
News: Local: EWEB signs on architects in riverfront planning Rowell Brokaw will help iron out details for developing the utility's property along the Willamette into a "people place"

By [Susan Palmer](#), The Register-Guard, *May 20, 2009, page B4*

The Eugene Water & Electric Board inched a step closer to developing a plan for its riverfront property on Tuesday when commissioners approved a consulting contract with the local architecture firm Rowell Brokaw Architects.

The public utility plans to sell a portion of its 27-acre property along the Willamette River, moving operations functions to a new site on Roosevelt Boulevard. Construction on that \$84 million project already has begun. EWEB can't simply sell the property to the highest bidder. The city requires that a master plan be created that spells out how a project there will meet guidelines imposed by Eugene's Downtown Plan.

That plan requires both mixed uses and open space, but no specific limits are on the amount of open space or what kind of mixed use should be considered.

The city requires that EWEB create a "people place" that is active, vibrant, accessible and multiuse; that it incorporate environmental concerns in its building and site design; and that it include an educational aspect that informs visitors about the river, the city and the area's history.

It will be up to the Riverfront Master Plan Community Advisory Team, with help from Rowell Brokaw and a lengthy list of consultants, to work out the details.

The property poses challenges for any developer. It's a narrowing swath of land pinched between the Willamette River on one side and railroad tracks on the other. State laws govern greenway space along the river and road access is limited.

The \$500,000 contract drew some grumbling from Commissioner Rich Cunningham, who warned that he better not see the out-of-town experts on the consulting team flying first class when they come to town. "I'm ready to extend that confidence that you'll be good stewards of the people's money," Cunningham told Dave Hauser and Pat Johnston, who head the Community Advisory Team.

Hauser, who is also president of the Eugene Chamber of Commerce, said the team looks forward to working with Rowell Brokaw on a project that has as many opportunities as it does challenges.

"We hope they'll help us produce a master plan that receives overwhelming public support," he said, "although that might be a little ambitious."

A memorandum of understanding between the city and EWEB governs the course of the Community Advisory Team. Among the first tasks after the consultant is hired will be a kick-off meeting among city and EWEB staff, which will be open to the public, to discuss constraints and opportunities.

The final master plan must include descriptions and diagrams of general uses on the site; the anticipated height and grouping of buildings; roads, sidewalks and other transportation and infrastructure; location of landscaped areas, open spaces and protected riverside areas; and how development will connect with surrounding sites.

EWEB expects the planning process to take about a year.

MASTER PLANNING BEGINS

The Community Advisory team will meet next week

When: 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 27

Where: EWEB meeting room, 500 E. Fourth Ave.
