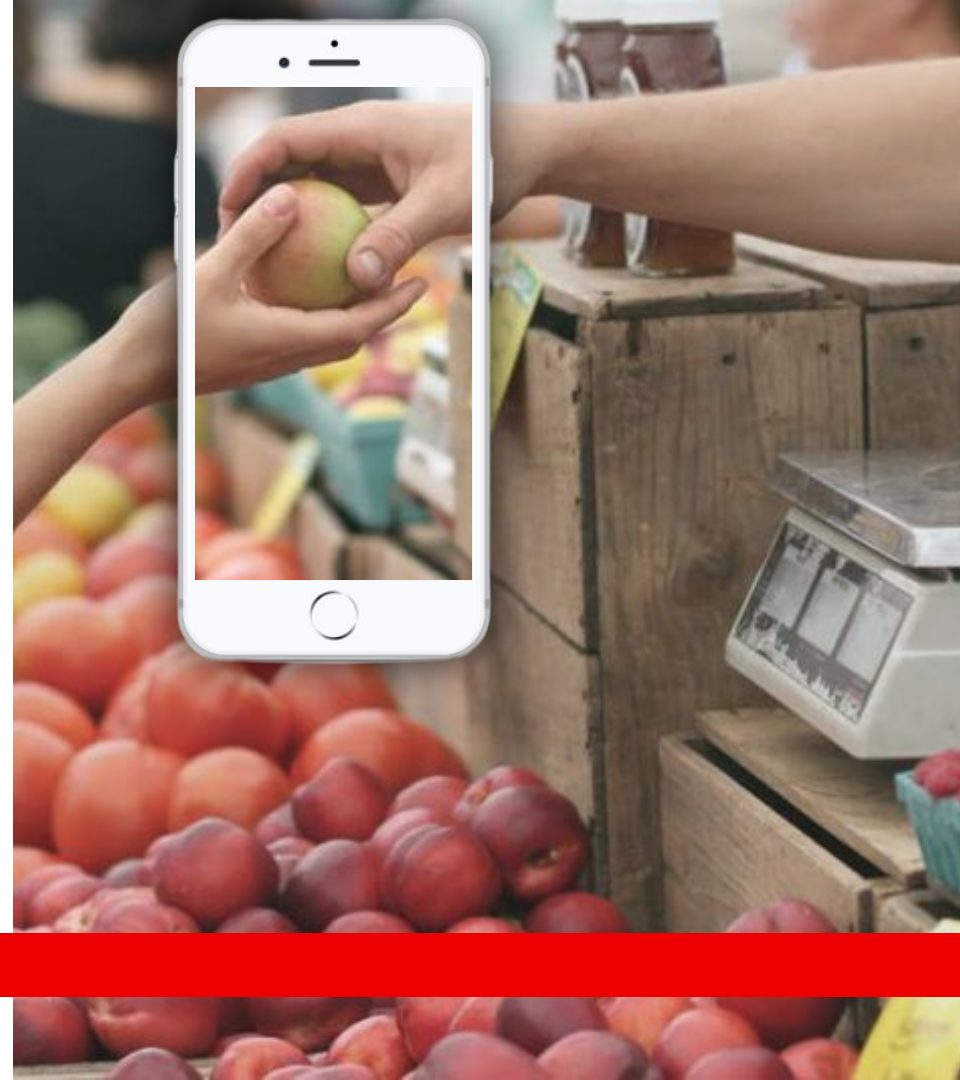


**Connecting local  
food producers  
with everyday  
retail customers.**

**Gordon**<sup>®</sup>  
FOOD SERVICE



Sponsored Project with Gordon Food Service, Chicago IL

## Introduction & Context

In the evolving landscape of the food service industry, the connection between consumers and local food sources is critical but often overlooked facet of retail and wholesale operations.

Recognizing this gap, we partnered with Gordon Food Service, a foodservice distributor based in Michigan serving the eastern half of the United States.

**The goal was to explore innovative strategies to enhance this linkage. This project seeks to understand and improve how restaurant operators and everyday consumers access and benefit from local food producers.**



# Design Process



## Research

### Secondary Research

Understand the existing ecosystem of Gordon Food Service.

### Primary Research

- 05 Store visits
- 15 Open Observations
- 05 Staff interviews
- 10 Customer Intercepts

## Analysis

**Key Learnings** from research to identify core issues and opportunities within the retail experience of Gordon Food Service.

