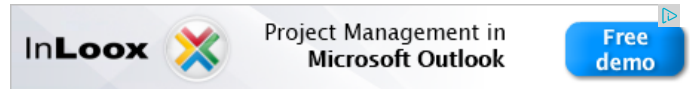




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Tampa council to vote on downtown apartment tower

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By Melissa Beckman - bio | email

TAMPA, FL (WFLA) - Tampa City Council members will vote Thursday on a proposal to build a 36-story apartment tower in the heart of downtown. Its location, though, is drawing some controversy.

It would be called the Residences at the Riverwalk and it would be built on a one-acre piece of property between the Straz Center, John F. German Public Library, and Tampa Museum of Art. The developers are proposing a 400-foot tower to house about 500 people, as well as parking and retail space.

"It enhances our riverfront. It's good for our economic bottom line," said Tampa Mayor Bob Buckhorn. "Retail follows and restaurants follow and bars follow. I mean, this is exactly the type of project that downtowns are built for."

Opponents say they like the idea of new apartments downtown, but don't think they should be built in the city's Cultural Arts District.

"We feel that it's completely inappropriate in size and in scale," explained Jeffrey Zampitella. "I think it will overwhelm the area and forever change the intent of the Cultural Arts District."

Zampitella is the President of the nearby Skypoint Condo HOA. Buckhorn believes his concerns center around how the new tower will block Skypoint's current view of the Hillsborough River.

"Their concerns are not legitimate concerns. They are personal concerns," said Buckhorn.

Zampitella insist his concerns are not about the views and could affect the feel of the whole area.

"I'm asking city council to slow down and don't throw away our future in this beautiful area of downtown," he said.

Buckhorn says the city would use \$4 million from the property sale to reconfigure Cass and Tyler streets into two-way streets, which he says would make the traffic flow safer and would create space for the tower.

Several organizations including the Board of Trustees at the Straz Center and Tampa's Downtown Partnership have pledged support for the project.

"People don't want to see sprawl, but then some people don't want to see density," said Tampa's Downtown Partnership Chairman David Smith. "You're gonna have to make some tough changes. Tampa is growing. It's going to be a bigger city than it has been and it's time for us to accept the new generation and build a place that they're going to want to be to live and work."

The council meeting starts Thursday night at 5:30 at City Hall. The council will also vote on another apartment tower in Channelside.



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