UX Strategy Report

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01. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the UX strategy for Voxy, a civic engagement mobile app designed to help close the widening gap between voters and their elected representatives. In a political climate where apathy is common, especially among younger or first-time voters, many individuals lack the knowledge of who represents them, what those representatives are working on, or how to engage with those representatives and the political process in a meaningful way. Voxy aims to eliminate the friction in that process by taking the guesswork out of civic engagement, giving users a simple, personalized way to know who represents them, what they're doing, and how to make their voice heard.

Built on Jesse James Garrett's well-known "Elements of User Experience," this report outlines the process of transforming the core concept of Voxy into a functional and intuitive product. From initial user needs and competitor research to interface development and visual rationale, this UX strategy prioritizes clarity, accessibility, and impact.

As Garrett reminds us, "Everything the user experiences should be the result of a conscious decision" (Garrett, 2011, P. 17) on the part of the designer. Therefore, the design choices throughout were made not only to inform users but to motivate and empower them. The goal in developing the app was to break down barriers to political participation with the same attention to usability that drives engagement in the best consumer-facing apps.

02. STRATEGY

The core problem that Voxy addresses is a lack of accessible, actionable information connecting voters to their representatives. This issue is particularly pronounced among younger voters and digital natives navigating an increasingly polarized political environment with few user-friendly tools to guide meaningful engagement. Research consistently shows that low civic engagement is often driven by limited trust, lack of information, and perceived complexity.

The primary user group for Voxy is young adults aged 18–35, including Millennials and members of Gen Z. These users often express frustration with traditional political systems and lack a clear path toward action as well. This user group tends to rely on mobile-first experiences, value transparency, and are motivated by social good, making

them especially receptive to digital tools that emphasize usability and impact over formality.

While younger Americans remain interested in political issues, their civic participation is inconsistent. According to the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (2025), "after historically high youth voter turnout of over 50% in the 2020 presidential contest, our early estimate is that 42% of youth … voted in 2024," highlighting both engagement and apathy in this demographic. Trust is another significant barrier: only "22% of Americans say they trust the government in Washington to do what is right 'just about always' (2%) or 'most of the time' (21%)" (Pew Research Center, 2024). Voxy is designed to address these twin challenges of access and trust by giving users a simple, empowering way to understand who represents them and how to communicate with those in power.

02.1. Competitor Research

In the effort to look at other digital tools that could compete with Voxy, the following criteria were specified to narrow the focus and be selective:

- **Core functionality overlap**: Does the competitor help users identify their representatives and/or engage with them directly?

- **Target audience alignment**: Is the competitor offering designed for the general public (especially less politically experienced users) rather than policy experts or niche activist groups?

- **Mobile-appropriate design**: Is the app optimized for mobile use, even if not a dedicated native app?

- **Intent to reduce friction**: Does the tool lower barriers to civic participation, such as through direct communication features or digestible information, and promote knowledge-building (not just news or petitions)?

Several digital tools exist that attempt to bridge the gap between voters and their representatives, but few offer an experience that feels intuitive or engaging to less politically active users.

- **BallotReady**: Offers in-depth voter guides and representative lookups, but its interface is dense and bureaucratic in tone. More critically, it requires users to submit both a home address and an email before accessing personalized election information, a step that can feel intrusive and discouraging to younger users accustomed to frictionless, low-commitment interactions.

- **Causes**: Allows users to track political issues and send pre-written messages to reps, but the app is primarily focused on news content, issue-based campaigns, and peer community, rather than on direct contact with representatives. While it includes a rep contact feature, this functionality is secondary to content consumption and social interaction.

- **FiveCalls.org**: Simplifies civic action by offering users issue-based scripts and phone numbers for representatives. Although the platform successfully lowers the barrier to phone-based engagement, it lacks rep discovery tools, a personalized experience, and modern mobile UX conventions.

- **Congress.gov**: Along with similar .gov portals, Congress.gov provides authoritative legislative content and representative profiles but is clearly geared toward policy researchers and political insiders. Its language is fairly technical, the layout is dense, and the institutional interface on mobile devices is cumbersome and intimidating for casual users.

