

MONEY WATCH

METRO MONEY

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL SUNDAY

Beware of fees on debit cards, F-4

Entergy fights for heating help, F-6

Investing when dollar is weak, F-9

Corporate boards forgive easily

Disgraced execs often keep seats

By Rachel Beck
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK — It doesn't seem to matter when corporate directors get tangled in business scandals or are accused of ketchy oversight: many still get to hold on to their jobs no matter what.

Just consider that three people who served on the Enron Corp. board before the energy giant's 2001 collapse are still directors of U.S.-based companies. Same goes for two WorldCom directors who sat on the telecommunications company's board when it became one of the largest corporate failures in U.S. history.

And that's just the start. Many of the nation's biggest companies have board members with spotted pasts. So much for all the promises out of corporate America in recent years to improve boardroom integrity.

Of course, there is the theory that those who fell asleep at the wheel before won't dare to shirk their responsibilities again. For some, that may be true, but there is no guaranteeing such reform.

That leaves it up to companies to decide whether they are willing to take the risk of letting these people join or stay on their boards, and it appears that many are unfazed by past mistakes.

Look at former Lucent Technologies Inc. Chairman and CEO Richard McGinn, who was forced out in the fall of 2000 after the company warned for the fourth time in a year that its profits would be weak. Soon after that, the telecommunications company disclosed that it had prematurely booked \$679 million in revenue.

See **BOARDS, F-8**

Priced-out home buyers shift focus

Urban investors find deals afield

1 ERATO STREET CRUISE TERMINAL



PORT OF NEW ORLEANS RENDERING

ROOM TO BOOM

Amphitheater? Parks? Museum? If old wharves were razed, what attractions could be built along New Orleans' underdeveloped riverfront?

By Jaquetta White
Business writer

Now that city and port officials have confirmed that they are close to signing a landmark agreement with the potential to spark an unprecedented development boom on the riverfront that would resuscitate areas that long ago flatlined, it's worth asking: Exactly what would a redeveloped riverfront look like?

Much has yet to be decided, but architects and planners envision a riverfront cleared of derelict wharves and filled with leisure and entertainment activities inviting locals and tourists to the river.

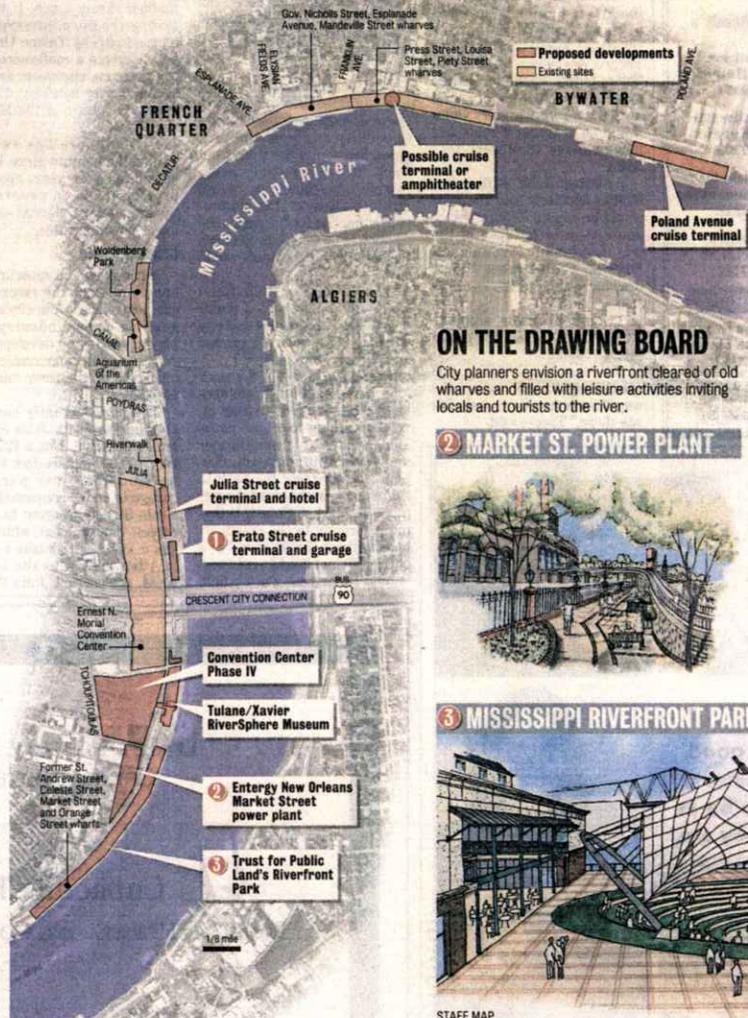
The "riverfront offers a chance to create something transcendent and of international acclaim, right here and right on the river," said Sean Cummings, director of the New Orleans Building Corp., the city's real estate arm.

