

Only the first three paragraphs and a shorter version of paragraph four were printed in the Denver Post on April 28, 2011. The rest of the printed version's space was used to promote two new Golden Real Estate listings. To see those & other listings, visit [GoldenRealEstate.com](http://GoldenRealEstate.com).

## Realtor Associations Struggle with Loss of Members to Non-Realtor Firms

You've probably heard the ad campaign — "Make Sure Your Agent Is a Realtor" — but what does that mean to the average home buyer or seller?

Realtor is a brand name, a registered trademark like Kleenex. Only a member of the National Association of Realtors (NAR) can call himself or herself a "Realtor" — with a capital "R", of course.

One doesn't join NAR directly. One joins a local Realtor association, which automatically makes you a member of the Colorado and National associations.

But dues are \$450 per year and going up, and more and more agents are switching from firms like mine which require Realtor membership to firms which do not. Home Real Estate (a Realtor firm) created Home Real Estate Colorado LLC (a non-Realtor firm), and Brokers Guild Cherry Creek (a Realtor firm) created Brokers Guild

Classic (a non-Realtor firm), with nearly identical logos designed to blur the fact that the agents of the latter companies are not Realtors.

This is a disturbing trend, but little or nothing is being done by NAR to counter it.

As of Feb. 22, 2011, fully 9.7% of the members of Metrolist (Denver's MLS) were non-Realtors. Metrolist could not provide me with historical figures to determine whether the number is trending up, but there's ample evidence it is.

The local Realtor association to which I belong, JCAR, has seen its membership decline significantly in recent years. The state association, CAR, reports a 22% decline in membership over the past three years. A survey of about 100 former CAR members revealed that 20% were still in the business but without being Realtors. Bob Golden, CEO of the state association, told me that he considers this

a "critical" trend for all Realtor associations.

NAR is fighting a losing battle urging the public to distinguish between a licensed real estate agent who is a Realtor and one who is not. As a writer, I learned early on that I should only use the term "Realtor" when it can be replaced by the phrase "member of the National Association of Realtors." Yet, NAR violated this practice in a recent press release about the importance of using a Realtor!

On Feb. 24th, NAR reported that in a recent survey, "83 percent of home owners said they used a REALTOR® to sell their home, whereas 17 percent said they tried to sell it themselves." But that adds up to 100%, which is unlikely, since many surely sold their homes using agents who were not Realtors. In their survey, NAR neglected to draw that distinction!

Although I don't have exact figures, it's widely known that only half of the active real estate licensees are Realtors.

We don't know how many of them are listing and selling homes, but I would guess that maybe 5% of all transactions involve a non-Realtor licensee.

When advertising the importance of being a Realtor, NAR always focuses on our Code of Ethics. Only Realtors subscribe to the Realtor Code of Ethics and can be sanctioned by the Realtor association for violating that Code.

Practically speaking, the public has no idea whether they're dealing with a licensee who is or is not a Realtor, and is probably unimpressed by the Code of Ethics spiel. "I've known many Realtors who are not ethical," one member of the public wrote in response to a column I wrote about the Code.

The strongest reason, in my opinion for a listing agent to be a Realtor is that our MLS doesn't

upload non-Realtor listings to [realtor.com](http://realtor.com), the most important real estate website. I would bet the non-Realtor firms don't mention that fact when recruiting agents.

It irks me that Metrolist, which is owned by the six metro Realtor associations, allows non-Realtors, for a higher fee, to be MLS participants. This came about when a non-Realtor sued them for access and they didn't want to spend money defending their practice of requiring Realtor membership.

Non-Realtors' listings are not only displayed on Metrolist, they are distributed, along with mine, to every consumer website except [realtor.com](http://realtor.com). Other MLS's, such as St. Louis, do not give non-Realtors access, but Metrolist does. Worse, Metrolist refuses even to add a field indicating on listings whether or not the listing agent is a Realtor.

### REAL ESTATE TODAY



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RAIN DATE:  
MAY 7th

Don't miss the biggest Community Garage Sale in Jefferson County!  
**This Saturday, April 30th, 8 a.m. to Noon at The Village at Mountain Ridge**  
Located on the west side of Highway 93 in Golden.  
Over 25 homes are participating in this huge event! See who's selling what at [www.GoldenGarageSale.com](http://www.GoldenGarageSale.com).