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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - PRELIMINARY REVIEW OF TREE IMPACT SUMMARY AND DRAWINGS

REGARDING CITY PLAN - SEWER, ROADS AND DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS IN LAWRENCE PARK

LOCATION OF TREES: Lawrence Park, City of Toronto Road Allowance

PREPARED FOR: Lawrence Park Ratepayers Association

DATE: July 14, 2016

BACKGROUND:

We attended a public information meeting on May 26, 2016 on the impact to the community contemplated by City of Toronto Plan of May 11, 2016, for road, sewers and road drainage improvements in the area. (the Plan) At the meeting itself, and following up by email on May 27th to Mayor John Tory, copied to Councilor Jaye Robinson, we expressed our concerns with respect to the drawings in the Plan.

1. Tree condition was rated using the terms “high,” “moderate” and “low”. These are not terms accepted by City Forestry department or defined in bylaw or arborist best practices. Qualified arborists are required to use the standardized terms “good,” “fair,” and “poor” which are quantified and therefore replicable by a qualified arborist.
2. Trees that would be injured by the proposed construction under City bylaw definition were identified in the drawings as “Preserve (if possible).” There is no tree risk assessment accompanying this report, such as would quantify the potential effect of structural compromise sustained during construction on the sustainability of the tree, nor any identification of target should the tree fail. There was an acknowledgement that trees would be “monitored,” after construction. Monitoring is not the same as risk assessment.
3. The “tree impact zone” (TIZ) used in the drawing is not standards-based. In response to my question, Ms. Kennedy indicated it was an individual assessment made on a tree-by-tree basis under consultation with a consulting arborist. This seems rather subjective in nature. TIZ is not used in the practice of arboriculture in Toronto, and is **not an accepted reporting standard for injury** under City of Toronto Tree Protection bylaw.
4. Although the meeting on May 26th promoted the idea of transparency (the term was used by the presenters several times) the “consulting arborist” cited was never identified. There has been no arborist report or impact assessment under the signature of a qualified arborist made available to the public. The drawings are signed by John Kelly, engineer with no reference to arborist of record.

We were invited by the Lawrence Park Ratepayers Association to prepare a preliminary report elaborating these concerns in context. We delivered that report in draft to LPRA executive on June 20, 2016. We received no reply from Mr. Tory or Ms. Robinson.



SCOPE:

Lawrence Park Ratepayers Association (LPRA) is eager to prepare a door-to-door survey of area residents to be delivered by an independent consultant with respect to impact of the proposed improvements by the City. We were informed by LPRA that the City wants to work collaboratively on the survey. The City has presented information with respect to trees in terms of number of trees to be “removed” (which is known as “destroyed” in bylaw) “preserved if possible,” (“injured” in bylaw) and “not impacted” (outside the tree protection zone required in bylaw). Therefore, the scope of this preliminary review of tree impact is as follows:

- I. To provide data regarding projected canopy loss under the Plan using arboricultural standards for future reference.
- II. To examine opportunities to reduce the impact on trees by reducing the number of sidewalks (a preference of the community) and suggesting any other canopy loss reduction opportunities that present during the course of our investigations.
- III. To share any observations made during our activities in the field regarding the accuracy, reliability and arboricultural impact of the remove/preserve/no impact decisions that have been made. To this purpose we decided to randomly select a street number and carry out a review of all categories of street trees in that sample area.

We were, in every instance, welcomed and supported by the community as we carried out our fieldwork.

A full review in draft was shared with LPRA executive on June 20, 2016. This executive summary comprises background, scope, conclusions and recommendations drawn from more detailed examination of canopy loss, canopy retention opportunities, and tree impact assessment observations and limitations included in the draft review.



V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Plan diagrams do not accurately reflect relative tree sizes or locations. Size and location are both significant in determining impact of construction on trees, suggesting that the full environmental and economic impact has not been fully understood and from a tree impact perspective it would be irresponsible to proceed. Based on the inaccuracies in the drawings, the conclusions in the Tree Impact Summary should not be relied on.
2. In the Plan, condition of the tree is not rated using arboricultural standards. Structural and vitality ratings are each significant in determining the sustainability of the tree in proximity to construction activities and together should lead to a quantifiable rating of good, fair or poor, from which post-construction sustainability and/or risk can be contemplated.
3. The Plan avoids using other standards-based terminology as defined in The City of Toronto Tree Protection Guidelines, specifically, the terms “destroy,” “injure,” and “tree protection zone.” This lack of adherence to standards calls into question any determination of “no impact.” Similarly, the use of the term “preserve if possible” is a misleading representation of what is in fact tree injury by definition.
4. Based on our observations, “remove,” “preserve” and “no impact” determinations in the Plan are not in accordance with arboricultural standards or best practices regarding size and condition, cohort behaviour, proximity to construction, species value, or community significance.
5. The Plan does not contemplate secondary canopy loss at all. Each sidewalk adds 1.5 m to the roadway width. Reducing the introduction of sidewalks into areas 5, 7 and 8, and reducing from two to one sidewalk in area 1 while maintaining a 7.6m roadway width will significantly increase the area available to protect and preserve trees.
6. There is opportunity to preserve additional canopy through the reduction of number of sidewalks.
7. Significant canopy can be preserved through the effective use of Tree Protection Zones to as close to the edge of existing impervious surfaces as possible. Developing a comprehensive Tree Protection Plan should be a Plan priority and is a necessary basis to accurately predict tree impact numbers. Development of a comprehensive tree protection plan is tantamount to the preservation of canopy and is the key concern regarding the Plan from an arboricultural perspective.
8. The tree impact presented in the Plan does not seem consistent with the vision and spirit of Toronto’s Strategic Forest Management Plan, specifically tree protection as an opportunity to educate the public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. An accurate and comprehensive Tree Protection Plan and Tree Impact Assessment should be developed by a qualified, third-party arborist in conjunction with the City engineering department. These reports can be used as a basis for informed choices, and where reasonable, to consider minor engineering alternatives that will allow for protection of significant canopy(ies).
2. Flowing from a Tree Protection Plan, tree risk assessment of trees to be retained wherever warranted by impact, condition, and/or target.
3. Before construction, the careful installation of tree protection barriers under the supervision of a qualified arborist to minimize construction-related injuries, removals, and secondary canopy loss.



Executive Summary - Preliminary Review of Tree Impact – Lawrence Park Improvements
July 14, 2016
Page 4.

4. From a canopy perspective is worthwhile to consider reducing the number of sidewalks to be introduced in the area. Fewer sidewalks will increase the tree protection area, suggesting that the number of trees that need to be injured or destroyed will be fewer, and construction impact and therefore secondary canopy loss will be less.
5. Road and sewer improvements in Lawrence Park present a unique opportunity for the City of Toronto to show leadership in maintaining the balance between the need for urban infrastructure reconstruction and minimizing the environmental, economic and safety impact of development, namely, the protection of mature canopy and monumental specimens. The community is engaged and stands ready to seek collaborative solutions with the City toward stewardship of an important public good.

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