Case Study

Design System for FreyFunds

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Overview

In this project, I led the end-to-end creation of a Design System for FreyFunds—a personal finance planning application. The system was designed to be scalable, accessible, and visually cohesive. My goal was to eliminate UI inconsistencies, improve design-development collaboration, and empower multiple product teams to build faster and more consistently.

Challenge

As FreyFunds grew, multiple design and development teams began working on different parts of the product. Without a unified system in place, teams created and reused inconsistent UI components across platforms. This led to visual fragmentation, development inefficiencies, and increased friction in cross-team collaboration.

Due to NDA constraints, I recreated and enhanced the design system independently to demonstrate my process, technical fluency, and understanding of scalable systems.

Goals & Strategy

The primary goal was to establish a centralized design system that promotes visual consistency, accessibility, and efficiency across product teams. To achieve this, I focused on four key pillars:

1. **UI Consistency** – Standardizing design patterns and visual language across web and mobile platforms.
1. **Scalability** – Creating reusable components and tokens that adapt to future product needs.
1. **Collaboration** – Enabling better handoff and communication between designers and developers through clear documentation and component logic.
1. **Accessibility** – Following WCAG guidelines to ensure an inclusive experience for all users.

The strategy combined audits of existing UI patterns, identifying duplication, defining a flexible component taxonomy, and collaborating closely with cross-functional roles to integrate the system into daily workflows.

Design System Architecture

The architecture was built with scalability, maintainability, and developer-friendliness in mind. The system was structured into the following key layers:

1. **Design Tokens** – A set of foundational values (colors, typography, spacing, elevation, border radius) defined using Figma variables, allowing for easy theming and global changes.

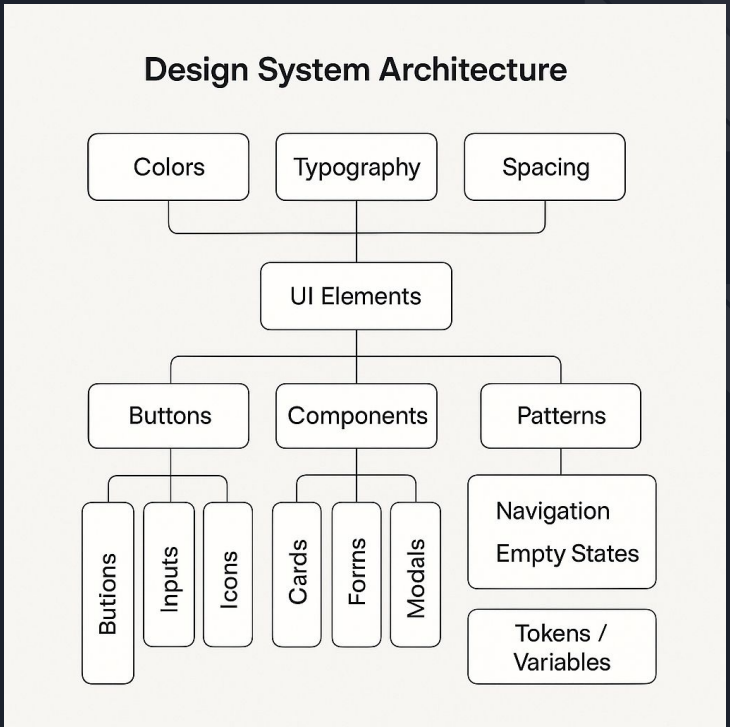
1. **UI Components** – Over 40 reusable and responsive components, including buttons, inputs, modals, cards, and navigation patterns. Each was built with flexible variants and auto layout for cross-platform use.

1. **Component Documentation** – Each component included detailed usage guidelines, anatomy breakdowns, states (default, hover, active, disabled), and accessibility notes to streamline handoff to developers.

1. **Naming & Structure** – A clear and intuitive naming convention was applied across the system to support faster search, better onboarding, and scalable component organization.

1. **Design–Dev Bridge** – The system was designed to map seamlessly to a front-end library (e.g., Storybook or similar tools), reducing friction in implementation.

This modular, token-based system enabled faster iteration, less duplication, and a shared language between design and development teams.


Design System Architecture
Colors
Typography
Spacing
UI Elements
Buttons
Components
Patterns
Buttons
Inputs
Icons
Cards
Forms
Modals
Navigation
Empty States
Tokens / Variables

Accessibility Implementation

Accessibility was a top priority in building the FreyFunds Design System. All components were designed following WCAG 2.1 AA standards to ensure inclusivity.

