

THE SHELTER REVOLUTION: HOUSING AND COMMUNITY PLANNING IN

TAMPA BAY, FLORIDA, 1940-1990

A DISSERTATION

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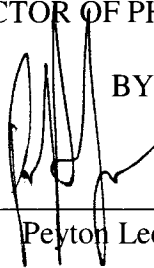
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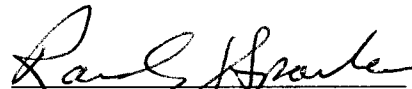
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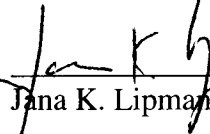
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Abstract:

In the last half of the twentieth century, a major transformation occurred in American residential living. While in the 1950s and 1960s the single-family, detached home dominated residential development, in the 1970s and 1980s new forms of residential dwellings and communities, ranging from private retirement communities, to mobile homes and trailer parks, to condominiums, to gated, privately governed “towns,” proliferated across the metropolitan landscape. The changes in residential living, what can be understood as a “shelter revolution,” played an integral role in the spatial, political, and social formation of metropolises in the Global South.

This dissertation examines the “shelter revolution” in Tampa Bay, Florida, between 1940 and the 1985. In so doing, it explores the changing relationship between housing and community design, community formation, and residential and metropolitan political culture. It argues that changes in residential living fueled and shaped metropolitan growth and expansion. At the same time, innovations in residential design and development, along with new legal instruments of property ownership, altered the residential experience. Over time, these changes rippled throughout metropolitan life, transfiguring the built environment and transforming the ways Americans built, purchased, and experienced residential housing and community. These changes drove the physical, cultural, and economic formation of the Tampa Bay, from a series of scattered urban settlements into a regional metropolis.

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The Shelter Revolution: Housing and Community Planning in Tampa Bay, Florida, 1940-1990

Introduction

When the housing market collapsed in 2008, Tampa Bay, Florida, felt the impact particularly hard. As the metropolitan economy bottomed out, the average home lost nearly fifty percent of its market value, and the metropolitan area lost more than 140,000 jobs.¹ Partially finished subdivisions and empty condominium projects littered the landscape. A subdivision named King's Point, built at the height of the boom, lost nearly 600 homes to foreclosure.² Along the Hillsborough River, the planned site of a Trump Tower condominium project sprouted weeds before vanishing into a sinkhole. Pulitzer-prize winning journalist George Packer profiled the Tampa Bay area in *The Unwinding* as the epicenter of the nation's housing bubble and ground zero for the destruction wrought by the bubble's burst.³

When *The Unwinding* hit store shelves in 2013, Tampa Bay's housing economy remained in the red. A consumer report released a year earlier listed Tampa Bay as the

¹ Brian T. Kench, "The Great Recession's Impact on the Tampa Bay Economy." *Research in Business and Economics Journal- Special Edition Florida Economic Symposium*, 2011.

² Susan Taylor Martin and Jeff Harrington, "Tampa Bay Neighborhood Ravaged By the Housing Crash Makes its Way Back; But Could That Happen Again?" *The Tampa Bay Times*, October 14, 2016.

³ George Packer, *The Unwinding: The Inner History of the New America* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2013), 190.

most “financially distressed” metropolitan area in the United States. Tampa Bay’s job and credit markets, rates of household income, and most significantly, its housing market, were in a state of “emergency crisis.” For Packer and other social critics, the collapse of the housing market was the product of nearly a decade of irresponsible policymaking, market deregulation, unfounded idealism, and predatory lending and banking practices that made some people rich at the expense of naïve consumers seduced by generous loan agreements and adjustable-rate mortgages. While all of these explanations go a long way in explaining the immediate economic crisis that befell the entire country, upon closer examination, the story is longer and more complicated. It is an overlooked story that nevertheless dominates the history of the last two thirds of the twentieth century. And, as this dissertation demonstrates, it is the history of metropolitan Tampa Bay.

Indeed, in the last half of the twentieth century, a major transformation occurred in American residential living. While in the 1950s and 1960s the single-family, detached home dominated residential development, in the 1970s and 1980s new forms of residential dwellings and communities, ranging from private retirement communities, to mobile homes and trailer parks, to condominiums, to gated and pseudo-private “towns,” proliferated across the metropolitan landscape. The changes in residential living, what can be understood as a “shelter revolution,” played an integral role in the spatial, cultural, and political formation of the metropolitan Sunbelt.

This dissertation tracks these changes through an examination of the history of housing and community planning in Tampa Bay, Florida, between 1940 and 1990. I argue that changes in residential living fueled and shaped metropolitan growth and expansion. At the same time, innovations in residential design and development, along

with new legal instruments of property ownership, altered the residential experience. Over time, these changes rippled throughout metropolitan life, transfiguring the built environment and transforming the ways Americans built, purchased, and experienced residential housing and community. These changes drove the physical, cultural, and economic formation of the Tampa Bay, from a series of scattered urban settlements into a regional metropolis.

“The Shelter Revolution” tells two parallel and interlocking stories. The first traces the physical and social creation of metropolitan Tampa Bay between 1920 and 1990. Through an examination of the intersection of booster promotion and the expansion and transformation of the built environment, it details the growth of a decentralized concentration of cities, St. Petersburg and Tampa, along with numerous towns and smaller settlements, into “Tampa Bay,” Florida, one of the most dynamic metropolitan areas in the country throughout the late-twentieth century.

Boosters—a loose collection of journalists, pro-growth institutions, builder-developers, politicians, and planners—imagined and sold an idea of the metropolis as a subtropical paradise with affordable real estate, a salubrious clime, and resort-style living. Booster imagery changed over time, depending on its institutional or organizational provenance. But collectively, they crafted a discursive dreamscape that captured the imaginations of millions of Americans throughout the postwar era. For their part, residential developers physically built the metropolis through the construction of a variety of different modes of shelter and innovatively designed communities. Together, boosters and builders culturally and physically created the metropolis.

The second story takes a closer look at the political and economic histories of residential development, changes in community design and function, and how people embraced and experienced these new kinds of residential living. Each chapter constructs a narrative around a specific type of housing and community development, including public housing, suburban subdivisions from the 1950s and 1960s, condominiums, mobile home parks, retirement communities, and gated communities and pseudo-private towns, and shows how boosters imagined such places, how developers built them, and how residents experienced and shaped them.

The Shelter Revolution?

Journalist Richard Louv coined the term “shelter revolution” in his 1983 book *America II*. Whether in the condominium form of collective property ownership or in the increasingly available “theme housing” that targeted specific consumer groups with a range of “lifestyle” amenities, Louv saw the future of the American residential community: exclusive, private, niche designs and marketing, and political.⁴ That same year, Francis Fitzgerald’s *Cities on a Hill* took readers through a tour of the “visionary communities remaking the American Dream,” from San Francisco’s famous gay district known as “The Castro” to Sun City Center, the pioneering age-restricted retirement community in metropolitan Tampa Bay.⁵ Yet, as this project demonstrates, Louv and Fitzgerald were observing a story in media res, and what appeared as new and

⁴ Richard Louv, *America II* (New York: Penguin Press, 1983).

⁵ Francis Fitzgerald, *Cities on a Hill: A Brilliant Exploration of Visionary Communities Remaking the American Dream* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).

“visionary” were merely small evolutions in the metropolitan history of residential community design and property ownership.

Around the time Louv and Fitzgerald published their books, within the academy a debate raged among scholars about how to understand and classify the nation’s shifting patterns of regional urbanization. The incredible growth of Southwestern and Southern cities, from Los Angeles to Miami, appeared to reflect a new era of capitalist urban development and inaugurate a new American super region, the Sunbelt. The earliest journalistic and scholarly works on the growth of the Sunbelt outlined the factors that ostensibly unified urban areas stretching across the southern rim of the United States, below the 38th parallel, from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic: postindustrial economies organized around high-tech defense manufacturing, leisure and tourism, real estate and construction, and extractive industries, and “post-structural” spatial layouts that developed vertically, as one study put it, with “self-sufficient communities scattering on their periphery.”⁶

While more recent studies have revived the Sunbelt paradigm, regional urban historians working in the late-1980s and 1990s generally abandoned the framework in favor of more traditional regional classifications, North, South, East, and West.⁷ An

⁶ David C. Perry and Alfred J. Watkins, eds., *The Rise of Sunbelt Cities* (Beverly Hills, California: Sage, 1977), 9. For a discussion of the “Sunbelt” debate, see David Goldfield, “Writing the Sunbelt,” *OAH Magazine of History* Vol. 18, no. 1 (October, 2003): 5-10.

⁷ David R. Goldfield and Howard Rabinowitz, “The Vanishing Sunbelt,” in *Searching for the Sunbelt Historical Perspectives on a Region*, ed. Raymond A. Mohl (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 224. For recent studies that revive the Sunbelt paradigm, see Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Elizabeth Tandy Shermer, “Creating the Sunbelt: The Political and Economic Transformation of the Sunbelt” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2009).

emphasis on the hyper-local, the particular, and the more practical concerns of maintaining institutional and disciplinary boundaries for the sake of professional legitimacy, precluded most historians from observing anything but regional difference and intra-regional historical continuity.

For histories of the urban West, Southern California became the analytical focal point of regional transformation. Scholars emphasized how boosters and land developers sold a mixture of fantasy, escapism, and nostalgia that led to the formation of decentralized metropolitan spaces economically based on the commodification of leisure and retirement.⁸ For urban historians and theorists, late-twentieth century Los Angeles epitomized the regional transformation and served as a laboratory for, in the words of Mike Davis, “excavating the future.”⁹ Los Angeles’s incredible growth and sprawling spatial form inspired new historical and theoretical approaches that examined the economic, political, and ideological connections between urbanization and suburbanization, in a historical subfield known as metropolitan history.¹⁰

⁸ Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the in Los Angeles* (London: Verso, 1990); Findlay, *Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture After 1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

⁹ See Davis, *City of Quartz*; Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Theory* (London: Verso Second Edition, 2011); and Michael Dear, H. Eric Schockman, and Greg Hise eds, *Rethinking Los Angeles* (New York: Sage Publications, 1996).

¹⁰ Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books, 1989); Mark Baldassare, *Trouble in Paradise: The Suburban Transformation of America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); Joel Garreau, *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier* (New York: Anchor, 1992); John Teaford, *Post-Suburbia: Government and Politics in the Edge Cities* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Timothy J. Gilfoyle, “White Cities, Linguistic Turns, and Disneyland: The New Paradigms of Urban History,” *Reviews in American History* 26, no. 1 (March, 1998), 175-204.

By contrast, studies of the twentieth century urban South emphasized historical continuity and their own blend of regional exceptionalism. For historians such as Jim Cobb and David Goldfield, booster declarations of a “New” or “Sunbelt” South obscured the historical continuity of racial strife, uneven economic development, and spatial decentralization.¹¹ Studies of Southern examine the relationship between race and space and show how Jim Crow laws guided the public policy that governed urban land use, including comprehensive planning and zoning, resource distribution, and urban redevelopment.¹² Yet the region’s southernmost metropolises, indeed its most dynamic state in the twentieth century, rarely if ever factor into Southern urban historiography—an egregious omission that this project seeks to correct.

By focusing on housing and community planning in Tampa Bay, Florida, this project bridges and combines the divergent historiographies of Southern and Southwestern metropolitan history while at the same time challenging the periodization of twentieth-century urban American history. Urban-metropolitan space serves as a unifying theme that guides this project. A cohort of scholars loosely organized in what

¹¹ James C. Cobb, *The Selling of the South: The Southern Crusade for Industrial Development, 1936-1990* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); David Goldfield, *Cotton Fields and Skyscrapers: Southern City and Region* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989). Since the 1980s, Carl Abbot has argued that terms like “The New South” and “Sunbelt” as well as civic slogans like those mentioned above helped obscure an ignominious past. Carl Abbot, “Real Estate and Race: Imagining the Second Circuit of Capital in Sunbelt Cities,” in *Sunbelt Rising: The Politics of Place, Space, and Region*, ed. Michelle Nickerson and Darren Dochuk (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 289.

¹² Ronald Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth Century Atlanta*; Thomas W. Hanchett, *Sorting Out the New South: Race, Class, and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875-1975*; and Christopher Silver, *Twentieth-Century Richmond: Planning, Politics, and Race* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984).

became known as the “L.A. School” initiated a critical reevaluation of urban space.¹³

Space as an analytical category comes from the field of urban geography. More than just the built environment, urban space can be understood as the intersection of, and changing relationship between, human activity, representations of space—what one historian has described as the ideology and language of planners, architects, academics, and others—and cultural symbols that reflect the lived experience of individuals and groups within particular spaces.¹⁴ Spaces are imagined and articulated, physically made, and socially interpreted and defined.

The history of metropolitan Tampa Bay provides a useful laboratory for studying the history metropolitan space. Tampa Bay has never existed as an incorporated city. It is a collection of urban nodes that consists of two major cities, Tampa and St. Petersburg, and numerous municipalities and unincorporated areas that all lie within three counties and encircle Florida’s largest natural harbor, Old Tampa Bay. Between the 1920s and 1990s the shelter revolution culturally and physically created metropolitan Tampa Bay. Boosters imagined and articulated a metropolitan sense of place. Builder-developers literally built the metropolis. And residents formed their own individual and collective place-identities that, like booster promotion and real estate development, changed over time and space. This dissertation provides a historicized account of the long twentieth-century revolution in American residential shelter. Historians and sociologists use the

¹³ Michael Dear, H. Eric Schockman, and Greg Hise eds, *Rethinking Los Angeles* (New York: Sage Publications, 1996).

¹⁴ See Henry Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 1984); David Harvey, *The Urban Experience* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988); Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1984); Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

term “shelter” sparingly. But when they do, it is usually as a catchall synonym for “housing” or “dwelling.” I use the term more broadly to refer to individual housing units, residential communities, and a combination of the two. Moreover, in what follows, I use the “shelter” interchangeably with those aforementioned terms.

By interrogating the history of metropolitan formation through the lens of residential living and community design, “The Shelter Revolution” offers fresh interpretations of Southern booster promotion, postwar economic growth and development, and metropolitan culture and politics.

Boosters

Boosters have played an integral role in the creation of American cities. Richard Wade and William Cronon have shown that as settlement moved away from the merchant towns of the Eastern Seaboard, boosters—mainly real estate speculators and planners, developers, journalists, and eventually local and regional politicians—trumpeted a locale’s natural endowment and commercial advantages to attract investment and settlement.¹⁵ Boosters gave life to towns and cities, first by imagining a place’s potential, mapping it, and then inscribing their vision through gridding and subdividing, thereby bringing order to the landscape.¹⁶

¹⁵ See Richard C. Wade, *The Urban Frontier: Pioneer Life in Early Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Lexington, Louisville, and St. Louis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); and William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1991).

¹⁶ Wade, *Urban Frontier*, 4; And also see Angel Rama, *The Lettered City* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

Booster promotion in the postwar urban South was rooted in the Great Depression. As James Cobb and others have shown, a young generation of growth-minded businessmen came of age during the Great Depression and WWII and began to supplant entrenched political regimes. Federal New Deal and wartime programs poured millions of dollars into urban infrastructures in the South and Southwest and later turned the regions into critical military production and training sites.¹⁷

When World War II came to a close, pro-growth boosters in cities across the region aggressively recruited industrial growth and economic diversification. Urban business leaders from Phoenix to Atlanta, adopted catchy slogans and growth-friendly “business climates” that entailed low taxes, generous public subsidies, and minimal business and labor regulations. Slogans like “The New South,” or “Atlanta: The City Too Busy to Hate,” served as both marketing tools and the rhetorical reimagining of cities and regions long associated with white supremacy and political and economic backwardness.¹⁸

¹⁷ James C. Cobb, *Industrialization and Southern Society, 1877-1984* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), 5-51; Gavin Wright, *Old South, New South: Revolutions in the Southern Economy Since the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 81-239; Pete R. Daniel, *Breaking the Land: The Transformation of Cotton, Tobacco, and Rice Cultures Since 1880* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Jack Temple Kirby, *Rural Worlds Lost: The American South, 1920-1960* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986); Cobb, *The Selling of the South*; Bruce Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South 1938-1980* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994). On the formation of “business climates” in the Southwest, see Elizabeth Tandy Shermer, *Creating the Sunbelt: The Political and Economic Transformation of the Sunbelt* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2009).

¹⁸ Since the 1980s, Carl Abbot has argued that terms like “The New South” and “Sunbelt” as well as civic slogans like those mentioned above helped obscure an ignominious past. Carl Abbot, “Real Estate and Race: Imagining the Second Circuit of Capital in Sunbelt Cities,” in Michelle Nickerson and Darren Dochuk eds., *Sunbelt*

As historians of Florida have described, civic boosters at the state, county, and local levels marketed and sold more than just business climates; they sold an experience, a lifestyle. Building off Kevin Starr's pioneering work on boosters and the "California Dream," historians of modern Florida have framed the state as California's eastern analog.¹⁹ Ray Arsenault and Gary Mormino, along with a number of scholars working in the "Florida School," have all shown how state and municipal boosters across Florida crafted their own place-ideology, collectively known as the "Florida Dream."²⁰ Arsenault and Mormino argue that the idea of the "Florida Dream" captured the imaginations of millions of upwardly mobile Americans, retirees, and foreign émigrés with promises of "perpetual warmth, health, comfort, and leisure."²¹

Rising: The Politics of Place, Space, and Region (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 289.

¹⁹ The "California Dream" promised an open shop and abundant labor for industrialists, but also a new beginning for millions of people, one replete with leisure- and consumer-based lifestyle, endless sunshine, beaches, cheap and abundant real estate, and low taxes. See Kevin Starr, *Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance, 1950-1963* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

²⁰ Raymond O. Arsenault, *St. Petersburg and the Florida Dream, 1888-1950* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999); Gary R. Mormino, *Land of Sunshine, State of Dreams: A Social History of Modern Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006); Ray Arsenault and Gary Mormino, "From Dixie to Dreamland: Demographic and Cultural Change in Florida, 1880-1980," in Randall Miller and George Pozzetta eds., *Shades of the Sunbelt: Essays on Ethnicity, Race, and the Urban South* (Ft. Lauderdale: Florida Atlantic University Press, 1989), 182; Godefroy Desrosiers-Lauzon, *Florida's Snowbirds: Spectacle, Mobility, and Community Since 1945* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011); and T.D. Allman, *Finding Florida: The True History of the Sunshine State* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2013); See R. Bruce Stephenson, *Visions of Eden: Environmentalism, Urban Planning, and City Building in St. Petersburg, Florida, 1900-1990* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1997); Gary Mormino and George Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

²¹ Arsenault, "Is there a Florida Dream?" *Forum* XVII (Summer 1994): 25-26.

The South's least populous state at the dawn of the Second World War, by the turn of the twenty-first century, Florida had the eighth highest population in the country, increasing from 2.7 million in 1950 to 16 million in 2000.²² While Texas and California's populations tripled, Florida's sextupled.²³ By the 1960s, 75 percent of Florida's population lived in metropolitan areas, and during the 1980s the state had four of the nation's top twenty-five fastest growing metropolitan areas.²⁴ More recently, the state surpassed New York to become the third most populated state in the country.²⁵

The first chapter provides a social and political overview of the metropolitanization of West-Central Florida between 1940 and 1985. It tracks the physical and demographic convergence of St. Petersburg, Tampa, and peripheral urban areas into a major postwar metropolis, Tampa Bay. It analyzes booster promotion and how it fostered the cultural creation of place. How did this play out at the various levels of metropolitan governance? How did boosters craft this imagery? How did the residential-vacation dream get balanced with the business climate? It also examines how builder-developers not only borrowed the imagery for use in their own marketing plans, but also physically constructed residential places meant to fulfill such dreams. Over time, as the subsequent chapters illustrate, the process of, and objectives for, buying residential property changed. Whereas upwardly Americans up until the 1950s and early 1960s

²² Mormino, *Land of Sunshine*, 13.

²³ As historian Gary R. Mormino points out, only Texas and California "exceeded Florida's absolute gains, and those states are, respectively, four and two and one-half times larger than Florida." See Mormino, *Land of Sunshine*, 12.

²⁴ Mormino, *Land of Sunshine*, 20.

²⁵ "20,271,272 Living the Florida Dream," *The Tampa Bay Times*, December 23, 2015.

sought to purchase lots or pre-built homes in a platted subdivision, residential consumption and the community experience thereafter became increasingly more exclusive, more customized, more complete, more collective, and, in some cases, more fantastical and vacation-like. Investing in residential property became less about buying homes and lots and more about investing in a pre-packaged residential experience that satisfied individuals' needs and desires. The evolutions in the residential experience came in numerous designs, targeted different class and age and racial demographics, occupied different geographical spaces, and offered consumers a variety of lifestyle amenities and commercial and professional options. Moreover, the changes in residential living entailed innovations in legal forms of property ownership—for example, the condominium and the community development district (CDD)—that increasingly rationalized collective limitations on private property while promoting the creation of pseudo-private towns that often operated independently of city and county politics.

Histories of the postwar American metropolis have never directly confronted these transformations. Instead, they have focused on the federal housing and urban redevelopment policies, national and local real estate practices, and the politics of urban and suburban social movements. The most important metropolitan histories implicate the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) and other federal housing programs, along with a racially discriminatory real estate industry, in the uneven development of the postwar metropolis. Pioneering metropolitan histories, from Kenneth Jackson's groundbreaking *Crabgrass Frontier* to Tom Sugrue's *Origins of the Urban Crisis* to Robert Self's *American Babylon*, federal housing and urban infrastructure programs fostered white suburbanization while simultaneously locking people of color in the increasingly

deteriorating and economically declining central cities.²⁶ Out of the suburbs came a new “culture of property ownership” that eventually drove the dismantling of the New Deal welfare state, the fragmenting of metropolitan society, and gave rise to a modern, conservative political ethos in the outlying suburban areas.²⁷ In this telling, white racism explains nearly everything about metropolitan expansion. The history of the metropolis becomes framed within an antagonistic urban-suburban binary. Geographical spaces and places get reduced to signifiers of racial privilege and oppression. Urban: black and poor. Suburban: white and upwardly mobile with a penchant for reactionary politics.

An analysis of the changes in residential development and design helps address these shortcomings. Drawing on the important if episodic national histories of housing and residential development, and grounding them within the history of Tampa Bay, this project demonstrates the critical role played by the shelter revolution in the physical and cultural development of metropolitan Tampa Bay. It looks at how builder-developers affected the pace and scale of metropolitan growth, how shifts in the organization of the

²⁶ Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Making of Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); David Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

²⁷ Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); See Self, *American Babylon*; Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*; Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Daniel Martinez HoSang, “Racial Liberalism and the Rise of the Sunbelt West: The Defeat of Fair Housing on the 1964 California Ballot,” in Michelle Nickerson and Darren Dochuk eds. *Sunbelt Rising: The Politics of Space, Place, and Region* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 188-213.

homebuilding industry altered development financing, forms of property ownership and neighborhood governance, and community designs, and how those changes manifested physically and culturally across space and over time. In so doing, it alters the generally accepted chronology of American urban history as defined throughout decades of historiography. Whereas the above-mentioned studies end in the 1970s with the onset of political conservative revanchism, this dissertation extends the chronology through the 1980s, illustrating how the shelter revolution was the most significant force in the physical and social creation of metropolitan Tampa Bay.

In a study of Jordan Park, a segregated, all-black public housing project built in St. Petersburg between 1939 and 1941, Chapter Two argues that the advent of public housing in the area represented the beginning of a new era of state-managed residential planning and federally subsidized housing and urban redevelopment. As Chapters One and Two show, the political controversy over the project reflected new attitudes about public control over urban space and the economic imperatives of adequate shelter provision. Chapter Three, “Where Citizenship is a Privilege,” tells the story of Progress Village, a master planned subdivision built and designed exclusively for black homeowners, between 1958 and 1962. By focusing on the connected histories of urban renewal and suburban subdivision development in the late 1950s, this chapter reconsiders the regional narrative of black housing, the politics of integration, and the racial implications of instruments of racial exclusivity, including deed restrictions and covenants. As Chapters Four and Five show, Progress Village was a prototypical residential community of the era, a contemporary of the age-restricted retirement community, and in many ways a precursor of the gated community. Chapter Four shifts

the focus to the advent of mobile homes and mobile-home parks, age-restricted retirement communities such as Sun City Center, and condominium complexes. These communities pioneered the designs and legal restrictions that would inform the utopian visions of gated-community developers and Scientologists. Together, the booster-imagined and protean dreamscape, along with the emergence of amenity-rich mobile-home parks, condominiums, retirement communities, and private neighborhoods, produced significant political and cultural consequences

Residential Politics and Culture

Lastly, this project examines how the residents of the new modes of shelter formed their communities and experienced residential life. While boosters imagined places, and builder-developers created physical manifestation of such places, people migrated to Tampa Bay, bought and rented different forms of residential shelter, and attempted to carve out a sense of place. The concept of *place* also comes from the social sciences. Like *space*, place can be difficult to create and observe and maintain. As one historian defined it, place is “space imbued with meaning,” the public dimension of space.²⁸ Without access to individuals’ psyche and internal motivations, a way of accessing how people create and conceptualize place is through an analysis of grassroots political and social protest.²⁹ “The Shelter Revolution” weaves throughout each chapter stories of grassroots protests that emerged in reaction to one or a number of threats to

²⁸ Andrew Weise, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

²⁹ Delores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes As Public History* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995).

place. While such “threats” took a variety of forms, they are all rooted in the cyclical processes of capitalist urban development and redevelopment. Physical space—the built environment—forms the grist of cultural constructions of place. But as private property (fixed capital), physical spaces and their owners face economic pressures to redevelop and renew. Such pressure has the effect of creating transient and fleeting places.

Residential developers physically built places, and the advent of new legal instruments designed to protect property values also functioned as bulwarks against physical and social change. Grassroots social and political movements, whether formed in the 1940s in support of public housing construction or in the 1970s to address sundry environmental problems, residents organized to forestall what urban geographer David Harvey called the “perpetual perishing” of place.³⁰ Furthermore, by emphasizing community efforts to create and maintain a sense of place, “The Shelter Revolution” illuminates the stories of previously overlooked historical actors (developers, black suburbanites, trailer park dwellers, and religious zealots as real estate developers) and events in the historical production of metropolitan space.

