

Common Ground:

*Building A Better Seattle Through Improved Democratization
of The City's Design Review Process*

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School of Art + Art History + Design

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Abstract

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The city of Seattle has been one of the fastest growing cities in the US for many years. This growth has led to a need for increased urban density. Demolition and construction has been a way to accommodate the population surge, but many citizens voice concern over the changing fabric of their neighborhoods. Studies in environmental and social psychology have discovered that the sooner citizens are engaged within the development process of new buildings, the likelier they are to view it as a positive change. Common Ground is a platform for citizens, city planners, and design review board members to engage each other early on in the architectural development process through the city's 'Design Review Process'.



common ground

Common Ground:

Building A Better Seattle Through a Greater

Democratization of The City's Design Review Process

Erin Wilson

MDes Thesis in Interaction Design

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W UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

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PREFACE

I initially attended graduate school to understand how I could better integrate interaction design within 3D physical space. With my background as a space designer for many large scale architectural projects, I noticed a functional gap between the design of interactive interfaces and the 'brick and mortar' physical space. Both seemed to merely coexist while operating in a solitary manner with a divided message and design language. While this was my initial thinkspace, I later found myself gravitating towards interaction design as a means to help *shape* the space itself. Because Seattle is a city that is rapidly changing through construction and architecture, I began to notice a common unrest among citizens that voiced concern over the changing fabric of neighborhoods. I also have observed the change in architectural aesthetics over my short decade of living in Seattle, but was unsure of how or where to offer my expertise. I studied certain programs within the city that dealt with "wicked problems" such as housing affordability, historic preservation, and artistic and civil protest of gentrification.

It wasn't until I discovered Seattle's Design Review Process that I found to be what I believed as the best way to affect the architectural voice of the city through participatory design. While this type of process is unique to only a few cities in the country as a means to get citizens involved in architectural development, understanding and engaging with Seattle's version proved difficult. As someone with an intimate knowledge of architectural terms and procedures, I too found this process daunting. With the help and guidance of design and city planning experts, I believe that this project is one way to narrow the gap between city development and citizen involvement. While there is much more work to be done to make this project a reality, it aims to help build a bridge between interaction design, 3D space design and civic participatory planning and development.

ABSTRACT

The city of Seattle has been one of the fastest growing cities in the US for many years. This growth has led to a need for increased urban density. Demolition and construction has been a way to accommodate the population surge, but many citizens voice concern over the changing fabric of their neighborhoods. Studies in environmental and social psychology have discovered that the sooner citizens are engaged within the development process of new buildings, the likelier they are to view it as a positive change. Common Ground is a platform for citizens, city planners, and design review board members to engage each other early on in the architectural development process through the city's 'Design Review Process'.

SIGNIFICANCE

Seattle has ranked as one of the top 5 fastest growing cities for nearly five consecutive years. Because the geography of Seattle is mostly bound by water, demolition and construction have become common solutions to accommodating increased urban density. But while density is being better addressed, it can create other social issues such as, but not limited to: vandalism, protests, general fear of change, and an active blocking of developments despite the need for increased density. "Common Ground" is one example of a platform that can connect citizens, city planners, and design review board members to tackle concerns and questions within the already established city process of design review.

BACKGROUND

For years, Seattle has been ranked as one of the fastest growing large cities in the US. This growth has presented challenges to maintain livability standards, especially when it comes to the need for increased urban density. Many cities have the ability to expand geographically to meet the demands of a growing population. Seattle, however, being bound mostly by water, in addition to zoning regulations, has to rely on demolition and reconstruction as its main method of expansion. This method not only helps to increase density, but it also is a much more sustainable solution than urban sprawl.

While Seattle needs greater density— demolition, construction, and large scale renovations of buildings must be well-aligned with a community to prevent backlash from residents that do not agree with the intended land developments (Manzo, 2012). These developments, regardless of the potential added benefits, can be perceived by some community members as a threat because they will change the physical fabric of the neighborhood. Studies in community and environmental psychology show that the earlier citizens are brought into the development process, the likelier they are to view the proposed project as a positive change (Manzo, 2012).

Progressing towards a more dense urban environment is unavoidable as the population here continues to increase. Fortunately, Seattle is one of just a few cities in the US that allows its citizens to be involved in this process. Seattle's "Design Review" program was established in 1994 to encourage better site planning, design aesthetics, and to improve communication and participation between the city, the community, and the development teams. This is one of the many tools the city employs to create a better urban environment, giving everyday citizens a voice in the design of most new multi-family and commercial buildings.

While this program activates certain citizens to participate in the planning process, many still do not have either the time to participate, an understanding of the process, or knowledge that it exists. "Common Ground" lays out a more democratic system to alert, educate, collaborate, implement, and archive existing and future building developments while keeping in context with current city building procedures.

BACKGROUND

Thesis Project Model: Initial Tripartite Method

Because Seattle's Design Review Process is comprised of many participants, both public and private, as well as both physical and digital platforms, a simple tripartite model was formed to understand what components needed to speak to each other so the citizen journey could be comprehensive.

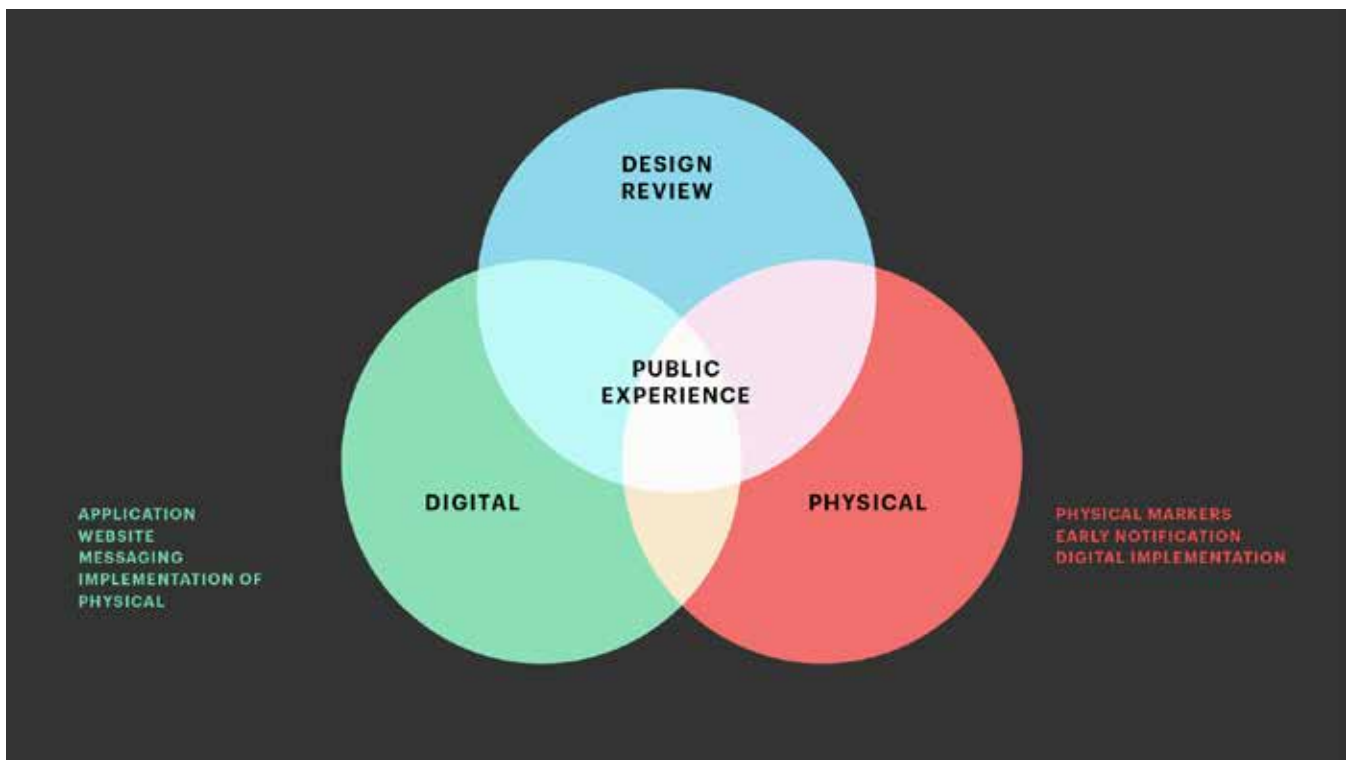


Figure 1

It was crucial that the public experience of the Design Review Process seamlessly integrated physical and digital aspects.

RELATED WORK

Courbanize: Cambridge, MA (2013-Present)

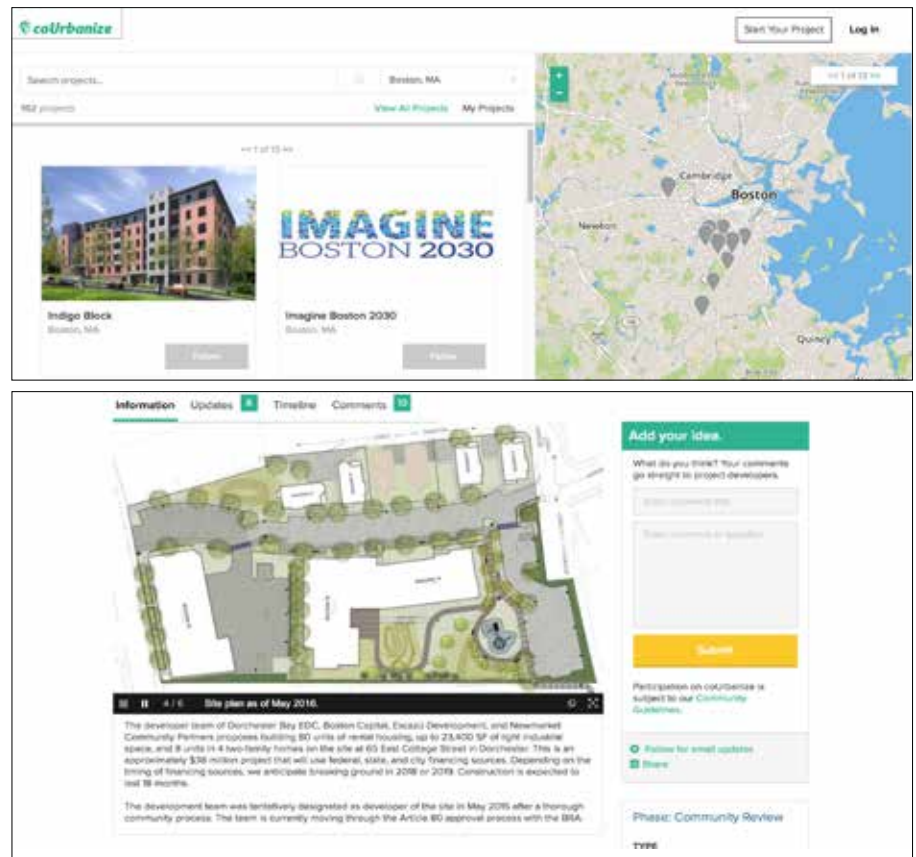
<http://www.courbanize.com/>

Founded at MIT's School of Architecture and Planning.

Courbanize began as a project for a city planner, building technologist and community residents to get over two big hurdles in urban planning. First, most community members didn't have time to go to public meetings. Much like Seattle's design review process, these Boston meetings determine the future of their local neighborhoods. Second, the facts about projects are very difficult to understand, especially traffic studies and engineering reports. Courbanize transforms the process to make it easier for more residents to learn about projects and understand the impact to their immediate neighborhood.

Figure 2

Screenshots of Courbanize's website and features.



