



December 2, 2025

Planning and Housing Committee

Councillor Perks and Members of the Planning & Housing Committee

PH 26.2 Growing Space for Trees: Protecting and Enhancing the Tree Canopy While Supporting Infill Housing and Addressing Concerns with Iceberg Homes - Recommendation Report

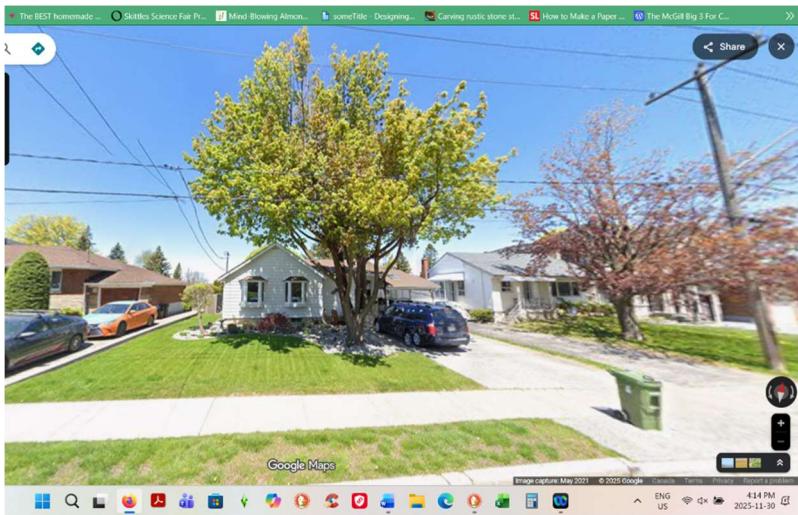
The Cliffcrest Scarborough Village SW Residents Association is pleased that the City of Toronto is addressing the negative impacts that infill housing can have on our urban forest. CSVSWRA represents residents living in one of Toronto's suburbs built following the second World War. Our communities are characterized by lots larger than those found in older parts of the city and are well-treed. Because of our mature trees, we could be described as the lungs of Toronto.

CSVSWRA is supportive of the proposed changes to protect the tree canopy. We believe, however, that enforcement of the tree bylaw needs to be strengthened. The large lots in our community have resulted in speculative activity. Starter homes that are relatively affordable are snapped up by profit-driven developers, converted to unlicensed rooming houses and allowed to deteriorate. The next step is a visit to the Committee of Adjustment with plans for extremely large, luxury houses requiring multiple variances including front, back and side setbacks. Sometimes these developers submit applications to destroy or injure the mature trees on the site; sometimes they don't. Mature, by-law protected trees are routinely destroyed on week-ends, leaving upset residents with no one to call.

CSVSWRA recommends the following, to further protect the health of our urban forest:

- Provide tree inspections seven (7) days a week. Municipal Licensing and Standards has mobile units available on week-ends to respond to by-law violations. Given the environmental and health benefits provided by trees, by-law enforcement needs to extend beyond the current limits;
- Require Urban Forestry to report annually to Council with the number of by-law protected trees removed both by permit and illegally. Keep track of the builders/companies that remove trees departments;
- Create mandatory standards for minimum soil volumes, greenspace and access to sun for mature trees;
- Mature trees are routinely destroyed in our neighbourhoods without a permit by developers whose future plans include building a large infill house. If caught, the penalty can include planting replacement trees. In some cases, these replacement trees are planted before construction begins and then destroyed due to construction activities. There are no consequences for this behaviour because the radius of the replacement trees is well below the by-law protected size. City Council needs to implement a system to protect replacement trees.

Enforcing the Tree By-law at infill construction sites is woefully inadequate. Developers view the present fines as a cost of doing business. Unprofessional fly-by-night companies often cut down trees without permits on week-ends because there is no enforcement. These companies are out of compliance with labour laws. They do not use experienced arborists, putting workers and neighbours at risk from their activities. The photos below, just one example of many, depict an illegal removal of a healthy maple tree on a Saturday morning, just a few weeks ago,



Healthy maple tree before the property was purchased by a speculator.

The healthy tree on the right was also killed by a housing speculator. He paid someone to drill holes in the tree trunk. Despite efforts from Urban Forestry, that tree died.



Tree removal, part one

The upper left corner shows a branch hanging from a hydro line. The branch split the line and needed repair. Hydro workers said that had the line snapped, a fatality was highly likely. Hydro warned the workers about removing the tree without an expert.



Tree removal, after Hydro departs,
Part Two

Time is money and, undeterred by warnings, the unsafe and hazardous work practices continue. The worker on the ground is pulling on a rope attached to a limb that the worker in the tree is cutting. The worker is pulling the limb towards himself. Neither worker has a hard hat.

The City of Toronto is responsible for enforcing their bylaws and building code regulations. The residents should not be expected to police building activities, unsafe working conditions, and illegal tree removals through the 311 portal. Since most of this activity happens during weekends and off hours, and residents are not aware of permit status, this is not a very effective or safe way of stopping this activity. The City should coordinate between Building Inspection and Forestry to ensure that builders are not removing trees illegally during the construction phase, which happens constantly. The City issues the permits for both the construction and tree removal, but there appears to be little to no co-ordination between these two departments.

It is incumbent on City Council to implement serious consequences on builders who direct unprotected workers to undertake tasks that are dangerous both to the worker and to innocent people walking by this construction. This criminal behaviour is a frequent week-end occurrence in our community and requires a much stronger response from both the City and the Province.

Yours sincerely,

Janet May

Director, Cliffcrest Scarborough Village SW Residents Association