Harris County Animal Shelter App

Case Study

Mary Catalanotto

Project overview

The product:

Harris County Animal Shelter is a publicly funded animal rescue organization located in Harris County Minnesota. The goal of the rescue is to connect members of the community with homeless pets and provides other resources such as emergency contact information.

Project duration:

December 2022 - February 2023

Google
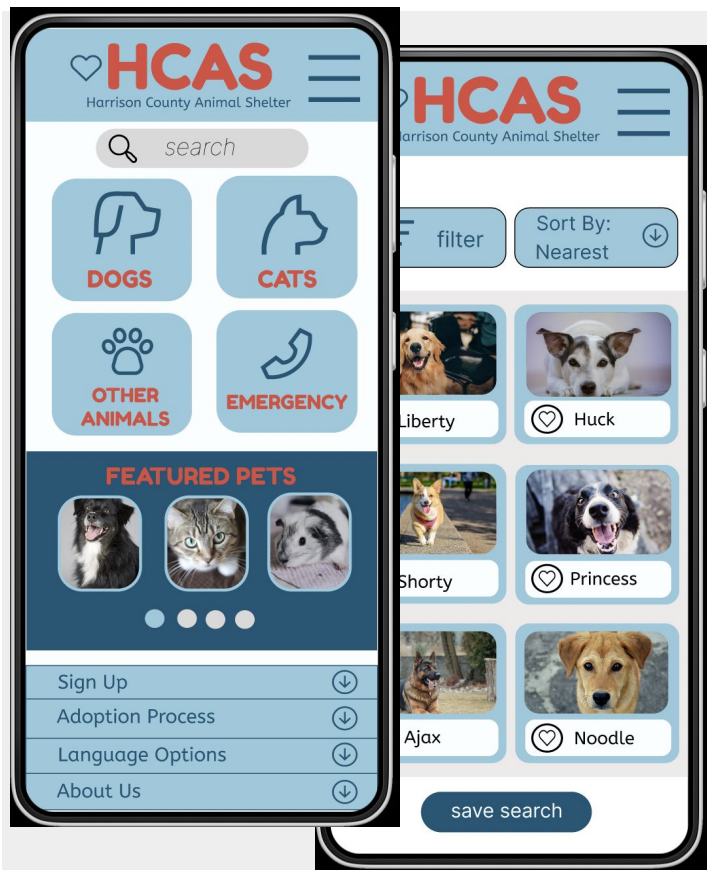
Project overview

The problem:

Community members do not have the time to visit the shelter to view all available pets.

Residents need to quickly contact the shelter for animal-related emergency services.

The goal:

Design an app that allows people to easily access services provided by Harris County Animal Shelter such as viewing available pets and contact information.

Google

Project overview

My role:

UX designer designing an app for Harris County Animal Shelter from conception to delivery.

Responsibilities:

Conducting interviews, paper and digital wireframing, low and high-fidelity prototyping, conducting usability studies, accounting for accessibility, and iterating on designs.

Google

Understanding the user

- User research
- Personas
- Problem statements
- User journey maps

Google

User research: summary

I conducted interview and created empathy maps to understand the users I'm designing for and their needs. A primary user group identified through research was working adults who did not have time to visit the shelter to view animals.

This user group confirmed initial assumptions about residents of Harris County, but research also revealed that time was not the only factor limiting people from adopting pets. Other user problems included difficulty obtaining contact information and inability to physically drive to the shelter to view animals.

User research: pain points

1

Pain point

Community members are too busy to drive to the shelter and view pets.

2

Pain point

Shelter app lacks assistive technology

3

Pain point

Information is not organized in a way that is easily accessible

Google

Persona: **Theresa**

Problem statement:

Theresa is a widower who would like to adopt a dog for companionship but cannot visit the shelter to find the perfect pet.

"I am lonely and would like a companion animal to keep me company."

Theresa LePortier

Age: 65
Education: Bachelor degree
Hometown: Jackson, MN
Family: Widowed
Occupation: Cafeteria worker

Goals
- To be able to find a companion animal that fits my lifestyle.
- To easily contact the right person to speak with about adopting an animal.

Frustrations
- "It is difficult for me to drive to the shelter because I have to work."
- "I don't understand the process for adopting a pet."