Cummings sees eye-catching cruise ship terminals teeming with passengers. He envisions an amphitheater elegantly nestled on the riverbank. A long park, he suggests, would link attractions and play host to a RiverFest as magical as JazzFest.

Excitement is building about the possibilities for the riverfront because the port and city have what amounts to a handshake agreement that says the port will allow non-maritime development on unused and underused areas of a 4 1/2-mile stretch of East Bank riverfront from Jackson Avenue to Poland Avenue. The port no longer needs many of the old wharves because its functions have moved farther upriver to the new Napoleon Avenue and Nashville Avenue terminals.

The port has the right to use the land along the river so long as it is for maritime purposes, but the port does not own the land. The port will not surrender completely what's known as its maritime servitude but would stop using the land so that developers could tear wharves down and redevelop it.

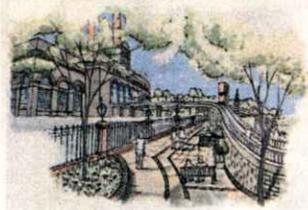
See **RIVERFRONT, F-2**



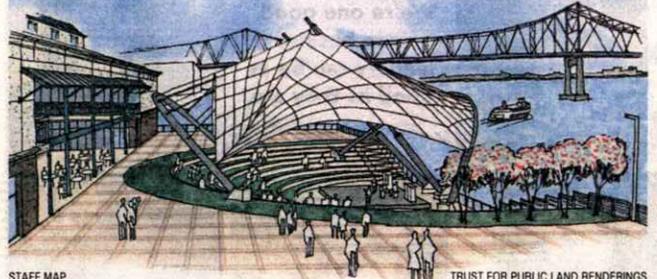
ON THE DRAWING BOARD

City planners envision a riverfront cleared of old wharves and filled with leisure activities inviting locals and tourists to the river.

2 MARKET ST. POWER PLANT



3 MISSISSIPPI RIVERFRONT PARK



STAFF MAP

TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND RENDERINGS

Additional cruise terminals possible

RIVERFRONT, from F-1

What's expected is development on both sides of the riverfront's anchors: the Aquarium of the Americas, Woldenberg Park and the Moonwalk. That would provide public access to portions of the waterfront currently inaccessible because of maritime activity. Such development would further transform the most visible portions of the riverfront from a

largely maritime focus to one that is centered on leisure and entertainment.

Access for all

"For me, a vision of the core riverfront of New Orleans — from Jackson Avenue to the Industrial Canal — is one where the public can get access," said architect Allen Eskew, who was the supervising architect of the Louisiana World Exposition or World's Fair of 1984.

Residents and visitors long have been denied much access to the river in that span. Although some areas, such as Woldenberg Park and the Riverwalk, have been developed, others in equally prominent locations are blocked by old sheds.

The biggest undertaking would be to provide a way for residents and tourists to walk along the river's edge uninterrupted from the Lower Garden District to the Bywater, except in places where cruise ship terminals would require a detour behind buildings, Eskew said.

"Just connecting everything so that the public has continual access would be phenomenal," Eskew said.

The agreement between the port and city won't be final until it is approved by the board of the New Orleans Building Corp., the city's real estate arm, and the Dock Board, the port's governing agency. Both are expected to address the issue next month.

The site that may be most in need of redevelopment is now occupied by the port's Gov. Nicholls Street, Mandeville Street and Esplanade Avenue wharves. It is also the area with the fewest development ideas.

The port still uses the wharves, and in the past, has been reluctant to give them up. According to the port and city's agreement, the port would turn over use of the Gov. Nicholls and Esplanade wharves if suitable replacement sites were provided at no cost to the port. The port would retain the use of the water side of the Mandeville Wharf, but the area could be redeveloped.

