The Sharing Economy with Heart: Developing a Peer-to-Peer Marketplace for Patients and Their Families Traveling for Medical Care

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Abstract

Hosts for Humanity is a non-profit organization that connects patients and their families traveling for medical care with volunteers willing to host them. Currently, patients and hosts are matched manually; however, for the organization to expand, a web interface must be developed that can be used by both guests and hosts. The interface must be designed to both mitigate the extreme stress that some users may be experiencing and cultivate philanthropic feelings to encourage more users to volunteer as hosts. To design the interface, a literature review of peer-to-peer marketplaces and hotel websites was conducted to reveal that all three parties—guests, hosts, and Hosts for Humanity—must appear trustworthy and credible to each other for the platform to be successful. Then, interviews with hosts and guests uncovered the motivations users had for becoming hosts; hosts' concerns; and the importance of convenience, cost, and location for guests. Discovery from the interviews was used to create a prototype, which was tested with both hosts and guests. During the test, users were given a series of tasks to accomplish with the prototype. Pain points were recorded, and if necessary, the prototype was iterated before the next test. The host testing revealed the importance of finding a balance between providing enough and too much contact information for both guests and hosts. The guest testing revealed the importance of simplicity and prompts to reduce user stress. The prototype is ready for development.

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Chapter 1: Literature Review

Introduction

When individuals or families are looking for accommodations near world-class medical institutions in cities far from their homes, their options are either limited or expensive. Many larger hospitals have a Ronald McDonald House nearby that can provide a room for children going through treatment and their families at little to no cost. Similarly, the Hope Cancer Lodge offers cancer patients and their caregivers a free place to stay when their treatment is in a city not near their home. However, if these facilities are full, or if the patient is not a child or battling cancer, the patients and their families often have no other option than to pay for a hotel or a peer-to-peer room rental.

In April 2016, Jenny Owens became aware of this issue when her son was in the NICU at Johns Hopkins Hospital. Owens lived just 10 minutes from the hospital, but in the hospital lounge she met a grandmother of another NICU patient who had traveled from Tennessee so her grandchild could have surgery for a rare condition. The grandmother was staying at a hotel during her two-week visit because no rooms were available at the Ronald McDonald House. The encounter made Owens ask, what if people living near hospitals could volunteer rooms in their homes to those traveling with loved ones for care? (Owens, 2017).

Less than a year later, Owens founded the non-profit organization Hosts for Humanity, aimed at connecting out-of-town patients and their families with generous volunteers willing to host them. Guests are asked to make a small donation per night to cover Hosts for Humanity's overhead and insurance policy, far less than a hotel in a major metropolitan area (Owens, 2017). Currently, Owens is matching patients and hosts herself. When she receives a referral from an individual, hospital, Ronald McDonald House, or Hope Cancer Lodge, she calls or emails her list of hosts to find out who is available. For Hosts for Humanity to expand and provide this connection on a larger scale, a web interface must be developed that can be used by both guests and hosts.

The interface will be similar to successful peer-to-peer room rental websites (such as Airbnb) and hotel websites. For the guest audience, the interface should be designed to mitigate the extreme stress that some users may be experiencing. For the host audience, the interface must cultivate philanthropic feelings to encourage more users to sign up as hosts and current hosts to expand their availability. Overall, all three parties—guests, hosts, and Hosts for Humanity—must appear trustworthy and credible to each other for hosts to want to open their homes and guests to feel comfortable staying. Without trust and credibility, the platform will not be successful.

Impact of Stress on Users

Guests using the Hosts for Humanity website to reserve a room may be under extreme stress. They may have been recently diagnosed with a chronic or terminal condition, or they may have a family member who has been recently diagnosed. They may be about to undergo major surgery or have a family member that is about to undergo surgery. And they are traveling to a medical institution that is far from their homes, in a city that may be unfamiliar to them. All of these situations are considered stressful.

A person may feel stressed for a variety of reasons. Stress responses happen when a person interprets a situation as novel or unpredictable. An individual who has the feeling that he or she does not have control over the circumstances will also feel stressed. A stress response may also happen when a situation has the potential to cause harm or loss to someone or their family or property. Finally, "social evaluative threats," or situations where people feel they will be negatively judged by others, also lead to stress (Lupien, Maheu, Tu, Fiocco, & Schramek, 2007). A Hosts for Humanity guest may feel stressed for one or more of these reasons. A diagnosis is certainly novel and an illness can be unpredictable. Health issues can also make people feel as if they do not have control over the circumstances. An illness could cause harm to a person, and the side effects of an illness or treatment could pose a social evaluative threat.

Stress can be relative or absolute. Relative stress comes from an implied threat, such as public speaking. Absolute stress, which is rarer and results in a greater

psychological response, derives from a real threat such as an earthquake or being in an accident (Lupien et al., 2007). Users of the Hosts for Humanity interface could be experiencing both relative or absolute stress, depending on if they are concerned about driving in a big city (relative stress) or have been recently diagnosed with a terminal illness (absolute stress). Some users may be experiencing both types of stress.

Stress impacts cognitive function. When people are stressed, their bodies secrete stress hormones that cross the blood-brain barrier where they influence learning and memory by binding to those receptors. Some stress hormones help to encode emotionally relevant information, making the stressful situation more memorable. Emotional events, in additional to stressful ones, are also memorable to many people. The more attention a person gives to an event, the more likely the event will be elaborated, meaning the person will relate the information from that event to other situations, at the time of encoding. The more something is elaborated, the better it is encoded in memory (Lupien et al., 2007).

However, stress helps people remember some things but forget others. For example, nearly every adult American can retell with great accuracy where they were when the World Trade Center was attacked on 9/11. But many of those same people have also forgotten an important meeting due to work stress. In several studies, when a person was subjected to a stressor (such as being asked to complete mental math problems aloud) the person had memory impairments for material unrelated to the stressor. The effects of emotional or stressful events on memory vary. Elevated levels of glucocorticoids (stress hormones) enhance memory for the stressful or emotional event itself, but typically lead to poor memory for information unrelated to the source of the stress (Lupien et al., 2007). Hosts for Humanity guests may be able to strongly recall where they were when they received a diagnosis or heard about a family member's diagnosis. However, it is possible that their memory function will be at least slightly diminished as they reserve a room on the Hosts for Humanity website. In fact, Lupien's (2007) studies on stress show that being admitted to a hospital causes a large increase in glucocorticoids, even before any tests or procedures are done. And increases of

glucocorticoids in response to stress predict poor memory performance. Therefore, the Hosts for Humanity interface should not require users to remember anything as they progress through the booking process, and it should provide reminders in the gap between when the booking occurs and when the stay begins.

In addition to the stress that users of the Hosts for Humanity website may be feeling due to their medical issues or the issues of a family member, the unfamiliar interface itself may cause stress. Moraveji and Soesanto (2012) believe that interfaces should be evaluated for both usability and potential for stress. Usability does not address whether or not properly using a website still induces stress, and stress can exist despite usability (Moraveji & Soesanto, 2012). Since higher amounts of stress make it more likely that the stressed person will have impaired cognitive function, it is imperative that the Hosts for Humanity website not add to the stress burden of the user. Instead, the interface should help people feel competent. Since users may be feeling that part of their life is very uncertain due to their illness, the interface should affirm that they will be successful in the acquisition of their accommodations. Finally, as they navigate a likely novel treatment process, the interface should not be one more thing a user has to figure out.

Moraveji and Soesanto's (2012) research revealed 10 design heuristics that aim to reduce the likelihood that a website interface causes stress on its user. The first heuristic is that the interface should provide the user with the ability to control interruptions. The interface should reveal settings to block, control, or temporarily disable interruptions during tasks that require the user's undivided attention, such as slideshows and presentations (Moraveji & Soesanto, 2012). On the Hosts for Humanity website, directions on how to use the interface will be important to minimize stress. However, users should be able to specify "Don't show me this again" on a directions page or popup, providing them control over the interface.

The second heuristic is to reduce feelings of being overwhelmed. Interfaces should avoid large datasets, because they may make a user feel as if they will never be finished using the application. Users can also feel overwhelmed from too many features

or options. When longer processes are necessary, these processes should be completed earlier in the application (Moraveji & Soesanto, 2012). Once Hosts for Humanity is up and running, there will hopefully be many accommodations from which a potential guest can choose. To avoid making the user feel overwhelmed by all the options, the results should automatically be filtered by availability and location. Other filters, such as the availability of parking or the presence of steps, should be present, but too many filters can also make the user feel overwhelmed. Finally, the longer parts of the booking process on the Hosts for Humanity website should be completed at the beginning.

Moraveji and Soesanto's (2012) third heuristic is to acknowledge human interpretations of time passing. Users should also be distracted during waiting periods with diverting stimuli (Moraveji & Soesanto, 2012). To acknowledge time passing, the Hosts for Humanity booking process could have its steps clearly numbered, so users know where they are in the process. Each step could also be labeled with approximately how long it will take users to complete the step. For example, for the Create an Account step, the directions might say, "Please create an account. This step will take about 10 minutes." If the search and filter function is not close to instant, an icon such as Windows' hourglass or Mac's spinning rainbow wheel may distract users from the wait.

The fourth heuristic is to use appropriate tone and emotion. Interfaces should use conversational tone and emotion when appropriate. For example, system or user errors could be acknowledged apologetically or in a humorous way. Polite requests instead of demands are also recommended (Moraveji & Soesanto, 2012). Appropriate tone and emotion are especially important on the Hosts for Humanity website because guests are already stressed before they even begin the booking process. The tone of the site should be comforting and knowledgeable, as if the site is an old friend helping the guest through the process. Error messages should be both apologetic and reassuring.

Similarly, the fifth heuristic says to provide positive feedback to user input and events. Simplifying tasks and acknowledging successes will build confidence in users. For example, an interface should use messages like "Thanks for filling out the form." Interfaces should also point out common mistakes so users feel like they are part of a

group with similar experiences (Moraveji & Soesanto, 2012). On the Hosts for Humanity website, users should receive positive feedback after every step. For example, "You've successfully created an account. Check your email for login directions and what to do if you forget your username or password." Or, "You successfully booked your room. You will receive an email with all accommodation information and directions to get there." Pointing out common mistakes is also critical to the Hosts for Humanity platform because users need to feel confident and that they are not alone. For example, many users may only have a tentative departure date because they don't know how long treatment will last. During the part of the booking process when a potential guest has to enter arrival and departure dates, a popup would appear instructing the user to make his or her best guess as to a departure date. Users will feel reassured that other Hosts for Humanity guests have tentative treatment plans and that they do not have to have the whole stay determined right away.

Moraveji and Soesanto's (2012) sixth heuristic is to encourage prosocial interaction. However, social media components may cause users stress because users have to manage their self image on those sites. Explaining prosocial interactions, for example, what a "like" is or how to "retweet" a post, can help mitigate that stress (Moraveji & Soesanto, 2012). Due to privacy concerns and legislation like HIPAA, social media will be used carefully on Hosts for Humanity. However, the language on the website and in the hosts' profiles should make potential guests feel as if they are part of a community that cares about them. Guests and hosts will also be able to privately message each other through the Hosts for Humanity platform.

Interfaces should also relieve time pressure, which is the seventh heuristic. Users feel a lack of control when pressed for time, so unnecessary time pressures should be eliminated (Moraveji & Soesanto, 2012). Potential guests using the Hosts for Humanity website may already feel pressed for time if their treatment date is looming and they have not yet reserved a place to stay. The website should not exacerbate those feelings by requiring that guests complete the booking process in a specific amount of time.

Tentative departure dates and an easy cancellation policy would also help relieve time pressure.

Meanwhile, the eighth heuristic is to choose naturally calming elements. Soothing error tones, naturalistic animations, and images taken from nature will help relax users (Moraveji & Soesanto, 2012). While there likely will not be many, if any, animations on the Hosts for Humanity website, the site could utilize a soothing error tone and nature photographs. The Hosts for Humanity logo is blue and green, and both colors are considered calming and found abundantly in nature.

The ninth heuristic is to acknowledge reasonable user actions. If the interface does not allow a certain interaction, explain why (Moraveji & Soesanto, 2012). For example, the Hosts for Humanity interface could acknowledge why a date is grayed out (not available) for a booking on the website calendar. And finally, the tenth heuristic is to demystify the interface. Designers should make sure that features are explained to the users before the users ask for help or look for documentation (Moraveji & Soesanto, 2012). Designing the Hosts for Humanity interface to be similar to other room booking interfaces such as a hotel or Airbnb may also help demystify the website, because users may be familiar with those other sites. Clear instructions and a well-labeled process may also prevent users from becoming confused.

The Hosts for Humanity website must take into account that users will likely be stressed and stress can impair memory. By designing a simple interface with low cognitive load that incorporates Moraveji and Soesanto's 10 heuristics to minimize stress, users will be able to successfully book a room and not have their stress compounded by the process. The website should also leave users with the feeling that they are competent and that they have nothing to worry about, remember, or figure out.

Philanthropy

Researchers Lampinen and Brown (2017) have studied peer-to-peer marketplaces and have determined that successful ones address five key concepts: thickness, congestion, stability, safety, and repugnance. The first key factor, thickness, is the idea

that the marketplace must get enough participants to create a steady flow of transactions. It is not enough to have just a large number of users. The platform must have a critical mass of matches, or a big enough proportion of users on both sides coming together to transact. Marketplaces struggle when there is over-supply on one side (too many guests) or when there are not enough good matches to convince participants to continue using the platform as opposed to going elsewhere (Lampinen & Brown, 2017). For Hosts for Humanity, this means that there must be enough hosts to satisfy guests, enough guests to satisfy hosts, and enough quality matches between them.

In many peer-to-peer marketplaces, hosts or sellers are often motivated by money. Money encourages users to rent out their accommodations or sell their items, other users rent or buy those items, and the market becomes thick (Lampinen & Brown, 2017). Hosts using Hosts for Humanity, however, are volunteers, so money cannot be a motivator. Alternatively, Couchsurfing is a peer-to-peer marketplace where hosts offer guests a place to stay (sometimes just a couch) for free but with the expectation that the guest will also be a host on the platform in the future. Here, money is not a motivator, but generalized reciprocity is. Encouraging users to alternate between hosting and guesting creates thickness (Lampinen & Brown, 2017). However, in the case of Hosts for Humanity, guests cannot be encouraged to become hosts, at least in the short term, because they may be very ill, and they likely do not live near a major medical facility. Hosts for Humanity runs a risk of becoming a thin market if the benefits for guests seem to be larger than those for hosts. To develop thickness, the platform must cultivate one or more motivators for hosts.

Research on charitable giving and volunteering has shown that people are much more likely to give time and/or money when they had a relevant personal experience related to the cause, especially when the cause is medical or health related (Bennett, 2002). For example, in a survey of contributors, 70 percent of the 915 people who responded agreed with the statement, “personal circumstances make me give, like I had a friend who died of cancer so I give to cancer charities” (Bennett, 2002, p. 14). For Hosts for Humanity, this means finding people who have been through a life-changing

diagnosis and then encouraging them to become hosts by speaking to that experience. After all, Jenny Owens's experience of her son's diagnosis and NICU stay compelled her to found Hosts for Humanity in the first place. Hosts for Humanity should tell the stories of its guests to potential hosts in the hope that they will relate to the story and open their homes to strangers for free.

Other factors that encourage people to donate time or money are the brand image of the charity, perceptions that the charity is efficient, and the sense of belonging to a community (Bennett, 2002). Hosts for Humanity must meet these expectations so that when users are motivated to volunteer, they will follow through. The Hosts for Humanity website must be well branded and look professional. The website can also reflect the organization's efficiency by making it easy for hosts to register. Finally, hosts must feel as if they are part of a community, both a community of other hosts and a community of people affected by a medical diagnosis. Hosts for Humanity can facilitate those feelings through website content and tone, social media content, and events and storytelling. Hosts should also be able to go to the organization, and potentially other hosts, for help, tips, and best practices. Stressing community will help people to get involved and stay involved with Hosts for Humanity.

Airbnb and the Sharing Economy

The sharing economy, also known as the peer economy or collaborative consumption, is when owners rent out something they are not using—such as a house, car, or bicycle—to a stranger on a peer-to-peer marketplace (Bercovici, 2014). Peer-to-peer marketplaces are places where individuals (the consumers) transact directly with other individuals (the sellers) while the marketplace platform is maintained by a third party. This type of e-commerce is growing at a rapid rate, because people are looking for low-cost goods or accommodations and direct interactions with the community (Botsman & Rogers, 2011; Guttentag, 2015). Hosts for Humanity is a type of peer-to-peer marketplace utilizing the sharing economy.

While there are many examples of peer-to-peer marketplaces for accommodations, such as HomeAway, FlipKey, Tripping.com, and VRBO, perhaps the most cited example of the sharing economy is Airbnb (Lee et al., 2015). Founded in 2008 in San Francisco, California by Joe Gebbia, Brian Chesky, and Nathan Blecharczyk, Airbnb is a community marketplace for people to list and book accommodations. Airbnb lists accommodations in more than 65,000 cities and 191 countries, totaling more than 3 million listings worldwide. More than 200 million guests have booked a room with Airbnb ("Airbnb.com," 2017). Due to Airbnb's success, the Hosts for Humanity interface will be modeled similarly.

E-commerce websites can be evaluated along three dimensions: efficiency, system availability, and privacy protection (Yen & Lu, 2008). Airbnb, and other websites on the peer-to-peer marketplace, should be evaluated along two additional dimensions: compensation and contacts. Efficiency is the extent to which guests can easily and quickly access the website, and system availability is the extent to which Airbnb is technologically functioning. Perceived security is the extent to which guests' information is secure. Compensation is the extent to which Airbnb compensates guests for problems, and contact is the extent to which Airbnb assists guests on the phone or online (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Malhotra, 2005). If Airbnb, and the Hosts for Humanity website, provide guests with efficient and accurate information, high-quality security, quick access, and proper compensation for problems, guests will be satisfied using the site (Han, Koo, & Chung, 2016).

