

Blackscape - Finding Black-Owned Businesses Website

Caitlin Powell

Project Overview



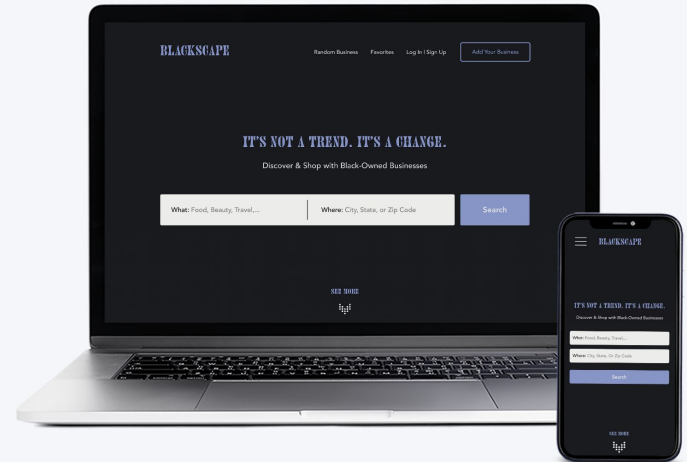
The Product:

Blackscape is a website dedicated to helping anyone discover Black-owned businesses that are located in the United States. Their directory is filled with businesses that range from small startups to ones that have begun to gain a global presence. Blackscape focuses on the message that shopping with Black entrepreneurs is not a “Trend,” but a “Lifestyle Change.”



Project Duration:

January 2022 – May 2022



Project Overview (cont.)



The Problem:

Many people are now looking to supporting Black entrepreneurs, but some do not know where to start looking or how to find relevant information about a certain business. Many online search tools do not provide all the necessary information needed to properly research Black-owned businesses.



The Goal:

Create a flexible website that allows users to discover Black-owned businesses in their own community and across the States.

Project Overview (cont.)



My Role:

UX/UI Designer and Researcher who designed the Blackscape website from conception to delivery.



Responsibilities:

- Conducting Interviews
- Paper and Digital Wireframes
- Low- and High-Fidelity Prototyping
- Conducting Usability Studies
- Accounting for Accessibility
- Iterating on Designs

User Research: Introduction



To begin my research, I conducted Interviews to understand the needs and frustrations of potential users. I focused learning how individuals search for Black-owned businesses they wish to engage with and support. During the interviews, I noted the challenges users faced when conducting searches for businesses. I then followed with a general survey to narrow down my target audience and gather more information about how users search for local Black-owned businesses.

After consolidating notes, I identified 4 painpoints when it comes to searching for Black-owned businesses:

Initial Search, Lack of Information, Lack of Diversity and Broad Starting Points

User Research: Pain Points

1

Initial Search

When looking for Black-owned businesses, knowing where to start may be the hardest part of the process.

2

Little Information

Some business search databases do not provide much information about a company other than their Name, Address, Website, and Reviews.

3

Lack of Diversity

In some searches, the results still favored non-Black businesses in the search results. This resulted in frustration when looking for the right business.

4

Broad Start

A simple Google search may not be concise enough to answer "Black-Owned Businesses Near Me." The vast amount of search results may be overwhelming and confusing.

User Persona: Local Artist

Problem Statement:

Calvin is a community-driven lifeguard who needs a flexible black-owned business search tool because he wants to seek out new shops near him to purchase gear and equipment.



Calvin Garrett

The Hero

PROFILE

Age: 26
Status: Single
Location: Los Angeles, CA
Occupation: Lifeguard

FRUSTRATIONS

- Spends hours looking for highly specific products
- Inaccurate information provided by online searches
- Unable to narrow down on a specific business

NEEDS

- Easier access to business and product information
- Efficient way to narrow down search results
- Reliable search tool for repeated usage

BIO

As a lifeguard, Calvin is always looking for new products and accessories that will protect his skin from the Sun. He has bought several products from various black-owned businesses, but wants to search for more local shops to support. Seeing the ups and downs his sister experienced with her own business, Calvin wants to show store owners his support and appreciation for their business.

