



## *Minneapolis – The City of Trees*

### *“Our Growing Capital Asset for All People”*



**Minneapolis Tree Advisory Commission  
ANNUAL REPORT  
January 2006**

to

**The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and  
the Mayor and City Council of the City of Minneapolis.**

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The trees and urban forest of Minneapolis are THE growing capital asset of the City, providing significant quantifiable benefits for everyone who lives, works, visits, and invests in the City. A thriving urban forest is essential in giving us clean air and water and in saving millions in energy and built infrastructure costs. This “public utility” requires ongoing public and private investments and leadership to counter impacts to the resource and assure that its public service benefits continue to increase in value.

This report outlines key strategies needed in 2006, including:

- Fund the Park Board’s urban forestry program at sustainable levels & match federal funds.
- Adopt urban forestry standards.
- Launch the public-private Urban Forest Stewardship Campaign.

## **I. THE STATE OF THE MINNEAPOLIS URBAN FOREST**

### **A. The benefits provided by 1 million trees in Minneapolis**

Minneapolis has almost **200,000 public boulevard trees** that provide at least \$24.9 million in quantifiable annual benefits—including

- annual energy savings of more than \$6.8 million,
- reduced storm water runoff benefits equal to \$9.1 million in savings, and
- aesthetic and property value increases of at least \$7.1 million.
- Plus additional benefits for the noise pollution and air pollution reduction.

IN ADDITION, Minneapolis has at least another **800,000 trees in our private yards, parks, school grounds, along the rivers**, and elsewhere throughout the City of Minneapolis. Looking down on the city from an airplane or a tall building, anyone would conclude that Minneapolis is not the “City of Lakes” but in fact is the “City of Trees.”

All together, **the quantifiable capitalized value of our million-tree urban forest exceeds \$760 million**, according to the 2004-05 i-Tree study in Minneapolis by the USDA Forest Service. Trees are on every street and in every City Council Ward. The trees in Minneapolis function as a “public utility.” Like streets, sewers, bridges and libraries, we are responsible to invest in the care of this growing public asset.

### **B. Impacts of Dutch Elm Disease**

Elms are still the dominant trees in the Minneapolis urban forest, even after more than 30 years of losses due to Dutch elm disease. While only 10% of the Minneapolis street tree population by “trunk count,” elms are so large that they provide more than 30% of the total canopy cover that generates much of the forest’s economic and environmental benefit. Each elm in Minneapolis provides two to three times the annual benefits of almost any other type of street tree.

Dutch elm disease still ravages the biggest and most beneficial trees in the City. Yet, fewer trees were lost to Dutch elm disease in 2005 than 2004. Specifically, Minneapolis lost 6,179 trees in 2005 (3,145 public and 3,034 private) compared to 10,153 trees lost in 2004 (5,217 public and 4,936 private).

Delays in removal of diseased trees—beyond the 20 days after detection required by law—are resulting in avoidable losses of nearby trees despite improvements in removal rates. In 2004, marked, diseased trees stood for months. For example, by early November, only 65% public and 33% private had been removed in 2004. But, at the same date in 2005, 89% public and 71% private of the trees marked had been removed. This action allowed Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (Park Board) crews to resume their regular pruning cycles in December that will increase the long-term health of our city trees.

Despite these improvements, the percentage of the remaining elm population lost in 2004 and 2005 was still the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> highest in the City’s history. Given the extraordinary benefits that elms provide, these high levels of losses to Dutch elm disease are tragic. Specifically, the

removal of 16,332 elms in 2004-05 means **the City has irretrievably lost at least \$5.75 million in ANNUAL urban forest benefits** that cannot be recovered for decades if ever.

