



# Community Tree Planting Grants

House Environment and Natural Resources Committee

**LisaBeth Barajas**

February 24, 2026



# Program Purpose



## As set in Minnesota Statutes, Section 473.355:


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

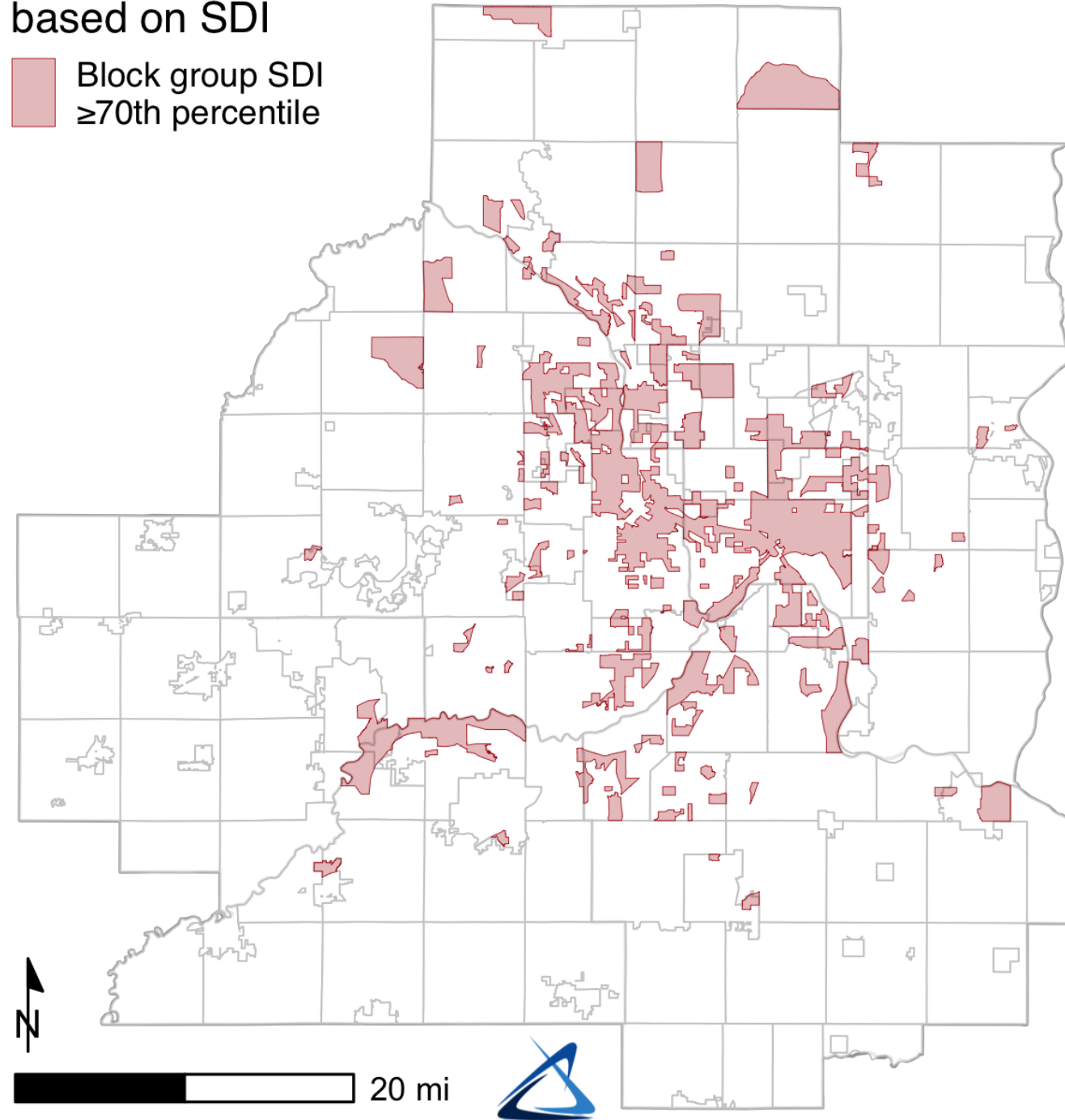
## Program Priorities

State law prioritizes:

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

Prioritization based on SDI

 Block group SDI ≥70th percentile



# 2025 Program Timeline

May 2024

- Legislature appropriates \$3.188 million in general fund to Met Council for Community Tree Planting Grants. \$668k is legislatively directed to the city of South Saint Paul.

