

The background features a solid blue gradient. At the top, there are several stylized, light blue clouds of various shapes. At the bottom, there is a stylized city skyline composed of various geometric shapes and buildings in shades of light blue and white. The main title is centered in the upper half of the image.

Harford County

Improving the “Visit Harford” Website Experience

INST 710, Fall 2018

This project supervised by Bill Kules

HCIM Program Director

The University of Maryland, College Park

PALS - Partnership for Action Learning in Sustainability

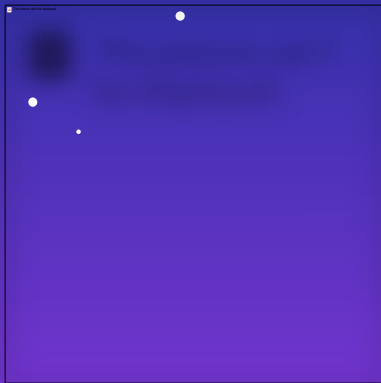
An Initiative of the National Center for Smart Growth



Gerrit Knaap, NCSG Executive Director

Kimberly Fisher, PALS Director

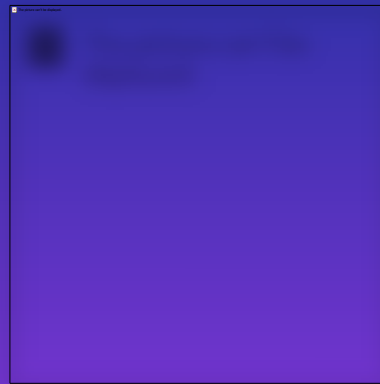
The Team



Anam Bhatia



Anavi Kajla



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Problem Statement

The client's goals

- Identify the shortcomings of the Visit Harford website and app
- Expand the website's reach beyond 30-40 year-olds
- Lay more emphasis on engaging business and leisure visitors
- Identify visitors' wants and translate them into features and offerings

Our Process



Background
Research



Field Research



Wall Walk



Ideation



Product Concepts



Background Research

Montgomery County Website

- Clean, modern interface
- “How do you like to travel?”
- Blog articles with tags like “see+do”
- “Get Inspired” section

Lancaster Tourism Website

- “Getaway guide”
- Trip planner option at the top
- “Create a memory”—different approach to main attractions
- Option to sign up for the newsletter

Prince George’s County Website

- Clean interface
- “Stories”: for latest county updates
- Navigation bar: “Play,” “Stay,” “Dine,” “Events” with useful sub-categories

Background Research

Common themes

- - All reviewed websites have a modern, intuitive UI
 - Sections like “How do you like to travel?” and “Create a memory” a personal touch
 - Option to sign up for a newsletter
 - Social media integration

Background Research

What we learned

- - Focus on the website experience for ages 20-30 years
 - Learn how and when users pick "navbar" options
 - Understand the user's personality to determine a relevant information structure
 - Focus on effective ways to incorporate social media

Target Audience

Individuals:

- In their 20s
- 8 people from different backgrounds:

Relationship Status		Occupation	
Single	3	Student (undergrad)	3
In a relationship (unmarried)	4	Student (grad)	3
In a relationship (married)	1	Working	2
Total	8		8

Interview Focus

Interviews focused on

- User's intention in using the website
- Understanding what information they're looking for
- App and website features they interact with
- Steps they take to navigate through the website and apps
- Other resources/ apps/ websites they use to inform their decisions
- Visitors' preconceived ideas about Harford County or its websites

Our User's Story

Why I travel ?

Factors that affect where I go

How do I plan ?

What makes planning easier for me?

Deciding what to do

Website features important to me

User Personalities

- Detailed Planner

Experimenter

History Buff

Social Traveler

Safe Planner

Thrifty Spender

Nature Lover

Improviser

No-nonsense planner

Why I Travel

- I look for unique experiences
 - I like exploring new places
 - I don't like artificial or touristy places
- I like to relax and take it easy
 - I want peace and quiet
 - I like to walk around
- I travel for very specific reasons
 - I travel to visit friends
 - I go on trips to accompany others

Related User Personalities

Experimenter

- I look for new places to visit
- I like to explore nearby places
- I prefer local restaurants
- I don't care about popular opinion
- I would rather go to peaceful places than crowded, touristy spots

Social Traveler

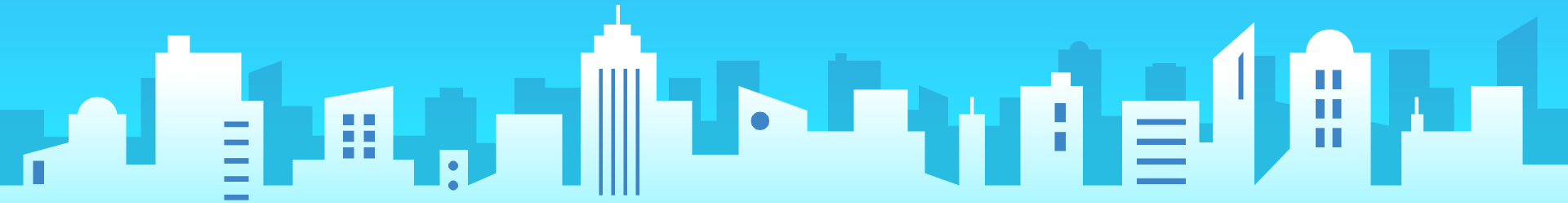
- I like to have a good time with people when I'm traveling
- Being with my friends is important to me

Nature Lover

- I enjoy spending time in nature
- I don't like to go to artificial places like malls

Actionable Items

Personality quiz to determine best choices



Factors That Affect Where I Go

- I rely on reviews to make a decision
 - I want the county website to have reviews
 - I read reviews before making a decision to visit a place
- External factors before I travel
 - Weather influences my decisions
 - Cost is important to me

Factors That Affect Where I Go

- I want to see pictures of real people, professional pictures feel impersonal
 - I want to see authentic pictures
 - I want to see pictures by real people, not professionally shot images

Related User Personalities

Safe Planner

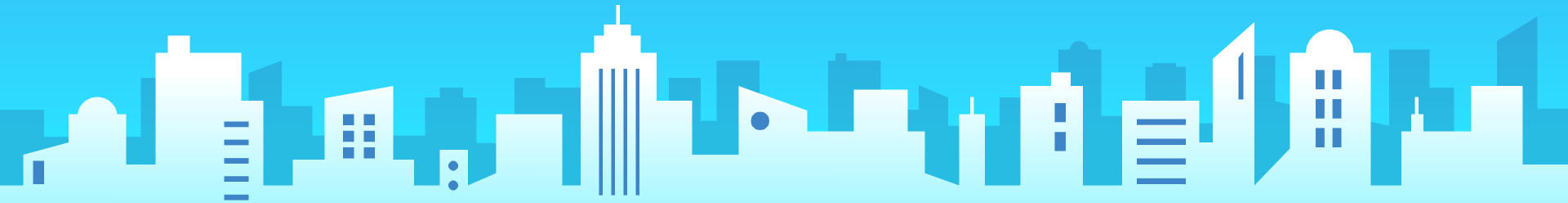
- I want reviews and recommendations from trusted websites
- I don't like professionally shot pictures

