

AL 108

Interviewee: Grant I. Thrall

Interviewer: Lois Randolph

Date: March 30, 1989

Dr. Grant Ian Thrall is professor of geography at the University of Florida. His area of specialization is quantitative geography. He was the founding editor of the Scientific Geography Series of books on geography and is the author of *Land Use and Urban Form: The Consumption Theory of Land Rent*. This interview is part of the series on the growth/no-growth issue in Alachua County.

Thrall was born on June 29, 1947, in Pasadena, California. As a youth, he vividly recalls riding his bicycle around neighborhoods in his area and being fascinated by how they developed. He notes that the forces that create the spatial organization of a city, no matter its size or locale, are always the same. What varies is the intensity.

Thrall earned his B.A. in business with an emphasis in economics from California State University at Los Angeles in 1970 and his M.A. in economics from the Ohio State University in 1972. (His parents were from Ohio.) He remained at OSU to earn a Ph.D. (1975) because of its strong program in geography. Professors Reginald Gollege and Emilio Casetti are specifically mentioned.

Thrall then was associate professor of geography at McMaster University in Hamilton Ontario, Canada, and later at SUNY, Buffalo. He came to the University of Florida in 1983, where he has remained. While in Gainesville he became involved with the Green Belt Task Force and developed a four-point land use plan (1985) for Alachua County, including limiting building permits, minimizing the cost of providing new urban public services, and coordinating a land use plan. He asserts that high-density neighborhoods are cheaper but that they require parks and other recreational space. He feels that Gainesville would benefit from high-density housing in the center of the city, decreasing in density toward the edge of town.

Thrall also discusses the UF Progress Park location and "Chambergate," the efforts of Alachua County commissioners and UF administrators to control his activities.

Thrall was opposed to the site location, which placed him in opposition to Florida Board of Regents members who he claims purchased land in the proposed site. That opposition became detrimental to his career. His relationship with fellow professor and compatriot Dwight Adams [see interview AL118] is also discussed, as well as the *Gainesville Sun's* labeling him as a "no-growther." Thrall also describes his work with the Visions 2000 Project, whose goal is to deal with issues related to the 1985 Growth Management Act, in which zoning and land management are key components.

R: This is Lois Randolph, and I am conducting an interview with Professor Grant Thrall in Turlington Hall on the subject of growth/no-growth in Alachua County. This is a special project initiated by the Oral History Program at the University of Florida. Grant Ian Thrall is a native Californian. He received his M.A. in economics and his Ph.D. in geography from Ohio State University. He has been assistant professor of geography at McMaster University in Canada and

associate professor at SUNY-Buffalo [State University of New York], where he taught in the departments of economics and geography. Dr. Thrall is currently a professor of geography at the University of Florida.

Dr. Thrall has been on the editorial board of *Professional Geographer*, one of the two official journals of the Association of American Geographers [AAG]. He has served as the elected chairman of the Mathematical Models and Quantitative Methods Group of the AAG. Professor Thrall is founding editor of the *Scientific Geography Series* of Sage Publications. He has written and/or edited eleven books, including *Land Use and Urban Form: The Consumption Theory of Land Rent*. He has made over fifty presentations at professional conferences and universities and has published over thirty articles in academic geography and regional science journals. He is an internationally recognized authority in urban economic geography and quantitative methods for the analysis of spatial processes. His research has focused upon the morphology of the urban landscape and city growth.

Professor Thrall, could you begin, please, by telling me where and when you were born?

T: I was born in Pasadena, California in 1947. My parents had just migrated to California from Gambier, Ohio, where my father had been superintendent of the school system. I grew up in San Gabriel, California.

I am going to jump immediately to how I got interested in cities. I do not remember not being interested in cities and their spatial organization. That actually comes from a hobby of my parents, which was the norm for the time in Los Angeles when it was a scattering of small settlements: [I am speaking of] the Sunday [family] drive, which I thoroughly enjoyed. As southern California was growing and the highway system was being built there, we would go out and just drive up and down the highway. We would go to the subdivisions as they were springing up along the highway, so this was just part of my childhood experience. I thought this is the way cities are supposed to be, that this was normal. I did not question it. It was fascinating.

As a youth, I would go on bicycle rides of great distances for me at the time. Looking back on it, it is still great distances – fifty to seventy-five miles in a day – just exploring neighborhoods. I was curious as to why they developed as they did. Los Angeles is an interesting place. It was the spatial organization of the city – looking back on it – that I did not understand at the time. As a child, I did not understand these things. I was interested in the city. It was fun to experience, and I wanted to understand it. That was a major goal of mine as I went through school.

The organization of Los Angeles dates in part to a rapid transit system, the Red Car Line, the Huntington-owned Pacific Electric Company trolley car system. From this massive transportation system of over two thousand miles of track in Los Angeles in the 1940s, the city had grown to be a scattering of settlements. These areas were filling in very rapidly during the 1950s. When I think about it, back from the period of the middle 1950s until I left in 1970, Los Angeles grew from a scattering of small settlements to a major metropolitan area. Now when I go back and I visit my parents, it will take us an hour and a half just to drive out of the city, whereas when I was a kid I could bicycle out to the desert. The transformation was that great.

As a freshman at California State University, Los Angeles, I started out majoring in business so I could get a nice job. I was taking history classes, and I eventually switched to a major in history, which I completed. My fascination was with reading about city growth. I thought that the way to understand cities was to analyze how they were elsewhere. This came from my own personal experience. It was very fortuitous for me that my father took a sabbatical leave when I was a junior in high school, and we went to London, England. After having grown up in Los Angeles and viewing that as a normal city, [it was a shock for me to be] transplanted into London, which had an entirely different spatial structure. Instead of the now-defunct rapid transit system of Los Angeles, London had one that was very viable. One could go anywhere in London without the need a car. You just hop on the tube and away you go.

R: Right.

T: The city's spatial organization was very different, and I just loved to explore the city – just to go out and wander around and see what was there.

R: It was a real city.

T: It is a real city. Well, Los Angeles is, too; it is a "freeway era" city.

R: Yes.

T: This influenced me in college, then, as I thought that the way to understand cities was to study how they were elsewhere and at other times. It took me a while to find out that historians, at least at that time, just did not know a whole lot about cities. They were not interested in cities. They were interested in people and how people influence the course of events. That, too, is important in city evolution, but it was the city itself that I was interested in. With an eye toward getting a job, I went back and got my degree in business [with an emphasis in economics] instead [of history], after I had done all my course work.

R: You mentioned that your father was on sabbatical when you went to England. What was your father's [specialty]?

T: He was an English teacher.

R: Oh, I see.

T: In my household there was a great stress on reading widely, and perhaps my own interest in education grew out of that.

R: Yes.

T: My mother was a successful business woman. She became head of advertising for General Electric on the west coast, a position she held when she retired from G.E. Before that she worked for Chrysler Corporation in a similar position. So she was a very successful business person.

R: This could possibly explain your interest in economics, because you have that in your background.

T: Yes.

R: What is your educational background?

T: I went to California State University at Los Angeles. The decision to go there was one that a geographer would understand as distance minimization – it was the closest general college to where I was living at the time. I had converted the garage of my parent's house into an apartment, which is where I lived very comfortably through my years as a college student. After I took business classes and switched to history and completed all the requirements for a degree in history, I switched back to business with an emphasis in economics.

When I decided to go to graduate school, I applied at Ohio State University, because that was where my father had gone to school. I had applied to other schools, but Ohio State offered me the most attractive financial assistance. In addition, I had relatives in Ohio whom I did not know at the time, so this was an opportunity for me to go see some of the roots of where my parents had come from. They had talked about Columbus as I was growing up, so this was the reason I decided to go to Ohio State University.

I worked my way through undergraduate school at a furniture store, [David's Custom Furniture in San Gabriel], which was a manufacturer of custom furniture for a long time. The person who owned the store, [Billie Wolfe], was a very successful decorator, and we did the homes of the rich and famous in the area

near where I lived, which was in San Gabriel, San Marino, and Pasadena, in that quarter where a lot of the old wealthy of California lived. People who were the executives of the major corporations, including movie studios, had their mansions around there. We were not in that income category at all, but that was a society that I helped make furniture for. I assisted in all the stages of furniture design and construction.

After I did that for a number of years, I became a "lab technician" of sorts at California Institute of Technology in the department of biology and, later, in the map library in the geology department. I did many things. I later worked for an architecture firm, and along the way I was a gardener. So I basically worked my way through college doing many odd jobs.