## Synthesis

**Design Principles** based on research insights to guide solution development.

**Persona and Scenario Creation** to focus design efforts and ensure solutions meet real needs.

## Ideation & Prototype

**Ideation Workshop** to generate solution ideas that align with the established design principles and user personas.

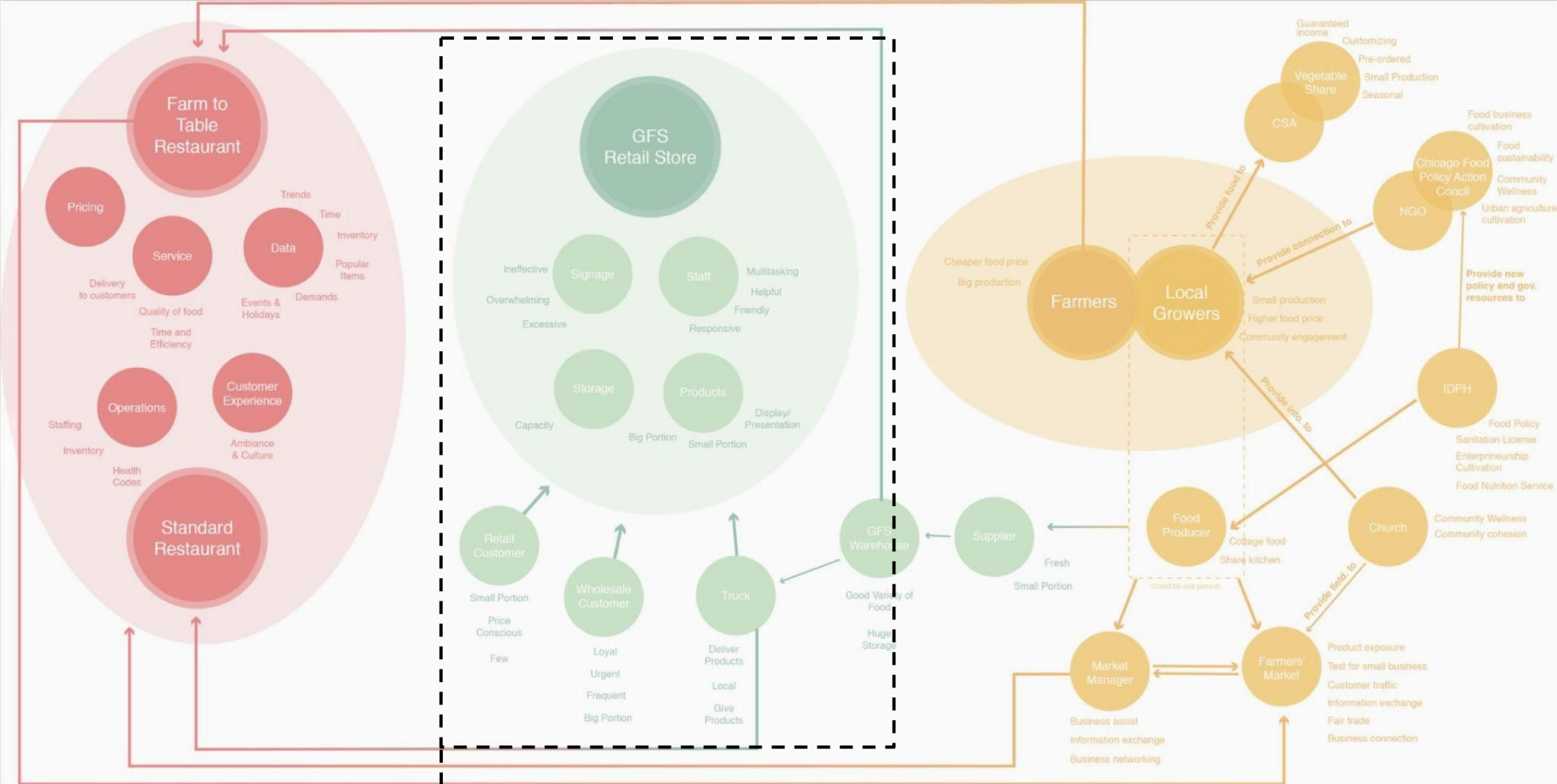
Design and refine the **final solution** addressing the identified needs, and enhancing the connection between consumers and local food sources.

## Central Challenge



How might the Gordon Food Service enhance its role in **connecting restaurant operators and everyday individual consumers with local food producers** to strengthen community ties and support local economies?





**Entities Relationships Attributes and Functions (ERAF) map**

For our project, we specifically focussed on enhancing the retail experience at Gordon Food Service. This approach allowed for more dedicated attention to distinct aspects of the retail operations, fostering deeper insights and targeted solutions.

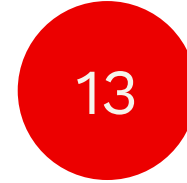
## Research | Primary

The research continued with a more focused inquiry on what role and in **what capacity is Gordon Food Service currently playing in connecting everyday individual consumers** with local food products and producers.

