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Final Design Report Materials

Project SeaCoyotee

Background

Currently, urban coyotes have become one of the most commonly spotted carnivore wildlife species in Seattle's neighborhoods (Carnivore Spotter, 2024). While the U.S. coyote population is between 2.9 and 4.7 million, Seattle has a stable population of around 50 coyotes (Woody, 2024). Urban coyotes, unlike rural coyotes, have adapted to urban cities and their diet can consist of small mammals and vegetation to human food and trash (SeattleCoyoteStudy, 2016).

The urban coyote's habitat overlaps with many human ones - such as parks, roads, and urban neighborhoods - so inevitably there are many instances of coyote-human conflict (see System Diagram). The most often reported cases are of coyotes attacking pets and, very rarely, children. Recently, a Seattle woman was injured while trying to protect her dog from a coyote, while a contributor on West Seattle Blog reported multiple coyote sightings along with warnings to keep outdoor cats inside (*KIRO 7 News Seattle*, n.d.; West Seattle Coyotes, 2024). Despite the negative media coverage, urban coyotes play an integral role in urban ecosystems. Coyotes help keep rodent, rabbit, and feral cat populations in control and help maintain the animal biodiversity of our cities (Project Coyote, n.d.).

The growing overlap between urban spaces and coyotes' habitats highlights the need for coexistence between coyotes and humans. Public education addressing the myths surrounding coyotes and coyote management strategies are key to reducing unnecessary fears and conflicts (*Urban Coyote Research Project*, 2019). Coyotes who are fed either directly or indirectly by people tend to become more aggressive when they lose their natural fear of humans. By securing food sources like trash and pet food, and learning how to handle encounters safely, communities can significantly reduce negative interactions. Understanding the situation is crucial for all stakeholders involved - from local residents and pet owners to wildlife research and conservation centers - so that appropriate strategies can be developed to coexist with these intelligent and highly adaptable animals.

Design Space

Our design focuses on facilitating human-coyote coexistence in shared urban spaces by addressing the interactions between stakeholders and meeting their needs. We aim to correct misconceptions and encourage proactive engagement among urban residents, particularly those living in neighborhoods where coyotes are commonly spotted. Special attention is given to pet owners and parents, who are often more concerned about the potential for coyote attacks.

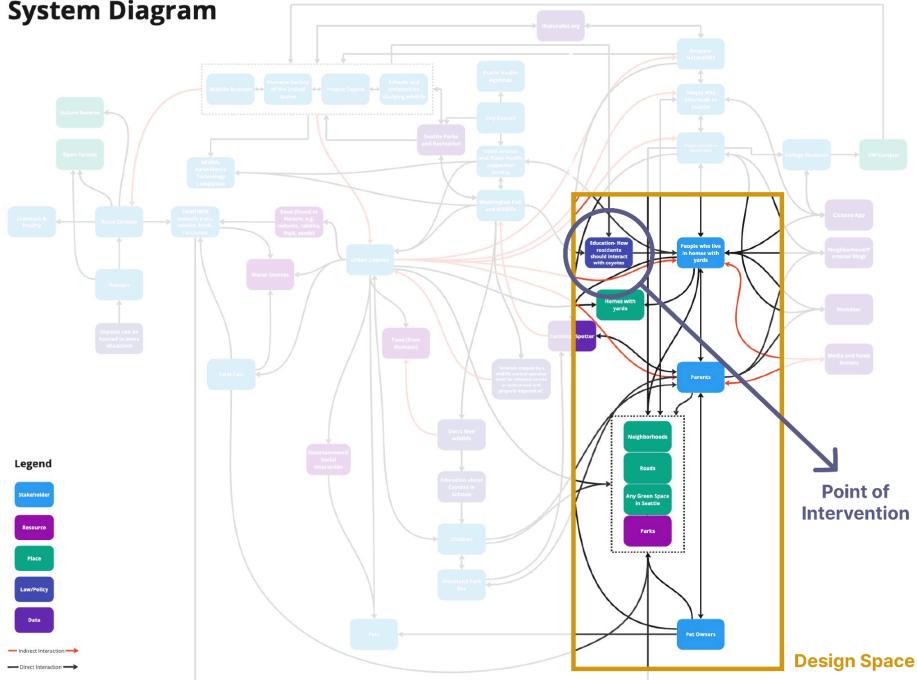
Point of Intervention

Our intervention focuses on providing educational content for Seattle residents in neighborhoods where coyotes are commonly spotted. We aim to offer verified and practical information from authoritative

