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A Beginner's Guide to SEO For Real Estate Investors



For a real estate investor or developer who has chosen to grow their business by building a website, the term “Search Engine Optimization” or “SEO” will likely come up in any initial research you have done. This concept is critical if you want your website to show up for searches entered into search engines, but the practice sounds much more intimidating than it really is. In fact, just by learning the basics you can drive a consistent and year-round flow of leads in the form of buyers, sellers, vendors, and even new sources of capital. This white paper will help you learn how to apply SEO techniques to your website to foster relationships with the industry players mentioned above.

The information below walks you through each of five major types of SEO for real estate investors. It is written in plain English with minimal jargon and includes examples specific to real estate investors like yourself.



The 5 sections include:

1. **On-Page Basics** – These help you prepare your overall website and its individual pages for the search engines, website visitors, and potential buyers. These basic techniques provide the foundation for your site.
2. **On-Page and Technical Mid-level to Advanced SEO** – These are items that give search engines a better understanding of your business, who will benefit from finding a specific page within your website, and how to increase your site's speed a bit more.
3. **Attracting Sellers** – Ready to use SEO to source more potential investment properties? Here is where you'll learn the important things to help attract motivated sellers.
4. **Bringing in Buyers** – Securing an investment property and completing renovations are exciting moments for an investor, but you still need to find a buyer to complete the "flip" of the property. This section will help you make sure that your website is showing up when they look for available homes that match your investment property.
5. **Localizing Content** – To show up in location-specific searches you'll want to use location-based SEO to optimize your website. This is where we teach you how.
 - a. Events schema and locations schema
 - b. Mobile inputs
 - c. Clickable phone numbers

On-Page Basics

On-page SEO is about defining what the page is about for both the person visiting your website and the search engines. These are easy and actionable items you can implement to let the search engines know which types of queries and questions your page is meant to answer and provide more information on.

Below you'll find a list of on-page SEO items specifically for real estate investor websites and a few examples of what are "good" and what are "bad" examples. We'll also share with you how to analyze what is currently on an existing website, so that if you already have a website you can make sure your pages are optimized properly.

- **Title tags** – This is what appears in your browser and as the headline in a search engine result. It should be 55 characters or less including spaces, have the main keyword phrase of the page in it, and be descriptive about what the person will find on your website if they click through.
- **Meta description** – These are NOT going to impact your ability to rank higher in search results but they can increase how much traffic you get. They appear in search results below the title, should be 155 characters or less and reinforce the message of the title tag and further explain how the person will benefit by visiting your page. If the Title tags serve as your "label" for the page, the Meta description serves as your sales pitch for why someone should click.

- **H1 tags** – These are the header and main topic of the page and are normally the bold letters you see. They should be simple, to the point, and direct. It is important to avoid using the same ones on any two pages and there should never be more than one H1 tag per page. There can only be one H1 tag per page because Google doesn't want to have to decide which page to show, or when there are more than one it doesn't show either.

For example, you should not have two separate pages on your website with an H1 tag of "Chantilly Virginia Single Family Home For Sale" on it.

- **Internal links** — These are links from one page on your website to another page on your website. They help the search engine to know what the page you are linking to is about. You do not want to link off of the same keywords to two separate pages as this causes confusion about which is the better page or more relevant.

For example, if your website features the phrase "renovated houses in Bethesda" in multiple locations within your website, be sure to not link that phrase to multiple other pages. Instead have one page dedicated to just your completed projects in Bethesda and anytime you link off of a variation of "Bethesda homes" you should only link to that page.

- **Copy** – This simply refers to the text that is written on any page of your website. Word count does not matter any more, so instead think about how you can provide the best possible user experience with the most relevant wording. This is what search engines reward and may help you to show up, so make sure that your copy is relevant to the intended query and valuable to visitors.

Ways to answer questions and provide a good user experience that also makes the search engines happy include:



Featuring Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about the topic



Creating content that explains what the page is about (which could include your experience in a bio or portfolio page), or about the house or condo on the property listings page (a multi-family home with 3 baths, game room, and a pool which is also close to 3 dog parks).