I was five years as an undergraduate; after having switched majors so many times you could not complete a program in four years. Plus I went to summer school all that time and always took a full course load. I was a pretty good student; I was on the dean's list and so forth. During my last year in college, I taught high school for part of a year, and I determined that I was not suited to be a high school teacher. Part of it may have been because I taught at a school that was for juvenile delinquents.

R: That could have something to do with it!

T: It was a very rough student body. At the same time they were good kids, and we got along. I never had any real problems, but I did not find it something that I wanted to pursue. Then the summer between when I graduated from undergraduate school and before I went to Ohio State University I drove a truck for Seven-Up Bottling Company; I was a soda pop delivery person. Also during this period I loved to explore. I just loved to go to cities that I did not know and explore them. That was a hobby of mine.

Going to Ohio [State] was exciting. I got my master's degree in economics and completed all the requirements for a Ph.D. in economics, and then I had to make a decision. My economics advisor was John Weicher. He is an urban economist, and he had accepted a position at HUD [Housing and Urban Development] [and the American Enterprise Institute] in Washington [DC], so I had to make a choice: stay with him as an advisor and do my degree remotely with my advisor elsewhere, [or change directions]. I inquired into going into other Ph.D. programs. I looked into real estate in the business program, and I looked into computer science. That would have been a major change. Then geography was suggested to me by an acquaintance. I was dating a girl whose roommate was dating a fellow who was a professor in geography. His name is Reginald Golledge, and Reg suggested to me that I look into some geography classes because geographers did exactly what I was interested in. I had no

background in geography at all; I had no familiarity with the discipline at all.

R: This was when you had already finished all your requirements for a Ph.D. in economics?

T: Yes. Actually, I had some additional course work to do, but when I switched into geography, I completed that course work, so I did everything required for my Ph.D. in economics short of writing my dissertation. I wrote my dissertation, instead, in geography. I had to take required courses in geography, as all other students do. All my credits transferred over. Then I took several additional courses and some very intensive readings classes with [Reginald] Golledge and Emilio Casetti, who became my dissertation advisor.

That was fortuitous for me, as it turned out in the sequence of events, because Casetti is one of the world's most renowned economic geographers, and his research interest at that time was the economics of cities and the spatial organization of land uses within cities. Reginald Golledge is a behavioral geographer who deals with spatial cognition – how people come to learn and understand the landscape, how people see the landscape about them, and how their mental maps form. Both Casetti and Golledge are giants in the discipline, both dealing with cities and the organization of activities within the city, one from a psychological standpoint and one from an economic standpoint. In fact, Casetti's own background was that he received a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Rome [Italy] and also was a practicing lawyer. He then migrated to North America and started all over again getting his Ph.D. in geography at Northwestern [University]. So it was fortuitous for me that Ohio State at that time had such an excellent geography program right in line with the type of things that I wanted to do.

R: With your interests.

T: Geography as a discipline was really taking off in this area. This was the hot topic, so it was lucky for me that I was able to fit. It was an easy transition for me going into geography because of my long term interest in cities. Basically, I could do [the work] as a professional and as an intellectual pursuit [because it was] something that had been a hobby of mine. So when I changed from one discipline to another, I did not change my interests. What I was doing was gathering from the discipline that which it offered me in this area. After five years, I completed my work at Ohio State University. I received two job offers, one from the University of Wisconsin at Madison and one from McMaster University in Ontario, Canada. I thought it would be fun to live in Canada for a while. I did not know much about the country.

R: Was there any special reason for that choice? Were you interested in looking at

the cities in Canada?

T: I had been to Canada only once when I was a graduate student on a three-day very quick vacation to Toronto. That was my only familiarity with Canada. McMaster University had the intellectual attraction, also, that its geography department was thought at that time to be one of the best in the world in quantitative geography. There is – and it still continues – a divisiveness within the discipline along the lines of scientific work or in quantitative work versus work which would be more in line with the humanities, something more in the line of a traditional historian or philosophical anthropologist. Often these individuals do not get along together for a variety of reasons that one can go through in the literature.

R: Yes, of course.

T: And it is in the literature. Madison, Wisconsin is one of the great geography departments in the world and is especially noted for being a humanistic-type department. McMaster was one of the shining stars in the world as a quantitative department, so there was the intellectual pull to go to McMaster.

R: You, yourself, are world renowned, actually, and are quite famous for your quantitative work in geography.

T: As a quantitative geographer.

R: Yes.

T: I have been elected chairman of the Mathematical Models Group, and I am the founding editor of the ten-volume book series entitled the *Scientific Geography Series*, which shows my own intellectual predisposition. So even though I did take a large dose of history classes – and I do appreciate historical work very much, although I find it very difficult to do well – my own bias is that to be a good historian is probably the most difficult thing to do in a university. It is a challenging subject. In my writings I follow what we call a logical positivistic approach. That is a belief that we can, using an axiomatic logical system, derive general theories, and then the general theories will produce hypotheses that we can empirically verify and apply.

Now, what I just outlined is standard for social sciences today. But that kind of reasoning, in fact, dates back to a fellow named Johann Heinrich von Thunen, who was a great agricultural land use theorist – so we are back to land use and spatial organization of activities in the landscape. He was the first one to propose this type of methodological thinking for solving problems, that is, one has clear and unambiguous assumptions. From this, we manipulate things in

such a manner as to come up with a clear mathematical statement of the relationships. Then we can manipulate this in such a manner as to ask what if certain things occur. What if transportation costs go up? What happens to agricultural land use? Where?

R: It gives you a model.

T: Yes, a model. He was the first person. In fact, von Thunen argued that his great contribution was not his agricultural land use theory, which is truly stupendous, a great intellectual contribution in 1812, but he believed his greatest contribution to be the reasoning, the methodology, which is something I believe in, as well. In thinking about things on the landscape, that is the mode that I think in. But when I express myself in a popular idiom, I translate into words that the general populace can understand. I do not speak equations to the general populace.

R: Right.

T: But my own thinking is, in fact, more quantitative. I think mathematically, geometrically, and graphically; I think in differential equations and in geometry. Then after I come up with how things are related, I translate that into words.

R: So you went to McMaster because you felt you could continue with a more quantitative approach to geography.

T: Yes.

R: What did you do after McMaster?

T: I was at McMaster for three years. That was an important period for me intellectually, because at that time I created and did the foundations of my own general theory of spatial organization of activities on the landscape, which I call the Consumption Theory of Land Rent. I worked on that for three years at McMaster. I also did some empirical work that evaluated property tax assessment inequity, and I wrote up this work for the local newspaper, the *Hamilton Spectator*, a copy of which I will give you. That was my first introduction to general popular literature by way of the newspaper, and it was quite successful, if we can judge success on the basis of how it affected public policy.

The end result of this work – which was called the McMaster Study, and it is still famous or infamous in Ontario today – was a redesign of the property tax system in Ontario. I was asked to write many articles for the *Hamilton Spectator* because, apparently, their circulation zoomed because of my work and my commentaries. [This work was published in the academic journals *Professional*

*Geographer and Economic Geographer.]*

Then I received a very attractive job offer from State University of New York at Buffalo, which had just hired an acquaintance of mine, another quantitative geographer named Ross MacKinnon. He was at the University of Toronto as an economic quantitative geographer. They were going to build a major department at SUNY-Buffalo, and this was a great opportunity for me. They paid me a lot of money, and so I [went]. I should mention that it was a tenure-track position. Ontario was going through some great financial problems at the time, and in many respects they still are, in education. I had a non-tenure track appointment, and Buffalo offered a tenure-track appointment, so I went to Buffalo. My wife and I kept an apartment in Oakville because she had an excellent job there, and we commuted. She would come down to Buffalo and I would go up to Oakville, outside of Toronto. It was an exciting, though somewhat tedious, lifestyle, passing the border with such frequency.

This began a period of great intellectual productivity for me. I did not participate in things locally at all. I did not write any newspaper articles. I just wrote great quantities of scientific articles. During that period I established an international name in urban land use. Also, Buffalo went from a department that was ranked, I think, twenty-eighth out of thirty Ph.D.-granting departments to being in the top six or seven departments in the country.

It was on the basis of that success, and the 1980 Florida Board of Regents' evaluation of the department here, that when the University of Florida decided that the department here was going to be improved, the regents recommended that this department be built into a quantitative department, which it had not been. There are no other quantitative geography departments in the Southeast, and this was an appropriate niche that this department – which I think was ranked thirtieth out of thirty geography departments – could very quickly, through appropriate hirings, become one of the major forces in the Southeast and, indeed, in the country.

R: Like SUNY?

