

# Seattle Defroster

## Team



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## Problem and Solution

Our design focuses on smoothing the process of moving to Seattle from a long distance away, by helping empower these new movers with the right tools for this process. Seattle has a rising job market and new people move here daily, many without any connections in the city, which can make this process incredibly difficult. Our Contextual Inquiries taught us that the most useful tools we can provide are connections to locals in the area. On one side, it helped to have local-specific information, such as weather, fashion, recreational, and other information hard to find when not told firsthand. From another side, providing strong connections to locals in special interest groups to these new movers helped give them a support group, assistance, and access to a bank of knowledge these locals have innately. We knew that motivating the locals to use our system would be a challenge, and after much deliberation we settled on a gamified platform, that would reward locals for providing useful information and hosting events including new movers. All this considered, our solution became simple: to create a platform that would allow new movers to communicate and build connections with locals. It would provide a forum for new movers to ask local-specific questions and receive answers from locals motivated by our gamification systems. Thus our platform helps building strong, motivated connections between new movers and local residents, helping to make the process of moving to Seattle a smooth and pleasant one.

# Contextual Inquiry Target, Stakeholders, Participants

## CI Participants #1 TOM

Tom just graduated from Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts and recently got a job offer from Amazon in Seattle. Now he is moving to Seattle. We chose him in our contextual inquiry because 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 and 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.

## CI Participants #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. As a new mover, Jean had a relatively smooth moving process, but she had a hard time finding her interest community, Husky Badminton Club, practice time. 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 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.

Jean 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. She offered very good perspectives of both sides. This is the reason that we chose Jean to be our inquiry target.

## CI Participants #3 Zee

Zee is a Seattle local who has lived here for 55 years, and is very familiar with her environment. She currently lives in north Seattle, commutes downtown for her job, and is close with families in her neighborhood. She fills the third area of our target group, Seattle natives who have 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 Result and Themes

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 many motivated new movers who were trying hard to get engaged into the community, though this was often difficult. We also saw that the existing local residents and communities in Seattle were generally excited to help but sometimes it is also hard for them in finding individuals needing for help. Additionally, sometimes it is easy for the locals to lose interests in maintaining the relationship. But when there were shared interests between the new movers and the locals, it often results in a 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. For individuals that are shy, these barriers just expand, turning each challenge into another reason to not reach out. Additionally, joining a new group as a new mover is even harder than if local resident joining a new group. This is because though local resident might not know anyone in the group prior joining the group, he has more common topics on Seattle with the people in the group already and he is also able to bring more friends of his to the group together. We understand that shared interests help bridge this gap, but we need to figure out a way to help the new movers to be easier in getting started with the interest groups, both as in providing more clearly and consistently information and as in boosting their first time experience in the group.

Our second insight is to assist the local individuals and groups in getting alert of any new movers. From our Contextual Inquiry results, interactions with locals was overwhelmingly a positive experience. Seattle individuals and groups are friendly in helping new movers. As Jean mentioned, friendliness helps foster a lasting community. 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 building the right connection between the new movers and the right club or group. The current routes to find these groups were varied and do not provide constant and reliable help. This is where our second insight arose - with the current platform, it is difficult for new movers to find these clubs and groups and on the other hand, it is also hard for the locals to promote their group to the new movers. However, this is so critical in helping the new movers fitting into new environments.

The last finding is that the biggest barrier in the building relationship process is needing encouragement as the locals in trying to stay connected with the new movers for a longer time. We noticed that since the new movers are the people needing for help, it takes less to help them to stay connected. However, on the other hand, motivating the local users would be an important area to keep in mind as we move forward. New movers will only benefit from such platform if the locals are always there, enthusiastic and staying connected.

Moving forward, we want to make sure our design solution deals with these problems. Therefore we figure that our design project should be a way of encouraging the building of 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.

## Answers to Task Analysis Questions

- **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.

- **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 interest 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.

- **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. One other area we looked at is assisting in the move-in process as in helping the new movers in understanding transportation information, learning local customs, and sharing any other local related information. 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.

