

RentSafeTO Online Rating System: User Research and Usability Testing Report

Municipal Licensing & Standards, City of Toronto

Prepared by GRIT Toronto

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Executive Summary

The following summarizes a round of one-on-one interviews from May 2020 with six Torontonians about an online ratings system as part of the RentSafeTO program. The interview sessions included an assessment of prototype designs of the online ratings system (see Appendix on page 25).

- An online rating system (similar to DineSafe) would provide value to, and empower, current and prospective tenants so they can access information about infractions for specific apartment buildings in Toronto.
 - Accessing infraction information would aid in housing-related decisions residents have to make.
 - Accessing information about protocols in the event of a building being given a low score would help residents know what to expect of the evaluation and enforcement process.
- In general, information on the City of Toronto's website is regarded as trustworthy; an online ratings system is perceived to be a reliable data provider to current or prospective tenants.
 - Residents currently rely on various aggregator websites that list available rental units, however, they are hesitant to trust the accuracy of the information, which does not typically include building infractions.
- There are several reasons why residents would want to access an online ratings system for apartment buildings; these reasons tend to be tied to their current experience as a current or prospective tenant;
 - For instance, if they want to find infraction information about a building they are considering moving to, or for their current building.
- An online ratings system slots in well with existing information and features on RentSafeTO's website; the usefulness of the website would increase substantially
- Awareness of RentSafeTO, and requirements of landlords around maintenance and notifications, was very low.
 - It's plausible that an online ratings system would drive traffic to the RentSafeTO website, where residents will also come across requirements and rights.
- While there is consensus about the importance of an online ratings system, there are mixed feelings about displaying ratings in their buildings, primarily due to stigma if a low score is achieved.

A full list of opportunities, based on the research findings, can be found on page 22.

Project Description

Gathering Residents to Improve Technology (GRIT) Toronto is an inclusive user research and usability testing service of Code for Canada, and sister program to Civic Hall Toronto (CHT), of which Municipal Licensing & Standards (MLS) is a member. A key benefit of Civic Hall Toronto membership is support for a new or ongoing project, for which a practitioner from the tech and design community is brought on to collaborate with the member team.

RentSafeTO is the City of Toronto's bylaw enforcement program that ensures that owners of apartment buildings with three or more storeys and 10 or more units comply with building maintenance standards. The goal of RentSafeTO is to ensure that tenants live in safe, well-maintained buildings.

In 2019, MLS staff recommended that the rating, or evaluation score, of every RentSafeTO building, be posted in each building. Council further directed staff to "create a rating system similar to the City's 'Dinesafe' program that requires landlords to post a colour-coded sign that displays the City's rating in a prominent, publicly identifiable location, along with posting the same information on the RentSafe website".

Recognizing the importance of providing a digital experience so Torontonians can access program information, MLS collaborated with a UX designer to build mock ups of a RentSafeTO online ratings system. Drawing inspiration from DineSafe, the online ratings system would exist within the City's website and be consistent with council directions and staff recommendations.

Test Purpose and Scope

Approach and Methodology

GRIT Toronto applied a human-centred approach to the user research and usability testing activities for the engagement with MLS. This included:

- Recruiting a group of participants that is diverse across many demographic factors
- Providing a positive experience for participants, so they felt comfortable, safe and respected at all times

- Supplementing prototype testing with qualitative research centred on the tenant experience; this helped to reveal the 'why' behind participants' feedback on the online ratings system

In early March 2020, prior to the testing sessions, the UX Designer, along with Civic Hall Toronto staff, facilitated a discovery session with the Policy & Strategy Support Team from MLS. The purpose of the session was to discuss previous research undertaken, confirm project goals, outline the prototype creation process, and surface ideas for why residents might seek to access RentSafeTO. These ideas served as data to further validate during testing sessions with GRIT Toronto participants.

Testing sessions were held during the week of May 4, 2020. Due to physical distancing recommendations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, all sessions were conducted virtually.

Prototypes

Each participant assessed two prototypes during their session. Both prototypes were based on the same primary user flow, with a few key distinctions.

Prototype 1 flow: search RentSafeTO buildings by location, discover building-specific evaluation scores and infractions, learn more about infractions and maintenance rights, submit a service request

Prototype 2 flow: same flow as P1, plus search by building details (i.e., amenities, accessibility, building types, etc.), use icon system to discover infractions at a glance

(See Appendix for prototype screens).

Test Goals and Outcomes

Goals

- Create rapport with participants
 - expand on basic demographic/behavioural data collected during recruiting
- Understand their experiences as tenants of RentSafeTO buildings
 - Dig into questions about maintenance issues, notifications from landlords, tenant rights, accountability
- Assess participants' awareness of RentSafeTO
- Surface questions participants have about RentSafeTO
- Understand participants' impressions of RentSafeTO and corresponding prototypes

- Assess usability/functionality of the prototypes
- Understand why residents would access RentSafeTO's online ratings system

Outcomes

- Participant journey information about renting in Toronto, tenant rights, accountability, expectations, unmet and previously unexpressed needs
 - Prototype recommendations
 - List of prioritized RentSafeTO online ratings system use cases and benefits
 - Outputs for existing RentSafeTO website
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Recruitment Methodology

GRIT Toronto's values around community engagement, inclusion, shared learning and transparency were a critical component to creating a panel of participants who would deliver valuable, meaningful feedback.

A "tiered consent" form was used to empower participants to choose between three options: audio only, audio and screen sharing, or audio and video. Participants were informed that all recordings were for internal purposes only. They were also given the ability to consent to more, or revoke consent at any point during the session.