Thrifty Spender

- I want to see prices while booking
- I look for cheaper options whenever possible

Actionable Items

*Reviews and recommendations
filters and sorts based on cost*



How do I Plan

- I improvise instead of planning ahead
 - I plan in the moment
 - I go with the flow
- I use external apps to plan
 - I prefer to use specific external apps for planning
 - I use external apps to find out what to do first
- I save interesting places to visit
 - I make a travel itinerary
 - I take notes of places I want to visit or save for later
- I plan with/for others
 - I plan for others
 - Friends and family plan for me
 - I plan with friends and family

Related User Personalities

Detailed Planner

- I like to plan a trip well in advance
- I like to have a final itinerary before booking
- I take a note of all the interesting places

Improviser

- I go with the flow and tag along with people on trips
- I just plan and book the important stuff before leaving

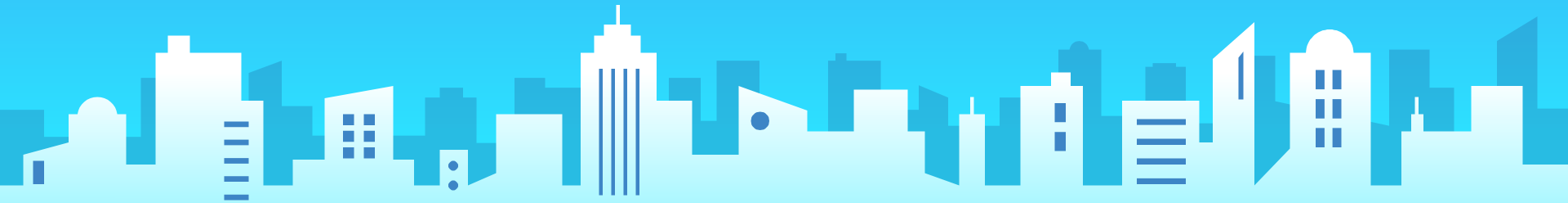
Safe Planner

- I need to see posts from people who have actually visited the place
- I want reviews and recommendations from trusted websites

Actionable Items

Customizable planner

Day-wise itinerary



What Makes Planning Easier For Me

- I want more pictures on the website
 - I expect pictures and want more pictures
 - I want to see people engaged and having fun
- I want things to be more organized
 - I like alphabetically organized lists
 - I want clear navbar options
- I want to find information quickly
 - I don't want redundant info
 - I don't want information immediately
- I need more information on the website
 - I want more information about pictures
 - I want more information on each trip idea
 - I did not find what I was looking for on the website

Related User Personalities

No-Nonsense Planner

- I want to get all my information upfront and quickly
- All relevant information should be consolidated in one place

Detailed Planner

- I want to know everything there is to know about a place
- I want to have more control over navigation

Improviser

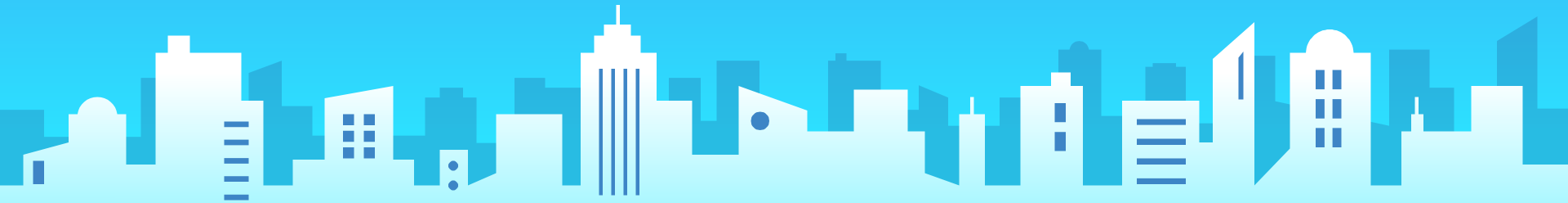
- Mobile websites should cater to on-the-go needs

Actionable Items

Mobile responsive website

Social media Integration (Instagram)

Gallery images with added info



Deciding What To Do

- External factors after I arrive
 - Proximity of attractions to each other matters
 - Duration of stay is important
 - I'm bounded by time
- My personal preferences
 - I like to shop
 - I don't like drinking alcohol
 - Food is an important factor
- I'm influenced by popular opinion
 - I make choices based on popular opinion
 - Ranking of results is important
- I take recommendations from people around me
 - I seek recommendations from people who have previously visited
 - I seek recommendations from friends

Related User Personalities

History Buff

- I want a way to talk to local people about the history of the place

Nature Lover

- I look for more outdoorsy trip ideas

Safe Planner

- I look for familiar places
- I want suggestions based on personal preferences
- I want links to external travel websites

Social Traveler

- I want to be able to plan with my friends collaboratively
- I want an option to share my itinerary with friends

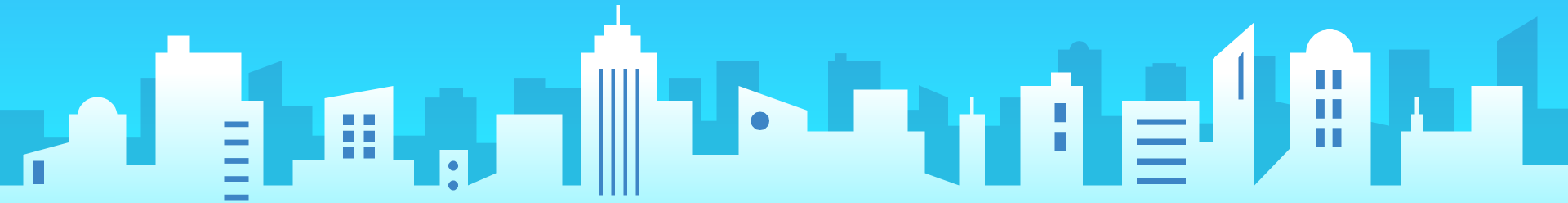
Thrifty Spender

- I want to know about the estimated cost of visits upfront

Actionable Items

Links to external travel website

Lists like “25 best things to do”



Website Features Important To Me

- I don't like information to be text heavy
 - I find the website too text heavy
- Visual design matters to me
 - I like it when the website and its features are not dated
 - I judge the overall feel of the website based on its visual design
 - I want a personalized experience
- How information is organized is important to me
 - The information on the home page should be captivating enough to make me want to explore more
 - I want to see the most important results on top

