MAKING A SUNBELT PLACE: TAMPA, FLORIDA, 1923 – 1964

By

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To my wife Lynn, with gratitude for traveling a long highway with me
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CTARS  City of Tampa Archives and Records Service
GWS Papers  George W. Simons, Jr. Papers, University of North Florida Library
PKY  P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida Library
SPOHP  Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, University of Florida
This dissertation explains the physical and economic shape that Tampa acquired during its most formative years. The generation of business and political leaders who most influenced change during the postwar years, who I call "civic entrepreneurs," were themselves most affected by the events of the 1920s and 1930s. The lessons, values, and assumptions that they inherited from their experience of Florida's first great real estate boom and economic crash guided their subsequent policy choices and preferences.

For most of the twentieth century, Floridians' fundamental economic assumption was that new growth would dependably fuel the local economy. Through increased population, investments, and jobs, growth would finance itself and yield gains for the existing population. By perfecting the pattern of economic and population growth that briefly obtained during the 1920s, Floridians imagined an infinite cycle of importing capital in exchange for cheap land and resources such as water and energy. To the twenty-first century observer, the formula seems problematic, if not unsustainable. However, to the mid-century citizens of Tampa and of Florida in general, the lesson of the 1920s was that growth was an end in itself.
The boom of the early to mid-1920s suggested that Tampa was rich with opportunity through land development and sales, which entrepreneurs could achieve at relatively little cost. Beginning in 1926, a real estate and banking collapse frustrated those intent upon expanding Tampa's prosperity. The economic disruptions of the 1930s perpetuated the sense of challenge that affected Tampa's civic entrepreneurs. The experience of the crash and the Great Depression did not alter their ambitions, but it did alter their attitude toward identifying and exploiting different resources to advance their interest in growth. Tampans looked to the federal government to move their local agenda forward. Civic entrepreneurs regarded federal interventions as coming at little cost in money, local autonomy, or in terms of affecting Tampa's traditional hierarchies, which included white supremacy and economic dominance by business elites. By the end of the 1930s, however, Tampans began to modulate their practices so as to better appeal to those they had previously kept at arm's length, e.g., unsympathetic northerners, federal bureaucrats, or labor activists.

The New Deal and World War II raised the importance of the federal government in Tampa. By the end of the war, Tampa's civic entrepreneurs began to imitate the federal government. They sanctioned comprehensive planning by local government, and created new public institutions in the form of public "authorities," through which they sought to exploit the power and financial capital of federal institutions, e.g., the Civil Aeronautics Administration (later the FAA), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads (later the DOT). By the 1950s, federal housing policies created during the Great Depression energized real estate development and finance, allowing that economic sector to resume where it had stopped in 1925.
After World War II, the pattern of support from government (at every level) for local growth became settled policy. Its effects include Tampa International Airport, the Port of Tampa, and the Interstate Highway System. The last of these, Interstate Highways, brought with them a new local agency, the Urban Renewal Authority. With that, Tampa's civic entrepreneurs met the sharpest limits yet of their ability to direct the remarkable growth that they had achieved. Nevertheless, the physical shape of the twentieth-century Tampa Bay region owes everything to the assumptions and choices that came into play during the period from the 1920s to the 1960s.

Since the 1960s, "growth management" has become one of Florida's most sensitive policy issues. It is the subject of a proposed constitutional amendment on the 2010 statewide ballot, even as Florida is trying to emerge from real estate and banking collapses resembling those influential events of the 1920s. This research should stimulate readers to examine the presumptions that drive contemporary policy reactions to similar conditions.
Tampa, Florida took on its definitive political and economic shape during its most formative years, from the 1920s to the 1960s. The generation of business and political leaders who influenced change during the period, who I call "civic entrepreneurs," were themselves influenced by the events of the 1920s and 1930s when Tampa’s economy shifted from boom, to crash, to depression. Throughout the period of this study, Tampans and Floridians generally accepted the fundamental assumption that growth was the source of their economic sustenance. Through increased population, investments, and jobs, growth would pay for the costs incurred by prior growth. By means of rational planning, the pattern of economic boom and bust centered around real estate sales that had briefly obtained during the 1920s could be made to operate reliably. Floridians could attract capital in exchange for low-cost resources such as land, labor, water and energy. To the twenty-first century observer the formula appears unsustainable. However, to the mid-century citizens of Tampa the lesson of the 1920s was that growth was an end in itself. It was from their experience of the 1920s’ boom that their controlling assumptions about public policy arose. In the 1960s, Tampa’s patterns of growth and those of its advocates who held public trust came under challenge. By then however, Tampa’s infrastructure and the outline of its political economy were already settled, the result of a concentrated period of public and private planning and investment carried out during the preceding twenty years.

The boom of the early to mid-1920s suggested that Tampa was rich with opportunity, owing to its potential for growth through land development and sales, which entrepreneurs could achieve at relatively little cost. Beginning in 1926, a real estate and
banking collapse frustrated those intent upon expanding Tampa's prosperity. The difficulties of the 1930s perpetuated the sense of challenge that affected Tampa's civic entrepreneurs. The experience of the crash and the Great Depression did not alter their ambitions, but it did alter their attitude toward identifying and exploiting different resources to advance their interest in growth. Tampans came to look outward, especially to the federal government, to help move their local agenda forward. Local civic entrepreneurs saw federal interventions as coming at little cost, in terms of money, local autonomy, or in terms of affecting Tampa's traditions, which included white supremacy and economic dominance by business elites. By the end of the 1930s, however, Tampans began to modulate their practices so as to better appeal to those they had previously tried to keep at arm's length, e.g., unsympathetic northerners, federal bureaucrats, or labor activists.

First the New Deal and then World War II radically elevated the importance of the federal government in Tampa. World War II energized many of the federal urban initiatives of the New Deal, especially involving infrastructure, and fostered new roles for the national government at the local level. Wartime also expanded the political space for the government to act on the economy, so that by the end of the war, Tampa's civic entrepreneurs began to imitate the federal government. They sanctioned comprehensive planning by local government, and created new institutions in the form of public "authorities" through which they sought to exploit the power and financial capital of federal institutions, e.g., the Civil Aeronautics Administration (later the FAA), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads (later the DOT). By the 1950s, federal housing policies created during the Great Depression
energized real estate development and finance, allowing that economic sector to resume where it had stopped in 1925.

After World War II, the pattern of government support at every level for local economic growth was a matter of settled public policy. In Tampa, its most recognizable consequences included Tampa International Airport, the Port of Tampa, and the Interstate Highway System. The last of these, Interstate Highways, fostered another local agency, the Urban Renewal Authority. However, with their effort to capture the resources of the federal government for urban renewal, Tampa's civic entrepreneurs discovered civil rights activism met the sharpest limits yet of their ability to direct the remarkable growth that they had achieved. Nevertheless, both the physical shape and the economic function of the twenty first-century Tampa Bay region owes everything to assumptions and choices that came into play beginning during the 1920s, and that commanded its political economy through the 1960s.

"Making a Sunbelt Place" portrays Tampa's growth as having been guided during its critical phase by a relatively purposeful, coherent planning apparat. Indeed, at various times during the twentieth century Tampa's political and business elites were surprisingly positive about public planning. World War II is the best example. In 1940 Tampa hired a planning professional, George W. Simons, Jr., paid him well, and afforded him with extraordinary entrée to every political resource. In turn, Tampa's planner conducted exhaustive research and local surveys, marshaled an impressive body of data, and over a period of eighteen years supplied his Tampa clientele with expertise on a range of matters.¹

¹ Federal policies during the late 1930s and 1940s favored city planning. See Thomas Hanchett, "Roots of the Renaissance: Federal Incentives to Urban Planning, 1941 to 1948," in Planning the Twentieth-
Simons represented the school of planning thought best known as the “City Efficient,” an engineering-based approach to planning cities that work rationally. The planning philosophy that existed in counterpoint was the “City Beautiful” or the “Garden City” movement, influenced by designers and architects for whom the aesthetics of the city affected the lives of its citizenry, and therefore its function. It would be a mistake to overemphasize the differences between these two visions of city planning. Practitioners of the latter were hardly irrational. Moreover, Simons’ work in Tampa demonstrates that the differing approaches could co-exist in the same plans and even in the same planner. Tampans had opportunities to consider planning ideals that drew on the City Beautiful impulse. However, the civic entrepreneurs in this study clearly favored urban function over form, and Simons was a compatible partner.²

The City Efficient emerged in opposition to the earliest impulses in American planning those of the Garden City movement, also known as the City Beautiful. In his international comparisons of Progressive reforms, Daniel Rodgers describes Garden City planning as the introduction of social design into urban design. Concerned with more than just aesthetics, European planners such as Great Britain’s Ebenezer Howard and Raymond Unwin, for example, consciously used their professional commissions to pursue their commitment to social progressivism. Organic city planning meant relocating some of the power to plan from private property owners to public authorities. By the 1930s however, as the planning careers of Harland Bartholomew and George Simons had overlapped those of the Garden City pioneers, continental European planning ideas began to seem more like socialism than social progressivism, and crossed the Atlantic Ocean less readily. The City Efficient was more positively American. Indeed, while engineering types such as Bartholomew and Simons touted their work as “scientific planning,” suggesting a

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² Christopher Silver argues that planning history tends to overlook the motives of planners and their links to local entrepreneurship. His work places urban planning in the context of “America’s unique political economy.” His account of Richmond is helpful to an examination of Tampa, in part because Richmond’s planning consultant for over fifteen years was the legendary Harland Bartholomew. Not only was Bartholomew one of the most prolific of American city planners, but his engineering-derived planning philosophy influenced countless other practitioners, Tampa’s planner George Simons among them. The two occasionally competed for assignments (including Tampa’s). See Christopher Silver, Twentieth-Century Richmond: Planning, Politics, and Race (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984) and Norman J. Johnston, “Harland Bartholomew: Precedent for the Profession,” in The American Planner: Biographies and Recollections, ed. Donald A. Krueckeberg (New Brunswick: Center for Urban Policy Research, 1994)
Since the late 1960s, the virtues of "growth management" have been part of Florida's perennial political debate. Recently Florida has experienced real estate and banking dislocations similar to those of the 1920s, for which some blame unplanned growth. Growth is rarely unplanned, however. Critical attention to the styles, methods, and substance of planning can help explain how Florida achieved its present condition. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Florida's socio-political tension revolves around whether the old economic model will resume its function, or whether to consider that fundamental realities have shifted, and that Florida needs to adopt new economic assumptions. This study considers the inherited assumptions that shaped Tampa's growth and development in the twentieth century.³
CHAPTER 2
THE 1920s: PROLOGUE TO A SUNBELT PLACE

Tampa’s experience in the 1920s decisively shaped the perspectives of the city’s civic and business leaders who came to prominence in the 1930s and 1940s. The boom-and-bust trajectory of the city’s post-World War I development both convinced them of the area’s exceptional possibilities for growth, and alerted them to the social and economic instability that could result from unregulated economic activity. Memories of the disorienting combination of population growth, real estate speculation, and technological change remained vivid through the middle decades of the twentieth century as business and political leaders sought to build a stable civic identity that would be hospitable to investment in a city otherwise notable for unsound business deals, organized crime, electoral irregularities, and violent social repression.

The city’s experience during the 1920s revolved around three key issues: real estate finance (public and private); the transformative effects of new mass technologies, notably the automobile; and the Tampa’s reputation for corruption, violence, and gambling. Through the mid-1920s, the city joined much of peninsular Florida in experiencing dramatic population growth, fueled by virtually unregulated land speculation and the expansion of automobile travel. Later in the decade, the land bubble collapsed, owing to a series of human factors and the effects of the Great Miami Hurricane of 1926. The resulting economic contraction left Tampa saddled with unfinished residential developments, ill-planned and inadequate urban infrastructure, growing environmental problems, and a crisis in public finance. Along with the city’s unsavory reputation for corruption and
violence, these circumstances challenged a new generation of civic
entrepreneurs, a group of bankers, businessmen, and politicians who sought to
bring orderly, business-friendly development to the raffish and sometimes chaotic
Cigar City.4

At the peak of the boom in late 1925, Florida was a place of seemingly
unlimited opportunity. Within months however, its prospects appeared
increasingly uncertain. In subsequent years, Floridians looked back to the 1920s
boom and sought to interpret and apply its civic lessons. At first disaffected, even
gloomy, Tampans came to read the 1920s as a cautionary episode. They saw it
as a mandate to strive anew for the prosperity that Florida’s boom had promised
while at the same time attempting to minimize economic dislocations. For
example, the rapid decline in real estate values after 1926 suggested that
Florida’s economic model, which converted land into capital and fueled growth in
population and employment at little cost to sellers and promoters, was
vulnerable. No consensus existed as to the precise cause of Florida’s economic
weakness, but by the end of the 1920s, the loss of real estate wealth appeared

4 Scholarship concerning Florida’s rapid economic expansion and collapse during the 1920s is
scant. Two of the most substantive monographs to date are William Frazer and John J. Guthrie
Jr., The Florida Land Boom: Speculation, Money, and the Banks (Westport: Quorum Books,
1995), and Raymond B. Vickers, Panic in Paradise: Florida’s Banking Crash of 1926
(Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994), although the two works contain differing
analyses of the crash. Frazer and Guthrie discern less villainy and corruption among Florida’s
bankers than Vickers believes existed. A brief overview of the decade appears in William W.
Michael Gannon (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), and in William B. Stronge, The
Sunshine Economy: An Economic History of Florida Since the Civil War (Gainesville: University
Press of Florida, 2008). An oft-cited account of Florida during the 1920s is by St. Augustine
historian David Nolan, Fifty Feet in Paradise: The Booming of Florida (San Diego: Harcourt Brace
Jovanovich, 1984), however it is not annotated. Biographers of seminal figures capture helpful
details from the era, one of the most useful being Mark S. Foster, Castles In the Sand: The Life
as the proximate cause for Tampa’s economic distress. It therefore followed that
economic stability depended in part upon supporting the market for real property.
Thus, Tampans became newly receptive to public policies that might secure and
enhance the value of their private property.

Uneven growth during the 1920s burdened Tampa with inadequate
infrastructure, of which streets and highways were just the most visible
examples. The city financed its capital projects through borrowing. However, the
end of the boom hobbled property tax payments, the revenue source that was to
have paid for the city’s increased obligations. Tax payments declined even as
city officials tried to keep up with an unprecedented amount of bonded
indebtedness. No process existed for the State of Florida to appropriate money
directly to cities such as Tampa, a statutory condition that the state legislature
found amenable. In any case, the State’s finances were as straitened as those of
its local governments. Nor was there any precedent for agencies of the federal
government to intervene in municipal crises such as that facing Tampa. By the
end of the 1920s, local officials in Florida’s cities were in uncharted waters.⁵

⁵ Rapid urban growth during the 1920s placed unprecedented stress on many American cities. As the effects of the Great Depression emerged, the damage to overextended municipal finances spread well beyond Florida. In a 1937 report to President Roosevelt, Interior Secretary Harold L. Ickes wrote that: "The unparalleled growth of cities has been accompanied by uncontrolled subdivision and speculative practices and by the most fantastic real estate booms which have meant dramatic profits to a few, but tragic personal losses to others and burdensome delinquent properties to the community; and this on a scale affecting the economic situation of the entire nation. The history of the recent industrial depression cannot be written without an account of the role of unsound financing and of speculation in real estate which at times became mere gambling. We are now faced with the problem of arriving at a rational urban land policy which, while affording private owners and developers adequate opportunity for wise and profitable land uses, will curb the forms of speculation that prove calamitous to the investing and tax-paying public." Harold L. Ickes, Our Cities: Their Role in Our National Economy (Washington: Report of the National Urbanism Committee of the National Resources Committee, Dept. of the Interior, August 9, 1937), p. ix.
Tampans embraced the ordinary practices and common assumptions that prevailed among Americans of the 1920s. Expectations about the future of automobiles for example, rested on the growing certainty that cheap oil and gasoline would always be available. The pursuit of growth relied on the assumption that new residents and businesses inevitably added to local prosperity. The belief that wealth derived from the buying and selling of real estate rested on the predicate that undeveloped land in and around Tampa could sustain new residents at negligible economic cost. There was little understanding that land development might have environmental as well as broader economic consequences. Throughout the 1920s, the U.S. Department of Commerce joined real estate dealers and others in promoting homeownership as a badge of American citizenship and as being essential to financial security. Tampans bought fully into this view. Business and civic leaders believed beyond any possibility of question or challenge that growth was good by definition. Therefore, it was to be secured by any expedient. Foremost among those was population increase through in-migration, which Tampa tried to stimulate by publicizing its attributes, and to accommodate by incentivizing the spatial diffusion of housing and highways.6

6 Concerning home-ownership initiatives in the 1920s, see Lawrence J. Vale, “The Ideological Origins of Affordable Homeownership Efforts,” in William M. Rohe and Harry L. Watson, Eds., Chasing the American Dream: New Perspectives on Affordable Homeownership (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007). Vale notes that in 1921, as Secretary of Commerce, Herbert Hoover adopted the Own-Your-Own-Home campaign launched in 1917 by the National Association of Real Estate Boards. Thereafter, increasing homeownership remained central to Hooverian economic doctrine, and attracted enthusiastic support from broad business and political constituencies throughout the 1920s.
Land and Lending

During the 1920s, Floridians’ economy changed from that of a rural state to one related to the selling, financing, and developing of real estate. Like the state’s more established agricultural enterprises, these new businesses were at first largely unregulated. Florida’s vast tracts of land appeared underutilized, seeming to require only minor improvement in order to become home sites. Florida’s real estate industry, practically non-existent before the 1920s, attracted a stampede of participants from other states intent upon converting the state’s idle acreage into wealth. The excesses that followed exemplified the hazards of an unfettered free market in land, in ways that became clearer after Florida’s broad economic collapse that began in 1926.

Until the land boom of the 1920s, peninsular Florida resembled a frontier territory. It had the lowest population density east of the Mississippi River, at three persons per square mile. Its inland counties were a mixture of sandy uplands and shallow wetlands. Human endeavors revolved around cattle and crop agriculture and other conversions of the state’s natural resources, such as phosphate mining and the timber business. Along the coast, mostly uninhabited barrier islands gave way to a few major embayments such as Tampa’s. Fishing dominated the maritime economy, though port cities along the Gulf of Mexico coast prospered from the export of Florida cattle to Cuba, with which Tampa also conducted a lively commerce in tobacco leaves for its young but profitable cigar industry.

First in 1898, then again in 1917, war briefly energized Tampa. For example, the Great War brought shipbuilding contracts that drew thousands of
new workers to Tampa. In November 1918, the war’s sudden end led to a sharp national recession, and meant the abrupt cancellation of Tampa’s contracts. Prosperity disappeared even faster than it had materialized, recent immigrants to Tampa departed for better opportunities elsewhere, and a local climate of pessimism prevailed into 1921.\(^7\)

In-migration and auto mobilization during the 1920s helped transform Florida into a predominantly urban state for the first time. The rest of the U.S. had been moving gradually toward that statistical tipping point, which had arrived by the time of the 1920 census, when for the first time more Americans lived in cities than those who did not. Florida’s demographic shift took place later, and far more rapidly. In 1920, only 37% of Floridians had lived in urban places; by 1930, the percentage was 52%, bringing the state close to the national ratio of 56%. During the same ten years, Tampa’s population doubled, going from 51,608 to 101,161. Other Florida cities experienced similarly dramatic growth.\(^8\)

Speculators who arrived in Florida in the 1920s discovered a frontier-like business culture of competitive deal making unconstrained by rules or regulations. Promoters advertised the state’s healthful, temperate climate and its inexhaustible supply of fertile, developable land. To attract newcomers to specific parts of the state, they touted non-existent local attributes in order to outdo

\(^7\) According to Florida Atlantic University economist William Stronge, Florida’s was a frontier economy that, through the beginning of the twentieth century, more closely resembled that of small western states rather than the other states of the former Confederacy. Its population was small and low in density, and it was dependent upon extractive industries. See Stronge, *The Sunshine Economy* p. 9-14.

\(^8\) For a discussion of Florida’s demographics during the 1920s, see Ibid p. 92-94. Most of Tampa’s population increase had already occurred by 1925. From 1920 to 1925, the population of the state overall increased by 30%. See the Sixth Census of the State of Florida, 1935 (Tallahassee: Florida Department of Agriculture, Nathan Mayo, Commissioner), p. 91.
competing boosters’ similarly mendacious claims. As the price of land rose, early investors’ successes inspired imitators, for many of whom Florida’s principal attraction was the prospect of quick, easy profits. Exuberant, unlicensed real estate dealers strained to outdo one another in the competition to obtain binders (binding written agreements to sell property at a specific price) on buildings and especially on land, and then to resell those binders at ever-higher prices. Real estate prices soared and for the first time small investors’ capital flowed into the state from diverse sources, mingling with the wealth of industrialists such as John D. Rockefeller, Henry Flagler, and Alfred I. DuPont. Florida’s bankers, loath to miss the windfall, loaned promiscuously to small borrowers as well as to colorful, larger-than-life dreamer-builders such as Boca Raton’s Addison Mizner and his brother, Wilson Mizner, Miami’s George Merrick and Carl Fisher, and Tampa’s David P. Davis and B.L. Hamner. The grandiosity of each of their new developments challenged others to imitate, if not outdo them by creating increasingly baroque edifices and exotically themed projects, serving to glamorize the risks of investing in Florida real estate.\(^9\)

\(^9\) In a 1925 letter, for example, Bartow (Florida) Chamber of Commerce general secretary George H. Clements complained to state health official George Simons about the prevalence of mosquitoes there, describing the town’s current fight against the pests as “desperate.” Simultaneously, the Chamber’s official letterhead (the very sheet of paper on which Clements’ letter was typed) described Bartow having “an almost utter absence of mosquitoes, house flies and other insect pests.” George H. Clements to George W. Simons, Jr., April 17, 1925, GWS Collection, UNF Library. Of the legendary developers named, only Merrick and Hamner lived for long after the boom, and only Merrick maintained his connections to real estate. The Mizners died in the early 1930s, within a year of one another, both ruined by the collapse of their new projects at Boca Raton. In 1939, Fisher died in Miami virtually broke. In 1926, under pressure financially, Tampa’s D.P. Davis mysteriously disappeared from an ocean liner far at sea. The authoritative work on Davis is Rodney Kite-Powell, “In Search of David Paul Davis” (University of South Florida, 2003) Kite-Powell’s MA thesis supplies detailed context on Davis’ meteoric exploitation of the Florida boom. Carl Fisher’s biographer includes extensive discussion concerning Florida’s boom and collapse. See Mark S. Foster, Castles in the Sand: The Life and Times of Carl Graham Fisher (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000). Walter Fuller described buying 40 acres
During the real estate boom of the 1920s, the philosophy of *laissez faire* dominated American economic doctrine, and nowhere was that more true than in business deals relating to land. In Florida, every aspect of real estate transactions was a function of local custom, from pricing and financing through the conveyance of deed and title. Real estate dealers answered to themselves and to the general civil and criminal statutes covering fraud and theft, just as in any business. Not until 1925 did Florida’s legislature establish a Florida Real Estate Commission (FREC). The law creating a licensing authority was a response to complaints by established dealers about the unlicensed salesmen who had “swarmed” the state, as the Florida Association of Real Estate Boards (FAREB) later put it. Initially, licensure consisted of registering the identity of and collecting a fee from anyone identifying himself (few women were in the real estate business) as a real estate dealer. As long as a boom mentality continued, the licensing fee was a minor impediment to entry into the business, as was the cost of membership in a local real estate board such as Tampa’s, founded in 1911. Having successfully pressed for the new law aimed at tempering unchecked competition, members of local real estate boards claimed to have professionalized their industry at a stroke. Even as they did so, the credibility of

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near St. Petersburg in 1920 for $45.27, then selling it in 1924 for $40,000.00 in cash. The buyer was a Philadelphia lawyer, who invested his life’s savings while never expecting to use the land, but merely to resell it. Nine months later in November 1924, he did so, for $60,000.00, a fifty percent profit. The next time the property changed hands was October 8, 1936, when it was auctioned on the local courthouse steps for delinquent taxes. The successful bid was $450.00. See Fuller, *op cit*, p. 7. Concerning Florida’s inflow of cash drawn by investment opportunity during the 1920s, see Frazer and Guthrie, *The Florida Land Boom*, p. 102. State and national banks operating in Florida leveraged their increased deposit balances into more loans, the collateral for which consisted mainly of real estate, newly purchased at historically high prices.
Florida real estate promoters evaporated in the overheated climate of the fast
profits to be had from dealing in land.\(^\text{10}\)

As with land transactions, real estate financing was also an unregulated
market subject to local custom. Mortgage investing as an organized industry with
major financial participants did not exist, nor was there a coherent secondary
market for mortgage securities. Lenders selectively “sold” loans one at a time, on
an individual basis. While certain informal customs prevailed, there was no

\(^{10}\) Tampa’s 1926 city directory listed more than 850 companies and individuals under the various

An insightful cultural study of the process through which real estate dealers sought to elevate
themselves by adopting the nomenclature and accoutrements of a profession is Jeffrey M.
Hornstein, \textit{A Nation of Realtors®: A Cultural History of the Twentieth-Century American Middle
Class} (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005). As Hornstein notes, real estate brokerage was an
almost exclusively male occupation until the 1950s. It was in the 1920s when dealers in land and
buildings discerned the advantages to themselves of reinventing their industry after the model of
professional services such as the law and accountancy. Real estate men recognized that
Americans considered houses not simply as a commodity purchase, but as a means of
establishing class identity. By casting themselves as trustworthy advisors, real estate dealers
sought to insinuate themselves into a position of control with customers who aspired to something
intangible. An advisory role obscured the naturally adversarial dynamic that exists between
shoppers and salesmen. \textit{Ergo}, the industry’s marketing slogan became “Consult a Realtor®,
realtor being a word that the national industry association registered as a trademark. For more on
mass marketing’s conscious engagement with Americans’ class aspirations, although with a later
chronological focus, see Lizabeth Cohen, \textit{A Consumer’s Republic: The Politics of Mass
Consumption in Postwar America} (New York: Knopf, 2003)

At no other place or time in U.S. history have real estate agents’ conduct called their integrity
and professionalism into question more so than in Florida of the 1920s. Fraudulent land sales
schemes became the stuff of legend, and loomed over the Florida real estate industry for
decades thereafter. During the 1920s boom, an army of hopeful investors from throughout the
U.S. looked to Florida property as their pathway to wealth. They encountered a smaller but even
more ambitious corps of real estate dealers, at least some of whom routinely fleeced the trusting
or unwary. As David Nolan later told it, “A building lot of fifty feet in paradise was the irresistible
commodity of 1925. There were not enough of them high and dry to go around, so swamps and
lowlands became negotiable – particularly with those who bought sight unseen.” Nolan, \textit{Fifty Feet
in Paradise} p. 3.

Florida’s reputation for amoral real estate dealers swiftly became part of American popular
culture. In the summer of 1929, the Marx Brothers comedy entertainment troupe released their
first talking motion picture, in which they portrayed a team of swindlers plying their trade at a
Florida seaside resort. In Groucho Marx’s scene as a real estate auctioneer, he exuberantly
promises the crowd: “You can get any kind of house you want. You can even get stucco. Oh, how
you can get stuck-oh.” Joseph Santley and Robert Florey, \textit{The Cocoanuts,} (1929)
standardization. It was common for a private individual with idle funds to lend money out to a local borrower for a few years at a time. Often a local attorney acted as intermediary, ensuring that the note and mortgage instruments were in recordable form and enforceable. For example, Tampa attorney Lewis W. Petteway also advertised his services under the business categories of real estate, loans, and investments. Such loans were of short duration, typically five years, ten at the most, and lenders minimized their risk by requiring borrowers to initially contribute substantial equity, as much as fifty percent of the property’s value. Second mortgage practices tended to be more conservative, as such loans were riskier by virtue of being subordinate to the primary mortgage. Some calculating investors deviated from conservative policies if they perceived that a borrower was hard-pressed. A mortgage lender might then choose to make a risky loan, with the hope of foreclosing. In such borrower-beware scenarios, no standardized lending policies or practices existed to deter opportunistic or predatory money lenders.\textsuperscript{11}

Land use regulations emerged slowly in the South for reasons that Tampa exemplified. In 1926, the U.S. Supreme Court legitimized land use zoning, calling it a necessary “police power” of the state. At first the decision had little impact on Tampans, who avoided regulating land use. The frenzied growth that took place during the boom, and the conflicts that ensued, did create complex attitudes toward planning and zoning laws. Upscale developments such as Davis Islands maintained order among property owners through deed restrictions, which prohibited certain activities such as conducting a business or the sale or rental of property to Negroes. Ironically, homeowners in Tampa’s older established neighborhoods were most wary of zoning. Land-use regulations might forestall an odious activity on the property next door, but restrictive zoning might also interfere with deriving income from real estate. In a district zoned for single-family homes, for example, the typical zoning ordinance language held that one could not legally divide a house into apartments or take in borders. From the 1910s through the 1940s, both practices were common among Tampans who owned homes.12

12 Concerning the proliferation of deed restrictions in the early twentieth century, see Robert M. Fogelson, Bourgeois Nightmares: Suburbia, 1870-1930 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005). Fogelson ascribes homeowners’ increasing acceptance of restrictions to their rising fear of disorder and change in neighborhoods where they lived and in which they had invested significant personal wealth.

By 1922, cities’ power to zone came under constitutional review in The Village of Euclid, Ohio v. Ambler Realty Co., 272 U.S. 365 (1926), in which the U.S. Supreme Court ultimately found zoning ordinances as a legitimate use of the states’ police power. However, Tampans evidently saw little need to regulate land uses, perhaps due in part to the fact that the prevailing informal customs and practices of social control were adequate to the circumstances. Certainly that was true with regard to race. Gerald Frug considers that one of zoning’s essential functions is “protecting people from their fear of otherness,” a fear that seems not to have concerned Tampans in the 1920s. See Gerald E. Frug, City Making: Building Communities Without Building Walls (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 144-145.
During the 1920s, Florida’s economy pivoted crucially and permanently away from the agricultural and maritime functions that had historically defined it, and that had sustained its people. For the first time, Floridians’ prosperity began to depend upon the productivity of non-agricultural land. At the end of the 1920s, events occurring in the market for real estate reached out to affect more than just speculators, real estate dealers, and homeowners (of whom there were still relatively few). Workers in new and expanding service businesses such as law, accounting, sales, construction, and insurance became captive to changes in land values and house sales. Individual lenders as well as banks were inextricably tied to the market for housing and developable land. Local utilities enterprises such as the Tampa Electric Co. and Peninsular Telephone Co., had barely existed twenty years earlier. In the 1920s, they plunged into capital-intensive projects to expand their technology and equipment, planning to amortize the costs over an ever-increasing population of customers. Their corporate leaders joined with Tampans representing other growth dependent

Concerning residential occupancy practices in Tampa, see the notes summarizing Table 2, Converted Structures, and Chart No. 3, in the “Real Property Survey and Low Income Housing Survey of Tampa, Florida, 1939-1940,” Works Project Administration, Tampa, 1940, p. 14-15. Anecdotal evidence gathered by the author further supports that, during the 1920s and 1930s, Tampa homeowners routinely supplemented household income by renting rooms to unrelated individuals or families, often charging for meals (“board”) as well. In some instances, converting a home into a rooming and/or boarding house provided a homeowner’s entire sustenance. During the tourist season, Tampa’s residential occupancy ratios “probably” increased due to the relative ease of taking in winter lodgers - see the “Real Property Survey,” Table 15, p. 32. Housing shortages during World War I and II led Tampans to adopt the same expedient. In the inter-war decades, Tampans shared the judgment reached by Houstonians, who preferred broad latitude in the permissible alternative uses of their private property, and still do, to the degree that the citizens of Houston have voted down three separate ballot proposals to adopt zoning. Houston Texas remains the largest U.S. city without land-use zoning.
sectors of the local economy in forming a new corps of civic entrepreneurs for whom a Florida land and population boom meant a secure future.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{Auto-mobility and Land}

Few places experienced swifter or more far-reaching impacts of automobilization than Florida in the 1920s, where young, relatively compact cities were as a blank canvas for a new transportation economy. Tampa owed much to the advent of rail transportation in the 1880s, but by the 1920s, local conflicts with the railroad corporations that served Tampa made alternative transportation modes seem increasingly attractive. Automobiles’ new popularity required that Tampa adapt to its citizen-motorists. More so than the streetcar, automobiles offered mobility, privacy, and security, all practical advantages in cities that seemed increasingly disorderly. Streets and highways changed the human environment as well as the way that the built environment reordered the natural landscape. Even when still just at the stage of rumor, a new road fueled real estate speculation and development, reactions that both stimulated and were stimulated by Tampa’s superheated real estate economy. In the 1920s, cars,

\textsuperscript{13} More so than many in his discipline, economic historian Alexander Field links the economic dislocations of the 1930s and the Great Depression to the land boom of the 1920s. In Field’s analysis, the rapid, unregulated growth of cities and suburbs helps to explain the unprecedented severity of the Depression that followed. In addition to the spread of cars and the lack of development regulation during the period, Field notes the proliferation and diffusion of electricity. These things combined to facilitate the spread of residential growth beyond the historic periphery of cities and towns, and imposed greater cost burdens on every market actor involved. See Alexander James Field, “Uncontrolled Land Development and the Duration of Depression in the United States,” \textit{The Journal of Economic History} (52:4) December 1992, p. 785-805.

Economist William Stronge notes that Florida during the 1920s made a decisive transition away from its previous dependence on agricultural and maritime economic sectors, and that as a result, the state’s economy closely emulated that of the other United States. Stronge, \textit{The Sunshine Economy}  p. 132.
roads, and real estate speculation converged in places such as Tampa to accelerate its boom.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{14} In 1884, Henry Bradley Plant’s new railroad enabled Tampa to establish regular overland commerce for the first time with the rest of the United States. As an inducement to Henry Plant, the City of Tampa granted his railroad a right-of-way along the east bank of the Hillsborough River running almost to the river’s junction with Hillsborough Bay, where ocean-going vessels docked. For decades thereafter, trains steamed through Tampa, obstructing downtown streets as they loaded and unloaded sea-born freight. When automobile traffic began to grow, stationary lines of rail cars obstructed Tampa’s motorists, resulting in daily chaos and igniting public resentment. Tampa’s officials and businessmen also came to believe (as did many Southerners) that railroad corporations unfairly exploited the region’s dependence on rail for overland shipping. Through politics and litigation, Tampans campaigned doggedly for more favorable freight rates. The legal contest over railroad tariffs lasted until 1963, when rail had finally exhausted its economic and political leverage. Tampa’s maritime business interests also grew frustrated with railroads. When local shippers attempted to innovate or adapt to changing markets for seaborne freight, they found that rail corporations who owned most of the commercial waterfront property favored shippers such as bulk producers, whose cargo generated large rail profits. The most expedient resource for a chronologically broad sense of Tampans’ battles over downtown congestion related to trains is Bentley Orrick and Harry L. Crumpacker, \textit{The Tampa Tribune: A Century of Florida Journalism} (Tampa: University of Tampa Press, 1998). The subject appears in nearly every account of life in Tampa during the first half of the Twentieth Century. Tampa businessmen’s frustrations over freight rate inequities, and over the use of waterfront lands owned by railroads, receive detailed attention elsewhere in this dissertation.


My evaluation is that the phenomena associated with automobiles (mass-production, mass distribution, mass marketing, consumer financing, urban spatial separation and diffusion, cheap oil distribution, asphalt paving, public finance for street and road building, and so on and on) converged at a historical moment when Americans were shifting away from having been a predominantly rural population. The U.S. census declared that we had reached the tipping point by 1920. A thoughtful study connecting similar technological and socioeconomic elements of streets and highways is Peter J. Hugill, "Good Roads and the Automobile in the United States, 1880-1929," \textit{Geographical Review} 72, no. 3 (1982). Robert Fogelson persuasively revises the conventional wisdom about the timing of American urban decline, and says that cities actually reached their zenith in the 1920s, rather than the 1950s, as has been more popularly argued. For
Following the postwar recession, recovery in the industrial North combined with surging automobile ownership to make Florida accessible to new visitors. Some affluent winter residents still arrived by railroad, as had been their practice since before the war, but increasing numbers of first-time visitors came by automobile. St. Petersburg developer Walter Fuller estimated that in the early 1920s, they numbered in the range of several hundred thousand.

Accommodations for these newcomers were scarce in Florida’s cities such as Tampa. The interim solution was motor campgrounds. Tent cities for nomadic seasonal visitors traveling by car or truck already existed throughout the state but were seldom filled. In the winter of 1920, that changed. Cities and counties responded to the demand by opening public spaces for use as motor campgrounds, which hosted a category of winter visitors called “tin-can tourists.” Owing to the growth of automotive tourism, new street and highway construction spread throughout peninsular Florida. Where roads appeared, speculation in land, hotels, offices, and homes blossomed.15

Wherever they appeared, automobiles created unprecedented demands on local governments. The greatest conflicts were in established central business districts that had the misfortune to predate the 1920s, things have been downhill ever since. See Robert M. Fogelson, *Downtown: Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). In sum, automobiles arrived just when they could effect great change upon the built environment. Nowhere in the United States was that more true than in cities that were becoming part of the Sunbelt, such as Tampa, or the Los Angeles of Scott Bottles’ account cited above.

15 See Walter P. Fuller, *This Was Florida’s Boom* (St. Petersburg: Times Publishing Company, 1954), p. 7-9. Later in life, Fuller became a journalist and popular local historian. Fuller’s depiction of the boom focuses on St. Petersburg, where he and his father had speculated in land for development since before the Great War, however his account describes people and events throughout the state, including Tampa, and finds little to distinguish among local responses to the boom era.
districts, which were fundamentally inhospitable to concentrations of motorists. As cities undertook to increase public accommodations for motorists, by way of wider and smoother streets, traffic controls, and free public parking, the more rapidly automobiles and their operators altered the economics (both public and private) of transportation. For example, in 1924 Tampa’s most celebrated event was the opening on November 19 of the Gandy Bridge, a 5.5 mile concrete trestle bridge built by George S. “Dad” Gandy and financed by bonds that Gandy’s company had sold to private investors. No agency of state or local government existed to undertake such a large inter-city project.

The gestation of the Gandy Bridge project illustrates the rapid ascent of automobiles to primacy in Tampa. Gandy’s original 1917 plan had called for a railroad connecting both sides of Tampa Bay. By the 1920s, that design morphed into an automobile bridge incorporating tracks for an electric interurban railway. By 1923, the roadbed was under construction and any consideration of building a bridge for rail had been abandoned. The Gandy Bridge would be exclusively an automotive highway. The new bridge connected Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties, replacing a tedious drive of forty-three miles and one and three-quarter hours around the north rim of Old Tampa Bay. By the end of the decade, automobile travel over the new bridge had eliminated the Favorite Line steamboat service, which for more than thirty years had operated from Tampa’s downtown riverfront, and ferried Tampans to and from St. Petersburg, Pass-a-Grille, and Anna Maria Island.\footnote{Gandy’s company was originally the Tampa and St. Petersburg Railway Co, chartered in 1916 to build a railroad bridge and network between the two cities. A series of legislative acts granted}
Subdivision developers of the 1920s were the first to adapt their practices to cars. New developments such as Tampa’s Davis Islands offered streets intended for autos, designed and built with modern engineering and materials so that motorists could enjoy the speeds of which modern cars were capable. The rapid increase in the number of vehicles became obvious in older residential neighborhoods, such as Tampa’s Hyde Park, where motorists competed for limited parking and often blocked access to private driveways. Wider streets, alleys, driveways, and sidewalks all helped modulate the effects of motor traffic but also had the effect of reducing the land area available for other purposes and therefore increased land costs on a per lot basis. Developers sought cheaper raw land to divide and ventured further than ever from existing urban infrastructure, creating demand for increased miles of new road construction, as well as for improvements to existing but increasingly inadequate roads. Temple Terrace, Tampa’s golf-course suburb developed on grove land north of the Hillsborough River, was a good example. Unsurprisingly, developers preferred to sidestep the longer-range implications of auto mobilization, and deferred the logistical and infrastructure questions to the local state. Cities such as Tampa awakened gradually to the consequences but had no precedent for response. The 1920s-

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the company a right-of-way over and through Tampa Bay, and an exclusive franchise to operate toll facilities thereon. See “The Gandy Bridge Company Proposed Capitalization,” January 3, 1922 (George Gandy Papers, Box 1, Folder 25, University of South Florida Libraries, Special Collections. Also see “Prospectus, $1,500,000, Gandy Bridge Company, First Closed Mortgage 5.5% Sinking Fund Bonds Due April 1, 1957,” p. 6-10 (George Gandy Papers, Box 1, Folder 23, University of South Florida Libraries, Special Collections). The last ferryboat on Tampa Bay operated until 1954, carrying passengers and cars across the mouth of the bay between St. Petersburg and Manatee County. It ceased operating when the first Sunshine Skyway Bridge opened.
era Good Roads Movement was especially popular in Florida, testifying to the
dearth of adequate highways linking cities and neighborhoods.

Downtown Tampa avoided the worst consequences of auto mobilization
owing to federal surveyor John Jackson. In 1853, Jackson drew the plat of
Tampa’s central business district in a grid of broad streets, with each right-of-way
eighty feet across. By the 1920s, when automobile traffic overwhelmed the
narrow streets of other downtown districts, Tampa enjoyed ample space to
accommodate angled parking along both sides of each street, as well as multiple
traffic lanes. However, surveyors who came after Jackson calculated that
narrower rights-of-way were more efficient in that they used less land for the non-
revenue-producing purpose of public streets. Accordingly, streets in Tampa’s
expanding neighborhoods tended to be no wider than necessary. Thus, except in
the city’s unusual central core, traffic congestion from automobiles during the
1920s oppressed Tampans as much as it did city dwellers across the nation.

Auto mobilization affected Tampa distinctively because the phenomenon
occurred just when it would dictate the city’s future pattern of development.
Tampa’s growth spasm of the 1920s was the model for each wave of growth that
followed. Each phase of urban and suburban expansion benefitted from the
increase in car ownership and road construction. Neighborhood design and
homebuilding reflected the needs of car-owning families. Tampa entered upon a
pattern of infrastructure development in which city officials became perennial
apologists for the shortcomings of its street and highway network, which never
satisfied the constantly accelerating demands of its citizen users, and the
increasing needs of commercial transportation. Motor highways dominated countless decisions about Tampa’s future.

**Reinventing Tampa**

Tampa in the 1920s was a steamy (some said seedy) harbor town that aspired to greater things. Civic reformers had to contend not only with a volatile and changing economy. They had to deal with the city's reputation for corruption, violence, and electoral irregularities, problems that the onset of Prohibition in the 1920s only intensified. Tampans did this in part by romanticizing vignettes out of the past, pressing history into service in the cause of depicting future promise. Buccaneers, smugglers, and gamblers all figured in Tampa's history as well as in its present. Their mythology as well as their contemporary exploits facilitated comparisons between Tampa and its equally raffish Gulf coast neighbor, New Orleans. The parallels between the two seaports included celebrations of their roles in the saga of European discovery and conquest in the Americas.

The 1920s enterprise known as rum running fit naturally into Tampa’s culture. Florida's geography, with hundreds of miles of coastline situated conveniently near Cuba and the Bahamas, favored alcohol smuggling, a trade that exploded after the 1919 passage of the Volstead Act. Many Florida counties had already been dry for years. On January 1, 1919, a year ahead of the rest of the country, the state constitutionally adopted Prohibition. The people of Tampa and Hillsborough County were cool toward the new law however, and local authorities routinely ignored or even helped subvert liquor-laws, generally
following a *laissez-faire* policy that many Tampans found as agreeable as it was lucrative.\(^{17}\)

Gambling also became integral to Tampa’s distinctive *persona*. During the 1890s, immigrant cigar makers from Cuba had brought Tampa into an industrial culture and profoundly influenced its political economy for years after. A Cuban tradition imported by the cigar workers, the betting game of *bolita*, became one of Tampa’s most popular enterprises. Daily drawings from cloth sacks of numbered wooden balls established winning numbers. Gamblers who had purchased tickets with matching numbers received payoffs of as much as eight to one. Businesses within Tampa’s Cuban and Spanish neighborhoods of Ybor City and West Tampa hosted the daily drawings before audiences of avid gamblers. *Bolita* became ubiquitous. Vendors discretely offered tickets for sale in every neighborhood, where customers could purchase a *bolita* chance along with a loaf of bread or a Coca Cola. By the 1920s, in spite of its criminality, in part because of it, *bolita* had come to influence Tampa’s politics and economy.\(^{18}\)

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\(^{17}\) Orrick and Crumpacker, *The Tampa Tribune* p. 91-93. Tampa’s defiance of Prohibition, through smuggling, local “underground” distilleries, and illegal sales under the protection of corrupt police, is widely cited. See Michael H. Mundt, ““Deplorable Conditions:” Tampa's Crisis of Law and Order in the Roaring Twenties,” *Sunland Tribune* 22, no. 1 (1996).

\(^{18}\) Longtime downtown businessman and school board member Benjamin Hill, Jr., explained one of the ways in which Tampa’s prominent Anglo citizens profited from *bolita*: “I cannot name any names on it because I could not prove it if it came up, but I know several of them personally. In fact, I know all of them personally, basically. But if you were a *bolita* operator, selling *bolita* – I mean not the salesman, but you know, the Ralph Riena, who was [a *bolita*] operator – maybe you got a heavy play on the number seven, and boy if that hits you, you can get hurt. So he would sell-off seven to these prominent people in Tampa. They would [say], all right, I will pay seven. You pay me $100 or $500 or whatever it is, and I will take the seven. If it comes up, I will pay it off for you. So they laid-off the bet, is what they did. So there were a lot of prominent people in this town who were laying-off bets in those days. Of course it was pretty good money. I mean, if you got hit, you had one chance in a hundred of losing, so it came out pretty good . . . laying-off bets became a pretty good thing for some of the prominent people.” Alan J. Bliss, “Oral History Interview with Benjamin H. Hill, Jr., 1999,” transcript, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, Gainesville, p. 25.
By the 1910s, an enterprising young Anglo named Charlie Wall began to organize Tampa’s gambling activity by negotiating police protection for ticket vendors and game operators. Born in 1880 to a prominent Tampa family, Wall navigated easily among Tampa’s Hispanic and “white” communities. Exploiting Tampa’s casually corrupt electoral politics, Wall brokered votes as well as cash, trading combinations of both for the tacit cooperation of mayors, police, and prosecutors. Arrests of bolita operators were usually exercises in public relations, or sometimes disciplinary measures aimed at those who failed to buy protection. The ease and convenience with which Tampanos and visitors alike availed themselves of betting was proof of Wall’s success.19

Growth in the 1920s, when the city’s population doubled from 51,608 to 101,161, ignited competition in Tampa’s underground economy. When new criminal factions attempted to enter the business, violence resulted. Occasionally the consequences were fatal, and since bloodshed was newsworthy, Tampa’s gambling economy gained notoriety in the national press. The unwelcome publicity raised Tampa’s profile, though not in the way that pleased the chamber of commerce. Reformers periodically tried to arouse moral indignation, with little success. Bolita corrupted virtually every politician in Tampa, as well as some in the state’s capital. A certain opacity lay across Tampa’s civic culture, as anyone involved with politics had no choice but to come to terms with the city’s extra-legal functions and arrangements that could never withstand public

acknowledgement. Membership in Tampa’s civic elite compelled tacit acceptance of crime or at least a tolerance for moral ambiguity.20

Bootlegging and gambling, occurring more or less openly, along with an exotically multi-racial, multi-ethnic population, lent Tampa a vaguely mysterious, at times alien persona. Beginning in 1904, Tampa’s social and business elites celebrated that image through an annual civic pageant called Gasparilla. Every winter thereafter, at the height of each tourist season, the members of Ye Mystic Krewe of Gasparilla costumed themselves as battle-scarred, dark-skinned, knife and pistola-wielding buccaneers. Embarking on a square-rigged sailing vessel, the Krewe led a flotilla of small craft and yachts on a boozy waterborne invasion, the climax of which occurred when the pirate ship docked on the downtown riverfront. In a shoreside ceremony, Tampa’s mayor cheerfully “surrendered” the city to the pirate leader, sanctioning a day of parades, parties, and public debauchery. Schools, government offices, and businesses closed for the much-anticipated event.

Nineteenth-century pirate Jose Gaspar, whose exploits the festival ostensibly commemorated, was an apocryphal figure, but Gasparilla itself incorporated social protocols and nomenclature closely resembling those of New Orleans’ famous Mardi Gras. Tampa’s Krewe annually chose Gasparilla’s king from among their membership of influential business and professional men, while the queen and her court were invariably the daughters of the same affluent, socially privileged families. Through their control of the elaborate festive rites, the

white, predominantly Anglo men of Tampa’s business and political communities used Gasparilla’s pageantry to acknowledge and indeed, reinforce Tampa’s complex and raffish persona, while at the same time asserting their place atop the city’s political economy. In their construct, bolita and bootlegging were simply piracy’s legatees. All were timeless, traditional, mostly harmless enterprises that evoked masculine fantasies of easy wealth and alcohol-fueled conquest, while serving as the financial underpinnings for the less romantic but presumably more reliable operations of Tampa’s modern, legitimate commerce.

Tampa’s civic boosters found the city’s past murky enough, like that of the pirate Jose Gaspar, to permit modern adaptation in the pursuit of useable history. On April 15, 1928, for example, the city placed a stone marker in Plant Park, commemorating the 400th anniversary of the landing of the Spanish noble Panfilo de Narvaez and “four hundred brave companions, the first white men to set foot upon the shores of Tampa Bay.” Narvaez was an explorer who rarely knew where he was, an inept conquistador whom historian Samuel Elliot Morison described as “the most incompetent of all who sailed for Spain.” However, four hundred years later Narvaez’s expedition had become shrouded in myth, while Florida’s name was a damaged brand. Tampans reacted by portraying their city as a place with a rich past, advancing steadily across a centuries-long arc of significant achievements. An old-world connection implied that modern Tampa was mature, stable, and ripe with the possibilities that attend a grand legacy. The location of Narvaez’s landing was impossible to prove, reflecting both the

historical problem of Florida’s Spanish colonial period and its potential for exploitation. Distant, undocumented events were easy to appropriate in the service of contemporary requirements. Tampans of the 1920s tempered perceptions of themselves as grasping, unsubstantial *arrivistes* by making the Narvaez memorial part of a contrived “Pageant of Progress.” By appropriating an epochal moment that was so ancient, as Americans measured such things, Tampa dignified its otherwise thin historical narrative, and represented itself in a more satisfyingly timeless perspective.22

Customs and cultural habits rooted in Tampa’s past survived among Tampans of the 1920s, but their persistence conflicted with some aspects of the city’s boom-time agenda. Since the Spanish-American War, native *Tampanos* tended to behave guardedly toward outsiders, particularly Northerners, until the latter proved themselves sympathetic to local values such as the immutability of white supremacy, an assumption that predominated amongst all the races in Tampa. Tampans were wary of state and federal government institutions, but because the local underground economy was so entrenched and reliably prosperous, they evinced an easy tolerance for criminal entrepreneurs.

Tampans’ appetite for growth, sharpened by the swift rise and fall of its 1920s boom, complicated its attachment to such traditions. To attract outside investment required confidence on the part of outside investors, even those with

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22 Leland Hawes described the marker ceremony and the “Pageant of Progress” in *The Tampa Tribune*, “Baylife History and Heritage,” April 19, 1998, p. 3. Across Tampa Bay, developer Walter Fuller almost simultaneously erected a sign declaring his St. Petersburg real estate development to be the site of Narvaez’s landing. Concerning Walter Fuller’s marker, see Raymond Arsenault, *St. Petersburg and the Florida Dream, 1888-1950* (Norfolk: The Donning Company, 1988)p. 18. The actual site of Narvaez’s landing on Florida’s west coast is probably unknowable, although the date is not disputed.
different cultural assumptions. Capital placed into Tampa’s local economy by newcomers or distant speculators was sometimes called “foreign” capital, a telling locution. Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs promoted investment that would validate their complicated local milieu of crime, racism, and celebration. As the boom faded, uncertainties about Tampa’s future made outside investment increasingly important as well as problematic.

**The Bubble Disappears**

In September 1925, Tampa’s and Florida’s economies were on a trajectory for growth. Major investors who had bet on the trend were alert for signs of trouble though, and beginning that month, a series of unrelated events heightened their worries. What initially appeared as an economic bump in the road seemed to morph into a healthy retrenchment. Then it became a collapse, mysterious and seemingly inexplicable, but widespread. A series of localized events broke in upon a celebratory atmosphere of overheated speculation, and each new negative development worked to amplify the one preceding. The dénouement came in September 1926, in the form of a catastrophic hurricane. During the panic that gradually unfolded, business and political leaders discovered the costs that the boom economy had imposed upon cities such as Tampa, as well as experiencing the limits of their ability to manage and survive the aftermath.

In the late summer of 1925, Florida’s East Coast Railroad tried unsuccessfully to adjust its overtaxed system to meet an unprecedented demand to deliver construction supplies to southern Florida. The railroad temporarily “embargoed” supplies of building materials destined for the end of its line, which
happened to be the south Florida counties at the epicenter of the boom. Miami was the only functioning seaport in the region, and was already backed up with cargo vessels anchored for days awaiting dock space at which to unload their freight. An untimely (from shippers’ perspective) strike by Miami dockworkers seeking better pay created additional delays and uncertainty for builders and their clientele. Throughout the autumn, those and other logistical disruptions inspired national news reports of chaos in the region. Then, on January 10, 1926, a shipwreck closed the only deep channel serving the Port of Miami. By February, the channel remained blocked, and the interruption to unloading building supplies brought local construction work to a halt. Unfinished buildings delayed real estate closings, the revenue from which investors and lenders had become dependent upon. The increasing disruptions to the flow of capital into Florida banks undermined local credit markets. Troubled by the signs of instability, large investors pulled back from their commitment to the Mizners’ ambitious new development at Boca Raton, the news of which disrupted additional transactions.

For smaller investors, and for Floridians who had come to thrive on the business of selling and re-selling land, it was not immediately obvious that the boom was over. Real estate dealers like Walter Fuller brightly insisted over a period of months that turned into a year that nothing was amiss, until realizing that they were the only people who believed it. Asked later why the boom ended, Fuller explained that “[w]e just ran out of suckers. That’s all. We got all their
money, and then started trading with ourselves."\textsuperscript{23} Within the span of a few years Fuller had gained and lost a fortune, and for the rest of his life waxed philosophical about the boom years.

After a desultory winter tourist season, Florida’s promoters spent the spring and summer of 1926 putting the best face on their setbacks, portraying Florida’s roiled economy as merely catching its wind. Then, on September 18, a major hurricane introduced tens of thousands of new Floridians to the hazards of a subtropical peninsula. While customarily called the Great Miami Hurricane, the storm savaged most of southern Florida, then curved north across the Gulf of Mexico and struck Pensacola. During the following weeks, the Red Cross counted 373 definitely killed by the storm, another 811 missing and presumably lost, 6381 injured, 43,000 homeless, and $159 million worth of property damage. The impact of the major hurricane conclusively ended a boom that many suspected had become mostly chimera anyway.\textsuperscript{24}

The contraction affected the economy of the entire state of Florida, though the heaviest impacts were in urban places such as Tampa, whose port

\textsuperscript{23} Fuller elaborated: “Did I say we ran out of suckers? That isn’t quite correct. We became the suckers. . . standing down there at the foot of the class.” Fuller, \textit{This Was Florida’s Boom} p. 62.

\textsuperscript{24} Accounts of the 1926 hurricane vary. These details are from Jay Barnes, \textit{Florida’s Hurricane History} (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), p. 111-126. Tampa’s Peter O. Knight was among those Floridians more worried by the impact that the catastrophic weather event might have on the state’s image than by its more immediate consequences. Knight tried to dissuade state and local officials from soliciting assistance for Miami’s hurricane victims, pointing out that any admission that they needed help would “…do more damage permanently to Florida than would be offset by the funds received.” John Kenneth Galbraith, \textit{The Great Crash of 1929}, (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1954), p. 11-12. Almost exactly two years later, on September 16, 1928, an even more destructive hurricane made landfall at Palm Beach. Property losses were smaller than in the 1926 hurricane, but at least 1,836 deaths, most of them occurring in the agricultural counties surrounding Lake Okeechobee, made the storm one of the most lethal natural disasters in American history. See Barnes, \textit{Florida’s Hurricane History}, p. 127.
activity provided a vivid example. In 1926, a record 464,000 tons of fruit, vegetables, tobacco, cement, building materials, and fertilizer crossed Tampa’s wharves, but by 1929, port volume had plunged to 141,600 tons. In addition to the dire consequences for Tampa’s stevedores and longshoremen, the decline was a heavy blow to the port district’s business owners and their allied civic boosters who had long sought to build up Tampa’s importance as a shipping nexus for commerce throughout the Caribbean and Latin Americas.  

Tampa’s land-born commerce suffered measurably as well. In 1926, traffic on the Gandy Bridge fell 17% from the prior year. In 1927, the volume of traffic dropped an additional 31.9% off the 1926 figure. By 1928, the toll revenues of the Gandy Bridge Company were less than half what they had been in 1925. Businesses that had recently opened along new highways, such as restaurants and gasoline stations, suffered accordingly. On both sides of Tampa Bay, real estate speculators had purchased land along the routes leading to and from the

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25 Even before the effects of the Great Depression reached Florida, statewide economic indicators pointed to a grave situation. Between 1926 and 1930, the assessed valuation of Florida’s real estate fell from $623 million to $441 million. That assessed value represented the perspective of local property appraisers, whose estimating accuracy declined as market volume decreased. In a declining market just as in one that is rising, appraisals lag behind the reality of market conditions. County property appraisers, who are elected in Florida, answered to multiple constituencies concerned with the value of real local estate for property tax purposes. Property owners sought low valuations, in order to minimize taxes. However, the lower the value of the property making up local tax rolls, the less revenue flowed to local government, which impaired the quality and standing of local government indebtedness - a critical concern in practically every city and county in Florida at the time, as elaborated elsewhere in this chapter. During the same four-year period, the operating revenue of railroads in Florida declined from $91 million to $46 million. Perhaps most tellingly, personal and corporate income fell from $815 million in 1925 to $84 million in 1930. See Junius E. Dovell, History of Banking in Florida, 1828-1954 (Orlando: Florida Bankers Asssociation, 1955), p. 114. Concerning data for the Port of Tampa, see War Department The Board of Engineers For Rivers and Harbors, The Ports of Miami and Tampa, Florida: Port Series No. 8, Part 2 (Rev. 1930) (Washington, D.C.: Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army, and United States Shipping Board, 1931), p. 99.
Gandy Bridge. For those who could afford to pay the taxes and keep their land, the profits that they had envisioned would be decades in the coming.26

The economy contracted rapidly just as cities such as Tampa had expanded their borrowing for capital projects conceived during the boom. By far the most common method of raising cash for public works was the sale of bonds backed by the creditworthiness of the local government entity, i.e., municipal bonds. By 1930, the $1.25 million worth of bonds that had been sold in order to pay for Tampa Municipal Hospital were part of the $14.7 million owed to the city’s bondholders. The amount of Tampa’s outstanding debt placed it fifth among Florida cities, after Miami, St. Petersburg, West Palm Beach, and Jacksonville. Tampa’s annual debt service was $1.26 million, or 30% of the annual operating budget, similar to the debt load of Florida’s cities of comparable size.”27

26 Concerning the Gandy Bridge traffic and revenues, see “President’s Report, Read at the Annual Meeting of Stockholders of the Gandy Bridge Company,” March 18, 1929 (George Gandy Papers, Box 1, Folder 26, University of South Florida Library, Special Collections).

