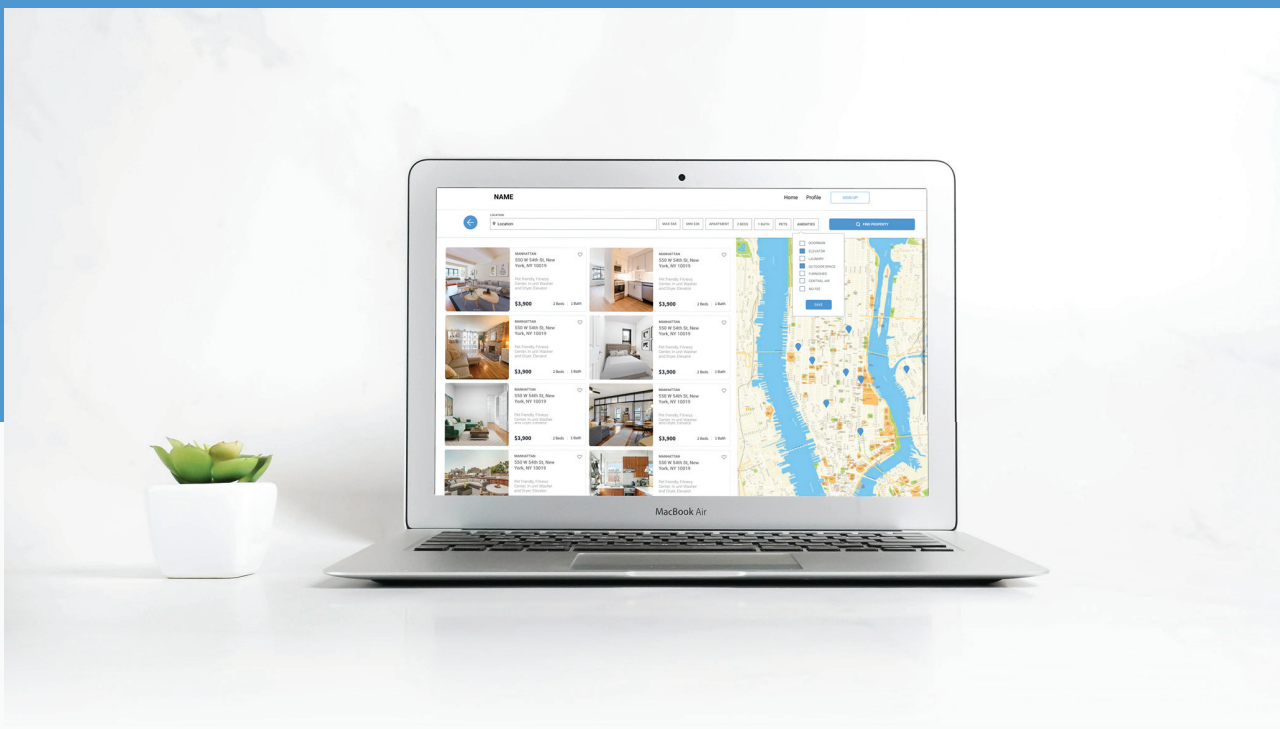


# Redesigning Rental

Redesigning the experience of housing search



## Problem

The housing market's complexity and constant shifts makes it challenging for individuals seeking a place to rent. There is a variety of housing search apps, however, users frequently encounter difficulties leading to dissatisfaction. This case study investigates the primary problems faced by users of current housing search apps and proposes solutions to enhance the overall user experience.

**Project Type:** Case Study

**Role:** UX/UI Designer: Research / Design / Testing

**Skills:** Researching / Wireframing / Prototyping / User Testing

“How might we create a stress-free and efficient housing search app for big city rental seekers?”

## Secondary Research

The research identifies three key groups facing challenges in finding rental homes, making them candidates for housing search apps:

- 1. Young Professionals and Students:** Facing limited options, high costs, and intense competition in competitive rental markets, such as large cities and college towns.
- 2. New Residents:** Struggling to choose suitable locations due to unfamiliarity with the local rental market, neighborhoods, and amenities.
- 3. Remote Renters and International Movers:** Dealing with challenges related to unfamiliar local rental markets, laws, and regulations.



18% Contacted a real estate agent

43% of all buyers looked online for prop+erties for sale

48% of Gen Xers and younger Boomers first looked online for property for sale

## Demographic Trends

Pew Research Center data highlights disparities in homeownership rates among different racial and ethnic groups. Notably, renting is more common among Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino households, comprising approximately 58% and 52%, respectively. Age also influences housing preferences, with renters being more common among those under 35.

## Rental Search Methods

### Online Platforms

Utilizing websites and apps like Apartments.com that include from multiple sources.

### Social Media

Engaging with landlords and seeking advice through local communities.

### Personal Networks

Relying on word-of-mouth recommendations within personal circles.

### Traditional Methods

Using local ads, newspapers, and bulletin boards to identify rental options.

### Real Estate Agents

Seeking the services of real estate agents and property management.

## Competitive Analysis



**Challenges:** Difficulty tracking preferred listings, reliance on external tools for organization, lack of intuitive comparison, and limited features beyond NYC.

**Positive:** Users can request tours through the app.

**Challenges:** Limitations on advertising apartments as 'coming soon', insufficient details for advertisers, and missing rent history.



**Positive:** Offers commute and points of interest information for each listing, includes property ratings and reviews.

## Pain Points

### Lack of Up-to-Date Listings

Users encounter difficulties due to insufficient and outdated property listings.

### Inaccurate Information

Limited details on amenities, lease terms, and pet policies complicate decision-making.

### Ineffective Search Filters

Users struggle with inadequate search filters and sorting options.

### Communication Challenges

Inefficient communication with landlords, delayed responses.

## Research Plan

The research aims to delve into the experiences of individuals seeking rental housing in big cities, specifically examining their interactions with existing housing search software.

### Objective:

To identify user pain points and needs during the house search process with the intention of rethinking and improving the overall home search experience.

### Methods:

The research methodology includes interviews with five participants aged 21 to 30 actively searching for rental homes in new cities. Both current and non-users of existing housing search apps were recruited through participant referrals.

