

## Wharf & Riverfront Timeline

### **1946**

Robert Moses, along with Andrews & Clark Consulting Engineers, released in 1946 his "Arterial Plan for New Orleans." The initial concept for the Riverfront Expressway emerged from a post-World War II effort by state and city leaders to modernize New Orleans' antiquated regional transportation system.

### **1957**

The city unveils a revised Robert Moses plan proposing that I-10 be elevated over Claiborne Avenue, with another elevated artery built down Elysian Fields, continuing between the French Quarter and the river. Construction of I-10 over Claiborne Avenue began in 1966 and was completed in 1968.

### **1969**

After a long battle, the plans for the Riverfront Expressway in the French Quarter were dropped.

### **Aug. 14, 1988**

New Orleans' riverfront streetcar line debuted as the first new streetcar line in New Orleans since 1926. The riverfront line's nearly two-mile route stretches along the edge of the French Quarter and Central Business District. It was financed with \$5.2 million in federal, city and private money.

### **1989**

Woldenberg Park opened and became a favorite site for communal events, most notably the French Quarter Festival.

## Insectarium History

### **1991**

Audubon's project announced and called for a \$15 million insect museum and butterfly pavilion in the middle of the \$10 million extension of Woldenberg Riverfront Park. Beginning 4 years of resistance from preservationists (especially VCPORA).

### **1992**

Audubon paid the Dock Board \$13 million for the right to develop the three wharves as part of a complicated, three-way agreement among Audubon, the board and the city that also gave the city control of the Rivergate and reduced Audubon's rent for the Aquarium of the Americas. Under the agreement, Audubon was to get control of the three wharves only after it received all necessary local and federal permits for its plans, particularly from the Army Corps of Engineers.

### **1993**

CPC & City Council approve plans for insectarium.

## **June 1994**

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation recommended that a permit not be issued for the proposed location:

"Locating such a development on the proposed site . . . will constitute an adverse effect which should be avoided," a high official of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation said in a June 14 letter to the local office of the Army Corps of Engineers. "By introducing thousands more tourists into already seriously overcrowded areas, the insectarium will ultimately detract from the (historic) districts' integrity."

Saying that "there are limits to the amount of development a historic district can absorb before losing its significance," Nissley wrote, "To our knowledge, no logical argument has been established to tie an insect exhibit to the architectural and historic value embodied within the Vieux Carre and Faubourg Marigny area."

## **August 25, 1994**

Audubon Park Commission leaders threw in the towel Wednesday on their plans to build a \$15 million riverfront insectarium and a \$10 million, 16-acre extension of Woldenberg Riverfront Park. Commission President Phyllis Taylor and Audubon Institute President Ron Forman joined Mayor Marc Morial to announce that Audubon will give up its claim to three wharves where the insectarium and park were to be built.

### **Miscellaneous Developments**

## **May 2014**

Vanilla Sky Café proposal: a pier that would be built between the Steamboat Natchez dock and the Governor Nicholls wharf with an anchored helium air balloon that would take passengers 500-feet up in the sky. Rejected by Port Authority and VCC. Later dropped.

## **2015**

Crescent Park completed, reclaiming 1.2 miles of abandoned wharves in Bywater and Marigny, from Mazant Street to Elysian Fields Avenue.

### **Esplanade Avenue & Governor Nicholls St. Wharves**

## **October 26, 2017 - Audubon Commission Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Ron Forman, President, and CEO discussed the city's vision for riverfront development. The goal is to build parks/green space from Woldenberg Park to the edge of Crescent Park. He reported that Audubon Commission would play a major role with the city, Port of New Orleans, and tourism industry working together.

Mr. Forman introduced Mr. Henry Kinney who asked for two motions to be added to the agenda in relation to Audubon's role in riverfront development. The first motion was in reference to Audubon's involvement with a ferry bridge terminal to be built on the grounds of the Aquarium.

RESOLUTION: J. Kelly Duncan, President of the Commission, subject to the approval of the Executive and Legal Committee of the Audubon Commission, be and is hereby authorized to execute any and all documents among the Audubon Commission, the City of New Orleans, and the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority for the building of the ferry bridge terminal, adjacent to the Aquarium of the Americas and for the planning, design, construction, and operation of that ferry bridge terminal.

The second motion referenced the combing of riverfront property. BE IT RESOLVED THAT: J. Kelly Duncan, President of the Commission, subject to the approval of the Executive and Legal Committee of the Audubon Commission, be and is hereby authorized to execute any and all documents among the Audubon Commission, the City of New Orleans, and the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority for the planning, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of the area known as the Crescent Park wharves and riparian land, the Esplanade Avenue wharves and riparian land, the Governor Nicholls wharves and riparian land, and the Moonwalk area.

### **July 2017**

Walter Isaacson, an author, former CNN boss, and a member of the City Planning Commission, [wrote in Time Magazine](#) that the wharves are "being converted into a music and performance venue to draw visitors from nearby Frenchmen Street and the French Quarter."

### **2017**

Mayor Landrieu announced plans to "turbocharge" development along the river now that the city had taken possession of the Governor Nicholls and Esplanade Avenue wharves.

### **November 22, 2017**

Funding Commitments finalized between 4 parties to raise and contribute to the planning, building and operation of the wharves as recreation space.

- a. Convention Center - \$9 million
- b. CVB - \$2 million
- c. Port Authority - \$2 million
- d. Audubon - \$2 million

### **January 11, 2018**

Council approves Ord # 32,124 (Dated Dec.14,2017) authorizing the Wharves CEA between the City and Audubon in order to "accomplish the valuable public purpose of supporting the economic growth of the City through the creation of public parks and recreational facilities." Original CEA duration is through the year 2068

### **2018**

Audubon officials held three community sessions in Bywater, Marigny and the Quarter to solicit input regarding the park development.

[Audubon head on French Quarter wharves: 'I don't see any way possible' major music venue will be in plan](#)

**August 2019**

Extending CEA with Audubon for previous milestones 1 year so City could continue leasing them to TCI

**April 2020**

Audubon and the Cantrell administration decided to stop trying to move forward because of the uncertainty caused by Covid.

**September 2020**

On Wednesday, Audubon asked its partners in a proposed riverfront development if it can borrow \$10 million reserved to pay for that project to help cover the institute's operating costs while it tries to get back on firmer financial footing.

**January 2021**

City of NO & TCI Packaging, LLC - Extends TCI lease on the 2 wharves 36 months, from Feb 2021-Feb 2024, providing city coffers nearly \$600,000 in annual rent. Cal # 33,226

**July 2023**

Forman announces that the riverfront wharf plan cost has doubled and said he has secured a commitment from Mayor LaToya Cantrell to "raise an additional \$15 million."

**August 2023**

Audubon releases Governor Nicholls Wharf [INITIAL IMPROVEMENTS SCHEMATIC PLAN](#)

**February 2024**

City enters into CEA with Audubon for \$15 million toward the "continued design and construction of the Governor Nicholls/Esplanade Wharf, including the redevelopment of wharfs into parks and recreational facilities, creating a continuous riverfront park extending from Crescent Park to Spanish Plaza, and which will include landscaping, lawns, play areas, shade pavilions indoor and outdoor cultural pavilions and flexible gathering spaces...

**March 3, 2024**

Spanish Plaza: The City Council approved a deal that will allow the operator of the Riverwalk mall, Houston-based RockStep Capital, to raise up to \$25 million, backed by an additional 2% sales tax on Riverwalk shops, to invest in new retail, restaurant, and entertainment venues at Spanish Plaza.