T: Within five years time, Buffalo became a major department. In fact, on that track record, which I was largely instrumental in establishing, Buffalo now has received a grant of \$1.5 million a year from the National Science Foundation to carry on this line of research that I began there. It was in anticipation that we were going to have the same type of success here [at UF] that I was recruited very intensely. The department, by way of personal feelers through my friends, encouraged me to apply here. The only thing I knew about Gainesville was I had only been in Florida once before as a graduate student, and we filled up with gas here. That was my only knowledge of Gainesville.

R: Your only acquaintance of Gainesville, Florida.

T: Yes. The University was not one of any significant general recognition. I guess it was in football, but I do not follow football.

Anyway, I applied for the job. On my flight down here I was thinking why am I doing this? I could be home writing an article. I was very unenthusiastic, but I pursued it anyway. I was very impressed at the beauty of the city. Buffalo is not a beautiful city.

R: No, it is not.

T: It was the full azalea season here.

R: Oh, that must have been a thrill for you to see.

T: I was definitely not in Buffalo.

R: True. You say most of your work at Buffalo, unlike your work at McMaster, was theoretical rather than applied or practical.

T: Yes, that is right.

R: So you went from applying your work at McMaster to doing very scientific, theoretical work at Buffalo, and now you are sounding like perhaps it will be a change in Gainesville.

T: Yes, I think I had reached a stage in my career where I was certainly ready for an intellectual change, as well as a location change. I grew up in California, and, in terms of climate, Buffalo, New York; Hamilton, Ontario; and Columbus, Ohio, were not very similar to the kind of environment I grew up in. I was very outdoors, warm-weather-type person, so it was the amenities of the place, the beauty of the city, that attracted me here, plus the very strong assurances from [College of Arts and Sciences] Dean [Charles] Sidman, which is where I saw the growth push for this department coming from. I felt that this would be a place that would be another growth point like Buffalo had been, so I perceived it as a safe move, as well as environmentally a very significant advantage. They also offered me a comparatively large amount of money.

R: Which helps.

T: Buffalo wanted to counter the offer, but I had decided that it was time to move, so we moved down here. During my first two years here I did not involve myself in

any local things. I never really had those aspirations.

R: You did not come here thinking that this was a city where you could apply your work?

T: No, I did not have these kinds of intentions at all. I thought that at some point in my career I would like to write newspaper commentaries, but that would be the extent of any kind of local involvement.

R: Now, one thing you noticed when you came here was the environment. You were particularly cognizant of the beautiful environment.

T: Yes.

R: We have talked so far about cities. Are you an environmentalist, or have you been an environmentalist in the past? What is your feeling about that?

T: I do not know if there is a word for it. I would be more of a "builtist," I guess. My orientation is toward the creation of well-built environments within the city. I do have very strong emotional sympathies toward the physical environment, but my large intellectual motivation and my writing deals with the urban-built environment. I have viewed these two things as being entirely compatible. Some of my writings locally have dealt with the idea of a compact city. What that means is that you have more people inside the city [and less urban sprawl into] the surrounding landscape. I do not support the kind of suburban expansion that Los Angeles had. It was good neither for the natural environment nor the urban-built environment, and much of the problems that Los Angeles has today, which are extensive, are very difficult to solve now. It is because the way the city was [spacially] organized – dating back certainly to Huntington's Light Rail Rapid Transit System, the way in which the city evolved during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, and a great expanse of low-density sprawl – that their problems are almost insurmountable today.

The time that you can really effect a change on a city, I believe, and really plan for a livable city and a quality city in terms of the retail sales and service economic base that would provide an exciting built environment is when the city is at the stage that Gainesville is now. Once a city has developed into a place like Jacksonville or Chicago, you are dealing with patching past mistakes, whereas now [in Gainesville] we have a clean slate in many respects.

R: You say you came to the University of Florida, and you were enthusiastic about starting a more quantitative program here in the geography department. What were your first impressions of the actual city of Gainesville?

T: Oh, it was very beautiful. My reasoning in my book *Land Use and Urban Form: The Consumption Theory of Land Rent* is that all cities are basically the same. What I mean by that is the forces that create the spatial organization of activities in the city are the same between cities. Translated into language like a stereo set, you have many knobs on a stereo, and that stereo is going to work in Jacksonville or Chicago just as well as it is going to work in Gainesville. And it is going to work today just like it worked ten years ago or will probably work ten years from now, so the location and time is not the important thing. It is where you set the dials – whether you have the bass turned up loud or soft, where you set the tuning knob, and so forth. The same forces, or, in effect, the same knobs you can twiddle, are the same ten years ago or today, in Jacksonville or in Gainesville. What is different is where you put the settings. The same forces play in Gainesville versus Chicago, but it is the magnitude of the forces that will differ, and these forces I have studied in my general theory of urban land use.

When I drove down to Gainesville, I was here for a matter of three days; my wife stayed in Buffalo or Toronto. I picked out a house in a couple of days. I was able to determine immediately that this is where I want the house, in this sector, and so forth.

R: How did you determine that?

T: Gainesville is sectoral; most cities are sectoral. When you buy a house, most Americans, including myself, invest the majority of their life savings in their house, so you buy in a place where the housing values are going to be safe, that is, where they are not going to depreciate. They are going to remain at least the same, if not appreciate. That is different from saying I buy a house where I prefer to live.

R: That is interesting.

T: Now, when I was in Canada, my location decisions were very different. I lived in Hamilton, Canada, for a while in a very attractive inner-core neighborhood that was built in the 1870s, I think – a wonderful place. But there the forces, the knobs, are set on different magnitudes to create a different kind of city. While the forces are the same in Toronto, Hamilton, and Gainesville, the settings are significantly different so that the way in which the neighborhoods evolve are very different between places. But you can still forecast; it is easy to forecast.

R: You were here for three days and were able to pick up on those differences immediately?

T: Certainly. I was here for a couple of hours, and I told the realtor, "I want to buy a house in this section of the city (which was in the northwest). I want to be within

the city limits. These are the characteristics of the neighborhood," and I wound up in Rock Creek [off of 34th Street]. There were three houses for sale on the street, and I was totally indifferent between the three.

R: A scientific selection of your dwelling!

T: Yes. I was able to make my house decision very quickly, and my wife was happy with it, too; she trusted me with that. I have not regretted it. It was the right decision.

Gainesville is a sectoral city. The wealthier sector is up toward the northwest and will continue to be so; it will continue to grow up toward High Springs. One of the low-income sectors, which there are several, is out to the southeast, except around Payne's Prairie, which generates what we call in the literature "positive externalities," that is, positive things, such as the view, proximity to the park, and so forth. There are pockets of high-income areas around there, like the golf course community and so forth, but, for the large part, down Archer Road is the low-income sector, and it will continue to be so on out toward the city of Archer.

I am jumping ahead of myself, but when I went on a lecture tour, which was organized through the Institute of Government here in the political science department, one of the messages that I brought these outlying cities like Archer and High Springs is that the land use that will eventually hit them is directly related to what corridor or sector of Gainesville they are in line with. As Gainesville grows out regionally, that particular type of land use will eventually become theirs. It is the low-income house trailer market that is eventually going to hit Archer. I told High Springs that they are in line for the higher income growth. You will be able to check in forty years if I am right.

R: Yes, we will! We will have you on record in the Oral History archives.

T: Now, they can screw up. I mean, knowing these things, you can bias the landscape. You can do a variety of things to change how your landscape will evolve, or you can make a decision to do nothing, which is also a decision that you are going to arrive at a certain kind of landscape. So in terms of my involvement in local community, I have always commented in my classes on how things were going on in the city and so forth, but I never took any direct personal involvement in them.

R: How long were you at this stage of simply commenting?

T: I think at least two years. I was very involved in building up the quantitative side of the department. I was teaching only methods courses. I was not teaching

anything that was what we call substantive, like my land use theory. [Instead, I taught] statistics, computer programming for geographers, and these types of things.

R: What happened that made you start to apply your work to this community?

T: There were two things. One is that I was gradually getting disenchanted with the commitment of the department to the quantitative side and to bring in quantitative faculty. We eventually brought in two--[A.] Stewart Fotheringham, who ultimately, frankly, left in disgust, and Peter Waylen, who is still here. But we are the only quantitative people in the department, so the promise of the department failed to unfold. In part, there was less of a draw for me to be that continual pusher and shaker for things in the department. The growth push, as I perceive it, had always been from [Dean Charles] Sidman. It had not been a ground swell from the department, and without the continuing push from [Dean] Sidman, the department was not going to go in the manner that the 1980 Board of Regents report had intended. So that was in the background, but it was not something that was strong at the time.