### Timeline:

Secondary research: 1 week  
User Interviews: 1 week

## Interview Notes:

	Experience	Challenges	Reliable Source	Pain Points
<b>Interview 1:</b> (07/03, 1:00 pm)	Stressful due to communication challenges.	Misleading listings and difficulty finding desired features.	Youtube, Google articles	Crowded interface. lack of in-app communication
<b>Interview 2:</b> (07/05, 7:00am)	Overwhelming with changing options and inconsistent prices.	Difficulty comparing prices.	Word of mouth. Instagram, Google searches.	Inability to filter based on specific preferences.
<b>Interview 3:</b> (07/10, 2:00 pm)	Exhausting with extensive searches	Limited availability within the expected move in date.	Apartments.com, friends who lived in the areas	limited availability and uncertainty.
<b>Interview 4:</b> (07/03, 2:30 pm)	Nerve racking due to a fast market and uncertainty.	Difficulty finding reliable information and contacting property owners.	Word of mouth	Difficulty keeping track of viewed listings.
<b>Interview 5:</b> (07/08, 8:30 pm)	Stressful with limited availability in good areas	Difficulty organizing the many listings on the fast market.	Social media, apartment websites	Constantly checking for new listings.

## Insights

User interviews highlighted common challenges such as communication issues, misleading listings, and the need for better filtering options. Participants expressed a desire for in-app communication features and reviews based on the area. These findings will hopefully aim to create a more user-friendly and efficient experience.

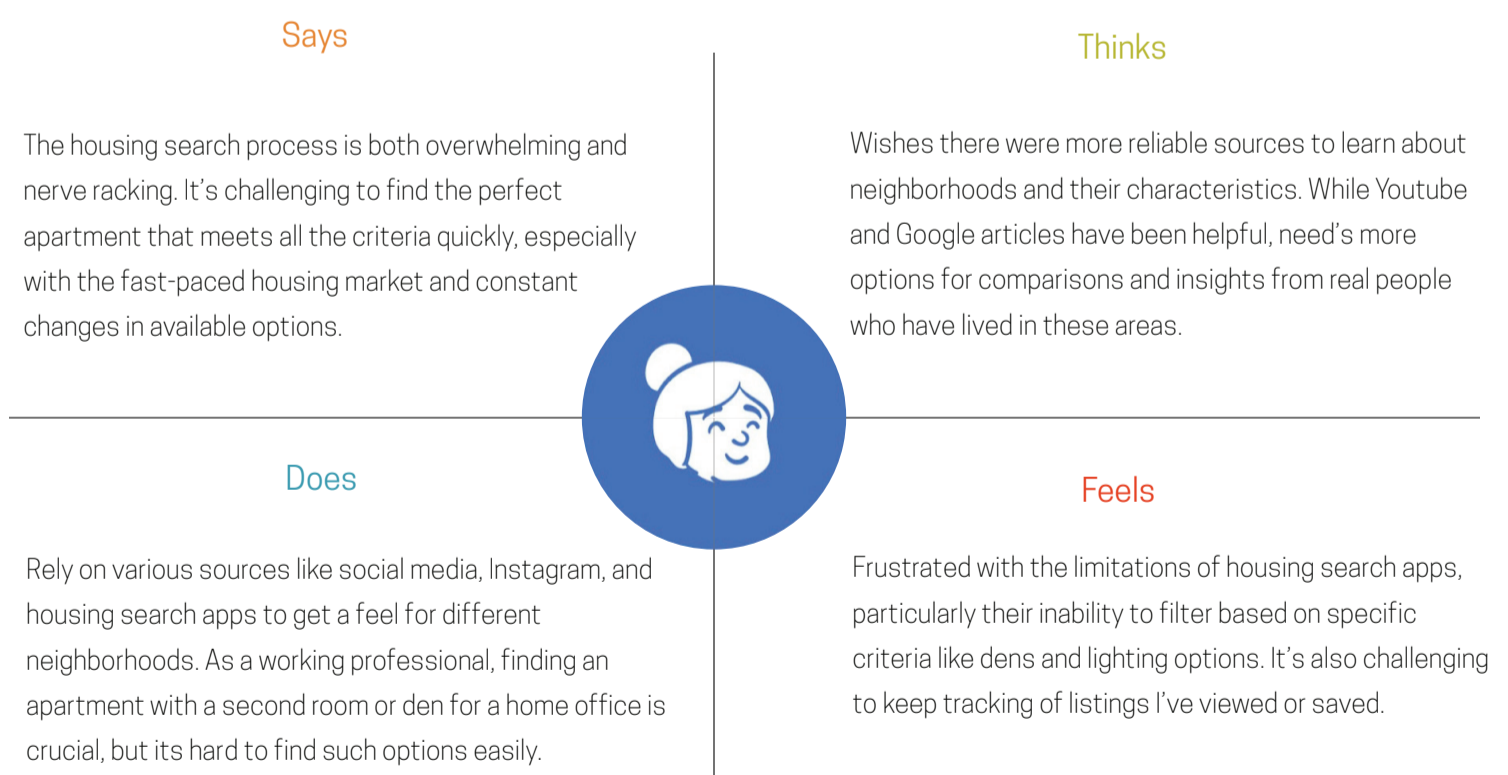
## Affinity Map

The map provides valuable insights into their pain points and potential improvements for a smoother housing search journey. They encountered challenges related to reliability, the fast-paced market, and difficulty in communication. One common struggle was finding trustworthy advice and information. Users also faced issues organizing listings and refining search filters.



## Empathy Map

The map provides valuable insights into their pain points and potential improvements for a smoother housing search journey. They encountered challenges related to reliability, the fast-paced market, and difficulty in communication. One common struggle was finding trustworthy advice and information. Users also faced issues organizing listings and refining search filters.



Interviews with housing seekers reveal common challenges such as fast-paced market navigation, lack of reliable neighborhood information, and frustrations with existing housing search apps. The affinity map highlights stress and difficulties faced during the search process, while the empathy map emphasizes the importance of meeting non-negotiable preferences and efficient communication.

## Persona

Sarah's persona adds depth to the case study, representing the target demographic of young professionals relocating to big cities.

### Sarah Thompson

Marketing Coordinator



Name: Sarah Thompson

Marketing Coordinator. Sarah is responsible for creating and implementing marketing strategies, managing social media campaigns, and coordinating events for her company.

- Age: 28
- Education: bachelor's degree in marketing
- Ethnicity: Caucasian
- Family Status: Single, no children

Sarah recently accepted a new job in a bustling big city, and she needs to find a rental home quickly before her move. Her main problem is navigating the fast-paced housing market and finding a suitable apartment that meets her preferences and budget. Sarah is motivated to secure a rental home in a safe neighborhood with good access to public transportation and amenities. Her goal is to find a well-lit apartment with in-unit laundry facilities, as these are essential for her comfort and work-from-home setup.

