

Guided*

A world of recommendations

Process Documentation

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Degree Project



Framing the Project

This project was inspired by summer travels in Europe and experiencing the stressors of planning and being met with overwhelming yelp reviews, google ads and thousands of comments, that made the process of deciding on where to spend our time and money quite exhausting. Additionally, bouncing between each of these unique interfaces with ample variation made keeping track of these places and listings even more painstaking. Lastly, I found there to be a niche in the market where travelers are looking for more authentic and unique experiences, away from tourist traps and the “must see” things a place has to offer. What if there was a platform that allowed travelers to experience the true essence of the place, as locals would?

Untourist (n.)

A life-long learner, the perennial seeker for whom adventure yields transformative personal discovery — an inner awakening to meaning, purpose, legacy and calling — because the journey is about the process as much as the destination.

Framing the Project

To frame the project, I composed some overarching questions that would allow me to create features of the app. With these HMWs created, I was able to think about the basic functions to be included in the app.

How might we **showcase the unique and untourist places people really want to see?**

How might we **share travel recommendations with friends or family?**

How might we **allow travelers to organize their trip itinerary with recommendations?**

How might we **facilitate group travel that accommodates to every person's unique preferences?**

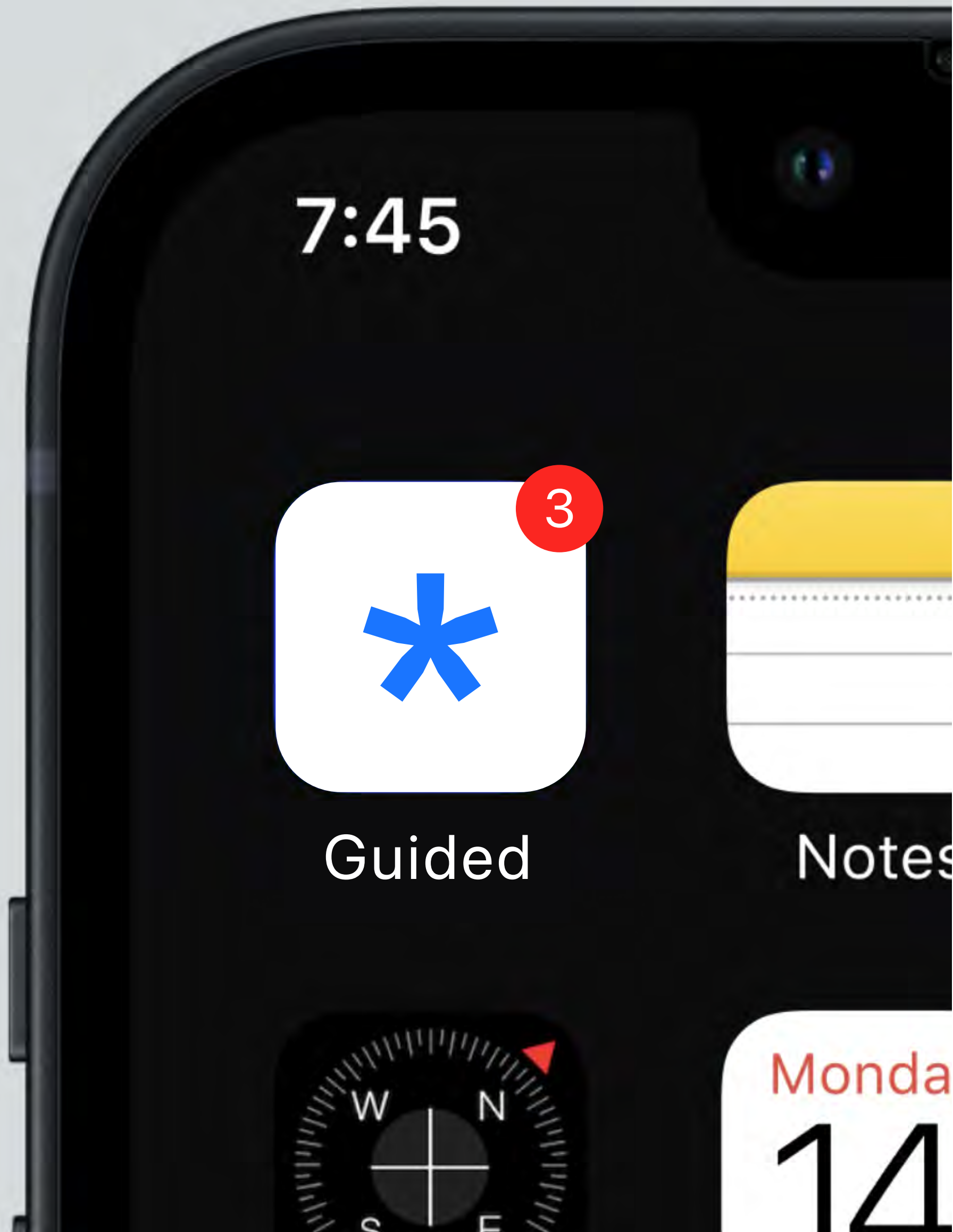
How might we **help travelers create a guide of their places of interest?**

How might we **organize a list of recommendations for the most effective itinerary?**

Not just another travel app.

Creating the problem statement for the app was a great first step to narrowing the scope of the project.

In a saturated market of travel planning and review apps, it can be difficult to decide on worthwhile restaurants, experiences and events to prioritize while traveling or planning an itinerary with others. Now more than ever, travelers are looking to experience the best of a place and will much rather follow recommendations from friends or locals before consulting a travel app.



What it's for.

Guided is on a mission to make traveling more enjoyable. Through a social system of shared recommendations on the best a place has to offer, Guided allows for the planning process to be much more straightforward.

With the emphasis on a social network of recommendations, the app allows for trustworthy recommendations because people have to put their name and reputation on a place.

This app presents what people really want, a short list of the places one must see when traveling, as if it's a trusted friend giving recommendations.

Let's Say,

1

I'm visiting Florence for the first time, and I know my friend Catherine has been there.

I can use this app to get all of her recommendations to make the most of my experience.

2

I'm backpacking through the South of France and I want to maximize my experiences in each city I stop in.

I can use this app to get the most recommended stops along my route, while documenting my guide to share with friends and family.

3

I'm traveling to Vienna with a friend who is vegan.

We can use this app to customize our itinerary to ensure there will be food we can all eat along the way.

Our People

My target audience for this app are people who are looking for recommendations on a new or familiar location. Whether traveling in a group or solo, they want to efficiently use their time to discover the hidden gems of a place. The audience of this app loves traveling but hates tourism, and can be considered untourists. This app is meant for anyone traveling, or looking to experience something new. Through options to share your recommendations or create a plan, this app can be used by a large demographic of people of any age, in any location all around the world.

Images by Seo Ju Park and Unsplash



Research Overview

I did research into the industry of travel interfaces to look into the different ways that these platforms were operating, marketing themselves, setting them apart and using specific messaging. I found some reassuring statistics about the travel app market.

Total revenue is expected to show an annual growth rate (CAGR 2022–2026) of 11.05%, resulting in a projected **market volume of US\$507.00m by 2026.**

[\(source\)](#)

The number of downloads in the Travel segment is projected to reach **2,308.2m downloads in 2022.**

[\(source\)](#)

Travelers from the United States rely on their smartphones for every part of their journey, from **using social media posts from friends and family to research leisure trips (62%) to sharing post trip feedback (32%),** and everything in between.

[\(source\)](#)

Covid Response in Travel

U.S. Travel category apps surpassed 85 million downloads in Q2 2021, accounting for the highest quarterly adoption since the outbreak of COVID-19 and an increase of 128 percent year-over-year compared to Q2 2020.

Travel booking apps were responsible for 19 percent of Travel category app downloads in H1 2021. The subcategory continues to lead the travel app space and its market share grew by 4 percentage points compared to 2020.

Travel Booking Market Share Grew by 5 Percentage Points

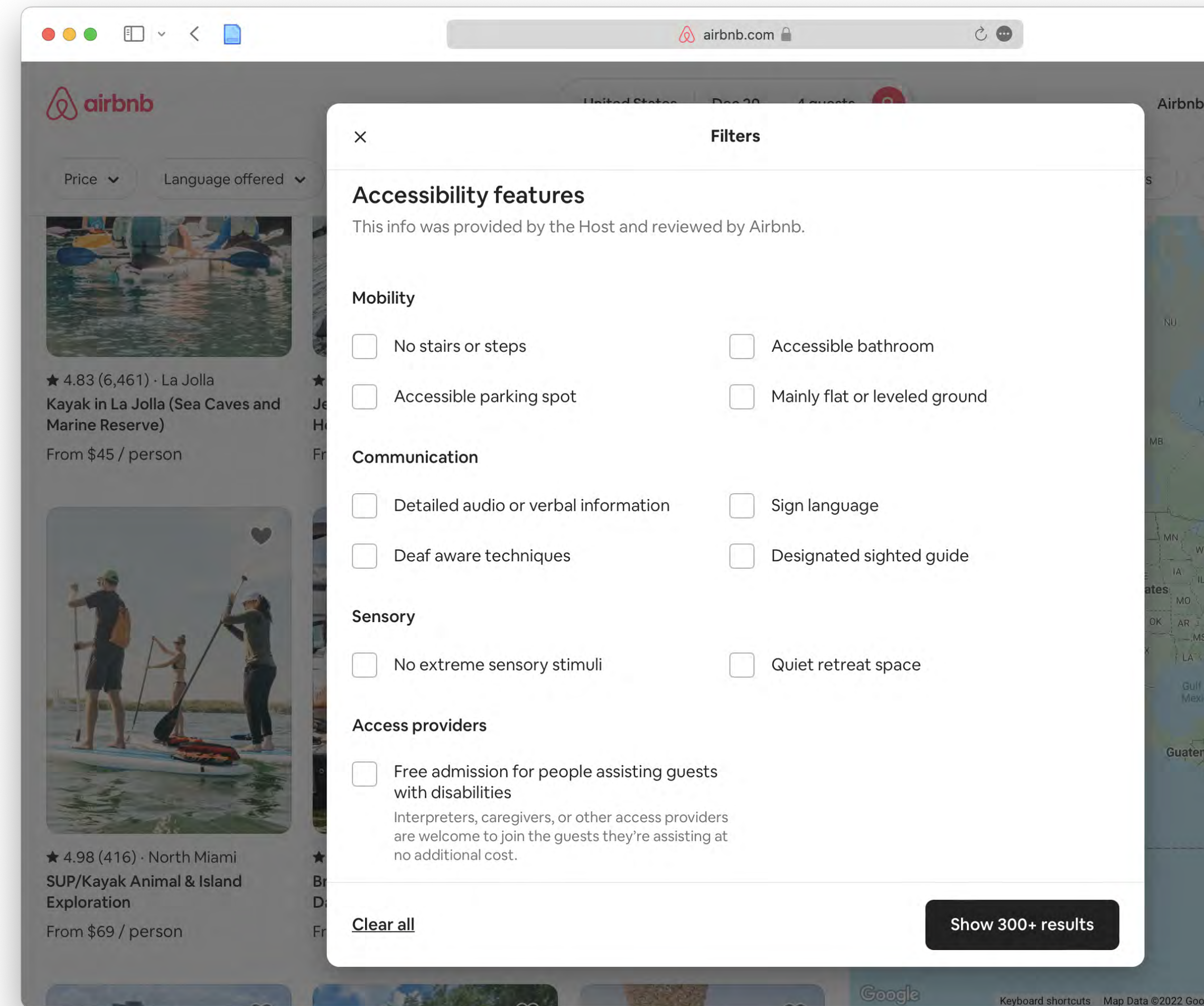
Proportion of U.S. installs by subcategory among top 100 Travel category apps



(source)

Competitive Research

Investigating other travel app and websites has allowed me to create a fully flushed out app prototype. With these apps as reference, I was able to learn more about the interactions occurring when users are trying to access certain features. Seeing how Airbnb has included accessibility features in their filters and looking into Trip Advisor's trip-making function was very influential. Looking at these apps and websites as reference was crucial for me to plan the overarching user flows associated with the fundamental purpose of my app.



The market

Trip Advisor

Great for seeing ratings of a place and for gathering a “trip” aka a guide of a city, which can be customized with notes

But these are filtered by ratings and doesn't plan the trip's route!

Airbnb

Really clean and intuitive UX. Customize trip settings based on where to travel, what you're interested in, what day, how large the group is, language and price, time of day and accessibility features are great!

But everything costs money and is just one activity!

Expedia

Can search for things to do, but is mostly used for booking and purchasing hotels and packages.

But there is limited filtering and different levels of sorting like “good” vs. “wonderful” experiences!

Apple Maps

Can create and share guides in a clean and intuitive interface. Easy to learn more about the place with all of its info.

