



## STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

### 74 Garfield Avenue – Application to Remove a Private Tree

<b>Date:</b>	March 12, 2015
<b>To:</b>	Toronto and East York Community Council
<b>From:</b>	Jason Doyle, Director, Urban Forestry, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
<b>Wards:</b>	Ward 27 – Toronto Centre -Rosedale
<b>Reference Number:</b>	P:\2015\Cluster A\PFR\TE05-041415-AFS#20916

#### SUMMARY

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This report requests that City Council deny the request for a permit to remove a private tree located in the rear yard of 74 Garfield Avenue. The application indicates the reason for the removal is due to concerns that roots may enter the basement of the house.

The subject tree is a Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*) measuring 56 cm in diameter. The tree is healthy and in good condition. Urban Forestry does not support the removal of this tree.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. City Council deny the request for a permit to remove a Norway maple tree located in the rear yard of 74 Garfield Avenue.

#### Financial Impact

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

#### COMMENTS

An application was received from the property owner of 74 Garfield Avenue for a permit to remove two private Norway maple trees; the tree in front yard measures 39 cm in diameter and the tree in the rear yard measures 56 cm in diameter. Ownership of the tree in the rear yard may be shared with the property to the east.

The Arborist Report that accompanied the application states the reason for the requested removal of the 39 cm diameter Norway maple, located in the front yard of the property, are concerns about roots damaging a decorative concrete tree well previously installed around the tree. Urban Forestry staff inspected this tree and found it to be in good condition with a full, healthy crown. The decorative concrete tree well is a ring around the base of the tree and was installed when the tree was smaller. Since it is so close to the base of the tree it would be expected that as the tree matures and the buttress roots grow, it could cause cracks and possibly lifting of the concrete. It's for this reason the installation of decorative tree wells are not recommended around the base of a tree. A permit to remove the 39 cm diameter Norway maple in the front yard was denied and the property owner is not pursuing removal of this tree.

This report addresses removal of the 56 cm diameter Norway maple located in the rear yard of the property, for which an appeal was received. The reason for requesting removal of the 56 cm diameter Norway maple is that the property owner is concerned that the tree is too close to the house, and feels that the roots may enter into the basement of the house. However, no evidence was submitted to substantiate these concerns. The Arborist Report notes "cracks forming on the base of the main leader which could be torsional cracks or verticillium wilt". Later in the report, the arborist adds, "the cracks may manifest into a weak point within the tree".

Urban Forestry staff inspected the tree and confirmed that the tree is healthy and appears structurally sound. The tree was found to be a medium to large specimen in good health, with a generally balanced crown and full canopy. The lower stem is not entirely upright/vertical, but the weight of the tree is generally well distributed above the base of the stem and root plate. The main branches show none of the signs or symptoms typically associated with weak or failure-prone trees. The "crack" on the main leader, identified in the Arborist Report, does not appear to penetrate beyond the bark. As Norway maples mature their bark typically develops shallow cracks and fissures. However, these characteristics do not compromise the health or structural stability of the tree.

The property owner has claimed they are worried that the roots from the 56 cm diameter tree in the rear yard will crack the foundation of the house. The tree is situated approximately 6.5 m from the nearest part of the house foundation. No evidence has been provided to support this claim. 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.

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

A permit to destroy the trees was denied. The owner is only appealing the decision to deny a permit for the 56 cm diameter Norway maple in the rear yard.

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*, approval must be conditional upon the provision of satisfactory replacement planting. The property owner is proposing to plant one (1) 60 mm caliper large growing shade tree. In this instance it is appropriate to require the applicant to provide five (5) replacement trees, in a combination of planting and cash-in-lieu.

Trees improve the quality of urban life and contribute greatly to our sense of community. They are aesthetically pleasing and soften the hard lines of built form and surfaces in an urban setting. Trees contribute to the overall character and quality of neighbourhoods. Studies suggest that social benefits such as crime reduction and neighbourhood cohesion can be directly 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 value 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 break the winter cooling effects of wind. 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 existing tree canopy to 40 percent by 2050. The loss of the tree canopy in the city due to the December 2013 ice storm, Asian longhorned beetle (*Anoplophora glabripennis*), and emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*), it is essential that priority be given to the preservation of healthy trees.

The Norway maple tree at 74 Garfield Avenue 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. Urban Forestry, therefore, does not support removal of this tree.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Jason Doyle  
Director of Urban Forestry  
Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 – stem of 56 cm diameter Norway maple tree  
Attachment 2 – superficial crack in 56 cm diameter Norway maple tree

56 cm diameter Norway maple – Rear of 74 Garfield Avenue





Superficial cracks in 56 cm diameter Norway maple at 74 Garfield Avenue

