



# Real Estate Websites: A Great Starting Point, But Not the Final Point

By ROBERT RADCLIFFE  
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A majority of the information about real estate – homes for sale and recent sales – is relatively easy to find online. But what does that mean and how does that change how to find a home to buy or understanding the right price when selling?

Before the Internet era, buyers used to have to meet with an agent and present a short list of must-have amenities, desired square footage and expected price range. Then they had to wait for the agent to get back to them with a list of fitting properties on the market.

Not anymore. The public now has more control. That is what I have explained to my team of agents at The Radcliffe Group: “Our job as a real estate agent is not about controlling the information, an agent’s job is assessing the information for our clients, to assist and guide them in making smart and very important real estate decisions when buying or selling their homes.”

When purchasing and selling

a home – real estate websites are a great place to start. However, you should never rely solely on them when making significant monetary decisions.

There are no less than a dozen major real estate websites that promote real estate, provide ample listings, extend supporting information and offer other news, tips and tricks. They also help to connect buyers with sellers. This is definitely not where you want to end your search or more importantly, rely on this information. Here’s why.

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## OUTDATED, INACCURATE INFORMATION WITH NO WAY TO VERIFY

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The information made available on these sites is often outdated, inaccurately reported, lacking in important local data and sometimes flat out untrue. Case in point, there was a listing on one of these sites that not only advertised the wrong number of bedrooms and square footage, but it also failed to update the newest appraised values.

Additionally, hundreds of potential buyers breezed right past the listing for the home, which had six bedrooms but was wrongly reported as having only two bedrooms. Imagine the confusion on browsers’ minds as they saw a price tag that definitely reflected a much bigger home when they thought they were getting a smaller place.

In this case, the records used to compile data on the site were pulled from a source that did not take into consideration recent renovations and upgrades made to the home.

The same confusion applies when homeowners use some of these sites’ home appraisal options, which rely on non-skilled, generic, computer-generated analysis. I have seen some appraised values come close to a home’s true value while others are millions of dollars off target.

The reason is because these sites lack the ability to actually see the interior details, condition of a home, topography, possible views or lack thereof. Only a li-

censed, local and skilled real estate agent or appraiser can accurately appraise a home.

Being familiar with the local nuisances of neighborhoods can dramatically affect home values. For example, the value of a home in Pacific Palisades in the Alphabet Streets can be quite different compared to a home literally across the street in the Huntington.

There is no harm in gaining as much of an understanding of the industry as possible. In fact, browsing to see what’s out there is a great preparatory tool. But when it comes to choosing a home, settling on a price, determining whether the purchase is a good long-term investment – nothing compares to working with a quality, reputable, experienced Realtor.

*Courtesy of Robert Radcliffe of The Radcliffe Group at Sotheby’s International Realty (roberttradcliffe.com). The Radcliffe Group has been ranked by The Wall Street Journal as one of the top 250 sales teams in the USA. Contact: (310) 255-5454 or rob@roberttradcliffe.com.*