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White Pine Tree Assessment

Prepared for:
Mrs. Lois Lane
60 Wehee Ln.
Gotham, NY

Prepared by:
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Summary

After assessing the condition of a large white pine, I have determined that the large, long horizontal limbs present a moderate level of risk to the clients' property. The risk of whole tree failure is small. There are nuisance issues concerning pollen dust, needle drop, and sap dripping. Options to abate the risk are provided within this report.

Introduction

Background

In early August of 2012, I was contacted by Mrs. Mrs. Lois Lane of Gotham, NY, in regards to a boundary tree impacting her mother, Mrs. Fannie Farmer, on her property at 42 Front St, Beantown, MA. There is concern about the risk and nuisance factors this tree presents. I was contracted by Mrs. Lane to provide an assessment of the tree and offer opinions as to what may be done to abate these issues.

Assignment

After discussions with Mrs. Lane, it was agreed that I would:

- Inspect the tree for signs of health and structural integrity.
- Determine the types of risk the tree presents to the property.
- Provide a written report of my findings with recommendations as to what actions may be taken to abate the nuisance and risk factors.

Limitations

As I was not allowed access to the neighboring property, physical measurements of the tree are approximated. A complete visual assessment of the tree was limited due to available lines of sight.

Identifying and managing risks associated with trees is a subjective process. Since the nature of tree failures remains largely unknown, the ability to predict failure remains limited.

Purpose and Use

The purpose of this report is to provide objective information regarding the health and safety of this tree, as well as to provide options to abate any issues. The information is provided to help resolve a dispute with the neighbor regarding this trees impact on the clients' property.

Observations

I visited the site on August 9, 2012. The trunk of the tree is located approximately 12 feet from Mrs. Farmers' house to the east. The neighboring house is a good distance away to the west (see site map, pg. 5).

This large White Pine (*Pinus Strobus*) has a dbh (diameter at breast height) of approximately 24 inches, a height of 50 feet and an average crown spread of about 35 feet (see photos 1&2, pg. 6).

The area around the root zone is undisturbed, and the **root collar**¹ appears sound. The trunk is healthy with few visible signs of defects on the lower portions. The tree is single stemmed, with a healthy **live crown ratio**² of about 80 percent. Branch attachments are good. Limbs have been removed, broken, or pruned back on the lower portion of the tree. The upper limbs are exceptionally long. All of the limbs to the west are growing over the property line. Many are growing directly over the house.

At about 25 feet, the main trunk makes a bend toward the west. I was not able to get a good view of the area. I also noted some sap flow on the trunk and an area of possible stem cankers above the bend on the east side of the tree (photo 3, pg. 7).

The foliage is of good color, size and density.

Discussion

White pine is a handsome native tree. It is one of the fastest growing pines and can reach heights of 50 to 75 feet in 25 to 40 years. In open situations, it can develop long limbs that are susceptible to breakage in storms. The White pine weevil (an insect) and White pine blister rust (a disease) are the two most serious pests. The White pine weevil can distort the tree shape, while White pine blister rust can kill the tree.

While this particular pine benefits both properties by providing shade, screening, aesthetics, and wildlife habitat, the negative aspects to the Farmer property cannot be denied. The tree trunk is located primarily on the neighboring property, but the upper crown overwhelms the Farmer house and parking area. In the spring, large masses of pollen are produced, coating everything with a yellow dust. In the fall, annual needle drop occurs. Sap frequently drips from the above foliage due to twig and branch breakage or insect activity. While the former slights may be construed as an inconvenience, the threat of branch breakage due to the excessively long limbs is a safety and liability issue.

The area where the trunk bends should be investigated further for possible defects. The area of sap flow and possible canker formation on the upper trunk may be signs of White pine blister rust and needs closer examination.

It must be noted that even a healthy, structurally sound tree can fail in an extreme weather event. In this case it is my opinion that breaking limbs are the biggest risk to the property, but the failure of larger portions or even the whole tree cannot be ruled out in extreme weather. High winds from the north-east are a fairly regular event in this area. The house location in proximity to the tree makes it a distinct target in the event of a failure.

Conclusions

Clearly, this tree poses many problems for the Farmer property. My client has made it clear that if it were her tree, it would be removed. Massachusetts law allows removal of parts of the tree growing over the property line, the caveat being that it is done in a manner not harmful to the tree, which is somewhat subjective.

The following recommendations provide options, along with the pros and cons of the treatments suggested.

