



## **Local First** – business marketing tool

This project was designed as a part of Ascend Hackathon where we provided solutions to the real-life problems.

### **Overview and problem statement**

Onus is on business owners to market themselves, but many don't have the know-how to do this effectively. Especially in a digital world. How can technology help consumers take the lead on this?

#### **Problem One**

Consumers need a way to quickly/easily find local places when they need to buy items/ hungry.

#### **Problem Two**

People who care about small businesses need a way to help promote them, because the businesses need more visibility since covid. We will know this to be true when people start sharing and looking for small businesses to explore and businesses see an uptick in traffic/sales.

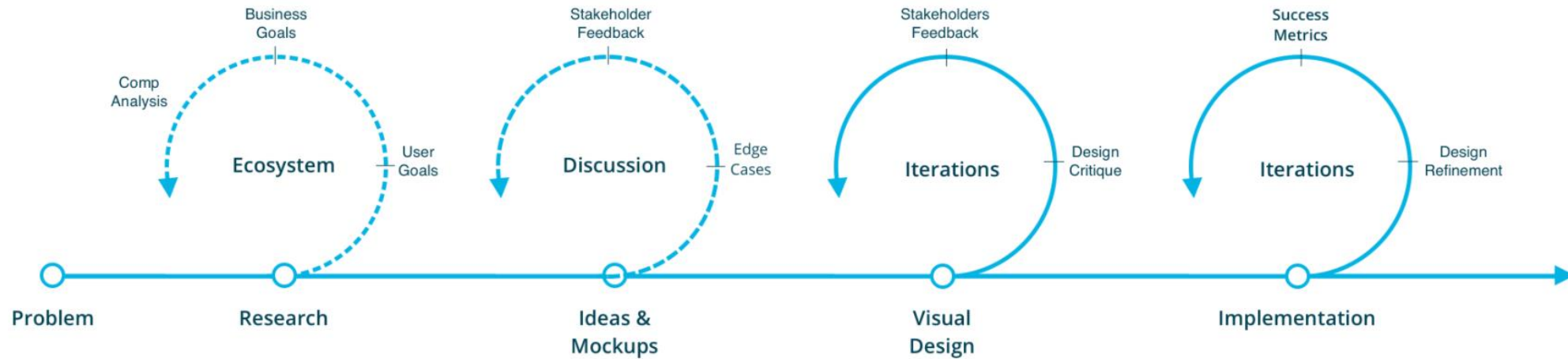
### **Problem Three**

Local small businesses need a way to amplify their marketing efforts because they have limited time, budget, and access. We will know this to be true when companies are able to develop successful partnerships with each other and increase their sales and customer base.

### **Problem Four**

Small business owners need a way to maximize their social media efforts. We know this to be true when they are easily and quickly reaching potential/current customers at little to no effort.

My role in this project was UX and UI design in collaboration with a front-end developer.



I did a competitive analysis of industry-trending tools and came up with features that would be helpful for users. Before presenting the feature list to the stakeholders, I ran it through a developer to see if these features are implementable or not.

	Google Analytics	Mailchimp	Hootsuite	Buzzsumo
Benefits	Provides insights into who is visiting your website and how they engage with it	Help building websites and marketing campaigns	Scheduling posts across all social networks in just a few clicks. Automatically schedule your content and review posts in a calendar view.	Shows content that is trending across social media based on searched topics.
Cost	free	subscription	subscription	subscription
Ease of use and time spent	5 out of 10	8 out of 10	9 out of 10	7 out of 10
Main features	Data points about who visited, how often and how they interacted with the website.	Build emails, social ads, landing pages, postcards, and more from one place.	Schedule posts in your calendar.	Keyword research Influencer search Topic-based social media feeds Content analysis Brand monitoring tools

## **Insights from stakeholders:**

- Scalability. Start small and replicate.
- Gamification. Make it fun. Make it local.
- Drive user interaction and benefit small business owners.