February 2025

- Council Approves Notice of Funding Availability

March – April 2025

- Application period

May 2025

- Internal application review for eligibility and completeness
- Panel review for criteria scoring and recommendations

June 2025

- Council reviewed and approved award recommendations

Summer 2025

- Grant agreements executed

# Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Potential Points
Project Overview	20
Communication and Collaboration	20
Project Serves Vulnerable Residents	20
Project Serves Residents Experiencing Extreme Heat	20
Tree Canopy Health and Resilience	20

# Summary of 2025 Applications

## Applications Received

- 31 applications received
  - 27 cities
  - 3 counties
  - 1 township
- \$5,537,897.94 in funds requested
  - Requests ranged from \$14,000 to \$500,000



# Review Process



## Internal and Panel Review

- Internal review for completeness and eligibility
- Six-member review panel composed of:
  - Two Met Council members
  - One Equity Advisory Council member
  - Representatives from:
    - MN Department of Natural Resources
    - Mississippi Watershed Management Organization
    - Great River Greening

# 2025 Funded Projects

Applicant	Project Name	Award Amount
City of Anoka	Sunny Acres Area Urban forest Restoration and Enhancement Project	\$83,100
City of Blaine	Remove and replace 39 ash trees in priority neighborhoods within the City of Blaine	\$94,880
City of Brooklyn Center	Brooklyn Center Right-of-Way and Heritage Center Canopy Improvements	\$142,350
City of Coon Rapids	Grow Urban Coon Rapids	\$94,500
City of Maple Grove	Rice Lake Neighborhood Ash Tree Project	\$82,825
Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board	Minneapolis target area ash tree removal completion and replanting project	\$454,407
City of Minnetonka	Minnetonka Tree Planting Program	\$277,215
City of Oakdale	Diseased ash tree removal and replacement tree planting in public spaces and rights of way	\$174,543
City of Ramsey	Majesty of the Commons – Ash Replacement and Community Collaboration	\$84,255
Ramsey County	Pierce Butler Route Tree Canopy Improvement Project	\$171,050
City of Roseville	City of Roseville EAB Mitigation	\$251,796
City of Saint Louis Park	Park Canopy Restoration Project	\$72,383
City of Vadnais Heights	Vadnais Heights Urban Canopy Program	\$220,196
City of West Saint Paul	West St. Paul Tree Canopy Improvement Project	\$296,500
City of South Saint Paul	Community Tree Planting Project (legislatively directed appropriation)	\$688,000
	<b>Total Awarded Amount</b>	<b>\$3,188,000</b>

# 2025 Grantees Expected Outcomes

Outcome Metric	2025 Competitive Grantee Totals
Total number of trees to be planted	5,128
Total number of trees to be planted in census block groups with an SDI score in the 70 <sup>th</sup> percentile or higher	2,115
Total damaged or diseased trees and stumps to be removed	2,219
Total damaged or diseased ash trees and stumps to be removed	1,563

# Reflections on the new program



## Lots of interest and learnings

- Applications included high quality projects from across the region and across community types.
- Program materials intended to reduce barriers to applying through tools like an interactive map to see prioritized areas.
- Coordination with DNR aimed to align application materials and processes to reduce confusion.
- Most applicants strove to reflect program priorities in projects.
  - Communities without any areas prioritized by the supplemental demographic index could not be competitive for this round of funding in the program structure.
- Scoring criteria could further emphasize the program priorities to reach communities most affected by emerald ash borer (EAB) and social vulnerability.

# 2026 Program Plans



## Key Details

- Program's statutory purpose and priorities remain the same
- Met Council received \$1 million from G.O. Bonds and \$900K from General Fund in the 2025 special session
- Anticipated 2026 timeline:
  - Final program details scheduled to be released in July
  - Application window: August – September
  - Internal and panel review: October – November
  - Council review and approval: November – December
  - Grant agreements executed: Early 2027

Thank you

**LisaBeth Barajas**

Executive Director, Community Development

[Lisa.Barajas@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:Lisa.Barajas@metc.state.mn.us)

