

Sketching ideas of digital interfaces

1

Thinking about sketches

Overview: sketching & ideas

What is an idea?

What is a sketch of an idea?

Overview: sketching & ideas

If I ask you to sketch, how do you feel?

Overview: sketching & ideas

But it's your job to sketch...

Who is a sketch for?

Me

You

Sketching is...

Sketching is about...

exploring

dreaming

solutioning

evaluating

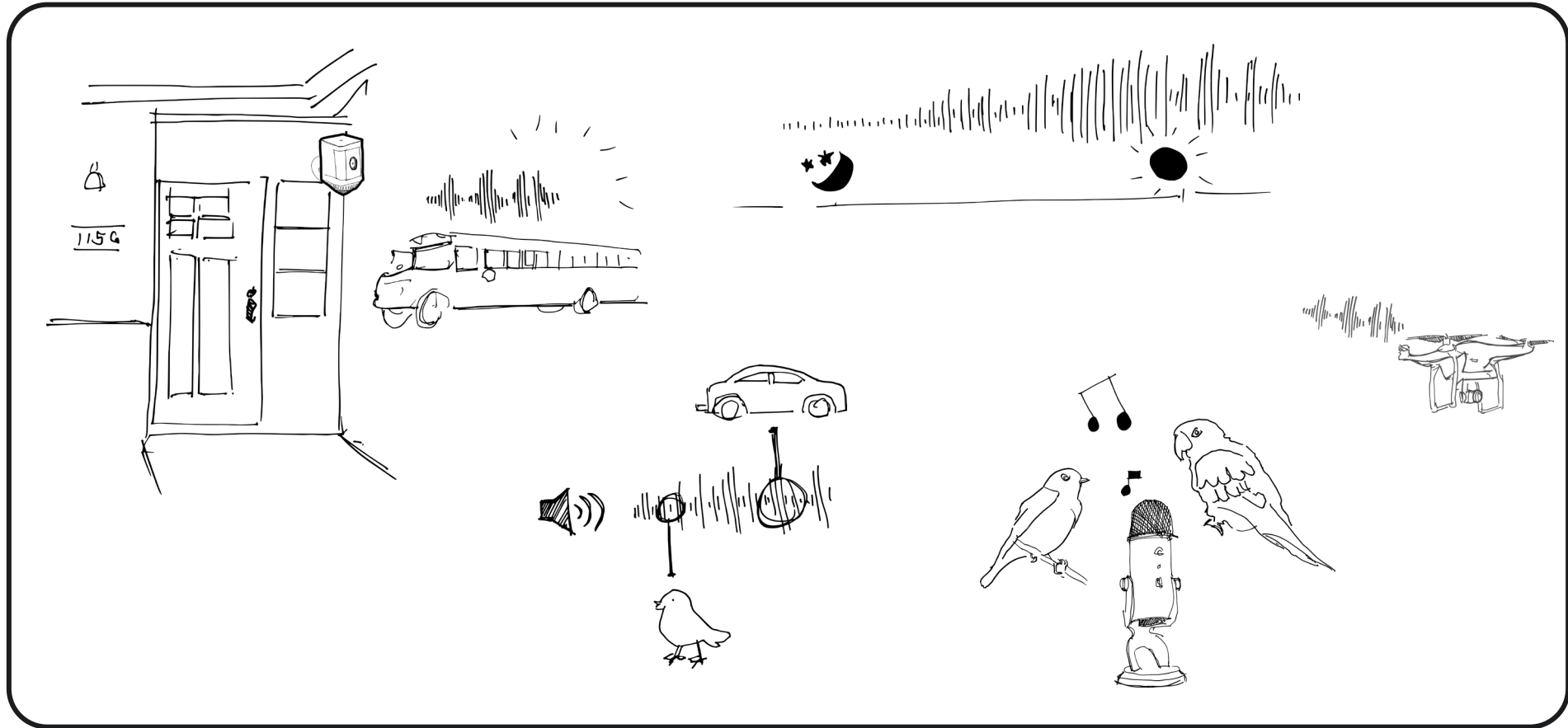
communicating

collaborating

manipulating

persuading

Sketches are ways we explore and dream



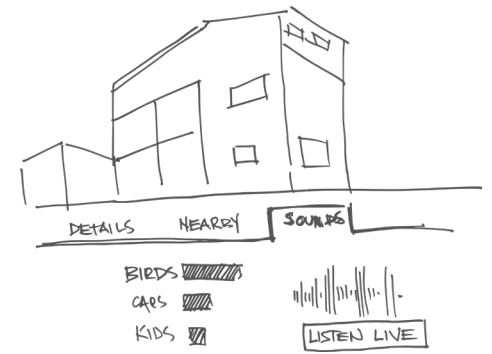
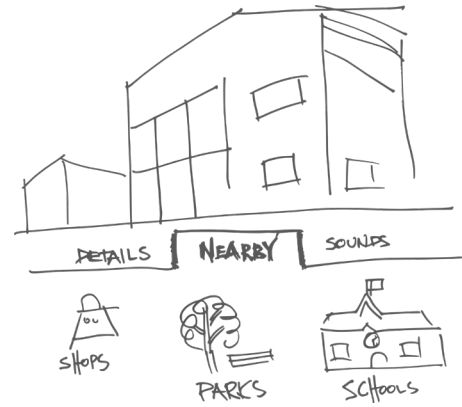
Sketches are ways to solve a problem