"It's one of the sites that had the greatest potential in terms of really reshaping what the riverfront looked like," said Will Tregre, senior vice president of Mathes Briere Architects. Tregre said an incredible view of a bend in the river and Algiers Point would be available if the sheds now at those sites were torn down.

Architect John Williams of Williams Architects said the area would be a good location for an amphitheater because of the way Esplanade Avenue and Elysian Fields meet there, drawing people to the river, he said.

Tregre, however, said the site would be ideal for green space.

"The best spin I could put on it is Woldenberg Park and the way it appears: Have a similar site there," Tregre said.



STAFF PHOTO BY ELLIS LUCIA

The Poland Avenue wharf, toward the left, appears destined to be a cruise ship terminal. The Louisiana Bond Commission voted a couple months ago to give the Port of New Orleans a \$3.3 million line of credit to begin creating an interim cruise ship terminal at the wharf in the Bywater neighborhood.

RiverSphere momentum

At the most upriver end of the stretch, Trust for Public Land, a national nonprofit land conservation organization, is planning to build Mississippi Riverfront Park, a 1-mile long park from Jackson Avenue to Race Street.

The park would replace four old sheds used to store cargo. The wharves on those sites are in such disrepair that cargo can be stored only on the land side because the waterside is too weak. Ships no longer dock there.

The Trust for Public Land has commissioned the Army Corps of Engineers to conduct a feasibility study on the proposed location of the Riverfront Park. The corps study is expected to be completed by the end of the year and would provide a timeline for the park's development as well as projections for how much the project would cost.

The Trust for Public Land likely would enter into a multi-year lease with the port and city when it's ready to break ground on the park, Schmidt said.

Schmidt has called the park an upriver version of Woldenberg Park. Schmidt's vision involves walking and bike paths and perhaps an amphitheater and slave ship museum. One plan also connects the park to the vacant Energy Corp. power plant at Market Street, bringing it directly to the neighborhood without the floodwall as a barrier, Schmidt said.

The Riverfront Park would

be a stone's throw from the Phase IV of the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, around the bend from the redeveloped St. Thomas neighborhood and just next door to the proposed Tulane University/Xavier University RiverSphere Museum.

Nine years ago, only nine weeks after opening, River City Casino, which sits at the site of the Robin Street Wharf, closed its doors. The building has remained vacant since. It would become the site of RiverSphere, a grand plan by Tulane University to create a conference center, museum, classroom and research facility honoring the science and culture of the Mississippi River.

RiverSphere has swiftly gained momentum since being announced a few years ago. The project has been generating funding and has cleared several development hurdles.

Cruising room

But a park and museum are hardly all that the riverfront can hold. Clearly the city's burgeoning cruise industry will play a part in any development. At some point, four cruise ship terminals on the river could be possible.

The port currently has two ship berths at its Julia Street cruise terminal. But a \$27 million, 100,000-square-foot terminal and 1,100-car parking garage is under construction at Erato Street, adjacent to Julia Street. Construction, which began in October, will take a year.

After the Erato site is finished, the current Julia Street

cruise terminal will be torn down and replaced with a redeveloped cruise terminal and hotel complex, according to the agreement the port and city may sign.

"The idea going forward would be to rebuild a cruise terminal and a convention hotel on top of the terminal," said Gerry Barousse, whose company Monarch Realty would likely lead development.

Barousse is planning a 900-plus-room hotel with about 100,000 square feet of meeting space. The Julia site is fairly narrow, so Barousse said the hotel would sit about 30 stories high. He envisions that one end of the hotel would attach to the Riverwalk Mall, while another would join it to the Convention Center.

A garage at that site and at Erato Street would provide much-needed parking.

The port also is moving forward with plans for a cruise ship terminal at Poland Avenue. Most recently, the port signed an agreement with the Maritime Administration to move its activity from Poland Avenue to the nearby Pauline Street wharf. In September, the Louisiana Bond Commission voted to give the port a \$3.3 million line of credit for the first stages of an interim cruise ship terminal at the Bywater site.

The port could also operate a fourth cruise site near Piety Street.

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