

DEVELOPMENT ON THE FORGOTTEN COAST: THE LOCATIONS OF POWER IN  
LOCAL DECISION-MAKING REGARDING COASTAL DEVELOPMENT

By

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To my dad, who opened up the world as a place of exploration, who always answered my questions, and who taught me the satisfaction that comes from finding out.

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This thesis evaluates the applicability of three different frameworks for understanding community power: pluralism, elite theory, and social constructionism. I utilize a case study of Apalachicola Bay, Florida in order to produce a detailed ethnographic account of power in local decision-making regarding coastal development.

Each theoretical framework identifies the exercise of power with different mechanisms- pluralists see power as dispersed among competing groups who act in an open political system based on their interests. Proponents of elite theory see power as concentrated among small, disproportionately influential groups who are able to utilize their positions and resources to exercise a great deal of control in the community. Theorists that fall within a social constructionist/political ecology framework see power as a more complex, dynamic element that is manifested in the ability of individuals or groups to shape discourse and create knowledge.

By investigating the political, economic, social, and historical contexts within which debate over development along the Apalachicola Bay are seated, a better understanding of who has power and how it is exercised is developed. By utilizing an ethnographic case study, this

research sheds some light on a field of study that has been contested for decades by critically evaluating the appropriateness of these three theories.

Ethnographic and inductive analysis indicated that no one theory of community power is adequate for identifying the location and exercise of power in local decision-making. Power is a dynamic and multifaceted tool that can be expressed in more than one place, and in more than one form. The debate and subsequent approval of SummerCamp in Franklin County involved elements of power characterized by pluralist, elite, and social constructionist theories.

These findings point to the need for specific, contextual understandings of local decision-making processes. The inadequacy of any one theory of community power illustrates the dangers of assuming that local politics is always inclusive and pluralistic. It also negates the idea that decision making can always be controlled by an elite few. Finally, the importance of the social construction of knowledge and discourse in local power structures is reinforced, but not at the expense of traditionally recognized structural constraints such as social position or economic and political resources.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The Gulf Coast of Florida's Panhandle region possesses a unique set of characteristics when compared to the rest of the state. The northwest area of Florida is much less developed than central and southern Florida. Aside from a few sporadic tourist areas such as Panama City Beach, there are few condo corridors, hotel clusters, warehouse-sized souvenir shops, and mini-golf complexes. Instead, nutrient-rich rivers, estuaries and wetlands, expansive tracts of pine forest, rolling beach dunes, hardwood hammocks, and tidal marshes make up much of the area. The Panhandle boasts a place among the top five biodiversity hotspots in North America (Blaustein 2008).

Rich in natural resources and isolated from the dense patterns of development that have come to define the southern part of the state, northwest Florida stands at the brink of a new era. Much of its rural and coastal lands have been slated for development on an unprecedented scale. With population and economic growth come land use changes that will forever alter the "Forgotten Coast." Those who want to protect the wetlands and native species of the area, as well as those who simply do not want northwest Florida to mirror south Florida, take a stand against unbridled development. However, local governments are often attracted to the promises of economic growth that accompany development, and in northwest Florida, economic growth is welcomed by citizens and public officials in areas deemed "economically depressed." Powerful actors are locating planned communities centered on New Urbanist concepts into lands formerly occupied only by old growth forests, red-cockaded woodpeckers, and oyster processors. Developers encapsulate the natural beauty and the wild spirit of the area into marketable images designed to draw in upscale clientele to a potential gold mine market.

According to the Florida 2060 Report, created by the GeoPlan Center at the University of Florida, Florida's population is expected to more than double between 2006 and 2060, and given current land use policies, the amount of developed land will also be doubled. This trend indicates that an additional seven million acres of Florida land will be urbanized by 2060, and that "2.7 million acres of existing agricultural land will be lost along with 2.7 million acres of native habitat" (Geoplan Center 2006:17). The remaining 20% of land that is predicted to be urbanized consists of mixed uses, such as mining and extraction, exotic plant cover, and low density urban development (Geoplan Center 2006:17).

The Geoplan Center report predicts that the Panhandle might be insulated from much of the coming development, with new building concentrated in the areas of Pensacola, Milton, Crestview, DeFuniak Springs, and Panama City. These predictions are based on data provided by the Bureau of Economics and Business Research on rates of birth, death, immigration, and emigration (2006:8). They qualify this prediction by noting that this "result is not guaranteed, however, as large land holders with the capital to undertake development of entire new towns can dramatically influence population growth and population distribution in a relatively short time period" (2006:8). It is likely that the authors of the Geoplan Center report are referring to a specific landholder in Northwest Florida- The St. Joe Company. The company was formerly in the pulp and paper industry, but has recently transformed into a real estate development powerhouse. The St. Joe Company is the largest landowner in Florida, claiming about 900,000 acres in eleven Panhandle counties. Of this land, St. Joe boasts forty miles of coastal acreage (Ziewitz & Wiaz 2004). St. Joe's landholdings places the company squarely in the center of development politics in the Panhandle. As Ziewitz and Wiaz (2004:8) note, "Although the St.

Joe Company is not the only agent of change, it is, because of the scope of its plans and its political and fiscal power, the leader.”

The town of Apalachicola, the county seat of Franklin County, is situated where the Apalachicola River empties into the Gulf of Mexico. The estuarine environment provides an ideal nursery for 95% of commercially harvested species in the Gulf of Mexico (Florida Department of Environmental Protection 2005). In 2004, it was estimated that 60-85% of the local population near the Apalachicola Reserve made their living from the fishing industry, with seafood landings bringing in \$70-\$80 million dollars annually (National Estuarine Research Reserve System 2004). Franklin County alone harvests over 90% of Florida’s oysters and 10% of the nation’s oysters (Apalachicola Bay Chamber of Commerce 2006). However, construction and development threaten the sensitive environment of the Apalachicola Bay (USGS 2005).

There is much contention as to whether and how development should occur, with government officials, developers, businesses, bankers, realtors, builders, environmentalists, NGOs and citizens drawing lines in the sand. Whatever decisions are made, the consequences will determine the new shape of the area’s economy, the future demographics of the area’s residents, and the very nature of the town and the bay that hover in limbo while the debate ensues.

This thesis investigates a major development decision in a particular town in northwest Florida in order to understand the complex nature of community decision-making- the historical, economic, and political contexts within which debate is situated, and how power might shape public debate concerning development. The goal of this research is to produce an accounting of where power is located in local decision making regarding development along the Apalachicola Bay. Which theories most accurately describe where power is situated and how power is

exercised in local decision-making? Are pluralists correct in their description of power in local decision-making as located within an open and accessible process that allows for competing interests to register their preferences and to reach consensus via traditional democratic processes? Or do elite theorists capture the true nature of power in community decision-making whereby a privileged few are able to control what issues are placed on the agenda? Or, is power situated within a nebulous cloud of discourse and ideology-within the grasp of those who are able to exert an influence on public debate, be it from the top-down or the bottom-up?

These competing theories of power in community decision-making attest to the complex nature of local politics. Perhaps most importantly, scholars recognize that generalizations cannot be applied to all places at all times. Power structures and decision-making mechanisms vary over time and by place. In truth, no one theory can be evenly applied to all places. It is useful to keep these theories in mind, and based on situational facts, apply them as appropriate. In this vein of thought, Logan advocates a “comparative theory of urban political economy” (1976:352).

It is in this spirit that I address the nature of power surrounding development decisions in the Apalachicola Bay. Rather than an attempt to fit the processes of power at work into one of the theories, I hope to conversely see which theory better describes the location and exercise of power in decision-making in the Bay. It is hoped that a descriptive and analytic account of a case study of development decision-making in Apalachicola provides a tool for evaluating theories of community power. Theories of community power serve as predictors of how actors and institutions interact to determine how this region will be shaped- physically, ecologically and socially.

## CHAPTER 2 BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

### **Theories of Community Power**

Scholars within political science and sociology have engaged a long-contested debate concerning how local decision-making takes place. They posit theories as to which actors have the power to make local decisions, how they assume this power, and how they exercise their power. The concept of power has been defined in countless ways across the social sciences disciplines. Therefore, when analyzing who has power in a local community, a researcher must “commit” in some sense to accept one of multiple definitions of what power actually is. The obvious consequence of choosing a definition of power, however, is that it shapes the fundamental nature of the research. Steven Lukes emphasizes that with regards to the concept of power, “both its definition and any given use of it, once defined, are inextricably tied to a given set of (probably unacknowledged) value-assumptions which predetermine the range of its empirical application”(2005:30). Therefore, a brief survey of the definition of power is in order.

### **Pluralist Views of Community Power**

Robert Dahl, in his highly influential *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*, viewed politics as an open arena in which individuals and groups compete on behalf of their interests. According to Dahl and other pluralists, power is the ability of *A* to get *B* to do what *A* wants; thus, power has a causal relationship (Dahl 1968:410). This causation model incorporates certain events as causal upon other outcomes or behaviors. While Dahl ceded that power is not evenly distributed, he nevertheless credited pluralist democracy, or polyarchy, with minimizing coercion, promoting the consent of all citizens, and creating opportunities for rational conflict resolution. Individuals have the opportunity to act within the political system based on their utilization of resources (money, time, wealth, information, legitimacy, the rights

associated with securing public office, popularity, etc. (1961:226). While acknowledging that some have access to more resources than others, Dahl argues that collective resources such as voting balance out the scales of power (1961:233). Pluralists see community power as “noncumulative and dispersed” (1961:11). Power is located in the proportional pressure exerted by individuals and interest groups, and identified as being exercised by those whose interests are served by decisional outcomes. Traditionally, pluralists utilize a decisional approach to analyze decision-making power. They see actors in decision-making as specialized agents who have a limited scope of power in certain areas, but with no overlap between one power center and another. Thus, power is fragmented. For example, an individual might exercise power in the decision-making process regarding, say, how to zone a parcel of land, but that same individual might not have an influence on local tax revenue allocation. Power is exercised through the ability to influence decisions.

