



Figure 3-1:
A link
exchange
site that
offers a
real estate
directory.

Although the preceding description covers many bases, the link exchange field is complicated. Two major variations are prevalent:

- **Paid link building.** Certain online marketing companies specialize in building incoming link networks for their clients. Ideally, they approach high-quality sites with strong relevance to the client site (in other words, similar sites with high PageRank), and request placement of a link to the client site. Content exchange is usually not involved. These services act as agents on your behalf and work best when your site is good enough to benefit other sites by linking to you.
- **Link farms.** These exchanges build vast numbers of outgoing links with indiscriminate disregard for topicality or any sort of editorial policy. Only a fine line distinguishes legitimate link exchanges that accept site information automatically and link farms. Google doesn't like link farms. Remember that Google's spider has an inclusive robotic eye with great peripheral vision. It sees the truth about link connections and their honesty. Building your backlink network around link farms can do you little good and might penalize your PageRank.