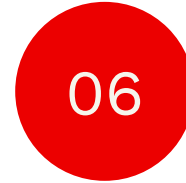
This phase involved more detailed data collection and analysis, through open observation and interviews of both GFS staff and in-store customers.



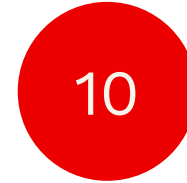
**Store Visits**



**Open Observations**



**GFS Staff  
Interviews**



**Customer Intercept  
Interviews**

---

## Research | Primary | Quotes and Observations



*"Retail stores originally opened as an emergency destination for wholesale customers."*

- Store Manager



*"I come for spices because they're in good quality and cheap. I don't buy fresh produce here."*

- Individual customer



Wholesale quantities dominate display, however packaging is not conducive to independent buyers.



Warehouse style display, similar to what users get at Costco



## Analysis | Key Learnings

Major findings about the retail experience at Gordon Food Service:



### Wholesale Customer Behavior

Wholesale customers visit daily due to urgent needs for specific products.



### Retail Customer Attraction

The GFS retail store primarily attracts price-conscious customers.



### Rewards Program Effectiveness

The current rewards program offers limited benefits to retail customers.



### Individual Customer Expectations

There is a disconnect between the store experience and the differing expectations of wholesale and retail customers.



### Product Visibility

Fresh produce sections are not prominently displayed, reducing their visibility to customers.



### Employee Performance

Store employees excel in building and maintaining customer relationships.

## Synthesis | Persona Development

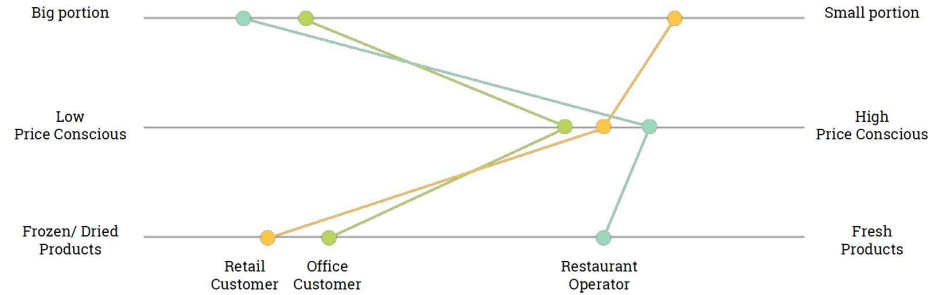
The personas were developed based on a comprehensive understanding of three critical variables:

- + **Portion size,**
- + **Price consciousness**
- + **Product type preference**  
(frozen/dried or fresh products)

Each persona represented a unique customer segment that Gordon Food Service targets, reflecting distinct behaviors and needs. The persona creation process involved detailed demographic profiling, shopping behavior analysis, and an understanding of their technological familiarity and goals related to product and shopping experience.

This method ensured that the design solutions proposed are tailored to meet the needs of specific customer types, **retail consumers like Mori being prioritized for this project**, thus enhancing the overall retail strategy and solution design for Gordon Food Service.

## Personas mapping on 3 important variables:



## Prioritized Persona:



Name : Mori  
Age : 45  
Gender : Female  
**Retail Customer**

### Occupation

**School Teacher**

### Family size

Small - 2

### Shopping Behavior

Comes to GFS seldomly for small portion of dried products such as spices, bread. Sometimes bundled food when she has visitors. Usually buy fresh produce in other grocery store.

### Portion

Small portion, dried food (spices, bread)

### Reward system user?

No, Doesn't know about it.

### Ordering channel

Self

### Technology familiarity

Low

### Experience goals

Convenient, clear display to see the descriptions, enhanced accessibility for overcoming physical restrictions

### Product goals

Small portion, valuable fresh food

### End goals

One stop shopping

# Synthesis | Current Scenario Storyboard

We developed current scenario storyboards to effectively visualize and identify gaps in the customer experience, as well as the challenges customers encounter.

Warehouse packaging is often confusing for the customers.



Huge portions is a pain point for the individual customer



## Synthesis | Design Principles

Based on our research findings, we established six design principles to guide the development of our final solution.