GOALS

- Continue to support black-owned businesses
- Share the new search tool with family and friends
- Learn about new local black-owned businesses

TOP SEARCH TOOLS

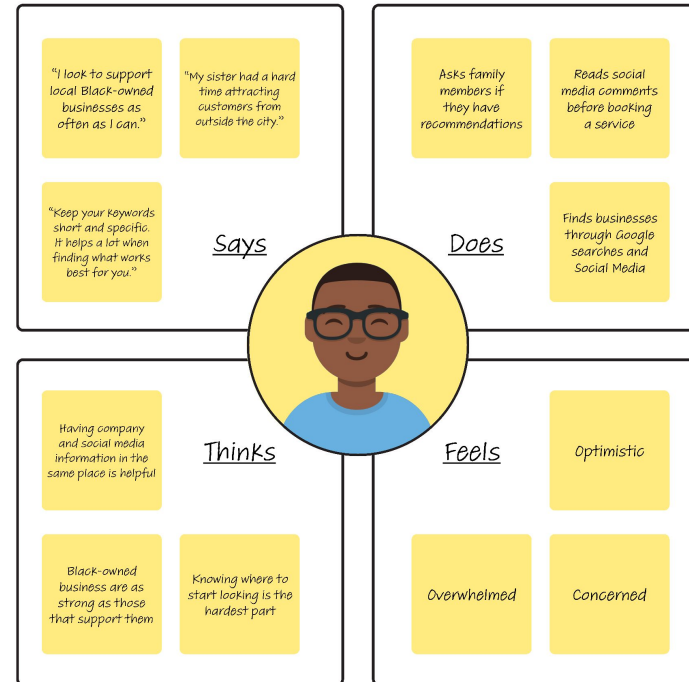
User Journey Map

Calvin's Journey Map uncovered what happens when he searches for a local Black-owned business that sells Lifeguard Gear & Equipment.

Goal: Search for a local black-owned business that sells Lifeguard Gear & Equipment.					
Action	Start an online search for black-owned businesses that sell lifeguard gear & equipment	Sort through results	Selects the company with the best reviews	Reads more information about the products and company	Visits the company website to buy the products
Task List	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Start an online search about "Black Owned Businesses Near Me" B. Finds a website dedicated to Black Owned Businesses C. Searches "Lifeguard Gear & Equipment" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Filters by "Distance" B. Filters by "Ratings & Reviews" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Reads on the top 3 search results B. Compares recent Ratings & Reviews C. Selects the company that is the best fit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Reads more about the company owner and their shop goals B. Reads reviews about their most popular equipment C. Finds their online shop details 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Finds the gear & equipment he needs B. Adds items to cart and uses the promotional code for a discount C. Checks out and purchases items
Feeling Adjective	Excited to find new gear & equipment	Overwhelmed by the number of results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical of finding the right company Happy to see review from customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pleased to see a company that aligns with his goals and offers what he is looking for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Happy to have found the best company Eager to purchase gear & equipment
Improvement Opportunities	Create a website that focuses on finding Black Owned Businesses that covers a wide range of products, services, and industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask for filtering tags during initial search Create tags for companies/services Create Company Preview slots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use reviews on products, services, and experiences pulled from multiple sources Factor in social media presence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include best selling products/services Include company mission/value statements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with companies to provide special discounts/promotions Direct link from company preview page to a specific product

User Empathy Map

An Empathy Map was created for Calvin and combined the differing perspective I uncovered during my research. These insights provided structure for my design ideas.



