

Update on the City's plans for our community¹

Arborist Report

The LPRA retained the services of a certified, professional arborist² to provide an unbiased report documenting and assessing the impact of the City's proposed road and sewer reconstruction and sidewalk construction on the Lawrence Park tree canopy, its biodiversity, and whether the current plans meet the City's stated environmental goals.

The report's observations and conclusions are summarized as follows:

1. The City plan's diagrams do not accurately reflect relative tree sizes or locations suggesting the full environmental impact has not been fully understood. From a tree impact perspective it would be irresponsible to proceed until accurate diagrams are presented. Based on the inaccuracies in the diagrams, the conclusions in the Tree Impact Summary should not be relied upon.
2. The City's assessment of the condition of trees does not meet arboricultural standards. Structural and vitality ratings are significant in determining tree sustainability in proximity to construction activities and together should lead to a quantifiable rating of good, fair, or poor - industry standards from which post-construction sustainability and/or risk can be assessed.
3. The City's plan does not use standards-based terminology as defined by its Urban Forestry department. The "remove," "preserve if possible" and "no impact" classifications in the City's 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. The City of Toronto Tree Protection Guidelines specifies terminology of "destroy," "injure," and "tree protection zone". The use of the non-standard terminology "preserve if possible" allows the City to make a subjective determination of "no impact" where it might not be warranted. 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. The City's plan does not contemplate secondary canopy loss. Toronto Urban Forestry has compiled a list of tree species that are intolerant of construction disturbance.³ More than 9% (23 of 247) of the trees classified as "preserve if possible" and 15% (127 of 848) of those classified as "not impacted" (150 trees in total) would fall into this category.
5. The City's plan contemplates replacing each tree that is removed and increasing the overall tree canopy by over 100 trees (i.e. 206 new trees). However, the arborist report observes that several thousand trees would be needed to replace the canopy of the American Elm on

¹ The City's complete presentation is available at www.toronto.ca/lawrencepark.

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³ City of Toronto "Tree Protection Policy and Specifications for Construction Near Trees" dated March 2016

Buckingham alone, or to replace the canopy of any one of the Red Oaks on St. Aubyn's.

6. There is opportunity to preserve additional canopy through the reduction in the number of sidewalks. Each sidewalk adds 1.5 m to the roadway width. Reducing the introduction of sidewalks on St. Leonards, Dawlish, Glenallan, Pinedale and Strathgowan, and altering the City's plan on Mildenhall from two to one sidewalk with a 7.6 m roadway will significantly increase the area available to protect and preserve trees.
7. Significant additional canopy can be preserved through the effective use of Tree Protection Zones. Developing a comprehensive Tree Protection Plan should be a priority; is a necessary basis to accurately predict tree impact numbers, 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.

The arborist report makes the following 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.
2. Before any construction, the careful installation of tree protection barriers under the supervision of a qualified arborist would minimize construction-related injuries, removals, and secondary canopy loss.
3. From a canopy perspective, it is worthwhile to consider reducing the number of sidewalks to be introduced. 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.
4. 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.

Door-to-Door Survey of Affected Residents: We are in the process of retaining a professional survey firm to undertake a survey of residents on road expansion, road resurfacing, and the addition and location of proposed sidewalks. We encourage everyone to participate to ensure that the results accurately represent the views of Lawrence Park residents.

Thank you to all who have provided monetary support for the cost of the arborist report and the pending door-to-door survey. If you are not already a member of the LPRA, please consider joining.⁴ Contact Rick Hutcheon at rhutcheon@sympatico.ca for more information.

⁴ Membership form is available online at: <http://lpra.ca/membership/>