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**Florida Cities Stress Giving Back Greatest Assets, Riverfronts, to Public  
-- Fort Lauderdale, Jacksonville, Jupiter & Tampa Join at  
Florida Riverwalk Exchange --**

Jacksonville, Fla. – The Florida Riverwalk Exchange held the second of its groundbreaking summits yesterday in Jacksonville, Florida. More than twenty business and civic leaders strategized on the future of Riverwalks and how to make them accessible, exciting and economically viable. Riverwalk delegates from Fort Lauderdale, Jacksonville, Jupiter and Tampa all agreed that with public access to waterfronts fast disappearing in Florida, the Riverwalks were the greatest asset they could give back to the public.

Ben Wacksman, founding Chairman of the Florida Riverwalk Exchange and President of Tampa-based Capital Realty Investors, suggested that the group begin collaborating on a white paper to examine the economic and social impact that Riverwalks have on the state of Florida, so that they might potentially look for state support to further preserve vital waterfronts and their access. “One of the tragedies of what we’ve done in the past is having lost public access to vital parts of our waterfronts.”

Said Jupiter’s Mayor Karen Golonka, “Even commercial marinas are now being bought out [for condo and other development]. How much linear feet of waterfront have we lost in the last year? It’s probably true of all our cities.” It was said that the State’s comprehensive plan makes a reference to “recreation and access to the waterfront”. Added Golonka, “If we were interested in encouraging Riverwalk support, we could use that as a starting point with the State.”

Scott Strawbridge, a board member of Fort Lauderdale’s Riverwalk Trust added that we should view things like the Mayor of Charleston’s successful riverfront, saying, “The greatest cities in the world are the one’s that give back their greatest asset to the public.”

Florida Riverwalk Exchange attendees discussed some of the other most pressing issues facing waterfronts today:

*Funding Riverwalks*

In terms of who funds the Riverwalk, whether public or developer funds, Tampa’s Lee Hoffman, Riverwalk Project Manager for Tampa, said, “We want the developer to maintain the Riverwalk.”

Scott Strawbridge of Fort Lauderdale agreed. “The best way is for public oversight, private dollars, and private contracts. The certificate of occupancy is tied to completion of the Riverwalk, and the developer has to satisfactorily complete a punch list or no

closing. It's a lot more successful for us to sign off on developer plans. It's unyielding and much more expensive to go through public routes."

Jupiter's Riverwalk Project Manager, Brenda Arnold, said that Jupiter was in a different position since it was newer and still in much of its planning stage. "You guys have to retrofit. We're mostly using public funds. We have a CRA that last year had \$71 million in funds and now is up to about \$180 million. We're spending money on building the public portions. In 2 \_ miles, there's only about 12 property owners, so we don't have the challenge of competing property owners."

Other forms of funding discussed including marketing-oriented financing. Patsy Mennuti, Executive Director of Fort Lauderdale's Riverwalk Trust said that in earlier years, "We sold 2000 bricks a year." She added that they had since cut back on expensive advertising and now promotes bricks through the Riverwalk's magazine and online. She added, however, that though they sell less bricks now, maybe 200 a year, "I think it's more than financial. It's a way to get people vested in the Riverwalk."

#### *Events to Draw Residents*

Terry Lorince, Director of Jacksonville's Downtown Vision said, "We need events now." She said that she'd heard from other riverfronts like Norfolk that were scaling back events because people "need to be at the restaurants and stores". But, her view for Jacksonville was different. "Events play more of a role till you have the downtown invigorated." She said Jacksonville has fireworks all the time, kids areas at festivals, movies shown off Riverwalk buildings, employee days for corporations, jazz, and more.

Fort Lauderdale's Strawbridge concurred that they had done a lot of events a decade ago to stimulate economic activity but since scaled back so as not to compete with vendors. "Now, things are coming around again, and we'll do events to invigorate the Riverwalk."

Jupiter's Brenda Arnold said in contrast, "Most of our commercial and residential along our A1A corridor is highly successful, and we don't do anything." She and Mayor Golonka saw smaller events that won't clash with retailers more fitting in their town. Golonka warned of events among mixed-use development. "Be wary. Some residents want all the events to stop once they're there."

#### *Retail on Riverwalks*

Bob Bekoff, president of a Water Taxi Inc. from Fort Lauderdale, who has worked with Riverwalks in many areas of the country, had strong views on setbacks for building on Riverwalks. "If you expect restaurants and retail on the Riverwalk, if they're 50 to 100 feet back, it's not conducive. You might as well put them up on a hill."

Strawbridge viewed things differently. "The key to Riverwalks is the connectivity. Surrounding areas can't all be on the Riverwalk. We look at the Riverwalk as the spine, and other areas as the ribs."

Terry Lorince of Jacksonville seconded that point saying that restaurants have told her they don't have to be on the Riverwalk, they just need a view. "Some of the best restaurants are off the Riverwalk."

