



concept, identity, mobile ux

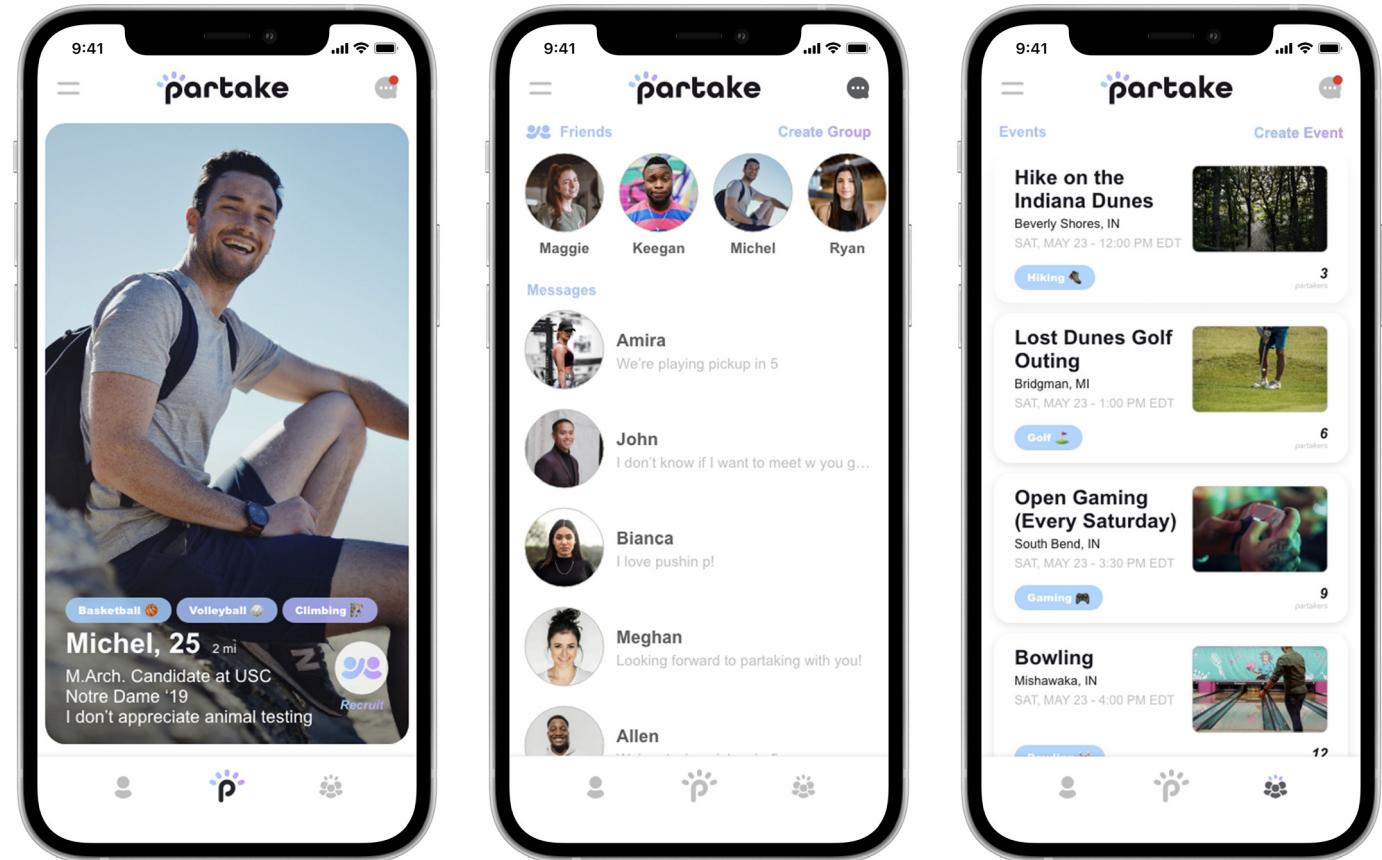
RYAN PAIRITZ | SPRING 2022

what's partake?

Partake is a social networking app intended for people to find friends in real life, by participating in the activities they love.

In a four week sprint, I created a hi-fi prototype with users in mind, so they can readily find others with common interests — as well as opportunities to participate in their favorite hobbies and make friends in the process.

The resulting app won a cash prize from the University of Notre Dame for Best App Runner Up.



kickoff

- a. problem & assumptions
- b. goals

For any product to follow a smooth development lifecycle, the focus must be on the user. So, to kick off, I aimed to better empathize with users by validating any problems and defining my research goals.

a. problem & assumptions

Some young people — especially introverts — are having a tough time adjusting to life in new cities where they may not know anybody.

Surveys show that introverts prefer meeting people in situations where they can take their time to warm up and where there's a natural subject for discussion (i.e. a club or class). However, they may not have access to alumni networks, and available sports and other organized clubs may not interest them as they're too few and far between.

