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Robert Lovins

The Riverside County courthouse during a foreclosure auction.

# Riverside Bans Foreclosure Auctions at the Courthouse

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**R**IVERSIDE — The walkways leading to Riverside County's civil courthouse soon will be clear of scores of people parked in beach chairs and shaded by umbrellas. The county's Board of Supervisors passed an unusual ordinance Tuesday banning unauthorized solicitation on county property — a law officials are using to bar foreclosure auctions from the courthouse yard.

The ordinance, one of just a handful of similar statutes in counties statewide, bans from county property marketing, revenue-producing activity, or any action that "announces the sale of any product, service or property," among other things. Breachers of the ordinance could get hit with an infraction or a misdemeanor and face fines or jail.

The measure will become law in a month and then will have a 90-day phase-in period before officials enforce it.

Earlier this year, Riverside County

Presiding Judge Sherrill A. Ellsworth complained to the supervisors about the courthouse trustee sales, saying crowding near the building entrance presented security issues and created a circus-like atmosphere that degraded the court. The crowds have grown steadily in the past couple of years because Riverside County has one of the nation's heaviest concentrations of defaulted properties.

United Trustees Association said it would negotiate 'in good faith' with county and court officials to reach a 'temporary or permanent solution to the issues raised by the passage of this ordinance.'

Representatives of trustees, foreclosure agents and publishing

companies fought the ordinance, saying that moving the assemblies or spreading them among other locations could lower attendance and stifle bidding for properties. In California, a nonjudicial foreclosure state, default notices must by law be posted at properties, and foreclosure auctions must be held in public places. It's not a legal requirement to hold them in front of courthouses, however.

On its website, the United Trustees Association, which represents trustees, foreclosure agents and others, said it would negotiate "in good faith" with county officials and Ellsworth to reach a "temporary or permanent solution to the issues raised by the passage of this ordinance."

Ray Smith, spokesman for the county, said Wednesday the county and courts would work with the auction houses to find alternate sites.

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