

# Evaluation of the EWEB Riverfront Master Plan Project

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IDENTIFYING STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF A  
REDEVELOPMENT PLANNING PROCESS

**Stefan Golos**

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON | DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, PUBLIC POLICY AND MANAGEMENT  
MASTER OF COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL PLANING | TERMINAL DEGREE PAPER | JUNE 2018

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## **Abstract**

The buzz surrounding the 2010 redevelopment master plan for the Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB) riverfront property along the Willamette River has inspired modest praise locally. Inspiring architectural renderings, extensive community outreach and sustained city support create a preconception of a successful project. This study presents a critical look at the planning process using information from the documents that influenced and directed the planning process, as well as perceptions from the professionals and leaders who assembled the final plan document. By analyzing the objective account of what happened during the planning process with the human account, this project provides insight for how the planning process presented in the EWEB Riverfront Master Plan could be modified to avoid shortcomings, or to enjoy similar successes. This insight would be useful for city officials, and professionals from fields like architecture, landscape architecture, and planning who might be interested in replicating the planning process from the EWEB master plan project.

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I would also like to thank the professionals who agreeing to take the time to speak with me, and reflect on their involvement in the EWEB planning process.

## Introduction

The Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB) Master Plan was finalized in 2010, and outlines a framework of intended land uses for 27.8 acres of riverfront property owned by EWEB (Rowell Brokaw Architects, 2010). This project

**Study Overview:** This study seeks to understand and assess the strengths and weaknesses of the EWEB Riverfront Master Plan process from the perspective of the stakeholders and participants. I chose the EWEB Riverfront Master Plan as the focus of this study because of the potential the master plan document has for being used as a template for future projects. A quick internet search reveals modest community and professional recognition for the project. When the project concluded in 2010, over 1,000 Eugeniens had participated.<sup>1</sup> This fact is proudly recounted on several websites hosted by the city of Eugene, and in 2014, Rowell Brokaw (the architecture office who led the assembly of the master plan document) won a professional award from the Southwestern Oregon Chapter of the American Institute of Architecture.<sup>2</sup> With mostly positive attention surrounding the project's efforts, does the plan live up to the hype?

By understanding what worked (or what didn't work) for the actors who assembled the master plan document, this study can inform other municipal organizations or planning consultants on how to organize a planning process with a similar goal.

I based this study on a review of key documents and interviews with individuals directly involved in the process. In the findings, I analyze responses based on themes, and compare these to what was stated in the master plan document, and other documents from the City of Eugene and the Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB).

*"This is a vision that everyone can get excited about because everyone who lives here loves the river." – Mike Clark, City of Eugene Councilor (Hill, 2018)*

**What to Expect:** This paper is organized into five main sections.

**Chapter 1. (Literature Review)** First, I provide an overview of the literature related to evaluating planning processes.

**Chapter 2. (Background)** Second, I will introduce the project site and the planning process. This section reviews the site location and history, what happened during the process, when it happened, and who was involved.

**Chapter 3. (Methodology)** Third, I will explain my methodology for this study. This section explains the steps I took for structuring my inquiry to produce research findings. The two main sources of information I used were from a review of planning documents, and open-ended interviews.

**Chapter 4. (Findings)** Fourth, I present what I found in the form of three general themes that includes comments that relate to satisfaction with the process, critiques of the process and inconclusive findings.

**Chapter 5. (Conclusion)** Finally, this document ends with a summary of the study, recommendations based on my findings, and opportunities for future research.

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<sup>1</sup> Rowell Brokaw Architects. (2010). *EWEB Riverfront Master Plan: A Community-Developed Design for Eugene's Downtown Riverfront*. Eugene, OR.

<sup>2</sup> Rowell Brokaw Architects. (2014). Eugene Riverfront Master Plan at EWEB. Retrieved from <http://rowellbrokaw.com/eugene-riverfront-master-plan/>

## Literature Review

Overall, there is a lack of focus on design professionals' perception of public processes in public participation research.<sup>1</sup> As literature moves forward, the inclusion of designer's perspectives in the evaluation of public engagement is crucial due to the benefit that designers have as leaders of the process itself. People involved in a planning process come from a variety of backgrounds. This can include designers, researchers, and policy makers. There's a specific have a professional outlook that can capitalize on sudden changes in direction, making them useful, flexible leaders.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, by contributing to the literature concerned with the perceptions professionals involved in planning projects, this study will contribute an important perspective that could support the role of professionals conducting a planning projects.

### Why it's Valuable To Evaluate Planning Processes

Engaging participants from varying backgrounds is increasingly the reality of how problems are addressed in contemporary society. One of the approaches to organize these exchanges is collaborative planning.<sup>3</sup> By understanding the process, we can improve the effectiveness of our planning projects.<sup>4</sup>

From a project management standpoint, "effectiveness" of a project can look at the inputs of planning process. For instance, the EWEB master plan project cost roughly \$1million, and took place over the course of one year.<sup>5</sup> This is considerable time and money being devoted to a series of meetings, workshops, and professional labor preparing the plan document. While a better process could improve certainty about streamlining these inputs, there is also value in evaluating the human experience behind planning projects.

### How Have Others Evaluated Planning Processes?

Existing literature favors an approach that responds specifically to a particular project. This acknowledges the unique social dynamics, and environmental considerations that realistically vary widely from location to location.<sup>6</sup> That being said, there is flexibility in how evaluation frameworks can be adapted from one project to another.

For instance, in a study by Mandarano, the author assesses the planning process for an estuary program in New Jersey. In order to create evaluation criteria, the author bases their evaluation framework in part on another framework from a project in Australia. In the latter of the projects, Margerum used four criteria to evaluate the quality of agreements made during an environmental management project in Queensland, Australia. Mandarano adapted these criteria, which tested for outputs and outcomes from the planning process. Margerum's criteria required that "the document should identify clear goals and expectations; the objectives should be based on sound causal theory about intervention; the objectives should be integrated with socioeconomic objectives and issues; and the agreement should be supported by stakeholders, elected

officials, and members of the public.” Mandarano adapted these into the following criteria: Documents should incorporate consensus-based science; the findings should present a clear approach for implementation; and the documents needs to be approved through consensus.<sup>7</sup>

Not all process evaluations have such a focus on academic definitions of collaboration, outputs and outcomes. An evaluation framework by Faehnle defines components of a “collaborative” process more inclusively. This includes formal collaborative deliberation, as well as the activities and sources of information related to planning projects. Examples of this could be public workshops that collect public feedback, or focus groups. The evaluation used four criteria:

- First, knowledge building should be a main priority.
- Second, it should take into account stakeholder perspectives.
- Third, it should take into account the administrative setting.
- Finally, it should use administrative settings to set outcomes to be achieved, and that can be evaluated.<sup>8</sup>