27 See J. Mark Wilcox, Finance and Taxation Problems of Florida Municipalities (Jacksonville: Florida League of Municipalities, 1930), Committee ReportTables 1 and 2, p. 4-6. The budgets of smaller municipalities that had been caught up in the boom were even more seriously impaired by their debt financing, such as West Palm Beach (54%), Sarasota (58%), and Coral Gables (64%). The Wilcox report offers a remarkably comprehensive contemporaneous appraisal of Florida’s chaotic municipal finances on the eve of the Great Depression. Mark Wilcox was the City Attorney for West Palm Beach, and chaired the League’s committee on Finance and Taxation. (In 1932, he became Florida’s Democratic U.S. Congressman from the 4th District). His report was a response to the fiscal distress discussed at the League’s annual meeting in December 1929 (less than 90 days after the stock market crash, but by then some four years after the Florida real estate crash). Aside from the revenue problems already endemic to Florida cities, Wilcox gloomily predicted that local government costs were bound to increase. No citizen wished to forego the then-recent advances in public-safety areas such as police and fire protection, or sanitation and health, and no local politician who demanded such sacrifices would long survive at the ballot box. Wilcox also noted that Florida continued to attract seasonal visitors, whose mere presence imposed extra burdens on state and local government. Wilcox’s Finance and Taxation committee sought assistance from the Florida legislature, asking that it reduce or forgo altogether its share of property taxes, and suggested additional measures to relieve the financial crisis of Florida’s cities: “We recommend that all construction programs of the State Highway Department be cancelled, and only a sufficient amount of the tax now collected from the sale of gasoline and automobile licenses as is necessary for the maintenance of the present highway system and the matching of Federal aid appropriations be used for highway maintenance and construction, and
Tampans contended with harsh new factors that called into question the virtues of owning real estate. Most of the money to pay for city and county services, as well as for debt service, came from local taxes on real estate. Owners and renters alike consumed municipal services, but property values, which mattered more to owners than to renters, derived in part from the quality, quantity, and the continuity of public services. Hard-pressed property owners who observed the value of their property decreasing began to question the wisdom of paying their property tax assessments. Some deeded their property to the city or county in lieu of a tax foreclosure, while others ignored their tax notices, and effectively abandoned their property. The latter often included out-of-state owners who had invested speculatively on platted lots in new subdivisions. Many of those had financed their land purchase and were making installment payments, either to the subdivision developer or to his financiers. Some had also borrowed the money for their down payment, as contemporary stock market speculators were wont to do. Out-of-state owners, inaccessible to local collection efforts, were the most prone to cut their losses.

that so much of said the taxes as are now appropriated and devoted to new construction be allotted to the municipalities of Florida for use in the payment of bond debts” (p. 14). Earlier that year, the legislature had in fact appropriated a portion of the state’s gasoline tax revenue to liquidate bonds issued by the cities and counties for roads and bridges. The Florida Supreme Court overturned the legislation on constitutional grounds. In 1931, the legislature then raised the state’s gasoline tax in order to fund its Road Department, a supremely powerful instrument of political patronage. As part of the new appropriation, the state reimbursed counties for roads and bridges along state highways even in cases where the counties had constructed the improvements. See Stronge, The Sunshine Economy p. 136.

Wilcox’s report is evidence that the state’s real estate crash, pre-dating the Great Depression, helped force a conservative fiscal culture onto Florida’s voters and elected officials. Floridians’ ambivalence toward paying for the growth that they pursue so ardently is a contradiction with consequences that that have haunted the state throughout the twentieth century. That contradiction is part of the state’s complicated political and psychological inheritance from the 1920s that remains at the core of twenty-first century policy debates.
By the end of the 1920s, delinquent property taxes had accrued to the extent that municipal defaults loomed. In 1922, just before the surge in real estate activity, Florida's local government debt totaled $110 million. In 1927, when Peter O. Knight lauded the State of Florida's balanced budget in the *Saturday Evening Post*, he remained silent about the financial condition of municipalities such as Tampa. However, the cities had borrowed heavily to finance their growth, and by 1929, their collective debt was $600 million, making Florida's public debt the highest *per capita* in the United States. That year, newly-elected Governor Doyle Carlton, formerly a Tampa attorney, candidly warned legislators that “[i]n spite of high taxes, so high that many have ceased to pay, bond defaults are imminent in towns, districts, and counties throughout the state. ‘Unwise,’ someone says, to release this information. But it is folly to dodge facts which will ultimately force their attention.”28

The large numbers of parcels against which tax liens existed had a chilling effect on real estate sales. Liens for unpaid taxes impair the title to real property, as they must be satisfied before any other title transaction can take place. Concentrations of properties subject to such liens raised uncertainty in the minds of prospective buyers, regardless of other factors that may have attracted investment. Unable to predict how long it might be until liens on surrounding property would be settled, prospective buyers of individual home sites avoided

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28 Dovell, *History of Banking in Florida*, p. 115. Also see Wilcox, *Finance and Taxation Problems of Florida Municipalities*, *op cit*, and Rogers, "Fortune and Misfortune," "The Paradoxical Twenties." For a different interpretation of Florida's 1920s experience, see Raymond Arsenault, who considers that the effects upon Florida of the 1926 real estate crash are sometimes overstated, certainly in the case of St. Petersburg, which was, he notes, insulated by its dependable winter tourist season; Arsenault, *St. Petersburg and the Florida Dream*, p.253.
even those adjacent or nearby parcels for which the title was free and clear. Investors bypassed entire subdivisions in which disproportionate numbers of properties were encumbered by unpaid taxes.

As Florida’s land boom faltered, Tampans reacted by trying to obscure its end. They feared that any acknowledgement of negative facts would become a self-fulfilling prophecy by damaging prospects for investment. Business leaders tried to assure outside observers that the financial climate was better than ever. In 1927, for example, Peter O. Knight penned an article for the *New York Evening Post* that sought to counter skepticism about Florida’s economy. Knight asserted that the “end of gambling in real estate marked the beginning of industrial development,” that Florida’s banks had successfully weathered a seven-month period of “deflation” caused by “lack of confidence,” and they had emerged from that unfortunate episode in financial condition superior to that of banks anywhere else in the United States. At the height of the crisis, Florida banks had borrowed $7 million, but at Knight’s writing in 1927 (“today, at the end of it all,” he blandly asserted), they owed a mere $5 million to the Federal Reserve. Knight did not mention that, of the 41 Florida banks that failed during the summer of 1926, only one had been a member of the Federal Reserve System. The rest were uninsured state-chartered banks, and their depositors’ losses unrecoverable. Knight went on to concede that the State of Florida’s modest revenue from taxes had declined, but he boasted that the state was nevertheless debt free, proof of its wise stewardship and inherent prosperity. In fact, deficit budgets in state government were unconstitutional in Florida, a
decisive factor that Knight chose to overlook. Economic conditions shone, Knight insisted, because “Florida has real merit. It has had constant and continuous development for many years. The hectic real estate gambling was simply an incident to our extraordinary and sound commercial development . . .”29

Knight’s assurances rang increasingly hollow as, following the 1926 collapse, Florida’s toothless banking laws and feckless or corrupt regulators permitted functionally insolvent banks to operate. One of the most egregious examples was Tampa’s largest financial institution, Citizen’s Bank and Trust, which finally collapsed in July 1929, following a swift, seemingly spontaneous run against its deposits. Citizens’ had actually been insolvent for longer than three

29 Blaming the media, Knight explained that “[B]ecause of the wide publicity given to the hectic real estate speculation with which Florida was afflicted in 1925, persons outside Florida became obsessed with the idea the chief business of Florida was real estate speculation. When gambling in real estate ceased last December these same people became satisfied business in Florida and its progress had ceased, and thereupon this state was afflicted with such a series of misrepresentations affecting its solvency and credit and the solvency and credit of its banks and institutions as no State (sic) in history ever had to contend with.” Peter O. Knight, “Florida’s Recovery From Deflation,” New York Evening Post, n.d 1927., p. 2. The quoted is from an offprint contemporaneously published by the Florida Growers’ Press, the original of which is in the archives of the Tampa Bay History Center. Cataloguing information was unavailable at this writing. Uncritical optimism in the guise of serious reportage was routine in the media of the late 1920s. Knight’s sanguine rhetoric rang hollow, but was still short of the bald desperation that characterized other pro-Florida Babbitry of the day. Even so, he seems to have been unconscious of his own implicit concession that Florida had been sustained up until then by little more than a vague sense of “confidence.”

Max Wellborn, the Governor of the Federal Reserve’s Sixth District headquartered in Atlanta, had recently helped member banks survive a crisis of Southern farming caused by drought, a boll weevil infestation, and unstable postwar foreign markets for Southern exports. In October 1925, Wellborn was less sympathetic toward Florida’s bankers when he wrote to his son: “I have been a spectator in the midst of the most active land speculation that the world has ever had . . . Everything is magnified and exaggerated . . . The bright sun shines upon the largest and most varied collection of thieves ever gotten together in any clime – they hesitate at nothing.” See “Droning Through the Roaring Twenties,” in A History of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, 1914-1989, website: http://www.frbatlanta.org/invoke.cfm?objectid=83FD4138-9AF0-11D5-898400508BB89A83&method=display_body, accessioned May 26, 2009.

Longtime Chamber of Commerce executive Scott Christopher described campaigns of the late 1920s to promote Tampa as a place immune to the vagaries of Florida’s speculative enterprises, but he conceded that “slowly the psychology of depression crept across the business community.” W. Scott Christopher, Tampa’s People With a Purpose (Tampa: Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce, 1993), p. 71-80.
years, a fact that State of Florida Comptroller Ernest Amos obscured by agreeing with Citizens’ claim that real estate loans (including a delinquent loan that he owed personally to Citizens’) made during the Boom were still liquid, performing assets. As a result, the bank continued to list loans on its books at face value, as if secured by real property that had maintained its pre-crash worth. Even casual observers knew better, and banking leaders such as Knight were certainly aware of the collusion and fraud. On the eve of Citizens’ denouement, George Howell awakened his father in law Alonzo Clewis (Knight’s partner in the Exchange National Bank of Tampa) to alert him to rumors that Citizens would not open the following morning. Clewis, the veteran banker and entrepreneur, phlegmatically commented, “[d]oesn’t surprise me,” and returned to sleep. When Citizens failed as Tampa’s knowledgeable financiers had anticipated, nine affiliated local banks closed as well, and wiped out the wealth of thousands of business and individual depositors across Florida. The scandal cemented Tampa’s reputation as a place where investing was a business for fools, gamblers, or those with vital inside information. Even its banks were financial time bombs, a critical fact that the city’s most powerful businessmen unsurprisingly kept to themselves.30

30 In finance accounting used by banks, the term “performing asset” means an outstanding loan on which payments arrive regularly and on-time, and whose borrower or guarantor has ample resources to meet all obligations. Delinquencies suggest increased potential for future defaults and for the eventual devaluation of the lenders’ assets, which is why bankers are loath to disclose rising delinquencies in their loan portfolios. The Alonzo Clewis anecdote is from the author’s interview with longtime Tampa banker (and Clewis’ grandson) Clewis Howell, who is also George Howell’s oldest son. See Alan J. Bliss, “Oral History Interview with Alonzo Clewis Howell, 2003,” interview, recorded on audiotape and transcribed, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, Gainesville. The Citizens Bank failure, its causes as well as its larger consequences, are described in detail in Vickers, Panic in Paradise. Scott Christopher refers to July 16, 1926, the date of the Citizen’s collapse, as “Dooms Day.” While blaming the initial runs on the ignorant ranting of a cigar factory reader in Ybor City, Christopher notes that Citizens’ failure affected the entire State of Florida, and that recovery was impossible before October 29,
The collapse of the real estate market in the late 1920s had lastingly deleterious effects on real estate that had lately been re-platted into smaller units of ownership, i.e., individual lots. What had been large tracts of land under the control of one or relatively few owners had turned into subdivisions. Parcels consisting of a dozen, a hundred, or even thousands of acres had been divided into numerous small units of ownership (lots). Because of the reconfiguration of ownership, the land was no longer available for its previous coherent use, and yet the market for home sites was gone. Investors who could not sell their lots fell behind on tax payments to the local government or simply abandoned their property altogether. In the years that followed the collapse of the real estate boom, new development bypassed those abandoned subdivisions or parts thereof. It was tedious and costly to resolve clouded titles, to negotiate with multiple property owners living in various distant places (often out of state), and then to replat a subdivision, even if it only existed on paper. In the case of a subdivision that had failed while being developed, the existing streets and other infrastructure improvements were often incomplete, substandard, or obsolete. It was faster, easier, and cheaper for a developer to pass up abandoned projects and acquire virgin parcels of land in order to begin afresh.31

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31 Achieving maximum profits within the minimum time required efficiency, which led developers to create as many lots out of an acre as possible. Since every home site needed access to a street or alley, narrow lot widths were the most expedient configuration to meet that objective, and some 1920s-vintage plats contained lots as narrow as twenty feet. Because they accommodated the structural footprint of contemporary bungalows, forty and fifty-foot widths were the customary increment for residential subdivisions (ergo the title of David Nolan’s account of the Florida real estate boom, Fifty Feet in Paradise). After WW II, however, lot buyers and homebuilders who catered to them favored larger lots, which offered greater privacy and exclusivity. Seventy-foot widths became customary, while older fifty-foot lots, which had allowed
The “crash” of Florida’s economic boom of the 1920s resembled a slow-motion train wreck, as one event after another added to the unfolding chaos. By the end of the 1920s, Florida was modeling for the rest of the nation the stages of a speculative market collapsing under the weight of baseless optimism. Early investors had influenced the market using their own land and cash. Their successes drew speculators into the market, who risked other people’s money, e.g. that of credulous friends, relatives, or bankers. Speculators’ leveraged bets on Florida real estate prices served to spread the risk to others, reaching even those who had remained on the sidelines of the market. Cautionary voices seemed self-defeating, while optimists profited, reinforcing perceptions that optimism itself could sustain the market for Florida land. Meanwhile, Floridians had committed themselves to public investments aimed at accommodating growth. Similarly to the aftermath of the Great Miami Hurricane, the physical and financial wreckage of Floridians’ boom-era public infrastructure made the 1920s hard to forget.

**Tampa’s New Culture of Civic Entrepreneurship**

During the 1920s, new types of jobs and business opportunities drew people to Tampa and differentiated the experiences of newcomers from those of...
previous immigrants to the region. Rather than expecting agricultural employment, as had previously been the norm, new workers and entrepreneurs earned their living in tourism, in real estate and construction, and in the proliferation of services such as law, banking and finance, all catering to the needs of Tampa’s swelling population. The expansion of roads and bridges, and of automobile ownership, led to the expansion and diffusion of jobs serving motorists in such places as car agencies, supply houses, and service stations. A cycle thereby began of employment in urban centers, the sustenance and expansion of which depended in turn upon population growth. Many workers saw the new types of non-agricultural jobs as more desirable than farm work. The dramatic effect of the trend, played out over just a few years, helped make the case for continuing growth as a fundamental assumption about Tampa’s future, and that of Florida generally.

For decades after the 1920s, the economic crisis of the era affected those who regarded Tampa as their civic project. To Tampans who witnessed their contemporaries humiliated or ruined, the real estate crash had the effect of a cultural as well as a financial earthquake. A generation of influential civic entrepreneurs such as banker George Howell, attorney Robert E. Lee Chancey, or druggist Curtus Hixon, processed choices through their historical interpretation of the 1920s, which informed their comprehension of later events. Each reacted individually to Tampa’s troubled passage of the 1920s, and their collective
responses evolved over the subsequent decades to help shape Tampa’s physical form and its political economy.\textsuperscript{32}

The thread that connected the 1920s to the following decades was one of reforming Florida’s dented image. Florida’s real estate bubble led to widespread skepticism toward the state’s land and housing markets, its bankers, and realtors. Florida real estate brokers blamed un-named outsiders for the damage done to their trade. As one consequence, the State of Florida initiated licensing of real estate dealers for the first time, although with little by way of regulatory guidelines. Awakening to the public contempt that their industry had drawn, brokers secured a role as gatekeepers to the business by having members of their local real estate boards appointed to administer the state’s licensing law through the Florida Real Estate Commission.\textsuperscript{33}

The Florida Bankers Association tried to protect its image while deflecting reforms to the banking system. In 1930, the FBA threw its support behind State Comptroller Ernest Amos, against whom impeachment proceedings had been instituted over concerns that he had contributed to Tampa’s 1929 Citizens’ Bank debacle. Amos and the Florida Bankers Association had powerful allies in the legislature. A tangled network of financial relationships connected elected officials to the Comptroller and to the banks ostensibly regulated by his office.

\textsuperscript{32} Chancey and Hixon both later served as Tampa’s mayors. Between them, they held that office from 1931 until 1956. Two more examples of Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs who were deeply affected by the 1920s were Peter O. Knight and Carl G. Brorein, presidents of Tampa Electric Co. and the Peninsular Telephone Co., respectively. Both headed utilities, extraordinarily capital-dependent enterprises that had invested heavily in response to the 1920s boom. Knight, also a former mayor of Tampa, headed Tampa Electric until his death in 1946. Brorein was President of Peninsular Telephone from 1938 until 1967.

Those relationships amounted to conflicts of interest that could not have survived public exposure. Predictably, the impeachment hearings took place in executive session, all testimony was sealed, and Ernest Amos’s acquittal allowed his political career to survive, at least temporarily. Apparently uneasy at public skepticism, the legislature passed a resolution declaring that Florida’s epidemic of bank failures associated with the real estate crash was “due to economic and industrial causes and not due to carelessness on the part of the state officials or laxity in the enforcement of state laws.”

In November 1932, Amos lost his campaign for re-election, by which time banking reform had risen to a national political issue.

The distinctive thing about Tampa’s economic boom during the 1920s was that its central commodity was land, not only for its tangible uses, but also as a speculative investment. Natives and newcomers alike expected to prosper from Tampa’s boom by parlaying real estate into personal wealth. The collapse of the boom left many skeptical of Tampa’s future, while others became more determined to ultimately secure their fortunes by promoting Tampa’s growth. During the most important passage in Tampa’s history, from the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s - the period of Tampa’s actual boom - civic entrepreneurs relied upon the lessons of the 1920s in order to guide public policy with the object of enhancing the appeal of real estate ownership by sustaining a market for property.


Florida’s economy of the late 1920s foreshadowed events nationwide, and pointed toward some of the reformist impulses that would energize the New Deal. In the later analysis of economist John Kenneth Galbraith, the events of the decade in Florida contained “all the elements of the classic speculative bubble” that ought to have alerted bankers, business leaders, and politicians to larger hazards then abroad in the American economic system.\(^{36}\) Like the rest of the state, Tampa’s experience of the Great Depression began earlier, lasted longer, and as a result was harsher than that of much of the rest of the nation. Florida’s reputation suffered lasting harm, as Americans came to associate the very word with unscrupulous promoters and financiers waiting to prey on newcomers and visitors. Tampa had been swept up in the exuberant excesses of the Florida boom and was brought low when thousands of gambles and daydreams failed. The conditions that followed impeded recovery for more than a decade. As its leading citizens searched the detritus of the boom years for the means to rescue their bets, and to repair the damage to their businesses and their dreams, they were open to new deals.

\(^{36}\) John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Great Crash, 1929* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1954). Galbraith wryly described Florida of the 1920s as “a world of speculative make-believe. This is a world inhabited not by people who have to be persuaded to believe, but by people who want an excuse to believe. In the case of Florida, they wanted to believe that the whole peninsula would soon be populated by the holiday-makers and the sun-worshipers of a new and remarkably indolent era.” (p. 9).
During the 1930s, civic entrepreneurs sought to change Tampa’s reputation for seedy business practices, political corruption, and organized crime by helping modernize the city. Reform-minded business and political leaders such as banker George Howell, businessman William Haggerty hoped to reinvent Tampa as a progressive urban center. However, events repeatedly frustrated their efforts. In 1935, Tampa’s longstanding practice of vigilante violence culminated in the murder of political activist Joseph Shoemaker, reportedly by local police officers acting with their chief’s approval. The ensuing press coverage drew national attention to Tampa’s repressive political culture, already famous for delivering the vote to order in fraudulent elections. Changes in election laws such as the statewide elimination in 1937 of the poll tax, and the following year’s public exposure of local gambling operator Charlie Wall’s underground business network, disrupted illegal gambling in Tampa’s political economy. By the decade’s end, Wall himself yielded involuntarily to a new criminal regime whose ruthlessness, he suggested, owed to its origins beyond Tampa. All of the functions of entrepreneurship in Tampa, both legitimate and criminal, experienced their own dimensions of a new deal.

The Great Depression provided both challenges and opportunities to rearrange Tampa’s public life and to revise an unsavory reputation that concerned and frustrated ambitious local promoters. The economic downturn, which for Tampans actually began in 1926, created problems. However, legitimate civic entrepreneurs found that New Deal programs provided both incentive and resources with which to build new facilities and institutions outside the ambit of the city’s traditional, and often corrupt and backward-
looking, power structure. They used federal policies and programs to develop Tampa’s seaport, build a new municipal airport, fund local public works, and to stimulate the local construction industry. Though uneasy at the potential for federal intrusion into local affairs, modernizing entrepreneurs such as Haggerty and Howell pursued fresh opportunities to start shifting the city’s center of political and economic gravity away from the crime, corruption, and cronyism of the raffish city of the early 20th century, and to promote a new narrative of growth, prosperity, and public purpose. They took for granted that their values, and those of business, banking, and civic leaders like them, would continue to guide development and regulate political and economic life. That presumption allowed more tradition-minded Tampans, such as the venerable banker and attorney Peter O. Knight, to reconcile the costs of joining their aspirations to the power of the U.S. national government.

In reacting to the Great Depression, Tampa’s leading citizens divided and re-aligned according to the way they interpreted the large forces affecting them. What held them together were their inherited presumptions and values, which included the importance of preserving and strengthening established local patterns of political and economic power. Both conservative and progressive interpretations of the Depression emerged from Tampa’s experience of the New Deal. For men such as Howell and Haggerty, the Depression created intellectual and emotional space within which they could imagine and give voice to alternative futures that would owe less to the city’s traditional practices. They believed that Tampans would have to revise their city’s culture in order to adapt its economy to the innovations of the 1930s. Others, such as banker and attorney Peter O. Knight, believed that Tampa would ultimately revert to the
rhythms and presumptions of life that had obtained before the collapse of its dominant real estate economy in the late 1920s.

For powerful local political operatives Patrick Whitaker and Robert Chancey, the Depression and New Deal seemed to offer new opportunities through which to advance their interests, often with help from Tampa’s buccaneering bolita entrepreneur, Charlie Wall, who profited during the Depression. However, Wall’s success even as others struggled emboldened potential competitors for his underground gambling business. When the influential Wall finally came under siege by his criminal opponents as well as by prosecutors, Pat Whitaker helped him to articulate a masterful argument for solidarity among Tampa’s corrupt establishment, of which both he and Wall were a part. The effort availed little, but revealed much about Tampa’s political economy. As the 1930s ended, the visions of Tampa to which all of these colorful figures aspired were under the sway of shifting social and cultural forces, disruptive technological changes, and the distant institutions of national government.

The economic chaos that defined the 1930s was especially disorienting because of Tampans’ collective memory of the previous decade. Between 1921 and 1927, the city’s population had doubled, going from 51,608 to 101,161. By the middle 1920s, Tampans new and old alike embraced high hopes and expectations for growth and prosperity. By 1930 however, forces that they found hard to identify had battered Tampans’ confidence. As the 1930s unfolded and the nationwide Depression deepened, Tampa’s old social and economic patterns seemed to offer little hope for a better future, while new practices might demand people in Tampa adapt to attitudes that they saw as alien. Yet to some it was Tampa itself that seemed disreputably alien, and
in its worst moments, under the sway of criminal violence and official venality. Influential citizens increasingly recognized that Tampa needed a new image, and that to effect meaningful change invited a departure from their distinctive traditions and venerable hierarchies.  

37 Concerning Tampa’s population data, see the Sixth Census of the State of Florida, 1935 (Tallahassee: Florida Department of Agriculture, Nathan Mayo, Commissioner), p. 91.

Scholarship on America and the Great Depression continues to expand and mature. Two decades ago, Tony Badger issued a useful synthesis of the towering body of work that already existed - see Anthony J. Badger, The New Deal: The Depression Years, 1933-40 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989). Since 1999, the standard general reference has been David M. Kennedy, Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), also offered in two volumes. Recent authors attempt to re-interpret the Depression decade by questioning its impact and by trying to de-mystify the Depression itself. For example, James R. McGovern, And a Time For Hope: Americans in the Great Depression (Westport: Praeger, 2000) suggests that Americans’ collective memory of the period over-dramatizes its harshness, and that in fact they evinced composure, ingenuity, and resourcefulness. As a social history, McGovern’s work colorfully portrays a resilient populace, but he is unpersuasive as to the argument that the Depression was not as bad as we remember it. A different re-interpretation comes from Amity Shlaes, The Forgotten Man: A New History of the Great Depression (New York: HarperCollins, 2007). The avowedly conservative Shlaes explains the Great Depression as the unnecessary consequence of fumbling interventions, first by Herbert Hoover, then by the Franklin Roosevelt administration. Had it not been for the New Deal, Shlaes argues, the Depression would have ended earlier rather than having to await the economic stimulus of World War II. Ideologues such as Newt Gingrich warmly celebrated Shlaes’ work as soon as it appeared.

New Deal critics from the left are dissatisfied with what they view as its limited accomplishments, and fault FDR’s New Dealers for enfeebling legislation by compromising with special interests. For an example of this analytic tension relative to housing legislation, which was important to the New Deal in terms of relief, recovery, and reform, see D. Bradford Hunt, “Was the 1937 U.S. Housing Act a Pyrrhic Victory?,” Journal of Planning History 4, no. 3 (2005) Hunt finds that the 1937 Housing Act realized classically Progressive ideas that weathered the legislative process surprisingly well. Furthermore, public housing’s later struggles ought not to be blamed on a law whose critics viewed it as emasculated at its conception. Instead, historians should compare the implementation of the law with its Progressive assumptions. Hunt sees Catherine Bauer, the law’s architect, as a shrewdly manipulative New Dealer taking the reform impulse in housing policy to a higher level, away from mere “slum clearance.” Put differently, in housing as well as in other attempts at reform, the New Deal accomplished as much as it could in its historical moment, and more than Progressive reformers had achieved.

Historian Ronald Tobey persuasively connects the Progressive impulse with the innovations of the New Deal in creating a new market for the retail consumption of electrical energy and the appliances that it powers. By helping make electricity widely and cheaply available, New Deal institutions such as the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) facilitated Americans’ aspirations to perfect their domestic environment with such things as refrigerators and washing machines, luxuries once reserved for the most affluent residents of large, sophisticated cities. The expanding market for those consumables in turn fueled manufacturing employment. Electrification contributed to the expansion of homeownership as well as to the spatial diffusion of housing, which is the central argument in Ronald C. Tobey, Technology as Freedom: The New Deal and the Electrical Modernization of the American Home (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

A notable recent addition to New Deal literature, and (because it focuses on political economy) pertinent to this study, is Jason Scott Smith, Building New Deal Liberalism: The Political Economy of
The Business of Politics

The decade of the 1930s revealed Tampa’s political culture at its worst, which paved the way for reform. Official corruption, election fraud, and public cynicism culminated in 1935 in an election that dismayed outsiders and embarrassed Tampans themselves. Tampa’s reputation for staging fraudulent elections stimulated reforms such as an end to poll taxes and the introduction of voting machines. Such innovations weakened criminals who had long brokered the fraudulent voting that allowed superficially legitimate politicians to dominate public institutions in the city and in Hillsborough County.

During the Depression, Tampa was, like most places in the South, functionally a one-party town. Republicans registered to vote, but the nominee of the Democratic Party invariably won in any general election. Moreover, in 1910 Tampa had placed control of its primary elections in the hands the local White Municipal Party, founded to achieve the “cooperation of the white voters of the City of Tampa by means of a primary election where-by the influence of the colored vote shall be entirely eliminated.”

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*Public Works, 1933-1956* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Smith sees the New Deal as a “public works revolution [that] . . . helped justify the new role of the state in American life . . .” (3). *Building New Deal Liberalism* points to both the rhetorical power of the New Deal as a political construct as well as to the physical evidence of its sweeping, durable impact across the United States. It is a strong rebuttal to historians from across the historical spectrum who doubt the lasting significance of the Franklin Roosevelt administration. The evidence of Tampa’s experience squares with Smith’s interpretation of the New Deal at large.

Literature specific to Florida during the Great Depression has grown less evenly. To date, no comprehensive monograph exists. An overview of the period appears in William W. Rogers, "The Great Depression," in *The New History of Florida*, ed. Michael Gannon (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), and a chapter devoted to the 1930s is in Stronge, *The Sunshine Economy*. Two edited volumes have recently strengthened historians’ resources; see Elna C. Green, *Looking For the New Deal: Florida Women’s Letters During the Great Depression* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), and John A. and John F. Stack Stuart, ed., *The New Deal in South Florida: Design, Policy, and Community Building, 1933-1940* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008) Most historians agree that by 1929 Florida was well into an economic depression, while much of the country was still enjoying the unprecedented prosperity associated with the Roaring Twenties.
according to party chair D. B. Mackay. The Party’s executive committee controlled voter registration and the qualifying of candidates, all by authority of a City Council ordinance that also placed the city’s voter records and polling places at the service of the White Municipal Party officials. During primary balloting, city and county law-enforcement officers handled security at voting stations and enforced the Party’s rules.

In 1931, Tampa’s governmental apparatus passed into the hands of a political faction led by State Senator Patrick Crisp “Pat” Whitaker, a gifted, dynamic criminal attorney and an unusually skillful politician. According to The Tampa Tribune, Whitaker “was sharp, quotable, and filled with guile, greed and virtue in equal measure.” After the 1931 election, Tampa’s new mayor was Whitaker’s brother-in-law Robert E. Lee “Bob” Chancey, an affable attorney and native of Georgia. Chancey’s victory assured Whitaker’s political influence over the city’s governmental functions for at least the next four years. That same year, demonstrating his talent for re-arranging political systems in his favor, Whitaker persuaded the Florida legislature to pass a Special Act establishing a local election board for the City of Tampa, whose members would be elected under rules that they themselves adopted. The Special Act codified in state law the local election procedures already extant in Tampa. Those procedures continued to exclude

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39 Ibid On election days, the Tampa Police Department issued badges to “Special Police,” hired specifically for the occasion, while the Hillsborough County Sheriff also deputized partisans. Adding to the tension, the leaders of the two police agencies’ were themselves sometimes allied with one or the other of the opposing candidates.

40 Orrick and Crumpacker, The Tampa Tribune, p. 134. This official history of Tampa’s leading daily was commissioned in 1995, on the newspaper’s 100th anniversary.
black citizens from Tampa’s civic life. They also now ensured complete, perpetual hegemony for the White Municipal Party in local elections. According to the new election board’s rules, a political party could field nominees for local office in Tampa only if it had nominated a candidate for mayor in the most recent previous election and if that candidate had won at least 25% of the vote in that election (as Whitaker’s brother-in-law had just done). Since 1910, no party other than the White Municipal Party had nominated a successful candidate for mayor of Tampa and the 1931 statute guaranteed that none could. Thus, whoever controlled the nominating process for Tampa’s White Municipal Party automatically controlled Tampa’s city government.\footnote{Iorio, “Colorless Primaries: Tampa’s White Municipal Party,” , p. 306-307. Ostensibly, the purpose of the new law was to weed out gadflies and fringe candidates from local politics, but voters interpreted it as a naked bid for complete and permanent local political control on the part of the Tampa faction headed by Whitaker. Subsequent to the law’s adoption, the White Municipal Party did completely regulate city elections, although Whitaker himself remained vulnerable to feuds within the organization. He eventually split with Tampa’s unelected power broker, banker and attorney Peter O. Knight. Whitaker’s political arch-rival in Tampa was D.B. McKay, whose newspaper, The Tampa Times, helped to defeat Whitaker in the 1934 election. Pat Whitaker regained his senate seat in the next election, and held it until 1942. Bentley Orrick and Harry Crumpacker interpret these critical events differently, saying that Whitaker’s local bill “had the effect of abolishing the White Municipal Party” Orrick and Crumpacker, The Tampa Tribune, p. 145. Unfortunately, their note to that passage does not elaborate, and their analysis fails to persuade. Tampa’s White Municipal Party existed well into the 1950s, vetting candidates for local office. By then, the Party concerned itself chiefly with those whom it regarded as communist sympathizers.}

Whitaker deployed his power with little care for ideology or personality. For example, in the 1920s Whitaker and Doyle Carlton, both Tampa Democrats, had been political enemies while Carlton served as Tampa’s city attorney. But in 1928, when Carlton won election as Governor of Florida, they crafted an alliance that afforded Carlton a strong partisan ally for his gubernatorial agenda in the State Senate. Given Florida’s constitutionally weak executive powers, Carlton needed a legislative advocate in order to introduce or advance bills through the house or senate. Whitaker’s end of the bargain was a free hand in dispensing patronage in Hillsborough County. He skillfully
used that privilege to widen his local influence, for example by securing promises of support for his brother-in-law to run for mayor of Tampa. Whitaker was a force in the state legislature as well as in his home district. By the time Bob Chancey took office in 1931, Whitaker’s fellow Senators had voted him a term as President of the Florida Senate, an office with great covert power.\footnote{No evidence of collusion exists, but soon after taking office, Governor Carlton used his executive authority to suspend Hillsborough’s elected Sheriff L.M. Hatton, Jr., appointing in his place Tampa plumbing contractor Robert T. Joughin. The latter was more to Whitaker’s liking. When Hatton appeared before the Florida Senate seeking restoration of his office, Whitaker ensured that the hearing was deluged with affidavits attesting to official corruption and ties between Hatton and Tampa gambling interests. The tradition of “senatorial courtesy” in local matters meant that Hatton’s appeal was moot in any case. For aspects of Doyle Carlton’s single term as governor (1928-1932), see David R. Colburn and Richard K. Scher, \textit{Florida’s Gubernatorial Politics in the Twentieth Century} (Tallahassee: University Presses of Florida, 1980). Carlton began well but ended poorly, having no answer to Florida’s deepening economic malaise, other than ineffectual administrative belt-tightening. The alliance between Carlton and Whitaker is discussed in Orrick and Crumpacker, \textit{The Tampa Tribune}, p.134-135. Whitaker appears to have gotten the better of his bargain with the unfortunate Governor Carlton, whose administration had scant legislative success.}

Throughout most of the 1930s Tampa’s White Municipal Party primary campaigns were open political (and sometimes physical) brawls that rivaling factions fought ruthlessly to win. Whitaker, Chancey, and their supporters competed with politicians centered around four-term former Tampa Mayor (1910-1920; 1928-1931) Donald Brenham (D.B.) McKay. His allies held key posts in Hillsborough County’s government, such as State Attorney J. Rex Farror, who won election to that office in 1933. Voting precincts in the unincorporated county were less populous than those inside Tampa but were free of control by the new municipal election board. In the city, however, voting rules and election oversight were in the hands of the incumbent office holders, and the potential for abuse was obvious.

As chief executive Tampa’s mayor had sweeping powers, including that of appointing the heads of all of the city’s other departments, most significantly the police
chief and the liquor-licensing officials. Tampa's pulsating underground economy depended on protection from interference by law-enforcement authorities, and businesses needed permits to operate. Thus, the mayor's job was a potentially rich source of payments for every kind of behind-the-scenes intervention. The mayor's appointees also stood to gain. During the early to mid-1930s, jobs were scarce in Tampa, and any position that allowed its holder to earn extra cash in addition to wages or salary was an extraordinary prize. Accordingly, for appointees in Bob Chancey's four mayoral administrations (1931-1943), the mayor's electoral success mattered. City employees contributed money and labor to his campaigns and those of his allies. Those who sought municipal jobs but lacked friends in the administration supported Chancey's opponents. Both sides calculated the spoils of winning against the cost of the retribution that came with defeat.43

Tampa's voters supported the New Deal, but not necessarily New Dealers. In national politics, Tampans embraced Franklin D. Roosevelt. In October 1932, a smiling Mayor Chancey posed in front of city hall, placing cash into a collection box prominently labeled "Elect Roosevelt." That November, FDR carried the state (including Hillsborough County) with 74% of the popular vote. However, in 1934 Tampa's Democratic machine defeated Claude Pepper, a Roosevelt loyalist who challenged Florida's three-term incumbent U.S. Senator Park Trammell. Trammell was a traditional Southern Democrat and a defender of states' rights who had been cool to the new President's legislative agenda. He was surprised in the June statewide primary when

Pepper appeared as if from nowhere to force the powerful Trammell into a runoff. To neutralize Pepper, Trammell dropped his ambivalence toward the Roosevelt administration’s recovery programs. However, it was fraudulent ballots cast in Tampa that kept Trammell safely in the U.S. Senate.44

The fraud was transparent, and surprised few who knew how Tampa’s elections worked. In the first primary, Pepper and Trammell drew 79,396 and 81,321 votes respectively, placing the incumbent ahead by a scant 1,925 votes statewide as they prepared for the June 26 runoff. In Tampa however, Trammell had swept Pepper by almost two-to-one (8,784 to 4,631). Tampa’s so-called “hot” vote had gone against Pepper. In the primarily Latin precincts of Ybor City and West Tampa, registrants routinely accepted cash and other emoluments in exchange for voting several times at various polling stations supervised by Tampa’s election officials, local sheriff’s deputies, and “special” policemen.45

Trammell won the second primary by approximately 4,500 votes statewide. Over 6,000 crucial votes for Trammell came from just eleven of Tampa’s precincts. In Ybor City and West Tampa, the hapless Pepper received a scant 360 ballots. The 1934 Senate race showed Floridians’ affinity for the New Deal, but what the election conclusively proved was that whoever controlled Tampa’s political machine could tilt a statewide election. To

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44 Burgert Brothers Photo Collection, Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library, Image Archive, item #02/1430. In the 1928 presidential election, Herbert Hoover had carried Florida (including Hillsborough County) by a statewide margin of 56%. Then, as well as in 1932, Hoover’s supporters included influential Tampans such as George Howell, according to his son A.C. Howell, in Bliss, “Oral History Interview with Alonzo Clewis Howell, , and William Haggerty, according to the recollections of his daughter Katherine Carroll (telephone interview, notes in the author’s possession). See Claude Denson Pepper with Hays Gorey, Pepper: Eyewitness to a Century (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1987), p. 41-50, also John M. Brackett, “Wrongful Defeat: The 1934 Florida Senatorial Democratic Primary Between Claude Pepper and Park Trammell,” Florida Historical Quarterly (84:2) Fall, 2005 p. 205-228.

45 Brackett, “Wrongful Defeat.”
underscore the point (perhaps with a wary eye to Claude Pepper’s political future),
Trammell’s friend and benefactor, Tampa lawyer and businessman Peter O. Knight,
complimented Pepper on his spirited campaign but added that he could have told
Pepper six months previously “what this country (sic) would do . . . and nothing would
have changed that.”46

Worse electoral fraud soon followed. On September 3, 1935, the Tuesday
following Labor Day, Tampa held its municipal primary election, which descended into
chaos. Tampa Police and Hillsborough Sheriff’s officers, aided by “special” police and
deputies, surrounded the polling places. Florida National Guardsmen, activated by
Governor Dave Sholtz at the request of Sheriff Jerry McLeod, also appeared amidst the
confused proceedings. The men from each agency carried clubs, pistols, machine guns,
and sawed-off shotguns. As with the 1934 election, “repeaters” moved freely in and out
of polling places while poll workers and lawmen prevented legitimate voters from
casting ballots. The election pitted former mayor D.B. McKay against the incumbent Bob

46 Ibid., p. 226-228, also cited in Tracy E. Danese, Claude Pepper and Ed Ball: Politics, Purpose, and
Tribune describes Knight during those years as “Tampa’s master manipulator.” Orrick and Crumpacker,
The Tampa Tribune, p. 154. Correspondence and related documents about the election are in the
Claude Pepper Collection at the Claude Pepper Library, Florida State University. Pepper later boasted of
having recognized in FDR, even when he was the governor of New York, the future of the Democratic
Party. In any case, Pepper early-on hitched his political future to Roosevelt’s rising star, and benefited by
the choice. See Pepper with Corey, Pepper, p. 44-45. Pepper’s decision not to challenge the runoff result
earned him public sympathy. Two years later, his forbearance paid off when Park Trammell and Florida’s
other U.S. Senator, Duncan U. Fletcher, both died unexpectedly within a few weeks of one another.
Pepper easily won a special election, and served two full terms in the Senate, throughout which he
ardently supported Roosevelt and the New Deal in strong populist rhetoric. He also made it a point to
frequently articulate the local benefits of that support to his constituents in Tampa, by such methods as
his bi-weekly radio speeches broadcast over local radio stations. Transcripts of Pepper’s radio speeches
are also in the Claude Pepper Collection at FSU. Many transcripts have been digitized and the full texts
are searchable on the website of the Collection: http://pepper.cpb.fsu.edu/collection/guides/speech1.html.
Later, as a U.S. Senator, Pepper earned the enmity of another powerful Florida banker, Jacksonville’s
Ed Ball, head of the Florida National Bank system. Knight and Ball were longtime business rivals, but as
Danese shows, Ball heartily contemned Pepper, and spent years helping to orchestrate George
Smathers’ 1950 Democratic primary win, costing Pepper a third term in the U.S. Senate. By then, Peter
O. Knight was no longer living.
Chancey who, thanks to his brother-in-law’s stratagem, controlled the Election Board and therefore the election itself. With the outcome foregone, the Chancey-Whitaker machine held City Hall along with its concomitant opportunities for graft.47

The nakedness of the fraud in Tampa’s 1935 mayoral election exceeded anything that had occurred before, and embarrassed all but the most jaded citizens. Even those with no particular commitment to democracy found the blatant abuses troubling. Civic entrepreneurs such as William Haggerty and George Howell deplored the injury that Tampa’s political corruption did to their project of improving its business climate. Elections held under threat of violence were anathema to investors. One result of the growing dissatisfaction among Tampans was support for electoral reforms such as the adoption of voting machines and, in 1937, the legislative abolition of poll taxes throughout the state.

In the U.S., poll taxes rose out of discriminatory practices where elected officials distrusted poor voters. Requiring payment for allowing citizens to vote discouraged the impoverished from participating in elections, and became a common if tacit method of racial discrimination in the post-Reconstruction South. In 1886, Florida’s voters inserted poll taxes into the state’s constitution. Abolishing the poll tax in Florida was a reform that did little to help black voters, who were still unable to vote in Democratic primaries, the only elections in Florida that mattered. However, the legislation did reduce election

47 The night before, the most powerful hurricane ever to reach the U.S. struck Florida. The Great Labor Day Hurricane, with sustained winds of over 180 miles per hour, destroyed the Florida East Coast Railway that linked Key West to the mainland. Over 400 died, including some 250 U.S. Army veterans at work on a WPA project. On election Tuesday, the hurricane moved into the Gulf of Mexico, passing just offshore from Tampa. By then, the storm had abated slightly, but high winds, rain, and flooding disrupted an already questionable balloting. See Les Standiford, Last Train to Paradise: Henry Flagler and the Spectacular Rise and Fall of the Railroad that Crossed an Ocean (New York: Random House, 2003). Poll taxes were common in the South, designed to marginalize the poor, but primarily blacks.
fraud. Tampa's underground criminal entrepreneurs had long given cash to citizens who were unable to afford the poll tax, and then influenced them to vote for candidates who were in favor with criminals. Thus, local gambling interests orchestrated and performed many of the illegalities necessary to subvert the election process at the precinct level.

By disrupting their fraudulent practices, Florida's new election procedures harmed those underground gambling entrepreneurs who had traditionally brokered elections. Both legal and extra-legal actors lost crucial influence, opening avenues for new local civic entrepreneurship. In a halting and uneven process of political realignment that followed, key personalities such as gambler Charlie Wall and reformer William Haggerty explicitly voiced Tampans' political, economic, and cultural assumptions about local power.48

48 Florida's poll tax was a product of the state's Constitutional Convention of 1885, when Democratic Party delegates successfully emasculated Florida's Republicans. See Edward C. Williamson, Florida Politics in the Gilded Age, 1877-1893 (Gainesville: The University Presses of Florida, 1976), p. 137-140. For more on the poll tax generally, including its adoption and repeal state-by-state and an examination of who benefitted from the poll tax as well as who was hurt by it, see Frederic D. Ogden, The Poll Tax in the South (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1958). In an example of local reform-consciousness, in 1920 Tampa adopted an ordinance exempting women, then newly-enfranchised, from the poll tax in city elections. See Robert Kerstein, Politics and Growth in Twentieth-Century Tampa (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), p. 311n37. As Nancy Hewitt notes, poll taxes discouraged immigrants as well as blacks from voting in Tampa – see Nancy A. Hewitt, Southern Discomfort: Women's Activism in Tampa, Florida, 1880s-1920s (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), p. 243. The poll tax in Tampa is treated in greater detail in this chapter's passages concerning Charlie Wall. Peter Klingman credits Dade County state senator Ernest Graham for spearheading the reform legislation that eliminated Florida’s poll tax in 1937. Graham's motivation rose out of his fight with a local political machine in Miami that, like Tampa's, was influenced by organized gambling rackets. See Peter D. Klingman, "Ernest Graham and the Hialeah Charter Fight of 1937," Tequesta: The Journal of the Historical Association of Southern Florida 34 (1974) Nationally, poll taxes became unconstitutional in 1964 with the passage of the 24th Amendment.

Tampa was one of many American cities where street-level betting on [ostensibly] random number drawings became important to the informal economy. The trend strengthened during the Great Depression; see, for example, Victoria W. Wolcott, "The Culture of the Informal Economy: Numbers Runners in Inter-War Black Detroit," Radical History Review, no. 69 (1997) Wolcott traces the influence of numbers bankers whose entrepreneurship established them as “respectable businessmen” in Depression-era Detroit. Sociological scholarship has generated literature on gambling's broader functions in American life, a topic that has currency given the economic significance of the so-called “gaming” industry in certain impoverished cities and regions of the U.S., and the spread of state-run lotteries. See Mikal J. Aasved, The Sociology of Gambling (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 2003). Social scientists generally regard gambling as a product of cultural forces within the sphere of the gambler's daily environment.
Business and Politics Underground

The Tampan who lost the most owing to the abolition of the poll tax was Charles McKay “Charlie” Wall, who also bore much responsibility for the city’s criminal reputation. Wall personified the dichotomy between Tampa’s established pattern of collusion and tolerance among legal and extra-legal civic entrepreneurs, and the emerging impulse for reform that businesspeople such as Bill Haggerty and George Howell represented. During the years of the Great Depression, Wall was at peak of his power. However, by the end of the decade murderously violent competitors were challenging Wall, who turned for help to his allies among legitimate political and business figures. By then, electoral reforms had weakened him by ending his ability to control local election results, thus ensuring the end of his reign as the Tampa’s dominant underworld entrepreneur.

Born in 1880, Wall was a larger-than-life figure descended from two of Tampa’s pioneering families, the Walls and the McKays. For nearly thirty years beginning in the 1910s, Wall used his inherited connections among Tampa’s Anglo elite along with his talent for organizing among gambling and bolita operators, to develop an intricate business and political network. Wall’s alliances transcended local government, legitimate capital, and criminal entrepreneurs in an opaque milieu from which he emerged as the honest broker. Wall accumulated political capital in the form of cash and votes. He traded in both to secure protection from law enforcement, paying regular bribes and, at election time, reliably delivering the vote from Tampa’s Latin precincts, especially those in Ybor City.49

49 Charlie Wall’s cousins included Tampa’s longtime U.S. Postmaster, J. Edgar Wall, plus Perry G. Wall and D.B. McKay, both of whom served as mayors of Tampa. Consequently, the Ybor City precincts that
Wall raised money from gambling operators who depended on him to arrange for police protection. As for Wall’s ability to deliver a candidate’s required number of votes on election day, several methods availed, the most reliable of which involved the poll tax. Upon paying the tax for willing (usually poor) voters, Wall obtained their tax receipts. On election day, proxy voters in Wall’s employ, often working as a team of “repeaters,” traveled by the carload throughout the city presenting poll tax receipts to election workers, who allowed the repeaters to vote as often as necessary to ensure the number of votes that the machine required for its candidates. In the critical precincts, heavily armed Tampa police or Hillsborough County sheriff’s deputies maintained order. Citizens who tried to vote were sometimes turned away with the explanation that their ballot had already been cast. One naïve voter who objected was charged with attempting to vote twice, and jailed until after the election.  

For those who hoped to diversify Tampa’s moribund economy and energize it with new capital investment, its openly debauched civic culture was mortifying. Tampa’s political factions resembled the criminal mobs with whom they were allied. Elections, a

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Wall controlled generally helped elect candidates of the McKay faction, but Charlie Wall was a pragmatist who never stood entirely on family loyalty. He respected and deployed power where it served him best. In 1938 for example, under a grand jury indictment as well as under growing pressure from competing racketeers, Wall hired as his defense attorney McKay’s bitterest enemy, Pat Whitaker. In a dazzling display that left Tampans more resigned than ever that their city was hopelessly crooked, Whitaker convinced the circuit court judge to drop all charges against Wall. This, despite the latter’s candid acknowledgement under oath of the existence and details of his bolita franchise. Whitaker’s service to Wall speaks to the way that Tampa’s most implacable enemies closed ranks against challenges to the economic order that sustained their political power.

subsequent mayor observed, were “wildly fraudulent.”51 Through the 1930s, Tampa was so hopelessly corrupt as to make voting meaningless. The rule of law prevailed only when little was at stake. Newspapers throughout the state and nation sensationally portrayed the city as akin to a fascist regime.52

During those years, Wall was at the height of his powers, but to defend his empire against challengers required the cultural sensitivities of a classic urban ward heeler combined with convincing tolerance for bloodshed. In the case of Tampa’s bolita rackets, Charlie Wall had to modulate violence according to the tolerance of two different constituencies, the first being his criminal compatriots and the other his legitimate political and business allies. If a dispute among organized criminals came to violence, regardless of prior arrangements between criminals and the police, the latter would have no choice but to intervene. For a well-connected criminal entrepreneur in Wall’s position then, the most dangerous competitor would be someone less dependent on police protection. Such an outside actor would have greater freedom of action than Wall. Put differently, the outsider would risk less and stand to gain by creating chaos, in order then to decisively enter the local underground economy while its routine functions were paralyzed by the disruption. For all of the established actors, both criminal and otherwise, the object was to prevail while quashing the violence.

51 “Wildly fraudulent” is Pam Iorio’s succinct appraisal of Tampa’s so-called democratic process during the 1930s. Iorio, a Hillsborough County commissioner, later Supervisor of Elections, and at this writing (2007) in her second term as Mayor of Tampa, has probably studied her city’s election history more closely than any.

52 For those who lived through the period, Tampa’s widespread reputation and its effects stood out in memory: “I attended the University of Florida [in 1938]. People ask you where you are from. I said, ‘Tampa, Florida.’ ‘Oh [they responded]–”Little Chicago.”’ Well, Tampa had the reputation of being a little Chicago—mass murders, gambling, and corruption. Well, I got embarrassed about being from Tampa.” Bliss, “Oral History Interview with Benjamin H. Hill, Jr., , p. 11.
Wall’s interests coincided with those of other powerful Tampans within and outside the law. All sought at least the appearance of law and order. However, Wall personified the edgy aspects of Tampa that, in both style and substance, progressive-minded civic entrepreneurs wished to put in the past. Tall, dapper, alternatively charming and ruthless, but always shrewd, Wall repeatedly deflected challenges to his power. Bolita’s lucrative profits fueled periodic spasms of murderous violence among the game’s operators. During the early 1930s, Wall narrowly escaped at least two attempts on his life, which he shrugged off with aplomb. Murders or attempted murders seldom resulted in arrests by the Tampa Police, as underground businessmen discretely resolved differences among themselves. When asked who would have tried to kill him or why, Wall demurred.

Wall could not have been oblivious to the growing tensions coursing through Tampa’s civic culture. His recorded utterances are those of a droll, amoral cynic who exemplified Tampa’s sometimes wistful and at other times violent resistance to change. Wall modeled a conceptualization of Tampa in which personal relationships trumped all, outsiders were suspect, and human weaknesses tolerated. In Tampa, such a perspective was perhaps never more compelling than during the chaotic early years of the Great Depression.53

53 Coincidentally or not, the perspective on Tampa that Charlie Wall struggled to voice in 1938 in a Tampa courtroom was practically at the same moment under much broader examination by University of Chicago sociologist Louis Wirth. In a landmark article published that summer, Wirth defined urbanizing places as characterized both by increasing population density and heterogeneity, in ways that diminished the importance of individual human relations. “The contacts of the city may indeed be face to face, but they are nevertheless impersonal, superficial, transitory, and segmental. The reserve, the indifference, and the blasé outlook which urbanites manifest in their relationships may this be regarded as devices for immunizing themselves against the personal claims of others.” Louis Wirth, “Urbanism As a Way of Life,” The American Journal of Sociology 44, no. 1 (1938), p. 12. Perhaps Wall did not read Wirth, but he would probably have grasped the kernel of the argument as it applied to his Tampa, whose emerging civic
Growth and change during the 1920s boom disrupted Tampa’s traditional networks, including that of gamblers such as Wall. However, during the early 1930s and in Bob Chancey’s first mayoral administration, Tampa’s legitimate economy was prostrate, a circumstance that strengthened Charlie Wall. As municipal finances grew more strained, the city cut its payroll across the board. The salaries for the City’s two highest-paid offices, those of the mayor and city attorney, fell from $10,000 annually to $5000. Layoffs affected every operation of local government. Tampa’s Fire Department, recently expanded to meet the growth of the 1920’s boom, closed several stations, reduced manning at the remainder, and demoted many remaining firefighters in order to shrink its payroll. The Fire Department cuts took place even as Tampa was experiencing a wave of fires that appeared to have been purposefully set in abandoned or recently foreclosed houses in order for owners to claim the insurance. Amid such adversities, Charlie Wall’s enterprises were among the few in Tampa that could boast of dependable income. The cash that he offered to public officials in exchange for allowing his gambling houses to operate was difficult to refuse, and his influence grew.54

entrepreneurs seemed to encourage the modernization of the city in ways that Wall and his generation of Tampans lamented.

54 Tampa city officials’ 1930 salaries are listed in B.L. Organization Hamner, Industrial Survey: Tampa, Florida (Tampa: B.L. Hamner Organization, 1930). In 1931, the mayor’s salary decreased to $7500, and the City Attorney’s to $5000. In 1933, their pay dropped again, to $5000 and $4800 respectively, which continued until 1937, when the mayor’s pay increased slightly to $6500. Tampa’s other city officers, such as the city clerk, tax assessor, and municipal judges, experienced similar adjustments. Because of the limited authority granted by the city charter, each salary change required a special act of the Florida Legislature. (See “Index, Laws of Florida: Special Acts Relating to the City of Tampa,” prepared by City Attorney Karl E. Whitaker, July 25, 1944, Box 26, Folder 258, Curtis Hixon Papers, CTARS. Karl Whitaker was unrelated to private attorney and former state senator Pat Whitaker – thanks to Tampa Tribune reporter Leland Hawes for clarifying this). Fire department conditions are noted in Mark Wilkens, “Gender, Race, Work Culture, and the Building of the Fire Fighters Union in Tampa, Florida, 1943-1985,” Robert H. Zieger, Ed., Southern Labor in Transition (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), p. 177. Arson for hire in 1930s Tampa is discussed in Part One of Tom Inglis, “The Guns of Tampa,” July 28, 1971, The Tampa Times, as well as elsewhere in this chapter. Fire Chief A.J. White believed that arsonists had caused the fires, as part of an organized insurance fraud scheme.
Criminal influence in local politics and the legitimate economy was an open secret, however Wall prevented his “arrangements” from becoming too blatant. In a pattern similar to that of Prohibition-era bootleggers through the U.S., he acquiesced to periodic raids on selected bolita and gambling operations. Those arrested normally bonded out of jail and either forfeited their bond or plead guilty and paid a fine. Most returned immediately to their work without further interference. Wall selectively allowed the raids to help maintain discipline within his network of underground entrepreneurs. In a pattern of collusion with local criminals resembling that of the Prohibition era, the arrests allowed local authorities to publicize regular successes in what they depicted as their endless struggle to close down Tampa’s gambling rackets.55

By 1938, Wall’s alliances with city officials and businessmen were faltering just when he needed friends more than ever. On March 9, one of Wall’s closest associates, Evaristo “Tito” Rubio, was murdered. Rubio co-owned Wall’s flagship gambling house, the El Dorado, at 8th Avenue and 14th Street in Ybor City. At 5:00 AM, as Rubio’s bodyguard and driver Lou Feldman waited in the driveway, two figures who had also been waiting just beneath the porch railing ambushed Rubio as he opened the back

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55 Readers must take this as informed but ultimately speculative interpretation. Historicizing criminal conspiracies is difficult at best, owing to the dearth of authoritative sources. Here I am describing Charlie Wall’s modus operandi based on anecdotal evidence, e.g., off-the-record statements uttered during my oral history interviews, and on unsupported statements advanced by authors or journalists who make no claims to historical rigor. For example, years after Mayor Curtis Hixon’s death, his longtime Police Department liaison Danny Alvarez spoke candidly to reporters about his work as a cash courier, or “bagman,” for the mayor during the 1940s and 1950s. Alvarez claimed that in accepting bribes from gambling operators, the Hixon administration was no different than that of the mayor’s predecessor, Bob Chancy. (Tampa Tribune, May 8, 1978, p. 1D, and May 9, 1978, p. 1D). The popular understanding of Wall’s crime enterprise and of Tampa’s corrupt practices from the 1930s through the 1950s match this account, although that proves little. I have scrutinized this interpretation and the anecdotes behind it in the context of Wall’s own sworn testimony in 1938 and again in 1950. Other than a single perfunctory denial in 1938 that he had ever paid for police protection, accompanied by a passionate vow that he would never incriminate anyone else, Wall’s statements neither support nor contradict this account. Scholars looking for evidence of a police protection scheme for Tampa’s bolita operators will probably be as unsatisfied as I am. However, they will probably be equally convinced that such a scheme existed over a period of decades.
door of his house. The murderers fired from close range using shotguns, the weapon of choice in Tampa’s organized crime wars. After dispatching Rubio, the killers disappeared.56

Since Rubio’s only apparent offense was that he was a prominent Wall lieutenant, the unmistakably gang-inspired murder forced Wall to a hard choice. If he allowed the killing of one of his top associates to go unanswered, his credibility with the rest would evaporate. If he retaliated against those whom he suspected of arranging the murder, rival factions would be obliged to respond, and a Chicago-style gang war would almost certainly ensue. In that event, Wall’s legitimate business and political allies would have no choice but to draw back. Tampa’s police, who claimed to have no suspects in the Rubio assassination, would have to abandon their comfortable arrangements with Wall. In that uneasy atmosphere, Hillsborough County’s grand jury reacted to Rubio’s murder by voting to subpoena the dead gambler’s associates, including Wall.57

56 Tito Rubio’s murder is described in the August 2, 1971 article of Tom Inglis’s “Guns of Tampa” series, Tampa Times. Charlie Wall himself provided considerable detail in his March 15, 1938 testimony before a grand jury, later printed in the Tampa Times of July 28, 1938, “Charlie Wall Tells All.”

