

User Experience Review

Sample

This is a sample review of user experience issues on a typical website, realtor.ca. (Online real estate is ripe for revolution.)

Two points of note:

- This review simply highlights issues; with my clients I provide practical, actionable recommendations to address every issue—so you get both insight and guidance.
- As I note at the end, this review looks solely at addressing what's there. The bigger opportunity is thinking differently: challenging assumptions, making the leaps no one else has yet realized.

So my intention with this sample review? That you begin to look at your online presence with new eyes, and see the opportunity for revolutionary improvement.

It's not rocket science, and I'd love to show you how.

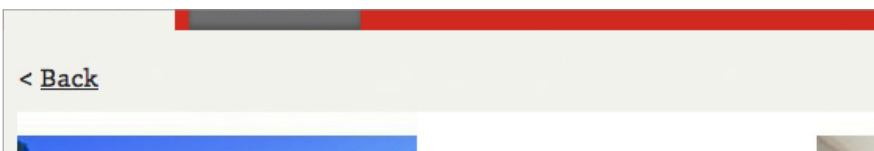
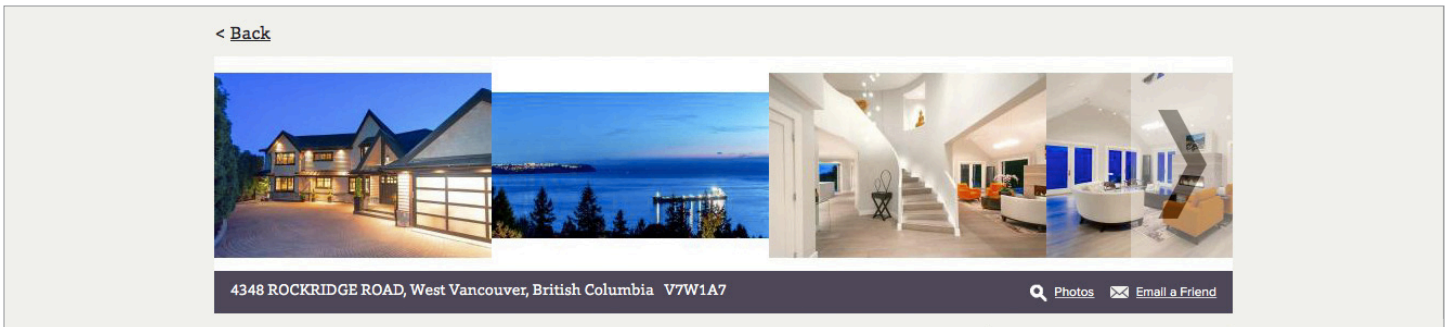
But first, the sample review.

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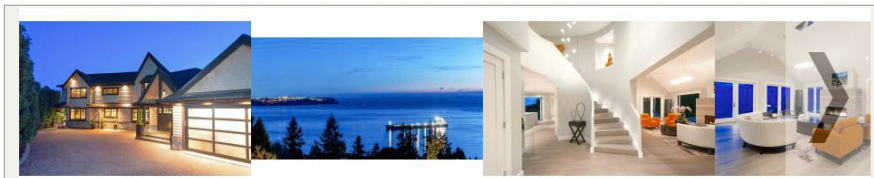
Here's the page in question, a real estate listing on realtor.ca. Overall, this is a **confusing page layout**, underselling the property:

- There is **no clear visual hierarchy**—everything competes with everything else. Notice your eye darting around the page, trying to find a place to 'land'.
- The property pictures draw the eye, as pictures often do. However, there is **no main picture**, so all four pictures compete with each other. Which picture best represents the house?
- On a larger screen, such as that used for this screenshot, there is a lot of **wasted space down the sides of the page**. As a site that should deliver a compelling and engaging experience, this is a missed opportunity.

Let's look at the parts of the page in more detail.



The 'Back' link takes up the entire row. This is **valuable space** at the top of the page, mostly being wasted at present.



Several issues affect the preview of the property pictures:

1. There is no indication of **how many pictures** there are, so users' expectations are not set in advance.
2. The 'right arrow' scrolls through the pictures **relatively slowly** (even when clicked), making quick browsing—as well as locating a specific picture—slow and frustrating. Go and try it.
3. The pictures are **mismatched in size**, which looks unprofessional and will subconsciously affect perceptions of the property.
4. There are **no captions** for the pictures, so for some pictures it is not clear which rooms are being shown.



The address is just **plain text**, when it is an easy opportunity to make it selectable, bringing up a map of the property's location.

