

Application to Remove a City Tree – 90 Gort Avenue

Date: October 9, 2024

To: Etobicoke York Community Council

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

Wards: Etobicoke-Lakeshore - 3

SUMMARY

This report requests that Etobicoke York Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one City-owned tree located at 90 Gort Avenue. The applicant indicates the reason for requesting removal of the tree is because the tree is non-native, has established itself in a poor location, and is causing a nuisance by dropping fruit which attracts hornets.

The white mulberry tree (*Morus alba*) measures 26 cm in diameter. The City's Tree By-laws do not support the removal of this tree as it is healthy and maintainable. The permit was denied, and the applicant is appealing the decision. Community Council has delegated authority from City Council to make a final decision as to whether a permit may be issued when an applicant wishes to appeal the denial of a permit of a tree protected under the By-laws.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Acting Director of Urban Forestry, Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that:

1. Etobicoke York Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one City-owned tree located at 90 Gort Avenue.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

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

DECISION HISTORY

There is no decision history related to this tree removal permit application.

COMMENTS

Parks, Forestry and Recreation received an application for a permit to remove one City-owned tree located on the City-owned right-of-way adjacent to 90 Gort Avenue. The white mulberry tree (*Morus alba*) in question measures 26 cm in diameter. The applicant indicates the reason for requesting removal of the tree is because the tree is non-native, has established itself in a poor location, and is causing a nuisance by dropping fruit which attracts hornets.

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

City staff inspected the tree and at the time of inspection determined that it is healthy and maintainable. While the tree overhangs the backyard, the tree is located such that routine maintenance of the tree and property can be performed. The City of Toronto maintains trees located on the City-owned right-of-way. Should this tree require maintenance in the future, the applicant may submit a service request through 311 Toronto to have the tree inspected.

Every large growing tree requires some degree of maintenance such as removal of leaves, flowers, fruit, twigs and small branches. Removal of debris such as fallen fruit is considered part of regular property maintenance and is a responsibility of all property owners within the City of Toronto.

The City's Tree By-laws do not support the removal of this tree as it is healthy and maintainable. Moreover, there is no provision in the Tree By-laws to exempt species, including non-native trees nor to address the perceived nuisance resulting from a tree's natural functions.

Through the inspection and review of the arborist report, a permit to remove the tree was denied by Parks, Forestry and Recreation. The applicant is appealing this decision. Community Council has delegated authority from City Council to make a final decision as to whether a permit may be issued when an applicant wishes to appeal the City's decision to deny a tree permit.

The City has reaffirmed its canopy target of 40 per cent by 2050. One approach to support achieving this target is to protect healthy trees from injury and removal whenever possible.

Protecting the urban forest is critical in building climate resilience as urban centres continue to face increasing development, impacts due to climate change in the form of extreme weather events, and other natural threats such as invasive pests. Toronto's urban forest provides \$55 million in ecosystem services and benefits annually. Services such as air pollution removal, reduction of storm water runoff, and carbon sequestration

all contribute to climate resilience. Protecting and expanding tree cover helps to mitigate exposure to extreme heat events through shade and transpiration.

A sustainable and expanding urban forest also supports the City of Toronto's goals to improve quality of life and well-being of its residents. A higher density of trees in a neighbourhood has been shown to significantly improve physical and mental well-being by reducing blood pressure, decreasing stress levels, and by promoting physical activity. Economic benefits include enhancements to property values, increased tourism and consumer spending.

In keeping with the City's Strategic Forest Management Plan, Toronto's Official Plan, Toronto's Biodiversity Strategy, and the Tree Protection By-laws, the white mulberry tree at 90 Gort Avenue is a valuable part of the urban forest, providing numerous aesthetic, social and economic benefits to the property owner and the local community and therefore should not be removed.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends Etobicoke York Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one City-owned tree located at 90 Gort Avenue. Should Etobicoke 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) Etobicoke York Community Council approve the request for a permit to remove one City-owned tree located at 90 Gort Avenue, conditional upon the applicant:
 - providing payment of the appraised value of the tree (\$867.00) to be removed;
 - agreeing to have the tree removed at their expense;
 - providing 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, and;
 - providing a tree planting security deposit to cover the cost of planting and warranty for a period of two years for all trees to be planted on City property.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Raymond Vendrig
Acting Director, Urban Forestry, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Figure 1: Staff photograph of the white mulberry tree at 90 Gort Avenue; May 28, 2024

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