Sarah is a social person and relies on recommendations from friends and colleagues who have lived in or visited the areas she is interested in.

Sarah uses housing search apps and websites to explore available listings, apply filters, and compare various rental options. She relies on technology for efficient communication with landlords and property managers.

*"Finding a secure and affordable place with natural light is essential for my peace of mind and productivity. I wish the search process could be less stressful and offer better organization to help me make the right decision."*

### Jobs To Be Done

Understanding the Jobs To Be Done (TBD) provides a detailed insight into the specific tasks users aim to accomplish during their housing search. Whether it's efficiently browsing listings, evaluating neighborhood suitability, or feeling empowered in their decisions.

<b>Job Performer</b>	Home rental searcher
<b>Job</b>	<p><b>Main Job:</b> Attain a rental home in a big city.</p> <p><b>Related Job:</b> Gather detailed information about neighborhoods.</p> <p>Connect with property owners to inquire about properties.</p> <p>Compare different rental properties to identify the best fit.</p> <p>Compare different rental properties to identify the best fit.</p> <p><b>Emotional Job:</b> Confidently make a choice that aligns with preferences and lifestyle.</p> <p><b>Social Job:</b> Share personal accomplishments about the new rental home decision with friends and family.</p>
<b>Needs</b>	Reduce the stress of the different factors that make rental house searching in a big city difficult; optimize the rental house searching process.
<b>Circumstances</b>	<p>Moving to a new city or seeking new rental accommodations.</p> <p>In a competitive rental market of a big city with a limited timeframe.</p>

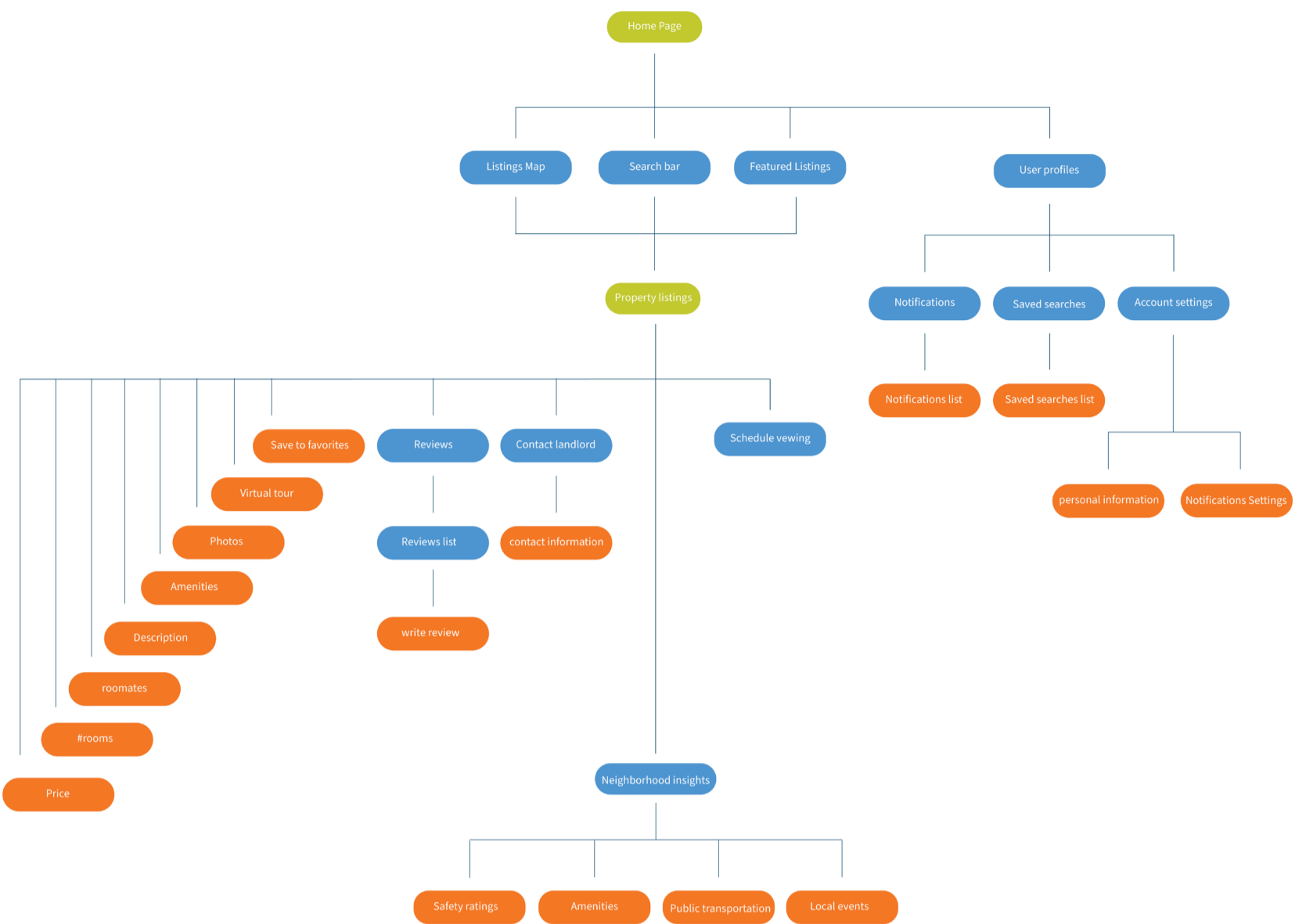
### Potential Solutions

Addressing the identified issues involves solutions such as:

1. **Organization:** Enhance saved property listings organization.
2. **Comprehensive Information:** Provide detailed data on rental properties, including amenities, and pet policies.
3. **Improved Filters:** Enhance search filters and sorting options for specific criteria.
4. **Efficient Communication:** Facilitate efficient communication channels between users and landlords.