I had met some people in Buffalo. There was an article in the local newspaper that a professor of English, Norman Holland, had accepted a job offer from the University of Florida. I was still in Buffalo, and Norman was teaching at the State University of New York there. I had just accepted the job offer [here, too], so I phoned him and said we should get together, and we did. We got together several times before we moved down here, and we made plans together --which moving company to use, and so forth.

R: That sounds good.

T: It really made moving a lot easier and much more efficient. I used the same realtor that they used, and so forth. We socialized regularly for the several years. Jane Holland had become, I think, vice-president of the League of Women Voters. They were organizing a conference on urban growth problems of Florida, and I remember there was a fellow named Al Hadeed who was there. He is a lawyer who has become now important in Tallahassee as an advisor to [Speaker of the House Tom] Gustafson. I gave a talk which was no more than seven minutes long. This was organized by Jane, and she was the one who got me involved in this.

R: Who is Norman Holland?

T: Norman Holland is an eminent scholar in English, and Jane Holland is now president of Planned Parenthood. I gave the seven-minute talk, and Gary Gordon, who was mayor of the city at the time, came up to me afterwards and

asked me if I would be willing to serve on a task force to basically come up with a land use plan for the county.

R: That was the Green Belt Task Force.

T: This was the Green Belt Task Force, right. I had not done any community service before, frankly, and I thought I have just been promoted to full professor. Maybe this will be interesting. Now, I had been doing all this theoretical work, and I have always tried to go back and forth between theory and empirical work. Here was an opportunity for me to find out how things work in a different dimension than what I had been working in. Plus, since I had been promoted as full professor, I thought I would do this community service and the University would be very much appreciative. Furthermore, I wanted to have an outlet for activities other than just departmental associations. So I accepted the offer. The *Gainesville Sun* asked me if they could publish my presentation, and I said yes, so I polished to a very minor extent what I had presented, and they published it as a full-page spread. I believe you have that in your documents.

R: Yes, I do.

T: I think it is called a four-point plan for land use in this county, or something like that.

R: What were the four points?

T: Let me see if I can remember. One was that there be a general land use plan for the county. I was not aware of the political intrigue that was going here at all when I proposed that. At any rate, I still believe that what we need is a land use plan for the county. In fact, I believe what we need is my land use plan for the county, of which you have a copy.

R: Is it too soon for us to go into the political intrigue? Should we save that?

T: Oh, let's save that, because that is quite exciting in itself.

R: All right.

T: I do not remember what the four points are off the top of my head. The first point was that I recognized that the way we were building here in Gainesville was ultimately going to set in a cycle of things that, if geographers listen to this tape in the future, they will recognize as "prisoner's dilemma." What is happening is that there is so much construction at the urban periphery, much greater than the population in migration here – which is particularly significant for the size of city that we have – that land values (I was forecasting at the time) were going to go down in the city and that the vacancy rate was going to rise.

R: You say "at the time." What was the time of this report? When was this?

T: This was in 1985 when I wrote this. We did not at that time have a major oversupply of houses, but I forecasted that, in fact, there was going to be one because of the rate of overbuilding. Overbuilding means that we were building significantly more than the rate of in-migration. The Chamber of Commerce was saying that we want to have a strong economic base. My argument, then, is that we should then create an environment where people want to remain living in the city, because that creates a stronger retail sales and service sector which is our economic future here.

I advocated a monitoring system where we limit the building permits, that we should tie the building permits to the vacancy rate. In Ontario this is not controversial--this is what is done. For example, if the vacancy rate goes up to 3 or 4 percent for some particular kind of land use in "Mississauga," let us say, then the Mississauga Planning Council is perfectly entitled to say, "We are going to withhold building permits for shopping centers until the vacancy rate goes down," or for single family dwellings, or for apartment buildings, and so forth. By keeping the vacancy rate to 3 or 4 percent, then, you have enough. I am not sure you want me to go into all these reasonings.

R: Yes, I do.

T: That was one point, and that is used, incidentally, here in Florida, in Sanibel Island. What they do is forecast the number of people out-migrating (which is easy), forecast the number of people in-migrating to Sanibel Island, take that difference, and add 1 or 2 percent.

R: So it becomes a mathematical formula for growth, in a way.

T: Yes. Then those are the numbers of building permits that they will issue for that year. What that does is maintain a very healthy, viable landscape, as opposed to what we are on track for here, and that is a doughnut landscape, where the city of Gainesville, if we continue on as we have been, will become basically a doughnut city with a high vacancy rate in the interior. There will be house arsons, there will be a general decline in the income level of people residing within the city, and there will be a decline in the tax base, while the higher income people will live around the urban periphery.

R: Basically, what you are describing is urban sprawl, or is that something different?

T: No, that would be something different. A doughnut city is where you have destroyed the economic base of the inner core, the inner part of the city.

R: I see.

T: The result is a moderately healthy ring of houses and retail sales and service sector as a doughnut, and the doughnut has a hole in the center, so you have no healthy, viable downtown area. The inner-core neighborhoods, which may have been built as recently as the 1960s, may have people with significantly lower income than the original buyers, and housing prices would go down. Here is an article in the *Florida Business Journal* that says that what I was forecasting in 1985 has, in fact, come to be in Gainesville.

R: And this was just written in 1989.

T: This came out in 1989, about three weeks ago, in the *Florida Business Journal*. What we have today is roughly a three and a half year oversupply of housing. That means that if all building were to stop today, with the current rate of in-migration – population increase and household formation – it would take us three to three and a half years to clear the present market of houses for sale.

R: Getting back to the Greenbelt Task Force Report, this was one of the major points that you were making.

T: This article and this presentation is why I was asked to be a member of the Greenbelt Task Force.

R: I see.

T: The second point was to minimize the cost of providing new urban public services. That is the rationale for a compact city. The more dispersed the population, the more expensive it is to provide police and fire protection. The more compact it is, the cheaper it is. If you are going to provide the same quality services for a dispersed city, then your taxes have to go up. In a compact city, the density, of course, would be higher.

This is my thinking. I have proved in my book – I think it is in chapter 13 on public goods – that parks and yards are substitutes for one another. That is, people are indifferent between living in high density with parks or low density without parks. I have just argued that it is better for people to live in higher density. What that means is that for them to be willing to live in the higher density, for their welfare not to go down in the high density, we have to provide parks and recreation for them, since they are not buying large yards.

R: Sort of the old concept of the common.

T: Yes, something like that. The antithesis of that is if the public sector is underproviding parks and recreation, then people will demand a lower density lifestyle. People will demand suburban sprawl, and that is what is going here. We have in this county the lowest expenditures on parks and recreation – natural resources – per capita in the state right now. That benefits developers who specialize in low-density development. As long as you underprovide those kinds of services, people will provide them privately.

R: I see. That was another one of the points that you made.

T: I think of this mathematically; that is what brought me to that conclusion. I argued for this in the newspaper piece. The fourth point is that we need a coordinated land use plan.

R: Yes.

T: In fact, the land use plan that I support is one in your documentation file called a "Land Use Plan for a Compact City," of which I was one of the major authors. So that was what my four-point plan was for the county. I said the alternative is that we could make no choice at all – we could do nothing. We could continue on as we are, and the end result is we are going to get a landscape that is going to be a doughnut city. It is going to be very expensive to provide these services. It is going to be deleterious to low-income people, because the greatest cost the low-income people have in that kind of landscape is transportation.

An example is the experience in Watts [a large, predominantly black neighborhood in Los Angeles]. One reason there was a riot in Watts during the middle 1960s was that here were people who could not afford an automobile, which they had to have to go to that job interview. [The riot was the summer of 1968. Ed.] If they got a job, it would be a low-skilled, low-income job that would unlikely be able to support an automobile going from their home to that place of work, so the people were spatially trapped in an enclave. That is the geography of that land.

We are well on track for creating the same kind of landscape here. That is bad for poor people. Now, to comment on the power elite, as I became more aware of what was going on locally, the Chamber of Commerce and the power elite were arguing about providing jobs for poor people.

R: What do you mean by the "power elite"?

T: We will get more into that later, but the power elite are certain people who are behind the scenes pulling the strings – very wealthy people.

R: Developers?

T: Developers, mainly, yes. This is where the large profits are to be made here. The power elite will differ by community depending upon where the big money is. In Palo Alto, the power elite is in the computer industry. Here, the power elite, where the big money is to be made relative to other activities, is in land development.

R: I see.

T: The power elite and the Chamber of Commerce argued that we should do certain things because we want to provide jobs for poor people, whereas, in fact, it is just exactly the opposite. Now we are getting into some of the conflicts, then, in which I unwittingly got involved.

R: That is the next question I wanted to ask you. These principles were put into the Greenbelt Task Force Report, basically.