Theresa is a widower whose youngest grandchild just moved out, leaving her alone in her home. She would like to adopt a dog from the local shelter, but due to working all week she is unable to visit. She would like to view what pets are available in her own time and be able to favorite pets she is considering adopting.
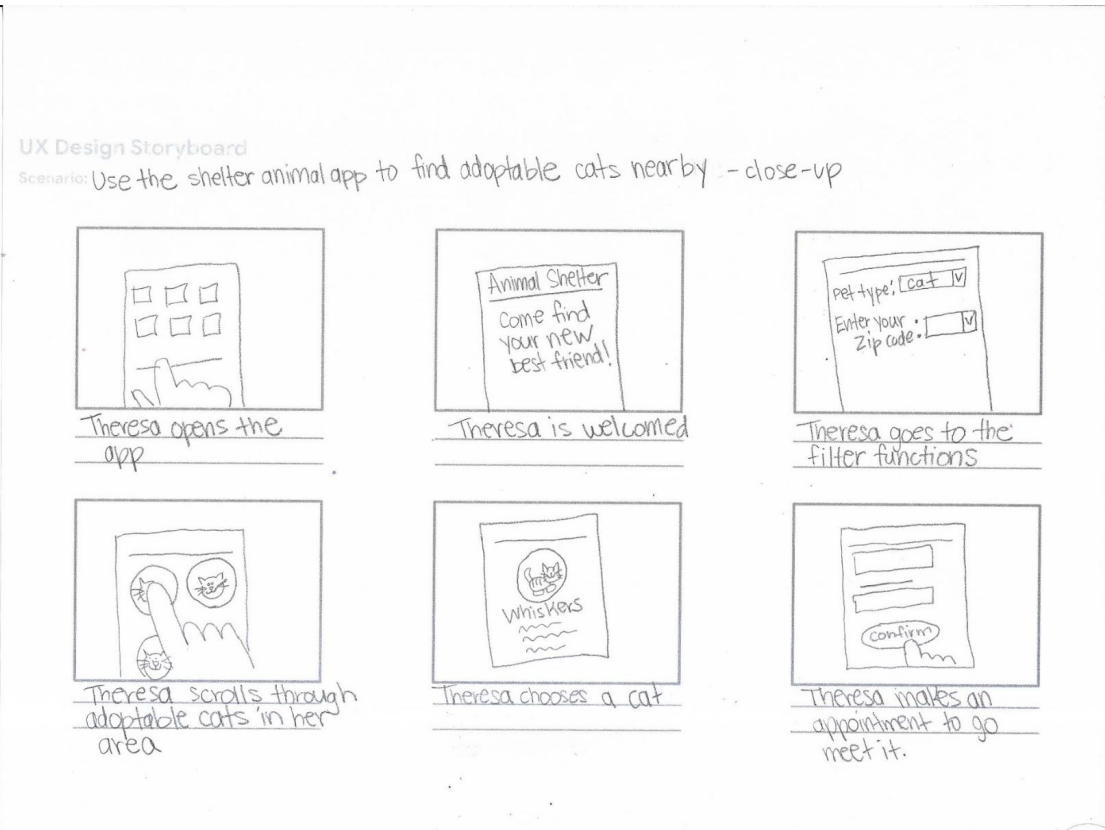
Google

User journey map

Mapping Theresa's user journey revealed how helpful it would be for users to have access to a dedicated shelter app.

Persona: Theresa	Goal: Find and adopt a companion animal				
ACTION	**Find list of adoptable pets**	**Read descriptions about each pet**	**Narrow selection of suitable pets**	**Arrange to meet the pet in person**	**Adopt the pet**
TASK LIST	Tasks A. Use a pet finder app B. Search for available pets near me C. Find out if I meet qualifications to adopt a pet	Tasks A. Use pet finder app to read descriptions about each pet B. Find out if shelters offer a trial period before permanent adoption	Tasks A. Pick which type of pet is best suited for my lifestyle B. Use filters to narrow pet type to individual pet	Tasks A. Call the shelter representative to ask about meeting a potential pet B. Drive to the shelter	Tasks A. Ask the shelter representative about the adoption process B. Fill out the paperwork and pay any fees. C. Bring home the pet.
EMOTIONS	• Confused by large amounts of pet results • Frustrated by lack of filter options	• Frustrated that font is too small • Confused as to whether there is a trial adoption period	• Happy	• Nervous about meeting with shelter representative • Excited • Hopeful	• Excited • Happy
IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES	• Add filters for location, age, type of pet, special needs	• Offer enlarged font size • Add an FAQ section to provide info. On adoption	• Provide pet matching services such as a quiz	• Add appointment scheduler to arrange to meet with pet • Add About Us section to introduce shelter workers	• Add FAQ section on adoption process • Provide forms online to be filled before going to shelter

Google

Starting the design

- Paper wireframes
- Digital wireframes
- Low-fidelity prototype
- Usability studies

Google

Paper wireframes

A close-up paper wireframe was drafted to show the user flow of a potential adopter. For the home screen, I created clear navigational cues to help users from all backgrounds easily access the information they want.

