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ember

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# Problem Statement

Despite 24/7, wall-to-wall coverage of national politics, **local** and **state** political **information** is still **difficult** to **find**. When it comes to local elections, people tend to vote simply along party lines. Instead, our goal is have **voters make more informed, confident choices**.

By **empowering users** with information that is often overlooked and **facilitating in-person discourse**, we believe we can create a platform that allows **people to unite** through their **local government** and ultimately be more **effective citizens**.

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# Solution Overview



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# Users

- An **uninformed voter** who feels **uncertain** about voting in local elections and wants to **engage with their community through in-person discourse to gain knowledge** about politics. They feel they are hindered by **scarcity of events** within the community and unreliable/unknown sources in trying to find events and facts about politicians.
- An **informed and passionate** citizen that is looking to increase their impact and **altruistic feelings**, but feels they lack the resources to do so. They **need a platform** to reach an audience and help get people fired up.

# Users - Personas

## Nancy Witherspoon

Looking for Inspiration from candidates and her purpose as a citizen

Trustworthy Stubborn Caring



### Goals

- Finding a politician that she can see herself in
- Getting more information on local topics
- Being satisfied with her role in elections

### Frustrations

- Does not like most candidates for elections
- Everyone compromises on morals
- Does not think that her role matters as much as it does in elections, especially considering she does not feel represented

### Bio

Nancy is currently a student at the University of Maryland and is very staunch and puts family life first. She has a very tight-knit community as well with a few close personal friends. Nancy enjoys simple things in life such as practicing her clarinet and looking after her two little brothers when she needs to. She has grown up in the age of information and uses social media extensively with her friends and colleagues. Nancy keeps a great balance of academics and social life and wants to participate in politics, but her search for the right representatives have shown poor results.

Politically, Nancy leans to the right because her parents have instilled their values in her and she believes they are just. When searching for someone to represent her, she looks for the PERFECT candidate who will not lay low when the going gets tough. She wants a fierce candidate who is not afraid to fight for what she thinks is right and believes extremely similarly to her on a large majority of issues. Unfortunately she has not found that perfect person yet and has come close to giving up on the democratic process. Nancy did not even vote in the 2016 election because Clinton and Trump were both deeply flawed and she could not make the decision to endorse either. Nancy does not do compromise.

### Motivation

Incentive  
Fear  
Growth  
Power  
Social

### Brands & Influencers

Online News

### Preferred Channels

Traditional Ads  
Online & Social Media  
Referral  
Guerrilla Efforts & PR

### Personality

Introvert  
Thinking  
Sensing  
Judging  
Extrovert  
Feeling  
Intuition  
Perceiving

*"Proper representation of family values is the only goal in a successful democracy"*

Age: 18-26  
Work: Student  
Family: Nuclear Family with two little brothers  
Location: Bethesda, MD  
Character: Affluent with conservative values and family first

## Kazimir Smith

Confident Ambitious Hard Worker



*"I'm always right, even if I'm wrong"*

Age: 25  
Work: Engineer  
Family: Married  
Location: Novi, MI  
Character: The Troll

### Goals

- Spread fake news and propaganda to promote political activity
- Create click-bate events to entice users
- Attract attention to political agendas

### Frustrations

- Lack of feeling heard even if his opinion is unpopular
- Worries about getting kicked off the page and having to create a new account
- Wishes he could be anonymous to decrease judgment

### Bio

Kazimir is an immigrant that has been living in the United States for 16 years. He isn't satisfied with the current political climate in his local community because it is filled with people who don't even know or care about elections. As an Immigrant he had to work hard working minimum wage jobs just to support his family. In order for him to create a better life he needs the local politics to increase the minimum wage and decrease public spending. He believes by attracting attention to a political event he can cause some discussion about politics, even if it's not positive.

### Motivation

Fear  
Growth  
Power  
Social

### Preferred Channels

Facebook  
Reddit  
Twitter  
Texting

### Personality

Introvert  
Thinking  
Sensing  
Judging  
Extrovert  
Feeling  
Intuition  
Perceiving

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# Basic Functionality

Ember users can:

- **Find candidates** that align with their views
- **Stay updated with candidates** over time
- **Save articles** on relevant topics for later reading
- **Create events** for **discourse** or **political action**
- **View and RSVP** to events in the **community**

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# Final Solution



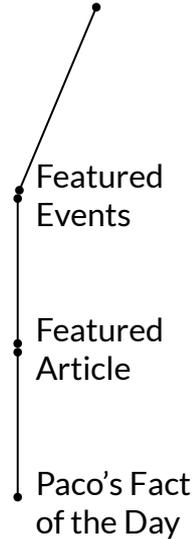
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## Main Screens

