

# Neighbourhood Tree Blitz Executive Summary



The Neighbourhood Tree Blitz targeted four low-treed neighbourhoods in London to harness the power of volunteers having one-on-one conversations with their neighbours and planting trees in residential yards.

## Primary Objectives

- I. Plant/distribute 360, 3-5 gallon native trees in privately owned yards in under treed areas of the city.
- II. Recruit 100 volunteers to create positive tree change within their neighbourhoods and in their own backyards.
- III. Educate homeowners about ReForest London and about the benefits of trees.
- IV. Pilot the tree Blitz concept to determine its scalability for future use.



The Neighbourhood Tree Blitz turned out to be a hugely engaging volunteer activity. Perhaps it was the slogging through the rain together or the positive reaction of homeowners; whatever the reason 100% of volunteers surveyed said they would do it again.

## Secondary Objectives

- i. Plant/distribute 90 trees in each of the four selected neighbourhoods.
- ii. Strengthen community partnerships.
- iii. Register at least 360 trees in the Million Tree Challenge.
- iv. Achieve 80 trained volunteers to implement the project as ReForest London wagon ambassadors in the future.
- v. Inform 1600 homes about the Blitz and ReForest London.

## The Project

The Neighbourhood Tree Blitz idea was based on our experience with the Green Wagon Program in which trained volunteers went door to door offering to plant a free tree for the homeowner. We had a 25% uptake with the Green Wagon Program so we estimated we would need to offer the program to at least 1600 homeowners. Four under-treed neighbourhoods were identified for the pilot project and four days selected, the last two weekends in June 2015, to implement the Blitz. Within each neighbourhood a central site was booked to serve as the headquarters for each of the days. Two weeks before implementation, 400 homes surrounding each site received advance notices outlining the project and how they could get their free tree. Residents had the option of having a volunteer plant their tree, or coming to a neighbourhood headquarters to choose their tree and plant it themselves.

All residents who got a tree received detailed information about the tree species as well as information on how to care for their tree.

Activities involved in implementing this pilot project included:

- Volunteer Recruitment
- Volunteer Training
- Volunteer Management
- Blitz logistics
- Materials Management
- Tree Management
- Neighbourhood Notice Distribution
- Homeowner Outreach
- Advertising and Events
- Data Collection & Forms
- Post Blitz surveys
- Volunteer Follow-up
- Homeowner Follow-up

Intensive volunteer engagement strategies resulted in 122 volunteers trained about trees and how to plant them. Each volunteer team member needed to be able to adequately communicate the value of trees as well as their own personal tree story. The volunteer's enthusiasm for their role led them to

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surpass all tree planting estimates by 13%, planting/distributing a total of 409 trees. A survey of tree recipients showed that 50% of those who had a tree planted for them liked the idea so much they themselves would volunteer for a future Blitz and we also saw a spike in Facebook. We have concluded that these face to face conversations accented with the immediate action of a tree planting makes the difference in influencing homeowners to agree to have a tree planted in their yards.

## Summary of Significant Outputs

<b>Trees</b>	
Trees planted in Carling Heights, June 20	104
Trees planted in Argyle, June 21	90
Trees planted in SOHO, June 27	92
Trees planted in Old East, June 28	123
<b>Total Trees planted/distributed</b>	<b>409</b>
Neighbourhoods impacted	4
Volunteers trained	122
Volunteers participating	80
<b>Influence/Engagement</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 80 volunteers formed the teams at the four Blitz days</li> <li>• 2 mulch volunteers at the Blitz from RA Walker Construction</li> <li>• 1600 advance notices distributed to homeowners</li> <li>• 50 miscellaneous more people helped (ie graphic designer volunteer, volunteer with his truck and trailer, people from outside the Blitz area that came, community contacts etc.)</li> </ul>	

## Funding

Our budget for the project came from grants as well as our in-kind contributions. Our initial budget of \$12,040 came from the Richard and Beryl Ivey Fund and the City of London's TreeMe program. \$11,950.00 of the budget was to come from in-kind for a total of \$23,990.00. At the conclusion of the Blitz we found that the projects value had increased to \$31,010 with 49.01%, or \$17,570 of the budget coming from in-kind contributions including volunteer time and equipment. The in-kind donations were essential elements in reaching success, streamlining our processes and providing the man power needed to get trees planted.

## Going Forward

The overwhelming success of our first Neighbourhood Tree Blitz encourages repeating and scaling up. Our learnings include reducing paperwork carried by the Blitz teams, having a rain date, having more days to Blitz and a pre-order option for homeowners to select their tree. Since we have piloted the project we can see that it would be very possible to multiply the number of trees that take root each day (about 100) by an increase in days to Blitz.

In conclusion the first ever Neighbourhood Tree Blitz was a great success, finding homes for 409 large native trees in four of London's lowest treed neighbourhoods leveraging the investment of funders and volunteers into a better future for all Londoners.



Homeowners were thrilled to receive a new tree for their yard. It will be exciting to see these trees take root and canopy the neighbourhood.