



THE JAMES MUSEUM OF WESTERN + WILDLIFE ART

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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THE JAMES MUSEUM GAINS UNANIMOUS CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL FOR PARKING, WAYFINDING AND STREETSCAPING SERVICES

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Following a presentation to the St. Petersburg City Council by The James Museum co-founder and chairman, Tom James, and expressions of support from St. Petersburg Mayor Rick Kriseman, The Dali Museum Executive Director, Hank Hine, and St. Petersburg Downtown Partnership CEO, Joni James, the City Council on Thursday evening voted unanimously to approve a contract between the City of St. Petersburg and James RE, LLC, on behalf of the James Museum, to provide a 50 year lease for two floors of parking in the South Core Condominium building (home to the museum), new wayfinding signage and improvements to streetscaping in the 100 block of Central Avenue and First Avenue South in St. Petersburg.

In approving the contract, the Council members gratefully acknowledged Tom & Mary James' lifetime contributions to the community and in particular this more than \$50 million personal investment in transforming a downtown city block into what will become home to The Tom & Mary James Museum of Western & Wildlife Art, scheduled to open in the fall of 2017, as well as significant renovated office and retail space.

Said Mayor Kriseman, "I am incredibly excited about this new partnership between St. Petersburg and what will surely be a landmark in this city, The James Museum of Western & Wildlife Art. Thanks to City Council for their approval to move forward today. And in particular, a special thanks to Tom James for his deep and abiding commitment to this city of the arts. I look forward to standing with him when we cut the ribbon on the James Museum."

The James Museum will be the new, permanent home of 400-500 premier works of art selected from the more than 3,000 pieces acquired by Tom and Mary over their 50 years of collecting. The 80,000 square foot museum will include over 30,000 square feet of gallery space; a 2,500 square foot indoor sculpture court throughout a 2-story stone 'arroyo' whose backdrop is an indoor waterfall; a Native American jewelry collection; a 120 seat theater; a 6,000 square foot museum event space, which will support both large events and break-out sessions; a significant catering kitchen; a museum store and café; as well as all of the spaces required to support and operate a 21st century museum of this scale.

The James Museum's roots are from Tom and Mary James' undivided love both for culture and the city of St. Petersburg that has been their home. Tom began collecting while a student and when their travels took them west, they were captivated by the art, landscape, and wildlife of the West. They began to collect what moved them — art of action and attention to place made by contemporary artists. They collected for their pleasure, though with an aim to help living artists live by their art alone. Many of the artists became personal friends.

Said Tom James, "It's difficult to create something that will evoke memories of where you were, what you saw, what you thought. I found art had a way of doing that."

Their collection is further enlivened with many works by Florida and local artists and their intended programming includes regional artist spotlights and guest lectures from renowned western and wildlife artists including members of the Cowboy Artists of America™. In addition, The James Museum intends a strong educational element in the way of both adult docent education and youth education in the history of the American West and in wildlife. The James Museum will add a unique, significant cultural destination to downtown St Petersburg.

In his remarks thanking Mr. James for his generosity in giving the city the museum and its priceless contents, Councilman Charlie Gerdes noted how he looked forward to his future grandchildren being able to enjoy the collection and learn about our nation's history depicted in the artworks.

In addition to the museum space, the development of South Core will include over 40,000 square feet of flexible leasehold space owned by James RE LLC. These leasable spaces are situated on the East and West sides of the project which will activate both of those corners along Central Avenue. The leasehold space is enjoying a great deal of interest from large and small businesses in the office, retail and restaurant industries. Leasing of the office and retail space is being managed by the Sembler and Echelon companies.

The James Museum has selected St. Pete Design Group (SPDG) as design architect for the project. SPDG is a joint venture between Harvard Jolly Architecture, Yann Weymouth and Wannemacher Jensen Architects, with Weymouth serving as design director. Their goal is to transform the lower two floors of the 30-year-old existing parking structure into a 21st century home for the collection, and to open the existing closed façade up to the streetscape creating a welcoming and vital presence in a dynamic part of the city.

"We are essentially reassembling the team which built the Dali," said Tom James. "Peter Arendt as the owners' representative, Yann Weymouth as design director and Beck as the builder. They did an outstanding job of bringing that iconic project in on time and on budget. Meanwhile our art curator, Emily Kapes, has been working diligently over the last two years on selecting just the right pieces of art to have on permanent display. It's a great team and it will be a wonderful showcase of the art which Mary and I have been passionate about collecting and now sharing with the public."

Weymouth stated, "We are designing an amazing transformation of a city block, capturing the essence of the western landscape. The James Museum on thriving Central Avenue, one block from vibrant Beach Drive, will be within easy walking distance of the other major art institutions of the City. It brings to a wider public a fascinating, uniquely American collection; a collection which recounts the many and layered stories of the American spirit, myth and reality. It speaks of the encounters, clashes and melding of Native American and European culture. The addition of this collection in this new museum will be an exponential addition to the establishment of St Petersburg as an arts destination. It will be a new jewel in the City's necklace of destination museums."

Hank Hine, Executive Director of The Dali Museum told the City Council, "This is a remarkable contribution to the cultural and economic life of St. Petersburg. A collection of art can stay a private collection. As such it may be shown or not shown, traded or sold. But a museum open to the public is another thing entirely. It is a kind of gift, a public trust. Built entirely from the James' private funds, this museum is being constructed in downtown St. Petersburg to spur the cultural and economic life of the City: in short, to build community in a manner parallel to their contributions to every other aspect of our civic infrastructure. Through exhibitions and educational programming, The James will emphasize core values of the art that moved Tom and Mary during their collecting: action, fortitude, heritage, and integrity."

The Beck Group has been selected as the builder and has begun interior renovation work on the structure. Exterior work on the façade will begin later this summer. A public "ground-breaking" with hard-hat tours is anticipated in early fall. The topping out of a significant architectural element is planned for is the spring of 2017 and the public opening will occur in the fall of that year.

As additional elements and news of the museum are announced: from traveling exhibitions to educational programs, from membership opportunities to donor naming opportunities, news will be posted on the website: www.thejamesmuseum.org.

Copies of the architectural renderings from St. Pete Design Group can be found [here](#).

Logos and still images of select artworks are available on request from Anthea.Penrose@raymondjames.com.

B-Roll video of select artworks to be exhibited in The James Museum can be found [here](#).

The James Museum project team includes:

Founders: Tom & Mary James

Collection Curator: Emily Kapes – 727.567.5896

Project Director: Laura Hine - 727.871.9642

Owners' Representative: Peter Arendt

Design Director: Yann Weymouth - 813.463.3726

Architect: St. Pete Design Group – a joint venture between Harvard Jolly Architecture, Yann Weymouth, & Wannemacher Jensen Architects

Contractor: The Beck Group, Dale Mize

Owner's advisors: Darryl LeClair, Craig Sher, Hank Hine