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Stacey Alcorn on Purpose

How Thoughts, Energy
and Intent Shape Reality

- Page 28

Stacey Alcorn
Founder and CEO,
LAER Realty Partners

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August 2025/Vol. 41, No. 8



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How Thoughts, Energy and Intent Shape Reality

Stacey Alcorn's career reads like a roadmap of what's possible when unwavering consistency, conscious seeking and perseverance align. The visionary force, founder and CEO behind Massachusetts-based LAER Realty Partners, one of the largest independent brokerages in the country, began her career in mortgage. Her story—every twist, setback and breakthrough—is not just about business growth. It's a case study in personal transformation, spiritual alignment and the relentless pursuit of higher goals. Purpose is the quiet force that guides energy, choices and actions toward something greater, says Alcorn—the steady current beneath relentless effort, the spark that transforms ambition into meaningful impact. In this month's cover story, follow Alcorn's journey, which, at its core, is a testament to purpose in motion.



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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Getting Back to Business



So much for a carefree summer, eh? While the season should be marked by good times and relaxing moments, the pace of change and controversy in residential real estate has only picked up speed.

Perhaps your head is spinning over the private-listing battle between Compass and Zillow...and countless others who have chosen a side on Clear Cooperation. Or perhaps you're one of the many waiting (patiently?) for interest rates to drop, stuck on the sidelines as the political drama plays out in D.C. Or maybe you're working tirelessly to guide homebuyers and sellers, many of whom are understandably confused about the market and mired in uncertainty. Unfortunately, the summer of 2025 has been anything but carefree for real estate professionals.

That's why it's more important than ever to keep your head above water and turn down the noise. As several wise people have advised, focus on what you can control instead of getting caught up in the rapid current of this chapter in our industry's history. Stay informed, absolutely. But then get back to business.

If you need a little inspiration, I suggest you turn to page 34 where we introduce our five Regional Rookie of the Year winners for 2025. One of these five standout new agents will be named RISMedia's 2025 Rookie of the Year at our Annual Awards Gala on September 4, taking place during our 37th Annual CEO & Leadership Exchange in Washington, D.C., September 3 - 5.

What I love most about these five impressive individuals is their ability to succeed despite the turmoil that has engulfed our industry during their first years in the business. Perhaps we all need to take a page from their playbook and remind ourselves why we chose real estate—and what it takes to succeed.

According to Ambre Theroux, our regional winner representing the Northeast, "Success came down to showing up—every single day—with purpose and persistence. I'm motivated not just by professional wins, but by the freedom and joy I'm building. That vision kept me focused, even on the toughest days."

Please join the more than 400 brokers, executives, team leaders and top-producing agents who will be attending RISMedia's CEO & Leadership Exchange in September. The discussions that will take place during this unparalleled industry think tank will be candid, strategic and motivating—so that we can all get back to business and close out 2025 strong.

John E. Featherston
CEO & Publisher

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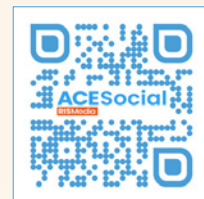
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3 Ways to Modernize Your Open House

By Clarissa Garza

If your open house still runs on printed flyers and a clipboard, it might be time for a refresh. Today's buyers, especially millennial and Gen Z homebuyers, expect a more streamlined experience—and you deserve tools that help make your job easier, too.

Digital tools can make events like an open house more efficient, boosting engagement and helping you capture and follow up with leads faster—all without having to lug around stacks of printed sheets or deciphering messy handwriting.

Here are three ways to digitize your next open house experience and make a lasting impact on both your business and your clients.

1. Ditch the Paper Sign-In Sheet

Paper sign-in sheets are outdated and often inefficient. They're easy to ignore, hard to read and, most importantly, they don't integrate with the digital methods agents typically use to follow up with prospective clients.

Instead, set up a simple Google Form or QR code at the entrance

with clear signage. This will streamline the process, both for yourself and open house attendees. Plus, you can skip the step of transferring the information into a digital format, as it all happens and lives in one place.

2. Go All-In With QR Codes

In this day and age, QR codes are the way to go. Instead of inundating prospective clients with a stack of papers during an open house, set up clearly labeled QR codes in the main areas of the home. You can set up separate codes for different goals: a sign-in sheet for getting a prospective client's information, a link to the home's listing and another for your website and/or social accounts.

By doing so, you won't overwhelm prospective buyers with too much in-

formation or paperwork...and let's face it, the stack of papers will likely end up in a bin. Plus, it's more likely that people will go back to those links when they have a spare moment, and it's much easier for them to look back at their browsing history to find the information they're looking for than trying to remember where they left a sheet of paper.

3. Follow Up, Segment Leads

If you did the first two steps, you likely have a list of names, emails and phone numbers. Make mental notes (or take notes on paper or in your smartphone) as you talk to each client so that you can send them a personalized text or email the day after the open house.

Not only will these notes help you personalize messages to each recipient, but you can use the information to help you segment your leads. When you identify these differences, you can tailor your follow-ups accordingly.

Digital tools can make events like an open house more efficient, boosting engagement and helping you capture and follow up with leads faster.

Given that a home is one of the biggest assets someone will likely purchase within their lifetime, it's important to foster that connection so that you stay top of mind when it comes time to do more than just window shopping.

These small touches build trust and keep you top of mind when casual browsers become serious buyers. **RE**

Clarissa Garza is an associate editor for RISMedia.

Reinvention at Every Stage

By Joey Macari

Robin Kencel has made a name for herself in one of the nation's most exclusive zip codes. A top 1% agent in the Greenwich, Connecticut, market (and top 1.5% nationwide), Kencel leads a powerhouse team at Compass specializing in high-end properties and discerning clients. Her real estate career began over two decades ago, flipping townhomes with a sharp eye for design and investment potential.



Now, with a national pageant crown in hand and decades of business experience behind her, Kencel is championing purpose-driven living at any age.

Here, Kencel talks about the market trends shaping buyer behavior, how she empowers fellow agents, and why she believes real estate is one of the best industries for women entering their second—or third—act.

You began your real estate journey flipping townhomes. How did that shape your approach today?

The first home I purchased was a townhome under construction outside of Princeton, New Jersey. I did a few customizations based on what I thought would be preferences of the

target buyer and sold it upon completion, pocketing \$30,000 in profit. From there, we purchased a townhome in Bronxville, New York, continued to carefully renovate homes, and moved onto larger ones over time. My interest in architecture, design and construction has great value for my luxury clients today. I retained top-tier architects, interior designers and contractors—and learned firsthand what made for good design, decorating and, ultimately, what was good, better and best in terms of materials, finishes and workmanship. That exposure enables me to evaluate homes from a number of perspectives when helping clients, whether they're buying existing properties or building from the ground up.

Is there a particular market trend agents should pay closer attention to today?

Sensitivity for the environment and what's good for the planet is becoming more prevalent, especially with younger buyers. They're looking for homes that aren't too large and don't have wasted space or unused rooms. Not only do they see this as unnecessary consumption, but they're also concerned about water and energy use. Agents who understand these concerns will be more effective in guiding clients and collaborating with architects and design/build firms.

What is the most important skill female agents should possess

when working in the luxury market?

The ability to effectively negotiate with male counterparts who don't have an equality mindset. Encountering men with strong communication styles and aggressive body language can be uncomfortable. I've learned to read who's on the other side of the table, understand my client and adjust my approach to what I feel will be most effective in getting the desired results.

How do you balance real estate with dancing, mentoring and your title as Ms. Connecticut Senior America 2025?

Real estate is a 24/7 career, but that doesn't mean you have to be physically present around the clock. During active negotiations, it's imperative to be focused and available. I've been in the business for over 20 years, and I now limit my client load to no more than four at a time. I also rely on colleagues to handle showings if I'm out of town or have a scheduling conflict. I'm careful to include not just appointments on my calendar, but "to-do" items with deadlines—like article submissions, rehearsals and check-ins with mentees. Calendar management is key.

What advice do you have for women starting or restarting a real estate career later in life?

Entering real estate at an older age makes more sense than people might think. If a woman chooses to work in the area she's lived in for a while, she'll likely have a strong network to draw from—and that's a big advantage. Whatever her previous career or volunteer work was, there are transferable skills. And many older women have more flexibility than they did while raising children, which is valuable in a business with unpredictable hours and last-minute client needs. **RE**

For more information, please visit <https://robinkencelteam.com>.



Set high above the city, this sprawling residence features an expansive wraparound terrace offering 180-degree views of the Manhattan skyline.

Star Power Meets Sky-High Style in Brooklyn

By Joey Macari

In this month's edition of Great Spaces, join us as we look inside basketball star Ben Simmons' sprawling former residence that blends form and function at every turn.

PROPERTY HIGHLIGHTS:

Location: Brooklyn, New York

Listing Price: \$16,995,000

Features: 5,261-square-foot duplex with five bedrooms and 5.5 bathrooms.

Added Appeal: Wraparound terrace with 180-degree views, interiors by Widell & Boschetti, guest/entertainment wing, floor-to-ceiling windows, heated floors and power shades.



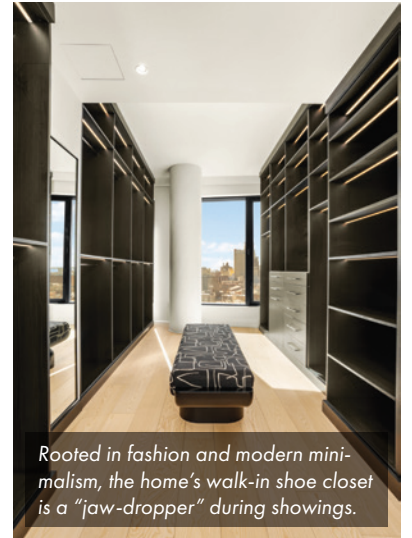
Novo

There's a certain kind of New York apartment that doesn't just sit high above the skyline but organically feels like part of it. Perched in the clouds at Olympia Dumbo, Australian basketball star Ben

Simmons' sprawling former Brooklyn residence is one of those rare homes. A seamless blend of modern minimalism, understated luxury and personal expression, this elevated duplex offers a look inside the lifestyle of a

global athlete—now available for its next chapter, as Simmons heads west to join the Los Angeles Clippers.

Located in one of Brooklyn's most architecturally striking buildings, the five-bedroom, five-and-a-half-bathroom residence balances form and function at every turn. Natural light floods the interiors through oversized windows, casting a glow across pale hardwood floors and crisp white walls. A wraparound terrace brings the city in from every angle, with unobstructed views of the Brooklyn Bridge, Statue of Liberty and Manhattan skyline. But the views aren't the only "wow" factor. Designed by



Rooted in fashion and modern minimalism, the home's walk-in shoe closet is a "jaw-dropper" during showings.

Widell & Boschetti, the home is tailored for both elevated entertaining and quiet retreat, with a full guest wing, state-of-the-art home theater and expansive custom dressing room anchored by a walk-in shoe closet that doubles as a fashion statement.

But this isn't just a home—it's a lifestyle. Olympia Dumbo's resort-level amenities include two pools, a private tennis court, boxing gym, bowling alley, sauna, spin studio and more. It's a building that matches the ambition of its residents—of which Simmons, known for his style and discipline on and off the court, was a perfect fit.

RISMedia spoke with listing agent

M. Monica Novo of Douglas Elliman who shared how Simmons' personal style, rooted in fashion, wellness and modern minimalism, informed the apartment's distinctive flow, refined finishes and standout features, culminating in a space that feels both strikingly personal and effortlessly luxurious.

Joey Macari: What makes this a Great Space?

M. Monica Novo: Residence 21A/D at Olympia Dumbo is undeniably in a league of its own. While the skyline views and expansive wrap-around terrace are show-stopping features, what truly sets this home

apart is the scale and seamless integration of indoor-outdoor living.

JM: From the basketball court to the walk-in shoe closet, how did Ben Simmons' lifestyle influence the layout and design of the space?

MN: Ben Simmons' lifestyle—centered around fashion, basketball and wellness—inspired a layout focused on flow, functionality and bold personal style. His influence is seen in the sleek finishes, custom lighting and open entertaining spaces. Yes, the walk-in shoe closet is a standout—it feels like a luxury boutique. It's dis-



GREAT SPACES

tinctly “Ben” with its scale, organization and dramatic display. During showings, it’s always a jaw-dropper, and often sparks conversations about his passion for sneakers and style.

“Living here means more than just owning a home; it’s buying into an elevated lifestyle. It’s about synergy—pairing the unit’s design and layout with the unmatched amenity offering.

-M. MONICA NOVO,
Douglas Elliman

JM: Olympia Dumbo has amenities that rival a luxury resort. How do you market a property like this when the building itself is practically a co-star?

MN: We highlight the unit’s unique features while positioning the building as a value amplifier—showing how living here means more than just owning a home; it’s buying into an elevated lifestyle. It’s about synergy—pairing the unit’s design and layout with the unmatched amenity offering. We tell the story of how the space and services together create an unparalleled living experience.

JM: With everything from a boxing gym to a bowling alley, it’s more than a condo—it’s a lifestyle. How do you balance selling the unit versus selling the building?

MN: We focus on both: lead with the unit’s unique features, then highlight the building’s lifestyle amenities as added value. The unit sells the space; the building sells the experience.



Tailored for elevated entertaining and quiet retreat, the space feels strikingly personal and effortlessly luxurious.





JM: What's your strategy when listing a home that's not only stunning, but also comes with serious celebrity appeal?

MN: There's absolutely a tailored approach. When a property has celebrity appeal—like Ben Simmons'—I lead with the name to generate buzz and press, but I anchor the strategy in the property's true value: architecture, layout and finishes. It's a mix of leveraging star power while making sure the home stands on its own merits. Press, privacy and presentation all get elevated.

JM: Having handled high-end listings before, what's your approach to client discretion and

"To create buzz while protecting privacy, I focus the narrative on the architecture, design and unique features of the home."

-M. MONICA NOVO,
Douglas Elliman

storytelling when working with A-list properties like this one?

MN: Discretion is key. I approach every high-end listing with confidentiality at the forefront, ensuring all team members and collaborators sign NDAs where needed. To create buzz while protecting privacy, I focus the narrative on the architecture, design and unique features of the home—not

the owner unless the owner desires the press. We craft a lifestyle story that speaks to the property's essence, not the personality behind it. Selective media placement and private showings allow us to maintain exclusivity while still building intrigue. **RE**

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Building and Sustaining a Successful Team

By RISMedia Staff

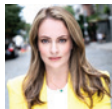
Building a well-structured team is the name of the game for those looking to join forces and expand their business while offering a level of service that can't be matched in today's competitive environment.

But as the ground beneath the market continues to shift, team leaders aren't just navigating their own way through the storm. They need to shine a light for their team to follow as they face the challenges associated with leading entrepreneurs toward a common goal while building a collective brand team members can rely on—understanding their team well enough to choose real estate professionals that are a good fit.

To gain insight into the ins and outs of team building in today's market, we asked some of our 2025 Real Estate Newsmakers the following question:

"What is the most important factor in building—and sustaining—a successful real estate team in today's market?"

Here's what they had to say:



ACHIEVERS

Frances Katzen

Founder & Leader, the Katzen Team
Douglas Elliman

"In a dynamic environment like New York City, the most important factor in building and sustaining a successful real estate team is effective communication, collaboration and accuracy. This means not only ensuring that team members share information and resources, but also fostering a culture of trust and support. Staying adaptable to market changes, leveraging technology for greater efficiency, and prioritizing continuous education and training can significantly enhance team performance. Equally important is establishing strong relationships with clients and

understanding their needs, which allows for personalized service and fosters long-term loyalty."



CRUSADERS

Lisa Nguyen

Team Lead

The International Group at RE/MAX Professionals

"Provide a service that others cannot offer, and remember not to put all of your eggs in one basket. Our team is fluent in 11 different languages—and sells residential, commercial and businesses. We also have a mission that is greater than making money. Instead of farming neighborhoods, we serve communities. The International Group at RE/MAX Professionals operates with six non-negotiable core values: integrity, international, professional, hustle, community and closers. We also do not see a dollar amount, which allows each and every customer to be treated with the utmost respect."



LUMINARIES

Kelly Boehmer

The Boehmer Team

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Select Properties

"I feel the most important thing in building and sustaining a successful team in today's market is to select team members who are as committed to the team as they are to themselves, and for the team being as much value to them as they bring to the team. There has to be value in the relationship on both sides in order for the relationship to be sustainable."



FUTURISTS

Dana Green

Founder

Dana Green Team - Compass

"In today's chaotic real estate environment, unwavering alignment with core values is paramount. Successful teams never deviate from their brand or compromise their clients' needs. As real estate professionals, we hold the big picture for our clients, which must guide every team member's thinking and actions. This shared vision ensures each person contributes meaningfully toward manifesting the team's greatest collective potential. When value-driven decision-making becomes the foundation, teams remain resilient through market fluctuations while consistently delivering exceptional client experiences that build lasting success." **RE**

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Leading With Positivity

By Keith Loria

Real estate has been in Donny Samson's life since he was six years old, as his father, Danny Samson, worked in the industry for decades.



He followed in his dad's footsteps, obtaining his broker license in 2007, drawn to the entrepreneurial spirit of the business. Samson loved the fact that success was directly tied to effort—the harder you worked, the greater the reward. That sense of ownership over one's future, along with the ability to forge one's own path, truly inspired him.

Today, Samson is CEO of Samson Properties, which has 21 offices in Virginia from Richmond up through Northern Virginia; one office in Washington, D.C.; three in West Virginia; one in Delaware; and 14 in Maryland.

What key milestones have shaped your professional journey?

Donny Samson: One memorable milestone was when my first two

commission checks paid for my wife Meredith's engagement ring. From there, my "why" became even more clear—my wife and our four beautiful daughters. They are my daily motivation and the driving force behind my commitment to grow, achieve and build something meaningful for our family.

How would you characterize the Northern Virginia market throughout the first half of 2025?

DS: The market is balanced right now—a refreshing change. We're seeing 30% to 50% more inventory in many areas compared to this time last year. I view that as a healthy development. It gives buyers more choices and allows the market to normalize.

Well-priced homes that show well are still drawing multiple offers. Listings that miss the mark on pricing or presentation are sitting longer until buyers see the value. Overall, this shift toward balance is much healthier than the frenzied market we've experienced in recent years.

How do you stay informed about current real estate market trends, and how do you use this information to guide your business strategy?

DS: I make it a priority to stay current by reading all the major real estate publications and industry reports. More importantly, I analyze Bright MLS data every week, including trends in showings, new listings, contracts and inventory levels. This real-time data enables me to keep our 6,000-plus agents informed about

what's happening today, not just month-old stats. That helps them make smarter decisions and adjust their strategies quickly in a rapidly evolving market.

