

CoStar Claims Zillow Stole Copyrighted Property Photos

By **Isaac Monterose**

Law360 (July 30, 2025, 3:41 PM EDT) -- CoStar Group Inc. and CoStar Realty Information Inc. alleged Wednesday in New York federal court that property listings giant Zillow stole and profited off of more than 46,000 of CoStar's copyrighted real estate photos.

According to CoStar, Zillow announced in May 2024 that it wanted to continue to grow its property listings business and the company decided to use CoStar's copyrighted images to help it do that. The company's suit specifically targets Zillow Group Inc. and Zillow Inc.

"Currently, CoStar is aware of at least 46,979 of its copyrighted photographs that Zillow is publishing without authorization on its network of rental websites, all of which have been discovered in just the last few months," the company claimed.

"While in some cases Zillow's customers may have uploaded or provided CoStar's photographs to Zillow's website, Zillow opts to make extensive use of CoStar's photographs rather than remove them," the company also claimed.

According to CoStar, its copyrighted images have appeared on Zillow websites and other related websites at least 250,000 times.

Most of the CoStar images are used for Zillow multifamily housing listings and Zillow also uses some CoStar photos for its webpages about "'unclaimed'" properties that aren't up for sale and can't be rented, the company alleged.

CoStar also pointed to a Zillow unclaimed property webpage that used CoStar copyrighted photos for a home that's listed as available on CoStar's Apartments.com.

"After a property owner or manager 'claims' a property from the Zillow-created 'Claim this property' page, Zillow allows them to use the content — including photographs — that was available on Zillow's unclaimed property page for future rental listings," CoStar said.

"Thus, by making prepopulated listing content available for use — and in particular, by including CoStar's professionally-shot property photos — Zillow attracts property owners who might not otherwise be interested in listing on Zillow to 'Claim [their] property' and purchase an advertising package to list the property for rent on Zillow's websites," the company added.

Additionally, Zillow could find and remove the copyrighted CoStar images it's using, but failed to do so, and half of the copyrighted CoStar photos on Zillow's website have CoStar's logo watermark, the company alleged.

CoStar further alleged that Zillow used CoStar's copyrighted photos for property listings on other listings websites owned by Zillow.

"After attracting advertising customers to its website and creating listings, Zillow publishes these listings — using CoStar's photographs — to Zillow's other listing websites, including Trulia and HotPads," CoStar claimed.

"Zillow also places listings on its websites StreetEasy, which is a website dedicated specifically to residential real estate in New York City (and New Jersey), and Out East, which is dedicated to homes for sale and rent in the Hamptons," the company also claimed.

Zillow also had syndication agreements with Realtor.com and Redfin where Zillow would post its multifamily property listings on the websites of those companies while using CoStar's property photos for those listings, according to CoStar.

For the Redfin deal, Zillow paid \$100 million upfront to Redfin and it's supposed to pay an additional \$75 million during 2026 for the guaranteed, generated business leads, CoStar alleged.

"In short, Zillow effectively controls the multifamily listings on Realtor.com, Redfin, and their affiliated websites," the company said. "And as a result of its syndication agreements, Zillow is publishing CoStar's copyrighted images not just on Zillow's websites, but also on several other rental listing websites, none of which have authorization to use CoStar's images."

Throughout the rest of its suit, CoStar made other allegations such as claiming that Zillow uses the copyrighted photos to improve its website features.

The company also described Zillow as a "repeat infringer" and said Zillow was previously sued by VHT Inc. for allegedly infringing on VHT's copyrighted property photos.

Currently, CoStar is embroiled in a long-running legal dispute with Commercial Real Estate Exchange Inc. in California federal court. CoStar accused CREXi of infringing on its property photos and CREXi hit back with antitrust counterclaims.

In a Wednesday statement, CoStar's founder and CEO, Andrew C. Florance, said Zillow's alleged theft "is nothing short of outrageous."

"Zillow is profiting from decades of CoStar Group work and the billions of dollars we have invested," Florance said. "Even worse, Zillow is magnifying its infringement on Redfin and Realtor.com."

"If these other sites do not immediately remove our images, we will have no choice but to sue them as well," he continued. "We are committed to stopping this systematic infringement and holding the wrongdoers to account."

Zillow didn't respond to a request for comment and its counsel information wasn't immediately available.

CoStar is represented by Nicholas J. Boyle, Sarah A. Tomkowiak, Jeremy Brown, Eleanor Allen, Jessie Cammack and Emma McLaughlin of Latham & Watkins LLP.

The case is CoStar Group Inc. et al. v. Zillow Group Inc. et al., case number 1:25-cv-06248, in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.

--Editing by Kelly Duncan.

All Content © 2003-2025, Portfolio Media, Inc.