Related User Personalities

No Nonsense Planner

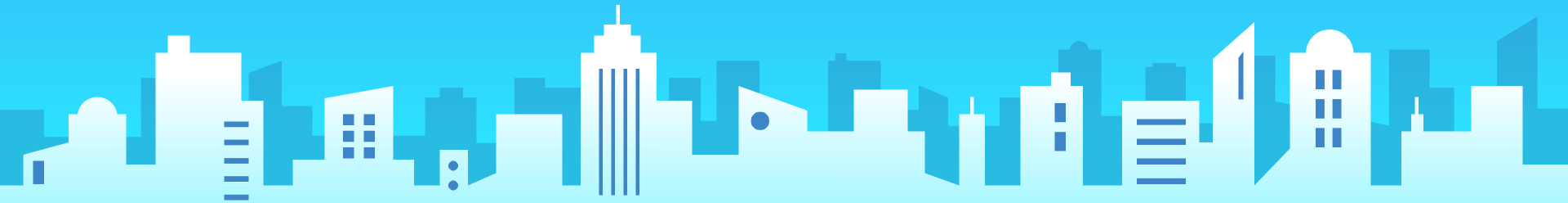
- I don't want redundant or irrelevant information
- List the best places on the home page
- I tend to look at the top few links while searching

Actionable Items

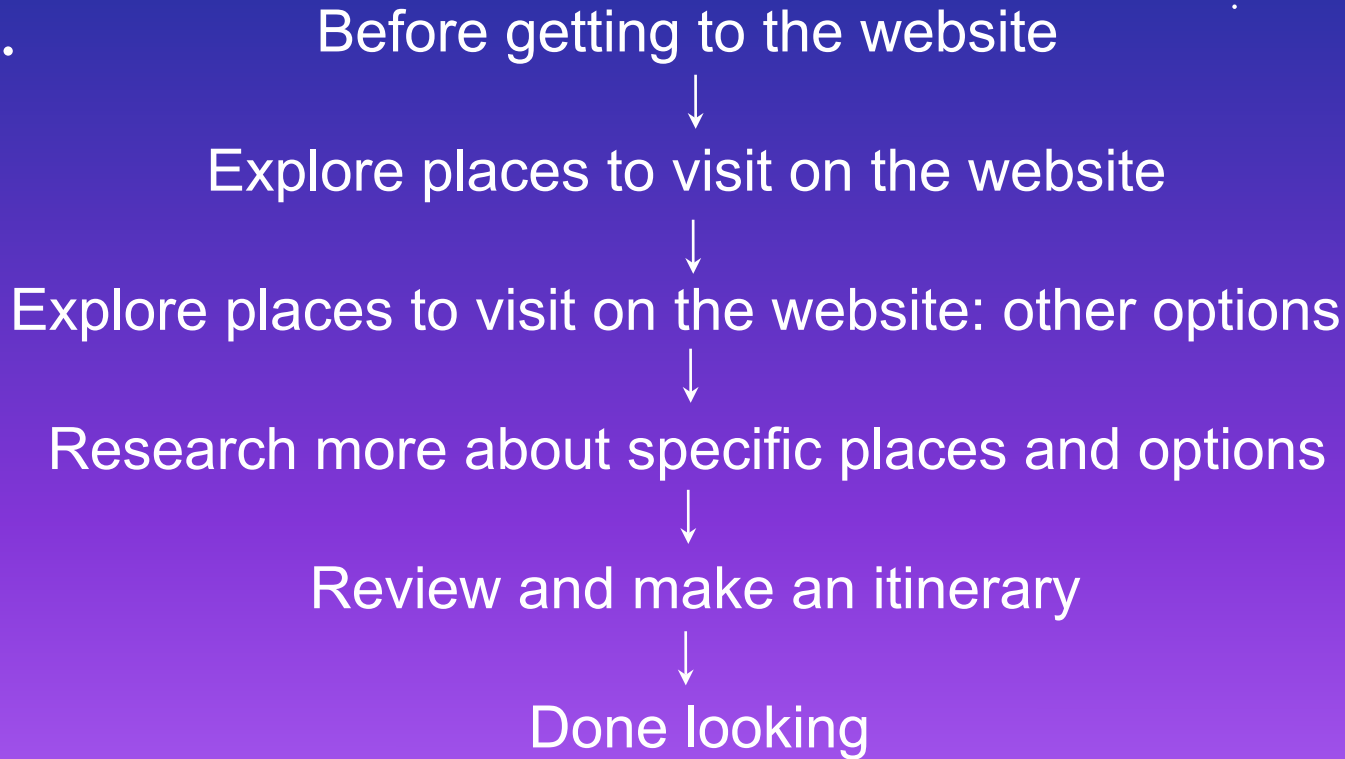
Clear navigation

Scannable text

Consistent visual and interactive design



A Typical User's Journey



Issues



Issues

- Organization of content is problematic
 - Organization of content on the navbar is confusing
 - Difficult to locate relevant and important info
 - Redundant navigation (bar and boxes)
 - Misleading landing image (because it shows on other pages)
 - “Plan A Trip” navigation is misleading

Issues

Issues with website features

- outdated UI
- broken external links
- travel guide is a PDF
- too text heavy
- website feels impersonal
- bad SEO
- textual direction not useful
- no customizability
- irrelevant information
- no nearby option
- no means of collaboration

Issues

Website lacks information

- lack of filters and sorts
- lack of related info on
 - Gallery images
 - trip ideas
 - attractions
- lack of trip ideas
- no reviews

Hot Ideas



Hot Ideas

Planner

- Favorites
- Day-wise itinerary
- More trip ideas
- Real-time collaborations
- Option to make trip idea public
- Display nearby options
- Wish list
- How to get there

Personalized Trip Ideas

- Personality quiz to determine best choices
- Season-wise ideas
- Time-wise ideas
- AI chatbot
- Similar things to do

Lists of each navbar item

- Walkability score
- Image carousel
- Sorts and filters
- Favorites
- Interactive map of all the places

Hot Ideas

Standalones

- Guided tours
- SEO and SMM
- Tab-based navigation b/w website sections

Images

- Social media linked
- Latest images
- Gallery images information
- More images for places

Travel Guide

- Frequently/dynamically updated
- Accessibility (older population)

Recommendations

- List of best/top places
- Recommendations from locals
- Reviews from external websites
- Similar things to do

Chosen Design Ideas

Planner

- Favorites
- Day-wise itinerary
- More trip ideas
- Real-time collaborations
- Option to make trip idea public
- Display nearby options
- Wish list
- How to get there

