

Application to Remove a Private Tree - 522 Woburn Avenue

Date: April 17, 2020

To: North York Community Council

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

Wards: 8 - Eglinton Lawrence

SUMMARY

This report requests that City Council deny a request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 522 Woburn Avenue. The application indicates the reasons for removal are that the tree has a thinning canopy, an elevated root plate, and is growing too close to the fence.

The subject tree is a Colorado blue spruce (*Picea pungens*), measuring 32 cm in diameter. The Private Tree By-law does not support the removal of the 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 privately owned tree located at 522 Woburn 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 at 522 Woburn Avenue. The subject tree is a Colorado blue spruce measuring 32 cm in diameter. The application indicated that the request to remove this tree has been made to address concerns that the tree has a thinning canopy, an elevated root plate, and is growing too close to the fence.

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

Urban Forestry staff inspected the tree and at the time of inspection, determined it is healthy and maintainable both botanically and structurally.

Although there is some loss of needles from the interior of the tree, it is well within the range of what is normal for this species. The crown is slightly one-sided due to light competition from an adjacent deciduous tree, and lower branches have been pruned off. However none of these factors indicate a thinning tree canopy due to poor health. Some of the roots are visible above grade however this is not an unusual condition and there is no evidence of the root system being weakened or compromised. The root system appears structurally sound without any heaving.

The tree is situated adjacent to the fence at the rear of 533 Woburn Avenue. No evidence of the tree impacting the fence was observed at the time of inspection. The proximity of the tree to the fence does not preclude tree maintenance from being performed.

When reviewing applications for tree removal, Urban Forestry staff are guided by City policies and bylaws including *City of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 813, Trees, 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 the 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 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 long horned beetle and the emerald ash borer make the preservation of all healthy trees more necessary now than ever.

The Colorado blue spruce tree at 522 Woburn 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 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 - Staff photograph showing the Colorado blue spruce tree measuring 32 cm in diameter, situated in the rear yard of 522 Woburn Avenue.

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