³⁰ Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference*, 261. A dystopian literature frames the discourse on Florida’s environmental history. Journalists, nature writers, and geographers have deplored the “paving [of] paradise,” the depletion of wetlands, and the draining of the Florida aquifer. These studies tend to establish a false dichotomy between a “real” Florida and the urban artifice it has become in the last half of the twentieth century. They border on teleology in the assumption that a particular landscape *should* look a certain way. They also analyze environmental problems as a result of unmitigated and poorly planned growth. See Diane Stevenson eds., *Paradise Screwed: Selected Columns of Carl Hiaasen* (New York: Berkeley Books, 1999); Jack E. Davis and Raymond O. Arsenault eds., *Paradise Lost?: The Environmental History of Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998); Michael Grunwald, *The Swamp: The Everglades, Florida, and the Politics of Paradise* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007); Craig Pittman, *Paving Paradise: Florida’s Vanishing Wetlands and the Failure of No Net Loss* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010); Royal C. Gardner, *Lawyers, Swamps, and Money: U.S. Wetland Law, Policy, and Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2011).

Sources

As a means of understanding these connections, this study uses a variety of distinct primary source collections. Key collections include the papers of neighborhood, homeowners, and trailer park associations; community newspapers; bulletins and pamphlets; booster ephemera like postcards, advertisements, and brochures; and University of South Florida and Story Corps oral history collections. Oral histories and the papers of community and neighborhood associations allow me to analyze how residents created new residential developments and communities, how these experiences split along class, racial, generational, cultural, and geographic lines, and how the changing politics of residential living informed the pace and scale of metropolitan growth over time. To understand how these processes intersected and informed each other, this project also examines government and institutional papers, ranging from metropolitan and urban planning documents; the papers of public redevelopment commissions; regional Federal Housing Administration and Housing Authority files; the personal papers of politicians and builder-developers; and the University of South Florida's collection of aerial photographs. These sources allow this project to move between local and metropolitan perspectives, to trace the transformation of the residential built environment, and to analyze the relationship between housing policy, homeowner and community political culture, and metropolitan politics.

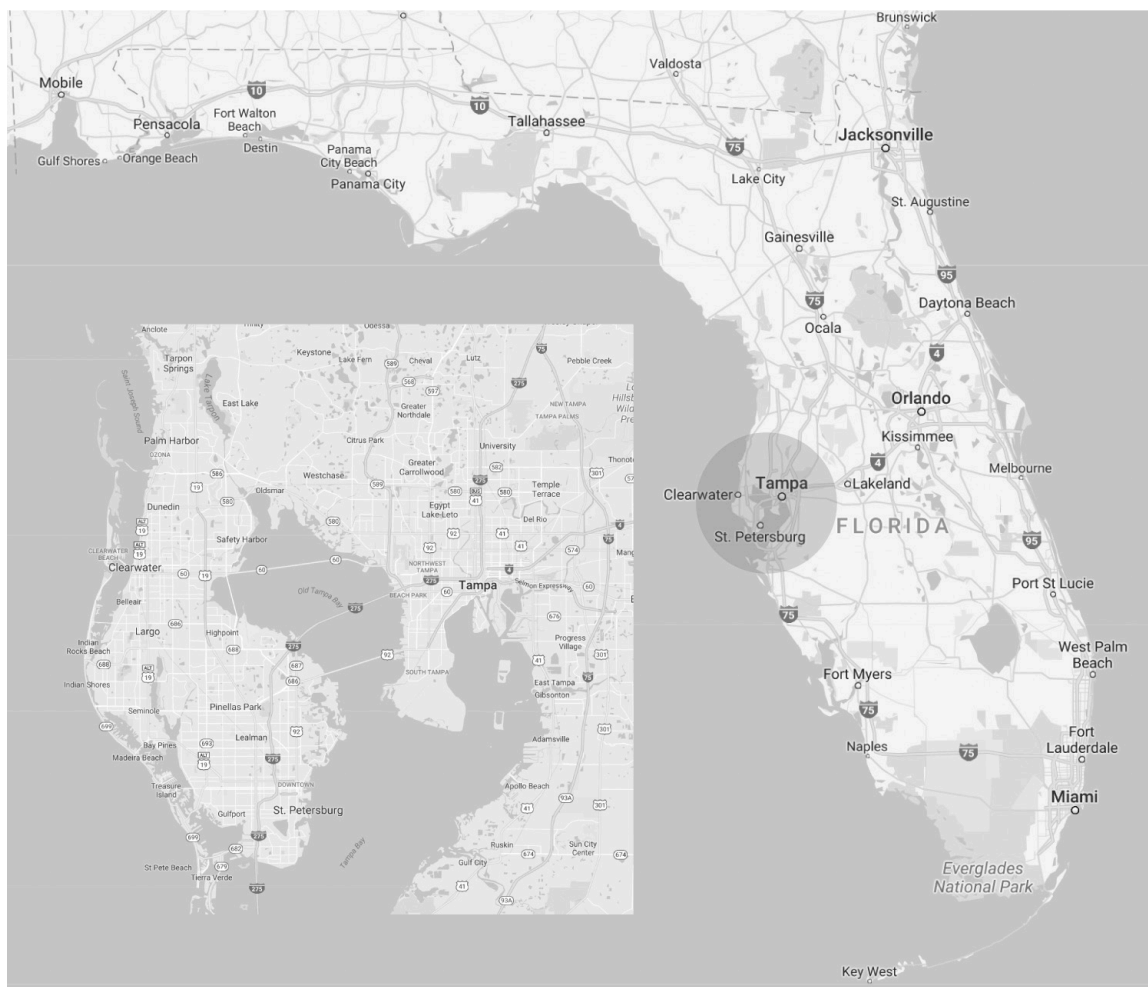


Image 1 “Map of Florida and Tampa Bay”



Image 2 “Residential Developments in Tampa Bay.”

Chapter One

Boosters, Builder-Developers, and the Metropolitanization of Tampa Bay, 1920-1990

Tampa Bay is too romantic and lovely a place for one to attempt describing it. I wish some perfumed, cigar smoking, novel writer, city man monkey was here, he could not describe it, he would die of fit of reality. Tampa is a perfect Arcadia...Florida could be made a heaven on earth...The more I see of T. Bay the more I like it, it is a romantic and truly picturesque place...Tampa, Tampa what a beautiful heavenly and luscourious [sic] spot thou are.¹
—Bartholomew M. Lynch, 1836

I. Sunbelt Foundations

During the early-1920s, metropolitan Tampa Bay did not exist. West-Central Florida's two substantial municipalities, Tampa and St. Petersburg, separated by Florida's largest natural harbor, Old Tampa Bay, were isolated urban enclaves with limited political, commercial, and cultural connections. Tampa was a multiethnic and multi-racial port city and a regional leader in cigar manufacturing and agricultural exports. Across Old Tampa Bay, on the southern tip of the Pinellas Peninsula, St. Petersburg existed as a small resort and retirement community. Before the area's first bridge across Tampa Bay opened in 1924, the drive between Tampa and St. Petersburg

¹ Epigraph in Gary Mormino, "Tampa: From Hell-Hole to the Good Life" in *Sunbelt Cities: Politics and Growth Since World War II*, ed. Richard M. Bernard and Bradley R. Rice (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 138-161.

took nearly four hours, as motorists had to drive around the northern most part of the bay, through the rural and agricultural lands separating nearby towns.²

The metropolitanization of Tampa Bay began in the early 1920s, as the nation emerged from a recession following the end of WWI. Between 1921 and 1926, boosters and real estate developers initiated a land-speculation and construction boom that carved up hundreds of thousands of acres of Florida swamps and wetlands and transformed agricultural lands into subdivided lots and communities.³ Civic boosters—a loose collection of pro-growth politicians, chambers of commerce members, journalists, developers, and real estate agents— from Miami to Palm Beach to Tampa and St. Petersburg, sold an early version of what historians later called the “Florida Dream”: a lifestyle of leisure and recreation, affordable land and homeownership, and a year-round subtropical climate.⁴ Booster promotion, taken as a whole, emphasized the recreational and sporting life that a winter resort entailed. The same natural amenities that made the place a tourist destination were sold as amenities that made for a good living place. Aided by the advent of private pensions, technological innovation, especially the proliferation of automobiles, approximately half a million people relocated to Florida during the 1920s, eager to take advantage of cheap and abundant real estate.⁵ St. Petersburg’s population

² The Gandy Bridge, a toll road, opened in 1924. See *Florida Trend* 2, no. 8 (November 1959): 12.

³ William B. Stronge, *The Sunshine Economy* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008), 95.

⁴ Arsenault, “Is there a Florida Dream?” 22-27.

⁵ The population rose from 968,470 to 1,468,211. See Stronge, *The Sunshine Economy*, 95; Jennifer Klein, *For All These Rights: Business, Labor, and the Shaping of America’s Public-Private Welfare State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

jumped from 14,237 to more than 30,000 by the end of the decade. Tampa's population nearly doubled, increasing from 51,608 to just over 100,000.⁶

At the same time, builder-developers created places to accommodate the influx of people. The area became a laboratory for the standardization and rationalization of the master-planned subdivision.⁷ Developers took booster images of a natural paradise and inscribed them onto the residential landscape. New subdivisions such as Davis Islands and Shore Acres re-imagined leisure pursuits from sailing to golfing as the rituals of daily life. While citizens and city officials in St. Petersburg and Tampa rejected multiple efforts to implement comprehensive planning guidelines, builder-developers of high-end residential subdivisions advanced the principles of zoning and pioneered legal instruments of collective property ownership.

Together, these interrelated forces fueled the urbanization of West-Central Florida and laid the foundation of the postwar metropolis. This chapter examines how boosters imagined and marketed the area and how developers shaped and physically built the residential landscape. It begins in the 1920s, during what historian Gary Mormino has called Florida's "second land boom," and tracks the growth of metropolitan Tampa Bay through the 1990s, from a loose collection of small urban nodes into one contiguous

⁶ Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*. While much of the scholarly attention has focused on Miami and its surrounding areas, rates of in-migration and the building and speculative frenzy in Pinellas (St. Petersburg and Clearwater) and Hillsborough Counties (Tampa) rivaled that of South Florida (Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, and Palm Beach). See Mark S. Foster, *Castles in the Sand: The Life and Times of Carl Graham Fisher* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000).

⁷ Marc Weiss, *The Rise of the Community Builders* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

metropolitan landscape, carved up by transportation networks, splintered by legal boundaries, and fragmented along sociopolitical lines of class, race, age, and lifestyle.⁸

The “Sunshine City”

Located on the southernmost tip of Pinellas Point, stretching between Old Tampa Bay and the Gulf Mexico, St. Petersburg has since its inception in the late-nineteenth century been a city socially and economically oriented around winter tourism, leisure, and retirement.⁹ Early boosters trumpeted the area’s salubrious clime and geographical amenities, especially the sunshine. In 1910, Lew Brown, owner and operator of one of the city’s two main newspapers, the *Evening Independent*, nicknamed St. Petersburg the “Sunshine City” and publicized what became known as the “sunshine offer”: free copies of the *Evening Independent* any day the sun did not shine.¹⁰

By the early 1920s, the winter tourists, seasonal guests, and most permanent residents could catch a spring training baseball game downtown, sun bathe at the waterfront, play shuffleboard, or attend one of the many public events sponsored by the Board of Trade (later named the chamber of commerce).¹¹ Even before the city became the first in the state to hire a full-time “publicity agent” to serve as its chief propagandist,

⁸ Mormino, *Land of Sunshine*, 45.

⁹ Tracy J. Revels, *A History of Florida Tourism* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), 66.

¹⁰ See a copy of the “Sunshine Offer,” *The Evening Independent*, September 1, 1910,

¹¹ Nevin Sitler, “Selling St. Petersburg: John Lodwick and the Promotion of Florida,” (master’s thesis, University of South Florida-St. Petersburg, 2006), 24.

St. Petersburg had become one of the most popular tourist and retirement destinations in the country.¹²

The discursive promotion of St. Petersburg went national during the Twenties. Publications as diverse as *Vogue* and *Homes and Garden* ran advertisements that extolled the virtues of a subtropical lifestyle and a paradisiacal escape.¹³ At the height of the boom the city's annual marketing budget climbed above \$250,000.¹⁴ While the booster campaigns that marketed St. Petersburg to the country established the city as a singular, Eden-like resort, the propaganda converged with a statewide discourse of Florida as a place of physical and psychological rejuvenation, youth and longevity, and personal reinvention.¹⁵ The marketing succeeded. Between 1920 and 1926 the population doubled from 14,000 to 30,000.¹⁶

Merchant-builder Perry Snell built the exclusive, deed-restricted neighborhood of Snell-Isle and in the process transformed shoals and mud flats into an ordered and master-planned community featuring Spanish and Mediterranean-style homes with stucco walls and tiled roofs, high ceilings and arched windows, and courtyards and gardens of subtropical plants and palm trees.¹⁷

¹² Arsenault, *St. Petersburg*, 186; Revels, *Florida Tourism*, 66.

¹³ *SPT*, March 9, 1925, January 1, 1925.

¹⁴ The exact figure in 1926 was \$270,000. See *SPT*, November 3, 1926.

¹⁵ Desrosier-Lauzon, *Snowbirds*, 30-31.

¹⁶ Gregg M. Turner, *The Florida Land Boom of the 1920s* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2015), 137.

¹⁷ Most of the builders and developers of the era were small, local firms. Not until the 1960s did the major real estate conglomerates come to dominate the home and

The more moderately priced subdivisions formed suburban pockets on the fringes of downtown. The new neighborhoods of Kenwood and Lakewood and Pasadena Estates featured the bungalow, which during the boom surpassed the popularity of the two-story “Cracker home” to become the design of choice for homebuilders and upwardly mobile homebuyers.¹⁸ The bungalow suited Central Florida living.¹⁹ A huge porch and overhanging roof provided shade and air circulation during the oppressively hot summers, and abundant windows let in the sunshine in the colder months.²⁰ The bungalow-style turned up in subdivisions throughout Pinellas and Hillsborough Counties.²¹

The booster narrative conveniently omitted anything that might detract from the image of a subtropical resort-city enjoyed by upper- and middle-class beachgoers and vacationers. Other populations, however, experienced a different side of the boom. Indeed residential accommodations split along racial and class lines. In a conflict that

community building industry. Marc Weiss, *The Rise of the Community Builders*, 2; Arsenault, *St. Petersburg*, 200-201.

¹⁸ Advertisement, *Suniland: The Magazine of Florida*, January 1925, 81.

¹⁹ “Episode 15 Cracker House,” *A History of Central Florida*, podcast video, April 25, 2014 <http://stars.library.ucf.edu/ahistoryofcentralfloridapodcast/15/>

²⁰ Stephenson, *Visions*, 50.

²¹ “Ad for Lakewood Manor,” *Suniland*, 81. According to Clifford Clark Jr., the bungalow reflected the modern industrial age. With its simple design, had become popular in the last decades of the nineteenth century, as industrialization precipitated a cultural backlash against Victorian complexity. The bungalow and its variations represented the exaltation of new aesthetics. Cement blocks and reinforced concrete became acceptable building components. Straight lines and ninety-degree angles—precision—replaced the “complicated curves and intricate detail that had characterized Victorian designs.” See Clark Jr., *The American Family Home, 186-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 146.

presaged future controversies between city leaders and mobile-home owners, the opening of “Tent City” in 1920 stirred public dissension. That year, lower- and working-class tourists and transient workers began pitching tents on city owned land near 18th street and 2nd Ave. Mayor Noel Mitchell welcomed the “tin-can tourists”—named for their practice of living off canned food heated and cooked over stoves or open fires—and eventually offered free campsites to anyone willing to stay in a tent.²² The residents of Tent City enjoyed free water, electricity, refuse collection, and toilet facilities. Within two weeks as many as 120 families had set up temporary residence. But the experiment did not last amid a wave of negative publicity, and less than a year later, it shut down. Entrepreneurs filled the void, opening private tent cities that became early versions of the trailer parks that dotted the landscape after WWII.²³

Residential distribution also cut along racial lines. With construction booming, black laborers in the Deep South, many of them recruited by white contractors, migrated to St. Petersburg.²⁴ The city’s black population more than doubled, jumping from 2,444 in 1920 to 7,416 by decade’s end.²⁵ Despite providing a much-needed source of cheap labor, the era’s burgeoning black population concerned white city leaders. Just as they disapproved of the optics of lower- and working-class tent dwellers, city leaders assumed a sizable black population would scare off tourists and damage the city’s reputation. City

²² “The Florida Madness,” *The New Republic*, January 26, 1926, 258; *Tourist News* 1 (December 4, 1920): 15.

²³ Trolander, *Sun City to the Villages*, 22.

²⁴ John B. Gardner, “Negro Section Mirrors White Community Strata,” *SPT*, February 12, 1962.

²⁵ Arsenault, *St. Petersburg*, 206.

officials strengthened Jim Crow laws and sought to ensure strict residential and social segregation, initiating a long-term trend of couching resistance to social equality as an economic imperative. Legal instruments such as deed restrictions, as well as less formal customs such as “gentlemen’s agreements,” circumscribed black residential mobility.²⁶ By the end of the decade, black residents concentrated in four neighborhoods on the western edge of downtown: Methodist Town, the Gas Plant area, Pepper Town, and along the 22nd Street South corridor.²⁷

While city boosters could try to hide the presence of black laborers and dwellers, it possessed no monopoly over the area’s geographical and climatic amenities. Cities and towns throughout Pinellas County used the template established by St. Petersburg: a booster-driven, non-industrial, and leisure-based economy that foreshadowed the postwar Sunbelt city. Booster promotion became a countywide phenomenon. A 1926 advertisement boasted that the town of Madeira Beach was where “living becomes a joy,” and encouraged residents to “banish the cares of life in a healthful existence amid. . . the clear, fresh, air of the Gulf of Mexico, whose azure waters break softly on a broad white beach.”²⁸ Farther north, in Clearwater, it was “spring all of the time.”²⁹ Such catchy civic slogans drew on similar themes to construct a unique sense of place that was deeply

²⁶ Arsenault, *St. Petersburg*, 206- 207. For more on deed restrictions, see Weiss, *Rise of the Community Builders*; and Robert M. Fogelson, *Bourgeois Nightmares: Suburbia, 1870-1930* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); and Kevin Fox Gotham, *Race, Real Estate, and Uneven Development: The Kansas City Experiment* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014).

²⁷ Rosalie Peck and John Wilson, *St. Petersburg’s African American Neighborhoods*, 30.

²⁸ “A statewide Survey of Florida Conditions,” *Suniland* (March 1924): 15, 72.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

connected to the landscape and the area's natural amenities. An improved transportation network, including a series of bridges that connected the barrier islands that buffered the gulf coast, better integrated the county's smaller towns and municipalities.³⁰ With the opening of the Gandy Bridge, in 1924, the area finally had a direct link between northern St. Petersburg and south Tampa, albeit one with a toll.³¹

The "Cigar City"

Eastward, across Old Tampa Bay, at the mouth of the Hillsborough River, Tampa was a city that produced cigars and shipped phosphate and fruit to points around the globe. If St. Petersburg was a prototype of the resort city, Tampa was more akin to the industrial metropolises of the Northeast and Midwest.³² In the ethnically diverse neighborhoods of Ybor City and West Tampa, Spanish, Italian, Cuban, and Afro-Cuban immigrants and their descendants worked in the unionized cigar-manufacturing industry. At the bustling port downtown, black stevedores unloaded cargo vessels carrying tobacco, turpentine, and timber and loaded the products of Tampa's outlying hinterlands.³³ The industrial political economy featured a combustible mix of machine politics, anarcho-syndicalism, gambling, bootlegging, and vigilante violence that had by the early-1920s earned the city a reputation for political corruption and lawlessness.³⁴

³⁰ "City and Community Slogans," *Suniland* (December 1924): 41-42.

³¹ *Florida Trend* 2, no. 8 (November 1959): 12.

³² "Florida's Greatest Port City," *Suniland* (March 1926): 114.

³³ Federal Writer's Project, *Works Progress Administration Guide to Florida*, 284.

³⁴ Mormino, "Hell-Hole," 140-141. During this era, Tampa's murder rate was three times the national average. See Kerstein, *Politics and Growth*, 52-53, 68; Robert P. Ingalls,

Nevertheless, civic boosters and developers drew on the same imagery as their counterparts across the bay. A 1919 advertisement published by the Tampa Board of Trade described the city as the “realization of every man’s dream” and boasted about the “magical transformations. . . effected” by a “winter spent in the all-healing sunshine.”³⁵ In 1924, the “Cigar City” became the “Year Round City.”³⁶ That same year, an ad by the Tampa Board of Trade, “Where the Birds Sing and the Flowers Bloom All Winter Long,” reflected the economic and spatial changes already underway:

As an American winter resort, there is no place like this beautiful metropolis on Florida’s gulf coast. It is far south of what most person’s [sic] consider ‘the South’—on a peninsula that stretches 300 miles out into the ocean.” “Tampa is unique in its gay setting of semitropical splendor. There is every convenience of a big city, and entertainment galore. Lily-white yachts and stately excursion steamers cut the waters of the bay. There is fishing in hundreds of near-by lakes. . . midst hyacinths on lazy streams; and in season, some of the best hunting in the country.”³⁷

As in St. Petersburg, residential developers celebrated the area’s natural amenities and built a residential environment that bespoke a “setting of subtropical splendor.” In 1924, D.P. Davis began accepting down payments on lots in his new waterfront development, Davis Islands. Davis had spent time in Miami apprenticing under the famous island developer, Carl Fisher, and in the early 1920s arrived in Tampa hoping to

Urban Vigilantes in the New South: Tampa, 1882-1936 (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993).

³⁵ Tampa Board of Trade, *Tampa and Hillsborough County, Florida* (Tampa: Tampa Board of Trade, 1919): 33.

³⁶ *Suniland* (December 1924): 41.

³⁷ *Ibid.* (October 1924): 81.

establish himself as a first-class “Maker of Islands.”³⁸ On a series of small, partially submerged mudflats at the mouth of the Hillsborough River, just south of the Port of Tampa, Davis’s vision became a reality. After acquiring the land and fending off affluent homeowners who feared the project would ruin their waterfront vistas, Davis unleashed the machines, dredging and filling the area into 875 acres of salable real estate.³⁹ To be a successful builder-developer during the 1920s boom took more than investment capital and land. It also required savvy marketing to attract would-be buyers, and, as Carl Fisher’s understudy, Davis had learned from the best. He combined lofty rhetoric with promotional spectacle. As the development got underway, Davis held speed boat races, arranged for yachts to ferry potential residents to and from the island, and hired professional athletes to promote the project.⁴⁰ When property sales began in October 1924, buyers waited in line for hours, with one man chaining himself to the door of the sales office to guarantee his spot at the front of the line. First day sales surpassed \$1.5 million, and by the end of the year the development had sold out, earning an estimated \$18,138,000.⁴¹ Purchasers invested in an exclusive neighborhood, replete with a landscaped boulevard, winding streets, several hotels and apartments, and residential dwellings that ranged in architectural styles from Spanish to Moorish to Italian.⁴²

³⁸ Term in Nolan, *Fifty Feet in Paradise*, 194.

³⁹ Charles E. Harner, “D.P. Davis and the Million Dollar Sandbar,” *FT* 14, no. 7 (November 1971): 83.

⁴⁰ Nolan, *Fifty Feet*, 194; James W. Covington, “The Story of Davis Islands, 1924-1926” *The Sunland Tribune* IV, no. 1 (November 1978).

⁴¹ Harner, “D.P. Davis,” 83.

⁴² Federal Writer’s Project, *WPA Guide*, 285; Harner, “D.P. Davis,” 83.

Across the inlet between Davis Islands and the mainland, brick and wood-frame mansions in the Georgian-Colonial style lined the elegant Bayshore Blvd.⁴³ Farther west, the development of the affluent suburbs of Beach Park and Parkland Estates subdivided the city's outlying land into ordered rows of low-rise bungalows and stuccoed homes with tile roofs.⁴⁴ From 1910 to 1930, homebuilders erected approximately 4,000 bungalows that in total comprised the neighborhoods of West Hyde Park, Seminole Heights, and Palma Ceia.⁴⁵

Northeast of downtown and the port, Ybor City, a "Latin" enclave famously known for the finest hand-rolled cigars, housed Italians, Spanish, and Cuban immigrants. The neighborhood had its own Spanish-language newspaper, theaters, restaurants, factories, and its own chamber of commerce.⁴⁶ Cuban, Italian, and Spanish cigar-workers occupied "primitive" one-story houses that surrounded the business areas. In other sections, Havana-style dwellings—stucco, flat or tile roofs, with "grilled" balconies and "courts and patios," gave the built environment a European and colonial-Caribbean aesthetic.⁴⁷ In an arrangement unique to the region, Afro-Cubans defied residential

⁴³ Federal Writer's Project, *WPA Guide*, 285.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 285. One of the city's earliest suburbs, Palma Ceia, also experienced substantial expansion. See Hampton Dunn, "Tampa's Most Raucous Roarin' Decade: The 1920s," *Sunland Tribune* 11 (1985): 15-24.

⁴⁵ James Ricci, "The Bungalows: A History of the Most Prominent Style of Tampa Bay," *Tampa Bay History* 1, no. 2, (Fall/Winter, 1979).

⁴⁶ Federal Writer's Project, *WPA Guide*, 290.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 290.

segregation customs and lived “intermixed with white Cubans” in Ybor City, at least until after WWII.⁴⁸

Racial boundaries were more rigidly defined outside of Ybor City and the cigar industry.⁴⁹ The rapid influx of black laborers during the boom created a widespread housing shortage that led to cramped and overcrowded communities and fueled territorial conflict with white residents.⁵⁰ The majority of Tampa’s black population (23,323 in 1927) lived in older, often deteriorating sections of the city, such as West Hyde Park, Robles Pond, and College Hill.⁵¹ An area known as the “Scrub” eventually became the epicenter of black life in Tampa, akin to St. Petersburg’s 22nd St. corridor. The Scrub was home to segregated schools, its own newspaper, Protestant and Catholic churches, and a wide variety of business enterprises catering to black residents.⁵² In an era when Americans increasingly pursued sporting and leisure activities as outlets of escape from mundane industrial and clerical work, Tampa’s black residents were banned from local beaches, pools, and parks. A power structure of white business and real estate interests maintained the color line through vigilante violence and an ever-shifting code of racial customs.⁵³

⁴⁸ J.H. McGrew and Arthur Raper, *A Study of Negro Life in Tampa*, 6-7.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 6-7.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 6-9; Robert P. Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*.