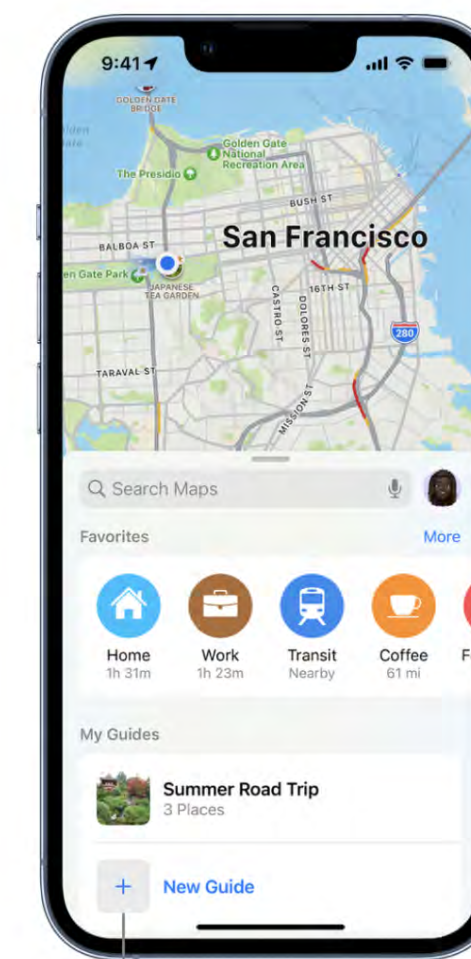
But these places are simply listed as a list of recommended spots!

Research

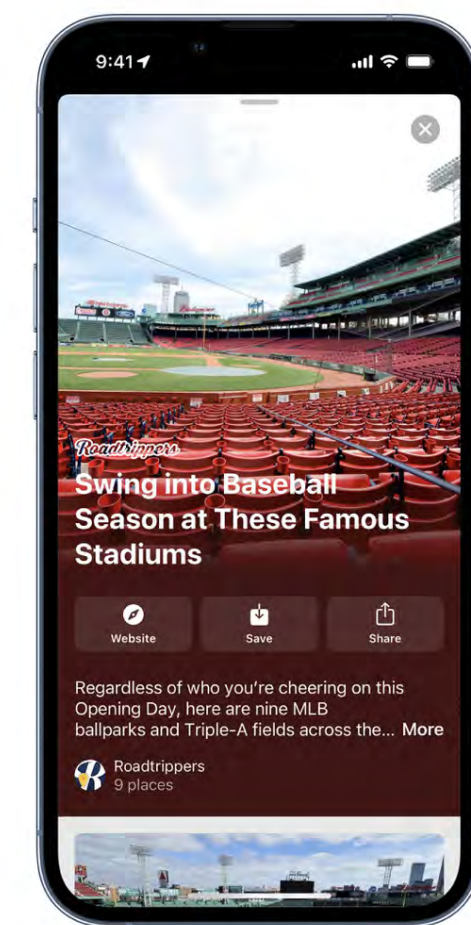
Included in my research was a search to find services that are doing similar things. Through this competitive analysis, I was able to look into the functions of Apple Maps, Trip Advisor Expedia and Airbnb. Taking notes on the features that were well executed and pitfalls, I kept this in mind while starting my design process and to be used as reference along the way.

- Trip Advisor
 - A really good app for getting reviews and seeing ratings of a place. What is nice about this app is that they have guidance from other travelers, suggestions and finding things to do by interest category
 - Categories for each more broad category is really interesting! like for outdoors, food&drink, art&culture, they have sub categories like "traveler faves", "IG-worthy", "Action Packed", "Off the beaten path", "fancy-ish".
 - Helps to get super niche into specifics of a place and all of the activities there so that people can get specific about what they want to do. Like a fam might be feeling doing something fancy-ish, while a group of friends might want to do a IG-worthy activity.
 - I think that this is a feature I have to consider bringing in to my app! like should I have recs based on our one kind of audience member, or should we integrate more of a choice by category look and feel? Are any of the experiences i want to propose really ig worthy or action packed?
- Airbnb - experiences!!
 - Really like looking how clean this user flow is from entering in what information one is interested in, like where they are traveling, what day, how big their group is.
 - Layout wise, it is really nice to see what locations are where and the logos that mark each category on the map. This is really nice to see what is happening near you! can be brought into something like planning the route of activities to maximize time potentially! like food and drink, landmark icon, person walking (could be better?)
 - Filter by language, price (with average), time of day checklist, accessibility features!!!
- Expedia
 - Search by "things to do" in location (no people number or preferences tho!)
 - But all of the activities are really click bait-y and all things cost money. So there are limited filtering based on what people want to do and all the activities look bad.
 - only travelor rating (who would want to look at activities that are only 'good' compared to 'wonderful'?)
 - recs like: free cancelation, deals, local expert picks, fam friendly, new,
 - budget, start time, duration.
 - Interesting since I am trying to go about making an app that looks like this, where there are limited filtering, but only a given selection of options to chose from. Would I like this style of recommendations if the recs were actually good and not just things like "hop on hop off" tours or really touristy things?

- Design audit and discovery (look at the competition, similar projects, any books or articles)
 - Apple Maps Guide Feature
 - you can organize places into your own guides for easy reference in apple maps. For example, you can add destinations for an upcoming vacation into a guide named *Summer Road Trip*. You can quickly get to your guides from the search card, and you can share your guides with others.



Create a guide to your places of interest.

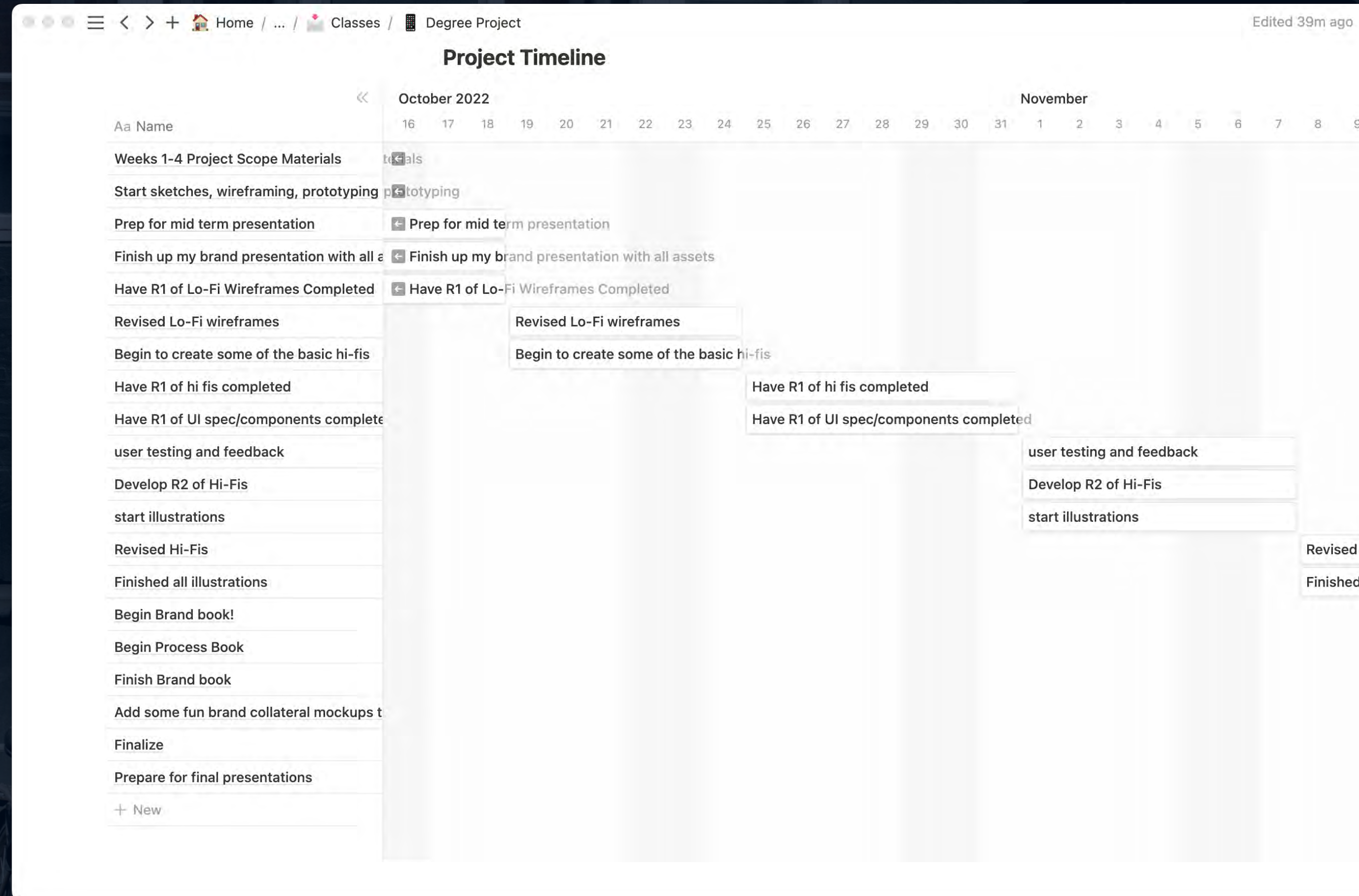


Project Scope

Research and Discovery
Ideation
Branding Exploratory

Lo-Fi Wireframes
Finalized Branding Styles
Brand Voice & Functionality
Development

Hi-Fi Wireframes
Interactive Prototype
UI Component Library
Brand Guidelines & Mockups



Deliverables

App Prototype (with 3 flows)

1. Onboarding and Getting Profile set up

- Onboarding
- Create Profile
- Add to Profile on Explore Page
- Interact with Map
- Cafe listing page
- Make Recommendation
- Recommendation added to Profile

2. Make a Plan

- Search for friend, Jonah
- Add friend
- Make plan on the Create page
- Invite friends to join plan
- Customization in Plan survey
- View plan itinerary and see plan map

3. Save Places for a Trip

- Create new collaborative folder in your Likes page with Charlie
- Search for Kyoto
- Browse Kyoto Guide
- Go to Recs from Jonah
- Browse his Plans
- View plan on the map
- Start saving places to Japan shared Folder

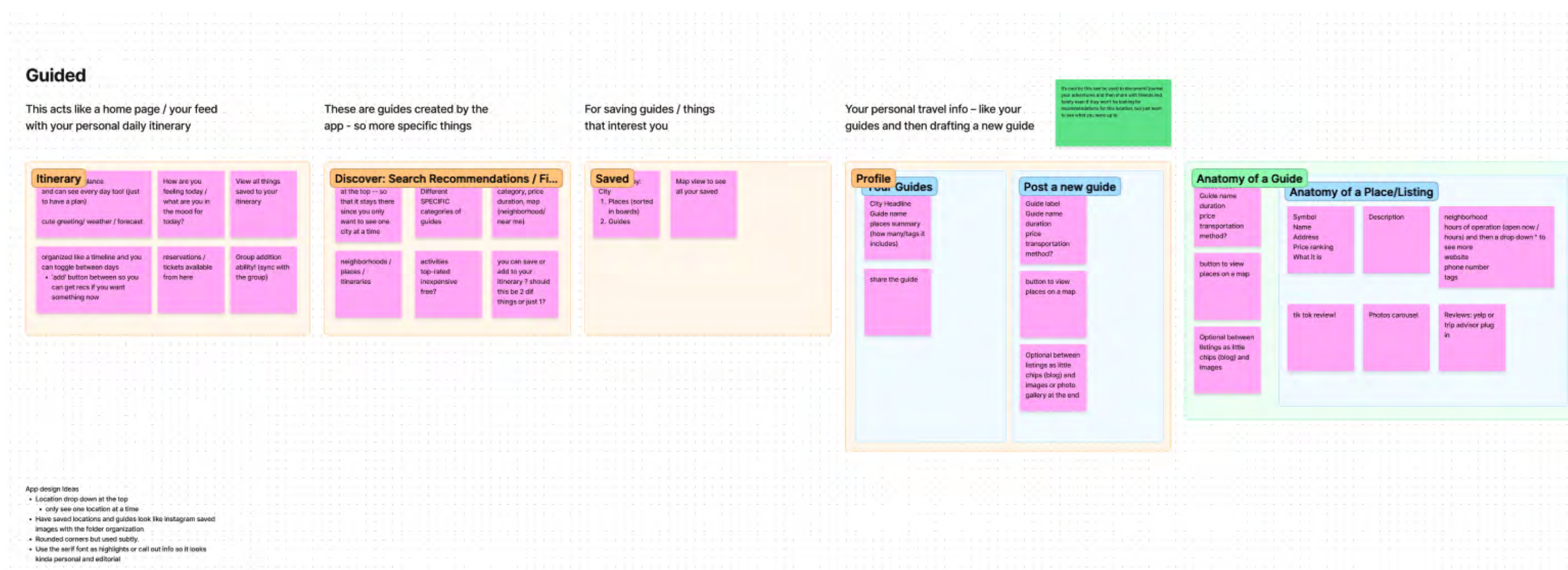
Brand Guidelines

- Logo and Icon / Usage
- Color and Typography
- Images and Image Treatments
- Brand Messaging
- Social Media Mockups

UI Component Guidelines

- Plan Component Layout/ Hierarchy
- Maps Component
- Icons and Usage
- Navigation
- Thumbnails and additional components

