

OFF THE STREET

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Problem and Solution Overview

On any given night, it is estimated that almost 23,000 people are homeless in Washington State. Homelessness is definitely an issue in our community. Most of the general public does not have an awareness of the struggles and stories of the homeless and how they can help them. In addition, many non-profit organizations receive their income primarily from past donors and have a difficult time finding enough new donors to grow. Those organizations that serve the homeless (shelters, job training programs and housing programs) use word of mouth and internal connections to find new donors, but it's not very effective. Our solution is to increase empathy for the homeless in the greater community in order to encourage them to donate to these organizations. We will accomplish this by designing an enticing and educational public display. The design will simultaneously help those organizations to spread the word about their mission, get more donations, and educate the public about homelessness.

Contextual Inquiry Target, Stakeholders, and Participants

We did four interviews in total to learn about the actual needs of those non-profit organizations. Most of interviewees are involved in either fundraising or volunteer outreach, so they are familiar with the challenges of engaging the general public around the issue of homelessness. The first three interviews were done over the phone while the last one was conducted during a tour of a shelter. We asked questions about how they currently conduct their work and what problems they have encountered.

Jen, who is our first interview participant, is the Intake and Outreach Coordinator for FareStart, an organization that operates a job placement and training program benefiting homeless and disadvantaged men, women, and youth. The interview was on the phone, Carmin interviewed Jen and Phil recorded and took the notes during the interview.

Jen directly interviews all of the prospective students, conducts orientations, and goes to prisons and shelters to recruit new students. Jen is very experienced in interacting with the homeless and knows their needs.

Steve, who Carmin interviewed over the phone while Ben took notes and recorded, is an ordained chaplain and Executive Director of Operation Nightwatch (since 1994). He manages the housing, the donations and the staff in the organization.

Dan- who Carmin interviewed over the phone, is the Development Director for Peace On The Streets, which is an organization that empowers homeless youth to become self-sufficient. He does event planning, general donor relations, and social media marketing for the organization. We decided to talk with Dan since his expertise is in donor relations and connecting with the community.

Lindsey, who Carmin and Phil interviewed at downtown Seattle near the Pioneer Square, where the Bread of Life Mission is located, is the volunteer coordinator. She mainly organizes volunteer events and she also volunteered in this organization for four years before she became the coordinator.

Contextual Inquiry Results and Themes

Some results from our interviews that we chose to not pursue in our tasks include that finding housing for the homeless is a limitation for job training programs. We also learned from that there was a misconception a while back that homeless shelters are only half full, and beds go unused. In reality, thousands of people sleep on the streets, oftentimes because shelters don't have room.

Of the themes that we learned in the interviews, we decided to focus on the observations that shelters struggle to attract new donors, there isn't a way to show donors how their money is going to help, and telling the stories of the homeless encourages community engagement. Although we asked each interviewee questions about volunteer engagement, it sounded like the organizations don't have many issues obtaining volunteers. It certainly is a non-issue compared to the prospect of gaining new donors.

One of the main themes that we learned from our interviews is that shelters find it difficult to attract new donors, which is necessary for them to expand their services. Often, most of their donors are people who have donated in the past. Organizations, especially the less established ones (like Peace on the Streets), rely mainly on word of mouth to gain new donors and increase awareness of their needs. The greatest need currently for Peace On the Streets is that they've tripled their budget in the last three years and they need to locate and engage new donors. The organization is 21 years old, but the community doesn't know who they are- they need more exposure to a broader audience.

We also learned that in terms of donations, there isn't currently a way of showing donors how their money will specifically serve the needs of the homeless. Currently, there's basic information on what dollar amount buys this service or item, but all the information is on a paper brochure- which means

they'd have to physically visit the organization in order to obtain a brochure. We mentioned to Dan the idea of an interface that shows people what they're buying for the shelter (e.g. selecting a laptop or two pairs of socks) and converts it to dollars and he said it would be very useful.

For all the organizations, we revealed that the core message they want the community to understand about the homeless is that they all have stories and backgrounds. Those who are homeless did not choose to become homeless. Showing the humanity of those experiencing homeless increases empathy and encourages the community to become engaged. We conducted secondary research on existing organizations that talk with the homeless and share their stories. Facing Homelessness and GiveSafe are both organizations that post photos and stories of the homeless online, on Facebook and blogs. They both have informal donation platforms (paypal, e-mailing the organizer) and have limited advertising other than word of mouth.

