

Application to Remove a Private Tree – 114 Marcos Boulevard

Date: April 16, 2024

To: Scarborough Community Council

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

Wards: Scarborough Centre - 21

SUMMARY

This report requests that Scarborough Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 114 Marcos Boulevard. The applicant indicates the reason for requesting removal of the tree is due to concerns over sewer back ups caused by tree roots and potential property damage and safety issues if the tree were to fail.

The Colorado blue spruce tree (*Picea pungens*) measures 50 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 114 Marcos Boulevard.

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 front yard at 114 Marcos Boulevard. The Colorado blue spruce tree (*Picea pungens*) in question measures 50 cm in diameter. The applicant indicates the reason for requesting removal of the tree is due to concerns over potential sewer back-ups caused by tree roots, property damage and safety issues if the tree were to fail.

The arborist report that accompanied the application did not provide a condition rating for the tree. The report noted that the tree is tall, has a slight lean, and is fully exposed to northwest winds. The arborist report also noted that prior removal of scaffold branches on the lower 6 m of the trunk may impact the tree's ability to sustain high winds. The report stated that at 8.5 m the trunk of the tree divides into two codominant leaders with a structural defect and included bark at the union. The report noted a structural defect on the trunk 2.4 m above ground. The report also noted water sprouts, shoots that arise from the trunk of a tree, along the trunk in the upper crown, possibly indicating internal rot.

City staff inspected the tree and at the time of inspection determined that the tree is healthy and maintainable. City staff did not assess an increased susceptibility to wind damage and therefore subsequent failure as a result of lower branches being removed in the past. The lean observed is not impacting the structural integrity of the tree. The root system appears healthy and has grown to support the slight lean. There is no evidence of heaving of structural roots or other root damage that would be indicative of potential tree failure.

Staff observed that the tree has a codominant leader and a canker on the trunk of the tree, but assessed that neither are critical to the structural and botanical viability of the tree. While water sprouts can be an indication of stress, no evidence of decay was observed in relation to this growth. Staff perform visual ground level inspections of trees and cannot confirm the presence of sprouts in the upper canopy.

Tree roots grow almost exclusively in the upper 60 cm of soil. Water and sewer pipes are usually 1.5 m to 2 m below ground level. Old pipes may crack or joints may loosen and separate because of age, freeze and thaw cycles, and general wear and tear. When damaged pipes leak, they provide oxygen and nutrient rich water deep in the soil, which attracts tree roots to enter the already cracked or compromised drainpipe. However, tree roots are not physically capable of exerting enough force to crack pipes.

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 Colorado blue spruce tree at 114 Marcos Boulevard 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 114 Marcos Boulevard. 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 114 Marcos Boulevard and require the applicant to plant 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
Director, Urban Forestry, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Figure 1: Staff photograph of the Colorado blue spruce tree at 114
Marcos Boulevard; September 28, 2023

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