

Information Item

Community Development Committee



Meeting Date: January 6, 2025

Topic

Community Tree Planting Grant Program Draft Notice of Funding Availability

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. This grant program was brought to the Community Development Committee's November 4, 2024, Committee meeting for a discussion on priorities and long-term planning for the program. Staff took that feedback to draft a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA). The purpose of this information item is to present the draft NOFA for the Committee's review and feedback.

Purpose of the Program

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

Prioritizing Funding

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

Projects that address both priorities will be evaluated first, and projects that address at least one of these priorities will be evaluated second. Projects that address neither priority will be evaluated third.

The statute language also left open the possibility of including additional priorities. Based on the discussion at the November 4 meeting, the draft NOFA includes evaluation criteria that prioritize projects that address areas experiencing urban heat island effects. Adding this criteria allows the program to explicitly incorporate the Council's focus on increasing the climate resilience of the region.

Next Steps

At the Committee meeting, Council staff will be seeking feedback from the Committee on the draft NOFA. Council staff have also planned a focus group of local government staff who will provide feedback on the program in January. Council staff will return to a February meeting with a final draft for approval.