When we took a tour of Occidental Park with Lindsey, she mentioned that she sometimes sees business people and homeless playing giant chess together in the park. There's food trucks, lawn games and a reading corner for children. It's a place for people coming from a variety of backgrounds to rest, play, eat and socialize. This inspired us to think about how to use a physical space to increase awareness about homelessness and engage the community.

Answers to Task Analysis Questions

Who is going to use this design?

Mostly community members (people who want to learn more about homelessness and want to help homeless people)

What tasks do they now perform?

Some of the support organizations provide story and photos of the homeless people on their websites. Shelter staff from Peace on the Street hold events to keep in touch with the donors. Community members can learn the stories of the homeless people from the internet. They can also know the shelters' needs by visiting shelters' websites or calling shelters. Homeless support organizations get new donors by relying on word of mouth and network of the current donors.

What tasks are desired?

We hope that the greater community can have easy access to information about homelessness. Not just people who want to help homeless people, but also other members from the community. By letting people be more aware of the homelessness issue and understand the homeless people in their community more, we hope that it could build empathy and encourages the community to become engaged.

How are the tasks learned?

Community members learn information from internet, calling organizations, visiting shelters, their friends.

Where are the tasks performed?

This can be performed in any public area, but we focus on some specific place like Occidental Park, where people get food from food trucks, homeless people play chess with business people. A environment which is friendly to both homeless people and community members.

What is the relationship between the person and data?

Community members can check out the information of the homeless people and shelter needs. Homeless support organizations provide stories and photos to our design so that other user can sees them.

What other tools does the person have?

Some organizations has their own publicity on social media, while on the community side, they have smart phones, internet, and other technologies to learn more about homelessness.

How do people communicate with each other?

Community members communicate with each other by face-to-face, phone, email, social network, or internet.

How often are the tasks performed?

It could be thousands of times a day. It depends on how the community is engaging with the homeless.

What are the time constraints on the tasks?

There is not obvious time constraints on the tasks that are going to perform. It depends much on people's own interaction.

What happens when things go wrong?

The private information of the homeless wouldn't be completely anonymous since we're sharing the photos and stories of the homeless, which could be dangerous for them. While the community is interacting with the display, there is some risk of stalking or exposure of payment information to dangerous individuals.

Proposed Design Sketches

Design 1:

Idea: A web application that provides information for the general public about homelessness as well as ways to donate or volunteer. Facts of homelessness would be presented alongside stories of those who are homeless. Community members can also gain insight into how their money will be used by various organizations when they donate. A variety of organizations that support the homeless could post their

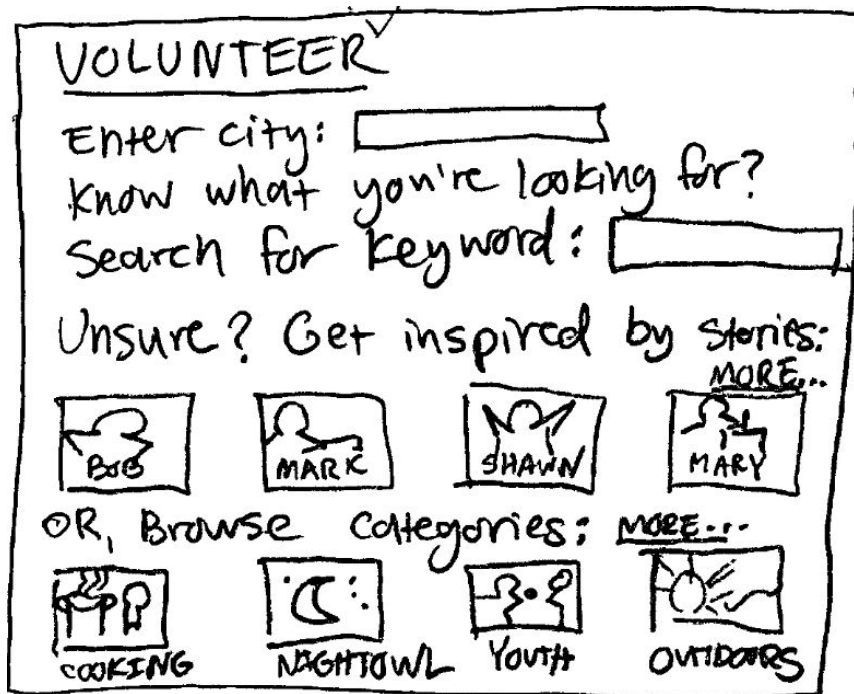
needs, stories of the homeless they support and stories of past/current volunteers. Community members can view the stories of the volunteers to gain a fresh perspective of how they can also use their talents to help the homeless.

