



Real Estate Agent SEO White Paper

SEO as a real estate agent can sound scary, but once you get over the initial fear of something new, you realize how easy it really is. In fact, learning the basics is what can help fill your portfolio of homes, drive a consistent and year round flow of buyers and sellers as well as investment leads to your business. That is what this white paper will help you learn to do.

The information below walks you through each of five major types of SEO for real estate agents. It is written in plain English with minimal jargon and designed specifically to help agents and investors like yourself grow your business.



The 5 sections include:

- 1. On Page Basics** – These help you prepare your website and individual pages for the search engines, website visitors and current clients. It's the foundation of your site.
- 2. On Page and Technical Mid-level to Advanced SEO** – These are items that give search engines a better understanding of your business and who will benefit from finding a specific page within your website and how to increase your site's speed a bit more.
- 3. Attracting Sellers** – Ready to attract some sellers? Here is where you'll learn the important things to help attract sellers who are shopping for an agent.
- 4. Bringing in Buyers** – Having a house to sell is only half the battle, you also need to help buyers find the home. These are the items you'll want to ensure are within your page so as someone looks for properties in Google or searches for homes, your listings may be able to show up first.
- 5. House Listings and Showings** – Once you're ready to add listings and need to attract people into your property, this is a checklist of items to make sure you include so that search engines know how to help a buyer find their future home.
 - a. Events schema and locations schema
 - b. Mobile inputs
 - c. Clickable phone number

On Page Basics

On page SEO is about defining what the page is about for both the person visiting your website and the search engines. These are easy and actionable items you can do to let the search engines know which types of queries and questions your page is right to show for people looking for solutions.

Below you'll find a list of on page SEO items specifically for real estate agent websites and a few examples of what is good and what is bad. We also share with you how to see what is currently on your website so you can make sure they are optimized properly.

- **Title tags** – This is what appears in your browser and as the headline in a search engine result. It should be 55 characters or less including spaces, have the main keyword phrase of the page in it and be descriptive about what the person will find on your website if they click through.
- **Meta description** – These are NOT going to impact your ability to rank in major search engines, but they can increase how much traffic you get. They appear in search results below the title, should be 155 characters or less and reinforce the message of the title tag and further explain how the person will benefit by visiting your page.
- **H1 tags** – these are the header and main topic of the page. They should be simple, to the point and be direct. It is important to avoid using the same ones on any two pages and there should never be more than one H1 tag per page.

i.e. you should not have two separate pages on your website with an H1 tag of Chantilly Single Family Home For Sale on it.

- **Internal links** – these are links from one page on your website to another page on your website. They help the search engine to know what the page you are linking too is about. You do not want to link off of the same keywords to two separate pages as this causes confusion about which is the better page or more relevant.

- **Copy** – word count does not matter any more and there is no minimum you should have on a page. Instead, think about how can you provide the best possible user experience with the most relevant wording. This is what most major search engines reward and may help you to show up.

Ways to answer questions and provide a good user experience that also makes the search engines happy include:



Having FAQs about the topic



Creating content that explains what the page is about (which could include your experience in a bio or why hire me page), or about the house or condo on the property listings page. (a multi-family home with 3 baths, game room and a pool which is also close to 3 dog parks).



The last thing to check is the copy on your pages from your phone and your desktop computer. If it is not the same, you may not be able to show up in the search engines as well. Google for example uses the content from your mobile site first, and then may look at what is on the desktop. Why does this create a problem?

Designers tend to hide or remove copy from mobile websites because it takes up space. If the mobile version does not have the same exact text, your site may not be able to rank as well as it could, and other agents will probably do better than you. If the text changes, or the menus change because of space on the mobile site, this can also change your internal links which sends less clarity about your site, passes less authority to your most important pages and can stop your website from showing up in search results as easily.

- **Images** – The images on your pages should not be high resolution and should be saved at 100kb or less. This is for page speed. The speed of the specific page is a ranking signal and helps Google to decide which one to show over another.



