



REPORT FOR ACTION

Application to Remove a Private Tree – 94 Atlee Avenue

Date: October 16, 2019

To: Scarborough Community Council

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

Wards: Ward 20 – Scarborough Southwest

SUMMARY

This report requests that City Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 94 Atlee Avenue. The application indicates the reasons for removal are that the tree is too large, dangerous, and too close to the house as well as the neighbour's house located at 92 Atlee Avenue, the ongoing costs of unclogging the sewer pipe and concerns that the roots will destabilize the veranda and stairs.

The subject tree is a Colorado blue spruce (*Picea pungens*), measuring 51 cm in diameter. The Tree by-law does not support the removal of this tree as it is healthy and maintainable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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 94 Atlee 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 received an application for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located in the front yard of 94 Atlee Avenue. The subject tree is a Colorado blue spruce measuring 51 cm in diameter. The request to remove this tree has been made to address concerns that the tree is too large and might fall and become a danger to nearby targets (houses, cars, and energized conductors), the homeowner has had to bear ongoing costs of clearing the sewer pipe made of clay tiles, concerns that the lawn will be rendered unsightly due to surface roots, and concerns that the tree roots might destabilize the veranda and stairs.

The arborist report that accompanied the application assessed this tree to be in good health. The structure is considered good to fair with some large surface roots. No upheaval of tree roots has been currently noted. Urban Forestry has conducted a tree health assessment and, at the time of the inspection, determined that the tree is healthy both structurally and botanically, with a healthy canopy and good root flare.

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 water and air. If proper drainage has not been provided, 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 (e.g. clay tiles) is too thin and/or cracked. It is typically possible to repair the damage and construct a more robust sewer pipe (e.g. PVC) while preserving the tree.

The minor deadwood and stubs present in the tree can be addressed through pruning in accordance with good arboricultural practices. This along with the performance of routine tree maintenance will also reduce the likelihood of future limb failure. Routine tree maintenance is considered part of performing routine 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. One comment was received in support of the removal of this tree.

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 94 Atlee 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 Tree/Ravine 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: July 12, 2019 Staff photograph of the Colorado blue spruce tree, measuring 51 cm in diameter and its proximity to house.

Attachment 2 – Figure 2: July 12, 2019 Staff photograph showing the trunk and entire canopy of the Colorado blue spruce tree measuring 51 cm in diameter.

Attachment 3 – Figure 3: July 12, 2019 Staff photograph showing the root flare of the Colorado blue spruce tree measuring 51 cm in diameter.

Attachment 1

Figure 1: July 12, 2019 Staff photograph of the Colorado blue spruce tree, measuring 51 cm in diameter and its proximity to house



Attachment 2

Figure 2: July 12, 2019 Staff photograph showing the trunk and entire canopy of the Colorado blue spruce tree measuring 51 cm in diameter.



Attachment 3

Figure 3: July 12, 2019 Staff photograph showing the root flare of the Colorado blue spruce tree measuring 51 cm in diameter.