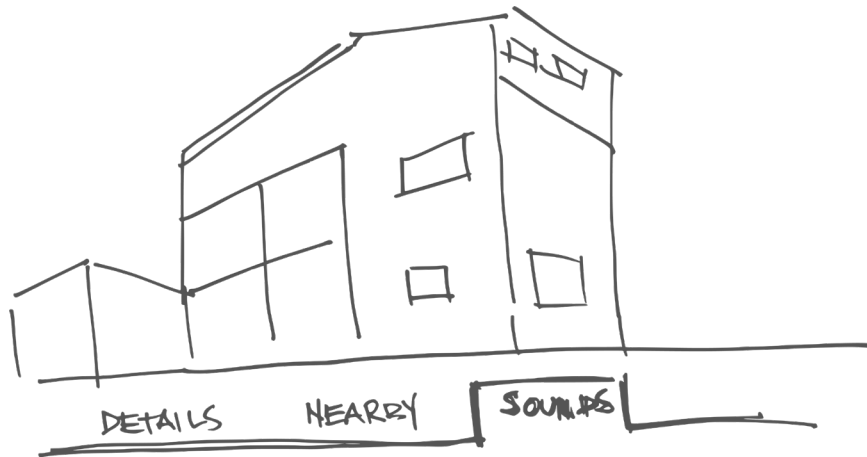
A rough problem-solving sketch




More in-depth problem solving sketches



Sketches are ways to compare ideas



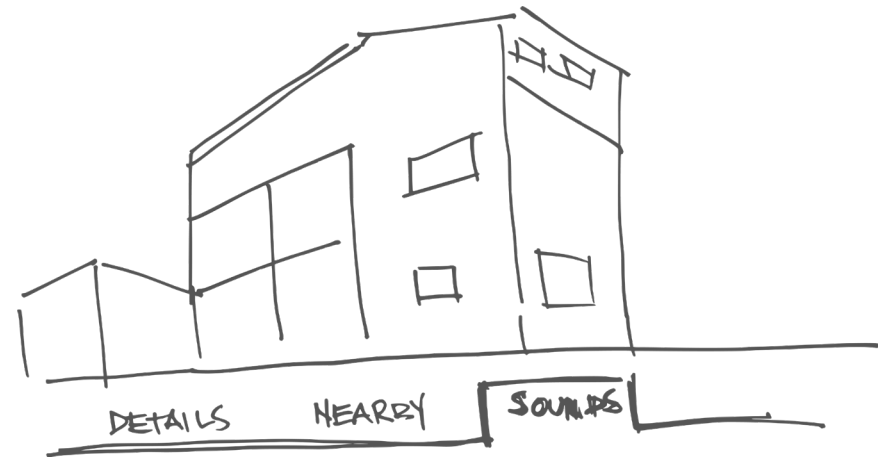
BIRDS 

