

EWEB RIVERFRONT MASTER PLAN
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN
June 2009 - May 2010

INTRODUCTION

The EWEB Riverfront Master Plan offers a pivotal opportunity to revision the downtown riverfront. The process by which EWEB and the City of Eugene arrive at a master plan for the EWEB property is an important ingredient for a successful outcome, and it is well recognized that the public's role in the overall process is central.

The Public Engagement process has multiple objectives. It must develop:

1. High-quality public input into the **design process**.
2. High-quality input into the **decision-making equation**.
3. An environment of stable **community support** for the project.

To be successful, the public's engagement in the planning process must be:

Meaningful: input will be timely and have the opportunity to affect outcomes

Accountable: people will have the opportunity to know how their input was used

Inclusive: reach for input beyond those who regularly attend downtown meetings

Transparent: decisions are public and materials are available on the website

Realistic: educated about the project constraints, objectives, and parameters

Outcome-oriented: purpose of public process is to achieve an adopted plan

The public engagement process will be conducted according to the Core Values of the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). The three most critical assurances of process integrity are 1) to ask before we begin if our plan will meet people's needs, 2) to only ask for input when it can have an impact, and 3) to report back to the public how and why decisions were made.

Decisions and Roles

In 2008, the City of Eugene and EWEB Board of Commissioners appointed a nine-member Citizen Advisory Team (CAT): Anita Van Asperdt, Dave Hauser (co-chair), Thomas Hoyt, Mark Johnson, Pat Johnston (co-chair), Desiree Moore, Dean Pape, Mary Unruh and Gary Wildish. Together with the consultant team and EWEB staff, the CAT is responsible for studying the issues, engaging the public, and making recommendations to the EWEB Board of Commissioners at specific points in the master planning process. The EWEB Board of Commissioners has final say on the adoption of the Riverfront Master Plan.

After gaining approval from the EWEB Board, the adopted Riverfront Master Plan must be approved by the City before any redevelopment, land use application, rezoning, Metro Plan or refinement diagram amendments are approved for uses

not associated with EWEB functions. The Master Plan will be evaluated based on its consistency with the four principles outlined in the 2004 Downtown Plan.

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN

The basic elements of the 10-month Public Engagement Plan are:

- 60 Individual and Paired Interviews (Phase 1)
- Three Group Interviews addressing Transportation, Development and Arts/Cultural Interests (Phase 1)
- Two Focus Groups addressing Site Ecology and Sustainable Urbanism (Phase 2)
- Four Community Events to present and gather input from the public for the Master Plan. These events are termed “Open Houses” in the MOU. (Phases 3-6)
- Outreach Beyond Public Meetings (ongoing)
- Communications Plan (ongoing)

Interviews and Group Interviews

Interviews can help to shape the public engagement process and educate the Design Team on technical and community issues before diving in. It utilizes local expertise and results in a more efficient process. The interview phase has many objectives:

1. Explain the project to a diverse group of community leaders
2. Ensure we have a public process that will work for people
3. Listen to ideas and concerns for the Riverfront site and master planning process
4. Clarify technical questions and assumptions for future research
5. Learn how to communicate with people's constituencies (newsletters, guest speaker, high volume events)
6. Establish communication with other processes that impact this project

The Design Team developed a list of 163 names for this foundational stage. The interviews will produce many more connections that we will aim to incorporate in the design process.

Group interviews will address Transportation, Arts/Culture and Development Issues. The Transportation Group will consider multi-modal transportation and site access challenges. The Development Group will give insight into the potential value and uses from a private sector perspective. The Arts/Culture Group will discuss ways the master plan might incorporate our local culture and history.

Focus Groups

Focus Groups, ranging from ten to thirty participants, tap the insight and knowledge of local experts and advocates to help address specific project challenges. The Design Team can get feedback on assumptions and help on problems. Participants will learn more about the site to expand the pool of people who can be articulate about the complexities, and will contribute their best thinking to the process of setting realistic project goals and parameters.

