

Downtown Residents Civic Association...

Making Saint Petersburg, FL the *Most Livable City in the World!*



SAINT PETERSBURG, FLORIDA

DOWNTOWN

RESIDENTS

CIVIC

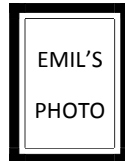
ASSOCIATION



For more information, contact:

2009–2010 ANNUAL REPORT

A Letter from the President of the Saint Petersburg Downtown Residents Civic Association:



Dear Downtown Resident:

The spectacular growth of Downtown St. Petersburg has presented opportunities and challenges that we know from experience can only be addressed by the unified voice of downtown homeowners.

This organization was founded in 2006 by six community associations.

Membership is open to all downtown residential community associations and is expected to expand significantly as more people choose to make Saint Petersburg their home.

As long as the quality of our lives is governed by a political process, we will need the DRCA to protect the interests of downtown residents and, indeed, the unpoliticized interests of our entire city.

When the DRCA was founded, there were forward-thinkers who urged that the organization support positive change in our city and oppose harmful activities. We recognize a primary obligation to our downtown area—Tampa Bay in the East to 10th Street in the West, and 14th Avenue North to 14th Avenue South—and we have been largely successful.

Issues affecting Downtown actually impact the entire city. Some of the major items on recent agendas include a downtown stadium, the city's sound ordinance, Baywalk, crime, homeless proliferation, police staffing, and the designation of the waterfront land from 1st Avenue South to Albert Whitted Airport as parkland.

DRCA is not your ordinary neighborhood association. We care a great deal about our city and we share a sense of moral obligation because we know that what is good for our city will also be good for us. DRCA owes its success to you and the Boards of your individual associations, for they have had the intelligence and foresight to recognize the need for a group whose strength is greater due to the increased numbers represented by multiple associations speaking as one.

I thank each of you for your recognition and support.

Emil A Pavone

DOWNTOWN ZONING

Downtown residents who speak up about things like excessive noise pollution and overdevelopment of our waterfront are often met with a response that sounds something like, “Well, what did you expect? You chose to live in a commercial downtown area .” Our response: “Well... not exactly.”

Many of the DRCA's members live in areas of Saint Petersburg that are zoned strictly “commercial” or “downtown core”, but in fact there are over a thousand homes here with thousands of residents living in them. In contrast, the number of downtown businesses is only a fraction of the number of residences. While the City prides itself on its many restaurants, cafés, museums and shops, it is still important to remember the many private homes that they must coexist with.



It is for this reason that we are working on the creation of a new zone for our unique downtown area, called “Mixed Use: Residential with Light Commercial.” We believe that this is a fair and accurate assessment of our small but booming downtown, and while this will not change anything overnight for residents and business owners, it will help to change the mindset of local lawmakers and future developers.

The DRCA is pleased to welcome commerce and new businesses to Saint Petersburg with open arms, especially in the empty Baywalk area that saddens us all. But when it comes to massive and invasive decisions like waterfront stadiums, late night events, and extension of liquor service, we want the City to have consideration for its thousands of residents as well as its many business owners.

By creating this new zone, we will be accurately defining the area and asking lawmakers to consider all parties involved when making decisions.

DOWNTOWN ZONING

(A VICTORY IN PROGRESS)

Waterfront Parkland Designation—When the current Land Development regulations were adopted, there appeared to have been a great oversight, because the Al Lang Field and Mahaffey Theater areas had not been designated as parkland. The **DRCA** questioned the matter in testimony before the City Council, and was told that it was an oversight and would be addressed when transcription errors and other “glitches” in the new regulations were corrected. The City Administration did not disclose at the time that it was in secret negotiations with the owners of the Rays baseball team to replace Al Lang Field with a new Rays’ stadium, and that if the area were designated as parkland, it would require a city-wide referendum to build the proposed ballpark. If the parkland designation was not granted, then no referendum would be necessary.

Bill Foster, then completing his second four-year term on City Council, must have been suspicious, because he managed to get every member of the City Council to agree that the first “glitch” to be corrected in the “glitch amendment” would be the waterfront parkland designation. They agreed, but after Foster had to give up his seat due to term limits, City Council did not follow through as promised.

Months of criticism by the **DRCA** and other voices finally wore the Council down and it began the process of zoning the area as Parkland. As this publication goes to press, the Al Lang Field has received parkland designation, and the area of land from Al Lang Field to Albert Whitted Airport is slated to follow. Councilman Karl Nurse has assisted the **DRCA** and the University of Florida with its efforts to push the matter through the City Council.



