LONG BRANCH
NEIGHBOURHOOD
ASSOCIATION

Planning and Housing Committee

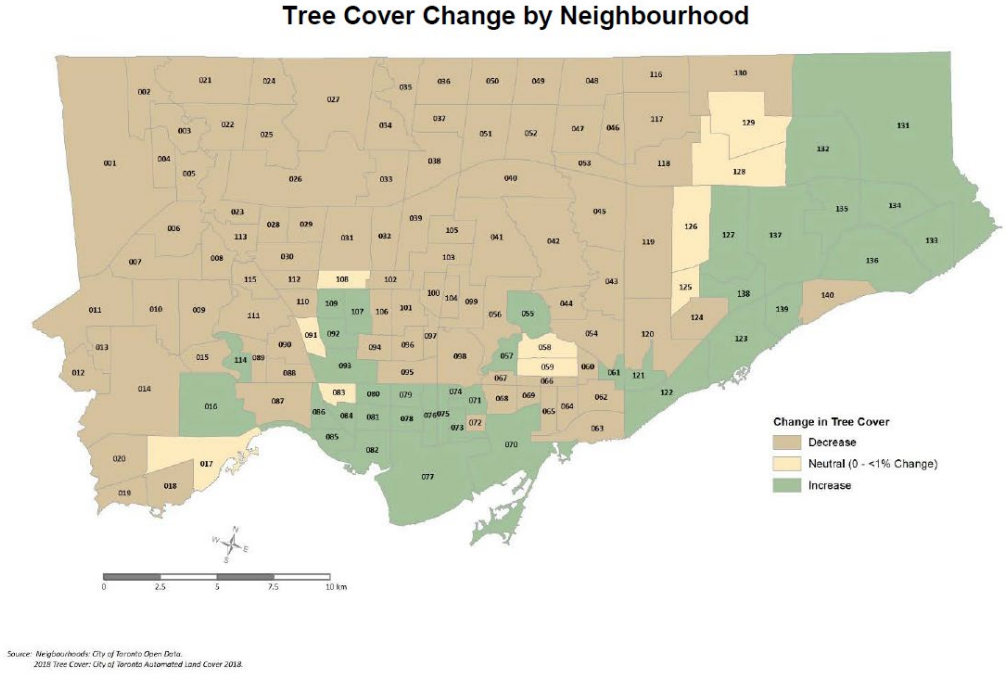
December 2, 2025

Re: PH26.2 – Growing Space for Trees: Protecting and Enhancing the Tree Canopy While Supporting Infill Housing and Addressing Concerns with Iceberg Homes – Recommendation Report

Dear Chair Councillor Gord Perks and Members of the Planning and Housing Committee,

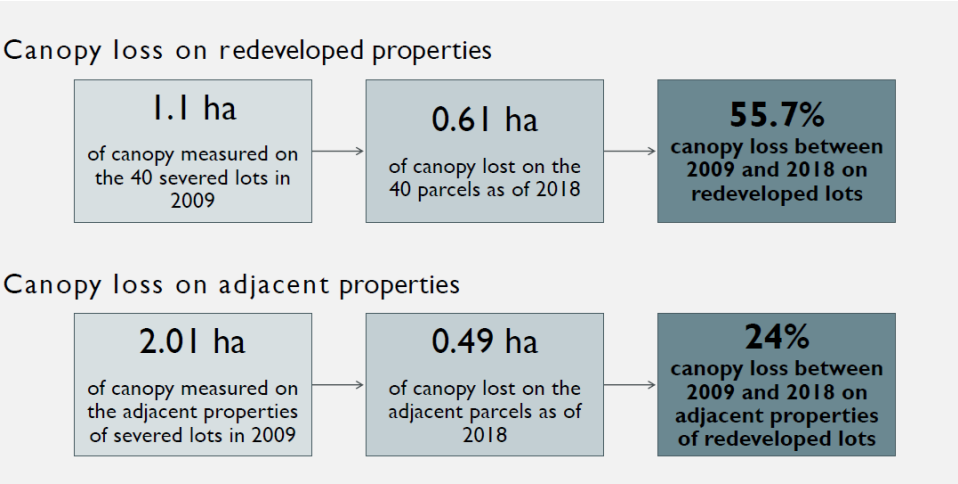
The Long Branch Neighbourhood Association is pleased to see this agenda item come back before this Committee. The earlier Report to this Committee 2 years ago in November 2023 identified that proactive solutions were needed as new infill housing has the potential to negatively impact the tree canopy and reduce the amount of suitable growing space for trees.

According to the City's 2018 Tree Canopy Study, tree canopy in low rise residential lands decreased from approx. 35% in 2008 to 31% in 2018. More than half of Toronto lost tree cover during that 10 year period (map area in brown below). This is heading in the wrong direction when 40% tree canopy cover is the goal reaffirmed by Council in December 2021.



