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Individual Assignment 4

Project Topic: Our project focuses on the challenges of moving to a new place and having limited resources to meet people and become familiar with an area. We want to provide our user group access to information about their new home and resources to find roommates, friends, restaurants and activities to allow them to settle into their new home as quickly as possible.

I.   **Design Description and Rationale**

A. ***Task 1: Select desired subsections to explore based on user's needs*** - For our homepage, we wanted to keep it very simple and easy to navigate so we included 4 buttons to navigate to each subsection as well as a button to access the user's profile. Some of the websites and applications we explored were very overwhelming and difficult to use since their pages were cluttered so we avoided that by dividing our application up into subsections and only including features that were applicable to the given subsection once redirecting the user to the chosen subsection via the buttons on the homepage.

B. ***Task 2: Apply filters to narrow roommate search*** - Once the user has selected the 'Roommate' button from the homepage, they are able to apply filters to inform their roommate suggestion list in addition to the information they would provide when setting up their profile. The filters would be implemented as checkboxes,

sliders, etc. to avoid any wrong inputs. This way the user can only manipulate data that is definitely accessible which minimizes user error.

C. ***Task 3: View full profile of potential roommate to learn more about them*** - When viewing the profile, the user will be able to see additional information that wasn't available in the blurb along with the profile picture of the potential roommate. There is also a 'Message' button that will redirect the user to a new screen which is explained in greater detail in the next task. Similar to our homepage, this screen is very simple and avoids cluttering. It provides important information about the potential roommate while still giving the user the chance to message them and find out more through a natural conversation.

D. ***Task 4: Message potential roommate to connect further*** - Lastly, the user can message the potential roommate to learn more about them and determine whether they are a good match. Good roommate relationships aren't solely based on qualities such as cleanliness and pet preferences so we wanted to allow for the user to make their own opinions on who would be a good pair for them with our suggestions as merely a guide.

II.   Prototyping Decisions

In terms of the filtering dimension of prototyping decisions, I choose to include color options and incorporate appearance into my design as we are still exploring the appearance and debating design choices for our application. When considering our content, I chose to use fictional people as our potential roommates but incorporated actual qualities into their profiles such as cleanliness and pet preferences. Since it was a paper prototype, I used simple drawings instead of people's photos to keep the profiles simple.

When designing this prototype, I determined that the qualities were more important to focus on and make accurate rather than the actual people. I was able to use fictional people while still illustrating the point of the application accurately since the personality traits and habits is truly what informs the application and progresses the flow. When including specific features and functionalities, it was important to me to highlight the filtering capabilities. Users will understand how to operate the buttons and other common features from prior experience with mobile applications so I wanted to spend time designing the filters to illustrate how each would work and gain user feedback on those specific components. I believe the filters are the most important features since it drives the progression of the application as in terms of informing the roommate suggestion list. As a group we decided to divide our tasks up between the 4 of us to allow for each of us to add greater detail and interactivity to each prototype which illustrates a single task. My prototype offers a good amount of interactivity and detail which allows me to receive accurate user feedback.

Equally important, I also thought about the implementation dimension when designing my prototype including choices regarding materials and resolution. In terms of materials, I used paper and sticky notes to create a simple and efficient prototype. The sticky notes allow for different options to be placed in the frames and create a customizable prototype. The resolution of this prototype is hybrid as it is not extremely detailed in every aspect but provides details where it seems important in order to give anyone interacting with it plenty of detail and information to gain an understanding of the overall purpose.

III.   Feedback Session

The participant who gave me feedback on my design is a 21 year old college female who is attending graduate school after college. She is a member of our user group and offers a unique perspective as to how she would interact with the application since she is continuing her education rather than working after receiving her undergraduate degree. During the session, I started by explaining to her the purpose of the application so she understood each component's functionality and how they worked together to achieve the overall goal. Once she understood what the prototype was intended for, I let her navigate through it and watched to see if she got stuck or if anything was unclear. She interacted with the prototype perfectly and expressed that it was simple to use and allowed her to accomplish the goal of finding a potential roommate to connect with further. She changed the input several times just to try different options and was successful with all inputs. I was glad that the prototype was self-explanatory, easy to use anad allowed for different input combinations to explore the reality of what the application would be able to do.

From our session, I gained insight about two things that seem to be encompassed in an overarching theme. The first thing she brought to my attention was in regards to what qualities are truly important to our user group when they are looking for a good roommate. Although she agreed that cleanliness and pet preferences were important qualities to consider, she mentioned others that I hadn't considered. Since she is attending graduate school, she suggested including a way to filter based on 'Occupation'. This could include 'Employed', 'Unemployed' or 'Student' as she would be. This offers information in two aspects. On one hand, the user could filter based on people with

similar lifestyles as themselves. I would imagine it is much easier to live with people who are on a similar schedule, either a strict 9-5 everyday or a more flexible schedule as we have experience in college. On the other hand, this also offers insight into their financial situation. If someone indicates that they are unemployed, it may raise concern as to how they will afford rent, utilities and other necessities as a roommate. She also mentioned knowing someone's college, hometown, etc. which could offer another point of similarity for the user to connect with a potential roommate on. Both these fall into the category of including enough and useful information to gadge compatibility with someone over the internet. We want our application to offer quality service and implementing these ideas into features will definitely push us in the right direction to accomplishing that goal.

In terms of her responses to my prototype, she really enjoyed the amount of information that I had available on the user profile and how she could view a select amount of it on the preview and learn more if the person seemed to be a potential match. She also thought the messaging feature within the application was a good idea since it provides some additional privacy and avoids giving anyone your actual phone number. Some things the participant mentioned that could be improved upon were the limited number of zip code options and filters. Since this is a paper prototype, I only included a handful of options to use as the zipcodes. However, I could have given 5 sets of the numbers 0-9 to allow the participant to create their own combinations of possible zip codes. This would have offered more interactivity and accuracy for the participant to experience the application in a more realistic sense. For the filters, the participant felt that there could have been additional filter options to accommodate a large range of people and their potential needs. These were both great suggestions that I think our users would

appreciate and will definitely be considered for implementation in future designs and prototypes.

Based on the participant's suggestions and the insights gained through the feedback session, I want to make several changes / additions to the design. First, I want to include a filtering option in regards to occupation. The filter would be 3 checkboxes with 'Employed', 'Unemployed' and 'Student' as the options. This would provide information about someone's schedule / lifestyle and their financial situation. I also want to add the potential roommates' hometown and alma mater into their longer bios to accommodate users who may want to know if they have other things in common with the suggested people in addition to personality traits and habits. Furthermore, I want to consider if people don't have a preference on the gender of their roommate and would live with either a boy or a girl. I would incorporate another checkbox option with the label 'No Preference' to facilitate this option. Finally, I want to include a 'Back' button to be able to navigate from the full profile back to the suggestion list if the user doesn't want to message the potential match. This allows the user to view profiles without committing to messaging them if after further investigation the individual doesn't seem like the best match. All of these additions allow the application to be more functional and applicable to a larger group of people.