# RentrEasy UX Report

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# Executive Summary

# Project Overview

**RESEARCH GOAL: Understand who our users are and what their current experience is like with small-scale real estate investment.**

Gaining a stronger understanding of our users and their experience ensures that we design based on insights from real users rather than relying on what we *assume* users will enjoy. Doing this at an early stage of development results in a more efficient development process and a stronger user experience. Keep in mind that this is an iterative process, and more data will reveal more insights.

This executive summary highlights actionable recommendations gathered from an interview with someone who fits the profile of a potential RentrEasy user. The rest of the report takes a deeper dive into the UX process and includes annotated wireframe mockups beginning on slide 14.

# Recommendations

**#1.** Provide opportunities for face-to-face educational webinars and networking meetups.

**#2.** Create a strong first impression about how easy real estate can be and build long term trust and buy-in with RentrEasy users.

**#3.** Provide a RentrEasy demo with sample data to allow potential users to explore the app freely before committing to it.

**#4.** Provide intuitive and easy-to-use tools e.g., TurboTenant's Landlord Toolbox.

These recommendations were gathered from an interview with Mark, a person who fits the profile of a potential RentrEasy user. However, **the ideal number of user interviews to conduct should be 5-6.** But as a starting point, interviewing 1 user will give better insight than interviewing no users.

# Methodology

# Methodology

Competitive Analysis

User Interview

Empathy Mapping

Persona

Journey Map

# Competitive Analysis

Key features from **TurboTenant, Buildium, RentRedi, and Robinhood** were analyzed based on Nielsen Norman's 10 Usability Heuristics and the Laws of UX Heuristics for UI/UX best practices.

## Recommendation

**Aim for a design experience between Buildium's user interface and TurboTenant's user experience.**

While Buildium has the strongest UI design, TurboTenant's user experience better caters to beginner small-scale real estate investors. Their limited use of jargon, features such as the Landlord Toolbox and webinars; and a strong adherence to Nielsen Norman's Visibility of System Status and Recognition Rather Than Recall heuristics make TurboTenant a stronger user experience for beginning real estate investors.
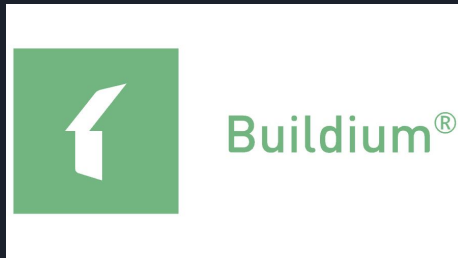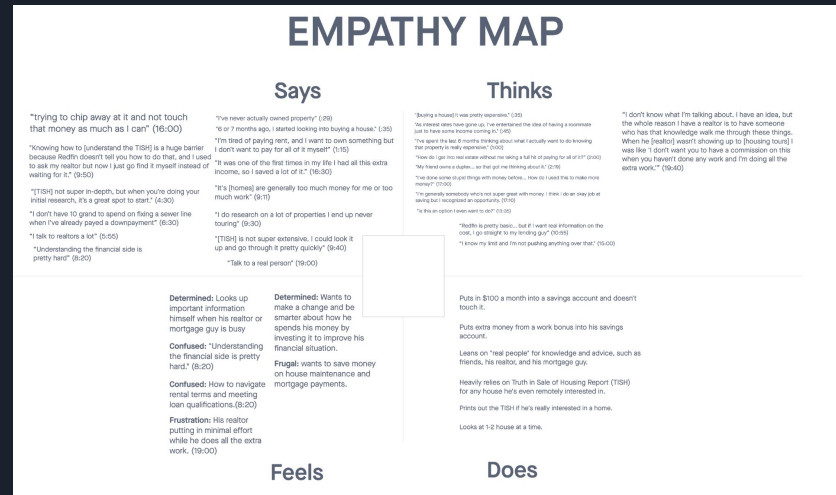
# User Interview

A participant who matched the RentrEasy user profile was interviewed. My role was to facilitate by asking questions and probing deeper into interesting parts of the interview, treating it more like a conversation and allowing the participant to tell me their story to get the best insights possible.

# Empathy Map

Key quotes and other notes from the interview were recorded onto an empathy map to better organize information and uncover important insights. This helped develop the following User Persona and User Journey map.

