

Application to Remove a Private Tree – 18 Fallowfield Road

Date: January 30, 2025

To: Etobicoke York Community Council

From: Acting Director, Urban Forestry, Environment, Climate and Forestry

Wards: Etobicoke North - 1

SUMMARY

This report requests that Etobicoke York Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located on the boundary line between the properties of 18 Fallowfield Road and 16 Fallowfield Road. The applicant indicates the reason for requesting removal of the tree is due to damage to the driveway, clogged pipes, potential damage to the foundation by tree roots, and concern that the tree is in decline.

The silver maple tree (*Acer saccharinum*) measures 76 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 appeals the denial of a permit of a tree protected under the By-laws.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Acting Director of Urban Forestry, Environment, Climate and Forestry recommends that:

1. Etobicoke York Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 18 Fallowfield Road.

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

The City of Toronto received an application for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located in the side yard on the boundary line between the properties of 18 Fallowfield Road and 16 Fallowfield Road. The silver maple tree (*Acer saccharinum*) in question measures 76 cm in diameter. The applicant indicates the reason for requesting removal of the tree is due to damage to the driveway, clogged pipes, potential damage to the foundation by tree roots, and concern that the tree is in decline.

The arborist report that accompanied the application described the tree to be in good health, with good structure, and good overall condition. It also notes a cavity from an old pruning wound.

City staff inspected the tree and at the time of inspection determined that it is healthy and maintainable. A cavity is beginning to form in one of the pruning wounds on the trunk, however the tree is producing callus tissue around the cavity. This callus formation is referred to as compartmentalization and is a tree's natural response to injury which limits the progression of decay.

Hard landscape features such as asphalt surfaces may be prone to damage by tree roots, if they have not been properly designed, built, or maintained. When built to accommodate future root growth and expansion, and when properly maintained over time, any conflict with trees or their roots can be planned for and managed without tree removal. The damage described here, can typically be repaired without requiring tree removal. If an injury to the tree is required in order to complete the repairs, the applicant may apply for a construction permit and submit the relevant construction plans and arborist report showing how the tree will be impacted and protected during construction.

Tree roots grow almost exclusively in the upper 60 cm of soil and are not physically capable of exerting enough force to crack pipes. Water and sewer pipes are usually 1.5 to 2 meters below ground level. Older clay pipes may be susceptible to cracks as a result of freezing and thawing. When damaged pipes leak, they provide oxygen and nutrient rich water deep in the soil, which attracts tree roots. If the old pipes have been replaced with new continuous PVC piping between the house and the sewer connection, this should eliminate the possibility of future blockages by tree roots.

Heavy structures such as building foundations are generally impervious to damage by tree roots. Over many years, deficient construction, inadequate maintenance, and weathering can wear down these structures, deteriorating them and eventually leading to minor defects. Without proper drainage, heaving or cracking may occur as a result of water freezing and thawing. This can create spaces that fine roots of nearby trees may grow into, which can accelerate the rate of deterioration. However, this type of age-related deterioration would also occur in the absence of trees and their roots, so trees are not unilaterally responsible for the damage.

The City's Tree By-laws do not support the removal of this tree as it is healthy and maintainable. Through the inspection and review of the arborist report, a permit to

remove the tree was denied by Urban Forestry. 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 appeals the City's decision to deny a tree permit.

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 to provide an opportunity for comment by the community. No comments were received in support nor in opposition to the application to remove the tree in question.

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 silver maple tree at 18 Fallowfield Road 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.

Environment, Climate and Forestry recommends Etobicoke York Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 18 Fallowfield Road. 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 privately owned tree located at 18 Fallowfield Road 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 Executive Director, Environment, Climate and Forestry.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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Acting Director, Urban Forestry, Environment, Climate and Forestry

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Figure 1: Staff photograph of the silver maple tree at 18 Fallowfield Road; August 15, 2024

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