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Published May 26th, 2010

## Real Estate Signs Abound

*By Cathy Tyson*

On any given Sunday, house hunters can be found making the rounds looking for the home of their dreams, or maybe just checking out the upgrades in a neighborhood property. The Happy Valley Improvement Association (HVIA), along with folks who happen to own homes on popular corners are not thrilled with the proliferation of directional signs popping up in Lafayette.

"For Sale" signs are obviously allowed in front of a home that is actually for sale; however they can't be erected on private property without permission, or on public property. At a recent City Council meeting, the City Attorney reiterated that homeowners who did not give permission for a sign on their property have the right to remove it, or as an alternative, call Code Enforcement Officer Mark Robbins who will remove the sign and speak with the real estate firm in question.

Robbins has been busy handling approximately twenty sign complaints in the last few weeks. Letters are scheduled to go out this month to real estate companies spelling out specific rules pertaining to real estate signs.

The HVIA would like to have the current sign ordinance revised so that directional signs are completely eliminated. However according to a Staff Report prepared on this issue, "State law preempts the City's regulatory authority and the City cannot legally revise the Sign Ordinance to restrict the placement of real estate signs in the manner requested by HVIA."

Local real estate firm Village Associates is opposed to directional signs and their proliferation. "We abide by the town ordinances as it relates to real estate signs in the three communities where we do the bulk of our activity. Lafayette has a loophole in their policy that allows directional sign placement on private property with the owners' approval," said Ignacio Vega, General Manager of Village Associates. "Home sellers' see these signs and insist on similar exposure for their properties. Being that we are in a very competitive business it is difficult to deny the request. One sign allowed leads to another, then another and soon you have the mess we see. The ordinance needs to be tightened to allow one sign per property, period."

To complain about a sign placed on your property without permission call the City's Code Enforcement Officer, Mark Robbins at (925) 299-3207.

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