

# Media Spotlights

**For City of St. Petersburg & Sankofa  
Group FRA Award Project Nomination  
for 2022**



**SANKOFA  
GROUP**

**THE DEUCES LIVE**  
HISTORIC 22ND STREET SOUTH | ST. PETE, FL

# ARTICLE 1: St. Petersburg's 22nd Street S corridor is 'where the growth is happening'

J.C. Pritchett, Terri Lipsey Scott, Mark Aeling, Jamison Carnegie and Joe Furst speak about their projects.



Jamison Carnegie executive director of Mt. Zion Human Services, speaks shares information about Sankofa, a three-part project consisting of affordable housing and commercial space, during a luncheon of the St. Petersburg Downtown Partnership to discuss some of the upcoming projects reshaping the 22nd Street South corridor, “the Deuces,” once the thriving “Main Street” of the city’s African American community, at the historic Manhattan Casino, Tuesday, April 12, 2022 in St. Petersburg. [ MARTHA ASECIO-RHINE | Times ]

**Colleen Wright**, *Times staff*

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ST. PETERSBURG — Veatrice Farrell made it clear that the 22nd Street South corridor has not always been vacant land and that projects ripe for redevelopment surrounded her and the 100 others gathered Tuesday at the Historic Manhattan Casino Event Hall.

Prior to integration, there was Mercy hospital, a funeral home and 100 businesses along the corridor. She invited luncheon attendees to visit the African American Heritage Trail markers and read two books on 22nd Street and the neighborhood.

“I don’t want people to leave here thinking there has not been any action in this corridor. We have just built up over the last 10 years to this,” said Farrell, executive director of The Deuces Live, the organization working to revitalize the historic corridor and promote the community’s deep cultural roots. “So please don’t leave thinking that things were not here. It’s just exploded, like now.”

Community leaders gathered Tuesday to hear the latest on the planned renaissance of the city’s former center of Black culture and entertainment. Among them was St. Petersburg’s first Black mayor, Ken Welch.

There are about 13 identified construction and redevelopment projects going on in the corridor, and on Tuesday the leaders behind five of them talked about their endeavors and took questions. The luncheon was sponsored by the St. Petersburg Downtown Partnership.

Rev. J.C. Pritchett, president and executive director of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, is building a two-story community purpose building. Terri Lipsey Scott, executive director of The Woodson African American Museum of Florida, is raising money for a \$27 million new home for the museum, which would be the first African American heritage museum built for that purpose in Florida. Mark Aeling, owner of MGA Sculpture Studio, redeveloped a six-warehouse, five-acre site that anchors the Warehouse Arts District.

Jamison Carnegie is a co-project manager of Sankofa on the Deuces, a three-part project with 24 affordable townhomes, commercial space and a development fund for other projects, inspired by Durham, North Carolina’s Black Wall Street. And Joe Furst, founder and managing principal of Place Projects, is developing a mixed-use, transit-oriented development around the SunRunner Bus Rapid Transit stop at 1st Avenue South and 22nd Street.

“I would suggest that what happens in this neighborhood is just as important, or more important, than what we have even in downtown because this is where the growth is happening,” said Jason Mathis, the partnership’s CEO, before introducing Farrell. “This is where the excitement is, the enthusiasm, and that will be learned about today.”

Duncan McClellan wants his glass art gallery to be included in proposed zoning changes “so we’re not going to get swallowed” by surrounding larger developments.

“We want to be able to grow our business,” he said.

Furst said he’s in a unique situation because he owns all of the vacant properties, and no one has been at risk of displacement. His focus is from 1st Avenue South to 6th Avenue South between 21st and 23rd streets.

He welcomed everyone to attend the St. Petersburg City Council meeting on April 21. The City Council will vote to accept a study of the SunRunner project and the land development regulations needed.

# ARTICLE 1: Development Leaders Break Bread, Discuss Partnership for End-to-End Revitalization of the Deuces



*The Deuces Live association has declared 2022 the “Year of the Deuces!” A dinner meeting this Wednesday was a rousing kick-off for the theme. With eyes fixed on the future, three dozen development leaders met and broke bread to discuss the possibility of a comprehensive partnership for the end-to-end revitalization of the historic 22<sup>nd</sup> Street South (aka, “the Deuces”).*

The timing could not have been more perfect. On the eve of the corridor’s centennial (2023-24), the Deuces is experiencing unprecedented growth.

