



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New "first in nation" system earns "Best Practices Award"

Northwest MLS adds accessibility features to database

KIRKLAND, Washington (November 7, 2018) -- "Everyone should have the same opportunity to find a home that fits their needs."

Two brokers who shared that belief approached Northwest Multiple Listing Service (NWMLS) two years ago in hopes of finding ways to better identify properties in the database that fit the needs of people with physical limitations. That undertaking just earned a "Best Practices Award" from Northwest Access Fund, a nonprofit organization serving individuals with disabilities.



Until now, brokers who are part of Northwest MLS had a single, vague way of identifying properties with accessibility features, a checkbox labeled "Disabled Access." Now, the broker-owned MLS is rolling out a comprehensive system – believed to be the first in the country – for highlighting and searching accessibility features throughout a home.

The new accessibility features in the multiple listing service (MLS) database culminates the two-year effort led by brokers **Barry Long** of Marketplace Sotheby's International Realty in Woodinville and **Tom Minty** of John L. Scott's office in Issaquah.

New Accessibility Field Options

Listing input options include 12 sections with checkboxes covering various areas of a property from accessible approaches and entrances to utility rooms.

Accessibility Features (12)

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessible Approach | <input type="checkbox"/> Accessible Utility |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessible Entrance | <input type="checkbox"/> Modifications for Hearing/Vision |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessible Central Living/Common Area | <input type="checkbox"/> Accessible Elevator or Lift Installed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessible Bedroom | <input type="checkbox"/> Ceiling Track |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessible Bath | <input type="checkbox"/> Smart Technology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessible Kitchen | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

Northwest MLS has also created an "Accessibility Information Supplement" with 48 definitions and delineations of the various features within each checkbox. Additionally, Long and Minty are offering educational training programs to familiarize members with the new system, and the MLS has added explanatory material to its forms manual and Listing Input class to demonstrate ways to filter searches and highlight features.

Long said some brokers have been hesitant to even mention disabled access, in part because it might conjure images of "ugly grab bars and a make-shift ramp that someone's uncle built." Now, he says brokers can highlight special features, assistive devices and other appealing universal design principles that add value to a listing.

"This more robust way of showcasing accessible properties means brokers and their clients can search and filter listings based on wide-ranging criteria," said Jason Wall, chairman of Northwest MLS and president of Lake & Company. Wall said people with disabilities, veterans who have suffered service-related injuries, and even seniors looking to age in place are among the populations who could benefit from the new disclosures.

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Both Long and Minty have developed expertise on accessible living needs, age-in-place housing, ADA-compliant designs, and universal design environments.

Minty credits a friend with multiple sclerosis with sparking his interest in serving house-hunters with different abilities or special needs. That evolved into his forming [ABLE Environments](#) in 2004, a full-service organization focused on accessible living. Minty, who has a Seniors Real Estate Specialist designation from the National Association of Realtors, has a background in construction, is a long-time member of the Northwest Universal Design Council, and is a member of the Seattle-King County Advisory Council for Aging & Disability Services.

In addition to his real estate practice ([Barry Long Homes](#)), Long is a [motivational speaker](#), delivering presentations on overcoming adversity, stepping up to the next level, goal setting and other themes. His perspectives on accessibility features and overcoming obstacles are based in part on his personal experiences since becoming a paraplegic from a near-fatal motorcycle crash in 1992. Calling that accident a “bad choice,” he is known for his “live life to the fullest” personality and belief that “the only real choice that matters is how you choose to respond to the things that happen in your life.”

Northwest Multiple Listing Service will be among honorees at the Northwest Access Fund awards dinner and benefit on November 15 in Seattle. The “Best Practices Award” recognizes efforts to include people with disabilities in various business practices, such as service methods, awareness efforts, customization, or targeted outreach. In announcing the award, Northwest Access Fund praised Northwest MLS for enabling brokers and buyers alike to search and filter for accessibility features, adding this MLS “is setting the standard for other regional listing services to follow.”

[Northwest Access Fund](#) (formerly known as Washington Assistive Technology Foundation) is a nonprofit organization serving people with disabilities in Washington and Oregon. It is the first certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) to be run by and for people with disabilities.

Northwest Multiple Listing Service, owned by its member real estate firms, is the largest full-service MLS in the Northwest. Its membership of around 2,200 member offices includes more than 29,000 real estate professionals. The organization, based in Kirkland, Wash., currently serves 23 counties in the state.

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Barry Long



Tom Minty