UX Design Storyboard
Scenario: Use the shelter animal app to find adoptable cats nearby – close-up

Theresa opens the app

Theresa is welcomed

Theresa goes to the filter functions

Theresa scrolls through adoptable cats in her area

Theresa chooses a cat

Theresa makes an appointment to go meet it.

Google

Digital wireframes

As the initial design phase continued, I made sure to base screen designs on feedback and findings from the user research.

Buttons clearly indicate the type of pet a user is looking for or to call for emergencies.

Additional menu options for other services.

Google

Digital wireframes

Accessibility options such as additional language choices was a Key user need.
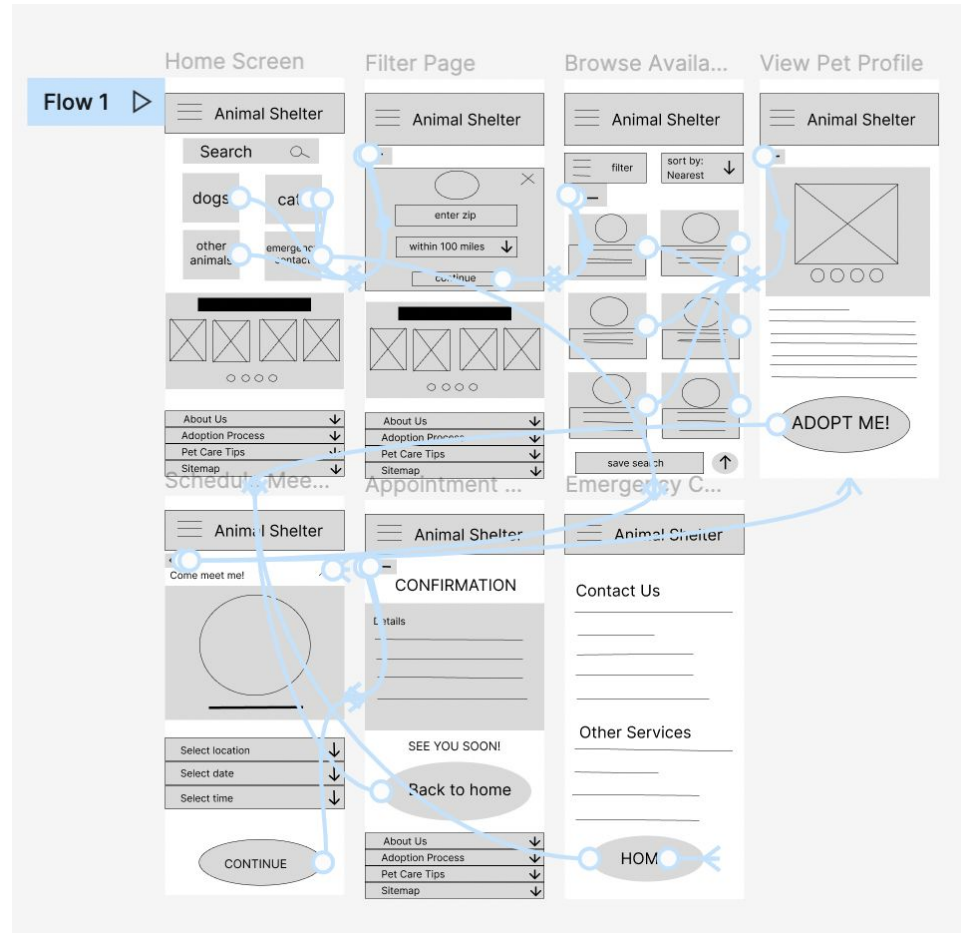
Additional language options for diverse user groups