Once an area is designated parkland, any development on the site requires a City-wide referendum.

ST. PETERSBURG

DOWNTOWN RESIDENTS CIVIC ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2009—2010

Hundreds of Homes, Thousands of Residents, and Growing...

The dynamic growth of the downtown area presents many challenges to residents, even as it provides many benefits. When it was suggested in 2006 that the dominant downtown residential associations should join together to deal with challenges and opportunities, the far-sighted Boards of these leading associations finally joined hands.

Most importantly, they agreed that the **DRCA** would always work to promote and enhance the city, supporting improvements while challenging detrimental changes to our small but booming downtown.

The **DRCA**, by its articles of incorporation, was established to:

1. Win universal recognition of the City of Saint Petersburg as *The Most Livable City in the World*.
2. Promote and enhance the City of Saint Petersburg as *an important commercial center*, not merely a “tourist destination”
3. Promote and advance the *good and welfare of the community* within the downtown area
4. Strive for the foregoing by *first and foremost representing the civic interests of the residential associations* constituting its membership, and their respective owners and residents.



Throughout the past year, the St. Petersburg Downtown Residents Civic Association has:

- appeared before
- worked with
- participated in
- assisted
- attended



the programs and meetings of many official and unofficial city groups, including:

- Saint Petersburg City Council
- City Council Sub-Committees
- Individual Council Members
- Neighborhood Associations
- Criminal Court Hearings
- Police Department
- Print and Broadcast Media Representatives
- Municipal Department Heads
- Pier Management Officials
- Baywalk Management and Developers

In addition to participating in these productive dialogues, the **DRCA** Board of Directors also met [TEN] times to discuss the challenges that are currently facing downtown homeowners. In addition, they held [TWO] general meetings that were open to all members of the homeowner associations. These sessions helped the Board to establish its priorities for the year based on audience comments and suggestions.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Crime and Police Staffing—Crime is certainly the City’s most serious problem, as **DRCA** Secretary Jim Rillings demonstrated with his statistical analysis more than 2½ years ago.

Since that time, others have added their voices, but serious damage has already been done to St. Petersburg and its downtown area. The most painfully obvious example is the bankruptcy of Baywalk due to severely reduced patronage, largely because people are afraid to go there at night.



The previous city administration refused, throughout its almost eight-year reign, to fully staff our police force. Only now, with so much damage done, is there finally talk about change. It’s doubtful that change would be contemplated even now, had the **DRCA** not raised the issue time and time again, drawing the attention of others to it.

Homeless Proliferation—There is a strong correlation between the incidence of crime and the number of homeless people living in the city’s parks and streets. Not all homeless people commit crimes, of course, but many of the drug and alcohol addicts, the mentally disturbed, and those who simply prefer a life of transience to the kind of life they are capable of working for, **do** commit crimes. Here again, the previous City administration refused to take a firm stand, and the problems have grown worse.

One positive thing did happen as the downtown business community and **DRCA** pleaded for action: the City Council finally enacted an ordinance that prohibits



panhandling in a specifically defined downtown business area. Initially, the ordinance was enforced strictly and the problem appeared to be addressed. But as time has passed, enforcement has dropped off and the problem is here again. Clearly, the policy of limiting the numbers of patrol personnel in our police

department is not working. The **DRCA** continues to argue for more police on patrol, and better enforcement of the laws.

VICTORIA EST NOSTRA!

(VICTORY IS OURS!)

Sound Ordinance—A major achievement of the past year was the City’s adoption of a new sound ordinance that finds violations when an officer with normal hearing can plainly hear the sound at a specified distance. For years now, over-amplified sound from restaurants, parks, concerts and festivals have bombarded residents as far as a mile away from the source!

The new ordinance, while better than the old, is still far from perfect, and the **DRCA** is working to get rid of its seriously troublesome loopholes. The initial effort to get the City to do something about noise pollution has kept us busy for three full years. No other group assisted us, because other neighborhood associations don’t consider it to be their problem. But our persistence has paid off, and we will continue to persist until we rid the new ordinance of its faults.

Downtown Ballpark—Very often, the issues that affect Downtown impact the entire City, like the proposal to build a 34,000-seat stadium on our waterfront, with a 320-foot tall canvas roof that was intended to be kept in place all day in order to shade the stands and ball field. This was one of the biggest issues to face our City in many years, and when the Rays’ owners announced their plans with great fanfare, it came to light that they had conducted secret negotiations with the previous Mayor for more than a year.