Six (6) Torontonians were recruited to be participants using the following methodology:

- Residents with lived experience as a tenant in Toronto
 - All are current tenants in RentSafeTO buildings
 - Mix of occupying current rental unit for more or less than 5 years
 - At least one resident of Toronto Community Housing (TCH)
- Diversity of ages
 - A mix of participants between the ages of 18 to 65+
- Geographic diversity
 - Residents from at least four (4) wards in different areas of Toronto
 - Representation of different contexts (i.e., downtown, inner suburbs, etc)
- Range of tech savviness*
 - Mix of residents who have tech skills ranging from novice to expert
- Variety of testing devices
 - Mix of residents testing prototypes using smartphones and computers

Participant Matrix

#	Age	Identify as	Identify as	Household income	Ward	Tech Savvy*	Rental unit, years in	Note
1	65+	Female	White, North American	\$20,000 - \$39,999	14	2	Midrise, >5yrs	TCH senior resident
2	55-64	Female	White, North American	\$40,000 - \$59,999	13	4	Highrise, <5yrs	
3	45-54	Male	South East Asian	\$60,000 - \$79,999	16	5	Highrise, >5yrs	
4	25 -34	Non-binary	South Asian	\$20,000 - \$39,999	13	5	Midrise, <5yrs	Newcomer
5	18-24	Female	East Asian	\$0 - \$19,999	22	4	Midrise, >5yrs	TCH resident
6	25 -34	Male	White, North American	\$60,000 - \$79,999	20	5	Midrise, <5yrs	

*Note: this metric was self-identified by participants using a 1-5 scale (1=novice, 5=expert)

Test Design

Each testing session took place virtually using Google Hangouts Meet and consisted of one participant, one facilitator and one note-taker. Representatives from MLS were invited to observe some of the sessions. Participants gave consent for their session to be observed.

The hour-long testing session was divided into six sections:

1. **Introductions** and instructions (5 minutes)
2. **Warm-up** and discussion about tenant experience, notification of maintenance issues, accountability, escalation of issues (10 minutes)
3. **Usability testing:** share Prototype 1. Participant to screen share their interactions with prototype. Move to Prototype 2. Follow with discussion of overall impressions, compare/contrast prototypes (30 minutes)
4. **Lightning round:** yes/no questions about familiarity of select tenant rights (<5 minutes)
5. **Card sorting exercise:** rank use cases of RentSafeTO in priority order (5 minutes)
6. **Debrief and wrap up:** discussion around overall feelings about the online ratings system, the RentSafeTO program, user experience interacting with prototypes, reflecting on individual tenant experience, participant learnings (5 minutes)

Testing Artifacts

- [Test plan](#)
 - [Facilitator guide](#)
 - [Prototype 1](#)
 - [Prototype 2](#)
 - [Card sorting](#)
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Test Findings: The tenant experience

It is difficult to find a suitable rental unit in Toronto, and residents often resort to using platforms that they don't trust.

Participants spoke about having to use platforms such as Kijiji, Craigslist and ViewIt to search for suitable rental units that are available. However, it is unclear whether the information posted to these platforms is verified for accuracy, which leads to a sense of distrust by prospective tenants.

"The buildings on Viewit.ca are the ones that can't get tenants. I have heard stories." (P2)

"Using something like Viewit doesn't have any measure of accountability or any verification requirements. I don't like that." (P6)

The sense from participants is that the Toronto rental market is complicated, and prospective tenants are resigned to use the platforms that are available, even if they don't trust all of the information that is presented. In some cases, they feel that they have to rely more heavily on the recommendations of friends, family and colleagues that they trust.

"Rental situation in Toronto is chaotic; we have so many buildings. It's a complicated maze." (P6)

"I'm on the waitlist for another building. It is a well maintained building with reasonable rents in a quiet neighbourhood. My cousin lives there." (P2)

However, the hope from most participants is that RentSafeTO's online ratings system can act as an accurate, vetted resource to check against information posted on rental platforms.

"The fact that this [information would be] on the city's website makes me trust it more." (P6)

Maintenance issues are often recurrent, causing frustrations.

All of the participants interviewed reported that they have had maintenance issues in their current rental, whether issues were relegated to their specific unit, the building, or both.

Additionally, 5 out of 6 participants have had to deal with pests (bedbugs and/or cockroaches) in their current or recent rental units. Other maintenance issues included: equipment malfunctions (elevators, lobby buzzer), water issues (clogged sinks, leaks), and electrical issues (lights burn out, blown fuses).

There was mixed feedback about how landlords or building operators have responded to maintenance issues - from proactive, to no action at all. There were only a few instances where building-wide issues were posted on notification boards or visible areas. Otherwise, participants took it upon themselves to notify their landlords. However, building-wide work that is planned in advance (i.e., water shut-off, elevator servicing) tends to be reflected on notices throughout the building.

"Overall, living [in the building] is good. When you have issues it's hit and miss. There's a form you need to submit and then follow-up several times with management before someone shows up." (P3)

This list of maintenance issues is organized by order of number of mentions, from most to least.

Maintenance Issues

	Category	Maintenance issue	Additional info/Action taken
P1	Pests	Bed bugs	<i>"There are pest issues, regular visits from the pest guy for cockroaches, bedbugs; occasionally have had mice [in the building] as well."</i>
P3	Pests	Bed bugs	<i>"They had a program where you register for pest control. I put myself on a monthly spray but it became too difficult where you have to leave your apartment for 4 hours. I've now switched to a less invasive program that involves powder, gels, and stickers."</i>
P4	Pests	Bed bugs	<i>"We do have bed bugs and they came in and cleaned the place but the next month we had the same situation."</i>
P5	Pests	Bed bugs	<i>"Bed bugs have always been an issue, but we have learned to handle it ourselves."</i>
P1	Pests	Cockroaches	<i>"When I first moved in, there were cockroaches. I contacted management right away. There are also notices around letting you know to report pests if you see them. I filled out a form that is in front of the office, the response [from management] was pretty good. Or you can contact</i>

	Category	Maintenance issue	Additional info/Action taken
			<i>TCH."</i>
P6		Cockroaches	<i>"[We've had] cockroach issues in the unit for two years, but [they] resolved eventually, after numerous treatments. My partner, two children and dogs all had to leave for each treatment. [I] notified [the] building manager right away - they were diligent and came within the same week, but would only do my unit and not the ones around, so pests kept returning."</i>
P5	Vital Services	Clogged sink	<i>"I [fixed] it myself."</i>
P4	Vital Services	Washroom taps not working	<i>"They took their time, 4-5 days, but it happened within 7 days of when they should. So they made it to their timeline required by [city] but personally I wanted it to [be addressed] within 24 hours."</i>
P4	Vital Services	Water shut-offs	<i>"I think every two weeks there is a lot of water maintenance going on from 9-5. In this situation with everyone at home 9-5 it's not great."</i>
P3	Vital Services	Leak in parking garage above car	<i>"There was some leak above my car in the garage. I asked management to address it or give me a new spot. They used some sheet metal to divert the water elsewhere but that water began to stink. Had to get a work order from the city."</i>
P3	Vital Services	Broken fridge	<i>"My fridge broke last summer and they tried to swap it with another used, broken fridge."</i>

