

UX Case Study: Simplifying the Voter Registration Process

PROCESS BOOK BY Ryan Kustaborder

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The Brief

This screenshot shows the homepage of the Ohio Secretary of State's website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links like Home, Secretary LaRose & His Office, Elections & Voting, Campaign Finance, Legislation & Ballot Issues, Businesses, Notary, Records, Publications, and Media. Below the navigation is a large banner with the word 'MANUFACTURING' in bold letters. To the right of the banner is a circular red outline containing the number '1'. The main content area includes sections for 'IN THE NEWS', 'QUICK LINKS', and various links for business owners and voters. At the bottom, there are links for 'ABOUT THE OFFICE', 'FOR OHIO VOTERS', and 'FOR BUSINESS OWNERS'.

This screenshot shows the homepage of VoteOhio.gov. It features a prominent banner at the top with the text 'YOU HAVE THREE GREAT WAYS TO VOTE' and '1. By Mail 2. Early In-Person 3. On Election Day'. Below this is a section titled 'Make Your Voice Heard' with a link to 'VoteOhio.gov'. A large red circle with the number '2' is positioned to the right of the banner. The page also includes sections for 'EARLY IN-PERSON VOTING HOURS', 'WEEK 4 and 5', and various links for voting, registration, and ballot tracking.

This screenshot shows the homepage of Vote.gov. It has a blue header with the 'Vote.gov' logo and a search bar. Below the header, there's a section titled 'Register to vote' with a dropdown menu for 'Where do you live?'. A large red circle with the number '3' is positioned to the right of the header. The main content area includes a section titled 'Vote.gov helps you:' with several expandable items like 'Register to vote', 'Find voter registration deadlines', etc. At the bottom, there's a section for 'Already registered?' with links for 'Absentee ballot' and 'Vote on election day'.

This screenshot shows a specific page on Vote.gov titled 'Register to vote in Ohio'. It includes sections for 'How to register to vote in Ohio', 'Voter registration deadlines in Ohio', 'How to check your voter registration', and a 'Sign up to get emails from USAGov' form. A large red circle with the number '4' is positioned to the right of the page content. The footer of the page includes logos for GSA, US Election Consortium, and USAGov, along with links for 'About Vote.gov', 'FOIA Requests', 'Office of the Inspector General', 'Privacy Policy', and 'Performance Reports'.

This project focused on rapid ideation and research based decisions. The project focused on Online Voter Registration and how to improve the process to include more people.

Design Sprint 1 focused on researching the issue. The current state of online registration was recorded and analyzed. Two personas were developed as a lens to focus our further research and redesign.

Design Sprint 2 focused on the process. The current process was analyzed with a journey map and sketches for designs were made.

Design Sprint 3 is where we really nailed down the UX portion of the project. We developed task flows and wireflows to create the final plan for our prototype.

Design Sprint 4 was for finishing touches and documentation. Higher fidelity mockups were created and user tested. Final high fidelity mockups were finalized. This process book was made.

1 - Ohio Secretary of State Home Page
2 - VoteOhio.gov Home Page

3 - Vote.gov Home Page
4 - Vote.gov Register to vote in Ohio

DESIGN SPRINT 1 PART 1

Self-ethnography

Checking (and updating) voter registration status

- Found where to go very easily through a quick google search with my e-question
- Many options of where to go may be confusing for voters, but all of the top options gave me good avenues to accomplish the task
- A lot of 'how to' pages with a lot of links I needed to click to find where I needed to be... would be much nicer to go directly to the page where I could accomplish the task.
- Overall, I can't REALLY complain about this process, because it was very quick for me. BUT if my internet was slower, I would probably be more mad about having to click so many hyperlinks instead of getting directly where I needed to be. Even when I add "Ohio" to my search terms, eliminating the pages' need to ask me what state I'm in, I still get led to how-to pages that that THEN lead me to where I need to go. The ohio.gov page that comes up as the second and (by appearance) most promising link in the Google search results is "not found."
- The website where I can actually complete the process, <https://olvr.ohiosos.gov/IdentificationInformation>, is intuitively usable, but the interface design doesn't exactly look... credible...? to me? The header is Frank LaRose's logo, the url doesn't seem official except for the .gov address, and the only thing clarifying that I am giving my information directly to the Ohio government is "An official State of Ohio government website. *Here's how you know*" at the top. Something about it does not feel like a website I am crazy about giving my address to.

To start, I began with a simple google search of "voter registration status." From there, I clicked the link labeled "Check registration status."

I was then directed immediately to this screen, I did not even have to specify that I am in Ohio.

Checking your voter registration status
Through voterlookup.ohiosos.gov

Steps:

1. Google "check my voter registration ohio"
2. Click first link that comes up
3. Fill in the following information
 - a. First name
 - b. Last name
 - c. County
4. Click the button that matches your address
5. View registration status

Pain Points: I was at first confused when looking at the last page because it was not immediately evident to me that it was confirming my registration status. There is also a lot of text beneath your information that doesn't make a lot of sense, and is very repetitive and unnecessary.

Were instructions clear: Yes

How easy/ difficult was it: Overall it was an easier process than I was anticipating, however there are some improvements that could be made.

ballotpedia.org/

They also have an option to view each candidate's political affiliation

Sample ballot
Lookup allows you to see every option that will be on your ballot based on your voter registration location

It also highlights clearly lays out all of the deadlines and events that are associated with the election

