Statement to Executive Policy Committee – April 30, 2019

Re: Support for motion to allow use of Land Dedication Reserve for Boulevard Trees in Glenelm

Mellanie Lawrenz

Emma Durand-Wood

Good morning, Mayor Bowman, and Members of the Executive Policy Committee.

As members of the Trees Committee of the Glenelm Neighbourhood Association we are here to support the motion to allow the use of Land Dedication Reserve (LDR) Fund for the planting of boulevard trees and to provide some background information. Our goal with this project is to **supplement** the Forestry Department's existing reforestation program to fully reforest our neighbourhood's boulevards.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your time and for your support today. We would also like to acknowledge the support of our councillor, Jason Schreyer, and the previous work and guidance of councillor John Orlikow on this matter.

Our neighbourhood is under a unique threat of loss to our tree canopy. According to the City of Winnipeg's Open Data System, Glenelm has a total of 945 public trees on our boulevards and in our parks. Of that number, Elms make up 44% and Ash trees comprise a further 18%. We are projected to lose 27% of our Elms in the next ten years, and a staggering 100% of our Ash – a devastating loss for any community, but particularly hard for ours, whose urban forest is almost entirely made up of these two species of tree.

With this projected loss, we will lose more than sixty percent of our neighbourhood's trees. One of our Association's community-led mandates is to preserve and protect our street trees. Our hope is that by paying attention to our boulevards now, we will reap the benefits in ten years when all of our Ash are gone.

Thanks to the efficiency and diligence of our world-class Urban Forestry department and the emergency funding granted to them last year, our neighbourhood is up-to-date on diseased tree removals (at this point, before this year's losses). But decades of disease have left our boulevards with dozens of sites left unplanted, because the Forestry department only has the funds to replace about 50% of the trees that are lost.

The Glenelm Neighbourhood Association approached the City's Chief Forester about ways that our residents could get involved with both tree loss prevention and reforestation. She mentioned a previous project undertaken in River Heights with a similar goal that identified the LDR as a source of funding.

We understand that the Land Dedication Reserve (LDR) Fund is to be used for the development of city parks and open spaces. It's use for the planting of boulevard trees requires special permission from Council.

We are the Adopt-a-Park partner for Elmwood Park and so we appreciate and understand that by reallocating funds intended for the parks, we believe it's incumbent on us to identify alternate means by which reforestation of the parks will be accomplished. We wish that we could do both things at once: invest in improvements for our parks AND reforest our boulevards. That said, we believe that right now, this year, reforesting our boulevards will provide the highest and fastest return on investment.

As we mentioned, GeNA is the Adopt-a-Park partner for Elmwood Park, and our residents are frequent users of that park, Hespeler Park, and the Talbot Avenue Tot-Lot. Our committee is currently exploring the various funding paths and opportunities that are open to us as a non-profit organization to secure funding for park enhancement projects. We intend to pursue this type of project within the next 2 years.

With this consideration addressed, we decided to pursue a way to use the LDR fund for boulevard trees by partnering with the city's urban forestry branch – whereby they provide the expertise on tree site location, and we provide project management of city-approved arborists.

We met with and obtained our Councillor's support for our Land Dedication Reserve application as well as the support of the other Councillors on the East Kildonan-Transcona Community Committee earlier this month.

We have started by mapping tree sites and initiating the required paperwork and project schedule. Pending council approval, we'll hire an arborist, and they'll plant 100 boulevard trees this summer to address some of the loss of our urban forest due to disease.

Today we are seeking EPC's support in waiving the eligibility criteria for the fund so that we can continue to the momentum we've built thus far.

In closing, we want to acknowledge the time and assistance that Urban Forestry has so generously given us as we develop ways to collaboratively tackle the ongoing challenges in preserving this priceless city asset. Thank you/merci beaucoup.