sources (e.g., Woodland Park Zoo) as well as insights from neighbors with similar experiences. Additionally, we provide an opportunity for residents to ask questions directly to coyote experts.

We are targeting this issue based on our research and contextual inquiries, which revealed that many people are particularly concerned about the potential harm coyotes may pose to their pets or their yard. However, after speaking with coyote experts, we learned that coyotes typically do not pose a threat to humans or pets if they are approached correctly. This insight highlighted a key disconnect: while the fear of coyotes is widespread, much of it is based on misconceptions. Our goal is to address this primary conflict by providing accurate information and promoting strategies that help people coexist safely with coyotes.

System Diagram



Stakeholders

Personas

Based on our insights, we conducted user segmentation and identified three specific personas.

Persona 1: Seattle resident who lives in a high frequency coyote sighting area who is also a pet owner.
Pain points: 1) Wants to know how to keep their dogs and cats safe; 2) Doesn't want to change behavior (e.g. keep dogs unleashed and cats indoors); 3) Doesn't know if there's a need to change their own behavior.

Persona 2: Seattle resident who lives in a high frequency coyote sighting area who is also a parent of a young child. Pain points: 1) Keep children safe and avoid confronting coyotes. 2) Increase know-how about hazing coyotes. 3) Want to avoid harming coyotes.

Persona 3: Seattle resident who lives in a high frequency coyote sightings area who is interested in coyotes and wildlife. **Pain points:** 1) Learn more reliable knowledge about coyotes 2) Wants to collect trivia about coyotes 3) Wants to learn to help their community members to understand how to coexist with coyotes

For this prototype design, we are primarily targeting the first group. They are more likely to encounter situations involving coyotes and show an inherent willingness to learn, making them an ideal audience for our approach.

Pain points

To summarize, We identified four main pain points:

1. Lack of awareness about regional differences in coyote behavior: Many people do not realize that coyote behaviors and characteristics can vary significantly from one region to another, leading to misconceptions and generalized assumptions.
2. Overwhelming amount of information online: The abundance of online content makes it challenging for people to discern which sources are reliable. Since many individuals rely on word of mouth for information, it is crucial to provide verified and trustworthy sources to help them make informed decisions.
3. Low motivation to seek information: The sheer volume of content available online can be discouraging, leading to reduced motivation to learn more about coyotes. Simplifying access to clear, curated, and engaging information could encourage people to become more informed.
4. Challenging stereotypes about coyotes: There is a common stereotype that coyotes are a threat to pets, particularly that "they will eat cats." Reducing such misconceptions and emphasizing balanced, factual perspectives can help shift public perception and reduce fear-based assumptions.

Research/Design Goals

Based on insights from our contextual inquiries, desk research, and personas, we proposed several questions we aimed to address with our prototype:

1. How can the prototype be designed to attract and engage people to learn more about coyotes?
2. How can we ensure that users access reliable and trustworthy information sources about coyotes?
3. How can we help dispel common stereotypes regarding urban coyotes?

Contextual Inquiries

Summary and Insights from Interview

Based on the insights gathered from our previous seven interviews, we identified two distinct groups within the interviewees. The first group, referred to as "general public," generally have basic awareness of coyotes—some may have seen them, while others have not. The second group consists of experts or individuals with a deeper understanding of coyotes, who are familiar with how to interact with them and possess knowledge about their behaviors.

