

Alex Loer Photography

While AI tools bring an exciting new dimension to how agents can enhance property listings, professional high-quality photos with proper staging remain a solid foundation. They build trust and credibility by showing buyers that the property is being presented honestly — not altered or misrepresented.

Our experience and expertise ensure your listing is showcased in the best possible light, protecting and strengthening the agent's reputation.

NAR (National Association of REALTORS®) Code of Ethics.

The Core Rule — Article 2 of the NAR Code of Ethics: This is the main governing language. It states that REALTORS® must "refrain from exaggerating, misrepresenting, or concealing pertinent facts" about a property. Article 2 of the code prohibits Realtors from exaggerating or misrepresenting pertinent facts about a property — in plain terms, an agent isn't supposed to hide a home's defects or make it seem better than it is.

Standard of Practice 12-5 — Disclosure of Digital Manipulation: NAR's Standard of Practice 12-5 requires clear disclosure when listing photos are digitally manipulated. Agents must indicate that furniture is "virtually staged" or "digitally added" via a watermark on photos and/or text in the listing description.

What's Allowed vs. What Crosses the Line: Digital image alteration does not include common photo editing adjustments like lighting, sharpening, or color correction, as they "do not change the representation of the real property." However, using AI to hide cracks in walls or make a yard look bigger can get realtors in trouble.

Elements that should never be manipulated include holes in walls or cracks in cement, grass or plants added where they don't exist, power and telephone lines, paint colors, paint blemishes, or positions of light fixtures.

Consequences: Violations can result in MLS fines, ethics complaints, license suspension, and civil lawsuits for misrepresentation.

State-Level Laws (Beyond NAR): Some states are now cracking down — California requires that listings with digitally altered images include disclosures and access to the original, unaltered photos. Wisconsin is set to follow with similar requirements in 2027, requiring disclosures for AI or tech tools that modify a home's appearance, such as virtual staging, replacing skies or grass, or removing visual elements like electrical wires or stains. [National Association of Realtors](#)