

Application to Remove a Private Tree - 42 Mossgrove Trail

Date: August 11, 2017

To: North York Community Council

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

Wards: Ward 25 - Don Valley West

SUMMARY

This report requests that City Council deny the application for a permit to remove one (1) privately owned tree located at 42 Mossgrove Trail. The application indicates the reason for removal is to address concerns that tree roots have entered the sewer pipes, resulting in blockages.

The subject tree is a Colorado spruce (*Picea pungens*), measuring 63 cm in diameter. The Private Tree By-law does not support 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 42 Mossgrove Trail.

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 to remove one (1) privately owned Colorado spruce tree measuring 63 cm in diameter, situated in the front yard of 42 Mossgrove Trail. The request to remove this tree has been made to address concerns that the tree's roots are blocking sewer pipes.

The arborist report which accompanied the application indicates that the tree is in healthy condition with good structure. It is also stated that the tree is exhibiting crown thinning with signs of *Cytospora* canker on its main stem. The property owner provided a short note to explain that professionals were brought in during the summer to clear blocked sewer lines.

Urban Forestry staff inspected the tree and determined it is healthy and maintainable. The tree has signs of *Cytospora* canker on its main trunk, however this has not impacted its health or vigor. Although tree branches may dieback as an effect of *Cytospora* canker, trees seldom die because of the disease. Trees with *Cytospora* canker can survive in a healthy and maintainable condition for many years. The crown has been elevated approximately 2.0 meters above the ground and minor deadwood was observed on the south side. The deadwood can be addressed through pruning. The tree is structurally sound and no structural defects were observed at the time of inspection.

When reviewing applications for tree removal, Urban Forestry staff are guided by City policies and by-laws including *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.

Following the permit denial the property owner submitted additional issues to support the removal request. The issues include: 1) the owner has been advised by a plumber that the cost to repair the pipes is over \$3,300 and the owner considers this unaffordable; 2) the tree has been planted so close to the house that it poses risks to structures during wind, ice and snow storms; 3) the branches create visual obstructions when owners pull out of driveway and access the sidewalk; 4) an adjacent city tree was scheduled to be removed because of interference by the subject tree.

No evidence was provided to support the additional issues presented above by the owner. The tree is located approximately 6.0 meters from driveway and 8.0 meters from existing house. Any site line obstruction can be addressed by pruning in accordance

with good arboricultural practices. Further, the adjacent City-owned tree is proposed for removal by Urban Forestry operations as it is no longer viable to maintain, not due to interference with the subject tree as stated by the owner.

The sewer line that needs to be replaced is situated approximately 4.0 m away from the tree. Replacement of this pipe would require an encroachment of approximately 0.3 m into the required Tree Protection Zone therefore the impact to the subject tree would be minor. Urban Forestry would not oppose these repairs taking place.

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) replacement 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 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 Colorado spruce tree at 42 Mossgrove Trail 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 – Figure 1: Subject tree measuring 63 cm in diameter situated in the front yard of 42 Mossgrove Trail

Attachment 2 - Figure 2: Lower canopy and main trunk of subject tree

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Attachment 2 - Figure 2: Lower canopy and main trunk of subject tree

