

Application to Remove a Private Tree – 280 Withrow Avenue

Date: December 15, 2022

To: Toronto and East York Community Council

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

Wards: 14 - Toronto-Danforth

SUMMARY

This report requests that Toronto and East York Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 280 Withrow Avenue. The applicant is seeking permission to remove the tree to address concerns that the tree is in poor condition due to systemic heartwood rot.

The subject tree is a silver maple tree (*Acer saccharinum*) measuring 78.5 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. Toronto and East York Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove a privately owned tree located at 280 Withrow Avenue.

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 280 Withrow Avenue. The subject tree is a silver maple measuring 78.5 cm in diameter. The request to remove this tree has been made due to concerns that the tree is in poor condition due to systemic heartwood rot.

The arborist report that accompanied the application described the tree to be in poor condition due to signs of systemic heartwood rot located throughout; a codominant stem with decaying cavity; poor pruning methods; and compartmentalization of decay.

Urban Forestry staff inspected the tree and at the time of the inspections determined that it is healthy and maintainable. Staff determined that the defects identified by the arborist are non-critical.

Heartwood is located at the centre of the tree. Heartwood rot is a fungal disease that causes the decay of heartwood at the center of the trunk and branches. Fungi enter the tree through wounds in the bark. Diseased heartwood softens, making trees structurally weaker and prone to breakage. It is important to consider the outer fibers in a branch or trunk contribute the most to a tree's strength. Half or more of a tree's heartwood can be decayed and the tree will still be structurally sound. While the pruning cuts shown in the report indicate the tree has internal decay, the sapwood is still solid and able to support tree's structure. When a tree is pruned or injured, it begins a natural process of compartmentalization, this isolates damaged or diseased areas from healthy tissue surrounding the wound.

The arborist further advised that construction took place in the rear yard at the neighbouring property (278 Withrow Avenue) in 2019 and speculated that this would have resulted in an injury to the subject tree. Urban Forestry confirmed that a tree injury permit was issued for the construction of a rear yard parking pad at 278 Withrow Avenue and observed no evidence of injury-related decline in the subject tree, at the time of inspections.

Two Urban Forestry staff inspected the tree on separate occasions and acknowledged a small cavity located at the main union, identified in the arborist report. Urban Forestry staff requested that a tomography test be conducted by the arborist to confirm the size of this cavity and extent of the internal decay. The applicant initially agreed to conduct further assessment and provide updated information in support of the application, however this information was never provided to the City.

Through these inspections 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, Urban Forestry determined there is not enough evidence to support the removal of the subject tree and, 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 regarding the removal of the tree in question were received.

The silver maple tree at 280 Withrow Avenue 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 by 2050, 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.

The Acting Director of Urban Forestry recommends Toronto and East York Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 280 Withrow Avenue. Should Toronto and East York 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) Toronto and East York Community Council approve the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 280 Withrow Avenue, 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

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SIGNATURE



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

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Figure 1: Staff photograph showing the crown of subject silver maple tree at 280 Withrow Avenue; July 4, 2022

Attachment 2 – Figure 2: Arborist photograph showing the cavity at main union of subject silver maple tree at 280 Withrow Avenue; August 28, 2022

Attachment 3 – Figure 3: Arborist photograph showing a pruning cut with solid sapwood in subject silver maple tree at 280 Withrow Avenue; August 28, 2022

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Attachment 2 – Figure 2: Arborist photograph showing the cavity at main union of subject silver maple tree at 280 Withrow Avenue; August 28, 2022



Attachment 3 – Figure 3: Arborist photograph showing a pruning cut with solid sapwood in subject silver maple tree at 280 Withrow Avenue; August 28, 2022

