Project Kage - UI Design Guidelines & Planning Document

Date Created: July 1, 2025
Phase: PLAN MODE - Design System Development
Status: Awaiting Design Decisions

Project Context

Current Development Status

- ✅ **Phase 1A Complete**: Ultra-modular Flask application foundation
- ✅ **Phase 1B Complete**: Complete database models with relationships
- 🎯 **Current Goal**: Define UI design system before Phase 1C implementation
- 🗓️ **Target**: Mobile-responsive web application for personal local use (MVP)

Technical Foundation Established

- **Architecture**: Ultra-modular Flask with SQLite database
- **Features**: Habit tracking, task management, goal setting, journaling, calendar
- **Database**: Complete models with cross-reference tables and relationship mapping
- **Infrastructure**: All blueprints, services, templates structure ready

Research Completed

Comprehensive analysis of three habit tracking apps:

- **Hello Habit**: Customizable complexity with colorful, all-in-one platform
- **Reach It**: Purpose-driven design with goal-habit integration
- **HabitKit**: Minimalist mastery with GitHub-style grid visualization

Key Screenshots Analyzed:

1. Hello Habit "Tomorrow" view with weekly calendar and habit list
2. Hello Habit habit creation with colorful category tiles
3. HabitKit dashboard with grid visualization system
4. Reach It goal templates with task/habit combinations

Design Philosophy Questions Framework

Q1: OVERALL DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

Context: Choose foundational design approach that will guide all UI decisions.

Options Analyzed:

- **Hello Habit**: Highly customizable, colorful, comprehensive integration
- **Reach It**: Purpose-driven with goal integration, balanced complexity
- **HabitKit**: Minimalist mastery with focus on essential features

Current Recommendation: Hybrid approach - HabitKit's minimalist foundation with Hello Habit's colorful visual motivation elements.

Decision Needed: Which design philosophy resonates most with your vision for daily personal use?

Q2: COLOR PALETTE & VISUAL IDENTITY

Context: Color directly impacts motivation and daily engagement with habit tracking.

Observed Strategies:

- **Hello Habit**: Bright, customizable colors with dark mode support
- **Reach It**: Orange/warm accent with clean whites, consistent branding
- **HabitKit**: Dark theme primary with colored habit categories (red, orange, yellow)

Key Decisions Needed:

1. **Theme Preference**: Dark theme primarily (HabitKit style) vs Light with dark option (Hello Habit style)?
2. **Color Strategy**: Category-based colors (HabitKit) vs Single accent color (Reach It) vs Full customization (Hello Habit)?
3. **Personal Motivation**: Any specific colors that motivate you personally?
4. **Accessibility**: Should we plan for color-blind friendly palettes?

Q3: NAVIGATION STRUCTURE

Context: Navigation determines user flow and feature accessibility.

Current Plan: Dashboard | Tasks | Habits | Goals | Journal | Calendar (6 tabs)

Observed Patterns:

- **Hello Habit**: Goals | Today | Tasks | Statistics | Settings (5 tabs)
- **HabitKit**: Dashboard-focused with minimal navigation
- **Bottom tab standard**: All apps use bottom navigation for primary features

Key Decisions Needed:

1. **Tab Count**: Keep all 6 tabs or consolidate some features?

2. **Default Landing**: Dashboard overview vs Today focus vs Most-used feature?

3. **Quick Access**: Floating action button (+ button) for quick captures?

4. **Secondary Navigation**: How to handle settings, statistics, detailed views?

Q4: HABIT VISUALIZATION APPROACH

Context: This is the core differentiator between habit tracking apps.

Distinct Approaches Observed:

- **Hello Habit**: Linear list with checkboxes, streaks, and frequency indicators
- **Reach It**: Card-based with goal connections and progress context
- **HabitKit**: Grid visualization (GitHub contribution chart style) for pattern recognition

Key Decisions Needed:

1. **Primary View**: Do you find grid visualization appealing for consistency tracking?

