Furever Care

LOVING CARE FOR WHEN YOU’RE NOT HERE

Here’s the Idea

Pet sitting services *just don’t work*. There’s plenty of them, but over 3/4ths of dogs aren’t eligible for pet sitting, leaving millions of dog owners stuck with available apps and services that just won’t accommodate for their pet(s).

My shitzu, Romeo, has a severe case of separation anxiety and needs a person around. He's not eligible for pet boarding services because he requires a higher level of care due to "undesirable behavior".

Romeo is far from the only one:

- "Undesirable behavior" is prevalent among dogs, with 72%-85% of dogs estimated to exhibit at least one type of behavioral problem
  - This varies from compulsion, hyperactivity/inattention, and separation related behaviors
- 44% of these behaviors stem from fear- and anxiety-based problems, and 30% are aggression-related problems

It gets worse:

- 54% of dog owners have regrets about getting a dog and 26% of it is because they have trouble finding care for their dog when traveling or going to work
- 39% of pet owners miss summer trips because they can't find suitable pet care

What’s the Problem?

Pets with special needs can't be sat for at boarding kennels or pet hotels, commonly due to *undesirable behavior*. Finding pet sitters is difficult due to location, pay, availability, and credibility. Over half of dog owners have regrets about pet ownership, a quarter of which is due to difficulty in dealing with pet care.

My Hypothesis

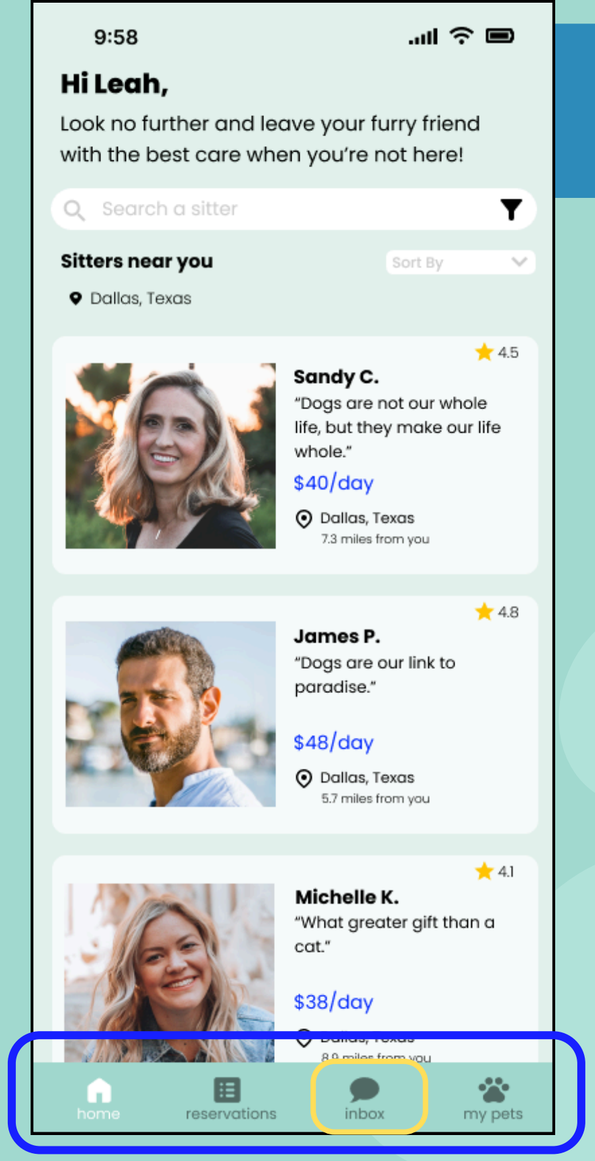
An app that provides verified and nearby credible pet sitters that can cater to a pet's specific needs and behavioral traits will enable owners to leave their pets with caring professionals.

Our Competitors

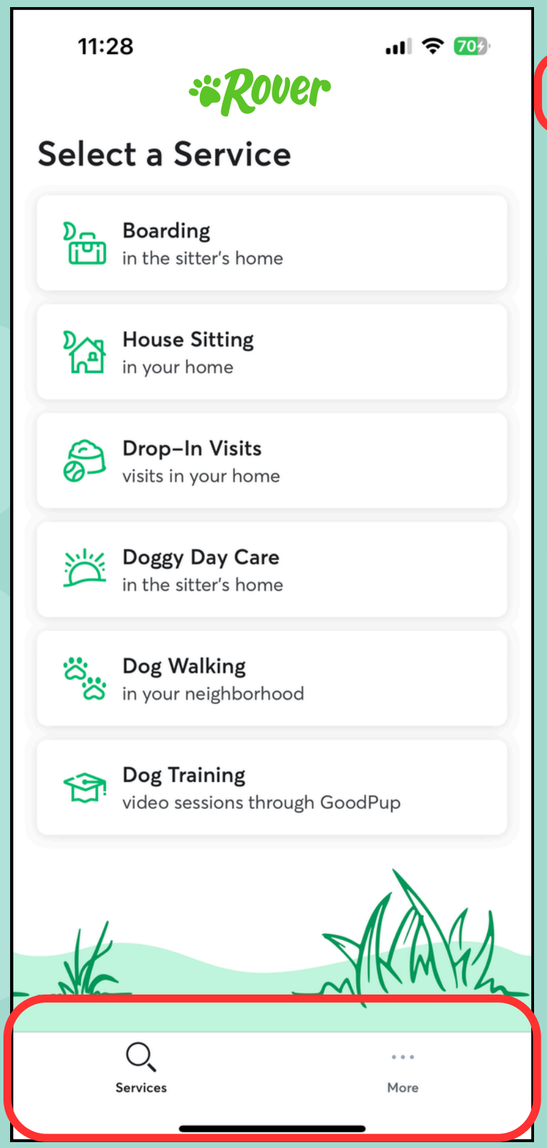
	ROVER	WAG!	FETCH PET CARE
Features	Can book services such as: pet sitting, dog walking, doggy daycare, pet boarding	Can book services such as: dog walking (primarily), pet sitting/boarding is an extra fee. Get live updates from live GPS tracking and a report card after a service is completed.	Can book services such as: In-home pet sitting, dog walking, cat care, pet taxi services
Pricing	Rover allows you to set your own rate, but takes a 20% service fee from each booking. Sitters with RoverGo — a premium version of the app — get charged a 25% service fee per booking.	Wag takes a 40% cut of your payout for walks, drop-ins, boardings and sittings. The site takes 30% for in-home and digital training services.	Rates are based on the user selected location. A user will most likely pay a higher rate if they live in a higher rate state (California, New York) versus Kansas or Alabama.
Booking/ Scheduling Sitter	Pretty simple to do. Didn't encounter any obstacles when booking/scheduling a sitter.	Booking process was simple until viewing sitters; WAG! requires users to subscribe (pay) to view, and users have reported struggling to cancel the service.	Function is extremely confusing, application is difficult to use and often switches to the browser. **Not sure why there's even an app**!
Restrictions	User cannot choose a back-up sitter (in the event of a cancellation).	Sitters do not get to set their own rates, WAG! provides fixed rates. WAG! does not always guarantee a pet owner's "preferred walker" if they decide they want to use them consistently.	The mobile app was cumbersome to navigate. Some buttons/labels were misleading and did not execute what I thought they were intended for. Often, the links would direct me to their website which has a much better user experience.

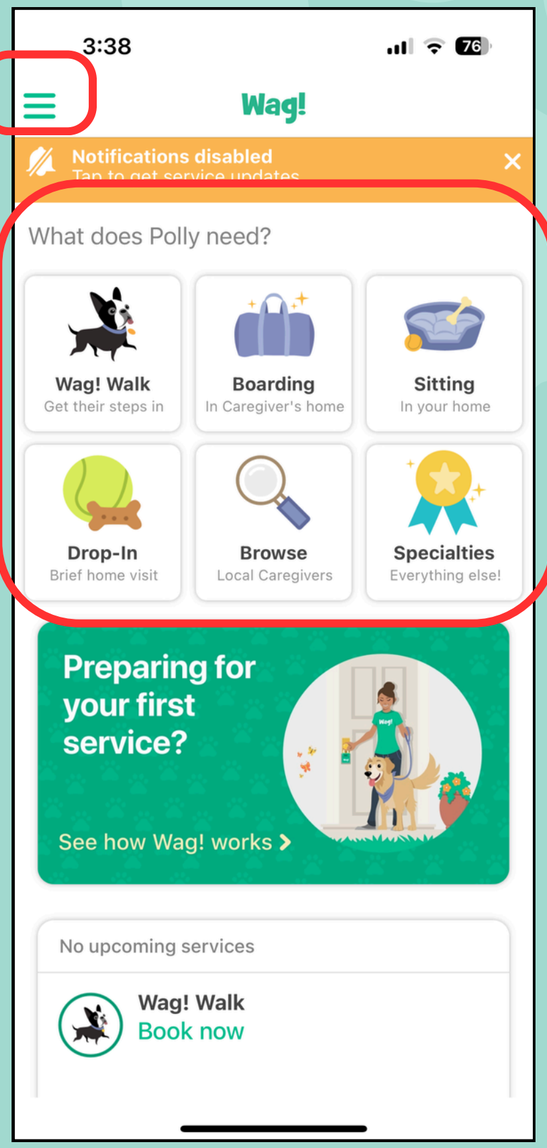
FureverCare Us.

