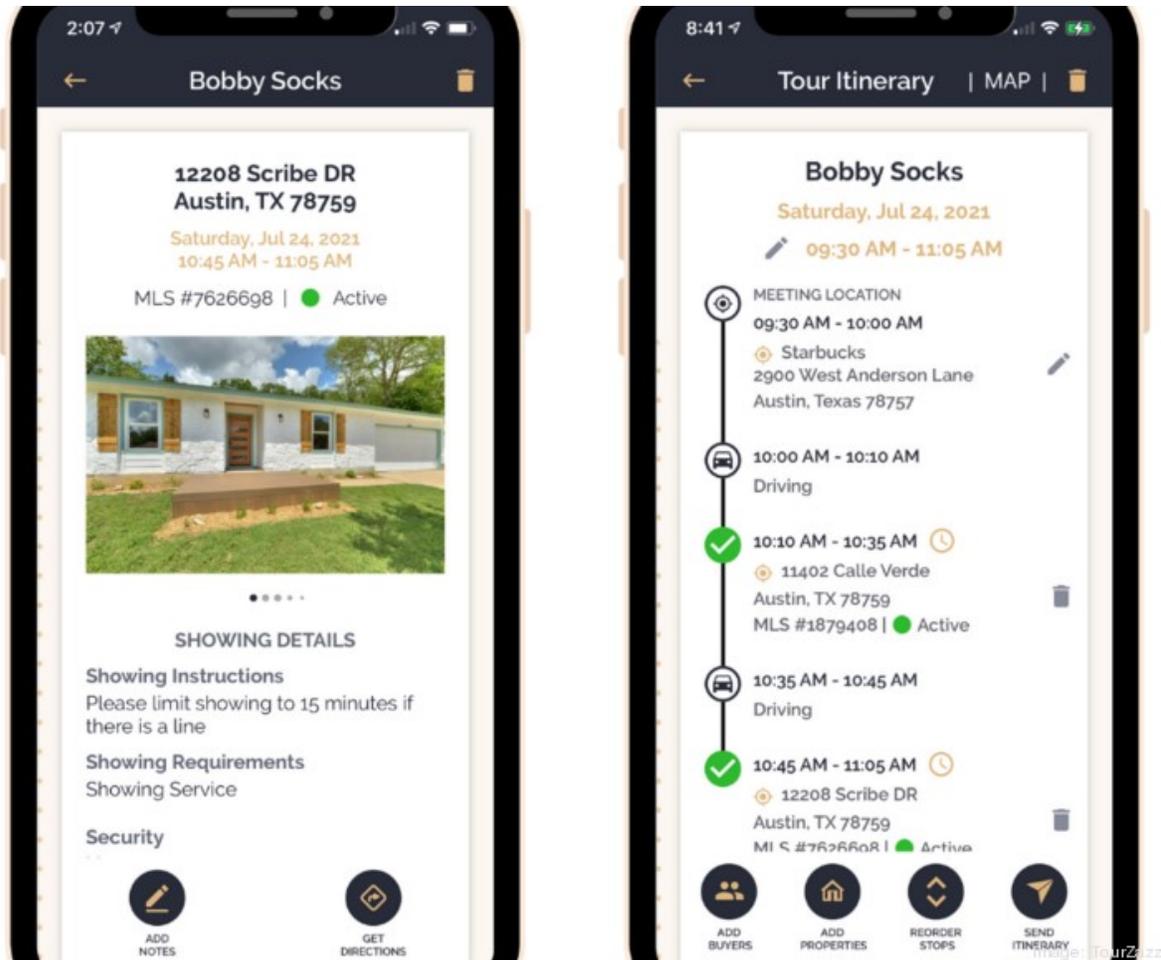


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Residential Real Estate

Married Austin Realtors create app to solve homebuying pain point

TourZazz speeds up process during a historically tight market



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The TourZazz app allows buyers' agents to schedule tours for their clients.

COURTESY TOURZAZZ



By [Michelle Pitcher](#) – Staff Writer, Austin Business Journal
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[Stacy Spickes](#) and [Michael Spickes](#) have been in the trenches of Austin’s real estate market for nearly 20 years. That experience convinced the husband-and-wife duo to create an app to reduce the headache of scheduling home tours for buyers’ agents.

TourZazz Inc. digitizes the home-showing process for buyer agents and their clients, helping them book, manage and take notes on home showings. Agents at Realty Austin, where Stacy and [Michael Spickes](#) lead a team, tested the platform over the past year, and Moreland Properties recently began using the technology as well.

