



West Tampa's History Plays Key Role in Armory Redevelopment Bid

Heritage Square LLC to use \$98 million in private funds to fuel community's economic development

Tampa, FL (June 22, 2006) — A local group submitted a \$98.3 million redevelopment plan to turn the 10.3-acre Fort Homer Hesterly Armory site into a major tourist destination and focal point for community life in response to the request for proposals issued jointly by the City of Tampa and Department of Military Affairs. Heritage Square, LLC, a development group formed by Intelident Solutions and others, wants to build Heritage Square at The Armory. The mixed-use venue will celebrate West Tampa's rich cultural heritage through art, architecture, food, events and lodging while creating jobs and training opportunities for local residents.

The plan draws from history to create a destination experience for tourists and locals while building new amenities for West Tampa. They include:

- **The Market Place at The Armory**, a 10,000-square foot open-air European farmers market located in the Armory's courtyards, will feature locally-grown organic produce; the first floor inside of the restored Armory structure will feature 43,000 square feet of retail space designated for unique Tampa offerings including ethnic restaurants, cafes, boutiques and specialty retailers. The second floor features 15,000 square feet of affordable artist studios and 10,000 square feet of commercial office space.
- **Hotel Sevilla**, a 300-room Spanish-themed luxury boutique hotel named for West Tampa's first hotel. The facility will serve as a major event venue and provide the neighborhood with a much-needed hotel along with convention and meeting space.
- **Spa Sevilla**, a state-of-the-art fitness center, holistic health center and European day spa serving hotel guests and area residents.
- **George N. Benjamin Park**, a lushly landscaped community amenity with an English garden, signature shade trees, seating areas, water feature, playground and small event pavilion. The park restores the parcel's original use and name while honoring one of West Tampa's founders.
- **West Tampa Cultural Arts Center** provides a new use for the 1940's era red brick building located just north of the Armory on Howard. The structure will be restored and house a café, history museum, and art gallery to showcase local artists' work. Meeting and rehearsal space for local groups will be included.
- **The Fernando Figueredo and del Pino parking structures** will incorporate the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design by including retail spaces with large display windows at street level and commercial lease space on the top floors. The garages are named for West Tampa's first mayor and the family that owned and operated West Tampa's first cigar factory.

Heritage Square Add -1-

The Heritage Square development team studied the West Tampa Economic Development Plan and documents published by Hillsborough Community College and Creative Tampa Bay to identify the community's needs before determining a final plan. "Our plan reflects input from the county's agriculture industry development manager; a West Tampa historian and several others, including some of Tampa's most noteworthy and celebrated artists," said Thomas J. Marler, president and chief executive officer of Heritage Square LLC. All have supported the Heritage Square proposal with letters of interest.

"Heritage Square at The Armory accomplishes many of the community's goals and meets the Florida National Guard's requirements while creating a healthy and vibrant urban core for West Tampa," noted Marler. The new venue will host cultural festivals, art events and community gatherings. Its integrated components create synergy among artists, other creative professionals, local farmers, restaurateurs, retailers and the community.

Some expected outcomes include:

Preserving West Tampa's Rich Cultural Heritage by breathing new life into the landmark Armory and two-story red brick buildings on Howard Avenue without making significant alterations to either.

Creating a Catalyst for Economic Development through the infusion of nearly \$100 million in private funds into West Tampa. The funds will be used to employ more than 2,300 local designers, contractors, craftsmen and service personnel. The retail and hotel facilities will create thousands of additional new jobs. The entire project is expected to generate a \$250 million incremental economic impact annually and provide a solid foundation for growth in West Tampa.

Encouraging Tourism with the creation a premier destination experience in Tampa that will become an attractive component of bids for major sporting events and conventions.

Providing Employment and Training Opportunities through numerous jobs and education programs that will be integral to The Market Place at The Armory, Hotel Sevilla, Spa Sevilla and the associated ripple-effect of job growth for enterprises supplying and supporting Heritage Square.

Supporting the most efficient and effective way of relocating the Florida National Guard by offering a turn-key relocation plan.

Heritage Square LLC plans to utilize private financing. The firm is not asking the City of Tampa or the Department of Military Affairs to bear any financial risk.

"We want to preserve the Armory and create an economic engine for West Tampa, said Marler who also serves as CEO of Tampa-based Intelident Solutions, a minority shareholder in the new development company. "Intelident Solutions purchased the Tampa Cuba cigar factory at 1202 North Howard in January. We are finalizing plans with Curts Gaines Hall Jones Architects for the historic restoration of the building so that we can move our corporate headquarters there within two years. Our interest in the Armory site mirrors our interests in historic preservation and West Tampa's economic future," he said. Marler is active in Tampa's business community as a member of the board of the Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce. He has previously lent his expertise to the board of the Metropolitan Ministries.

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Heritage Square Add -2-

Several accomplished local individuals and companies are a part of the Heritage Square development team. They include architect Stephanie Gaines, a principal with Ybor City-based Curts Gaines Hall Jones Architects; former Planning Commission Chairman Michael English of WilsonMiller, one of the country's top planning firms; and Alan Bomstein, founder and president of Creative Contractors, one of Florida's most well-respected construction companies.

Heritage Square, LLC will provide the Florida National Guard with reimbursements for improvements made to the site; offer several options for relocation to nearby land, and build a new facility that meets FNG requirements.

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