### **A “Successful Plan” vs. One That Is Feasible**

These approaches are important for this study because they help compare the academic metric for success of a plan with another goal that most plan creators are concerned with: implementation. Plans created through public engagement experience more success in municipal adoption, but researchers observe that plans developed from public engagement face challenges because of a variety of economic reasons. Developers especially may complain that a community-based vision is infeasible to actually implement. This occurs because members of a community are engaged based on free reign over the ideas they want to see reflected in the plan, not because these ideas are based in economic reality.<sup>9</sup>

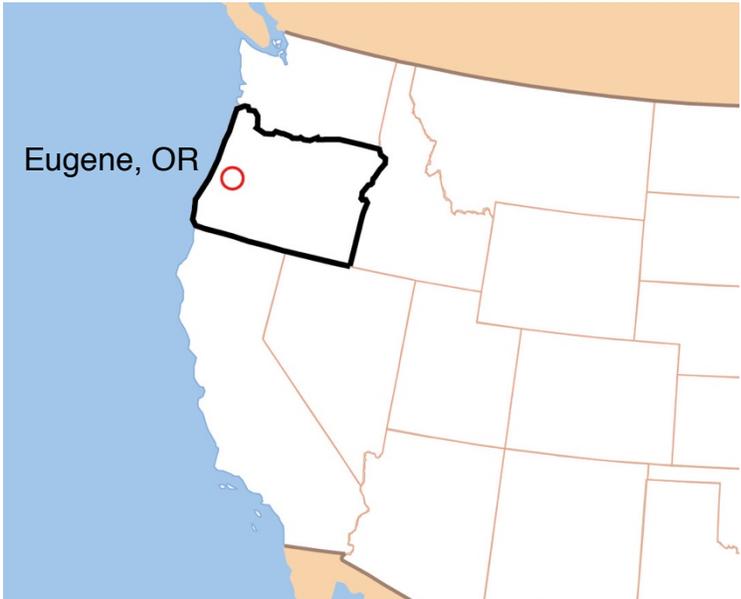
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- <sup>1</sup> Molina Costa, P. (2014). From plan to reality: Implementing a community vision in Jackson Square, Boston. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 15(3), 293–310. Retrieved from <http://10.0.4.56/14649357.2014.932428>
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- <sup>4</sup> Margerum, R. D. (2002). Evaluating collaborative planning: Implications from an empirical analysis of growth management. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 68(2), 179–193.
- <sup>5</sup> Rowell Brokaw Architects. (2010). *EWEB Riverfront Master Plan: A Community-Developed Design for Eugene's Downtown Riverfront*. Eugene, OR.
- <sup>6</sup> Faehnle, M., & Tyrväinen, L. (2013). A framework for evaluating and designing collaborative planning. *Land Use Policy*, 34(Supplement C), 332–341. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2013.04.006>
- <sup>7</sup> Mandarano, L. A. (2008). Evaluating Collaborative Environmental Planning Outputs and Outcomes: Restoring and Protecting Habitat and the New York--New Jersey Harbor Estuary Program. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 27(4), 456–468. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X08315888>
- <sup>8</sup> Faehnle, M., & Tyrväinen, L. (2013). A framework for evaluating and designing collaborative planning. *Land Use Policy*, 34(Supplement C), 332–341. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2013.04.006>
- <sup>9</sup> Molina Costa, P. (2014). From plan to reality: Implementing a community vision in Jackson Square, Boston. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 15(3), 293–310. Retrieved from <http://10.0.4.56/14649357.2014.932428>

# Background

The planning process for the EWEB Riverfront Master Plan included a series of meetings and workshops convened by two municipal organizations, and executed by a community advisory team (CAT) working collaboratively to manage the project. To obtain the information needed for the plan to be written, as well as assembling the final plan document, the CAT hired a team private consultants. Over the course of a year from 2008 to 2009, the CAT and the design team worked to create a document that outlined the future use of the Eugene Water and Electric Board’s (EWEB’s) 27.8 acres of property along the Willamette River. In order to complete this document, the CAT and design team completed through a series of public outreach actions, as well as collecting technical information to guide decisions. The objective was to provide information from technical consultants like engineers and architects to inform the community’s vision. The result would be representation of technically accurate, buildable ideas that represent a more conceptual vision for the site.

This study relies on the understanding of who was involved in the planning process, when they were involved, why they were involved, and what they did. In order explain the approach I took in my methodology, this section communicates the specific context for geographic and historical context for the project, as well as a summary of the events that led up to the EWEB master plan, and the planning process itself. This provides a background for where the project took place, why the site is unique, who was involved in the project, and what happened during the course of the project.

Figure 1. Regional Geographic Context of Eugene, Oregon



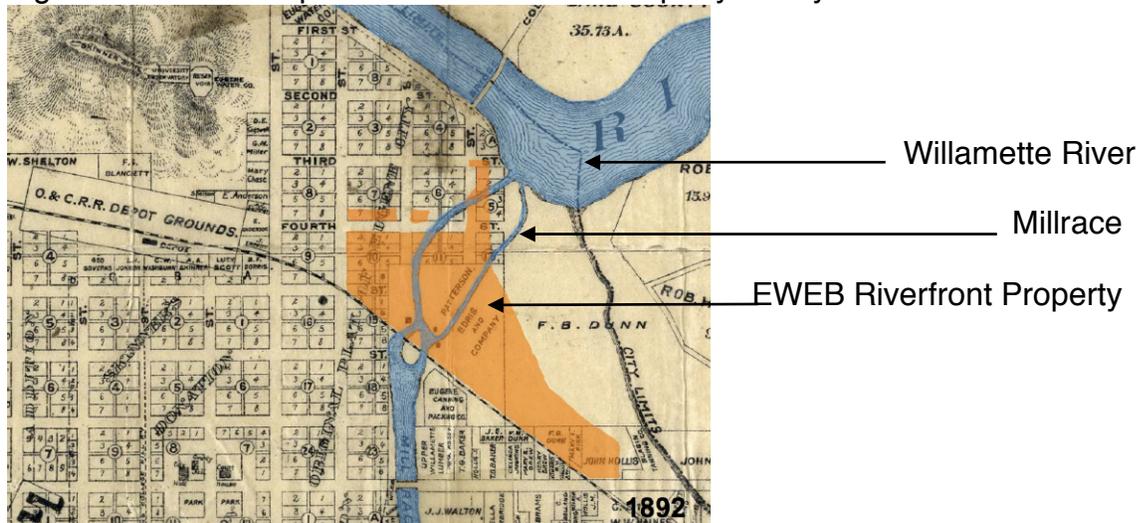
Source: Stefan Golos, 2018.