Google
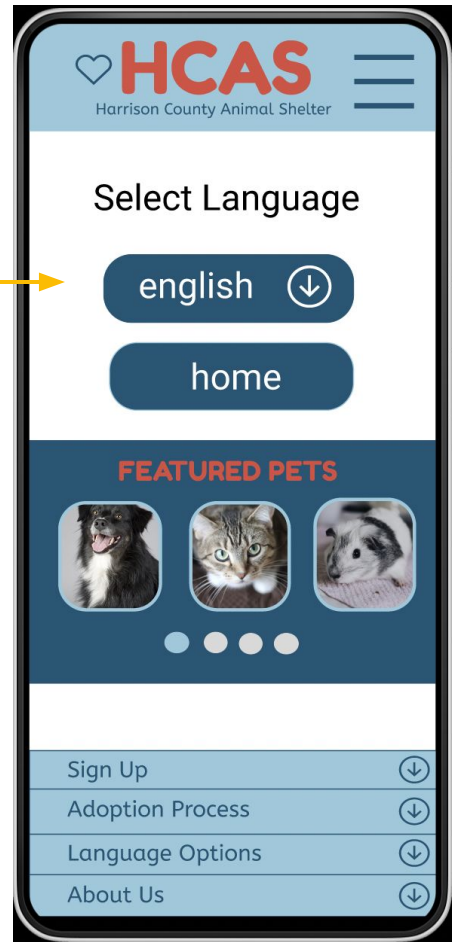
Low-fidelity prototype

The low fidelity prototype connected the primary user flow of making an appointment to meet a potential pet, so the prototype could be used in a usability test with users.

View the app

Low fidelity prototype

Usability study: findings

I conducted two rounds of usability studies. Findings from the first study helped guide the designs from wireframes to mockups. The second study used a high-fidelity prototype and revealed what aspects of the mockups needed refining.

Round 1 findings

1. Users wanted to view animals available for adoption

2. Users wanted more language options

3. Users wanted easy access to emergency contact information

Round 2 findings

1. Icons were too small or hard to find

2. Only English was available

Google

Refining the design

- Mockups
- High-fidelity prototype
- Accessibility

Mockups

Early designs allowed for
some customization, but
After the usability studies, I
added additional options
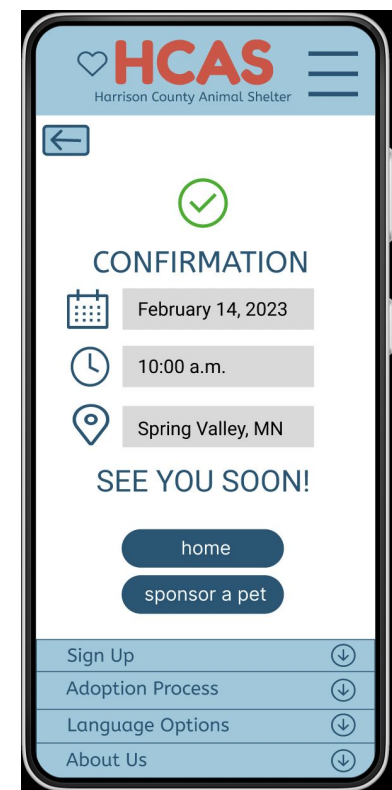for language choices and
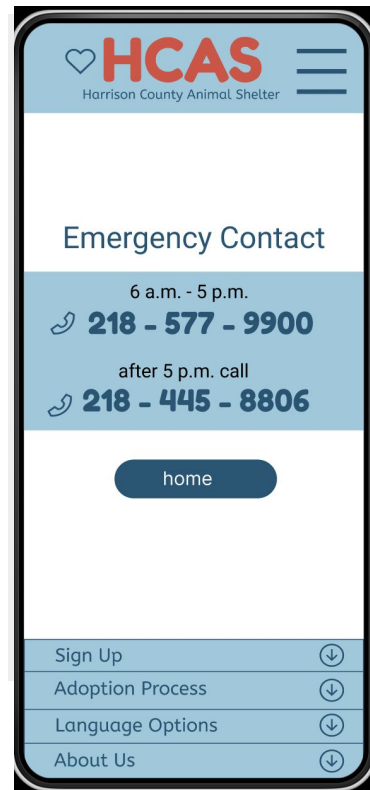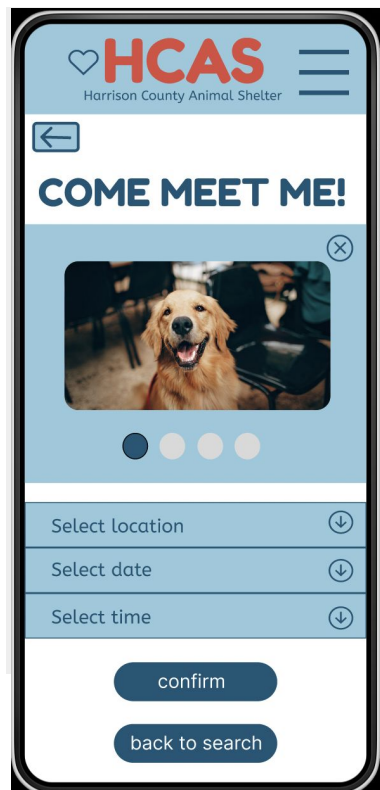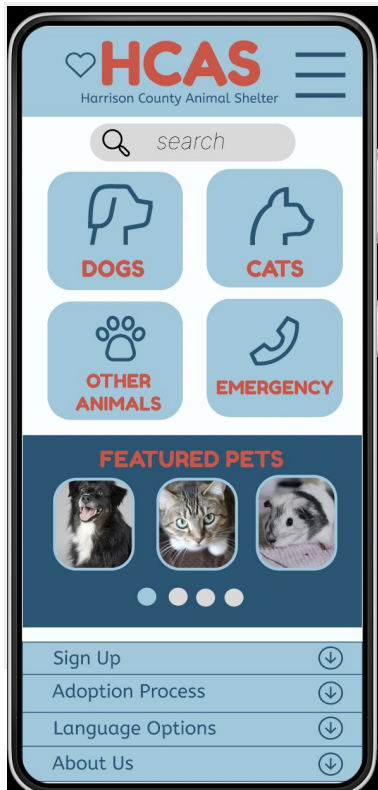sign up so users can save
their searches.

