



## **Riverfront Courtship Off to a Promising Start**

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When the Everett City Council gave the nod to OliverMcMillan on Wednesday to develop the long-awaited riverfront project, the San Diego-based company bought itself an eager fiancé and some precious time to come up with a grand proposal.

In this case, the bride-to-be isn't just the city, but its nearly 100,000 residents who will have the opportunity to continue being part of a very public process city officials can be proud of and citizens can appreciate.

More than 10 years and 100 public meetings on what to do with the prized parcel of land that used to host a mill and a landfill is hardly a rush to the altar. City leaders took the time to find out exactly what citizens wanted. They took those recommendations and ideas from the Shoreline Advisory Committee and sought out prospective developers across the country whose projects and philosophies were likely to match the city's, rather than waiting for prospective suitors to come to them. It was a smart move by Lanie McMullin, the city's executive director, and others on staff, and it continues a pattern of pursuing projects, partnerships and opportunities the last several years that are making the city a vibrant place to live, work and play.

Asking the companies to base their presentations on their qualifications and not possible proposals was another wise move. A piece of land commonly referred to as the city's "front porch" is too vital to have anyone come knocking on the back door to tell us what they're going to do with it. The next several months to a year will be a time of listening and learning on both sides of the partnership. Listening to what people want to see, do and visit - and listening to what the land on the site can tolerate and what the market will bear.

Now comes the serious courtship, if you will, between Everett and OliverMcMillan. And it's a monogamous relationship. "I think everybody should understand we're just engaged, and we're not dating anybody else," McMullin said of the next phase of the project. The marriage will come when the OliverMcMillan team makes its final proposal to the city.

Fortunately, it looks as though the city's new partner feels the same way. The company proudly states that it works on one big project at a time and Everett is now its focus. Its work is about "art and making special places happen," Dene Oliver, the company's chief executive, told the City Council. It's about the city's past, its values, its future and where its residents want to go with their community.

He couldn't have said it better if he had gone down on one knee. Welcome to the family, OliverMcMillan.

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