# Persona

The user persona "Mark Snyder" was created based off of the interview I conducted. Mark is looking to purchase his first home and potentially get into the real estate business. Quotes are taken directly from the interview.

**Mark Snyder**

| | |
|---|---|
| AGE | 30 |
| JOB | Software Developer |
| SALARY | $80,000 - $85,000 |

66 I recognized the opportunity of 'How do I make more money or get myself out of a worse financial situation?'

66 How do I spin this? How do I get into real estate without having to take a full hit of me paying for all of it?

**Feelings**

- **Determined** to be smarter with his money
- **Intimidated** by the financial literacy required
- **Frustrated** by people who are unreliable and untrustworthy

**About me**

Mark recognizes that there are better ways he could be spending his money. He currently has more saved up than he ever has before, and this time he wants to do something smart with it. He's tired of paying rent and views homeownership as the next step in his financial well-being. He's looked into investing in a duplex as a way to offset the cost of a mortgage and as a potential for future passive income. He isn't confident that real estate investment is his future, but he's willing to give it a try and start small.

66 It's like an experiment to me, being so new to [real estate investment].

**Goals**

- Improve his financial situation
- Buy a second home to reside in and continue to rent out his first property
- Have passive income

**Concerns**

- Understanding the financial side of things.
- Navigating rental terms and meeting loan qualifications
- Not sure if real estate investment is what he wants to continue to do in the future
- Unreliable and/or untrustworthy subject matter experts

**Behaviors**

- Leans on his network for knowledge and advice
- Relies heavily on TISH reports for homes he's even remotely interested in
- Puts $100 a month into his savings
- Puts money from work bonuses into his savings
- Browses the Redfin app for properties

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# Journey Map

Based on the interview, a journey map was crafted to detail Mark's initial real estate journey. This map highlights the high and low points of Mark's journey along with opportunities for RentrEasy to pursue.

**Keep in Mind: The journey map and persona are iterative pieces of work. With more data, both will change or entirely new personas and journey maps may develop alongside these initial deliverables.**



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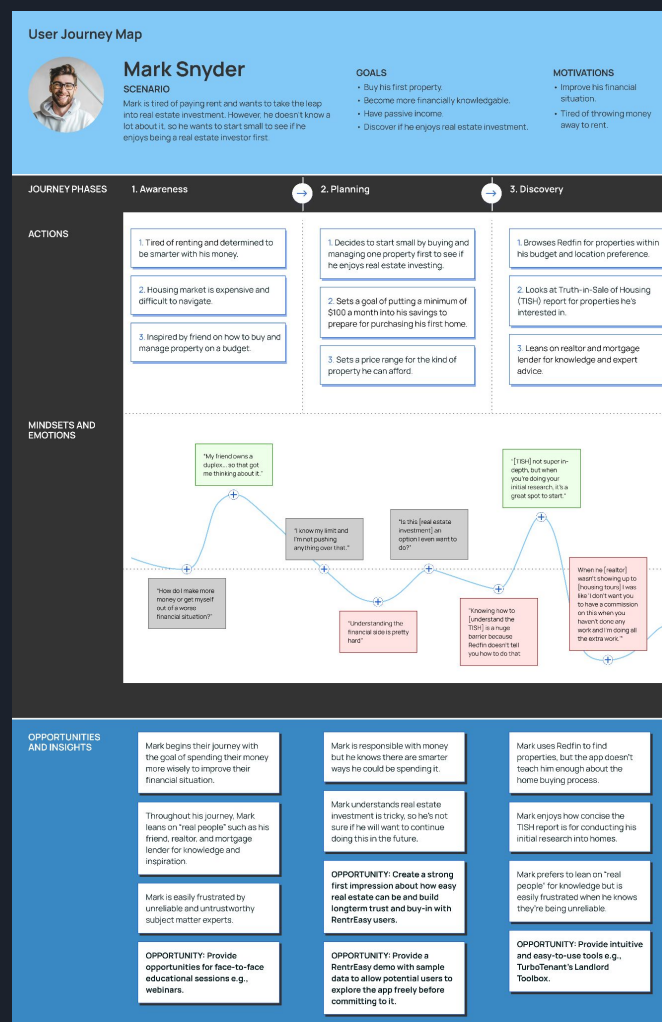
# Recommendations

# Recommendation #1

Provide opportunities for face-to-face educational webinars and networking meetups.

