

This is a time for a paradigm shift in our thinking about the future of Lithia Park.

Twenty one years ago when my family moved to Ashland, Lithia Park was indeed the "jewel" of Ashland. Wonderful conifer specimens, historic design, great picnic areas, stretches of clean, green lawns, a Japanese style garden, beautiful roses and annual flower gardens. It sparkled and tourists and locals reveled in its beauty.

Today some of the sparkle is gone and gardens lost, but the Japanese style garden remains with "good bones".

Before us now is an opportunity to take this garden and develop it into a truly authentic Japanese garden that will incorporate the many outstanding maple trees, evergreens and conifers that presently exist within the garden area and serve as a tourist destination and special place for Ashland citizens to relax, meditate and gain solace.

Please recognize this is a gift to the people of Ashland. The garden design submitted by renowned landscape architect Toro Tanaka, is stunning. Tanaka who appreciates the potential influence of climate change has included recycling (for the water features), and proposed the addition of plants that will have a good chance for long-term survival.

In recent discussions there has been a suggestion to shift the landscape design over 10 feet to allow two large Douglas fir trees (a vulnerable species) to remain. This will clearly have an impact on the integrity of the landscape design and most likely preclude incorporation of some of the existing plants, including mature maple trees that are critical to the proposed design.

The decision to sacrifice the two Douglas firs would be softened by the use of their wood in the construction of the Asian style wall designed to protect and enhance the Garden.

We suggest that this is a time for you as a Park's Commissioner and spokesperson for the general public to leave your personal biases on the table and consider making a decision for the greater good, for our beautiful Park and therefore our Community.

*Donna Rhee*

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