

33 Princess Margaret Boulevard – Application to Remove a Private Tree

Date:	April 22, 2014
To:	Etobicoke York Community Council
From:	Jason Doyle, Director, Urban Forestry, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
Wards:	Ward 4 – Etobicoke Centre
Reference Number:	P:\2014\Cluster A\PFR\EY32-051314-AFS#19466

SUMMARY

This report requests that City Council deny the application for a permit to remove one (1) privately owned tree located in the rear yard of 33 Princess Margaret Boulevard. The applicant is requesting tree removal due to a family member with allergies related to honey locust trees.

The subject tree is a honey locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*) measuring 49 cm in diameter. The tree is healthy and in good condition. Urban Forestry does not support removal of this tree.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that:

1. City Council deny the request for a permit to remove the privately owned honey locust tree at 33 Princess Margaret Boulevard.

Financial Impact

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

COMMENTS

Urban Forestry received an application for a permit to remove a privately owned 49 cm diameter honey locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*) tree located in the rear yard of 33 Princess Margaret Boulevard. The owner requested authorization to remove this tree due to a household member having allergies to honey locust trees.

The tree was inspected by staff and found to be healthy and in good condition.

As required under *Section 813-19, of City of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 813, Trees, Article III*, a Notice of application sign was posted on the subject property for the minimum 14 day period in order to provide an opportunity for comment by the community. No comments were received in response to the notice.

A permit to remove the tree was denied by Urban Forestry. The property owner is appealing that decision.

The pollen grains produced by honey locust trees are relatively large, and are generally insect-pollinated for a roughly two week period sometime during May and June. Therefore, the allergy reaction period described in the application would occur for this short period of pollen production time.

There are approximately 153,000 honey locust trees in Toronto which comprise 1.5% of Toronto's urban forest and 6% of the street tree population. A search of the tree inventory in the Tree Management Maintenance System database indicates 30 honey locust trees fronting homes within 500 metres of 33 Princess Margaret Boulevard. Two of these trees are fronting the adjacent property and directly opposite the subject property (35 and 38 Princess Margaret Boulevard). It is unknown how many private trees may exist within this area. It is not possible to implicate one particular tree as exclusively aggravating or causing allergy symptoms.

Trees are essential to improving air quality as they provide a constant source of oxygen and filter harmful pollutants from the air we breathe. The direct benefits derived from improving the health of our urban forest helps to improve the lives of its citizens, especially those suffering from allergies and other respiratory disorders such as asthma. Under the Ontario Health Protection and Promotion Act, health allergies are not considered to be health hazards. Toronto Public Health supports the public health merits of Urban Forestry's approach to tree allergies as outlined in this report. Medical allergists were consulted in the development of this approach, which also lends it strength and credibility.

Toronto's Official Plan policy 3.4.1 supports the preservation of trees, citing their many benefits:

- (1) To support strong communities, a competitive economy and a high quality of life, public and private city-building activities and changes to the built environment, including public works, will be environmentally friendly, based on:

- (d) preserving and enhancing the urban forest by:
 - (i) providing suitable growing environments for trees;
 - (ii) increasing tree canopy coverage and diversity, especially of long-lived native and large shade trees; and
 - (iii) regulating the injury and destruction of trees.

The environmental benefits of trees include cleansing of air, noise and wind reduction, and protection from ultraviolet radiation. Trees reduce rain water runoff thereby reducing soil erosion and lowering storm water management costs. They also contribute to moderation of temperature extremes and reduction of the urban heat island effect by providing shade during the summer.

Trees provide many economic benefits, including the enhancement of property values. Homes with mature trees have higher value when compared to similar types of homes in similar locations without trees. Mature trees are associated with reduced home energy consumption. Air conditioning costs are lower in a home shaded by trees and heating costs are reduced when trees break the winter cooling effects of wind.

Should City Council approve this request for tree removal, in accordance with *Section 813-20 of City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 813, Trees, Article III*, approval must be conditional upon the owner providing satisfactory replacement planting. In this instance, it is appropriate for the applicant to provide three (3) trees as replacement, which can be achieved in a combination of on-site planting and cash-in-lieu of planting.

Removal of the honey locust tree at 33 Princess Margaret Boulevard would eliminate all of the environmental quality benefits the tree is providing; however, would not likely be an effective or appropriate means to alleviate the allergy symptoms being experienced by a resident of this address. Urban Forestry, therefore, does not support removal of this tree.

CONTACT

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Jason Doyle
Director of Urban Forestry
Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division

ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1 – photo of 49 cm diameter honey locust tree at 33 Princess Margaret Boulevard

49 cm diameter honey locust tree at 33 Princess Margaret Boulevard

