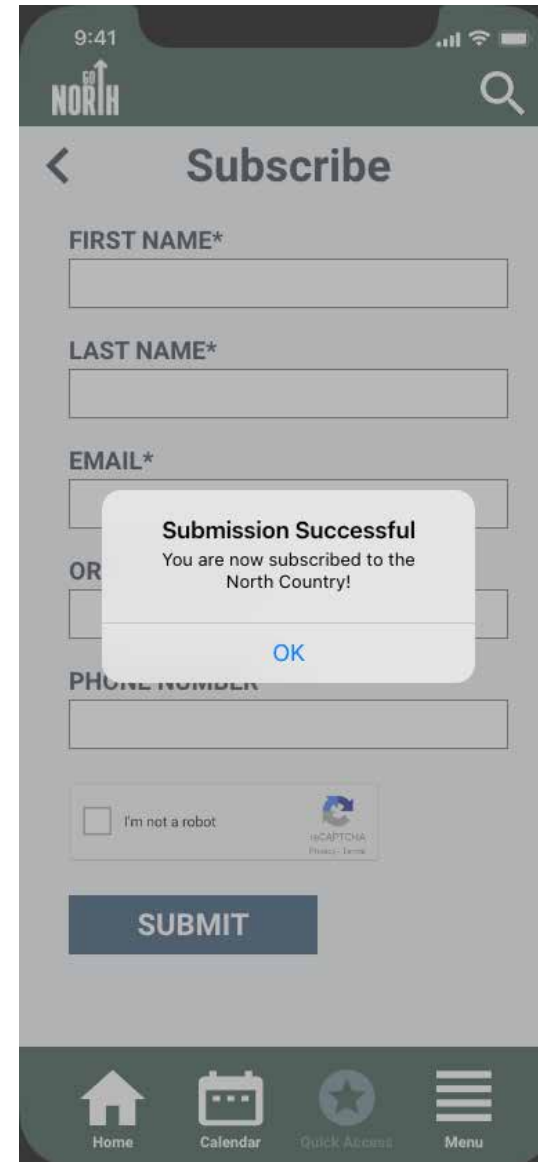
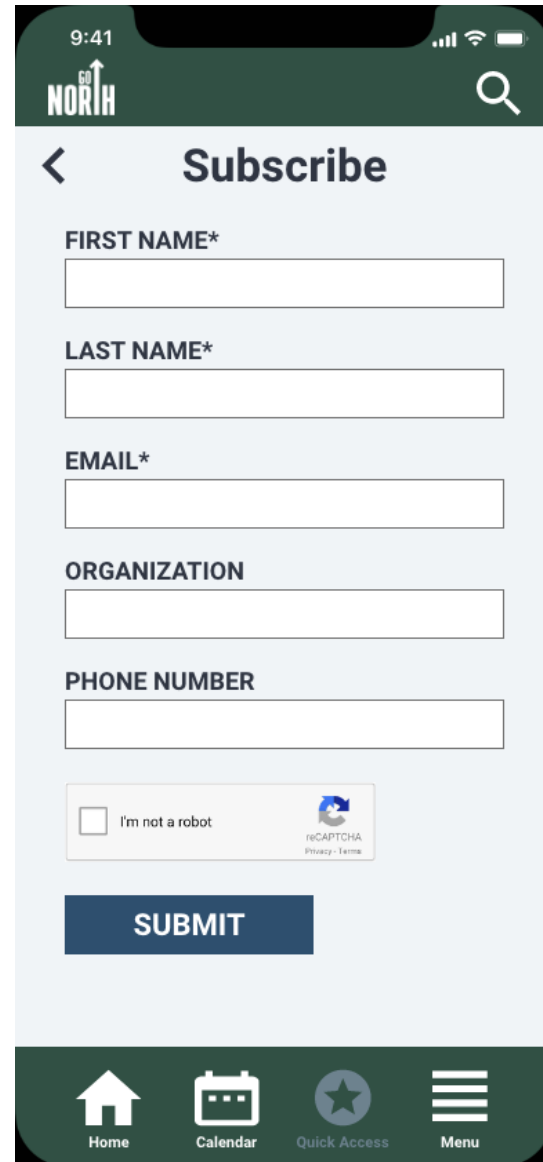
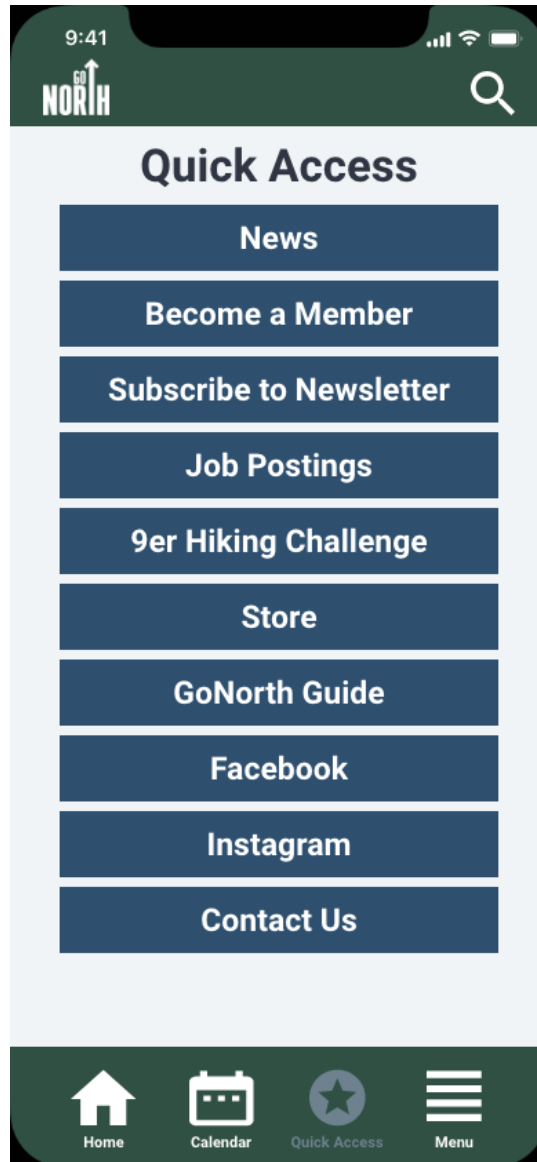
High-Fidelity Prototype — Screens

