

PETPLACE

Creating an Accessible Pet Adoption Platform

My Role: UX Designer

Methods:

Rapid Prototyping

Contextual Inquiry

User Interviews

Timeline: 6 weeks

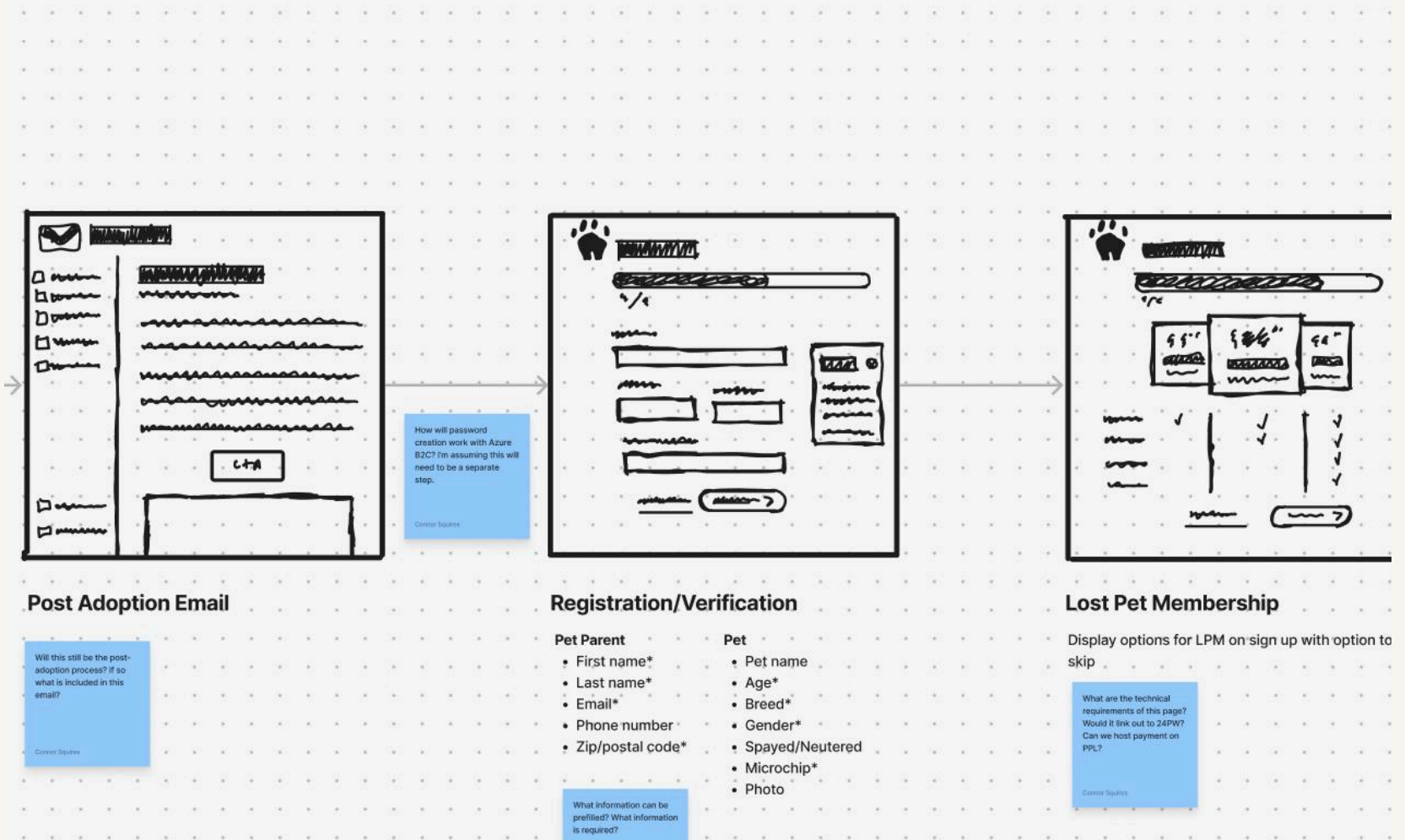
Introduction

Summary

PetPlace Adopt is a comprehensive platform that helps prospective pet owners discover, inquire about, and save favorite adoptable pets. Created as part of PetPlace's mission to support pet parents throughout pet ownership, this platform connects users to detailed animal profiles from an existing database of shelters and rescues. Since launch, PetPlace Adopt has achieved a 202% increase in traffic to petplace.com, generated over 90,000 adoption inquiries, and 2.8 million pet searches, with an 8.4% conversion rate.

Overview

Along with two other designers, we began researching by traveling to animal shelters in and around Chicago, Minneapolis, Seattle, and Toronto. At these shelters, we observed the adoption process, interviewed shelter employees/volunteers and adopters, and conducted a deep dive into the use of shelter-facing software. Using the data gathered during these sessions, I created an in-depth interactive prototype for further testing before handing off the final designs to the development team.



Research

The Problem

During our research, we found that pet parents face a fragmented experience when searching for adoptable pets, with limited access to pet information, adoption status, and support throughout the process.

Discovery & Insights

We observed and interacted with several in-person adoptions during this project's discovery phase. During this period of observation, we uncovered several key insights, including:

Inconsistencies in the Adoption Process

There is a high demand for adoptable pets, and potential pet parents often search several shelters or rescues simultaneously. Though the same shelter-facing software is used, each organization may have its own adoption process, leading to an inconsistent and confusing experience for adopters.

Overwhelmed Shelters

Shelters and rescues are extremely busy and often run mainly by volunteers. Any solution for an adopter-facing product must integrate seamlessly with the shelter's software without requiring extra steps from employees or volunteers.

