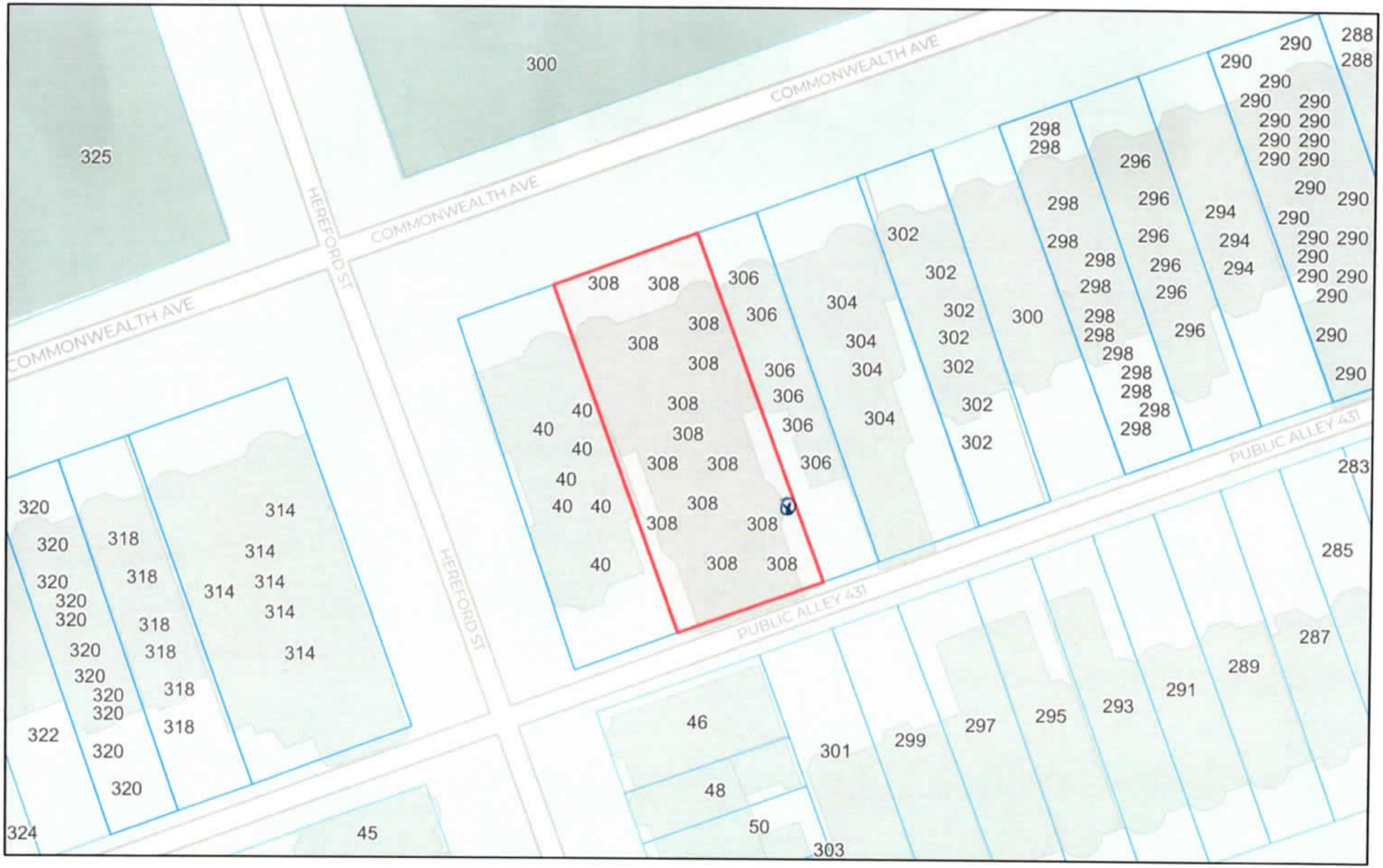
ArcGIS Web Map



4/13/2026, 12:38:12 PM

Parcels FY25

⊗ Tree location

1:730

0 0 0.01 0.02 mi

0 0.01 0.01 0.02 km

BARTLETT TREE EXPERTS

Tree Health Assessment – *Ailanthus altissima*

308 Commonwealth Avenue Condominium Association
Attn: Michael Jammen

Date: April 29, 2026

Location: 301 Public Alley 431, Boston, MA

Mr. Jammen,

At your request, a visual arboricultural assessment was performed on a mature *Ailanthus altissima* (Tree-of-Heaven) located at 301 Public Alley 431, Boston, Massachusetts. The tree has an approximate diameter at breast height (DBH) of 23 inche**s,** height of approximately 60 feet, and canopy spread of 30 feet. The evaluation was conducted during the spring season and consisted of a ground-based visual inspection only. (Figure 1.)

