

## **Application to Remove a Private Tree - 95 Gordon Road**

**Date:** March 12, 2020

**To:** North York Community Council

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

**Wards:** Ward 15 - Don Valley West

### **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 Gordon Road. The application indicates the reasons for removal are to address concerns that the tree represents a potential hazard, is not suitable for the growing space due to its height, has caused damage to a neighbouring property, and may cause damage to the playground adjacent to the tree.

The subject tree is a Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumilia*), measuring 84 cm in diameter. The Private Tree By-law does not support the removal of this tree as it is healthy and maintainable.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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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 95 Gordon Road.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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There is no financial impact resulting from the adoption of the recommendations in 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 front yard of 95 Gordon Road. The subject tree is a Siberian elm measuring 84 cm in diameter. The application indicated that the request to remove this tree has been made to address concerns that the tree represents a potential hazard, is not suitable for the growing space due to its height, has caused damage to a neighbouring property, and may cause damage to the playground adjacent to the tree.

The arborist report that accompanied the application assessed this tree to be in poor structural condition. The report also states that the upper canopy has sustained structural failure at included bark crotches which has caused unspecified damage to the neighbouring property.

Urban Forestry staff inspected the tree and at the time of inspection determined that it is healthy and maintainable, both botanically and structurally. The tree is located at the south-east corner in the rear yard of the property and is 1.5 metres from the playground and 23 metres from the dwelling at 95 Gordon Road. The tree has lost one 10-15 cm limb in the upper canopy, which split away from a co-dominant union. The remaining canopy is full and vigorous.

All trees, even healthy trees, will pose some risk of limb failure. The issues presented regarding the branch attachment with included bark can be addressed through pruning to remove weight on one or both of the limbs included in the union. The removal of deadwood through pruning in accordance with good arboricultural practices and performing routine tree maintenance will also reduce the likelihood of future limb failure.

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, 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 this 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 provide cash-in-lieu payment for 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 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 Siberian elm at 95 Gordon 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. 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**

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Jason Doyle  
Director, Urban Forestry  
Parks, Forestry and Recreation

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment 1 - Figure 1: Staff photograph of the privately owned Siberian elm measuring 84 cm in diameter located in the rear yard of 95 Gordon Road, September, 2019.

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