RELATED WORK

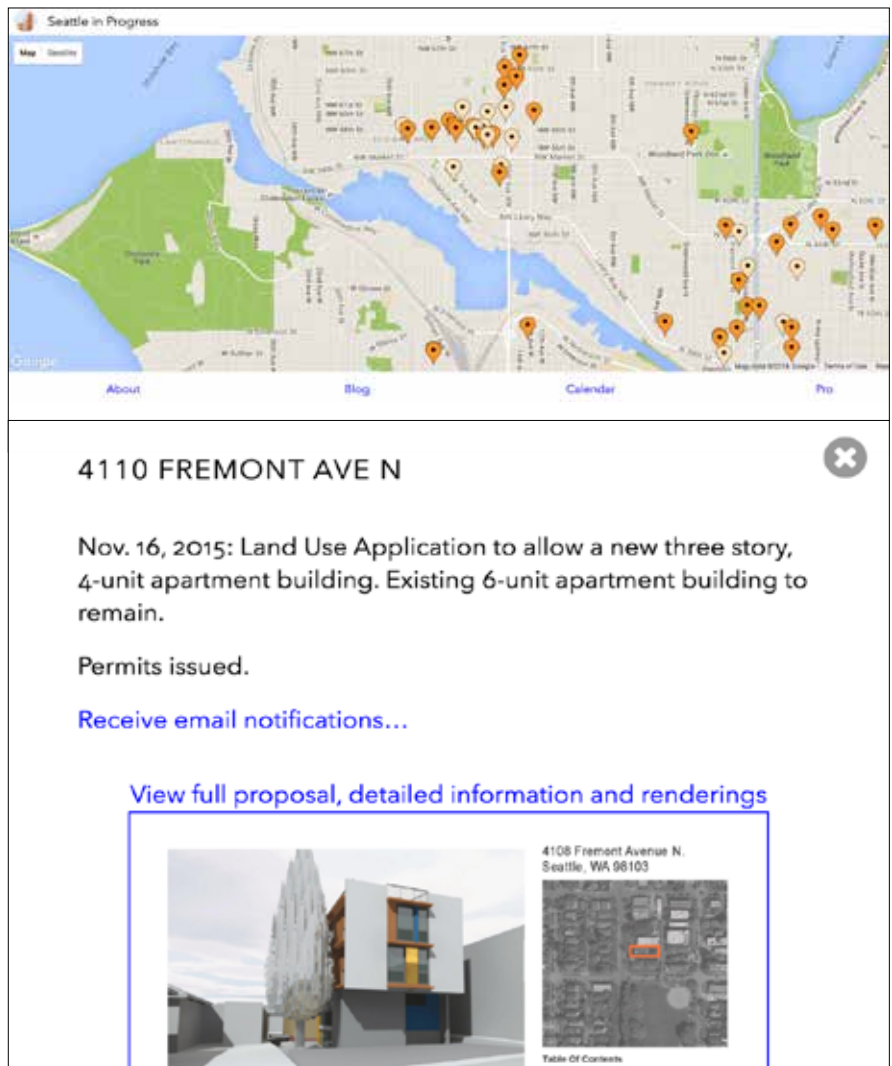
Seattle In Progress (2012): Seattle, WA

<https://www.seattleinprogress.com/>

“Seattle In Progress” is the most similar to Common Ground in terms of mobile offerings and obvious geography. While it does pinpoint where developments are happening throughout the city and supplies email alerts to new phases being developed- it does not give a direct line to the city to comment on current and proposed projects, have commonly tagged keywords, followup with city actions, or have the ability to redline and identify concerns with the actual architectural documents.

Figure 3

Screenshots of “Seattle in Progress” and core features



RELATED WORK

FutureFront: New York, New York (2013)

<http://www.crowdsourcedcity.com/>

“FutureFront” used a physical poster campaign to solicit feedback via text messaging from community members about potential uses for vacant storefronts. FutureFront encouraged users to learn about the history of the sites they visited while thinking about future possibilities. A series of interventions were used to crowd source citizen feedback on what the future public programming should be in various storefronts being put to use by malls in New York City’s Lower East Side. By producing print posters which prompted passersby to text in their answer, FutureFront provided a digital + analog method of gathering data in real time. The team found that prominently displaying the instructions for the texting-based survey was critical for improving participation.

Figure 4
Screenshots of FutureFront’s website as well as core features



RELATED WORK

Hybrid Space Lab: City Kit (2012): New York, New York

<http://www.world-architects.com/pages/insight/hybrid-space-lab>

City Kit is a combined urban planning program and computer game designed to help residents upgrade their neighborhoods. The project was developed for the Hong Kong Social Housing Authority to target young people who were spending more time playing computer games than exploring the outside world. City Kit aimed to turn these young citizens into the “makers” of the city, providing a bridge between the users of the urban environment and the experts—the architects and the urban planners. The goal of City Kit was to help citizens revalue their local surroundings and incorporate the new layers created into the game’s virtual world. Making small modifications to the personal and physical environment in digital space changes the experience of living in the real world.

Figure 5

Screenshots of City Kit’s features and comment mode



UNDERSTANDING SEATTLE'S DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

Seattle's Design Review Program was established in 1994 as a step to better connect the public to developments in the city of Seattle. The Design Review committee and its volunteer board of local architects, urban planners, and designers review private development projects in Seattle. They analyze multiple aspects of a building and its site, including some of the following:

The overall appearance of the building

How project proposals relate to adjacent sites and the overall street frontage

How project proposals relate to unusual aspects of the site, like views or slopes

Pedestrian and vehicular access to the site

Quality of materials, open space, and landscaping

Seattle's Design Review only holds public meetings for 'full' Design Review that includes review by city staff and the Design Review Boards. Full Design review is for larger architectural projects that affect more of the surrounding neighborhood character and square footage. These can be, but are not limited to, large mixed use developments such as condo/retail spaces and large scale residential proposals. This review process includes an opportunity for public comment and involvement. Currently, there are multiple explanations of the Design Review process that are available to the public. After meeting with Lisa, a city land use planner, I was able to get a better understanding of the steps to the process. They are as follows:

1. Developer of property applies for pre application of land use and gets coached by the city planning department about the steps and expectations of the process.
2. Early Design Guidance application (EDG) is submitted. This is the step where the developer and partnering architecture firm submit the proposal which includes plans for what they intend to develop on the property.
3. EDG meeting notice is issued to the public. This may include, but is not limited to mailers, large land use signs, and alerts on neighborhood blog posts.

UNDERSTANDING SEATTLE'S DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

4. The public meeting is held. I will explain what is involved with this more in the next section.
5. A report is issued containing the outcomes and discussions of the public meeting. Individual citizen concerns are not well documented in this phase.
6. A Master Use Permit (MUP) application is submitted by the developer and architect. This is in preparation to begin construction. By this point, most of the design concerns and questions will have been addressed by the Design Review Board. The public does not have much leverage after the initial Early Design Guidance meeting.
7. MUP is reviewed by the Design Review Board
8. The public meeting notice for the final design review is issued.
9. The second, and final, design review meeting is held. The public may attend and comment, but it mostly is to showcase the final design for the development.
10. The report is issued for what is the recommended design for the development.
11. MUP decision is published for the public.
12. MUP is issued
13. Construction begins

Many of these steps are unknown to the public and also follow aggressive time lines. Before the initial EDG meeting, the public has a maximum of 10 days to review and understand complicated architectural documents that illustrate things such as shadow tables and light studies, egress, and property adjacencies. In addition to this, each neighborhood has their own specific neighborhood guideline packet that indicates regulations for the developers and architects to follow. Complicated architectural documents as well as multi-page neighborhood guidelines can and do create frustration among the citizens trying to participate.

UNDERSTANDING SEATTLE'S DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS



Figure 6

After understanding the SDR process, I designed a model of where I would focus my design. Items in blue are the phases that would be included in my design as they are the phases that relate to the public. Comment deadlines for the public were noted as well as areas where additional information where needed (red).

UNDERSTANDING SEATTLE'S DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

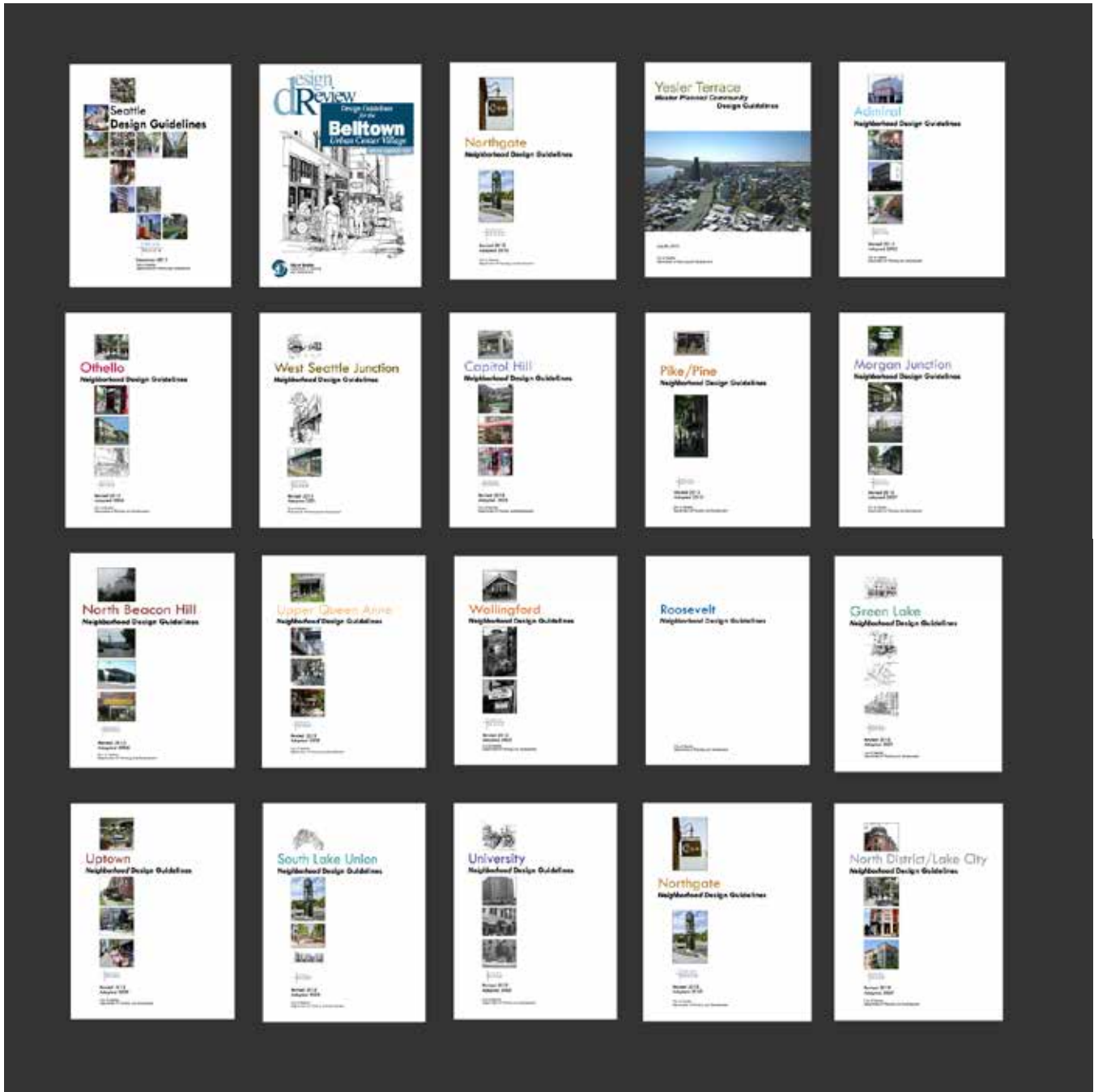


Figure 7
Example of all of Seattle's neighborhood guidelines booklets along with the city of Seattle's guidelines

DIRECTOR OF DESIGN REVIEW IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE INTERVIEWS

As I began my research to understand Seattle's Design Review Process, I quickly came to the conclusion that I could not learn the program in a vacuum. I reached out to the department of city planning and was fortunate enough to have Lisa Rutzick respond to my inquiry. Lisa Rutzick is a land use planner for the city of Seattle as well as the director for the Design Review Improvement Committee. Over the course of this project, we met twice as well as corresponded over many emails to make sure that the project was founded on the factual principles of the existing process and that the resulting design was rooted in reality.