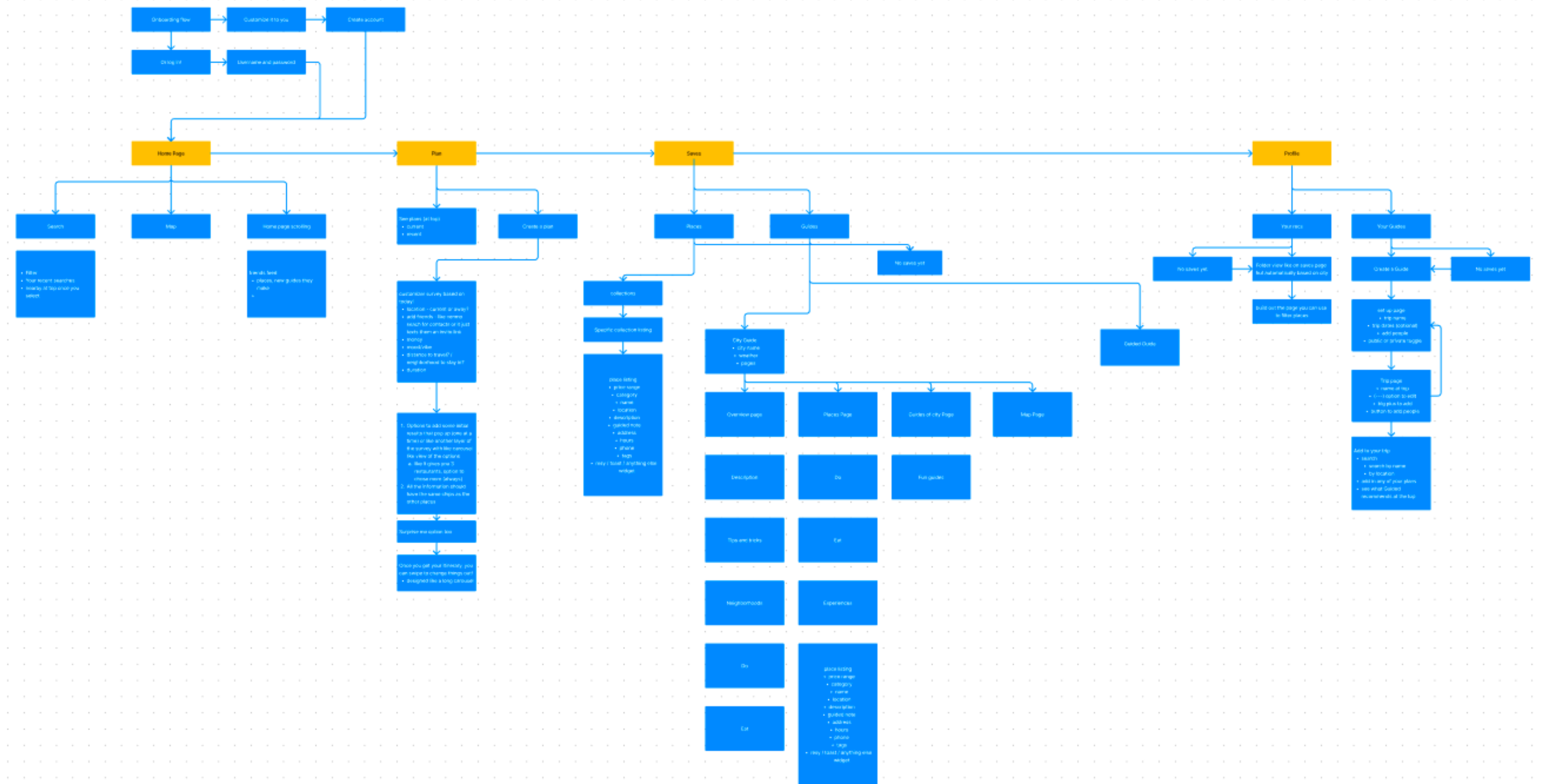
App Planning



The process of deciding the information architecture of my app was possibly the hardest part of of the design process. It was difficult to conceptualize the functionality and then to organize what I wanted the app to be used for within different pages. Trying to incorporate features such as the ability to both 'like' and 'recommend' a listing which could be applied to a place, plan or guide created a design challenge that pushed me to think about the interface and visual indicators that would minimize this confusion for users.

Creating app features on pink sticky notes allowed me to begin grouping them into similar sections, which framed the basic understanding of the app's navigation.

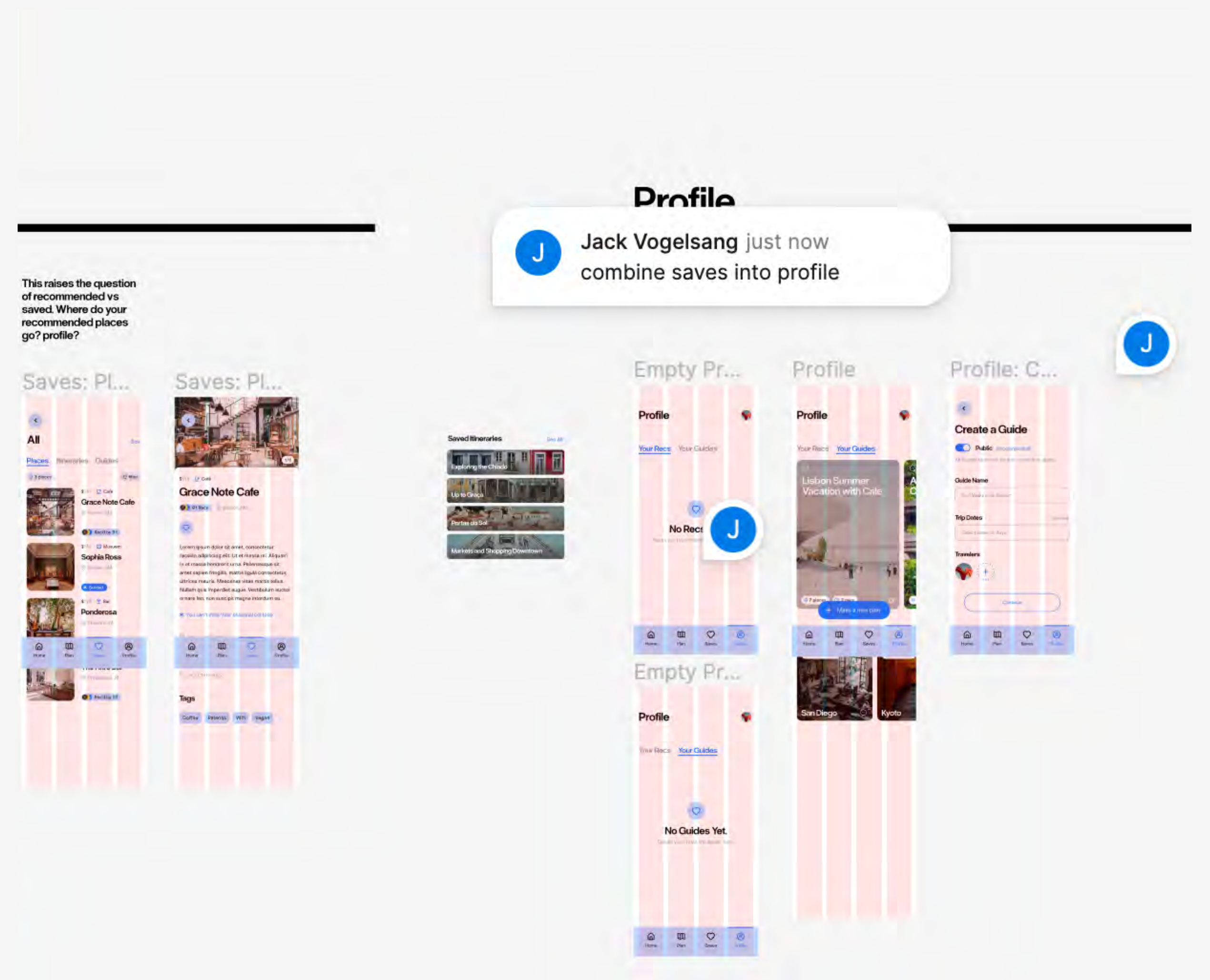
In order to set up the structure of the pages for my app, it was necessary to create an affinity diagram that would lay out how all of the pages would interact with each other. This diagram outlines each screen that is housed within the main pages of the app. Within each page, I carefully outlined the different features and interactive elements of the page.



After this diagram was created, I decided on the stylistic choice to add another page to the main nav bar, that would be the “create” page, used to make a plan, recommendation or guide. I ultimately decided that these were an essential part of the app, and should not appear nested within other pages.

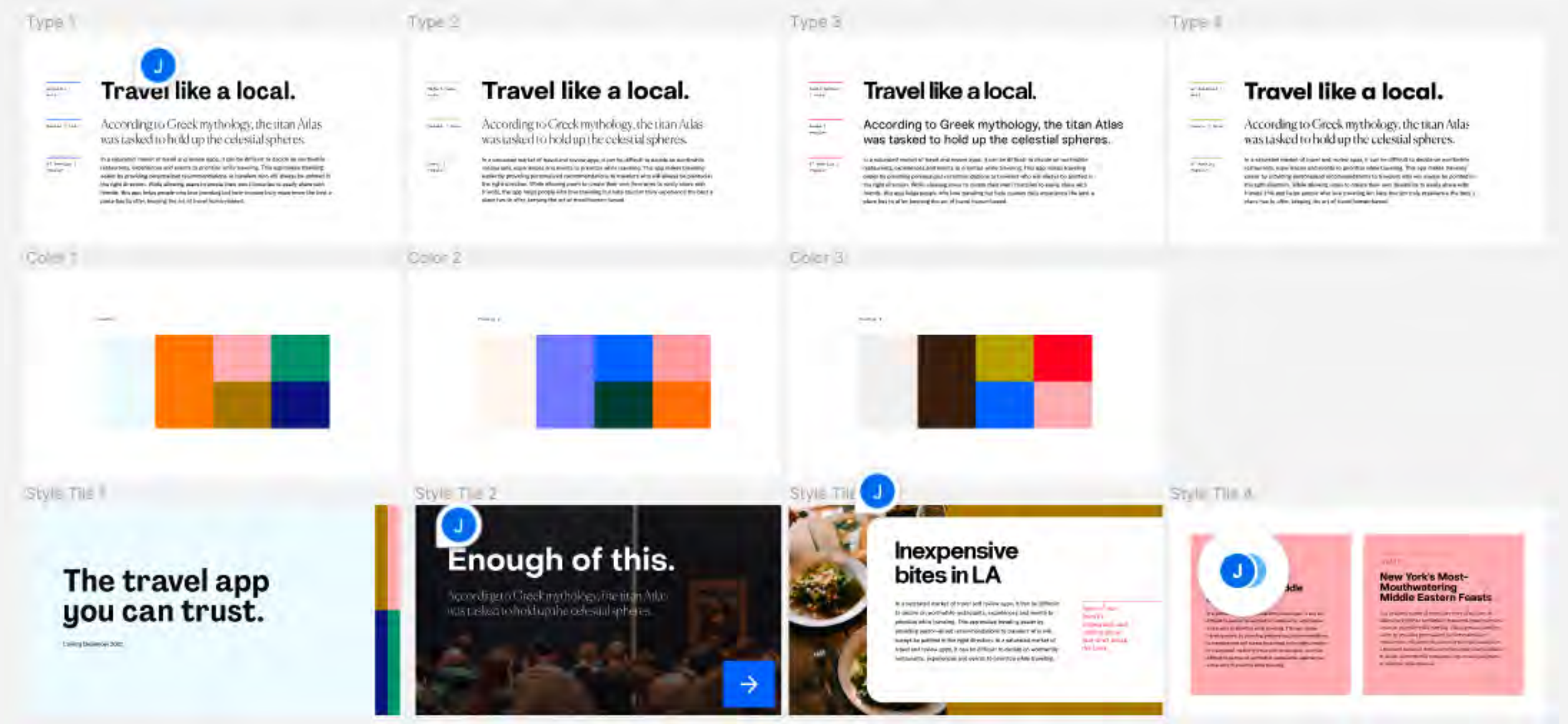
Pivot

One of the biggest blockers in my design process was going about how to allow for ability for the user to both ‘save’ and ‘recommend’ a place, plan or guide. It was difficult to understand what differentiated these, and how these would be collected and displayed on a page. Also, it was challenging to find a symbol that would be used for each. I went back and forth having both saves and recommendations appear in the same page, and then separating them out. In the end, I brought recommended items into the profile section and allowed the saved items to be stored in a unique page.



