

## Quarterly Newsletter

October 2016

### SAVE THE DATE: Riverwalk Design Alternatives Presentation and Workshop

*Thursday, November 17<sup>th</sup>*

The time has come...

See and discuss the design alternatives for the riverwalk! Bring the whole family to this fun interactive event and participate in riverwalk design. More details to be shared on our website: [www.rediscoverthefalls.com](http://www.rediscoverthefalls.com).



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## DESIGNER Q&A

*with Michelle Delk*



Michelle Delk, Partner, Snøhetta

Along the banks of the Willamette River in Oregon City, a vision is taking shape to reconnect Oregonians with one of the state's most spectacular — and hidden — natural treasures: Willamette Falls.

Oregon City, Clackamas County, Metro and the State of Oregon have teamed up to help transform a former industrial site into an iconic destination, beginning with a public riverwalk. The partners are working with a world-class design team: Snøhetta, Mayer/Reed and DIALOG, chosen last year in a competitive selection process that drew proposals from around the world.

The designers' work is founded on the Willamette Falls Legacy Project's four core values and informed by site visits and research, discussions with stakeholders and the input of thousands of community members gathered through numerous public engagement efforts since the project began.

The team's riverwalk design ideas will be introduced this fall at a community event and on the project's website, [rediscoverthefalls.com](http://rediscoverthefalls.com).

Michelle Delk of international design superstar Snøhetta shared her thoughts about waterfalls, past projects, design for public spaces — and what excites her the most about the Willamette Falls Legacy Project.

**Willamette Falls is your favorite waterfall (clearly!). Describe your second favorite waterfall in the world.**

Yes, Willamette Falls is clearly a magnificent and unique waterfall! But my heart belongs to another . . . my husband proposed after a rain-soaked hike to a discreet waterfall just outside of Dahlonega, Ga.



DeSoto Falls, Georgia, photo courtesy Michelle Delk.

While Willamette Falls is absolutely unique and incredible, "our" backwoods waterfall is simply intertwined with a meaningful moment in my life. But, it's just one of many beautiful places, where nature and the power of waterfalls can captivate you.

Any place can become special because of the history and memories we find embedded there. It's our personal experiences that are vital.

No two people experience, remember, or understand a place quite the same, and this is what allows places to become special and exceptional.

# Willamette Falls

## LEGACY PROJECT



Rendering of Museum Park Miami, credit Civitas, Inc.

### **Tell us about a past project you worked on that was especially meaningful to you.**

Over a decade ago, I started the redesign of the former Bicentennial Park in downtown Miami, Florida (now called Museum Park Miami). It was an impressive site embodied by great ambitions! I had only a few years' experience, and certainly not with anything as complex or culturally significant as this site.

As the original home of the Port of Miami, the site had a long history of industrial maritime use prior to its establishment as a city park in 1976. Unfortunately, the park quickly deteriorated while crime and homelessness became prevalent.

When I started the project, very few people spent time there and the existing park was derelict, with only intermittent events, such as a grand prix style auto race.

The 29-acre site was a very special place, as it stretched along a half mile of publicly accessible

waterfront; very rare in downtown Miami. During the 5-year design process, I became increasingly intertwined and deeply knowledgeable of the site, the team, and the political environment surrounding this project.

The proposed design not only created a home for a new art museum and a new science museum, but established the park itself as an outdoor cultural destination with unique spaces and rich materiality that would invite a diversity of future users back to this incredible waterfront.



Michelle Delk at One City Plaza, Greenville, S.C.  
Courtesy GreenvilleOnline.com



Unfortunately, after the drawings were released for bid, financing difficulties caused the park-as-designed to not be constructed.

Museum Park taught me so much about the many layers of complexity that design embodies and still holds a special place in my heart.

**You've designed a lot of parks and public spaces. What do you think is the key to designing successful public spaces?**

Respecting and developing an understanding of a place is vital to foster a design that reflects a multiplicity of voices.

We explore the boundaries between program and spontaneity and emphasize the importance of the human experience as the center of our transformations within the public realm.

People are the key to the success of public spaces, but we must inspire them and provide them opportunity to build their own stories, histories, and connections for true success.

**What are you most excited about on the riverwalk project?**

The site is such an incredibly complex amalgamation of the natural and built environment! The physical strata intertwined with remnants of the constructed industrial landscape along the waterfront of the Willamette Falls and Willamette River hold such a compelling story that beg for reveal!

I've always been drawn to places where nature and culture merge to create unique and complex landscapes. This is probably inspired by my childhood. In a vastly agricultural landscape, my home sat near a shallow river, surrounded by acres of deciduous forest.

I could often be found in an abandoned rock quarry, partially filled with waste rock and successional vegetation. My days were spent exploring this landscape, imagining all the people who had been there before me and what they had created. At the same time, I scoured the landscape and formed art installations out of plants and old relics that I'd found.

The first time I visited the Blue Heron site I was immediately inspired and connected to this landscape as though it was a long lost friend. I'm intrigued not only by what is visible here, but by so much that is invisible. It's an incredible three-dimensional place that's absolutely inspiring and powerful!





# Willamette Falls

## LEGACY PROJECT



## Partners Group Decision on Whitewater Park Proposal

At its public meeting in Oregon City on September 19, the Willamette Falls Legacy Project partners group decided unanimously to move forward on its public riverwalk project as planned, without further consideration of a proposal to integrate a whitewater park into the project.

The whitewater park proposal had been brought forward by nonprofit We Love Clean Rivers, which envisioned the construction of a large-scale manmade whitewater channel through the project site.

In making its decision, the partners group reflected upon the desire to avoid additional

costs and delays to the riverwalk as well as other concerns regarding feasibility and environmental impacts.

“It is important to make clear that as riverwalk design proceeds, the Willamette Falls Legacy Project will strive to incorporate the community’s desire for river access, such as portage trails and water trail connections, to create opportunities for kayaking and other water activities,” said Kathleen Brennan-Hunter, Metro Director of Parks and Nature.

The Willamette Falls riverwalk is envisioned as a world-class public open space and walkway to Willamette Falls, the second-largest waterfall by volume in North America. The project has received tremendous community input that will be reflected in riverwalk design alternatives planned to be released for public feedback in November.



Jonathan Stone, Downtown Oregon City Association

## STAKEHOLDER SPOTLIGHT:

### *Downtown Oregon City Association*

The success of the Willamette Falls Legacy Project relies upon the support and participation of many stakeholders. One of them is the Downtown Oregon City Association (DOCA), also known as Main Street Oregon City, a nonprofit working to revitalize downtown Oregon City. DOCA is responsible for some of Oregon City's most popular and high-profile community events, including the annual First City Celebration in July.

We caught up with Jonathan Stone, DOCA's Executive Director, to talk about what the riverwalk will mean to the downtown district, results from its downtown parking study and what he's looking forward to on the riverwalk.

**Downtown Oregon City, especially along Main Street, has undergone an amazing revitalization. How does DOCA see itself in relation to the riverwalk and efforts to develop the overall Blue Heron site?**

We see the riverwalk as an intrinsic part of the downtown district. We recognize the mill site as part of our focus area for our efforts and services. What it means now versus what it

would mean in the future very much depends on how the project evolves. The types of activities we engage ourselves in depend on what we're trying to achieve.

Eventually, I imagine that we would have either a strong partnership role or be directly involved in what programming might happen there.

**Have you received any feedback from DOCA businesses and property owners about what's happening over at the mill site?**

Everybody is anticipating it. It's basically the first question I get asked whenever I talk to somebody I haven't talked to in a while or upon first being introduced to someone - it's "what do you know about that mill site?"

**Moving forward, what synergies do you see between DOCA and WFLP?**

One of the things I mentioned to the riverwalk designers is that you're going to be dreaming up a bunch of great ideas for the site, and the site is only so big, but when we think of the site as a continuation of downtown, we need to think of all those ideas in the context of the entire district.

So if you have fifteen amazing ideas, and you narrow them down to five, and you can only fit in three, let's talk about those other two, and is there anything that we can do to help implement those things in other places?

We see our role as a partner in helping to understand the inter-relationship between this world-class design effort at the mill site and how we help the rest of downtown stand up to that and be continuous with it.

**DOCA has collected data for a downtown parking study. What results have you found?**

We proposed a renewal and expansion of the parking study that was done in 2009, so we could better understand the economic improvement district as it relates to new business uses.



We have not yet done a full analysis of the data, but we have found that our hypothesis is correct – our peak hour for public parking demand is at 6:00 p.m., dinnertime, and it's both during the week and on weekends.

My understanding is that the transportation demand management study (being done by the Willamette Falls Legacy Project as part of its development strategy) will offer a lot of insights that we could also apply to the rest of the district. We are looking to provide that project with information to serve as a starting point. We also look at where our economic opportunities are.

**What are you most looking forward to doing at the riverwalk when it is opened to the public?**

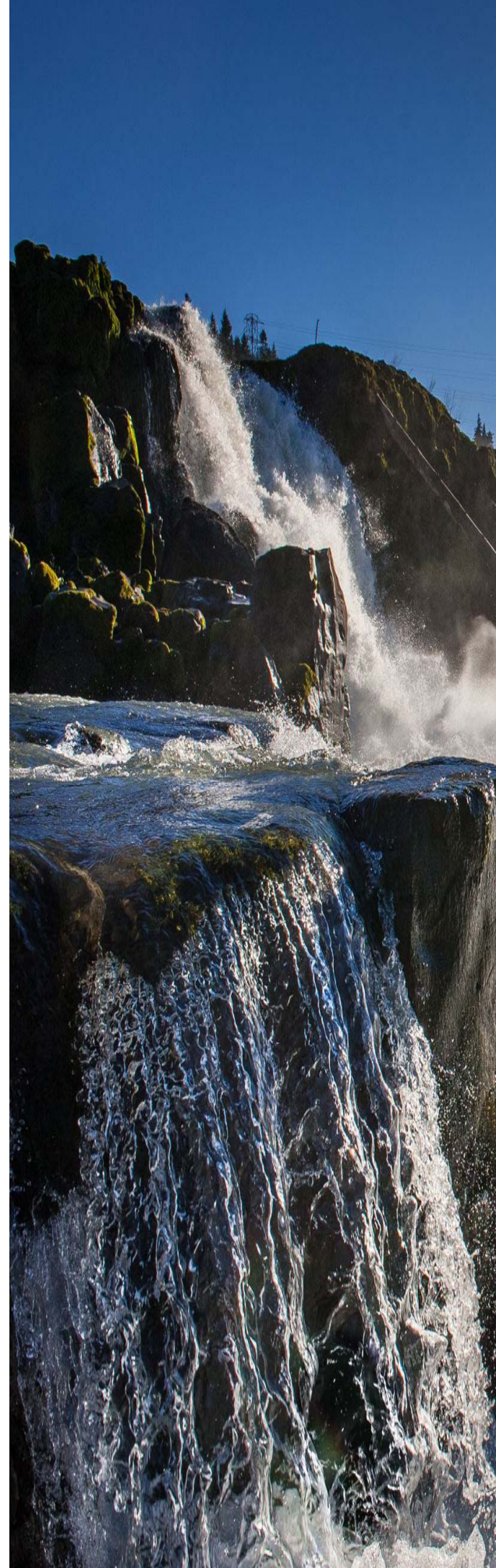
I share the anticipation of everybody that provided input for the vision and master plan – and those values are very much what we have as well. I'm excited about a multi-dimensional experience.

Personally, I hope there's a significant cultural opportunity on the site, whether that is an interpretive center, performing arts spaces – and it would be super interesting if it were incorporated into the outdoor spaces as well.

Speaking for my board, we want to see a place and experience a place that's undeniably Oregon City, and when people go to the riverwalk they take away a sense of what makes Oregon City unique.

With the falls and retaining existing buildings and all of the public visioning that's happening, I think the riverwalk will succeed in reflecting what Oregon City's all about and help to assert to the rest of the state and the country that what happened here is nationally significant.

*Jonathan Stone is the Executive Director of the Downtown Oregon City Association and was named statewide Manager of the Year in 2016 by Oregon Main Street. Prior to joining DOCA, he worked as an architectural professional focusing on institutional and multi-family residential projects and spent time as an independent consultant working with traded sector and family owned businesses. He has an MS in Information Systems and MBA in Marketing from Boston University and a Bachelor of Architecture from Boston Architectural College. In addition to his work for DOCA, he sits on the board of directors for the Willamette Falls Heritage Area Coalition, Rediscover the Falls, the Oregon City Chamber of Commerce, and the Clackamas County Historical Society.*







## Riverwalk Opportunities Report Now Available

Earlier this year, the riverwalk design team conducted an existing conditions investigation of the old Blue Heron mill site and PGE dam. They documented their work in a report that describes the various areas and structures on the site, and provides initial thoughts on the opportunities that each piece presents for the riverwalk

experience. This is the first of several reports and studies that we will be able to share with you this Fall.

### *What do you think?*

Download the full report and share your opinion:

[http://www.rediscoverthefalls.com/  
riverwalk-opportunities-report-now-available/](http://www.rediscoverthefalls.com/riverwalk-opportunities-report-now-available/)





## FEATURED FAQ

### When will riverwalk construction begin?

The current design and engineering phase will be completed in approximately 18-24 months, bringing us to 2018. The site is not a shovel-ready project – infrastructure is needed and permitting will be complex. Construction of the riverwalk is estimated to begin as soon as 2018.