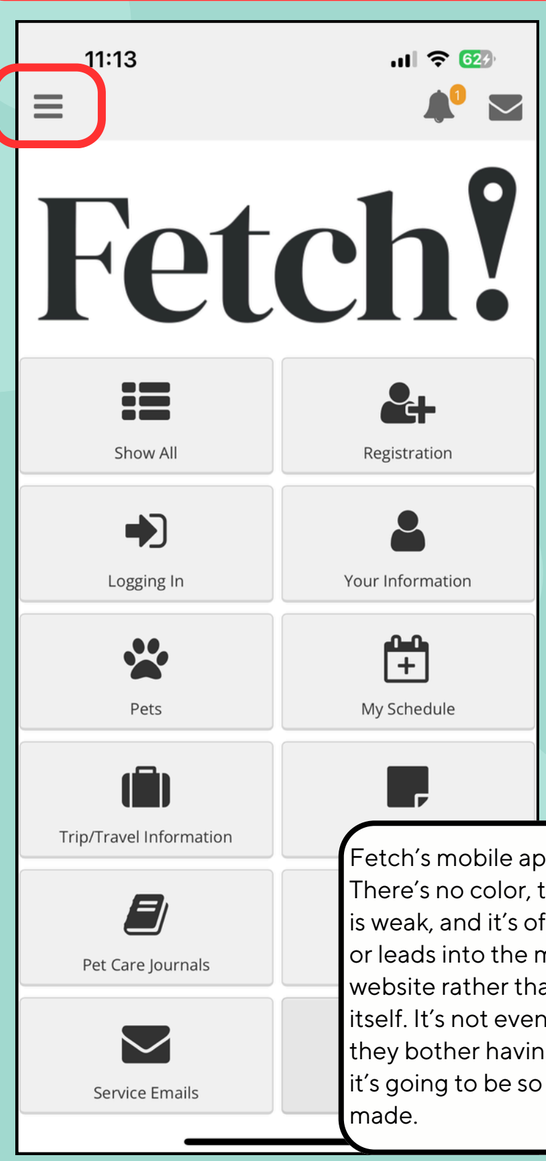
The navigation from each competitor is excessive and complex for pet owners seeking the right sitter. They're primarily focusing on finding the right service rather than the right sitter; it's too complicated. This excess complexity helps FureverCare build trust between user and sitter rather than the user and the service.



None of the products provide a tab bar even though there's numerous value points for multiple dashboards. Chat is invaluable when finding a pet sitter that you can trust, and keeping tabs on your current and past reservations, as well as having easy access to your pets is a necessity.





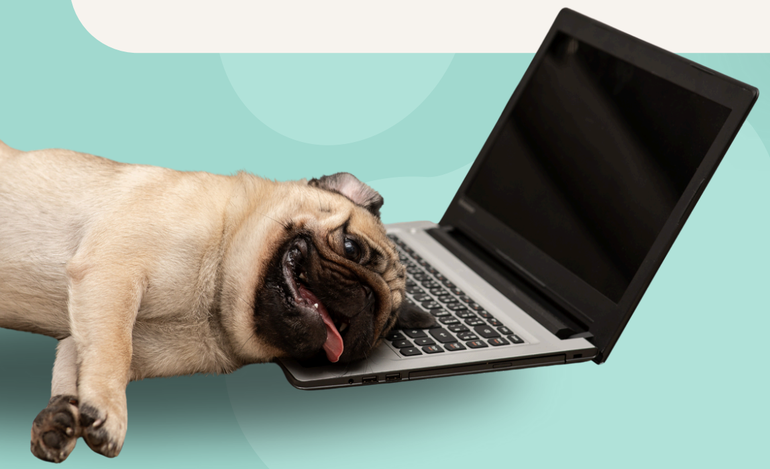


Fetch's mobile app is awful. There's no color, the interface is weak, and it's often broken or leads into the mobile website rather than the app itself. It's not even clear why they bother having an app if it's going to be so poorly made.

Competitor Analysis

Rover is the least expensive and most user-friendly when booking a service. They also offer various pet services such as walking, daycare, boarding, etc. However, *Rover* lacks control in choosing a new sitter if the original sitter canceled. *Wag!* offers similar services, yet charges much more for everything aside from their primary service: dog walking. *Wag!* also does not allow the user to book the same walker multiple times, which is frustrating for building trust.

Fetch Pet Care has the worst mobile app: it lacks structure, organization, and aesthetics. I was unable to properly book a service due to misleading labels and buttons. The app was effectively useless except to link to the mobile website, which was much more usable.

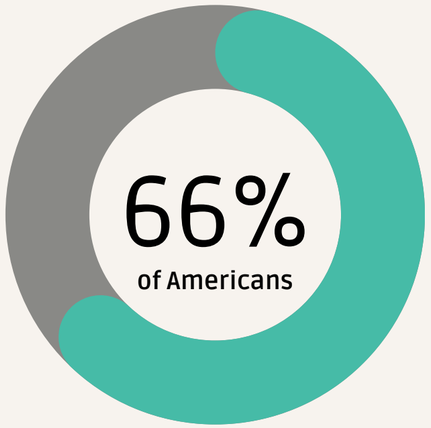


Rover is the most competitive service, though all are nearly identical in their offerings. Rover wins out thanks to better pricing and ease-of-use, and most importantly more options for booking and scheduling for any available service, including pet sitting. It was also the most well designed, thoughtful, and aesthetically pleasing option.

Secondary Research

major data points

U.S. households (86.9 million) own a pet

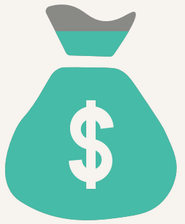


85% dog owners & **76%** cat owners

consider their pets to be

members of their family

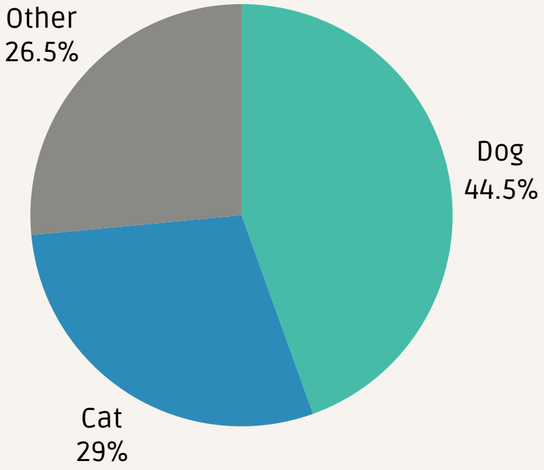
Average User Spending



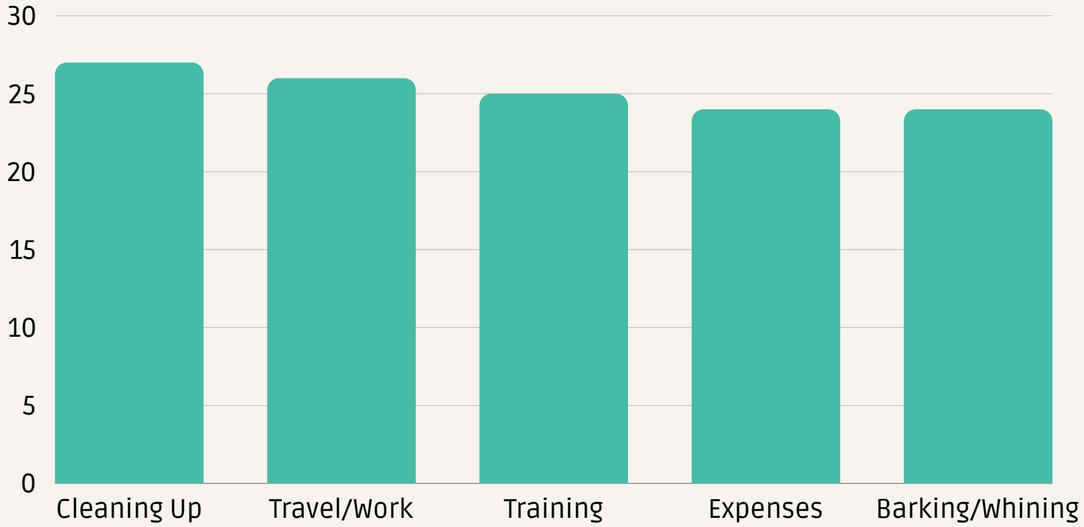
$912/year for dogs

$653/year for cats

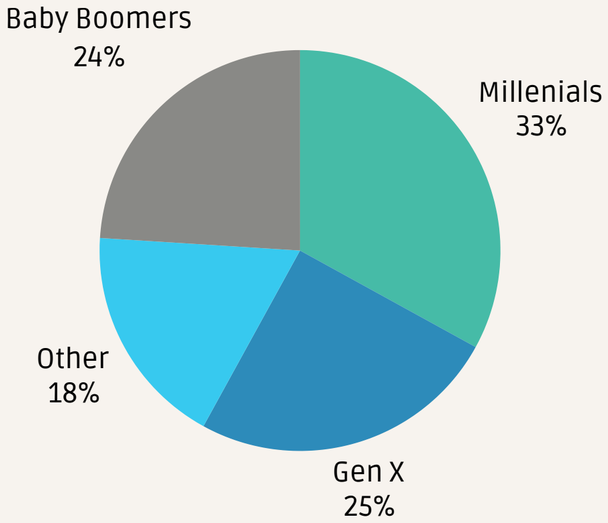
Pet Ownership in the U.S.



