

Local Political Topics

SAN DIEGO COUNTY'S GENERAL PLAN 2020 UPDATE PROCESS

One of the most significant political issues on the local radar screen is the update and revision of the County General Plan. Known as **General Plan 2020**, the initial work raised serious concerns by REALTORS® and rural land owners because of drastic down-zoning proposals.

The 2020 plan process has pitted environmentalists against development and property rights advocates. On one side, the environmental view wants to drastically reduce future growth in our region by adopting an unrealistic future population number and only planning infrastructure to meet that number.

Development advocates want to begin with a realistic population figure, based upon accurate historic figures and design a plan based upon "smart growth" principles that encourage density near transportation corridors, encourage mixed-use developments that combine jobs and housing, and encourage preservation of open space through clustering and innovative design standards.

A group known as Save Our Land Values (SOLV), composed of rural landowners, was formed when initial proposals suggested massive down-zoning of back country areas. The result would have stripped the value from the land. NSDCAR helped form SOLV, and its voice has been effective in killing the most drastic proposals and turning the update process in a more reasonable direction.

There is still much to be done on this issue, but your Association is actively involved in the process and will keep you informed of developments. For more information, you can visit the County web site that is devoted to the General Plan update, located at:

<http://www.co.san-diego.ca.us/cnty/cntydepts/landuse/planning/GP2020//index.html>

REALTORS® WORK TO PRESERVE RIGHT TO PLACE SIGNS

REALTORS® have played an important role in two North County cities regarding the right to place 'For Sale' and 'Open House' signs within those communities. This is just one more example of how your association works to protect your right to do business.

In Carlsbad, the city began a process to revise their antiquated sign ordinance. The initial proposals would have eliminated all offsite signs and would even have set standards for the size and color of magnetic signs on the sides of REALTOR®'s vehicles.

Your Local Government Relations Committee became involved in the process and was able to preserve the right of REALTORS® to place off site signs as long as they are not in the public right-of-way. The final ordinance that is being proposed will make Carlsbad's sign ordinance comply with state law regarding real estate signs.

Further inland, the City of San Marcos completely outlawed off-site real estate signs a few years back, and recently began an aggressive enforcement program of confiscating signs that were placed in violation of their ordinance.

REALTORS® sprang into action, and have achieved amazing results. Much of the success in fixing the San Marcos sign situation goes to Eileen Schwartz and George Cosh at Coldwell Banker in Vista. They assembled a group of REALTORS® and met with city staff in an effort to find a solution to the ban on offsite signs. What they came up with was a test period where the city will allow real estate and 'Open House' signs to be placed with the following restrictions:

- No signs placed on medians
- No signs on sidewalks
- No signs on public streets, bike lanes or any trail
- No signs shall block sight distance of vehicles
- No signs shall block existing signage
- Only freestanding signs are permitted (staked signs can damage irrigation systems)
- Agents are responsible for getting permission to place signs on private property

In a cooperative effort, the city will continue to enforce sign regulations with the above changes, but they will simply lay offending signs down and post them for a period of time. It is up to REALTORS® to follow the rules. After a test period, if the new regulations seem to be working, the sign ordinance will be amended.

The important thing to remember is that despite our successes with preserving sign privileges, it remains up to you to follow the rules. Politicians simply respond to the public, and if they become unhappy because of abuses, the laws get changed and our industry suffers. If you are not sure what the local sign ordinances are, visit or call the city planning department and find out.

“Increasing the Success and Profitability of Those We Serve”