	Category	Maintenance issue	Additional info/Action taken
			<i>It took over two days to get a working fridge."</i>
P2	Electrical/building maintenance	Faulty fire alarm/sprinkler in parking	recurrent
P2	Electrical/building maintenance	Stuck in elevator with faulty alarm bell	<i>"I went to talk to the manager the next day. The manager said that I should've called right away. Other tenants experienced similar issues. The elevator was taken out of service and repaired in 4 days."</i>

Opportunities to help ease frustrations:

- Socialize RentSafeTO information (e.g. about tenant rights, how to contact your landlord, and escalate to the City if needed) through additional channels such as posting in multiple areas of the building or communicating with tenants via email or social media.
- Educate and empower broader public, not just those who are active in tenant rights
- Enforce RentSafeTO's requirement of providing notices on a tenant notification board in a common area

Residents discussing maintenance issues often led to sharing their experiences of safety issues.

Although there were no safety-related questions planned for the user research interviews, the conversation about maintenance organically led 4 out of 6 participants to share their experiences with safety and security issues in their buildings. This shift in discussion may be due to the fact that participants were reflecting deeply on their tenant journeys, and past issues around safety emerged. (Note: security systems are currently assessed as part of the RentSafeTO evaluation process).

Safety-related issues surfaced by participants include: non-building residents entering the building when security staff is not on duty (P4), car break-ins (P3), residents crowding

closely together in the lobby during the COVID-19 pandemic (P1), and fears that a fire could break out in their high-rise building (P2).

Opportunities for RentSafeTO:

- If possible, consider adding security system information to building listing pages on RentSafeTO's website
- Link to appropriate page/escalation protocol or resources on the City's website for tenants who may have experienced a safety-related issue
- Be aware that in having future conversations with tenants, they may share or ask questions about safety issues
 - Consider adding safety-related questions to future surveys and other resident engagement activities
- If safety records are available, consider adding to building listing pages on RentSafeTO's website
 - Caveat: displaying this information may pose a stigma for residents of building
 - Consider asking this question in future consultations

By and large, residents are not escalating issues to the City.

Despite the number of maintenance issues listed above, none of the participants have escalated their complaints to the City. Below are the reasons why participants have never escalated:

- The issue was resolved by the landlord
- The participant thinks it takes too much time to escalate
- The participant didn't know how to escalate
- The participant didn't think escalating to the City would lead to action

"I didn't ever escalate to the city. [It] seemed like a difficult thing to navigate and [I have] no time." (P6)

"I never [escalated an issue to the City]. We [roommates] are all international students and don't really know how to do that." (P4)

"Personally, the process of having to submit something isn't worth the trouble." (P5)

Residents often do not feel comfortable reporting pest issues.

When discussing various pest issues, a few participants alluded to feelings of shame about infestations, particularly bed bugs. It's worth noting that participants whose buildings deploy regular bed bug extermination services did *not* convey the same sense of shame.

"We do have bed bugs and they came in and cleaned the place, but the next month we had the same situation. It's our fault too because we didn't tell them, but we should raise this issue again." (P4)

Test Findings: RentSafeTO

Participants' awareness of RentSafeTO was very low.

Only one participant (P2) stated that they were "somewhat aware" of the RentSafeTO program before participating in the testing session. In order to distinguish participants' awareness of the particular program vs the information contained *within* the program, they were each asked a series of yes or no questions about landlord requirements and tenant rights. MLS had deployed the same set of questions in an earlier research exercise.

Facilitator's question:

"For RentSafeTO buildings, which are buildings with 3 more storeys and 10 or more units, did you know that landlords are required to..."

RentSafeTO Program Requirement Question	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
A: ...inform residents about repair and maintenance plans?	no	yes	no	no	no	yes
B: ...inform residents about managing garbage, electrical maintenance, pest management, and keeping the building clean?	no	yes	yes	no	no	yes

RentSafeTO Program Requirement Question	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
C: ...provide and use a tenant notification board to communicate with building residents?	no	no	no	no	yes	no
D: ...inform residents when a building has been evaluated to meet specific housing standards?	no	no	no	no	no	no
E: ...provide tenants with either a cooling room, or the address and map to the nearest location of a publicly accessible air-conditioned location or a functioning air conditioning system?	no	yes	no	no	no	no

Participants have mixed feelings about displaying evaluation scores in their buildings.

The divide seems to be directly tied to scenario:

- Scenario 1: If displaying scores in their current buildings: participants have concerns about stigma if there’s a low score that includes details of infractions (particularly if the infractions are associated with pest infestations).

"I can see why tenants wouldn't want [the score posted] if it brings about stigmas, and if the score was displayed publicly. It can affect people mentally knowing that anyone (friends and others) can see the score of the building they live in." (P5)

- Scenario 2: If searching for a new building: participants would appreciate the disclosure of a low score. This would help inform their decision of where they would like to live.

"I think [posting the green pass certificates] outside of the main gate [of the building] - that's where new prospective tenants can see them and this information is important to them. People will know that this is a certified building by the City... This would have added to my confidence of being able to rent a place." (P4)

One participant (P6) acknowledged the shortcomings of both scenarios, but ultimately weighed the value of access to information and accountability of the building operator higher than stigma:

"Should [RentSafeTO] posters be visible in buildings? Yes - [they are] handy for people who don't use the internet and would be right up front, not hidden away behind the landlord's desk. [The] only potential issue is that it creates a stigma of sorts, even if after time they clean things up, I would remember the old rating. But [the] pro outweighs the cons." (P6)

Opportunities for RentSafeTO:

- Address low awareness of RentSafeTO
 - Push a benefits-first approach to the public
 - Core benefits: access to information, transparency of information and evaluation process, accountability of building operator, a trusted source for their apartment search (accurate, verified, up-to-date)
 - Link benefits to tenant needs and challenges
 - Design materials with benefits front and centre
 - Communicate the benefits in all communication channels
 - Conduct further research into needs and challenges
- Reach out to more residents with "Should scored RentSafeTO posters be visible in buildings?" question
 - Ask probing questions about different scenarios to dig deeper (see above for Scenarios 1 and 2)
- Consider other factors that may impact their feelings about displaying posters, including:
 - Where the score is displayed
 - What other information is included on a low score

Test Findings: Prototypes

Participants enjoyed interacting with the prototypes and appreciated how they match the City's website design. Since many of the participants were familiar with DineSafeTO, they understood the concept immediately.