Main insights from the initial clarification meeting with Lisa are as follows:

1. There are multiple places where the design review process is explained to the public and many of them are not the same. Mailers, websites, and public pamphlets have different versions of the phases of design review, sometimes even with a different number of steps to the process.
2. Engaging the public to offer design suggestions to the developers and architects can get tricky. Design Review should allow architects and designers to do their job as freely as possible with the neighborhood guidelines acting as a checklist for the public.
3. During the public meetings, it is clear that the public does not understand exactly what it is that they can affect. They need a platform that can educate them on the merits and limits of the Design Review Process
4. Currently, the majority of the public is not notified of a land use project until the large land use sign is installed on the intended development. It is also important to not have any additional early engagement before this notification to be about design. This could set a precedent that could eventually let down those citizens that wish to participate.
5. After the public meeting takes place, there is no way for the public to follow where their comments and suggestions go. They have little information on what is taken and utilized versus what is never dealt with.
6. The Design Review Committee would like more interaction between the public and developers architects and city planners.

DESIGN REVIEW MEETING ATTENDANCE AND INSIGHTS

Within my research to better understand this process, I attended approximately 15 public meetings over the course of 4 months. Throughout these meetings, I recorded 3, and took notes and photos for the remainder. The following are insights that I gathered from the culmination of this research. The format of the public Design Review meeting is as follows:

20 minutes for the architectural team to present their design

20 minutes for the public to respond to the design

20 minutes for the volunteer design review board to address the design
(the public must stay silent during this portion)

Figure 8

The public attending one of Seattle's Early Design Guidance Meetings



Insight 1:

The neighborhood guidelines account for many things such as: Height, bulk and scale of the building, sunlight and natural ventilation, relationship to the environment, plants, trees and shrubs, architectural character, street level interaction, and exterior materials and finishes. The public was mostly concerned with sunlight, trees, character, and materials and finishes

DESIGN REVIEW MEETING ATTENDANCE AND INSIGHTS

Insight 2:

There are many things that the public addresses that Design Review cannot change. This includes parking spaces, emotional connection to place, and halting the pending development.

“Where the hell am I going to park now?!”

-meeting attendee quote

Insight 3:

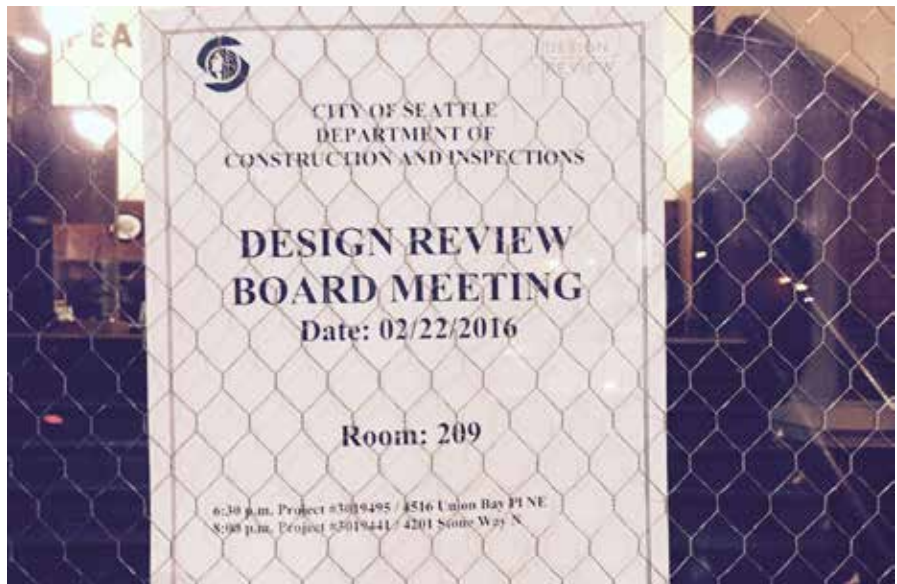
During the 20 minutes that the public has to discuss issues, much of the time is taken up by emotional reactions to the development in general.

“Why can’t all these new people just move to Tacoma?”

-meeting attendee quote

Figure 9

Example of door sign for public Design Review meeting



Insight 4:

When meetings are overwhelmingly attended, most disapprove of the intended land use.

Insight 5:

When people do disapprove, they collaborate, study, and cross reference the architectural documents against the neighborhood guidelines so they can prepare detailed notes to ‘make their case’ against the development.

DESIGN REVIEW MEETING ATTENDANCE AND INSIGHTS

Insight 6:

Most attendees are property owners, or are supporters of property owners that live on or near the proposed building site.

Insight 7:

After comments are submitted in verbal and written form, there is no process in place to know if these comments were considered or implemented by the city.

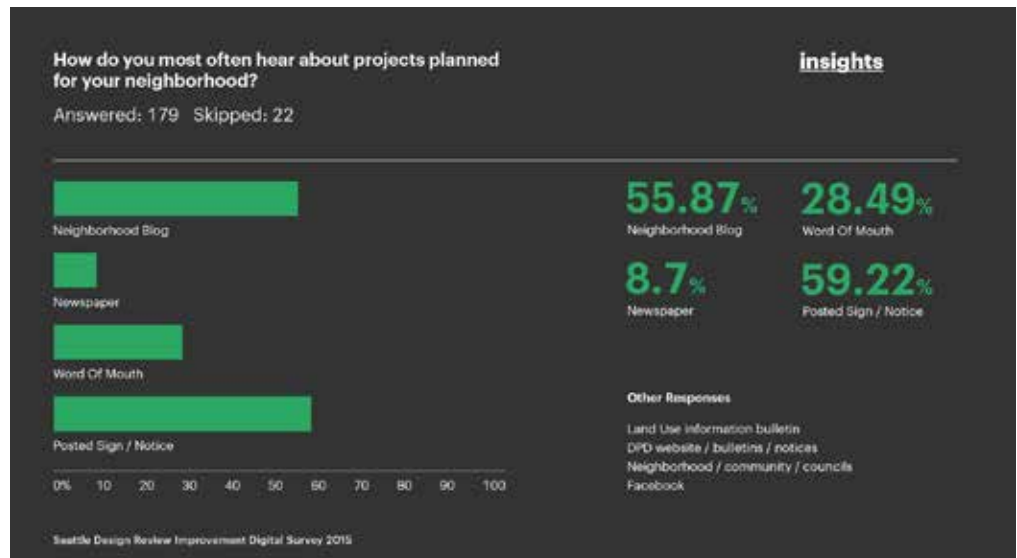
Insight 8:

Many of these meetings take place in the evening and are difficult to attend for people not working first shift, or for those with prior commitments and/or families. Meetings are also less attended during warm and sunny weather- although this could also be a correlation to the significance of the project moreso than the weather itself.

In 2015, Seattle's Design Review Committee understood some of these difficulties and conducted an online survey to understand better how the public wanted to participate. What follows are a few of the results that reiterate the need of a digital participatory platform.

Figure 10

Graphic representation of one of Seattle's Design Review Improvement Committee online survey questions



DESIGN REVIEW MEETING ATTENDANCE AND INSIGHTS

Figure 11
Graphic representation of one of
Seattle's Design Review Improvement
Committee online survey questions

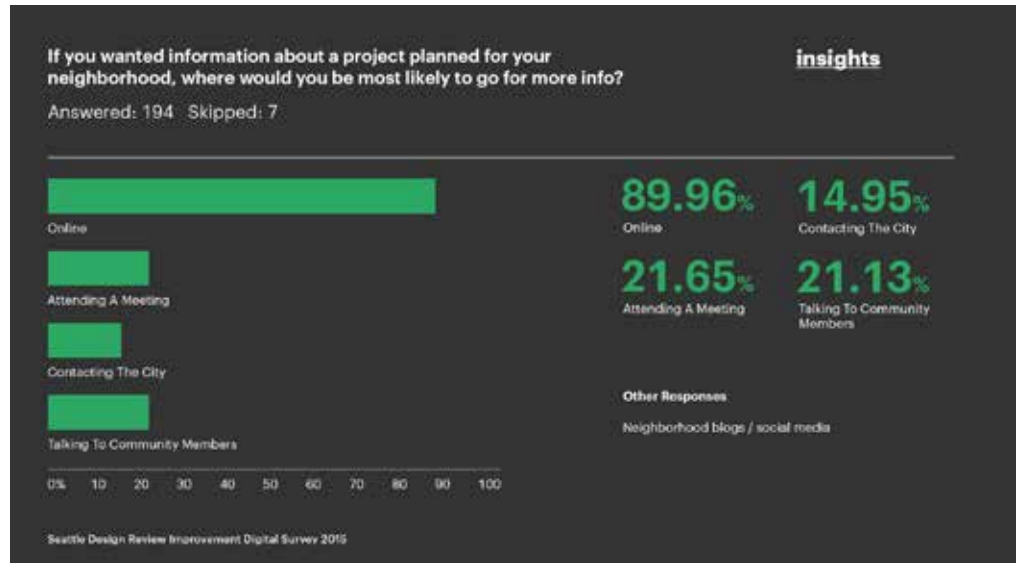
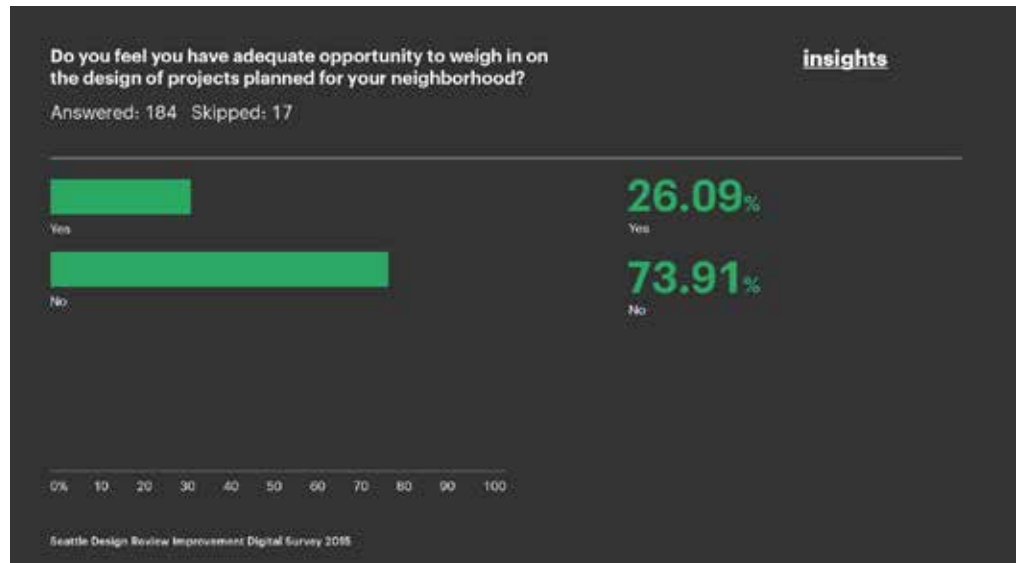


Figure 12
Graphic representation of one of
Seattle's Design Review Improvement
Committee online survey questions



CORE ATTRIBUTES

The core attributes of Common Ground are based off of insights which were distilled from both the primary and secondary research. These attributes were used as a foundation which distinguishes Common Ground from other related work and platforms which exist today. Geo-Sensitivity, Progressively disclosing Design Review phase information, and allowing citizens to prepare and be involved with meetings remotely were the 3 pillars that were the most important to the success of the final interface.



Figure 13
Core attributes of design

LOOK AND FEEL

As a portion of the design of the mobile interface, I explored two different themes for the look and feel. Both themes were tested with both Lisa Rutzick of Seattle's Design Review as well as a group of 10 randomly selected participants that were interested in digitally participating in the design review process. Ultimately, "Neighborhood Ties" resonated more with local neighborhood ideals.

Theme 1

"Neighborhood Ties"

Keeping within the character of Seattle's many unique and historic neighborhoods.

hyper-local/ conservative/ architectural/ clean



Figure 14

Look and Feel board:
"Neighborhood Ties"

LOOK AND FEEL

As a portion of the design of the mobile interface, I explored two different themes for the look and feel. Both themes were tested with both Lisa Rutzick of Seattle's Design Review as well as a group of 10 randomly selected participants that are interested in digitally participating in the design review process. Ultimately, "Neighborhood Ties" resonated more with local neighborhood ideals.

