

# Inside St. Pete Speaker Bios

## May 31, 2024

**Christopher Steinocher** is President and CEO of the St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce. Prior to the Chamber, Mr. Steinocher was with the Tampa Bay Partnership as COO and Senior Vice President of Marketing and Business Development, a job he held for 17 years, helping start the regional economic development group. Mr. Steinocher was also the AVP of Marketing for Fortune Bank, a Tampa Bay based bank with 46 branch locations throughout He has over 33 years of experience in marketing and community development, 31 of which have been in the St. Petersburg region. He holds a Bachelor's degree from Emory University.

### **Mayor Ken Welch, City of St. Pete**

Kenneth T. Welch was sworn in as the 54th mayor of St. Petersburg, Florida in January 2022.

Growing up in the Gas Plant area of St. Petersburg, Mayor Welch worked summers and after school on his grandfather's woodyard that sat on property later displaced by the interstate. His father was a city council member who helped lay the foundation for St. Petersburg's resurgence. Welch saw firsthand the uprooting of hundreds of businesses, homes, and churches for what eventually became Tropicana Field. He also saw the unfulfilled promises of jobs and economic development in return for that sacrifice.

After receiving his BA from USF St. Petersburg and MBA from Florida A&M University, Mayor Welch returned to St. Petersburg as an accountant for Florida Power Corporation. He also served as Technology Manager for his father's small accounting firm. After years of community service, Welch became the first Commissioner elected to represent County Commission District 7 in St. Petersburg, only the second African American commissioner in the history of Pinellas County. Welch proudly served on the County Commission for 20 years, where he brought a focus to the issues of economic development, transportation, equity, housing, criminal justice reform- and fighting poverty.

A third-generation resident of St. Petersburg, Mayor Welch and his wife, Donna, have two daughters.

**Jason Spears** was born in St. Petersburg and raised in Pinellas County.

After earning an Associate Degree in business from SPC, Jason graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Construction Management from the University of Florida.

After college, Jason moved to Atlanta and worked for a large general contractor specializing in multi-family high rise construction as well as healthcare for five years.

In 2009, he moved back to St. Petersburg to begin his career with Peninsular Mechanical Contractors, Inc. (PMCI) where he is the vice president and a shareholder. PMCI celebrated its 45th anniversary earlier this year.

Jason's path with the St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce began as a member of the Leadership St. Pete Class of 2012. He then served for two years on the planning committee and three years on the Board of the LSPAA. Jason is a past Chair of the SPYP and the Finance Committee and is now serving as Chair of the Board of Governors for the Chamber.

Outside of the Chamber, Jason is passionate about the construction industry, specifically addressing the labor shortage in the skilled trades. Jason serves on the executive committee for the Florida Gulf Coast Chapter of Associated Builders and

Contractors, the largest multi-disciplined apprenticeship training facilitators in the state of Florida. Jason has also held leadership positions at the state and national level with ABC.

Jason lives in St. Petersburg with his wife Cassandra.

**Christian Hardigree** is the Regional Chancellor of the University of South Florida St. Petersburg, located in beautiful St. Petersburg, Florida. She previously served as the founding dean of the School of Hospitality at Metropolitan State University of Denver (Denver, Colorado) and as the founding director of the Michael A. Leven School of Culinary Sustainability and Hospitality at Kennesaw State University (Kennesaw, Georgia).

Before joining Kennesaw State, Dr. Hardigree spent 15 years at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and served in a variety of administrative roles, including as the Assistant President and Chief of Staff to the University President, the Associate Dean for Strategic Initiatives, the Department Chair for Hotel Management (twice), and as the Associate Athletic Director for Community Development and Special Projects.

During her tenure at UNLV, Dr. Hardigree was a tenured faculty member in the William F. Harrah College of Hospitality, teaching graduate and undergraduate courses in hospitality law, employment law, management, human resources, ethics, and diversity. She became a Teaching Fellow and later a Senior Teaching Fellow, was recognized with several awards for teaching and service, while compiling an impressive and nationally renowned research and scholarly engagement portfolio.

