

Application to Remove a City-Owned Tree – 338 Belsize Drive

Date: September 15, 2021

To: North York Community Council

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

Wards: Ward 15 – Don Valley West

SUMMARY

This report requests that City Council deny the request for a permit to remove one City-owned tree located at 338 Belsize Drive. The application indicates the reason for removal is due to a conflict with the proposed construction of a new dwelling.

The subject tree is a honey locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*) measuring 75 cm in diameter. The Tree By-laws do 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 City-owned tree located at 338 Belsize Drive.

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 City-owned tree located on the City-owned right-of-way fronting 338 Belsize Drive. The subject tree is a honey locust measuring 75 cm in diameter. The request to remove this tree has been submitted due to a conflict with the proposed construction of a new dwelling at the subject address.

The arborist report that accompanied the application describes the tree to be in fair condition.

Urban Forestry staff inspected the tree and at the time of inspection determined that it is healthy and maintainable. Through this inspection and review of the arborist report, staff have concluded that the removal of the subject tree is not permissible under the Tree By-law, *City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 813*.

Urban Forestry reviewed the minor variance application submitted to the Committee of Adjustment and provided comments recommending denial of the variances due to the impacts to the bylaw-protected tree. While the plans showed the subject tree being retained and accommodated, Urban Forestry determined that the injury associated with the expanded hardscape would not allow for the tree to survive. During the Committee of Adjustment hearing the applicant acknowledged that they were aware that Urban Forestry could refuse the permit to remove the tree, and confirmed the tree would not be removed.

Following the issuance of Notice of Decision and Final and Binding approval, Urban Forestry received a permit application to remove the subject tree. Attempts to provide alternate designs to accommodate the tree have not been to Urban Forestry's satisfaction. Urban Forestry has therefore denied the application, and the applicant is appealing this decision.

Should City Council approve this request for removal of the City-owned trees, in accordance with *Section 813-10.B of City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 813, Trees, Article II*, permit issuance must be conditional upon the applicants providing payment of the appraised value of the tree to be removed (\$12,337.00), agreeing to have the tree removed at their expense, as well as providing satisfactory replacement planting. In this instance, it would be appropriate for the applicant to provide five replacement trees for each tree being removed which can be achieved in a combination of on-site planting and cash-in-lieu of planting. The applicant will also be required to provide a tree planting security deposit to cover the cost of removal, replacement and the cost of maintenance for a period of two years for all trees to be planted on City property.

The honey locust located at 338 Belsize Drive is a valuable part of the urban forest that provides numerous aesthetic, social and economic benefits to the property owner and local community. Toronto's urban forest provides \$55 million in environmental benefits every year including improved air quality through pollution removal, lower storm water management costs by reducing runoff, and carbon sequestration that lessens the impacts of climate change. Through shade and transpiration, increasing urban tree cover can mitigate exposure to extreme heat events. A higher density of trees in a neighborhood has been shown to significantly improve physical and mental health, such as reducing blood pressure and stress levels and promoting physical activity. Trees also make urban environments aesthetically more pleasing which raises property values.

Protecting the urban forest is a key strategy for building resiliency, as it continues to face increasing natural pressures such as storms and invasive pests. The 2013 ice

storm resulted in the removal of over 3000 City-owned trees. The Emerald Ash Borer beetle has killed approximately 860,000 ash trees across the City. As a result, if the City aims to reach its canopy target of 40 per cent, it is imperative that the City protect healthy trees from injury and removal whenever possible. The improved condition and size of the urban forest will support the City of Toronto's goals to improve quality of life and well-being that enables a diverse, sustainable, innovative, growing and thriving city.

In accordance with the City Council-approved Strategic Forest Management Plan, Toronto's Official Plan, Toronto's Biodiversity Strategy, and the Private Tree By-law, the honey locust at 338 Belsize Drive, as a valuable part of the urban forest, should not be removed.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Kim Statham
Acting Director, Urban Forestry
Parks, Forestry and Recreation

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Figure 1: Arborist photograph showing City-owned honey locust in front of 338 Belsize Drive. March 20, 2021.

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