



Photographs and Media FAQs

To comply with MLS Rules and Policies, please review these frequently asked questions before adding your listing or uploading photographs and media to the MLS.

1. Can images be removed from an MLS listing once it's in a finalized status (Closed, Canceled, Expired)?

No. Once the listing is finalized, or is the subject of a purchase contract (Active Under Contract or Pending), photographs or other historical data cannot be removed by the MLS or users. This is required by California Civil Code section 1088 and section 11.8 of the CRMLS Rules and Policies. In addition to understanding the property's value, photo content (like all listing information) is essential for market analysis, appraisals, CMAs, etc.

To learn more about your options as a listing agent, office manager, or broker, click [here](#).

2. Can a property photo be uploaded to the MLS if it includes a "For Sale" sign?

No. This qualifies as "branding" and is prohibited on the MLS. Violations of this rule will result in the photo's removal and the issuance of a citation from the CRMLS Compliance department. Issues of branding are clarified in section 11.5(e) of the CRMLS Rules and Policies. Because a branding advertisement occurs concurrently with the media's publication, this violation does not receive a warning notice and CRMLS will issue a citation with an immediate fine.

3. Is branded content allowed on the MLS? What is considered "branding?"

No. Branded content in MLS media will result in its removal, a citation, and a fine. This is required by Rule 11.5 (e) of the CRMLS Rules and Policies.

CRMLS defines branding as the use of any media content to identify a person or entity. This includes, but is not limited to, the listing broker or agent, any franchise or company they are affiliated with, their contact information, or any other material that is or may be associated with the broker or agent.

Media content that CRMLS may consider branding includes, but is not limited to, signs, contact information, identifiable persons, logos, slogans, catchphrases, external links/references, team names, or any other items related to the broker or agent.

4. Does the primary photograph need to be of the property's exterior structure?

No. While at least one (1) photograph must show a substantial portion of the property's exterior, it does not need to be the primary photo.

5. Does the exterior photograph need to be an image of the property's front view?

No. Other views will satisfy the requirement as long as the photograph includes a substantial portion of the property's exterior.

6. The property for a land listing is inaccessible for photography. Can the photo requirement still be fulfilled?

Yes. In these cases, download and use parcel maps from public sources that confirm, in writing, the user's right to use the image. Alternatively, use an accurate rendering of the property.

7. Are YouTube links allowed in the Unbranded Virtual Tour field?

Yes, but with restrictions. Unbranded channels with only general property descriptions are allowed. Channels that include agent or brokerage details, logos, photographs, or anything that connects them to an agent or brokerage are prohibited. See sections 11.5 and 12.5 of the CRMLS Rules and Policies for more restrictions on virtual tours and other media.

8. Can listings include copied images from Google, Bing, or other online sources?

No. By submitting media to the MLS, the participant and subscriber represent and warrant that either they own the right to reproduce and display that media or that they have procured such rights and all necessary licenses from the appropriate parties. If using media from a third-party source, it is necessary to provide pre-entry written documentation to authorize the listing agent and broker to use that media on the MLS.

Please note that Google, Bing, and most other online sources allow only non-commercial uses of their images. Publication through the MLS is considered a commercial use.

9. Is documentation required to use photographs from a photographer?

Yes. The listing agent and broker must get written permission to use photographs taken by a photographer. This documentation may include, but is not limited to, the C.A.R. PIA (Property Images Agreement) form or another acceptable assignment of rights or license agreement.

The document must allow the MLS to use, store, reproduce, compile, display, and distribute the images. The MLS's rights must be irrevocable, unrestricted, transferable, perpetual, royalty-free, non-exclusive, and with the right to sublicense.

CRMLS has found that photographer-created license forms rarely include the necessary license language, even when they mention the MLS. These forms should be reviewed carefully. The participant or subscriber from another party must have all the rights in writing before submitting the subject media to the MLS.

10. The seller provided photographs of the property and wants to use them on the MLS. Is this allowed?

Yes, with exceptions. The listing agent or broker must get written permission from the holder of the necessary rights and licenses before using media they did not create themselves.

Documentation may include, but is not limited to, the C.A.R. PIA (Property Images Agreement) form or another acceptable assignment of rights or license agreement. The document must allow the MLS to use, store, reproduce, compile, display, and distribute these images as part of its compilation. The MLS's rights must be irrevocable, unrestricted, transferable, perpetual, royalty-free, non-exclusive, and with the right to sublicense. If the seller is also the content creator, they can provide this documentation.

11. Is a photograph required for listings in the Coming Soon status?

Yes. There must be at least one (1) photograph uploaded to the listing that accurately depicts a substantial portion of the property's exterior within two (2) calendar days from entry.

To learn more about the Coming Soon status, click [here](#).

12. Is a photograph required for registered listings?

No. However, up to seventy-five (75) photographs can be added to a registered listing.

13. Can other listings or statuses be exempt from the photo requirement?

Yes. Registered listings, listings canceled within two (2) calendar days, and listings entered in the Business Opportunity property type are exempt from requiring at least one (1) exterior photograph.

To learn more about Registered Listings, click [here](#).

14. Can photographs of the property be omitted from the listing at the seller's request? If so, what are the steps to remain compliant?

Yes. Within two (2) calendar days of entry, CRMLS Compliance must receive written instructions from the seller not to include property photos on the MLS.

15. Can photographs from the MLS be reused with the original owner's permission?

No. It is prohibited to reuse MLS photographs, even with the original owner's permission. Reusing photographs from the MLS will result in a "double watermark" on the photos, which violates MLS rules.

When a photo is uploaded to the MLS, each one is stamped with a watermark that displays the letters "CRMLS" in the bottom-right corner. This watermark indicates that the uploaded photo is original. It also signifies that the listing photos are part of the CRMLS compilation copyright. If a photograph is copied from another listing, with or without permission, and then uploaded to a new listing, the watermark from the copied photograph will carry over to the new one. The new watermark will be applied to the uploaded photograph, resulting in a double watermark.

Reusing photographs violates CRMLS rule 11.5(d). There must be sufficient written authorization from the rightful owner of the media prior to adding it to a listing. To avoid double watermarks, always get the originals or unmarked versions from whoever is granting permission to use them. It is prohibited to copy photos directly from another listing.

For a complete copy of the CRMLS Rules and Policies, click [here](#).

Click [here](#) to chat live with a compliance analyst, available Monday-Friday from 8:30 AM-4:00 PM.