

Application to Remove a Private Tree – 29 Mafeking Crescent

Date: March 4, 2025

To: Scarborough Community Council

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

Wards: Scarborough-Guildwood - 24

SUMMARY

This report requests that Scarborough Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 29 Mafeking Crescent. The applicant indicates the reason for requesting removal of the tree is due to concerns over safety and property damage due to potential tree and limb failure; and the potential for tree roots to damage the garage's foundation.

The honey locust tree (*Gleditsia triacanthos*) measures 39 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. Scarborough Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 29 Mafeking Crescent.

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 front yard at 29 Mafeking Crescent. The honey locust tree (*Gleditsia triacanthos*) in question measures 39 cm in diameter. The applicant indicates the reason for requesting removal of the tree is due to concerns over safety and property damage due to potential tree and limb failure; and the potential for tree roots to damage the garage's foundation.

The arborist report that accompanied the application described the tree to be in good health. This report noted that the crown is full and healthy with less than 10 per cent dead wood. The bark has some yellow discolouration likely caused by lichens and is not negatively affecting the tree. The report noted concerns with the structure of the tree citing a major union about 7 metres from the base of the tree which contains included bark. One side of that main union leans toward the house and contains multiple additional unions with included bark over the house, higher up on the same stem.

City staff inspected the tree and at the time of inspection determined that it is healthy and maintainable. Staff noted that previous pruning cuts are healing well, there was no major deadwood, and the crown was full.

Included bark grows in the union between two or more stems that are growing closely together. Bark does not have a strong supportive fiber strength like wood so the branch attachment may be weaker than a union without included bark. This can result in a branch that is not well supported. The issues presented regarding the branch attachment with included bark can be addressed through pruning to remove weight on one or both of the limbs included in the union which may 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.

The tree is located approximately 2 metres from the garage. It is extremely rare for trees or their roots to cause damage to a well-constructed foundation from this distance. The arborist report submitted by the applicant mentioned concerns about the tree's roots damaging the garage foundation, but no evidence of damage was observed at the time of the site inspection.

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 Environment, Climate and 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 wishes to appeal 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 of, 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 honey locust tree at 29 Mafeking Crescent 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 Scarborough Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 29 Mafeking Crescent. 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 Mafeking Crescent 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

Raymond Vendrig
Acting Director, Urban Forestry, Environment, Climate and Forestry

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Figure 1: Staff photograph of the honey locust tree at 29 Mafeking Crescent; October 16, 2024

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