

BACKGROUND:

There are nearly 1 million Oregonians with a disability. This includes those with physical and mental disabilities, as well as older citizens who may face limited mobility.

Recent census data indicates that a prime subset of this demographic—30% of all disabled Oregonians between the ages of 21 and 64—are employed. Many of these, as well as those who receive assistance funds or who rely on family members' incomes, constitute a significant market segment.

Nearly 1 million Oregonians identify themselves as disabled.

30% are employed and of prime home buying age.

RMLS™, ACCESSIBILITY, AND YOU

The Regional Multiple Listing Service™ (RMLS™) is constantly upgrading its member and public sites (RMLSweb and rmls.com, respectively) to better serve you as you serve consumers. One feature that was recently expanded was the listing, definition, and search-ability of accessible features.

WHAT ARE ACCESSIBLE FEATURES?

Accessible features are a set of specifically defined residential or structural attributes that may make a home more useable, safe, functional, or comfortable for those with disabilities.

ARE YOU MISSING AN ENTIRE MARKET SEGMENT?

WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOUR LISTINGS AND RMLS™ SEARCH OPTIONS MAY HAVE YOU MISSING THE MARK ON A SIGNIFICANT DEMOGRAPHIC!

RMLS™



So WHAT?

We have already established that those with disabilities constitute a significant market segment. That alone should encourage most sellers and their agents to want to identify their listings as accessible whenever possible.

In addition, federal fair housing laws broadly define disability to include any physical or mental condition that creates a substantial "major life impairment" such as difficulty seeing, walking, thinking, chronic illness, and so forth. When you consider the scope of possible disabilities, your listing may be more accessible than you think!

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Structural features that increase accessibility might include:

- Doors and hallways wide enough for wheelchairs
- Light switches, electrical outlets, thermostats, and other environmental controls in accessible locations
- Exterior routes (level ground, ramps, and wide outside doors)
- Grab bars or installation of wall reinforcements around toilets, tubs or shower stalls, and shower seats
- Kitchens and bathrooms laid out in such a way that an individual in a wheelchair can maneuver
- Strobe lights or other alternative alert systems for doorbells, smoke detectors, etc.

Some of these features may be natural and attractive in any residential setting (spacious kitchens and bathrooms, wide hallways, etc).

Tout these great features to the market and expand your listing's appeal!

RMLS™ TOOLS FOR ACCESSIBILITY

RMLS™ has created an index of terms along with technical definitions that may be used to identify accessible properties on RMLSweb and rmls.com called *Accessibility Term Definitions* (AKA: Doc. 1211).

This sheet can be viewed and printed from the RMLSweb site by going to Toolkit; choosing Forms and Documents; then requesting Doc. 1211.

WHEN YOU MEET WITH SELLERS to fill out a listing contract, refer to the *Accessibility Term Definitions* sheet to interpret the accessibility abbreviations RMLS™ uses and identify as many accessible features as possible.

Then it will be a simple matter to flag the home's accessible features when inputting the listing into RMLSweb! In the Listing Load module (Back Office/Listing Load) you will find a section called "Features" and a subheading labeled "Accessibility", much like it appears on your listing form (see screen shot below).

Accessibility: Max Choices: 9	<input type="checkbox"/> 1LEVEL	<input type="checkbox"/> BATHCAB	<input type="checkbox"/> BATHSIZ
	<input type="checkbox"/> BINLITE	<input type="checkbox"/> CAREQTR	<input type="checkbox"/> ELEVATR
	<input type="checkbox"/> GRNDLVL	<input type="checkbox"/> KITCAB	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDING
	<input type="checkbox"/> MINSTEP	<input type="checkbox"/> NATLITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PARKING
	<input type="checkbox"/> PASTACC	<input type="checkbox"/> PATHWAY	<input type="checkbox"/> RAMP
	<input type="checkbox"/> ROLLSHR	<input type="checkbox"/> STAIRAS	<input type="checkbox"/> WALKSHR
	<input type="checkbox"/> WD-DOOR	<input type="checkbox"/> WD-HALL	

Simply place a check mark next to each feature you identified with the seller as you input the listing.