Feature the fresh  
produce section



Be attractive to price  
conscious customers



Customize experience for  
wholesale and retail customers



Enable quick check  
out and delivery



Leverage good relationships  
between staffs and customers



Give real benefits to  
loyal customers

## Ideation & Prototype | Workshop

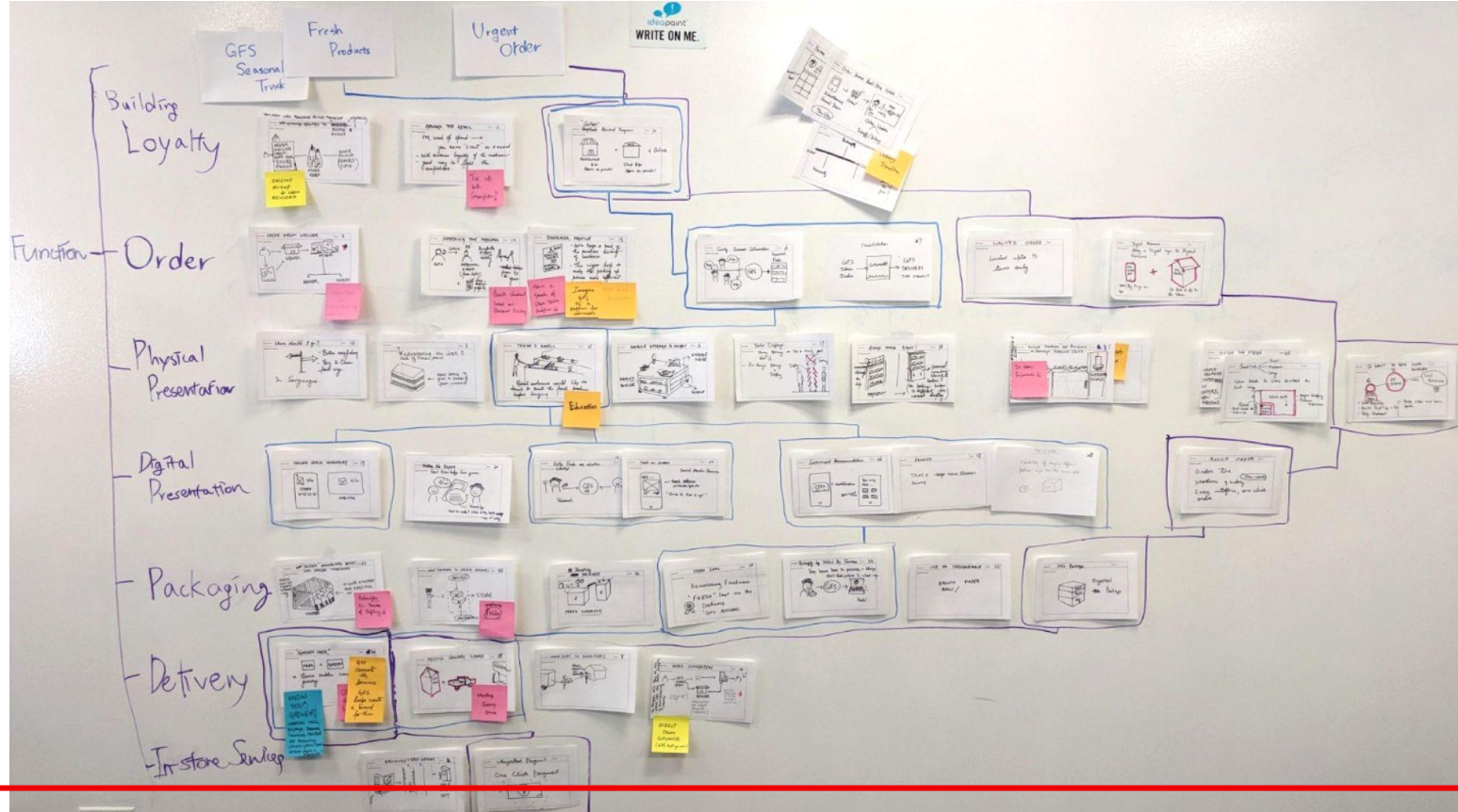


We conducted an **ideation workshop based on multiple shopping scenarios**, to generate solution ideas, drawing from the key learnings, established design principles, and the central challenge.

This collaborative session enabled us to **explore digital solution approaches** and practical solutions, effectively integrating our research insights with the GFS objective of connecting restaurant operators and everyday consumers with local food producers and strengthening community ties and support local economies.



# Ideation & Prototype | Workshop | Digital Solution User Flow



Prioritized Ideas bucketed in 7 different categories.

Out of these, ideas were further prioritized based on user need, alignment with design principles and business effort of implementation.

These ideas were put together to prepare the user flow for a digital application.