Dr. Hardigree serves on a variety of community initiatives, including as a member of the Board of Directors for the St. Petersburg Downtown Partnership, President of the Board for the St. Pete Innovation District, and an executive board member of the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce.

Married with three children (17, 16, and 13), Dr. Hardigree enjoys playing golf, riding horses, gardening, watching collegiate sports, collecting original works of art from local artists, and playing with her Great Dane, Grace.

**Rui Farias** is a near lifelong resident of St. Pete, and now the Executive Director of the St. Petersburg Museum of History. He holds a BA in Journalism from USF and was a writer for the St. Petersburg Times before embarking on a 15-year career in PR and Marketing, including events for the Tampa Bay Rowdies and the 1994 FIFA World Cup. After a short stint in public facility management, Rui returned to his love of history, and St. Petersburg, by creating and teaching Pinellas County's first Florida History class for St. Petersburg High School.

**Andrea Falvey** re-joined the City of St. Petersburg's Economic & Workforce Development Department in May of 2023. In her role as Economic Development Manager, she oversees the City's Business Attraction, Retention and Expansion programs as well as the City's Main Street Program and Workforce Development Initiatives.

Andrea's past experience includes her role as Business Development Manager at Pinellas County Economic Development where she specialized in the expansion of the Life Sciences, Medical Technologies, and Business & Financial Services industry sectors. During her first tenure with the City of St. Petersburg she was the program manager for the City's Brownfields redevelopment program, marine science cluster and Bank on

St. Petersburg program. Prior to her work in Economic Development, Andrea spent five years with an industrial and commercial property development firm in Tampa.

Andrea holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from the University of South Florida (USF), and an MBA with course concentrations in marketing, finance, and management, also from USF. She received the distinction of Certified Economic Developer (CEcD) through the International Economic Development Council (IEDC).

**Caleb Peterson** is the Senior Manager of the St. Pete Clearwater Sports Commission. An industry veteran of 12 years, Caleb leads the sports development efforts for the destination by placing a priority on relationships in the community and tourism industry. During his time at the sports commission, Caleb has secured significant events including the WWE Royal Rumble and multiple World, National, and Collegiate Championships spanning across the sports of Baseball, Boating, Golf, Pentathlon, and Softball. In the current fiscal year, Caleb is responsible for delivering 187,000 room nights to the destination.

**Dr. Sheron Brown** is an award-winning and internationally recognized social innovator and total wellbeing expert. Her pioneering and innovative nature led her to create an award-winning app dedicated to connecting nonprofits in their local areas. As a tech entrepreneur, Dr. Brown mentors health start-ups, advising them on health equity and coaching frameworks. Dr. Brown has authored several books, including *The Conscious Collaboration Pathway™*, *The Wellness Purpose Connection™*, and most recently, a journal set for publication later this year.

During her time as the CEO and Executive Director of the Tampa Bay Health Collaborative, Dr. Brown utilized her expertise to bring awareness and education to local communities while promoting and advancing health equity.

A celebrated speaker, Dr. Brown has spoken in front of audiences of all sizes on the topics of wellbeing, health, purpose, and Conscious Collaboration. Her TEDTalk entitled “How Your Work Could Influence Your Well-Being” focuses on the idea that work is not really about the work as much as it is about becoming.

A graduate of Howard University, her education and background involve neuroleadership and integrative nutritional health. Dr. Brown is a trained coach and yoga instructor and holds certifications in Oneness Meditation, HeartMath stress, and wellbeing.

Dr. Brown believes there is a direct connection between purpose and our work. In her work, she often notes that illness, stress, or anxiety often indicates imbalance in some areas of a person’s life. Her life’s purpose is to walk in freedom and expansion while helping others realize they can do the same.

