

EWEB Riverfront Master Plan Community Advisory Team (CAT)

Wednesday, January 27, 2010, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

EWEB Board Room

Present: Dave Hauser, Tom Hoyt, Mark Johnson, Pat Johnston, Desiree Moore, Dean Pape', Mary Unruh, Anita Van Asperdt, and Gary Wildish, members; Bob Cassidy, EWEB Commissioner; Jeannine Parisi and Debra Smith, EWEB staff; Greg Brokaw, Lorri Nelson, Kaarin Knudson and John Rowell, Rowell Brokaw Architects; Derek Lee of PWL Partnership (via Skype); Ellen Teninty, T'NT Consultants; Tom Larsen and Nan Laurence, City of Eugene; Vicki Maxon, Recorder; Tom Brandt, Bob Hart, Drew Johnson, Kevin Matthews, Tom Snyder and David Sonnichsen, public.

Site Walk and Debrief (occurred between 4:00 and 5:30 p.m.)

CAT members shared their observations from the tour and voiced appreciation for the opportunity to “ground truth” the single design concept.

Ellen Teninty gave an overview of recent public engagement opportunities, including two Rotary presentations, and tabling at the MLK Celebration and a Bike/Pedestrian Summit at Sheldon Community Center.

3. Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review

Dave Hauser welcomed the group.

Jeannine Parisi explained that there will be more time allotted for agenda item #7 regarding the CAT decision-making process, and that agenda items #10 and #11 require CAT direction to the design team regarding stormwater and building mass/height review, but not consensus at this meeting.

4. Minutes Approval

The January 13 minutes were approved.

5. Comments from the Audience/CAT Comment

David Sonnichsen told the CAT that he contacted City of Eugene Parks & Open Space about the proposed bridge, and was surprised to learn that neither EWEB nor the design team had made contact with that department regarding a new bridge landing on Alton Baker Park property. He wondered why another bridge is needed when the Frohnmayer and DeFazio bridges already exist. He added that he has learned that a coordinated planning group is recommending a new bike/pedestrian bridge connection in Glenwood, and that the new I-5 bridge project calls for a bike/pedestrian bridge made out of recycled construction materials from the existing detour bridge, and that it will route bicyclists onto the south bank of the Willamette River. He said he would like to focus on a functional connection to Springfield, and thinks the proposed bridge to

Alton Baker Park only amounts to an ornament. In closing, he reiterated that he is concerned that no one from EWEB or the design team has talked to anyone at City of Eugene Parks & Open Space and that this bridge won't remedy a transportation deficit. He asked the design team to stop promoting the bridge as part of their design.

Kevin Matthews said he would like to tag on to David Sonnichsen's opposition to the proposed bridge and that he realizes that it appeared in a previous charrette scheme, but that it seems arbitrary as other ideas from the charrette were not carried forward. He said he believes the CAT has bigger things to worry about and that the bridge proposal should be dropped. He said his second concern is that there seems to be some kind of snafu around CAT meeting agendas and that those agendas should be made available to the public before the day of the meeting. He noted that most planning processes in the community mail out their agendas to an interested parties group ahead of time, which allows the public to prioritize whether or not they will attend. He closed by saying that the public who make an effort to attend CAT meetings are the most informed and most dedicated to this project, and a timely agenda would help them better participate in the process.

Dean Pape' asked for confirmation regarding the status of the bridge. John Rowell replied that Bart Johnson (ecological consultant) had said that the location in Alton Baker Park was a good habitat area and that the CAT should be aware of such potential impacts. Dean reiterated that the CAT has not said that the bridge is something that will be done, even though it was formerly a part of the plans.

Anita Van Asperdt commented that she supported including the footbridge concept and that the new bridge and the DeFazio Bridge would be the two arms that would embrace Alton Baker Park and thus make it part of the downtown.

Pat Johnston recommended that the bridge be removed from the plan, and that in recommending boundaries for the project area, if it is left out of the project area, who knows where it might end up. She said that area may eventually include Oregon Research Institute (ORI) and other technological company property, but it is her opinion that the CAT doesn't want to be part of that.

Mark Johnson commented that parks are mainly for people, and that a bridge provides for better access to parks in order for more people to use them. He said he believes a bridge is one option to bring people to the site, thus creating more opportunity for green space and connectivity to the things that people use. He noted that part of the master plan includes how the property connects to other areas, ORI, downtown, etc., and that this proposal is no different in concept than anything else the CAT has been working on. Anita Van Asperdt agreed.