## Ideation & Prototype | Final Solution

### Gordon Go: Mobile Application

A seamless online ordering experience for both wholesale and retail customers. Designed with a focus on fresh produce, competitive pricing, and quick delivery, this application ensures transparency in sourcing while **enhancing consumer convenience and trust.**





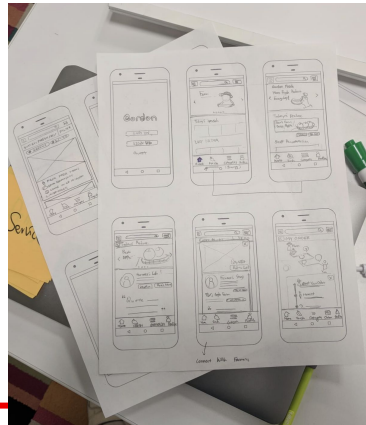
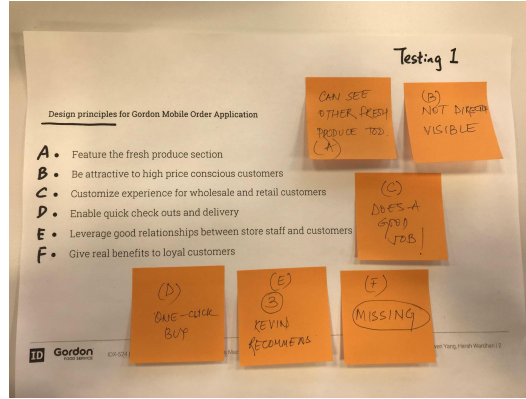
# Ideation & Prototype | Final Solution

## Low Fidelity Prototype Testing

Initially, we developed low-fidelity prototypes to evaluate the design concepts and gather early user feedback.

This feedback guided the refinement of our designs into high-fidelity prototypes, leading to the development of a minimum viable product (MVP).

This progression ensured that each iteration was aligned with user expectations and functional requirements.



# Final Solution | Gordon Go Mobile Application

## Features - Sign up



### Design Principles Addressed



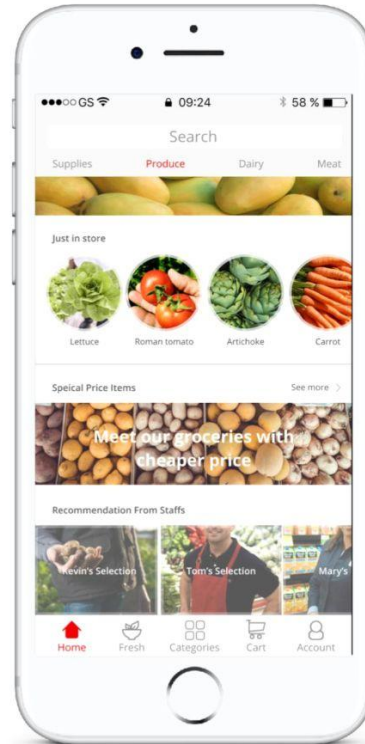
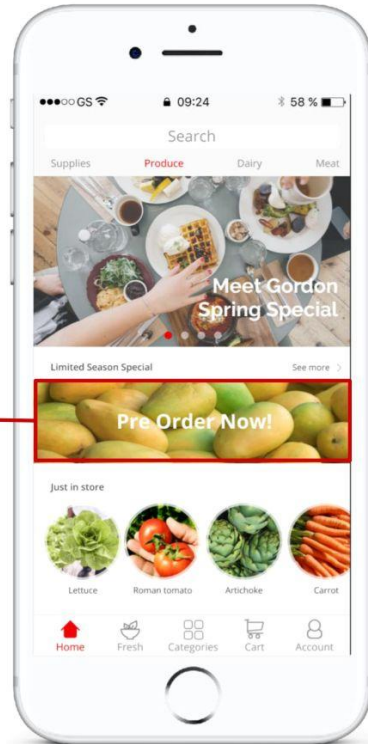
Customize  
experience for  
wholesale and retail  
customers

When signing up, user can choose individual or business and input the size of the household or business so that they will receive tailored content.

