

# COMMUNITY TREE PLANTING GRANT PROGRAM

DRAFT 2025 Notice of Funding Availability



METROPOLITAN  
COUNCIL

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The Metropolitan Council is the regional planning organization for the seven-county Twin Cities area. The Council operates the regional bus and rail system, collects and treats wastewater, coordinates regional water resources, plans and helps fund regional parks, and administers federal funds that provide housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income individuals and families. The 17-member Council board is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the governor.

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# 2025 Notice of Funding Availability

This 2025 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) describes the Metropolitan Council's intentions for the Community Tree Planting Grant Program in 2025. Specifically, this notice:

- Establishes the amount and type of funding available for the 2025 award year and the limits that apply to individual awards.
- Sets the schedule for application submittal, review, and award.
- Describes the criteria the Metropolitan Council will use in project selection.
- Defines who is eligible to apply.

## Background and Purpose

In the 2024 session, the Minnesota Legislature enabled a new Metropolitan Council program in [Minnesota Statute 473.355](#) for community tree planting grants. The Legislature also appropriated \$2.5 million for these grants to be spent by June 30, 2026.

The purpose of this program is to support the maintenance and expansion of the tree canopy in the region. More specifically, the program supports:

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

The statute also set the following priorities for the program:

1. Projects removing and replacing ash trees that pose significant public safety concerns.
2. Projects located in a census block group with a supplemental demographic index score in the 70th percentile or higher within the state of Minnesota.

## Eligible Applicants

Applicants must be a city, county, township, or regional park implementing agency (Minn. Stat. 473.351, subd. 1(a)) within the 7-county metropolitan area (Minn. Stat. 473.121, subd. 2). Individuals, private, and nonprofit organizations are not eligible but may be included as project partners with an eligible applicant.

## Available Funds and Award Limits for 2025

The Council will be distributing \$2.5 million in this funding round.

- The Council reserves the right to award less than the available funding.
- The Council reserves the right to award less than the amount requested and will negotiate any revisions in project scope prior to finalizing a grant agreement.
- The Council will only consider funding proposals that meet all the required eligibility criteria and receive at least 50 of the 100 potential points.
- No individual grant shall be less than \$10,000 or more than \$500,000.
- Grant funds are distributed on a reimbursement basis.
- No matching funds are required.

## Eligible Uses of Funds

Consistent with the authorizing statutes and the Council's goals in *Imagine 2050*, grant proposals must meet the criteria below to be considered for funding:

- Address one or more of the tree canopy purposes outlined above.
- Be located on publicly owned land, prioritizing land outside of the regional parks and trails system.

Eligible project expenses are those incurred through project activities that are directly related and necessary to produce the outcomes described in the project application. Grant funds can be used for, but will not be limited to:

- Professional contracts for technical assistance or project implementation by individuals or organizations not a part of the local government unit
- Staff time for grantee staff qualified for tree removal and planting work
- Site preparation and planting materials including mulch, watering bags, staking materials, and tree wrap or guards
- Equipment purchases less than \$5,000 that are used to complete the project
- Purchasing of trees for climate-adapted, diverse tree canopies and up to a year of maintenance costs
  - Trees on the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources [Climate Adapted Urban Trees](#) are automatically eligible. Any tree species selected for planting that is not on this list must be accompanied by an explanation of its climate-adapted qualities.

## Ineligible Uses of Funds

Ineligible project expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Costs incurred prior to the start of the project activity period
- Purchase of trees listed on the [Minnesota Noxious Weed List](#), or the [DNR's Invasive Terrestrial Plants](#) list
- Purchase of balled and burlapped trees, containerized trees larger than #20, and bareroot trees greater than 2" caliper diameter
- Purchase of tree species that already make up 10% or more of the community's public trees, or whose family makes up 20% or more of the community's public trees
- Purchase of chemicals for insecticide treatment
- Gravel bed construction
- Purchasing of plants such as shrubs, living ground covers, sod, grass seed, and flowers
- Purchasing of land or easements
- Major soil and grade changes or construction
- Capital expenditures (items with a unit cost of \$5,000 or more), such as motor vehicles, buildings, or other permanent structures

## Review Process

Council staff will review all proposals to ensure completeness of the application and eligibility of the proposed activities. Council staff are available to answer applicant questions throughout the application process.

