



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF INSPECTIONS, LICENSES AND PERMITS

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Ms Suzi Padgett
Howard County Realtors Association
c/o Coldwell Banker
6031 University Boulevard, Suite 100
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Ms Padgett:

Please accept this letter as follow up and clarification to the on-going questions about the Howard County Sign Code and its relationship to realtor's signage.

With respect to real estate signs, section 3.503(e)(2) of the code specifically addresses this issue. In short, it states that directional signs may not exceed three square feet in area. There may not be more than four signs on an approach route. These signs, announcing an open house, may be placed in the County right-of-way between 4:00 p.m. on a Friday and noon on the following Monday. This leads to several questions on which I will clarify our position.

First, three square feet is pretty self-explanatory. Regarding approach routes, we have taken the more generous interpretation that there can be more than one approach route to a location; however, there can only be a total of four signs on that route; not four signs at each intersection along that route. An open house means that the house is open to the public without the need for a pre-arranged appointment. In order to use the exemption in the code, the house must be open at some time during the weekend between the hours when we allow the signs to be up. In addition, the signs must, as the code clearly states, be announcing an open house; they cannot simply be "for sale" signs. Unless the open house signs identify a specific address, all the houses in a subdivision, or on the same street, served by the same realtor, are covered by one sign. In other words, if you have 10 open houses on a street, you cannot put up 10 generic open house signs at each of four locations along each approach route to attract someone to the same street or neighborhood.

I hope this clarifies our position on the sign code as it relates to open house signs. Please disseminate this information to your membership. We have been notifying individual realtors about violations of this section of the code. Once this clarification is fully out in the open, we will be at liberty to issue citations any time we find someone in violation.

Thank you and if you have any questions, please contact me at 410-313-2433.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Frances, P. E.
Director

cc: Aaron Greenfield, Chief of Staff
Sean Kelly, Chief, Inspections and Enforcement, DILP
Brenda Saucedo, Supervisor, Inspections and Enforcement, DILP
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