Exhibit "A"

Interviews and Other Reference Materials

To ensure a comprehensive understanding, this investigation gathered input from 60 individuals representing a wide array of professions and stakeholders. These included 23 municipal employees, 9 homebuilders, 8 elected officials, 4 utility companies, engineering experts (3 water, 3 civil, 2 landscape, 1 traffic), 6 homeowners lacking park strips, 2 attorneys, a regional planning firm, and the USPS. Further resident perspectives were captured through a NextDoor post that yielded 44 comments and additional emails. Here's a compilation of input that I received during my investigation:

1. Municipal Planners

- **Synopsis:** Planners generally favor park strips primarily for aesthetic reasons, desiring tree-lined streets, and for the enhanced perception of pedestrian safety they can offer. They see attractiveness and perceived safety as key benefits. However, they identify neglect and poor maintenance as significant problems that undermine these benefits, with some suggesting city or HOA maintenance as a potential solution. Gravel-filled park strips were specifically cited as aesthetically undesirable.
- **Direct Quotes:**
    - "Safety perception and attractiveness favor park strips. Neglect is the problem unless an HOA or the city maintains them."
    - "Gravel-filled park strips are too big a loss of aesthetics."
    - "Street trees add benefits to a community, and may enhance property values if they look nice. But the need for park strips goes away on slow speed, low traffic volume streets."
    - "We feel that they serve valuable purposes in our community and that the benefits outweigh the drawbacks. We recognize that some issues may arise, however there are sufficient remedies to mitigate any identified concerns or issues."

2. Municipal Public Works Employees

- **Synopsis:** Opinions with public works employees were divided on the necessity of park strips overall. However, there was strong consensus against having *trees* in park strips due to the significant costs associated with repairing sidewalk damage caused by tree roots (accounting for 70% of the sidewalk repair budget). They suggested eliminating street trees could solve most sidewalk problems. Hardscaping was presented as a functional, low-maintenance alternative, with landscaping considered optional from an engineering perspective. They also clarified that pushing snow onto park strips is not standard practice.
- **Direct Quotes:**
    - "Get rid of street trees and we'll resolve 80% of sidewalk problems."

- "We do not train for, or have a policy of pushing snow onto park strips on residential streets. Generally, we are pushing to the gutter. We don't intentionally push onto the park strip."
- "Hardscaping options, such as stamped and colored concrete, are equally effective and provide a low-maintenance, durable solution that supports Public Works requirements. From an engineering perspective, landscaping is optional and not essential for parkstrip functionality."

3. Municipal Public Utilities Employees

- **Synopsis:** While there was a healthy debate, Public Utilities employees generally felt park strips were unnecessary, citing drawbacks that outweighed benefits. There was notable concern about street trees causing root damage to sewer and water lines located within the park strip. Additionally, leaves from these trees clog storm drains, and bark mulch from xeriscaped strips presents similar issues. Xeriscaping itself was surprisingly viewed as difficult to maintain. Eliminating park strips would require relocating streetlights further from the road centerline, potentially necessitating 15-20% more lights for equivalent coverage. Low public interest in adding trees to park strips was also noted.
- **Direct Quotes:**
  - "Xeriscaped park strips are the hardest option to maintain."
  - "Of 96 park strips flipped through the state program, only 8 added trees (a few kept existing trees). A new $50 "tree-bate" was added recently [but is not available unless the park strip is 10" wide]."
  - "Street trees reduce the temperature on the sidewalk and the street, and increase curb appeal. But the leaves cause a problem for the storm drains."
  - "The City's standard is to locate streetlights in the park strip. If park strips were eliminated streetlights would be 7 to 8 feet farther from the centerline of the roadway. This extra distance would reduce coverage and would require about 15% to 20% more streetlights to be installed to meet the same lighting coverage."

4. Municipal Parks Employees

- **Synopsis:** Municipal Parks employees expressed opposition to park strips, primarily because *all* tree types eventually cause sidewalk damage when planted within them, a problem rarely seen when trees are planted behind the sidewalk. They highlighted the short lifespan (7-10 years) of street trees due to harsh conditions and noted that replacement tree vouchers require planting behind the sidewalk. One employee bluntly stated, "Stop building park strips." However, the Parks and Recreation Director acknowledged the broader positive impacts of well-designed streetscapes on community pride, property values, and public health.
- **Direct Quotes:**
  - "Stop building park strips."

    - "Our "approved list" of street trees is just better, not perfect."
    - "Street trees have an expected life span of only 7-10 years."
    - "Well-designed and maintained streetscapes can foster community pride and increase property values, benefiting residents economically. A walkable environment promotes healthier lifestyles, leading to decreased healthcare costs and a more active population."

