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Thursday, September 28, 2006

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Spirits buoyed on waterfront

20 years later, development group celebrates park project

By **Sheldon S. Shafer**
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In 1986, Louisville's downtown waterfront was barricaded by a string of sand and salt piles, scrap yards, railroads and industry.

Nearly \$100 million later, the riverfront has undergone an "almost unprecedented transformation," said Glenn Allen, a partner in Hargreaves & Associates of San Francisco, the landscape-design firm that is Waterfront Park's master planner.

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Marshall Barber, who was fishing using six poles yesterday at a sunny and warm Waterfront Park, said that he loves the Louisville setting along the Ohio River. "I'm usually here five days a week," he said. (Photos By Sam Upshaw Jr., The Courier-Journal)

"I'd like to shake the hand of the man who came up with the idea" for Waterfront Park, said Anthony McIntyre of Louisville, who was riding his bike yesterday at the park's downtown wharf.

There was a whole lot of hand-shaking yesterday during a ceremony aboard a gleaming Belle of Louisville, where a host of government and

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business leaders celebrated the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Waterfront Development Corp., which has overseen the riverside rejuvenation.

It was that year that Gov. Martha Layne Collins, Louisville Mayor Jerry Abramson and Jefferson County Judge-Executive Harvey Sloane signed the articles of incorporation setting up a 15-member board with

representatives of all three governments.

The board has planned and administered the park's development and rounded up the money to build the attractions, which drew 1.5 million visitors last year.

"Lots and lots of folks had to buy into the vision to make this magnificent entryway" to the city and state, Abramson said yesterday.

Now Louisville's metro mayor, he said the park, which will convert the old Big Four Bridge into a cross-river walkway by 2008 to complete development, is evidence of a successful public-private partnership.

"I love it," said Marshall Barber, who was sitting in a chair yesterday as he fished off the wharf with six poles. "I'm usually here five days a week."

Reporter Sheldon S. Shafer can be reached at (502) 582-7089.

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