The user from the persona, Mark, tends to rely on their network for advice and inspiration. Whether that's learning from a friend's experience or leaning on an expert for advice, it's important that RentrEasy provides a space for users to network with each other and learn from experts.

## Quotes from User:

*"Go look for lenders, find a lender program—talk to a real person"*

*"Redfin is pretty basic… but if I want real information, I go straight to my lending guy"*

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# Recommendation #2

Create a strong first impression about how easy real estate can be and build long term trust and buy-in with RentrEasy users.

Mark tends to rely on his network, but he also has a strong dislike towards unreliable people, particularly with experts who are supposed to help them (e.g., a realtor who doesn't show up to a house tour as they promised). So, RentrEasy's first impression is crucial.

*"Be very leary of what realtors you go to."*

*"I had a reality sh\*tty realtor for awhile—he just sucked."*

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# Recommendation #3

Provide a RentrEasy demo with sample data to allow potential users to explore the app freely before committing to it.

Mark was unsure if they wanted to commit to real estate investment for the long term, so they wanted to start small by purchasing a duplex and renting out the other half. An easy, no strings attached demo for users to freely explore before committing to the app may be a good way to onboard new users and establish RentrEasy as a trustworthy and reliable gateway for beginner real estate investors. Despite Buildium's overall complexity for new real estate investors, one thing they do well is provide an easy to access demo that simulates exactly how the app will look like using sample data.

*"is this an option I even want to do?"*

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# Recommendation #4

Provide intuitive and easy-to-use tools e.g., TurboTenant's Landlord Toolbox.

When searching for homes to buy, Mark enjoys using the Truth-in-Sale of Housing report because the information is concise and easy to understand. This makes him feel more confident when browsing homes on Redfin. Providing easy-to-use tools such as a rent price calculator, resources for state specific laws, and more may be a great way for RentrEasy to attract users like Mark and establish RentrEasy as a trustworthy resource for beginning real estate investors.

# Annotated Wireframes

# Dashboard

The home screen. Provides brief summary of important information and quick access to different parts of the app.

**1** Notifies users of any new, important information. Red status dot means there are are new notifications. Notification settings should be adjustable in the settings under the hamburger menu.

**2** Quick access to properties and units owned. Red dot status notifies user of any important information regarding the property that needs to be resolved such as maintenance requests/updates. This notification is tied to the bell notification, and both clear when the issue is resolved.

**3** Allows user to minimize and maximize different containers to clear up space on the dashboard.

**4** Green status dot next to chat icon indicates that there are unread messages. Reading the unread message will clear this green dot status.
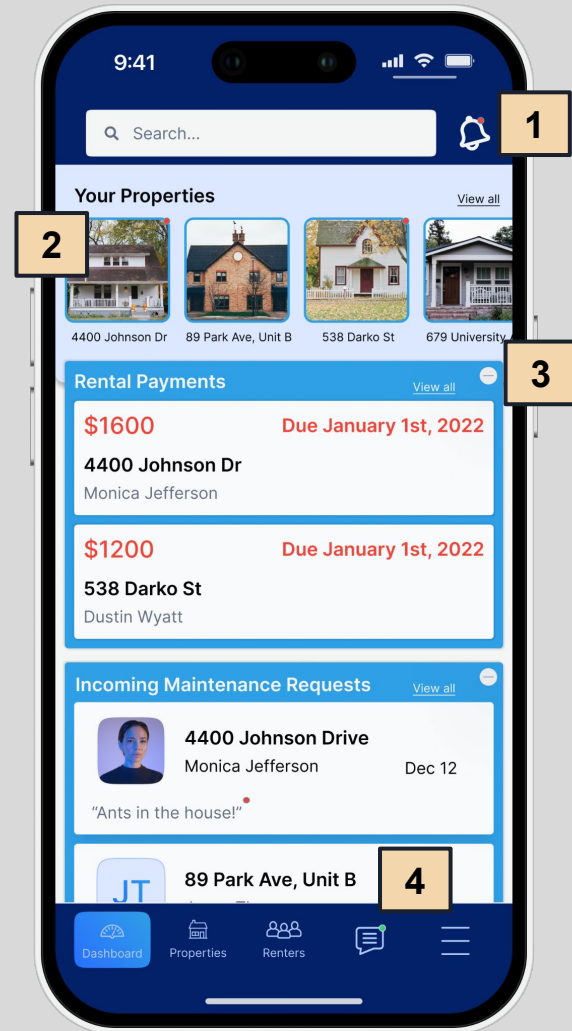
# Active Work Orders

List of active work orders and their most recent update. Tapping on an individual work order should bring up more details.