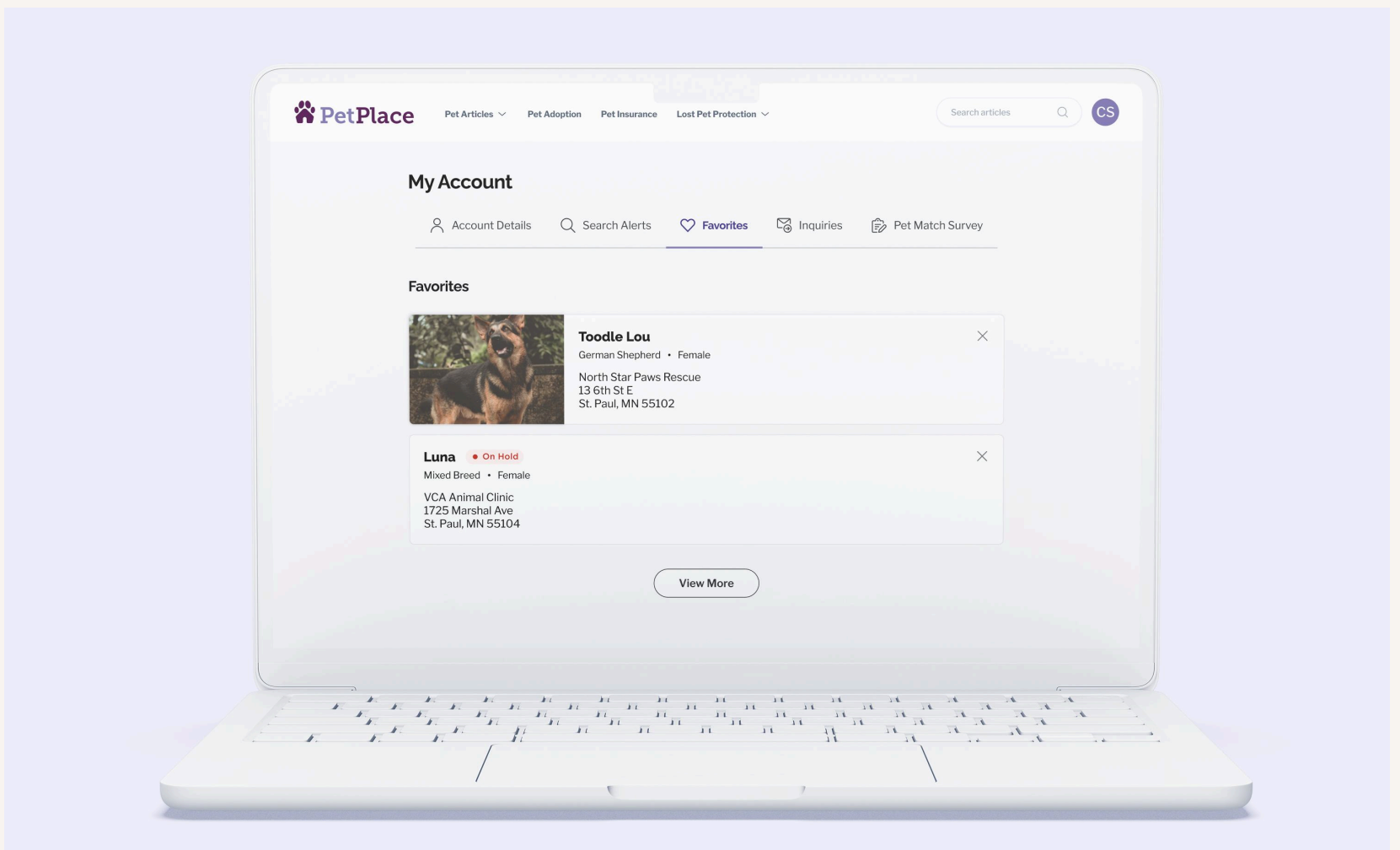
Personalization

Many adopters we interviewed expressed an interest in a more personalized adoption experience. This may include a survey used to match adopters with compatible pets or displaying pets based on the adopters' location or preferences.

