

Bobby Torras Jr. and Bob Torras Sr. stand on the marina at Brunswick, which has been called "the most substantial private development in the city's history."



Torras Complex to Bring People 'Downtown' Again

By Kristine Anderson

Brunswick is waking up — it's not a sleepy little coastal town anymore," says Bob Torras. The 62-year-old Torras is the developer of the Brunswick Landing Marina and planned mixed-use waterfront complex. During the next 10 years, the 31-acre, \$85 to \$100 million development will include a 100-room hotel, three restaurants and a lounge, retail/office space, apartments and condominiums, 350 boat slips and a mile-long pedestrian walk, offering views of the Marshes of Glynn.

While Brunswick is a thriving international port, the city has little activity on its main street. City officials believe the marina and the 400,000-square-foot development, along with the nearby waterfront park currently under construction, will help revitalize the downtown area and make Brunswick a destination point.

The Torras project is already bringing more people downtown. "It's going to be the most substantial private development ever done here," says city councilman Ken Plyman.

Three docks with a total of 60 slips, including one for the 180-foot Emerald Princess, a casino/cruise ship operated by Golden Isles Cruise Lines, are already in place. Torras expects to build one dock with 20 slips a year and hopes to have

additional cruise ships making regular stops in Brunswick as they sail along the inland waterway.

Torras, a Brunswick native whose father designed and built the Torras Causeway to St. Simons in 1924, says, "The marina and complex will have a \$60 million to \$80 million economic impact on the area over the next decade and create 600 to 800 new jobs." The Emerald Princess, which operates year-round, employs between 90 and 100 people, 90% of whom are local residents.

Bobby Torras Jr., 35, vice president and general manager of the marina, which opened in 1994, said, "We've had the busiest summer to date — our docks are full and we'll have more boats next summer."

Torras Sr. owns a large mowing machine manufacturer called Kut Kwick, located on the waterfront, and Torco, a precision parts manufacturing operation in Kennesaw, as well as the 52-acre Kennesaw Business Park, three apartment complexes in Fairburn and 160 acres on St. Simons.

Torras' father, Fernando Joseph Torras, a native of Brunswick, built railroads, roads and dams throughout the world and was the man who surveyed, engineered, arranged the financing, and oversaw the entire construction of the St. Simons Causeway, which connected St. Simons Island and Sea Island to the mainland. This project was ranked as an

engineering feat in its time.

During later years, F. J. Torras served as both City Manager and County Administrator in Brunswick and Glynn. After his death the causeway was named the F. J. Torras Causeway in his honor.

The waterfront development by Bob Torras has been an exercise in persistence. He bought the acreage 12 years ago, but the actual construction has been delayed by the long, cumbersome permitting process.

Though Brunswick city officials and the Downtown Development Authority have worked closely with Torras, getting the necessary permits has been time-consuming and costly because of the number of historical surveys and studies involved.

Torras spent more than \$600,000 and had to get approval from 14 agencies at the local, state and federal levels. He says, "Doing a development in Brunswick is very different from doing a development in Atlanta — especially when some of the site touches on wetlands."

So far, Torras has financed the marina primarily himself, but as the project progresses, he hopes to get some public funding.

Many people told Torras a marina could never work in Brunswick. But today he says, "The marina is successful — and the mixed-use development will be, too."