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St. Pete unveils proposals to redevelop Tropicana Field (Renderings)

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St. Petersburg has unveiled seven proposals for the redevelopment of the 86-acre Tropicana Field property — all of which reimagine the site as a vibrant, mixed-use urban district.

The Tampa Bay Rays' lease on the city-owned stadium expires in 2027. The team has been searching for a new stadium site since 2007 and said Tuesday its focus remains on a concept it first pitched in mid-2019: splitting the season between Tampa Bay and Montreal.

With the team's future in the region unclear, St. Pete officials asked for development proposals both with and without a Major League Baseball stadium for the Rays. Nine teams submitted responses to a request for proposals that hit the streets in late July; two of those responses were disqualified.

A breakdown of each proposal and accompanying renderings are below.



CITY OF ST. PETERSBURG

Tropicana Field in downtown St. Petersburg

"When you see these submissions, I think you'll quickly realize the future has never been brighter here," Mayor Rick Kriseman said Tuesday.

Kriseman called a news conference Tuesday morning to announce he has rejected a proposal from the Rays on the grounds that the team was asking for too much control of the property. The Rays, Kriseman said, had pitched a deal in which the city would transfer 50 acres east of Booker Creek to the team at no charge. Fourteen acres of that site would be site aside for a park; the other 36 would be home to a ballpark.

The team also wanted to retain 50 percent of development proceeds for the remainder of the site west of Booker Creek, which it is guaranteed by its current lease. Several of the proposals include convention space and conference hotels — an optimistic view of the region's tourism and events industry, which has been decimated by the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Public financing remains the major hang-up when it comes to the Rays' future in Tampa Bay. Kriseman has said he will not support any taxpayer money funding a stadium for the team's preferred split-season scenario (in which "new, intimate" ballparks are built in the Tampa area and Montreal). Negotiations with Tampa and Hillsborough County officials for a stadium near Ybor City broke down in late 2018, though Ybor developer Darryl Shaw has said that he would welcome a stadium on the land he controls between Ybor and the Channel district.

Here are the development teams that submitted proposals:

Portman Holdings, Portman Residential and Third Lake Partners
Unicorp National Developments
Sugar Hill Community Partners, JMA Ventures
Midtown Development
SROA Capital, Holabird & Root, ARHO
TRS Development Services
Wendover Housing Partners

Portman Holdings, Portman Residential and Third Lake Partners

St. Petersburg-based Third Lake Capital and Atlanta-based Portman have assembled a development team that includes local real estate, public financing and ballpark architecture expertise.

In various financing scenarios — with and without a ballpark for the Rays — the total development costs range from \$2.22 billion to nearly \$2.6 billion.

The design team includes HKS, an architecture firm known for ballpark design; Beyer Blinder Belle as the master planner of the public realm; and 5+Design as the master planner of placemaking and retail. St. Petersburg developer Darryl LeClair, CEO of Echelon and a longtime proponent of keeping the Rays in St. Pete, will work in an advisory capacity, focused on local development issues and community relations.

"This is a transformational project for not only the Tampa Bay area, but I think for the entire state of Florida," said Ken Jones, Third Lake CEO. "This is one of the largest undeveloped, contiguous tracts of land on the East Coast of the U.S. in a major metro market."

Paying homage to Black residents, Black-owned businesses and Black churches — all of which were displaced by present-day Tropicana Field — is a top priority for the team, Jones said.

Here's a breakdown of the uses the team has proposed for the property:

30,000-seat Major League Baseball stadium (contingent upon the Rays' decision as to where to build a new stadium)

Destination entertainment and retail area

400-key hotel with 50,000 square feet of meeting space

"Appropriate levels" of parking to strike a balance between market feasibility and encouraging the use of public transit

"Significant" park and recreation space

Cultural and amphitheater space envisioned to be occupied by museums, arts organizations or "other creative users"

If a ballpark is not part of the redevelopment, this proposes to fill that space with "a creative arts and manufacturing district with space for inventors, artists and others requiring unique facilities."