\$7,498,000
Listing ID: R2068813

5 7

[Favourite](#) [Compare](#) [Print](#) [Financial](#) [Multimedia](#)

Property Type Single Family	Building Type House	Title Freehold
Land Size 19160 sqft	Built in 2014	

[Details](#) [Demographics](#) [Walk Score® + Directions](#)

Show measurements in Imperial

Description

Sit on a sunfilled C-D-S on a 19,160 sf (.435 acre) estate, is this new World Class Contemp res feat 180 degree ocean vws! Compl privacy. Dramatic firpln w/classic architectural enhancements. Approx 7372 sqft w/gorgeous island kit, brkfst bar, dry pantry, dinette area & adj FR. Vaulted plantation-style ceilings, stone F/P, elegant

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[Favourite](#) [Compare](#) [Print](#) [Financial](#) [Multimedia](#)

The term “Multimedia”, with its icon, is **too vague**, is **outdated** in usage, and **focuses on the tools** (video, audio, etc.) rather than the benefits they bring.

In addition, why not **surface the information** it contains—which in this case is a link to the REALTOR® website—rather than hiding that information behind a generic “Multimedia” button?

Property Type Single Family	Building Type House	Title Freehold
Land Size 19160 sqft	Built in 2014	

This is primarily **reference information** that does not warrant such a strong visual prominence on the page. Make it clearly available, but don’t make it the sole focus of the property’s presentation, especially in such a plain, text-only manner with dry labels and terminology.

[Details](#) [Demographics](#) [Walk Score® + Directions](#)

Because “Walk Score®” is the start of the third tab’s name—and because users often **scan information** by reading the start of text, rather than reading in detail—it is likely some users will not realize the **tab also contains directions** (and a map) for the property.

The screenshot shows a real estate listing page. At the top left, the price is \$7,498,000 and the listing ID is R2068813. There are icons for Favourite, Compare, Print, Financial, and Multimedia. Below these are property details: Property Type (Single Family), Building Type (House), Title (Freehold), Land Size (19160 sqft), and Built in (2014). There are three tabs: Details, Demographics, and Walk Score® + Directions. A description follows, starting with 'Sit on a sunfilled C-D-S on a 19,160 sf (.435 acre) estate...'. On the right, there is a profile for Jason Soprovich, a REALTOR® with contact information (604-817-8812, website, and email). Below his profile is another agent, Malcolm Hasman.

A close-up of the 'Show measurements in Imperial' selector, which is a dropdown menu with a downward arrow.

Another issue with visual prominence is seen here. This measurements selector **dominates the focus** right above the all-important description.

A measurements selector!

Allow the user to set this preference elsewhere on the page or site.

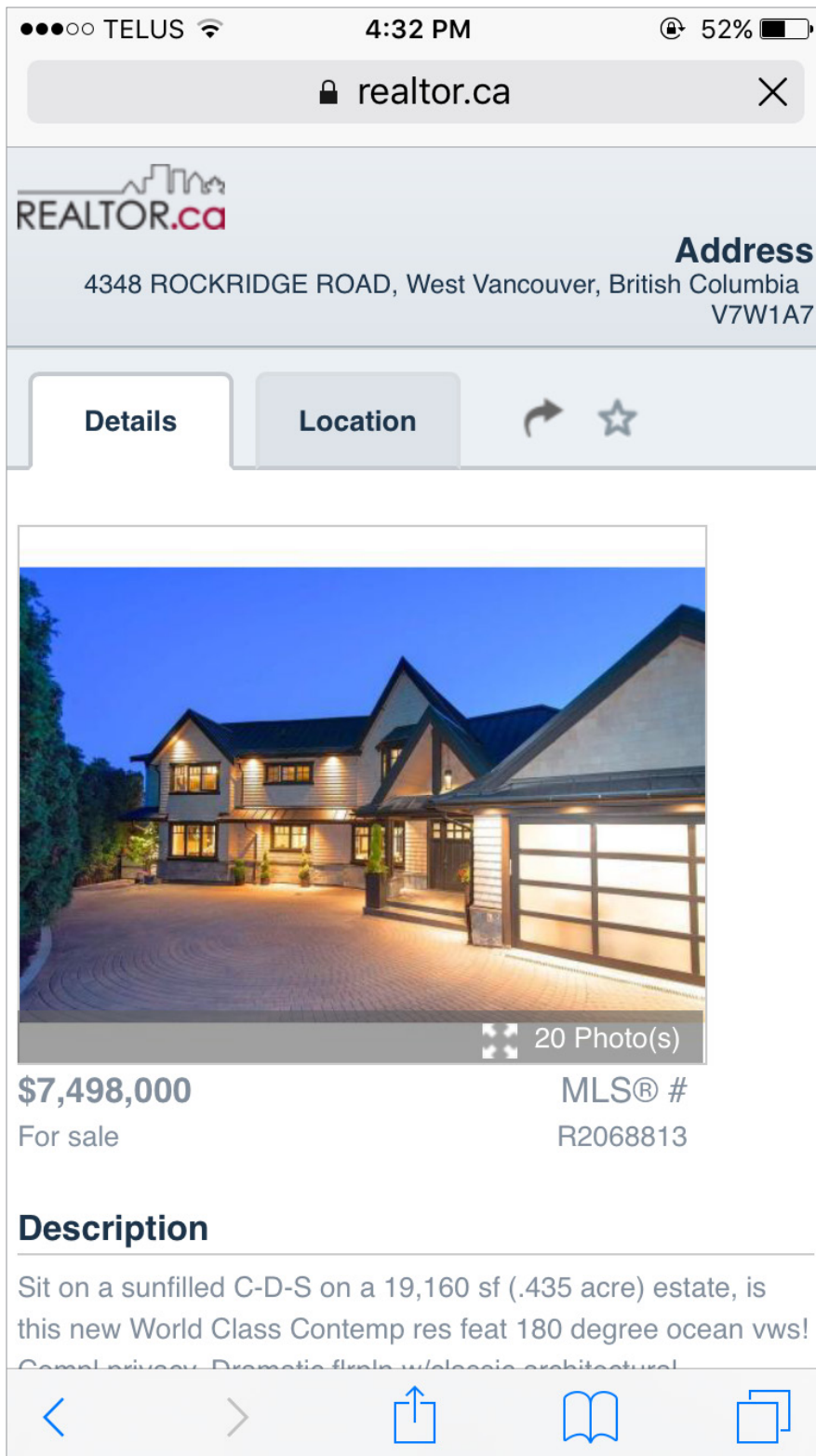
A close-up of the property description text: 'Sit on a sunfilled C-D-S on a 19,160 sf (.435 acre) estate, is this new World Class Contemp res feat 180 degree ocean vws! Compl privacy. Dramatic flrpln w/classic architectural enhancements. Approx 7372 sqft w/gorgeous island kit, brkfst bar, dry pantry, dinette area & adj FR. Vaulted plantation-style ceilings, stone F/P, elegant'.