CARS 

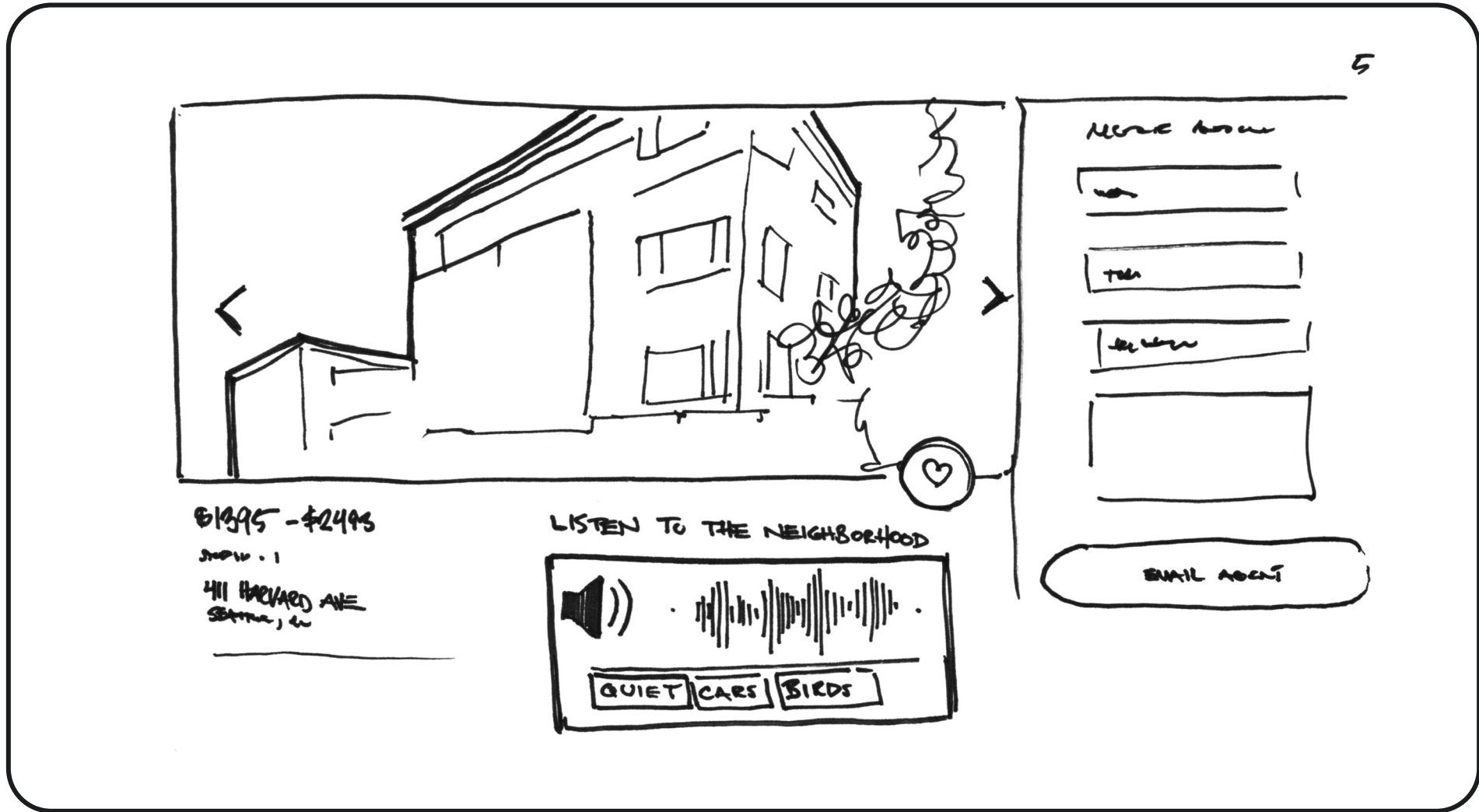
KIDS 



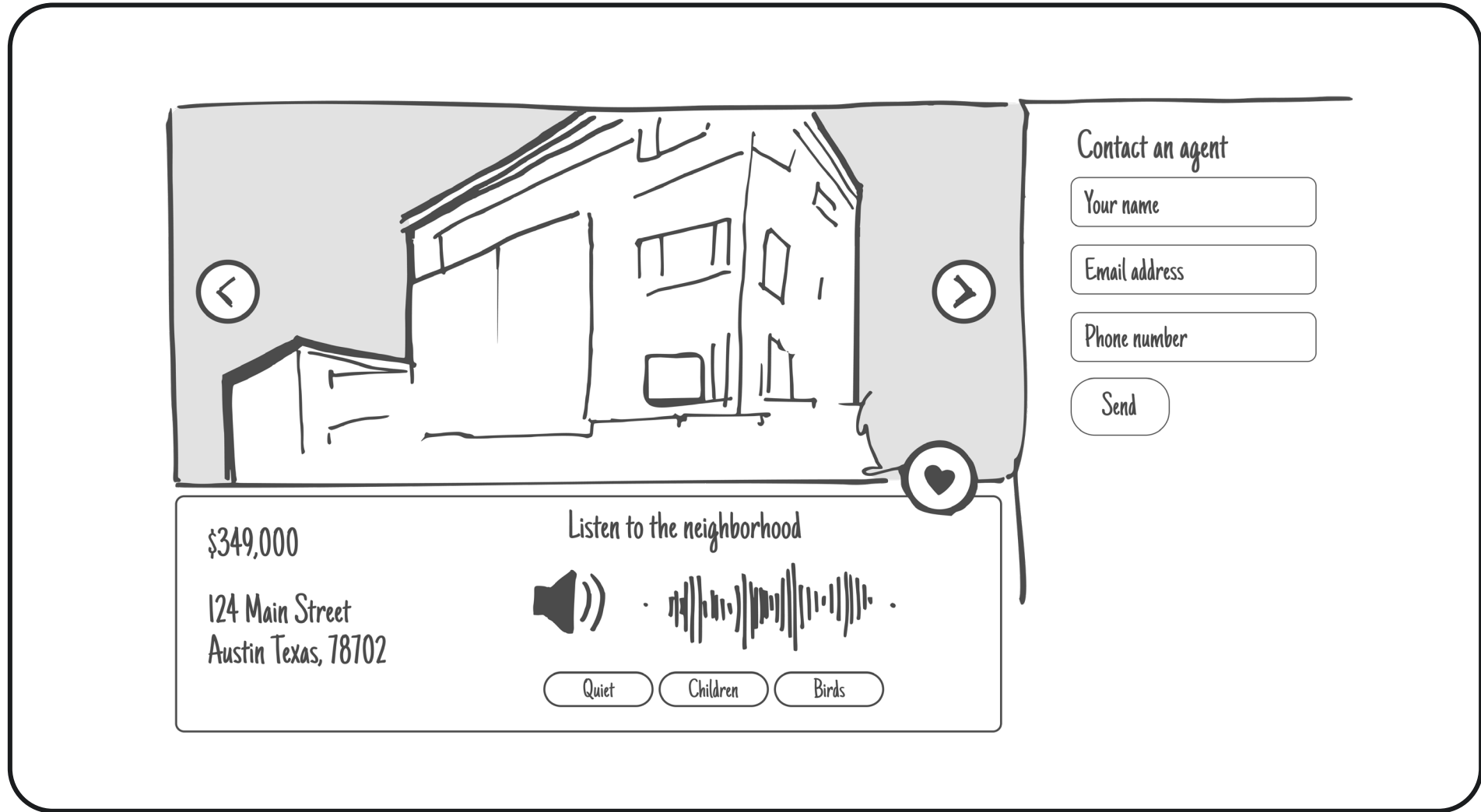
LISTEN LIVE



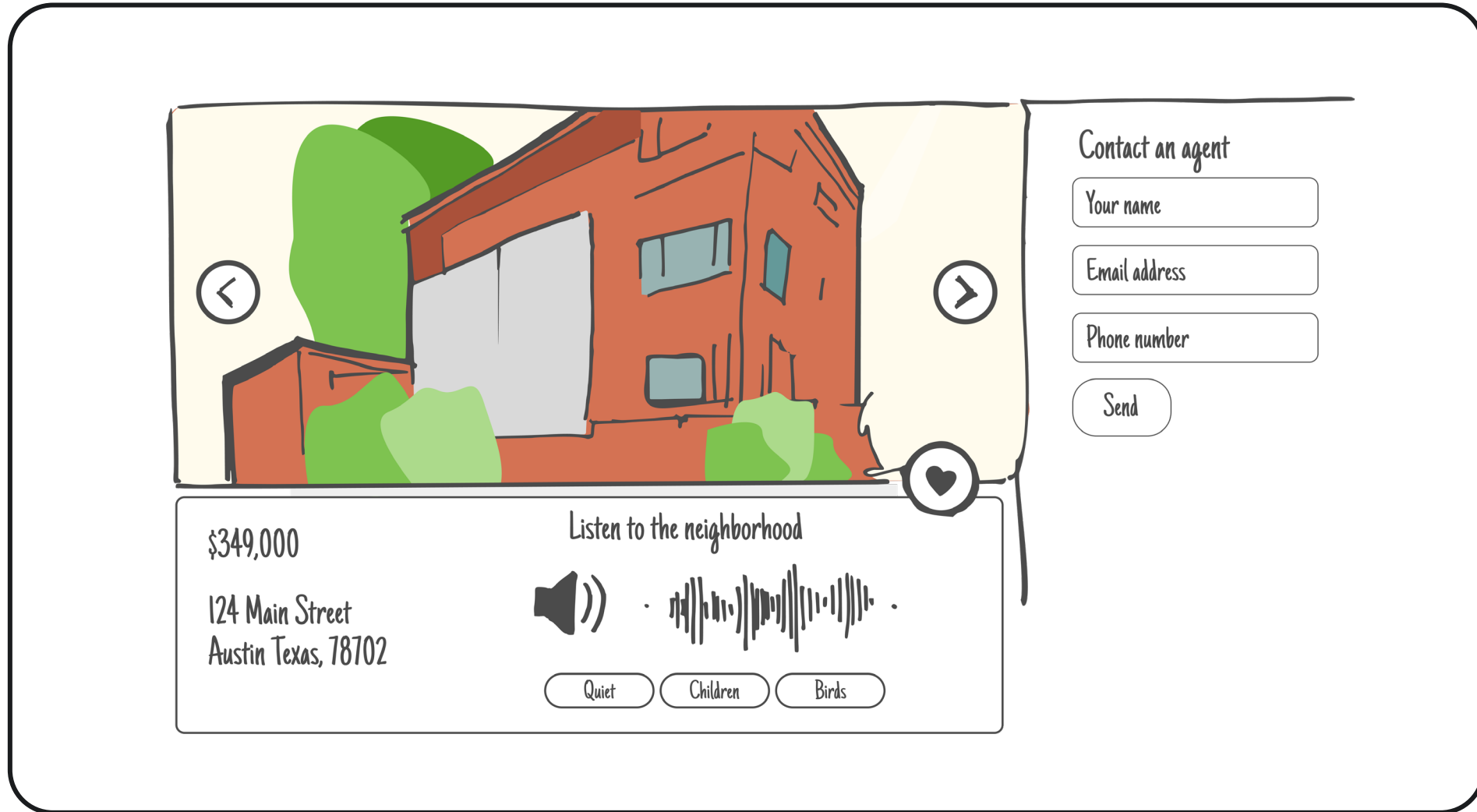
Sketches are ways to put boundaries around an idea



