



# Council Study Session

May 15, 2023

<b>Agenda Item</b>	Request for Letter of Support by Oregon Urban Rural and Community Forestry		
<b>From</b>	Chad Woodward	Climate and Energy Analyst	
<b>Contact</b>	<a href="mailto:Chad.woodward@ashland.or.us">Chad.woodward@ashland.or.us</a>		
<b>Item Type</b>	Requested by Council <input type="checkbox"/> Update <input type="checkbox"/> Request for Direction <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

## **SUMMARY**

The non-profit organization Oregon Urban Rural Community Forestry is requesting write a letter of support for their application for an Inflation Recovery Act grant to establish sustainable and long-lasting urban forestry programs within partner organizations.

## **BACKGROUND AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The Oregon Urban Rural and Community Forestry (OURCF) project is a non-profit organization seeking Federal Grant funding through the Inflation Recovery Act. OURCF aims to advance knowledge and support for urban, rural, and community forestry in Oregon by advocating for education, data collection and dissemination, tree planting, tree inventories, urban wood utilization, and the preservation and protection of existing healthy trees. The project focuses on empowering disadvantaged, underserved, and underrepresented neighborhoods and communities in Southern Oregon, where the effects of climate change, drought, and wildfires have led to declining tree health and limited access to high-quality, locally acclimated nursery stock.

To address this issue, OURCF has partnered with Plant Oregon Nursery to expand nursery production of 2,500 climate-resilient trees annually, with a focus on planting regionally native trees found in warmer, dryer climates to the south in Northern California. The project aims to plant 1,000 of these trees per year in Southern Oregon and an additional 1,500 trees dedicated to equitable tree planting projects throughout the State of Oregon, working with the Oregon Department of Forestry's Urban and Community Forestry Programs. If awarded federal funding the OURCF project would be replicable, providing an equitable and inclusive urban forestry model that is implementable by other NGOs and agencies throughout the US. All materials and ideas produced under this grant project will be open source and available at no cost to everyone.

Oregon Urban Rural and Community Forestry (OURCF) is seeking a letter of support from the City of Ashland for their project to include in their application for federal funding. The City of Ashland Climate Energy Action Plan Committee, and the Tree Committee have each heard a presentation from Mike Oxendine, founder of OURCF, and have recommended Council provide such a letter of support for the project and grant application. Included in the materials provided by OURCF is a similar support letter from the Oregon Department of Education, and the draft grant application which further describes the proposal.

## **FISCAL IMPACTS**





# Council Study Session

While OURCF may seek a more formal partnership with the City of Ashland in the future and potentially seek City funding support for their project, the request before the council this evening is simply for a letter of support for their grant request for Inflation Recovery Act funds. Any future partnership agreement or dedication of funding would require a separate City review and approval.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

Does the Council have any questions regarding Oregon Urban Rural Community Forestry and the proposed request to seek federal funding in support of their forest management project?

## **SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS**

Upon Council direction a letter of support would be drafted for signature by the Mayor on behalf of the City.

City

## **REFERENCES & ATTACHMENTS**

- OURCF Draft Inflation Recovery Act Grant Application
- Oregon Department of Education Support Letter
- Tree Committee support request to City Manager
- CEPAC support request to City Council

# Oregon Urban Rural Community Forestry

Request to Ashland City Council to support a grant request by OUR  
Community Forestry.

Draft Inflation Reduction Act Grant to be submitted by  
OUR Community Forestry.

## OUR Community Forestry

Unique Entity ID: XCMVSNB11QE5

IRA Grant Tracking # ira-08874

Describe the issues this project is seeking to address and how the project will contribute to the goals in this funding opportunity, including congressional, Justice40, State Forest Action Plans, and Ten-Year Urban and Community Forestry Action Plan (2016-2026) priorities.

### 1. Project Scope Alignment:

Oregon Urban Rural and Community Forestry's heart is on equitably advancing knowledge, support, and the ecological benefits of urban, rural, and community forestry in Oregon. We will accomplish this through education, advocacy, data collection and dissemination, nursery production, tree planting, tree inventories, urban wood utilization, and the preservation and protection of existing healthy trees. Our work is targeted to empower ourselves and our partners in disadvantaged, underserved, and underrepresented neighborhoods and communities. OURCF and our multi-jurisdictional partners are mission driven and aligned in the goals to improve climate resilience, decrease invasive species impacts, decrease urban heat islands, celebrate diversity, increase green infrastructure, foster conservation through preservation of natural resources, and restore and recover ecological services to our urban areas.

