

Application to Remove a Private Tree – 83 Collingsbrook Boulevard

Date: December 15, 2022

To: Scarborough Community Council

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

Wards: 22 – Scarborough-Agincourt

SUMMARY

This report requests that Scarborough Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 83 Collingsbrook Boulevard. The applicant is seeking permission to remove the tree in order to address concerns that tree is in poor health and that the tree's roots are causing damage to adjacent driveways and blocking sewer lines.

The subject tree is a silver maple tree (*Acer saccharinum*) measuring 105 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 83 Collingsbrook Boulevard.

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 83 Collingsbrook Boulevard. The subject tree is a silver maple measuring 105 cm in diameter. The request to remove this tree has been made to address concerns that the tree is in poor health and that the tree's roots are causing damage to adjacent driveways and blocking sewer lines.

The arborist report that accompanied the application described the tree to be in poor condition. The report indicated that the tree is outgrowing its current location, and that the tree roots are causing issues to surrounding sewage lines, and to the adjacent driveways.

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

The tree holds many characteristic growth traits typical of large silver maples, such as multiple stems. Callus tissue was observed healing over pruning wounds without the suspicion of larger internal decay. The buds, small twigs and scaffold branches were observed to be healthy and in vigorous condition. The tree appears to be thriving in the current location.

Hard landscape features such as interlocking unit pavers and asphalt surfaces may be prone to damage by tree roots, if they have not been properly designed, built or maintained. When built to accommodate future root growth and expansion, and properly maintained over time, any conflict with trees or their roots is more likely to be manageable, and can typically be resolved without removing the tree. In this type of situation, Urban Forestry has consistently denied tree removal permits, as removal of the tree alone will not correct the observed damage.

Tree roots grow almost exclusively in the upper 60 cm of soil and are not physically capable of exerting enough force to crack pipes. Water and sewer pipes are usually 1.5 - 2 meters below ground level, and old pipes may crack as a result of freezing and thawing. When damaged pipes leak, they provide oxygen and nutrient rich water deep in the soil, which attracts tree roots to enter the already cracked drain pipe. Replacing old clay pipes with continuous PVC piping between the house and sewer can eliminate future blockages by tree roots.

Through the 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 in support of the removal and one comment in objection to the removal of the tree in question were received.

The silver maple tree at 83 Collingsbrook Boulevard 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 by 2050, it is imperative that the City protect healthy trees from unnecessary 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 at 83 Collingsbrook Boulevard as a valuable part of the urban forest, should not be removed.

The Acting Director of Urban Forestry recommends Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 83 Collingsbrook Boulevard. Should 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 83 Collingsbrook Boulevard, 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 the silver maple tree at 83 Collingsbrook Boulevard; April 13, 2022

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