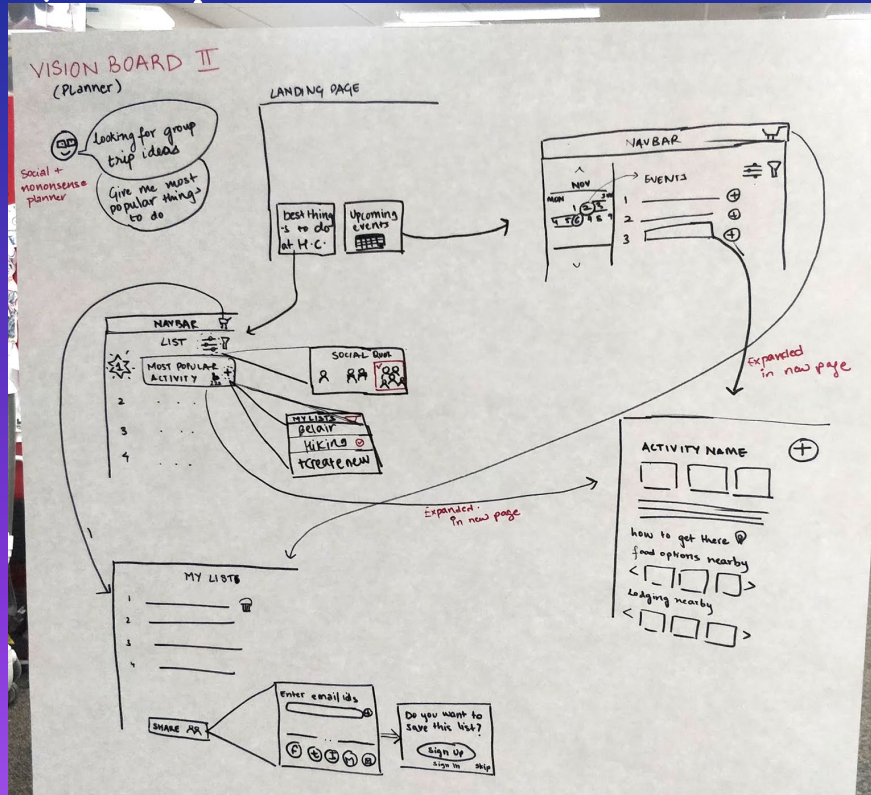
Personalized Trip Ideas

- Personality quiz to determine best choices
- Season-wise ideas
- Duration -wise ideas
- AI chatbot
- Similar things to do

