

Committee Report

Community Development Committee



Committee Meeting Date: February 3, 2025

For the Metropolitan Council: February 12, 2025

Business Item: 2025-045

Approve Community Tree Planting Grant Program Notice of Funding Availability

Proposed Action

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

Summary of Community Development Committee Discussion/Questions

Senior Climate Planner Gillian Greenberg presented the Notice of Funding Availability for the new Community Tree Planting Grant program on February 3, 2025. The Committee unanimously approved the item, expressing support for the program and an interest in learning about the size and types of projects funded as the program progresses.

Motion by Council Member Carter, seconded by Council Member Vento. Motion carried.



Business Item

Community Development Committee



Committee Meeting Date: February 3, 2025

For the Metropolitan Council: February 12, 2025

Business Item: 2025-045

Approve Community Tree Planting Grant Program 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

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 70th 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.



COMMUNITY TREE PLANTING GRANT PROGRAM

2025 Notice of Funding Availability



METROPOLITAN
COUNCIL

The Council's mission is to foster efficient and economic growth for a prosperous metropolitan region

Metropolitan Council Members

Charlie Zelle	Chair	Diego Morales	District 9
Judy Johnson	District 1	Peter Lindstrom	District 10
Reva Chamblis	District 2	Gail Cederberg	District 11
Tyronne Carter	District 3	Susan Vento	District 12
Deb Barber	District 4	Chai Lee	District 13
John Pacheco Jr.	District 5	Toni Carter	District 14
Robert Lilligren	District 6	Tenzin Dolkar	District 15
Yassin Osman	District 7	Wendy Wulff	District 16
Anjuli Cameron	District 8		



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.

On request, this publication will be made available in alternative formats to people with disabilities. Call metropolitan council information at 651-602-1140 or tty 651-291-0904.

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.

Program Purposes	Program Priorities
<p><i>All applications must address these purposes. The degree of alignment with or focus on these purposes can increase the application’s score.</i></p>	<p><i>Addressing priorities increases an application’s likelihood of being funded, impacting review order and scoring.</i></p>
<p>The statute laid out the following purposes for the program:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<p>The statute set the following priorities for the program:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 or private and nonprofit organizations are not eligible applicants but are welcome to partner on projects with an eligible applicant.

Available Funds and Award Limits for 2025

The Council has \$2.5 million to award in 2025.

- 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.

Program Requirements

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 Program Purposes outlined above.
- Be located on publicly owned land.

Eligible Uses of Funds

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 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 conducting project activities
- 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
 - 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.
- Maintenance and establishment costs during the grant period for trees planted using grant funding

Ineligible Uses of Funds

Ineligible project expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Costs incurred prior to the start or after the end 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 chemicals for insecticide treatment
- 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

Grantee Expectations

Once funded, grantees must continue to meet the following requirements through the grant period:

- Meet grant objectives and submit a final report by 90 days after the end of the grant term.
- 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.
- Planting requirements:
 - Planting trees may 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.
 - Removals of ash trees must follow [emerald ash borer best management practices](#) set by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

Review Process

Council staff will conduct a preliminary review of all proposals to ensure completeness and eligibility. In the event of overwhelming interest, Council staff may conduct an initial review based on the evaluation criteria below. Council staff are available to answer applicant questions throughout the application process.

Evaluation Criteria

Complete proposals will be reviewed, scored, and ranked by a review team according to the scoring rubric that follows in Table 1. Each application will be reviewed, scored, and ranked in one of three tiers:

- 1) applications meeting both legislative priorities (found on page 1),

- 2) applications meeting just one priority, or
- 3) applications meeting neither priority.

Funding will be awarded in ranked order to applications in the first tier. As funds remain, awards may then be made to applications in the second tier (meeting one priority) in rank order, and finally to ranked applications in the third tier (meeting neither priority). No application receiving fewer than 50 points will be awarded funding, regardless of tier.

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"> • Application clearly describes project • Application and timeline demonstrate (1) readiness to take on the project of the proposed scope and (2) commitment and demonstrated capacity to maintain and care for planted trees 	20
<p>Project serves vulnerable residents*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application clearly lists the prioritized census block groups with vulnerable residents served by the project • Planning and collaboration clearly serves and includes vulnerable residents • Application demonstrates clear and tangible impacts for vulnerable residents 	20
<p>Project serves residents that experience urban heat island effects**</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application clearly lists the prioritized census block groups experiencing extreme heat served by the project • Planning and collaboration clearly serves and includes residents living in areas experiencing the urban heat island • Application demonstrates clear and tangible impacts for residents living in areas experiencing the urban heat island 	20
<p>Tree Canopy Health and Resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application describes if and how the project will address ash trees posing public safety concerns • Application describes how the project will improve tree canopy health and resilience, and/or improve tree species diversity 	20
<p>Communications and Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Application outlines any intended collaboration or partnership with community organizations, neighborhood organizations or other partners 	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 70th percentile or higher for land surface temperature in the region

Funding Schedule

Date	Milestone
February 12, 2025	Council authorization of Notice of Funding Availability
March 5, 2025	Application window opens
April 18, 2025	Application window closes
Late Spring	Review Team evaluates applications
Early Summer	Grant Agreements are sent out

Grant Terms

Grant funds must be spent by June 30, 2027. 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.



390 Robert Street North
St Paul, MN 55101-1805

651-602-1000
TTY 651-291-0904
public.info@metc.state.mn.us
metro council.org

Follow us on:
twitter.com/MetCouncilNews
facebook.com/MetropolitanCouncil