Attendees noted that on their tour of Jacksonville's Riverwalk, led by Melody Bishop who helped design Jacksonville's Riverwalk, most restaurants were all in one location, and perhaps they should be more spread out. Jacksonville's Lorince concurred by saying, "Our goal would be to do that, but it's just where we are right now."

Dan Mahurin, CEO of SunTrust Bank- Tampa Bay, commented that in Tampa, "We're very blessed because we have strong anchors at both ends with residential. We have barbells on both ends."

Lorince noted that European cities have a lot of nice kiosks along their riverfronts, and inquired as to whether Riverwalks had contemplated them? While Fort Lauderdale reps were discouraged by difficult permitting problems, Mayor Golonka said that kiosks and carts were permitted in Jupiter. "It's something I definitely want to see. Carts are good because you can move them. For small business people and artisans, they could show their wares and unique ideas." Tampa is also encouraging carts that can move in and out.

The Chairman of the Florida Riverwalk Exchange, Ben Wacksman of Tampa, noted that all the new condo development occurring in Tampa would change the retail component of its Riverwalk. "Tampa has 5,000 planned units. It will have a tremendous affect on retail."

Nicholas Mastroianni, President of Allied Capital & Development, which is currently planning \$150 million of mixed-use development along Jupiter's Riverwalk, prefers hotel over condo development. "We like hotels because they're transient with a lot of turnover that will feed retail. You're not dependent on events. With condos, it's the same people all the time, and so many units are vacant in the summer." He noted that Florida hotels are a big draw to Europeans in the summer. Of Allied Capital's 110,000 square feet of retail under consideration, he expects about a one-third split between national chains, local stores and restaurants.

Strawbridge insisted that as for retail, "The biggest failure is how to get people there [to the Riverwalk]". In that regard, Lorince said "wayfinder" maps were very important, and that Jacksonville was aggressively working on a new plan to help residents navigate downtown better."

#### *New Innovations*

Jupiter Riverwalk's project manager, Brenda Arnold, said there were thoughts of making part of the Riverwalk, perhaps under the Indiantown Bridge, a WiFi zone. "It certainly attracts people to Starbucks," she said regarding the potential to draw users, and she likes the idea of a shady location under a bridge. Fort Lauderdale reps also said they had talked about making their entire Riverwalk WiFi accessible, though there were no definitive plans.

### *Security*

Jacksonville uses golf “cart police” that make the rounds of the Riverwalk and hotels along it. They have additional walking security officers in other areas. Jupiter has police on bikes, and Mayor Golonka said, “All our residences are required to have a balcony or outside use looking out to the Riverwalk. They are the eyes of the Riverwalk.” She added that an active marina adds more eyes. Golonka, however, warned of mixed-use development and events sponsored at Riverwalks. “Be wary. Some residents want all the events to stop once they’re there.”

The Florida Riverwalk Exchange is a pro-active think tank dedicated to having Florida’s key waterfront cities share the best of ideas and solutions for maximizing waterfront promenades throughout the state.

### **Background on Florida’s Riverwalks**

#### *Fort Lauderdale*

Fort Lauderdale’s Riverwalk is one of the most mature of the Riverwalks with a one-mile “Riverwalk Park” along the New River that passes Fort Lauderdale’s Arts & Entertainment District. The Riverwalk Trust, [www.goriverwalk.com](http://www.goriverwalk.com), serves as the catalyst in building and nurturing Fort Lauderdale’s “most beautiful mile”, an advocacy group of business and professional volunteers.

#### *Jacksonville*

Jacksonville has a well developed downtown waterfront with a pedestrian promenade that totals 2.5 miles and passes premier attractions situated on both sides of the St. John’s River. The city’s Downtown Vision, Inc., looks to build and maintain a healthy and vibrant downtown community, [www.downtownjacksonville.org](http://www.downtownjacksonville.org). The city anticipates the Riverwalk eventually doubling in length to five miles as development proliferates downtown.

#### *Jupiter*

The Town of Jupiter plans a 2.5-mile. Two early phases are complete that includes a natural environment, along with office, residences and retail. The final segment will include the planned Harborside Place, a \$150-million mixed use development overlooking the Intracoastal which will serve as the epicenter of Jupiter’s Riverwalk and include retail, restaurants, a marina, hotel, office space, and abundant green space for public leisure.

#### *Tampa*

Tampa’s “Friends of the Riverwalk” public/private task force is dedicated to cultivating the 2.4-mile Riverwalk that will wind its way along downtown Tampa. Tampa’s Riverwalk is 17% complete, with a strong focus on getting as much completed as possible by 2009 when Tampa hosts Super Bowl XLIII. More information can be found at [www.tampariverwalk.net](http://www.tampariverwalk.net).

