

9. 226 CLYDE ROAD – TREE REMOVAL REQUEST

General Manager responsible:	General Manager City Environment
Officer responsible:	Greenspace Manager
Author:	Tony Armstrong, DDI 941 8578

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to present an application seeking approval to remove and replace a Douglas fir tree (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) located on the grassed berm outside 226 Clyde Road.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. On 30th September 2005 Council received a letter (file record TR 001-5/02 IN 05/4601) from Rosemary Fergusson requesting the removal of the “large” tree outside her property.
3. The reasons stated in the letter for removal were many, including concern about safety due to high winds, debris filling gutters, obscuring sun, and, roots interfering with the garden. The most concern expressed was that of damage to her property due to branch failure.
4. Mrs Fergusson has previously requested pruning (see RFS record) of the tree and most recently, in September following the snowstorm on the 19th, the tree was pruned to remove and repair broken branches.
5. The tree was viewed by the Community Board on a bus tour on 17th October 2005 and the tree was inspected on 7th February 2006.
6. The tree is a Douglas Fir, approximately 15m in height with a DBH (@ 1.4m) of 0.6m and canopy spread of 8m. A VTA (visual tree assessment) determined that the tree was generally healthy with typical form and a hazard rating of 4 out of 10. However, target rating is high i.e. property (carport) and footpath/road.

Note on assessment are as follows: -

Roots	Grassed berm adjacent to garden and tar sealed footpath with minor cracking evident. No visible root evident in garden
Trunk	Basal flare OK. Slight depression on trunk (east side). Multiple pruning wounds with callus (branches 'lifted' 50%)
Canopy	Evidence of recent branch failure. Foliage normal. Extension growth OK. Minor deadwood. No visible dieback.

7. On the basis of the above assessment there is no arboricultural reason to remove the tree and so the considerations for removal are therefore based on appropriateness of the tree to the site and nuisance factors.
8. The tree is a landscape feature being a large tree situated in the street environment. Its visibility is greater from the south whereas from the north it is slightly obscured by the presence of a silver birch, also on the berm. See photographs, **attached**. However, the birch is deciduous and the size at maturity and expected life of the Douglas Fir are greater, albeit that the planting site (grassed berk) is restricted.
9. The reasons for the removal of the tree given by Mrs Fergusson are essentially ones of nuisance. In my opinion the obscuring of sun and interference with garden are minor given the location of the tree in relation to the property, general environment and the nature of the garden. Debris from this tree would generally be needles and cones. It is not unreasonable to expect that trees drop debris as part of their life cycle and that regular maintenance of tree and property mitigates any nuisance.
10. Therefore, in my opinion, it is branch failure, which is the risk and the major consideration in this case. The evidence is that this tree has had a history of such and that this is likely to be ongoing given the nature of the tree (species) and its potential for greater growth. Mitigation for this is regular monitoring and maintenance, however, this in itself is not a guarantee that in high winds, or snowstorm events as experienced in the City, the risk of injury and/or damage can be eliminated or even minimised. Given the location of the tree the target is high and the tree cannot be effectively isolated.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

11. The cost of any monitoring and maintenance on the tree is covered under the existing citywide arboricultural operations budget.
12. This tree is not protected under the City Plan.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board approve the removal of the Douglas Fir tree located outside number 226 Clyde Road and replace with it appropriate planting in consultation with the resident.

CHAIRMAN'S RECOMMENDATION

That the staff recommendation be adopted.

OPTIONS

13. There are three possible options:

- (a) Do nothing or status quo.

This is not considered a viable option as it would leave the Council highly exposed to a negligence claim in relation to any subsequent damage to persons or property given our awareness of the condition of the trees.

- (b) Increase level of regular maintenance and implement a regular safety monitoring programme.

This option will not address the key issues (of risk, nuisance and species selection) in the long term and has the effect of simply deferring the cost of the ultimate action to some point in the future. The overall maintenance cost would be increased with this option and there is still the risk of potential failure of, or part of, the tree given its size, location and the susceptibility characteristics of this particular species.

- (c) Remove and replace the tree.

This option will address the immediate risk management, nuisance and appropriateness issues. Selection of a more suitable replacement tree for the site will reduce the overall tree maintenance costs and help mitigate for the loss of amenity in the longer term.

PREFERRED OPTION

14. The preferred option is option (c).