Before usability study
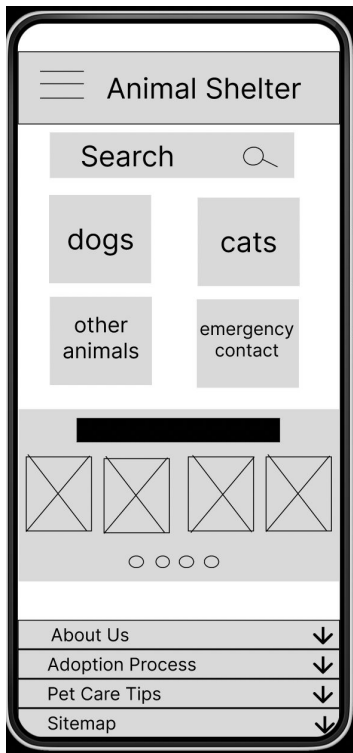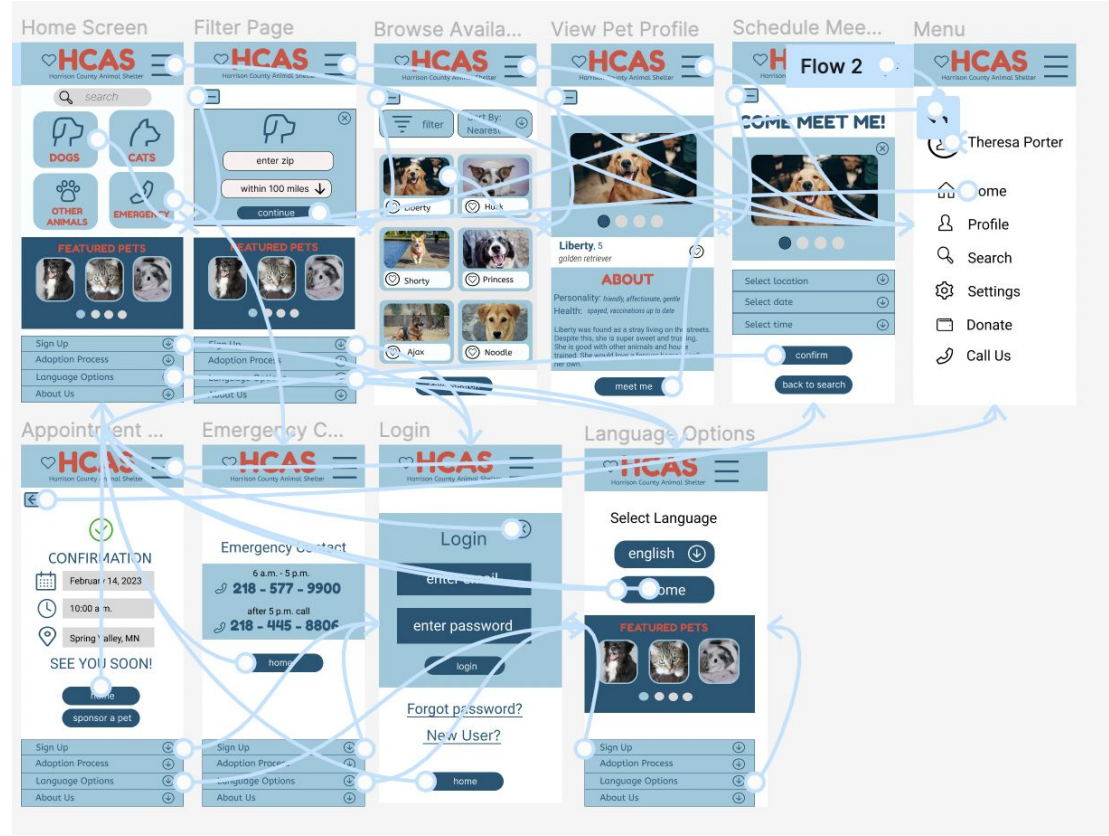
After usability study