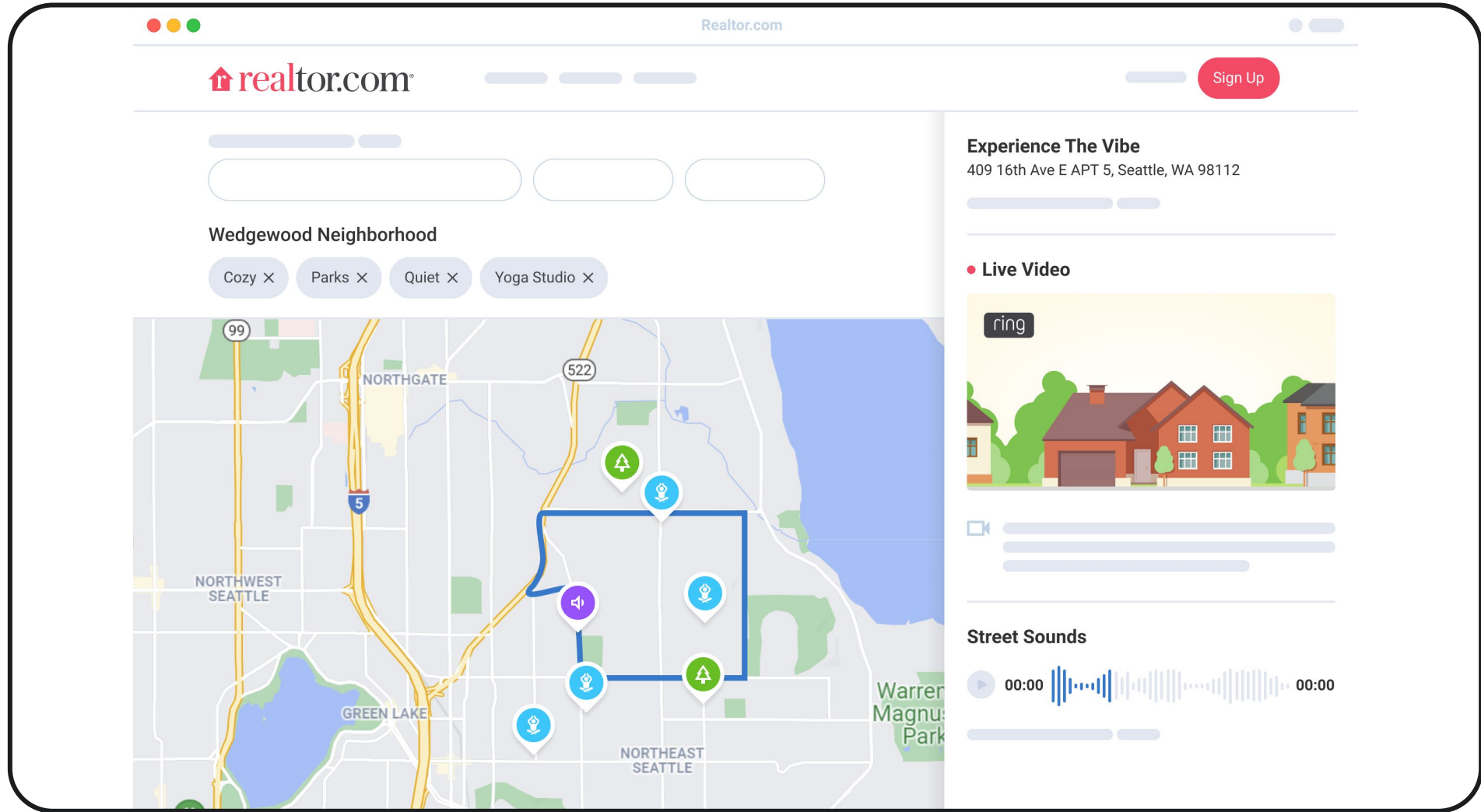
Sketches are ways to show ideas to other people



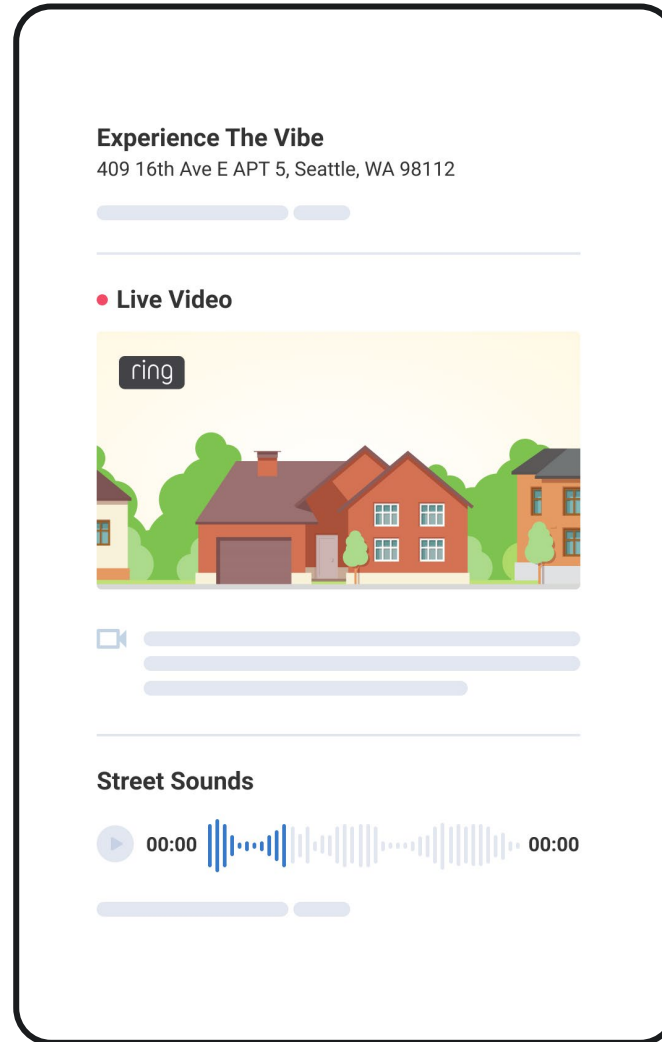
Sketches are ways to show ideas to other people, and hold their attention