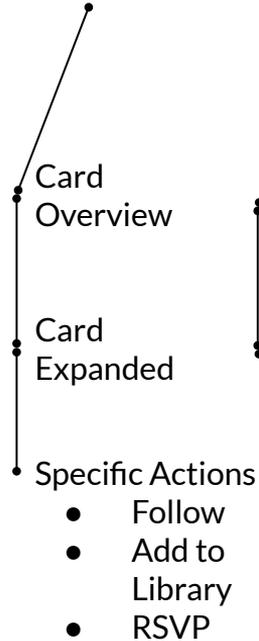
(accessible from all screens)

## Secondary Screens

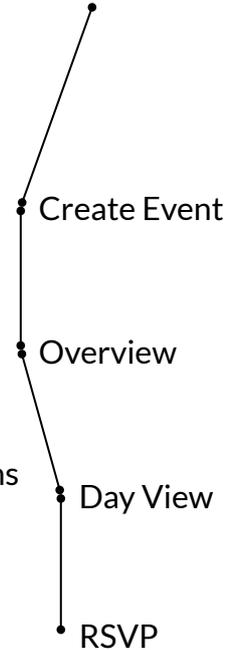
### Dashboard



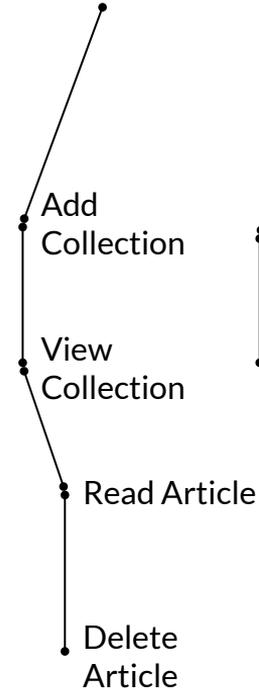
### Explore



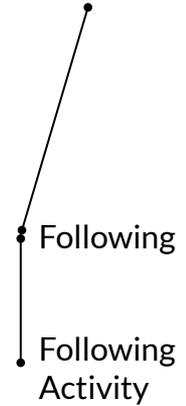
### Events



### Library



### Profile

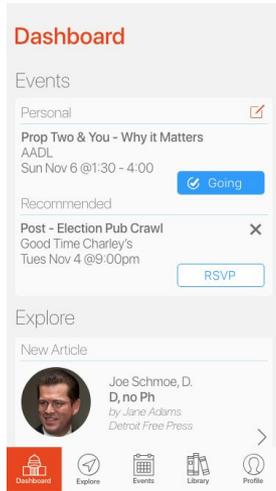


**flow overview - text**

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# Main Screens

## Dashboard



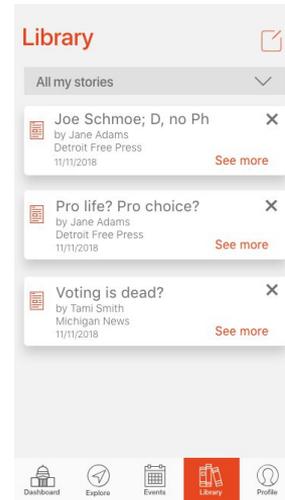
## Explore



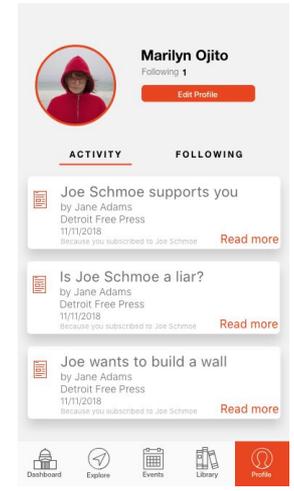
## Events



## Library



## Profile



# flow overview - visual

# Main Screens

(accessible from all screens)

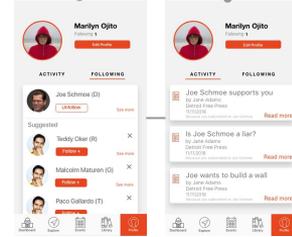
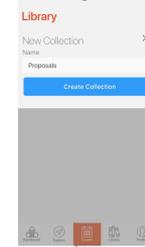
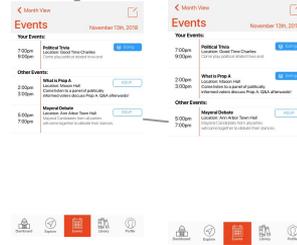
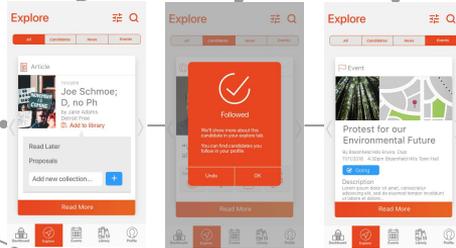
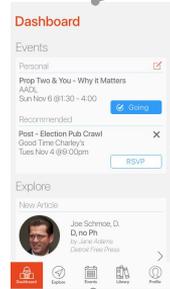
## Dashboard

