



01/28/2007

The Home Search: Where to Look on the Internet - Part I

For any of you would-be homebuyers, access to the home is key to selecting the perfect place. With the advent of so much new technology, sellers have an opportunity to present their home in the best possible light (and I mean that literally in some circumstances.) For the past 10 years, the internet has continued to provide evolving technology to assist people in their decisions to buy and sell products of all kinds and houses are no different.

So, where should you list your houses? Should you list your home with a realtor? On the Craigslist? With so much information at our fingertips, making choices has never been so easy and, yet, it has never been so complicated. In a market and economy like the one we have today, time is an essential factor and could cost or make you lots of money.

Realtor.com

The first thought that comes to mind when buying a home is going to the website Realtor.com. It is user friendly, concise, and provides many extra features for sellers and buyers. This is the official website of the National Association of REALTORS[®], so, going through a realtor will be necessary to take advantage of selling off this website.

The search engine on this website is quick and straight forward. You can search by city, state or by zip code. You can also stipulate minimum and maximum prices as well as number of bedrooms and baths. More advanced search features include type of property, property features (such as laundry rooms, swimming pools), lot features (such as waterfront property, lot size), and community features (like clubhouses and recreational facilities). If your search does not return enough results you can expand your search to nearby areas.

Becoming a member of Realtor.com has its advantages. A member of this website can save searches, listings, and realtor information. Signing up is not too invasive. They will ask for your name, email address, current address, and birthday (which I assume is for assessing your age) but neither telephone nor fees are required!

I highly recommend this website. It is easy to use, it provides additional information if you are new to home buying, and it is not limited to residential property. Plus you have the assurance that you are searching listings from a reputable association.

Zillow.com

A great new website for buyers and sellers alike is Zillow.com. Unlike Realtor.com, both agents and owners can list properties but like Realtor.com, the website pulls from a variety of sources to give as up-to-date information as possible.

The great aspect of Zillow.com is the ability to type in an address and get the last cost or a good estimate (called a "Zestimate") for that property and the surrounding properties. It's really cool. You can zoom in and out to get a better look at the neighborhood. It's a cross between Google Maps and Realtor.com. Another fun feature associated with this site is the ability to "Claim Your Home" where you can enter a picture of your home, enter its stats, etc. As a seller, this would give your home much more exposure.



Zillow.com also has a Wikipedia-style portion of their website. In this section they have answers to many real estate questions from loans to closing. Not only is this a section created by Zillow employees but visitors can also share their own expertise, advice, and personal experiences.

Look for the next part in this article series to find out about more places to look on the internet to find the perfect home.