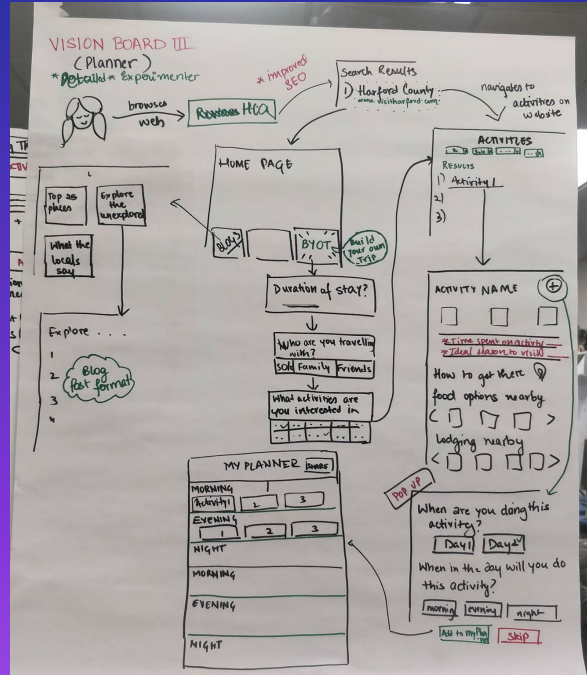
Visions



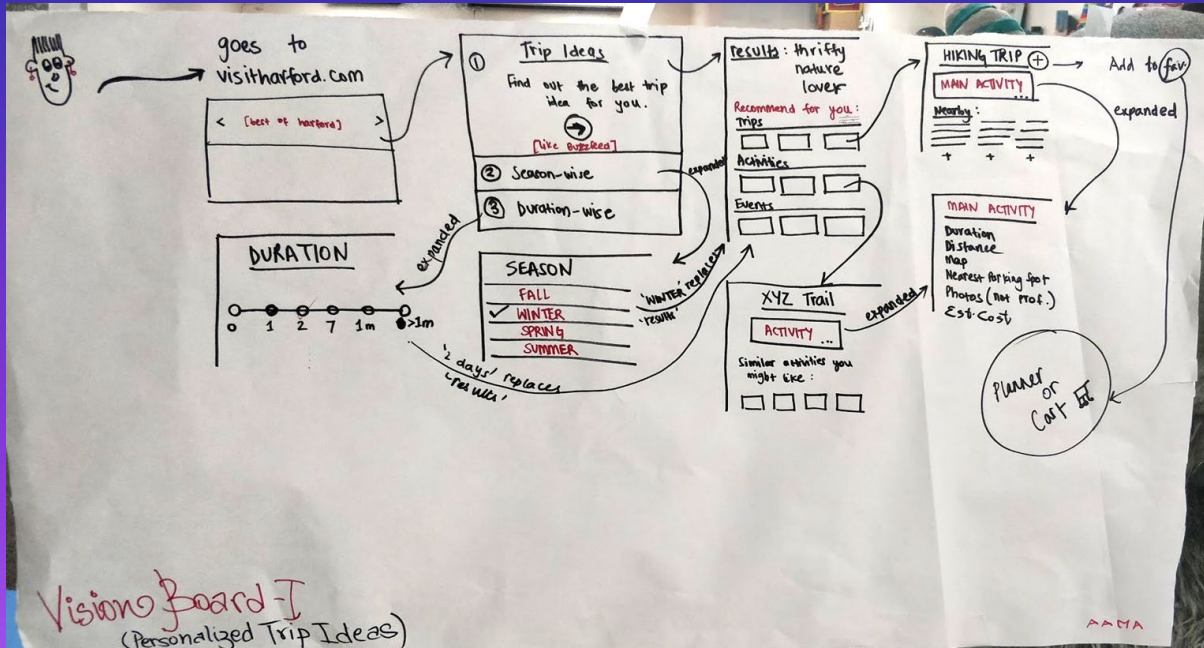
Planner - I



Planner - II



Personalized Trip Ideas

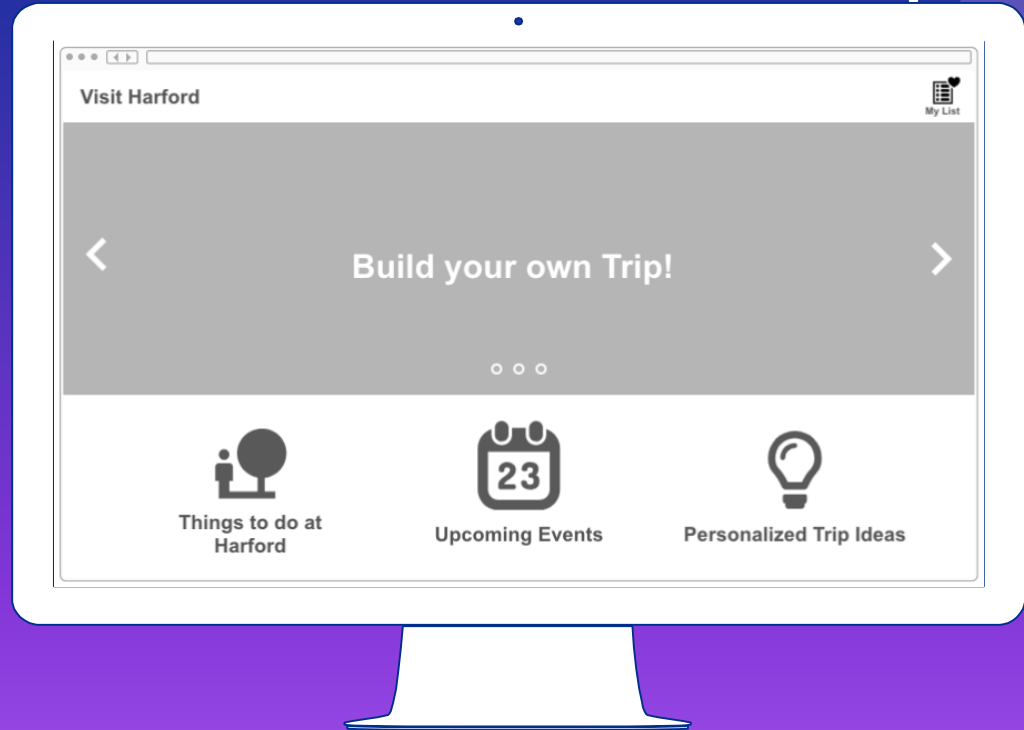


The background features a dark blue to purple gradient. At the top, there are stylized white stars and light blue clouds. At the bottom, there is a dark blue silhouette of a city skyline with several buildings. Some buildings have yellow lights glowing from their windows, and one building has a yellow circle on its side. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

Product Concepts

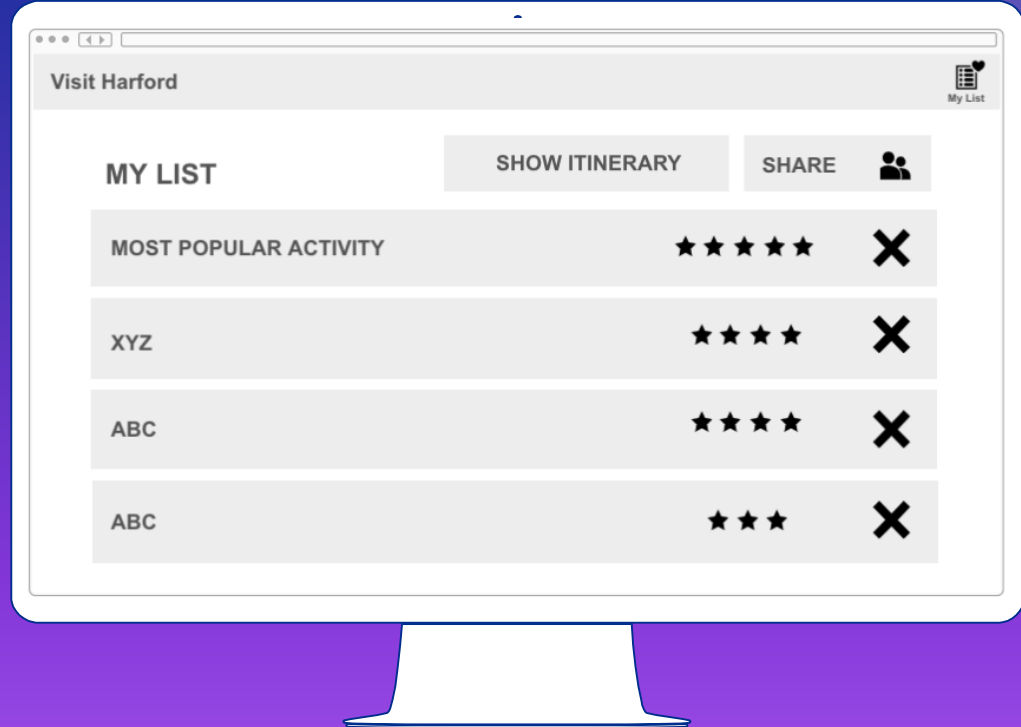
Home Page

- ● Things to do in Harford County
- ● Upcoming events
- ● Personalized trip ideas
- ● Build your own trip
- ● My list



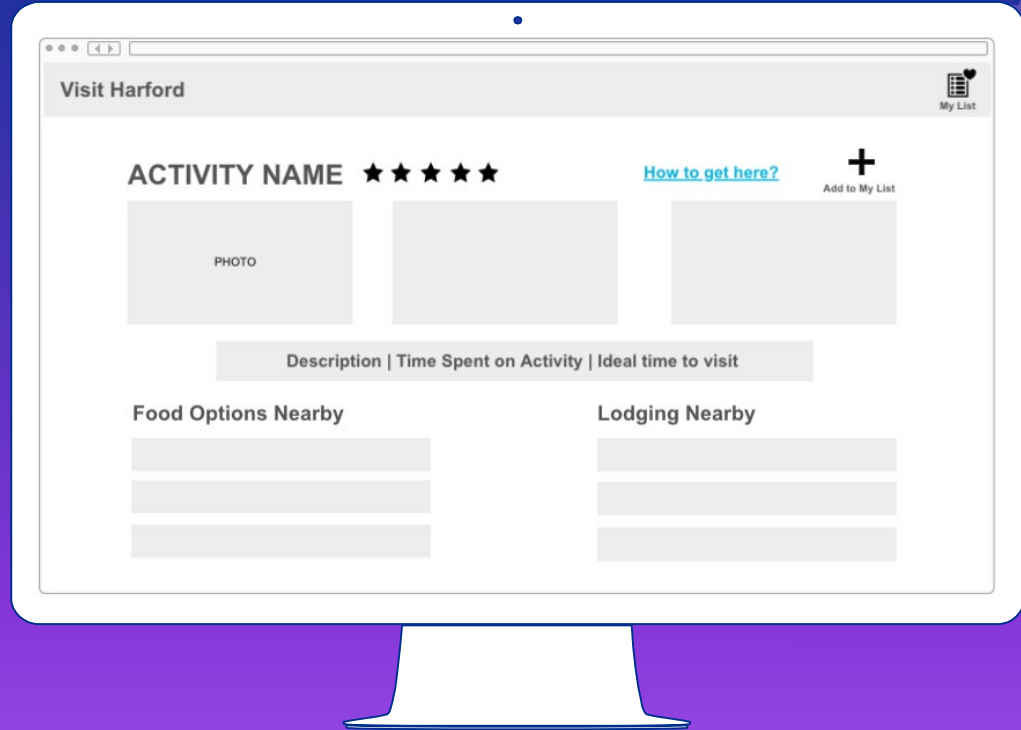
My List

- List of activities added by the user
- Option to remove activities
- Share with friends
- Option to build an itinerary