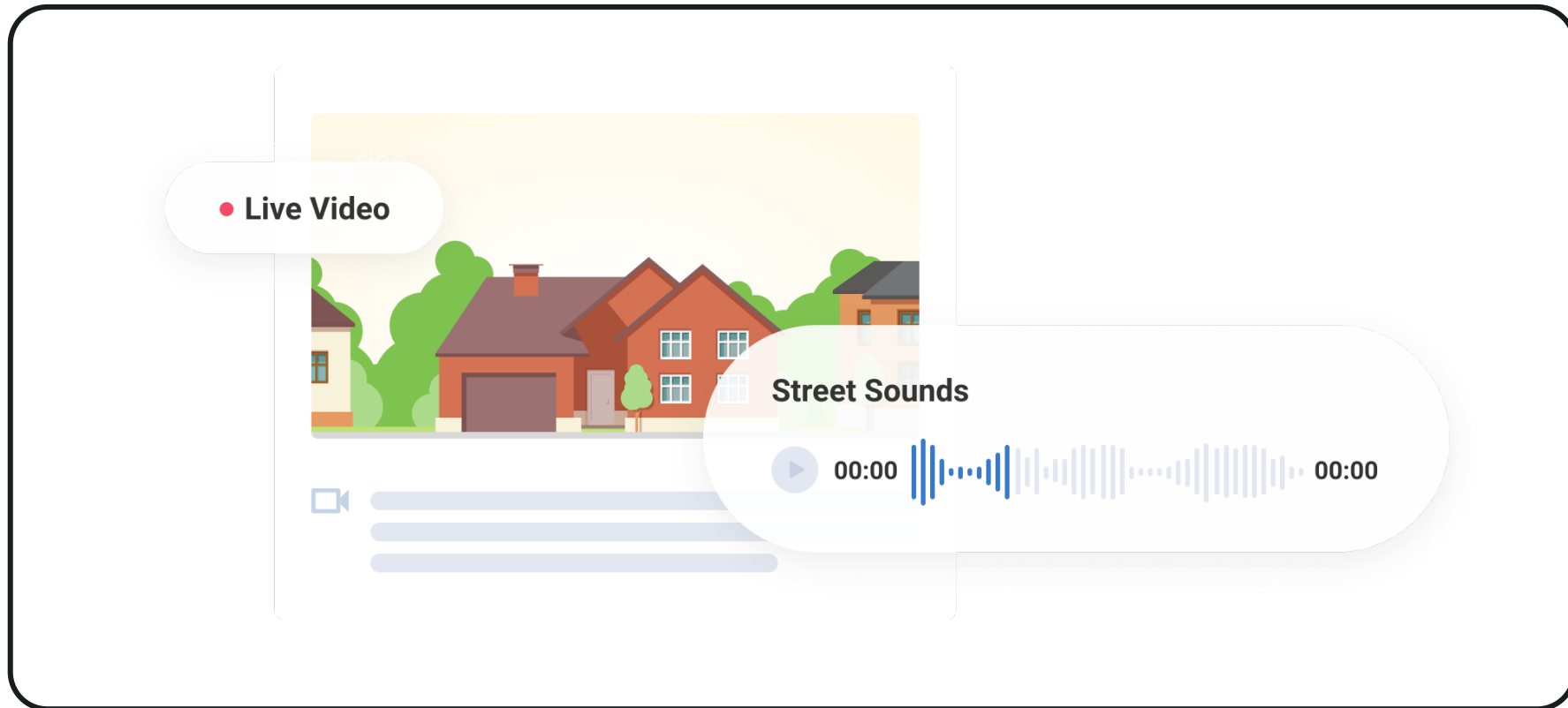
Sketches are ways to convince people



Sketches are ways of focusing a conversation



Sketches are ways of highlighting a feature



The language of sketches

Fidelity is the level of ambiguity of a sketch.

Ideas naturally have ambiguity

An idea is a part of something larger, and by nature, it is incomplete. It may be missing

- “Edges”—boundaries of where the idea ends and another begins
- Detail—decisions about attributes
- Context—where the idea will be used or considered, and by whom
- Applicability—an idea can be *practically* useless, yet still have value

Fidelity results from, and leads to, ambiguity

If I sketch something that I don't know about, my sketch may start to fill in the gaps, or it may simply emphasize that gaps exist.

A sketch without a point of comparison, such as a sketch of a new idea, may be hard to contextualize, and so may add ambiguity, rather than reduce it.

The language of sketches

Detail is the level of specificity of a sketch.

Detailed sketches are more authoritative

When a viewer sees a sketch with lots of refined details, it feels complete—as if those details represent decisions that have already been made.

- The lack of detail requires a viewer to fill in the blanks, which takes work, but provides ownership
- A less-detailed sketch drives misalignment, because it is interpreted
- A detailed sketch provokes a detailed level of criticism
- Concept, context, and value can get lost when people focus on small nuances rather than a larger whole
- Showing details can imply that detailed decisions have already been made

In interaction design, specificity is critical

We're designing to support or change the way people behave, which demands attention to tiny details, including:

- Words. When a user tries to accomplish an action, they are looking for specific language to predict how a system will respond.
- Importance. In digital contexts, people often move quickly through a system, and lean on *clues of importance* to help them take action.
- Less, but matching. Digital systems can feel overwhelming, particularly when lots of choice or options are displayed. Curation means specific choices have been made, and good curation means those choices match a user's mental model.

The language of sketches

Realism is the amount a sketch reflects life.

Realistic sketches trick us

When a sketch reflects life—when it looks like how we would expect to encounter an idea in the world around us—it tricks us into believing that it is, in fact, real.

This can be good, because it helps people understand, and they can make detailed judgements or take detailed actions.

This can be bad, because it discourages participation.

