UI Design Document

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Visual Design Overview

The visual identity of the Golden Plains Stories website is inspired by the shire's rich and vivid history, as well as its vibrant sense of community today. Focusing on the prioritisation of engaging our primary user, the teenager living in Bannockburn, we have made sure to create a website that is both instinctive and visually appealing to the young avid internet user.

The overall look and feel of *Golden Plains Stories* is fresh and energetic—a marriage of the vintage and the contemporary— to celebrate the shire's history and its present. The primary colour palette consists of dark blues and cream, while bright pops orange, yellow and light blue reflect a more modern style. With the use of flat-design graphics and distinct font pairings, the website aims to present the shire's history in an engaging and digestible way. Furthermore, our team aims to appeal to both our primary and secondary users. Therefore, the website will take a straightforward, intuitive layout and approach that will make the users comfortable and excited to explore.

After revising and discussing our initial visual design approach, we have reiterated the website's brand identity to best reflect our primary users' goals and motivations, and to best solve their needs and pain points. We made changes to UI by rounding the corners of every element, including the hamburger menu, buttons, and tabs. This was to ensure visual consistency across all elements in our website, and to provide an interface that is easier on the eyes and makes information easier to process (FMC n.d.).

One of our most significant changes to the visual design was substituting the images in every header to an illustrated patterned background. This decision was made in response to initial mock-ups where the website became too image-heavy, with not enough visual cohesion from page to page. These illustrated patterns would similarly correspond with the graphic styles of the parallax animation in the timeline as well as the looping animation on the homepage. Additionally, this change would better encompass the website's refined colour palette, as each header in every page would use one of the main colours. A study has shown that the effective use of colour can increase a reader's attention span and recall by 82% (Xerox 2017). Henceforth, our team hopes to not only cater to the users' visual tastes and engagement, but to provide meaningful learning experiences as well.

All of these visual design decisions were made with the target userbase in mind, and through extensive research of the Golden Plains community and essence. Our team has ensured to cover a wide base of factors affecting our primary and secondary users through the implementation of visual flow and layout, typography, colour, navigation, and UI.

Visual Design Overview

Homepage Animation

Town Background Header

- Inspired by the Golden Plains **Architecture and Landscape**
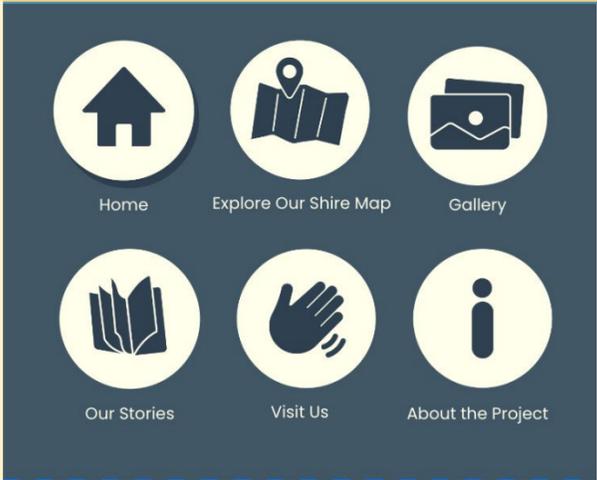- Bring **vibrance to historical buildings**
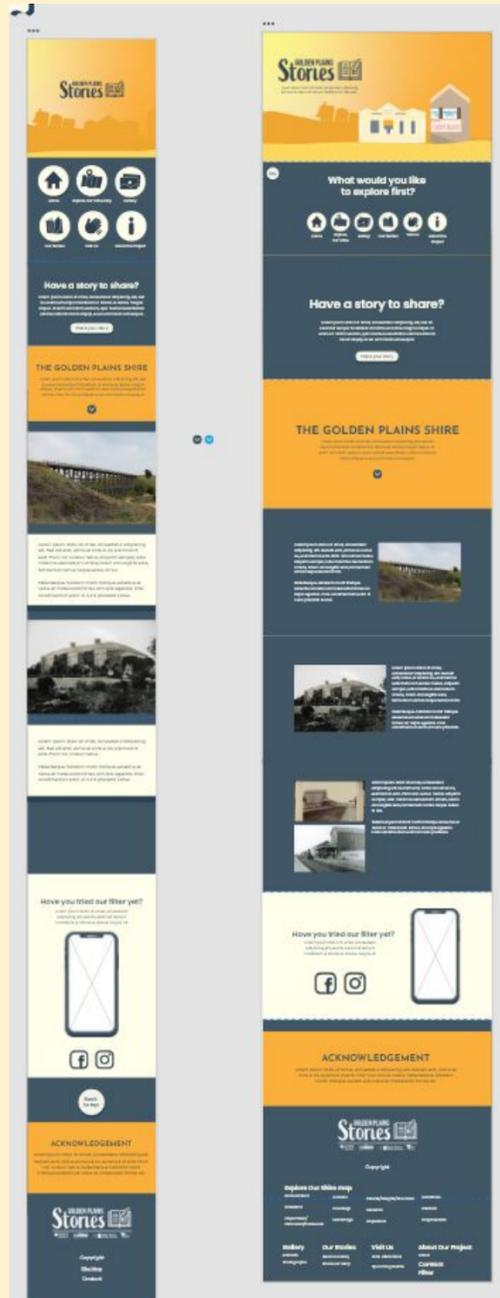- **Depth/Texture**