2. **Progress Focus**: Emphasize streaks prominently vs focus on daily completion vs show overall patterns?

3. **Habit Display**: Show all habits daily vs only today's scheduled habits vs customizable view?

4. **Completion Method**: Simple tap vs swipe gestures vs detailed logging?

Q5: DASHBOARD COMPOSITION

Context: Dashboard is the daily entry point and must show most relevant information.

Hello Habit "Tomorrow" View Analysis:

- Weekly calendar strip with current day highlighted (excellent UX)
- Clear progress indicator (0/3 completed habits)
- Scheduled habits for specific day with frequency indicators
- Clean, scannable layout with good information hierarchy

Key Decisions Needed:

1. **Time Focus**: Today's focus vs Weekly overview vs Monthly patterns?

2. **Progress Display**: Progress rings/percentages vs simple counters vs visual grids?

3. **Information Density**: Quick overview vs detailed dashboard vs customizable widgets?

4. **Quick Actions**: Prominent quick capture vs habit completion focus vs balanced approach?

Q6: HABIT CREATION EXPERIENCE

Context: Habit creation must be simple yet comprehensive for long-term success.

Hello Habit Excellence Observed:

- Beautiful categorization with colorful tiles (Fitness, Health, Mind, Chores, Reduce)
- Predefined habits with intuitive color coding and icons
- "Try a suggestion" vs "Custom Habit" clear path options
- Comprehensive without overwhelming complexity

Key Decisions Needed:

1. **Predefined Options**: Create categorized habit templates vs simple custom creation?
2. **Visual Elements**: Icons for each habit type vs text-only vs user-customizable?
3. **Creation Flow**: Simple form vs guided wizard vs progressive disclosure?
4. **Frequency Setup**: Advanced scheduling vs simple daily/weekly vs flexible patterns?

Q7: VISUAL FEEDBACK & MOTIVATION

Context: Visual feedback drives habit formation more than data alone.

Motivation Strategies Observed:

- **HabitKit**: Immediate visual satisfaction from grid completion (aesthetic pleasure)
- **Hello Habit**: Color-coded progress with descriptive text and streak emphasis
- **Reach It**: Goal connection provides context and purpose for habit completion

Key Decisions Needed:

1. **Feedback Type**: What visual feedback motivates you most personally?
2. **Timing**: Immediate gratification (tap → visual change) vs accumulated progress (streaks)?
3. **Celebration**: Include completion animations vs simple state change vs milestone celebrations?
4. **Failure Handling**: How to visualize missed days without demotivation?

Q8: MOBILE-FIRST CONSIDERATIONS

Context: Optimizing for mobile use as primary interaction method.

Mobile UX Priorities:

- **Touch Targets**: Large, easy-to-tap buttons (minimum 44px)
- **Thumb-Friendly**: Important actions within thumb reach zones
- **One-Handed Use**: Key functions accessible without hand repositioning
- **Gesture Support**: Swipe actions for common tasks

Key Decisions Needed:

1. **Interaction Style**: Tap-based primary vs gesture controls vs hybrid approach?

2. **Touch Targets**: Large completion buttons vs compact information density?

3. **Thumb Optimization**: Design for one-handed use vs two-handed assumption?

4. **Responsive Strategy**: Mobile-first vs desktop-equivalent vs adaptive?

Q9: COMPONENT HIERARCHY

Context: Clear visual hierarchy improves usability and reduces cognitive load.

Component Importance Levels:

- **Primary Actions**: Habit completion, add new items (largest, most prominent)

- **Secondary Actions**: Edit, settings, filters (medium prominence)

- **Information Display**: Cards, lists, progress indicators (clear but secondary)

- **Navigation**: Tab bar, headers, back buttons (consistent, unobtrusive)

Key Decisions Needed:

1. **Primary Focus**: Should habit completion be the largest, most prominent action?

