

Team looks to redevelop building



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Advocate Staff Photo by ARTHUR D. LAUCKThe Darensbourg building, right, could soon become home to an architecture firm and ground-floor retailer. Circa 1857's Danny McGlynn and Dennis Hargroder are working to buy the property and improve the block in front of the adjacent buildings, which they also own.

Circa 1857 developers take on another Government St. project

by **Chad calder**

Advocate business writer

Circa 1857's Danny McGlynn and Dennis Hargroder have an agreement to acquire the title to and redevelop the Darensbourg building, a white, two-story building on Government street across from the Westmoreland Shopping Center.

The goal is to have the bottom floor ready for a retail tenant and the second floor home to Ritter Maher Architects, which will oversee the design of the project.

McGlynn, who has spearheaded a number of redevelopment projects in downtown and Midcity, said the goal is to try to transform the block. He also owns the adjacent buildings now home to Denicola's, The Atomic Pop Shop and the former bicycle shop and has named the venture Model Block LLC.

McGlynn said he would work with the Mid-City Redevelopment Alliance within its Government Street Master Action Plan and with the Center for Planning Excellence

to bring the block to life in a way that is consistent with the findings of the various public design workshops that have been held for the busy traffic corridor.

Government is often cited as a street with potential as a pedestrian-friendly, retail destination of local shops and boutiques, akin to New Orleans' Magazine Street.

McGlynn said it remains to be seen whether the redevelopment will include just landscaping or outdoor seating or any other option.

"We're prepared to do whatever they think needs to be done," he said. "We'll ask them how far and to what degree they want us to do something different."

McGlynn said the plans call for about \$1 million in redevelopment costs, though he said he would apply for façade improvement grants from the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority.

He said bringing in Scott Ritter and Steve Maher puts a team of talented architects in charge of redeveloping an important building overlooking their alma mater. Also, he noted, owner-occupied projects are the only ones that can get funding in the current economic climate.

He said he hopes to have the redevelopment of the 9,000-square-foot building complete and occupied by the fall of 2013.

McGlynn said the idea started about five or six years ago, when he, Hargroder and friend and business partner Jon McArthur thought it would be a good idea to approach redevelopment on a block-by-block, not building-by-building, basis, when possible.

It's what they managed to accomplish around Circa 1857 about a decade ago, turning a quiet, abandoned corner of Government and South 19th streets into an artisan's market with a café and the occasional jazz brunch.

McArthur passed away about a year ago, and they don't have the entire block, but McGlynn said he and Hargroder are hoping Model Block can help continue the slow transformation of Government Street.

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