

# Building Trust in the Rental Housing Market

**PROJECT** MSc in UX and Service Design

**ROLE** Lead Researcher & Designer

**DURATION** Sep 2025 – Present

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# Introduction

Project context

# Introduction

## Theme

Building Trust in the Rental Housing Market

## Process

- Understanding the ecosystem (Stakeholders, As-Is Blueprint)
- Understanding users (Interviews insights)
- Selecting the focus (Priority Matrix)
- Designing the solution (Persona/Journey, Flows, Redesign Proposal)

## Outcome

A redesigned solution for trust-building at the listing stage



# Stakeholder Map

Understanding the service ecosystem

# Stakeholder Map

## Primary

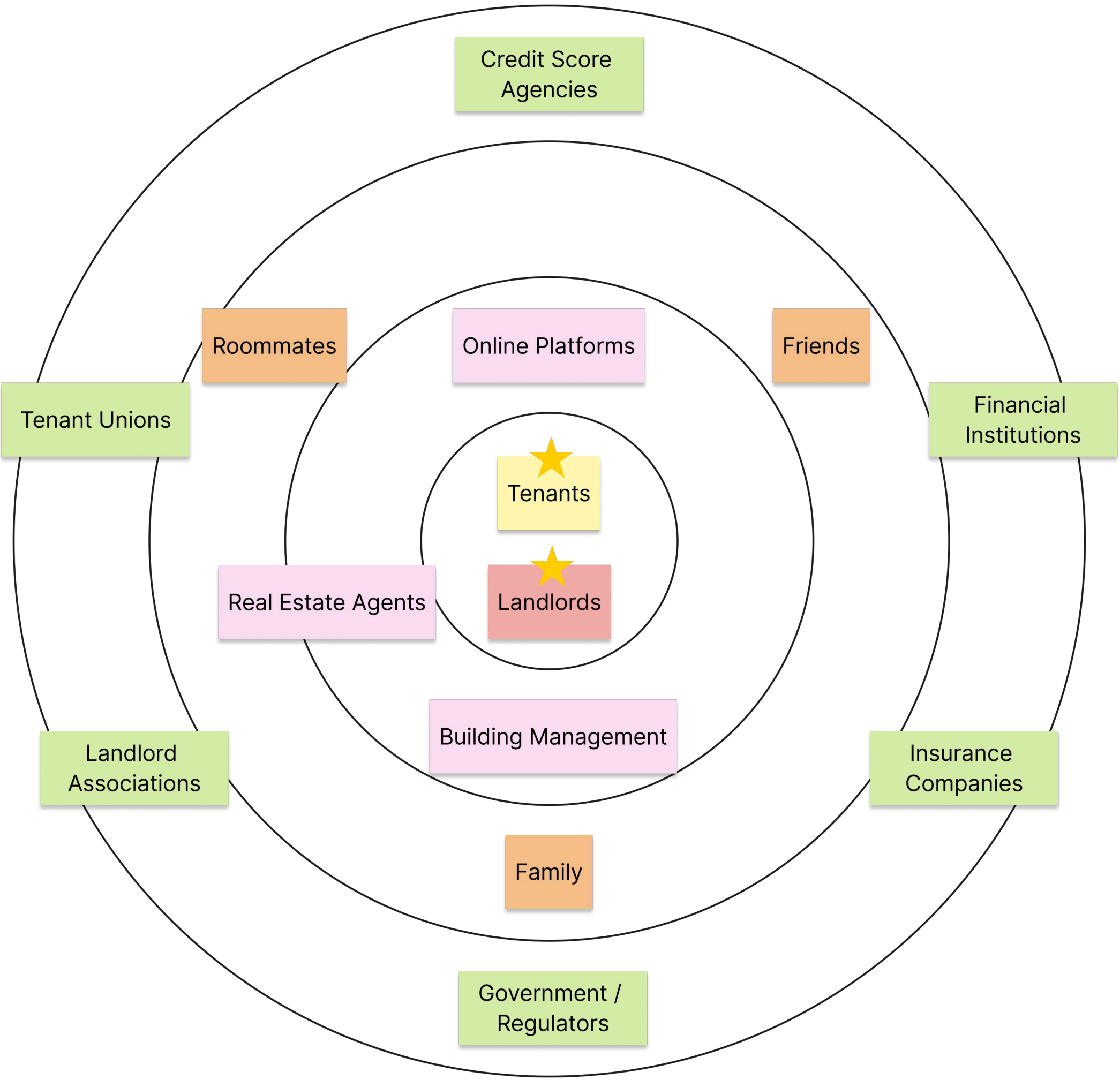
Tenants, Landlords

## Secondary

Online rental platforms, Real estate agents, Building management

## Tertiary

Roommates, Friends, Family



# **As-Is Service Blueprint**

Current journey, pain points, and critical moments

# As-Is Service Blueprint

## What this blueprint shows

- The end-to-end rental journey
- Visible vs. hidden system processes
- Key touchpoints for tenants and landlords
- Critical moments where trust drops
- Opportunities for redesign

Offering name: Current Rental Experience

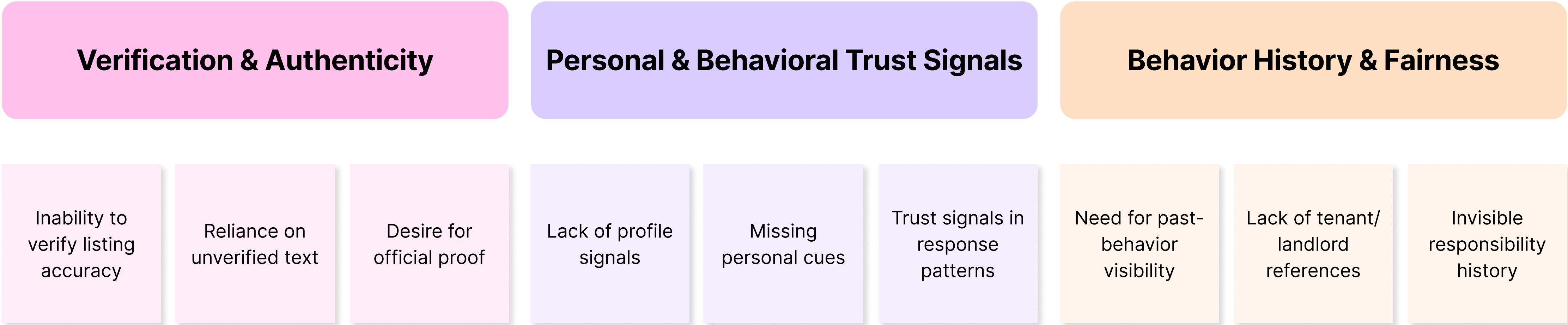
Scenario name: Tenant–Landlord Communication Across the Rental Journey

	1. Listing	2. Interest Expression	3. Inquiry & Communication	4. Viewing	5. Decision & Agreement	6. Post-Move Relationship
Step (Visible)	The landlord registers a property for rent.	The tenant searches using filters and clicks the inquiry button.	The tenant and landlord exchange messages.	Visit scheduled or video meeting conducted.	Contract signing, deposit transfer, and key handover. (in person)	Tenants and landlords communicate directly for maintenance, issues, or renewal.
Step (Hidden)	The platform uploads the property to the database and determines its visibility ranking.	The system sends notifications and creates a message queue.	The system stores messages and tracks response time.	Schedule sync	-	-
Touchpoints	Real estate platform / text / email	“Contact” button on platform, text message / email	In-app chat / email / text	On-site visit / video call / calendar	in-person meeting / platform message or text for coordination	Phone calls, text messages, in-person visits
Roles	Landlord	Tenant / landlord	Tenant / landlord	Tenant / landlord	Tenant / landlord	Tenant / landlord
Process	The landlord enters property details (price, terms, and photos) and posts the listing.	The tenant filters listings, and expresses interest.	Exchange of details, Q&A, and schedule coordination.	Both sides meet to confirm details and assess mutual fit before agreement.	Users finalize the agreement offline, sign physical documents, and transfer deposit through bank or cash	Handle maintenance requests, discuss payments or renewals
Technology	Property database, search algorithm	Messaging system, notification API	Chat server, file transfer, response log	Chat server, file transfer, calendar	text, phone, bank transfer systems	phone, messenger, email, conversation in person
Policy	Listing guidelines, anti-fraud policy	Privacy policy, hidden contact information	No identity verification, no communication guide	Scheduling and attendance policy	offline documentation	offline documentation
Critical Moments	Trust begins with the first impression (photos, price, and description)	First contact (response speed & tone) determines trust.	Response speed & tone determines trust	First impression of the property, first real interaction	Trust has already been formed before this stage; signing is a procedural confirmation.	How issues are resolved determines whether trust continues or breaks down.
Opportunities	Verified property and landlord/tenant badges, Ratings and feedback from previous landlords/tenants	Visible reply rate	Visible reply rate	Landlord pre-viewing condition checklist	Easy-to-read Digital Contract	Create optional post-move support tool such as feedback collection.
Metrics	Click-through rate on verified badges	Number of inquiries, average reply time	Average reply time	mutual satisfaction after viewing, cancellation/no show rate,	-	Maintenance request resolution time, renewal rate, post-stay satisfaction.
Questions	How might property and landlord verification be automated?	Why do some users drop off after expressing interest?	How can trust and emotion be measured during conversations?	How can the system help both sides evaluate compatibility and make fair, confident decisions during viewing?	How can platforms better support transparency and reliability during offline contract processes?	How can the service extend trust and communication beyond the contract?
Notes	-	-	-	-	-	-

# Interviews Key Findings

Core insights that shape the redesign direction

# Affinity Mapping



## Findings

### **Users cannot verify the authenticity of listings or ownership.**

The lack of official verification creates uncertainty, forcing tenants and landlords to rely on unverified text and assumptions.

### **Trust is shaped by small personal and communication cues that are currently missing.**

Users depend on profile details and communication patterns to assess trust, but these signals are inconsistent or unavailable.

### **Past behavior is the strongest indicator of trust, yet invisible on current platforms.**

Tenants and landlords want visibility into rental history, responsibility, and references to make informed decisions.