**Brandi Gabbard** represents District 2 on the St. Petersburg City Council. As a member of the City Council, Brandi has fought to make our community safer and stronger by increasing access to affordable housing, lowering the cost of flood insurance, fighting for small and local businesses, and working to help our neighborhoods be safer and more resilient in the face of climate change.

Originally from Indiana, Brandi and her husband Keith moved to St. Petersburg in 2003. As a licensed real estate broker, she has been in real estate in St. Petersburg and the surrounding area for over 15 years. Prior to public office she served for over a decade in leadership roles with the state, local and national real estate associations. Most notably, she was President of the Board of the Pinellas Realtor® Organization in 2014 and was awarded Realtor® of the Year in 2015. Testifying before the Governor of Florida and his cabinet in 2013 regarding the effects of flood insurance affordability led Gabbard to a position as Chair of the National Association of Realtors® Insurance Committee. Recognized as an expert in issues pertaining to neighborhood sustainability has awarded her opportunities to speak on the national stage including Capitol Hill. While she has served in various roles throughout her community the role she is most proud of is mom to her 13 year old son.

**Jay Miller** is a specialist in planning, development and leasing of urban and suburban retail centers and infill townhome projects in the Tampa Bay market. After twenty years focused on development of large mixed-use projects, Miller created his own company, J Square Developers in 2013. J Square completed the new retail center in St. Petersburg's busy 4<sup>th</sup> Street corridor for Trader Joes and the Vitamin Shoppe in 2015, and co-developed St Petersburg's first Whole Foods store which debuted in early 2024. In the past several years, J Square has also developed free standing stores for national retailers including Starbucks, O'Reilly Automotive, Wawa and Circle K.

In the residential arena, the company has completed and sold out Quattro Beach Drive and the Saint James Townhomes (8 units) in downtown St. Petersburg, both infill townhome projects. Currently under development is Strum Place on the city's west side.

In November 2019, the City of St. Petersburg awarded development rights for a major new mixed -use development on a strategic 2.2. acre block downtown to Edge Central Development Partners, a joint venture between J Square, DDA Development and Backstreets Investments. That project is now under development in joint venture with Ellison Development Partners. J Square also manages a closely held portfolio of retail properties in Pinellas and Manatee counties with a total value exceeding \$12 million.

Mr. Miller graduated from the University of Michigan and received his Master's degree in City and Regional Planning from the John F Kennedy School at Harvard University. Throughout his career, he has directed development and management of specialty retail and mixed-use projects ranging in size from \$2.0 million to over \$100 million.

Prior to establishing J Square, Mr. Miller was Sr. Vice President of Retail Development in Florida for Ohio-based Equity Incorporated, where he advised Nationwide Realty Investors on the planning and development of a 140-acre mixed use project in the suburbs of Tampa, Florida. He served for 11 years as Regional Vice President of Development and Asset Management for Steiner +Associates. Steiner is one of the nation's leading developers of suburban and urban retail town centers based on the principles of new urbanism. Mr. Miller's career in retail development began in Miami when he joined Constructa US, the French company responsible for the development of the pioneering CocoWalk project in in Coconut Grove. Mr. Miller is a Florida licensed real estate broker. He enjoys international travel, speaks French fluently and is conversant in Spanish.

Mr Miller is actively involved in the St Petersburg and Tampa Bay community, serving as Finance Committee Member and past Board President of Pinellas Habitat for Humanity. He is Immediate Past President and still serves on the Board of Gulfcoast Jewish Family and Community Services in Clearwater. Other past Board participation includes Bayfront Medical Center and its successor, the Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg (a health care conversion foundation). He is also a Board Member and Chair of the Housing and Land Use Committee for the St. Pete. Chamber of Commerce and of the Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies (a national board).

**Whit Blanton** is the executive director of Forward Pinellas, a public agency responsible for countywide planning, aligning land use, economic development, and transportation. As the metropolitan planning organization (MPO), Forward Pinellas sets priorities for state and federal transportation funding. As the Pinellas Planning Council (PPC), Forward Pinellas maintains a Countywide Plan that encourages affordable housing, guides growth and redevelopment into appropriate areas, in close alignment with the MPO and cooperation with the County and its 24 municipalities.

