



Report to: Development Services Committee

Meeting Date: February 22, 2022

SUBJECT: Review of the number four in municipal addressing
PREPARED BY: Robert Tadmore, Senior Planner, Ext. 6810
REVIEWED BY: Stephen Lue, Senior Development Manager ext. 2520

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the report titled ‘Review of the number four in municipal addressing’, dated February 22nd, 2022, be received;
2. That Council direct Staff to retain the current street addressing criteria with no changes.
3. And that Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

This report provides a Staff response to the November 8, 2021 Development Services Committee request for a review of how the address number four (4) is treated in the cities of Richmond Hill and Toronto as compared to Markham.

BACKGROUND:

At the October 25, 2021 Development Service Committee Meeting a notice of motion was moved to consider the exclusion of the address number “four”. Its English pronunciation sounds similar to the word “death” in Cantonese and Mandarin which is felt to have negative implications for homeowners. It was noted that in May 2013 City of Richmond Hill Council passed a resolution to exclude the address number four (4) from all future development projects. The notice of motion included a similar Council resolution as follows:

“Now therefore be it resolved that the City of Markham’s Municipal Addressing Criteria #3 – which stipulates that all numbers are included in the addressing of a street – be amended to reflect the elimination of the use of the number four (4) in future municipal addresses in Markham.”

The matter was deferred to the November 8, 2021 Development Services Committee Meeting for discussion and consideration. At that meeting Development Services Committee suggested the motion be deferred until Staff report back with a comparison of how Richmond Hill, Toronto and Markham’s Address Policies deal with the use of the number four (4) in municipal addressing.

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

City of Markham Staff contacted the City of Richmond Hill to obtain their policy regarding the use of the address number four (4). Their addressing Staff confirmed that until 2013 Richmond Hill only excluded the address number thirteen (13) from their addresses, but on May 13, 2013, Richmond Hill Council adopted an amendment (Confirmatory By-Law No. 62-13) to their street naming and addressing guide recommending that “The number four (4) also be removed due to various cultures superstition;”. It must be noted this recommendation only excludes the address number four (4) and not any other address number that includes a four (4).

City of Markham Staff subsequently contacted the City of Toronto to obtain their policy regarding the address number four (4). Their addressing Staff indicated while they have a standardized method for the assignment of addresses, Toronto does not have a Council adopted set of address criteria. Toronto Staff indicated they normally include all numbers when assigning addresses for new developments, but confirmed they have excluded the number four (4) when specifically requested by developers. They do not however exclude any series of numbers that include a four (4) such as in the case of the forty series of numbers.

As for Markham, on January 28, 1997, after extensive discussion, Council adopted a set of addressing criteria (See Appendix ‘A’) that has been administered by the Planning & Urban Design Department for the assignment of municipal addresses. These criteria were reviewed and supported by the Fire Department and would provide all interested parties with a formalized guide to street numbering practices. Criteria #3 from that list stipulated that “All numbers are included in the addressing of a street.” It was based on the principle of applying a consistent and coherent addressing system to ensure public safety with respect to emergency services response times and to provide delivery services and the general public with a reliable system with which to locate their destinations.

It should be noted that, based on past address change requests to the City from both developers and residents, the issue with the number four (4) includes all address numbers that possess the number four (4) [eg. 14, 43, 124, etc.]. Staff have confirm through discussions with Richmond Hill that they continue to receive requests to change addresses that contain the number 4 (four).

Therefore, it is Staff’s opinion that supporting this motion may lead to the erosion of what has been a reliable addressing system in this City. However, it should be noted that Staff do currently permit address changes in certain instances where the Council adopted addressing criteria and policies would not be compromised.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Not applicable.

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

The Fire Department was consulted regarding this matter and agree with Staff's position noted in this report.

RECOMMENDED BY:

Biju Karumanchery,
M.C.I.P., R.P.P.
Director of Planning & Urban Design

Arvin Prasad,
M.C.I.P., R.P.P.
Commissioner of
Development Services

ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix 'A' – Council adopted addressing criteria