General elections

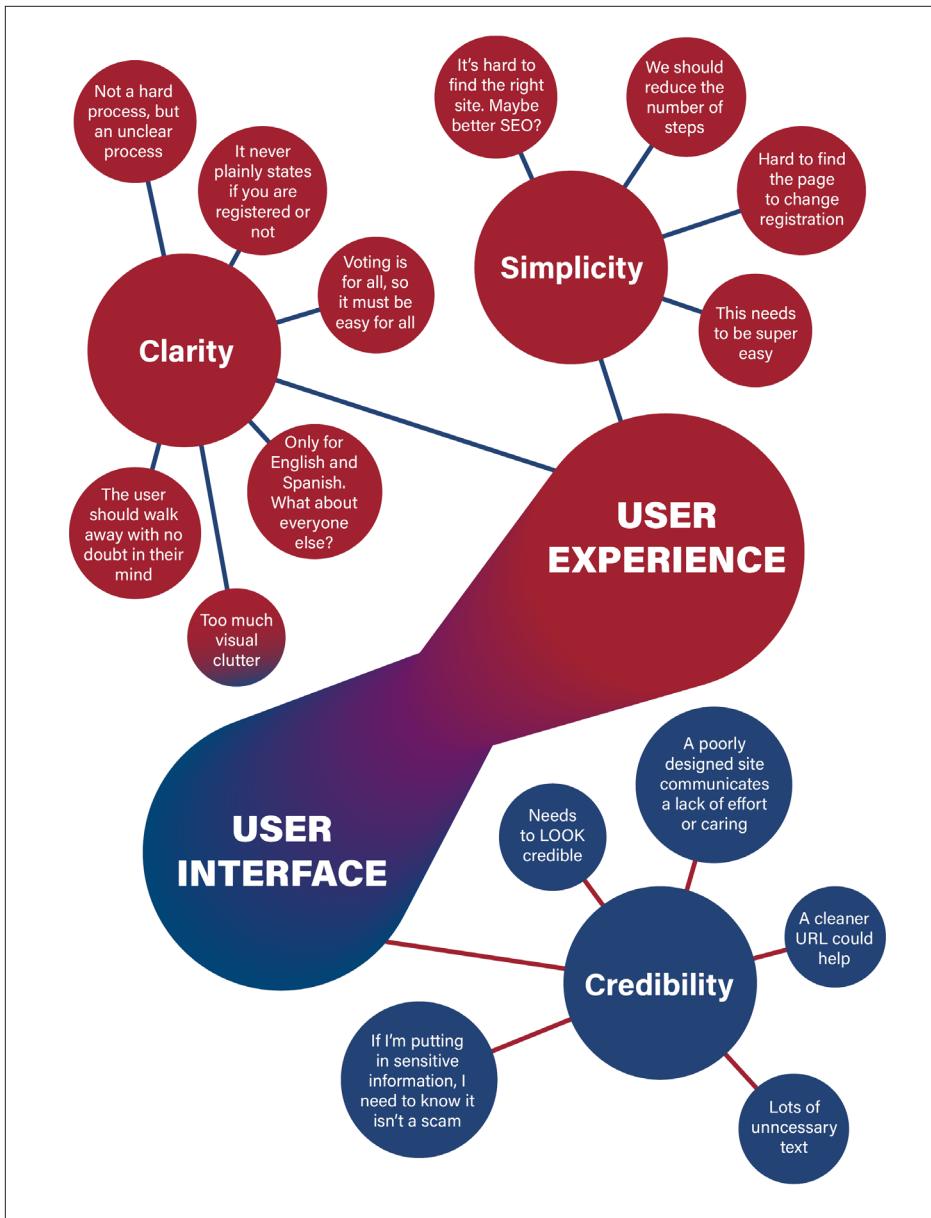
1 - Self Ethnography - Cam Godfrey
2 - Self Ethnography - Jakob Roberts
3 - Self Ethnography - Miranda Zangara
4 - Self Ethnography - Ryan Kustaborder

First we researched what currently existed online for getting election information and registering to vote.

For my portion I researched finding ballot information online before the election. This led me to find ballotpedia.org which ended up being a huge inspiration for the remainder of the design process.

The biggest takeaway that we had after our research was that there were many online resources, but they were not made for people who have a lower technological literacy or do not speak English or Spanish.

Affinity Mapping



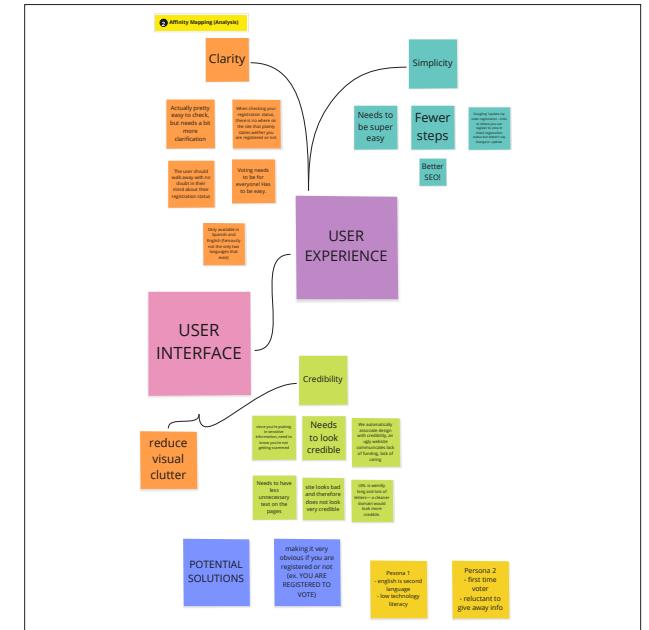
We worked as a group to develop an affinity map for the current experience of registering to vote, keeping in mind our findings from our Self-Ethnography. Then I created a cleaner visualization of our finalized affinity map.

We grouped our findings into 3 main categories:

Simplicity - can the user use the website?

Clarity - can the user understand the site?

Credibility - can the user trust the site?



DESIGN SPRINT 1 PART 3

Personas

We worked as a group to create our personas. We came up with two personas that each had a different barrier that might prevent them from successfully using online voter registration.

Elena - Non-Native English Speaker

Matthew - Untrusting and Inexperienced



**Elena Fernanda
Santos Sy**

Age 47
Kitchen Assistant
Tacoma, Washington

***"(Translated) "I want me and my kids
to have a voice in US politics"***

Bio

Elena was newly awarded United States citizenship, and she is excited about being involved in the democratic process. Before being awarded citizenship, she felt voiceless in American politics, and is enthusiastic about the chance to change that— though she's realistic that it is not a seamless process for ESL speakers. Despite the difficulties, she has two US-born children (10 and 13) and wants to model active participation in her civic duties. Unfortunately, the voting process often requires a higher level of English comprehension, and she is still struggling to learn the language. The voter registration website, like many online voting resources, is only available in Spanish and English, not her native Tagalog.

Elena's low English comprehension is also a barrier to tech literacy, and she does not have a computer at home. This adds another layer of difficulty when navigating online voting resources.

Goals

- Checking her voter registration status and poll location
- Voting in local, state, and national elections
- Inspiring her kids to participate
- To stick it to the people who work hard to keep her demographic from having a say.

Needs

- ESL resources
- Library access and assistance
- Simplified processes



**Matthew
Thompson**

Age 19
Student
Pittsburgh PA

***"I want to be confident that my
information is safe"***

Bio

Matthew Thompson is a 19 year old college student at the University of Pittsburgh where he studies political science. Matthew has always had an interest in politics, and finds it imperative that US citizens exercise their right to vote. Matthew is very involved in on campus initiatives to recruit new voters, and plays an active role in the political community. When he was finally eligible to register to vote, Matthew was excited to finally participate in the democratic process. However, when he went to register online he was deterred by how much personal information he had to give over. The criteria for registering required a full social security number and full license ID number. The site did not seem to be credible enough to the point where Matthew was comfortable releasing his information.

This issue is important to address because voting is something that needs to be extremely accessible to everyone. People must have confidence in the site that is processing all of their personal information.

