

Tulane University Awarded \$3 Million Federal Grant For RiverSphere

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The U.S. Economic Development Administration has awarded Tulane University a \$3 million grant to help build RiverSphere, a Center of Excellence at Tulane that will promote the development, testing, demonstration and commercialization of renewable energy technology, using one of New Orleans' greatest natural resources – the Mississippi River.

RiverSphere will be a research center, an education facility, an exhibition space and a business incubator focused on water sustainability and renewable energy. The facility, located at the Robin Street Wharf, will include floating barges on which private companies can test prototypes of power turbines capable of generating electricity using river currents. The project's business incubator will be a catalyst for the creation and support of "green" energy jobs and will help make New Orleans an exporter of sustainable energy technologies and intellectual capital throughout the country.

"The Obama administration is committed to creating jobs, encouraging innovation and improving our nation's economic competitiveness," said U.S. Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development, John R. Fernandez. "This EDA investment will work to ensure the long-term resiliency of the greater New Orleans area by supporting Tulane University's efforts to grow and commercialize innovation in the alternative energy sector."

The grant, which is funded through supplemental disaster appropriations from hurricanes Katrina and Rita, will be used to convert a 22,000 square-foot warehouse next to Blaine Kern's Mardi Gras World into the RiverSphere campus.

"RiverSphere will focus initially on "in-stream" hydrokinetic technologies that harness the power of the Mississippi River to generate carbon-free electricity," said

Douglas Meffert, RiverSphere executive director and deputy director for policy at the Tulane/Xavier Center for Bioenvironmental Research. “RiverSphere will be a place to explore the most cost-effective and environmentally safe energy solutions for New Orleans, Southeast Louisiana and similar geographies around the world.”

The RiverSphere hydrokinetic turbine testing facility will be the nation's first “vendor-neutral” in-stream demonstration site, meaning that it will be open for use by multiple companies. The data gathered in testing the ecological, navigational, hydrological and other potential impacts of these technologies will play a key role in determining how they can be deployed in the most environmentally sensitive way while generating as much electricity as possible. The RiverSphere incubator will host a variety of technologies in order to help more companies obtain the proof they need for commercialization and deployment worldwide.

RiverSphere also will house laboratories where researchers can work to further understanding of the hydrology and ecology of the Lower Mississippi River Deltaic Plain, especially as it relates to the sustainability and viability of nearby communities. Planned exhibition space will be open to the public, serving as a key component of New Orleans riverfront revitalization efforts.

RiverSphere supporters include the Port of New Orleans, Blaine Kern Studios/Mardi Gras World (a co-tenant at the site), the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, The Alliance for Affordable Energy, American Rivers and a number of hydrokinetic turbine manufacturers and vendors.

More information about RiverSphere is available online at <http://www.riverweb.org> .