Branding Process

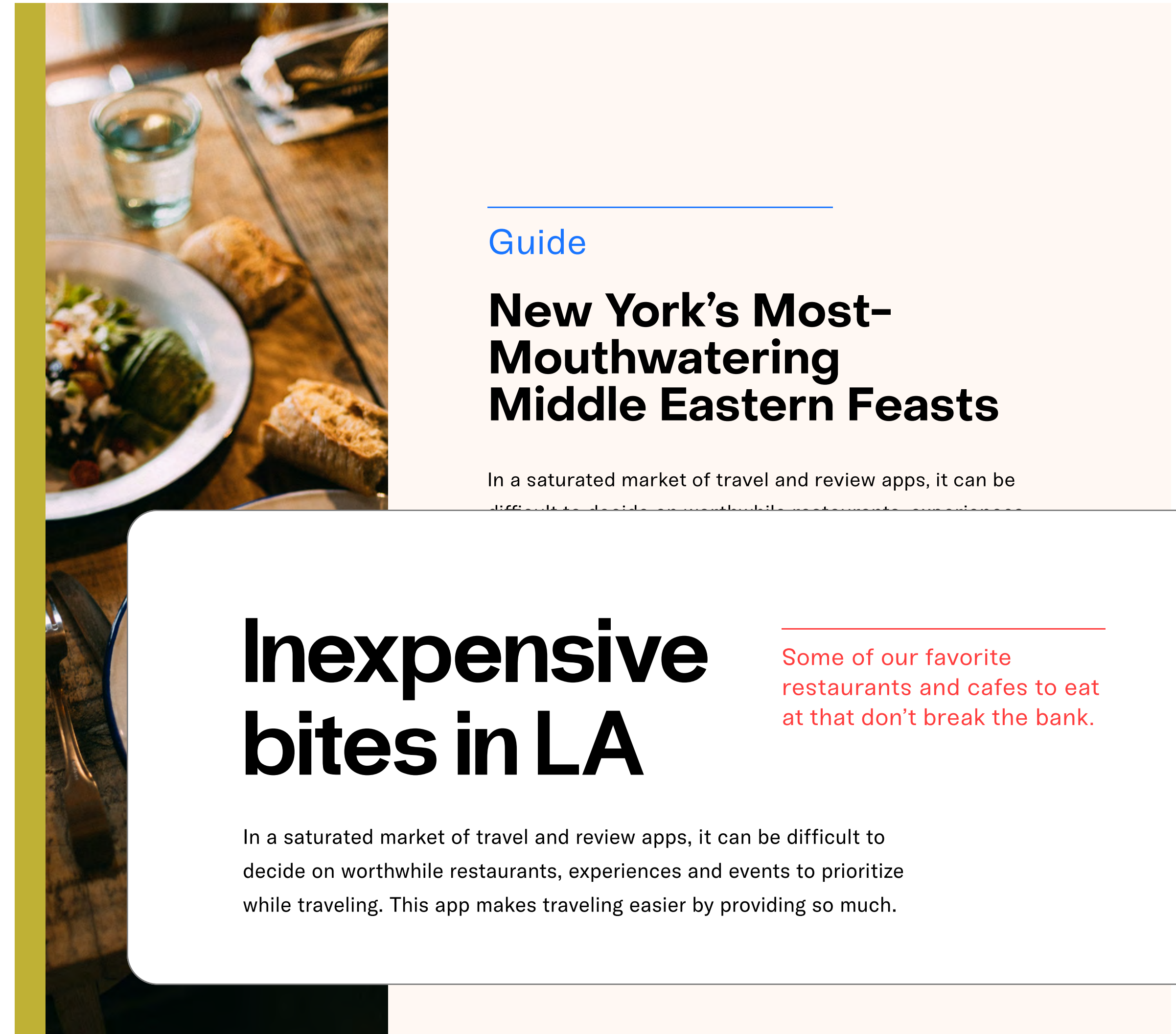
Exploration plays a large role in the design process. Through a simple exploratory exercise, I started to play with different typefaces and how they would be used in a typographic system that includes Headings, Subheads and body text. Additionally, I explored color palettes that promoted a certain modern and playful feel. After these, I created a few sample “style tiles” that utilized type, color and images in editorial or slide deck template layouts.



Through pages, I created unique combinations of the type, color and style tiles to see the brand come together.

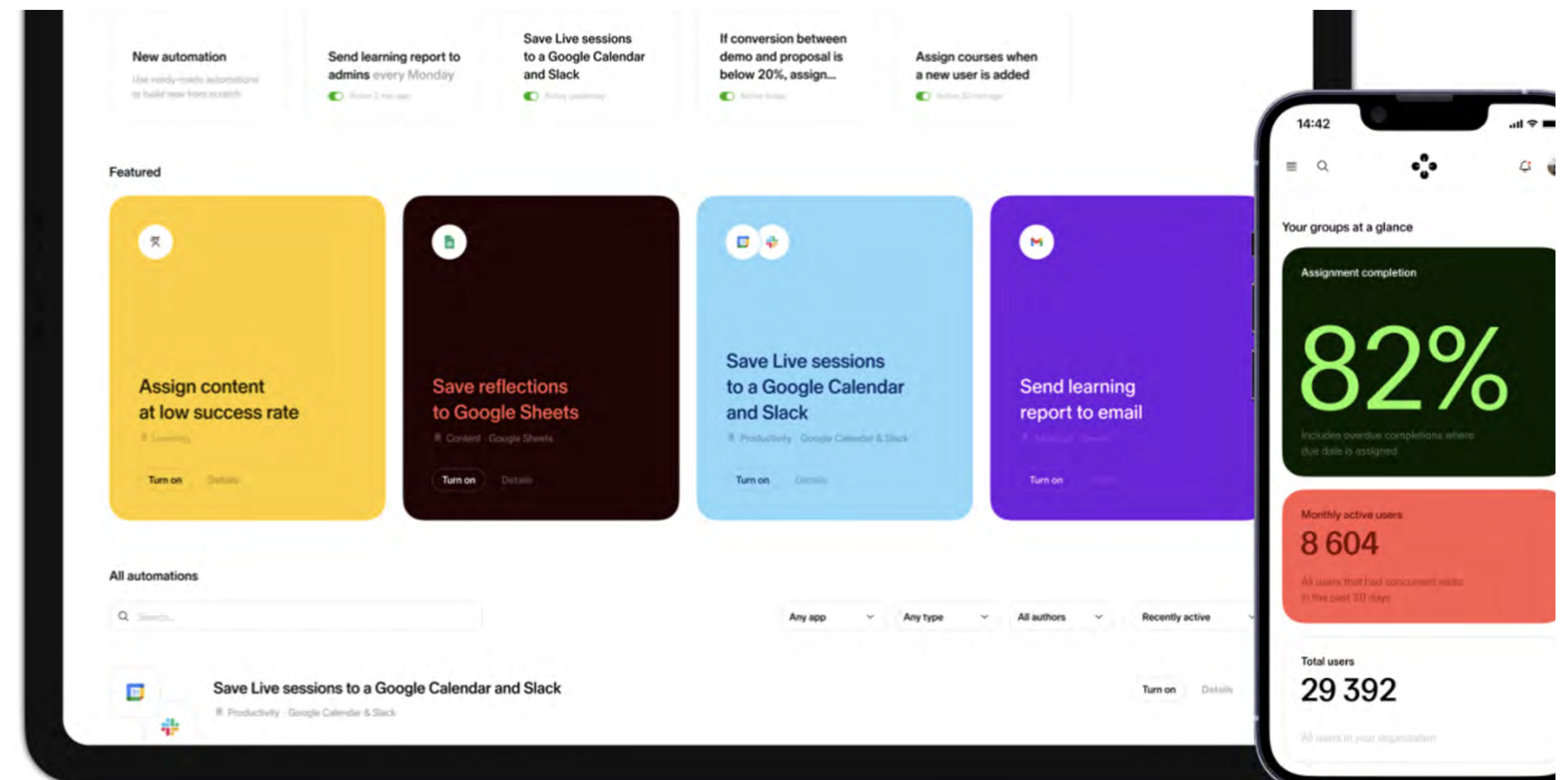
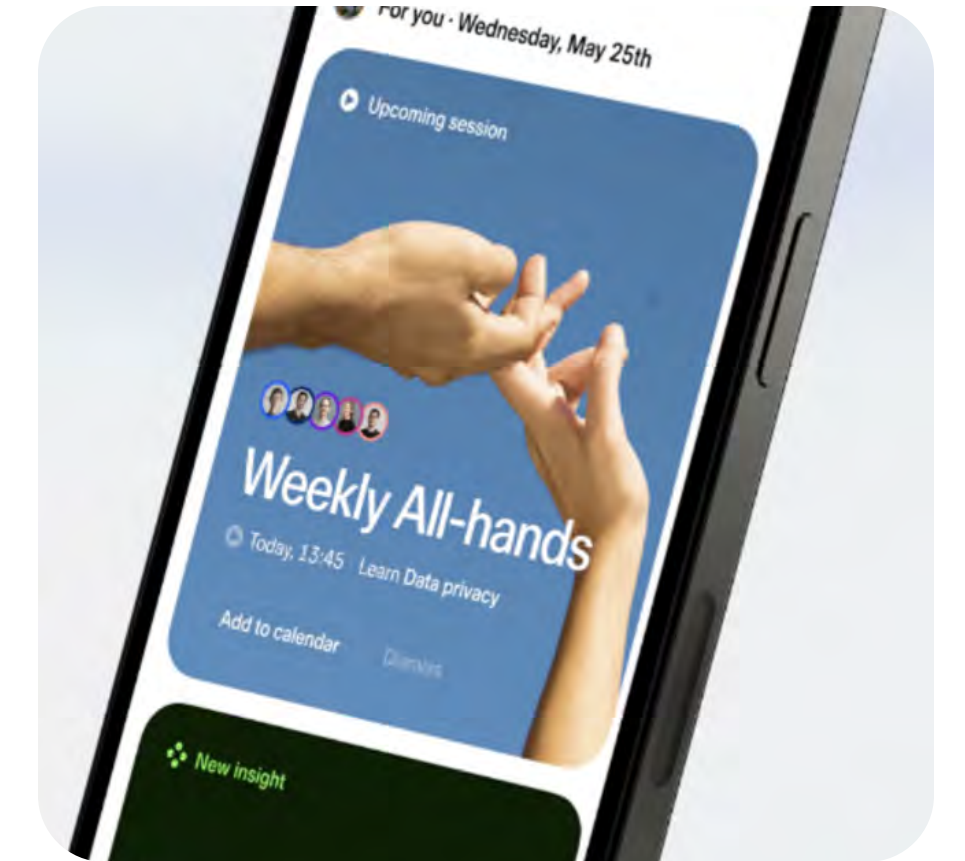
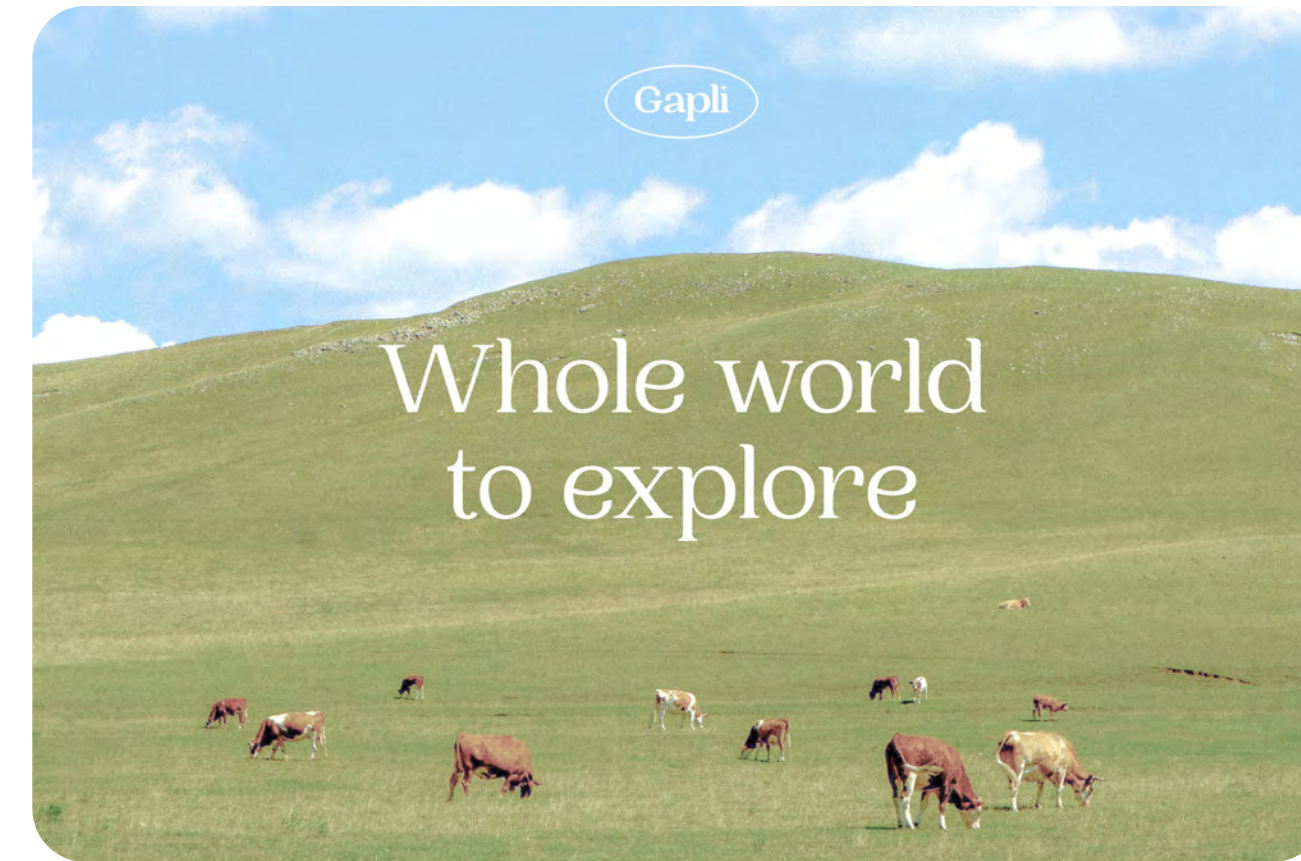
Branding Process

After initial style tiles were created, I gathered feedback about what fonts were readable and worked well together. Additionally, I know that the type would be one of the only elements that would guide the look and feel of the brand since the app would allow for little ornamentation or graphics. Getting the type system right was crucial to promoting a youthful and modern look and feel.