% of Major Challenges from Pet Ownership



Pet Ownership by Age in the U.S.



Primary Research

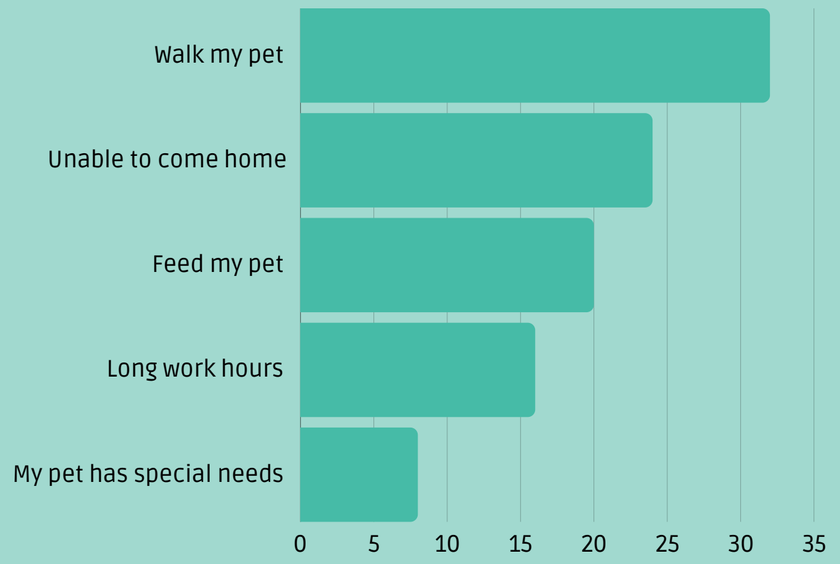
survey results & analysis

In an effort to research the users of this app, I targeted pet owners who are likely to not have children, which meant our audience was expected to be generally younger. This was true in the survey findings:

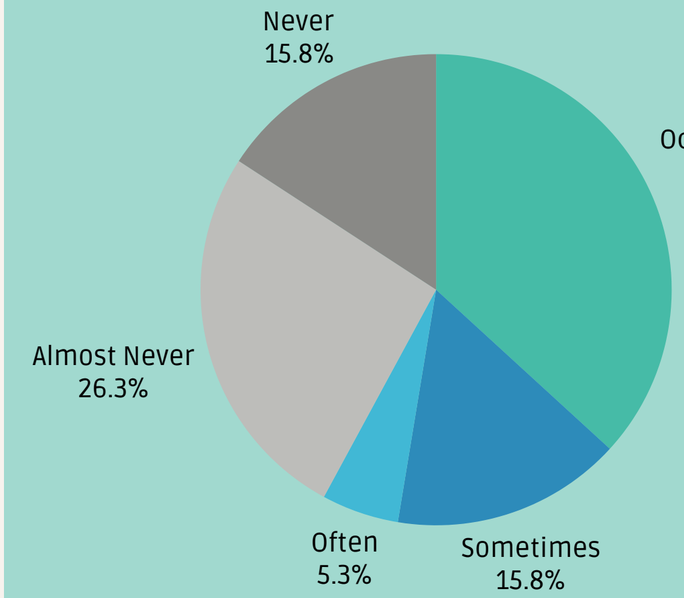
- 60% of the participants (ages 18-29) are more likely to use a service to watch their pet
- Of those 60% were predominately females that live in suburban areas and own at least 1 pet
- About 50% of pet owners have had to change/cancel their plans because they were unable to find a pet sitter
- **Income was not a factor in using a pet service**

I was shocked to learn that income level played **no role** in the frequency of a pet owner using a service like this. However this does make sense: our pets, especially those with special needs, are our babies. This also aligns with findings that pet owners are in need of a sitter primarily for when they work long hours or take a trip, or even just for going out for the night.

Reasons why I need a pet sitter:



I've missed outings due to my pet:



Key Pain Points from Interviews

Concerned with my pet's safety and health.

Pet owners want the option to communicate with their pet sitter.

Pet updates can relieve stress or worrisome.

Built-in Chat

Last minute cancellations can be frustrating.

Sitters cancel frequently.

Backup Sitter

My pet requires special care that involves a lot of work and time.

Building trust with a pet sitter is difficult.

Ratings/Reviews

My pet doesn't qualify for dog boarding facilities.

Family and friends are not always available to pet sit.

Sitter Reservations

Reservations are not accepted by hotels if you bring a pet.

Finding availabilities can be cumbersome.

Scheduling

MVP FEATURES

Personas

Distressed Jess

Age: **50**
Occupation: **Physical Therapist**
Location: **Morristown, NJ**
Income: **$120K**
Status: **Married**
Pets Owned: **2**

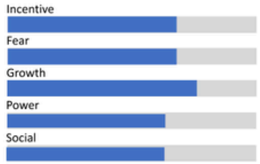
Goals

- Plan a fun and memorable trip with her husband and kids
- Attend more outings/events with her friends
- Maintain a healthy balance between work and home life

Frustrations

- Unable to find a proper sitter for her dog and cat
- Forced cancel/change plans last minute frequently
- Doesn't have much time to relax and spend quality time with family or friends

Motivation



Brands & Influencers

BIO

Anxious Angela

Age: **25**
Occupation: **ER Nurse**
Location: **Dallas, TX**
Income: **$70K**
Status: **Single**
Pets Owned: **1**

Goals

- Travel more this year and experience new cultures
- Maintain a healthy balance between work and social life
- Completing courses to obtain her Master's Degree

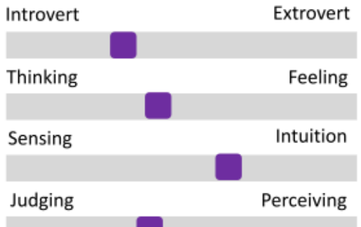
Frustrations

- Difficult to find a pet sitter when working long hours at the hospital
- Hard to manage my personal and work life
- Feeling exhausted to do normal tasks throughout the day

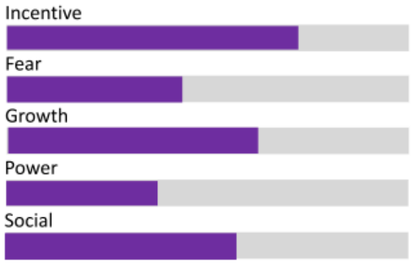
BIO

Anxious Angela just recently moved to Dallas, Texas accepting a job as an ICU nurse. She currently works 12-hour shifts 3 days per week. Sometimes, she'll pick up an extra shift to make extra money or when the hospital is in dire need of more nurses to care for patients. Angela worries that she doesn't have enough time to care for her Maltese, Bella, when she is working long hours at night and taking classes. Since Angela is new to the Dallas area, she is struggling to find a good pet sitter to accompany and care for her sweet Bella.