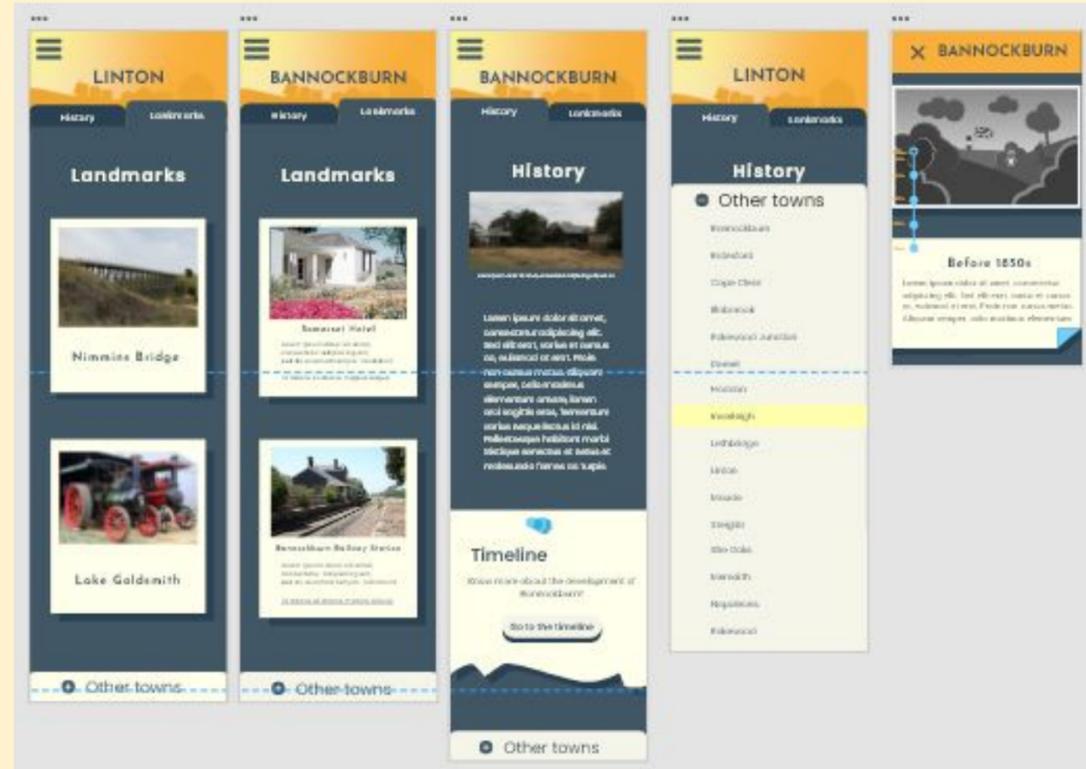
Homepage Mobile

Homepage Desktop
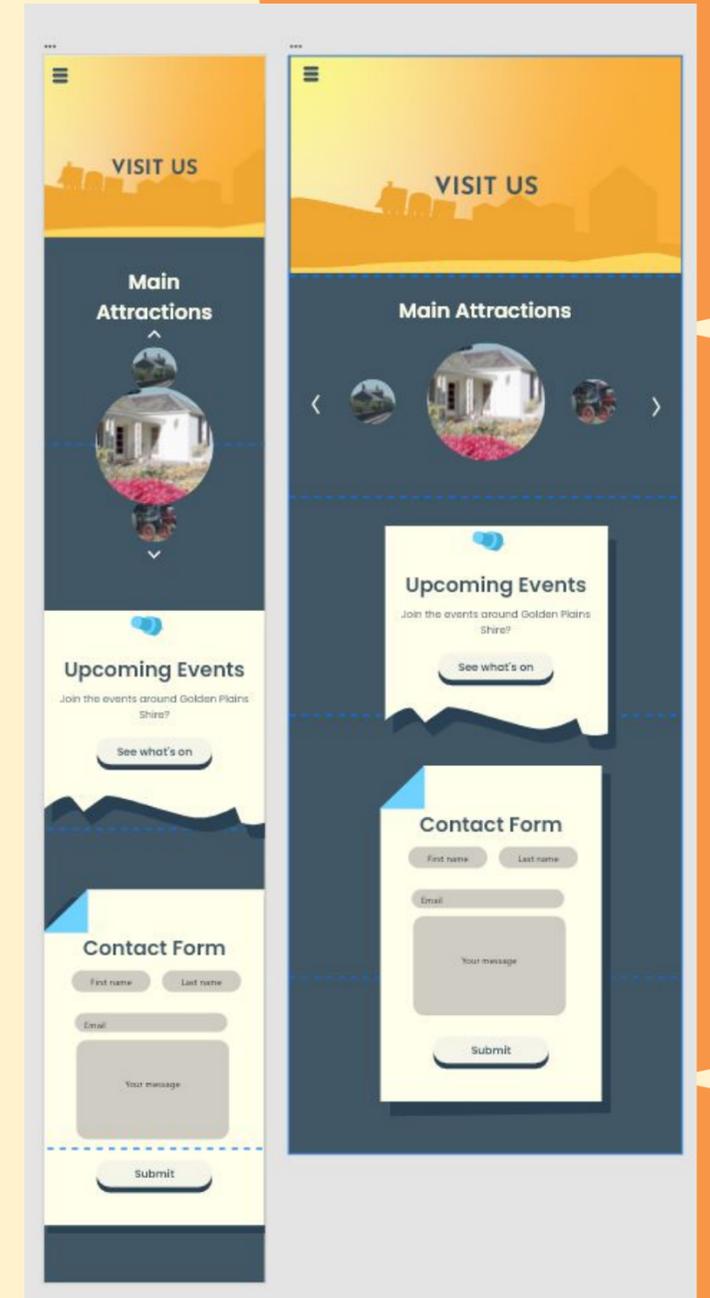

Landscape/Architecture inspired Illustrations

Mock up
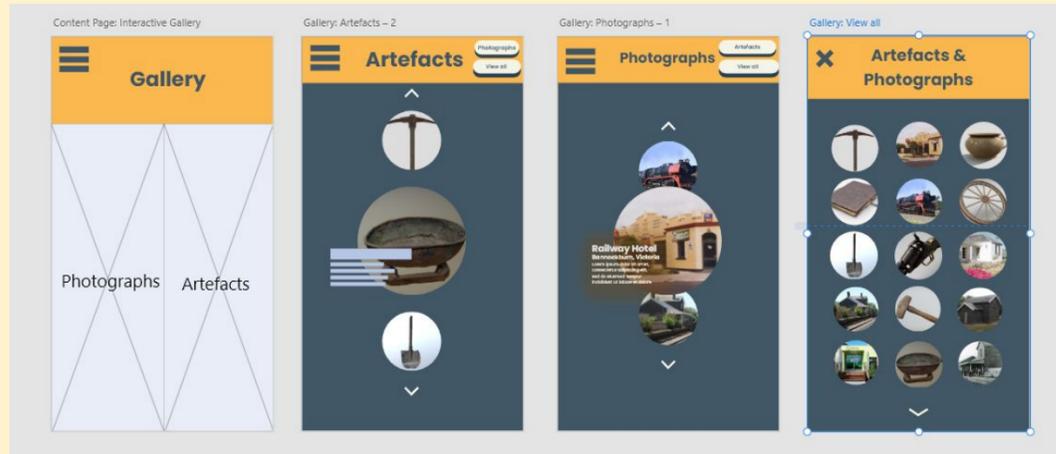

Home page
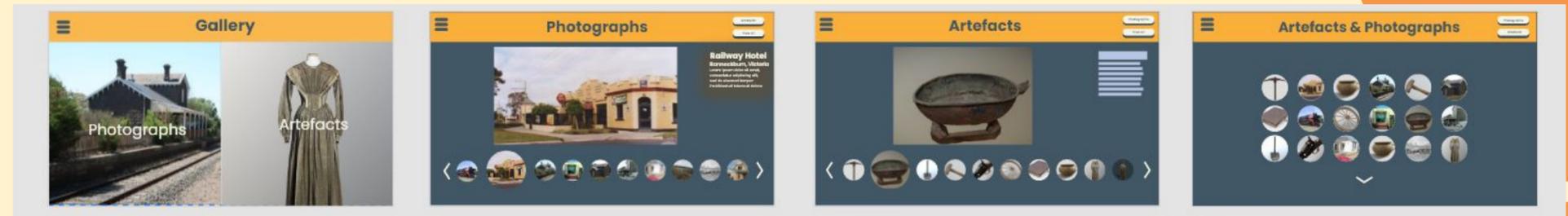

