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Not Your Average Speakers: What's Next For Downtown Tampa

DIANE EGNER | TUESDAY, AUGUST 27, 2013



So much is happening or about to happen in downtown Tampa that it's hard to keep up even if you think you have your finger on the pulse of the rapidly growing urban scene. So it's fair to ask, "What's new and what's next for downtown Tampa?"

That will be the focus of *83 Degrees Media's* next "Not Your Average Speakers" community dialogue on Sept. 26. The event appropriately will be at [The Ella](#), a brand new apartment building in the Encore! Tampa planned community just north of downtown starting at 5 p.m. with networking. The discussion starts at 5:30 and should be over by 7.

As you think about what you might want to talk about, consider:

Residences at the Riverwalk, a new 35-story apartment building, will tower over the Hillsborough River between the Straz and the Tampa Museum of Art sooner than you may realize.

Two new boutique hotels are emerging out of renovations to the old Mercantile Bank on the corner of Kennedy Boulevard and Ashley Drive ([Aloft](#)) and the Classic Federal Courthouse on Florida Avenue between Twiggs and Zack streets ([Le Meridien](#)). At least two more are in the works.

Three new restaurants have opened on Franklin Street and Ashley Drive in recent months: [Anise Global Gastrobar](#), [Crumb and Cork](#) and PaddyWagon Irish Pub.

At least three large employers are moving to downtown Tampa: Jacobs Engineering, a global firm based in Pasadena, CA is moving from an office park in New Tampa, Synergy Health is moving from Oldsmar into the SunTrust Bank Building and PNC Bank's Tampa headquarters is moving from the Westshore area into Tampa City Center.

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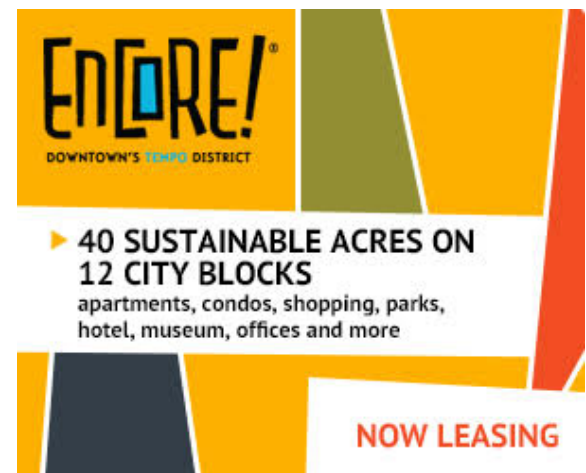
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At least four neighborhoods in and contiguous to downtown are experiencing growth with new projects, new renovations, new shops, new restaurants and new residents, including NOHO near the University of Tampa (which now enrolls 7,000+ students), the Channel District (a major grocery store will be announced soon), Ybor City and Tampa Heights. And don't forget about all that's going on in Hyde Park.

In the pipeline are [Crescent Bayshore](#) luxury apartments on Bayshore Boulevard; the [Pierhouse Apartments](#), [SkyHouse Apartments](#) and [The Martin At Meridian](#) in the Channel District; [Encore! Tampa](#), the music-themed residential-office-retail planned community just north of downtown; Madison Heights, a senior living facility on North Florida; and renovations of the downtown Hilton and Marriott hotels plus a couple of new retail concepts that haven't been announced.

The Straz has never been busier with a star-studded schedule that regularly attracts new talent to perform to sold-out audiences. The Tampa Bay Times Forum continues to draw popular concert performers and the Lightning pre-season starts in mid-September. Annual [Tampa Bay Fashion Week](#) activities include popup retail in Channelside the week of Sept. 13-21 plus a fashion show in downtown. Bollywood is coming to Tampa next June.

Public infrastructure improvements in the works feature new street configurations designed to slow traffic, including additional parking on Ashley Drive; additional bike lanes and a new bike share program; shade from newly planted trees and lovely green spaces; new murals and urban artwork; many more events along the Riverwalk and in Curtis Hixon Park; and a nightlife that stays vibrant long after dark many evenings.

While no street in downtown Tampa can yet match the sidewalk cafes and pedestrian traffic seen regularly along Beach Drive and Central Avenue in downtown St. Petersburg, it won't be too long before such activities are part of the everyday environment in downtown Tampa too. And while Tampa isn't seeing the dynamic growth of the late '70s / early '80s, the state bird of Florida -- the construction crane -- is back hovering over downtown in several new places.

How will all those developments and changes impact your life and where you choose to live, work and play? What more is needed in downtown Tampa? How do we get from here to there? Let's talk about it. [RSVP here.](#)

Conversation Starters

- Michelle Deatherage -- The Owner of Duckweed Urban Market became an urban pioneer in Tampa when she opened a small grocery that earlier this year expanded and moved into the first floor of the Element next to the Kahwa Espresso Bar.
- Andrew Blikken -- Chief Instigator of bike sharing programs in downtown St. Petersburg and downtown Tampa, and Executive Director of Studio Rhino, a film studio and artistic lounge in downtown St. Pete. He has a master's degree from DeVry University's Keller Graduate School of Management and is a graduate of the University of North Texas.
- Jeannette Jason -- Founder and Owner of the Doran Jason Group, Jason co-owns the Kress and Grant buildings on two blocks along Franklin Street. She is a graduate of Florida State University, where she studied economics.
- Greg Minder -- President and Owner of Intown Group, the developer behind the latest residential tower on the Tampa Riverwalk, and President and CEO of University Housing Group, a developer of campus housing around the nation. Minder holds a master's degree from Arizona State University and is a graduate of the University of Florida.
- Keith Greminger -- Senior Planning and Urban Design Manager at Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. serves on the advisory board at the Tampa Bay chapter of the Urban Land Institute. Greminger has a bachelor's degree in architecture and urban planning from Kansas State University.



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From developing urban rest stops and locations for people to fill water bottles to expanding mental health programming, local charities are focused on solutions to end homelessness.

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- John Dicks II -- An attorney and associate in litigation at Akerman, a national law firm with offices in the SunTrust Bank building in downtown Tampa, will serve as moderator. Dicks is a graduate of the University of Florida College of Law and also completed a master's in business administration and a bachelor's degree in economics from UF in Gainesville.

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Diane Egner is the publisher and managing editor of 83 Degrees Media. Comments? Contact [83 Degrees](#).



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Diane Egner is the publisher and managing editor at 83 Degrees Media in the Tampa Bay region of Florida.

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Victoria Jorgensen · Producer Director at A Movie Productions

I would like to see more support for the arts at a financial level. Our local film industry is quite strong but has little consolidated direction. We should be booking more Hollywood and Independent film as well as commercial production. It pains me when local entities seek out of town talent when we are rich with some of the best!

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Billi Griffin · Howard University

I will be attending...

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Heather Hale · Plant City, Florida

See you there - Downtown Tampa is so exciting now - working together is the Key!

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Ginger Perkins Watters · Tampa, Florida

Do we RSVP? I'll be there!

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Reese W Pieces · Orlando, Florida

I hope future developers consider lower price points that would be affordable for single people less than \$1500/month. I am new to the city but the suburbs were cheaper when compared to living downtown.

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