This landscape reveals a clear design opportunity: a civic engagement tool tailored to mobile-first users that doesn't assume prior political fluency, and prioritizes intuitive access, visual clarity, and political neutrality.

While existing tools often overwhelm users with dense content, text-based interfaces, or borderline partisan tones, Voxy is designed to meet users where they are. This means offering a visually engaging, jargon-free experience that helps users identify their representatives, understand key issues, and take meaningful action without friction.

03. SCOPE

The scope of Voxy includes both the functional requirements (what the app will do and how it will do it) and the content requirements (what information and assets the app must contain in order to provide value).

This section defines the core experience users will have when interacting with Voxy, specifically through two key screens: the *Home* screen and the personalized *Your Reps* screen. All features and content are shaped by the goal of making civic engagement intuitive and enjoyable for users who may be politically disengaged, overwhelmed, or uncertain about where to start.

03.1. Functional Requirements

The functional scope of Voxy focuses on helping users quickly and easily identify their elected officials, see what those officials are working on, and take meaningful action, all from a streamlined mobile interface.

Feature	Functionality
Zip code (or location entry)	Users enter their zip code (or grant location access) to personalize content. Both options have pros and cons but the ideal approach is a progressive, dual-option model for our audience (see *Structure* section below for more information)
Representative lookup	The app retrieves a list of elected officials (federal and state) based on location.
Representative information cards	Each representative appears in a tappable card with photo, name, office, and party affiliation.
"Take Action" buttons	Buttons allow users to call, email, or use popular social media accounts to send a message to their reps (with the buttons launching the appropriate native apps).
Legislation & Committees tracker	Users can see what legislation their reps are working on, including summaries of key bills, as well as see what committees their reps serve on.
Feedback form	A lightweight contact form allows users to express opinions on issues.
Tab navigation	A bottom nav bar provides access to "Home," "My Reps," and "More" (see *Skeleton* section below for more information)

All interactive elements are designed with accessibility in mind, following best practices for mobile usability and WCAG compliance. Button sizes, contrast ratios, and tap targets will meet or exceed minimum guidelines to ensure inclusivity (W3C, 2023).

03.2. Content Requirements

The content scope of Voxy focuses on delivering accurate, concise, and inviting information. Since the app's target users may be unfamiliar with political terminology or processes, content will be written in plain language with supportive visual elements. The use of plain language will also directly support accessibility, which prioritizes readability and user comprehension.

As WCAG.com notes, "Plain language removes barriers between your message and your audience, making content more accessible to individuals with cognitive disabilities, limited literacy, or those who speak English as a second language" (WCAG.com, 2023). This includes those with disabilities, but others will also benefit from the "curb cut" effect and attention to principles of inclusive design.

Content Element	Description
Representative details	Names, office held, political affiliation and profile images
Contact information	Office phone numbers, emails, and primary social media accounts for reps
Biographical information	A short profile of each rep, written in plain, conversational language
Bill and issue summaries	Short, nonpartisan summaries of key legislation, organized by topic (e.g., education, health)
Committee information	Summarized list of primary committees the rep currently serves on
Contact information	Office phone numbers, emails, and primary social media accounts for reps
Icons and labels	Clean iconography to support key navigation and action cues, along with accompanying text labels for accessibility
Branding	App logo, name ("Voxy"), tagline ("Make Your Voice Heard")
Interface language	Conversational and encouraging: e.g., "Make your voice heard," "Find your reps," etc.

Together, these features and content elements form the backbone of Voxy's user experience. The app's limited scope, centered around lookup, learning, and action, ensures it remains focused and uncluttered while still empowering users to engage meaningfully with their representatives.

04. STRUCTURE

The structure of Voxy addresses two key components of user experience: Interaction Design and Information Architecture. Together, these define how users navigate through the app and how content is organized to support their goals.

04. 1. Interaction Design

The *Home* screen's inline message builds trust at the moment of data entry. The interaction model for Voxy is deliberately simple and guided by a principle of minimal friction. Each tap leads to clear, purposeful next steps, with users able to identify their representatives and take meaningful action in just a few clicks. Rather than relying on a multi-step onboarding process, Voxy uses lightweight, in-context guidance.