Theme 2

"Urban Zeitgeist"

The excitement in and of changing the landscape and creating a new Seattle.
energized / bold / progressive / futuristic



Figure 15

Look and Feel board:
"Urban Zeitgeist"

USER PERSONAS

User personas are a fictional representation of the goals and behavior of a hypothesized group of users. These fictional representations were created maintain a baseline of the goals of the final digital platform. Derived from research through public meetings, field expert interviews, and citizen questionnaires provided by the Design Review Improvement Committee, these representations are founded as the four main targeted potential clients to the final platform.

Figure 16
Public Personas used for design



USER PERSONAS

User personas are a fictional representation of the goals and behavior of a hypothesized group of users. These fictional representations were created maintain a baseline of the goals of the final digital platform. Derived from research through public meetings, field expert interviews, and citizen questionnaires provided by the Design Review Improvement Committee, these representations are founded as the four main targeted potential clients to the final platform.

Figure 17
City Personas used for design



CORE SCREENS AND FUNCTIONS

The core screens and functions of Common Ground are based off of insights which were distilled from the core attributes. These features are what distinguish it by the research that was gathered, but also the related work which displays many of the same goals as this thesis. Broken down into digestible parts, these core screens and functions follow the insights that led me to this main feature flow: Alert, Educate, Collaborate, Implement, and Archive.



Figure 18
Representation of citizen using Common
Ground's mobile application

CORE SCREENS AND FUNCTIONS/ ONBOARDING

ALERT/ EDUCATE/ COLLABORATE/ IMPLEMENT/ ARCHIVE

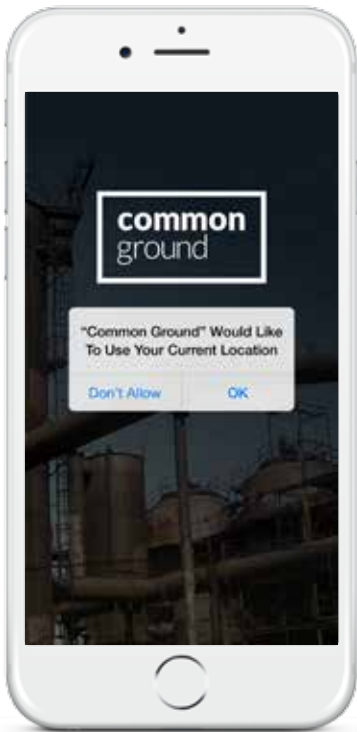


Figure 19
Mobile App features:
Geolocation optional



Figure 20
Mobile App features:
geographically relevant
neighborhood loading screens
(Wallingford, Seattle)

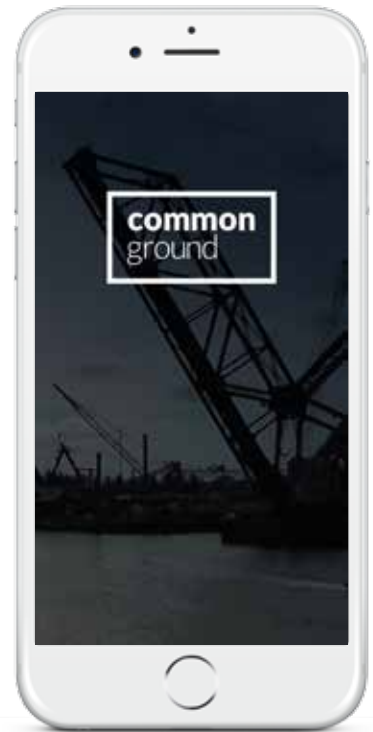


Figure 21
Mobile App features:
geographically relevant
neighborhood loading screens
(Ballard, Seattle)

CORE SCREENS AND FUNCTIONS/ ONBOARDING

ALERT/ EDUCATE/ COLLABORATE/ IMPLEMENT/ ARCHIVE

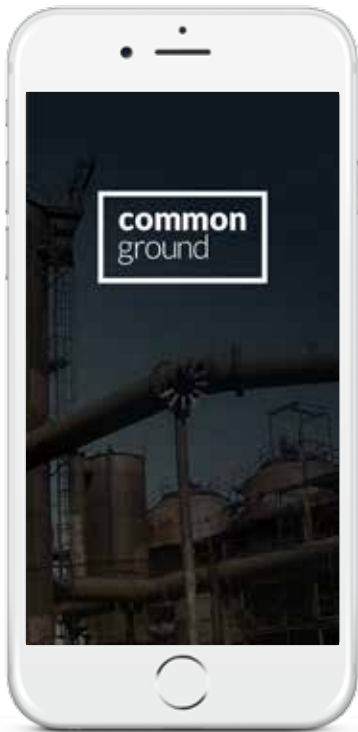


Figure 22
Mobile App features:
locally relevant loading screens
(Wallingford, Seattle)



Figure 23
Mobile App features:
Onboarding

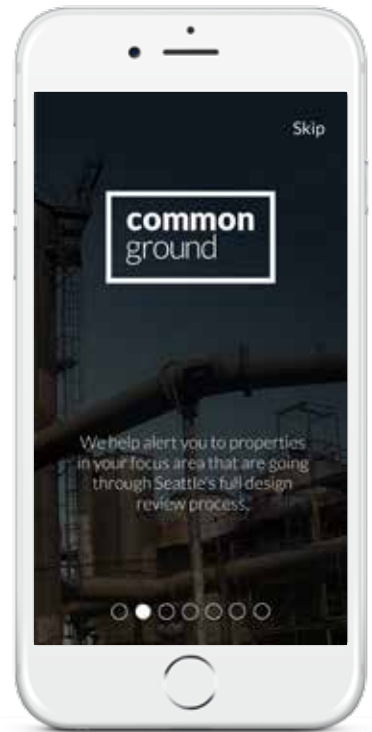


Figure 24
Mobile App features:
Onboarding

CORE SCREENS AND FUNCTIONS/ ONBOARDING

ALERT/ EDUCATE/ COLLABORATE/ IMPLEMENT/ ARCHIVE

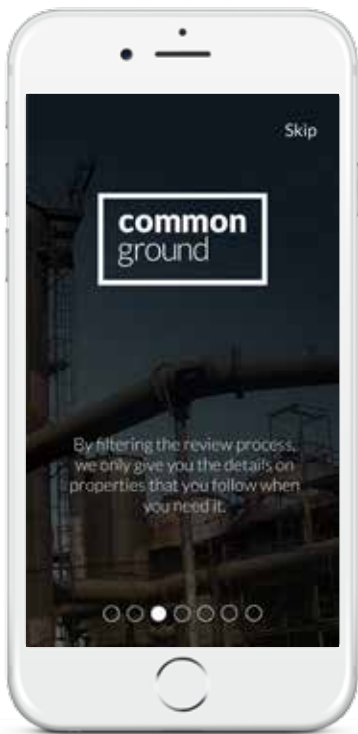


Figure 25
Mobile App features:
Onboarding

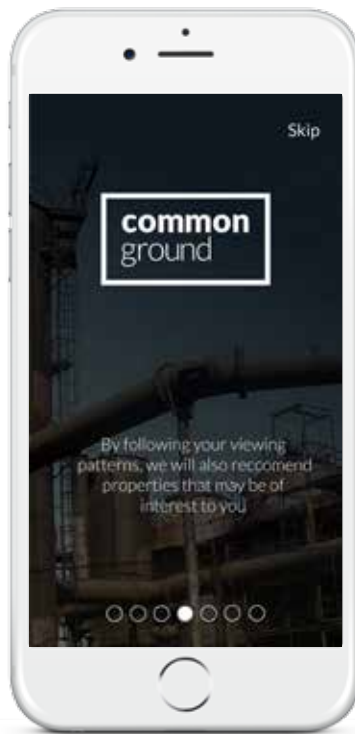


Figure 26
Mobile App features:
Onboarding



Figure 27
Mobile App features:
Onboarding

CORE SCREENS AND FUNCTIONS/ ONBOARDING

ALERT/ EDUCATE/ COLLABORATE/ IMPLEMENT/ ARCHIVE



Figure 28
Mobile App features:
Onboarding



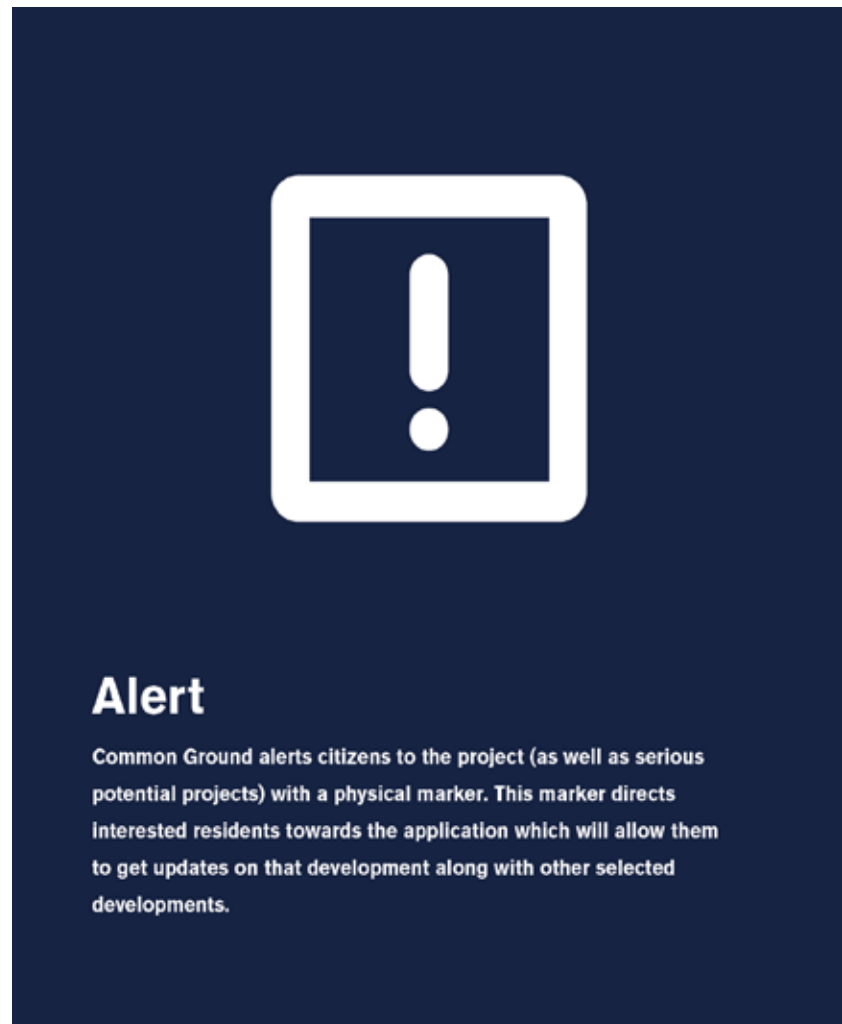
Figure 29
Mobile App features:
Onboarding

CORE SCREENS AND FUNCTIONS

ALERT/ EDUCATE/ COLLABORATE/ IMPLEMENT/ ARCHIVE

Figure 30

Alert icon and explanation. Also used as board in the Henry exhibit.



