

## Image Rights for Real Estate Marketing

Every social post, flyer, and listing graphic is for commercial use. Copyright, trademark, and publicity rights all apply. Attorney Patent Trolls actively scan the web and will send invoices for tens of thousands of dollars for infringements. You must only pull from sources that grant you a real commercial license.

### Do Not Use These Sources

Source	Why It Is a Problem
<b>Google Images</b>	A search engine, not a license. Results are copyrighted by someone. Downloading grants you nothing.
<b>Pinterest</b>	A discovery platform. Every pin is owned by a creator. Re-posting to your feed or a flyer is infringement.
<b>Social media screenshots</b>	Screenshots from Facebook, Instagram, or the MLS do not transfer rights. The original creator still owns it.
<b>AI images with real faces or logos</b>	Even AI-generated content is subject to publicity and trademark rights when it shows a real person or brand.
<b>Client or friend photos, no release</b>	Get a signed release before using anyone's face, home interior, or child in marketing.

### Approved Sources

Source	What You Get	Watch For
<b>Canva Pro Library</b>	Millions of photos, illustrations, videos, and elements in your Canva Pro or Teams plan. Commercial use is covered inside your Canva designs.	Do not export Canva Pro stock and re-sell it as a standalone file.
<b>Unsplash (unsplash.com)</b>	Free high-quality photos, commercial use allowed, no attribution required under the Unsplash License.	Recognizable faces and brand logos still need separate clearance.
<b>Pexels (pexels.com)</b>	Free photos and videos, commercial use allowed, no attribution required. Owned by Canva.	Same rules on faces and trademarks. Confirm before running paid ads with a person.



Source	What You Get	Watch For
<b>Pixabay</b> (pixabay.com)	Free photos, illustrations, vectors, and videos. Commercial use allowed, no attribution required.	Ignore the sponsored Shutterstock results at the top. Those are paid.
<b>Your own work</b>	Photos you took, headshots you commissioned, listing photos you paid for.	Photographer contracts can limit reuse. Read before repurposing.
<b>Paid stock</b> (Adobe, Shutterstock, iStock)	Professional licenses with clear commercial terms and, often, indemnification.	Keep the receipt. Standard licenses have use caps.

### Three Free Sites to Bookmark Today

- **Unsplash** (unsplash.com). Clean, modern photography that does not look like stock. Best for hero images, social graphics, and email headers.
- **Pexels** (pexels.com). Large library with strong diversity and lifestyle content, plus free videos. Best for Reels, neighborhood scenes, and testimonials.
- **Pixabay** (pixabay.com). Broader mix including illustrations, vectors, and icons. Best for infographics, checklists, and graphic elements.

### Four Fast Rules

- **If you did not take it, buy it, create it or find it on a site that grants a license**, do not use it.
- **A free license covers copyright**. It does not cover faces, logos, or private property. Get separate permission for those.
- **For ads with a recognizable person**, get a model release in writing. No exceptions.
- **When in doubt**, ask the broker. A thirty-second question beats a four-figure demand letter.

### Use of AI-Generated Images

AI-generated graphics can be a smart workaround for copyright claims because, under current U.S. Copyright Office guidance, images created purely by an AI tool from your own text prompts are not owned by anyone, which means no photographer, stock agency, or estate is going to send you a demand letter for using one. Tools like Canva's Magic Media and Google's Imagen let you produce custom visuals. The safe lane for real estate agents looks like this: use AI for concept art, lifestyle scenes without identifiable people, abstract backgrounds, icons, and illustrations for newsletters or training content, and keep your prompts and output files saved so you can prove where the image came from.

### Creative Commons

**Creative Commons** is a free licensing system that lets photographers, illustrators, and designers tell the world exactly how their work can be used, without you having to hunt down







the creator and ask. When you see a CC label on an image, you are getting permission in advance, but that permission comes with conditions.

For real estate marketing, the ones that matter most are CC0 (use it any way you want, no credit needed), CC BY (free to use commercially if you credit the creator), and CC BY-NC (free for personal or educational use only, which means off-limits for your listings, ads, and market reports because every one of those is commercial use). If an image has no Creative Commons license at all, assume it is fully copyrighted and do not use it.

The license is your written permission slip, so check the badge before you download, save a screenshot of the terms the day you grab the image, and when in doubt, pick something clearly labeled CC0 or pull from a site like Unsplash, Pexels, or Pixabay that grants commercial rights up front.

#### Creative Commons licenses at a glance

Read the badge before you use the image. The more icons, the more restrictions.

 <p><b>CC0</b> Public domain</p> <p>Use it any way you want.</p> <p>Commercial use OK.</p> <p>No credit required.</p> <p>Edit, crop, remix freely.</p>	 <p><b>CC BY</b> Attribution</p> <p>Use it anywhere, including ads.</p> <p>Must credit the creator.</p> <p>Edits allowed.</p> <p>Name, link, license in the caption.</p>	 <p><b>CC BY-SA</b> Share-alike</p> <p>Use and remix, including ads.</p> <p>Must credit the creator.</p> <p>Your remix must carry the same license.</p>	 <p><b>CC BY-ND</b> No derivatives</p> <p>Use as-is, including ads.</p> <p>Must credit the creator.</p> <p>No edits, no crops, no filters.</p> <p>Text overlays may break it.</p>	 <p><b>CC BY-NC</b> Non-commercial</p> <p>Personal and educational use only.</p> <p>No ads, no listings, no promotions.</p> <p>Must credit the creator.</p>	 <p><b>No CC</b> © Reserved</p> <p>Most images on Pinterest, Google, and the open web.</p> <p>Assume you cannot use it without a license.</p>
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Most open

Most restricted

Updated April 2026 - MR