T: Yes.

R: How was that report received by the community of Gainesville?

T: Before I get to that in the sequence, things started happening to me, personally, very quickly. This article was published in the newspaper. I became a member of the task force, and I think the task force had been in existence [only a short time]. We had met once, at most twice. During this period, I became aware, as I started thinking more about applying my work locally, that a lot of what I saw I did not like. For example, there is the issue of Progress Center.

R: I wanted to ask you about that, too.

T: When you interviewed [Ernest] Dwight Adams [professor of physics], his concern was entirely different than mine. That does not mean to say that I am opposed to his concerns. I truly believed that what the University wanted was an industrial park that would work and would be a success, and, naively, I thought if that was the goal, to create an industrial park, my land use theory (and the literature that I am familiar with) says that every indication of what they were doing pointed to a failure: "Stop the failure right at the beginning. Do not dump money down a drain that is going to be wasted." Instead, I offered my services to locate a facility that is going to be a success.

R: As they had conceived Progress Park, why was that programmed to be a failure?

T: It was too far away from the University for University faculty to be willing to use it. I wrote a commentary at the request of the *Gainesville Sun* on why industry locates (and that is also in your package). We are close enough to Jacksonville to be in its shadow. A manufacturing firm will think of locating in Jacksonville because it has really everything right now compared to Gainesville. We really do not have a lot going for us right now. That does not mean that we will never have anything going for us, but right now, today, and during the last five years and for the next five years, we do not have a whole lot to attract industry. Our economic future during the next five years [will grow or shrink, depending upon what happens to the retail sales and service sector, and that depends upon a land use plan].

There were also problems with the Progress Center in that the site was in a wetlands. The site was next to an environmentally important area--San Felasco Hammock [State Preserve]. The site was to be serviced by the city of Alachua, which had a population of only around thirty-five hundred people at that time. That population cannot afford those services that are required by federal law to support that kind of industrial facility. For example, fire trucks and fire personnel to combat chemical fires are very expensive, and a population of thirty-five hundred just cannot afford that.

Gainesville has only recently gotten into that. Because of what has been happening in the courts, firms are concerned about possible litigation against them because of environmental problems. There is roughly a six- to seven-hour underground water flow from Progress Center to the city of Alachua waterwell field, and that place is littered with sinkholes. It is like Swiss cheese up there, so even a minor spill has a potential for massive problems for which a firm can be held liable. The Progress Center has not been successful in getting insurance for that type of problem, and I saw this coming.

R: This was about the same time that the task force report was being drawn up?

T: This was actually when the task force was just forming. I had been on the task force for about two months. I was trying to do public service and trying to save the University from mistakes, because I thought the University was truly interested in building an industrial park. At a meeting that was held in the city of Alachua, I said, "This site will not work (for these reasons I have just described), but I am willing to offer my services to select a site that will work."

R: In other words, you were not opposed to economic development. You were not opposed to bringing more jobs to this area. You were just opposed to that particular site.

T: In fact, it was a recommendation. It was, "That site is going to be a failure."

R: I see.

T: I can read a map. "That site will not work. I will offer my services to select another site that will work." Then came "Chambergate," and you have that in your file.

R: Yes, I was going to ask you about Chambergate.

T: At the time of Chambergate, many things happened.

R: First of all, what was Chambergate?

T: The president of the Chamber of Commerce at that time was a fellow named John Schroepfer, who was a past county commissioner. In fact, he lost his seat to Jim Notestein. Before that he had owned a bar, and before that he had been an FBI agent. At the time of Chambergate, he worked for Prudential-Bache. The chamber executive board meetings are typically taped, and transcripts are made. Somebody who received these transcripts was apparently sufficiently offended that he or she gave a copy of the transcripts to the *Gainesville Sun*. The *Gainesville Sun* was so shocked at the things that were going on that the paper then published [a transcript of] those tapes.

R: What did the transcripts say?

T: In short, they basically said that, as I reason it, there were many people in the community who were treated very scandalously. In terms of me and the University – and you have a full copy of the transcripts in that package that I gave you – Schroepfer said that various developers were concerned about Dwight Adams's activities as president of the Sierra Club, and they wanted to keep him in the physics lab. Then they said that Marshall Criser [president, University of Florida] had promised to retard my activities in the community. Now, I had done no more than what I have just described, which was not very much.

R: At this point, you were working on the task force report?

T: That is right, I had been on the task force for two months. I had said the Progress Center was not going to be a success but that I would be willing to help them find another location. I had proposed a four-point land-use plan for the county, which was my intellectual driving force for the land-use plan in general. That was it. I thought I was doing good community service, and I was certainly treated well at the University and by the department at that time.

Then Mr. Schroepfer said that basically he and Criser had made a deal. The chamber was upset with Dwight Adams, as I read it, and Criser was upset with

me, and they were going to unite forces (as I saw it) to harass the two of us so that we stayed out of community activities. This was then published in the *Gainesville Sun* on the day before [John] Fitzwater, who is the present publisher of the *Gainesville Sun*, came in.

First of all, do I believe Criser said these things? I cannot document or prove that he did, but I do believe that he did [say something]. What do I believe were Criser's motivations? I believe that there was never an intention that this was going to be a successful industrial park. That is not to say that they were opposed to its being an industrial park. The primary intention, as I see it, was that the Progress Center was a "Florida land deal." The effect was that it bilked local people out of their money.

R: How so? By inflating the land value?

T: Sure. [The story of how the Progress Center was selected is interesting.] The Progress Center was originally to be located where present-day Meadowbrook Golf Course is, so we have to go back quite some time. The city had a policy of not extending utilities outside of the utility service area, and the utility service area was fundamentally described as the incorporated limits of the city. To get utilities, sewer, and water, you had to become incorporated within the city. The University argued that the utilities should be sent to present-day Meadowbrook Golf Course to create jobs for poor people, for economic growth, and so forth. The city, by extending utilities outside the service area, opened the door for any developer in the unincorporated county to get sewer and water service extended to their property by this precedent. Once the sewer and water was extended to present-day Meadowbrook, President [Robert Q.] Marston of the University [Marshall Criser's successor] made a deal with a land owner to swap the Meadowbrook site for the present-day Progress Center site, which is south of the city of Alachua on Highway 441.

In the meantime, members of the Board of Regents and others (I did not know this when I gave my presentation; I discovered this only much later after Chambergate) had bought property that surrounded the swap site, the Progress Center site outside of Alachua, including Raleigh Greene and a fellow named Fernand St. Germain. [Greene was a member of the Florida Board of Regents and headed the committee that was working on the project. He also happened to be one of the founders of the Florida Federal Savings and Loan. St. Germain was a representative from Rhode Island and chairman of the House Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs Committee. Ed.] Charlie Reed [chancellor, State University System] still owns a large tract of land [in the name of his daughter] at a subdivision called Alachua Highlands, which backs up against Progress Center. Alachua Highlands is next to where Progress Center is now proposed to be extended to go on the other side away from Highway 441 and to Highway 241,

so I think this might serve to benefit Reed's property even more. Apparently, the property value around Progress Center, once it was announced that there was going to be a University industrial site there, went up 2,000 percent. The members of the Board of Regents who owned that property then sold their property.

R: This is at what time? What would the date of this be, roughly?

T: This was going on at the time that I spoke against the site.

R: Which was when? 1987?

T: No, it would be around 1985, I think.

R: So this was before Chambergate.

T: Oh, yes, this was going on before Chambergate, when they were swapping the land and so forth. The land was swapped before I came here. A member the Board of Regents still owned there property when I spoke against that as an industrial site.

R: And you spoke against that in what year? What year would that be?

T: Oh, the year that just preceded Chambergate.

R: It would be 1986, then, because Chambergate was February 1987.

T: Yes, it was in February 1987. I spoke one time against Progress Center, so that would have been in the fall of 1986, then. At that time, the members of the Board of Regents still owned their property; they had not yet unloaded it. I believe what was happening was that I threatened to pop the balloon that they were artificially creating. So [I believe] it was not an interest of theirs to create an industrial park; their interest was to use public investment – in this case, the funds from the University of Florida Foundation – in order to enhance the land values of the members of the Board of Regents.

R: These were privately held properties?

T: Privately owned property, that is right. [Charlie] Reed and Marshall Criser have long been business associates. We should not forget that Marshall Criser was a land developer in Palm Beach before he came to the University of Florida.

R: That is right.

T: All of these things I did not know; I was naive in that respect. The mathematical theory may give you an indication of what the real world was like, but it does not tell you what the real world is. The historian maybe knows better.

R: Perhaps.