# Priority Matrix

Identifying high-impact opportunities



# Priority Matrix

## Priority 1

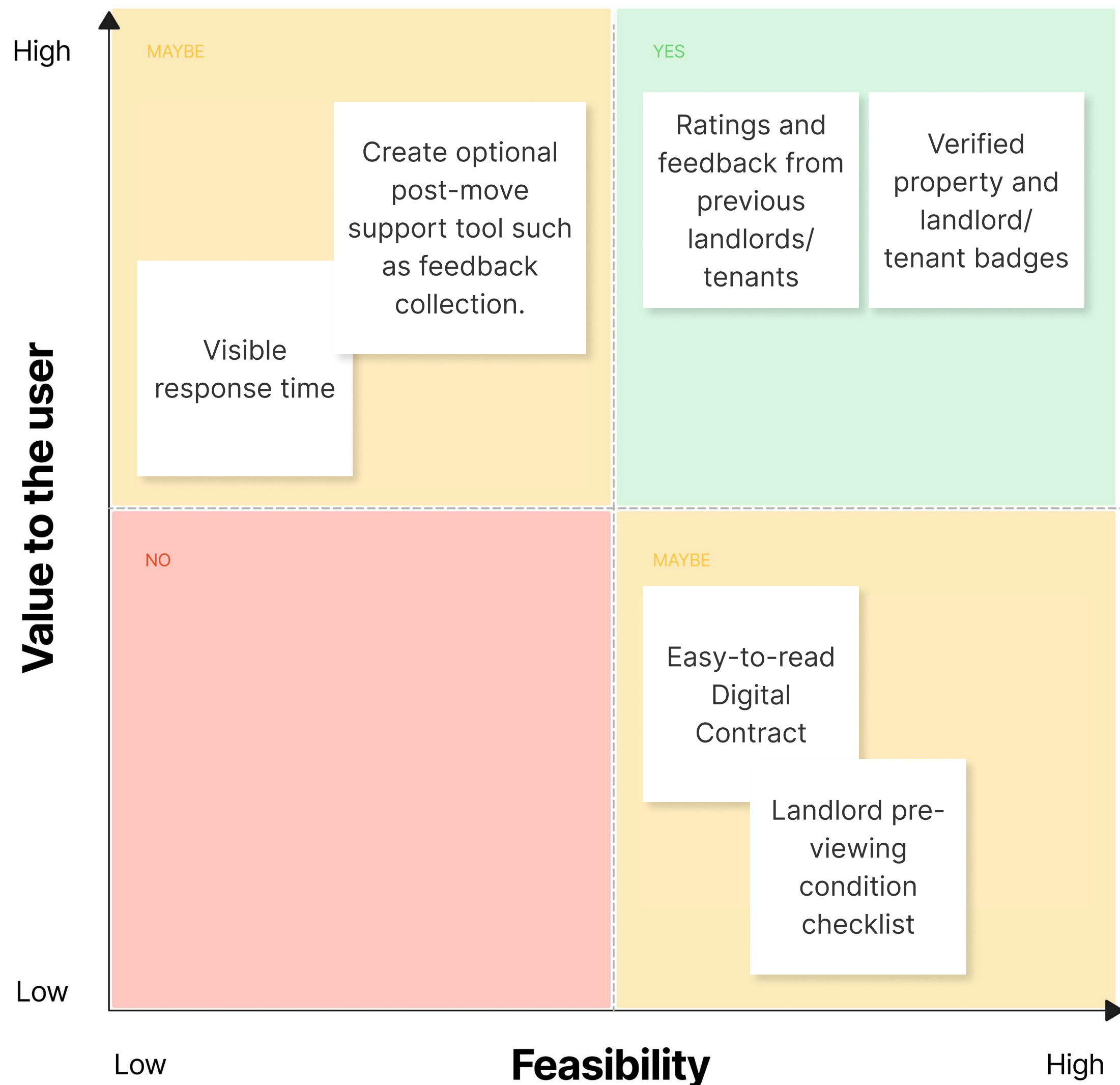
Verification badges, ratings

## Priority 2

Reply rate & post-move support

## Priority 3

Digital contract & condition checklist



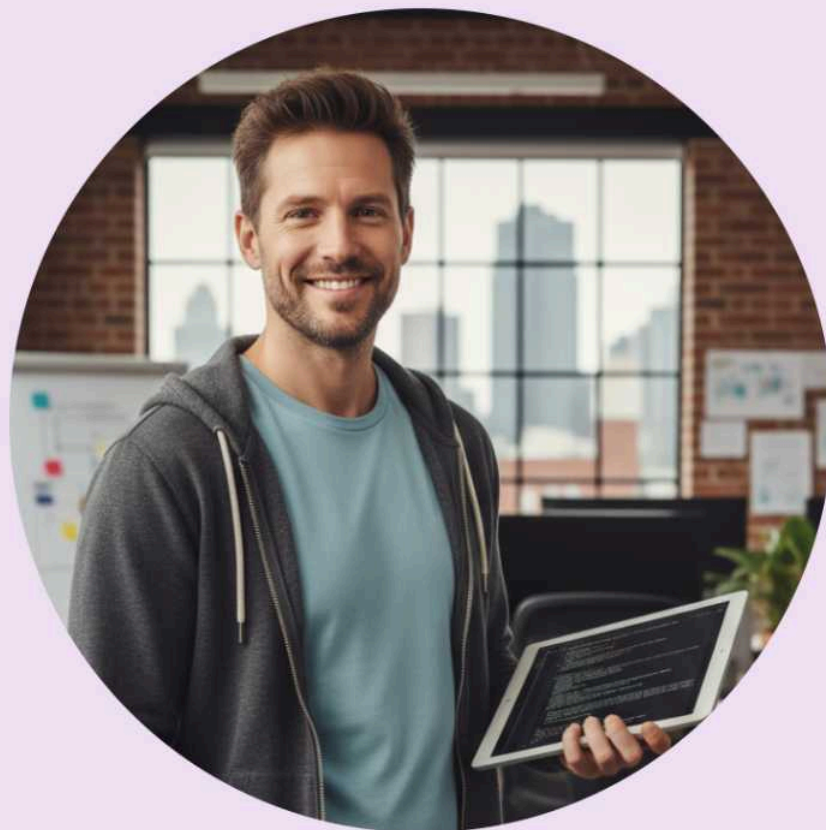
# Touchpoints for Redesign

Key service moments selected for improvement

# Personas

## Tenant & Landlord

Developed directly from the target users and their interview insights, representing the core needs, behaviors, and trust-related challenges of each side.



## Alex (Tenant)

"I wish there was a way to know if I can trust the landlord and what he says about the house."

- Age : 34
- Occupation : Young professional in a tech-related field
- Location : Lives in a large European city

Has rented several apartments through typical online platforms. Often faced unreliable communication and hidden property issues discovered only after moving in.

### Goals

- To find a home and a landlord he can genuinely trust.
- To make rental decisions based on transparency and mutual respect, not guesswork.
- To feel secure before signing a lease.

### Pain points

- To find a home and a landlord he can genuinely trust.
- To make rental decisions based on transparency and mutual respect, not guesswork.
- To feel secure before signing a lease.

### Needs/Motivations

- Accurate, verifiable property information
- Clear digital trust signals
- Emotional safety and reduced uncertainty

### Personality







## Kate (Landlord)

“I’m renting out my home, not just a house. I just wish I could know who I’m trusting it with.”

- Age : 42
- Occupation : Healthcare Professional
- Location : Lives in a mid-sized coastal city

Owns one or two properties. Has faced situations where tenants broke agreements or treated the house carelessly.

### Goals

- To find tenants who respect her home and communicate honestly.
- To feel emotionally secure about who she’s renting to (not just whether they can pay.)

### Pain points

- Hard to tell if potential tenants are genuine or responsible.  
(No reliable background or verification process.)
- Text-based interaction makes it difficult to sense attitude or trustworthiness.

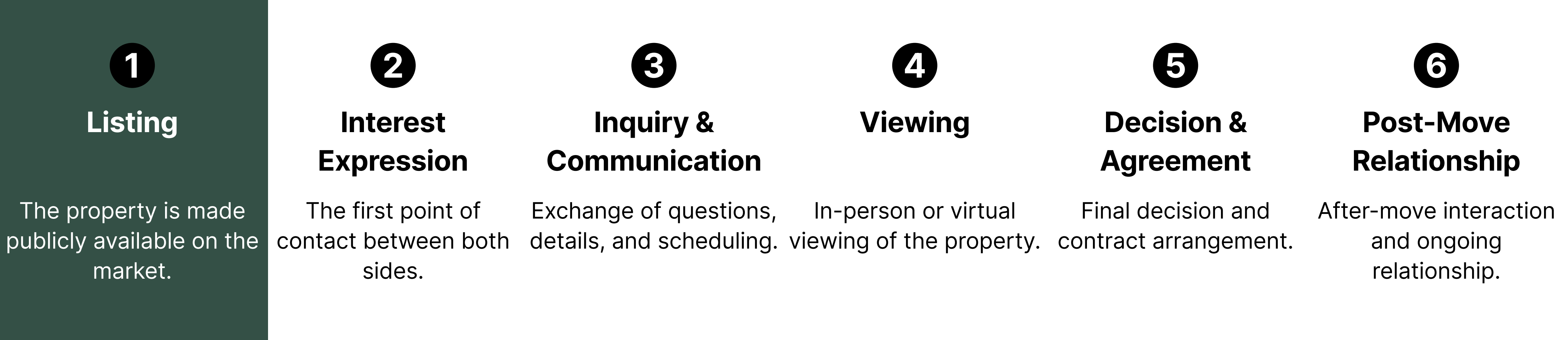
### Needs/Motivations

- Reliable indicators of tenant responsibility
- Verified and authentic tenant identity
- Clear communication signals beyond text

### Personality



# Customer Journey Map



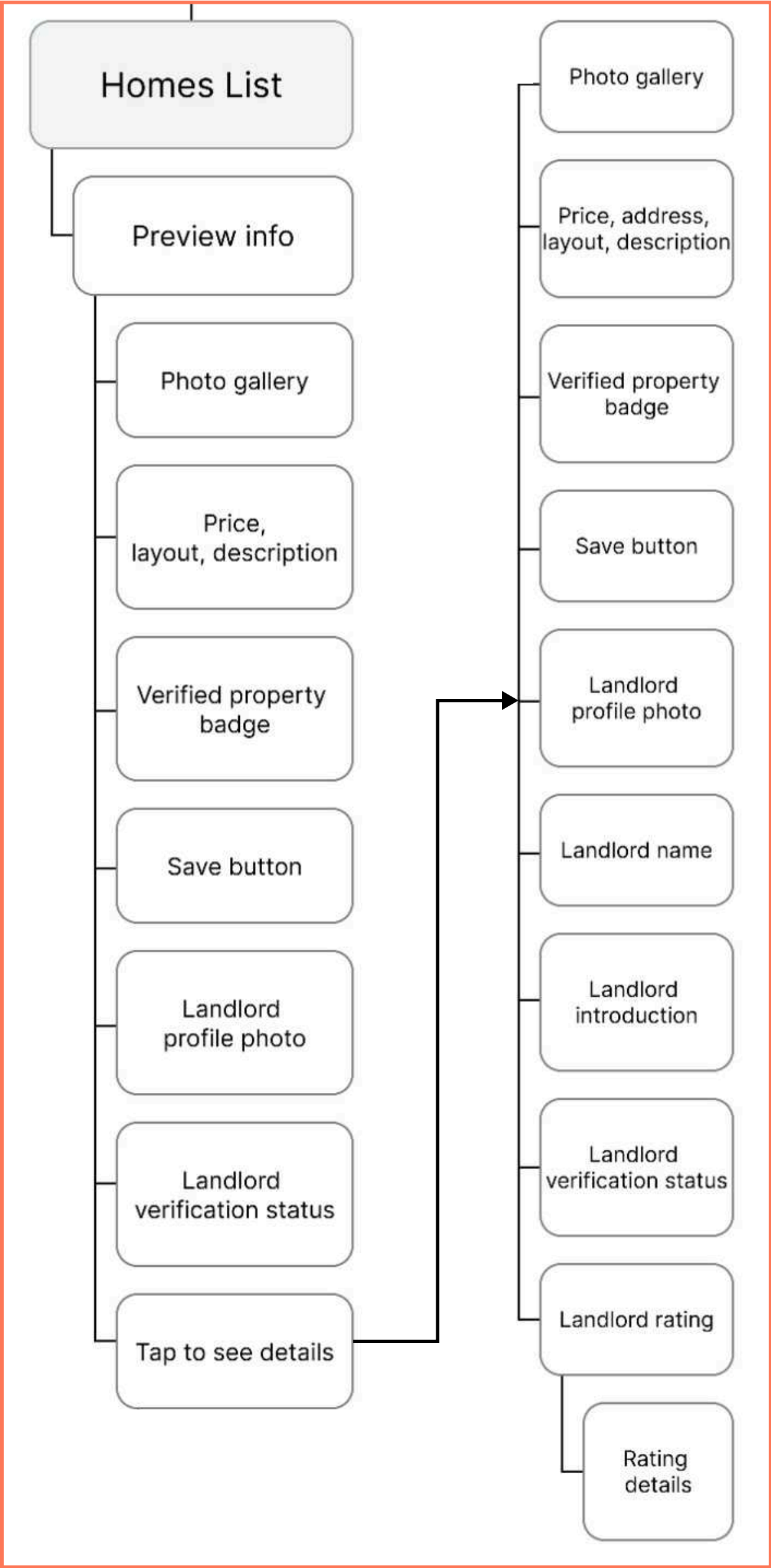
User steps	<div>1. Listing</div> <div>The property is made publicly available on the market.</div>			
Users	Tenant		Landlord	
User actions	<div>Brownses listings (Comparing photos and descriptions to make an intuitive judgment about whether the property feels right)</div> <div>Checks the landlord's profile</div> <div>Debates whether to save the listing to favorites or send an inquiry</div>		<div>Uploads the property listing</div> <div>Tries to anticipate how the listing will appear to potential tenants</div> <div>Waits for inquiries from interested tenants</div>	
Feelings and thoughts	<div>☹️ "Are these photos real?"</div> <div>☹️ "I'm not sure if I can trust this landlord."</div>		<div>☹️ "Am I showing my home accurately?"</div> <div>☹️ "How can I tell if a tenant is genuinely responsible?"</div>	
Pain Points	<div>No way to verify whether the photos or descriptions are accurate</div> <div>Insufficient information to assess the landlord's trustworthiness</div> <div>Constant vigilance against scams or fraudulent listings</div>		<div>Insufficient information to assess the tenant's trustworthiness</div> <div>Concern about the risks of choosing an unreliable or unreliable tenant</div>	
Opportunities	<div>Verified property photos and descriptions</div> <div>Verified landlord identity and trust signals</div> <div>Transparent listing information</div>		<div>Verified tenant identity and background signals</div> <div>Tenant responsibility indicators (reviews and history)</div>	
Touchpoints	<div>Messaging apps</div> <div>Email</div> <div>Calendar</div> <div>Property platform</div>		<div>Messaging apps</div> <div>Email</div> <div>Calendar</div> <div>Property platform</div>	