1. *Home* Screen

- **1.1 Launch & Orientation**
  - User opens the app and, after a very short (200ms) animated splash screen, is greeted with a welcoming and encouraging "Make Your Voice Heard" tagline underneath the Voxy logo.
  - Two side-by-side actions appear: "Enter Your Zip Code" and "Use My Location" button.
  - Inline microcopy reads: "Used only to identify your reps — never stored or shared."

- **1.2 ZIP Code Path (Manual Entry)**
  - User types a ZIP code and taps the primary CTA "Find My Reps."
  - The app validates the ZIP.
    - If valid, the app proceeds directly to the *Your Reps* screen.
    - If invalid, the app shows an inline error: "Please enter a valid ZIP code."

- **1.3 My Location Path (Automatic Entry)**

- User taps "Use My Location."
- OS permission modal appears.
  - If granted, the app auto-retrieves coordinates, matches the district, and immediately loads the *Your Reps* screen (no extra tap required).
  - If denied, fallback modal pops up with a prompt: *"We couldn't determine your location. Please enter your ZIP code instead."* User dismisses the modal and is seamlessly transitioned to the ZIP Code Path with the cursor placed in the input field and the ZIP button ready to use.

To support seamless personalization without compromising user trust, Voxy offers two parallel options for identifying representatives: entering a ZIP code or sharing device location. This dual-path approach balances privacy and accuracy. Manual ZIP entry is familiar and low-risk, while location access provides faster, more precise results

Presenting both options side by side (with the aforementioned contextual microcopy) minimizes cognitive friction while addressing the privacy concerns common among younger, mobile-first users. This subtle design choice reinforces Voxy's goal of transparent, user-first civic engagement.

2. *Your Reps* Screen

- **2.1 Arrival & Layout**
  - After a successful ZIP or location lookup, the user lands on the *Your Reps* screen.
  - Representatives are presented in stacked cards and are categorized by federal and state (local representatives may be a future feature).
  - A subtle section header (e.g., "Federal") separates each group.

- **2.2 Card Structure**
  - Photo avatar
  - Name and Office (e.g., "Mark Kelly – U.S. Senator")
  - Party Affiliation (a simple "D" or "R" icon for, respectively, "Democrat" or "Republican" is avoided for reasons of accessibility)
  - Chevron icon indicating tap-to-view details (takes the user to the dedicated rep page)

- **2.3 Primary Interaction**
  - Cards are scrollable with the bottom nav remaining fixed for easy tab switching.
  - Tap on chevron to open the *Rep Details* screen.

- **2.4 Sticky Label on Scroll (Optional Advanced)**

- Allow section headers to "stick" briefly at the top as the user scrolls through reps, helping orient them.

This flow is designed to take users from uninformed to engaged in seconds, removing barriers to civic action while preserving agency, privacy, and clarity.

04.2. Information Architecture

Voxy's information architecture is intentionally minimal and user-centered, designed to reduce overwhelm while guiding users toward meaningful action. The app uses a card-based layout and progressive disclosure to organize information in a way that feels approachable and familiar.

Content is organized according to user mental models and aligned with mobile UX best practices:

- **By Government Level**: On the *Your Reps* screen, elected officials are grouped into two clearly labeled sections (Federal and State) to help users understand the structure and hierarchy of representation. Subtle visual dividers and section headers reinforce this organization.

- **By Role Clarity**: Each representative is displayed in an individual card that includes their image, name, office, and party affiliation, giving users enough context to recognize their reps without overloading the screen with details.

- **By Visual Simplicity**: The *Home* screen is focused on a single goal: personalizing the app experience through ZIP code entry or location access. Inline guidance and microcopy offer just-in-time support while maintaining a clean layout.

Labels throughout the app favor plain language for ease of comprehension (e.g., "Find My Reps"). Icons are used sparingly and always paired with text to support accessibility and reinforce meaning without relying on interpretation.

Navigation remains consistent across screens, using a bottom tab structure to ensure familiarity and reduce friction. This structure supports just-in-time access to core tasks, minimizes user disorientation, and accommodates future content scaling.

While the current prototype is intentionally scoped to two primary screens, the information architecture is designed to scale. Future iterations could incorporate additional local representatives, issue-based navigation, and action pathways (e.g., email, call, track bills) without disrupting the app's clear, friction-minimized structure.