⁵¹ McGrew and Raper, *Negro Life in Tampa*, 6-7.

⁵² Federal Writer’s Project, *WPA Guide*, 285; McGrew and Raper, *Negro Life in Tampa*, 7.

⁵³ Ibid., 6-7.

Approximately 950 black residents formed the bedrock of an emergent homeowner class, mainly residing in the neighborhoods of West Hyde Park and in the West Palm Avenue neighborhood.⁵⁴ As educated and skilled professionals, from doctors and barbers to business owners and government workers, these homeowners encountered the same indignities as their poor and lower working-class counterparts, but their positions of social and economic influence within the segregated black community offered a modicum of residential and social mobility. The property-owning class filled the rosters of the city's prominent black institutions, from the Urban League to fraternal aide societies, and eventually took the lead in the postwar fight to end Jim Crow. But until then, the incipient shelter revolution, represented by places such as Temple Terrace, was spatially and socio-economically out of reach for black residents of Tampa Bay.

Developers built Temple Terrace, a prototype of the private country-club community, on a former game preserve in northern Hillsborough County, beyond the Tampa city limits.⁵⁵ The founders of the community envisioned a place where as part of the residential experience wealthy retirees owned a small orange-grove plot in addition to their Mediterranean Revival home. M.E. Gillette, a father of one of Temple Terrace's developers, had helped bring to market a new strand of Florida citrus that he called the Temple orange. While retirees in Temple Terrace played golf on the community's new green, swam at the pool, or challenged one another at a game of tennis, they also contributed to the world's supply of Temple oranges.⁵⁶ Within a year of welcoming its

⁵⁴ McGrew and Raper, *Negro Life in Tampa*, 10.

⁵⁵ Advertisement, "Florida's Masterpiece," *Suniland* (January 1925): 55.

first residents, Temple Terrace legally incorporated, making it, along with Plant City, one of only three municipalities in Hillsborough County.⁵⁷

The origins of Temple Terrace and Plant City symbolized the county's incipient economic and cultural tensions. Nearby, Plant City formed as a small hub for the county's agricultural interests. Temple Terrace, by contrast, foreshadowed a future of retirement and resort-style living.⁵⁸ Indeed, by combining orange growing and golfing, Temple Terrace literally stood between two historical eras.

"A Greedy Delirium"

At the height of the boom, Tampa and St. Petersburg occupied different worlds, but those worlds were spatially, economically, and culturally converging. Yet the savvy promotional industry and inflated sales figures concealed the land boom's shaky foundation.⁵⁹ What passed for economic growth was often in reality the product of speculation and dubious business practices. Between late-1925 and the spring of 1926, the speculative wave crashed, presaging the onset of the Great Depression. "The world's greatest poker game," declared the *Nation's* Stella Crosley, "played with building lots

⁵⁶ Janet M. Hall, "The Birth of Temple Terrace in the 1920s: A Photographic Essay," *Tampa Bay History* 14, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1992), 44.

⁵⁷ *Suniland* (October 1924): 64.

⁵⁸ Mark W. Kerlin, "Plant City, Florida, 1885-1940: A Study in Southern Urban Development" (master's thesis, Fort Lewis College, 1981), 12.

⁵⁹ *St. Petersburg Times*, January 1, 1925.

instead of chips, is over.”⁶⁰ The flow of northern migrants slowed to a trickle, banks closed and lenders went under, and residential building ground to halt.

In St. Petersburg, for example, building permit receipts, having peaked in 1925 at \$24,081,7000, never topped the \$1 million mark between 1930 and 1933.⁶¹ Similarly, housing prices declined. A home in the NorthShore suburb that had cost \$40,000 to build in 1925 could be purchased for around \$7,000 in the early 1930s.⁶² Bank deposits dwindled to a fraction of their pre-depression figure. With no money coming in and none going out, every bank closed, and the city defaulted on its bond issues.⁶³

While the emergent metropolis avoided some of the shadier real estate practices afflicting South Florida, it nevertheless experienced a real estate boom fueled by speculative capital.⁶⁴ A relatively new breed of salesperson, the professional real estate agent, greased the land-sales machine. Nick-named “binder boys,” real estate agents roamed the streets downtown, selling and flipping lots in unfinished and phantom subdivisions. Walter Fuller, city historian and prominent real estate developer during the 1920s, explained the role of the real estate agent:

A 1925 salesman was a single purpose animal, trained for a short burst of speed. Office men got the prospects. The salesman was armed with a sales kit and a single selling story. He was selling one product, a vacant lot that ‘sure to double

⁶⁰ Stella Crossley, “Florida Cashes in Her Chips,” *The Nation*, July 7, 1926, 11.

⁶¹ Federal Writer’s Project, *WPA Guide*, 263.

⁶² Commercial real estate also reflected this trend, selling at ten to fifteen percent below construction cost during the depths of the Depression. See Karl H. Grismer, *The Story of St. Petersburg* (St. Petersburg: P.K. Smith and Company, 1948), 170.

⁶³ Data found in Arsenault, *St. Petersburg*, 255.

⁶⁴ Pinellas County Planning Department, *Pinellas County Historical Background*, December 2008, endnotes, xx.

in value within 90 days.’ He showed the prospect, wined and dined him, if necessary, bluffed, cajoled or talked the prospect out of ‘earnest money,’ and he was done. Others closed the deal.⁶⁵

The bluffing and cajoling created an unsustainable situation.⁶⁶ Individual lots sometimes traded hands multiple times in a day, inflating their values to unprecedented and dangerous heights while not necessarily resulting in actual homebuilding. Between 1920 and 1925 the total valuation of property in St. Petersburg increased 300 percent.⁶⁷ Yet at one point in 1925, with as many as fifty subdivisions under construction the combined number of buyers, streets, and real estate agents (nearly 6,000) outnumbered houses.⁶⁸

The economic downturn took a similar toll on Tampa. Between 1930 and 1940, the city added just over 7,000 new residents.⁶⁹ Residential and commercial construction and banking stagnated. Cigar manufacturing, still the dominant industry at the dawn of the Depression, began a slow decline thereafter as automation killed jobs and cigarettes supplanted cigars.⁷⁰

As of 1926, the developers of Temple Terrace ran out of money to pay bondholders and the building and property sales stalled. Six years later, only 77 families

⁶⁵ *Pinellas County Historical Background*, 69.

⁶⁶ Nolan, *Fifty Feet*, 201.

⁶⁷ Proceeds from building permits leapt from \$5,928,171 to \$46,167,038. See Fuller, *St. Petersburg and its People*, 254-258; and Arsenault, *St. Petersburg*, 195.

⁶⁸ *Pinellas County Historical Background*, endnotes, 72.

⁶⁹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census*, table 13.

⁷⁰ Mormino, “Hell Hole,” 140.

lived in the resort community.⁷¹ At the end of the decade, aborted real estate projects and empty lots littered the landscape. The land boom earned the state a bad business reputation that lingered in the minds of Americans well into the post-WWII era. It built instant fortunes and destroyed them almost as quickly.

But it also demonstrated the explosive power and transformative potential of Central and South Florida's residential real estate economy. Booster promotion became more deeply intertwined into the regional political economy. Abundant and cheap land made the area a laboratory for residential planning and community development. But the speculative boom cast a pall over the Florida real estate industry for years to come. For in the words of Karl Grismer, the "boom was not an urge to retire in a pleasant cottage in Florida or bask in luxurious villas or seaside hotels." It was, he continued, "a greedy delirium to acquire riches overnight without benefit of effort, brains, or services rendered."⁷²

II. From Welfare to Warfare

The "crises" of depression and total war helped lay the foundation for the area's explosive postwar growth. Most importantly, the advent of the New Deal, and later military mobilization, injected life into the area's moribund economies and insinuated the federal state deeply into the region's political economy.⁷³ Government programs put

⁷¹ Hall, "A Photographic Essay," 45.

⁷² *Pinellas County Historical Background*, endnotes, xx.

⁷³ Southern historians credit federal and private capital for lifting the region out of economic destitution. See James C. Cobb, *The Selling of the South*; Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt*; Wright, *Old South, New South: Revolutions in the Southern*

people to work, upgraded infrastructure, and introduced tens of thousands of American soldiers to the inexpensive, vacation- lifestyle offered in Tampa Bay. Later, military installations brought soldiers to Tampa Bay, turning the area into a strategic node in the regional geography of an emergent warfare state.⁷⁴

The emergency crises led to a reorganization of the home and community building industries in several significant ways. First, it created a political and cultural context more amenable to government intervention in the economy. Federal financial relief, along with greater attention paid to the merits of city planning, concentrated power over the residential environment in the hands of public officials and urban planners. And finally, with the advent of total war in Europe, the bay area became an important military training and production center. The bay area's martial makeover evoked a singular sense of place. The affordable shelter shortage that resulted from the rapid influx of soldiers and war workers forced a variety of interests—from federal and local government officials to homebuilders to hotel and motel proprietors—to think of housing and community in terms of the metropolis.

During the First World War, the federal government made a small foray into the shelter business. But before the government could spend all of its \$110 million appropriation for housing war workers, the conflict in Europe ended and the

Economy Since the Civil War; Daniel, *Breaking the Land*; Kirby, *Rural Worlds Lost*; Bartley, *The New South*; Grantham, *The South in Modern America*.

⁷⁴ Gary R. Mormino, *Hillsborough County Goes to War: The Homefront, 1940-1950* (Tampa: Tampa Bay History Center, 2001), 9. New Deal, wartime, and postwar defense dollars initiated the urbanization processes in many western and southern towns. See Lotchin, *Fortress California, 1910-1961: From Warfare to Welfare* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

responsibility for solving the country's shortage of affordable shelter returned to the private market.⁷⁵

Amid the Red Scare that followed, a variety of civic groups, trade organizations, and eventually the federal government, began promoting homeownership as the hallmark of good citizenship and as an antidote to communistic collectivism.⁷⁶ Pioneering subdivision builder William Levitt captured the prevailing sentiment, when he famously quipped that “no one who owns his own house and lot can be a communist. He has too much to do.”⁷⁷ Throughout the 1920s, national advertising and propaganda campaigns, from “Own Your Own Home” to “Better Homes In America,” touted the patriotic and civic virtues of private homeownership.⁷⁸ Organizations such as the National Association of Real Estate Boards (NAREB) educated Americans on the economics and practicalities of owning a home.⁷⁹

The Great Depression created a crisis so severe that the Roosevelt administration, as part of its New Deal to revive the American economy, initiated numerous programs that retooled the housing industry and established a long-term commitment by the federal government to help improve Americans' access to homeownership and affordable shelter. As historians have shown, a series of programs, including the Federal Home Loan Bank

⁷⁵ Jackson, *Crabgrass*, 192.

⁷⁶ Lawrence J. Vale, “The Ideological Origins of Affordable Homeownership Efforts,” in *Chasing the American Dream*, ed. William M. Rohe and Harry L. Watson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 20.

⁷⁷ Colin Marshall, “Levittown, the Typical American Suburb—A History of Cities in 50 Buildings,” *The Guardian*, April 28, 2015.

⁷⁸ Vale, “Affordable Homeownership,” 20.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

Board (FHLBB), the Federal National Mortgage Association (FNMA), the Homeowner's Loan Corporation (HOLC), and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), revolutionized the nation's home-finance industry by freeing up capital for lenders and borrowers, stimulating private construction and individual home purchases.⁸⁰

While some of the earliest New Deal housing programs amounted to little more than subsidies to stimulate the construction industry, the formation of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the United States Housing Authority (USHA) had profound, and long-enduring, consequences for the provision and distribution of American shelter.⁸¹

The FHA provided borrowers access to long-term mortgages that required low down payments and carried the backing of federal guarantees. Historians have implicated the FHA as the primary suspect among many in the racially uneven development of postwar suburbia. The FHA's *Underwriting Manual* standardized nationwide appraisal

⁸⁰ Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, especially chapter eleven, "Federal Subsidy and the Suburban Dream: How Washington Changed the American Housing Market." For an analysis on the relationship between New Deal lending programs and racial discrimination, see David Freund's *Colored Property*.

⁸¹ D. Bradford Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); John Bauman, *Public Housing, Race, and Renewal in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Rachel Bratt, *Rebuilding a Low-Income Housing Policy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989); Eugene Meehan, *The Quality of Federal Policymaking* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1979); Gail Radford, *Modern Housing for America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Lawrence Vale, *From Puritans to the Projects* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); Devereux Bouly, *The Poorhouse: Subsidized Housing in Chicago, 1895-1976* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978).

and lending practices that were themselves informed by the dubious theories of urban land-use economics.⁸²

Mentioned less often, the FHA also established national design guidelines for building residential subdivisions. Its 1940 bulletin, *The Successful Subdivision*, outlined the qualifications for developments using FHA insurance, which included a professionally written master plan, lot and street sizes, curvilinear streets, and minimum construction standards to ensure quality and structural longevity.⁸³

Drawing on the work of housing reformers and social scientists, *The Successful Subdivision*, much like the advent of comprehensive zoning in municipalities, sought to rationalize the use of residential space and creating and sustaining strong real estate markets.⁸⁴ To that end, it mandated the use of a comprehensive Master Plan that outlined design specifications, from curvilinear street patterns, housing unit dimensions, street size and width, and the demographic composition of residents. Deed restrictions and covenants ostensibly protected property values by regulating personal behavior, restricting property ownership, and ensuring a modicum of demographic continuity.⁸⁵

The master-planned, FHA-approved subdivision, a modified version of the pre-war subdivision, fundamentally altered the geography and design of early postwar

⁸² Freund, *Colored Property*, 196.

⁸³ Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Housing: The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding America's Domestic Architecture* (New York: Knopf, 1984), 80.

⁸⁴ McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*; Boyer, *Dreaming the Rational City*, 163.

⁸⁵ McKenzie, *Privatopia*, 20.

residential living.⁸⁶ As chapter two demonstrates in more depth, the USHA represented the federal government's most successful foray into the provision of affordable shelter.

With the creation of the United States Housing Authority (USHA), the federal government expanded its commitment to the nation's housing problems. Created by the Wagner-Steagall Act in 1937, the USHA initially set aside \$800 million for public housing for urban slum clearance and the erection of public housing for poor residents unable to afford monthly rents anywhere but in the most deteriorating and run-down shacks.⁸⁷

In West-Central Florida, federal housing programs combined with a variety of New Deal agencies to revive a moribund economy. As across the South, the WPA, CCC, and others put people to work, rebuilt public works infrastructure, and created a political and social atmosphere more amenable to federal subsidy and the merits of urban planning and the management of the built environment.⁸⁸ While federal relief programs, particularly public housing projects, drew the ire of local conservatives and stirred up

⁸⁶ Excellent studies of the postwar "suburbs" and the processes suburbanization abound. Most of these studies collapse distinction between modes of shelter. Jackson discusses other types of residential living, but he's more interested in drawing a distinction between the suburbs and the city and the disastrous if unintended consequences of FHA lending programs. Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*; See Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Making of Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

⁸⁷ Wright, *Building the Dream*, 227.

⁸⁸ Stephenson, *Visions*, 101-103; For more on the South and the New Deal, see the notes in Chapter Two of this dissertation, as well as Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt*; and Smith, *The New Deal in the Urban South*.

local controversies, the country's entry into WWII intensified the federal state's role in local matters.

With the advent of total war, the Tampa Bay area became a critical node in the geography of an emergent warfare state. The tens of thousands of soldiers and industrial workers that descended on the area to train and build the nation's war machine engendered what the *St. Petersburg Times* called an "acute" need for housing, one that lasted the duration of the world conflict.⁸⁹ But in a way that clearing slums and providing shelter for poor black residents could never do, the emergency of total war fully legitimized, if only temporarily, publicly subsidized housing. The need for more and better housing touched all parts of the Tampa Bay area. The crisis of housing took on a metropolitan dimension.

The Tampa Housing Authority built a "war housing project" with more than 1,100 units and leased to the army a piece of land that eventually contained as many as 300 residential trailers.⁹⁰ Trailers proved a useful, if incomplete, solution to the housing crunches afflicting most urban war production centers.⁹¹ They were mobile, transient, inexpensive to construct and transport, and therefore inherently "temporary." Still, as war continued, housing war workers and soldiers proved difficult.⁹² At one point in 1943 as

⁸⁹ *SPT*, May 13, 1943.

⁹⁰ Tampa Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 1944, Forward. By January 1943, 300 of the expected 400 trailers had been set up at Municipal Trailer Park. See *Tampa Daily Times*, January 21, 1943.

⁹¹ Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 262.

⁹² In February 1943, almost 1,600 soldiers' families needed housing. See *Tampa Morning Times*, February 7, 1943.

many as 1,600 soldiers and their families needed shelter.⁹³ Some newly arrived families slept in their cars, often for weeks, before finding adequate shelter. Others, like the family of one particular shipyard employee, crammed two parents and five children into a two-bedroom cottage that rented for \$10/week.⁹⁴

According to the Tampa Housing Authority, in its 1944 annual report, said that because the “private housing in the Tampa Bay area has been insufficient to meet the increased demands,” available housing had therefore become Tampa’s “chief problem.”⁹⁵

Hotels filled up with soldiers.⁹⁶ Soldiers stationed in St. Petersburg took shelter in one of the numerous luxury hotels, such as the Vinoy, Soreno, and the Princess Martha, many of which had been largely empty in the last years of the 1930s. The newly christened “hotel-barracks” added to the city’s martial makeover. Onetime sites of leisure and affluent recreation became signifiers of military austerity. For example, in the Med-Rev style Vinoy, on the north end of the harbor, hotel staff removed the telephones in each room and took down the expensive artwork gracing the lobby walls. The conversion of the city’s luxury hotel stock into “hotel-barracks” not only mitigated the area’s housing shortage, it saved the Allied war effort at least 8 months by not having to wait for the construction of more dwellings.⁹⁷

⁹³ *TMT*, February 7, 1943.

⁹⁴ *TDT*, March 9, 1944.

⁹⁵ Tampa Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 1944, Forward.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, Forward.

⁹⁷ Sgt. Louis M. Marks, “Eight Months Brings About Great Changes in the City,” *St. Petersburg Times*, February 24, 1943.

Khaki-clad soldiers were a prominent presence on the streets and in the shops downtown. Usually quiet and almost empty during the summer months, the beach welcomed carloads of off-duty troops and their families.⁹⁸ Residents and local civic officials openly welcomed the influx of military personnel. The war-housing center in the area reported “cooperation” from local property owners in listing homes and apartments available for rent. The American G.I., a new kind of transient visitor, not only got his first taste of subtropical living, but also allowed the city to participate more intimately in the war effort and stimulate the local economy.⁹⁹

When the War came to a close in the summer of 1945, the metropolitan area’s two major cities, Tampa and St. Petersburg, were several years into an increasingly robust economic recovery.¹⁰⁰ After a slight economic slowdown caused by demobilization, the expanding metropolis experienced decades of economic growth and became a laboratory for the postwar shelter revolution. The booster promotion of the 1920s, combined with new federal housing programs and a moderate embrace of comprehensive urban planning at the local level, rationalized efforts to publicly plan and manage the residential built environment.

The “crises” of economic depression and total war expanded the housing shortage beyond the localized confines of the area’s multiple downtowns. Housing had now

⁹⁸ Editorial, “City Fine for War Workers, War Workers fine for the City,” *SPT*, May 13, 1943.

⁹⁹ Marks, “Eight Months Brings About Great Changes in the City.”

¹⁰⁰ At least Pinellas County and St. Petersburg were improving. See “Pinellas County Has Gain of \$12,000,000 in Realty Sales Over Previous Year,” *SPT*, March 12, 1944.

become understood, in the words of the Tampa Housing Authority, as a “metropolitan-wide” phenomenon.¹⁰¹

The Metropolitanization of Tampa Bay (1945-1975)

In the thirty years after WWII, Hillsborough and Pinellas were two of the fastest growing counties in the most rapidly urbanizing state east of the Mississippi River. The processes that took root in the preceding decades combined with the financial resources of a newly empowered federal state and an upwardly mobile citizenry. In that time, Tampa Bay emerged as a prototype of the Sunbelt metropolis. The area embodied the “Sunbelt City” taxonomy established by sociologists in the 1970s: economies based on leisure and tourism, retirement, high-tech and extractive industries, federal defense spending, real estate construction, and population in-migration. Technological innovations such as air conditioning tamed the oppressive summers and DDT disarmed the ubiquitous mosquitos.¹⁰² The processes fueling the growth of metropolitan Tampa Bay paralleled those of the South and Southwest.

As historians of Florida have shown, state and local boosters sold the Florida Dream of “perpetual warmth, health, comfort, and leisure.”¹⁰³ Pinellas County became St. Petersburg writ large, a tourism and working- and middle-class retirement haven that dabbled in defense manufacturing and later the healthcare industries. But it was largely

¹⁰¹ Tampa Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 1944, Forward.

¹⁰² Raymond O. Arsenault, “The End of the Long Hot Summer: The Air Conditioner and Southern Culture,” *Journal of Southern History* 50, no. 4 (1984): 597-628; Gordon Patterson, *The Mosquito Wars: A History of Mosquito Control in Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004).

¹⁰³ Arsenault, “Is there a Florida Dream?” 25.

what one historian has called a “mailbox economy” of private pensions and social security checks.¹⁰⁴

By contrast, the city of Tampa retained some of its industrial and agricultural economy. Its deep-water port consistently ranked as one of the busiest ports in the country. Citrus, vegetables, beef, and phosphate, among other products from the Central Florida hinterland, passed through the port to destinations throughout the Caribbean and Latin America. Over time, boosters succeeded in redeveloping parts of the downtown into a banking and entertainment district.¹⁰⁵

By the 1970s, an international airport and two interstate highways that intersected in Tampa extended the metropolitan periphery and made the area a regional hub in the global circulation of people, capital, and goods.¹⁰⁶ But the bulk of the human traffic moving through Tampa’s transportation system took up residence, if at all, outside of the Tampa city limits, where home builders and community developers, armed with federal subsidies and powerful machines, remade the landscape.

Bulldozers turned much of Pinellas and Hillsborough County’s remaining citrus groves and ranchland into subdivisions and mobile-home parks and a commercial infrastructure that predominantly supported the tourist and retirement economy. Residential developers took the model of a resort city first established by St. Petersburg and replicated it at smaller levels across the landscape. Unoccupied and cheap real estate abounded. A constitutional amendment outlawing a state-income tax, along with a \$5,000

¹⁰⁴ Mormino, *Land of Sunshine*, 136.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., “Hell Hole,” 152.

¹⁰⁶ Allan Bliss, “Making a Sunbelt Place,” (Ph.D. dissertation, the University of Florida, 2010), 246.

homestead tax exemption for homeowners, raised the possibility of full-time living in a vacation setting.¹⁰⁷

“Subdivisionitis”

In the 1950s, residential-subdivision building in Tampa Bay exploded. Much of the action in the 1920s consisted of subdividing plots of land into lots that may or may not eventually become the site of a home. From the 1940s onward, developers large and small built complete communities, and later, residential experiences.¹⁰⁸ During the 1950s, the bulk of residential building occurred in the “rural” and agricultural spaces on the outskirts of cities and in unincorporated areas. There, builder-developers inscribed the Florida Dream discourse into the built environment and, over time, forged a diffuse metropolitan dreamscape that transformed residential living.

James Rosati turned citrus groves into subdivisions with names such as Tyrone Gardens, Orange Hill, and Orange Lake Estates. Built on 240 subdivided acres, Orange Lakes Estates contained 1,000 concrete block homes fronting St. Augustine grass and surrounded by palm trees and tropical plants.¹⁰⁹ The garden motif proliferated. Subdivisions, from Tyrone Gardens to Disston Gardens, evoked a pre-lapsarian

¹⁰⁷ “Florida in the U.S. Tax Picture,” *FT* 1, no. 1 (April 1958).

¹⁰⁸ Weiss, *The Rise of the Community Builders*, 2.

¹⁰⁹ In 1957, the National Broadcasting Company did a special on Orange Lake Estates. See John Wilson, “Shaping the Dream” (master’s thesis, University of South Florida-St. Petersburg, 2007), 68.

authenticity that complemented promotional portrayals of the area's unspoiled and paradisiacal landscape.¹¹⁰

In northwestern Hillsborough County, the Lamont-Shimberg Co. spent more than a decade turning a former dairy farm into numerous master-planned, FHA-approved subdivisions, collectively known as Town'N Country.¹¹¹ Featuring ranch and split-level homes, selling in 1959 for approximately \$9,000 with a fixed rate, 40-year mortgage, the community purportedly offered buyers a complete residential experience.¹¹² The name "Town'N Country" evoked a self-contained metropolis with its own urban and rural sections.

The postwar residential boom drove up the cost of land and building materials.¹¹³ As early as 1960, real estate analysts noted that the area's undeveloped land was "rapidly disappearing."¹¹⁴ Rising costs and diminishing land availability led to a reorganization of the home- and community-building industry. Giant, publicly traded conglomerates, armed with millions of dollars in capitalization, pushed out many of the small-time merchant-builders.¹¹⁵ As chapter three demonstrates, mobile homes and a new form of property ownership and residential living, the condominium, rose in popularity as

¹¹⁰ "For Your Life in the Sun," *SPT*, July 20, 1958; "Southern Comfort Homes To Open New Section," *SPT*, July 20, 1958.

¹¹¹ James H. Shimberg, interview with Peter Klingman, August 5, 1996, 13.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 13.

¹¹³ "Danger in Florida Land Developments," *FT 2*, no.6 (September 1959); and "New Concepts in Florida Real Estate Investing," *FT 2*, no. 7 (October 1959).

¹¹⁴ "Inside Florida," *FT 2*, no. 12 (April 1960): 4.

¹¹⁵ "Danger in Florida Land Developments."

homebuilders of all sizes sought ways around the increasingly high costs of doing business.