T: So this came as quite a surprise to me, because I thought I was offering a good University service, which I still believe I was. What I did not understand was what I believe to be the level of corruption that we have here, where officials are making decisions to spend public moneys based upon how that will translate into their own personal benefit. I think the Progress Center is a prime example.

R: So you think this reaction, this whole Chambergate affair, was directly related to your [whistle blowing].

T: Yes. I believe the idea was that I was viewed as a dangerous person by Marshall Criser, and I was somebody certainly to keep out of the picture. When this was coming out in the newspaper, I called the chairman of my department, Stephen Golant, who was on sabbatical leave at the time, and I said, "This is coming out in the newspaper. You should brace yourself. This is going to be a major thing for this department, me in particular, and the community in general." He did not believe me. It was difficult to foresee something of such enormity as this.

After it did come out, I was surprised at the lack of support that I got from the department. In fact, Stephen Golant, as I recall, said that if he had to make a choice between supporting me in this versus supporting Marshall Criser, he would have to back Marshall Criser all the way. Then the person who was the acting chairman at the time, David Niddrie, said to me (as I recall) that as I was being flushed down the toilet, I was dragging the department with it. So I did not receive support from the department on a very important issue. This was an issue that was bigger than just me. This was an issue, as I have addressed, of academic freedom in general, because I am just practicing my literature, practicing my science.

R: You were attempting to apply your practice.

T: I was attempting to apply my science for the general public good. It is also very important to geography as a discipline, because we would like to increase our image within the American populace. Much of our literature since the late 1950s has dealt with spatial organization of activities within the city, and we would like the public to become aware that we have these techniques, we have this knowledge.

R: And tools.

T: Yes, we have these tools that we can use for the general public benefit. Then as we apply these tools, we cannot let our faculty be harangued for practicing good geography, and that is exactly what I was doing. So it was something of major consequence, I think, to the discipline, and certainly of major consequence to the University and the issue of academic freedom. That is, here we have a president of a university who, I believe, was building up a program to harass a faculty member because of the interest of the president's wallet. [I believe he was also working] to protect the financial interests of his friends. That should not happen at a university.

This issue became complex, and the newspaper, I think, found it easier to say, "Grant Thrall is against economic growth," than to say, "Grant Thrall is against corruption," because now let us look at [*Gainesville Sun* publisher John] Fitzwater. The rumor is that Fitzwater was hand picked by Marshall Criser and Phil Emmer, who is a local developer. It seems that they contacted the *New York Times* and said, "We want to have a boy here as publisher of the newspaper who reflects local community values. The present publisher is not reflecting local community values." [The *Gainesville Sun* is a *New York Times* Regional Group newspaper. Ed.]

R: Who is the present publisher?

T: The present publisher is Fitzwater.

R: Is he the person you are talking about?

T: No, they wanted to get rid of the publisher and bring in somebody like Fitzwater.

R: Who was this publisher?

T: I do not know his name. I believe he has been bumped up to be an administrator in Tallahassee, and he is waiting for retirement. [Ed Johnson was publisher from 1985 to 1987. Ed.] At any rate, a team was sent down from the *New York Times* headquarters in New York City, and they received a list of people to interview from Marshall Criser and Phil Emmer. They then reasoned that yes, indeed, the publisher at that time did not present community values, that the community was outraged with the publisher of the *Gainesville Sun*. They sent several publishers here from other cities to be interviewed, and Marshall Criser and Phil Emmer reportedly hand selected Fitzwater.

Now, Fitzwater had run a very yellow journalistic program in Charlottesville, Virginia, before he came here, and it was on the basis of that that he was hired

as the publisher. It was easier for Fitzwater, I believe, to say that Grant Thrall is a "no growther". That is easier for the average person to understand than it is to say that Grant Thrall is shocked at the level of corruption that is rampant here in this community and that he has, in fact, been in favor of economic development, but development that works, that is, real economic development, and not bilking the local people out of their money.

R: If I recall, they grouped you and Dwight Adams as environmentalists as opposed to developers.

T: Yes, it was orchestrated. It was a campaign that was designed to discredit me. There was the shocking statement by Marshall Criser to the University of Florida Faculty Senate where he called me a dissenter [and protector]. Now, this is interesting. Dissenting from what? That clearly means that unbeknownst to me there was an official policy, and he was the one who had designated this official policy. He then insisted that he supported the right of dissenters and protesters to dissent and so forth. [But the damage had been done when he characterized me as harming the University's image.]

What he did was define an agenda for me. This is there in your transcripts. His definition of my agenda was not, in fact, my agenda, but one that was easily salable by Fitzwater to the community in order to discredit me. I had to be discredited, I believe, because there was so much investment by Marshall Criser's friends that stood to be threatened had the general population believed my science as opposed to believing their hype.

It was an interesting learning experience for me, and it was, of course, a very stressful time. What this did for me and the department was, instead of building up a quality, top-rated scientific geography department, one that was the best in the Southeast, which is the reason why I was hired, it pulled the carpet out from underneath me. It gave those people who were opposed to quantitative methods, opposed to science, and opposed to this becoming an internationally known department (because they themselves are not in that category of scholar) very strong and effective ammunition to discredit me. So this hurt me academically within the department, and I think it has hurt the department's future very significantly.

Had Marshall Criser not made these statements, not done these things that the previous publisher of the *Gainesville Sun* attributed to him and Schroepfer, [this would not have happened]. What he should have done was come out with a very strong, positive statement on academic freedom at the Faculty Senate meeting, as well as make a personal visit to the department here stating that he, in fact, recognized the value of academic freedom and that he appreciated the efforts that I was making in the community to assist the economic development of

the area, especially the idea of building up an industrial site that would work. But Marshall Criser made no such public declaration, and he made no such visit to the department. This continues to be used against me: "The president was against you, so we cannot support you on this thing."

R: Would you say that it does not allow you to be as effective in planning and in helping with land use planning in Alachua County?

T: I would say that it has hurt the department's evolution. It was an orchestrated campaign to discredit me in the community. At the same time, it brought me from being somebody who was a background advisor to advising people who were making decisions whether to invest in this property or not. In terms of somebody who is advising the government through an official task force, it changed me from that position to one of public prominence.

The whole effect, I think, backfired on Marshall Criser, if this was his goal, and I believe it was. It served to divide the business community. I became a household name in this county because of Chambergate. I would have been more successful had Marshall Criser supported me, and I believe he should have, because I think it was in his long term economic interests.

R: What has become of Progress Center?

T: It has been a total failure. That does not mean to say that members of the Board of Regents might not have made a lot of money, which is what might have been intended. I popped the bubble, and they were afraid. They may have been able to make more money had I not popped the bubble when I did. The Progress Center is a failure, and 12 percent of the University of Florida Foundation money is locked up in Progress Center. That should never have happened.

R: You mentioned earlier that some of the business community appreciated your advice and your knowledge. In other words, we are led to believe that there were two camps, that there is a dichotomy between developers (people who are business oriented) and environmentalists (people who do not want growth), [between] the "growthers" and the "no-growthers."

T: Right.

R: Is it really that simple?

T: It is not that simple. That is a fiction that has been created by the *Gainesville Sun*. It is easy [for the *Sun*] to transmit that idea, and it serves their interests. It is much more complex than that. There are people in retail sales and services

on an order less than Oaks Mall – people who own the local video store or people who own a local grocery store, somebody who owns a furniture store down on Main Street, or something like that. These people are being destroyed economically by the type of dispersion of population that is being encouraged right now by our County Commission and by many of the people on our City Commission, such as Cynthia Chestnut. I feel that these people would not like to believe me. They would like to believe that the Chamber of Commerce was working in their best interests, but I think they are coming to recognize that, in fact, what I have been saying for so many years is coming true, that is, what is good for somebody who is a land developer out on the urban periphery is not good for the long-term commercial viability of the city, and that means the retail sales and service sector here.

The black leadership has, I believe, come to recognize that my points are valid. But it is much more difficult to explain the complexities of urban growth to somebody who is not well educated. It is easier for them to say, "There are those damn environmentalist and bunny huggers," than it is to explain to their constituency that certain spatial organizations of activities in cities work better than others and that some spatial organizations of cities benefit poor people more than other alternatives do.

Those are very difficult ideas [to grasp], and most people do not have the kind of experience that I had of living in many different cities, have not studied it mathematically, and are not familiar with the literature for the past twenty or thirty years. Most people see the environment immediately around them, and it is based only on that information that they make decisions. They have not experienced the growth of Los Angeles from scattering settlements to the big city that it is. So I think the community is truly divided.

R: Let's us look now at the power elite. Are the developers all just one group and we name them developers, or are there different groups of developers?