Personality

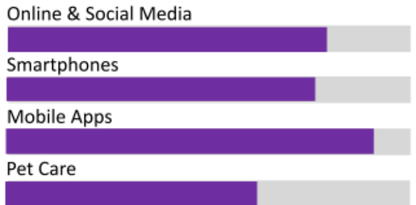


Motivation



Brands & Influencers

Tech Savvy



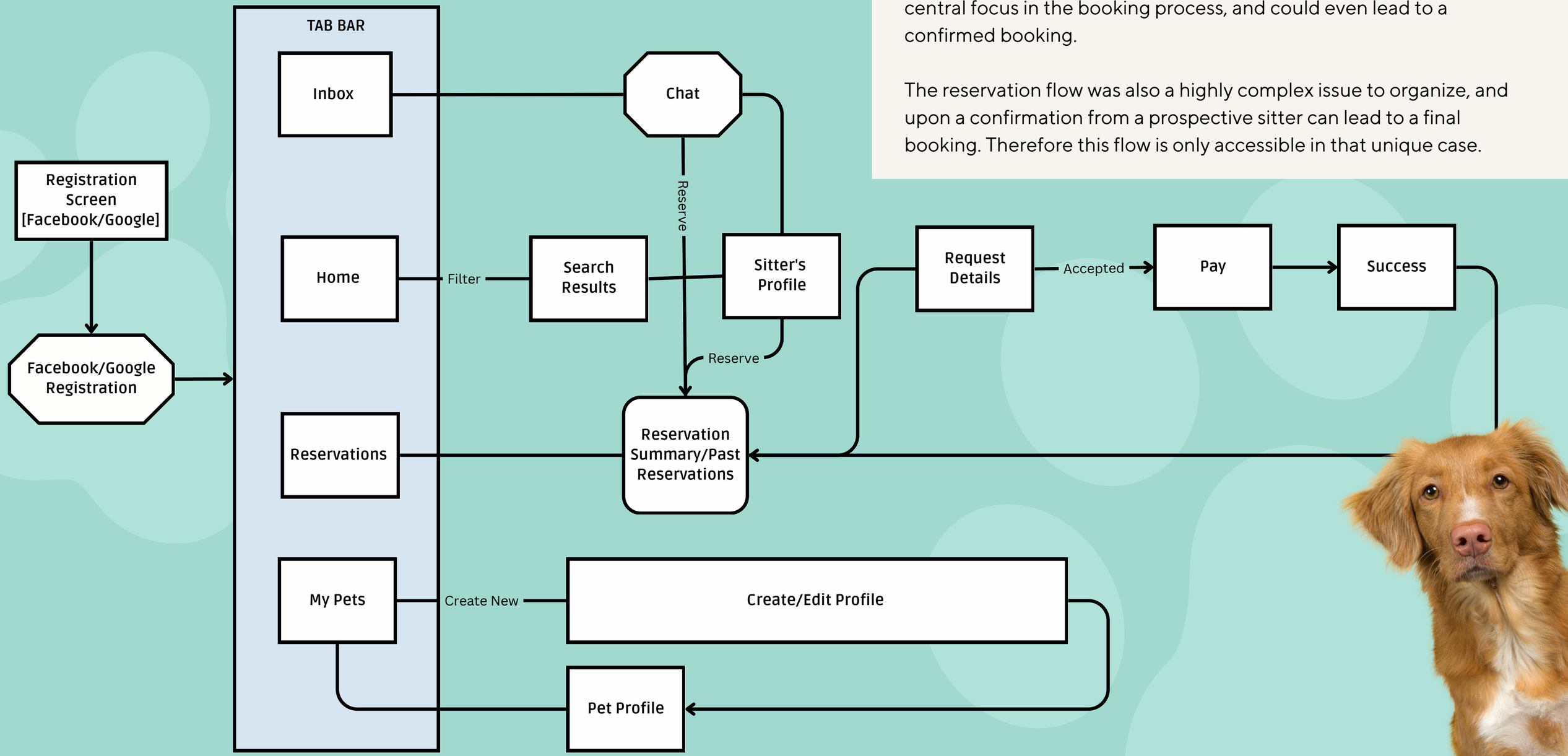
Angela is our primary demographic because as a 25 year old making $70K/year and single with a single pet, she is the type of person who loves having a dog but can't always be there because she's young and busy! She works long hours and cannot properly care for her dog. At this age, she has a stronger desire to want to go out and explore the world.

By comparison, Jess is older with a family that is old enough to travel, which means they're more likely to need a service for their pets and have the financial stability to travel semi-frequently.

Information Architecture

Initially, chat was not a front and center for users, but as I continued designing the app and testing how people decide on sitters, clear communication mattered more than anticipated. So chat became a central focus in the booking process, and could even lead to a confirmed booking.

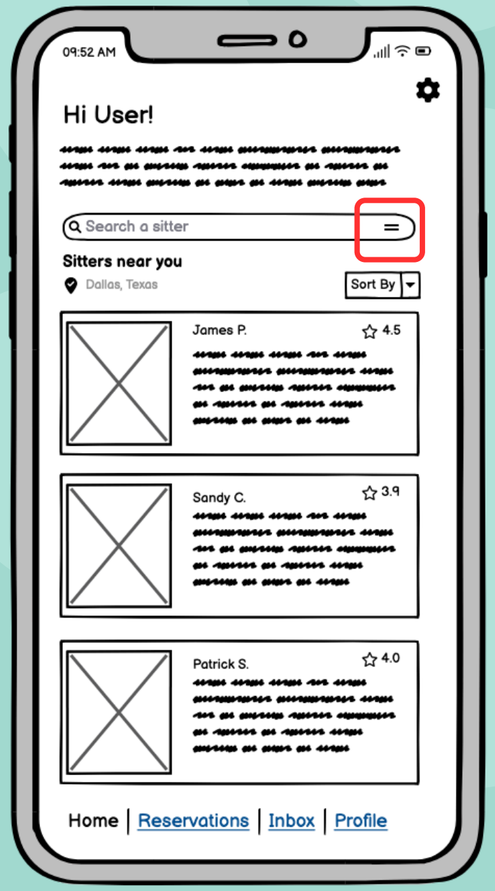
The reservation flow was also a highly complex issue to organize, and upon a confirmation from a prospective sitter can lead to a final booking. Therefore this flow is only accessible in that unique case.

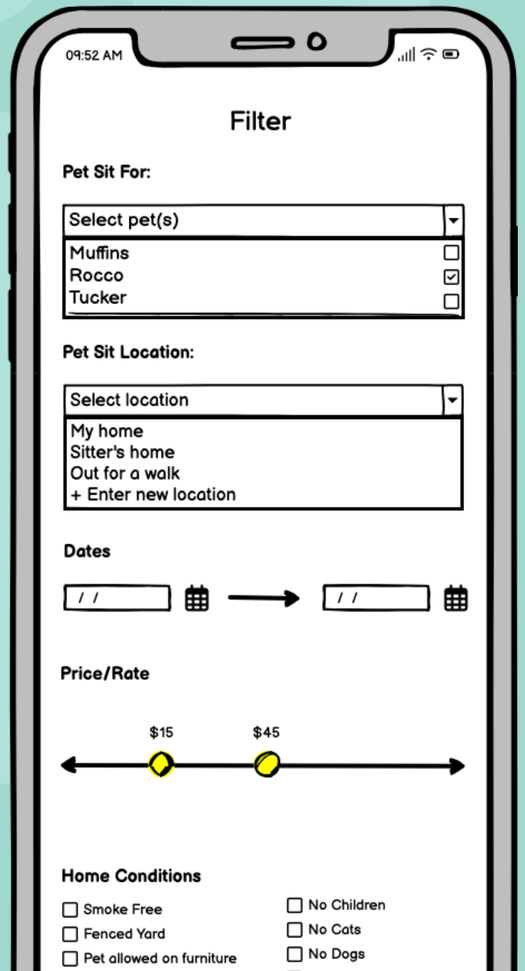


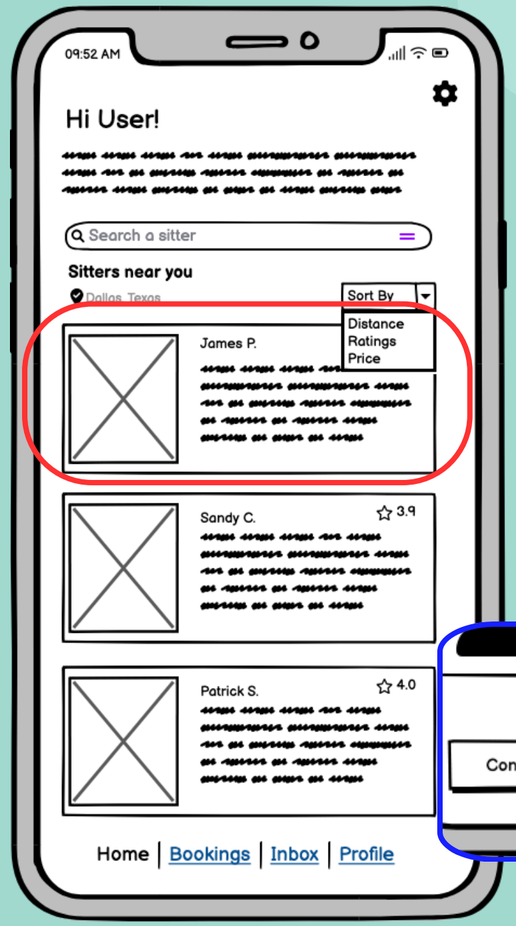
Finding a Sitter

As a user, I want to **find a sitter** that can watch my pet for a selected duration.