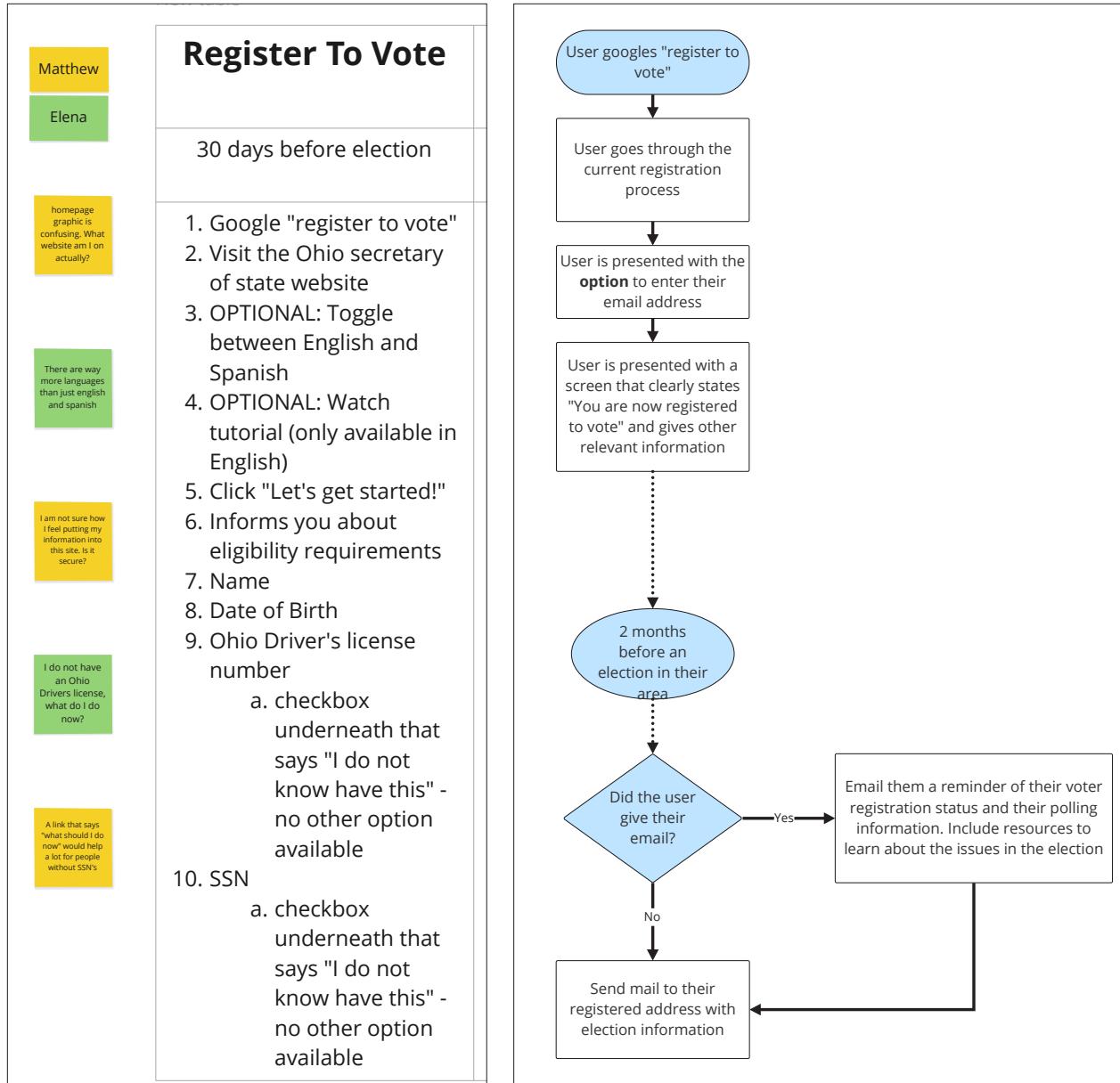
Goals

- Register to vote
- Encourage others in the community to participate
- Vote in upcoming elections

Needs

- Security
- Credibility

Journey Map Draft

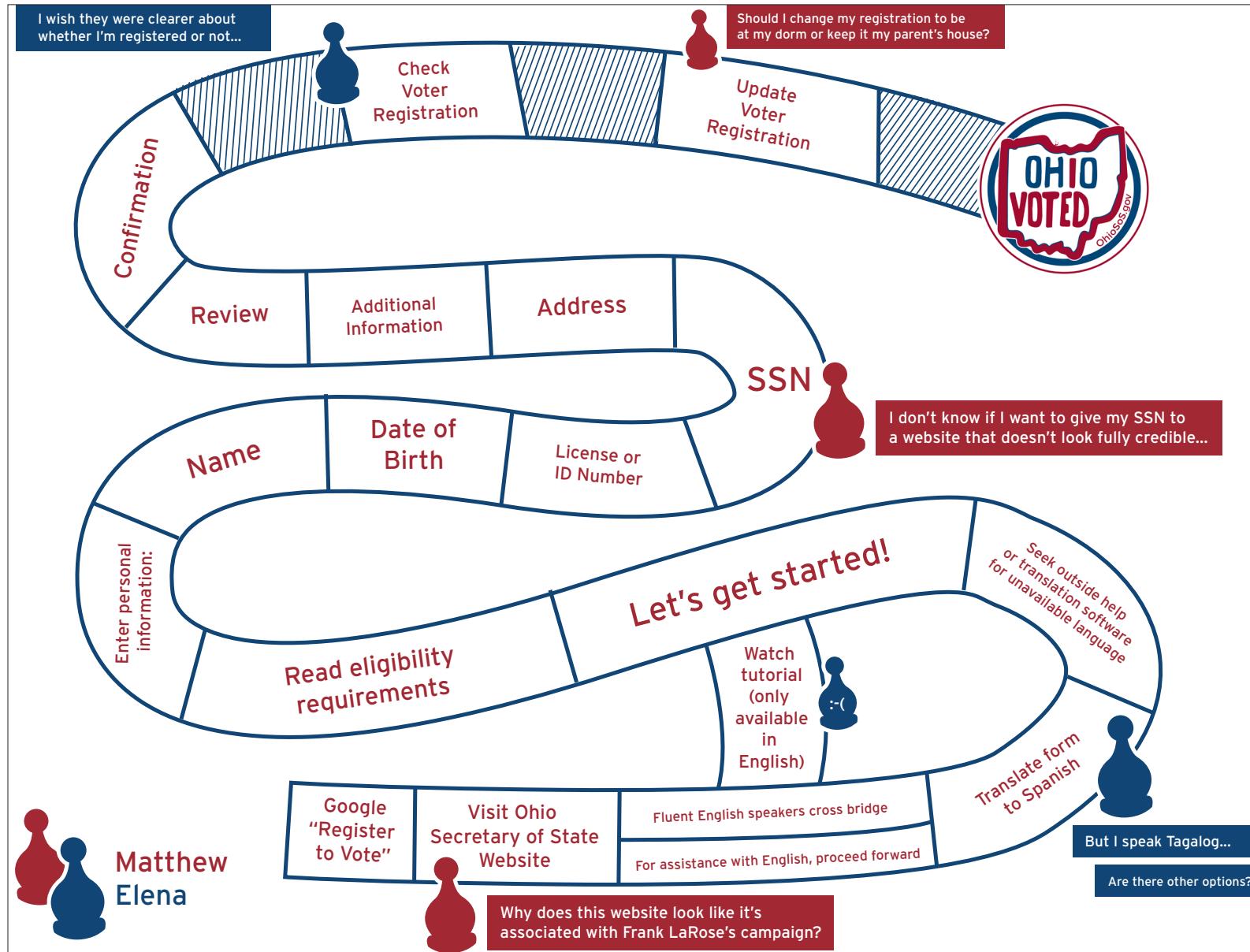


Next we developed a journey map to simulate our personas going through the process of registering to vote online. We also began thinking of ways to increase voter engagement with a reminder service.

This very loose period of ideating allowed us to create multiple different ideas for our journey map. We thought of representing it as a flow chart, column based chart, and finally ended on representing it like a board game path.

Journey Map Final

We created a more polished and clear final version of our journey map with comments from each persona.