**1**    Option to sort work orders by Recent Activity (i.e., when it was last updated) or by severity.

**2**    Color status dot indicates severity of each work order. Red=High Severity, Yellow=Medium Severity, and Blue=Low Severity. Severity level should be set by the landlord only.

**3**    Floating action button allows user to create their own work order and add it to the list.

**4**    Hamburger menu should open up a modal side sheet for additional screen navigation, including access to settings and account.



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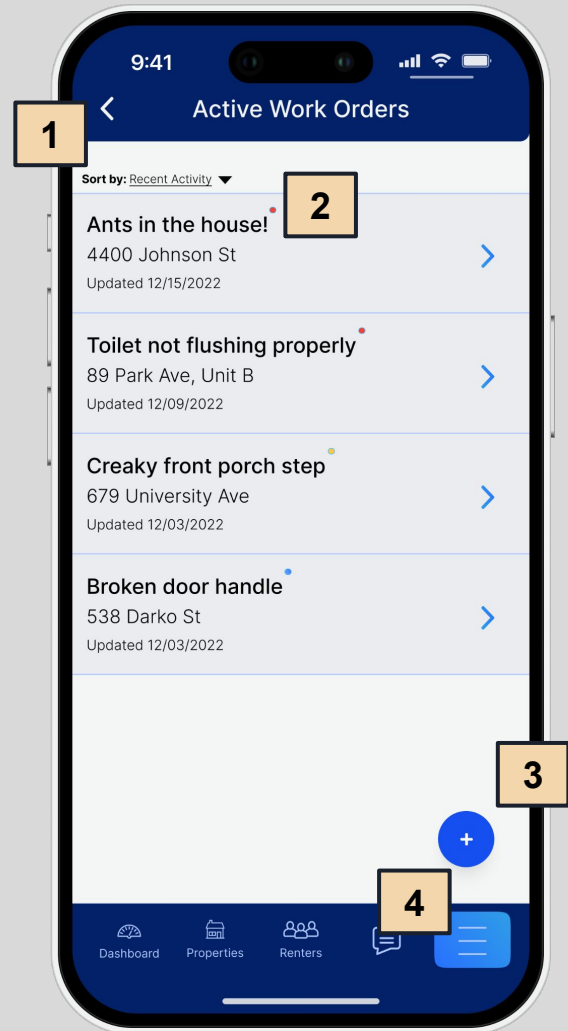
# Making a Payment

What it looks like to a make a secure payment on RentrEasy from the *tenant's* perspective. This may most likely look similar from the landlord's perspective when paying for something on their end (e.g., making a payment to a handyman).

**1** Tapping here allows the user to change or add a bank account to draw money from.

**2** Option to turn manage and turn AutoPay on or off.

**3** Continue to final review of payment before officially confirming
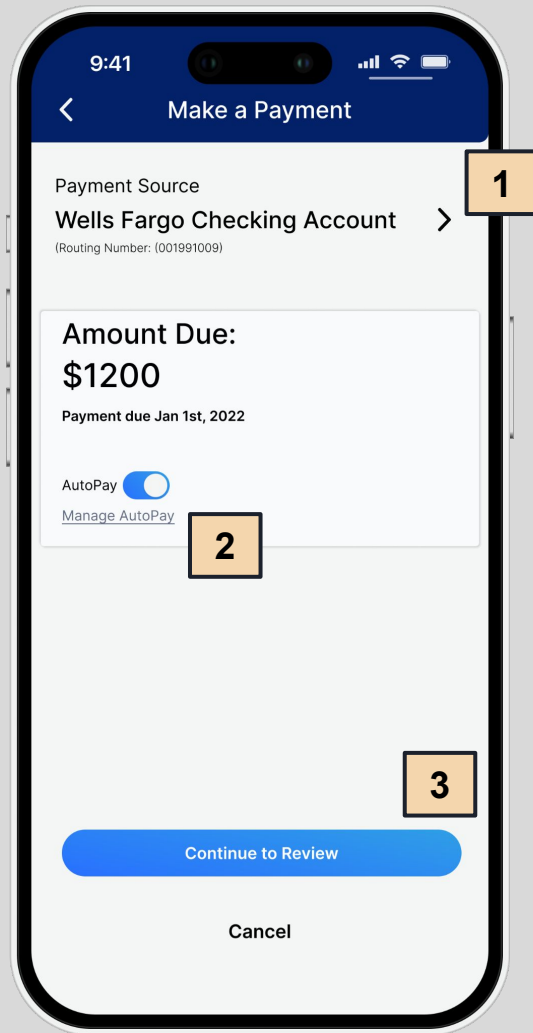
# Rental Payments Overview