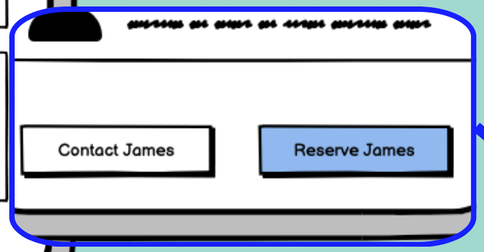
Home Page → Filter → Select Date/Time and Apply → Search Results → Choose Sitter → Sitter's Profile

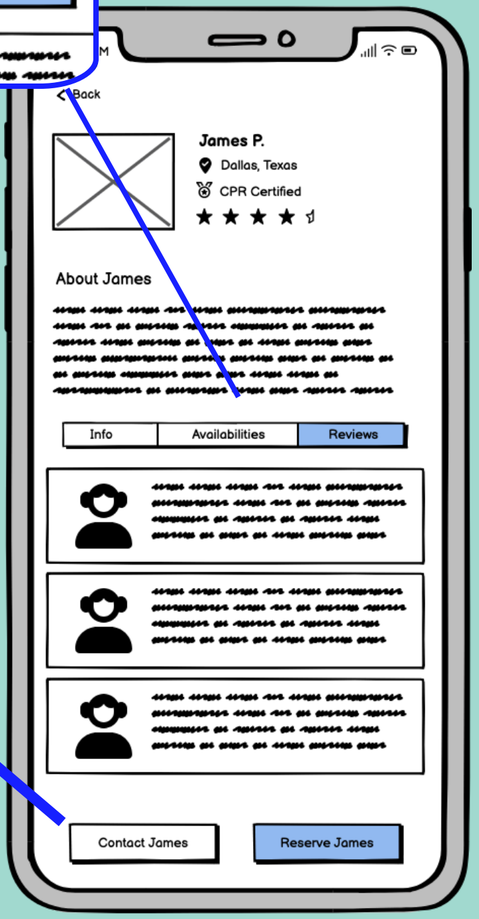




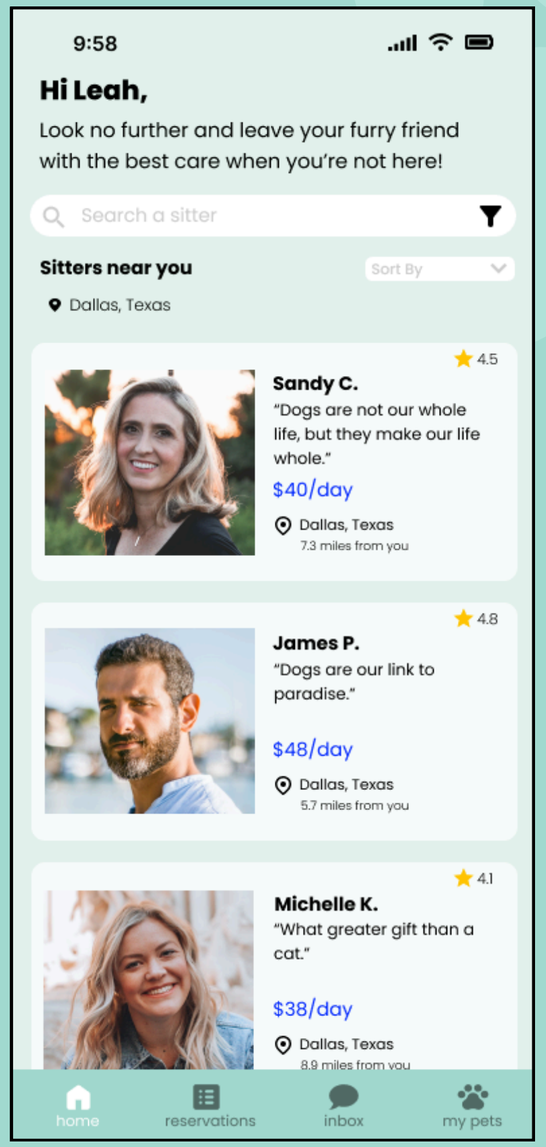


The sitter's profile has a lot of information to display, so it was important to organize it efficiently. The critical point is to enable the pet owner to contact and reserve anytime. So a basic summary along with a segmented controller to navigate between more relevant information made it easy for users to read up on a sitter prior to contacting or reserving the sitter.

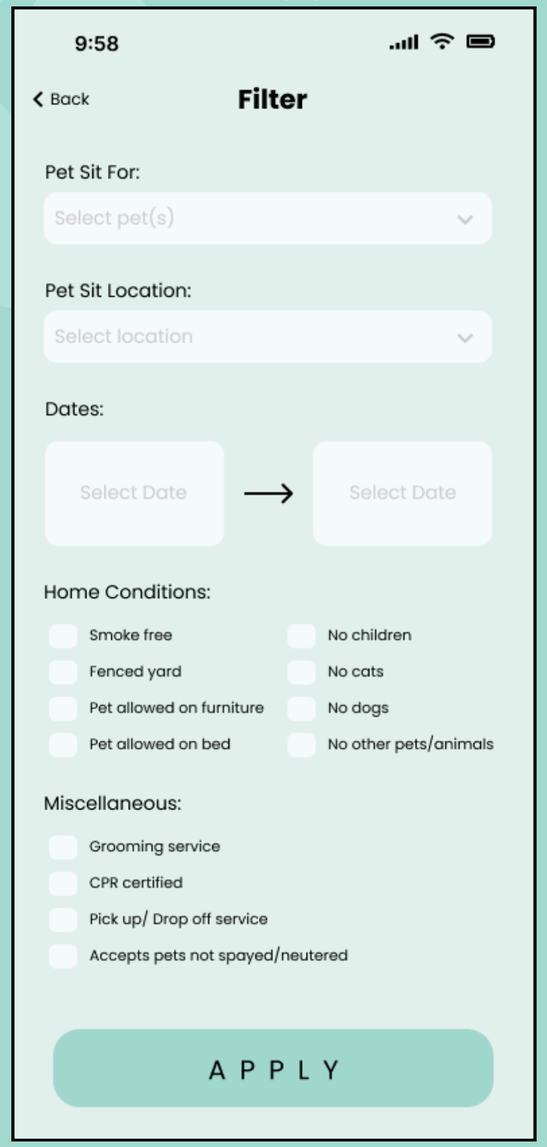




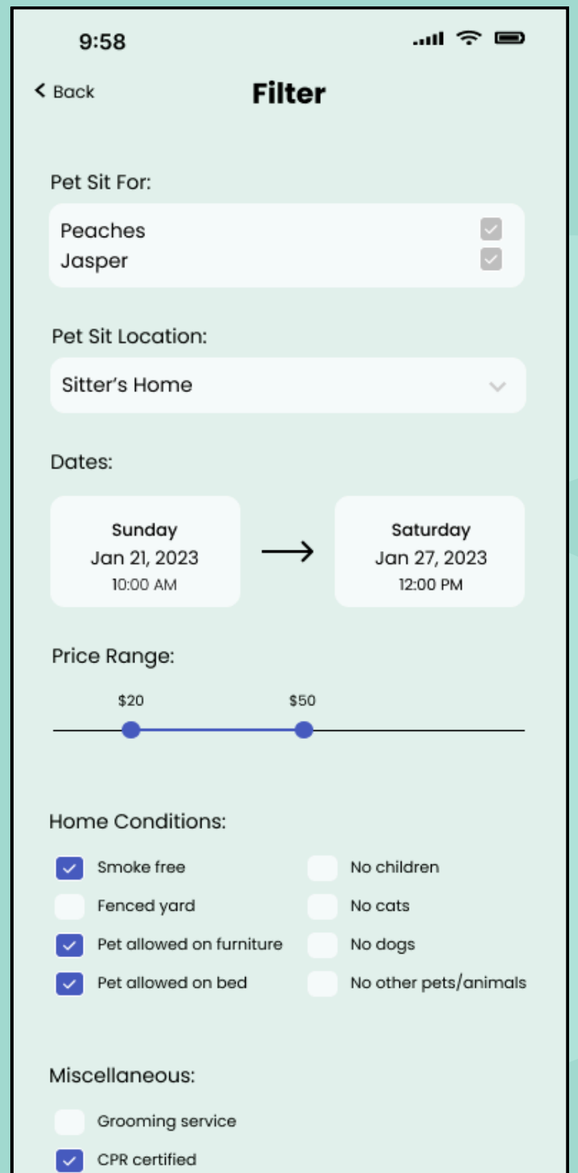
From my low-fidelity prototypes, my wireframes for finding a sitter was well-structured so I mostly focused on the visual design when creating my high-fidelity prototypes.