How to complete tasks:

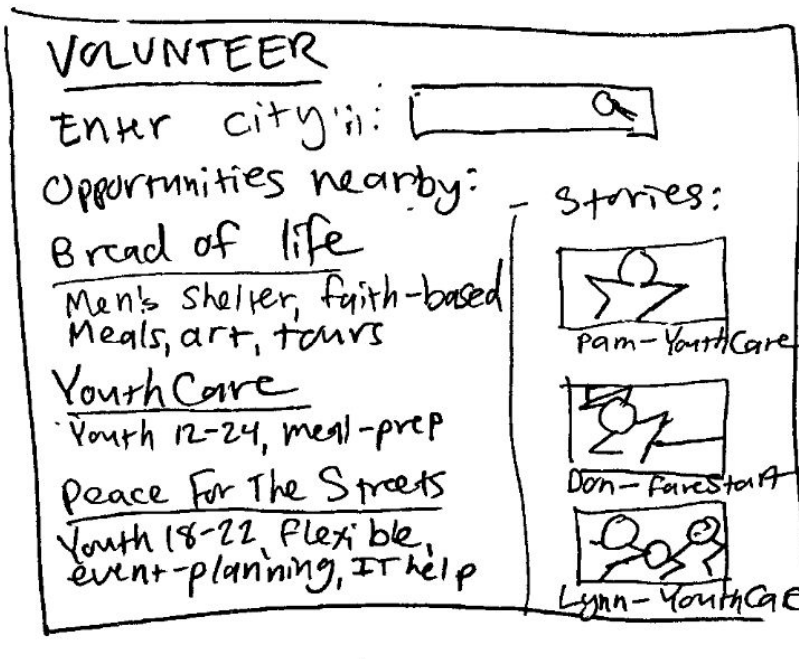
Task 1: Community member learns about stories of how other volunteers have used their unique skills at shelters

- Community member navigates to “volunteer” page, selects city, then can either enter a keyword, read stories of past volunteers or browse categories (target populations, skills, time of day, interests). They can then learn more about each shelter and setup a time to volunteer.

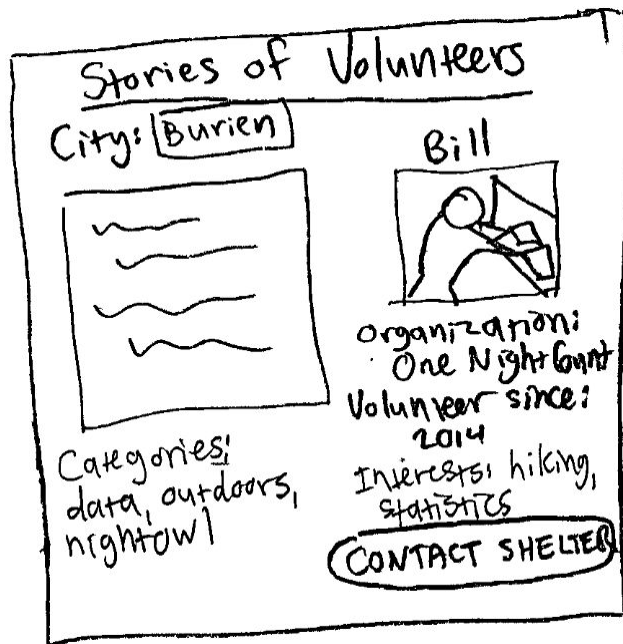
Users can browse or search for volunteer opportunities:



Searching for volunteer opportunities:



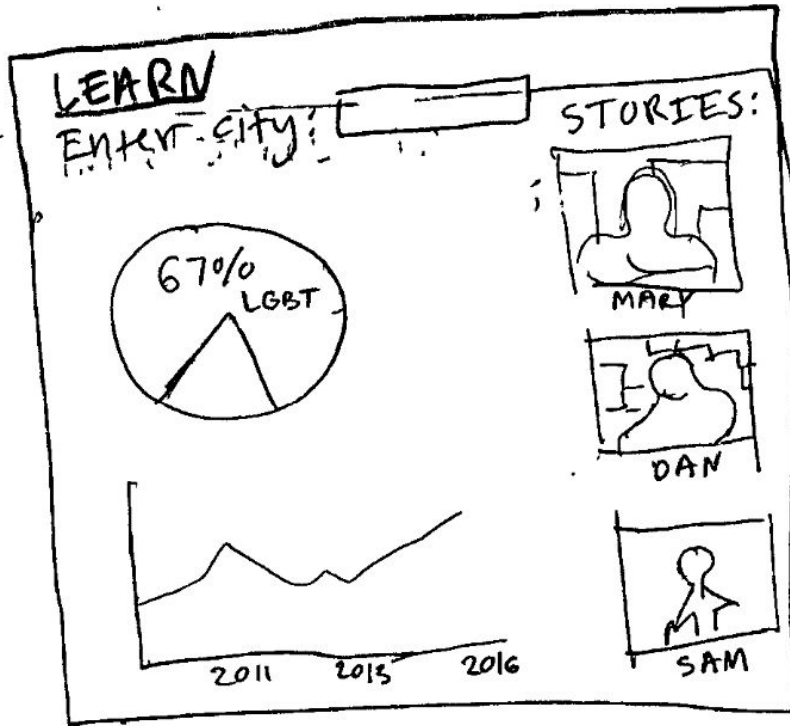
Learning about stories of volunteers:



Task 2 & 3: Community member learns about the background, story and interests of the homeless and community member learns statistics about the issue of homelessness

- Community member navigates to the “learn” page, enters the city they want to view data for then views the facts and statistics regarding homelessness. They can also read about the stories and backgrounds of homeless people.

Facts and statistics about homelessness:

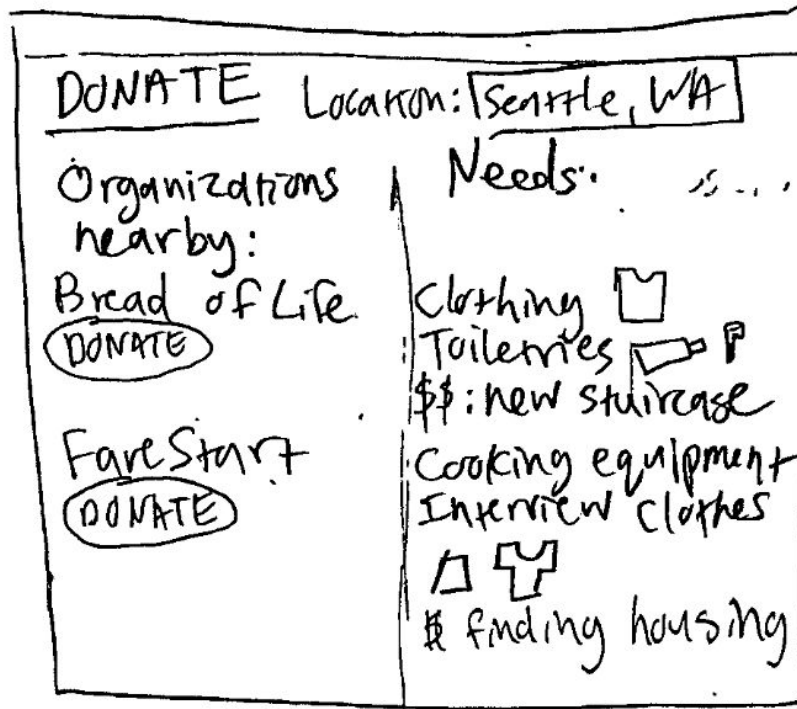


Story user would see after clicking a picture:



Task 4: Community members learn about shelter's needs and how their donations can help homeless individuals

- Community member searches for keyword, item or a population that an organization supports (youth, seniors, veterans, etc.). They receive search results that show each organization and what physical items they need and the most urgent need that cash donations would go towards.