Our conversations revealed that the general public often exhibit indifference, a lack of concern, or even fear towards coyotes. This perception is largely shaped by word of mouth and community discussions, where information is passed along informally. Such sentiments are particularly common among pet owners, who express concern that coyotes might attack their cats or harm their pets. In contrast, experts tend to have a more positive and informed attitude toward coyotes, emphasizing that these animals are primarily food-seekers and even enjoy fruits as part of their diet. Coyote researchers, in particular, aim to educate the public to foster a more accurate and unbiased understanding of coyotes, dispelling common misconceptions.

Interview #1



Who	An older woman, pet owner, Seattle resident all of her life
Where	Greenlake Park
Key Takeaways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She thinks coyotes are cool but isn't sure how to respond if she encounters one. • She hears news of coyotes from word of mouth, those in her network.

Interview #2



Who	A young man, pet owner, Seattle resident
Where	Greenlake Park
Key Takeaways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He hasn't seen any coyotes before, but noticed the recent signs around Green Lake (about a week ago). • He is concerned that coyotes might harm pets. • He would use the internet to look up more information e.g. Google Search

Interview #3



Who	David, pet owner, Seattle resident for 17 years
Where	Greenlake Park
Key Takeaways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He doesn't think much about coyotes in his neighborhood, but he does note that while rabies is rare, it's better to be cautious. • He thinks coyotes are cool animals. • His wife shares stories and news with other neighbors in the neighborhood - word of mouth about many things including coyote sightings and he doesn't use social media.

Interview #4



Who	Deandria, Magnolia resident (Parent, pet owner, yard owner)
Where	Uptown Espresso, Magnolia
Key Takeaways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doesn't see coyotes as a threat to humans as she has a large dog • She is a little worried about her children as coyotes frequent the neighborhood. She has neighbors whose pet dog was killed by a coyote. • She demonstrated on her device how she looks up coyote related information. She agreed to not having Seattle specific updates or know-how.

Interview #5



Who	Rober Long and Katie Remine, Conservation Scientists, Woodland Zoo
Where	Woodland Zoo, Seattle
Key Takeaways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They emphasized that Seattle currently doesn't have a proactive Coyote Management plan They envision a formal Coyote Safety toolkit for the greater Seattle area, so that it is region specific. People lack general know-how about managing Coyote interactions, and preconceived notions about these wild animals causes confusion and unnecessary panic. Katie said that having too much empathy (e.g. giving food) for wildlife is counterproductive since people need to learn to haze or keep coyotes away.

Interview #6

Who	Sarah Killingsworth, Project Coyote
Where	Virtual
Key Takeaways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coyotes have moved and adapted to urban environments in search of food, prey and shelter and no longer depend on humans for survival. Project Coyote provides extensive, downloadable handouts and resources on Coyotes and coyote management activities like hazing, denning, etc. She pointed towards the Humane Society for an even more holistic, empathetic rubric of the same.

Interview #7

Who	Sam Kreling, Prugh Lab
Where	University of Washington
Key Takeaways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coyotes are flexible animals adept at using roadways and waterways but larger barriers like i5 restrict movement

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genetically identified 70 different individuals but the number fluctuates after mating season and coyote deaths • There is a public misconception about how ferocious Coyotes are, and they are hardly comparable to similar larger wild animals like wolves. • Coyote attacks are often misconstrued and sensationalized as people habituate these animals and do not actively try to keep them away.
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Problem Statement

Longtime Seattle residents see urban coyotes as neighbors who live with them in a shared space (Manzolillo et al., 2019); but despite this, Seattlites, including those who live in areas with a high frequency of sightings and are pet-owners, do not actively seek nor are informed of the best practices needed to co-exist with these animals.

Research has shown that while positive emotional connections towards coyotes are the first step towards cohabitation (Drake et al., 2020), human behavior and habits (Breck et al., 2019) and how neighborhoods are designed (Poessel et al., 2017) significantly influence whether coyotes become accustomed to humans and whether the likelihood of human-coyote conflict happens.