Design Decisions

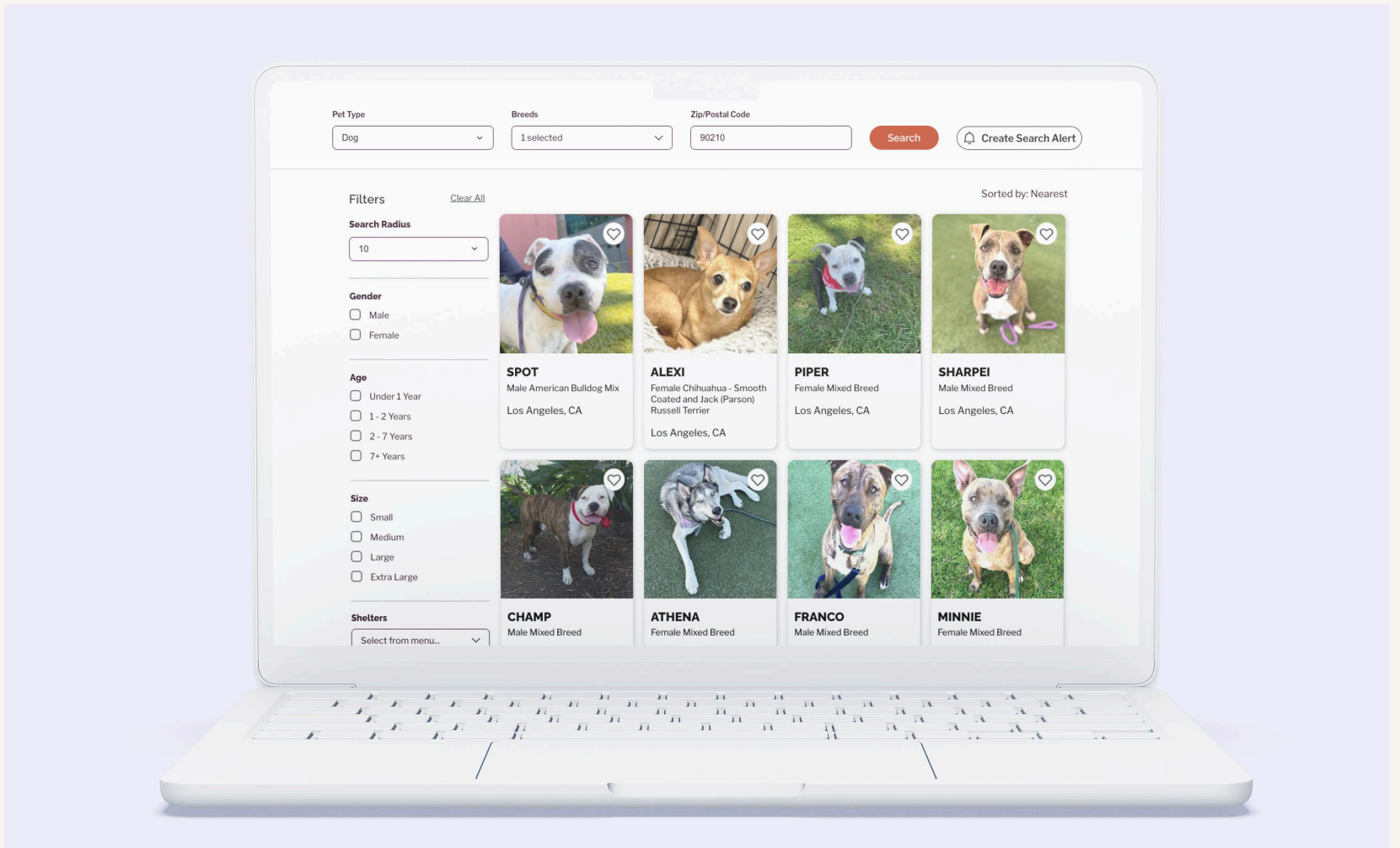
Account Creation

Research showed that users greatly valued the ability to track and save pet profiles, enhancing both convenience and engagement in their adoption journey. The account creation feature allows users to revisit their favorite profiles and manage inquiries. It also supports a personalized experience by storing preferences and suggesting relevant adoptable pets based on individual user interests.



