

Application to Remove a Private Tree – 27 Caribou Road

Date: May 31, 2022

To: North York Community Council

From: Acting Director, Urban Forestry

Wards: Ward 8 - Eglinton-Lawrence

SUMMARY

This staff report is about a matter that Community Council has delegated authority from City Council to make a final decision.

This report requests that North York Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located on the boundary line between the properties of 25 Caribou Road and 27 Caribou Road. The application indicates the reason for removal is due to concerns that the tree has multiple defects that pose an unacceptable risk of failure.

The subject tree is a silver maple tree (*Acer saccharinum*) measuring 127 cm in diameter. The Tree By-laws do not support the removal of this tree as it is healthy and maintainable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Acting Director of Urban Forestry recommends that:

1. North York Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 27 Caribou Road.

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 on the boundary line between the properties of 25 Caribou Road and 27 Caribou Road. The subject tree is a silver maple tree measuring 127 cm in diameter. The request to remove this tree has been made to address concerns that the tree has multiple defects that pose an unacceptable risk of failure.

The arborist report that accompanied the application did not provide the condition assessment rating of the tree. It describes that the tree contains decay near the base, branch unions, and old wounds; refers to the tree as having three main stems with weak attachments; notes the crown as being asymmetrical due to past pruning practices, and indicates the presence of exposed and girdling roots.

Urban Forestry staff inspected the tree and at the time of inspection determined that it is healthy and maintainable. The extent of the defects, individually and collectively, does not warrant the tree's removal.

During the site inspection, staff inspected the areas of the tree where the arborist report identified decay and observed that the extent of decay in these areas appears minor, and is unlikely to result in unreasonable risk of breakage or failure. Trees can survive and remain strong despite minor defects, such as small areas of decay, for many years. Trees having more than one leader (i.e. main trunk/stem), where the leaders attach or join at a narrow angle, may be more prone to failure under stress. Despite showing this growth form, the risk of failure is not unreasonably high.

All trees, even healthy trees, will pose some risk of limb failure. The likelihood of damage can be significantly reduced with the removal of large or significant dead branches through pruning in accordance with good arboricultural practices and the performance of routine tree maintenance.

Girdling roots refers to the occurrence of roots that grow or wrap around a tree's stem, instead of growing outward from it. In some severe cases, girdling roots may restrict the radial (outward) growth of the tree's trunk which may impair the normal movement of water and nutrients between the crown and the roots, leading to a slow decline in the tree's health. The impact of girdling roots on a tree depends on the size of the involved root(s), the amount of the tree's base that is girdled, and how long the problem has persisted. The girdling root noted in the subject tree is small, and no impact on the trunk's structure or the tree's health was observed.

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. Two comments in objection to the tree removal were received in response to the application.

The silver maple tree on the boundary line between the properties of 25 Caribou Road and 27 Caribou Road 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 resilience, 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 silver maple tree on the boundary line between the properties of 25 Caribou Road and 27 Caribou Road, as a valuable part of the urban forest, should not be removed.

The Acting Director of Urban Forestry recommends North York Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove a privately owned tree located on the boundary line between the properties of 25 Caribou Road and 27 Caribou Road. Should North York Community Council grant this request for tree removal, the following recommendation may be adopted, in accordance with the City's Tree By-law permit requirements:

- 1) North York Community Council approve the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located on the boundary line between the properties of 25 Caribou Road and 27 Caribou Road, and require the applicant to provide five replacement trees which can be achieved in a combination of on-site planting and cash-in-lieu of planting to the satisfaction of the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Figure 1: Arborist report photograph showing the silver maple tree on the boundary line between the properties of 25 Caribou Road and 27 Caribou Road; October 27, 2021

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