Nan Laurence commented that the master plan requires options for connections to downtown, and that there is also a requirement to show how EWEB property connects to adjacent property, and that the bridge is just one option.

Dave Hauser noted that, due to time constraints, this discussion needs to be continued at a future meeting. John Rowell agreed. Tom Larsen noted that the right of way connection to the south is important to think about as part of that future discussion.

6. Riverfront Ecological Analysis and Design

In response to a comment from Desiree Moore at the previous CAT meeting, Debra Smith (in Mark Oberle's absence) explained that she had approved a small contract outside of the CAT budget for ecological consultants as an opportunity to gain knowledge about riparian issues, and even information regarding location of a bridge. She added that even though it wasn't in the original scope of work, the work will help EWEB gain confidence in the design and its relationship to the river, and given the focused nature of the study and the expertise involved, she thought it was a good investment.

Ellen Teninty added that the ecology consulting team will give a presentation at the February 10 CAT meeting.

Desiree Moore replied that her only issue was that she didn't know that the consultants had been hired until they attended the previous CAT meeting, and that she would have liked to have received that information ahead of time. Debra Smith assured Desiree that EWEB staff is committed to sticking with the project budget that was approved at the beginning of the process.

Desiree asked why only this segment of the design process was highlighted when other cuts had been made and not highlighted. John Rowell replied that during contract negotiations with EWEB it was agreed that no technical studies or additional consultants would be included. But given the complexity of the topic, the design team recommended to EWEB that an ecological analysis be completed.

Debra Smith added that EWEB has an ongoing relationship with the river that needs to be maintained, and that this is one area that needs extra work for this process. Desiree replied that she wants to make sure that economic feasibility is still in mind if we need to invite more experts to the table. Debra said that asking questions about limited resources is always appropriate, and that she appreciated Desiree's concern.

7. Process Discussion

Referring to an e-mail that Pat Johnston sent to CAT members and staff, Jeannine Parisi acknowledged that the CAT has reviewed a lot of material in the last couple of meetings, and thanked the design team for all their hard work. She summarized her understanding of the issues raised in the e-mail; that the CAT is moving too quickly on making decisions and that CAT members don't have enough time to really think through and discuss those decisions. She reminded the CAT that they are working toward a single revised design option to take to the EWEB Board and also to shop around to various constituent groups for refinement. She said she wanted the CAT to feel good about the process and that this is a good time to see if other

members are feeling rushed through decisions. Jeannine added that EWEB staff would be willing to add another meeting or two if needed, but that there is not money left in the budget for more design work or consultant time.

Debra Smith added that Pat did a great job in the e-mail of expressing how she felt and that staff needs to know how others are feeling.

The following comments were made by various CAT members:

- Sometimes things get dropped at the end of the meeting and not brought back at the beginning of the next – maybe we need an “Old Business” item at the beginning of each meeting
- CAT concerns often get recorded but we don’t know when they will be addressed again
- Comfortable with seeing the whole picture and a discussion before we make a final decision – maybe look at our original value statements and grade how we’ve done on those.
- We agree on an awful lot – probably 95% of the time—and I’m comfortable with the process and where we are
- This is my first experience with this type of group, but I feel comfortable. I believe we are all strong enough people to ask questions or ask for more information. I appreciate the more relaxed process.

Pat Johnston commented that the CAT makes decisions and the design team follows their lead, because that’s their job. She noted that the CAT did develop design guidelines at the beginning of the process, and that she wonders about the value of taking the original grading sheets and seeing how close the design is to the original value choices that were made. She added that she worries about investing more money when there is a possibility that not all the CAT members are on the same page, but that this is just one idea.

Anita Van Asperdt replied that since the principles were adopted, even more was learned through the design process, and that she didn’t want the CAT to feel overly constrained by values meant to guide the design process. She added the design team always invites CAT members to meet with them if they had questions or comments, and that it is her feeling that it is a CAT member’s responsibility to speak up if they feel the process is going too fast. She ended by saying that she is happy with the process and the fact that the design team makes themselves so available.

Tom Hoyt commented that he has listened to John Rowell’s design presentation at two large public meetings in the last week, and that the presentation clearly lays out nine guidelines and goes through them in detail. He said that there is a wide diversity between ecology and economic profit, and that explaining that to over 250 people successfully and in a way that is honest, sincere and balanced is quite an undertaking. He added that he feels the CAT has done a very good job of identifying and meeting objectives, and that he feels that the CAT has done an adequate job of addressing open space, habitat, etc.

Jeannine Parisi said that she heard two process improvement suggestions: 1) add an Old Business item to the CAT agenda and revisit more explicitly the outstanding issues as part of the next meeting; and 2) spend some time comparing the Guiding Principles against the single design.