05. SKELETON

The skeleton plane defines the interface layout, navigation model, and information design. This is the plane that dictates "the visual form on the screen, presentation, and arrangement of all elements that make us interact with the ... system" (Elgabry, 2016) and how the user moves through and understands what's on the screen.

05.1. Navigation

To support intuitive movement throughout the app, Voxy uses a persistent bottom navigation bar with three primary tabs: "Home," "My Reps," and "More." This streamlined approach reduces cognitive load, minimizes clutter, and aligns with mobile UX best practices by prioritizing reachability and ease of use. Each tab on the nav bar reflects a core functional area:

- **Home**: Anchors the user flow with the persistent and familiar icon functioning as an "emergency exit," giving users a dependable way to reorient themselves and return to a familiar starting point at any time. This approach supports usability by reinforcing user control and minimizing the risk of getting lost.

- **My Reps**: Offers quick access to their elected representatives based on user input.

- **More**: Serves as a drawer for secondary or less frequently accessed features such as *Settings* and *FAQs*. This structure avoids overwhelming the user, keeps primary tasks front and center, and ensures consistent orientation across screens

This structure supports Voxy's mobile-first audience by emphasizing ergonomic interaction, simplifying choices, and maintaining a clean, focused interface.

05.2. Interfaces

Two key screens were designed to show the primary user flow: *Home* and *My Reps*. The current skeletal structure can scale to include additional details (dedicated rep pages with biographical information, legislation, and committee; an issues repository, etc.) without disrupting the clean, focused layout established here.

Interface 1: *Home* Screen

The *Home* screen (see Figure 1) is Voxy's launch point and is designed to be clean, welcoming, and intuitive. At the top, the Voxy logo and tagline, "Make Your Voice Heard,"

establish brand identity and purpose, reinforced by a simple civic-themed image like a megaphone.

Below this, users are prompted to either enter their ZIP code followed by a clear call-to-action ("Find My Reps") or tap "Use My Location." Inline microcopy ("Used only to identify your reps – never stored or shared") builds trust and reduces friction, especially for privacy-conscious users.

A persistent bottom navigation bar provides quick access to *Home*, *My Reps*, and *More*, aligning with mobile UX best practices and ensuring users can navigate easily at any time.

All in all, this design reduces friction by making the first major interaction feel familiar and unintimidating (e.g., the act of entering a delivery zip code) but with civic utility instead of e-commerce.
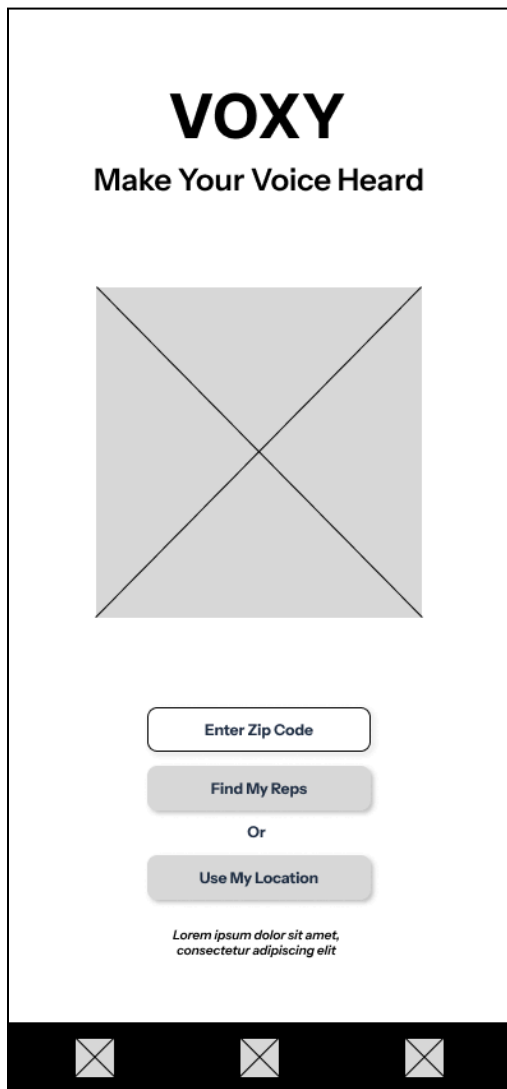

Figure 1 – *Home* screen wireframe

Interface 2: *Your Reps* Screen

The *Your Reps* screen (see Figure 2) presents a scrollable list of the user's elected officials, grouped by Federal and State categories for clarity. Each official appears in a clean, card-based layout with their photo, name, title, jurisdiction, and party affiliation.

