

MLS Says Compass “Private Exclusives” Scheme Constitutes Deceptive Marketing

The MLS serving Washington State has filed a counterclaim against Compass that adds a potent and legally grounded dimension to the long-running argument that private listings are not just exclusionary, but fundamentally deceptive. By framing Compass’s three-phase marketing strategy as a “deceptive scheme” under Washington’s Consumer Protection Act, NWMLS shifts the debate from a disagreement over industry norms to allegations of consumer harm, market manipulation, and intentional concealment of material facts.



At the heart of NWMLS’s argument is the claim that Compass’s Private Exclusives and Coming Soon programs are designed to hide inventory from the public and from competing brokers, creating what the MLS calls a “two-tier marketplace.” In this structure, Compass insiders receive privileged access to listings while the general public sees only a depleted, delayed, or sanitized version of the market. NWMLS argues that this is not simply a business strategy, it is a deliberate withholding of housing data that consumers have a right to see. By positioning housing data as a public good rather than a proprietary asset, NWMLS asserts that private listings undermine the very foundation of an open, competitive real estate market.

The counterclaim goes further by alleging that Compass’s strategy intentionally manipulates the historical record of a property’s marketing life. According to NWMLS, Compass “wipes the slate clean” after testing a listing privately, erasing early days-on-

market and price-response signals before the property ever reaches the MLS. This practice, the MLS argues, conceals the true demand history of a home and suppresses the “public auction effect” — the competitive dynamic that typically drives prices upward when all buyers have equal access to information. In other words, NWMLS is accusing Compass of engineering an artificial version of market reality, one that benefits the brokerage at the expense of both sellers and buyers.

This allegation is particularly significant because it reframes private listings not merely as restrictive, but as structurally deceptive. For an industry built on fiduciary duties and full disclosure, NWMLS’s argument suggests that private listings inherently compromise transparency and distort pricing signals.

The counterclaim also leverages Washington’s Senate Bill 6091, which prohibits agents from marketing properties to exclusive groups unless they are marketed simultaneously to the public. NWMLS argues that its own Rule 2, requiring concurrent public marketing, is now effectively codified in state law. Private listings are not just bad policy, they are now arguably illegal in Washington.

NWMLS further alleges that Compass encouraged its agents to violate their own consumer contracts by prioritizing corporate strategy over client interests. This accusation reinforces the narrative that private listings serve brokerage-level goals rather than consumer welfare. It also positions private list-

ings as a structural conflict of interest: a system where the brokerage’s incentives diverge from the client’s best outcome.

Compass, for its part, frames its approach as consumer-driven flexibility and choice, arguing that NWMLS is retaliating to protect its own power. But NWMLS’s counterclaim

says private listings are mechanisms that obscure truth, distort competition, and mislead consumers.

In doing so, this case adds a powerful new dimension to the national debate. It suggests that the core problem with private listings is not just fairness — it’s deception.

From Quartzite to ‘Cottagecore’: Here Are Some Design Trends Boosting Sale Prices for Homes

According to 2026 research from Zillow.com, today’s buyers are paying surprising premiums for homes that feel like personal retreats — spaces that look ready for their close-up on a streaming-series set.

The analysis of more than two million 2025 listings shows that lifestyle-driven features and turnkey finishes are commanding the highest boosts in sale price, with some amenities adding more than 5% to a home’s expected value.

Zillow reports that the “cottagecore” aesthetic — think outdoor fireplaces, and cozy, nature-inspired living — continues to resonate with buyers seeking comfort and escape. Homes with outdoor kitchens add 4.4%, and even the simple use of the word *cottage* in a listing is associated with a 3.2% premium.

Outdoor showers, waterfront settings, and fireplaces also rank high, reinforcing the idea that buyers want homes that feel like a getaway, even if they’re not vacation properties.

Inside the home, quartzite countertops have emerged as the new luxury must-have. Zillow found that listings mentioning quartzite sell for 5.3% more than expected, outperforming quartz, soapstone, marble, and onyx. The appeal is clear: buyers want kitchens that photograph beautifully but also stand up to daily use.

Quartz and quartzite may sound similar, but they’re very different materials. Quartz is an engineered surface made from crushed quartz bound with resins, giving it consistent patterns, a wide color range, and excellent stain resistance with no need for sealing. Quartzite is a natural

stone formed under heat and pressure, prized for its unique veining, superior hardness, and strong heat resistance, though it requires periodic sealing because it’s porous. Quartz offers predictable pricing and low maintenance, while quartzite tends to cost more due to quarrying and fabrication but delivers a more organic, one-of-a-kind look.

Personalization, once considered risky, has also become a selling point. Custom features and bespoke finishes add roughly 3%, while purpose-built spaces such as gourmet kitchens or golf simulators can push prices even higher.

Perhaps the strongest message from buyers is this: *no one wants a project*. Turnkey homes sell for 2.9% more, and remodeled homes earn a 2.2% premium, while fixer-uppers take a steep 14% discount. With affordability tight, buyers prefer to roll improvements into their mortgage rather than undertake renovations after closing.

For sellers, Zillow emphasizes that there’s no need to rush into major upgrades. Instead, highlight the features you already have, list strategically — late May remains the sweet spot — and invest in strong digital presentation. High-resolution photography, virtual tours, and interactive floor plans, especially through Zillow Showcase, help listings stand out and sell faster. In a market where buyers crave comfort, customization, and certainty, the homes that feel both personal and polished are the ones commanding top dollar.

If you list your home with me, it will be featured on this page and on page 3 of all 24 metro area weekly newspapers. Call me at 303-525-1851 for details!

Wealthy Vail Valley HOA Shows What Money Can Buy When It Comes to Wildfire Resilience

Cordillera, the luxury community above the Vail Valley, has built one of Colorado’s most sophisticated — and expensive — wildfire defense systems, a model of what’s possible when residents fund mitigation at a scale few places can match. The *Colorado Sun* describes a layered strategy that treats wildfire not as an occasional threat but as a design parameter baked into daily operations, infrastructure, and even landscaping.

The backbone is a **redundant water supply network**: hydrants placed far more densely than county code requires, plus strategically buried cisterns that ensure firefighters never have to chase water uphill. Roads and driveways are widened, signed, and meticulously mapped so engines can maneuver quickly in steep terrain. The HOA enforces **strict defensible-space rules**, and common areas undergo continuous fuel thinning to keep

fire behavior low and predictable.

Cordillera’s private fire authority conducts **regular readiness drills**, preplans every structure, and maintains detailed digital maps of hazards, access points, and water sources. Crews train on-site so they know the terrain intimately before a fire ever starts.

And then there’s the community’s most eye-catching tool: a **robotic mowing tractor** that autonomously trims large swaths of grassland to maintain low-fuel zones. It works day or night, reducing labor costs while keeping fire fuels in check — a high-tech hedge against fast-moving grassfires.

The result is a rare, well-funded blueprint for making a mountain community **hard to ignite and easy to defend** in an era of escalating wildfire risk.

Find a link to the Colorado Sun article at <http://RealEstateToday.substack.com>.



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