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Will NYC renters flock to this on-demand apartment showing app?

'If I want to see an apartment, I want to be able to see it within 25 minutes,' says founder of Cribitt

BY BRITT CHESTER ★
OCT 7

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Starting with the Big Apple, founder of Cribitt Stephen Steiner is trying to do for renters what [Hobizbo](#), [Curb Call](#), [AgentPair](#) and [HouseCall](#) are already doing for homebuyers: connect them with agents for on-demand showings via a mobile app.

The company is keen on getting agents onboard early: it will cover the licensing fee for any new agents signing on, while offering them flexible work schedules. Agents who work for Cribitt receive a 90 percent broker fee split.

On the renter side, Cribitt users sign up for an account and are shown a map of their location with the number of available units in a chosen area.

From there they can summon the nearest agent like an Uber ride to schedule a tour now or later. For the apartment hunter on a time crunch, it's only a matter of how close the nearest agent is to the listing. For renters scheduling a showing in the future, Cribitt makes the appointment available one hour prior so that proximate agents can snap it up.



Stephen Steiner



Cribitt app



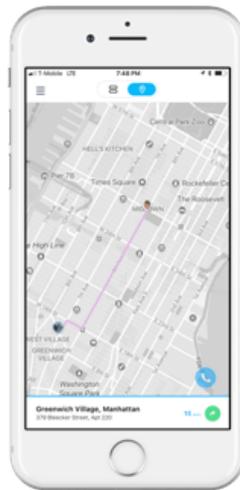
come, first served.

Cribitt verifies the identity of all the agents prior to allowing them to accept showings. This includes a criminal background check. The app also directs the renter and the agent to a nearby coffee shop as a mutual meeting place prior to the showing. Either party may cancel the appointment at any time.

The app offers a picture gallery and information section for the chosen property. It also lists the available floor plans if a building has multiple units available. The picture gallery is simple, but primed for a 3-D home tour service (hint, hint.)

It is possible to search the available units without signing up for an account. However, one must sign up for an account to access the Instant Showing option. It's simple, but requires a text verification code.

The listings that appear on the map are [powered by Nestio](#). Although Cribitt is only available in New York at this time, the Nestio platform is offered in Dallas, Austin, Chicago and Boston, and Steiner is planning for expansion into new markets. Cribitt chose to work with Nestio because “it operates the most like a tech startup,” said Steiner.



Cribitt app

“My goal in life with this company is if I want to see an apartment, I want to be able to see it within 25 minutes,” Steiner added. While this may sound optimistic-albeit-attainable, he acknowledges the barriers of access, especially in a city like New York: Agents remain at the mercy of doormen and leasing offices. He said, however, that “key exchanges,” or physical lockers that store keys and allow operators to grant access remotely, may be helping to change that. ([KeyCafe](#) is one example of such a hub).

Steiner himself is a 20-year veteran of real estate. He is the broker for [Jyson Properties](#), a residential and commercial real estate firm that handles sales, rentals and property management.

There he saw firsthand the pain points in renting properties in New York — listing, vetting, scheduling, applying and follow-up were all problem areas — which led him to create Cribitt two years ago.

“We’re doing something that’s very big here, in terms of there being a lot of pieces of the puzzle,” Steiner said. “We’ve been on it for close to two years... there were a lot of challenges that we faced and that we continue to face, but we don’t see anything that’s going to stop us.”

Email [Britt Chester](#)

Article image credited to Cribitt iPhone screenshots



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Emile L'eplattenier

Nakedapartments (since gobbled up by Zillow) has had a "showings on demand" feature for a few years now. it works great for exclusives, but can be a huge pain for open listings, occupied listings, or new developments that have leasing offices. Also, the last time I used the service (admittedly a few years ago) they charged agents \$20 per showing. That said, it's something renters want so if they can make this work I'm sure it will drive traffic to their listings.

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Lori Dake · Northfield, Illinois

I was going to say the same thing, that I foresee the units have to be vacant, move-in ready, exclusive listings. If the unit is occupied for example, people cannot have an immediate showing. And sometimes, some landlords do not allow lockboxes at any time - that keys need to be held at listing agent's office (and where they must attend showings), or the owner/maintenance guy insists on providing access.

That has me wondering if the listings will only be exclusive with a ShowingTime (-type?) program included, because the owner is still going to want an assurance that access is only given to agents.

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Chris Lima-Realtor

This seems a bit problematic on so many levels, but the safety concern is by issue. I suppose all will be worked out. I am a professional not a vending machine.

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John Glenn · Real estate broker at Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage - Chicagoland, Milwaukee, IN and MI

Most Realtors already avoid rentals if they can. This will help ensure it. Renters beware. May result in those pesky unintended consequences.

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