2

Moving from ideas to sketches

With a focus on **digital interfaces**

Pen to paper

Select your tools—basics



Paper Mate Flair Felt Tip Pen, black (only)



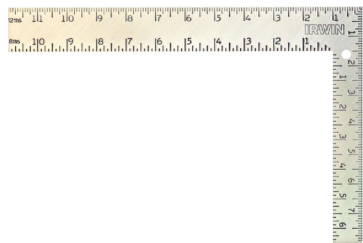
Sharpie Permanent Marker, Fine Point, black (only)



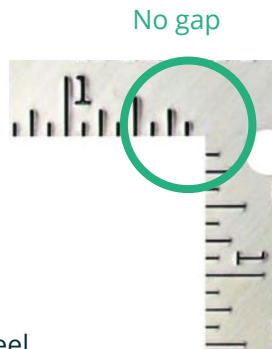
Multi-Use Printer & Copy Paper, White, Letter (8.5" x 11"), 20 Lb, any brightness



Swingline Paper Cutter, Guillotine Trimmer, 12" Cut Length, 10 Sheet Capacity (not sliding)



IRWIN Tools Carpenter Square, Steel, 8-Inch by 12-Inch



Brother ADS1200 Compact Color Desktop Scanner

Pen to paper

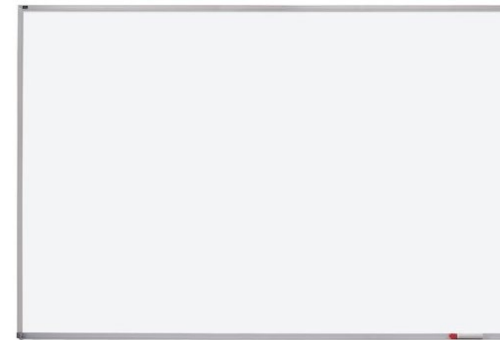
Select your tools—extras



Foam Core Board - Black, 1/2" thick; 48" x 96" if you have room. Otherwise, biggest size you can fit. Uline



Clear push pins. No colors



Quartet Mountable Porcelain Whiteboard (not Melamine), as large as you can fit (ideally 8' x 4')



X-Acto® Heavy-Duty 15" x 15" Paper Trimmer



Plastic or glass 8" container to replace shitty pushpin disaster box



Expo Low Odor Dry Erase Chisel Tip (not Fine Tip; not off-brand)

Pen to paper

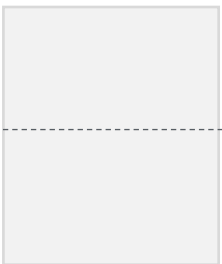
Set up your workspace.

Yes

- Spreadable work surface
- Clean, other than the sketching parts
- Place to pinup
- Music (or not)
- Other people (or not)
- Alcohol (or not) (Seriously! Or coffee, or tea...)
- Snacks
- Cut paper (8.5x11, cut into horizontal 8.5x5.5 sheets)

No

- No social media
- No alerts on your phone
- No children
- No tablet (yet)
- No pencils
- No erasers



Outline

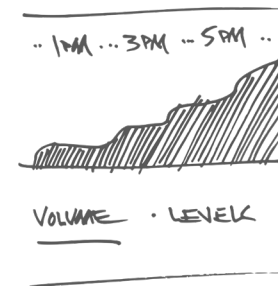
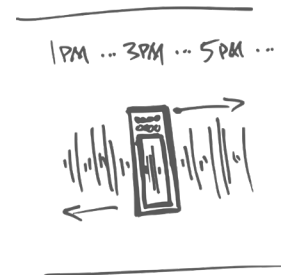
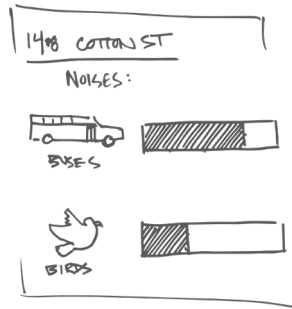
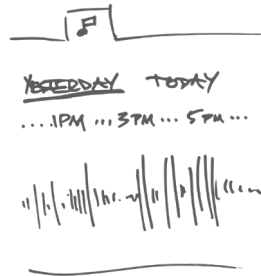
Answer these planning questions:

Who are the sketches for?

How will they be used?

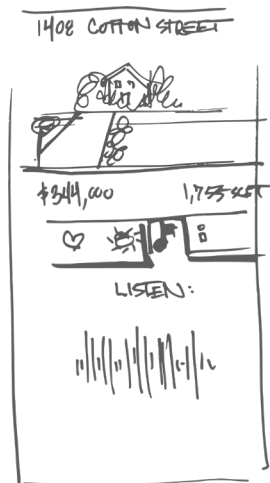
Pen to paper

Draw iterations.

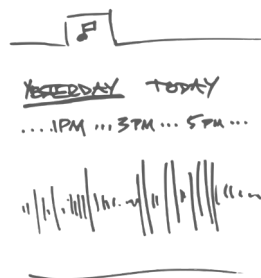


Pen to paper

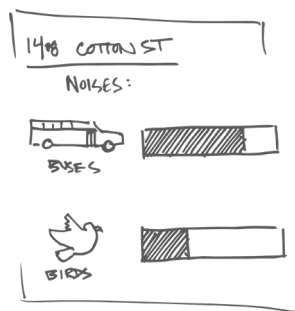
Draw iterations.



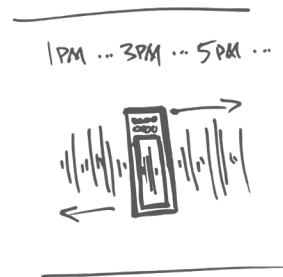
What if the whole thing is mobile?



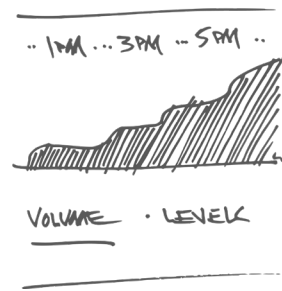
Seems like time of day might be interesting to explore, since it's noisier during the day.



We could identify the different noises... I like birds but not vehicle noises.



A user could slide back and forth on the sounds to hear them historically.



