



City of Yakima

NEWS RELEASE

Subject: Downtown Yakima Central Plaza Design Team

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Release Date: Thursday, March 27th, 2014

Designers of Downtown Central Plaza Concepts Have Yakima Roots

Not only are two of the key members of the design team recently chosen by the City Council to develop concepts for a Downtown Yakima Central Plaza highly regarded regionally, nationally, and globally, they are both originally from Yakima and have taken on the project as a way of giving something back to their hometown.

Kathryn Gustafson is a founding principal of Gustafson Guthrie Nichol (“GGN”), an internationally-celebrated landscape architecture practice based in Seattle. Gustafson, who grew up in Yakima and has several family members who still call the Valley home, has earned acclaim around the world during her 30-plus-year career for her ground-breaking, contemporary designs. Gustafson, who is also a partner in the London-based design firm Gustafson Porter, has contributed to notable projects including the *Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial at Hyde Park* in London, *Cutuurpark Westergasfabriek* in Amsterdam, *Valencia Park Central* in Spain, and *Lurie Garden at Millennium Park* in Chicago.

Brett Baba, a founding principal of Graham Baba Architects (“GBA”) and also a Yakima native, has spent more than three decades honing his reputation as the “detail master” on projects that range from the Melrose Market in Downtown Seattle to the Cowiche Canyon Restaurant/Ice House Bar, a project still under construction in Downtown Yakima. In 2011, Baba and GBA’s other founding principal, Jim Graham, were named among “Seattle’s Most Influential People” as chosen by *Seattle Magazine*.

“As someone who grew up in Yakima, I want to create an absolutely stellar piece in my hometown,” said Gustafson. “For me, the Central Plaza project is about the place where I was born and raised before I went out into an international realm. I look forward to going home to make a place that fits Yakima,” said Gustafson.

“Getting to work on projects in Yakima, like the Cowiche Canyon Restaurant/Ice House Bar, the new Washington Fruit office, and now the Downtown Yakima Central Plaza, is not only professionally rewarding but also gratifying on a personal level,” said Baba. “The enthusiasm we’ve received for our work in the area has felt like a warm welcome home.”

Magnusson Klemencic Associates Magnusson Klemencic Associates, a civil and structural engineering firm headquartered in Seattle, will bring their expertise in innovative stormwater management systems to help the team design a plaza that functions well in Yakima’s semi-arid climate.

“With Kathryn and Brett, we are really getting the best of two worlds,” said City Manager Tony O’Rourke. “The Downtown Central Plaza design will combine the insights and experience of world-renowned architects with a truly unique hometown Yakima connection. Our community is incredibly fortunate to have GGN, GBA, and MKA as our plaza design team,” said O’Rourke.

The Central Plaza is a key element of the Downtown Yakima Master Plan, which began being developed in 2013 and is still a work in progress. Plaza design concepts will be developed for two sites – the parking lot across from the Capitol Theatre and the parking lot at the northeast corner of 2nd Street and S Sgt Pendleton Way and will cost about \$145,000. The designs will focus on transforming the lots into welcoming, interactive public spaces while also accommodating public parking. Ultimately, the City Council will be asked to choose one of the two sites to develop.

Both the Downtown Master Plan and the Central Plaza design concepts are expected to be completed later this year.

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