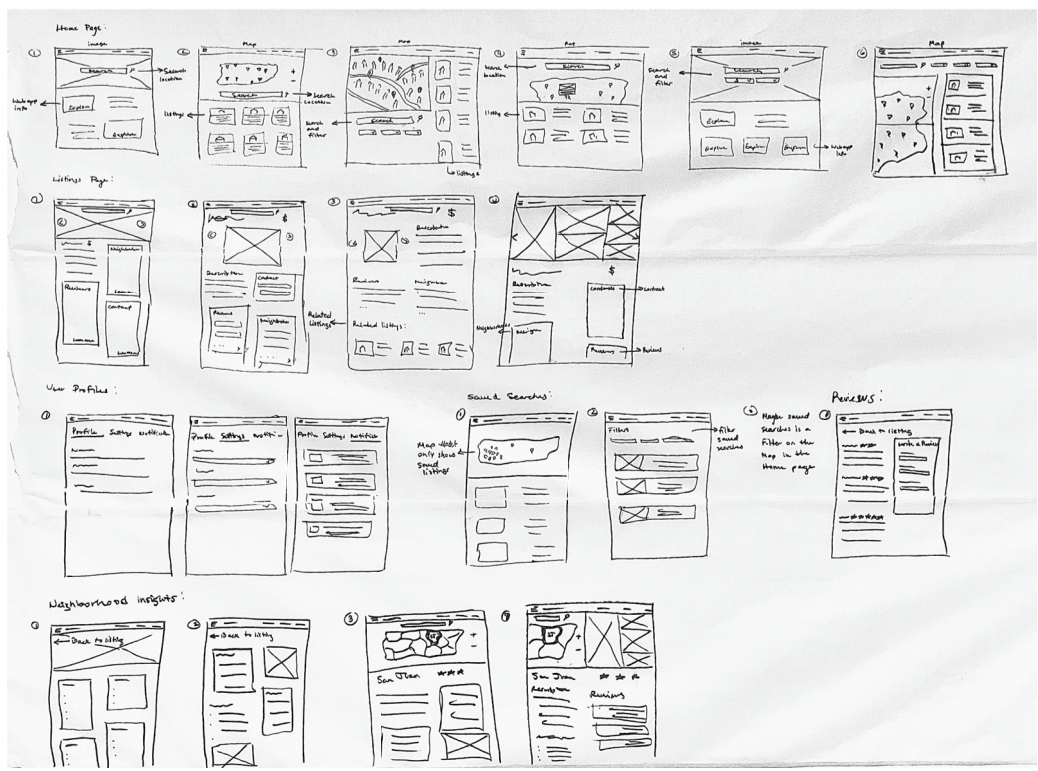
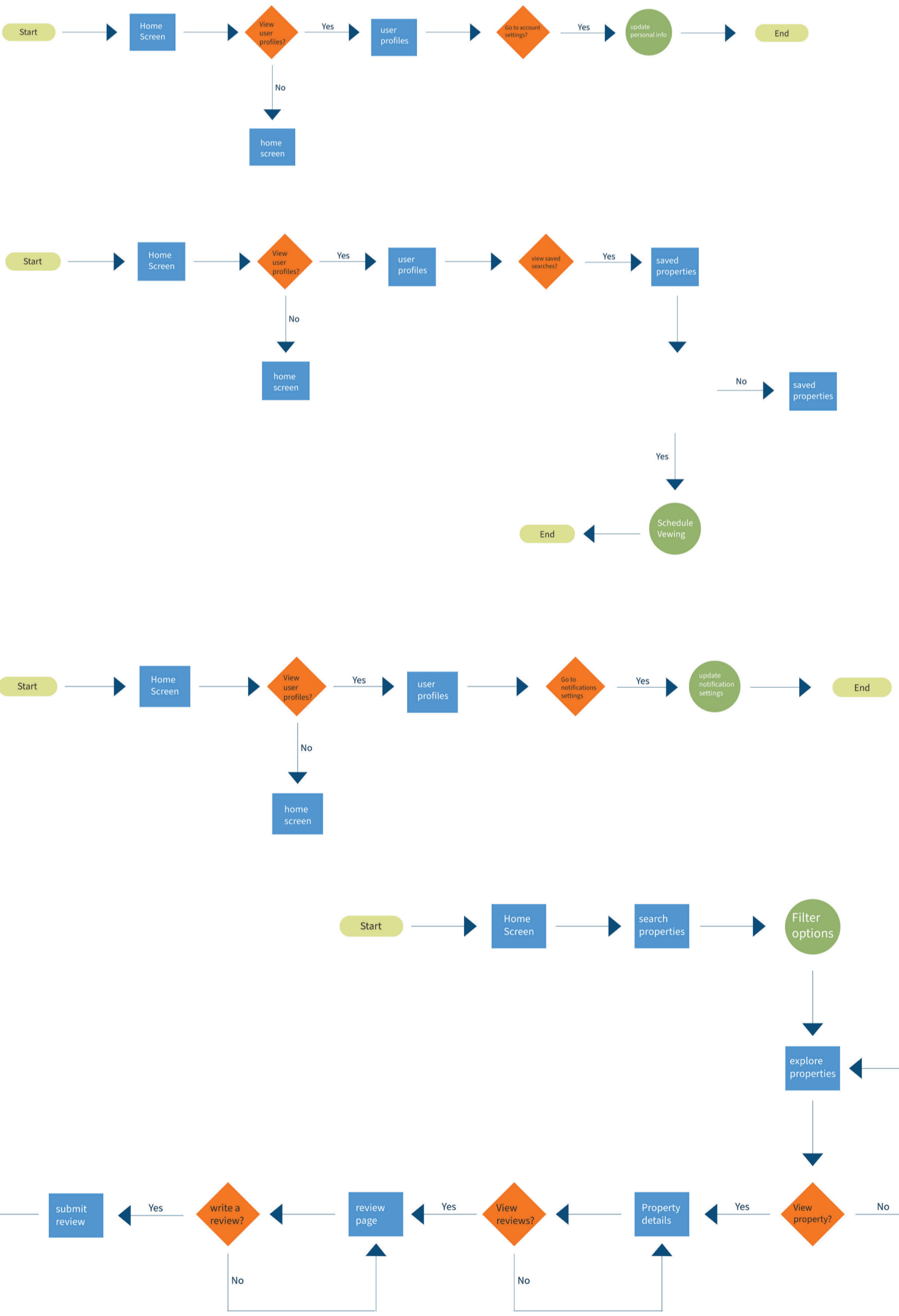
# Site Map

The site map for the housing search app outlines the main features and navigation structure of the application. The site map includes primary pages such as the home page, search results, listing details, neighborhood insights, and user profile. Secondary pages branch out from these main sections, capturing additional functionalities like filtering options, communication with landlords, and viewing scheduled appointments.



# User flows

The User Flows represent the step-by-step journey that users take within the housing search app, from initiating a search to completing specific tasks like viewing listings, exploring neighborhood insights, and scheduling viewings.