57 “Farrior Tells of Gambling, Gang Murder,” Tampa Tribune, July 29, 1938. In that summer’s trial of Charlie Wall and his fellow gamblers, Pat Whitaker, representing Wall, called State Attorney Rex Farrior to the witness stand. The personal and political animosity between the two local lawyers nearly overshadowed the judicial proceedings, and exasperated the trial judge. Whitaker needled his political and professional opponent Farrior by charging that he had pressed the grand jury to move against Wall’s associates as a political stunt to serve his own interests. Farrior retorted that the jurors obtained names and addresses, not from the prosecutors, but simply by reading the newspaper: “Both papers said gambling was wide open. They named places and how they kept posting numbers. In the face of Tito’s murder and nothing being done about it, the grand jury voted to investigate gambling.” Farrior, who first won election as Hillsborough state attorney in 1933, was later at some pains to explain to the Kefauver Committee investigating organized crime in Tampa, that the office of the state’s attorney was constrained by statute from investigating or prosecuting crimes other than “the three capital offenses, murder, rape, and kidnapping for ransom.” Prosecuting other offenses such as gambling was the responsibility of the county solicitor, who tried cases before the local criminal court of record. Farrior conceded that the grand jury had the latitude to investigate “any other matter, other than capital offenses, if in their opinion, the welfare of the county warrants the duplication of effort and expense.” Hearings Before a Special Committee to Investigate Organized Crime in Interstate Commerce: United States Senate, Eighty-Second
On March 15, Wall reacted with a bold play of his own by trying to cash-in on his support among Tampa’s legitimate business and political community. Testifying in an all-day closed session before the grand jury, he voiced his disquiet at the attack and promised to tell the jurors everything. He lamented Rubio’s murder, proclaiming him a “philanthropist, especially among the poor of Ybor City.” Wall repeatedly insisted that he had no clue as to who was responsible. On the other hand, he was extraordinarily forthcoming about his own place in Tampa’s gambling rackets. “I am a fellow that seems to be the brains or the smart fellow in what is known as the underworld. I would like for you to have a picture of it, and it might be interesting.” Wall proceeded to educate the jurors about bolita and similar lotteries known locally as “Cuba” and “Bond.” He described in detail the operation of gambling parlors such as his own El Dorado, and stripped away the mystique surrounding his enterprise. “There is no such thing as luck in gambling. I can take a piece of paper and figure a percentage on any game . . . [y]ou have to have a percentage. You can set down the volume of business and figure what percentage you have and deduct your expenses. So there is nothing mysterious about this thing or mysterious in the underworld.”

Wall portrayed gambling as a popular everyday business catering to Tampa’s citizenry including, he hinted broadly, some of the gentlemen in the courtroom who perhaps required no lessons from him on the subject.

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*Congress, First Session,* (Washington, 1951), p. 400 – 402. At the time of the Kefauver Committee investigation, confessed gambling operators had named Farrior as one of Hillsborough County’s three top officials who accepted regular cash payoffs in exchange for allowing bolita to operate unhindered. (The other two named were Hillsborough County Sheriff Hugh Culbreath and Tampa Police Chief M.C. Beasley). Farrior denied the accusations, blaming them on his political enemies, including associates of “the Charlie Wall group” (p. 410 – 411).

Wall’s revelations about gambling in Tampa were “amazing,” declared a news article that quoted Wall prefacing the testimony he was about to give as his complete story, “from soup to nuts.” The public was barred from the hearing, but a court reporter transcribed the proceedings, and the 58 year-old Tampa native was hardly so naïve as to expect that his remarks would remain secret. Under a grant of immunity from future prosecution, Wall was loquacious. In fact, he was being disingenuous. First, whatever he could get into the court record while under immunity was tantamount to pocketing a get-out-of-jail-free card. Intentionally or not, State Attorney Rex Farrior had extended an opportunity, and Wall seized the maximum advantage. Second, he repeatedly drew the jurors back to the Rubio killing, and professed ignorance as to the murderers’ identities and motive, while simultaneously telegraphing his suspicions. “I do not think they could get three gamblers in town to do anything like that. If someone wanted to kill someone, it seems to me that I would have been the man to be killed” he said, after conceding that he been threatened just six weeks earlier and had eluded multiple attempts on his life. “Outsiders” had tried and failed to break into Tampa’s underground economy, Wall mused, alluding to interests from New York and “the Bingo people . . . [t]hey were from the Pacific Coast.” Rubio’s killers could not have been from any part of Tampa’s existing gambling network, Wall insisted, emphatically driving home his thesis. “I know the

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59 Later, it was Wall’s own attorney, Pat Whitaker, who in open court with reporters present, read aloud for nearly an hour and a half from the grand jury transcript. The public airing came in July, 1938, as Whitaker defended Wall on related charges. Wall seemingly calculated that he would be best served by getting his version of the recent events out in public. Whitaker helped Wall do so with the perhaps unwitting assistance of the court system. Tampa’s local newspapers were pleased to oblige the colorful gambler and his counselor. “Charlie Wall Tells All: Life Story to Grand Jury Bares Tampa Racket Setup,” *Tampa Times*, July 28, 1938.
people I associate with. If I thought they were assassins or would have anything to do with that, I would not have anything to do with them.”\textsuperscript{60}

Wall further used his momentary legal truce to attempt to exploit his complicated relationships among Tampa’s civic elites. By fastidiously disavowing violence while alluding darkly to a new conflict with unknown outsiders, Wall slipped a third subtext into his monologue. For all his flaws, he was still a successful native son, sensitive to Tampa’s traditions and protective of its values. Genial and modest, Wall took care to establish a certain gentlemanly masculinity. “Sometimes . . . I should be restrained, but I am no boss. But naturally I have some friends. I have lived here all my life. I am 58 years old and I have been quite a colorful character here. But they all do not like me. But I am not afraid to die. I enjoy the confidence of some pretty nice and decent fellows.” Wall denied ever paying for police protection and refused to incriminate anyone, even while gaining greater immunity for himself with each fresh, self-incriminating disclosure. “‘I am not going to put anyone in the penitentiary for gambling,’ he warned. ‘Before I would do that I would spend sixty years to a day and go to hell in the county jail.’” Nor did Wall’s solidarity extend only to his fellow Anglo townsmen. “I have known the Latins and Italians for a period of years, and they resent this stuff as much as anyone in the world,” he added.\textsuperscript{61}

Wall portrayed Tampa as needing someone like him to reconcile the amorality of its most popular and lucrative criminal entertainment with the city’s vital, complicated civic and economic life. He invoked his role as a significant local employer, stating that

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
some “50 to 100 men were employed at [his] El Dorado,” though of course he knew
them only by face, not by name. His colleague Tito Rubio’s murder exposed a new,
destabilizing threat to Tampa’s cultural stasis, to its public peace, and to the intricate
commercial arrangements upon which so many had come to depend. A dangerous if
murky subversion of the happy status quo was abroad, originating from without. If ever
there was a moment for Tampa’s “fine and decent fellows” to close ranks with Wall, he
covertly but urgently signaled, this was it.62

The timing of Wall’s implicit appeal for support during that summer of 1938 was
inauspicious. Wall’s troubles exposed him not just to murderous competition in his own
business, but also to an emerging corps of civic entrepreneurs who hoped to reform
Tampa’s political economy. Continued signals of empathy and unofficial tolerance for
Charlie Wall might have helped him to perpetuate his illegitimate empire, but when he
could no longer manipulate elections by means of poll taxes, he was out of political
capital. Tampa’s legitimate civic entrepreneurs could agree with him that gambling was
an elemental part of local life, and no one questioned Wall’s effectiveness at brokering
illicit investments and agreements throughout Tampa’s legitimate business and political
economy. However, for the members of that informal civic tribunal to endorse Wall
would be to concede that Tampa remained mired in the practices and values of its past.
Tampa’s traditional political economy was unappealing to the outsiders that
progressive-minded business and political leaders were determined to attract. In testing
the power of his influence, Charlie Wall asked for too much, too late.

62 Ibid.
Tampa’s New Business Deals

Reform-minded Tampans led by businessman Bill Haggerty exploited Charlie Wall’s setbacks to press for improving the city’s reputation by effecting further changes to its political economy. The Rubio murder and the publication of Wall’s grand jury testimony created an opening for Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs to advance new ideals and business innovations. Their efforts coincided with new federal investments in shipbuilding, with tangible, local effects that energized Tampans as nothing else had for more than a decade. More than at any time during the Great Depression, Tampans began to pivot away from their traditional business practices to embrace the economic opportunities fostered locally by the federal programs of the New Deal.

During the summer of 1938, Haggerty, a relative newcomer, launched a seemingly idealistic appeal to his fellow Tampa businessmen to close ranks without native son Charlie Wall. Youthful and outspoken, Haggerty proposed that business owners and managers ask every one of their employees to sign a pledge, promising to refrain from gambling for one year. As a member of the Tampa Exchange Club, Haggerty made the rounds of the other local civic organizations, such as Civitan, Kiwanis, and Rotary. Everywhere he advanced the same theory: legitimate businesses in Tampa suffered as they were losing revenue to gambling. Thus, it disappeared from the legitimate economy. Taxes, licenses, and other expenses of legal commerce went unpaid by gamblers. They routinely skirted other laws and corrupted the democratic process, even as they preyed upon Tampa’s poor. Haggerty argued that a public pledge campaign, though it lacked any legal standing, might generate the popular consensus that it would take to weaken the franchise held by criminal entrepreneurs, every attempt to accomplish that by the force of law having been futile.
With his anti-gambling initiative, William Bernard Haggerty entered Tampa’s marketplace of civic entrepreneurship. A Montana native, he had come to Florida in 1926, attracted, like many of his contemporaries, by the promise it seemed to offer of growth. In 1934, at the age of 28, he founded Tampa Cold Storage, Inc., a refrigerated warehouse downtown near the port district. Haggerty envisioned a future for the transshipment of perishable freight through Tampa, as well as a need for reliable storage handling of refrigerated products for local distribution. The following year he became the local agent for the York Corporation, representing that manufacturer’s air-conditioning and refrigeration business in Tampa and in the sixteen surrounding counties. In addition to sensing the economic potential of mechanical refrigeration, Haggerty was an early aviation enthusiast who was drawn to its business possibilities. For much of the rest of his life, he helped promote Tampa as a commercial aviation hub. He obtained a patent for a process to quickly refrigerate food products by carrying them high aloft in un-pressurized aircraft. The cold air encountered in flight passed through the cargo areas, chilling or freezing the contents which, upon landing, were quickly transferred to cold storage. Haggerty made Tampa his permanent home, as an innovative businessman and as a vigorous, sometimes deliberately provocative civic activist. He modeled the way that reform and boosterism became conflated in 1930s Tampa, and exemplified the impatience of civic entrepreneurs who enthused about growing and modernizing the local economy, especially through technological adaptation, and for whom Tampa’s attempts to romanticize its past held little appeal.63

63 Karl H. Grismer, Tampa: A History of the City of Tampa and the Tampa Bay Region of Florida (St. Petersburg: St. Petersburg Printing Company, Inc., 1950); “Ex-Health Council Chairman Dies at 79,” The Tampa Tribune, July 29, 1985; additional information about Haggerty comes from his personal papers, in the custody of his daughter, Katherine H. Carroll (copies in the author’s possession). She and her brother,
The publicity attending local gambling in 1938 both moved Haggerty to act on his impulse for reform and gave him an attentive audience. After the Rubio murder, the grand jury’s investigation of gambling in Tampa led jurors to accompany Hillsborough Sheriff’s Deputies to several alleged gaming establishments, where they observed betting equipment and advertisements for illegal lotteries, and encountered some of the individuals, including Wall himself, who had so recently testified under oath about the rackets. With members of the grand jury present, deputies arrested Wall and several others. The grand jury promptly indicted them on charges of violating numerous gambling offenses. Upon the protest of their attorney State Senator Pat Whitaker, however, the trial judge dismissed all charges against Wall and his associates, because their earlier testimony before the grand jury rendered them immune from prosecution. Front-page news accounts of the arrests and subsequent releases merely reinforced longstanding public cynicism, and a widespread attitude of weary resignation that Tampa’s gambling racketeers remained beyond the law.64

Haggerty reasoned that a widespread boycott of gambling would reduce revenue to bolita operators and make their businesses unprofitable to the point that they would have to abandon them. Calling for a “new business deal” for Tampa, he shrewdly insisted that adopting a boycott implied no moral judgments about gambling or gamblers. Rather, its purpose was simply to re-channel Tampa’s economy away from illegal enterprises to legitimate businesses that paid taxes and hired employees who did the same. Haggerty recruited support from other civic clubs and persuaded the

William B. Haggerty Jr., generously shared reminiscences of the senior Haggerty, for which I thank them both.

Presidents’ Roundtable, a coalition of the presidents of Tampa’s numerous civic clubs, to endorse his idea. On July 14, 1938, he appealed to an elaborately stage-managed meeting of more than a thousand businessmen at the Tampa Auditorium. There, he quoted from the report of the recently retired grand jury, which charged that gambling and bolita were responsible for Tampa’s “strangled economic conditions.” According to the report, commercialized gambling damaged Tampa in other ways as well: “[The city’s] nationally advertised crooked elections [were] paid for with five, ten, and fifteen-cent bolita tickets,” Haggerty declared. Cutting even a part of the revenues flowing to racketeers would impede their ability to buy influence from elected officials and police who, Haggerty charitably ventured, would rather operate within the law anyway. Neither moral suasion nor law enforcement had made inroads against the rackets, but an attack based on “cold, realistic factors regarding economics” could. Haggerty proposed to freeze gamblers out of Tampa, all while blaming no individual, accusing no institutions of evildoing, and casting no moral verdict against those who enjoyed friendly betting. “We want our business to grow,” he said, “but I know my business can’t prosper unless the business of all of us here prospers. This is not a city of individuals. It is a community.”

Local publicity was the anti-gambling campaign’s most visible accomplishment. Both local newspapers cited the newly-favorable outside press coverage of Tampa’s campaign against bolita, and citizens chimed in with praise and reinforcement. The newspapers praised Haggerty’s appeal for solidarity among businessmen, and publicized each new announcement of hundreds, then thousands, of signed pledge

cards from Tampans who forswore gambling for one year. By the autumn of 1938, the Committee claimed over 20,000 pledges. Some gambling operators responded to the apparent popularity of the citizens’ campaign by going temporarily underground, but Haggerty’s anti-gambling crusade had little ultimate impact, and the pragmatic Haggerty undoubtedly knew it. Along with other business boosters, he declared victory over Tampa’s criminal establishment, while continually pressing for actual reform. 66

Owing to Tampa’s notoriety as a haven for gambling, Haggerty and the campaign against bolita became news elsewhere, and drew mixed reactions from Tampans. Haggerty’s quotable utterances filled columns of reportage about Tampa’s gambling boycott, first in the statewide press, then nationally. “The old timers think Florida gambling can’t be suppressed, but we are going to do it . . . by united action we can chase these gamblers right into the ocean,” he confidently told the Chicago Tribune, whose readers knew something about organized crime. 67 His habitual outspokenness affronted more seasoned civic entrepreneurs who were sensitive to Haggerty’s “old-

66 Felix B. Streycmans, Today’s Young Men (Chicago: Reilly and Lee, 1940), p. 74. “A Businesslike Plan to Stamp Out Bolita” (editorial), The Tampa Daily Times, July 15, 1938; “Gambling Boycott Brings Tampa Good Publicity,” The Tampa Daily Times, (editorial) July 29, 1938; “The New Attack on Gambling” (editorial) The Tampa Morning Tribune, July 16, 1938. The Tribune’s editors seemed less willing than those of the Times to let local officials off the hook, saying the economic attack on bolita would help, but that Tampa’s only hope to eliminate commercial gambling was through “honest, fearless, and vigilant law enforcement officers, free of any alliance with the gambling operators…” Historian Pam Iorio attributes Wall’s loss of influence to the advent of voting machines, plus the incursion of Italian-led organized crime into Tampa’s bolita commerce. The changes, both legal and extra-legal, had the consequence of forcing Tampa’s longtime self-styled “smart-fellow” permanently aside. Commercialized gambling interests continued to prosper, and to influence Tampa’s elections throughout the 1940s, however, under the leadership of a different crime syndicate, equally as smart and perhaps more ruthless than Wall’s. On April 20, 1955, Charlie Wall was found dead in the bedroom of his Ybor City home. He had been stabbed and bludgeoned to death, and his throat cut. The house was locked, there was no sign of robbery or of forced entry. Like the murder of Tito Rubio in 1938, and those of many others among Tampa’s underworld, the killing of Charlie Wall remains unsolved.

67 “Young Business Men to Mop Up Florida Gaming: Launch Campaign Against Racketeer Barons,” Chicago Sunday Tribune, August 21, 1938. Haggerty explained that “with their hush money payments and their investments in tear gas and sawed-off shotguns, these gamblers don’t net more than twenty percent, in spite of the fact that they repay the suckers only about ten percent. So if you can cut their business by thirty percent they no longer can make a profit.”
timers” remark. Rumors spread that Haggerty was using the campaign to promote himself as Tampa’s next mayor. He denied any such ambitions, though he did not rule the idea out. “People have been taking pot shots at me from all angles,” he informed a meeting of the Citizen’s Committee. “Then too, we have some opponents who have lived in the City a long while and who want to see this movement fail. Oh, they are a conniving bunch and will go to any end to see our movement stopped.” Haggerty seemed to be pointing not to Charlie Wall or his allies among the city’s corrupt political leadership, but to the many Tampans for whom gambling was a remunerative if illicit sideline. Despite Haggerty’s promise to avoid blaming anyone for the rackets and associated corruption, his combative allusions to unnamed opponents with deep local connections grated upon those who had spent their lives learning to function within Tampa’s labyrinthine political economy.

Tampa’s Junior Chamber of Commerce promoted the local anti-gambling scheme to other Florida cities beset by commercialized underground betting and its related corruption. Addressing its August 18 dinner meeting, banker George Howell encouraged the campaign, while reducing some of the friction between Tampa natives and those who, like himself and like the upstart Haggerty, had less claim to “insider” credentials. “Your stand on the gambling situation here is sweeping the state,” Howell told the Jaycees. “But you have a hard problem to solve because of the large number who have grown used to gambling. You must not relax in your fight, if you hope to win.” Howell mentioned New York City’s hard-charging young District Attorney, Thomas E. Dewey, who in 1938 sought to prosecute organized crime “numbers bankers” for

electoral corruption in that city: "[t]here is nothing worse than organized gambling. Just follow the Dewey case in New York and find out how gambling is carried on. It is the same way here, except on a smaller scale."  

Howell was a civic entrepreneur who looked beyond Tampa for a way to revive its shipbuilding economy while simultaneously revising its reputation. As the grand jury investigated local criminal rackets, and Haggerty’s pledge drive tried to undercut gambling’s popularity, Howell was at work on Tampa’s largest economic coup since the 1920’s boom, a federally-subsidized loan to the Tampa Shipbuilding Corporation. Howell was a director of Tampa’s First Savings and Loan, and served as an officer of the Exchange Bank. By 1938, Howell was President of the Florida Bankers Association and had joined the board of Eastern Airlines, headed by his friend and fellow Great War veteran Eddie Rickenbacker. That same year, the Tampa Civitan Club named Howell as Citizen of the Year, ostensibly in recognition of his numerous civic contributions, but most particularly because of his success in negotiating a Public Works Administration loan for a Tampa firm to build a 10,000 ton dry-dock, and financing to qualify the same company to bid for federal shipbuilding contracts. Through those developments, Tampans finally glimpsed the larger potential of the New Deal to reshape their lives.

During the Great War, Tampa Shipbuilding and Engineering had enjoyed spectacular prosperity. Its owners, brothers Ernest, Max, and Paul Kreher, were experienced shipbuilders who built fifteen steel vessels for the Emergency Fleet Corporation, employing at their peak 3500 workers. Following the Armistice in 1918,

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69 “Gambling Drive Draws Praise: Speaker Urges Members to Continue Work,” Tampa Morning Tribune, August 18, 1938. For an appraisal of Thomas Dewey’s campaign against organized crime, see Mary M. Stolberg, Fighting Organized Crime: Politics, Justice, and the Legacy of Thomas E. Dewey (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1995). Stolberg is attentive to the political capital that lay between urban organized crime syndicates and ambitious prosecutors such as Dewey.
they completed the ships under construction. Emergency Fleet cancelled the contracts for which work had not started, and in 1919, employment at the shipyard plummeted. By 1920, most wartime jobs had vanished. Over the next seventeen years, the Krehers’ yard lapsed into genteel decline and, in 1932, suffered a catastrophic fire. By 1937, financing the new $880,000 dry-dock would have been impossible absent the federal guarantee, the news of which spread excitement throughout the city. More was to come. By virtue of having the new 400’ dry-dock, Tampa Shipbuilding and Engineering Co. became eligible to bid on and, in March, 1938, win a contract from the U.S. Maritime Commission, to build four major cargo ships. The projects assured steady jobs for 1200 workers over the next several years. The significance was such that Mayor Bob Chancey highlighted the news in his 1939 re-election campaign. Chancey argued that the shipyard’s new financing demonstrated the federal government’s confidence in Tampa, which he interpreted as confidence in its honorable mayor. To other Tampans it was obvious that civic entrepreneurs such as George Howell had been instrumental in closing the new deal for Tampa.  

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70 A number of sources refer to the fire that heavily damaged Tampa Shipbuilding during the interwar years, but without a date certain. Christopher James Tassava has the year as 1932, in “Launching a Thousand Ships: Entrepreneurs, War Workers, and the State in American Shipbuilding, 1940-1945,” Ph.D. dissertation (Evanston, Illinois, 2003), p. 59. Tassava’s note to this paragraph appears to cite a document in the papers of Admiral Emory S. Land, Chairman of the U.S. Maritime Commission from 1937 to 1946. Admiral Land’s papers are housed in the Library of Congress.

George Howell’s relationship with the Tampa Shipbuilding and Engineering Co. (later re-named TASCO) is explained variously in unrelated sources. I have reconciled the conflicts sufficiently to support the present account. I began with a retrospective news account by Leland Hawes, “Banker Kept Tampa Shipbuilding Afloat,” and “Shipbuilding Moved Tampa Out of Economic Drydocks,” The Tampa Tribune, March 26, 1989, p. 6-I. Also see Charlton W. Tebeau and Ruby Leach Carson, Florida: From Indian Trail to Space Age (Delray Beach: The Southern Publishing Company, 1965), p. 846; also Grismer, Tampa; Bliss, "Oral History Interview with Alonzo Clewis Howell, and Alan J. Bliss, "Oral History Interview with George Blaine Howell, Jr., 2003," interview transcript, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, Gainesville. Also see Frederic C. Lane, Ships For Victory: A History of Shipbuilding Under the U.S. Maritime Commission in World War II (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1951, 2001). Another factor connecting Howell to the shipyard may have been Peter O. Knight, who in 1924, in addition to being an officer and director of the Exchange bank was also identified as “chairman of board, Tampa
To the businessmen of the anti-gambling committee, the announcement of new federal contracts at Tampa Shipbuilding represented a new business deal not just for the Krehers and their employees, but for Tampans generally. In particular, the prospective infusion of federal money into Tampa’s economy underscored the urgency of “killing [Tampa’s] community cancer,” as Bill Haggerty called it. At the July 18 mass meeting at the Tampa Auditorium, Haggerty declared, “I have details of WPA and relief workers, recipients of our tax money, spending most of it on bolita, and it is everywhere in every line like that... we want that money to come through our cash registers. That bolita money – it’s ours. We’ll pay taxes on it, and not buy [voter] registration tickets.” Another speaker added, “If you want to make money, you have to go where the money is. We know where that money is, and we’re entitled to it. Now we’ve just been through

Shipbuilding and Engineering Co.” The reference is from a biographical sketch of Knight in South Florida: Its Builders, Its Resources, Its Industries and Climactic Advantages, ed. Donald B. McKay (The Tampa Daily Times, 1924), 68. My formal interviews with Howell’s sons were granted through the courtesy of Howell’s grandson, George B. Howell III, who also discussed his reminiscences and shared relevant material from his late grandfather’s papers. At the University of South Florida Library Dept. of Special Collections, a substantial collection of WPA papers remains boxed and uncatalogued. The collection includes notes, drafts, and news summaries by local Tampa writers for the Federal Writers Project of the WPA, including “Shipbuilding May Be Resumed in Tampa,” dated May 17-24, 1938, authored by one “Bryan,” probably Lindsey Bryan. Librarian Paul Camp permitted me to explore the contents of this fragile, fast-deteriorating archive.

Howell and the Kreher brothers received timely help from the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, Herbert Phillips, whose principal office was in Tampa. At a critical juncture, the venerable federal prosecutor and Democratic Party stalwart issued a formal opinion on the letterhead of his private legal practice to the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. He validated Tampa Shipbuilding’s corporate legal status, and certified the corporation’s ownership of the real property that was to help secure the company’s loans from the RFC. By doing so, Phillips eliminated legal problems that the company had ignored during the lean years of the 1920s and 1930s, but that, left unresolved, threatened its ability to enter into contracts with the federal government. Herbert S. Phillips to Reconstruction Finance Corporation, July 6, 1938, re: Tampa Shipbuilding and Engineering Co. (Herbert S. Phillips Papers, Box 5, Folder 10, University of South Florida Libraries, Dept. of Special Collections).

In 1939, Mayor Chancey’s campaign published Eight Years of Achievement for Tampa’s 100,000: An Illustrated Story of the Progress the City of Tampa Has Made Since 1931. N.d., n.p. (PKY). This forty-eight page book was a lavishly-illustrated campaign advertisement, underwritten by 120 of Chancey’s supporters. Pat and Tom Whitaker were among them. George Howell and Bill Haggerty were not.
a campaign to get the shipyards re-opened, and I have been informed that there have been two gambling places opened to get the workers’ money. That is an example.”

As the 1930s ended, Bill Haggerty’s anti-gambling drive failed to drive gamblers into the ocean. Bolita and its companion illicit enterprises continued to thrive in Tampa. Combined with local election reforms, however, the public assault on gambling helped persuade Charlie Wall that he could no longer depend upon Tampa’s network of business and political insiders to sustain his underground network. Tito Rubio’s death also signaled that superior criminal forces were moving against Wall. After his 1938 trial and acquittal, he retreated more frequently to Havana and Miami, ceding Tampa’s gambling rackets to the “outside” elements to which he had alluded in his grand jury testimony. By peeling away popular sympathies for Wall, the anti-gambling boycott had helped to disrupt a collective habit of accepting gamblers’ invulnerability and omnipotence in Tampa. New possibilities for prosperity were beginning to appear which would depend on people and forces beyond the reach of local traditions. To pursue the opportunities of the 1930s demanded that Tampans shift their local political economy, allowing it to mesh with regional and national enterprises. Tampans saw that the tribal chieftain of the city’s most authentically local rite, bolita, could speak openly in a courtroom, but not in the gatherings of the Presidents’ Roundtable. By turning a spotlight on that cultural bifurcation, Haggerty’s campaign helped Tampans see beyond the limits of the city’s traditional politics and commerce.

71 “Tampa Business Men Start Drive on Gambling,” Tampa Morning Tribune, July 18, 1938. The second speaker was John G. Anderson, Jr., who noted that the bolita boycott was “the first time in more than 40 years in Tampa that he had seen the problem attacked from an economic angle.”
The New Deal Over Tampa

During the 1930s, Tampans embraced technological innovations that would connect them more firmly to people and forces that had long seemed foreign. Air travel was the most influential technology of the time, and a growing number of Americans sensed that aviation would be essential to the future of any city that aspired to growth and prosperity. Federal policies toward aviation reflected and reinforced those local attitudes, and federal resources became essential in Tampa’s adaptation to the developing technologies and infrastructure of commercial flight. Through the airport construction programs of the WPA, the New Deal helped Tampa to substantially advance its role in air travel. The process strengthened the economic and political ties between local and federal government, while softening local anxieties about federal influence.

As an unmistakable symbol of modernity, aviation illustrated a city’s claim to being a vital, sophisticated urban center on a trajectory to grow and prosper. Air travel promised to shrink distances and draw distant places together, which appealed to urban boosters, and was particularly suited to Florida’s sprawling, predominantly rural geography. Airplanes and flyers also drew admiring attention wherever they appeared, adding glamour to their enterprise. Even though many had never flown, and aircraft had yet to prove their economic viability, many identified themselves as aeronautical enthusiasts.  

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During the 1920s aviation technology and popular interest in its possibilities had surged. In 1926, commercial and civilian aviation and airport development received their first serious attention from the federal government. The Air Commerce Act of that year created a new Aeronautics Branch in the U.S. Department of Commerce. It authorized the Secretary of Commerce to classify local airports according to criteria set by his department, and it authorized him to designate intercity air routes. The Treasury Secretary would regulate foreign flights, authorizing them to serve selected air ports of entry. Congress appropriated no money for actual airport development. Nevertheless, just the existence the new federal classification system motivated local boosters in cities such as Tampa to attempt to earn the highest possible federal classification by investing in standardized aviation infrastructure such as modern, well-equipped airfields.73

After Charles Lindbergh’s trans-Atlantic flight, people everywhere tended to equate aviation with human progress. The sky liberated and purified. When people took flight, they could view their city and countryside in fresh perspective, having left earthly graft and corruption behind. From three thousand feet, Tampa appeared to be just as its boosters imagined it should - clean, orderly, prosperous, and modern. The air-minded Tampan, then, stood implicitly in reproach of anything that might characterize the city as backward-looking. Aviation appealed naturally to civic boosters. Members of the local business elite, motivated by civic pride and ambition, did not merely support but practically evangelized about all things related to flying. They couched flight in the rhetoric of growth and portrayed a future that would bypass cities that skimmed on flying.

73 David Courtwright argues that the Air Commerce Act of 1926 “did for national airways expansion what the 1785 Land Ordinance and the 1787 Northwest Ordinance had done for expansion across the Ohio River: postal contracts and safety regulations served as the equivalents of cheap land and orderly political development.” See Courtwright, *Sky As Frontier*, p. 68.
facilities. The Post Office’s new nationwide airmail routes were compelling evidence, and Tampa’s Postmaster J. Edgar Wall was an early, prominent aviation booster.  

Tampa feverishly embraced the nationwide blaze of air-mindedness. In 1928, local businessmen formed the Tampa Aero Club, with National Airlines local agent Roslyn E. Burritt as secretary. Aero Club members promoted all things related to the future of aviation, while focusing on the commercial advantages that aviation might confer on Tampa. Eventually, the club became the local affiliate of the National Aeronautic Association (NAA). For over two decades, “Roz” Burritt served as the group’s tireless recruiter, correspondent, and factotum. Burritt, who also worked for National Airlines, combined his public relations background with the platform of the Aero Club to promote Tampa to aviation interests nationwide.

The new Tampa Aero Club teamed with the Chamber of Commerce to press the City of Tampa to purchase a parcel of land for use as a public airfield. Drew Field, named for the farmer who owned it, was a nearly square 240-acre tract three miles west of town that had once been a pasture. At the time of the city’s purchase, flying enthusiasts were already using it as an airfield. It functioned as an “all-ways” facility,

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74 See Bednarek, America’s Airports also Karl B. Lohmann, Principles of City Planning, First ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1931) The first edition of this pioneering standard reference for urban designers stated that cities “must plan at once to provide the necessary landing facilities for airplanes and dirigibles... [U]nless these landing places be provided for a city, no traffic by air can ever increase the commercial importance of that place.” Citing city planner E.P. Goodrich, this text enjoined cities to reserve plenty of space for operating and parking aircraft. “[B]y the time the United States has reached a population of 200,000,000, there will need to be one airport for every 2,000 of the population. Upon this basis the city of New York with its prospective population of 10,000,000 people will require 5,000 airports” (p. 139-140). J. Edgar Wall was one of numerous prominent Tampans to join the Tampa Aero Club.

75 Information concerning the Tampa Aero Club and other Tampa-based aviation activities comes from the Papers of R.E. Burritt, in the Dept. of Special Collections, University of South Florida Library, Tampa. The date of the club’s transition to the Tampa Chapter of the NAA is unclear, though the minutes of the “first official meeting of the Tampa Chapter of the National Aeronautic Association” bear the date December 30, 1935. That name begins to replace that of the Aero Club in 1936. References herein to the Tampa Aero Club include the Tampa Chapter of the NAA.
meaning that there were no improved directional runways. Pilots landed and took off in every direction. A lighted beacon identified the field at night, while red and green approach lights warned flyers away from the trees along the south and west boundaries and the trees and power lines across the north boundary. A few small buildings lined the east side of the property, closest to Westshore Boulevard. An informal community of pilots and enthusiasts mowed the grass, smoothed the ruts, and welcomed visitors. There was no system of ground transport, so arriving flyers either hitched a ride or called for a taxi, using the telephone required by the Department of Commerce to be present at any first-class airfield. In 1928, when the City of Tampa assumed ownership, its Public Works Department took over responsibility for maintenance, granting official legitimacy to both Drew Field and to local aviation in general. Still, the municipal airfield was a remote and comparatively crude setting for what Tampa’s air-minded envisioned as a setting for future glories.

The Tampans who focused on the city’s business future included Haggerty and Howell, who associated themselves with the growing nationwide community of aviation enthusiasts. Haggerty was personally and professionally intrigued by aviation’s possibilities, and Howell, who also liked flying, was similarly drawn to the commercial possibilities of making Tampa a nexus of air passenger travel. As was the case in cities around the country, they joined other ambitious local promoters, many of who were not pilots, but who like them sought to advance Tampa through aviation by using it as a symbol of local sophistication, modernity, and inter-connectedness.

The term “air-mindedness” rhetorically signaled Tampans’ welcoming attitudes toward aviation, technological progress, and modernization more generally. Tampa’s
aviation promoters spread their “winged gospel” locally, and strove to make it part of the city's image. Throughout the 1930s, Tampa’s business leaders cited air travel’s potential to further their regional and international ambitions. However, Tampa’s troubled reputation and national news coverage of certain of its backward traditions, such as those associated with the Shoemaker lynching scandal, hampered those who tried to identify the city with the newest technological and commercial innovations. Moreover, during the torpor of the Depression, aviation interests in Tampa and elsewhere had to compete for capital. Neither mere enthusiasm for flying nor popular fascination with technology were enough to overcome the inertia of a community already preoccupied by more pedestrian worries. Aviation’s impassioned true believers had to recruit investors whose interest was more calculated.

The Tampa Aero Club, then, was more than an association of people who wanted to go up in airplanes. Its influential members included department store executive Jerome “Jerry” Waterman, attorneys Sidney Brown and Cody Fowler, Tampa Postmaster J. Edgar Wall, real estate dealer E.S. Hensley, Peninsular Telephone Company President Carl Brorein, Tampa Electric Company head Frank Gannon, banker T.C. Taliaferro, and Mayor Bob Chancey. Many Aero club members also served on the Aviation Committee of the Tampa Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber promoted air-related development consistently and strongly, and routinely pushed local aviation projects in tandem with the Aero Club. Other local organizations such as the Tampa Board of Realtors and the Junior Chamber of Commerce did likewise. When key developments impended, such as major aviation news or legislative activity, the interested parties all convened informally as the “Greater Tampa Aviation Committee,”
usually chaired by Maas Brothers president Waterman, a leading downtown merchant and a devoutly air-minded member of both the Chamber and the Aero Club.  

The joint committee of the Chamber and the Aero Club initiated and orchestrated every local event dealing with aviation. For example, on October 12, 1934, the joint committee met at the Hillsboro Hotel to plan that year’s Tampa Aviation Week festivities. Local “aviation days” or weeks were common in cities that sought to promote aerial commerce. In 1934, the event celebrated the first anniversary of Pan American Airways’ passenger service between Tampa and Havana, along with the inaugural flight of locally-owned Gulf Airways’ service to New Orleans. 1934 also marked the sixth anniversary of the Tampa Aero Club itself. To maximize the effect of all of these celebrations, the committee scheduled Tampa Aviation Week for the last week in November. The group planned an aerial pageant and flying demonstrations, with guests of honor invited from the cities and states connected to Tampa by air service, as well as dignitaries from Havana, including Cuba’s president.

Tampa staged such public festivities to broadcast its faith in aviation, but the city’s public policies proved it. In a separate meeting during that same month, Mayor Chancey briefed the Aero Club on the status of a proposal for a new city airfield, a matter of consuming interest to all air-minded citizens. Earlier that year, Tampa had applied under a program of the federal WPA for funds to build a new airport closer to

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76 R.E. Burritt Papers. In 1934, Waterman, Brown, and real-estate dealer/attorney Louis Petteway formed the Gulf Airways Corporation to carry passengers between New Orleans and Tampa, by way of Mobile, Pensacola, and Panama City. They intended to capitalize on Tampa’s new role as a terminal for service to Havana and South America. Like Miami-based Pan-Am, Gulf Airways used Sikorsky amphibious aircraft so as to operate flexibly from urban waterfront facilities. The new company survived for only a few years.

77 Minutes of the Greater Tampa Aviation Committee, Friday, October 12, 1934. (R.E. Burritt Papers, Box 4, Folder 12, USF Special Collections).
the central business district then somewhat remote, pastoral Drew Field. A modern downtown airport would appeal to business travelers, and would be a full-throated declaration of Tampa’s commitment to air commerce.\textsuperscript{78}

Municipal ownership of the property was a pre-condition for airport funding by the WPA, so the Tampa Aero Club, Chamber of Commerce, and other organizations lobbied the Board of Representatives to buy land for a second city-owned airport to supplant Drew Field, purchased just six years previously. In 1934, Tampa’s straitened finances were hardly auspicious for such an investment, but on March 6, the Board unanimously approved the purchase of 691 vacant residential building lots at the southern end of the dredged island subdivision called Davis Islands. The lots, covering 140 acres, had been idle and abandoned since the collapse of the real estate boom eight years previously. Local banker and attorney Peter O. Knight represented the out-of-state investment corporation that owned the land, and he was instrumental in negotiating its sale to the city. From the seller’s point of view, a new airport at the most remote corner of the island had the potential to revive interest in nearby vacant lots languishing on the market for sale.\textsuperscript{79}

The Board of Representatives rewarded Knight by naming the new municipal airport for him. No doubt the powerful old conservative savored the irony of attaching his name to a major project of the WPA. Few in Tampa could have been more hostile to Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal. In fact, the dissonance captured elite Tampans’

\textsuperscript{78} Minutes of the Greater Tampa Aviation Committee, October 19, 1934. (R.E. Burritt Papers, Box 4, Folder 12, USF Special Collections).

\textsuperscript{79} By virtue of his role in establishing the Tampa Electric Co., Knight was the local agent for Boston-based Stone & Webster, the venerable utility holding company and consulting firm. In 1928, Knight had facilitated Stone & Webster’s investment in the moribund Davis Islands project.
ambivalence about federal relief and recovery programs, i.e., that they might be radical interventions with potentially disruptive consequences, but the prevailing economic conditions made it foolish to overlook any help for municipal improvement. Through the WPA, the federal government funded 70% of the $565,000 cost of the airfield, the adjacent seaplane ramp, and the handsome art-deco terminal building, which included airport administrative offices, meeting space, and a control tower. The city’s financial contribution included the unfinished residential tract that it had acquired for the airfield.80

The presence of the sparkling new in-town airport sent a number of messages that greatly pleased Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs, even those who personally cared little for airplanes. The new municipal tangibly proved that Tampans were air-minded; it symbolized Tampa’s technological modernity; and, it supported local boosters’ claims that the city was a place of civic achievements. The federal government’s significant capital contribution to its aviation partnership with the city reinforced Tampa’s representations of itself as a place that was safe for investment. Meanwhile, Knight’s symbolic imprimatur on the project may have tempered disquiet about weakening local control over Tampa’s assets in favor of federal government agencies and regulators such as, in this case, the Civil Aeronautics Administration.81

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80 “Eight Years of Achievement For Tampa’s 100,000: An Illustrated Story of the Progress the City of tampa Has Made Since 1931,” (Tampa: 1939)

81 Since the new Peter O. Knight Airport was much closer to the downtown business district, the city and airlines designated it as the passenger airfield, and Drew Field languished until the U.S. entered World War II. The local focus on aviation also led to Tampa’s competition to host a permanent military air base, which became a reality in 1939 when Congress authorized MacDill Army Air Field, well south of town on Tampa’s Interbay peninsula. When the U.S. entered World War II, the City of Tampa leased Drew Field to the U.S. War Department for twenty-five years, or until the end of the national emergency. The War Department turned the field over to the Army, which operated it as Drew Army Air Force Base, a training facility for bomber pilots and crews. Drew functioned as an adjunct installation to MacDill Field. In Tampa, These additional aviation resources from beyond the city profoundly altered Tampa’s future.
Reform and Resistance

While civic entrepreneurs pursued new political and economic relations with the federal government, Tampa’s inheritance of racial and labor tensions made national news, and compromised efforts to revise its image and reshape its political economy. In 1935, a little-known Tampa social activist died for advocating radical ideas about rights and equality. Joseph Shoemaker was an unusual lynching victim, because he was white. Those charged in his kidnapping and murder included several Tampa Police officers, and Mayor Chancey’s police chief. The attorney for all of the accused was the Mayor’s brother-in-law and political patron, Pat Whitaker, who also capably represented Charlie Wall. Speaking for the defendants, Whitaker denounced the victim, arguing that Shoemaker had tempted fate by advocating socialism, which Whitaker equated to treason. Therefore, Shoemaker had assured his own fate. Just as Tampans sought attention for their engagement with America’s modernizing political economy, the publicity that accompanied the Shoemaker murder highlighted local practices of violent informal justice as a means to preserve the traditional social order. During the trial of Shoemaker’s accused killers, Tampans began to measure the cost of holding onto some of their oldest and most distinctive values.82

Southern traditionalists fretted that Washington-based New Dealers planned to use their power to end white supremacy and empower labor unions in the region, though in Tampa, scant evidence supported those fears. From the 1920s through the

82 Lynching here refers to a manifestation of vigilantism, or “the use of violence by established groups to preserve the status quo at times when the formal system of rule enforcement is viewed as ineffective or irrelevant.” See H. Jon Rosenbaum and Peter C. Sederberg, “Vigilantism: An Analysis of Establishment Violence,” in Vigilante Politics, ed. H. Jon Rosenbaum and Peter C. Sederberg (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976), p. 17. The operation of lynching in Tampa in this context is nowhere better explained than in Ingalls, Urban Vigilantes, who also refers to the work of political scientists Rosenbaum and Sederberg.
1930s, the lives of Tampa’s African-American changed little – if at all, for the worse. The privations of the 1926 Crash fell hardest on them, as blacks were invariably the first to lose their jobs in any economic contraction, and the last to benefit from recovery. Jim Crow segregation affected virtually every aspect of life. Meanwhile, President Roosevelt’s Democratic allies from the South in Congress protected the legal foundations of Southern life, especially those affecting labor. For the region’s blacks, the benefits of the New Deal were more rhetorical than tangible.83

The economic strains of the 1930s led some whites and blacks to make common cause in asserting their rights, but conservative whites recoiled from any show of solidarity between the races. Whites who failed to sustain a pose of superiority relative to blacks invited punitive measures similar to those routinely deployed against assertive blacks. Tampa’s police aggressively discouraged non-conforming behavior, lest African-Americans or sympathetic whites misinterpret police tolerance as the freedom to depart from the norms of racial apartheid. In the South of the 1930s, non-conformists included labor union organizers, socialists, and communists. Tampa’s whites were quick to conflate all three with disturbing notions of equality for black citizens.

Tampa native Robert Saunders observed Tampa’s culture of racial politics firsthand. “Bob” Saunders was born in Tampa in 1921, and grew up in the part of West Tampa called Roberts City. During the 1930s he attended segregated public schools for blacks, and in 1940 graduated from Middleton High School. His textbooks, he recalled, were cast-offs from Tampa’s white high schools, Hillsborough and H.B. Plant.

83 Concerning blacks’ experience of Tampa’s cascading economic depression in the late 1920s and early 1930s, see Rowena Ferrell Brady, Things Remembered: An Album of Africa Americans in Tampa (Tampa: University of Tampa Press, 1997).
Middleton’s share of the supply ended with the books for 10th grade Algebra. Saunders believed that his resulting mathematical illiteracy later “crippled” him in the military, where he had hoped to make a career. 84

To Saunders, official racism in the Tampa of his childhood was ubiquitous, and indelible. Tampa’s police demeaned blacks as a matter of policy, and interactions between police and black citizens were routinely accompanied by physical brutality. As Saunders and his classmates were on their way to school one morning, two Tampa policemen boarded their streetcar looking for two black female students. The officers “whipped them while they were taking them off.” Police officer Frank Davis acquired the nickname “Let’s Go,” for his trademark peremptory command to any African American who aroused his interest. Davis and fellow officers were prone to “walk into the black homes and beat and arrest people.” When Saunders and his friends went downtown to earn money by shining shoes, “the cops would run us off and call us niggers.” 85

In 1931, as a ten-year old elementary school student, Saunders witnessed white police disciplining whites who strayed beyond Tampa’s social and political boundaries. He and his neighbors watched as Ku Klux Klansmen claiming to be police entered the home of Frank Crawford, a neighbor and labor union activist, and took him away. Crawford returned home tarred and feathered, and was subsequently arrested for

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84 Robert W. Saunders’ Sr. Oral History interview by Glenda A. Rabby, Tampa, Florida, 1981, p. 4-5 (Robert and Helen Saunders Papers, USF Special Collections). Roberts City took its name from a nearby cigar factory that was the neighborhood’s principal employer. In 1953, Saunders returned to Tampa as the Florida Director for the NAACP.

85 Ibid, p. 3-5
possessing subversive literature. Later, Saunders learned that Crawford’s offense was membership in the “Socialist Party.”

Employers and politicians in Tampa found little to distinguish between socialists, labor unionists, and those who would “agitate” among black citizens. Tampa was unusual among southern cities, in that labor unions had been long-established in its important cigar industry. Union membership was common among the city’s Spanish-speaking citizens. Tension between organized cigar workers and their employers periodically resulted in strikes, lockouts, and sometimes violence. Local government, police and the press invariably sided with factory owners. During the early 1930s, high unemployment increased those tensions, as well as raising fears that labor activists were spreading disaffection among Tampa’s African-Americans, a population group whose very existence challenged urban boosters.

After the 1920s real estate boom and crash, Tampa’s promoters faced a dilemma as to how best to weave the city’s black population into the city’s narrative of growth. To portray blacks as constituting a swollen pool of low-wage labor implied that Tampa was overpopulated and economically depressed, and therefore unstable. But concealing such a resource might cause the supply of potential labor to appear tight, and thereby expensive. In January 1926, the *Tampa Tribune* strove mightily to articulate the orthodoxy of race in Tampa’s political economy by assigning prospective future jobs to different groups according to race as well as gender. “Everyone must recognize the need of (sic) Negro labor in this city as in other cities of the South. No matter how great

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a city Tampa may become, it will still have need of the labor service of Negro men and
the domestic service of Negro women."\textsuperscript{87} That locution baldly depicted contemporary
race relationships in Tampa, as well as the locally prevailing assumptions about the
city's future. The contingent elements of Tampa’s path to metropolitan importance and
prosperity included the existence of an underclass of citizens who would remain
perpetually marginalized owing to their racial identity.

In 1930, such unselfconsciously exploitive racism continued to inform political
entrepreneurs’ presumptions, and surfaced in booster rhetoric. Tampa real estate
broker and developer B.L. Hamner prepared an exhaustive analysis of the local
economy, designed to attract the interest of outside industries. In discussing labor, the
Hamner report acknowledged that organized labor existed in Tampa, but noted that
unions represented a minority (25%) of those currently employed. The study labeled
Tampa’s population as “Native White, Foreign, and Negro… of the latter two classes
Tampa has approximately 20% of each . . . [T]he negro, due to lack of education falls
within the unskilled labor class.”\textsuperscript{88}

Hamner’s 1930 report echoed the 1926 \textit{Tribune} editorial, sorting-out Tampans for
work suited to their racial identity and gender while anticipating the tendency of some
outsiders to stereotype. There was “an abundance of labor to be found in Tampa for all
purposes both skilled and common. . . [O]f the latter, two classes with both sexes are
available, namely foreign and Negro. Contrary to general opinion Negro labor can be
moulded (sic) to form a very fine class of labor. During the World War that Negro was

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\item[87] \textit{Tampa Morning Tribune}, January 30, 1926.
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taught along general lines; coupled with a high rate of pay he learned the value of money; following with the period of reconstruction and a decline in the wage scale the Negro realized that a steady job was desirable and has maintained a high percentage of employment since. For certain classes of work, the Negro woman, as well as the foreign woman, offers a source of employment highly desirable."  

Hoping to have persuaded readers about the advantages of Tampa's low-wage workforce, Hamner's pamphlet expanded upon "common labor" resources. "At this point it might be brought out that Tampa does not desire industries using so-called cheap labor, but in some instances, certain factors enter into a business that can make use of labor that due to the non-essential (sic) of extreme skill is worthy of only a moderate wage and labor of that class is easily obtainable here." Turning to skilled labor, the writer assured that "practically any kind is available," including the trades, such as carpenters, painters, plumbers, bricklayers, plasterers, tinters, lathers, and paper hangers. Hourly wages for Tampa's skilled classes ranged from $.80 to $1.50, based on a 44-hour work week, and even among the unionized, strikes were rare, the only one in recent memory having been in the cigar industry, "which lasted about three weeks." 

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89 Ibid., p 104. The unidentified writer expressed the breezy, unabashed racism of that place and time, when Southern boosters portrayed African American citizens in terms that would sooth prospective newcomers, and forestall anxiety that strict segregation necessarily equated with racial tension. “Our Negroes are probably the most peaceable citizens,” Mayor Chancey proudly declared in 1931, in the context of ordering forceful, repressive action aimed at furthering their peaceable nature. (Quoted in Ingalls, Urban Vigilantes, p. 151.

90 Ibid., p. 104-105. The Hamner survey is a rich if somewhat random document, full of lists, tables, and data, interspersed with the commentary of a 1930 real estate promoter, uncertain of his audience, but striving to seem candid. It reflects the economic aspirations of a depressed city as yet unaware that the rest of the nation was entering a long period of similar conditions. See B.L. Hamner Organization, Industrial Survey: Tampa, Florida (Tampa: 1930), Folder 23, Tampa Chamber of Commerce Collection, CTARS.
Worsening economic conditions made Tampans alert to labor tensions as well as racial unrest, and sensitive to “foreign” sources of radical ideologies. In 1935, those currents reached their nadir when socialist connections cost Tampa resident Joseph Shoemaker his life. On the evening of November 30, uniformed police, acting without a warrant, entered a home where Socialist party allies were meeting. Shoemaker was present in his role as the founder of a tiny group that he called the Modern Democrats. Officers drove Shoemaker and four others to Tampa police headquarters for interrogation. Sergeant Charles Brown, who was in charge of Tampa’s traffic squad, questioned each of the men about their sympathies for Communism or for racial equality. As each man was released from the police station, waiting figures bundled the “Modern Democrats” singly into unmarked cars, which carried them to a remote wooded spot east of the city. After savage beatings, the attackers tarred and feathered their victims, and left them with a warning to “get out of town in 24 hours, or we’ll kill you.” After this treatment, and following nine days of hospitalization in Tampa, Joseph Shoemaker died from his injuries.91

The survivors of the attack identified Tampa policemen among their kidnappers. Based on their previous experiences, the victims’ relatives and friends anticipated that the local police would investigate without arresting anyone, and that to call upon outside law enforcement agencies would merely draw down reprisals against themselves. Socialists in Tampa appealed to the national party’s head, Norman Thomas, who

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91 Ingalls, Urban Vigilantes, p. 182-183. The Modern Democrats were moderate socialists within the economic reform movement in the style of California’s Upton Sinclair. In Tampa, their most serious offense appeared to have been challenging the White Municipal Party in the 1935 mayoral election. Incumbent Mayor Chancey, the White Municipal Party candidate, won overwhelmingly, however Shoemaker’s Modern Democrats persisted in publicly denouncing Chancey’s “corruption, chicanery, dishonesty and dictatorship.”
publicly demanded that Mayor Chancey and the Hillsborough County Sheriff Jerry R. MacLeod identify and prosecute the attackers. Thomas’s most effective move was to establish a national Committee for the Defense of Civil Rights in Tampa (CDCRT). The committee collected over $7,600, with the help of various union locals, the American Federation of Labor, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Separately, the ACLU posted a $1000 reward for information in the investigation. CDCRT investigators bestirred local officials, while the publicity campaign succeeded in its objective to “bring down upon the heads of government in the city of Tampa the full force of public indignation everywhere.” For the next three years, the case drew state and national news coverage. Journalists excoriated Tampa’s political and economic elite, to good effect, merely by invoking the Shoemaker case.92

Unsurprisingly, Tampa’s police chief Richard G. Tittsworth found no evidence of involvement in the Shoemaker incident by anyone in his department. Tittsworth, a local attorney, was a Chancey appointee and the mayor’s personal friend. Hillsborough Sheriff MacLeod was, however, closer to Tampa's political faction that had opposed Chancey, most lately in the violent 1935 election. Under pressure of wide publicity, MacLeod and Hillsborough State Attorney J. Rex Farrior launched a separate investigation of the case that yielded grand jury indictments of ten Tampa police officers. For his role in blocking the investigation, the Grand Jury named Chief Tittsworth as an accessory to the crimes.93

92 Ibid
93 Jerry MacLeod became Sheriff due to a gubernatorial appointment by David Sholtz, who had replaced the previous Sheriff for misconduct. Sholtz was embarrassed by the publicity surrounding the Shoemaker
The presiding circuit judge who gave the grand jury members their charge was explicit about what the affair meant for Tampa: “It has been said by some of our businessmen that important industries have purposefully avoided their establishment here because of the reputation of this city with respect to law enforcement.” Justice was one thing, but local indignation at the Shoemaker murder also drew from fears of the impression that it would make upon outsiders. Beatings, kidnapping, lynching and other forms of vigilante violence had long been as unremarkable in Tampa as they were throughout the Deep South. Most ascribed such vigilantism to the Invisible Empire of the Ku Klux Klan, a reputation that members local Klansmen were pleased to encourage, albeit anonymously. However, by December of 1935, Tampa’s political establishment sensed that informal violence in the name of social control had gone too far. While Shoemaker’s murder had aroused the usual moralizing critics, other, usually phlegmatic constituencies also complained, and alert civic entrepreneurs detected a sea change. Tampa’s traditional methods of social control had drawn unwelcome attention before, but now they threatened to undermine local efforts to revise perceptions of Tampa. In a remarkable departure from their tolerant editorial stance concerning vigilantism, both daily newspapers voiced the same concern. The *Tampa Times* editorialized that Shoemaker’s gruesome fate represented “another large blot on the reputation of Tampa for lawlessness,” while the *Tampa Tribune* called the attackers public enemies, who had not just “brutally murdered an inoffensive citizen, innocent of
any crime or wrongdoing, but they have inflicted upon the city an injury which will take years to overcome."\textsuperscript{94}

Mayor Chancey publicly labeled the victims as well-known troublemakers, given to political agitation among workers as well as the unemployed. This was standard rhetoric, tacitly signaling all concerned that the victims and their sympathizers would get no help from Tampa's police or other authorities. The mayor's declaration would also have served as a coded authorization for the victims and their allies to receive the appropriate community response, which meant shunning and other informal retribution for stepping out-of-bounds.

In the Shoemaker case, however, the "troublemakers" did not stay silent, and their usual oppressors felt constrained by the unaccustomed level of public dismay. When he realized the strange new political direction in which the Shoemaker case was moving, Chancey tacked by suspending the city employees alleged to have been among the attackers. The exception was the mayor's friend Chief Tittsworth, who instead took an indefinite leave of absence. The grand jury indictments made it obvious that Tampa's police had in fact been involved, at least in Shoemaker's kidnapping. Popular reactions surprised local as well as outside observers. On January 19, 1936, Norman Thomas visited Tampa to address a public rally organized by the CDCLT. There, a crowd of 2000 cheered as Thomas optimistically declared: "This is the first time in American history that any floggers have ever been brought to justice, and perhaps some higher-ups reached."\textsuperscript{95}

\textsuperscript{94} Quoted passages are from Ingalls, \textit{Urban Vigilantes}, p. 186-189.

\textsuperscript{95} Ibid, p. 191.
Prominent Tampa businessmen, many supporters of Mayor Chancey, immediately posted bail for the eleven men charged, all of who had formal ties to the Tampa Police Department. Chancey’s brother-in-law, attorney Pat Whitaker, threw himself into the defendants’ cases with his customary vigor, and presumably with his behind-the-scenes political influence. Before the trial, two of those indicted died under mysterious circumstances, ostensible suicides. Whitaker succeeded in having the remaining trials moved to neighboring Polk Country. There, Whitaker portrayed the victims as socialists or communists, and cast the policemen’s suspicious treatment of them as a patriotic response that could scarcely have ended any other way. To nearly everyone’s surprise, the rural Polk County jurors were unmoved by the attempt to recast the murder trial as a political inquest, and promptly returned guilty verdicts for all nine defendants. Whitaker then successfully moved for another trial that would exclude much of the prosecution's evidence. The second trial judge agreed with Whitaker, and the original convictions were set aside. In the eyes of the judiciary, the defendants had been exonerated, although by then few any longer questioned their guilt.96

The embarrassing notoriety that accompanied the Shoemaker affair affected most Tampans. Those who sought to preserve the traditional social hierarchy through intimidation and violence were uncharacteristically on the defensive. Meanwhile, those disgusted by such primitive brutality, or embarrassed by community lawlessness, found themselves in an unaccustomed position of moral authority over Tampa’s self-styled defenders of tradition. And for those accustomed to living in fear of unchecked mob rule,

96 Ingalls, Urban Vigilantes, Chapter 6, “Tar and Terror.” Ingalls measures the end of Tampa’s “reign of terror” (p.163) by the Shoemaker episode, as well as the 1934 lynching of an African-American suspected of assaulting a white woman. The aftermath of both murders revealed Tampa’s propensity for mob violence tolerated, if not fostered, by authorities.
Joseph Shoemaker’s murder was liberating. Tampans felt newly free to deplore time-honored local practices of vigilantism and quasi-official mayhem.