If you forget what the abbreviations stand for, LEFT click once on the header "Accessibility" and a popup window with the unabbreviated terms and their technical definitions will appear. You can mark up to nine (9) accessible features per listing.

You might also consider including pictures of accessible features in your RMLS™ listing. RMLSweb allows up to eight (8) photos to illustrate the special features of each property.

THE IMPACT

In the initial six months of this expanded rmls.com site feature, member agents posted over 3,000 accessible properties!

This has made it easier than ever before for buyers searching the public rmls.com site to find properties that are suitable for them. It has also made it easier for buyers' agents representing buyers with disabilities to narrow their searches on RMLSweb to properties that may not require modification to accommodate the buyers' needs.

You can help this market segment attain homeownership and independence while at the same time market your listing to a broader audience.

Familiarize yourself and your clients with the accessible features in the RMLS™ system and be sure to properly identify all the great attributes of each of your listings.

THE NEED

While 3,000 listings identified as accessible is a significant step forward for those with disabilities and the agents who serve them, you can help reach and serve this market by assuring that all properties with accessible features are properly and clearly identified as such.

ACCESSIBILITY TERM DEFINITIONS

1LEVEL	One Level At least kitchen, one bedroom, one bath, and one sitting area are on a single level.
BATHCAB	Bathroom Cabinets Most cabinets can be reached at less than 48" from the floor. Cabinets' knee room requirements are the same as kitchen cabinets.
BATHSIZ	Bathroom Size Minimum 60" diameter floor area for turn around or transfer to toilet or tub/shower.
BINLITE	Built-in Lighting Home has built-in ceiling or wall lighting for more even distribution of light than permitted by plug-in lamps.
CAREQTR	Caregiver Quarters Guest or caregiver space with bedroom and bath.
ELEVATR	Elevator to upper floor(s) is installed in this home.
GRNDLVL	Ground Level At least kitchen, one bedroom, one bath, and one sitting area are on the ground floor.
KITCAB	Kitchen Cabinets Most cabinets can be reached at less than 48" from the floor. Knee room under sink is a minimum 19" in depth and between 34-37" from floor to bottom of sink or cabinet. If no knee room, there is room for a table workspace or pull out counters.
LANDING	Landing Entry Porch or landing a minimum of 60" diameter for opening the door and turning to enter.
MINSTEP	Minimal Steps No more than two steps/stairs at any one location in the home.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY...

The Fair Housing Council of Oregon (FHCO) with the tremendous support and technical assistance of RMLS™ and Bridges to Mobility prepared this brochure for you.

This project was funded by a grant from Legal Aid Services of Oregon and the Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) with the intent of expanding Oregon's largest statewide multiple listing service database to allow both the public and real estate industry professionals to easily identify accessible features in homes for sale.

FHCO IS A NON-PROFIT committed to promoting equal, safe, and affordable housing and to providing information and resources to both housing consumers and housing providers. This is achieved by providing education and outreach regarding fair housing laws, as well as enforcement and investigations of civil rights violations as they pertain to housing.

Everyone falls within one or more protected classes and denying anyone housing services (representations, access to accurate availability information, lending, appraising, insurance, etc.) based on the following is illegal:

- Gender, race, color, national origin, religion, disability, and familial status (presence of children or pregnancy) are protected under Federal Law.
- State law protects marital status and source of income
- In addition, local governments may add additional protections such as sexual orientation, age, and gender identity. Check the regulations in the jurisdictions in which you conduct business to identify additional protected class groups.

The work that provided the basis for this publication was supported by funding under a grant with HUD. The substance and findings of the work are dedicated to the public. The author and publisher are solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and interpretations contained in this publication. Such interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the Federal Government.

FAIR HOUSING AND YOUR ADVERTISING

Fair housing law prohibits housing providers and the media from printing or publishing an advertisement that indicates a preference, limitation, or discriminates based on a protected class.

Currently state and federal law protects people from housing discrimination based on an individual's race, color, national origin, religion, sex, family status, or disability.