Focus group topics are Site Ecology and Sustainable Urbanism. The Focus Groups will bring together people with specific areas of expertise and the interested public. Each Focus Group will be held in a group discussion format that will allow the Design Team and community to gather knowledge about the site and discuss critical issues that have bearing on the EWEB Master Plan.

The Site Ecology focus group will look closely at the Willamette River's edge, riparian habitat, existing conditions, restoration potential, and natural and man-made forces that influence the EWEB site. The ecological role/potential of the Millrace will also be discussed.

The Sustainability Focus Group will look at how activities on the EWEB site can better support and integrate with the natural environment and how activities here can support Eugene's sustainability goals (e.g., livability, energy use, open space, transportation, etc.). This group will address Eugene's sustainability goals, how these goals might affect the EWEB Master Plan, and the opportunities for sustainable redevelopment and green infrastructure that stem from this project.

All invited to the Focus Groups will receive a project update that will show how their input affected the outcome to date. Why did some ideas move forward, while others seem to have dropped off the table? We will take the time to explain research results and decisions made. We will also invite their ongoing participation and ask them to help us to expand the circle for the next phase of public engagement.

Establish Project Objectives, Program & Parameters

Input and lessons learned from the Focus Groups, Interviews and Group Interviews will be analyzed and reported to the CAT to help them determine the project program, objectives, and project parameters. By this point, EWEB, the CAT and the Design Team need to be able to articulate the range of possibilities open for exploration and explain the facts of site and political constraints. This step is critical to ensuring that the large public events are meaningful and realistic.

At this stage, the project will implement a communications strategy to share information, stimulate creative and realistic thinking, and invite the full community to participate in the Four Community Meetings.

Four Community Meetings on Design

There will be four large community meetings during the Master Plan's development. The recruitment effort will be vigorous with goals of inclusion and warm welcome for first-time participants. The meeting schedule is designed so that the CAT will have the opportunity to consider public input before making important decisions about the direction of the Master Plan.

Meeting #1: Visioning Charrette (October 2009)

Meeting #2: Multiple Design Options (November 2009)

Meeting #3: Input on Chosen Design Option (February 2010)

Meeting #4: Open House Celebration of Final Scheme (May 2010)

All participants will receive project updates to report project progress, explain how their input affected decisions, and invite them to the next event. The CAT and Design Team will work to make their decisions accountable to community input and the technical facts and transparent to the public.

Diversity

Accessibility Community

Throughout the process, we will use the principles of Universal Design, an approach to the design of all products and environments to be as usable as possible by as many people as possible regardless of age, ability or situation. Universal Design accommodates people with disabilities, older people, children, and others who are non-average in a way that is not stigmatizing and benefits all users.

The seven principles of Universal Design are:

1. Equitable Use
2. Flexibility in Use
3. Simple and Intuitive Use
4. Perceptible Information
5. Tolerance for Error
6. Low Physical Effort
7. Size and Space for Approach and Use

Using these principles as a filter when designing the public meetings will help reduce barriers to participation. In addition, we will work with the City of Eugene Human Rights Commission Accessibility Committee and the Lane Independent Living Alliance to shape creative outreach and participation methods for people with disabilities in accordance with Americans with Disability Act meeting requirements. These groups will help articulate and incorporate Universal Design principles into the process and final plan.

Young Adults

A glance around a typical public meeting shows that middle-aged and retired citizens far outnumber youth in terms of involvement. However, the foundation of community engagement is built by teaching young people about the value of democracy through real-world projects. To increase the number of young adults participating in the EWEB Riverfront Master Plan, we will actively work with:

- High school teachers involved in government, ecology, internships, and drafting.
- High school students interested in community service.
- College students involved in student outreach services, public affairs, planning, and architecture.
- Young adult organizations.