From the late-1950s onward, the giant community-building firms employed land-use instruments that altered the shape and composition of the suburban subdivisions. These large-scale developers went vertical and collective, employing new designs that created complete residential experiences, first for retirees, and later younger Americans on the make.

Earth-moving machines provided another alternative solution to the area's rapidly disappearing real estate. Following the example of their 1920's predecessors, developers used dredging machines to dig up the sea floor and deposit the fill atop pre-existing mud flats and sandbars.¹¹⁶ Such operations increased the developable acreage and remade the geographical contours of the barrier islands and the coastal mainland. For more than twenty years along Pinellas County's intra-coastal waterway, mechanical dredges took dirt from the sea floor and turned it into million-dollar real estate with canals and lagoons—all in a effort to manufacture a residential experience.¹¹⁷ As bulldozers fell citrus groves while powerful dredges devoured sea-grass beds.

A Texas-based development company spent \$25 million turning fifteen scattered mudflats off the southern tip of Pinellas Point into six islands of "scenic" boulevards, intra-island bridges, and "deep" canals for boating and easy access to the Gulf, designed

¹¹⁶ "Danger in Florida Land Developments."

¹¹⁷ R. Bruce Stephenson, *Visions of Eden*, 136-139; Wilson, "Shaping the Dream," 67; "Bayway Adds New Fill To Bay," *SPT*, January 1, 1961.

to fulfill “every man’s dream of living on a semi-tropical island, yet with *all* [sic] the conveniences of ultra-modern living.”¹¹⁸

Subdivisions such as these extended the residential built environment to the city limits of St. Petersburg and smaller cities such as Clearwater and Dunedin. Clearwater Beach, a sandy and sparsely settled strip of barrier island that measured three square miles at the close of WWII, boasted by 1970 1,220 motel and apartment units, a “boatel,” a marina, and recreational facility costing upwards of \$2.5 million. Along the causeway that connected mainland Clearwater to the beach, a dredge and fill project begun in the 1950s turned mudflats and mangroves into the exclusive residential neighborhood of Island Estates.¹¹⁹ As of the early 1970s, dredge and fill operations had added nearly 5,000 acres of developable real estate to Pinellas County.¹²⁰

Unincorporated Hillsborough County became a laboratory for residential innovation in the postwar decades. The southern part became home to Progress Village (Chapter Three), an all-black planned subdivision, as well as Sun City Center, a pioneering age-restricted retirement community (Chapter Four), among many others. The population of unincorporated Brandon jumped from under 1,600 to over 12,000 in the decade between 1960 and 1970. South of Hillsborough, Manatee and Sarasota Counties watched their populations respectively triple and quadruple.

¹¹⁸ Advertisement, *SPT*, March 30, 1963.

¹¹⁹ “Clearwater Beach Waterfront Booming,” *FT* 13, no. 3, July 1970.

¹²⁰ Desrosiers-Lauzon, *Snowbirds*, 135. As of the early 1960s, approximately 3,500 acres of Boca Ciega Bay had been filled in to make way for homes, roads, and commercial centers. See Stephenson, *Visions*, 129.

In the northern part of the county, between Town’N Country and Temple Terrace, several middle and upper class communities under the Carrollwood brand were for decades some of the hottest real estate in the metropolitan area. The original Carrollwood opened in the early 1960s, and its 800 homes and a white-sand beach around Lake Carroll attracted professors and administrators from the newly opened University of South Florida.¹²¹ Ten years later the county authorized the creation of special district for the development of Carrollwood Village, a mixed-use development with multiple types of residential housing, collectively owned common areas, and a private golf course. As chapter four and five explain, communities such as Carrollwood Village, age-restricted retirement communities, and condominiums helped popularize the Common Interest Development (CID), which directly influenced the private cities of the 1980s.¹²² Three unincorporated municipalities that were not even on the map in 1960—Egypt Lake, Lake Magdalene, and Sweetwater Creek—collectively boasted a population of more than 25,000. As of the early 1970s, northern Hillsborough County contained three unincorporated municipalities that collectively boasted a population of more than 25,000.¹²³ The population settlement patterns cuts across county lines.

A quaint and rural county on the metropolitan fringe twenty years earlier, best known for citrus and cattle grazing, Pasco County, and its four municipalities, New Port Richey, Dade City, Zephyrhills, and Port Richey, attracted residents, many of who sought more affordability and decentralized living. In 1978, the construction of single-family

¹²¹ “Inside Florida,” *FT* 2, no. 12 (April 1960): 4.

¹²² Richard Danielson, “Carrollwood Developer Matt Jetton looks back on 50 years of Community,” *SPT*, March 19, 2009.

¹²³ *FT*, September 1972.

homes topped agricultural production as the county's most profitable industry.¹²⁴ A number of devastating freezes in the first few years of the 1980s further imperiled the county's agricultural economy. Farmers and county officials, as they had in other parts of Tampa Bay throughout the postwar era, focused more intently on real estate development, and by the mid-1980s Pasco County was a burgeoning retirement destination as well as an affordable suburban housing option for young professionals working in Hillsborough and Pinellas County.¹²⁵

South of Hillsborough and Pinellas, Manatee County experienced a protracted boom. Home to the nation's first trailer park subdivision, opened in the late 1950s, Manatee County, much like St. Petersburg, attracted retirees, many living on tight budgets. In ways similar to Pasco, however, Manatee County also welcomed young professionals unable to afford the rising home costs in Hillsborough and Pinellas, as well as service-industry workers and middle- and working-class retirees. As of the mid 1980s, Manatee County itself was becoming a metropolitan area. In one illustrative year, between 1983 and 1984, building permits rose forty percent in value, reaching \$293 million.¹²⁶ At decade's end, Manatee County counted more 200,000 residents.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Most of the building occurred in unincorporated West Pasco, where the county issued 4,142 (out of a total of 4,935, worth approximately \$106,000,000) building permits that year. See Linda Perry, "Single-family homes lead Pasco building," *SPT*, February 2, 1979.

¹²⁵ John English, "Cashing in on the Boom in Tampa Bay," *SPT*, December 12, 1985; In 1979, the construction of single-family homes in Pasco County, then the county's biggest industry, totaled more than \$106 million. See *SPT*, February 2, 1979.

¹²⁶ "As We See It," *Florida Builder*, April 1985, 4.

¹²⁷ Manatee County's population reached 211,707 in 1990, up from 148,442 in 1980. See "Growth Spurt Continues in Southwest Florida," *FT* 22, no. 12 (April 1980).

III. “Where the Sunbelt Buckles” (1975-1990)

Between 1975 and 1976, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers of the National Football League (NFL) lost 26 games in a row. For nearly two seasons, Tampa Bay’s recently acquired expansion team was the laughing stock of professional football and the butt of jokes throughout the country, including those of talk-show host, Johnny Carson. The late-night comic regularly lampooned the Bucs in his monologues. Yet, while no one could argue against the team’s ineptitude, the national publicity was anything but negative for Tampa Bay. Chamber of Commerce executive vice president Al Trayner called it “the biggest boost to our identity of anything in the world. “Regardless of what he [Carson] was saying, you just can’t buy that kind of advertising. Now,” he added, when people ask about the metropolitan area, “nobody asks you about Miami.”¹²⁸ Win or lose, the Bucs served as a roving promotional junket, touring the country and apprising would-be tourists and potential transplants of Tampa Bay, Florida.¹²⁹

When the Bucs made the 1979 playoffs, the name “Tampa Bay” beamed into millions of American households.¹³⁰ The cultural sense of place that projected outward also pervaded local neighborhoods. Through shared fandom and social interaction the area’s professional sports franchises (three by the end of the century) manufactured a sense of community and place that transcended the area’s web of legal and political and

¹²⁸ “Growth Spurt Continues in Southwest Florida.”

¹²⁹ *Florida Trend* put it succinctly: “If Tampa is to become the largest tourist-retirement-recreational area on Florida’s growing west coast, going big league is a must, because it means free television exposure.” See “Tampa Bids for Pro Football,” *FT* 12, no. 7 (November 1969): 43.

¹³⁰ “Tampa Stadium,” *SPT*, January 1, 1985.

social boundaries. Fans wearing shirts emblazoned with “Tampa Bay,” massive stadiums and arenas, and the spectacles of games and matches, consistently reproduced the idea of “Tampa Bay” as a coherent and unified place. Boosters used the arrival of professional sports to tout the metropolitan area’s coming of age. One promotional video from the late-1970s personified the metropolis as a scrappy and underestimated upstart who defied the critics with a Manifest-Destiny-like ascension. As “one big market,” Tampa Bay was “bigger than they thought we could be.”¹³¹ Journalists referred to the area as the “city of Tampa Bay” and, with an enthusiasm that sounded more like boosterism, “a real estate goldmine called the “Suncoast.”¹³²

A minor recession in the mid-1970s temporarily cooled the national discussion about a regional “power shift” to the “Sunbelt.”¹³³ But when the Arab oil embargo lifted, the economy revived, and in-migration levels shot to unprecedented heights. The metropolitan population reached nearly 3 million in 1990. Between 1974 and 1984, the year that Tampa Stadium hosted the Super Bowl, the acreage of developed land increased at twice the rate of the population.¹³⁴ The following year, Tampa Bay led the South in residential development.¹³⁵ A leisure-based retirement and tourist space, an international

¹³¹ Greater Tampa Bay Chamber of Commerce, promotional video, 1976.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GTBfBoYSCtl>

¹³² Jeanne Malmgren, “Open Spaces are Filling up Fast: Growth Overflows Pinellas,” *SPT*, April 11, 1988 and “Tampa Bay is a Sprawling Metropolis,” *SPT*, October 5, 1988.

¹³³ Sale, *Power Shift*.

¹³⁴ Stephenson, *Visions*, 176.

¹³⁵ In 1985, residential construction rose 19 percent from the previous year, from \$1.25 billion to \$1.49 billion. The Orlando metropolitan area ranked second with a total of \$1.23 billion in residential construction. See *Florida Builder*, April 1985.

port and extractive space, a decentered metropolis, a regional finance and banking hub—Tampa Bay was a quintessential Sunbelt metropolis, simultaneously exceptional and prototypical. The empowerment of environmental planning agencies to regulate residential and commercial development across overlapping legal jurisdictions further reinforced the idea of a singular metropolis.

The new “regional” monikers—Sunbelt, Southwest Florida, Suncoast, Tampa Bay—bespoke a modernist penchant for grand schemes and vast designs for controlling and comprehending the “chaos” of the postwar metropolis.¹³⁶ A similar style of thinking infused the national debates. It pervaded the idealism behind the construction of the Florida Suncoast Dome, built in downtown St. Petersburg in the late-1980s. But while the arrival of professional sports appeared to signal the bay area’s ascension into the ranks of the nation’s monumental metropolises, it also illustrated the internal contradictions and tensions that complicated regional growth and development.

The formation of the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council along with other multi-jurisdictional agencies, including Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD), represented rational if insufficient responses to overwhelming rates of population growth and the inability of dozens of discrete governments to adequately handle the consequent environmental depredation and social and political frustration. When the metropolitan economy slid into a minor recession in the mid-1970s, on the

¹³⁶ Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, its Transformations, and its Prospects* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1961); Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Vintage, 1974); Jon C. Teaford, *The Rough Road to Renaissance: Urban Revitalization in America, 1940-1985* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); Joel Schwartz, *The New York Approach: Robert Moses, Urban Liberals, and the Redevelopment of the Inner City* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1993); Thomas Kessner, *Fiorello H. LaGuardia and the Making of Modern New York* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989).

heels of a national downturn, a rash of environmental calamities attracted negative publicity. Potable water shortages, rivers and lakes poisoned by the refuse of urban expansion, and the destruction of acres of mangrove swamps and sea-grass beds fueled to action environmentalists and state and local lawmakers who eventually oversaw the passage of some of the strongest environmental regulations in the region.¹³⁷ But the growth was difficult to restrain and impossible to stop.

As chapter four demonstrates, the regulatory apparatus that aimed to protect environmentally sensitive areas from development propelled important changes in the design and development of residential communities in the late-1970s and 1980s. But just as regional planners gained the ears of policymakers, and just as the era's large-scale and long-delayed urban renewal and redevelopment projects were coming to fruition, an undercurrent of social criticism and social activism challenged the very notion of the regional metropolis.

At the level of national cultural production, Jane Jacobs and others assailed the basic tenets of postwar modernist planning.¹³⁸ In Florida, journalists and novelists played

¹³⁷ Florida Land Design and Engineering Inc., *Application for Certification As a Florida Quality Development* (July 11, 1986): 4; See also Stephenson, *Visions*, 178.

¹³⁸ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961). For a discussion of the debate between Jane Jacobs and Lewis Mumford, see Robert Fishman, "The Mumford-Jacobs Debate," *Planning History* 10 (1996). For postmodern criticisms of modernist urban planning, see Christopher Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal*; James Holston, *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Caro, *The Power Broker*; David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); M. Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and its Architectural Entertainments* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996); Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disneyland* (Berkeley: University of California Berkeley Press, 1991); Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*; Davis, *City of Quartz*; and Hayden, *The Power of Place*.

the role of organic intellectuals in the burgeoning environmental movement. A cohort of writers, from Carl Hiaasen to John D. McDonald, decried the environmental depredation wrought by developers and urban growth regimes. McDonald linked the destruction to the rootlessness of the population and joined a chorus of sociologists in lamenting the loss of community and the disappearance of place.¹³⁹

Grassroots reactions to the consequences of rapid growth varied over time and space. Neighborhood groups and non-profit homeowners associations endorsed laws limiting growth and curtailing individual property rights for reasons that while often cloaked in the guise of environmental justice and civil liberties nevertheless pursued the interests of property values, community protection, and anti-taxation. While together these groups may have formed what critics have called a “slow-growth” movement, collective efforts struggled to transcend the multitude of physical and legal boundaries.¹⁴⁰

Beneath the booster rhetoric, past the football fan wearing a Buccaneers t-shirt, the metropolitan expanse fragmented along the lines of class, race, age, and lifestyle. By the 1980s, metropolitan Tampa Bay broke down into three counties, more than thirty cities and municipalities, dozens more unincorporated areas, and hundreds of residential communities that catered to a diverse clientele, creating a patchwork of urban nodes and concentrations of people and political power. In Pinellas, the state’s most densely populated county, towns and cities overlapped seamlessly into one another with little

¹³⁹ Carl Hiaasen, *Paradise Screwed: Selected Columns of Carl Hiaasen*, ed. Diane Stevenson (New York: G.P. Putnam’s and Sons, 2001). For more on McDonald, see chapter three of this study. For more on the genre that has become known as “Florida Noir,” see the notes in the introduction of this study.

¹⁴⁰ Davis, *City of Quartz*, 156. For more on the various slow-growth movements in Tampa Bay, see chapter five of this study.

distinctions between where one began and the other ended. The emergence of areas such as Countryside in north Pinellas, Tyrone in south Pinellas, and Westshore in south Hillsborough, increasingly decentered commercial and residential activity and fragmented the metropolis into dozens of discrete and overlapping entities.¹⁴¹ Urban theorists discerned new patterns of suburbanization. Neologisms such as “suburban downtowns” and “edge cities” sought to classify the “new urban forms” that appeared to combine the functions of the urban and suburban.¹⁴² But as this chapter has shown, Tampa Bay has always existed as a conglomeration of scattered urban nodes among interstitial rural and agricultural spaces.¹⁴³

The historical tensions between the area’s different *places* returns us to the aforementioned arrival of professional sports. For many, the name “Tampa Bay” referred to something tangible. Ironically, at the municipal level, the acquisition of professional sports franchise, along with an obligatory stadium, represented another wave of local reinvention in the endless and cutthroat competition between cities—a cyclical staving off of what David Harvey called the “perpetual perishing” of place.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Otis White, “Suburban Downtowns: Real Estate Hybrids Are in Full Bloom,” *FT* 27, no. 9 (January 1985).

¹⁴² White, “Suburban Downtowns: Real Estate Hybrids Are in Full Bloom.” In the 1990s, building on the pioneering work on suburbanization and urban decline, scholars coined terms like “spread cities,” “post-suburbs,” “edge cities,” and “technoburbs” to describe the independently functioning municipalities on the peripheries of central cities. See Joel Garreau, *Edge City*; Teaford, *Post-Suburbia*; Perry and Watkins, *The Rise of Sunbelt Cities*; and Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*.

¹⁴³ Goldfield, *Cotton Fields and Skyscrapers*; See also Don Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1880-1910* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

¹⁴⁴ Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference*, 261.

The name “Tampa Bay” belied the fact that the Buccaneers actually played football in the city of Tampa, in a stadium subsidized by Tampa taxpayers. For Tampa and its civic leaders, acquiring a professional sports franchise was a major step in the city’s long, postwar transformation. Indeed, urban reinvention became an economic imperative for the city as early as the 1950s, when much of the county’s growth occurred outside of the city limits.¹⁴⁵

Ambitious urban renewal plans, expansion of the transportation infrastructure, and an evolving discourse of civic promotion refurbished the city’s image. Modernist urban renewal programs throughout the 1960s redeveloped broad swathes of downtown acreage and resurfaced the built environment. An industrial strip along the Hillsborough River became home to a pedestrian river walk and convention center.¹⁴⁶ Ybor City, once the home of a bustling cigar industry, became a caricature of its former self as the city tried to re-package the area’s history into a touristic “Latin Quarter” reminiscent of New Orleans’ Vieux Carré.¹⁴⁷

From the mid-1970s through the end of the 1980s, the city’s changing skyline reflected the frenetic pace to remain relevant enough to attract at least a moderate proportion of the hordes of people moving into and visiting the Tampa Bay area every year. On the outskirts of downtown, Tampa Stadium and the addition of new office towers downtown altered the skyline and symbolized a political economy increasingly

¹⁴⁵ Kerstein, *Politics and Growth*, 151.

¹⁴⁶ Office of the Administrator, Housing and Home Finance, “Press Release,” Washington, D.C., May 1, 1958, NP, box 36, folder 276, CTA; Kerstein, *Politics and Growth*, 138.

¹⁴⁷ “A New Dimension in Florida’s Future,” *FT* 13, no. 5 (September 1970): 47.

oriented toward real estate finance and entertainment. The year after hosting the 1984 Super Bowl, the city changed its slogan to “Tampa: Where life gets better every day.”¹⁴⁸

Tampa’s reinvention, but also the greater area’s explosive growth, forced St. Petersburg to catch up. In the wake of the 1984 Super Bowl, city officials in St. Petersburg chased their own professional sports franchise. As in Tampa, the city publicly financed a stadium and waited for a suitor. St. Petersburg’s mild winters had made it an ideal site for Major League Baseball’s Spring Training, but landing a professional franchise required more than a good climate and enthusiastic boosters.

Journalists in northern cities scoffed at St. Petersburg’s bid for a professional baseball team, partly out of regional resentment but also because of St. Petersburg’s apparent demographic deficiency. The *Washington Post* joked that in St. Petersburg, “the shuffleboard capital of the world,” fans would “rise for a seventh-inning stroke.” When city officials began negotiations with the Chicago White Sox, the *Chicago Sun-Times* suggested that the “Sox euphoria in this retirement Mecca” was “greater than would follow a rise in social security benefits.” Another daily newspaper referred to St. Petersburg as “a nice and quiet place to live if you were a retiree or an orange.”¹⁴⁹ Locals got in on the action. When asked for help naming the stadium, the public submitted names such as “Codger Stadium” and “Old Folks at Dome.”¹⁵⁰ To be sure, St. Petersburg had less than one-tenth the population as Chicago. But viewed as part of an ever-

¹⁴⁸ Packer, *The Unwinding*, 190.

¹⁴⁹ Quotes in Karl Vick, “Old Sentiments Die Hard: As City Bids for Sox, U.S. Press is Full of One-Liners,” *SPT*, May 27, 1988.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

expanding regional metropolis, Tampa Bay far exceeded Chicago in terms of population and rates of in-migration.¹⁵¹

But the city's reputation had vexed civic boosters for decades. Indeed, since at least the 1950s, St. Petersburg's pro-growth interests had periodically initiated urban redevelopment programs with the goal of rehabilitating the built environment and, later, reinventing the downtown. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, redevelopment and marketing programs such as "Waterfront '56" and "Project '61" updated the leisure-recreation infrastructure and ineffectively tried to shed the city's image as a place where old people go to live out their senescence.¹⁵² Whereas Tampa embarked on ambitious urban renewal and redevelopment plans, St. Petersburg's city leaders balked when the time came to apply for and accept federal money. On several occasions in the early 1960s, citizens voted down urban renewal in citywide referendums, largely based on broader assumptions shared by residents and the real estate industry alike that federally funded urban renewal meant more public housing construction, as well as the exacerbation of ongoing racial conflict over integration.¹⁵³ A 1974 plan sought to redevelopment the old black neighborhoods of Jamestown, Gas Plant, and Campbell Park into medium-to-high density residential and commercial quarters with a mixture of

¹⁵¹ Vick, "Old Sentiments Die Hard: As City Bids for Sox, U.S. Press is Full of One-Liners."

¹⁵² Dick Bothwell, "How A City Is Moving to Build a New Image," *SPT*, May 1, 1961; and John Durant, "A Face-Lifting For Florida's St. Petersburg," *NYT*, November 10, 1963.

¹⁵³ "Urban Renewal Legislative Act Draft Should Be Completed Today," *SPT*, October 11, 1960; Jerry Blizin, "Urban Renewal Discussion Contrasts Tampa and St. Petersburg Plans," *SPT*, September 9, 1960; and "Urban Renewal Law Proposed," *SPT*, September 15, 1964.

single- and multi-family dwellings, and, ultimately, to stanch the flow of more upwardly mobile residents to the suburbs.¹⁵⁴ Small-scale redevelopment projects, the opening of inter-state 2-75, and decades of city planning efforts culminated in the Florida Suncoast Dome, a \$100 million enclosed stadium perched on 800 acres of former residential slums.¹⁵⁵

Less a monument to a successful civic reinvention, the dome reflected important changes in the culture and political economy of urban tourism. As it was in Tampa and cities throughout the Sunbelt, the stadium and team-acquisition craze captured the imaginations of boosters and everyday citizens alike. The race to build arenas and attract tenants ostensibly promised a host of economic benefits to the successful suitor.¹⁵⁶ It also reflected a mixture of old and new trends in urban design that preferred a mechanically managed and controlled built environment to that of unpredictable and uncontrollable nature. At least until the opening of Orlando's Disney World, Central and South Florida's natural amenities had been why people vacationed in, and moved to, Florida. Theme parks such as Disney World and Busch Gardens turned the attraction into a mechanized fantasy. A mild winter climate was one of the main reasons professional baseball teams began training in St. Petersburg nearly a hundred years earlier. When the Tampa Bay Devil Rays joined Major League Baseball as an expansion team, they played their home

¹⁵⁴ *St. Petersburg In-town General Plan* (1974): 2.

¹⁵⁵ Michael Martinez, "A Dome For Expansion," *NYT*, March 5, 1990. The dome was outdated before it had a permanent resident. See "Tampa Bay Dome Is Out of Step Before It Opens," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 23, 1995.

¹⁵⁶ For more on the urban political economy of professional sports stadiums and teams, see Dennis R. Judd and Susan S. Faintstein, *The Tourist City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

games on artificial grass and under artificial light in the air-conditioned Florida Suncoast Dome.¹⁵⁷

As this chapter has shown, metropolitan Tampa Bay developed between the 1920s and the 1990s, from a small grouping of discrete urban entities to a sprawling metropolis. Boosters imagined the metropolis as a place of sunshine and leisure and recreation, an alternative to somewhere else, and a place to begin anew. From ground level, or viewed from the sky, the metropolitan area fifty years after the end of WWII appeared as a pastiche of residential shelter and communities, segregated along overlapping lines of class, race, age, and lifestyle. Taken as whole, however, the residential landscape represented the changing nature of American shelter and reflected the interdependence of the processes of community development and metropolitan growth and expansion.

Such transformations reflected a deeper process at work: the reorientation of the built environment, the economy, and metropolitan political culture toward residential development, residential and community consumption, and the creation and preservation of an idealized residential experience. The following chapters take a closer look at the relationship between residential development and metropolitan growth.

¹⁵⁷ “Tampa Bay Dome Is Out of Step Before It Opens.”

Chapter 2

“A Small City”: Jordan Park and the Advent of Public Housing in Tampa Bay, 1937-1941

On September 24 1940, more than four thousand St. Petersburg residents turned out to cast their vote in a special election. Weeks earlier, in a controversial decision, the city council had agreed to reject a proposed extension to the city's first and only public housing development, the segregated, all-black Jordan Park. While white city officials knew the majority of the city supported the extension, they never anticipated the rabid/intense institutional backlash. Business groups, ecumenical organizations, trade unions, and social clubs mounted a campaign to override the council's decision and force a public referendum. What ensued represents a curious moment in St. Petersburg's history that begs for an explanation: During the Great Depression, why did so many white citizens and traditional enemies of anything that smacked of “socialism” come out in full force behind a program to spend federal and local tax dollars on the subsidization and improvement of living conditions for the city's black slum dwellers?

The answer lies at least partly in the economic development opportunities presented by the New Deal. Federally subsidized programs to clear slums and build public housing not only boosted the economy; they allowed cities to assert more control over urban space and the people who moved within it. Along with new state laws expanding municipal police power, projects such as Jordan Park became a way for the city to liquidate an aesthetically compromised built environment that posed numerous

social and economic threats. A capacious understanding of the term “blight” conflated the residents of slums with the dilapidated structures themselves.¹ But with slum clearance came the potential for black residential dispersal, an idea anathema to the white leadership in the segregated “Sunshine City.” Unable to legally enforce a city-wide residential segregation ordinance, Jordan Park became one of numerous mechanisms used to strengthen the color line under the guise of a humanitarian concern for the inadequate shelter conditions that housed the bulk of the city’s poor black population.

Moreover, in an era of heightened white concerns about the strength of the color line, including black residential encroachment into white neighborhoods, Jordan Park seemed to offer a legal and practical solution to the problem of black demographic dispersal. As such, Jordan Park functioned in ways similar to public housing and slum clearance programs in urban Florida and throughout the region.²

The Slum-Scape

When in the late-1930s President Franklin Delano Roosevelt referred to the South as the nation’s “number one economic problem,” he was not exactly referring to St. Petersburg, Florida.³ The city had certainly struggled through the depths of the Great

¹ Caro, *The Power Broker*.

