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# REAL ESTATE

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## Artificial Intelligence Is on Track to Play a Bigger Role In the Real Estate Industry

I wouldn't have thought to use ChatGPT for this purpose, but an email from Andrew Sams at Alpine Building Performance LLC told me about it. They call it "Alpine Intelligence," a branded application of Chat GPT.

Alpine's tool is designed to ask about "likely inspection issues" at a specific address as a first step before hiring an inspector like Andrew or even before making an offer on a listing you're interested in. I uploaded a PDF of the MLS listing for one of my listings (by hitting the + symbol in the prompt field) and it laid out likely inspection issues based on the age of the home, using details from the listing as well as what it found on public records, including work that was permitted, such as the roof replacement, which was not on the MLS listing. Each response by the tool ended with suggestions of other questions I could ask, such as "How does this home compare to comparable homes?" and "What should I expect to pay for fixing each potential defect?"

Within the Alpine tool, there is a link to order the inspection from Alpine and to order a free BuildFax report from them. This got me thinking about the other ways

we agents and our clients could use artificial intelligence tools for real estate.

Those of us with Windows operating systems have "Copilot" on our task bars but may not have found a use for it. It is basically a built-in artificial intelligence tool like Chat GPT. I asked the same questions in Copilot and got equally good responses. I was particularly impressed that it knew the address I entered was in unincorporated Jeffco instead of in the City of Golden, but when I asked for the water provider, it wrongly said it was the City of Golden, based on proximity.

### REAL ESTATE TODAY



By JIM SMITH Realtor®

You can use Copilot as an alternative to Google for all kinds of searches, posed as requests or questions. As a test, I entered "Show me 3-bedroom homes in Jefferson County with a swimming pool." It immediately produced a home on 2 acres in Evergreen matching those criteria and said it was the only one, but there were homes with 2 or 5 bedrooms in Lakewood and Littleton with swimming pools. Although it already provided a lot of information about the home in Evergreen, I asked it to show me the MLS listing, and it offered three links to different

brokerages plus realtor.com.

All that was just using Copilot on my PC. It both inspired me and scared me, because any homebuyer could ask Copilot to do a home search and not bother calling a Realtor like myself to help them. This is good news for listing agents, because the buyer is likely to learn the name and phone number of the listing agent (after all, just ask Copilot!), instead of seeking out an agent to provide buyer representation. I asked for that contact info and the agent's production history, plus her current active listings, and I got it.

Then there was a surprise — I asked if that Evergreen property was priced correctly, and only then did Copilot say "apparently not," because it sold in December for 18% under the asking price! It wasn't actually active!

For comparison, I started over with ChatGPT, asking for a 3-bedroom home in Jeffco with a swimming pool, and it only found two homes with access to a community pool and didn't mention the one which Copilot had found erroneously. However, ChatGPT then coached me to ask about backyard pools and it found several listings in Jeffco with a backyard pool.

The lesson from all this is not to abandon Copilot or ChatGPT, but to play with each and, in the end, search Zillow or Redfin or [www.GoldenRealEstate.com](http://www.GoldenRealEstate.com) for the address you're interested in to see if it's actually active. Then call me to set a showing!

I asked Andrew how I could create a tool similar to his, and he said, "Ask ChatGPT!"

A link for Alpine Intelligence is posted at <http://RealEstateToday.substack.com>.

## Follow-up on Heat Pumps: Be Careful That You Only Purchase a "Cold Climate" Heat Pump!

Everyone installing a heat pump should invest in a cold climate heat pump — and most companies are in fact installing cold climate rated heat pumps. But not all "cold climate" heat pumps are created equal. Like electric vehicles, their range can vary. How do you know how much "range" your cold climate heat pump has? And how much "range" does your home require? Thoughtful HVAC design is critical to making sure your heat pump runs efficiently and meets your needs. It would be nice if we could rely on all HVAC installers to steward this decision, but often they are more interested in their bottom line than yours, or they just don't have enough experience to properly size a system.

The first thing to check is the heating requirements of your home, and compare it to the output of the heat pump. The industry calls these two steps a Manual J and Manual S calculation. You should require your vendor to provide a thorough Manual J and Manual S. It does not take a lot to understand what goes out must come in. Square footage, insulation values, number and type of windows, and amount of air leakage all affect the heat load.