Whit reports to a board elected officials representing the county's 25 local governments. His public and private sector planning experience includes a wide range of planning experience as founding owner of a national consulting firm. Whit is president of the Florida Chapter of the American Planning Association and has held many leadership positions within the American Planning Association for more than 25 years.

Over his 35+ years of experience, Whit has played a key role in the evolution of transportation and land development in St. Petersburg. As a consultant, he prepared neighborhood plans in the city, developed a comprehensive operations plan for countywide transit service, and led countywide long-range transportation plans, trail master plans, and redevelopment plans across Pinellas County. Over the last nine years, he's played a leading role in guiding major transportation investments, safety initiatives, and transit oriented development plans within the City of St. Petersburg.

**Elizabeth "Liz" Abernethy** has over 30 years as a practicing planner in the Tampa Bay region, with twenty years in public service and eleven in private practice. Since September 2014, Elizabeth has served the City of St. Petersburg, first as Zoning Official and manager of the Development Review Services Division and currently as the Director of Planning and Development Services, directing the City's building, zoning, planning and historic preservation activities.

Elizabeth's St. Pete efforts include leading the award winning StPete2050 community visioning effort (2021 FAPA Award of Excellence); updating the Downtown Waterfront Master Plan; shepherding code changes to allow Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) city-wide and a new Missing Middle zoning district; establishing a process for approval of affordable housing projects under Florida House Bill 1339 and SB 102; updating Urban Agriculture provisions expanding Community Gardens; updating Coastal High Hazard policies and regulations to address Sea Level Rise and storm vulnerability; creating a Storefront Conservation Corridor Overlay addressing space for small business and corridor character; updating noise regulations improving enforcement procedures and establishing a requirement for noise mitigation and monitoring plans; implementing a comprehensive update to the residential Land Development Regulations with an innovative FAR approach addressing compatible infill; and a Tree & Landscape code update introducing enhanced protection for Grand and Signature trees.

Publications include "HB1339 When the public benefit can justify a bypass to planning and zoning laws" Florida Planning, Fall 2021 "Breaking Down the Big Box House: How the City of St. Petersburg adopted and implemented zoning regulations to address compatible residential infill" Florida Planning, Fall 2017

Elizabeth's previous experience from 2004 through 2014 includes private sector positions as a Site Development Project Manager for Bloomin' Brands, Inc., managing national level restaurant development on their behalf and as a Senior Project Manager, Associate for the firm of WilsonMiller/Stantec, managing a variety of private-sector real estate land development projects. Previous public sector experience includes eleven years with the City of Tampa.

Elizabeth holds a Master of Arts in Urban & Regional Planning from the University of Florida, a Bachelor of Arts in Public Affairs with a minor in Environmental Policy from the State University of New York at Albany and has been certified by the American Institute of Certified Planners since 2004. Recent professional service includes serving on the ULI Tampa Bay Executive Board, the Professional Advisory Council for the University of Florida Urban & Regional Planning program, the FAPA Legislative Policy Committee, serving as a panelist in workshops and conferences on planning and housing related topics, and guest lecturing for the University of South Florida, Urban Planning Program and for St. Pete College.

**Laura Hine** is a Navy veteran, proven community leader and mom of two children in our local schools, Laura believes that - like our military - K-12 education is vital to our national and local strength and prosperity.

“The health of our nation is a direct reflection of the health of our public schools. It’s not enough to have a few high-quality schools here and there. We can and we must believe in, engage in, and invest in excellence and opportunity across our K-12 schools.”

**Alison Barlow** is the Executive Director of the St. Petersburg Innovation District.

The St. Petersburg Innovation District is a public-private partnership focused on increasing economic vibrancy and innovative problem solving in the Tampa Bay region. Alison manages the District’s portfolio of collaborative projects including the Maritime and Defense Technology Hub, a coworking facility for the maritime technology and national security sectors; the Ocean Team, a premier consortium of marine science and related entities in the Southeast; and the St. Petersburg Science Festival, an annual exploration of science and technology for youth.