² Raymond A. Mohl, “Trouble in Paradise: Race and Housing in Miami during the New Deal Era,” in *The Making of Urban America*, ed. Raymond A. Mohl (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Books, 1988): 214-227. N.D.B. Connolly sees the New Deal as imbued with, and inseparable from, white supremacy. In Miami, he suggests, “Liberty Square and the attendant anti-slum campaign represented a kind of spatial uplift facilitated through black and white collaboration.” See Connolly, *A World More Concrete*, 89.

Depression. Between 1933 and the early-1940s, the federal government spent millions of dollars rebuilding the city's public work's infrastructure. The CWA hired workers to build parks and rebuild roads. The PWA financed a new hospital, upgraded the drainage system, and erected a new city hall.⁴ By 1938 the city's economy had begun to rebound as in-migration picked up and the tourists returned.⁵

The reaches of spatial modernization extended unevenly across the built landscape. Just beyond the master-planned and manicured subdivisions and landscaped boulevards downtown stood the deteriorating shacks and tenement houses of the predominantly black communities of Methodist Town, Pepper Town, Campbell Park, and other, smaller neighborhoods scattered throughout the south side. The bulk of these neighborhoods consisted of sagging brick bungalows, pine shotgun shacks, and lopsided two-story apartment houses that lacked electricity, in-door plumbing, and proper ventilation. Deteriorating and densely arranged, such dwellings fronted unpaved roads and dirt paths that blew up dust clouds in the dry months and turned to muddy puddles during summer rains. Tenants used outhouses and pumped water from wells in the front yard.⁶

³ National Emergency Council, *Report on Economic Conditions of the South* (1938), 1. http://www.archive.org/stream/reportoneconomic00nati/reportoneconomic00nati_djvu.txt

⁴ The government spent \$90,000 on the construction of Mound Park Hospital, \$294,545 for a "beach water system," and \$389,415 for a new city hall. But it was, along with the housing programs, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) had the greatest impact on the city. See Stephenson, *Visions*, 103.

⁵ "Annual Influx Starts Early," *SPT*, November 13, 1938.

⁶ Housing Authority of St. Petersburg (hereafter HASP), *Appraisal Report of Site 2*, City of St. Petersburg, Florida, May 2, 1938.

While not all of the city's approximately 12,000 black residents lived in slum conditions, most if not all of the slum dwellers were black and poor. One late-1930s study commissioned by the city council estimated that 1,253 black families occupied dwellings that were "totally unfit for human habitation," with another 150 families living two families per unit.⁷ Another study found that citywide 88 percent of the 3,300 homes occupied by blacks were substandard.⁸

Trapped at the lowest civic stratum by the constraints of a pervasive Jim Crow order, black slum dwellers provided the critical labor necessary to keep the city's tourist economy going. Men generally worked as day laborers and hotel bellmen, with the majority earning less than \$15 a month.⁹ A city report on the Methodist Town and Campbell Park neighborhoods observed that in "nearly every case" women worked for three to five dollars a day as domestics for white families, "preparing meals," "tending to children," and "doing the family washing."¹⁰ Monthly rents these neighborhoods ranged from three to ten dollars and lined the pockets of a predominantly white contingent of slumlords, many of whom owned dozens or more rentals properties.¹¹

⁷ *St. Petersburg City Council Minutes* (hereafter *Minutes*)(October 11, 1937): 108.

⁸ "Standard" only meant that the dwelling provided minimum sanitation facilities, lights, air, and non-leaky roofs. See Editorial, *SPT*, Sept 22, 1940.

⁹ *Minutes* (October 11, 1937). St. Petersburg's black population was smaller and averaged higher incomes than those of other Southern cities such as Memphis, Atlanta, Birmingham, and New Orleans. The percentage of dilapidated black residential dwellings varied in these cities, but as in St. Petersburg, at least fifty percent of the black-occupied units were substandard. See Smith, *New Deal in the Urban South*, 167-168.

¹⁰ C.O. Lowe, "Editorial," *SPT*, September 20, 1940.

¹¹ Low-income white renters paid on average \$15 to \$39.99 a month. See St. Petersburg City Planning Board, *A Proposed Master Plan for the City of St. Petersburg* (1943): 142.

As in cities across the South during the Depression, the initial efforts to raze and repurpose the city's slums began as part of a broader agenda to modernize the built environment and make slum properties pay.¹² As shown below, the prevailing wisdom among health department officials and local reformers was that cramped slums bred sickness and disease and therefore constituted a public hazard.

While the parlous economic conditions had created a political climate more amenable to city planning and federally subsidized redevelopment, redeveloping acres of slums posed a number of significant challenges for city officials and white residents. The central issue regarded the distribution of black residential occupancy. Even minor efforts to improve slum conditions, such as implementing a minimum-standards building code or upgrading septic tanks, threatened to price out poor black tenants and disperse them throughout neighborhoods traditionally off limits to people of color.¹³

City leaders on several occasions tried to limit the mobility of black residents. The 1931 charter established "separate residential limits or districts for white and Negro residents."¹⁴ Unable legally to enforce residential segregation, city leaders sought ways to

¹² As this chapter later explains, the eclectic mix of pro-slum clearance and public housing supporters approached the housing question from different perspectives. Ultimately, as Douglas Smith has observed in his survey of the urban South during the Depression, business groups and planning advocates saw in slum clearance and public housing the mechanisms of ensuring economic stability and "community well-being." See Smith, *The New Deal in the Urban South*, 185; and *Minutes* (September 4, 1935): 311.

¹³ A 1934 FERA loan rebuilt septic tanks in several slum neighborhoods. See *Minutes* (March 19, 1934): 129.

¹⁴ The charter revision also banned white residential and commercial activity in zones designated for black residents. See *Charter of the City of St. Petersburg, 1931*, 9; Stephenson, *Visions*, 103; For more on race and city planning, see Ronald Baylor, *Race*

codify the practice in other ways, at one point forming a “Negro Segregation Committee” to study and recommend a plan for long-term racial apartheid.¹⁵ Without a clear strategy to contain black residential dispersal, building codes went unmonitored. Slumlords had no interest in upgrading their rental units. White citizens on the south side worried about black residential occupation.¹⁶ Black residents voiced their own dismay. For many, building code enforcement meant higher and most likely unaffordable monthly rents.¹⁷ The central conundrum was thus how to clear slums without upsetting the color line.

The Wagner-Steagall Act (1937) seemed to offer a solution to these interconnected problems. Indeed, after several false starts, New Deal housing reformers and urban planning experts successfully designed a bill that coupled slum clearance with the provision of adequate shelter for low-income residents.¹⁸ The Act, which created the United States Housing Authority (USHA) and set aside \$800 million for projects across the country, appealed to local officials in St. Petersburg for several reasons.¹⁹ First, it established a federal-city partnership that kept the bulk of the decision-making at the local level. Second, by providing up to 90 percent of the total costs of slum clearance and

and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 53-92.

¹⁵ *Minutes* (October 12, 1937): 115.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, (October 19, 1937): 115.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, (July 2, 1938): 349.

¹⁸ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 16.

¹⁹ Wright, *Building the Dream*, 227.

public housing construction, the city would not feel the financial burden.²⁰ And lastly, while entailing what many considered “socialized housing,” Wagner-Steagall ostensibly addressed the concerns of segregationists by giving the city an alternative means of enforcing residential apartheid. Two months after Congress signed Wagner-Steagall into law, the St. Petersburg city council authorized the formation of the Housing Authority of the City of St. Petersburg (HA) as a quasi-independent public entity with a mayor-appointed staff that included a paid executive director and an unpaid board of directors.²¹

Phase I

Between December 1937 and May 1938, the city and the HA entered into a series of contracts and agreements with the Housing Authority and the USHA to build the metropolitan area’s first public housing project.²² The cooperation agreement stipulated the basic terms: the Housing Authority would use a \$1,750,000 federal loan to build and operate an all-black public housing development consisting of approximately 242 rental units. To repay the loan the Housing Authority would issue bonds, and over time use rent payments to pay off bondholders. To keep rents low, the bonds amortized over sixty years.²³

For its part, the city agreed to cover ten percent of the total project costs, which eventually included donating land to the HA and the purchase of \$200,000 in bonds. To

²⁰ *Minutes* (October 12, 1937): 108.

²¹ HASP, *Charter*; *Minutes* (November 9, 1937): 155.

²² Copies of the contracts and agreements can be found in the *Minutes* (December 1938-May 1939).

²³ *Minutes* (July 26, 1938): 338.

give the city enough time to come up with the money, the contract broke down the project into two phases. Furthermore, to help keep rents low, the city offered municipal resources tax free, with the exception of water and gas, for which the housing project received fifty and twenty percent discounts respectively.²⁴ Most controversially, the city agreed to fund the slum-clearance portion of the program: one unit of slums for every unit of public housing erected. The provision initially passed without scrutiny. Later, however, when it became time to build the project's second phase, debates over the contractual arrangements regarding slum clearance and the utility rates threatened to undermine the entire development. But in the earliest stages, the most vocal critics of the project could only shout from the margins as the city moved forward.²⁵

Throughout the fall and spring, the city and the HA used their expansive police powers to acquire more than twenty contiguous acres on the south side, bounded north and south by Thirteenth and Ninth Ave S., and east and west by Twenty-Second and Twenty-Fifth St. S.²⁶ The site contained a smattering of slum shacks and vacant lots and stood on the southwestern edge of a vibrant black commercial and entertainment district, an area later known as “the deuces.”²⁷

The HA bought the majority of the lots that comprised the project site by condemning the structures and buying them for fair market value, which ranged anywhere from \$1,100 for single-family shotgun to \$3,000 for a multi-family apartment

²⁴ *Minutes* (July 26, 1938): 338-339, 341.

²⁵ *Ibid.* (July 2, 1940): 408.

²⁶ Edward Stevens, “U.S. Housing Project Site Selected Here,” *SPT*, November 15, 1938.

²⁷ Rosalie Peck and John Wilson, *St. Petersburg's Historic 22nd Street South* (Charleston: The History Press, 2006), 7.

building.²⁸ When several “die hard” owners held out for better offers, the city stepped in and used its more expansive eminent domain powers to condemn and repossess the properties without compensation, either on the basis of delinquent payments on taxes or special assessment.²⁹

The city eventually repossessed more than 150 slum properties and sold them at a substantial profit to the housing authority.³⁰ When it came time to name the project, the HA settled on “Jordan Park,” after Elder Jordan, a late black entrepreneur responsible for pioneering the “Deuces” neighborhood.³¹ Housing Project FLA-2-1 became Jordan Park.³² The name functioned symbolically in multiple ways. First, it signaled that the project was specifically intended for black residents. The image of Elder Jordan, moreover, evoked an entrepreneurial spirit ostensibly lacking in the area’s slum dwellers.

More than 408,000 labor hours over the course of a year made the Jordan Park housing project a physical reality.³³ Work crews demolished nearly one hundred substandard shotgun homes and multi-family apartment buildings. Atop the detritus of urban slums, the Millstone Construction Company erected thirty-seven two-story, multi-

²⁸ HASP, *Appraisal Report of Site 2*.

²⁹ “First Step Toward Acquiring Housing Site Taken by City,” *SPT*, November 8, 1938 and Edward Stevens, “U.S. Housing Project Site Selected Here,” November 15, 1938; See *Minutes* (July 2, 1940): 404.

³⁰ Many of the lots had been appraised at \$100 per lot, but the city unloaded them to the HA for \$200 each, netting the city a substantial profit. See “‘Jordan Park Project’ New Title of Big Improvement,” *SPT*, November 26, 1938.

³¹ Shonel, “JPPNA’s Black History Month Celebration”; “Jordan Park Project, New Title of Big Improvement.”

³² *Minutes* (July 26, 1938): 539.

³³ “Housing Project Workmen,” *SPT*, July 28, 1939.

family row houses.³⁴ Arranged in a “campus-style” pattern across more than twenty acres, the buildings all faced inwards, away from the city streets, and overlooked interior green spaces lined with concrete sidewalks that slashed through the “graded and sodded lawns.”³⁵ The concrete residential buildings, described by the *St. Petersburg Times* as “modern in every detail,” accommodated anywhere from three to eight families, ranging in size from two to seven members.³⁶ Newly paved streets, lined with “artificially” ordered shrubs and trees, and recreational amenities that included a community center, filled out the rest of the project.³⁷ The modernist design, later criticized as anti-social, intended to foster residential community and a sense of safety and community.³⁸ It was, in the words of HA chairman Walter Ramseur, “a small city.”³⁹

The first residents arrived nearly a year after the groundbreaking. Throughout the spring and early summer of 1940, the Housing Authority moved more than 110 families

³⁴ Picture caption, *SPT*, February 12, 1940.

³⁵ Landex Development used the apt term “campus-style” in 2000 to describe Jordan Park’s original design. The company, hired in the early 2000s to redevelop Jordan Park, criticized the design as anti-social and “disconnected from the adjacent community.” See <http://www.landex.org/portfolio/jordan-park/>; Also see the captions under the pictures accompanying the article, “Million Dollar Housing Project Ready With \$7,000 Addition Soon to Start,” *EI*, March 30, 1940.

³⁶ Picture caption, *SPT*, February 12, 1940.

³⁷ “11 Bidders Seen on \$1,065,000 Project Here,” *SPT*, March 15, 1939.

³⁸ Miami’s Liberty Square had a similar design and look. See John A. Stewart, “Liberty Square: Florida’s First Public Housing Project,” in *The New Deal in South Florida: Design, Policy, and Community Building, 1933-1940*, ed. John A. Stuart and John F. Stack, Jr. (Gainesville: The University Press of Florida, 2008), 186-222.

³⁹ Walter Ramseur quote in, “Plan to Clear Methodist Town by Trade for Site Near Jordan Park is in Offing,” *SPT*, July 16, 1940.

from slum conditions into Jordan Park.⁴⁰ Applicants to Jordan Park encountered a strict screening process.⁴¹ Some earned too much money to qualify, while others made too little.⁴² The earliest residents came from Methodist Town and Pepper Town and from the nearby shacks recently condemned and razed to make way for Jordan Park's first and second phases.⁴³

Solomon Smith left his leaky and cracking bungalow for Jordan Park unit 206 on May 4, 1940. Elliot Birt moved into unit 95 after living on Freemont Street, in a single-family shack from a single-family shack with no electricity and a roof that leaked so badly that it "rained inside," as one HA investigator described it. Johnnie Barnes went from using an outhouse off of Freemont Terrace to indoor plumbing at Jordan Park's unit 25.⁴⁴ Tillman George and Eddie Weatherman moved their families from nearby condemned properties into Jordan Park units 102 and 236. By late May, Jordan Park was nearly half full, with at one point as many as eight families a day relocating to the community, such as those of Sallie Howard, Rufus Turner, and Dave Gadsden.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ *Minutes* (July 30, 1940): 436.

⁴¹ "Jordan Park Housing Project is Steadily Increasing," *EI*, May 20, 1940.

⁴² "Plan to Clear Methodist Town by Trade For Site Near Jordan Park is in Offing," *SPT*, July 16, 1940.

⁴³ HASP, *Appraisal Report of Site 2*.

⁴⁴ Neighborhood News Bureau, "A History in Photographs: Jordan Park," University of South-St. Petersburg School of Journalism and Media Studies. Accessed online, Summer 2016. <http://www.nnbnews.com/2016/01/27/a-history-in-photographs-jordan-park/>

⁴⁵ Picture caption, *SPT*, February 12, 1940.

As of late August, Jordan Park's 242 units had reached maximum occupancy.⁴⁶ Estimates for the last months of 1940 showed that the average Jordan Park tenant earned approximately \$500 a year and paid monthly rents that of about \$8.85 (\$12.87 including utilities).⁴⁷ The addition of nearly two hundred units, moreover, promised to reduce rents even further.⁴⁸

For Jordan Park's supporters, its completion was nothing less than a striking success. The park's housing units were full. Well built, "triple-A" rated, fire-resistant buildings stood amidst open green spaces on grounds previously occupied by deteriorating shacks and junk piles.⁴⁹ As such, the HA assumed the city council would rubber-stamp its approval of the cooperation agreement for the housing project's extension.⁵⁰

But for others, the success of the project stood in sharp contrast to the lack of progress made in clearing slums. As of August 1940, with Jordan Park's 242 units completely full, the number of slum dwellings eliminated by the city totaled no more than 105, which included the shacks razed to clear the way for the project's second phase.⁵¹ City leaders who had always understood the project as primarily a slum-clearance

⁴⁶ "Jordan Park Housing Project is Steadily Increasing," *EI*, May 20, 1940.

⁴⁷ Margaret H. Schoenfeld, "Progress of Public Housing in the United States," *Monthly Labor Review* (August 1940): 275.

⁴⁸ "Editorial," *SPT*, September 22, 1940.

⁴⁹ Edward Stevens, "Owners of Negro Property Say it Hurts Their Business," *SPT*, July 19, 1940.

⁵⁰ "Housing Loan of \$750,000 to Be Asked," *SPT*, August 17, 1939.

⁵¹ "Questions Popped at Petition Circulators," *SPT*, August 2, 1940.

program now found common cause with a contingent of angry slumlords who had always opposed the project. And when the interests of slum capital rallied against the extension, they found key allies at City Hall.⁵²

Phase II

The controversy began in July 1940, when the city council's "special housing committee" balked at approving the HA's proposal to add 212 units to Jordan Park.⁵³ The three-member committee had spent weeks delaying a decision as it met with slum owners to hash out an alternative plan.⁵⁴ From these meetings a subversive narrative emerged that threatened to delegitimize the entire enterprise. Some folks had heard that none of Jordan Park's residents had relocated from substandard dwellings. Other rumors stemmed from more reliable observations. Councilmen Minshall pointed out that new tenants had subsequently inhabited a number of the vacated slums in Methodist Town. Slumlords, many of whom had spent thousands of dollars improving their rental properties, called attention to the fact that Jordan Park did nothing to help the city's poorest residents.⁵⁵ When the council's "special housing committee" finished its investigation, its recommendations echoed the concerns of the city's slumlords: (1) The original project had not produced significant slum clearance and it was therefore reasonable, given the contractual arrangements, that the extension would not either; (2) The discounted water

⁵² *Minutes* (July 23, 1940).

⁵³ "Housing Loan of \$750,000 To Be Asked," *SPT*, August 17, 1939.

⁵⁴ *Minutes* (July 16, 1940): 420-421; "Where Will Housing Committee Meet Tonight, and With Whom?" *SPT*, July 18, 1940.

⁵⁵ *Minutes* (July 23, 1940): 428.

and gas rates unfairly discriminated in favor of Jordan Park residents; (3) the project actually resulted in a net loss for the city; (4) The HA represented a threat to the private market for low-income black housing.⁵⁶

Vice Mayor Walfred Lindstrom, an avowed supporter of public housing, sympathized with the slum-clearance argument, but felt leery about disavowing what he considered to be eighty-to-ninety percent of public opinion.⁵⁷ “Evidently this council doesn’t care what the people think,” he intoned.⁵⁸ Lindstrom and HA chairman Walter Ramseur did their best to counter the committee’s dubious conclusions. The vice mayor pointed out that the city sold water to the Bay Pines veterans hospital at a rate so low that its competitor, the Pinellas County Water company, had to lower its rates. Ramseur tried in vain to convince the committee that on nearly every point of contention the members had their facts wrong. He even went as far as to convince the USHA to renegotiate the utility rates so as not to disadvantage the city.⁵⁹ But ultimately it did not matter. Nothing could change the fact that a handful of city council members wanted a federally funded slum clearance program and that they were not going to approve any program that did not accomplish that objective.

Meanwhile, a powerful faction moved to override the council’s decision and place the issue in the hands of the electorate. The public debate that ensued illustrates the different objectives guiding the groups both for and against the extension. White efforts

⁵⁶ *Minutes* (July 23, 1940).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ “Council Frowns,” *EI*, July 31, 1940.

⁵⁹ *Minutes* (July 30, 1940).

to strengthen civic control over urban space and the black bodies moving within it doubtless informed the widespread support for slum clearance and public housing. But as the section below demonstrates, the eclectic groups that comprised what eventually became known as the “Citizen’s Referendum” committee approached the issue from a variety of interconnected political and ideological vantage points. The condition of the built landscape functioned economically in ways that were much easier to suggest than to define. By contrast, slum capital’s countermovement was much more one-dimensional.

The Resistance

The movement against the council’s decision began even before city leaders voted to kill the Jordan Park extension. Halsey Smith, a representative of the St. Petersburg League Of Women Voters, became a fixture at the heated council sessions that ultimately determined the extension’s fate. At one meeting in mid-July, she presented a petition carrying the signatures of 1,500 supporters of public housing. When it became clear that the city was going to reject the project extension, the League of Women Voters, along members of the Chamber of Commerce and the St. Petersburg Realty Board, led a petition drive that set about the city obtaining the more than 2,000 signatures needed to initiate a public referendum.⁶⁰ The “pro-extension” committee established nearly thirty substations where residents could pledge their name to a petition and register to vote in the special election. Within weeks, it had garnered over 4,000 signatures, more than twice

⁶⁰ *Minutes* (July 16, 1940): 421.

the total needed to force a public vote, and a public referendum was set for September 24.⁶¹

A petition drive turned into a fight to control the “housing” narrative and turn out the vote. A “pro-extension” movement that consisted of a variety of interest groups embarked on a public reeducation campaign that trumpeted the extension’s widespread social benefits. On a practical level, an extension to Jordan Park promised numerous economic advantages. The city’s slums and their poor black residents contradicted the “Sunshine City’s” booster-crafted and expertly marketed image of paradisiacal resort with a built environment oriented around tourism and leisure. Acres of Substandard dwellings tarnished the landscape, which in turn jeopardized the touristic and residential experience. A city selling affect, according to the *St. Petersburg Times*, needed “to maintain its reputation as a beautiful resort,” and thus “can’t afford eyesores.”⁶² The *Times* editorial board, having recently come under the leadership of the racially moderate Nelson Poynter, provided critical support for the extension. In the weeks leading up the referendum, the paper published daily editorials detailing the merits of the extension. Political cartoons mocked the slumlord’s hypocrisy.⁶³ Later, when the fate of the public referendum hung in the balance after a legal challenge by the slumlords, Poynter and

⁶¹ *Minutes* (August 13, 1940).

⁶² Editorial, *SPT*, September 22, 1940.

⁶³ *Minutes* (October 4, 2012): 12-13. The meeting concerned the historical designation of the Merriwether Building along the historic black neighborhood located along 22nd Street South. The minutes include a history of the building and the surrounding neighborhood. The *Times* ran numerous editorial cartoons that highlighted the hypocrisy of those calling the extension “socialized housing.” *SPT*, July 3, July 7, and July 24, 1940.

representatives from the *Evening Independent* met with the city council and offered to fund the special election.⁶⁴

Slum conditions were not only an eyesore but also an economic problem for nearly everyone except the owners of substandard dwellings and the management firms that collected rents.⁶⁵ Indeed, low rents returned substantial profits. With assessed market-valuations ranging anywhere from \$1,00 to \$3,300, yielding from five to thirty-five dollars a year in property taxes, respectively, slum dwellings benefitted from city fire and police protection yet contributed little to the county and city coffers.⁶⁶ Owners collected rent payments and yet rarely reinvested in their substandard rental properties.⁶⁷ The *Times* reported that the public subsidized its slum conditions to the tune of \$75,000, while driving up the city's fire insurance rate.⁶⁸

The removal of slums and slum dwellers, moreover, would allow private interests to redevelop and repurpose an area such as Methodist Town, stimulating the real estate and construction industries and driving up land values. "By settling the Negroes into a community such as Jordan Park," the *Times* argued, "the city will ultimately open more downtown land for business and park development and expansion," and finally end the public subsidization of slumlord profits. The federal money would go elsewhere if not to

⁶⁴ Shear-Jashub, "Paper Offers to Put on 'Referendum' for The City," *Observer*, September 20, 1940.

⁶⁵ Connolly, *A World More Concrete*.

⁶⁶ HASP, *Housing Authority Report on Site 2*.

⁶⁷ Editorial, *SPT*, September 22, 1940.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*.

St. Petersburg and yet local residents would still pay the same amount of money in federal taxes.⁶⁹

A more concerted effort at the grassroots level emphasized less the business and economic opportunities. Like their counterparts at the national level, local reformers touted the project's humanitarian and public-health implications. Speaking on behalf of the Ministerial Alliance, Reverend J. Wallace Hamilton said that his organization stood "solidly behind the extension program" from a "health, humanitarian, and moral standpoint."⁷⁰ For the League of Women Voters, slum clearance and low-income housing would prevent the possibility of a major epidemic spreading through the city—a natural enemy in the tourist trade. "Clean living quarters and bathrooms reduce disease," read a pamphlet that the League handed out from house-to-house across the city. "To be blunt," it said, "we mean syphilis and other social diseases."⁷¹

The humanitarian and public health arguments bespoke a more pervasive idea among reformers that linked the conditions of the built environment with individual and collective racial pathology.⁷² The *Times* articulated the prevailing wisdom: "The extension will help reduce juvenile delinquency and crime." There could be no doubt

⁶⁹ The *Times* estimated that the city subsidized the slums to the tune of \$75,000 a year in services that were not recouped in taxes. Editorial, *SPT*, September 22, 1940.

⁷⁰ *Minutes* (July 23, 1940): 428.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² According to Kenneth Jackson, Edith Elmer Wood, one of the architects of the 1937 Act, drew inspiration from the efforts of European housing reformers and argued that "social behavior was conditioned by housing and that government action to replace the slums would improve citizenship." See Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 220.

because it was “universally admitted that slums and poor housing breed crime.”⁷³ “Decent, sanitary surroundings,” it concluded, “made the tenants better citizens.”⁷⁴ But the newspaper’s notion of citizenship entailed not democracy but social discipline. The humanitarian injustice linked to impoverished housing conditions could be solved without destabilizing spatial and economic Jim Crow. The project extension reinforced them both. By this logic, the problem was not poverty but impoverished conditions. Therefore it was entirely consistent for the *Times* to assume that an improved and ordered built environment would discipline an ostensibly dependent class: “All of us would rather have domestics from clean and modern quarters than from shacks and slums such as exist in parts of the city now.”⁷⁵

The countermovement deployed similar strategies of pamphleteering and editorializing. In the *Times* Op-Ed pages, printed next to SPHA chairman Walter Ramseur’s pleas for public support, slumlord C.O. Lowe spoke for several dozen slumlords and a few city council members when he inveighed against the extension. Lowe, who owned more than sixty black rental units and at one point offered to swap his properties in Methodist Town with city-owned land on the south side, crafted an alternative narrative that featured a spirited dose of red- and race-baiting rhetoric.⁷⁶ His numerous editorials relayed a story of “darkies” pulling one over on the city’s white

⁷³ Editorial, *SPT*, September 22, 1940.