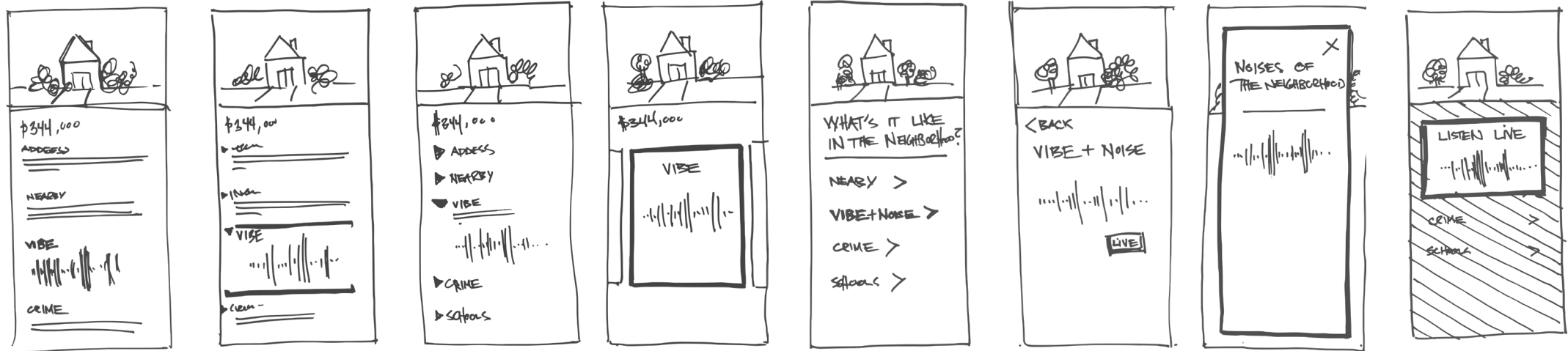
Are sounds the important part, or volume?



It might make more sense to identify a noise on a volume graph, not a sound visualization.

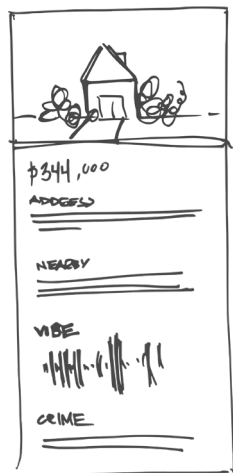
Pen to paper

Draw variations.

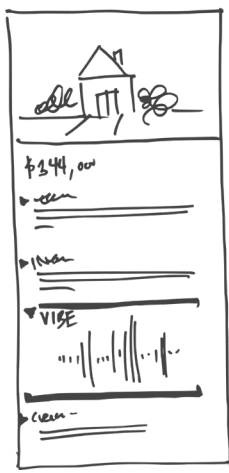


Pen to paper

Draw variations.



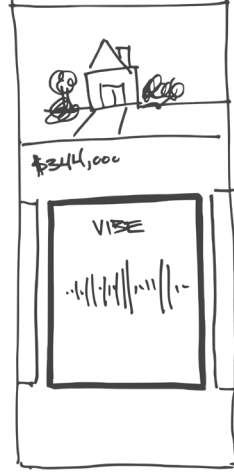
It should be a primary element on the listing page.



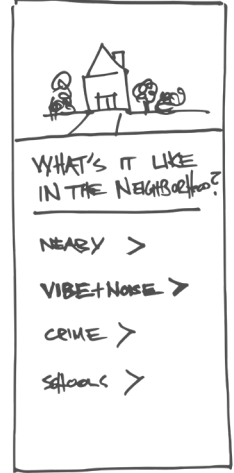
The items should probably expand and collapse.



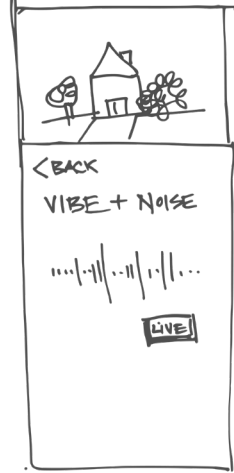
What if it was just one at a time?



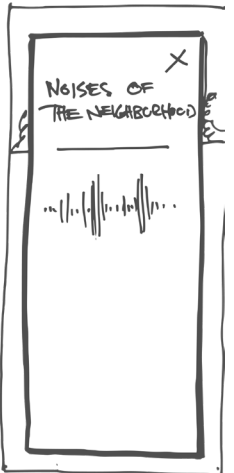
It would be more fun to swipe through cards.



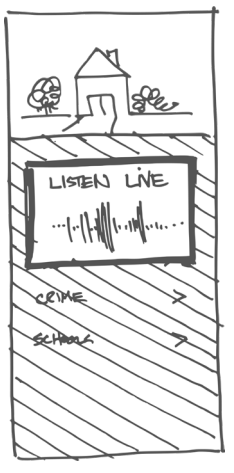
These should probably be sections.



Maybe there's not enough in a section to warrant its own page.



A modal seems to work, but that's huge.



What about a mini popup?

Pen to paper

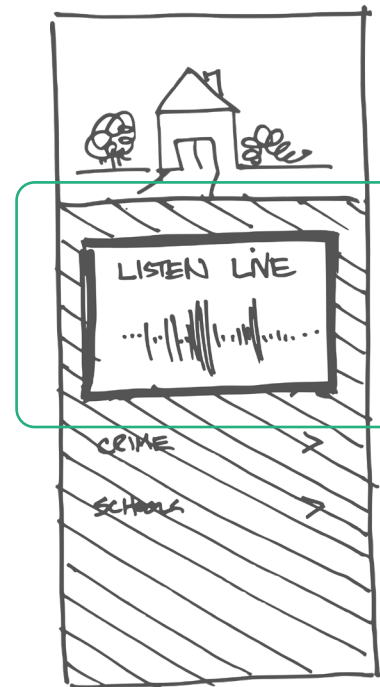
As you sketch,
Look at what you just drew, and react to the **content**,
not the **quality**.

The image displays four hand-drawn mobile app sketches, each with a green box highlighting a specific feature and a corresponding text box below it providing feedback.