## **Revised Problem Statement**

Local small businesses need a way to amplify their marketing efforts and increase word of mouth because they have limited time, budget, and access. We know this to be true when we see new customers engaging with businesses, and businesses engaging with each other

## **To Do:**

Onboarding

Sign in/Sign up/Switch to customer account

Business Profile

Home-Active QR codes, how many people redeemed

Nav

Messaging

Rewards Card

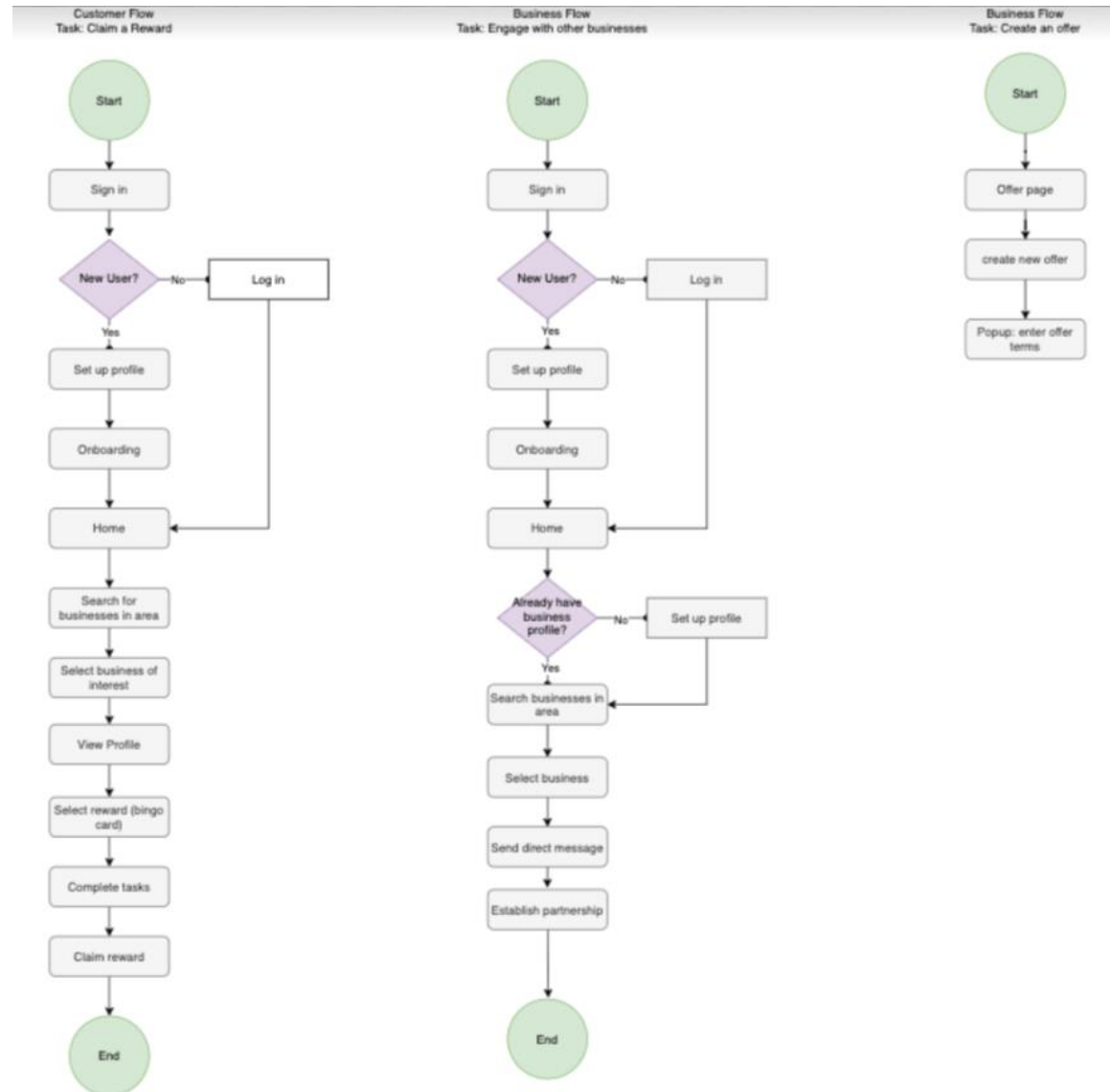
Meet other Businesses

Settings

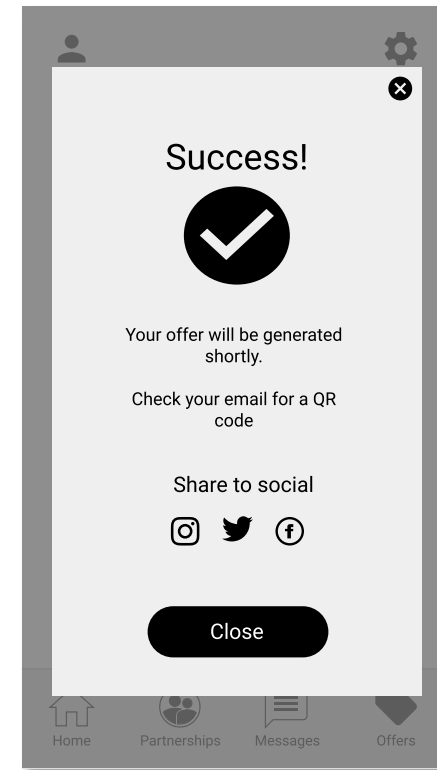
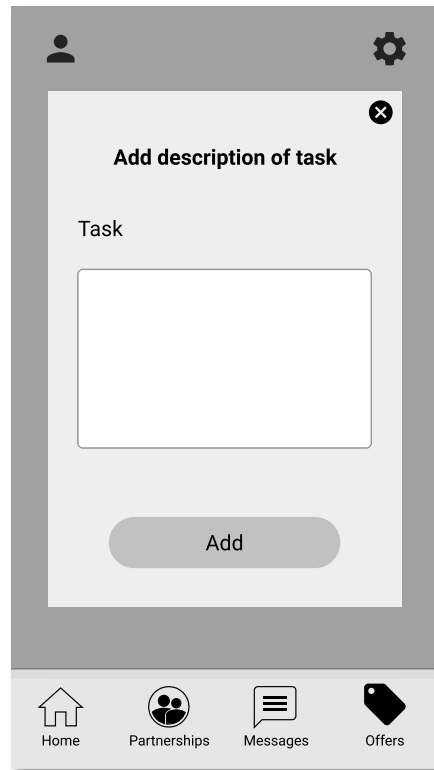
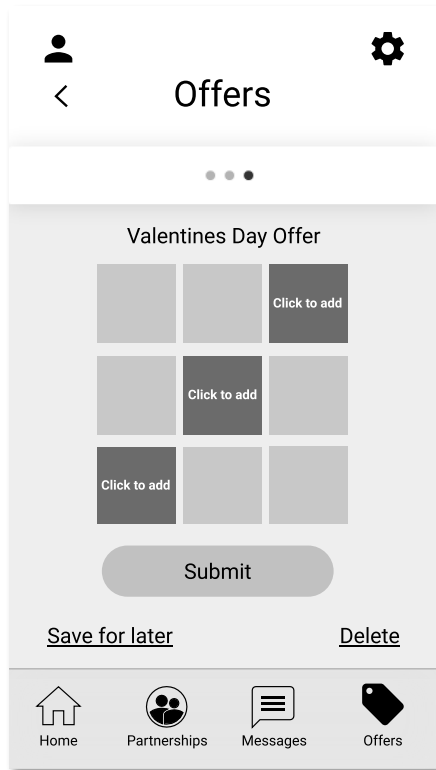
## **Timeline: 1 week**

- ✓ Sunday-Refine Vision
- ✓ Monday-Storyboard, Wireframes
- ✓ Tuesday-Low Fidelity Prototypes
- ✓ Wednesday-High Fidelity Prototypes
- ✓ Thursday-kind of clean.
- ✓ Friday-clean it up. Make it look good.