¹ Root collar - Area where main roots join the plant stem, usually at or near ground level

² Live crown ratio – ratio of the height of the crown containing live foliage to the overall height of the tree

Recommendations

Option 1 – Remove and replant a new tree

Pros:

- Removes all risks and nuisances associated with this tree
- Provides the opportunity to plant a more appropriate tree for the site

Cons:

- All the benefits associated with a large shade tree are gone
- It would take several years before a new tree could begin to offer the same benefits

Option 2 – Remove all large limbs growing over property line back to trunk

Pros:

- All risks and nuisances associated with the limbs are removed

Cons:

- Exposed trunk areas would become susceptible to sun scald
- Amount of wounding would likely give rise to insect and disease problems
- Loss of photosynthetic area would reduce tree vitality
- Structure and wind resistance would be compromised
- Aesthetically displeasing

Option 3 – Perform a crown cleaning³ and reduction pruning⁴

The longest limbs should be reduced by a third or more, depending on the size of cut required and the amount of live growth remaining. Cuts should not be more than 3 inches in diameter, and close to existing lateral branches not less than one third the size of the branch being removed. Pruning should be continued on a 3 to 5 year cycle (see photo #1&2, pg.6).

Pros:

- Many of the risks and nuisances associated with the limbs would be abated

Cons:

- Some of the risks associated with a large tree remain
- Pollen, needle cast, and sap dripping will still be an issue
- Tree will require regular cyclic maintenance

Any pruning treatments on this tree should be done by a qualified arborist accredited by the Massachusetts Arborist Association, Tree Care Industry Association or International Society of Arboriculture. It may be advisable to have an arborist on site to represent the interests of the client if any pruning is to take place.

³ Crown cleaning – removal dead, dying, diseased, and/or broken branches from the crown

⁴ Reduction pruning – method of reducing the height and/or the spread of a tree by making appropriate pruning cuts

Site Map



The subject house is indicated by the 'A' symbol. The white pine to the right of the house has a major influence on the house and property.

Photos

Photos 1&2



Views from the south and east. The large white pine overwhelms the small house. Many large excessively long limbs overhang the house and property. The dotted white lines indicate the suggested outline of the crown after a reduction pruning.

Photo 3



The white areas on the trunk (arrow) indicate sap flow, either from wounds or stem cankers, a possible sign of White pine blister rust

Assumptions and Limiting Conditions

- 1** Any legal description provided to the consultant / appraiser is assumed to be correct. Any titles and ownership to any property are assumed to be good and marketable. No responsibility is assumed for matters of legal character. Any and all property is appraised or evaluated as though free and clear, under responsible ownership and competent management.
- 2** It is assumed that any property is not in violation of any applicable codes, ordinances, statutes, or other government regulations.
- 3** Care has been taken to obtain all information from reliable sources. All data has been verified insofar as possible; however, the consultant / appraiser can neither guarantee nor be responsible for accuracy of information provided by others.
- 4** The consultant / appraiser shall not be required to give testimony or attend court by reason of this report unless subsequent contractual arrangements are made, including payment of an additional fee for such services as described in the fee schedule and contract of engagement.
- 5** Loss or alteration of any part of this report invalidates the entire report.
- 6** Possession of this report or a copy thereof does not imply right of publication or use for any purpose by any other than the person to whom it is addressed, without the prior written or verbal consent of the consultant / appraiser.
- 7** Neither all nor any part of the contents of this report, nor copy thereof, shall be conveyed by anyone, including the client, to the public through advertising, public relations, news, sales or other media, without the prior expressed written or verbal consent of the consultant / appraiser-- particularly as to value conclusions, identity of the consultant / appraiser, or any reference to any professional society or institute or to any initialed designation conferred upon the consultant / appraiser as stated in his qualification.

Certificate of Performance

I, Howard Gaffin, certify that:

I have personally inspected the tree(s) on the property referred to in this report and have stated my findings accurately. The extent of the evaluation and/or appraisal is in the attached report.

I have no current or prospective interest in the vegetation or the property that is the subject of this report and have no bias with respect to the parties involved.

The analysis, opinions, and conclusions stated herein are my own and are based on current scientific procedures and facts.

My compensation is not contingent upon the reporting of a predetermined conclusion that favors the cause of the client or any other party, nor upon the results of the assessment, the attainment of stipulated results, or the occurrence of any subsequent events.

My analysis, opinions, and conclusions were developed and this report has been prepared according to commonly accepted arboricultural practices.

No one provided significant professional assistance to the consultant, except as indicated within the report.

I further certify that I hold the following credentials:

- Registered Consulting Arborist #458
- Board Certified Master Arborist #NE-0363B
- Massachusetts Arborist Association Certified Arborist#1468

I have been involved with the practice of arboriculture for over 30 years.

Signed



Date 8/13/2012