

Application to Remove a Private Tree – 29 Willsteven Drive

Date: June 6, 2022

To: Scarborough Community Council

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

Wards: Ward 24 - Scarborough-Guildwood

SUMMARY

This staff report is about a matter that Community Council has delegated authority from City Council to make a final decision.

This report requests that Scarborough Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 29 Willsteven Drive. The application indicates the reason for removal is due to safety concerns related to branch failure.

The subject tree is an American elm tree (*Ulmus americana*), measuring 124 cm in diameter. The Tree By-laws do not support the removal of this tree as it is healthy and maintainable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Acting Director of Urban Forestry recommends that:

1. Scarborough Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 29 Willsteven 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 privately owned tree located in the rear yard at 29 Willsteven Drive. The subject tree is an American elm tree measuring 124 cm in diameter. The request to remove this tree has been made due to safety concerns related to branch failure.

The arborist report that accompanied the application described the tree to be in poor condition. It describes the tree as: decayed; having included bark; containing a split from the ground to the main junction; and having multiple limbs with splits. It indicates that the tree has had two branch failures in the last couple of years, and is likely to have more branch failures in the near future.

Urban Forestry staff inspected the tree and at the time of inspection determined that it is healthy and maintainable.

Included bark grows in the union between two or more stems that are growing closely together. Because bark does not have a strong supportive fiber strength like wood, the branch attachment may be much weaker than a union without included bark, creating a branch that is not well supported. While minor included bark was evident between the main stems of this tree, it is not uncommon for elm trees to have this shape. In this instance, the presence of included bark does not compromise the structure of the tree.

The removal of deadwood through pruning in accordance with good arboricultural practices and the performance of routine tree maintenance will also reduce the likelihood of future limb failure. Routine tree maintenance is considered part of performing property maintenance and is a responsibility of all property owners within the City of Toronto.

Minor decay was observed in old pruning wounds, however the trunk did not exhibit any obvious signs of internal or external decay that would make it more prone to failure. A common indication of potential failure due to strong winds can be a heaving root plate. The root system appears structurally sound with a good root flare and without any heaving.

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*. As a result of the above noted findings and in support of protecting and growing the city's urban forest, a permit to remove the tree was denied by Urban Forestry. The applicant 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. No comments were received in response to the application to remove the tree in question.

The American elm tree at 29 WillSteven 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 neighbourhood 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 resilience, 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 American elm tree at 29 WillSteven Drive as a valuable part of the urban forest, should not be removed.

The Acting Director of Urban Forestry recommends Scarborough Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 29 WillSteven Drive. Should Scarborough Community Council grant this request for tree removal, the following recommendation may be adopted, in accordance with the City's Tree By-law permit requirements:

- 1) Scarborough Community Council approve the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 29 WillSteven Drive, and require the applicant to provide five replacement trees which can be achieved in a combination of on-site planting and cash-in-lieu of planting to the satisfaction of the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation.

CONTACT

Janice Allen, Acting Supervisor, Tree Protection and Plan Review, Urban Forestry
Tel: 416-396-5131, Email: Janice.Allen@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

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

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Figure 1: Staff photograph showing shape and structure of American elm tree at 29 WillSteven Drive; July 15, 2021

Attachment 1 – Figure 1: Staff photograph showing shape and structure of American elm tree at 29 Willsteven Drive; July 15, 2021