# User flows

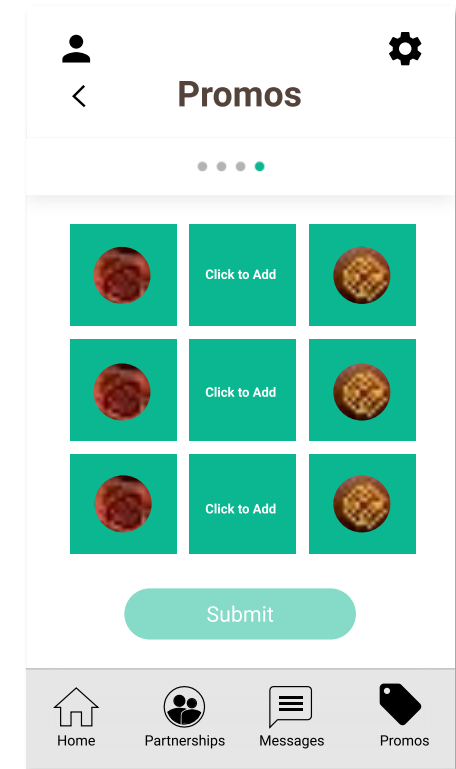
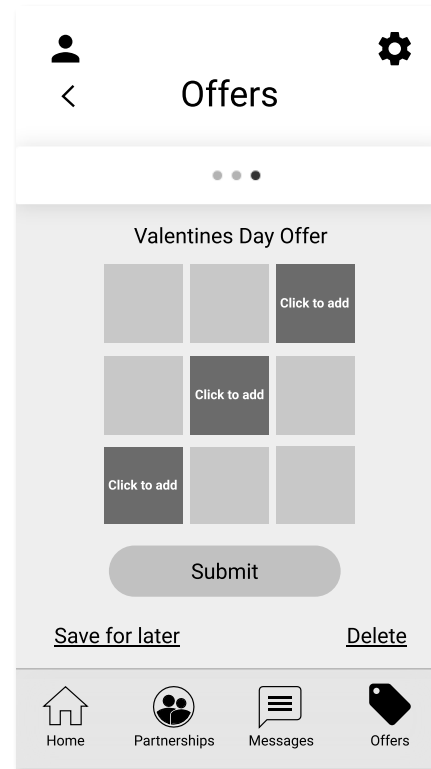


