

Search Alternatives to MLS Areas

As agents look forward to 2010 and area elimination on the MLS, there can be an uneasiness that can become almost panic. There is a high level of comfort associated with searching by MLS Areas for many agents. While these agents will have to say goodbye to MLS Areas as search criteria, the plethora of other search options may not be readily apparent. Below are 4 of the more popular alternatives.

MLS Areas have been a staple at CBR for a very long time. There are many alternatives to area searching that have been available for even longer. Zip Code, School District, Tax District and others have always been viable search fields in the MLS. These continue to be used and have actually gained ground as far as frequency of use as compared to areas. New technology has offered even more search options, namely, polygon map searching.

Alternative 1: Zip Code Search –

Zip Code allows agents to find a very common and easily definable geographical boundary for their searches. These boundaries are readily available to the general public as well as agent by picking up any up-to-date map that displays Zip Codes. These are standard and removes the need for having a specific brand or version of a proprietary map. Zip Code is required entry at time of listing. It is also a fineable field to ensure that only correct data is entered in this field.

Alternative 2: School District Search –

School District is an excellent way to conduct your searches. In fact, many clients require a certain School District when defining their buying criteria. School District is required entry at time of listing. It is also a fineable field to ensure that only correct data is entered in this field.

Alternative 3: Tax District Search –

Tax District field is a great way to search for specific communities in the MLS. For Example, if an agent wants to look in Powell Corp., they used to search MLS area PO. They can still search Powell Corp. simply by entering Tax District 24 instead of Area. This works for all Corporate Limits searches. Just like Areas, this does not include the “surrounding subdivisions”. If your client wants to live in “the Powell area”, it would probably be best to use a polygon. Tax District is required entry at time of listing. It is also a fineable field to ensure that only correct data is entered in this field.

Alternative 4: Polygon (Map) Search –

Polygon searching is an incredible implementation of new mapping technology that allows agents to define search criteria by geographic boundaries. If a client says, “We want to be North of 270 between 71 and Sunbury Rd.”, that is no problem for Polygons. The polygon may include multiple Zip Codes, Counties, School District, Areas, and Tax Districts. In fact, without polygons, accurately searching this client’s criteria might be all but impossible. The agent can add the correct number of beds, baths, price range and other criteria to hone in on exactly what the client wants. The combination of criteria on the Search Form and polygon on the Search Map will allow an unprecedented level of fine tuning for MLS searches.

Polygon Searching is probably the best overall alternative to areas. There are many opportunities to “get up to speed” on polygon/map searching. These include the MLS training videos and PDF documents located at www.wdwp.com as well as MLS classes.

Polygon Search Training Options

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MLS polygon search video and PDF training (<http://www.wdwp.com>) :

- Video - "Mapping - Polygon Search"
- Video - "Mapping - Multi Polygon Search"
- PDF - "Polygon Searching"
- PDF - "Geo-Code (Map Placement)"

There are 2 MLS classes that offer polygon search training:

T1: Tempo Level I –

This class is a 3 hour class covering all fundamental "core" functions of the MLS class. This class includes polygon searching, geocode, basic criteria search, email, archive and adding or editing listings and photos (Listing Maintenance).

Tempo FOCUS: Map Search –

This class is a 1 hour class devoted completely to mapping and geocode. Only polygon search and related topics will be covered in this class. Tempo FOCUS: Map Search class is a great way for any agent who is new to polygon search or just not comfortable with polygon search to focus on just those skills that will make them proficient at polygon map searching.

To schedule a class, please call 614-475-4000
or schedule online at the CBR website www.columbusrealtors.com