“Those are two big brokerages that have signed on basically as launch partners,” [Stacy Spickes](#) said. “We’re building traction there, continuing to tweak as we need to, but we’re available in all of the Austin market right now. So, slowly, we’ll be launching with other brokerages here.”

TourZazz is one of many local proptech companies — including Agent Pronto and RealSavvy — born out of Austin’s super-charged housing market. The average house in the city spends only 16 days on the market, so a tool aimed at helping agents and clients work quickly promises a valuable competitive edge.

[Stacy Spickes](#) said the process of building an itinerary, booking appointments and getting confirmations from sellers, buyers and showing agents could take hours to finalize. TourZazz aims to cut down on that time.

The app is both business-to-business and straight to consumers, with interfaces for agents and clients. It’s available to download on the Apple App store, and any agent in Austin has access to the service, regardless of which brokerage they’re with.

“What we want to do is approach as many brokerages as we can to see about integrating this as part of [what] they provide to their agents, but that does not preclude agents from being able to just sign up on the TourZazz site here in Austin,” Spickes said.

While TourZazz is currently geared toward buyers’ agents and their clients, Spickes said they plan to expand the app’s functionality to help listing agents as well. She said historically, platforms like ShowingTime have had the market cornered on the sell side. However, since the ShowingTime app [went into acquisition talks with Zillow](#) earlier this year, the market for new technology has opened up.

“It was a trigger for us because all of a sudden there was this demand for other showing services,” Spickes said. “We went to our development team and said, ‘How quickly and how well can we build out the whole other piece of this ecosystem?’ They said, ‘Probably in the next 90 to 120 days.’”

While the app may be adapting rapidly, the process of initially creating it was long.

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Michael Spickes began to sketch out rough ideas for the app back in 2014. The couple used their own money to fund the project in the early days. After some investors signed on — including family, friends and multiple former clients — they put the product into agents’ hands.

They launched a pilot program within Realty Austin in March 2020, just days before the Covid-19 pandemic shut everything down. It wasn’t until November that they were able to do a full roll-out to the entire company. Now, **Stacy Spickes** said, about half of Realty Austin’s approximately 600 agents are actively using the app.

“Realty Austin has really been our sandbox, so to speak, for piloting in the Austin market,” she said.

In addition to affecting the timing of the company’s beta testing, the pandemic influenced some of the app’s features. Because so few people were traveling in 2020, virtual tours became more common. According to Spickes, TourZazz will soon have streaming capabilities built into the app, so agents or clients can stream a home tour to people offsite.

Brigitte Thompson, a Realtor with Realty Austin, was part of the initial group of agents who tested the app. She said the platform has made her job a lot more efficient.

“It just really cuts down hours of my time, especially if we’re looking at more than five to six properties,” Thompson said.

She’s used the platform with every client she’s worked with in the past year and a half. She said once she shows them the interface, they’ve all taken to it easily and eagerly. One of her clients, **Kiley Sheehy**, embarked on a months-long process of looking for a home earlier this year. She said TourZazz helped her keep track of all of the properties she was considering.

“Sometimes we would see four or five different places, and I’d have ... a timeline of what we did, so I could go back and refresh my memory,” Sheehy said.

TourZazz is at the beginning of its first funding round, and **Stacy Spickes** said the next big challenge is scale. The team is currently in talks in 10 other metros, including Nashville and Seattle, with the goal to launch in the next 100 days.

The biggest hurdle to clear when entering a new market is navigating the peculiarities of its multiple listing service, [Stacy Spickes](#) said. Making sure they can gain access to all of the information they need and successfully integrate it with their platform is crucial before they can launch in a new area.

The app complies with guidelines from the Real Estate Standards Organization (RESO), a national group that helps regulate real estate technology.

“TourZazz is one of many RESO members that collaborate with other tech companies to create technology standards,” said [Sam DeBord](#), CEO of RESO. “These standards ensure systems can talk to each other and create better experiences for consumers and real estate brokers.”

While they’re hoping to go nationwide, [Stacy Spickes](#) said Austin agents have helped shape the app into one that can free Realtors up to spend more time meeting clients’ needs.

“Austin's really where we're building the story,” [Stacy Spickes](#) said. “As agents become more used to the platform ... [it will] save them time and give them hours back in their day, to do more meaningful activities ... spend more meaningful time with clients, really build out the consumer experience.”