Overall, the online rating system is user-friendly and would help make informed decisions about housing.

Participants remarked that the prototyped design presents a straightforward way to access maintenance records and information about individual apartment buildings. Interestingly, none of the participants asked where the data comes from, how it is maintained, or if it is up-to-date. The ability to have this information at their fingertips, coupled with a sense of trust because it's on the City's website, made it extremely favourable.

"[It's] very helpful to see the percentages and scores for each building. There's no other way to know a building's record. I like this - can see what they're addressing and what they're ignoring. This is helpful and much better than the current situation" (P3)

"It is nice to know what problems I might be facing when I move into a new building. I'm made aware of what is to come if I move into this building." (P4)

Prototype 2 was the preferred option for two reasons, one of which can be incorporated into Prototype 1.

Infraction icon system

The icon system provides at-a-glance information and removes the need to click through to a new page. It also helps the user understand the meaning of the score percentage and colour thumbnail, and adds another graphic element to the page.

"They [icons] are very useful. At a glance I can see what issues affects each listing. These icons answer a lot of my question that I had with the 1st prototype" (P5)

"P1 was such an improvement from the current system. P2 is easier to narrow down using the search. P2 feels like it's closer to something I'd use." (P3)

Presented in Prototype 2, the infraction icon system can also be easily incorporated into Prototype 1.

Building details system

The ability to search by building details (including amenities, pet-friendliness, accessibility, parking, etc.) makes the RentSafeTO much more useful by opening up new use cases for residents. This feature helps to address the earlier challenge of finding a suitable rental unit from a trusted source of information.

"[I] like [seeing] whether the building is pet friendly or not very much! Saves a lot of time during the search" (P6)

"It's very helpful to see these other building types (my friends had trouble finding apartments that were pet friendly). These categories are very helpful. I know I appreciate these." (P5)

"Ohhh okay this would help me narrow down my search for things that are like this. This is really nice, better than Kijiji or Google, for sure." (P3)

Note: while it's helpful to understand the adjacent benefits that a future RentSafeTO website may provide, the building details system would require further investigation and would likely not be feasible to implement at this time.

Participants want to see what protocols are put in place for a low score.

Both prototypes included the same score (85% pass) on the listing detail screen. Several participants wondered what kind of information would be displayed if the score was much lower.

Participants were then asked to envision what they would expect to see on the screen in the instance of a low score. They would expect to have the following questions answered:

- What happens after a low score is received?
- What is the protocol?
- When will the City conduct a follow-up inspection?
- How long do building operators have to address infractions?
- Are there penalties if building operators fail to address infractions in a timely manner?

Service request forms designed to submit to landlords are helpful and provide credibility.

These forms currently exist on the RentSafeTO site, but it's worth pointing out that a few participants would feel confident in using the forms to communicate an issue to their building operator, because of the credibility that is perceived of the City.

"I [would] use the City of Toronto's request forms because it has a bit more credibility and lets my landlord know that I know my rights, or at least know where to find them and escalate the complaints." (P4)

Participants would value the ability to use an online form to submit a request to the City.

Participants cited feeling worried that their email or call records would get lost or forgotten about, and using the phone is too much of a bother.

"I'd like to do the same thing with a [service request to the City] form, rather than writing an email [or using] a phone number. I'm sure the City receives a ton of these emails so mine will get lost in a stack of emails. I'd rather have a 3-4 field form that I know will make sure all of the information is structured." (P4)

"Service request should be a web form, not calling 311 - using the phone is a deterrent. Why call 311 and then do everything else online? Everything should be possible from the same point of contact (online)" P6

One participant mentioned that because residents may feel frustrated when emailing the City, or leaving a phone message, they may leave out pertinent information, further delaying resolution of their issue. A web form would capture all of the necessary information in one pass.

"Email could work, but forms are more specific because they can include fields for everything the city needs to know. A tenant sending an email might leave out information by accident, especially if they're frustrated." (P6)

Note: The user interview guide did not include questions about participants' desires to submit a service request to the City via web form; participants surfaced this notion on their own.

Opportunities for prototypes:

- Utilize Prototype 1 for all future assessments
 - Consider doing additional testing of Prototype 1 with more residents
- Provide information outlining protocols for buildings that achieve a yellow or red score
- Consider adding a flow on individual building listing pages for yellow and red scores
 - Test flow with residents
- In the event of a future iteration with the ability to search by building details, consider testing it with residents
- In the event of a future iteration with a web form, consider testing it with residents

A note on tenant rights:

Although a tenant rights section currently exists on the RentSafeTO website, it is worth pointing out that participants feel empowered when they understand their rights and how to escalate concerns if necessary. However, residents may not feel compelled to research this until a circumstance compels them to.

"Learning my rights is super important. I am interested in reading about this and what rights I have as a tenant. I appreciate this section after the building section."
(P5)

"I like that the maintenance rights are written; I'm part of a tenant rights Facebook group and appreciates that this incorporates some of the information I might have gone to the group to look for otherwise." (P6)

Test Findings: Usability

Overall, the user experience (UX) and design of the prototypes was considered favourable across the participant group. Participants appreciated the plain language used throughout the design, especially in relation to infraction information, as well as the similarity to DineSafe.

"[It's] important that it's standardized within other city rating tools like DineSafe to avoid confusion." (P6)

Below are the main usability issues that came up during testing. This list is organized in order of priority, as proposed by GRIT Toronto, from highest to lowest.