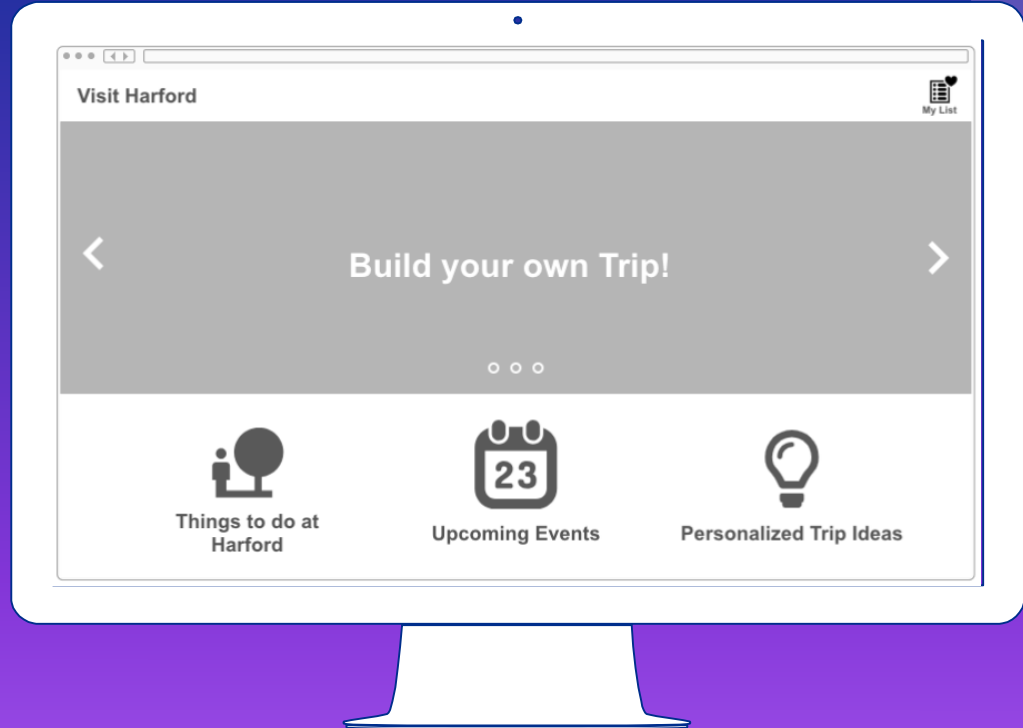
Individual Activity

- Photos with relevant details
- Description of activity
- Food and Lodging options nearby
- Directions
- Add to “My list” option

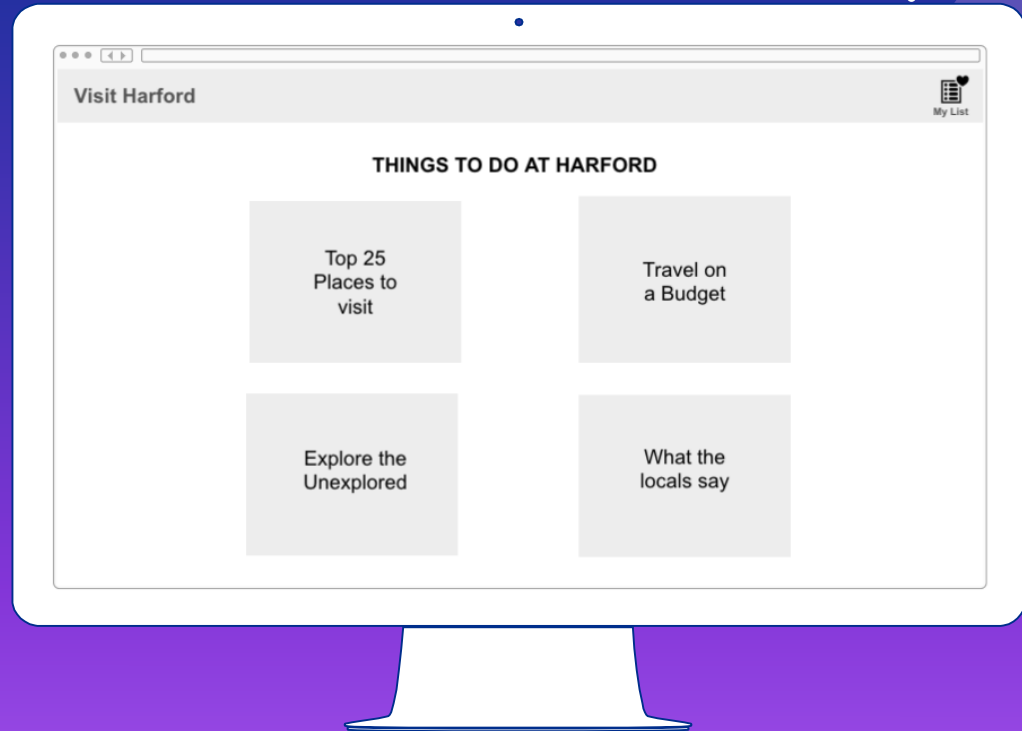


Home Page

- ● Things to do Harford County
- ● Upcoming events
- ● Personalized trip ideas
- ● Build your own trip
- ● My list