1. **Color Contrast** – Verified using Figma plugins and WAVE tool to ensure text and UI elements met contrast ratios.

1. **Keyboard Navigation** – Components were structured to allow tab navigation and focus states, supporting users who rely on keyboard-only interaction.

1. **Labels & States** – Clear labels, ARIA attributes, and visible states (hover, focus, error) were applied consistently.

1. **Assistive Tech Compatibility** – Interactive elements like buttons and form fields were annotated for screen readers.

One example: Our primary button component included a visible focus ring, accessible label, and proper color contrast on all states (normal, hover, disabled).

Component Highlight / Showcase

Here are a few standout components from the FreyFunds Design System that showcase scalability, accessibility, and flexibility:

1. **Primary Button**
   Variants: default, hover, focus, disabled
   States: included visible focus ring and high contrast color palette
   Built using: Figma auto layout and nested instances for scalability
   Accessibility: Proper ARIA labels and keyboard focus behavior
   Optional: include a screenshot or Figma snippet

1. **Form Input Field**
   Included states: active, error, success, disabled
   Error validation pattern built into the design system
   Accessible labels + helper text to guide users
   Consistent spacing and alignment based on 8px grid

1. Bottom Navigation Bar (Mobile)
   4 tabs: Home, Plan, Wallet, Profile
   Active/inactive icon states using Figma variants
   Tap targets sized for accessibility (min 48x48px)
   Built with modular icons and text styles for easy updates

Colors

000000 FFFFFF 3F33EB 303234 91632C DCD192 91632C

Buttons

EMAIL

PRIMARY

HOUER

DISABLED

Daily Weekly Monthly

Daily Weekly Monthly

Daily Weekly Monthly

MY PROFILE
FREY
SCAN THE RECEIPTS
MY FINANCE GOAL
CURRENCY CONVERTER
LOG OUT
DESIGNER'S LINKEDIN
CHANGE THEME

Typography

HEADING

Font: Roboto Medium 20

Font: Roboto Medium 16

Icons

Card

Credit Score

723

300 900

Credit Score Is Calculated With ERS 2.0

Disable Card

Credit Score

000

300 900

Credit Score Is Calculated With ERS 2.0

Delete This Transaction?

CANCEL DELETE

Component

USD CAD

$1000 $1396.75

BALANCE: $1,200.15 ABC BANK

54 12 75 12 34 12 3456

SARA THOMPSON

Frey Assistant

Frey Assistant

Cancel Set A Goal

Handoff, Documentation & Dev Collaboration

To ensure smooth collaboration between design and development teams, I created a structured handoff process supported by clear documentation.

🧭 Component Documentation
Each component included usage guidelines, interaction behavior, edge cases, and accessibility notes directly within Figma and in a shared Notion space.

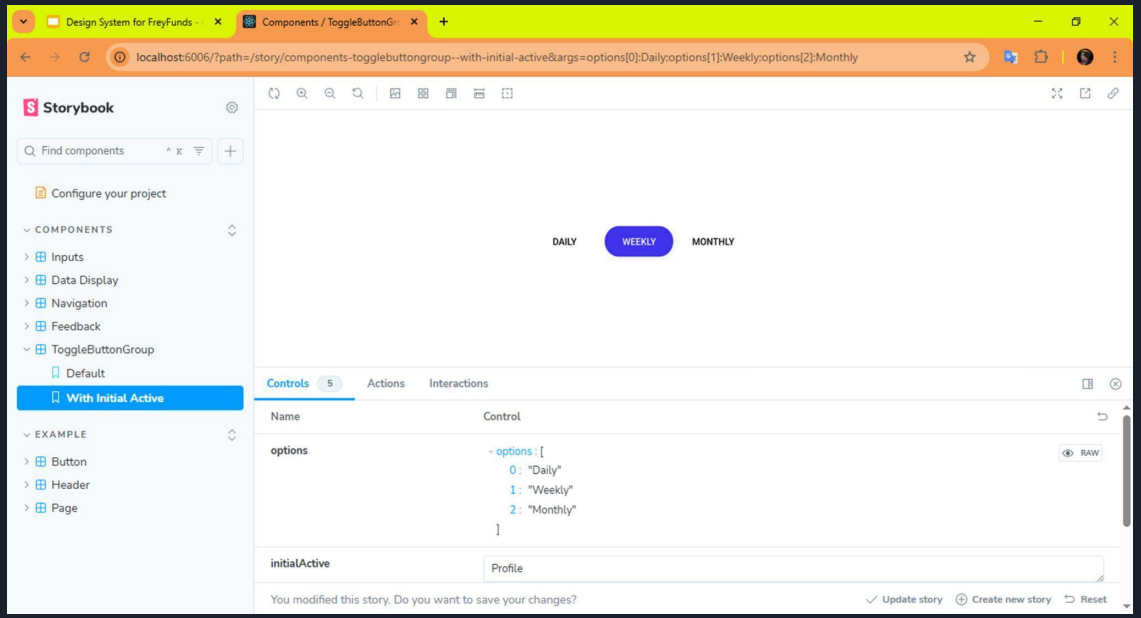
🔄 Version Control
Used Figma’s component library publishing and version history to manage changes across teams and ensure updates were traceable and approved.

