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For Immediate Release

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Make room for Sweetgums on Roosevelt Island

Replacement trees coming soon to the lawn near Rivercross

ROOSEVELT ISLAND – (September 28, 2018) - American sweetgums are among the favorites to replace two dying Norway Maple trees that were removed Thursday from the lawn south of the Rivercross co-op at 531 Main Street.



The low-maintenance, deciduous shade tree's scientific name is *Liquidambar styraciflua*. It often exudes an aromatic balsam/gum that some describe as liquid amber; thus, its common name of sweetgum. The medium-sized to large tree typically grows anywhere from 50–70 feet tall with trunks measuring two-to-three feet in diameter. The trees, which have a brilliant Fall leaf mixture of yellows, oranges, purples and reds, can live to 400 years.

Red oaks are also being considered as replacements. It is believed both species would grow well in this lawn area. The schedule and exact location for the replacement planning has yet to be finalized.

(Do you have some suggestions on what type of trees should be planted on the lawn as replacements? Email your thoughts to the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation c/o Alonza Robertson, alonza.robertson@rioc.ny.gov.)

An ISA-certified arborist did a recent health survey of Roosevelt Island trees at Southpoint Park, Capobianco Field and the lawn near Rivercross. The Mount Vernon-based tree expert was tasked, by the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation, with identifying dead or declining trees that posed safety hazards.

Two Norway maples, both longtime fixtures at the Rivercross lawn area, were found to be in serious declining health with more than 60 percent of the limbs in the trees' crowns dead, presenting a major safety hazard to anyone located in the spaces under the trees. Norway maples have a reputation for falling branches and limbs as the tree weakens.

In addition to the dead limbs and subsequent safety hazard, the arborist also found that the trees showed:

- Evidence of stress
- Insect (bores) activity
- Large amounts of deadwood
- Stress cracks along the base of tree

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- Weak structure

There is no spray or alternative treatment that would have reversed the condition as their root systems – which tend to grow close to the ground surface – also were girdling or strangling the trees with its own roots.

“We have next weekend’s Fall for Arts Festival taking place on the lawn where the two dead trees were located and we wanted to make sure the hazardous trees were removed prior to the event for safety reasons. The other trees in the area have received pruning as well to remove any other dead branches,” said Susan Rosenthal, RIOC’s president and CEO.

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