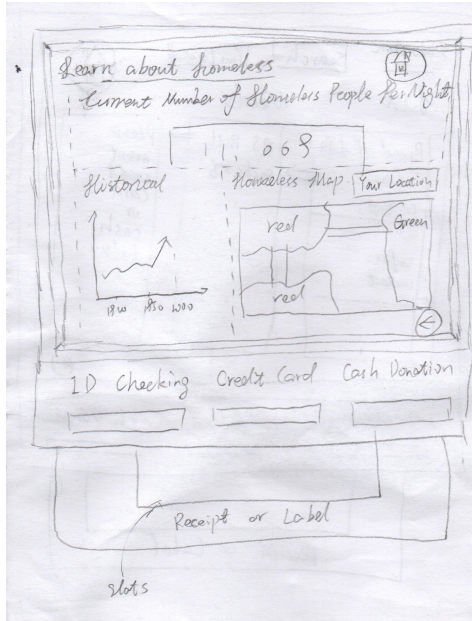
Design 2:

Idea: A public display board with user interface is a convenient way to engage the greater community around the issue of homelessness. It's preferable over an app or website in that people are no longer required to download anything or go online to receive information. The display board will be enticing as it will feature a competition aspect between Seattle neighborhoods (and global cities) showing how many donors from each neighborhood/city have used the display to donate to local organizations. The public display board can be placed in a public place such as Occidental Park, where the homeless and community both spend time.

How to complete tasks:

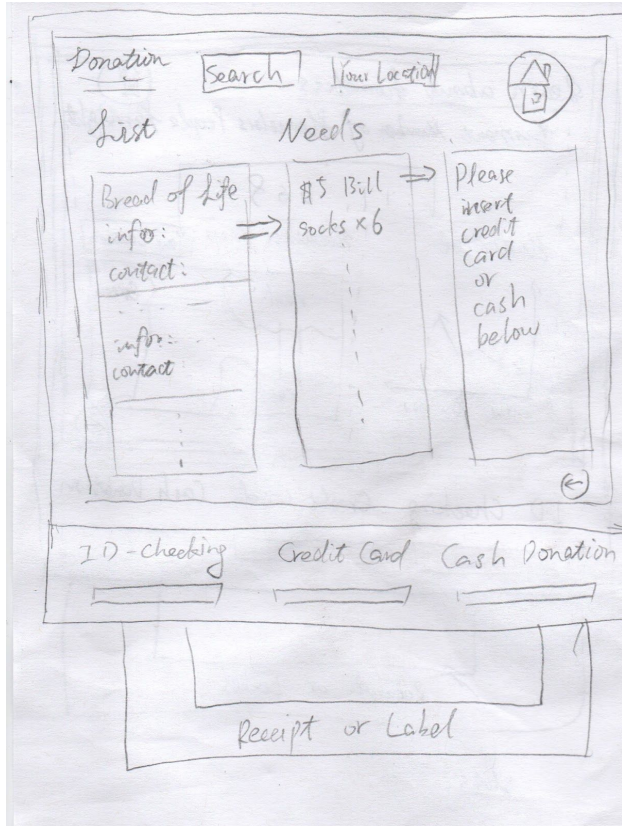
Task 1: Community members learn statistics about the issue of homelessness- Medium

- On the "learning" page of the display board, it shows the status quo of homeless issue. It has the real-time data for count of homeless per night. Below, it has the historical data showing the total number of homeless people in King County. On the right, it shows the approximate situation for homeless by displaying different colors. There are homepage button and back button on the right side of the page for quick operation.

