

# NAR committee recommends “full exchange of data”

NAR looks at the future of MLSs at the NAR NXT conference

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As class action anti-trust lawsuits involving the **National Association of Realtors** (NAR) and Realtor-affiliated multiple listing service (MLS) platforms continue to drag on, the trade organization’s MLS Issues and Policies Committee is looking at how MLSs can better serve consumers.

“If we don’t have the consumers as our guiding light and what’s in their best interest and not what’s in the best interest of our MLS organizations, then we are not moving in the right direction,” Nicole Jensen, the CEO of **realMLS** and the chair of NAR’s Presidential Advisory Group (PAG), told committee members and **NAR NXT conference** attendees gathered in the Hyatt Regency Orlando’s Windermere ballroom Saturday morning.

“Our duty is to serve consumers the best way we know how. I understand that there are organizations that are affected by these recommendations, but we must as an industry have consumers be our guiding light.”

To meet this goal of better serving consumers, the committee recommends “a full exchange of data into local and/or regional native MLS platforms,” including listing data, roster data and history data. While all five recommendations under this umbrella were approved to move forward to the executive committee, there was quite a bit of debate from MLS executives and Realtors in attendance.

“As an MLS, this kind of puts you at a competitive disadvantage if you are trying to gain market share because how would you expand if everybody is getting that same data,” Jim Bellville, a Vermont-based Realtor and member of **Northeast Research and Education Network** (NEREN) MLS, said. “Unless you have two MLSs that are very similar, I see no benefit to either one to do this, as far as their growth potential.”

According to Jensen, research done by the PAG has found that even in smaller marketplaces, data shares have resulted in an increase in MLS membership. Jensen said data shares add value for members, encouraging more Realtors to join.

“The whole purpose of this concept is to arm Realtor members with the same data that consumers are getting from online sources and the PAG believes that if we want to empower our Realtor members, that they have to be able to serve that data to their consumers and the only way to do that is to share data. Otherwise you are requiring that consumer to go out to a third-party site to get the best data, which is not good for Realtor members, who should be the source for real estate data.”

Another concern brought up by Realtors at the meeting was how data sharing would impact commission sharing. As it stands, in order to list a property on a Realtor-affiliated MLS, the listing agent must offer a buyer broker commission, but if the buyer broker comes from another MLS within the state, unless they get a broker-to-broker compensation agreement, they generally are not offered compensation. Realtors, therefore, wondered how data sharing would impact these practices.

“The recommendation that the PAG stated was to include the offer of compensation via the data share,” Jensen offered in clarification.

In addition to data-sharing recommendations, the committee also discussed measures still being workshopped that will go up for committee approval at a later date. Some of these included plans to merge both internet data exchange (IDX) and virtual office website (VOW) uses and policies into a simplified “listing exchange,” propositions to review and create new resources related to property access and showings, and measures to improve Realtor safety, by adopting “safety fields” into MLS listings.

“It is the sad truth that Realtors are victims of crime every day in the U.S., a stark reminder of the unique risks face by those in the real estate profession,” Janet Judd, the chair of the Realtor Safety Advisory Committee, said. “The following safety related fields have been added to reduce the number of safety incidents in the real estate industry.”

The recommended safety fields include information on the occupancy status of the house, amount of interior and exterior lighting, visibility of the property from the road and whether or not there is consistent cell phone service at the property.

Judd said that so far over 20 MLSs nationwide have expressed interest in adding these fields to listings and five MLSs, including **Cooperative Arkansas Realtors MLS** (5,200 members), **Greater Greenville** (South Carolina) **Association of Realtors MLS** (3,100 members), and **Southwest** (New Mexico) **Multiple Listing Service** (4,300 members) have committed to implementing the safety fields.

As NAR and MLSs continue to battle class action anti-trust lawsuits, committee chairs told Realtor and MLS executive attendees that it is more important than ever before to make sure clients understand the value of the MLS and the services provided by buyer brokers.

“We want to make sure people recognize the importance and value of local MLS cohort marketing places and how competitive they are and Realtors and how much we do for consumers,” Jason Sanchez, the director of MLS engagement, said.