Google
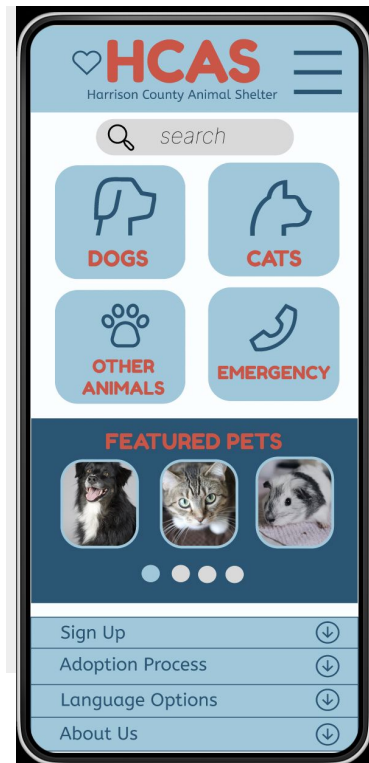
Mockups

High-fidelity prototype

The final high-fidelity
Prototype presented
Cleaner user flows for
Making an appointment
to meet a pet. It also met
user needs for
emergency contact
information.

View the high-fidelity prototype here.

Accessibility considerations

1

Provided access to users who are vision impaired through adding alt text to images for screen readers.

2

Used icons to help make navigation easier.

3

Used detailed high contrast colors to help all users better understand the designs.

Google

Responsive Design

- Responsive design

Google

Responsive designs

The designs for screen size variations included mobile, tablet, and desktop. I optimized the designs to fit specific user needs of each device and screen size.

Mobile

Tablet
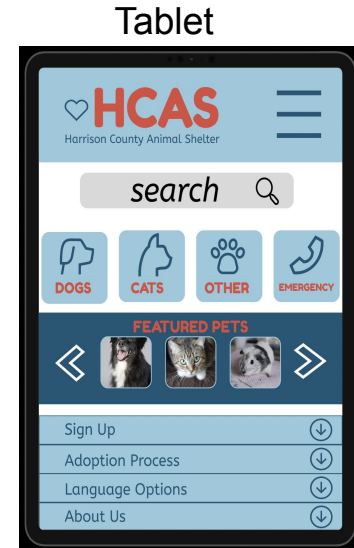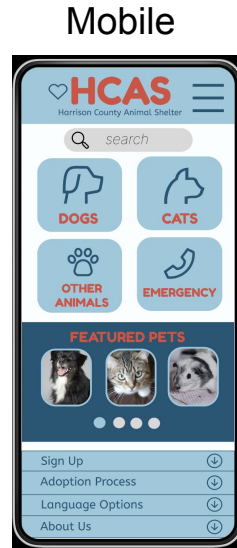
Desktop

Going forward

- Takeaways
- Next steps

Google

Takeaways

Impact:

The app makes users feel like Harris County Animal Shelter really tries to provide access to community members.

What I learned:

While designing the shelter app, I learned that the first ideas for the app are only the beginning of the process. Usability studies and peer feedback influenced each iteration of the app's designs.

Next steps

1

Conduct another round of usability studies to validate whether the pain points users experienced have been effectively addressed.

2

Conduct more user research to determine any new areas of need.

Google

Let's connect!

Thank you for your time! If you would like to see more or get in touch, my contact information is provide below.

Email: marycatalanotto777@gmail.com