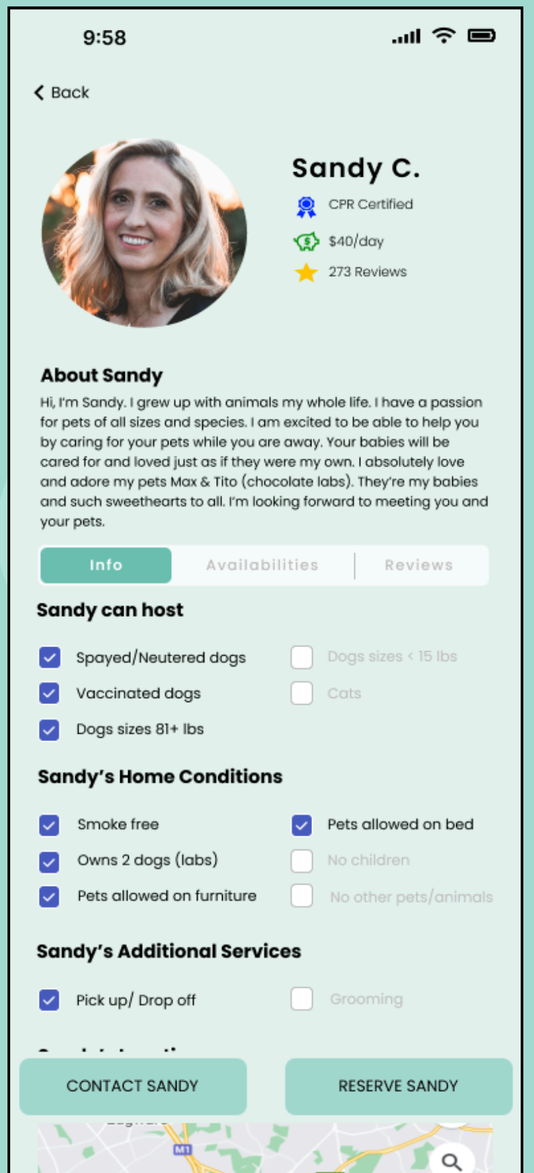


Filters (empty state)



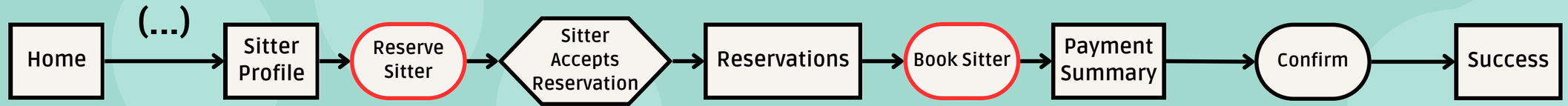
Filtered

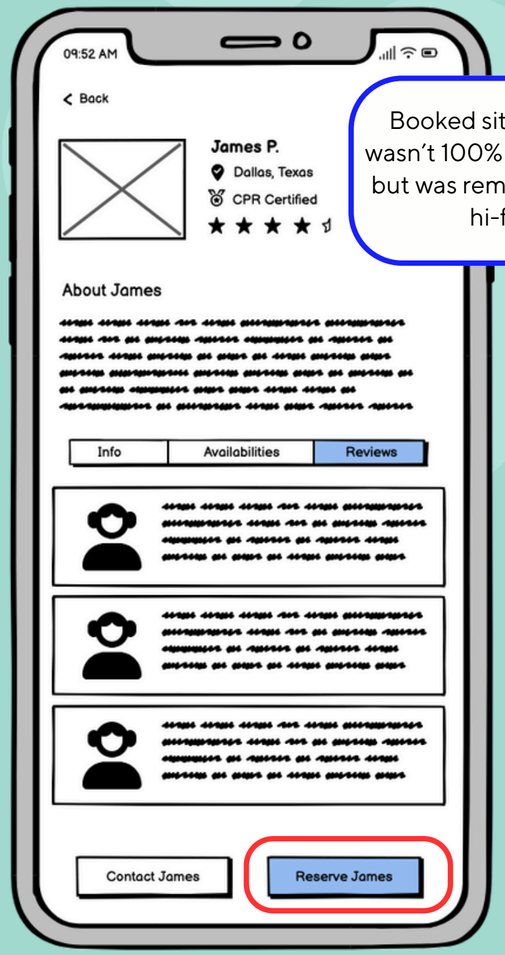




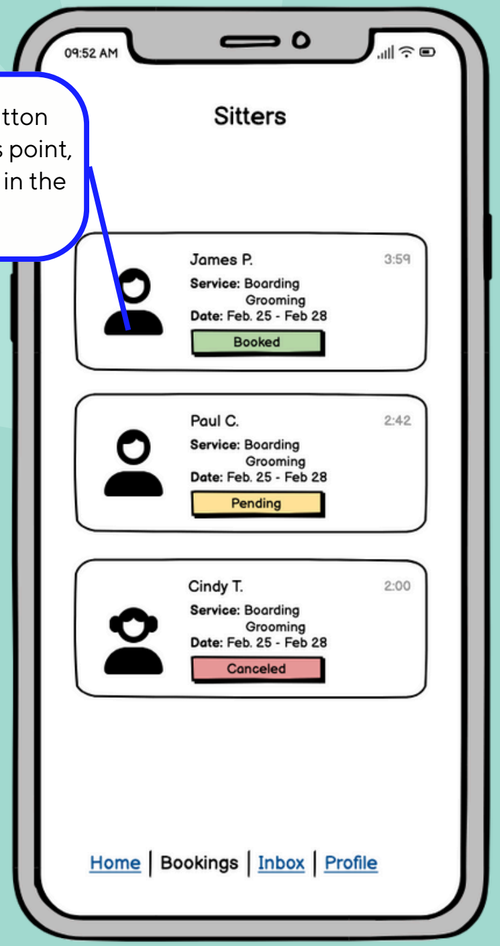
Book/Pay Sitter

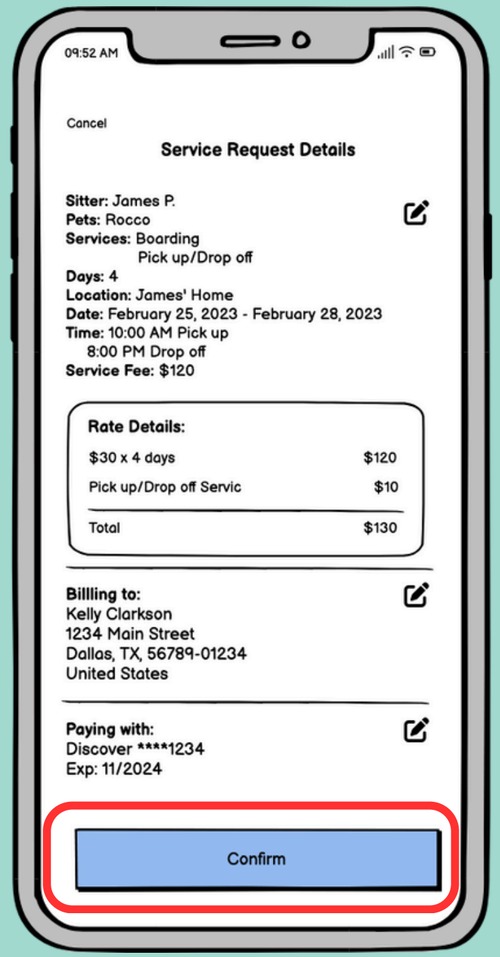
As a user, upon receiving a confirmation of a reservation, I want to **book and pay for a sitter**.



