August 4, 2016

Dear Council Members,

On Thursday, August 4th, 2016 the City of Ashland Tree Commission met and discussed the reiteration of the Pioneer and Lithia Way project which Laurie Thorton (Laurie Sager and Associates Landscape Architects Inc.) has written a recommendation, drafted July 11th. We would like to formally address the council with an updated recommendation. After hosting the world's foremost expert in urban trees Mr. James Urban, and participating in his workshop it was clear to all us that alternatives to the design of this project exist and need to be further explored.

The Tree Commission carefully considered public comment provided by Kathryn Thalden, a retired landscape architect. Her recommendation is a tree-centric design with preservation of trees as one of the main objectives of the project. Another aspect of her recommendation would be to use this project as a showcase for alternatives such as rubber or pervious sidewalks as a way to get more natural water to these existing trees in order to improve their environment.

The City of Ashland Street Tree Guide recommends these species of Maple trees as drought resistant and good urban street trees. These existing trees are valuable for numerous reasons including their current size, location, shading, air filtration, canopy coverage, and tolerance to the urban environment. New trees in this location will struggle to establish due to the stressful urban environment of this location. The existing trees have already survived the hardest part of an urban trees life, the establishment period. The Zelkova trees on the north side of Lithia Way near the intersection of 1st and Lithia are a great example of hardy, urban tolerant, fast growing trees and their lack of ability to establish in this same microclimate environment (many of these trees have either died or are currently unhealthy).

We are requesting that the City Council works to preserve these valuable trees. The Tree Commission would appreciate your consideration of contracting a landscape designer to redesign this landscape. We understand the desire to redesign the current landscape and believe that the goals of the current project can still be met with the preservation of the trees.

Thank you for your consideration,

The City of Ashland Tree Commission