Debra Smith suggested putting those items up on a parking lot (flipchart) at the end of each meeting and then design the next agenda from that parking lot list.

John Rowell noted that the CAT meeting before the upcoming Board meeting will be spent in looking at the big picture and assuring that the CAT is confident that the framework is on track.

Pat Johnston commented that she doesn't think that is something that the design team needs to do, but that the CAT should speak from their own values. John Rowell noted that his team writes Guiding Principle statements all the time and that they're meant to be used as a checkpoint.

Debra Smith asked for confirmation that what she is hearing is that the CAT is not interested in the design team coming back to tell them about meeting criteria, but that they are interested in CAT members making an assessment, and that possibly that could be done in advance of a meeting. Gary Wildish suggested that members not only evaluate how closely the design meets each principle, but how important that particular principle is in their mind.

Dave Hauser asked what would happen if there is a huge departure after that assessment is made.

Jeannine Parisi replied that staff doesn't need to go to the EWEB Board with unanimity, and that the Board can be informed about differences that can be tested with the public on March 3.

Dean Pape' said he is hearing a desire for an extended meeting, and he wondered if an executive session for CAT members only would be a possible avenue for discussion.

Jeannine Parisi replied that she and Mark Oberle had discussed timing for a process-oriented meeting and that February 24 might work because the public meeting has been postponed. She added that staff is trying to be conscious of CAT members' personal time and that they have already asked for many more meetings than originally planned.

Dean Pape' said that he would prefer to make sure this checkpoint is carried out and that there is a feeling of consensus for both the CAT and the community that the CAT represents.

Ellen Teninty said that she understood that the February 10 CAT agenda includes the ecologic analysis presentation and its effect on design, and also the need for a bigger discussion about massing, height, etc., which are two fairly large topics.

Jeannine Parisi asked if CAT members are okay with having staff check with the design team and CAT co-chairs regarding scheduling this meeting by February 24. The CAT said they are.

Gary Wildish encouraged the CAT to use the 1-5 rating, but also to ask themselves whether all the topics are worthy of the same grade. He added that he thinks that rating them will be valuable in showing the CAT just how much they've accomplished and where more attention might be needed.

Mary Unruh said she thought that the assessment would be useful as part of the process and also for prioritizing it for themselves.

Dave Hauser commented that the grading process shouldn't be over-engineered and that the group is talking about mostly qualitative, not quantitative issues. He added it would be helpful to simply know how each person is feeling, and whether or not the CAT is on target relative to goals.

Debra Smith said that it is an intuitive process, and that when the CAT meetings first started, the group chose consensus as a preferred way for approval, with majority vote as a backup. She explained that if someone feels they can only live with a particular element, it wouldn't be given a 5, and that it is whether or not they can live with it that is important to determine minority views and whether or not consensus can be reached.

Tom Hoyt commented that he came to this meeting thinking that the group would be asked for consensus tonight.

Ellen Teninty agreed that the overall framework needs to be approved in order to be taken back to constituency leaders, opinion leaders, the EWEB Board, and the upcoming public meeting. She added that feedback needs to be collected from all sources, which will include options for how to respond based on that feedback, and that the Guiding Principles will come into play. She noted that tonight the group does need to be pretty clear that the majority is okay with starting to show it to people in order to get more feedback, and then revise it if necessary.

Dave Hauser commented that, in his mind, tonight's discussion defines preliminary agreement, and that he is comfortable with having those conversations with people in the community.

8. Update on Overall Framework

John Rowell gave a Powerpoint presentation regarding the Steam Plant district and the options for interpretation and education on the history of the site through landscape features, artifacts, art or symbolic structures. A brief outline follows:

Previous CAT concerns regarding:

- Accessibility to river

- Shape of open space

- Bridge questions

- Real ecological function will have to wait Bart Johnson's feedback

- Uses and road locations – unfinished business

The CAT was reminded that the February 10 Board presentation has been postponed to February 16.

In a discussion of the idea that the “Steam Plant District could be a cultural landscape,” John Rowell reviewed a series of slides explaining this open space vision. He showed examples of waterfront developments in New York and Seattle, among others.

John also reviewed the previous list of accessibility issues and briefly summarized his meeting with American Disabilities Act (ADA) experts. He said that this conversation had changed their thinking regarding whether it was safe to bring people to the river’s edge at this particular site, and provided other helpful design information.

8a. Check-in on Open Space Framework

Ellen Teninty then asked for CAT check-in on the open space framework.