By the summer of 1937, those emerging public attitudes tempered the official response to a sit-down strike, conducted by 400 women employed at the WPA’s Ybor City sewing room. In the face of staff and budget cutbacks, the workers demanded higher pay and better conditions. Strike leader Mabel Hagan and fellow labor activist Eugene Poulnot called on WPA workers throughout Tampa to launch a general strike. The appeal to other workers failed, and for nearly two weeks, local police and sheriff’s deputies monitored the scene without intervening, until July 14, 1937, when the striking women left the sewing room building and abandoned their labor action. Other factors helped minimize local reactions. For one thing, the strikers were mainly women, rather than members of any group whose identity was part of traditional patterns of violent collective repression. Furthermore, as opposed to a cigar factory strike, the sewing room strike did not threaten larger economic consequences for the community. Perhaps the decisive consideration was that, in 1937, any action against the strikers stood to become a media spectacle, placing the names of Joseph Shoemaker and Tampa back into newspaper articles throughout the country. The point was not lost on either side. 97

The New Deal affected labor relations differently according to region. In Tampa, the process of change included officially sanctioned violence, albeit on a lesser scale than that marking unionization in the steel and automotive industries of Michigan and Pennsylvania. The new climate contrasted sharply with Tampa’s previous practices

involving organized labor, and undermined old presumptions. Of those, the hardest to fall was the belief that elite Tampans could informally regulate the rights of groups or individuals who challenged them, all without drawing criticism.

**New Deals in Housing**

Housing policies ultimately affected Tampa as much or more than any other aspect of the city’s engagement with the federal New Deal. The impacts were so gradual at first as to be unnoticeable. Multi-family public housing projects, either directly financed or subsidized by the federal government, drew the most attention. However, federal housing initiatives eventually redefined Tampa’s geospatial form by stimulating private ownership of detached, single-family homes. Since the purchase price of a new home lay well beyond the cash resources of most Americans, ownership depended upon buyers’ ability to borrow large amounts of money. New Deal housing policies led to standardized practices, and redirected capital into local housing markets across the United States. The new national housing market was actually a network of local real estate markets interconnected by their dependence on a secondary market for mortgage loans. In order for new homes to qualify for subsidized mortgages and loan insurance, federal rules required that local governments such as Tampa's adopt a system of land-use regulations, or zoning, to help stabilize property values. Tampans’ aspired to home ownership, and tempered their suspicion of land-use laws. Despite influential local critics, the New Deal ushered in Tampa’s first zoning ordinances and land-use plan.

The critical events that rearranged Tampa’s physical geography and housing market occurred in the late 1930s and early 1940s, while the evidence of their consequences appeared after World War II. Mortgage lending policies, especially those
originating at the federal level, manifest their effects incrementally, given the time necessary for real property to change hands, for lenders and borrowers to enter into significant new financial agreements, and for the design and construction of new buildings to take place. Each phase occurs repeatedly within hundreds of transactions taking place over a span of years, so that broader effects only become visible well after the fact of their initial policy stimuli.

Similarly, local zoning laws affect land use only gradually. Where a new law would prohibit an existing activity, such as an automotive garage, the property owner normally may continue the non-conforming use at least until the property changes hands or is substantially altered. Such continuities are examples of “grandfathered” land uses, and may persist for years, or decades. New activities, that zoning laws may seek to encourage, also tend to commence only upon transfers of real estate over a period of years.

During the decade of the 1930s, the statewide rate of homeownership in Florida increased slightly, from 42% to 43.6%. The growth was modest, but it ran counter to the nationwide statistics, which declined from 47.8% in 1930 to 43.6% by 1940. In 1940, then, Florida was on par with the rest of the U.S. Elsewhere in the Deep South, though, homeownership had lagged throughout the decade, in most states declining slightly from rates that had already been poor in 1930. Only Texas and North Carolina claimed ratios exceeding 40%, while only 30.8% and 30.6% of Georgians and South Carolinians, respectively, owned their homes.98

98 U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Housing, Historical Census of Housing Tables – Homeownership.
Tampa’s homeownership statistics from the period portray a relatively stable residential population. According to a 1940 housing survey conducted by the WPA, 45% of Tampans owned their homes, greater than both the state and national ratios. In 1930, the average value associated with a new residential building permit in Tampa had been $1586.85. In 1940, the average had increased to $2773.03, a 74.8% increase that placed new home prices somewhat higher than the average value of existing, owner-occupied homes, which was then $2492. According to the 1940 Real Property Survey, that was only partly due to conditions for federal home loan insurance. Somewhat defensively, the writer commented, “[t]his great increase cannot be attributed to FHA loans entirely, which are not at all to be slighted, but there has been a constant improvement in the economic conditions of Tampa, more pronounced the last few years. Tampa people have a new feeling of security, and a strong determination to stick to Tampa and build their permanent homes on its soil.”99 Inarguably, the local economy was better than it had been in 1930 or 1935, and some Tampanos had reason to be more sanguine about the future. However, the ability to own a home depended on being able to finance it, and that ability had its basis in the federal housing policies of the New Deal, including those of the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC), the Federal National Mortgage Association (FNMA), and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA).

99 Real Property Survey and Low Income Housing Area Survey, Tampa, Florida, (Tampa: Works Progress Administration, 1940), p. 12. No authors are listed for this report, and the identity of those involved in its preparation seems carefully obscured. Given the patronage system under which the WPA operated in 1940 in Florida, the writer was likely a well-connected local citizen. A narrative of Tampa’s history covers three pages, within which a single sentence relates the economic collapse of the 1920s and 1930s: “In the next succeeding few years this great [real estate] activity slowed down, but Tampa has continued to grow, and with a firm and set determination to plan for a more beautiful and greater city” (p. 6).
Even those Tampans who did not participate in the FHA loan program acknowledged its local impact.100

Even so, homebuilding struggled throughout the 1930s. During the 1920s, Tampa’s new home construction had surged and then collapsed, remaining moribund until the beginning of World War II. The twelve months of 1925 saw $9.5 million worth of residential building in Tampa, but by 1927, the value of residential new construction fell to less than $2 million. By 1930, it was less than a half million dollars. 1932 was the worst year, with less than $100,000 worth of new homes built citywide. After that, Tampa’s homebuilding economy recovered slowly, with dollar values creeping up each year, until by 1940 they neared $1 million - still barely 10% of their boom-time value.

Beginning in 1934, federal grants and loans stimulated the local construction industry by financing public works. These included the reconstruction of Bayshore Boulevard as a four and one-half mile linear park and divided scenic highway; new public parks, such as the sprawling Cuscaden Park and Swimming Pool in Ybor City; and government buildings such as a new sixty-bed riverfront hospital solely for black citizens, named for Tampa’s pioneering African-American nurse Clara Frye. In addition, the WPA funded one-half the cost of a new $50,000 building to house a clinic and laboratory for the Tampa Health Department. One of the most celebrated local projects of the WPA was the new $565,000 municipal airfield, seaplane ramp, and terminal building on Davis Islands.101

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100 During the late 1930s, early in its existence, most residential mortgages insured by the FHA financed existing houses, rather than new-builds. In those cases, FHA lenders relied on the neighborhood appraisal maps created beginning in 1934 by the HOLC in order to predict the quality and stability of the property being mortgaged.

101 “Eight Years of Achievement,”
Such projects created hundreds of construction jobs and energized local building-supply vendors. However, federal spending on such civic improvements stimulated non-residential commercial construction more than residential home building, a sector that continued to languish into the 1940s.\textsuperscript{102}

**New Deal for an Old Order**

At the close of the 1930s, there were growing signs of resentment toward criminal excesses, an increasing presence of and influence from non-native white citizens, and at least a superficial easing of resistance to ideas and practices heretofore “foreign” to Tampanos. Developing technologies, such as aviation and mechanical refrigeration, offered convincing potential to alter Tampa’s human and economic geography. Shipbuilding was tangible proof of a new economic force that promised to benefit Tampans generally. Civic entrepreneurs generally embraced the era’s new business deals, even though they sometimes fostered unfamiliar challenges or competition. The federal New Deal itself, in the meantime, met with somewhat greater ambivalence, since it worked to shift political and economic power away from those who had traditionally exercised it.

That relocation of influence happened against a backdrop of deepening conflict between Florida’s cities and the state legislature. During the 1930s, state governments throughout the U.S., but particularly in the South, were unable or disinclined to address the problems of cities. During 1920s boom, the population of urban places such as Tampa area soared. However, local and county governments in those districts lacked the constitutional power to adapt by initiating new policies, particularly in matters of

\textsuperscript{102} Real Property Survey, p. 10-11.
finance. The legal precedent known as “Dillon’s Rule” meant that local government had to apply for passage of a local bill in the state legislature in order to create such things as special taxing districts, administrative authorities, or even zoning districts and agencies. In Florida’s capital city of Tallahassee, rural delegates controlled the legislature. Famously caricatured as the “Pork Chop Gang,” they tended to win election from sparsely populated north-Florida counties dependent upon agriculture or extractive industries such as timber. Their aversion to the interests of metropolitan voters also had the effect of constrained Florida’s governors, who depended upon the “pork-choppers” in order to advance their own agendas. Rural legislators’ abuse of their power was no secret, but invariably Florida’s courts also rejected attempts by municipalities or citizens to increase local control through judicial intervention. Under those circumstances, federal resources aimed at solving local problems gained ready acceptance among the civic entrepreneurs of Tampa. 103

103 DeGrove, John and Robyn Turner. "Local Government: Coping with Massive and Sustained Growth.” In Government and Politics in Florida, ed. Robert J. Huckshorn, 169-192. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998, p. 172. “Pork-Chop Gang” refers to the practice of powerful legislators of adding costly irrelevancies to spending bills that would benefit only their own constituents. The ability to control such legislative and budget fat, or “pork,” was an incentive for lawmakers to aspire to such posts as House Speaker, or Senate President. Tension between cities and rural-dominated statehouses was not unique to Florida or even the South. Cleveland, Ohio’s former mayor (and then U.S. Senator) Harold Burton, a Republican, lamented the political bias of statehouses and their limited sympathy for urban problems. See Douglas H. MacNeil, "Big Cities and States’ Rights,” Survey Graphic: Magazine of Interpretation, October 1944. The operation of Dillon’s Rule as an impediment to local government finance is a question of some nuance, however. Eric Monkkonen sees Dillon’s Rule as having sometimes been interposed, with the complicity of local officials, as a brake on the tendency of private enterprise to co-opt local government policy making. Eric H. Monkkonen, The Local State: Public Money and American Cities (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995). For a brief history of Florida cities’ political and legal struggle for greater local control, see Ralph Marsicano, "Development of Home Rule in Florida,” Florida Municipal Record, April 1984. In an example of political mischief, an act of the Florida Legislature abolished the City of Daytona Beach, then simultaneously re-created it with a virtually identical charter, but a new set of city commissioners. At a stroke, the popularly-elected commissioners were legislated out of office. In 1939, the courts upheld this baldly partisan action. On the other hand, in that same year the Florida Legislature devolved new power on cities by passing a general zoning enabling act, which for the first time granted cities the power to adopt local land use and building restrictions, to establish zoning districts, and to create zoning boards as well as boards of adjustment. Tampa moved promptly to establish its own Zoning Board, chaired by architect Franklin O. Adams, which led to its hiring consultant George W. Simons, Jr.
Dillon’s Rule and unsympathetic state legislators nudged cities toward greater interaction with federal agencies and officials, but the economic exigencies of Great Depression of the 1930s conclusively set the two in motion toward political interdependence. In 1931, unemployed citizens all over the country increasingly needed direct assistance, while city governments were often unable to meet municipal payrolls, much less appropriate funds for public relief. State agencies in Florida had few resources of their own, and local government officials turned to federal agencies for help. During 1932, the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) loaned money to cities to pay for public works. Early in the Roosevelt administration, during the so-called “First New Deal,” the Public Works Administration (PWA) made direct grants to cities for an increasing variety of local projects. Its successor, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) rationalized the process by establishing numerous district offices within the states, including one in Tampa.

By 1940, as war-related developments gained importance in local economies, Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs had grown accustomed to dealing with federal agencies. The results of federal grants for local public works in Tampa were clear and specific. Bayshore Boulevard and Peter O. Knight Municipal Airport were the more important examples among many. Government loans, loan guarantees, or direct subsidies to private corporations such as Tampa Shipbuilding were undeniably lifting up Tampa’s battered economy, a trend that growing international tension promised to continue. Tampans’ perceptions of New Deal recovery programs were strongly positive. Recognizing that, local elected officials such as Mayor Bob Chancey emphasized their
role in bringing federal dollars to Tampa, and aimed to continue and cultivate the relationship for their local benefit.\textsuperscript{104}

The 1930s introduced Tampa to radical changes, but the city’s most oppressive conditions persisted. Crime and corruption flourished, while crackdowns and crusades had little effect. Gross racial inequities persisted, but changes to either formal or informal apartheid remained mostly unthinkable, and unspeakable to Tampa’s white citizens, whether they were newcomers and old timers, poor or powerful. The notions of reform that sometimes accompanied New Deal initiatives appealed less to Tampans, especially where reform threatened to alter the familiar social patterns of life in the Cigar City. The physical detritus of the 1920s boom, such as obsolete infrastructure, plagued the city as well as surrounding residential areas. As the 1940s opened, the dislocating effects of a world war drew Tampans into bolder imagination about their future, an increasing interdependence with federal institutions, and further loosened their attachments to the city’s past.

\textsuperscript{104} President Roosevelt’s close advisor Harold Ickes noted the political moment and its causes in a 1937 report to FDR: "Urban public finance is [another] emerging problem of vast proportions. In the recent depression, urban areas pouring millions into the national treasury were forced to pass the hat, begging for financial support. The anomaly of this situation is that the 48 state governments which determine the local systems of taxation are from the standpoint of total expenditures only one-half as important as all the local governments they must control. Our largest cities alone, New York, Boston, Chicago, and Detroit, have larger budgets than the states which contain them. The problem of municipal finance is becoming even more complicated with the extension of Federal and State taxation to support the newer services of government such as social security and extensive public works" (p. ix). Pointing to the political conundrum caused by Dillon’s Rule, Ickes added that, "[i]n spite of its vital and growing significance as the principal instrument of public service and community control, the American city is still the legal creature of higher authorities, subject to their fiat for the most minor of powers and procedures, reaching down in one state to legislation to permit the peddling of peanuts on a municipal pier. The city is in many ways the ward of a guardian who refuses to govern" (p. ix). See Harold L. Ickes, Our Cities: Their Role in the National Economy, 1937.
CHAPTER 4
PLANNING FOR PEACE, 1940-1945

During World War II, Tampa’s political institutions and economic functions grew in a pattern modeled by the federal government. Civic entrepreneurs such as Bill Haggerty and George Howell advanced their project of transforming Tampa into a modern city by founding an innovative public-private planning corporation, the Economic Development Committee (EDC). The EDC in turn fostered agencies such as a new Port Authority and Aviation Authority. By 1944, the EDC was collaborating with George Simons, Tampa’s municipal consultant, on planning for major public works initiatives. The critical functions that grew out the EDC’s planning, policy development, and legislative advocacy involved seaport, airport, and highway transportation. Local projects resulting from that relatively brief surge of planning activity became decisive to the future of the metropolitan area by making the Tampa the region’s transportation center, financed through federal projects that integrated the local economy with that of the nation.

At the beginning of the 1940s, Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs observed the first successes since 1925 in their pursuit of economic growth. During the latter half of the 1930s, federal initiatives had put Tampans to work on numerous public works. The jobs and business activity that resulted from such projects fueled civic entrepreneurs’ appetites for such economic activity that came at seemingly low cost. When the economic expansion associated with World War II occurred, Tampa experienced it in two phases. With the outbreak of war in Europe in September of 1939 came increasing orders for ships to move freight on coastwise and ocean routes, placing Tampa’s growing shipyard capacity at an advantage. That same year, the U.S. War Department selected Tampa as the site of a major new Army aviation training base. Steady growth
in local employment and population ensued, even though the U.S. remained at peace. The second phase of the war economy began late in 1941, when the U.S. became a combatant nation. Tampa’s boom accelerated in every sphere. By 1944, Tampa Shipyards was Florida’s largest civilian employer, with some 14,000 workers. The city also hosted tens of thousands of Army aviation trainees, many stationed one of Tampa’s three Army Air bases where they learned to operate bombers. In addition to trainees who lived in Tampa for months at a time, aircrews in transit to the European theater of operations regularly passed through Tampa. Between December 8, 1941 and August 14, 1945, tens of thousands of newcomers saw Tampa for the first time. Many of them returned after the war.¹⁰⁵

World War II enabled Tampans to continue their project of civic reinvention by exploiting the federal policy initiatives, as well as by opening new paths for metropolitan growth. The citizens of Tampa experienced the institutions and programs of a large federal government more than ever before. The scope and function of local government grew as well, and a unique public-private partnership, the Economic Development Committee (EDC), undertook comprehensive planning for the postwar era. The EDC’s original brief was to avert an expected postwar depression, but its leaders expanded

¹⁰⁵ Concerning America’s political economy in wartime, Rutgers economics professor Hugh Rockoff argues that historians “tend to think of the war as a single, undifferentiated event rather than as a historical process,” and that there is a “tendency to forget the substantial changes that took place in the economy between the outbreak of the war in Europe and Pearl Harbor. In December, 1941, when all-out mobilization began, unemployment had fallen to about 6% of the labor force . . .” Hugh Rockoff, “The United States: From Ploughshares to Swords,” in The Economics of World War II: Six Great Powers in International Comparison, ed. Mark Harrison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 81-82. Employment data for Tampa Shipyards is from Gary R. Mormino, Hillsborough County Goes to War: The Home Front, 1940-1950 (Tampa: Tampa Bay History Center, 2001), p. 52.
their objectives to include that of steering Tampa toward a more sustainable political economy.  

To civic boosters, transforming Tampa meant revising perceptions among outsiders, to many of whom Tampa was a marginal Southern port city with a reputation for little other than cigars, crime, corruption, and repression. Investors were skeptical of a place where, just fourteen years earlier, the local banking system’s collapse had ruined thousands of business and individual depositors. During the 1930s, Tampa’s national reputation suffered as reports spread of murders among its organized gambling network, as well as politically motivated violence and rampant election fraud. Despite Tampa’s efforts to promote the area’s labor force as skilled yet docile, major industrial employers and capitalists regarded local workers warily, partly due to race tensions, and partly owing to their low levels of training and experience. In a December 2, 1940 letter, President Roosevelt’s War Shipping Administrator Admiral Emory Land wrote: “The Maritime Commission’s experience at Tampa, Florida has been quite unhappy on account of labor troubles and unfortunately some K.K.K. difficulties which have only

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recently been ironed out. Theoretically the shipbuilding labor situation in the South looks attractive, but practically this is not the case.\textsuperscript{107}

As early as 1941, unease about what the war’s end would do to Tampa’s newfound prosperity bestirred civic entrepreneurs to attempt some planning for the postwar period. Local citizens and outside consultants, operating both within and outside of formal institutions, engaged with ideas about Tampa’s future in an unprecedented surge of holistic planning. Tampans’ record and rhetoric of anti-statism made their comprehensive planning initiative seem contradictory. However, during the preceding fifteen years Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs had achieved little of what they had sought. The Great Depression in Tampa began earlier and lasted longer than in comparable cities. The economic contraction burdened the city with unmet infrastructure needs and strained municipal resources. Tampans’ personal finances were equally troubled, which may explain their close connections with illegal gambling interests. If the Second World War ended with a return to the conditions of the Great Depression, then lawlessness, violence, and corruption were likely to endure and to continue to hobble the city’s reputation.

\textsuperscript{107} K.K.K. refers to the Ku Klux Klan, whose members resisted, sometimes violently, the hiring of black or Hispanic workers at shipyards along the Gulf of Mexico, regardless of their skill. In his letter to the President, Land went on to complain of “scamping” labor in the South (a reference to lazy, inept workmanship), and to note that the South lacked “engineers, naval architects, draftsmen, managers, foremen, quartermen, and leading men . . .” and generally, “white collar brains.” Frederic C. Lane, Ships for Victory: A History of Shipbuilding Under the U.S. Maritime Commission in World War II (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 49. Had the decision to subsidize new shipyards been Admiral Land’s, there would have been little Southern shipbuilding during the 1930s and 1940s. Fortunately for Tampans, President Roosevelt favored the region, and accepted the counterarguments which held that the South offered a large pool of under-employed and unskilled but trainable workers, who would be attracted even by relatively low wages. In addition, the Gulf ports were remote enough to be safe from enemy attack, and even if future developments made them vulnerable, the dispersion of manufacturing capacity would complicate an enemy’s attack problem. The prospect of temperate year-round weather also boded well for productivity in cities such as Tampa. See Lane, Ships for Victory , 49-51.
Planning was a term freighted with notions of the federal New Deal and socialism, which were troubling to southerners preoccupied with states’ rights and traditional ideas about individual freedoms. The harshness of the Great Depression had muted ideological critics of the New Deal in the South. However, absent the fast, disorienting growth that came during World War II, Tampa’s engagement with comprehensive planning would have lacked urgency.\(^{108}\)

During the 1930s and 1940s, urban change in the South both fostered and rose out of a new relationship between cities and federal agencies in Washington D.C., one that circumvented governors and legislators. State governments throughout the U.S. were unable or disinclined to intervene in the problems of cities. Urban populations such as Tampa’s had soared during the 1920s Florida real estate boom, and did so again during the years of World War II. But local and county governments had limited power, particularly in matters of finance. State legislators from Florida’s urban districts wheedled and bargained for special legislation in order to create new local taxing districts and administrative authorities, or to allow cities and counties to issue municipal bonds. Even raising or lowering the salaries of municipal officers required the consent of

\(^{108}\) The trope of defiant Southern agrarianism is manifest in the writings of intellectuals such as Donald Davidson. Less partisan observers note that, until the mid-twentieth century, the urban South had experienced such slow growth that planning had been unnecessary. Tampa’s fast adoption of comprehensive planning during these years happened as other southern cities did much the same. Other research on local planning in the South may reinforce what this study adds to understanding the evolution, during the mid-Twentieth Century, of the New South into a distinctively more urbanized place. In 1920, only three southern cities (Norfolk, Tulsa, and Shreveport) had formal planning agencies. By the early 1950s, that number was 39. Stuart Chapin, first a community planner for the TVA, then planning director for Greensboro, North Carolina, became professor of city planning at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Writing in 1954, he suggested that the rapid increase in southern municipal planning had been propelled by the redevelopment provisions in the Federal Housing Act of 1949. See F. Stuart Jr. Chapin, “City Planning: Adjusting People and Place,” in The Urban South, ed. Rupert B. Vance and Nicholas J. Demerath (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954). Other cities, including Tampa, opted to contract planning work to professional municipal consultants such as George W. Simons, Jr., who, between 1929 and 1970, conducted planning studies for more than fifty cities in the American southeast.
a legislature that met only every other spring. Rural delegates with little experience or
sympathy for urban problems controlled legislative sessions. Friction, inertia, and
outright antipathy characterized relations between cities and their state governments,
leading the former to look to the federal government for relief. Agencies staffed by New
Deal appointees cultivated the new political relations, which opened channels to people
who most needed federal relief and help with recovery from the nationwide economic
depression. Federal policies and programs aimed at life in U.S. cities eventually worked
to stimulate urban reforms that had long been part of the agenda of the Progressive
movement.109

Planning and Zoning a New Tampa

By 1940, federal policies influenced Tampa to hire a municipal planning
consultant, George W. Simons, Jr., to create the city’s first “comprehensive city plan”
and zoning ordinance. Tampa’s leading advocate for the planning initiative was architect
Franklin O. Adams, who chaired Tampa’s Zoning Commission from its inception in 1939
until 1955. Simons’ contract, signed on December 18, 1940, called for a three-phase
project to be completed on or about January 1, 1943. However, the dislocations of
wartime overtook Simons as well as his clients and he did not deliver the final report of
the plan until February 10, 1945. During the intervening years, the scope of Simons’

109 According to Mark Gelfand, “[t]he New Deal marked a new epoch in American urban history . . . [t]he
rural domination and administrative stupor so characteristic of state capitals left the cities no choice but to
seek help from another source: the Federal Government.” In 1936, Gelfand noted, Cleveland, Ohio
became the first city to establish an Office of Federal Relations. Mark I. Gelfand, A Nation of Cities: The
important change was to the attitudes of “conservative urban business and commercial leaders, who
became increasingly fearful for the safety of their real-estate investments amid depression-era blight and
decay,” and welcomed direct federal appropriations and intervention in the problems of cities. See
Douglas L. Smith, The New Deal in the Urban South (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press,
work in Tampa came to include additional projects and clients, the most important being
the Hillsborough County Economic Development Committee. A public-private
consortium spawned in 1943 by the war crisis, the EDC gradually became a
metropolitan comprehensive planning agency extraordinaire.110

Simons was attractive to his Tampa clientele because he articulated a value
championed among local professionals, politicians, and entrepreneurs, namely, the
presumption that growth was good. With ample access to relatively cheap energy and
plenty of vacant or underused land, Southerners had little cause to examine the impulse
favoring economic growth by any means. Tampa's civic entrepreneurs reflexively
explored every avenue of economic and population expansion. Popular awareness of or
even curiosity about the ecological dimensions of growth did not exist, while faith in the
capacity of science, technology, and engineering to overcome human problems and
natural hazards was strong. The South's heritage as an economically disadvantaged
region further sustained those who promoted every kind of business idea. In 1938, the
federal “Report to the President on Economic Conditions of the South” described the

110 Although the two were from different backgrounds, Frank Adams and George Simons became friends,
and frequently dined together at Los Novedades, one of Tampa's finest Spanish restaurants, in Ybor City.
Adams grew up on a Louisiana cotton plantation and, in 1901, received a bachelor’s degree from the
venerable Centenary College of Louisiana, when it was still located in Jackson, LA. There he had joined
that quintessential southern fraternity, the Kappa Alpha Order. Adams came to Tampa during the Great
War, “[because] it was the only Florida city that showed any signs of potential growth, and I wanted to
help make it the center of Florida commerce and industry.” During the administration of Herbert Hoover,
Adams served on the President's National Building Congress. Later, during FDR’s presidency, Adams
was a member of the National Construction Appeals Board, under the National Recovery Act. He and
Simons thereby shared some experience of public service at the federal level, as well as a Hoover
connection. Their acquaintance preceded Simons' work in Tampa, as both were alums of the
Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Although they graduated several years apart, and in different
disciplines, Simons was active in MIT's alumni association for the rest of his life, and developed personal
contacts at every turn. See Alan J. Bliss, "Oral History Interview with Christian Simons LaRoche, 2003,"
Transcript, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, Gainesville, p. 66-69, and “Franklin O. Adams Retires,”
The Tampa Times, March 3, 1957; also “Converting Bay to Fresh Water Was a Big Plan Back in 1924,”
The Tampa Times, August 3, 1963; and “Franklin Adams, Retired Tampa Architect, Dies,” The Tampa
region as America’s “Economic Problem Number One.” In a 1941 magazine article, Simons responded specifically to the report, declaring that industrialization was the South’s destiny. Calling the South a “colonial province,” Simons noted that the “large corporations and financial interests of the north control[led] most of the South’s economic life; they also control[led] the credit structures.” Arguing for the region’s potential, Simons suggested that its natural resources, agricultural opportunities, and inviting climate for industrial employers had all been under-exploited. “We did not like to see or read the report to the President, but we must admit it brought forth much comment and jarred us into new channels of thought, all of which should redound to the credit and honor of a great region,” he declared. Simons portrayed a South peopled by those so frankly eager for economic activity that they solicited extractive industries, such as mining and forestry, and boasted of their willingness to work cheaply.  

To Simons, cities in the South sought to become organic parts of the larger national and international political economy. In November, 1940, a year prior to Pearl Harbor and the U.S. entry into World War II, Simons declared that “the day of isolationism is gone for cities as well as for nations.” Referring to the recent growth in military facilities in the South, he labeled the era a “defense generation in which the South will have a most strategic. . . place” in the economy. “To not only build and manufacture for defense but in so doing to improve the South’s economic position and .

111 George W. Simons, Jr. "Future Industrial Opportunities in the South." Florida Public Works, February 1941, 3-4. This was the official journal of the Florida State Road Department and the Florida Aviation Association.

112 George W. Simons, Jr., “Address before the Membership of the [Jacksonville] Chamber of Commerce, Tuesday, November 26, 1940” GWS Papers.
. intellectual and cultural development is a challenge to us all.”

Southerners’ time was at hand, Simons observed, early in 1941. “Today, the South is in a boom period – a few years hence when peace again dawns – a depression will come. It is now our opportunity to study and plan ahead so that when the day of depression does arrive the South will be better than ever able to meet the crisis.” Simons’ view resonated with civic entrepreneurs throughout the South, nowhere more so than in Tampa.

Simons agreed to produce three major reports for Tampa. Beginning in 1941, soon after his initial hiring, and continuing through 1944, Simons surveyed and evaluated population, land use, traffic and circulation, neighborhood composition and characteristics, housing, parks and recreation areas, and public buildings including schools. Each of these reports became the basis for a topical plan, which Simons compiled into a coordinated master plan. Report Number One, the Major Street Plan, focused on transportation, one of Tampa’s most vexing issues. The document was classic Simons, replete with maps, charts, graphs, and tables, all connected by a narrative discussion of the planner’s observations, interpretations, and recommendations. Over sixty photographs of streetscapes illustrated the report, to help readers visualize the problems that Simons described.

One of Tampa’s inherited planning challenges were streets whose ends did not align with each other. The pace of real estate development in the early 1920s had overwhelmed feeble attempts at even informal subdivision practices, as neither the City of Tampa nor Hillsborough County had adopted relevant ordinances. Therefore, no one

113 Simons, “Future Industrial Opportunities in the South.”
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid.
who converted a tract of land into a new subdivision followed any standard practices as to lot size, or the width and alignment of streets. The terrain and boundaries of the property, and the convenience and sometimes simply the whim of each builder, informed every land development decision. Developers divided land into residential lots, and set aside a strip of land to serve as a street right of way. The result was a patchwork quilt of neighborhoods with varied design characteristics, whose streets ended where the builder’s property ended. The adjoining tract might have been developed by someone whose needs differed from those of the neighboring parcel, perhaps because of topography, perhaps because the overall boundaries of the new neighborhood dictated an alternate design, or perhaps because of a perceived aesthetic issue. In the course of his local traffic survey, Simons would often find a three-way street intersection quite close to another three-way intersection, making Tampa’s street map resemble a maze. To cross town, motorists executed a series of alternating ninety-degree turns until they gained a major thoroughfare that might continue for a mile or two. The narrowness of typical neighborhood streets designed for local travel aggravated the congestion. Methodically, Simons recommended streets for realignment or relocation, or for outright closure.116

Simons’ transportation plans addressed streets and highways that lay beyond Tampa’s city limits, which drew him into the not always easy relationship among city and county officials. Conceding that the city’s plans could not affect land use or road construction in the county, he argued that the two overlapping political units had a

116 Simons, George W., Jr. Major Street Plan, City of Tampa, Florida, Including Rules and Regulations for Subdivisions and Interim Zoning Ordinance. Jacksonville: Simons & Sheldrick Company, 1941. Simons described a process of “successive corporate area expansions and ... successive subdivision accretions” (p. 7). The report includes numerous maps, charts, tables, charts, and graphs, as well as over fifty photographs of Tampa streetscapes.
mutual stake in correcting the mistakes of the past, and in coordinating the transportation resources of the Tampa region. Tampans had “a right to expect” street widening and new highway construction, new bridges across the Hillsborough River in the downtown area, relocation of railroad right-of-way (away from the urban core), redevelopment of the Army’s Drew Field as a regional airport for west Florida, and Henderson Field as an air cargo terminal. Simons also recommended the construction of a limited-access expressway, running north away from downtown Tampa, roughly along the corridor between Florida and Nebraska Avenues. Most of those projects had implications that extended well beyond the city.  

Report Number Two addressed land use zoning. Finalized in November, 1942, it stimulated the greatest debate among all of Simons’ Tampa planning documents. The tensions rose out of Tampa’s recent history, when it had grown far and fast without constraints on the ways that owners used their land. By the time of Simons’ hiring in 1940, Tampa was one of only four remaining cities in the U.S. with populations over 100,000 that had no zoning. Within Florida, Tampa was one of only three un-zoned cities of any consequence, the other two being Pensacola and Lakeland. The result in Tampa was haphazard and inefficient development. Churches, schools, gas stations, and taverns might occupy the same block as residential homes. The population had been moving, as in American cities generally, outward from the center “toward the fringe and beyond” But “[t]hat tendency is quite noticeable in Tampa,” Simons noted. Such

117 Ibid. Drew Field is now Tampa International Airport; Henderson Field is now the main campus of the University of South Florida. Each of these recommendations informed Simons’ professional guidance to Tampa over the subsequent eighteen years. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, each bore fruit. The expressway that Simons proposed became the present-day Interstate Highway 275; Drew Field is now Tampa International Airport; in 1959 Tampa and Hillsborough County merged their planning agencies. That same year, the city purchased the railroad siding yard on Tampa’s downtown riverfront and placed its future land use under a redevelopment authority.
movements had imposed change upon older areas that had frequently been “for the worse.” Simons’ challenge was to rationalize the chaos that increasingly complicated Tampa’s private property market, without provoking local real estate interests or private property owners – the problem that faced every American planning professional.\textsuperscript{118}

Working in collaboration with the Zoning Board, chaired by his friend Frank Adams, Simons began by surveying Tampa and its surrounding areas. He had available the 1940 Real Property Survey produced by the WPA and the Tampa Housing Authority. He found that single-family houses predominated in Tampa’s real estate inventory, to a greater extent than in southern cities of comparable size. During the twenty years that preceded the WPA survey, the great majority of Tampa’s construction had been single-family houses. No four-family dwellings had been built since 1931 (only eight since 1927), and no private multi-family dwellings, i.e., apartment houses, since 1932 (only five had been built since 1928). However, since January 1930, there had been 967 single-family houses built in Tampa, for which Simons credited “interest stimulated thru (sic) the agency of the Federal Housing Administration.”\textsuperscript{119} The average lot size in Tampa was fifty by one-hundred twenty-five feet, with many smaller than this. Tampa’s housing stock consisted mainly of “modest” houses on lots tending to be smaller than those of comparable cities. The vast majority dated from the boom of the early 1920s. The limited quantity of multi-family dwellings were mainly in the Hyde Park and Tampa Heights neighborhoods, which were the oldest sections peripheral to the central business district. However, in the year between April 1941 and May 1942, 340


\textsuperscript{119} Ibid, p. 36.
single-family houses had been built in Tampa, a dramatic increase, and persuasive evidence that Tampa's residential real estate market had recovered, at least temporarily. The new houses had been built in the sparsely-developed section north of Hillsborough Avenue, and to the southwest of downtown, beyond the city limits in the general direction of the new MacDill Army Air Base.\textsuperscript{120}

As for commercial land uses, Simons found that Tampa was drastically over-endowed, with 200,000 lineal feet of street frontage devoted to business uses. Based on comparable statistics, this would have been over-generous even for a population more than double that of Tampa's. Much of this inventory was vacant, or occupied by "run-down residences." While Simons offered no explanation for this excess, none would have been needed for those who had experienced the financial panic and real estate crash of the 1926. For the rest of that decade, and through most of the 1930s, business activity of every kind had languished. Tampa was also burdened by the physical distribution of its excess commercial real estate. It had occurred at the whim of countless property owners, in linear patterns along main highways as well as residential thoroughfares. Simons repeatedly lamented this "ribbon" pattern of development, charging that it had "seriously depreciated property values and blighted many areas that should have been retained for other uses."\textsuperscript{121}

As part of the second phase of his assignment, Simons drafted an ordinance for the City of Tampa, establishing ten zoning districts. Five would be residential (single and multi-family), three commercial, and two industrial ("light" and "heavy" industrial

\textsuperscript{120} In statistical comparisons with Tampa, Simons often compared Knoxville, Little Rock, Fort Worth, Tulsa, St. Louis, Minneapolis, and Portland (Oregon), sometimes selecting from among them depending on the metric that he wanted to illustrate.

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid, p. 38-41. Discussion of "ribbon" development along various thoroughfares appears on p. 49.
districts). These last Simons proposed for land adjacent to or near water or rail facilities. As part of the ordinance, Simons produced a map of the land use districts. As was invariably the case in the adoption of zoning, the map codified the predominant uses found in each location. Simons sought to ameliorate if not eliminate outright some of the most undesirable land uses. The ordinance was non-retroactive, and non-conforming uses were protected upon adoption (i.e., “grandfathered”), except if the structure in question were 75% or more destroyed by fire or other loss, or “left vacant ninety days or more.” By this means, Simons intended that the ordinance would work gradually over time to eliminate through attrition Tampa’s problem causing “ribbon” commercial uses along residential thoroughfares. 122

Simons typically helped campaign for citizens’ support of his plans and initiatives. In the case of Tampa’s proposed new zoning ordinance, he personally conducted public hearings (required by the 1939 statute) to explain and discuss its provisions. In early August 1942, he spoke at hearings in each of Tampa’s proposed new residential districts, where he responded to objections and encouraged supporters. Because many properties in these areas were already in business use, some owners objected that zoning was a threat to their investment values. “Many have brought property on [North Nebraska Avenue] with the intent of selling the property or developing it for business purposes,” protested L.M. Davis, at the August 5, 1942 hearing in Tampa Heights. “I’ll admit, the street is pretty well shot, already,” Simons agreed. “But all of the property along the street will not support business, and there are some fine residential blocks that should be protected.” Davis argued that those owners should take their chances

122 Ibid.
just as he had been doing, to which Simons inquired, “In other words, you believe in every man for himself?” “That’s right,” Davis answered.ât123

There lay the heart of Simons’ greatest challenge whenever and wherever he proposed zoning. Critics cast zoning in opposition to personal liberty, and particularly to the free market. Perhaps their motives involved pecuniary gain more than ideological convictions, but their arguments resonated nonetheless. As part of Simons’ counter-argument, he credited the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loan guarantee program for such residential building as Tampa had seen though the late 1930s. He then reminded homeowners, and those who owned vacant building lots, that the FHA would not lend in neighborhoods that were un-zoned or zoned for business. As homeowners recognized the market advantages that zoning thus offered, they became Simons’ lobbyists with the Board of Representatives.

Simons’ recruits to the cause of zoning were effective. Because of their identity as consumers of real estate, they complicated the natural impulse of the Board of Realtors, which was on principle against anything that limited the potential uses of real estate. Realtors were suspicious of planning for the same reason that they feared zoning. Both threatened to constrain the profit-making potential of land. However, as the potential of land increasingly derived from residential uses, homeowners grew convinced, with Simons’ prodding, that zoning favored their property values by making houses and lots more saleable. Realtors whose trade depended on selling houses muted their criticism. On August 4, 1942, at the Jackson Heights public hearing, one homeowner commented: “I was refused a loan because the area is not restricted. The government

had no security that the value of the property would remain the same.” Another added, “The FHA could have helped us a lot out here. We could use at least 100 new homes on this section.” Simons exhorted audiences to write to their city representatives. “We will have to convince the board of alderman (sic) that the zoning plan is what we want.”

The Board of Realtors objected to zoning districts that would reduce the size of commercial and multi-family districts. However, even as Tampa real estate dealers fought Simons in order to maintain high-densities and business uses, the local property market boomed as it had not since 1925. Defense workers crammed themselves and their families into apartments, rooming houses, and spare bedrooms throughout Hillsborough County and the surrounding area, some commuting to work in Tampa from St. Petersburg or Dade City. Trying not to alienate homeowners, the Realtors temporized. On June 2, 1943, nearly a year after Simons had submitted the proposed zoning plan, with the pace of real estate activity resembling that of the 1920s, the Realtors meekly advised the Board of Representatives that, “Realtors are heartily in favor of property zoning for the City of Tampa. But not having an opportunity to study the plan in detail, we do not care to approve or disapprove it.” The reaction of the Chamber of Commerce was also subdued.

In an August 13, 1943 editorial, the Tribune observed that Tampa “has been dilly-dallying” about zoning. Though demurring from explicit criticism of the Tampa Board of Realtors, the Tribune noted that real estate dealers sought changes to the proposed

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zoning law that would undermine residential sections of the community. In a calculated thrust, the newspaper chastened real estate dealers for pressing to allow commercial uses along Tampa’s scenic Bayshore Boulevard. During the 1930s, “the Bayshore,” as it was called, had been raised, widened, and landscaped, and a concrete seawall constructed to protect the roadbed and low-lying private property from storm-driven flooding. Seventy-five percent of the costs had been paid by the federal Works Progress Administration. The beneficiaries included the owners of many of Tampa’s most desirable homes along the Boulevard. Predictably, those influential citizens were cool to the possibility of living next door to a business, and zoning’s benefits became evident to a powerful group of homeowners. 126

Tampa’s zoning conflicts never actually ended, but merely subsided. On September 10, 1943, the Zoning Board voted to compromise on the problem of “ribbon” commercial properties, by classifying Florida and Nebraska Avenues as “multi-family” rather than single-family residential. The Realtors dropped their insistence on commercial zoning for the western part of Tampa’s declining Hyde Park neighborhood, and also agreed to a clause limiting the number of employees at businesses in “neighborhood commercial” zoning districts. In October 1943, the Zoning Board formally adopted the re-drawn zoning maps, which the City Board of Representatives approved by ordinance in 1944. Throughout the years that followed, a Board of Zoning Appeals met regularly to adjust the inevitable conflicts that resulted. Meanwhile, Simons had started to work on Tampa’s other thorniest problems, in conjunction with the civic entrepreneurs of its Economic Development Committee.

Tampa’ Economic Development Committee

Throughout the four years when George Simons carried out his planning assignments for Tampa, tension over the postwar outlook affected Tampans, who regarded wartime prosperity with excitement and unease. Tampans worried that peacetime would return them to a climate of depression, as the end of the Great War had done a mere twenty-three years earlier. Dozens of new shipbuilding contracts, three Army Air Corps training bases, and a soaring population of civilian workers released a river of income into the local economy. Population growth combined with rationing of building materials to create a tight housing market. Newcomers competed for places to live as real estate dealers, landlords, and homeowners with spare rooms profited. Demand grew for every product or service, legal or otherwise. Even gambling and prostitution flourished. The roaring economy was a bittersweet reminder of the boom years of the mid-1920s, after which Tampa found itself with over sixteen million dollars of municipal indebtedness and declining revenues from which to repay it. In 1942, that experience was fresh, and those who remembered it were dubious about making large plans beyond the end of World War II. Their instincts were to minimize risks and brace for a new depression. Parallel strains of exuberance and apprehension influenced Tampa’s Economic Development Committee with which Simons soon became allied.127

127 Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Economic Development Committee of Hillsborough County, Inc., March 14, 1945, p.6. (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 7, Folder 66, CTARS). The speaker in this instance was Karl Whitaker, Attorney for the City of Tampa, whose job during the late 1920s and early 1930s included filing and pursuing liens against the hundreds of Tampa property owners unable to pay their taxes, and regularly reporting his painful lack of results to the Mayor and Board of Representatives. Similar anecdotes abound.
Tampa, Florida’s World War II Economic Development Committee (EDC) was one of approximately 2800 similar groups organized beginning in 1942 under the aegis of the national Committee for Economic Development (CED). Tampa’s committee sought to ensure jobs for returning veterans and displaced defense workers by planning public improvements to meet existing and future local needs. While denouncing the interventionist practices of the New Deal welfare state, the business and professional men of Tampa’s EDC nonetheless adopted centralized planning and the liberal use of public finance to accomplish their goals, which included low postwar unemployment. In fact, the institutions and projects fostered by the EDC enabled Tampa to take advantage of a postwar boom and to secure the dominant economic role in its metropolitan region. Its citizens planned systematically, but with imagination and ambition.

The national Committee for Economic Development (CED) was co-founded in 1942 by Studebaker Corporation chairman Paul Hoffman and William Benton, vice-president of Hoffman's *alma mater*, the University of Chicago.128 The national CED

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128 During the Great Depression, Hoffman gained fame as an industrial *wunderkind* when, as a Studebaker vice-president, he helped rescue the venerable carmaker from receivership. Historians routinely, and understandably, confuse the origins of the Committee for Economic Development. In the twenty-first century, the CED remains an influential Washington “think-tank,” however its archives relating to its own past are thin. Paul Hoffman’s biographer Alan Raucher places the CED as a successor to the American Policy Commission (an institute at the University of Chicago), while Patrick Reagan calls it “a successor agency to the Business Advisory and Planning Council.” Christopher Silver, in his study of Richmond, placed the CED within the Department of Commerce, and Carl Abbott vaguely credits the DOC’s “guidance” with fostering a World War II-era local CED in Seattle. All are essentially correct. The ambiguity of the CED’s relationship with the federal government may result from the fact that Hoffman had served on the Department of Commerce’s Business Advisory Council, and that Commerce Secretary Jesse Jones encouraged Hoffman and Benton in their plans to found the CED. Jones, a millionaire in his own right, may have contributed some of his personal funds to help found the organization. He certainly directed that Commerce Department resources be used in the formative stages of the CED, and Jones personally helped recruit the CED’s charter board of trustees. Thereafter the CED became autonomous. See Alan R. Raucher, *Paul G. Hoffman: Architect of Foreign Aid* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1985), p.50-52; Patrick D. Reagan, *Designing a New America: The Origins of New Deal Planning, 1890-1943*, ed. Sidney M. Milkis and Jerome M. Mileur (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), p.166; Silver, *Twentieth-Century Richmond*, p.182; Carl Abbott, "Wartime Planning in Seattle and
disavowed socialism as well as laissez faire. The former represented a threat to freedom, while the latter was recklessly self-indulgent, Hoffman argued. Joint planning on the part of business and government could modulate the business cycles that had precipitated the Great Depression. The strength of the American war economy showed that science and technology offered the means to increased productivity, dependable profits, and high employment. CED leaders expected that, after the war’s end, New Deal innovations such as the minimum wage, unemployment compensation, and pension rights would bolster workers’ purchasing power and morale. While public works jobs might break local unemployment cycles, in the long run they led to unproductive and complacent workers. To assure high levels of employment after the war, the CED set a goal for American business of “thirty to forty-five percent greater business volume than in 1940” (the last full year of peace), which would yield “seven to ten million more jobs than in that same year.”

The national CED consisted of two units, a Research Division and a Field Development Division. The Research Division developed policy recommendations for government, business, labor, and agriculture such that the U.S. postwar economy might expand. Staffed with experts led by Theodore Yntema, an economist on leave from the University of Chicago’s Business School, the Research Division gathered data, analyzed mostly macroeconomic issues, produced topical reports, and developed policy

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recommendations. The Research Division manifested the CED’s belief that formal, academic expertise was indispensable to objective economic policy and to enlightened business thinking. Business needed “the economist and the social scientist just as much as...the engineer and the chemist,” the CED News explained.\footnote{Collins, \textit{The Business Response to Keynes, 1929-1964}, p. 85.} Adopting a macroeconomic perspective meant acknowledging that employment levels were beyond the control of businesses and local government and therefore were properly a matter for federal involvement, in conjunction with business leaders.

The CED’s Field Development Division conducted surveys and distributed policy and planning information by means of pamphlets, the bi-monthly \textit{CED News}, and state, regional and national meetings. Divided into regions corresponding to those of the Federal Reserve Bank system, by the end of the war the Field Development Division had organized a network of over 2,800 autonomous local committees, including Tampa’s. Their membership consisted of approximately 60,000 individuals, mostly business people, who were concerned with postwar employment prospects. The Field Division was a clearinghouse for planning and action initiatives. It supported local affiliates by means of the CED’s research literature, planning handbooks, and audio-visual aids. Florida was part of Region 6, chaired by H. Carl Wolf, President of Atlanta Gas Light Co. West central Florida’s liaison with the Field Division of the national CED was Carl D. Brorein, president of the Tampa-based Peninsular Telephone Company.\footnote{\textit{International Trade, Foreign Investment, and Domestic Employment}, CED, p. 25. See also “Tampa Leaders Organize for Post-War Work,” \textit{Tampa Tribune}, August 7, 1943, p.1. Utilities executives such as Wolf and Brorein, invariably focused on expanding their franchises, were active in many functions of the CED. Brorein, a charter member of Tampa’s EDC, was of the same generation of Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs as Howell and Haggerty, having assumed the Presidency of Peninsular Telephone in 1938. The company had been founded in 1901 by Brorein’s uncle, William G. Brorein, a businessman and Republican politician from Ohio who moved to Tampa specifically for the opportunity to start a}
The CED’s culture and policies migrated unevenly from the national level to the local. With regard to methods and organization, local organizations such as Tampa’s followed the pattern of the national CED, but Tampa’s members showed the autonomy that local committees could exercise. The Tampa EDC identified two main concerns about postwar economic prospects: industrial recruitment, and civic improvements. When the first showed little promise the EDC never formally dropped it as a goal, but merely shifted its focus to the latter concern. In doing so, it moved beyond the national CED’s mandate in order to focus on public projects and institutions. It also moved beyond George Howell’s initial caveat that public works would be merely a stopgap measure. The EDC engaged in what amounted to long-range comprehensive metropolitan planning, including engineering and fiscal planning. Such practices set Tampa’s EDC apart from its contemporary local committees throughout the U.S., as well as from the national organization. The EDC also fostered an unusual program of comprehensive local and regional planning that was unequaled in Florida.\(^{132}\)

The membership of Tampa’s EDC included business people, elected officials, and professionals, all of whom often disagreed over whether and how to engage or resist changes that might affect the city’s political economy. What drew them together was

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\(^{132}\) “Presented at Rotary Club Meeting,” September 26, 1944; Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 8, Folder 69, CTARS. Standifer addressed Tampa Rotarians at length concerning the work to date of the EDC, in an earnest attempt to gain their support. This seven-page typescript is a detailed snapshot of the EDC’s priorities and expectations, at about the halfway point of its existence. A fruitful area of research that other EDC studies might visit is the extent to which public funding of the Tampa EDC was unusual. City and county governments contributed substantially to the EDC’s budget, during two fiscal budgets (albeit not without grumbling; see “Is Tampa Just a Thin Dime Town?” *The Tampa Daily Times*, June 27, 1944, editorial).
their expectation that widespread unemployment after the war’s end would return Tampa to the conditions of the late 1920s and the 1930s. Returning military veterans as well as laid-off defense workers would attempt to re-enter a shrinking economy that was converting to an uncertain peacetime production regime. The Depression was vivid in memory, stirring fears of a communist uprising if jobs did not exist for the millions who would surely seek them. In trying to anticipate the future and turn events to their objectives, the businessmen (and they were all men) of Tampa’s EDC borrowed from progressive corporate voluntarism and New Deal statism. The EDC proposed to address a range of local needs, such as reviving the polluted waters of the Hillsborough River and Tampa Bay, slum clearance, and the lack of a civic center facility. EDC members, together with George Simons, brought new energy to bear on Tampa’s issues. A wartime climate of emergency inspired them to reconsider the relationships between the institutions of business and those of the larger community. Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs collaborated to stimulate long-range economic development. They consciously used the tools of government, especially planning and public finance, to achieve private-sector objectives. One objective was to limit if not actually reduce the influence of government. Implicitly, they aspired to a reinvented postwar Tampa capable of moving beyond its degrading history of dependence on an underground economy. The EDC’s work in transportation-related planning (Tampa’s ports, aviation, and highways) best illustrates the group’s methodology and its results. Those included new state institutions and public works projects, which physically and economically shaped the Tampa Bay region.
On August 6, 1943, the EDC’s directors announced the establishment of the committee at a meeting of the Tampa Chamber of Commerce. Formally the “Economic Development Committee of Hillsborough County, Inc.,” the EDC existed until October 31, 1945. Its purpose, to make Tampa’s wartime prosperity outlast the war, seemed merely to echo the ubiquitous boosterism of the Chamber of Commerce. Ostensibly, the EDC was a “bureau” of the Tampa Chamber, but in fact it was autonomous. Its budget was funded jointly by the City of Tampa, the Hillsborough County Commission, and approximately 200 member-subscribers from local business, politics, and the professions. At the August 6 meeting, George Howell was elected president, with E. P. Taliaferro of the First National Bank, Frank Traynor of Florida Portland Cement, and Truman Green of the *Tampa Tribune* as vice-presidents. Twenty-eight board members including Tampa’s Mayor represented businesses and government. Howell immediately listed three principal postwar planning goals for the EDC: the correction of unfair rail freight rates affecting Tampa and (all of the South); reconversion of wartime industries to a peacetime economy; and new jobs for the “men at war,” as well as for war production workers. Howell anticipated that postwar public works would be appropriate in the short-term, but stipulated that the jobs thus created ought to be “constructive work, and no leaf-raking.”

133 *The Tampa Tribune*, August 7, 1943, p. 1. Tampa Mayor Robert Chancey advocated and co-sponsored the EDC. Prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, Chancey had spoken widely of the need for postwar planning, and the subject was a favorite of his at political campaign events and at statewide meetings of the Florida League of Municipalities, in which he was active. Early in 1943, he solicited recommendations for appointees to a postwar planning committee for Tampa. (See D. S. Riek, President, Tampa Builders’ Exchange, letter to Hon. R.E.L. Chancey, May 5, 1943; Box 2, Folder 19, Robert E. Lee Chancey Papers, CTARS). Mayor Chancey and Peninsular Telephone President Carl Brorein were also among the Tampa EDC’s charter directors. Chancey’s participation on the EDC was brief, as within two months he lost his bid for re-election to a fourth term as mayor. His successor, former City of Tampa Alderman and then Hillsborough Commissioner Curtis Hixon, moved easily into Chancey’s place as an EDC director. Truman Green, of the *Tampa Tribune*, was also a vice-president of the EDC, and the next
Tampa’s EDC started with an influential directorate, a generous budget, and an explicit mission. It occupied free office space in the Chamber’s downtown Tampa headquarters. G. Dave Curtis, the Chamber’s Secretary, at first also served the EDC in the same capacity. The committee enjoyed an initial capitalization of $54,000, with the City of Tampa and Hillsborough County Commission each advancing $16,667 of the total.\textsuperscript{134} Three days later, the \textit{Tribune} endorsed the EDC in a ringing editorial.\textsuperscript{135} For the duration of the committee’s existence, the \textit{Tampa Tribune} and its competing daily, the \textit{Tampa Times}, both lent the EDC unreserved editorial support, and complaisant news coverage. Indeed, EDC directors frankly discussed among themselves precisely how the local newspapers should report their activities.\textsuperscript{136}

Two months later, the directors named T.V. “Tom” Standifer as the EDC’s executive director, at a starting salary of $10,000 per year, plus expenses. Standifer was a senior manager with the New York-based McCloskey and Company, which was then establishing a shipyard on Hookers Point in Tampa to build concrete freighters for the wartime trade. Howell and Standifer were no doubt acquainted, as both men’s firms were competing for the same slender pool of skilled labor available locally for shipyard

\textsuperscript{134} \textit{The Tampa Tribune}, August 7, 1943, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{135} \textit{The Tampa Tribune}, August 10, 1943, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{136} Minutes of the organizational meeting of the EDC Harbor Development Committee, June 13, 1944, p.2. “Mr. Green said that whatever this committee recommended was going to have to be sold to the public and that both papers would give full support to its recommendations. (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 7, Folder 67, CTARS).
employment. Standifer had unusually broad business experience. The 52-year old Texan had been educated at the University of California at Los Angeles and had been a construction executive in California, Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. Most recently, as an employee of the politically influential Matt McCloskey, he had built many of the structures for the 1939 New York World’s Fair. Standifer came to Tampa to set up and oversee Matt McCloskey’s shipyard, a decidedly complex industrial enterprise.\textsuperscript{137}

Other than its shipyards, Tampa had few significant industrial employers, and Standifer appears to have doubted that trying to recruit new industries would have much effect on the local economy. Tampa’s public officials hoped to maintain high postwar employment in the city’s sprawling new shipyards, but Standifer rarely mentioned the idea. Like George Howell, he anticipated that at the end of the war Tampa’s shipbuilding contracts would evaporate, just as they had after the Great War. Instead of industrial recruitment, Standifer concentrated his effort on seeking ways to improve Tampa’s functionality and its marketability as what he called a “trade area,” or a nexus for commerce. He and the EDC’s directors established several committees for which Standifer provided staff support and arranged outside expertise. Each committee took as its brief a discrete aspect of Tampa’s challenges, resources and future opportunities. Since the 1920s, for example, Tampans had been keenly interested in aviation, which became a priority for the EDC. The Aviation Committee, led by civic entrepreneur and businessman-inventor William Haggerty, was one of the first to go to work, assisted by its expert consultant, Gil Robb Wilson. During the early months of 1944, the directors decided on additional concerns for which they appointed specific committees, including

\textsuperscript{137} The Tampa Tribune, October 23, 1943; also, correspondence files of Mayor Curtis Hixon, CTARS (throughout).
housing, highways, agriculture, and sewers. In June, the directors named members to a new Tampa Harbor Committee, chaired by W.L. Waring of Lyons Fertilizer Company. The Harbor Committee’s port development initiative illustrated the EDC’s special focus on transportation, its organic approach to business development, and its methodical approach to its work.

Tampa’s EDC followed the lead of the national CED organization by hiring a sophisticated staff and recruiting a team of outside professional and academic experts. In October, 1943, simultaneously with Standifer’s hiring, the Tampa EDC contracted with Walter Matherly, dean of the College of Business Administration at the University of Florida. Matherly was to spend two to three days a month in Tampa and received $1,800 annually, plus expenses. For a retainer of $1,000, Gil Robb Wilson, the New Jersey-based president of the National Aeronautic Association, joined the EDC as its consultant on aviation matters. As the members of the EDC developed their collective thinking about Tampa’s future and concentrated on particular projects, they hired more specialists, often looking to other states and regions for the expertise that they sought. Gradually, municipal consultant George Simons came to function as an *ex officio* member of several EDC committees.138

In November 1943, a few weeks after his hiring, Standifer began a countywide survey of industrial firms. He conducted the survey in person, taking inventory of the assets and labor that each expected to have on hand at the end of the war. He sought

138 *The Tampa Tribune*, December 23, 1943, p. 14. The files concerning Walter J. Matherly’s relationship with the EDC are at the University of Florida Archives, in the Department of Special Collections, Smathers Library. See Series 48, College of Business Administration, Office of the Dean, Administrative Policy Records, Box 15, EDC Folder. Gil Robb Wilson was nationally famous as an aviator, writer, and technical expert who, for example, had served on the State of New Jersey’s board of inquiry into the 1937 Hindenburg disaster. In 1941, Wilson and former New York City Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia co-founded the Civil Air Patrol within the new national Office of Civil Defense, then headed by LaGuardia.
employers’ estimates of the number of employees they would need to meet their postwar requirements, and of the current wartime employees who would no longer seek work after the war. Standifer also solicited plans and suggestions for peacetime industrial and agricultural expansion. Finally, he gathered historical data about local conditions in 1940, the national CED’s common statistical benchmark year.139

By Christmas, the local business survey was complete, but the EDC also sought advice from the general public concerning its task. On the day after Christmas, the Sunday Tribune carried an article with a clip-out coupon, addressed to the EDC, inviting every reader to list her or his ideas for meeting Tampa’s postwar needs.140 During the first week of 1944, the EDC hosted mayors and chamber presidents from the surrounding cities, in and near Hillsborough County, at Tampa’s Municipal Auditorium. There, on January 5, Gil Robb Wilson spoke concerning the regional importance of postwar aviation, and Walter Matherly described postwar prospects from a statewide perspective.141

As Tom Standifer gathered data about Tampa and Hillsborough County, he found the city’s consultant George Simons at work on similar research and analysis. The two became helpful to one another, and the professional relationship between Simons and the City of Tampa came to tacitly include the EDC, in whose committee meetings Simons became a regular participant. By February 10, 1945 when Simons delivered his

139 The Tampa Tribune, November 21, 1943, p. 19.

140 “Post-War Committee Wants Ideas For Improvement of Hillsborough,” The Tampa Tribune, December 26, 1943, p. 2. “Don’t be afraid your idea may be considered screwball, because it may be screwball, and still have the spark of genius in it. If you think it is a bit cockeyed, you don’t have to sign your name. And don’t be afraid it is too obvious. Most every Tampan will agree that it would be a splendid thing to construct a $5,000,000 sewer system after the war, but if that is what you think best, send it in anyway.”