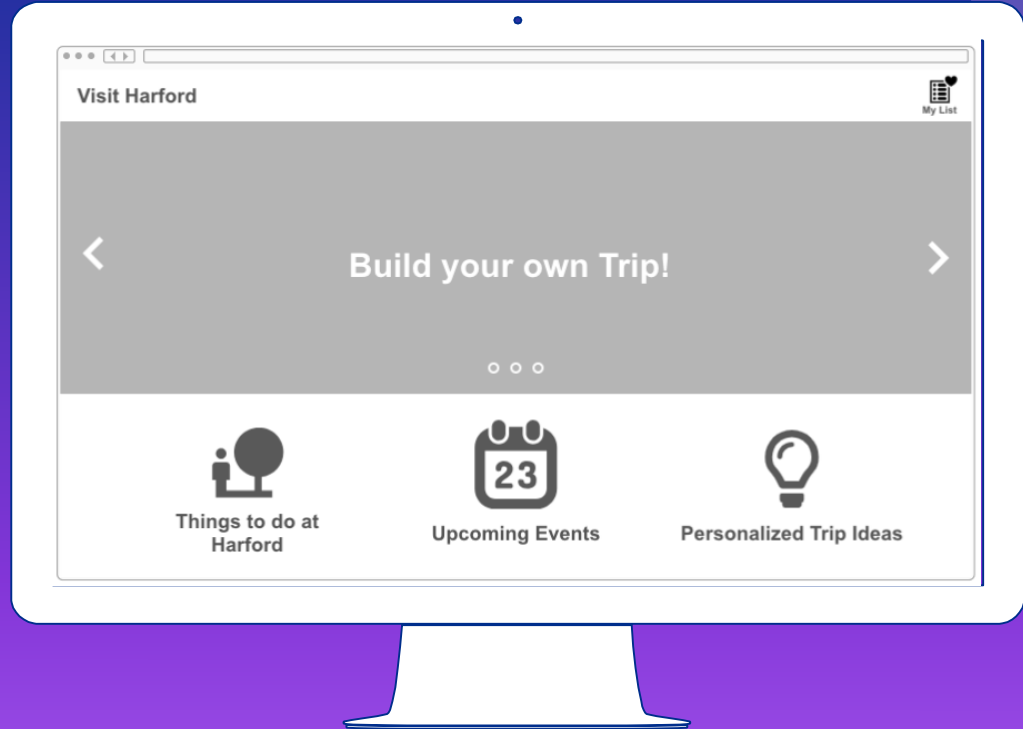


Things to Do in Harford County



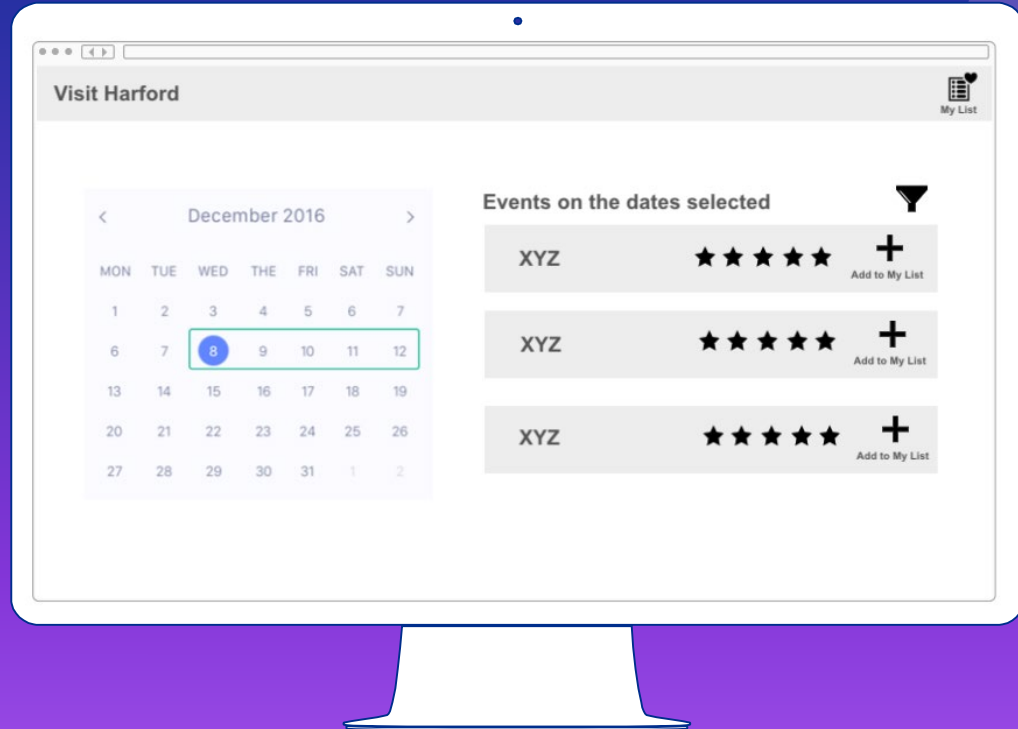
Home Page

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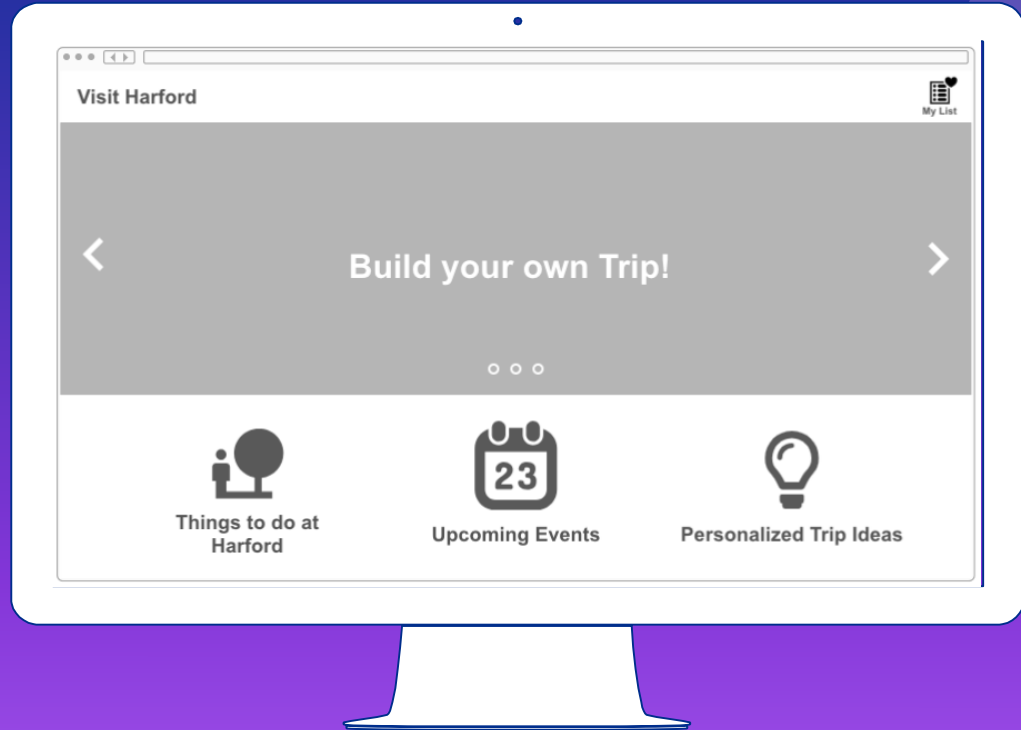
Events Calendar

- Calendar to choose dates of visit
- A list of events on selected dates
- Option to filter the list
- Option to add events to “My list”