### **Elite Theory Views of Community Power**

Elite theorists, however, see community power as being concentrated in the hands of a powerful few from political, social-economic, or military blocs, who exercise informal control over multiple sectors. Therefore, the interests of a powerful fraction of the citizenry are predominant in local decision-making. Elite theorists C.W. Mills, G.W. Domhoff and Thomas Dye utilized a positional approach to studying community power. Their method of analysis was to “identify major political, economic, military, or social associations or institutions, and then to analyze the membership, cohesiveness, and impact of such groups” (Waste 1986:15). They felt that higher levels of overlap indicated a concentration of power in the hands of the elite. An alternative approach by elite theorists in the study of power and influence in local decision-making is the “reputational” approach, set forth by Hunter in his influential *Community Power Structure* (1953). Hunter composed a pool of community leaders, and based on identification

among other key members of the community, ranked these individuals in terms of their power and influence at the local level. These individuals were the subject of Hunter's studies of power in local decision-making. Elite theorists see power as derived from the economic, social, and/or political positions that individuals or groups hold in a community.

With respect to development, elite theorists have identified what they describe as powerful networks of land-based elites who exercise power in local decision-making in order to maximize benefits for themselves. Harvey Molotch developed a "growth machine" theory, which contributed to the debate in that it was able to "take attention away from elites as behind-the-scenes conspirators in the city and to refocus attention on the larger politico-economic forces that influence city politics" (Harrigan & Vogel 2003:189). Molotch asserted that local elites who stand to benefit from development (landowners, realtors, bankers, builders, etc.) share an interest in advocating growth. Growth creates for this group a return on capital that is invested in land and increases in rents and payments. These interests are active in government and influential among politicians in order to secure financial benefits from pro-growth policies (Molotch 1976). However, Molotch contends that local residents do not stand to make gains from the advancement of the growth machine. Residents are promised the influx of jobs and a lower unemployment rate, but Logan and Molotch bring forth evidence that this is, in fact, not the case (1987:85-98). Often, the influx of jobs is accompanied by an influx of skilled, experienced workers and their families, creating higher demand for jobs. In addition, residents' quality of life is further threatened by an increase in tax burdens which might drive residents from their locality.

Critics of the elitist view of a unified business interest point out that the business sector of a city might have divergent interests, and that business influence is limited by the extent of its

local heterogeneity. However, Logan (1976) contends that a view of growth as the predominant political and economic concern is more useful than the pluralist model of a level playing field for all interests. Logan elaborates, “growth is the result of the usurpation of political control by unrepresentative land-based local elites and is the source of their continuing coherence as a power bloc” (1976:349). Elite theorists criticize pluralism on the basis that by focusing on decisions alone, the role of power in setting the agenda is ignored.

### **The Social Constructionist View of Power**

In their 1966 book, *The Social Construction of Reality*, Berger and Luckmann put forth the theory that social reality is constructed. That is, knowledge of what constitutes reality is the product of dynamic, ongoing negotiations between individuals through social interaction. For example, the institution of marriage and all of its associated roles and rules are constructed over time through a multitude of social interactions. Marriage does not exist objectively, but rather through social negotiations as to what marriage is and is not. Notions of engagement, wedding ceremonies, wedding rings, fidelity, living together- these are all commonly accepted components of marriage in modern western societies. Conceptions of what marriage is change over time; divorce was introduced only relatively recently as a way to end a marriage, and the possibility of same-sex marriage is spurring a new debate about what marriage is. The concept of marriage also varies among cultures. In some cultures, marriage is pre-arranged rather than the result of a period of time known as dating. Polygamy is an accepted element of marriage in some cultures but not others. This example illustrates how social institutions and even “common sense” knowledge (e. g., when one is sick, one goes to the doctor) are socially constructed rather than objectively “real”.

Social constructionists emphasize the production of knowledge through social interaction. Whoever is involved in the production and classification of knowledge is imbued with power. A postmodernist turn in social constructionist theory is embodied in the engagement with Foucault (1980:93), who emphasizes how power is a principal agent in the creation of truth:

There are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated, nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse... We are subjected to the production of truth through power, and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth.

An important form of social interaction that is involved in the social construction of knowledge is discourse. Foucault conceives of discourse as a “system of possibility for knowledge.” Discourse frames the way we conceive the world and the modes in which we define and discuss it. In analyzing discourse, Foucault asserts that questions about the rules of discourse must be asked. As Mark Philip (1985:69) elaborates, these questions involve

what rules permit certain statements to be made; what rules order these statements; what rules permit us to identify some statements as true or false; what rules allow the construction of a map; model or classificatory system; what rules allow us to identify certain individuals as authors; and what rules are revealed when an object of discourse is modified or transformed.

These rules create a discourse that guides our everyday modes of thinking, scientific modes of inquiry and explanation, and eventually, policy making and the justification, reinforcement, adaptation, or revolution of social institutions.

Social constructionists locate power in the ability to create knowledge. Those who are most able to shape the discourse in local decision-making are imbued with more power than those who are unable to exert such an influence in the public discussion. In local decision-making, this power might be manifested in the ability to influence how an

issue is presented and debated. In order to shape public discourse, one might utilize one's position or influence in order to gain access to public media, or perhaps to create statements or other documents formalizing a position (e.g., the stance of the American Academy of Pediatrics on breastfeeding). Political parties, real estate agents, and marketing firms all understand and take advantage of the fact that how something is framed can very well affect its success or failure as an ideology, a sale, or a product: "oil drilling" vs. "energy exploration," "decrepit house" vs. "charming fixer-upper," or "diet pills" vs. "dietary supplement."

With regard to development decision-making, the location and exercise of power can be identified as highly visible support or dissent regarding a particular development, public media announcements and propaganda, formal policy recommendations, or speeches or statements given at public events. The manipulation of the discourse surrounding public decisions can also be more covert. While more difficult to identify, it can take place through using particular types of language or words that convey a particularly positive or negative image, both in public and private dialogue. Social constructionists point to a dialectical relationship between the individual and society in the construction of meaning. Therefore, the ways in which different parties frame a particular decision imbues the decision-making process with whatever positive or negative associations they desire to associate outcomes with. Benford and Snow (2000:626) recognize the importance of discursive processes in the framing of public issues, arguing that "the key to understanding the evolution of frames resides in the articulation and amplification processes rather than in the topics or issues comprising the frames."

### **The Three Dimensions of Power**

Steven Luke's *Power: A Radical View* (1974:124) surveyed and critically assessed social and political theories concerning the definitions of and exercise of power. This work serves as a

useful tool in conceptualizing the three competing schools of thought outlined above. Lukes notes that the definition of power as domination is “essentially contested.” He conceives of power as more than just overt outcomes and controlling the agenda; he also incorporates a view of power that involves consent through willful compliance.

Lukes identifies the pluralist model of power as one-dimensional. By focusing on observable conflict and outcomes, this notion of power does not allow for unarticulated or unobservable interests (1970:19). The two-dimensional view of power is also criticized. He cites Bachrach and Baratz’s definition of power: “to the extent that a person or group – consciously or unconsciously – creates or reinforces barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts, that person or group has power” (1970:8). This type of power is manifested not only in what decisions are made, but by non-decision-making. Conflict is not limited to its overt exercise, it can be covert as well. Power can be said to be exercised when covert grievances are prevented from entering into the political system. This conception of power is in line with the power elite theories that place power into the hands of a few who are able to control the agenda. Lukes criticizes this view of power on the basis that it is “still too committed to behaviorism,” or the overt, outcome-based model of decision- (and non-decision) making (1970:25). This view of power, he contends, ignores how the system can be biased. It also fails to recognize that conflict is not necessary for power. He argues that “the most effective and insidious use of power is to prevent such conflict from arising in the first place” (1970:27). Power can be exercised, Lukes contends, by influencing an individual’s interests, for example through control of information and socialization (1970:27). Lukes characterizes this third dimension of power as the securing of compliance to domination. The social constructionist view of power relations complements this

embodiment of power through the emphasis placed on the generation and creation of knowledge and the framing of issues.

Lukes does not ignore the problem of the determination of interests in his survey of power. A definition of power is closely linked to judgments about interests. Views and perceptions of domination give “divergent answers to what constitutes a rationally defensible and undistorted account of what those interests are,” and therefore, he maintains, “the concept of power as domination is essentially contested” (1970:124). He concludes that the third dimension of power involves “the capacity to secure compliance to domination through the shaping of beliefs and desires, by imposing internal constraints under historically changing circumstances” (1970:144)

### **The Need for a Critical Comparison of Theories of Community Power**

Upon reviewing the conflicting theories in political science and sociology concerning the politics, power and processes involved in local decision-making, the need for a context specific approach is evident. Theories concerning decision-making are valuable, but cannot be applied evenly across space and time. By utilizing a thorough historical, economic, and social contextual analysis, as well as a deep ethnographic method, a case study of decision making in a particular place might lend insights to those who want to understand how different groups and individuals take part in local decision-making. This research centers on a specific area- the Apalachicola Bay in northwest Florida- as an ideal example for a case study. Development decisions that are currently being contested will have a permanent impact on the nature of Apalachicola Bay’s places, the allocation of resources, the shape of its economy, the health of its environment, and the story of its future.

## CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

### **Approach**

This research incorporates a political ecology approach. According to Blaikie and Brookfield, political ecology “combines the concerns of ecology and a broadly defined political economy” and “encompasses the constantly shifting dialectic between society and land-based resources” (1987:17)

This interactive view of nature-human relationships complements social constructionism. The process of social construction is embedded within political and economic power structures. Political ecologists emphasize the significance of the political, economic, and historical contexts within which environmental problems are framed. Therefore, environmental issues and human-nature interactions are seen as complex, historically rooted, and deserving of careful analysis as rooted in political, economic, and cultural systems.