Township (mobile)
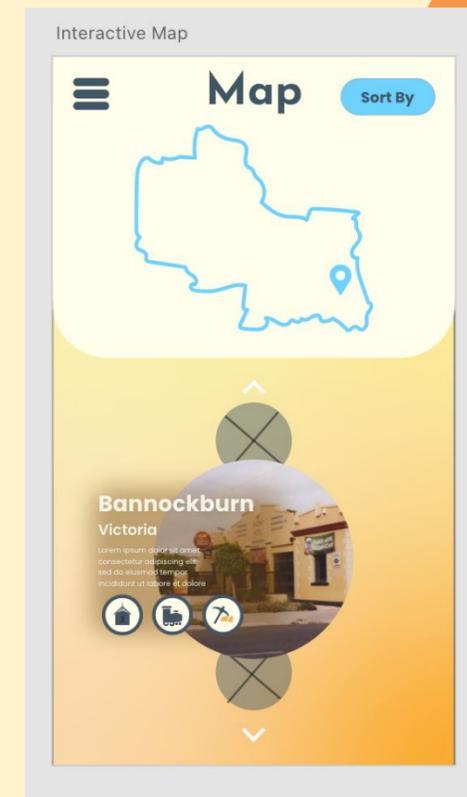

Township (desktop)

Visit Us

Mock up

Interactive Gallery (Mobile)

Interactive Gallery (Desktop)
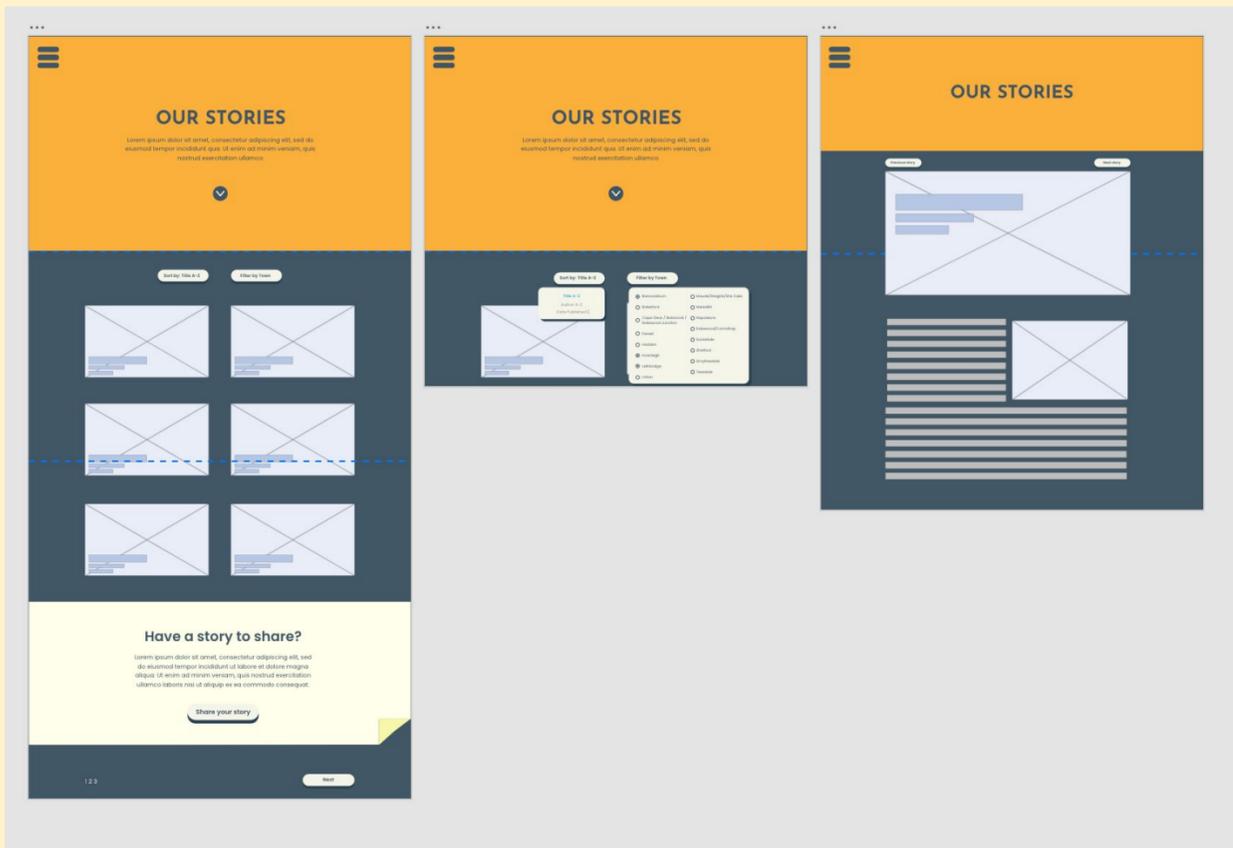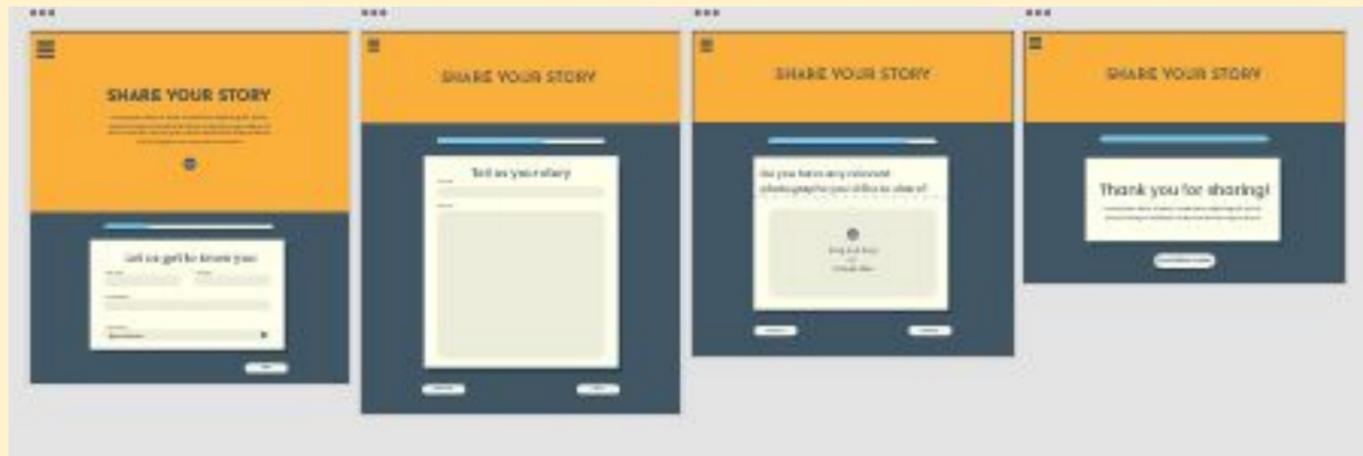
Interactive Map (Desktop)

