



The MLS Governance Layer for the AI Era

How Project NexusRE Protects Trust, Enables Innovation, and Advances Industry Data Sovereignty

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For more than three decades, the MLS has served as the quiet infrastructure behind the most trusted real estate marketplace in the world. It is where competitors cooperate, brokers contribute listing information under shared rules, and accuracy, accountability, and professional responsibility come together.

The MLS was never just a database. It was a governance system.

That distinction matters now because artificial intelligence is forcing the industry to confront a new infrastructure moment. AI is not simply another display channel, another website, or another software integration. AI reads, interprets, summarizes, transforms, and acts. It can answer consumer questions, prepare market analysis, draft listing descriptions, create reports, guide agent workflows, and power software agents that operate with little or no human intervention.

For MLS executives, the opportunity is obvious. AI can improve service, lower support burden, help agents work more efficiently, and make trusted real estate information more useful. But the concern is just as obvious. MLSs were built to govern people and systems accessing data through known channels. AI introduces machine-scale consumption, derivative content, and automated decision-making across systems that may sit outside the traditional reach of MLS compliance.

That is the problem Project NexusRE was created to address.

Project NexusRE is a patent-pending, industry-owned governance infrastructure platform created to help MLSs and brokers manage the next era of real estate data use. It is not an MLS system replacement. It is not another AI chatbot. It is not simply another API or MCP. It is a governance layer designed to help policies, permissions, compliance rules, and usage rights follow the data wherever authorized systems interact with it.

The idea is simple, but the implications are significant. The same policy should apply whether listing data is accessed through an MLS application, broker platform, public website, mobile app, API, data feed, AI assistant, MCP, software agent, or proptech application. The rules should not change just because the interface changes. In the AI era, governance must move closer to the interaction itself.

Project NexusRE represents a belief that the real estate industry should not surrender the intelligence layer of its future to outside platforms. MLSs and brokers have spent decades creating trusted property data. The next strategic question is who will govern the intelligence created from that data.

"The industry has spent years discussing access, distribution and policy enforcement, but AI changes the scale and speed at which those issues now operate. We believe governance has to exist at the infrastructure layer if MLSs want to maintain consistency, accountability and transparency moving forward. We also believe the industry is best served if that infrastructure is owned by brokers and MLS in order to remain neutral."

Tim Dain, President and CEO of NorthstarMLS.



Origin: Built by MLS Peers, Not Outside

Project NexusRE began inside NorthstarMLS, a broker-governed MLS serving the Upper Midwest market. NorthstarMLS operates in the daily reality of MLS leadership. It supports brokers and agents, manages data, works with vendors, responds to compliance issues, and serves a marketplace that depends on trust.

Under the leadership of President and CEO Tim Dain, NorthstarMLS began exploring artificial intelligence early. Tim has earned a reputation as one of the more curious and exploratory MLS leaders in the industry. He studies change before it becomes obvious. He tests ideas. He listens to brokers, agents, teams, and technology partners. Most importantly, he understands that innovation in an MLS environment is not about chasing novelty. It is about protecting cooperation as the marketplace changes.

The NorthstarMLS Board did more than trust its CEO to experiment. The board engaged the question at the level where MLS boards should engage it: what do brokers and agents need, and what risks emerge when AI begins operating outside the jurisdiction of the MLS?

The answer was not abstract. Agents were already using AI clients. Teams were building AI workflows. Brokers were considering new AI tools. Vendors were adding AI to their products. Consumers were beginning to expect AI-powered experiences. The activity was already underway, but the governance model was not yet mature enough to match it.





NorthstarMLS saw a problem that many MLS executives are now beginning to feel. AI does not create the need for governance. It exposes the limitations of governance models built for a different era.

That realization led to the creation of Project NexusRE.

