



**STAFF REPORT
ACTION REQUIRED**

51 Silversted Drive – Application to Remove a Private Tree

Date:	December 4, 2015
To:	Scarborough Community Council
From:	Jason Doyle, Director, Urban Forestry, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
Ward:	Ward 41 – Scarborough Rouge River
Reference Number:	P:\2016\Cluster A\PFR\SC11-011916-AFS#22310

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council deny the application for a permit to remove one (1) privately-owned tree located at 51 Silversted Drive. The application indicates that the reason for removal is to address concerns that the tree may fail and damage a buried gas line. The owner has also raised concerns that tree's roots are damaging a neighbour's driveway.

The subject tree is a Colorado blue spruce (*Picea pungens* var. *glauca*), measuring 37 cm in diameter. Urban Forestry does not support the removal of this tree as it is healthy, maintainable and growing in an appropriate location.

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 51 Silversted Drive.

Financial Impact

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

COMMENTS

An application was received from the property owners of 51 and 53 Silversted Drive for a permit to remove one (1) privately-owned Colorado blue spruce tree, measuring 37 cm in

diameter, situated between the driveways of the above-noted properties. The arborist report that accompanied the application claims that the tree shifted from its original position during the ice storm of 2013. The arborist report also states that the root system is causing damage to the driveway at 53 Silversted Drive.

The property owners have expressed concerns that the tree may fail and damage a buried gas line, as they claim the root system on the east side of the tree has been moving significantly during recent wind storms. The property owner is concerned that if the tree fails, the gas line may be disturbed or damaged as a result of being entangled in the roots.

Urban Forestry staff inspected the tree and determined that it is in good health. Staff found no evidence of root system instability or signs of recent shifting of the stem or crown based on its current condition.

The lower portion of the trunk leans approximately 15 to the north, while the upper portion of the trunk appears vertical. This configuration is common when a young tree shifts out of vertical alignment due to external loading, (e.g., wind, snow or ice). From that time onwards, the new growth at the top of the trunk typically grows upright while the lower portion the trunk maintains a lean. The end result is a growth form consistent with that of the subject tree (leaning base, upright top).

A buried gas line does run under the subject tree. The depth of the gas line, however, is unknown. There is no indication that the roots of the tree are growing at the same depth as the gas line and based on the condition of the tree it is unlikely that it will fail.

At the time of inspection, Urban Forestry staff did observe cracks in the driveway at 53 Silversted Drive. However, it should be noted that tree roots are not physically capable of exerting the physical force required to crack concrete or asphalt. Tree roots are, however, capable of growing into any available cracks that offer water and air. Removing the tree will not correct the issue of existing damage, and repairs to the driveway will still be necessary. It may be feasible to repair the driveway while retaining the tree, however, Urban Forestry would need to review details of any planned repairs to confirm the tree could survive the injury well. The applicants did not outline plans to repair the driveway.

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 required 14 day period, in order to provide an opportunity for comment by the community with an opportunity to make comment. No comments have been 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 approval must be conditional upon the provision of satisfactory replacement planting. As

a condition of permit issuance, the applicant is proposing to plant one (1) large growing native shade tree. However, in this instance, it would be appropriate for the owner 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 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 attributable 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 mitigate the cooling effects of the 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 existing tree canopy to 40 percent. The loss of the tree canopy in the city due to the ice storm experienced in late December 2013, the Asian longhorned beetle and the emerald ash borer, make the preservation of all possible healthy trees more necessary now than ever.

The Colorado blue spruce tree at 51 Silversted 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. Urban Forestry, therefore, does not support removal of this tree.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Jason Doyle
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Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Photograph of the spruce tree showing the upright upper crown and leaning lower stem.
- Attachment 2 – Photograph of the spruce tree located between two adjacent driveways.
- Attachment 3 – Photograph showing cracks in asphalt driveway adjacent to the subject tree.