The bottom navigation remains visible, offering quick access to other core areas and reinforcing a consistent, low-friction user experience. This layout turns complex civic data into a streamlined, approachable interface.
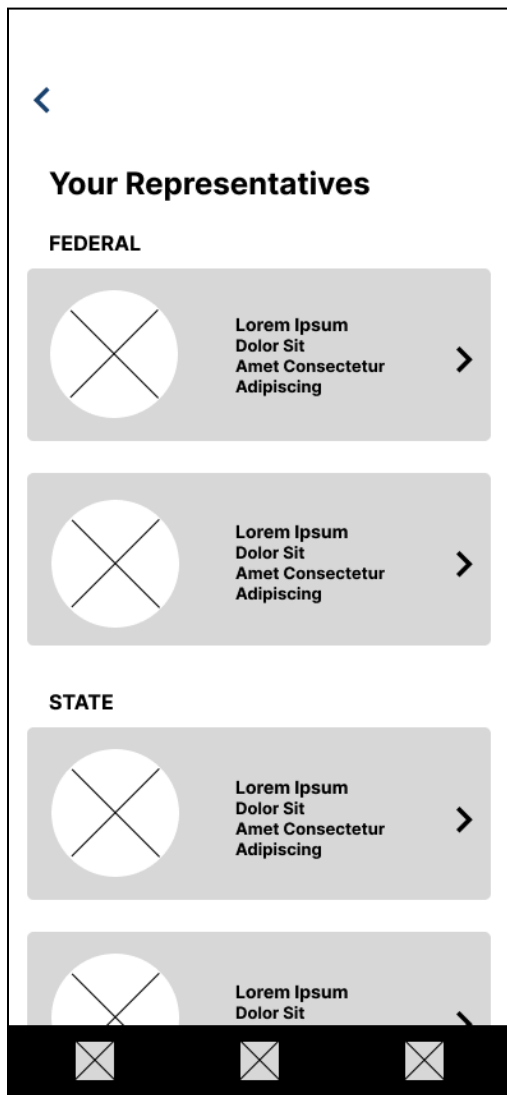

Figure 2 – *Your Reps* screen wireframe

05.3. Information Design Considerations

Voxy's information design emphasizes clarity, accessibility, and cognitive ease, all things that are critical for users who may be new to civic engagement. Design choices are

grounded in mobile UI best practices and accessibility standards, with particular attention to hierarchy, grouping, and readability.

- **Accessible Tap Targets**: All interactive elements meet or exceed the 44 × 44px minimum target size recommended by Apple's Human Interface Guidelines and WCAG 2.1, ensuring comfortable interaction for all users (including assistive-tech users).

- **Clear Visual Hierarchy**: Typeface weight and size are used systematically to distinguish between primary actions (e.g., "Find My Reps"), key content (e.g., rep names), and secondary information (e.g., party affiliation).

- **Left-Aligned Text**: Text is consistently left-aligned to optimize legibility and allow for efficient vertical scanning. This is especially important in mobile interfaces where center or justified text can disrupt flow and increase reading time.

- **Card-Based Layouts**: Rep profiles and issue overviews are presented in modular card components that use light drop shadows to visually group related elements and visually distinguish them from other elements. This creates a clean separation between content areas without overwhelming the user with heavy containers.

- **Label-Paired Icons**: Icons are used sparingly and always accompanied by text labels to ensure interpretability and accessibility. This supports users who may have difficulty recognizing standalone icons and helps screen readers interpret interface elements more accurately.

- **Consistent Spacing & Alignment**: Uniform padding and spacing between elements support a rhythmic, uncluttered experience. Headings, body text, and CTAs align to a consistent grid system that reinforces the app's visual integrity and predictability.