# Some early sketches

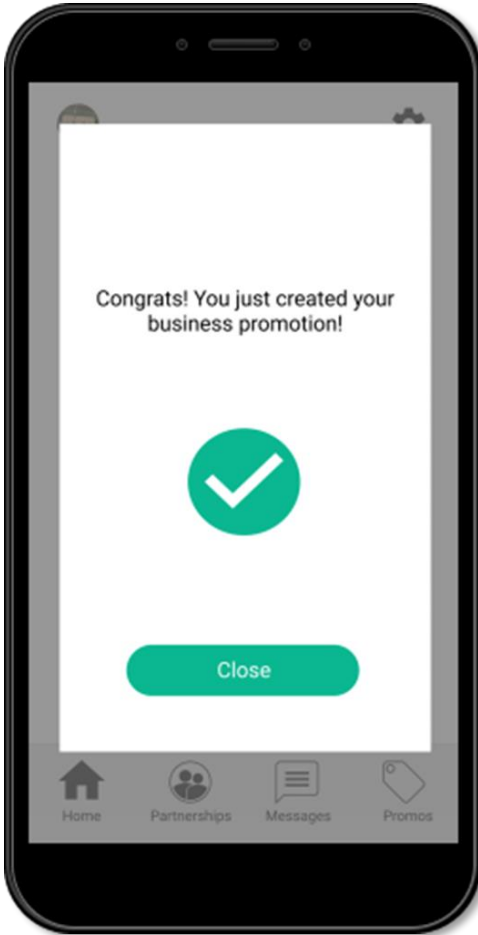
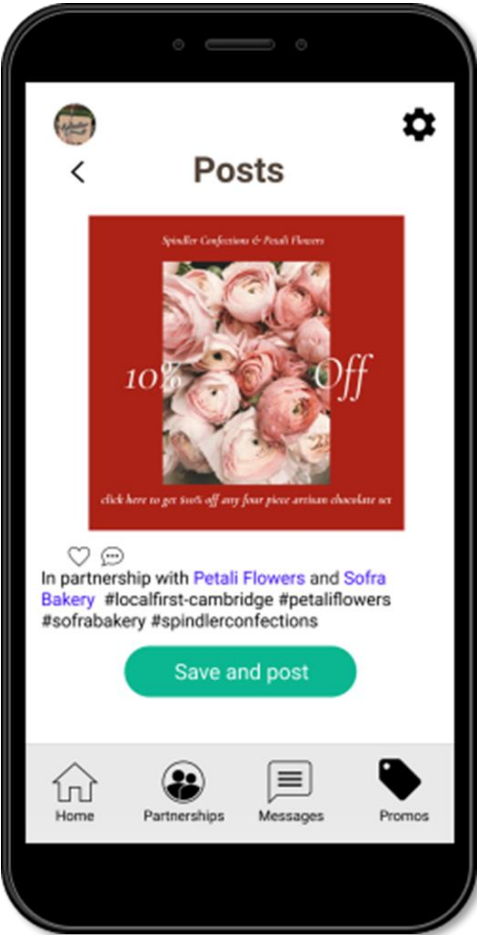
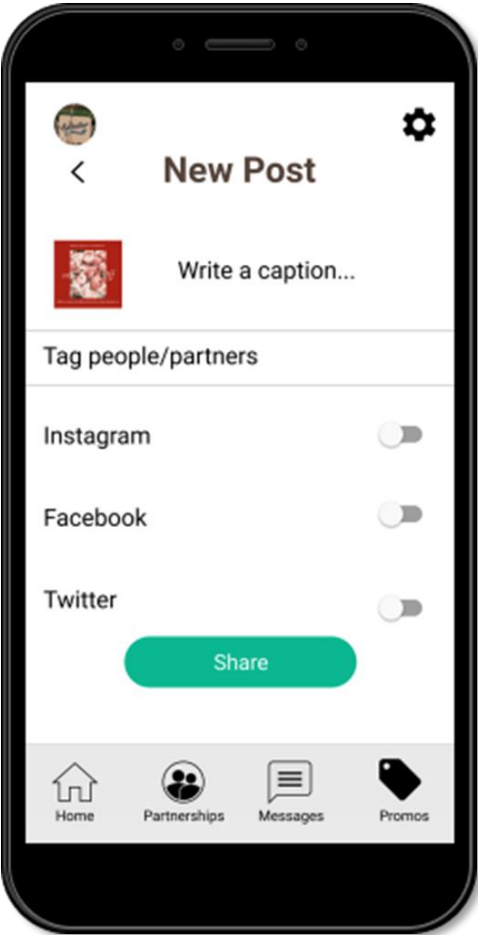




During iterations step we could not figure out how to implement the bingo game card. On the first iteration, the plan was to have one bingo card per business where a user must complete 3 tasks (the highlighted squares, the others are just for visuals) to get an offer. I discussed it with stakeholders, and we made a decision to change “offers” to “promos” and add more tasks to the bingo card. Those tasks do not necessarily include buying something from a business but would be as simple as liking a Facebook page, leaving a review and posting it to Instagram. This idea was gladly accepted by the stakeholders. So, I kept on improving my designs.