# Site Map

## App

- App Entry
- **Home > List**
- Saved
- Messages
- Menu

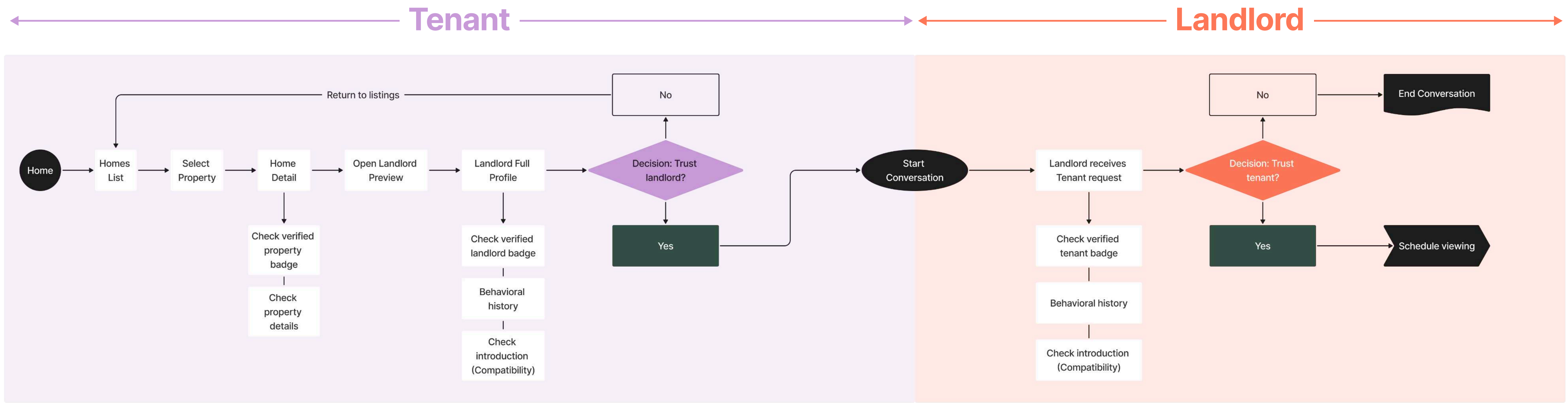


Please zoom in to see the details





# User Flow



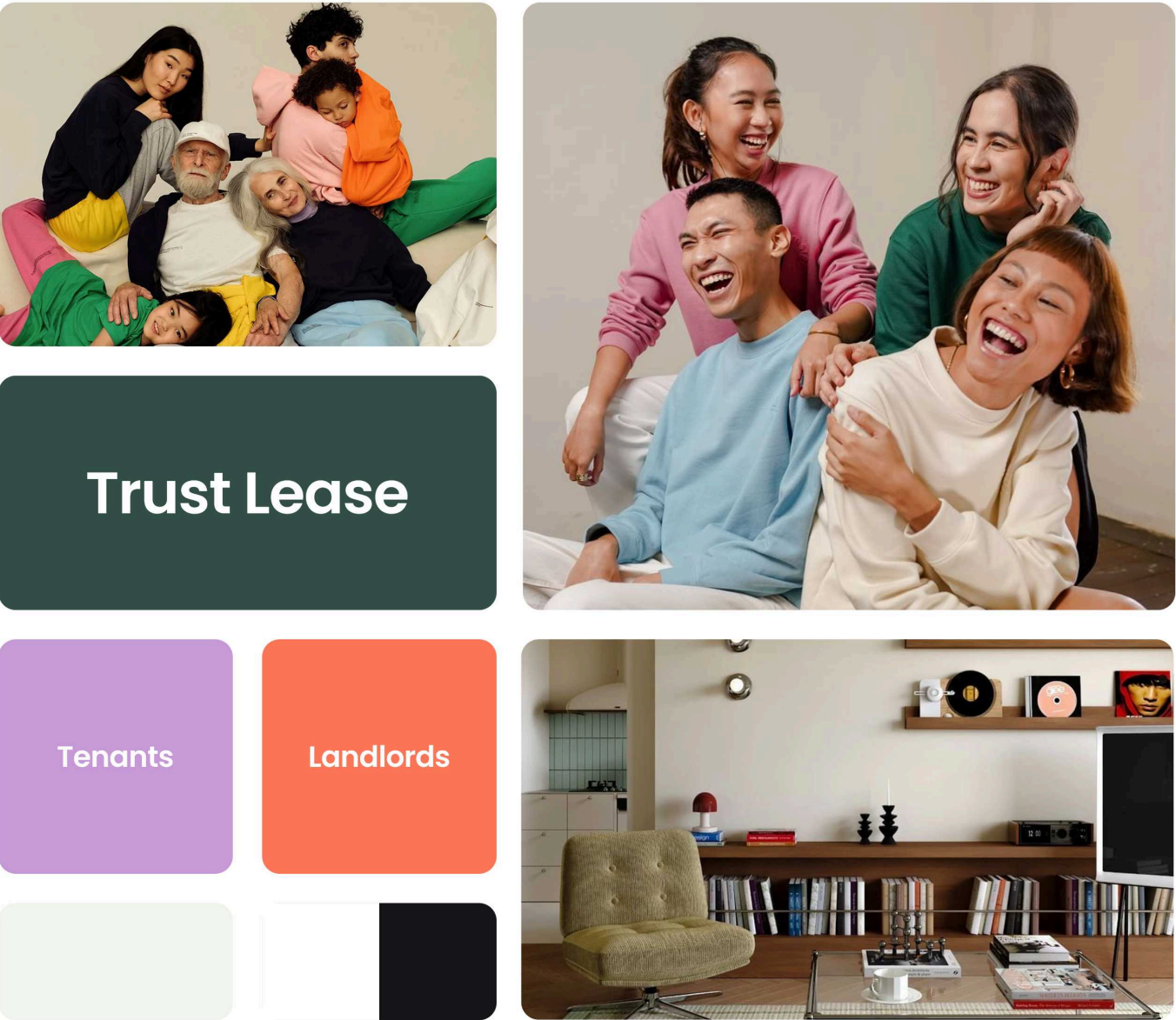
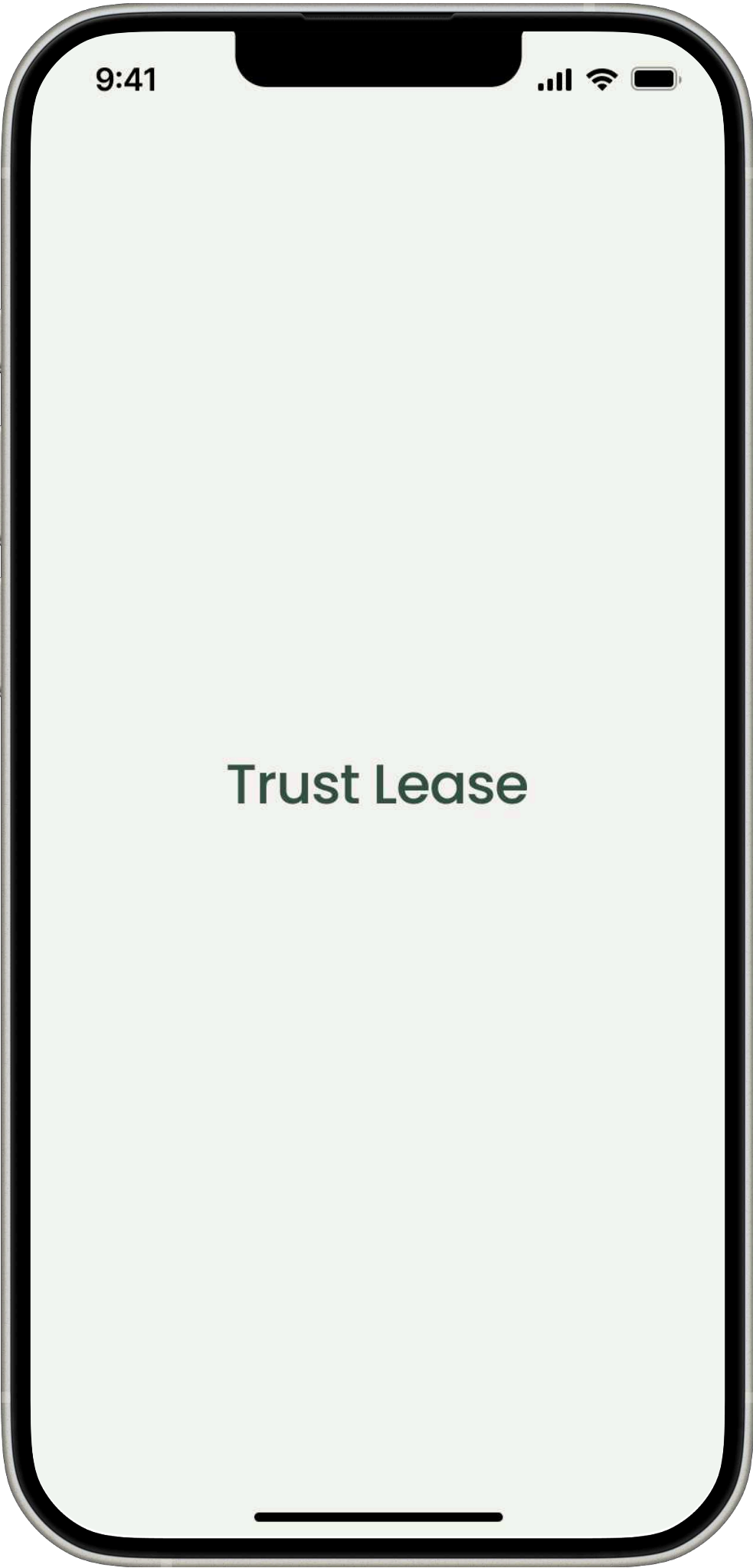
# Redesigned Touchpoint Presentation