Alison is originally from St. Petersburg. She received a Bachelors in Hospitality Administration from Florida State University, and a Master of Business Administration from American University in Washington D.C. Alison is a graduate of Leadership St. Petersburg, a member of the St. Petersburg Leadership Alliance, and on University of South Florida Research Foundation Board of Directors, University of South Florida College of Business Entrepreneurship Advisory Board, and Friends of Strays Animal Shelter Board of Directors.

**Gina Driscoll** has previous experience as a Sales and Marketing Manager for Hampton Inn & Suites Downtown St. Petersburg; as an Account Executive for iHeart Media, an Account Executive for the Tampa Bay Times, and Group Sales Manager for the Don CeSar Hotel.

This University of Tampa and University of Central Florida alum has been involved in the community and served in several leadership positions including the St, Petersburg Downtown Neighborhood Association – Board Member and President; Downtown Business Association – Board Member; Central Avenue Council – Organizational Committee Member. Member involvement: Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA); Downtown Partnership; St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce; St. Petersburg Shuffleboard Club; and St. Petersburg Preservation.

**Richard Lesniak** has been with the City of St. Petersburg for over twenty (20) years serving in the capacity of Airport Manager during this entire period. In this position, he is responsible for the daily operation and upkeep of the Albert Whitted Airport. This includes maintaining facility compliance with Federal, State and other aeronautical and safety standards, tenant relations and lease negotiations, capital program administration, facility planning and budgeting among other concentrations.

Prior to coming to the City, Richard was employed by Pinellas County at the St. Pete-Clearwater Int’l Airport. He served in numerous positions over almost nine (9) years, with his last as the Airport Operations Manager. Richard has a Bachelor’s Degree in Aviation Business Administration from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. He has been a resident of Pinellas County since 1984 and currently lives in Seminole with his wife and two (2) sons.

The airport's future will be studied by a committee established after the November vote that assured Albert Whitted's continued presence on the city's waterfront, Lesniak said. He said about 300 people work at Albert Whitted, where an estimated 224 aircraft are based.

Lesniak earned an associate's degree from St. Petersburg Junior College in 1990. While in school, he worked as a copy clerk for the St. Petersburg Times. He then went to Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Orlando, graduating in 1994 with a bachelor's degree in aviation business administration. He also has nearly completed a master's degree in the same field from Embry-Riddle. "I'm still working on the dreaded thesis paper," he said.

**David Wirth** has served as Port Director for the Port of St. Petersburg since January 2018. He also manages the City's Municipal Marina, the largest municipal marina in Florida. Prior to his appointment, Dave served as the Marina Supervisor since 2012. During his tenure the Port has seen several significant improvements including: a \$5M renovation of the wharf including the addition of six large power centers, the lease of a port building which now houses the Maritime and Defense Technology Hub, the docking location for the Cross-Bay Ferry, and the new home-port location for an American Cruise Lines ship.

His experience in the maritime sector began while attending Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, where he was a member of their student run Marine Search and Rescue Team. Later he joined the crew of a 230' motor yacht and held positions from Deckhand to Second Mate.

Dave holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in International Business from Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida, he is also a Certified Marina Manager by the Association of Marina Industries and currently serves as the Secretary/Treasurer of the Florida Ports Council.

**Brian Auld** begins his 20th season with the Rays and his ninth in his current position as team president. Together, he and Matt Silverman lead the club's operations both internally and externally. In his tenure as team president, Auld has brought a renewed focus to the Rays mission—to energize the community through the magic of Rays baseball—by redoubling the Rays commitment to its community and to its employees.