Sellers in peer-to-peer marketplaces are evaluated along the dimensions of contact, fulfillment, and responsiveness (Yen & Lu, 2008). Contact is the extent to which sellers (or hosts, as they are called on Airbnb and Hosts for Humanity) provide verified contact information. Fulfillment is the extent to which hosts meet promises they make, and responsiveness is the extent to which they respond to guests' questions. If Airbnb and Hosts for Humanity hosts provide a detailed explanation of the accommodations, provide contact information in multiple channels, respond quickly to guests, react quickly to

problems, and deliver on promises, guests using the site will have their standards met (Han, Koo, & Chung, 2016).

A study of Airbnb room sales divided features into two categories: social and conventional. Social features such as host responsiveness, wish list count, and number of reviews are significantly associated with room sales. Host responsiveness represents how often and how quickly a host responds to a message from a prospective guest. It is a very significant factor in predicting room sales. The faster hosts respond, the more likely rooms were reserved in the same time period. The wish list is an Airbnb feature that allows users to bookmark listings. Any user can see how many times a particular property has been saved to someone's wish list. This count is also significantly associated with future room sales. Guests who stay in a room can write a review of their experience. Lee's (2015) study found that the quantity of reviews for a property is more important to room sales than the rating. Rooms with more reviews are more likely to be booked in the future (Lee et al., 2015). Applying this study to Hosts for Humanity, host responsiveness will be extremely important to the booking process. It is unlikely that wish lists and reviews will be implemented on the site, at least initially, because hosts are volunteers.

The two social features that were not important to room sales are overall rating and number of host references (Lee et al., 2015). If reviews are not used on the Hosts for Humanity website, it would be interesting to see if host references became more important. Conventional features, such as wi-fi and a washer/dryer, were also found to have a very limited effect on room sales in Airbnb (Lee et al., 2015). Airbnb hosts, and future Hosts for Humanity hosts, should not get hung up on conventional features but should instead focus on social features to boost success.

Trust

In the sharing economy, facilitating trust among the two parties is extremely critical. Traditional e-commerce involves only monetary risk, while peer-to-peer commerce includes additional risks (Ert, Fleischer, & Magen, 2016). For example, potential hosts may worry that guests will damage their property. Guests may worry

about their physical safety or the accuracy of the accommodation description (Ma, Hancock, Mingjie, & Naaman, 2017). Furthermore, Airbnb and Hosts for Humanity provide a service, not a product, and since services are intangible goods, it can be difficult to verify their quality before they are purchased (Ert et al., 2016). Researchers Lampinen and Brown (2017), who study peer-to-peer exchange platforms, consider safety to be one of the key concepts required for the market to function successfully. Safety refers to having the platform organized so that users can make decisions based on reliable information and state their preferences honestly without fearing that doing so would harm them (Lampinen & Brown, 2017).

Establishing host-guest trust helps mitigate these risks and provides safety. Trust is essential for the success of Airbnb, which is why the company has developed an assurance policy and reputation system. (Ma et al., 2017). For hosts, Airbnb has the Airbnb Host Guarantee, which provides protection for up to $1 million to a host for damages to property in the event guest damages exceed the security deposit or if there is not a security deposit in place. The Host Protection Insurance Program provides primary liability coverage for up to $1 million in the event that a guest injures themselves or their possessions while a guest ("Airbnb.com," 2017). Hosts for Humanity also has an insurance policy that protects hosts in the event their property is damaged or someone is hurt. Airbnb also offers safety tips for hosts, such as recommending that all payment and communication goes through Airbnb's website, asking guests for profile verifications, completing house rules and a house manual, and adding a security deposit ("Airbnb.com," 2017). The Hosts for Humanity website should also provide a private messaging system for users and a profile verification mechanism. Hosts are encouraged to be as transparent as possible about their accommodations, and house rules could help with that. In addition, house rules will help both hosts and guests feel more comfortable because the expectations are in writing. A security deposit would not be appropriate for Hosts for Humanity because the organization is supposed to provide a low-cost solution for patients and their families.

For guests, Airbnb provides reviews about each property from previous guests. Hosts may also post recommendations from friends, family members, and colleagues ("Airbnb.com," 2017). Hosts for Humanity will not have a public review system (at least initially) because the hosts are volunteers. However, recommendations may be a good way to build trust, even if the method is not as effective as reviews. Airbnb also recommends that guests choose hosts with verified profile information and that they review each accommodation's home safety card, which includes emergency phone numbers, the locations of fire extinguishers and fire alarms, and emergency exit routes ("Airbnb.com," 2017). Hosts for Humanity should incorporate the concept of a home safety card to develop credibility and the feeling of security for guests.

Trust between guests and hosts is not the only important relationship in Airbnb and Hosts for Humanity. Both parties must also trust the umbrella organization for the peer-to-peer marketplace to be successful. If potential hosts think the site lacks credibility, they will not sign up to be hosts. If potential guests think the site lacks credibility, they will not book accommodations. Both parties will go elsewhere to fulfill their needs. Since fraud is perceived to be a growing problem online, and especially since Hosts for Humanity's extremely low cost could appear to be too good to be true, the website must come across as credible. To explain how users assess credibility online, BJ Fogg (2003) developed Prominence-Interpretation Theory. Prominence-Interpretation Theory says that people notice an element of a website (prominence) and then make a judgement about that element (interpretation). Together, these actions create the impact that an element has on the credibility assessment. A user quickly notices website elements and evaluates them iteratively and typically subconsciously. This process is repeated until an overall assessment about the website's credibility is made (Fogg, 2003).

In a website credibility study with more than 2,000 participants, Fogg and his colleagues (2003) found that users commented on the design of the website more often than any other feature. Design included layout, typography, white space, images, color schemes, etc. They note that looking good is often interpreted as being good. Since the 1930s, social psychologists have shown that attractive people are perceived to be

credible. This basic human processing bias seems to also apply to evaluating the credibility of websites (Fogg et al., 2003). To exude credibility, it is imperative that the Hosts for Humanity website have an excellent visual design.

The other features that users commented on in assessing credibility were structure of the site's information, perceived underlying motive, usefulness of information, accuracy of information, name recognition and reputation, advertising, tone, identity of site owner, functionality of site, and customer service (Fogg et al., 2003). To appear credible, the Hosts for Humanity website should have good navigation and information architecture, useful and accurate information, no advertising, appropriate tone, no broken links, and a good search function. Since users in the study found that websites with an admirable motive were more credible, Hosts for Humanity should make its very admirable motive clear. Users also evaluated website credibility by the name recognition of the organization. Since Hosts for Humanity is a new organization with little to no name recognition, the website could display its partners' logos (Ronald McDonald House, Hope Cancer Lodge, Johns Hopkins University Hospital) prominently (Fogg et al., 2003).

Reviews

On peer-to-peer travel websites, potential guests can obtain information about a property from two sources: the owner and other reviewers. Travelers trust other reviewers more than owners because they believe the reviews reflect real experiences and are more credible (Zhu & Zhang, 2010). Therefore, one of the primary ways sharing economy websites facilitate online trust is by incorporating online reviews (Ert et al., 2016). Peer evaluations reduce uncertainty for users making a purchase decision (Zhu & Zhang, 2010). Consumers tend to pay attention to products with more positive ratings. Both the volume and valence (number of stars) of online reviews are important (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006). The volume of online reviews is often associated with the popularity of a product. Consumers are unlikely to choose a property without many reviews because they have no way to reduce uncertainty from peer evaluations or to explain away the

occasional bad review. A lack of reviews affects the sale of a product (Sotiriadis & van Zyl, 2013).

While the vast majority of sharing economy websites use reviews, the founder of Hosts for Humanity would like to avoid public reviews of accommodations, at least initially. Hosts are volunteers, and there is concern that the threat of a public poor review could prevent someone from volunteering to be a host. A public poor review could also cause a host to stop hosting. However, Hosts for Humanity will employ a private review system, where guests can leave reviews that are only visible to the host and Hosts for Humanity. Private reviews allow guests to have their opinions heard and also allow Hosts for Humanity to intervene if there is a problem with a host.

Many e-commerce websites encourage users to leave reviews by gamifying the process (Li, Huang, & Cavusoglu, 2012). Gamification is the application of game design elements to non-game contexts (Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, & Nacke, 2011). For example, users may be awarded badges or a higher status for posting reviews (Li et al., 2012). Other examples of gamification are points and leaderboards. Gamification provides motivation to users for continuing or increased engagement (Deterding et al., 2011).

An example of gamification is Airbnb's "superhost" badge for hosts. To obtain this badge, hosts must have hosted at least 10 trips, maintain a 90 percent response rate or higher, receive a 5-star rating at least 80 percent of the time, and complete all of their confirmed reservations without canceling. Once a host reaches superhost status, the badge is automatically placed on their host profile. Superhosts are reviewed quarterly to make sure they still meet the qualifications ("Airbnb.com," 2017). Hosts hope the badge will lead to more bookings, because potential guests can conduct a search of superhosts in a given area. Plus, an accommodation with a superhost badge is considered more credible, which can affect a potential guest's perceived risk. Overall, the superhost badge can attract more bookings and reviews and improve ratings (Liang, Schuckert, Law, & Chen, 2017). The badge also gives hosts a higher status within the Airbnb community. Superhosts get priority support when they contact Airbnb, and they also get a $100

voucher to use toward their own Airbnb trip each year they maintain the superhost status ("Airbnb.com," 2017). In a 2016 study of Airbnb superhosts, only 2.9 percent of hosts had earned the badge. On average, superhosts posted 18.047 photos on their Airbnb listing, 90.4 percent posted a detailed description, and 53.5 percent posted a house rule. The study also found that guests felt comfortable spending more money for a superhost badge property (Liang et al., 2017).

While Hosts for Humanity cannot use gamification to encourage reviews, (because it will not offer public reviews) it could consider a badge for hosts similar to Airbnb's superhost badge. To earn the badge, hosts must have hosted a certain number of guests, maintain a high response rate, complete all reservations without canceling, and have a high private rating. The Hosts for Humanity badge would not have the same rewards as the Airbnb superhost badge because money is not a factor, but the badge could speak to the intrinsic reasons users have decided to become hosts.

Profiles

Both the accommodation and host profiles on sharing economy websites are important in terms of trust and credibility. Guests rely on photos to infer hosts' trustworthiness, which is called visual-based trust. Visual-based trust directly affects the potential guest's choices, and its effect is stronger than that of other visual attributes (Ert et al., 2016). The host profile photo is particularly powerful. The human face is one of the most notable sources of social information (Zebrowitz, Voinescu, & Collins, 1996). When people view photos of other people, they make snap judgments about their social attributes (Ert et al., 2016). Neuroscientists have shown that these conclusions are automatic, and the human brain forms judgment of a person's trustworthiness in less than a second after seeing their face or a photo of their face (Engell, Haxby, & Todorov, 2007).

On Airbnb, the host's photo is placed at the top of the listing, directly below the main photo of the accommodation ("Airbnb.com," 2017). This placement provides identity verification and fosters an increased sense of personal contact (Guttentag, 2015).

Ert's (2016) study of host photos on Airbnb shows that the higher a host photo was rated on a trustworthy scale, the more likely it was that the person would choose that listing to book. The host's perceived attractiveness also made it more likely that a person would book, but not as likely as trustworthiness. Overall, a host's photo is more influential to a guest than the host's reputation on Airbnb, so hosts should choose their profile photo carefully (Ert et al., 2016). Smiling might increase perceived trustworthiness (Scharlemann, Eckel, Kacelnik, & Wilson, 2001). Featuring the female host (when there is one) may also increase perceived trustworthiness, as 75 percent of Ert's (2016) study participants preferred a female host to a male one. Hosts for Humanity should also locate the host's photo near the photos of the accommodations to foster the sense of personal contact. Volunteer hosts could also be encouraged to choose a profile photo in which they are smiling.

There are other strategies that hosts can use when posting an accommodation on Airbnb (or Hosts for Humanity) to affect their perceived trustworthiness. One way to understand how profiles establish trustworthiness is to use the Profile as Promise framework, which says that a profile is a psychological contract between the profile holder (host) and the viewer (potential guest) that future interactions (Airbnb stay) will take place with someone who does not differ fundamentally from the person represented in the profile. Using this framework, the content of a profile should be characteristic of trustworthiness perceptions (Ellison & Hancock, 2013). The Profile as Promise framework can help explain how hosts and guests produce and evaluate profiles on sharing economy websites such as Airbnb (Ma, Hancock, Mingjie, & Naaman, 2017). Hosts for Humanity hosts should be encouraged to be truthful in their profiles and to make their profiles accurately reflect who they are and their accommodations.

In addition to the Profile as Promise framework, Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) has also been used to understand Airbnb profiles and their effects on trust. URT says that quantity and diversity of information increases the perception of trust. Scholars have used URT to show that strangers about to meet for the first time want to increase the predictability of behavior in both themselves and the other party before the first

interaction. Therefore, if applying URT to Airbnb, the more information a host discloses in a profile, the more likely it is perceived as trustworthy (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Ma and his colleagues (2017) proved this theory in a study of 1,234 Airbnb profiles. On-site hosts (hosts that will be staying on the same property as the guest) wrote longer profiles than remote hosts. On-site hosts were also more likely than remote hosts to include information about their personality and interests and tastes in their profile. Since on-site hosts will meet their guests, where off-site hosts will not, these results support URT, which says that people seek to reduce uncertainty before the first meeting (Ma et al., 2017).

Ma and his colleagues (2017) also found a clear relationship between profile length and perceived trustworthiness score. The longer the profile, the higher the score. However, there is a pattern of diminishing returns for longer profiles. When a profile doubles in length, the perceived trustworthiness only increases by 5.47. (Trustworthiness was rated on a scale of 0-100.) Hosts for Humanity hosts should be encouraged to write longer profiles and include as much information as they feel comfortable, especially since they will very likely be on-site.

The final theory that has been applied to Airbnb profiles to evaluate trustworthiness is Signaling Theory. Signaling Theory says that specific kinds of information can signal trustworthiness in a profile. When reviewing a host's profile, potential guests subconsciously compare explicitly stated signals and the underlying qualities those signals represent. Conventional signals are easy to fake, like when a person says he is a hard worker or reliable when he is not. Assessment signals are more difficult to fake. For example, it is difficult to forge a degree from a prestigious university (Donath, 2007). Hosts for Humanity will help hosts create a profile by prompting them with questions to answer. Those questions should lead hosts to answer with assessment signals rather than conventional ones.

Studies of trust have shown that people determine trustworthiness by using ability, benevolence, and integrity (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). In the context of Airbnb and Hosts for Humanity, ability is the skills a person has to be a host.

Benevolence is the extent to which the host wants to make the guest happy beyond selfish motives (like profit or reviews). Integrity is the host following moral principles (Ma et al., 2017). In Ma's study of Airbnb profiles, ability, benevolence, and integrity were highly correlated, meaning profiles that reflected these qualities were more likely to be chosen by potential guests (Ma et al., 2017).

In the same study, hosts were most likely to talk about origin or residence (68.8 percent) in their profiles, followed by work or education (60.29 percent) and interests and tastes (57.78 percent). The next two most popular topics were hospitality (52.76 percent) and travel (47.89 percent). Least popular were relationships (27.88 percent), personality (26.58 percent), and life motto and values (7.86 percent). The number of topics mentioned in a profile had a positive impact on trustworthiness. For shorter profiles, the number of topics increased perceived trustworthiness even more. When profiles are short, perceived trustworthiness nearly predicts choice. In general however, hosts should be encouraged to provide as much information as they can (Ma et al., 2017).

For profiles that discussed just one topic, the topic that resulted in the highest trustworthiness score was messages of hospitality. The second best one-topic strategy was interests and tastes. Life motto and values was the least successful one-topic strategy, which is a bit ironic considering Airbnb encourages hosts to discuss those topics. For two-topic profiles, the most successful profiles were ones that combined hospitality with origin or residence. For three-topic profiles, a profile that combines the topics of hospitality, origin or residence, and work or education were clearly the most successful (Ma et al., 2017). Through prompts, Hosts for Humanity hosts should be encouraged to discuss hospitality, origin or residence, and work or education in their profiles.

When considering these results through the lens of Signaling Theory, it is predictable that hosts will signal their trustworthiness by disclosing more assessment signals (origin or residence and work or education) that are more difficult to fake than conventional signals. Guests perceived profiles with more assessment signals as more trustworthy (Ma et al., 2017). However, demonstrating hospitality or sharing interests and tastes proved to be more successful than Ma expected because those topics translate to

conventional signals. Overall, Ma found that the best strategy to increase trustworthiness is to provide a welcome or greeting, reasons for hosting, and assessment signals (origin, residence, work, education) (Ma et al., 2017). It stands to reason that this strategy would also apply to profiles for hosts on Hosts for Humanity.

Hotel Websites

Hotels are not part of the sharing economy nor are they peer-to-peer marketplaces. However, hotel websites are the traditional method for reserving accommodations when traveling, and the majority of Hosts for Humanity guests will have likely booked a room on a hotel website at some point in their lives. Furthermore, hotel websites and their users have been studied fairly extensively. There are several theory models that explain why hotel website visitors act the way they do. Do they leave a site immediately? Do they stay but leave without booking? Or do they stay and reserve a room? Researchers have applied these models to users in studies and have found specific website features, design approaches, and information architecture techniques that designers and developers should implement or avoid when creating a hotel website. Where appropriate, these items should be included in the Hosts for Humanity website as well.

Sixty-five percent of users visiting a hotel website for the first time are there just to get information, not to book. If users cannot find what they are looking for during that information gathering session, they are far less likely to book on that site. In fact, 88 percent of first-time visitors return to the website if the first encounter was successful, while only 40 percent return if their first visit was not successful (Scheuler, 2005). First impressions are important, even in web design. The Hosts for Humanity website must make it easy for users to find the information they need so they return to book accommodations.

Website interface is a main reason why a user chooses to book a room on a particular hotel website (Griffith, Krampf, & Palmer, 2001). Better website design and navigation encourages online shopping (Floh & Madlberger, 2013). However, content is

also important. A study of tourism websites found that adequacy of information positively influences a website's perceived usefulness. Meanwhile, interactivity and navigability positively influence a website's perceived ease of use (Herrero & San Martin, 2012).