Calvin Garrett

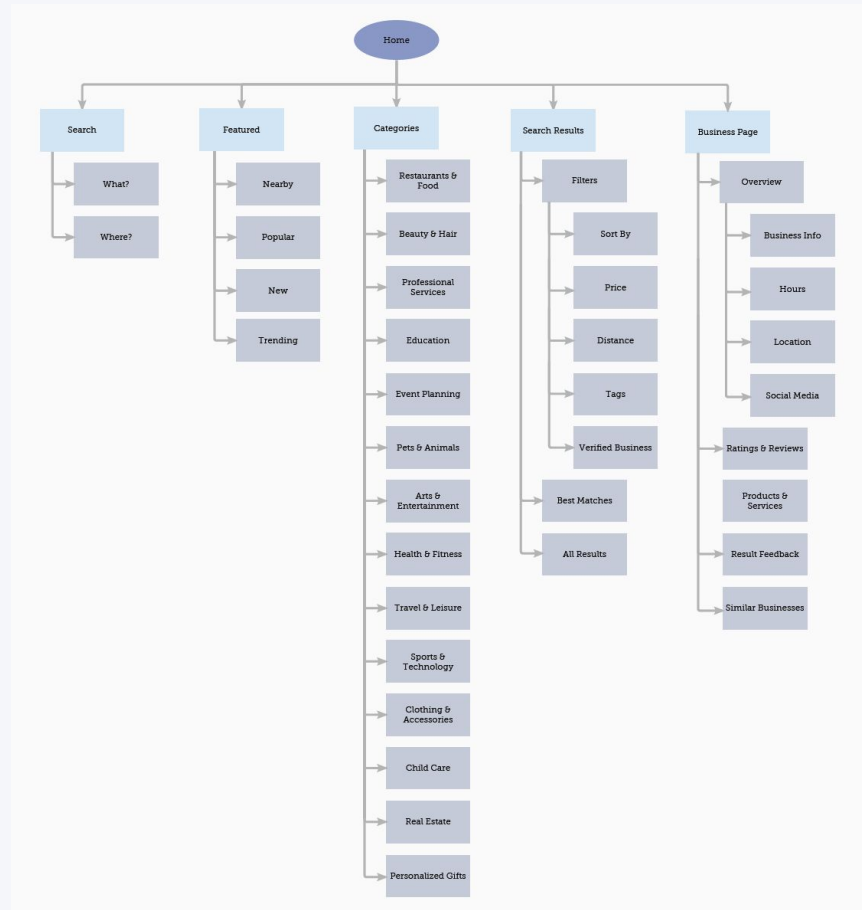
Starting the Design

- Sitemap
- Paper Wireframes
- Digital Wireframes
- Low-Fidelity Prototype
- Usability Studies

Sitemap

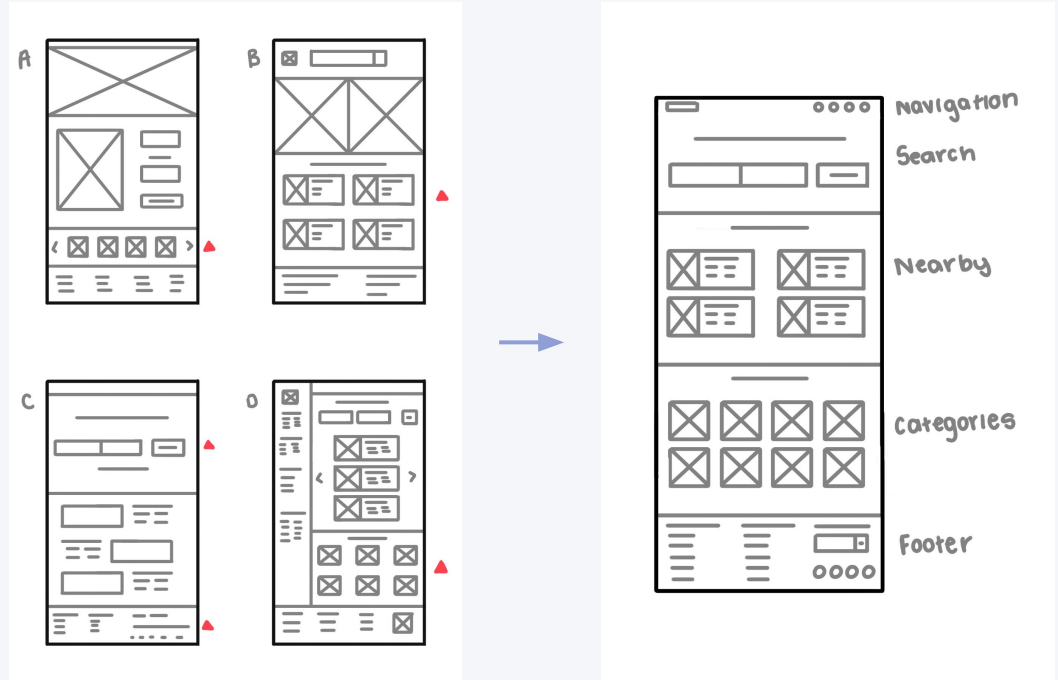
Know that my research group wanted a strong search tool, I created a sitemap that focuses on the search and result aspects of the website.

The structure ensures that the website will help to narrow down on a specific business and provide as much information is available to users about the company.