- **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. Though the internet provides one (very large) pool of resources, it is not location-tailored and it is also not comprehensive. 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. Internet is also one large resource of new movers finding groups that they are interested, but it has the same problem as in not being comprehensive enough and it is often hard for them to find the group they are looking for. And even when they find something that they are interested in, some of them might be too shy to go to the group without knowing anyone in the group already. So we figured these tasks by seeing the huge gap in between.

- **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. The location is also currently one of the limiting factor that blocks the connection, so we are hoping for figuring a way to make the “locationless” connection between the new movers and the local.

- **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 (e.g., air conditioners in apartments) but is something that long-time residents enjoy sharing (e.g., Zee’s favorite local bakery or trail).

- **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 any easy tools to connect to people new to their environment. They might randomly be notified. They could use advertisements, personal social networking sites, or other ill-fitting or outmoded tools.

- **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.

- **How often are the tasks performed?**

The self-browsing of information and meeting with local people can be performed at anytime. While the other tasks involved with communication of existing group are usually performed routinely (they can be spur-of-the-moment, a daily conversation at work, a weekly Badminton meeting). 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.

- **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.

- **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. Failure is if the communication does not occur and people are unable to find local support groups with similar interests, meaning people become isolated and alone.

# Proposed Design Sketches

## Design #1

Our first design centers around providing new movers to Seattle all the information they could need throughout the moving process. (Fig.1) It is a digital app for phone or computer with two modes with different interfaces: one designed for use by the new movers, and the other designed for use by local people in the area already. The app makes it easy for people moving to Seattle to find local-specific information about housing (Fig.3), restaurant, transportation restrictions, even local culture and habits (Fig.4). Also, they can take advantage of the app to find interest communities (Fig.3). On the local people side, they will be notified by the app about new movers moving in and offer assistance for them(Fig.2).

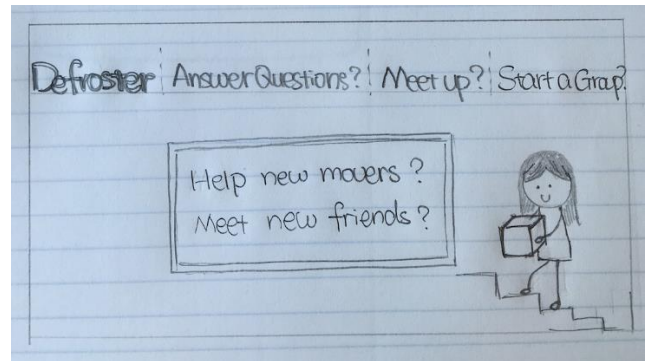


Fig1. Two different interface modes: New mover Mode Interface and The Locals Mode Interface



Fig2. Notification System of New Movers

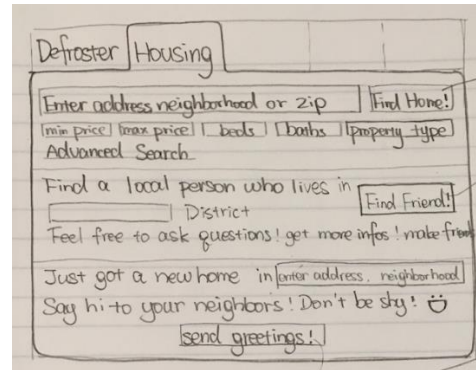


Fig3. Finding local housing information with Specific Security/Location Requirements

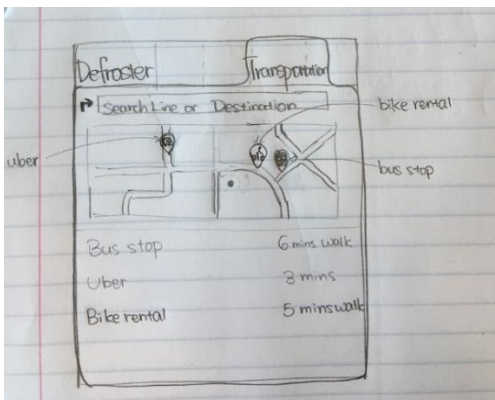


Fig4. Finding Local-Specific Information (Culture, Habits, Transportation, Food, Weather, etc.)

