

Summary of Key Findings and Takeaways:

In our Contextual Inquiries, we attempted to learn the breadth of the move-in process for new movers to Seattle. We performed our CI reviews on three very different people: One currently moving to Seattle, another who moved to Seattle already and is now an active member of the community and works to engage others, and another who has lived here in Seattle for her whole life and dealt with many new movers from out of state. We found two key things in common between their stories:

First, all parties agreed that engagement with locals is a helpful, and often critical part of a successful move-in process. Take Tom, who just got a job from Amazon, who didn't know that AC is a rarity in Seattle homes. He wishes a local could have briefed him on local customs that differ from his hometown. Or take Jean, who was provided assistance moving in by her school dormitory, not just in physical but also social and geographic nature. She found this kind of help important to making her moving process a smooth one.

Second, communities that really engage people are ones that are built on shared interest. Take the case of Sawyer the new mover who worked alongside Zee, a Seattle native. The two grew close over shared love of food, music, and hiking, which helped to acclimate Sawyer to the new environment. For Jean, too, her love of badminton led her to the badminton club where she found like-minded peers.

Moving forward, we plan to brainstorm applications that allow new movers to find local assistance during and immediately after the moving process. We plan to do this by utilizing our insight that new movers work best with communities based on their interests, and by combining these two insights we believe we can smooth the move-in process while connecting locals with people with shared interests, helping everyone involved.

Contextual Inquiry Participants

Participant #1, Tom:

Our first participant, Xing Zhang, just graduated from Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts. He recently got a job offer from Amazon in Seattle, and now is moving to Seattle in order to take this job. He fits nicely in our target group of individuals that are currently in the process of moving to a new and unfamiliar urban environment. We interviewed him about his current process of moving to a new state.

His moving process was very difficult and self-driven. Once he found out he was hired, he began his research online. He used [apartments.com](https://www.apartments.com) and [neighborhoodscout.com](https://www.neighborhoodscout.com) to find apartments close to the Amazon offices downtown which also were safe, secure environments. Once he had a list, he found a temporary place to stay on Airbnb in that area for a week from where he scheduled apartment tours. To go through this process with all of the locations took three days.

Once he found his optimal location, he signed the contract and moved into his new apartment, moving his luggage and purchasing lots of new furniture to furnish the

space. Once he moved in, he realized the apartment had no air conditioner. He hadn't thought to look into this, since nearly every apartment in Boston (where he was moving from) has an air conditioner. Therefore he right now is currently in the process of moving all his furniture into a new apartment with an air conditioner.

Participant #2, Jean:

Jean is a junior student in Public Health at UW who currently serves as a publicity manager for the Husky Badminton Club. She originally came from San Jose, CA and moved to Seattle for college in September 2013. She fits well in our two target groups of individuals that had experience of moving to Seattle and being the community side to engage more new people to the group.

Jean had a relatively smooth moving process. She got a lot of help from her parents and the UW staff, who assisted in finding housing and moving in. She is a big fan of badminton and had already looked up the Husky Badminton Club before moving. However, she did have a hard time finding the club's practice time when she did move, and only found out the time by accident while she was playing badminton with her friends. She appreciates how friendly the club is and therefore stays involved.

As a publicity manager for the club, she thinks the most important part to recruit new members is friendliness. She believes people value a community by the atmosphere of that community. She also knows a person's enthusiasm for badminton also helps them stay involved. She uses two platforms to help convey information about the club: a Facebook Page and a Facebook Club, which have poor access for new members as it costs money to boost advertisement for their club online. She thinks it might be more effective if there were a UW platform which allowed her to advertise.

Participant #3, Zee:

Zee is a Seattle local who has lived here for 55 years. Zee has lived in her current location for 15 years, and is very familiar with their environment. She currently lives in north Seattle, commutes downtown for her job, and is very familiar with her neighborhood environment. She fills the third area of our target group, that being Seattle natives with knowledge they enjoy sharing with new movers.

Zee talked about her neighborhood communication systems. She mentioned that she learned recently about a new family down the way from neighbors she talked to when walking outside. She also said she received their email and phone number through a shared volunteer-run community network, and then later used this contact info to have a conversation about security after her house was broken into.

She also mentioned her recent interactions with a family that recently moved to Seattle, Sawyer and his wife. She knew them through work, and later found they had many shared interests such as cooking food, hiking, and a taste in music. Zee gave them tips on places to live, local services and habits, and even took them to a local concert. Now, Sawyer and his wife are more knowledgeable than Zee in some capacities, and share this new learned information with her.

Contextual Inquiry Themes

Across the three inquiries, we expect some emergence of common themes, problems, and practices. Identify high level themes the participants share in their practices.

Do these themes, problems, and practices suggest tasks to important to design for?

After conducting all three of our Contextual Inquiries, we were able to see several recurring patterns and potential insights into areas we could look for further development of our project. We saw a sizeable pool of very motivated new movers who were trying hard to get engaged into the community, though this was often difficult, and the move-in process was often fraught with problems. We also saw that the existing local residents and communities in Seattle were generally excited to help, but especially so when there were shared interests that would result in more lasting friendships.

It seemed that the first approach all new movers would take is finding clubs, persons, or special interests groups that align with their interests. For some outgoing people these bonds might happen naturally, as was the case with Sawyer and Zee. It's not necessarily always the case, however, as could be seen with Jean and her inability to find information on the Badminton club's meeting times. On top of this, for individuals that are shy, these barriers just expand, turning each challenge into another reason to not reach out. Shared interests help bridge this gap, but only if the information about them is presented clearly and consistently, which is certainly not always the case. This led to our first insight, that the best local assistance comes through those with shared interest when barriers between locals and new movers are few.