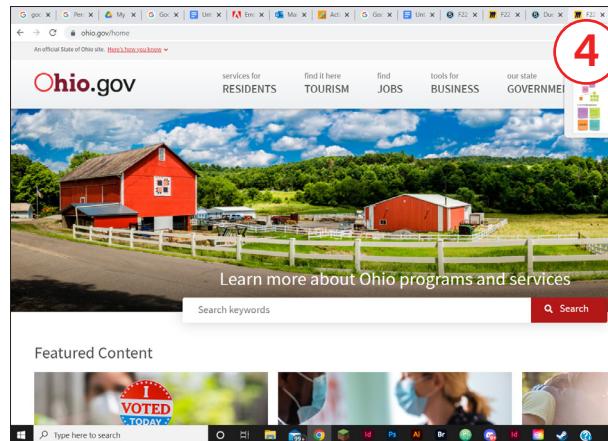
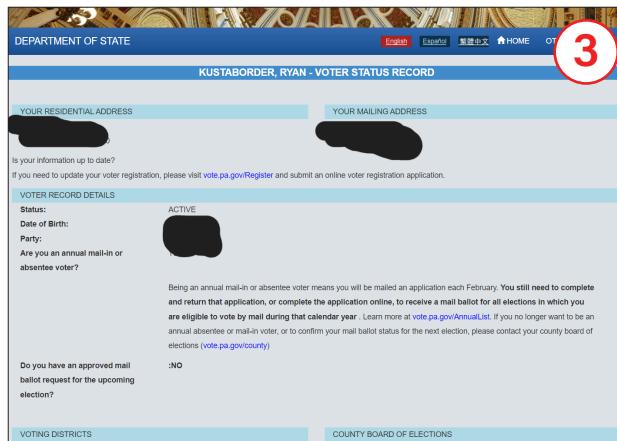


DESIGN SPRINT 2 PART 2

Inspiration



First name: Jane
Last name: Doe
Work email: jane.doe@example.com
Company website: example.com
Country: United States
Payments volume: Select a monthly amount
Anything else? Tell us more about your project, needs, and timeline.



We looked around the internet to find inspiration for the visual portion of the redesign. We ended up finding many different sites to be inspired by, but these are a few of the ones that seem to have had the most effect in our final design.

a - Credibility with Icons
b - Twitter (density of information)
c - Modern aesthetic
d, e, f - Pennsylvania Government Websites

- 1 - Pennsylvania Department of State Homepage
- 2 - Form example
- 3 - Pennsylvania registration status results page
- 4 - Ohio.gov Home Page

- a - Credibility with Icons
b - Twitter (density of information)
c - Modern aesthetic
d, e, f - Pennsylvania Government Websites

DESIGN SPRINT 2 PART 3

Sketching / Crazy 8s

Next we did a sketching activity that focused on quickly trying new ideas. These sketches helped us develop our initial wireframes and explore lots of different possibilities in a small amount of time.



1 - Sketches - Ryan Kustaborder

- a - Breadcrumb system used in final design
- b - Two Circle landing page used in final design
- c - Ballot Box hero image used in final design

2 - Sketches - Cam Godfrey

3 - Sketches - Miranda Zangara
4 - Sketches - Jakob Roberts

DESIGN SPRINT 2 PART 4

Refined Wireframes

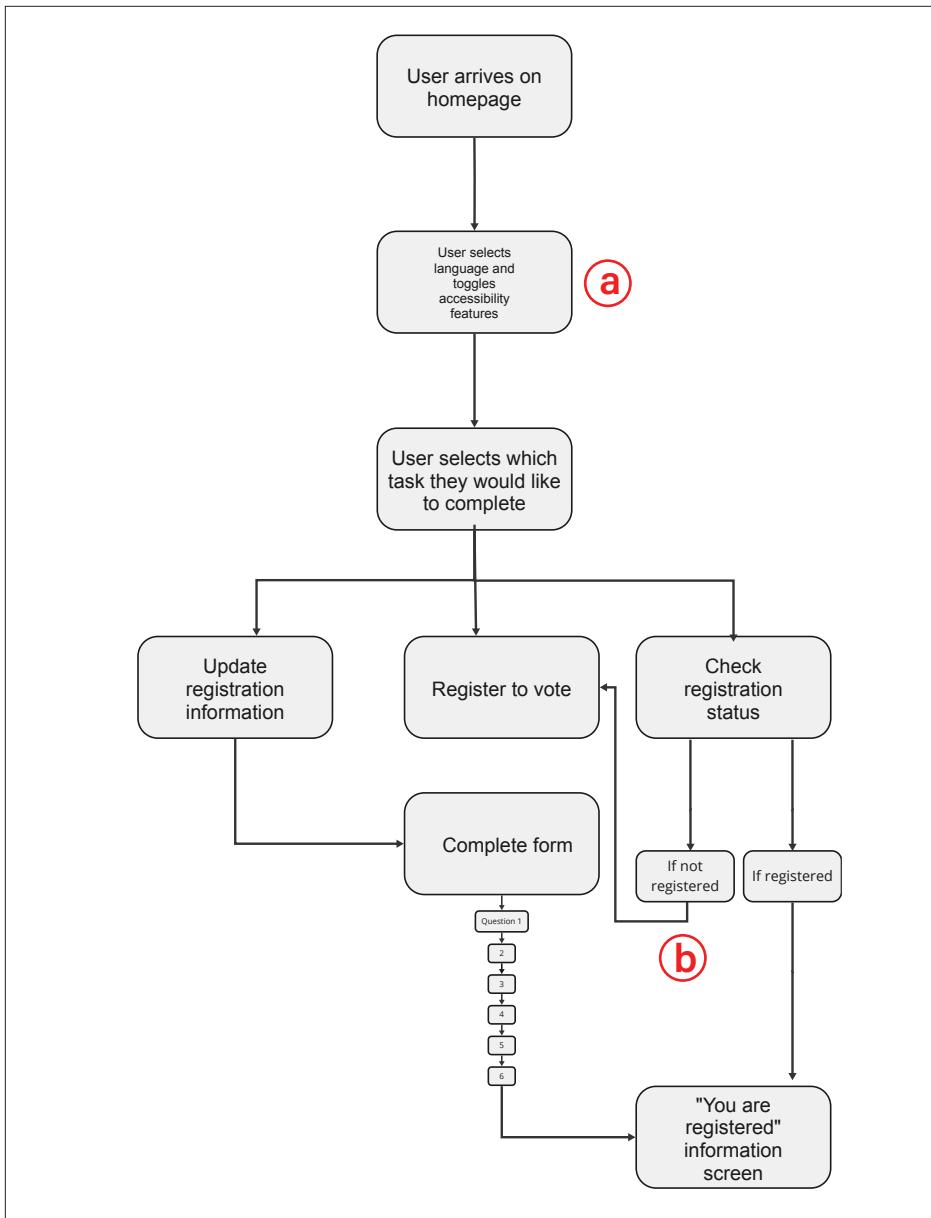
Now we created refined low fidelity wireframes using the ideas generated in our sketches. We each generated multiple of these wireframes and we combined the best aspects of each into these final wireframes.

- 1 - Landing Page
- 2 - Registration Form
- 3 - Updated Information Form
- 4 - Status Results Page

- Some of our other ideas
- a - Alternative Breadcrumbs Placement
 - b - Ohio O from Logo
 - c - Paneled View

- d - Minimalist Home Screen
- e - Search for Help Page
- f - More Breadcrumbs Placement

Task Flow



We next created a task flow to help layout exactly how a user would navigate the site. While this wasn't set in stone, it was a useful framework to help guide development of the wireflow.