- **Readable Typography**: A modern sans-serif font is used to ensure legibility on small screens (see *Surface* section below for more information). Text is sized according to WCAG contrast and readability standards, with a minimum of 16px for body content and higher contrast against background colors.

These considerations work together to reduce cognitive load, improve task orientation, and create a trustworthy visual voice. These design goals are essential for an app seeking to bridge the civic engagement gap. The skeleton thus ensures that users can find their reps, understand their work, and engage if desired, all without needing a tutorial or guide.

06. SURFACE

The surface plane represents the final visual expression of Voxy. Here, the "sum total of all the work and decisions we have made" (Elgabry, 2016) in the earlier planes – from user needs to information architecture – come together in a high-fidelity interface that is clean, modern, and purpose-driven.

Two prototype screens were created in Figma (see Figures 3 and 4) to reflect this vision: the Home Screen and the Your Reps Screen.
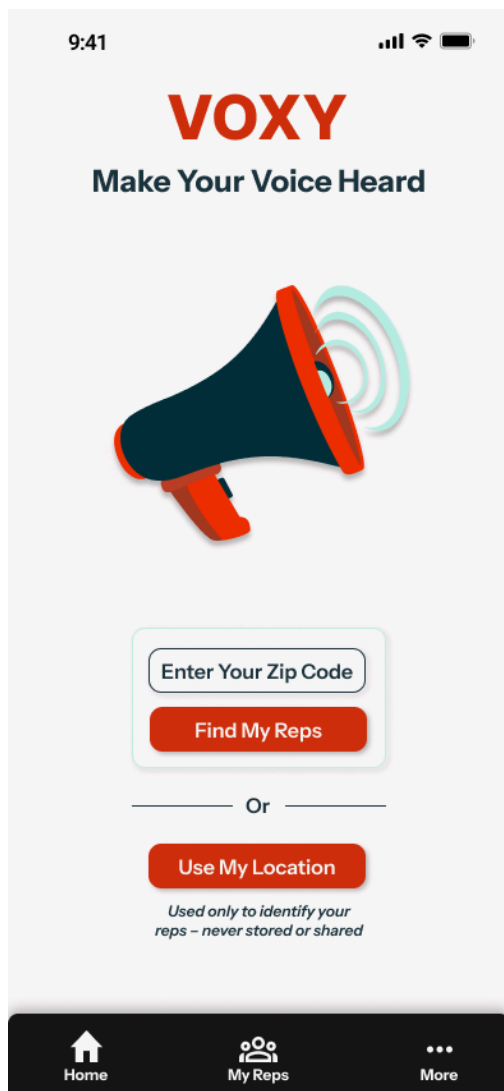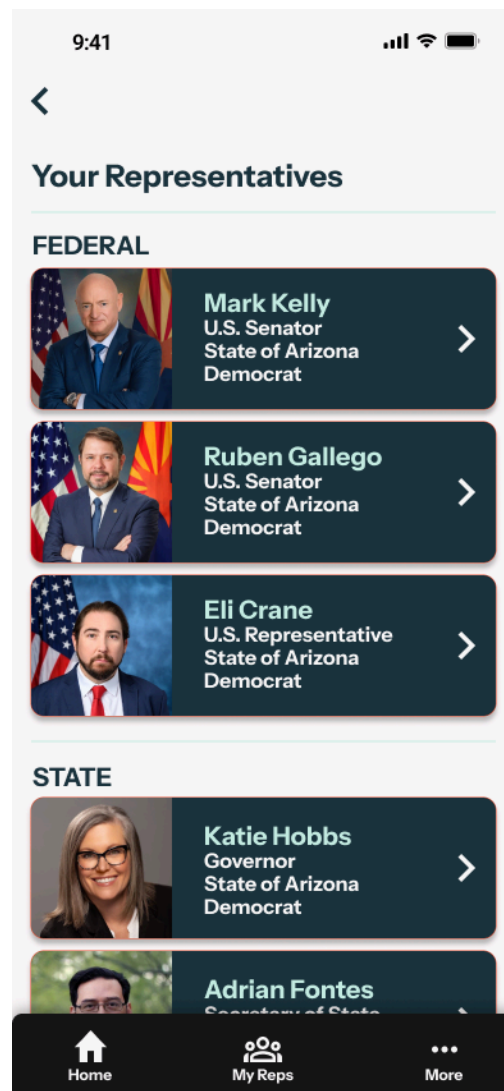

