



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

3 Acland Crescent – Application to Remove a Ravine-Protected Private Tree

Date:	September 21, 2016
To:	Scarborough Community Council
From:	Jason Doyle, Director, Urban Forestry, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
Ward:	Ward 44 – Scarborough East
Reference Number:	P:\2016\Cluster A\PFR\SC17-101316-AFS#23522

SUMMARY

This report requests that City Council deny the application for a permit to remove one (1) privately-owned, ravine-protected tree located at 3 Acland Crescent. The application indicates the reasons for removal are that the tree is in a poor location, situated too close to an existing house and walkway, and that the walkway has been lifted by expanding roots.

The subject tree is a white pine (*Pinus strobus*), measuring 62 cm in diameter. Urban Forestry 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, ravine-protected tree located at 3 Acland Crescent.

Financial Impact

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

COMMENTS

Urban Forestry received an application to remove one (1) privately-owned, ravine protected tree located in the front yard at 3 Acland Crescent. The request to remove this

tree has been made to address concerns that the tree is located too close to an existing house and walkway. The arborist report that accompanied the application states that the tree is a moderate risk and that it is in relatively poor condition. The report describes the tree as having a highly irregular crown, with numerous branch stubs and a significant hole in the stem of the tree about two-thirds from ground level. The report further states that the tree has sustained some damage during the ice-storm from December 2013 with a large number of branches falling since this storm causing damage to the house.

Urban Forestry staff inspected the tree and determined that it is healthy and maintainable both botanically and structurally. No evidence was observed, nor was evidence provided that the tree is causing or is likely to cause damage to the house or walkway. The tree is situated approximately 5 m from the house and none of the tree's branches are in conflict with the structure.

With respect to the applicants' claim that the tree is damaging an existing walkway, tree roots are not physically capable of exerting the physical force required to lift or crack hard surfaces such as concrete or asphalt. Tree roots cannot damage a properly constructed walkway. Tree roots are, however, capable of growing into any available cracks that offer water and air. If proper drainage has not been provided, heaving may occur as a result of freezing and thawing, creating space that tree roots may grow into. Roots do not and cannot go where there is no water. Where a walkway has been damaged, repair can be typically be undertaken without requiring tree removal.

The property owner's concerns over the number of branches falling from the tree and the existing branch stubs can be addressed through routine, maintenance pruning, in accordance with good arboricultural practices. The irregular crown of this tree as identified in the arborist report should not be considered a defect as mature white pines are often lopsided, asymmetrical or wind-blown. The significant hole, as identified in the arborist report, appears to be a minor wound resulting from a broken branch. There are no visible signs of decay in or around the wound.

When reviewing applications for tree removal, Urban Forestry staff are guided by City policies and by-laws. This includes the City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 658, more commonly referred to as the Ravine By-law. The Ravine By-law does not have a mechanism that would allow the removal of the subject tree based on the applicants' concerns.

A permit to remove this 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 658-6 of City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 658, Ravine and Natural Feature Protection*, permit approval must be conditional upon the provision of satisfactory replacement planting.

As a condition of permit issuance, the property owner has proposed to plant one (1) white pine 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 planting on site 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 neighbourhoods. Studies suggest that social benefits such as crime reduction and neighbourhood 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 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 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 white pine tree at 3 Acland Crescent is a valuable part of the urban forest. With proper care and maintenance this tree has the potential to provide the property owners 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

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Photograph of the white pine tree, measuring 62 cm in diameter