141 “Civic Leaders in Tampa Area Will Meet Here,” The Tampa Tribune, December 29, 1943, p. 5.
Final Report, titled “A Comprehensive Plan for Tampa,” he and the committees of the EDC had jointly immersed themselves in dozens of Tampa’s problems and opportunities. The Comprehensive Plan contained detailed recommendations for infrastructure, finance, slum clearance, and neighborhood redevelopment. Some parts of Simons’ plan, such as a new sewer system, had already become major advocacies of the EDC, for which Simons was then also consulting. Thanks to the EDC’s political and press influence, an atmosphere of urgency surrounded news accounts of their work.

The 1945 Comprehensive Plan detailed opportunities for Tampans to adopt and apply some of the most imaginative planning ideas then abroad in the profession. The Plan advocated increased support for public housing, but Simons also called for new housing policies directed toward those neither rich nor poor. Describing an area of “depreciated values” close to downtown Tampa, he noted that, “The Tampa Housing Authority provides housing for the low income groups, and private developers or individuals provide homes for the upper middle and upper income groups, but in between is an income group obliged to shift for itself. It is neither the low income nor upper income group and for the most part is on its own; no provision is made for its members.” Simons recommended that the City of Tampa collaborate with private enterprise to redevelop this area of mixed land uses (east of Marion Street, between Twiggs and Whiting) into a neighborhood for white-collar workers employed in the adjacent downtown or nearby industrial districts. Such an idea deviated from the free market traditions of land and housing development. Simons anticipated the value that would accrete to Tampans in general from encouraging socio-economic diversity and

residential stability in and near the Central Business District, an ideal to which “New Urbanists” still aspire seventy years later.

Elsewhere in Tampa, Simons recommended that Tampa invest in a new design and re-plat of Riverside Heights, an already platted but still largely vacant 1920s-vintage neighborhood west of North Boulevard, between Columbus Drive and Buffalo Avenue (now Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard). The western boundary of the area was the Hillsborough River. The existing plat was a conventional rectilinear grid of blocks and lots. Due to the 1920s real estate collapse and the Great Depression, few houses or other structures existed in the area. Simons drew a conceptual map illustrating a neighborhood of inter-connected “Superblocks,” featuring short access streets, park and playgrounds within the interior of the blocks, and walkways leading to schools and shopping centers, located away from automobile thoroughfares. The neighborhood was to have limited points of egress onto the adjacent major traffic arteries, such as North Boulevard or Columbus Drive, and no through streets would traverse the district. The centerpiece of the design was a landscaped park overlooking a picturesque bend in the Hillsborough River. The park site was also to accommodate public structures such as a school, civic center, and fire station. Simons argued that such neighborhood enhancements, and replacement of rectilinear grid-pattern streets and blocks, would encourage the restoration or replacement of dilapidated, obsolete housing stock, and would yield residential sites “far surpassing anything that the fringe or the area beyond could offer.” Neither of these imaginative neighborhood plans bore fruit, but that Simons incorporated them in his submittal to Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs is telling.

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143 Ibid, p. 87. Also see Figure 18 on the page preceding.
Their appearance in the 1945 plan exposes layers of social as well as economic complexity already apparent in Tampa’s process of urbanization, and suggests a taste at least among some to consider deploying the power and resources of the local state to manage Tampa’s future growth.

Simons proposed other sweeping changes to Tampa’s physical and cultural landscape, some of which gained traction. His design for a civic complex to be built in the “Scrub” area just northeast of downtown evoked Daniel Burnham’s Plan for Chicago, which Simons cited, and Burnham’s 1903 Group Plan for Cleveland, completed in 1936 to considerable fanfare. Such monuments to progressive urban reform afforded Simons with an opportunity (which he rarely missed), to quote Burnham’s famous advice that one should “make no small plans, for they have not the magic to stir men’s blood. Make big plans . . .” Other visionary designs included residential “superblocks,” and garden-style neighborhood shopping centers designed to concentrate commercial activity on nodes rather than strips. All of these ideas excited the members of Tampa’s Economic Development Committee. Future redevelopment possibilities for the so-called “Scrub” area were especially interesting to the EDC.144

Simons worked closely with the EDC’s powerful Public Works Committee. The EDC’s committees on Highways and Housing adopted his recommendations, and lobbied the City of Tampa Board of Representatives to do likewise. Simons used the Public Works Committee to help advance ideas that he conceded were visionary but that he insisted would make Tampa great. Slum clearance was essential to that end, and Simons extensively reported on the problems associated with “the Scrub,” Tampa’s

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144 Hoping to promote tourism, Tampa funded and staffed an exhibit at the 1936-37 Great Lakes Exhibition on the site of Cleveland’s brand new civic mall, the product of Burnham’s Group Plan.
most problematic, substandard neighborhood which lay just northeast of the central
business district. Repeatedly, Simons described the neighborhood as “cancerous,” and
his sweeping vision for the area included a new courthouse, a state office building, an
art museum, and a new library. The EDC strongly endorsed his concept of a
comprehensive civic center on the site of the Scrub. Together with his transportation
plans, Simons’s thinking meshed well with the metropolitan growth and public works
agenda that the EDC embraced.\footnote{Minutes of the Public Works Committee of the EDC, July 26, 1944, p. 2-3 (Mayor Hixon Papers, Box 8, Folder 71, CTARS). The minutes contain a detailed and candid discussion of Tampa’s slum clearance issues, in which Simons draws unflattering comparisons between Tampa and other contemporary cities of the South with problematic ghettos. Also see George W. Simons, Jr., “Report On the City Plan of Tampa, Florida, 1951” (University of Florida, Smathers Libraries, Department of Special Collections, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History). The 1951 planning document reflected Simons’ accumulated sub-plans that he had produced over the preceding eleven years’ of work. The so-called “Scrub” was a longstanding embarrassment for Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs, and a symbol of the profound inequalities between Tampa’s white and black citizens.}

**Tampa’s Port Ambitions**

Uncertainty about the future of Tampa’s port was a major reason for the EDC’s
support from institutions such as the Tampa Chamber of Commerce. Walter Matherly
regarded port expansion as the EDC’s single most important undertaking and “central in
Tampa’s future development.” In developing plans for the port’s future role in Tampa’s
economy, the EDC demonstrated its systematic process of research, policy
development, and legislative action. The EDC’s Standifer collaborated with outside
experts to identify a new model of port ownership and governance that sought to
rationalize its function, and increase its value to Tampa’s larger economy. Indeed, future
planning for the operation of the port led to considerations of the region’s overall
transportation infrastructure, and drew civic entrepreneurs’ focus to the future of
highway transportation. The policy choices and methods that featured in the work of its
Harbor Committee resonated through the EDC’s period of existence and beyond. Planning for port reorganization led to the creation of a new Port Authority for Tampa, and encompassed radical ideas about political economy bordering on collectivization that aroused the EDC’s critics.146

During the 1940s, Galveston, Mobile, and especially New Orleans owed their prosperity to the commerce that passed through their busy ports, but shipping in Tampa lagged behind that of other port cities even just within Florida. Jacksonville, Miami, and Ft. Lauderdale’s Port Everglades competed among each other for primacy in cargo movements to and from Central and South America. Those concerned with seaborne shipping in Tampa believed that trade with Latin America was an under-exploited opportunity for growth. Given Tampa’s significant Hispanic population and its claims to a Spanish colonial heritage, civic entrepreneurs viewed Latin American markets with a sense of entitlement. Their awareness of the port’s possibilities grew as Tampa Shipyards began to launch new oceangoing vessels for the Maritime Administration and for the Navy.147

By the early 1940s, Tampa’s function as a commercial harbor depended on its natural geography and upon purpose-built infrastructure for handling freight. Most ports relied upon a so-called “belt line railroad” in order to move cargo within the immediate port area. In Tampa, the belt-line railroad consisted of sections of track owned and

146 Walter J. Matherly, “Comments on Activities of Hillsborough County Economic Development Committee,” (n.d.); Box 7, Folder 68, Curtis Hixon papers, CTARS.

147 See Truman Green’s remarks to the Harbor Development committee, noted elsewhere. At the EDC’s public meeting on January 5, 1944, Walter Matherly told his audience that Tampa’s “strategic location with respect to South America and the Panama Canal had brought about a population growth and a development of industry that may be capitalized upon in the post-war world.” (“Florida U. Man Urges Uniform Growth and Laws,” The Tampa Tribune, January 6, 1944, p. 10).
operated by either the Atlantic Coast Line or the Seaboard Air Line Railroad, with a small section of connecting track owned by the City of Tampa. Railroad trackage and right-of-way required capital, but no aspect of port infrastructure was as costly as deep-water channels, which were so expensive that they had to be funded by the United States government through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In the shallow waters of Tampa Bay, ship channels had to be created. In order to prevent the dredged channels from silting-in as a result of currents sweeping sand out of the nearby shallows, periodic maintenance dredging was essential. Without decades of large and continuing federal appropriations, Tampa would not have existed as a major port.

In waters of Tampa Bay, the federal presence began in 1890 (the year after the Florida Central and Peninsular railroad entered Tampa, the second railroad to do so), when the U.S. government began dredging a ship channel between the Gulf of Mexico and Hillsborough Bay. In 1903, the government deepened and extended the channel to the mouth of the Hillsborough River. Thereafter, Tampa’s maritime traffic increased in volume as well as in the size of vessels. By the outbreak of the Great War, additional deepening had become necessary. Even during peacetime, the federal investment in Tampa’s navigational infrastructure continued to grow.148

Because Tampa’s landside shipping facilities were a function of private enterprise, channel deepening benefitted the steamship and railroad companies who owned the upland tracts adjacent to deep-water slips. The City of Tampa owned only three small parcels of commercial waterfront land abutting the dredged channels, only two of which were valuable enough to be worth leasing by private operators. While the railroads

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148 “History of Port of Tampa, General,” n.a., n.d., (Mayor Curtis Hixon papers, Box 26, Folder 257, CTARS).
sometimes leased their waterfront land, they favored businesses that shipped by rail, in bulk. Such exclusionary practices preserved the hegemony of railroads at the cost of retarded port development. Alternative water-related businesses such as seafood processors, agricultural shippers, or oil terminals may have generated new local jobs and created other economic impacts, but because their rail shipping requirements were light, they were unattractive tenants for railroad landlords.\footnote{Tampa owed its place in the regional order of cities to the arrival in 1884 of a railroad, but by World War II, the relationship between the two was decidedly adversarial. The conflict revolved around more than just the railroads’ use of their waterfront lands. George Howell had made unfair rail-freight rates a primary target of the EDC on the first day of its existence. The record of the debate is voluminous, and public comments, in speeches and in the press, were often oblique. In private correspondence, letter-writers on the subject referred to matters about which each expected the other already possessed perfect understanding. Nevertheless, a concise and unusually candid summary of the waterfront lands issue may be found in an anonymous, undated five-page typescript titled “History of Port of Tampa, General,” with an addendum headed “Plans for development of property if secured.” From content and context in the files, the documents are circa 1947, when the City of Tampa was attempting to purchase the former McCloskey Shipyard, a large waterfront tract on Hookers Point, for use by the Port Authority as port development land. (Mayor Curtis Hixon papers, Box 26, Folder 257, CTARS).}

As the EDC explored creating an autonomous port authority for Tampa, the committee’s legal counsel pointed out that neither the city nor the county had the standing under the Florida Constitution to create such an agency. To do so would require an act of the notoriously recalcitrant state legislature in Tallahassee. The

\footnote{Some scholars note that during World War II, U.S. railroads feared the rapid growth of the relatively new motor freight industry. Accordingly, the railroads exploited the emergency to permanently draw trade away from waterborne commerce, and to eliminate coastwise shipping as competition. See Rene De La Pedraja, \textit{The Rise and Decline of U.S. Merchant Shipping in the Twentieth Century} (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), p.153-158. The interests of rail and shipping were often antithetical, and railroads were determinedly hostile to anything that might benefit the movement of domestic freight by rivers, canals, lakes or oceans.

Concerning the EDC’s interest in commercial fishing, see letters exchanged by Standifer and Matherly (November 30 and December 2, 1943) in which Standifer asks Matherly to comment on a letter from a Captain Wilkinson regarding the development of the fishing industry in Tampa. Matherly was enthusiastic: “Too often this industry is thought of as a localized thing. Captain Wilkinson gives a much broader conception. He has imagination. With the proper capital and leadership, there does not seem to be any reason why Tampa could not become a great center of commercial fishing.” (University of Florida Archives, Dept. of Special Collections, Smathers Libraries, Series 48, College of Business Administration, Office of the Dean, Box 15, EDC Folder). Unfortunately Captain Wilkinson’s ideas are not elaborated.}
challenge for the EDC’s effort would be to market the idea of the new port authority to very different audiences, one in Tampa and the other in the state capital.\footnote{Minutes of the organizational meeting of the EDC Harbor Committee, June 13, 1944 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 7, Folder 67, CTARS). For a description of the problems of local government in Florida, though with limited historical focus, see John and Robyn Turner DeGrove, “Local Government: Coping With Massive and Sustained Growth,” in \textit{Government and Politics in Florida}, ed. Robert J. Huckshorn (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998): “Prior to Florida’s 1968 Constitution, the state’s local governments had almost no fiscal, legal, or institutional flexibility as they coped with the problems of a rapidly growing state.” (p. 172).}

The first step was research. On March 26, 1944, Standifer and Chamber/EDC secretary Dave Curtis left Tampa by auto and traveled to Mobile, New Orleans, Houston, and Galveston. “We were armed with letters of introduction to men of importance in these several cities. . .[and] were accorded every privilege and given every opportunity to study the harbor facilities and port authorities in each of these towns . . .” Standifer later reported. Standifer and Curtis traveled together for two purposes: to conduct port research and to promote Tampa as a base of operations for oil companies interested in drilling in Florida and the eastern Gulf of Mexico. Standifer concentrated on the first project, and Curtis the latter.\footnote{Report by T.V. Standifer and G. Dave Curtis to the Directors of the EDC and to the Special Oil Committee of the Chamber of Commerce, n.d., ca. April, 1944. (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 7, Folder 67, CTARS). In 1943, there had begun a stampede of oil companies speculating on the discovery of oil in Florida. Twelve firms opened Florida offices, three in Tampa (Humble, Magnolia, and Ohio). Dudley J. Hughes, \textit{Oil in the Deep South: A History of the Oil Business in Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, 1859-1945} (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993), p. 238-243.}

In Mobile, Standifer and Curtis found a highly centralized port bureaucracy operated by the State of Alabama. Mobile was the only seaport in Alabama, so there was no political conflict in operating it as agency of the state, an arrangement that could not work in Florida, where several ports competed. The Alabama State Port Authority owned waterfront terminals that it operated in competition with the privately-owned terminals on Mobile’s waterfront. In one instance, a private dock and warehouse
operator refused to maintain the same published tariffs charged at the state-owned
docks. Whenever he reduced rates in an attempt to stimulate his business, the State
Port Authority responded by cutting its rates even further, both to punish the renegade
competitor and as an example to deter other private dock owners from setting their
prices independently. The state-sponsored tariff war had continued until the embittered
businessman was, as Standifer put it, “completely ruined.” The emissaries from
Florida envied the Alabama Port Authority its prosperity, but reluctantly discarded it as a
model for Tampa.

The Floridians were even more impressed by the tremendous volume of the Port
of New Orleans, but they concluded that it too was a poor example for Tampa. In New
Orleans, there were no private terminals, and shippers were obliged to do business with
the port authority on its terms. Meanwhile, the belt line railroad that served the riverfront
was owned and profitably run by the City of New Orleans, much to the chagrin of the
port director, who desired it for his empire. Although a great deal of freight ran through
New Orleans, Standifer and Curtis noted that the port authority still posted heavy
losses, owing to depreciation, interest on bonds sold by the authority, and a bloated
administrative payroll. Concluding that New Orleans’ port was hopelessly burdened by a
history of political interference and cronyism (they referred specifically to the pervasive
corruption of the late Huey Long’s gubernatorial administration), the two moved on to
Standifer’s home state of Texas.

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152 Report by T.V. Standifer and G. Dave Curtis to the Directors of the EDC and to the Special Oil
Committee of the Chamber of Commerce, n.d., ca. April, 1944. (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 7, Folder
At the Port of Houston, a variety of commercial entities owned privately as well as by the Port competed with one another. The Port agency owned Houston’s belt line railroad, but the railroad corporations that served the waterfront district operated the belt line under a joint agreement. The rail companies paid a standard part of each transaction that moved over the Port’s tracks and furnished the equipment to run the operation, reportedly an efficient system for customers, and a profitable arrangement for the Port. Houston’s docks and warehouses were owned by the public port agency and by two major private operators, all in competition with one another. Standifer and Curtis found the system rather opaque, and investigated the arrangements closely. They concluded that it all worked partly because no party could achieve economic hegemony within the port district, and therefore each kept their promises to the other. In addition, Houston’s volume of shipping was adequate to support every business operating on the waterfront.

By the time they reached Galveston, the two travelers were weary of ports and frankly expected to find an aging waterfront district in decline, eclipsed by that of modern Houston. Instead, they discovered a sophisticated operation, Galveston Wharves, and they established a warm relationship with its veteran general manager, Finlay Parker. As in Houston, the port enjoyed more than ample business. What distinguished Galveston Wharves was that, while it owned everything in the port, including the docks, warehouses, and belt-line railroad, it operated very little. The port manager rented out the port’s real estate and equipment. He leased land to several factories, and contracted services to a variety of private businesses. The manager imposed uniform charges for the port’s transactions with its operators. He left
competition for such things as dockage, stevedoring, and warehousing up to the private tenants and contractors doing business within the port’s cohesive, fenced-off waterfront district. Standifer and Curtis were impressed. “Their affairs are in good shape, and their operation is exceedingly profitable. They employ about 1,500 people,” they wrote. As for Parker, “In discussing our problems here in Tampa . . . he was able to understand our situation quite fully,” and offered advice for organizing a waterfront commercial district lines similar to Galveston’s. One of Parker’s recommendations, for example, was that Tampa should join the federal lobbying efforts of the American Association of Port Authorities.153

Upon returning to Tampa in April, after three weeks of travel, Standifer and Curtis issued a joint report on seaport development, also addressing the question of Tampa as a place for oil companies to do business. Oil companies were awaiting the discovery of substantial oil or gas reserves in Florida. Experts suggested that Florida join the Interstate Compact to Conserve Oil and Gas, an organization of oil-producing states, and that Florida’s laws with respect to the leasing of state lands for drilling should conform with those of Texas, which would make Florida attractive to oil producers. The EDC and Chamber representatives were eager to foster oil industry growth in Tampa. But with few major oil discoveries under development in Florida, the Chamber’s Oil Committee had done what it could.154

In May 1944, the directors of the EDC forwarded Standifer and Curtis’s recommendations to a new Harbor Development Committee. Membership on the

Harbor Committee was so sensitive a matter that the Board appointed a nominating sub-committee just to recommend prospective appointees. On June 8, 1944, George Howell named the committee’s seventeen members, with W.L. Waring of Lyons Fertilizer Company as chair. As EDC vice president Truman Green explained at their first meeting, they had been chosen because “none...had any direct shipping interests and would therefore not be handicapped or embarrassed by any conflict with selfish private interests.” Standifer noted that the EDC’s directorate believed that Tampa’s business future “would depend largely upon the successful operation of our port,” and that their purpose was to study the conditions affecting the port, and make recommendations as to how “the interests of the Tampa trade area may best be served by the development of this port.”

Standifer distributed the report of his seaport research trip, as well as literature that his staff had gathered on other ports. He arranged for the Harbor Committee to inspect Tampa’s commercial waterfront by boat as well as by land. Committee members still believed that railroad freight rate adjustments would increase imports and exports through the port, but they left the matter for the Tampa Traffic Association (whose staff director, Joseph H. Donnell, also reported to Standifer). Based on the material supplied to them by Standifer, the members acknowledged that every port with which Tampa hoped to compete was operating under some form of centralized

155 Minutes of the organizational meeting of the EDC Harbor Committee, June 13, 1944 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 7, Folder 67, CTARS).

53 Organization Chart, n.a, n.d. (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 8, Folder 69, CTARS). Most urban ports and rail centers supported a traffic bureau, often a department within the local chamber of commerce, the purpose of which was to increase commercial freight traffic through its trade area. Tampa’s freight shipping interests supported the Traffic Association, which was distinct from the Tampa Chamber’s Traffic Bureau. The EDC regarded the work of the Traffic Association, directed toward rate relief for Tampa region, as so valuable that it allocated part of the EDC’s budget to support Donnell and his staff.
administration, and they supported moving to such a practice in Tampa. Based on his tour of that spring, Standifer had reached the same conclusion. Promptly he handed over summaries of various laws creating other port authorities. In addition to port legislation from throughout the U.S., Standifer circulated a detailed report from the Greater Miami Traffic Association on its plans to expand Miami’s harbor after the war.156

As Standifer organized the EDC’s Harbor Committee, Curtis conferred with the Chamber’s Washington lobbyist, Francis L. Judd, about having the federal government deepen the port’s channels again. Judd counseled waiting until autumn, when the House would take up debate on the next Rivers and Harbors bill. Judd would then press for a provision in the bill directing the Corps of Engineers to conduct a new harbor survey for Tampa. Meanwhile, Judd advised, Curtis should have the various shipping companies provide the Corps with data about the largest of their vessels that would call on Tampa after the war’s end. The local district of the Corps of Engineers would support Tampa’s request, Judd believed. He would have to work to move the channel-deepening project through the Corps’ hierarchy. Unlike Florida’s other port cities, Tampa had enjoyed splendid success at getting federal help with its harbor improvements, ten million dollars to date, with little in the way of local cost-sharing, Judd noted pointedly. “My attention has been repeatedly called to the amount of local cooperation exacted from other ports and harbors, especially Florida ports, we sure

156 T.V. Standifer to the Chairman and Members of the Harbor Development Committee, June 27, 1944. With this letter Standifer declares himself convinced as to Tampa’s need for a port authority, and also appears to have believed that the freight rates battle– win, lose, or draw– was not so much a crucial issue as the EDC’s founders had originally declared; also Standifer to George B. Howell, June 30, 1944 (both letters in the Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 7, Folder 67, CTARS).
have been fortunate . . . this has been one of my primary obligations. Your contributions have made the justifications possible, and you know what is required." 157

While the Chamber and its lobbyist laid plans for additional channel improvements to be paid for by the U.S. government, the EDC’s Harbor Committee contemplated the port’s administration, operation, and even its ownership. Following the EDC’s customary practice, the Committee engaged an expert professional, in this case Finley Parker of Galveston Wharves, whom Standifer had met during his March 1944 tour. On August 6, 1944, Parker arrived in Tampa and spent seven days as a guest of the EDC, surveying the port, including a boat tour with the Harbor Committee. He met with businessmen, Mayor Hixon, the City of Tampa’s Board of Representatives (the aldermen), and the management of every docking facility in the port. Standifer himself drove Parker throughout Tampa’s waterfront, the railroad network, and its westerly links to the City of Port Tampa and across the bay to St. Petersburg. 158

On August 11, Parker addressed the combined Harbor Committee and Board of Directors of the EDC in what became a spirited discussion of the contributions that the port could make to the Tampa. He advised that Tampa’s waterfront was adaptable to industrial uses that would complement the port, but cautioned that its administration should avoid competition with private enterprise. He strongly urged that Tampa institute some kind of centralized governance in the port and promised that its economic function

157 Francis L. Judd to G. Dave Curtis, July 8, 1944 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 3, Folder 25, CTARS). Judd possessed an impressive mastery of Tampa’s relationship with the Corps, correcting statements by Curtis or port engineers as to the authorizations contained in various U.S. laws affecting what he called “Tampa Harbor.” Other than Judd’s cryptic reference to his own record of success at securing appropriations, this collection contains no evidence suggesting how it was possible for Tampa to obtain more favorable treatment from the federal government than did other Florida ports.

158 Report of F.W. Parker Made at Request of Economic Development Committee of Hillsborough County, Florida, September 11, 1944 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 8, Folder 71, CTARS) p. 4.
would never improve until it had done so. George Howell warmed to Parker’s recommendations, but wondered whether it was wise to invest in the port before achieving success in the rail freight-rate battle that Southern businessmen had pursued for decades. Parker conceded that Tampa would benefit from freight rates equalization, but then called attention to a different, fast-rising transportation mode. Citing conditions in Texas, he warned that highway freight lines were successfully challenging railroads. In the post-war period, he predicted, Tampa and its port would come to depend on highway transportation, and rail freight rates might become irrelevant. The Tampa region should prepare by building roads that would afford easy access to the city’s port district. 159

Parker’s theme was that Tampa stood not only to increase traffic in its port, but to use it as the basis for increased commerce and industrialization of its region. Those benefits had not materialized, nor would they until everyone with an interest in the port accepted some mechanism of centralized planning and policy. On September 11, Parker dispatched his sixteen-page written report to the EDC, supplemented by five letters and memorandums. 160 Tampa’s strategic location and the configuration of its

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159 Minutes of the special meeting of the Harbor Committee and the Board of Directors, August 11, 1944 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 7, Folder 67, CTARS). Parker’s employers were satisfied: “Mr. Traynor said that he had found Mr. Parker’s talk the most instructive fifteen minutes that he had ever had in Tampa. Mr. Howell concurred in this.” (p.3).

160 The documents are divided equally between Box 7, Folder 67, and Box 8, Folder 71, all in the Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers at the CTARS. The items in Folder 67 pertain mainly to Tampa’s Board of Pilot Commissioners, and their relationship with any potential port authority or port director. Pilotage was a sensitive matter, having to do with the power that Pilot Commissioners possessed as political appointees to set the fees that shippers were obliged to pay for services other than pilotage, which Parker discussed at length in his covering letters. Recognizing that his advice might contain “dynamite,” he separated his recommendations on that subject in order that Standifer might deploy them selectively. Folder 71 contains material having to do more generally with the physical port and its management, including Parker’s summary, which he submitted in quadruplicate. In his cover letter to Standifer, Parker discussed additional recommendations that he rightly predicted might be incendiary among the EDC’s maritime constituents. Standifer and his colleagues would have to “overcome if possible, and if not, over-ride
The harbor were its strengths; nearly everything else about the port was a weakness. The latter included poor, inefficient railroad alignments, not just in the immediate port area, but throughout the city, deteriorating waterfront facilities, a lack of infrastructure for freight trucks, and uncoordinated, inconsistent rates for the use of docking and storage facilities. Of the officials and businessmen involved in the port, none possessed an understanding of the issues, or accepted responsibility for mastering them. That situation could only be remedied by organizing a Port Commission or Authority, a recommendation to which Parker returned several times. “This is a necessity that was impressed upon me almost every day I was in Tampa.”

A Port Commission was not a radical concept, he assured his clients, for such institutions were already present in every example of a successful port city in the U.S.

As to the port’s rail infrastructure, Parker recommended authorizing a port director to negotiate several changes. First, the City should turn over its relatively small belt-line railroad to form a network that would include the two major railroad companies operating in Tampa. A port director could consolidate the physical layout of the trackage, and set uniform pricing for servicing the port’s terminals by rail. The pricing should be fair to the railroads, but not excessively profitable, as the belt-line railroad should function as a sort of co-op that would meet the requirements of shippers as well as railways. He also encouraged the City of Tampa to press the Atlantic Coast Line (ACL) railroad to withdraw its service to the City of Port Tampa, a municipal enclave on certain local prejudices, selfishness, etc...” Parker concluded by stating his fascination with Tampa and its port problem, and his wish that he were young enough to gain employment there “to help you work this proposition out.”

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161 Report of F.W. Parker Made at Request of Economic Development Committee of Hillsborough County, Florida, September 11, 1944 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 8, Folder 71, CTARS) p. 4.
Tampa Bay seven miles from downtown Tampa. The ACL could consolidate its operations in the port area adjacent to downtown Tampa proper, which would improve service, increase efficiency, and remove trains from the downtown streets and highways that they had to cross every day to reach Port Tampa. Another advantage would be the elimination of any need for dredging channels to Port Tampa, a costly redundancy.

Tampa should improve its existing rundown and neglected municipal dock along Ybor Channel and extend its property, possibly dredging out additional docks at the north end of that channel. As with the railway system, those facilities should be placed under the central administration of a port director, who would be charged with operating them, not at a discount to favored shippers, nor as a profit center for the City, but rather as a regulator on the pricing of local port services. The port commission might offer shippers the same services from its property that private enterprise offered; if so, those services should be priced just the same as local private vendors offered. The exceptions might be if private companies, in the judgment of the port commission, were overcharging for their services, in which case a port manager could undercut their rates and keep them honest. If there were shipping needs going unmet by private-sector terminals, the port could incentivize a commercial activity whose presence in Tampa it considered beneficial to the local economy. The port’s individual terminals and property owners could not help with such initiatives, because of the demands of capital and space, or owing to their innate and natural resistance to new competition. Some docks and terminals in Tampa were owned by steamship companies for the use of their own vessels, but rarely experienced more than forty-percent utilization. Dock owners were disinclined to rent their facilities to other vessel operators, as doing so might hinder their
own operations while helping to foster competition. If the port commission could offer good quality, full-service terminals to the existing dock-owning companies, making the facilities reliably available with dependable pricing and availability, then dock-owning businesses would be motivated to move their operations to the common terminal, and raise capital by disposing of their own waterfront property. Having more waterfront commercial land available would help open the way to alternative industrial development.

The port operator must consider streets and highways in planning all its infrastructure, Parker said, because “[t]here is no question but what a large volume of cargo in the future will be handled by trucks . . .”\(^{162}\) Some feared that the laws in various states limiting the size and weight of trucks would restrain the expansion of the trucking industry, an argument that Parker dismissed. The trucking of freight over the roads offered so much greater efficiency than any other method that restrictions would have to give way to political pressure from freight customers. Accordingly, he recommended that Tampa should plan, not just for streets to serve its commercial waterfront, but also for the network of highways that would carry heavy freight in and out of the county, the state, and beyond.

Parker discussed the economic opportunities that an improved port would create for Tampa. “Industry is what brings payrolls and permanency to a city,” he ventured. The reason to enhance the port was to exploit it as a vehicle for industrialization. At the time there was only one tin-processing plant in the U.S., processing ore shipped from Bolivia, but Tampa might compete for that trade and gain a large employer in the

\(^{162}\) Ibid, p. 13.
process. Even without oil production in Florida, Tampa could ship crude oil from Texas and Louisiana, and refine and distribute it in Florida. Parker also liked ideas such as packing houses, to process Florida cattle, and fish packing plants to produce frozen seafood. The fish by-product might add to the resources used by Tampa’s existing fertilizer producers, Parker noted. The port operator should not be seduced by marginal proposals, however. To have no plant at all was better than to cope with a failure, no matter the temporary good it might do while operating. The port commission should create an industrial research department to investigate business prospects and to critically evaluate their compatibility with the port’s physical and economic geography.163

Geography favored Tampa with a superbly sheltered embayment, and the federally dredged channel made it accessible to ships, all at little direct cost to Tampans. All that remained was a system of management to turn its advantages into a productive commercial waterfront. The agglomeration of enterprises on Tampa’s waterfront contributed to the city’s economy only up to the point at which they conflicted with one another. Then, they tended to impede growth. Tampa’s port had up until that time been a competitive free-market, but Parker argued energetically that such a condition prevented the port from making its maximum contribution to its economic hinterland. He offered detailed advice, but nearly every suggestion was contingent upon a centralized administrative structure that would have enough control over the port to impose order on its functions.

163 Ibid., p.14. “Such industry must be of a stable character. I noticed along your waterfront many facilities that have been abandoned— why I do not know, and to know would not help us in our analysis of what you have and what could be done . . . [a]ll over our South, including Tampa, you will see many broken down, dilapidated buildings along waterfronts, especially that were once the hope of some Chamber of Commerce Industrial Committee.” Parker counseled against the exuberant, grasping, uncritical boosterism that inspired cities to indiscriminately embrace every new commercial opportunity.
Parker’s advice fell on receptive ears among the EDC’s Harbor Committee and its staff. By September 27, when the Committee met to consider the report, Standifer had drafted a port authority bill based on Parker’s recommendations. The EDC’s attorney Ray Brown took the draft under review. Waring sought to limit the Harbor Committee to proposing the creation of an authority, leaving the actual process to others. He favored having the legislature create a port authority for Tampa, then forwarding the Parker report to the new board to implement as it saw fit. Chamber President Truman Green wanted the EDC’s Harbor Committee to retain its portfolio, in order to shape the necessary legislation passed. A majority of the Harbor Committee membership agreed on helping to draft the bill, and indeed, resisted suggestions to bring in representatives of the steamship companies and local government. The committee directed Standifer to work with Brown and to send drafts to Finlay Parker for his comment prior to the next meeting.164

Over the following month, Standifer, Brown, and the EDC staff worked on the proposal, while keeping the details confidential. After a contentious October meeting in which Mayor Hixon participated for the first time, the Harbor Committee finalized its version of a port authority bill. At the mayor’s suggestion, the committee agreed that the new agency’s jurisdiction should include all of Hillsborough County. Hixon then suggested that the proposed port authority should have no taxing power of its own. Instead, it should rely upon Hillsborough County for funding, a proposal that seemed to

164 Minutes of the meeting of the Harbor Development Committee, September 27, 1944 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 7, Folder 67, CTARS). This meeting took place at 3:00 P.M. Of the thirteen who were present, four (Waring, Traynor, Green and Standifer) had been present that morning when fireworks erupted between some members of the Tampa Chamber’s leadership and that of the EDC. The former felt that the EDC had, by proposing major civic improvements, strayed from what they saw as its mission to function as a survey and marketing department.
leave the others nonplussed. Uneasily sensing that competing interests had the scent and were maneuvering to bend any new port agency to their purposes, Waring again pressed to forward the proposal to the Chamber of Commerce, whose leaders could referee the brawl that he felt was sure to begin. Chamber President Green tried to keep the process sequestered within the EDC’s Harbor Committee, but finally agreed to take up the matter at the next meeting of the Chamber’s Executive Committee. With apparent relief, the Harbor Committee forwarded its legislative proposal to the EDC and Chamber Boards, and instructed Standifer to release it to the press. The parochialism and competitive self-interest against which Parker had warned began to spill over and fueled growing criticism of the EDC itself.165

The Harbor Committee met again on February 5, 1945. During the intervening one hundred days, furious maneuvering had taken place behind the scenes. The Committee expanded and re-named itself the “Joint Harbor Committee representing the Tampa Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Committee of Hillsborough County.” Attorney Ray Brown no longer represented the EDC. Instead, he had collaborated with County Attorney John Allison to redraft the port bill on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce. On March 5, after circulating the newest draft among those with waterfront business interests, the reconstituted Joint Harbor Committee met publicly with representatives of individual businesses as well as of two organizations,

165 Minutes of the meeting of the Harbor Development Committee, October 25, 1944 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 7, Folder 67, CTARS). Reporters J.A. Murray of the Tampa Tribune and Lucy Marsh of the Tampa Times were present. Hixon may have anticipated that the new port would become a perennial drain on the budget of its host unit of government, and wished to avoid having it become his problem. By creating a countywide port authority, the mayor also ensured that if the new agency did gain taxing authority, it would have to compete with all of Hillsborough’s governmental taxing units, not just Tampa’s, for ad valorem revenue. Finally, dispersing the port’s revenue base throughout the county would keep the issue from complicating the City’s hopes to annex surrounding suburban property.
the Tampa Maritime Association, and the Federal Emergency Warehouse Association of Tampa. The Joint Committee and its attorneys fielded a torrent of objections from port businesses. The compact that painstakingly emerged contained several measures dealing with money and control. The Governor of Florida would appoint board members to the new authority from a list of locally-proposed nominees. The policy of the Port Authority would be to develop the port using private capital. All land or facilities that the Port acquired must be paid for through the sale of bonds, which would not be an obligation of either the City of Tampa or of Hillsborough County. Hillsborough County could levy up to one-quarter of a mill in property taxes, for administrative expenses only, subject to budget approval by the County Commission. The existing functions and revenues of Tampa harbormaster would become those of the Port Authority.  

In May, Tampa’s State Senator Raymond Sheldon filed the amended proposal in the legislature, which passed the bill creating a Hillsborough County Port District and Port Authority. The law was contingent upon passage of a countywide referendum to validate the state action. On October 16, 1945, that referendum passed, creating the Hillsborough County Port Authority (whose board later changed its name to the Tampa Port Authority). By that date, the EDC was mere days away from ceasing operations,

166 “Explanation of Port Authority Bill,” n.a. n.d. (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 71, Folder 687, CTARS). The process of gubernatorial appointments to the Port Authority Board was to eliminate local political conflict over control of the port. The stratagem inevitably backfired when later governors appointed local supporters to the board, at the expense of those unfortunate enough to have backed a losing candidate in the statewide race.

167 The minutes of the Harbor Committee of the EDC, with accompanying correspondence covering the years 1944 and 1945, may be found in Box 7, Folder 67, Curtis Hixon Papers, CTARS. An unsigned and unaddressed, three page “Explanation of Port Authority Bill,” attached to a draft copy of the bill itself, is in Box 71, Folder 687, Curtis Hixon Papers, CTARS. See also Thomas J. O'Conner, "Forty Years of the Tampa Port Authority," The Sunland Tribune: Journal of the Tampa Historical Society XII (1986). Part two of this essay appears in Volume XIII of The Sunland Tribune, November, 1987, p.38-44. O'Conner credits the Chamber of Commerce for the work that the EDC carried out. The confusion may be understandable, given the overlapping membership between the two organizations, as well as the fact that Tampa
but the new Port Authority was taking up its first mission, acquiring war-surplus property, for which it would rely on groundwork that other divisions of the EDC had already laid.\footnote{In addition to the opposition from Tampa’s Maritime Association and Warehouse Association, Pinellas County’s legislative delegation threatened to block the bill, out of fear that it would grant Tampa’s new port authority the right to regulate shipping to and from the Port of St. Petersburg. W.L. Waring insisted to St. Petersburg interests that such would not be the case, but wryly added that their opposition was welcome, as it would “crystallize sentiment for it here [in Tampa].” “Tampan Denies Port Bill Affects St. Petersburg,” \textit{The St. Petersburg Evening Independent}, Saturday, April 7, 1945, p. 3.}

\textbf{Aviation}

Intercity competition had helped stimulate the EDC’s seaport planning, and urban rivalries played a major role in its airport program. Tampa’s ambition to become major air terminal faced competition from across Tampa Bay in St. Petersburg. The perennial competition between St. Petersburg and Tampa became a struggle for regional primacy in air transportation, and escalated old jealousies between people of the two cities. Tampans of the EDC led by Bill Haggerty combined regional diplomacy with aggressive lobbying in Washington. The EDC acted systematically to advance the city’s aviation interests, and its political adroitness helped the Aviation Committee to implement a comprehensive, sophisticated plan to make Tampa home to the region’s principal commercial airport. As with the seaport, the major component of the EDC’s plan was

\footnote{Chamber of Commerce documents rarely mention the EDC. As noted herein, by late 1944 antagonism had risen between the two organizations. Ray Brown had served as attorney for the EDC since its founding, and became the attorney for the Hillsborough County (later Tampa) Port Authority from its inception until his death. However, by September 1944 Brown himself became critical of the EDC’s emphasis on planning for civic improvements. See the minutes of the joint meeting of the Executive Committee of the Chamber of Commerce and the Executive Committee of the EDC, September 27, 1944. (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 7, Folder 68, CTARS). Some newspaper accounts also vaguely ascribed the port authority initiative and related improvements to the Tampa Chamber of Commerce. See, for example, “Tampa Keeps Port Active,” \textit{The St. Petersburg Times}, Sunday, January 30, 1949, p. 7, which credits a Tampa Chamber of Commerce Committee headed by W.H. Walker, a lumber executive, with making an exhaustive survey of other American ports, and then recommending creation of a port authority. The available primary sources fail to support either claim. Of the two organizations, the Tampa Chamber of Commerce survived World War II, and the EDC (by design) did not. That may help account for the swift evaporation of public memory of the EDC’s role during the early 1940s.}
consolidation of all local aviation infrastructure under the aegis of a new countywide aviation authority.

When the United States entered World War II, Pinellas County already had a master airport plan. Federally subsidized construction was underway at a location on the shore of Tampa Bay between Clearwater and St. Petersburg (neighboring cities with a durable, bitter rivalry of their own). In 1943, Pinellas County formed a postwar aviation committee, whose members believed that, while they lacked a local industrial economy, tourism and air travel fit together so well that Pinellas was the natural air travel hub of the region. Indeed, the Pinellas airport’s boosters intended to make it the chief air-port of entry for the Southeastern United States, for travelers arriving from South America and Africa. Tampa’s commercial aviation activists had the same idea, though they regarded a regional airport as crucial for their city’s industrial development as well as for tourism.\textsuperscript{169}

During World War II, Tampa’s aviation ambitions soared anew. Aircraft technology advanced during the war, amid speculation as to new possibilities for air freight and civil aviation (light airplanes owned and flown by private, non-commercial pilots). Tampa had an established corps of passionate aviation boosters, with a history dating to the 1920s. Aviation boosters on both sides of Tampa Bay were pleased to claim the first commercial airplane flight in the world, which took place on January 1, 1914, between St. Petersburg and Tampa. Tampans regarded the flight’s destination as more

significant than its place of departure – after all, in the early years of aviation many flights took off and never reached their intended destination.

In 1928, the City of Tampa had purchased the remote, 160-acre John Drew property west of town for use as a general aviation airfield. During the mid-1930s, the city used WPA funds to develop Peter O. Knight Municipal Airport on Davis Islands. Since Knight Airport was much closer to the downtown business district, the city and airlines designated it as the passenger airfield, and Drew Field temporarily languished. When the U.S. entered World War II, Tampa’s new MacDill Air Base had just entered service, but the military’s need for training fields was great. The City of Tampa leased Drew Field to the U.S. War Department for twenty-five years, or until the end of the national emergency. The War Department turned the field over to the Army, which for the rest of the war operated it as Drew Army Air Force Base, a bomber training facility.

Drew Field grew into one of several training fields that the War Department and the Works Progress Administration constructed throughout Florida, where flat topography and mild weather offered ideal conditions for training new aviators. Hillsborough County was home to two other such airfields, MacDill, at the southern tip of the Interbay peninsula, and Henderson, to the city’s northeast. Trainees learned to fly medium and heavy bombers, often traveling between bases in Florida to perfect their navigation skills, or over the nearby Gulf of Mexico, to learn low-level flying and anti-ship warfare techniques.\textsuperscript{170}

\textsuperscript{170} The large population of novices attempting to master new, high-performance military aircraft in unfamiliar surroundings produced regular accidents, emergencies, and crashes. Instructor-pilots and trainees alike joked that their operations were so hazardous that MacDill Field’s slogan was “One a Day in Tampa Bay.” (Alan Bliss oral history interview with Robert Schwaegerl, SPOHP).
At the time of the EDC’s founding, aviation development became an instant priority. George Howell, already a member of the Eastern Airlines’ Board of Directors, appointed Bill Haggerty as chair of the EDC’s nine-member Aviation Committee. Support for post-war airport expansion was lively in the Chamber’s Aviation Committee, but other than its emphasis on staying ahead in its ongoing urban rivalries, the Chamber’s policy had become incoherent with respect to Tampa’s growing airport assets. The City of Tampa owned and operated Peter O. Knight Municipal Airport on Davis Islands as the city’s principal commercial air terminal. The City planned to extend the length of those runways to 5000 feet, in order to accommodate larger aircraft. However, by 1943, some local commercial aviation interests began to promote Henderson Field as the city’s future nexus of national and international air travel. Divided amongst themselves, the Chamber’s board turned to Eastern Airlines president Eddie Rickenbacker as well as National Airlines president G.T. “Ted” Baker for advice as to how best to increase Tampa’s appeal for passenger air transport. However, the two executives were suspicious of each other’s business motives, as well as focused on preserving their own company interests.¹⁷¹

In October 1943, in the meantime, the EDC hired as its aviation consultant Captain Gill Robb Wilson, a Great War combat veteran of the Lafayette Escadrille who had later flown with the U.S. Army. Wilson was President of the National Aeronautic Association, and since 1934, had been director of aeronautics for the State of New Jersey. Wilson was no stranger to Tampa, where an active chapter of the NAA had existed since 1935.

¹⁷¹ For details as to the EDC’s Aviation Committee, see W.B. Haggerty to George B. Howell, September 19, 1945, final report to the Board (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 7, Folder 68, CTARS). Concerning planning prior to the EDC, see “Peterson Says He’ll Work For Tampa Aviation: Chamber Acts To Get a Better Air Deal,” *The Tampa Tribune*, September 15, 1943, p.2, and “City Plans To Expand Airport After The War: Makes Survey To Extend Length of Runways,” *The Tampa Tribune*, September 27, 1943, p.2.
In January 1944, Wilson toured the region’s aviation facilities, and on January 5, he spoke at Tampa’s municipal auditorium, to an audience that included officials from St. Petersburg and other west Florida cities. Wilson exhorted community leaders throughout the region to make common cause with respect to aviation development. He said that the diverse aviation needs of the area meant that there would be plenty of aviation business in the postwar years, but that the people of the region could only lose if they allowed infighting over which city got the biggest airport.  

Following the same pattern as that of the EDC’s Harbor Committee, the Aviation Committee commissioned Wilson to evaluate the Tampa Bay region and to recommend ways to enhance its economic function in air commerce. One of his suggestions was that the EDC form a committee of representatives from all the cities and counties in the region. Wilson insisted that factionalism would sink the area’s efforts to secure federal and commercial support for a major air terminal. The Aviation Committee agreed, and on April 13, 1944, created the Florida West Coast Aviation Committee. The members of the EDC’s Aviation Committee joined the new organization, and Tampa’s Bill Haggerty chaired the group.

Haggerty was attentive to Wilson’s enjoinder to present a unified face to the rest of the aviation community, and acted to not merely put together a coalition, but to make it (and himself) credible. Haggerty obtained from every member of the new regional group a letter authorizing them to represent their respective communities. St. Petersburg and

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173 W. B. Haggerty to George Howell, September 19, 1945 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 7, Folder 68, CTARS).
Clearwater were a part of the consortium. Then, Haggerty had the letters reproduced in order to prove that the West Coast Aviation Committee was indeed a united force. Factionalism appeared to have been stifled, even more so when the West Coast Committee agreed to design a feeder-line system of regional links between airports, possibly with Tampa as the hub.\textsuperscript{174}

Large hub airports appeared increasingly important to aviation boosters. In the Tampa region, existing downtown airports, such as Albert Whitted in St. Petersburg, or Peter O. Knight in Tampa, were too small to accommodate the large passenger transports that were already in service with the military. The aviation technology advances in World War II military aviation also affected civil aviation, as larger planes meant larger payloads, whether the cargo was to be bombs or tourists. With respect to airports, the result was that runways, and therefore all facilities, had to be bigger. Postwar commercial airports would require more space, and the only places in the Tampa area feasible for a major postwar terminal were the three airfields then in use by the Army. Wilson identified Drew Field as the region’s most central location for postwar commercial aviation. However, until the Army announced whether and when it might relinquish Drew Field, that Committee goal would have to wait. Naturally, the Drew Field proposal attracted Tampa’s contingent, who worked toward the possibility that the location would became available. George Howell’s friend and Eastern Airlines president

\textsuperscript{174} Report on Committees, EDC: Progress Report of the Aviation Committee, July 5, 1944 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 7, Folder 68, CTARS).
Eddie Rickenbacker made Eastern’s engineering staff available to the EDC’s Aviation Committee to design a future terminal and administration building for Drew Field.\footnote{Ibid. Concerning airport size and locations, see Paul Barrett, "Cities and Their Airports: Policy Formation, 1926-1952," \textit{Journal of Urban History} 14, no. 1 (1987)}

Dissent over airfield alternatives roiled the EDC’s Aviation Committee. For example, some members believed that Henderson Field should be reserved for postwar service as Tampa’s regional air freight terminal. Howell found the proposition unimaginable. He preferred to concentrate on re-acquiring Drew Field for the City of Tampa to remake as the regional airport for every commercial service. Haggerty complained that Tampa suffered from too many committees on aviation. He sought to keep peace among the regional coalition that he had assembled, fearing that the EDC’s goal of securing Tampa’s role as a regional aviation hub was fragile. Because of the civic pride that every community took in its airport, he urged caution. “Tampa necessarily must utilize the maximum of diplomacy in press releases and policy, or our entire program most definitely will collapse.” In any case, every proposal had to wait until the war ended, the government’s air bases became surplus, and the War Department announced its intentions for disposal.\footnote{Report on Committees, EDC: Progress Report of the Aviation Committee, July 5, 1944 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 7, Folder 68, CTARS).

As the end of the war neared, cities as well as airline corporations deluged the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) with applications and petitions for airport operating privileges and route assignments. The Tampa Bay area’s West Coast Aviation Committee handled applications to the CAB for the necessary approvals, acting as a co-op representing Tampa and St. Petersburg-Clearwater interests in general. The routes that concerned the West Coast group were a proposed new international service
between the Tampa area and Havana, with connections to other Latin American
destinations, and a new domestic route connecting Tampa with New Orleans and points
to the west. As for airport certification, the co-op requested that the Tampa area’s major
terminal should be “any one of several airports laying within a certain radius of Drew
Field and includes; a possible use of part of Drew Field, Henderson Field, Peter O.
Knight Field and the Pinellas County Airport.” Haggerty may have believed that Pinellas
County interests had either signed on to the Tampa plan or that he had lulled them into
passivity, but the peace did not last. The Tampa Chamber’s Washington lobbyist
Francis Judd was monitoring the CAB’s application files, and in August 1944, he
reported that Pinellas County had filed its own briefs specifically in support of the
Pinellas airfield as a postwar master air terminal.177

As Haggerty promoted Tampa’s bid for air routes he inadvertently awakened
another critic. In August 1944, he visited Cuba under an official letter of endorsement
from Mayor Curtis Hixon to promote direct passenger service between Tampa and
Havana. Upon his return, Haggerty asked the EDC’s aviation consultant Gill Robb
Wilson to represent the West Coast group before the CAB, which Wilson did beginning
in November. Wilson’s appearance in Washington on behalf of Tampa was an affront to
the Chamber’s lobbyist Judd, who felt that he already had an insider’s advantage and
could get any results that Tampa wanted. Howell, Haggerty, and the others soothed the
Tampa Chamber’s immodest legislative advocate, toward whom even the Chamber
leadership was increasingly skeptical. Over the ensuing months both Judd and Wilson

177 Francis L. Judd to G. Dave Curtis, August 12, 1944 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 1, Folder 6,
CTARS). Judd apparently acquainted himself with representatives of the CAB and became as conversant
in the minutiae of their commercial applications, called docket numbers, as he had been with harbor and
navigation matters.
appeared before the CAB, while their patrons in Tampa struggled to hold together the wary local coalition of aviation interests that Haggerty had assembled. Everyone waited to learn what the War Department would do about disposing of its airfields.\(^{178}\)

In April 1945, the war in Europe ended, and Pinellas County’s aviation interests began to press the War Department to immediately release the Pinellas Airfield from military use, so that they could begin converting into a regional commercial airport. The EDC Board and its Aviation Committee members were furious at what they saw as another hostile initiative. Standifer exhorted Wilson to press for the War Department do the same with Drew Field, as well as to renew his ongoing campaign with the CAB.\(^{179}\) In the meanwhile, on Wilson’s advice, the EDC asked Hillsborough’s county attorney to draft a bill similar to the port authority bill, creating a new Hillsborough County Aviation Authority. Under intense lobbying from Tampa’s interests, the Florida legislature passed that bill in the same session as the port bill, although the former was not subject to a referendum. On October 1, 1945, the new Aviation Authority took over the

\(^{178}\) W. B. Haggerty to the Members of the West Coast Aviation Committee, October 26, 1944; Francis L. Judd to Fred W. Ball, Curtis Hixon, Truman Green, and George Howell, November 21, 1944; also Judd to W.B. Haggerty, November 23, 1944, (all in the Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 1, Folder 6, CTARS). Also Francis L. Judd to G. Dave Curtis, December 10, 1944 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 1, Folder 68, CTARS). Concerning Judd’s standing with the Chamber and the EDC, see Minutes of the Board of Directors, EDC, February 14, 1945 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 7, Folder 66, CTARS). By that date, the Tampa Chamber of Commerce had reduced Judd’s compensation by $2,000, and the lobbyist threatened to quit. West Coast Aviation Committee chairman William Haggerty urged the EDC to pick up the difference, lest Judd’s sudden departure disrupt matters in Washington.

\(^{179}\) Reports of the Aviation Committee of the EDC, along with T.V. Standifer’s correspondence with Gill Robb Wilson, and correspondence with lobbyist Francis L. Judd, may be found in Box 1; Folders 6 and 7, Curtis Hixon Papers, plus Box 7, Folder 68, in the Hixon Papers, all in the CTARS. Also see The Tampa Tribune, December 12, 1943, p. 6 (editorial) and p. 16 (news feature), concerning the EDC’s employment of Captain Wilson. Like Thomas O’Conner in his account of the Tampa Port Authority, Douglas Karsner, with only partial accuracy, credits the “local chamber of commerce” with helping establish the Hillsborough County Aviation Authority (HCAA). “Their persistent efforts paid off, as the number of flights in and out of Tampa’s airport jumped from six per day in the early 1940s to forty per day by 1950.” Douglas Karsner, “Aviation and Airports: The Impact on the Economic and Geographic Structure of American Cities, 1940s-1980s,” Journal of Urban History 23, no. 4 (1997), p. 413.
administration of all civilian airports in Hillsborough County, and responsibility for aviation promotion.  

Not until January 9, 1946, did the U.S. Surplus Property Administration officially declare Drew Field surplus. Since the City of Tampa had originally leased the property to the War Department, the Surplus Property Administration initially offered it to the City. The airbase had expanded during the war to some 3,600 acres, all of which the City was pleased to accept on behalf of the new Aviation Authority. Later that year, the CAB granted the applications from the major passenger airlines serving Tampa to move from Peter O. Knight Airport to the new Drew Field Municipal Airport. The regional battle for aviation hegemony in the Tampa Bay area ended with Tampa having swept its regional competitors from the field. 

The EDC took up one of the initiatives that Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs had long cherished. Moving through a complex milieu of technological change, economic uncertainty, and evolving federal policy, Haggerty and his Aviation Committee achieved more in two years than preceding efforts had since the 1920s. However, the accomplishment was not all owing to the people involved. As with everything that the EDC did, time and circumstances favored Tampa’s civic ambitions. The political and economic climate of the late war years created an exceptional opening through which the EDC took Tampa’s entrepreneurial aspirations. The consequences of creating the Hillsborough Aviation Authority, securing the ownership of Drew Field, and winning

180 T.V. Standifer to Gill Robb Wilson, April 24, 1945, and W.B. Haggerty to George B. Howell, September 19, 1945 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 7, Folder 68, CTARS).

181 Bulletin, Surplus Property Administration, January 9, 1946 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 26, Folder 251, CTARS). According to Katherine Haggerty Carroll, her father received news of Franklin Roosevelt’s death while visiting Havana in the company of Eastern Airlines chairman Eddie Rickenbacker. Both men contemned Roosevelt, and the occasion stirred them to an impromptu celebration.
commercial air routes to Tampa were immense. Drew Field ultimately became Tampa
International Airport, the impact of which spread beyond even just Hillsborough and
Pinellas Counties. In so doing, the new airport moved Tampa closer to being what the
EDC sought, the trade and economic center of west central Florida.

**Highways**

The third part of the EDC’s transportation agenda was motor transportation. In
1943, the U.S. Conference of Mayors alerted Tampa Mayor Chancey that Congress had
taken up discussion of a National Interregional Highway System. Limited-access local
expressways were already part of Tampa’s long-range traffic plan prepared by George
Simons, who was also following the national highway proposal. Since the 1920s, road
building in the Tampa area had been minimal, while traffic congestion in downtown
Tampa had grown oppressive. To mayors such as Bob Chancey, the relevant point was
that the Bureau of Public Roads might use federal funds for right-of-way within urban
boundaries. In planning to exploit federal highway resources for Tampa’s advantage,
Simons’ advance work combined with the EDC’s practiced methodologies of planning
for large infrastructure. The result was a critical moment of intervention followed by a
successful project of integrating Tampa with the rest of the United States by way of a
new federal highway network.¹⁸²

The idea of a nationwide Interregional Highway System originated in 1938. A
committee appointed by President Roosevelt recommended three alternative designs,
one of 33,920 miles, a second of 36,000 miles, and another, considerably larger

¹⁸² Harry R. Betters, Acting Executive Director, The U.S. Conference of Mayors, “Pending Federal Road
Legislation” bulletin, May 21, 1943. (Mayor Chancey Papers, Box 2, Folder 20, CTARS); Truman Green
to the Honorable Board of Representatives, City of Tampa, July 31, 1944 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers,
Box 83, Folder 807, CTARS).
arrangement totaling 70,000 miles of new Federal highway. World War II intervened, and the administration did not revive the proposal until the war was nearing conclusion. During the 1944 session, the House and Senate narrowed the alternatives to call for a network not to exceed 40,000 miles, without urban components. On December 20, 1944, President Roosevelt signed the Federal Aid Highway Act authorizing a 40,000 mile national “system of interstate highways,” a mileage limit that could accommodate either of the two smallest design proposals.\textsuperscript{183}

The Federal Bureau of Public Roads mapped a rough overall concept of highway alignments, then called on the various state road departments to recommend routes within their own jurisdictions. The federal BPR map for Florida envisioned an interstate highway segment running generally down the state peninsula from near Lake City to Tampa. In March 1945, Florida’s Chief Road Department engineer instead proposed a highway across North Florida, from Pensacola to Jacksonville, another running down the east cost of Florida from near Jacksonville to Miami, and an east-west link across the middle peninsula of the state, from near Daytona Beach to Tampa. Tampa was to be connected to the new network, but the state engineers decided against a north-south segment serving the west coast. In Tampa, the Chamber of Commerce and EDC reacted with urgency.