CORE SCREENS AND FUNCTIONS

ALERT/ EDUCATE/ COLLABORATE/ IMPLEMENT/ ARCHIVE



Figure 31
Physical sign used to alert the public of a pending or approved development



Figure 32
Physical sign in context

CORE SCREENS AND FUNCTIONS

ALERT/ EDUCATE/ COLLABORATE/ IMPLEMENT/ ARCHIVE



Figure 33
Mobile App features:
Street view and highlighting of proposed development with an important Design Review phase approaching

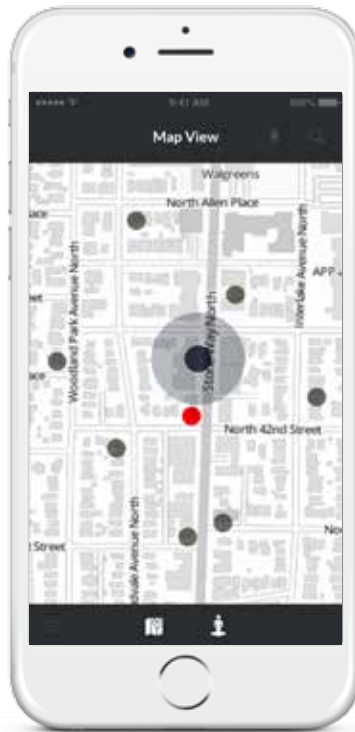


Figure 34
Mobile App features:
Geolocation with red dots indicating a development with an important phase approaching. Grey dots indicate recently completed or idle projects.



Figure 35
Mobile App features:
Geolocation showing 'your home' with red dots indicating a development with an important phase approaching. Grey dots indicate recently completed or idle projects.

CORE SCREENS AND FUNCTIONS

ALERT/ EDUCATE/ COLLABORATE/ IMPLEMENT/ ARCHIVE

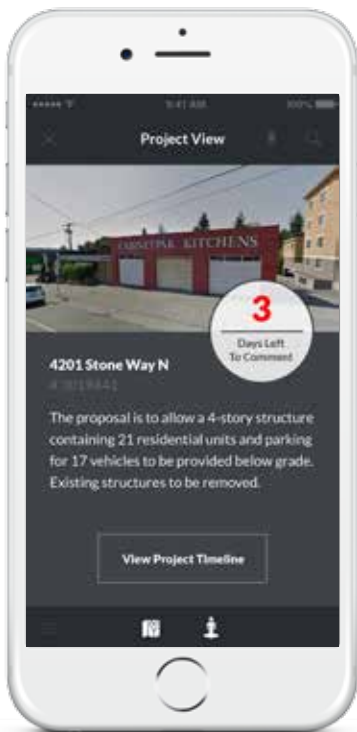


Figure 36
Mobile App features:
Project description and alert to an upcoming meeting.



Figure 37
Mobile App features:
Project time line helps citizens to understand the process while letting them know what is actionable via progressive disclosure.



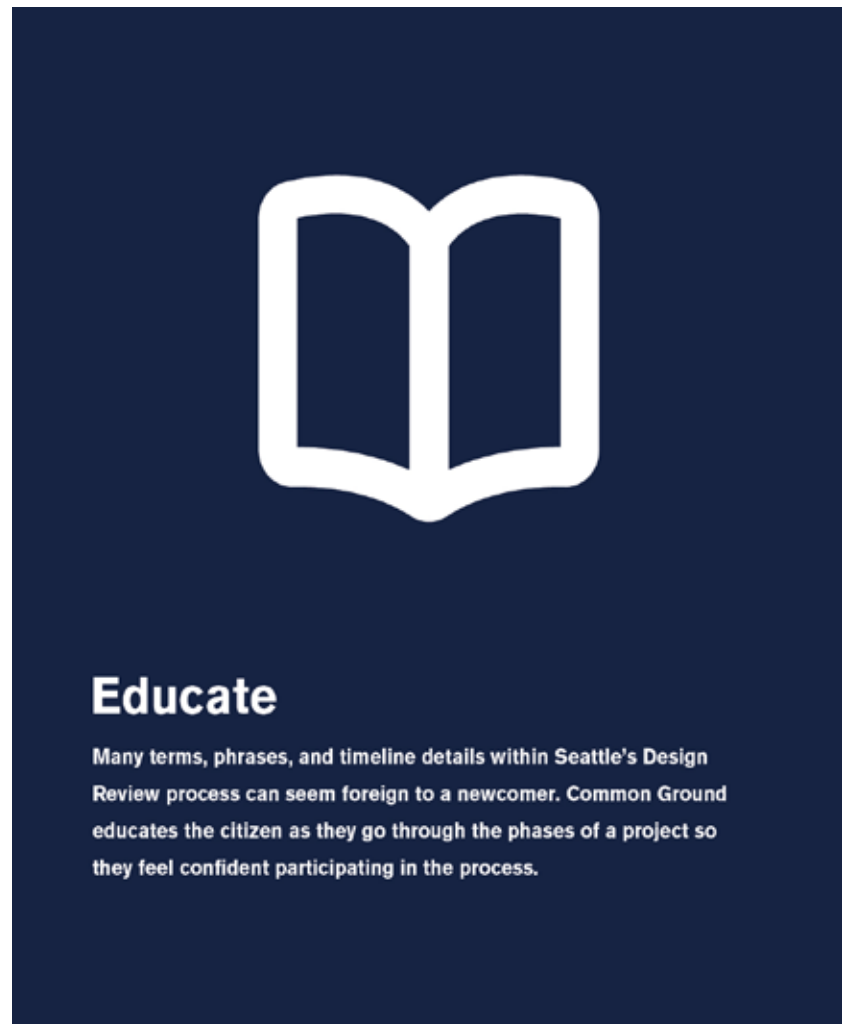
Figure 38
Mobile App features:
Project time line helps citizens to understand the process while letting them know what is actionable via progressive disclosure. Tagged words indicate hot button issues with the proposal among participating citizens.

CORE SCREENS AND FUNCTIONS

ALERT/ **EDUCATE**/ COLLABORATE/ IMPLEMENT/ ARCHIVE

Figure 39

Educate icon and explanation. Also used as board in the Henry exhibit.



CORE SCREENS AND FUNCTIONS

ALERT/ **EDUCATE**/ COLLABORATE/ IMPLEMENT/ ARCHIVE

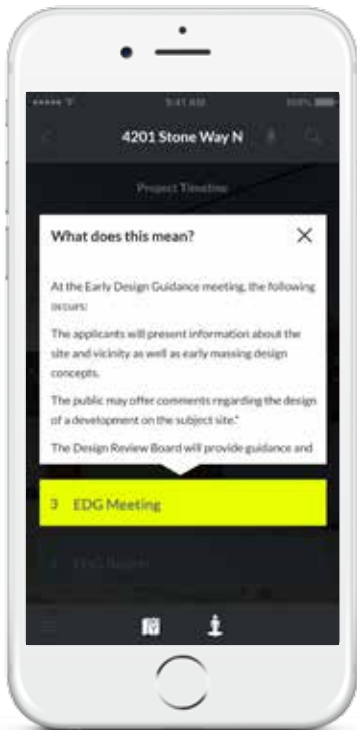


Figure 40
Mobile App features:
Press and hold to understand acronyms,
architectural terms, or phases

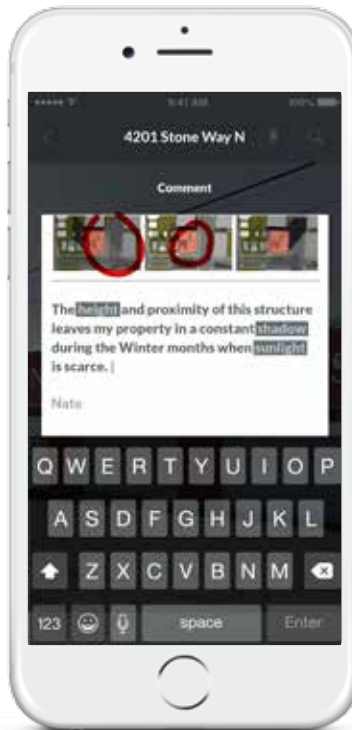


Figure 41
Mobile App features:
When comments are left, certain words
are highlighted to let the user know
which issues are common among others
leaving comments about the proposal.



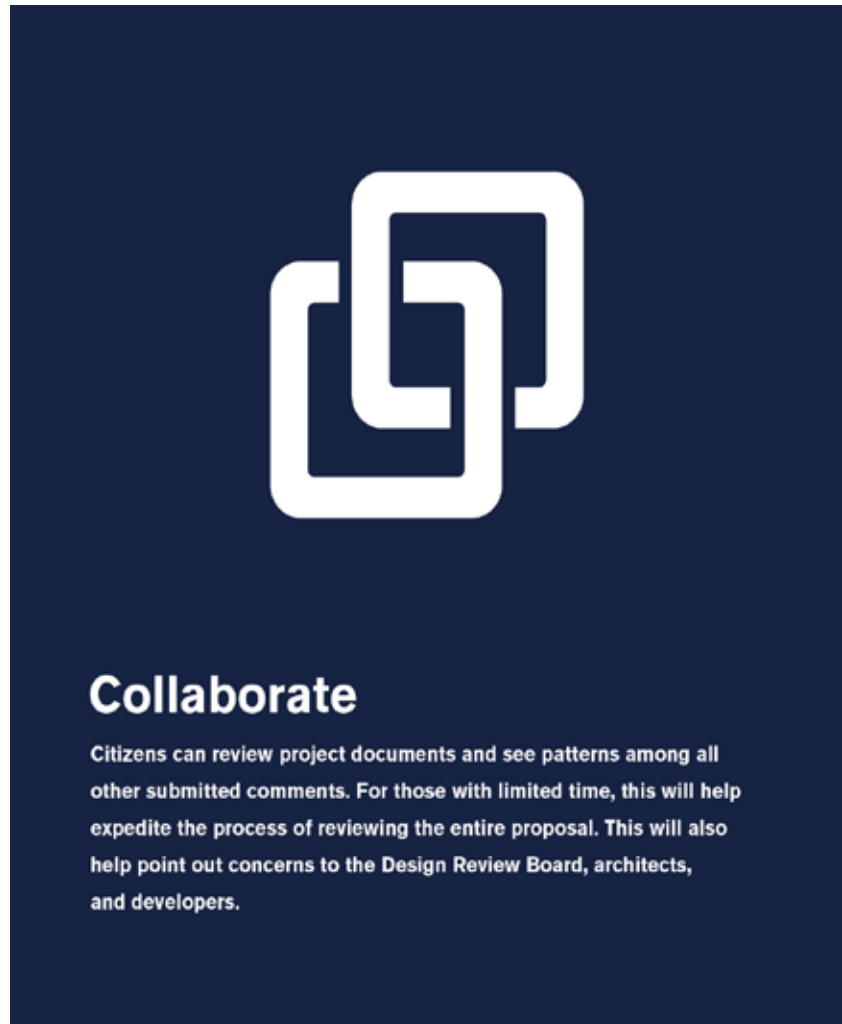
Figure 42
Mobile App features:
Project time line helps citizens to un-
derstand the process while letting them
know what is actionable via progressive
disclosure.

CORE SCREENS AND FUNCTIONS

ALERT/ EDUCATE/ **COLLABORATE**/ IMPLEMENT/ ARCHIVE

Figure 43

Collaborate icon and explanation. Also used as board in the Henry exhibit.



CORE SCREENS AND FUNCTIONS

ALERT/ EDUCATE/ **COLLABORATE**/ IMPLEMENT/ ARCHIVE

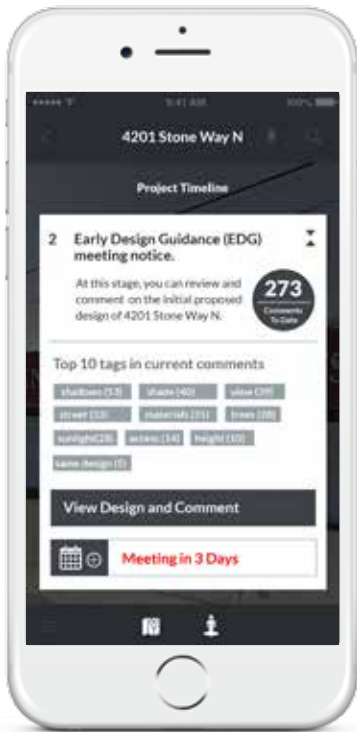


Figure 44

Mobile App features:
Project time line helps citizens to understand the process while letting them know what is actionable via progressive disclosure. Tagged word help citizens collaborate with key issues remotely.