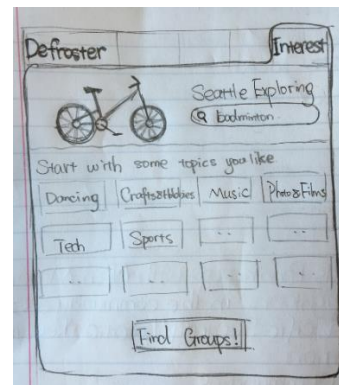


Fig5. Finding Interest Communities

## Design #2

For our second design, instead of just providing a platform for information sharing, we wanted to gamify the new-mover helping experience. (Fig.6) Users have their own characters in this game and earn their “reward points” for completing different tasks, which would be different for locals or new movers. New movers, for example, might earn points by checking in different places in Seattle to explore the city or join the interest communities (Fig.10). Locals might instead gain points for interacting with new movers, providing a good answer to a new mover’s questions (Fig. 8), and holding some continuous event that involves new movers and local people (Fig.7). When people receive enough points, they could earn a cosmetic title or even a real reward (Fig. 8), such as a gift card to Starbucks or coupons to a local store, which motivates the locals to help the new movers.

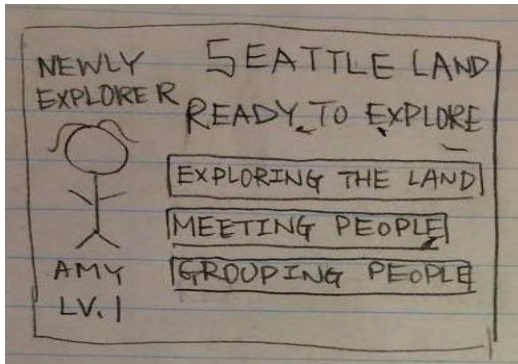


Fig6. High Level App Layout

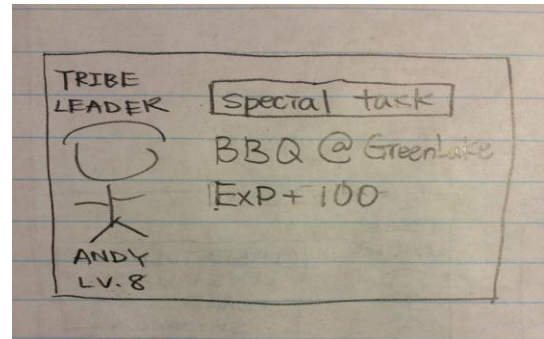


Fig7. Continuous Connection between the locals and new movers

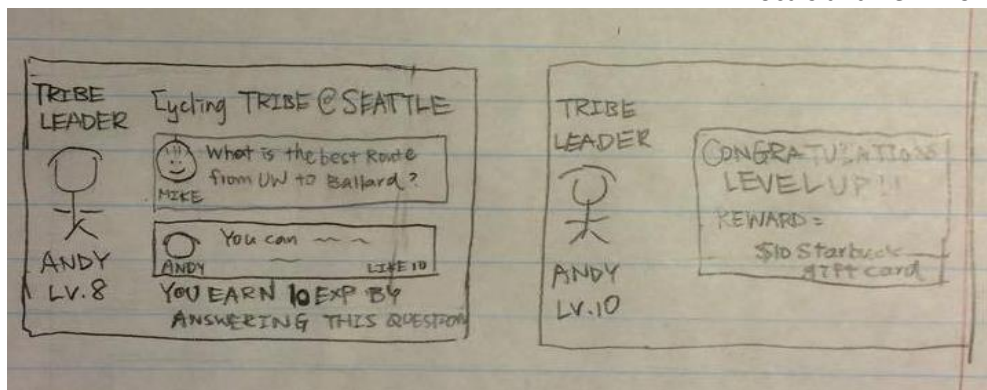


Fig8. Motivating the locals to help out the new movers by providing points and rewards