Petersburg Park by Unicorp National Developments

Orlando-based Unicorp National Developments has assembled a large team with several local players to pursue the Tropicana field redevelopment. It is proposing

Petersburg Park on the site.

Among Unicorp's partners are Tampa land use attorneys from Sterns Weaver Miller, St. Petersburg-based office investor Feldman Equities LLC and Sarasota's Imerza, a technology firm that specializes in interactive real estate models.

At the heart of the district is a park loosely modeled on New York's Central Park, said [Chuck Whittall](#), president of Unicorp.

"What is St. Petersburg missing? They're missing a great park," Whittall said. "There's not really a great park and this could really be the heartbeat of the city."

The park, Whittall said, is a way of reopening the property to the community that was pushed out to make way for the baseball stadium.

"It's the opposite of gentrification," he said. "We're bringing everybody back together."

Unicorp's proposals show various ranges for different uses, depending on whether there is a MLB stadium on the site.

2,925 residential units with stadium; 3,448 without
205,793 square feet of retail space with stadium; 312,170 without
155,544 square feet of office space (remains the same with or without stadium)
186,745 square feet of flex space; 158,367 without
401-key hotel
70,903-square-foot conference center
287,724-square-foot innovation center

SROA Capital, Holabird & Root, ARHO

West Palm Beach-based [Storage Rentals of America](#) has assembled a team with experience in acquisition, financing, owner-operated assets and retail.

[Benjamin S. Macfarland III](#) is the lead in the proposal and brings 16 years of experience focused on development, repositioning, and management including self-storage (since 2006).

The team includes [Sidney Kohl](#), who has started and grown many successful

businesses including Kohl Food Stores into Wisconsin's largest food chain. Rusty Walker is Chicago-based Holabird & Root's Design principal, leading and overseeing the design of all projects within the firm. ARGO Systems LLC in Hanover, Maryland, is a construction services firm with experience in both the governmental, private and public sectors.

Its team says it set out to create a vision for a community inclusive of "diverse programmatic requirements" of the community. It combines that history with a forward-thinking, environmentally friendly, vibrant mixed-use neighborhood.

It focused on key environmental attributes including Booker Creek, Pinellas Trail and the adjacency of Campbell Park to the south, the proposal said.

"The opportunity to combine a living working community with the possibility of a large entertainment venue such as a new stadium for the Tampa Bay Rays requires an integration of mixed-use entertainment programming with the desired residential and commercial mix," it said.

Three phases are envisioned for the project that includes 17 buildings and a total construction value of \$2.67 billion; seven of the buildings are mixed-use, residential and commercial.

Here's a breakdown of some of the uses the team has proposed for the property:

40,000-seat ballpark

Three hotels of 250, 150 and 100 rooms

100,000-square-foot conference center

Ben Shibe Baseball Museum

Cultural pavilion and sculpture trail

Mixed-use residential

Commercial technology campus

Sugar Hill Community Partners, led by JMA Ventures

San Francisco-based JMA Ventures, the master developer of this proposal, has brought on several local names of note, including affordable and workforce housing developer Blue Sky Communities, residential developers DDA and J Square; and Backstreets Capital, a family investment office based in St. Petersburg.

Redeveloping the Trop, the group says, "comes with the responsibility of acknowledging the site's difficult past."

"To that end, our plan is based in the existing cultural and physical contexts of the Tropicana Field site. It is an integral part of the city, connecting seamlessly to its neighbors, while maintaining a distinct identity resulting from the specific nature and topography of Booker Creek," the proposal says.

Here's a breakdown of this group's vision for the site, which will be built in five phases. These figures represent the total proposed:

1.075 million-square-foot convention center (650,000-square-foot convention center in Phase 1, to be expanded by 425,000 square feet in Phase 4)

25,000-seat ballpark

500-room convention hotel, Phase 1

150-key lifestyle hotel to be built in Phase 2

871,200-square-foot technology campus that includes the 500,000-square-foot

AltaSea Florida, based on ocean research center AltaSea at the Port of Los Angeles

11-acre park anchored by Booker Creek

With or without a ballpark, the proposal calls for "a History Walk – free and accessible to all – along the primary pedestrian pathway in both development schemes. The History Walk will incorporate memorials, artwork and narratives that celebrate the rich stories, culture and heritage of St. Petersburg's historic Black neighborhoods."