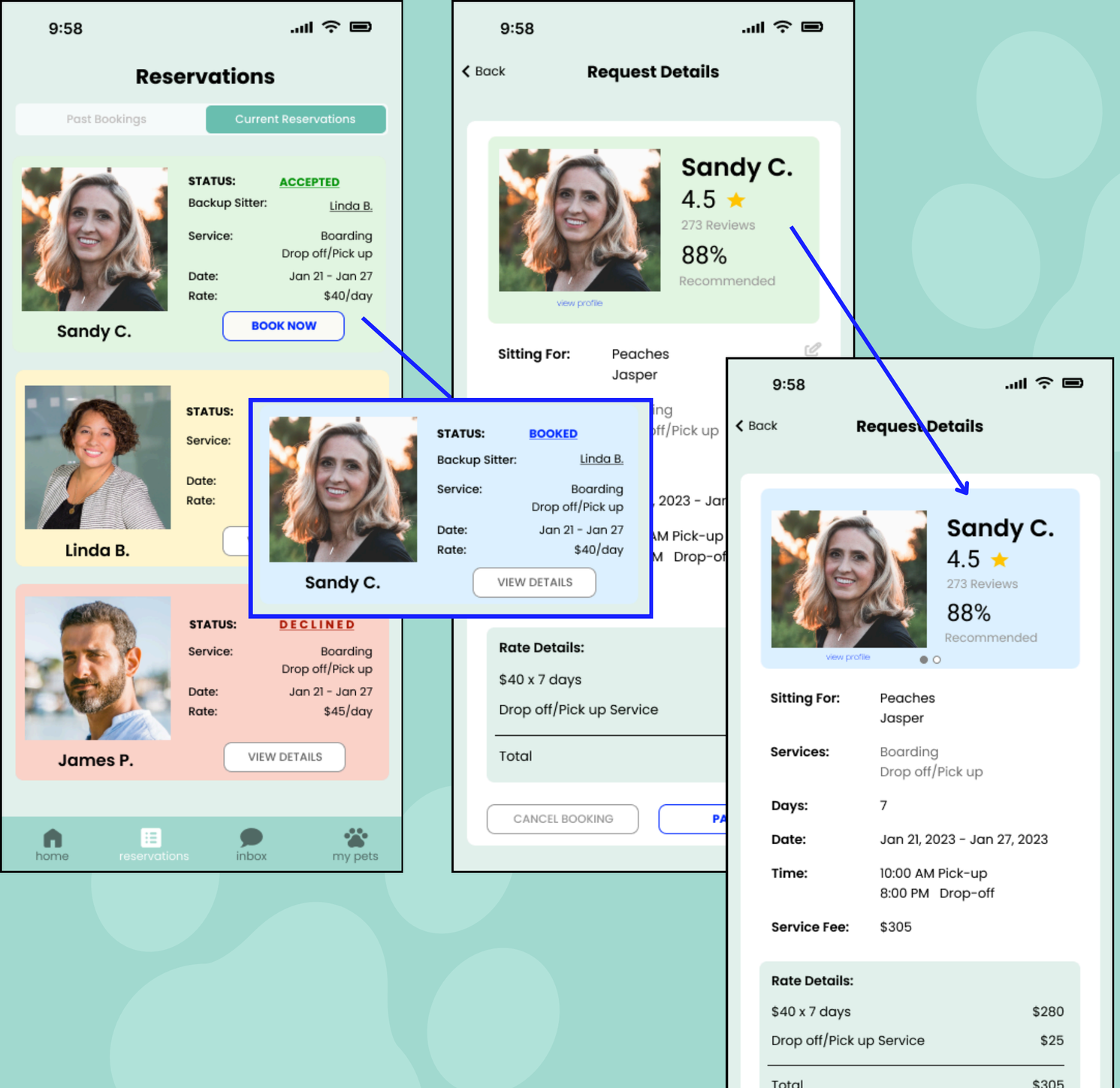


Booked sitter button wasn't 100% at this point, but was remedied in the hi-fi's.





This user flow was extremely complex and went through many iterations, and the wireframes above match the general direction. See next slide for more detail.



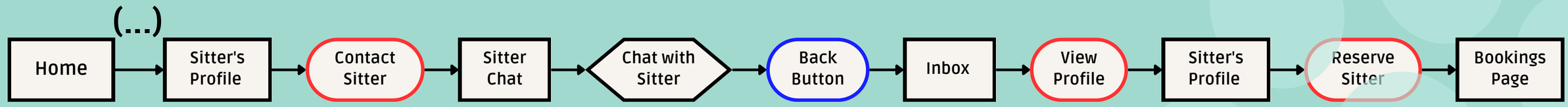
I had not anticipated how complex the sitter booking process would be. Unlike existing gig economy apps, users are looking for a sitter they *actually want*, and **need** to choose the correct sitter for them and their pets. This adds an extra layer of complexity to the booking process.

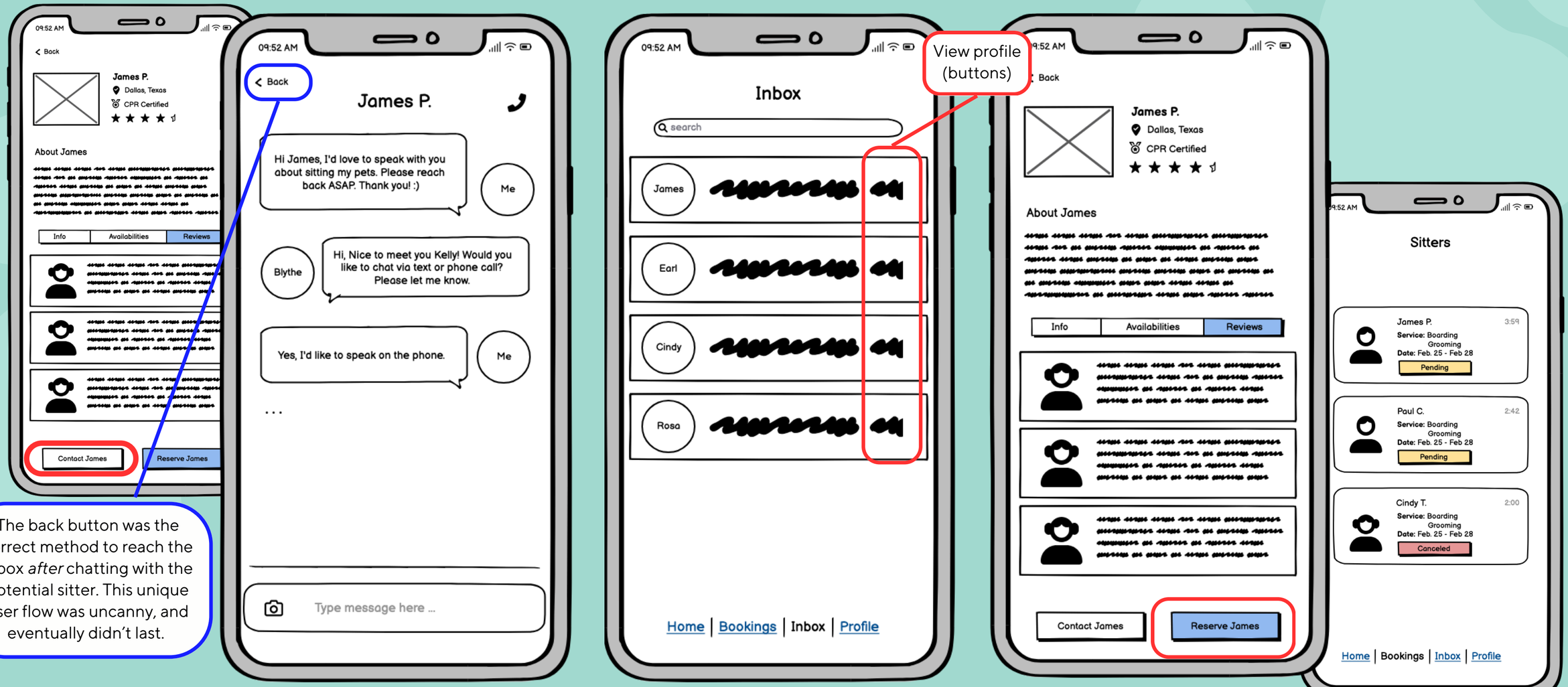
This means when selecting a sitter, users must first reserve, wait for a confirmation (for the given reservation), book, and pay to confirm the booking. While waiting for a reservation to confirm (or decline), there's a "pending" state, and of course a sitter can always decline, so there's a decline state. Phew!

In the reservations tab, users can see all current (and past) reservations, along with a color coded descriptor of the state for each reservation. This simplifies the process, and helps users visually understand where in the booking process they are. I went so far as to even adopt the same color coding for the summary page so users can subconsciously feel like their booking is complete.