Some homes may have a heat load as low as 12,000 BTU per hour, while others may have a load as high as 60,000 BTUs per hour. The right cold climate heat pump for these homes is very different. Make sure your heat pump has the capacity for what you need.

Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships, [www.NEEP.org](http://www.NEEP.org), provides detailed 3rd party performance data on over 200,000 different heat pumps. You can use their website to look up the specific heat pump recommended for

your home and see if it fits the bill, or if its "range" is too small. It's also a great source to compare different equipment and bids from different contractors.

Lastly, many HVAC companies don't trust cold climate heat pumps because they are stuck 15 years in the past when heat pumps struggled to perform in low temperatures. Their solution is to add a gas furnace as back-up heat (like a plug-in hybrid electric vehicle that extends the range), but sometimes their solution is to add an electric strip heater — think of a giant toaster — to take over when the undersized heat pump can't keep the house warm. Ironically, we often see this where homeowners have solar and want to completely stop using natural gas. They want to use electric only, and they don't understand that a strip heater is one-third the efficiency of a heat pump; they just know it doesn't use gas. This can be a recipe for disaster. If the heat pump is too small for the home load in the first place and you must rely on that giant toaster, this can raise your utility bill astronomically.

In general, most homes are comfy with a properly designed heat pump system. The utility bills stay more or less the same as gas usage is reduced and electric usage increases. But since electricity is being produced more from cheap renewable sources, like wind and solar, electricity is a more efficient and cleaner fuel. And the transition to electric will only grow. It's just better technology. We just need to make sure you get the range you need!

My thanks to Bill Lucas-Brown of GB3 Energy. I merely edited his writing above. You can reach Bill at 970-846-4766.

## States Jump Into Controversy Over Off-MLS Listings

I have written several times about the "private exclusives" scheme at Compass, now the country's largest owner of real estate franchises, including Century 21, Coldwell Banker, Sotheby's, ERA and many others.

Compass promotes the idea of posting its agents' listing on its own off-MLS website instead of on the MLS, fooling sellers into thinking that's a good idea, when all it does is restrict the number of potential buyers who see those listings. The reason? To minimize the number of listings which use non-Compass agents to sell their listings, keeping more of the commission revenue within their brokerages.

Now that our own franchise will be under the Compass umbrella, we're not changing our name to Compass, but we are being encouraged to use their tools, including putting our listings on their off-MLS website.

Zillow is in litigation with Compass, because Zillow, like us, doesn't like the "private exclusives" approach due to how it hurts our sellers, to whom we owe utmost fidelity, including making them, not us, the most money for their listings. Zillow has banned Compass's non-MLS listings on their website, even after they give up their private sale and post their listings on the MLS. (Zillow gets all its listings from MLSs around the country.)

Now, state legislatures are taking up the battle against off-MLS networks. Lawmakers from Wisconsin, Washington, Connecticut, Hawaii and Illinois have proposed bills that would require broad public marketing of listings.

Wisconsin led the way with Act 69, which was passed in December but doesn't go into effect until next January. It says, "Within one business day from the start date of any agency agreement authorizing the listing firm to sell or lease the owner's property, advertise or market the owner's property for sale or lease on one or more Internet platforms or websites accessible to the general public and any real estate licensees representing prospective buyers or tenants, unless the owner completes and signs a disclosure and opt-out form prescribed by the department."

That form requires the seller to state why they're opting out. It also requires them to acknowledge that fewer potential buyers might see their listing, and that the reduced exposure might lead to a reduced sales price.

Washington's bill was passed unanimously in its Senate and 92-1 in its House and takes effect this June. It says, "A broker may not market the sale or lease of residential real estate to a limited or exclusive group of prospective buyers or brokers, or any combination thereof, unless the real estate is concurrently marketed to the general public and all other brokers, except as reasonably necessary to protect the health or safety of the owner or occupant."

In each state, the local Realtor association and Zillow have lobbied for these bills. Although some are still in committees, they are broadly supported by legislators from both parties. The legislation echoes NAR's Clear Cooperation Rule, requiring listings to be on the MLS within one day of signing the listing agreement.

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