The last thing to check is the copy on your pages from your phone and your desktop computer. If it is not the same, you may not be able to show up in the search engines as well. Google, for example, considers the content from your mobile site first, and then may look at what is on the desktop. Why does this create a problem?

Designers tend to hide or remove copy from mobile websites because it takes up space on the smaller, more slender screen. If the mobile version does not have the same exact text, your site may not be able to rank as well as it could, and other sites will probably rank better than you. Page links in the menu and other internal links need to remain consistent as well since search engines often use these as roadmaps for your content, and if the two maps (mobile and desktop) are different, they will spot the inconsistency and decrease your rank.

- **Images** – Believe it or not, the images on your pages should **not** be high resolution and should be saved at 100kb or less. This is for page speed. The speed of the specific page (total load time) is a ranking signal and Google generally prefers the page with the lower page speed.



How to find each of the items above:

Go to your own website and right click on the page. Now click on “view page source.” On a PC click “cntrl + F” and if you’re on a mac, click to open a search box.

Now in the box type:

- “<title>” to find the title tag.
- “<meta name=“description”” to find the description
- “<h1” to find the H1 tag

Here's an example of a good and a bad title tag/description and H1 combination for an investor who is looking for motivated sellers.

Bad: 

Title - The Best Place To Sell Your Home In Virginia | Arlington | Alexandria

Description – We're here to buy your home quickly and with cash. Contact us today and find out why we are the best choice to buy your house.

H1 – The Best Place To Sell Your Home In Virginia, Arlington, Alexandria

Good: 

Option 1:

Title – Sell Your House As-Is in Virginia, Arlington, Alexandria

Description – Get your fair cash offer now. There's no need to perform repairs or deal with high-pressure negotiations.

H1 – We Buy Houses in Rough Condition

Option 2:

Title – Sell My House for Fast Cash

Description - Looking to offload your home quickly and for an honest cash offer? Contact us today and get an offer in minutes.

H1 – Sell Your House Fast



In the bad example it is “keyword stuffed” and all about you as the buyer and not helping out the seller. The character counts are also too high to fit into a search result. In the good examples you have some of the important keywords like location covered and their copy is about meeting seller’s needs and alleviating pain points like stressful negotiations. It also has a call to action to let them know they can reach you.

Mid-Level to Advanced SEO Techniques

Mid-Level to Advanced SEO Techniques



This section contains more advanced items that may sound intimidating, but will become clearer as we walk through examples. Depending on your website provider, many offer “plugins” or tools to help do perform more complicated tasks without having to apply code. WordPress is the best option for many of these due to its customizability. If this section seems a bit intimidating, skip it for now and go to one of the three remaining. We also have people on staff at Washington Capital Partners that will be happy to talk to you about these techniques.





- **Schema** – This is also known as “markup” and helps to explain to the search engines what the page itself is about as well as what each section within the page is about. There is a database (also known as a library) you can find at the website schema.org which lists all types of useable schema.

There is schema for reviews, office/business hours, locations and even home and construction schema. By incorporating proper schema into your pages when it is relevant, you can better define the topic of that page. If you are using it and your competitors are not, you will have an advantage, just make sure you only use relevant schema.

For example, you do not want to use “review” schema on a page without reviews. If you are a real estate investor and the page is about a property you are advertising for sale, do not use “real estate agent” schema. Even though your page is about real estate, it is about the property, not an agent.

Schema doesn’t have to be intimidating. Contact your website builder or if you use WordPress, there are numerous plugins to choose from to make implementation easy.

- **Image compression** – Photographers and web designers love to use large file sizes for images because they think they are better looking. As mentioned before, the unfortunate truth is that this can hurt your ability to rank high in searches. By having an image compressor you’ll be able to shrink the size and in many cases get them down to the 60-100kb goal. There are plenty of free compressors available online so that you can resave the compressed before placing it on your site.



- **Modifiers for copy** – Modifiers are words you can add to your text to help make it unique. They include numbers, places, colors, nouns, adjectives, verbs, questions, and numerous other items. They come in handy when you have to create unique copy about 5 similar properties all in the same town. Unique selling features are a great place to start, such as including phrases like “brick front,” “large garage,” “dog park,” or “near metro.”
- **Canonical tags** – these can be tricky at first. Canonical links tell the search engines which page is the right one to show. They are used to help make sure you don’t have “duplicate pages.” Duplicate pages cause confusion for search engines and without canonical tags, neither page will be able to rank.