In April, the Tampa Chamber and EDC jointly announced that the west coast of Florida had been cut out of plans for the new federal highway. In messages to government and chamber officials, and influential citizens from twelve counties between

Lake City and Fort Myers, the two Tampa groups announced a joint meeting of their highway committees for April 25, 1945. Leslie Blank chaired the Chamber’s Highway Committee, while George Holtsinger, Tampa’s Ford automobile dealer and an EDC director, chaired its Highway Committee, which had until then been concerned with state and local transportation plans. Holtsinger presided over the joint meeting, attended by fifty-eight business and political representatives from as far away as Ocala and Ft. Myers.\textsuperscript{184}

That morning, State Road Department engineer J.H. Dowling, had announced to the press that Tampans were wasting time by trying to change the route. State Road Board Chair Elgin Bayless backed him up. Meanwhile, the politicians and businessmen gathered in Tampa evaluated the Federal Bureau of Public Roads’ map, then the state Road Department’s proposal. Then, the discussion turned to the towns and cities along Florida’s east coast which stood to gain the most from the Road Department’s plan to establish Florida’s major new federal highway along the Atlantic coastline. In the words of one participant, “we may have to do something in collaboration with our friends [in central Florida] to get the central route in order to get something away from the east coast.”\textsuperscript{185} The Tampans wanted the new interregional highway to run south from Lake City passing near or through Gainesville, Ocala, Brooksville, and to have its end in Tampa. Alternatively, the Tampans suggested that the Road Board should balance

\textsuperscript{184} Minutes of the joint meeting of the Highway Committees of the Tampa Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development Committee of Hillsborough County, together with representatives from Counties, Cities and Chambers of Commerce along the West Coast of Florida from Lake City to Fort Myers, April 25, 1945. See also the telegram from F.W. Ball, G.M. Holtsinger, Leslie Blank, and Curtis Hixon, to the Honorable Millard Caldwell, Governor of Florida, June 8, 1945 which clarifies the distinction between the Tampa Chamber’s Highway Committee and that of the EDC, though the two were in this instance working closely together. (Both in Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 3, Folder 25, CTARS).

\textsuperscript{185} Ibid. The speaker was Clearwater citrus grower H.H. Baskin.
interests on opposite coasts by constructing one central north-south highway running from the Georgia border through Lake City, Gainesville, Ocala, Haines City, and Frostproof. After skirting the south side of Lake Okeechobee, the central route would end in Miami.¹⁸⁶

In a variation on the tactics devised by Haggerty and the Aviation Committee, the EDC’s Highway Committee crafted a regional coalition of interests. The Floridians attending that day’s meeting in Tampa agreed to form the South Florida Interregional Highway Association, chaired by Holtsinger and staffed by Standifer. Its purpose was to press the state and federal highway planners for an alternate Interregional Highway alignment that would carry travelers more directly to the Tampa Bay region. The following week, Holtsinger set the EDC’s peripatetic Standifer in motion again, this time to visit Washington, D.C to learn more about the position of the Bureau of Public Roads, and if possible to lobby for a direct highway link between Tampa and the north.

Standifer was already convinced about the importance to Tampa of expanding regional highways in the postwar period. In September 1944, port consultant Finlay Parker had predicted repeatedly that trucks would become more important than railroads to shippers in general. Parker had carried his advice further in his report to the EDC’s Harbor Committee, when he emphasized that it was not just local streets, but highways in and out of the state that would be crucial after the war. In January 1945, Thomas McCord, manager of the Union Stockyard in Montgomery Alabama, had visited Tampa to advise the EDC’s Agriculture and Livestock Committees about starting a

¹⁸⁶ The comments by Dowling and Bayless are from The Tampa Tribune, April 25, 1945. Also see the Minutes of the joint meeting of the Highway Committees of the Tampa Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development Committee of Hillsborough County, together with representatives from Counties, Cities and Chambers of Commerce along the West Coast of Florida from Lake City to Fort Myers, April 25, 1945 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 3, Folder 25, CTARS).
Tampa stockyard. When transportation came up, McCord advised that the need for railroad facilities was “negligible,” as the vast majority of cattle came to the Montgomery yard by truck. Standifer believed that the proposed new federal interregional highway system, were it built, would powerfully advance the EDC’s agenda for growth in Tampa. 187

Standifer postponed the meeting of the EDC board scheduled for May 2, and instead, traveled to Washington. There, on May 3, 1945, he met with the Federal Commissioner of Public Roads, Thomas MacDonald. MacDonald confided to Standifer that he had held Florida’s Road Board in low regard, and he hoped that the recently installed board Chairman would be a “broader gauged, more cooperative person” than his predecessor. MacDonald proved to be familiar with Florida’s situation, and was sympathetic to Standifer’s concerns the west coast route. The Commissioner turned Standifer over to his chief deputy, Herbert S. Fairbank, whose discussion of the Florida routes was “most pleasant and clear.” Fairbank said that the Bureau concurred as to the value of a Florida west coast route, and that it had only narrowly missed becoming part of the original federal bureau design. However, the bureau did not intend to impose any route alignments upon the states. Instead, it wanted the states to submit recommendations from among which it would choose. Standifer concluded that, if the choice was available, the federal bureau would adopt the additional Tampa route in any final plan for the state’s part of the new highways. “There is no question about the sincerity and understanding of Mr. MacDonald and his staff,” he reported. Standifer

187 For the McCord discussion, see the minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors of the EDC together with the Agriculture and Livestock Committees and cattlemen and packers of the Tampa area, January 23, 1945. (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 7, Folder 66, CTARS). Finlay Parker’s final report to the EDC is also in the Hixon Papers, Box 8, Folder 71.
decided that it was crucial for Tampans to prevail upon the Florida State Road Board to propose a west coast route in its final submittal to Washington.188

Hillsborough County Commission chair Fred Ball, Mayor Curtis Hixon, and Chamber President Truman Green launched a campaign of telegram and letter-writing to the Road Board members and to Governor Millard Caldwell. They enlisted their counterparts in the South Florida Interregional Highway Association, representing eleven west-Florida counties and fourteen cities. The SFIHA offered to exchange endorsements with the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce, whose members fretted that Tampa was attempting to steal away the east coast interstate route. A besieged Road Board chair Bayless promised Hixon that the Board would give the Tampa route “careful consideration.” The State Road Department’s draft proposal ranked alternatives, but when it failed to list the west Florida route as number one, the Tampa interests personally lobbied Governor Caldwell to intervene with the Road Board, whose members he appointed. The governor’s intervention apparently carried the day for the Tampa campaign, as the route it sought appeared in the State Road Department’s submittal to the BPR, and won acceptance by the federal highway engineers.189

When compared to the duration of its port project or the aviation program, the role of the EDC in shaping Florida’s interstate highway plan appeared relatively minor, yet it

188 Memorandum of meeting, T.V. Standifer, Thomas H. MacDonald and Mr. Fairbanks (sic), Thursday, May 3, 1945, 1:30 P.M. - 3:30 P.M., Room 6004, Federal Works Agency Building, 18th and F Streets, N.W., Washington, D.C. (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 8, Folder 71, CTARS). The new Florida State Road Board chairman to whom MacDonald referred was F. Elgin Bayless, appointed by Governor Millard Caldwell. Standifer was not a stranger in Washington that spring; on May 14, 1945 he and seven others representing the Gulf Ports Association enjoyed a fifteen-minute meeting at the White House with President Harry Truman (Truman Presidential Museum and Library, Daily Presidential Appointments, available on-line at www.trumanlibrary.org/calendar/).

189 In addition to the material in Box 8, Folder 71 (cited above), more letters and telegrams on the debate over the interstate highway route may be found in the Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 3, Folder 25, CTARS.
may have been the most important single thing that the organization did. At the time that the highway dispute emerged, relations between the EDC and the Tampa Chamber had soured, and local government support for the EDC was waning. But when Tampa stood near to being left out of the new nationwide federal highway system, it was to the EDC and its managing director that the other local groups and individuals turned. Following a pattern that had already worked to benefit Tampa’s shipping and aviation interests, Standifer and Holtsinger created a regional coalition to leverage Tampa’s political influence. The EDC board and Standifer dropped everything so that he could travel to Washington to establish the facts at firsthand. His report resulted in the orchestrated, intensive lobbying initiative that followed. Owing to their earlier research and planning on Tampa’s seaport functions, the members of the EDC quickly appreciated the importance that an interstate highway would assume in the postwar period. The route that they and other west central Florida representatives successfully promoted in the spring of 1945 eventually became Interstate 75, Tampa’s surface transportation link to Atlanta and the Midwest. In 1945, few could have anticipated the consequences that would result when the federal interstate system also brought limited access highways directly into the centers of traffic-choked cities such as Tampa.  

Tampa’s Distinctive Planning Coalition

Working with various committees of the EDC throughout its two-year existence, George Simons advocated new schools, public boat basins (marinas), a new municipal garbage incinerator, and other such tangibles. But he was concerned with organizing more than just urban space. When possible, Simons liked to think in terms of urban

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190 The subsequent chapters of this dissertation elaborate on these assertions.
systems, ranging beyond the physical or even the political boundaries of the city that was his client. Perhaps the most sophisticated project advanced by Simons and the EDC, and at $5 million the most expensive, was their 1944 proposal for a sanitary sewer district to serve Tampa and the area beyond its city limits. As a trained sanitary engineer, Simons was the ideal consultant about sewers in cities. Over a period of one and a half years, he helped the EDC’s Special Sewerage Committee study engineering, health standards, revenue bond financing, and public utility law. Working with the city and county attorneys and the EDC staff, Simons crafted original legislation to create a new public institution that would focus on waste water disposal in and around the City of Tampa. The plan called for raising cash through the sale of revenue bonds (another Simons specialty), and provided for a sewer authority whose directors would be elected from throughout its service area. Simons obtained sample legislation from sewer districts that were noted for innovative water and sanitation projects. Armed with his reports and recommendations, the EDC helped achieve a political consensus to attack a regional problem that had resisted solution since long before World War II. The tangible evidence of this initiative only began to appear after the war, however.  

In July 1944, Standifer heard Paul Hoffman speak at the annual meeting of the national CED. Standifer was struck by Hoffman’s preoccupation with “the problems of the large eastern manufacturer” and concluded that Hoffman and his fellow industrialists were “not used to thinking in terms of the economy of the Southern States.” During two

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191 J. Ralph Van Duyne, Chief Engineer, Passaic Valley Sewerage Commissioners, to T.V. Standifer, June 22, 1944 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 7, Folder 68, CTARS). Also see George W. Simons, Jr. to T.V. Standifer, April 17, 1945, and T.V. Standifer to Honorable Curtis Hixon, April 23, 1945 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 8, Folder 71, CTARS); also Karl E. Whitaker to Honorable Curtis Hixon, May 12, 1945, and Curtis Hixon to Honorable Raymond Sheldon, May 14, 1945, and Harry G. McDonald to the Honorable Curtis Hixon, May 16, 1945 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 28, Folder 273, CTARS).
days of reports and presentations, Hoffman reminded his audience that the object of the CED was “to create a record-breaking expansion of industry and to cause, as far as possible, an economy of abundance in the farms of this country” in the postwar period. The initial part of the program covered the work of the CED’s research division, after which the field division representatives reported on activities in their communities and industries. Following the field division reports, a group of representatives from southern states such as Tennessee, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida (including Standifer) agreed that their problems differed from those of the other states. Nonetheless, Standifer considered his trip to the Chicago convention worthwhile. He concluded that Tampa’s efforts were considerably more advanced than those of the other local committees represented at the convention, and he was surprised that CEDs from around the United States disregarded public works or civic improvements as devices of postwar full-employment.192

Walter Matherly did not join Standifer at the 1944 CED convention. Soon afterward though, he acknowledged the managing director’s assessment, in the context of Matherly’s own conversations with regional CED chair Carl Wolf of Atlanta. Matherly thought that the regional committee followed “too much” the pattern of the national CED. “What will apply to large-scale industry in the North will not apply to small-scale industry in the South,” he wrote. The plans of the national CED would require adaptation to the

192 T.V. Standifer, Report to the Officers and Directors of the Economic Development Committee, July 24, 1944; Box 7, Folder 66, Curtis Hixon Papers, CTARS.
situation in the South and Florida. Matherly also agreed with Standifer that Tampa’s EDC was “far ahead” compared to other local committees.193

Some EDC co-founders, including members of the Tampa Chamber’s Board, also thought that the organization was far ahead, perhaps too much so. By September 1944, the EDC neared the end of its first year of operation and began planning for a second fiscal year. Howell, Standifer, Green and others were beginning to draw criticism from their colleagues. An indication of dwindling official enthusiasm for the EDC was a reduction in its public financing. The Hillsborough County Commission, whose chairman Fred Ball was a director of the EDC, had resisted funding the organization for a second year and grudgingly appropriated $12,500, down from $16,666. Eventually, but equally reluctantly, the City of Tampa matched the amount. Both appropriations came only after pointed speculation that the organization had become a boondoggle.194

On September 27, 1944, the executive committees of the Tampa Chamber and the EDC met in an unprecedented joint session. EDC vice president Truman Green, by then also Chamber President, had called the meeting to clear the air between the two groups, whose relationship had been souring for months. In what must have been the lowest moment of the EDC’s existence, its leaders exchanged sharp and sometimes

193 Walter J. Matherly, “Comments on Activities of Hillsborough County Economic Development Committee,” (n.d.); Box 7, Folder 68, Curtis Hixon papers, CTARS.

194 “Is Tampa Just A Thin Dime Town”? *The Tampa Daily Times*, June 27, 1944 (editorial). When the City of Tampa Board of Representatives as well as the county balked at the EDC’s request, an embittered Howell told the county commissioners that, “Tampa has always tried to do for a dime what Jacksonville and Miami spend $5 for.” For their part, the representatives reportedly grumbled “that the committee has ‘accomplished nothing’ and just ‘paid out salaries.’” It was not until February 1945 that the City Board ratified its contribution to the EDC; see F.M. Traynor to Honorable Curtis Hixon and Board of Representatives, March 1, 1945 (Box 8, Folder 70, Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, CTARS).
harsh criticism, prompting V.V. Sharpe to complain that, “every time anybody in this town tried to do anything, it always ended in a row.”

Banker E.P. Taliaferro (also a vice president of the EDC), speaking for other Chamber critics, charged that the Committee had done nothing constructive. His conception of the Committee had been that it was a survey organization, created to establish precise data about where and how many jobs the area’s postwar populace might need versus how many it might offer in the postwar period. Taliaferro predicted that the local cigar makers would require help with mechanization, if they were to survive in Tampa, but instead of addressing that, the EDC had become “a glorified grab-bag.” George Howell expressed amazement at Taliaferro’s observations, and pointed out that such a survey had been the first job that the Committee had undertaken. As to Tampa’s cigar manufacturers, they were divided among themselves over the merits of mechanization. Employment projections generally were problematic, Howell continued, because, “No one could know now what would happen to the political situation, or whether there would be government control of prices and labor... it was nonsense to say that questions of this kind could be settled now.” The program of planning for public works had been the EDC’s logical next step after the survey, and projects such as the sewer system might indeed yield a great deal of postwar employment, depending on government policies.

Frank Traynor of Florida Portland Cement, and an EDC vice president, reported that he knew of attacks on the Harbor Committee for reportedly “taking pleasure boat

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195 Minutes of the joint meeting of the Executive Committee of the Chamber of Commerce and the Executive Committee of the Economic Development Committee, September 27, 1944. (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 7, Folder 68, CTARS).

196 Ibid.
rides.” Traynor heatedly defended the committee and complained in turn that certain dissidents on the EDC’s board had been meeting in secret. The acrimony escalated, and late-arrivals (possibly summoned by worried participants) sought calm, venturing that perhaps the EDC had not done enough to publicize its own work. On that there was agreement, and the directors turned on the local news media. The editors of both Tampa dailies were present, and protested that it was difficult to report the news of a group such as this to satisfy everyone.\footnote{Indeed, since early in 1944 the EDC had been assembling a publicity campaign including a public exhibit of its proposed public works projects, which the EDC staff eventually produced. However some directors, Taliaferro among them, had opposed the exhibit owing to concerns that such a display of seemingly grandiose projects would arouse critics already suspicious of the EDC’s ambitions, apparently including some of its own members such as Taliaferro himself.}{\footnote{Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors of the EDC, July 5, 1944. (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 7, Folder 66, CTARS). “Mr. Taliaferro said he had found a lukewarm air among the public about the accomplishments of this committee and he thought this display would cause criticism.”}} 

The EDC directors agreed on improving their publicity program, but little else. Mayor Hixon arrived late and tried to smooth things over. “I think we have covered the problems pretty thoroughly. There is always a lot of controversy– you always run into that.” Taking the cue, Carl Brorein moved to approve the program of work that the EDC had followed in its first year and that the present discussion “be considered” in planning the subsequent work of the Committee. Waring seconded the motion, which carried, though apparently not unanimously.\footnote{Minutes of the joint meeting, September 27, 1944. The staff member who recorded the minutes at EDC meetings followed certain protocols, one of which was to note unanimous polls, but when there was
The dissension highlighted tension over the unusual activism that the EDC had pursued, as well as a distaste among some of its civic-entrepreneur members for so many initiatives that crossed into the public sphere. Many on the EDC’s board were impatient with merely sustaining and promoting assets that Tampa already possessed, such as its cigar industry. They saw the EDC’s role as one of pursuing new institutions and innovations. By contrast, E.P. Taliaferro spoke for those who envisioned an EDC that aimed to resuscitate and preserve existing local businesses in the postwar period, after the model that Tom Standifer had disdained after hearing it described at the national CED convention in Chicago. Standifer was satisfied to note then that “Tampa had progressed... much further than any other locality that was represented at the convention.”

Defensiveness on the part of the Chamber of Commerce also probably grew out of remarks made by EDC members or consultants that seemed to slight the Chamber’s history of attempts at industrial recruitment. Finlay Parker’s reports contained such allusions. Sensitive egos might have interpreted the editorials of Truman Green’s *Tampa Tribune* as critical of the Chamber’s record, as the paper frequently called for “serious” planning. The Chamber’s Congressional lobbyist had made no secret of his anger at the seemingly abrupt intervention in his preserve by the EDC’s Aviation

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200 T.V. Standifer, Report to the Officers and Directors of the Economic Development Committee, July 24, 1944; Box 7, Folder 66, Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, CTARS. In his cover letter describing the Chicago convention, Standifer wrote that other community programs “...have given no consideration whatsoever and have no plans for municipal or civic improvements and have not in any way discussed the matter of postwar public works... A lot of the discussion was rather elementary as far as our committee is concerned... I don’t believe that any CED organization has carried its work as far or covered anything like the range of subjects that the committee here in Tampa has undertaken.”
Committee. The impressively-credentialed, much-traveled Standifer and his rotating team of imported experts lent an air of purposefulness, expertise, and authority to the EDC’s work. Such a bustling but at times secretive apparat, combined with generous financial support from local government, would have struck unease or at least envy into the heart of the most self-assured chamber of commerce leader. Rather than serving as a transient auxiliary bureau, the EDC may have appeared to veteran local boosters like an uber-chamber of commerce, endowed with assets that the parent organization never possessed. EDC Chairman George Howell was a visionary who by every account was affable and capable of great charm. He was also formidably willful and outspoken, as well as impatient with what he sometimes viewed as Tampa’s parochial infighting. In any case, the internal tensions over EDC’s philosophy continued for the rest of its existence, but its work practices and the substantive issues on which it had chosen to concentrate, especially those relating to transportation, remained settled.\textsuperscript{201}

On October 31, 1945, the Economic Development Committee ceased operations. The date marked the end of its second fiscal year, and given the evidence of the war’s approaching end, as well as the controversy that had surrounded its second year, the EDC had been planning itself out of existence since March, 1945.\textsuperscript{202} As the year drew to a close, returning veterans disembarked in force at Tampa Union Station, Tom Standifer and his family prepared to leave Tampa for New York, and George Howell

\textsuperscript{201} Minutes of the joint meeting, September 27, 1944. Before the meeting adjourned, George Howell appointed a committee chaired by Carl Brorein to draw up the following year’s program of work; the other members were Truman Green, E.P. Taliaferro, W.L. Waring, R.D. Jackson, and David E. Smiley. (Green and Smiley were the two newspaper editors). This became what was called the Policy Committee, which delivered its report to the EDC Board the following May 23. (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 8, Folder 70, CTARS). Concerning the content of the Parker report, see note 44.

\textsuperscript{202} Minutes, Board of Directors, Economic Development Committee, March 14, 1945 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 7, Folder 66, CTARS).
drafted thank-you letters to the members of the EDC. The postwar period of unknowable changes that the EDC had tried to anticipate and master was under way.203

The EDC had an organic vision of Tampa that was exceptional for its time, and in its historic and geographic context. The things that its members saw as having economic value were not unusual. The port had obvious value and was something that any booster group could support. So too was a commercial airfield. But this group of civic entrepreneurs looked for new ways to integrate such things into the regional economy and to make them productive community assets. Moreover, the EDC’s city of the future was not just a place of grain elevators and airplane terminals but also of playgrounds and a cultural center, more and improved schools, and housing for minorities – admittedly not the integrated, equal housing that federal law would later attempt to mandate, and perhaps motivated by a selfish interest in eliminating a perceived eyesore, but still an alternative to simple displacement. To be sure, the EDC made no attempt to narrow Tampa’s racial divide and never acknowledged that a harsh racial caste system existed, or that such a condition might be problematic for Tampa. In

203 Executive’s Bulletin, Tampa Chamber of Commerce, November 12, 1945. T.V. “Tom” Standifer resumed his employment with McCloskey Construction. Before the year was out, Standifer reappeared in Tampa as McCloskey’s representative, negotiating the sale of that firms’ Hookers Point shipyard to the City of Tampa—a matter that he knew something about. Like his competitor Matt McCloskey, George Howell realized that shipbuilding as a major enterprise in Tampa was finished. He resigned as President of Tampa Shipbuilding, and returned full time to banking. (In 1947, he chartered the Marine Bank and Trust Co., the first new commercial bank to open in Tampa since the beginning of the Depression). The thank-you letters that Howell sent, dated December 8, 1945, were on the letterhead of Tampa Shipbuilding Co., and read in part: “I cannot let the Economic Development Committee of Hillsborough County go out of existence without expressing to you my deep appreciation for the wonderful work... During my twenty years in Tampa, I have never seen as much interest displayed in any local organization, nor have I seen a greater willingness to work and produce for the benefit of the community. You have all received a copy of the final report consisting of some 200 pages, and if the Committee had produced nothing more, it has for the record a complete survey of Hillsborough County, its present condition, and its possibilities for the future. It is unnecessary for me to review the work accomplished, as that is covered completely in the final report.” (George B. Howell to Honorable Curtis Hixon, December 8, 1945. Mayor Curtis Hixon papers, Box 8, Folder 70, CTARS). Unfortunately, no copies of the final report, reportedly titled Tampa’s Future, are known to exist.
that sense, the businessmen of the EDC were faithful to their place in time and space. Any other behavior would have been so radically out of the ordinary as to be unsustainable.

Tampa’s planners and promoters aimed to stimulate new enterprises and new forms of commerce, and the civic entrepreneurs of the EDC took unprecedented measures to realign Tampa in the service of such goals, politically, economically, and physically. The consultants hired by the EDC draw upon diverse experience and specialized resources that were unavailable locally. The EDC’s vision of Tampa’s future consisted of more than just celebrating its climate, or touting a compliant workforce. In doing so, it committed to embracing newcomers *en masse* in commerce and society. That was ever the point of boosterism, but for Tampa’s elite it meant continuing to yield ground in terms of local control and power. Like George Howell, Bill Haggerty, or Tom Standifer, Tampa’s newcomers were perhaps less constrained by the city’s past, and liberated to concentrate on its future.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁴ For an account of the character of Tampa’s postwar business community, and its responses to civil rights activism, see [Lawson, 1982 #113] The nature of controlling elites differentiated the experience of southern cities during racial crisis. Places whose leadership (such as the EDC’s George Howell, or Tom Standifer) had migrated from elsewhere, who perhaps had newer roots in the community, tended toward moderation in race-related matters, as did those with recently-wealthy elites (“nouveau riche”). New-South promoters tempered the responses of more traditional Southerners who might have avoided chances to negotiate with aggrieved, activist black citizens. On the other had, the “modern apostles of the New South” helped sell northern industry on relocating to a place of cheap, docile labor, and so had a vested interest in keeping a lid on racial violence. Tampa in the 1950s was a place of such white elites, but also had a black activist community that embraced negotiation and compromise. The bi-racial committee established by Tampa mayor Julian Lane became a statewide model. Prominent Tampa attorney Cody Fowler, a leader of the bi-racial committee, had sterling booster credentials thanks to his early membership in the Tampa Aero Club, and later the EDC’s aviation committee, along with a host of other civic activities. Unlike Jacksonville and St. Augustine in Florida, and places such as Little Rock and Birmingham elsewhere in the South, Tampa avoided serious damage to its progressive business reputation, while making halting progress toward desegregation. Perhaps more cynically, James Cobb sees immigrant industrialists in New South boomtowns as having been sincere only about heading-off violence, thus allowing local booster politicians “to play a skillful game of tokenism. See [Cobb, 1984 #14] p.115-116.
CHAPTER 5
SUNBELT ENTREPRENEURS: 1945 – 1956

During the decade after World War II, Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs continued their effort to change the once sleepy, crime-ridden city into a dynamic and modern metropolitan center. Tampans used new institutional structures such as the Port and Aviation Authorities, and a new inter-local sewer district, to exploit and leverage the federal government’s New Deal and World War II investment in the city. Drawing on work done by the specialized sub-committees of the EDC in collaboration with consultant George Simons, civic entrepreneurs collaborated to expand Tampa’s seaport, create a modern sewage treatment system, and develop a large-scale passenger airport. In 1956, federal revenue became available to build the interstate highway system for which Tampans had already established a local and regional plan. Owing to plans that they had helped formulate decade earlier, Tampa’s political and economic leaders quickly saw how to advance their agenda for urban reinvention. Interstate highway construction and associated urban renewal projects allowed them to use federal resources and policy to realize their long-cherished intent to physically transform the city.205

205 The term “civic entrepreneur” refers to historical actors who saw Tampa’s advancement through growth and prosperity as high public service, and as their civic obligation. They were men of business, politics, or both, who functioned easily in either sphere, and who conflated their personal prosperity with that of Tampa generally. Public service was not rewarding in itself, but rather it was adjunct to personal accomplishment. “Civic entrepreneurship” as a conceptual term related to community organizing also appears in Douglas Henton, John Melville, and Kimberly Walesh, Grassroots Leaders for a New Economy: How Civic Entrepreneurs Are Building Prosperous Communities (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997). Henton, et al’s conceptualization was unrelated to my use of the term. However, the authors subsequently defined their use of the phrase so as to roughly conform to the meaning I intend, even though they use it in a different context. See Henton, Melville, and Walesh, “Civic Entrepreneurs: Economic Professional as Collaborative Leader,” Community Economics Newsletter (269) March 1999, Center for Community Economic Development, University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension Service.
Tampa’s post World War II political regime included many of the civic entrepreneurs who had experienced the city during the 1920s, the Great Depression, and war. Postwar Tampans inevitably bore the imprint of their pre-war memories. Their historical perspective on Tampa included a sense of missed or fumbled opportunities. Tampans remained acutely aware of the 1920s real estate boom, the physical evidence of which remained visible in places such as Davis Islands, just across the Seddon Channel from downtown. The projects conceived during the war by the Economic Development Committee reflected a desire to revive and perpetuate the optimism that Tampans had enjoyed only briefly. The EDC’s that succeeded, e.g., seaport, airport, and highway development, shaped postwar Tampa’s physical development and the operation of its political economy. Each aspect of change contributed to growth that spread across the region and propelled the increasing value of land. The result was a city at the center of a new, far-flung regional metropolitan economic geography characteristic of the modern American South, i.e., a Sunbelt place.

Following World War II, leading Tampans merged their experience of the pre-war years into assumptions about the future. While Tampa was the putative urban center of west central Florida, the city’s standing was at risk owing to its reputation for corrupt politics, organized crime, fraudulent business practices, and harshly repressive social practices. The way to legitimize Tampa’s reputation was to cultivate and increase its legitimate economic functions. Ergo, growth by

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206 A notable exception to those who survived the war and went on to influence the next decade was Peter O. Knight, Tampa’s giant of politics and business since the turn of the century, who passed away in 1946.
any means was incontrovertibly good. From 1945 on, those beliefs informed the worldview held by every influential Tampan.

The projects conceived during the war by the EDC promised local growth by means of highways, aviation, and seaport development. Since the 1920s, each new development in urban life had proven that highways trumped every other surface transportation mode, so Tampa needed more of them. Because aviation was the future of long-distance travel, it legitimized a city’s claim to modernity. Growth, therefore, called for the largest possible passenger airfield, which assure Tampa’s influence within any hierarchy of cities. Meanwhile, Tampa’s historic functions as a seaport appeared to lag behind those of other port cities. An innovative organizational strategy offered a method by which the port could grow coherently, and contribute more fully to the broader economy.

Proposals to stimulate local growth also responded to the discomfort that many Tampans felt about their city’s postwar condition. Gambling, prostitution, and gang-related violence characterized Tampa’s powerful shadow economy. Indeed, they had come to help define Tampa’s national identity. Visitors who were aware of Tampa’s “Little Chicago” nickname saw additional evidence of urban decay and pollution. Grossly substandard housing in the area of the central business district (the “Scrub”) and the stench of sewage in the lower Hillsborough River and its estuary were tangible evidence that Tampa was depleted, morally and materially. A visibly modernized cityscape would assert Tampa’s place in the community of modern Southern places.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ Urban scholars generally find that American cities seek growth because it is the most expedient way to increase wealth within their jurisdictions. Short-term econometrics support that
Partnerships normally operate under tension, and by the late 1940s relations between Southerners and the national government bore generations’ worth of historical freight. Tampans success at exploiting federal resources in order to advance local objectives depended on seeing past that history. Those who had lived through the Depression and war realized the power of the United States government to help overcome local problems and to change conditions that had previously seemed immutable. Thanks to their experiences during the New Deal and especially the war years, those who had been EDC members understood the possibilities of Tampa’s partnerships with federal agencies. The result was another guiding value during the postwar decades, which was a new acceptance, sometimes grudging, at others grasping, of the need for federal dollars. Given the scope of the Tampans’ ambitions, they had little choice but to enter into new forms of partnership with the U.S. government. Like citizens elsewhere, Tampa’s political entrepreneurs chafed under the constraints and mandates of federal bureaucracies while grudgingly tolerating them in the pursuit of local objectives.

**Tampa’s Postwar Regime**

Many of those who had helped craft the EDC’s agenda for the postwar period were among the leaders who implemented it. Changes in the makeup of logic, but pro-growth policies do not always generate or sustain political consensus. Growth invariably carries costs, tangible or otherwise, to which affected constituencies naturally object. Typically, parochial concerns such as neighborhood change stimulate resistance to growth. However, unlike growth advocates, dissidents tend to command fewer resources and thus less wealth with which to fund their resistance, which is one reason that their record of success is thin. In the late 1940s and 1950s, Tampa’s circumstances privileged growth to an unusual degree, not simply for its wealth-generating potential, but also as a way to supplant, and eventually overcome the city’s tawdry image.
Tampa’s civic elite were always gradual. Most EDC members were already associated with more insular, but influential groups, such as the Chamber of Commerce, the President’s Roundtable, and the Board of Realtors. Local elected and appointed officials also joined or served as *ex officio* participants on EDC committees. During the two and a half years of its existence, the EDC challenged and inspired people from disparate groups to act collaboratively. When rifts appeared, they rose out of uncertainty and diverse attitudes about the future at least as much as out of competition or self-interest. The great achievement of the EDC was an exceptional, if relatively brief, period of consensus among influential Tampans’ as to their view of the city’s future.\(^{208}\)

As World War II ended, the impetus for widespread cooperation dwindled, while proprietary self-interest seemed to harden, and individual personalities asserted themselves anew. Nevertheless, the EDC’s informal project of planning, and its agenda for political reorganization, survived the war’s end and served as the basis for collective undertakings. In December of 1945, the EDC ceased to exist, but some of the committees and task forces that it had fostered during the war years held together, or morphed into coalitions directed toward the same purposes. The common thread to those purposes was determination that Tampa

\(^{208}\) The Presidents’ Roundtable, introduced in Chapter 3, included representatives of Tampa’s numerous civic organizations such as Civitan, Rotary, the Jaycees, and others. Tampa businessman and politician Ben H. Hill, Jr., himself a Jaycee during the 1940s, reflected that, “Tampa has not been a town where people thought way ahead. That was an unusual thing for Tampa for this Economic Development outfit to forecast these things [future improvements]. We have always been a town where after it happened we did something about it. (Laughs).” Alan Bliss oral history interview with Ben H. Hill, Jr., October 30, 1999, p. 37 (SPOHP).
and its people would prosper in the postwar years under the leadership of traditional political and economic elites.209

Tampa’s political administration throughout those years enjoyed unusual continuity in the person of Curtis Hixon, who won office as mayor in 1943 and held it until his death in 1956. For twelve and a half years, the slight, dapper Alabama native and longtime neighborhood pharmacist presided over the most remarkable boom in Tampa’s history. He had entered politics in 1929 as a Tampa city councilman and subsequently as a Hillsborough County Commissioner. He gained the mayor’s office at nearly the same time that the EDC came into existence and he supported it unfailingly. Hixon helped secure financial support for the EDC from both the city and county and his ex officio membership on numerous committees guaranteed access to people and information. Hixon received a copy of virtually every major item of correspondence produced by the EDC staff, including the minutes of directors’ and committee meetings. EDC executive director Tom Standifer carefully kept the Mayor up-to-date on matters that particularly interested him, such as port development and slum clearance. The mayor’s staff responded promptly to the

209 For example, when asked whether EDC Highway Committee Chair George M. Holtsinger had been a noticeably forward-thinking citizen, Ben Hill replied, “No, he was just a hard-headed businessman. He was a Ford dealer… [h]e was a very gruff person and big, one of those big guys… he was very conservative.” Early in 1945, however, as Highway Committee chair, Holtsinger had formed a regional highway association to lobby on behalf of Tampa as well as the surrounding counties. In 1945, such regionalism reflected a newly enlightened affinity for institution-building in the pursuit of distant and intangible benefits. Later, as Chamber of Commerce Highway Committee chair, Holtsinger worked similarly on behalf of regional highway interests, rather than concentrating exclusively on Tampa. Hill found such selfless advocacy out of character for the frosty automobile entrepreneur. The impact on Holtsinger’s business interests is only apparent in retrospect, with knowledge of what became, nineteen years later, Tampa’s part of the Interstate Highway System. See Alan Bliss interview with Ben Hill, SPOHP.
EDC’s needs and participated in its committees. Both during and after the war then, unsurprisingly, the mayor’s priorities mirrored those of the EDC.²¹⁰

Other than lifelong politicos such as Hixon most of those who participated in the work of the EDC and who then adapted its programs to peacetime were entrepreneurs. Their enterprises were mainly local businesses rather than affiliates of regional or national corporations. They were men with enthusiasm for technological innovation. Many were engineering-minded and most shared an affinity for aviation, which was the transformational technology of their lifetimes. Some Tampans had invested in aviation ventures, often with little success but always with hope. They also saw their commercial interests and those of the city as the same, so to these Tampa businessmen, the resources of the state existed to serve their objectives. In the broadest terms, they sought to increase and diversify Tampa’s metropolitan commerce. To that end, they influenced public institutions and bureaucracies to modernize Tampa’s infrastructure and position it for the maximum benefit of private enterprise and local commerce. The label “civic entrepreneurs” aptly identifies those citizens, most of them men, whose interests, values, and operative assumptions governed Tampa’s postwar development.

²¹⁰ Research into Tampa’s EDC would have been impossible were it not that Mayor Hixon’s papers include more than two years of his correspondence from the EDC. Some documents bear notations in the Mayor’s hand, in the margins or on the back, the latter seeming to be notes of meetings or telephone conversations about the subject at hand. Many items are “information” copies of correspondence between Tom Standifer and the EDC’s outside consultants, businessmen, or state and federal officials. The EDC staff also provided Hixon with copies of surveys, reports, and publications relating to the work of the local as well as the national EDC, which he saved assiduously.
Planners, in contrast, are rarely entrepreneurs but during the late 1940s and 1950s, the critical years in Tampa’s growth, planning overlapped significantly with entrepreneurship. George Simons, Tampa’s professional planner for eighteen years, embodied this synergy. He was an independent businessman who had earlier tried his hand at real estate development. Meanwhile, neither Bill Haggerty and George Howell, nor their business colleagues on the EDC, possessed even informal background in city planning. Nevertheless, they immersed themselves wholeheartedly in the city’s war-era planning process, driven by the tensions of war and the fear that peace would undermine Tampa’s prospects. It was also distinctive in the way that public and private actors collaborated.

During the postwar years, municipal consulting became increasingly competitive yet Simons remained Tampa’s municipal consultant on a variety of matters from 1940 until at least 1958. Thanks to relationships that he had cultivated during the war years with the EDC, Simons worked easily with the Zoning Board, the Mayor’s office, the Board of Representatives, and the Chamber of Commerce. He also served the Tampa Housing Authority. His persuasive abilities and his familiarity with Tampa’s political economy prepared him to imagine its future in ways that resonated with his audience.  

Throughout nearly two decades of service to Tampa, Simons advanced planning ideas that conformed to values and assumptions that he shared with his

\[\text{\footnote{Solicitations from Simons' professional rivals are throughout Mayor Curtis Hixon's correspondence files from the postwar years, especially the early to mid 1950s (Hixon Papers; CTARS). Examples may also be found in the files of Mayor Hixon's successors, J.L. Young, Nick Nuccio, and Julian Lane (also in the collections of CTAR.}]}\]
Tampa clientele. He promoted a regional perspective on Tampa’s future. Simons anticipated suburban growth and increasingly blurred physical demarcations between municipalities but he expected that downtowns would maintain their economic primacy in the expanding metropolitan scheme. Simons erred as to the lasting primacy of traditional central business districts but in the late 1940s few planning professionals would have disagreed with him. His Tampa clients envisioned their urban core as a place of great civic structures and ease of access by automobiles. As for Americans elsewhere, Tampans’ post-war boom seemed to portend limitless growth and economic opportunities. The most tangible adverse consequence was automobile traffic congestion, a problem Simons had addressed in his 1941 traffic plan for Tampa. It remained only for road building to catch up with increasing car-ownership and usage.

Flawed assumptions such as those about central business districts did not impede Tampa’s other planning initiatives. Instead, perhaps owing to its fast pace, compressed time line, and its transcendence of public and private sector boundaries, Tampa’s war-era planning was a success. Critics of planning tend to dismiss the process as one that generates documents that quickly become obsolete and languish thereafter unread, “gathering dust on a shelf.” The EDC did produce a final document. However, its most important product existed in the person of its two hundred-some members. They were men who had disagreed over their visions of Tampa’s future, settled on a few substantive things, and emerged from the process with a sense of investment in pursuing a vision of city-building. They shared certain goals, such as the development of ports and
transportation facilities, and agreed on broad outlines for achieving them by way of local public institutions and federal cooperation. The alumni of the EDC constituted an informal society of elites sharing a mutually reinforcing culture that manifested itself in expressions of urgency about advancing civic causes that promoted Tampa’s growth and prosperity.\textsuperscript{212}

These postwar civic entrepreneurs had the means and opportunity to pursue their agenda. The political and economic climate following World War II favored civic ambitions of the sort that, before the war, had suffocated in Tampa’s hot, corrupt, factionalized and depleted political economy. In 1945, Tampa still had perplexing problems. Its minority citizens endured daily injustices. However, the visible evidence of traffic, population, business activity, and construction illustrated that Tampa was more alive than ever. Military veterans absent since the early 1940s returned to a city that was palpably more optimistic and energized than the one that they recalled from the pre-war years, even if it was still just as steamy on a summer afternoon.\textsuperscript{213}

\textsuperscript{212} The EDC’s intellectual product also existed in the form of its 200-page final report, titled \textit{Tampa’s Future}. Copies of the report unfortunately no longer exist. In his closing message to the membership of the EDC, George Howell referred specifically to the report, a copy of which went to each of the EDC’s 200-some members. (George B. Howell to Honorable Curtis Hixon, December 8, 1945. Mayor Curtis Hixon papers, Box 8, Folder 70, CTARS). Concerning Tampa’s culture of civic entrepreneurship, George Howell’s oldest son described the attitude that his father shared with his business and political contemporaries: “[i]n the 1920s, when he came down [from New York], Florida was nothing. Florida was just a little, old, poor, rundown state with a few people living in it. But that didn’t jar him. He just learned, like so many of us, that’s what made Tampa. That is, so many of us just love Tampa. We’re going to do any goddamned thing it takes to handle what has to be done. He was like that.” Alan Bliss oral history interview with A. Clewis Howell, June 6, 2003 (HillCo 74, SPOHP).

\textsuperscript{213} During the late 1940s and 1950s, before air conditioning became ubiquitous, Florida’s heat was memorably oppressive, even for those who worked indoors. Paul Danahy, who graduated in 1957 from the University of Florida College of Law, recalled that air conditioning was non-existent except for part of the library. Students therefore sequestered themselves in that space until the Library’s closing time each night. He and his classmates noted ironically that Florida A&M University’s Law School, which the legislature had established in Tallahassee as a segregated
In 1945, Tampa’s human and economic geography was relatively coherent. Admittedly, homes and businesses ranged well past its political borders, a situation that had the effect of creating a metropolitan population whose relationship with Tampa as a city was increasingly problematic. Still, Tampa existed as a discrete, distinct urban place whose suburbs operated in the orbit of a traditional central business district. Downtown Tampa remained vital enough as to encourage those who planned for its future to expect that it would remain so. Consequently, it was easy to contemplate a future during which Tampa would function much as it had through the first four decades of the twentieth century – as an international seaport, a manufacturing center, and a regional hub for banking, legal services, wholesaling, and retailing.\textsuperscript{214}

In 1945, Tampa’s downtown district already enjoyed systemic advantages in the region’s political economy. As the seat of county government, Tampa was the legal and political center of a rural and agricultural hinterland that took in Hillsborough County’s sprawling 1048 square miles of land area. The county courthouse and circuit judges were based in downtown Tampa. As the site of the only U.S. Courthouse between Miami and Jacksonville, Tampa was home to federal judges, a U.S. Attorney’s office, the Marshals Service, a branch of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, customs and immigration officers, and numerous other representatives of the national government. The U.S. courthouse school for African-Americans, had (because it was new) been built with a central air conditioning plant. Upon graduating, Danahy opened a law practice in Tampa’s First National Bank Building, which was, he noted, “filled with doctors and lawyers,” but still not air-conditioned.\textsuperscript{214} Alan Bliss oral history interview with Paul W. Danahy, Jr., July 27, 2005, p. 16 (FP-79, SPOHP).

was the site of every federal judicial proceeding involving the citizens of several counties in west central Florida, ranging from Ft. Myers to Brooksville and Orlando. Tampa’s boosters counted those federal functions and the facilities that housed them among their leading accomplishments of the preceding half-century. Both private business and government activity made Tampa a major regional center. Its civic entrepreneurs envisioned a future that would bring more of everything that they already celebrated, in appropriately modernizing forms.215

In addition to the physical coherence of its urban space at the end of World War II, Tampa inherited a tradition of consistency in public policy. Tampa’s elections may have been ruthlessly competitive and riotously corrupt but they also tended to be insular affairs. Two established dominant political factions

215 Hillsborough County also includes 24 square miles of inland surface waterways, extending to the mouth of Tampa Bay near Egmont Key. The county existed since 1834, when Florida was still a territory, and included what are now Pinellas, Polk, Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte, DeSoto, Hardee and Highlands Counties, plus parts of present-day Glades and Lee. The last reduction in Hillsborough’s physical jurisdiction occurred in 1911, when the legislature allowed voters along the Gulf of Mexico and Pinellas peninsula to secede from Hillsborough, and form Pinellas County. The secession followed a long, bitter political campaign between interests in Tampa and St. Petersburg that fueled a lasting enmity between the two cities. Besides Tampa, two incorporated municipalities lay within the county, Temple Terrace and Plant City.

Historian Gary R. Mormino observed that, “[I]n the summer of 1946, Tampa Bay’s most expensive real estate centered around Franklin Street. Downtown Tampa stood at its zenith; its stores, offices, and banks defined fashion, power, and status... residents from Arcadia to Zephyrhills drove to downtown Tampa to patronize up-scale stores, such as the region’s only modern department store, Maas Brothers.” “The Summer of ’46,” Sunland Tribune (22) November 1996, p. 81. Residents of St. Petersburg and Clearwater also crossed Tampa Bay via the Gandy Bridge or the Courtney Campbell Causeway in order to shop in Tampa, an excursion that consumed much of the day and invariably included at least one restaurant meal. Vehicle tolls on the Gandy Bridge ended in 1944, easing automobile travel across the Bay, and fulfilling a goal of merchants in downtown Tampa.

In 1945, the federal judiciary in Florida consisted of two jurisdictions, the Northern District Court, headquartered in Tallahassee, and the Southern District Court, based in Jacksonville, and of which Tampa was a part. The sprawling geography of Florida’s Southern District created the need for District divisions, with permanent courthouses in Miami and Tampa. At the end of WWII, Tampa’s federal courthouse was an imposing four-story masonry structure built in 1905. In 1962, Congress created a new Middle District Court for Florida, first headquartered in Jacksonville, and presently (2008) in Orlando. Tampa became a principal division of the new Florida Middle District at the time of its creation.
cheated each other. Power revolved among a cast of bitterly antagonistic personalities. But regardless of whose regime was in power, both systematically excluded blacks from influencing elections and dismissed political aspirants who presumed to suggest meaningful reform. Contests were about who would rule rather than what they would do. The usual result was a regime of stable public policies from which there was at most limited dissent. The difficulty that this pattern created for civic entrepreneurs was that in both perception and substance the image of legitimacy that they sought for Tampa demanded actual electoral reform. Yet more transparently democratic local elections could undermine the informal networks upon which political entrepreneurs relied for managing consensus, and could lead to risky unpredictability in policy, anathema to civic leaders and investors alike.

One strategy for managing civic consensus was the so-called white primary election, a Southern institution that was not unique to Tampa. Until the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1944 *Smith v. Allright* decision, Tampa’s White Municipal Party legally excluded blacks from the only meaningful phase of the local election, the nomination of that party’s candidate. Even after *Smith v. Allwright*, white Floridians devised numerous tactics to resist allowing blacks to participate in their elections. For example, Hillsborough County election registrar John Dekle continued to register blacks automatically as Republicans. “Negroes can register as Democrats if they want to, but we don’t invite them,” Dekle said.216 The process of qualifying of candidates, through which their names could appear on

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the ballots, remained in the hands of local party officials. As late as 1953, nine years after the constitutionality of its primary role had fallen to the legal assault of the NAACP, Tampa’s White Municipal Party continued to screen candidates for city offices.217

Periodically, reform initiatives (though never addressing racial equality) originated among those of Tampa’s civic organizations that were popular with young, ambitious businessmen, such as the Junior Chamber of Commerce (or “Jaycees”), Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions Clubs. The membership of such bodies typically included people who, aspiring to influence and hoping to build a reputation, lacked the money or connections that might gain them entrée to the most influential civic networks. Young business and professional men in that situation often sought to advance their civic stature by campaigning for elective office. However, entering politics in Tampa required personal connections to either of the two existing factions, one generally centered in the offices of county government, the other based in Tampa’s city hall. The politicians in control of

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217 Pam Iorio, “Colorless Primaries: Tampa’s White Municipal Party,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* (79:3) Winter, 2001, pp. 297-318. In 1947, blacks voted in Tampa’s city election for the first time since 1910. In 1945, however, Tampans had amended the city charter so that members of the Board of Representatives, as the City Council was then named, were reduced in number from twelve to seven. Rather than running in twelve separate precincts, or wards, candidates for these seven seats ran “at large” (citywide). Also, the charter amendment increased the term of office for members, from two to four years. (See Tampa City Council Members 1904-1963, compiled by W. Curtis Welch, city archivist, CTARS). Ostensibly to break up the influence of notoriously corrupt voting wards, the elimination of single district voting also meant that voting groups such as blacks, geographically concentrated in certain districts, had little hope of marshalling enough votes to influence even so much as one seat on the Board. In 1947, the near success of a black candidate for Jacksonville’s city council prompted that city to also amend its charter so that city council candidates ran city-wide. See Abel A. Bartley, *Keeping the Faith: Race, Politics, and Social Development in Jacksonville, Florida, 1940-1970* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000), p. 34. Meanwhile, Florida’s Republican votes were simply not in play. “1946 represented the high water mark of Democratic dominance… No Republican served in the 1945 state legislature. The state GOP was moribund at best, downright embarrassing at worst.” See Mormino, “The Summer of ’46,” p. 84.
those groups in turn could command support in crucial electoral precincts.
Tampa politics also required an appetite for rough political combat. The violence
that accompanied the elections of the 1930s was vivid in local memory. And, as
Bill Haggerty’s anti-gambling crusade from that same period had shown,
Tampa’s incumbent political leaders speculated that anyone who agitated for
substantive change did so merely to advance his own political ambitions. The
implication in such dismissive rhetoric was that upstarts such as Haggerty were
opportunistic climbers motivated by self-interest rather than the public good. 218

In the late 1940s, it continued to be difficult for a novice to gain political
traction in Tampa. Newcomers to politics had to satisfy influential prospective
supporters as to their support for economic growth and the continuance of
Tampa’s social order, which included racial segregation. Impulses for popular
reform that originated from without the city’s closed political culture had to meet a
similar test. Accordingly, the political space during wartime, in which the EDC re-
imagined Tampa, enabled its members to conceive and effect systemic change
while remaining faithful to their exclusive traditions and sustaining a regime
whose leadership and expertise remained consistent.

During the years of planning for the post-war era, Tampa’s Mayor Hixon
and County Commission Chair Fred W. Ball represented their respective local
governments on the EDC’s Public Works Committee. The Public Works
Committee’s proposals included a new county courthouse, a civic center

218 University of Tampa political scientist Robert Kerstein describes the unsuccessful reform
efforts of such pre-war civic clubs, naming William B. Haggerty, William H. Frecker, and Laban G.
Lively among the activists. Politics and Growth in Twentieth-Century Tampa (Gainesville:
University Press of Florida, 2001), p. 90-93. Also see Chapter 3 of this dissertation.
complex, and related projects in or near downtown Tampa. The committee also worked extensively on plans for what it called “slum clearance,” particularly involving the area just northeast of downtown called the Scrub. To the men of the EDC, ambitious projects such as these would redraw the city’s appearance and functionality. War-era comprehensive planning generated other specific ideas for re-inventing Tampa. Two of those ideas, maritime and aviation authorities, sought to capitalize on Tampa’s distinctive geography.²¹⁹

**Tampa’s Seaport Economy**

Tampa’s war-era planning resulted in the Tampa Port Authority, conceived as a means to consolidate and improve the city’s harbor and seaport and to rationalize their contributions to the city’s overall economy. A central idea that rose out the EDC’s planning was that significant assets such as Tampa’s port should become more complementary to other local commercial functions. Tampa’s maritime commerce had taken place at the whim of private interests who competed against one another as much as they did against other ports. Business firms or maritime occupations without existing Tampa operations found it difficult to establish themselves. Civic entrepreneurs wanted to enlist the port in their campaign of diversifying and modernizing Tampa’s economy. The Port Authority rationalized that effort by lobbying for federal investment in ship channel dredging, acquiring waterfront land, and attracting new maritime businesses such as commercial shrimping. Some land acquired by the Port Authority came from a defunct wartime shipyard, while more resulted from an

²¹⁹ Address to the Rotary Club by T.V. Standifer, Managing Director, EDC, September 26, 1944 (Mayor Hixon Papers, Box 8, Folder 69, CTARS).
Army Corps of Engineers project to deepen the ship channel. The resulting parcel became the site of a major part of the City’s new sewer treatment plant.

In late 1944, Tampa’s shippers, warehousers, railroads, and property owners suspended their mutual distrust long enough to endorse a state law conceived and promoted by the EDC to create a port authority. Sensing the tentative nature of the compromises that had gone into the proposed law, the Florida legislature insisted on a local referendum to guarantee political support. On October 16, 1945, Hillsborough voters passed the measure creating the Hillsborough County Port Authority. By the end of the year the Port Authority had opened for business with modest countywide taxing power, ownership of the City of Tampa’s dilapidated wharves along the Ybor Channel, and the first coherent vision for the future of Tampa’s commercial waterfront prospects. Most importantly, the new agency was the first institution to manage the business functions of the seaport in the service of Tampans in general. 220

The Port Authority’s proponents on the EDC’s Harbors Committee believed that Tampa needed to standardize the port’s rules and practices, impose uniformity on its rates, and equalize and expand access to the port’s wharfage, where the functions of a port terminal took place. There, vessels docked, discharged and loaded freight, refueled and loaded supplies, conducted business with agents and officials, changed crews, and connected to the necessary shore-based infrastructure. The Port Authority required land that

220 The Hillsborough County Port Authority later changed its name to the Tampa Port Authority. The EDC’s role in the effort is described extensively in Chapter 3 of this dissertation. Also, see the minutes of the Harbor Committee of the EDC, with accompanying correspondence covering the years 1944 and 1945. (Box 7, Folder 67, Curtis Hixon Papers, CTARS).
fronted on protected deep water, with access to rail, highways, and utilities. Such real estate was in short supply. Private owners, mainly corporations, owned most of what there was in Tampa that met those criteria and used their control of the necessary physical space to limit competition. In doing so they limited the expansion the Port Authority sought, and prompted calls for a new port ownership and management structure.

A choice parcel on Hookers Point, on the eastern bank of the Sparkman Channel, just southeast of downtown Tampa, possessed all the necessary characteristics of location. It also boasted graving docks, concrete work areas, and spacious buildings suitable for heavy manufacturing. Moreover, it had high-capacity electrical power and ample deep water at dockside for large vessels. In fact, it was a major shipyard, constructed in 1942 with financing from the U.S. Maritime Commission, which had leased it for the duration of the war to the Philadelphia-based McCloskey Company to build concrete freighters and barges. The site was just south of the Florida Portland Cement plant, a location that assured supplies of the necessary concrete.221

In the summer of 1942, the McCloskey Company dispatched its employee T.V. “Tom” Standifer to Tampa to organize the Hookers Point yard. Standifer had

221 Frederic C. Lane, Ships For Victory: A History of Shipbuilding Under the U.S. Maritime Commission in World War II (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1951, 2001), p. 630-634. In 1947, the War Assets Administration carried the McCloskey facilities on its books at a value of $6,460,550, although other sources reported the yard’s original cost as in excess of $7.5 million. Abstract of Proposals, Hookers Point Shipyard, Tampa, Florida, M-Fla-80, February 11, 1947, Mayor Hixon Papers, Box 26, Folder 254, CTARS. The difference may have resulted from the fact that, after the end of war manufacturing, the WAA had periodically sold off items or lots of materials from the yard’s inventory. During 1946, for example, Tampa Shipyards had reportedly purchased some $100,000 worth of steel. Letter, January 13, 1947, from L.E. Wolfson to Mayor Curtis Hixon, Box 26, Folder 254, Mayor Hixon Papers, CTARS. The McCloskey Company was headed by Matthew H. McCloskey (1893-1973), an influential activist and fundraiser for the Democratic National Committee.
supervised construction of buildings for the 1939 New York World’s Fair. He was to have been McCloskey’s general manager at Hookers Point, but material delays prevented the yard from commencing work on schedule and left Standifer available for other work. In October 1943, George Howell tapped him to become Managing Director of the Economic Development Committee. Standifer continued in that position until the EDC ceased operations, then returned to the construction business once again as McCloskey’s employee.

The WAA’s Office of Real Property Disposal administered the sale of the shipyard, which drew speculators with various ideas for its use. Most were interested in the yard’s impressive inventory of tools and supplies. In May 1946, McCloskey unsuccessfully tried to buy the machinery and equipment on hand. Other companies and investors made proposals as well and the City of Tampa declared its interest early on. Mayor Hixon, coordinating with the newly created Tampa Port Authority, opened negotiations with the Jacksonville Office of Real Property Disposal. Simultaneously, he prodded Florida’s U.S. congressmen and senators to intervene with the WAA on the city’s behalf.

During 1946 and early 1947, the WAA negotiated with the city as well as with private sector bidders who wanted to buy or lease the property. While pursuing the land, the City of Tampa weighed alternative uses for the Hookers Point property and explored deals with some of the private bidders with whom it was in competition. Prospective lessees or buyers included a builder of manufactured homes, a ship-scrapping and repair company, and a manager who wanted to subdivide the property into small business spaces. All these uses
offered possibilities for job creation but did little to serve the EDC’s objective, which was to create a port collective that would diversify and expand the types and sources of cargo moving through Tampa. The Mayor’s office advanced a proposal to use part of the waterfront on which to build a sanitary sewer treatment and discharge plant. In pursuing that idea, the City and the new Port Authority together contrived to put the former shipyard into the service of an entirely different EDC objective, a modern sewer system that would lead to cleaner water in the Hillsborough River and in the estuary. The sewer project was unrelated to port development but it had everything to do with advancing Tampa’s postwar growth.

On April 21, 1947, the War Assets Administration accepted Tampa’s offer of $400,000 to purchase the land connected with the Hookers Point shipyard. An additional $25,000 purchased the so-called personal property, meaning the yard’s machinery, equipment, and supplies. Thus the City gained assets in which, just five years earlier, the federal government had invested at least $7 million. In addition to representing a favorable business deal, the purchase left Tampa in a position to pursue the long-term strategies conceived during the final months of war by the EDC.

Curtis Hixon had been at the center of negotiations among private investors, the Port Authority, and the WAA. He had enlisted two of Florida’s most influential legislators, Congressman J. Hardin “Pete” Peterson and Senator Spessard Holland to advance Tampa’s bid while maneuvering against a possible bid from the federal Reconstruction Finance Corporation. Tampa lawyers, real
estate appraisers, engineers, and maritime interests had cooperated with the mayor and the Port Authority in the pursuit of a major civic objective, expecting that it would benefit Tampa’s long-term development. When the deal between Tampa and the federal government became public, congratulations poured in to Hixon’s office.\textsuperscript{222}

During the EDC’s wartime research into new industries for post-war Tampa, Tom Standifer and the EDC’s consultant Walter Matherly, of the University of Florida, agreed that commercial seafood processing and shipping would add to the seaport’s economy. The first chance to pursue that idea came in late 1949, when St. Augustine-based shrimpers John and Felix Salvador discovered rich beds of deep-water pink shrimp near the Dry Tortugas, about sixty miles west of Key West. Previously, commercial shrimping took place mainly on Florida’s east coast. Significant shrimp populations in the eastern Gulf of Mexico were unknown until nighttime trawling under lights drew the nocturnal feeders to the trawlers’ nets. Immediately, night trawling yielded rich harvests indicating that the waters near Southwest Florida held large concentrations of the profitable crustacean.