## Context

**Eugene, OR:** The City of Eugene is located approximately 61 miles east from the Pacific Ocean (see Fig.1), and began as a land claim filed by Eugene Skinner in 1846. Following his claim, Skinner's property, and his cabin at the foot of present-day Skinner's Butte became a node for new settlers moving into the area.<sup>1</sup>

**Site History:** The site that eventually became EWEB's riverfront property began in a historic hub of industry in Eugene, Oregon. After being settled by Eugene Skinner, more people were drawn to the area. With more people also came demands for commodities; specifically, lumber. In response to this demand, one enterprising settler named Hilyard Shaw diverted an ephemeral slough (a channel that only contains water at certain points of the year) from the Willamette River into a channel that could fuel mill operations. Thus, the "millrace" was born. The millrace was completed between 1851 and 1852 by Shaw, and was aided in this project though a land grant obtained from Eugene Skinner, and negotiations with neighboring property owners. With the millrace complete, Shaw then constructed a sawmill over the newly dug water route. While it's unknown the exact date the sawmill was completed, Shaw quickly was overwhelmed by the demand for access to, and maintenance of the millrace by businesses. Shaw sold the millrace in 1856, but subsequent businesses continued to expand in size and diversity. For example, the Eugene City Distilling Company became a thriving enterprise which paid more in taxes than any other business at the time.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 2. Relationship of EWEB Riverfront Property to Hilyard Shaw's Millrace



Source: Rowell Brokaw Architects. *EWEB Riverfront Master Plan*. 2010, p. 10.

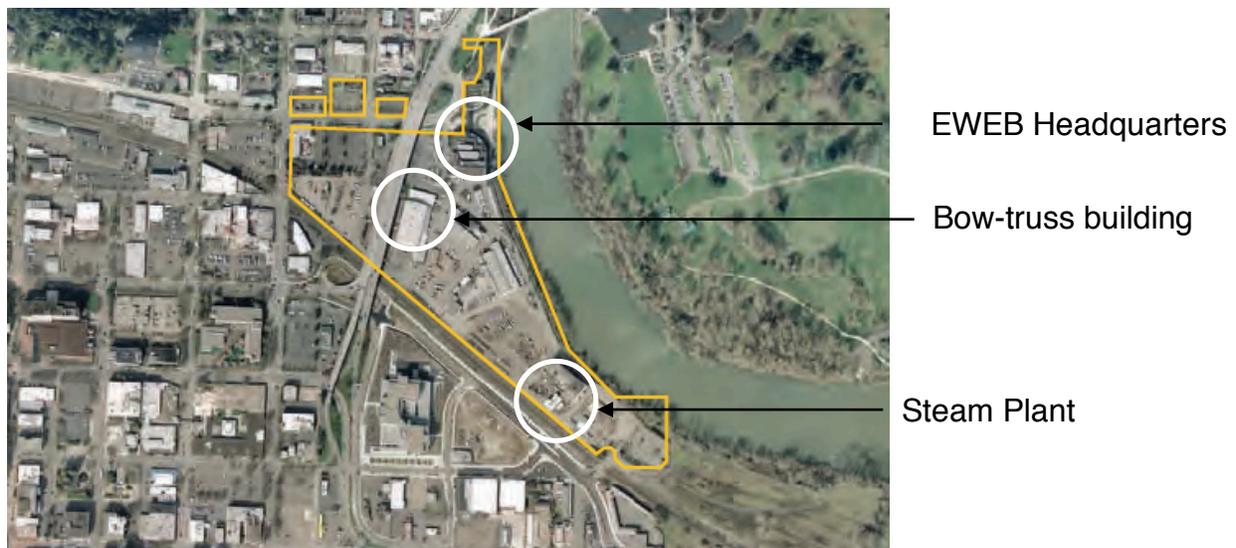
**Current Site Conditions:** The site addressed by the EWEB Riverfront Master Plan is a collection of parcels on the south bank of the Willamette (see Fig.3, Appendix). These parcels were gradually purchased from 1908 to 1988.<sup>3</sup> The site's longstanding industrial use along the river literally was a barrier to public riverfront access.

Due to 100 years of industrial use, the site is heavily asphalted, and has several main buildings. The most notable are the steam plant, bow shed, and EWEB's headquarters building. The mill race still exists, but is buried beneath concrete, asphalt, and other infrastructure. The steam plant and bow-truss building capture public interest because of their historic presence on the site. They are among the oldest buildings on the river, with the steam plant being constructed in 1931, and the bow truss building being completed in 1949.<sup>4</sup>

**EWEB:** EWEB formed in 1908 after a Typhoid outbreak led the community to pressure the city for a public takeover of the previous water company. Following a vote, Eugene purchased the company's facilities. In 1911, the city of Eugene authorized control of the system to a citizen committee called the Eugene Water Board. In 1949, this group changed its name to the Eugene Water and Electric Board.<sup>5</sup>

Officially, EWEB is a "political subdivision" of the City of Eugene.<sup>6</sup> The City of Eugene Charter authorizes EWEB to act on the city's behalf to generate, collect, and distribute electricity, steam, and physical energy. This also requires EWEB to adopt rules in the organization's bylaws that are consistent with the laws that the city is held to. For instance, EWEB must post public notice for all their board meetings. Board members must disclose conflicts of interest prior to meetings, and are prohibited from accepting gifts in the same way elected officials in the city are prohibited.<sup>7</sup>

Figure 3. Existing Site Conditions of EWEB Riverfront Property



Source: Rowell Brokaw Architects. *EWEB Riverfront Master Plan*. 2010, p. 10.

## Project Background - Who Was Involved & How they Convened

The main actors involved in the planning process were the City of Eugene, the Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB), the community advisory board (CAT), and the design team. These four groups came together as a result of two documents. First, the 2004

downtown plan included a concept for connecting the downtown to Willamette River, which solidified municipal interest in pursuing redevelopment of the EWEB property. With this precedent on hand, EWEB's request to city for relocation of its maintenance facilities to west Eugene created the opportunity to realize this vision. A 2007 memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the City and EWEB set the planning process in motion for the EWEB Riverfront Master Plan.

**2004 Eugene Downtown Plan:** The condition of Eugene's urban waterfront was addressed in the city's 2000 Downtown Visioning Project. Concepts developed in this visioning report were more formally recognized in 2001 report called "The Vision for Greater Downtown Eugene." Concept illustrations from this document were directly reflected in a subsequent 2004 plan for downtown Eugene.<sup>8</sup> The plan indicates the opportunity for using 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> avenues to connect Eugene's downtown thoroughfares to the Willamette, which goes directly through the riverfront property of the Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB). The 2004 Eugene Downtown Plan mentions EWEB's plans to relocate their maintenance facilities from the riverfront site, and discusses the redevelopment of this part of the site as an opportunity to realize the connection described in the visioning report.<sup>9</sup>

Figure 4. Context of the EWEB Riverfront Site to Current Downtown Eugene.



Source: AIA Southwestern Oregon. 2017. "EWEB Riverfront Masterplan". <http://www.aiaswo.org/ewebriverfront/>. Accessed 4.21.18

With the potential for the site's usefulness to city goals identified in the 2004 Eugene Downtown Plan, the stage was set for the 2007 MOU between the City of Eugene and EWEB.