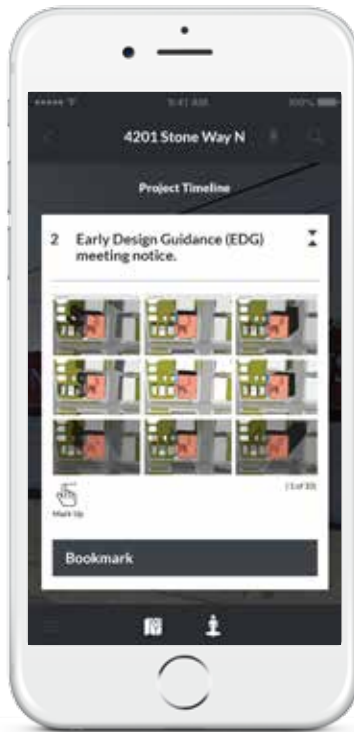


Figure 45

Mobile App features:
Citizens can view and 'redline' proposals so that other participants can see concerns and questions in real time.

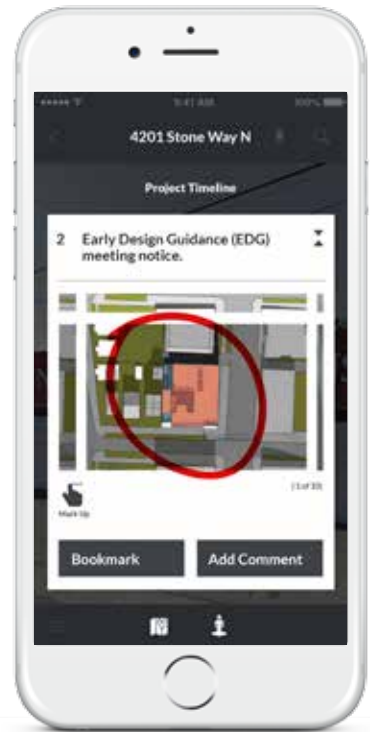


Figure 46

Mobile App features:
Citizens can view and 'redline' proposals so that other participants can see concerns and questions in real time.

CORE SCREENS AND FUNCTIONS

ALERT/ EDUCATE/ **COLLABORATE**/ IMPLEMENT/ ARCHIVE



Figure 47

Mobile App features:
Citizens can view and 'redline' proposals so that other participants can see concerns and questions in real time. Tagged words allow participants to key in on hot button issues.



Figure 48

Mobile App features:
Tagged words allow participants to key in on hot button issues.

CORE SCREENS AND FUNCTIONS

ALERT/ EDUCATE/ **COLLABORATE**/ IMPLEMENT/ ARCHIVE

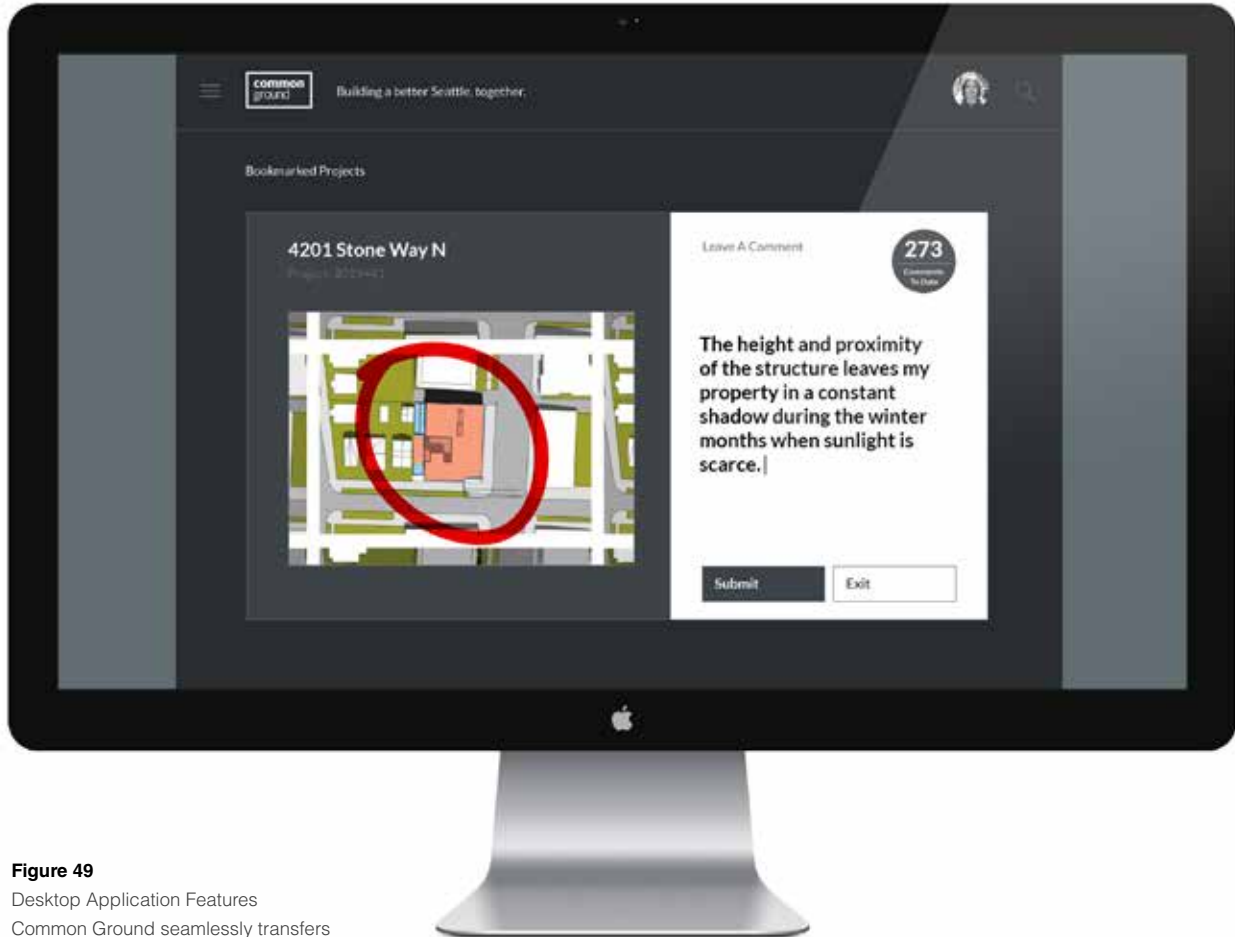


Figure 49

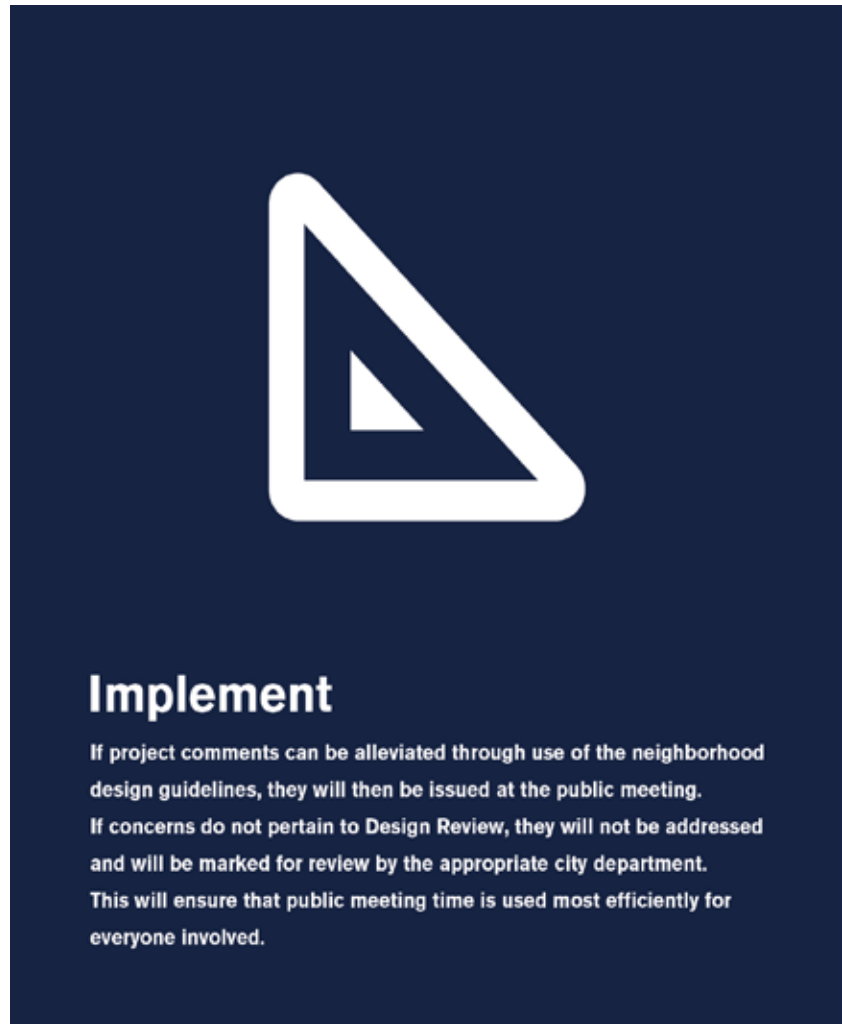
Desktop Application Features
Common Ground seamlessly transfers from mobile application to desktop so that users can bookmark sections and read them on a larger screen.

CORE SCREENS AND FUNCTIONS

ALERT/ EDUCATE/ COLLABORATE/ **IMPLEMENT**/ ARCHIVE

Figure 50

Implement icon and explanation. Also used as board in the Henry exhibit.



CORE SCREENS AND FUNCTIONS

ALERT/ EDUCATE/ COLLABORATE/ **IMPLEMENT**/ ARCHIVE

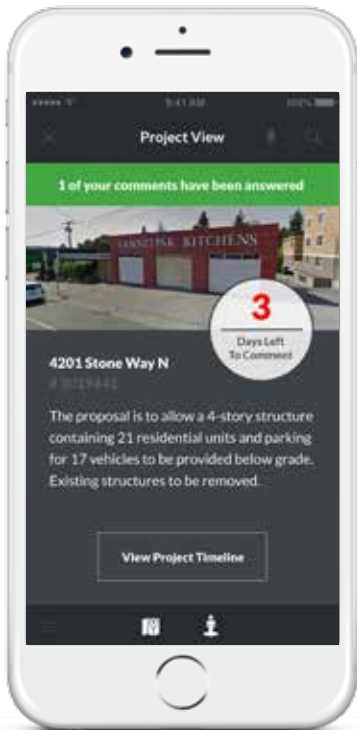


Figure 51
Mobile App features:
Participant is alerted when a comment has been addressed by a city planner



Figure 52
Mobile App features:
Participant is alerted when a comment has been addressed by a city planner.