Proposed solution

# Service Name

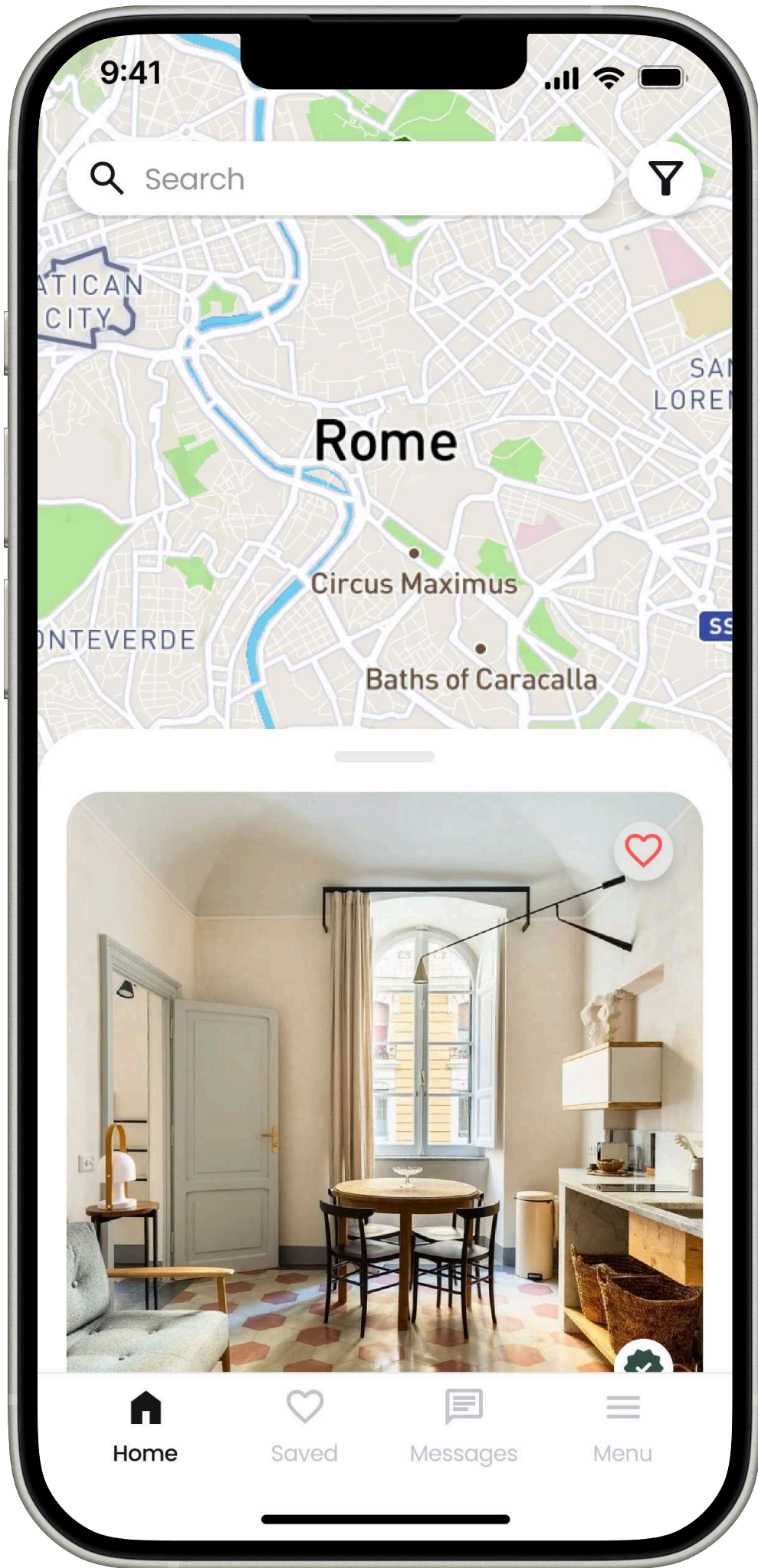
## Trust Lease

The core of the rental experience isn't just the property or the contract, but the trust between the people involved.





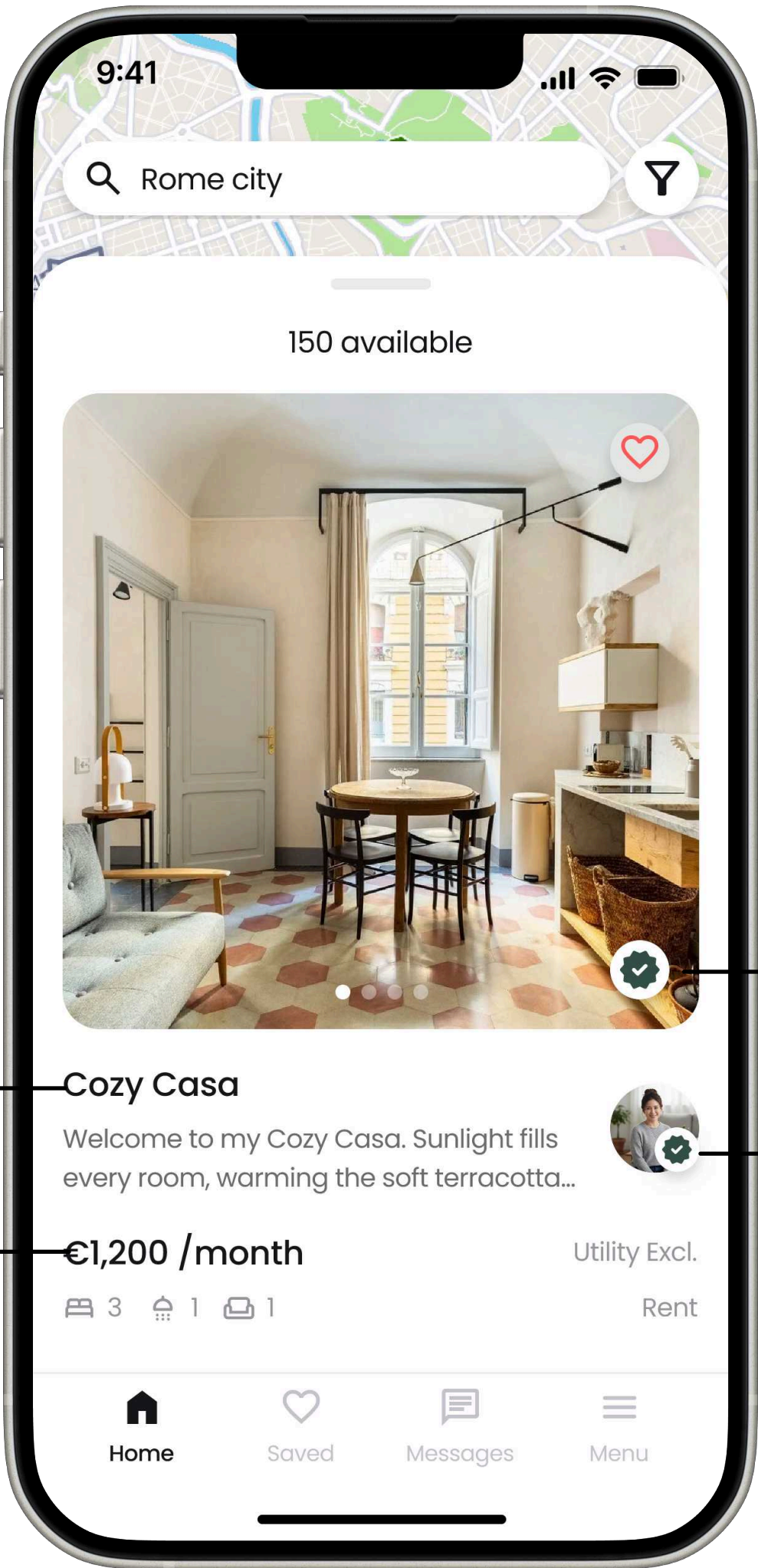
# Home > Listing



Home (Default)

Home  
Introduction

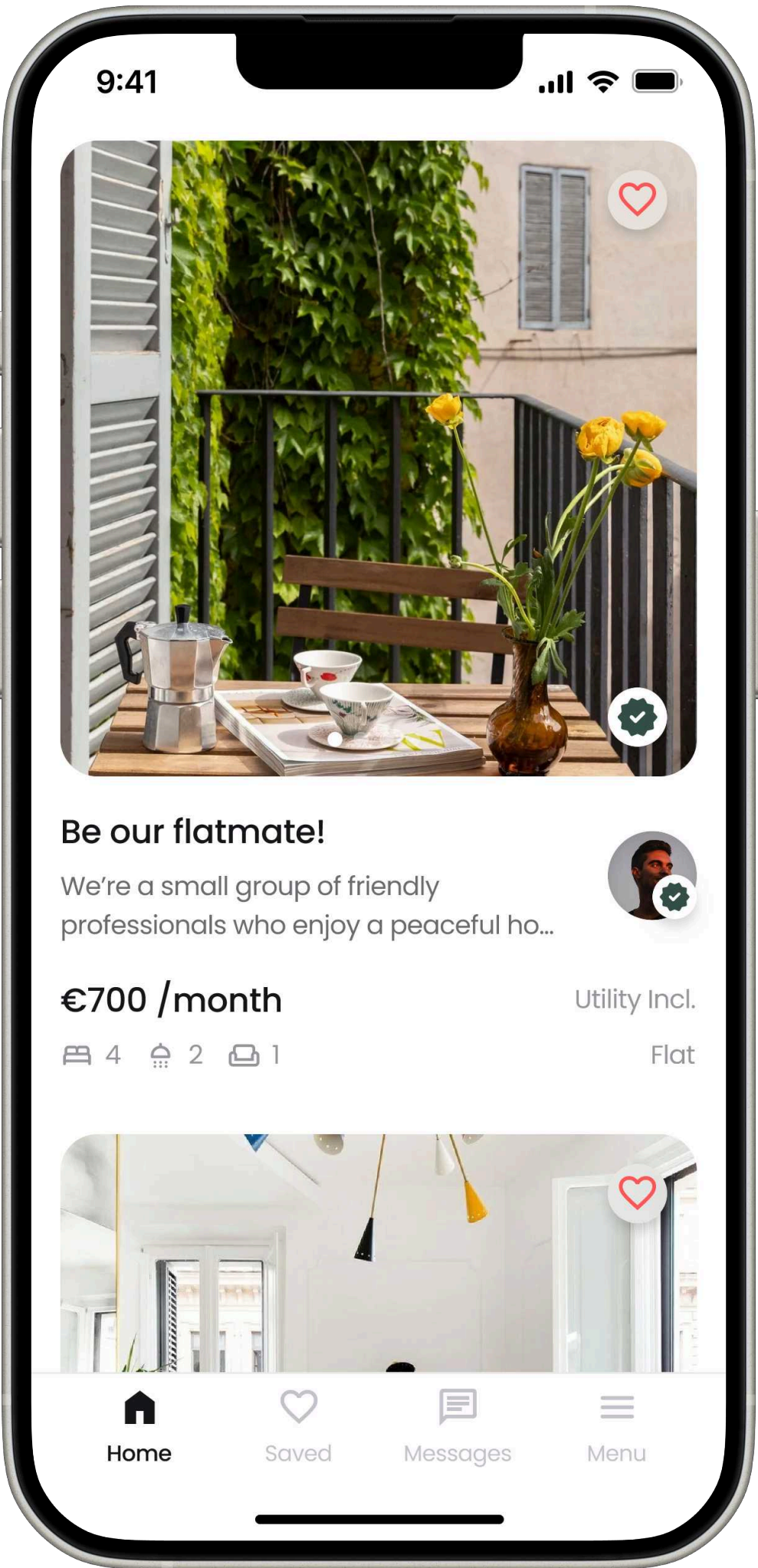
Brief  
Facts



Home > Search

Verification Badge  
(Home)

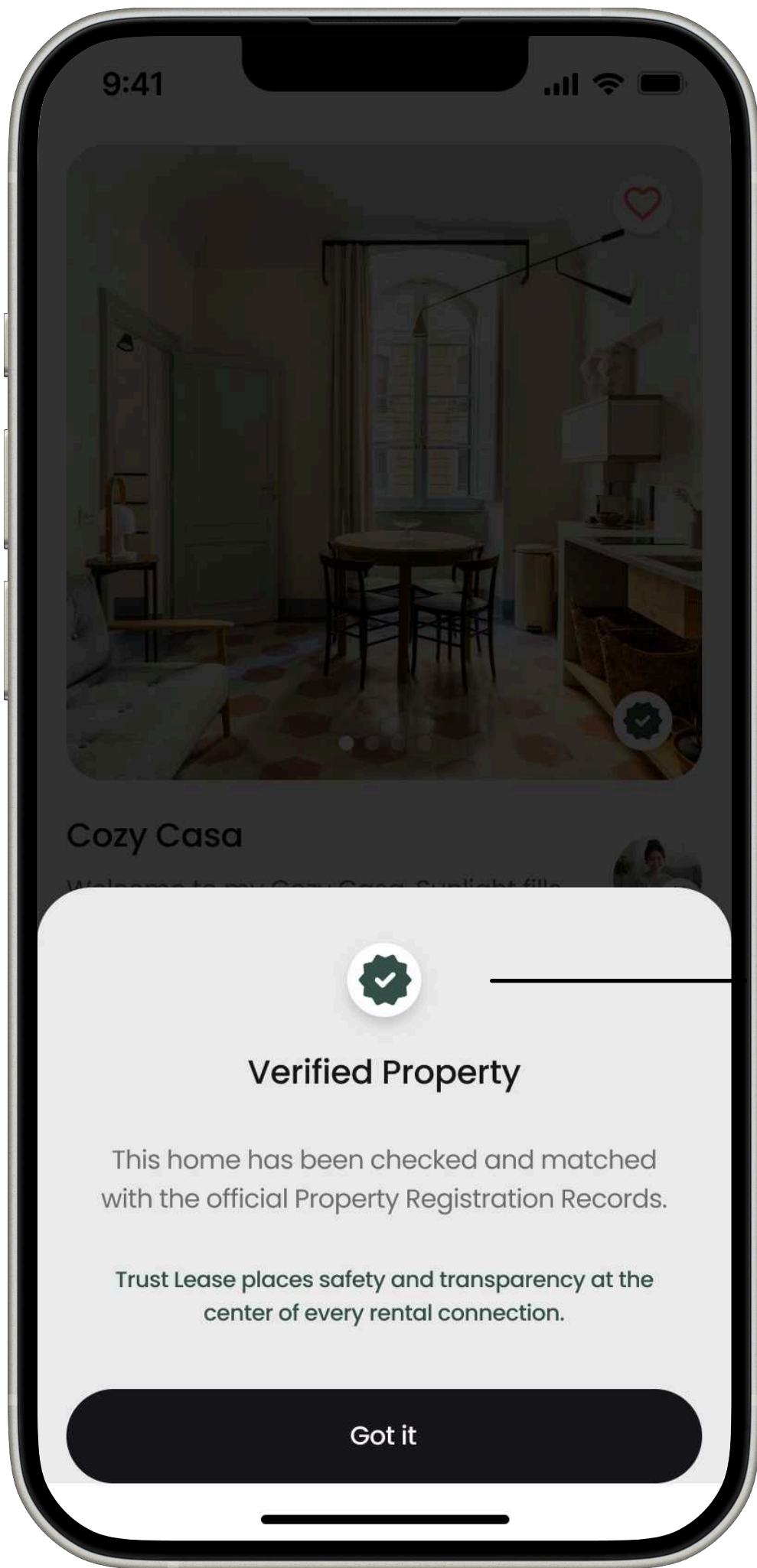
Verification Badge  
(Landlord)