Balancing work and personal life can be challenging. What strategies have you found to be effective for maintaining a healthy work-life balance in a demanding field?

DS: This is non-negotiable for me—my family comes first. I've never heard anyone say they wish they spent more time at work. I coach my daughters' teams and make it a priority to be present at their events. I build my work schedule around family time, not the other way around. I also prioritize my physical and mental health. I work out every morning, which helps me start the day focused and energized. While I'll take an occasional evening call or email, I avoid scheduling meetings on nights or weekends. When I'm home, I try to be fully present.

What is your leadership philosophy, and how do you inspire and motivate your team?

DS: I lead by being present and engaged. I'm in our offices or teaching in "Masterminds" (live educational sessions) at least twice a week. I also record a weekly video update to keep our agents informed and connected. I may not be able to be everything to everyone, but I want our agents to know I'm just a call or email away. Our culture is rooted in connection—we call it our "SamFam." I try to lead with positivity, empower our team leads and give them the autonomy to run their departments while staying aligned on big-picture goals. We've built an incredible staff that helps elevate the company every day.

What's one innovation you've recently incorporated that has made a noticeable difference?

DS: Our HQ2U weekly training days

have been a game-changer. Every Wednesday, 10 of our HQ staff travel to one of our offices for a full day of training, classes and connection. I personally lead a business-building session in an open Q&A format, and we typically get around 50 agents in attendance.

This initiative has had a huge impact, especially in today's climate, where misinformation and negativity are rampant. These in-person sessions foster real connection, provide clarity and help agents grow their businesses with confidence and support.

What would you point to as your firm's unique value proposition in your market?

DS: We're a 100%-commission firm with low fees. Our goal is to keep as much as possible in the agent's pocket. But what truly sets us apart is the level of support we offer. With 40 offices, a full-service print center and free marketing materials like postcards and flyers, we make it easy for agents to market themselves. We also offer extensive free tech, training and collaboration opportunities. Our mission is simple: equip our agents with everything they need to succeed and let them keep more of what they earn. **RE**



VITALS:

Samson Properties

Years in business: 25

Size: 40 offices, 6,100 agents

Regions served: Northern Virginia, West Virginia, Washington, D.C., Delaware and Maryland

2024 Transactions: 19,253 units

2024 Sales Volume: \$10,523,017,225

<https://samsonproperties.net>



Celebrating the opening of the firm's McLean office.



Samson in the dunk tank at the firm's annual Samson festival.



Grand opening of the firm's new headquarters in spring 2023.



Agents packing meals for those in need through a partnership with Generosity Feeds and the Samson Cares program.

Power Broker Insights is sponsored by:

Diamond Level

Event Level





A Victory for Homeownership—and a Testament to Realtor® Advocacy

By Shannon McGahn

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act is now law, reshaping the American tax landscape and delivering transformative investment in housing. From current homeowners and first-time buyers to real estate professionals and communities across the country, the gains are significant—and hard-won.

At the heart of these wins is the National Association of Realtors® (NAR), whose persistent advocacy helped secure policies that protect homeowners, expand affordability and recognize the essential role of real estate in American prosperity.

These victories are not luck—they are the result of rigorous research, strategic outreach and members speaking with one voice in every zip code in America.

NAR's top five priorities made it into the final bill:

- A permanent extension of lower individual tax rates, creating household stability;
- An enhanced and permanent qualified business income (QBI)

deduction, supporting independent contractors and small businesses;

- A five-year quadrupling of the SALT deduction cap, delivering relief to homeowners in high-tax states;
- Continued protection for business SALT deductions and 1031 like-kind exchanges, vital tools for real estate investment;
- And a permanent mortgage interest deduction, a key incentive for homeownership.

These provisions support first-time and first-generation buyers, preserve homeownership incentives and strengthen housing supply. Real es-

tate drives nearly one-fifth of the U.S. economy, and lawmakers clearly heard the message: homeownership is vital to middle-class wealth and economic strength.

For months, NAR backed its message with original research, economic analysis and national polling. Members met with lawmakers, were invited to the White House and helped shape evidence-based policy. When thousands of Realtors® came to Washington this June, they brought compelling data:

- 92% of voters support tax-free savings accounts for first-time buyers
- 91% want mortgage interest deductions preserved
- 86% back lower individual tax rates
- 61% support lifting SALT caps

The law also includes other key provisions:

- Permanent enhancements to the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit
- A higher child tax credit
- A stable estate and gift tax exemption
- Renewed Opportunity Zones
- “Baby bonds”—\$1,000 for every newborn, potentially helping fund future homeownership

These reforms are a strategic investment in housing, wealth-building and local economic growth. Real estate helped bring Washington together—and Realtors® delivered the facts, the stories and the urgency needed to get it done.

This is a moment to celebrate. But it's also a call to stay engaged. What we win today, we must defend tomorrow. That's the real work of advocacy—and Realtors® are ready to lead it. **RE**



Shannon McGahn is executive vice president and chief advocacy officer for the National Association of Realtors®.



Real Estate Marketing That Actually Works

By Darryl Davis

Let's be honest: No one wants to be *that* agent. You know the one: constantly posting listings, flooding inboxes with stats or making every conversation about the market. In a world where attention is scarce and trust is everything, staying top of mind doesn't mean being loud—it means being *genuinely present*.

That's where the 3-3-3 Rule comes in. It's a simple system designed to help real estate professionals nurture relationships without coming across as pushy or transactional. It's about consistency, not pressure. Value, not volume.

Here's how it works. Each month, commit to these three actions:

Call 3 people. Pick up the phone and check in with three people—clients, past clients, prospects or sphere of influence. Keep it light. Ask how they're doing, mention a recent local event or congratulate them on a milestone. You're not pitching—you're *connecting*.

Send 3 personal notes. A handwritten note is rare—and powerful. Thank someone for a referral, wish them a happy home anniversary or just let them know you're thinking of them.

People remember those small, sincere gestures. (Some even save them for years.)

Share 3 pieces of value. Whether it's a seasonal home maintenance checklist, a market snapshot or a list of local weekend events, aim to offer something helpful. Ask yourself: *What would I find useful if I were a homeowner—or planning to become one?*

When done consistently, these small acts build familiarity, trust and visibility—without overwhelming anyone.

Be Strategic on Social Media

No, you really don't need to post five times a day. Focus on relevance and connection:

- Share behind-the-scenes moments from your life or business.
- Celebrate client wins and milestones.

- Highlight local events and favorite small businesses.
- Offer short, helpful tips for buyers, sellers or homeowners.

And remember—don't just post. *Engage*. Comment, like and respond. Social media is a conversation, not a billboard.

Use the Calendar to Your Advantage

Holidays, seasons and special occasions are built-in touchpoints. A spring-cleaning checklist, a fall maintenance guide or a holiday card with a local recipe—these simple gestures show that you care and keep your brand in their home (and heart). Even small surprises—like a packet of seeds in spring or a Halloween goodie bag—can make a big impression.

Make It a Habit

Here's the real magic: schedule it. Put relationship-building activities in your calendar weekly or monthly. What gets scheduled gets done—and what gets done grows your business.

Lead With Heart, Not Hype

Staying top of mind doesn't mean being the loudest voice. It means showing up with purpose, care and consistency. The 3-3-3 Rule isn't just a strategy—it's a mindset shift. One that transforms marketing into meaningful connection. Start small, stay steady, and watch your relationships—and referrals—grow. **RE**

Darryl Davis has trained and coached more than 600,000 agents globally. He is a best-selling author of "How to Become a Power Agent® in Real Estate," which tops Amazon's



charts for most-sold book to real estate agents. Davis hosts a weekly webinar to help agents succeed in changing times. Visit <http://www.DarrylSpeaks.com/Online-Training>.



Property-Search Filters New Agents Should Master

By Devin Meenan

Industry reports have been saying that housing inventory is increasing, climbing up from its well-documented shortage. With more options hitting the market, more buyers may be enticed to get off the sidelines and into the real estate game. And with more options to choose from, they'll need help sorting through what's on the market to find the right home. That's where agents come in.

The first step many take in a home search is to visit online listing portals. As you search through various portals, whether it's a public portal such as Zillow or your local MLS, search filters are vital. Ideally, your search will begin with some generic filters before adding more to the mix

as you narrow down the properties that have caught your clients' eyes. Many portals are even embracing AI to give these filters extra power, but it's important to remember that by applying too many filters, the results will often be too narrow.

The obvious filters to begin with are

listing price, size and location range based on what you know your client is looking for. But what filters should be prioritized after that, especially if you're a new agent who isn't used to the property search process? While a conversation with your clients will shed light on their wants and needs, the following filters are often useful for both agents and clients.

Monthly Payment on the Home

Listing prices can be deceiving, because while they signify what your buyer clients will pay upfront, they are not the entire price tag. Home-

ownership is an ongoing expense thanks to property taxes, mortgage rates, homeowners insurance and more. So, when nailing down the price of a home, be sure your clients are aware of not only the listing price, but the estimated monthly payment as well.

Portals such as Realtor.com® and Zillow include a monthly payment filter under the broader “price” category, calculated based on the aforementioned costs of homeownership and more. If the listing price is within your buyers’ budget, but the monthly payment gives them pause, that’s another house you can cross off the list to keep your search productive.

Number of Days the Listing Has Spent on the Market

Realtor.com cites the number of days a listing has spent on the market as a factor buyers should be aware of during a home search. True to their word, Realtor.com’s listing status filter includes an option to see how many days the listing has been on the portal, from the day it was listed out to 30 days. Zillow offers a similar “Days on Zillow” feature, from one day to 36 months.

If a home has been on the market for a relatively long time, that can put your buyer client in a better negotiating position. If the seller hasn’t had luck selling their property, they’re likely more eager to compromise in order to make a deal. When looking at days on market, if you see that the home has been sitting for weeks (or longer), it opens the door for a conversation about why the property isn’t moving. This shouldn’t be an aggressive question. Simply approach it as though you’re being thorough in obtaining every piece of relevant information.

To that point, a buyer might also think a home being on the market for multiple weeks is a red flag. Take the time to explain why this isn’t necessarily the case, while filtering out

homes that have been on the market too long for your client’s liking.

The Home’s Age and Condition

Some overlapping filters can be used to separate houses out by their age: When was it built? Is the home an existing/pre-owned property or a newly constructed home? If the home is a new construction listing, could there be a premium on the price? How high is that premium? Filtering out new construction can be an effective way to keep findings within your buyer clients’ price range.

When looking at days on market, if you see that the home has been sitting for weeks (or longer), it opens the door for a conversation about why the property isn’t moving.

If the home is decades old, will it need renovations? Perhaps clients don’t want a home past a certain age because renovations are exactly what they expect. You can come to the seller and their agent armed with knowledge of an aged house and inquire about what renovations have recently been made.

In this case, it’s also useful to get a full list of the home’s amenities (appliances, air conditioning unit, heating components, etc.), so you can inquire about their age and the cost of renovating or replacing them if the need arises. This also offers a good opportunity to share local businesses (contractors, electricians, plumbers, etc.) you’ve worked with in the past, showcasing your value on a deeper level.

Monthly HOA Fees, if Applicable

One of the costs weighed in monthly payments is the membership fee for the Homeowners Association, or

HOA. Some portals include a filter for the maximum amount of monthly HOA fees, ensuring that your buyer won’t be shocked by the fee if/when they become homeowners within that association.

A possible range for this filter is only houses with no HOA fees, especially if your buyer doesn’t feel like paying the extra expense. To ensure your due diligence, be sure to explain the specific pros and cons of HOA membership so that your clients’ decision about avoiding the fee is a fully informed one.

Going into a negotiation with a seller knowing that there is or isn’t an HOA fee, and the implications of what that means for owning the home in practice, also creates a more open and transparent dialogue.

Tours Being Offered on the Listing, and When

Listing portals are a quick and easy way to pin down which listings your client might be interested in. But a prospective buyer will likely (and absolutely should) want a closer look at the home, and in-person, before making an offer.

Zillow allows searches to filter out homes if they don’t offer a 3D tour, an open house and/or an AI-powered Showcase, while the front page of Homes.com’s search engine includes tabs for 3D tours and open house schedules for listings near you. If the 3D tour impresses your buyer, you can then look into open house times and take the next step of your clients’ home search from digital to physical. **RE**



Devin Meenan is an assistant editor for RISMedia.



Boost Your Call Answer Rate and Lead Engagement

REAL ESTATE WEBMASTERS LAUNCHES CALLER ID FOR REW DIALER

By RISMedia Staff

Real Estate Webmasters (REW) has officially released a Caller ID feature for REW Dialer, offering customers a more personalized and trusted way to connect with leads. This latest product update allows agents to use their own phone number when calling leads directly from REW CRM, which can increase answer rates and avoid calls being labeled as spam.

REW Dialer's Caller ID was developed as a response from the community's feedback, and as a company known for shaping its products around what agents need, it's no surprise that this requested feature has been added to the dialer.

This feature is a must-have for agents who want to successfully connect with more prospects. When a lead receives a call from a number they recognize, they're more likely to answer. By allowing agents to display their own number instead of a virtual number, the Caller ID invokes familiarity and trustworthy feelings.

"This is about improving that first touchpoint," says Morgan Carey, CEO of Real Estate Webmasters. "When

your own number appears on the screen, you're not just another unknown call. You become a real human being."

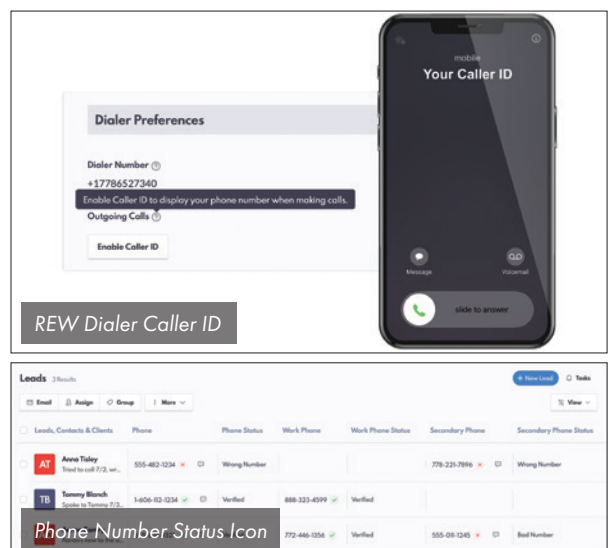
Adding Caller ID to REW Dialer is another way to help agents have more meaningful conversations. It's through these real connections that conversion can happen, and Real Estate Webmasters' mission is to equip agents with all the tools they need to jumpstart those interactions. This focus on conversations isn't new. The REW Dialer update earlier this year also features Conversations mapping, allowing users to automatically categorize their calls based on outcome. Together, all these new dialer features support agents in their lead engagement and conversion efforts. Looking ahead, customers can expect future product releases to continue building on this path.

Together with the Caller ID feature, Real Estate Webmasters also released a new phone number status icon on the CRM's Lead Details page and Leads View. This visual guide helps agents instantly verify if a lead's number is valid or not. Additionally, phone number status filters were added to make it easier to segment leads and maintain a clean database.

If you're a current REW Dialer user, these features are already available on the platform. You may reach out to your account manager if you have questions or need help with setup. REW CRM users who are interested in adding the Dialer to their CRM may easily do so by connecting with their account manager.

"We're always looking for ways to make life easier for agents," concludes Carey. "With these updates, we're helping them start more conversations and boost their chance of closing more deals." **RE**

For more information on Real Estate Webmasters' products and services, please visit www.realestatewebmasters.com, and check out their latest updates and releases at www.realestatewebmasters.com/resources.





Leveraging Data to Drive Value

REALTORS PROPERTY RESOURCE® (RPR®) A GAME-CHANGER FOR THOSE LOOKING TO MAINTAIN A COMPETITIVE EDGE

By Joey Macari

As CEO of Keller Williams Homewood in Birmingham, Alabama, Lindsay Sport leads with a rare mix of strategy, insight and heart. A seasoned real estate professional, investor and entrepreneur, she's built her business on education, precision and an unwavering commitment to delivering value to her clients.

One of the key tools in her arsenal is Realtors Property Resource® (RPR®), the exclusive online property database platform she describes as essential to her day to day. "I'm all about data and numbers," says Sport. "RPR allows me and my team to combine what we know with what we can show—and that's where the real value comes in."

Among the newest features to catch her attention is the Market Activity report with Market Trends, along with its shareable link, which updates every 48 hours. "This is a total game-changer," she says. "I can send the link to my clients, and they receive the most current data without me having to resend anything." For sellers who begin planning months in advance, this real-time access is a major advantage. "The market changes all the time," she adds.

"This tool keeps them updated automatically, without me needing to constantly follow-up."

Sport has also begun to incorporate the RPR mobile app into her business, and she's seeing her agents follow suit, giving her the flexibility to access data wherever she is—whether in the office or at a showing. "I'm excited to have immediate access to everything right at my fingertips," she says. "When I'm out in the field, I can look up surrounding homes or pull data on the spot. I can check recent closings to see if a property is priced accurately, or quickly find similar homes that are available." It also helps her stay sharp with her own listings. "If I'm inside a property and a question comes up that I don't remember the answer to offhand, it's right there in the app."

Tailoring the experience to fit each client's needs is another area where RPR plays a big role. "I love that I can pick and choose what to include based on what's most important to my client," says Sport. "RPR has so much information on the factors that truly impact the sale of a home. I'm sharing this kind of info with clients almost every day."

When it comes to pricing, RPR's comparative tools give Sport—and her agents—an edge, especially in situations where MLS data might fall short. "I've had a lot of success using RPR's comparables," Sport says. "It pulls from off-market properties and surrounding areas, which is key—because sometimes the comps you need aren't in the MLS." That broader search capability allows her to fine-tune values based on upgrades, home condition and more. "My favorite stat is the 'list-to-sold' ratio," she says. "I use it to help buyers understand how aggressive they need to be with their offers and to give them a sense of what homes in a particular area are actually selling for."

To further enhance her workflow, Sport encourages a tech-savvy culture among her agents, combining RPR with other platforms that complement her research-driven style. "I'm a Homes.com member, and it works really well alongside RPR," she says. "I still do a lot of manual searches, but I always use RPR as a baseline or starting point—especially when I'm having trouble locating certain properties." She also uses it as a final step to confirm her findings. "I love how it pulls from multiple sources. By combining tools like these, I can deliver real value to my clients while educating them along the way."