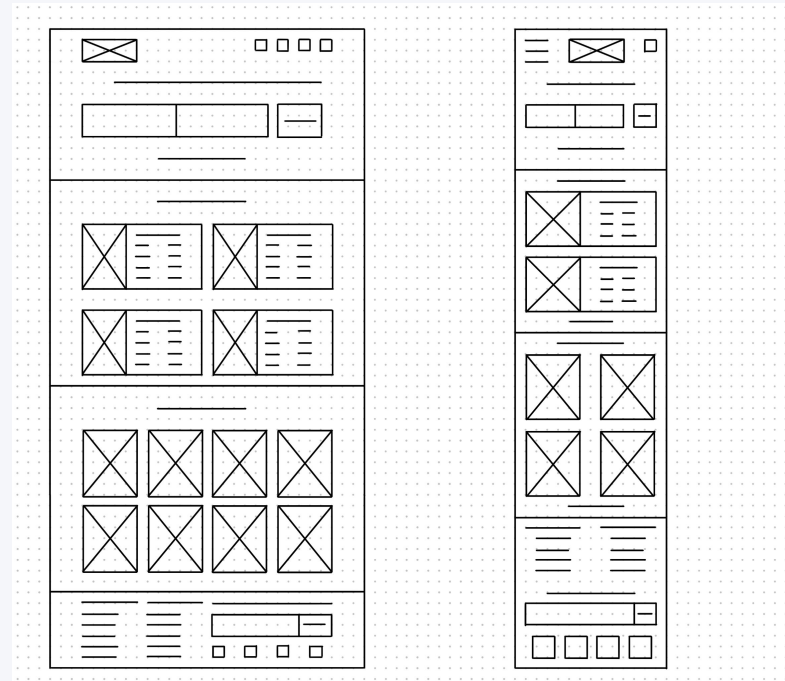
Paper Wireframes

I started by iterating multiple versions of the homescreen focusing on layout and hierarchy. I then identified successful elements and combined them to create a wireframe of the homescreen.



Paper Wireframes: Screen Size Variations

Because I am creating a responsive website, I translated the Desktop wireframe to a Mobile wireframe. I wanted to keep the same layout and worked to maintain hierarchy and formatting.



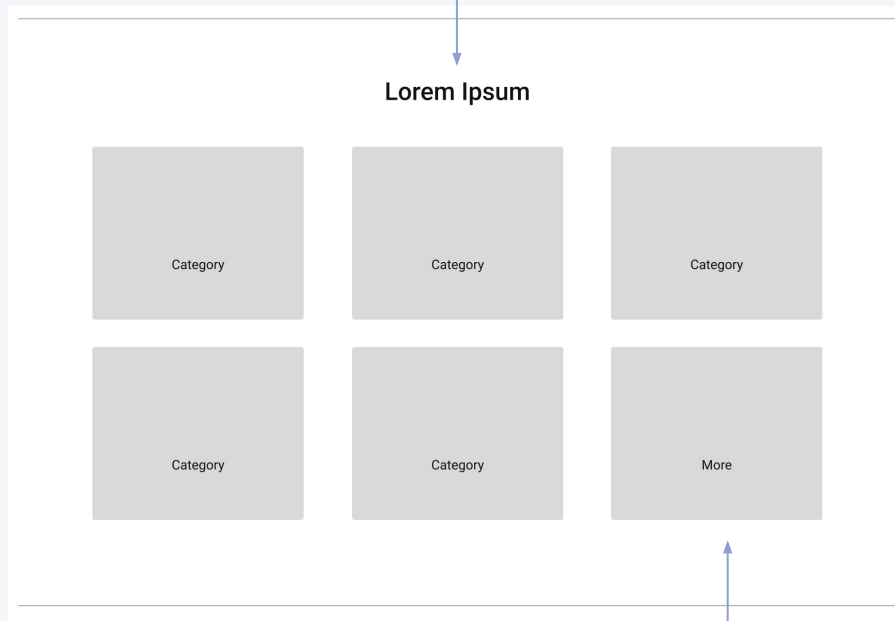
Desktop

Mobile

Digital Wireframes

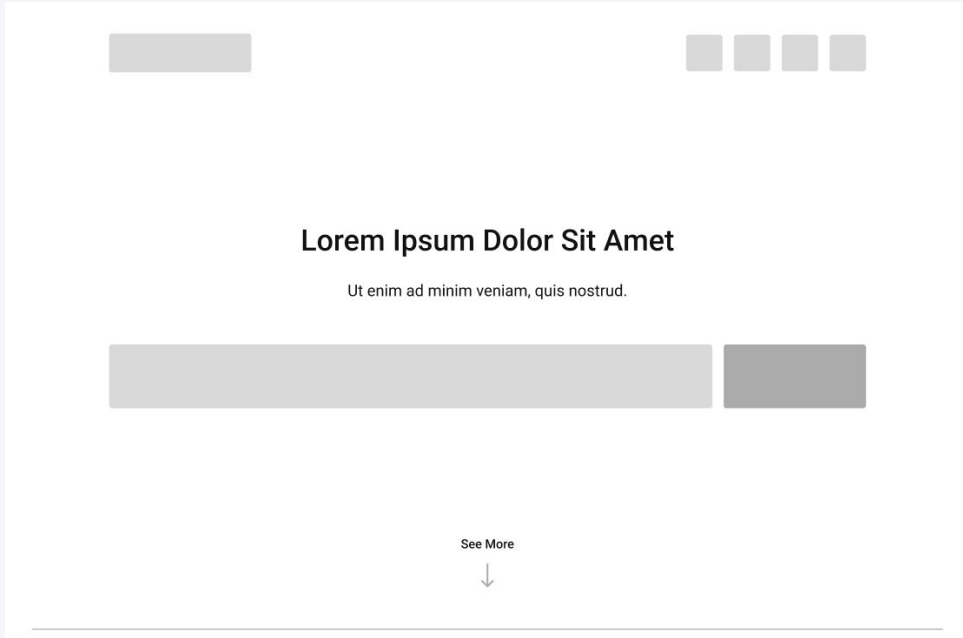
After reviewing feedback from the paper wireframes, I reworked the categories section to avoid information overload. This new layout is easier to read and clean.

