

Application to Remove a Private Tree – 149 Blantyre Avenue

Date: April 18, 2024

To: Scarborough Community Council

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

Wards: Scarborough Southwest - 20

SUMMARY

This report requests that Scarborough Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 149 Blantyre Avenue. The applicant indicates the reason for requesting removal of the tree is due to the tree's poor condition, including a lean and dripping sap, and concern about safety and property damage if the tree were to fail.

The Norway spruce tree (*Picea abies*) measures 80 cm in diameter. The City's Tree By-laws do not support the removal of this tree as it is healthy and maintainable. The permit was denied, and the applicant is appealing the decision. Community Council has delegated authority from City Council to make a final decision as to whether a permit may be issued when an applicant wishes to appeal the denial of a permit of a tree protected under the By-laws.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Director of Urban Forestry, Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that:

1. Scarborough Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 149 Blantyre Avenue.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

DECISION HISTORY

There is no decision history related to this tree removal permit application.

COMMENTS

Parks, Forestry and Recreation received an application for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located in the rear yard at 149 Blantyre Avenue. The Norway spruce tree (*Picea abies*) in question measures 80 cm in diameter. The applicant indicates the reason for requesting removal of the tree is due to the tree's poor condition, including a lean and dripping sap, and concern about safety and property damage if the tree were to fail.

The arborist report that accompanied the application described the tree to be in poor condition. This report noted that the tree is at or past maturity and is in decline; has lost some limbs in recent winds; and has some dead branches. The arborist report also noted that Norway spruce is not a deep-rooted species and is growing in sandy soil, suggesting there is a risk of failure due to reduced structural support from the root system.

City staff inspected the tree and at the time of inspection determined that it is healthy and maintainable. Staff noted some minor deadwood and some branches in contact with the building. Only minimal pruning would be required to prevent the branches from touching the house; all the branches below the height of the building do not have to be removed. Preventing branches from touching the building and the presence of dead wood are issues that can be addressed through pruning in accordance with good arboricultural practices and the performance of routine tree maintenance.

As part of the inspection, staff identified that the sap flow observed on the trunk is typical to the species and was not assessed to be a critical defect. Staff also assessed that there are no visible signs of decay to the trunk that would make it more prone to failure. A common indication of potential failure due to strong winds can be a heaving root plate. At the time of inspection staff noted that the root system appears structurally sound without any heaving. The proximity of the building also provides the subject tree with additional shelter from strong winds.

This tree's apparent lean is a phototropic growth pattern that exists because the tree has been competing for sunlight with a nearby building. Phototropism is a natural growth pattern whereby plants grow toward available light. A minor lean typically does not affect the stability of a tree. Trees adapt to minor leans through various mechanisms such as root growth adjustment or trunk thickening to maintain their stability.

The City's Tree By-laws do not support the removal of this tree as it is healthy and maintainable. Through the inspection and review of the arborist report, a permit to remove the tree was denied by Parks, Forestry and Recreation. The applicant is appealing this decision. Community Council has delegated authority from City Council

to make a final decision as to whether a permit may be issued when an applicant wishes to appeal the City's decision to deny a tree permit.

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 to provide an opportunity for comment by the community. No comments were received in support, nor in opposition to the application to remove the tree in question.

The City has reaffirmed its canopy target of 40 per cent by 2050. One approach to support achieving this target is to protect healthy trees from injury and removal whenever possible.

Protecting the urban forest is critical in building climate resilience as urban centres continue to face increasing development, impacts due to climate change in the form of extreme weather events, and other natural threats such as invasive pests. Toronto's urban forest provides \$55 million in ecosystem services and benefits annually. Services such as air pollution removal, reduction of storm water runoff, and carbon sequestration all contribute to climate resilience. Protecting and expanding tree cover helps to mitigate exposure to extreme heat events through shade and transpiration.

A sustainable and expanding urban forest also supports the City of Toronto's goals to improve quality of life and well-being of its residents. A higher density of trees in a neighbourhood has been shown to significantly improve physical and mental well-being by reducing blood pressure, decreasing stress levels, and by promoting physical activity. Economic benefits include enhancements to property values, increased tourism, and consumer spending.

In keeping with the City's Strategic Forest Management Plan, Toronto's Official Plan, Toronto's Biodiversity Strategy, and the Tree Protection By-laws, the Norway spruce tree at 149 Blantyre Avenue is a valuable part of the urban forest, providing numerous aesthetic, social and economic benefits to the property owner and the local community and therefore should not be removed.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends Scarborough Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 149 Blantyre Avenue. 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 149 Blantyre Avenue 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, Supervisor Tree Protection and Plan Review, Urban Forestry
Tel: 416-396-5131, Email: Janice.Allen@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

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

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Figure 1: Staff photograph of the Norway spruce tree at 149 Blantyre Avenue; October 31, 2023

Attachment 1 – Figure 1: Staff photograph of the Norway spruce tree at 149 Blantyre Avenue; October 31, 2023