This OUR Community Forestry Project is an innovative and replicable mission driven equitable and inclusive urban forestry model that is implementable by other NGOs and agencies throughout the US. All materials and ideas produced under this grant project will be open source and available at no cost to everyone. The pilot site for this work is specifically focused on three rural counties in Southern Oregon. 47% of the total population (382,244) of Jackson, Josephine, and Klamath Counties are considered disadvantaged by the Justice40 initiative. According to the EPA Environmental Justice and Screening Mapping Tool, none of the municipalities in these Counties have achieved tree equity. OUR Community Forestry has identified 150 potential project partners which include 20 municipalities, 123 K-12 schools, 4 higher education institutions, 2 federally recognized tribes (10 local non-federally recognized tribes) within the 3 identified counties. With this IRA grant funding opportunity OUR Community Forestry's work with disadvantaged communities in desperate need of urban forestry advancement will be federally subsidized and be provided at little to no cost to our partners.

The Southern Oregon area is experiencing acute effects of climate change and over the past 23 years, 11 years have been declared extreme drought and this past year 2022 was rated as exceptional drought. These repetitive droughts are causing declining water availability from all sources. Southern Oregon is experiencing record heat in the summer, record droughts, and more numerous and intense wildfires that are causing continual late summer air quality issues due to wildfire smoke. This rapidly changing climate was fully realized on September 7th and 8th of 2020 when four wildfires (Two Four Two, Slater, Almeda, and South Obenchain) ripped through the communities of Southern Oregon killing 5 people, destroying 3,377 structures and leaving an estimated 8,500 people homeless. 2020 was the most destructive wildfire season on record in the state of Oregon.

There are millions of trees within the Southern Oregon watersheds that are in decline or standing dead due to drought stress and associated insect predation. The urban forests are also seeing the effects of drought stress and are at higher risk for associated invasion of pests such as emerald ash borer, dutch elm disease, thousand cankers disease, and mediterranean oak borer. These invasive species combined with a rapidly changing climate highlight the need to diversify these forests. Unfortunately there is a lack of availability of high quality locally

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acclimated diverse and climate resilient nursery stock. OUR Community Forestry is in partnership with Plant Oregon Nursery and we have a collaborative plan to utilize IRA grant funds to expand nursery production of 2,500 trees annually. All 50 + species will be climate resilient and be grown with the highest nursery standards to be exceptional quality. Adaptive methods include growing trees in inground grow bags, utilizing drip irrigation, utilizing native soils amended with high quality compost, organic fertilizers, and free from chemically synthetic herbicides. We will be focusing on planting regionally native trees found in warmer, dryer climates to the south in Northern California, such as valley oak (*Quercus lobata*), blue oak (*Q. douglasii*), and interior live oak (*Q. wislizeni*). The program intends to plant 1,000 of these trees per year in Southern Oregon, with an additional 1,500 trees dedicated to equitable tree planting projects throughout the State of Oregon, we will work with the ODF UCF program to distribute these trees to the communities most in need.

The goals and objectives listed below were all developed to address the goals, strategies, and actions listed in the National Ten-Year Urban Forestry Action Plan with a specific intent to focus on climate justice and equity in urban forestry that align with the goals in this IRA funding opportunity. Every aspect of this plan has been reviewed by and is in alignment with the Oregon Department of Forestry's Urban and Community Forestry Programs statewide objectives (see included letter of support from ODF-UCF).

**Goal #1: Broaden community engagement and guide each community in developing an urban forestry master plan tailored to their locality, with a focus on environmental justice, equity, and climate change resilience. This involves collaborating with partner organizations to lead workshops on program development, tracking, reporting, building capacity, buy-in, support, and investment in their urban forests. The ultimate goal is to establish sustainable and long-lasting urban forestry programs within each partner organization.**

**Objective #1:** Secure partnerships and negotiate agreements with potential partner organizations for the OUR Community Forestry assistance program.