Ref: Figure 13: Tree cover change by neighbourhood (Source: Change detection using 2008 and 2018 land cover data, City of Toronto)

Recently a Master of Forest Conservation Student from the University of Toronto studied the impact of residential intensification on the urban forest in Long Branch. They looked at properties that had been intensified and found a 56% Tree Canopy loss on the redeveloped lots and a 24% loss on the adjacent lots. Insufficient growing space was left for that tree canopy loss to ever recover.



This dramatic loss in tree canopy is further confirmed by the most recent City data. Long Branch is the hardest hit Neighbourhood for Tree Canopy loss in all of Etobicoke York. Long Branch has experienced the greatest Tree Canopy loss (-43.4%) in all of Ward 3 and all of Etobicoke.

2009 - 2018 Toronto Tree Canopy change by Etobicoke-York Ward*

Ward	Neighbourhood	Number	2018	2009	Change	% change
3	Long Branch	19	15.00	26.50	-11.50	-43.4
3	New Toronto	18	15.25	8.70	6.55	75.3
3	Mimico	17	16.49	13.40	3.09	23.1
3	Alderwood	20	26.83	24.70	2.13	8.6
3	Stonegate-Queensway	16	43.40	32.20	11.20	34.8
3	Islington-CityCenter West	14	15.73	15.40	0.33	2.1
3	Kingsway South	15	42.55	46.90	-4.35	-9.3
Total Ward 3			**25.04**	**23.97**	**1.06**	**4.4**

Even when one takes into account the standard deviation associated with the above numbers for Long Branch, it is undeniable that our neighbourhood is losing Tree Canopy which is contrary to the objectives that the City has set to grow the tree canopy to 40%.

City-wide, growing spaces for trees are being lost as hard surfaces in the city are increasing. The latest data from the City's Tree Canopy Study showed that the equivalent of 1,115 soccer fields were converted to hard surfaces during the 10 years studied.

Trees have a significant and well-documented positive impact on the health of people living in neighbourhoods with strong tree canopies. They are essential "green infrastructure" that improves

physical, mental and social well being. As our City and our population grows and more people make Toronto their home, it is critical that our tree canopy also grows.

The poor and often dangerous air quality we experienced this past summer throughout the months of June, July and August when on too many occasions Toronto's air quality index was ranked worldwide amongst the Top 10 worst cities and on numerous occasions the 2nd worse in all the world highlight the need to take urgent action to better protect and grow our Tree Canopy. Trees remove pollution from the air by direct absorption through their leaves as well by capturing particulate matter on and in plant tissue. This benefit is linked to leaf area and function.

In 2008, Toronto's trees were estimated to remove approx. 1.906 tonnes of pollution per year. As of 2018, this declined to approx. 972 tonnes of pollution per year as Toronto's Total Leaf Area of its urban forest decreased and resulted in a loss of 11% Total Leaf Area. Recently planted/young trees contribute much less to the total leaf area of the urban forest which is why it is so important to retain and better protect healthy, mature large trees. (See Figures 1 & 2)

The policies and Zoning By-law changes recommended in this Report for Action are designed to do that and therefore we strongly support them. In particular

- The recommended policy changes to Chapter 4 of the Official plan Policy 4.1.5 j); 4.1.9 g); 4.2.2 i) and j); 4.2.3 e); 4.2.4 b) v and vii and 4.2.6
- We agree that artificial turf and permeable pavements and pavers should not be considered as "soft landscaping"
- We agree that the area of soft landscaping should not include water surface area of outdoor swimming pools, hot tubs, fountains or other ancillary structures used to hold water.
- We agree that the required building setbacks need to apply to all parts of a residential building above and below ground

However, for trees to grow and thrive around apartment buildings we believe that below and above ground setbacks should also apply to apartment buildings.

We would like to see greater clarification on what is classified as an artificial pond as it would need to have the majority of surface area as plants to meet the intent of these policies

We would strongly recommend building in requirements for minimum areas, soil depths and volumes to support the growth and maintenance of large canopy trees to maturity.

To ensure that Toronto achieves its biodiversity goals we would also recommend stronger policies around providing space and sunlight, soft landscaping and soil volume that can support large canopy native tree growth. Too many trees are being placed in the shadow of tall buildings for much of the day and this drastically limits the size and species of trees that can survive in those adverse conditions.

Sincerely,

Judy Gibson
Chair, Tree Canopy Preservation and Enhancement Committee
Long Branch Neighbourhood Association
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Figure 1: Two "twin" mature, healthy city-owned trees in 2015. Note the growing space and amount of soft landscaping around the tree to the right prior to intensification.

Figure 2: Same two city-owned trees in summer 2023 approx. three years post intensification. Note the lack of growing space and lack of green space/soft landscaping around the tree to the right. Has resulted in a dramatic decline in tree health.