

# Residences at the Riverwalk a natural fit

By STEVEN A. ANDERSON  
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With help from every Tampa mayor since 1976, our Riverwalk today is rapidly becoming a vibrant mix of business, entertainment and culture. It is thriving not just by connecting important community assets, from the Florida Aquarium to the Straz Performing Arts Center, but by creating a sense of place that energizes the entire downtown area. Today, the Riverwalk is emerging as a destination in and of itself, attracting economic investment and diverse people of all backgrounds and viewpoints — the epitome of authentic Tampa.

As a longtime member and officer of Friends of the Riverwalk, I have devoted many hundreds of hours to the improvement and long-term vision of the Riverwalk. I have also seen the dramatic, encouraging change in downtown brought on by new residential developments such as SkyPoint and Element. As a result, I have followed the news coverage, city council discussions and been briefed about plans for the proposed Residences at the Riverwalk.

Without question, new residential developments strengthen our downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, catalyzing local retail and restaurants, and attracting investment. Equally importantly, however, the Residences at the Riverwalk is a well-thought-out approach from both a development and community perspective. On its face, the proposal demonstrates a real private sector commitment to making this a strong and positive addition to the Riverwalk as well as key destinations like the Straz Center and the John F. Germany Library.

Our community can take great pride in the Straz Center and the library. They both deserve and receive public support, and they are well-represented and accommodated in the Residences.

The concerns and requests raised by both have been addressed, and will be paid for by the private sector, including reconstruction of the cross bridge, additional parking, improvement of the street grid around both institutions, and construction of a new access and arrival pavilion for the Straz Center based on its own specifications.

Further, the Residences at the Riverwalk will donate \$1 million to the Straz Center.

Of course, every administration and elected official must make tough decisions, with good, intelligent people on both sides advocating one way or the other. Fortunately, Mayor Bob Buckhorn and the city have provided numerous opportunities this last year for engaged citizens to share their concerns, hopes and aspirations for our center city. Through InVision Tampa, more than 1,800 voices, thoughts and opinions have been shared, making their views on this issue clear.

Overwhelmingly, this community has recognized the importance of our cultural and educational institutions, and we agree. Just as importantly, our community also desires — and deserves — opportunities for economic prosperity through a lively and growing urban residential base. That base will, in turn, stimulate greater opportunities and support for our museums and arts venues.

We are confident that the Residences at the Riverwalk will do just that.

Steven A. Anderson is board chairman of Friends of the Riverwalk.