**Objective #2:** Provide planning guidance and outreach to partner organizations to engage their communities, including underrepresented groups, and assist in developing sustainable urban forestry programs.

**Objective #3:** Establish a comprehensive data collection and reporting system to track progress and report program achievements and challenges to partner organizations and the OURCF Board of Directors on a bi-annual basis.

**Goal #2: Increase the production of high-quality, locally-adapted, diverse nursery trees that can withstand climate change and be used by local programs for planting.**

**Objective #1:** Expand local nursery capacity for urban and community forestry through leasing land and collaborating with established nurseries.

**Objective #2:** Establish a statewide program for planting peace trees and "peace groves" by reserving a portion of the nursery capacity for "Peace and Reconciliation" trees.

**Objective #3:** Develop paid internship and training opportunities that target disadvantaged populations and groups underrepresented in the nursery industry, arboriculture, and forestry.

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The program will teach skills like horticulture, arboriculture, and nursery management, as well as provide work experience and leadership opportunities.

**Goal #3: Assist partner organizations in conducting a public tree inventory and utilize the data to support program objectives and garner support.**

**Objective 1:** Identify and serve disadvantaged and underserved populations through socioeconomic, heat island mapping, census data, and other sources like health inequity maps, and prioritize these areas for restoration plantings.

**Objective 2:** Collaborate with partner organizations to develop and implement a statewide tree inventory and management system, utilizing LiDAR, GIS mapping, and existing inventory data.

**Objective 3:** Train partner organization staff on proper inventory management and utilization of ecological data and reports to advocate for funding and prioritize climate resiliency in tree species selections, locations, and long-range recommendations. Additionally, offer paid internship opportunities to disadvantaged students to learn about tree inventory software, tree program management, geospatial, and LiDAR technology.

**Goal #4: Plant trees in partner organizations' jurisdictions within the Southern Oregon region in an equitable manner, with a goal of planting 1,000 trees annually.**

**Objective #1:** Utilize tree inventory data, GIS mapping data, socioeconomic data, and other sources to create a map of priority planting locations that takes into account equity considerations.

**Objective #2:** Establish a tree board or advisory panel for each partner organization, and guide them through a priority rating system that takes into account equity and sustainability considerations. This will help determine the planting areas and numbers for each planting season.

**Objective #3:** Contract with a local tree planting organization to assist with the installation of trees.

**Goal #5: Hire local tree care companies and arborists to maintain inventoried trees for partner organizations during the first 5 years after planting, using the inventory and equitable prioritization. This goal may be changed based on each partner organization's future capacity.**

**Objective #1:** Identify and assess local tree care companies and certified arborists in the region of each partner organization. Encourage the participation of women and minority-owned firms through mentorship, educational programs, and grant opportunities.

**Objective #2:** Create and manage competitive bid contracts for tree work identified by partner organizations, emphasizing sustainable practices and adherence to industry standards and safety guidelines.

**Objective #3:** Train contractors to inventory and report on the status of each tree and location using inventory software. Supervise the work of contractors to ensure quality control and

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compliance with contractual obligations, including collection and responsible disposal of green waste and wood debris.

**Goal #6: Establish a training program for partner organizations' staff, which may include an apprenticeship or certification program for arborists. The program will involve collaboration with various organizations, including the Pacific Northwest Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture (PNW-ISA), Oregon Community Trees (OCT), Oregon Department of Forestry Urban and Community Forestry Program (ODF UCF), and local community colleges.**

**Objective 1:** Partner organizations will identify their staffing needs and support the professional development of current staff or hire new qualified staff or outsource services to OURCF or other contractors to achieve program success.

**Objective 2:** Assess the educational needs of each partner organization to determine specific objectives required for program success.

**Objective 3:** Provide comprehensive professional development training for partner organization staff covering the basics of tree identification, entry-level tree biology, ecology, inventory software fundamentals, and basic tree pruning, planting, and maintenance techniques, focusing on disadvantaged populations. Intermediate level professional development training will also be provided to build on these basics and prepare for certified arborist training programs.

