

Application to Remove a Private Tree - 34 Whittaker Crescent

Date: March 12, 2020

To: North York Community Council

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

Wards: Ward 17 - Don Valley North

SUMMARY

This report requests that City Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 34 Whittaker Crescent. The application indicates the reasons for removal are to address concerns that the tree is overhanging the dwelling, property, and neighbouring driveway.

The subject tree is a Norway spruce (*Picea abies*), measuring 51 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 34 Whittaker Crescent.

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 34 Whittaker Crescent. The subject tree is a Norway spruce tree measuring 51 cm in diameter. The application indicates that the request to remove this tree has been made to address concerns that the tree is overhanging the dwelling, property, and neighbouring driveway.

The arborist report that accompanied the application assessed this tree to be in fair to good condition. The report also states that the tree has moderate pruning wounds, an asymmetrical form, minor girdling and exposed roots with visible seams, and minor twig dieback.

Urban Forestry staff inspected the tree and at the time of inspection determined that it is healthy and in good condition, both botanically and structurally. At the time of inspection, the tree did not exhibit any signs of decay, and has a full, well-formed crown, with no obvious or large dead or broken branches. No evidence of the tree impacting the dwelling, property or neighbouring driveway was observed at the time of inspection.

All trees, even healthy trees, will pose some risk of limb failure. Overhanging branches including any deadwood can be addressed through pruning in accordance with good arboricultural practices and routine tree maintenance, which will also reduce the likelihood of future limb failure. The proximity of the tree to the dwelling does not preclude tree maintenance from being performed.

When reviewing applications for tree removal, Urban Forestry staff are guided by City policies and by-laws 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. One (1) letter in support of the tree removal was received in response to the notice.

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 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 resources 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 Norway spruce tree at 34 Whittaker Cres 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: Figure 1 - Staff photograph of the Norway spruce measuring 51 cm in diameter located in the front yard of 34 Whittaker Crescent, November 2019

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