In a study of hotel website users run by Drousiotou (2014), nearly all participants followed the same sequence of cognitive actions when booking a hotel room online. First they searched for information, then they evaluated the alternatives, and then they purchased. Several participants added a fourth step, which was to confirm the purchase with their bank. On average, it took participants four minutes to decide if they wanted to book a room on a particular website. Participants made an average number of 30 moves from start to finish of the decision-making process. Drousiotou (2014) then redesigned the websites she used in her study to reduce the pain points uncovered from the study. The pain points included no obvious rate information, few images of the hotel, no contact information, no exclusive offers, no posted refund policy and/or cancellation procedure, and no credit card security message. When she tested the sites again, she found that the mean time for completing the decision-making process was significantly reduced. This shorter time frame resulted in more satisfied users (Drousiotou, 2014). Hosts for Humanity users will likely follow the same or a similar sequence of actions when booking their accommodations. The less time it takes the users to reserve a room, the more satisfied they will be with the process.

Theory

In 1974, Mehrabian and Russell proposed a model (now called the M-R model) that suggests that emotions exist to mediate the effects of environmental stimuli on behavior. People's emotions determine what they do and how they do it. And people respond to different environments with different sets of emotions. Studies support the idea that the M-R model can be applied to websites, specifically e-commerce sites (Deng & Poole, 2010). Schwarz's (1986) "affect as information" framework says that a user's

emotional response to an object affects that user's evaluation of an object's characteristics and general attitude toward it.

Another theory takes the M-R model one step further and describes the emotions of e-commerce site users by dividing the users into two categories: hedonic and utilitarian. (In some literature, hedonic users are said to be in a paratelic state and utilitarian users are in a telic state.) Hedonic (or paratelic) shopping is when users enjoy the shopping experience itself. For example, taking a virtual tour of a hotel or looking at photos of amenities would be hedonic shopping. Utilitarian (or telic) shopping results when users want to achieve a specific goal, such as booking the lowest-cost room (Deng & Poole, 2010). A user's attitude about a hotel company is therefore shaped by the degree to which the website fulfills his or her utilitarian or hedonic shopping needs (Bilgihan & Bujisic, 2014). Ideally, a hotel website would satisfy both hedonic and utilitarian users. A web interface should promote engagement and pleasure, in addition to functionality and ease-of-use (Wright, McCarthy, & Marsh, 2001). Potential guests of Hosts for Humanity lean more toward the utilitarian category, because they have a very specific goal. Unlike many hotel guests, Hosts for Humanity guests are not booking a vacation. However, potential Hosts for Humanity guests may enjoy browsing photos of the accommodations or local area, so hedonic attributes should not be ignored.

The hedonic/utilitarian theory can be expanded further by integrating a theory on customer commitment. Customer commitment is made up of two dimensions: emotional and cognitive/economic. Emotional commitment helps create a relationship between the hotel and the customer. Relationships built on emotional commitment are typically more stable because customers have a positive relationship with the organization (Fullerton, 2003). Cognitive/economic commitment is the intent to continue a relationship because of its low costs or a lack of alternatives. A customer in a cognitive/economic commitment relationship with a company does not have a true desire to develop a long-term rapport with the company (Bendapudi & Berry, 1997). Many Hosts for Humanity guests will be using the service because of a lack of low-cost alternatives, which is cognitive/economic commitment. Ideally, the interface would elicit emotional commitment as well to keep

these users from going elsewhere. Even more urgently, the site also needs to create emotional commitment from hosts so they continue to volunteer.

Bilgihan and Bujisic's (2014) study found that hedonic and utilitarian website features have a positive effect on emotional and cognitive/economic commitment. Emotional commitment has a positive effect on trust and loyalty, and cognitive/economic commitment has a positive effect in online hotel booking. Utilitarian features are necessary, but not enough to build customer commitment online. The study's findings highlight the importance of creating loyalty through both hedonic and utilitarian features. Websites that have both types of features will do better than those that just have one or the other (Bilgihan & Bujisic, 2014).

Features

As a result of the studies on hotel booking websites, many features have emerged as critical or highly requested by users. The most important features are those that speak to both hedonic and utilitarian needs. Hotel location maps, site amenities, and pictures of the hotel and guest rooms—features that both satisfy a user's paratelic and telic state—were highly requested by hotel website users (Law & Hsu, 2005). Including links to local attractions also positively affects site appeal, because the links allow users to browse further and help users who are unfamiliar with the area (Phelan, Christodoulidou, Countryman, & Kistner, 2011). The Hosts for Humanity website can incorporate all these hedonic and utilitarian features.

Features that speak specifically to hedonic users are videos, photos, animated images, sounds, social components, and gamification (Drousiotou, 2014). Social relationships can create a sense of community before, during, and after a stay (Bilgihan & Bujisic, 2014). A blog should share the latest news, photos, and happenings and solicit customers' feedback (Drousiotou, 2014). Of the hedonic features, the importance of photos was the most frequently cited factor in a user's assessment of a hotel website. In a study of hotel website usability, nearly 70 percent of respondents mentioned photos. Quality photos on both the home page and internal pages positively impacted the

respondents' assessment of the site they were reviewing (Phelan et al., 2011). Large landscape photography is the most eye catching (Drousiotou, 2014). Users are more likely to book a room on a hotel website when they are able to psychologically or emotionally connect with the images of people on the website. Conversely, when users were unable to relate to a photo on a hotel website, they had a negative impression of that site (Shiratuddin, Hassan, & Landoni, 2003). The majority of these features can be incorporated on the Hosts for Humanity website. While social media will likely be used carefully, a blog could certainly be used to create a sense of community among users.

Utilitarian features include easy navigation and comprehensive, organized information (Herrero & San Martin, 2012). Effective search capability is also a utilitarian feature. Studies show that more than half of users prefer to navigate a site using search, a smaller percentage prefers to navigate a site using the information architecture, and a smaller percentage still uses both methods (Drousiotou, 2014). Guest profiles are also a recommended utilitarian feature of hotel websites. When a hotel website allows users to create a profile, guests aren't asked to re-enter personal information when making reservations, which saves time and makes customization and personalization features possible. Profiles also make it easy for guests to view, change, or remove personal, reservation, or payment information (Nassar & Abdou, 2013). The Hosts for Humanity website will have easy navigation, organized information, effective search, and guest profiles.

Nassar and Abdou's (2013) study of hotel websites defines six key elements that satisfy hedonic users, utilitarian users, or both: accessibility, information, credibility, e-commerce, immediacy, and customer relationship. Accessibility means well-implemented SEO practices that will help the website get more traffic. If a website is not easy to locate or does not show up on the first page of search results, it does not matter what the site looks like. The website should also download quickly so users are not tempted to move on to another site (Nassar & Abdou, 2013). Specifically, the site should load within four seconds and Flash should be avoided (Drousiotou, 2014). The Hosts for Humanity website should meet all these accessibility guidelines and be Section 508 compliant.

The information element is comprised of maps, photos and videos of the hotel, restaurant options, and details about local events and attractions (Burns, 2010). Usefulness to the user is the most important thing to keep in mind when choosing web content. Related to the information element is the credibility element. Content should be updated and revised regularly so it stays credible. Links should be working and carefully labeled (Nassar & Abdou, 2013). The content on the Hosts for Humanity website must be chosen carefully, well written, and accurate.

Nassar and Abdou's (2013) e-commerce element says that hotel websites should allow guests to book a room in real-time through an online booking agency that is branded to have the same look and feel as the hotel website. This element will help to build trust and confidence in the user. Online reservations, in addition to special instructions and cancellations, must be executed promptly, which speaks to the immediacy element. Any problems that may arise with these services must be identified immediately. For example, the website should flag a guest who has requested a handicapped-friendly room on a night when none are available (Nassar & Abdou, 2013). The online booking component of Hosts for Humanity will be part of the website and therefore branded the same.

Finally, the last element is customer relationship. Hotel websites should help promote and sustain relationships with guests. To do this, websites should utilize an electronic contact us form and a frequently asked questions page. Social media integration can also help build relationships with customers (Nassar & Abdou, 2013). Customers should be able to leave reviews. Links to the hotel's social media pages should be easily available (Drousiotou, 2014). However, any social media integration should be well explained to avoid causing stress on a user. Like hotel websites, the relationship between Hosts for Humanity and its hosts and guests is very important. The site can provide mechanisms such as forms, FAQs, and links to Hosts for Humanity social media accounts. Guests will be able to leave reviews, but they will not be public.

In addition to all of these hedonic, utilitarian, or mixed features, hotel websites must consider flexibility and scalability during development. Flexibility describes

whether or not the hotel's web platform can keep up with new technology. Scalability is ensuring that the web platform is up-to-date and can grow along with the company (Cullen, 1998). The Hosts for Humanity website will be built using WordPress, which allows for both flexibility and scalability.

Design

Apart from features, website design is also very important. A well-designed hotel website can provide a good impression before a guest even arrives on the property (Bilgihan & Bujisic, 2014). The layout of a web page plays an important role in a customer's online decision making process. A complex layout will cause a user to go elsewhere (Drousiotou, 2014). These concepts can be applied to virtually all websites, including Hosts for Humanity.

Color is a major component of website design. From a hedonic shopping perspective, colors and layouts should be aesthetically pleasing (Bilgihan & Bujisic, 2014). Color should also be consistent and in line with the overall brand (Drousiotou, 2014). Phelan's study found no clear color preference among its respondents, although many commented that color was important (Phelan et al., 2011). Conversely, designers should include sufficient white space to allow for breathing room and to make certain features stand out. White space also keeps a site from becoming cluttered. However, too much white space can lead to a boring website. Plain or boring sites received negative site appeal from users in one study (Phelan et al., 2011). Core tasks should be categorized with only a few on each page. The area around the core tasks should be clear to draw users toward them (Drousiotou, 2014).

Web page visual complexity and order are important design features that affect users' emotional responses to a website (Deng & Poole, 2010). The two cognitive processes crucial for human survival are understanding and involvement. Users prefer environments where there is understanding, such as coherence and legibility, and involvement, or complexity (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1983). In applying that 1983 framework to web design, Lavie and Tractinsky's (2004) study shows that users see website

aesthetics in two main ways: classic aesthetics and expressive aesthetics. Classic aesthetics are orderly, clear, clean, and symmetrical. Expressive aesthetics are visually rich, diverse, and complex. Both types of aesthetics positively influence the feelings of pleasure and usability in users.

To break down classic aesthetics further, web page order is defined as the "logical organization, clarity, and coherence of webpage content and information" (Deng & Poole, 2010, p. 714). A web page that is logically organized is intuitive and understandable. Order can be created by grouping or aligning similar elements, and clarity can be achieved by highlighting contrast between elements (Deng & Poole, 2010). Order is needed for users to navigate complex hotel websites and room booking processes because complexity without order produces confusion. Some level of complexity is necessary on a hotel website because without complexity, order causes users to become bored (Arnheim, 1966; Deng & Poole, 2010). Telic users, or visitors on the Hosts for Humanity website attempting to book a room, want to achieve their goal with a minimal expenditure of energy or effort. Therefore, a web page with a moderate complexity level and high order level is the most pleasant to a telic or utilitarian user because it requires less energy to navigate and allows for higher efficiency (Deng & Poole, 2010).

Drousiotou's (2014) study of hotel websites confirmed the existence of the golden triangle, which is in the top-left corner of the page. The most important information should be presented there, including the logo, which should link to the home page. A link to the home page from the logo allows users to get to the home page from any page on the site. While the top-left corner was the most noticed spot on the home page, the center of the page was where the majority of eyes landed during the booking process. On these booking pages, attention was focused in a T shape. Drousiotou (2014) also noticed that photos placed in the middle of the screen created an "eye-pull-down" effect, where, because of those photos, users' attention was drawn under the photo, near the bottom of the page. Unless this layout is used, critical information should be placed above the fold (scroll). Smaller pages that do not require a lot of scrolling are ideal (Drousiotou, 2014).

The Hosts for Humanity website will place the most important information in the golden triangle on the home page and the center of the booking pages.

Many studies have confirmed that users do not read websites, they skim them. Important text should be scannable with striking headings. Important messages should be short and to the point. It is also no secret that users have banner blindness. They ignore anything that looks like an ad, even if it is not (Drousiotou, 2014). So Hosts for Humanity will not use any graphics that look like banners.

Information Architecture

Information architecture (IA) best practices for hotel websites are the same as the IA best practices for other types of websites. Hotel websites should have a hierarchy of menus and pages that are convenient and well structured (Nassar & Abdou, 2013). A clear and simple top navigation bar is imperative, and labels should be three words or shorter (Drousiotou, 2014). Other consistent navigation mechanisms should be present, such as breadcrumbs and a site map (Nassar & Abdou, 2013). Within the main navigation, users should find the reservation widget and the About Us and Contact Us pages (Drousiotou, 2014). The Hosts for Humanity website will implement best practices for IA and will include a link to the booking mechanism in the main navigation.

In her study, Drousiotou (2014) found that users were willing to click an average of 13 times to browse a single hotel website and book a room. She recommends that the booking process itself should be able to be done in 4-5 clicks. Unnecessary clicks, or clicks that take users to the same place, should be eliminated (Drousiotou, 2014). The Hosts for Humanity website will have a simple booking process that does not require a lot of browsing and clicking to complete.

Booking Interface

The predominant interface for a travel booking website used to be a multiscreen booking interface. In a multiscreen booking interface, every request (i.e. a search query) is sent to the server, which returns the results. This type of interface forces search and

purchase into a linear process. However, advances in web technology now allow for single-screen booking interfaces, where users can search and deliberate before purchasing in just one screen or frame. The user inputs search parameters, such as dates, number of guests, and room preference, and receives feedback without having to click on a submit button (Beldona & Kalkan, 2009). Single-screen interfaces lead to instant gratification and enhance the quality of the search process (Willemsen, 2006).

The single-screen approach is similar to the inverted pyramid concept used to write website or newspaper content, where users are given broad information that gradually gets more specific. With the single screen interface, users are given the entire picture of the purchase process from the beginning. Users therefore do not begin their search clueless, because not only do they see the whole picture, but also multiple parameters can be changed dynamically. A single-screen interface also saves time because submissions, which require page reloads, are not constantly repeated (Joshi & Mathur, 2004). However, because a single-screen interface takes up just one screen, visuals and fonts may end up being small and room descriptions thin, which is likely to affect the quality of the interface (Kistner, 2006).

In Beldona and Kalkan's (2009) study of single-screen and multi-screen booking interfaces, the single-screen interface was found to be more efficient and memorable. It also allowed for more error recovery than the multi-screen interface (Beldona & Kalkan, 2009). As long as design and content are not detrimentally affected, the booking interface for the Hosts for Humanity website should be a single screen.

Regardless of whether or not the booking interface is one screen or several, the booking process should begin on the home page in some way. The booking form should be simple and mandatory fields kept to a minimum. The format should be vertical and, when possible, users should be provided with potential answers they can click on instead of having to type. For example, when choosing dates, the interface should provide a calendar where the user can click on the arrival and departure dates rather than type them. Any instructions on the booking form should be simple, and the website should use familiar terms and concepts instead of formal or technical language (Drousiotou, 2014).

Users like the ability to stop, change their minds, go back, and see alternatives. A successful booking interface allows users to stop the booking process at any point. The interface should not only remember booking information from a previous page or query but should also remember personal information by allowing frequent users to log in (Drousiotou, 2014).

For the purchase aspect of the booking process, SSL/security is a user's main concern. A credit card protection logo should be at the bottom of the screen, and users should be given multiple options for payment (PayPal, credit, debit, etc.) The refund policy should be located in an intuitive location, and ideally, refunds should be available in the event of a cancellation (Drousiotou, 2014). The Hosts for Humanity website should include as many of these best practices as possible. A simple booking form with potential answers provided will reduce error and stress. Allowing users to stop, go back, and see alternatives will also reduce stress and frustration. Finally, the last thing users should be worried about is SSL/security and how to pay, so Hosts for Humanity guests will be reassured that their payment information is secure.

Conclusion

Hosts for Humanity's mission, to connect families and friends of patients traveling for medical care with volunteer hosts offering accommodations in their homes, is a noble one. The website's function is extremely important, because it must not only make those connections, but it also must support and cultivate two very different audiences. The guest audience will likely be under stress, and the website must be designed to mitigate that stress while being perceived as trustworthy and legitimate. Meanwhile, hosts and potential hosts must be encouraged to participate without money, which is the typical motivator in peer-to-peer marketplaces. By making the interface similar to successful room rental websites such as Airbnb and hotel websites, and by implementing interactions known to facilitate trust, credibility, and usability, the Hosts for Humanity website will be successful.

Chapter 2: Method

Participants

This project involved 16 participants, divided evenly among two user groups of hosts and guests. All participants were 18 years old or older. Three were male and the rest were female. They were racially diverse.

Half of the participants were current or potential hosts; that is, people willing to host patients and their families who are looking for housing near medical institutions in cities far from their homes. Participants were chosen from the pool of hosts registered with Hosts for Humanity.

The other eight participants were potential former guests. These participants were family members or friends that had to travel with a patient for medical care. At the time they were traveling, Hosts for Humanity did not yet exist, so they stayed with friends, relatives, or other organizations such as Ronald McDonald House, the Clyde F. Barker Penn Transplant House, Hosts for Hospitals, and Airbnb.

Apparatus & Materials

Qualitative data was collected through interviews and usability tests of a website prototype.

The interviews were conducted over the phone, and I used one set of questions for the host user group and another set of questions for the guest user group. Both hosts and guests were asked for their name, contact information, and whether or not they were 18 years old or older. The interview questions for the host user group generally tried to ascertain why they agreed to become hosts. Specifically, they were asked questions such as:

- How did you hear about Hosts for Humanity?
- Were you asked directly to become a host?
- Why did you decide to become a host?
- Do you volunteer for any other organizations? If so, which ones and how?

- Did you have any concerns about becoming a host? If so, what were they?