Establishing a connection with the teachers and helping them gain an understanding of the project is essential. Before students attend the charrette or other public events, it may also be helpful for a member of the project team to participate in an in-class discussion, answer questions, and explain the context of the project. It is also important to welcome the students to the event and help them connect with the CAT and other community leaders. Outreach to young adults through identified civic organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce's Young Professional Network, will be facilitated by CAT member contacts. Finally, sending the young adult participants updates about how their input affected the final outcome helps them to value the democratic process.

Communities of Color

Racial diversity among the participants in this process will not happen without active effort. We seek to reach out to all of Eugene's communities of color by getting referrals and extending personal invitations to the four large public meetings via email and phone. Recruitment efforts for the four public meetings will include outreach at supermarkets, Longhouses, churches and social service agencies. University of Oregon and Lane Community College have numerous student organizations and several multicultural centers that will also be cultivated for outreach.

In addition, attention will be given to identifying organizations and gathering places that serve communities of color, and opportunities will be pursued for outreach and engagement with speakers or staffed displays.

This site has a particular history with our African American community. It was one of the few places African Americans were allowed to have homes, and then later those families were forced to move. This gives special significance to thoughtful outreach to the African American community in visioning the future of this place in Eugene.

Our goals also include incorporating a new, but growing sector of our population: Latino first time meeting-goers. Outreach will be focused through St. Mary's Church and the Transiciones Program at Lane Community College. To promote

success, suggestions included using fliers to make people aware of the meetings, personally telling people that their participation will be welcomed, having a known community leader present, and providing childcare, food and translation.

Early interviews with constituents of various communities of color showed a willingness to participate if people feel welcomed, and understand how this project will directly impact them and their communities.

Outreach Beyond Meetings

The CAT will be available to attend meetings of civic organizations to provide updates on the project and gather input relevant to that stage of the project. The Design Team will provide CAT members with a presentation outline with supporting graphics, a survey instrument to collect ideas and input, and a sign up sheet to receive electronic project updates.

The CAT will staff a project display at selected high volume community venues to reach out to non-meeting goers. This provides an informal setting for one-on-one conversations to share project information and gather opinions relevant to the specific stage of the process. Names and emails will be collected so people can receive updates of project progress. Examples of events the project might choose to attend are the Eugene Celebration, Holiday Market, Nutcracker Ballet at the Hult Center, First Friday Art Walk, Green Home Show, and University of Oregon events.

Public Project Website: www.eugeneriverfront.com

Rowell Brokaw Architects has donated the development and maintenance of a user-friendly public project website for the Riverfront Master Plan—to ensure that accurate information is always available to anyone interested in the project and its progress. This website will have a project library of design materials, images, maps, reports, meeting minutes, a schedule of upcoming meetings, and a way for people to submit comments or request a presentation to their community group(s). The website will also have a mass email capacity to interface with a large database of interested parties. This will allow the project team to send project updates to interested parties throughout the master planning process and for individuals who miss specific public meetings or events to remain connected with the project.

Communications

It is important that we are timely and conscious about using media to communicate with the public. Media advisories (informal press briefings) can be scheduled prior to each large public meeting to educate the public about the EWEB riverfront issues to be addressed and invite participation. Guest Opinions can be submitted to our newspapers with the same goals.

We will also submit articles to EWEB and City of Eugene publications, and to many other community organization newsletters. For example, the Chamber of Commerce is willing to place project information in their publications.

All media work will include our website URL as a way people can always submit comments, ask question, and get personally connected.

CONCLUSION

The CAT believes that public involvement is an essential ingredient for project success. They are committed to the ideals of a public process that is meaningful, accountable, inclusive, transparent and realistic. There is a commitment to ask realistic questions and to listen and consider the input received. The combination of well-run community meetings, media communication, and outreach at high volume events is an effective strategy to engage Eugene in this important planning effort.



Downtown Riverfront Master Plan
Project Schedule + Process Diagram

May 2009 June July August September October November December January 2010 February March April May June