An overview of rental payments sorted by month. How much is due, how much has been collected, etc.

**1**    Tapping here allows the user to switch between months.

**2**    Sort by balance (high - low) and filter by unpaid, paid, or past due rent.

**3**    Tapping here takes the user into more detail about each rental payment.



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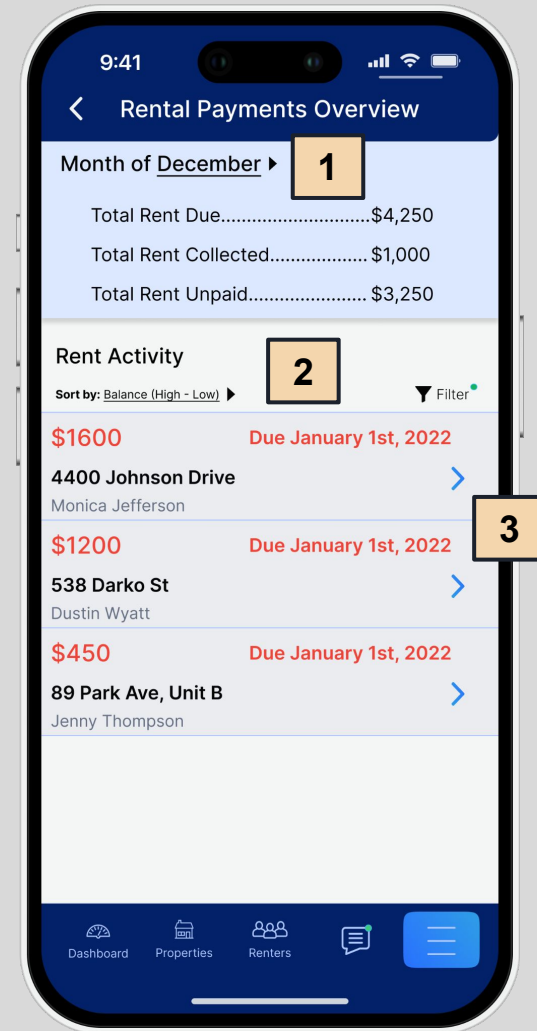
# Education

The "Browse" or "Education" part of RentrEasy. A better name should probably be used, but this screen contains everything related to learning more about real-estate investment, terminology, etc.

**1**  Top banner showcases upcoming webinars or other important information about RentrEasy. Always includes a call to action to RSVP or learn more about an event.

