

December 15, 2020

City of Richmond Hill  
225 East Beaver Creek Road  
Richmond Hill, Ontario, L4B 3P4

**RE: Richmond Hill Secondary Suites and Ancillary Units Consultation**

Dear Mayor Barrow,

On behalf of the 57,000 Members of the Toronto Regional Real Estate Board (TRREB), I am writing in support of the City of Richmond Hill considering to amend the Official Plan and the Zoning By-law Amendment to expand permissions for secondary suites and ancillary units for ground-related dwellings, to bring them into conformity with provincial legislative requirements and to facilitate housing diversity.

TRREB's REALTOR® Members work with home buyers and sellers across the GTA every day, including the City of Richmond Hill. As such, they are among the most knowledgeable on housing issues and challenges that face the City and region. In this regard, in recent years, TRREB has emphasized that the most significant challenge facing current home buyers is insufficient supply of housing, and especially mid-density housing options, which is leading to housing affordability.

TRREB has been a long-time supporter of the legalization and facilitation of secondary suites such as basement apartments, and ancillary dwellings such as garden suites or coach houses. Now, more than ever, we believe that these units can help address the housing challenges that we face by making significant contributions to the supply of housing both for home ownership and rental housing.

Regarding home ownership, secondary suites and ancillary units provide an excellent strategy for many people to achieve the dream of home ownership. For some people, generating income by renting a secondary suite or ancillary suite allows them to qualify to purchase a home that they otherwise would not have been able to.

With regard to rental housing, secondary suites and ancillary units provide a readily available option for renters. Furthermore, such units allow more diverse housing types and lifestyles for renters, as well as greater diversity in location of choice.

When it comes to mid-density housing, sometimes referred to as "the missing middle", secondary suites and ancillary units can help to fill this gap in a gentle way, without changing the neighbourhood character.

In order for these policies to be effective, have a good adoption rate and add a good supply of affordable housing units, it is imperative for the policies to be clearly communicated, easy to follow, and not financially prohibited. Below are some recommendations that the City could consider as the policy is being reviewed:

- The City should consider creating a “one-stop” Comprehensive Guide or Interactive Web Portal with all necessary information to create these units from scratch (including fire safety standards, Building Codes, inspection info, contact information for all relevant city departments):
  - the interactive online guide should allow users to ask questions about their circumstances and then be directed to further information based on specific requirements (e.g. detached vs. townhouse, secondary suite vs. ancillary unit etc., existing illegal units vs. new ones);
- The City should consider utilizing a live or digital concierge service to assist homeowners through all steps of the process;
- The City should consider flexible options for surface parking requirements based on local needs and realities instead of a blanket, mandatory requirement which can be punitive and limits uptake;
- The City should consider applying the regulations across both new and existing homes;
- The City should consider offering incentives (monetary and non-monetary) to encourage development of “legal” secondary suites and ancillary units; and
- The City should consider promoting the economic benefits of creating legal suites to ensure a good adoption of this policy.

Thank-you for the opportunity to provide our recommendations and we look forward to continue working with the City on this file. TRREB would welcome the opportunity to participate and provide insight when the City considers the proposed rules, requirements and guidelines regulating secondary suites and ancillary units.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Patel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lisa" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Patel".

Lisa Patel  
President  
CC: Members of Council