

Shall Make, Shall Be: The Bill of Rights at Play

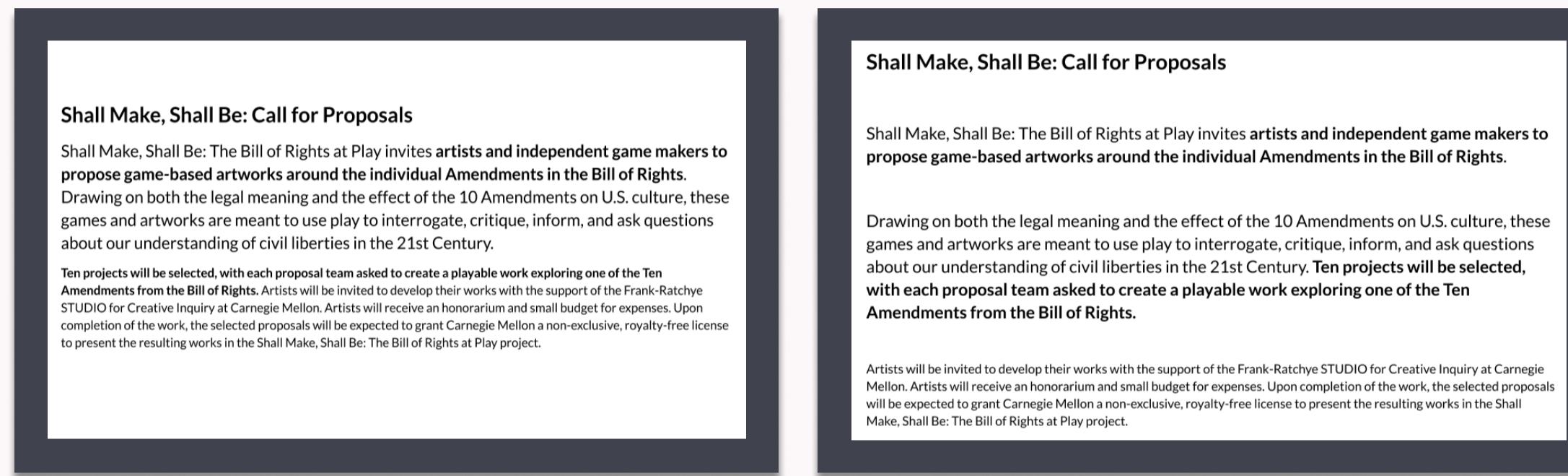
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Process Book
Interaction Design Studio 1
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Prototype

A Balancing Act

As I began to start designing from the ground-up in class assignments, I wanted to push myself out of my comfort zone and experiment with different styles and ideas. Diving into the design deep end, however, made me realize that I was quick to jump to the extreme; I always seemed to take my choices a step farther than they needed to for the sake of testing the boundaries.

It was only when I listened to my instincts and make deliberate choices about balancing the aesthetic, informational, and functional components that I began to see my designs and feedback improve. Finding the balance between thinking outside of the box and using my intuition in my designing has been a challenge, but it is one that I will continue to work on as I grow as a designer.

Typography



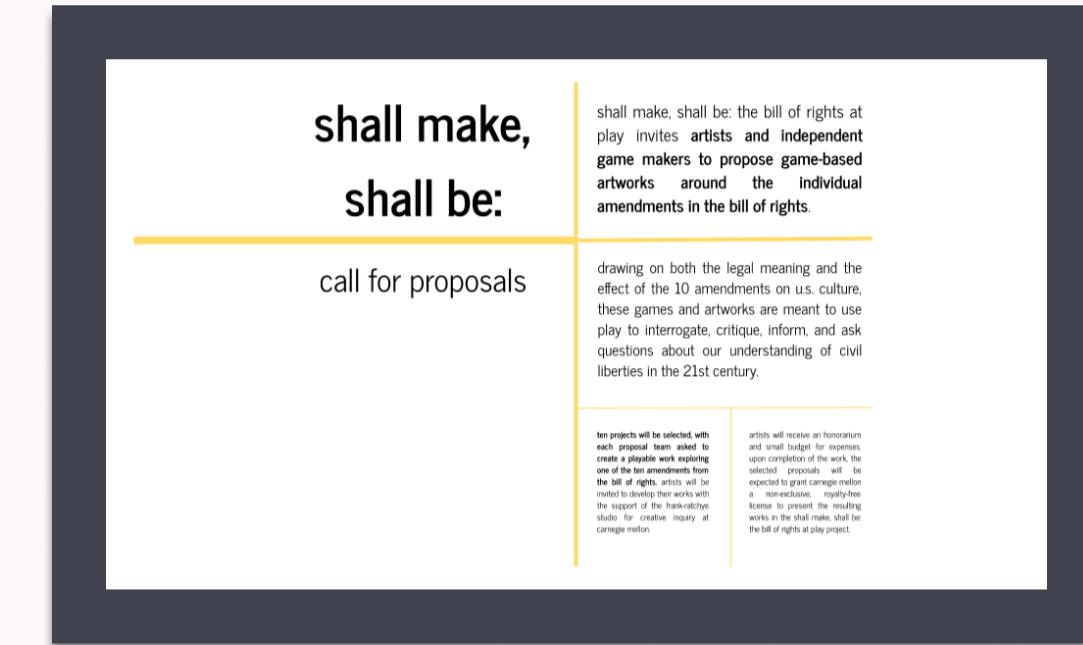
My first step when examining the text was to bold the title and one key phrase in each paragraph. I wanted to practice restraint and focus on discerning the most important and relevant information to emphasize. My next step was to differentiate the different hierarchy of information by altering the font sizes: the title being the largest, what I considered to be the prompt as a step below that, with the information about the reward being the least important information to convey.