2. **Layout Style**: Card-based layouts vs list-based layouts vs mixed approach?

3. **Visual Hierarchy**: How important is obvious size differentiation for actions?

4. **Information Architecture**: Flat structure vs hierarchical vs contextual grouping?

Q10: DATA DENSITY & INFORMATION DISPLAY

Context: Balance between information richness and visual clarity.

Density Approaches Observed:

- **Hello Habit**: Medium density with clear spacing and readable text

- **HabitKit**: High density maximizing screen use with grid efficiency

- **Reach It**: Lower density with generous white space for focus

Key Decisions Needed:

1. **Information Amount**: More information on screen vs cleaner, simpler views?

2. **Detail Access**: Show detailed statistics prominently vs hide behind taps/navigation?

3. **White Space**: How much breathing room feels right for daily use?

4. **Scan-ability**: Optimize for quick scanning vs detailed reading?

Design System Components to Define

Once Philosophy Questions Are Answered:

1. Visual Component Library

- **Buttons**: Primary, secondary, tertiary styles with states

- **Cards**: Habit cards, goal cards, progress cards

- **Forms**: Input fields, dropdowns, toggles, date pickers

- **Navigation**: Tab bars, headers, breadcrumbs

- **Feedback**: Progress indicators, completion states, error states

2. Color Palette Definition

- **Primary Colors**: Main brand/accent colors for actions

- **Secondary Colors**: Supporting colors for categories/states

- **Neutral Colors**: Backgrounds, text, borders

- **Semantic Colors**: Success, warning, error, info states

- **Dark/Light Themes**: If supporting theme switching

3. Typography Scale

- **Headers**: H1-H6 sizes and weights for hierarchy

- **Body Text**: Regular reading text with line heights

- **Captions**: Small text for metadata and labels

- **Interactive Text**: Links, buttons, form labels

4. Layout Grid System

- **Spacing**: Consistent margins and padding scale

- **Breakpoints**: Mobile, tablet, desktop responsive points

- **Grid**: Column systems for different screen sizes

- **Safe Areas**: Mobile-specific spacing considerations

5. Icon Strategy

- **Style**: Outline vs filled vs mixed approach

- **Size System**: Icon sizes for different use cases

- **Sources**: Icon library selection or custom creation

- **Usage Guidelines**: When to use icons vs text

6. Animation Guidelines

- **Transitions**: Page changes, state transitions
- **Feedback**: Button presses, form submissions
- **Celebrations**: Completion animations, achievement unlocks
- **Performance**: Animation duration and easing preferences

Next Steps After Design Decisions

Implementation Priority Order:

1. **Create Base Template Updates** with chosen design system
2. **Build Component Library** starting with most-used elements
3. **Implement Habit Module** as design system proof-of-concept
4. **Iterate Based on Usage** and refine design patterns
5. **Expand to Other Modules** using established patterns

Context for Future Conversations:

- **Development Method**: Step-by-step, feature-by-feature implementation
- **Testing Approach**: Build, test, refine each component before moving forward
- **Design Validation**: Use actual daily interaction to validate design choices
- **Ultra-Modular Benefits**: Easy to modify individual components without affecting others

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Questions to Answer in Next Design Session

Priority Questions (choose any to start design conversation):

1. Which overall design philosophy feels right for your daily use?
2. Do you prefer dark theme primarily or light theme with dark option?
3. Should we use HabitKit-style grid visualization for habit tracking?
4. What type of visual feedback motivates you most when completing habits?
5. Do you want predefined habit categories like Hello Habit's colorful tiles?

Instructions for Design Session:

- Pick any question above to begin detailed design decisions
- Reference this document for full context of each decision
- We'll build design system components progressively
- Each decision will inform Phase 1C implementation approach

Goal: Complete design guidelines document to serve as reference for all UI implementation work, ensuring consistency and purposeful design choices throughout Project Kage development.