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**The Future of St Pete Pride:
Reasons for Change, Potential for Growth**

TAMPA BAY, Fla, Wednesday, December 14, 2016 – St Pete Pride remains Florida’s largest LGBTQ+ event with continued annual growth. The organization’s board of directors and planning team constantly reevaluates the demands placed on the Celebration Weekend and recognizes the need for a location suited to provide the best experience for its attendees.

The location of St Pete Pride’s main events is not a new discussion. “This has been a topic among the board for the last eight or nine years,” says St Pete Pride’s longest serving board member, Stanley Solomons. “We were always familiar and comfortable with the Grand Central District. But regardless of my fondness with the current location, the time to move came when the logistics and security measures changed.”

The current parade staging area at 31st St. N. and 3rd Ave. N. is slated for redevelopment. Multiple new locations were reviewed, including an option that utilized the Tropicana Field parking lot for the parade staging. With a focus on security of attendees, production costs, and the potential for growth, the St Pete Pride Board was presented with the downtown St. Petersburg option for consideration at December’s board meeting.

Vinoy Park and Downtown St. Petersburg will provide greater capacity, more usable space, and new staging opportunities. Attendees will enjoy a larger gathering space, close proximity to hotels, walkability to approximately fifty restaurants and bars, and over 11,000 parking spaces according to a City of St. Petersburg parking demand study. The layout of the Downtown St. Petersburg option will give the festival and parade greater security and help yield quicker response times for emergency responders and staff.

“In 2016 we had an independent economic impact survey conducted that found 50% of attendees come from outside of Pinellas County and stay an average of 2.6 nights,” says Eric Skains, Executive Director of St Pete Pride. “Since the change from a one-day to a multi-day event, the economic impact has grown from \$10-million to over \$20-million. By giving more options to attendees, we hope this impact will continue to grow as the event becomes more accessible to them.”

With the change, the three-day celebration will include a Friday night event in the Grand Central District, a Saturday evening parade along Bayshore Drive, and a Sunday Festival in Vinoy Park.



“It was extremely important to the board that the Grand Central District remain part of St Pete Pride Weekend,” says Skains. “Grand Central will always be a special place for the LGBTQ community. We fully intend to work closely with the district to ensure the Friday night event is supported by our sponsors and marketed equally with the parade and festival.”

The proposed move downtown comes ahead of St Pete Pride’s official announcement of its bid for the 2021 World Pride celebration, an intent the organization made in October at the InterPride World Conference in Montpellier, France. More details on the World Pride bid will be revealed at the 2017 Kick-off event in April.

For further information on the proposed move, go to www.stpetepride.com/2017. The St Pete Pride Board of Directors will officially vote on the move at the January 17 board meeting. Information on this meeting may be found at www.stpetepride.com.

Registration for the 2017 St Pete Pride Festival & Parade will be available on January 18 at www.stpetepride.com.

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About St Pete Pride

The purpose of St Pete Pride is to promote unity, visibility, self-esteem and a positive image of and among the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community of Tampa Bay and throughout the State of Florida by way of cultural and educational programs and activities.