**EWEB Facilities Relocation and the 2007 MOU:** As the organization's needs evolved, EWEB proposed a relocation of their maintenance facilities to the Roosevelt Operation Center on west side of the city.<sup>10</sup> In their proposal to the city for this relocation, the city required a plan to be developed for the property. This resulted in both EWEB and the City of Eugene signing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in 2007. This acknowledged the conditions for convening a community advisory team to guide the development of the downtown EWEB site. The city agreed to let EWEB lead the project, but both the city and EWEB favored a collaborative process where neither organization would be directly involved in leading. They agreed to delegate responsibilities for managing the assembly of a master plan to a collaborative process comprised of members they would appoint.<sup>11</sup>

**Community Advisory Team (CAT):** When the community advisory team (CAT) was formed, their role was to guide the creation of a plan for EWEB. The committee had to account for the future assurance that decision makers at the city would need for future approval, and implementation of the plan. Their goal was in the interest of creating the strongest vision possible for the site. As the design consultants worked to collect information from the community, and develop site opportunities and constraints, it was ultimately up to the CAT for deciding on how this information met the criteria they developed. These criteria included

**Design Team:** The design team selected by the CAT to create the plan document was led by Rowell Brokaw, local Eugene architecture office and included landscape architects, public engagement consultants, engineers and environmental scientists.<sup>12</sup> The design team worked from June 2009 to May 2010 to create a final plan document for EWEB to submit to the city. In addition to technical memorandums from engineers, the design process of the project saw a series of outreach methods to guide the information reflected in design solutions from the consultants. The organizations represented on the design team included:

- Rowell Brokaw Architects (Prime Consultant)
- PWL Partnership Landscape Architects
- WRT/ Solomon E.T.C with MZM DesignWorks
- Cogito/ T'NT Consultants
- Leland Consulting Group
- Interfluve River Restoration
- Advising Consultants:
  - AECOM
  - KPFF Engineering
  - JRH Transportation Engineers
  - Don Pering (local historian)
  - Greenskins Lab
- City of Eugene Planning and Engineering Staff
- Lane Council of Governments

## **Design Process - What Happened**

The section reviews the history of the design process and the role of the stakeholders and public input (see Figure 5)

### **2008:**

#### First Official CAT Meeting.

The CAT began the design phase by developing guiding principles. These principles helped both the CAT and the design team when making decisions, so as to make sure all the parts of the plan were being considered. These included:

- Sustainable Urbanism
- Balance of Uses
- Connection
- Ecology
- Identity
- Economics
- Feasibility

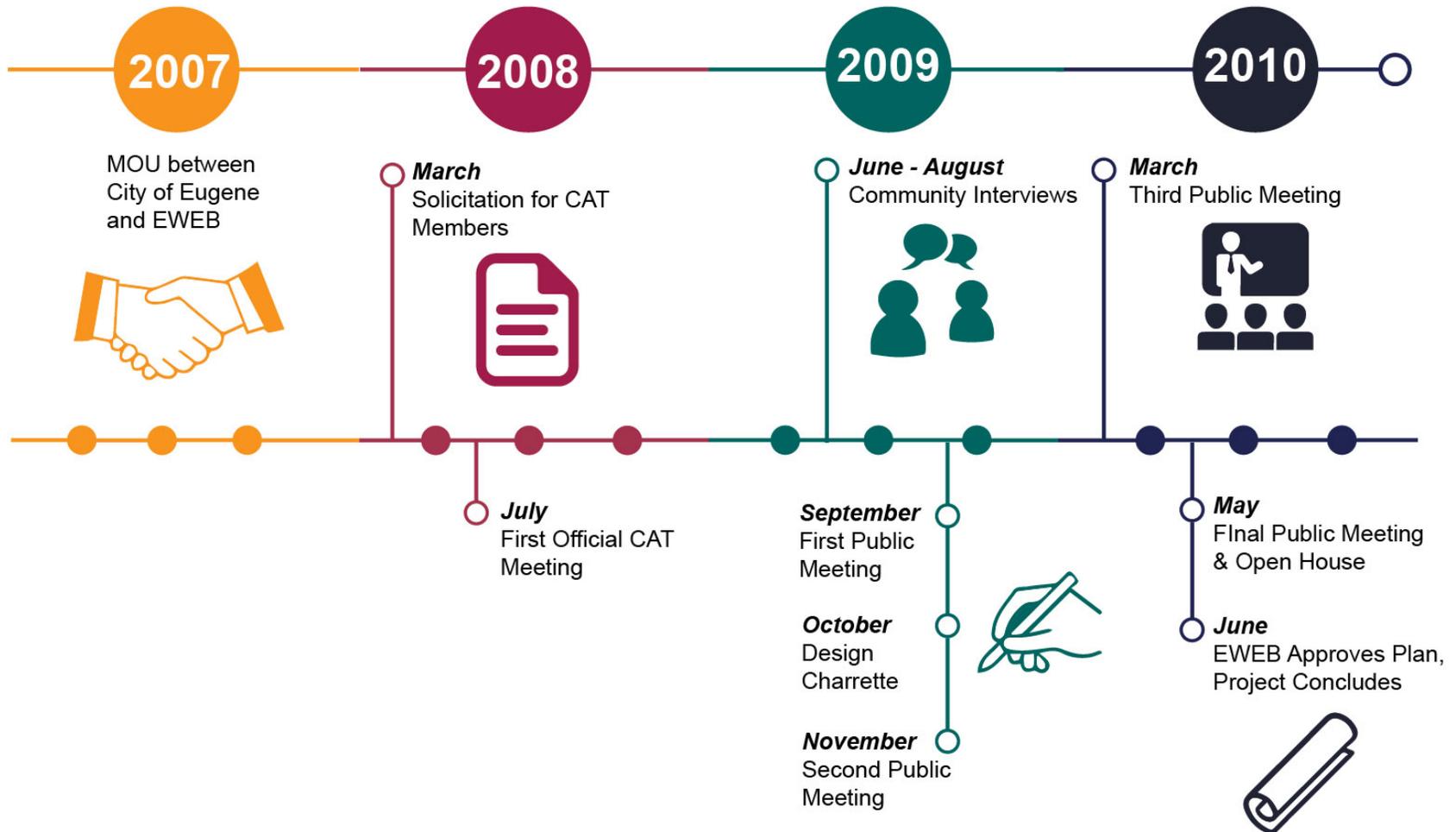
Beginning in March 2008, EWEB solicited applications for members for the CAT. The purpose of this team was to convene a group of stakeholders representing different interests in the City of Eugene. A total of nine members were selected. Five members were selected by EWEB, and four were selected by the City of Eugene to guide the development of the plan. When the team was finalized, the CAT set about interviewing design teams to produce the final document. Proposals from 15 teams were submitted, and the design team led by Rowell Brokaw architects was selected.<sup>13</sup>

