

Application to Remove a Private Tree – 107 Oakridge 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 107 Oakridge Drive. The application indicates the reason for removal is due to concerns related to the potential for tree failure.

The subject tree is a red oak tree (*Quercus rubra*), measuring 58 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 107 Oakridge 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 in the front yard at 107 Oakridge Drive. The subject tree is a red oak tree measuring 58 cm in diameter. The request to remove this tree has been made to address concerns related to the potential for tree failure.

The arborist report that accompanied the application described two red oak trees for removal. The arborist report did not distinguish between the two trees when describing the trees condition and defects, stating the trees to be in fair health and poor structural condition. The trees were described to have large dead branches in the crown; visible decay where large pruning cuts had been made historically; and numerous long, over-extended limbs that posed a risk of failure. The arborist report also stated that the bark had begun to buckle and cracks were visible across more than 30 per cent of the trunk, which could be considered as signs of impending structural failure. The tree in question was described as leaning to the west with its canopy weighted in the same direction.

Urban Forestry staff inspected both trees, and at the time of inspection determined that one of the red oak trees was in poor condition and a permit was granted for the removal. However, the red oak tree measuring 58 cm in diameter was determined to be healthy and maintainable.

The tree is exhibiting a slight lean due to a phototropic growth pattern. Phototropism is a natural growth pattern whereby plants grow toward available light. The lean observed is not impacting the structural integrity of the tree and is a response to competition from nearby trees and buildings. The tree's root system appears healthy and has grown to support the slight lean.

The trunk does not exhibit any obvious signs of internal or external decay that would make it more prone to failure. Additionally, 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.

All trees, even healthy trees, will pose some risk of limb failure. However removal of deadwood and concern over extended limbs can be addressed through routine tree maintenance and pruning in accordance with good arboricultural practices, which will reduce the likelihood of tree failure.

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 red oak tree at 107 Oakridge 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 red oak tree at 107 Oakridge 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 107 Oakridge 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 107 Oakridge 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

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SIGNATURE

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

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Figure 1: Staff photograph showing red oak tree at 107 Oakridge Drive;
December 10, 2021

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