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RDA, Entergy discuss future use of complex



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BY CHAD CALDER
ADVOCATE BUSINESS WRITER
November 06, 2011

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The East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority has had early discussions with Entergy Corp. about whether the RDA could be involved in the redevelopment of the utility's two-building complex on Government Street near the railroad tracks.

The RDA's board on Thursday approved the use of \$360,000 in Environmental Protection Agency grants should the RDA pursue anything related to the Entergy site. The funds, which would come through the state Department of Environmental Quality, are targeted to projects that involve so-called brownfields sites.

RDA President Walter Monsour told the board there have been preliminary discussions about the RDA helping put the site back into commerce, though he added there is nothing concrete and the vote was really just a way to keep the path clear to the funding if it is needed to

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Entergy has already moved the 130 employees who worked in the smaller of the two buildings to its new site on Pecue Lane. The properties are seen by planners as having major redevelopment potential for the transitional area between downtown and the heart of Midcity.

"We know that with Entergy moving out of that building, it would leave significant structures on Government Street that wouldn't be used, along with a couple of other buildings along the corridor," said Sam Sanders, executive director of the Mid-City Redevelopment Alliance. "So putting that back to use makes perfect sense to us."

Sanders said that if the larger, vacant building can be saved, the site presents an opportunity, particularly for multifamily development.

"Really, we're open to supporting any option that could exist there, but residential would be something we'd be very intrigued by," he said, noting the new apartments going up nearby on North Boulevard at the eastern foot of the overpass.

"We've always felt the opportunity there is quite interesting," he said.

Entergy spokeswoman Nicole Daigle said that until something happens with the building, the utility will be storing equipment there. As for the potential redevelopment opportunities, she provided a written statement from the company that said: "We are exploring our options with the facility that will benefit the community, and will also align with a plan to promote growth and economic development in the area."

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