

Application to Remove a Private Tree – 158 Morse Street

Date: January 30, 2025

To: Toronto and East York Community Council

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

Wards: Toronto-Danforth - 14

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 158 Morse Street. The applicant indicates the reason for requesting removal of the tree is due to concerns about potential branch failure and to open up the canopy to improve growing conditions for recently planted trees.

The tree of heaven tree (*Ailanthus altissima*) measures 104 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, Environment, Climate and Forestry recommends that:

1. Toronto and East York Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 158 Morse Street.

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 rear yard at 158 Morse Street. The tree of heaven tree (*Ailanthus altissima*) in question measures 104 cm in diameter. The applicant indicates the reason for requesting removal of the tree is due to concerns about potential branch failure and to open up the canopy to improve growing conditions for recently planted trees.

The arborist report that accompanied the application described the tree to be in fair condition. This report noted multiple stems, overextended branches and deadwood located throughout the canopy; and included bark on some of the stems.

City staff inspected the tree and at the time of inspection determined that it is healthy and maintainable. Staff observed very few dead branches throughout the tree and did not observe any significant included bark. The overextended branches were noted to not be dangerous. Pruning the branches in accordance with good arboricultural practices can be carried out to reduce the excessive weight and the risk of branch failure.

The City's Tree By-laws do not support the removal of this tree as it is healthy and maintainable, nor do the by-laws support removal of a mature tree to improve growing conditions for recently planted trees. 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 tree of heaven tree at 158 Morse Street 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 Toronto and East York Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 158 Morse Street. 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 158 Morse Street 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 tree of heaven tree at 158 Morse Street; August 6, 2024

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