

## **Application to Remove a Private Tree – 171 John Street**

**Date:** December 1, 2021

**To:** Etobicoke York Community Council

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

**Wards:** Ward 5 - York South-Weston

### **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 171 John Street. The application indicates the reason for removal is due to concerns that the tree is destabilized due to the impact of landscaping work near the tree's roots.

The subject tree is a Colorado blue spruce tree (*Picea pungens*), measuring 51.5 cm in diameter. The Tree By-laws do not support the removal of this tree as it is healthy and maintainable.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Acting Director of Urban Forestry recommends that:

1. City Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 171 John Street.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of 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 at 171 John Street. The subject tree is a Colorado blue spruce measuring 51.5 cm in diameter. The tree is located by the pool in the rear yard. The request to remove this tree has been made to address concerns that the tree is destabilized because tree roots have been impacted by landscaping work that took place within 2 m from the base of the tree.

The arborist report that accompanied the application described the tree to be in good condition and noted that the tree has a small root flare and minor elevation. The arborist report stated that it is unclear if the tree has been destabilized.

Urban Forestry staff inspected the tree and at the time of inspection determined that it is healthy and maintainable. Urban Forestry staff requested that the applicant provide further evidence to support the claim that the tree is destabilized, however none was received.

Through this inspection and review of the arborist report, staff have concluded that the removal of the subject tree is not permissible under the Tree By-law, City of Toronto *Municipal Code Chapter 813*. As a result of the above noted findings and in support of protecting and growing the City's urban forest, a permit to remove the tree was denied by Urban Forestry. The applicant is appealing this decision.

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 application to remove the tree in question.

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. Any cash-in-lieu collected will go towards the City's tree canopy reserve, a fund used for planting trees City wide.

The Colorado blue spruce tree at 171 John Street is a valuable part of the urban forest that provides numerous aesthetic, social and economic benefits to the property owner and local community. Toronto's urban forest provides \$55 million in environmental benefits every year including improved air quality through pollution removal, lower storm water management costs by reducing runoff, and carbon sequestration that lessens the impacts of climate change. Through shade and transpiration, increasing urban tree cover can mitigate exposure to extreme heat events. A higher density of trees in a neighbourhood has been shown to significantly improve physical and mental health, such as reducing blood pressure and stress levels and promoting physical activity.

Trees also make urban environments aesthetically more pleasing which raises property values.

Protecting the urban forest is a key strategy for building resiliency, as it continues to face increasing natural pressures such as storms and invasive pests. The 2013 ice storm resulted in the removal of over 3000 City-owned trees. The Emerald Ash Borer beetle has killed approximately 860,000 ash trees across the City. As a result, if the City aims to reach its canopy target of 40 per cent, it is imperative that the City protect healthy trees from injury and removal whenever possible. The improved condition and size of the urban forest will support the City of Toronto's goals to improve quality of life and well-being that enables a diverse, sustainable, innovative, growing and thriving city.

In accordance with the City Council-approved Strategic Forest Management Plan, Toronto's Official Plan, Toronto's Biodiversity Strategy, and the Private Tree By-law, the Colorado blue spruce tree at 171 John Street as a valuable part of the urban forest, should not be removed.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Kim Statham  
Acting Director, Urban Forestry  
Parks, Forestry and Recreation

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment 1 – Figure 1: Staff photograph showing Colorado blue spruce tree at 171 John Street; June 16, 2021.

Attachment 1 – Figure 1: Staff photograph showing Colorado blue spruce at 171 John Street; June 16, 2021.