Along with the centrality of knowledge/power and the constructive and subjective conceptions of nature and environment, historical context is a fundamental area of study for political ecologists. Peluso and Watts, in their study of violence and environmental conflict, emphasize the complex interactive element in specific local histories and within the political economy. They recognize the importance of the context within which violence occurs and the reciprocal relationship between humans and nature. They see contention as existing within “social relations of production” (patterns of accumulation, forms of control and access concerning resources, the actors which constitute contention), as well as the “social fields of power,” or the historical and cultural context within which actors’ desires are expressed (2001:29).

Political ecologists and social constructionists view power as related to the control of knowledge and the development and constraint on discourse. Within the context of local decision-making, then, power in local politics might be found in how issues are defined and framed by those who are actively involved in the creation and negotiation of discourse. It is important to note that power to shape discourse can be located across multiple lines of social, economic, and political standing. Power to shape discourse is not necessarily a top-down phenomenon. Scholars such as Benford and Snow recognize the role of social movement actors as “signifying agents actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists, and bystanders or observers” (2000:613).

### **Methodological Concerns**

Two methodological concerns deserve attention and explication. First, the question of whether a social constructionist, political ecology oriented approach to research can be used to compare the value of that same type of framework for analyzing decision-making with other competing frameworks must be addressed. Does using a particular type of approach to research bias the researcher to favor that approach in the comparison? I argue that, no matter what, the researcher must use some type of framework for conducting and analyzing the research, and therefore there is always a chance for bias to be present. However, by recognizing and acknowledging my theoretical and methodological orientation, it is hoped that this bias can be checked through careful reflexivity throughout the research process. Paying special attention to social, economic, and cultural context and to the constructivist nature of social phenomena automatically does not preclude the identification of other theoretical frameworks as useful or inappropriate. As a matter of fact, a holistic analysis of social phenomena might lend more flexibility and openness to alternative theories than adherence to more narrow approaches.

Secondly, it is important to briefly address the application of a field of study that overwhelmingly focuses on the “Third World” to a “First World” town. While the political ecology approach has traditionally focused on research in the “Third World,” McCarthy asserts that the questions asked by political ecology are appropriate across the constructed divides of the “First” and the “Third Worlds,” as well as across the constructed divides of urban or rural and capitalist or non-capitalist (2005 :954). He claims that “adoption of a political ecology framework, by situating research in a tradition in which such issues are central, compels researchers working in industrialized countries to address them, while also connecting them with one of the best sets of tools currently available to identify, investigate, and theorize such factors” (2005:954).

### **Methodology**

In order to examine power in local decision-making concerning growth in Apalachicola Bay, a key “event,” or public outcome relating to development was chosen as a case study in order to investigate context, power, and patterns of discourse surrounding development decisions. This case study was researched using a two-step data collection process. First, information was gathered from public documents such as books, journal articles newspaper articles, official publications issued by NGOs, developers, governments, and other groups, minutes of city council meetings, speeches, etc. to determine the historical, political, and economic context of development in northwest Florida, as well as how individuals and organizations situated themselves in regard to this development decision along the Apalachicola Bay.

Second, a series of interviews was conducted, focusing on the actors surrounding development decisions. In addition to recognizing the meanings attached to natural resources, land use, and development in the Apalachicola Bay area, the interviews also sought to more fully

understand why individuals favor or oppose coastal development, and in what ways they do or do not hold power in development decision-making processes. By producing a rich, detailed accounting of the perspectives of individuals and organizations, a more complex comprehension of discourse, meaning, and cultural significance was attained.

Interview respondents represented a diverse group of actors with both direct and indirect involvement in local decision making. Four interviews were conducted with members of local civic and non-governmental organizations including Apalachicola Bay Chamber of Commerce, Apalachee Ecological Conservancy, Apalachicola Bay and River Keeper, and the Franklin County Oyster and Seafood Task Force. Three local government officials were also interviewed. Local business owners comprised four additional interviews. One developer was interviewed, although it should be noted that despite repeated attempts no representatives of St. Joe Company were reached for interview. Six seafood industry workers, two of which were retired, were interviewed. Of these six, two respondents were owners of seafood houses. The remaining ten interviews were conducted with local citizens of varying backgrounds including real estate, education, ministerial service, hospitality, and homemaking. The total of 28 respondents was comprised of eight females and twenty males. Ages of respondents ranged from 22 to 85, although only eight of the 28 interviewees fell outside of the age range of forty to sixty years old.

Respondents were first derived from purposive sampling, then recruited using snowball sampling when necessary. These interviews were conducted in accordance with IRB guidelines, audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using inductive analysis.

My research goal was to assess the usefulness of three different theories of power without forcing the case study to fit into one or the other of the pre-existing theories. I contend that

inductive analysis from data rather than determining whether data fit into a pre-existing theory or not, was the most appropriate way to go about my research.

### **Selection of Case Study**

Both phases of this research focused on a particular development decision along the Apalachicola Bay: the proposal, negotiation process, and approval of SummerCamp, a large residential development consisting of 499 housing units, a beach club, and public dock on St. James Island in eastern Franklin County.

The following chapter tells the story of SummerCamp, or at least as much of the story as I was able to gather from public documents and a series of interviews. A holistic understanding of the political, economic, and social contexts of development decision-making in Franklin County, Florida sets up the story for a more comprehensive understanding and analysis. Therefore, a brief background on the area is provided before delving into the specific case study.

CHAPTER 4  
A BRIEF CONTEXTUAL SURVEY OF APALACHICOLA AND FRANKLIN COUNTY,  
FLORIDA

The area's first historically documented inhabitants were the Native American Apalachees of middle Florida, and the Apalachicolas, who lived near the coast. Spanish explorers began mapping and writing about the Gulf Coast in the early and middle 1500s. By the latter half of the 1700s, the British and French began contending for colonies throughout Florida, with competition culminating in the transfer of Florida from Spain to the English in the 1763 Treaty of Paris. After the American Revolution, Florida was returned to Spain. Soon, however, the expanding United States made claims for Florida territories, and after a series of bloody battles, Spain once again handed over her Florida lands, this time to the U.S. in 1819 (Rogers 1986: xx-xxiii).

The District of Apalachicola was created in 1823, as ships began entering Apalachicola Harbor to load up on cotton that came down the Apalachicola River, along with "hides, sugar, lumber, staves, cedar, and live oak timbers" (1986:4). The town that was growing up at the mouth of the Apalachicola was informally known as Cottontown by the mid-1820s, then incorporated as West Point in 1829. In response to petitions from the town's residents, the name was officially changed to Apalachicola in 1831. Franklin County was founded in 1832, and Apalachicola became the county seat (1986:4-5).

Apalachicola's growth depended on economic ties with upriver towns in Alabama and Georgia, who utilized Apalachicola ports for shipping goods. Meanwhile, merchants upriver relied upon goods unloaded in those same ports. This economic relationship was predicated upon the relocation of thousands of Native Americans in Florida, Georgia, and Alabama, accomplished through postwar treaties, transfers of territory, and monetary compensation that often shortchanged the Native Americans (1986:6-8). The cotton trade also depended largely on

African slaves who worked on the cotton fields and rice plantations. Many of these slaves actually escaped from the plantations and sought freedom in peninsular Florida. Franklin County had few slaves, however, as there were few farms and no large cotton plantations. A few slaves did reside in the area, working on farms, and (some speculate) on boats.

Apalachicola hummed along from year to year following the cycles of tide and commerce. From late fall to early spring, the town bustled with activity. Ships came into harbor, dropped wares from New York and other northern cities, loaded up on cotton, timber and other goods, and then continued on to other coastal towns, or perhaps back to New York. Others crossed the Atlantic to European ports to load up on foreign goods and passengers bound for northern ports (1986:33-4). During the summer, commerce died down and the town's activity slowed like cooling sap. The few who remained endured the fever, pests, and boredom by making social calls, reading, and enjoying the local music. (1986:28-9). By 1840, Apalachicola boasted 1,030 residents. The population grew slowly, reaching 1,906 as the Civil War loomed (1986:17).

In 1860, with the Civil War impending, conditions became less favorable for Franklin County. River water was low, silt piled up and funding for dredging remained low, and the rain refused to fall. Newly built railroads competed for trade traffic, and cotton began being diverted to textile mills further north. Residents of Franklin County were so dependent upon commerce that the 1860 Census reflected no industrial economy and only three persons were listed as farmers (1986:42-3).

Fortunately, the citizens of Franklin County had other resources to turn to. One grew in abundance in the swampy areas around the township of Carabelle- timber. Longleaf yellow pine, ash, cottonwood, cypress, sweet gum, and tupelo gum provided local residents with jobs felling trees, working in lumber mills, and harvesting turpentine and rosin. After World War I, the

lumber industry in Franklin County fell due to a combination of deforestation and decreased demand for timber and naval goods. One holdout, The St. Joe Company, still owns seventy thousand acres of Franklin County land, a significant part of its nearly one million acres of land holdings in northwest Florida (McCarthy 2004:84-6). The significance of the St. Joe Company and its land holdings in Franklin County will be discussed later, as development decisions in the county are intricately bound up with its land uses.

A significant resource for Franklin County comes from the Gulf of Mexico and the shallow estuarine waters around the Apalachicola Bay: seafood. An estuary is an area where fresh- and salt-water mix. As the nutrient-rich Apalachicola River empties into the salt water of the bay, a perfect environment is created for oysters, shrimp, crabs, clams and fish to grow and reproduce.