Figure 3 – *Home* screen prototype

Figure 4 – *Your Reps* screen prototype

06.1. Visual Style & Brand Identity

- **Typography**: Instrument Sans anchors the interface with a friendly, contemporary feel that softens the often hard edges of civic information and supports the app's apolitical stance. Its generous x-height, open counters, and rounded terminals enhance legibility on small screens, while a full weight range supports clear visual hierarchy across headings, body text, and buttons.

- **Color Palette**: Voxy's palette was deliberately chosen to convey a soft, modern set of tones that emphasize trust, clarity, and freshness. This helps the app stand apart visually while signaling a more welcoming, less "institutional" experience. Specifically, the color palette (see Figure 5) consists of:

    - Night #161618
    - Gunmetal #19323C
    - Mint Green #C7EDE4
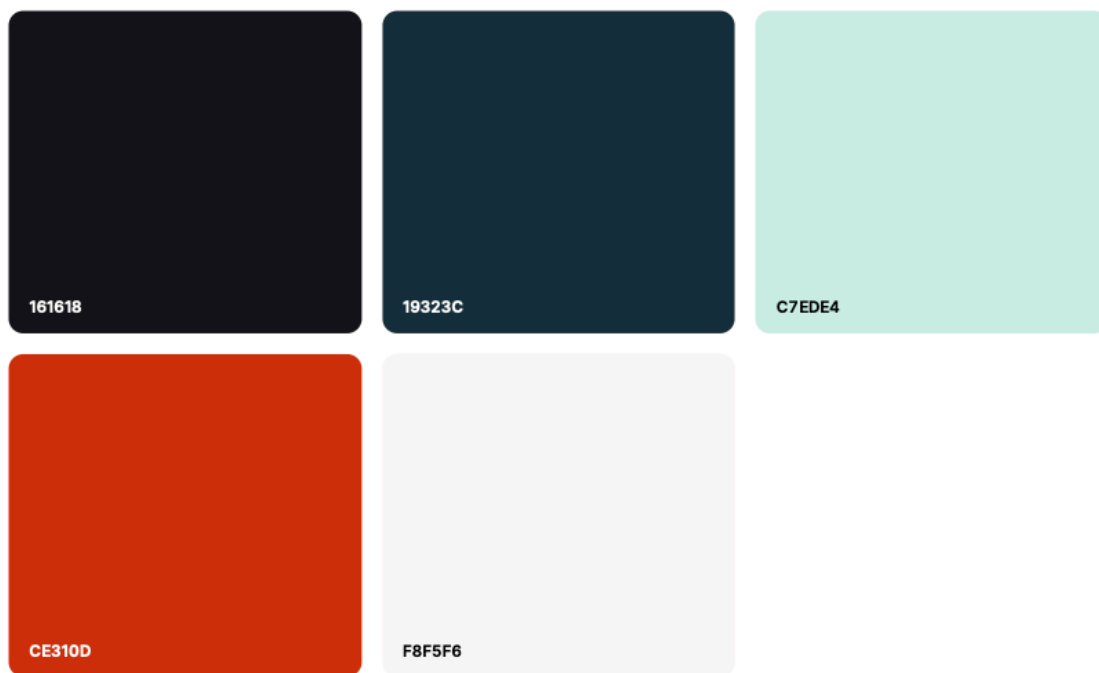   - Amarantha Red #CE310D
    - Snow #F8F5F6

Figure 5 – Voxy color palette, courtesy of https://coolors.co/

- **Contrast & Balance**: A deliberate mix of light backgrounds (Snow #F8F5F6) and dark text (Gunmetal #19323C) ensures strong WCAG-compliant contrast while

avoiding the starkness of pure white and the harshness of true black. Night #161618 is reserved for the bottom navigation bar, providing clear visual separation from scrollable content and anchoring the interface. Amarantha Red #CE310D is applied selectively, preserving visual balance while commanding appropriate attention. Hints of Mint Green provide highlights that keep the interface feeling fresh without competing for attention.

