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Wheel of fortune

10/14/2008

Deep within the ancient mists of time — i.e., the Carter administration — it was proposed that the Mississippi River at St. Louis be spanned with a cable car system. The thought was that tourists would love to see the river from 300 feet.

There was no money for this plan, of course, and, as it turned out, very little enthusiasm. We hadn't thought of it in three decades until we read Matthew Hathaway's story in the Sunday Post-Dispatch about Mark and John Rodgers' plans to build a 175-foot tall Ferris wheel on Laclede's Landing.

As connoisseurs of far-fetched riverfront development schemes — cable cars, floating islands, Disney-St. Louis, the Battleship Missouri, etc., — we applaud the Rodgers frères for their pluck. When the economy went south and their proposed \$25 million Port St. Louis condo development on the Landing went kaput, the brothers bounced back with the Ferris wheel concept.

Now, some will argue that to erect a Ferris wheel — actually, an "observation" wheel or "sky" wheel, featuring 42 climate-controlled gondolas with video screens — just north of Capt. James B. Eads landmark bridge and not far from Eero Saarinen's Gateway Arch might be . . . well . . . a little tacky.



To which others might reply, "Have you seen the London Eye?" That's a 443-foot tall Ferris wheel across the River Thames from Westminster that has become the most popular tourist attraction in England.

Who needs St. Paul's Cathedral or Buckingham Palace when you've got a 443-foot Ferris wheel?

In fact, all around the world, cities are building

giant Ferris wheels. Soon, no city's skyline will be complete without a Ferris wheel. St. Louis must close the Ferris wheel gap!

yesterday's most emailed

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2. Oral cancer rates rising is linked to virus spread by sex
3. The Post-Dispatch Endorses Barack Obama for President
4. Pujols has elbow surgery
5. St. Louis firetrucks collide rushing to blaze
6. Child support ends earlier for college students
7. Brothers plan a Ferris wheel on the Landing
8. I think Halloween is becoming Hookerween
9. Are you living in a former meth lab?
10. Lawyer pardoned in Nevada crime loses Missouri license for not revealing his record

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Besides, Laclede's Landing could use the business. And former Sen. Jack Danforth, R-Mo., has been pointing out that tourism at the Arch is down, too.

Naturally, the Rodgers brothers are seeking a city subsidy for their wheel of fortune in the form of tax increment financing. This means the mayor, the Board of Estimate and the aldermen will all get in on the act. If the brothers think a Ferris wheel goes 'round and 'round, wait'll they see City Hall.

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(1) Comments



darcot October 14, 2008 5:05PM CST

This is fantastic!! Please St Louis politicians, don't stand in the way of a really cool and fun idea. Let's have St Louis be in front of something instead of always a few steps behind!! I appluad this iniative as fresh... and the riverfront can certainly use a little update!! Cheers to the Rogers Boys...Go get 'em

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