Not since the mid-1920s have there been so many projects unfolding on the corridor simultaneously.

Approximately seven mid-sized commercial facilities were built along 22<sup>nd</sup> Street South in the 1920s. Today, there are ten development projects underway, which – if successful – will bring a total of 180,000 SF of commercial space and over 450 new or revitalized housing units to a 13-block stretch of the Deuces.

For perspective, that’s two times more commercial (non-institutional) and housing development in the next five years than the sum total of the prior 20 years of

redevelopment efforts combined.

From 2000 to 2020, the corridor saw over 300,000 square feet of new construction, renovation, and historic preservation. But a majority of it was institutional and educational, such as the 166,000 square foot Pinellas County Job Corps campus and two facilities by St. Petersburg College including a 45,000 square foot campus.

The current landscape is much different. Whereas prior projects drew mostly students and clients of local non-profit service agencies, today's pipeline of projects is decidedly more commercial.

Several of the projects on the drawing board are poised to attract more of a diverse consumer and household mix. The vision for a new world-class Woodson African American Museum of Florida is expected to be a center of gravity in drawing tourists and locals to the corridor. Sankofa on the Deuces is slated to attract several dozen entrepreneurs to the Deuces. The Tangerine Plaza re-boot will house as many as six retail tenants.

This is added to the magnetism of existing anchors – **Gloria Campbell's** Advantage Insurance Solutions, **Elihu and Carolyn Brayboy's** Chief's Creole Restaurant, the Manhattan Casino, and the newest addition, Heavy's Soul Food restaurant, which opened this January.

The term is "critical mass," says **Veatrice Farrell**, Executive Director of the Deuces Live Main Street (the organization tasked with leading redevelopment and historic preservation on 22<sup>nd</sup> Street South). "The momentum we see now has been years in the making." Indeed – redevelopment planning dates back to the tenure of Mayor David Fischer in the 1990s.

Also present at Wednesday's dinner were representatives of Sankofa on the Deuces, Deuces Rising townhomes, the Woodson African American Museum, the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance (spearheading development of The Legacy Center), Binger Financial (which is in talks with the City about redevelopment of Tangerine Plaza), the Brayboys (who own multiple parcels on and adjacent to the corridor), VISION Investors (an emerging housing development group), and Pathway2Success (a local organization with a project building 27 housing units, one block east of the Deuces).

Several existing owners and operators attended as well, including the Urban Collective (operating the Manhattan Casino), and Tampa Bay Black Business Investment Corporation (the BBIC), which owns two properties on 22<sup>nd</sup> Street South.

Three of the region's economic development leaders took part – **Dr. Cynthia Johnson**, head of Pinellas County Economic Development; **Bemetra Simmons**, CEO of the Tampa Bay partnership; and **Tony Brown**, Community Development Director for the Tampa Bay Economic Development Corporation.

The feedback of attendees was upbeat throughout the evening. "The potential and combined power of the people in the room was incredible," said **Nikki Gaskin-Capehart** who served as Moderator for the occasion. "We're talking about the possibility of 93 organizations operating on the corridor by the year 2025." That's triple the current total of roughly 30.





Caption: Dr. Cynthia Johnson, Director, Pinellas County Economic Development; Rev. J. C. Pritchett, President, Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance; Terri Lipsey Scott, Executive Director, Woodson Museum of Florida; Pastor Louis Murphy, Sr., Mt. Zion Progressive MB Church; Tony Brown, Tampa Bay Economic Development Council; Valerie Fulbright, Vice President, First Home Bank; Bemetra Simmons, CEO, Tampa Bay Partnership; and St. Petersburg Deputy Mayor Stephanie Owens. Photos by All Photos Considered.

Yet the dinner's organizers struck a cautious tone at several points during the dialogue. "This will not be easy, and it will require some of us to step up with equity investments," said **Albert Lee**, CEO of the BBIC. Lee pointed to the Brayboys as among a small handful of African American investors bringing their own capital to the table.

"We will need to be 'intentional' about creating high-income earning possibilities along the corridor as well," said Dr. Johnson. "The professional services and tech firms evaluating the Sankofa site can serve as a foundation for growth."

**Attorney Tamara Felton-Howard** encouraged the audience to identify next steps that harness the energy of the room, such as committing to the Woodson Museum capital campaign, set to launch on February 1.