Figure 53
Mobile App features:
Participant is alerted when a comment has been addressed by a city planner

CORE SCREENS AND FUNCTIONS

ALERT/ EDUCATE/ COLLABORATE/ **IMPLEMENT**/ ARCHIVE

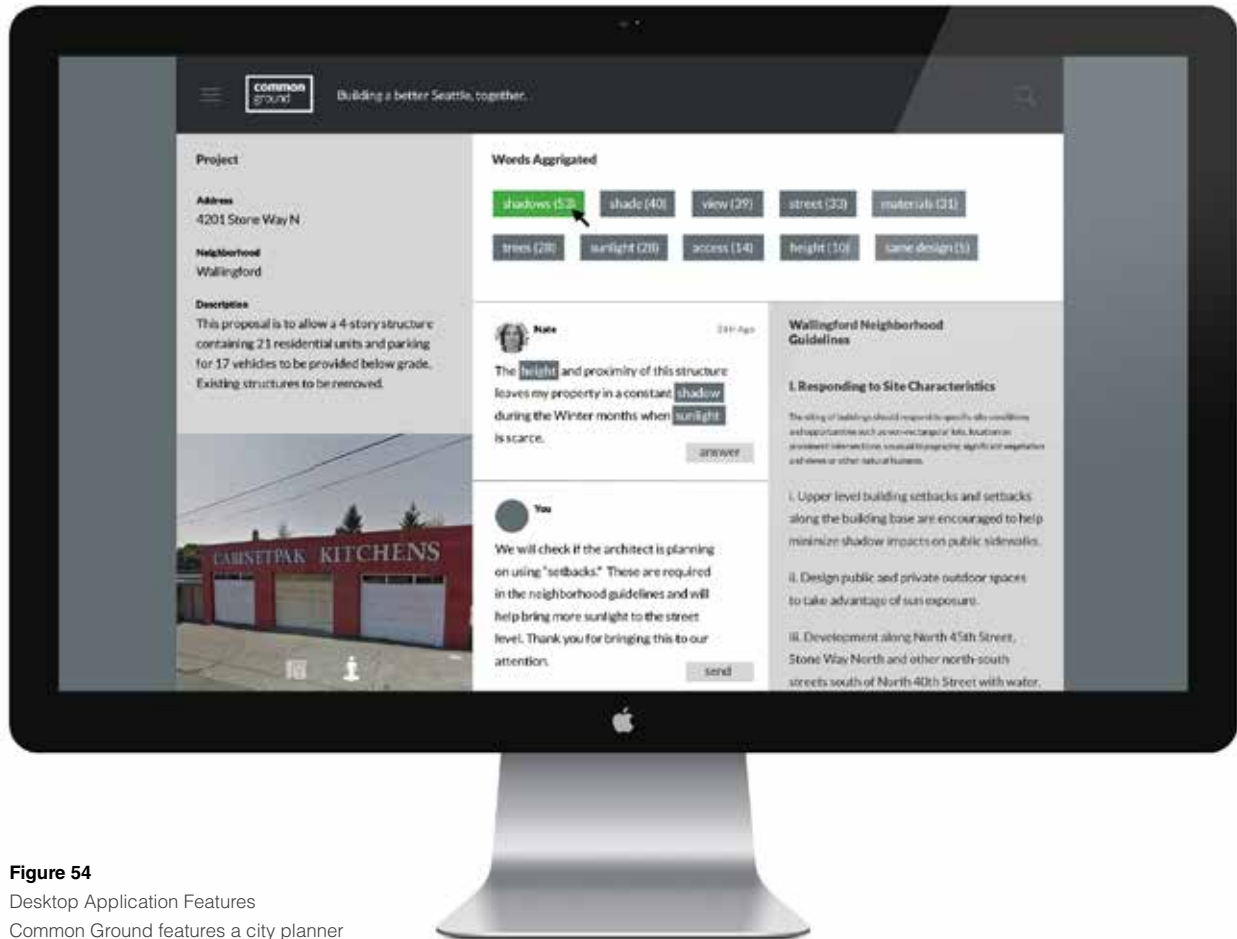


Figure 54

Desktop Application Features
Common Ground features a city planner platform that can also be addressed with Design Review Board members, developers and architects. This allows the non-public side to understand concerns and aggregate comments that lead to possible violated neighborhood guidelines.

CORE SCREENS AND FUNCTIONS

ALERT/ EDUCATE/ COLLABORATE/ IMPLEMENT/ **ARCHIVE**

Figure 55

Archive icon and explanation. Also used as board in the Henry exhibit.



CORE SCREENS AND FUNCTIONS

ALERT/ EDUCATE/ COLLABORATE/ IMPLEMENT/ **ARCHIVE**

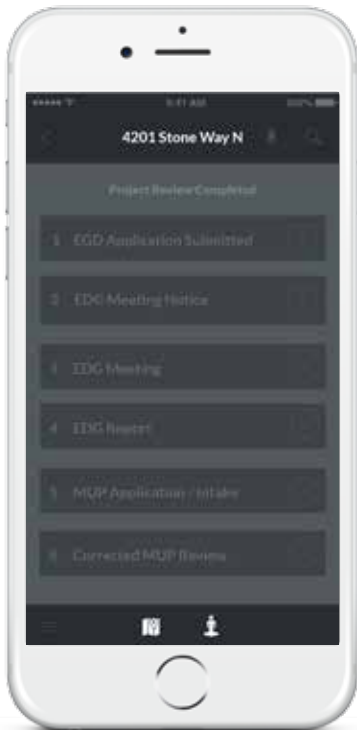


Figure 56
Mobile App features:
Grey dots on the geolocation lead you sometimes to recently completed projects. The information is retrievable, but they are no longer active in the mobile app.

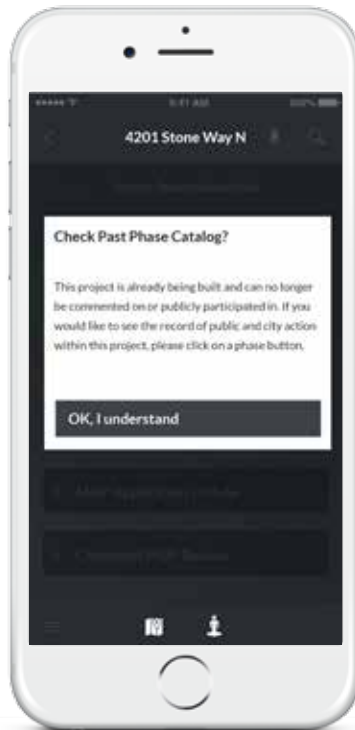


Figure 57
Mobile App features:
Grey dots on the geolocation lead you sometimes to recently completed projects. The information is retrievable, but they are no longer active in the mobile app.

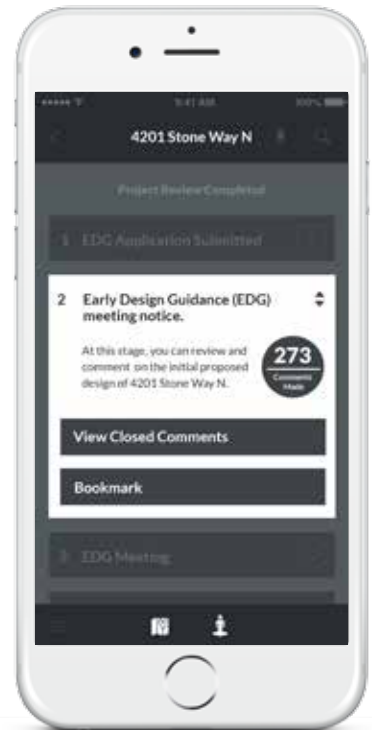
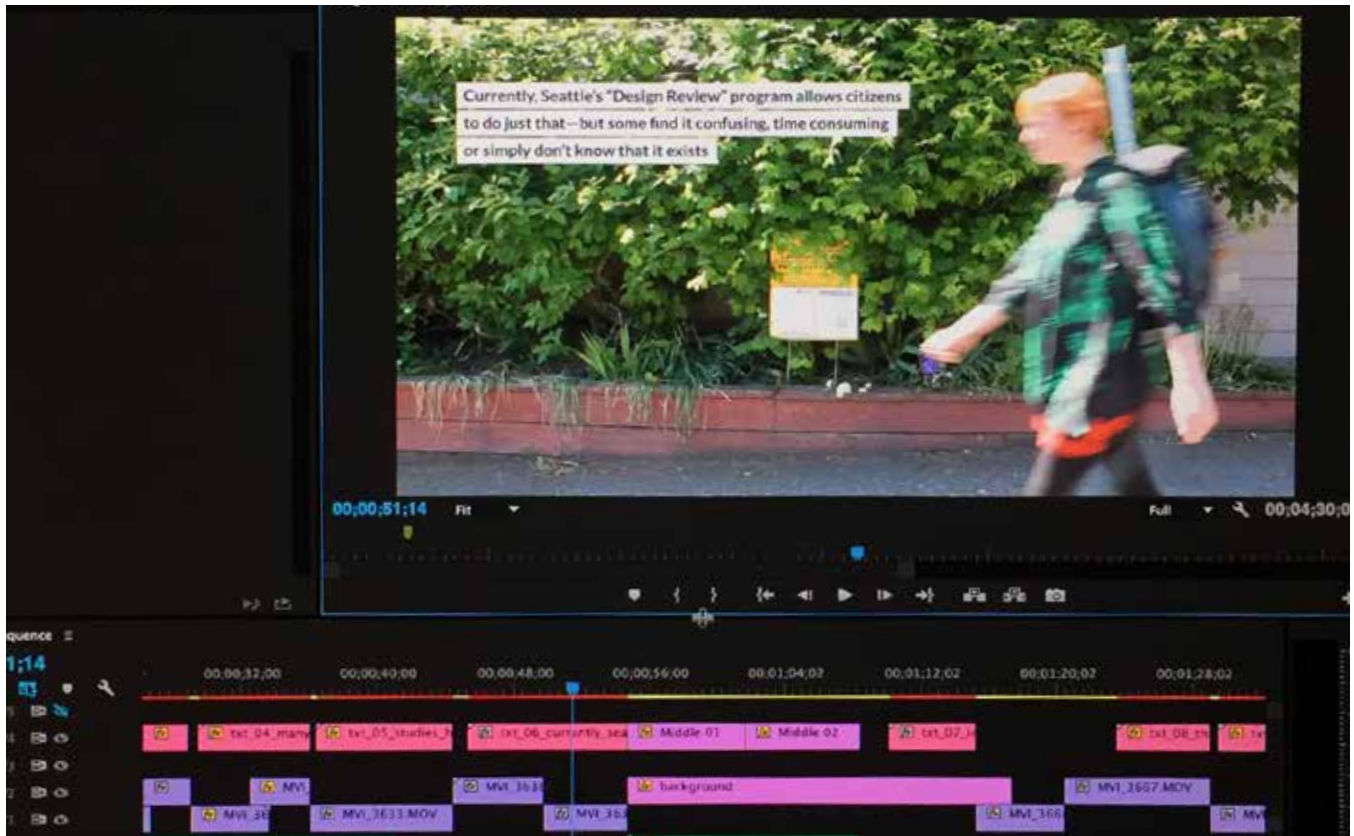


Figure 58
Mobile App features:
Grey dots on the geolocation lead you sometimes to recently completed projects. The information is retrievable, but they are no longer active in the mobile app.

VIDEO PROTOTYPE

To best communicate how Common ground could help a citizen remotely through the Design Review process, I created a video illustrating a 'golden path' scenario. This video was an idealized version of how this multi-platform system would work if everything went smoothly with all players involved. In this scenario, the video shows my character, Nate, learning about the mobile application through a physical sign (which has been proven to be the most common way a citizen currently finds out about development projects.) Because Nate is a recent home buyer, he is especially concerned about the shadows that are projected to be cast on his new condo. He notices this by thumbing through the architectural project documents. Nate leaves a comment to voice his concern and by the end of his working day, he is assured by a city planner that the proposed development does in fact violate established neighborhood guidelines. He is assured that they will address this issue at the public meeting later that week.

Figure 59
Video Prototype in progress.



