



AN EMERGENCY REPORT BY THE MINNEAPOLIS TREE ADVISORY COMMISSION

January 4, 2005

**To: The Mayor, The City Council, and The Park
and Recreation Board of the City of Minneapolis**

The Minneapolis Tree Advisory Commission (the “Commission”) was appointed by The Park and Recreation Board (hereinafter the “Park Board”) in 2004 to, among other duties, evaluate issues relating to trees and to report annually on the State of the Minneapolis Urban Forest. Because of the extremely serious nature of the problems presently facing the Minneapolis Urban Forest, the Commission has deemed it necessary to address all three governing bodies of the City of Minneapolis with this Emergency Report.

The year 2004 was the third worst year in the year in the history of Minneapolis for the number of trees lost, with 4979 trees on City property and boulevards being lost to Dutch elm disease. Only 1977 and 1978 saw more American elm trees cut down: 20,823 and 13,688 trees respectively. In fact, in terms of *percentage* of boulevard elm trees lost, 2004 was the second worst year. And if one considers the amount of “total urban forest canopy” lost with the destruction of 9914 elms, 2004 was probably the worst year, since the City’s remaining elms are mostly very large trees, with each one equal to many, many smaller replacement trees.

The members of the governing bodies of Minneapolis must understand (as we believe they do) that our Minneapolis Urban Forest trees are not “niceties” but in fact are necessities that reduce storm water runoff, lower air conditioning costs, shelter us from chilling winter winds, and increase property values and the resulting tax base. Each large Minneapolis shade tree lost now is lost for the remainder of the lives of all but the youngest Minneapolis residents. Preservation of trees is “about time”—*double entendre* intended.

Furthermore, without doubt wise urban forest management is highly cost effective. Newly planted Minneapolis trees are the one civic capital investment whose value appreciates over time. More notably, preservation of large existing Minneapolis trees eliminates the cost of removal and the loss of the appreciated value of the multitude of economic benefits that large trees provide.

If, in the throes of the present crisis, we delay removal of diseased elms (thus substantially increasing the spread of the disease), and if we defer pruning of young trees, we only substantially increase future costs and decrease the economic value of our future Minneapolis urban forest.

Accordingly, we must recommend that the Park Board, the City Council and the Mayor act cooperatively to:

1. **Fund** sufficiently the removal of all marked public diseased elm trees within 20 days.
2. **Enforce** the presently existing system to assure removal of all trees marked for Dutch elm disease on private property within 20 days.
3. **Seize** the “teachable moment” created by the current highly visible tragedy to inform City staff members, residents and property owners on the multitude of economic and environmental values of the Minneapolis trees and the actions they need to take to protect our Minneapolis Urban Forest investments from harm.
4. **Assure** allocation of resources needed to sustain adequate pruning cycles on public trees necessary for health and safety reasons, *i.e.*, every two years for young trees and every four years for all other public trees.
5. **Invest** needed capital in the next generation of City trees to retain the public tree population of the Minneapolis Urban Forest essential to maintain Minneapolis property values and other economic benefits.
6. **Facilitate** cooperative approaches to link interested property owners with providers who are available to properly treat elms with systemic fungicides to prevent infection by Dutch elm disease.

The Members of your Commission welcome the opportunity to discuss with you the foregoing recommendations in more detail, but because of the emergency facing the City of Minneapolis and its World-renowned urban forest, we offer this concise report on the most urgent needs of the Minneapolis Urban Forest.

Respectfully submitted,

THE MINNEAPOLIS TREE ADVISORY COMMISSION

Margaret (Peggy) Booth, Chair	Tracy Nordstrom
Donald C. Willeke, Secretary	Michael P. Schmidt
Commissioner John Erwin	Ralph Sievert
Gary R. Johnson	Lorrie Stromme
Commissioner Vivian Mason	George Welles
Janette Monear	

