

11 Mooregate Avenue – City Owned Tree Removal

Date:	March 5, 2007
To:	Scarborough Community Council
From:	Brenda Librecz, General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
Wards:	Ward 37 – Scarborough Centre
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

The Ward Councillor, on behalf of the property owner, has requested that Urban Forestry report on a request to remove two (2) City-owned honey locust trees that are 48 centimetres and 51 centimetres in diameter, located on City property fronting 11 Mooregate Avenue. The request for tree removal has been made due to the property owner's concern that tree roots may be causing damage to the foundation of the house.

Inspection of the trees by staff revealed that the trees are in good condition. Both are located approximately six metres from the front of the house. Urban Forestry staff were unable to detect any damage to the foundation; however, the area had not been excavated. With respect to damage to foundations, poor or deteriorating foundations allow water to penetrate and the freezing and thawing of this water causes cracks. The presence of any roots in cracks is circumstantial. With proper care and maintenance, the trees should continue to provide benefits to the community for years to come. Therefore, Urban Forestry cannot support removal of these trees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that the request to remove the two (2) City-owned honey locust trees fronting 11 Mooregate Avenue be denied.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The owner of the property feels that two (2) City-owned trees have caused damage to the foundation of the house at 11 Mooregate Avenue, and is therefore requesting that both trees be removed.

COMMENTS

A request for removal of the trees was first made in 2003, by the property owner when it became evident that the City was going to implement a pesticide ban. The property owner's concern at that time was that aphid infestations would be extremely heavy and unbearable if the trees were not sprayed on an annual basis. In response to these concerns, Urban Forestry did provide the owner with information on aphids and alternate methods of control without using pesticides. Since that time, further concerns regarding aphid infestations have not been brought to the attention of Urban Forestry.

In 2006, Urban Forestry was approached again about tree removal, as the homeowner was suggesting that tree roots had damaged the garage floor and the foundation. The tree closest to the garage is located approximately 7.8 metres from the northwest corner of the garage. A crack was visible in the asphalt of the garage floor. The garage was constructed over the existing driveway. Once the asphalt within the garage was lifted, one long small root, approximately two to three centimetres in diameter was observed. In 2006, the property owner submitted a claim for damages to the City of Toronto's insurer, and received monetary compensation for the cracked asphalt.

Tree roots require water, air and uncompacted soil in order to grow. Successfully constructed concrete or paved areas require well-compacted granular and a surface that prevents water penetration which prevents damage caused by the freeze thaw cycle. Roots cannot grow in such conditions. The extent to which roots are found in and under cracks of concrete or asphalt areas is reflective of the amount, or lack of sufficiently compacted granular sub-grade. Cracks are caused by this condition which allows penetration of water and the deteriorating effects of the freeze thaw cycle. The presence of roots in such conditions is circumstantial. They are there to take advantage of the water and air provided by the existing cracks. Roots beyond two metres of a tree become increasingly smaller and fibrous in nature. They grow cell by cell, fed by water and air. They are not physically capable of exerting the physical force to crack concrete or asphalt. They are however capable of growing into any available cracks that offer water and air. The same holds true for foundation walls. They must be structurally sound and properly waterproofed to keep out water and to deal with the forces created by the freezing and thawing. A tree cannot damage a properly constructed foundation. If there are any cracks resulting from a breach of the waterproofing, tree roots will grow into them. Roots do not and cannot go where there is no water. They cannot physically breach waterproofing. If a tree root is found beyond any waterproofing membrane it is because of a crack that has been caused by any number of other reasons but not by the roots of a tree.

The trees in question are located approximately six metres from the front of the house. Tree roots have extended up to the foundation wall, which is evident from the suckers that have sprouted in the front garden. Urban Forestry staff were unable to locate any damage to the exterior of the house; however, the area next to the house had not been excavated. It is our view that these trees have not and will not cause any damage to the foundation.

Should the request for the removal of the two City-owned trees located at 11 Mooregate Avenue be approved, approval must be conditional upon the applicant paying all applicable costs and complying with all other requirements as set out in *City of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 813, Trees, Article II*.

These trees are significant and are a valuable part of the forest community that exists within this area. With proper care and maintenance, the subject trees should continue to provide benefits to the owner and to the community for many years to come. Urban Forestry cannot support removal of these trees.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Brenda Librecz
General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

ATTACHMENTS

Photographs of honey locust trees

Attachment – Photographs of honey locust trees



48cm diameter honey locust

51cm diameter honey locust



51cm diameter honey locust

48cm diameter honey locust