

## Real Estate Project Observation: Finding a House Online

Notes Before we Began: P. is a Student at CU Boulder who's identity will be kept anonymous as part of the ethics agreement before the observation began. P. lives off campus currently and is looking for a new place to live next year. They admit to me that they have never really looked for a place to live because their roommates did that for them last time.

Observation Details: With the explicit goal of finding suitable listings in Boulder to Rent for next year, P. is given a computer with Safari and 15 minutes to find a couple listings that they like. I cannot interfere, offer advice, or talk to them in any way, only observe how they go about looking for this location and what methods of comparison they use.

Setting: P's House, located in South Boulder, we set up in P's living room, the house is quiet, its a cold December Day, and the heat in the house is a little too high for my liking. I set up in a chair next to P so that I can see their screen, but not so close that it feels like I'm breathing down their neck. The atmosphere between us is calm because I know them personally but have made it clear to them to act as if I'm not there.

- 15 Min to Go
- They're exited, seeing this as a sort of challenge
- P. types homes in boulder into the search bar
- They took the first link to Zillow
- P. comments on how many listings there are
- P. browses the listings that pop up for Boulder
- They haven't clicked on any of them yet
- P. comments on being unfamiliar with Zillow
- P. clicks on the Rent button on Zillow
- 14:16 left
- P. looks more intensely at the listings, ignoring the map for now
- P. is looking more closely at the pictures and the prices
- They are talking themselves through their feelings about the listings
- P. has stopped on a couple but has scrolled away
- P. has stopped looking at the list and is using the map now
- 13:04 left
- The map is slow to load, so P. has to navigate it carefully
- P. accidentally clicked on a few listings
- This frustrated P. as they are used to clicking to zoom
- There are a lot of dots on the map, P. is hovering over them looking for certain traits.
- P. begins zoning in on North Boulder
- 11:59 Left
- P. filters the results for 4+ bedrooms and sorts them from lowest to highest price
- P clicks on a 5 bedroom 3 bath in North Boulder, 3200 a month
- 10:48 Left
- P. starts looking through the pictures
- P. is looking closely at the interior pictures
- They comment on how nice the living room is
- They exit out of the pictures and go to Google Street view
- P. comments on how they haven't been to the area
- P. comments on how nice the yard is and how nice the Subarus parked outside are
- They exit street view
- P. reads the description, they look more confident and happy with what it says
- P. comments on the Ping Pong table
- 8:35 left
- They comment on the 3 unrelated individual part of the description and exit the listing
- They accidentally exit the whole search page and have to use the back arrow
- They start scrolling then go to the map

Excitement may also indicate that they are nervous  
Computer Literacy is Standard  
Unfamiliarity with sites leads to first choice

Unfamiliarity with Zillow  
Lack of Knowledge  
Getting a feel for the site  
Talking to ones self is self reassurance  
Figuring out the website

Starting to narrow results  
Focusing on the aesthetics of the listings  
Focusing on price  
Boulder is Expensive  
Location Location Location  
Lack of Knowledge  
Clunky UI on Zillow/Unfamiliarity with the site  
Unfamiliarity with Zillow

Starting to scan for options/adjusting to the site

Preferred neighborhood possibly  
Location Location Location  
Adjusting to the site/Has roommates

High Price/Many Roommates  
Boulder is Expensive

Checking for quality  
Communal living  
Checking neighborhood out  
Location Location Location  
Nice area

Feeling confident with Zillow  
College Values

Zoning Laws  
Lack of Knowledge  
Unfamiliarity with Zillow/Poor UI

- Again they zoom in on North Boulder
- They don't seem to see anything they like so they start to zoom out
- P. is using the list again and is scrolling through the cheaper options
- P. scrolls the map all the way out to get more options
- They find another listing a 4 bed 3 bath in north east Boulder
- P. looks at the pictures again
- They comment on it being a little old
- They comment on how big it is
- P. stops on a few pictures to inspect further
- They exit the pictures and start to read the description
- They read the description and seem satisfied
- 5:55 left
- They comment on keeping the one in mind and keep scrolling down the list
- They focus in on one property in South Boulder
- 2700 a month 4 bed 3 bath
- P. uses the same pattern they were before, they start to look at pictures
- The comment on how they don't like the interior but like the yard
- They exit the pictures and start reading the blurb
- They keep that one up and open up the first one in a new tab
- P. is comparing them jumping back and forth between tabs looking at the details offered in the listing
- P. exits out of the first listing and settles on the new one in South Boulder
- 2:25 left
- P. tells me they are done and have their listing.

The listing: [https://www.zillow.com/homedetails/3340-Dover-Dr-Boulder-CO-80305/13184889\\_zpid/](https://www.zillow.com/homedetails/3340-Dover-Dr-Boulder-CO-80305/13184889_zpid/)

Preferred neighborhood

Location Location Location

Unfamiliarity with Zillow

Lack of Knowledge

Roommates/Compromising Location due to Codes

Checking for quality

Boulder typically has older properties

Faster scanning = Familiarity with the site

Boulder is Expensive

Compromised on location for convenience

Less Expensive, same Bed/Bath combo

Location Location Location

Outdoorsy, Communal

Familiarity with the site/Potential burn out on Zillow

Compromise on Location for Price and Zoning

Boulder is Expensive

12:35 to find preferred listing