In *Apalachicola Bay*, McCarthy discusses the role of the seafood industry in Franklin County. He notes that, “up until recently, between sixty and eighty-five percent of the citizens of Franklin County have made a living from the seafood industry, which contributes more than eleven million dollars a year to the local economy and eventually generates over seventy million dollars a year by the time all of the seafood reaches restaurant tables” (2004:75). The Gulf of Mexico is a huge component of the seafood industry, supplying forty-two percent of the national harvest (2004:75). The Apalachicola Bay provides up to six million pounds of shrimp per year. In addition, blue crabs, clams, bay anchovy, striped mullet, flounder, speckled sea trout, red fish, croaker, spot, and sand sea trout are abundant in the bay (2004:76-7). Ten percent of the nation’s oysters, and ninety percent of Florida’s oysters, come from the Apalachicola Bay. Native Americans were harvesting oysters from the bay, as evidenced by shell mounds found along the coast. However, the oyster did not become a part of the new local economy until shortly before

the Civil War, right around the time that the cotton trade was declining as a reliable source of income for Franklin County residents (2004:65-7).

The seafood industry in the Apalachicola Bay has had to adapt to numerous challenges throughout recent years. Dredging was outlawed due to the tendency of the method to disrupt healthy oyster beds. The Florida Marine Fisheries Commission now strictly regulates limited dredging. Hurricanes and drought in the 1980s damaged oyster beds and brought about experimentation with aquaculture in the bay. Young oysters are placed in porous bags and attached to submerged pipes, then allowed to grow. Oysters have also been relocated from certain areas to others that are more productive and less vulnerable to harmful algal blooms. Over 750 acres of artificial reefs have been built in the bay since 1949, providing a boon to oyster harvesting (2004:68-9).

Further interventions in the seafood industry of the area have been legislative in nature. The Apalachicola Bay Protection Act of 1985 called for upgrades to the county's sewage system, in order to reduce the amount of contamination in the bay. In addition, the act handed power to the State Department of Community Affairs regarding development decisions (2004:70). Regulatory actions are viewed by those who depend on the Apalachicola Bay's resources as having both positive and negative aspects. An amendment in 1995 limited the use of fishing nets in an effort to address the problems associated with overfishing. However, this put many who made their livings from netting amberjack, grouper, snapper, and other finfish out of business (2004:79)

Ask almost anyone who works and makes their living from the seafood industry in Franklin County, and they will tell you that oystermen, shrimpers, and fisherman are an endangered species. First of all, many blame state regulations that were passed in order to protect

certain wildlife for wrecking the industry. A local seafood dealer and a long-time oysterman complain inside the office of a seafood retail store about “those people up in Tallahassee, who don’t understand how these regulations affect workers.” Legislation banning tramble nets, implementing the use of smaller nets, turtle excluder devices, restrictions on redfish, and other catch limits pose severe constraints on what seafood harvesters are able to bring in.

Once back on land, the two men tell me, they are forced to contend with dealers who have lowered their payouts before the workers came in for the day, competition from immigrant labor which in their opinion drives the prices down further, and imported shrimp from South American countries, whose prices are so low that they simply cannot be competed with. Overhead costs have also risen, with the increased costs of oystering supplies, and the especially painful increases in fuel costs. Four lifelong residents of Franklin County, all in their sixties or seventies, kill time under a covered pavilion at Battery Park in Apalachicola. As they look out over the harbor, one of the men declares,

That’s one of the things that’s held back- their rules and regulations. For example the shrimp boats. They made ‘em put a turtle excluder device. Well, when they did that, the shrimper loses approximately 30% to 40% of his catch, it goes out the turtle excluder device. And the fuel prices put most of ‘em out of business, they just can’t afford to. There’s not ten working shrimp boats here now.

Another of the men chimes in, “If you had give me a fleet, just give ‘em to me, brand new boats and I had to put ‘em to work, I’d tell you to just keep ‘em. It just ain’t feasible no more.” The two seafood workers back at the seafood retail store also point to changing practices among the new generation of workers as compromising the health of the local seafood industry. “They don’t cull, they’re all about quantity over quality. And the people buying the bags of oysters aren’t enforcing the 3” limit, which destroys the oyster beds.”

Aside from the regulatory and economic burdens shouldered by the local seafood industry are environmental threats, both naturally occurring and manmade. Hurricanes, tropical storms,

and (to a greater or lesser extent) algal blooms have always posed threats to the local seafood industry. Even the seafood industry itself is a culprit, with overfishing a constant concern. The water wars controversy concerning the flows along the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) waterways illustrates the new breed of threats to Apalachicola's Bay- a political and ecological hybrid that promises to be a difficult problem to resolve. Development and population pressures in Atlanta and other upstream areas are putting higher and higher levels of water withdrawal demand on the ACF system. As flows are decreased, the amount of freshwater entering the bay at the mouth of the Apalachicola is decreased, resulting in changing salinity levels. The sensitive estuarine environment is thrown off balance by the changing salinity, which means less abundant (and less healthy) seafood. Local development is seen by many as an additional threat to the Bay, due to runoff and sewage entering the waters.

The bay's environment is not a utopian one. Livelihoods rest on the fickle moods of nature; droughts, destructive hurricanes and tropical storms, competing natural predators, and harmful algal blooms all threaten the creatures of the bay. The people who work in the bay must also contend with economic and political structures that affect their daily lives and their ability to make a living from the water. In addition, there are the manmade pressures posed by pollution, overfishing, and development.

### **Economic Boom and Bust**

In 2005, the real estate market in Franklin County was in a boom time. People were buying and selling lots and homes, as well as reinvesting and making improvements on landholdings. According to County Planner Alan Pierce, a beachfront lot on St. George Island that might have sold for \$100,000 in 1988 was selling for around \$2 million in 2005. He noted that this value wasn't concentrated only on the beachfront; values were increasing inland, across

the bay, and to the mainland as well. “It didn’t matter where you were... money was just in the ground and everybody was just doing everything,” Piece reflected. However, after 2005 the economic times took a turn for the worse. An especially tough hurricane season, rising interest rates and high tax burdens converged in a “perfect storm” which resulted in a market collapse in Franklin County. Of course, these economic woes were linked to the larger state and national financial downturns as well. Foreclosure signs and paved subdivisions with empty lots are plentiful across Franklin County.

Currently the people of Franklin County must grapple with questions of what is best for its citizens, its environment, and its character. Should the county hang on to the seafood industry as a source of economic stability in a time when regulations, environmental degradation, and water wars threaten its livelihood? If not, will the heritage of the area be changed forever? Should development be embraced as a source of economic development in one of Florida’s “distressed” counties? If so, what kind of development should occur? Can the unique character of the area be maintained and exploited at the same time? With its economy, population, and character at a crossroads, Franklin County provides a fascinating case study concerning development decision-making. Rather than a continuation of a trend or an easy win or lose situation, the current decisions that are made about how to develop the county carry with them heightened significance due to the unique state of limbo presented by this contextual crossroads. It is here that the location and mobilization of power might stand out in sharp contrast and lend itself to analysis.

## CHAPTER 5 SUMMERCAMP

### Overview

SummerCamp is a large-scale residential development located in eastern Franklin County. Although it's not immediately obvious to one passing through, this area of Franklin County is actually an island. St. James Island is home to mostly Florida scrub habitat and wildlife such as deer and bear. The island is flanked by the Alligator Harbor Aquatic Preserve. It also serves as the home of Florida State University's Coastal and Marine Laboratory, which bears the name of Edward Ball, founder of St. Joe Paper Company.

To understand how and why SummerCamp came to fruition in Franklin County, one must understand the history and the role of St. Joe Company in northwest Florida. In 1925, Ed Ball began buying up land in northwest Florida for his brother-in-law, Alfred DuPont. From the 1930s to the 1990s, much of these lands provided the raw timber for the family's business, the St. Joe Paper Company, which operated for decades in the pulp and paper industry, as well as dabbling in the railroad and banking businesses, among other ventures. At the turn of the century, the company sold its last papermill, changed its name to St. Joe Company, and officially transitioned into the real estate business. Most of the county's lands (85%) are publicly owned state or federal lands. The vast majority of the remainder of the county's lands are held by St. Joe Company.

In August of 2001, St. Joe had ambitious plans for its holdings on St. James Island. A 60-slip marina, restaurant, 50-room hotel, and lots for 499 homes (developments of 500 or more home sites were required to go through Developments of Regional Impact review process) were included in the proposed plans for SummerCamp.

## **Contentions and Concessions**

Getting what they wanted, however, was going to be no walk on the beach. As the director of the Apalachicola Bay Chamber of Commerce noted, “I remember attending a meeting at the county courthouse years ago...when St. Joe first started developing their land. And everybody was vehemently against everything they could possibly ever do. Because it was the 800-pound gorilla...of course we were all very upset at the very beginning.” An early public hearing for SummerCamp was described as “rancorous,” having such a large turnout that the meeting had to be moved from the county commission chambers to the public courthouse. According to information collected during interviews, this public response was generated largely due to the scope of St. Joe Company’s original plans, the most contested of which was the location of a marina at SummerCamp.

Those who opposed the marina were mostly the wealthy residents of St. Teresa, a long-established residential enclave which had no desire to share the bay with the noisy boats of new neighbors. The St. Teresa residents were joined by upper middle class retirees and residents from Alligator Point, the other residential outpost on St. James Island. Many of these residents claimed that the delicate sea grasses and the endangered sea turtles of the area would be threatened by the proposed marina. St. James Island is surrounded by Alligator Harbor Aquatic Preserve, with more than 1,600 species of marine life sheltering in the sea grasses and marshes. Other interviewees pointed out that additional concerns voiced by these residents were centered on a particular way of life that they sought to protect. Assistant County Planner Mark Curenton explained: “They were, I would say, mainly opposed to development because I think that they saw that as the beginning of what they had come here to get away from.” Paul Johnson was the director of the Apalachee Ecological Conservancy, a grassroots group composed of residents from Alligator Point and St. Teresa. He noted that the group had originally formed to protect sea

turtles, but had mobilized around the issue of SummerCamp because they “did not want their paradise altered... it was a threat mainly to their lifestyle.”

