

EUGENE CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY



Work Session: Eugene Water & Electric Board Riverfront Master Plan

Meeting Date: June 12, 2013
Department: Planning and Development
www.eugene-or.gov

Agenda Item Number: A
Staff Contact: Gabe Flock
Contact Telephone Number: 541-682-5697

ISSUE STATEMENT

This work session will provide another opportunity for the council to learn more about Eugene Water & Electric Board's (EWEB) Riverfront Master Plan proposal, in advance of the upcoming public hearing. As a reminder, this is a quasi-judicial process which requires that the work session be limited to factual information and questions about the request. The council should avoid prematurely expressing opinions or deliberating on the merits of the proposal in advance of the public hearing, which is scheduled for June 17, 2013.

BACKGROUND

At the council's last work session on this topic, staff provided an overview of the proposal, including the regulatory actions proposed for implementation of the EWEB Riverfront Master Plan. As a reminder, the formal land use applications proposed by EWEB to implement the master plan, are briefly summarized below:

Metro Plan Amendment (MA 12-1): amends the Metro Plan diagram to reflect the master plan vision for mixed-use redevelopment; changes land use designation from primarily heavy industrial to mixed use.

Refinement Plan Adoption & Related Amendments (RA 12-1): adopts the EWEB Downtown Riverfront Specific Area Plan; also amends the Downtown Plan and Riverfront Park Study to remove obsolete sections and ensure consistency.

Code Amendments (CA 12-4): amends the Eugene Code to establish a new (S-DR) Downtown Riverfront Special Area Zone including form-based standards for future redevelopment; also includes related code amendments to integrate the new zoning with existing code sections.

Zone Change (Z 12-6): rezones the site from public land and industrial zoning to the new (S-DR) Downtown Riverfront Special Area Zone.

Willamette Greenway Permit (WG 12-4): approves a Willamette Greenway Permit for future development that is consistent with the new plan and zone.

Staff also responded to a number of questions and comments about the proposal at the work session. Additional responses and relevant materials are organized by topic and addressed below.

Public Access to, and within the EWEB Riverfront Site

The council asked how this master plan would promote access to the site both as a destination, and for casual use. The master plan and related code provisions ensure a new public street system that reconnects the site to downtown from 5th and 8th avenues. This will provide the critical connection linking downtown to the river.

The plan envisions this primary riverfront street as a “Great Loop” that provides pedestrian-friendly, bicycle, vehicular *and transit* access to the site from downtown. The concept also includes the ability to close sections of this riverfront street for festivals or other public events, but otherwise provide a convenient, pleasant streetscape environment for a wide variety of potential users, whether as residents, retail customers, or park users. The proposed bike path and boardwalk, adjacent to “Restaurant Row” and the new riverfront park, can accommodate a variety of users including bike commuters and more casual recreational users.

Transit service was closely considered in the master planning process with the involvement of a focus group that included Lane Transit District staff, City transportation staff and a variety of community members with interest in transportation issues. As a result, the primary street has been designed to ensure that it will accommodate future transit service, but with the realization that the specific type and location of service will depend on future build-out and a variety of details that naturally come later in the redevelopment process. Attachment A includes an excerpt from the master plan that shows the site’s relationship to regional, community and local transit service including rail, EmX, and the Breeze. It shows existing routes and how bus service could be routed to the site in the future.

The vision for the EWEB property is to expand the range of opportunities for commercial and residential development throughout the entire downtown and to create the desired mix of uses and high quality development within a compact urban core as called for in Envision Eugene. The proposal is intended to help realize the potential for this site to be a special destination downtown, where residents, visitors, downtown employees, and students come for activities that strengthen downtown, reinforce the identity of the community and its ties to the area’s most significant natural resource, the Willamette River.

Willamette Greenway and Water Resource Protections

There are two primary types of land use regulation that apply to natural resource/water resource protection on the EWEB Riverfront site:

- Willamette River Greenway (Goal 15)--The majority of the EWEB site is within the Willamette River Greenway Boundary. As such, a Willamette River Greenway permit is included in the adoption package. This permit and the proposed code include a new Willamette River Greenway setback to ensure protection of the expanded open space, riparian area and scenic values along the river.
- Water Resource Overlay Zoning (Goal 5)--While the typical setback for the Willamette River is 100 feet from the top-of-bank, the EWEB site is almost entirely developed up to the current bike path with either paving or buildings. As such, future development in the

“prior developed areas” is exempt from these setback and use restrictions. EWEB, however, is proposing extensive development setbacks, almost two acres more, than are required by current code.

The Planning Commission reviewed this issue in detail during their deliberations and ultimately found that the proposal resulted in an overall expansion of the protected and enhanced area along the river.

Attachment B illustrates the proposed Willamette River Greenway setback, and the extent of areas that are otherwise exempt from the Water Resource overlay setbacks (currently paved or existing buildings).

Potential Funding Sources for Public Improvements

Implementing the master plan will require on-going collaboration and leveraging of funds from multiple sources. There are a variety of public and private funding sources that will likely be considered. Private sources primarily include developer investment, potentially from multiple developers. Public sources could include grants from state or federal sources, Riverfront urban renewal funds and other City-controlled sources, as well as participation from EWEB. As an example, Public Works staff is coordinating with EWEB to pursue federal grant funding to reconstruct and realign the section of riverfront path within the master plan area. Additional options such as the formation of a local improvement district and other public-private partnerships have also been discussed. Until a development entity and a timeline are secured, amounts and sources are difficult to estimate.

Options and future decisions regarding financial tools, incentives, and public-private partnerships will come back to the council for further discussion once the regulatory framework is in place.

Future Park Site/ Riverfront Open Space

The same is true of options that exist for future park ownership and maintenance, which will depend largely on the outcome of this process to first establish the park location and basic regulatory framework for redevelopment of the site. In the case of the EWEB property, an existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) identifies the City’s option to declare interest in all or a part of the site, once the proposed land use application package is adopted and EWEB indicates its intent to sell the property. A variety of options exist and have yet to be decided in terms of future ownership and management of the park site.

Based on the level of interest in the proposed riverfront open space, additional details are provided in Attachment C, including a set of design guidelines and a detailed open space diagram from the plan. These materials help to show the intended location for various park improvements, riparian enhancements, native habitat areas, interpretive sites and other park elements including areas that could be available for community gardens.

The proposal is based upon a “Riverfront Ecological Analysis and Design” report that was prepared during the master planning process, which includes an analysis and recommendations about the site’s ecological condition, riparian restoration, and balancing of these opportunities among economic, social, and environmental concerns. A specific native planting list developed as part of this analysis is included in the adoption package. These materials help to show the balanced

approach envisioned in the master plan for compact urban development, reconnecting downtown to the river, and maximizing natural resource values in context with a variety of policy goals for the site. (For access to this document, please refer to the materials at: <http://www.eugene-or.gov/index.aspx?NID=2358> beginning on page 630 of the record.)

Sustainability Principles (Triple Bottom Line)

A fundamental element of the master planning process from the beginning was to establish a vision statement and guiding principles that address the “triple bottom line” of sustainability (see Attachment D). This vision and the guiding principles were approved by the Community Advisory Team to help inform the process based on an understanding of the inter-dependence of the community’s social, economic, and environmental concerns. This framework also recognizes the unique opportunity to advance these interests and model sustainability principles in a tangible way for the entire community, through redevelopment of the EWEB riverfront site. As such, the proposed adoption package is intended as a reflection of that inter-dependence and balance, with numerous examples throughout the materials that implement sustainability principles.

New Mixed-Use Redevelopment Potential

The adoption package includes a variety of regulatory actions that, as intended, would create a substantial amount of new capacity for a mix of residential, office, commercial and employment uses on the site as compared to its current industrial designation and largely vacant character. This additional capacity can help to meet the needs identified in Envision Eugene for both multi-family housing and commercial jobs. Additional information was requested at the last work session about more specific estimates of that new capacity. Based on the applicant’s analysis of market feasibility and various redevelopment scenarios under the proposed zoning, estimated build-out would create:

- 250-400 new dwelling units,
- 22,000-28,000 square feet of new retail space,
- 14,000 square feet of restaurant use, and
- 40,000-315,000 square feet of additional office uses.

Form-Based and Traditional Zoning (“Hybrid”) Code Provisions

Additional information about the difference between form-based elements and traditional zoning provisions was also requested at the last work session. The proposed special area zone includes some of both, and is therefore considered a “hybrid” form-based code by integrating form-based elements with existing, traditional code provisions.

Staff believes that one of the advantages of the form-based approach is its focus on standards that try to articulate what the City wants to see built, rather than traditional codes which tend to focus on preventing what the City doesn’t want. A key means for accomplishing this is the focus on urban design standards. These standards are perhaps the most obvious form-based elements of the proposed zoning that are intended to ensure an active streetscape, appropriately scaled buildings, and pedestrian-friendly character. Maximum building envelopes, minimum building heights, step-backs for taller buildings, articulation and window transparency requirements, and main entrance orientation are examples of the form-based standards that have been tailored to the site in order to achieve the intended result.

One key difference as compared to traditional zoning is the inclusion of user-friendly graphics to

represent the standards and better reflect what is allowed and what is not in terms of building form and the public streetscape. Another key difference is that the allowed uses are organized in broad categories to encourage a more generous mixing of uses (e.g. retail on the ground floor, with offices and residential units above); in general, form-based codes are much less predicated on the separation of uses as compared to traditional zoning. In this case, careful consideration was still given to prohibit certain uses such as heavy industrial or suburban-style residential housing, and to require minimum residential density above the ground floor along key street frontages.

Public Testimony Overview from Planning Commission Hearing

At the Planning Commission's initial public hearing held on February 5, 2013, following a presentation from EWEB's staff and consultant team, testimony was received from 18 individuals in support of the request. There were two individuals who had questions or otherwise indicated a neutral position, and two individuals with testimony in opposition to the request.

Several themes emerged in that testimony including appreciation for extensive public input opportunities in the master planning process, the balanced and careful consideration of various stakeholder interests, the vision for compact but sensitive and well-designed mixed-use redevelopment, and based upon the proposal for a new riverfront park with ample public access, river-oriented amenities, and enhancement of the riparian area along the river's edge. Opposing testimony mainly expressed concern about the perceived shortcomings of the plan's ecological analysis and protections along the river's edge.

RELATED CITY POLICIES

The Eugene Code and Downtown Plan require the City's approval of a master plan for redevelopment of the EWEB riverfront property. The adopted policy reads as follows:

A master plan for the EWEB riverfront property must be approved by the City before any redevelopment, land use application, rezoning, Metro Plan or refinement plan diagram amendments are approved for uses not associated with EWEB functions. The master plan shall be evaluated based on the master plan's consistency with principles (1) through (4) below:

- (1)** Create a "people place" that is active, vibrant, accessible and multi-use.
- (2)** Provide appropriate setbacks, deeper where environmental or habitat issues are more critical, shallower in other areas.
- (3)** Incorporate appropriate building and site design techniques that address environmental concerns.
- (4)** Incorporate an educational aspect, so that the riverfront improvements teach the community about its river, history and city.

EWEB's proposed land use application package is intended to fulfill this policy and to implement the regulations needed to ensure that redevelopment of the site remains consistent with the conceptual master plan. Findings addressing the applicable approval criteria, including Statewide Planning Goals and other adopted City policies for this request, are included in the applicant's written statement for the land use application package.

COUNCIL OPTIONS

This is an informational work session; no action is necessary at this time.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

As noted above, this is an informational work session; no action is necessary at this time.

SUGGESTED MOTION

None.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Transit Service Study Materials
- B. Willamette Greenway and Water Resource Setbacks
- C. Open Space Diagram and Design Guidelines
- D. Master Plan Guiding Principles

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Staff Contact: Gabe Flock
Telephone: 541-682-5697
Staff E-Mail: gabriel.flock@ci.eugene.or.us