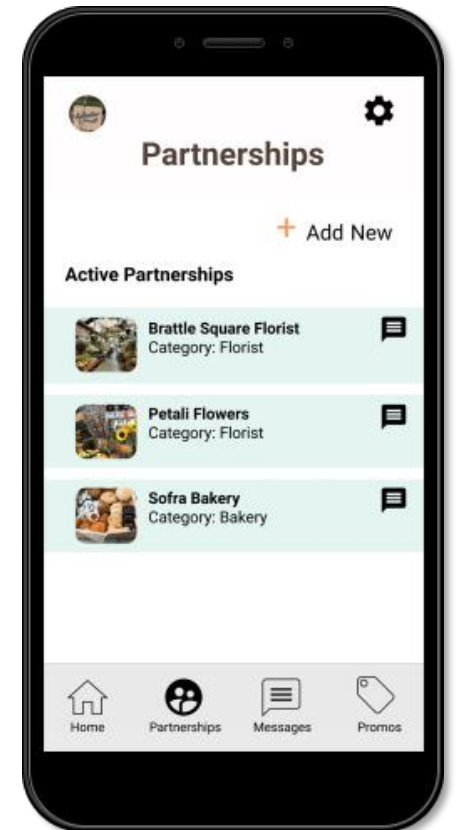
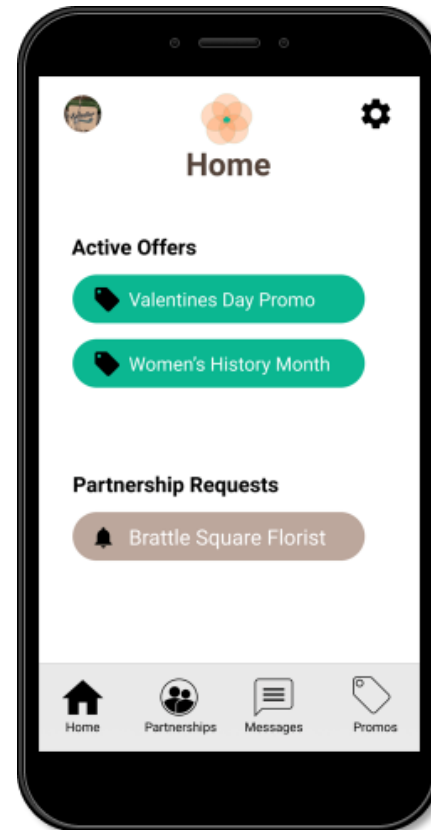
In addition to being able to forge a partnerships to acquire a greater customer base, businesses will be able to create promotions and share them to various social channels with one click. Hootsuite has a similar feature. When I discussed it with stakeholders and developers, we came to an agreement to make is super simple for not super tech savvy users, Instagram-like posts. You can see the design result below.



## Got stuck

Designing a home page. This step I got stuck on since I was not sure what should live on the home page. On the first iteration I had active offers and partnerships. After testing it with stakeholders, decided to change to active offers and partnerships requests. The reason behind it is that active partnerships would be visible on the partnerships tab.