T: Oh, there are factions within the development community. After all, we must recognize that somebody on the Chamber of Commerce board released those tapes, but I do not know who it was. I have suspicions of who it was, but I really do not know. Some people on the City Commission, like Courtland Collier, owned large amounts of property in the inner core of the city. There are people like Ken McGurn, who owns maybe 10 percent of downtown Gainesville. That is a massive amount of investment he has there. That is not to say that he does not also own property at the urban periphery as well. He has kind of hedged his bets there.

There is a battle going on between those people who own large tracts of land at the urban periphery, like Lowell Chesborough, who was on the real estate faculty

here at the University of Florida for three years. He owns lots of land at the urban periphery. There is Charlie Pinkoson, a retired medical doctor whose family has been here for generations. They own large tracts of land.

These interests pushed forward the installation of public utilities here – the sewer and the water – because if they are on a paved road with sewer and water facilities their density can go up from one unit per five acres to a minimum of three units per acre. Your allowed density goes up, and consequently your land values go up, which means that the money you have invested increases.

The president of the Chamber of Commerce here has traditionally been somebody with very close ties to the banking community, like C. B. Daniels, who is president of Florida National Bank. He took over from Schroepfer when Schroepfer resigned as president of the Chamber of Commerce. Banks make their money like a stockbroker does – by volume of turnover of houses, effectively. If the volume is high, it could be that the land values are going down. That is okay so long as people are selling their houses every four and half to six years. You pay a two- to four-thousand-dollar loan initiation fee to the bank, so if there is high volume, the bank makes a lot of money.

R: So development benefits from a suburban development?

T: No, from transition, change benefits, not development. There is a difference between what I consider growth and development versus just turnover of houses. You can have increasing vacancies in the city. That is not growth--that is decay. In fact, if you have decay set in, people get dissatisfied with their neighborhoods and then they sell their houses. There is somebody else that maybe will come in and buy that house at a lower price, and then you buy a house at the urban periphery at a higher price. That is two loan initiations. Now, if everybody is satisfied with where they live, there are no loan initiations. So it is not growth per se that benefits the bank.

Similarly, the stockbroker makes money if the stocks are going up or if the stocks are going down, so long as that stockbroker sells stocks. If people panic and they sell stocks, the stockbroker gets their commission. If people want to get in a market before the prices go up, the stockbroker gets their commission. So it is not growth that benefits the stockbroker. It is the volume of sales.

It is the same with the real estate sector and the banking sector. What is good for the real estate sector and the banking sector is not necessarily good for the individual homeowner. The individual homeowners in this community, I think, are beginning to become outraged because they see what is happening now because I have been effective in articulating what goes on in the city, which we know from the literature. I am not just speaking from my back pocket. This is

the science of urban geography that I am translating into a language that the average person can understand.

R: A practical application.

T: Yes. The Chamber of Commerce says, "We want a healthy, vital economic base. We want to create jobs for poor people. We want to diversify our economy," and I say, "Fine. This is how you do that." Then they say, "No, what we want to do is to create suburban satellites." What they are doing is using those arguments to back up the creation of things that are, in fact, linked to just the exact opposite of what they are saying they support. So I have become, in fact, a threat to certain power interests because of the image that I obtained within the community, which was purely accidental.

It has continued to affect me personally and my relationships with the department. Things were being done to me in this University that were just absurd. Once I became a persona non grata, I believe that various administrators and faculty members of the University thought that they could achieve benefits from the higher administration by open harassment of me. This I documented extensively, and I tried to communicate to the administration that this should not be going on. The provost, Bob Bryan, refused to see me. In fact, they used this to harass me even more. It was on the basis of that that I went to the Board of Regents and said, "This should not be going on at the University." Two months later, Marshall Criser resigned.

For me personally that was a very trying period, and still is so in many respects. For a university that has aspirations of international excellence, this is probably good. It brought the issue of academic freedom and scholarly excellence out into the open, so it was a very quick learning experience for this University, moving from an old Southern boys school into what a major-league university should be behaving like. It was good for the University, but very traumatic for me personally.

R: As far as the community is concerned, are you discouraged from going out and applying some of your theories of land use?

T: Well, along the way, as I created this mathematical web, as in my *Consumption Theory of Land Rent* – and I still continue to do so; now I am working on the *Production Theory of Land Rent*, the theory of manufacturing and industrial land values and land use, which, if I go on sabbatical next year, I will be doing that full time – I wanted to see if these things worked. I think that based on what has happened to me, the evidence is that yes, they do work. My theory does work.

R: For instance, I know in your theory of attracting industry to a region you have

certain things that you set down that are necessary for a community to have, and that was part of the Greenbelt Task Force report, too, was it not?

T: Yes, it was.

R: How do you explain this?

T: My motivations were very different from Dwight Adams's, but I believe that the two of us were probably the most influential in writing the report that we signed. That does not mean to say that the other people did not agree with us. They simply liked what we were doing, so they signed off on it. Dwight's concern, as I see it, was more with the preservation of the natural environment, and my concern was creating an attractively built environment that people would want to remain in and to live in. If we are attracted to the built environment, for Dwight that would be desirable, because that means they will be attracted away from the natural environment, which will leave it in a better state.

R: So they are complementary views?

T: Yes, they are. That does not mean to say that Dwight and I are clones or substitutes of one another. We are complements to one another. The argument that I saw for our land-use plan was that we would have a higher density in the downtown area (which we presently have) than we had at the time (which now dates back several years). The density downtown should be higher, and then step down to an intermediate density, what we call the rural transition zone, and then go far out to the periphery and the interstices between the city of Gainesville and the outlying cities like Alachua and High Springs. Beyond that, the density would be much lower still; it would be one housing unit per ten acres. The rural transition zone would be one housing unit (I forget what the exact numbers were) per five acres, but you could easily get your density up to one per acre if you did certain kinds of architectural things such as clustering. Then the minimum or floor density within the city would be what it presently is – on average of three units per acre. But you can get your density higher than three per square acre by certain design things, including purchase of developer rights, or density bonuses, as Governor [Robert] Martinez is saying. So Governor Martinez has even sided with me.

R: Yes, and recently, actually. I have noticed in the newspaper that [Tom] Gustafson and Martinez have both come out in favor of in-filling, and I thought it interesting that they seem to be subscribing to a lot of the things that you have worked for.

T: Hadeed is the advisor of Gustafson, and Hadeed has a copy of the report. All these ideas are articulated in the report. My objective was to create a more

economically viable city by maximizing retail sales and the service sector, which benefits lower income people because that is where the entry level jobs are. By providing an exciting urban environment, it attracts "footloose" industry, that is, industry that can locate anywhere would be more attracted here because it is a nicer place to live.

R: For the amenities. What are some of those amenities that would attract industry to a location?

T: Oh, the variables that can enter into the quality of life are, as they say in the literature, almost countless. It is easier to say what does not attract industry. What is not an amenity? Polluted water does not attract industry. Housing values that are going down do not attract industry. Nobody wants to live in a neighborhood that is declining. That does not attract. In fact, just the opposite of these things attract.

R: What I was getting to is in your writings you said, for instance, that Gainesville will never attract the large manufacturing industries, that we will attract another kind of industry, and that we will attract them with certain amenities that we have.

T: We cannot compete with Jacksonville for the larger industries and manufacturing firms. The retail sales and service sector, by the way, is not peanuts. This is what the economic base of this state is, retail sales and service sector, and I think they will continue to be so. We do not have a deep water port like Jacksonville has. We do not have the population threshold for an international airport. That was another Progress Center-type land deal that was promoted, I believe, by Marshall Criser, and it has failed.

I have also written and stated publicly that we just did not have the population to support the international airport. They hired a consulting firm that said exactly what I said: "Alachua County does not have the threshold population to support an international airport." I believe what was happening was some property was selected that had been bought by friends of Marshall Criser and himself, and it was going to be another Florida land deal like Progress Center. I believe that to be the case, and that bubble was popped very early on. We do not have the venture capital. We have capital for real estate development, but we do not have venture capital, which is high risk capital, for industry here. For that you need to be at the headquarters of banks and insurance companies, and we do not have that type of economic activity here. All of those things Jacksonville has.

We do not have scope of labor market. When a firm like IBM is locating a research and development facility, they will ask, "What kinds of jobs can our spouse have here?" So long as we are disconnected from the Jacksonville labor market, the answer is we do not have sufficient scope or breadth of labor

market to meet the needs of the modern-day, upper-middle-income technician. University professors have these problems, too.

