

Information Item

Community Development Committee



Meeting Date: November 4, 2024

Topic

Community Tree Planting Grant Program

District(s), Member(s):	All
Policy/Legal Reference:	Minn. Stat. § 473.355
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Gillian Greenberg, Senior Climate Planner, 651-602-1726
Division/Department:	Community Development / Regional Planning

Background

In the 2024 legislative session, the Minnesota Legislature directed the Council to establish a community tree planting grant program. This direction included language on the purpose of and priorities for the program as well as an appropriation of \$2.5 million for the Council to be used by June 2026. The purpose of this information item is to update the Council on program development and discuss priorities and long-term planning.

Purpose and Priority

The purpose of this program is to support the maintenance and expansion of the tree canopy in the region. The statute language specifically outlines three purposes:

- Removing and planting shade trees on public land to provide environmental benefits
- Replacing trees lost to forest pests, disease, or storms
- Establishing a more diverse community forest better able to withstand disease and forest pests

The statute language also outlined two priorities for the grant program:

- Projects removing and replacing ash trees that pose significant public safety concerns
- Projects located in census block groups with a supplemental demographic index score in the 70th percentile or higher within the state

The Council also has the option of adding priorities to better target the funding. These priorities could include:

- Projects located in areas with less tree canopy
- Projects located in areas with higher land surface temperatures
- Other priorities that advance the Council's goals

Program Development

The program received funding for a single grant cycle through state appropriations. The Council can choose to make the program recurring if it determines it is a priority for the Council to fund in future years. Some aspects of program development for the 2024-2025 cycle will be influenced by whether this is a one-time grant or an ongoing program.

At the Committee meeting, Council staff will be seeking direction from the Committee on priorities and future program cycles to inform the program development. Council staff will return at a future meeting to discuss a draft Notice of Funding Availability for the program, based on the feedback provided by the Committee.