Usability issue	Description	Opportunity
Submit service request	Chinese languages were missing from the list	Ensure all languages are represented; use expand/collapse bar if too lengthy
Building details checkbox <i>(Prototype 2 only)</i>	Participants consider this a high-priority feature, yet felt it was not prominent enough on screen (most had to be directed to it)	Make the building details prompt more prominent and/or action-oriented, i.e., "Select building details"
Icons	Participants favoured the concept of the icon set, but none of them were correct in guessing what the icons mean	Move the legend up, before the individual building cards
Submit service request	Participants falsely assumed that they would have the ability to submit the request through the website	Change section to "How to Submit a Service Request" and break into steps; consider using graphic device to organize steps & shorten text
Resident age criteria <i>(Prototype 2 only)</i>	A few participants said it would be helpful to be able to search buildings by certain age-specific criteria, i.e., kid-friendly, seniors only	Consider adding this information if relevant open data sets are available, i.e., the registration dataset
Building rating/score	Participants were unsure of what the building rating/score number signifies and would like to see how the score is broken down	Denote how the remaining % is accounted for with regards to infractions, i.e., 15% = notification board infraction; or outline entire evaluation score in a user-friendly way
"Read more", infraction	There was confusion when clicking "read more [about infraction]" took participants to "Learn my Maintenance Rights" page	This may have been a prototype glitch; clicking "read more" should jump down to the relevant infraction on the maintenance rights page

Test Findings: Card sorting results

Goal

The purpose of the card sorting exercise was to understand the highest-value benefits that RentSafeTO can deliver to residents.

Outcomes

Use cases (i.e. scenarios) ranked in order, from highest priority to lowest.

Method

All six participants engaged in the card sorting exercise during the testing sessions. Using the Optimal Sort tool, they sorted ten possible use cases of RentSafeTO in the order of 1-10 (1 = the reason they would be most likely to use RentSafeTO).

(Note: the ten use cases were the product of the discovery session that the UX Designer held with the team from MLS and CHT staff).

The data was analyzed after the sessions to reveal the use cases that were consistently ranked the highest among the participant group:

	Use case/Scenario Prompt: "I would use RentSafeTO..."	# of participants who ranked use case in their top 5
A	...if I was looking for a new place to live	5 out of 6 participants
B	...to submit a service request to my landlord	5 out of 6 participants
C	...to submit a service request to the city	4 out of 6 participants
D	...to find more about specific infractions	4 out of 6 participants
E	...to learn about my maintenance rights as a tenant	3 out of 6 participants

Opportunities for use cases:

- Test use cases with more residents using card sorting activities
- Continue to validate use cases on an ongoing basis
- Include the ability for residents to add new use cases

On use case A) if I was looking for a new place to live:

"For my next building search I will want to visit this website, survey the building I'm moving into so I can have all the information with me -- management can't hide/keep things from me if I had this website. I would want to visit this website before I move into my next building." (P4)

"For sure I would use this. If I ever have to look for another apartment, this is something that would be useful for me in terms of what I value in a living situation." (P5)

On use case B) to submit a service request to my landlord:

"It was great to learn that I can complain to the city and my voice can be heard if my landlord isn't listening to me" (P4)

On use case D) to find more about specific infractions:

"[Tenants] are paying good rent. Tenants could be more informed about their buildings, their rights and infractions/ongoing issues." (P2)

"it's a very good idea, it's long overdue. If we have standards for restaurants and tattoo shops etc., we should have it for rentals. [It's like] having a one stop shop for quick info about possible infractions." (P6)

Full List of Opportunities

Opportunities to help ease tenants' frustrations with recurrent maintenance issues:

1. **Socialize** RentSafeTO information (e.g. about tenant rights, how to contact your landlord and escalate to the City if needed) through additional channels such as posting in multiple areas of the building or communicating with tenants via email or social media.
2. **Educate** and **empower** broader public, not just those who are active in tenant rights
3. **Enforce** RentSafeTO's requirement of providing notices on the tenant notification board in common areas

Opportunities for RentSafeTO:

4. **Address low awareness** of RentSafeTO
 - a. Push a benefits-first approach to the public
 - i. Core benefits: access to information, transparency of information and evaluation process, accountability of building operator, a trusted source for their apartment search (accurate, verified, up-to-date)
 - b. Link benefits to tenant needs and challenges
 - c. Design materials with benefits front and centre
 - d. Communicate the benefits in all communication channels
 - e. Conduct further research into needs
5. If possible, consider **adding security system information** to building listing pages on RentSafeTO's website
6. **Link to appropriate page/escalation protocol** or resources on the City's website for tenants who may have experienced a **safety-related issue**
7. **Be aware** that in having future conversations with tenants, they may share or ask questions about safety issues
 - a. Consider adding safety-related questions to future surveys and other resident engagement activities
8. If **safety records** are available, consider **adding to building listing pages** on RentSafeTO's website
 - a. Caveat: this may pose a stigma for residents of building
 - b. Consider asking this question in future consultations
9. **Reach out** to more residents with "Should scored RentSafeTO posters be visible in buildings?" question
 - a. Ask probing questions about different scenarios to dig deeper (see above for Scenarios 1 and 2)

10. **Consider other factors** that may impact their feelings about displaying posters, including:
 - a. Where the score is displayed
 - b. What other information is included on a low score

Opportunities for prototype:

11. **Utilize Prototype 1** for all future assessments
 - a. Consider doing **additional testing** of Prototype 1 with more residents
12. **Provide information** outlining protocols for buildings that achieve a yellow or red score
13. **Consider adding a flow** on individual building listing pages for yellow and red scores
 - a. Test flow with residents
14. In the event of a future iteration with the ability to search by building details, consider testing it with residents
15. In the event of a future iteration with a web form, consider testing with residents

Opportunities for design:

16. **Service request:** Ensure all languages are represented; use expand/collapse bar if too lengthy
17. **Building details:** Make the building details prompt more prominent and/or action-oriented, i.e., "Select building details"
18. **Infraction icons:** Move the legend up, before the individual building cards
19. **Service request:** Change section to "How to Submit a Service Request" and break into steps; consider using graphic device to organize steps & shorten text
20. **Age criteria of residents:** Consider adding this information if relevant open data sets are available, i.e., the registration dataset
21. **Building rating/score:** Denote how the remaining % is accounted for with regards to infractions, i.e., 15% = notification board infraction; or outline entire evaluation score in a user-friendly way
22. **Infraction "read more":** This may have been a prototype glitch; clicking "read more" should jump down to the relevant infraction on the maintenance rights page

Opportunities for understanding high priority use cases:

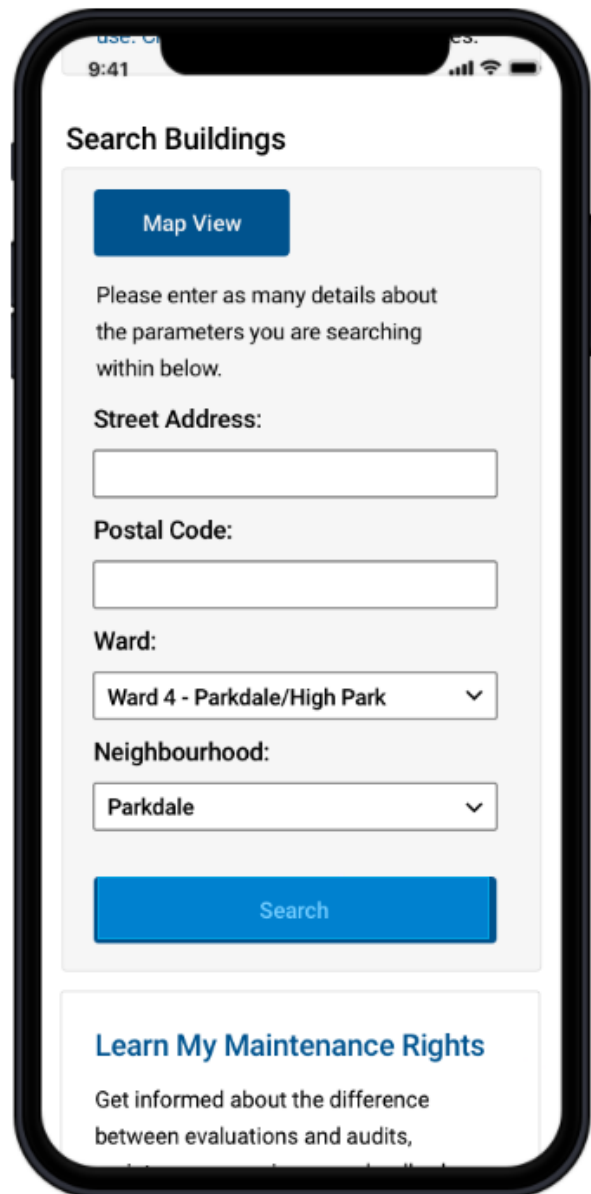
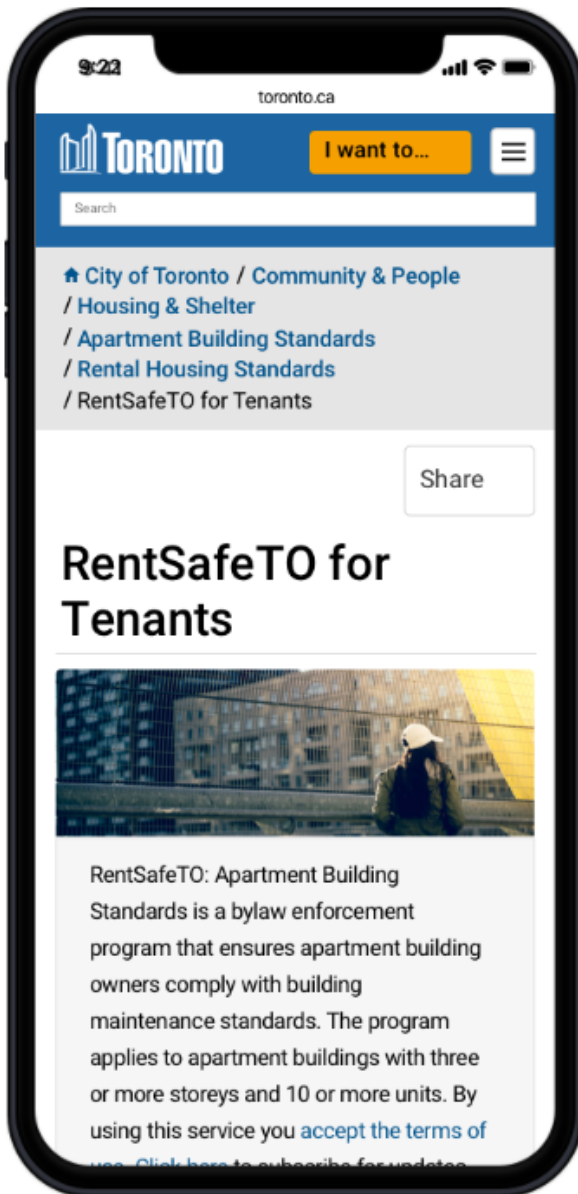
23. **Test** use cases with more residents using card sorting activities
24. Continue to **validate** use cases on an ongoing basis
25. Include the ability for residents to **add** new use cases