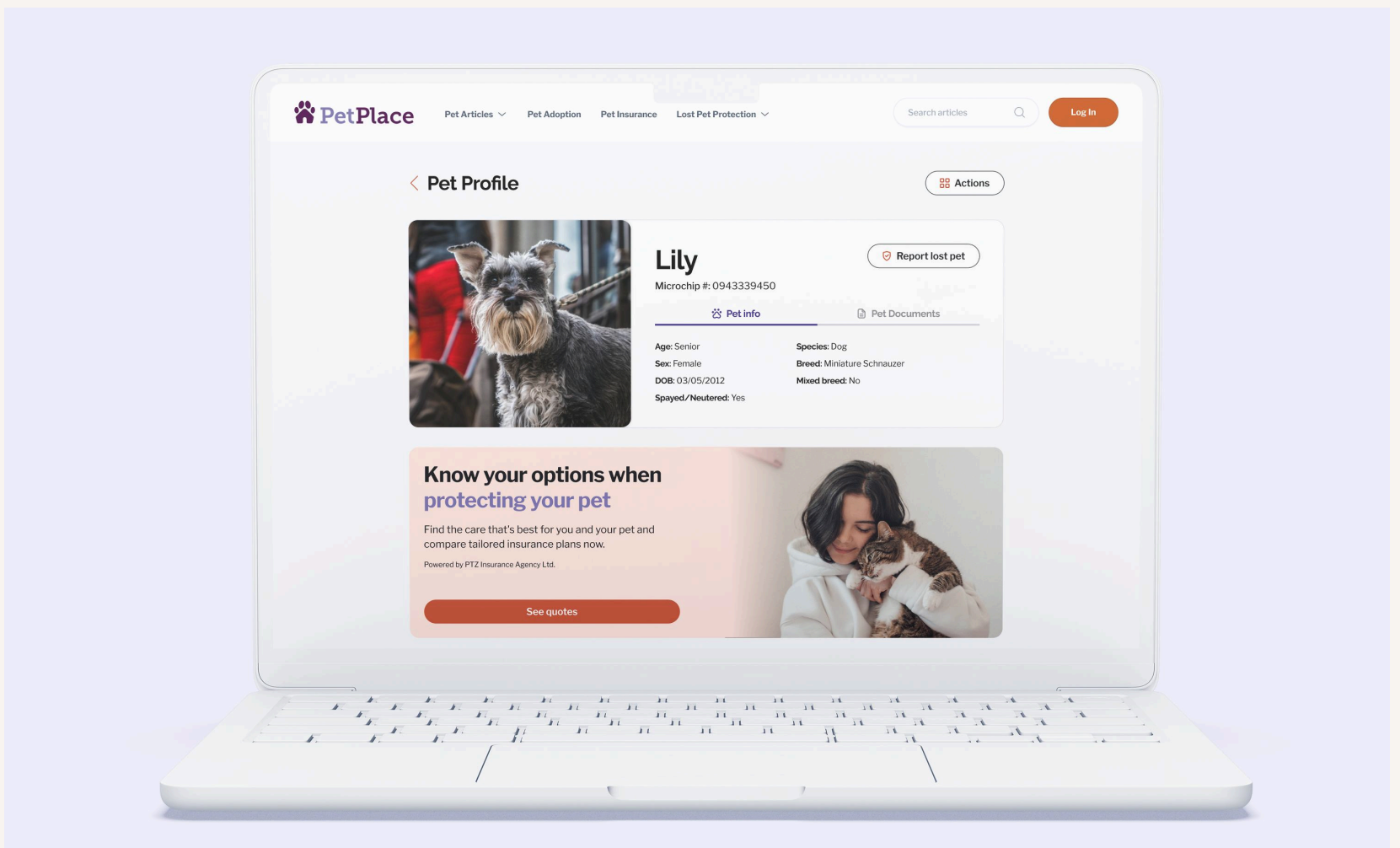
Intuitive Search Functionality

Observing the fragmented adoption process emphasized the need for a robust search feature. Adopters frequently search across multiple shelters and platforms, so providing an intuitive and comprehensive search tool is essential. This empowers users to easily explore adoptable pets that align with their preferences and geographic location, creating a more seamless experience.



Software Integration

Due to the high demand and busy nature of shelters, any platform aimed at adopters must seamlessly integrate with existing shelter software. Integrating PetPlace Adopt with the shelter's system minimizes extra work for shelter staff. This allows them to concentrate on their primary responsibilities while providing adopters with accurate, real-time information about available pets.



Outcomes

8.4%

Conversion rate

202%

Increase in traffic

103,876

Accounts created

90,000+

Adoption inquiries submitted

3.8 million

Searches conducted

Takeaways

Prioritize Empathy in Design

Empathy is critical in the context of pet adoption, as users often experience a mix of excitement, uncertainty, and emotional investment. Understanding these emotions and the unique challenges adopters face enables the design to provide intuitive guidance and support throughout their journey.

Design with a System in Mind

Designing without a cohesive design system or style library can lead to inconsistency across visual elements. Establishing a unified visual language from the outset is essential to ensure coherence across the product, minimizing the need for design rework and enhancing the user experience.

Leveraging Constraints as Opportunities

Working within constraints, such as limited resources, technical restrictions, or timeline pressures, encouraged creative problem-solving and adaptability. Constraints can drive innovation by prompting us to refine priorities, focus on high-impact features, and find efficient solutions that align with user needs. Embracing these limitations allowed us to develop a user-centered experience that maximized value despite resource restrictions.