We argue that if Seattle residents were more fully educated on the importance of adopting individual and community-level coyote management strategies (Bonnell & Breck, 2017), they would gain not only a more accurate understanding of their animal neighbors but also be better equipped to coexist sustainably with urban coyotes. Problems Identified:

1. Lack of Sustainable Coexistence: Seattleites and coyotes currently do not sustainably coexist due to frequent negative and aggressive interactions, such as pet attacks or fear-based confrontations, fueled by misunderstandings and improper human behaviors.
2. Misinformation and Misconceptions: Many residents rely on informal communication or sensationalized media, leading to widespread stereotypes, such as coyotes being inherently aggressive or dangerous that escalate fear and conflicts.
3. Insufficient Education: A lack of tailored, accessible, and region-specific educational resources leaves residents unprepared to interact with coyotes in a way that mitigates conflict. Additionally, low motivation to learn unless directly impacted compounds the issue.

Design Intervention

Group discussion sessions led to brainstorming some directions of interventions:

1. Develop an All-in-One Digital Platform: Create a comprehensive platform that offers a variety of features to help users understand coyotes and stay informed about coyote-related issues in their community. For instance, include an FAQ section with authoritative answers to the most common questions, a quiz to assess users' knowledge about coyotes, and the ability to integrate with platforms like Nextdoor, enabling users to view relevant community posts.
2. Implement an LLM-Based Chatbot: Design a chatbot powered by a large language model to answer coyote-related questions in real time, providing accurate and instant assistance to the general public.

3. Introduce a Coyote Alert Add-On for Apple Watch: Develop an Apple Watch add-on that can issue alerts when encountering a coyote. This feature would allow users to send warnings to others in the community, enhancing overall safety and awareness.

Considering feasibility and users' behavior patterns when seeking coyote-related information, we will focus on implementing the first solution, we will primarily concentrate on implementing the first solution. The design intervention focuses on addressing identified challenges through a multi-pronged approach that integrates both digital and physical elements. By targeting pet owners and parents (the primary personas), the intervention aims to reduce fear and increase preparedness for coyote encounters.

Prototype

Final Version Description

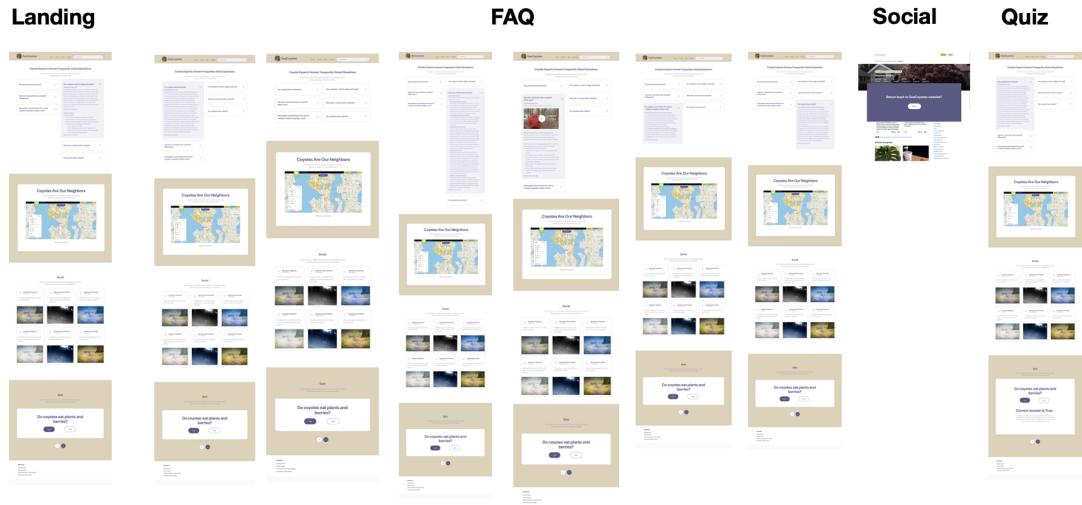
The intervention is an interactive digital platform which acts as an information hub for our primary persona regarding coyote information. More detailed description of our website's features can be found in the Prototype Document attached separately.