Fig9. The app offers opportunities for the locals to know the new movers easier

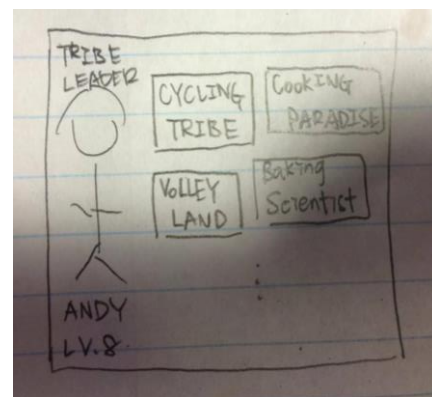


Fig10. The app also provides a platform of local interest communities information for new movers

### Design #3

Our third design is an interactive digital bulletin board that would be placed in community centers and would be a hub for new local residents to learn local information (Fig.11). It would be placed in community centers and other locations of high local traffic to help naturally integrate the new movers in their environment, allowing them to interact with the locals there (Fig.12). It would have up-to-date information on local eateries, transportation tips (Fig.14), and advertisements for local clubs and meetups of special interest groups (Fig.15). In addition, by centralizing the new-mover information gathering experience around these boards in existing local community centers, the barrier of knowing who the new movers are is lifted and locals are free to connect much easier (Fig.13).



Fig11. High level sketch of this interactive digital bulletin board.

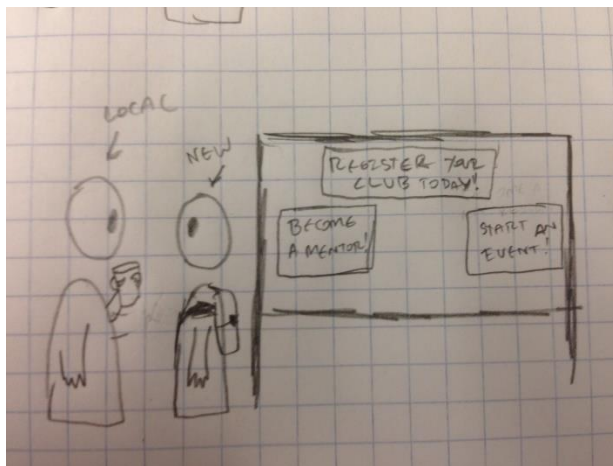


Fig12. As the problem of finding who the new movers are is solved, the locals are easily motivated to interact with new movers



Fig13. New movers can be easily identified by locals by placing the boards in local community centers.

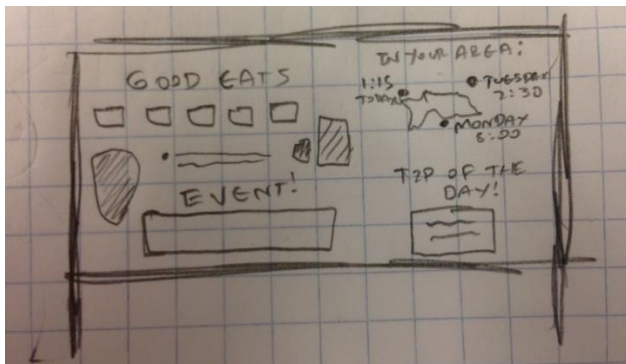


Fig14. The board will keep up to date and present information on local events.

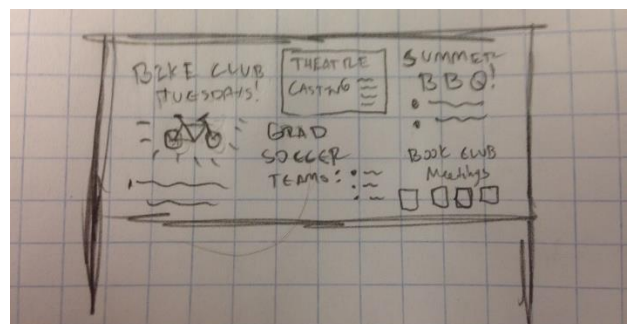


Fig15. The board can also serve as an advertising board and digital signup sheet for local clubs and special interest groups.