- **Iconography**: Simple line-based icons (e.g., home, reps, etc.) enhance comprehension without visual clutter. Icons are always paired with text labels to support clarity and screen reader accessibility.

- **Spacing & Layout**: Generous padding and ample whitespace improve scannability, particularly for users who may be skimming or unfamiliar with civic terminology. Layouts follow a consistent grid system to maintain rhythm and alignment across screens.

Together, these surface-level treatments deliver a cohesive visual identity that feels modern, friendly, and politically neutral. And these characteristics align with Voxy's mission to make civic engagement approachable for everyone.

06.2. Rationale

The design rationale behind Voxy is grounded in usability principles and interface design that encourages engagement without overwhelming or pressuring users. Both layout and navigation decisions were guided by Steve Krug's admonition, "Don't make me think" (Krug, 2014. P.11), while best practices in mobile-specific design were adhered to. The goal is that users should intuitively comprehend what Voxy does within the first few seconds of opening the app, and feel confident in using it.

- **Typography**: Instrument Sans was selected for its generous x-height, open counters, and rounded terminals, which "make text easier to read on small screens" (Osborn, 2017a). The choice of typography further reinforces this clarity, with short, bolded headlines and plain-language copy enabling fast scanning. The neutral look and feel of Instrument Sans also supports Voxy's non-partisan stance, and its full weight range lets the design establish hierarchy without additional color, preserving visual calm.

- **Color System**: A restrained five-color palette reflects best practices in interface design and follows Osborn's advice that limiting hues "reduces clutter and strengthens brand recognition" (Osborn, 2017b). Each color in the palette serves a clear functional role while supporting a cohesive visual identity. All interplay between colors maintains appropriate WCAG-compliant contrast ratios, ensuring legibility for all users (W3C, 2023). Overall, the balance in the color palette

supports the usability, readability, and accessibility that's particularly important in a tool aimed toward civic engagement.

- **Layout and Spacing**: A responsive grid, 16 px minimum body text, and 44 × 44 px tap targets reflect mobile-first and accessibility guidelines, supporting users with motor or visual limits. Ample white space balances each screen and keeps visual weight evenly distributed, so no element disproportionately dominates the interface.

- **Information Presentation**: Plain-language copy reduces cognitive load and aligns with WCAG guidance that "plain language removes barriers between your message and your audience" (WCAG.com, 2023). Icons are paired with text for clarity and screen-reader support, never replacing labels outright.

- **Navigation**: Navigation follows familiar mobile tab conventions to reduce cognitive friction and reinforce users' mental models. Primary destinations are placed in a bottom tab bar for easy thumb access, ensuring users can move fluidly through core functions. Less frequently accessed options are grouped under the *More* tab to keep the interface clean. This predictability aligns with Elgabry's (2016) emphasis on user alignment: "Strategy is about aligning the product with user needs and business goals."

Collectively, these design choices create a visual and structural system that is trustworthy, inclusive, and purpose-driven, allowing users to move from uncertainty to informed civic action with minimal effort.

07. CONCLUSION

Voxy was designed to address a very real and very solvable problem: the disconnect between constituents (particularly younger constituents) and their elected representatives. Through the deliberate application of Jesse James Garrett's Five Elements of UX, the app evolved from a broad idea into a targeted, mobile-first solution for encouraging civic engagement.

Every design decision, from frictionless navigation to accessible typography and trust-centered microcopy, reflects a commitment to users who may feel unsure, disengaged, or excluded from traditional civic tools. Rather than overload users with complicated interfaces and dense content, Voxy offers clarity, transparency, and action in a lightweight, user-first experience.

The goal of the app is not to inform but to empower users and invite them into a system that can often feel opaque and impenetrable. Voxy shows how thoughtful UX design can lower barriers to participation and help to transform intimidating systems into approachable, meaningful (and ideally actionable) interactions with our political system.

08. REFERENCES

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09. AI ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A generative AI tool (ChatGPT) was utilized to provide recommendations on how to revise certain sections of this assignment for purposes of organization, clarity, and conciseness. I reviewed and edited the final work, and assume full responsibility for the final content.