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## News

Area realtors face varied sign rules

By **LAURA MALLGREN**

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San Diego County real estate agents need to know their markets to comply with varying city ordinances.

San Diego cities and the county have varying ordinances regulating signs, ranging from their size, to where they can be placed to when they must be removed.

The standard size of a sign is 18 inches by 24 inches, according to Ron Johnson, president of San Diego-based Champion Signs. Signs to be displayed in Rancho Bernardo are 9 inches by 12 inches.

For the most part, "cities might have different regulations but it's not enforced," he said. "We're not allowed to put up posts in La Jolla. No posts, no signs." The sign-size regulation is enforced in Rancho Bernardo, he said.

Both the San Diego Association of Realtors and the East San Diego County Association of Realtors post sign ordinances on their Web sites.

Agents tend to work in specific areas and typically need to know just one or two sets of ordinances, according to Lorrie Mowat, communications director for SDAR.

"Of course, Realtors who cross a lot of jurisdictional boundaries have a lot to keep track of, which could be why we got a really good response when we started posting this stuff," she said.

According to Patti Phillips, a Realtor with **Prudential California Realty** in North County, gated communities tend to be more restrictive than other areas.

Also, Rancho Santa Fe bans the posts and the signs.

"You can never get drive-by traffic," she said. "It makes it difficult to do an open house. The only thing they'll let you put out is a flag at the end of the driveway -- just during an open house."

Phillips learned the hard way.

When she started her residential real estate career five years ago, she put up two or three open-house signs.

The signs disappeared. When Phillips went to the home owner's association to ask for her signs back, she was told that patrol staff probably pulled them out of the ground and disposed of them.

That had to happen only once to Phillips, who said the signs cost her \$28 apiece.

In most of Oceanside, agents are allowed to install up to two on-premise for-sale signs. There is a 6-square-foot and 5-foot height maximum. Off premise, one sign is permitted from 6 p.m. Friday to 6 p.m. Sunday.

In the coastal city, one roughly 9- by 10-inch sign is permitted in a gated senior neighborhood, according to Phillips. "You have to put it in a very specific spot on the house," she said. "On the left-hand side of the garage. Nailed on. You've got to put a nail in your client's house. You can't put it in a window. You have to buy special signs if you work in that area."

On Wednesday, Phillips drove to Carlsbad to inspect a property on Aviara Drive. The custom homes have views of a golf course and the ocean. The sell for \$2 million and up, she said. Only one sign is allowed and it has to be bought from the homeowners association. It then has to be painted a certain way.

For most other neighborhoods, Carlsbad's ordinance allows one on-premise for-sale sign. There's a 3-square-foot maximum. Lights, banners and pennants are prohibited.

One off-site sign is allowed but not on a public right-of-way.

In Solana Beach, one on-premise sales sign is allowed. There is a 6-square-foot and 5-foot-height maximum. One open house sign is permitted. A single flag or pennant is allowed for the sign. One 6-square-foot, off-premise directional sign is permitted with the property owner's approval. The sign can't be installed on a public right-of-way.

Norman Vanderbilt, broker and owner of **ERA Davies Vanderbilt** in Chula Vista, characterized sign regulations as a double-edged sword.

EastLake, a master-planned community in the eastern part of the city, bans signs, he said. The reason behind the ban -- or restrictions -- is aesthetics. At the other end of the spectrum, some areas look terrible because of signs posted everywhere, including on telephone poles. Vanderbilt characterized a jumble of signs as tacky.

"I believe in a balanced sign ordinance, which will allow for a sale sign on the property but has restrictions on size, how many," he said.



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