In response, the **DRCA** delivered to each City Council member a 24-page “white paper” entitled *Facts and Fallacies RE: Rays’ Team Owners’ Proposal*. In a strictly factual manner, it established the extraordinary financial burden that the new stadium would place on Saint Petersburg taxpayers, the environmental damage that it would cause, and the dramatically negative impact it would have on the quality of life for downtown residents. No other organization claiming to represent City residents asserted a position on the subject at the time.

The intense opposition by the **DRCA** finally led the team’s owners to withdraw their request that voter approval for a new City-funded ball park be placed on the November 2008 ballot. However, recent actions by the Rays’ owners require us to be continuously alert.

DRCA MEMBERS

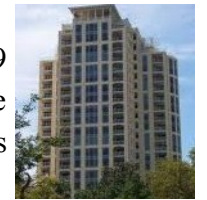
Vinoy Place is a 102-unit condominium complex located between the Renaissance Vinoy Hotel and Vinoy Park with four mid-rise towers and ten city homes. Representing Vinoy Place are **DRCA** Vice Presidents Hugh Tulloch and James H. Rillings.



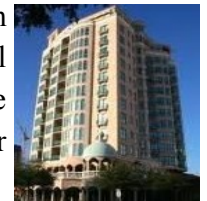
Bayfront Tower was the first waterfront condominium in Saint Petersburg and has nearly 250 residential and 11 commercial units on Beach Drive. Representing Bayfront Tower is **DRCA** President Emil Pavone.



The Florencia is a 21-story condominium with 49 residential units and 2 retail stores, adjacent to the Hampton Inn on Beach Drive. The Florencia is represented by **DRCA** Treasurer Marion Lee.



The Cloisters is a 14-story condominium on Beach Drive with 32 residential units and several retail stores on the first floor including a café and deli. Lenore Bizner is the representative for the Cloisters and a Director for the **DRCA**.



Harbour Hill is a Beach Drive condominium in the historic Old Northeast. Located near Vinoy Park, it caters to the 55 and up community. Representing Harbour Hill is **DRCA** Director Ann Caviness.



Parkshore Plaza is a 29-story tower on Beach Drive with 96 condominium units and 21 townhomes. The ground floor includes retail shops and the Parkshore Grille. Parkshore is represented by Joseph Girolamo, a **DRCA** Director.



DISTINGUISHED DOWNTOWN LEADERSHIP

Working closely with City officials, the DRCA has seen improvements being made in our City, and attention is finally being paid to the issues that concern its residents.

Mayor Bill Foster was elected in 2009 after serving on the Saint Petersburg City Council for nearly a decade. Since then, he has lent an earnest ear to our board members and worked to address some of the DRCA's main concerns, including noise ordinance violations, crime and homelessness. In an attempt to better understand these problems, he acquired his own police radio and visited crime scenes, condominium fires and high-rise fire drills. He also rode along with detectives on a curfew check and attended the June 4 police raid of a downtown establishment that was accused of harboring contraband and violating the City's nudity laws. In addition, he has taken a hands-on approach to solving the Baywalk crisis by visiting entertainment complexes in other parts of the country that Baywalk could model itself after. The DRCA hopes to work closely with Mayor Foster in the coming years.



DISTINGUISHED DOWNTOWN LEADERSHIP

Councilwoman Leslie Curran is a founding member of the Historical Kenwood Neighborhood Association and the owner of Interior Motives, an art gallery and design business located on Central Avenue. As the Chairwoman for the Saint Petersburg City Council and the representative for District 4, Ms. Curran has worked with the DRCA to stop noise pollution and address the issue of homeless proliferation in Saint Petersburg by attending the Homeless Leadership Network meetings in May and August 2010. District 4 includes areas such as the Old Northeast, Vinoy Park, Baywalk and the Pier.



Councilman Karl Nurse has been active in the political affairs of Saint Petersburg for twenty years, including his current position as District 6 representative. He has paid special attention to the issue of urban crime and even did a ride-along with the Street Crimes Unit of the police department in order to see first-hand what happens in our city on a daily basis. In 2009, he was the first Council member to advocate that the City aggressively pursue stimulus funding for the police department. He secured a grant to pay for nine non-sworn police employees and applied to get more officers funded as well. He also voted in favor of the ordinance that requires convenience stores to utilize crime prevention technology.



In addition, Councilman Nurse has supported the DRCA's objectives for downtown building codes and zoning regulations. He supported the zoning change of our waterfront land to designate it as park land. He also supported ordinances that lowered maximum building heights on waterfront properties.

District 6 includes the Central Avenue strip and all of Beach Drive south of Central; Albert Whitted Airport and the Dali Museum, Tropicana Field and the Old Southeast.