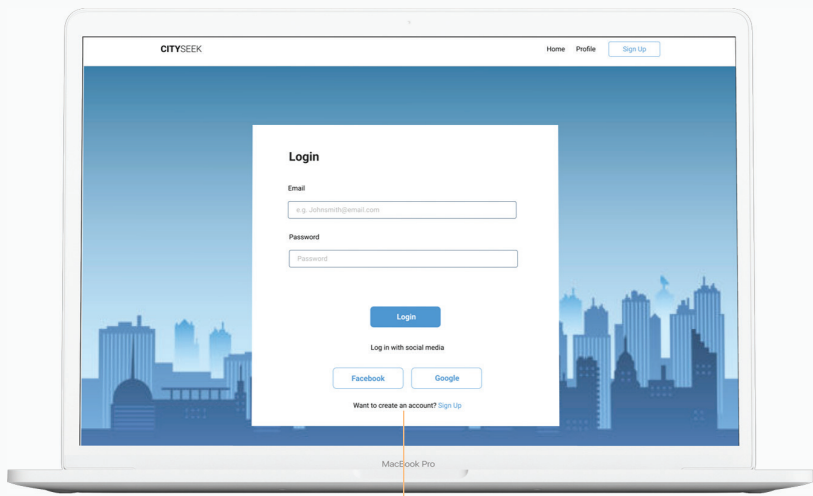


# Sketches

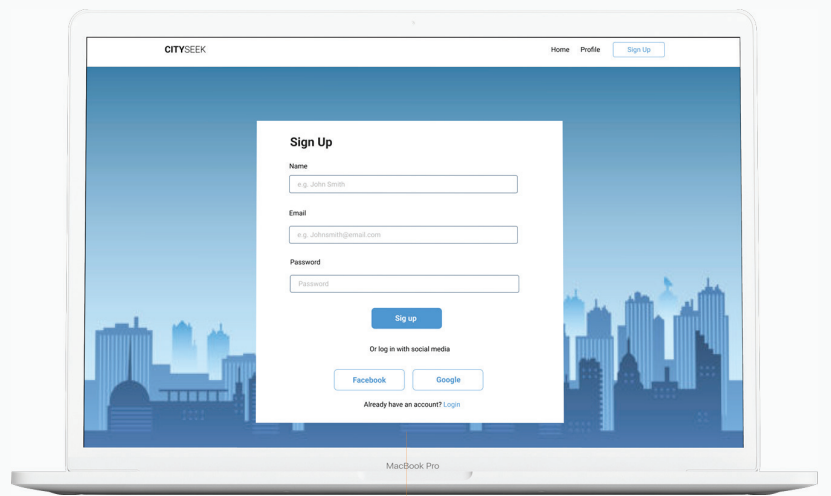
The initial sketches organized the app in order with the main page showcasing a map and updated listings. Iterations of the listings page with the order of each feature. From the sketches, one iteration from each page was chosen to develop forward.



# High Fidelity Mock-ups

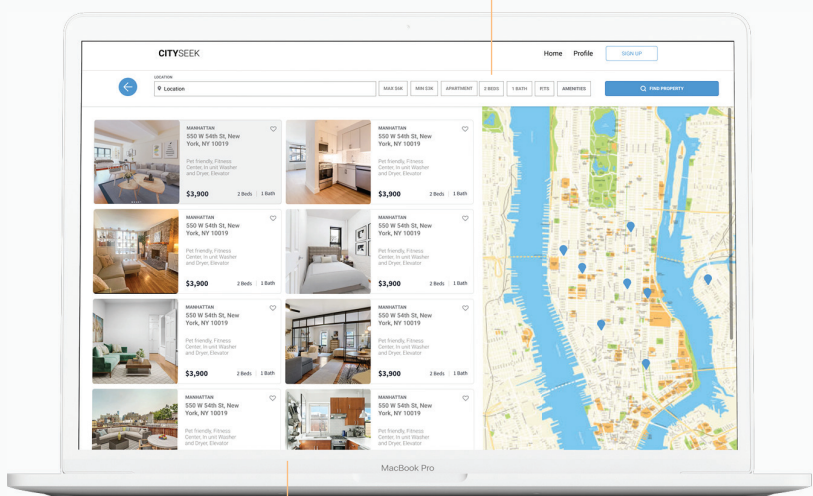


Login page with multiple options to login

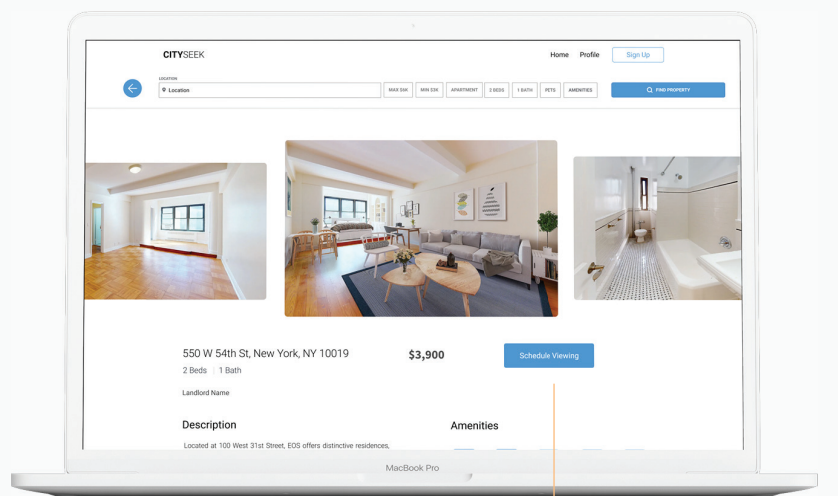


Sign up page

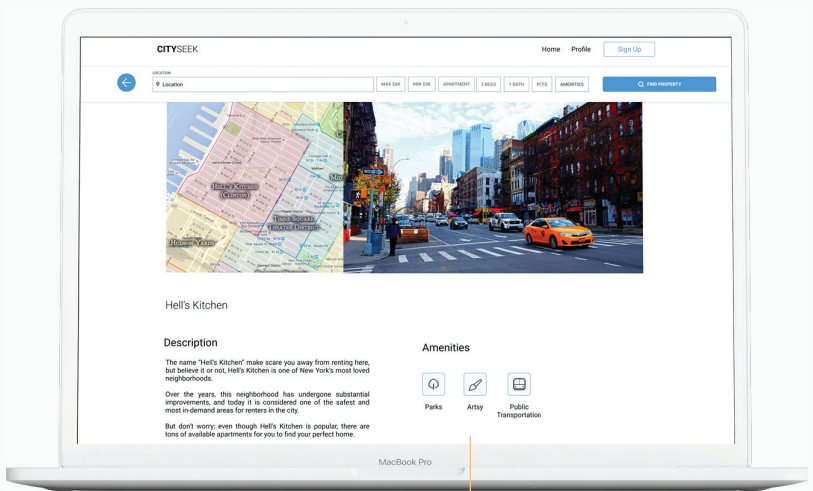
Accessible and visible filtering options