A good example is if your website has one single-family home located in Bethesda, MD displayed (let’s call it “Property 1”). Many websites that feature multiple properties have a “categories” system in place (similar to folders that house groups of files on your computer), which means that the property above would likely show up on 2 different pages with 2 different URLs:

Page A. [Yourdomain.com/bethesda](#)

Page B. [Yourdomain.com/single-family-homes](#)

In situations like this, you want to pick one of the two URLs from above, or even give Property 1 its own page within a general “properties” category and have your canonical link point there ([Yourdomain.com/properties/property-1](#)).



Now on both Pages A and B, you'll have a canonical link that points to "Yourdomain.com/properties/property-1" and the search engines no longer have to guess which one to show which also means it doesn't get suppressed.

To find your canonical links, right click to open the source code like we covered earlier and type "canonical" into the search box. It'll show you where your canonical link points to. If it isn't the right page, contact your web developer, web designer, or website host and see if they can fix it for you. Canonicals are standard and are normally set up correctly.

- **CDN** – A "CDN" is a "Content Delivery Network." It helps people who are not in your current location get to your website and pages faster. It is all about page speed. For example, if you invest in DC properties but live in Seattle, and you don't have a CDN installed, your website and its pages may take longer to load for visitors in the DC area. Because page speed is a ranking signal, you'd be at a disadvantage to other competing websites. CDN's are easy to get and your web hosting company will normally be able to install it for you.
- **Sitemaps** – A sitemap is a listing of all of the important pages on your website that you want a search engine to see. You can normally find it by adding "/sitemap.xml" at the end of your URL. If it isn't there, go to Google and type "yourdomain.com sitemap" and it should show up. If it still doesn't, contact your web host and they'll send you a link to it. On the site map, make sure the most important pages are there, and less important ones are not.



Important pages include:

- o The homepage of your website
- o Main categories like cities, property types, etc.
- o The homepage of your blog
- o Your portfolio of flips and for sale & "coming soon" properties
- o Testimonials
- o Anything else that you want search engines to look at regularly



Non-important pages include:

- About us
- Contact us
- Terms of Service
- Privacy Policy



Robots.txt – this is the most intimidating item we’ll cover. It is simply defining how to “crawl” (scan and analyze) your website for a search engine. You include “disallow:” when you want it to avoid a specific folder, parameter, or page and “allow:” on where you’d like it to focus.



- You may want to disallow sorting features, blog tags, and other sections that aren’t as important.



- You’ll want to allow the CSS files and javascripts that enable the search engine and browser to properly display your website.

Robots.txt can be tricky, so ask your website host if they can help. If not, Google offers a free resource site and builder to help you.

Attracting Sellers

If you choose to use your website to bring in motivated sellers, the trick is to know what people are looking for. You can do this by setting up an account for Google Ads (you don't need to create ads or spend money, you just need to set up the account). Once in Google Ads, locate the "Keyword Planner" tool which allows you to explore the search volume for the keywords and phrases that you want to rank for. This tool also allows you to see related and suggested phrases to consider for your site. Generally you want to see decent search volume for your keywords, but don't worry if the keywords that you know you want to rank for don't display very high volumes, you may be able to make that your niche and capture a large percentage of those individuals versus competing with others for the keywords with hefty search volumes.

Once you have a list of keywords and phrases that you want to rank for, be sure to write website content (page text, blog posts, etc.) that includes these keywords and provides information or answers to common queries. For this section we'll use the About Us page (which is highly recommended to have on your site) as an example. A blog can also be used, but since not everyone has one, we'll keep the focus on the About Us page.

The first thing to do is create an About Us page with your business' information and schema. By doing this you can optimize it to explain that you are the best single-family home buyer in Alexandria, VA. The page can talk about your experience and professionalism as well as how you provide sellers that need to offload their property with a clean, cash transaction.