Desiree Moore asked if the river can be seen from the boardwalk at the river’s edge. John Rowell said yes.

Gary Wildish said that he appreciates recognizing that the site is a dangerous stretch of the river, and that at the Corvallis site they saw that a wall existed for that reason. He added that in dropping the bank down, it makes sense to have a barrier of some sort so there aren’t dangerous uses. He asked if this is consistent in terms of eight acres of open space. Lorri Nelson replied that it is (8.2 acres, to be exact).

Mary Unruh said she likes moving the bike path further way from the river and creating more space to see the river. She added that she likes the idea of creating a sense of place around art—a place where people can see art integrated into a space that they can relax and enjoy. She said that people seem interested in retaining the steam plant as a historical building, and that it has potential for a real destination place if it can be reworked. She noted that it is the tallest building on the site and has the best vantage of the river looking in both directions, and that she can visualize a nice restaurant on the top floor, and that the main floor should be an activity space where something happens that draws people to that part of the site.

Mark Johnson said he likes incorporating culture, arts and history in a people place and/or destination spot. He added that after walking the site before the meeting and getting a better sense of scale, he is more and more comfortable that the design has good balance and is moving in the right direction.

Dave Hauser agreed, and asked if this is an appropriate time to have a conversation about the proposed bridge. Ellen Teninty said that the ecological analysis presentation on February 10 will provide some of the bridge information.

Jeannine Parisi noted that the bridge discussion will be put on the parking lot for a future meeting.

Dean Pape' said he appreciated the design team interviewing the ADA experts and that they offered some good insight, and that he agrees that there needs to be ways to slow down the bicyclists on the bike path going through the park. He said that he continues to struggle with the road design and the fact that the secondary roads needs to be included. He added that he and Nan Laurence will be meeting for a further discussion regarding the roads.

Pat Johnston said she is still waiting for Bart Johnson's analysis regarding the river edge and that could change how the CAT talks about this. She added that she is a little concerned about allowing for an addition to the steam plant in light of the 100' setback. John Rowell noted that the building add-on would be outside the setback.

Pat continued, saying she likes how the stormwater areas are starting to be developed, and she thinks there is quite a bit of potential for those strategies. She asked what the objectives of the open spaces are, and that a people place is just one objective. She asked whether the CAT should be concerned about wildlife habitat, a people place, or both, and she asked Mary Unruh if she is suggesting a connection to the arts in the entire green space.

Mary Unruh replied that she is envisioning different patches as one traverses through the site—something of interest that moves one along the path toward what she sees as an activity place where something happens—an art activity preferably—but anything that engages people in a cultural way—a museum, gallery, or an artist work space. She clarified that she is talking primarily about inside the building, not outside.

John Rowell commented that the future use of the steam plant isn't known, but the design is meant to set it up for a cultural role. He added that the design team is certainly looking for direction with respect to green space functions.

John also noted that he isn't sure that the design team will be making steps into the river as previously shown. He added that it is best to think of the landscape buffer as a barrier or safety measure, areas within these zones where one can walk and where one can't, which speak to habitat. He noted that this is also something that is being discussed with Bart Johnson and his consulting team.

Pat Johnston said she is struggling with the combination of people and wildlife in a public open space, and that she is hearing two different things, but that it sounds like Bart Johnson's team will have more to offer on that subject.

John Rowell replied that there is a need to identify opportunity zones; places where interpretive elements could be objects in the landscape.

Pat Johnston said she is still concerned about sensitivity toward wildlife habitat on this site, and that the CAT needs to be really clear about their objective around that. For example, if there is an open park area, animals aren't going to use it without shrubs, escape routes, trees, etc. She noted that in planning for that with realistic objectives, she questions a 100' setback, which will take quite a bit away from habitat and make it very much a people place. John replied that Bart Johnson's presentation will shed additional light on these issues.

Tom Hoyt said he will defer to the consensus process.

Ellen Teninty asked for the CAT's okay on the framework as presented in design Option #4.

Pat Johnston reiterated that she is not okay with it until she hears more from Bart Johnson's presentation.

Tom Hoyt added that he also wants to make sure there is allocation for wildlife in cultural areas, but that he sees that happening upstream, with downstream being the area for the people place. He added that he feels there is plenty of wildlife opportunity on the site, but not in front of the proposed restaurant row.

Dean Pape' emphasized his concern about the location of open space and it becoming overgrown or unable to be maintained.

Pat Johnston commented that open space that is isolated from the rest of the project on the far end of the site could be trouble for that reason. She said she is uncomfortable if multiple uses are in one area without finding an ecological balance.