⁷⁴ See “Questions Popped at Petition Circulators,” *SPT*, August 2, 1940.

⁷⁵ “Summarizing Why We Believe the \$710,000 Jordan Park Housing Extension is Good For St. Petersburg,” *SPT*, September 22, 1940.

⁷⁶ Lowe offered to swap land with the city at a council meeting on July 16, 1940. See *Minutes* (July 16, 1940): 420.

citizens. “How many white people are now living in substandard houses,” he asked rhetorically. “At least these people should be taken care of at the same time the darkies are.” Echoing his allies on the city council, Lowe said he would happily support a federally subsidized housing program for the city’s most impoverished: the single mothers working as domestics, earning four to five dollars a week. Housing the lowest income earners posed no threat to Lowe’s version of free enterprise. As far as he was concerned, the landowners were the victims. In one editorial, he recalled the depths of the Depression, when some of his “three-room apartments had been reduced in rent to 50 cents a week,” and yet he still struggled to collect rent in full. Similarly, Jordan Park had devalued his properties, forcing him to spend money improving them while at the same time lowering the rents.⁷⁷

At a public rally held downtown at Williams Park on the eve of the public vote, more than 600 residents turned out to hear from the city officials most opposed to the project. Council members George W. Hopkins, Oliver William Hewitt, Stanley Minshall, and R.G. McCutcheon ratcheted up the demagoguery. They dubiously claimed to support a housing project that helped the city’s poorest. For Hopkins, the problem was not that taxpayers subsidized slum properties, it was that Jordan Park forced whites to subsidize blacks—not even Negroes who occupy slums,” he reminded the audience, “but those of a higher class.” McCutcheon echoed the point and contended that Jordan Park amounted to an un-American handout to “a special class” with a “lack of initiative.”⁷⁸

⁷⁷ C.O. Lowe, “Editorial,” *SPT*, September 20, 1940.

⁷⁸ “4 Councilmen Explain Reasons for Opposing Extension of Project,” *SPT*, September 24, 1940.

Opponents attempted a few last-ditch moves to undermine the “pro-extension” movement. On the eve of the public referendum, a group calling itself “Friends Who Oppose the Jordan Park Housing Project” placed an ad in the *Evening Independent* claiming that SPHA executive director Emil Nordstrom had received kickbacks when his architecture firm was hired to design Jordan Park.⁷⁹

A few days before, more than forty slumlords had filed an injunction to block the referendum. The injunction reiterated the familiar anti-extension points but made no case for challenging the legality of the special referendum. However, legally thwarting the referendum may not have been the ultimate objective. Both sides knew that the USHA’s window for approving the extension was about to close. As such, for Lowe and his fellow slumlords, successful stall tactics favored the same outcome as a decision not to move forward with phase II. The injunction eventually reached the Florida Supreme Court, which upheld District Court Judge T. Frank Hobson’s ruling in favor of the special referendum: “In the absence of a showing that a proposed ordinance, which is to be submitted in a referendum election is, on its face, wholly void and inoperative, the right of a free people to express and declare the will of the majority upon any subject affecting the public welfare should and must be held inviolate.”⁸⁰

The following day, September 24, 1940, citizens from across the city turned out to vote. Activists on both sides of the issue passed out leaflets at polling stations and used organized carpools to transport voters. The Jordan Park extension won 2,731 to 2,081,

⁷⁹ *Minutes* (September 17, 1940).

⁸⁰ “City Votes Today on Housing Project, Ballpark Location,” *SPT*, September 24, 1940; “Text of Housing Decision,” *Observer*, September 20, 1940.

carrying a majority in every voting district.⁸¹ It was the biggest turnout for a special citywide election since the mid-1920s. The *St. Petersburg Times* reported that the bulk of the voter turnout was white, with perhaps as few as 150 black residents participating in the special referendum.⁸²

Within months the city and the HA entered into another cooperative agreement and ironed out the details regarding site improvements and utility rates.⁸³ A year later, when construction finished on the 204-unit, Leroy Burton and his mother became the first residents to move in.⁸⁴ As Leroy and his mother waited for his father to return home from Detroit, where he had gone to look for work in the country's "Arsenal of Democracy," the units in Jordan Park's extension reached capacity.⁸⁵

Decades later, Minson Rubin, the son of a construction worker and a bundle-clothing laborer, recalled that when the second phase opened, residents opened their doors to curious whites who wanted to see what the fuss was all about.⁸⁶ The "fuss" was short-lived. Soon after families filled the extension, the nation went to war, and the influx of soldiers and defense workers created an entirely new kind of affordable-housing shortage. In St. Petersburg and Tampa, even as the city razed a handful of dilapidated

⁸¹ "Jordan Park Extension Carries All Districts; 4,879 Go to the Polls," *SPT*, September 25, 1940.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Minutes* (February 4, 1941): 645.

⁸⁴ Raven Joy Shonel, "JPPNA's Black History Month Celebration," *The Weekly Challenger*, February 26, 2016.

⁸⁵ "Housing Board Cites Restrictions in Report," *SPT*, February 8, 1961.

⁸⁶ Shonel, "JPPNA's Black History Month Celebration."

shacks in Pepper Town, slum clearance by and large took a backseat to war preparation.⁸⁷

At one point during the war, the Tampa Housing Authority opened buildings it had condemned for slum clearance to provide a roof to workers building ships downtown.⁸⁸

The story of Jordan Park offers a window into the history of between public housing and urban redevelopment during the Great Depression. At one level, the project served as a partial solution to the paucity of decent accommodations for poor black residents. Formerly occupants of deteriorating and unsafe shacks and tenement houses, Jordan Park's residents rented soundly constructed, safe, and affordable residential units. The project did not cater to the city's poorest residents, as slumlords consistently pointed out. But that was not the intention of the program. The early public housing projects built by USHA were intended to help the "worthy poor"—the elderly and the hardworking people temporarily experiencing hardship. While the local debates in St. Petersburg never used the term "worthy poor," such a distinction between low-income groups animated the opposing sides. Not until the 1960s, explains D. Bradford Hunt, did federal public housing programs target the nation's most destitute.⁸⁹

Some observers have called the completion of Jordan Park's two phases a "bittersweet" victory for reformers. In that view, Jordan Park's improved shelter conditions for many of St. Petersburg's low-income black residents represented a political and social success, but the segregated public-housing community also hardened

⁸⁷ *Minutes* (February 4, 1941): 645. Few, if any, Southern cities successfully solved their slum problems. See Smith, *The New Deal in the Urban South*, 165-166.

⁸⁸ Tanner, "Progress and Sacrifice," 422-454.

⁸⁹ Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 16.

the color line.⁹⁰ But it is important to remember that even the city's most vocal supporters of Jordan Park never publicly denounced the project's implications for racial segregation. To the contrary, for them, a segregated public housing project was desirable because it achieved racial, "humanitarian," and economic ends. Upgrading the residential built environment ostensibly improved the moral character of the poor while simultaneously enhancing the city's touristic experience and expanding civic control over property values and population distribution.

Furthermore, the deeper significance of the creation of Jordan Park cannot be understood in terms of the project's perceived successes or failures. The New Deal introduced the federal government as a legitimate engine of regional economic development and established a precedent with long-term implications for the post-WWII era. Moving forward, the federal state provided millions of dollars to cities for urban renewal, public housing, highway construction, and suburban homebuilding and buying—all of which held profound consequences for the greater area's black residents.

Nevertheless, the public fight over the Jordan Park extension marked the zenith of enthusiasm for public housing. Later, many of the same people who fought for Jordan Park worked just as diligently behind the scenes to thwart a segregated public housing project for low-income white residents.⁹¹ Whereas it was generally understood that the market could not solve the housing shortage for low-income and impoverished black

⁹⁰ Arsenault, *St. Petersburg*, 270.

⁹¹ *Minutes* (June 12, 1947).

residents, members of the St. Petersburg Realty Board and the Chamber of Commerce considered an “all-white” housing project an unnecessary market distortion.⁹²

Political support for comprehensive planning also crested during the Jordan Park controversy. With the coming of war and national defense mobilization, the economy continued its upward trajectory. Two years after the opening of Jordan Park’s second phase, the nationally renowned planning firm, Harland Bartholomew and Assoc., submitted its master plan for St. Petersburg to the city planning board.⁹³ The city ultimately rejected the master plan, in part because of significant design flaws, but also due to the vitiated support for planning initiatives.⁹⁴ Even as the mobilization for WWII created more pressure on the metropolitan area’s limited housing accommodations, later proposals to extend Jordan Park met with a wall of resistance. In 1944 redbaiting helped kill an extension proposal.⁹⁵ Five years later, a plan to add 900 units to Jordan Park lost in a public referendum. As of 1961, all of Jordan Park’s 446 units were full and the waiting list topped 800 people.⁹⁶

With the advent of urban renewal in the late-1950s, local attention again turned to the slum conditions of Methodist Town and nearby neighborhoods. Exposés in the *St. Petersburg Times* delivered savage critiques of the persistent slum conditions.⁹⁷ But

⁹² *Minutes* (June 12, 1947).

⁹³ City Planning Board, *A Proposed Master Plan*, 1943.

⁹⁴ Stephenson, *Visions*, 106.

⁹⁵ “Housing Board Cites Restrictions in Report,” *SPT*, February 8, 1961.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ “Slums,” *SPT*, March 25, 1962.

whereas Tampa embarked on the most ambitious urban renewal program in the state, St. Petersburg largely turned its back on new “federal entanglements.”⁹⁸ Ironically, the public health and pseudo-humanitarian arguments voiced by the pro-extension committee provided the intellectual basis for Tampa’s postwar urban renewal legislation, which itself became the template for cities across the state.⁹⁹

The city strengthened its building code and hired more building inspectors. In lieu of clearing slums and building public housing units, the city earmarked local money for several modest redevelopment projects in targeted neighborhoods and cracked down on the owners of substandard properties.¹⁰⁰ Grady Swope, for example, the owner of more than a dozen slum dwellings, went to jail in 1966 on five charges of building-code violations.¹⁰¹ With the advent of the integration movement, black population encroachment into white neighborhoods again raised local racial tensions. As successful as Jordan Park was in re-concentrating black settlement, increasing the city’s public housing stock to better house low-income black residents was a proposition that carried little favor among white civic leaders. Members of the Pinellas County Commission considered the idea of building an all-black suburban community north of St. Petersburg, in a section of the county known as Ridgecrest.¹⁰² While private builders erected several

⁹⁸ “Housing Board Cites Restrictions in Report,” *SPT*, February 8, 1961.

⁹⁹ This is discussed more in chapter three. For more on postwar urban renewal in Florida, see Raymond A. Mohl, “Making the Second Ghetto in Metropolitan Miami, 1940-1960,” *Journal of Urban History* 21 (1995): 395-427; and Connolly, “Sunbelt Civil Rights.”

¹⁰⁰ “Tentative Approval Given to Eight Renovation Districts,” *SPT*, February 2, 1962.

¹⁰¹ “Margaret Carroll, “Slum Inspection Slowed By Lack of Examiners,” *SPT*, October 6, 1960; “Slum Crackdown Begins,” *SPT*, April 4, 1966.

homes in the area, the absence of federal subsidy and a lack of political consensus sank the project in its infancy. Across the bay in Tampa, white civic leaders conceived of a rather novel solution to the combined problems of a perpetual low-income housing shortage and the dissolution of the color line.

¹⁰² Charles Patrick, "Negro Family Accepts Keys to New Home," *SPT*, January 8, 1960.

Chapter 3
“Citizenship is a Privilege”: Progress Village and the Dream of Black Suburban Housing in Tampa, Florida, 1958-1961.

“We can solve a housing problem, or we can try to solve a racial problem. But we cannot combine the two.”

-William Levitt.¹

In December 1959, Van Gainous, her husband, and her six children, were the first residents to move into Progress Village, an exclusive working-class suburb eleven miles south of Tampa, Florida, in unincorporated Hillsborough County. Gainous loved her new residential neighborhood, especially her green lawn and the safe, open spaces for her children to run and play. The suburban setting was a stark contrast from her previous home, in a “noisy” and “crowded” neighborhood in downtown Tampa.² For Eddie Oliver and his five children, moving to Progress Village was like “moving to another country.” A mother of four was relieved that she no longer had to pay a rent that was “too high” for a termite-infested shack owned by a slumlord who would “collect the rent without ever fixing anything up.”³ Emanuel Johnson, another early resident, recalled jumping at the opportunity to own his

¹ Quote found in Ron Rosenbaum’s “The House that Levitt Built,” in *Esquire* (December 1983): 378-90.

² Quotes in “Giant Steps from the Slums,” *TT*, September 6, 1960.

³ *Ibid.*

own home. When the opportunity arrived, he told the builder that he wanted a house facing east so that his wife could watch the sunrise.⁴

These were not the common refrains of first-time suburban homeowners in unincorporated Hillsborough County, in the late-1950s. To be sure, in terms of physical design, structure, marketing, and location, Progress Village resembled the numerous master-planned suburban communities cropping up across metropolitan Tampa Bay. What distinguished Progress Village from other subdivisions of the era, however, was the fact that it was the first—and only— master-planned suburban community in Tampa Bay specifically and exclusively designed for black homebuyers.⁵

The story of Progress Village (1958-1962) intersects several important narratives of early postwar metropolitan development, including black suburbanization and community planning, urban renewal and slum clearance, and civil rights. The planning, building, and populating of Progress Village highlights the broader relationship between housing and community development and metropolitan growth between 1958 and 1962. “Progress” is a key term here. For the village’s white visionaries, progress meant several things. On a practical level, as the city implemented urban renewal and redevelopment plans, Progress Village partially satisfied federal housing requirements that mandated the construction or acquisition of affordable housing for residents displaced by redevelopment. By situating Progress Village on the urban fringe, moreover, the

⁴ Justin George, “Pains of Progress,” *SPT*, December 3, 2006.

⁵ Andrew Wiese has shown that upwardly mobile black Americans in the postwar era saw in the suburbs the same opportunities as white Americans: homeownership, open spaces, good schools, and class and social status, among other things. See Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 148-150.

city could steer black residential dispersal, exacerbated by urban redevelopment programs downtown, away from white neighborhood while at the same time averting the construction of additional public housing units.⁶

Demographic realignment was only part of the issue. The re-mapping of the color line coincided with an emergent civil rights movement that threatened to upend the city's postwar development plans. By providing poor and working-class black residents the opportunity to purchase homes in a planned suburban community, white proponents of the project hoped to thwart social unrest. As they understood it, homeownership and suburban living were the hallmarks of good citizenship; and good citizens were invested in the community and presumably did not disturb the peace. However, the goal was not social, or even economic, democracy, but rather progressing "race-relations."

Progress Village's board of directors played an important role in this process, serving as a de-facto "race-relations" commission that worked alongside other civic institutions to manage social conflict. Throughout the late-1950s and early 1960s, black and white members of the Progress Village board of directors also served on the Regional Planning Commission, the Interracial Commission, and the Urban Renewal Agency of

⁶ This reflects a region-wide pattern of black settlement. As Wiese shows, in the parts of the postwar urban South, "white and black civic leaders collaborated to solve the postwar housing crisis by building new homes in sanctioned "Negro expansion areas" at the edge of town." See Wiese, *Places*, 165. For more on the growth of black communities in the postwar South, see Ronald Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 53-92; Christopher Silver and John Moeser, *The Separate City: Black Communities in the Urban South, 1940-1968* (Lexington, Kentucky, 1995), 125-62; and William H. Wilson, *Hamilton Park: A Planned Black Community in Dallas* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

Tampa. These unelected members of committees attempted to manage growth and the social conditions necessary for its perpetuation.⁷

Thus Progress Village was a pseudo private solution to public problems. Its realization would pave the way for “progress”: the spatial modernization of downtown and the concomitant re-imagining of the city. It also meant “progress” for dispossessed people, improvements in their residential conditions—conditions that had ostensibly produced the moral failings that in turn engendered poverty and blighted structures. In a less historically nefarious way, the design of Progress Village also reflects the standardization of new community-development ideals, represented by the project’s array of commercial, residential, and social amenities.

The Idea

An all-black housing development was the brainchild of prominent Tampa industrialist Robert Thomas. In the origins story of Progress Village, expounded in a 1959 letter to *Fortune* magazine, Thomas explained that the idea for an all-black suburban village came to him after reading English political philosopher John Stuart Mill’s perspective on social progress and societies in transition. According to Mill, “great economic and social forces flow like a tide over communities only half conscious of that befalling them,” and it is up to the “wise statesmen” to “foresee what time is thus bringing,” to “try to shape institutions and mold men’s thoughts and purposes,” and avoid

⁷ Allan Bliss calls them “Sunbelt entrepreneurs.” See Allan Bliss, “Making a Sunbelt Place,” (Ph.D. dissertation, the University of Florida, 2010), 196.

“ignorant change” and overcome “ignorant opposition to change.”⁸ As a self-styled “wise statesmen,” Thomas, along with Cody Fowler and an eclectic group of businessmen and politicians, represented a new generation of growth-minded civic leadership in postwar Tampa.⁹ As the area expanded, and as growth bypassed downtown Tampa and concentrated along the metropolitan periphery, the corporate leadership class needed a mechanism through which to redirect the regional boom to downtown. Coming of age during the boom and bust of the 1920s and 1930s, witnesses to the transformative power of federal aid, Tampa’s “wise statesmen” saw in federal housing and urban renewal legislation a way to reinvigorate the city’s declining downtown.

Much like parts of St. Petersburg as well urban centers across the South, downtown Tampa’s housing stock consisted of acres of residential slums.¹⁰ Deteriorating, unsafe, and inadequate housing pervaded the predominantly black, East Tampa neighborhoods of Robles Park, parts of College Hill, areas of Ybor City and the nearby “Scrub,” and a semi-industrial strip along the banks of the Hillsborough River.¹¹ Writing in his updated 1950 *Master Plan for the City of Tampa*, Tampa’s chief urban planner, George Simons, described the Scrub’s mix of dilapidated single- and multistory homes

⁸ Robert Thomas to the Chief Editor of *Fortune* Magazine, October 10, 1959, Progress Village Papers (hereafter PVP), box 1, folder 9, University of South Florida Special Collections, Tampa, Florida.

⁹ Bliss, “Making a Sunbelt Place,” 196.

¹⁰ A 1960 regional housing report found 1.2 million dilapidated dwellings in the South, and another 3 million that lacked proper plumbing facilities. See William G. Grigsby, “Housing Markets and Public Policy,” in *Urban Renewal*, ed. John Q. Wilson (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), 28.

¹¹ Robert A. Catlin, “Blacks in Tampa,” in *The Black Experience in the 1970s and 1980s*, ed. Robert D. Bullard (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989), 145.

and deteriorating commercial structures as an “economic burden to all of the taxpayers in that it costs more in crime and service charges [than] it returns to the city in taxes. The reconstruction of the area for improved living and additional commercial and industrial enterprise,” Simons continued, “will remove one of the most insidious and infectious in the city.”¹² Surveying the scene in the late-1940s, one national housing reformer called Tampa’s slums the “worst. . . in the nation.”¹³ During the Depression and war, Tampa initiated an extensive program of slum-clearance and public housing. As of the late-1950s the Tampa Housing Authority had spent more than \$22 million on the construction of nine low-income housing projects that provided shelter for more than 10,000 residents (1,634 black families and 1,548 white families) and had eradicated approximately 182 acres of slum real estate.¹⁴

The 1950s economic boom, however, fueled by federal housing programs that disproportionately benefitted white Americans, East Tampa’s black neighborhoods became even more densely populated and increasingly dilapidated.¹⁵ A 1958 study by the county planning commission found 33 percent of Tampa’s housing stock in these areas did not meet federal minimum standards.¹⁶ Another study classified more than 60 percent of Tampa’s “Negro housing” as substandard. At the same time, Tampa was one of ten

¹² George W. Simons, *Master Plan for the City of Tampa*, 57.

¹³ J.A. Murray, “Tampa’s Public Housing Projects Provide Homes But Still Leave Slums,” *Tampa Times*, September 28, 1952.

¹⁴ Tampa Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, Forward.

¹⁵ Catlin, “Blacks in Tampa,” 145.

¹⁶ Relocation Subcommittee of the Metropolitan Planning Committee, *Relocation Housing Report*, Tampa Chamber of Commerce, June 26, 1958.

cities in the South with more than half of its non-white population living at or below the poverty line of \$3,000/year.¹⁷ Postwar federal largesse provided the mechanisms for redeveloping the urban slums, and Tampa's "wise statesmen" worked aggressively to take advantage of it. No one could accuse them of thinking small. Firmly ensconced in organizations like the Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce, the "Committee of 100," the Riverfront Roundtable, and later the Urban Renewal Agency (URA), Tampa's growth-minded business leaders and public officials envisioned a wholesale reinvention of downtown, including revamping the transportation infrastructure and redeveloping several large, slum-filled neighborhoods.¹⁸ As of the late-1950s, Tampa's ten-year urban renewal agenda was the most ambitious in the state, if not the region.

While the imperatives of public health that animated the outcry over the Jordan Park extension played a smaller role in Tampa's postwar urban redevelopment efforts, they provided the legal foundation for the state's eminent domain law. In a reversal of a 1952 decision involving the city of Daytona, the Florida Supreme Court, in 1958, officially sanctioned the public repossession of private property for private gain.¹⁹ The ruling gave Florida cities expansive eminent domain authority to eliminate acres of low-income neighborhoods and commercial districts, re-plat the area, and redevelop it for

¹⁷ Grigsby, "Housing Markets and Public Policy," 28.

¹⁸ Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA), Press Release, May 1, 1958, Washington, D.C., Nuccio Papers (hereafter NP), box 36, folder 276, City of Tampa Archives.

¹⁹ *Grubstein v. the Urban Renewal Agency of the City of Tampa* (1958).

residential and commercial purposes.²⁰ With private property laws, funding, and political support no longer obstacles to urban renewal, the city's agenda faced one last hurdle.

Indeed, for the thousands of families living in the areas targeted for redevelopment, the advent of urban renewal and other redevelopment projects held different promises and offered only one guarantee: residential displacement. One study estimated 1600 families would be displaced: 477 from expressway and other highway projects; 425 from the renewal of Maryland Ave.; 238 from the Ybor City redevelopment; 680 from the Riverfront redevelopment; and another 460 from code enforcement and other violations.²¹ Most of the city's black slum dwellers worked as unskilled day laborers, janitors, and domestics and earned less than \$3,000 a year.²² Trapped economically and geographically by decades of oppressive Jim Crow laws that pervaded everything from labor markets to decisions governing public resource allocation to the real estate industry, these residents had nowhere to go when the bulldozer arrived.²³ The housing question proved the most vexing for all involved. Among the city's white movers and shakers, a general consensus coalesced around opposing the addition of more "socialized housing."

²⁰ In his study of "real estate and the making of Jim Crow" in Miami, Nathan Connolly argues that when black residential dispersal threatened the color line, or when slum conditions jeopardized the city's reputation, local politicians used eminent domain as a "market corrective" that helped protect white homeowners, contain black renters, and keep the racial peace." See Connolly, *A World More Concrete*, 5-6.

²¹ Of the 680 families predicted to be displaced by the Riverfront project, 10 of those families were white. Hammer and Co., *Maryland Avenue Project Analysis*, 1958, 2.

²² *Ibid.*, 2.

²³ McGrew and Raper, *Negro Life in Tampa*, 6-7.

At the same time, city leaders and white residents alike, worried urban renewal would, with the assistance of federal relocation money, disperse the city's concentrated black population into white neighborhoods.²⁴ Corralling poor black residents into public housing at least helped preclude residential integration and remapped but reinforced the color line. With the city's existing public housing full and future residents already a "substantial waiting list," the housing dilemma opened the space for the idea of Progress Village to gain traction.²⁵

Most importantly, the FHA approved and stood behind the idea. In a letter to mayor Nuccio, Hardy A. Sullivan, director of the FHA branch in Tampa, thought the idea of "a new subdivision intended to provide excellent housing accommodations for minority groups" was a "proposal" with "considerable merit" and would "benefit all parties involved."²⁶

In May 1958, the Housing and Home Finance Agency (part of the FHA), gave Tampa the green light on the city's first urban renewal program, the Maryland Ave. Slum Clearance and Urban Renewal Project, and released the initial financing for up to 1,700 units of low-income housing, of which 775 were to be designated for "minority group occupancy."²⁷ But the plan contained a near-fatal flaw. The HHFA's authorization did not mean dwellings for the displaced actually existed or ever would. Furthermore, the

²⁴ "Plan Sought For Negroes Displaced By Expressway," *Tampa Tribune*, November 28, 1957; "Tampa DPs Must Have a Roof," *Tampa Tribune*, November 20, 1957.

²⁵ Metropolitan Housing Committee, "Relocation Housing Report," *Minutes of the Tampa Chamber of Commerce*, 1958.

²⁶ Hardy A. Sullivan to Nick Nuccio, August 11, 1958, NP, box 36, folder 276.

²⁷ Walter E. Keyes to Mayor Nick Nuccio, May 8, 1958, NP, box 36, folder 276.