## Explore

## Events

## Library

## Profile



Paco's Fact of the Day

*"Approximately 55% of all registered US citizens voted in the 2016 Presidential Election."*  
Source: AP News

# flow overview - visual

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## Stand-Out Factors

- The premise of our application itself; there are no mobile applications as accessible as ours that address the same problem in a political context.
- Library collections are easy to create & update, and allow for powerful management of news articles.
- Follow message appears only the first time a candidate is followed. This informs the user, but doesn't berate them.
- Explore filtering tab allows for direct access with a single tap.

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# Scrapped Ideas



Saved

- X/Save buttons.
  - Each card originally had the buttons to the left associated with them. These designs did not help create an appropriate mental model for the users, and were confusing interactions. Usability tests revealed it was not clear what would happen by clicking either one. To be frank, we didn't know what effect the "X" would have.
- Saved Section
  - We originally had one saved section for events, candidates, and articles. We soon realized, however, that there was different utility in looking at each later on, and interactions needed to be more specialized.

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# Scrapped Ideas



- Chat

While this idea barely even carried into our paper prototype, we decided we explicitly did not want to include a chat or commenting feature in our application. We do not believe this supports our mission of increasing positive discourse, due to the different dynamics associated with online discussion. We think Ember should be a tool to unite people, and enabling keyboard warriors does not create unity. This is especially the case when it comes to politics. We instead chose to turn focus to in-person events.

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# Not Implemented in Prototype

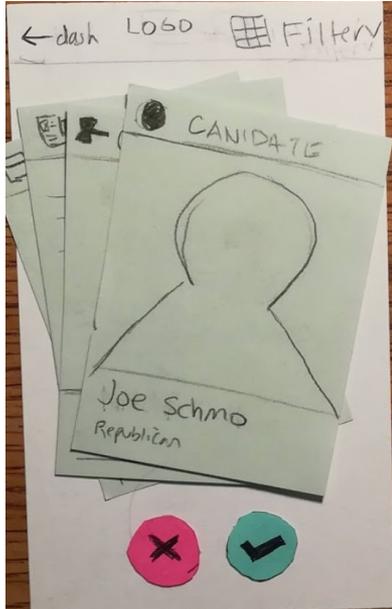
## Swiping Navigation

We view swiping as the primary navigation method in the explore tab. For our prototype, we had to implement navigation arrows with large amounts of padding. This was simply because dragging triggers and animations are difficult to do with existing prototyping tools. In a full-featured application, we would increase the prominence of swiping, and believe that navigation would be more natural.

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# Tools





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# Tools

## Paper Prototype

The paper prototype was an invaluable starting tool. It allowed us to unify our team ideas into something more concrete. The prototype was far from finished at this point, but gave us something to come together on and begin creating our own mental model for the application. This was also where we began our design process, in which two members would design the same screen independently, and together the team could pull ideas from both versions.

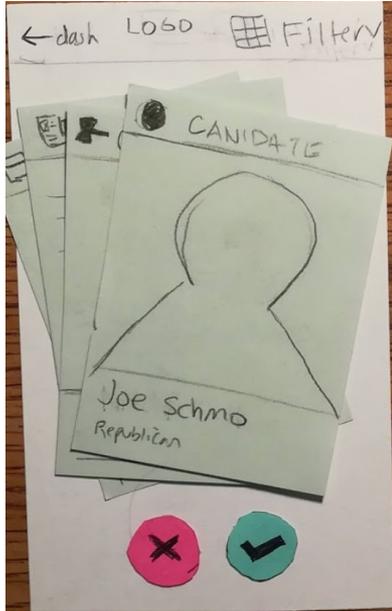


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## Tools

### Adobe XD

Creating a digital prototype in Adobe XD allowed us to have a medium through which we could refine many of the minutiae that would make our application usable or not. Through this, we were able to more clearly define navigation, choose accurate semantics, and establish information hierarchy. XD provided us the ability to work at a low cost, on multiple operating systems, and with controls that fit conventions that many of us were familiar with. We also appreciated the ability to design basic elements and prototype within the same application.