Using the Member Directory



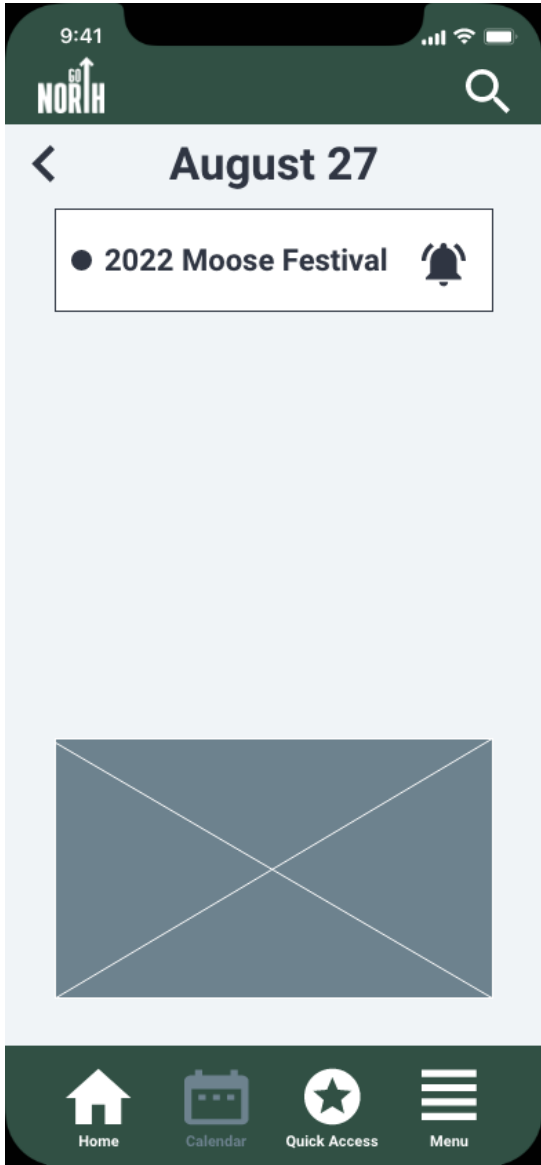
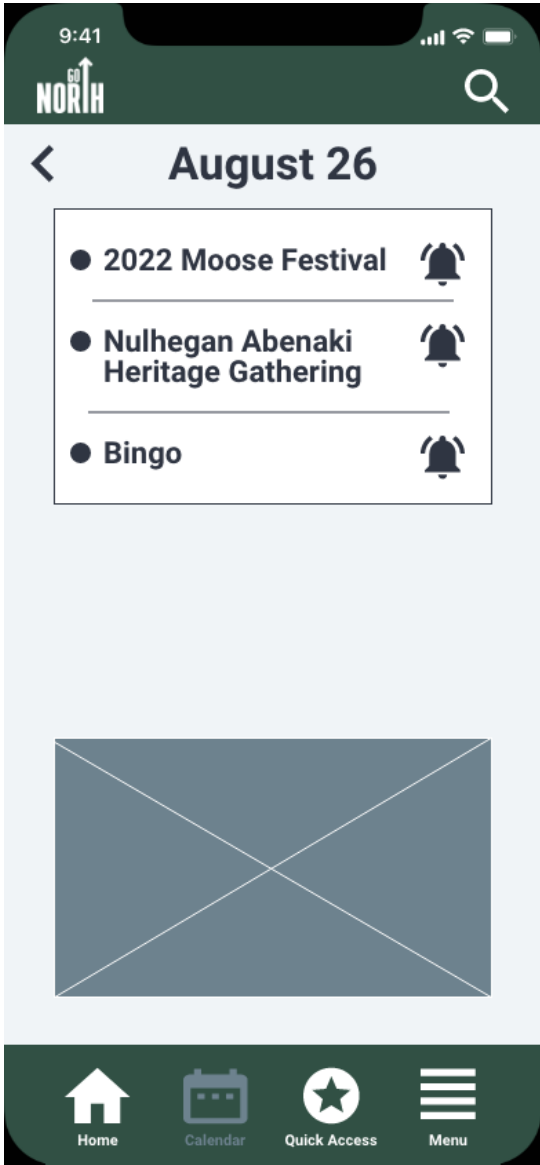