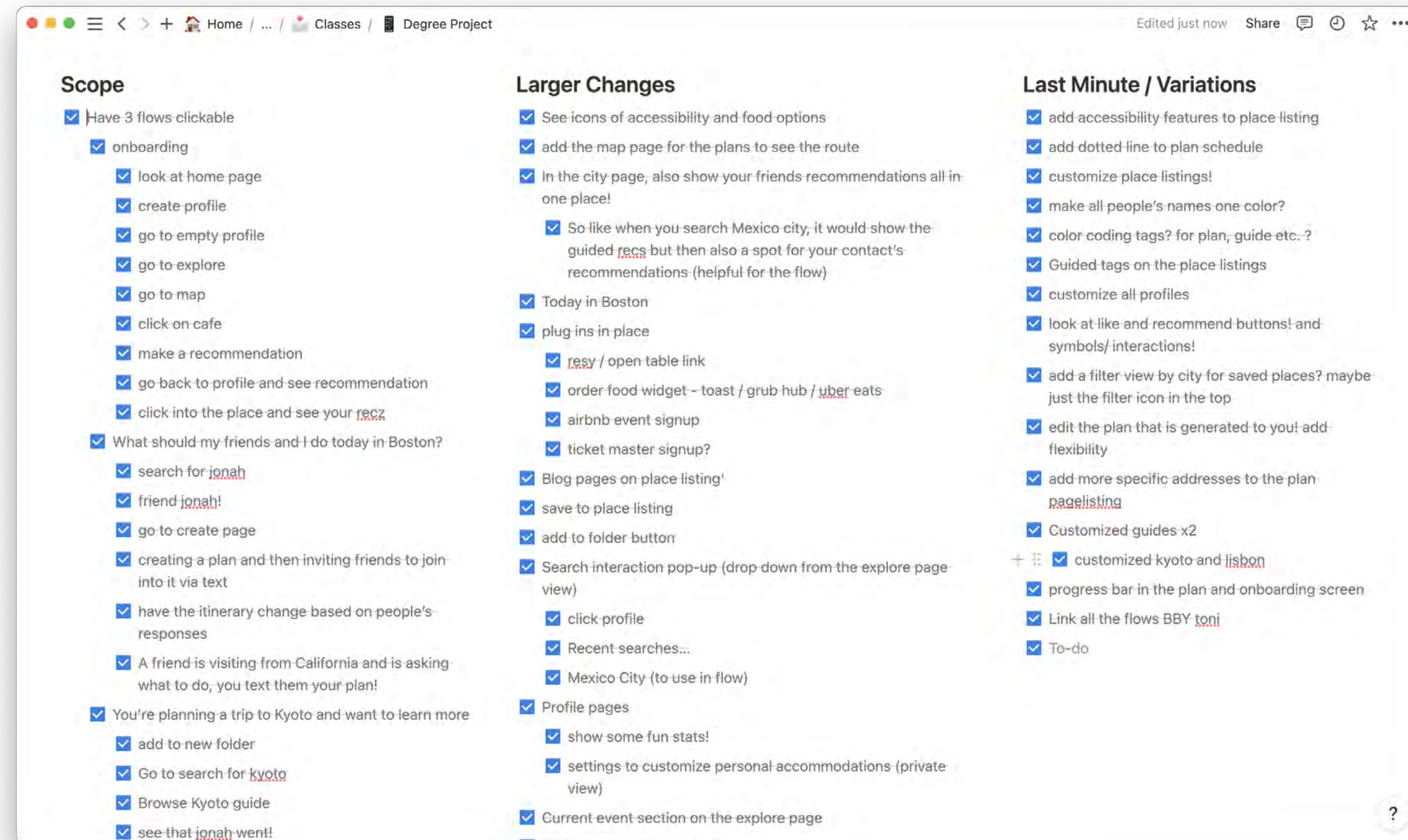
Inspiration

Finding inspiration was a crucial part in designing for this app. I was excited to find case studies of similar interfaces and to explore how other projects utilize color, image and type to create a functional system first, with a branding system that is established through the clean and organized design of UI elements.



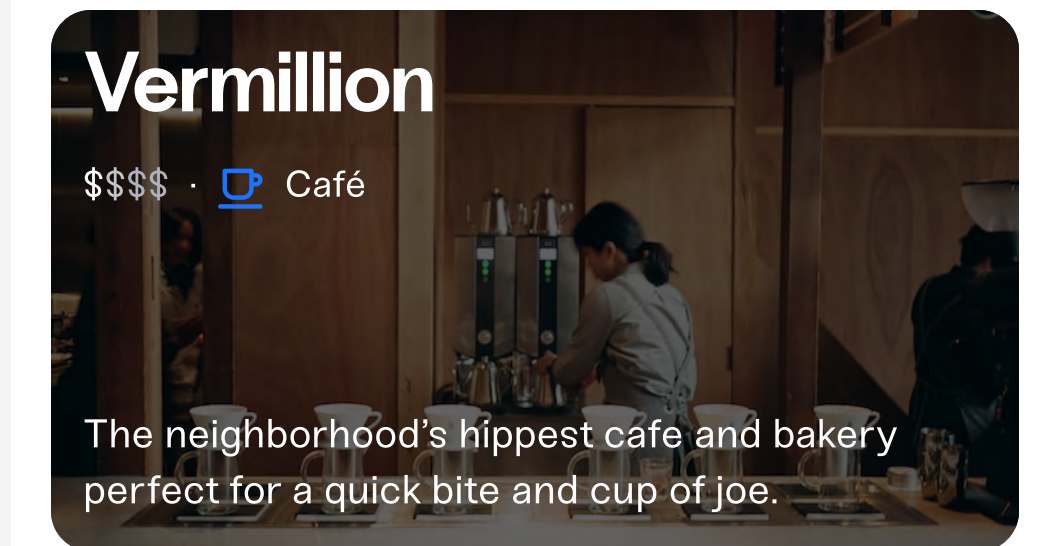
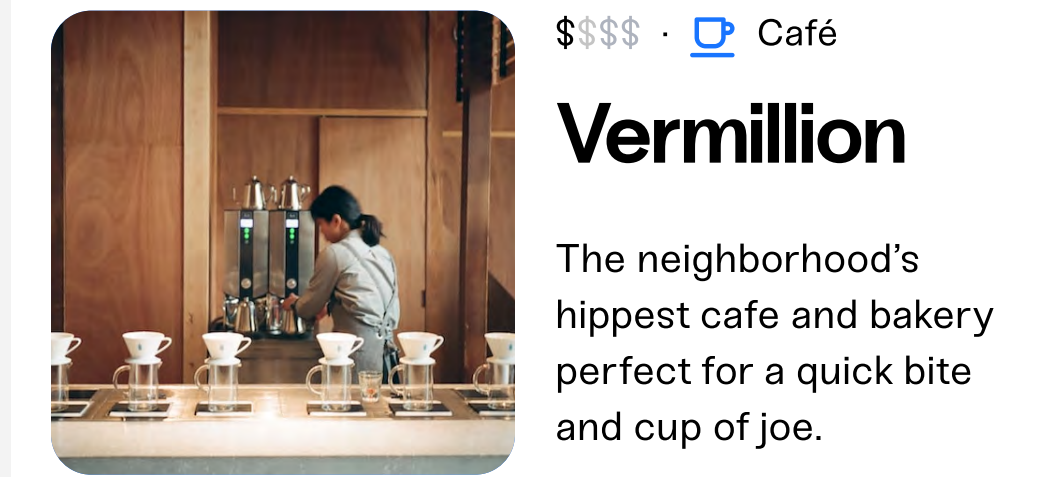
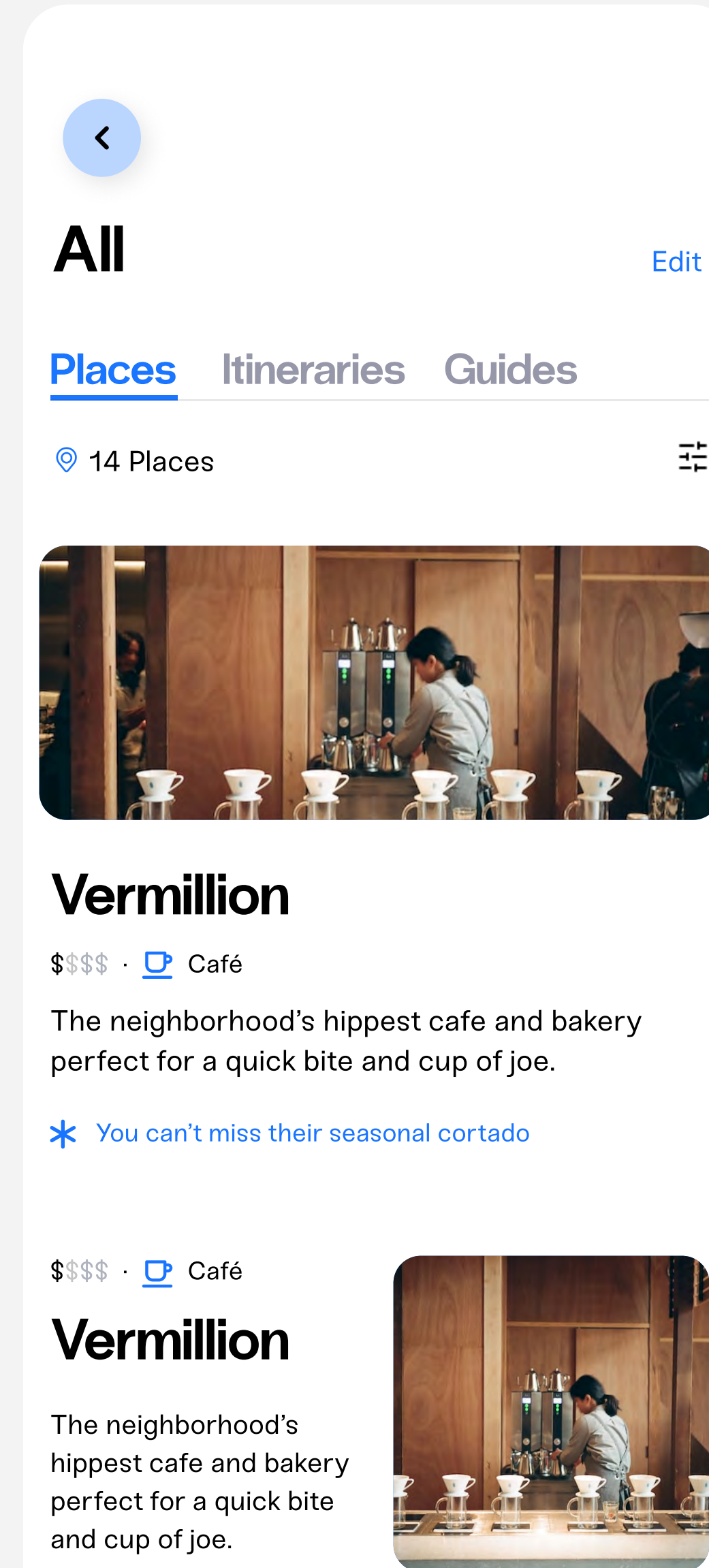
Prototyping

Although I had grand visions of implementing different features that would stack and be added to build the UI system gradually, projects don't always go according to plan. In the few weeks of the app development process, I had created a huge checklist of items and components to be created. Ranging from a to-do list item that would add a like button to a place listing, to creating specific user flows where a new folder is added with your friend Charlie, I found this to-do list to be the most effective method to tracking and documenting the final deliverables.



Place Display

The layout to display the place listing was a challenge to make. The essential elements of the clickable thumbnail for a place listing must include an image, the place name, money indicator, and category of place. From there, I explored different options of how this could be displayed.