In desperate bids for friendship, they may turn to apps like Bumble For Friends, which have such a strong stigma around them in the friendship segment. Perhaps it's because networking on such an app feels forced — like you're awkwardly and knowingly asking individuals to be friends, when the lightning of a new connection doesn't strike like that.

¹ Sussex Publishers. Survey says: How to meet new people. Psychology Today. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-introverts-corner/201202/survey-says-how-meet-new-people>

b. goals

We wanted to create an app that points these people in the right direction — toward new friendships. Its indirect approach could make it more attractive, by letting people fall into a friendship while they're distracted talking about or doing the things they enjoy.

To be successful, we must first try to understand the user. So, I considered some goals for my UX research.

- ***Understand common challenges*** people face when trying to find friends wholly on their own (i.e. without mutual friends to provide introductions)
- ***Identify groups commonly facing problems*** in this segment of the market
- ***Underline the competition's weakpoints*** addressing these underserved groups

understand the user

- a. screening
- b. user interviews
- c. competitive analysis

Garnering information from a representative user sample — then performing a competitive analysis to highlight weak points to capitalize on — would prove invaluable to the design process, as it would inspire the bulk of decisions to come.

a. screening

To ensure I would conduct meaningful research, I had to identify characteristics of target users to filter out anyone who might not accurately represent the target user.

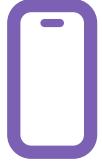
- **18-24** years old
- Lives in **suburban or metropolitan area**
- **Less than 5 friends** in current city
- Include participants of **different genders**

b. user interviews

With the goals defined for my research in mind, I sat down with four different friends and family members who matched the description of the ideal participant.

Again, the goal was to empathize with the user by gauging the challenges they face when trying to make friends on their own and how they might feel marginalized or discouraged from using a current “solution.”

1. Can you **describe** your current schedule?
2. Aside from work/responsibilities, **how much time** do you spend **participating in hobbies/activities**?
3. **What options** for finding new activities in your city **are you aware of**? What options have you tried?
4. If you've tried any, **what are the challenges you have faced** with them? If you haven't, **what has held you back**?
5. **What apps** have you used to try **to find friends**, if any? What do you like/dislike about them?



100% of participants stated they primarily access social networking apps **using their smart phone.**



25% have tried Nextdoor to try to meet people in their neighborhood, but it was less for connecting than it was for fear mongering and **flagging strangers as "suspicious."**

"If you're young and fresh out of college, the bulk of people you can meet in the same age group — if they're on any friendship app at all — is on Bumble For Friends."



75% of participants have tried — or currently use — Bumble For Friends.



Zero users have actually **made it out of the Bumble chat** and done something IRL, which reveals the greatest pain point.

"Unless you're an extrovert, striking up a conversation that brings you out of the app is tough on apps like Bumble BFF, which don't offer clear topics to discuss."

c. competitive analysis

Through insights I gathered in user interviews, contextual inquiries, and secondary research, we learned what different apps people were turning to to find friends and why — and where these apps were falling short.

Using this analysis in combination with the qualitative & quantitative data I collected, we could define Partake's value proposition, ensure we satisfy any unmet needs, and bring a unique solution to the market.

	bumble	meetup	nextdoor	friender
Friendship focused	✗	✗		✗
Interest-based algorithm		✗		✗
Events		✗	✗	
Group chats	✗	✗		
Filter by age groups	✗	✗		✗
Modern UI	✗		✗	✗
Market adoption	✗	✗	✗	
Adopted by 18-24 y/os	✗			

user personas

- a. busy bee
- b. penny pincher
- c. user stories

We needed to put ourselves in the shoes of key user personas — who embody the goals and frustrations of our target users — to make design decisions as efficiently and definitively as possible.

As such, we'll evaluate personas and stories for two representative groups: those who are short on time, and penny pinchers.

a.



Meghan Dawson, 22 *busy bee*

Family: Dog

Occupation: Vet Tech

Goals

- Be reliable at work and to her dog
- Open up to new people and know what things to talk about, preferably about things she's interested in, given what little time she has

Frustrations

- "I hate feeling like I have to search high and low for my people."
- "Visiting friends want to go out to bars to help me meet people, but I feel like it's so hard to actually make meaningful connections that way."
- "I cannot be gone for hours on end with a dog that depends on me."

"As busy as I am, I wish someone could take control of creating and fostering my social life for me."

Meghan is a recent graduate who earned her Bachelor's degree from Indiana University South Bend, where she commuted from home. She lived in the South Bend area all her life, and everyone she knows was there. However, she was forced from her comfort zone when she got the opportunity to work as a vet tech in Kansas City. Now, when she doesn't work, she has to take care of her dog and just wants to relax in front of the TV. Loneliness is catching up to her though, and she's considering joining literally any available clubs in Kansas City just to find friends.

b.