**Goal #7: Ensure through collaboration with ODF UCF Program reporting assistance and urban and community forestry advancement Tree City USA, Tree Campus USA, Tree Campus K-12, and Growth Award status for all partner organizations.**

**Objective #1:** Support partner organizations in their development and administration of urban and community forestry programs through education, training, and policy review. This includes utilizing the tree board framework to identify education and administrative assistance needs, creating a training program to pass down knowledge, and reviewing tree ordinances and policies.

**Objective #2:** Plan and coordinate annual arbor-month activities for each partner organization to engage the community in urban forestry initiatives.

**Objective #3:** Assist partner organizations in achieving recognition for their urban forestry programs through consolidating program activities and applying for Tree City USA, Tree Campus USA, K-12 Tree Campus USA, and Growth Awards.

**Goal #8: Establish a hub for urban wood utilization, comprising a showroom, program office, training center, and workshop.**

**Objective #1:** Construct versatile and sustainable structures using reclaimed urban and community wood. Utilize available program resources to design and construct these buildings.

**Objective #2:** Build connections and partnerships with local woodworking associations, school woodshops, or individuals capable of transforming urban wood into value-added goods that promote the OURCF's objectives.

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**Objective #3:** Develop and implement an urban wood utilization program that provides education and training to the community on the value of urban wood and how it can be repurposed for use in furniture, flooring, and other wood products. This program will also provide access to the hub's resources, such as the showroom and workshop, to allow community members to utilize the space and equipment to create their own urban wood projects.

**Goal #9: Establish an area for processing and utilizing compost, mulch, green waste, and bio-char, and lease an Air-Curtain Bio-char kiln for energy production.**

**Objective #1:** Use local resources to set up a composting program. Initially contract out the establishment of the program, with the aim of transitioning to a permanent self-sustaining on-site compost program in the future.

**Objective #2:** Lease an air-curtain burner system to produce bio-char and generate electricity.

**Objective #3:** Provide a local facility where homeowners, forestry professionals, landscapers, and arborists can dispose of wood waste.

**Goal #10: Provide educational and advocacy materials for free.**

**Objective 1:** Establish an in-house signage production system by investing in a sign-making CNC machine and supplies to produce cost-effective, high-quality signs.

**Objective 2:** Develop and produce statewide tree preservation and protection signs for critical root zone or tree protection areas, using the newly established in-house signage production system.

**Objective 3:** Create and produce statewide educational signage on topics such as habitat trees, ecological importance of trees, and historic or special interest trees, arboretums, or tree walks, using the newly established in-house signage production system. The educational materials will be available in multiple languages, including Spanish, and will be designed to promote cultural wisdom and knowledge, particularly in underprivileged and underserved communities.

**Goal #11: Organize annual educational events such as meetings, workshops, symposiums, conferences, and training sessions to advance urban forestry and arboriculture with a focus on underserved populations, including those in rural and socio economically depressed areas.**

**Objective #1:** Create a permanent, accessible, and welcoming education space and provide opportunities for leadership development for both internal and external tree boards.

**Objective #2:** Develop and execute high-quality educational programs, workshops, and classes for people at the local, regional, and statewide level, including professional development opportunities in arboriculture, horticulture, and urban forestry in Spanish.

**Objective #3:** Reach out to the Hispanic/Latino/Latinx community and migrant worker community to advocate for increased educational opportunities, and offer interpretive signage, educational materials, and other outreach efforts to promote awareness of tree-related issues and knowledge.



## 2. Implementation Strategy/Methodology/Timeline:

Provide a detailed explanation of the proposed approach, methodology, operations strategies, project schedule/timeline with goals/milestones, expected accomplishments or measurable outcomes, and project assessment/evaluation methods.

OUR Community Forestry is currently all volunteer. The Executive Director is presenting the proposed support program to City Councils, Boards, and Tribes weekly with the anticipation of having as many signed partnership agreements as possible in place by June 1st, 2023. Once funding is established and partnership agreements are in place OUR Community Forestry will scale quickly by hiring paid staff - job descriptions, compensation, and recruitment are all in process. Everyone currently on the OUR Community Forestry Team has vast and diverse experience working in urban forestry, the nursery industry, and arboriculture. We have several contract partners already engaged and committed to the success of this project, see section below on capability and capacity. Through our existing network of urban forestry professionals we can scale quickly to meet the challenges outlined in this plan.

