

Application to Remove a Private Tree – 41 Greendowns Drive

Date: June 6, 2022

To: Scarborough Community Council

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

Wards: Ward 20 - Scarborough Southwest

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 Scarborough Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 41 Greendowns Drive. The application indicates the reason for removal is due to concerns over the tree's proximity to the home and resulting unwanted maintenance, potential for failure and property damage.

The subject tree is a Colorado blue spruce tree (*Picea pungens*), measuring 46 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. Scarborough Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 41 Greendowns Drive.

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 at 41 Greendowns Drive. The subject tree is a Colorado blue spruce tree measuring 46 cm in diameter. The request to remove this tree has been made due concerns over the tree's proximity to the home and resulting unwanted maintenance, potential for failure and property damage.

The arborist report that accompanied the application described the tree to be in good condition. It also noted a number of defects including an elevated root plate, exposed roots, sap secretion on the main stem, a slight lean, minor canopy dieback, and minor thinning of the canopy.

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

This tree is situated approximately 1.9 metres from the house. No evidence of the tree impacting the house was observed at the time of inspection. The tree is located such that routine maintenance of the tree and house can be performed.

A common indication of potential failure due to strong winds can be a heaving root plate. The root system appears structurally sound without any heaving.

No evidence of dripping sap from overhead limbs was observed on the adjacent home or driveway. Sap was observed on the main stem of the tree permeating from pruning wounds, however it is typical for this species. As the tree completes its normal process of compartmentalizing these wounds, sealing off entry points for disease and other pathogens, the oozing of sap should cease.

Many of the tree species that grow in Toronto's urban forest produce fruit that some residents consider a nuisance. Every large growing tree has some degree of maintenance associated with it including removal of leaves, flowers, fruit, twigs and small branches. Private tree maintenance including the removal of debris such as leaf litter from eaves troughs and downspouts is considered part of performing regular property maintenance and is a responsibility of all property owners within the City of Toronto.

The City's Tree By-laws do not support tree removal to address the perceived nuisance resulting from a tree's natural functions or unwanted tree maintenance. 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.

The Colorado blue spruce tree at 41 Greendowns Drive 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 Colorado blue spruce tree at 41 Greendowns Drive as a valuable part of the urban forest, should not be removed.

The Acting Director of Urban Forestry recommends Scarborough Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 41 Greendowns Drive. Should Scarborough 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) Scarborough Community Council approve the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 41 Greendowns Drive, 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

Janice Allen, Acting Supervisor Tree Protection and Plan Review, Urban Forestry
Tel: 416-396-5131, Email: Janice.Allen@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

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

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Figure 1: Staff photograph showing overall condition of Colorado blue spruce tree at 41 Greendowns Drive; June 1, 2021

Attachment 1 – Figure 1: Staff photograph showing overall condition of Colorado blue spruce tree at 41 Greendowns Drive; June 1, 2021

