

To Whom It May Concern,

Wildfires are a real danger to our community. It only makes sense to adapt current codes and regulations to reflect our changing environment and the demands it places on our city. Unfortunately the current proposal to expand the existing wildfire overlay zone to encompass the entire city has much larger long term implications; places unfair economic responsibility on those improving the community; and ignores the natural fabric of the place we call home.

The proposal has much broader implications than simply prohibiting certain flammable plants and eliminating plantings around 200 square foot additions. By putting the entire city within a wildfire hazard zone, would we be opening the door for programs and codes adopted by the state and national legislatures to automatically be accepted and enforced at a city level, even though they may not be applicable to our community? Would we be limiting our future options on mitigation strategies, programs, and education to wildfire prevention if we formally declare the entire city a wildfire hazard area?

The properties within city limits are highly developed, and very few build-able lots remain. Most future development would be infill, additions to existing homes, and the occasional new construction. Change has to start somewhere, but the proposed ordinance places the burden on those that want to improve their property. Requiring additional drawings, prevention and control plans, and limiting building/landscaping materials which surround and tie into structures will all add to the construction cost of any new development. Furthermore, what is the proven effectiveness of these requirements if the developed property is the only one in a sea of properties that are not compliant with the proposed ordinance? What sort of time frame are we looking at for the proposed ordinance to be determined 'effective'?

We live in an area where conifers define our landscape, blackberries grow rampant, and the state flower is the Oregon Grape. These plants, along with the majority of vegetation on the proposed prohibited plant list are native to the area. How effective can an ordinance like this be if A) compliance is reliant on future development/improvement, and B) our native habitat is already abundant with the vegetation that will be prohibited? Will the city be responsible for compliance within the public spaces which contain these prohibited plants, and if so, at what cost to the taxpayer?

More education and outreach programs within the community would help citizens understand the importance of wildfire mitigation on their *own* terms. "Firewise Ashland" is a great program, and has proven to be an effective educational tool for neighborhoods throughout Ashland. By putting more resources and energy into programs like this the city would come from an educational and informational approach (bottom up) rather than a code compliance/legislative approach (top down). This would empower members of the community to make the changes needed on their own, rather than being forced to meet criteria which may or may not be applicable to their specific situation.

We all agree that addressing the wildfire hazard is important. This current proposal, however, leaves too many unanswered questions and ultimately will not be effective. We live in a community of forward thinking individuals that value our natural environment. Let's reach out, educate, and organize rather than impose standards which don't fit the fabric of our city.

Respectfully,

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