# Final Solution | Gordon Go Mobile Application

## Features - Home

Preordering service for seasonal produces



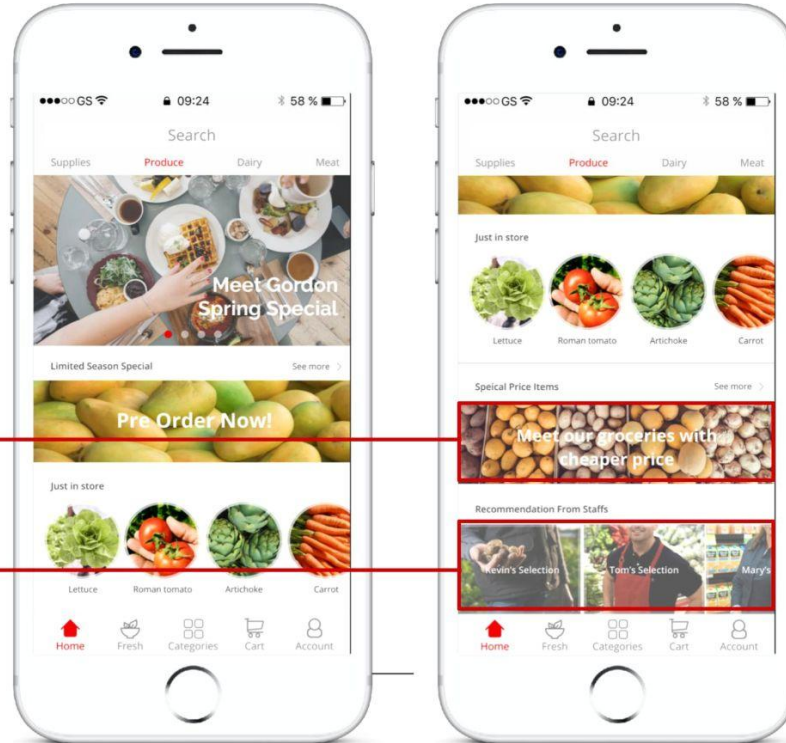
Design Principles Addressed



Feature the fresh produce section

# Final Solution | Gordon Go Mobile Application

## Features - Home



Specially priced ugly produce section

Recommendations from staffs

Design Principles Addressed



Be attractive to price conscious customers

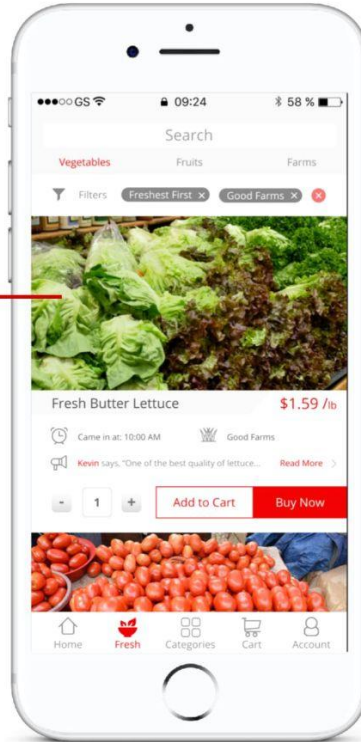


Leverage good relationships between staffs and customers

# Final Solution | Gordon Go Mobile Application

## Features - Fresh Feed

Fresh produce photos sent from store staffs



## Design Principles Addressed



Feature the fresh produce section



Leverage good relationships between staffs and customers

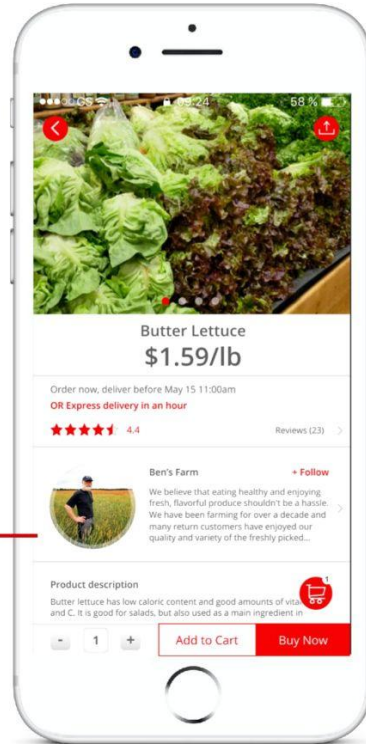
# Final Solution | Gordon Go Mobile Application