Menu
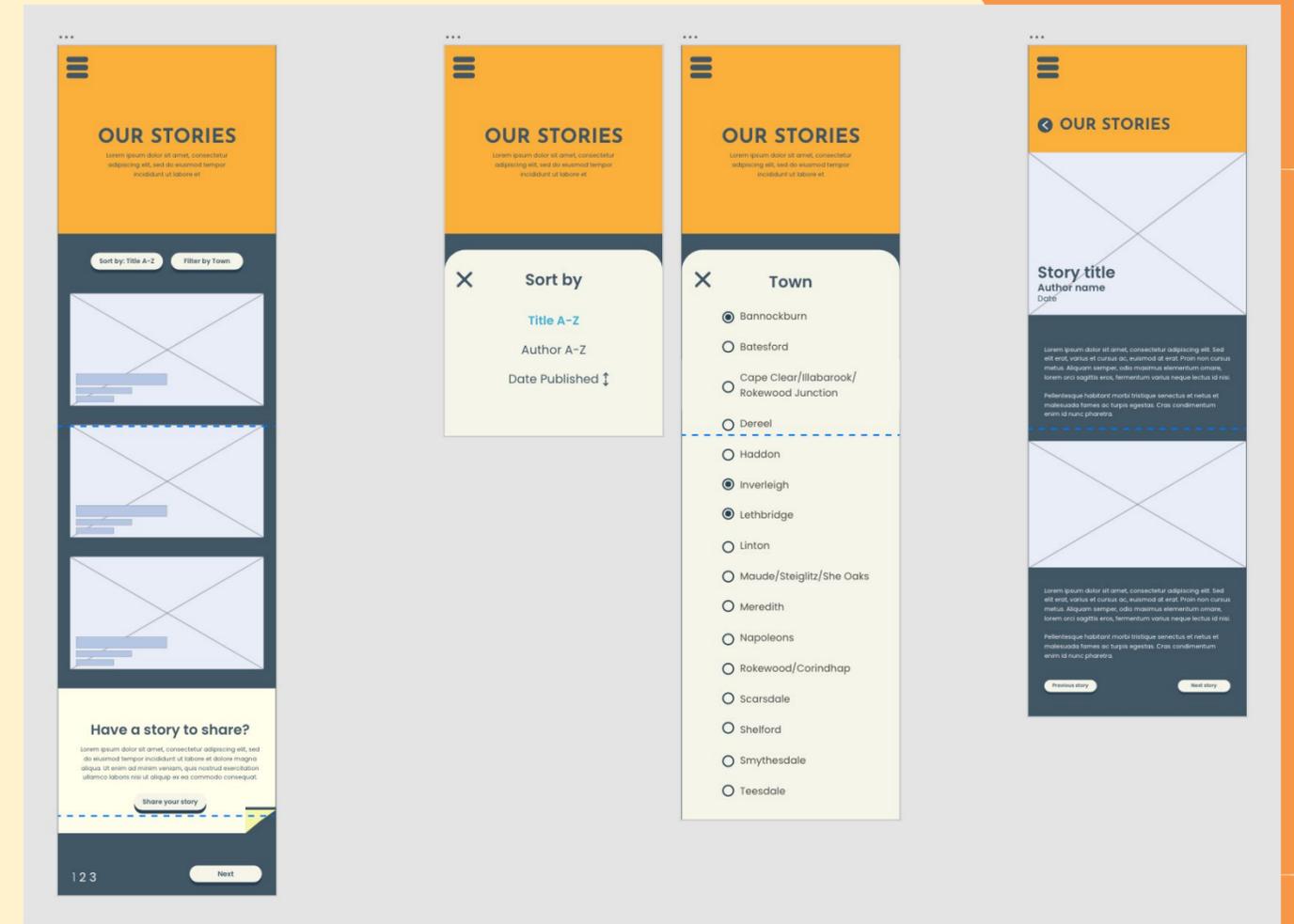Click for menu links
(icons)

Interactive Map (Mobile)

Mock up

Share your story/Our Stories (Desktop)

Share your story (Mobile)

Typography

Font styles

About

The fonts we use are Josefin Sans and Poppins. Josefin Sans is for heading and Poppins is for subheading and body. Both of them are sans serif fonts. The reason why we use these fonts is because they are modern and stylish, fitting with our primary persona, the high school students. Although we used to focus on vintage style, they made the mock-up look outdated which is not suitable for our primary users when we put it into our mockup.

Last but not least, the web-safe fonts we are going to use are Verdana and Arial which are also sans serif fonts. Both of them cover 95% or above for Windows and Mac. Verdana is for heading and Arial is for both subheading and body.

Legibility

The design traits of Josefin Sans and Poppins are clear and simple because they do not have unnecessary decoration. Regarding its weight, their weights are regular; not extremely heavy or light, and is easy for users to read. However, to demonstrate the hierarchy of the headings and subheadings we will use bold and semi-bold to increase their weight. Moreover, both of them do not have stock contrast and their counters are not small. Moreover, X-height and character width are important for the body because they can affect users how easy to read the text and Poppins fulfills these two requirements. Josefin Sans' character width is good to read as well.

Readability

About the type case of these two fonts is not all caps. However, the heading of the page would be presented in all caps because it can enhance the power that can obviously show it is a heading. The headings for the content would not be in all caps. The type sizes depend on which part of the content it is. The heading should be the largest. The body paragraph would be the smallest. In the part of line spacing, it is the part only for the body. Their line spacing is auto so it can adjust lines between lines automatically. Furthermore, the line length does not fix, but not more than 75 characters per line. Last but not least, the colour of the words will be changed depending on the background colours.

Kerning & tracking

The kerning and tracking of Josefin Sans and Poppins are not too close nor far, but suitable to read. Their letters would not be stuck together and the spacing between word to word has a perfect distance. However, the word spacing in body paragraphs will be affected by justify align.

Accessibility considerations

Overall, Josefin Sans and Poppins are most effective in their readability. During the coding process, we will resize it depending on the hierarchy. The body paragraphs are the smallest size, subheadings are larger and headings are the largest. Likewise, the text spacing would be the default one because the default one is easy to read enough, but the word spacing of body paragraphs would be auto and impacted by justify. Moreover, the hyperlink would have the underline.


Poppins in paragraph

The heading and the subheading

Colour

The Golden Plains Stories project hopes to reinvent the communication of history through the use of new media. The colour palette this project plays a important role in painting history in a new light.