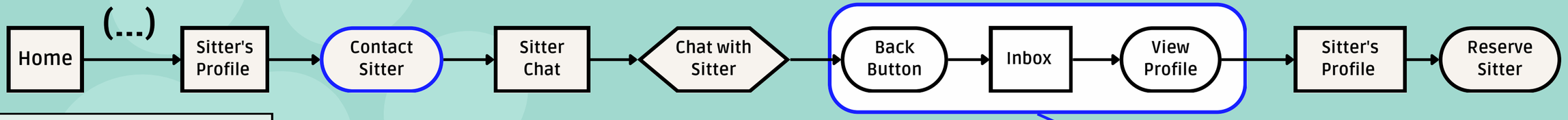
Chat with Sitter

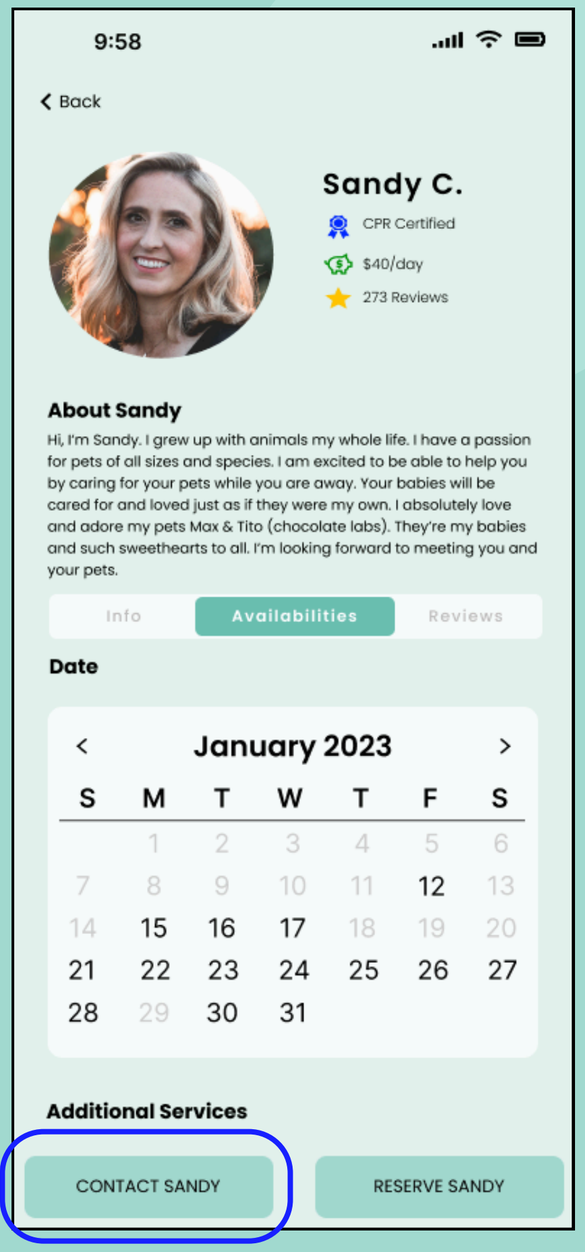
As a user, I want to **communicate with the sitter** and set up a reservation.

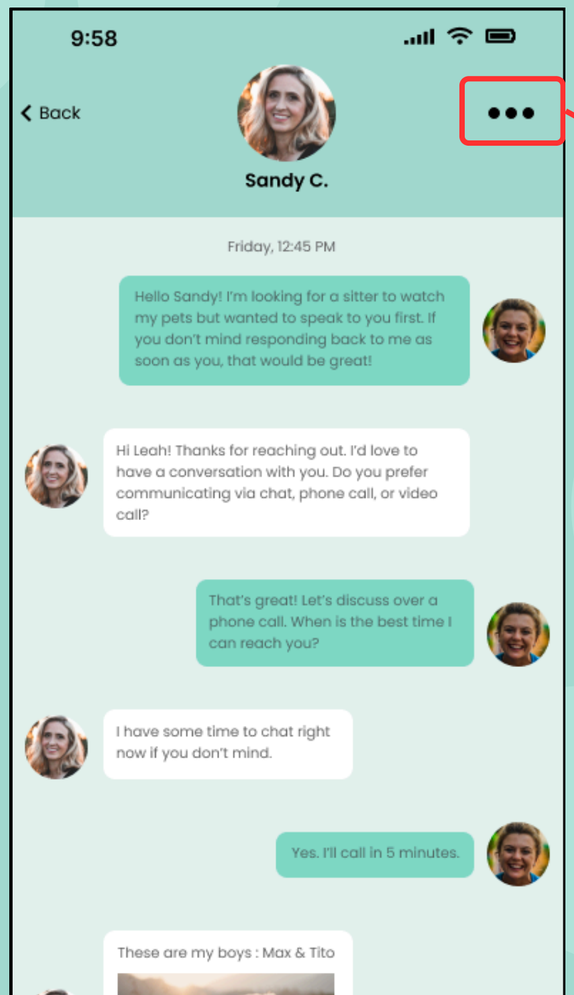




The back button was the correct method to reach the inbox *after* chatting with the potential sitter. This unique user flow was uncanny, and eventually didn't last.



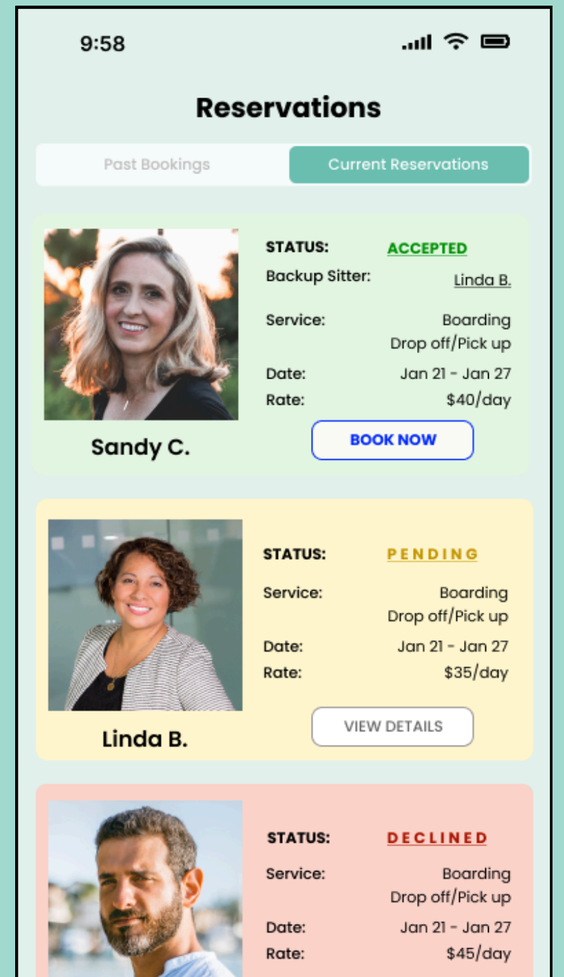




There was a lot of complexity when designing the chat interface. My goal was to add elements that are easily accessible to the user such as:

- reserve the sitter
- view the sitter's profile
- call the sitter

The original user flow required going back from the chat to initiate a booking...that didn't make sense! Instead of going backwards, I added in the option to reserve a sitter in the chat. This made the flow a forward progression where users can either reserve on the chat page or on the sitter profile page.



What did I Learn?

Design Process

I learned the value of personas the hard way. Initially, I assumed they were a marketing tool to describe users, but this project taught me that they are so much more. Not only do personas help designers empathize and focus on a specific target demographic, they also enable us to communicate the user's needs quickly and efficiently.

At first, "Anxious Angela" was based solely on my survey findings and personal expectations. However, through in-depth user interviews, this persona needed significant changes because Gen-Z users have less trust in pet services, and frankly in general!

This was a massive finding that changed how the entire application operated, leading to the updated booking process with search, reservations, and chat in the app. I never expected that everything in the design process was so interconnected! It’s amazing!!

I was also surprised by the amount of change in a product's design just from an imaginative review of a user's needs and behaviors. This forced me to revisit how gig workers can choose to accept or decline *when* compared to existing services (ie. Lyft, Doordash, etc.).

Unlike ordering food, a pet sitter must accept the reservation, and only then can the user book and pay. It was a cumbersome process, but lead to a better understanding of how product design really works.

What did I Learn?

Product and Industry

Gen Z Needs Their Pets Cared For

Before diving in to my secondary research and survey results, I had hypothesized that the targeted audience was 40-60 years old, primarily women, were financially stable, and go out often. This turned out to be very wrong! Gen Z and younger Millenials tend to be the more appropriate audience because they're more willing to use a pet service, have pets, and have an overwhelming desire to go out (even if they can't really afford it).

This demographic is totally different from what I expected to design for. They're less likely (in the US) to have children, and they view their pets as their kids (ever heard of a dog mom?), and like to splurge on them (meaning they'll spend more for the best level of care). They're not planners either; last-second outings are a serious consideration for this audience, and it's more about instantly knowing whether the sitter is available or not, and whether they *vibe* or not.

Doggy Daycares Is Too Frequently Not A Viable Option

Doggy daycares are extremely limiting! They don't allow for pets with undesirable traits (except on occasion for an extra cost). This means users who would want to bring their dog in at a moment's notice will either be turned away or won't even bother trying because they know their pet isn't eligible.

The global pet sitting market was valued at $2.48 billion in 2022, and is expected to reach $6.81 billion in 2032. This just goes to show how massive of an opportunity this is. Pet owners today can all commiserate over being forced to Netflix and Chill instead of going out for drinks or a fun time because they couldn't find someone to pet sit for them.

What's the Future?

Implement New Features to FureverCare

Automated back-up sitters for last minute cancellations

<u>More services:</u>
dog walking
vet appointments
grooming
training
going to the park

<u>Receive a daily report with details of care:</u>
meal time
walks
sleeping
medications
photos/videos

<u>Expand this opportunity to other animals:</u>
cats
hamster
bunny

Live stream of your pet's care (via app) to stay connected

As devoted dog moms or dads, we view our pet as a member of the family or sometimes our "forever child". So it's no surprise that we have a strong connection with them and want nothing but the utmost happiness and care they deserve. While FureverCare provides your pet with love and care when you're away, it would be even better to know/observe their time with the pet sitter. You're paying good money for someone to watch your pet while you're away, so you expect that they give your pet the same level of love and care as you would. By implementing a feature where you can view live footage of your pet being taken care of, it makes your money all worth it.

my actual dog, Romeo

Any Questions?

Let's work together!

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