NorthstarMLS partnered with REcore, an industry-owned MLS services organization whose largest partner is California Regional MLS. REcore will serve as the operational service provider, responsible for hosting, sales, support, and operations center management. This matters because MLS executives need more than a concept. They need confidence that a platform can be operated, supported, and scaled by people who understand MLS service delivery. It's important to note that NorthstarMLS chose REcore as a partner because of their company structure. REcore can only accept investment from Brokerages or MLSs, preserving the trust and neutrality that must remain at the heart of the industry's modern governance infrastructure.

The application has been developed in collaboration with WAV Group's Fluente AI team, led by technologist David Gumpper, with support

from Jennie MacIntosh and Victor Lund. This partnership brought together MLS governance insight, industry-owned operational infrastructure, and practical AI architecture.

From the beginning, Project NexusRE is being built to scale. It already hosts an enormous volume of MLS records and is designed for participation by like-minded brokers and MLSs that want to join as subscribers, investors, or both. That model is important. Project NexusRE is not asking the industry to become dependent on another outside vendor's AI strategy. It is inviting participation in an infrastructure path designed and protected for the industry.

The patent-pending wrapper is part of that strategy. Project NexusRE invested in protecting the architecture not to wall it off from the industry, but to help preserve the opportunity for industry ownership from the start. That distinction should not be overlooked. In an era where AI companies are racing to capture data, workflows, and intelligence, Project NexusRE was created so MLSs and brokers can build from a position of sovereignty.

Why Real Estate Data Requires Special Care

Real estate data is not ordinary content. A listing is not just a marketing asset or a collection of fields. It represents a homeowner, a financial decision, a family transition, a broker relationship, and a professional obligation.

Consumers entrust information to real estate professionals. They expect their home records, photographs, property details, pricing history, and transaction-related information to be handled responsibly. They do not assume that because their home is listed for sale, their information should become unrestricted training material for an AI company.

That concern is now moving from theory to practice. AI systems can consume, summarize, transform, and reuse information in ways that are difficult for brokers, MLSs, and consumers to see. Once data is replicated outside of a governed environment, visibility often becomes fragmented. It may be difficult to know who accessed the information, what purpose was declared, how the information was used, whether derivative content was created, and whether the original permissions were respected.

For brokers, this is not just a compliance problem. It is an asset problem.



For years, some brokers have described the MLS as a buffet where some participants bring the dish and others arrive only with a fork.

The listing broker creates much of the value that powers the marketplace. The broker earns the client relationship, gathers and validates information, invests in photography and marketing, and contributes the listing into the MLS under a cooperative framework. The MLS protects that contribution by establishing rules, permissions, and accountability.

For years, some brokers have described the MLS as a buffet where some participants bring the dish and others arrive only with a fork. The listing is the dish. AI makes that metaphor even more important because listings no longer create value only through exposure. They also create intelligence.

If AI systems consume listing data to power answers, reports, recommendations, automations, and derivative content, then the industry needs a way to understand and govern that consumption. Without that structure, brokers will see the value of their data migrate into systems they do not control.

Project NexusRE is designed to restore that connection between contribution, consumption, and accountability.



From Data Access to Data Governance

Historically, MLS technology has focused heavily on access. Who can receive the data? Which fields are included? Which use cases are permitted? Which vendor has a license? Which broker has authorized which display? Those questions remain important, but AI adds a new layer. The industry must now ask what happens after access occurs.

A human user may search for listings, review results, and take action. An AI system may consume thousands of records, compare them, summarize them, generate advice, create a report, trigger a workflow, or produce derivative content. An AI agent may do this repeatedly, at scale, and across multiple systems.

That requires a different governance model.



"One of the technical challenges behind modern MLS environments is that policy enforcement, permissions, compliance logic and data access often exist across disconnected systems and workflows. The goal behind Project NexusRE is creating infrastructure capable of applying those controls more consistently across modern channels and AI-driven interactions."
David Gumper, WAV Group President of Technology and Fluenta executive (Build Partner)



Project NexusRE is built around the principle that permissions should follow the data. A policy should not be interpreted one way in an MLS system, another way in a broker application, another way through an API, and another way by an AI agent. The same request should produce the same result because the governance layer evaluates the request consistently.