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# Tools - Pros and Cons

## Paper Prototype

- Pros
  - Quick manifestation of ideas
  - Ability to receive early user feedback
- Cons
  - Our mental model wasn't as concrete as it initially felt
  - Smaller interactions that ended up having unforeseen impact on the end product were glossed over at this stage
  - Some interactions were much easier to do in a paper prototype than digitally. Thus, some interactions that were initially relied on were not implemented, and substitutes had to be created.

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# Tools - Pros and Cons

## Adobe XD



- Pros
  - Able to work without extra financial cost, cross platform
  - Integration with existing Adobe suite, which designers are largely familiar with.
  - Ability to design most elements, perform basic animations, and create links between screens all within the same application.
  - Get a more accurate sense for how the application would actually feel on a phone and be used without the explanation that is necessary with a paper prototype.

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# Tools - Pros and Cons

## Adobe XD - cont.



- Cons
  - Lack of collaboration features
  - The above combined with our time availability resulted in us splitting screens amongst ourselves. While this invited diverse ideas, it also created fragmentation across the application.
  - To work efficiently across space, we had to work on different files, upload them, and then take extra time to merge the work of the two files together. Time was also taken to make sure style inconsistencies did not exist. This would have been less likely with everyone sitting down and working on one file at a time.

# Design Evolution

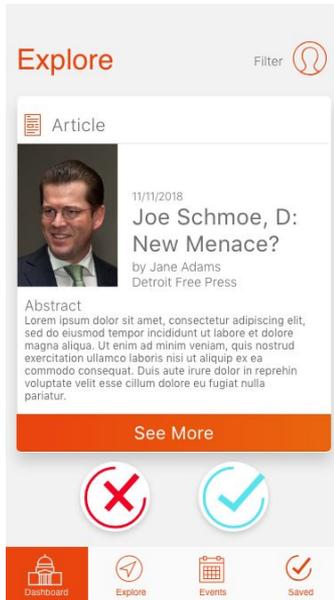


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# Brainstorming/Sketching

- Scrapped sketching idea: Gamification
  - use teams of citizens to get together and learn about local issues in gamified structure
  - would also gamify rallying fellow citizens to vote
  - had idea to weave gamification into our other initial tinder-esque idea
    - was left out considering we had enough trouble refining our main interaction and goals

# Design Iteration #1



- Tinder-esque approach to the feed
  - “save” or “dislike” feed cards
- Feedback:
  - expectations about “saving” and “disliking” cards is not clear
    - Unclear about what “dislike” would do
  - Is saving/liking a politician different from doing the same to a different instance like a news article?
  - What happens after a user “dislikes” a card from the feed? Does it never show up again?

# Design Iteration #2



- Switched liking vs. disliking to simple upvote, downvote system
  - ideas for what upvote, downvote meant
    - to give the feed a better sense of what the user liked to give similar cards in the future
    - liking feature similar to other social platforms like reddit
  - Feedback:
    - Want to see updates on politicians not just see their cards
    - Not sure if this is now a social media app around politics or a political app now

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# Final Prototype

Main features:

- **Events:** be able to have in-person dialogue with local community members in order to spark healthy political discourse and dissemination of information
- **Feed:** ability to stay informed with local and national politics, users will be exposed to all types of politics, news articles, and political events to make better voting decisions
- **Saving Articles:** users can archive articles when interested in them

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# Final Prototype, cont.

Main features:

- **Follow Elected Officials & Candidates:** Users can “follow” politicians and candidates to stay updated and informed about their career, events, and news
- **Fact of the Day:** political facts and interesting political statistics are generated daily and accessible in the user’s dashboard to inform users about interesting news
- **Filtering:** Increased ability to find specific candidates based on keywords, parties, or topics in the Explore section.

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# Evolution + Class Readings

- Storyboarding (Sketching UX 4.4)
  - This reading helped us realize our true intentions for this app in leading to higher voting and agency
    - Initially our focus was on our app and our unique interaction
    - We slowly started to focus on helping the user be more and more active instead to hopefully lead to our aspirational goal which aligned with our storyboards
- Paper Prototyping and Early User Testing (Rudd, Low vs High Fidelity)
  - As previously mentioned, the readings guided us in developing a helpful paper prototype to
    - Get our ideas on paper
    - Receive user feedback at early stages in the process

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# Impact

Ember has the potential to mobilize citizens and empower them to take initiative in regards to their local politics. We also believe there is a large possibility of this spilling over to a general increase in political activism.

Focus on local events and news can help instill a greater sense of community and responsibility in individuals. Equal ability amongst all users to create events distributes power more equally.

Finally, we believe the affordances of ember indicate to users that it is simply a tool. We want to turn focus away from digital “activism,” and shift the focus back to real events, people, and impact.