Allen Joshwa, 23

penny pincher

Family: Lives alone

Occupation: Data Scientist

Goals

- Save money
- Participate in activities he likes with friends, and not just online given how much he uses his computer for work
- Offer others opportunity to meet up to play pickup basketball or flag football

Frustrations

- "Without knowing anyone — to play basketball or football and join a league — if there even is one — I have to pay a bunch of money, just to play with a bunch of older people I wouldn't really care to hang out with. No offense to old people."

"I want to hope that there are others who want to do things — even niche things in a small city like South Bend — without having to spend hundreds on drinks or membership fees."

Allen works remotely in data science for a company based in Chicago, but he chooses to live in South Bend to save money. Although he's from the area, his friends have moved away to pursue career opportunities in other cities. And, while trying to meet new people doesn't stress him out, he feels he's already seen all that South Bend has to offer and doubts he'll find anyone new his age who enjoys doing the same things. The fact that there are so few local sports clubs — and none that actually align with his interests — doesn't help change his opinion.

C. user stories



"As a young dog mom alone in a big city and who struggles to find time to meet people, I want to easily meet others with similar interests and know what I'm getting into in advance, so I don't waste any of my little 'me time.'"



"As a young professional in a smaller city, I want to avoid paying large sums on memberships to any of the few clubs that are available here, especially if the club itself doesn't interest me or isn't conducive to meeting people my age."

preliminary design

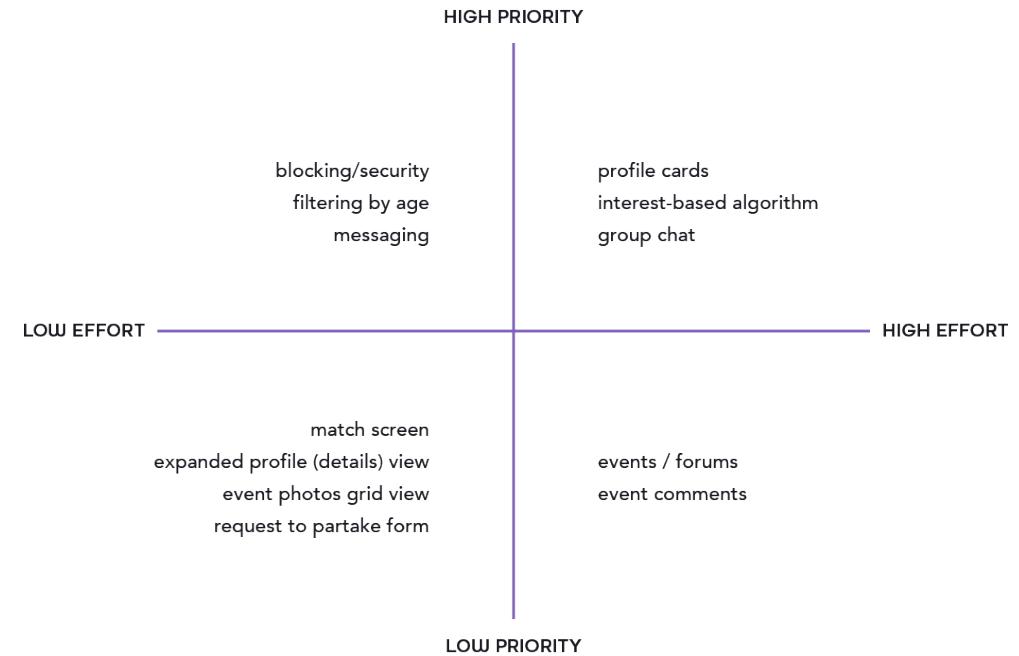
- a. priority mapping
- b. paper wireframes
- c. usability studies

It was important to prioritize possible features to include, to provide a basis for the design and direction for early prototypes. Then, I enlisted a few users to participate in usability studies, to determine if we were on the right track.

a. priority mapping

Plotting a list of important features (identified through user research) helped isolate what was critical for the minimum viable product (MVP).

This was especially useful considering how little time we were allotted for development. We needed to refine the vital features efficiently and early to ensure a relatively complete deliverable.



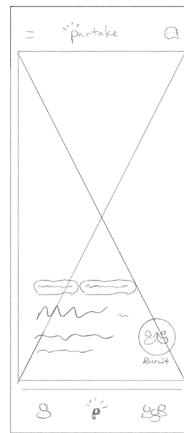
b. paper wireframes

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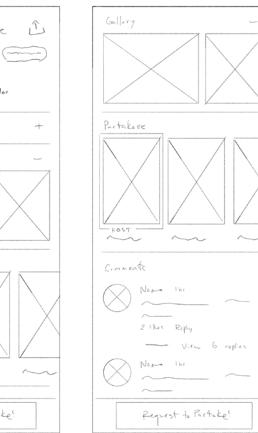
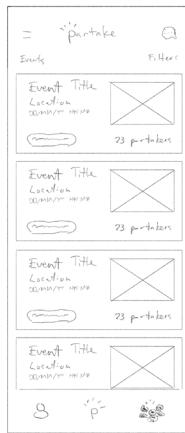
splash