**2**  Contains a library of RentrEasy articles meant to help small-scale investors learn the basics. When a user finishes reading an article, there should be something to indicate that an article has been already been completed (e.g., a check mark).
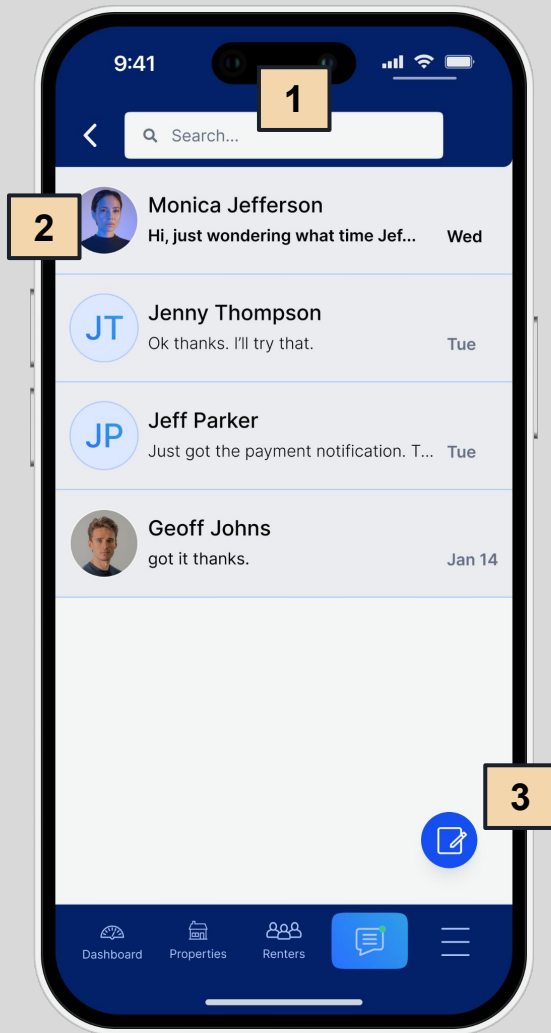
**3**  RentrEasy blog highlighting the top 4 most recently published articles.
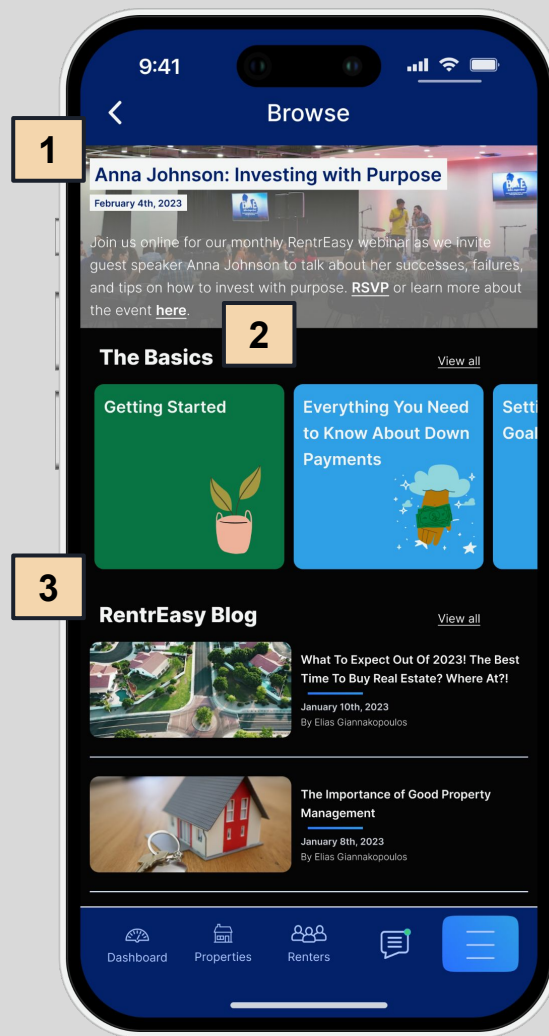
# In-app Messenger

Allows for instant communication between RentrEasy users.

**1** Searches for any active conversations.

**2** Unopened messages remain bold until opened.

**3** Floating action button allows the user to draft and send a new message to a recipient.

# In-app Messenger (Cont.)

**1** Sent messages are organized by the date and time that they were sent by.

**2** Outgoing messages sent by the user always appear on the right-hand side.

**3** Tapping this icon provides the option to attach videos or images from the user's phone.



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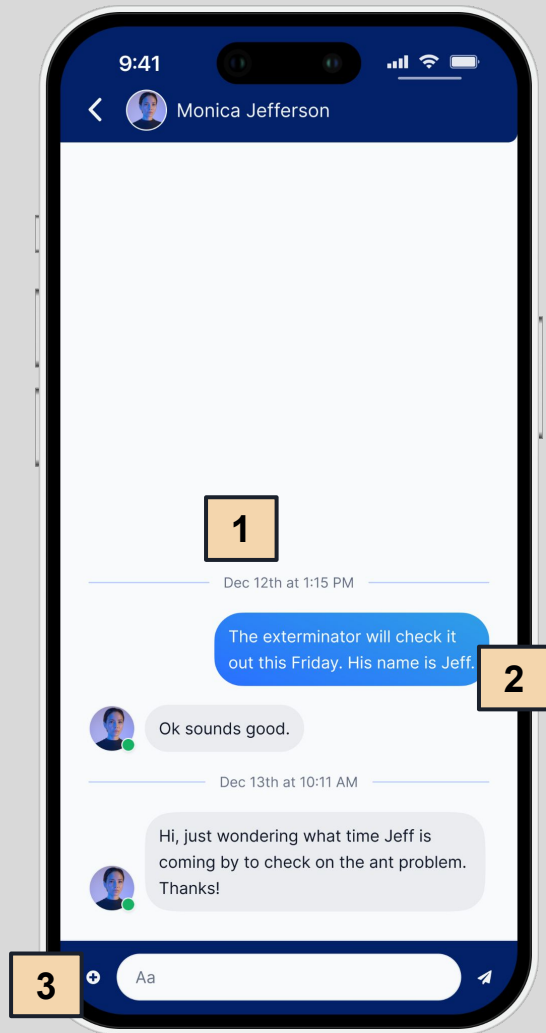
# Next Steps

