

**Grand Opening for Civitas/W-designed Julian B. Lane Riverfront Park in Tampa**  
*\$35 million revitalization engages West Tampa in Hillsborough River development*



Civitas widened Hillsborough River to create a calm water cove for learners to paddle. W Architecture-designed River Center includes city-run boat rentals and storage, community center and public art.

Denver, Colorado – June 5, 2018 – Conceived as a “park for everyone,” Tampa, Florida’s new Julian B. Lane Riverfront Park welcomed thousands in a dynamic “Riverfront Rock” weekend grand opening celebration. Visitors from around the city and all walks of life engaged with the 25-acre public space, validating the inclusive vision created by award-winning Denver urban design and landscape architecture firm [Civitas](#) with [W Architecture and Landscape Architecture](#) and engineering partner [Stantec](#).

The \$35 million revitalized park is a nearly 20-year dream of City of Tampa Mayor Bob Buckhorn’s, representing a major investment in the West Tampa neighborhood he has described as “underserved for decades” and activating the west side of the Hillsborough River – a key piece in the larger mission of making the waterway the center of the city’s urban core.

“With over 25,000 people attending opening night, this new park is already a destination for people from near and far,” says Civitas founding principal Mark Johnson. “For the first time in decades, the people of West Tampa will have access to the water, to boating and a myriad of new play in the park.”



L to R: Mayor Bob Buckhorn cuts the ribbon on Tampa's revitalized Julian B. Lane Riverfront Park; boat house deck and docks offer the community new river access; a bocce court is one of the park's many engaging activities.

Built in 1977 and once a neighborhood anchor, the original Riverfront Park had fallen into disuse and disrepair. Civitas and W undertook an intensive public outreach and stakeholder process with the West Tampa neighborhood beginning in 2014, soliciting community hopes and needs to shape the ultimate design. “We balanced neighborhood family use of the park on a daily basis with the city’s need for a boating and performance facility,” says Robin Norcross, Civitas Project Manager for the park redevelopment. “The playground, splash pad and ‘front porch’ located in the middle of the park create a central catalyst of family activity for the space.”

The idea for a public boat house owned and operated by the City of Tampa and supporting a variety of human-powered crafts – from racing shells to kayaks to dragon boats – came out of the community engagement process. “There wasn’t a public boat house in the project when we started,” explains Barbara Wilks, principal of W Architecture and Landscape Architecture, who designed the structure, which quickly became integral to the park’s design and purpose. “The location of the building and the way it is situated reflects the mayor’s vision for bringing people to the west side of the river and fulfills his desire to have a landmark that draws your attention.”

Consisting of a big roof for shade, an elevated upper floor out of the flood plain with floor-to-ceiling glass capturing panoramic river views, a broad porch and lower level boat storage and rental office, the boat house “acts like an exclamation point to the nice curve of the park’s promenade with the way the roof swoops up,” says Wilks. And the roof doubles as storm water management, channeling runoff into a lush rain garden that filters it through landscape and plant material, controlling the water’s return to the river.

To further promote neighborhood access and involvement with the river, the Civitas-led team devised the idea of “creating a quiet cove for learners and paddlers,” says Norcross, “a unique thing to find associated with a boat house.” Constructing the cove meant major challenges for marine engineering partner Moffatt & Nichol. “It required full realignment of the sea wall in the river,” says Norcross. “We actually expanded the river.”



L to R: A large central lawn offers freeform space for games, relaxation and dramatic views of downtown Tampa; Thomas Sayre's 34-foot-high "Ripple Gate" sculpture provides a gateway to the park.

The community's desire for preserving neighborhood history is present in the [public art](#) incorporated throughout the park, including a three-dimensional relief mural in the boat house by local team of fabricators and makers Pep Rally Inc that densely layers references to the area's past. Other public art pieces include a mosaic by Jovi Schnell, Thomas Sayre's monumental "Ripple Gate" stainless steel gateway spirals set atop concrete pylons, and Marc Fornes' "Form of Wonder" shade canopy (to be installed mid-summer 2018).

Marked by an official ribbon-cutting by Mayor Buckhorn, fireworks and a free public concert by Third Eye Blind, the Riverfront Rock celebration drew crowds enthusiastic to embrace this one-of-a-kind destination waterfront park that celebrates its history rooted in the West Tampa community. "Tampa came together under the leadership of Mayor Bob Buckhorn," says Civitas' Johnson, "to create a place of great joy and inspiration for this rapidly rising city on the Bay."

Additional team members in the effort include Moffatt & Nichol, VoltAir Engineers, Arehna Engineering, Silman Structural Engineers, Evans Engineering and KVJ INC Public Relations and Event Consulting. "Team members on the project from the City of Tampa include City Architect James Jackson Jr., City Project Architect Kevin Henika, Parks and Recreation Director Paul Dial, Parks and Recreation Superintendent Brad Suder and Parks and Recreation Landscape Architect Project Manager Karla Price."

Founded in 1984 with the core purpose of "creating healthier cities," Denver-based Civitas, Inc., is an idea-based practice of urban designers, architects and landscape architects engaged in strategic planning for urban change and project design for built works. Recent honors received include the Chicago Athenaeum/European Centre International Architecture Award, the Canadian Institute of Planners "Great Public Space," an Excellence on the Waterfront Award from the nonprofit Waterfront Center and a 2018 Honor Award for Excellence from International Making Cities Livable. A consultancy and a design studio, Civitas advises on a wide range of strategies for re-

imagining urban life and places, working in U.S. cities coast to coast and around the world. For additional information visit [civitasinc.com](http://civitasinc.com).

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