City of Carlsbad
Real Estate Sign Rules

Real estate signs in Carlsbad are allowed on private property, with the permission of the owner, but not on public property, including streets, sidewalks and the city's "right-of-way."

What is the "Right-of-Way?"

Right-of-way is any public street, sidewalk, easement or similar public property owned or controlled by the city and dedicated to public use. Typically, the public right-of-way extends 10' from face of curb.

Why We Limit Signs

The City of Carlsbad understands that signs are considered an important tool for marketing real estate. Our sign rules are in place primarily to:

- **Protect public safety**
  Signs placed on sidewalks and in street medians pose a hazard to drivers and pedestrians. Excessive signage can make important traffic and safety signs harder to see.
- **Support freedom of speech**
  This includes the people's right to express political, religious and other noncommercial messages on their property.
- **Maintain community character**
  Signs and other visual clutter detract from the community's visual appeal.

Why Can't Real Estate Signs Be an Exception?

Local government sign regulations must be "content-neutral" to comply with the First Amendment. In other words, local governments may place regulations on the "time, place and manner" in which signs are displayed, but may not restrict or allow signs based on their message.

This means that the city may not single out certain categories of commercial signage to be allowed on public property. If all businesses were allowed to place signs on public property, the visual character of the city would be significantly degraded and hazards to pedestrians and vehicles would result.

Enforcement

Commercial signs, including real estate signs, in the right of way will be picked up by city staff and brought to City Hall. The signs can be retrieved from City Hall, located at 1200 Carlsbad Village Drive, by appointment only between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. To schedule an appointment, call 760-434-2703. Signs must be picked up within 30 days. All signs not retrieved will be disposed of after the 30 day holding period.

Thank you for helping to ensure Carlsbad remains a high quality community with a strong and profitable real estate market.

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Other Prohibited Signs

The following sign types are prohibited in all locations in Carlsbad:

- A-frame signs (allowed for Carlsbad Village businesses with sign permit)
- Animated signs
- Balloons or other inflatable signs or devices
- Beacons
- Billboards
- Bus stop bench/shelter signs
- Digital display signs
- Exposed neon lighted signs on any building elevation that faces and is within five hundred feet of any property line that adjoins residentially zoned property
- Commercial mascots and hand held or sandwich board signs carried by a person and displaying a commercial message
- Marker boards
- Mobile billboards or any other type of vehicle that is moving or parked on city streets whose primary purpose is displaying general advertising
- Roof signs
- Signs attached to trees, plants, rocks, fences, utility poles/cabinets or other objects, the primary function of which is not to support a sign
- Signs physically blocking or impeding the free passage of persons through doors, firescapes or public rights-of-way
- Signs erected on or over city property including public easements and public rights-of-way, except those needed for traffic and public safety regulation and those erected pursuant to other provisions of the Carlsbad Municipal Code
- Signs simulating in color or design a traffic sign or signal or using words, symbols or characters in such a manner as to be reasonably likely to interfere with, mislead or confuse pedestrian or vehicular traffic
- Signs that do not conform with applicable Uniform Building Code as adopted by Carlsbad and National Electric Code as adopted by Carlsbad
- Most temporary signs, including but not limited to banners (i.e.; feather banners) and pennants
- Unsafe signs

For more information and to read the sign ordinance, visit www.carlsbadca.gov or call City of Carlsbad Code Enforcement at 760-434-2703.

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