Creekside, Midtown Development

The development team comprises 15 different firms or organizations, some local, some from Florida and others around the country. It includes two local law firms (Trenam Law and Holland & Knight), marketing and culture consultants, brand development and graphic design, three architecture firms, three engineering firms, three surveying and civil engineering, housing, and community revitalization, green building consultants and the Pinellas County Urban League.

Its proposal includes a diagram showing nearly 50 people involved in the economics, planning, community and construction management of the project.

It proposes to work in partnership with the city to purchase, master plan, redevelop, operate and maintain the site as a mixed-use neighborhood with "strong pedestrian

scale and urban design characteristics." The proposal focuses on phases with various land uses including office, retail, hospitality, civic and residential to create a mixed-use neighborhood "with immediate emphasis on "breaking down physical and metaphysical barriers that have unjustly deprived the African American community and heritage of St. Petersburg."

The Midtown team said its "financial commitment" is more than \$185 million, with the first \$10 million in the form of an upfront payment to the city. It believes that any deal for the redevelopment of the Tropicana site must creatively produce citywide benefits.

Here's a breakdown of some of the highlights of Midtown's proposal:

\$30 million devoted to public parks

Hotel and convention space

A partnership with the city to fund, design and build 1,000 low and moderate income, green-certified residential units

Any environmental remediation needed

Smart city technologies

34 public acres with a \$175 million budget for development of roads, parks, etc.

13.5 acres used by ballpark

Wendover Housing Partners

Wendover Housing Partners, based in Altamonte Springs, leads its proposal with affordable housing. Business Park Development Corp. has signed on as an equity partner and commercial developer.

"There is an insatiable demand in the city and greater St. Pete/Clearwater/Tampa market for rental and fee simple housing options that are priced at an attainable level for the working class," the team says.

"Nothing will stand in our way of making downtown St. Petersburg the most affordable urban market in Florida to live in and raise a family."

Here is a breakdown of its vision for the Trop site:

25,000-seat ballpark

1.4 million square feet of office space

2,196 residential units, 1,286 of which are affordable and workforce housing
Retail and entertainment space similar in nature to LA Live and The Battery Atlanta
Up to 500-room conference hotel
250,000-square-foot technology, industrial and trades campus

TRS Development Services

The TRS team comprises 13 firms, all predominantly local or with a significant presence in Tampa Bay. The Tampa office of Ryan Cos. is the lead developer with national firm Brennan Investment Group.

Brennan is a technology park developer and property owner with local leads. It is a mixed-use development specialist with a background in construction, architecture and engineering. Phelps Dunbar is the land use attorney. Tampa-based Blue Sky Communities is the affordable housing developer and Kimley-Horn is the civil engineer.

The project aims to capitalize on the presence of Booker Creek and create a public recreation space. It will align with the city's integrated Sustainability Action and Grow Smarter economic development strategies. It envisions a space for research and innovation, child care for the site's residents and employees, hotel and conference space and many community benefits around employment goals, living wages, small business participation, workforce training opportunities, housing affordability and more.

The retail portion of the development is slated to comprise at least 50 percent small businesses.

"The site should provide housing for individuals of various income levels and accommodate families — another need for St. Pete," the TRS proposal says. It will also consider development with and without a stadium that will lead to a "home run on the site that should have happened a generation ago."

Total cost is \$475 million, not including city stadium renovation and intermodal transportation center, nor infrastructure improvements.

Here's a breakdown of some of the highlights of TRS's proposal for a development in 12 phases:

High-tech office above parking

Tropicana Field remodeling and parking structure

Workforce housing

50,000 square feet each of office and conference space

250-room hotel

Job creation plan (quantity and quality of jobs), emphasizing employment opportunities for residents of the South St. Petersburg CRA

Transportation modes and connectors