



Report to General Manager

Attachments:
Nil

SUBJECT: SP 11620, 30a Lavender Street, Lavender Bay – Fig Tree Removal

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ENDORSED BY: Rob Emerson, Director Open Space and Environmental Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Council has received an application to remove a large *Ficus microcarpa* (*var.hilii*) Hills Fig located in the front yard of Strata Plan 11629 – 30a Lavender Street, Lavender Bay. The tree is poorly located and causing structural damage to surrounding infrastructure with its root system.

The property is within the Lavender Bay conservation area and comments by North Sydney Councils Conservation Planner were obtained and an independent Arborist report was requested with the application. The consultants report recommends the trees removal.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Nil

Comment by Responsible Accounting Officer:

Funding for the project is appropriate.

Local Government Act 1993: Section 23A Guidelines - Council Decision Making During Merger Proposal Period

The Guidelines have been considered in the preparation of this report and are not applicable.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT Council approve the application to remove the Fig tree located in the South-East corner of 30a Lavender Street, Lavender Bay.

LINK TO DELIVERY PROGRAM

The relationship with the Delivery Program is as follows:

Direction: 1. Our Living Environment

Outcome: 5.3 Council is ethical, open, accountable and transparent in its decision making
5.4 Community is informed and aware

BACKGROUND

Council received an application from the owners of Strata Plan 11629 under the Tree and Vegetation Management Policy to remove a *Ficus microcarpa* (var.hilii) located in the South-East corner of 30a Lavender Street, Lavender Bay. The tree is a significant landscape feature for both the property and the streetscape and Council requested an independent report from a level 5 Arborist to assess the application further.

The report by Naturally Trees Arboricultural Consulting dated 5 July 2016 recommends the tree removal and replacement within the next six months.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

Community engagement is not required.

SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT

The sustainability implications are of a minor nature and did not warrant a detailed assessment.

DETAIL

Arboricultural Advice

The *Ficus microcarpa* (var.hilii) Hills Fig tree is located in the South-East corner of 30a Lavender Street, Lavender Bay. It is 27 metres in height with a 30 metre canopy spread that overhangs the front yard of the property and Lavender Street traffic lanes. The tree is a mature specimen and in healthy condition with 90% foliage cover.

The property is a block of units that is located in the Lavender Bay Conservation area. The front yard of the property has nine mature *Washington robusta* (Washington Palms) that were planted approximately 100 years ago and listed on the North Sydney Council Significant Tree Register (dated December 1994). In the Significant Tree Register the Washington Palms are considered to have historical and aesthetic value for the property, streetscape and Lavender Bay.



The Hills Fig tree was planted within the last 40 years in front of the Palm trees and is poorly located in shallow soils for such a large tree species. The Fig Tree is located adjacent to underground services (gas lines) and is causing structural damage with its root system to boundary walls, pathways and the neighbouring driveway.

Council's historical document, the 1994 Significant Tree Register and accompanying report noted in the management recommendations that "the 3 Hills Figs on the Eastern boundary are likely to cause adverse competition with the Washington Palms as they mature" and recommended a programme of removal and replacement of the Figs. Two of the Figs have been removed and one of the large upper branches of the remaining Fig tree is rubbing against the nearest Washington Palms causing damage to the palm trunk.

Heritage Planning Advice

Council's Conservation Planner, Lucinda Varley noted that "although the Fig tree is not a Victorian or Federation era planting, its large canopy contributes positively to the Lavender

Bay Conservation area. It is considered that the value of the tree as an asset to the streetscape is greater than the value of the damage it has currently caused and with possible root pruning and wall reconstruction that the Fig could be managed for another ten years.”

Discussion

The Arborist report notes that without a physical barrier to deter root growth, roots will inevitably grow and cause damage to surrounding structures. Tree roots up to 150mm diameter were observed causing damage and pruning roots of this size within the critical root zone to manage and rebuild structural faults will cause the trees health and stability to decline.

As it is very likely that any remedial works will be damaged by expanding roots and there is no realistic way of managing a tree of this magnitude in its current location, it is recommended that the tree be removed.