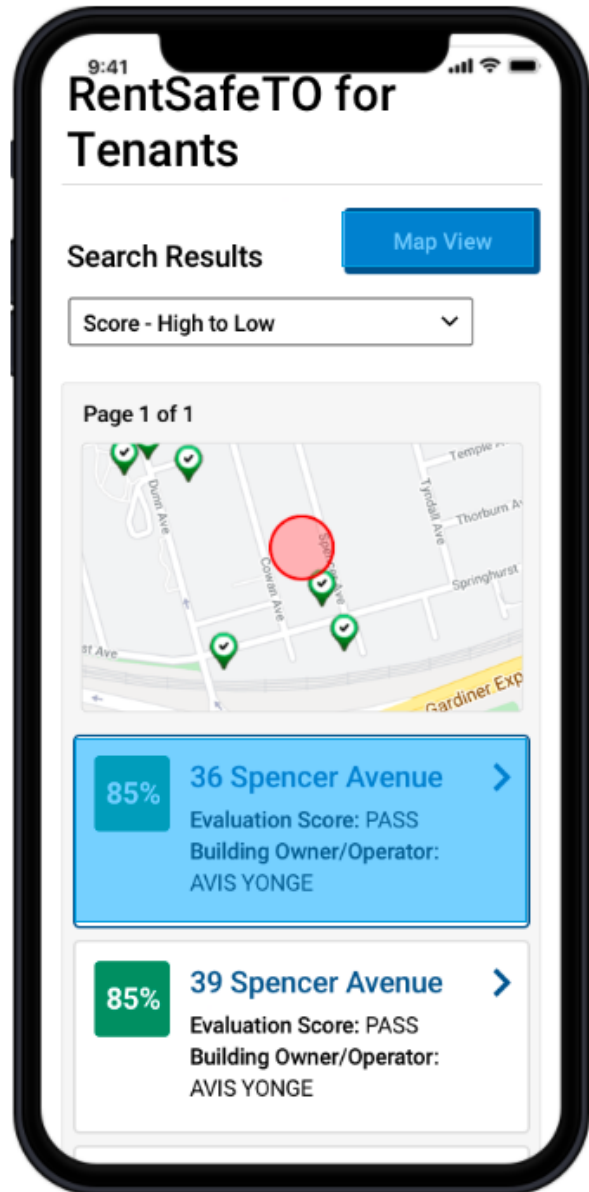
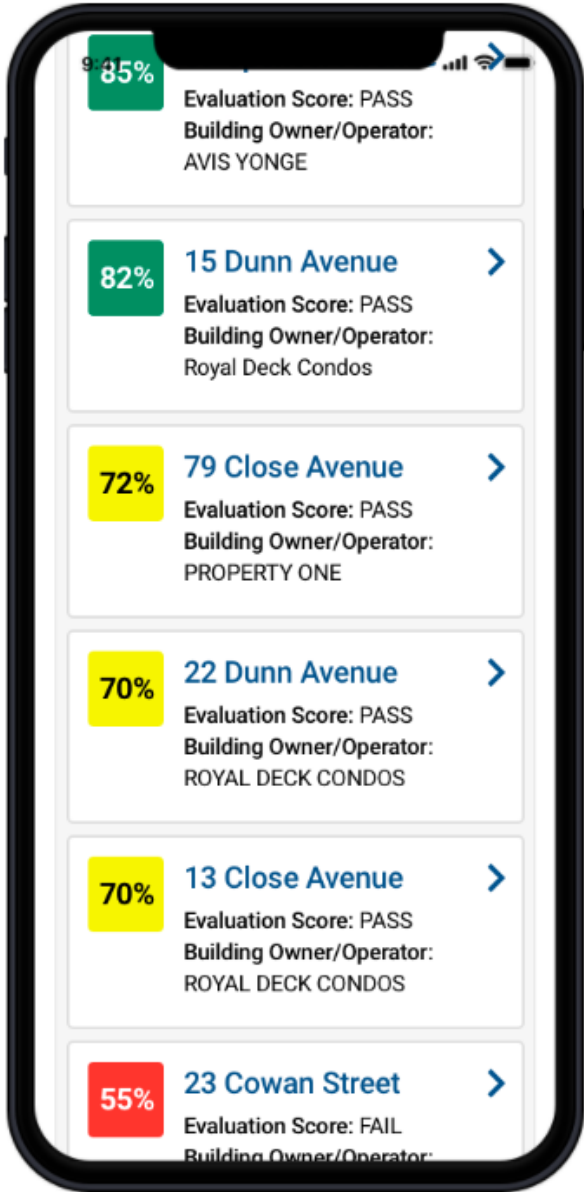
Appendix

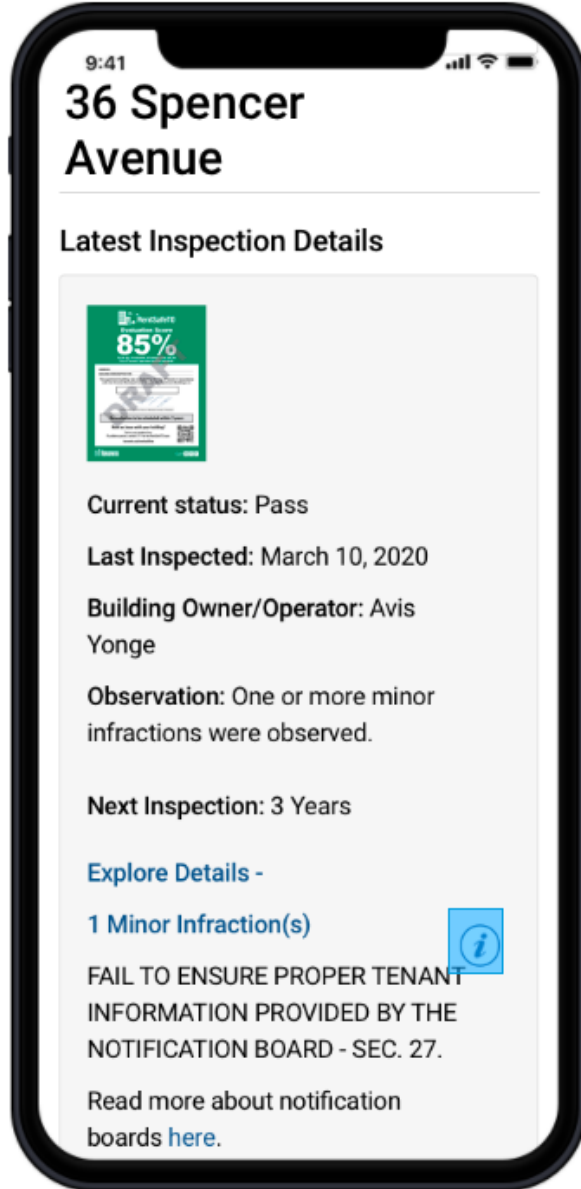
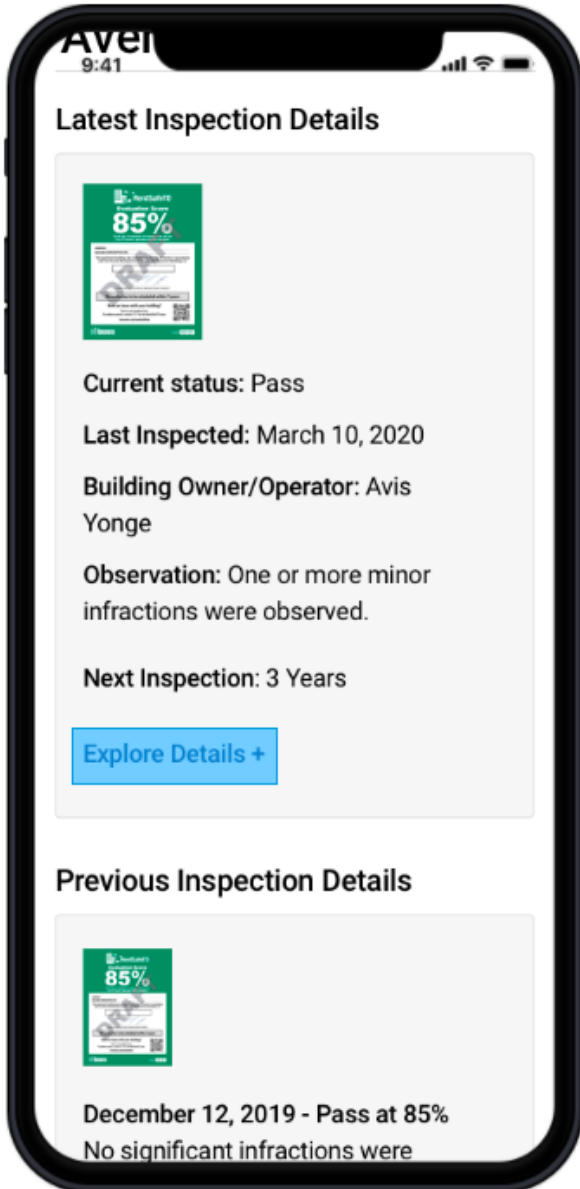
Prototypes