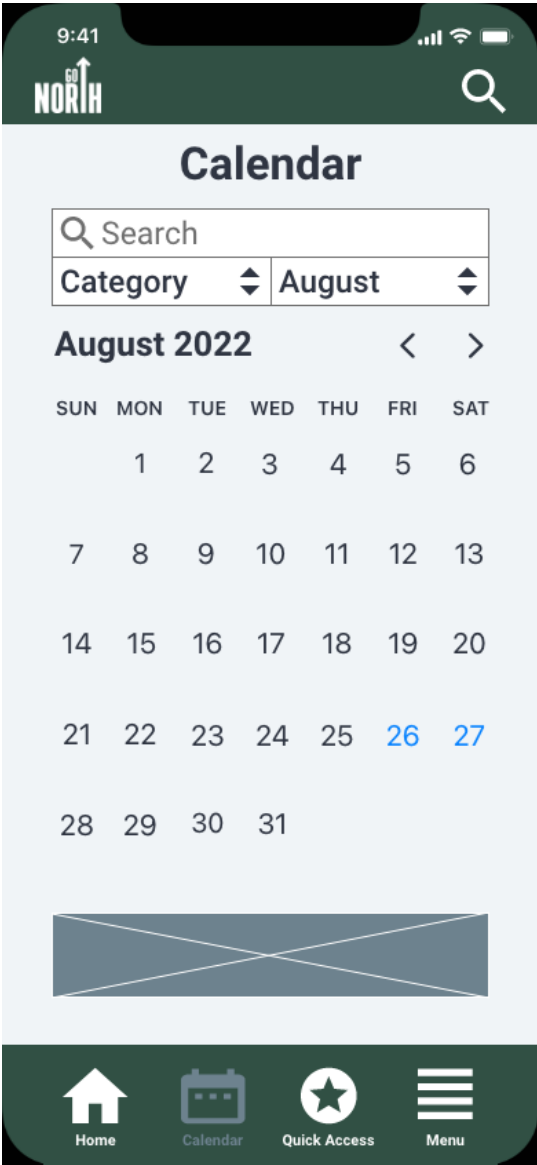
High-Fidelity Prototype — Screens