For Sport, tools like RPR aren't just conveniences—they're competitive advantages. And in a market that moves fast and demands expertise, that edge can make all the difference. **RE**

For more information, please visit <https://www.narrpr.com>.

THE GREATEST REAL ESTATE SOFTWARE IN HISTORY

Top team leaders join Real Estate Webmasters advisory board to help redefine the future of prop tech

By RISMedia Staff



Gary Ashton
The Ashton Real Estate Group
#1 RE/MAX Team (Worldwide)

Justin Havre
Justin Havre Real Estate Team
#1 eXp Realty Team (Canada)

Morgan Carey
Real Estate Webmasters
#1 Custom CRM Company

Ken Pozek
The Pozek Group
#1 Keller Williams Team (USA)

What would you get if you brought together Muhammad Ali, Wayne Gretzky and Michael Jordan on the same starting lineup?

You'd get history in the making.

And in the world of real estate technology, that's exactly what Real Estate Webmasters (REW) has set out to do.

According to Founder & CEO Morgan Carey, as the world's No. 1 custom real estate marketing and software agency, REW has built empires alongside the top producers on the planet. And now, with the help of some of the greatest team leaders in the business—Gary Ashton of RE/MAX, Justin Havre of eXp Realty and Ken Pozek of Keller Williams—Carey is poised to take the top spot in arguably the most important battleground in real estate software: CRM.

The REW Legacy: The Powerhouse Behind Real Estate's Most Successful Teams

Real Estate Webmasters didn't become one of the most successful agencies in the real estate space by accident, explains Carey. The firm has spent over two decades working alongside some of the industry's best leaders, refining a formula designed to make top agents and teams unstoppable online. That formula includes:

Search Engine Optimization

"We are the definitive leaders in real estate SEO—bar none," says Carey. "We've consistently generated billions of dollars in real estate sales through organic traffic. No gimmicks. No tricks. Just technically excellent, sustainable and scalable SEO that delivers year after year. REW's Renaissance website platform is the most search engine-friendly platform

in the world. Our clients even show up in AI-driven ChatGPT searches, widely regarded as the next frontier of search."

Pay-Per-Click Marketing

REW's pay-per-click (PPC) programs deliver some of the highest-quality leads in the business, with conversion rates and ROI metrics that surpass industry standards. "Our deep integration with CRM and lead tracking ensures that every dollar is measurable, from the initial click to the final commission check," says Carey. "We don't just run ads—we build entire conversion funnels, landing pages and reporting mechanisms to give team leaders total clarity on performance."

Custom Design

As a custom agency, REW's clients benefit from the ability to create whatever they can imagine. While others offer templates, REW's aim is to build experiences, creating handcrafted sites with an emphasis on WPO (web performance optimization), which are optimized to convert, lightning fast and stunning on every device.

"We've never believed in one-size-fits-all design," explains Carey. "Our clients are building serious brands—and serious brands deserve websites that stand out, perform exceptionally and leave a lasting impression on consumers."

The Evolution: From Marketing Titan to CRM Powerhouse

Real Estate Webmasters has long been known for delivering some of the industry's best websites, high-

quality leads and world-class custom design. But in recent years, the firm has turned its focus inward to answer a critical question: How can we help our customers convert more leads, retain more agents and drive greater ROI?

That single question launched a multi-year journey of innovation—one that saw REW invest tens of thousands of hours and millions of dollars into building what is now one of the most advanced CRM platforms in real estate, says Carey.

"This wasn't an incremental evolution," he explains. "It was a ground-up reimagination of what a real estate CRM should be. We didn't want to simply match what others had done—we wanted to create something that truly solved the biggest challenges facing agents and team leaders."

To ensure REW truly understood the day-to-day challenges of real estate agents and team leaders, Carey and his wife Carly even launched their own real estate team, giving them firsthand insight into what agents need—and what traditional CRMs were missing.

"We experienced, in real time, the pain points our clients were facing: incomplete data, lack of accountability, fragmented workflows, disjointed communications and poor lead attribution," says Carey. "We didn't just write down the problems—we lived them. And then we solved them."

The result? A platform built around how agents and teams actually work. "REW CRM delivers unmatched agent accountability and leadership reporting, combining front-end user behavior, IDX engagement, sold data and follow-up activity into a single, unified experience," Carey explains. "It's something no other platform on the market can replicate. And we're not done."

COVER STORY

Enter the Dream Team: The REW Advisory Board

To help the firm excel at even higher levels, Carey assembled an advisory board like no other:

- **Gary Ashton**, leader of the No. 1 RE/MAX team in the world, the Ashton Real Estate Group at RE/MAX Advantage
- **Justin Havre**, leader of the No. 1 eXp Realty team in Canada, the Justin Havre Real Estate Team
- **Ken Pozek**, leader of the No. 1 Keller Williams Team in the U.S., the Ken Pozek Group

"These are not just clients. These are legends," says Carey. "They've built machines that dominate their markets and generate thousands of transactions a year."

Their insight? Invaluable. Their involvement? Game-changing.

Carey feels extremely fortunate to have worked with these storied leaders from the beginning of their journeys, and more importantly, to be able to call them trusted friends. Combined, these three customers alone have been with REW for over 40 years.

"Our track record of success together is unprecedented," says Car-

ey. "When I think about Gary, Ken and Justin, I can't think of a better analogy than Ali, Jordan, Gretzky. These aren't just the leaders of the top real estate teams in the largest organizations 'right now.' These are the leaders of the greatest real estate teams of all time."

In Carey's letter to the three leaders proposing this collaboration, he wrote, "If it doesn't work for the best in the world, then it's not the best. And that's why I need your help."

Excited to become part of the inner circle, Ashton, Havre and Pozek, along with their top team members and advisors, will work closely with REW over its next several releases, ensuring Carey and his team remain hyper-focused on the features and tools that drive significant business impact. They share their thoughts on the partnership in their own words:

Justin Havre

"The first features I recommended to Morgan focused on tracking agent activities that directly impact business growth. Being able to measure key metrics like conversion rates, conversation length and outcomes provides valuable insight, not just into production, but also into identifying performance gaps. This data allows

us to coach agents more effectively, helping them build critical skills and ultimately grow their business.

"AI is another huge category where the best CRMs are focused. I know integration of AI into CRMs is the future, and Real Estate Webmasters has launched several exciting artificial intelligence initiatives, built on top of their proprietary 'REWPerT' AI robot, that are going to be a massive advantage for data-driven team leaders."

Gary Ashton

"We've been with Real Estate Webmasters since the very beginning (over 20 years), and in that time, we've become the No. 1 RE/MAX team in the world. A significant part of that journey was collaborating with Morgan and his team to develop innovative ideas for the platform. From visiting their Vancouver Island headquarters several times, to having them out to Nashville for office visits or REW Summits, and of course, collaborating at hundreds of industry events, we're always connecting in person and collaborating.

"This new advisory solidifies in many ways what REW has always done: bringing together the best of the best, sharing ideas and building amazing products. Getting together the top team leaders in RE/MAX, KW and eXp is a brilliant move, and I know both Justin and Ken very well; they are two of the brightest minds in our industry. As a FUB (Follow Up Boss) user, I can also say the timing makes a lot of sense—since Zillow purchased FUB, there are a lot of team leaders and brokerages looking for alternatives. FUB has been great to us, but knowing there is an amazing alternative should things go in a different direction at Zillow makes us feel good about the future of our business and the safety of our data."



Justin Havre, Morgan Carey and Gary Ashton at the REW Studio, Nanaimo.



Morgan Carey and Gary Ashton at the REW Summit, Nashville.

Ken Pozek

"The thing I love about REW is the access and collaboration that we've always had with the team. I mean, where else do you have the owner's cellphone, and you can call or text at any time with an idea, and you're met with enthusiasm and an offer for a meeting to help you work out the ideas? And if you know Morgan, you know you can DM him any time on Facebook, seven days a week, and he will always be excited to help you with your projects or even provide feedback on things you need help with in your business that aren't related to REW.

"For our part in this collaboration, we're really focused on improving the deal-flow portions of the CRM. We come from Brivity, which has a lot of great features and was founded by Ben Kinney, a great operator and business mind in his own right. Our previous platforms (we've tried many) have all had great features, but never has there been 'one thing' that we could use to power the most important parts of our business. This new collaboration with REW promises to be that one thing, that unifying platform, that helps us reduce complexity (and cost) in our business and make our trans-

action teams and agents even more excited to be on our team."

The Roadmap

One look at the 2025 roadmap, and every real estate agent, team leader and broker will instantly understand just how significant the REW initiative is, says Carey.

"We started by evaluating the top CRM for real estate at the time, which was Follow Up Boss," he explains. "On our forums and community, we asked users 'what' and 'why.' What about this software makes it so sticky, and why would Zillow want to buy it? We also asked them what would make it even better."

As the agent community shared their favorites, REW made a list. But not just a copy list. "Our philosophy in developing the REW CRM is that if a feature is beloved already, we need to understand it and then seek to make it even better," says Carey.

Some recently completed examples from Carey's CRM roadmap include:

Real Estate Dialer

• **Agents can use their own phone number.** A popular feature among top CRMs is a dialer. However, no

existing CRM dialers allow you to use your own phone number while maintaining the tracking ability of call attempts and conversations, says Carey. Team leaders who prefer having their own company-owned CRM number for accountability and transferability can choose that option as well.

• **Conversation logging.** Dialers are great, but sometimes agents get calls on their personal cellphone, or team leaders and brokers want to provide agents with the option to use their own cellphone. This leaves gaps in the CRM data in terms of important elements, such as date/time of calls, as well as duration, Carey explains. "Real Estate Webmasters has solved this problem in an elegant way that allows both dialer data and manual cellphone calls to be merged into one dataset for a complete and accurate picture of an agent's workflow and efforts," he says.

• **Transcripts and AI ratings/feedback.** The next phase of REW's dialer is focused on automatically creating a full transcript of dialer calls. This helps in many ways, as it documents the conversations for agents, saving them time from making detailed notes, but also provides a powerful insurance policy with respect to transactions. In the event there is ever a dispute during or after a transaction, or claim made of agent impropriety, the agent now has documentation of the call and can provide hard evidence that a consumer was in fact informed or made certain commitments.

REW is also now exploring using artificial intelligence (AI) to analyze, rate and provide feedback to agents on their call performance in real-time. This provides a 24/7 sales coach that assists agents in training and process improvement while removing the often negative challenges of one-to-one, in-person call reviews. As one team leader put it, "When it's AI giving you

COVER STORY



Ken Pozek speaking at the REW Summit, Nashville.

the feedback, it doesn't feel personal or like judgment. And so it's easier to just take the feedback and learn and grow, versus feeling like my manager is coming down on me." Managers love these types of AI features, too, as they allow them to focus on the positives within the agent partnership, as opposed to always feeling like the bad guy.

Sources and Deals

At its heart, Real Estate Webmasters is a marketing firm. The company's roots are firmly cemented in SEO, PPC and social lead generation. For over 20 years, REW has been generating more leads than any other marketing agency, says Carey, which has led to the growth of many of the top teams and brokerages in the world.

The common phrase, "50% of marketing works, but no one can tell you which 50%, so be sure to keep marketing," provides a convenient—and often valid—out for marketing firms when it comes to accountability. But not at REW. REW has challenged the notion that ROI is difficult to track and calculate, and has launched a series of features that provides what Carey refers to as the most robust and in-depth marketing/deal-analytics engine on the market today.

Here's how it works:

- **Sources:** Any source can be mapped through the REW CRM, be it Google SEO, PPC, Realtor.com, Zillow or Sphere. There are no limitations. Once mapped, you can leverage the system to log and monitor your spend on the various platforms over time, retroactively attribute lead data by source and automatically track all inbound leads from any online source.

- **Deals:** The counterpart to Sources is Deals. Real Estate Webmasters' CRM provides a deal-management system that is far more robust than the competition, says Carey. Inspired by great workflow UIs such as Salesforce, REW's deal management software starts at the very first notable moment—setting an appointment. From there, deal management allows agents to track their entire process from appointments met to offers, subjects/contingencies all the way through to closed won/lost.

"The magic of Deals plus Sources is that the REW CRM now knows everything about the transaction: from the first dollar spent and how long it took to capture the leads, all the way through to how much commission was dispersed to both the agent and the brokerage," says Carey. "Having such robust and fulsome data at our disposal allows Real Estate Webmasters to provide the kinds of

insights and analytics that no other CRM can match."

The next phase for Deals is the automatic ingestion of transactions, Carey adds. Real Estate Webmasters is currently working on an open API as well as with transaction management companies, such as SkySlope and BoldTrail, to automatically ingest deal data in order to save customers the time of manually logging closed transactions.

Why This CRM Changes Everything

"Let's be honest. Most CRMs today are either too bloated with unhelpful features, or too disconnected from the daily realities of real estate," says Carey. "What we're building is different."

REW CRM is not just software, but rather, a system designed with elite agents and team leaders, for elite agents and team leaders. It is designed to empower brokers to hold agents accountable, help teams grow intelligently and provide a competitive edge that can't be replicated with off-the-shelf solutions.

"If you're serious about performance—about winning in your market—you need tools that are built by champions, advised by legends and optimized for results," says Carey. "Brokers and team leaders, this is your rallying cry."

As with every product and advancement spearheaded by Carey over the years, this latest launch is not just about building a CRM.

"At Real Estate Webmasters, we're building the future of real estate success," he says. "So here's the question: Do you want to be part of the team that's changing the game—or do you want to be chasing them?" **RE**

For more information, please visit <https://www.realestatewebmasters.com/rew-crm/>.



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Stacey Alcorn on Purpose

How Thoughts, Energy
and Intent Shape Reality

By RISMedia Staff



Stacey Alcorn
Founder and CEO,
LAER Realty Partners

Photography by Giordano Photography
www.kellygiordanophotography.com

Stacey Alcorn's career reads like a roadmap of what's possible when unwavering consistency, conscious seeking and perseverance align. The visionary force, founder and CEO behind Massachusetts-based LAER Realty Partners, one of the largest independent brokerages in the country, began her career in mortgage. Her story—every twist, setback and breakthrough—is not just about business growth. It's a case study in personal transformation, spiritual alignment and the relentless pursuit of higher goals.

Purpose is the quiet force that guides energy, choices and actions toward something greater, says Alcorn—the steady current beneath relentless effort, the spark that transforms ambition into meaningful impact. Her journey is, at its core, a testament to purpose in motion.

Mortgages to Milestones

Alcorn began her career in the mortgage business during her early 20s while putting herself through college. Her first role? Copying and packaging loans. But she didn't stay there long. With a natural inclination for detail and an unstoppable work ethic, she rose to become a mortgage processor. It was during this time that she became one of the early experts on the then-nascent FHA 203k loan, a program that would change the course of her life.

With \$3,500 she had saved from birthdays and graduation money, Alcorn bought her first property at 21 years old. She attended auction after auction to learn the process, usually crowded with competitive buyers.

"One day, it was pouring rain, thunder and lightning, and nobody showed up to the auction except me and the bank," she recalls. "Because I showed up, I got the house. That lesson has followed me through life: Most people don't show up in the storm. I always will."

That first project ignited an enthusiasm for real estate and real estate investments. Throughout her 20s, Alcorn balanced college classes with house renovations,

rehabbing multiple properties while simultaneously rising through the mortgage world.

Finding the Formula

In 1995, Alcorn graduated from business school with a bachelor's degree and made the leap from mortgage processor to loan officer. Even back then, she didn't consider herself a salesperson, so she was determined to build her business through authenticity, work ethic and consistency.

Her strategy was simple but effective: Show up in person. She hand-delivered rate sheets to more than 30 real estate offices weekly, each time with a quirky, memorable marketing twist, such as her "Finding the right loan is no picnic" rate sheet that was covered with cartoon ants.

It worked. Within two years, as

one of the top loan officers at her bank, Alcorn was promoted to vice president status. "It wasn't charm or charisma; it was consistency. I answered my phone (actually a beeper back then). And I always showed up."

From Broker/Owner to Business Architect

In 2000, at just 28 years old, Alcorn purchased a small franchise real estate brokerage with 11 agents. "I wanted to really understand the real estate business from the inside out. And I realized quickly—mortgages and real estate aren't that different. Both are relationship businesses."

She applied the same lessons from her mortgage career to growing the brokerage—being authentic, being accessible and being open to learning. Within a few years, the firm grew to over 30 agents. As the real estate brokerage continued to expand, Alcorn made the strategic decision to shift her focus away from lending and into the emerging real estate company.

And she continued to push herself. At age 30, Alcorn enrolled in law school, running the brokerage by day and studying law by night, becoming





Alcorn (center, in red) at an awards ceremony for LAER's Florida office

a Massachusetts attorney in 2007.

"It wasn't about practicing law—it was about proving to myself I could do something I was told I would never be able to do," she says, referring to a high school education system that programmed her to believe she had learning disabilities. "In my college years I learned how to study, how to research, how to truly learn. Most importantly, I learned the art of shedding all the mental programming that would have led me to accept an average life—beliefs, narratives and limitations that had nothing to do with my potential and everything to do with conditioning that teaches people to settle instead of create."

From Student to Seeker

Alcorn's boundless love of learning led her to explore deeper questions, those that went far beyond contracts and closings.

"I wanted to understand why some people achieve extraordinary things, while others don't—despite working just as hard," she explains.

From a very young age to the

present day, Alcorn reports consistently reading more than 20 books a year on a varied array of topics, including world history, the human condition, business, philosophy, sales and science, as well as classic literature. And in 2013, she set out on her own modern-day journey in pursuit of understanding, interviewing more than 400 high achievers over six years, from Fortune 500 CEOs to world-changers to celebrities. Her work became a natural fit for media outlets like the Huffington Post and Entrepreneur Magazine, where she became a contributing writer.

"I took what I learned in those interviews and brought it back to my laboratory—my brokerage," she says. "I applied those success principles to the business and watched it grow."

Alcorn's thirst for knowledge formed what is now a fundamental part of her current philosophy and business strategy: tapping into the quantum field.

"The quantum field is the invisible, energetic realm that holds infinite

possibilities, where thought, belief and emotion begin to shape what eventually becomes form," she explains.

Understanding and engaging with the quantum field has become central to how Alcorn creates, builds and leads. She teaches that success is not just about strategy, but about alignment—matching your frequency with the outcome you wish to experience. Whether designing agent systems or delivering mindset training, Alcorn believes that the real power lies in tuning into the field of infinite potential.

A Company Is Born

In 2014, with the brokerage now almost 200 agents strong, Alcorn made the bold move to de-brand from her longtime franchise and launch her own independent brokerage: LAER Realty Partners. With the freedom to build without limits, LAER quickly grew into a movement more than a company, she explains, one fueled by purpose, vision and a shared belief in transformation through action.