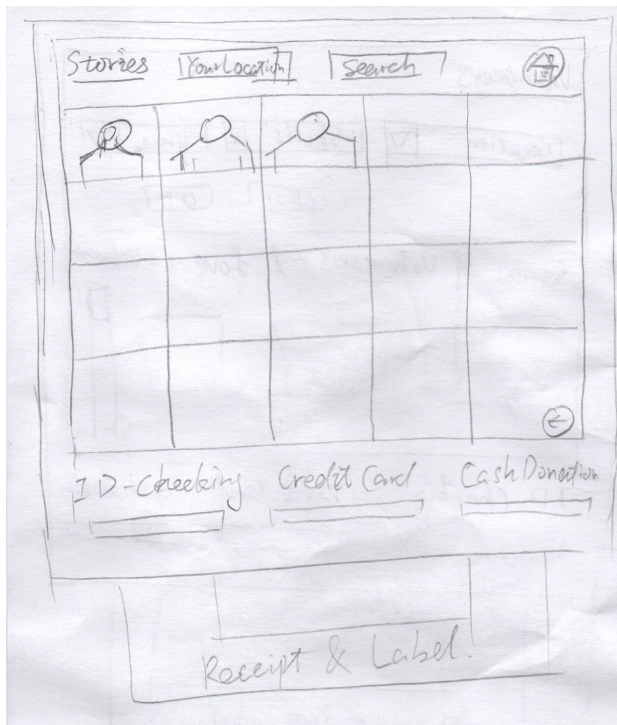


Task 2: Community members learn about shelter's needs and how their donations can help homeless individuals (new task)- Medium

- Community member can go to the donation interface to donation items or money. They can browse through the listed shelters and their needs. Then, they can choose some of the things to donate. If donating money, one can use credit card or cash by inserting them to the slots on the bottom. If donating items, one can choose donation destination and a label with instruction that tells him/her where to drop-off the items.



Task 3: Community members learn about the background, story and interests of the homeless (new task)- Easy



Community can go to a page full of homeless people photos and choose one of them to see the story behind. When the mouse is hover on the photo, it will show the information about this photo, for example contact shelter, age and name.

Task 4: Community member learns about stories of how other volunteers have used their unique skills at shelters (new task) - Easy



Community member can choose to volunteer by select a few filter options: location, time and skills. If he/she is not sure about how is the volunteer job look like, he/she can just browse down to learn more about stories of other volunteers.

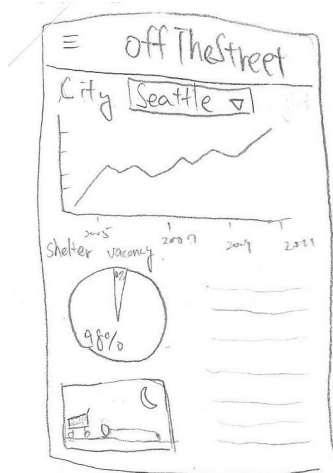
Design 3:

Idea: A mobile app that users can use it to learn more about the homelessness in their community. Users can also learn the stories of the homeless people to understand more. Besides these, this app enables users to search nearby shelters and check what their needs are. After knowing their needs, users can use this app to donate. Users can also track their donation history and see what impact their donations have made.

How to complete tasks:

Task 1: Community members learn statistics about the issue of homelessness

- A user navigates to the "statistics" page and select their city. The statistics about the homelessness of that city will be shown.



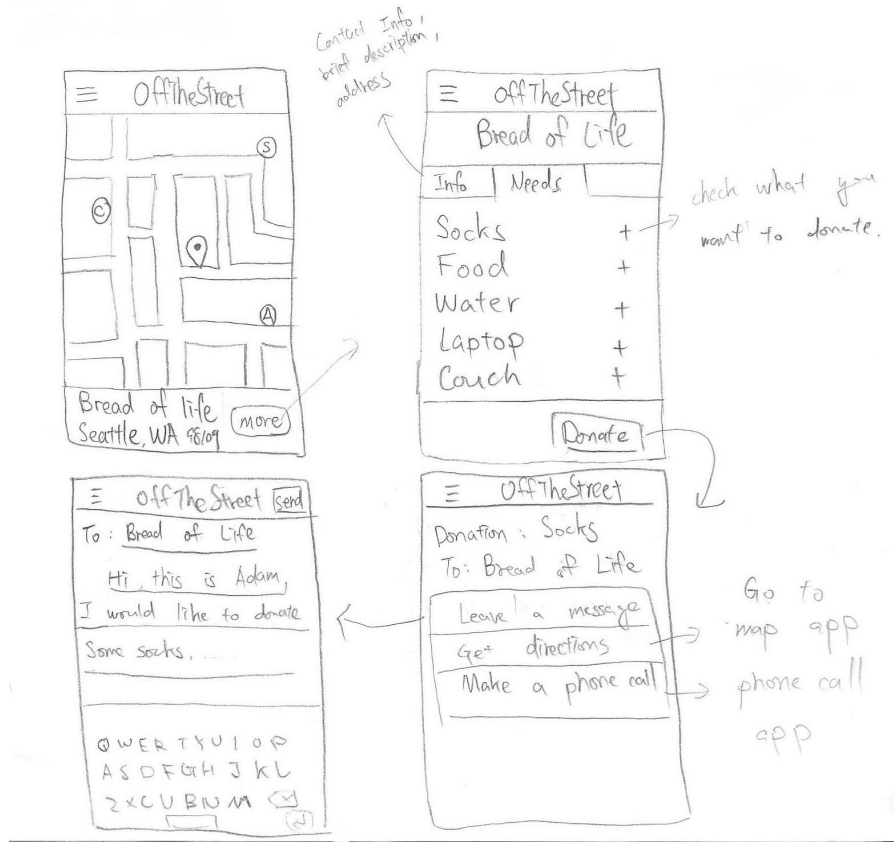
Task 2: Community members learn about the background, story and interests of the homeless (new task)- Easy