Subscribing to the Newsletter



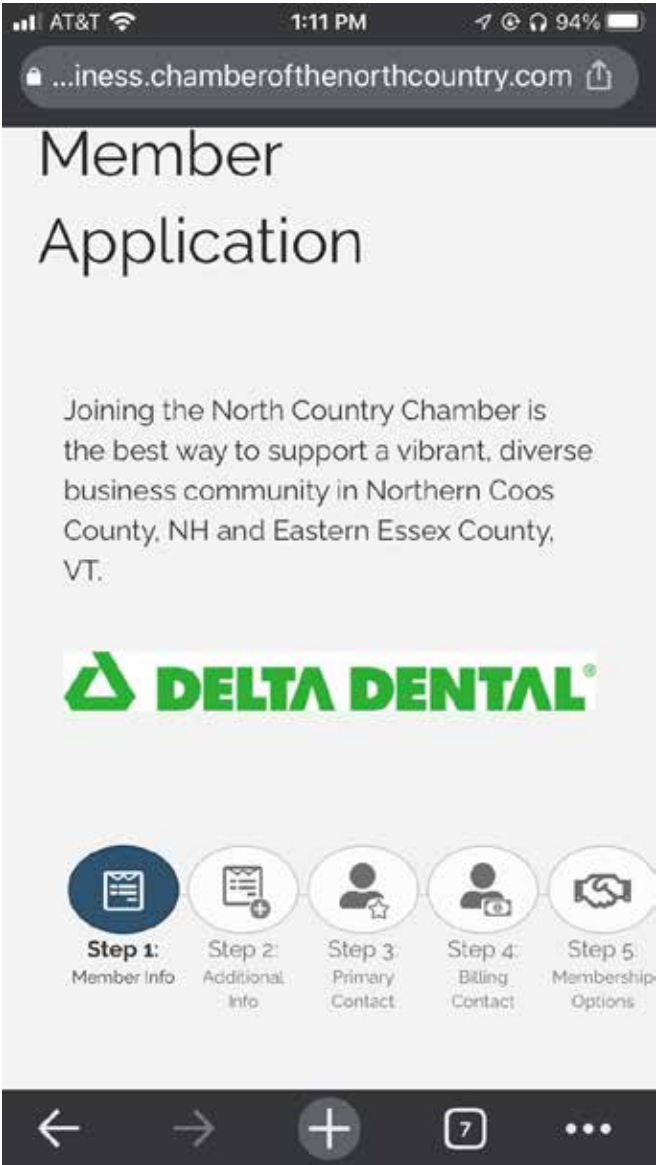
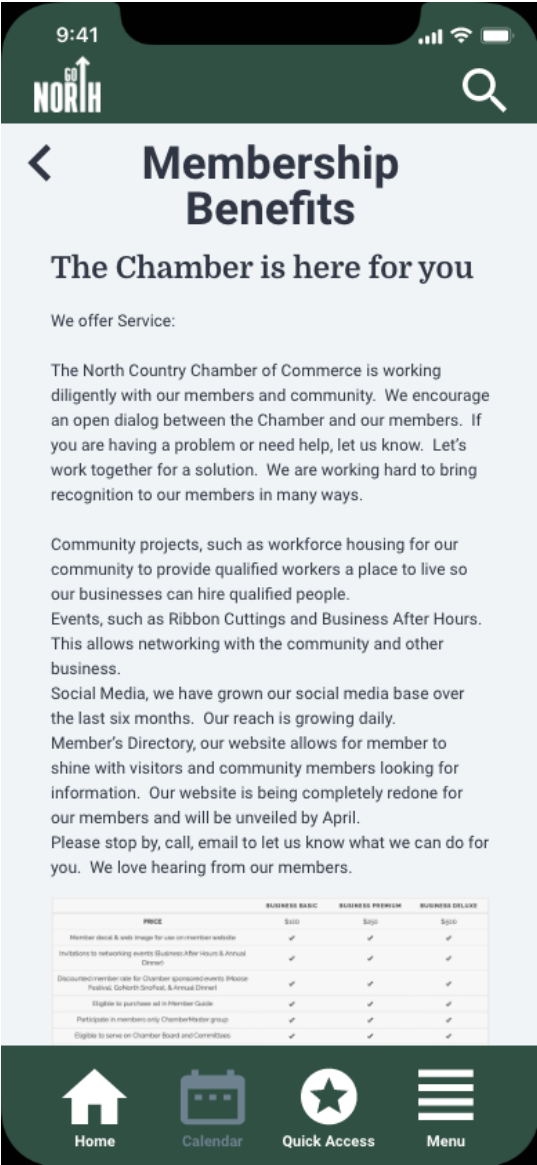