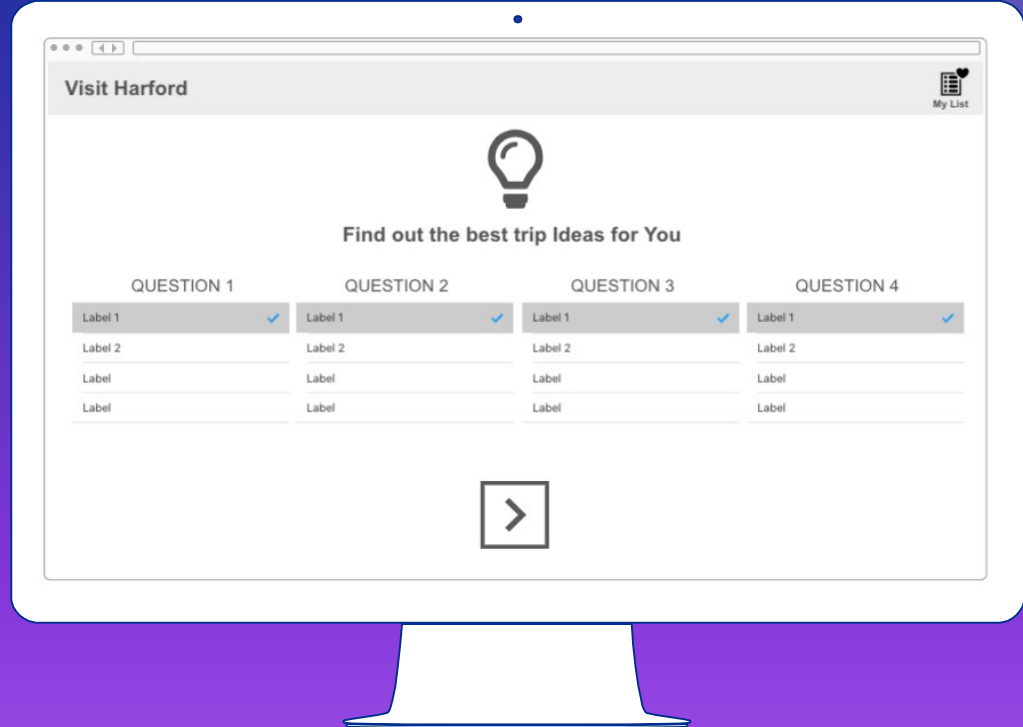
Home Page

- Things to do in Harford County
- Upcoming events
- Personalized trip ideas
- Build your own trip
- My list



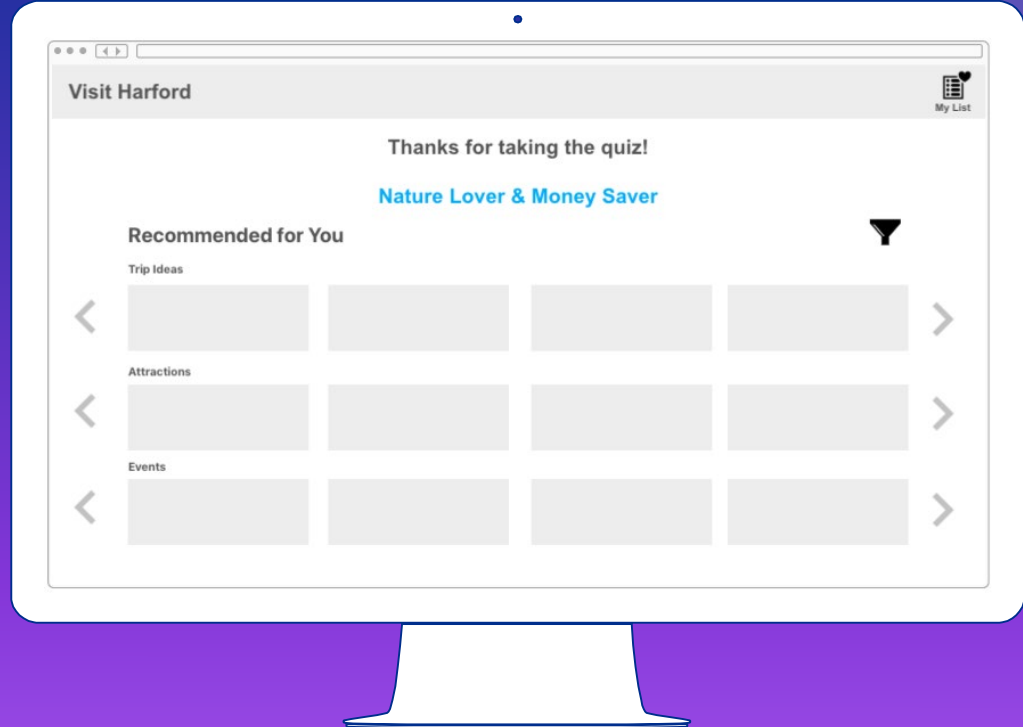
Personalized Trip Ideas

- Questions to find out user preferences
- A list of trip ideas, activities and events based on the answers



Personalized Trip Ideas

- Questions to find out user preferences
- A list of trip ideas, activities and events based on the answers



Build Your Own Trip

- User selects
 - duration
 - traveling with
 - interesting activities
 - travel season
- A list of recommended activities is generated

Visit Harford My List

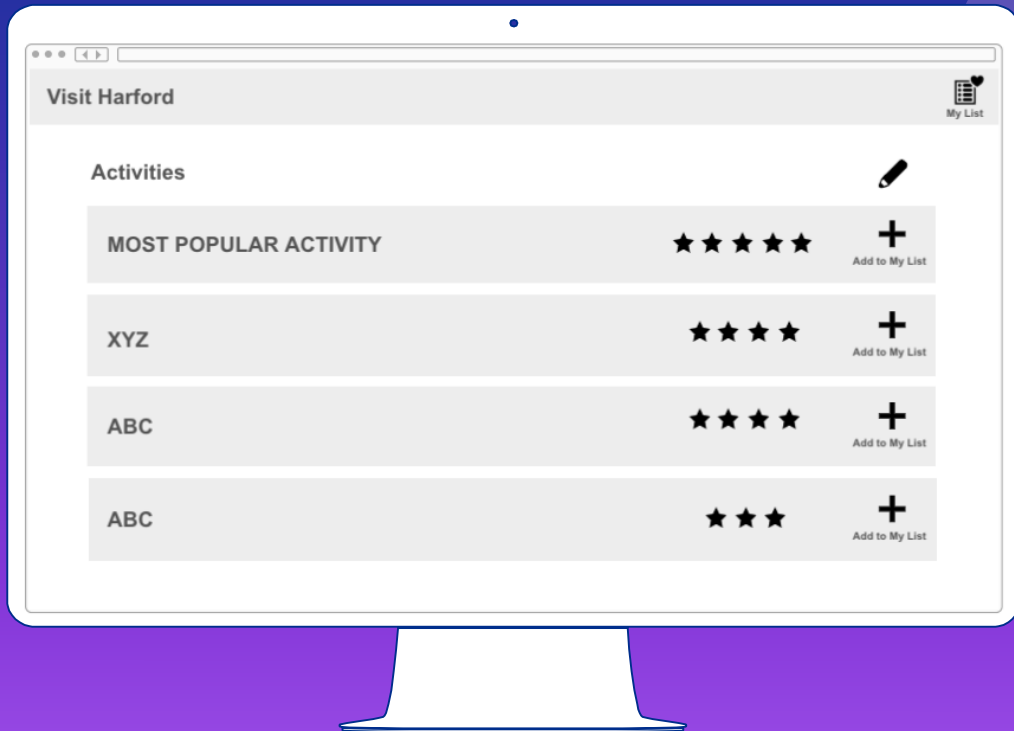
Build Your Own Trip!

Duration of Stay?	Who are you traveling with?	What activities are you interested in?	When are you travelling?
1 Day	Solo	Label 1	Summer
2 Days	Friends	Label 2	Winter
3 Days	Family	Label	Spring
4 Days	Not Sure	Label	Fall
Not Sure		Not Sure	Not Sure

>

Activities

- Activities filtered based on user preferences
- Ratings and other relevant details
- Option to add to “My list”



Itinerary

- List of activities added by the user on the left
- Day-wise itinerary on the right
- User can drag and drop activities