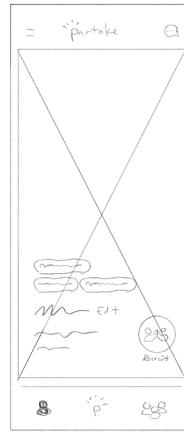
home



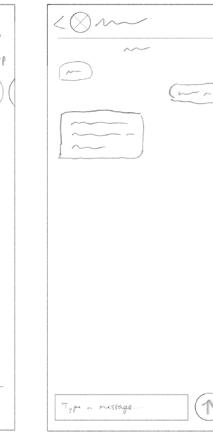
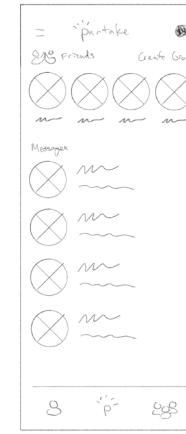
events



profile



messages

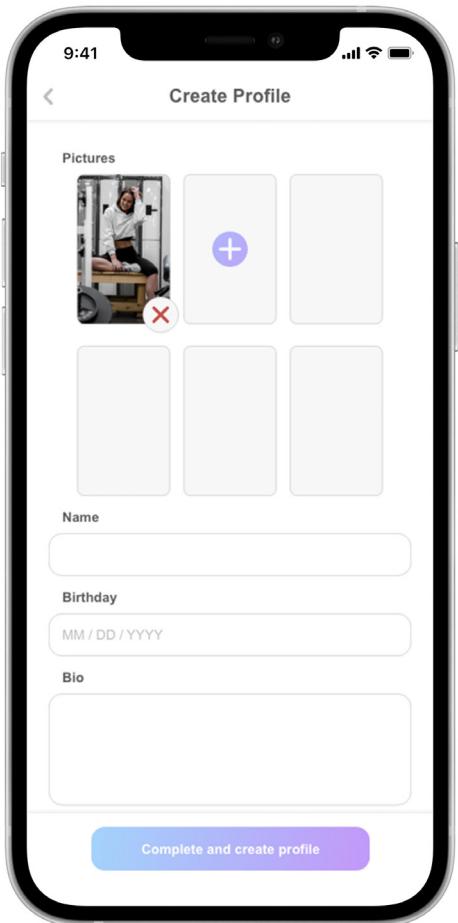
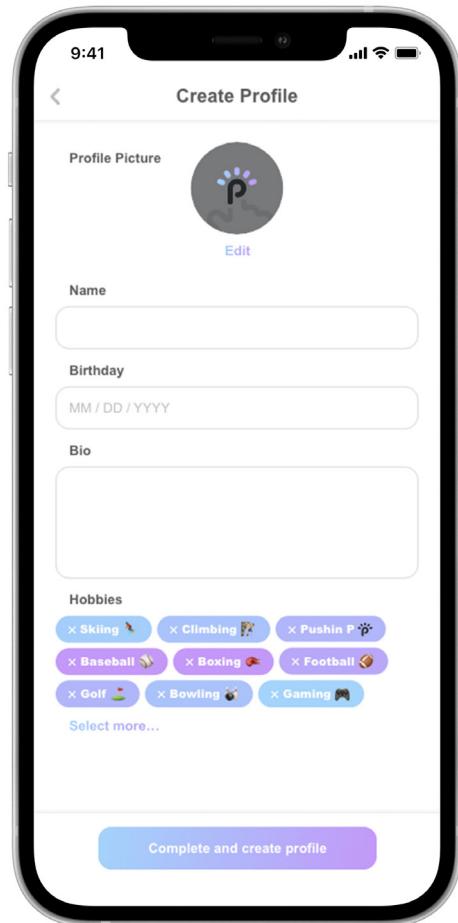


c. usability studies

Conducting usability studies with four participants allowed me to gain some insight about some of features in the high-fidelity (hi-fi) prototype I prepared, before finalizing the design and putting on my dev cap.