Representative Will Kendrick, a sixth-generation Franklin-Countian, also opposed the construction of a marina. Despite threats from lobbyists to withdraw their financial support, Kendrick spoke against an addition to the 2002 growth management legislation that had passed the Florida House. This addition “approved a provision to lift DRI review of marinas under certain conditions and specifically exempt from state agency review new marinas west of 84 degrees 24 minutes west longitude” (2004:255). Despite the fact that the language would obviously be a huge benefit to St. Joe, the company denied participation in its design (2004:256).

The Apalachicola Bay and River Keeper (ABARK), a non-profit organization mandated to protect and preserve the recreational and commercial resources of the Apalachicola River and Bay, quickly joined onto the ongoing negotiations concerning how the development might affect the Bay. The organization fought to reinforce existing laws protecting wetlands and sought lower density and longer setbacks for the development. A former ABARK board member asserted: “The Riverkeeper was hot and heavy, you know, in the dynamic of different things, whether SummerCamp was going to be approved or rezoned, or whatever.”

The Panhandle Citizens Coalition, representatives from the National Estuarine Research Reserve, 1000 Friends of Florida, and the Florida Wildlife Federation also voiced concerns over SummerCamp. Along with ABARK, these non-governmental organizations (NGOs) framed their concerns in terms of threats to the environment, especially in terms of the water quality of the Apalachicola Bay.

Another contentious issue included a drastic density change from agricultural (one home per each forty acres) to 499 homes on 784 acres. There were also uncertainties associated with

the appropriateness of the building site in terms of flooding and soil properties (Ziewitz and Wiaz 2004:175). The building of SummerCamp on St. James Island would require an amendment to Franklin County's comprehensive plan. It just so happened that the county's comprehensive plan was lapsing and due for a mandatory update. So, in the summer of 2002, a vote on SummerCamp was delayed so that objections could be addressed.

In January of 2003, a standing-room only meeting was convened despite what Ziewitz and Wiaz characterized as a "climate of considerable opposition," with "sentiments from speakers at the meeting ran two to one against approval of the 784-acre project before the county had rewritten its comprehensive plan" (2004 :176). The positions taken by these groups, along with the dissenting statements made by a number of individuals at the early public hearings, forced St. Joe to the bargaining table.

St. Joe brought to the table a number of concessions. There would be no marina. Highway 98 would not be relocated, and neither would the Florida State University's marine lab. An advanced wastewater treatment plant would be built in order to protect the bay from the threat of leaky septic tanks. Buffer zones would be set aside to protect wetlands. A community dock would be built in lieu of individual docks and boat launches. Runoff would be mitigated by installing permeable roads and keeping native vegetation rather than creating lawns. The Franklin County Commission unanimously approved the land use change from agricultural to mixed use residential after a long and heated public comment session.

The task of revising the county's comprehensive plan remained. The process was "fast-tracked" to be done in one year. St. Joe agreed to help the county pay for consulting services from Florida State University's planning school to assist in the redrawing of a new comprehensive plan. As part of the plan update, a community visioning process would

incorporate the suggestions and concerns of all interested parties in the construction of this document which would guide the future development of Franklin County. This visioning process began in February 2003.

### **Approval**

In April 2004, the Franklin County Commission voted to send an updated comprehensive plan to Florida's Department of Community Affairs. The updated plan included provisions for approximately 3,500 units to be built on St. Joe's lands along St. James Island.

Development of this scale on St. James Island would have important implications for Franklin County. A substantial shift in the population center of the county could occur if this eastern edge were to be fully built out. However, this direction of development would be a benefit for the county, according to county planner Alan Pierce.

And so we proposed, and immediately St. Joe, the landholding company that owns most of the private land in Franklin County, benefited from this, but immediately what we did was we chose rather than to increase development around Apalachicola Bay, we chose to allow some additional development pressure to go over to the east, and get out of the drainage basin of the bay. And who owned the land to the east? The St. Joe Company.

Along with a dramatic population shift, a huge jump in Franklin County's population would also occur with a full build out of St. James Island. The county's population, with 3500 units at the standard density of 2.4 people per unit, would be increased by 8,400, nearly doubling the number of residents. Even with only the immediate building out of SummerCamp, the eastern tip of the county would gain approximately 2000 residents, increasing the county's population by 20%.

Given the concerns voiced by those who opposed or at least questioned the development of SummerCamp, how did it go from being vehemently resisted at the early public hearings to being accommodated (despite complicated remaining questions concerning flooding, soil, and emergency management) two years later? Based on my research of available documentation as

well as information garnered from interviews with those who were involved (and with those who were not immediately involved) with the process, there were three major factors that contributed to the eventual approval of SummerCamp.

First, Franklin County's lands are mostly tied up in federal and state preservation lands. Local governments depend on revenue generated by property taxes and other economic development on their lands to provide income for operations. With so little of the county's land available to be tapped for revenue generation, the county is under extreme financial pressure to allow some of that land to be developed. The declining seafood industry and the lack of many job alternatives also create a context in which economic development, with its promise of an influx of jobs, are appealing to local residents and government officials. To put it simply, Franklin County needed the money.

Second, the size and scale of the St. Joe Company's plans were perceived not only as overwhelming and possibly threatening, but also as a potentially beneficial and desirable type of development. Many of those interviewed indicated that St. Joe has the resources to develop in ways that are more appropriate and environmentally sensitive than the usual piecemeal development that occurs with multiple developers subdividing land and gaining permits for many smaller developments. These smaller developments generally are not held to the same standards regarding wastewater treatment, environmental impact, etc. as a large development. The size of St. Joe Company might have drawn more attention, both negative and positive, but it also created for the county an opportunity to address large-scale developmental goals. One respondent noted,

There are always going to be developments, and people wanting to develop. So, to me, there's always going to be a push for that somewhere. At least if you find someone you can work with, all of them are going to have their interests as the first tier, but you know, if they at least put some of your concerns, and the community has a priority to get those things done, you know, they tend to be fairly responsive. Because they work through that process somehow. And there were a lot of

meetings. It would be much better than dealing with thirty individual developers who all have different missions and end up with this hodgepodge of things, and probably not green space designated and no green development, because they can divide the cost to do some of those more appropriate kinds of things over a broader base of the property. Smaller developers don't have those choices... a developer like St. Joe that has that kind of staying power and resources to put behind it...at least they have enough resources and enough foresight and enough people to understand the value in some of the things that need to be saved.

Andy Smith, Executive Director of Apalachicola Bay and River Keeper, noted that “[St. Joe] have the potential to be a really good developer because they have enough land and enough money to do it, to plan it better.”

Because of St. Joe's ability to financially and physically address some of their concerns, many NGOs expressed optimism that the development could be implemented in a way that was environmentally sensitive and responsive to the community's desires. This brings us to the third, and perhaps most important factor in the approval of SummerCamp: concessions.

The ability of St. Joe to negotiate and make concessions with local government officials, NGOs, and individuals was indispensable in getting SummerCamp approved. Based on opinions expressed at meetings and sentiments recounted during interviews, St. Joe would not have been able to steamroll the opposition and get everything they wanted. The marina was an especially contentious feature of the original plan and was dropped entirely, very early in the process. As Franklin County planner Alan Pierce acknowledged,

People were concerned because SummerCamp initially started out as a residential development with water access. And that really concerned FSU marine lab, because SummerCamp wraps around the FSU marine lab. And then there was this move, maybe to get the marine lab relocated, and that would open up the basin the marine lab had. And that didn't work. So SummerCamp had to revise itself.

The executive director of the Apalachicola Chamber of Commerce, Anita Groves, mirrored this sentiment.

And I watched as things evolved and people spoke- of course we were all very upset at the very beginning. And they wanted to do some much more intensive

things. They wanted to build piers and a marina, and so the whole process kind of evolved over time. They dropped the marina, they dropped a number of aspects of the development. And the county and St. Joe worked together to come up with what was legally permissible on that property, and the county to me has followed through and...was very out there saying exactly what they wanted, which is what I think- if it's a place where you're going to live you can't just say, 'well do whatever you want'. You have to say 'we want this, and we don't this'. And I know that St. Joe seemed very workable.

### **Dissent**

It must be noted, however, that not all interviewees exhibited trust or esteem for the negotiation process with St. Joe. A local business owner in Apalachicola alleged that St. Joe has “all kinds of political power here...both state and local levels. A lot of people feel that the county planner is very much pro-St. Joe, as were a couple of county commissioners,” that St. Joe had “gotten most of what they wanted,” and that with regard to the county commission meetings “nothing was going to be accomplished except raising your blood pressure.” When asked to elaborate on his opinion concerning St. Joe's role in redrafting the comprehensive plan, he stated, “I can't, because I don't know what goes on in smoke-filled rooms. And if I knew, I probably wouldn't be around. I'd be out there as alligator chum.” According to another interviewee, who was involved in the Comprehensive Plan visioning process as part of one of the NGOs listed above, the maps, plats, and other documents presented at the meeting were not those vetted by the visioning process, but rather were created independently by St. Joe. He felt that the documents simply reflected “their business plan,” and resulted in what the interviewee referred to as “a huge sense of outrage and betrayal.” He further claimed that St. Joe exercised power “through behind the scenes work with individual county commission leaders, county commissioners, county planner, people in the community.”

A local resident doubted the ability of St. Joe and the county to mitigate the effects of such a large development:

They do things right, but they do it big. And big will destroy anywhere...even if they do it right. The sheer number of people, they ain't gonna stay on the land that they bought. They're gonna filtrate out during the daytime...It's like a damn ant mound. They get in the ant mound, but when they come out of the ant mound they're all over the place.

