

Application to Remove a Private Tree - 62 Anndale Road

Date: December 12, 2016

To: Scarborough Community Council

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

Wards: Ward 36 – Scarborough Southwest

SUMMARY

This report requests that City Council deny the application for a permit to remove one (1) privately-owned tree located at 62 Anndale Road. The application indicates the reason for removal is to address concerns that the tree makes a large mess and that branches are growing too close to an existing house.

Several additional reasons for requesting a permit to remove the tree in question were provided after the application was denied. These included; concerns that the tree will fail, creating the potential to injure the persons or property; the tree is lifting a concrete slab adjacent to an existing house and the tree is causing a crack in a nearby retaining wall. Also, the property owner believes that the foundation of an existing home at the site could potentially be damaged by the tree; and that water flowing from a church and school parking lot abutting the rear of the site could potentially erode soil surrounding the tree causing it to become destabilized.

The subject tree is a honey locust tree (*Gleditsia triacanthos*), measuring 52 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 tree located at 62 Anndale Road.

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, situated at the rear of the property of 62 Anndale Road. The subject tree is a honey locust measuring 52 cm in diameter. The application indicates the reason for removal is to address concerns that the tree makes a large mess and branches are growing too close to the property owner's home.

Several additional reasons provided after the application was denied include: concerns that the tree will fail creating the potential to injure the family living at the site or people attending the church and Montessori school at the abutting lot to the rear of the site; the tree is lifting a concrete slab adjacent to an existing home at the site and is causing a crack in a retaining wall; the owner believes that the foundation of the existing home is next to be damaged by the tree; and that water flowing from the church and school parking lot into the backyard could potentially erode the soil around the tree causing it to become destabilized.

Urban Forestry staff inspected the tree and determined it to be in a healthy and maintainable condition, and did not observe any significant structural or health defects. Staff re-inspected the tree after having been notified of the failure of a medium-sized branch after the application was denied. At that time staff determined that the failure of this individual branch had not compromised the overall health or structural integrity of the tree.

The issues noted by the property owner concerning branches growing close to or abutting the house, the mess caused by a tree's natural functions, and the removal of deadwood can be addressed through pruning in accordance with good arboricultural practices and the performance of other routine tree maintenance. Doing so will also reduce the likelihood of future limb failure.

Tree roots are not physically capable of exerting the force required to lift or crack a properly constructed and maintained concrete slab, retaining wall or foundation wall. They are, however, capable of growing into any available space that offers water and air. However, 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. Waterproofing of the foundation, if not already done, would prevent roots from growing in any existing cracks or other openings in the foundation. Damage such as that described here can typically be repaired without requiring tree removal.

Finally, the issue presented regarding soil erosion in the backyard should, in fact, be mitigated by the roots of this tree and the presence of other vegetation, and not exacerbated by it. Tree roots help to anchor soil and prevent it being eroded by flowing water, wind or other natural forces.

When reviewing applications for tree removal, Urban Forestry staff are guided by City policies and bylaws 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 approval must be conditional upon the provision of satisfactory replacement planting. As a condition of permit issuance, the property owner is proposing to plant one (1) large growing 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 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 existing tree canopy to 40 per cent. The loss of the 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 honey locust tree at 62 Anndale Road 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
Director of Urban Forestry
Parks, Forestry and Recreation

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Photograph of the honey locust tree, measuring 52 cm in diameter.
Attachment 2 – Photograph showing cracked retaining wall and lifted concrete slab.

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Attachment 2 – Photograph showing cracked retaining wall and lifted concrete slab.