Our other insight was one that reinforced the need to have these local connections. Across the board, from our Contextual Inquiry results, interactions with locals was overwhelmingly a positive experience. As Jean mentioned, friendliness helps foster a lasting community. Once these connections are made, quality of life increases dramatically and social involvement rises. Finding these positive communities help adjustment to the new environment. From the contextual inquiries, almost everything about the process could have been solved with the right support network, and so the problem rather falls on the new movers being able to find the right club or group of people to join. The routes to find these groups were varied. Some looked online, some lucked into a random chance, some relied on their school or work organization. This is where our second insight arose - it is difficult for new movers to find these clubs and groups, which are so critical to fitting into new environments.

Moving forward, we want to make sure our design solution deals with these two insights. Therefore we figure that our design project should be a way of building connections between new movers and existing communities, thereby providing them a pool of local resources to help them adjust to a Seattle way of life. All our Contextual Inquiries suggested that this a gap is not only an important part of adjusting to a new urban environment, but is rather an absolutely critical one which we will address in our solution.

Task Analysis Questions

1. Who is going to use the design?

Our design targets individuals who are currently moving to Seattle or have very recently moved in. We also target people and communities that currently live within Seattle, with shared interests to the individuals currently moving to Seattle. Our solution is one that helps connect those two groups.

2. What tasks do they now perform?

People who are currently moving to Seattle already inefficiently perform many tasks related to this process. They may search for information or groups online, might live in temporary housing to learn the local area, might get in touch with friends who currently live in Seattle, or might (rarely) meet up with their neighbors in person.

For people currently living in Seattle, they might have some kind of neighborhood notification system, might greet new neighbors, employees, or peers, or might promote community information online.

3. What tasks are desired?

The main task that is desired is connecting new movers with special interests to locals and local communities that share those interests. The other areas we looked at - assisting in the physical move-in process, understanding transportation information, learning local customs - all are part and parcel of this larger task of connecting these two groups. This goal is comprised of several smaller tasks, however, such as notifying these groups of new movers, notifying new movers of these groups, providing scheduling resources, and providing forums of communication to discuss these new groups.

4. How are the tasks learned?

Currently, these tasks are often performed incidentally and accidentally. Information is passed in person, one to another, and new movers can be out of the loop and ignored by the community. The internet provides one (very large) pool of resources, but it is not location-tailored. Some new movers might live in a hotel for a short time to "experience" the neighborhood, but this alienates shy or cost-sensitive movers, and is still not a surefire way of connecting new movers to these groups.

5. Where are the tasks performed?

New movers may perform these tasks at their old house before they move, in temporary housing as mentioned in question 4, at their new house (perhaps after the information or support groups could have helped them), or out in their new communities if they are lucky enough to find them. Neighborhoods might see new movers in person or visually, or they might receive a notification from their work or school organization. Their scheduling and discussion forums may be in isolated email chains, in person, or in other limited capacity that isolates new movers.

6. What is the relationship between the person and data?

Data is very broadly defined in this case, but here we use it to refer to “specialized information that is location-constrained to Seattle”. Right now, it is something that is slowly and randomly acquired, usually from other people in shared communities. It seems to pass faster and more relevantly when it is between individuals with shared interests, and is something that is not only very useful and relevant (eg, air conditioners in apartments) but is something that long-time residents enjoy sharing (eg, Zee’s favorite local bakery or trail).

7. What other tools does the person have?

Currently, new movers are stuck using tools that are not built for this purpose. They might Google a new area, check for locals on Reddit or some other broad social-networking site, or schedule in-person meetings, if they’re lucky enough to know someone in Seattle already. They might look up Yelp reviews, or services like Zillow, Redfin, or sites for moving companies. They may even resort to tourism apps or sites for basic information about the city. None of these tools are built to connect these people to local communities, however.

On the flip side, locals do not have easy tools to connect to new people in their environment. They might randomly be notified, by work or school or happenstance. They could use advertisements, personal social networking sites, or other ill-fitting or outmoded tools.

8. How do people communicate with each other?

Because our tools are about communication, the answer to this question is very similar to number 7. They may use personal contacts, social networks, neighborhood events, in-person meetings, or existing internet or other communication channels to talk to one another.

9. How often are the tasks performed?

These kinds of tasks are performed routinely, on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. Because they are tasks involved with communication of existing groups, they can be spur-of-the-moment, a daily conversation at work, a weekly Badminton meeting, or a monthly neighborhood barbeque. The important thing is that they are a repeated event that happens as long as the new mover is part of the community, and this routine (however chaotic or unorganized it may be) is important information to pass on to the new movers.

10. What are the time constraints on the tasks?

The main thing we found is that these tasks really *don’t have* a time constraint. The move-in process is a very long one, that doesn’t end when the boxes are unpacked; rather, it is a long and subtle process of adapting or not adapting to the local culture, and finding what fits or doesn’t fit for you. Several months around move-in day, new movers might still need advice or assistance on how to operate in the new city. For several months after that, they will still be learning, though their learning may turn to leisure and finding similar interest groups. Then for months - maybe years - after that, they will be giving back to those interest groups with knowledge they find themselves.

11. What happens when things go wrong?

Success in this process is if people are quickly able to connect with others with shared interests, and therefore determine if Seattle and their new environment is the right place for

them. Even if they move out, it is still a success if they did so intentionally with the assistance of friendly locals. Failure is if communication does not occur and people are unable to find local support groups with similar interests, meaning people become isolated and alone, and then either move out or do not for the wrong reasons.