## User Interviews

As stated before in this report, **conducting 5-6 user interviews** is the sweet spot before you begin to notice diminishing returns of insightful user data. However, you might discover you have a second set of primary users, such as tenants, that you can do more interviews with, and thus create a second set of personas and journey maps.

## User Flows

User flows are flow charts that explain how the app is navigated and show key interactions that the user goes through. It will be important to focus on key user flows such as detailing the interactions a user goes through to create a work order, how to sign-up for a RentrEasy account, or even the steps it takes to attend a webinar (though a storyboard may be better for this).
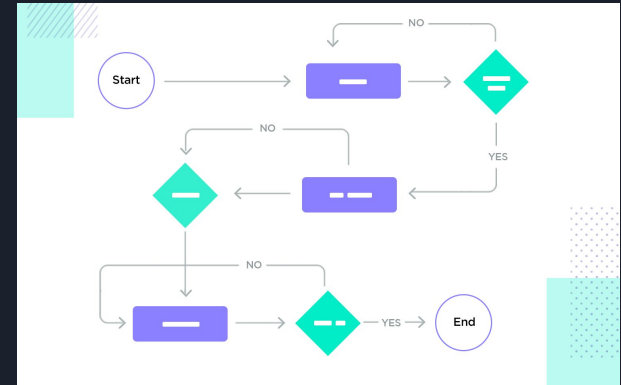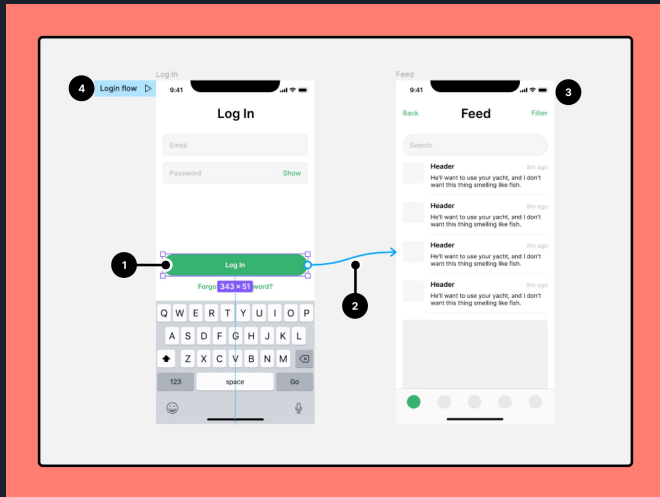


Example of what a user flow can look like.

Source: https://www.justinmind.com/blog/user-flow/

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## Interactive Prototype

To better help the development team, an interactive prototype may be beneficial. This will make wireframes built in Figma clickable and show key interactions between the different screens. For efficiency, don't bother with building a prototype for the whole app. Instead, look at the user flow and decide which important flows you should like to focus on (e.g., Creating an account, creating a work order, etc.).



To the left: An example of making wireframes clickable in Figma.
Source: https://help.figma.com/hc/en-us/articles/360040314193-Guide-to-prototyping-in-Figma

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# Thank You!

# Thank You!



This has been an amazing opportunity! RentrEasy is an exciting app, and I'm thankful for the chance to have had a hand in it. Elias and Georgiana, you have both been great leaders and I look forward to seeing where RentrEasy goes next.

**Contact Information:**

If you have any other questions, please reach out to me on LinkedIn, Slack, or my email at mikeman1090@gmail.com—I'm happy to be a friend and a resource!

Thank you!