



## REPORT FOR ACTION

### Application to Remove a Private Tree – 95 Pebblehill Square

**Date:** September 11, 2019

**To:** Scarborough Community Council

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

**Wards:** Ward 23 – Scarborough North

#### SUMMARY

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This report requests that City Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 95 Pebblehill Square. The application indicates the reasons for removal are that the tree is too tall and its close proximity to the house makes it dangerous.

The subject tree is a Colorado blue spruce (*Picea pungens*), measuring 46cm in diameter. The Tree By-law does not support the removal of this tree as it is healthy and maintainable.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Director, Urban Forestry, Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that:

1. City Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 95 Pebblehill Square.

#### FINANCIAL IMPACT

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

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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There is no decision history regarding this tree removal permit application.

## **COMMENTS**

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Urban Forestry received an application for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located in the backyard of 95 Pebblehill Square. The subject tree is a Colorado blue spruce measuring 46 cm in diameter. The request to remove this tree has been made to address concerns that the tree is too tall and might fall and become a danger to nearby targets (houses, shed and fences) during the next high wind storm event and that the homeowner has had to remove part of the brick patio due to surface roots heaving the bricks.

The arborist report that accompanied the application assessed this tree to be in fair condition. The structure is considered good to fair with a slight lean away from the house. Urban Forestry has conducted a tree health assessment and has determined that, at the time of inspection, the tree was healthy both structurally and botanically, with a healthy canopy and good root flare. There is one surface root on the lawn but no upheaval of the patio bricks was observed.

Tree roots are not physically capable of exerting the force required to lift or crack properly constructed and maintained load bearing structures. They are however, capable of growing into any available space that offers air. Heaving may occur as a result of freezing and thawing, which creates space that tree roots may grow into. Tree roots will exacerbate the situation if a problem has already occurred or if the material layer (i.e. clay tiles) is too thin, cracked and/or made of lightweight material. It is typically possible to repair the damage and construct a more robust patio while preserving the tree.

The minor deadwood and stubs present in the tree can be addressed through pruning in accordance with good arboricultural practices. The removal of deadwood through pruning in accordance with good arboricultural practices and the performance of routine tree maintenance will also reduce the likelihood of future limb failure. Routine tree maintenance is considered part of performing regular property maintenance and is a responsibility of all property owners within the City of Toronto.

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 replacement tree. However, in this instance it would be appropriate for the applicant to provide five 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 blue spruce at 95 Pebblehill Square 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 Tree/Ravine By-law, this tree should not be removed.

## **CONTACT**

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Mark Ventresca, Supervisor Tree Protection and Plan Review, Urban Forestry  
Tel: 416-392-7390, Email: [Mark.Ventresca@toronto.ca](mailto:Mark.Ventresca@toronto.ca)

## **SIGNATURE**

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Jason Doyle  
Director, Urban Forestry  
Parks, Forestry and Recreation

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment 1 – Figure 1: September 9, 2019 TPPR staff photograph of the backyard Colorado blue spruce tree, measuring 46 cm in diameter

Attachment 2 – Figure 2: September 9, 2019 TPPR staff photo showing the trunk and upper canopy of the Colorado blue spruce tree measuring 46 cm in diameter.

Attachment 3 – Figure 3: September 9, 2019 TPPR staff photo showing the lean of the Colorado blue spruce tree measuring 46 cm in diameter.

Attachment 4 - Figure 4: September 9, 2019 TPPR staff photo showing the root plate and surface roots of the Colorado blue spruce tree measuring 46 cm in diameter.

Attachment 5 - Figure 5: September 11, 2019 TPPR staff photo showing rear lawn and brick patio as well as location of one surface root (red circle)

Attachment 6 - Figure 6: September 11, 2019 TPPR staff photo of the brick patio

Attachment 7 - Figure 7: September 11, 2019 TPPR staff photo of Colorado blue spruce tree measuring 46cm in diameter showing distance from house

Attachment 1

Figure 1: September 9, 2019 TPPR staff photograph of the backyard Colorado blue spruce tree, measuring 46 cm in diameter



Attachment 2

Figure 2: September 9, 2019 TPPR staff photo showing the trunk and upper canopy of the Colorado blue spruce tree measuring 46 cm in diameter.





Attachment 3

Figure 3: September 9, 2019 TPPR staff photo showing the lean of the Colorado blue spruce tree measuring 46 cm in diameter.



Attachment 4

Figure 4: September 9, 2019 TPPR staff photo showing the root plate and surface roots of the Colorado blue spruce tree measuring 46 cm in diameter.





Attachment 5

Figure 5: September 11, 2019 TPRR staff photo showing rear lawn and brick patio as well as location of one surface root (red circle)



Attachment 6

Figure 6: September 11, 2019 TPRR staff photo of the brick patio





Attachment 7

Figure 7: September 11, 2019 TPPR staff photo of Colorado blue spruce tree measuring 46cm in diameter showing distance from house