Bold header to stand out from other information in the same section

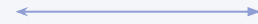


Expands to show more information
(prevents too much information
being on the screen at one time)

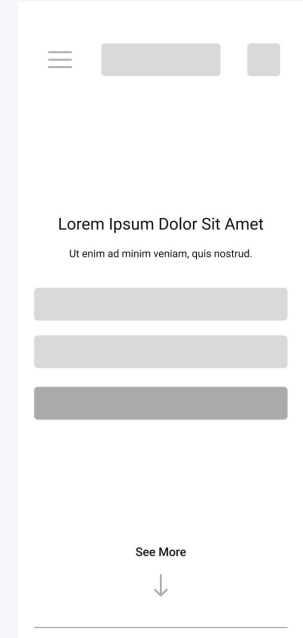
Digital Wireframes: Screen Size Variations



Desktop



Search box is split on mobile to accommodate more information

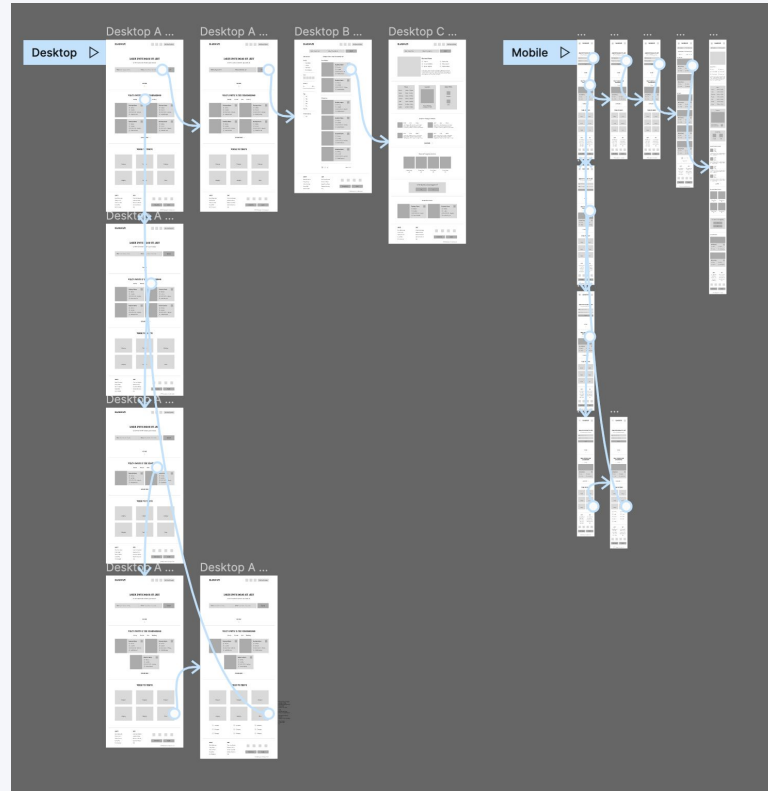


Mobile

Low-Fidelity Prototype

After creating the paper and digital wireframes, I created a low-fidelity prototype. The primary user flow focused on searching for gear, filtering results, and narrowing down on a specific business.

[View the Low-Fidelity Prototype](#)



Usability Study: Parameters



Study Type:

Unmoderated Usability Study



Location:

United States, Remote (Zoom)



Participants:

7 participants



Length:

30-45 minutes

Usability Study: Findings

1

Make Buttons

On Mobile, there were several elements that hindered the user flow as they were not identified as interactive elements.

2

Adding a Review

Several participants wanted to know how they could leave a review if they had previously shopped with them.

3

Getting Directions

When viewing the location, all participants clicked on the map to get directions. This was not an interactive element (but now there needs to be a way to allow users to get directions).

4

See More Products

Most participants wanted to view more products or services a company offers before exiting to the company website.

