



**Intern Teams Can Impact Serious Problems**

**2. CURTAILING CRIME**

Conflicting reports have it that crime is increasing in St. Petersburg; that it has been reduced; that violent crime has increased; that some violent crimes have decreased. Those quoted on the subject often appear intent on preserving the status quo, with little concern for increasing danger to the city's citizens, and specifically downtown residents.

Those who live downtown know from what they see and hear that downtown crime is real and increasing. Many will no longer go to the movies or patronize the restaurants after dark at the downtown Baywalk complex. The city-owned parking garage serving that complex has been the scene of late-night robberies and other serious crimes.



Clearly, we need to determine objectively whether crime is increasing, the nature of any increased crime, reasons for any increase, and what we can do to deal with the problem. We know that the City's Police Department has long been understaffed. Why the City has allowed this, and why the City

Council, which controls the purse strings, has tolerated it, calls for inquiry.

The DRCA Board has analyzed downtown crime data by U.S. Census tract, as compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigations. The FBI data present a disturbing picture, suggesting that further analysis is in order. A team of student interns could carry out further statistical analysis and, more important, relate it to City Police Department budget allocations in order to learn whether our taxes are adequately allocated for police protection. Students, assisted by a member of the DRCA Board, would:

- Analyze available crime data in depth
- Interview appropriate Police Department officials, including:
  - Chief of Police, Charles "Chuck" Harmon
  - Major Melanie Bevan, Uniform Services Bureau - District II Cmdr.
  - Sergeant James Alese, Downtown Patrol
- Analyze police personnel turnover
- Compare wage and benefit structures with neighboring jurisdictions
- Compare percentage of revenues allocated to Police Department with neighboring jurisdictions, and with national averages for cities of similar size
- Present recommendations to Mayor and City Council



**Intern Teams Can Drive 4 Critical Areas of City Government**

**1. STUDENTS CAN CHANGE CITY'S AND THEIR OWN ECONOMIC FUTURES**

The City of St. Petersburg is perched on the cusp of a new economic era, reinforced by the success of the University of South Florida. Until now, many of the University's graduates have been forced to leave the area to find jobs requiring the high skills they acquired there. But soon St. Petersburg may no longer be simply a "tourist destination," and many new businesses requiring those skills will locate here. —If city management recognizes the opportunities and works with the University and others to attract them.

The St. Petersburg Downtown Residents Civic Association (DRCA) is an association of six condominium associations comprising 663 homes and an estimated 1,500 residents. Its Articles of Incorporation specifically require that it "Promote and enhance the City of St. Petersburg as an important Commercial Center . . ." A team of student interns, assisted by a member of the DRCA Board, would:

- Coordinate with Mayor, City Council and Administrative Personnel
- Analyze industries most likely to employ USF graduates based on:
  - Nature of potential jobs
  - Number of potential jobs
- Analyze current revenues allocated for promotion of specific industries
- Analyze tax exemptions and incentives available to entice businesses here
- Develop list of specific companies to invite to locate here
- Write and send solicitation letters to target companies, emphasizing:

- Financial advantages in terms of:
  - Tax incentives
  - Tax rates
  - Wage levels
  - Real estate values
- Quality of life in terms of:
  - Housing costs
  - Relatively low taxes
  - No state income tax
  - No estate or inheritance tax

- Abundant arts, including symphony orchestra, many museums, theater companies, and a vibrant creative arts community
  - All sports, including major league baseball and hockey teams
  - World class sailing with one of the world's leading yacht clubs
  - City-sponsored sailing programs for children and adults
  - Ideal climate, beautiful beaches and fabulous fishing



### 3. COMMUNITY ACTIVISM

Public policy — when it affects many people — is best influenced by numbers. The number of persons who speak out tends to determine chances of legislative approval or rejection. To that end, the Downtown Residents Civic Association seeks to broaden its knowledge base and expand membership beyond the six associations currently represented, with their 663 homes and an estimated 1,500 residents.



Many issues face St. Petersburg's downtown residents — those who work downtown as well as those who live here — and including USFSP students and their professors who both live and work here. In at least one case, quality-of-life concerns mobilized a

significant portion of the community to prevent an giveaway of prime public lands to a privately owned business.

Pollution, in all its forms — toxins in soil, water and air; noise, light, litter and waste — constitute continuing concerns for thoughtful downtown residents who know their legislators respond best when many voices are raised.

At times, proposed legislation is a source of wonderment. For instance, the City of St. Petersburg has adopted a new noise ordinance that in some cases requires the sound to be audible 5,000 feet away — almost one mile — before it is deemed a violation.

DRCA's membership area extends from Tampa Bay in the East to 10th Street in the West, and from 14th Avenue in the North to 14th Avenue in the South. A team of student interns would work with members of the DRCA Board to encourage the many other condominium associations within that area to become members of this influential organization. This would entail:

- Efforts related to DRCA's:
  - Website
  - Newsletter
- Sale of Advertising on Website and in Newsletter
- Membership Solicitation Presentations:
  - Letters to Condominium Boards Soliciting Membership
  - Presentations to Condominium Boards
- Tie-ins with downtown business groups for joint benefits.



### 4. PRESERVING PUBLIC TREASURES & TREASURY

In many cities throughout the United States, private owners of the very profitable major league baseball teams have succeeded in convincing elected officials to build them new baseball stadiums. Cost of these stadiums has ranged from hundreds of millions to more than one billion dollars, overwhelmingly funded by taxpayer dollars. In almost all cases, a public benefit was claimed because the stadium was to be built in a blighted area.

The owners of the Rays baseball team chose instead to ask St. Petersburg's taxpayers to build them a \$450,000,000 stadium on the City's priceless downtown waterfront — an area noted for its beautiful parks, museums, concert hall and theater. Many were amazed to learn that the City had conducted serious secret negotiations with the investor-owners of the team for a full year before the news was leaked. The public outcry that followed resulted in abandonment of the attempt to obtain public approval with a hurry-up referendum on the ballot in November.



Instead, the City appointed Jeffrey Lyash, President of Progress Energy Florida, a subsidiary of a North Carolina company, to create a committee to advise on the best site for a stadium. Two points were made clear at the outset by persons speaking for the new committee:

1. Its members must be committed to recommending that the City build a new stadium for the Rays' investor-owners.
2. No site may be excluded from consideration, including the City's downtown waterfront.

The Constitution of the State of Florida authorizes Citizens' Initiatives that may be undertaken when large segments of the public feel their legislative representatives do not reflect their position. This is clearly the case regarding possible construction of a mammoth baseball stadium on the downtown waterfront. A group is currently forming that will determine whether most St. Petersburg residents want their park-zoned waterfront to be dominated by a two-square-block baseball stadium with a canvas roof rising to the top of a 320-foot mast. DRCA will be part of that effort.

A group of student interns, working with an advisor from the DRCA Board and members of the Citizens Initiative committee, can play key roles in the effort. They would guide volunteers collecting signatures on a petition to amend the City Charter so as to forbid development of the downtown waterfront to any density greater than that which currently exists.

Citizens' initiatives constitute democratic action in its purest form. DRCA is pleased to participate, and welcomes your assistance.

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