I then spaced out the three sections that I had distinguished, but received feedback that the sections were consequently too far apart and appeared disjointed. I received the most positive feedback with altered weight and size; it established a clear hierarchy of information and appropriately emphasized the key points of the text. The critique made me consider using different type characteristics sparingly so that they work together to increase the clarity of the content, rather than becoming a distraction.

Grid

I used the grid assignment to push myself out of my natural inclination toward conveying the information in one large block of text. I had seen several examples in class readings of how the grid had been used to organize the content of the text, and to limit the line length for readability. My favorite designs from this exercise favored the use of smaller portions, and suggested or showed the grid that guided the arrangement.

I did, however, experiment with evoking images with the text. In this example, I used the division of the sections in combination with the colors to create the image of the flag. It became clear to me that I was sacrificing the readability of the text and not efficiently using the grid to convey the information; I was instead too focused on the aesthetic goal I wanted to achieve and not considering the reader's needs.



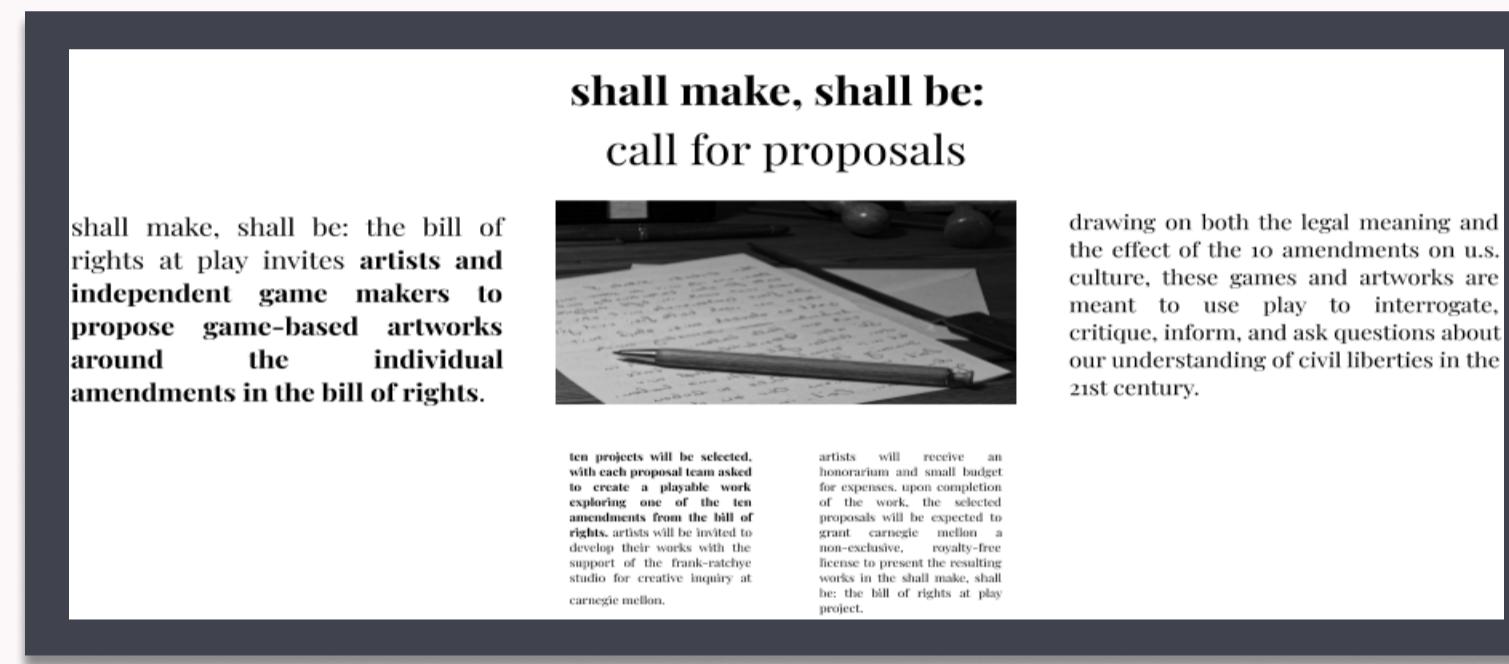
| Color

