

TWO RIVERS TWO ROADS ONE FUTURE

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Staff

Remains of city's first mall targeted for major renovation 3/6/05

By JIMMY SETTLE

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The Florida-based owners of **Two Rivers Center** say they aren't about to give up on the 234,000-square-foot facility that was Clarksville's leading shopping mall before the annexation of St. Bethlehem and subsequent arrival of Governor's Square Mall in the mid-1980s.

Two Rivers - situated at the highly visible corner of Providence Boulevard and Riverside Drive - is about to get a major facelift under the guidance of In-Rel Management Inc. of Lake Worth, Fla., which has been the **center's** owner for the past year.

This time, said Dennis Udwin, In-Rel owner/president, the property seems destined for a major turnaround that will benefit all of downtown Clarksville.

"We're excited about these plans and hopefully, you guys there in Clarksville will be excited as well," Udwin said in a telephone interview last week from his offices in South Florida.

Udwin noted that In-Rel is familiar with Tennessee, because it has a branch office in Memphis.

"We'll basically be taking an old dinosaur with good bones and bringing it back to life there in Clarksville," Udwin said.

The architectural rendering of the **Two Rivers** redesign from Clarksvillian Brad Martin of Lyle-Cook-Martin Architects shows an exterior makeover that conforms to design themes already visible in the **River** District Commission's master plan for the Cumberland RiverCenter, Riverside Drive pedestrian overpass, and the RiverWalk in general.

Red bricking with awnings over storefronts are in the exterior plans for the estimated \$1.2 million revamp of **Two Rivers Center**. Work began on the project late last week.

"My concept for **Two Rivers** is that I want it to tie in with the overall redevelopment on the riverfront there," Udwin said. "I wanted what we do with **Two Rivers** to be in keeping with the whole schematic design that's materializing in that vicinity."

Udwin said he believes in **Two Rivers** and its potential, although it has struggled for nearly **two** decades.

"I think it's a wonderfully located piece of real estate that has just suffered from bad management in the past," he said. "There are companies that have been there before that have just come in and thrown a coat of paint on that building, and I think it needs more than that. We're going to do some extensive exterior and interior renovations, and add some pylon signage that will make the property look a lot more 'hip,' we think."

Good news for downtown

The timing couldn't be better for the Clarksville **River** District Commission, which is about to launch a series of public hearings on redevelopment and expansion of its

master plan for the Cumberland riverfront.

"The **River** District Commission is excited about the prospect of any new development or redevelopment going into the area that elevates the quality level," said Jeff Robinson, RDC chairman.

"A redeveloped **Two Rivers** Mall can be a vital component of redeveloping the entire area if it is done properly. It has obviously been somewhat neglected in its recent history. We are excited about the potential of it being revitalized," he said. Martin, the architect, is confident in In-Rel.

"Dennis and In-Rel have had great success bringing life back into older, 'down-on-their-luck,' inward-oriented 'malls,' transforming them into thriving, outward-oriented shopping **centers**," Martin said as he showed his final exterior drawings last week.

"The word, 'center' is key here. The idea is to drop all connotations of the old 'mall' and reposition the facility as a 'center,'" Martin said, "with retail stores approached from the parking lot.

"The facade design is therefore a direct response to this concept, punching large glass entrances in the exterior walls, adding bright, colorful awning canopies and repainting the entire brick structure to force people to take notice.

"This, coupled with tree plantings and renovated street signage, is intended to change the way we have viewed **Two Rivers** over the past 10 to 15 years. The truth is that the building has never gone away, it has just been overlooked," he said.

Making it match

Martin said the project could boost the RDC's broader mission of returning the city to the **river** - its roots - with a beautified riverfront that's more conducive to public use and enjoyment, extending from historic Fort Defiance in New Providence to Fairgrounds Park.

"We have a wonderful opportunity to not only bring **Two Rivers** back, but to help build momentum for our **river** district and downtown at the same time. One idea behind the new facade design for **Two Rivers Center** is to be sympathetic to historic architecture in the coloring of brick veneers and application of extending canopies while interjecting a progressive flair with the slanted pitching of the overhanging roof forms atop the tower elements at the main entrance and street signs," Martin said.

"As with so many older malls in this country, the new mall comes to town and the old mall dies or limps along gasping for years. Ours is a little different. **Two Rivers Center** already has several strong tenants as anchors." Those include Convergys call **center** (with 1,500 employees), Hooters, Extreme Fitness and Kickers Country Club. High traffic count

Tennessee Department of Transportation traffic counts show that **Two Rivers Center** sits at one of the busiest intersections in Middle Tennessee.

Two Rivers' leasing agent, Commercial Property Services Inc. of Nashville, points to an annual estimated count of 47,000 vehicles a day.

"With the rebirth of **Two Rivers**, we're trying to move away from an interior mall format," said Brenda Hill with the leasing firm. "That's why we're showing storefronts in our redesign. People who maybe don't need as much visibility will have the opportunity to occupy office space to the rear of the facility.

"We want it to offer more retail, at least along the front of the property."

Ogle said space will still be available inside.

"Some service-type businesses would work well inside the facility, like something from the medical community. We've been in talks with lots of different types of tenants, ranging from apparel stores to computer companies," Ogle said.

New tenants

A major new tenant will occupy more than 11,000 square feet of the renovated complex.

Harbor Freight Tools - a nationwide company based in Camarillo, Calif., that has been in business for more than 35 years and now operates more than 200 stores - is coming to town, **Two Rivers** spokesmen confirmed.

Harbor Freight sells tool brand-names such as DeWalt, Chicago Electric, Pittsburgh, Makita, Central Machinery, Central Hydraulic, Stanley, Central Forge and more.

The company also has a large tool and equipment catalog with online ordering at www.harborfreight.com.

Clarksville will be home for Harbor Freight's sixth Tennessee store. Construction of its space has just begun, and the company expects to open for business here within 60 to 90 days.

Also, Waffle House closed in February on the purchase of an outparcel at the northeast corner of the **Two Rivers** property at the U.S. Highway 41A entrance.

Construction is scheduled to begin in April with an anticipated opening in August.

This new **Two Rivers** Waffle House will replace an existing location nearby at 886 Kraft St.

Other tenant prospects include a national clothing retailer, a discount store and a hair salon, Ogle and Hill said.

Current tenants who are expected to remain through the **Two Rivers** makeover include Convergys, occupying 77,178 square feet and employing about 1,500 people; US Factory Outlet (40,680 square feet); Kickers Country Club (21,600 square feet); and Xtreme Fitness (12,851 square feet), as well as Hooters, Grace Church, Merle Norman, Rose's Nails and outparcel tenants O'Charley's and Friendly Tire.

Ogle and Hill emphasize that all-local contractors will be used in the **Two Rivers** rebuild. In addition to the architect, Lyle-Cook-Martin, the contractor is Register Construction of Clarksville, led by James Register. Lead project manager is Phil Dycus.

Sign Art of Clarksville, owned by Bing Verbist, will handle sign work.

A partial list of local subcontractors includes Accurate Electrical, Wall Brothers Glass, Bassett Painting and Clarksville Awnings.

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