The anticipated timeline for this project is engagement with 75 of 150 identified partner organizations within the next five years, an annual target of 15-20 urban forestry planning projects. OUR Community Forestry is organized as a worker self-directed non-profit. We use a collaborative, asset-based approach to decision-making, which aims to empower all members of the organization to influence the realms and programs in which they work, the conditions of their workplace, their own career paths, and the direction of the organization as a whole. Our sociocratic organizational structure of interconnectedness provides a method of governance that is effective, harmonious and collaborative. Each person on the team works on multiple projects in different phases of the plan. In this way we make meaningful progress with multiple large urban forestry plans concurrently with constant feedback and collaboration between partners and OUR Community Forestry. This sociocratic structure also allows us to be multifaceted and have many areas of expertise and various simultaneous deliverable products such as nursery production, compost & bio-char, tree inventory & planning, urban lumber, education & training, and tree planting & maintenance.

We will work with our partners to create legacy urban forestry master plans and support those plans through nursery production, compost & bio-char, tree inventory & planning, urban lumber, education & training, and tree planting & maintenance. We will measure our success by the standards of our collaborative partners at the ArborDay Foundation through the Tree City USA, Tree Campus USA, and Tree Campus K-12 USA programs. The ultimate goal is to help all of our partners become legacy urban forestry programs that report on their successes each year through the ArborDay Foundations programs. OUR Community Forestry will be a success if half of all 150 potential identified partners in Southern Oregon engage and foster legacy urban forestry programs. Tree planting and maintenance will be tracked and reported on annually with the goal to plant 1,000 1.5" - 2" caliper trees and maintain 10,000 trees annually. Nursery production will be tracked by the number of trees grown from nursery field to final planting site. The urban wood utilization will be tracked by linear board feet of usable lumber produced annually. The composting and bio-char operation will be tracked by cubic yards of compost created annually. All of the OUR Community Forestry programs will track and report on the ecological benefits of all trees under their purview for the life of the program - this means that

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every tree grown in the nursery, every tree planted, and every tree preserved will be tracked using tree plotter and i-tree software. This data will be collected and reported on annually to the USDA and ODF.

### 3. Capability and Capacity:

Describe how each contributing organization is suited for (mission) and qualified to deliver the project. Provide the names, titles, and organization affiliation and specific roles of key personnel for the project. Include qualifications and experience of key personnel to implement, monitor, and assess/report project outcome.

[Plant Oregon](#) - 50 years of experience in growing trees specializing in native, climate resilient, and drought tolerant species. Vast experience in restoration work, large scale urban tree planting projects of greater than 100 trees, urban lumber milling, compost creation, and large landscaping and irrigation projects. Plant Oregon will be responsible for leasing land and facilities to OUR Community Forestry and contract growing up to 2,500 trees annually. They will also be responsible for milling urban lumber, large scale tree planting projects, and compost/biochar operation.

[OUR Community Forestry](#) - The team at OUR Community Forestry has over 100 years of combined experience in urban forestry, arboriculture, nursery, and organizational development. Mike Oxendine is the founder and Executive Director and will lead the organization. He is also the current President of Oregon Community Trees. Mike has 20 years of experience in urban forestry and ecology with a passion for equity and environmental justice. His advisory team includes Dr. Geoffrey Donovan a leading urban forestry researcher and published author with the USFS, Chris John Board Certified Master Arborist and owner of Canopy LLC, Rachel White Science Delivery Specialist with the USFS, Scott Altenhoff Oregon Department of Forestry Urban and Community Forestry Program Manager, and Paul Ries

[Rogue Reconnaissance](#) - Eli and his team use cutting edge drones equipped with different data collection cameras including LiDAR to create data specific to urban forestry tree inventories that allows us to collect tree measurements with incredible accuracy and efficiency.

[Green Top Planning Development](#) - Nikki Hart-Brinkley is a GIS guru and has helped us generate a portfolio of reproducible data sets for each partner community. Data sets include heat island mapping, socio-economic data, lost canopy post disaster, community infrastructure, housing density, impervious/pervious surfaces, wildlife corridors, parks and open spaces, and many other important data layers.