How to find each of these items.

Go to your own website and right click on the page. Now click on “view page source”. On a PC click “cntrl + F” and if you’re on a mac, click to open a search box.

Now in the box type:

- “<title>” to find the title tag.
- “<meta name=“description”” to find the description
- “<h1” to find the H1 tag

Here's an example of a good and a bad title tag/description and H1 combination.

Bad: 

Title - The Best Real Estate Agent For Million Dollar Homes In Virginia | Arlington | Alexandria

Description – We're here to help you find your dream home or sell your property quickly and for the best price. Contact us today and see how we're different from other realtors.

H1 – The number one best selling real estate agent for million dollar homes in Virginia, Arlington and Alexandria.

Good: 

Option 1:

Title – John Doe – Arlington VA's Top Rated Real Estate Agent

Description – Looking for an agent who picks up the phone, works around your schedule and meets your needs in a timely manner? Click here to see how I can help.


H1 – Arlington's Leading Real Estate Agent

Option 2:

Title – Jane Doe – DC & VA's Leading Luxury Real Estate Agent

Description - Looking to purchase your dream home or sell a property over \$1M, I have the experience, knowledge and network to get the job done fast and hassle-free.

H1 – Jane Doe, DC & VA's Leading Luxury Real Estate Agent



In the bad example it is keyword stuffed and all about the agent. The character counts are also too high to fit into a search result. In the good example you have some of the important keywords like location covered and the copy is about meeting your client's needs and alleviating pain points like non-responsive companies. It also has a call to action to let them know they can reach you.



Mid-Level to Advanced SEO Techniques

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This section contains more advanced items that may sound intimidating, but become more clear when initiating them. Depending on your website provider, many offer plugins or tools to help do these things without having to code. WordPress is the best option for many of these. If this section seems a bit intimidating, skip it for now and go to one of the three remaining. We also have people on staff that will be happy to talk to you about these.



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- **Schema** – This is also known as markup and helps to explain to the search engines what the page is about and what each section of your page is about. There is a database (also known as a library) you can find at the website schema.org which lists all types of useable schema.

There is schema for reviews, office/business hours, locations and even real estate agent schema. By incorporating proper schema into your pages when it is relevant, you can better define the topic of that page. If you are using it and your competitors are not, you will have an advantage. Just make sure you only use relevant schema.

For example, you do not want to use review schema on a page without reviews. If the page is about a property you have listed, real estate agent schema isn't relevant because the page is not about a real estate agent.

Image compression – Photographers and web designers love to use large file sizes for images because they think they are better looking. This can hurt your ability to rank. By having an image compressor you'll be able to shrink the size, and in many cases get them down to the 60-100kb goal.

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- **Modifiers for copy** – Modifiers are words you can add to your text to help make it unique. They include numbers, places, colors, nouns, adjectives, verbs, questions and numerous other items. They come in handy when you have to create unique copy about 5 similar properties all in the same town. Here's a blog post with a ton of options to help get your creative juices flowing so you can create unique copy for each of your pages.

<https://www.adamriemer.me/50-modifiers-boost-seo-drive-sales/>

- Canonical tags – these can be tricky at first. Canonical links tell the search engines which page is the right one to show. They are used to help make sure you don't have duplicate pages. Duplicate pages cause confusion and neither one will be able to rank.

A good example is if your website has a category for multi-family homes and also homes in a neighborhood. The same house can be listed in both meaning you have two identical pages.

- A. Yourdomain.com/bethdesda/multi-family-home
- B. Yourdomain.com/house-size/multi-family-home

When this happens, you pick the best option for the house, or whichever folder it should be in (maybe create a page for all properties so you have yourdomain.com/properties/multi-family-home) and have the canonical link point there.