Within weeks of the Salvadors’ 1949 discovery, Key West blossomed with activity as fishermen relocated from distant ports to capitalize on the discovery. Landing, packing, and shipping facilities grew apace, and soon Ft. Myers also gained popularity with the shrimpers. Ft. Myers offered two geographic

\textsuperscript{222} Thomas E. Drumm, Deputy Administrator, Office of Real Property Disposal, WAA, to the Honorable Curtis Hixon, April 21, 1947. Mayor Hixon Papers, Box 26, Folder 255, CTARS. Extensive correspondence related to the McCloskey Shipyard negotiations is in Folders 254, 255, and 256, in the Hixon collection.
advantages over Key West. It was closer by truck to the important markets of the North, and its harbor was better sheltered and thus more secure during the summer and fall hurricane season. Tampa had similar advantages of geography, although it lay further from the prime shrimp grounds surrounding the Dry Tortugas.

Previously, Tampa’s commercial fishing trade had served mostly local or nearby markets. By the 1940s, the toxic state of Hillsborough Bay’s polluted water had extinguished local fisheries, such as crabbing and netting. Beginning in 1952, however, Tampa attracted growing numbers of Gulf shrimp fishermen. More so than Ft. Myers, it had convenient highway connections for long distance freight trucks. For the new, larger trawlers entering the business, Tampa’s deepened channels were superior to those of the smaller, shallow-water ports further south along the coast including Ft. Myers. Captains and crews found that they could effect port turnarounds quickly while enjoying access to machine shops, mechanics, parts houses, and repair yards, as well as to the various entertainments for which Tampa was notorious and that seamen tend to sample in haste. By the end of 1952, more than 100 deep-water shrimp boats were operating from Tampa.²²³

The postwar expansion of motor freight trucking and the national highway network connected Tampa-based shrimpers with emerging northern markets. An

additional factor essential to Tampa’s new maritime enterprise was the perfection of cargo trailer refrigeration. Prior to World War II, refrigerated rail cars had carried Florida shrimp to northern markets, but rail’s limitations hampered the expansion of those markets. Trains operate on schedules even as fishing vessels remain at sea until their holds are full, their supplies are depleted, or unfavorable weather forces them to shelter. Accordingly, fresh seafood landed on an erratic schedule that meshed poorly with the rigid timetables of departing trains. Trucks could drive away from the port terminals at the instant the trailer was full. In addition, while traveling to distant customers, the truck driver could detour and stop to deliver product along the way, without affecting the remaining cargo.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, a growing number of trucks hauled fresh as well as frozen shrimp from Florida’s west coast via U.S. Highway 41 to Chicago, the Midwest’s predominant distribution center.224

The discovery of the Tortugas grounds altered not just the geographic location but also the operating practices and the capital requirements Florida shrimpers. Since 1902, shrimpers had been a close fraternity based in Fernadina, Mayport, St. Augustine, and New Smyrna. From those ports, three generations of local captains and crews sailed on voyages of a few days’ duration, dragging nets in the near-shore waters along Florida’s east coast. The new pattern of deep-water fishing in the Gulf of Mexico for days or weeks at a time called for larger boats, with more powerful engines, longer endurance,

greater carrying capacity, and more sophisticated electronics, refrigeration, and net gear. In 1951, American shrimpers also began voyaging to the vast shrimp grounds in the Bay of Campeche, in the southern Gulf near Mexico’s Yucatan Peninsula, making for still longer and more demanding trips. For operators to compete effectively, they required larger and more costly boats.225

George Howell loaned much of the capital necessary for the success of Tampa’s newest industry. As the head of the Marine Bank, which he established in 1946 after selling Tampa Shipbuilding, Howell disrupted the patterns of Tampa’s banking business. Attorney and fellow banker Warren Cason recalled that “Mr. Howell’s bank was the first bank that had been chartered in downtown since the banks went bust during the Depression. From that little location where he was, he moved down to what had been Madison Drugs at the corner of Madison Street and Franklin and really developed the bank there. Then he built the big building across the street, I think probably the first new building downtown Tampa after the war.”226

To bankers any enterprise connected with the sea was unusually risky, and fishing vessels were prime examples. They were expensive pieces of capital equipment that were almost constantly out of sight and beyond the reach of loan officers. Even in port cities where mature fishing businesses existed, credit financing for commercial fishermen was problematic. Tampa’s bankers had little experience in the field. After World War II, however, the growing size and


226 Alan Bliss interview with Warren Cason, August 2, 2000, p. 48-49, SPOHP.
sophistication of the industry increased fishermen’s need for capital. Shore-based enterprises such as packers and shippers also sought financing for land, buildings, and new technologies to quickly process and freeze seafood for shipment. Howell’s vision of civic entrepreneurship toward Tampa’s economy plus his maritime experience inclined him to risk doing business with vessel owners and operators. During the 1950s, his willingness to lend to shrimpers and other non-traditional borrowers won him a reputation for innovation, and helped Howell’s Marine Bank become one of the three largest in Tampa.227

As other local businesses entered Tampa’s seaport economy, the commerce that resulted included such things as ship chandlers, boat repair yards, fuel and paint suppliers, insurers, and attorneys specializing in admiralty law. From its 1929 low of 141,600 tons, Tampa’s port tonnage for 1948 had expanded to 4,417,484. A significant source of the growth was in new commerce with Central and South American ports, as outbound banana freighters carried consumer merchandise and equipment exported for sale. Commodity shipments of oil and fertilizers also increased rapidly. As the EDC’s harbor consultant Finlay Parker had predicted, highways and trucking became critical to the success of business on Tampa’s waterfront. Tom Standifer and Walter Matherly had

227 Howell’s receptiveness to non-traditional commercial customers is a recurring theme in nearly every conversation about him, including interviews with his sons Clewis and Blaine Howell, conversations with his grandson George B. Howell III, and with other businessmen. Tampa businessman Ben Hill argued that Howell’s new Marine Bank changed Tampa’s postwar financial community from a “closed corporation,” from which a newcomer could expect little, into a genuinely competitive capital lending market. See Alan Bliss interview with Ben Hill, Jr., October 29, 1999, p. 20-22, SPOHP. Warren Cason, who entered the banking business in 1959 just prior to Howell’s death, agreed with Hill’s characterization. Cason recalled Howell as “a fine businessman, a strong, strong person... [who] formed his own bank and developed that into quite a bank.” Alan Bliss interview with Warren Cason, August 2, 2000, p. 48-49, SPOHP.
correctly forecast the economic importance of the commercial seafood industry. By the 1950s, the broad synergies of the port were beyond question, as was the value of the Tampa Port Authority. Tampans celebrated the industrial growth occurring throughout the city, and explicitly linked it to the comprehensive vision and enterprise of its new port authority.228

**Waste and Waterways**

Just as Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs believed that port development was crucial to the city’s long-term prosperity, they regarded modern sewage and waste water systems as a central component of a modernized Tampa. As was the case with port development, local elites found ways to leverage federal resources in order to advance their local project of modernization. Tax exempt municipal revenue bonds provided the large amount of capital needed. In conjunction with the port authority’s expansion of Hookers Point, the Army Corps of Engineers created a waterfront location for a new sewer plant, at no cost to Tampa. Like the port project, the solutions to Tampa’s waste water problems also fostered a new institution of local government, whose organizational innovation owed to the energy and resources of the wartime EDC.

In 1943, when the EDC began to plan for postwar projects, water pollution from sewer discharges was ubiquitous. Tampa’s need for systemized waste-

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228 "Tampa Keeps Port Active,” *St. Petersburg Times*, January 30, 1949, p. 7. “War-spurred Tampa is winning its fight to find its rightful place in the industrial sun of the post-war world. Thanks to the very harbor which made Tampa such a good liberty town for [Jose] Gaspar and his cut throats, the industrial future looms rosy. For it this harbor which Tampa is using to spearhead its industrial offense.” With “[the Port Authority] as the leading element, tactics changed from over-emphasis on the physical aspects of the harbor to the systematic solicitation of all likely clients.” The work of the wartime EDC had already fallen away from Tampans’ public discourse on its postwar boom. This article erroneously attributes the establishment of the port authority to the closing of the McCloskey Shipyard at the end of the war, and the resulting work of “a Chamber of Commerce Foreign Trade Committee headed by W.H. Walker, lumber executive.”
water treatment was so well known that when the EDC solicited the public for project suggestions, it dismissed a new waste water system as being too obvious. The impediments to such a system included the capital cost to engineer and build such a system, as well as the political and legal complexity of doing so. Many of the sources of Tampa’s river and bay pollution were outside the city in the unincorporated areas of Hillsborough County. By 1945, when the EDC ended its existence, it had fostered a new trans-local district charged with surmounting the obstacles to a sewerage treatment system and eradicating one of Tampa’s greatest miseries. The public land essential for the treatment and disposal facilities materialized on the property of a former shipyard acquired by the city at the war’s end in the furtherance of seaport expansion.

In 1941, Tampa’s modest new project of city planning became complicated by the war. What began as a program of land-use zoning eventually turned into a comprehensive plan for capital projects to develop infrastructure beyond the city limits. It was 1944 when municipal consultant George Simons completed his original contract for the City of Tampa. By then he was involved in every aspect of the Economic Development Committee’s project of postwar economic planning. He and his EDC collaborators had changed their focus to reflect newly optimistic assumptions about Tampa’s future growth.229

The clearest example of how far Simons’ planning-and-zoning brief evolved was his engagement in 1945 by the EDC’s Public Works Committee to

229 George W. Simons, Jr. “Final Report of Comprehensive Plan: City of Tampa, Florida, including sections Parks and Recreation; Civic Art; Civic Center; Utilities (Water, Sewerage, Electricity); Long-Range Budgeting of Capital Improvements” (Jacksonville: February 10, 1945).
develop a new sanitary sewer district to serve Tampa and its unincorporated suburbs. Since 1924, no improvements or expansions had been made to local sanitary sewers. Tampans tolerated the stench from untreated waste that flowed into the Hillsborough River and Hillsborough Bay (Tampa’s estuary opening onto Tampa Bay). During summer, residents along Bayshore Boulevard, ostensibly Tampa’s showcase address, suffered grievously. Sewage from both the city and the unincorporated areas wound up in the bay, where the prevailing easterly breeze held the putrid mess close to the seawall between Davis Island and Ballast Point. Sightseers avoided the broad, palm-lined avenue with its elegantly ornamented promenade that overlooked a nauseating miasma. 230

As long as property owners outside the city continued to pollute the river and bay, local city officials saw little reason (and lacked the resources, anyway) to create new wastewater treatment facilities. Annexation of county lands into the city was the obvious solution, but county voters dwelling at some remove from the riverbank and bay were seldom afflicted by the pollution. In addition, the owners of property that lay outside the city limits feared tax increases to pay for what they viewed as just another one of Tampa’s urban problems, and not their concern.

230 Concerning Simons’ hiring for the sewer project, see “City Planner Recommends Master Sanitary District,” Tampa Morning Tribune, January 23, 1945, and “Simons Begins Work on Sewer District Bill,” Tampa Morning Tribune, April 5, 1945. Also see “Tampa Has Moved Forward in Building Sewage Facilities,” Florida Municipal Record, November, 1954. Anecdotally, Maude Taylor Bliss (1913-1989) grew up in Tampa during the 1920s and 1930s, and later recalled the stench of raw sewage along the Bayshore. In 1992, the author witnessed sample dredging of the bottom of Hillsborough Bay near the Bayshore area, in which scientists from the Southwest Florida Water Management District, joined by officials of the Tampa Bay Estuary Program, demonstrated the thick accumulation of waste coating the sandy bay bottom. The official policy toward that condition is to remain passive, as any attempt at removal would lastingly damage surrounding water quality and increase the risks to the estuarine ecology.
During the late 1930s, then-Mayor Robert Chancey’s administration sought WPA support for a sanitary sewer system in Tampa. When the U.S. entered World War II the request was still pending. By the early months of February, 1942, construction materials for such projects were critical war resources, and Tampa’s proposal languished until 1943, when Congress formally ended the WPA. By that time, war industries and military installations were drawing thousands of new residents to Tampa, placing additional stress upon the city’s waterways. In December, 1943, when the EDC invited citizens to suggest postwar projects, the wording of the public appeal frankly conceded the severity of Tampa’s Bay’s pollution: “Don’t be afraid your idea may be considered screwball, because it may be screwball, and still have the spark of genius in it. If you think it is a bit cockeyed, you don’t have to sign your name. And don’t be afraid it is too obvious. Most every Tampan will agree that it would be a splendid thing to construct a $5,000,000 sewer system after the war, but if that is what you think best, send it in anyway.”231 In fact, the misery was so entrenched, and its solution so confounding, that Tampans resigned themselves to the insufferable. The necessary technology existed but the political and financial will were lacking. However, as it became clear that failing to act on the problem would stymie postwar growth, the stakes became higher than just olfactory discomfort, or upset stomachs from consuming bad shellfish.

By the summer of 1944, the EDC was developing a proposal to stop using the Hillsborough River and Tampa Bay as giant communal sewers. The plan

called for the establishment of an extra-urban sanitation district. Of all the projects advanced by the EDC, the sanitary sewer district was the most sophisticated. Professional expertise was already at hand in the form of Simons, who had been educated as a sanitary engineer and was uniquely qualified to advise about sewers. During 1944 and 1945, he introduced the EDC’s Special Sewerage Committee to the state of the art in sanitary and hydraulic engineering, public health practices, revenue bond financing, and public utility legislation. Working with the city and county attorneys and the EDC staff, Simons crafted original legislation to allow Tampa to sponsor a new utility district. The proposal called for the issuance of sewer revenue bonds to raise the initial capital, and creation of a public sewer authority to be governed by directors elected by voters in its service area. Simons gathered examples of legislation from officials in New Jersey, Illinois, Minnesota, and elsewhere, who he regarded as innovators in water and sanitation practices.232

Local storm sewer financing districts had existed in Tampa since the 1920s, typically to serve specific neighborhoods such as Palma Ceia, but a district that crossed from a city into its county was unprecedented in Florida. And while systematized waste-water treatment prior to discharge was not new, it was rare in Florida, whose porous, sandy soil allowed drain fields and septic tanks to function with little maintenance. Rural Floridians used privies, and those who

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232 J. Ralph Van Duyne, Chief Engineer, Passaic Valley Sewerage Commissioners, to T.V. Standifer, June 22, 1944 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 7, Folder 68, CTARS). Also see George W. Simons, Jr. to T.V. Standifer, April 17, 1945, and T.V. Standifer to Honorable Curtis Hixon, April 23, 1945 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 8, Folder 71, CTARS); also Karl E. Whitaker to Honorable Curtis Hixon, May 12, 1945, and Curtis Hixon to Honorable Raymond Sheldon, May 14, 1945, and Harry G. McDonald to the Honorable Curtis Hixon, May 16, 1945 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 28, Folder 273, CTARS).
lived where urban densities had only recently begun to intensify had rarely concerned themselves with the disposal of their own waste. However, Florida’s relatively flat terrain combined with a high water table made large concentrations of septic tanks ineffective. That was especially in Hillsborough County and Tampa, whose low, wet, level topography aggravated the problem. 233

With the City’s 1947 purchase of the Hookers Point property, the physical site necessary for a sewer plant fell into place. The former shipyard lay adjacent to a smaller, partly-submerged parcel that the City had acquired on March 5 that year from the Seaboard Air Line Railroad Company. Channel deepening was then underway at the expense of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, so as to allow larger ships to carry their deeper draft into the Sparkman and Ybor Channels. The City of Tampa contracted with the Corps to use its submerged lands adjoining Hookers Point as a dredge spoil site. As the Corps’ dredging contractor excavated the bay bottom, it pumped the wet sand and shells up onto the City-owned property at Hookers Point, thereby expanding the waterfront at no cost to the city. The combined property allowed construction of treatment plant and a pipeline for carrying treated wastewater out into the deeper waters of Hillsborough Bay. 234

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233 As Florida’s first sanitary engineer, one of Simons’ initial jobs had been to promulgate standards for the design and construction of sanitary privies, a project that he undertook on a county-by-county basis throughout the state.

234 Felix H. Williams, Attorney, Chief, Legal Branch, War Dept. Corps of Engineers, Office of the District Engineer, Jacksonville District, to Frank J. Fagan, Assistant City Engineer, City of Tampa, June 17, 1946, Mayor Hixon Papers, Box 72, Folder 696, CTARS. Also, Karl E. Whitaker, City Attorney, City of Tampa, to Carl A. Widdell, Chief, Legal Division, Office of Real Property Disposal, WAA, October 28, 1947. Mayor Hixon Papers, Box 26, Folder 256, CTARS. Also, Port Facilities Map, Tampa, Florida, ca. 1938, in the map collection of the Tampa Bay History Center.
Simons’ plan for financing the new Master Sewer System called for the City of Tampa to issue sewer revenue bonds. The bonding legislation itself was the job of a specialized New York law firm, Masslich and Mitchell (later Mitchell and Pershing), whose partners were experienced at advising municipalities on securitization of public debt. An initial 1949 sewer bond issue in the amount of $12 million funded the treatment plant and associated pipelines, which entered service in the same year. In 1954, Tampa issued an additional $10 million in sewer system revenue bonds, this time to extend the system out into the areas annexed the previous year into the city. The “revenue” in the Simons plan came from sewer customers. Sewer connections were mandatory for all water system customers, wherever they were located. Sewer charges appeared on customers’ water bills. Since non-payment of any portion of the bills caused disconnection of that customer’s water service, enforcement was straightforward and effective. As a result, the sewer district board could confidently project revenue to repay its bonded debt, and the bonds’ investors had satisfactory security arrangements.  

The EDC’s systematic approach to local water pollution, executed in conjunction with George Simons, led to Tampa’s first coherent wastewater treatment system and the first attempt to reverse the effects of decades of reckless pollution. During the 1950s, growth outpaced the new facilities even as expansion was taking place, which only proved that Tampa had to invest in sanitary sewers. The EDC had strenuously advocated the district idea as

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essential for a city that sought to boast a high quality of life, and that became crucial to growth and development.

**Airport Metropolis**

During the years following World War II, Tampa realized its ambition to be the regional hub for national and international air commerce. Its success followed decades of local efforts to promote aviation and airports, which culminated in federal investments in local aviation for the wartime military. By the war’s end, energetic maneuvering and preparation by the EDC ensured that Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs were ready to take over the Army’s Drew Field. Another new institution of government, the Hillsborough Aviation Authority, consolidated local efforts to make Tampa the major destination for major air carriers, as well as the area’s air port of entry for international flights, and in the process to secure a satisfying win in an old urban rivalry with Pinellas County.

Throughout the EDC’s wartime planning efforts, postwar commercial aviation was a priority. At the war’s end the city moved to re-acquire Drew Field Army Air Base from the War Department. The task was more straightforward than the purchase of the McCloskey Shipyard from the WAA, as Drew Field had belonged to the City of Tampa since 1928, having been its original municipal airfield. At the outbreak of war, Tampa had leased the facility to the federal government for a term of twenty-five years or until the end of the national emergency. During three years of intensive operations, the Army had transformed Drew Field into one of the largest and most sophisticated flying
facilities in Florida. Its postwar potential tantalized air minded civic entrepreneurs.  

During 1944 and 1945 meanwhile, the EDC collaborated with Tampa’s Chamber of Commerce to lobby the federal Civil Aeronautics Board, which oversaw commercial aviation nationwide. The Tampans’ wanted badly to establish Drew Field as the region’s air port of entry for foreign flights, which they believed would guarantee Tampa’s future as the regional transportation nexus. On the other side of Tampa Bay, St. Petersburg’s hoteliers and other tourism-related businesspeople also saw the importance of being an international air travel destination. They advocated the Pinellas Army Airfield, also a war-era training facility on Tampa Bay several miles north of St. Petersburg’s city limits, as the ideal site for the region’s international airport. Led by the irrepressible Bill Haggerty, the Tampans’ outmaneuvered their competition from Pinellas County. Ever after, St. Petersburg’s business and political boosters believed that the Tampans had acted underhandedly in order to win the CAB’s approval of Drew Field. The decision meant that visitors to Pinellas County who traveled by air would fly in to Tampa. Business and political elites in St. Petersburg and in the various small beach resort towns that lined the Gulf of Mexico felt robbed of their right to regional primacy in air travel. In fact, the Pinellas Airfield was more central to the three principal cities, St. Petersburg, Clearwater, and Tampa, that together constituted the Tampa Bay region. Warren Cason later remarked that, “Of course, Pinellas County did their best to get it over there at their airport,

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236 Enthusiasm among Tampans for air travel and freight is considered in Chapters 1, 2, and 3 of this dissertation.
which was at that time wide-open. I mean, there was nothing around it, primarily, and it could have expanded. I guess what you could say was that we won the war, and it is on this side of the Bay. It is not that much further from St. Petersburg to Clearwater to the airport, but it is further, and it is on our side of the Bay.”

As the War Department prepared to return Drew Field to city ownership, the City of Tampa and Hillsborough County consolidated ownership and operation of all public airfields under a new aviation authority. The EDC’s aviation committee proposed the new countywide agency following a structure identical to that created for the Tampa Port Authority. The county’s attorneys drafted enabling legislation similar to the port authority bill, although state legislators chose not to insist on a local referendum to confirm the new Aviation Authority. Both bills

Warren M. Cason interview, August 2, 2000, p. 45. Relations between the civic leaderships of Tampa and St. Petersburg have been fraught since 1912, when Pinellas County split from Hillsborough. Observers from both places agree, however, that the post-WWII competition between the two cities to host a regional international airport brought the relationship to its all-time low. Tampa banker and former State Road Board member Warren Cason noted that “[p]robably the biggest contention ever, the biggest one problem that arose, was the location of the airport. That became a real problem… finally it was located in Tampa. That was a very, very difficult situation between the two counties.” Warren M. Cason interview, August 1, 2000, HIL-CO 73, SPOHP. Cason’s analysis, shared by many, was that Pinellas County’s spread-out geography hampered its people from acting coherently in their general interest. More than twenty municipalities ran from Tarpon Springs on the north to St. Petersburg on the south end of the peninsula, all with differing interests. Pinellas County’s Board of Commissioners rarely overcame those differences, with the consequence that the Board never convincingly represented the county as a whole.

Neither of the ex-military airfields that had been proposed as regional airports, Drew or Pinellas, were convenient for automobile travelers based in the other’s county. Until January 1960, only two bridges connected Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties, the Gandy Bridge to the south of both airfields (see Chapter 1 of this dissertation), and the Davis Causeway (in 1948 renamed the Courtney Campbell Causeway, honoring Clearwater Beach businessman and State Road Board member Courtney W. Campbell) to the north. The third bridge, named for the late Tampa businessman and State Road Board member W. Howard Frankland, presently carries eight lanes of Interstate 275 across Tampa Bay and to within a quarter of a mile of the south entrance to Tampa International Airport. The former Pinellas Army Airfield is now St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport, a combination public and military facility hosting a major U.S. Coast Guard Air Station.
passed in the same session of the Florida legislature. On October 1, 1945, the new Hillsborough County Aviation Authority assumed management of all civilian airports in Hillsborough County, as well as for increasing commercial aviation. Henceforth, its efforts centered upon developing Drew Field into what in 1952 it re-named Tampa International Airport (TIA). The Aviation Authority budget depended on a local property tax levy plus revenues from operations. Throughout the 1940s and into the 1950s, TIA’s capital requirements were moderate and its facilities were practically new and state of the art, having been recently constructed by the War Department. In June 1953, the Hillsborough Aviation Authority dedicated a new $800,000 terminal and control tower facility at the southeast corner of the airport. To support the airport’s evolving technology and infrastructure needs, the Aviation Authority relied upon federal dollars from the CAA or the CAB. Federal support for air travel infrastructure was already routine, as growing nationwide and international route systems created the need for continually advancing aviation technologies to conform to universal standards.\textsuperscript{238}

Tampa demonstrated the broad change in the geo-spatial relationship between postwar cities and their airports. As recently as 1935, for example, Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs had celebrated the construction, with WPA money, of Peter O. Knight Municipal Airport on Davis Islands, near the downtown central

\textsuperscript{238} T.V. Standifer to Gill Robb Wilson, April 24, 1945, and W.B. Haggerty to George B. Howell, September 19, 1945 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 7, Folder 68, CTARS). Concerning the federal role in commercial aviation, see Janet R. Daly Bednarek, America’s Airports: Airfield Development, 1918-1947 (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001), p. 163-177. Also see Mark H. Rose, Bruce E. Seely, and Paul F. Barrett, The Best Transportation System in the World: Railroads, Trucks, Airlines, and American Public Policy in the Twentieth Century (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2006), p. 83.
business district (CBD). Tampans highlighted the advantages that resulted from their new airport’s close proximity to the city’s commercial core – less than a ten minute drive. Wartime advances in aircraft design led to planes far larger and heavier than those that had represented the state of the art in the late 1930s. World War II military aircraft set the standard for the next generation of passenger transports, which, like heavy bombers, needed long, durable runways and taxiways. After the war, for Tampa to have maintained its main passenger airline terminal close to downtown would have required greatly extending the runways at Peter O. Knight, a problematic step owing to space limitations. The new Hillsborough Aviation Authority turned to Drew Field, whose runways already served the newest military aircraft, and could accommodate the largest passenger transports entering service, such as the Douglas DC-4, the DC-6, and the Lockheed Constellation. From that point forward, Tampa International Airport drew the city toward itself along surface transportation corridors. By 1956, those corridors included the proposed route of Interstate Highway 4 (I-4) running west from downtown Tampa and ending at Westshore Boulevard. In 1958, construction also began on a new highway bridge across Tampa Bay that would meet the western end of I-4, just south of the airport, improving access for travelers visiting St. Petersburg or the resort communities along the Gulf Beaches.  

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239 Concerning Tampa’s development of Peter O. Knight Municipal Airport, see Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

During WWII, the U.S. Army responded to developments in strategic bombing by perfecting increasingly larger, four-engined aircraft as bombers and transports. Heavy, powerful aircraft such as the B-17, B-24, and ultimately the B-29 required long runways in order to land and take off. Thus Army airfields built during the war adapted to such aircraft, which in turn served as the
As they had done since the 1920s, Tampa’s postwar civic entrepreneurs enlisted in the cause of aviation promotion, and turned it into a permanent campaign of lobbying, marketing, business leverage, and public relations stunts. On Monday, August 12, 1946, for example, William Hartsfield dined in his city hall office, together with local real estate executive Jesse Draper. Hartsfield was in his third term as Atlanta’s mayor, and Draper chaired the Aviation Committee of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce. By prior arrangement, the two air-minded Georgians met to enjoy a sumptuous lunch flown in that morning from Tampa. To celebrate Eastern Airlines’ new “Silver Liner” non-stop DC-4 service to Atlanta, Tampa’s mayor Curtis Hixon had dispatched to Hartsfield a sample of “Tampa’s world-renowned specialty… a complete Spanish luncheon for two.” A courier technological platform from which post-war passenger transports derived. The DC-4, DC-6, and Lockheed Constellation mentioned herein were all four-engine propeller-driven transports, products of the U.S. Army Air Forces’ wartime development programs. All became mainstays of airline fleets, in the U.S. and abroad. Airfields such as Peter O. Knight remained suitable only for light aircraft, such as private planes, normally labeled “general aviation.”

The so-called western segment of Tampa’s interstate expressway, meaning the section between the Hillsborough River and Westshore Blvd., existed largely because of Tampa International Airport. The Bureau of Public Roads had no plans to extend the highway across Tampa Bay to St. Petersburg. Other than the airport, no destination west of downtown Tampa justified the road’s existence in that part of the city. Former State Road Board member Warren Cason considered that State Road Dept. planners, ca. 1957 and 1958, would have been “derelict in their duties” had they not provided for the interstate system to carry traffic west from downtown Tampa to the vicinity of the airport. See Alan Bliss oral history interview with Warren M. Cason, August 2, 2000, p. 44-45. The construction of that part of I-4 imposed large changes on the geography of west Tampa, however. As the new limited access highway was on an east-west axis, the streets that it crossed were “dead-ended,” or permanently closed, at the federal highway’s right-of-way line. Tampa’s city engineer pressed unsuccessfully for more and wider grade crossings in the western section of the highway, out of concern for the “extreme concentration of traffic” that would result on Tampa’s surface streets, once the new expressway was finished. He enlisted George Simons in aid of this effort to preserve the coherence of Tampa’s surface street system. See Roy K. Van Camp, Superintendent, Dept. of Public Works, to Harold V. Aiken, Reynolds, Smith and Hills, Architects and Engineers, April 4, 1958 and June 3, 1958. (Mayor Julian Lane Papers, Box 14, Folder 107, CTARS). The discussions came down to cost. State highway engineers offered to add grade separations to the Tampa segments of the interstate, but only at the city’s expense. Like most cities, Tampa already faced unanticipated expenses related to the interstate project, and demurred from buying more grade crossings. See Warren Cason interview, op. cit.
delivered Pompanao Pilots, curried chicken with rice, and all the trimmings, which Hartsfield and Draper heartily praised to watching reporters.  

Atlanta’s mayor relished such public relations theater, and welcomed others to bask in the publicity along with him. Tampa’s aviation promoters knew that they could depend on that habit of Southern hospitality. News accounts of his exotic Spanish luncheon reinforced Hartsfield’s boast that Atlanta was at the center of the booming postwar South. Since the 1920s, as an Atlanta city councilman, Hartsfield had been an aviation enthusiast, and he rightly claimed credit for that city’s growing importance as an airline hub. He seized every chance to promote Atlanta and air travel, and the Tampanos expected Hartsfield to flaunt his luncheon treat, and to note that it had been specially flown in that morning. Tampa’s air-minded promoters mimicked Atlanta’s tactics, and collaborated with aviation boosters across the South.  

Beginning in the 1930s the federal government directly supported local airport development while civic entrepreneurs’ metropolitan ambitions focused on commercial air travel. Cities such as Tampa pursued Congress, federal aviation regulators, airline executives, and military aviation to build a network of increasingly sophisticated partnerships that resulted in a nationwide air travel system. By the 1950s, the passion for aviation that Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs

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240 Telegram, Curtis Hixon to the Honorable W.B. Hartsfield, August 9, 1946; letters, Jesse Draper to the Honorable Curtis Hixon, August 12, 1946, and W.B. Hartsfield to Mayor Curtis Hixon, August 13, 1946. Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 2, Folder 10, CTARS. Draper added that he was “ashamed to admit that in all of my travels through Florida I have never had the pleasure of a visit to Tampa, which dereliction I hope is short-lived.”

241 In recognition of the former mayor’s advancement of air travel, Atlanta’s airport bears his name, as well as that of Maynard Jackson, the city’s first African-American mayor. Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport appears on various lists as the world’s busiest.
had shown for more than thirty years was vindicated by their busy, sophisticated international airport that served Floridians across the west central region. Tampa International Airport demonstrated Tampa’s regional hegemony in air transportation as well as its dependence upon the federal government. The airport also proved Tampa’s claim to have become a modern city that represented the emerging modern American South.  

**Outgrowing Organized Crime**

At the end of World War II, important parts of Tampa’s infrastructure were moving to control by new institutions, such as the port and aviation authorities, and the nascent sewer district. Each of these new local agencies had jurisdictions that ran beyond Tampa’s city limits, and usually throughout Hillsborough County. As a result, they obscured historical divisions between the city and county, and disrupted the two principal factions whose rivalries long defined local politics. As civic entrepreneurs regarded Tampa in this new broader perspective, they looked for ways to revise the city’s reputation for political fraud and violence. Through the 1950s, a generation of influential politicians gave way to successors less attached to the old tribal enmities, and more invested in the success of such initiatives as the port and airport authorities. However, the emerging crop of civic entrepreneurs once again experienced national humiliation. This time it came in the form of a U.S. Senate Committee that traveled to Tampa to investigate organized crime in interstate commerce. In 1950

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and 1951, the special committee heard testimony that dredged up Tampa’s most scandalizing recent past while training a spotlight on its present habits of public corruption.

Since before the Great War, most Tampa’s mayors had been partisans of either of two informal local political machines. The locales of power consisted, on the one hand, of the Hillsborough County Commission, the state’s attorney for Hillsborough County, and the sheriff. They competed for spoils with the City of Tampa’s mayor, city attorney, and police chief, who were the political officers of the opposition. Other than geography, the two groups had corruption in common. Together with violent crime, sunny weather, and fine cigars, political corruption was so endemic that it seemed, like water pollution, to be something to which its people had become inured.

In December of 1950, a U.S. Senate Special Committee on Organized Crime (popularly named after its chair, Tennessee Senator Estes Kefauver), heard damning testimony from Tampans including the notorious Charlie Wall, who reprised parts of his 1938 testimony before the Hillsborough grand jury. Other witnesses testified that they regularly delivered protection payments from gambling operators in cash to local law enforcement officials, including Hillsborough County Sheriff Hugh Culbreath, Hillsborough State Attorney J. Rex Farrior, and Tampa Police Chief J.L. “Jack” Eddings. All three denied the charges, but few Tampans doubted the allegations. As far back as 1938, a local grand jury had indicted Culbreath for collusion with Tampa’s gambling operators. He nevertheless won election as Sheriff in 1940. Since then, the Tampa Tribune
had periodically reported allegations of corruption in Culbreath’s office. After
1943 when Virgil M. “Red” Newton became managing editor, the critical
reportage sharpened, as Newton was pleased to style himself and the Tribune as
journalistic crusaders. Meanwhile, those who knew Chief Eddings assumed that
he, like Sheriff Culbreath, profited from his relationships with Tampa’s organized
crime figures.243

Crime drew Tampa’s postwar growth constituencies together. Tampans’
failure to be shocked at the Kefauver Committee’s revelations proved that the
underground economy was an undeniable fact of local life, tolerated like the odor
of sewage along the Bayshore. Civic entrepreneurs sought economic alternatives
that would help them revise perceptions of Tampa as a place of violent corruption
and dissolute values. Ben Hill later observed that, “Before we could have any
economic development in this town, we had to get the crime era out of the way,”
although some Tampans came to see it the other way around. Legitimate growth
might be what it took to finally displace what some authorities believed was
Tampa’s largest industry.244

243 For more on the Kefauver Committee in Tampa, see the “Second Interim Report of the Special
Committee to Investigate Organized Crime in Interstate Commerce,” February 28, 1951
committee’s hearings in Tampa. When describing popular perceptions of police corruption in
postwar Tampa, Ben Hill said: “I guess the best example I can give you is that [Mayor Curtis
Hixon’s] chief of police was Jack Eddings. My mother-in-law lived on Davis Island and across
the street from them was Jack Eddings’ home, a nice new home. So, on Sunday, we usually would
stop by and visit my mother-in-law. Clarabelle, who [was] Jack’s wife, came running across the
street when she saw us and said, ‘Oh, you have to come see my new house.’ I cannot give you
the definite details of these things, but I can give you the gist of the conversation: ‘Santo
Trafficante gave us the most beautiful living room suite; Primo Lazarra gave us this, this, this;’
and she named…all the crooks in town, Mafia and all. They all bought furniture, so that furnished
the whole house.” Alan Bliss interview with Ben Hill, Jr., October 30, 1999, p. 12, SPOHP.

244 Alan Bliss interview with Ben Hill, Jr., October 30, 1999, p. 20 SPOHP. In his autobiography,
Tampa Tribune editor Red Newton claimed that “[f]ederal authorities, who at that time could not
Early in 1951, several members of the Tampa Jaycees formed the Hillsborough County Crime Commission, styled after the Kefauver Commission. Attorney Cody Fowler, Sam Davis, and Charles Adler (both business owners) were founding leaders, who hired former FBI agent Ralph Mills as executive director. Members of the Crime Commission included “a lot of big people in Tampa,” according to Warren Cason, who in a telling locution recalled that their purpose was “to see if they could not get rid of the name of being a big Mafia town.”245 The Jaycees also helped form a related organization called Voice of the Electorate (VOTE) to identify and endorse honest, qualified candidates for public office in Tampa. In the 1952 election, Paul Johnson, Robert Edward “Ed” Blackburn, Jr., and James M. ‘Red” McEwen all rode VOTE’s support to new jobs as County Solicitor, Sheriff, and State Attorney, respectively. Those successes began to improve public confidence in local law enforcement, and VOTE as well as the Crime Commission both received credit. In any case, new faces occupied old seats that Tampans had long regarded as corrupt.246

As Cason’s appraisal of the Crime Commission suggests, when it came to Tampa’s extra-legal economy perceptions mattered as much reality. Subsequent to his service on the Hillsborough Crime Commission, Sam Davis chaired the Hillsborough County Industrial Development Authority, which issued municipal

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245 Alan Bliss oral history interview with Warren M. Cason, June 12, 2000, p. 39, SPOHP.

bonds through major New York-based investment brokers. When visiting New York to attend bond sales, he expansively asserted that his work on the Crime Commission meant that criminals no longer had influence in Tampa. Municipal bond brokers who recalled Florida’s colorful history of fraudulent investment schemes and steady pace of unsolved mob assassinations no doubt welcomed the announcement.247

Tampa’s national reputation for tolerance of crime and corruption did not end so much as it dwindled. There was no specific event or moment when the influence of organized crime began to wane. “I guess we just outgrew it,” Warren Cason later reflected.248 That process of outgrowing Tampa’s past took place throughout the 1950s and 1960s, reinforced and advertised by periodic law-and-order campaigns such as that of the Crime Commission. Later in the 1960s, Tampa’s name surfaced in connection with claims that alleged Mafioso Santo Trafficante was part of a conspiracy to assassinate President John F. Kennedy. No proof of the conspiracy emerged, but belief in its existence along with murky allusions to Trafficante’s Cuban connections continue to animate Kennedy assassination conspiracy theorists. Few seemed surprised to discover that Tampa was home to a prince of American organized crime.249

247 “[w]hen I represented…the Hillsborough County Industrial Development Authority, Sam was one of our chairmen in a series of years, and he would have to go to New York to sign the bonds or to be involved in the closings. He would hold court when he went up there, and he would tell all the people in New York about the Mafia in Tampa and how his crime commission had busted it up…” Alan Bliss oral history interview with Warren M. Cason, June 12, 2000, p. 39, SPOHP.

248 Alan Bliss interview with Warren M. Cason, June 12, 2000, p. 38 SPOHP.

That an alleged mobster from Tampa was linked however tenuously to a presidential assassination president speaks to the shift in Tampa's underground political economy. Prior to World War II, illegitimate entrepreneurship had been local, largely controlled by a lifelong Tampano, Charlie Wall. While organized crime by its nature eludes measurement and analysis, most accounts suggest that during the 1940s and 1950s, systemized illegal enterprises such as narcotics and off-track wagering came under the control of syndicates operating cooperatively in numerous cities. In his 1938 testimony before the Hillsborough grand jury, Wall alluded to outside challenges to his local racket posed by interests unconnected to Tampa. Wall reportedly then yielded his place at the head of Tampa's gambling rackets to an Italian-American group that included Santo Trafficante Sr. whose son, Santo Jr. succeeded his father upon the latter's 1954 death. The younger Trafficante moved aggressively to assert control over Tampa's underground economy by settling scores, possibly one involving Wall. In his December 1950 testimony before the U.S. Senate's Kefauver Committee investigating organized crime, the professed bolita entrepreneur claimed to be peacefully retired. However, Wall's enemies were evidently wary of his knowledge and his garrulity. On April 20, 1955, his wife returned home to discover

Each year brings fresh additions to the ocean of literature on the Kennedy assassination. Most references to involvement by organized crime identify Santo Trafficante, Jr., New Orleans-based Carlo Marcello, and Chicago-based Sam Giancana. A notable recent example is Vincent Bugliosi, Reclaiming History: The Assassination of President John F. Kennedy (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007). Bugliosi devotes eight of his book's 1648 pages to the evidence and allegations linking Trafficante and contemporary organized crime figures to the assassination. Gerald Posner's compelling research into the various assassination theories also explores the evidence of possible involvement by Trafficante - see Gerald Posner, Case Closed: Lee Harvey Oswald and the Assassination of JFK (New York: Random House, 1993). No proof exists that Trafficante was complicit in JFK's murder or in the cover-up claimed to have resulted in the murder of Kennedy's alleged assassin Lee Harvey Oswald. Yet suspicions faintly connecting Tampa's underworld to the crime of the century will not out.

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the 75 year-old brutally murdered in his own bedroom. The doors of their secure Ybor City bungalow were locked and there was no sign of forced entry. Hillsborough County’s reform-platform State Attorney Red McEwen and Sheriff Ed Blackburn investigated, but fifty years later the homicide remained unsolved. Charlie Wall was gone, but the history of Wall’s era continued to parallel that of Tampa’s underground economy. Both were violently dramatic and compellingly public, and their mysterious reputations persisted.\textsuperscript{250}

\textbf{Toward a Coherent Economy}

The postwar project for Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs was to consolidate the economic assets gained as a result of the New Deal and World War II, and to leverage them into the service of a larger, more coherent local economy. Men such as George Howell and Bill Haggerty believed that to do so meant exploiting the spoils of war so as to raise Tampa’s national standing among major cities. That meant securing permanent advantages in aviation, improving Tampa’s function as a seaport, restoring the city’s aesthetic appeal, and tempering its reputation for crime and corruption. Some of these goals dated to the boom of the 1920s and 1930s. Most benefitted from the brief period of planning that occurred during the war years. All led to greater involvement by the federal government in Tampa’s affairs.

Growth planning came relatively late to Tampa. It began in an atmosphere of crisis, first during the throes of the Great Depression, immediately followed by World War II. With the return of peace, new crises complicated Tampa's plans for the future. By the decade of the 1950s, traffic congestion and obsolete highways weighed increasingly on everything else. Civic leadership was concentrated among a relatively exclusive community of white businessmen who tried to selectively adapt the resources and practices of an active federal government to their objectives, but black citizens' problems became ever more of a distraction. Tampa's usually feeble political influence in state government left few alternatives to partnerships with or intervention by the federal government.

Tampa exploited America's post WW II economy with unusual success by organizing itself after the model of a collaborative state, in which private-sector actors controlled the agendas for ostensibly public institutions. That informal collaborative state pursued objectives that it had accepted as consistent with communitarian interests, instead of narrow commercial or individual aspirations. Tampa's civic entrepreneurs of the late 1940s and 1950s began to overcome persistent problems, and achieve long-held objectives that appealed to broad local constituencies. Criticism of Tampa's political culture and economy persisted, but in the 1950s boom era of the Cold War, it remained possible for the city's most influential advocates to rally around their vision of growth while minimizing local dissent.
CHAPTER 6
AN EXPRESSWAY RUNS THROUGH IT: 1956-1962

Between 1956 and 1962, the federal government’s effect on Tampa reached its zenith. Local urban sections of the new Interstate Highways 4 and 75 in Tampa subdivided the city while connecting it to the rest of the nation, and fostered a program of urban renewal in Tampa funded by the federal government. In 1956, the Defense Department released the war-era Henderson Field for redevelopment as the new University of South Florida. In 1958, Tampa International Airport expanded its runways to accommodate new passenger jets. Throughout the decade the Tampa Port Authority collaborated with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to deepen and improve area ship channels. Meanwhile, urban renewal precipitated conflicts over civil rights for black Americans and dealt to civic entrepreneurs the first check on their freedom to plan for Tampa’s future. The city’s new Interstate expressways connected all of these developments, responded to Tampa’s crisis of automobile congestion, and carried the postwar city to its place in the modern Sunbelt.

Federal interstate highways had greater effects on Tampa’s political economy and human geography than any other infrastructure project, carried out at any level of government. Local urban segments of Interstate Highway System afforded opportunities for civic entrepreneurs to accomplish their goals of making slums disappear while modernizing their central business district. By 1962, visitors and residents alike were using the new interstate expressways to travel within Tampa as well as to move in and out of the city. At the same time, the highway system that brought the federal government most fully into partnership
with Tampa also drew its citizens into greater democratic participation in local politics than ever before. Until the tensions over Interstate construction and urban renewal, municipal planning had taken place behind closed doors at City Hall or the Chamber of Commerce. Clubs, associations, churches, and neighborhood groups knew little of major plans until they were virtually complete. But the rules associated with new federal housing programs mandated citizen involvement, and for the first time previously quiescent groups such as African Americans found their voices in civic development.

The Interstate emancipated some people and created exciting opportunities for them. For others, the highways became a boundary and a barrier. As for Tampa’s perennial problems such as traffic congestion, inequality, and crime, expressways offered no new solutions. The new freeways imposed a new geography on Tampa and its surrounding region and animated a new kind of mobility. However, the new geography was informed by the past. Tampa’s dependence on auto-mobilization had originated in the boom of the 1920s, and the physical orientation of the new super-highways owed to plans that dated from 1941.

During the 1950s the generation of Tampans whose urban vision had been born in the 1920s began to wane. On May 21, 1956, Curtis Hixon, Tampa’s mayor of thirteen years, died following a short illness, less than a year after winning his fourth term. In 1959, George Simons and Frank Adams ended their eighteen-year reign of influence over local planning and zoning, handing the task over to Tampa’s first full-time planning staff. On October 17, 1961, veteran
banker and innovative entrepreneur George Howell died suddenly. Nevertheless, the collective vision of Tampa’s future that those men and their contemporaries had worked for decades to advance was finally in place and becoming tangible.

As the generation of war-era business and political leaders began to disappear, Tampa’s veterans of World War II formed a new generation of civic entrepreneurs who expected to participate in the next boom that many sensed was at hand. They shared their elders’ concern over Tampa’s reputation as a stagnant center for little more than prostitution, gambling, and violence. Some perceived that Tampa’s unique ethnic culture combined with appalling scenes of urban decay impeded growth and prosperity in favor of more glamorous places such as Miami or more industrial cities such as Jacksonville. Images of gridlocked downtown traffic highlighted their concerns. To visitors and residents alike, oppressive driving conditions were a daily reminder of Tampa’s backwardness and its incapacity to deal with growth. The future could hardly be bright for a city whose transportation network was so inadequate. Thus, a powerful local consensus supported highway building as the means to perfect Tampa and to set it on a path toward sustainable growth.

An Expressway to Growth

Beginning in the 1920s and following national trends, Tampa’s short but spectacular growth surge during that decade established a presumption that favored personal ownership of automobiles and good roads on which to operate them. After the boom of the 1920s ended, road building all but stopped, while automobile ownership continued to expand save for the few years during World War II. After the war, auto sales expanded while public transit systems atrophied.
The consequences for cities such as Tampa were alarming, as congested central business districts could not accommodate the flood of motorcars. By the 1950s, the tension between Tampa’s growth and its inadequate streets and highways made traffic congestion politically important. The popular demand for solutions fostered support for an urban expressway system.

In 1947, State Road Department engineer W.M. Parker drafted a brief historical commentary explaining the basis for Tampa’s future expressway plan. First, the Department explicitly acknowledged the City of Tampa as the geographic and economic focal point for the west Florida region. Second, the report declared that primary mission of the new limited-access expressways in Tampa would be to move vehicles in and out of the downtown section. The eventual development of Interstates 4 and 75 in west central Florida rose from those two unchallenged assumptions.251

The April 1947 issue of the Road Department’s magazine *Florida Highways* featured a map of Florida superimposed with Department's proposed expression of development. Parker, Division Engineer, Division of Research and Records, “A Traffic Survey Report and Limited Access Highway Plan for the Tampa Metropolitan Area,” State Road Department of Florida, in Cooperation with the Public Roads Administration, Federal Works Agency, 1947, (not paginated). [PKY]. The report drew on the text and maps in George W. Simons' 1941 Traffic Plan. For example, Parker wrote that, “To visualize the situation from a highway transportation standpoint, it is necessary to revert to (the) 160 acre grant of land made in 1849 . . . .” Because other surveyors and developers of parcels surrounding the 1849 grant tended to provide for narrower rights-of-way, “the physical street plan is much more nearly adequate in the downtown business district, thanks to Surveyor Jackson, than are the approach routes. Tampa’s growth has been continuous and substantially in pace with the development of the State. It is true that between 1930 and 1940 there was slight decline in population inside the city limits, resulting from a shifting from the city center to the adjacent suburbs. However, the metropolitan area as a whole recorded a substantial increase. By 1945 the corporate population reached 124,000 while that for the metropolitan area was 172,000. But Tampa’s importance lies not entirely within itself. Especially since the expansion in highway travel a metropolitan center exercises great influence in its tributary area. Being a main seaport and transportation center, it seems reasonable to assume that Tampa’s influence extends at least 100 miles. This 100 mile area brings 783,000 people under the city’s influence.”

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251 W. M. Parker, Division Engineer, Division of Research and Records, “A Traffic Survey Report and Limited Access Highway Plan for the Tampa Metropolitan Area,” State Road Department of Florida, in Cooperation with the Public Roads Administration, Federal Works Agency, 1947, (not paginated). [PKY]. The report drew on the text and maps in George W. Simons' 1941 Traffic Plan. For example, Parker wrote that, “To visualize the situation from a highway transportation standpoint, it is necessary to revert to (the) 160 acre grant of land made in 1849 . . . .” Because other surveyors and developers of parcels surrounding the 1849 grant tended to provide for narrower rights-of-way, “the physical street plan is much more nearly adequate in the downtown business district, thanks to Surveyor Jackson, than are the approach routes. Tampa’s growth has been continuous and substantially in pace with the development of the State. It is true that between 1930 and 1940 there was slight decline in population inside the city limits, resulting from a shifting from the city center to the adjacent suburbs. However, the metropolitan area as a whole recorded a substantial increase. By 1945 the corporate population reached 124,000 while that for the metropolitan area was 172,000. But Tampa’s importance lies not entirely within itself. Especially since the expansion in highway travel a metropolitan center exercises great influence in its tributary area. Being a main seaport and transportation center, it seems reasonable to assume that Tampa’s influence extends at least 100 miles. This 100 mile area brings 783,000 people under the city's influence.”
alignment for Florida’s part of the nascent Interregional Highway system. The same article declared the State’s intention to extend the Interregional Highways into the cities of Florida, announcing that, “Studies have clearly shown that routes to and through the hearts of big cities are what is needed - not by-passes.” After describing the surveying methodology by which urban route alignments were selected, the anonymous author issued a mandate to the cities: “The State Road Department cannot begin to achieve the objectives of an adequate highway program for these Interstate routes without the effective cooperation of the several interested cities, counties, and other local units.”

When it came to highways, owing to popular anger about traffic congestion Tampa’s Mayor Curtis Hixon and other city officials were ready to cooperate. No problem generated so much heated written complaint to the Mayor as did that of getting around Tampa by car. Throughout Hixon’s twelve years in office Tampa traffic was awful, and Hixon received his most vituperative mail by far on that subject. Citizens called for wider roads, new cross-streets, and better paving. They demanded new “Stop” signs where none existed, and the removal of “Stop” signs where they were too numerous. Tampa motorists wanted more traffic signals, alterations to existing traffic signals, more traffic police, higher speed limits here, and lower speed limits there. It seemed that every motorist in

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Tampa wanted a personal traffic light at the end of his or her residential street or business entrance.\textsuperscript{253}

During the 1950s, inadequate streets and highways combined with soaring automobile ownership and deteriorating public transit to create tension in every American city. Tampa’s traffic congestion owed to the same conditions. For nearly a hundred years, Tampa had grown outward from its original urban core. Most streets in or near downtown dated from the nineteenth century. After the failure of the real estate boom of the 1920s, the city could afford to build few streets. However, the population growth of the 1940s and 1950s drew newcomers to Tampa by car. Virtually every family arriving in the postwar South owned a car. Until the end of World war II, the constituency for mass transit had dwindled. After that, the streetcar system that had defined Tampa’s neighborhoods for half a century became obsolete, and at midnight on August 3, 1946, it ceased to operate.\textsuperscript{254} Freed from streetcar competition, the city’s franchised bus operator, Tampa Transit Lines, Inc., tried to compete with the automobile, but declining ridership forced the company to increase fares and reduce service. Those responses further discouraged ridership and perpetuated the decline. In 1949, an acrimonious driver’s strike hobbled bus service, which only aggrieved the shrinking population of bus riders. Following a pattern that

\textsuperscript{253} Multiple folders in Mayor Hixon’s papers at the CTARS are devoted to citizens’ letters about local traffic problems. It is unclear whether Hixon responded to all, but every mayor in the United States would have sympathized with the mayor of Tampa. Douglas Rae expressed the problem most elegantly: “Among all the theaters of creative destruction that defined twentieth-century history, none was more fateful for the governance of cities than the rise of mass-produced, popularly priced cars, rolling across an electrified landscape.” Douglas W. Rae, \textit{City: Urbanism and Its End} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p.24.

\textsuperscript{254} \textit{Tampa Tribune}, December 26, 1947.
became common across the country, the city took over the failing Tampa Transit Lines. Meanwhile, motorists did not want to give up their cars. They just wanted to get out of heavy traffic. 255

Another vexing problem common to American central business districts was parking. Like most downtowns, Tampa’s had been designed for visitors who traveled by streetcar. High real estate prices mandated utilization of every square foot of land area for profit, leaving nothing for off-street parking. Curbside parking was inefficient, wasting nearly twenty lineal feet of property frontage for each automobile parking space. Diagonal parking yielded marginally greater efficiency at the cost of fewer and narrower traffic lanes, since vehicles protruded further away from the curb. As early as the 1920s parking garages had appeared in major northern cities. Beginning in 1945, innumerable committees, campaigns, and consortiums promoted the construction of large parking garages in downtown Tampa. Downtown merchants worried that their businesses would succumb to competition from the new outlying shopping centers that boasted of ample parking. In March of 1952, Tampa’s first new multi-story downtown parking garage opened at Polk and Ashley Streets. Nevertheless, on any given business day motorists circled blocks repeatedly searching for a place to park. Frustrated

255 Considerable scholarship explores the mid-century decline of American mass transit. Although some suggest a conspiracy involving the transit division of General Motors Corporation, little evidence substantiates the claim. Americans responded powerfully to the perceived freedom of owning a personal automobile that could carry them wherever they wanted, whenever they pleased. For an indictment of General Motors and its municipal bus contractor, National City Lines, Inc., see Kay, Asphalt Nation, p. 212-214. For the counterargument, see Mark S. Foster, A Nation On Wheels: The Automobile Culture in America Since 1945 (Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth, 2003), p. 111-113. For more concerning the proliferation and popularization of automobiles, see Bottles, Los Angeles and the Automobile, and Lewis, Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life.
drivers competing for parking slowed traffic circulation on every street, blocked intersections and alleyways, and caused more gridlock.\textsuperscript{256}

In addition to those general conditions, distinctive local factors fueled Tampans' misery. For example, the movement of freight trains into and out of Tampa created slow-motion havoc throughout the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. The Atlantic Coast Line Railroad's tracks extended right up to the wharves on the Hillsborough River waterfront. Indeed, that riverfront railhead had made Tampa economically viable. By the 1950s, trucks and automobiles were making railroads less important, but trains continued to operate on the same small patch of land dominated by surface streets and threatened to strangle the very city that rail had fostered. Throughout the decade of the Fifties, the City of Tampa and Chamber of Commerce tried to cajole or force the Atlantic Coast Line out of downtown. When jawboning, editorial pressure, and public indignation all failed, the City of Tampa moved to condemn the A.C.L.'s downtown holdings. In the meantime, automobile registrations soared, and whenever a slow moving freight train rolled into or out of Tampa, auto traffic halted for hours.

\textsuperscript{256} For a thorough account of parking battles in American central business districts, see Fogelson, \textit{Downtown}, p. 282-308. Fogelson shows that parking became a crisis of downtowns beginning the 1920s, and never disappeared. In 1952, Tampa businessmen J.L. Cone, Paul Smith, and Howard Frankland teamed to build the seven story Park N' Shop at a cost of $680,000. The reinforced concrete and steel structure was the first purpose-built public car-park in Tampa. It accommodated up to 700 cars, and its owners claimed that it was the largest and most modern parking garage in the South. See “Building With Tampa,” in \textit{Tampa Commerce}, the newsletter of the Tampa Chamber of Commerce, February, 1952. From the beginning, Tampa's new outlying shopping centers exploited their advantage in parking spaces. In September 1956, the headline of a two-page newspaper advertisement for one shouted: “Free Parking for over 2000 cars will make your shopping pleasure at Northgate a delightful one (sic). Rain or Shine, you can shop at leisure under the long walkway roof that will take you from store to store . . .”\textsuperscript{256} The following week, that shopping center's competitor, Britton Plaza, advertised its response in a banner headline: “. . . over 2400 FREE parking spaces.” See the \textit{Tampa Tribune}, Sunday September 9, 1956 and September 14, 1956.
Tampa’s climate also made driving downtown problematic. In the 1950s, automotive air conditioning was a rarity. Cars had small, pivoting triangular vent windows at the leading edge of the two front side windows. These could be turned so as to catch the passing wind generated when the car was moving. Most cars also had manually-opened floor vents on either end of the firewall, under the dashboard. Even with windows and vents opened wide, these means of relief from the heat depended upon keeping the car in motion. The discomfort of creeping along in heavy, stop-and-go traffic, surrounded by exhaust gas, radiant heat from other vehicles and reflected heat from the pavement, as well as noise, was oppressive even under ordinary climate conditions. In places such as Tampa, congested city streets could become hellish. Tampa was a hot subtropical place, with average summer daytime temperatures well into the ninety-degree range, and humidity levels to match. In addition, almost every summer afternoon, typically during the homeward-bound rush hour, brought violent electrical storms accompanied by torrential rainfall that immobilized cars for brief periods. Conditions inside stopped closed automobiles became miserable. The prospect of steady movement on uncongested highways was the only relief from miserable summertime urban driving.\textsuperscript{257}

\textsuperscript{257} American car culture emphasized speed and power, yet so much did Southern motorists crave relief from the heat that they paid premium prices for aftermarket auto air conditioners. These retrofitted appliances hung beneath the dashboard of the car, while the compressor was bolted onto the belt-train of the engine. Compared to later factory-installed auto air conditioners, the added-on units were inefficient and robbed the engine of considerable power while increasing the likelihood of overheating, especially in heavy summertime stop-and-go traffic. Nonetheless, they became popular in places such as Tampa. For a discussion of air conditioning’s impact on Sunbelt growth, see Raymond Arsenault, “The End of the Long Hot Summer: The Air Conditioner and Southern Culture,” \textit{The Journal of Southern History} (50:4, November 1984) 597-628. Later books include Gail Cooper, \textit{Air-Conditioning America: Engineers and the Controlled Environment, 1900-1960} (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998) and Marsha E. Ackerman, \textit{Cool...
Early during the 1950s, Tampans were already considering the various benefits of expressway construction. The possible orientation of future expressways existed on paper and was available to anyone who cared to inquire. In 1951, George Simons updated his 1944 Plan for Tampa, including local alignments for the federal Interregional Highway System proposed at the end of World War II. Even those who seemed unaware of specific highway plans grasped their economic potential. For example, some Tampa residents openly hoped to combine expressway construction with redevelopment of the city’s areas of poor housing. In 1950 Mayor Hixon received a scribbled post card from a citizen advising the City to make Ashley Street a six-lane highway between downtown and the “old reservoir.” “This is Negro scrub section,” the writer noted, “but is well located and will become extremely valuable and built up before long. Don’t wait until that happens . . . It would be the foundation for a super highway north and south.”