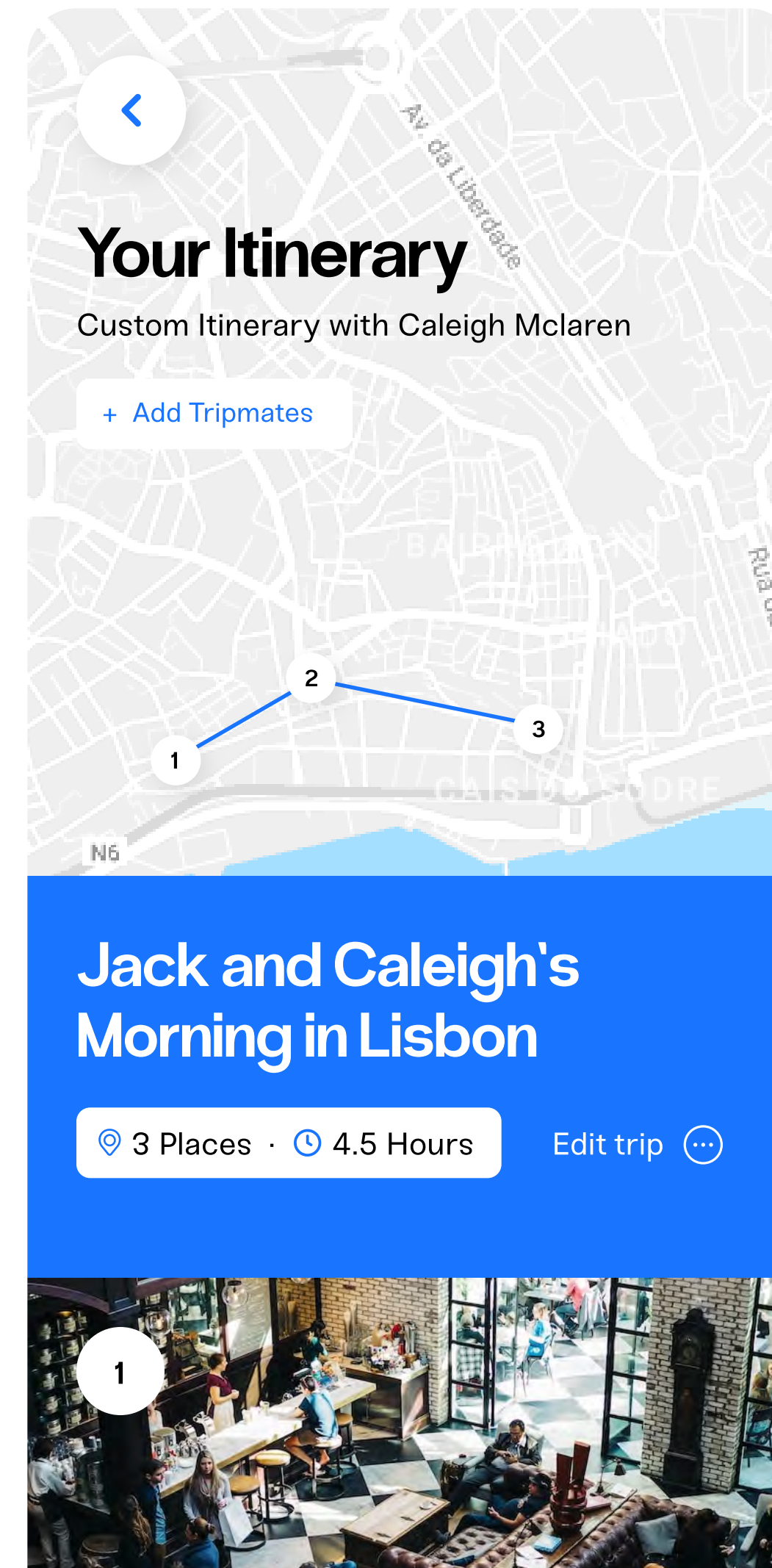
Layout Explorations

inaccessible contrast

In the early stages of designing the app interface, I explored the use of different colors and layouts. Interactive elements like a 'toggle' button between places and itinerary and different layouts were an essential part to understanding the page's layout.

Through user testing, blue sections were noted to appear as clickable sections

For the maps to be more effective, they need to be closer and show directions on the street to connect places, not just a straight line.

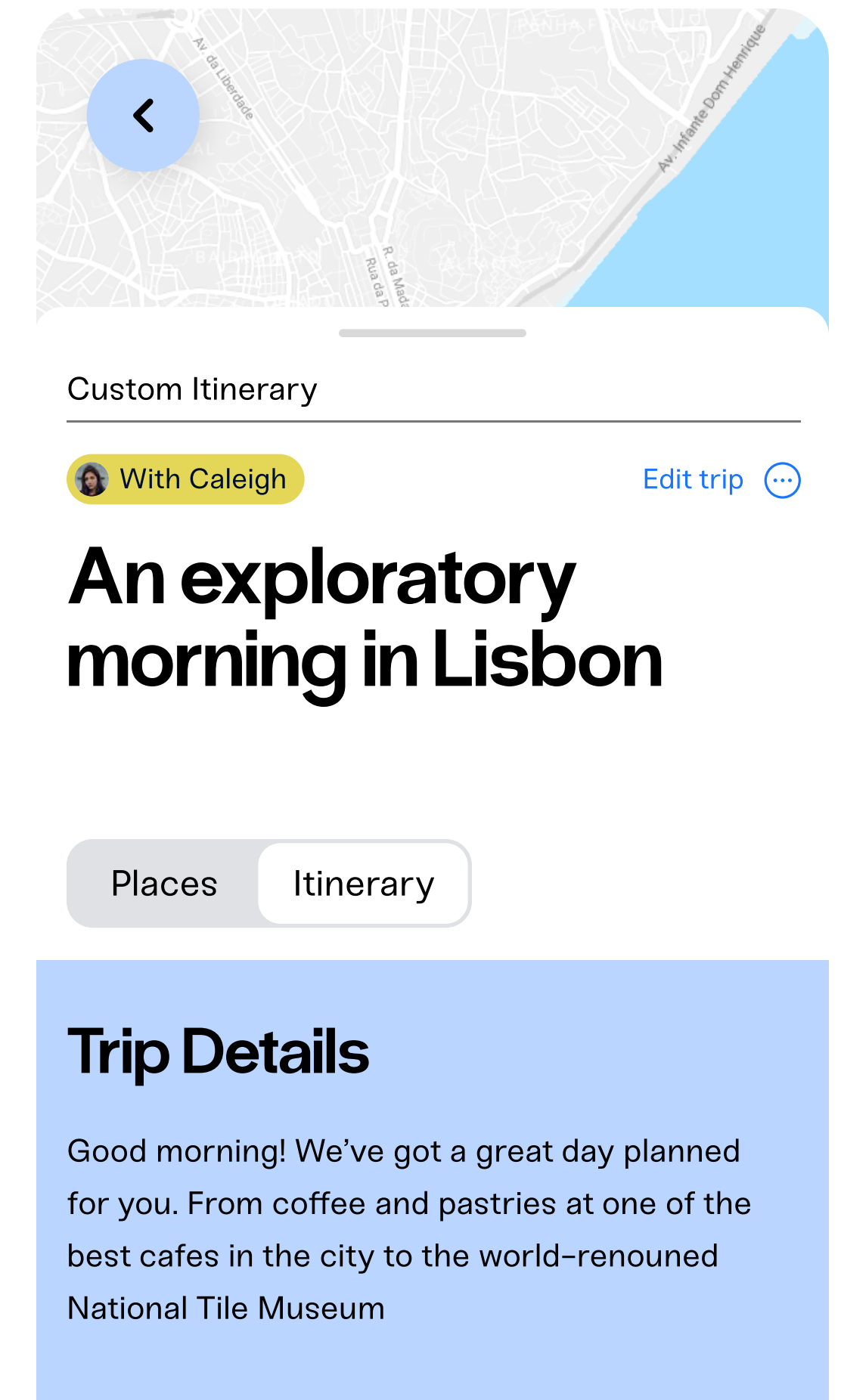


Lucinda's

\$\$\$\$ · Café

The neighborhood's hippest cafe and bakery perfect for a quick bite and cup of joe.

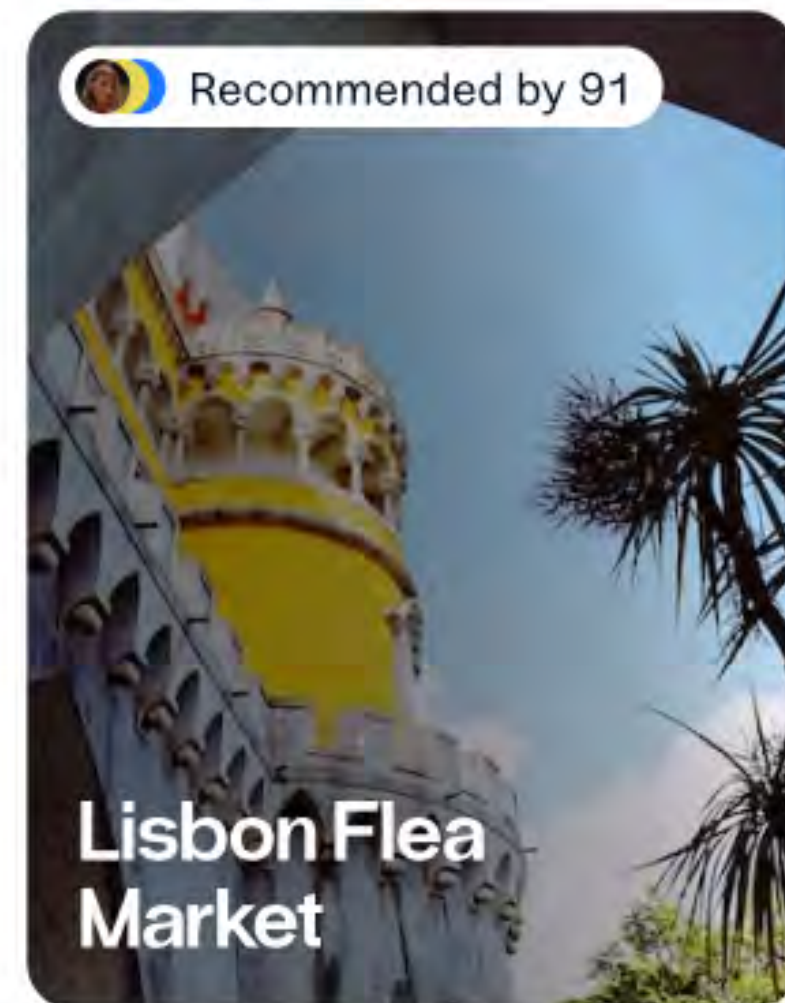
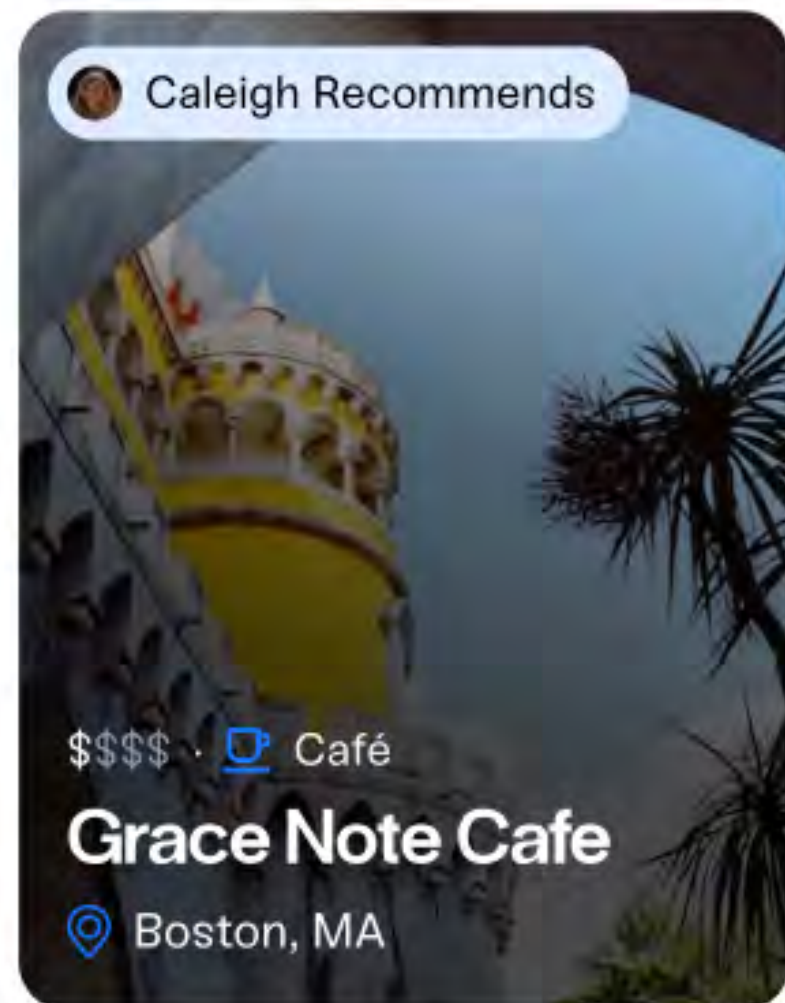
* You can't miss their seasonal cortado