Make sure you have an easy-to-use Contact Us form for lead generation, your phone number, email address, and office location (if applicable) right there so the person can go from website visitor to real property lead.



The writing style on any pages that promote your business is extremely important to get right. When talking about their businesses, many investors tend to say “I,” “me,” and “we” very often. This is natural but, can also begin to sound arrogant or self-centered. Instead of writing about what you have accomplished, try writing your page text by explaining what value or solutions you bring to your intended website visitors.

For example, “We are the right people to buy your house, because we can pay cash and move fast” may be an expected quote within the industry, but it’s 100% about you, not the visitor.

Instead you could write “If you’re in need of cash but your home is in poor condition, you can count on us to take the stress out of selling it. Your time and comfort are our top priorities.” This approach is all about solving the visitor’s problem and tends to have a higher success rate for visitors to contact you about your services.

The same general rule applies to your pages intended to attract potential buyers, vendors, capital sources, and other industry players. Speak to each of these audiences the way they would like to be spoken to, not just how you prefer to talk about yourself and your business. Always keep in mind, what is the intended audience seeking by visiting your site? It could be a problem that they need solved, or maybe they’re seeking value from a business partner - either way your best bet is to make the page about them and what they seek.



Blog posts can also help with your website SEO. People who are thinking about selling their homes are looking for information, and by creating blog posts that answer their questions and solve their issues, you can introduce them to your brand and show off your expertise.

Topics could include:

- How to sell my home for cash
- Can I sell my home without fixing it up?
- How to sell your home quickly, regardless of the condition
- Should I trust "we buy ugly houses" ads?

Each of these gives you the opportunity to bring in a lead by answering their questions and giving them real, valuable information on the most common queries a motivated seller would search. Don't forget to include a "CTA" (Call To Action) like your phone number or a lead generation form so that they can easily contact you if your post empowers them to act.

Bringing in Buyers



Much like helping sellers find you, copy (website text) can bring in buyers too. But there are some SEO-specific items that you'll want to double check on your property listing pages.

These can help give you an advantage over your competition and get your properties from on-market to sold faster. Keeping sold properties on your website is important too, as it showcases your work and shows that your final product is consistently of high enough quality for buyers to spend large amounts of money on.



- **Optimized images** – Make sure your images are not high resolution and are saved or compressed to at least 100kb. Be sure to name the images in a way that helps describe the page, like “single family home for sale in Bethesda” or “single family home 123 Main Street.” This rule depends on the page and what the goal of the page is.

Now check the “Alt Text.” This is what the search engines use, and it can be found in the source code next to the image. Type “alt=” into the search box on View Source. Don’t forget the image description (in the source tag, look by the alt= for description=), and make sure they are similar or an exact match to the name. These are items that search engines and readers for people who have vision problems can use to determine what the image is about.

- **Location pages with geographic information** – Double check that the Properties page has the physical address listed. It can make a great H1 tag as well, but just writing the location isn’t all you can do. You can also add location schema to the page so the search engines know where it is and you can add an interactive Google Map. This helps the potential buyer to see the “coming soon” or “for sale” property, where it is in the neighborhood, and if they’re coming to visit, they can click and get directions easily.



- **Create a Properties portfolio** – This is a page with all “coming soon,” “for sale,” and “sold” properties in your investing portfolio. You can have it sort by neighborhood, price, type of home, amenities, or anything else buyers would find important.

If you only resell properties in a specific area, you can optimize it for “Single Family Homes for Sale in Alexandria, Virginia.” If you cover the entire state and have a high volume of projects per year, you can always optimize a main category for “Renovated Homes for Sale in Virginia.” From there you can create sub-categories for each of the major towns/cities you have properties in.

After you have done that, you are covered for each category with a dedicated and relevant page for online searchers to land on. Just make sure you have unique titles, H tags and copy for each category and subcategory.

- **Create a list of all amenities and the walk score.** This is important because both Google and your website visitors want to know as much as possible about the property. If you don’t say it is “near a dog park” or “close to 3 schools,” then the potential buyer may be less interested and Google may not automatically associate these amenities with your property just based off of proximity. So without these in place, someone searching for “condos in Columbia Heights with a pool”, you won’t show up.