[Oregon Department of Forestry Urban and Community Forestry Program](#) - ODF UCF program will assist by advising and reviewing program objectives and deliverables. They will also be the clearing house for data that will be used for Statewide reporting and provide software and education in collaboration with OUR Community Forestry.

[Oregon Community Trees](#) - State wide urban forestry advisory board that consists of up to 23 members from all around Oregon. They will serve in an advisory capacity and assist in dissemination of data and education.

### 4. Communications Plan:

Share your plans for communication on the project, including plans for 1) signage acknowledging the source of funding at project locations 2) inclusion of funding information in press and promotional materials.

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OUR Community Forestry is invested in storytelling and transparent sharing of our projects through social media, press releases, articles, presentations, signage, and advertising. We are prepared to create and provide all materials in house including signage and digital media. Signs will be installed at large project locations and partner agency headquarters following all local codes and appropriate channels.

### **5. Evidence of Disadvantaged Community Status for projects requesting Match Waiver (if applicable):**

Clearly describe the scope of work to be performed in disadvantaged communities, and identify online vulnerability and environmental justice equity data and/or tools referenced to support a disadvantaged community designation, (e.g., White House Council on Environmental Quality Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST), EPA Environmental Justice and Screening Mapping Tool (EJScreen), EPA EnviroAtlas Interactive Map, Opportunity Zones, or other vulnerability data/tools applicable to the scope of work). Multiple tools may be used. **All work must be tracked at the level that designates disadvantaged communities.**

All aspects of OUR Community Forestry work will be available to all of our project partners. All of our proposed project partners are in disadvantaged or underserved communities. Equity and inclusion will be the cornerstone of all Urban Forestry Master Plans and the data collected will identify the priority equity areas in each partner's jurisdiction. Tree planting and preservation efforts will be focused on the most disadvantaged areas identified through an equity scoring system. As stated above 47% of the total population in the three Counties covered under this project are identified by the CEJST as disadvantaged in at least one category. The entire Southern Oregon region is considered rural, a large percentage of the population are migrant and undocumented hispanic and latinx families. According to the EJScreen tool almost all of the identified potential project areas are considered low socioeconomic status from low income, unemployment, and age diversity. All of the areas are at a high risk for drought, wildfire, and have the associated health disparities from high levels of pm 2.5 air pollution from wildfire smoke.

We will report on environmental justice data and measure our success based on improved environmental justice scores in the following categories. Canopy coverage %, temperature at specific project sites, community survey data.



# Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor



**OREGON**  
**DEPARTMENT OF**  
**EDUCATION**

*Oregon achieves . . . together!*

**Colt Gill**

Director of the Department of Education

May 5, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) is proud to support the Oregon Department of Forestry's Urban and Community Forestry Program (ODF UCFP) and its non-profit partner, Oregon Urban Rural and Community Forestry (OUR Community Forestry), in guiding K-12 schools in Oregon to create and adopt campus forestry plans and become Tree Campus K-12 USA accredited campuses.

We know that the loss of trees in Oregon due to wildfires, drought, and pests like emerald ash borer highlights the need to grow and replant a diverse mix of trees in our state's K-12 school grounds. Trees provide ecological, economic, and social value to Oregon communities, promoting human health, saving energy, improving air and water quality, reducing flooding, buffering high heat events, and addressing historic and ongoing inequities.

We believe that trees are vital to our individual and communal well-being and future prosperity. Trees provide respite, joy, and social interaction, and have a positive impact on mental health and community resilience. Studies have shown that students with a view of trees from their classroom have improved learning success.

The Arbor Day Foundation and Project Learning Tree have long-standing proven program methodologies that ODF and OURCF will be utilizing and collaborating with to expand their benefits into the Oregon school system. We see this as an opportunity for Oregon to lead the way towards greener, more resilient, and safer school yards in the USA.

Therefore, the Oregon Department of Education fully supports the efforts of the Oregon Department of Forestry's Urban and Community Forestry Program and Oregon Urban Rural and Community Forestry.