For MLS executives, this is the heart of the matter. MLSs are not trying to slow innovation. They are trying to preserve trust while innovation accelerates. Project NexusRE creates a common operating environment where policy can be evaluated across channels rather than rebuilt separately in every product, vendor agreement, and workflow.

This is also where the practical value becomes clear. MLS compliance teams already manage complex policies. Those policies often live in rules documents, participant agreements, vendor contracts, support procedures, and staff knowledge. Project NexusRE helps translate those policy expectations into operational controls that can be evaluated by the system. It then expands to allow brokers to add additional policies and entitlements based on their agreements and choices.

In plain English, Project NexusRE helps the brokers and MLSs move from written rules to executable governance.

The Five Audiences Project

NexusRE is Designed to Serve

Project NexusRE is designed as a neutral coordinator of broker and MLS data for the AI era. It serves five primary audiences: agents, brokers, MLS staff, AI agents, and proptech vendors. Each audience has different rights, responsibilities, and needs. Project NexusRE manages those differences through entitlement structures.

1. Agents need trusted AI that helps them do their work without creating compliance risk. They want to ask questions, generate reports, prepare CMAs, serve clients, and move faster. They should not be expected to understand every technical permission behind every data request. They need a governed environment that makes the right thing easier to do. Allowing that AI to interact with background knowledge on state statutes, fair housing laws, MLS policies, and broker policies grounds the interaction in reality shaped by guardrails without over complicating the interaction.
2. Brokers need visibility and protection. They need to understand how their listings are being accessed, how their information is being consumed, and whether the systems using that information are operating under approved terms of use or rules. They also need confidence that the MLS is protecting the assets brokers contribute to the cooperative marketplace. In addition, it starts carving the path to the rise of personal use applications. Brokers and agents are increasingly building personal software tools using low-code and AI-assisted development platforms, and they need a system that can help them move toward the personal software era.



***This is the practical promise of neutral infrastructure.
Everyone can innovate, but everyone operates from the same
trust foundation.***

3. MLS staff need tools that help them manage a more complex technology environment. The volume of AI-related systems, interactions, and questions will not slow down. Support, compliance, licensing, and data operations teams need infrastructure that helps them answer questions, monitor usage, evaluate policy, and support members without manually chasing every new AI use case.
4. AI agents represent a new class of user. These are not people logging into a system. They are software agents deployed by people and companies to perform tasks, answer questions, call tools, and act on behalf of authorized users. Project NexusRE gives these agents a governed path to interact with MLS data, MLS partner data, and broker partner data according to identity, role, purpose, and permission.
5. PropTech vendors need a reliable way to innovate. The industry should welcome responsible AI development. But vendors should not be forced to recreate governance systems MLS by MLS and broker by broker, nor should MLSs and brokers have to evaluate every AI workflow from scratch. Project NexusRE creates a trusted coordination layer that helps vendors build within accepted rules.

The Economics of Contribution and Consumption

One of the most important ideas behind Project NexusRE is economic alignment and incentive.

MLSs have long managed access through licensing, subscriptions, and participant rights. That model made sense when data use was largely tied to human users, display channels, and defined software products. AI changes the economics because it changes consumption.

A single AI workflow may consume data differently than a human user. An agent may ask for a CMA. A broker may request performance analytics. A market report agent may generate neighborhood trends. A proptech vendor may query data for an approved application. Each interaction creates value, and each interaction consumes the trusted data created by brokers and governed by the MLS.

Project NexusRE introduces a token and credit framework designed to better align those who contribute value with those who extract it. In this model, contributors such as listing brokers may receive credits when their data is extracted. Consumers participate based on usage. The more a system uses the data, the more it participates in the economics of that use.

This should not be understood as selling listings. It is better understood as aligning contribution and consumption.

That distinction matters. The MLS exists because brokers cooperate. Brokers contribute the information that makes the marketplace work. If AI creates new forms of value from that information, then the infrastructure should recognize the source of that value.

