TORONTO

REPORT FOR ACTION

Application to Remove a Private Tree – 118 Withrow Avenue

Date: February 22, 2018
To: Toronto and East York Community Council
From: Director, Urban Forestry, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
Wards: Ward 30 – Toronto-Danforth

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council deny the request for a permit to remove one (1) privately owned tree located at 118 Withrow Avenue. The application indicates the reasons for removal are to address concerns that the tree is too close to the house, the risk of damage to the property from tree roots and that the tree is too large for the property.

The subject tree is a silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*), measuring 80 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, Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that:

1. City Council deny the request for a permit to remove one (1) privately owned tree located at 118 Withrow Avenue.

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 has received an application for a permit to remove one (1) privately owned silver maple tree, measuring 80 cm in diameter, located in the rear yard of the property located at 118 Withrow Avenue. The application indicates the reasons for requested removal are to address concerns that the tree is too close to the house, the risk of damage to the property from tree roots and that the tree is too large for the property.

The arborist report that accompanied the application assessed this tree to be in fair condition.

Urban Forestry staff inspected the tree and determined that it was healthy and maintainable both botanically and structurally.

Tree roots are not physically capable of exerting the force required to lift or crack a properly constructed and maintained 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 can typically be prevented with proper maintenance without requiring tree removal.

Despite concerns that the tree is too big for the yard, no damage to the house or property was observed due to the presence of the tree at the time of inspection. The tree is located such that routine maintenance of the tree can be performed.

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. Two (2) objections were received in response to the application to remove the tree in question. 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 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 silver maple tree at 118 Withrow Avenue 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 silver maple tree measuring 80 cm in diameter
Attachment 2 – Photograph of the silver maple tree measuring 80 cm in diameter
Attachment 3 – Photograph of the silver maple tree measuring 80 cm in diameter

Attachment 1 – Photograph of the silver maple tree measuring 80 cm in diameter



Attachment 2 – Photograph of the silver maple tree measuring 80 cm in diameter



Attachment 3 – Photograph of the silver maple tree measuring 80 cm in diameter