Some also question whether or not the jobs and revenue promised by St. Joe will ever come. SummerCamp stands nearly empty today, a few model homes sitting watch among empty lots. Streets with names such as Firefly Circle and FishHook Way are deserted. While St. Joe hunkers down to weather the economic storm that hit the real estate market so hard, Franklin County waits to see some returns on its land. Seafood Industry Task Force executive director Kevin Begos recounts the effects of the real estate collapse on the community:

St. Joe burned some bridges with the county commission and with fishermen when, it was a combination of I guess of some promises they made but some expectations people had. For a while it seemed St. Joe was this juggernaut that was going to be able to do anything. Move the roads, bring in airports, design the whole thing from the ground up. When they crashed and burned, some of the county commissioners in particular saw that hey, they haven't really given much back to this community, you know, in terms of public access or things like that on the waterfront...If you read the press from two or three years ago it seemed inevitable. And they had full time PR people so they were getting press from the New York Times and Washington Post and Fortune and all that. But SummerCamp is a perfect example- it has not generated construction jobs or tax base or public access or much of anything.

The approval of SummerCamp occurred within a context that is very specific to a time and place- a time and place characterized by a particular set of social, political, and economic conditions. The story of SummerCamp has been recreated here as accurately as possible to reflect information gathered from public documents and interviews. It is in no way assumed to be unbiased and complete. However, I consider the information sufficient to generate ideas concerning the role of power within this particular context, discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 6 THE ROLE OF POWER IN THE APPROVAL OF SUMMERCAMP

I argue that power is located at multiple points in the process leading up to and including the approval of the SummerCamp development. The following sections evaluate the ways in which power was exercised in the decision to approve SummerCamp.

### **The First Dimension of Power**

The public was given opportunity to provide input at public hearings and county commission meetings, as well as during the visioning process for revising the comprehensive plan. Thus, public citizens and interest groups were able to mobilize their resources (time, money, information, etc.) in order to act on behalf of their interests<sup>1</sup>. Taking into account the pluralist view of power, power is said to be exercised when person/group A can make person/group B act in accordance with person/group A's wishes. This causal, outcome-based view of decision-making directs me to examine what decisions and outcomes prevailed in the SummerCamp development. Given that St. Joe got what they wanted, then St. Joe can be said to have power in this situation. However, given that St. Joe made so many concessions, such as dropping the marina from their proposal, then it can also be said that individuals and groups also exercised power by getting St. Joe to make these concessions.

Several interviewees contended that the public did have adequate opportunity for input via county commission meetings and the visioning process. However, they also note that these were not fully taken advantage of by local citizens. Potential reasons that were noted in my interviews for people not participating in the county commission meetings were: too old, too busy, too hard, and not a good time.

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<sup>1</sup> How interests are determined and defined is a longstanding source of contention in the social scientist. A survey of this debate is beyond the scope of this work. For this paper, interests are assumed to be those explicitly and implicitly expressed by the actors themselves and are not theorized by the researcher.

These reasons lend some support to the pluralists' claims that people will act in their interests to the degree that they feel that their interests are threatened. The non-participation of citizens in county commission meetings, therefore, could be attributed to the fact that their interests were not being threatened.

However, an adequate analysis cannot credit the approval of SummerCamp with embodying all the ideals of a level playing field for all interested parties. Were certain individuals, groups, or issues factored out of the decision-making arena? For these answers we turn to an examination of the second and third dimensions of power.

### **The Second Dimension of Power**

Elite theorists claim that overlapping members of powerful political, economic, military, or social groups are able to disproportionately influence decision-making to their own benefit. Power is exercised through positions of influence and by determining what issues are placed on the decision-making agenda in the first place. Growth machines, or growth coalitions as defined by Harvey and Molotch (1976) and Domhoff (2005) consist of a network of local land-based elites who stand to benefit from development in the forms of rents and payments. They advocate their pro-growth policies by being active in government and political circles.

Is power in Franklin County concentrated into the hands of a few who hold such positions within the community? It can be argued that the County Commission members as well as planning and zoning officials hold quite a bit of power in their positions as local government officials. No documentation was discovered that proved or disproved that commissioners or other local officials were offered personal gains in exchange for the approval of SummerCamp. In fact, a significant number of interviewees indicated that they felt this to be the case. In particular, one county commissioner who voted for SummerCamp also owned a guide business. An interviewee noted that he might have had his business interests at heart with a nod of

approval. However, innuendo and rumor has little weight in what is hoped to be as true a representation of events as possible. Therefore, allegations of smoke-filled rooms and the purchasing of board members can only be taken as points for consideration.

Allegations that the St. Joe Company has a number of political connections, both locally and at the state and even national levels, are repeated through numerous interviews. A long-time local business owner claimed,

They [St. Joe] have all kinds of political power here...both state and local levels. A lot of people feel that the county planner is very much pro St. Joe, as were a couple of county commissioners. And a lot of people feel that St. Joe had a good buddy in Jeb Bush. You know, this very valuable coastal land is so very precious. So if you can get twice as many houses on a tract of land than what's allowed, then you get twice as much money.

Another interviewee noted that St. Joe was able to use their power "through behind the scenes work, with individual county commission leaders, county commissioners, the county planner, people in the community." As one developer noted,

The whole issue about political decisions by elected officials and influencing the decisions of elected officials is a real complicated one. It's extremely complicated. Because, you know, money doesn't have to change hands for you to win the approval of an elected official. It can be just recognition, it could be good deeds...I mean it's mostly recognition or money. You know, that's just the nature of the political business.

A local fisherman, however, placed more emphasis on the money, remarking that "It's according to how much money you got, and how many good people you know."

Ziewitz and Wiaz provide a much more in-depth history of St. Joe's political connections in Florida in their book, *Green Empire: The St. Joe Company and the Remaking of Florida's Panhandle* (2004). In 2001, legislation was introduced to raise the threshold required to force a Development of Regional Impact review by 150%. This legislation, referred to by state workers as the "St. Joe Relief Act," was tacked onto an economic development bill at the last minute and raised the DRI threshold to 500 units or more. SummerCamp, with only 499 units, would be able

to go around this regulatory hurdle rather than jump it. St. Joe denied any involvement in initiating the measure, despite a St. Petersburg Times article that a St. Joe land use attorney was also serving as a paid advisor to Florida Senate president John McKay on growth management issues at the time of the legislation (Ziewitz and Wiaz 2004). Recognizing that these political connections might exist implicates that St. Joe has the resources to exercise political power based on positional ties.

I contend that local government officials including county commissioners and the planning and zoning department do exercise power due to their positions in setting the decision-making agenda. The fact that the SummerCamp development made it to the agenda in the first place reflects the power that the commissioners, planners, and others hold in the development decision-making process. Furthermore, the County Comprehensive Plan guides future development decisions; whomever is involved with its creation, maintenance, and interpretation, therefore, is imbued with power. Once again, the officials in the planning offices and on the County Commission hold power due to their positions in relation to the creation and maintenance of the County Comprehensive Plan.

Bachrach and Baratz assert that powerful actors take advantage of their positions in order to protect their interests through the mobilization of bias, which they define as “a set of predominant values, beliefs, rituals, and institutional procedures (“rules of the game”) that operate systematically and consistently to the benefit of certain persons and groups at the expense of others (1970:43-4). I argue that local government “rules of the game” do act, at least to some degree, to limit citizen participation in the decision-making process.

Local officials do indeed hold the power to set the agenda in Franklin County decision-making. Certain individuals were excluded from decision-making due to the political processes

at work in the public hearing stages of the rewriting of the Comprehensive Plan and the commission meetings during which SummerCamp was discussed and approved. Often, county commission meetings are held during the day, when working people are unable to attend the meetings without risking the loss of their job, or at least a potentially significant loss of income. This limits the amount of participation that some people are able to enjoy. County Planner Alan Pierce recognized that there had been some dissatisfaction among the citizenry during the debate over SummerCamp:

Well, I mean, there's always this criticism in local government. We don't have a broad-based media, so the county commission, in those days, they met in a meeting twice a month, in the daytime. There was weekly newspaper coverage; there was no television coverage of the meetings. So you had to be at the meetings, by and large, to be involved, or read about it a week later. So there's a little lag time about what the county was doing. And there was some complaint about that. The county commission was following its own procedure, but this was a big development: 477 houses on 800 acres. And some people wanted to have more input on it. And so there was some controversy.

One interviewee complained that commission members would stall out especially contentious issues until public interest had died down:

Yeah, and the way things work here, and probably everywhere, is that if there is an issue that's too hot to handle, they'll say, well let's think this over, or let's kick this around and we'll try to decide at the next meeting, or the meeting after. So you have this very hot political issue, and you have all kinds of people coming in, and nothing's decided. I mean, it's the oldest ploy in the world. So they end up at the next meeting or the meeting after, they wait a couple of months, and the people who are really involved, they're just kind of giving up...they table the issue for a certain length of time, until no one's coming to the meetings.

Citizens might also feel as if their input is moot if they believe that the decisions are being made by certain individuals or groups behind closed doors. As another interviewee noted, "There's an old saying here that the decision is made before the meeting is brought to order. A lot of people feel that. I can't say one way or another whether that's true, but you know, it's

already been decided, it's like, let these people get out there and rant and rave you know, about smothering wetlands, blow some steam off, and we'll table it until the next meeting."

As discussed above, it was alleged that the documents and maps presented at the county commission meeting during which SummerCamp was approved were not the ones produced during the collaborative visioning process with the community. If it is true that the visioning process for the comprehensive plan resulted in documents and maps that were not presented or used in the final approval of SummerCamp, then this further exemplifies the exclusion of certain participants in the decision-making process.