HHFA disbursed the “221” funds specifically designed to assist displaced residents with relocation costs through local, private lenders, which meant that minority residents had to have the credit and employment credentials to qualify for the loans.²⁸ Such criteria doubtless proved problematic for the poor residents living in the areas targeted for renewal, most of who had inconsistent incomes and had never established relationships with financial lending institutions.²⁹

Nevertheless, on the heels of the first round of HFFA approval, Progress Village Inc., a non-profit corporation, with seed money from at least fifty wealthy bay area residents, opened for business on July 9 1958. The articles of incorporation succinctly laid out the project’s vision:

The general nature of the object of this corporation shall be to better race relations, to accomplish slum clearance, to improve health, and to improve the living conditions of people living in sub-standard housing, to receive bequests and grants of money and property of every kind and to administer the same exclusively for religious, charitable, educational, literary and scientific uses, and to do anything necessary or proper for the accomplishment of these purposes.³⁰

As the incorporation articles explain, Progress Village was not to be an ordinary residential development. It was a social engineering project intended to thwart social unrest and foster social citizenship through homeownership. As such, bettering “race relations” meant managing race relations. Clearing slums and providing adequate residential accommodations, according to the leading liberal reformers of the day, eradicated the conditions that produced “crime” and “disease.” Similarly, access to

²⁸ Walter E. Keyes to Mayor Nick Nuccio, May 14, 1958, NP, box 36, folder 275.

²⁹ Bliss, “Making a Sunbelt Place,” 266.

³⁰ “Articles of Incorporation,” *Minutes for Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Progress Village* (hereafter *PV Minutes*), July 11, 1958, PVP, box 1, folder 1.

homeownership ostensibly quelled social radicalism and promoted republican citizenship.³¹ Managing race relations also entailed the more practical goal of forestalling the complete dissolution of the residential color line. The project's white visionaries understood a lack of black access to homeownership to be the ultimate injustice of Jim Crow. Thus for them, Progress Village served as a vehicle that allowed private citizens acting in a private, profit-driven capacity to determine the dispersal and distribution of "minority group occupancy," and thwart black encroachment into white neighborhoods. To this end, Progress Village Inc. served as a *de facto* race-relations commission that, in concert with a loose cohort of other organizations, actively promoted social stability and economic growth.

Indeed, Progress Village Inc.'s board of directors was a "who's who" of Hillsborough County business elites, most notably Robert Thomas and Cody Fowler. Fowler was the scion of a pioneering Hillsborough County family, prominent attorney, and president of prominent savings loan institution, and a host of other business men intimately tied to the fate of urban redevelopment. While Fowler embraced the role of racial moderate, and even headed the governor's statewide bi-racial commission in the early 1960s, it was Robert Thomas who pushed the mayor to form a local committee to ameliorate the growing racial tensions over attempts to integrate Lowry Park, the site of children's amusement park, in the late 1950s. Born in Seffner in 1924, Thomas owned Port Sutton, a private deep-water port, warehouses, and an industrial complex. Neither Thomas nor Fowler supported integration, but like politicians and leaders throughout the region's urban areas, they saw the writing on the wall. Rather than attract negative

³¹ Vale, "The Ideological Origins of Affordable Homeownership Efforts," 20.

publicity with overt demagoguery, managing and overseeing the transition from segregation to integration, even while using the legal system to forestall the process as much as possible, was a viable alternative to losing business and attracting unwarranted federal attention that might hinder urban renewal financing.³²

Thomas and Fowler were joined by other prominent figures from the business community, including Chamber of Commerce president and merchant-builder Paul H. Smith, chamber executive director, Scott Christopher, and clothier Harold Wolfe, a recent recipient of the Tampa Advertising Club's award for "Advertising Man of the Year."³³ As part of their plan to "better race relations," and as way to curry black support, white board members enlisted C. Blythe Andrews, Perry Harvey Sr., Aurelio Fernandez, James Hargrett Sr., and H.H. Martin—prominent members of the black business and political community.³⁴ Andrews owned and edited Tampa's black newspaper, *The Florida Sentinel Bulletin*. Harvey, a longtime political and labor activist, presided over the local black longshoreman's union. Together, Andrews and Harvey headed the Lily White Benefits Association, a mutual aid society that provided death and funeral benefits for black residents unable to afford them. H.H. Martin owned an insurance company on Central Avenue, near the Maryland Avenue neighborhood.³⁵ James Hargrett Sr. was the

³² "Business Rancher," *FT* 4, no. 4 (September 1961).

³³ *FT* 1, no. 2 (May 1958).

³⁴ "Of the trustees, one-half shall be elected from the white community of Tampa, Florida, and one-half shall be elected from the colored community." See "Articles of Incorporation."

³⁵ *PV Minutes*, May 25, 1959, box 2, folder 13, PVP; Local histories intimate that white business leaders bought off Andrews and Harvey. Susan Greenbaum and Robert W. Alicea argue that the white leaders of Progress Village, in return for Andrews' and

founder of the local black chamber of commerce.³⁶ And Fernandez was a prominent local educator before his untimely death a few months later, before the project's completion.

Although the Progress Village board was technically bi-racial, the formation of subcommittees for various research and development tasks split along racial lines. For example, when it was time to secure a contract for the development of a supermarket, the "Negro group," headed by Harvey and Andrews, took charge. The white members handled the business end of the operation, while black members handled issues more concerned with community formation. Thus, like the Progress Village project itself, the board of directors was an exercise in racial cooperation through racial separation.³⁷

The project's implicit commitment to racial segregation alienated the local NAACP Branch, which had by the late-1950s become the city's primary vehicle for the advancement of black civil rights. Under the leadership of Robert Saunders, a field state secretary for the Florida State NAACP Conference, the Tampa branch had been instrumental in breaking down the barriers of Jim Crow, from fighting for the equalization of pay for black teachers in the late-1930s, to pushing for the integration of the public sphere, such as parks, swimming pools and beaches, and the public school system. After fighting for decades against racial discrimination, the NAACP could not in good conscience support a program that perpetuated racial segregation. Saunders called

Harvey's participation and support of the project, promised to see to it that the Lily White Benefit Association won a bid to build low-income housing in the Maryland Avenue neighborhood as part of the redevelopment of the area. See Greenbaum, *More than Black*, 290; and Robert W. Alicea, *Progress Village: An Experiment in Southern Gradualism* (unpublished essay, found in PVP), 5.

³⁶ James Hargrett, interview with Otis Anthony, July 27, 1978, 3.

³⁷ *PV Minutes*, July 11 and May 25, PVP, box 2, folder 13.

on white city leaders to prioritize “housing citizens,” not the building of “black housing” and especially not the “establishment of an all-Negro community.”³⁸ Instead, the NAACP threw its organizational weight behind slum clearance and public housing. As Nathan Connolly has shown, black leaders in cities throughout the country supported slum clearance and urban renewal programs “because urban progressives and moderate reformers explicitly framed land expropriation as an effective weapon against abusive and intransigent landlords. To various degrees, black and white housing activists, urban mayors, and even more moderate southern governors lauded bulldozers and land condemnation as instruments of civil rights reform.”³⁹ Moreover, the 1954 Housing Act stipulated that cities hoping to qualify for federal urban renewal money had to submit a “workable plan” designed to increase local participation in the processes of community redevelopment.⁴⁰ The NAACP saw provisions like the “workable cities”—indeed the entire process of urban renewal, at least initially, as mechanisms that enhanced and expanded black political power.⁴¹

The ideological and programmatic split between the NAACP and the black supporters of Progress Village obscures a deeper ideological consensus. To be sure, during the 1950s, *Florida Sentinel Bulletin* editor and Progress Village board member, C.

³⁸ Robert Saunders to Mayor Nick Nuccio, May 29, 1958; May 29, 1958, NP, box 36, folder 276.

³⁹ Essentially, those with a civil rights and reform agenda, says Connolly, “found common cause with proponents of regional growth who simply wanted to repurpose the land rental owners held.” See *A World More Concrete*, 8.

⁴⁰ Nick Nuccio to Walter E. Keyes, March 27, 1958, NP, box 36, folder 276.

⁴¹ Robert Saunders to Mayor Nick Nuccio, May 29, 1958; May 29, 1958, NP, box 36, folder 276.

Blythe Andrews, articulated in the editorial pages of his newspaper a message of racial uplift that combined calls for black respectability with an ambivalence about racial integration. Improved access to homeownership and the economic benefits (real and imagined) supposedly offered therein, eclipsed the imperatives of integration politics. Later, however, as the sit-in took the country by storm in the early-1960s, he passionately supported the efforts of student demonstrators. Similarly, the NAACP agreed that improving the residential built environment and increasing black access to affordable dwellings (affordable in terms of rent and/or ownership and mortgage payments) were viable means of redressing racial inequality and of promoting black upward mobility.

Despite their differences, the NAACP and the Progress Village Inc.'s board of directors ultimately worked in concert within a county-wide network of non-profit institutions bent on managing local race-relations and maintaining social stability, a practice NAACP executive and URA subcommittee member Rev. A. Leon Lowry famously called the "Tampa Technique."⁴² The "Tampa Technique" reflected the class interests shared by business and property-owning blacks and whites, most of who understood that, notwithstanding individual notions of racial hierarchy, social discord threatened their economic livelihood.

Conceptualization and Controversy

Progress Village Inc., after considerable research and site scouting, selected a low-lying, 1,228-acre tract of "scattered oaks and pines" and small lakes in an unincorporated area five miles southeast of Tampa, an area bordered by 78th street to the

⁴² Lawson, "From Sit-in to Race Riot," 259.

west and by U.S. highway 301.⁴³ More than fifty “subscribers,” some of the most affluent residents in the city, purchased non-interest bearing loans to underwrite the \$165,000 down payment.⁴⁴ The county had tried to improve the area’s poor drainage by building a system of ditches and drainage canals, but, as builders and residents eventually learned, a hard rain could (re)turn the area to swampy miasma. Twenty years later, Progress Village would be encircled by sprawling residential and commercial developments, but in the late 1950s the site stood in the liminal spaces between country and city, downtown and suburbia, and between the economics of agricultural production and real estate expansion.

Progress Village first took shape on paper. The Master Plan reflected the most current trends in residential community design, from FHA specs, instruments for protecting property values, and an assortment of recreational and leisure-based amenities. The plan envisioned and outlined a complete and “independent residential suburban community, self-sufficient with every facility for comfortable and healthful-outdoor living,” replete with nearly four thousand residential home sites, enough room for more than 20,000 people, an elementary school, neighborhood shopping centers, churches, hotels, a golf course, parks, and playgrounds.⁴⁵ Residents would have to look no further than the boundaries of their community to satisfy their commercial and communal needs and desires.

⁴³ *Report on the Master Plan*, 2.

⁴⁴ Land purchased from the Atlantic Holding Company for a total of \$736,000. See *PV Minutes*, July 11, 1958, PVP, box 2, folder 13.

⁴⁵ *Report on the Master Plan*, 2.

Future residents chose one of several models of ranch homes erected and sold by one of thirteen different builders. By the late-1950s the ranch-style home had become the most popular and commonly built single-family home, because of its simplicity, utility, and functionality—perfectly suited for Progress Village.⁴⁶ House options eventually included concrete block units that ranged in size from 800 to 925 sq. feet, came with either a brick or concrete façade, and featured options such as terrazzo floors and a bevy of modern appliances.⁴⁷

The Master Plan contained legal instruments historically used as mechanisms of racial exclusion. A deed restriction (“declaration of restrictions”) ensured aesthetic continuity, as well regulated the height, size, type, and number of buildings per lot, banned mobile homes, and segregated land-uses through mono-functional zoning. Historically, deed restrictions contained what were known as racial covenants, legally binding provisions that blocked property owners from selling to black buyers.⁴⁸ The Supreme Court ruled racial covenants unconstitutional in 1948 (*Shelley v. Kraemer*), racist ideas about the relationship between race and property values and neighborhood stability continued to inform real estate and lending practices nationwide.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Clark, Jr., *The American Family Homes*, 198-199.

⁴⁷ Bliss, “Making a Sunbelt Place,” 272; “Firm to Show First Group of Homes in Progress Village Today and Sunday,” *SPT*, December 12, 1939.

⁴⁸ McKenzie, *Privatopia*, 5.

⁴⁹ The Supreme Court outlawed racial covenants in *Shelley v. Kramer* 1949. According to Wright, Raymond Foley, director of the Housing and Home Finance Administration, waited a full two years before he ordered a change in FHA lending policy to reflect the Supreme Court decision. As late as 1968, the FHA was still refusing to underwrite developments for multi-racial and multi-ethnic residents. See Wright, *Building the Dream*, 248.

Ironically, Progress Village might never have received FHA approval without an implicit commitment to housing only black residents. While unable to legally enforce racial segregation, the FHA in the 1950s and 1960s still operated under the assumption that the more ethnically and racially homogenous a neighborhood was the better chance it had of retaining and increasing its property values.

No longer as useful in enforcing racial separation, Progress Village's deed restriction nonetheless contained provisions that controlled individual behavior and curtailed property rights.

Such restrictions, moreover, allowed Progress Village's founders a degree of control not only over the future shape of the community but also over the lives and cultural habits of its residents. For example, the Master Plan banned the commercial sale of alcohol, outlawed chicken-raising and small livestock holding, and placed stiff limits on the volume of trash and debris allowed to accumulate in one's front yard.⁵⁰ In light of Progress Village's programmatic vision for economic and racial uplift that specifically targeted black Americans, the Master Plan and the attendant deed restrictions can also be understood as extensions of the widespread institutional efforts to control urban growth and manage race-relations.

The plan for Progress Village, notwithstanding its implications for racial segregation, resembled those of the more exclusive and amenity-rich developments cropping up across Tampa Bay. As the following chapter demonstrates, only a few years after Progress Village welcomed its first residents, an age-restricted retirement community, Sun City Center, opened a few miles south. Like Progress Village, Sun City

⁵⁰ *PV Minutes*, July 11, 1958 and May 25, PVP, box 2, folder 13.

Center represented a type of residential community conspicuously organized around homeownership (detached, single-family-style), residential homogeneity, and manufactured community.⁵¹

Modern in design and bent on owner-occupancy and upward mobility, Progress Village nevertheless stoked local racial tensions, drawing the ire of suspicious civil rights leaders and formidable opposition from grassroots homeowners nearby. The reactionary mobilization against Progress Village was particularly fervent in unincorporated Riverview, where white residents of new communities such as Clair Mel and Palm River, situated among dairy farms and phosphate mines, enjoyed low taxes and a modicum of local control.⁵²

At a July 1958 meeting between representatives of Progress Village and the Palm River Civic Club, Riverview residents couched their deep concerns about the project in the language of property rights and racial exclusion. Irene Wilson, for example, worried about racial mixing and feared an “overflow from Progress Village” might “seep into” the local schools. She implored the representatives from Progress Village to find another location, perhaps, she suggested, in the College Hill Homes section, where houses had “been vacated by white people who have moved to Forest Hills.”⁵³ Robert Thomas attempted to assuage her concerns about public school integration. As a “complete community,” he explained, Progress Village was designed to provide its residents with

⁵¹ Chapter three explores the history of Sun City Center. Also see Trolander, *From Sun City to the Villages*, 2; and Richard Louv, *America II*.

⁵² The Hillsborough Board of County Commissioners kept taxes low and waived impact fees for developers what Kerstein calls a “caretaker policy.” See Kerstein, *Politics and Growth*, 153-154.

⁵³ *PV Minutes*, July 11, 1958, PVP, box 2, folder 13.

their own schools. The Board of County Commissioners, he added, “would not permit a project of this sort without provision for schools.”⁵⁴ When Violet Pinegar inquired as to why public housing projects “for whites” could not be “converted to colored,” Thomas reminded the audience that Progress Village was for blacks “who want to and are going to own their own homes.” J.D. Foxworth inquired about the possibility of heightened police security after the project’s completion and the arrival of the first black residents.

Opponents connected to the real estate industry expressed their concerns in a way that conflated race and class. Mel Larson, President of Clair-Mel Builders, worried about the speculative investments he had made “in anticipation of a place for Tampa to grow.” He sympathized with the plight of black residents, but not enough to risk having his “land downgraded.” Maxine Lanier contended that the project proposal had already “reduced” the price of some of her listings. A rather despondent Helen Richards told the committee that “the proposed area for Progress Village” had stoked fears that black residents might “use the rivers” and “take the jobs of whites in the area” and therefore already had ruined her plans to develop a small project on her land along 78th street.⁵⁵

Barney Harwell, of the East Bay Chamber of Commerce, succinctly summed up the opposition, cloaking it in a paternalistic and rather gendered sheen similar in language (tone) to Progress Village’s white proponents. “Something must be done for the Negro,” he averred. “They are human beings and entitled to a place to live. He does not now have things available to him. If he has the money to buy a home of his own, he cannot find

⁵⁴ *Minutes of a Public Meeting of Representatives of Progress Village, Inc. and East Tampa Civic Clubs and Land Owners*, July 18, 1958, PVP, box 3, folder 12.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

one.” But Harwell did “not want this project in our neighborhood,” he confessed, and vowed to “find another suitable place” or “fight it legally.”⁵⁶

Shortly thereafter, the Gibsonton Chamber of Commerce issued a memo outlining an alternative plan for Progress Village. The memo, known as the “Palm River Plan,” called on city leaders to locate Progress Village on the southern tip of Davis Islands, one of Tampa’s most exclusive all-white neighborhoods, situated downtown, at the confluence of the Hillsborough River and Old Tampa Bay. At the time, the dredging and deepening of the harbor was underway as part of the city’s postwar strategy for economic development, and the proponents of the “Palm River Plan” argued that the city could use the surplus fill to add acreage to the islands, making them a suitable spot for the planned community.⁵⁷ Certainly few if anyone in Gibsonton held out much hope that the Palm River Plan would garner serious consideration, but the plan nonetheless evinced an emergent “property rights” movement culture intent on deploying the tools of real estate economics and land-use science as instruments of class and racial exclusion. To that end, Riverview residents contemplated a more realistic and time-tested strategy to thwart the project, municipal incorporation.

Incorporation would allow the leaders of the new city of Riverview to implement zoning laws that could legally thwart the entire housing project.⁵⁸ But there was little anyone could do to block the project. As an early Progress Village supporter explained, the board had kept the project “out of the press,” especially “out of the newspapers,” until

⁵⁶ *Minutes of a Public Meeting of Representatives of Progress Village, Inc. and East Tampa Civic Clubs and Land Owners*, July 18, 1958, PVP, box 3, folder 12.

⁵⁷ *Tampa Tribune*, August 29, 1958.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

they had paid the down payment on the land.⁵⁹ To the dismay of Riverview residents, their deliberations over the merits of incorporation occurred too late in the development process. The fear of a population of black voters large enough to potentially sway local elections silenced any calls for incorporation.⁶⁰

Realization

To bring the village to life, Progress Village Inc. selected thirteen homebuilders and sold them lots on which to construct one of a variety of home models. The builders included, Matt Jetton, president of the Florida Homebuilders Association, A.R. Ragsdale, suburban builder and executive director of Tampa's Urban Renewal Agency, and Brown L. Whatley, who later rose to prominence for his role in bringing the condominium form of property ownership to Florida.⁶¹ The different builders initially came together under the banner of Progress Village Sales Inc. Keeping the individual entities under the guise of Progress Village maintained the project's vision of a "complete community" for the purposes of marketing and advertising. Progress Village Inc., and its auxiliary entities such as Progress Village Sales Inc., and later the Progress Village Development Co., were in the business of selling communities and experience, selling citizenship and status, selling the idea of progress, not simply houses and lots.

To spread the word about the project, to brand it, and to condition blacks in Tampa on the desirability of homeownership, Progress Village Sales Inc. deployed

⁵⁹ Hargrett Interview, July 27, 1978.

⁶⁰ *Florida Sentinel Bulletin*, January 6, 1959.

⁶¹ "Community Status Progress Report for Progress Village Inc.," August 14, 1959, PVP, box 2, folder 11.

marketing and promotional strategies similar to those used by other suburban developers, trailer-park builders, and the creators of exclusive retirement communities.

As suggested by Matt Jetton, president of the Florida Homebuilders Association and later a builder of one of Tampa Bay's biggest and most popular planned communities, Progress Village Sales had model homes constructed and put on display at the Florida Fairgrounds in Tampa. A model home was also placed at the entrance to Progress Village, where the developers held special viewing events, replete with raffles and prize giveaways. Board member Blythe Andrews did his part by running regular ads in the pages of the *Sentinel Bulletin*. "Get started now on owning a fabulous home in Progress Village," proclaimed a regularly running ad. "We recommend Progress Village," Andrews editorialized, "to the discriminating Negro citizen who wishes to live in comfort with all modern conveniences."⁶² Later, in 1960, after residents had begun to move in, the *FSB* ran ads offering "free prizes" (modern conveniences) like an electric washing machine, toasters, waffle irons, deep fryers, and coffee pots for anyone willing to sign a mortgage for a home in Progress Village. A lucky "grand-prize" winner even drove away in a brand new, 1961 Plymouth Valiant.⁶³ On Central Avenue just north of downtown, in the heart of one of the largest black sections of the city, Progress Village board member H.H. Martin's Central Life Insurance Co. doubled as an office where future residents could put down a \$27 deposit for a pre-construction contract.⁶⁴

⁶² *FSB*, February 7, 1959, April 28, and April 29, 1959, and May 12, 1959.

⁶³ *FSB*, September 17, 1960.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*

In the last months of 1959, Progress Village went from an idea on paper to a physical reality—what one observer called an “orderly rows of concrete block and frame houses.”⁶⁵ The first fourteen families moved into the village between January 29 and February 6 and settled into their homes. Despite the ever-present threat of rain, the project advanced on a modified schedule. The completion and the selling of homes allowed the Board of Trustees and the builders to move ahead with platting and surveying units II and III.⁶⁶

Two weeks after the first families moved into Progress Village, fifty black high school students marched on the Woolworth’s in downtown Tampa in a direct-action protest against its segregated lunch counters. Earlier that month, in Greensboro, North Carolina, black students from North Carolina A&T launched the direct action student movement by taking seats at the all-white lunch counter at Woolworth’s in downtown Greensboro, and by the time the sit-ins broke out in Tampa Bay, students across the South had joined the cause.⁶⁷ Whereas the sit-in movement erupted spontaneously in Greensboro and other cities, disrupting the quotidian humdrum of downtown culture and business activity, the sit-ins in Tampa and St. Petersburg had a decidedly de-radicalized edge. The local NAACP had sanctioned and overseen the protests. When violence occurred on the second day, NAACP halted the demonstrations and publicly repudiated the incident. (Andrews’s cautious support highlights how complicated local race relations

⁶⁵ Jerry Blizin, “Progress Village Bustles Ahead, Right Into Some Growing Pains,” *SPT*, October 6, 1959.

⁶⁶ “Progress Report,” July 22, 1960, PVP, box 2, folder 11.

⁶⁷ Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle For Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 5.

were.) Two days later, more than 100 students showed up at the department store to once again protest its lunch counter policy.⁶⁸

Member of the Progress Village Board played key roles in managing the conflict. The city's interracial commission, initiated by Robert Thomas and chaired by Cody Fowler, oversaw negotiations between department store owners and the NAACP that quietly ended Jim Crow at public lunch counters.⁶⁹ For three years a loose coalition of black and white leaders, including the interracial commission, the NAACP, the Urban League, the Chamber of Commerce, the Urban Renewal Agency, and Progress Village Inc. helped keep a lid on overt expressions of racial unrest while quietly negotiating the end of Jim Crow. The sit-ins in St. Petersburg lasted only a few days before members of the local NAACP and other civic groups agreed to finish the fight at the negotiating table and in the courtroom.⁷⁰ The integration of local movie theaters occurred in a similar fashion. After several days of protests outside movie theaters in Tampa and St. Petersburg in 1962 and 1963, NAACP leaders met with theater owners, who without fanfare dropped their segregation policies.⁷¹

Meanwhile, throughout much of the early 1960s Progress Village began to take shape. As builders finished more homes, and as these homes sold, the building and

⁶⁸ Lawson, "From Sit-ins," 18.

⁶⁹ In 1959, after efforts to integrate recreational facilities threatened to upend social stability, Progress Village Board member and industrialist Robert Thomas encouraged newly elected Mayor Julian Lane to form a bi-racial commission to bring black and white community leaders together and ameliorate the racial discord. See "Business Rancher," *Florida Trend* 4, no. 4 (September 1961): 18.

⁷⁰ NAACP Memorandum, February 3, 1961, Robert Saunders Papers, box 5.

⁷¹ Ibid.

purchasing could continue. By mid-July, approximately 327 families had paid anywhere from \$2,400 to \$9,200 for a home in Progress Village.⁷²

The non-residential components of Progress Village also came to fruition. In March, classes began at the segregated elementary school, named after deceased Board member Aurelio Fernandez, who died in a car accident while also serving on the board. Regular bus service began running in April. Later that year, a grocery store and “7-11” convenient store opened for business.⁷³ Leisure amenities, such as a golf course, recreational parks and playgrounds, and a community center, faced numerous setbacks, but eventually they too came to fruition.⁷⁴

The earliest residents formed the Progress Village Civil Council, which operated as a voluntary, non-partisan and non-political city council and neighborhood association. Educator A. D. Gaither became the organization’s first president and hosted its first meeting in a tool shed.⁷⁵ The group played a key role in the formation of the residential-community experience by bringing people together, serving as meeting space for residents to air grievances and plan community events, and through the fostering of social obligation and participatory democracy. To that end, on one occasion, members canvassed the village and garnered more than 900 signatures on a petition calling for

⁷² “Status Report,” July 22, 1960; “Editorial,” reprinted from the *Miami News*, found in the *EI*, June 6, 1960.

⁷³ “Status Report,” July 22, 1960, PVP box 2, folder 11.

⁷⁴ “Status Report,” July 8, 1960, PVP, box 2, folder 11; July 22, 1960, PVP box 2, folder 11.

⁷⁵ Janet Zink, “A Sense of Place,” *SPT*, June 11, 2004; Letter: A.D. Gaither to Cody Fowler, April 7, 1960, PVP, box 1, Correspondence folder.

streetlights.⁷⁶ While homeownership and suburban living may have symbolized a certain kind of citizenship in the American polity, the civic council emphasized the franchise, another, more tangible form of citizenship rights. Voter registration drives organized by the civic council had particular success in the village's first years. In the 1960 general election 249 out of 257 registered voters cast their ballots. The following year, when the county proposed a 10-mill tax levy, Progress Village residents, taking pride in their new community school, supported the measure and led the county's 80 precincts with a turnout of 120 voters.⁷⁷

Later that year, the Association began publishing and circulating the Progress Village *Pioneer*, a community newspaper that apprised residents of local news and upcoming community events. The top right corner of the *Pioneer's* front page contained its slogan: "Progress Village, where citizenship is a privilege."⁷⁸ Clearly a paean to the village's desirability and its branded exclusivity, the slogan also reflected the project's broader social objectives and new attitudes about suburban living.