Improved editorial guidelines and reviews are likely needed so that **descriptions like this are improved**. With **abbreviations and acronyms everywhere**—such as ‘C-D-S’, ‘adj FR’, and ‘island kit’—and **no paragraph breaks**, this is not a description that best represents a \$7.5M property.

A close-up of the agent profile for Jason Soprovich, showing his name, photo, contact information (604-817-8812, website, and email), and the text 'RoyalLePage Sussex J'.

Why is the Email action so prominent? Any form of contact will be valuable to a REALTOR®. All Calls To Action (CTAs) should be collectively clear.

It is also not clear where the ‘Jason Soprovich’ link will take the user, given there is already a website link provided.



The mobile version of this page also has some notable issues.

First, consider that:

1. People now spend, on average, **more time on mobile** than on desktop.
2. For some people, especially travelers, **mobile is their only Internet access.**
3. Mobile is only going to **increase in importance.**

Because of this, the user experience issues on this page are in need of particular attention. Four examples:

- Not all the features on the desktop version are available on mobile. For example, there is **no mortgage calculator** and **no Walk Score®** here.
- Some features are **implemented differently on mobile**, preventing the user transferring their learned experience from the desktop site. For example, the 'star' icon to its right is the seeming equivalent of the 'heart' feature on the desktop site.
- There are **no menu and navigation options** for moving around the site, an unforgivable omission.
- There are several small design elements that give the impression of a lower level of professionalism. Note the **alignment issue below the 'Address' label** at the top of the page; the main photo that does not expand to the full width of the screen; the **blurry**, non-retina share and save icons; and the **'Photo(s)' label that does not adjust** based on how many photos there actually are.

This sample review does not cover all the user experience issues identified. This is very typical for most websites; there is much to be done, once you see your website with new eyes.

However, more importantly, this review purposely focuses **just on what's there**: the issues with layout, content, and interaction, as they are presented.

It does not address the bigger opportunity for **revolutionary online change** in the real estate industry. (One of many industries ready for revolution.) Doing away with the tired, old approach to online real estate listings, and getting to the core of what helps excited buyers find their new home. The opportunity is tantalizing.

For that, you will need to contact me.

As a teaser, here is food for thought for real estate:

- Why are online real estate listings often just a wall of **flat, lifeless information**?
- Are pictures and a single description—just tools in themselves—**really the building blocks** of an intuitive experience that really helps sell a property?
- A flat screen can never replace the experience of viewing a property. However, **what advantages does it have**, advantages that are difficult or impossible to represent on sheets of paper or even in-person with a REALTOR®?

In **any** market, I can be the catalyst for achieving online excellence.

Ready to make waves? I hope you're inspired to get in touch.

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