

## **Reinventing the Crescent Stakeholders' Meeting Notes April 13, 2007**

Sean Cummings welcomed the group and gave out the Website address [www.neworriverfront.com](http://www.neworriverfront.com).

Allen Eskew told the group that this is the beginning of the conceptual process, adding that the "ideas are not fully cooked...they are still brewing," so not to take anything as a done deal.

He said there was a neighborhood meeting last week, and there will be some other opportunities for neighborhoods to weigh in. A downriver meeting is set for April 25, location TBD. Upriver, there will be a similar meeting at Kingsley House on May 2. There will be a forum for all other neighborhoods in areas people are comfortable with.

"What you are going to see today is big ideas, not explicit designs," Eskew said and introduced Carol Bebelle.

Carol said people use the river for ritual, for entertainment and other purposes, so it is important to be imaginative. "We suffer from people not being able to imagine what could be," she said. "What feels threatening, what feels right? What are the dreams? We are in the midst of collecting all that to design the riverfront for the future."

She added, "The River is definitely in motion. We are hopefully in a city that is in motion."

Alex Krieger explained the five goals/themes:

- 1-Place of distinct character and civic energy
- 2-Breaking down barriers and gaining access
- 3-Continuous access along great public open space
- 4-Building and sustaining great places to live
- 5-New icons and social landmarks (places and structures)

George Hargreaves talked about the specific locations:

Riversphere and Upriver – ferry terminal not really affected.

Wharf area – cannot build buildings. Create attractive landscape with river ecology. There may be syncopated spaces that are about "up" and urban, some with programming, and other spaces that are "down" with earth, water.

Allen Mountjoy said that at the Riversphere and Convention Center there are a variety of land uses, all connected visually to the water. There is a fairly large open space to provide a focus. An over-track access is proposed for the cruise terminal. There would be cultural and educational uses, and iconic structures that would be about programming.

About Julia Street, he said it is a gateway to the water and is becoming more important as a cultural location. It should terminate in something worthy of that role, perhaps by providing an

overlook at cruise terminal activity. He said it also reduces the barrier quality of the convention center.

Alex said the facility could provide public amenity besides the convention use. Moving up the slope allows seeing more of the maritime activity. There could be different scales, and a series of functions.

Allen Eskew said these projects have been in the process for many years. The second cruise terminal, and the 700 to 900-room hotel have been in the hopper for some time, some such as the International River Center/Hilton property since the World's Fair. The new piece is the Convention Center, with possible high-tech suites that are vertical.

Kirt Reider talked about Spanish Plaza. "It's lost what it had historically," he said. "We want to bring some clarity back to the area." He said the city will always need vehicular access across the floodwall. CCC has agreed to subtract some parts and reconfigure the ferry terminal to help remove some of complexity.

George discussed Jackson Square/Moonwalk, talking about connecting them with a "stepped" landscape that broadens the view of the river. At Esplanade/Elysian Fields, the wharves would be cut, creating a gap park and access to water. Over time, it becomes less of a working site, piers take their place and river ecology evolves. It is a timed strategy resting on interpretive use and great synergy between the French Quarter and the functioning port.

Enrique said there is a need to decide the architectural pieces, to create the proper environment to develop architecture. He said the team is trying to create the "moments" in the 4.5 miles and they want very specific qualities to each of the urban spaces that already exist.

At Poland, Mark Dwyer suggested connections across the Industrial Canal so people can "get" the relationship to the rest of the city. The train is diverted here, which allows for more land. "Maybe this is where you become dramatic with some height."

There are three components:

- 1 – new cruise ship terminal
- 2 – potential for existing buildings
- 3 – potential height as the first thing you see entering the city...last if you are leaving on a cruise ship.

"This is very suggestive," Enrique Norton said. "It's an extension of the neighborhood, but also new neighborhood. It's a great opportunity for the city...very important articulation. It neighbors one of the most interesting places in New Orleans. We are intrigued by what's happening creatively in those areas. How do we protect and address issues and give new opportunities?"