### **2009:**

#### Community interviews.

Interviews were conducted by public engagement consultants from the design team between June 2009 to August 2009, followed by focus groups. During community interviews, the design team collected feedback from 125 subjects. These subjects were mostly local professionals and community leaders, and brought knowledge from a variety of disciplines including local government and design. Focus groups occurred in this first part of the design process, but it's unclear precisely when they occurred. During the focus group workshops, participants met in groups of 20 and provided information on: site ecology, sustainable urbanism, development, arts, history and culture, and transportation. These two activities provided the design team with people who could be contacted for their local knowledge.<sup>14</sup>

Figure 5. Design Process Timeline



Source: Stefan Golos, 2018

### Design Charette

(October 3, 2009) A design charrette was facilitated by Rowell Brokaw Architects and other architecture staff from the local chapter of the American Institute of Architecture (AIA) and American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA). This workshop allowed participants to use representations of buildings and features to give designers insight into the spatial preferences from people in the community.<sup>15</sup>

Four public meetings were then scheduled throughout the project to communicate the progress on the project, and gain input from the community.<sup>16</sup>

### First Public Meeting

The first meeting took place September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Staff from Rowell Brokaw Architects led This “kickoff” meeting, and invited residents to tour the site, speak with the design team, and brain storm in small groups.<sup>17</sup>

### Second Public Meeting

The next meeting took place November 10, 2009. During this meeting, Rowell Brokaw Architects presented multiple options for the master plan layout. This was the first meeting that utilized “electronic polling” through the use of clickers.<sup>18</sup>

## **2010**

### Third Public Meeting

During the third meeting on March 3, 2010 Rowell Brokaw Architects presented a single design option, and was notable for the approximately 300 attendees. This meeting also collected responses from electronic polling. Lastly, an open house on May 12, 2010 utilized a site tour. Through the project timeline, responses via the project website every 4 to 6 weeks.<sup>19</sup>

### Final Document

Overall, the process utilized input from roughly 1,000 members of the public. Input reflected which approaches for housing, commercial use, and open space should shape they way decision makers approach developing the site in the future. The result of this interdisciplinary project was a 184-page master plan document.<sup>20</sup>

The final document provides an exhaustive discussion of overview of the tasks completed during the process, and the final recommendations of the plan. Information provided in the final plan document includes:

- Site history and context
- Design process
- Public engagement process
- Summary of Design Recommendations (from public engagement feedback and technical consultant research)
- Technical considerations for land use and infrastructure

- Implementation of the plan

The intent of the plan is not to be prescriptive in its interpretation. It allows for flexibility in the specific visual style of the eventual development. At its strictest, it does lay out allowable uses, and uses that would not be suitable. The allowable and non-allowable uses are based on the operations and functions that would comply with Eugene's zoning code. Ultimately, the plan documents a framework for a community based vision. The plan's recommendations illustrate achievable options for possible scenarios that would meet the framework outlined by the plan.<sup>21</sup>

#### *EWEB Approval and Adoption by the City*

The EWEB Riverfront Master Plan was approved by the EWEB board of commissioners on June 1, 2010. Following the approval of the plan by EWEB, the EWEB Riverfront Master Plan was adopted by the City of Eugene as an amendment of the 2004 Downtown Eugene Plan.<sup>22</sup> Both the original 2007 MOU between EWEB and Eugene, as well as the 2004 Downtown Plan state that upon its completion, the EWEB Riverfront Master Plan would need to be evaluated based on its consistency to four principles;

- "Create a 'people place' that is active, vibrant, accessible and multi-use."
- "Provide appropriate setbacks, deeper where environmental issues or habitat issues are more critical, shallower in other areas."
- "Incorporate appropriate building and site design techniques that address environmental concerns."
- "Incorporate an educational aspect, so that our riverfront improvements teach us about our river, our history and our city."

## **Post-Adoption**

Following the 2010 approval of the EWEB Riverfront Master Plan by the EWEB Board of Commissioners, the plan was adapted into code by Cameron McCarthy, a local landscape architecture and planning office. This codified version of the plan was adopted by the City of Eugene in 2013.<sup>23</sup> In 2014, the University of Oregon Foundation was selected by EWEB to lead the purchase and development of EWEB's riverfront property, but left the agreement with EWEB in 2015.<sup>24, 25</sup> The sale of the EWEB property by EWEB to the City of Eugene was finalized on April 2017.<sup>26</sup> Currently, Williams/Dame & Associates are in the process of negotiating a specific agreement with the City of Eugene for development of the EWEB Site. A final agreement between William/Dame & Associates and the City of Eugene is due June 30 of 2018.<sup>27</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> Coons, F. B. (1951). *The Early History of Eugene*. University of Oregon.
  - <sup>2</sup> Tweedell, B. (1949). *Millrace History*.
  - <sup>3</sup> Rowell Brokaw Architects. (2010). *EWEB Riverfront Master Plan: A Community-Developed Design for Eugene's Downtown Riverfront*. Eugene, OR.
  - <sup>4</sup> Rowell Brokaw Architects. (2010). *EWEB Riverfront Master Plan: A Community-Developed Design for Eugene's Downtown Riverfront*. Eugene, OR.
  - <sup>5</sup> EWEB. (n.d.). About Us.
  - <sup>6</sup> EWEB. (2015). EWEB Bylaws. Retrieved from <http://www.eweb.org/about-us/board-of-commissioners/eweb-bylaws>
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  - <sup>9</sup> Eugene, C. of. (2004). *Eugene Downtown Plan*. Eugene, OR.
  - <sup>10</sup> Hill, C. (2017b, October 3). EWEB to keep downtown presence. *Register Guard*.
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  - <sup>15</sup> Rowell Brokaw Architects. (2010). *EWEB Riverfront Master Plan: A Community-Developed Design for Eugene's Downtown Riverfront*. Eugene, OR.
  - <sup>16</sup> Rowell Brokaw Architects. (2010). *EWEB Riverfront Master Plan: A Community-Developed Design for Eugene's Downtown Riverfront*. Eugene, OR.
  - <sup>17</sup> Rowell Brokaw Architects. (2010). *EWEB Riverfront Master Plan: A Community-Developed Design for Eugene's Downtown Riverfront*. Eugene, OR.
  - <sup>18</sup> Rowell Brokaw Architects. (2010). *EWEB Riverfront Master Plan: A Community-Developed Design for Eugene's Downtown Riverfront*. Eugene, OR.
  - <sup>19</sup> Rowell Brokaw Architects. (2010). *EWEB Riverfront Master Plan: A Community-Developed Design for Eugene's Downtown Riverfront*. Eugene, OR.
  - <sup>20</sup> Rowell Brokaw Architects. (2010). *EWEB Riverfront Master Plan: A Community-Developed Design for Eugene's Downtown Riverfront*. Eugene, OR.
  - <sup>21</sup> Rowell Brokaw Architects. (2010). *EWEB Riverfront Master Plan: A Community-Developed Design for Eugene's Downtown Riverfront*. Eugene, OR.
  - <sup>22</sup> Rowell Brokaw Architects. (2010). *EWEB Riverfront Master Plan: A Community-Developed Design for Eugene's Downtown Riverfront*. Eugene, OR.
  - <sup>23</sup> Hill, C. (2017a, April). City to buy EWEB riverfront. *Register Guard*, p. A1. Retrieved from <http://projects.registerguard.com/rg/news/local/35476890-75/eugene-agrees-to-buy-eweb-riverfront-property-for-5.75-million.csp>
  - <sup>24</sup> Oregon, U. of. (2014). UO Foundation selected as developer for EWEB project.