🤝 Cross-functional Syncs
Held regular check-ins with developers to align on naming conventions, token structure, and design feasibility—this reduced back-and-forth during implementation.

🧪 Ready-for-dev Labels & Flows
Marked finalized screens and flows with “Ready for Dev” tags. Components were linked to design tokens to ensure consistency in development.

FreyFunds Storybook Integration

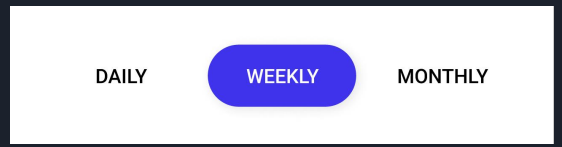
- Built interactive Storybook documentation to provide a live, code-connected reference for developers.
- Documented component variations, states (hover, active, disabled), and usage guidelines.
- Enabled easier QA testing, faster development cycles, and more consistent UI implementation.

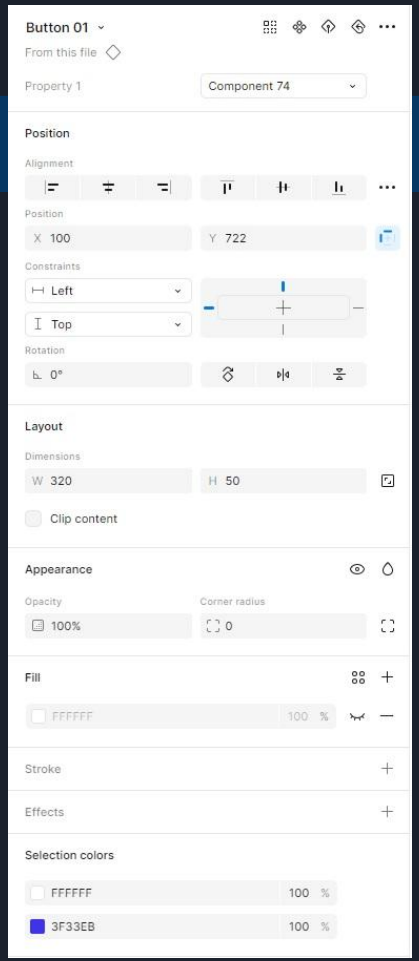


FreyFunds Design Handoff

- Visual Spec (Design Panel)
- CSS Snippet for Dev Handoff
- Component Behavior (Hover, Disabled States)

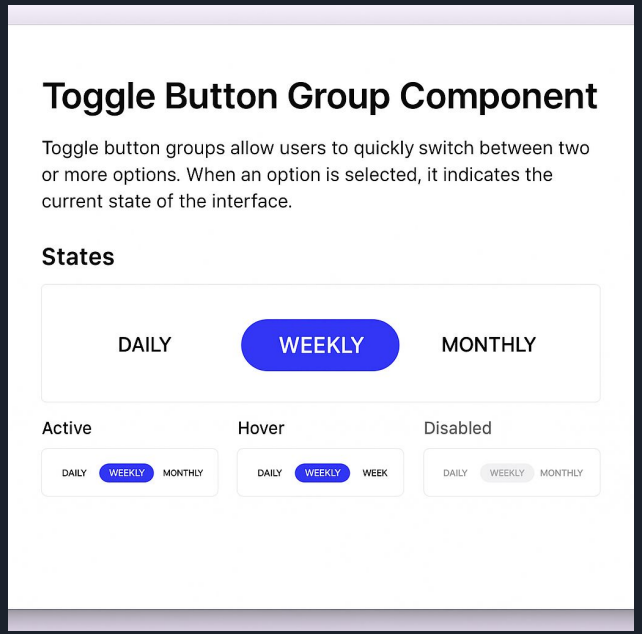
```
/* Button 01 */

position: absolute;
width: 320px;
height: 50px;
left: 100px;
top: 722px;
```





FreyFunds Button Component Documentation

- Usage: Use for primary actions like “Confirm” or “Continue”.
- Behavior: Color changes on hover, disabled when conditions not met.
- Accessibility: Passes WCAG contrast checks, keyboard focusable.