The team's initial colour palette was inspired by muted warm pastel colours. This was inspired by the vintage and retro 80s era; hoping for popular colours of the past on the website to be a homage to the concept of history. It was found for this colour scheme to be quite overused, potentially making the Golden Plains Project another outdated website. The pastel colour scheme was slightly too muted for a teenage audience. Though much consideration, the team discussed that a pop of colour was required in order to achieve a contemporary and dynamic website style.
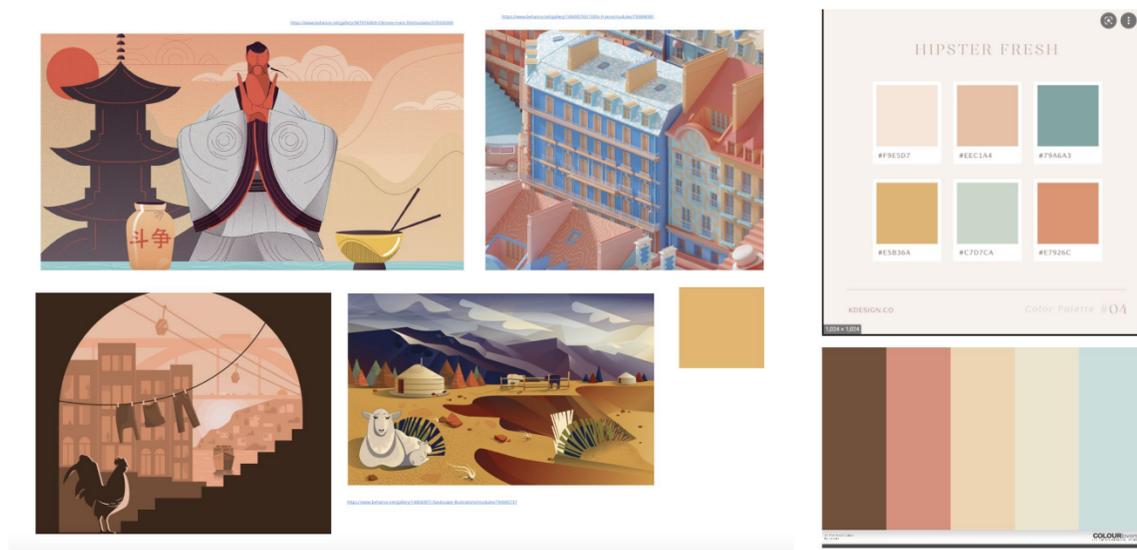

Still inspired by the direction of the moodboard, it was in the team's interest to explore a similar colour palette that touched on warm nude shades, whilst contrasting with a blue. The final curated palette, consists of 5 colours, 2 primary colour selections and 3 secondary colour shades.
Shades of warm nude colours and blue are both colours found in nature, easily associated (in the Golden Plains Shire) with the landscape and sky. The team intended to highlight the natural forms and colour palette within this historically rich location, yet introduce a vibrance into the style of it.

Primary Colours

Secondary Colours
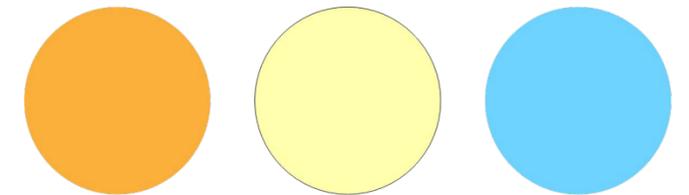
This website steers clear of the traditional black and white, instead a tinted cream shade has been selected, and a tinted navy shade has been selected as the Primary colours. Bright colours for the secondary colours were intentionally chosen, in order to inject a lively atmosphere into the project. These colours wil be the colours that iconically stand out as the Golden Plains Stories style, employed to attract users to certain functions and sections.

It is crucial to note that the blue and orange within the colour palette are complementary colours. This therefore creates a bold and striking contrast, allowing both colours to stand out and prove their vibrance. The yellow provides a supporting depth to the orange, as the orange is derived from the yellow. Through the establishment of this colour palette, the team hopes to communicate history in a contemporary, and exciting manner to teenagers.
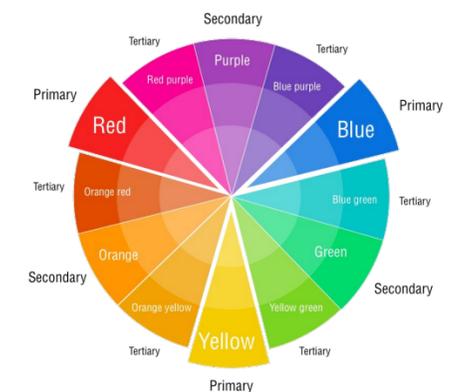
Icons

A distinct element of the website's visual identity is its icons, most notably included in our menu and our map. For the menu, our team decided to use icon buttons instead of a typical text button for the main pages. This is to break down the heavy use of text that would be inevitably presented in a history-focused website, as well as to provide users with distinct and engaging visual signs of what the website has to offer.

The use of these icons provides users with visual indicators that are representative of certain categories or convey a specific meaning. Consistent repetition of the icons throughout the site will also promote memorability, even if the icon is new to the user. Hence, after being introduced to the icons for the first time, the user will then be able to recognise its meaning and purpose for the remainder of their user journey. This will also improve readability and allow for a more seamless user experience, so that our users can focus more on their learning.

Home   Explore Our Shire   Gallery   Our Stories   Visit Us   About the Project

Menu icons

In addition to universal icons such as the hamburger menu, arrows and accordion buttons, the site features icons which are tailored to information that is unique to Golden Plains. For example, the "specialty" icons (used to indicate each township's most distinguishing area feature) include a flat-design illustration of a Victorian building, to represent the specialty of Heritage Architecture. This illustration was directly inspired by the Bannockburn Railway Station, which is a significant landmark listed in the Victorian Heritage Database – yet the simplicity of the illustration is also indicative of the colonial architectural style overall.

Heritage Architecture icon compared to the Bannockburn Railway Station that inspired it
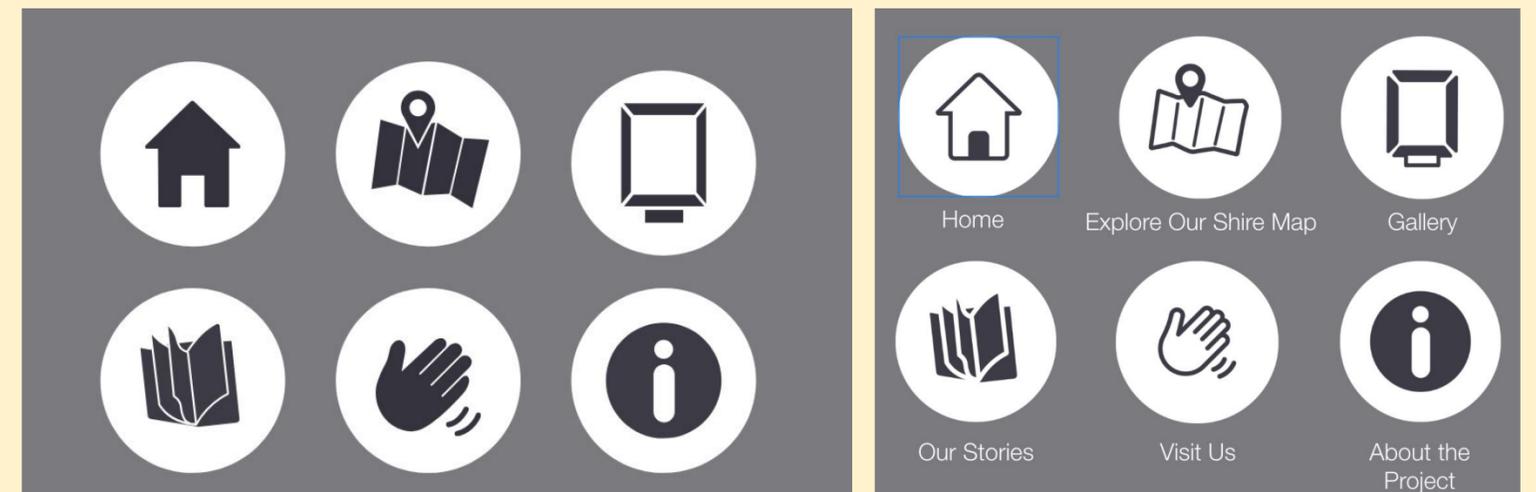
Icons

