

## **Application to Remove a Private Tree - 168 Erskine Avenue**

**Date:** November 27, 2018

**To:** North York Community Council

**From:** Director, Urban Forestry, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

**Wards:** Ward 15 – Don Valley West

### **SUMMARY**

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This report recommends that City Council deny the request for a permit to remove one (1) privately-owned tree located on the boundary line between the properties at 160 and 168 Erskine Avenue. The owner at 168 Erskine Avenue is requesting removal to address concerns regarding the tree roots' impact on the adjacent driveway and the structural shape of the crown.

The subject tree is an American elm (*Ulmus americana*) measuring 62 cm in diameter. Urban Forestry does not support removal of this tree as it is healthy and maintainable.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

1. City Council deny the request for a permit to remove one (1) privately-owned tree located on the boundary of 160 and 168 Erskine Avenue.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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

### **DECISION HISTORY**

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There is no previous decision history regarding the subject tree.

## COMMENTS

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Urban Forestry received an application to remove one (1) privately-owned American elm (*Ulmus americana*) tree measuring 62 cm in diameter, located on the boundary between the properties at 160 and 168 Erskine Avenue. The application for tree removal has been made to address the property owner's concerns about the tree roots' impact on the adjacent driveway and the structural shape of the crown.

The arborist report indicates the vitality of the tree as fair to poor. Urban Forestry staff inspected the tree and at the time of inspection determined that it is both botanically and structurally healthy and maintainable. The tree has a mildly imbalanced crown structure due to growth response to the available area. There is limited soft surface area for the roots and the tree's root system likely extends below the driveways located at both properties. There are no significant signs of damage to the driveways as a result of the trees root structure. Tree roots are not physically capable of exerting the force required to lift or crack a properly constructed and maintained driveway. They are however, capable of growing into any available space that offers water and air. However, if proper drainage has not been provided, heaving may occur as a result of freezing and thawing creating space that tree roots may grow into. Roots do not and cannot go where there is no water. Resealing the driveway, if not already done, would prevent roots from growing in any existing cracks or other openings in the foundation. Damage such as that described here can typically be repaired without requiring tree removal.

A permit to remove the tree was denied by Urban Forestry. The owner is appealing this decision. 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. During the posting period, Urban Forestry received two (2) letters of opposition from community members and a petition with twenty eight (28) comments from tenants residing at 168 Erskine Avenue opposing the removal of the tree. The residents oppose the tree's removal and cite concerns of the loss of shade from the tree and its impact on the heating of the building and their apartments. They worry about the increased requirement in energy usage due to increased air conditioning in the summer months if the tree is removed.

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*, permit approval must be conditional upon the provision of satisfactory replacement planting. As a condition of permit issuance, the applicant is proposing to pay cash-in-lieu of one (1) tree at \$583.00 to be planted off-site. However, in this instance, it would be appropriate for the owner to provide five (5) replacement trees through a combination of planting on site or cash-in-lieu of planting.

Trees improve the quality of urban life and contribute greatly to our sense of community. They are aesthetically pleasing and soften the hard lines of built form and surfaces in an urban setting. Trees contribute to the overall character and quality of neighbourhoods.

Studies suggest that social benefits such as crime reduction and neighbourhood cohesion can be attributed to the presence of trees.

The environmental benefits of trees include cleansing of air, noise and wind reduction, and protection from ultraviolet radiation. Trees reduce rainwater 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 mitigate the cooling effects of wind. Trees are a community resource which can make the city more attractive to investors, tourists and prospective residents, thus contributing to growth and prosperity.

It is the goal of the City of Toronto to increase the city's tree canopy to 40 percent. The loss of trees in the city due to the ice storm experienced in late December 2013, compounded with additional tree loss due to the presence of the Asian longhorned beetle and the emerald ash borer make the preservation of all healthy trees more necessary now than ever.

The American elm tree located on the boundary line of the properties at 160 and 168 Erskine Avenue is a valuable part of the urban forest. With proper care and maintenance this tree has the potential to provide the property owner and the surrounding community with benefits for many more years. Urban Forestry, therefore, does not support removal of this tree.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Jason Doyle  
Director, Urban Forestry  
Parks, Forestry and Recreation

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment 1 – Photograph of the subject tree from the south looking north, 160 Erskine Avenue on the left, and 168 Erskine Avenue on the right

Attachment 2 – Photograph of the subject tree's trunk flair from the south looking north

Attachment 3 – Photograph of the subject tree's trunk flair from the east looking west, showing the cracks of concern in the 168 Erskine Avenue driveway

Attachment 4 – Photograph of the subject tree's trunk flair from the west looking east, showing the 160 Erskine Avenue driveway

Attachment 5 – Photograph of the subject tree's shadow, taken from the south looking north

Attachment 1 – Photograph of the subject tree from the south looking north, 160 Erskine Avenue on the left, and 168 Erskine Avenue on the right



Attachment 2 – Photograph of the subject tree's trunk flair from the south looking north



Attachment 3 – Photograph of the subject tree's trunk flair from the east looking west, showing the cracks of concern in the 168 Erskine Avenue driveway



Attachment 4 – Photograph of the subject tree's trunk flair from the west looking east, showing the 160 Erskine Avenue driveway





Attachment 5 – Photograph of the subject tree's shadow, taken from the south looking north