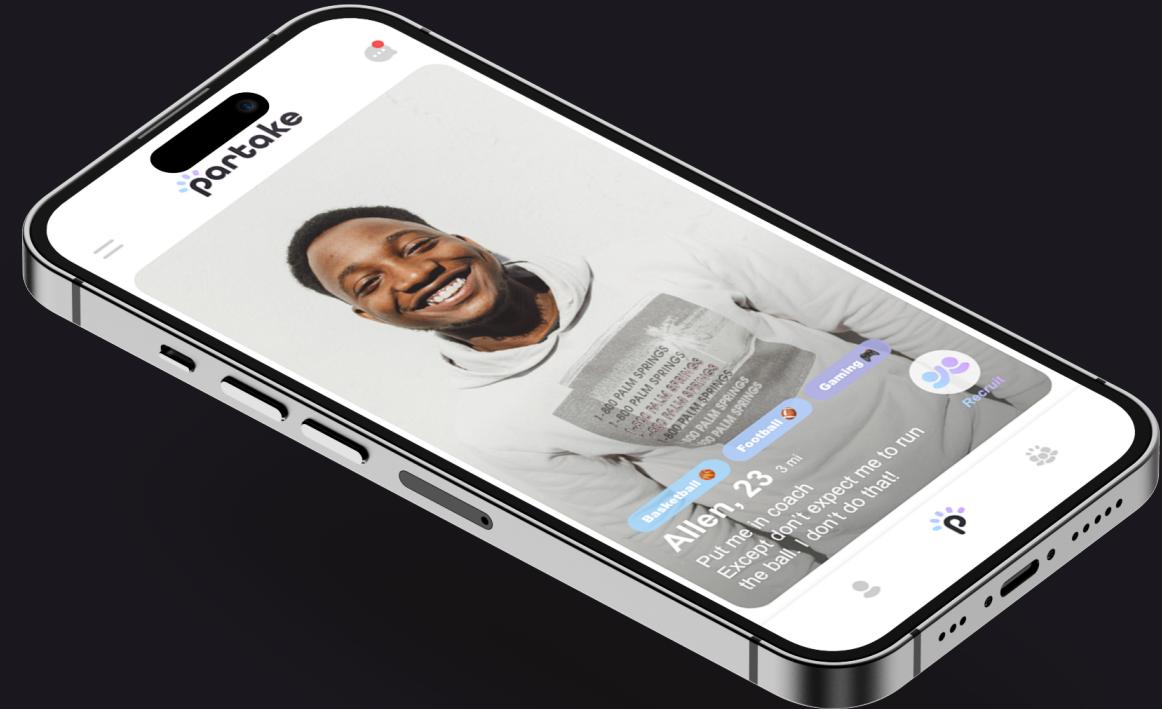
One improvement I learned I could make came from the suggestion to make the Profile Editor and Onboard views similar to Tinder's or Bumble's, which include more fields with fun prompts and the option to add more photos, to allow more user expression. Adding more fields wasn't a priority for the MVP, but I felt the need to improve the photos display.