At the time of inspection, the tree was observed to be in fair overall condition. The exterior portions of the canopy exhibited normal bud swell consistent with the current stage of the spring growing season. However, multiple dead branches were noted within the interior of the canopy, indicating reduced vigor and declining interior crown health. (Figure 2.)

The tree has an observed history of pruning to maintain clearance from adjacent buildings. These repeated clearance cuts have resulted in a lion-tailed canopy structure, characterized by foliage concentrated at the outer ends of branches with sparse interior growth. This condition can reduce branch taper and increase mechanical stress on limbs and leaders, thereby predisposing them to failure during adverse weather conditions. (Figure 3.)

The root flare has displaced and buckled surrounding brick pavers, indicating constrained growing conditions and surface root expansion. Soil exposure at the base of the tree revealed rodent burrowing activity in the root flare zone. Due to the presence of extensive surrounding hardscape, the root system could not be fully evaluated, limiting the ability to assess structural root condition or potential decay below grade. (Figure 4.)

The tree is located within a confined public alley environment and in close proximity to surrounding structures, which further restricts management options and increases the potential consequences associated with structural failure.

Ailanthus altissima is a non-native invasive species in Massachusetts. The species is known for aggressive growth, poor wound compartmentalization, infrastructure damage, and prolific root and basal sprouting. Additionally, *Ailanthus* is a confirmed host species for the spotted lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*), an invasive insect of significant agricultural and ecological concern.

Based on the observed canopy condition, structural pruning impacts, site constraints, root-zone disturbances, proximity to structures, and the invasive status of the species, removal of the subject tree is recommended.

This assessment is based solely on visible conditions at the time of inspection. Hidden defects, internal decay, or root failures may exist and were not detectable through this limited evaluation. **This report is not an ISA Tree Risk Assessment and does not constitute a formal assignment of risk or likelihood of failure.**

Please feel free to contact me should you require additional information or clarification.

Sincerely,

Daniel Strom

ISA Board Certified Master Arborist NE-7224B

Figure 1. Subject tree: 23” DBH Ailanthus altissima (Tree of Heaven)

Figure 2. Normal bud swell on exterior branches

Figure 3. History of "lions tail" pruning to achieve clearance objectives

Figure 4. Conflicts with brick pavers and rodent burrows under the root flare

May 27, 2026

Michael Jammen
The Trustees of the 308 Commonwealth Condominium Trust
308 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, MA 02115

Email: mjammen@me.com

Project: 308 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA
Re: Structural review of tree in back alley
Project No.: 26060

Dear Mike,

As requested, Bouchard Engineering (BE) visited the above referenced site to review structural concerns with a tree located adjacent to the building in the rear courtyard off Public Alley 431. According to an arborist's report provided by the Trustees, the tree is an *ailanthus altissima* with a height of approximately 60 feet and a canopy spread of approximately 30 feet. The tree is located within four feet of the building wall. Although tree location is not addressed in the building code, the general rule of thumb is to plant a tree at least as far away from a building as the anticipated height of the tree to avoid structural issues.

The building is a six (6) story plus basement wood-framed structure with brick masonry bearing walls supported on stone masonry foundation walls. Although the structure is too heavy to be dislodged by the tree root system, the roots of the tree will extend into the mortar joints of the foundation masonry, leading to structural damage and leaks. The inside face of the foundation wall directly adjacent to the tree are within a finished unit and could not be observed; however, roots were observed beyond the finished unit approximately 20 feet from the trunk of the tree, which is not surprising for a tree of this height and type. Considering how far below the building the roots have extended, it is a given the root system has penetrated into the mortar joints of the masonry foundation causing deterioration of the mortar.

Considering the proximity of the tree to the building and the damage to the foundation mortar, BE recommends that the tree be removed.

Please contact the undersigned with any questions.

Sincerely,

Bouchard Engineering, PLLC

Keith M. Bouchard, P.E.
Principal
kmb@bouchard-eng.com

01		Trunk of the tree within four feet of the building wall.
02		Portion of the tree root system observed in the crawl space, approximately 20 feet from the tree trunk.