On the visual side of things, the icons are a continuation of the simple illustration-style of the website (as featured in most headers and the timeline page). The circle shapes are not only more effective in capturing the users' attention, but is consistent with other circular elements in the website such as in the interactive gallery. The graphics of the icons maintain the site's colour palette and make use of negative space to create clean lines.

Creating these icons in Adobe Illustrator, we went through several reiterations to ensure the final product could be easily read, understood, and used. Beyond its aesthetic value, it was critical to our team that the icons could be immediately identified. Therefore, many changes were made to the actual icons so that they best represented its purpose.

Finally, while the visual icons should be easily understood from the illustration itself, they will be labelled, to ensure complete clarity. These icons will also be accessible through alt-text and text-to-speech.

Final specialty icons

Initial iterations of icons

Site Layout

When it comes to the site layout we have created the pages to remain consistent with the overall design and flow. This can be seen with the with the gallery and artifacts page and the map page, both these pages have a bottom navigator with circle icons. Consistency is also seen within the header font and subheading font on all the individual town pages. The reason we are remaining consistent is because its key that our website remains coherent and works harmoniously across all its different elements, such as headers,footers,sidebars and navigation bars.

Some key differences with our mobile and desktop tops versions are seen throughout the different pages. In the mobile version the gallery and artifacts page, the map page and the visit us page navigators with the circle icons are scrollable vertically and in the desktop version the navigators and scrollable horizontally.

We have combined the homepage with the historical content of Golden Plains for two reasons. One to maintain the site's hierarchical system, and two to provide users with a sequence in which they would learn about the entire shire first, then have the opportunity to dive into the history of its individual townships via the Interactive Map.

We have designed our website to have minimal columns and mostly rows. To implement this when coding we have decided to use CSS-grid, also grid is useful for when we want to apply some space between rows, although Flex does have some gap properties it has lower support at just 75%.

Photographs desktop version
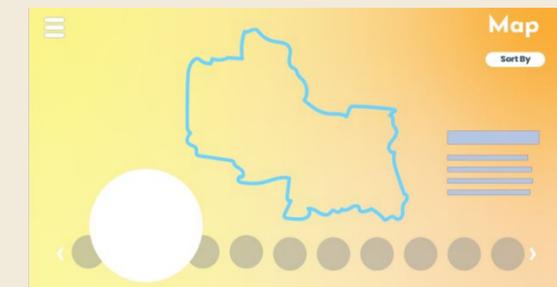
Map desktop version
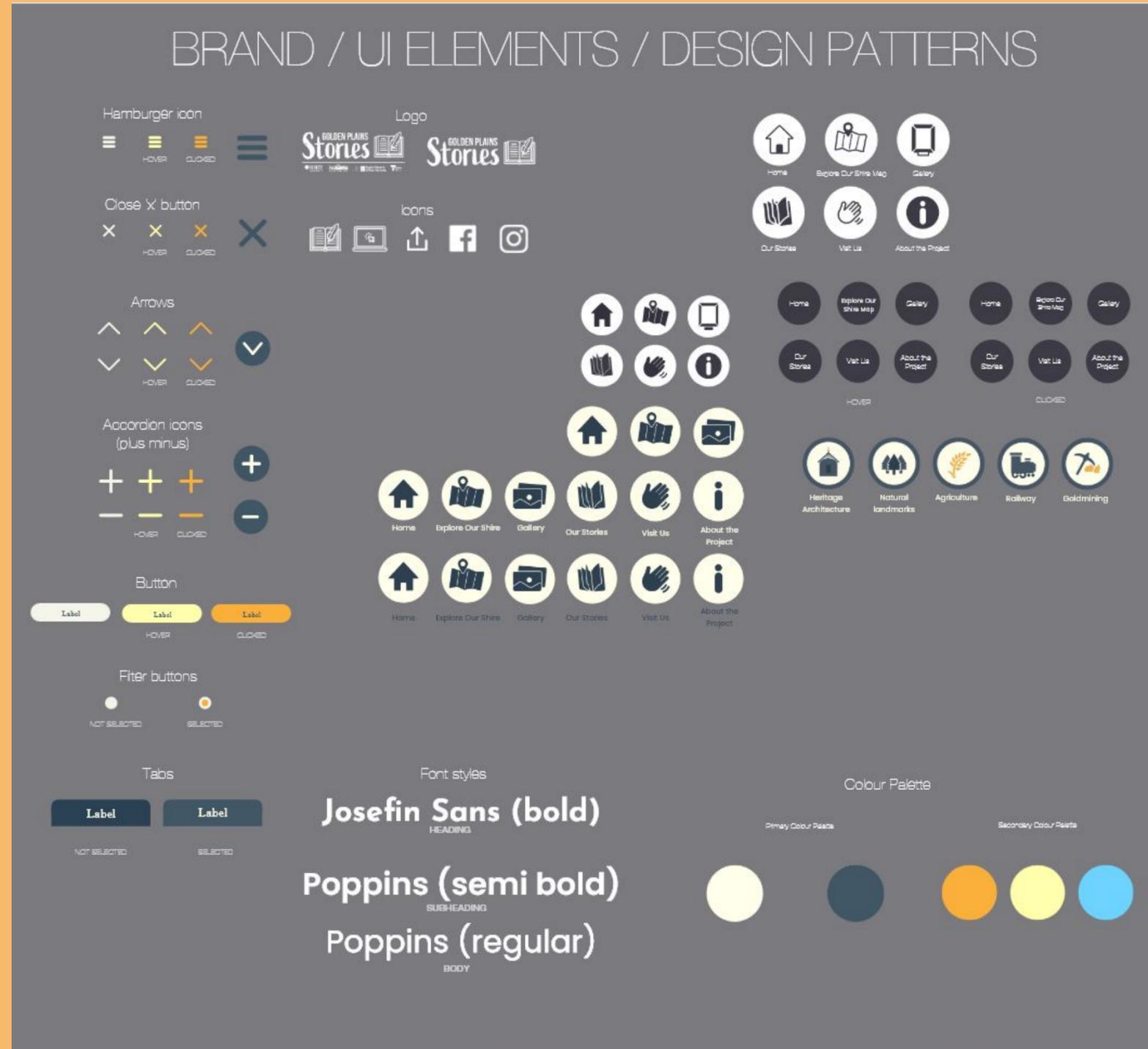

Homepage with historical content

Photographs mobile version

Map page mobile version

Brand/ UI Elements /Design Patterns

Elements

Big elements

The big elements of our website are images, 3D models and parallax animations. Images are not only shown in the gallery but they are also supporting the text to explain. Likewise, 3D models are only shown in the gallery. Moreover, the parallax animations are not only shown on the timeline but it is also shown on the home page which is a looping parallax animation.