John Rowell commented that Bart Johnson was complimentary about the idea of laying back the bank and that the idea of overlapping the urban and natural elements was heading in a good direction. John added that the design team wouldn't be recommending this if it were headed toward a dead end.

Pat Johnston questioned the need for a decision tonight when more information will be presented in two weeks.

Ellen Teninty replied that she is asking for an okay on the roads and open space orientation--the general framework of this design option. She noted that Bart Johnson's presentation might change people's minds if major issues come up.

Pat Johnston replied that she still doesn't know where the group is with regard to the goals for open space.

Anita Van Asperdt commented that she doesn't see the EWEB riverfront as prime habitat area but that her goal for the site is that it will show the community what river ecology and habitat is all about if it has enough value and features so that people can have a learning experience.

Jeannine Parisi noted that the design team has presented an open space vision that is an undulating setback from the river edge weaving natural and people places, and that they need to hear from the CAT that this is the right direction and that the design supports that vision.

Anita Van Asperdt replied that she believes the design team is moving in the right direction because the undulating fingers and stormwater features are layers that the site should speak to, but that habitat content will depend on Bart Johnson's research.

Gary Wildish commented that his definition of habitat and wildlife may be different than other members. For example, he doesn't believe that ducks, geese or heron will be present on this site, but he can envision rabbits, squirrels, etc. He added that Bart Johnson will help the CAT understand what will work and that he believes there is lots of opportunity for that.

Desiree Moore commented that her open space goals would shift dramatically if this site was in the middle of an industrial park, but the fact that there is a great deal of open space acreage directly across the river lessens her concern, and that she doesn't feel there have been any sacrifices made, in fact, maybe quite the opposite when it comes to thinking about habitat. She added that she has lived in Eugene for 27 years and is concerned about respecting the river and its environment, but not specifically because of this location.

Tom Hoyt noted that nutria, geese, ducks and seagulls are a huge problem in Alton Baker Park and that he doesn't want to duplicate that problem on this side of the river.

Ellen Teninty suggested reworking the February 10 agenda to allow time for Bart Johnson's presentation along with a discussion of goals, and asked if the CAT is comfortable with that.

Dave Hauser asked Pat Johnston to confirm that conceptually she is okay with the direction and also whether she is comfortable at a certain level assuming that the finer points can be addressed. Pat replied that she still needs to have an understanding of the ecological function of the riparian area and that it meets the goals of riparian setback, with Bart Johnson's help to understand that piece. Secondly, she commented that she thinks it's important for people to have green space that they can play in and that draws people to it, and that people, buildings and parks in the right mixture makes for a highly desirable people place, and not just acres and acres like Alton Baker Park. She added that she thinks to try to force the people aspect into the riparian zone would be impacting that function.

Ellen Teninty asked the CAT if they wanted to vote now or talk more about their concerns after Bart Johnson's presentation. Tom Hoyt reiterated that he came to the meeting ready to vote tonight because he will be absent at the February 10 meeting.

Greg Brokaw said that the design team needs to invest in the process moving forward and that the design team needs clear direction from the CAT. He added that the basic framework question is important and that he prefers to have confidence that the CAT has certainty about direction.

Desiree Moore commented that it is her belief that majority vote is the best the design team will get at tonight's meeting.

Eight of nine CAT members approved the basic framework of design Option #4, with Pat Johnston in opposition.

10. Stormwater

Due to time constraints, John Rowell gave a brief Powerpoint presentation regarding stormwater design through landscape features, and noted that the design team is proposing an oil/water separator with a pump to bring water from the 60" stormwater pipe to the surface.

John also gave a brief Powerpoint presentation for initial review of building heights, setbacks and massing. A brief outline follows:

Existing code, building height allowances/limitations, setbacks and facades

- 45' height limit west of the viaduct
- No adjacent conflicts with R-1 zone
- C-2 code allows a height of 120'
- Form-based code (as in Walnut Station) offers some leeway

Ellen Teninty noted that the design team will be getting more public feedback on this at the March 3 event.

Gary Wildish asked, for perspective, if the CAT could receive information on the height of the Federal Courthouse, and also the height of the Portland riverfront buildings that were seen on the field trip, which are on much higher ground, and what the ground elevation is there.

Jeannine Parisi summarized the items that were placed on the parking lot, and added a continued discussion of building uses that was not completed at the last meeting.

Ellen Teninty noted that the agenda for the February 10 meeting will be revisited at the core team meeting to be held on February 2.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

**Next Meeting: Wednesday, February 10
 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
 EWEB Board Room**