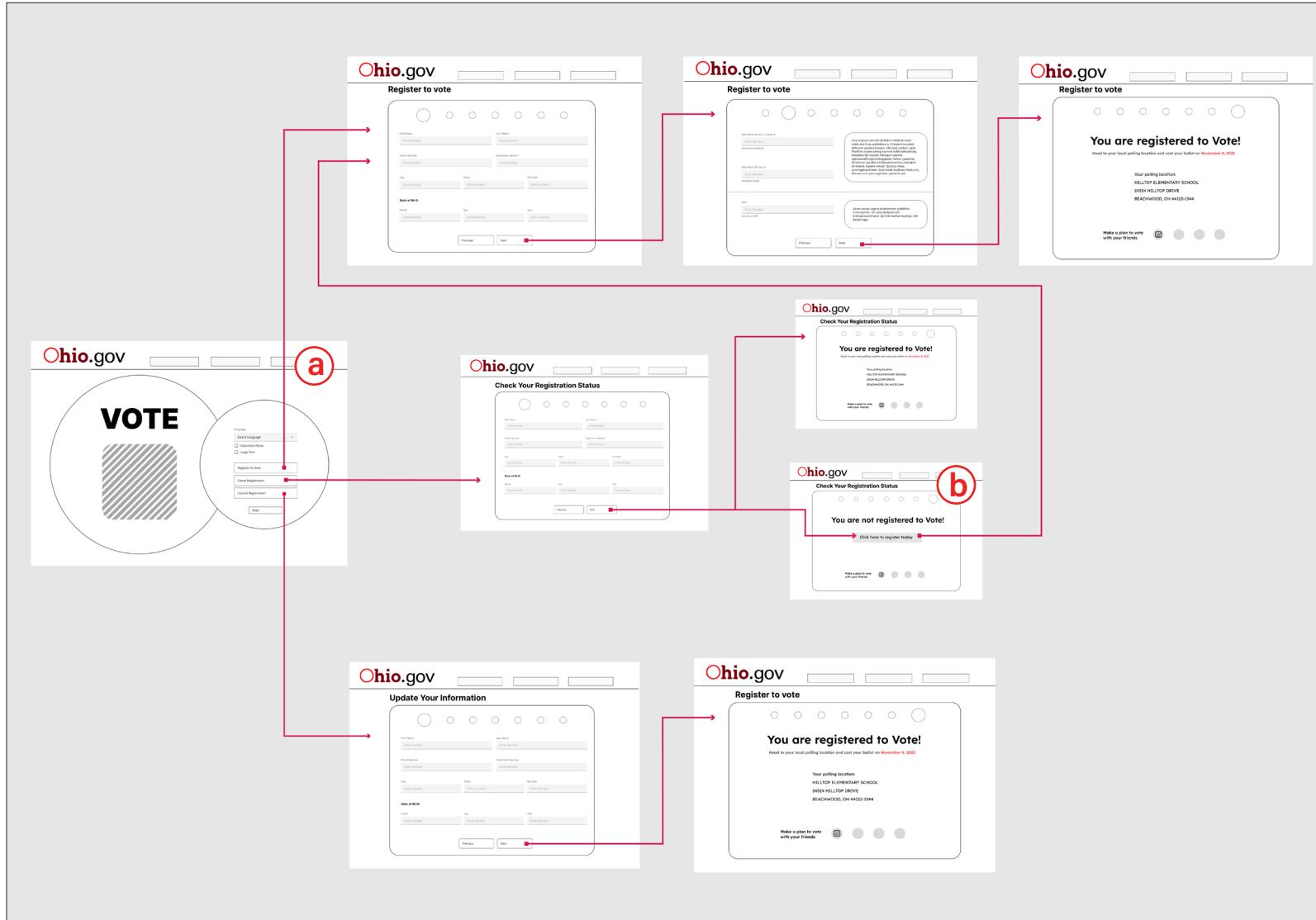
a - We wanted to make sure that users would be immediately able to change the accessibility and language settings. This ensures that there are no barriers to access for people who use those features.

b - To encourage increased registration rates, we wanted to make it as easy as possible for the user to register if they found that they were not yet registered.

DESIGN SPRINT 3 PART 2

Wireflow

From the task flow we developed a wireflow which demonstrates how each screen connects and how the user can navigate between them. This allowed us to create prototypes that we could test out and get feedback on.



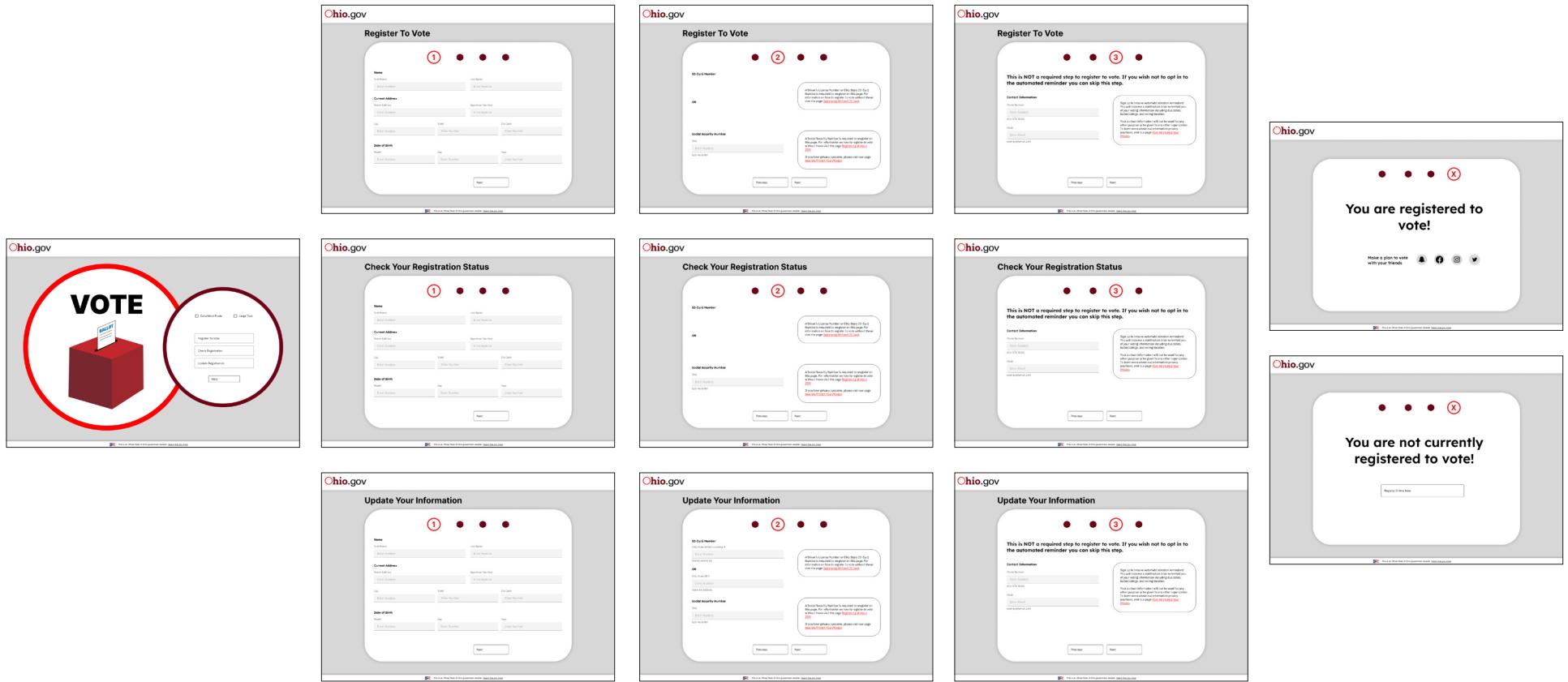
a - The accessibility and language features are on the home page. There are no other pages that need to be navigated to in order to make the website usable for all people.

b - To direct unregistered voters to register, we put a big button in the middle of the screen that will take the users to the registration process.