Home > Listing > Scroll

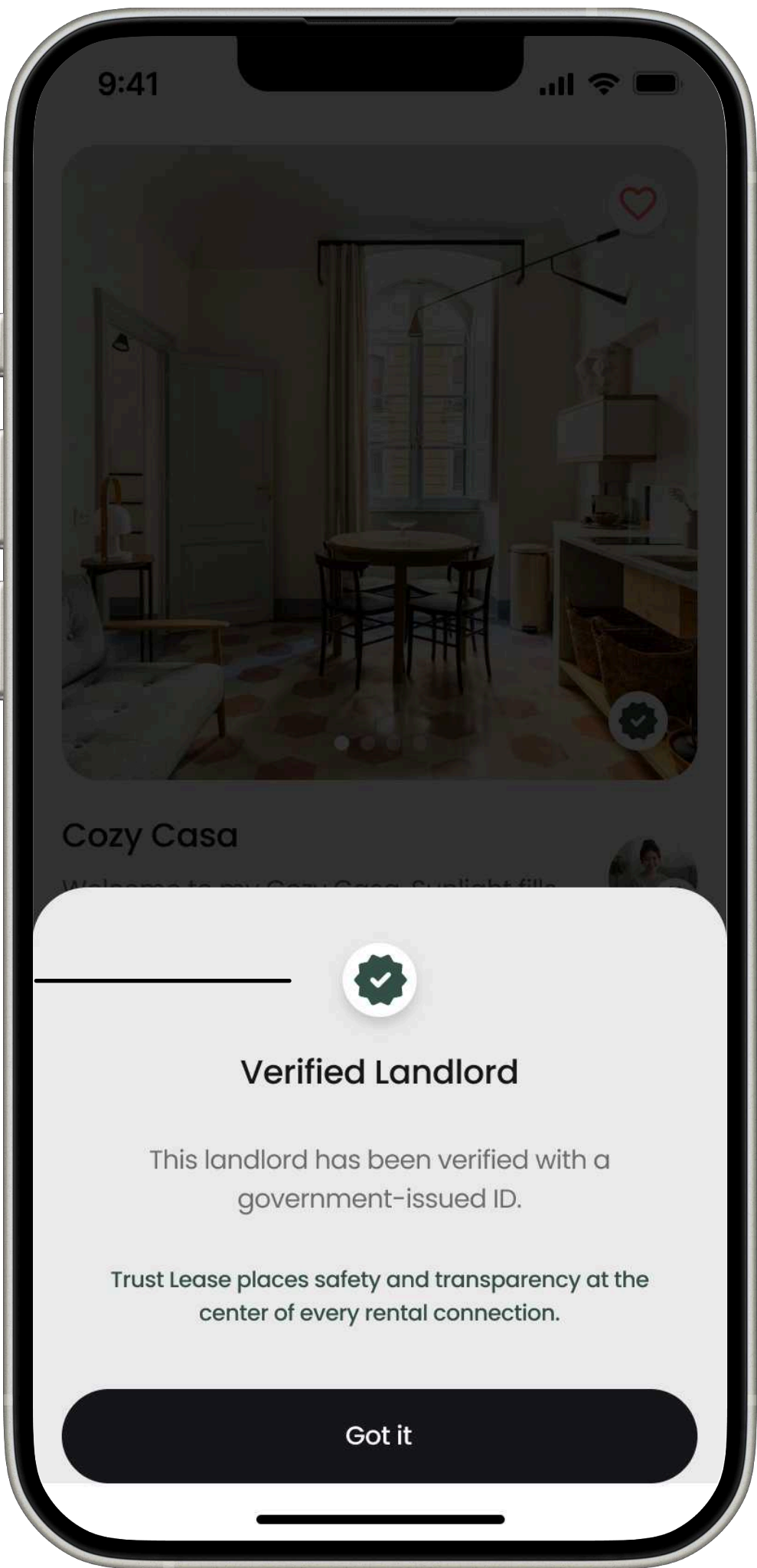


# Verification Badges (Home & Landlord)

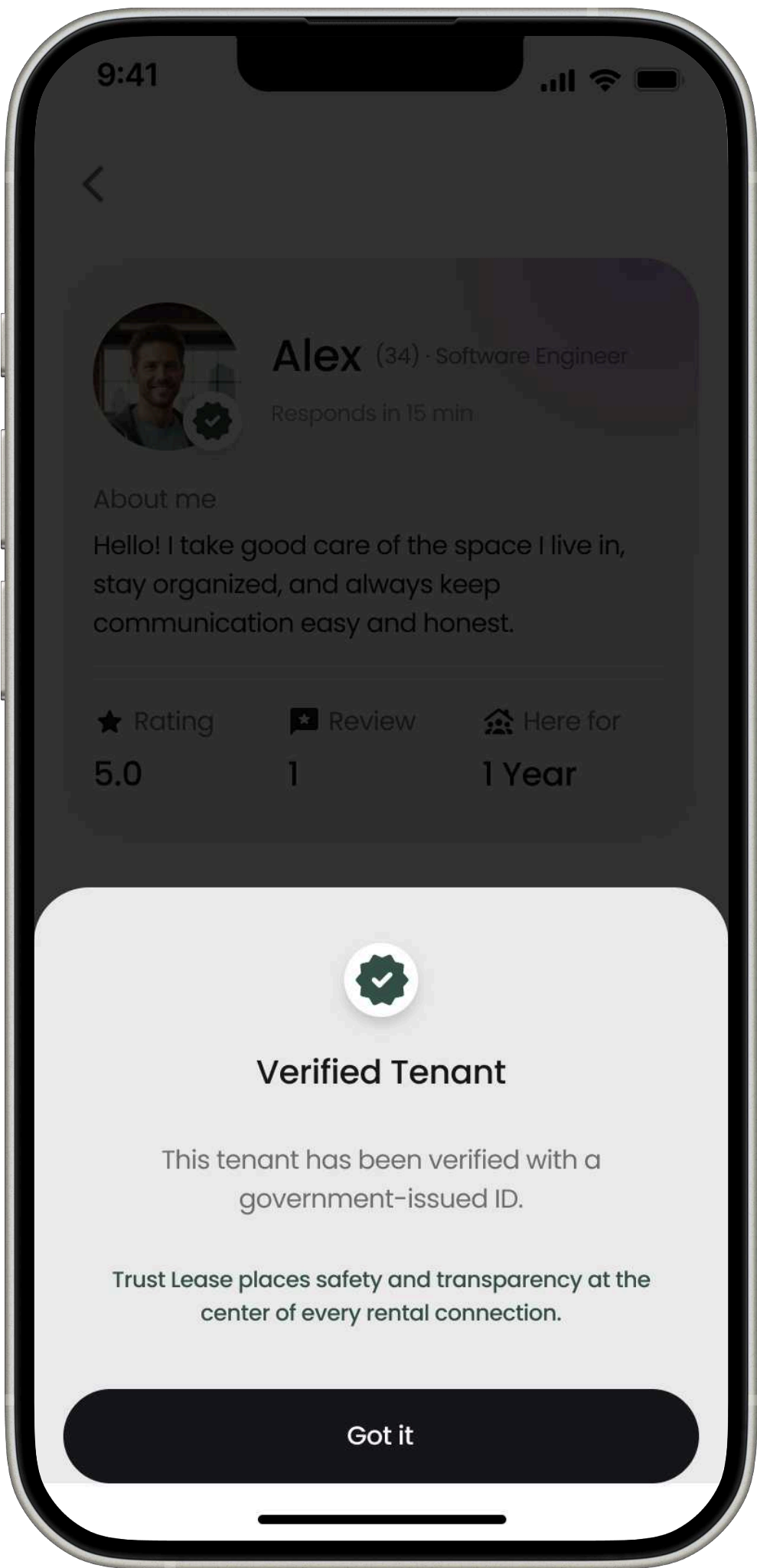


Verification Badge (Home)

Popup describing  
the verification process  
for the badge



Verification Badge (Landlord)



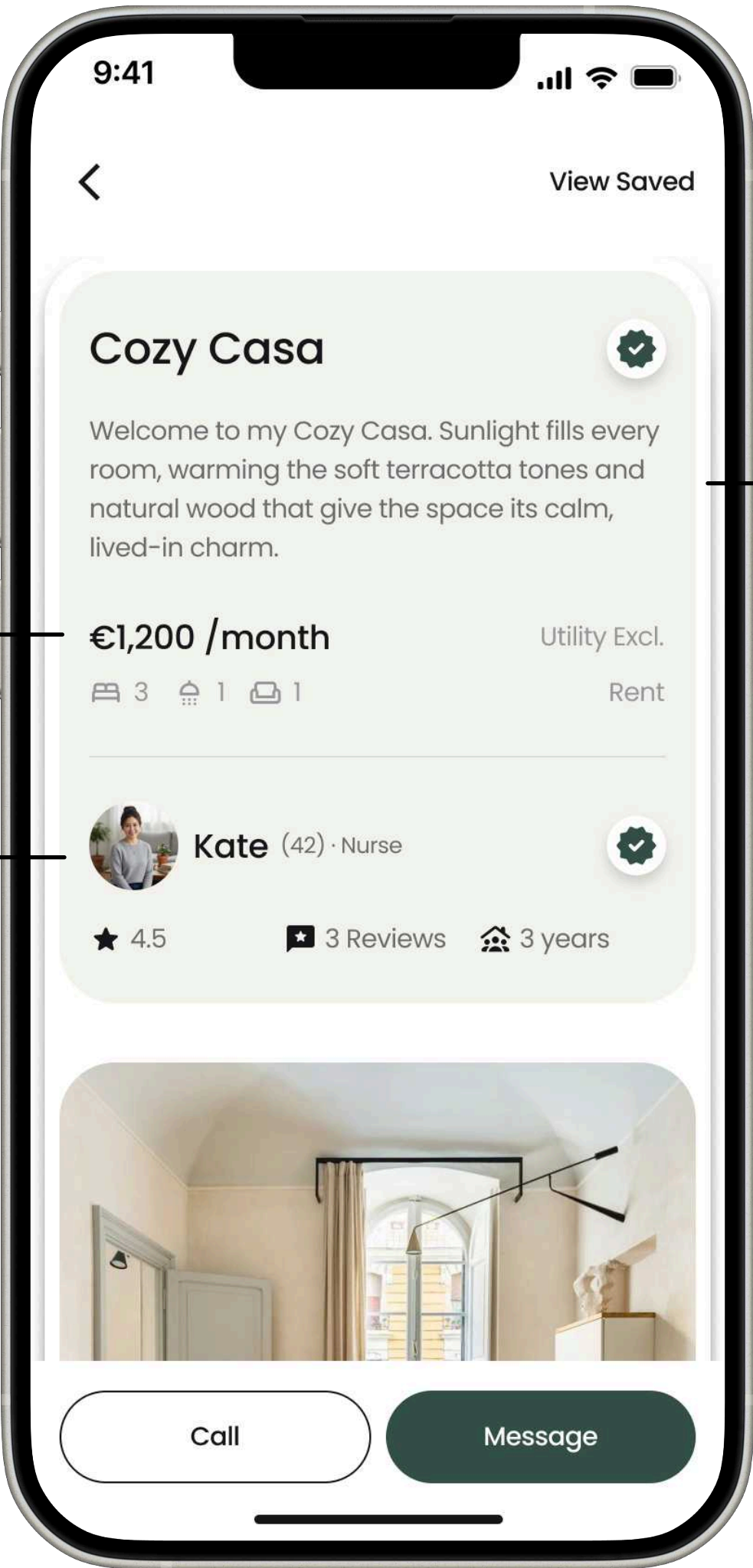
Verification Badge (Tenant)