- A user navigates to the “story” page, where there are pictures of the faces of homeless people. Select the city that the user want to learn about. By clicking on their faces, the story about that person will pop up, telling the user about that person’s life.



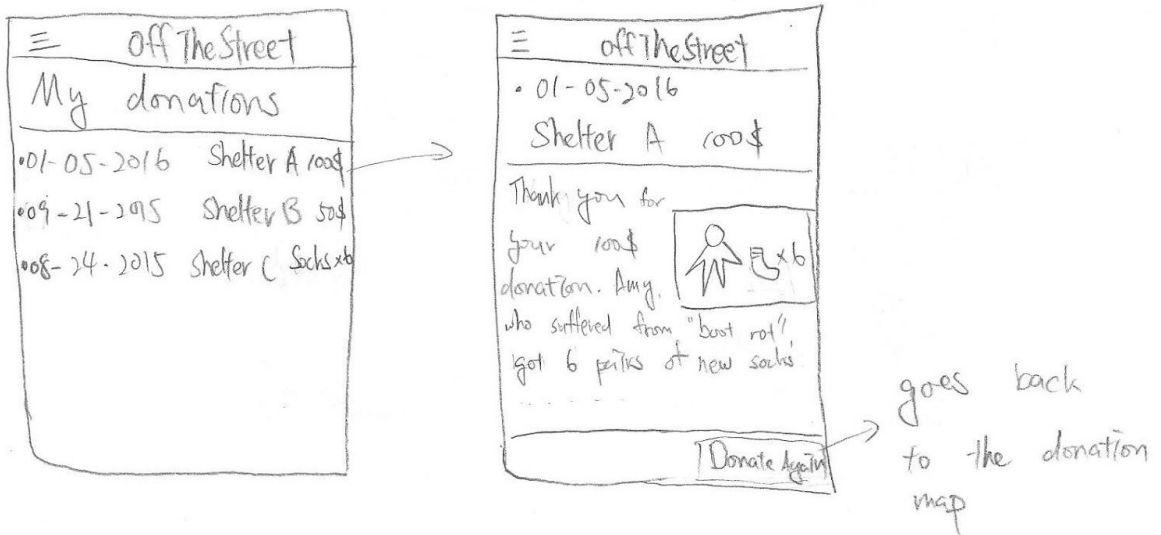
Task 3: Community members learn about shelter’s needs and how their donations can help homeless individuals (new task)- Medium

- First, user can get their location on the map. The app shows user all the nearby shelters. After selecting a shelter, a user can click the “more” button to navigate to the information page of that shelter. In that page, needs of the shelter are listed. A user can select what he/she wants to donate and hit the “donate” button. Next, the user can either leave a message, get directions to that shelter, or make a phone call.



Task 4: Donors receive feedback on the impact of donations (new task) - Medium

- A user navigates to the donation history he/she made with this app. In that page, all of his/her past donations are shown. By clicking on the record, he/she can see the details of that donation, impact he/she made, and "thank you notes" from the shelter or the person. In that page, a "donate again" button at the bottom can navigate the user back to the shelter searching map.