Under Auld's leadership, the Rays have developed a thriving workplace culture. In addition to paid parental leave, adoption benefits, paid volunteer time and a wellness initiative, the Rays created a \$15 minimum wage for all part-time employees. In 2018, Auld and Silverman oversaw the Rays purchase of the Tampa Bay Rowdies USL soccer team, based in St. Petersburg. They now also serve as vice chairmen of the Rowdies, overseeing all franchise operations. Prior to Auld's promotion to team president, he oversaw a wide spectrum of the team's business operations, including the human resources, information technology, marketing, ticket sales, fan experience and stadium operations departments.

Auld joined the Rays in June 2005 as director of planning and development, where he worked closely with Silverman to define organizational priorities and assist with the transition in ownership. Soon after, he played a key role in establishing the Employee Community Outreach Team (ECOT). All Rays staff may spend up to one paid workday each month volunteering in the community and ECOT assists by planning opportunities.

Before joining the Rays, Auld attended Harvard Business School, where he earned his MBA focusing on managing human capital, marketing and finance. Auld's previous work experience includes serving as lead teacher and director of development for the East Palo Alto Charter School in California. Born in Berkeley, Calif., Auld received a bachelor's degree in economics and master's degree in education from Stanford University, where he also captained the lacrosse team. He and Silverman met in high school in Dallas, and graduated one year apart. Brian is proud to claim that he once trekked to the bottom of Mount Everest.

He currently serves on the boards of directors for the Rays Baseball Foundation, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Tampa Bay and CEOs Against Cancer. In addition, he serves on the Sports Advisory Council for Special Olympics Florida and is chair of the Tampa Bay Partnership. Auld and his wife, Molly, reside in St. Petersburg and are proud parents of two daughters, Lucy and Mia, and a son, Jack.

**Brian Caper** is the Economic and Workforce Development Director for the City of St. Petersburg. He is a key member of the Historic Gas Plant Redevelopment Project and is responsible for fostering economic growth and workforce development in the City. Caper oversees the St. Petersburg Greenhouse, the City's front door to small businesses, community redevelopment areas, and business development. He holds an MBA, a MAURP, and a BSBA, majoring in Finance, from the University of Florida. Caper focuses on achieving equitable and sustainable growth through strategic development and collaboration to enhance the City's economic landscape.

**Latorra Bowles** has been driving organizations forward with over 18 years of experience in human resources and operations management. She has excelled in various positions throughout her career, including Director of Recruiting, Director of Community Relations, and Project Manager. Mrs. Bowles has a Bachelor of Science degree in Project Management from Saint Leo University and a proven track record of helping businesses reach their goals by providing creative solutions and strategic guidance while establishing trust and growing profit channels with persuasive flair.

Throughout her career, Latorra has demonstrated a strong commitment to building inclusive and thriving communities. Latorra has formed meaningful partnerships and collaborations with stakeholders from diverse backgrounds. She understands the importance of community engagement and works tirelessly to ensure that any initiative is responsive to the needs and aspirations of the communities it serves. With her strategic vision, leadership skills, and dedication to social impact, Latorra is committed to promoting vibrant experiences and fostering community connections. She is driven by a deep sense of purpose and a belief in the power of collaboration to create positive change in the world. She is a St. Petersburg, FL native, bringing sunshine to the sunshine city as a wife and full-time mother.

**Gwendolyn D. Reese** is the President and CEO of Peaten Reese Peaten Consulting, Inc., providing professional development and consultation services to individuals and organizations in Florida and beyond.

Ms. Reese is President of the African American Heritage Association of St. Petersburg, FL, Inc. The Heritage Association created and curates the African American Heritage Trails along 22nd Street and 9th Avenue in South St. Petersburg. Reese serves on the Voice Heard Voices Matter Bloomberg Harvard Equity Group with the focus of ensuring equity and engaging and sustaining community involvement in the redevelopment of Tropicana Field. Additionally, she is a member of the Commission to Study Structural Racism in the City of St. Petersburg, the Sankofa Project Advisory Council, and the Community Benefits Agreement Policy Council.