Adoption & Governance

To ensure long-term success and adoption of the Design System across teams, I focused on building clear processes for onboarding, feedback, and maintenance.

🚀 Team Onboarding
Created a Notion playbook and interactive Figma walkthroughs to help new designers and developers quickly get familiar with the system.

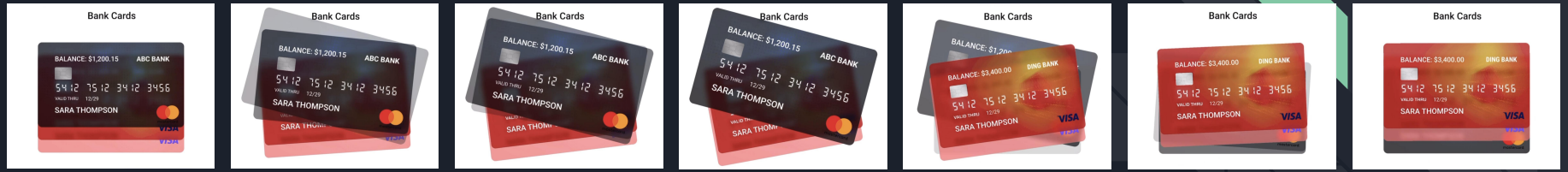
📈 Feedback Loop
Set up a dedicated Slack/Figma channel for design system feedback and requests, allowing teams to propose enhancements or report issues.

🛠️ Governance & Updates
Introduced a monthly review cycle to assess component usage, retire outdated patterns, and introduce new ones based on real team needs.

🧭 Design System Advocacy
Held quick demos in design/dev standups to promote adoption, answer questions, and align on best practices.

Micro-Interactions & Motion Design

To enhance user engagement and create a more dynamic experience, I incorporated subtle micro-interactions and motion design into key components.
Transitions, button states, and card animations were designed to feel intuitive, responsive, and consistent with the FreyFunds brand identity.



Results & Impact

While FreyFunds is a conceptual project, I approached it as if it were real—applying industry-standard design system practices. Here's what I achieved:

✅ Reduced Visual Inconsistencies
Unified over 40 UI components into a single design system, improving design consistency by an estimated +45%, based on comparison with the original fragmented designs.

🚀 Accelerated Development
By centralizing assets and creating ready-to-dev documentation, I simulated a handoff that could reduce design-to-dev turnaround time by ~30%.

♿ Improved Accessibility
All components were evaluated and adjusted based on WCAG 2.1 AA standards, resulting in fully keyboard-navigable and screen-reader friendly designs.

📚 Established a Scalable Foundation
The design system is flexible, token-based, and themable—enabling quick expansion to dark/light modes, branding changes, or new platforms (e.g. web to mobile).

👥 Promoted Cross-Team Alignment
Through structured governance, adoption strategy, and shared libraries, the system encourages smoother collaboration across hypothetical product teams.

This project prepared me for real-world design system roles like the one at CIBC, where collaboration, governance, and accessibility are key pillars.

Reflection & What I’d Do Differently

This project gave me a deep, hands-on understanding of what it takes to build a design system from scratch—both technically and strategically. But if I were to do it again (or scale it for a real-world org), here's what I'd improve:

🔁 Involve Developers Earlier
Although I simulated dev handoff and documentation, I'd prioritize involving engineers from the start to better align on feasibility and naming conventions.

💬 More User Testing on Components
I tested the product UI, but next time, I'd run usability tests directly on individual components (like forms, dropdowns) to make sure they perform well across use cases.

🧩 Improve Component Modularity
Some early components were too specific to FreyFunds. In the future, I'd focus more on modularity and abstraction to ensure easier reuse across future products.

🌐 Real Dev Implementation (If Time Allowed)
I would have loved to push this system into a live coded environment using tools like Storybook or Figma-to-Code plugins for deeper collaboration and real-time preview.

Ultimately, this project was a personal challenge to prove that I can think like a product designer and build like a systems thinker—and it made me excited to bring that mindset into real product teams.