After seeing how my classmates had used color in more than just the text, I wanted to experiment with incorporating color with shapes. In our critiques, it became clear that red, white, and blue was a popular color theme that related to the Bill of Rights. I challenged myself to create a design without those colors, but struggled to make it reflect the themes of the proposal. With this prompt in particular, there were two possible general color themes to choose from: a game-like palette, which would be lighthearted and colorful; or the traditional patriotic colors, which would be muted and formal in its mood.

I had a hard time combining those two themes, and opted to go with the somewhat more conventional red, white, and blue theme with variation on the typical hues. In doing so, I could signal the political themes while simultaneously distinguishing my design from others. It also helped to incorporate a less traditional feeling that could attract gamers and artists to the proposal.



Images



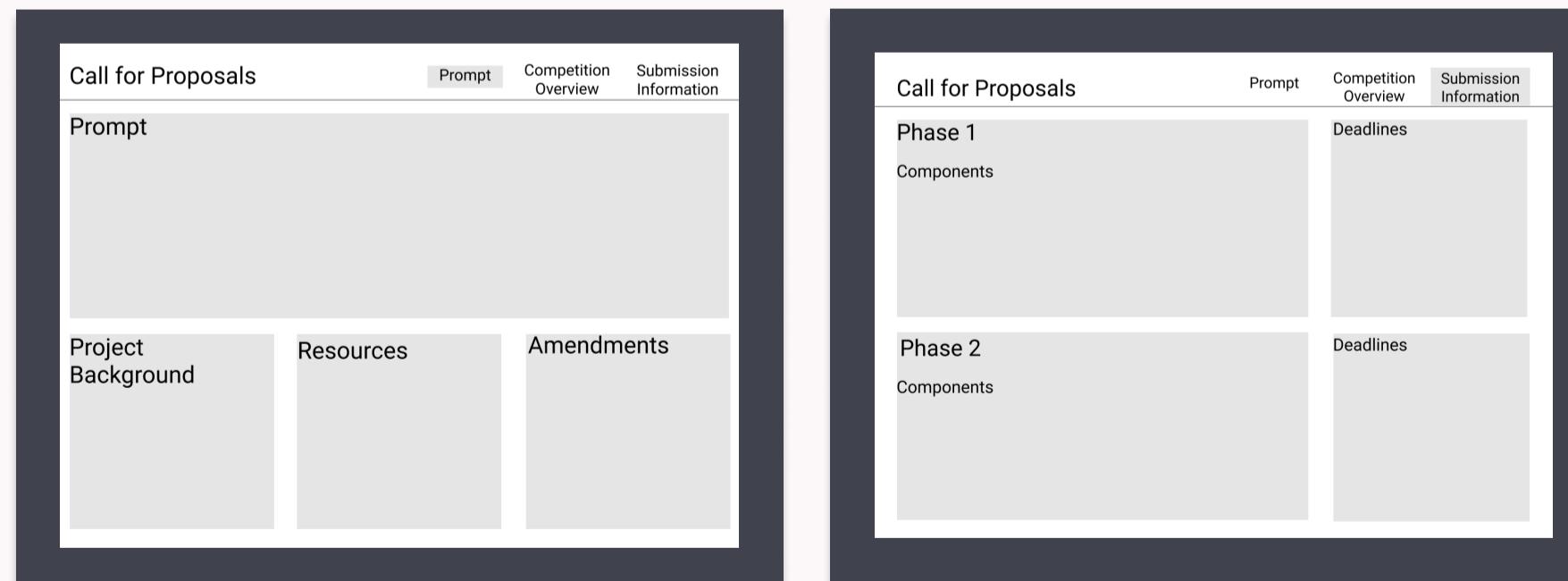
I briefly experimented with pictures in my grid assignment, and found that I was very hesitant to use them in my design for two reasons: the amount of text and the theme of the information. Including images would provide a visual break from the information-heavy text, but it might also distract from the content itself. It was also particularly difficult to find an image that related to the Bill of Rights that would appeal to artists and gamers and compel them to submit a proposal. I chose to use shapes to add those breaks and visual intrigue instead.