Digital Platform (Figma Prototype):

- **FAQ Section:** A curated list of frequently asked questions (FAQ), sourced from expert organizations like Project Coyote, Woodland Park Zoo, and the Humane Society of the United States.
- **Coyote Location Datar:** Shows the real-time interface of citizen reported coyote sightings from <https://carnivorespotter.org/urban-carnivore-spotter/>.
- **Social/Community Updates:** Aggregated posts from platforms like Nextdoor to display neighborhood-driven coyote sighting and discussion forums.
- **Interactive Quiz:** Gamified learning with questions that test and reinforce knowledge about urban coyotes.

Figma Prototype Link: [Click Here](#)

Prototype v3: High Fidelity Page Mock-ups



Prototype Iterations

We had three prototype iterations (version 1, 1.1, and 2) and our final version was version 3. Each iteration was revised based on user feedback through either usability testing (two rounds) or survey replies. More specific information on what evaluation feedback we received as well as the changes we made can be found in the Prototype Document attached separately.

Changes Made Between Prototype Versions

Prototype v1 - v1.1: After our first usability test, we tabled the non-digital flyer card idea due to time and other feasibility restraints. To the FAQ section, we added links to videos and the question “how to correctly haze coyotes” based on the received feedback.

Prototype v1.1 - v2: After our survey, we not only validated some design decisions such as how people receive their coyote information but also added to the FAQ section questions such as “do people overestimate the risk of coyotes towards outdoor cats” and “do coyotes have rabies?”

Prototype v2 - v3: And finally after usability test 2, our usability tests revealed users caring about knowing where coyotes currently are thus the Carnivore Spotter section was added. In addition, the Contact an Expert section was removed due to lack of importance to our users and the feature’s resource-heavy requirements to sustain.

Design Process Video Youtube Link: <https://youtu.be/bDe2xGUe0Kc>

Evaluation/Testing

Overview

Evaluation #	Method	Number of Users	Prototype Iteration # Used in Test	Takeaways for Next Iteration

Evaluation 1	Usability Test 1	2	Prototype 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAQ and Quiz addressed user needs the best More information about how to take care of your dogs and cats are needed Contact an Expert section requires too many resources to sustain
Evaluation 2	Survey	20	Prototype 1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Users care about coyote information from verified sources Users want to see others getting accurate coyote information Access points such as community platforms are viable ways to reach our targeted users
Evaluation 3	Usability Test 2	4	Prototype 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact an Expert section is not high priority for users Knowing location of coyotes and most updated information of coyotes in Seattle and their neighborhood is needed FAQ needs to be more differentiated

Table 1. Summary of Evaluation Methods and Prototype Takeaways

User Selection

<u>Inclusion Criteria</u>	<u>Exclusion Criteria</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A resident of Seattle Lives in a high frequency coyote sighting neighborhood Has heard of coyotes and/or has had encounters with coyotes Is either a parent, pet-owner, and/or lives in a house with a yard in areas with previous coyote sightings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is not a resident of Seattle Does not live in a neighborhood with high frequency of coyote sightings

Test Objectives

<u>Evaluation #1</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To determine if our prototype v1, created from our contextual inquiries and desk research, addresses the needs of our primary persona.
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<u>Evaluation #2</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verifying content on our prototype is important to our stakeholders • Test whether the 'FAQ' section can help general people understand more about coyotes and increase their confidence in coexisting with coyotes
<u>Evaluation #3</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verifying content on our prototype is important to our stakeholders • Test whether the 'FAQ' section can help general people understand more about coyotes and increase their confidence in coexisting with coyotes

Method/Process

Evaluation #1

Usability test was conducted with a user who fulfilled the inclusion criteria. The user was given the following hypothetical scenario and asked the subsequent questions:

- Scenario: "Assuming you just had an encounter with a coyote or heard of one in your neighborhood from another source and you wanted to look up more information."
- Questions:
 - i. How would you do so? Can you show me?
 - ii. Would our prototype answer your questions or anything other information you would like to know?
 - iii. How did our prototype address those questions?