"LAER isn't just a real estate firm; it's a collection of people committed to becoming the highest version of themselves," says Alcorn. "Of course, we teach agents how to write offers and negotiate contracts, but that's just the entry-level basic training. The real education we offer is on how to access the magic of channeling energy, thought and intent to create the life and business of their dreams."

Today, LAER has close to 800 agents across six states:



Alcorn speaking at the company's agent mastery event, "Unleashed"

Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Maine, Rhode Island and Florida. According to Alcorn, the firm is built not only on systems and skills, but on energy, alignment and the scientific quantum law of success.

The Pursuit of Excellence

Clearly, Alcorn doesn't settle for "good enough." She believes excellence lives in the minute details, and she has led the firm in perfecting systems that deliver seamless agent support seven days a week. From done-for-you marketing systems to elegant and content-rich listing and buyer presentations—and a technology suite that is second to none—Alcorn is relentless when it comes to improving upon the details.

Thriving on feedback, when an agent tells Alcorn that a system could work better or a marketing piece could look more stunning, she sees it as an invitation to refine and improve. Alcorn obsesses over the small things because, in her view, the real estate industry is riddled with mediocrity.

"No brokerage should look exactly the same 12 months later," she says. "Technology evolves rapidly, and tools, training and systems must evolve just as quickly."

To that end, when choosing tech partners, Alcorn prioritizes firms that allow her a direct line of communication with the CEO, ensuring she's collaborating with like-minded leaders who are equally obsessed with delivering an exceptional agent experience.

Culture, Not Just Closings

At LAER, culture is not a buzzword—it's a core strategy. Monthly birthday luncheons, team events and community outreach are all standard. The firm's offices are intentionally brick-and-mortar—Alcorn



is disappointed, in fact, to see so many brokerages move to the cloud, believing that brick-and-mortar is the core business of real estate brokerage.

"Investing in real estate locations is a commitment to our industry and to building a culture of agents who come together regularly to share ideas, celebrate successes and build vast communication networks," says Alcorn.

For Alcorn, energy is everything—each interaction with agents, staff or clients transmits a frequency.

"We're not just teaching sales—we're teaching frequency," she says. "Vibration. Alignment. And much of that is done person-to-person at office luncheons, classes and events."

Alcorn is open about the fact that the journey hasn't always been easy.

"There have been times that tested every part of me—weeks, even years of challenge," she says. "But those were the seasons where I gathered the most wisdom."

Through it all, she returned to the same core truth: thoughts, energy and intent shape reality.

"I built LAER from the quantum field up," she says with a smile. "And I know that any agent, any person, can do the same. We are creators, not victims of circumstance."

The Mission Ahead

In addition to leading LAER, Alcorn is the author and publisher of the Mindful Monday newsletter, recently reaching its 240th issue with over 100,000 subscribers. The weekly newsletter explores the intersection of philosophy, science and achievement, delivered with the same intention and depth that she brings to her business leadership.

Alcorn continues to work on shedding those nagging, limiting beliefs from her younger years, having spent the last five years studying a foreign language eight hours a week, just to prove to herself she could do it.

As LAER continues to grow, Alcorn's mission is bigger than market-share. She's building a place where agents transform not just their income, but their lives.

"My goal isn't to have the biggest brokerage; it's to have the most consciously aligned one," she says.

Asked what's next, she doesn't flinch. "We're just getting started."

Because when the storm hits and everyone else stays home, Stacey Alcorn shows up. **RE**

For more information, please visit <https://www.laerrealty.com>.



5 Selling Missteps That Could Cost Homeowners Thousands

By RISMedia Staff

From renovations to curb appeal to disclosures—all areas on which consumers might potentially spend thousands of dollars to prepare their home for sale—recent research sheds light on how these big financial spends could be unnecessary, and details more affordable ways to gain better returns.

The survey, released by Zillow and conducted by The Harris Poll, finds that many Americans misunderstand important parts of the home-selling process, namely five things homeowners often get wrong when selling—and what they tend to get right.

1. Investing in the Wrong Projects

Today's sellers face more competition and need to put in more work to get their home ready for sale. How-

ever, investing in the wrong improvements can take a big bite out of the bottom line.

According to the survey, nearly one-quarter of homeowners (23%) believe building an addition offers the best return on investment when preparing a home for sale. In reality, simple updates like fresh paint and landscaping deliver a much better—and more affordable—return on investment when it comes to resale.

"Many sellers assume that big, ex-

pensive renovations will guarantee a higher sale price," said Christina Pappas, president of The Keyes Company and Illustrated Properties in Miami. "In reality, buyers respond more to a thoughtful presentation: smart pricing, polished staging, a high-impact digital presence and strategic updates like a fresh coat of paint. A strong first impression gets buyers in the door. That's why it's essential to work with an agent who understands what buyers are looking for and how to make a listing stand out online."

2. Ignoring Screen Appeal

Screen appeal is the new curb appeal. Many buyers make up their minds about a home after viewing it online, yet 40% of homeowners be-

lieve great curb appeal makes the best first impression, according to the survey.

Zillow data shows that investing in an immersive online media package pays off. Buyers pay 2% more for homes listed with Zillow Showcase, which features larger high-resolution images, 3D home tours and interactive floor plans, compared to similar non-Showcase listings.

3. Skipping Key Steps When Hiring an Agent

In today's rapidly changing market, sellers need a local expert to correctly price and market a home for sale. Still, one-quarter of homeowners surveyed believe they can skip reading online reviews (25%), researching sales history (25%) and interviewing their top candidates (25%) when hiring a real estate agent. These steps are essential to finding the right agent and gaining a competitive edge.

4. Highlighting the Wrong Features

Nearly half of homeowners (45%) think an open floor plan is the feature most likely to boost a home's sale price if mentioned in a listing description. However, Zillow research shows that these homes actually sell for 0.2% less than expected. By contrast, homes with natural materials like white oak flooring, walnut cabinets and soapstone countertops can sell for as much as 3.5% more. Only 9% of homeowners recognize this advantage, Zillow reported.

5. Misunderstanding Seller Disclosures

More than half of homeowners (56%) think sellers should hide issues like structural problems (19%), pest infestations (15%), water damage (15%) or asbestos (14%) to sell a home faster. That could put a homeowner on the wrong side of the law. Sellers must disclose known issues to prospective buyers, and a trusted real



“Many sellers assume that big, expensive renovations will guarantee a higher sale price. In reality, buyers respond more to a thoughtful presentation: smart pricing, polished staging, a high-impact digital presence and strategic updates like a fresh coat of paint.”

-CHRISTINA PAPPAS,

President, The Keyes Company and Illustrated Properties

estate agent can help ensure all legal requirements are met.

What Homeowners Get Right

Sellers today need to be proactive to make sure their listing is seen by as many potential buyers as possible. According to survey results, nearly two in five homeowners (37%) know that the most important question for sellers to ask an agent is where they plan to list the home for sale. A large majority (70%) understand that listing publicly on all major real estate portals, such as Zillow, Redfin and Realtor.com®, gives a seller the best chance of earning the most money.

Only 8% of homeowners say listing a home privately—only for clients of

their real estate agent's brokerage—will give a seller the best chance of selling for the most money. The data backs that up: Zillow research finds that the typical home seller who did not list on the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) sold their home for nearly \$5,000 less.

In today's dynamic real estate market, homeowners need to stay informed and advocate for their listing. By understanding these common misconceptions and working with a trusted agent, sellers can avoid costly mistakes and make the most of their home sale. **RE**

For more information, please visit <https://www.zillow.com>.



Who Will Be Named the Rookie of the Year? Meet the 5 Agents Now Competing for the National Title

Representing five major regions of the U.S., RISMedia announces its 2025 Rookie of the Year Regional Winners. One of these standout new agents will be named the national winner at RISMedia's Annual Awards Gala this September.

By RISMedia Staff

Designed to honor real estate agents who demonstrate stand-out success in their first year in the business, RISMedia's fourth annual Real Estate Rookie of the Year award—sponsored by industry education leader, Colibri Real Estate—has announced five Regional Rookie of the Year winners for 2025.

The five winners, representing the Midwest, Northeast, South, Southeast and West, were selected from the top 25 regional finalists, who were chosen from hundreds of nominations.

"At Colibri Real Estate, we're incredibly proud to sponsor the Rookie of the Year award because it celebrates what we value most: excellence from day one in this profession," says Tina Lapp, market leader

for Colibri Real Estate. "These five regional winners exemplify what's possible when talent meets proper education and training. Their remarkable achievements in their first year demonstrate that with the right foundation, new agents can make an immediate impact in their communities and build thriving businesses from the start. Each of these professionals has shown that success isn't about years

of experience—it's about dedication, client commitment and investing in the knowledge needed to excel in today's dynamic market."

According to RISMedia Founder & CEO John Featherston, the 2025 Rookie of the Year Regional Winners are beacons of light in today's fraught market environment.

"Amid the often sobering news in today's real estate industry, from lawsuits to interest rates, our Rookie of the Year Regional Winners provide us with a much-needed infusion of positivity," he says. "Their enthusiasm and dedication toward helping clients is inspiring, and reminds all of us that a career in real estate

is not just a potential path to prosperity, but an honorable profession of service, helping others on one of life's most important journeys. All of us at RISMedia extend our congratulations and admiration to these five outstanding new agents."

MIDWEST REGIONAL WINNER

Sam LoFaso III

**LoFaso Real Estate Services
Brunswick, Ohio**

According to Sam LoFaso, a commitment to constant learning and a willingness to grow were among the top factors that led to his rookie-year success.

"I made it a priority to learn from experienced professionals in the industry, and I surrounded myself with people who challenged and inspired



LoFaso

"Real estate is more than just finding someone a house; it's about helping individuals and families achieve their goals, find a place to call home and create a better future."

me," says LoFaso. "Getting involved with the Medina County Board of Realtors®, Leadership Medina County and serving as vice president of the Synergy Networking Group also helped me expand my knowledge, network and community presence. Being part of an organization that values service as much as success has been incredibly rewarding."

When it comes to his success, LoFaso also points to the competitive drive and discipline he developed by playing high school and college sports.

"That mindset has pushed me to stay focused, work hard and aim high in everything I do," he explains.

LoFaso also leaned into his family history in the real estate business.

"Growing up in a real estate family and having a father who led by example, I was fortunate to see early on what it takes to succeed, not just in a career, but in life," he says. "That foundation made it easy for me to fall in love with this profession."

"But beyond the business itself, what truly drives me is the opportunity to help people and give back to my community in meaningful ways," adds LoFaso. "Real estate is more than just finding someone a house; it's about helping individuals and families achieve their goals, find a place to call home and create a better future."

LoFaso is both humbled and inspired by his Rookie of the Year regional recognition.

"It's incredibly motivating to be recognized among so many talented new professionals, and it fuels my drive to keep learning, improving and making a positive impact in my community," he says.

SOUTH REGIONAL WINNER

Trent Rogers

**Realty Executives Associates
Maryville, Tennessee**

Awards and accolades were the furthest thing from Trent Rogers' mind when he got into the real estate

business. He describes his Regional Rookie of the Year recognition as a "testament" to the people he's been fortunate enough to work alongside.



Rogers

"Once I decided it was time to pursue real estate full time, and I got a sense of how freeing a flexible schedule is, there was no going back."

"That would include my mentor, managing broker, team members, transaction coordinator and certainly the admin staff at my brokerage," says Rogers. "And my biggest cheerleader, my wife Hayley. There is zero chance I could have had a year like 2024 without their support."

Rogers also attributes his rapid success to his commitment to staying in touch with clients and customers.

"There are two mottos that resonate in my head the most," he says. "One is 'take care of the people, and the money will take care of itself,' and the other is, 'the fortune is in the follow up.' I've seen both of these hold true over and over and over again in my sales career."

A self-proclaimed lifelong dab-

bler in real estate, Rogers officially entered the business after a career in the luxury automotive industry. His background helped him to quickly excel, and also provided him with a true appreciation of the freedom a career in real estate can provide.

"I spent two decades working 50-plus hours a week, and every weekend in a car dealership," says Rogers. "Once I decided it was time to pursue real estate full time, and I got a sense of how freeing a flexible schedule is, there was no going back. I would even go as far as to say that the freedom and flexibility real estate has afforded me was a large factor in my wife and I deciding to have our first child after 16 years together. She was running her own business, and I was practically living in a car dealership. We just never felt like the timing was right, but as of March 8 of this year, we have an incredible little boy, and my wife has a new career—being a mom."

NORTHEAST REGIONAL WINNER

Ambre Theroux

**Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices New England Properties
Granby, Connecticut**

"This past year has been a whirlwind of showings, open houses, curveballs and nonstop learning," says Ambre Theroux. But at the heart of it all, she adds, is people, and helping them find the right space for their next chapter in life has been the most rewarding aspect of her real estate career thus far.

When it comes to succeeding in her rookie year, Theroux credits her dedication to clients.

"It came down to showing up—every single day—with purpose and persistence," she explains. "I committed fully to my clients, made quick thinking a habit and tackled every challenge with heart."

"But behind that drive was something deeper—personal goals I set for the life I'm working hard to cre-



Theroux

"I'm motivated not just by professional wins, but by the freedom and joy I'm building—the ability to live life on my own terms. That vision kept me focused, even on the toughest days."

ate," adds Theroux. "I'm motivated not just by professional wins, but by the freedom and joy I'm building—the ability to live life on my own terms. That vision kept me focused, even on the toughest days. Success didn't happen by accident—it came from a clear "why," a lot of hustle and a genuine love for helping people move into their next chapter."

According to Theroux, real estate is never just about the house.

"It's about the people," she says. "The stories behind every move, and the next chapter they're stepping into. Every transaction is personal. Whether it's helping a first-time buyer take that exciting leap, guiding a growing family into more space or walking alongside someone downsizing from a home

filled with decades of memories, I take pride in being the steady, thoughtful presence they can count on. This career allows me to combine so many things I love—strategy, creative problem-solving, adaptability and heart."

Theroux's real estate career has also enabled her to incorporate one of her lifelong passions: horses.

"Equine properties come with their own set of needs, challenges and dreams," she says, "and being able to understand those firsthand has allowed me to better serve clients who share that lifestyle. Whether it's helping someone find the perfect setup for their horses or preparing a well-loved farm for sale, I know how much it means, because it means just as much to me."

SOUTHEAST REGIONAL WINNER

Walther Vasquez Johnson

**J&C Real Estate Solutions
Sterling, Virginia**

Like any successful rookie agent, Walther Vasquez Johnson devoted many hours working hard for his clients during his first year in the real estate business. Receiving the Rookie of the Year top spot for the Southeast region proves to him that his efforts were well worth it.

"Being named a Top 5 regional finalist is truly an honor and a humbling recognition of the hard work, dedication and passion I've poured into my first year in real estate," says Johnson. "It validates the late nights and the commitment I've made to serving my clients. It's also a reminder that I'm just getting started, and it motivates me to keep working hard."

According to Johnson, building trust with clients in his community was the most important factor in successfully launching his career as a real estate professional.

"I focused on being present, educating clients every step of the way, and offering personalized service that made them feel seen and sup-



“My background, consistency and ability to connect with Spanish-speaking families helped me create strong relationships that turned into referrals and a consistent business.”

ported,” he explains. “My background, consistency and ability to connect with Spanish-speaking families also helped me create strong relationships that turned into referrals and a consistent business.”

Johnson doesn’t take his role as a real estate professional lightly, fully aware of the profound effect his guidance can have on the future of someone’s life.

“What I love most about the real estate business is the impact,” Johnson explains. “Real estate allows me to play a meaningful role in people’s lives, whether it’s helping a family buy their first home or guiding a seller through a major transition,” he says. “Every transaction is a chance to empower, educate and uplift oth-

ers, and I’m honored to be part of that journey.”

WEST REGIONAL WINNER

Koby Bishop

**The Group, Inc.
Fort Collins, Colorado**

According to Koby Bishop, his rookie-year success in a shifting market was due to a two-pronged approach: relentless client focus and strategic mentorship.

“I made it my mission to understand my clients’ deepest aspirations, mov-



“There are few careers that allow you to walk beside your clients while they make some of the biggest decisions of their lives. Walking alongside them in both joy and grief gives me profound satisfaction as I guide them through life’s milestones.”

ing beyond just their immediate needs to grasp their ‘dream list’ for the future,” he says. “I then proactively connected them with resources and individuals within my sphere who could help bring those dreams to fruition. This created immense client gratitude, directly leading to referrals and transactions.”

Additionally, Bishop made it a point to surround himself with high-achieving agents from the get-go.

“This small, dynamic group fostered an environment of rapid learning, allowing me to absorb new ideas, cutting-edge sales strategies and witness solutions for common transaction challenges,” he says.

Bishop also credits the influence and support of his mother, a 20-year industry vet whose mentorship and guidance proved invaluable, providing nuggets of advice like, “Always answer your phone, because most agents don’t” and “You win your clients by paying attention to the details and solving for their pain.”

What Bishop loves most about the real estate business is the clear connection between effort and results—something he learned early on from his mother.

“I was seven years old when my mom shifted from her career as a teacher to selling real estate full time,” says Bishop. “Her investments of time and hard work built a dynamic portfolio, which allowed my parents to travel the world and retire at an early age. I am fascinated by the diverse wealth-building strategies available through real estate and can’t wait to continue the growth of my business so I can create an amazing life for my own family.”

Bishop finds ultimate meaning, however, in the difference he can make in others’ lives.

“There are few careers that allow you to walk beside your clients while they make some of the biggest decisions of their lives,” he says. “Walking alongside them in both joy and grief gives me profound satisfaction as I guide them through life’s milestones.” **RE**



Study: California and New Jersey Counties Face Greatest Housing Market Risk

By Clarissa Garza

California and New Jersey counties dominated the list of the nation's most vulnerable housing markets in this year's first quarter, accounting for nearly half of the 50 most at-risk markets, according to a recent ATTOM Special Housing Risk Report.

Basing risk on affordability, foreclosures, unemployment rates and proportion of seriously underwater mortgages—where the combined balance of loans was at least 25% more than the property's value—the report placed 14 California markets and nine New Jersey markets as the most vulnerable in the country.

Of the 572 counties analyzed, in 109, a typical resident would have to spend over half their annual income on a down payment, mortgage and other initial expenses for a median-priced home.

"Affordability is an obvious concern, but as the data shows, there's a complex interplay between price, wages, mortgage health and foreclosure rates that can give even greater insight into where property values are likely to go in the future," said ATTOM CEO Rob Barber.

