

Application to Remove a Private Tree - 168 Grandravine Drive

Date: December 8, 2017

To: North York Community Council

From: Director, Urban Forestry, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

Wards: Ward 8 - York West

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council deny the request for a permit to remove one (1) privately owned tree located at 168 Grandravine Drive. The application indicates the reasons for removal are to address concerns the tree is too big for its location and that sap is accumulating on the front walkway and damaging the property owner's car.

The subject tree is a Colorado spruce (*Picea pungens*), measuring 46 cm in diameter. The Private Tree By-law does not support the removal of this tree as it is healthy and maintainable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that:

1. City Council deny the request for a permit to remove one (1) privately owned tree located at 168 Grandravine Drive.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

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

DECISION HISTORY

There is no decision history regarding this tree removal permit application.

COMMENTS

Urban Forestry received an application for a permit to remove one (1) privately owned tree located in the front yard at 168 Grandravine Drive. The subject tree is a Colorado spruce tree measuring 46 cm in diameter. The request to remove this tree has been made to address concerns that the tree is too big for its location and that sap is accumulating on the front walkway and damaging the property owner's car.

The arborist report that accompanied the application did not rate the tree's condition however the report noted that the tree had unevenly distributed anchor roots that have contributed to a slight lean of the main stem and limited root space due to a retaining wall on the east side. The report also noted partial defoliation of new growth in a section of the tree, potentially due to a sawfly infestation.

Urban Forestry staff inspected the tree and determined that it was healthy and maintainable both botanically and structurally. The tree is situated approximately 3.5 meters from the house at 168 Grandravine Drive. No evidence of the tree impacting the house was observed at the time of inspection. The tree is located such that routine maintenance of the tree can be performed.

All trees drop leaves, needles and other debris. The Private Tree By-law does not support tree removal to address the perceived nuisance resulting from a tree's natural functions. Concerns expressed by the applicant regarding sap can be addressed through pruning in accordance with good arboricultural practices and routine tree maintenance.

The tree does have a slight lean, however this does not negatively impact its structural integrity. The tree's roots have sufficient growing space as they have access to the entire front lawn's soil volume. At the time of inspection Urban Forestry did not identify any defects that would indicate that the tree is likely to fail.

At the time of inspection Urban Forestry staff did not observe any sawfly damage to the subject tree. Spruce sawflies (*Pikonema* spp. or *Diprion hercyniae*) are insect pests of spruce trees whose larvae feed on needles of new growth. There are specific management practices available to address this pest.

When reviewing applications for tree removal, Urban Forestry staff are guided by City policies and by-laws including the *City of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 813, Trees, Article III*, more commonly referred to as the Private Tree By-law. The Private Tree By-law does not have a mechanism that would allow the removal of the subject tree based on the concerns stated in the tree removal permit application.

As required under *Section 813-19 of City of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 813, Trees, Article III*, a Notice of application sign was posted on the subject property for the minimum 14-day period in order to provide an opportunity for comment by the community. No comments were received in response to the posting.

A permit to remove the tree was denied by Urban Forestry. The owner is appealing this decision.

Should City Council approve this request for tree removal, in accordance with *Section 813-20 of City of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 813, Trees, Article III*, permit issuance must be conditional upon the provision of satisfactory replacement planting. As a condition of permit issuance, the applicant is proposing to pay cash-in-lieu for one (1) replacement tree. However, in this instance it would be appropriate for the applicant to provide five (5) replacement trees which can be achieved in a combination of on-site planting and cash-in-lieu of planting.

Trees improve the quality of urban life and contribute greatly to our sense of community. They help to soften the hard lines of built form and surfaces in an urban setting. Trees contribute to the overall character and quality of neighborhoods. Studies suggest that social benefits such as crime reduction and neighborhood cohesion can be attributed to the presence of trees.

The environmental benefits of trees include cleansing of air, noise and wind reduction, and protection from ultraviolet radiation. Trees reduce rainwater runoff thereby reducing soil erosion and lowering storm water management costs. They also contribute to moderation of temperature extremes and reduction of the urban heat island effect by providing shade during the summer.

Trees provide many economic benefits including the enhancement of property values. Homes with mature trees have higher values when compared to similar types of homes in similar locations without trees. Mature trees are associated with reduced home energy consumption. Air conditioning costs are lower in a home shaded by trees and heating costs are reduced when trees mitigate the cooling effects of wind in winter. Trees are a community resource which can make the city more attractive to investors, tourists and prospective residents thus contributing to growth and prosperity.

It is the goal of the City of Toronto to increase the city's tree canopy to 40 per cent. The loss of trees in the city due to the ice storm experienced in late December 2013, compounded with additional tree loss due to the presence of the Asian longhorned beetle and the emerald ash borer make the preservation of all healthy trees more necessary now than ever.

The Colorado spruce tree at 168 Grandravine Drive is a valuable part of the urban forest. With proper care and maintenance this tree has the potential to provide the property owner and the surrounding community with benefits for many more years. In accordance with the City Council-approved Strategic Forest Management Plan, Toronto's Official Plan and the Private Tree By-law, this tree should not be removed.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Jason Doyle
Director, Urban Forestry
Parks, Forestry and Recreation

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Photograph of the Colorado spruce tree measuring 46 cm in diameter

Attachment 2: Photograph showing the base of the tree in relation to the east retaining wall.

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Attachment 2: Photograph showing the base of the tree in relation to the east retaining wall.