# Home > Listing > Detail

Brief  
Facts

Landlord's name, age, job,  
rating, review count,  
years on platform

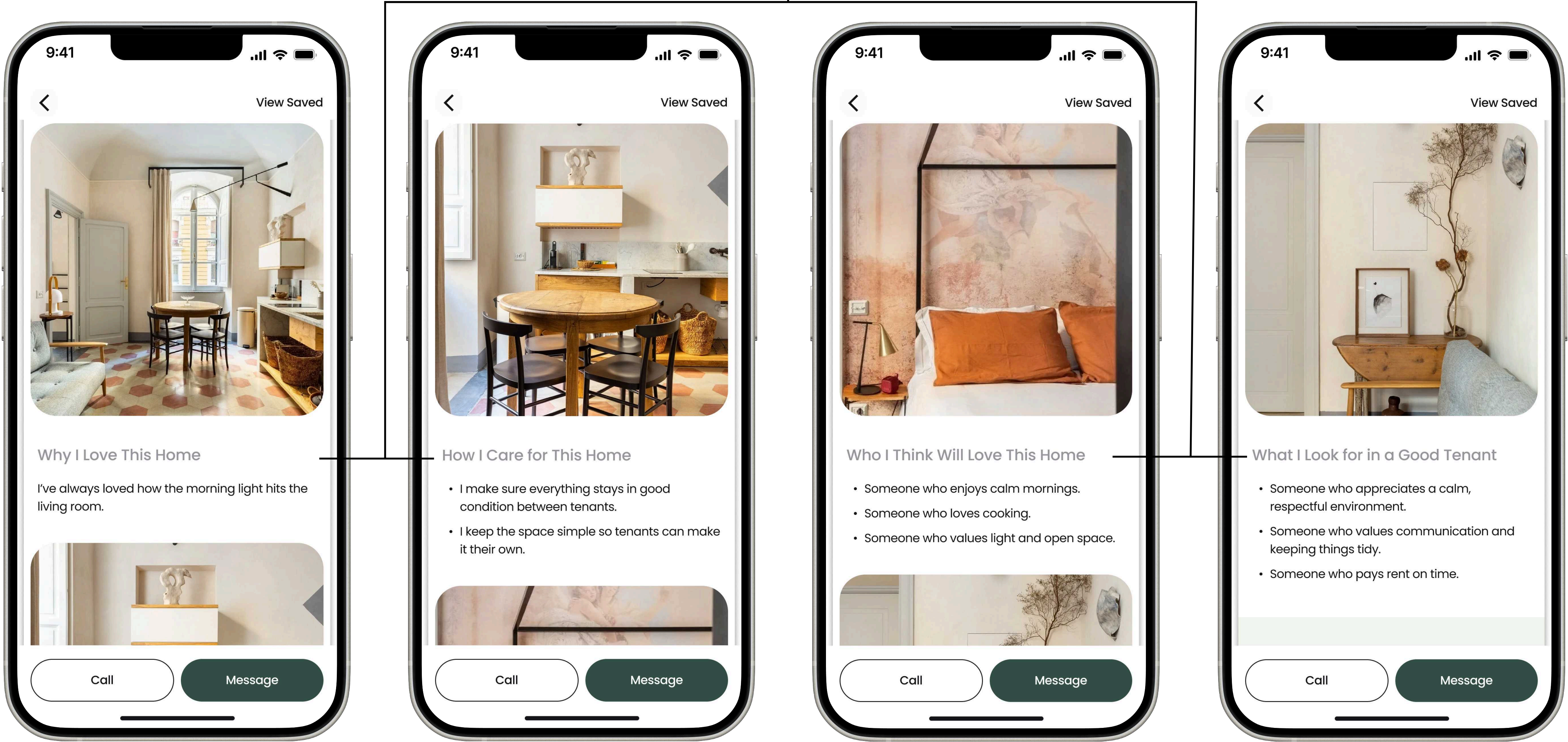
Home  
Introduction





Home > Listing > Detail

Trust-building micro stories

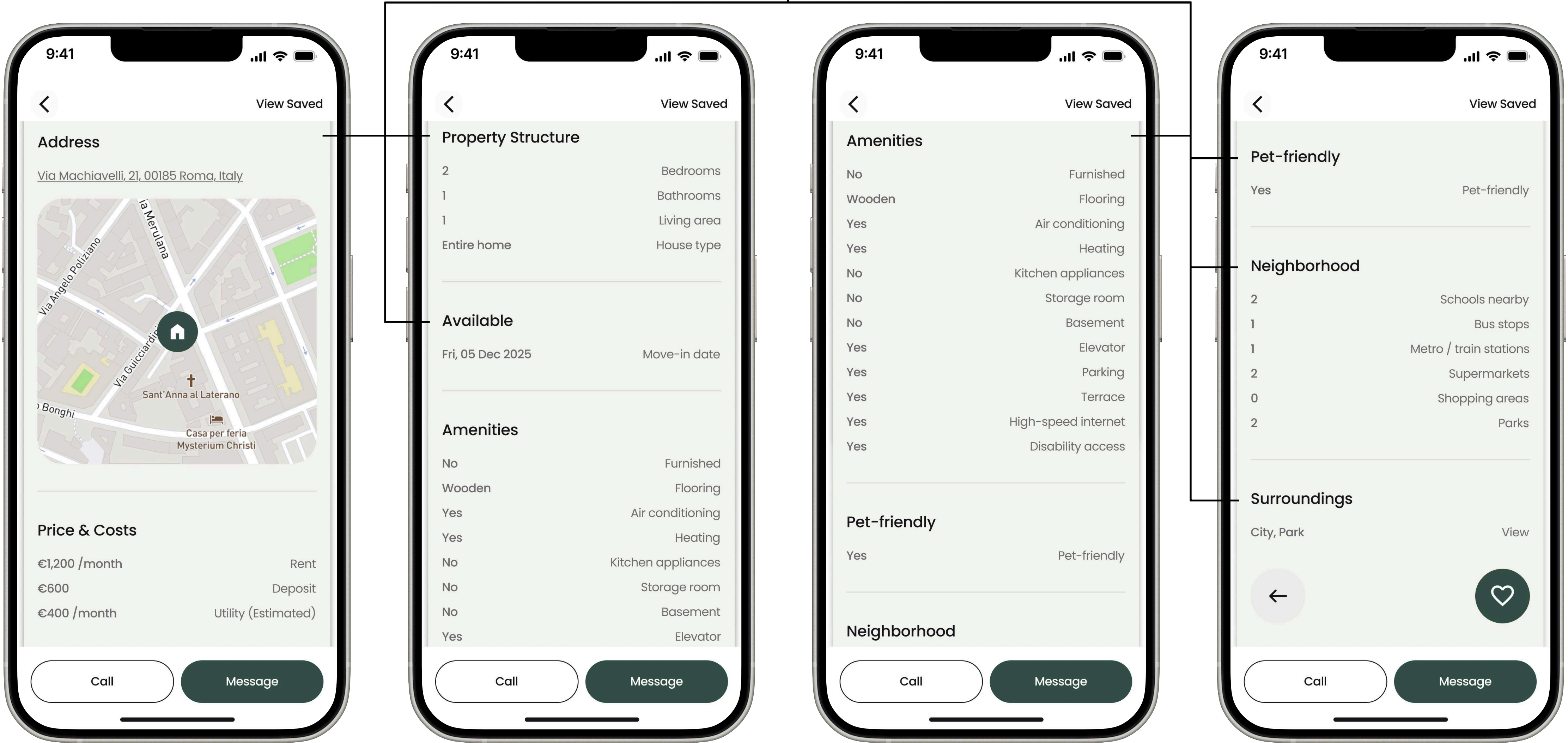