- Sketch 1:** Titled "WHAT'S IT LIKE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD?". It features a house icon and a list of categories: "NEARBY >", "VIBE + NOISE >", "CRIME >", and "SCHOOLS >". A green box highlights the list items, with the feedback: "These should probably be sections."
- Sketch 2:** Titled "VIBE + NOISE". It includes a house icon, a "< BACK" button, and a waveform. A green box highlights a "LIVE" button at the bottom, with the feedback: "Maybe there's not enough in a section to warrant its own page."
- Sketch 3:** Titled "NOISES OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD". It features a house icon, a close button (X), and a large waveform. A green box highlights the waveform area, with the feedback: "A modal seems to work, but that's huge."
- Sketch 4:** Titled "LISTEN LIVE". It features a house icon, a "LISTEN LIVE" button with a waveform, and a hatched area below labeled "CRIME" and "SCHOOLS" with arrows. A green box highlights the "LISTEN LIVE" button, with the feedback: "What about a mini popup?"

Pen to paper

As you sketch, think about:
What's the value of the idea you are drawing?
What's the hero moment?
What's the narrative?



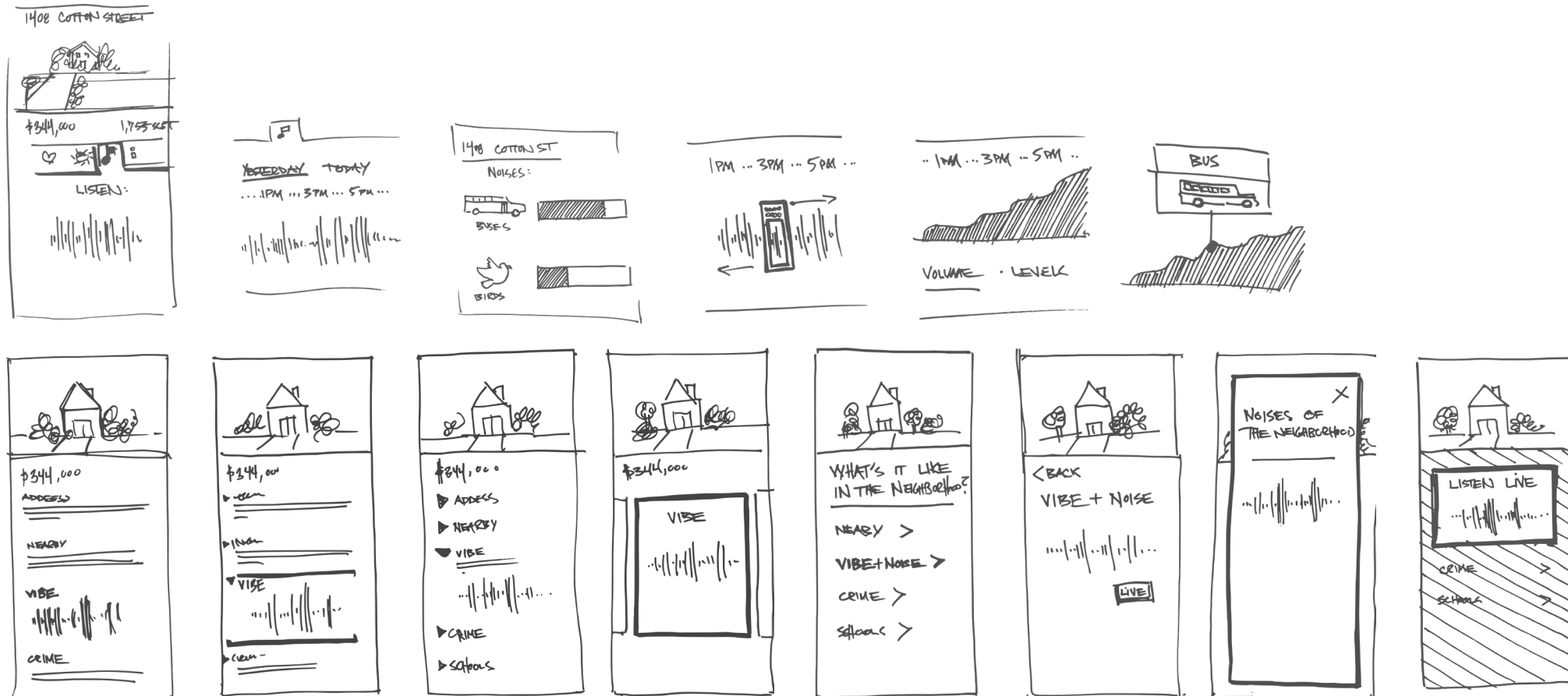
Noisy neighbors suck. It would be really valuable to know if a house is loud, before you buy it.

It wouldn't take much—just a "little glimpse" into the sound profile.

That glimpse should be in the context of the property card, as a "top-level" evaluation criteria.

Pen to paper

These sketches are just for you. They are **thinking sketches**.



A guiding principle

No one is judging your method except you. Cheat as much as you need to.

Start with examples

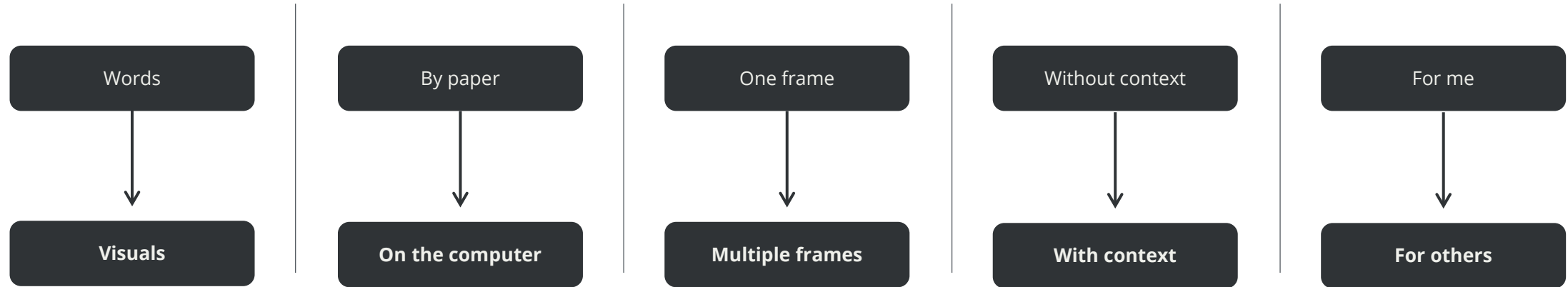
- Find a product that has already solved the problem you are working on
- Evaluate how they did it
- Copy it

Don't try to be innovative

- Solve a problem
- Help a person
- Lean on precedent and heuristics

Consider the “big jumps”

Remember fidelity, detail, and realism.



Thank you!

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