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# 'Rough' riverfront draft due | A planning firm will offer up three concepts for development of the EWEB land in Eugene on Tuesday

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By [Greg Bolt](#), The Register-Guard, Nov 9, 2009

The big ideas about connecting Eugene's downtown to the riverfront are about to become more down to earth.

After spending several months listening and interviewing and brainstorming, the firm charged with creating a master plan for the soon-to-be-vacant Eugene Water and Electric Board equipment yard is ready to present its first draft. A set of three concepts for the 27-acre riverfront property will make its public debut at a community meeting Tuesday.

A final plan is still months away, but the conceptual drawings mark the first attempt to give actual shape to the many ideas and expectations people have for the key parcel. The goal is to merge ideas for parks and open space, development and streets into what might be described as three suggestions for how the property could be used.

Comments on the three plans will then be combined into a single "rough draft" plan expected to be ready in February. A final plan will be presented in the spring.

John Rowell of Rowell Brokaw Architects, the firm hired to create a master plan for the property, said the plans give people an idea of how Eugene could achieve a long-sought connection to the river as well as balance the sometimes competing desires for both natural space and development.

"If people come on Tuesday, our hope is that they would see variations on a central theme of this exciting connection to the river," he said. "We've all agreed this is what we want to do. The question is, how do we do it? Our job is to give people different looks at how that could happen."

Kaarin Knudson, the project director with Rowell Brokaw, said all of the proposals include open space, better treatment of the river's edge and room for different kinds of development. They also show different ways that cars, bicycles and pedestrians could reach and move through the area.

They differ in how the various elements are concentrated or dispersed and where they are located, but all the options look for balance, she said.

"The thing I think that people will be encouraged by and enthusiastic about is to see that we really are trying to put forward a great alternative for Eugene and to take into consideration that there's a desire for development on this site and there's a desire for beautiful natural areas on this site, and that there's no reason why we should have to choose between those two things."

The firm has gathered comments and input from community meetings, from focus groups and from small group interviews. It held a design workshop for area architects and planners to brainstorm ideas. In all, more than 200 people submitted their ideas and comments on using the property.

EWEB will move out of the site once its new operations center on Roosevelt Boulevard is complete next year. It plans to sell the property to help finance that project, but the master plan will guide the way the area is used.

The property is important because it could provide a link between downtown and the Willamette River, opening what many see as exciting possibilities for retail, housing and parks. But as with Eugene's downtown core, divisions exist over the best way to use the area and how open space and development should be balanced.

Rowell said the firm is well aware of the potential for conflict over the parcel. He said the planning effort lets people work through those conflicts before any work begins, in hopes of avoiding gridlock.

“If you come with solutions before you understand the problem, if you come with particular outcomes before you understand what’s possible or realistic, you set up false options,” Rowell said. “We’re working really hard to do the research to have the knowledge of what’s possible from an economic point of view, from a public support point of view and what is realistic in terms of the capacity of this community.”

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## EWEB RIVERFRONT PLAN CONCEPTS

Ideas will be presented to Riverfront Master Plan Citizen Advisory Team

When/where: 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, EWEB Board Room, North Bldg., 500 E. Fourth Ave.

More information: 682-5340.