Home > Listing > Detail > Scroll



Home > Listing > Detail

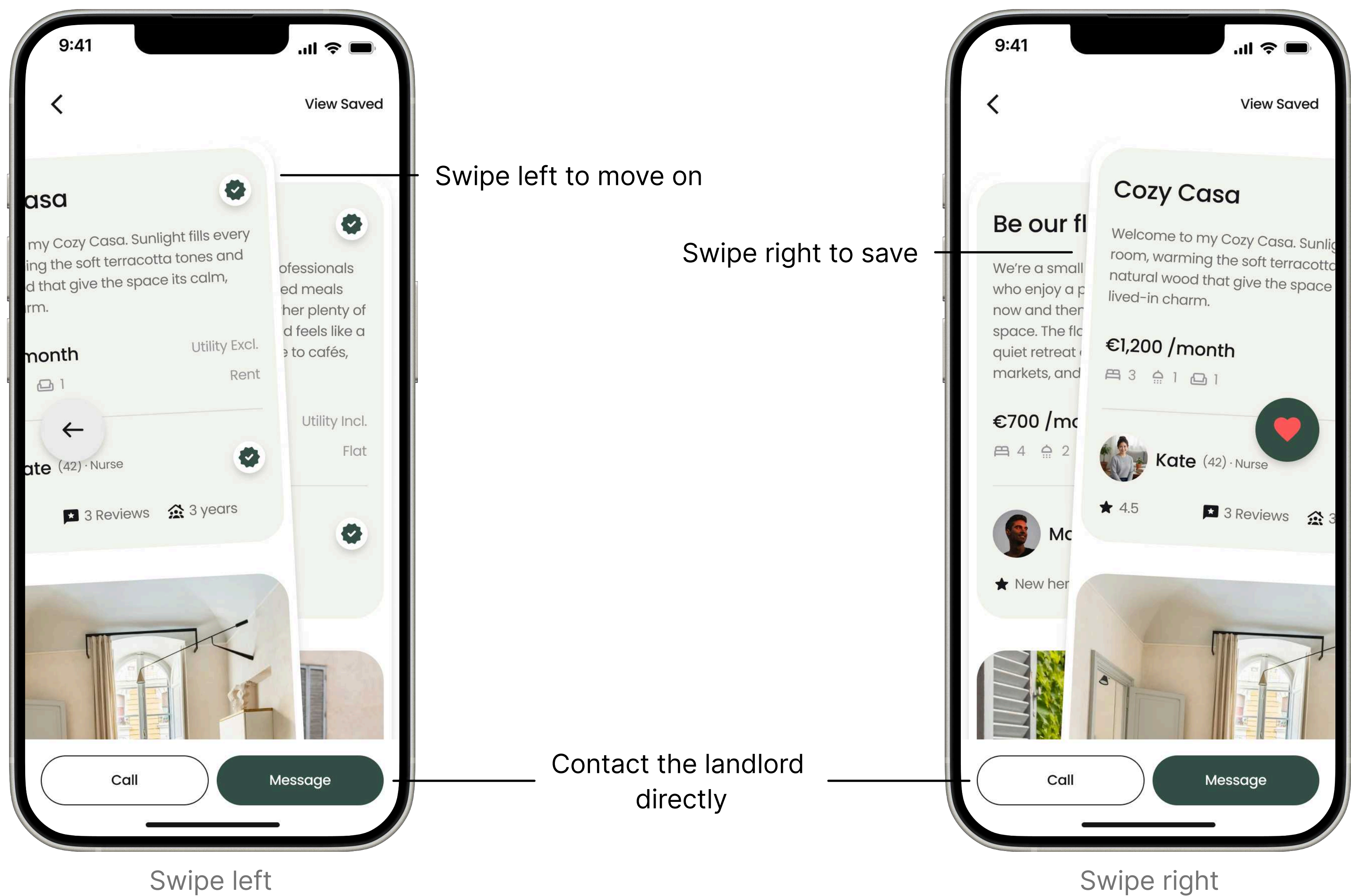
Facts, Features



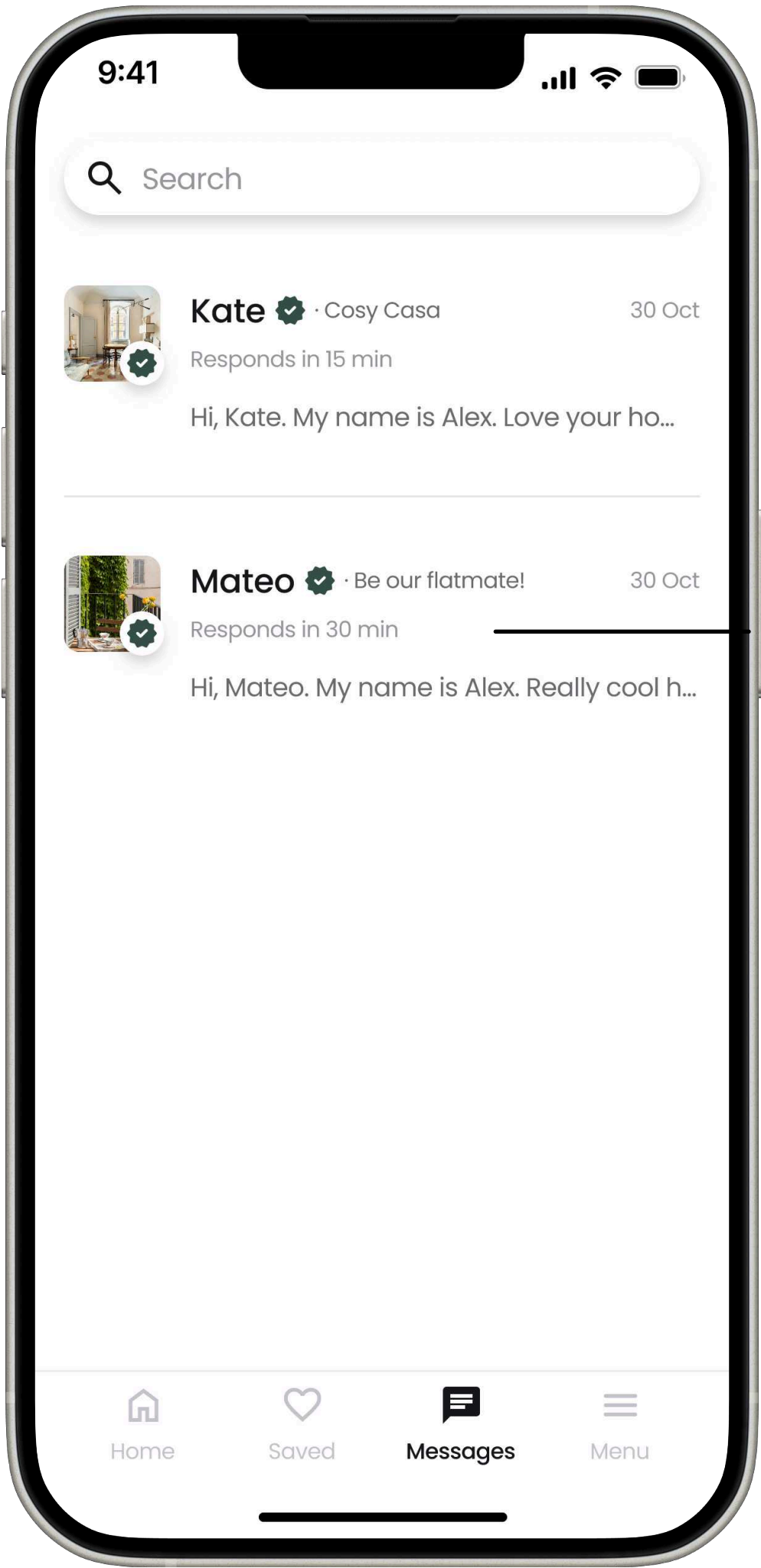
Home > Listing > Detail > Scroll



# Home > Listing > Detail



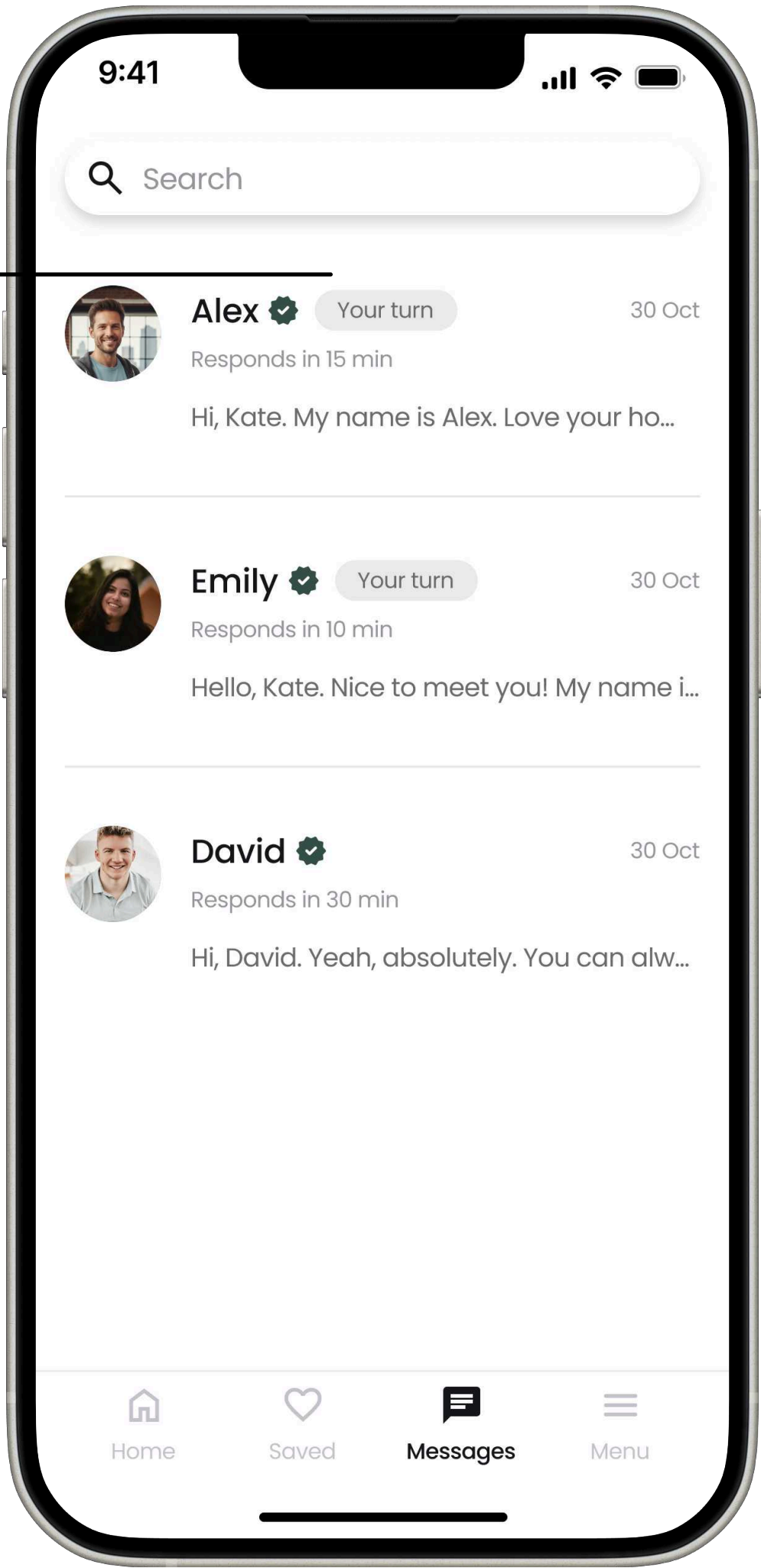
# Messages



Messages (Tenant account)