This concept may become especially important as machine-scale consumption grows. MLSs will need more than a yes-or-no access model. They will need reporting, accountability, and the ability to understand how value flows through the ecosystem. Project NexusRE provides a foundation for that future.





RAG: Helping AI Understand MLS Policy

Project NexusRE also includes a Retrieval Augmented Generation, or RAG, solution for managing knowledge documents. The concept is important, but it does not need to be complicated.

A general AI model answers questions based on what it learned during training and what a user provides in the prompt. A RAG system allows the AI to retrieve trusted information from approved documents before answering. For an MLS, those documents may include rules and regulations, compliance procedures, data license agreements, FAQs, support materials, training guides, and broker policies. For a brokerage that may include their custom forms for dual agency disclosure, brand guidelines, open-house safety policy, etc. This turns static documents into an interactive knowledge system.

An agent can ask a question about advertising rules, listing status, photo use, data permissions, or compliance procedures. Instead of guessing, the AI can retrieve the relevant approved brokerage or applicable MLS material and produce an answer grounded in that source.

Many MLSs and Realtor associations are already licensing RAG-style solutions from third party vendors. That may be a useful first step, but Project NexusRE raises a larger strategic question. Who should own the learning that comes from the industry's use of AI?

Every prompt creates an opportunity for learning. Every question reveals a need. Every failed answer exposes a gap. Every correction improves the knowledge base. Every repeated workflow creates an opportunity for tuning, automation, and better service.

If an MLS licenses a disconnected AI tool, the immediate benefit may be helpful. But the long-term intelligence created by usage will be owned by an entity that is not likely neutral and may have motivations that are not aligned with brokerage or MLS. Project NexusRE is built on a different premise. The system learns in service of the MLSs, brokers, agents, and vendors that participate in it.

That is what industry ownership means in practice. It is not only ownership of software. It is ownership of the improvement cycle in order to preserve trust and neutrality.

From Answers to Action: Purpose-Built AI Agents

The future of AI in real estate will not be one chatbot trying to answer every question. It will be an orchestrated environment of specialized agents that understand specific tasks.

Project NexusRE will include an orchestration layer that evaluates a human prompt and determines which specialized agent or capability should respond. If the user needs a market report, the request can be routed to a market reports agent. If the user needs help with pricing analysis, it can be routed to a CMA agent. Over time, additional agents can be added for other MLS, broker, compliance, support, and data workflows.

The first Project NexusRE agents include CMA Agent and Market Reports Agent. These are built and being tested as we continue development on the overall infrastructure.

This approach has practical advantages. Specialized agents can be tuned for better responses because they are designed around defined real estate workflows. They can respond faster because the system knows which tool to call. They can also be more affordable because not every request needs to be handled by the most expensive general-purpose AI model.

For MLS executives, this is where the AI vision begins to meet operational execution. Project NexusRE allows users to explore trusted MLS data within the guardrails of broker and MLS policy, while common requests can be optimized over time. The system knows who it serves. It knows the rules of the environment. It learns from use. It improves with each engagement.

That is different from simply giving agents access to a general AI tool and hoping they use it correctly.

Project NexusRE creates an environment where AI can be useful because it is governed.



Why Industry Ownership Matters

MLSs have a long history of partnering with technology vendors. Those partnerships have helped the industry modernize. They will continue to matter. Project NexusRE is not a rejection of vendor partnerships. In fact, the roadmap includes exploring new relationships based on non-listing data sources and purpose built tools that can interact with Project NexusRE.

It is a recognition that AI governance is a special category of infrastructure and it's the one that brokers and MLSs should preserve. If it's not built by a company that is industry owned, it will inevitably be built by others, and we will not be able to regain the trust and neutrality that the MLS delivers today.