The questions for the guest user group were designed to understand where they stayed when they were guests and how they found that space and reserved it. Specifically, they were asked questions such as:

- When you traveled with a family member or friend for medical care, where did you stay?
- How did you go about reserving the room?
- Which device did you use for booking? (desktop, laptop, phone, tablet)
- How do you choose in which hotel/home to stay?
- What else is a factor in your decision making? (reviews, amenities, photos)

The usability study required a smartphone with screen and audio capture. iPhones have screen and audio capture built in, so no additional software was needed. Zoom web conferencing was used for the remote usability studies. Participants joined the Zoom meeting and then shared their screen.

Before the usability testing, all participants signed an informed consent form. During the usability testing, the moderator read from a script, and both sets of participants read and carried out tasks using the prototype. The prototype was created using Adobe XD. Tasks for hosts were:

- You have recently heard about a non-profit organization called Hosts for Humanity. Find out more about becoming a volunteer host.
- You decide you'd like to become a volunteer host. Register.
- Guests need to know when your room is available for them to stay. Designate your availability for February 2018.
- You receive a hosting request from Gary Guest. Review the request and determine if you'd like to host him.

Tasks for guests were:

- You need to spend some time in Baltimore, and the hospital has told you Hosts for Humanity can help with accommodations. Explore the Hosts for Humanity website and determine if it could meet your needs.

- You need accommodations for March 26-29. Find a room near Johns Hopkins Hospital that is available those days.
- You decide you'd like to reserve that room. Register to become a guest.
- Reserve the room you found in task #2.
- Guests must pay Hosts for Humanity a $5 per night administrative fee before they can stay with a host. Pay the fee.

The post-test questionnaire was conducted immediately following the usability test. Both hosts and guests were asked:

- What is your overall impression of the website?
- What did you like best about the site?
- What did you like the least or find frustrating?
- If you had a magic wand and could change anything you wanted about the site, what would it be?
- Do you have any other questions or comments?

Procedure

I interviewed eight hosts about why they decided to become a part of Hosts for Humanity with the hopes that their responses would help me to develop a website that would encourage others to become hosts. I also interviewed eight former guests about where they stayed when they had to travel with a loved one for medical care and how they reserved the space. I took the information I gathered from those interviews and the findings from my literature review and created a specifications list of the features and considerations the Hosts for Humanity website should have. The list was organized by specifications for the overall experience, the host experience, and the guest experience.

I then prototyped a mobile website using the key specifications and interface design characteristics from the list. I created the prototype using Adobe XD with moderate fidelity. The visual design was realistic, though not extremely detailed. The prototype also included real content and was realistic in its interactions. I created a slide menu for every unique screen so that users would be able to access the menu from any

point during the usability test. Moderate fidelity allowed users to get a strong sense of the finished product but also allowed me to iterate between tests.

Next, I tested my prototype with four current hosts and one prospective host. I met with each participant individually, and I began the session by reading the script and asking them to sign the informed consent form. Adobe XD allows users to publish prototypes with a URL, so I opened that URL on my iPhone X using the Safari browser. I then began recording the session using the iPhone's built in screen and audio capture and gave the phone to the participant.

Each task was typed on an individual slip of paper, and participants were given the slips one at a time. Participants were encouraged to think aloud. When participants completed a task (successfully or unsuccessfully), I asked them to move to the next task until all the tasks were complete. I then asked them the questions in the post-test questionnaire. I took notes throughout the test.

Between usability testing sessions, the prototype was iterated based on feedback and problems that arose during the testing.

I then tested the prototype with five potential former guests. I followed the same procedure for participants that were local as I used for the host user group; however, many did not live in Maryland. For those participants, I sent them the consent form electronically and asked them to print it, sign it, scan it, and send it back to me. During the testing session, the remote participants were able to share their screen using the Zoom web conferencing app. The rest of the procedure was the same as it was for the host user group. Between sessions, I iterated the prototype based on feedback and problems that arose during the testing.

Chapter 3: Analysis

Interviews

Hosts

While the details varied from person to person, the interviews with the volunteer hosts uncovered a few major themes. When asked how they heard about Hosts for Humanity, hosts had heard either from Jenny Owens directly or through social media. Despite the fact that Hosts for Humanity is a relatively new organization, I was surprised to find that several of the hosts I interviewed had not met Owens. Hosts for Humanity should continue to harness the power of social media to educate others about their services.

For the hosts that did know Owens, the majority were not asked to become hosts directly. Instead, they felt swayed to become a host after listening to Owens tell her story. Since cloning Owns is not currently an option, a video of Owens telling her story is a powerful tool that the Hosts for Humanity website should absolutely implement. Currently the website does feature a text version of the story, but a video would have much more impact.

Five of the eight hosts I interviewed decided to become hosts because they, or a close family member or friend, had to travel for medical care sometime in the past. Those hosts expressed extreme empathy for those traveling for medical care and wanted to help. The other three hosts decided to become hosts because giving back to their community, and also helping Owens, made them feel good. They recognized that the host-guest relationship is not a one-way street and that they would get something out of it as well. Anecdotes from current hosts may help prospective hosts see how they too could give back and benefit from being a part of Hosts for Humanity.

More than half of the hosts I interviewed also volunteered with other organizations, such as their church, neighborhood, or specific cause. All of these other organizations are either near where the host lives (church or community group) or related to them in a personal way. (For example, one host is a self-proclaimed dog lover and

volunteers at BARCS.) This information demonstrates the idea that people need to feel a personal connection with the cause to which they have been asked to contribute.

The overall biggest concern hosts had was safety. Hosts with children were especially concerned about it. Background checks, host training, and house rules helped to allay most people's fears. The other two concerns that hosts expressed were with travel and guest interaction. Three hosts traveled a lot and were worried about guest timing. Owens assured these hosts that they could set their availability and their house would not be used when they were not home. The hosts that expressed concern with how to interact with guests suggested more extensive training, perhaps with tutorial videos, and the ability to interact with other hosts to get tips. All of these concerns should be explicitly addressed in frequently asked questions and on the Hosts for Humanity blog.

Guests

My interviews with eight guests revealed that where people stay when traveling for medical care varies widely. The guests I interviewed stayed with friends, family, in hotels, in homes using Airbnb, at the Ronald McDonald House, and at the Clyde F. Barker Penn Transplant House. One guest had stayed with a volunteer host through Hosts for Hospitals, which is an organization in the Philadelphia area similar to Hosts for Humanity. The guest enjoyed her stay but had a few suggestions about how Hosts for Hospitals could improve. These suggestions are also appropriate for Hosts for Humanity to consider. Hosts for Hospitals does not have an interactive website, and the guest did not think that the website appeared very professional. The guest appreciated that Hosts for Humanity is developing a platform where users can reserve rooms online. The guest also felt strongly that Hosts for Humanity should request a set fee per night. Hosts for Hospitals simply asks for a donation, and the guest was unsure whether she should donate $5 or $50. She said it added to her stress. Finally, the guest said she wished she had been given some guidelines on how to interact with the volunteer hosts. Again, the uncertainty of the situation added to her stress. Hosts for Humanity should strongly consider sending tips and house rules to guests before their stay.

Why guests stayed where they did came down to two factors: convenience and cost. Guests who had friends or family in the area chose to stay with them. Friends and family are familiar and free, both of which likely lowered the guests' stress level. If guests did not have friends or family in the area, they branched out to medical-specific housing because it is also free, and it typically has conveniences like transportation to the hospital, kitchen facilities, laundry, and trained staff. Guests that did not qualify for medical-specific housing or encountered full facilities turned to hotels and Airbnb, both of which are less convenient and more costly than the other options. As one guest put it, "The one thing [during my treatment] that was so stressful, so anxiety-inducing, was money." Hosts for Humanity will appeal to guests who would otherwise stay in a hotel or through Airbnb because it is much cheaper.

To reserve the room, guests first decided where they would stay, and then they either called the family member/friend/facility or they made the request online. For those who booked online, the overwhelming majority did so using their smartphone. I had initially planned to create a prototype of the Hosts for Humanity website suitable for a desktop or laptop because just 20 percent of hotel bookings are made from a phone or tablet. In one study, 95 percent of U.S. users polled said they would book a hotel room using a desktop or laptop computer, compared with 50 percent that said they would book a room using a smartphone (Peltier, 2016). However, after the interviews, I decided to create a mobile prototype instead. For many of the guests I interviewed, their trip was completely without warning (heart attack, sudden transplant available, unexpected illness) and left no time to browse for accommodations on a computer. A well-thought-out mobile website that will scale up smoothly will benefit all users.

When asked how they chose where to stay, nearly every guest said that location was the biggest factor. Guests wanted to be able to get to the hospital (and their loved one) quickly and easily. Several guests anticipated late nights at the hospital and did not want to have to drive far late at night. The Hosts for Humanity website should make it easy for guests to see how far each accommodation is from the nearest hospital. The accommodations should also be available in both a list view and a map view. After

location, guests considered cost and then, if they were staying in a hotel or through Airbnb, looked at photos and reviews. The two guests who stayed in hotels preferred big name chains because of reputation. No other amenities or attributes were mentioned. Overall, the interviews confirmed the findings in my literature review, and they helped me to understand which interaction design features are the most important to both parties.

Usability Testing

Hosts

Once my interviews were complete, I prototyped the host experience. Then I tested the prototype with five hosts. All participants were able to complete all four tasks successfully and relatively easily. However, each test revealed ways to improve the prototype.

For the first task, I asked guests to attempt to find out more about becoming a volunteer host. From the home page, four hosts found the text link, "Join our community of hosts" and clicked on it to learn more. One host did not see the text link and clicked on "Become a Host" from the mobile menu instead. All felt the information on the Become a Host page was easy to read (font size and leading were appropriate) and understand.

The second task asked participants to register to become a volunteer host. All hosts clicked the Get Started button on the Become a Host page to register. Several participants commented that they appreciated knowing approximately how long it would take to complete the first step. On the form for the first step of the registration process, the first two hosts I tested both saw the field "Date of Birth (for background check)" and commented that they had not realized they would be undergoing a background check. Information about the background check had been on the previous screen, but both had missed it. Since privacy and safety are critical to Hosts for Humanity, I moved the information about the background check to directly above the Get Started button. The other three participants noticed it there.

After several tests, I noticed that all the participants had barely glanced at the instructions at the top of the page for steps two and three of the registration process. The

instructions had been on a teal background to help them stand out, but I suspected that the teal box looked too much like an advertisement, and the hosts were experiencing banner blindness. I removed the background color and found that the last two participants spent more time looking at the instructions. I also moved the sentence, "A copy of the training materials will also be emailed to you." from the top to the bottom of the step two screen after two hosts made comments that led me to believe they had missed that information. See Figure 1 for images of how the instructions looked at the beginning of the testing and at the end of the testing.

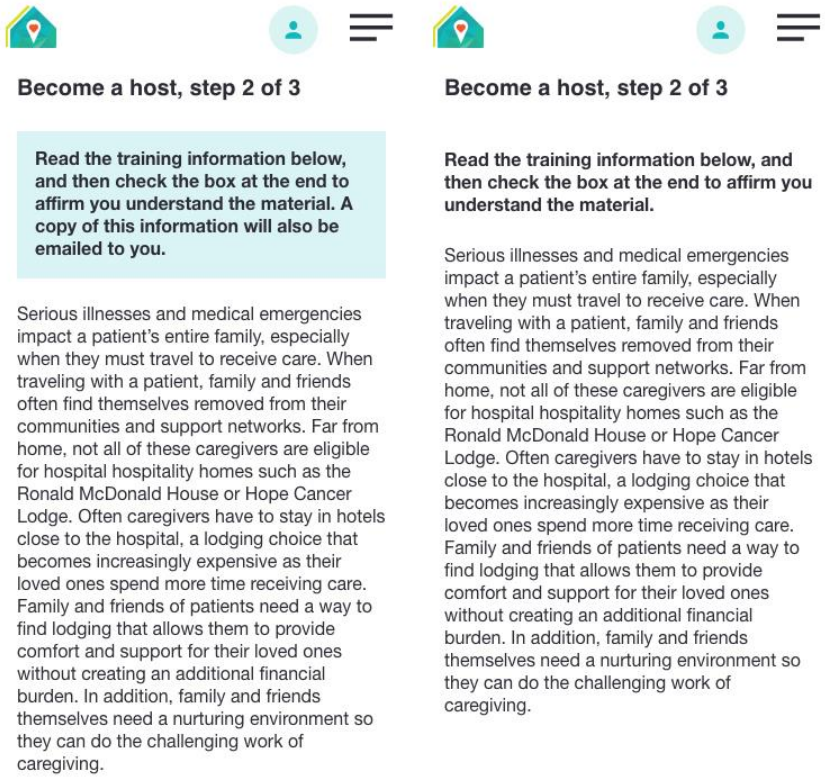

Figure 1. Users failed to notice the page instructions when they were in a teal box (left). Users paused to read the instructions when the box was removed (right).

The third task asked hosts to designate their availability for February 2018, and it was this transition from registration to dashboard that caused users the most trouble. Two participants noticed the text link to the dashboard on the Become a Host Thank You screen but only after a lot of scanning, prompting me to move up the link and bold it.

Other participants clicked on the mobile menu and hesitantly chose the login button. I changed the login button to say My Account when the user was logged in, and the hesitation went away. None of the users noticed the dashboard icon at the top of the screen. I suspect that hosts missed it because the icon is a stock photo of a middle-aged woman who did not mean anything to them. On the real interface, the image would be a photo of the user that he or she uploaded in step three of the registration process. Testing the interface after development is imperative to see if users notice the dashboard icon when it is their own photo. Once I showed the dashboard icon to the participants, four of the five used it for the rest of the usability test. See Figure 2 for the dashboard icon with the stock image.

Figure 2. Dashboard icon with stock photo.

None of the hosts had any trouble understanding how to edit their availability. A few users did miss the instructions (but intuitively knew what to do anyway) so I moved the instructions to the top of the page. Several users also felt that the Save button should take them back to the dashboard, so I made that change. Figure 3 shows the confirmation message that appears at the top of the dashboard briefly when users arrive there.

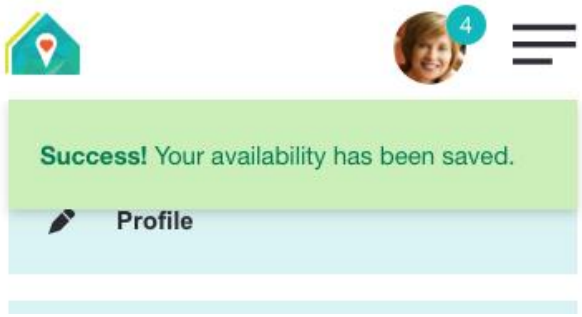

Figure 3. Temporary confirmation message that appears at the top of the dashboard, assuring users that their availability has been saved.

For the last task, hosts were asked to review a hosting request from Gary Guest and determine if they would like to host him. Once they got back to their dashboard, all

participants were able to easily understand how to confirm a guest. Every host chose to review the guest's profile first, and three of the five hosts said they would send him a message before confirming. (The other two participants decided to confirm him immediately after reading his profile.) Since more than half of the hosts wanted to send the guest a message first, I added a button to the bottom of the guest profile allowing them to do that.

Seeing Gary Guest's contact information at the bottom of his profile did prompt one host to wonder how much contact information was appropriate to display. The literature shows that more contact information, especially if it is verified, leads to more trust between parties. However, privacy is also important, and making other forms of contact available may lead guests and hosts to interact off the Hosts for Humanity interface. (For safety, hosts and guests should primarily interact through the Hosts for Humanity messaging system.) Upon discussion of this concern with Hosts for Humanity, the decision was made to make contact information for both guests and hosts available only after the host has confirmed the guest. However, guests and hosts will still be able to see that Hosts for Humanity has verified an email address and phone number for the other party. If guests and hosts want to interact before a confirmation, they can use the Hosts for Humanity messaging system. The left panel of Figure 4 shows the contact section of a guest's profile before the host has confirmed his stay, while the right panel shows the contact section after his stay has been confirmed.

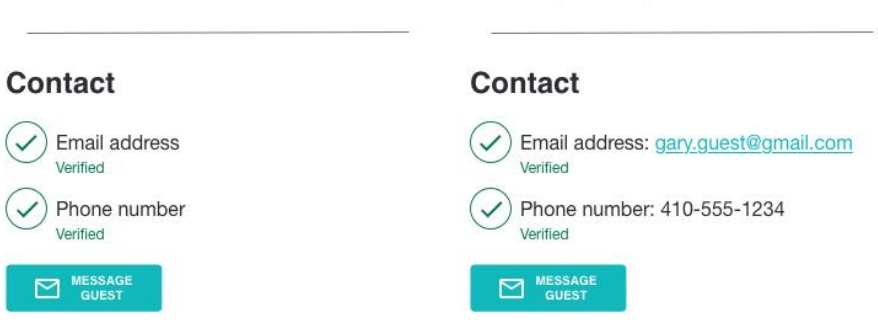

Figure 4. Contact section of guest profile before host has confirmed guest (left) and after host has confirmed guest (right).

Feedback on the site from the post-test questionnaire was overwhelmingly positive. Hosts' biggest concern was getting to the dashboard, which was addressed by changing the login button in the menu to say My Account and by pointing out the dashboard icon at the top of each screen. The host experience as it is currently prototyped is ready for development.

Guests

The first task asked guests to explore the Hosts for Humanity website and determine if it could meet their needs. Two users scanned the home page and then clicked the text link for the About page. They explained that they wanted to know a bit more about the organization first. The other three users scanned the home page and then clicked on the Find a Place to Stay button. They explained that they wanted to see the type of housing available first. At some point during the task, two of the participants clicked on the mobile menu just to get a sense of the site. One user even clicked on the Become a Host page to see the requirements for becoming a host. She said that she wanted to know the criteria a person had to meet to become a host since she was theoretically going to stay with one of them. I did not make any edits to the prototype based on the findings during this task. However, it is important to note that new users will explore the site in different ways.