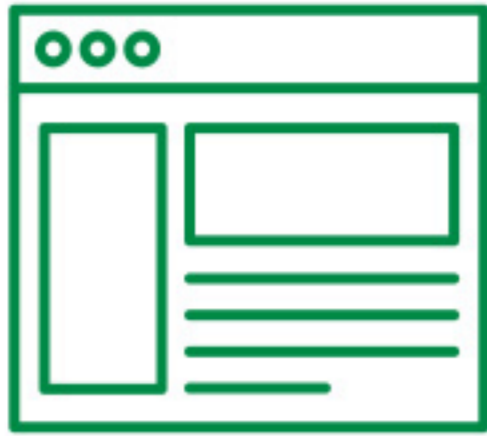
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Now on both pages A and B, you'll have a canonical link that points to `yourdomain.com/properties/multi-family-home` and the search engines no longer have to guess which one to show which also means it doesn't get suppressed.

To find your canonical links, right click to open the source code and type "canonical" into the search box. It'll show you where your canonical link points too. If it isn't the right page, then contact your web developer, web designer or host and see if they can fix it for you. Canonicals are standard and are normally set up correctly.

- **CDN network** – A CDN is a content delivery network. It helps people who are not in your current location get to your website and pages faster. It is all about page speed. For example, if you have someone in Seattle moving to DC and you don't have a CDN installed, your website and pages may take longer to load for them. Because page speed is a ranking signal, you're at a disadvantage to other websites. They are easy to get and your web hosting company will normally be able to install it for you.
- **Sitemaps** – A sitemap is a listing of all of the important pages on your website that you want a search engine to see. You can normally find it by adding `/sitemap.xml` after the `.com` or `.net` on your URL. If it isn't there, go to Google and type "yourdomain.com sitemap" and it should show up. If it still doesn't, write to your web host and they'll send you a link too it. On the site map, make sure the most important pages are there, and less important ones are not.

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Important pages include:

- o The Homepage of your website
- o Main categories like cities, property types, etc...
- o The homepage of your blog
- o Your properties if you don't have many
- o Anything else that you want search engines to look at regularly



Non-important pages include:

- Login (where clients login)
- About us
- Contact us
- Terms of Service
- Privacy Policy

Robots.txt – this is the most intimidating item we'll cover. It is simply defining for a search engine how to crawl your website. You include disallow: when you want it to avoid a specific folder, parameter or page and allow: on where you'd like it too focus.



- You may want to disallow login pages, sorting features, blog tags and other sections that aren't as important.



- You'll want to allow the css files and javascripts that enable the search engine and browser to properly display your website.

Robots.txt files can be tricky, so ask your host if they can help. If not, Google offers a free resource site and builder to help you. You can find that here.

<https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/6062596?hl=en>

Attracting Sellers

If bringing in more clients who need to sell their houses, condos and rowhomes is your goal, this is the section for you. The trick here is to know what people are looking for. You can do this by logging into **“Keyword Planner”** which is a tool inside ads.google.com and shows you the search volume.

Now you want to follow the advice above and create pages to help. For this section we'll focus on your about us page. A blog can also be used, but since not everyone has one, we'll mention it slightly where it could help.

The first thing to do is create an about page with your local information and schema. By doing this you can optimize it to explain you are the best real estate agent in Alexandria for selling multi-family homes. The page can talk about your experience and professionalism as well as how many properties you sell each year for people just like the website visitor.

Just make sure you have an easy to use contact me now form, phone number and email address right there so the person can go from website visitor to official lead.

The next thing to add to your website is an active and updated portfolio. By having this you can optimize each with how you sold the house, the value you got for your client and really sell why the person should choose you over other agents. You can also have a *“view current listings in XY city”* on the page to help people and agents looking for properties for a buyer find what you currently have. It's a double win for you to optimize these pages.

The writing style on these pages is very important. We tend to say “I”, “me” and “we” a lot when we write about work we’ve done and ourselves. This is natural, but can also become a turn off. It’s called “we, we” syndrome.

