

2019-79 Pierce vs Toronto Life

30 September 2019

The National NewsMedia Council has considered and dismissed a complaint about a factual inaccuracy in an article published by Toronto Life on August 19, 2019, entitled “Sale of the Week: The \$3.4-million modern Thorncrest home took a few tries to sell.”

The complainant, Nancy Pierce, described herself as a real estate agent who has lived in Toronto’s Thorncrest Village for over 20 years. She took issue with the description of the house, arguing that it would have been better described as a “Princess-Rosethorn” home, and that the misidentification had a negative impact on potential buyers in Thorncrest Village and her real estate business.

The complainant described the article as “reckless reporting and a breach of journalistic standards.” She requested the news magazine publish an apology along with an article that was “more flattering” about real estate in Thorncrest Village.

The NNC does not compel its members to issue an apology, nor does it direct news media organizations on editorial decisions. For these reasons, the NNC will not take action on the requests for an apology and substitute article.

The news media organization responded to the complaint by stating that names of Toronto neighbourhoods differ based on a variety of sources and that it is the practice of the news media organization to describe areas by more commonly identifiable locations. While the news organization acknowledged that Thorncrest Village has a particular history and distinct identity, it pointed out that the article did not refer to the home as being located in “Thorncrest Village” but in a larger area that it has referred to for the past ten years as “Thorncrest” after the name of a principal street in the area.

In reviewing the article in question and additional materials submitted, the NNC supported the view of the news organization regarding its use of neighbourhood names. While acknowledging there are varying maps and designations describing Toronto neighbourhoods, the NNC supports the prerogative of a journalist to select the source that best serves the focus of an article. In this case, the article prominently reported the house number and street name of the property, removing any question about the exact location of the property

The complainant argued that this geographical reference diminished the value of other properties located in Thorncrest Village. However, no evidence to support this allegation was submitted or found in the article. In an ordinary reading, the article is about a specific house and does not comment on the neighbourhood.

For the above reasons, the NNC dismisses the complaint about inaccuracy. The NNC takes allegations of reckless reporting very seriously. In considering the totality of this complaint, it finds the complainant’s allegation to be without merit.