For the second task, I asked guests to find a room near Johns Hopkins Hospital that was available March 26-29. All five participants were able to navigate to the Accommodations screen and filter the search results for those dates. All the participants also commented on how much they appreciated having a map view option, and three of the five participants explored the other filters. For the parking filter, one user suggested making a note that few accommodations offer garage parking, so I added that note. Another participant suggested that "private bath" be elaborated to either "private full bath" or "private half bath." I implemented that suggestion on the Individual Accommodation screen, and it should also be added as a field to the host registration. Upon seeing the favorites heart on the Individual Accommodation screen, a participant

suggested that I also add a share button. She reasoned that users may want to share the accommodation with those traveling with him or her. She also pointed out that VBRO and Airbnb utilize a share button for individual accommodations. I implemented the share button but chose not to give users the option to share with social media, due to privacy concerns. Users can share via email or messenger or by copying the link. See Figure 5 for the share button on the Individual Accommodation screen and Figure 6 for the Share screen.

Figure 5. Share button.

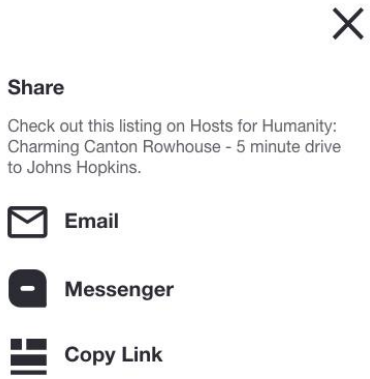

Figure 6. Share screen.

Four of the five users used the filters immediately when presented with task two. However, one participant really wanted to be able to pick a home she felt comfortable with first, and then see if it was available for her dates. Currently the interface does not allow for this type of interaction, but it certainly could. A Check Availability button could be added to each listing, similar to Airbnb only without the availability calendar. Hosts for Humanity is different from Airbnb in that guests should only be using the service when it is necessary for them to travel. Hosts for Humanity does not intend that guests to be able to change their travel dates to stay in their accommodation of choice.

Finally, as Hosts for Humanity grows, the Find a Place to Stay button should change to a search bar, and a search bar should be placed at the top of the Accommodations screen. Currently, there are not enough accommodations to make a search bar necessary, but once the organization grows, users will want to search by location, room type, etc.

The third task asked users to apply to be a guest on the Hosts for Humanity website. All five users clicked the More Information and Request Stay button on the Individual Accommodation screen, which took them to the Login screen. From the Login screen, all users also clicked the Apply for Housing button to get to the application. One user felt that a link directly to the Apply for Housing screen from the menu would be helpful. I did not add the link because no other user mentioned it and the menu already felt crowded. However, if it fits, the Login button on the menu could be changed to Login or Register.

All participants had a positive reaction to the Apply for Housing screen. They especially appreciate the headings and bullets. One user wanted to know what she should do if she needed accommodations immediately. She felt that in those emergency situations, it would be helpful to have a phone number to call. Since several of the guests I interviewed had needed housing unexpectedly and quickly, I added the following note under the Get Started button: If you need housing in the next 24 hours, please call XXX-XXX-XXXX. However, Hosts for Humanity will have to determine if that is how they would like to handle emergencies.

All the participants felt that the registration form was straightforward, and several commented that they appreciated knowing approximately how long each step would take. One participant pointed out that as Hosts for Humanity grows, the list of hospitals on the Guest Registration Step 2 screen will have to be organized by state or region. The same participant also recommended adding boxes so users could explain any other housing options they were pursuing and which, if any, other organizations were supporting them during their stay. Once they arrived on the Guest Application Complete screen, two users commented that they wanted to know how long the background check would take. I added a sentence about the background check taking 24 hours, although typically they take less than an hour.

For the fourth task, guests had to reserve the room they found in the second task. This proved to be the most difficult task for two reasons. First, in reality, guests would not be able to reserve accommodations immediately after registering. They would have to

wait for the background check to be complete. At that point, they would receive an email with links to the Accommodations section of the website or to their Favorites screen. (Both links should prompt a login.) Second, because we were testing with a prototype, I had to create two sets of Accommodations screens, one set where it appeared the user was not logged in and one set where it appeared the user was. During the testing, several of the users tried to get back to the Accommodations screen but ended up on the non-logged-in set. This result caused some frustration. However, the problem should be solved after the website is developed.

Once they got to the Individual Accommodation Logged In screen, all five participants had no trouble requesting a stay. In fact, two users commented that they felt it was too easy! The users felt that after they pressed the Request Stay button but before the request was processed, a pop-up screen should ask them to confirm their travel dates and ask if they really wanted to request a stay. One user commented that she was afraid she would hit the button by mistake, and this pop-up screen would prevent a request from being sent in error. See Figure 7 for the added pop-up screen.

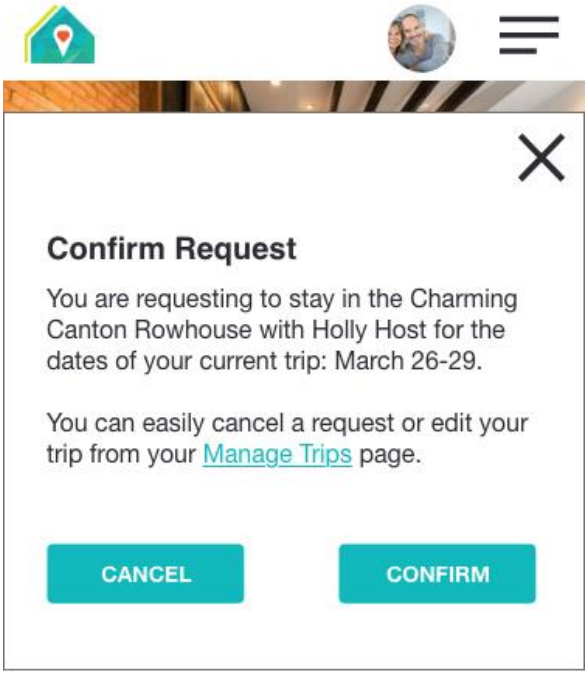

Figure 7. Pop-up screen asks users to confirm request.

For the last task, guests paid the $5 per night administrative fee. Four of the participants got to the Manage Trips page using the text link in the request trip confirmation box. (However, in reality, they would not be able to pay until after the guest confirmed their request.) One user clicked on the dashboard icon to get to the Dashboard screen and then clicked on Manage Trips. I had not been enamored with the Manage Trips screen before the user testing began, and the users' actions confirmed my concern. All five participants had to really study the screen to understand it, and one was concerned that he would accidentally press the Delete Trip or Cancel Room buttons. (This was a different participant than the one that was concerned about accidentally pressing a button in the previous task. Accidentally pressing buttons may be a common user concern!) I discussed page layout with one user and determined that tabs for current, pending, and past trips would be easier to navigate. The left panel of Figure 8 shows the original layout of the screen, while the right panel shows the revised layout.

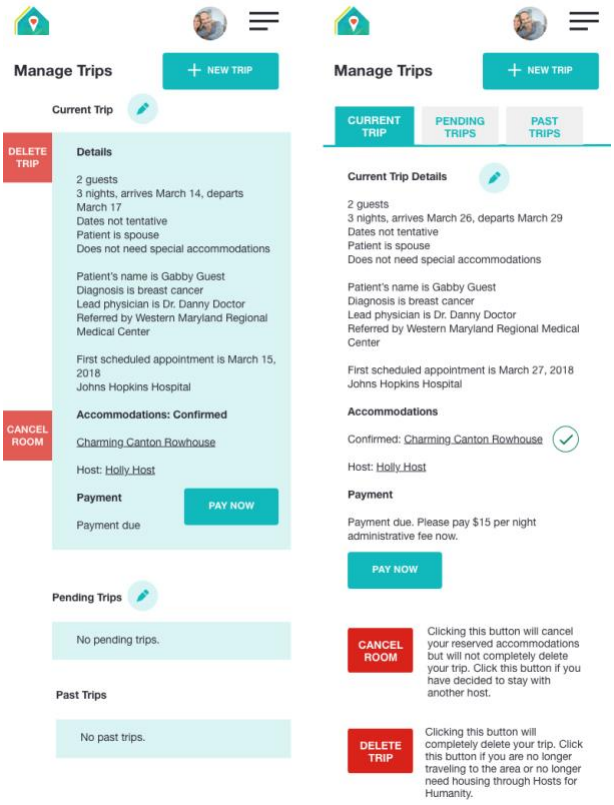

Figure 8. Left panel shows the original Manage Trips screen; right panel shows the revised screen.

On the Payment screen, every user noticed and read the cancellation policy. Two participants, both of whom have experience in nonprofit fundraising, commented that the refund should not include the cost of the background check. Hosts for Humanity will have to decide whether to refund the full amount if a user cancels a trip or refund the full amount minus the cost of the background check. The first two users with whom I tested felt that the question asking guests if they would allow Hosts for Humanity to photograph them during their stay for marketing material was very out of place on the Payment screen. I removed the question, and I recommend either emailing guests with the request or adding it to the Payment Confirmation screen. One participant strongly recommended giving users the option to pay with PayPal as well as a credit card. The literature supports giving users multiple ways to pay, so I added this functionality.

There were several questions that were a part of the guest application form on the original Hosts for Humanity website that I felt should be asked later in the interaction. (See Figure 9.) Most of the questions were demographic in nature and therefore rather personal. By moving these questions to the end of the guest experience, I hoped that users would have built up enough trust with Hosts for Humanity to answer the questions or not be concerned by them. During the user testing, three users said they would answer the questions on the Payment Confirmation screen. One user had mild concern but would likely answer. One user had a lot of concern and would not answer. That user was mostly concerned with the household income question.

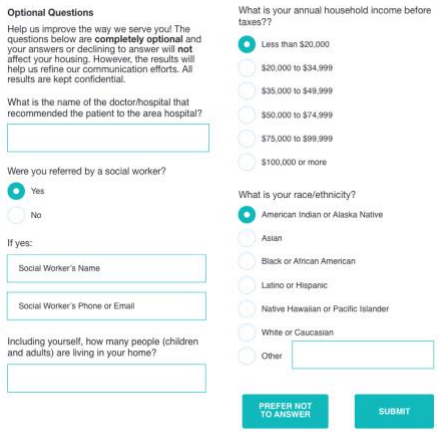

Figure 9. Optional questions on Payment Confirmation screen.

Overall, user testing with both the host and guest user groups went very well but was also incredibly beneficial. Testing with hosts taught me that banner blindness is very real and can happen in situations where a designer may least expect it. It also brought up the very good question of how much contact information to make available. Testing with guests really helped me to understand that the guest experience is a bit fragmented. Guests must register, but then cannot reserve housing until they pass a background check. Then, they do not pay until they are confirmed by a host. It is imperative that Hosts for Humanity fill in the gap between registration and completed background check and the gap between requesting housing and payment with regular communication that explains next steps and expectations. Once the site is developed and has actual users, a journey map of the guest experience would help find pain points and possibly improve the process.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Peer-to-peer marketplace websites have been well studied since the sharing economy began in the early 2000s. The research shows that peer-to-peer marketplaces must facilitate trust and credibility to be successful, and my interviews and user testing for the Hosts for Humanity website confirmed those findings. During the interviews, potential former guests told their often-emotional stories, explaining that in the moment of crisis, they looked for a familiar, trustworthy solution. Typically that solution was a friend's home, a well-known hotel chain, or a reputable hospitality home. Hosts told of meeting Owens and developing trust in the organization after hearing her story. They also overwhelmingly said that the security of themselves and their family members, which is connected to guest trustworthiness, was their top concern. When guests were given the opportunity to test the site, they immediately looked for signs that the organization was credible. They checked the home page, About page, navigation menu, list of available accommodations, and even the Become a Host page. Hosts focused on the guest profile, including contact information, and the blog and FAQ page to validate trust in both the potential guest and Hosts for Humanity.

The prototype is ready to be developed; however that development process should be lean and iterative, partially because trust and credibility are so important to the success of Hosts for Humanity. As Hosts for Humanity grows, a mechanism should be implemented that allows the organization to verify that guests are truly traveling for medical treatment. This mechanism will increase trust between guests and hosts and will lend more credibility to Hosts for Humanity. It could be as simple as requiring guests to provide the name and phone number of the physician the patient will be seeing. Or, the mechanism could require the physician's office to sign a document, confirming the appointment and diagnosis. Whatever the mechanism, it must be positioned in the interaction so that the guest has already developed enough trust in Hosts for Humanity to feel comfortable providing that information.

While necessary in the long run, this mechanism to confirm guests' identities will further disrupt an already rather fragmented guest experience. Guests register but cannot reserve housing until they pass a background check. They do not pay until they are confirmed by a host. Eventually, they may not be able to stay with a host until the patient's appointment is confirmed. It is imperative that user testing continue after development and that development is iterative. If user testing does not continue after development, it is possible that the fragmented experience will turn away users, especially if those users are stressed guests. However, with iterative development, processes could be added such as instant, automatic background checks (if such a thing exists) to improve the guest experience. It is also possible that as brand awareness for Hosts for Humanity increases, the guest interaction could be reordered because the organization has more credibility from the start. Trust and credibility should be assessed regularly as long as Hosts for Humanity continues to operate.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent

Patients and their families may encounter difficulty when looking for housing near world-class medical institutions in cities far from their homes. There are generous people willing to host patients and their families, but connecting these hosts and patients is challenging. In an effort to bridge this gap, I am conducting usability tests to design a website interface that would allow patients and their families to reserve space in the homes of volunteer hosts. Usability tests examine how people interact with a website. They also seek to determine how easy or difficult it is for users to use a website interface. I hope to see how patients and their families and hosts use the interface I have prototyped.

During this session, which will last approximately 20 minutes, the moderator will ask you to use the website prototype to complete predetermined tasks. Your mouse clicks and verbal comments will be recorded. The moderator may also take notes.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You choose whether to participate. If you choose to participate in the study, you can stop your participation at any time. If you want to withdraw from the study, please tell the researcher that you want to withdraw.

Dr. Kathryn Summers, my faculty advisor, and I will have access to the observations and notes made by the researchers as well as the video of this session. Overall results of the study will be shared with representatives from Hosts for Humanity, may be shared with product vendors, and will be used for publication. However, I will not use your name when quoting your comments in the client presentation or any other presentations nor will I provide any identifying information.

If you have any questions about the research, you may contact me, Amanda Wozniak, at 410-353-8053 or amanda.wozniak@ubalt.edu. Thank you for your participation.

I, _____, permit you to observe my use of the website prototype and record the session. Only select video clips will be used for the client

presentation and only overall study results will be shared with product vendors or used for publication.

_____ _____

Print Name Signature

_____

Date

Appendix B: Moderator Script

My name is Amanda Wozniak and I'll be running this session with you today. I am a graduate student in Interaction Design and Information Architecture at the University of Baltimore. I am conducting usability testing on a peer-to-peer room booking website that I designed, and I want to find out if it works for real users – people like you.

First of all, thanks for agreeing to meet with me. I really appreciate it. We should be here for about 20 minutes today.

If you don't mind, I'm going to read the next couple of things from my script to make sure I cover everything.

This isn't a test of you. There are no right or wrong answers. Instead, you are helping me to test the site. So, please be honest – you won't hurt my feelings.

Before we start, I've got a little bit of paperwork.

[Consent form] This consent form sets out what we will and won't do with the information you give us today. Please read it through and then sign at the bottom. Today's date is [____]

Today, we'll be working through some typical tasks if you were to sign up to become a host/guest on the Hosts for Humanity website. If you need to take a break at any point, just let me know. If there are any questions that you don't want to answer, again, just let me know. There's water here for you as well if you want it. Do you have any questions before we begin?

There's one thing you can do that will really help me as we go through the session today, and that is I'd like you to think out loud. By that, I mean while you are working with the site. I want you to tell me what you're thinking as you go along. For instance if anything acts differently than you expected, or if you are trying to work out what to do next, say those things out loud.

I'm going to be giving you things to do with the computer. I'd like you to go as far as you would if you were working on your own. I will be right here, but I might not be

able to answer your questions. When you are done, say "I'm done" or "I would stop here."

OK, let's start. The first thing I'd like you to do is read this out loud and then go ahead and do what it says. *[hand first task to participant]*

[After first task] Thank you. Now let's move on to the next one.

[After second task] Thank you. Now let's move on to the next one.

[After third task] Thank you. Now let's move on to the next one.

[After fourth task] Thank you. Now let's move on to the next one.

[After fifth task] Thank you. Now let's move on to the last one.

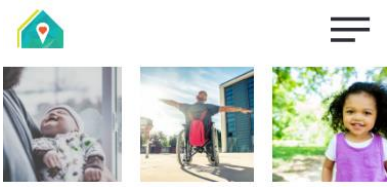
[During tasks, if necessary] Please remember to think out loud.

[After all tasks] Thank you. Your feedback has been very helpful. Do you have any questions for me about what you just worked with?

OK, we're finished.

Thanks once again. *[check that participant has coat, bag, etc. with them before they leave]*

Appendix C: Prototype Screenshots



Hosts for Humanity

Connecting families and friends of patients traveling for medical care with volunteer hosts offering accommodations in their homes.

FIND A PLACE TO STAY

Hosts for Humanity is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that launched in 2017. Learn more about us.

Make a big impact in the lives of people traveling for medical care. Join our community of hosts.

Hosts for Humanity matches volunteer hosts with patient families seeking a place to stay while their loved ones receive care.

Volunteer hosts are able to list available accommodations in their homes. Whether an apartment for a few days, an entire home for a month, or a garden for an afternoon, Hosts for Humanity connects family and friends of patients with volunteer hosts, allowing them to stay in a low-cost and supportive environment.

Hosts for Humanity is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. We launched in the spring of 2017 and are actively recruiting volunteer hosts and hospital partners.

Staff & Board of Directors

Jenny Owens, ScD, MS
Founder and Executive Director
President, Board of Directors
jenny@hostsforhumanity.org

Lauren Malloy, MSW, LGSW
Member, Board of Directors

Ray Dudeck
Treasurer, Board of Directors

Our Story

My name is Jenny Owens, and I created Hosts for Humanity due to health challenges my son faced when he was born.

