

May 26, 2018

Dear Parks Commissioners,

A proposal for a bike park in Ashland Creek Park envisions converting most of the land area of the Park into paved, impervious areas for use as bike pump tracks. The Ashland Creek Park Master Plan, developed based on an extensive public involvement process is explicit that Ashland Creek Park is intended as a space for a community garden, open space with native meadow grasses, walking trails, and a family playground and picnic area with minimization of impervious paving. The master plan also included accommodation for a meditation area.

Much of Ashland Creek Park is located within the 100-year floodplain and Ashland Creek Park abuts the sensitive riparian area of Ashland Creek. Ashland Creek is Ashland's most important natural resource and a critical headwater of Bear Creek and of the Rogue River.

Encroachment of and development in floodplains and in or near the riparian area, particularly those developments which introduce impervious surfaces, such as a multi-acre asphalt bicycle pump track facility are not appropriate within the Ashland Creek floodplain or near its riparian edges. The sculpting and raising of land areas within the floodplain is detrimental to the capacity of the floodplain to dissipate flood waters.

The master plan intended the planting of more trees along the creek to increase shade and filtration for the waterway, and to lower summer temperatures for improved fish habitat, which is greatly needed. The bike park proposal is contrary to the master plan and harmful to Ashland Creek and the community's natural resources. The City has an obligation to carry forward and protect the expressed interest of the community which was developed through an extensive public participation process. The community has clearly indicated a preference for sustainability and protection of its natural resources and open spaces.

Ashland Creek Park is the site of historic Native American encampments and is a Native American cultural site. Ashland Creek Park is adjacent to the site of the first sawmill in the Rogue Valley. Ashland Creek Park is located on the original Helman (Ashland founder) Land Claim tract. Helman and Jessie Applegate both camped near this location on their first visits to Ashland. The Applegate Trail crossed Ashland Creek near the current Hersey Street alignment at Ashland Creek Park's south entrance. Some of these cultural aspects of Ashland Creek Park were recently memorialized by a marker placed near the proposed bike park location. Clearly from a cultural resources and preservation standpoint, a modern bike park is inconsistent with and would diminish the setting of this historic location.

In December 2014, the City of Ashland adopted a resolution to become a BEE CITY USA. Ashland Creek Park has been designated a Pollinator Garden in partnership with BEE CITY USA, and the Pollinator Project Rogue Valley. Bees require access to native plants, a water source, and uncultivated/undeveloped areas to thrive. There are approximately a dozen registered bee hives shown on the City's beehive locator tool and surely many other native hives within foraging distance and that actively use Ashland Creek Park for forage and water. We observe bees daily accessing the meadows, community garden, and waters of Ashland Creek.

We feel that this proposal for the park is inconsistent with the community interest at large and is harmful to Ashland's natural, cultural, and open space resources and is also harmful to the Bear Creek Watershed at large. We believe that this proposal is unlikely to find support from sustainability advocates, cultural preservation interests, community gardeners within the park, bee conservation advocates, or other users of the park who routinely visit Ashland Creek Park from the broader community.

We respectfully request that you find a more appropriate location for the bike park that does not compromise vulnerable community resources.

Thank you,

Handwritten signatures in blue ink. The first signature is 'Ursula Webster' and the second is 'Marvin Webster'.

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