When an MLS licenses a front-end system, tax platform, showing solution, or support tool, the vendor relationship can be managed through contracts, service levels, and data agreements. AI governance is different because it touches the intelligence layer built from the industry's data. It influences how data is consumed, how answers are generated, how compliance is evaluated, how derivative content is created, and how learning compounds over time.

If that layer is controlled entirely outside the industry, MLSs may find themselves depending on platforms whose incentives do not fully align with broker governance, MLS policy, or consumer trust. Eventually, the MLSs diminished value becomes irrelevant.

"NexusRE represents a recognition that while the battles we are having as an industry today are solvable at an infrastructure layer, this industry is fighting over symptoms of a larger disease. If we can modernize the infrastructure we can solve listing flow permissioning, payload distribution and economics of listing data value at scale," Dain explained.

Project NexusRE is positioned as industry-owned infrastructure. REcore provides the operating foundation. NorthstarMLS originated the concept and serves as patent assignee. The patent applications have been filed across multiple related areas of invention. That protection is part of the sovereignty strategy.

The industry does not need every MLS to solve AI governance alone. It also does not need every MLS to surrender the problem to outside platforms. There is a third path: shared infrastructure created by peers, at a company owned by combined broker and MLS investment, protected for the industry, and operated by an industry-owned services organization.

That path is the heart of Project NexusRE.

"AI adoption is already happening across real estate. The question is whether the infrastructure supporting it evolves at the same pace and within the trusted, neutral marketplaces that MLS and brokers own and utilize every day. Project NexusRE is intended to help close that gap and ensure trust and neutrality remain within the architecture that powers organized real estate today."

Art Carter, REcore CEO.





A Trust Carrier From One MLS to Another

The best MLSs understand that cooperation is not passive. It must be maintained, protected, and modernized. Clear Cooperation, IDX, VOW, syndication, APIs, data licensing, compliance operations and broker governance all reflect the same underlying truth. Those “truths” can evolve as technology and practice evolve, but the MLS exists because trust and neutrality create market efficiency for brokers. That cooperation is necessary to Make the Market Work™.

AI does not change that truth. It makes it more urgent.

The next era of real estate will be shaped by systems that can read data, understand context, answer questions, make recommendations, and complete tasks. If those systems are not governed, the industry will spend the next decade reacting to consequences. If they are governed well, AI can become one of the most powerful service improvements organized real estate has ever delivered.

Project NexusRE is an invitation to take that journey together.

It is an invitation from one MLS to every broker and MLS, from one broker-governed organization to its peers and customers, and from industry-owned infrastructure to the broader real estate community. The message is not that every answer has already been perfected. The message is that the industry has a path, and that path is being built by people who understand the responsibility.

MLS executives and brokers do not need to become developers to understand what is at stake. They need to ask the questions they have always asked when protecting the marketplace.

Who is authorized?

What are they allowed to do?

Which rules apply?

How do we verify compliance and accountability?

How do we protect the broker's contribution?

How do we support innovation without losing control?

How do we evolve the economics to support the demand?

How do we provide transparency that informs future decisions?

How do we make sure the future of real estate intelligence remains connected to the professionals who create the underlying value from a position of trust and neutrality?

Project NexusRE was built to help answer those questions.

The MLS was created because brokers understood that some infrastructure was too important for every company to build alone or for misaligned incentives of corporate ownership. AI governance is the moment that requires we evolve that infrastructure.

The future will belong to organizations that understand the difference between using AI and governing AI. Project NexusRE gives MLSs a way to do both, together, with sovereignty, trust, neutrality, and cooperation at the center.



About WAV Group

WAV Group, a leading consultancy in real estate, offers comprehensive advisory services tailored to real estate brokerages and MLSs. Their expertise spans commission management, technology strategy, marketing, recruitment campaigns, and mergers and acquisitions. With a diverse team of experienced executives and industry leaders, WAV Group leverages cross-functional expertise to help real estate brokerages and MLSs critically assess opportunities for business growth. Their services aim to enhance lead generation, reduce operational costs, and create pathways for market expansion.

Learn more at www.wavgroup.com.

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