## Features - Farms

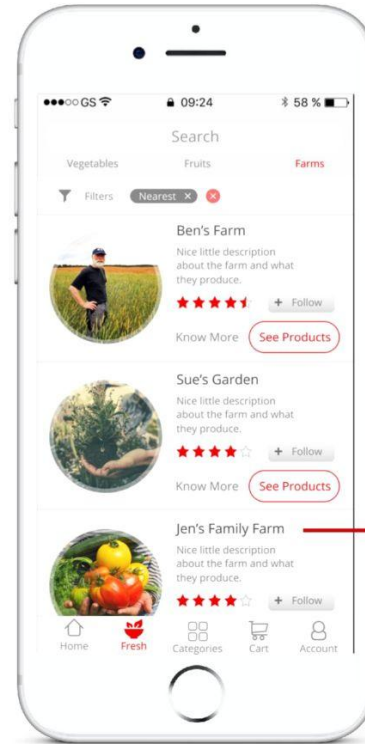
Design Principles Addressed



Feature the fresh produce section



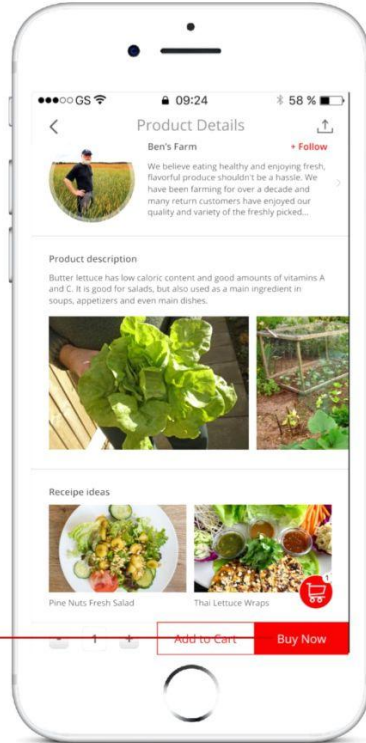
Farmer's story



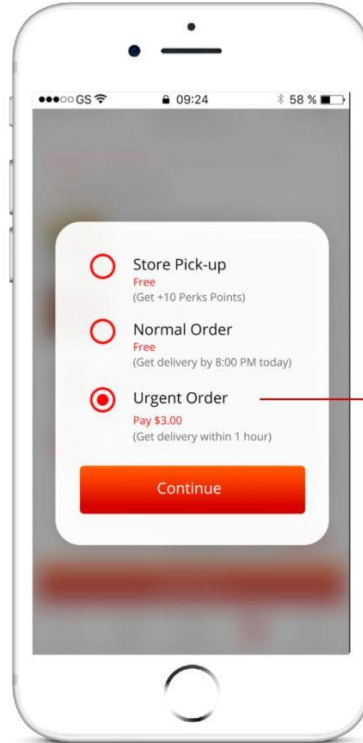
Review different farms and follow the farmers