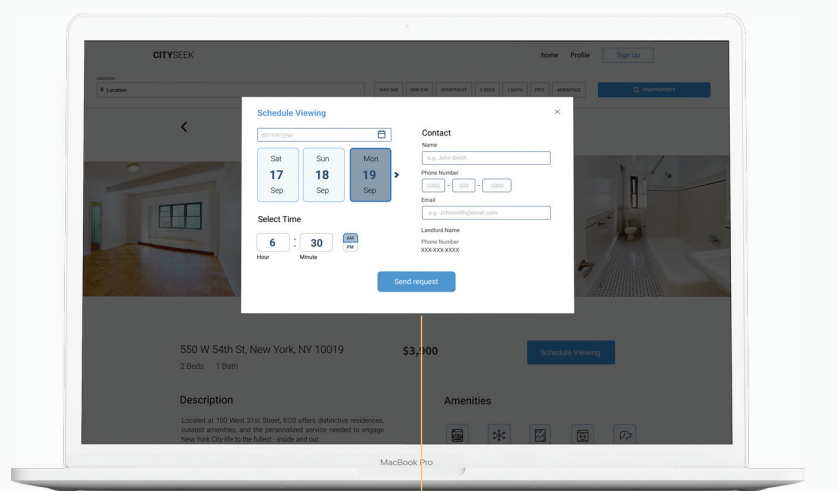
listings upfront with amenities and important details on the card



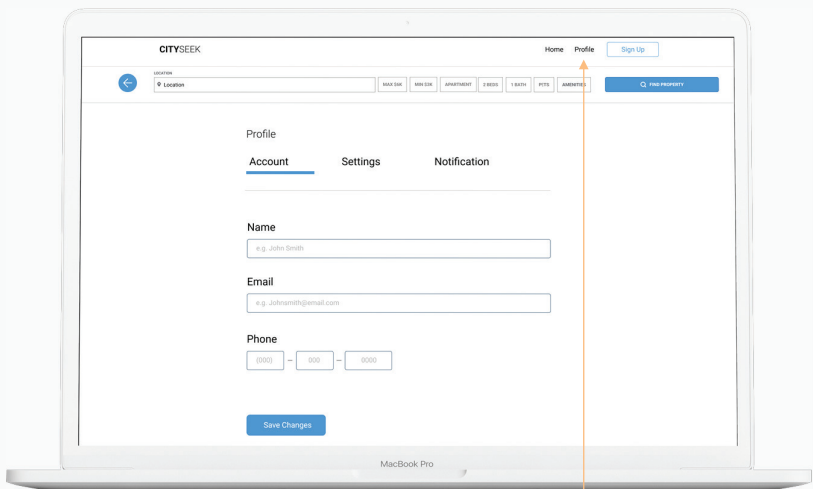
Schedule a viewing within the listings page for a fast message



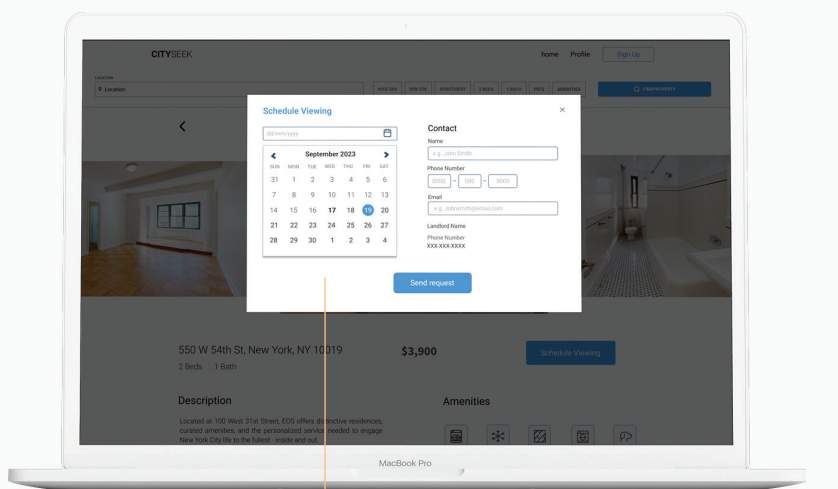
Icons for a more user friendly approach to the amenities



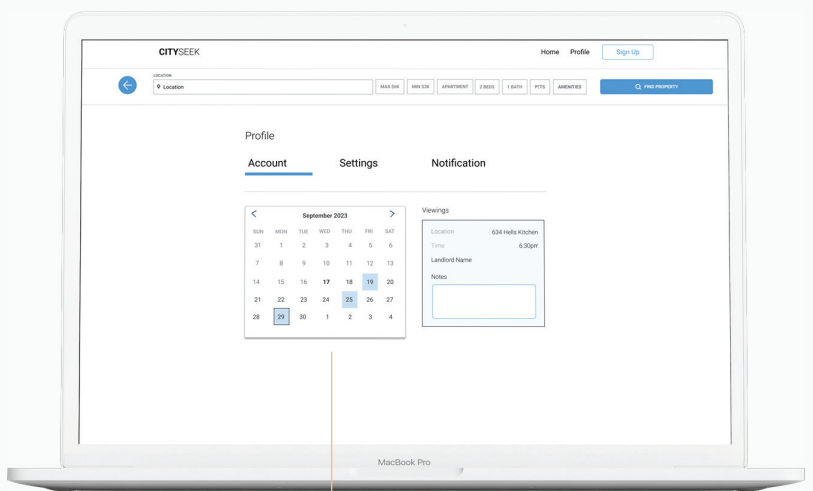
Schedule viewing pop up for a faster action



