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# Rivana Apartments deal finalized

## \$111 million complex big step for River District

BY RICH COLLINS

Staff writer

The River District neighborhood reached a significant milestone this week when the developers of the 220-unit Rivana Apartments closed on financing that paves the way for construction to begin on the \$111 million complex later this month.

The deal, which was finalized Wednesday, will bring a second major building to the planned community just upriver from the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, where a new regional headquarters for oil giant Shell has been under construction since early 2025. The project will also serve as a visible sign of progress for an ambitious, \$1 billion mixed-use development slated for 40 acres of unused land near the banks of the Mississippi River.

“The significance of this week's closing is hard to overstate,” said Brian Gibbs, one of the Rivana's developers, in a phone interview Thursday. “Having a new building built next to the Shell headquarters with retail and a park all helps paint the picture that this thing is rolling.”

The financial closing means the project's lead contractor, Gibbs Construction, can begin fencing off the site in the 1400 block of Tchoupitoulas Street before workers prepare to drive pilings. The construction is expected to take just under two years to complete.

Units in the four-story building will be reserved for individuals making at or below 80% of area median income, so \$49,650 a year or less. It will also have 17,000 square feet of ground-floor retail space, a fitness center, a community room and a swimming pool.

“The energy around the River District is growing, and people have a reason now to come see what's happening,” said Jim Cook,

➤ See **RIVANA**, page **8A**

# REBIRTH

## Top musicians join Saints legend Steve Gleason for album that coincides with 'Domecoming' anniversary



STAFF PHOTOS BY DAVID GRUNFELD

Troy 'Trombone Shorty' Andrews greets Steve Gleason with the 'fo-to-fo' gesture — forehead-to-forehead — before a recording session for Gleason's album at Esplanade Studios in New Orleans on Sept. 14.

BY KEITH SPERA

Staff writer

In the shadows and stillness of a former church sanctuary, Troy “Trombone Shorty” Andrews presses his forehead against Steve Gleason’s, carefully maintaining eye contact.

The intimate gesture — dubbed “fo-to-fo,” short for “forehead to forehead” — is Gleason’s preferred greeting since ALS paralyzed him completely.

Andrews performed the previous night in Montgomery, Alabama. That morning, he drove to Atlanta, flew to New Orleans, and hustled to Esplanade Studios to assist Gleason with his latest ALS-defying project: recording an album.

The title? “Rebirth.”

“When he called me, I was

Recording engineer and studio owner Misha Kachkachishvili, left, and co-producer Steve Rehage oversee a recording session with Troy 'Trombone Shorty' Andrews for Steve Gleason's album.



confused,” Andrews said. “I’m like, ‘What do you mean?’ But whenever he calls, (I’ll do) whatever I can to help out.”

Though not autobiographi-

cal, “Rebirth” was inspired by the cycles and challenges of Gleason’s life. Lyrics are partly based on his poetry and prose.

➤ See **REBIRTH**, page **6A**

# Louisiana AP exam scores improve

## But many unable to access program

BY PATRICK WALL

Staff writer

More Louisiana high school students are earning high marks on Advanced Placement exams, according to newly released data. However, they remain far less likely than their peers nationally to have access to the college-level courses.

Nearly 70% of the AP exams that Louisiana students took this year received a score of 3 or higher on a five-point scale, qualifying students for credits at

➤ See **EXAM**, page **8A**

# FBI says 2 La. men raised money for Hamas

BY JAMES FINN

Staff writer

Federal authorities accused two brothers living in Louisiana of using social media to raise thousands of dollars for Hamas, the Palestinian militant group responsible for the October 2023 attack on Israel, according to newly unsealed documents.

Court records show the brothers, Omar and Abdel Adhami, were arrested in September on a sealed complaint after a joint investigation by the FBI and the New York Police Department.

➤ See **HAMAS**, page **8A**