Three Northern California counties affected by this year's wildfires—Butte, Humboldt and Shasta counties—topped the list, followed by New Jersey's Atlantic and Cumberland counties along the state's southern coast.

Notably, there were no counties in the area surrounding New York City, which have previously been ranked among the riskiest in the nation.

Affordability Crisis, Underwater Mortgages, Foreclosures and Unemployment

Nationally, prospective homebuyers would have to spend 32.5% of their annual wages to afford a home. In the counties analyzed, residents would have to put aside 59.3% of their income.

Here is the percentage of a resident's income needed to cover a home's initial expenses in a few of those counties:

- 109.5% in Kings County, New York
- 101.5% in Maui County, Hawaii

- 100.1% in San Luis Obispo County, California
- 97.8% in Orange County, California
- 97.5% in Marin County, California

Honing in on properties with mortgages considered seriously underwater, 37.8% of the counties examined fit into that category, compared to the 2.8% nationwide.

Louisiana topped the list of markets with the highest rates of seriously underwater properties:

- 14% in Calcasieu Parish, Louisiana
- 13.7% in East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana
- 13.4% in Caddo Parish, Louisiana
- 13.1% in Rapides Parish, Louisiana
- 12.8% in Ouachita Parish, Louisiana

Across the nation, foreclosure activity affected one in every 1,515 homes. In 19.2% of the counties analyzed, more than one out of every 1,000 properties faced foreclosure in this year's first quarter.

The counties with the worst foreclosure rates are as follows:

- One out of 434 homes in Dorchester County, South Carolina
- One out of 463 homes in Johnson County, Texas
- One out of 472 homes in Highlands County, Florida
- One out of 473 homes in Cumberland County, New Jersey
- One out of 517 homes in Kaufman County, Texas

About a third of the counties analyzed had higher unemployment rates than the national rate of 4.3% in March 2025.

Mostly in California, the counties with the highest rates of unemployment were:

- Imperial County, California, with 16.6% unemployment

- Tulare County, California, with 11.4% unemployment
- Merced County, California, with 11.3% unemployment
- Yuma County, Arizona, with 11.1% unemployment
- Kings County, California, with 10% unemployment

Different Story in the South

Of the 50 least at-risk counties, 27 were located in Southern states, 12 in the Midwest and seven in the Northeast.

Tennessee topped the list with nine counties among the most favorable: Sullivan, Hamilton, Washington, Blount, Sumner, Davidson, Wilson, Knox and Rutherford.

Virginia followed with seven counties: Henrico, Prince William, Alexandria City, Arlington, Virginia Beach City, Loudoun and Fairfax.

Next up was Wisconsin with four counties: Outagamie, Winnebago, Brown and La Crosse.

Other major metro areas in the top 50 were Honolulu County, Hawaii; Hennepin County, Minnesota; and Wake County, North Carolina.

Top 50 Versus Bottom 50

The counties that made ATTOM's top 50 least risky list tended to be more affordable, but not by much.

A typical resident had to spend less than a third of their annual income to purchase and pay for a new home in 19 of the top 50 counties, compared to 15 of the 50 most risky counties.

Among the 50 least at-risk counties, the ones with the lowest portion of wages required for homeownership were:

- Madison County, Alabama, at 21.4%
- Sullivan County, Tennessee, at 21.6%
- Morgan County, Alabama, at 23.3%
- Midland County, Texas, at 25.6%
- Durham County, North Carolina, at 26.4%

When it comes to homes with seriously underwater mortgages, 44 out of the top 50 least at-risk counties were lower than the national average of 2.8%. The counties with the lowest rate of seriously underwater homes were:

- Loudoun County, Virginia, at 0.5%
- Prince William County, Virginia, at 0.7%
- Fairfax County, Virginia, at 0.9%
- Maui County, Hawaii, at 0.9%
- Saratoga County, New York, at 1%

Only one of the 50 least at-risk counties had a foreclosure filing rate greater than the national average of one in every 1,515 homes. That was Shelby County, Alabama, with one in every 1,465 homes facing possible foreclosure in this year's first quarter.

The lowest foreclosure rates for the top 50 counties were:

- One in every 17,249 homes in Arlington County, Virginia
- One in every 11,118 homes in Gallatin County, Montana
- One in every 10,815 homes in Medina County, Ohio
- One in every 7,605 homes in La Crosse County, Wisconsin
- One in every 7,502 homes in Berkeley County, West Virginia

Across the board, the 50 least at-risk counties had unemployment rates below the national rate of 4.3%. The lowest rates were in:

- 1.9% in Minnehaha County, South Dakota
- 2.2% in Gallatin County, Montana
- 2.3% in Honolulu County, Hawaii
- 2.6% in Rutherford County, Tennessee and Hamilton County, Indiana **RE**



Clarissa Garza is an associate editor for RISMedia.



10 Key Strategies From Experienced Agents to KO the Competition

By Michael Catarevas

It could be said that in many ways real estate sales mirror pugilism. It's an intense competition to not only land clients and listings, but to decisively defeat competing agents by closing sales and collecting commissions. Boxing is a legitimate comparison, because just as a homebuyer having their offer accepted after a bidding war, there is only one winner following a boxing match. Occasionally there's a draw, which might be viewed as equivalent to the seller taking their home off the market for whatever reason.

Just as boxers must be in phenomenal condition to win, so too must you be in peak form, especially these days when limited inventory, fluctuating mortgage rates and other aspects of the business combine to a point where only the strong survive.

Boxing matches are scored on the 10-point must system where the winner of each round receives 10 points,

while the loser receives a lesser amount, typically nine or less. If a knockdown occurs, the losing fighter may receive even fewer points, down to eight or seven, depending on the severity and number of knockdowns. This system helps judges assess each round independently and provide a structured framework for evaluating the fight.

What follows is a 10-point must system for real estate, consisting of 10 surefire strategies leveraged by successful agents. The more you can master each point, the better you'll be judged by clients, leading to not just immediate sales and commissions, but future referrals as well.

1. Use Social Media Non-Stop.

"People love to scroll through various platforms: TikTok, Facebook and Instagram just to name a few," says Leah Williamson, an agent with Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate Metro Brokers in the Atlanta, Georgia, area. "You need to have an active presence on all three with engaging content that can captivate the audience. Create content that is per-

sonable and fun, that makes you real and relatable.”

2. Don't Be Afraid to Try New Things. “We’re all navigating a different market right now, and in order to truly differentiate yourself from the competition and to help your clients win, you have to innovate and get out of your comfort zone,” says Rachel Gold, a senior account executive with ShowingTime+. “Build a really strong value proposition and be able to articulate what you can accomplish for buyers from start to finish. You’re going to be competing against agents who are willing to discount their services quickly, so come up with ways to have that differentiating factor to stand out. Ask yourself what makes you stand out, and make sure you’re able to articulate that to your buyers.”

3. Show Clients Your Work. “You work hard and never let your buyers know what you’re up to, how long it took to get an appointment,” says Joe Rand, chief creative officer for Howard Hanna | Rand Realty. “We don’t document that, but we need to start. Track the things that you do on a daily basis. Who are you working for? How much time you spent, how many people you talked to, all that sort of thing. And then add it up at the end of the week, and add it up at the end of the transaction. Give it to them and say, ‘Look, this is everything I did.’”

4. Manage Seller Expectations. “Many sellers read media headlines but don’t understand how the news impacts their sale until they are on the market,” says Lauren Walz, an agent with the Dawn McKenna Group in Hinsdale, Illinois. “It is important to show them how buyers’ expectations and buying power has changed, through data and statistics. Say a property was sold prior to a mortgage-rate hike. To make a comparable home affordable to the same buyer now, you must reduce the price

to account for the additional monthly costs of the higher rate. It is also important to remind sellers of why they are selling. Most often, selling a house is not a 100% financial decision. When sellers keep in mind their ‘why,’ they are likely to sell for market value.”

5. Monitor Seller Emotions. “Generally, emotions are a touchy subject, and one I respect greatly when having the opportunity to work with an older client,” says Christine Stucke, a sales associate with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Fox & Roach, REALTORS® in Turnersville, New Jersey. “Certain ones will need more of a hands-on approach, and the idea of someone new starting another chapter in a home they have loved

offers a tug on their heartstrings. I explain the idea of decreasing the cost of living and maintenance for them, noting it’s a win-win situation. If their objective isn’t to downsize, I will use the same approach on their particular situation: proximity to work, family or even the condition of a home and the work it needs.”

6. Be an Expert Listener. “People want to buy a home, not be sold a home; there is a difference,” explains Jeffrey Decatur, a broker associate with RE/MAX Capital in Latham, New York. “An agent’s role is to listen to potential buyers and sellers, accept personality quirks or attitudes, and provide them with all the information possible to make sound decisions.

“We’re all navigating a different market right now, and in order to truly differentiate yourself from the competition and to help your clients win, you have to innovate and get out of your comfort zone.”

-RACHEL GOLD,
Senior Account Executive, ShowingTime+





“The bar is often set far too low in this industry, and it’s important to me to change the way consumers view real estate agents, starting with our value and the way we communicate it.”

-RYLIE SCHROEDER,
Founder, Schroeder & Co. Real Estate

Things getting testy is normal because emotions can run high with such significant financial transactions. People will quote various sources to support their point of view, positive or otherwise. What they need to understand is their local market, and consult with a trusted expert in that area.”

7. Work Well With Agents. “Not only must agents get along with buyers and sellers, but also with other agents who either have the listing or represent a buyer if it’s her listing,” says Louise McLean, a real estate professional with RE/MAX Aerospace Realty in Rockledge, Florida. “I’ve learned a thing or two about collaborating with other sales associates, as well as negotiating with buyers and sellers. One major point is that I needed to be neutral. The transaction wasn’t about me; it was about

the buyer and seller. You don’t own the buyer or the seller; you communicate with them. You convey information so they can make the decisions. You’re simply the person in the middle of the transaction who is there to convey and negotiate what is best for the buyer and the seller. It’s an emotional decision for both parties, so you must stay calm. You can’t control the other agent, but you can control your reaction to him or her.”

8. Bond With Clients. “My hope is that the buyer will consider me not just an agent, but a friend,” says Charlie Kerr, an agent with RE/MAX Heritage Properties in Chester, New Jersey. “They have gotten to know me through the process and developed a trust that is consistent with our first visit. It doesn’t end there; it also carries into any future opportunities in

which my buyer may recommend me. I want their experience with me to be that no matter what day of the week or time of day it was, I was there for them, and met every challenge of the transaction for a positive outcome.”

9. Overwhelm With Value Prop. “I want any new client to feel shocked at the level of knowledge, guidance and value an agent was able to provide them in such a short amount of time,” says Rylie Schroeder, founder of Schroeder & Co. Real Estate in Austin, Houston and San Antonio, Texas. “I want them to feel immensely confident in their real estate journey with me by their side. I want them to feel relaxed and in good hands, knowing they made the right decision hiring me to advocate for them during the biggest financial purchase in their life. The bar is often set far too low in this industry, and it’s important to me to change the way consumers view real estate agents, starting with our value and the way we communicate it.”

10. Showcase Your ‘Insider’ Know-How. “There’s an abundance of real estate data that can be obtained by the click of a button when browsing the internet,” says Suzy Minken, a real estate professional with Compass based in Short Hills, New Jersey. “The buyer’s agent, however, is an ‘insider insights’ provider, with access to not only all of the public information, but to ‘insider’ details as well. This may include, for example, the property’s history, the number of offers on a property, why a house is now suddenly back on the market, the property’s condition, etc. And when you go beyond the numbers, these insights are gold.” **RE**



Michael Catarevas is an
RISMedia senior editor.

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TRAILBLAZERS - *The Agents of Change*

Leading Agents Through a Changing Industry

By Devin Meenan

A broker, coach and investor, Nick Libert earned a spot among RISMedia's 2025 Real Estate Newsmakers in the Trailblazers category through his experience in all three roles.

Libert saw an industry going through changes throughout 2024 and wanted to be a positive force for that change. At his Chicago-based brokerage, EXIT Strategy Realty, he launched the coaching program #ProjectX to provide his agents with the right tools—especially ones for automation, giving his agents the gift of being able to prioritize the tasks (and personal touch) that can't be automated.

The firm ranked as EXIT Realty International's No. 1 most productive office group for 2024, while Libert himself took home a spot (and not his first) on the Chicago Association of Realtors® Top Producer award list.

Here, Libert recaps the philosophy that drove his success in 2024, and how he continues to coach others to excel.

Devin Meenan: How does it feel to be named a first-time Real Estate Newsmaker?

Nick Libert: I'm really excited for the opportunity to be a Newsmaker. I see a lot of shifts in our industry right now, a lot of chaos, and I believe it's a time where we're looking for people to lead, innovate and step up to the plate. I'm delighted to be part of a group that's doing that. There's a lot of innovation and leadership needed in the marketplace right now in terms

of private listing networks, marketing and disclosures. The real estate industry is in a world of mess, and I want to be one of the people bringing positive energy and good things to the table.

DM: Which industry changes are you currently emphasizing in your coaching?

NL: One of the things we're focusing on is the damage the private listing network can do to a listing in terms of visibility. If it's not going to go on Zillow, if it's not going to go on Redfin, there's a lack of visibility and transparency. We're a brokerage that thrives on equal opportunity for everyone—fair housing—and I believe the private listing network is something that's potentially damaging that. The technology I'm using with #ProjectX is trying to break through that and

get the private listing network out to everyone. One of the components I use is Zenlist, an agent-to-client home search platform. We're excited about bringing transparency and openness to both the consumer and the marketplace.

DM: How do your roles as a coach, investor and broker connect or intermingle?

NL: Wearing multiple hats gives me the opportunity to be in the shoes of the consumer, the agent and the investor, and truly live out their lives and their value propositions so that I understand what's important to them. Being in their shoes allows me to look for the best technology, tools and strategies that are going to most positively affect their performance.

DM: Can you walk me through the origins of #ProjectX and how it has continued to grow since last year?

NL: EXIT Realty, as a franchise, has a great baseline of tools, but I was looking for something on top of that. Something to bring more tools and transparency to the marketplace; to make it easier for the consumer to find properties; to make it easier for the consumer to understand the process of purchasing or building generational wealth. With #ProjectX, we want to make everything more simplified, while also building in what's coming from AI. We want to talk about sustainability. There's a lot of opportunity to streamline operations and, quite frankly, make this a more efficient and better process for the Earth in terms of the way we buy and sell houses, and the way we use our homes and our properties in the future.

DM: What would you point to as the specific tools that attract professionals to #ProjectX?

NL: One of the big tools right now is Zenlist. Also, Wise Agent CRM—technology that provides the ability

to mass text—has been a big differentiator, and RoomView, our AI component that helps build out and automate their social media content. The Geolocational Smart Signage that EXIT Realty uses works with our CRM so that those things are talking to each other, allowing us to automate some processes, so when you do an open house, there's some follow-up after that can be automated. A lot of this can be done through AI as well as the geolocational tools. Having all of these tools talk to each other allows agents to work smarter, not harder. They can also get more information on a digital platform than ever before.

DM: How do you balance embracing automation with making sure you keep that personal touch as an agent?

NL: The core of this is that AI should be able to free up more of your time as an agent to build out, deepen and strengthen those personal relationships. AI gives you an upper hand, like automations, that offer you more time to build deeper and more personal connections with your communities, and educate and empower your clients. You have more time to be out in the field building those personal connections that AI can't replicate.

DM: What is the biggest lesson you've learned in building a coaching brand? How do you get people to trust you to help them succeed?

NL: What makes my coaching different is the transparency that "everyone fails." Everyone tries and fails. Everyone makes mistakes. Everyone has bad habits. Everyone has a bad day. I think it makes it much more of a relatable coaching program where we all fail forward. Sometimes we have to take a step back, or when life gets in the way, we have to do what I call "control, alt, delete" and reset. There's so much uncertainty and chaos out there, especially in the

world we live in right now. You've got to give yourself some grace and be transparent by saying, "Hey, I'm trying my best to better myself." I'm a big fan of a book called "The Compound Effect." It describes how the process of transforming your life doesn't happen overnight, but rather, by making small, incremental changes every day. And while sometimes you'll need a day off, give yourself grace and be transparent.

DM: Having received many accolades this past year, what stands out about being named an RISMedia Newsmaker?

NL: What I enjoy is looking at the depth of other people's different opinions, successes and strategies. It's exciting to be in a field of people who don't always agree with me or think in the same manner or use the same strategies. There are different thought leaders on this list who are doing things in a different manner, so I was excited to be part of a bigger group that's doing things in a variety of different ways, hopefully all to better the industry. **RE**

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Devin Meenan is an assistant editor for RISMedia.



How Trump's Slimmed-Down CFPB Might Impact Fair Housing, Consumer Protections

By Deborah Kearns

The Trump administration has made sweeping changes at all levels of the federal government, slashing spending, cutting staffing and revamping policies to fit its agenda. There's no place where this is more evident than at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB).

Multiple media outlets reported on CFPB Enforcement Director Cara Petersen's resignation in June, and her scathing indictment of recent changes made by the administration, which claimed that the Bureau is no longer serious about carrying out its core functions, citing what she called "inexplicable dismissals of cases, and terminations of negotiated settlements that let wrongdoers off the hook."

Once a powerful consumer watchdog created in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, Trump's CFPB indisputably looks very different today. The agency is on the brink of losing 1,500

employees (at press time) as the Trump administration's staffing cuts work their way through the federal courts.

If the administration has its way, only 200 people will remain at the CFPB to carry out the agency's mandate to enforce consumer financial protection laws, reducing its capacity for enforcement as well as its scope.

On May 12, CFPB Acting Director Russell Vought rescinded 67 guidance documents the CFPB has issued, with some dating all the way back to 2011 when the CFPB was established.

According to Vought, the move was in line with President Trump's di-

rectives to "deregulate and streamline bureaucracy," as well as eliminate the overlap and duplication of other federal and state regulators. As a result, "the Bureau is reducing its own enforcement to only those areas statutorily required," Vought noted in a rule published in the Federal Register.

With these changes, civil rights advocates worry that the future of fair housing enforcement, particularly redlining and mortgage discrimination, hangs in the balance.

While some industry leaders argue the overhaul at the CFPB is long overdue to streamline operations and curtail regulatory overreach, some worry these moves could invite a return to discriminatory lending practices going unchecked.

Under the new regime, the priorities at CFPB are clear: mortgage

fraud will receive the most attention. But conspicuously absent from the agency's high-priority list are fair housing enforcement activities that it previously pursued with vigor.