DESIGN SPRINT 4 PART 1

Low Fidelity Prototypes

From the task flow we developed a wireflow which demonstrates how each screen connects and how the user can navigate between them. This allowed us to create prototypes that we could test out and get feedback on.



Landing Page

The home page features a hero image of a ballot box alongside the word VOTE in a heavy weighted font. If a user is unsure where they need to go, they can immediately recognize that this is the page they are looking for. It then provides the three action items for the user.



Form Pages

The form pages are all similar to maintain visual cohesion. They are kept minimal and aim to present the information in a clear and concise way. This is done with simple phrasing, minimal design, and use of whitespace.

Ohio.gov

Update Your Information

1 a

Name

First Name Last Name

Current Address

Street Address Apartment Number

City State Zip Code

Date of Birth

Month Day Year

Next

 This is an official State of Ohio government website. [Here's how you know](#)

a - This breadcrumb element was introduced early in this project and still persists in the prototype to help the user where in the process they are.

Secure Information

We wanted to make sure that any secure information that is needed would not put off those that are apprehensive about registering to vote. To do this we offered explanation as to the purpose of the information and alternative options.

The screenshot shows a step-by-step registration process. Step 2 is highlighted with a red circle containing the number 2. The page title is "Update Your Information".

ID Card Number

Ohio State Driver's License #

Enter Number
XXXXX XXXXX XX

OR

Ohio State ID #

Enter Number
XXXX XX XXXXXX

Social Security Number

SSN

Enter Number
123-45-6789

A Driver's License Number or Ohio State ID Card Number is required to register on this page. For information on how to register to vote without these visit the page [Registering Without ID Card](#).

A Social Security Number is required to register on this page. For information on how to register to vote without these visit the page [Registering Without SSN](#).

If you have privacy concerns, please visit our page [How We Protect Your Privacy](#)

Previous Next

This is an official State of Ohio government website. [Here's how you know](#)

a - By limiting the amount of information on the screen and directing the user to a separate page, the visual clutter is reduced. This helps keep the user from being overwhelmed.

Reminder Program

The form pages are all similar to maintain visual cohesion. They are kept minimal and aim to present the information in a clear and concise way. This is done with simple phrasing, minimal design, and use of whitespace.

The screenshot shows a step 3 of a 3-step process for updating information. The header reads "Ohio.gov" and "Update Your Information". A progress bar at the top shows step 3 is active. A callout labeled "a" points to a note: "This is NOT a required step to register to vote. If you wish not to opt in to the automated reminder you can skip this step." Another callout labeled "b" points to a summary of the reminder service and privacy statement.

a

This is NOT a required step to register to vote. If you wish not to opt in to the automated reminder you can skip this step.

b

Sign up to receive automatic election reminders! You will receive a notification once to remind you of your voting information including due dates, ballot listings, and voting location.

Your contact information will not be used for any other purpose or be given to any other organization. To learn more about our information privacy practices, visit our page [How We Protect Your Privacy](#).

Previous Next

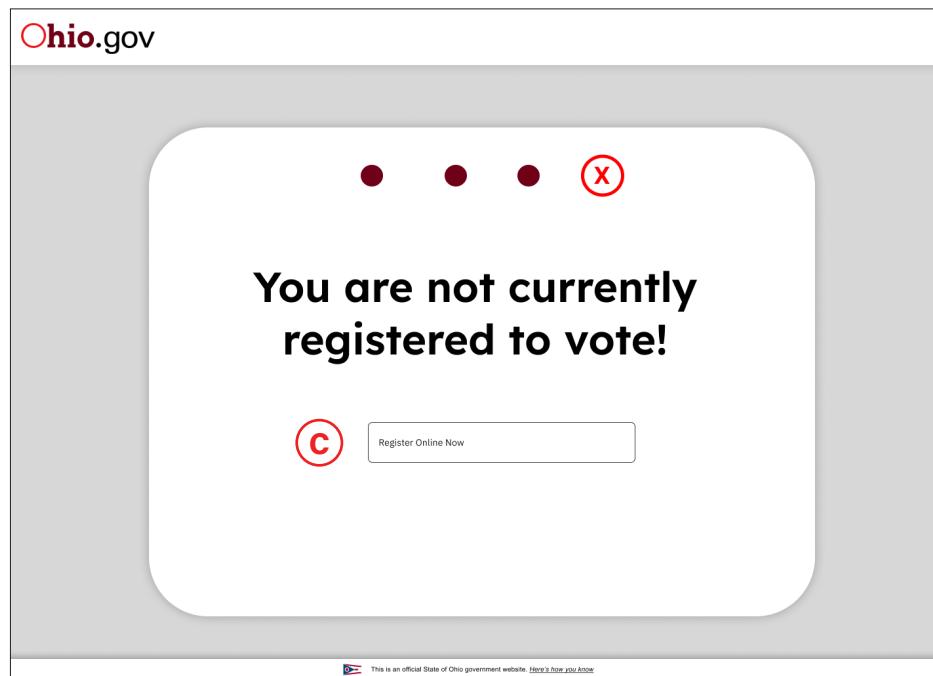
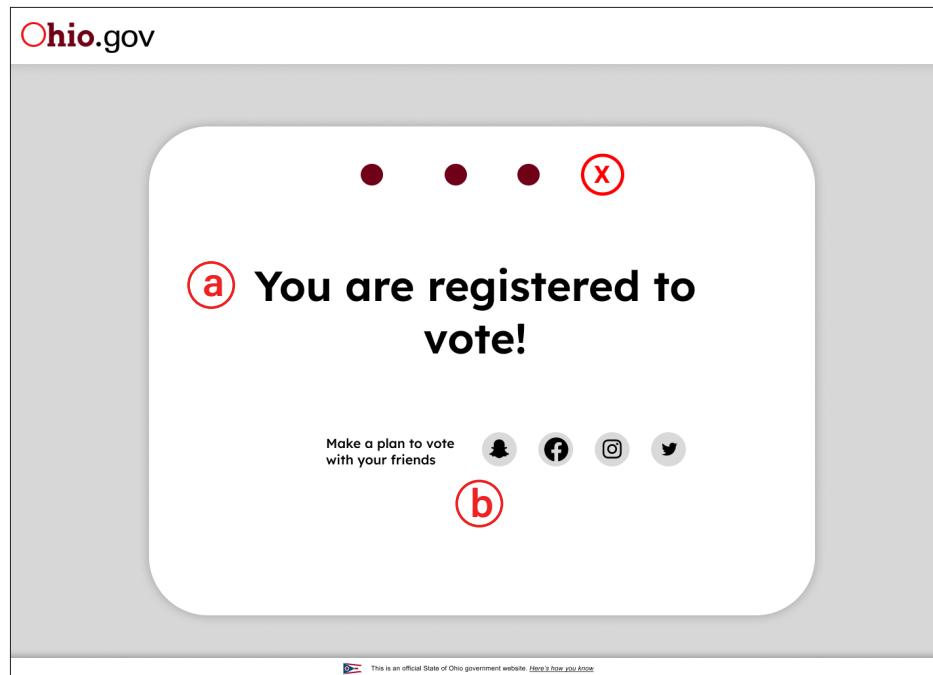
 This is an official State of Ohio government website. [Here's how you know](#)

a - Since this is additional personal information, it needs to be clear that this is not required in order to register to vote.

b - To avoid overwhelming the user with text, a short summary is given with a link to learn more if the user wants to investigate. This lets the user decide the level of detail they want to have.