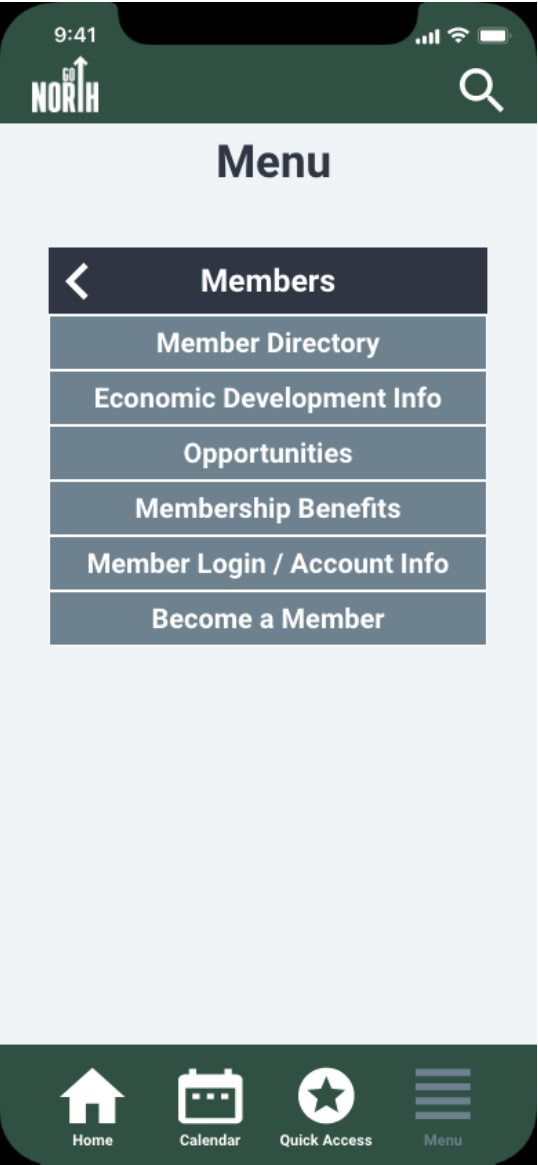
High-Fidelity Prototype — Screens