For example, the CFPB moved to vacate its settlement with Townstone Financial for alleged redlining violations based on racially discriminatory comments executives made on a radio show. Townstone Financial agreed to pay a \$105,000 penalty to settle the case with the CFPB in November 2024.

"They reviewed the mortgage case and they said, 'Okay, tell us the name of the borrower that was harmed.' They couldn't identify one," said Taylor Stork, president of the Community Home Lenders of America (CHLA), a trade group representing independent mortgage banks (IMBs). He noted that the investigation and following enforcement were based on theoretical borrowers, not actual borrowers, which exceeds CFPB's scope.

Stork's organization argues that IMBs are over-regulated compared to the big banks. As he noted, "An IMB is regulated by every single state in which they're licensed" and potentially by "54 or 55 institutions, organizations, regulators," while "there are nearly 5,000 banks that are not regulated by the CFPB."

Sounding the Alarm on Fair Housing Enforcement Gaps

The view from fair housing advocates is dramatically different as they closely watch the Trump administration's dramatic pivot to slash the federal budget and purge diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives from all corners of the government, including the CFPB.

Sasha Samberg-Champion, special counsel for civil rights at the National Fair Housing Alliance, describes the current situation as "really a multifront war" against fair housing enforcement.

"You're seeing basically all the fair lending staff have been let go in some fashion," Samberg-Champion said.

"But you also see that at a bunch of other agencies, too. You see that at HUD, with the fair housing staff having been decimated."

The concern extends to data collection and reporting requirements that enable fair housing enforcement.

"We certainly are extremely concerned about attempts to degrade the utility and availability of the basic information that you need to understand what is going on in the world," Samberg-Champion added.

While some industry leaders argue the overhaul at the CFPB is long overdue to streamline operations and curtail regulatory overreach, some worry these moves could invite a return to discriminatory lending practices going unchecked.

It's certainly an abrupt about-face from the CFPB's fair housing enforcement activity during the Biden administration.

The CFPB and Department of Justice (DOJ) alleged that Fairway illegally redlined Black neighborhoods in Birmingham, Alabama, including through its marketing and sales actions, resulting in a significant enforcement action. The lender, the government had alleged, violated the Fair Housing Act, Equal Credit Opportunity Act and Consumer Financial Protection Act.

Last October, Fairway agreed to pay \$8 million and a \$1.9 million civil penalty to the CFPB's victims' relief fund.

The settlement was part of the DOJ's broader Combatting Redlining Initiative, which had secured more than \$150 million in relief for communities of color nationwide.

In another redlining case, the DOJ and CFPB recently filed a motion to

terminate a consent order against Trustmark Bank over its alleged redlining activity from 2014 to 2018, according to federal court records. This undid the work of the previous CFPB, which brought its case against the lender in 2021, securing a \$5 million penalty in the five-year consent order. Now, the lender is free from the order 17 months early.

How CFPB Pullback Complicates Data Tracking

Another concern fair housing advocates like Samberg-Champion share is how a weakened CFPB, HUD and other housing-related federal agencies will impact data reporting and transparency.

The rate of nonreporting of demographic information has risen since 2019, potentially limiting CFPB and other regulatory bodies from detecting and addressing redlining, borrower discrimination and other fair housing violations.

For instance, Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) data is the most comprehensive source of publicly available information on mortgage market activity. The data is used by industry leaders, consumer groups, regulators and civil rights advocates to assess potential fair lending risks.

Samberg-Champion emphasized this concern: "We rely on the government reporting certain things so that we know what the loan denial rates are based on certain characteristics, right?"

The nature of discriminatory lending has evolved, making enforcement more complex. As Samberg-Champion explained, "The nature of redlining has changed a little bit now that everything is digital. That doesn't mean you can't figure it out, but it has changed what you're looking for when you think about redlining."

He cited examples of modern discrimination: "I'll give you another example, which is people who are charging different rates in different ar-

eas," he said. "That's just another way to say that we're going to discriminate against communities that have been historically starved of credit and punish them for the very unavailability of credit in their markets previously."

The level of sophistication needed to spot these problematic trends requires expertise that may be lost with staff reductions at the CFPB and elsewhere, Samberg-Champion said.

"It's a horrible time for that sophistication to be destroyed at the agencies," he pointed out.

"You could have a Democratic administration in 2028 that comes back and says, 'You know, it doesn't matter what the Trump administration focused on, it matters what the law was at the time.'"

-PETER IDZIAK,

Senior Associate Attorney, Polunsky Beitel Green, LLP

The Financial Reality for IMBs

Independent mortgage banks and mortgage subsidiaries of chartered banks lost an average of \$1,056 on each loan they originated in 2023, down from an average loss of \$301 per loan in 2022. This represents a series high in the 15-year history of the Mortgage Bankers Association's (MBA) Annual Mortgage Bankers Performance Report.

Although this has improved recently—IMBs and mortgage subsidiaries of chartered banks reported an average profit of \$443 on each loan they originated in 2024, up from an average loss of \$1,056 per loan in 2023—compliance costs remain a

significant burden for independent mortgage lenders.

"While overall production profits were positive, some lenders are still struggling in this tough market environment," Marina Walsh, MBA's vice president of industry analysis, said in a news release. Lenders that closed less than \$500 million in loan volume in 2024 continued to see average net production losses for a third straight year, Walsh noted.

"It has been difficult to spread the fixed costs of originating loans over lower volume," Walsh added.

Regulatory hurdles, along with higher costs to obtain credit reports, which is required for most loan programs, create added costs for IMBs that are eventually passed on to consumers, Stork explained.

"When you have to operate in a zero-defect [business] model, you have to be so unbelievably careful with every single thing you do that you have to have triple checks and quadruple checks," Stork said. "The cost of triple- and quadruple-checking every single thing goes right into the rate sheet and gets passed right through to the borrowers."

The debate often centers on the balance between compliance costs and consumer protection. IMBs have legitimate concerns about regulatory burden affecting their competitiveness and borrowers' costs.

Take credit report fees as an example: Compared to 2022, mortgage lenders in 2023 saw a price increase between 10% and 400% for credit reporting services alone.

Stork argues that borrowers ultimately bear these costs.

"Borrowers spend thousands of dollars in excess fees in order for the lender to be able to dance through the raindrops and not get wet."

CFPB May Be Narrowing Scope, but Lenders Are Still Being Watched

Peter Idziak, a senior associate at-

torney at Polunsky Beitel Green, LLP, who represents mortgage lenders and banks in consumer financial cases, acknowledges the industry may see "fewer federal resources focus on this space," but that doesn't mean oversight is completely disappearing.

"The Dodd-Frank Act does allow state attorneys general to enforce the consumer financial protection laws, and several states have increased resources in that space, and the industry itself does a fair bit of policing," Idziak noted.

"Lenders should focus on what the actual laws and regulations are in force...to the extent that you know the laws and regulations are still on the books; clients should still follow them."

However, if lenders think they can shirk the law without repercussions in the future, they're mistaken, Idziak said.

"One thing at the federal level, the lookback period for a lot of these investigations has been anywhere from five to seven years," he pointed out. "You could have a Democratic administration in 2028 that comes back and says, 'You know, it doesn't matter what the Trump administration focused on, it matters what the law was at the time.'" **RE**

Deborah Kearns is an RISMedia contributing editor with more than 15 years of experience covering real estate, mortgages and personal finance topics. Her work has appeared in The New York Times, Forbes Advisor, The Associated Press, MarketWatch, USA



Today, MSN and HuffPost, among others. Kearns previously held editorial leadership and writing roles at NerdWallet, Bankrate, LendingTree and RE/MAX World Headquarters.

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The Power of Connection: Fueling Agent Success

Commentary by Merri Jo Cowen

In today's real estate landscape, opportunity knows no boundaries. Teams are expanding, business is becoming more mobile than ever, and clients expect seamless service—regardless of location. Stellar MLS recognizes the need to empower its brokers and their agents to adapt to the pace of today's market and continues to provide the resources they need to stay ahead in a rapidly changing market.

Real estate professionals rely on market intel to make informed decisions and confidently guide clients through one of life's biggest milestones. Whether it's leveraged to analyze trends, expand business referrals to new territories or guide relocating customers, the ability to view comprehensive listing data across the country is a significant strategic advantage.

Stellar MLS is committed not only to delivering powerful listing insights, but also to offering expansive market coverage. In line with this mission, Stellar MLS recently formed strategic partnerships with California Regional MLS and Bright MLS. Through these new partnerships among the three largest MLSs in the country, Stellar MLS customers now have access to listings across California and the Mid-

Atlantic, directly within Matrix. No extra logins needed. This integration means agents and brokers have access to thousands of additional listings, without leaving Matrix, opening the door to broader and more integrated business opportunities.

This collaboration comes at a pivotal time. Cross-country relocation is on the rise, driven by changing lifestyle preferences and work environments, and increasing interconnectivity. Clients—buyers or sellers—are no longer tethered to a single market; they're exploring possibilities from east to west. Agents equipped with real-time, accurate data across geographies can stand out by delivering unmatched service and guidance.

Still, access alone is not enough; it must be paired with efficiency and

accuracy. Stellar MLS remains committed to ensuring that its customers thrive in an intuitive environment. Bringing the reciprocal MLS access partnerships into the Stellar MLS system means agents and brokers can research, plan and serve clients without juggling multiple platforms or logging into separate systems. That's time saved and real value gained.

And this is just the beginning.

Clients—buyers or sellers—are no longer tethered to a single market; they're exploring possibilities from east to west. Agents equipped with real-time, accurate data across geographies can stand out by delivering unmatched service and guidance.

As we look to the future, Stellar MLS will continue building relationships and investing in data connectivity to meet the demands of an interconnected market. Our goal remains clear: to provide our customers with the tools, insights and access they need to compete and thrive, no matter where their business takes them.

In a business defined by relationships, readiness and reach, knowledge and confidence are power. We believe that when agents are connected to the right data and market access, they will have the confidence and clarity to succeed. **RE**



Merri Jo Cowen is the CEO of Stellar MLS. For more information, please visit <https://www.stellarmls.com>.



Report: Remodeling Market Sentiment Sees Q2 Dip

By RISMedia Staff

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) recently released its NAHB/Westlake Royal Remodeling Market Index (RMI) for Q2, posting a reading of 59, down four points compared to the previous quarter. While the reading of 59 is still in positive territory, NAHB stated that this is only the second time the RMI has dipped below 60 since the survey was revised in Q1 2020.

"Although remodeler sentiment softened in the second quarter, overall it remains positive," said NAHB Chief Economist Robert Dietz. "High interest rates and economic uncertainty are headwinds for remodeling, but not to the extent that they have been for single-family construction. Even with these headwinds, NAHB is projecting that remodeling will post solid gains in 2025, followed by more modest but still positive growth in 2026."

The Current Conditions Index averaged 66, as stated in the report,

dropping five points compared to the previous quarter. All three components remained in positive territory: the component measuring large remodeling projects (\$50,000 or more) fell two points to 62, while the component measuring moderate remodeling projects (at least \$20,000 but less than \$50,000) fell six points to 66. And the component measuring small-sized remodeling projects (under \$20,000) fell six points to 70.

NAHB reported that the Future Indicators Index averaged 51, down

four points compared to the previous quarter. The component measuring the current rate at which leads and inquiries are coming in remained unchanged compared to the previous quarter at 51, and the component measuring the backlog of remodeling jobs fell six points to 52.

"Although remodeler sentiment softened in the second quarter, overall it remains positive. High interest rates and economic uncertainty are headwinds for remodeling, but not to the extent that they have been for single-family construction."

-ROBERT DIETZ,
Chief Economist, NAHB

"Most remodelers continue to express positive sentiment, but some, especially in the western part of the country, are seeing a slowing of activity in their markets," added NAHB Remodelers Chair Nicole Goolsby Morrison. "Those who report a slowdown have cited economic uncertainty stemming from government policies as the main reason." **RE**

For more information, please visit nabh.org/rmi.



The State of the 'Housing Crisis': Leading Researchers Discuss Evolution and Potential Future

By *Claudia Larsen*

Housing is in crisis, and it has been for the past few years. While the term "housing crisis" itself sparks some debate, the data does not lie. Experts across the industry have been saying that the housing market is facing unprecedented challenges, and organizations like Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies (JCHS) have been tracking this in order to help the industry face it head-on.

JCHS shared countless insights into the crises the housing market is facing and how they have evolved at its 2025 State of the Nation's Housing event, held at the Boston Federal Reserve on June 24. The event centered on data from JCHS' 2025 State of the Nation's Housing report.

Chris Herbert—JCHS managing director—said in his opening remarks that the "key goal of the report is to provide robust information to inform policy, advocacy and industry as each works to meet the nation's critical need for good quality, affordable housing and thriving communities."

"An important goal to release each year is, of course, to share the report's findings, but perhaps more important is to bring together stakeholders from these different sectors to discuss how the report can help inform and shape the actions needed by policymakers and leaders of both for-profit and non-profit organizations," he continued.

Among other things, the report found that affordability is shrinking the rate at which the country adds new homeowners, putting starter homes out of reach for increasingly cost-burdened renters and threatening to price out older generations.

Answering the question of why the event was held at the Boston Fed this year, organization President and CEO Susan Collins said in her welcome address that "housing is deeply tied to the overarching role of the Federal Reserve."

"While the flow of new housing, in other words, residential investment represents only about 4% of annual U.S. GDP on average, it can have an outsized effect on business cycles," she continued.

While real estate professionals largely focus on how the Federal Open Market Committee's choice to raise or lower interest rates affects mortgage rates, Collins pointed to many other ways the Fed system is invested in housing.

She explained that housing can affect wealth, financial markets (via mortgage securities) and local government finances (via property taxes and fees). Constraints in the housing and rental markets, specifically in pricing increases, have placed strains on so many other industries.

"It constrains labor mobility, it limits the ability of businesses to hire. It affects where businesses choose to expand operations, and it reduces the wealth building potential that homeownership has historically provided to American families," she said. "These are just some of the reasons why it's so important to have a regular, in-depth look at housing and, in particular, that is what this report provides."

Collins went on to discuss how economists for the Fed do a lot of analytical work on the housing market, and how when the Federal Reserve banks gather to discuss issues—and when regional presidents connect with their local communities—housing is a main issue frequently brought up. With this insight, regional Feds work to bridge housing gaps through its research and advocacy to other governmental organizations.

She concluded her address by emphasizing that fixing issues in housing,

which have developed over many decades, “will take time and persistence.”

“These issues are both urgent and important, and addressing them will require continued creative thinking and collaboration across the public and private sectors as well as among practitioners, researchers and community leaders,” she said. “It’s going to take all of us working together.”

The ‘State of Housing’

Diving into the State of Housing report, JCHS Senior Research Associate Daniel McCue took to the stage to break down the three main findings.

“First, high housing costs are a challenge to homebuyers and a burden to homeowners. Second, that high costs are also a challenge for renters, and it’s soon to be a greater challenge given that markets are tightening. And lastly, for the lowest income households, given these conditions and others that we’ll talk about, the need for housing assistance has never been higher.”

In terms of high housing costs, McCue explained that according to JCHS’ data, home prices are up 4% year-over-year, which now puts them 60% higher than 2019. He also noted that the median home price surpassed the \$400,000 barrier “for the first time ever last year,” now marking five times more than the reported median household income.

McCue also noted that high housing costs aren’t just prices, but also mortgage rates and payments. JCHS data saw monthly mortgage payments on median-priced homes grow by \$90 last year to \$2,570 a month, which is \$1,100 a month higher than 2021. The average income needed to buy a home has risen to \$126,700—and only 6 million of the 46 million renters in the U.S. qualify for this benchmark.

Speaking of renters, the rental market has faced strain from those priced out of the housing market, McCue explained. JCHS found that the rental population grew by 848,000 in 2024. Multifamily construction is attempt-

ing to rise to the challenge, with JCHS reporting 608,000 new units built in 2024, the most in about 40 years.

“Now is not the time to step back, but to step up efforts to increase affordability, lower housing costs and address the ever-growing needs of the nation’s households.”

-DANIEL MCCUE,
Senior Research Associate, JCHS

Despite the construction increases, units are continuing to rise in price. JCHS saw that 22.6 million renters are cost-burdened, which translates to 50% of the renting population. In addition, more than 12.1 million (27%) are severely burdened, meaning they spend over 50% of their income on their rentals. As McCue puts it, these renters are in “a very precarious financial situation.”

High housing costs aren’t just a barrier to homebuyers and renters. In fact, McCue said they also pose a challenge to existing homeowners as well. Property taxes and home insurance have seen increases, with JCHS reporting that taxes grew 12% from 2021 to 2023, while insurance premiums shot up 57% from 2019 to 2024.

Because of the high housing costs in both markets, McCue emphasized that the “growth in the number of homeowner households was cut in half in 2024 and has dropped even further in early 2025.” He noted that homeownership rates were also hit with a decrease, dropping for the first time in eight years. This caused such a slow-

down in the market that “existing-home sales hit their lowest point since 1995.”

To meet this challenge head-on, JCHS found that builders started to ramp up the new-home market by offering smaller homes, lower prices and financial incentives. This did ease the burden a bit, as new-home sales grew 3% in 2024. However, tariffs now threaten the housing construction industry by potentially raising the cost of building to “almost \$11,000 per unit,” which McCue said could “make additional gains more difficult to achieve in the future.”

While there is also housing assistance available for renters, buyers and homeowners, McCue clarified that most of this population is either aging or disabled and not participating in the workforce. “There’s very little assistance available to help the millions of working families living paycheck to paycheck to make ends meet, and with assistance reaching so few of those in need,” he said, emphasizing the increased need for more programs.

Continuing on this point, McCue also noted that housing assistance needs to increase not just for the currently cost-burdened, but also for the future aging population. Data shows that the “number of householders aged 80 and over is projected to double in the next 20 years, adding nearly 10 million households to this oldest age group.” McCue said that this will bring “increased needs and increased urgency” to the assistance pool.

McCue concluded by saying that all the data JCHS found “points to the fact that now is not the time to step back, but to step up efforts to increase affordability, lower housing costs and address the ever-growing needs of the nation’s households.” **RE**



Claudia Larsen is an associate editor for RISMedia.

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Consedine

Being Prepared, Proactive and Positive

Brent Consedine

President

**Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices California Properties
San Diego, California**

<https://www.bhhscalifornia.com>

Region served: San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura,
Los Angeles County, Orange and San Diego Counties

Years in real estate: 29

Number of offices: 53

Number of agents: 2,500

What challenges are you currently facing, and how are you working to overcome them?