She formerly served as a co-chair of Pinellas Remembers, a Community Remembrance Project of the Equal Justice Initiative, a Commissioner on the City of St. Petersburg's Community Planning and Preservation Commission and as chair of the City Hall Mural Committee. She is a graduate of Leadership St. Pete Class of 1991 and a charter member of the St. Petersburg Midtown Rotary.

Ms. Reese was the first Social Justice Coordinator for the Alabama Institute of Social Justice (AISJ). She was a primary organizer and facilitator for Agenda 2010, a historically significant political action and education project to increase



black voter participation and candidate accountability during the 2009 City elections. She was co-founder with Gypsy Gallardo of the PACT, Agenda 2010 & Beyond and the Southside 2020 Project.

In 2015, Ms. Reese was the recipient of the 2015 MLK Leadership Award presented by the National Council of Negro Women and was recognized by Congresswoman Kathy Castor for her more than 40 years of community activism and leadership. The Congressional Recognition included a U.S. flag which was flown over the United States Capitol on January 13, 2015, and a Statement for Congressional Record which was filed in the Library of Congress. In February 2015 she was named one of the Pinellas County Urban League's 2016 "Champions of Justice". In February 2018 she received the Peggy Peterman Award from the Legacy Group for her column which is dedicated to preserving and educating the community about the history of African Americans in St. Petersburg. The column appears in the Weekly Challenger newspaper. In May 2018 she received the Founders Tribute award from the 2020 Plan. On August 19, 2021, she was presented with the Key to the City of St. Petersburg by Mayor Rick Kriseman.

**Alex Schapira**, based in Saint Petersburg, FL, US, is currently a Director at Hines, bringing experience from previous roles at Hines and The John Buck Company. Alex Schapira holds a 2018 - 2019 Master of Business Administration (MBA) @ Northwestern University - Kellogg School of Management. With a robust skill set that includes Argus Modeling, Financial Modeling, Real Estate Acquisitions, GMAT, Asset Management and more, Alex Schapira contributes valuable insights to the industry. Alex Schapira has 3 emails and 1 mobile phone number on RocketReach.

**David Flatt** grew up on a family farm in Illinois about an hour away from St. Louis. Ever since childhood, he had a passion for history and archaeology. Those interests helped direct him towards becoming a historical archaeologist. He worked and taught in that field for many years, including archaeological projects in the United States, Europe, and Asia.

He completed Bachelor's degrees in history and anthropology from Southern Illinois University, a Master's in history from St. Louis University, and he is currently working on a Ph.D. in anthropology from Flinders University in Australia. Besides archaeology, he has also worked in government and education administration. David was previously the Executive Director of the Kregel Windmill Factory Museum in Nebraska. The Kregel is the only windmill factory museum in the United States. During his time there he founded the "Power of Wind" art show featuring over 500 international student and professional artists from over 30 countries.

After 3 years at the Kregel Museum he was the Executive Director of the Ford Piquette Avene Plant Museum for 3 years in Detroit, Michigan. Piquette is the original Ford factory and the birthplace of the Ford Model T, the car that put the world on wheels. Under his direction Piquette became the #1 ranked destination event venue in the state of Michigan. At both museums he received awards and recognition for STEAM educational programs from the Governors in Nebraska and Michigan. In 2022 David was the Executive Director of the California Automobile Museum in Sacramento. While there he set a record for attendance in the 35 year history of the museum as well as helped organized the largest Cruise Fest on Fulton Avenue that the city ever experienced with more than 400 cars participating and an audience of 15,000+.

As a ceramic specialist in Archaeology David has always had a love for the arts and helped build art shows, art fairs, and art exhibitions at non-art museums. Imagine Museum is the perfect fit for his talents and is looking to help take this internationally renowned museum to the next level and promote the art and artists of contemporary glass art on a global scale.

**Terry Marks'** rich experience in business, education, and the arts has shaped her into a powerhouse for economic development in St. Petersburg's creative community. As CEO at the St. Petersburg Arts Alliance, she champions adequate & sustainable funding, builds relationships between members of our diverse community, and advocates for art & artists.

