

Application to Remove a Private Tree - 16 Alrita Crescent

Date: October 23, 2017

To: Scarborough Community Council

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

Wards: Ward 40 - Scarborough-Agincourt

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council deny the application for a permit to remove one (1) privately owned tree located at 16 Alrita Crescent. The application indicates that the tree is too large for its location and is in contact with the hydro service wires.

The subject tree is a Colorado spruce tree (*Picea pungens*), measuring 38 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 16 Alrita Crescent.

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 of 16 Alrita Crescent. The subject tree is a Colorado spruce tree measuring 38 cm in diameter. The request to remove this tree has been made to address concerns that the tree is too large for its location and is in contact with residential hydro service wires.

The arborist report that accompanied the application assessed this tree to be in good condition, but noted adelgid galls as well as root rot indicated by fruiting bodies visible in the lawn. Concerns about unsightly form that may result from pruning to accommodate the driveway, a hydro pole and hydro wires, as well as a potential for the tree to uproot were also identified as concerns. A photograph of a fruiting body was attached to the arborist report provided to Urban Forestry, but the species of fruiting body could not be identified due to the poor quality of the photograph. No other evidence supporting potential for the tree to fail was provided in the report.

Urban Forestry staff inspected the tree and determined that it was healthy and maintainable both botanically and structurally. Neither fruiting bodies nor other signs of root rot were observed on site at the time of inspection or during a follow-up inspection. Urban Forestry staff did not identify any signs or symptoms that would indicate this tree is prone to failure.

Adelgid galls are malformations of the branch tips caused by small insects feeding on the needles. They are a cosmetic concern and not a serious health threat for the tree. Any structural concerns can be addressed through routine inspection and maintenance in accordance with good arboricultural practices. The tree could also be pruned in accordance with good arboricultural practices to eliminate any branch contact with overhead utility conductors.

Since the denial by Urban Forestry of the permit to remove this tree, the applicant has pruned its branches to provide clearance from the driveway and house.

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, 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 plant 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 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 16 Alrita Crescent 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 38 cm in diameter showing the hydro wires through the canopy.

Attachment 2: Photograph showing the distance between the Colorado spruce and the house.

Attachment 3: Photograph of the healthy crown of the subject tree showing minor tip dieback on two branches.

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