

Google drops real estate listings

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Search giant Google will no longer support real estate listings uploaded to its classified listings site on [Google Maps](#), the company [announced](#) today.

Consumers will no longer be able to find for-sale, foreclosure, or rental properties through the search function on Google Maps, and real estate professionals will no longer be able to upload their listings to Google Base, the company's classifieds site, which is being replaced by Google Shopping APIs and will not support real estate listings.

"In part due to low usage, the proliferation of excellent property-search tools on real estate websites, and the infrastructure challenge posed by the impending retirement of the [Google Base API](#), we've decided to discontinue the real estate feature within Google Maps on February 10, 2011," the company said in a blog post.

Home seekers can still use "Google search results to find helpful real estate information and websites" as well as view local businesses, directions and transit times through Google Maps and explore neighborhoods through Google Street View, the company added.

"This does not come as a surprise to me. Even with Google's huge audience, it shows having listing data is clearly not enough to deliver a good real estate search experience and build audience," said Pete Flint, CEO and co-founder of property search site Trulia.

The company added that Google's removal of listings data will not affect its mobile application, which uses the Google Maps API.

Though Google has [touted the ability to upload](#) and search for listings on its site, it has also [denied](#) that it seeks to create a "universal MLS" or take on real estate search sites.

"We are no more in the real estate business than we are in the cafe or the museum business," said Carter Maslan, Google's director of product management, at the July 2010 Real Estate Connect conference in San Francisco. "We view as key ... to get (the information) right, but what we really want to do is show it in context."

In a [blog post](#) about the decision, Joel Burslem of real estate marketing and communications firm 1000 Watt Consulting, commented: "Maintaining a national property database, and, perhaps more importantly, its concurrent accuracy, is a huge challenge that it looks like even Google realized is too big a pill to swallow."

Inman News columnist Gahlord Dewald said Google's announcement opens up more questions than it answers.

"For real estate, I don't have data that supports the idea of humans clicking on maps as a search interface ever was real -- the technology vendors of map-based search still don't have adequate analytics baked in to give us that data. Google, I'm sure, has that data," Dewald said.

"That they couldn't sustain an interest in the project could mean a lot of things: Maybe Google lacks the imagination to develop a business around the service, maybe people don't want to use a map as a search interface for real estate, maybe there's no business there at all."

Google launched Google Base in November 2005. The Houston Association of Realtors was one of the first industry associations to push members' listings to the service, in [December 2006](#).

In November 2009, Google added "place pages" to the service, making available on a single page all the information Google has about a property listing -- including property details, photos, inspection times, videos, a street-view preview and nearby public transit information.

"This is an interesting move by Google. We saw big changes in leadership last week with Eric (Schmidt), Larry (Page) and Sergey (Brin) shifting their focuses and positions," said Inman News columnist Tom Flanagan.

"I suspect more changes are coming. I'd really be surprised if Google completely retired real estate -- it's just too big for them to ignore!"

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