Lucinda's

From Alex Guide created in October 2022

Guides



Guide created in October 2022

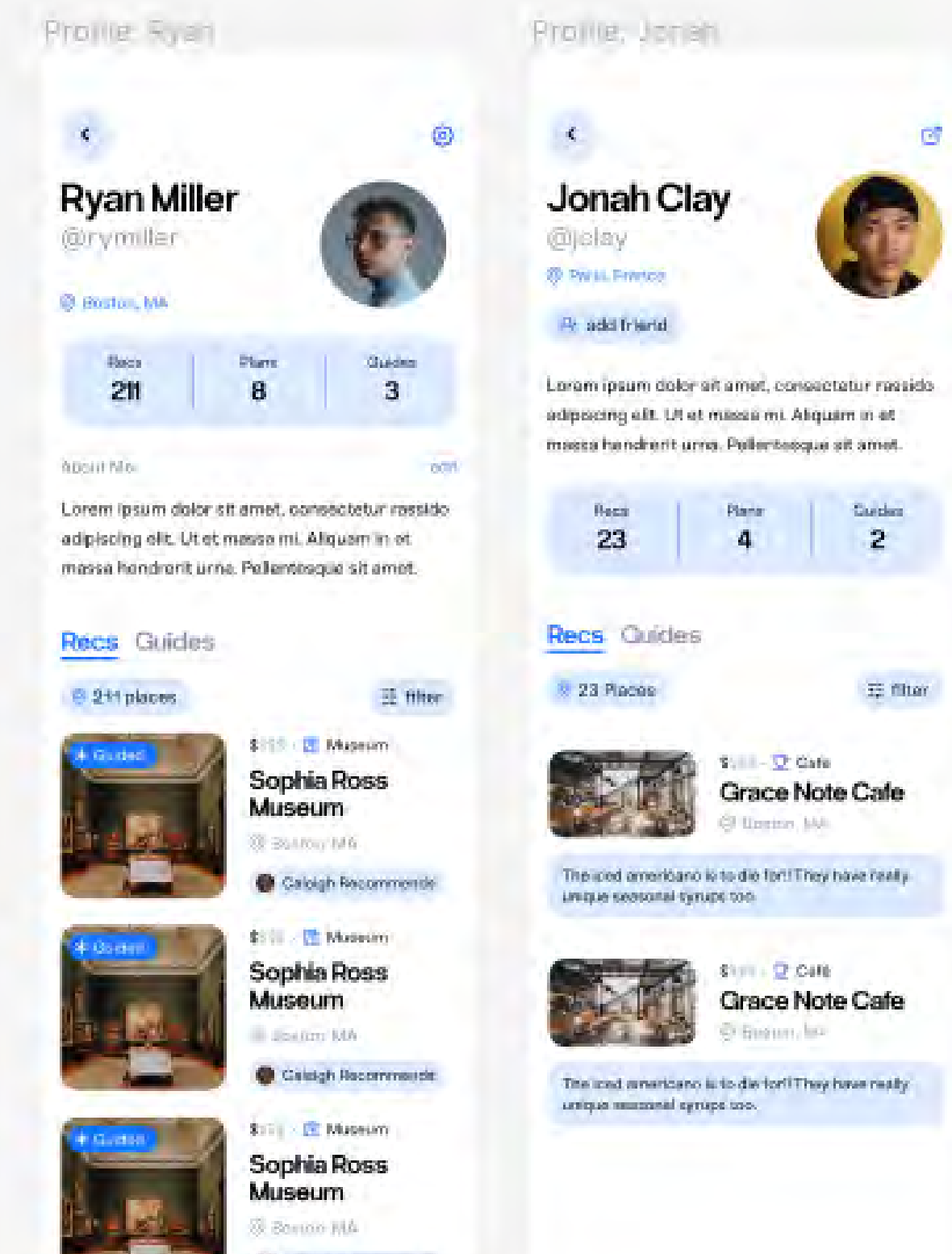
Another small design challenge I encountered in my process was determining the naming mechanism for the recommendation tags.

In different iterations, I explored naming combinations with no friends, one friend, two and three friends or 3+

These small naming constancies were something I wanted to prioritize in order to maximize the variation of my app, showing all case scenarios.

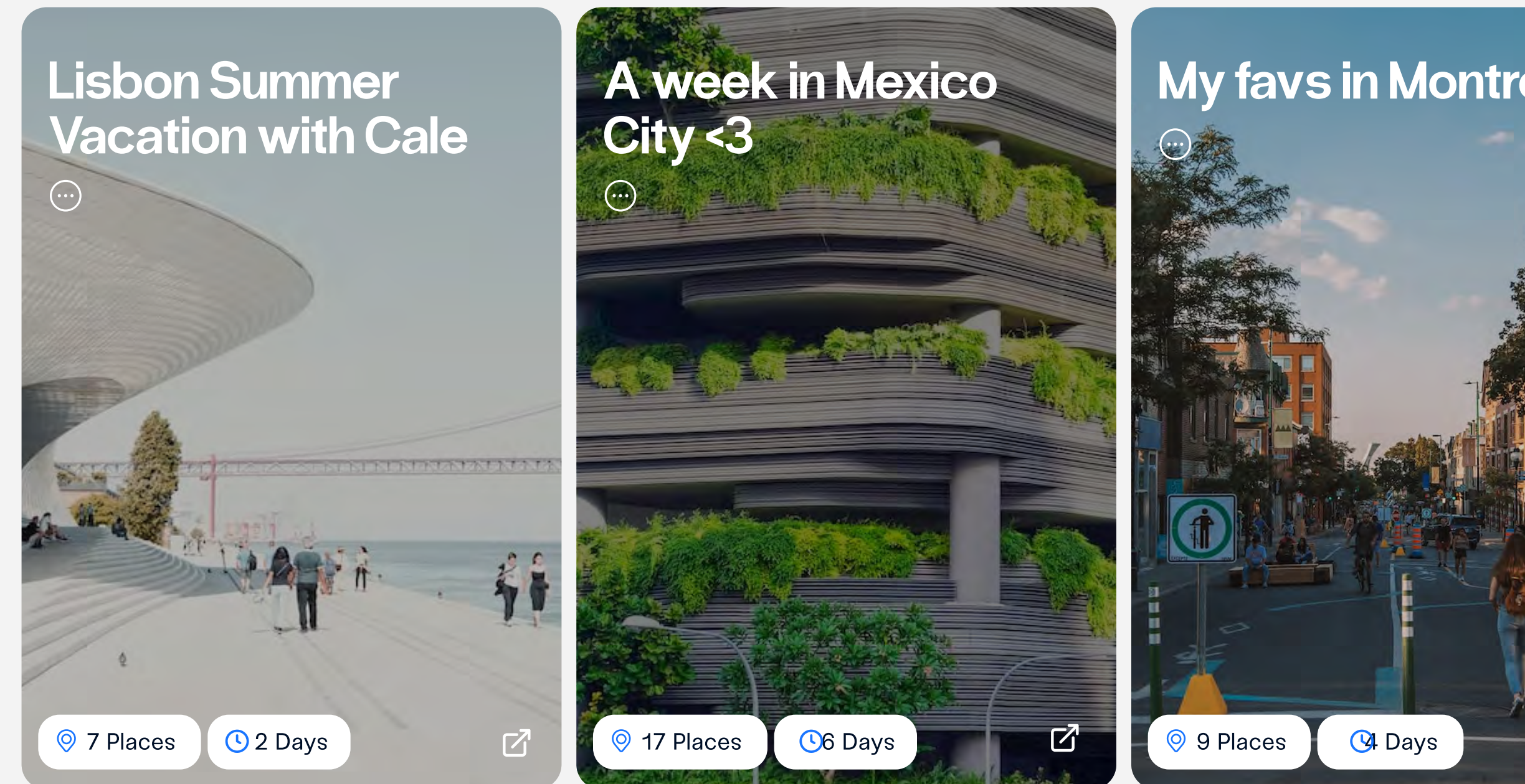
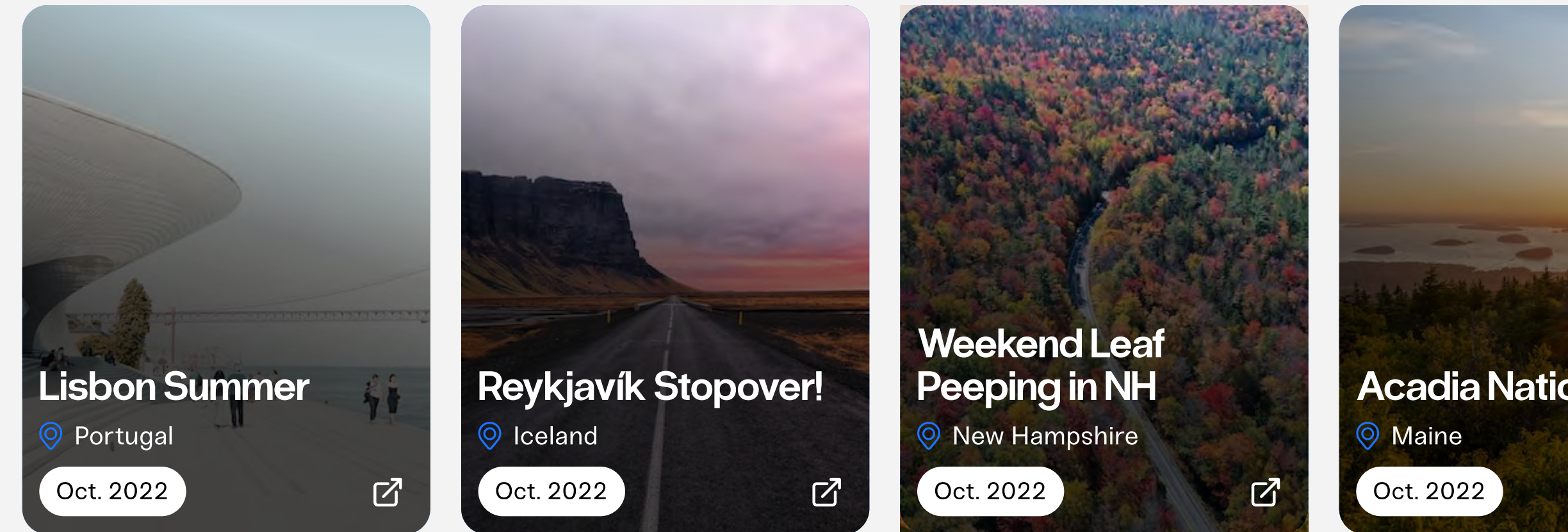
Also, determining the layout of recommendations being displayed on someone's personal account was a decision that required some thought.

Since the profile section should be used to view recs and 'jog one's memory' with their thoughts on it, I chose to allow the comments to be featured in the same layout as they appear on the feed page.



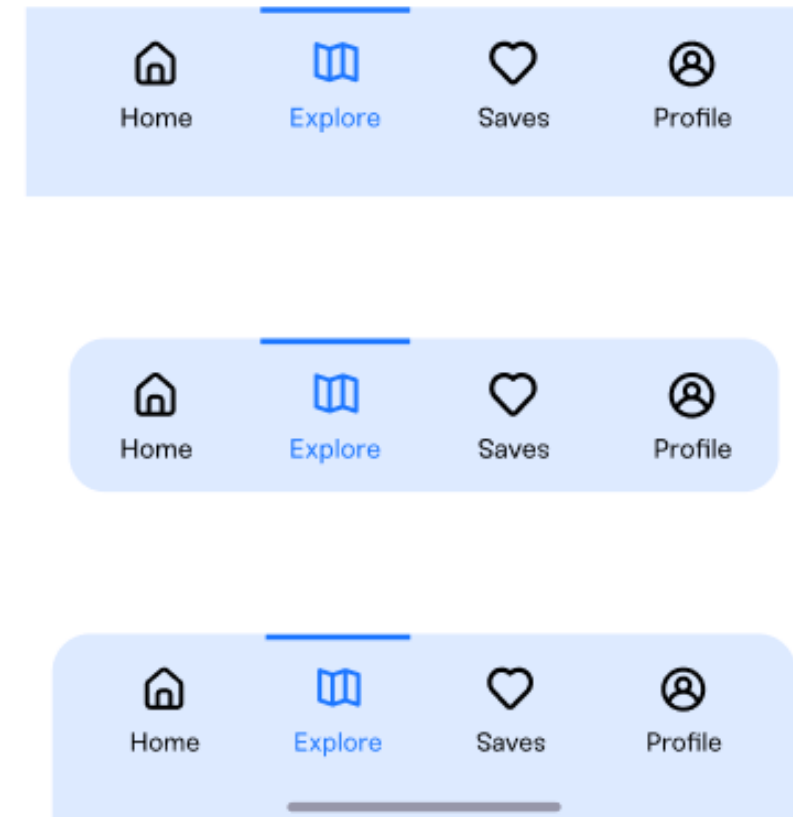
Photography treatment

An important part of the app are images, and figuring out how to utilize them in a way that was conducive to including more information within them. Through the use of dark gradients or multiplied color layers on top of the image, I was able to include more information. Through these darkening mode, white text can appear.