### **C. Other Major Threats to the Urban Forest**

Additional looming disasters threaten the City's urban forest, notably the following:

- Asian long-horned beetle is the greatest threat, because this virulent pest kills most species of trees, and the only remedy is clear-cutting all trees for blocks around. Fortunately, the Asian long-horned beetle has not yet been found in Minnesota, although it has devastated parts of Chicago and New York City.
- Emerald ash borer is as destructive as the Asian long-horned beetle, except that it attacks mainly ash trees. As with the Asian long-horned beetle, the only effective remedy against this pest is clear-cutting. The good news is that it's not in Minnesota ... yet. It is established in Michigan and parts of Indiana and Ohio, where over 10 million ash trees have been cut down. The bad news is that about 22% of Minneapolis trees are green ash.
- Gypsy moth infestations defoliate over 300 types of trees and shrubs and weaken them to the point where losses are inevitable. Although the Minnesota state tree programs have contained infestations of gypsy moth to date, the pest is already well established in half-way across Wisconsin and has a foot-hold in Northeastern Minnesota. Gypsy moth will be here soon.
- Climate change, drought, storm damage and associated "natural disasters" are poised to create increasing havoc to our trees. Each year we risk significant damage and costs due to wind and ice storm damage. Drought is likely to be a more imminent and insidious threat. Lack of snow cover and predictions of drier mid-summer months endanger otherwise-stressed trees of all ages and types across the whole city.

Because of higher Dutch elm disease losses, Park Board funds and crews have been diverted to elm removal, and essential tree care and pruning activities have been cut drastically. This "deferred maintenance" of our tree infrastructure has exactly the same effect that deferred maintenance has on streets, sewers, and city buildings. It will cost us more in the long run.

## **II. RECOMMENDATIONS**

To protect and enhance the "public utility" of our Minneapolis urban forest, and to optimize the economic benefit that street trees provide, the Minneapolis Tree Commission recommends that the Minneapolis Park Board and, where appropriate, the City Council and Mayor, undertake the following key strategies in 2006.

### **A. RESOURCES & FUNDING.**

Allocate funding for tree-planting in the City's annual budget. In 2006, the City Council and Mayor budgeted \$300,000 for tree-planting, including \$200,000 to the Park Board for

planting about 3,500 trees on public property, and \$100,000 as a matching-grant program for tree-planting on private property. This significant contribution to the Park Board Forestry program should be renewed in the 2007 City Budget, in order to help achieve the City's Sustainability Goal of planting at least 3,500 trees annually.

1. **Support state funding.** The City and the Park Board should strongly support the proposed legislative initiative bonding funds to assist Minnesota communities in protecting and replanting their threatened community trees.
2. **Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board:** Fund Park Board Forestry at levels necessary to achieve:
  - Timely (20 day) removal of Dutch Elm disease infected trees and resuming a regular (3-5 year) pruning cycle. This responsibility needs \$2,600,000 to \$3,500,000 additional Forestry funding annually.
  - Catch-up on stump removal backlog in 2006-07. This responsibility needs \$700,000 to \$1,200,000 over a two-year period.
  - Establishment of a \$1,000,000 storm-damage response fund to replace depleted reserves. This responsibility needs an initial \$1,000,000 to be replenished annually if needed.
3. **Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board:** Invest in the Urban Forest Stewardship Campaign Fund.
  - Match the \$25,000 federal grant for the Stewardship Campaign's outreach and education with \$25,000 in new Park Board funding (see below).
  - Establish ongoing funding for the Stewardship Campaign for outreach, education, and incentives for Minneapolitans to take responsibility for their trees and become involved in community forestry activities. At least \$50,000 annually is needed.
4. **Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board:** Advocate planned giving by citizens for special community forestry through the Park Foundation. The Tree Commission has scoped needs for "root rescue" and "tree rescue" projects as well as opportunities for private funding for special tree planting and tree injections.

## **B. POLICY & COORDINATION ACROSS JURISDICTIONS**

1. **Adopt and enforce urban forestry standards** to implement the City's Urban Forest Policy and Park Board policies. These standards include:
  - Minimum tree planting for development projects
  - Streetscape standards and specifications (*e.g.* approved alternatives to tree grates)
  - Private arborist qualifications
2. **Integrate urban forestry fully into the City's 2008 Comprehensive Plan**—addressing the urban forest as an integral part of the public infrastructure and capital investment, and directing that its protection and management are the responsibility of the City (City Council, Mayor, Public Works Department), the Park Board, property owners, and neighborhoods.