Details

The images in the town pages are having a border like instant images because the instant image has the space for users to write or draw something on it and the layout of it is like the posts on Instagram which is fitting in our primary users and keeps the vintage aspect. However, the landmarks on the featured town page would not seem like instant images in the desktop version because they are not intuitive for users to read. Therefore, they would be like notecards instead of instant images in the desktop version.

The parallax animations in the timeline would have a white border which likes the photos because it would be playful and the photo is also the media to record the history that is related to our topic. Moreover, the colour palettes would be changed depending on the time period. In the time period of nowadays, it would be colourful.

The text boxes are the shape of a memo and torn paper with a pin. These elements can rich the visual experience.

Since we want to make the layout much more dimensional, while keeping the flat graphic style at the same time, we only drop some shadows under the images with a photo border and the text boxes with a memo or a torn paper as the background.
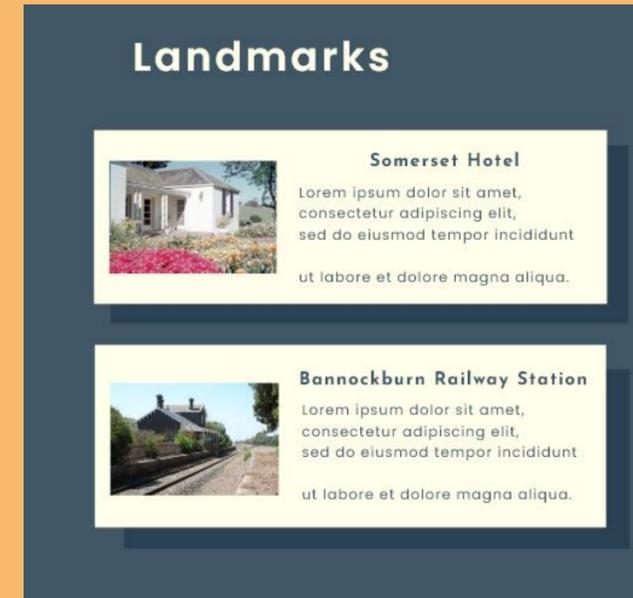
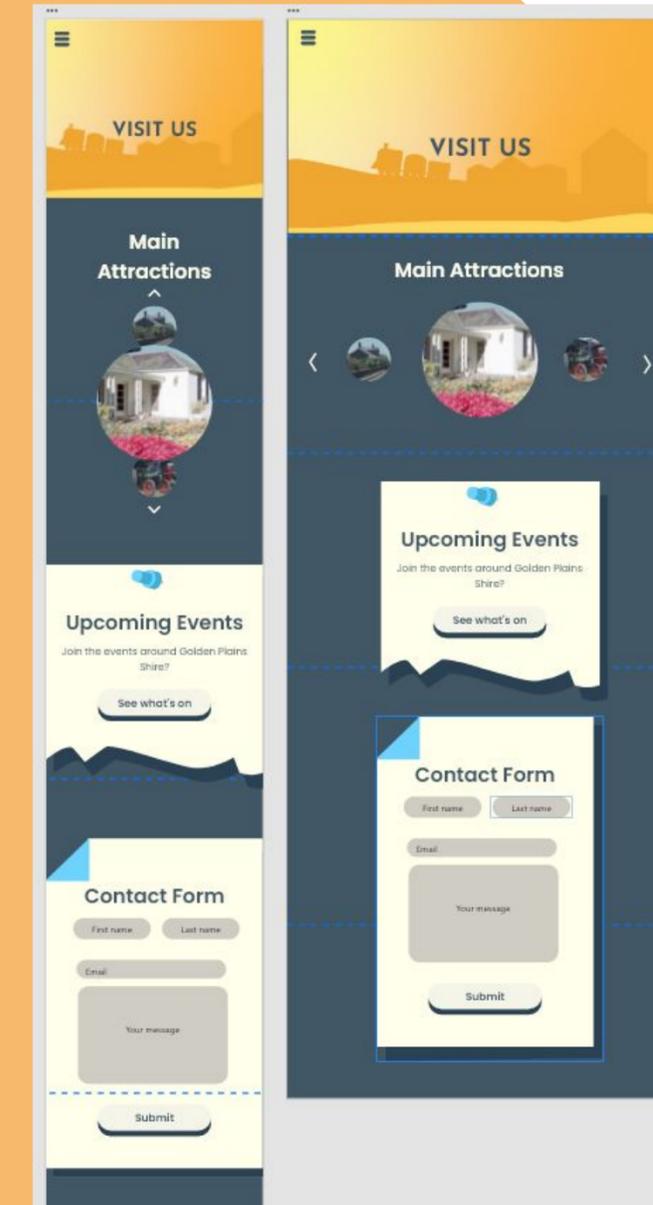The layout of feature town's landmarks in desktop version
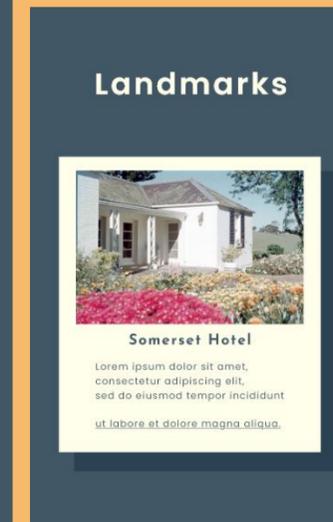
The layout of feature town's landmarks in mobile version

The parallax animation

Colour palettes of parallax animations

The background of the torn paper and the memo

Navigation

Icons on the homepage

 users are presented with sections that are easy to find and clearly organised.

This is supported by the categorisation of these sections into pages with allocated icons. The hamburger menu is an intuitive design that is implemented on every page to maintain consistency, it is located in the top left corner of all pages and when clicked icons will slide out horizontally on desktop and vertically on mobile for more navigation options.