In April 2016, my husband and I welcomed our son Maximus to the world. Within hours of his birth, Max was diagnosed with a rare condition called Congenital Diaphragmatic Hernia. The doctors gave Max a 50% chance of survival, and for the next few months Maximus and his physicians fought for his life.

Max spent several weeks in the NICU and more time in the Children's Hospital as he underwent several surgeries and procedures to repair his diaphragm. Although there's still a present but diminishing threat of a re-herniation of his diaphragm, Max is now an animated toddler who is growing and thriving. We feel such gratitude for the excellent care he received at Johns Hopkins.

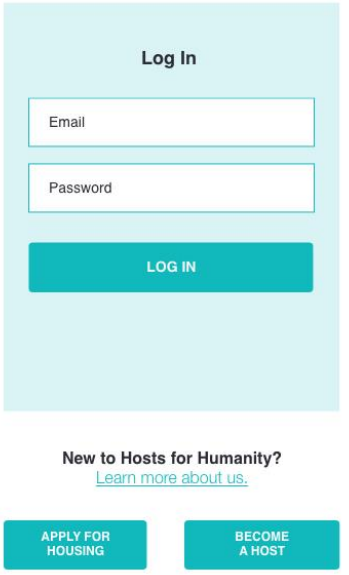
While Max was in the hospital, I ran into a grandmother of an infant patient in the family lounge. During our conversation, I learned that she was visiting for two weeks and staying in a hotel. Her son and daughter were living in a tiny hospital room at the Children's Hospital until either the Children's House or Ronald McDonald House had an open room. They were all from Tennessee and had traveled to Baltimore for specialists that could care for their baby's rare condition. They would be in Baltimore for months while their tiny baby had multiple surgeries.

Right then I realized how incredibly lucky we were to live so close to such amazing hospitals. We could get from the NICU to our home in 10 minutes, but many families traveled hours each day and stayed months longer than we did.

I wondered, what if people living near hospitals could volunteer rooms in their homes to people traveling with loved ones for care?

In the spring of 2017, I founded Hosts for Humanity to answer that question and to make a difference in the lives of patients and their families.

CONTACT HOSTS FOR HUMANITY



Become a host

Thank you for your interest in joining the Hosts for Humanity community as a volunteer host. Seriously, we already think you're amazing.

Being a volunteer host is as big or small of a committment as you want it to be. Volunteer hosts only lodge guests when they want and for how long they want. Hosts only need to provide a clean and comfortable place to sleep and access to a bathroom. Other amenities are appreciated but not required.

As a host, you'll be improving the lives of people traveling for medical care, but you won't be doing it alone. Our community of volunteer hosts, staff, and resources will help you every step of the way.

Sign up in three easy steps:

1. Fill out the information form
2. Read the host training materials
3. List your home and availability on the Hosts for Humanity website

As part of our safety measures, we complete background checks on all hosts and guests.

GET STARTED

Step 1 will take approximately 5 minutes.

Once you complete step 1, you can stop and restart the registration process as needed.

Want to learn more about becoming a host? Have questions or concerns?
* Read about us and our history
* Read our detailed FAQs
* Peruse our community blog
* Contact Jenny Owens at jenny@hostsforhumanity.org

Become a host, step 1 of 3

Information Form Secure Form

Name

Date of Birth (for background check)

Email

Phone Number

Street Address

Address Line 2

City

State

ZIP Code

Can you provide a comfortable place to sleep?
Yes
No

Can you provide a private room?
Yes
No

Can you provide access to a bathroom?
Yes
No

Does your home have working smoke detectors?
Yes
No

Does your home have a working carbon monoxide detector?
Yes
No

Does your home have a working fire extinguisher?
Yes
No

All adult members of the household must undergo a background check. Please provide names and birthdates for everyone in the home 18 years of age and older.

Name

Date of Birth

Add family member

Create a password for your account

Password

Repeat Password

Liability Release Statement

I/We (all adults in household) have read and agree to the liability release statement. [Statement opens in pop-up and will also be emailed to you.]

SAVE AND CONTINUE TO STEP 2

Step 2 will take approximately 5 minutes.

Become a host, step 2 of 3

Read the training information below, and then check the box at the end to affirm you understand the material.

Serious illnesses and medical emergencies impact a patient's entire family, especially when they must travel to receive care. When traveling with a patient, family and friends often find themselves removed from their communities and support networks. Far from home, not all of these caregivers are eligible for hospital hospitality homes such as the Ronald McDonald House or Hope Cancer Lodge. Often caregivers have to stay in hotels close to the hospital, a lodging choice that becomes increasingly expensive as their loved ones spend more time receiving care. Family and friends of patients need a way to find lodging that allows them to provide comfort and support for their loved ones without creating an additional financial burden. In addition, family and friends themselves need a nurturing environment so they can do the challenging work of caregiving.

That's where you come in. Being a volunteer host is giving an incredible gift to people when they need it the most. By following these simple guidelines, you're setting yourself up to create a compassionate environment for patient families traveling for medical care.

1. Don't be afraid to talk to your guest. It is better to say, "I don't know what to say" than to stop talking out of fear.

a. Here are some options to help show your care and support:
   i. I'm sorry this has happened to you
   ii. If you ever feel like talking, I'm here to listen
   iii. What are you thinking of doing, and how can I help?
   iv. I care about you and your well-being
   v. I'm thinking of you

b. Here are examples of phrases that are unhelpful:
   i. I know just how you feel
   ii. I know just what you should do
   iii. I'm sure you'll be fine
   iv. Don't worry
   v. How long does your loved one have?

2. Sometimes your guests will want to talk, and sometimes they won't. Meet them where they are and follow their lead. If they want to talk, use active listening skills. Seek to understand and not to be understood.

3. Think of yourself as a peer when you interact with your guest. Research has found that frequent, affirming, and pleasant contact from a peer supporter has been especially helpful to those experiencing social isolation and emotional distress. By supporting the physical need of housing, you're providing indirect financial support, and by interacting with your guest, you're providing social and emotional support.

4. Never press for information. It can be physically and emotionally tiring to repeat the same information to different people.

5. It's also okay to talk about other topics. If appropriate, ask about interests, hobbies, and other topics not related to the health condition. People going through treatment sometimes need a break from talking about the disease.

6. This is an emotionally challenging time for many families, and they often will be dealing with a range of emotions such as sadness, grief, or even anger. All of these feelings are okay, and these feelings aren't for you to fix.

7. It's tempting to want to share similar experiences, but this can sometimes cause family members undue stress. Your experience isn't the same as their experience. Resist the urge to share your similar story, especially if your experience was negative. Avoid statements like "My father had the same condition as your brother. He passed away from complications after 10 days in the same hospital..." Or "A neighbor's daughter has that condition too, she's had 32 surgeries, and she's only 8 years old."

8. Privacy is important. Do not share any information about your guests with others, unless they give you permission to share. Do not post pictures or tag guests on social media without their permission.

9. Don't focus on your own worries and sadness about your guests' diagnosis. The guest or caregiver shouldn't feel like he or she has to take care of you. Instead, offer strength, humor and practical help.

10. Each host will have different house rules. Make sure to review these with your guests at the onset of their stay and orient them to your home. Being in a hospital setting can be unsettling and create feelings of insecurity. Setting expectations and clarifying roles reduces uncertainty and will help create an environment of support and security.

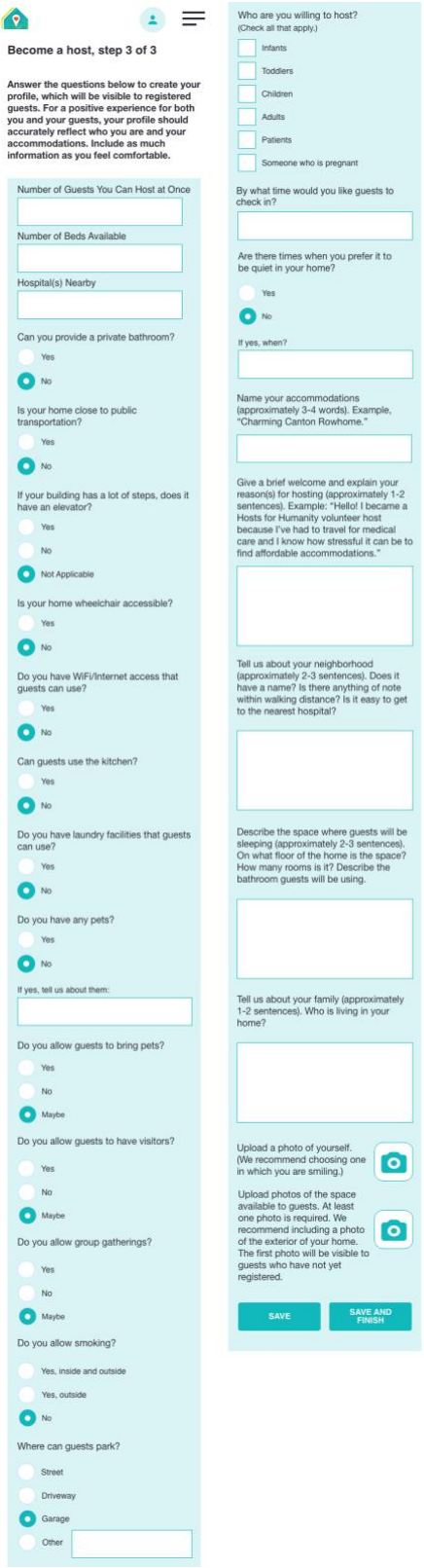
11. If you have any questions, come across a situation that makes you feel uncomfortable, or can no longer be a host, don't hesitate to reach out to a member of the Hosts for Humanity team. Just like you're there for your guests, we're here for you. You can contact us directly at jenny@hostsforhumanity.org.

Additional Resources
* Detailed host FAQs
* Community blog

I have read the training materials. (A copy will also be emailed to you.)

SAVE AND CONTINUE TO STEP 3

Step 3 will take approximately 10 minutes.



Thank you for registering as a volunteer host!

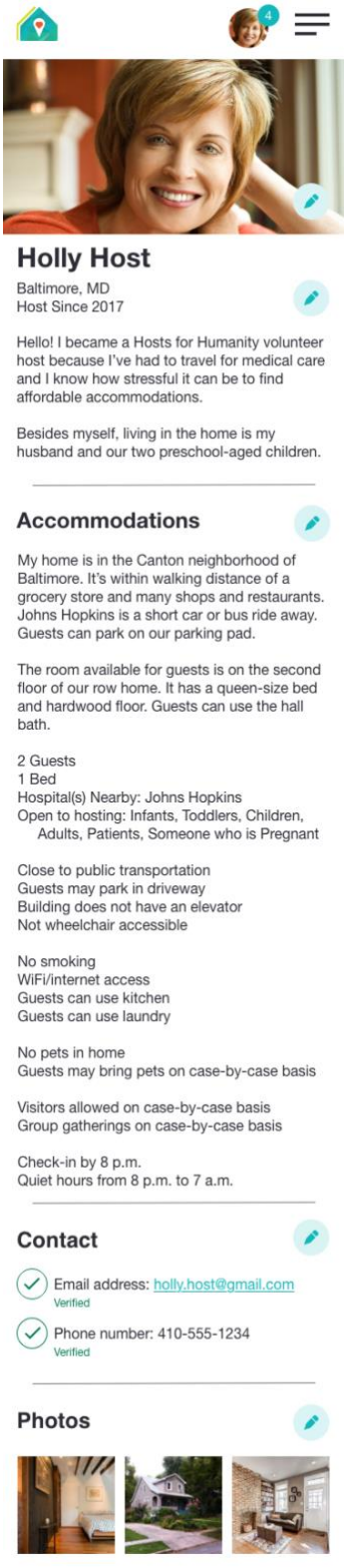
We really appreciate your willingness to improve the lives of patients and their families in your area. Once your background check is complete, you will recieve an email telling you that your profile has been posted on the Hosts for Humanity website.

In the meantime, visit your dashboard to complete your availability.

We also recommend you:

1. Re-read the training materials that should now be in your email inbox.
2. Read our detailed host FAQs.
3. Check out our community blog.
4. With tips from our FAQs and blog, create your house rules.

Questions? Email Jenny Owens at jenny@hostsforhumanity.org.



Holly Host

Baltimore, MD
Host Since 2017

Hello! I became a Hosts for Humanity volunteer host because I've had to travel for medical care and I know how stressful it can be to find affordable accommodations.

Besides myself, living in the home is my husband and our two preschool-aged children.

Accommodations

My home is in the Canton neighborhood of Baltimore. It's within walking distance of a grocery store and many shops and restaurants. Johns Hopkins is a short car or bus ride away. Guests can park on our parking pad.

The room available for guests is on the second floor of our row home. It has a queen-size bed and hardwood floor. Guests can use the hall bath.

2 Guests
1 Bed
Hospital(s) Nearby: Johns Hopkins
Open to hosting: Infants, Toddlers, Children, Adults, Patients, Someone who is Pregnant

Close to public transportation
Guests may park in driveway
Building does not have an elevator
Not wheelchair accessible

No smoking
WiFi/internet access
Guests can use kitchen
Guests can use laundry

No pets in home
Guests may bring pets on case-by-case basis

Visitors allowed on case-by-case basis
Group gatherings on case-by-case basis

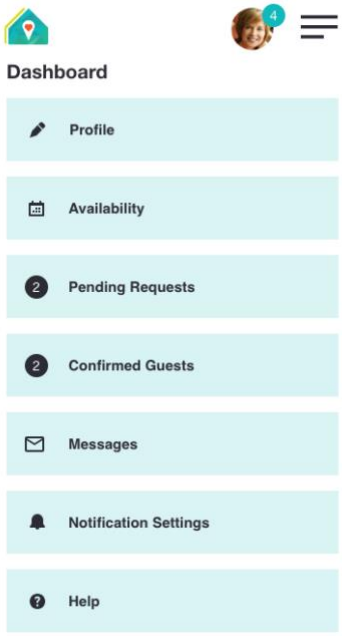
Check-in by 8 p.m.
Quiet hours from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m.

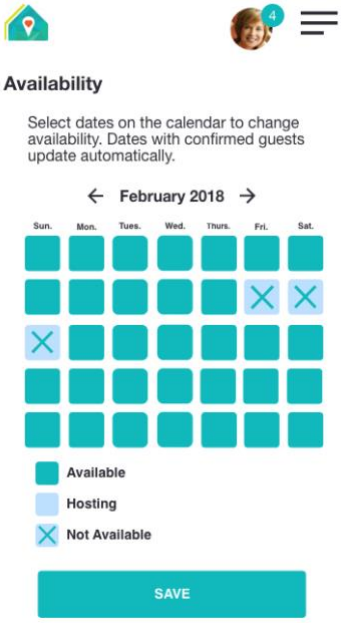
Contact

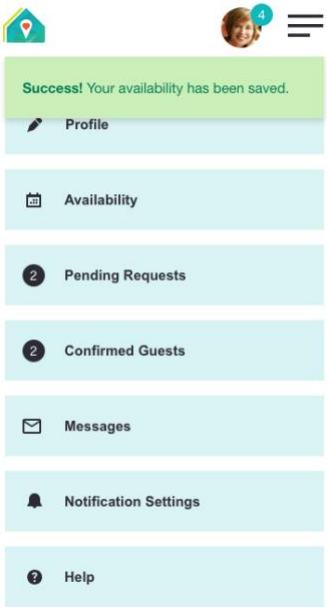
Email address: holly.host@gmail.com
Verified

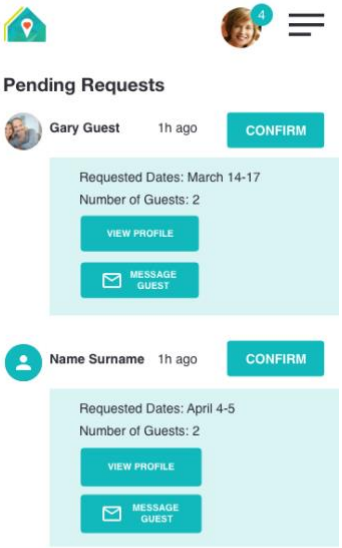
Phone number: 410-555-1234
Verified

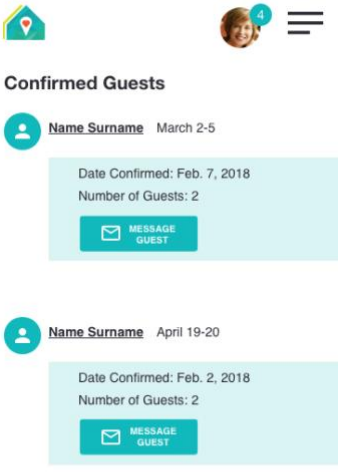
Photos

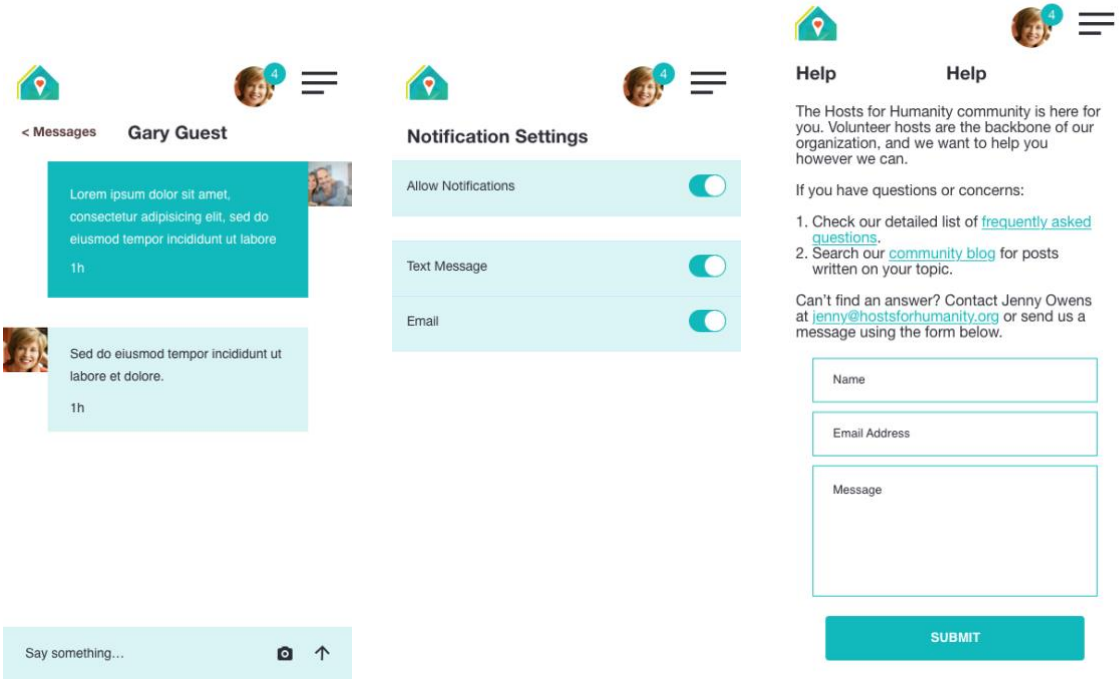












Frequently Asked Questions

What are house rules?

