

Key Lessons

- The Tree Project has had significant success in negotiating directly with larger landlords and property owners. Members have worked with social housing organizations, co-operatives and faith buildings to propose both front and back yard shade trees for these properties. Members conducted virtual (Google) site visits or actual site visits to determine their suitability for new trees. This successful strategy is recommended for groups with limited resources and without conducting a community development initiative. A small number of volunteers can complete this project in several weeks without external funding or resources.
- Identifying the appropriate contact person at Urban Forestry took concerted effort, and was not easy for Urban Forestry, either. Planting and removing trees in parks, in front yards, or planting over 10 trees at once, as well as the addressing of complex situations are all handled through different compartments within the Urban Forestry department. Engaging with the local city councillor was essential to navigating this process. The Tree Project website includes a link to the Urban Forestry organizational structure and an interpretation of jurisdiction so other groups may encounter fewer obstacles.
- Having a contact person at Urban Forestry actually engage with the Project was another significant obstacle. Again, the involvement of the local councillor was important in overcoming this challenge. With the success of the Tree Project's first year, the relationship has shifted – our local Supervisor indicates he is now the envy of his colleagues since the Tree Project has helped him find so many locations to plant. This shift is also reflected in the Supervisor's participation in training Year 2 Tree Project volunteers after declining repeated requests in Year 1.
- The Tree Project recommends that Urban Forestry or a similar project should communicate proactively through 3 emails sent to applicants who provide an email and would include the key messages:
 - 1) "We have received your request and an inspector will come by your property in this approximate time frame...", covering common questions such as whether a consultation is available, whether the homeowner has to be present, and the approximate timelines
 - 2) "We visited your property and it has been approved (or not approved) for a tree..." and "Expect your tree to arrive in this approximate timeframe – you do not have to be present, and we will plant the tree for you." If the site is not approved, indicate the key reason and a number to contact to clarify. The most common reason for a site to be rejected was the presence of existing landscaping. The Tree Project had to reconfirm with the homeowners, who were generally willing to have their landscaping disturbed for a new tree. In the absence of the Tree Project as intermediary, such sites are simply rejected without the homeowner ever knowing.
 - 3) Care instructions – to be sent once the tree has been planted.
- The coroplast lawn signs placed at each site with a new tree were a successful norming strategy and highlight community "experts" (those who have successfully accessed a tree). The 2011 evaluation indicated clearly that the signs encourage neighbours to do lateral work and build community connections. Forty-two percent of survey respondents indicated they had helped at least one other person acquire a tree. The second year of the project has revealed that individuals who contact the Project after seeing a lawn sign are highly motivated, require very limited support from the Project, and have an almost 100% application completion rate
- Approach residents who have recently moved into single-family homes. In spring 2010, volunteer canvassers noted houses with "for sale" or "sold" signs along their routes. These houses were re-approached in the fall with a high success rate. The new homeowners were highly motivated, required only a single visit and responded to literature left at their door at substantially higher rates than the average homeowner during the regular canvas.