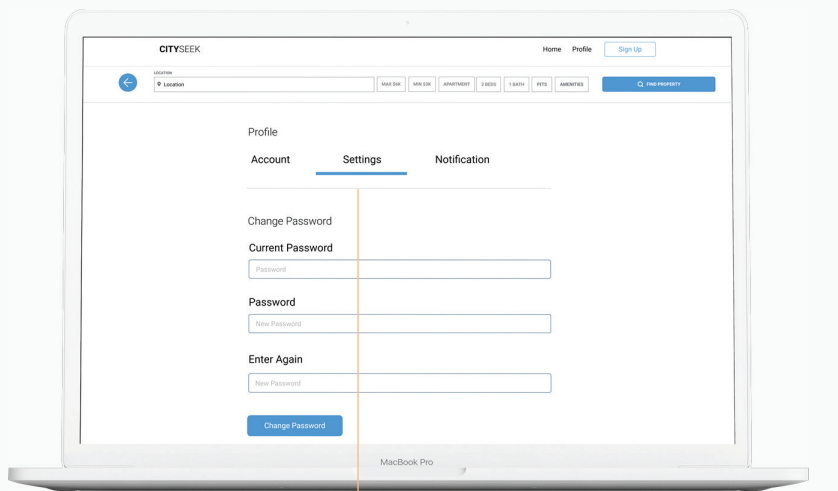
Profile accessible from the toolbar



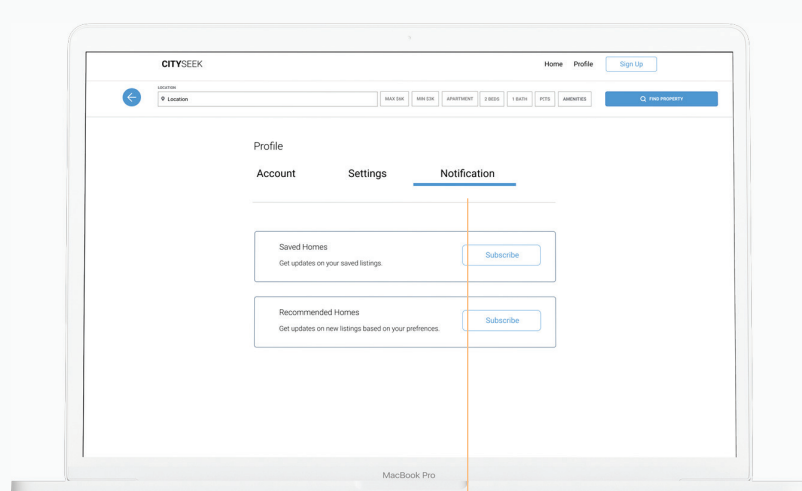
Calendar pop up for scheduling a viewing for easy access



Calendar accessible from the account page



The profile page includes the settings page where users can change their password

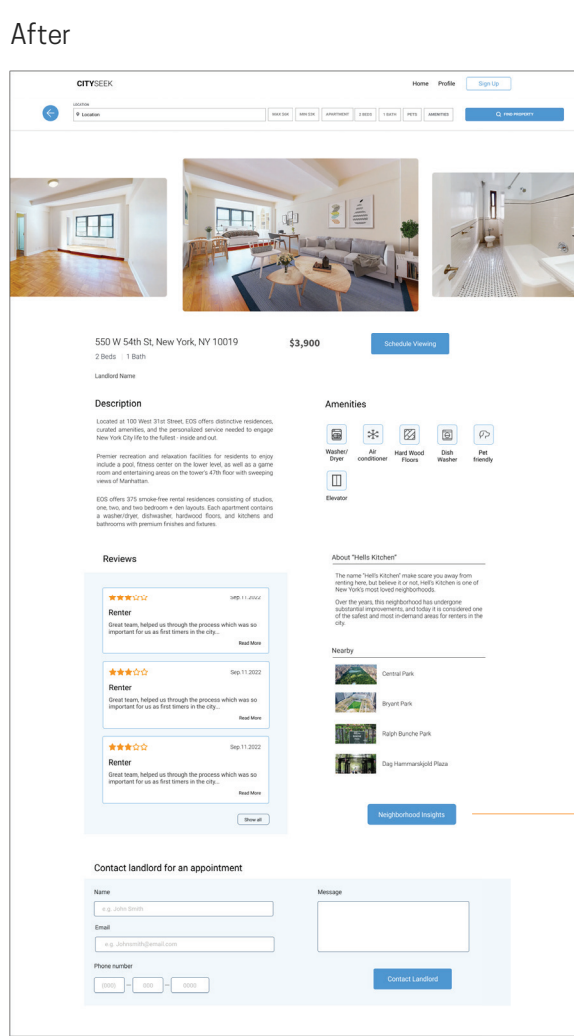
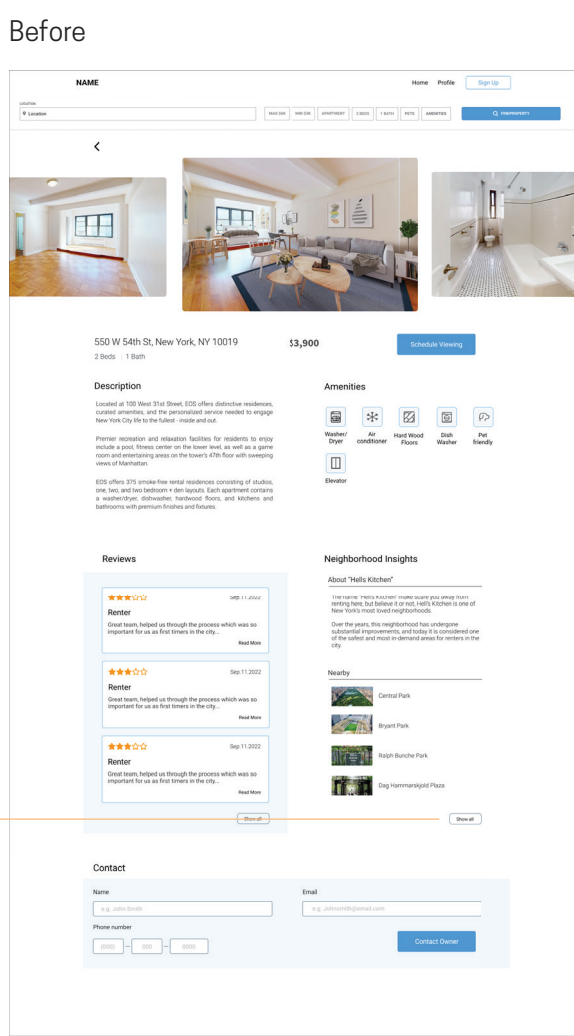


