

Where Should Zillow Fit Into Your Home Search Process?

Zillow.com offers home buyers (and sellers) some compelling reasons to use them when searching for homes, but it's important to realize Zillow's number one drawback — it's lack of accurate listing data.

It used to be that Zillow received a direct feed from our MLS, as it still does from other Multiple Listing Services. However, for more than a year now, Zillow has not been receiving listing data from the Denver MLS.

As a result, you'll find many "for sale" listings on Zillow that are no longer for sale. With today's limited inventory of homes for sale, that can be really frustrating for buyers.

As a Realtor, I frequently get calls from clients and others asking to see a home listed for sale on Zillow, only to inform them that the house they saw on Zillow sold a month ago or even longer.

Fortunately, there's an easy solution to this problem. The Denver MLS is available to the general public, not just to licensed real estate agents like me. It's at www.REcolorado.com. Although you won't see all the information about each listing that agents see and can't search on as many fields, you'll have the assurance that if it's "active" on that website, it is actually for sale, and your broker can show it to you.

That's not to say that Zillow shouldn't play a role in your home search. **Just don't go there first** when looking for available listings. Go to Zillow **after** you find a home for sale on REcolorado, to benefit from details not available to you (or me) on the MLS.

I'm not talking about Zillow's home valuation numbers, which they call "zestimates." Those are notoriously inaccurate — again, because Zillow doesn't have access to MLS data for comparable sales to determine home values.

The one thing which Zillow offers that I find useful on occasion is property lines drawn over a satellite view. The other data and advice you need to take with a grain of salt.

Look up your own home address on Zillow and see what you think. In the case of my own home, Zillow is

very accurate about the details of my house, but it describes the real estate market in my neighborhood as "cold," which couldn't be further from the truth. And Zillow's valuation of my house is off by about \$100,000.

Another statement on Zillow with which I disagree is the following: "June has historically been the best month to list a home in your area. We estimate that listing your home in June would increase your sale price by \$3,303 over listing in February." If our market were truly "cold," that might be true, but, as I've written before, winter can be the best time to list a home in our current seller's market. There are fewer listings with which you're competing, and nearly as many buyers jumping on each new listing that comes on the market.

Zillow does contain school ratings from Great Schools, which is nice. It also has more rentals than our MLS. And, of course, Zillow displays "Premier" agents who pay to be featured next to listings.

What about other websites? The only national website that is linked to every MLS is www.realtor.com. I use it for searching outside the Front Range of Colorado, knowing that if it's active on that website, it's actually available to buy.

The brokerage websites which display listings — for example, remax.com or redfin.com — get their information directly from the MLS as well, and they're pretty much all the same. We have that same feed on our website, www.GoldenRealEstate.com. But it is possible for brokerages to opt out of displaying their listings on brokerage websites, so the only source for **all** active listings is www.REcolorado.com.

There are multiple MLS's in Colorado, and it is not uncommon for sellers to list their homes with agents who aren't members of the MLS's that are local to their property. For example, occasionally I'll see a listing of a Jeffco home that is on the northern Colorado MLS, called **IRES**, instead of on REcolorado. This is not smart, because few Jeffco agents are members of IRES and, even if they were, those agents wouldn't search IRES for Jeffco listings. The result, obviously, is much less exposure for your home, not just to agents, but also to buyers who, increasingly, do their own online searching before calling an agent.

Similarly there are many northern Colorado listings on REcolorado that aren't on IRES, which means those listings don't get the exposure **they** deserve. I am a member of IRES for when I list homes in our northern suburbs or in our northern foothills, such as Coal Creek Canyon.

REAL ESTATE TODAY



By JIM SMITH, Realtor®

Attend an Informational Session on '8 Weeks to Wellness' Next Wednesday

This is the program that Rita and I rave about. Over 10 of my readers have also taken it with similar good results. If you'd like to know more about it, come to a free informational session next Wednesday, **Feb. 15th, at 6:30 p.m.** at the office of Body in Balance, **755 Heritage Road, Golden.** Call **303-215-0390** to reserve your seat(s). I'll be there myself.

Another Body in Balance event this month is "Dinner with the Doc" on the subject of nutrition and heart disease. It happens on Feb. 27th. Call **303-215-0390** to reserve your seat at the table.

Do You Like Southwestern Art & Artifacts?

We recently listed and sold the Golden home of Marcia Mustoe, who was well known for collecting southwestern art, pottery, furniture and artifacts. Her home in South Golden was a virtual museum of such items!

Marcia made frequent visits to Santa Fe and cultivated many close relationships with artists. She cherished and supported the local art scene both there and in Golden.



Unfortunately, Marcia passed away in December, and an estate sale company has been retained to sell her fabulous collection. A list of the items being sold (with pictures) can be seen online at www.estatesales.net/CO/Golden/80401/1425210.

The sale is happening today and tomorrow, **Feb. 9th and 10th, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.** at Marcia's home, **17205 Rimrock Drive, Golden.** Furniture without a Southwestern theme is also for sale.

What's the Difference Between a Condo & a Townhome?

Good question! And an important one!

A townhome owns the land under it, and there is no unit above or below it.

A condo owns only its "air space." There could be units above it or below it, since it does not own the land under it.

Occasionally, I come across a subdivision that structurally resembles townhomes, but is legally a condo complex, meaning that the land under those "townhomes" are owned by the HOA, not the individual unit owner.

The distinction may not mean much to the typical homeowner, but it's useful to know the difference.



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