

Junction Adopt-a-Street-Tree  
Special Projects Report to  
**TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS**  
**Special Projects 2017-18**  
March 1, 2018

**Name of Project:** Junction Adopt-a-Street-Tree Project (originally called Junction Trees Project)  
**Name of applicant (TFN member):** Rita Bijons /Co-Chair, Green 13

### Introduction

Toronto's urban forest provides a multitude of benefits to both city residents, and the broader environment we live in. These benefits include storm water runoff reduction, friendlier spaces for community-building and recreation, wildlife habitat provision, improved air quality, moderated microclimates, and many others. In recognition of these benefits, the City of Toronto has established the goal of increasing canopy cover to 40%, and aims to achieve equitable distribution of the urban forest, targeting canopy cover increases where they are needed the most. This involves not just planting new trees, but also ensuring that existing trees thrive after they are planted. Such post-planting care is particularly important for street trees, since they grow in the most difficult conditions (pollution, compacted soil, physical damage, etc.).

The Junction is a neighbourhood in Toronto with a relatively low canopy cover percentage, at around 6.7%. Green 13 worked in partnership with the City of Toronto, LEAF, and the Junction Business Improvement Association (BIA) to create an Adopt-a-Street-Tree (AASST) project along Dundas Street West, between Quebec Avenue and Indian Grove. The project aims to improve the health and survival of street trees in that area, by engaging volunteer business owners, residents, and other community members in regular watering and care. It was launched to the public in June 2017, and has already achieved progress in several ways:

- ✓ increasing public interest in street trees within the Junction
- ✓ augmenting nature protection within the City of Toronto
- ✓ disseminating knowledge of proper tree care and urban forest issues among tree adopters and the general public



*Without regular watering and other forms of stewardship, street trees are much more vulnerable to the significant stresses they face. After adoption, trees like this one will have a much better chance to survive and thrive.*

© 2017 Kimberly Dowell/LEAF

With support from TFN, and from the Junction Residents' Association, Green 13 and LEAF were able to recruit two summer students. Kimberly Dowell, a Masters of Forest Conservation student, supported the project for the months of June and July. Aidan Curran, a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture student, supported the project for the months of July and August. Together, they helped implement all aspects of the Junction AASST project outlined in the following report.

## Project Description

Green 13 proposed to collaborate with LEAF and with the City of Toronto through the Adopt-a-Street-Tree Program. Below is a summary of the Junction Adopt-a-Street-Tree project, and how we achieved our proposed goals:

**1. TFN Goal: Stimulate public interest in nature**

*We proposed to heighten public awareness of the state of our area's tree canopy, and our capacity as a community to improve it.*

**Stakeholder engagement:** The project started with a stakeholder meeting, to identify who was already interested in the local community, and what their ideas and priorities were. Meetings between Green 13, the Junction BIA, and LEAF were held at the project outset, to establish roles and responsibilities.

**Volunteer and adopter engagement:** Further community interest was generated through volunteer recruitment (done through outreach by Green 13 and LEAF), canvassing to local businesses (done by volunteers, with significant assistance from the Junction BIA), and engagement of residents (speaking at the Junction Residents' Association's meetings, tabling at the Junction's annual Summer Solstice Festival). At the end of the season, a public information session was also held (with about 20 attendees), to communicate the importance of the AAST program to the general public, including people not living in the Junction.

Currently ( March 1, 2018), the Junction AAST project has 103 tree adopters, made up of 86 businesses and 17 residents.

**Public awareness:** At the outset of the Junction AAST project, a webpage was created on LEAF's website, to provide a home for project information and public engagement. A [map](#) of all the trees within the project was also created, as a tool for adopters and interested individuals to find out about available and/or adopted trees. Media coverage throughout the season heightened public awareness of the stresses the Junction's tree canopy faces, and the powerful role that the community can play in mitigating those stresses. Media outlets included the [Green 13 newsletter](#) (four articles) and website, the [LEAF blog](#) (one post), [Inside Toronto](#) (one article), and news from Councillor Sarah Doucette (seven bulletins). Content focused on general awareness on tree care and the AAST concept, calls for volunteers, notice of the launch event, and project updates.



*Outreach materials from the AAST information session © 2017 Erica Hazlett/LEAF*

**2. TFN Goal: Encourage protection of nature in Toronto**

*We proposed to encourage the care of local trees through training and engagement of volunteers.*

**Tree adoption:** There are currently 136 trees included in the Junction AAST project, of which 118 (87%) have been adopted by business owners, employees, residents, and other community members. Trees that have not been adopted by individuals are cared for collectively by volunteers. Tree care includes regular watering (30 litres, twice a week, in the absence of steady rain), annual mulching, removal of litter and sidewalk salt from tree bed and monitoring of tree trunks to make sure nothing is tied to them.