. Furthermore, the County Comprehensive Plan guides future development decisions; whomever is involved with its creation, maintenance, and interpretation, therefore, is imbued with power. Once again, the officials in the planning offices and on the County Commission hold power due to their positions in relation to the creation and maintenance of the County Comprehensive Plan.

As Bachrach and Baratz (1970) point out, nondecisions must also be evaluated in determining where power lies. Identifying the absence of a decision is no easy task. According to Bachrach and Baratz, grievances on the part of the individuals and groups disadvantaged by outcomes must be considered, even if they are covert. Who stood to lose the most with the development of SummerCamp? Based on public documents and interviews, those most opposed to SummerCamp were residents and groups who did not wish to see additional population pressures result in 1) environmental degradation, 2) increased boat traffic near private residences, and 3) increased population pressures in Franklin County in general. These grievances were overtly expressed. Identifying covert grievances is much more difficult. However, nondecisions that might have influenced the outcome for those with grievances might include 1) the location

of SummerCamp further inland and away from sensitive coastal areas, or 2) the purchase of St. Joe land by the city or county for the purposes of conservation or other types of development to be carried out completely independent of the St. Joe Company. For example, local government officials could have raised funds to purchase the land in order to build an eco-tourism resort. The arguments that the land is needed for revenue generation and job creation would still be satisfied with this decision. However, this option was never placed on the agenda. This is just one example of a nondecision that could be applied to this particular issue.

So, is the second dimension of power (setting the agenda), at work in the approval of SummerCamp? I contend that that certain people were excluded from the decision-making process due to a mobilization of bias which included a) weekday county commission meeting times, b) issue tabling, c) control over the development of the Comprehensive Plan by a relatively small number of people, and d) the absence of alternatives to the SummerCamp development as sources of revenue for the county. In addition, it is evident that St. Joe Company has significant political ties, both at the local and state levels. While allegations of smoke-filled rooms and cozy relations with county commissioners conjure some speculation of disproportionate influence on the part of St. Joe and protection of vested interests on the part of some county commissioners who may have something to gain from approval of SummerCamp, these allegations are not backed up by strong evidence.

### **The Third Dimension of Power**

It is important to note the tremendous media resources utilized by the St. Joe Company. St. Joe Company was able to bring in highly paid private consultants to conduct flood stage analysis, produce complex topographical maps and imagery of St. James Island, engage in compelling presentations at county commission meetings, and send out press releases over local media advertising the benefits of SummerCamp. By holding such a large role in creating and shaping

the knowledge and discourse surrounding the SummerCamp development, St. Joe can be said to have exercised a form of what Lukes' described as the third dimension of power (1974).

SummerCamp was portrayed to the public as a friendly, low-impact development that would preserve the character of the area and respect the local environment, architecture and culture. As a matter of fact, this image of SummerCamp was also harnessed for marketing purposes to targeted buyers. Brochures and magazine advertisements portray a secluded, quiet community where time stands still and life is simple. Images of tall pine trees, empty beaches, and peaceful waterways pervade their marketing materials (see figures 1-1 and 1-2). SummerCamp's primary motif consists of a jar of fireflies (see figures 2-1 and 2-2). The heritage of "Old Florida" is also harnessed in their promotional materials. Huge beachside homes priced well above \$300,000 are referred to as "cottages." Videos on the St. Joe Company's SummerCamp web page feature outings with local clam harvesters and oystermen, and a series of short videos featuring a "glimpse of what your lifestyle could be" (<http://www.pmitchell.com/summercamp/>). They showcase a grandfather teaching his grandson how to tie a lure, a mom and daughter enjoying a conversation in a front porch hammock, two kayakers navigating the bay at sunrise, families returning to the dock after a day fishing at sea, and community members eating, lounging, and swimming at the beach side club house.

However, St. Joe was not the only actor who had the opportunity to shape the discourse surrounding SummerCamp. Many of the NGOs voiced their opposition to SummerCamp with political and media savvy. Groups like the Apalachicola Bay and River Keeper and Apalachee Ecological Conservancy (APECO) were able to put environmental concerns at the forefront of debate concerning SummerCamp. APECO utilized signs to display at public hearings, protests, and along roads near SummerCamp (see figure 3-1). Groups such as the Panhandle Citizens

Coalition utilized web campaigns questioning the intentions and transparency of St. Joe, and to mobilize networks of growth management watchdogs.

### **Conclusions**

A contextual and in-depth study of the debate over and consequent approval of SummerCamp does not place power squarely within one of the three theoretical frameworks. Rather, power is found at multiple points and in multiple forms. Many elements of the community debates and negotiations surrounding SummerCamp reflected pluralistic processes—public hearings, opportunities for citizen input, the sharing of information, the visioning process, and concessions made by parties on all sides characterize the pluralistic political process, whereby people are able to participate in the political sphere according to their interests.

If the decision-making was disproportionately influenced by the resources of St. Joe and others who might benefit from the development of SummerCamp, and if the decision-making processes excluded the public, then power can be said to have been concentrated into the hands of a more powerful few. Allegations that St. Joe was able to influence elected officials and that a group of those with interests in getting SummerCamp built was able to speed up the political process of approval brings forth questions of equal access to the political sphere. During my research I did not document any proof of such events, although some interviews alleged that St. Joe was able to get elected officials to vote for SummerCamp no matter what public input was given. Therefore, I cannot conclusively say that power was or was not exercised disproportionately by a more powerful few. Taking the positional approach utilized by Dahl, I also did not identify any overlap between local elected officials, St. Joe Company executives or shareholders, and local business leaders.

The majority of interviewees that I spoke with yielded sentiment that, while the public did indeed have the opportunity to participate in commission meetings and the visioning process,

many members of the community did not do so. According to the interviews, this pattern was not so much to a simple case of apathy, but also to two factors: 1) residents feel alienated from the decision-making apparatus and disenfranchised in local government decisions, or 2) residents invest faith that the county commission and planning and zoning officials have their interests at heart and will make the best decisions for Franklin County without the direct participation of those who placed them in office. These two positions at first seem at odds with one another, but are actually reconcilable: the vast majority of interviewees felt that political participation in local decision-making ends at the polling booth. The first view relegates participation in county commission meetings or visioning meetings to an empty process designed to give lip service to public participation. The second view is more optimistic: once elected officials are given their mandate by the citizens, the tedium of decision-making, and all the privileges that go along with it, are in the hands of the representatives. Either way, the pluralist view of public participation is at odds with the findings of this research in that not everyone participates in public decision-making in proportion to their interests. While pluralists might argue that those with less resources are able to harness the power of the vote and therefore balance out the political equation, the fact remains that many residents identified the SummerCamp approval process and comprehensive plan visioning process as political events from which citizens were excluded, either through outright means such as scheduling, or indirectly through the disregarding of their desires.

Finally, power was found to be exercised by multiple parties, both for and against SummerCamp, in shaping the debate surrounding the development. It could be argued, however, that St. Joe Company had more resources available in shaping the discourse, especially at public hearings and commission meetings. The company could afford to hire consultants to make

topographical maps, to design multimedia images of what SummerCamp might look like, to do preemptive legal and public relations research, and to introduce SummerCamp through favorable press releases. Organizations such as ABARK and APECO did experience some success in portraying SummerCamp as a possible environmental threat to the area. Perhaps even more importantly, however, these same organizations made multiple public statements throughout the negotiation process that praised St. Joe Company as an amenable partner with the resources and foresight to provide for the best possible development of St. James Island. Optimism that SummerCamp could be developed in ways that would do the least environmental harm was expressed on behalf of these groups at the commission meetings. However, individuals and small groups were less able to mobilize public media and professional services in the presentations of their views. Therefore, power was also located in the ability of certain groups to shape the debate concerning SummerCamp through access to media and public outlets.

Lukes' conception of power as three-dimensional provides a useful conceptual image that mirrors the findings of this case study on decision-making in Franklin County. Power was located at points identified by each of the three competing theories of community power: 1) individuals and groups acting on behalf of their interests, 2) at higher levels among those with more resources due to their positions, and 3) among those who were able to shape the discourse and knowledge surrounding SummerCamp and the debate. Power was also implemented in ways that each of the three theories recognize as characteristic of their definition of power: 1) political behavior that resulted in an outcome that reflected the individual's or groups' interests, 2) setting the decision-making agenda, and 3) influencing the perceptions, values, and interests of those surrounding the decision-making process to a greater or lesser extent.

The negotiation process surrounding SummerCamp allowed for the involvement of multiple parties with converging and diverging interests. Individuals and groups spoke at public hearings and meetings and used the threat of future votes to apply pressure in favor of their interests (accepting the definition of interests espoused by pluralists as what is expressed through political behavior). Actors on all sides of the decision-making process made concessions in order to bring about the final result: the approval of SummerCamp in its final revised form.

Conversely, in the case of SummerCamp, power cannot be seen as limited to the simple acting out of preferences by multiple groups acting in proportion to their level of interest. The approval of SummerCamp also involved power differentials in the ability of some (i.e. county officials) to set the decision-making agenda and to limit decision-making to certain issue areas. Citizens expressed a lack of efficacy in the decision-making process as well as faith in elected representatives to make decisions in the interest of the citizenry, reflected by a lack of direct participation in public hearings and meetings.

Finally, power was demonstrated by multiple actors in the ability to influence perceptions and values. St. Joe was able to mobilize imagery of SummerCamp as in line with the values of Franklin County's citizens. SummerCamp was presented as development that would preserve the "Old Florida" feel, keep in line with vernacular architecture, and maintain a high level of environmental sensitivity. St. Joe also presented SummerCamp as an opportunity for economic development for the county. Meanwhile, groups such as the Apalachicola Bay and River Keeper, as well as the Apalachee Ecological Conservancy were able to center concerns about the development around environmental and quality of life issues.