onboard



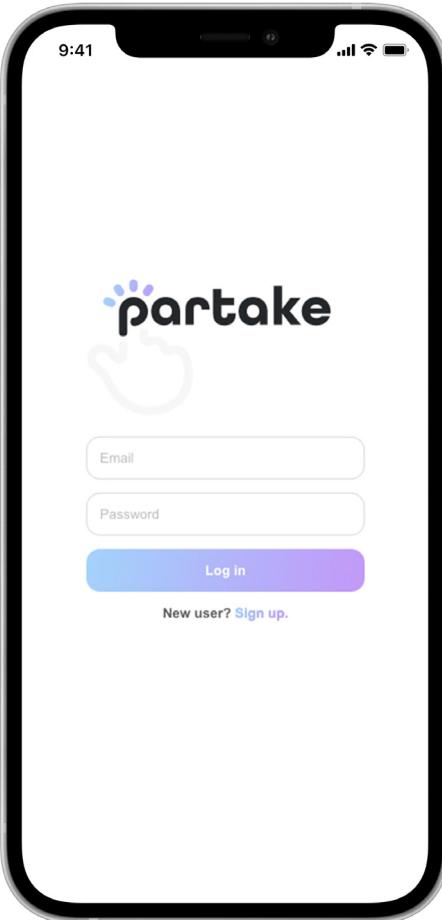
"final" design

- a. high-fidelity prototype
- b. style guide

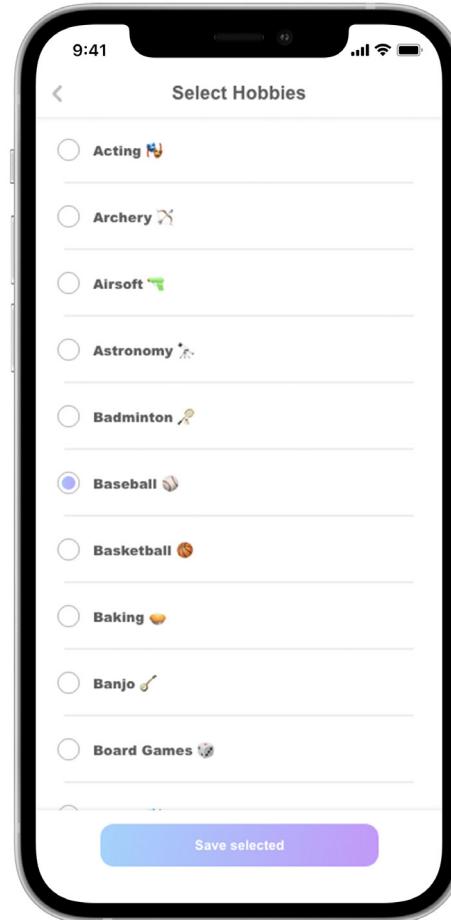
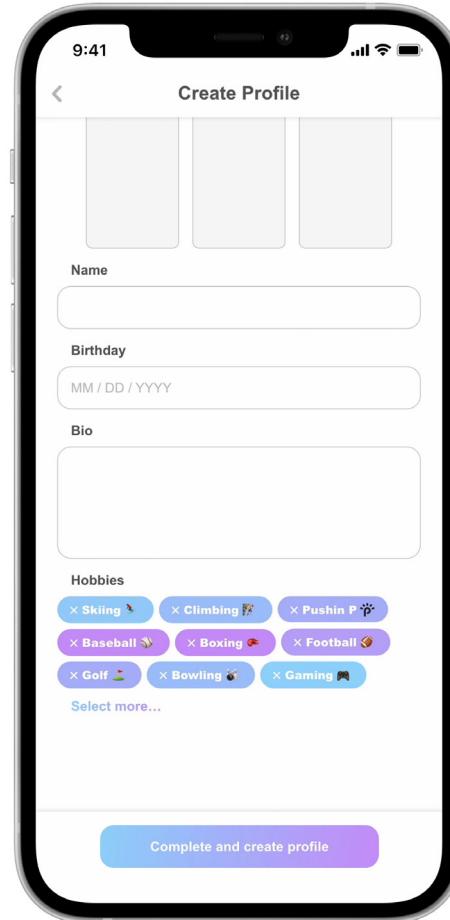
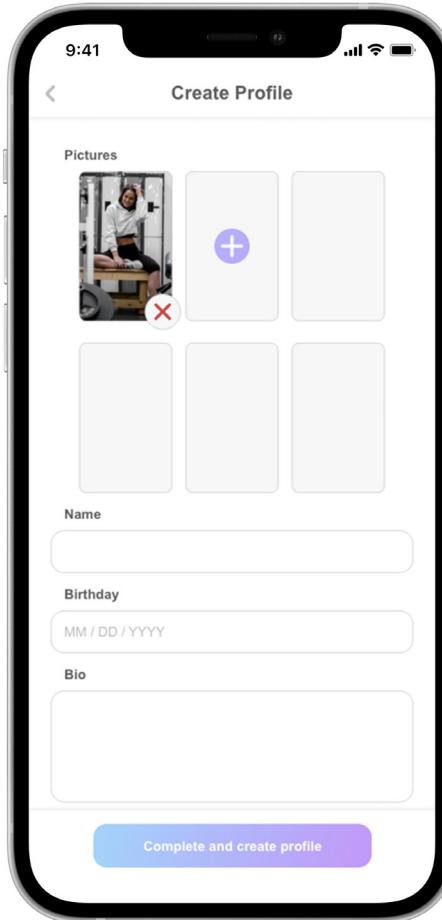


hi-fi prototype

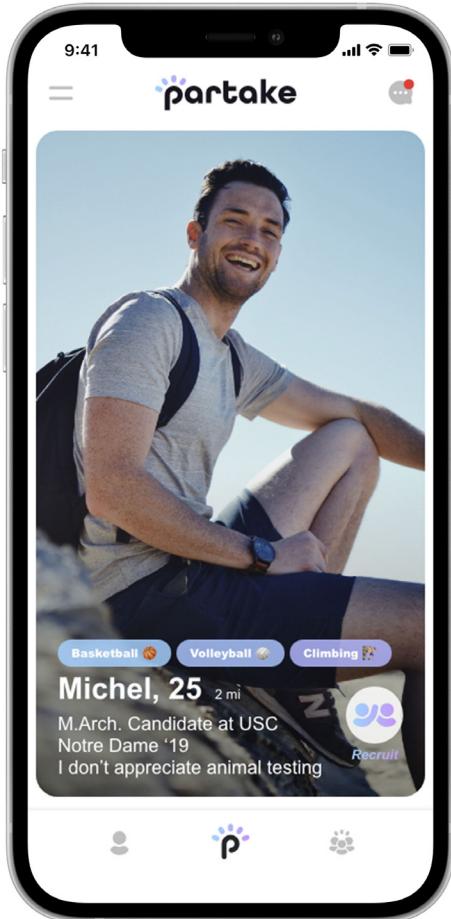
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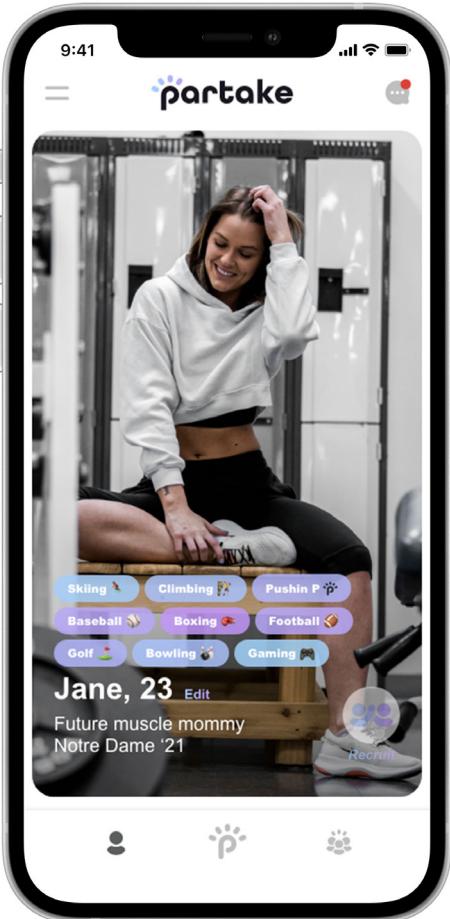
onboard



