



## Real estate on the go: from GPS to ZipForms

### Part 3: Mobile matters in real estate

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*Editor's note: In this three-part special report, Inman News dives into the world of mobile real estate to offer a look at how agents are using various services to connect with clients and streamline their businesses. (Read Part 1, "[Agents, consumers connect with mobile technology](#)," and Part 2, "[Trends in mobile technology](#).")*

GPS, iPhone, the *New York Times*, photos, [Realtor.com](#), SMS, vFlyer, videos, Zillow and ZipForms: Mobile technology for real estate consumers and professionals is increasingly sophisticated and diverse.

Talk is cheap -- the latest phones feature an array of tools that expand communications beyond the realm of voice, and technology and real estate marketing companies are offering services that capitalize on these capabilities.

The *New York Times* offers a [real estate-focused text-messaging service](#) that delivers for-sale property information to mobile phones, "regardless of whether you are looking in the newspaper, on the Web site or searching directly from a mobile device." Users of the service can get more information about a print ad for a property by texting a property identification number and can send information to their mobile device, for example, or they can send property information to their own device or another mobile device by clicking on a mobile icon at the *New York Times* real estate Web site. Also, they can access a mobile-friendly search page at [mobile.nytimes.com/re](#).

Some mobile technology companies are seeking to build similar systems for other media outlets. Greg Harris, CEO for Mobile Visions Inc., a company that offers a real estate text-messaging service that delivers property information for prospective buyers at CellAHouse.net, said his company is seeking to build mobile-messaging services for newspapers and real estate magazines.

CellSigns, another mobile technology company, also offers a range of tools for publishers, including its Cellifieds mobile publishing platform for newspapers that can deliver ads and other content via text message or mobile-friendly Web sites.

[Gumiyo.com](http://Gumiyo.com) offers a mobile-accessible classified service that allows users to post ads for real estate, autos and other items by sending photos, videos and text from their mobile devices.

Real estate professionals and home sellers can post real estate ads that feature a multiple listing service number and a description including square footage, price, and the number of bedrooms and bathrooms, among other details.

The site also broadcasts mobile ads to other search engines and online classified sites. Buyers can sign up to receive alerts on their mobile devices by typing in a keyword for what they are looking for and entering a location and a geographic radius in which they wish to purchase an item.

The company does not charge for basic services but offers packages of more advanced services for \$9.95 per month, such as unique mobile identification numbers for property listings that can be displayed on advertisements and for-sale signs.

Many mobile technology companies have built real estate applications that allow real estate professionals to capture phone numbers and other information from prospective buyers who call a toll-free number or send a text message from a wireless device and enter a unique property code that they saw posted on a for-sale sign or in an ad. Some companies have taken a different approach to privacy issues related to the information gleaned from consumers who inquire about properties using a mobile service.

CellSigns allows consumers who use the system to opt-in to receive additional information, and also requires a confirmed opt-in process through which a follow-up message is sent to a user that requires additional permission before an agent who subscribes to the service can contact a consumer directly to schedule a showing or send a brochure. "Unless the consumer 'opts-in,' the agent does not have access to the customer's cell phone number," according to the CellSigns Web site.

Several other companies have taken a different approach in disseminating user information to real estate professionals who subscribe to the system. David Wachs, founder of Cellit Mobile Marketing, a company that delivers property information to consumers when they send a text message to the service, said Cellit always provides consumer contact information to its real estate clients.

"If they are texting in on a property, even if the property is not of interest to them, they probably need (an agent)," he said. "That's why we provide that information." Wachs said the company is in compliance with federal laws because consumers are specifically inquiring about properties.

[House4Cell](http://House4Cell) can transmit property information via text message, fax, e-mail, photos and alerts that are customized based on consumer requests. That company has service plans ranging from \$29.99 per month to \$49.99 per month depending on the number of signs with unique text-messaging codes that real estate professionals choose.

[Goomzee.com](http://Goomzee.com), another mobile technology company that offers a text-for-information service, offers monthly plans ranging from \$39 per month to \$260 per month depending on the number of unique listing codes. The company "solves Do Not Call List concerns because buyers are requesting information," according to the company's Web site. Subscribers can choose which type of alert to receive when prospective buyers use the service.

Mobile Visions Inc.'s [CellAHouse.net](http://CellAHouse.net) service text-messaging service for real estate professionals ranges from \$19.99 per month to \$99 per month depending on the number of unique sign codes. The company has also launched [MobilePropertySites.com](http://MobilePropertySites.com), a free site that enables users to quickly create mobile-friendly individual property Web sites.

[Zoglist.com](http://Zoglist.com), another text-for-info real estate service, charges from \$14.95 to \$109.95 per month for a range of plans.

[DriveBuy Technologies](http://DriveBuy Technologies) offers a text-based real estate service for a \$29 account action fee, \$9 per month for each unique property code and 25 cents per lead.

[CellSigns](http://CellSigns) offers several packages under its Real Estate Mobile Marketing System text-for-information service, ranging from \$25 per month to \$400 per month depending on the number of signs with unique codes. CellSigns also offers a mobile service for real estate brokerage companies through which buyers working with those companies can search among for-sale properties in the area.

The property information is supplied by brokers who participate in data-sharing agreements for a given multiple listing service area. Brokerage company subscriptions for the Mobile Agent service start at \$500 per month.

[HouseFront](http://HouseFront), another mobile technology company, offers real estate valuation tools for mobile users and maintains a database of about 105 million properties, and the company is also working on mobile search technology that ties into multiple listing service information on for-sale properties and location-aware technology, said company CEO James Eberhard. The company has an ad-based revenue model that allows real estate professionals to pay for text message-based ads and to pay for leads.

Popular real estate valuation site [Zillow.com](http://Zillow.com) also offers a mobile valuation tool called [ZMobile](http://ZMobile).

[Smarter Agent](http://Smarter Agent) is a pioneer in location-aware global positioning systems for the real estate industry. Smarter Agent has plans to roll out mobile GPS property search in several markets before the end of the year. The company is partnering with real estate brokerage companies to brand the service in different market areas. The tool will allow consumers to view the location of the nearest for-sale properties based on where they are standing.

Another service, called [TaggLine](http://TaggLine) and offered by Taggart Communications, gets back to basics in offering a toll-free number that prospective home buyers can dial from their mobile phones to request property information in the form of a voice recording, text message or

multimedia message. That service offers subscriptions of \$40 a month for one to five property listings, and reusable signs are \$10 apiece. An unlimited listings plan is \$60 per month.

[Buyer Acquire](#) is another service that captures leads for real estate professionals via a toll-free number. Prospective buyers can call to hear an audio recording, in English or Spanish, of property details that are entered electronically by a real estate professional and are translated as an automated voice recording. The fees for the service start at \$39 per month with a \$49 one-time setup fee, which includes two free sign riders. The annual charge is \$399, with a \$49 setup fee.

Some popular online services for real estate professionals are also available on mobile devices. Electronic forms provider [ZipForms offers a mobile version](#), as does [Move Inc.'s Top Producer](#) customer relationship management service. VFlyer, an online marketing company, [offers mobile tools](#) that allow subscribers to distribute mobile fliers via text messaging and e-mail, and to track viewer statistics.

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