

Thank-you.

On behalf of the Members of the Toronto Real Estate Board, thank-you for the opportunity to provide our views on the regulation of open house signs in the City of Richmond Hill.

I would like to begin by noting that TREB supports the motion, tabled by Councillor West, to make changes to the Richmond Hill Sign By-law to allow the legitimate use of real estate open house signs, under strict rules, as detailed in the motion.

We strongly believe that reasonable rules should be in place to ensure the legitimate use of these signs. In fact, we have worked closely with Richmond Hill by-law enforcement staff, recently, to assist with enforcement efforts by issuing direct and numerous communications to our Members reminding them of their obligations and need to adhere to municipal sign by-laws. We appreciate the working relationship that we have developed with your staff, and believe that they would agree on the mutual benefits in this regard.

We take sign by-laws seriously. In fact, to help ensure compliance, TREB recently instituted complaints based procedures as part of its professional standards requirements, which could ultimately lead to disciplinary measures as harsh as revocation of a Realtor's TREB Membership if they repeatedly contravene these sign by-laws.

TREB makes this issue a priority because open house signs continue to be an important and legitimate marketing tool, which our Members clients, your constituents, EXPECT and DEMAND to be a part of the strategies used to promote the sale of their property.

Your constituents expect our Members to use these signs because they do assist with increasing interest in their home. As I'm sure you know, many people drive through neighbourhoods that they are considering moving to, when they are looking for a new home. Open house signs help to bring these people to a home for sale and thereby help your constituents realize the full market potential of their home.

Currently, Richmond Hill is quite unique, within the GTA, in prohibiting open house signs. Because of this, the current Richmond Hill sign by-law puts your constituents at a competitive disadvantage with home sellers in neighbouring municipalities like Vaughan and Markham, where open house signs can be used.

In this regard, we believe that it is prudent to consider best practices used in other municipalities, as is done by Councillor West's motion. Other municipal sign by-laws vary in the degrees that they regulate open house signs. With that said, in our experience, the single most effective action that Richmond Hill Council can, and should, take is to require open house signs to display the date, time, and address of the open house that it is promoting. This is a requirement in various municipalities including Vaughan and Toronto, and is included as part of Councillor West's motion.

This would help to ensure that the sign is being used to promote a legitimate open house, and not for ulterior motives. It would allow both enforcement staff and the public to instantly determine if the sign is advertising a current open house or not.

This requirement, together with other reasonable measures to regulate size and location, would address concerns associated with illegitimate use of open house signs.

Thank-you