**Deputy Mayor Stephanie Owens** was positive in her remarks to the gathering. "One of **Mayor Ken Welch's** core principles is creating intentional equity," said Owens. "The progress in the Deuces is uplifting, and the future looks bright. The city is committed to ensuring progress continues and, perhaps more importantly, that it's the right progress for this community."

The strategies of the Welch administration will be a decisive factor in the success of several projects on the drawing board. At least two housing developments will require zoning variances. Several of the projects may seek or already have sought investments from the City-run South St. Petersburg CRA.

One of the next steps discussed at the dinner was the capitalization of a development fund created late last year by the City and the Sankofa Group as part of their co-development agreement for a 2.8 parcel in the 600 block of the Deuces. Net revenues from Sankofa on the Deuces (a two-building, two-story business facility) will serve as a starter source for the fund. The Sankofa Group is seeking to leverage the City partnership to replicate the funding models of the Los Angeles Development Fund and the Detroit Strategic Neighborhood Fund.

The dinner meeting was the first time the corridor's project sponsors were invited to the same table. Several stakeholders met one another for the first time. "I've been waiting 50 years to see this kind of meeting take place," said **Rev. Watson Haynes**, CEO of the Pinellas County Urban League. "Now is the time for collaboration on a scale not possible in the past." The Urban League is an anchor partner to Sankofa on the Deuces and recently completed construction of the agency's first single family home.

After decades of disinvestment and decline in commercial tenants, the Deuces has begun to turn a corner. Occupancy has doubled over the past decade. The energy of Wednesday's meet-up left many with the sense that the Deuces' may soon regain its former glory.

**Click here** to view photos of the dinner meeting. To receive updates on this effort: [gypsy@onecommunitystpete.com](mailto:gypsy@onecommunitystpete.com).



# Article 3: HORUS Wins Largest-Ever City Contract with Black-Owned Firm in St. Pete, a Full Circle Moment for the Graham Family

Posted on April 6, 2021



**ABOVE:** The Graham brothers present their firm's ability to successfully execute public-private projects; HORUS is one of the largest black-own construction firms in the Southeast U.S.

The Graham family has built one of the largest black-owned construction firms in the Southeastern United States but had never – ***until now*** – had the opportunity to serve as a prime contractor in St. Petersburg, the city their parents made home in 1968.

Last December, their firm – **HORUS Construction** – was selected through a competitive bid process to handle the design/build contract with the City of St. Petersburg for the **Sankofa Vision**, one of four components of the City's **Deuces Rising** plan to accelerate revitalization along the 22<sup>nd</sup> Street South corridor (affectionately known as "the **Deuces**").

And next Thursday, April 8<sup>th</sup>, St. Pete's City Council will vote on whether to approve phase 1 of what is believed to be the largest construction contract ever awarded to a black-led firm in the City's 133-year history.

The Sankofa Vision entails new construction of 26 townhomes and 28,000 to 35,000 square feet of commercial space that will cost roughly \$17 million, according to preliminary estimates.



Though there will likely be larger contracts for minority-owned firms on the 86-acre Tropicana Field Redevelopment Project, this is a full circle moment for the Grahams, and an historic marker for the City, which shuttered its minority business procurement program in 1999.

Prior to now, the largest City-awarded contract to a black-owned firm might have been on the original Tropicana Stadium development project, according to several elders contacted for this article. The project lasted three years (1987 to 1990) and its largest contract to a black-owned firm might've ranged from \$750,000 to \$1.5 million in antique dollars (\$1.7 to \$3.3 million in today's dollars). I will continue to research the question.

But if City Council approves the contract with HORUS on Thursday, not only is it likely the largest such contract to date. It may also be the first time St. Petersburg has awarded a contract to an all-MBE team.

HORUS, the prime, is 100% African American-owned firm, and will partner with **Howard & Associates** as architect and **Volt-Air** for mechanical, electrical, and plumbing engineering (both also black-owned), along with **Master Consulting Engineers** (a Hispanic-owned firm).

**Jonathan and James Graham** founded HORUS Construction in 2001 (Jonathan, the youngest of the family's three boys, as President, and James, the eldest, as Director of Operations). Since then, HORUS has completed over 200 commercial projects in 8 states, including 15 international airports, theaters and auditoriums, schools, bank branches, retail plazas and mixed-use projects.

### **Challenges Winning Contracts Make This a Proud Moment**

Despite the firm's award-winning track record, HORUS had never won the opportunity to lead a project in St. Petersburg. Not for lack of trying.

