

Application to Remove a Private Tree – 171 Neville Park Boulevard

Date: September 25, 2025

To: Toronto and East York Community Council

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

Wards: Beaches-East York - 19

SUMMARY

This report requests that Toronto and East York Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned ravine-protected tree located at 171 Neville Park Boulevard. The applicant indicates the reason for requesting removal of the tree is as a precautionary measure to mitigate the risk of failure that could result in serious injury or loss of life.

The red oak tree (*Quercus rubra*) measures 93 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 City's decision to deny a tree permit.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The 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 171 Neville Park Boulevard.

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 ravine-protected tree located in the rear yard at 171 Neville Park Boulevard. The red oak tree (*Quercus rubra*) in question measures 93 cm in diameter. The applicant indicates the reason for requesting removal of the tree is as a precautionary measure to mitigate the risk of failure that could result in serious injury or loss of life.

The owner hired an arborist to conduct a Level 2 (ground level visual) Tree Risk Assessment of the tree, which described the tree to be in fair to good condition. The arborist report noted that the tree is growing above a large retaining wall on the side of a hill sloping towards the house and exhibits pruning wounds, burls, prominent root flares, and a light amount of deadwood. Its overall form is bowed toward the west, resulting in an asymmetrical crown that adds weight to the side of the tree facing the house. The report concluded that considering normal weather conditions, including thunderstorms and winter storms, the overall risk rating of tree failure to the targets is low in the next two years.

This specialized arborist's report followed internationally recognized standards through the International Society of Arboriculture's (ISA) Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ) process. This involves a detailed visual inspection of the tree from the ground, looking at its structure, condition, and surroundings. This type of assessment also incorporates professional judgment, site-specific analysis, and detailed documentation to support risk mitigation decisions. The arborist did not recommend conducting any Level 3 Tree Risk Assessments (advanced risk evaluations) for this tree, which could involve different types of testing and assessments, such as sonic tomography which uses sound waves to detect if there is any internal decay.

Previous arborist reports dated November 2024 and February 2025, submitted to support a construction related application, assessed this same tree to be in fair to good condition.

City staff inspected the tree and, at the time of inspection determined that it is healthy and maintainable. Staff did note non-critical defects including minor wood decay, poor architecture and presence of some non-structural defects such as cankers, frost cracks, small cavities and other abnormalities. Staff recommended that the applicant continue to monitor the tree, and the appropriate arboricultural maintenance performed by a qualified professional.

Concerns regarding deadwood and the asymmetrical crown can be addressed through pruning to reduce the weight without impacting the tree's structure or health.

The tree is exhibiting a slight lean due to a phototropic growth pattern. Phototropism is a natural growth pattern whereby plants grow toward available light. The lean observed is not impacting the structural integrity of the tree and is a response to competition from nearby trees. There is no evidence of heaving or other root damage that would be indicative of potential tree failure. The tree's root system appears healthy and has grown to support the slight lean.

The tree is located near the top of a slope above the applicant's home. Healthy, mature trees contribute significantly to slope stability. The root system of the red oak helps anchor soil, reduce erosion, and manage stormwater runoff. Removal of the tree could inadvertently destabilize the slope, increasing the risk of soil movement or erosion that may pose a greater long-term threat to the property. Staff advise that retaining the tree, along with ongoing monitoring and maintenance, is a more prudent approach to managing both tree health and slope integrity.

The City's Ravine By-law does 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 appeals 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, Ravine Strategy and the Ravine and Natural Feature Protection By-laws, the red oak tree at 171 Neville Park Boulevard 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 171 Neville Park Boulevard. 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 Council approve the request for a permit to remove one privately owned ravine protected tree located at 171 Neville Park Boulevard and require

the applicant to provide nine 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

Yaroslav Medwidsky, Project Manager, Ravine and Natural Feature Protection, Urban Forestry

Tel: 416-392-0343, Email: yaroslav.medwidsky@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Kim Statham

Director, Urban Forestry, Environment, Climate and Forestry Division

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Figure 1: Staff photograph of the red oak tree at 171 Neville Park Boulevard showing the tree's crown; July 23, 2025

Attachment 2 – Figure 2: Staff photograph of the red oak tree at 171 Neville Park Boulevard showing the position of the tree in relation to the house at the bottom of the slope; July 23, 2025

Attachment 1 – Figure 1: Staff photograph of the red oak tree at 171 Neville Park Boulevard showing the tree's crown; July 23, 2025



Attachment 2 – Figure 2: Staff photograph of the red oak tree at 171 Neville Park Boulevard showing the position of the tree in relation to the house at the bottom of the slope; July 23, 2025