Sincerely,

Colt Gill  
Director  
Oregon Department of Education

May 3, 2023

Joe Lessard  
City of Ashland  
20 E Main Street  
Ashland, OR 97520

Dear Mr. Lessard,

The Ashland Tree Advisory Committee (formerly the Ashland Tree Commission) is submitting this letter of support on behalf of the local 501 (C) (3) Not-For-Profit, Oregon Urban Rural and Community Forestry (OUR Community Forestry). OUR Community Forestry is applying for Inflation Reduction Act Grant funding to support their work. They have identified Ashland as a potential regional partner and beneficiary of their work. The grant proposal to support this work has a submission deadline of June 1st, 2023. OUR Community Forestry is requesting formal partnership agreements with Southern Oregon municipalities, tribes, and educational institutions.

As a Federal and State grant funded organization OUR Community Forestry is anticipating providing low to no cost support and solutions to their partners. Ashland doesn't have an urban forester or a public tree inventory. OUR Community Forestry can assist in developing a public tree inventory and creating an urban forestry master plan that would address important topics such as tree protection & preservation and related ordinances, climate resilience through species diversity, and categorize collect and disseminate ecological data that can be used to make informed decisions regarding Ashland's urban forest.

Trees play a vital role in the lives of all Ashlanders and as Southern Oregon experiences more frequent acute effects of climate change such as recurring droughts - over the past 23 years, 11 years have been declared extreme drought and this past year 2022 was rated as exceptional drought. These repetitive droughts are causing declining water availability from all sources. We are experiencing record heat in the summer, record droughts, and more numerous and intense wildfires that are causing continual late summer air quality issues due to wildfire smoke. Extreme heat and heat related illnesses kill more people every year worldwide than all other natural disasters combined. Many of these deaths can be prevented simply by planting and caring for the urban forest - particularly in disadvantaged, underserved, and underrepresented neighborhoods.

According to the White House's Justice40 initiative climate and economic justice screening tool Ashland has 1,972 residents that are considered disadvantaged, underserved, and underrepresented. OUR Community Forestry is dedicated first and foremost to helping equitably plant and maintain trees for the disadvantaged, underserved, and underrepresented neighborhoods. Please consider accepting OUR Community Forestry's request to present to the Ashland City Council and partnering with them to advance climate justice in Ashland.

Sincerely,

Ashland Tree MAC

To: Ashland City Council,

The Climate & Energy Policy Advisory Committee (CEPAC) is submitting this letter of support on behalf of the local 501 (C) (3) Not-For-Profit, Oregon Urban Rural and Community Forestry (OUR Community Forestry). OUR Community Forestry is applying for Inflation Reduction Act Grant funding to support their work. They have identified Ashland as a potential regional partner and beneficiary of their work. The grant proposal to support this work has a submission deadline of June 1st, 2023. OUR Community Forestry is requesting formal partnership agreements with Southern Oregon municipalities, tribes, and educational institutions.

OUR Community Forestry is dedicated to equitably advancing knowledge, support, and the ecological benefits of urban, rural, and community forestry in Oregon. They accomplish this through education, advocacy, data collection - analysis and dissemination, nursery production, tree planting, tree inventories, urban wood utilization, and the preservation and protection of existing healthy trees. Their work is targeted to empower their partners in disadvantaged, underserved, and underrepresented neighborhoods and communities. OURCF and their multi-jurisdictional partners are mission driven and aligned in the goals to improve climate resilience, decrease invasive species impacts, decrease urban heat islands, celebrate diversity, increase green infrastructure, foster conservation through preservation of natural resources, and restore and recover ecological services to urban and rural areas.

As a grant funded organization OUR Community Forestry provides low to no cost support and solutions to their partners. They are primarily focused on helping communities draft urban forestry master plans through the collection, analytics, and dissemination of ecological data. Their work aligns well with the Ashland Climate Energy Action Plan and will help Ashland better understand and report on how the urban forest provides carbon sequestration, stormwater management, improved air quality, and related human health and economical improvements for our community.

The Climate & Energy Policy Advisory Committee recommends the Ashland City Council accept a request from OUR Community Forestry to present to City Council and consider supporting a formal partnership with OUR Community Forestry to help advance Ashland's response to climate change.

Sincerely,

Brian Sohl  
Chair, Climate & Energy Policy Advisory Committee