# Final Solution | Gordon Go Mobile Application

## Features - Quick Order



“Buy now” button  
enables quick check out



Check out with  
“Urgent Order” option  
to get quick delivery

Design Principles Addressed



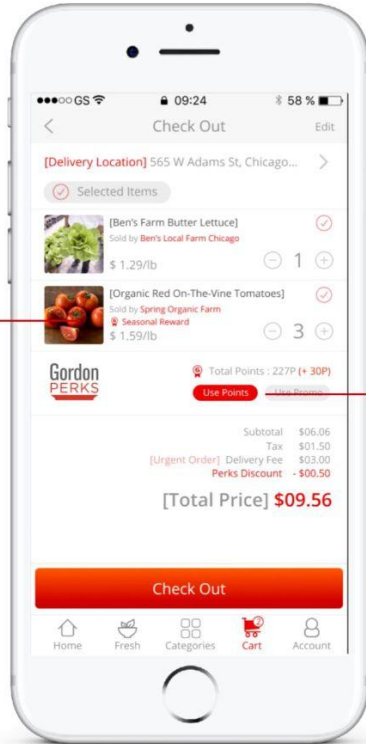
Enable quick  
check out and  
delivery

# Final Solution | Gordon Go Mobile Application

Design Principles Addressed

## Features - Check Out

Earn seasonal reward points  
for buying fresh produce



Use reward points  
for checkout



Give real  
benefits to loyal  
customers



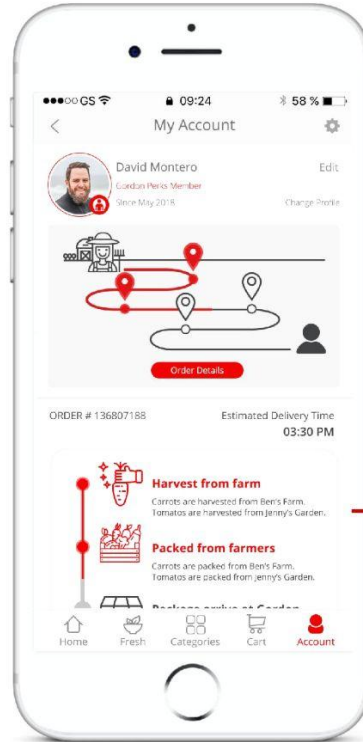
Feature the  
fresh produce  
section



# Final Solution | Gordon Go Mobile Application

Design Principles Addressed

## Features – Order Tracking

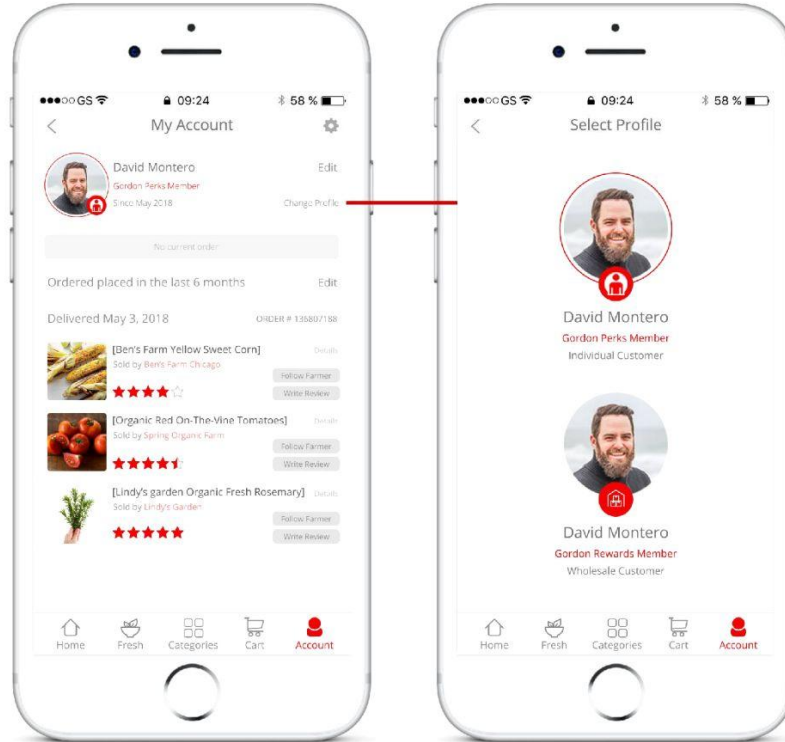


Feature the fresh produce section

Track your order and get to know the source

# Final Solution | Gordon Go Mobile Application

## Features – Multiple Profiles



Design Principles Addressed



Customize  
experience for  
wholesale and retail  
customers

User can have multiple profiles  
which can be changed in the  
My Account section.

## Conclusion

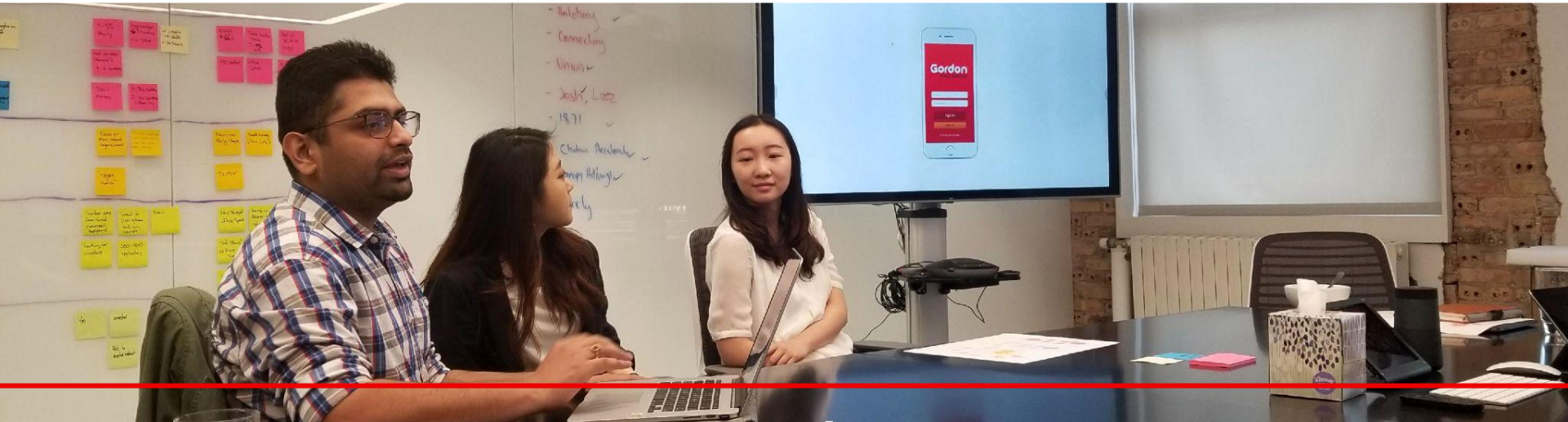
The collaboration culminated in the successful development of the Gordon Go Mobile Application, **a solution designed to redefine how restaurant operators and everyday consumers connect with local food producers with GFS being a connecting channel.**

This project addressed critical gaps in the retail experience of individual customers enhancing the customer engagement within the Gordon ecosystem - bolstering local food ecosystems, supporting sustainable practices, and enhancing customer satisfaction.

## Reflections

Despite the constraints of our limited engagement period with Gordon Food Service, the feedback from the primary stakeholders were promising.

However, **without ongoing visibility into the testing and consumer adoption phases, we missed a valuable opportunity for real-time feedback and iterative improvements.** Extended collaboration with the GFS team would have enabled us to establish a robust feedback loop.



---

The End | Thank You

---