<sup>25</sup> Hill, C. (2017a, April). City to buy EWEB riverfront. *Register Guard*, p. A1. Retrieved from <http://projects.registerguard.com/rg/news/local/35476890-75/eugene-agrees-to-buy-eweb-riverfront-property-for-5.75-million.csp>

<sup>26</sup> EWEB. (2018). EWEB, City Complete Riverfront Property Sale. Retrieved June 1, 2018, from <http://www.eweb.org/about-us/news/eweb-city-complete-riverfront-property-sale>

<sup>27</sup> Hill, C. (2018, January 31). Riverfront development plan takes shape. *Register Guard*. Retrieved from <http://www.registerguard.com/rg/news/local/36398202-75/plan-to-redevelop-downtown-eugene-riverfront-property-takes-shape.html.csp>

## Methods

My research question was to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the EWEB Riverfront Master Plan process from the perspective of the participants involved in conducting the planning process. With this goal in mind, I used information collected from document analysis, and open-ended interviews to reach this study's conclusions.

I decided to limit the scope of this study to the events and process from 2009 to 2010, where the content of the final master was being collected, and assembled. During that time, the community advisory team (CAT) and the design team had the most control and involvement in conducting the public outreach, and translating that feedback into the plan document. This included five main outreach processes:

- Community Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Four Public Meetings
- A Design Charrette
- Comments Collected from the Project Website

Their immediate role in this active part of the project indicated that any impact from success or difficulty caused by the process would be most keenly felt by the community advisory team and design team. Therefore, members from the community and design team would be the ideal participants to talk to for gauging the strengths and weaknesses of the EWEB Riverfront Master Plan process.

## Document Review

For this study, I reviewed the EWEB Riverfront Master Plan document, the 2007 memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the City of Eugene and EWEB, the 2004 Downtown Plan, and memos from the City of Eugene and EWEB.

### Why was I reviewing these documents?

There were two reasons why I chose these documents. First, they provided an objective account of what happened, when it happened, and who was involved. Second, this helped me match the interviewees perceptions to what was specifically happening during that part of the project. As a result, I could be able to say that a certain part of the process was associated with a certain perception.

### How did I select them?

The final master plan document was essential to review because it provided an extensive account of the project timeline, beginning with the concept for connecting downtown Eugene to the river through EWEB's riverfront property. I selected the 2004 Downtown Plan because it provided the city decision makers with an official direction for how to view the potential for the site, and to see if there was any additional information

that could be useful to understand the project. Similarly, I also looked at the 2007 MOU to see if there was any additional insight that would be useful for understanding the involvement from the city of Eugene and EWEB during the project. Additional memorandums were also selected because they provided additional sources of information to corroborate the dates and decisions described in the master plan.

#### How did I review them?

I began with reading the EWEB Riverfront Master Plan. This outlined important factors that contributed to the project, beginning with the concept from the 2004 Downtown Plan which recommended connecting the river to downtown. This concept was referenced in the 2007 MOU. The 2007 MOU reiterated some of the information that also appeared in the EWEB Riverfront Mater Plan, like the role of the 2004 Downtown plan as being supporting the use of the site for a civic purpose.

## **Open-Ended Interviews**

The 2007 MOU between the City of Eugene and EWEB delegated the production of the EWEB Riverfront Master Plan to the CAT. This placed the CAT as the group of individuals who would ultimately be responsible for producing the community based master plan to EWEB, who then would hand the plan off to the city for approval. As a result, interviewing the CAT members was important to understanding the design of the process because they had the most ability to direct what was included in the plan. Looking at the project as a participatory planning process, the CAT had the most autonomy. The 2007 MOU between the city and EWEB agreed on developing a consensus-based process using the CAT to be responsible for reflecting the voice of the community in the master plan.<sup>1</sup> While EWEB and the city were the conveners of the CAT and had stake in the project, they ultimately weren't directly involved in assembling the master plan document itself.

#### Approach

I interviewed five members from the Community Advisory Team (CAT), and design team based on their respective leadership roles during the project. For design team members, the purpose of this approach was because not all decisions are made with equal power. The project managers leading the efforts of individual offices have the final responsibility in deciding how to interpret directions from the CAT, and the prime consultant. Therefore, their insight on how the process worked would have more weight than someone not as involved in the direction of the project

All the project managers and support staff involved with the design team are named in the final master plan. However, to screen who the project managers were (and whether they would be available to speak), I contacted Kaarin Knudson, who was the project manager from Rowell Brokaw (the design team lead). Using those individuals, I proceeded to contact them for interviews. After I conducted the interviews from this pool of subjects, I conducted an additional interview with a local real estate expert who

was briefly involved in the project. The purpose of this final interview was to validate the concerns towards the plan's implementation expressed from the interviews. I collected all comments using Microsoft word.

### Interview Questions

I analyzed responses to open-interview questions from interviews with the members of the CAT, Design Team and a participant from the community interview phase of the project. As mentioned earlier, the interviews were conducted from a script of seven open-ended questions. The objective of these questions were to assess two main questions;

- What was your overall satisfaction level with the process?
- What would you change about the process?

The second overall question regarding the use of information from public engagement was explored with four questions;

- Which of the outreach methods were team members involved with?
- How satisfied (or dissatisfied) were team members with the public input that was collected?
- How was public input used by each of the team members?
- How well did each of the public outreach phases fit together?

### Results

Following these steps, I was able to conduct interviews with five individuals representing the CAT, the design team, and an additional local expert who participated in the community interview phase of the project.

## **Analysis**

In order to come up with my findings, I compared my understanding of the actions that occurred during the project timeline with the interview responses from members of the community advisory and the design team. This gave me the ability to compare the viewpoint of "what happened" to "how it impacted the people involved".

I set about this by creating an excel spreadsheet that summarized responses from each of the interview subjects into themes. These themes were organized by respondent, by question. This provided me with a sense of which parts of the project showed more positive themes, and themes that indicated a critique of the process.

## Limitations

**Time:** At the time of the study, the EWEB project had been complete for eight years. This was a significant amount of time where members from the CAT and design team had retired or changed offices, thereby decreasing availability for communication and decreasing assurance the project was fresh on their mind. In order to try and compensate for the gap in time, interview questions were provided to the subjects prior to the interviews.

**Subject Sample Size:** Members of the public who participated in the public meetings were not included in the project. There were almost 1,000 people who attended the public meetings and workshops.<sup>2</sup> This would not be an achievable sampling group to engage without much more time both for conducting and coding the interviews. There also was the question of whether contact information from the people attending public meetings would have been collected, and whether they expressed any willingness to be contacted in the future. Therefore, the research questions were focused on the evaluation of the process from a smaller group people who would be more accessible for contacting.

All the interviewee subjects I contacted were either active or retired professionals. As a result, my ability to schedule interviews was limited by their employment obligations, and personal lives. Depending on the contact information that was available (phone numbers and email addresses), I would call or email a subject, and follow up once or twice if I didn't receive a reply over the course of one or two weeks.

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- <sup>1</sup> Braud, D. (2014). *Work Session: Eugene Water & Electric Board Riverfront Redevelopment Project*. Eugene, OR. Retrieved from [http://coeapps.eugene-or.gov/cmoweblink/0/edoc/1571760/Agenda Item Summary A.pdf](http://coeapps.eugene-or.gov/cmoweblink/0/edoc/1571760/Agenda%20Item%20Summary%20A.pdf)
- <sup>2</sup> Rowell Brokaw Architects. (2010). *EWEB Riverfront Master Plan: A Community-Developed Design for Eugene's Downtown Riverfront*. Eugene, OR.

## Findings

In this section, I review the findings from the interviews. These findings are grouped into themes that relate to; overall satisfaction with the process, weaknesses with the process, and comments that were inconclusive as to whether being positive or critical.

### Strengths of the Process

#### Overall Satisfaction with the Process

The five people I was able to interview were generally very positive about their experience with the EWEB master plan process. One of the respondents stated they felt this was “one of the most thoughtful, thorough community involved processes I’ve been involved in”. There were three main factors that appeared to influence this satisfaction.

##### Communication.

First, two of the interview subjects reported satisfaction with the leadership from Rowell Brokaw Architects. Rowell Brokaw was the lead consultant of the design team, which meant they were responsible for assembling the final plan document and making sure it met the expectations of the community advisory team. As the process progressed, different iterations of the plan were developed using public input collected from meetings, and the design charrette. One of the respondents stated how “the process of presenting iterations of the project to the public was extremely well managed”.

##### An Easy-to-Follow Process.

The second factor that came up relating to satisfaction with the process, was that the process was easy to follow. One of the follow up justifications that an interview subject gave was the way the public engagement followed a clearly increasingly “wider net” of information. Beginning with individual interviews with community members, each step reached out to a larger and larger group of people. This was helpful to the interviewees since they were able understand what size of audience they would be expecting. In another case, the interviewee commented that “the priorities between the consultants was seamless”. According to this interviewee, they didn’t perceive any internal confusion among the consultants regarding what they were trying to achieve collectively.

#### Satisfaction with Information

##### Early Effort from Community Interviews Paid Off Later.

One of the interviewees commented on how the effort that went into the community interviews was valuable because it allowed them to steer away from certain contentious topics, like the pedestrian bridge.

### Use of Architectural Graphics Was Valuable for Public Meetings.

Although not directly related to information “collected” during the process, one of the interviewees mentioned they were very happy with the inclusion of architectural graphics by Rowell Brokaw in preparation for the public meetings. Interview subjects reported that the heavy use of architectural graphics as a way of showing the development of the plan was noticeably useful during public meetings. Clear graphic illustrations went a long way in helping the public understand what certain options would look like if adopted, which benefitted both the design team and the public.

### Use of Clickers.

Two of the interview subjects mentioned positive perception related to the use of clickers. Clickers were used during the two final public meetings as a way to gather information in a way that allowed people who may have been intimidated by competing with others for a chance to speak.<sup>1</sup> The interview subject said that investing in clickers was beneficial for generating information that would be immediately available after the event. It circumvented the effort and coordination that would be required for surveys or individual interviews, especially for a large group of people.

## **Weaknesses of the Process**

### **Concern with Implementation**

The dominant concerns that all the interviewees expressed was related to the plans ability to be implemented. The first theme around these concerns was a lack of developer input. Second, there was concern at barriers to implementation of the plan. Looking at the plan document, a possible cause for infeasible solutions might be rooted in the criteria outlined by the CAT. One of the the guiding principles outlined by the CAT at the beginning of the process list “economics” as a factor that was used in evaluating the plan document. This concerned with including amenities that would be economically valuable, and viable in Eugene, but without any requirement to be verified by developers. Finally, there was critique of burnout felt during the process.

### Lack of Developer Input.

The five people I talked to all expressed concern and frustration with the plan’s progress towards implementation. Four of them commented that there wasn’t an opportunity to test the development feasibility of the final designs. This is partly substantiated by the master plan itself, which indicates that developers were consulted on the problems from noise created by the rail lines that run along the west side of the site, but there isn’t any further mention of involvement in the charrette, or the public meetings.<sup>2</sup> A local real estate expert who was included in the community interviews indicated that there was no involvement from developers after the community interviews. They expressed interest in the project, but their continuous participation at every part of the planning process was not feasible due to their primary professional obligations. One of the most notable results of this gap in involvement was “Restaurant Row”. The real estate expert explained that as it is, the success of riverfront restaurants generally is extremely slim.

Combined with the moratorium on parking along this part of site, and the likelihood that any business would succeed there seemed doubtful to them.

Figure 6. Rendering of “Restaurant Row”



Source: Rowell Brokaw Architects. <http://rowellbrokaw.com/blog/2014/10/8/uo-foundation-team-selected-for-eweb-riverfront-re-development>

### Barriers to Development.

Three out of the five people I interviewed brought up serious concerns with the viability of the final design due to the process. They are concerned that the plan is “almost too thorough”, and therefore inflexible. For instance, the plan outlines specific height maximums, setbacks, building articulation and ground floor use for all the development areas of the plan. These building guidelines were developed to reflect realistic building dimensions, and would be useful for converting into a building code, but the overall development concept they are illustrating was untested by developers prior to the plan’s publishing. Two identified development barriers in the plan are the limits on parking, and retaining two of the existing maintenance buildings.

The developer I interviewed indicated that the parking requirements are simply unrealistic. The most problematic requirement is no new surface parking on the riverfront. Additionally, an architect working with Williams and Dames (the most recent developer for the site) indicated that the community interest in preserving the bow-truss building was actually an obstacle to “getting the maximum value out of this entire piece of property” (Hill, 2018).

### Burnout.

The yearlong process was most problematic for the CAT members, and local professionals. For the CAT members, this was an obligation they felt responsibility to fulfill. The real estate expert I spoke to referred to “burnout” as the factor which discouraged them consistent involvement in the process. They were involved in the community interviews phase of the project, but dropped out due to their professional obligations.

# Differences Between Interviewee Perceptions

There were some findings that are less conclusive, but two findings seemed valuable to include.

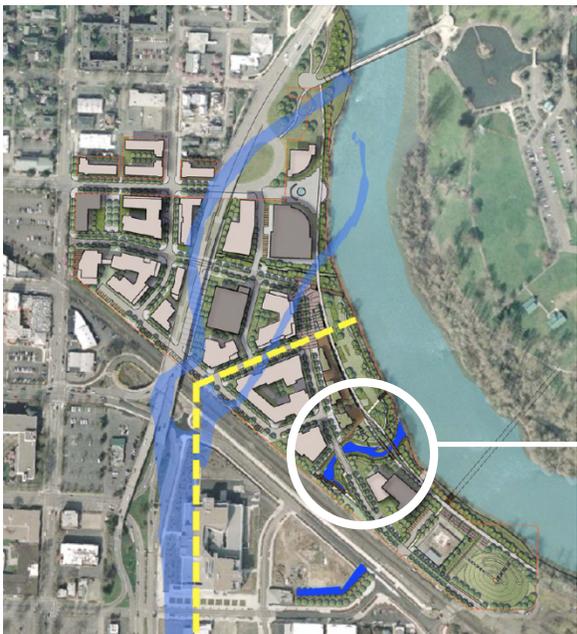
### Impact on Institutional Ownership.

One of the interview subjects discussed their concern for the degree to which the process focused on the community ownership of the project. Their concern was how this diminished EWEB’s ownership of the project, since it was their property’s use that the public was deciding on. Officially, EWEB is a political subdivision of the city of Eugene.<sup>3</sup> As a result, it becomes liable for the same standards of public transparency that the city is held to. So, while EWEB’s relationship to city is not as clear as something like the department of public works, it still is going to subject to the same political reassurance that any other local government decision would need.

### Managing Opposing Viewpoints.

The second comment that I saw a split opinion on was the way certain decisions were handled by Rowell Brokaw. One of the interviewees described this action as “tabling” certain ideas, which means an idea that appeared to be creating conflict was set aside “for future use”. This diffused a situation that at the time was disrupting progress, but resulted in an addition to the plan that was compromise. The example they gave was the millrace. This was an attractive option because a full restoration of the millrace would “reveal” a historic industrial channel that had been covered by modern infrastructure in the century since it was built.

Figure 7. Millrace Options on Master Plan



Source: Rowell Brokaw Architects. *EWEB Riverfront Master Plan*. 2010, p. 31.

Figure 8. Final Master Plan Layout



Source: Rowell Brokaw Architects. *EWEB Riverfront Master Plan*. 2010, p. 45.

*“There is a shelf life on  
community goodwill”  
-Interview Subject*

Moving forward, one of the interviewees commented that as the project’s approval by the city in 2010 becomes farther in the past, the challenges facing the project in the future might become more problematic. As we look to lessons we can use in future projects, this becomes a learning opportunity. The also same goes for the positive experiences indicated in this section. Next, I’ll conclude this study with some take-away ideas from this project that can hopefully be applied to future planning processes.

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- <sup>1</sup> Rowell Brokaw Architects. (2010). *EWEB Riverfront Master Plan: A Community-Developed Design for Eugene's Downtown Riverfront*. Eugene, OR.
- <sup>2</sup> Rowell Brokaw Architects. (2010). *EWEB Riverfront Master Plan: A Community-Developed Design for Eugene's Downtown Riverfront*. Eugene, OR.
- <sup>3</sup> Eugene. (2008). *Eugene City Charter*. Eugene, OR.
- KVAL-I. 2018. <http://kval.com/news/local/eugene-completes-purchase-of-waterfront-acreage-from-eweb>. Accessed June 11, 2018.

## Conclusion

This study responds to the potential for the planning process from the EWEB Riverfront Redevelopment Master Plan to be used as a template for future development projects. For a municipal planner or professional in the planning or architecture fields who might find the outcome of the project to be appealing, I wanted to provide a critical account of the project that identifies strengths and weaknesses of the EWEB Riverfront Master Plan process.

## Summary

### Document Review.

Using the final master plan document as a beginning reference, I reviewed of documents that played an important role for inspiring and directing the planning process. This included the final version of the EWEB Riverfront Development Master Plan document, the City of Eugene 2004 Downtown Plan, the 2007 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Eugene and EWEB, and several memos from EWEB and the City of Eugene. This provided an account of what happened, when it happened, and who was involved. I used the information from these documents to develop a graphic outline of the events during the planning process from 2007 to 2010. This included events like the 2007 MOU, and the public outreach events that were used to collect the community feedback that guided the final recommendations of the mater plan.

### Interviews.

Once I had an understanding of what occurred during the project timeline, I contacted members of the community advisory team, and the design team. Using an interview script of open-ended questions, I asked participants of the planning process a series of questions about how they perceived their satisfaction with the process. This included for example, their overall satisfaction with the process, and what they would change to improve their satisfaction with the experience of conducting the planning process. With this approach, I wanted to be able to associate individual perceptions of the participants with specific parts of the process.

## Conclusions

### Include Developers in the Planning Process.

Based on the information I collected, including developer feedback is crucial for future redevelopment projects. The implementation of features in the final plan document like the “Restaurant Row” face challenges that resulted from lack of developer involvement in the project. In order to retain the insight from developers, the process needs to achieve sustained involvement from developers beyond early community interview and

focus group phases. As the process kept expanding over the course of a year, the ability of people to volunteer time was limited, and they experienced burnout. If involvement on a consultant team isn't feasible, a developer focus group to review the plan options would be a useful strategy to avoid possible barriers to implementing the community vision.

#### *The Value of Architectural Graphics and Local Knowledge for Public Engagement.*

The use of architectural graphics during public meetings, and local knowledge were valued for improving communication, and decreasing conflict. The consultants directly involved in collecting feedback during public meetings highly valued having graphics on hand to help relate the concepts of "what could be", to a tangible location on a map. This resulted in what the consultants perceived to be lower frustration from the public than what might have occurred without accessible graphic information. Similarly, having background information on contentious concepts helped the consultants leading and supporting public in meetings and the charrette to avoid disagreement.

#### *Incorporate "Market Verification" When Defining The Goals of the Planning Process*

The ability of the plan to be approved by EWEB was measured using the guiding principles developed by the community advisory team (CAT), and the principles from the 2004 Downtown Eugene Plan. The unanimous approval of the plan by EWEB in 2010, and the adoption by the City of Eugene in 2013 indicate that the plan met these requirements. The participants involved in the assembly of the plan reported overall satisfaction with the process, but all brought up unhappiness with the lack of progress for seeing the plan become reality. In the future, including a consideration like "market verified" solutions in guiding criteria at the beginning of the process could be a means to create an outcome that meets the expectations of the people assembling the plan.

## **Future Research**

While not within the project scope, additional questions that came out of the study include the following themes:

#### *Specific to the continuing development of the EWEB riverfront site*

- Using the agreement between the City of Eugene William/Dames & Associates scheduled for June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018, perform a "before", "after" evaluation between the modified plan from William/Dames & Associates and the 2010 EWEB Riverfront Master Plan.

#### *General Inquiry*

- Examine differences between expectations for plan outcomes between municipal staff approving a redevelopment plan, and the consultants assembling the document.

- Assess the relationship between case studies of riverfront developments and setbacks from the river.