The cruise ship terminal offers a real arrival, he said. As important as Spanish Plaza is, this will become another important "moment" for the city. He suggested creating a fabric different from the neighborhoods that surround it with something different on the waterfront.

A civic, public icon should be at this location, he said. "A performing venue...maybe indoor/outdoor to create a new cultural center. Celebrate this new beginning of the future for New Orleans."

Alex said he recognizes this is a fragile city. "Cities have to treasure the future as well as past. We have tread lightly on some areas where things need to be enhanced, such as Spanish Plaza, but the Convention Center – each end – and Poland need transformation...need to be reconceived."

Allen Eskew said the team is half-way through process. Neighborhood meetings are coming and he told the group to look for emails and website announcements.

Once the neighborhood meetings are held, the cultural scripting will begin.

Q&A

Pam Meyer said that Poland will become a busy, crowded street.

Allen said Poland has some capacity, and they are trying to take 1-2 blocks off St. Claude and create an elevated crossover over railroad tracks.  
She asked if a traffic study has been done by the Port.  
Joe said that traffic studies are only related to current usages.

Allen Eskew said he thinks that housing will come before a second cruise terminal.

An unidentified person asked if planning includes maintenance for the future.  
Allen said there is a governance question. What entity would be the operating and maintenance entity is not known. There are existing organizations that may be expanded, or maybe it will be under single operational governance.

Lynn Walters said the Riverwalk has a 99-year lease with Spanish Plaza. She would like to talk about their plans with someone.  
Allen said the steering committee wanted to put forth the idea, then talk with stakeholders and leaseholders.  
Lynn said they will be happy to be part of discussion.

Gene Cizek said that Poland Avenue doesn't have the capacity and that houses are close to the street. "Areas like this are very delicate," he said, adding, "We're not against developing the riverfront. If people like those in Bywater had not made this community what it is over the past 30 years, you wouldn't be interested today. Seventy-five feet is overwhelming."

Sean asked if the Light Industrial areas have had higher structures?

Gene said they are large horizontally, not vertically.

Allen said there are infrastructure needs to handle capacity. It has been identified for recovery planners. He said that the team is looking at alignments, etc. with Moffat and Nichol making sure that the Port criteria is understood.

Nathan Chapman said he is happy with the five criteria, but would like to see one more: How to enhance the history of the area. He thinks it should be amplified.

He said that at Jackson Square the team should definitely put power lines on wish list. He asked what the change at moonwalk does for the community.  
George said that building landscape terraces creates an atmosphere that will be welcoming, contemplative area for watching the river.

Allen said that the design team likes working waterfronts. Gov. Nicholls and Esplanade will remain working wharves...pieces of a working waterfront. Only after they are decommissioned, will they be considered for other uses.

Gene Cizek said that some of those wharf buildings are historic in themselves. They are structures that could be utilized...for an extended French Market, a museum, etc. "If they are evaluated through a 106 review, you may find you don't want to tear them down. At any rate, some memory should be left there," he said.

An unidentified Person questioned the abrupt ending at Gov. Nicholls.  
Allen said they want to connect the French Market to the river, and hopefully follow the Bell/Moss area of the original landing and weave through the French Market.

John Williams said it looked like the plan left out the 8<sup>th</sup> ward. Allen said Holy Cross is included.

Paul Cramer asked about the railroad issue. Allen said he expects dialogue with Public Belt.

Doug Meffert said that he has been talking with European engineers about hydropower, etc. Existing technology can be utilized. Global Green just out with RFP for river turbine study.

Pam Meyers asked what “enhanced” means when referring to Bywater. Allen said there are multiple opportunities to reach the waterfront. Sometimes it may be a bridge. Some may be grade level. At the end, there will be specific recommendations for each location.

Carolyn Leftwich thanked the team for respecting green space in Bywater because there is so little of it.

Allen thanked everyone for coming and said to check the Website next week for meeting notes and other updates.