

Application to Remove a Private Tree – 214 Snowdon Avenue

Date: September 16, 2020

To: North York Community Council

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

Wards: Ward 15 – Don Valley West

SUMMARY

This report requests that City Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located on the boundary line between the properties of 214 and 216 Snowdon Avenue. The application has been made by the owner of 214 Snowdon Avenue. The application indicates the reasons for removal are to address concerns that the tree is damaging a deck structure, the tree's proximity to the house, and the potential for the tree's roots to cause foundation problems.

The subject tree is an American elm tree (*Ulmus americana*), measuring approximately 80 cm in diameter. The Private Tree By-law does not support the removal of this 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 on the boundary line between the properties of 214 Snowdon Avenue and 216 Snowdon 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 a privately owned tree located on the boundary line between the properties of 214 and 216 Snowdon Avenue. The application was submitted by the owner of 214 Snowdon Avenue. The subject tree is an American elm measuring approximately 80 cm in diameter. The request to remove this tree has been made to address concerns that the tree is damaging a deck structure, the tree's proximity to the house, and the potential for the tree's roots to cause foundation problems. In accordance with the City's Boundary and Neighbour Tree Procedure, the co-owner of the boundary tree has been notified in writing that an application to remove the tree has been received.

The arborist report that accompanied the application describes the tree to be in good condition. The report describes the root crown structure as good, the trunk integrity and crown structure as good to fair, and canopy vigour as fair. The arborist notes epicormic shoot growth along the limbs.

No evidence of damage to either foundation has been submitted to Urban Forestry.

Correspondence from the applicant after the application was received, also indicates that there is concern that the tree's roots are lifting the paving stone driveway that accesses a rear garage at 216 Snowdon Avenue.

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

The subject tree is situated approximately 1.5 meters from the house at 214 Snowdon Avenue and 3 meters from the house at 216 Snowdon Avenue. No evidence of the tree impacting either house was observed at the time of inspection. The tree's location does not preclude the undertaking of routine tree maintenance, such as pruning for health or building clearance.

Tree roots are not physically capable of exerting enough force to lift or crack properly constructed and maintained infrastructure such as a house foundation, deck, or driveway. Roots cannot grow where there is no water or air. However, if proper drainage is not provided, heaving or cracking may occur as a result of water freezing and thawing, creating spaces that tree roots may grow into.

The damage described here, can typically be repaired without requiring tree removal. Waterproofing of the foundation, if not already done, would prevent roots from growing in any existing cracks or other openings in the foundation. The driveway or deck, if properly constructed and sealed, should prevent roots from growing into any existing cracks or other openings.

The tree is not showing any evidence of Dutch Elm Disease (*Ophistoma ulmi*) (DED), a fungal disease affecting elm trees, which leads to tree mortality. The American elm is an especially valuable and significant tree. This species was almost completely destroyed during the 1960s and 1970s due to Dutch Elm Disease. This disease continues to infect and kill American elms across North America and very few mature elms have survived

in Toronto. Due to the age and health of the subject tree, it is clear that it has been able to resist infection. It is not possible to predict whether this tree will survive indefinitely, but given its current health and demonstrated ability to resist the disease, preservation is recommended.

American elms can live for several hundred years. Those elms that have survived DED may represent a potential source of genetically resistant offspring, and therefore a means to reintroduce this stately species back into the urban forest. The University of Guelph is currently conducting research on DED resistance utilizing clones of such trees.

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 American elm at 214 Snowdon 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

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Parks, Forestry and Recreation

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Figure 1: Staff photograph of the American elm tree situated on the boundary between the properties of 214 Snowdon Avenue and 216 Snowdon Avenue, viewed from the driveway of the adjacent property.

Attachment 2 - Figure 2: Staff photograph of the base of the American elm tree situated on the boundary between the properties of 214 Snowdon Avenue and 216 Snowdon, viewed from the adjacent property.

Attachment 3 - Figure 3: Staff photograph showing the American elm tree situated on the boundary between the properties of 214 Snowdon Avenue and 216 Snowdon in relation to the deck seen above and behind the ladder.

Attachment 1 - Figure 1: Staff photograph of the American elm tree situated on the boundary between the properties of 214 Snowdon Avenue and 216 Snowdon Avenue, viewed from the driveway of the adjacent property.



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