



SCHWARTZ *Report*

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A SIGN OF THE TIMES

For those of you who were expecting to see the usual January real estate market report for the previous year, a new year's tradition for the Schwartz Report, I am sorry to report that due to a year end transfer to the new "Bright" multiple listing service we are waiting a couple of weeks to verify the data from 2018. Rest assured the stats will be back when accurate sales data is available.



prospective buyers are sitting in the car in front of a house with a for sale sign on the lawn, they already like what they see and are at least somewhat conversant with its surroundings or they wouldn't call in the first place.

Furthermore, today's signs can convey more information than ever before, even lead the prospects to a virtual tour of the inside of the property. In fact,

some agents and agencies try to convey too much information with their signs. I've seen multiple phone or ad numbers, agents' pictures, agent's pictures with their favorite pet, team pictures and so on. The idea should be to market the property not the person marketing the property.

In the meantime I thought we'd focus on a traditional marketing tool that has been described by some as "clutter, obsolete and archaic", the for sale sign. Now I might say parenthetically here that the recent off year elections' political posters make real estate signs look like the Mona Lisa. But I digress. Back in June, 2018 the New Canaan, Connecticut Board of Realtors voted to ban all real estate yard signs in its jurisdiction. A Realtor.com article broke the news with this headline: "Sorry, Sellers Your For Sale Sign May be Ugly and Desperate". After a short trial, however, the ban was rescinded although the town council of New Canaan is still considering a ban of its own. These have been tried before in other areas and usually fall out as a result of legal challenges. More importantly, such bans fail because real estate yard signs work. To eliminate them sounds good but to do so would be a disservice to buyers, sellers and agents alike.

The metamorphosis of sign development progressed like this: First there was a sign which said simply "For Sale"; then there was the "For Sale" with a phone number still in use today by most for sale by owners; then there was "For Sale" with the brokerage name and phone number; then there was the "For Sale" sign with the brokerage name and phone number and the listing agent's name, sometimes with his phone number as well. And on and on, until we finally got the bright idea that perhaps someone looking at the sign might be more interested in learning something about the property itself. Enter the Hot Line, the web page, the virtual tour et al. Again I'll repeat what my dad used to say that he could sell houses in Chicago if we had enough signs up out there.

Most seasoned agents would rather have a call from a sign than an ad call. Why? Think of it this way, if

Every veteran agent has a fount of sign stories. Some of these can be quite comical even bordering on slap

stick. One such incident happened to me some years ago at Halloween. Neighborhood kids, as they were wont to do on mischief night, moved my for sale sign, let's say from the Smith house to the Jones house around the corner and I get a call from Mr. Jones pointedly telling me that his house was not for sale and would I come out immediately and pick up the sign. Now the Smith's, whose place I had for sale, had a beautiful matched pair of German Shepherds who had never quite caught on to the fact that I was a dog lover and therefore deserved gentle treatment. In fact, the dogs were costing us showings because people would simply turn away from the front door after a couple of full throated growls from those two. I could not convince the Smiths that their little darlings were

costing them the sale of their home, until that Halloween. I was so intent to get the sign off of Mr. Jones' lawn (where it looked quite nice I might add) that I did not call the Smiths to let them know I would be returning their sign. Someone had left the gate to their yard open and my two furry friends were waiting for me when I pulled up in my station wagon which was considered standard equipment for real estate agents at the time. Now was the pups' chance to punish the guy who caused them to spend so much time in the garage. Well, I've never been so happy to see the luggage rack on my car and I never thought that human levitation was possible until that afternoon. Vacant houses are considered hard to sell, not so after the Smiths moved out and took their canine tag team with them.



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