Since I had chosen a red, white, and blue color palette, I wanted to incorporate some sort of flag-like imagery without being too similar to the Shall Make, Shall Be's website that included fragmented stars in the background. I started with stripes that cut through the corners of the homepage, and used them in different orientations for the other screens to create continuity and a cohesive style throughout the micro site while also conveying the theme of the proposal. I included stars overlaid on the stripes because they invoked the image of the flag more than the stripes alone.

Information Architecture

As I read through the original content for the first time, I took note of the different topics that the text moved through. I came up with three general overarching sections: the prompt for the proposal, an overview of how the competition would work, and information about the submissions. When designing my wireframes, each of the three main sections had 2-3 subsections beneath them, which I incorporated into the grid with three columns and two rows. The layout of the containers in the grid were different on each page, but retained a similar feel overall.

I paid particular attention to maintaining the hierarchy of information that I had established in my information architecture assignment. My intention was to order the screens to help the user move through the entire proposal process, and build upon the knowledge that they had gained in the previous screen. While I did have to alter the general layout from the model to the prototype, the general flow and hierarchy remain in tact. I relied on my instincts as I first read through the website and used my logic to build what I believed to be an intuitive and easy-to-navigate page.



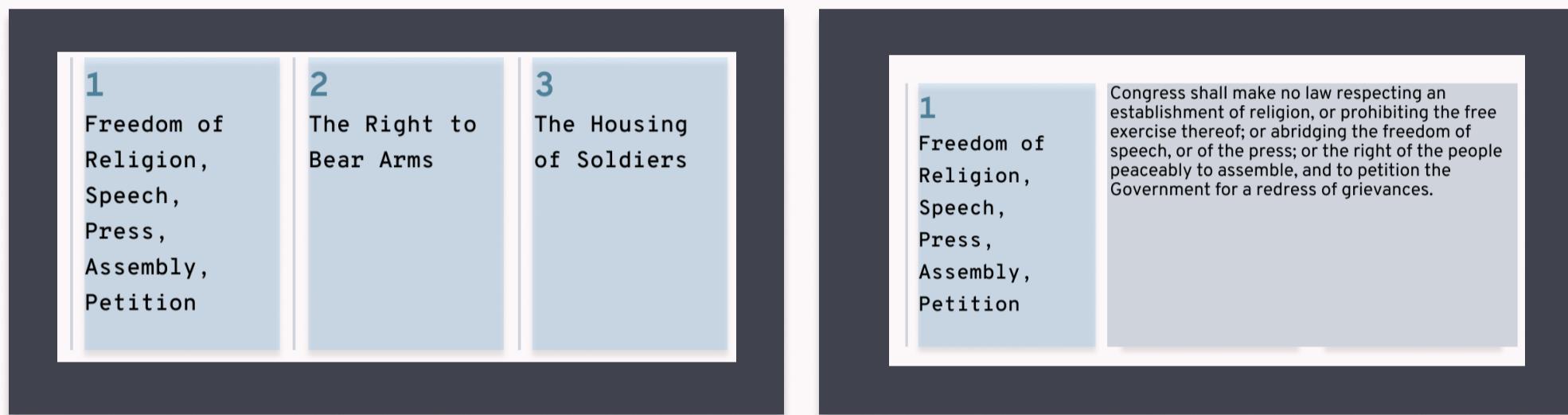
Information Architecture (cont.)

One of the challenges that I ran into with this design in particular was the sheer amount of text that needed to go into each screen. I struggled to find the balance between items, not only in how much space to devote to each one but in making each one fit into the designated area while maintaining the grid and readability. From critiques, I learned that the ADA recommends making body text at least 16px font, which I had not been using. I also knew that with so much information to be included, I wanted to minimize any other elements without overwhelming the reader with the amount of text.

I was concerned with the FAQ section in particular because the individual questions didn't have an organization, but generally fell under one of the general categories I had determined. For the actual prototype, I opted to break the FAQ section into two parts: Competition Overview and Submission Information. I also created hover items, so the user can hover over the question and the response will pop up. This minimized the amount of text on the screen so that it was less crowded and overwhelming, and the user could interact with the site to find the information as they need it.



