

Sellers Who Value Their Privacy & Security Can Make Their Home Visible Only to Agents

A recent email newsletter from our Denver MLS, REcolorado, to its members explained how sellers, through their listing agents, can literally sell their homes without their neighbors knowing about it — although your neighbors may ask why so many people are visiting your home, one after another!

To quote that newsletter article, “Whether they are a celebrity, in witness protection, or simply concerned for their safety, protecting the seller’s privacy is the primary concern.”

Although not mentioned in that article, it starts with the yard sign. There’s no requirement that you have a real estate sign in your front yard.

As you probably know, Realtor.com, Zillow, Trulia, Redfin, NextDoor and virtually every real estate website downloads its listings from the MLS, but your listing agent can opt out of such syndication, which also keeps it off REcolorado.com except for its logged-in members. However, the listing will still be emailed to buyers who have alerts set up by their agent.

There are lesser degrees of privacy available. For example, a seller may be okay with displaying their home on public-facing websites, but only allow logged-in agents to see their address. That’s another option available to agents when they enter a listing on REcolorado.

Sellers also, of course, can dictate what interior pictures are shown of their home — or ask their agent to have no interior pictures at all.

As you probably know, it is recommended that sellers leave their

home during showings and inspections, but I’ve had sellers who insisted on staying home during showings.

Recently, I had a husband and wife who insisted on being present for my open house. That’s okay, although unusual. The husband worked from home and insisted on keeping his home office locked to all visitors. We had a picture of his office on the MLS, and it was included in my video tour, but during showings a picture of the room’s interior was posted on the locked door to his office.

If you have video cameras installed inside and outside your home, that’s okay, too. To comply with privacy laws, you only need to post a warning sign visible to all visitors that video and audio surveillance is in use at this property. Adding that warning to the “broker remarks” on the MLS provides proof that you did notify all visitors, through their agent, of the video and audio monitoring present in your home. (The MLS system keeps a record of each and every change to the MLS listing, allowing you to prove that the warning was there from the beginning and not added later.)

If you don’t want your agent to install a lockbox containing the key to your home, that can be arranged. Just have the showing instructions say, “Seller will let you in and then step outside during the showing.”

Speaking of lockboxes, I recommend against the kind of lockboxes with dials, because anyone can look at the lockbox while it is open and see what the code is.

Electronic lockboxes are becoming more common in our market.

The most common brand is Senti-Lock. Electronic lockboxes record the time when each agent enters and leaves the home, and showing agents can only use their access code for the approved date, not come back a second time without asking for a second showing.

Normally, we don’t tell the seller the code to the lockbox, because we don’t want the seller to give that code to a friend or cleaning person without our knowledge. However, I have on occasion given that code to a seller who wants to remove the key overnight.

I don’t want readers to get the impression that security is a big problem in our market. In two decades of listing homes, I have never had an incident where a visitor (including at open houses) stole something from one of my listings. Every licensed real estate agent has been fingerprinted and had a criminal background check done on them when they were licensed. They could lose their license and livelihood if they were later convicted of a felony. They would also put their

license in jeopardy if they were to give a lockbox code to a buyer.

It should be noted that our showing service, ShowingTime, makes sure that no unlicensed person is able to get showing instructions for our listings. When an agent calls to set a showing using their own phone, ShowingTime knows from Caller ID which agent it is so they don’t have to check if they’re licensed. (They greet me by name when answering my calls.)

ShowingTime offers several options for allowing showings of your home. You can specify what hours you want to block showings, and these rule can vary by date or day of the week.

You can also specify lead time for showing requests. One hour is a common lead time requirement, but some listings require prior day notice. In other words, your listing agent can pretty much set any rule you want regarding showings, and that rule is computer enforced, meaning the rules will not be violated due to human error.

Do you have other concerns?

Most Agents Are in Sales, Primarily of Themselves

Some real estate professionals may take offense at that statement, but I don’t say it to demean them in any way. I myself once had a “real estate coach” and I’ve been to a couple “superstar summits,” and the focus was always on prospecting and marketing and getting clients to hire you, not someone else.

In fact, I owe my facial appearance to one such coach, Tom Ferry, who said at his Palm Springs superstar event in 2003 that “people don’t trust agents with facial hair.” I didn’t believe him, but the next week I asked a seller why he chose another agent to list his home, and he said, “Frankly, I didn’t trust you.” My mustache was gone that evening!

It makes absolute sense that agents, especially new ones, need to be coached on how to sell themselves as the “right” agent for buyers and sellers. I don’t disagree. But for most

agents, that’s 90% of their selling effort. Once hired, they really don’t “sell” real estate, they advise, consult and coach buyers on the relative merits of the homes *they choose to see*.

The buyer counts on us to share our expertise, to identify features or defects that they might not notice, and to construct a winning offer, coach them on inspection issues, and guide them through to a successful closing.

The agents at Golden Real Estate don’t expend their time or money on prospecting. Yes, we network when we’re at the gym or elsewhere, but we don’t do mailings, cold calling and such because most of our clients have been reading this column for a decade or longer and are pre-sold on hiring us.

It’s a luxury we relish — spending most of our time on developing expertise instead of on selling ourselves to people who haven’t heard of us.

REAL ESTATE TODAY



By JIM SMITH, Realtor®

Just Listed: Ranch on 0.41 Acres Backs to Stream

This 1961 brick ranch at **705 Dudley Street** in Lakewood backs to Lakewood Gulch. Actually, the stream runs through the back of the property, which includes both sides of the gulch. There are several great features of this home, including the 15’x32’ covered patio behind the garage with a built-in gas grill with chimney. There’s a gas fireplace in the kitchen and a wood-burning fireplace in the family room — and enough trees on the property to provide firewood! A trail to Holbrook Park (which straddles the same gulch and includes a playground) is just 100 feet west of this home! Look for pictures and a video tour at www.LakewoodHome.info. My broker associate, **David Dlugasch**, 303-908-4835, will be holding it open **Saturday, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.**



Every element of this ad is also posted at GoldenREblog.com

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