Evaluation #2

Using a survey created using Survey Monkey, we collected survey data from 20 of the great Seattle area's residents, and 17 of them have either seen or heard about coyote sightings in their neighborhood.

- Survey link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/59BCGJP>
- Questions:
 - Basic information:
 - i. Which neighborhood are you living in?
 - ii. Have you ever encountered a coyote in your neighborhood, or heard about a coyote sighting from your neighbors?
 - Current Attitudes and Information Sources About Coyotes
 - i. How important is the issue of coexisting with coyotes in your neighborhood? (Please rate from 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important and 1 being the least important)
 - ii. What would you do with your pets if heard about or encountered coyotes in your neighborhood?
 - iii. What are your main sources of information about coyotes?
 - iv. What characteristics would you like to take into consideration when choosing information to learn more about urban coyotes?
 - Your Thoughts on the 'FAQ' Section Prototype: We've created a sample Frequently Asked Questions section with information on urban coyotes, sourced from trusted websites like Woodland Park Zoo, Project Coyote, and the Humane Society of the United States. In this section, you'll find answers to common questions, including both text and video responses, along with links to additional resources. If you're interested, feel free to explore the prototype for more details.
 - i. How well does the 'FAQ' section answer your questions about coyotes? Please rate from 1 to 5, with 5 being 'Very Good'.

- ii. How confident are you in your ability to coexist with urban coyotes in your neighborhood? Please rate from 1 to 5, with 5 meaning 'Very Confident'.
- iii. What additional questions would you like to see answered in the 'FAQ' section?

Evaluation #3:

Usability testing was conducted with a user who met the inclusion criteria. We focused on testing the website's usability, particularly the FAQ section, which, according to previous interviews, was identified as an area of greater concern for users. The user was given the following hypothetical scenario and asked the subsequent questions:

- Scenario: "Assuming you just had an encounter with a coyote or heard of one in your neighborhood from another source and you wanted to look up more information."
- Questions:
 - i. How would you do so? Can you show me?
 - ii. Would our prototype answer your questions or anything other information you would like to know?
 - iii. How did our prototype address those questions?
 - iv. How well does the 'FAQ' section answer your questions about coyotes?
 - v. How is your experience with this website prototype? What are its pros and cons?

Results

Evaluation #1: Usability Test 1 Findings

Through interviews with two participants—one a pet owner and the other a staff member working on the "Work with Coyote" project—they both expressed interest in the quiz and FAQ sections. They believe these features could enhance user engagement and help the general public access more verified advice and clear up any confusion.

User #	User Details	Content & UI	Other
1	Robert (Woodland Park Zoo)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact an Expert section requires too many resources to • Add more hazing guidelines • Address misconceptions with videos/flyers • Increase website link prominence 	They prefer receiving some non-digital materials, such as quiz and flyers, which can be provided in the short term.
2	Annalise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAQ and Quiz addressed user needs the best • More information about how to take care of your dogs and cats are needed 	She recognized that even though her mom knows to keep her outdoor cat inside, she most likely won't change her behavior

Evaluation #2: Survey Findings

~73% of respondents believe that coexisting with coyotes in their neighborhood matters a lot, while ~61% of pet owners prefer to keep their pets indoors to avoid potential conflicts with coyotes.