"We've done over 50 projects for Hillsborough County Schools, right across the bridge, but could never break through to win a project in St. Petersburg. We've been a sub-contractor on several projects in the city, but never the lead,"

When asked for his opinion as to why, James says he and other minority contractors see St. Petersburg and Pinellas County as closed markets for MBEs. "We've bid on projects that HORUS would've been perfect for, given our track record. But we weren't chosen."

That's beginning to change, he says. HORUS is also working with the **Pinellas County Office of Small Business & Supplier Diversity (OSBSD)** to explore opportunities through its SBE Program.

The brothers say they couldn't be prouder to be selected for the Sankofa project. "This is personal for us," says James. "The Graham family has lived in this area for 50+ years, with fond memories of going to Geech's for barbecue and Green's Bakery for sandwiches and baked goods. We've seen the Deuces past and present, and we are honored for the chance to be a big part of its future."

Both men graduated from **St. Petersburg High School**. James was the first black junior classman ever inducted into the National Honor Society at the school.

HORUS represents three generations of contractors. Their father – **James Graham Sr.** – was a contractor and three of James' children also work for the family firm. His two daughters – **Lena and Candice** – manage business development and SBE/MBE contracting programs for HORUS, while **James, III**, is a Superintendent, currently overseeing the Moffitt Cancer Center expansion.

**BELOW:** *James, Jr. and his daughters, Lena and Candice, who both work for the family business (left) and James Sr., who founded HORUS along with his sons. He was by then, a veteran in the construction industry (right)*

“HORUS and the Graham family represent all that we hope to achieve through the Sankofa Vision,” says **Pastor Louis Murphy**, of **Mt. Zion Progressive Missionary Baptist Church**, one of five non-profit partners of the Sankofa Vision Group and a member of the **2020 Plan/One Community Plan** board that spearheaded the Sankofa Vision. “Not only is HORUS a shining example of success in multi-generational wealth building. They proactively reach back to help smaller firms build their businesses too.”

The company sponsors the **HORUS Academy**, which mentors and cultivates sub-contracts for smaller firms. So far Academy participants have grown from an average \$250,000 in revenues before starting the program to \$1.7 million by the end of two years and \$8.6 million by the end of six years with the Academy. HORUS is partnering with Pinellas County’s OSBSD to launch Construction Management Academy in Q4 of 2021, to prepare more minority construction firms to compete on larger jobs.

### **Intentional About Reaching Out to MBEs**

The selection of HORUS for the Sankofa project is a prime example of the outreach and advocacy sometimes needed to give minority-owned contractors an opportunity. The Sankofa Group and City staff were intentional about getting the RFP into the hands of the largest black-owned firms in the region.

“This is a defining project, not just for the Deuces, but for our whole city,” said **St. Pete Mayor Rick Kriseman**. “I want to thank the HORUS team for coming on board to execute the Sankofa vision for the Deuces, and look forward to putting a shovel in the ground to get this project started.”

**Deputy Mayor Dr. Kanika Tomalin** added, “This is a critical project in St. Petersburg, and we have high expectations, not just for what the site will be once we cut the last ribbon, but for how it will catalyze opportunity for our community. We have full confidence in the Graham family and express our gratitude to the HORUS team for taking on this important endeavor.”

### **About HORUS:**

- **Founded:** 2001
- **Offices:** 6 offices (St. Petersburg, Tampa, Orlando, Gainesville, Deerfield Beach, North Carolina)
- **Workforce:** 40 Salaried Employees
- **Certifications & Memberships:** Certified MBE with State of Florida, State of Louisiana, Hillsborough County and Broward County; U.S. Green Building Council Member; and National Association of Minority Contractors Member
- **Larger Projects:** Gaillard Performing Arts Center (Charleston, South Carolina, the largest contract ever awarded to an African American-owned company in the city’s history); University Hospital (New Orleans); The Renaissance Center (Sarasota); Encore-Tempo (Tampa) and Marriott on the Water (Tampa)
- **Company Motto:** “We Listen. We Build. We Deliver. – Excellence is our Standard”
- **Rankings:** 18<sup>th</sup> largest MBE in Tampa Bay (Tampa Bay Business Journal); and 8<sup>th</sup> largest Black-Owned Business in Tampa Bay (Power Broker Magazine)
- **Online:** [Horus Construction Services, Inc. \(horus-cs.com\)](http://horus-cs.com)