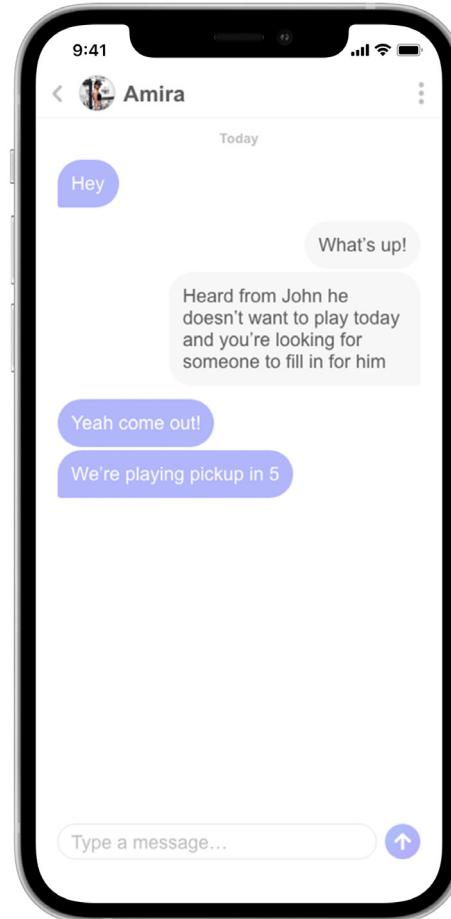
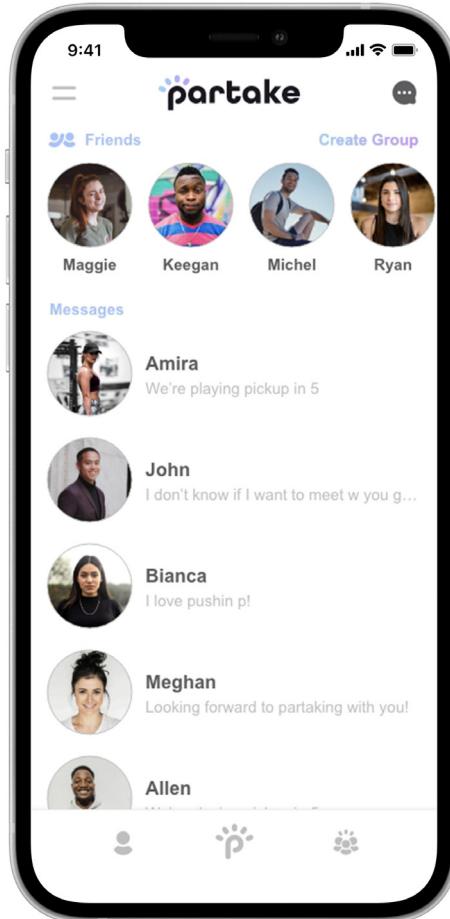
home