Results Page

The final results page is all about clarity and next steps. From our self ethnography we remembered having difficulties to understand the results from the current Ohio Secretary of State page.



- a - A large message with the users status will help make it clear to the user
- b - By linking to social media, we can increase engagement and encourage more people to register
- c - The user should be able to register if they find out they are currently not registered

DESIGN SPRINT 4 PART 2

User Testing

For user testing I wanted to test with people who have less technological literacy. So I chose my parents. Both are in their 50s and have never registered online before. This put them right in the middle of the demographic our redesign was targeting. Here are the highlights of both sessions.

Landing Page

- Liked that it was right to the point
- Knew exactly where to go
- Enjoyed simplicity of design

Form Pages

- Couldn't get back to landing page
- Breadcrumbs too big/distracting
- No headers for form section
- Did not know what is required

Secure Information

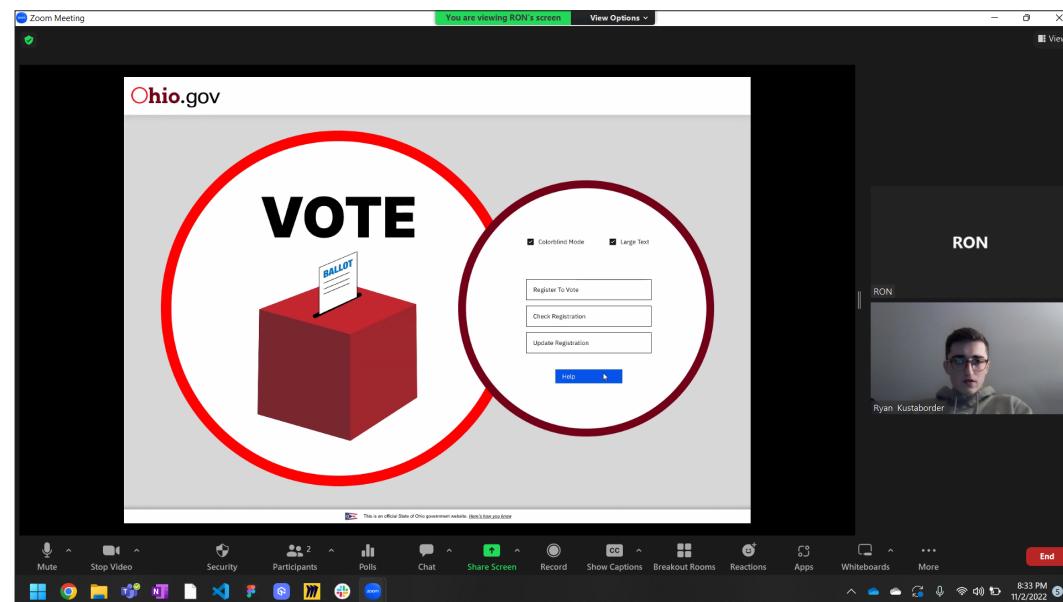
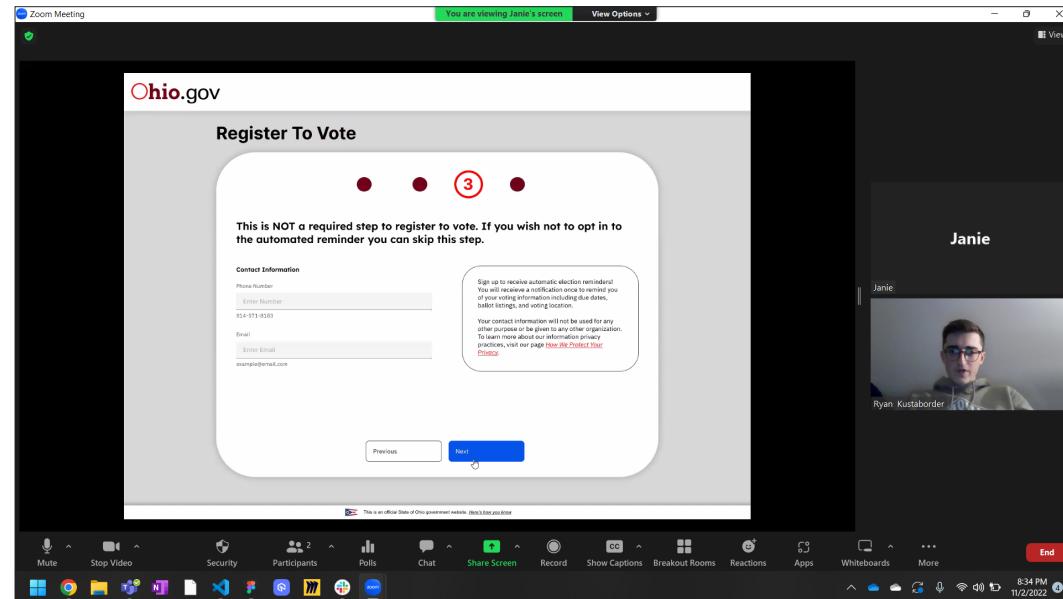
- Trusted the website
- Liked that they could find other route

Reminder Program

- Had difficulty understanding disclaimer
- Liked the idea of a reminder message
- Were comfortable giving additional info

Results Page

- Success page does not feel successful
- Liked the ability to immediately register
- Did not want to repeat form sections
- Wanted more action items



DESIGN SPRINT 4 PART 3

High Fidelity Prototypes

Lastly I transformed the previous prototypes into high fidelity prototypes. I made sure to incorporate all the feedback from user testing as well as cleaned up the edges. While the focus of this project was not on the visuals, I am pleased with the simplicity of these prototypes.

This is an official State of Ohio government website. [Ohio's how you vote](#)

Voter Registration Status

You are **not currently registered** to vote.

The next election in your area is the **2022 Midterm Elections** and the deadline to register is **October 12, 2022**.

Register to Vote

[Need Help? Click Here](#)

Share with your Friends

Restart • • • **Home**

Voter Registration Status

You are **currently registered** to vote.

The next election in your area is the **2022 Midterm Elections** which will occur on **November 8, 2022**.