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How do I create house rules for my home?

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What if a guest gets hurt on my property or something gets broken?

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Is hosting safe?

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Should I still become a host, even if I'm not home a lot?

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How should I interact with my guests?

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How can I contact Hosts for Humanity?

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Curabitur ultricies dolor et lorem faucibus egestas. Nunc feugiat pulvinar ipsum eget iaculis. Quisque sollicitudin augue in elit lacinia laoreet.

H4H Community Blog

Getting the most out of your hosting experience

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Tags: host, expectations, relationships

Creating house rules

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Tags: host, expectations, house rules

Gary Guest

CONFIRM

Frostburg, MD
Need accommodations March 14-17

My wife is recieving chemotherapy and radiation treatment for breast cancer at Johns Hopkins Hospital. We are looking for a place to stay nearby for three days. We are on a waiting list for Hope Cancer Lodge.

Trip Details

2 guests
3 nights, arrives March 14, departs March 17
Patient is spouse
Does not need special accommodations

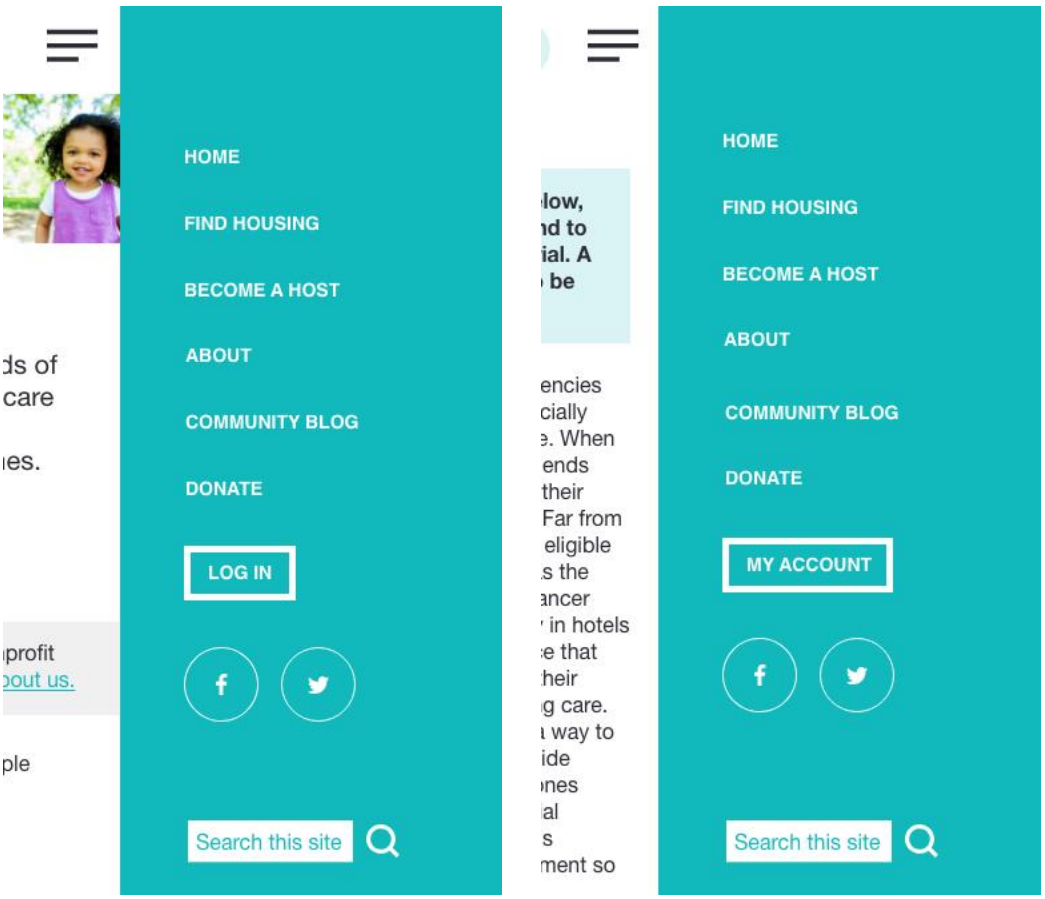
Patient's name is Gabby Guest
First scheduled appointment is March 15, 2018
Johns Hopkins Hospital

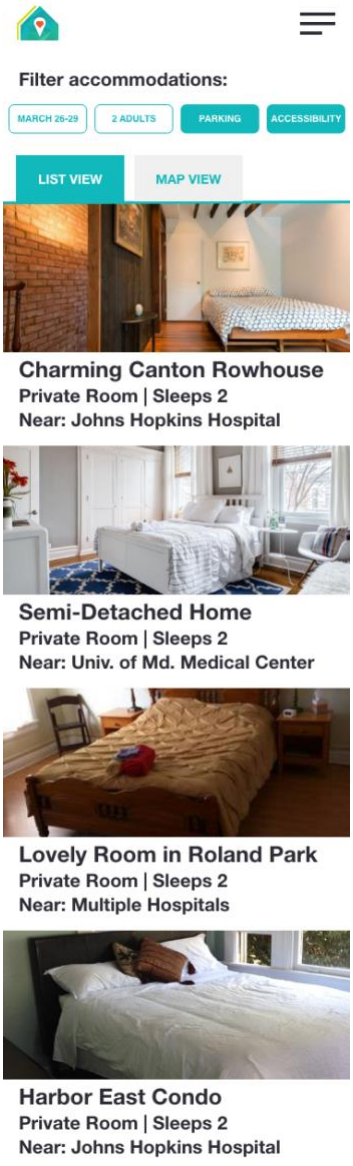
Contact

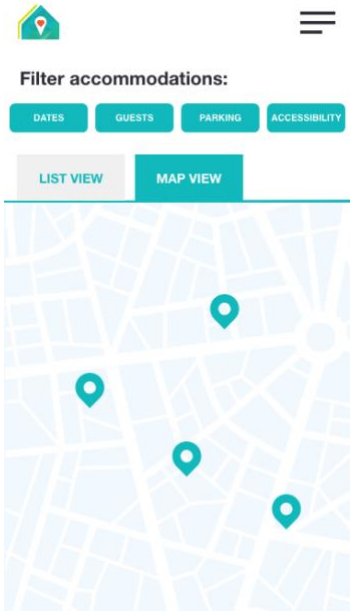
Email address
Verified

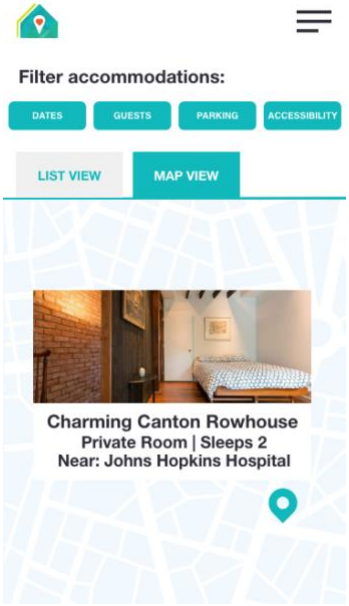
Phone number
Verified

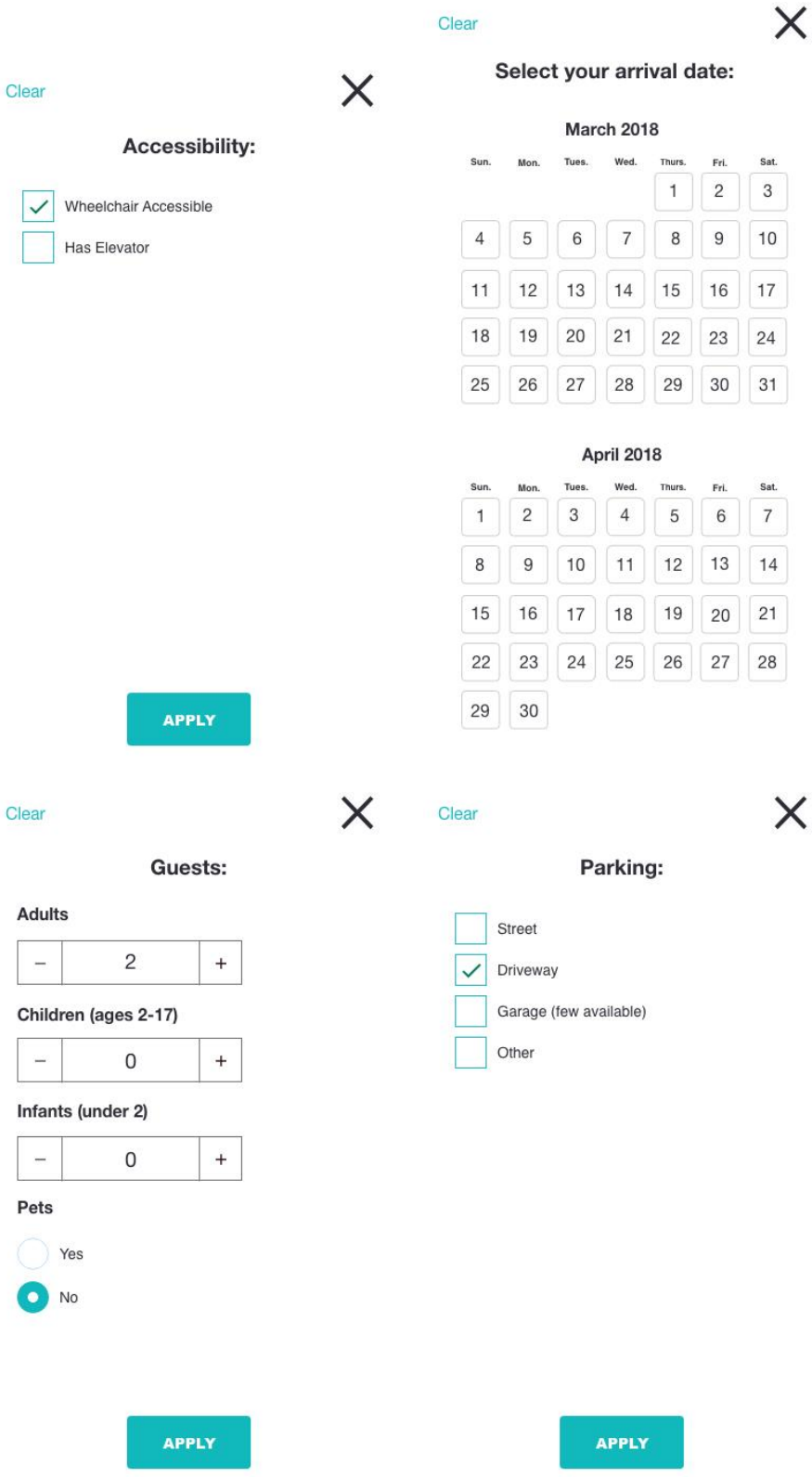
MESSAGE GUEST











Charming Canton Rowhouse

5 minute drive to Johns Hopkins

2 guests · 1 bed · private room · private full bath

My home is in the Canton neighborhood of Baltimore. It's within walking distance of a grocery store and many shops and restaurants. Johns Hopkins is a short car or bus ride away. Guests can park on our parking pad.

MORE INFORMATION AND REQUEST STAY

Share

Check out this listing on Hosts for Humanity: Charming Canton Rowhouse - 5 minute drive to Johns Hopkins.

Email

Messenger

Copy Link

Apply for Housing

Hosts for Humanity connects family and friends of patients with volunteer hosts, allowing them to stay in a low-cost and supportive environment.

Accommodations vary, but at a minimum volunteer hosts provide guests with a comfortable place to sleep and access to a bathroom. Volunteer hosts do not provide meals or transportation, although some hosts live in areas with access to public transit.

Eligibility

Guests must:
* Be a patient or an important support person for a patient in active treatment (at least one appointment per week)
* Live more than 15 miles from the hospital
* Have a permanent home to return to after their stay
* Be unlikely to put a host family at risk

Cost

The cost for accommodations is $5 per night. This fee keeps Hosts for Humanity up and running, and helps guests like you be matched with trained volunteer hosts.

Register

Reserve housing in three easy steps:

1. Create your account
2. Fill out the trip information form
3. Review available accommodations and request a stay

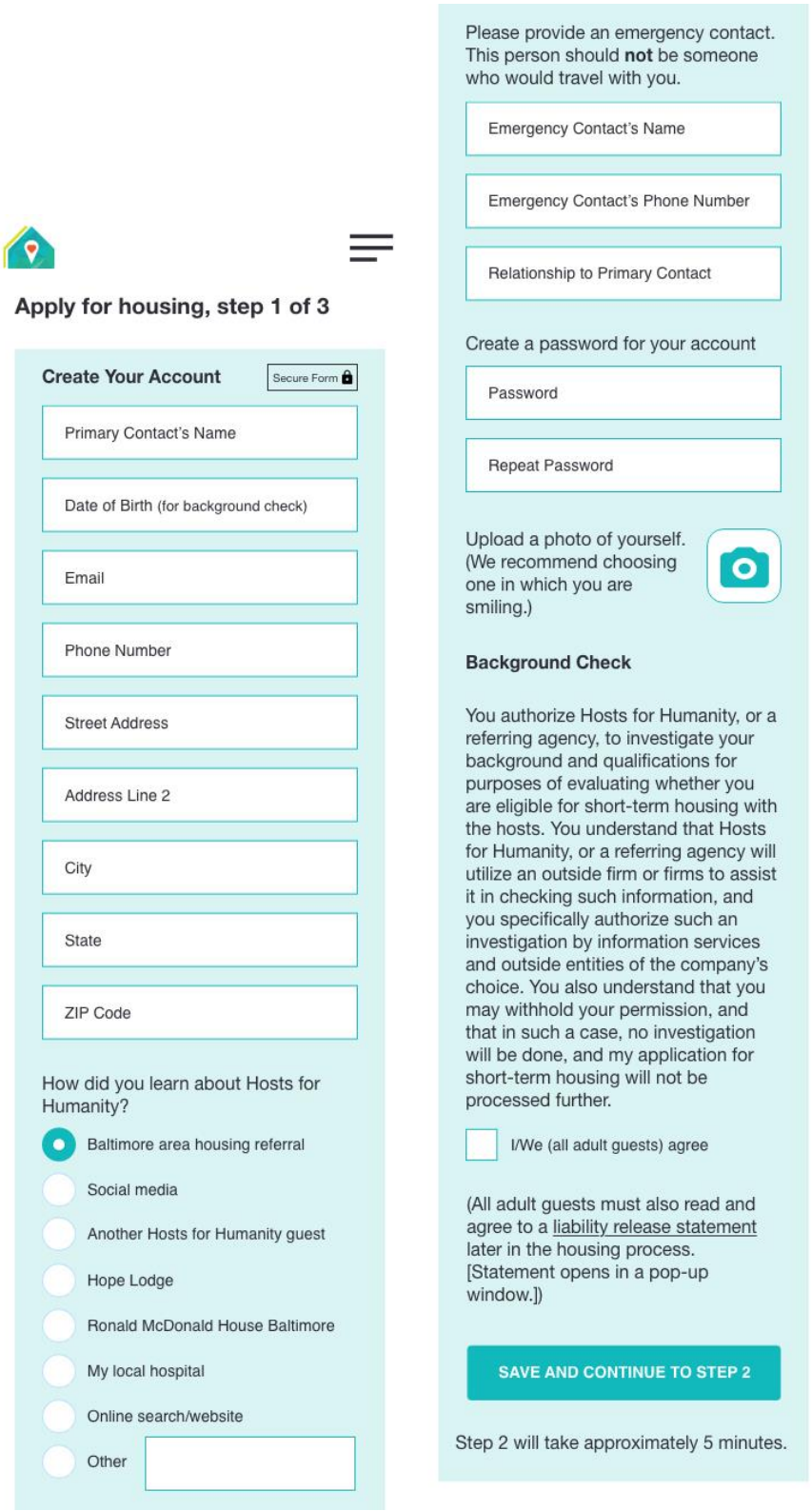
As part of our safety measures, we complete background checks on all hosts and guests.

