

Application to Remove a Private Tree - 113 Meadowbank Road

Date: March 12, 2020

To: Etobicoke York Community Council

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

Wards: Ward 2 - Etobicoke Centre

SUMMARY

This report requests that City Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 113 Meadowbank Road. The application indicates the reason for removal is to address concerns that the tree's roots are clogging the main drain pipe, leading to basement flooding.

The subject tree is a honey locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*), measuring 60 cm in diameter. The Private Tree By-law does not support the removal of this tree as it is healthy and maintainable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. City Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 113 Meadowbank Road.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

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

DECISION HISTORY

There is no decision history regarding this tree removal permit application.

COMMENTS

Urban Forestry received an application for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located in the front yard of 113 Meadowbank Road. The subject tree is a honey locust measuring 60 cm in diameter. The application indicates that the request to remove this tree has been made to address concerns that the tree's roots are clogging drain pipes which is leading to basement flooding.

The arborist report that accompanied the application assessed this tree to be in fair condition with little deadwood.

According to the information provided by the owner, an incident of basement flooding at this property was investigated by City workers who determined that a broken watermain pipe was the cause. The City hired an independent contractor to clear the blockage.

Urban Forestry staff inspected the tree and at the time of inspection determined that it is healthy and maintainable, both botanically and structurally. This tree is situated 7 meters from the dwelling at 113 Meadowbank Road and 8 meters from the road. No evidence of the tree impacting the residence was observed at the time of inspection.

Tree roots do not cause drains or sewer pipes to break, but they will invade and clog drains that have pre-existing cracks and resultant leakage. The majority of a tree's root system is located within 60 cm of the soil surface above the depth of sanitary and storm drains. However when drains fail and leak additional oxygen and nutrient rich water, this draws roots deeper where they may enter and cause damage. Replacement of old clay pipes with new PVC piping, continuous between the house and sewer, eliminates future blockages by tree roots.

When reviewing applications for tree removal, Urban Forestry staff are guided by City policies and by-laws including the *City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 813, Trees, Article III*, more commonly referred to as the Private Tree By-law. The Private Tree By-law does not have a mechanism that would allow the removal of the subject tree based on the concerns stated in the tree removal permit application.

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 posting.

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

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 issuance must be conditional upon the provision of satisfactory replacement planting.

As a condition of permit issuance, the applicant is proposing to plant one replacement tree. However, in this instance it would be appropriate for the applicant to provide five replacement trees which can be achieved in a combination of on-site planting and cash-in-lieu of planting.

Trees improve the quality of urban life and contribute greatly to our sense of community. They help 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 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 in winter. 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 per cent. 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 honey locust tree at 113 Meadowbank Road 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. In accordance with the City Council-approved Strategic Forest Management Plan, Toronto's Official Plan and the Private Tree By-law, this tree should not be removed.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE



Jason Doyle
Director, Urban Forestry
Parks, Forestry and Recreation

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Figure 1: Staff photograph of the honey locust measuring 60 cm in diameter located in the front yard of 113 Meadowbank Road, July, 2019

Attachment 2: Figure 2 - Staff photograph showing the trunk flare of the honey locust measuring 60 cm in diameter located in the front yard of 113 Meadowbank Road, July, 2019

Attachment 1: Figure 1 - Staff photograph of the honey locust measuring 60 cm in diameter located in the front yard of 113 Meadowbank Road, July, 2019



Attachment 2: Figure 2 - Staff photograph showing the trunk flare of the honey locust measuring 60 cm in diameter located in the front yard of 113 Meadowbank Road, July, 2019



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