Finding an Event



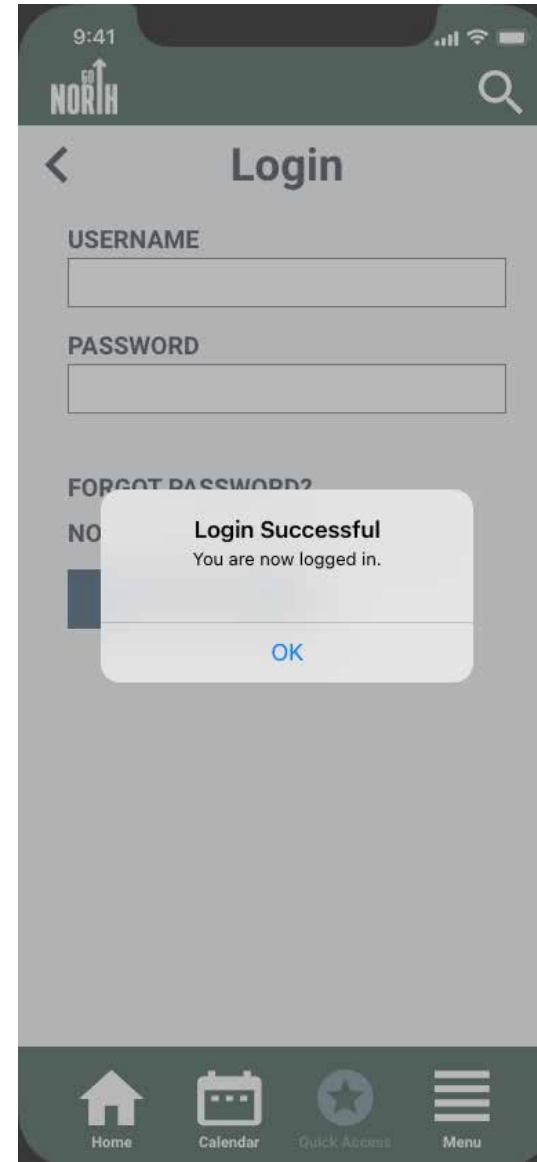
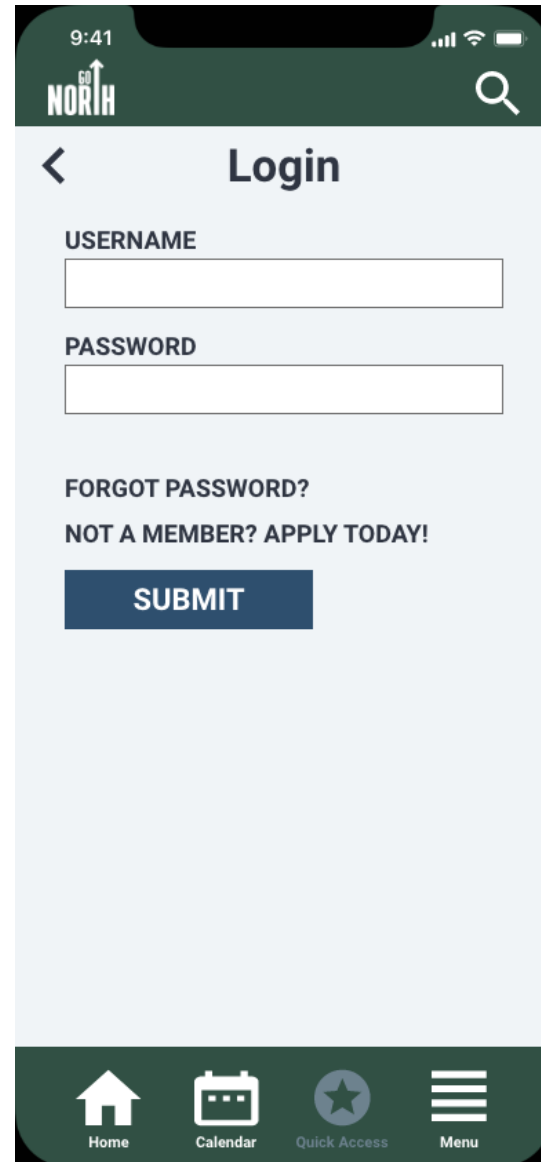
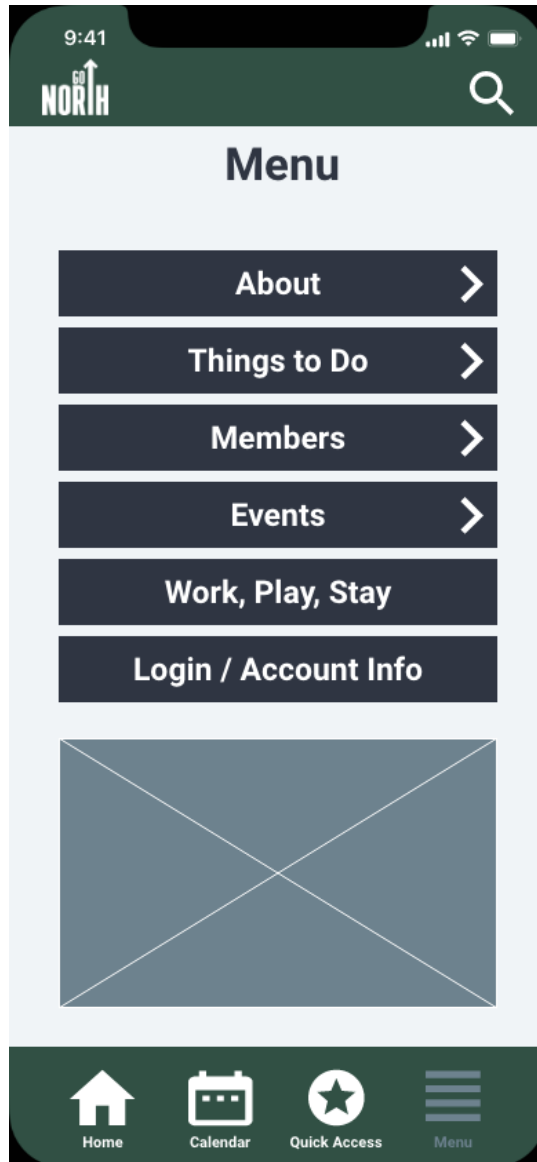
High-Fidelity Prototype — Screens

Applying to Become a Member



High-Fidelity Prototype — Screens

Logging In



Final Thoughts

Municipality websites tend to contain a myriad of links and pieces of information, which can make organizing and navigating them a huge challenge for any web developer or UX designer. It's even more challenging to assess what constitutes good information architecture, revise the IA, and then craft and test companion app prototypes based on the new IA. I am a novice when it comes to app development, so learning, implementing, and iterating each step in the Design Thinking process was crucial.

The most challenging part for me probably was figuring out how to restructure and reorganize information via IA without taking away important information or adding too many features. However, it was rewarding when it came to actually building the prototypes because I had already figured out the IA ahead of time, so I could focus on the building. The user testing and user tasks really helped me identify problem areas—no matter how minor—as well as what worked from other people's perspectives so that when it came time to build the high-fidelity prototype I wouldn't be stuck trying to identify and address weaknesses.

Overall, I enjoyed the process of building this companion app prototype, even if some of the technology frustrated me from time to time. I also got to learn a lot about the Chamber of Commerce that I work for and what features they have for business and marketing purposes. This was valuable experience for me (even if I wasn't currently working there), and hopefully this is not the end for the MyGoNorth prototype as I work to make the website better by reorganizing information, adding features, or even putting the app into action.