We choose to use a public display board with an interactive user interface as our design. Compared to other designs (mobile app and web), which require downloading or access to internet to operate, public display board is more convenient to engage the greater community in that the public display can be placed almost anywhere with free access. This huge advantage will enable more people to focus on homeless issue. The two tasks we chose as our main tasks are: learn about a non-profit organization's needs and how donations can help homeless individuals; learn about the background, story and interests of the homeless. The second task is to inspire people to care more about the homeless people. We learned from our contextual inquiries that the most important thing for those shelters are donations, so we chose to focus on educating and developing empathy in community members so they will donate to homeless-supporting organizations.

Written Scenarios - "1x2"

Community members learn about the background, story and interests of the homeless

Ben is a warm-hearted software engineer who works in Pioneer Square. He sees many homeless people sleeping on the streets near his bus stop when he arrives at work. He gave money to a man begging on the streets once, but he felt that the money could have been used for anything. He wasn't sure if he had improved his situation at all. Now he mainly walks by the homeless with signs without saying a word. He wants to know their personal stories and needs, but doesn't feel comfortable approaching them and asking about their lives directly. One day, he sees a display at his bus stop that is a slideshow of pictures of several homeless individuals. Ben chooses to navigate to the "learn more" screen, which shows facts about homelessness alongside tiled pictures of the homeless. He selects one of the pictures and learns about a homeless woman named Jackie, who became homeless because she was fleeing an abusive relationship. He spends a few minutes browsing other stories and decides to donate some money for a local shelter to buy interview clothes for people like Jackie. He leaves the bus stop with a better understanding of why some of the individuals he sees on the streets are without a home and a feeling that he's made a difference.

Community members learn about shelter's needs and how their donations can help homeless individuals

Jake works in human resources at an investment company and lives in Greenwood. He currently donates to a few charities, but has never donated to an organization supporting the homeless. One day, he is in Occidental Park to grab some tacos before a Mariner's game. He sees a homeless man begging for spare change, but he walks by because he doesn't have change and isn't sure how to help him. While Jake is waiting for his tacos, he notices a large display in front of him. The display shows a map of Seattle and has different colors for various neighborhoods. Jake is intrigued, so he gets a closer look and sees that it's a sort of competition showing how many people from each neighborhood have donated to shelters using the display. He finds his neighborhood, Greenwood, and sees that it's shaded

purple, which means not many people from his neighborhood have donated. Phinney Ridge is in the lead, which just can't be! Jake, being naturally competitive, knows he has change this. He touches the screen and is shown options to either "learn" or "donate". He selects the donate button which shows that for only \$5, he can donate a pack of clean socks for a homeless person. There's also some information about why maintaining proper foot care is important when you're homeless, and how infections can easily occur and result in amputations. Jake is touched and saddened by the conditions that some people are forced to live in. Jake is moved and decides to donate two pairs of socks to a nearby shelter and inserts his debit card into a slot at the front of the display. After he completes the donation, he sees the color of his neighborhood on the map turn slightly more green and he gets a tinge of satisfaction. The game is fun, but Jake understands what's really important is having a positive impact on the lives of the homeless.

Storyboards

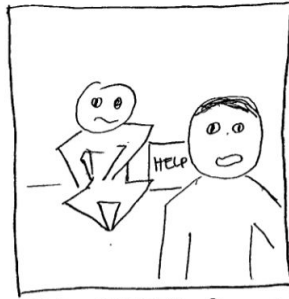
Learning about the background and stories of the homeless



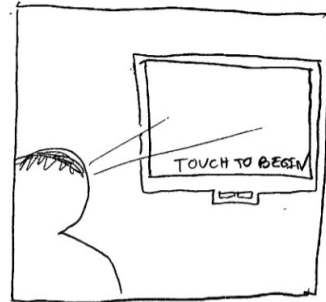
Learning about how shelter's needs and how donations can help homeless individuals



Jake is waiting for his food truck order at a park.



Jake notices a homeless man begging for money. He wants to help but isn't sure how.



Nearby, he spots a compelling display and figures it's an interesting way to spend a few minutes.

DID YOU KNOW?
Foot care is very important for the homeless.

Shelter A nearby needs:

20 socks	10 shoes
DONATE SOCKS	DONATE SHOES
\$5 each	\$50 each

I didn't know foot care is so important! I'm going to donate towards socks!

DONATE SOCKS

I feel great knowing how my donation will help!

THANK YOU FOR DONATING socks to Shelter A!

Jake finds out which shelter will use his donation to buy socks for the homeless.