## Minimum Requirements

Applicants must meet the minimum requirements to be considered for this grant opportunity. Minimum requirements are:

- Showing the ability to implement the project, meet all grant objectives, and submit a final report by 90 days after the funds expire.
- Planting requirements:
  - Planting trees can take place without tree removal.
  - Tree removals conducted on streets and in manicured parks must meet a minimum of one tree planted for each tree removed.
  - Removals conducted in park woodlands must incorporate replanting at a meaningful rate.
    - Removals need to be considered a necessary component of replanting.
    - Removals in woodlands need to be mitigating a public safety concern or to address degraded ecosystems.
    - Removals must meet a minimum of one tree planted for five trees removed.
- Providing photo documentation of the project's progress at appropriate phases, and illustrations, diagrams, charts, graphs, and/or maps to show results. Documentation of all trees removed and planted must be mapped and submitted to the Council.
- Complying with all Federal and State laws and regulations related to the completion of projects as stated in the grant agreement.

## Evaluation Criteria

Complete proposals will be reviewed, scored, and ranked by a review team according to the scoring rubric that follows in Table 1. Projects that meet both of the priorities listed on page 3 will be scored first. Projects that meet one of the two priorities will be scored second. Projects that meet neither of the two priorities will be scored third.

A complete proposal includes:

- Application Form
- Budget Form
- Project Timeline
- 3-year Maintenance Plan for newly planted trees
- Species and Stock List from which trees will be planted
- Map of project site(s)

Table 1. Scoring Criteria

Evaluation Criteria	Potential Points
<p>Project Overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application clearly describes project</li> <li>• Application and timeline demonstrate readiness to take on the project of the proposed scope and size</li> <li>• Project focuses on the purposes specified for the program</li> </ul>	20
<p>Project serves vulnerable residents*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application clearly lists the prioritized census block groups with vulnerable residents served by the project</li> <li>• Planning and collaboration clearly serves and includes prioritized areas</li> <li>• Application demonstrates clear and tangible impacts for prioritized areas</li> </ul>	20
<p>Project serves areas that experience urban heat island**</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application clearly lists the prioritized census block groups experiencing extreme heat served by the project</li> <li>• Planning and collaboration clearly serves and includes prioritized areas</li> <li>• Application demonstrates clear and tangible impacts for prioritized areas</li> </ul>	20
<p>Tree Canopy Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application describes if and how the project will address ash trees posing public safety concerns</li> <li>• Application describes how the project will improve tree canopy health and resilience, and/or improve tree species diversity</li> <li>• Application prioritizes tree canopy on public lands outside of the regional park and trail system</li> </ul>	20
<p>Communications and Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application outlines communication strategies that directly relate to project accomplishments, activities, or both, and multiple forms of communication are listed with potential to reach the public</li> <li>• Application outlines any intended collaboration or partnership with community organizations, neighborhood organizations or other partners</li> </ul>	20

\*defined in statute as serving census block groups with a supplemental demographic index score in the 70th percentile or higher in the state of Minnesota

\*\*defined as census block groups in the 70<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher for land surface temperature in the region

## Funding Schedule

Date	Milestone
February 2025	NOFA brought through Council processes for approval
Late Winter 2025	Application opens
Spring 2025	Application window closes
Spring 2025	Review Team evaluates applications
Late Spring 2025	Grant Agreements are sent out

A formal funding schedule will be included in the final Notice of Funding Availability.

## Grant Terms

Grants funds must be spent by June 30, 2026. All costs eligible for reimbursement must be incurred during the grant term, as amended, and all costs must be submitted within 90 days after the end of the grant term. Unspent grant funds will revert to the Council.

## Program Evaluation

The Council will review the overall impact of funded projects and the efficacy of the Council's program application process with a focus on continual improvements.



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