What kind of jobs can their spouses get? The pressures for a town like this are actually downwards until you get over some hump. Eventually, we will become part of the larger Jacksonville urban area. I foresee that in about fifteen years if I am right.

R: Another prediction!

T: Another prediction! Jacksonville is growing at us at a rate of about twenty-eight feet per day.

R: What is the Visions 2000 project?

T: I did not participate in the first Visions 2000, from which several people resigned. Doris Bardon resigned, and John Mahon from the history department resigned. Incidentally, it might be noted that John Mahon is a distant cousin of mine, which I discovered here in Gainesville. Those were two people active – John was very active--in the environmental community here. They resigned because did not think the Visions 2000 really represented community values. I was encouraged to apply for Visions 2000 by [City Commissioner] Court Collier. I did and was appointed to the Visions 2000.

Visions 2000 was implemented to serve and satisfy requirements of the Growth Management Act that each community come up with a projection of what it would like to become in the future. The 1985 Growth Management Act stated that by 1991, if there is to be development, that development must be concurrent with sufficient infrastructure to support that development.

R: This is throughout the whole state of Florida?

T: Yes, throughout the whole state, and each community had to [decide what its minimum level of infrastructure would be. What is controversial in] the Growth Management Act is the issue of concurrency: should the infrastructure be concurrent with the new development? That is, should the roads be widened, should the parks be in place, should the sewers be of sufficient capacity, should schools be built, and so forth at the same time that the new subdivisions are put in, or should they be built at a later date? Now, that is important. The way it is being done now is they are put in after the subdivisions are built, which means that the developer does not have to be faced with the larger cost of infrastructure. With concurrency, the developer is faced with the cost of the infrastructure. Now, that is actually not bad for the developer. I can prove that mathematically.

R: Those are impact fees?

T: Yes. This is not bad for the developer in the long run. In the short run it is very terrifying to a developer, and perhaps reasonably so.

R: In a recent article in the *Gainesville Sun*, a developer named Good (I think his name is Good) who is associated with Meadowbrook of Gainesville said just what you are saying, that it is in the long run good for developers.

T: Yes. As I wrote in my first commentary, "Alachua County Has A Choice For The Future", one of the points was that we should have an impact-fee-type system so that growth pays its own way. Without that, we will not have the infrastructure for future growth. So what kind of developer are you? Are you somebody who is here for the quick buck, like the Progress Center was (I think)? Are you for a quick buck like the airport deal was going to be? Or are you in it for the long term? Those people who are in it for the long term, I think, recognize the importance of concurrency.

But then we also must consider that here is another power elite battle: where do you own property? If you own property where the infrastructure is already in place, a la in-fill, then the idea of concurrency does not threaten you at all. Now, let us say that you own property that is several miles from where the present utilities are extended to. The idea of concurrency may be that your property is not developable for five years after [the date] you thought you were going to be able to develop it. That means holding onto maybe a \$100,000 or \$1 million piece of property for an extra five years.

R: Which you will have to pay taxes on.

T: True. But say you have a loan from the bank on that property and have to pay your mortgage on that property. The taxes are very insignificant for these types of things.

R: What is the difference between an impact fee and a zoning fee? You advocated impact fees, and now Governor Martinez has come out advocating what he calls a zoning fee.

T: I do not know enough about what that issue is. There are a variety of ways that one can accomplish the same thing. One way to do it is to apply for a zoning permit. This is what is done in Irvine, California, I believe. They have a mechanism where you have to pay a fee when you apply for a particular land-use change, or something like that. That is basically an impact fee, but the fee is due at the time of application. What that will do is discourage people from applying for a development permit and then not develop for ten or fifteen years,

which is one of the ways in which money is made here.

Here, as development regulations tighten, you are grandfather cloused in, but then the marketability of your property is enhanced by a grandfather-clause development permit that may not have as strong environmental or built-infrastructure regulations as others. As a result, when that [property] is developed, you can make more money because your competitors costs are higher than yours. That is another way to make money.

Another reason why a lot of the developers – some developers, not all developers – are opposed to this land-use plan that I proposed is because of the high risk involved. Much of the reason why land values are so low at the urban periphery here in this county is because of this. At this time, if you buy 100 or 500 acres of land – and tracts like this still remain – you could pay \$800 to \$1,000 an acre. Now, why is this property so low in price? For one reason, it is remote. But more important, the risk of building residential units on that property is very high. Say I bought ten acres of land and built a house that would be in the upper price ranges here. Right now the average price of a house in Gainesville is \$65,000 to \$85,000. Say I were to buy ten acres of land for \$1,200 an acre and then build an \$80,000 house on that. Now I have a \$92,000 house, roughly, on ten acres of land. I may wind up with a high-density trailer court subdivision next to me with from three to even ten units per acre. If that kind of development were to occur next to me, I could not sell my house. I could not get my money out of it.

People tend to be very conservative when they invest in houses, so, therefore, they steer away from that type of high-risk investment for a house, that type of high-risk consumption. Instead, they will buy where it is safe. That risk decreases land values.

Now, let us say that the land-use plan that I proposed comes into effect, where we zone the large tracts of land at one unit per ten acres. That means that a high-density trailer court subdivision could not go in next to you. The experience in Portland, Oregon, when they did that, was that there was an outflow of people, and the land values absolutely soared where the density was zoned to be the lowest.

Why are land developers opposed to this? The answer is that this is precisely how some of them make money. A developer, for example, will buy 200 or 500 acres of land at \$800 to \$1,000 an acre. Because the tract is large enough, he can increase land value by having restricted deeds on the property: all houses must be 2,500 square feet, they cannot be house trailers, they have to be built upon a poured concrete slab foundation or whatever, and there can be a maximum of one house per five acres or one house per ten acres, or if you have

one house for ten acres you can subdivide your lot only once. That is a private market response. As soon as they put in these kinds of deed restrictions, land that was bought at \$1,000 an acre can now be sold at \$6,000. This is how Ken McGurn, whom you will be interviewing, has made a lot of money; he has done precisely that.

R: The heading of a recent article in a business journal in Gainesville read, "Is the Greenbelt Strangling Gainesville?"

T: Actually, that was in a conservative newspaper, *The Florida Review*. When the student journalists, one of which had an M.A. in economics, came to me, they came with all the biases and prejudices that had been built up from the *Gainesville Sun*. Then upon talking to me, they left with a very different opinion. While I do not like the cover on the paper, for which you have a documentation in your package, I thought they treated my position quite reasonably in the article.

I believe that the land-use plan can accommodate over one million people in the county if the zoning were accepted that we proposed. That is not strangling.

R: You see it as the emerald necklace rather than a spangle.

T: I see it as providing a lower risk environment that will be an inducement for people to move here. By having different densities, it will allow those people who want to live in a higher density, which has many advantages to it, to do so. You can have public transportation in a higher density. As access increases, that is, as more people live in a dense environment, the transportation costs decrease. As that happens, people will frequent the retail outlets more.

Let's say that I live half an hour from a retail outlet. I am not going to go there very often. Therefore, I do not spend very much, and the economic viability of those kinds of retail outlets declines. Now, let's say I live in a higher density environment, and it is a five-minute walk [to the stores]. The economic viability for those kinds of retail outlets goes up, and as they go up, more exciting retail outlets can open, which provides an inducement for people to live in a more exciting built environment.

On the other hand, somebody who bought a one-unit-per-five-acre lot does not want to live next door to a twenty-unit-per-acre condominium.

R: Exactly. It allows more choice in living.

T: Right. What kind of environment do you choose to live in? If you choose to live in a low-density environment, do not expect a three-minute response time for a fire truck. If you choose to live in a high-density environment, you will get that three-minute response time for a fire truck, and you will get that quicker response

time for an ambulance. This is very important to an old person, a retiree. You can also have the threshold for a public transportation system.

Some people prefer an intermediate-level density of one to three units per acre. The land-use plan accommodates those different kinds of usages in a manner that maximizes the welfare of the entire community, and that, then, should maximize the profits of the development community. There are some developers that do support this land-use plan.

Land use is a complex issue. It is an exciting issue, and that is one reason why I was attracted to it. It is an intellectually stimulating, exciting thing wherein you are dealing with a real-world phenomenon that all of us live in. We all live on land somewhere, and the organization of the city does affect you. So it is a wonderful thing to study. I never thought that I would get more than just intellectually involved in it, that I would become so personally involved in it as somebody who is more than an innovator. What circumstances have done is transform me into, I would presume, a community leader, what my literature calls an "early developer." I was satisfied with being just a scholar on the subject. It was not my goal to go to that position.

R: Well, on that up note, Professor Thrall, I think we will end the interview. Thank you very much.

[End of the interview]