VIDEO PROTOTYPE

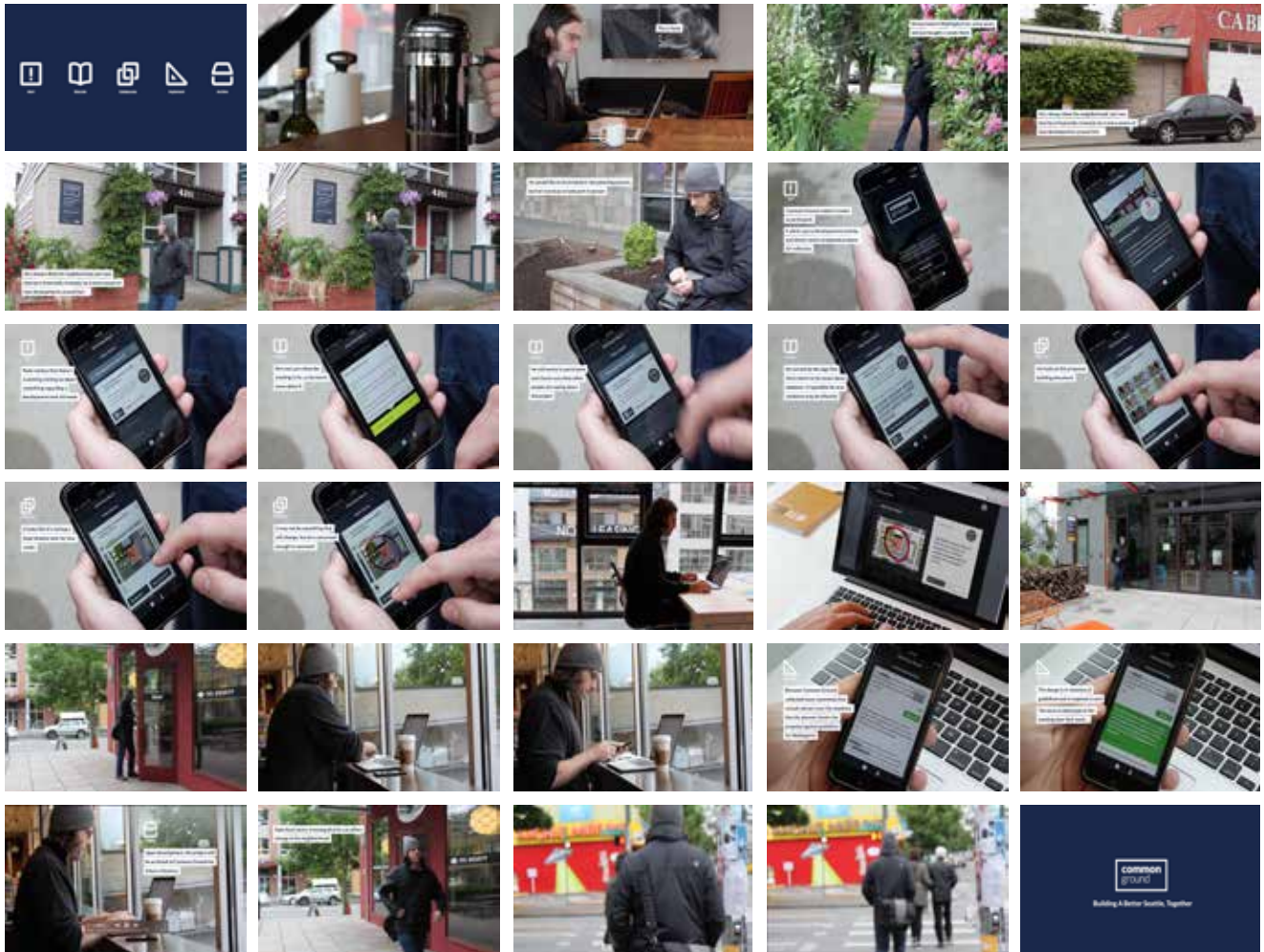


Figure 60
Video Prototype screenshots to illustrate storyboard.

THE HENRY EXHIBIT

Each year, the Henry Art Gallery presents the University of Washington's School of Art + Art History + Design, Master of Fine Arts and Master of Design thesis exhibition. Throughout my thesis, I worked with my advisor and gallery coordinator to emerge with a vision and direction displaying this thesis project as a gallery exhibit.

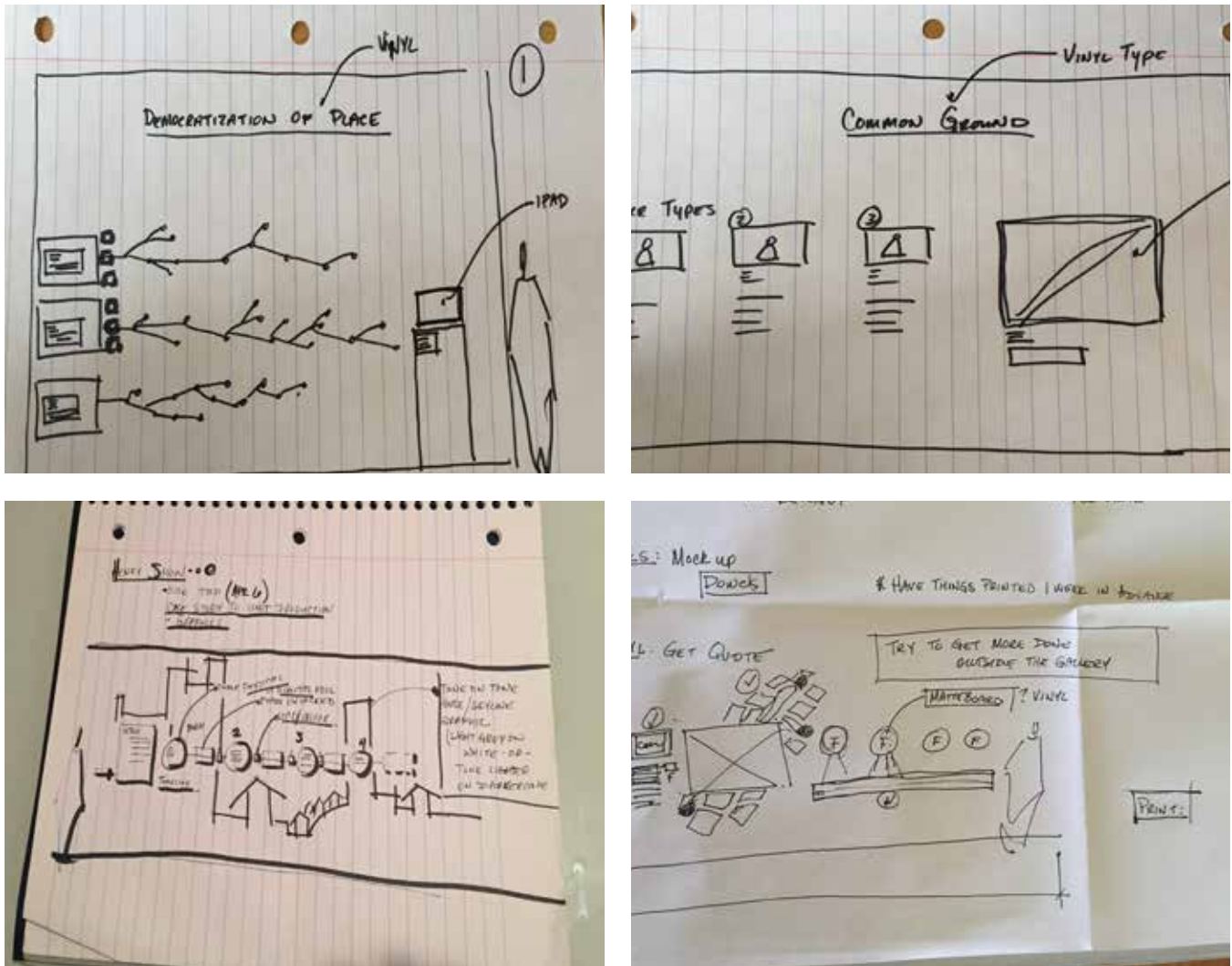


Figure 61
Initial exhibit ideas for the Henry Gallery

THE HENRY EXHIBIT

Figure 62

An initial Sketchup model of the gallery space that would house the Masters of Design exhibits



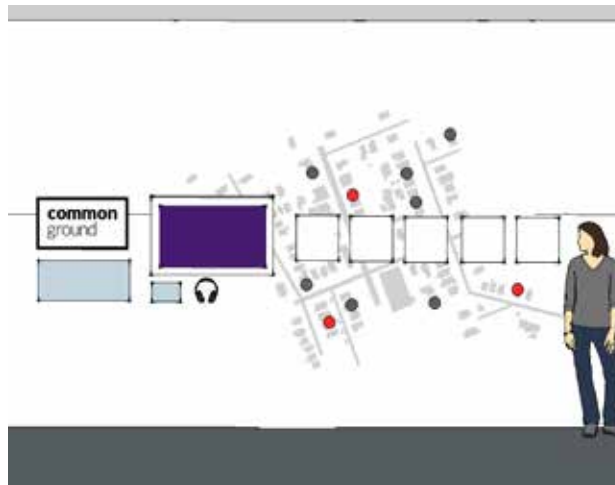
Figure 62

An initial Sketchup model of the wall space that would house my exhibit



Figure 63

A final Sketchup model of the wall space that would house my exhibit



THE HENRY EXHIBIT

Figure 64

Vinyl installation in progress



Figure 65

Vinyl installation in progress



Figure 66

Vinyl installation completed with monitor mount and acrylic circle standoffs finished. The map and acrylic standoffs are a direct representation of the geolocation screens in the mobile application.



THE HENRY EXHIBIT

Figure 67
Final Exhibit Completed



Figure 68
Final Exhibit Completed



Figure 69
Final exhibit completed along with the crowd from the grand opening of the exhibit.



THE HENRY EXHIBIT

Figure 70

Final Exhibit Completed:
Acrylic circle stand-off detail

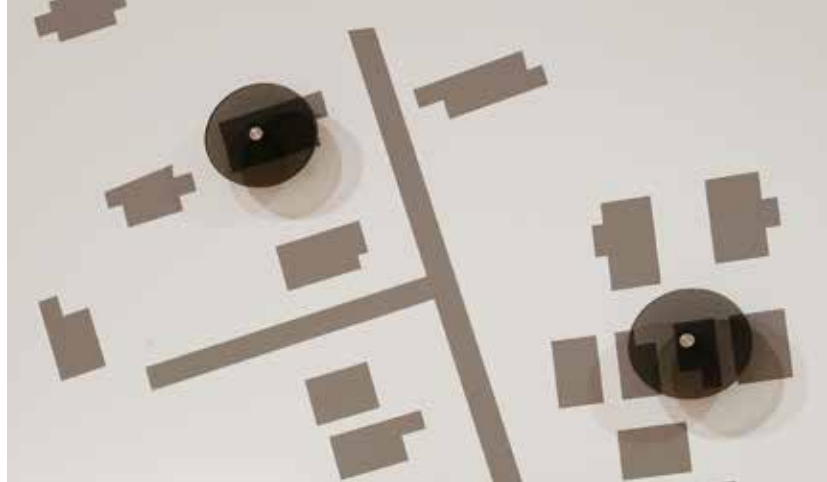


Figure 71

Final Exhibit Completed:
'Archive' board detail



Figure 72

Final Exhibit Completed:
Title board, project information, and
monitor with video detail.



NEXT STEPS

There are some issues that would need to be resolved before Common Ground could be a reality. First, the issue of how it could be integrated into the existing Seattle Design Review city platform would need to be resolved. The ability for the city to adequately address any and all concerns would be an obstacle that the city planning department does not currently have the time or resources to accommodate. While it is possible that Common Ground could in fact save time with features such as tagging hot button issues with citizens, the bulk of time should be spent responding to concerns on a large and still growing number of current and future development projects. Secondly, the platform would need a back-end developer so that eventually the concept could be tested in beta on a wide range of citizens, city planners, and project architects. This would allow proper user testing that was not a feasible option for the time frame that I had to complete the project portion of this thesis. Further research would need to be done to understand the short term as well as long term implications and outcomes of the public being this heavily involved. Currently, project architects that have to already understand and implement neighborhood guidelines into their designs would be further implicated with multiple comments and concerns from citizens. The ideal outcome would be to continue to allow that architects do what they do best while also allowing citizens to be thoroughly understood and heard.

CONCLUSION

Mass utilized technology such as mobile devices and physical markers such as land use signs will ideally be packaged as a single design language for the public to identify and understand. Until then, a mobile application could bridge the gap for the majority of citizens that would like to participate in the Design Review Process, but are put off by the current design aesthetic and language. Common Ground was designed to create an educational, engaging, and straight forward platform so that citizens of all levels of knowledge within the process could interact and not feel intimidated. I plan to continue working with the Seattle Design Review Department to understand what if any of these design could be a reality in the future of Seattle developments. Ideally, those who interact with this will understand that the more that citizens are involved, the better each project will be received by the public that resides near the development. While this platform option of the Design Review Process is by no means perfect, the integration of more people into the experience could help make the experience better with research, testing, and continuous design iterations.

“Design Review can’t make every design great, but Design Review can make every design better”

- Lisa Rutzick, Design Review Manager

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This project had many helping hands. Whether it was moral, academic, technical, or field expert support—this is a project of many and would not have been possible without their selfless guidance.

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