If you talk to any agent, especially in California, they'll tell you that insurability is a hot-button issue. To prepare for that, not only do we have a HomeServices insurance division, but we also have our own insurance producers and brokers who provide information on policies and what we need to do to help our properties become more insurable.

Another big challenge is financing. A lot of our agents are struggling to get buyers off the fence, so we need to communicate in a different way while finding alternative financial solutions.

There's also the affordability issue. We've been helping our agents learn what they need to know—from down payment assistance programs to tracking neighborhoods that are in transition. There's not much we can do about affordability other than offer solutions to help ease some of the pain.

How are you working to support agents?

In addition to sharing ideas for office meetings with our managers, we've been talking about the three Ps—prepared, proactive and positive. We came into 2025 very consciously, taking what we learned from surviving in 2024 and applying it to thriving in 2025. We're focused on a holistic approach that involves preparing agents for the business and marketing side. We want to prepare them for the mental side as well. Additionally, we've been helping agents understand how to use AI for more than just writing creative copy. By attending our AI University, Ahead of the Curve, agents can learn practical tasks and uses for AI in their own business.

Tell us about some of the lessons you've learned.

Looking back, all I ever tried to do was embrace new opportunities—and being open to taking on more responsibility led me to the next level. I've come to realize that the challenges I experienced as an agent weren't that different from the challenges associated with the role of branch manager, regional vice president, president and so on. My role is to ensure that the tools and support we're providing our agents is what they actually need. As things change, we want to remain relevant and competitive. Having experience in a lot of aspects of the industry helps me understand that, as does being out in the field.

What is the most important lesson you drive home when mentoring/training agents?

Some people, myself included, are guilty of striving for perfection. But if you're constantly just thinking about something, you're not actually executing on it. I tell them not to reinvent the wheel. This is what has worked for many of your peers. This is our structured program. This is a strategy that's successful. What would happen if we pushed a little bit to see what's possible? Often, it's small tweaks that need to be made for agents to level up.

What attracted you to the brand?

There are many things I like about the brand, the first being that it's recognizable. The Berkshire Hathaway name is global, and we get the benefit of being associated with a Warren Buffett company. Another thing I love about California Properties in particular is that despite the firm's size, we feel like a small company. Being a Berkshire Hathaway branded company comes with a lot of benefits—whether it's tools, programs and coaching, or global leads and relocation. **RE**

*For more information, please visit
<https://www.BerkshireHathawayhs.com>.*

-Claudia Larsen



A Shared Commitment to Excellence

Dean deTonnancourt
Broker/Owner, CEO
HomeSmart Professionals Real Estate
Warwick, Rhode Island
<https://www.thehomesmartexperience.com>

Region served: **Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Connecticut**
Years in real estate: **36**
Number of offices: **6**
Number of agents: **300**
Work philosophy/motto that you live by: **"Integrity, Professionalism and Coachability"**

What sets HomeSmart Professionals apart for agents looking to build or expand their business?

At HomeSmart Professionals, we've created an environment where agents are set up for growth. What sets us apart is a deep commitment to support without unnecessary complexity. We offer a modern business model that lets agents keep more of their income while still receiving the training, systems and tools typical of higher-cost brokerages. It's about empowerment, not restriction. Agents today want freedom, but they also want community—and we've found that balance. We're collaborative, tech-forward and focused on providing real, personalized support that helps each agent build the business that fits their vision.

HomeSmart is all about empowering agents—whether it's marketing, engagement or lead generation. How do the brand's tools help your agents stay ahead?

Empowering agents means giving them real leverage. HomeSmart's tech tools aren't just flashy, they're powerful—they streamline work, save time and boost profession-

alism—all at no cost to the agent. Our e-Signature platform lets agents close deals from anywhere. The AI-driven Marketing Design Center is a game-changer—agents can create high-quality, customized marketing materials in minutes. These tools remove friction from their workflow so they can focus on building relationships, generating leads and serving clients with excellence. It's not about overwhelming agents with features—it's about simplifying their day and maximizing their potential.

What's your strategy when it comes to mentorship, collaboration and creating a culture agents want to stay and grow in?

It starts with relationships. We don't lead with ego—we lead with empathy and clarity. Our culture is built around respect, responsiveness and a shared commitment to excellence. Whether an agent is brand new or a seasoned top producer, they know they'll be supported and heard. We create mentorship opportunities by matching experience with ambition, and we constantly promote collaboration without competition. We celebrate individual wins, but always bring it back to the collective strength of the team. This isn't a brokerage where people come and go—we've built a place where people come to grow, stay and thrive.

As someone who sees landscape design as a creative outlet, how do you bring that same vision and long-game thinking to helping agents shape their careers?

Landscape design is all about envisioning potential, layering elements thoughtfully, and understanding that beauty unfolds over time with the right foundation. I approach agent development the same way. It's not about quick fixes or one-size-fits-all plans—it's about helping each agent design a career that aligns with their strengths and goals. Like landscaping, you start with a blank space and envision what's possible—using the right tools and strategy to bring it to life.

What's one thing you want agents to know about the experience associated with being part of HomeSmart Professionals?

I want every agent to know that you'll never feel like just a number. You'll be supported, seen and set up to succeed—every single day. Whether it's as simple as a tech question, a marketing need, navigating a tough deal or achieving a long-term goal, we show up. Our company was built for agents, by people who understand what it means to serve clients and build a business with heart. That's the difference—and it's why agents who join us tend to stay. **RE**

For more information, please visit <https://join.homesmart.com>.

-Joey Macari



Driving Success Through Inspiring Growth

Sharon Wilson
President/Broker in Charge
Wilson Associates, a member of Leading Real Estate Companies of the World®
Greenville, South Carolina
<https://wilsonassociates.net>

Region served: **Upstate South Carolina**
Years in real estate: **40**
Number of offices: **1**
Number of agents: **37**
Favorite part of your job: **The people**

How does your company work to make its agents' jobs easier?

Our company culture is really important to me. It's not built on just the number of people, but rather, the type of people we hire. Another thing we do that's a little bit different is recognize agents who have bettered themselves and increased their business based on sales volume or number of transactions instead of ranking them based on production. This allows agents to compete against themselves, not one another.

Tell us about your experience co-founding Wilson Associates back in 2014.

While it was the scariest day of my life, I'll also say that I've never worked as hard—and I've never had as much fun

doing it. When you take this on, you take on the responsibility for everything. Having worked as a salesperson prior to co-founding Wilson Associates, the thing that surprised me most was the fact that experienced agents were coming to me so that we could problem-solve together. Stepping into this role taught me that agents may put what you're telling them into their own words, but when you're watching them succeed and grow, it's clear that they're listening.

Is now the time to pursue expansion—in terms of offices and/or number of agents? Why or why not?

For us, I would say no to office expansion because COVID taught us to pivot and do things a bit differently. I don't think we need brick and mortar because we're pretty much paperless. That said, it would be foolish to not want to grow and keep up with the market if the right person came along. We're not looking to be one of the big companies. Our goal is to be a mid-sized company, potentially increasing our agent count in order to expand our presence into other regions and communities.

What is your best piece of advice for agents looking to grow into leadership roles or open a brokerage?

If you want to open a brokerage, you have to be able to work 24 hours a day, seven days a week—and if you want to grow from an agent to managing or owning a brokerage, you need to network with people who are doing that. You need to take some leadership courses and be involved with your local boards and associations to see how it works.

Being an agent is different than being a broker/owner, and while there's some crossover, you need to be networking and connecting with the right people. Being part of the industry and volunteering on committees and boards is a great way to stay informed about what's going on at the local and state level.

What attracted you to Leading Real Estate Companies of the World® (LeadingRE)?

In addition to being a fabulous global network, I like that the companies affiliated with LeadingRE are very kind to us. In fact, I can call a company and either speak to their relocation person or the agent I'm going to refer a client to. A lot of referral networks are just online portals, and that doesn't work for me. When you get to have a conversation, you're setting the stage for a successful referral. Beyond their big conference in Las Vegas, I also enjoy LeadingRE's regional events, which are great for networking and sharing best practices. **RE**

For more information, please visit <https://www.leadingre.com>.

—Claudia Larsen



Wilder

Creating Your Own Reality

Monie Wilder

Regional Vice President/Associate Broker
Wilder Real Estate powered by Jason Mitchell Group
Scottsdale, Arizona
<https://www.moniewilder.com>

Region served: **Phoenix/Scottsdale**

Years in real estate: **8**

Number of offices: **1**

Number of agents: **8**

Best tip for getting the right listing price: **A great agent with expertise in their market should be able to help a seller understand how the right listing or marketing price will help deliver the highest price for their home.**

No. 1 tip for dealing with difficult clients: **Be self-aware enough that you can clearly navigate issues and challenges and not be sucked into unnecessary drama.**

Most effective way to motivate agents: **Provide opportunities to do enough business to keep them out of survival mode while arming them with creative strategies and tools. Be there to help them get out of pickles, but don't micromanage, which could shut down a sense of ownership of their results.**

Key to establishing a healthy work-life balance: **Be joyful in what you're doing on a daily basis. It's okay to have seasons where you're overly occupied with your business, and seasons when you're unplugged.**

What would you tell an agent determined to follow in your footsteps having sold 100 homes a year, on average, for each of your eight years in the industry?

Agents need to understand that it's about coupling their personal drive with the right systems and support. Finding a brokerage or team that provides leads and systems is a game-changer. I wish I would have found JMG sooner, as I would have been able to build much faster with much less money. One shift I had to make was thinking like the CEO of the business I wanted to create versus the business I currently had. This helped me make the necessary investments into systems, marketing and people before I was ready—and then I grew into it from there.

What would you point to as the most important key to success, and how does it relate to mindset and personal development?

Own your results, and you'll see your life shift immensely. Don't look to others to save you, provide for you or stand up for you. Decide that you're the creator of your own reality, and commit to the art of creating a life and business that reflects what you deserve. The second thing I would advise is getting a coach. Invest in the process of having someone else see you, hold you accountable to your goals and have a stake in you leveling up in whatever way matters most to you.

You're obviously a naturally gifted coach. How do you apply that talent to training better JMG agents?

I have my own coaching business called Coaching for Closers that agents, regardless of brokerage affiliation, can access for inexpensive and practical sales coaching. I'm a big believer in simplicity, so everything I do is about helping agents see the simplest ways to get 1% better every day as salespeople. It's usually about slowing down, listening better, thinking critically and responding simply.

As an experienced media spokesperson, what tips can you offer others in the field who may be called upon to respond to media queries?

Make the truth sexy. When it comes to news, reporters need to capture attention (make a sale), so help them do that. I love to write articles that have a little sass, humor or great storytelling included—and when I'm on camera, I make sure I'm magnetic and engaging. What's really happening within the industry, or in your local market, can be shared in a way that's as interesting as the latest Netflix hit. It's your job to bring that to light for them. **RE**

For more information, please visit <https://thejasonmitchellgroup.com>.

-John Voket



Broker Confidence Plummets as Affordability Smothers Markets

By Jesse Williams

Broker confidence tumbled to a two-and-a-half year low in June, according to RISMedia's recent survey of real estate business owners, with long-run affordability concerns tipping against a generally resilient economic environment.

RISMedia's latest Broker Confidence Index (BCI) came in at 5.6, a precipitous drop from 6.3 in May. Low sales and macro turmoil appear to have weighed heavily on most markets throughout the spring, with the affordability problems an albatross for almost the entire industry.

"Affordability is not due to interest rates, it's due to the fast increase in property values above 40-year average appreciation, and incomes not ris-

ing at a commensurate rate," said Todd Menard, CEO of West USA Realty in Arizona. "People have increased their expenses to new highs. Debt to income is crippling the industry."

The BCI has not seen a lower monthly reading since December of 2022, when the Federal Reserve's rate hiking campaign froze out the market as inflation hovered around 6.5%.

In 2025, home sales remain at lows not seen since the Great Recession, and

while many—including the National Association of Realtors® (NAR)—believe new Trump administration priorities as addressing at least some of these structural issues, affordability remains the main barrier for getting prospective buyers off the sidelines.

Notably, in June, the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies (JCHS) released its annual report on the "State of the Nation's Housing," and found that homeownership rates fell in 2024 for the first time in almost a decade.

In their qualitative response to the BCI, 45% of brokers mentioned affordability as something that was currently affecting their confidence.

"Listings are getting harder and harder to sell—especially the ones that are near new construction areas. Buyers are holding off until rates drop," said Scott Myers, broker/owner of CENTURY 21 Scott Myers REALTORS® in Texas.

Numbers and Needs

Far from a sudden or surprising crisis, affordability issues grew steadily—and significantly—in the wake of the 2008 housing crash, as many smaller builders disappeared and new home construction slowed, creating supply-demand imbalances. Simultaneously, incomes, especially in the lower and middle quartiles, stagnated, pricing more and more of the population out of homeownership.

The same JCHS study found that only around 17% of current renters can afford to buy a home, based on incomes, current mortgage rates and spiraling costs. Those kinds of data paint a dire picture of the long-term health of housing—but policymakers have long noted that solutions require complex and interdisciplinary approaches, looking at everything from local land use regulation to income inequality.

And importantly, most (or at least many) of these issues can only be addressed at the local level, making broad-based reforms or initiatives nearly impossible.

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BROKER
CONFIDENCE
INDEX

5.6

Richard McKinney, broker/owner of RE/MAX Gold in Florida, highlighted the specific, acute challenges facing the housing market in that state, pointing to insurance costs, higher inventory, taxes and competition with new builds as putting “downward pressure” on the market—with affordability as the overarching theme.

“There is no way but down in most Florida sub-markets,” he said.

Brokers were asked to highlight what they saw as the most important solutions to affordability issues in their market, ranking programs or policies on a scale of one to five, from “least needed” to “most needed.”

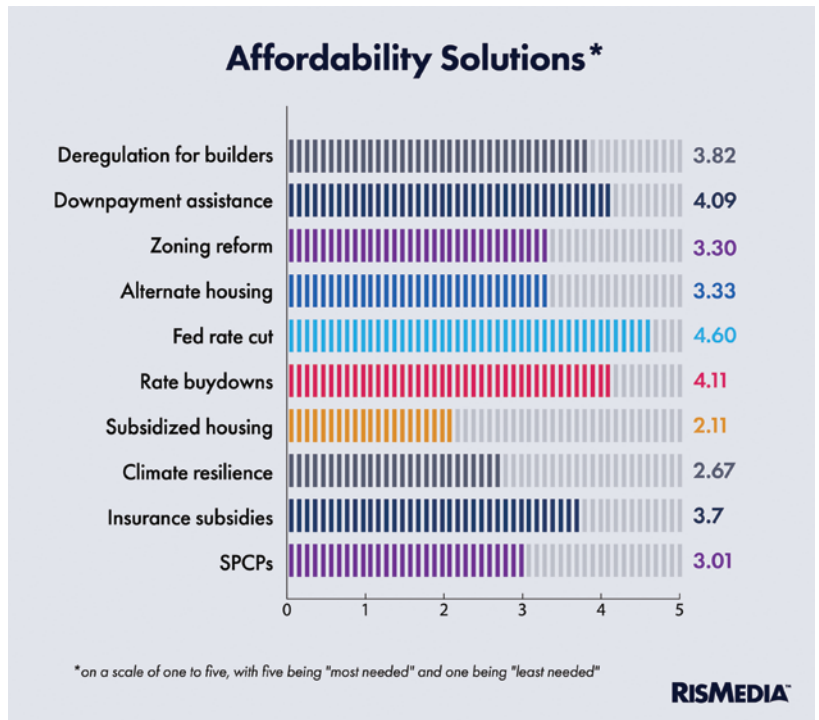
Unsurprisingly, the broadest consensus across geographies was for a lower federal funds rate. Almost three-quarters (72%) of brokers ranked this as the “most needed” step to address affordability, with rates still hovering around 6.6% (at press time).

President Donald Trump, as well as Federal Housing Finance Agency Director Bill Pulte, have viciously attacked Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell for delaying interest rate cuts, calling for his resignation and accusing him of political bias. Powell has refused to address these attacks publicly, and continued to say the Fed is waiting on more economic data related to tariff impacts before cutting rates again.

Another highly rated policy was downpayment assistance—something that is offered by all levels of government, as well as through private organizations in some circumstances. The new Trump administration has not made these programs a priority, with no new programs in the recently signed mega-bill.

According to the Urban Institute, as of 2023, most down payment assistance programs were run at the state level. The same report found demand for these programs growing exponentially, with three times as many buyers relying on them in 2023 compared to 2010.

Brokers also pointed to deregulation



According to the Urban Institute, as of 2023, most down payment assistance programs were run at the state level. The same report found demand for these programs growing exponentially, with three times as many buyers relying on them in 2023 compared 2010.

for builders (something that has been a priority at the federal level). A 2021 National Association of Home Builders’ study claimed that around 24% of the cost to build a new home was regulatory—though that study did not break out which level of government imposed those regulations, saying it is

“difficult to impossible” for a builder to make those determinations.

Programs that brokers saw as less needed included deed-restrictions and subsidized housing, with only 11% of brokers ranking these programs as a four or higher. So-called permanently affordable housing like this varies widely in how it is executed, but has been cited by many advocates as necessary to help low-income families climb the housing ladder.

Other lower-priority programs include special purpose credit programs (SPCPs), lending products available to disadvantaged groups. While the Mortgage Bankers Association touted these programs in the past, the Trump administration has recently withdrawn support for these programs, limiting their reach and usefulness, according to NAR. **RE**



Jesse Williams is content director for RISMedia Premier.



Reviving Cold Leads: The Power of AI in Real Estate Engagement

By Anvesh Chakravartula

In the competitive world of real estate, understanding how to effectively engage with leads is crucial to success. While many real estate agents focus primarily on acquiring new leads, it's equally essential to recognize the untapped possibilities within dormant contacts and how they can become potential clients. Most leads don't go cold; they simply go quiet, and tailored strategies can revive them.

Defining Lead Engagement

Lead engagement involves actively nurturing interactions with potential clients, whether through follow-up calls, personalized emails or timely messages. This process requires a balance of persistence and finesse, recognizing when a prospect needs a gentle reminder or an informative nudge.

In today's fast-paced market, agents often juggle multiple responsibilities and wear multiple hats, leaving little room for extensive follow-up efforts. However, leveraging AI-powered solutions, such as Realoq's RE-Engage, a lead reengagement solution that helps real estate agents recover and convert previously unresponsive yet qualified leads, can streamline this process while ensuring no lead is left behind.

The Importance of Personalization

Effective lead engagement hinges on personalized communication. A generic message is unlikely to spark interest, but intelligent contextual messaging based on a lead's past behavior can cultivate a genuine connection. By understanding what past prospects are seeking, agents can tailor their outreach to feel relevant and precise, rather than robotic or prescriptive.