**Paul Carder** began his advertising career with Ogilvy & Mather in New York after receiving his MBA from the Harvard Business School and his BA Economics from the University of Michigan. After nearly 10 years with Ogilvy in New York and Toronto (where he was transferred), and a stint with Doyle Dane Bernbach Paul and his creative partner formed Carder Gray Advertising. Following the merger of Carder Gray with DDB Needham, Paul became President and CEO of Carder Gray DDB Needham. With the expansion and diversification of the business, the DDB Group of Companies was formed with Paul as Chair and CEO; the Group operated as a holding company for a portfolio of advertising and related marketing companies. He retired in 1995 leaving a \$175 million organization.

Following his retirement and prior to moving to St. Petersburg, Paul became Dean for Business and Creative Arts at a large, urban community college, responsible for five divisions, nearly 4,000 students, and over 200 part- and full-time faculty. After an agreed-to 3-year term, and a bit more retirement, Paul became Director of Marketing & Business Development for the law firm of which he had been a client. There he built a marketing department from two to 13 people, initiated a number of innovative programs and helped the firm achieve international recognition in key practice areas. When Paul left the firm was ranked 14<sup>th</sup> in the world in M&A volume.

Paul has always given back to the community, in Toronto serving on a number of not-for-profit Boards including the Ontario Heart & Stroke Foundation, Toronto Community Foundation, the National Ballet of Canada, Ballet Jorgen, Souleppper Theatre Company, the Young Center for the Performing Arts, the Harvard Business School Club and the Institute of Canadian Advertising. Paul was named the outstanding volunteer in several of these organizations.

Paul and his wife, Jacqueline MacNeil, moved to St. Petersburg in 2007 where he has continued his service. He was a member of the LSP class of 2008 (best ever) and served on the Planning Committee for several years after. He joined the Board of the Morean Arts Center and was a leader in acquiring the Chihuly Collection. As a downtown resident, Paul recognized the value of the St. Petersburg Downtown Neighborhood Association and joined the Board in 2014 where he served for five terms. He has been an active member of the St. Petersburg Arts Alliance, now in his third three-year term.

Paul has devoted considerable time and energy to the St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce – sitting on the Board and Executive Committee for 13 years. He played a lead role in the creation and implementation of the Grow Smarter Economic Development Initiative; was instrumental in developing the Economic Development Corporation; was a member of the select Downtown Waterfront Master Plan task force; has taken the lead in the development of the Inside St. Pete program; and has been the Board Director working on the newly-formed St. Petersburg Leadership Alliance.

Paul believes the SPDNA has a significant role to play in the re-development of the Gas Plant District and Rays Stadium, ensuring the voice of the residents is heard and hopes to be able to contribute in gaining that “seat at the table”.

**Richard Novikas** is a seasoned leader with a wealth of experience in the transportation industry, leading companies such as Star Trolley, Expedient Movers, and Bean Machine. His career in transportation encompasses expertise in both passenger and cargo services. At Star Trolley, he oversees passenger transport, while Expedient Movers specializes in cargo logistics. Aside from his professional endeavors, Richard also runs Bean Machine, a hobby business driven by passion. For nearly 15 years, Richard has called St. Pete home, actively contributing to the community's growth and connectivity.

**Shawn Drouin** has been employed with the City of St Petersburg for 22 years. Shawn began his employment with the Parks and Recreation Department's TASCOS Teen Programs, where he remained for 19 years. Shawn's current role is Event

Recruitment and Management Coordinator. He loves the controlled chaos, diversity, and non-stop action of St Petersburg Events.

Born and raised in St Pete, Shawn takes pride in uplifting and providing opportunities for the very community that raised him. He is a PROUD father to his 7-year-old son, Daniel. He is a graduate of St Petersburg College and the University of South Florida. Shawn is an Eagle Scout and graduate of the 2020 Leadership St Pete Class (obviously the BEST class EVER).