

## **Downtown Beautification Committee:**

Numerous Ashlanders and visitors have made very similar comments for improving the Plaza. These suggestions are practical and cost effective:

Consult first with an architectural historian for suggestions on how to make the entire Plaza more compatible with the downtown historic district. The current "modern" Plaza fights the feeling and flow of the historic downtown motif.

1. Replace the gray pavers with a warmer color, such as old brick colored pavers. The current pavers can be reused on some more suitable site, they won't go to waste! Paver contractors advise us that the pavers can be easily replaced w/o disrupting the Plaza or surrounding businesses.
2. Increase the green planted areas on the ground with additional areas of hardy, evergreen native shrubs. More greenery, less pavers. Raise the beds 8-12" to protect from pedestrians. Hardscape can be significantly reduced without compromising the usability of open areas.
3. Reduce the angularity of the overall design, incorporate more curved, expansive design elements that lend a flow to the feeling, rather than the chopped up angles we now see. One way to do this is to remove one or more of the concrete seat walls, preferably the longest one. It makes the Plaza look blocky and stilted.
4. Repaint the Information booth a warmer color that compliments the downtown.

**Add a fountain or an arbor as a focal point along the Main St. end of the Plaza**

We recently consulted with Paul Stranberg, of Valley View Nursery for suggestions on evergreen plants and shrubs for our Plaza. He generously responded with this list of suggestions. Downtown Beautification Committee, Council, staff, please take note!

"I finally went to the Plaza to look at the planters. You're right they have taken a beating. Some of the plant selections they made aren't bad, but too many deciduous. I have some recommendations below that would add some accent and evergreen for year round interest.

I would suggest 1 of the following as an accent for each planter bed. (the blue colored conifers will accent the blue tiles used in the mosaics)

**Picea p. St. Mary's Broom**  
**Cedrus at. Glauca Horstmann**  
**Cedrus deodara Feelin Blue**  
**Pinus sylv. Hillside Creeper**  
**Chamaecyparis True Blue**

I would suggest a pair of Ilex cr. Sky Pencil at the ends of each bench.  
(help frame the benches)

I would suggest 1 of the following plants to line the back side of each bench.  
(help define the benches)

**Ilex Scallywag**  
**Ilex Little Rascal**  
**Ilex Gold Coast**

I would suggest 1 of the following for a filler or ground cover for each planter bed.

(multi seasonal interest and durable)  
**Cotoneaster Streibs Findling**  
**Cotoneaster Thymefolia**

Hope this helps. It's just my suggestions. I'm sure there are lots of other ideas.

Let me know if I do anything else to help.

Thanks, Paul"

And thank you, Paul! We've had many suggestions for plantings, and yours are excellent. Hopefully we'll be able to incorporate them in the final redesign.

Petitioners for Restoration of Our Plaza

**Ashland Daily Tidings**  
March 6, 2014

### **Letter at Length**

City officials misled us on paver color

The recently redesigned Plaza is disliked by 65 percent of Ashlanders just polled by the Sneak Preview, including over 500 petitioners. Nearly two out of three people say it's dull, lifeless, unwelcoming. It looks like a parking lot.

During the Plaza redo, checks and balances were disregarded: Why were salmon-colored paver renderings shown to the public and press throughout the design process, but gray installed instead? Why does Administrator Kanner say he didn't know about the gray paver choice? His staff liaison was at the Arts Commission meeting specifically to learn of this. Wouldn't she have told him? Why was this decision kept from the public and press until after the pavers were installed? Many here feel we've been deceived.

Petitioners talked to Plaza contractors who knew city staffers were aware of the gray pavers many months before the public was ever told. Just when did each of the councilors learn gray pavers had been picked? Except for Councilor Carol Voisin, they've refused to say.

Official explanations for the gray pavers have been sketchy, misleading, nonexistent or false. For instance, last May, Voisin expressed concern that Covey's color renderings showed salmon pavers, not gray. Kanner explained the salmon colors were due to "software limitations."

Petitioners asked Travis Scott, a regional computer renderings expert to study these color renderings. His comments to us noted that over 14 colors are shown. Gray, or any color, not just salmon, could easily have been used for pavers. Therefore Kanner's statement, that software limitations obliged the use of salmon for pavers, is false.

Then city staffers claimed Plaza rendering didn't show the actual colors. But we plainly see: gray for street, green for plants and salmon for pavers. For over nine months, these official color renderings were shown to the public and press as representations of what the Plaza would look like. Showing renderings of salmon pavers for nine months is the same as promising them.

The sudden appearance of gray pavers on the Plaza was shocking! The council majority and some city staff violated the public's trust. To add insult to injury, council and staff give either false or misleading explanations to the public and press, deny there's a problem, made us pay for it, and have just put Plaza restoration near the bottom of the list for downtown improvements. (Mr. Kanner stated at a recent council meeting that his "staff have visually spent the TOT funds" dedicated for downtown improvement.)

This is far more than just a beef over a pile of bricks; it's about the look and feel of our town, and the accountability and integrity of our City Council and staff. Our councilors and city staff owe it to the public to keep their promises: deliver colored pavers and more greenery to the Plaza.

We sincerely encourage the new Downtown Beautification Committee to take into consideration the city of Ashland's past representations of the Plaza's colored pavers and lush greenery, made to the Ashland public and press.

David Sherr

**Petitioners for Restoration of Our Plaza**