When asked about the main sources of information regarding coyotes, more than half of respondents rely on social media platforms like Nextdoor, followed by information from neighbors and authoritative websites (e.g., Woodland Park Zoo). In terms of the characteristics of information they value, 42% prioritize verified resources, 26% prefer neighborhood-based information, with city-based information and the most recent updates following closely. These insights align with the design of our prototype, where we have created modules that meet these preferences. The 'FAQ' section features verified resources, the 'Social' module connects users to Nextdoor for neighborhood discussions, and the 'Ask Experts' section provides a platform for addressing unanswered questions.

In the 'FAQ' section prototype test, approximately 93% of respondents felt that the section effectively addressed their questions about coyotes, and 93% reported feeling confident about coexisting with coyotes in their neighborhood. The most common topics respondents wanted further answers on include: the dangers of coyote groups to humans, legal issues and human risk perception, and the risks coyotes pose to small dogs and cats in yards.

Evaluation #3: Usability Test 2 Findings

The main takeaways from our usability tests are:

- The interface looks beautiful.
- FAQ information is helpful and answers user needs.
- In the FAQ, the information needs to be organized so the answers are more differentiated (e.g. User 1 expected to see all dogs and cat information under the dogs and cat question).
- Users want to know where the coyotes are appearing (e.g. User 1 uses Nextdoor and Carnivorespotter for this reason).
- Contact an Expert section is not a priority for users
- It would be better to have live, real-time community reporting

User #	User Details	Content & UI	Other
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 20-30 years old ● Female ● Student & working professional ● Small dog owner ● Seattle resident of 10 years ● Animal lover 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● FAQ and Social is most helpful ● She would want more information info on how coyote interact with other wildlife (e.g. interested in deer question) ● She expected to see all dogs and cat information under the dogs and cat question in the FAQ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● She only lets her dog go unleashed in dog parks near her house and the reason is mostly raccoons not because of coyotes ● She checks Carnivorespotter and Nextdoor to know where coyotes are out of curiosity.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 25-30 years old ● Female ● Student & working professional ● Small cat owner ● Seattle resident of 2 years 	Pros: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The website interface looks clear, beautiful and simple Cons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Text readability: The contrast rate between Light purple and dark purple won't pass the 	She mentioned that her cat is an indoor cat, so she's not too worried. However, if the cat were outdoors, she would be concerned about the risk of coyote attacks when coyotes are present in the neighborhood.

		<p>readability test.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low accessibility: The layout change from the collapsed answer section will bring accessibility issues. 	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 25-30 years old Female Student & working professional Seattle resident of more than 1 year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The website interface looks beautiful. The 'FAQ' topics are comprehensive. Some of the links seem to be broken or not working. 	N/A
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 35-40 years old Male Business Owner in Seattle Resident for past 5 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAQ section is useful and appreciates that we added information from credible sources Wants to know the steps he needs to take for aggressive coyote interaction Prefers live, real-time community reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It could be expanded to include FAQs or relevant sections for other urban animals Prefers a voice assistant and a live chat feature for coyote related emergencies

Requirements, specifications, and limitations

Requirements:

- FAQ Section: A list of common questions, sourced from experts like Project Coyote and the Woodland Park Zoo, providing reliable coyote information.
- Coyote Location Data: Real-time data integration from Carnivorespotter showing coyote sightings in urban areas.
- Social/Community Updates: Aggregated posts from platforms like Nextdoor, allowing community-driven coyote sightings and discussions.

Specifications:

- User-Friendly Interface: Simple, clear layout for easy navigation across different devices.
- Real-Time Data: The coyote location feature will update in real-time from Carnivorespotter.
- Engaging Content: The quiz will offer instant feedback with explanations to improve learning.

Limitations:

- Time and User Base: Limited time and a small number of users in coyote-prone areas restrict testing and feature completion.
- Usability Testing: User interviews and surveys may not provide enough feedback, so WebFlow will be used to track user interactions for better insights.
- Targeted Needs: Further focus is needed on specific user groups, like pet owners, to refine the FAQ section and address detailed concerns.

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Appendix

Appendix A Survey Results



Attitudes towards the “FAQ’ Section Prototype