

Monthly Newsletter

November 2014

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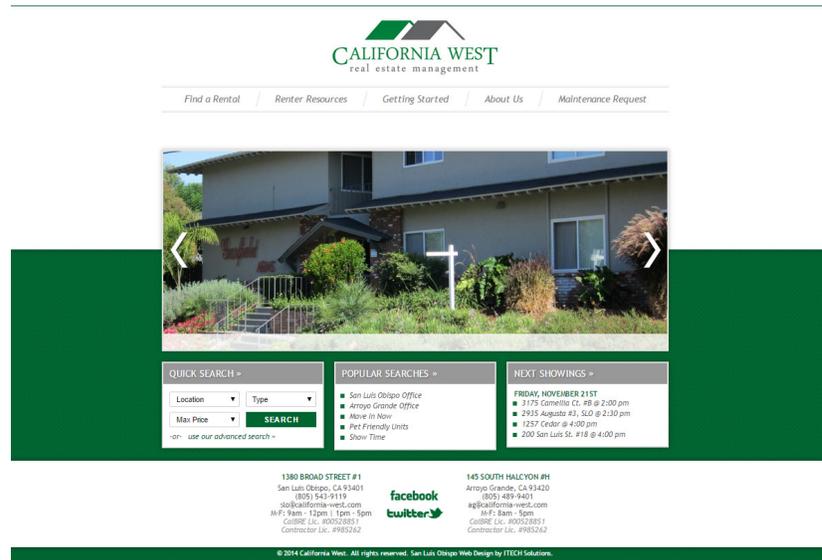
- California West launches a new mobile-friendly website.
- Applicant screening laws require close attention.

Making sure that calwest.com is easy to navigate on iPhone and Android is very important.

California West launches a new mobile-friendly website.

On November 18, California West launched an updated website at california-west.com and calwest.com.

The overall appearance of our website was modernized and, most importantly, our site is now optimized for mobile devices.



Other improvements to the site include allowing tenants to better view when a particular property is being shown and there is a more streamlined description of how to apply for a property.

Greater emphasis was also given to promoting California West's social media presence on Facebook and Twitter, where we advertise our available properties.

That said, Craigslist remains the most effective online tool for advertising availabilities.

Much of our internet traffic originates from Craigslist and is viewed on a mobile device. Making sure that our website is easy to navigate on iPhone and Android is therefore very important.

Applicant screening laws require close attention.

Lately, the Bureau of Real Estate is making a point to enforce laws regarding application screening fees to ensure that landlords and others are not charging unlawful fees to prospective tenants.

California West charges application fees directly to prospective tenants instead of to our property owner clients.

The law sets maximum fees that are much higher than what we charge. As of December 2013, the maximum rate that we may charge is \$45.16 and that amount increases every year.

In our Arroyo Grande office, our applicant screening fee is \$15 per adult. In San Luis Obispo, the fee is \$25 but there is no additional charge for a co-signer application. We try to keep the fee as low as possible so that we do not discourage potential tenants from applying.

Once we accept the screening fee and begin processing the application, an applicant may then request a copy of their credit report, which we must by law provide to them.

Another law provides that if we turn down an applicant because of something on a credit report, we must then notify the applicant in writing and state the reason we declined the application.

The reason for so many laws regarding screening fees is because of abuses in the past. The abuses in screening fees do not usually come from property management companies or from private landlords because we just want to rent our properties to qualified applicants.

The abuses come from fly-by-night companies in big cities with competitive rental markets. Those companies mislead prospective tenants into thinking they can secure housing for them for an expensive screening fee.

However, there is no housing and the companies really just pocket the screening fees for themselves.

As a result, laws now exist to limit what these companies may lawfully charge and to dictate how exactly a screening fee must be charged.

Unfortunately, those abuses cause more regulations that legitimate property owners and managers must comply with.

In our Arroyo Grande office, the applicant screening fee is \$15 per adult. In San Luis Obispo, the fee is \$25 but there is no additional charge for a co-signer application.

San Luis Obispo Office

1380 Broad Street #1
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
Ph: (805) 543-9119
E-mail: slo@calwest.com

Arroyo Grande Office

145 S. Halcyon #H
Arroyo Grande, CA 93420
Ph: (805) 489-9400
E-mail: ag@calwest.com

www.california-west.com

CalBRE Lic. No. 00528841
Contractor Lic. No.: 985262