The three dimensional concept of power allows a more holistic and comprehensive analysis of local decision-making. As this case study demonstrates, power can be exercised by

multiple groups and individuals and through multiple mechanisms simultaneously. Pluralists, power elite theorists, and social constructionist thinkers each identify one or another of these types of power, yet fail to recognize its varying and dynamic nature. Rather than looking for competing forms of power, the three-dimensional approach allows for an integration of its many forms.

### **Caveats**

Even as the very definition of power is contested, its varying expressions and locations can be taken together rather than in competition with one another. Certainly it can be asserted that the second and third dimensions of power- the ability to influence what decisions are made (or not made, in the case of non-decisions) in the first place, and the ability to shape perceptions and values, are difficult to quantify. The exercise and location of these forms of power can only be inferred from interviews and documents. Therefore, some criticism might be generated due to the subjective nature of identifying non-decisions (how do you know when a decision hasn't been made?) and in being able to identify the power to shape complex values and perceptions that may be built up over long periods of time and are often dynamic and influenced by a multitude of factors.

An additional concern is the identification of interests. As stated previously, for the sake of this research interests are assumed to mirror those expressed by the participants in decision-making. However, scholars both before and after Marx have questioned the assumption that people are always aware of what their true interests are. Others criticize this notion of false consciousness. This debate remains unsettled in academia and in this research as well. I have chosen to recognize those interests overtly expressed by participants, while leaving out the problematic questions of unexpressed or unrecognized interests. However, the third dimension of power does reconcile this differential to some degree. It allows for some consideration of how

peoples' interests might be shaped by the discourse surrounding public issue. Unfortunately, it does not incorporate complex microsociological and psychological analysis of the formation of interests.

SummerCamp  
Beach

SOME PEOPLE TAKE TIME OUT.

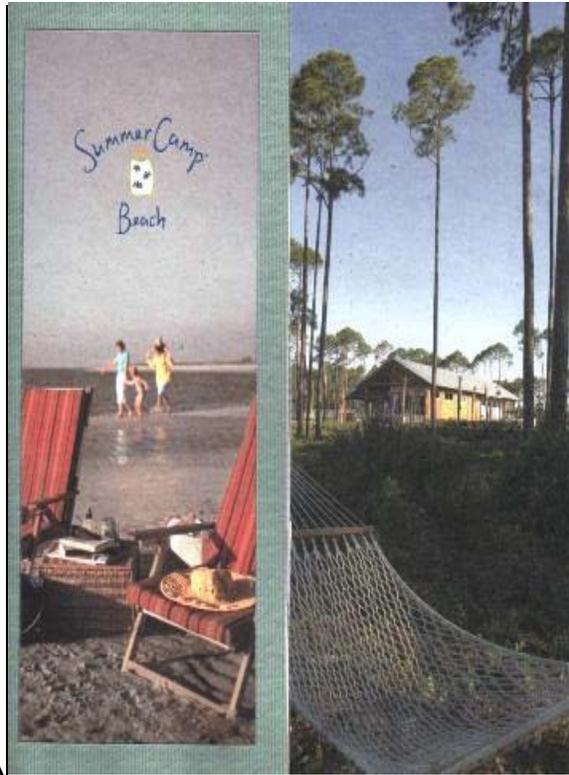
WE TAKE TIME OUT. On our terms. To unwind, to play, to explore. In a place of secluded beauty, designed with respect for its natural surroundings. Each day unfolds at its own pace, with time marked by our internal clock instead of an imposed schedule. At SummerCamp Beach, there's always time — how you spend it, is up to you.

Home sites starting at \$135,000.  
850.802.5200 or JOE.com | Keyword: Beach Living

IF YOU DON'T KNOW JOE, YOU DON'T KNOW FLORIDA. STJOE

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Figure 1-1. Advertisement for SummerCamp. (Source: Forgotten Coast Magazine, 2008)



A

Remember when searching for seashells or leaving your footprints in the sand left you with a summer full of memories?

Or when the most fun you could imagine was exploring? If you thought those days were gone, we have great news. The SummerCamp Beach community is about creating new memories with friends and family.

SummerCamp Beach is a coastal community designed for you and future generations of "explorers" to enjoy the simple pleasures of the great outdoors.

Located on St. James Island, just 46 miles south of Tallahassee, Florida, SummerCamp Beach offers nearly four miles of shoreline fronted by 762 acres of woods, wetlands and tidal marshes. Trails, boardwalks and bikebridges are planned to wind through the community, providing an unmatched setting for walking, exploring or biking.

You'll be able to grab a kayak or canoe from the boathouse or enjoy the water with a refreshing swim. If you prefer a swim pool, search for a perfect spot to enjoy a view of the Gulf of Mexico and its stunning sunsets. Then, simply catch a firefly and light the way home.

If you enjoy catching something with a bit more fight, head for the water where you can throw a fishing line and be a hero for dinner. Or head to the restaurant, enjoy a cold drink and swap stories about the big one that got away.

SummerCamp Beach homes are designed simply yet thoughtfully, reflecting traditional coastal architecture with porches and tin roofs.

Where summer lives  
\* 365 days a year.

B

**St. Joe.**  
Creating a community that builds memories.

SummerCamp Beach is the creation of The St. Joe Company (NYSE:JOE), one of Florida's largest real estate development companies and one of the state's largest private landowners. Today JOE is creating some of Florida's most desirable destinations - places to call home, places to enjoy, and places to do business. With an uncompromising commitment to "doing it right," JOE is setting new standards for craftsmanship, planning, and conservation.

Authentic and unique. Elegant, yet inviting. St. Joe communities are places that don't just welcome you. They embrace you. Come see for yourself what sets St. Joe apart from the rest.

**BUSINESS REPLY MAIL**  
FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO 30 TALLAHASSEE, FL  
POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

**SUMMERCAMP BEACH**  
108 SEA PINES DR  
ST TERESA FL 32358-9988

NO POSTAGE NECESSARY IF MAILED IN THE UNITED STATES

C

Figure 1-2. Brochure for SummerCamp. (Reprinted with permission from SummerCamp Sales and Information Center).



Figure 2-1. SummerCamp sign near Highway 98. (Photograph: Dionne Mathis Banks. August 2008).



Figure 2-2. SummerCamp sales and information center and beach club. (Photograph: Dionne Mathis Banks. August 2008)



Figure 3-1. Signs used by Apalachee Ecological Conservancy to protest SummerCamp. (Photograph: Dionne Mathis Banks, March 2009)

## APPENDIX A AREA MAPS



Figure 4-1. Map of Northwest Florida. (Source: [http://www.uniquepanhandleproperties.com/map\\_of\\_florida.htm](http://www.uniquepanhandleproperties.com/map_of_florida.htm). Retrieved May 2009)



Figure 4-2. Map of Franklin County Florida. (Source: Google Earth Mapmaker)

APPENDIX B  
PHOTOGRAPHS OF APALACHICOLA



Figure 5-1. Boats docked at Scipio Creek Marina, Apalachicola (Photograph: Dionne Mathis Banks, August 2008)



Figure 5-2. Boat docked at Scipio Creek Marina, Apalachicola (Photograph: Dionne Mathis Banks, August 2008)



Figure 5-3. Oyster processing house on Water Street, Apalachicola. (Photograph: Dionne Mathis Banks, March 2009)



Figure 5-4. Closed marine supply store, Apalachicola. (Photograph: Dionne Mathis Banks, March 2009)



Figure 5-5. Building façade, Apalachicola. (Photograph: Dionne Mathis Banks, January 2008)



Figure 5-6. Antique shop, Apalachicola. (Photograph: Dionne Mathis Banks, January 2008)



Figure 5-7. Boats docked underneath John Gorrie Memorial Bridge/Highway 98, Apalachicola. (Photograph: Dionne Mathis Banks, March 2009)



Figure 5-8. Boats docked on Water Street, Apalachicola. (Photograph: Dionne Mathis Banks, March 2009)

APPENDIX C  
PHOTOGRAPHS OF SUMMERCAMP



Figure 6-1. Model home at SummerCamp. (Photograph: Dionne Mathis Banks, August 2008)



Figure 6-2. Home under construction at SummerCamp. (Photograph: Dionne Mathis Banks, August 2008)



Figure 6-3. Pipes await their fixtures with model home in background at SummerCamp.  
(Photograph: Dionne Mathis Banks, August 2008)



Figure 6-4. Lot for sale at SummerCamp. (Photograph: Dionne Mathis Banks, August 2008)



Figure 6-5. Beach Club/Sales and Information Center at SummerCamp. (Photograph: Dionne Mathis Banks, August 2008)



Figure 6-6. Firefly Circle at SummerCamp. (Photograph: Dionne Mathis Banks, August 2008)



Figure 6-7. Straight rows of trees on SummerCamp land reveal St. Joe Company's history in the pulp and paper industry. (Photograph: Dionne Mathis Banks, August 2008)



Figure 6-8. Whose habitat? (Photograph: Dionne Mathis Banks, August 2008)



Figure 6-9. One tactic used to ensure protection of the local environment at SummerCamp.  
(Photograph: Dionne Mathis Banks, August 2008)

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Dionne Mathis Banks earned her Bachelor of Science in sociology with a minor in political science at the University of Louisville in 2007. She is currently pursuing her Master of Arts in sociology at the University of Florida.

Dionne's research interests include environmental sociology, political sociology, community development and urban planning, food justice, and social inequality. Past areas of research have included urban restructuring and agency efficiency (NSF grant, 2005), social inequalities and social justice in relation to food, (Southern Sociological Society, 2009), power in local decision-making (thesis, 2010), and issue framing in development (forthcoming, ASA 2010).

Professional memberships include American Sociological Association and Southern Sociological Society. Awards and honors include Outstanding Faculty Award (University of Florida, 2009), Alumni Fellow Award (University of Florida, 2007-2011), NSF Research Experiences for Undergraduates Award (University of Louisville, 2005), and Honors Scholar Award (University of Louisville)