5. Local Homebuilders

- **Synopsis:** Homebuilders strongly advocated for eliminating park strips, viewing them as an unnecessary construction expense that adds little functional value and contributes to the housing affordability crisis. While acknowledging the desirability of shade trees, they preferred planting them behind the sidewalk. They indicated they only include park strips when mandated by a city.
- **Direct Quotes:**
    - "This is forward-thinking and a great idea as long as you still require trees, and widen the sidewalk. This helps with the affordability crisis as park strips are a cost waste."
    - "Lot prices are too high to spend money on a park strip that isn't useful. It adds unnecessary cost to a home."
    - "We never build park strips unless the city requires it."
    - "I discussed Cyndi Sharkey's concept of eliminating park strips in new residential subdivisions with my staff. It was the liveliest staff meeting we've ever had."

6. Local Utility Companies

- **Synopsis:** Utility companies expressed a preference for eliminating park strips. They favor locating utility connections behind the sidewalk, away from potential damage near the road, conflicts with tree roots, and issues like snow burying fire hydrants located in park strips.
- **Direct and Paraphrased Quotes:**
    - *(Paraphrasing)* Preference is to have their utility connections back of sidewalk, not close to the road, or competing with tree roots in park strip. Above-ground utility connections get damaged more easily in the park strip. Fire hydrants get buried in the snow when in park strips.
    - "Tree roots and water or sewer lines don't mix."

7. Water Engineering and Consulting Firms

- **Synopsis:** These firms stated directly that park strips serve no necessary function, including for purposes related to stormwater management or drainage.
- **Paraphrased Quotes:**

    - *(Paraphrasing)* No need for park strips, not even for storm water retention or drainage.

8. Traffic Engineering Experts

- **Synopsis:** Traffic engineers saw no pedestrian safety concerns with eliminating park strips on local streets. They pointed out negatives associated with park strip trees, such as obstructing driver visibility (site triangles) and branches being hit by trucks. They also noted that residents request sidewalks, but not park strips.
- **Paraphrased Quotes:**
    - *(Paraphrasing)* No pedestrian safety issue (car will not jump sidewalk at local street speeds). Street trees can cause site triangle/visibility problems. Branches from street trees are hit by trucks. City often receives resident requests for sidewalks, but never for park strips.

9. Civil Engineers

- **Synopsis:** Civil engineers highlighted practical drawbacks of park strips. They noted it's preferable for passengers exiting parked cars to step onto a sidewalk rather than a park strip. They also reiterated that street trees damage not only sidewalks but also the adjacent curb and gutter.
- **Paraphrased Quotes:**
    - *(Paraphrasing)* Passenger in parked car would prefer to step in and out onto sidewalk than park strip. Street trees damage not only sidewalk, but also curb and gutter.

10. Municipal Fire Employees

- **Synopsis:** Municipal fire employees preferred not having street trees in park strips because they can obstruct firefighting efforts from the street. Setting trees further back (behind the sidewalk) allows for easier deployment of ladders and equipment.
- **Paraphrased Quotes:**
    - *(Paraphrasing)* street trees can create barriers for fighting house fires from the street. Trees set further back from street makes it easier to deploy ladders. Otherwise, parking in driveway or non-truck mounted ladders are required.

11. Elected Officials

- **Synopsis:** Elected officials raised concerns about the fairness and complexity of homeowner maintenance responsibilities for city-owned park strips, noting inconsistencies between municipalities. Prominent officials voiced strong support for eliminating park strips in new developments, citing benefits such as cost savings

(contributing to affordable housing), water conservation, environmental advantages, and more efficient land use.

- **Direct Quotes:**
  - “I support Council Member Sharkey’s proposal to discontinue the building of park strips in residential developments. I intend to open a bill file to enact this change on a statewide basis as it provides multiple benefits including water, environmental, and cost savings.” – Utah House District 42 Representative Clint Okerlund
  - "Eliminating unnecessary park strips promotes affordable housing and efficient land use. We need more common sense solutions like this to create housing for our kids and grandkids." – Steve Waldrip, Governor’s Senior Advisory for Housing Strategy

12. Homeowners and Residents

- **Synopsis:** Homeowner and residents feedback was varied, but a significant number expressed dissatisfaction or preference for not having park strips. Common complaints included the difficulty and unexpected effort required for maintenance (especially weed control in rock/xeriscaped areas), tripping hazards caused by tree roots lifting sidewalks, the perceived waste of space, and the poor health/appearance of many street trees. Some residents felt safer walking in the street than on uneven sidewalks damaged by park strip trees. While some suggested the city should take over maintenance, others supported eliminating them in new construction. A minority viewpoint advocated for better landscaping choices within park strips rather than elimination.
- **Direct Quotes:**
  - “Over many years, we have lived in homes with a parking strip and homes without a parking strip. In our opinion, we feel the parking strip is a waste of space and property. Last time we moved, one of the requirements was no parking strip… We live on a street that has no parking strip and we love it… we regularly comment that we do not like walking on the sidewalks on that street as they are uneven due to tree roots… We walk in the street there, as it is safer than the sidewalk.”
  - “The city should pay to pave/cement them all. Make more safe space for runners, bikers, walkers. The rocks and weeds look terrible.”
  - “No park strips. We put down weed barriers before putting the stone down, but weeds are popping up anyway.”
  - “The city spends so much to stick oversized trees in park strips just so they can raise the sidewalks and die from lack of water. Many park strip trees are in bad shape.”
  - “[Xeriscaped] Park strips are harder to take care of. Once the weeds grow you have to pull weeds out of the rocks then spray. Several people don't do it. It's harder for older people.”