For the first half of the 1950s, the State Road Department's plan for limited-access highways in Tampa lay idle. The city’s planning consultant Simons was pleased that Florida State Road Department engineers had adapted their map completely to his own 1941 Major Street Plan for Tampa. In his Tampa plan report of 1951, Simons quoted the state engineer’s praise for his earlier work. He

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258 Postal card from Allyn T. Gleaves to Hon. Mayor Hixon, April 21, 1950 (Mayor Curtis Hixon Papers, Box 56, Folder 556, CTARS). “Scrub” refers to the predominantly African-American neighborhood just northeast of downtown near Central Avenue, which had been the focus of slum clearance ideas since World War II. Gleaves described the eventual alignment of Interstate 75 in Tampa, which conformed to the traffic demand maps that George W. Simons had created for Tampa’s 1941 Traffic Plan. For more concerning the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads’ Interregional Highway System and its relationship with Tampa, see Chapter 4 of this dissertation.
alluded further to the State plan for limited access highways but acknowledged that there had been no progress toward actually building the system. Should the Interstates ever become reality, Simons’ 1951 Plan remained the basis for their planning in Tampa.259

On June 29, 1956, the national political coalition that supported Interstate freeways realized its goal when President Eisenhower signed the Federal Aid Highway Act. Florida acted quickly. Money to construct the new national Interstate System was to come from federal gas and excise tax revenue. The certainty of federal appropriations for the project meant Simons’ return to one of his earliest jobs for Tampa, street and traffic system engineering. This time he was coordinating the location and arrangement of surface-street interchanges and grade crossings that would carry the new highways through Tampa while allowing motorists to enter and exit. In mid-June 1957, the Florida Road Department and its consultants held public forums in Tampa to display a map of their proposed local route and answer questions from the public. On June 24, they followed with a public hearing in Tampa, where the audience raised no serious objections. On August 20, 1957 Mayor Nick Nuccio and the Board of Representatives formally approved the local urban Interstate routes.260 The City

259 Report On the City Plan of Tampa 1951, p. 18.
260 Resolution #9489-C, Proceedings of the Board of Representatives, City of Tampa, Vol. 45, August 20, 1957, p. 74-75 (CTARS). This resolution was cross-referenced to a file (File No. D-2986) containing the report of the Board’s Rules and Ordinances Committee, “recommending adoption of a resolution approving route and general outlay of Interstate Expressway System with certain exceptions and reservations.” In 1998 the archivist for the City of Tampa reported that the contents of this file had been destroyed on January 18, 1994, and were never microfilmed. For the originally designed alignment of Tampa’s Interstate expressway components, see Tampa Interstate Routes Preliminary Geometric Design 1957, Div. of Traffic and Planning, State Road Dept. of Florida in Cooperation with the U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of Public Roads.
dissented from the State’s plan on just one point, a design alignment that would claim part of MacFarlane Park in West Tampa for Interstate 4 as it approached Westshore Blvd. near Tampa International Airport.

News of the Interstate’s impending construction stirred anxiety among those who realized that their homes and businesses lay in its path. However, even during the first months of project engineering, local objections had little effect. Thus, by June 1956 upon President Eisenhower’s signature of the highway bill, major route planning was in place. In addition, the unease that citizens felt about the disruptions of a major highway project were tempered by concerns for Tampa’s future without the new expressway. Blight, congestion, and aging housing stock, combined with the nascent movement toward new suburban subdivisions caused businesspeople, politicians, and planners to view the highway project as vital for Tampa’s renewal. Citizens with businesses or jobs at stake saw the urban expressway as essential to projects that would reshape the city in its most obsolete and embarrassingly rundown aspects.

Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs had long spoken of clearing out slums and eradicating blight, and the new highway running through Tampa had obvious potential to advance those goals. However, acting to modernize the city’s poorest housing stock did not figure into local plans for urban renewal. On May 20, 1958, Mayor Nuccio appointed building contractor A.R. “Ray” Ragsdale as chairman of Tampa’s Urban Renewal Agency (URA). Also president of the Tampa Homebuilder’s Association, Ragsdale was an outspoken opponent of public

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(University of South Florida Library, Dept. of Special Collections). The route closely followed the design of 1947, which helps explain why few were surprised at the Road Department’s new map.

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housing. Tampa’s Realtors were similarly critical, referring to it as “socialized” housing, Cold-War code invoked to portray anything as un-American. The Tampa Chamber of Commerce took the same position. Thus, it was not the mission of the Urban Renewal Agency to assist citizens displaced from their homes by the Interstate. The URA planned alternative uses for land that it acquired. In the vicinity of the downtown and riverfront, those plans did not include public housing, which it rejected on aesthetic as well as philosophical grounds.

As was the pattern in cities across the United States, Federal initiatives such as the process of building new expressways affected those who were poor or politically marginalized, such as African-Americans and certain ethnic communities. In Tampa, blacks as well as Tampa’s Spanish, Cuban, and Italian ethnic minorities were among those who suffered the greatest disruptions. When programs such as the Interstate expressway and urban renewal initiatives encountered dense, mature urban neighborhoods, “immigrant communities became pawns.” So it was in east and west Tampa, the home of distinctive, coherent Italian-Spanish ethnic neighborhoods. A broad planning and engineering consensus favored building the Interstate 4 expressway across the northern portion of Ybor City east of downtown and through the predominantly

261 Letter, A. R. Ragsdale to Mayor Nick Nuccio, May 19, 1958 (Mayor Nick Nuccio Papers, Box 36, Folder 276, CTARS); Resolution of the Tampa Board of Realtors, May 1, 1958 (ibid).

262 Report of the West Riverfront Committee, Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce, May 1, 1962 (Mayor Julian Lane Papers, Box 29, Folder 220, CTARS).

Hispanic neighborhoods of West Tampa. As the Road Department acquired land in those sections for the expressway, Tampa’s Urban Renewal Agency condemned and bought adjoining parcels, even though projects associated with the URA were years in coming. The aesthetics of the city were important to Tampa’s image and the path of the Interstate was an efficient place to address blight. However, the battle to alter Tampa’s downtown aesthetics moved unexpectedly, and became part of another emerging national pattern. The tensions that grew out of urban renewal became part of Tampa’s experience of the American civil rights movement, and drew local civic entrepreneurs into conflict with their greatest benefactor, the federal government.264

An Expressway to Democracy

During the 1950s southerners experienced complex new social tensions associated with racial segregation and the struggle to end it. In Tampa as elsewhere, responses to the routine injustices of American apartheid increased whites’ anxiety about their status. For Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs, white racial supremacy was a core value. However, the problematic nature of Jim Crow emerged when white elites sought to exploit federal resources to move urban

264 Ibid, p. 54. For descriptive maps and data concerning the neighborhoods targeted by Tampa’s Urban Renewal Agency, see Geoffrey Mohlman, “The Terminator: Urban Removal in Tampa, 1945-1975” (University of South Florida, 1995). Near downtown, there were three discrete Urban Renewal Areas, including a “Riverfront Area,” which straddled both banks of the Hillsborough River for several blocks to the north and south of the Interstate 4 alignment; the “Maryland Avenue Area,” which lay just northeast of the central business district, and at the western extremity of Ybor City; and the “Ybor City Area,” running east from the Maryland Avenue Area along either side of the I-4 alignment as far as 22nd Street. In 1973, a subsequent area designated as the “Central Avenue Redevelopment” came under the jurisdiction of a successor agency to the URA, called the Metropolitan Development Agency. The Central Avenue and Maryland Avenue areas intersected, and between them accounted for the black residential area historically known as The Scrub as well as for Tampa’s mature, vibrant African-American business and entertainment district. Mohlman considers that Urban Renewal caused a “black diaspora” in Tampa. (p. 28).
blacks away from downtown neighborhoods. Federal policies that favored Tampans’ dreams of urban reinvention culminated with the Interstate expressways, even as Tampa’s blacks found federal rules that empowered them for the first time to assert their place in Tampa’s project of growth. In fostering a new Tampa that would overcome its unsavory reputation, civic entrepreneurs had to choose whether to accept or resist real change. While racial protest erupted in cities across the South, Tampans steered an uneven course of cautious, gradual accommodation to the voices of African Americans and to their broader inclusion in planning for the city’s future.

Racism was an elemental part of life in Tampa. As late as 1949, the Ku Klux Klan had gathered in rural Hillsborough County to rally Tampans in support of white supremacy. In 1952, the builders of Hillsborough County’s new courthouse building installed duplicate, adjacent water fountains at different heights, with signs labeling the higher ones as “white” and the rest as “colored.” The 1954 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in Brown v. Board of Education outraged many white Tampans. In Florida’s 1956 gubernatorial election, three of the four major candidates attacked the Brown decision. One of those three, Tampa businessman Sumter Lowry, made resistance to Brown his central campaign promise, placing it in terms of Cold War urgency. “Integration [is] part of a communist conspiracy to destroy the moral fiber of the nation by creating a mongrel race incapable of preventing a red take-over,” he proclaimed for the
many white Floridians who were unabashedly race-conscious and who demanded the continuation of segregation throughout society.\textsuperscript{265}

Segregation’s effects quietly pervaded urban freeway planning in the South. In 1946, Florida’s Road Department planners created preliminary designs for urban expressways in each major Florida major city. Beginning with Jacksonville, their report noted that, “For the most part, it is possible to serve the City’s traffic needs without disturbing existing activities to any great extent by locating the Interstate Routes through areas of low property values where adequate Right-of-Way costs will not be excessive.”\textsuperscript{266} In the urban American South, the phrase “areas of low property values” plainly referred to black neighborhoods. Its use by the Road Department’s planners made it clear that the new highways would follow the path of least economic and political resistance on

\textsuperscript{265} Concerning the Klan in Tampa in 1949, see Alan Bliss’ interview with Paul Danahy, Jr. July 27, 2005, p. 47-50, SPOHP. A native of Massachusetts and in 1949 a new Floridian, where he had come to attend the University of Tampa, Danahy witnessed a Klan rally held near rural Brandon, and vividly remembered his discomfort at the seemingly primitive rites. In the days after the Supreme Court announced its decision in the \textit{Brown} case, the former U.S. Attorney in Tampa, Herbert Phillips, wrote Florida’s U.S. Senators of his concerns. Both Spessard Holland and George Smathers expressed hearty agreement. Holland wrote: “Dear Herbert. . . You could hardly be more disturbed about this matter than I. As a life-long Southerner, with six grandchildren to be educated in Florida public schools, and with years of experience in law enforcement and race problems, I think I realize fully the grave implications.” Spessard L. Holland to Herbert S. Phillips, May 25, 1954 (H.S. Phillips Papers, Box 3, Folder 8, USF Library, Dept. of Special Collections). Senator Smathers was of like mind, adding: “It is our hope that the Negro leaders will recognize the many disadvantages to themselves in seeking to override well-founded traditions and will make adjustments themselves which will benefit them and at the same time avoid conflicts.” (George Smathers to Herbert S. Phillips, May 31, 1954, H.S. Phillips Papers, Box 3, Folder 8, USF Library, Dept. Of Special Collections. Concerning Sumter Lowry, see David Colburn and Richard Scher, \textit{Florida’s Gubernatorial Politics in the Twentieth Century}, p. 77. Lowry was also a longtime officer in Florida’s National Guard.

\textsuperscript{266} W.M. Parker, Division Engineer, Division of Research and Records, A Traffic Survey Report and Interstate Highway Plan of the Jacksonville Metropolitan Area, State Road Department of Florida, in cooperation with the Public Roads Administration, Federal Works Agency, and the City of Jacksonville, 1945-1946. (PKY).
the way through Jacksonville. The symbiosis between urban highways and slum clearance was official policy rationalized by financial calculation.

The new Interstate highways allowed Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs to apply their operative assumptions about cities in order to realize their goals. Those assumptions included white political and economic supremacy, homeownership as a measure of citizenship, and the privileged place of the automobile. The goals that seemed finally within reach were among others a final solution to the problem of the “Scrub” area just northeast of downtown, as well as aging, modest residential blocks along the axis of the new Interstate Highway 4. The solution to Tampa’s traffic congestion also seemed at hand, as the Interstate expressway promised to deliver on the objectives of George Simons’ 1941 Street Plan for Tampa. Since the end of World War II, the Simons’ proposal for a north-south limited access highway roughly parallel to Central Avenue had become increasingly obvious as a way to relieve the traffic-choked Nebraska and Florida Avenues. The Interstate Highway System meant that the money with which to solve those longstanding local problems would come from federal appropriations.267

Accepting federal money for local urban renewal, however, committed the city to rules that ran against many white citizens’ fundamental values. Since

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267 In September 1956, discussing the location of Tampa’s downtown interchange where I-75 and I-4 would meet, State Road Dept. engineer J.A. Connor said, “This central distributing point is the key to the entire expressway system in this area . . . If it works, we know the rest of it will work. Its location will be north of the railroad station in the center of a slum area which needs to be cleared away . . . The site of this distributing point was selected not only because of the shabbiness of the neighborhood, but because it is on terrain allowing for the lower level to be below the ground.” *Tampa Tribune*, September 15, 1956. Connor was describing the black residential neighborhood historically known as The Scrub as well as the black Central Avenue business district. (See Chapter One of this dissertation).
planning's inception in Tampa in 1940, civic entrepreneurs dominated the process to the extent that by the late 1950s, planning was the natural preserve of affluent, influential whites. Centralized public-private planning functioned with few distractions. In Tampa, public planning had the character of a top-down social club for educated or accomplished citizens whose values coincided with those of elite members, privileged by virtue of their status in the larger community. Theirs were the common values that drove the planning agenda. Few if any mandates existed either in law or in custom for broad public review or participation. Prior to the social upheavals mid-1960s moreover, Americans tended to repose a certain optimistic faith in the competence of credentialed experts.268

Following World War II, throughout the U.S., new administrative bodies moved important functions principally having to do with transportation infrastructure away from elective office holders and into the hands of appointees. In Tampa, seaport and airport matters came under the control of statutory boards, or “authorities,” whose members and executives enjoyed the presumption of informed judgment and expertise. These officials and their professional advisers sought to rationalize Tampa’s economic geography

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268 During the 1950s, Tampa’s City Planning and Zoning Board met when and where it pleased, including within the private offices of its members. For example, Planning and Zoning chair Joe Merrin invited Mayor Hixon to join the board and its consultant George Simons for a “special” meeting that the board had decided to hold in the office of longtime board member Frank Adams, an architect. There the board was to discuss “a number of recommendations and . . . ideas as to the future course which should be followed in the planning and zoning field.” Continuing, Merrin advised that “[s]ome of the ideas which have been advanced . . . will undoubtedly call for new legislature (sic) to be enacted . . .” thus the usefulness of having the mayor present to help arrange for the necessary actions. Letter, Joe K. Merrin, Chairman, City Planning and Zoning Board, to the Honorable Mayor Curtis Hixon, March 14, 1955, Box 83, Folder 809, Curtis Hixon Papers, CTARS. For a discussion of the seeming omnipotence that Americans’ ascribed to researchers and scientists, for example, see James T. Patterson, Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 318-320.
according to what they saw as the interests of the community. Appointees to agencies governing major infrastructure operated less publicly than elected office holders, and were therefore were less visible and thereby less responsible to voters and elected officials alike. Without subterfuge and with only minimal consultations with interests other than those of industry and finance, Tampa’s public authorities planned, financed, built, and operated assets that became crucial to Tampa’s growth.

Highway planning in Tampa was also seldom visible to the public until the time came to announce construction of a new road. Street and highway design was the task of professionals such as George Simons and later of engineers with the Florida State Road Department and the Federal Bureau of Public Roads, along with consultants from powerful national firms such as Wilbur Smith Associates. In an attempt to shield large policy decisions from political interference, Florida’s governors appointed a State Road Board whose members represented the interests of transportation districts within the state.269

Ironically, it was urban renewal related to the Interstate System that weakened the postwar highway engineering technocracy. New federal rules required that citizens who were to be displaced by urban renewal projects had to be represented in the local deliberative proceedings. At first Tampa officials

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269 For a thorough, nuanced appraisal of America’s highway engineering technocracy, see Seely, Building the American Highway System: Engineers As Policy Makers. Seely’s examination of the masculine culture of the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads headed by Thomas MacDonald recalls scholarship describing J. Edgar Hoover’s Federal Bureau of Investigation. For a detailed discussion of Florida’s State Road Board, its process of political appointments, the relationship among its staff, consultants, and board members, see Alan J. Bliss, “Oral History Interview with Warren M. Cason, 2000,” Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, Gainesville, p. 15-17 and p. 27-42.
ignored this stipulation, then they sought to *finesse* it. However, by using the federal mandate as a basis to resist and challenge the local Urban Renewal Agency, Tampa’s black citizens for the first time gained official *entrée* to municipal planning. Indeed, black representation on Urban Renewal advisory panels marked the first time that anyone other than white civic entrepreneurs and their professional advisers participated in planning for Tampa’s future. The result pointed to an unaccustomed and unprecedented infusion of democracy in local city planning.  

On April 15, 1958, Robert Saunders made his first attempt to invoke the new federal rules by writing to Mayor Nick Nuccio. Saunders was a Tampa native who had returned to make his hometown the state headquarters for the NAACP. His letter directed the mayor’s attention to Section 221 of the National Housing Act of 1954, which mandated Workable Programs in cities that proposed to use federal resources for urban renewal. Saunders noted that the law “calls for the participation by representatives from all groups in the planning for the relocation of persons displaced because of the proposed changes in the city’s structure.” On the basis of the limited information available, Saunders pointedly observed, it was evident that “the Negro citizen will be called upon to give up property… yet,

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270 By 1961, the NAACP’s national housing policy director Jack E. Wood predicted that Tampa’s leaders would henceforth conform to federal rules for minority participation in urban renewal, because they could no longer risk the loss of federal funding for their ambitious projects. Robert W. Saunders, Jr., *Bridging the Gap: Continuing the Florida NAACP Legacy of Harry T. Moore* (Tampa: University of Tampa Press, 2000) p. 135.
we know of no Negro in the community who has been consulted…” Black citizens “do not want to be planned for, but to be planned with.”

Nuccio blandly countered that Saunders was premature. The City had engaged a special planner (Milo Smith, formerly associated with George Simons’ firm), who was working on urban renewal matters “as rapidly as possible with the expectation and hope of…approval…[of a workable plan for Tampa].” Smith’s rapid work on the plan notwithstanding, he had not yet begun to address aspects of the program concerning possible relocation of residents. At the appropriate time, Nuccio said, he would appoint an advisory committee on the relocation of displaced persons. Nuccio assured Saunders that, “your people will have representatives thereon.”

The implications of African Americans being forcibly relocated made white Tampans uneasy. Speaking on November 27, 1957 to the Tampa Chamber of Commerce, City Councilman Lee Duncan noted that the route of Tampa’s new interstate expressway lay through predominantly black neighborhoods. If alternative housing was not ready, he warned, displaced blacks might try to move

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271 Robert W. Saunders to the Honorable Nick Nuccio, Mayor, April 15, 1958. Nick Nuccio Papers, Box 36, Folder 276, CTARS. On May 22, 1958, Mayor Nuccio formally appointed seven white men to the City’s Urban Renewal Agency. They included bankers, insurance agents, a downtown retailer, an attorney, and construction company owner A.R. “Ray” Ragsdale, who was also the president of the Tampa Homebuilders’ Association. Ragsdale became chair of the Tampa URA, and held that post for more than five years. Certificate of Appointment, Nick Nuccio Papers, Box 36, Folder 276, CTARS. Notes in the file indicate that Nuccio had selected his appointees several weeks earlier.

272 Nick Nuccio to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, April 21, 1958. Nick Nuccio Papers, Box 36, Folder 276, CTARS. Between May 7 and May 9, 1958, Nuccio wrote to thirty citizens of Tampa, inviting them as “interested parties” to come to City Hall on May 15 to discuss housing for residents to be displaced by various impending city projects. The names included downtown merchants, professionals, and politicians. Only one however, the Reverend A. Leon Lowry, was black. See Mayor Nick Nuccio Papers, Box 36, Folder 276, CTARS.
into white neighborhoods. Three days after Duncan voiced this concern remarks, a Tampa Tribune editorial agreed that “residential areas for Negros are strictly limited… We believe that members of Tampa’s Negro community prefer to have their own neighborhoods, but if they are denied this opportunity they can hardly be blamed for seeking a roof wherever they can find it.” Tampa had a year until the expressway demolitions would begin: “That is little enough time for city officials, civic planners, and business leaders to prepare a practical program for housing the displaced families.” Concluding, the editorial writer linked Tampa’s dilemma over accommodating blacks to the national discourse on civil rights: “One of the arguments we make in the South in defense of segregation is that it does not deprive the Negro of any of the physical comforts or material advantages that other citizens enjoy. In the expressway displacement, Tampa will be called upon to demonstrate that this argument is valid.”

The Tribune’s editorial was a misreading as to what decades of segregation and discrimination had come to mean in terms of modern American housing markets. Indeed, builders and developers from Tampa and elsewhere were already calling on Mayor Nuccio, eager to discuss “the proposed urban housing development for displaced colored people.” For their part, Nuccio and the Board of Representatives frankly expected to delegate problem of new housing

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for displaced Tampans to local real estate agents and homebuilders. However, the conventions and practices of Tampa’s real estate business were geared for homebuyers with jobs and steady income, accumulated savings, and access to credit. Even setting aside considerations of race, the potential profits in supplying housing for low-income customers appealed little to entrepreneurial homebuilders. The NAACP’s Bob Saunders understood that private real estate dealers were poised to take advantage of black citizens faced with losing their homes. However, even he did not anticipate the difficulty of making poor blacks and Tampa’s housing market conform to each other.275

The relocation problem baffled and frustrated everyone associated with Tampa’s project of urban renewal. Residents of neighborhoods in the path of the interstate expressway were typically unable to qualify for conventional mortgages due to their chronically low, uneven family incomes. Some wage earners received income from part-time or casual labor, which was often paid in cash making the amount and frequency of payments hard to document even if they were adequate to meet household needs. Further, it was rare that such working-class families had managed to accumulate significant monetary savings. In addition, many residents targeted for relocation were lifelong renters. Having never owned a home, those displaced residents had never accumulated equity convertible into cash with which to make a down payment on purchasing another

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275 After serving in the U.S. Army during World War II, Saunders lived in Detroit for several years. As a law student he would certainly have observed local real estate dealers’ exploitation of both blacks and whites over housing, as described in Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). In Tampa, Saunders voiced his suspicions by registered letters to the Mayor. See Robert W. Saunders to Mayor Nick Nuccio, April 15, 1958 and May 29, 1958; both found in the Nick Nuccio Papers, Box 36, Folder 276, CTARS.
home, either new or existing. While renters had no mortgage debt and in most cases few formal financial obligations, they also had few if any institutional credit relationships, a circumstance that placed them at a disadvantage as they tried to identify and evaluate home-financing options. Lifelong renters had little exposure to the habits, conventions, and presumptions of banks or savings and loan officers. Such prospective borrowers seldom had access to experienced friends or relatives who might guide them through the daunting process. Finally, when State Road Department land agents closed on purchases of land in or around downtown Tampa, it was most often landlords who pocketed the condemnation-sale proceeds on houses slated for demolition. Those who were forced to move out of such houses typically left only with their possessions. Turning such renters into homeowners proved time-consuming and difficult at best and offered little reward for real estate dealers at a time when there were easy commissions to be made by selling houses to customers with steady jobs and access to banks or savings and loan institutions.276

Owing to the same condition of low family incomes, Tampa’s displaced residents could ill-afford to pay market rent for newly constructed apartments. For their part, builders who were interested in constructing and operating subsidized

276 Alan Bliss interview with Sharon Mims McBride, April 12, 1997. Not transcribed - audio recording in the author’s possession. For an insightful discussion of issues that affected urban blacks trying to enter the class of homeowners, see Ibid. Like Mark Gelfand and Kenneth Jackson, Sugrue tends to overestimate the impact of HOLC redlining on perpetuating segregation in urban housing markets. In addition, Sugrue’s study of Detroit translates with difficulty to a Southern place such as Tampa, where there is less evidence of real estate syndicates aimed at profiteering from blacks’ residential dispersal in white neighborhoods. Still, Sugrue has a fine ear for the reactions of white homeowners to a period of change in the their communities’ housing demographics during the 1940s and 1950s, and he makes the important point that racial conflict in housing and homeownership was already widespread in the decades before civil rights legislation or related jurisprudence energized demonstrations and increasing violence.
rental housing for low income families found that they could not make their costs conform to laws that limited rent to a percentage of the tenant’s income. Repeated income surveys of Tampa’s neighborhoods targeted for redevelopment showed that many residents were already paying more in rent (for substandard housing) than they could afford, according to Federal Housing Administration guidelines. The survey data aggravated Urban Renewal Agency members, prompting Ragsdale to grumble “these figures aren’t reliable since Negroes generally don’t report all their income.”277 Racial presumptions merely amplified white businessmen’s and politicians’ growing frustration and resentment at the limitations of federal policies. Meanwhile, Tampa’s low-income citizens facing dislocation could not predict where they would live within the next few years, knowing only that their homes and neighborhoods of decades were soon to disappear.

To Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs such questions were distractions from what mattered, which was that their vision of a publicly financed project of downtown reinvention seemed close at hand. In 1958, merchants in the central business district pressed the state and county to acquire 40 acres on the east bank of the riverfront just north of Cass Street for use as a new state office building. The parcel was part of the Riverfront Redevelopment Area. “The [site] is a truly blighted slum area, occupied almost exclusively by the colored race . . . [t]o condemn this River Site would eliminate criticism on the part of the colored

277 Minutes, Meetings of the Commissioners, Urban Renewal Agency, City of Tampa, Florida, May 8, 1961, June 5, 1961, June 19, 1961 and July 10, 1961; the quotation is from the minutes of the meeting of July 10, 1961 (Mayor Julian Lane Papers, Box 29, Folder 402, CTARS).
people that they are required to live in slums. There are ample housing facilities at present to house these people.”

Amid increasing concerns about keeping Tampa’s growth and modernization on track, Nick Nuccio lost his 1959 re-election campaign to political newcomer Julian Lane, a World War II veteran and Tampa native. Seeking a fresh start on easing racial tension among Tampa’s whites and blacks, Lane created a new Community Relations Board, more commonly known as the Bi-Racial Committee. The Committee represented the first organized attempt on the part of white Tampans to peacefully navigate past emerging “problems” with civil rights activists. In what became a model for other cities, Lane appointed several white and black Tampans to advise him and the City Council on matters related to racial conflict. Some whites tapped by Lane resisted serving on the committee or refused outright, viewing black activists as provocative challengers not just to segregation, but also to Tampa’s broad social, economic, and political order. Traditional white responses to such challenges included confrontation, repression, and state-sanctioned violence. Tampa’s reputation for those things disturbed civic entrepreneurs who believed that they were finally reshaping the city in a modern form. News of fresh racial violence would undercut their years of effort aimed at differentiating Tampa from its past. Indeed, elsewhere in Florida,  

278 “An Open Letter to the Citizens of Hillsborough County,” by the Uptown Merchants Association of Tampa, Inc., Silas Telander, President, n.d. but from context this would have been published as the Hillsborough County Commission was debating its choice of sites to recommend to the State of Florida for use as a new downtown office building in early 1958. The decision involved planning for the access ramps to the new Interstate expressways, as the Merchants Association noted: “One of the main trunks of the Expressway must pass directly over this site at a very high elevation, thus giving a disgraceful bird’s eye view and exposing the skeletons in our closet – one of the ugliest slums to be seen in any city of this size – a veritable pig sty. This must not happen to Tampa!” Nick Nuccio Papers, Box 17, Folder 126, CTARS.
tensions over civil rights protests had precisely that effect. By 1962, Klansmen assaulted peaceful demonstrators in Jacksonville and St. Augustine, unimpeded by local police or sheriffs. In Tampa, Lane and his supporters hoped that a seemingly authoritative panel of moderate voices would help keep a lid on black civil rights protest as well as white resistance, while maintaining the focus on Tampa’s modern growth.279

Members of Tampa’s Bi-Racial Committee explored unfamiliar territory as they strove to temper strong local reactions to unheard of demands from Tampa’s black citizens. Longtime white business leaders such as attorney Cody Fowler served on the committee, along with black appointees such as Baptist minister Leon Lowry. To help ameliorate tension among black Tampans, the committee proposed modest accommodations that nevertheless stirred white opposition. Committee suggestions included allowing greater participation by blacks in Tampa’s Urban Renewal Agency, which was a priority for the Tampa

279 See Stephen F. Lawson, “From Sit-In to Race Riot: Businessmen, Blacks, and the Pursuit of Moderation in Tampa, 1960-1967,” in Elizabeth Jacoway and David R. Colburn, Southern Businessmen and Desegregation (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982). Lawson, along with other contributors, suggests that the nature and circumstances of controlling elites informed their reactions to the civil rights movement in Southern cities. Proponents of so-called New-South ideals, in cities whose growth permitted them to begin to enjoy their long-sought prosperity, restrained their more traditionalist brethren. In Southern cities such as Tampa, where growing numbers of white businessmen had roots elsewhere, promoters warned that continued growth depended upon satisfying northern industrialists and investors that the local workforce was docile and welcoming. Unlike Jacksonville or St. Augustine, or (elsewhere in the South) Little Rock and Birmingham, Tampa avoided serious damage to its progressive reputation, while making halting, uneven progress toward racial justice. For an articulate example of Mayor Lane’s friends and political allies who uneasily said “no” to his request for them to join the Bi-Racial Committee, see B.G. Smith to the Honorable Julian Lane, June 7, 1963, and Lane’s reply dated June 18th, 1963, both Box 29, Folder 218, Julian Lane Papers, CTARS. This exchange admittedly took place four years after the establishment of the Bi-Racial Committee. However, the two writers helpfully recapitulate the perspective of white Tampa elites on developments in what Smith called “the problem of the social revolution of the American negro.” For example, Smith describes himself as having moved from “an attitude of compromise and conciliation” to one of fear for private property rights and for the future of democracy if whites conceded anything further to militant black leaders.
branch of the NAACP. The Mayor temporized by appointing black residents to a new special sub-committee evaluating the Maryland Avenue Urban Renewal Project. As with the mayor’s appointees to the Bi-racial Committee, blacks whom he selected for the Maryland Avenue panel tended to be those with little nerve for criticizing the city’s plans. The NAACP’s Saunders was frustrated by the timid behavior of supposedly influential black Tampans who he believed preferred the mayor’s favor to that of their fellows.280

As was the case nationally, the term “urban renewal” was a sobriquet for racially divisive public policies in Tampa. State Road Department engineers and acquisition agents invariably chose the lowest cost alignment for new road construction. Blocks with deteriorated housing were engineers’ default choice for condemnation and purchase. The fact that Tampa’s most impoverished and disenfranchised citizens lived in the path of the right-of-way seemed unremarkable. Multiple blocks of neighborhoods ranging from Ybor City to West Tampa became “redevelopment areas” under the URA’s jurisdiction. Those

280 The chair of Tampa’s NAACP’s steering committee on housing was Reverend William H. Gordon. Pressed by national NAACP officials and by Saunders to challenge Tampa’s plan to demolish housing along Scott, Estelle, and Fortune Streets near the Hillsborough River, Reverend Gordon demurred. His funeral home, he explained, embalmed the bodies of deceased indigents, a steady source of business directed to him by the City of Tampa that he feared losing if he challenged the city’s plans. Saunders saw Gordon’s dilemma as evidence of a pattern of quiet subversion or co-opting of significant blacks in Tampa. He acknowledged the economic power that white Tampans controlled. “Importantly, I was not beholden to local sources for my paycheck, which was signed in New York City by Walter White and, after Walter’s passing, by Roy Wilkens. I am convinced that this single small fact made a monumental difference in my ability to further NAACP goals in Florida.” Robert W. Saunders, Jr., Bridging the Gap: Continuing the Florida NAACP Legacy of Harry T. Moore (Tampa: University of Tampa Press, 2000) p. 132. For more on Tampa’s Community Relations Board, or Bi-racial Committee, see Saunders, p. 131 – 140. Asked to comment on the effectiveness of Mayor Lane’s Bi-Racial Committee at moderating local racial divisions, Tampa businessman Blaine Howell (George B. Howell’s youngest son) responded simply: “We had a way of life down here, and that’s what we lived. There weren’t too many rabble-rousers back in those days.” Alan Bliss oral history interview with G. Blaine Howell, Jr., SPOHP, p. 20.
Tampans who were most affected also tended to be fragmented and disorganized. Politically and economically, blacks were marginalized by decades of exclusion from the processes of democracy and from the exercise of their rights. Tampa’s URA accepted a mandate to replace substandard housing in and around downtown Tampa with new civic infrastructure such as such as a public auditorium, a new court house, or other improvements that civic entrepreneurs had long sought. Housing promised to yield neither profit nor praise for the members of the URA, who sought to make the problem go away.  

The daunting economics of low-income housing for black citizens frustrated the determination of civic entrepreneurs to succeed at their project of re-modernizing the city. The problem eluded local market solutions, and fostered a plan that combined charity with federal mortgage subsidies to house low-income Tampans far away from downtown. In 1958, a new not-for-profit corporation capitalized by local investors announced that it would build a community of houses called Progress Village on 1,226 low-lying rural acres in the unincorporated county, eleven miles southeast of downtown Tampa. The developers planned more than 3800 homes, although fewer than one thousand were built. Owing to the site’s remote location and its tendency to flood, the land costs were low, making it possible to develop the property cheaply. By leaving out all but the barest of necessities, builders held construction costs to a minimum. Progress Village houses were simple concrete block structures of 850

281 Saunders discusses Tampa’s Urban Renewal Agency in Bridging the Gap, p. 133-136. Saunders recalled that he and his colleagues in the Tampa Branch of the NAACP referred to Urban Renewal as “Urban Slum Removal” – p. 133.
to 925 square feet, constructed by various Tampa builders to meet the minimum standards of the Federal Housing Administration. Complying with FHA rules made the houses eligible for mortgage loans with subsidized interest rates and loan guarantees. The Progress Village developers raised additional money through local donations to help cover down payments for families displaced from Tampa’s downtown redevelopment area. Mortgage payments were as low as $50.00 per month.282

Progress Village homes were affordable but remote. Residents of the new neighborhood were far from their habits, jobs, friends, and resources. Even telephone service was slow to reach the rural subdivision. The location and density of downtown neighborhoods had made it possible to get to work and other destinations by using transit buses, carpooling, or walking. Progress Village’s isolation eliminated every alternative but cars, so in addition to the financial impact of relocating, many families had to invest in at least one automobile. For their part, URA members gave little thought to the problem of transportation between rural Hillsborough County and downtown Tampa. If residents of remote neighborhoods such as Progress Village cared to come into the city, they would drive. Embracing the rational technocracy of state and federal highway engineers, the URA saw its project of making Tampa more

accessible to automobiles as part of an American tradition of creative destruction
that could only improve the city and the lives of its people.

In 1959, Tampa’s perennial effort to acquire the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad property along the east bank of the Hillsborough River succeeded. Since the early 1940s, George Simons had denounced the railroad siding and switching complex as a wound on the downtown landscape and an impediment to traffic circulation. Every civic entrepreneur agreed. When the railroad finally consented to the sale of 4.4 acres of riverfront land between Lafayette Street (now Kennedy Boulevard) and Cass Street, the mayor and Board of Representatives eventually bonded the $2.5 million purchase price, then turned the land over to the Urban Renewal Authority to come up with development alternatives. One of those was a grand new riverfront civic center and auditorium which the city named after its late Mayor Curtis Hixon.\(^\text{283}\)

As the 1950s ended, Tampa’s units of local government were trying to implement public projects of unprecedented scale during a period of equally unprecedented social and economic change. Countywide population growth fostered seemingly endless debate over the possibilities of territorial annexations into the City of Tampa or of consolidated countywide government. Since the beginning of his work for Tampa, Simons had favored annexing surrounding

\(^{283}\) Memorandum of conveyance from Mayor Julian Lane to the Honorable Chairman and Members of the City Council, authorizing the issuance of $10,000,000 in Special Obligation Capital Improvement Bonds, July 16, 1962. The $10M in proceeds from the sale of the bond series broke down as follows: $2.7M for the ACL riverfront land; $305K for improvements on the riverfront land; $3.075M for construction of the new convention center (named as “Curtis Hixon Hall”); and $3.92M to pay for street improvements to be performed by the City in conjunction with the impending downtown segments of Interstate Highway 4. City Clerk “B” Petition Records, Box 7-1A-9, Folder B1-4661-E (Series E Bonds), CTARS. The bonds were sold on maturities of 30 years. The ACL site became part of the URA’s Riverfront Redevelopment Area.
areas of development into the City. By the mid-1950s, he was recommending countywide zoning as an alternative. Offering an example that he knew would galvanize envious Tampans, he pointed to Atlanta’s Metropolitan Planning Commission, for which he was on a continuing retainer contract. Simons reminded the Tampans that federal funds were available to such metropolitan planning organizations. However, Simons himself was no longer in favor, having lost an important supporter in 1956 when Curtis Hixon died. In 1958, Simons lost another close ally when Frank Adams came under fire for possibly abusing his power as Zoning Board chair. Since 1940, Simons and Adams had dominated Tampa’s planning and zoning functions, but to the emerging generation of civic entrepreneurs, the results were unconvincing. Tampa’s old problems of urban decay, traffic congestion, pollution, and land use conflicts persisted and some conditions had only worsened. After eighteen years of promoting visionary redevelopment with little that was tangible to show for it, the blame for Tampa’s seemingly moribund condition fell readily to Simons, while his defenders were becoming few.284

In January 1959, the Tampa Chamber of Commerce echoed Simons’ advice by recommending the merger of the city’s planning functions with those of

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284 See Bruce M. Robbins, Robbins Manufacturing Co., to the Honorable Mayor Nick Nuccio, March 17, 1958, Box 30, Folder 221, Nick Nuccio Papers, CTARS. Robbins was an eight-year veteran of the Planning and Zoning Board, having originally been appointed by Curtis Hixon, and argued for continuing Simons’ contract with the city in spite of demands from some Board of Representatives members that Nuccio fire Simons. Robbins hinted that critics were jealous of the substantial fees that the consultant had earned while under contract to Tampa. “[I]n my opinion he was worth the amount and more. You are aware of his vast experience in City Planning throughout the South. His knowledge of the zoning effect in Tampa and other cities is worth considerable (sic) to the people of Tampa . . .” Also see “Competent Planner Urged to Clean Up Zoning Mess; Myers Blames it on Simons,” Tampa Tribune, June 18, 1958.
the county. Mayor Lane, the City Board of Representatives, and the County Commission concurred, and in October, 1959, authorized an inter-local agreement creating the Hillsborough County Planning Commission, a joint city-county agency serving the entire unincorporated county as well as the three incorporated municipalities within the County. The new agency’s first staff initiative was to perform an economic analysis of the county, from which subsequent planning initiatives derived. Dissent over proposals for municipal annexations and or countywide government continued, but countywide planning was a step toward rationalizing local infrastructure. It also marked a fundamental change in the nature of Tampa’s public planning process, which started to become more public than ever before.²⁸⁵

At the end of the 1950s, the one thing about which most Tampans seemed to agree was the importance of finishing the city’s segments of the new Interstate expressways. On October 15, 1960 the *Tampa Tribune* made the point in an editorial cartoon depicting several white males wearing suits and ties gathered around a sleek automobile stranded in mud up to its axles. The men pointed at one another while chorusing, “It’s his fault.” The caption for the piece contained the moral: “Don’t point, push.” To emphasize the connections among

²⁸⁵ “Framework of the Plan Report,” Hillsborough County Planning Commission, Tampa, March 1962 (USF Library, Dept. of Special Collections). Also see George W. Simons, Jr., “The Broadening Scope of Planning Procedure,” manuscript, n.d., but from context 1958 (GWS Collection, UNF Library, Dept. of Special Collections, Folder: Planning and Zoning). Having finally persuaded his clients in Tampa, Simons called for statutory authorization for countywide zoning throughout Florida. In a February 1959 speech to county zoning administrators meeting in Tallahassee, he predicted that strings and clusters of municipalities were growing closer together so that they were becoming in effect unbroken cities. To reinforce the point, Simons warned that such a super city, or megalopolis, was already taking shape along Florida’s east coast from Ft. Pierce to Key West. Rather than waiting for the legislature to act, he advised counties to press their representatives for special acts pertaining to their jurisdictions. “Jax Planner Predicts Giant City,” *Jacksonville Journal*, February 21, 1959.
cars, roads and local hopes for the future, the mired but ultra-modern auto in the
cartoon bore the label “Tampa’s Progress.” Anyone who allowed self-interest to
impede the highway contractor’s bulldozers would find little sympathy at Tampa’s
major daily newspaper.\textsuperscript{286}

**An Expressway to the Sunbelt**

Litigation and political contests over railroad freight rates dragged on until
the early 1960s, but by then what had been George Howell’s top priority for the
wartime EDC was already irrelevant to Tampa. As Finlay Parker had forecast in
1944, rail lost the competition with over-the-highway motor freight. Road building
during the 1950s assured trucking’s success. By helping keep Tampa involved in
the future Interstate Highway System, Tom Standifer’s two-hour visit to the
Bureau of Public Roads in the spring of 1945 accomplished more than anything
the EDC did with regard to rail freight rates. Tampa’s pre-war port economy had
depended on rail and coastwise ship traffic, neither of which recovered after
World War II, when trucks pushed mariners out of most domestic freight markets.

Transportation was the platform on which Tampa’s modernization
functioned, and with the arrival of Interstate Highways, the EDC’s crucial
emphasis on reorganizing its seaport and airport paid off. The shoreside
expansion of the 1940s allowed Tampa to grow into one of the largest seaports
in the United States. In 1949, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed the
Tampa harbor survey that Francis Judd and the Chamber had requested in 1945.
The Corps proceeded to carry out local channel improvements at an initial cost of

$7,836,000 plus annual maintenance expenses of $341,085. The federal government insisted on quid pro quos, including a guarantee that local interests would offer wharfage at Port Tampa and at the Alafia River to every customer at the same rates, and expand the terminals to accommodate shippers’ needs. Phosphate used in the manufacturing of agricultural fertilizers remained a major cargo. The oil terminals that the EDC sought to attract also became a major activity in the port, supplying the oil for electrical generation, jet propellant for aircraft refueling at Tampa International Airport (and MacDill Air Force Base), diesel fuel for trucks and buses, and gasoline to power the automobiles of two million Bay area motorists. Freight trucks based in Tampa used the Interstate expressways to serve the city’s expanding regional market.287

During the 1950s the Hillsborough Aviation Authority substantially upgraded Drew Field, re-inventing it as Tampa International Airport. To do so, the Authority used its local taxing power cautiously, and instead skillfully exploited the national market for tax-exempt municipal bonds. By combining their bond capital with the direct financial support of the federal government, the Aviation Authority minimized its need for financing from either the City of Tampa or from Florida’s state government, and followed the pattern of New Deal initiatives that had benefited Tampa aviation since 1934. The Federal Civil Aeronautics Board, later the Federal Aviation Administration, invested continually in local airports.

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287 Concerning the postwar improvements that the federal government consented to make for the Port of Tampa, see Secretary of the Army, *Tampa Harbor, Florida: Letter From the Secretary of the Army Transmitting a Letter From the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, Dated May 19, 1949, Submitting a Report, Together With Accompanying Papers and an Illustration, On a Review of Reports on Tampa Harbor, Florida, Submitted in Response to a Resolution of the Committee On Rivers and Harbors, House of Representatives, Adopted March 21, 1945* (Washington: Department of the Army, Chief of Engineers, 1949).
throughout the U.S. In order to advance its role as an aviation center, Tampa increasingly became a “federal city,” meaning a local government directly dependent upon the U.S. government. Superior ground transportation cemented Tampa’s regional dominance in air travel, when passengers could arrive and depart from the airport by car and get directly on one of Tampa’s local Interstate expressways.

In 1962, as contractors poured the Interstate’s concrete over a swath of raw land running west from downtown toward the airport, Tampans and their visitors could see the physical evidence of their local values and aspirations. The new Interstate expressway also illustrated the permanent relationship between the city and the nation. To help prove their modernity, Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs exploited transportation technologies to connect their city with distant places. They also sought to lever federal resources in the service of local prosperity and growth. Nothing advanced those objectives as effectively as did the two new Interstate expressways that terminated in Tampa.288

At the same time, nothing aggrieved Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs so much as new federal limitations on their ability to reshape the city according local customs. In a 1962 speech, George Simons condemned the popularity of new phrases as “urban renewal” and “urban redevelopment,” calling them “gibberish.” To those with experience at trying to solve the problems of cities, the terms still

288 Not until the 1970s did Congress authorize additional miles for the Interstate Highway System. Interstate 75 was then extended west across Tampa Bay, through St. Petersburg, and south down the west coast of Florida parallel to U.S. Highway 41. What had been I-4 running west from the Daytona area to Tampa Bay was officially shortened so as to end at its downtown Tampa interchange with I-75. In the 1980s, an I-75 bypass was authorized east of Tampa, upon which the entire segment from north of Tampa to Manatee County was re-badge as I-275.
meant “slum clearance under fancier names.” Within a few years Simons began to withdraw from his planning practice, disenchanted by the oppressive “red tape” that increasingly burdened the profession. Simons was sensitive to the excesses of unfettered free markets in housing and in urban economies generally. However, like many southerners of his generation he was affronted by the increasing democratization of public processes such as planning. Planning by groups of ordinary citizens staffed by in-house bureaucrats meant that the power to re-imagine cities no longer rested with those who shared the sense of civic responsibility that men like Simons respected. Those civic entrepreneurs were educated, spiritual, financially secure, and disposed to use their gifts to arrange a healthy, orderly, prosperous community as they saw fit. Many had invested heavily of themselves attempting to do just that, and they need not have worried about their legacy. By 1962 Simons, his professional colleagues, and their clients such as Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs had imprinted their vision of urban form on postwar America’s fastest-growing region. During the critical decades from the 1920s to the 1950s when Sunbelt cities such as Tampa were most open to lasting influence, a generation of civic entrepreneurs shaped them. Dozens of southern urban regimes made choices informed mainly by their intense pursuit of growth. Their cities became characterized by sprawl and auto-mobilization. Their leaders marshaled public resources at every level of government to favor growth according to that pattern.

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289 “The Community Responsibility of Local Authorities,” speech text, n.d. but from context ca. 1962. (E.g., Simons refers to the 25 years since passage of the Wagner-Steagall Housing Act of 1937). This speech appeared to have been prepared for delivery to a meeting of local public housing authorities in Florida.
In 1962, more than at any time since the real estate boom of the 1920s the success of that vision was manifest. Tampa seemed to be part of a new frontier, and opportunities for growth appeared to open in every direction. Tampans’ sense of their possibilities reinforced the urgency of peacefully navigating the explosive complexities of racial integration. Tangibly and otherwise, the federal Interstate Highway System enabled the Cigar City to join the American Sunbelt.
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION: MAKING A SUNBELT DEMOCRACY

The four decades covered in this study saw Tampa’s influential business and political leaders turn repeatedly to the federal government to help overcome local obstacles to urban growth. Civic entrepreneurs, who moved easily between the spheres of private enterprise and public policy, re-configured local government by creating new institutions similar to those of the federal government. The new local authorities accomplished tangible transportation improvements that Tampans had long wanted, while functioning with less citizen participation than did elected bodies such as the Tampa City Council or the Hillsborough County Commission. Nevertheless, by the 1960s the popular movement for social justice for African Americans was slowly bringing about greater public involvement in functions such as urban planning that had previously been reserved for elites. Rules, policies, and laws that accompanied the physical and financial interventions of the federal government in Tampa helped increase the influence of ordinary citizens, while complicating that of civic entrepreneurs. However, owing to the help of federal agencies and federal investment, these local elites were largely able to realize of their ambitions. By the early 1960s, Tampa’s long process of maturation into a modern urban center seemed manifest in its new highways, airport, and seaport.

Beginning in the 1930s, Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs reacted to the city’s troubled reputation, unstable economy, and dysfunctional government by helping to reorient local political power and by pursuing federal investment in public works. Tampa’s earlier political regime, deeply corrupt and consumed by the internecine competition for power, gradually gave way to interests principally concerned with
growth, rather than with achieving and preserving broad political hegemony for its own sake. What then emerged during the late 1940s was a set of institutions whose leaders enjoyed unprecedented autonomy and control over the allocation of public resources in pursuit of substantial infrastructure development. Tampa’s post war planners and leaders were a coalition of private and public sector actors who privileged business objectives in the region’s political economy. In the early 1960s, this conscious program of government-sponsored growth and economic development that had been underway in Tampa for nearly thirty years climaxed with the building of the Interstate Highways in the city and surrounding area.

Federal programs, laws, and mandates changed Tampa and other Southern cities, even as federal jurisprudence effected key changes. The Supreme Court, along with federal judges throughout the South, gradually brought the people of the region into a new era of desegregation. The high court’s *Smith v. Allwright* decision (1944) stimulated Southern blacks’ participation in electoral politics. In 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education* challenged white Southerners as nothing had since the end of Reconstruction, although in fact public schools desegregated only slowly thereafter. In 1962, *Baker v. Carr* rearranged Southern politics, eliminating the region’s characteristic pattern of rural over-representation in state government.  

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290 Indeed, *Baker v. Carr* altered the urban political economy of the South. The case originated when citizens of Memphis, Nashville, and Knoxville sued the state of Tennessee for having failed, since 1901, to reapportion its legislative districts, as the state’s constitution required. In a pattern common to states of the old Confederacy, the rural-dominated legislature sought to preserve its lawmaking power against the antithetical interests of urban voters and their representatives. Tennessee’s circuit and appellate judges supported the legislature. In 1959, the plaintiffs in *Baker v. Carr* turned to the U.S. District Court, arguing that the state was violating rights of Tennesseans under the federal constitution. The federal district judge disagreed, and the plaintiffs appealed directly to the United States Supreme Court. By April, 1961, when the Court heard initial arguments, Robert Kennedy was the new U.S. Attorney General, and his Solicitor General was Archibald Cox, also new. Acting with Kennedy’s approval, Cox joined the case with an amicus brief from the U.S. Justice Department, changing the case from a relatively obscure political
In places like Tampa, the political stakes were already high. Since 1948, Hillsborough County’s state legislative delegation had fruitlessly sought a home-rule charter. The rural legislators who dominated Florida’s legislature reserved committee chairmanships for themselves. With rare exceptions the powerful offices of House Speaker and Senate President were also the preserve of rural legislators. By 1962, Tampa’s civic entrepreneurs faced a dilemma. On the one hand, reapportionment that reflected Florida’s urbanizing population would improve local representation in the state capital. It would also increase the number of legislators representing urban districts who would be sympathetic to the needs of Florida’s cities in general. On the other hand, reapportionment would empower minority voters who in the early 1960s were unfriendly to most incumbent urban regimes. The Supreme Court resolved the dilemma by ordering reapportionment, a process that was itself painfully contentious and plagued by attempts to soften its impact.291

After a few false starts, *Baker v. Carr* eventually led to greater legislative representation for Tampa as well as to a fresh generation of ambitious if inexperienced new legislators. One of these was Paul W. Danahy, Jr., an attorney who had served as Executive Director of the Hillsborough County Local Government Study Commission. In 2005, Danahy recalled that reapportionment had created a number of new seats for Hillsborough County with no incumbents. The opportunity to run for an open legislative seat was unusual. To have several simultaneously open seats was a rarity, and in 1966, with seeming suddenness, Danahy became one of a bumper crop of freshmen Senators

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and House members representing Tampa in the state capital. His colleagues included young politicians such Bob Graham, Lawton Chiles, Terrell Sessums, Talbot “Sandy” D’Alemberte, and Reubin Askew. In another sign of great political change, a Republican was elected as governor for the first time since Reconstruction.292

Accommodating such political realignments encouraged demands on the part of the formerly excluded, most notably African Americans, for a greater presence in matters that affected them. Sometimes whites’ concessions were symbolic adaptations from which there could nevertheless be no going back. Thus, in 1962 one of Tampa’s unwritten, seemingly invisible racist traditions evaporated when Tom McEwen became the new sports editor of the *Tampa Tribune*, with wide latitude to revamp the *Tribune*’s sports reportage. Until then, news coverage involving black athletes appeared only on the inside pages of the sports section, never on the front, and photographs of black athletes appeared not at all. Tacitly acknowledging the reality of blacks’ achievements in American major league sports such as baseball and football, and on teams that were racially integrated, McEwen ended both obsolete policies.293

In 1963, race relations in Tampa were not sufficiently advanced as to allow for any black appointees to serve on a Local Government Study Commission (LGSC) created that year by a special act of the Florida legislature. Indeed, on November 18, civil rights and desegregation in Tampa re-surfaced as major concerns when the city hosted a sitting U.S. president for the first time. John F. Kennedy came to Tampa as part of a concerted effort to maintain support for his administration and for the

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Democratic Party in the South. Both the President and his party were under pressure from white southerners who opposed Kennedy's increasingly apparent sympathy for the civil rights movement. The President's major appearance in Tampa was before a meeting of the Florida Chamber of Commerce, where he was pointedly asked about his recent show of support for racial integration. Kennedy answered that as President he intended to carry out his responsibilities to all Americans, which he pointed out was not the obligation of Chambers of Commerce. As Paul Danahy recalled the moment, "there was not much applause to that statement, but I thought there was a feeling of respect for the guy [Kennedy] for saying what he said."²⁹⁴

In the 1960s, other political changes that included growing environmental consciousness. Throughout the U.S. new, articulate voices questioned the values that inspired highway construction and other major public works that had since the 1930s been at the core of civic entrepreneurs’ ambitions for Tampa. However, such skepticism came too late to change the city's modern physical and economic structure. For nearly twenty years after the end of WW II, the Tampa Bay metropolitan area experienced the effects of federally subsidized public works programs underwriting economic and population growth. Citizen engagement was superficial, while the responsible public officials, their staffs, and consultants enjoyed a broad presumption of professional expertise and personal disinterest.

The postwar years in Tampa were a time during which a centralized style of joint public-private planning could function more freely than before or since. During the

²⁹⁴ Bliss, “Danahy Oral History Interview,” p. 74. Four days after his Tampa visit, Kennedy died in an assassination in Dallas, Texas. Although Tampans such as Danahy who were present throughout his visit recall the President as having been only marginally popular in Tampa, the public turnout for his first and only visit was large and enthusiastic. After his death, Tampa's City Council honored him by renaming Lafayette Street, a major east-west thoroughfare, as John F. Kennedy Boulevard.
pivotal fifteen years of Tampa’s growth following World War II, popular concerns about environmental consequences were rare. Authors such as Marjorie Stoneman Douglas and Rachel Carson questioned the presumption that human aspirations should be permitted to trump the Earth’s natural order. Environmental consciousness then began to attract a political constituency, while challenging prevailing assumptions about the benefits of growth that had long informed Tampans’ worldview. For example, a writer in 1940 described Tampa’s Davis Islands as having been transformed from “a barren waste to one of the show places of Florida.” Prior to D.P. Davis’s ambitious project to dredge up the bay bottom and fill in the island, Tampans had regarded the marshy patch just south of downtown as a smelly eyesore, especially since its sea grasses trapped and filtered waste and debris that they dumped into the Hillsborough River. Davis’s new development epitomized Florida’s 1920s real estate boom in Tampa, while the destruction of the grassy key beneath it demonstrated Floridians’ habitual nonchalance toward the natural beauty that surrounded them.

Postwar planning carried out by elites did not end the divisions between the City of Tampa and those of Hillsborough Country. Instead, new agencies such as the Tampa Port Authority, the Hillsborough Aviation Authority, an inter-local sewer district, and the Hillsborough City-County Planning Commission offered new paths to circumvent those old urban conflicts. The new administrative bodies reduced and diluted the power of local interests, moving functions away from elective office holders at the city and county level, and into the hands of appointees. The functions of government that made the


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transition to new institutions were those having to do with transportation infrastructure. Local seaport, airport, and road building functions came under the control of officials with presumptive qualifications to exercise informed judgment, equitably and dispassionately. In collaboration with legal, engineering, and financial consultants and with the help of federal financing, these officials transcended Tampa’s political boundaries. Their results, such as Tampa International Airport and the local Interstate Highway network, rationalized Tampa’s economic geography according to what civic entrepreneurs saw as the most important objective of the community at large, which was growth.

By operating under the aegis of expertise cloaked with authority, appointees to agencies governing major infrastructure became less visible, and thereby less responsible, to voters and elected officials alike. With no particular attempt at subterfuge, but only slight interaction with interests other than those of industry and finance, Tampa’s new public authorities planned, financed, built, and operated collective assets that became crucial to Tampa’s growth. By ensuring the city’s place as the regional transportation nexus, by air, sea, and highway, those planners and managers guaranteed Tampa’s supremacy as the economic center of west central Florida.

Civic entrepreneurs’ cherished ambition to re-energize downtown Tampa was less successful. Downtown Tampa merchants’ had fought a long rearguard action to preserve their regional dominance of retailing, which ended ironically with the completion of the Interstate expressway. In 1967, Westshore Plaza opened as the first fully-enclosed mall on Florida’s west coast. It was at the westernmost point on I-4 in Tampa and the eastern terminus of the Howard Frankland Bridge connecting St.
Petersburg and Clearwater with Tampa. The new mall was also close to Tampa International Airport. Its anchor tenant was Tampa’s leading retailer, Maas Brothers Department Store, whose longtime managing director Jerry Waterman had personified downtown retailing since the 1930s. The spatial diffusion of the economic function of Tampa’s central business district into commercial strips and clusters away from the downtown was part of a pattern that characterized cities across the U.S. The pattern emerged naturally in Sunbelt places such as Tampa, owing to their reliance on automobiles and their postwar successes at accommodating motorists.

By 1964, the Sunbelt pattern of urban diffusion was settled, and growth thereafter followed in the same pattern. The values and presumptions of the interwar years in Tampa helped reinforce the preferences behind that pattern of growth. Thus, the events of the 1920s shaped development and life throughout the rest of the twentieth century, and guided Tampa’s evolution as a Sunbelt place.


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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Alan Bliss is a native of Cleveland, Ohio, with roots in Tampa, Florida. His bachelor’s and master’s degrees are from the University of Florida, where he studied U.S. History, with a minor field in geography. Before returning to higher education, he was a Florida real estate broker, appraiser, and property manager. He has also worked as a commercial mariner, and is an experienced offshore sailor. While completing the Ph.D., he has taught U.S. History at the University of Florida in Gainesville, and at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville.