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Design Team Chosen for Iconic Willamette Falls Riverwalk Project

The Riverwalk will allow people access to Willamette Falls, the second-largest waterfall in the U.S. by volume, for the first time in 100 years

(Oregon City, Ore.)—Oregon Governor Kate Brown announced the selection of the design team for the Riverwalk portion of the Willamette Falls Legacy Project today, ushering in the next step in the redevelopment of a significant landmark site near the country’s second largest waterfall. The team of Mayer/Reed, Snøhetta and DIALOG were chosen after an extensive national proposal process conducted this spring, and will begin work this summer on the schematic design of the Riverwalk. When completed, the project will open public access to Willamette Falls to the public for the first time in over 100 years.

Local and regional elected officials and community supporters praised the selection of the team on Friday.

“This is the first step in rediscovering one of Oregon’s most beautiful and significant places,” said Carlotta Colette, Metro Councilor. “We are going to allow people to see Willamette Falls in a way they haven’t been able to experience it for more than a century and create housing, jobs, and public spaces at the same time.”

“I am excited that we have chosen an extraordinary team to help create a world-class Riverwalk to Willamette Falls,” said Oregon City Mayor Dan Holladay. “Providing public access to the Falls will not only allow the public to return to an amazing section of the Willamette River in Oregon City, but will also drive economic investment into the Blue Heron property and surrounding area. “

“Clackamas County is a proud partner and a firm believer in this project’s future potential for our county and for our region,” said Clackamas County Commissioner Tootie Smith. “Through this

collaborative partnership, great progress has been made toward transforming this site and capitalizing on its historic, cultural and economic significance.”

The selection process invited design teams to demonstrate their approach to give the public access to the breathtaking Willamette Falls and the adjacent industrial site. Mayer/Reed, Snøhetta, and DIALOG envisioned an experientially-rich Riverwalk that not only accesses and amplifies the magnetic power of the Willamette, but also courses through time, stitching together the natural and cultural histories embedded within the Blue Heron site.

“We believe that the site and the history it holds is a sublime, one-of-a-kind landscape that should not be upstaged by the hand of any designer,” commented Michelle Delk, Snøhetta’s Director of Landscape Architecture. “We are inspired by the complex strata of the site and its deep cultural history. By protecting, reusing, reducing, and adding, we will integrate and amplify the site’s strata into the Riverwalk,”

Located at the end of Main Street in Oregon City, the current Willamette Falls Legacy Project site is a cluster of empty industrial buildings, the remnants of the Blue Heron Paper Mill, which was shuttered in a bankruptcy in 2011. The Willamette Falls Legacy Project is a collaboration of four public sector partners (Metro, the Portland-area regional government, the City of Oregon City, Clackamas County and the state of Oregon) and the Blue Heron site’s landowner, Falls Legacy LLC. The project aims to create a Riverwalk that connects people to the falls as well as a Willamette Falls Downtown District with spaces for housing, employers and recreation.

“The upland portions of the site will thrive when their connectivity to the water’s edge, their form, massing and sight lines, and indeed the very fabric of uses eventually embedded in the site, are carefully considered together,” notes Alan Boniface, DIALOG Principal.

Long an important gathering spot and fishing location for Native American tribes, Willamette Falls was also a final destination for many a westward-heading pioneer due to its location at the end of the Oregon Trail. It was also site of the country’s first long-distance transmission of electricity in 1889, when electricity generated by the falls was sent several miles away to Portland. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, it was the site of various thriving industries, including lumber, flour, woolen, and paper mills, and a brick-making operation.

“The magnetism of Willamette Falls is the genesis and spirit of place. We will provide an experiential glimpse of the fall’s power, one that transports visitors deep into history and highlights its elemental qualities” says Carol Mayer-Reed, Principal of Mayer/Reed.

The design team's approach showed the falls and the complex material layers of the site as a portal to the Northwest's collective history. The site's strata tells the story of deep geology, dynamic hydrology, and vibrant ecology, together forming the spirit of place. It tells the story of Native Americans who first understood the site's promise, fishing its waters and building deep tradition, as well as that of European immigrants who claimed Oregon City, carving out a grid and building settlements. It tells the story of workers and industrialists who ground flour, drove timber, spun wool, milled paper, and generated electricity. It will tell the story of you – the public - who will help lay down the next historic layer - an experiential riverwalk, foretelling a story of renewed economy, environmental sensitivity, and historic importance.

The idea boards and images generated by the design team demonstrate their thinking and approach to the site. The final design for the new Riverwalk will be the result of an extensive public engagement process.

Snøhetta and Mayer/Reed are also currently working on Portland's James Beard Public Market. DIALOG brings international experience designing revitalized post-industrial waterfronts and will provide urban design expertise on the project. DIALOG and Snøhetta are also working together on the Calgary Central Library in Alberta, Canada, currently under construction.

For more information on the Willamette Falls Legacy Project, visit www.rediscoverthefalls.org

About Mayer/Reed

Mayer/Reed is a multi-disciplinary Portland firm providing landscape architecture, urban design, visual communications, product design, wayfinding and interpretive design throughout the Pacific Northwest and at a national level. The firm's award-winning work demonstrates how thoughtful design can shape places to become engaging environments that create community, forge connections and spur economic growth. The designers' process explores the social, cultural, ecological and historic contexts of each place, resulting in spaces that resonate with genuine identity and character deeply felt by inhabitants and users. Mayer/Reed has experience in complex, sustainable public projects including: waterfronts, plazas, trails, streetscapes, light rail transit, educational facilities, natural areas, and arts and interpretive integration. Public projects include the Vera Katz Eastbank Esplanade, a multi-phased portion of the Willamette Greenway in downtown Portland; the Old Mill District in Bend, OR; the Rain Garden at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland; the Portland to Milwaukie Light Rail East Segment urban design; and recent master planning for the campus expansion of the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI), including the renovation of its extensive waterfront on the Willamette River.

About Snøhetta

Snøhetta values human interaction. All of the studio's work strives to enhance a sense of place, identity and relationship to others and the physical spaces they inhabit, whether natural or human-made. Snøhetta is committed to an integrated, trans-disciplinary practice of landscape architecture, architecture, interiors, and graphic design. The quality and strength of identity provoked by their designs is achieved by incorporating research with intuition, leveraging what are often perceived as challenges into opportunities, and factoring the social and political environment in the creative process. This methodology ensures site-specific solutions are created that meet client and user needs for successful and engaging public spaces.

For over 20 years, Snøhetta has designed some of the world's most notable public and cultural projects. Snøhetta kick-started its career in 1989 with the competition-winning entry for the new library of Alexandria, Egypt. This was later followed by the commission for the Norwegian National Opera in Oslo and the National September 11th Memorial Museum Pavilion at the World Trade Center in New York City. The studio is currently working on the expansion of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in California, the redevelopment of Times Square in New York City, the expansion of The French Laundry Kitchen and garden in Yountville, California, and the Lascaux Caves Museum in Montignac, France, all of which are currently under construction. The office recently completed the Ryerson University Student Learning Centre, in Toronto Canada, and is currently working on the Calgary Public Library in Alberta, Canada, among many other projects. Among its many recognitions, Snøhetta received the World Architecture Award for the Bibliotheca Alexandrina and the Norwegian National Opera and Ballet, and the Aga Kahn Prize for Architecture for Alexandria Library. Since its completion in 2008, the Norwegian National Opera and Ballet has also garnered the Mies van der Rohe European Union Prize for Architecture and the EDRA (Environmental Design Research Association) Great Places Award, as well as the European Prize for Urban Public Space, The International Architecture Award and The Global Award for Sustainable Architecture in 2010.

About Dialog

DIALOG is widely regarded as a world leader in urban design that focuses on long-term, community-based place making. The firm was created as a cross disciplinary collaborative to tackle the increasingly complex challenges involved in the making of community. DIALOG includes urban designers and planners, architects and interior designers, structural, mechanical and electrical engineers, and landscape architects. The firm practices across Canada, the US (including Portland, OR) and beyond from carbon neutral studios in Vancouver, Toronto, Calgary and Edmonton. DIALOG's work includes design for urban vibrancy, transportation, arts and culture, retail and commercial, residential, education and mixed use. The firm has planned improved waterfronts at Granville Island, Lonsdale Quay, The Versatile Shipyards site, Fraser Mills, The Olympic Village Master Plan in Vancouver, The Red Hook neighborhood in Brooklyn, The Auckland Waterfront in New Zealand, the Gold Coast of Australia and Astoria, Oregon. Although the firm's work has attracted many awards, the designers consider a project truly successful when it is embraced by its community.

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