**ABoR Data Syndication: Q&A for Media**

October 9, 2013

Please use the following Q&A as a guide for fielding questions from media.

1. **What is the ABoR syndication policy change?**
2. On September 30, the ABoR Board of Directors voted to return decisions regarding listings syndication to brokers by agreeing to terminate ABoR’s relationship with ListHub after April 30, 2014, and stated its intention to cease facilitating the syndication of members’ listing data to non-REALTOR® consumer websites.
3. **Why is the syndication agreement with ListHub / syndication of listings to non-REALTOR® consumer websites an issue?**
4. The Syndication Task Force concluded that many Austin-area REALTORS® have concerns about how some non-REALTOR® consumer websites utilize ABoR members’ property listing data, which is provided via syndication. The manner in which non-REALTOR® consumer websites utilize data provided by REALTORS® negatively affects homeowners and may diminish the reputation of REALTORS®.

Some syndication sources not bound by the REALTOR® Code of Ethics have business practices that are not consistent with that code. In addition, the inaccurate property information provided by these sources sets false expectations for consumers that inhibits homebuyers’ ability to make sound real estate decisions.

1. **What led ABoR to make this decision?**
2. In June 2012, the ACTRIS Committee of the Austin Board of REALTORS® created a Syndication Task Force of nine REALTOR® members representing brokerages of various sizes to investigate reports of increased member frustration with listing data by non-REALTOR® websites. After more than a year of research, the ABoR Board of Directors, ACTRIS Committee and Syndication Task Force concluded that ABoR does not wish to contribute to what it believes are the detrimental effects of business practices of some non-REALTOR® consumer websites.
3. **How was this decision made?**
4. ABoR leadership spent more than a year studying this issue through the Syndication Task Force. The Syndication Task Force recommended to the Board of Directors that the association terminate its contract with ListHub after April 30, 2014, to stated its intention to cease syndication of members’ listing data to dozens of non-REALTOR® websites, following a six-month period for member input and additional due diligence. The ABoR Board of Directors adopted that recommendation on September 30, 2013, and has begun the six-month input period.
5. **What research went into this decision?**
6. The Syndication Task Force conducted extensive research of industry standards and best practices, conducted a phone survey with ABoR members in the top 100 offices by agent count, and held a meeting with ABoR data syndication vendor ListHub.
7. **What does this mean for Austin-area REALTORS®?**
8. This decision will empower Austin REALTORS® to assist their clients in the best manner possible. After April 30, 2014, Austin-area brokers will be able to decide independently and on a case-by-case basis whether to provide listing data to non-REALTOR® consumer websites based on the best interests of the clients and agents.
9. **What does this mean for Austin-area homebuyers and sellers?**
10. This decision seeks to protect the integrity of the data consumers use to make important home buying and selling decisions. ABoR encourages consumers to visit a REALTOR®-affiliated website, such as a REALTOR® website, AustinHomeSearch.com, Realtor.com and TexasRealEstate.com to search for properties. Listings on these websites are provided directly from multiple listing services and updated frequently.
11. **Is ABoR ending all syndication or just syndication to specific websites?**
12. ABoR will be terminating its relationship with listing syndication provider ListHub after April 30, 2014. The intention to cease facilitating the syndication of members’ listing data applies only to non-REALTOR® consumer websites. ABoR will continue to provide data to REALTOR® websites and REALTOR®-affiliated websites, such as AustinHomeSearch.com, Realtor.com and TexasRealEstate.com.
13. **If ABoR is no longer syndicating through ListHub, does that mean that its members can no longer syndicate?**
14. Not at all. In fact, through this decision ABoR is give brokers autonomy in deciding whether to syndicate data to non-REALTOR® consumer websites. After April 30, 2014, brokers may choose independently whether to syndicate their listings with non-REALTOR® consumer websites if they feel that is in the best interest of their clients.
15. **What happens between now and April 30, 2014?**
16. ABoR will continue its relationship with ListHub until April 30, 2014, while collecting information and communicating with members about this decision. In the interim, ABoR will conduct the additional due diligence required to pursue this action responsibly and collect input from its members.
17. **Why wait until April 30, 2014 to end the syndication agreement with ListHub?**
18. The Syndication Task Force recommended to the Board of Directors that the association provide for this six-month interim period to conduct the additional due diligence that is necessary to make this change responsibly, to collect input from members, and to allow time for members to make alternate arrangements for data syndication, if they so choose. Also, as is currently the case, brokers may change their syndication choice at any time before April through the ListHub portal.
19. **No one else is doing this is the REALTOR® industry. In fact, the Houston Association of REALTORS® recently elected to give non-REALTOR® consumer sites *more* access to MLS data. Why is ABoR choosing not to syndicate?**
20. Through conversations with REALTORS® in other markets, we’ve learned that many share our concerns about the negative effects of the business practices and data inaccuracies of non-REALTOR® consumer websites. We believe we can support members in marketing their listings without facilitating syndication of members’ data to non-REALTOR® websites and by doing so, seek to avoid the negative impact that practice can have on members and consumers.
21. **How is Multiple Listing Service data superior to other sources of property information?**
22. Data provided directly by the REALTOR® organization is the most accurate information on which consumers can base decisions the Multiple Listing Service rules by which REALTORS® must abide help ensure data integrity.
23. **Why do non-REALTOR® affiliated sites have such outdated information?**
24. ABoR cannot comment on the thoughts or actions of non-REALTOR® consumer websites. However, REALTORS® are required to operate under a strict Code of Ethics, which includes doing our utmost to preserve the integrity and accuracy of property data.
25. **Syndication sites such as Trulia and Zillow are more popular than ever. Is ABoR concerned that this will create an image that ABoR is adverse to technological development?**
26. ABoR is committed to finding the best ways to help members market their listings, provide consumers access to information and introduce new technologies to support their businesses. This includes giving back brokers the autonomy in deciding whether to syndicate data to non-REALTOR® consumer websites on a case-by-case basis as dictated by clients’ and agents’ best interests.
27. **By limiting the sites were Austin home listings are available, will this make the home buying process more difficult for homeowners?**
28. On the contrary. When a homebuyer views listings on a REALTOR®-affiliated website, they can trust the property information on these sites to be accurate and reliable. We believe syndication to only REALTOR®-affiliated sites will reduce the headaches that homebuyers experience from inaccurate data, such as finding out a property they found online is no longer available.
29. **By limiting the sites were Austin home listings are available, will this make it more difficult for sellers to sell their home?**
30. On the contrary. By syndicating property information only to REALTOR®-affiliated websites, the seller’s property information will remain up-to-date, yielding serious inquiries from potential homebuyers and increasing the chances that a property will be sold smoothly.