3. **Assure that the Park Board's Comprehensive Planning Process treats urban forest management as core** to each aspect of the Park Board's mission and that this plan strengthens the Park Board's leadership and funding support for forest management and outreach.
4. **Institute an Emergency Storm Response Plan** that coordinates prevention, response and mitigation when storms strike our City's trees and assigns Park Board and City department responsibilities.

## C. OUTREACH & EDUCATION

1. **Launch the Minneapolis Urban Forest Stewardship Campaign** aimed at residents, property owners, and neighborhood groups who are responsible for and influence most of the trees in the City. Support the campaign through strategies including:
  - Build upon Minneapolis Arbor Day to engage citizens in tree planting and care. Join Hawthorn Neighborhood, Park Board, and 500 students from Nellie Stone Johnson School in planting 100 trees in Farview Park Arbor Day on May 19<sup>th</sup> – the official 2006 Minneapolis Arbor Day.
  - Strengthen Park Board communications unit contributions to “spread the word” by publicizing official notices on tree-related events, public participation opportunities, and website improvements.
  - Support TreeKeeper workshops and other citizen outreach efforts achieved through the partnership between Tree Trust, Park Board Forestry staff, and local groups.
  - Mobilize the community including tree planting and care, as well as root rescue and tree rescue projects.
  - Utilize City cable television to publicize tree stewardship in cooperation with the Park Board and the Committee on Urban Environment.
  - Engage people in the Citizen Tree Academy to be held in Loring Park on July 28, 2006, sponsored by the Minnesota Society of Arboriculture, which is hosting the 2006 International Society of Arboriculture conference at the Minneapolis Convention Center in late July 2006.
2. **Improve the Park Board's Website** information on trees and its linkages to valuable tree information, including:
  - Link people to useful information and research which supports citizen action: including I-tree data, forest health, how's and why's of pruning, and hotlinks to key websites e.g. [www.mntrees.org](http://www.mntrees.org), [www.treetrust.org](http://www.treetrust.org), and [www.treelink.org](http://www.treelink.org).
  - Invite users to make comments to and ask questions of Park Board Forestry.

- Publicize opportunities to participate in tree events and activities, as well opportunities to volunteer.

**3. Enhance 311 for trees** – encourage the Park Board join the 311 system to more quickly connect callers to park staff to answer questions.

**This report and its recommendations are submitted by**

**The Minneapolis Tree Advisory Commission**

- Margaret (Peggy) Booth, Chair
- Donald C. Willeke, Secretary
- Gary R. Johnson, University of Minnesota professor
- Commissioner Vivian Mason (2005)
- Janette Monear, citizen representative
- Tracy Nordstrom (2005 Mayor’s Designee/2006 Park Commissioner)
- Kit Richardson, developer
- Michael P. Schmidt, MPRB
- Ralph C. Sievert, MPRB
- Elizabeth Storey, Mayor’s Designee
- Rolf Svendsen, citizen representative
- Lorrie Stromme, City Council representative
- John Uban, representative from CUE
- George Welles, Minnesota Shade Tree Advisory Committee

**ABOUT THE MINNEAPOLIS TREE ADVISORY COMMISSION**

**Goal of the Commission**

To enhance the Minneapolis urban forest and improve its long-term health.

**Commission’s Charge from Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board**

The initial goals of the Minneapolis Tree Commission shall be to

1. Coordinate issues related to trees across city jurisdictions,
2. Coordinate fiscal resources and explore new ways to acquire funds to increase support for urban forest establishment and management, and
3. Evaluate issues related to trees and report annually to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and City Council.

**Commission Activities**

The Minneapolis Tree Commission meets monthly—usually the second Thursday of the month at 5:30-7:00 pm. The Commission welcomes ideas and inputs from City officials, staffs, residents, property owners, and anyone interested in the City’s urban forest. The Commission:

- co-sponsors the Minneapolis Arbor Day,
- provides technical and policy guidance to the Park Board and City, and
- is coordinating the new Minneapolis Urban Forest Stewardship Campaign.