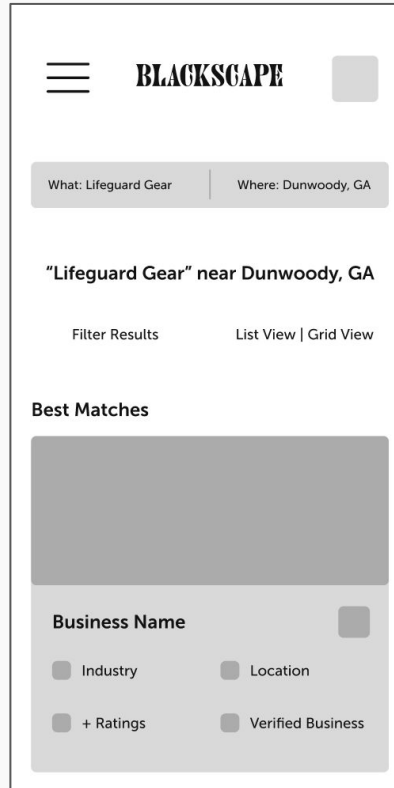
Refining the Design

- Mockups
- High-Fidelity Prototype
- Accessibility

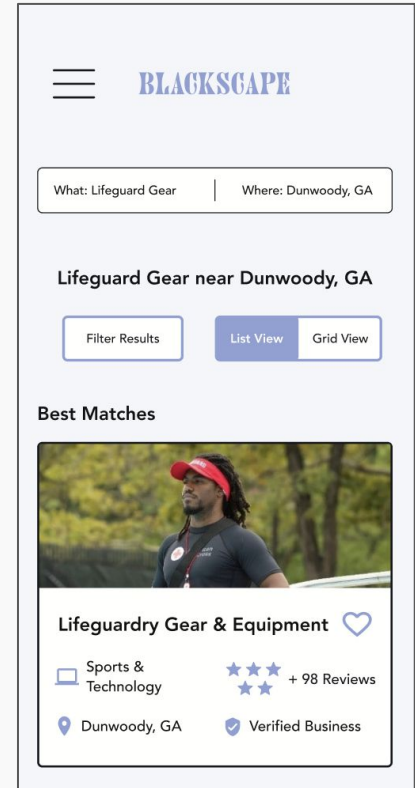
Mockups

The “Filter Results” and “List | Grid View” text elements were turned into buttons to indicate they were not just text on the screen and capture the attention of the user to interact with them if necessary.

Before Usability Study



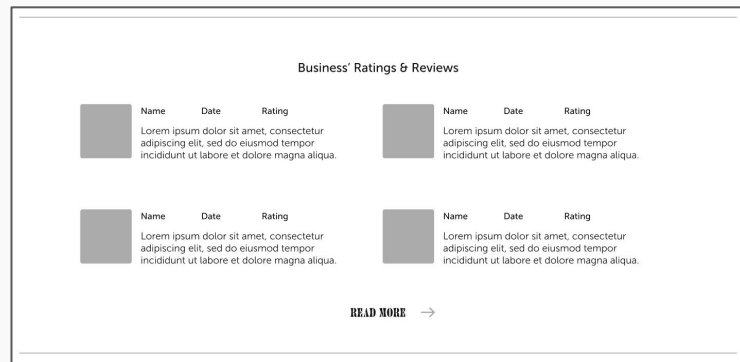
After Usability Study



Mockups (cont.)

To accommodate users wanting to leave their own review, they are prompted to “Log In” to leave a review on the selected business.

Before Usability Study



After Usability Study

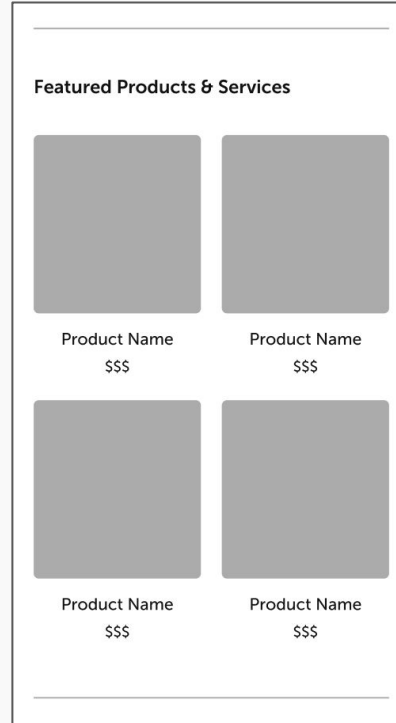


Mockups (cont.)

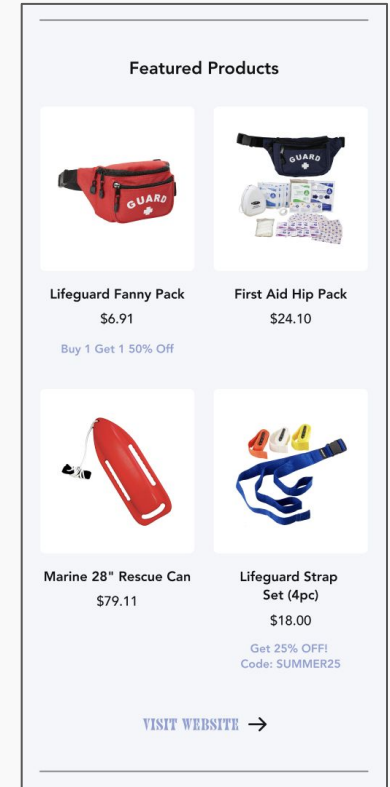
To view more products, users can visit the website or (scroll through more options on desktop).