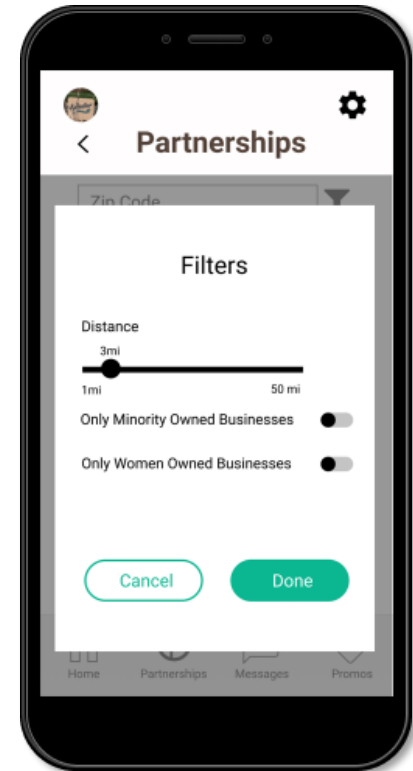
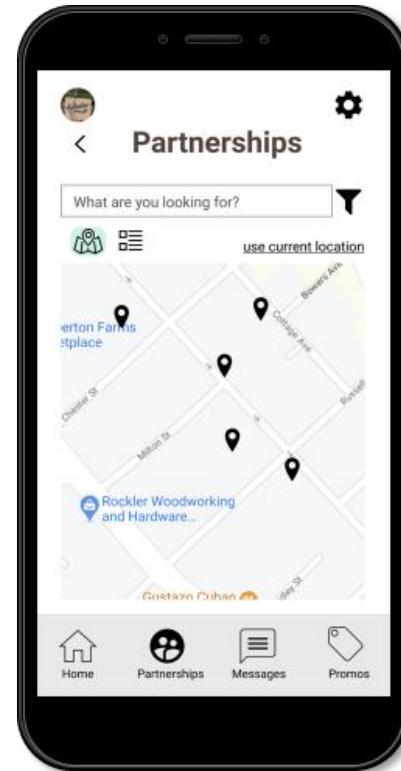
One other issue was, what to put on an active partnerships screen next to the business picture and business name. First, I had an idea to include stars from google reviews so that the business can prioritize to partner with most successful businesses. However, this was not really corresponding with our problem statement to help small businesses with marketing. After discussing it with stakeholders and developers, I decided to include a message icon, so they can quickly start messaging without having to go to messages tab.



The idea of having a map was not supported by one of the stakeholders since “there’s already google maps”. However, for Local First it’s vital for businesses to be able to search for a partnerships using a map. Depending on the service/product type, proximity might play crucial part in running successful promotions.

For the filter, I chose an option of distance and filtering out minority and women owned businesses. Some businesses might want to give a preference to minority owned and/or women owned businesses.

After iterations, this idea was also welcomed by developers and stakeholders.



I had a discussion with stakeholders and developers about how to frame the partnerships request process. How to make it include not too much and not too little info. I came up with an idea to create simple forms that a business owner can fill out and they will be sent to the potential partners. The form has a few basic questions: Why do you want to partner with us? What do you have to offer? How soon are you ready to partner?

The screenshot shows the 'Partnerships' screen with an 'Inquiry Request' form. The form has three text input fields for the questions: 'Why do you want to partner with us?', 'What do you have to offer?', and 'How soon are you ready to partner?'. The third question has a date picker set to '31' and an 'Immediately' checkbox. A green 'Send' button is at the bottom. The bottom navigation bar includes Home, Partnerships, Messages, and Promos.

This screenshot shows the same form with sample text entered: 'Upcoming Mother's Day holiday will be a great opportunity to partner for gift-giving.' for the first question, 'We are doing a special Mother's Day sampler chocolate box.' for the second, and the 'Immediately' checkbox is checked. The 'Send' button is still visible.

The screenshot shows a 'Success!' confirmation screen with a green checkmark icon. The text reads: 'We sent your request to Central Square Florist' and 'We'll let you know when they respond'. A green 'Close' button is at the bottom. The bottom navigation bar is visible but dimmed.

Here is the link to the clickable prototype

<https://www.figma.com/proto/NkLhczWF2EppBWzSyUtLQY/Team-Go-Copy?node-id=14%3A0&scaling=scale-down&page-id=0%3A1>

Next steps would be to do another round of user testing and make necessary adjustments to the design.

### **Learning outcomes:**

**Good design should be invisible.** Not all people are tech savvy. For the digital product to have success, it should be simple and fun to use. In the Local First app, creating Instagram-like social posts would help business owners who are not tech savvy, feel less stressed, since they will not have to learn how the application works. They will be able to use it intuitively.

**Don't be afraid to speak up about your ideas.** At the beginning of the hackathon, when we were presented a problem to solve. We did not really know where to start. So, we decided to brainstorm all our ideas. At first, the idea of business partnerships and social sharing with one click, was not supported by the stakeholders. But when I showed my sketches and explained how it would work on the app, they agreed that it is something new on the market and can be efficient to help small businesses with no budget, get up and get going with their marketing efforts.