State law also protects marital status and source of income, and some cities or counties protect age, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

WHAT SHOULD BE AVOIDED?

- Direct discrimination, such as "No Children" or "Healthy Only"
- Pictorial inserts that only show non-disabled white adults communicate the same illegal message as the words "non-disabled white adults only"

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW?

- Words that describe behavior--not status--are generally permissible. Examples of acceptable words are "responsible" or "reliable." If the word "independent" is used, it should be clear that a person with a disability who can live alone with some outside assistance is not excluded.
- Words that describe an attribute of a dwelling unit are permissible unless the ad restricts who can live there. For example "family room" or "mother-in-law apartment" are okay as long as it does not really mean only a mother-in-law can live there.
- Similarly "view" or "within walking distance of downtown" are descriptive and acceptable. What would be illegal are "no blind persons" or "no wheelchairs."

NATLITE	Natural Lighting Windows allow good natural lighting into major living areas of the house.
PARKING	Parking Parking space is a minimum of 12' wide, ideally 15'.
PASTACC	Past Accessibility An already adapted or retrofitted home. Home has been accessibility occupied by a person with accessibility needs or used as an adult foster care home, group home, etc.
PATHWAY	Pathway Pathway or ramp from parking area to house entrance is a flat or gentle grade, ideally a 1:12 ratio (1" rise for 12" length).
RAMP	Ramp Ramp from parking area to house entrance is a flat or gentle grade, ideally a 1:12 ratio (1" rise for 12" length).
ROLLSHR	Roll-in Shower No barrier/lip/ rise to step over. Shower area is minimum 30" deep and 60" long. Drain in floor.
STAIRAS	Stair Assistance Elevator or stair assistance device is installed in this home.
WALKSHR	Walk-in Shower Barrier/lip/rise is no higher than 6" at entrance to shower.
WD-DOOR	Wide Doorways Minimum 32" width.
WD-HALL	Wide Hallways Ideally 36" width with 60" diameter turning area at corners.

Do you have questions about...

FAIR HOUSING LAW:

Fair Housing Council of Oregon

Phone: (503) 223-8197 or 1-800-424-3247 (TTY)

E-mail: information@fhco.org

Website: <http://fhco.org>

- To schedule a fair housing training session please call: (503) 412-6000
- To report a fair housing complaint please call: (503) 223-8197 or 1-800-424-3247 (TTY) (Se habla español)

Dept. of Housing and Urban Development

Phone: 1-800-877-0246

Website: <http://www.hud.gov>

Fair Housing Accessibility First.

Phone: 1-888-341-7781 (Voice/TTY)

Website: <http://www.FairHousingFIRST.org>

LISTING LOAD FUNCTIONS:

RMLS™

Phone: (503) 236-7657 (Portland office number)

- For listing load or other technical questions: 503/872-8002 or support@rmls.com
- You can find the RMLS™ *Accessibility Term Definitions* (AKA: Document 1211) at RMLSweb.com/Toolkit/Forms and Documents
- To schedule a listing load class call the office number or email training@rmls.com or log into RMLSweb and visit Toolkit/Training Calendar

ADVERTISING, CONTINUED:

- Age is a protected class only in some areas, but beware of publishing ads limiting age, because they may discriminate against families with children.
- Senior housing may exclude families with children, but it must meet certain criteria, including an intent to be senior housing. Using "adults only" does not express the intent to be "senior housing." The ad should indicate the housing is for those over age 55 or age 62 or seniors.
- Words that do not directly prohibit a protected class but are "neutral" are permissible. Phrases like "choice location," "executive home," "private," etc. are permissible. But if you know that your client wants to use these as "code" words to exclude protected class individuals, follow the spirit of fair housing and do not do it.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS:

- Use the HUD fair housing logo whenever possible
- If a dwelling unit is accessible to persons with mobility impairments, mention it in your marketing

This information is available at <http://fhco.org>

Fair Housing Council of Oregon
1020 SW Taylor St., Suite 700
Portland, Oregon 97205
Phone: (503) 223-8197
Fax: (503) 223-3396
E-mail: information@fhco.org