Furthermore, the landscape of real estate is shaped by shifts in consumer expectations. Buyers and sellers are increasingly looking for not just products but relationships—real estate is, after all, a people business. Automated responses should serve as a foundation, while live interactions enhance that connection, dem-

onstrating a commitment to service and authenticity.

The Role of AI in Nurturing Leads

Incorporating AI solutions into your strategy doesn't just add efficiency; it brings a level of sophistication that can redefine your engagement approach. Tools that offer always-on lead nurturing and readiness alerts allow agents to stay top of mind.

The integration of such capabilities within a single platform simplifies workflows, enabling agents to focus on what matters most—their clients. Instead of toggling between cumbersome systems, an all-in-one solution can enhance productivity and effectiveness.

Strategies for Engaging Dormant Leads

1. Personalize your follow-ups based on previous interactions to resonate more deeply with prospects.
2. Leverage automated solutions to maintain consistent communication while retaining your personal touch.
3. Remain proactive with lead readiness notifications that let you know when past contacts are ready to reengage.

While acquiring new leads lays the groundwork for a successful business, revitalizing cold leads through intelligent engagement strategies can unlock hidden potential within your client database. By prioritizing personalized interactions and embracing innovative technology, real estate professionals can cultivate meaningful relationships that lead to successful transactions. Harnessing AI tools and methodologies empowers agents to transform dormant leads into tangible opportunities for growth. **RE**

Anvesh Chakravartula is CEO of Realoq. For more information, please visit <https://realoq.com/solutions/reengage>.



Real Estate Teams Need Better Tech

Commentary by Gina Ippolito

Real estate technology continues to advance, giving professionals the ability to scale. But time and time again we see one industry segment get left behind: teams.

Solo agents unlock autonomy and freedom when they leverage the right tech, but teams often can't fully benefit from those same platforms. Teams need specialized technology.

Why Team-Focused Tools Matter

A team's tech stack needs unique functionality to navigate the nuances of the team dynamic to avoid missing out on opportunities and earning potential. Why does it matter? Solo agents focus on their own goals, while teams and their leaders have to balance individual and collective objectives.

In fact, teams operate more closely to a typical brokerage than their solo agent counterparts.

Technology geared toward teams needs to take a holistic approach to productivity, transaction and commission management, as well as recruiting. To operate effectively, teams

need the same information and digital infrastructure available at a brokerage level.

Productivity

For a solo agent, figuring out total sales volume and units sold is relatively straightforward. Effective teams require additional measurable points beyond these basic numbers.

Team leads need comprehensive data to make informed decisions and guide their members. Valuable, and often overlooked, team data includes:

- New versus canceled
- Closed versus canceled
- Closed versus pending, sales sides
- Gross commission income

Transaction and Commission Management

Leads that have transparency into the team's transaction history are able to use the insight to help members play

to their strengths and meet milestones.

Transparent commission approvals are also key to timely, seamless payouts. If a team lead can preset the entire approval process on their backend, hiccups are less likely to slow momentum or lead to agent dissatisfaction.

Recruitment

Growing a team requires time and energy to source and vet the right people. Why should a team leader have to juggle multiple recruitment platforms when the ideal agent may be right under their nose? With built-in recruiting tools, leaders can attract new talent in their local market while managing their search from a centralized resource.

Is Your Brokerage Giving Teams an Advantage?

If teams can achieve brokerage-level production, they need tech that offers the same big-picture analytics and process automation.

But not every brokerage is equipped to support teams the way they need. HomeSmart has always strived to optimize the real estate technology experience for every agent—without leaving anyone, including teams, behind.

This is why we've given teams a major advantage with integrated team features built into our RealSmart Agent platform—at no additional cost. Our nationwide network includes over 400 actively producing teams responsible for more than \$5.7 billion in volume and nearly 12,600 transaction sides since January 2024. **RE**

To learn more about HomeSmart's transformative technology, visit Join.HomeSmart.com.

Gina Ippolito is HomeSmart's vice president of Product and Development, driving the



brokerage's technology initiatives and strategy. She spearheads the advancement of HomeSmart's proprietary RealSmart Agent platform to provide innovative, empowering agent solutions.



Listing Leader Lisa Bayless Shines With Buyer-Agent Team in Tucson

By Barbara Pronin

A native of Tucson, Arizona, Lisa Bayless earned a degree in social work from Boston University, convinced she'd found her calling in counseling. But a blind date who became her steady was a real estate developer in Back Bay, and she was quite surprised to see an overlap in what they did.

"We both worked with clients who valued our expertise," says Bayless. "We did our best to make them feel comfortable, to trust us, and in the end to help them meet their goals."

So, when they returned to Tucson in 2006 to finish grad school and plan a wedding, she decided to try her hand at real estate. Licensed a year later, she found a home at Long Realty, where she reigns among the top 1% of agents nationwide—and where the Bayless Team last year closed 206 transactions valued at more than \$124 million in volume.

Barbara Pronin: Lisa, how and when did you begin building a team, and how is it structured?

Lisa Bayless: I hired my first admin

in 2017 because I needed help with my workload, and that created more business. Then I hired a buyer's agent, and business increased even more. Today, we're a team of five buyer's agents—one of whom is very new—and four administrators, and I do all the selling.

BP: What do you look for when you hire an agent?

LB: A good work ethic—and loyalty. I want people who will stay with us, not use us as a springboard. Most of us have been together for a while. They trust me. They know our team is here to stay, and that I won't bring on another person without their buy-in. That's my pledge to them because my success is tied to my team.

BP: How would you describe your team culture?

LB: Very close knit. We're on the phone all day long. We're like our own little family.

BP: Eight or nine people is a good-sized group. What's your method for staying organized?

LB: We have two regular meetings every week to be sure we're all on the same page, and another meeting once a month to talk about larger issues. And then, as I said, we're on the phone much of the day as needed.

BP: Tell us a little about the areas you serve.

LB: Primarily greater Tucson and Oro Valley, which is six miles or so north of Tucson. It's an upscale community with some stunning mountain views, great schools and easy access to a host of outdoor sports.

BP: What's the average selling price?

LB: Our average selling price is about \$700,000, although you can still buy a home in Tucson for \$300,000, and we have listings in some desirable Oro Valley areas for \$1.5 or \$2 million.

BP: In your opinion, Lisa, what makes your team the one to call in your market?

LB: Professionalism, without a doubt—and personal service. I've been here most of my life. I have a deep understanding of the local market, and I'm accustomed to working with all parties in every transaction to ensure everything is smooth and seamless and that my clients achieve their goals.

BP: Your team posted \$124 million in closed transactions last year. What's your goal for 2025?

LB: I'd like to think we're going to exceed it, but there are so many variables out of our control that I can only promise to do our best.



Experience the perfect blend of luxury and modern technology in this contemporary home, listed by the Bayless Team.

“However you choose to structure your team, show up every day committed to mentoring, inspiring and creating a culture of closeness and loyalty.”

-LISA BAYLESS,
the Bayless Team

BP: What do you do when you're not working?

LB: I love hiking and biking—and I'm a travel junkie. I like to read about ancient history and choose a destination where we can explore in person all the places I've been reading about.

BP: As you noted, you have deep roots in the area that serve you well. How do you choose to give back to the community?

LB: I'm proud to be a past board president of the Boys & Girls Club of

Tucson, and I'm all about supporting local nonprofits. I donate a portion of every commission to local organizations—more than \$120,000 thus far.

BP: And finally, Lisa, what's your best advice to team leaders just starting out?

LB: Be clear about the kind of team you want. In my case, I chose to hire buyer's agents while I do all the sales. We don't even have a team phone number. Clients speak only to me. It's less traditional, but it works well

for us—and however you choose to structure your team, show up every day committed to mentoring, inspiring and creating a culture of closeness and loyalty. **RE**

For more information, please visit <https://lisabaylessteam.longrealty.com>.



Barbara Pronin is a contributing editor to RISMedia.



Wisconsin Team Leader Thrives on Challenges

By Barbara Pronin

Wisconsin native Tony Wendorf always planned to be a doctor. In 2009, he earned a PhD in forensic psychology and went to work qualifying executive talent for industrial organizations. He loved the work, and still does, setting aside part of every work week to continue in his first career.

But in 2017, a friend in the industry got him thinking about real estate.

"I had always had an interest in real estate," says Wendorf. "The hours were flexible, the pay was good, and like my work as a licensed psychologist, it was all about helping others to live their dream."

Along the way, Wendorf had learned a lot from a book called "Raving Fans" by Ken Blanchard and Sheldon Bowles.

"The book provides a simple framework for building a raving fan base," says Wendorf, "because just having satisfied customers isn't good enough anymore."

In 2021, Wendorf joined First Weber REALTORS® Lake Country office in Delafield, Wisconsin, where his team of eight tallied 160 accepted offers worth more than \$70 million last year.

Barbara Pronin: You're a very busy man, Tony. How do you find the time and energy to manage two successful careers?

Tony Wendorf: I'm typically up and at my desk by six in the morning, and I often work until eight at night—but I find myself energized by the work I do. I deal with a lot of happy people.

BP: So, let's go back a bit, to when you joined First Weber. It's the only company you've worked for, isn't it?

TW: It is, and they've been wonderful—and I came into the business fully ready, with a deep understanding that customer service is paramount. In my first year, I earned (in sales) \$6.3 million. In my second year, it was \$16 million. That's when I knew it was time to create a team.

BP: What did you look for in recruiting team members?

TW: I was, and still am, open to people with a similar mindset; ethical, hard-working people with at least five years in the business, who are committed to unparalleled customer service.

BP: What do you mean by "unparalleled" service?

TW: Going the extra mile to be sure we exceed our clients' expectations in every step of the process. Our goal is to make the buying or selling experience fun, easy and so successful that our clients become forever clients and refer their friends and family.

BP: What's the size of your team today?

TW: There are eight in sales, including me, and two fantastic administrators, a transaction manager and an operations director.

BP: And how do you stay organized?

TW: We have a weekly meeting every Tuesday so that everyone stays up to date—and we talk often and meet whenever something needs to be addressed. We're results-driven. Achievement is our thing, and we love to celebrate wins. All in all, we have a great time, in and out of the office.

BP: Is that how you would describe your team culture?

TW: That's part of it, yes. But it really goes deeper than that. We're united in our core belief in what I call the five important Fs: Faith, Family, Friends, Fitness and Financial. We're committed to doing the work of God, ethically and morally, but also to spend quality time with friends and family—to stay healthy, and take care of others as we achieve financial stability.

BP: Does that mean you have a philanthropic side?

TW: Absolutely. We give back about



Tony Wendorf & Associates Team

“A leader’s job is to make his people successful. That’s where you need to invest yourself. Their success is your success, and that makes everyone happy, including the customers you serve.”

-TONY WENDORF,
Tony Wendorf & Associates Team

and streams—great for recreation, and a great place to live. We’re 25 minutes from Milwaukee and 45 minutes from Madison, so we attract a lot of commuters looking for peaceful space outside of the city.

BP: What is your average sales price?

TW: The average is about \$440,000, although we recently sold a \$6.5 million lake property and a \$57,000 parcel of land.

BP: And finally, Tony, what advice do you have for team leaders just starting out?

TW: Have a thick skin. Much of your time will be spent making others happy, and helping others grow. A leader’s job is to make his people successful. That’s where you need to invest yourself. Their success is your success, and that makes everyone happy, including the customers you serve. **RE**

For more information, please visit <https://tonywendorfassociates.firstweber.com>.



Nestled on 9.18 private acres, this Tony Wendorf & Associates Team listing boasts 648 feet of private lake frontage.

\$40,000 a year to the communities we serve. We have a \$15,000 annual sponsorship to St. Anthony on the Lake, helping to serve the needy, and the rest to a variety of local causes that are meaningful to our team members—the homeless, grief counseling,

local sports teams, to name a few. The rule is, don’t say no.

BP: Tell us something about the communities you serve.

TW: Delafield is truly lake country, grassy hills amid any number of lakes



Barbara Pronin is a contributing editor to RISMedia.



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info@jordanbaris.com

Founded in 1952, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Jordan Baris Realty is among the most respected full-service real estate brokerages in Northern New Jersey. With a team of close to 150 associates, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Jordan Baris Realty offers real estate brokerage to buyers and sellers of residential and commercial properties, developers, tenants and landlords; title services through JB Title Agency, LLC; and award-winning global relocation services.

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Bright MLS was founded in 2016 as a collaboration between 43 visionary associations and two of the nation's most prominent MLSs to transform what an MLS is and what it does, so real estate pros and the people they serve can thrive today and into our data-driven future through an open, clear and competitive housing market for all. Bright is proud to be the source of truth for comprehensive real estate data in the Mid-Atlantic, with market intelligence currently covering six states (Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia) and the District of Columbia. Bright MLS' innovative tool library—both created and curated—provides services and award-winning support to well over 100K real estate professionals. Learn more at <https://BrightMLS.com>.

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Long & Foster Real Estate is part of The Long & Foster Companies, a subsidiary of HomeServices of America, a Berkshire Hathaway affiliate. HomeServices is one of the largest providers of integrated real estate services. The Long & Foster Companies also includes Prosperity Home Mortgage, LLC, Long & Foster Insurance, Mid-States Title, Insight Home Inspections and HomeServices Property Management. Long & Foster Real Estate has offices in eight East Coast states, plus the District of Columbia. The company is an exclusive affiliate of Forbes Global Properties and is a founding member of Leading Real Estate Companies of the World®, a prestigious global network of real estate professionals that includes the Luxury Homes International Division. Visit www.LongandFoster.com for more information.

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Offices: 9 • Associates: 180

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22342 Avenida Empresa, Ste. 110, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688

Contact: Joshua Tucker, Director of Relocation Services

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Email: jtucker@century21award.com • Coverage Areas: Orange County

Offices: 15 • Associates: 1,200

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7676 Hazard Center Dr., Ste. 300, San Diego, CA 92108

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Email: jtucker@century21award.com

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Email: kstephens@pagetaft.com • URL: www.pagetaft.com

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Tel: (401) 486-9677

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Email: ReiMesa@BHHSFloridaRealty.com

Relocation Contact: Linda Lindemoyer, Vice President, Relocation and Business Development

Email: lindalindemoyer@bhhsfloridarealty.com

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Email: Kathy.Connelly@BHHSGeorgia.com • URL: www.BHHSGeorgia.com

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Tel: (219) 864-7200

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Tel: (219) 864-7200

Email: drew.ranich@mccolly.com • URL: www.mccolly.com

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Tel: (508) 420-1130

Email: lcundiff@kinlingrover.com • URL: www.kinlingrover.com

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Email: aignatowski@bhhsselectstl.com • URL: www.bhhsselectstl.com

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Tel: (800) 477-7653 or (402) 547-5137

Email: Katie.adams@BHHSamb.com • URL: www.BHHSamb.com

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Contact: Eileen Mitchell, Dir. of Relocation & Referral Services

Tel: (800) 735-4488

Email: relo@BHHSNV.com • URL: www.BHHSNV.com

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Contact: Carol Abdo, Relocation Director

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Email: relocation@jordanbaris.com • URL: www.jordanbaris.com

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Offices: 9 • Associates: 175

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Email: nmoore@cdanjoyner.com,
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Coverage Areas: Greenville, Greer, Taylors, Duncan, Spartanburg, Mauldin, Simpsonville, Fountain Inn, Powdersville, Easley, Piedmont, Anderson
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Readers Respond to the Latest Headlines on rismedia.com

Editor's note: Responses have been lightly edited for clarity and to comply with magazine editorial style.

"NAR Praises 'Big Beautiful Bill' as 'Major Win' for Real Estate" - 7/3/25

"While the National Association of Realtors® celebrates the One Big Beautiful Bill Act as a major win, it's essential to ask—a win for whom? Because for everyday Americans struggling to afford a home, this legislation feels like yet another tone-deaf move favoring the wealthy and well-connected.

Let's be clear: Housing affordability today is not primarily about interest rates. It's about home prices that have ballooned beyond reason, fueled by speculation, investor dominance and supply bottlenecks. A \$10,500 tax savings might sound great—if you're already living in a \$1M home in a high-tax suburb.

NAR touts SALT cap increases and estate-tax protections as victories. But these provisions overwhelmingly benefit affluent homeowners and investors—not renters trying to break into the market or buyers scraping for a down payment.

The harsh truth? Sometimes the association needs to step outside its D.C. echo chamber and remember that real estate isn't just about wealth-building—it's about shelter, dignity and opportunity."

- Cathleen Morales, Northrop Realty

"Zillow Dismisses Compass's Claims of 'Irreparable Harm'; Denies Anticompetitive Conspiracy" - 6/30/25

"Private listings have always had a place in real estate for delicate and deeply personal situations... In those instances, we've worked with clients to respect their need for privacy, while still following industry rules by submitting the property to the MLS as an exclusive listing with client-requested privacy instructions. The very last place we—or the client—would want that listing to appear is on Zillow or any other public marketplace site.

That said, let's be honest: many in the industry have used private listings for reasons that had nothing to do with client privacy and everything to do with controlling both sides of the transaction.

So it raises the question for Compass: Why the sudden outrage that Zillow won't support private or pocket listings? Is this about protecting consumer privacy...or protecting market control?"

- Ronald Stewart,
Mohawk Valley 1st Choice Realty

"'Pig Butchering': U.S. Secret Service Warns NAR of Crypto Scam Targeting Agents" - 6/9/25

"I received three or four of these inquiries this past year. They always insisted on using the WhatsApp form of communication. Which is fine; I have other clients who like that. But it did just sound too good to be true: 'I want to spend a lot of money, cash, and it will be a quick close.' I have been a [real estate professional] for over 30 years and have learned—just like in anything else—if it sounds too good to be true, it usually is. So I checked with a few younger, more tech-savvy agents, and my son who is in law enforcement. My son said they target older agents, mostly because we are likely to have some good assets sitting around. Needless to say, when I refused to discuss investing in crypto they went away... I guess I was one of the lucky ones."

- Connie Loveland,
Benson & Mangold

"The same thing happened to me more than once—one was kind of a hybrid of the dating scam as well. She seemed compelled to send several fetching photos without being asked to do so. I ran the photos through Google image search and it was a popular Chinese actress. The person I was communicating with said they lived in San Francisco and worked in tech. The WhatsApp ask is a real tip off and should be a red flag for anyone being asked by an unknown entity."

- Richard Burton, Compass

We value your comments! Weigh in on RISMedia articles and industry issues by emailing us at realestatemagazinefeedback@rismedia.com.

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