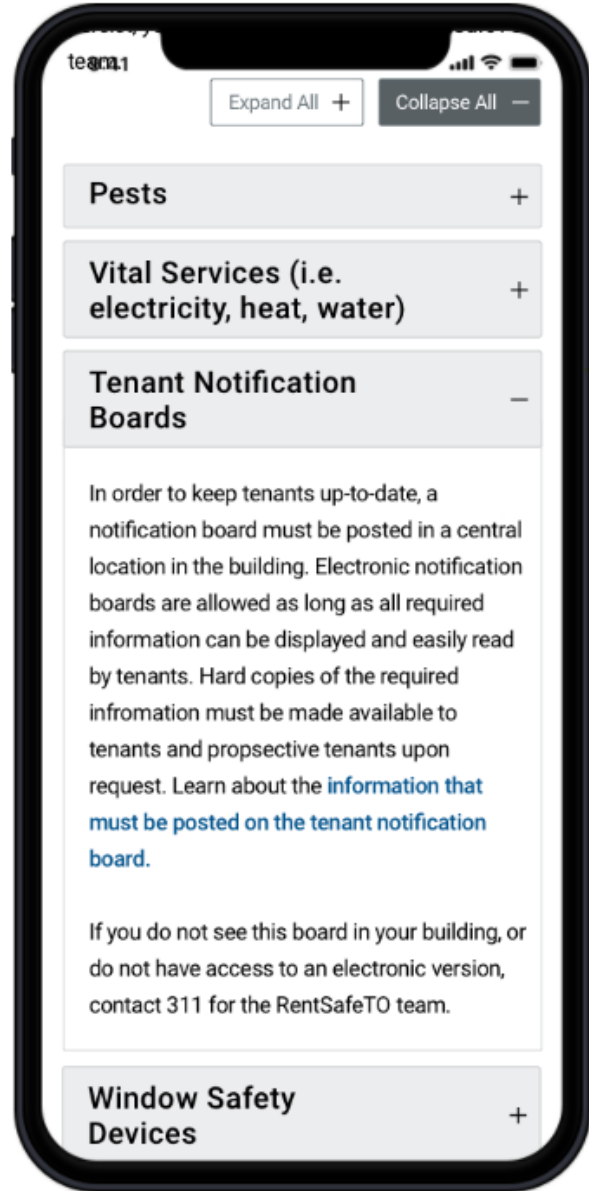
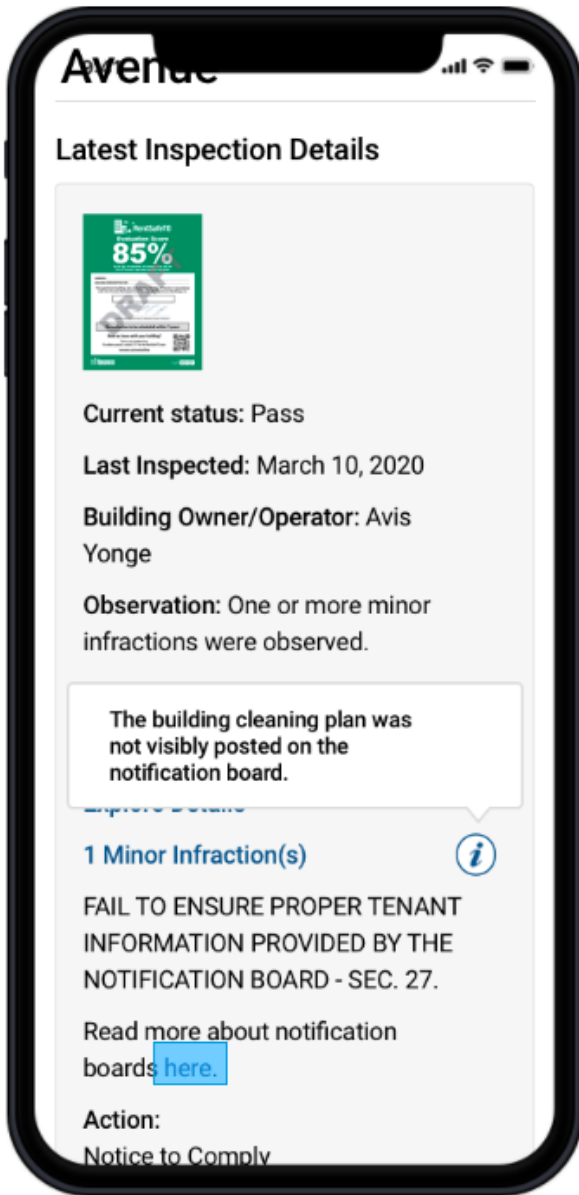
The following select screens depict the main flow of the prototypes shown to participants.

Prototype 1 Flow (8 screens)









Prototype 2 Flow (4 screens)

Street Address:

Postal Code:

Ward:

Neighbourhood:

Search with building details

Building Type

Pet-friendly

Balconies

Accessibility

All Amenities

All Parking Types

9:41

RentSafeTO for Tenants

Search Results

Score - High to Low

Page 1 of 1

85% **36 Spencer Avenue**

Evaluation Score: 85%
Building Owner/Operator:
AVIS YONGE
Infraction Categories:

70% **22 Dunn Avenue**