Users are also able to see what sales are available for certain products and services.

Before Usability Study



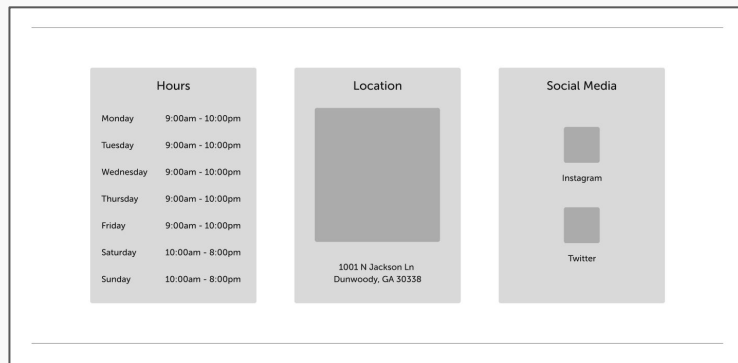
After Usability Study



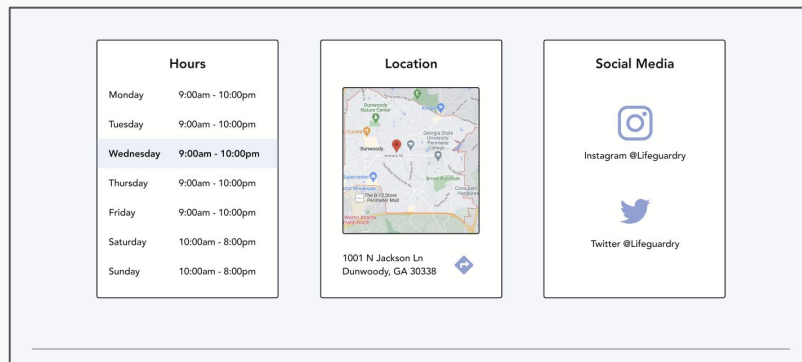
Mockups (cont.)

To help users get directions efficiently, a “Get Directions” button was added and links to map directions in another tab.

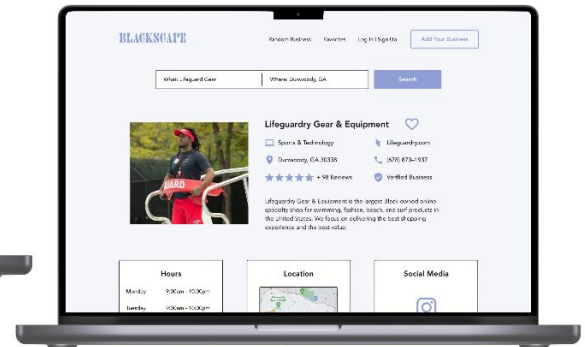
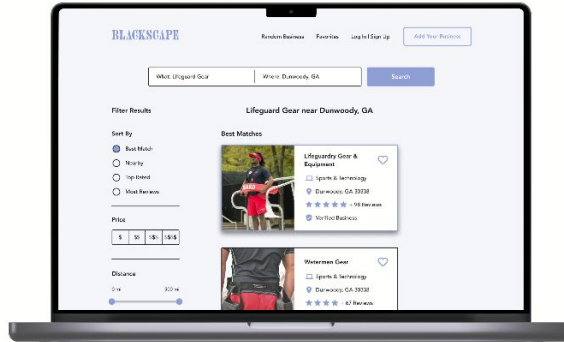
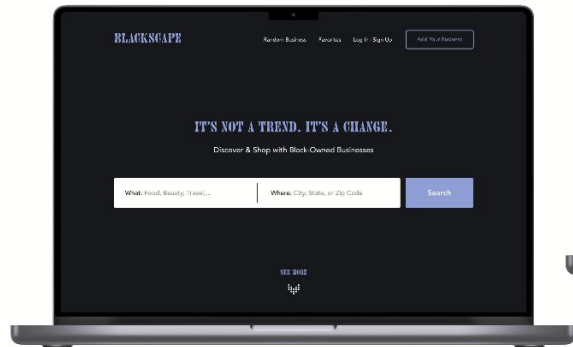
Before Usability Study