User Interface Prototyping

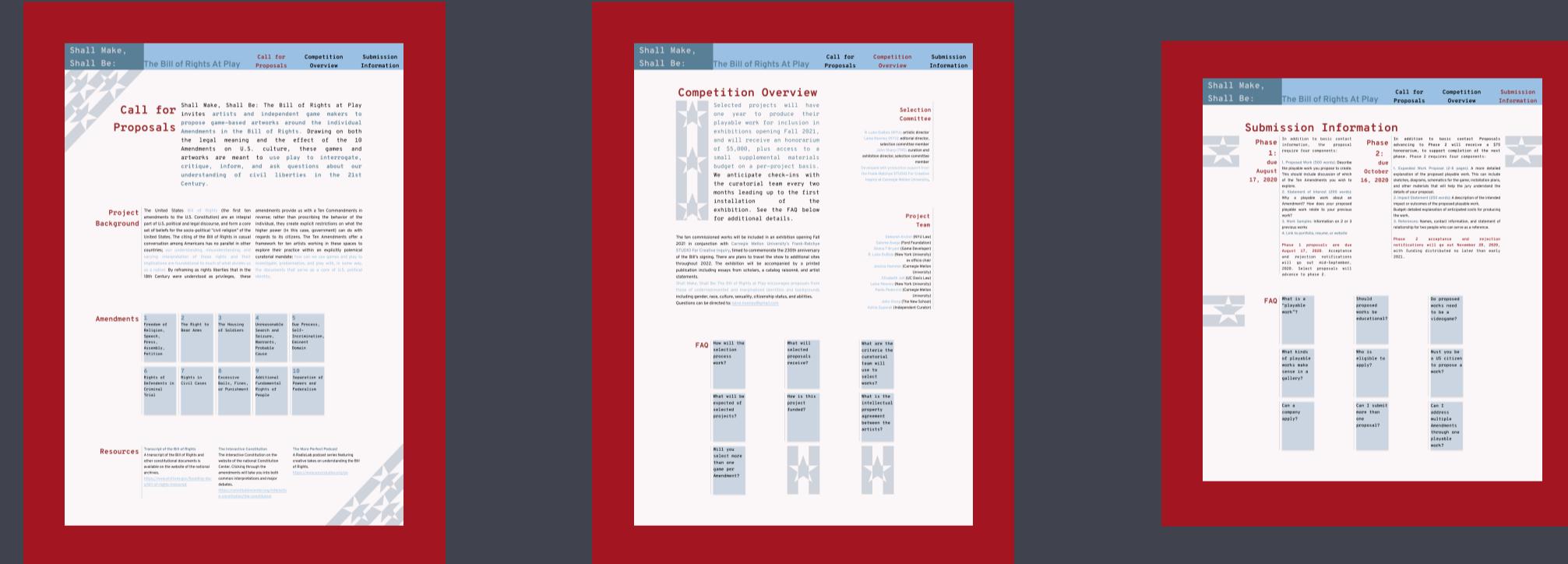


As this is my first attempt at a high fidelity prototype, I struggled with growing accustomed to using Figma. I didn't realize that I could extend the length of the frame, so that I wouldn't have to crunch the text together. Once I was able to extend the dimensions of each frame to better accommodate the content, I ran into errors with the grid. I was able to fix the problems, but not without a calculator and several sticky notes with scribbled dimensions.

Once I had the design and layout of the screens figured out, I turned to the interactions. I admittedly struggled with the decision to include the boxes that users can hover over in the Amendments and FAQ sections. Without those elements, the only other interactions would be between screens. Additionally, it seemed odd that the first interaction (other than the menu, that is) would fall at the bottom of the page. On the other hand, I needed to maintain the informational hierarchy and didn't see how any additional interaction might add any sort of value to the micro site; in fact, it might make it more difficult to find the most important information. In retrospect, I think I might find an alternative way to include the text-heavy information, or more widely incorporate the interaction throughout the page.

Reflection and Final Thoughts

I am generally happy with the final micro site. It was not without its struggles, both technically with Figma and structurally with the layout. Working through the various exercises and evaluating where I had taken missteps helped me to hone my focus on the overall appearance and composition of the pages. If I had more time to perfect the micro site, I would create more flow and interaction throughout the screen; the Amendments and FAQ sections are a somewhat abrupt break in the flow of the page.



Overall, this was an exercise in both experimentation and restraint. I wanted to push myself into trying new things and approaching design in a few different ways to find the strategy that would work for me. After a few missteps at various stages throughout the process, I've learned that I need to balance the trust in my instincts and careful evaluation of my choices to ensure that the components are working together in harmony toward their intended purpose.