

Forget Dubai. Dublin is to get its own high-rise village

GLITZY shopping precincts are two a penny in exotic destinations such as Los Angeles and Dubai.

But now a Dublin entrepreneur is hoping to outdo them all by building an €800million 'cultural' paradise in Ireland's capital city.

After an eight-year wait, the Dublin Docklands Development Authority has finally granted developer Harry Crosbie, 59, permission to build a no-expense-spared, luxury village surrounding his Point Theatre in Dublin's Docklands.

Covering 12 acres, The Point Village is expected to create at least 2,000 jobs, and will include a 23,000sq m shopping centre, 13,000sq m of offices, a 250-bed four-star hotel with 20 serviced apartments, a car park, and a 12-screen cinema.

In announcing official approval for his plans yesterday, Mr Crosbie said: 'This is my biggest project yet and I'm very pleased to be making such a huge addition to the cultural infrastructure of the city. I don't think there is anywhere else in Europe that will create the same atmosphere and intimacy as The Point Village.'

The unique development will

By **Kate Chambré**

also boast a 35-storey 'watchtower' as its signature building.

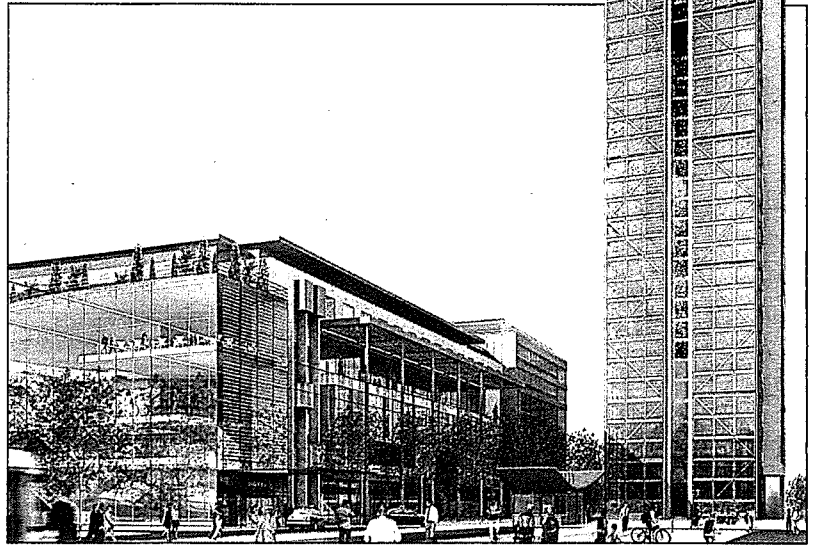
'The Watchtower will include 500sq m of office space, luxury apartments, an exterior rooftop bar and restaurant offering panoramic views over Dublin Bay,' Mr Crosbie said.

And as if that was not enough, a major revamp of the The Point Theatre, in the style of a 15,000-seater curved Roman amphitheatre, as well as 'a double size Vicar Street', is also included in the plans.

Mr Crosbie expects each to attract well in excess of two million visitors each year.

The Dublin businessman, who owns the site, is not relying on any State funding or grants for the massive project.

'The development will be entirely financed by private funds, and we hope it will be completed in 14 months' time,' he said. He added that the main attraction of the Point Village would be the 'ease' of getting there without using a car, with a new Luas station in the centre of the village and six bus routes.



Great expectations: The Point Village, to be completed in 2008, will feature a 35-storey Watchtower

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I was entitled to stolen cash, says runaway priest

From **Paul Thompson**
in Florida

RUNAWAY priest Francis Guinan claimed he was 'entitled' to some of the €6.8million he stole from church funds because of the good work he carried out in his parish.

He said the money was a form of payment for the advice and comfort he gave to wealthy parishioners at his church in Florida.

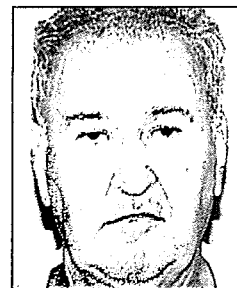
The astonishing claim was made by Guinan during a 15 minute telephone call from his luxury hotel in Melbourne, Australia, before his arrest.

The 63-year-old, originally from Blr, Co. Offaly, contacted detectives from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement after learning he was wanted on Grand Theft charges.

Guinan, who was on a six-week round-the-world trip, called Detective Mike Driscoll after being told that his friend and co-conspirator Father John Skehan had been arrested. During a taped conversation with Driscoll, Guinan confessed to taking money from church offerings.

'Father Guinan admitted taking money, but disputed the amount he has been charged with,' said Detective Driscoll.

'He attempted to legitimise what he had done by saying he was entitled to the money for all



Confession: Francis Guinan

the good work he had carried out in the parish. He said he had helped many people, and the money was a form of payment for that.

'Father Guinan was not arrogant in any way when he said this, but was stating his case and justifying where the money went.'

Detective Driscoll said Guinan admitted going to casinos in Las Vegas and the Bahamas.

He said: 'We did not go into specifics, but he did admit to visiting casinos.'

He did not admit to losing over €23,500 during one stay in Vegas.

Despite earning €20,000 as a parish priest, Guinan has hired one of Florida's most expensive and celebrated criminal lawyers, David Roth.

Roth, who is based in West Palm Beach, arranged for Guinan

to complete his extended holiday before turning himself in.

Roth charges up to €400 an hour for his services and many within the Delray Beach community are puzzled as to how Guinan can afford such fees.

A police source said: 'Only \$1million (€0.78million) has been traced and so it is pretty obvious what money is being used to pay for such an expensive lawyer. It is stolen money which is pretty ironic given the situation.'

Guinan lived up to his reputation within the community as someone who enjoyed the high life by refusing to return immediately after Skehan's arrest.

The priest travelled to Frankfurt, Germany, London, England, Singapore and Australia before being arrested at Miami Airport by customs officials almost two weeks ago.

Police sources said completing his holiday before surrendering had not helped his case.

'He might be a man of the cloth but his behaviour in not coming back as soon as he knew he was wanted for questioning smacks of arrogance,' said a senior detective familiar with the case.

Guinan and Skehan, 79, from Johnstown, Co. Kilkenny, have been accused of plundering funds from St Vincent Ferrer Church in Delray Beach, Florida over a 40-year period.

Both men are free on bail and are set to be charged later this year with grand theft. If convicted they could be jailed for up to 15 years.