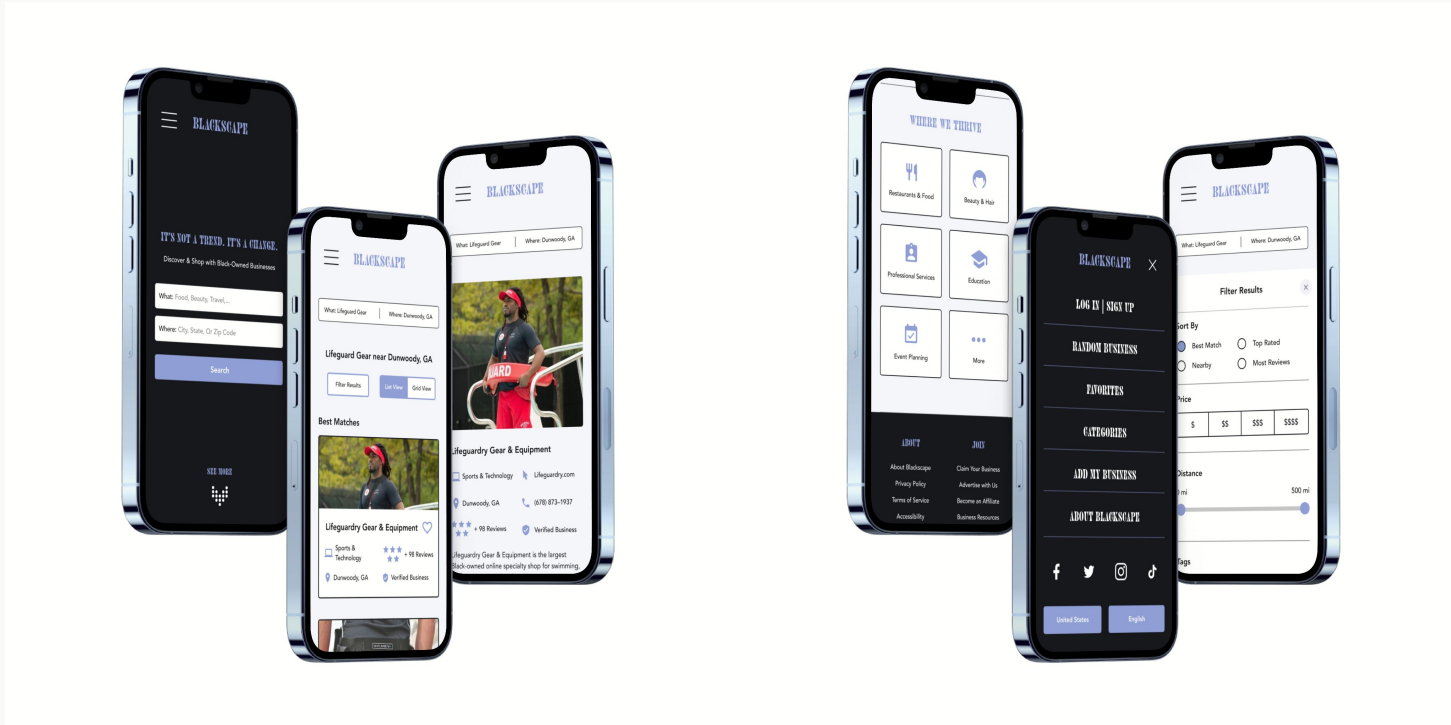
After Usability Study



Mockups: Original Screen Size (Desktop)



Mockups: Screen Size Variations (Mobile)



High-Fidelity Prototype

Using insights from the usability studies, I reiterated my designs for a Revised Mockup and added a few more key screens within the user flow.

[View the High-Fidelity Prototype](#)



Accessibility Considerations

1

All colors were analyzed for their contrast with the background on webaim.org.

2

Users who may have a hard time reading on a dark background can make changes via the “Accessibility” link in the footer.

3

Users who are vision impaired are able to access the website via alt text added to images for screen readers.

Project Takeaways



Impact

All of the participants who tested this website (and those who have reviewed by updates) were very excited to see an involved online search tool for Black-owned businesses. Compared to other websites, Blackscape provides the most information in one place.



What I Learned

A major thing I learned is how to design for responsive design. I realized that it is more than just making things bigger or smaller between devices, but about reordering elements to keep hierarchy consistent.

Next Steps

1

I will continue to implement feedback and iterate on my high-fidelity prototype after another round of usability testing. I also want to build out more screens to expand the fidelity of the high-fi prototype.

2

After final revisions and modifications, my screen will be ready to send off to a development team to launch my website for public use!

Let's Connect!



Thank you for taking a look at my Process Work for the Blackscape!

If you'd like to see more of my projects, feel free to view my portfolio below!

Email: connect@caitlinpowell.xyz

Portfolio: www.caitlinpowell.xyz