Although the icons as seen in the hamburger menu are positioned differently on the homepage as a fixed set of buttons. We made this conscious design decision so that users would be immediately presented with navigation options as soon as they visit the site. Therefore, users would be more familiar with the six sections and their equivalent icons, enhancing their overall experience as they explore the rest of the website.
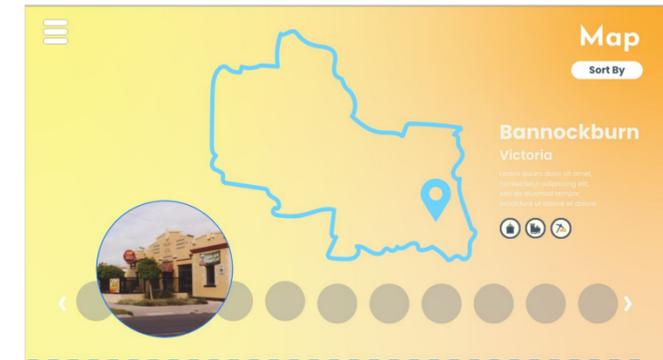
Navigation features also include the circle icons that users can navigate through found at the bottom of the art and gallery page and the map page and also found in the visit us page when users scroll down. This is an intuitive designed created for simplicity and clear navigation through the images.
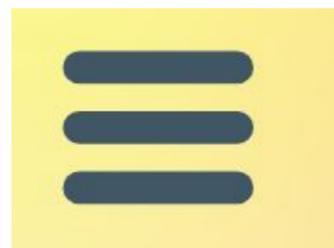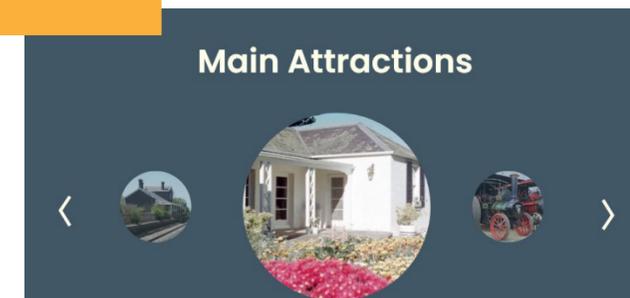

Map circle icon navigator

Circle icon navigator photographs

Circle icon navigator Main Attractions

*Hamburger menu*

Design Measures

Taking a mobile-first approach, our team has designed the website with the consideration of mobile devices, particularly space and layout. As mentioned in the Site Layout section, we made sure to account for screen size and difference in interactivity based on the device being used. For example, the mobile screen would have feature larger elements primarily placed vertically; whilst in the desktop version, most elements would be scaled down slightly and spaced out more horizontally.

The team has made sure to follow visualisation guidelines that ensure inclusivity for all users. These design measures will also increase the effectiveness of the website and the user's experience overall. Tags of headings, subheadings, and body text will be appropriately structured (H1, H2, etc.) when coding. Links will be distinctly indicated either by an underline or bold. The colours particularly used for important information, such as between the text and its background, has a high contrast that will ensure visual accessibility. Any graphics or colours are not the only visual means of conveying information—there will always be text equivalents, such as labels and concise alt-text, to support these elements.
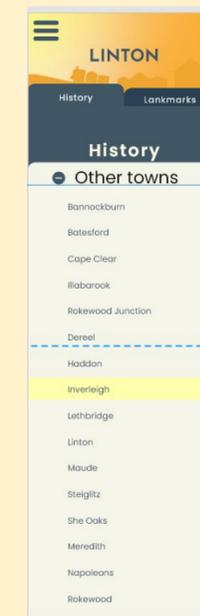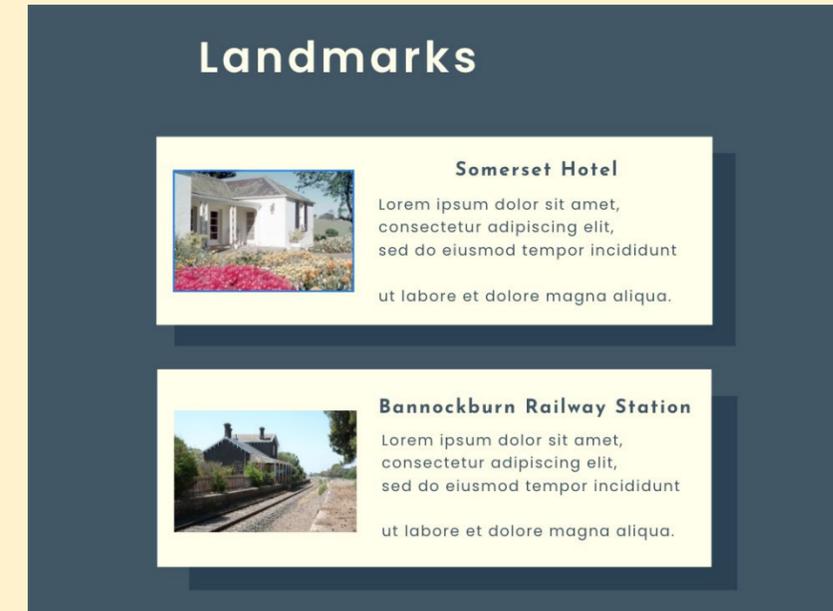
Mockups of mobile vs. desktop

Impact

Age: 15
Location: Bannockburn
Education: High School
Occupation: Works casually at local vineyard
Status: Single
Born in Bannockburn, Family are locals

Sarah Walker

Age: 55 years
Location: Golden Plains Shire (new resident of Bannockburn)
Education: Bachelor's degree
Occupation: Department manager
Status: Married, two children

Tim Richardson

Vibrant Representation of History

This entire project's UX and UI has been curated with the project's primary target audience at the forefront of design. It is in our interests to re-communicate and re-present history in an engaging, contemporary and vibrant manner toward high schoolers. The UI design style with vibrant colours and contemporary flat design has encouraged this renovation of the face of the Golden Plains Shire history. Through the UI illustrations, there also is modern visualisation of the towns and history of the Golden Plains Shire. All such efforts are in an attempt to rebrand the preexisting idea of history and rural towns.

Engaging + Interactive Content

The interactive elements in which we are set out to accomplish and create are innovative methods of showcasing information that is currently not widely implemented. This incorporation of dynamic content such as animation, and interactive media reinforces this connection with our primary target audience. With younger people, ever so immersed with the digital media culture, these innovative and interactive platforms are able to engage and simulate them through their high tech literacy.

Easy Navigation

The secondary audience of this project has not at all been forgotten. The UX has been carefully reiterated to ensure that the navigation of the website is simple and user friendly for those with low tech literacy. This includes the site architecture, navigation menus and Sort/Filter functions. The menu navigation is rather different to most websites. Our designers have decided to adopt a hamburger menu that expands to a 6 icon bar. This is simple, sleek and is straightforward.

Tailored Content

The secondary audience's desires are to be able to connect with the community and to be able to learn and contribute stories. The features within this project are community building elements, which allow the secondary audience to participate. The 'Our Stories' and 'Share Your Story' segments are an example of how the Golden Plains Stories has merged traditional mediums of passing stories with contemporary story sharing.

The Golden Plains Stories hopes to continue designing to impact these audiences; reinventing the way history is communicated, highlighting the wonders of the Golden Plains Shire and it's immense history.

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