Response reminder label

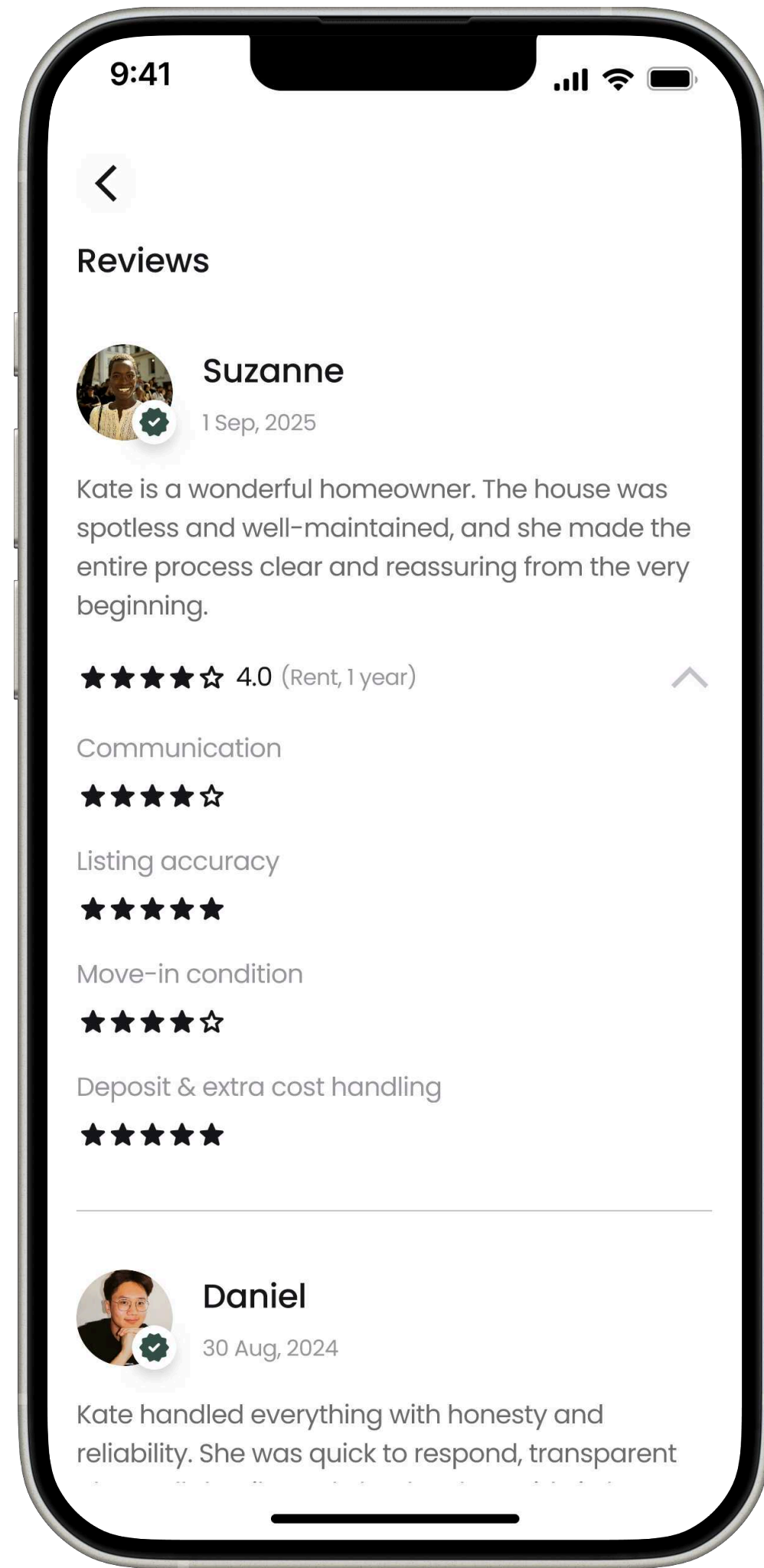
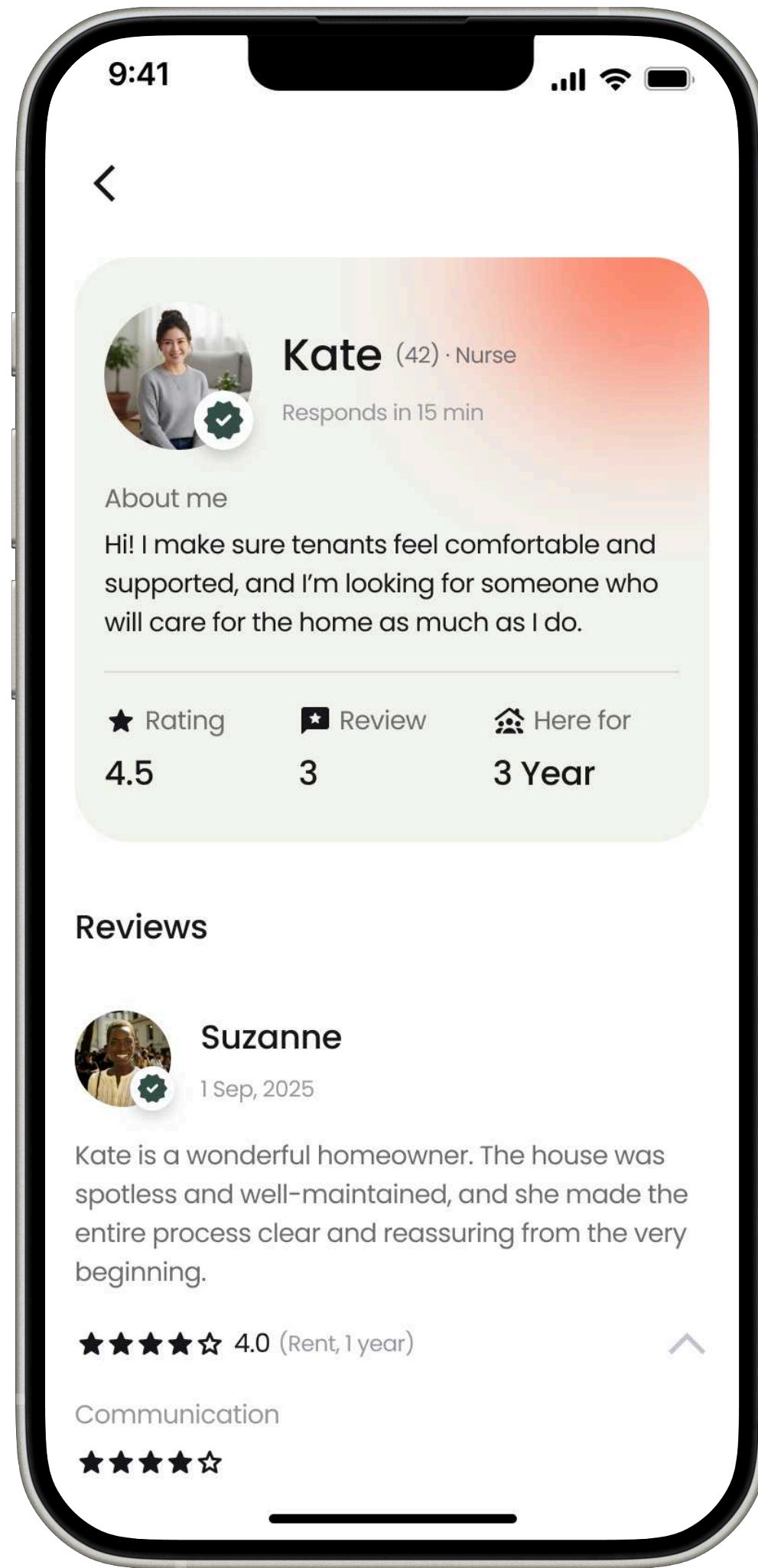
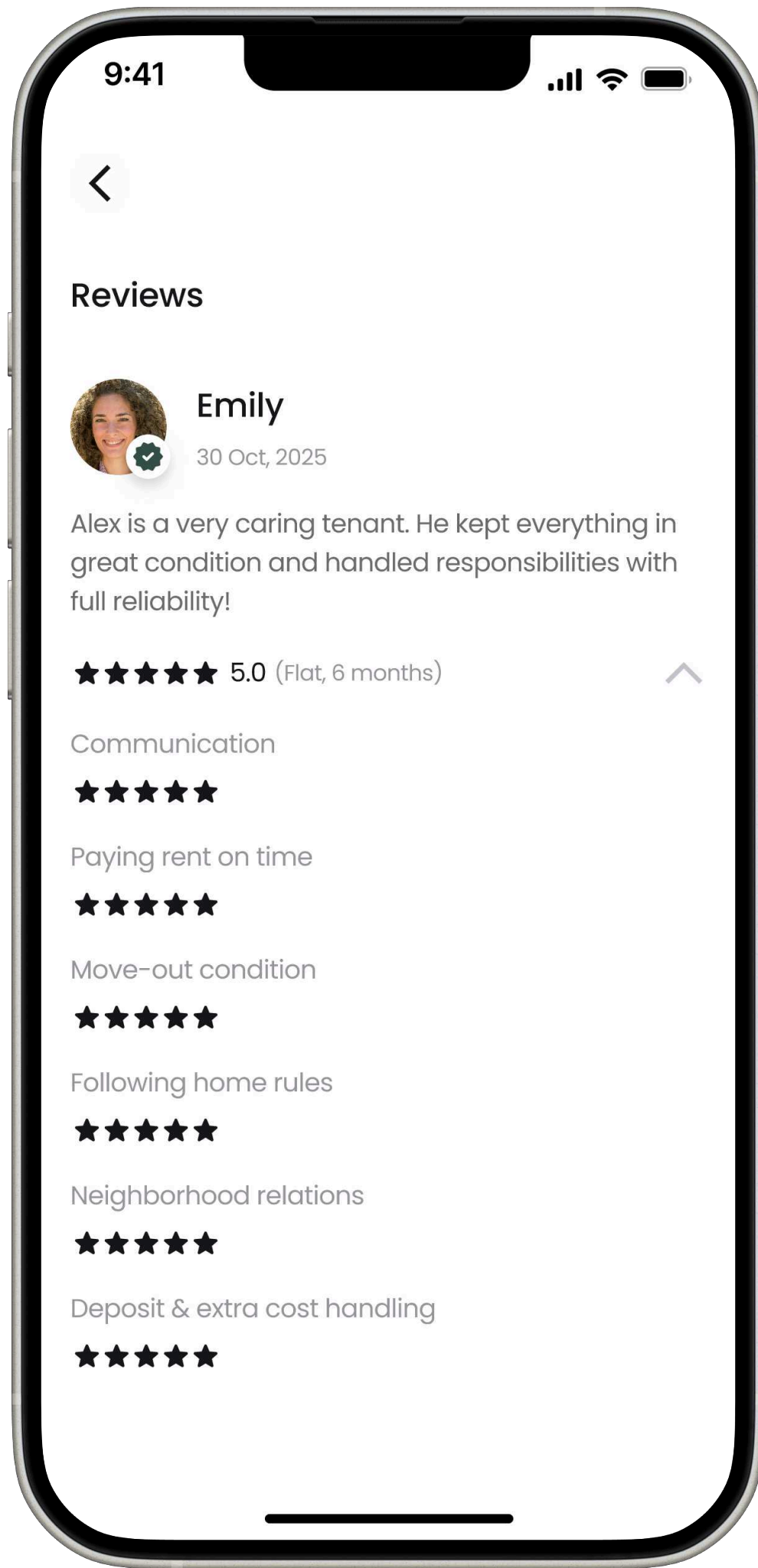
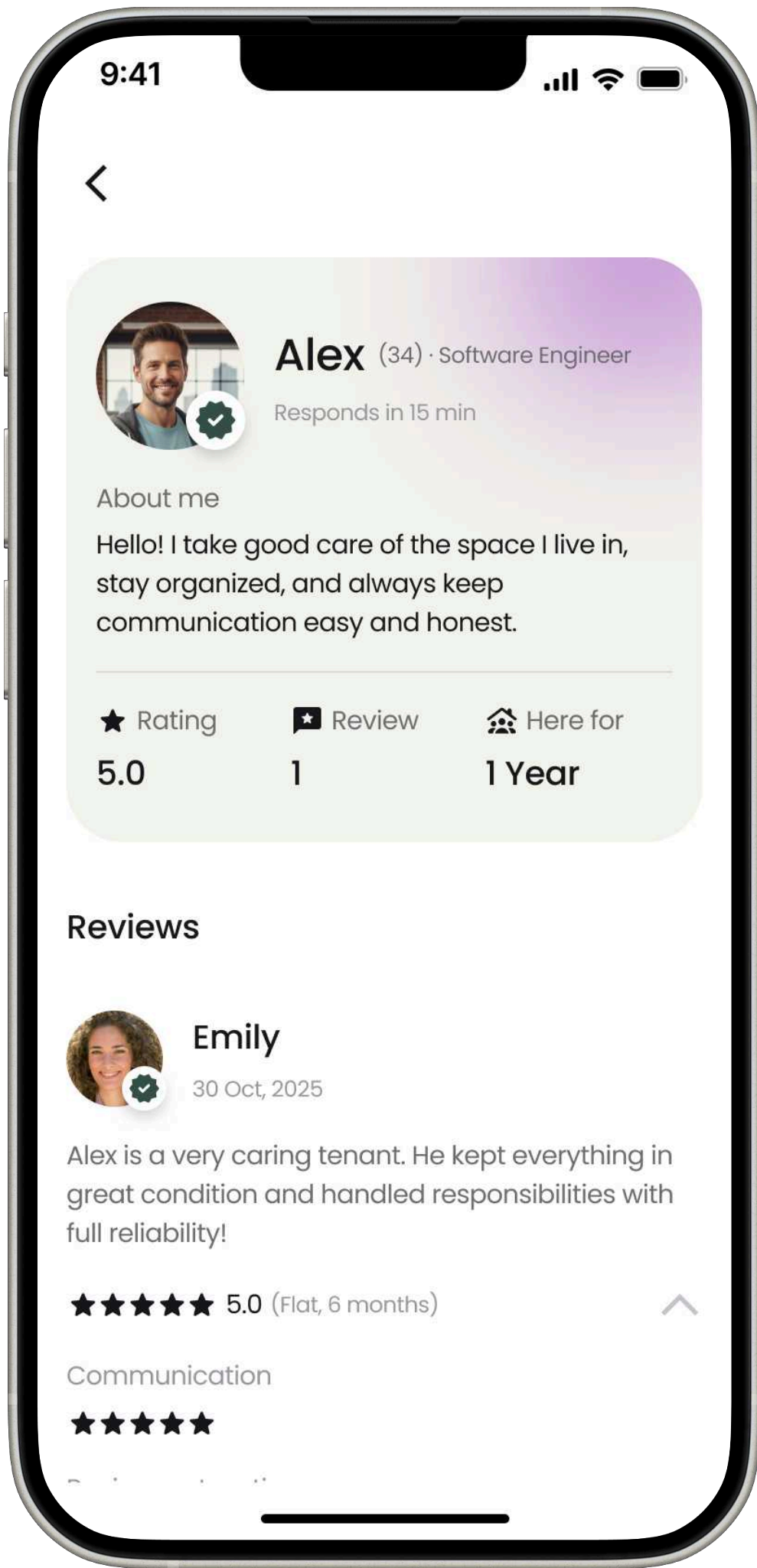
Average response time



Messages (Landlord account)



# Ratings & Reviews



Reviews (Tenant account)

Reviews (Landlord account)

# Reflection

Takeaways

## Reflection

This project started from a frustration I've personally experienced many times. As I worked through the process, I began to see the rental experience as a whole journey and to understand how trust is actually formed within that journey.

Throughout the project, I had to constantly shift between the big picture of the service and the smaller details. This back-and-forth thinking helped me look beyond surface-level issues and focus on the deeper needs and emotions.

Even though I interviewed only four users, I still gained unexpected insights at moments I didn't anticipate. It showed me how important it is to rely on real user evidence rather than my own assumptions, which is a core principle of design thinking.

Using tools like the blueprint, customer journey map, and priority matrix helped me break down the problem more clearly and understand which touchpoints actually influence trust.

Overall, this project helped me realize that service design is about defining the right problem and understanding users deeply enough to justify every design decision.

# Thank You