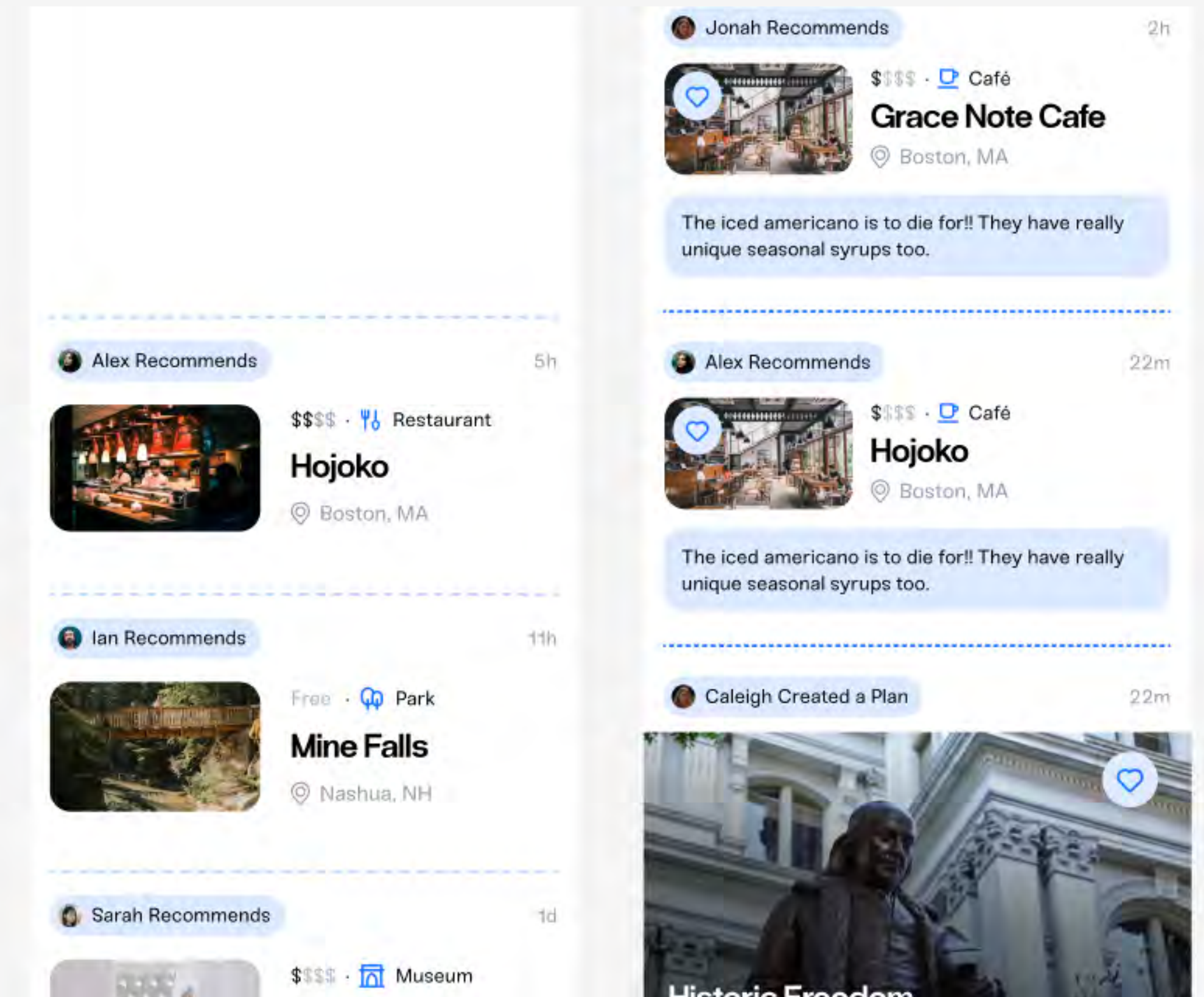


User Testing Results

While still having 4 main pages in the navigation, I explored the different options for how this could be displayed. Fixed to the bottom as a block or having it floating with some open space, or just rounded were all compared for contrast and relation to elements on the page.

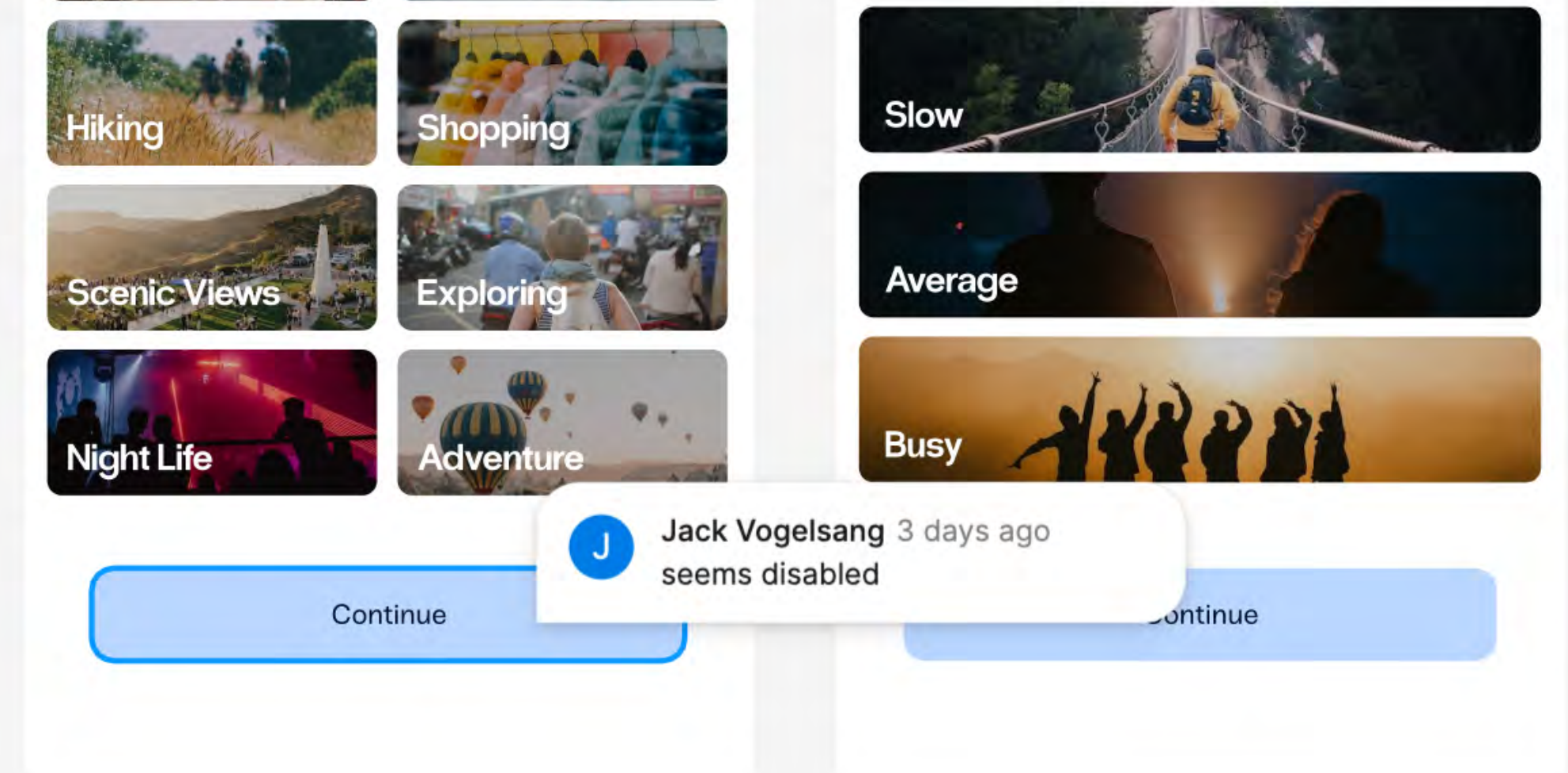


I explored different feed views to find the best way to represent the place, and call out the recommendation as much as possible. Using a blue color background for person recommendations and comments allowed this text to stand out and be linked to the person, even while separated.



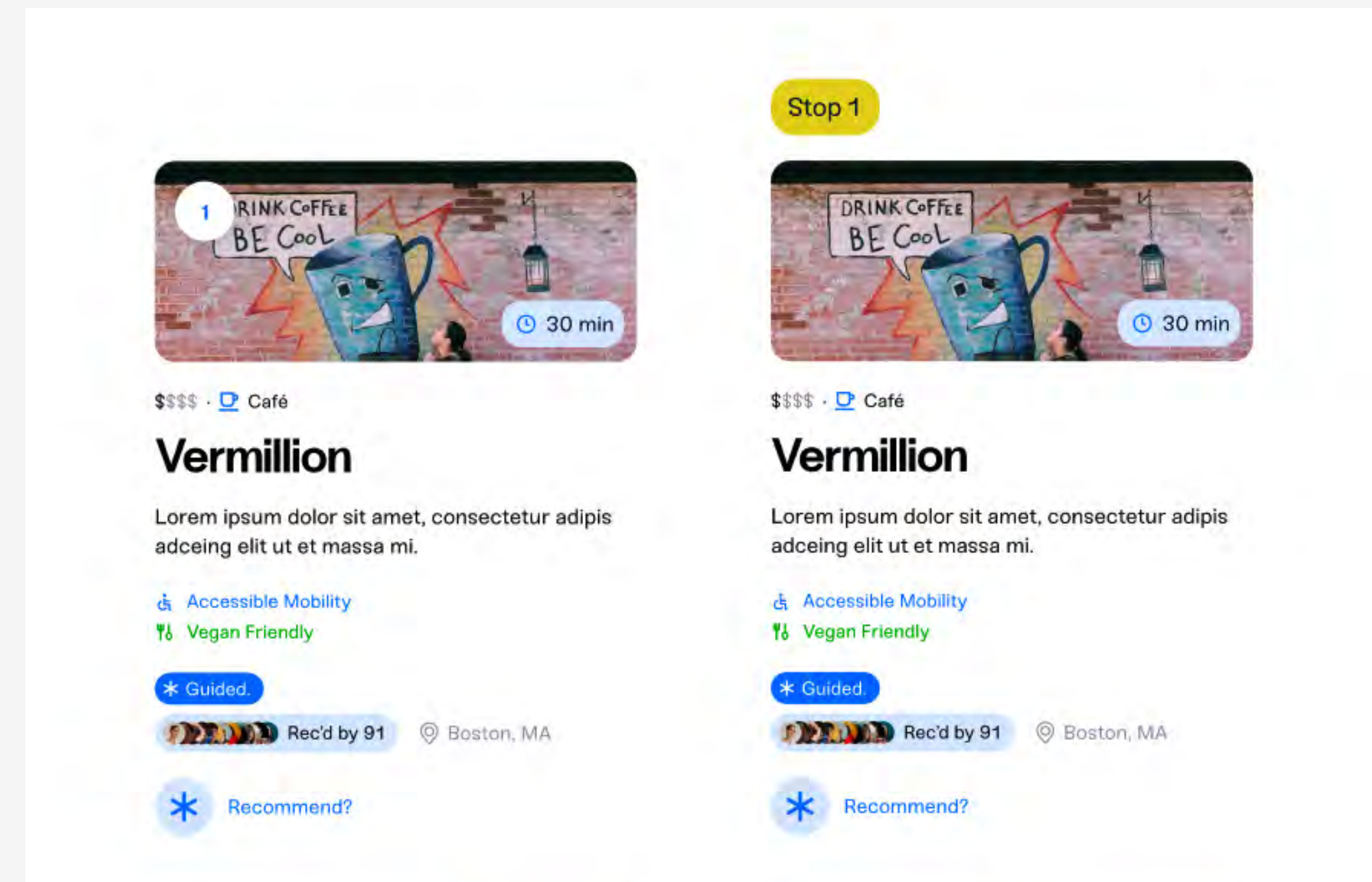
User Testing Results

Having students and friends interact with working prototypes of my app in process of being completed was very effective in gathering feedback. I found that showing classmates the still screens was effective in gathering feedback for the design and visuals, it was only with the interactive prototype was I able to gather feedback about confusing transitions between pages or buttons that were being perceived as unclickable.



Button color was noted as appearing unclickable or disabled.

It was noted that the stop number could get lost within the image.



Reflection

In the end, I am very pleased with how this project landed. I am proud of the work I have put into each of these screens to make the prototype realistic and flushed-out with variation. In the process, I learned about figma in breadth and depth and it's prototyping capabilities. I pushed myself as a designer to incorporate a strong branding system into a platform with so much variation and image heavy screens, but ended with a cohesive brand system that is able to promote a strong brand both on and off of the app.

Continuing with the idea.

Some ideas that could be incorporated into the app to continue to push it forward include a mockup of the app store listing page with convincing marketing graphics.

Additionally, I would like to design a few different 'Guided' integrations into other UI interfaces. For example, you could click to recommend the venue while paying your receipt at a restaurant, or on the digital Square receipt screens, after tipping.