# Written Scenario

## Scenario #1 - Finding Local Specific Information

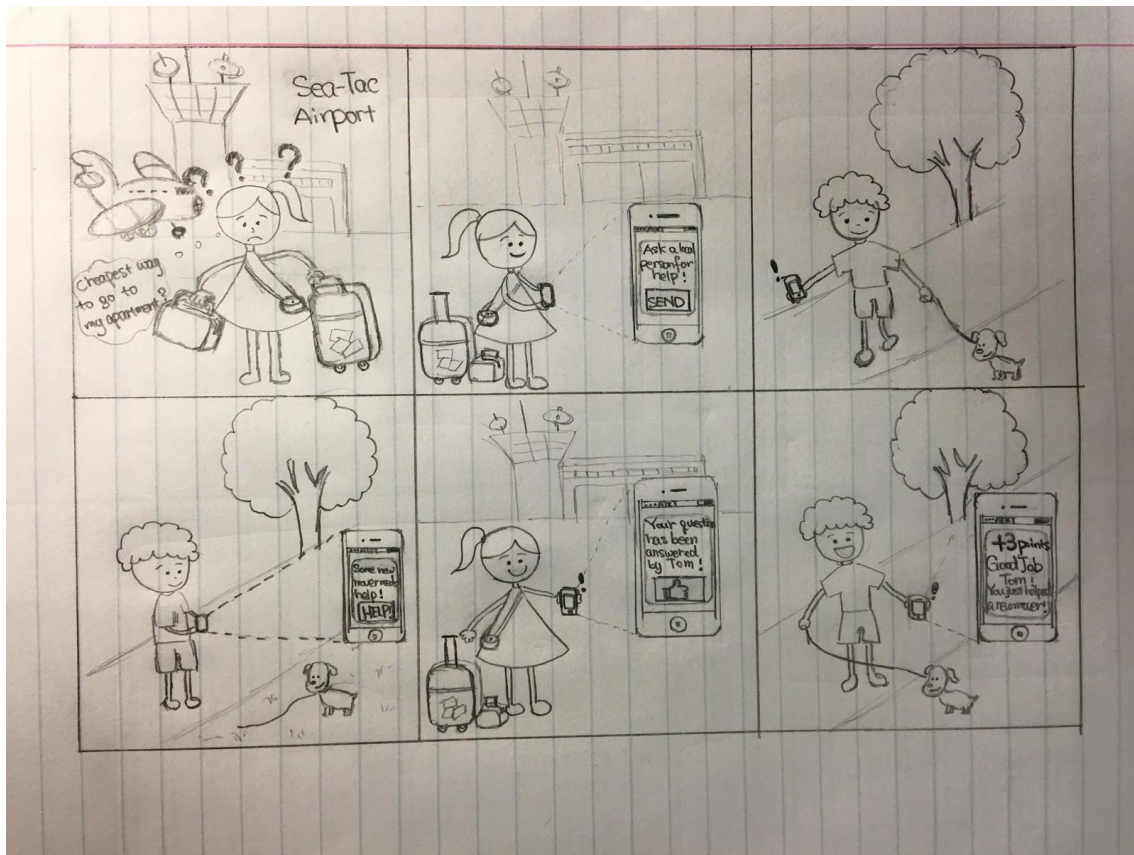
Annie is just offered by Amazon and is moving from New York to Seattle. She has just arrived at the SeaTac airport without knowing anyone local so she has to figure out a cheapest way to get to her apartment. She opens the Defrosters phone app and asks for help. Tony is a Seattle local resident for years. While Tony is walking his dog in a park, he opens his Defrosters app and is wanting to help any new movers. He sees this notification of Annie's question, then he answers Annie quickly. Annie is really happy to see the simultaneous answer to her question. On the other side, Tony is also really glad that he helped someone and earned points towards his Starbucks gift card reward at the same time.

## Scenario #2 - Finding Interest Communities as a New Mover

William is a newly admitted UW student from California. William has imagined about his social life and playing his favorite sports badminton with all his new friends at college. However, he is so disappointing when he first goes to the IMA and seeing no one there at the badminton court. He then pulls out his Defroster app, and figures that this is not the time for the badminton club to meeting. And in fact, there is several groups of badminton teams in Seattle and all of them are meeting this week. This makes William so much better. He chooses one of his favorite teams according to the detail information each team provides, attends the activity the team hosts, and makes more new friends with the same interest.

# Storyboards of the Selected Design

## Storyboard #1



## Storyboard #2