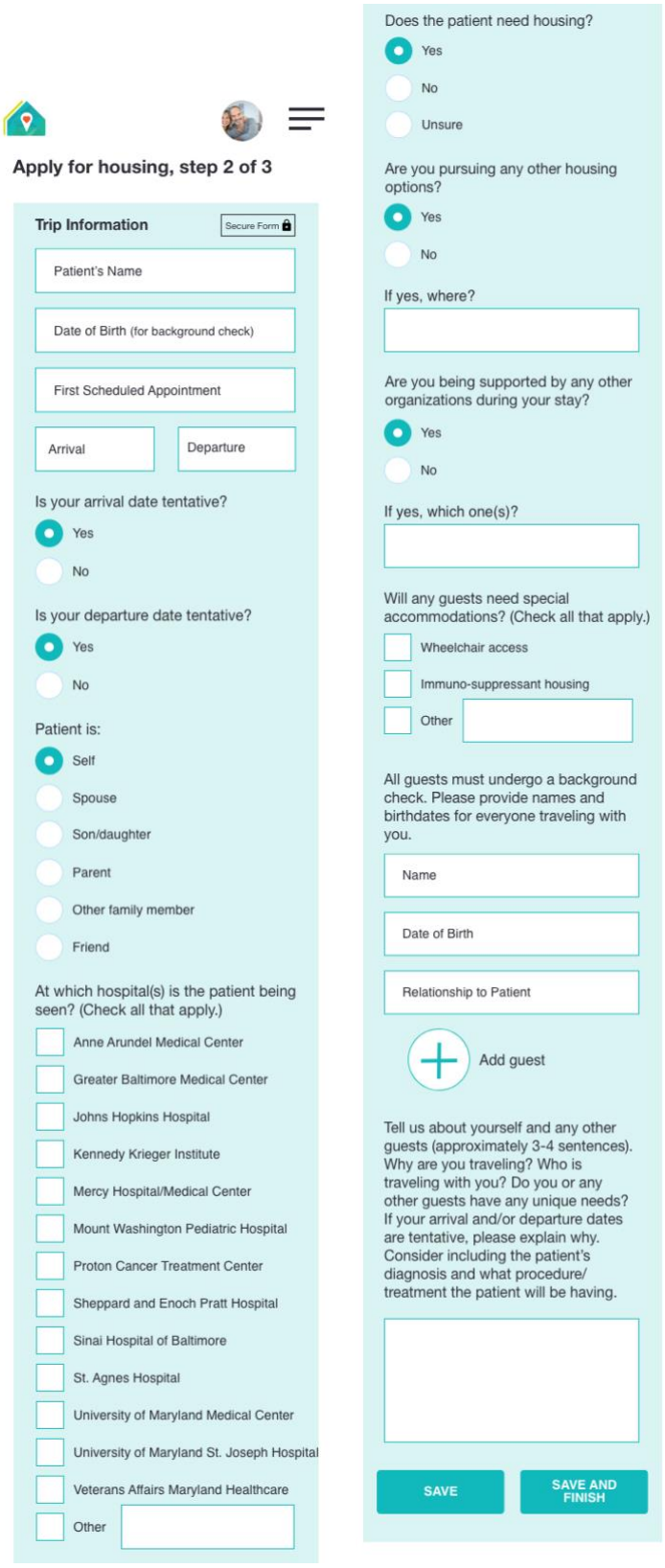
GET STARTED

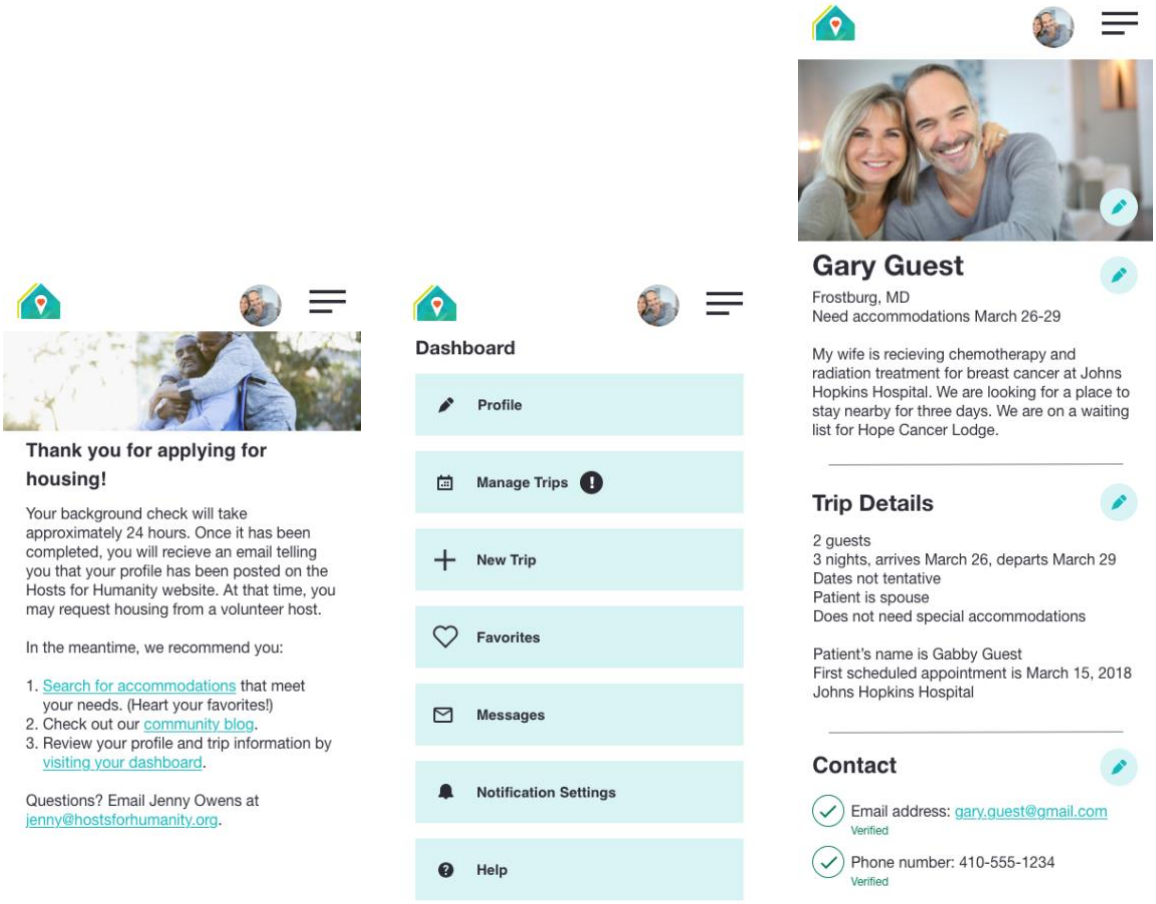
Step 1 will take approximately 5 minutes.

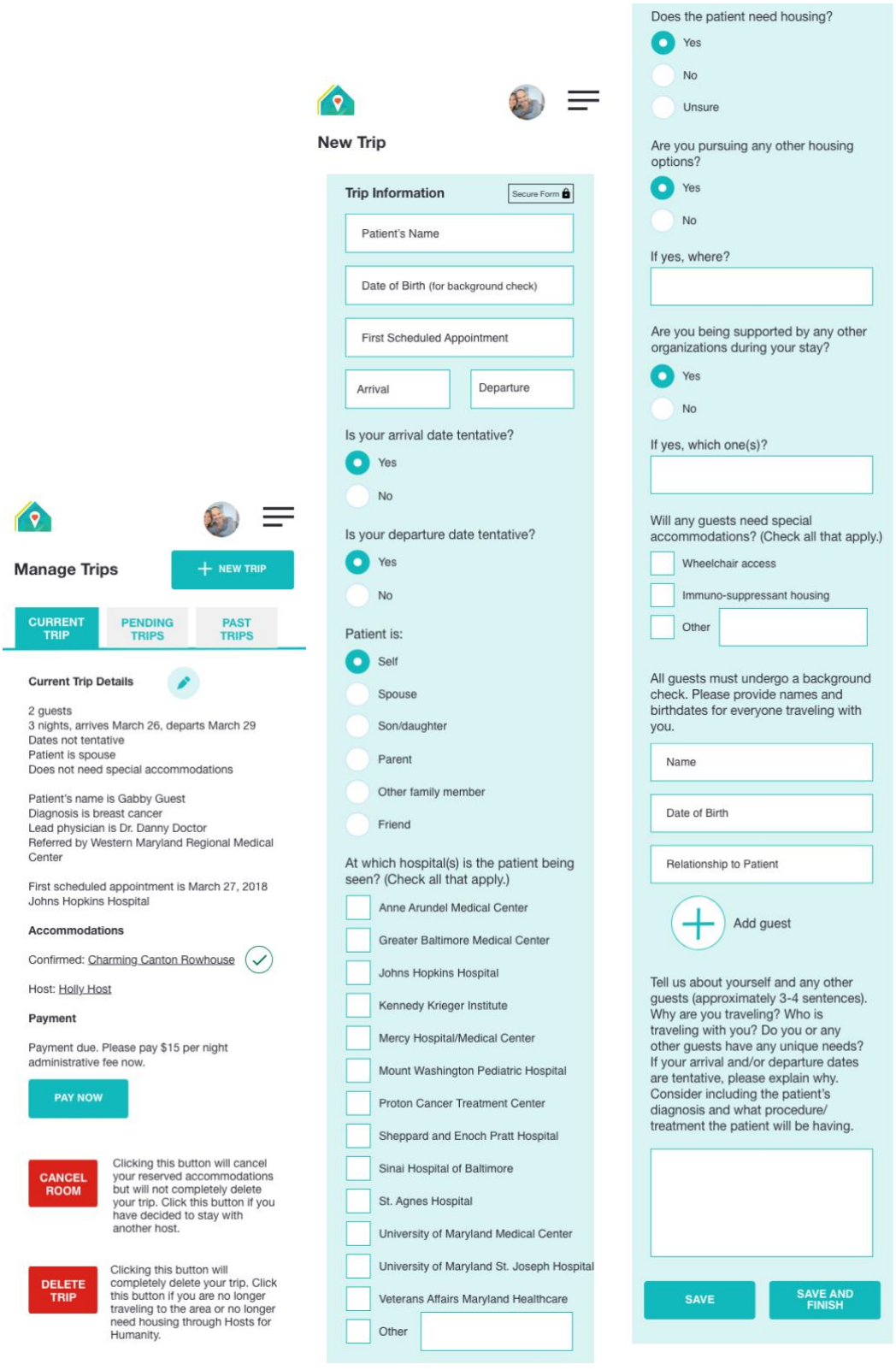
If you need housing in the next 24 hours, please call 410-555-5555.

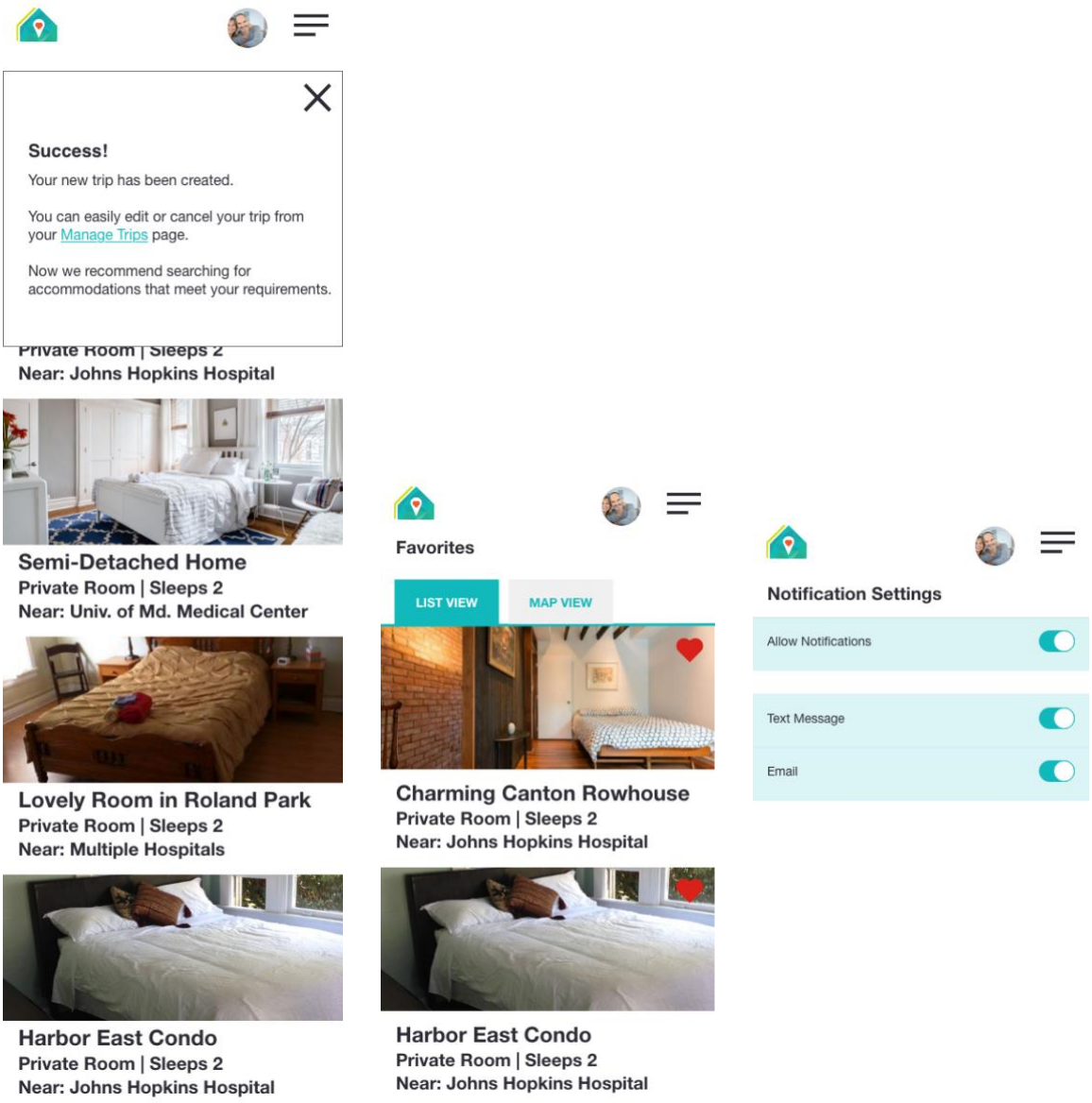
Want to learn more about being a guest? Have questions or concerns?
* Read about us and our history
* Peruse our community blog
* Contact Jenny Owens at jenny@hostsforhumanity.org

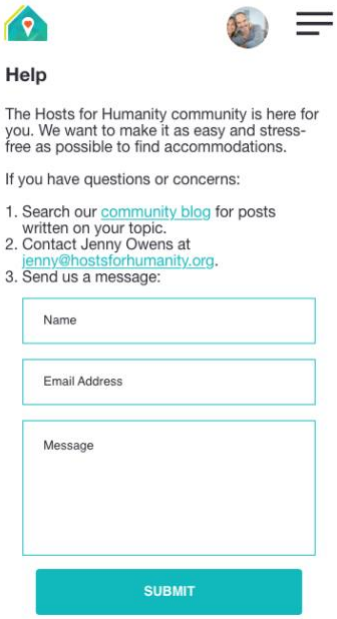


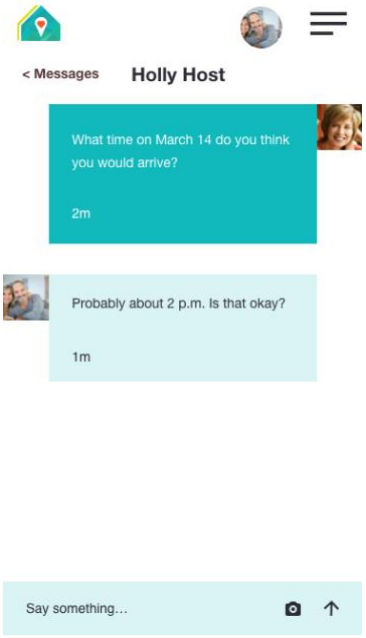


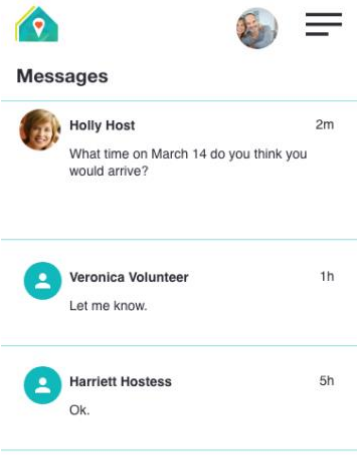


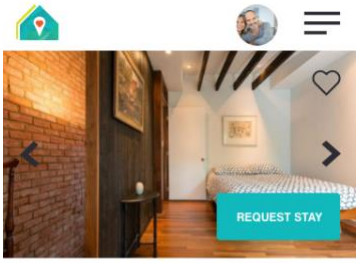












Charming Canton Rowhouse

5 minute drive to Johns Hopkins

2 guests · 1 bed · private room · private full bath

Host: Holly Host

My home is in the Canton neighborhood of Baltimore. It's within walking distance of a grocery store and many shops and restaurants. Johns Hopkins is a short car or bus ride away. Guests can park on our parking pad.

The room available for guests is on the second floor of our row home. It has a queen-size bed and hardwood floor. Guests can use the hall bath.

Accommodation Details

2 Guests
1 Bed
Hospital(s) Nearby: Johns Hopkins
Open to hosting: Infants, Toddlers, Children, Adults, Patients, Someone who is Pregnant

Close to public transportation
Guests may park in driveway
Building does not have an elevator
Not wheelchair accessible

No smoking
WiFi/internet access
Guests can use kitchen
Guests can use laundry

No pets in home
Guests may bring pets on case-by-case basis

Visitors allowed on case-by-case basis
Group gatherings on case-by-case basis

Check-in by 8 p.m.
Quiet hours from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m.

REQUEST STAY

Holly Host

Baltimore, MD
Host Since 2017

Hello! I became a Hosts for Humanity volunteer host because I've had to travel for medical care and I know how stressful it can be to find affordable accommodations.

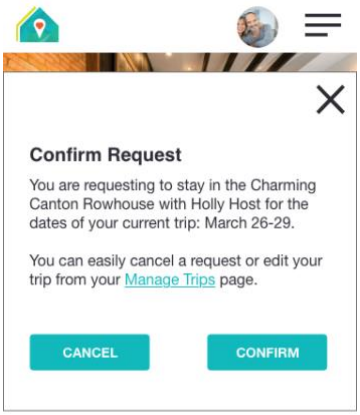
Besides myself, living in the home is my husband and our two preschool-aged children.

Contact

Email address
Verified

Phone number
Verified

MESSAGE HOST



Confirm Request

You are requesting to stay in the Charming Canton Rowhouse with Holly Host for the dates of your current trip: March 26-29.

You can easily cancel a request or edit your trip from your Manage Trips page.

CANCEL CONFIRM

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