Whenever you see a “we” or “I” or “Our”, try changing it out for a “You”, “You’ll” or “You’re”. For example, we are the right agent to sell your house, because we specialize in selling homes over \$250,000. This could be, If you’re house is \$250,000 or more, you’re in good hands. Each agent will learn about your goals and specializes in the \$250,000+ market, so you’re in good hands!

Blog posts can also help to be your friends. People who are thinking about selling their homes are looking for information, and by creating blog posts that answer their questions and solve their issues can introduce them to your brand and show off your expertise.

Topics could include:

- Is summer or winter worse for selling my home in Arlington
- Will adding a pool to my house make it more valuable in Fairfax
- Is Navy Yard going up in value or down in the next 5 years
- Which DC neighborhood is right for new families
- How much should I pay for a house in Waldorf Maryland?
- Is it ok to hire an Agent in VA if I live in DC?
- Do I need an agent in DC if I’m buying in MD?

Each of these gives you the opportunity to show off your knowledge, bring in a lead by answering their questions and display your phone number, email and a contact form so they can reach you if they have more questions and need an agent.

Bringing in Buyers

Much like helping sellers find you, copy can bring in buyers too. But there are some SEO specific items that you'll want to check and double check on your listings pages. These can help give you an advantage over your competition and get your properties from on the market to sold and a case study that brings in new sellers.



- **Optimized images** – make sure your images are not high res and are saved or compressed to at least 100kb. If you have the opportunity to name them, make sure the main image is named for the page “single family home for sale in Bethesda” or “single family home 1234 main street”. It depends on the page and what the goal of the page is.

Now check the alt text (this is what the search engines use and it can be found in the source code next to the image (type alt= into the search box on view source)) and the description of the image (in the source tag, look by the alt= for description=) and make sure they are similar too or match the name. These are items that search engines and readers for people who have vision problems can use to determine what the image is about.

- **Locations pages with geographic information** – Double check that the listing page has the physical address listed. It can make a great H1 tag as well. But just writing the location isn't all you can do. You can also add location schema to the page so the search engines know where it is and you can add an interactive Google Map. This helps the potential buyer to see the property, where it is in the neighborhood and if they're coming to visit, they can click and get directions easily.

- **Create a listings portfolio** – this is a page with all active listings. You can have it sort by neighborhood, price, time on market, type of home, amenities or anything else buyers would find important.

If you only sell properties in a specific are, you can optimize it for Homes for Sale in Potomac Maryland. If you cover the entire state and have a ton of listings, you can always optimize a main category for “Rowhomes for Sale in Maryland”. Then you can create sub-categories for each of the major towns you have listings in.

Now you are covered for each with a dedicated and relevant page. Just make sure you have unique titles, H tags and copy for each category and subcategory.

- **Create a list of all amenities and the walk score.** This is important because Google and visitors want to know more about the property. If you don't say it is “near a dog park” or “close to 3 schools” then the potential shopper may be less interested and Google will have no idea these are applicable, so as someone searches for “condos in Columbia Heights with a pool”, you won't show up.

House Listings and Showings

Now that you have sellers on your site and listing with you, buyers coming in to see their properties, it's time to get some additional foot traffic into the showing. That's where these three tips come in. They may be small, but they make a huge difference!

1. Optimize the page for a showing. This means you'll want to include events schema to help Google know there is an open house in the specific area and at what times. In addition to them finding your page, you'll want to make sure there is also a Google map so that people can easily find the property.

2. Mobile inputs and mobile friendly features are some of the most overlooked items on a website. Inputs are the fields on a form when someone needs to contact you. Mobile friendly features refer to a click to call phone number instead of making the person type it in and a click to open the location in a map. This helps people go direct from your page to their navigation app so they can find the open house quickly, easily and not show up frustrated from getting lost.

3. Your mobile number or someone who will pick up the phone. Having a clickable number isn't the only thing to remember. Check the webpage and make sure the phone number on the open house is one that you can answer or that it is owned by someone who will answer immediately and help the person find the showing. If there isn't someone who picks up, the person may decide not to leave you a message and go to another showing. That person could have been the buyer.