Subscription to desired notifications

# Usability Test

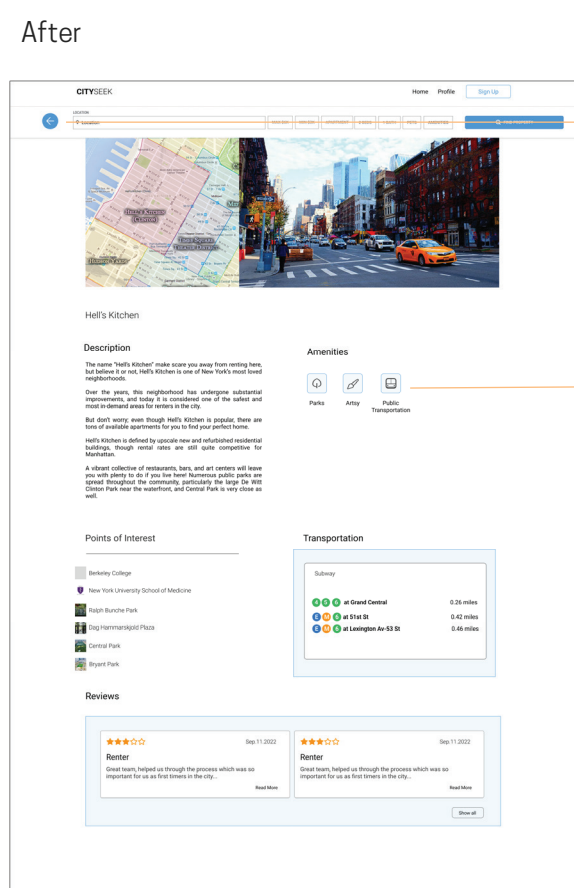
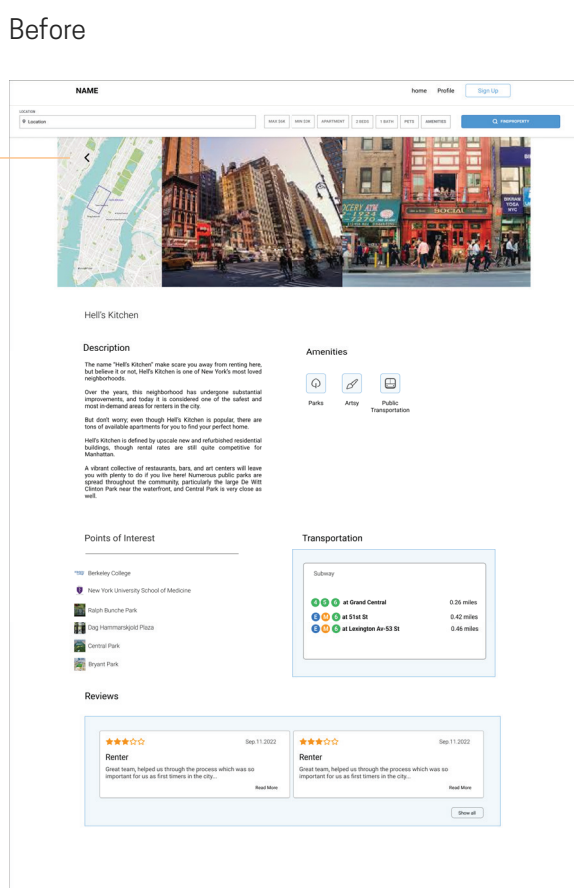
The purpose of this testing was to evaluate the app's usability and to gather feedback from participants. I conducted these tests on 10/21-22/2023, with a focus on understanding how users interacted with the app. With the aimed to uncover any usability issues, gain insights into user feedback, and assess the overall user experience. Recruiting five participants, all potential users of the app, who had various backgrounds and housing search needs. The usability tests conducted on the housing search app showed valuable insights into user interactions, preferences, and pain points. Participants were able to find relevant listings and navigate through various features, emphasizing the user-friendly nature of the app. Overall, these insights were able to offer guidance for refining the app's interface, addressing usability challenges, and ensuring a more seamless and inclusive user experience.

Check out my prototype



Some participants found difficulty understanding the purpose of certain buttons, such as "show all" under neighborhood insights, revealing a potential need for clearer labeling.

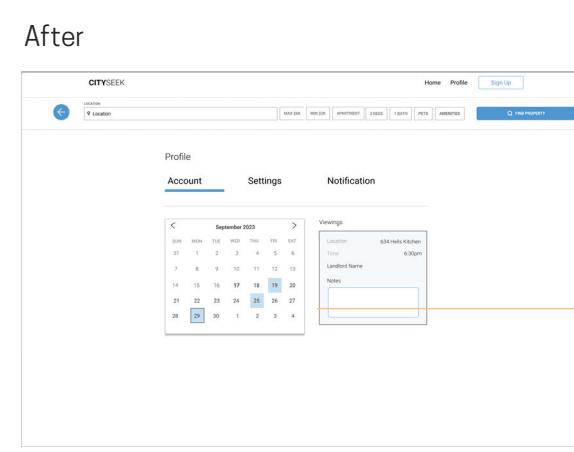
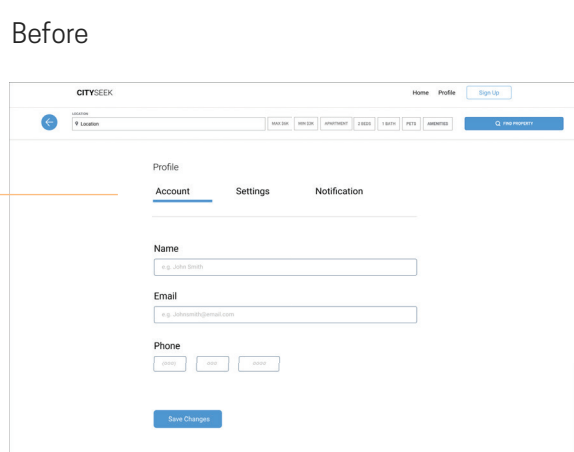
Enhance the labeling and user interface design to make these features more intuitive.



Challenges were identified, notably in the navigation flow, where participants struggled with the small arrow to go back, emphasizing the need for a more intuitive design.

Improved the visibility and functionality of the back button to enhance user navigation.

There was a positive response to visual elements, especially icons aiding users with dyslexia, highlights the importance of inclusive design.



Participants expressed a desire for an integrated calendar for scheduling viewings, enhancing the app's organizational aspects.

A calendar for their scheduled viewing to keep their listings organized within the same app could help the users be more organized.

## The Outcome

The journey involved understanding the unique needs of big city rental seekers, ideating around core principles, and refining the app through usability testing. The changes made reflect the commitment to creating a stress-free and efficient housing search experience.

## Contact

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