

# Business Item

Community Development Committee



**Committee Meeting Date:** February 3, 2025

**For the Metropolitan Council:** February 12, 2025

## Business Item: 2025-45

Approve Community Tree Planting Grant Program Notice of Funding Availability

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

### Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council authorize the attached Notice of Funding Availability for the Community Tree Planting Grant Program.

### 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. This grant program was brought to the Community Development Committee's November 4, 2024, and January 6, 2025, Committee meetings for discussions on program design and priorities. Staff took that feedback from those meetings as well as feedback from a focus group with local government staff to develop the Notice of Funding Availability.

### Program Purpose

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

### Program Priorities

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 70<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher within the state

### Response to Feedback

Discussions at past Committee meetings and a focus group with local government staff have provided important feedback in the development of the grant program. The Notice of Funding Availability reflects an added priority of addressing urban heat island effects, interest in focusing on

residential areas, and an emphasis on maintaining trees planted with the funding.

### **Rationale**

Approval of the Notice of Funding Availability will allow the Council to create and distribute funds through a Community Tree Planting Grant program as directed by state statute.

### **Thrive Lens Analysis**

The Community Tree Planting Grant Program supports all Thrive outcomes: stewardship, prosperity, equity, livability, and sustainability. A healthy and tree canopy is integral to healthy, resilient and restored natural systems. The prioritization on overburdened communities ensures that funding is spent equitably and support all residents in the region in accessing a high quality of life.

### **Funding**

In the 2024 legislative session, the State established the new program and appropriated \$2.5 million to the grant program. These funds are part of the Council's budget.

### **Small Business Inclusion**

There are no direct impacts to small businesses with the proposed action.