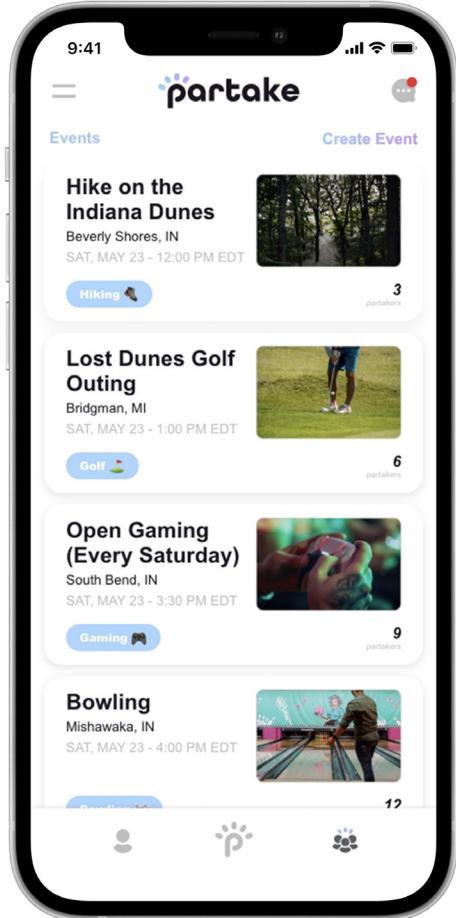
profile



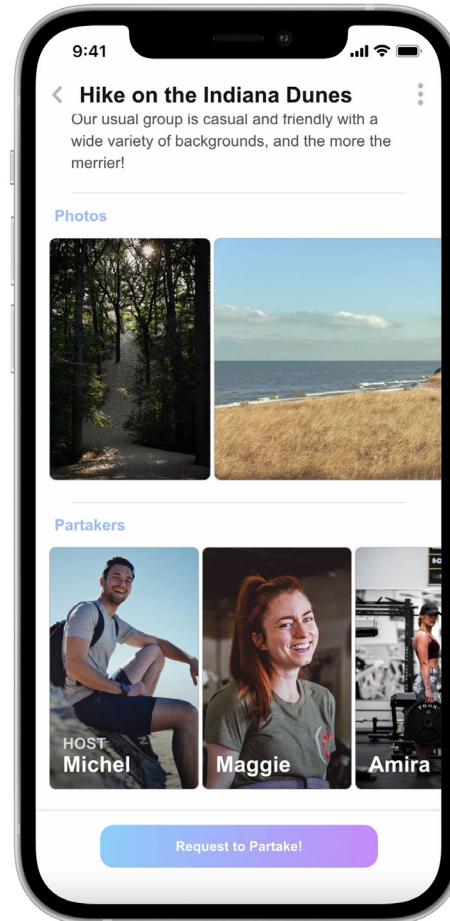
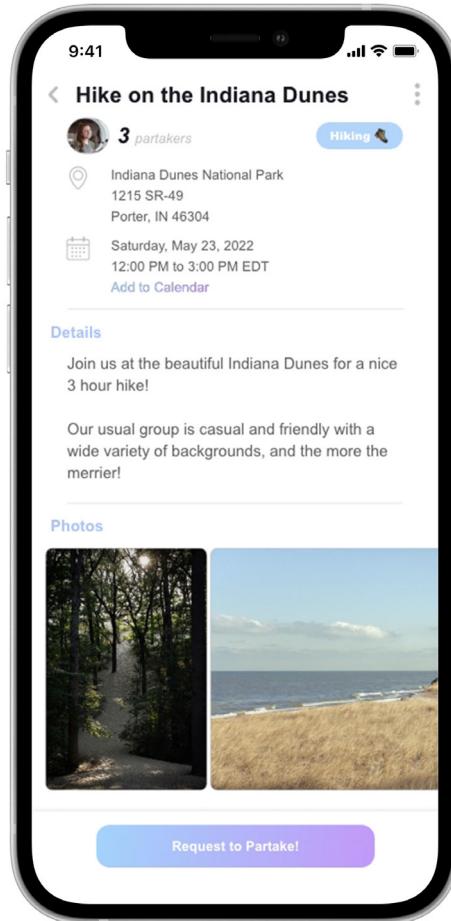
messages



events list



event details



style guide

Applying color sparingly guarantees users can focus on people and events and be more effectively drawn to interactive elements and calls to action (CTAs).

Using gradients blending a cool blue to a bright lilac, I was able to convey a nonchalant and easygoing tone, while keeping it fun and exciting.

In keeping with that same tone, I wanted the logo to appear Keith Haring-esque, while tying in the hobby pillboxes, which are unique to Partake.

colors



type

AaBbCc

All Round Gothic, Bold
logotype, expression

AaBbCc

Arial, Bold
headings

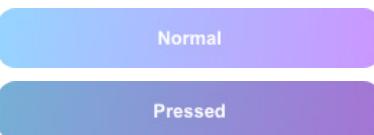
AaBbCc

Arial Black, Regular
pillboxes

AaBbCc

Arial, Regular
body text

buttons

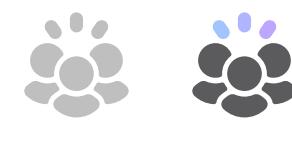


call to action



Normal
Pressed

inline



nav - inactive nav - active

logos



wordmark



brandmark

conclusion

Time to reflect.

What went well? What could be improved?

- a. summary
- b. next steps

summary

Knowing we only would have a couple of weeks to implement the design, I really had to prioritize designing certain features over others.

So, I felt the need to emphasize the Home, Events, and Messaging views. So long as users could find others with common interests and also events to participate in those interests, we would have addressed the majority of user problems we defined and thus provided users the most value possible, given our time constraints.

Though I wish I'd started with a lo-fi prototype to save time in the prototype and test stages instead of rushing to the hi-fi prototype, we accomplished just that.

next steps

That said, my work is not finished.

Granted more time, I would have included the ability to tap on a hobby pill box to show Events filtered by that hobby, the ability to include a note when a user requests to partake in a private Event, a Comments feature in an Event's details, more Partaker details when a user engages with their profile, etc.

I would have also appreciated more time to talk with potential users and go through additional usability studies, for a more iterative, user-centric design process. In addition, I'd like to design and implement the app on the web.



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