*Councillor Sarah Doucette watering a Junction street tree (left) © 2016 Janet McKay/LEAF  
A view of trees included in the Junction's AAST project (right) © 2017 Aidan Curran/LEAF*

**3. TFN Goal: Disseminate knowledge of natural history**  
***We proposed signage and articles to identify local Junction street trees and healthy tree care practices.***

**Volunteer training:** After the initial recruitment of volunteers, volunteer training was provided through both a local training session and, in some cases, with a comprehensive Tree Tenders course that LEAF offers. Training included tree identification and health, common tree stresses (such as drought and soil compaction), and proper tree care techniques (such as watering and mulching). By engaging business owners and residents, volunteers also gained community engagement skills that are very important for the continued distribution of natural history knowledge.

**Tree health assessments:** Volunteers applied their training to two tree health assessments: one that examined tree health on a four-point scale (good, fair, poor, and dead), and a more detailed, Neighbourhoods inventory. Information from both inventories will be used in future years, to measure the extent to which tree adoption improves the health of street trees. The Neighbourhoods inventory protocol was developed by Dr. Andy Kenney and Dr. Danijela Puric-Mladenovic of the University of Toronto. Members of Green 13 participated in a training workshop conducted by Andy and Danijela in spring 2017. Information on the protocol can be found here <http://neighbourhoods.org/index.html>.

**Public education and outreach events:** Apart from the many adopters, who have gained significant knowledge and experience in urban forestry and arboriculture through their tree care duties, non-adopters were also engaged and involved with the project. For example, at the Summer Solstice Festival, a tree tour was held to educate participants about the street trees in their neighbourhood, their interesting properties, and the stresses they face. The public AAST information session at the end of the season also provided an opportunity for people to learn about proper tree care, and its importance for street tree health.

Of special note, the heightened awareness and attention to our street trees engendered by the Junction Adopt-a-Street-Tree project gave rise to a very special community event. Concerned citizens, in collaboration with the Junction BIA and wonderful arborists, came out October 21 to provide greatly needed TLC to a landmark community tree. More information is available [here](#).

**Educational materials:** Decals displaying tree care information were provided freely to adopters as part of the program, and were often placed on business windows, making that tree care information publicly available. Each tree in the project was also given a tree tag, identifying its species and (if applicable) the

name of its adopter. This provided another opportunity for passers-by to gain knowledge about tree identification, and about the program itself. Finally, the community-building that occurs through the AAST projects (mentioned by many adopters in adoption surveys that were sent out this year) is another mechanism by which people who are not current project participants may still learn more about trees and proper tree care.



One of the project's tree tags (left) and window decals (right) © 2017 Janet McKay/LEAF

### Measurable Outcomes

A student in the Master of Forest Conservation program at the University of Toronto was recruited to coordinate the Neighbourhoods inventory of trees in the Junction AAST project. Data from the Neighbourhoods inventory were compared with the City of Toronto's 2015 inventory data, to identify tree losses in the Junction between 2015 and 2017. Twenty-six trees (i.e. 19%) had been replaced between the 2015 and 2017 inventories, but the latter inventory identified a further eleven trees in need of replacement (i.e. 27% in all). The Neighbourhoods inventory therefore contributed to an expedited process, in which those eleven additional trees were also replaced (making a total of 37 necessary tree replacements carried out between 2015 and 2017). The updated data from the AAST inventories will be used as baseline data to track tree health and adoption success over time.

### Budget

Item	Details	Estimated Cost	Actual Cost
Students wages	Part time - May to August	\$2,100.00	\$2,215.00
Posters and flyers	Printing costs	\$150.00	\$150.00
Volunteer T-Shirts	\$20 ea. x 14 = \$280 + tax (\$36.40)	\$316.40	\$316.40
Watering cans	\$10 ea. x 10= \$100 + tax (\$13)	\$85	\$0.00
Utility Cart	\$150 + tax (\$19.50)	\$169.50	\$169.50
Rain barrel		\$150.00	\$150.00
Cart Wheel Replacement	\$30 + tax (\$4.50)		\$34.50
		\$2,998.90	\$3,000.90

## Conclusion

The Junction AAST has shown a promising start in its first year, with a large proportion of adopted trees and many adopters. Through regular stewardship (such as watering, mulching, and removing litter from tree beds), adopted street trees will be much better protected, exemplifying how green infrastructure can be strengthened within the city of Toronto. Moreover, the Junction community's knowledge of trees and tree care is already growing, through regular adoption tasks, publicly-posted information (such as news articles, decals, and tree tags), and community interactions.

Our plan is to continue the project, with continuing support from LEAF in 2018, and with funds raised through the Junction Residents' Association. Future years of the Junction's AAST program will demonstrate what links there are between tree adoption and health, and will further nurture community stewardship in the urban forest.

It is our hope that the success of this project in the catchment area of the Junction BIA will serve as an inspiration for collaboration between other community groups and BIAs, indeed, inspiring similar adoption and care in other boulevard and park locations.



*An adopted Junction tree © 2017 Aidan Curran/LEAF*