

# Kansas City Star, The (MO)

January 24, 2006

**Section:** Opinion

**Page:** B1

## Help change the riverfront

STEVE PENN

You've traveled and seen the way waterfronts have been developed in Memphis, San Diego and Denver.

You know what's worked and what hasn't.

If you could make a suggestion that might shape the future of Kansas City's riverfront, what would that recommendation be?

The Port Authority of Kansas City is holding a series of forums seeking suggestions on riverfront development. Officials need the public feedback before moving forward with plans to develop the 55-acre tract near Richard L. Berkley Riverfront Park.

"This is a huge opportunity for Kansas City, one that many of us have been anticipating for more than 25 years," said Linda Ward, the chairwoman of the Port Authority of Kansas City. "All of us have driven across the river millions of times and never had an opportunity to be as close as we will through this development site."

Until lately, it hasn't been a smart idea to get too close. The riverfront hasn't always been treated well, once serving as a tow lot and a dumping ground for buildings that had collapsed or been torn down. As a result, the authority has had to grapple with many environmental issues.

Now the roadblocks are gradually being removed.

The Port Authority of Kansas City has struck a predevelopment agreement with Forest City Enterprises Inc. of Cleveland, a premier developer. Forest City Enterprises will be responsible for converting the 55-acre tract into a vibrant neighborhood with residential, retail and office space.

Ward said the Port Authority is close to signing a development agreement with Forest City Enterprises, but that won't happen until enough public input has been achieved.

"It's a really good time," Ward said. "I tell people, I feel like the planets have finally aligned for us to be able to move forward with riverfront development."

The authority's first two forums were last week. The next two will be Feb. 8 at the Southtown Council office at 6814 Troost Ave. and Feb. 9 at Northland Neighborhood Inc., 5312 N.E. Choteau Trafficway. Forums also will be March 15 at Southtown Council and March 16 at Northland Neighborhood Inc.

"The forums have been exciting," Ward said. "People are thrilled that this is going forward."

Ward wants a strong turnout at each session. The public consensus reached at each forum, she explained, is incorporated into the designs. The results of each session are summarized on a Web site at [kcportauthority.org](http://kcportauthority.org).

"The Port Authority is focused on capturing the hopes and dreams of the entire metropolitan area around what should be in and around Berkley Riverfront Park," Ward said. "We have just one riverfront. And the Port Authority commissioners are entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that it has a wonderful legacy, not only for the former mayor but for generations to come in Kansas City."

Forest City Enterprises has been involved in redeveloping the old Stapleton Airport in Denver and central station in Chicago into mixed-use developments.

"We know we'll never have (riverfront development) perfectly aligned with what everybody wants," Ward said. "But we're committed to listening and incorporating as many ideas as we can from the people of this area."

That's why the public should make a concerted effort to attend the meetings and participate.

Creating a strong public consensus on the front end should keep the project flowing more smoothly on the back end.

To reach Steve Penn, call (816) 234-4417 or send e-mail to [spenn@kcstar.com](mailto:spenn@kcstar.com).