- "Assuming you would shift the sidewalks against the street and not create additional concrete then I think no park strips is the ideal way to go. Great solution for new developments but not likely a viable option for pre-existing park strips."
- "I got my grass dug out, weed barrier and rocks in - hoping it would be maintenance free. It's filled with weeds now."
- "Weeds survive without water. Horticultural plants do not… seeds get into the mulch or rocks from wind, birds and other animals… They will sprout as soon as it rains and then live on."
- "Park Strips can be beautiful & drought tolerant. Please educate our residents about alternatives to heat generating rock landscapes. Thank you for your attention to this."
- "The problem isn't the park strip it's the maintenance required… I say if it is such a problem… make the city maintain park strips."

13. Other Sources (USPS, Transportation Research)

- **Synopsis:** These sources provided related context but not direct opinions on eliminating park strips. The USPS noted a preference for community mailboxes in new developments. Transportation research suggests that while landscape buffers (like park strips) might make pedestrians *feel* safer, there's currently a lack of evidence proving they *actually* increase safety compared to factors like vehicle speed and volume. The presence of a sidewalk itself is a key factor for walking and perceived safety.
- **Direct Quotes:**
  - "We do ask that all new larger developments in Sandy have a community box set up for the residents. It does come down to the decision on the Postmaster though of the post office." – Sandy USPS
  - "While [a landscape buffer] does seem to provide a higher sense of security for pedestrians along heavily traveled collectors and arterial streets, there is no evidence that the tree lawn actually increases the safety of the pedestrian. For this reason, provision of a tree lawn should be considered carefully". – Texas Department of Transportation
  - "The existence of sidewalks significantly affected all walking and perception of pedestrian safety variables… speed of motor vehicle traffic… frequency of motor vehicles passing pedestrians… were found to be significant factor[s] in pedestrian discomfort." – The Effects of Pedestrian Environments on Walking Behaviors and Perception of Pedestrian Safety, 2021

Which Group(s) Entirely, or In-part, Supported the Concept of Eliminating Park Strips in Favor of a Curb-Adjacent Sidewalk Streetscape, and Why?

Several groups explicitly or implicitly supported eliminating park strips, replacing them with curb-adjacent sidewalks for various reasons:

1. **Municipal Parks Employees (In-part):** Primarily due to the inevitability of sidewalk damage from trees in park strips and the short lifespan of those trees. They recommended planting trees behind sidewalks instead.
2. **Local Homebuilders:** Due to the unnecessary construction costs, impact on housing affordability, and perceived lack of value or purpose.
3. **Local Utility Companies:** To avoid conflicts between their infrastructure (water, sewer, hydrants, connections) and tree roots, snow burial, and potential damage near the roadway.
4. **Water Engineering and Consulting Firms:** Stated park strips serve no necessary function, including for stormwater.
5. **Traffic Engineering Experts:** Cited lack of proven safety benefit, visibility issues caused by trees, damage to trees by trucks, and lack of public demand for park strips.
6. **Municipal Fire Employees:** Preferred trees set back from the road (implying no park strip trees) for easier access with firefighting equipment.
7. **Elected Officials:** Supported elimination for cost savings, affordable housing, efficient land use, water conservation, and resolving homeowner maintenance issues.
8. **Homeowners and Residents (In-part):** Many preferred elimination due to maintenance burdens (especially weeds), tripping hazards from damaged sidewalks, perceived wasted space, and poor tree health.
9. **Civil Engineers:** Highlighted inconvenience for car passengers and damage to curbs/gutters by street trees.
10. **Municipal Public Works Employees (In-part):** While opinions on strips varied, the strong opposition to trees *in* strips (due to massive sidewalk repair costs) implies support for designs without tree-filled park strips.
11. **Municipal Public Utilities Employees (In-part):** Concerns over utility line damage, storm drain clogging, and difficult maintenance suggest support for elimination.
12. **Municipal Planners (In-part):** Gravel-filled park strips were specifically cited as aesthetically undesirable.

The primary reasons recurring across these groups include: **cost** (construction, repair, maintenance), **infrastructure conflicts** (sidewalks, curbs, utilities), **maintenance burdens** (weeds, tree care), **safety/access issues** (tripping hazards, visibility obstruction, fire access), **Aesthetics**, and a perceived **lack of functional necessity or value** compared to the problems they create.