

# Transforming a diamond in the rough: How FirstService Residential elevated a historic Houston high-rise

*FirstService Residential's partnership with committed board members brings new life to downtown Houston's first high-rise building.*

When Susan Hill joined the board of 2016 Main in December 2015, she had a clear vision: transforming what she called “a diamond in the rough” into a property that could compete with any new luxury high-rise in downtown Houston. Today, after partnering with FirstService Residential, that vision is becoming reality.



## A building with deep roots and strong bones

Built in 1964, the property at 2016 Main Street holds the distinction of being downtown Houston's first high-rise. “It's probably the safest and most secure building you could live in because all the walls are concrete, and all the floors and ceilings are concrete,” explains Hill, who has lived in the building on and off since her post-college days and now owns seven units there.

Despite its sturdy construction, the building had fallen into disrepair over the years. “The pool was leaking from the bottom. And it was the original pool from 1964. The building was dirty. The parking garages were dirty,” Hill recalls of the conditions before recent improvements.



# From undervalued to revitalized

Everything changed when Hill became treasurer in January 2022, and shortly afterward, the building's management company decided to exit the high-rise market. After interviewing four companies, the board selected FirstService Residential, a decision Hill calls "absolutely the best."

Upon FirstService's arrival, the team conducted a formal reserve study—the building's first—which revealed the property was severely underfunded. Previous boards had taken pride in minimal maintenance fee increases of just 1-2% annually, an approach Hill now recognizes as short-sighted.



## Ambitious improvements underway

With proper funding and expert management in place, the building has embarked on several major improvement projects:

- A major pool renovation was recently completed
- An elevator modernization currently in progress
- An exterior stucco restoration project underway

"There is no way any other management company could handle all of this," Hill says. "It takes a village, and what people sometimes don't realize is there are so many people behind our on-site team that have expertise in different areas."



# Beyond physical improvements: A cultural transformation

The changes extend beyond physical renovations. The partnership with FirstService has transformed how the board operates and communicates with residents.

“They’ve made us become better board members as a result of their leadership,” Hill notes. “We’ve come a long way from a board who never said a word at board meetings.”

Hill also appreciates the company’s values and approach. “Every single core value, they exercise here. If they make a mistake, they own it and improve it. They always do what’s right.”



## Creating a true community

For residents, the building now offers an elevated living experience. “You feel like you’re walking into a luxury hotel,” Hill says, crediting the hospitality industry experience many FirstService team members bring to their roles.

The management team’s focus on service and community has created an environment where residents feel at home, not just in a facility. “It’s the aura that you feel with them,” Hill explains. “All they’re here to do is make the HOA a better place to live.”

## The value proposition

While some residents initially balked at increased fees, Hill emphasizes the value proposition. “Our maintenance fees include water, utilities, basic cable, Wi-Fi, and 24-hour security,” she points out. “If you were in a single-family home, you’d have to replace the roof, have a security system, your own Wi-Fi and internet—you get a lot of value here.”

As for the higher management costs compared to their previous company, Hill is unwavering: “Don’t be leery about the cost because what comes with that cost pays for itself,” she advises. “The relationship FirstService has developed with vendors, their bargaining power because of the number and quality of buildings they manage—when you are with the best, you become the best.”



# Looking ahead

Today, the transformation continues, with each improvement bringing the building closer to Hill's vision of a diamond polished to its full potential.

"I feel very comfortable competing with any of the new-build high-rises downtown," Hill says proudly. "I can't even imagine not having FirstService. It's just that they appreciate the boards, they appreciate the time that we invest, and they're investing in us as well."

*This article was developed from an interview with Susan Hill, board treasurer at 2016 Main, conducted by Lillian Guerrero of FirstService Residential.*



## About FirstService Residential

FirstService Residential is simplifying property management. Its hospitality-minded teams serve residential communities across the United States and Canada. The organization partners with boards, owners, and developers to enhance the value of every property and the life of every resident. Boards and developers select FirstService Residential to realize their vision and drive positive change for residents in the communities in their trusted care. FirstService Residential is a subsidiary of FirstService Corporation (NASDAQ and TSX: FSV), a North American leader in providing essential property services to a wide range of residential and commercial clients. [www.fsresidential.com](http://www.fsresidential.com).

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