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OVFI ORN

Agents rarely use 'romantic' to woo buyers, but champagne and sunsets might win more hearts than sturdy porches

HOME SELLERS COULD GET more

love if they open up to romance. For-sale listings that included "romantic" in the description were 86% more expensive and 27% larger than listings that lacked the term, according to an analysis by real-estate brokerage ZipRealty of listings in 24 major metro areas in 2013. But less than 1% of homes on the market

What gives?

were described as "romantic."

The lack of love in listings may re-

flect agents' fear that "romantic" sends the wrong message to buyers, says ZipRealty CEO Lanny Baker. "It might say 'not-for-families,' or it might say 'cozy,' which can be a code word for small," he adds.

But "romantic" doesn't have to imply cramped living; it can refer to smaller spaces in a larger house, says Eric Boyenga, a real-estate agent with Intero Real Estate in the San Francisco Bay Area. "You are targeting it as a retreat for a couple. If it is

Where the Heart Is

A look at the top five metro areas in the U.S. in which current home listings used the word 'romantic' in 2013

Metro	Percent of listings	Median list price of homes with word	Median list price of homes without word	Avg. square footage of homes with word	Avg. square footage of homes without word
Orange County, Calif.	1.91%	\$799,444	\$545,000	2,690	1,945
Los Angeles	0.81%	\$899,000	\$349,500	2,942	1,973
San Diego	0.36%	\$899,495	\$439,000	3,552	1,939
San Francisco Bay Area	0.30%	\$818,000	\$569,000	2,207	1,865
Tucson, Ariz.	0.27%	\$299,950	\$169,000	2,563	1,896
Source: ZipRealty					

large or for a larger family, you want to designate some areas to be just theirs," like a romantic spa or English garden, he says.

Warm-weather locales seem to boast the most loving homes. Orange County, Calif., has the highest percentage of "romantic" listings, followed by Los Angeles and San Diego, according to the data.

Colder markets, like Boston and Chicago, had lower shares of romantic homes. The trend toward warmer markets suggests that agents are casting romantic homes as airy retreats with views and outdoor space, Mr. Baker says. In those places,

Laura Markosian, an agent with Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage in Los Angeles, used "romantic" in one of her current listings to describe the entire ambience of a five-bedroom

agents know romance sells.

Most common features in 'romantic' homes:

Fireplace (61.2% of listings) Master bedroom (16.3%) Balcony (16.1%) **Garden** (14.7%) French door (14.3%)

contemporary house in Malibu with ocean views. "I have seen the most amazing, colorful sunsets from there. It's like the ocean is on fire," she says. "You can picture yourself having a glass of wine and seeing the sunsetisn't that the most romantic thing?" Samantha Gorrell, an agent with

advertises a house as romantic in writing, but she tries to set a romantic ambience during open houses. She will serve wine and set up candles, champagne, a bucket and a few glasses in the master bedroom. Sometimes she will swap lighting to pink bulbs, add soft fabrics and install a chandelier in the master bedroom as well.

ZipRealty in Orange County, rarely

"You try to evoke a feeling," says Coleen Brennan, a Realtor in Corona del Mar, Calif., who uses "romantic" in about one-third of her listings. "I've been doing this for over 25 years, and I've adapted words as the times have changed. We didn't have open-floor plans when I first started, for instance. Porches were in, then went away and are back again. But romantic is different. It's here to stay."

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