Your Voting Location:
St. Magnus Cathedral
123 Buckeye Dr
Columbus OH 12345

Share with your Friends

Restart • • • **Home**

Step 1: Identifying Information

Legal Name

FIRST NAME* LAST NAME*

Current Address

STREET ADDRESS* APARTMENT NUMBER*

CITY* STATE* ZIPCODE*

Date of Birth

DAY* MONTH* ZIPCODE*

Next

Quit

This is an official State of Ohio government website. [Ohio's how you vote](#)

Step 2: Identity Verification

State ID Number

OHIO DRIVER'S LICENSE #
or
OHIO STATE ID CARD #

A Driver's license number or Ohio State ID Card number is required to register on this page. For information on how to register to vote without these visit the page [Registering with SSI](#).

Social Security Number

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER*

A Social Security Number is required to register on this page. For information on how to register to vote without this visit the page [Registering with SSI](#).
If you have privacy concerns, please visit our page [How We Protect Your Privacy](#)

Next

Back

This is an official State of Ohio government website. [Ohio's how you vote](#)

Optional Step 3: Get Reminded!

To skip this step press next.

Contact Information

PHONE NUMBER
OR
EMAIL

Sign up to receive automatic election reminders! You will receive a notification every two weeks about election due dates, ballot listings, and voting location.

Your contact information will not be used for any other purpose or given to any other organization. To learn more about our information security practices, visit our page [How We Protect Your Privacy](#)

I would like to receive reminder emails before elections
 I would like to receive other election related news

Next

Back

This is an official State of Ohio government website. [Ohio's how you vote](#)

DESIGN SPRINT 4 PART 3

Landing Page

The landing page fared well in the user testing, so not much had to change from the low-fidelity prototype. The hero image was much improved and the finer details were added.

The screenshot shows the Ohio.gov website landing page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for "Ohio.gov", "Elections & Voting", "Businesses", "Notary", "Publications", "Media", a search bar, and a magnifying glass icon. The main visual element is a large circular graphic on the left containing the word "VOTE" in a large, bold, dark red font. Below "VOTE" is a small illustration of a ballot box with a "BALLOT" sign. To the right of this graphic is another circular area containing several interactive elements:

- Checkboxes for "Monochromatic" and "Use Large Text".
- A "SELECT LANGUAGE" dropdown menu set to "English".
- Three buttons: "Register to Vote", "Check Registration Status", and "Update Registration".
- A link "Need Help? Click Here" with a question mark icon.

At the bottom of the page, there is a small blue ribbon logo and the text "This is an official State of Ohio government website. [Here's how you know](#)".

Form Pages

The structure of the forms required a bit of reworking after user testing. It is now much clearer for the user to understand what they need to do and where all they can navigate to.

Ohio.gov [Elections & Voting](#) [Businesses](#) [Notary](#) [Publications](#) [Media](#)

Step 1: Identifying Information (a)

Legal Name

FIRST NAME*
ex: John

LAST NAME*
ex: Doe

Current Address

STREET ADDRESS*
ex: 123 Buckeye Dr

APT NUMBER*
ex: 1234

CITY* **STATE***
ex: Columbus

ZIPCODE*
ex: 12345

Date of Birth

DAY*
ex: 04 or 4

MONTH*
ex: January

ZIPCODE*
ex: 12345

(c) (d)

This is an official State of Ohio government website. [Here's how you know](#)

- a - A header was added to the top of each form section to help the user understand what to do
- b - All the required forms are now marked with the standard red asterisk
- c - A quit button was added to allow users to go back at the beginning
- d - The breadcrumbs were significantly reduced in size to make them less distracting

Secure Information

The structure of the forms required a bit of reworking after user testing. It is now much clearer for the user to understand what they need to do and where all they can navigate to.

Ohio.gov [Elections & Voting](#) [Businesses](#) [Notary](#) [Publications](#) [Media](#)

Step 2: Identity Verification

State ID Number

OHIO DRIVERS LICENSE #

Enter Number
ex: 1234 567 8909

a or

OHIO STATE ID CARD #

Enter Number
ex: 123 4567 8909

A Driver's License Number or Ohio State ID Card Number is required to register on this page. For information on how to register to vote without these visit the page [Registering Without ID Card](#).

Social Security Number

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER*

Enter Number
ex: 123 45 6789

A Social Security Number is required to register on this page. For information on how to register to vote without these visit the page [Registering Without SSN](#).

If you have privacy concerns, please visit our page [How We Protect Your Privacy](#)

[Back](#) [Next](#)

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a - The "or" element was added to help clarify that the user only needs to enter one of the options

Reminder Program

The reminder program itself was received positively during user testing, but the page needed a little help. It was too unclear if the step was required or what the user was signing up for. Now it is much easier for the user to understand their options and make the best choice for them.

Ohio.gov [Elections & Voting](#) Businesses Notary Publications Media

Optional Step 3: Get Reminded!

a To skip this step press next.

Contact Information

PHONE NUMBER

 ex: 123-456-7890

or

EMAIL

 ex: example@ohio.gov

Sign up to receive automatic election reminders! You will receive a notification once to remind you of your voting information including due dates, ballot listings, and voting location.

Your contact information will not be used for any other purpose or be given to any other organization. To learn more about our information privacy practices, visit our page [How We Protect Your Privacy](#)

b

I would like to receive reminder emails before elections

I would like to receive other election related news

Back • • • **Next**

This is an official State of Ohio government website. [Here's how you know](#)

- a - The message informing the user that this step was optional was reworded
- b - Checkboxes to officially opt in were added to prevent confusion

DESIGN SPRINT 4 PART 3

Results Page

The results pages needed to be more clear, both in terms of the users registration status as well as what the user can do next. Now the results are highlighted and plenty of action items are provided to the user.

This screenshot shows the results page for a user who is currently registered to vote. The page features a large red ballot box icon on the right. On the left, there's a callout box with the heading "Voter Registration Status" and the message "You are currently registered to vote." Below this, it says "The next election in your area is the [2022 Midterm Elections](#) which will occur on November 8, 2022." It also displays the user's voting location: "St. Magnus Cathedral, 123 Buckeye Dr, Columbus OH 12345". A section titled "Share with your Friends" includes icons for Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. At the bottom, there are "Restart" and "Home" buttons, along with a navigation bar.

This screenshot shows the results page for a user who is not currently registered to vote. The layout is similar to the registered user version, with a red ballot box icon on the right. The callout box on the left now says "Voter Registration Status" and "You are not currently registered to vote." It provides information about the next election: "The next election in your area is the [2022 Midterm Elections](#) and the deadline to register is October 12, 2022." It includes a prominent "Register to Vote" button with a red outline and a "Need Help? Click Here" link. The "Share with your Friends" section and the bottom navigation bar are identical to the registered user version.

- a - The results text is now highlighted
- b - Information about the next election is given to the user
- c - If the user is not registered, they can immediately register or get help
- d - Options to return to the landing page or restart the form are given

Conclusion

One major focus of this project was rapid ideation and development. This is a particularly important skill to learn as designers as it is so easy to keep improving and fine tuning forever without moving on to the next step.

This project also reminded me of the large blind spot we have when it comes to assuming knowledge. User testing allowed me to figure out where those were and correct any mistakes caused by them.

Most importantly this project is a perfect example of why UX/UI design is so important in an age where so much of our lives is spent on the internet. Allowing more people to use this website allows more people to be heard, to be counted, and to make change in the world, and design has allowed us to remove some of the barriers that are currently blocking people from participating in our democracy.