Cody Fowler put it more concisely when he and several other board members flew to New York to accept the Lane Bryant award for outstanding community service. As he accepted the award, Fowler read from a prepared speech that boasted about the project's ambitious design and agenda. "The establishing of Progress Village," he explained, "is a pioneering and constructive advance in bi-racial human relations,

⁷⁶ Letter: A.D. Gaither to Cody Fowler, April 7, 1960, PVP, box 1, Correspondence folder.

⁷⁷ Ward Sinclair, "Progress Village Success Surpasses Dreams," *Tampa Tribune*, November 28, 1961.

⁷⁸ *Progress Village Pioneer* 1, no. 1 (December 1961).

signifying the purpose of our white citizens to understand and at least in a small measure to solve some of the problems of our Negro citizens.” Progress Village had made great strides in the quest “to solve some of the problems of our Negro citizens,” and he was “pleased that Negroes who have bought homes in Progress Village are happy,” and their “pride of ownership” and their ability to rear “constructive citizens” was a delight to behold.” Moreover, Progress Village, more than just a community, held great social promise: “We feel confident that the creation of Progress Village has brought about a closer relationship among all our citizens and has caused us to approach the problems ahead with a sympathetic and more understanding attitude, and with an earnest desire to work out our problems fairly and pleasantly for the benefit of all of us.”⁷⁹

After a little more than a year of building, production ran into the problems of under consumption. Discouraged builders cut their losses by either halting construction indefinitely or walking away altogether.⁸⁰

The Board of Directors hired the Walker Research and Development firm to undertake a market analysis and to figure out why sales in Progress Village had slowed. Employees from Walker interviewed members from 200 households in Progress Village, 136 in unit one, 64 in Unit 2, and another 200 families living outside Progress Village, in Tampa proper. All interviewees were black. The report showed that most residents enjoyed the peace and quiet and, like the Van Gainous family, were “proud” of their home, which for many was the first one they had ever purchased, and considered their neighborhoods “friendly.” Residents asked about their experiences appeared genuinely

⁷⁹ Transcript of Cody Fowler’s acceptance speech for the Lane Bryant awards, PVP, box 3, folder 9.

⁸⁰ Walker Research Service, *Tampa Housing Study, 1961*, PVP, box 2, folder 21.

pleased with their purchases and excited about the prospect of living as homeowners in a suburban community. Others were simply satisfied with a “decent place to live.”⁸¹ The majority had a television and at least one car. But, as the report claimed, “the picture was not all roses [sic]”⁸²

The problems stemmed from geography. The community’s distance from downtown and other black neighborhoods left residents feeling isolated. Survey respondents living outside Progress Village also expressed concerns about living so far from work and friends. The bus schedule, what Betty Brown described as “sporadic at best,” made commuting to work a logistical quandary.⁸³ Even when the busses ran on time, a Progress Village resident who worked downtown had to catch the bus early in the morning, transfer multiple times, and did not return until after dark. Sometimes the trip took ninety minutes one-way.⁸⁴ The dilemma forced some families to strain their budget and purchase a new car. The necessity of having at least one car, moreover, disqualified the majority of the residents affected by urban renewal from ever living in Progress Village.⁸⁵ One early resident recalled a common exchange: “Going to town?” hitchhikers asked passing motorists. “Going to Progress Village?”⁸⁶

⁸¹ Burnett, “Giant Step From Slums,” *Tampa Times*, September 6, 1960.

⁸² Walker Research Service, *Tampa Housing Study, 1961*, box 2, folder 21, PVP. For more on black attitudes about suburban living, see Weise, *Places*, specifically the chapter, “The House I live In,” 143-163.

⁸³ Betty Brown, Interview with Anthony Otis, August 1979.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ George, “Pains of Progress.”

The dearth of retail and grocery stores exacerbated the already poor transportation situation.⁸⁷ The lack of streetlights made residents feel unsafe at night and underpinned the village's semi-rural setting. Most significantly, the report concluded that for many the village was not only geographically out of reach, it was so financially as well. The mostly unskilled laborers and domestic workers that composed the majority of Tampa's black population (those not living in Progress Village), most of whom lived in Belmont-Jackson Heights, North Boulevard, College Hill, Central Village, and West Tampa, could not afford the payments for a \$9,000 home on a 40-year fixed mortgage, even with FHA assistance.⁸⁸

Later that year, the project underwent an extensive and last-ditch retooling. Ten of the original builders dropped out, leaving only three to finish the village. Building eventually stopped at 1,000 homes in 1961—far short of the more than 3,000 envisioned by the Board of Trustees in 1958.⁸⁹

Progress?

In 1969, a lawyer for the Lily White Benefit Association, the burial aid society run by Perry Harvey Sr., and C. Blythe Andrews, wrote a letter to Cody Fowler inquiring about repayment on the Progress Village bond the society had purchased in 1958. Less than ten years since builders broke ground on the first home in Progress Village, Fowler wrote back, explaining the project had been a “failure,” and that the bonds were

⁸⁷ Walker Research Service, *Tampa Housing Study*, 1961.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ George, “Pains of Progress.”

“worthless.”⁹⁰ As Betty Brown later remarked, “there were some shattered dreams with Progress Village.”⁹¹ To be sure, the project failed to meet its goals in terms of total residential units and number of residents. And many of the promised facilities never “materialized,” as Brown also observed.⁹² More importantly, it failed in the long run to forestall residential integration and reinforce the color line.

But to deem it a failure as a residential development overlooks the community that actually came into existence and the people who stayed and helped it mature. It overlooks the people such as Betty Brown who built lives for their families and worked for decades to shape a community.

The idea for Progress Village was born out of several interrelated processes: attempts to reimagine the city through a renewal of the built environment and a reorganization of the economic base; black residential dispersal; and the efforts to mitigate growing racial hostilities through providing working- and middle-class black residents access to a suburban “lifestyle”; attempts to reimagine the city through a renewal of the built environment and a reorganization of the economic base.

The grand vision for Progress Village was only partially realized when the project started to stall. The inability for the builder-developers to turn a significant profit, the FHA’s repossession of several properties, and the transfer of homes from owners to renters (even though the policy was eventually reversed) highlighted the project’s weak foundation and internal contradictions. As the cost of land and building materials rose in

⁹⁰ URA, *Urban Renewal News* 1 (July-September 1967), box 82, folder 706, NP.

⁹¹ Brown Interview.

⁹² Ibid.

the early 1960s, the builders under the Progress Sales Inc. umbrella, struggling to turn a profit, raised home prices. Moreover, while the project was sold as a solution to the housing crisis the URA was going to create, it never really had anything to do with housing the people displaced by urban renewal. For many potential residents, Progress Village was too expensive, too far away from sources of employment, and, in some respects, ahead of its time. Even some of the first residents stayed only a few months before moving. Because Progress Village Inc. was so desperate to fill the community, applicants who did not have the finances but who came up with the down payment got pre-approved.⁹³ These residents went ahead and moved in to Progress Village only to later find out they had not qualified for an FHA loan. But not everyone left because of foreclosure. According to one early resident, “Some people left because they were disillusioned with the community.”⁹⁴ Despite the promotional claims of its founders, Progress Village was a working-class suburb economically and logistically beyond the reach of the majority of the city’s low-income residents. By all estimates, no one who moved to Progress Village in the first few years of its existence had been displaced by urban renewal.

After years of delays, Tampa’s many urban renewal programs eventually got underway and the redevelopment of the Maryland Avenue neighborhood and the Riverfront area came to fruition. One of the major delays resulted from the inability of many of the residents of the Maryland Avenue neighborhood to find somewhere to go. Upon hearing this, URA director A.R. Ragsdale, scoffed at the proposition that anything

⁹³ Brown Interview.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

other indolence precluded the residents of finding alternative shelter. Ragsdale accused the residents of lying about their monthly incomes, as if that was the only factor involved.⁹⁵

With Progress Village unable to serve as a suburban residential refuge for the urban displaced, the Tampa Housing Authority oversaw the construction of additional units of public housing. In 1963, the Housing Authority built an eight-story, 150-unit apartment complex, as well as 250 units of row houses and flats.⁹⁶ As of 1967, Tampa's URA reported that it had successfully relocated 630 families (approximately 75 percent of the total) from the Maryland Ave and Riverfront redevelopment areas.⁹⁷ That same year, a riot in the Central Ave neighborhood, in and around the old "Scrub" and Maryland Avenue neighborhoods highlighted the limitations of the "Tampa Technique."⁹⁸

A year later, St. Petersburg's south side went up in flames amidst a three-month long standoff between striking sanitation workers and the lily-white city government.⁹⁹ The riots punctured the myths of a paradisiacal resort metropolis and drew national

⁹⁵ Urban Renewal Agency of Tampa, *Minutes of the Minutes of Commissioners*, July 7, 1961, Julien Lane Papers, box 54, folder 402, CTA.

⁹⁶ The row houses and flats were to house to people displaced by urban redevelopment. The apartments were restricted to blacks 62 years or older or those otherwise receiving social security for disabilities or survivorship. See *Florida Trend* 6, no. 2 (June 1963).

⁹⁷ URA, *Urban Renewal News* 1 (July-September 1967), box 82, folder 706, NP

⁹⁸ Lawson, "From Sit-in to Race Riot," 18.

⁹⁹ Peyton Jones, "A Great Refusal: The St. Petersburg Sanitation Workers Strike," (unpublished seminar paper, Tulane University, Spring 2011).

attention to the metropolitan area's geography of racial inequality.¹⁰⁰ In the wake of the rioting, Tampa City officials took a more active interest in improving housing conditions for low-income black residents. Under the Model Cities program, the city renovated more than 2,000 homes and razed nearly 1,000 dilapidated residential units and replaced them with new single-family homes and multi-family duplexes.¹⁰¹

As of the early 1980s, with Tampa's black population just below 64,000 people (approximately 23.5 percent of the total), the Tampa Housing Authority had under its management thirteen public housing projects, sheltering more than 20,000 people, ninety percent of which were black. At the same time, the metropolitan area's black population surpassed 145,000, about 9.3 percent of the total. Of that total, approximately four percent lived outside of the central cities.

This chapter reconsiders black suburban community building within the context of the broader patterns of residential development and the transformation of American residential living that occurred throughout the last half of the twentieth century. Because of its racialized intentions, the story of Progress Village initially appears unique and, ultimately, a symbol of a dying, segregated social order. But as a housing development catering to a niche clientele, and as a residential community built upon an ideology of homeownership and suburban living, replete with a built-in economic and cultural infrastructure, Progress Village was part of metropolitan-wide trend in residential community design and development.

¹⁰⁰ Catlin, "Blacks in Tampa," 153.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 153.

residential living that occurred throughout the last half of the twentieth century. Because of its racialized intentions, the story of Progress Village initially appears unique and, ultimately, a symbol of a dying, segregated social order. But as a housing development catering to a niche clientele, and as a residential community built upon an ideology of homeownership and suburban living, replete with a built-in economic and cultural infrastructure, Progress Village was part of metropolitan-wide trend in residential community design and development.

Chapter 4: The Shelter Revolution in Metropolitan Tampa Bay

After returning home from WWII, Jim Walter worked for \$50 a week in his father's citrus-packing operation before entering the homebuilding business. On a fall morning in November 1946, Walter read a newspaper advertisement that changed his life: "Nice little unfinished houses to be moved. \$895. 9410 11th St., S.S.," read the ad.¹ After borrowing \$500 from his father, Walter purchased Davenport's shell home and moved it to an empty lot in Sulfur Springs. Three days after putting the house on the market, it sold for \$1,295. Jim Walter had taken his step into what eventually became a multimillion-dollar, decades-long career in the metropolitan housing business.²

The shell home appealed to working-class individuals and families on the make but who were still unable to afford the down payments on finished homes, whether in shiny new subdivisions or in the unfinished boom-era neighborhoods then filling in with a new generation of homes and residents. After about a year in business, Walter and Davenport were selling about ten shell homes a week. Ten years later that number rose to 600 a month.³

¹ Alvin Moscow, *Building A Business: The Jim Walter Story* (Sarasota: Pineapple Press, 1995), 2.

² "How to make a Million (Every Six Months)," *FT* 1, no. 2 (May 1958): 10; Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council, *Regional Housing Plan Guide* (Revised), December 1982, 9.

³ *Ibid.*, 12.

When the residential real estate economy dipped in the late 1950s, the product of overbuilding, sales of shell homes boomed, and Jim Walter, now working on his own, got rich. With his companies collectively bringing in more than a million dollars every six months, Walter sold more shell homes than anyone else in the nation.⁴ The last year of the 1960s, with home prices averaging \$5,000, Walter's company turned out nearly 9,000 shell homes, a sales volume worth \$54.9 million.⁵

While Walter became one of the Tampa Bay's biggest and most successful homebuilders, the shell home, despite its popularity, never dominated the housing market and ultimately made up only a small part of his residential-development empire.⁶ But in the 1960s and 1970s, three other modes of shelter and community development—including mobile homes and parks, condominiums, and age-restricted retirement communities—transformed residential living in metropolitan Tampa Bay and throughout the region.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Americans embraced three novel forms of residential shelter and community: mobile homes (most often situated in mobile home parks), condominiums, and age-restricted retirement communities. Throughout the country, the demographic profiles of mobile-home residents and condominium dwellers varied, but in metropolitan Tampa Bay, elderly retirees comprised the bulk of the consumer market. By the late-1970s, the construction of multi-family developments, such as condominiums,

⁴ "How to Make a Million (Every Six Months)," 11; and "Public Financing Brings New Shell Home Entries," *FT* 3, no. 10 (February 1961): 16.

⁵ "Six of Top 100 homes Builders Have Active Florida Programs," *FT* 12, no. 6 (October 1969); "Thirteen Florida Builders Listed Among U.S. Giants," *FT* 13, no. 7 (November 1970): 38.

⁶ "The Giant Plunge Into Mobile Homes," *FT* 12, no. 10 (February 1970): 14-17.

outpaced that of single-family, detached housing.⁷ While the construction rate of single-family homes eventually rose again, the profusion of mobile homes and condominiums represented a revolution in Americans' shelter options and in the composition of the residential built environment.⁸

Many factors propelled the shelter revolution in Tampa Bay, including the advent of working- and middle-class retirement, shifts in regional population dispersal, the reorganization of the real estate industry, new forms of individual and collective property ownership, and new consumer tastes and architectural styles.⁹ This chapter details the rise and proliferation of these new modes of shelter and community formation. It contends that they not only fueled the metropolitanization of west-central Florida and transformed the built environment; they created the template for the pseudo-private cities of the 1980s.

Mobile Living

In the mid-1960s, mobile home owners in Pinellas County organized and protested a projected increase in local taxes and the implementation of stricter regulation guidelines. Under the auspices of the Federation of Mobile Homes (FMO), mobile home owners throughout Pinellas County successfully killed the new legislative proposals. Within a decade, the FMO had spread statewide and counted more than 50,000 members,

⁷ Douglas Doubleday, "Florida Trend: Phasing Out Single-Family Units," *SPT*, April 10, 1966.

⁸ *Regional Housing Plan Guide*, 9.

⁹ "Danger in Florida Land Developments," *FT* 2, no. 6 (September 1959).

and included a paid full-time staff, a legislative committee, and three full-time state lobbyists. In the process, it became one of the most powerful and successful political interest groups in the state.¹⁰

Beneath the story of the federation and its fight against taxation and the “unfair” and “unjust” treatment of mobile-home owners, is the history of the advent and proliferation of residential trailers (eventually dubbed mobile homes and later manufactured homes) as well as a story about communities of mobile homes. The FMO flexed considerable power because of the number of members and their widespread distribution throughout the state. As of the early 1970s, more than two million mobile homes, and hundreds of parks, dotted Florida. Metropolitan Tampa Bay accounted for more mobile homes than any other metropolitan area in the state. Pinellas and Sarasota Counties, with more than 70,000, contained the bulk of the area’s mobile homes.¹¹ Thus it is no wonder that retired dwellers in St. Petersburg initiated the formation of the FMO in 1962.

From Trailers to Mobile Homes

While manufacturers were mass-producing residential trailers as early as the 1920s, it was not until after WWII that trailers gained widespread popularity and became a suitable alternative to the single-family detached home. The War had revealed to government officials and the real estate industry how successfully trailers filled the void

¹⁰ “The Federation Needs You—You Need the Federation,” *Wilder’s Park Newsletter* (hereafter *WPN*), Wilder’s Park Collection (hereafter *WPC*), box 2, folder 9, USF-SP Special Collections.

¹¹ “The Factory Built Home Becomes Florida’s Newest Growth Industry,” *FT* 14, no. 4 (August 1971).

in temporary housing. Cheap, mobile, and quickly assembled, trailers could be manufactured and delivered in short notice to areas experiencing housing shortages. By 1943, the federal government owned more than 30,000 residential trailers, many of which were no more than metal boxes.¹² As explained in chapter one, they proved a viable, if incomplete, solution to the wartime housing shortage in Tampa Bay, numbering more than 300 in Tampa alone.¹³

In the immediate postwar years, the federal government unloaded its supply of trailers. Still, housing experts inside and outside of the federal government foresaw in the postwar era the dawn of mass-produced, factory-built homes that rolled off assembly lines much like toasters and washing machines. The belief that what became known as the prefabricated home was the answer to the nation's postwar housing dilemma reflected an idealistic attitude towards the possibilities of technological innovation. But it did not necessarily represent a realistic assessment of the homebuilding industry. Generous federal subsidies given to builders of prefabricated homes, such as Lustron and National Homes, seemed to foretell a future of prefabricated living.¹⁴ But prefabricated homes only increased the nation's housing stock by 1.5 million in the first two years after WWII, hardly the technological solution to the nation's housing shortages.¹⁵ Beginning with the Federal Housing Act of 1949, the federal government shifted its financial and

¹² Sixty percent of those "metal boxes" were located in strategic defense areas. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 262; Allan D. Wallis, *Wheel Estate: The Rise and Decline of Mobile Homes* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 93.

¹³ *Tampa Daily Times*, January 21, 1943.

¹⁴ "Florida Tries Factory-Built Homes," *FT* 2, no. 11 (March 1960).

¹⁵ Wright, *Building the Dream*, 245-246.

ideological support away from the prefabricated residential unit and towards the suburban single-family home and the urban apartment.¹⁶

Thus, even throughout much of the 1950s and 1960s, few real-estate industry insiders would have predicted the rise and proliferation of prefabricated-trailer living. Many assumed the suburban ranch house, built and consumed with the support of generous federal subsidy, or the apartment co-op, would be the dwellings that housed most Americans, especially retirees.¹⁷

In Tampa Bay, tin-can tourists and the transient nature of trailer living had created a social stigma against trailer dwellers. Writing in the *Tourist News*, St. Petersburg booster and real estate developer Karl Grismer explained, “some of the camps became refuges for an undesirable type of people who were not wanted near any community.”¹⁸

Several industry innovations altered trailers’ reputation and fueled the growth and popularity of the industry. During the 1950s, the trailer home industry underwent significant changes. While the older, prewar and wartime trailers stood eight feet wide, as of 1954 the mass production of ten-foot wide trailers outpaced smaller ones.¹⁹ Within three years nearly a dozen manufacturers were churning out ten-foot trailers.²⁰ Whereas automobiles towed the older trailers, large trucks were the only vehicles capable of

¹⁶ Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 93.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹⁸ Karl H. Grismer, “Preparing for Tin Canners: Resort Cities Adopt Various Methods,” *The Tourist News* 2 (November 19 1921): 3.

¹⁹ Robert Mills French and Jeffrey K. Hadden, “Mobile Homes: Instant Suburbia or Transportable Slums?” *Social Problems* 16, no. 2 (Autumn, 1968): 221.

²⁰ Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 133

hauling the bigger trailers. What the new models lacked in mobility, explains historian Lee Irby, they gained in size and residential comfort.²¹ C.J. Stoll, known locally as “Mr. Mobile home,” introduced the 10-ft. mobile home to St. Petersburg and revolutionized the market.²²

The industry changed the words it used to identify itself. As Alan Wallis explains, there was also a cultural-attitude shift. In 1952, *Trailer Park Management Magazine* changed its name to *Mobile Home Park Management*. Similarly, the following year the Trailer Coach Manufacturers Association, what Wallis calls the “the industry’s key association,” rebranded itself as the Mobile Home Manufacturers Association (MHMA). Even before pioneering the 10-ft. wide trailer, Elmer Frey explained the rationale behind the name changes:

I believe that products should be called what they are... If you saw a truck and the semi-trailer loaded with a bulldozer, would you say, “There goes a trailer?” No—you would say, “Look at that bulldozer!” By the same token, when you see a man towing his home, why do you call it a trailer? Why not say, “There goes a man towing his home!” Why not call it exactly what it—a home which is mobile—hence a mobile home.²³

Additionally, new market conditions soon made trailers a more attractive option. As real estate prices and building materials became more expensive beginning in the early 1960s, builder-developers found an inexpensive industry with a seemingly inexhaustible consumer base. Construction workers on the make, young families, and elderly retirees, embraced mobile homes because of affordability and the built-in

²¹ Irby, “Trailer Trash,” 185.

²² Ibid., 185.

²³ Frey quote in *Trailer Dealer Magazine*, 1953.

amenities. For retirees, many of whom lived on fixed incomes, the trailer, and the trailer park, proved affordable means of achieving the postwar retirement dream.²⁴

Trailer living exploded in Tampa Bay in the 1950s. By 1960, the Tampa Bay metropolitan area contained more than 70,000 mobile homes. In the first fifteen years after WWII, Pinellas County, central Florida's smallest county, became the state and national leader in number of residential trailers, with just over 23,000 in 1960.²⁵ Trailers soon occupied urban, rural, and suburban locations, and the majority of trailer parks opened in, and on the fringes of, the emergent Sunbelt. However, the trailer phenomenon was not a limited regional phenomenon. Between 1940 and 1960, the numbers of trailers nationwide increased from 170,000 to 750,000.²⁶

While throughout the country trailers became affordable housing options for a number of demographic groups, it was retirees, as well as the advent of the modern trailer park, that ultimately rationalized this form of residential shelter. As the public perception of the trailer evolved, Tampa Bay became ground zero for retirees' embrace of the low-cost lifestyle. Welburn Guernsey opened the area's first retiree-oriented trailer park in 1956, Guernsey City, which featured 10-ft. trailer models.²⁷ Two years earlier, Fred Wilder opened Wilder's Park. For Wilder, the austere tourist camps, many of them lacking convenient and sanitary bathroom facilities, made the trailer lifestyle less desirable and exacerbated its cultural reputation. Seizing the opportunity, Wilder opened

²⁴ Mormino, *Land of Sunshine*, 264-65.

²⁵ See "Inside the State," *FT* 12, no. 5 (September 1969).

²⁶ Irby, "Trailer Trash," 185.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 186.

Wilders' Park in 1954, and rented lots 33 by 52 ft. in size and charged residents \$2/month, which included water and sewer fees. Within three years the park had reached near capacity.²⁸ Differences marked Guernsey City and Wilder's Park. While Guernsey City specifically targeted retirees, Wilder's had no age requirement, even though by 1957 a senior citizen headed ninety percent of the "households."²⁹

Trailer Subdivisions

Around the same time Guernsey and Wilder were opening their retirement trailer parks, real estate developers in Florida began toying with the idea of the trailer subdivision, where residents would own both land and trailer, and where the physical, social, and demographic structure mirrored those of the more traditional subdivisions with detached, single-family homes. South Florida real estate developer Sydney Adler, who later admitted that at the start he "knew nothing about the trailer business," pioneered the trailer subdivision, opening the first one in the country, Trailer Estates, in 1954, on a strip of land on the southernmost periphery of metropolitan Tampa Bay, between Sarasota and Bradenton.³⁰ While Trailer estates targeted both retirees and upwardly mobile young families, Adler keenly understood that retirees comprised the bulk of the state's trailer consumers. As such, Adler and his mobile-home business company used Florida's tried and true methods of residential place marketing. According to Adler, "We set up a mobile home at the Michigan State Fair with an orange tree and

²⁸ Irby, *Trailer Trash*, 181.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 181.

³⁰ Quote in Mormino, *Land of Sunshine*, 266.

palm tree and a close-circuit TV and told people, ‘put yourself in this picture.’”³¹ Trailer Estates featured recreational amenities often associated with more high-end residential living, including a private beach, a marina for 140 boats, a grocery store, shuffleboard courts, and a busy recreational schedule for residents.³²

Functionally, mobile-home subdivisions were akin to the retirement (age-restricted) communities then becoming popular. The built-in social life gave residents the opportunity to make friends. This was particularly important to retirees, especially widows and widowers, as a full recreation schedule not only spurred community formation, it also solved problems that the suburban subdivision, with its private single-family home and spacious yard, could not: boredom and loneliness. Designed to resemble a long-term stay at a resort hotel, a summer camp, or even a subtropical cruise, the social programs, often directed by a full-time, salaried recreational manager, gave retired residents the feel of a permanent vacation.³³

Lots in Trailer Estates initially sold for \$898, and monthly fees were not to exceed \$15 a month. Three years after it opened, advertisements boasted it was the “world’s largest trailer community.” A tribute to its success as a model of the mobile home way-of-life, in the 1990s Trailer Estates was not even one of the top 25 most populous parks in Bradenton.³⁴

³¹ *Orlando Sentinel*, September 6, 1998; Irby, “Trailer Trash,” 186.

³² Andrew Hurley, *Diners, Bowling Alleys, and Trailer Parks: Chasing the American Dream in Postwar Consumer Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 260-262.

³³ *FT 2*, no. 12 (April 1960): 11-12.

³⁴ Mormino, *Land of Sunshine*, 266.

The increasing popularity of mobile homes was not hard to explain. For developers, mobile home parks required fewer land improvements and allowed for more “homes” per square foot. With prices per lot comparable to that of traditional subdivisions, trailer park subdivisions often had a density of ten mobile units per acre. Sales promotion cost less as well, as developers targeted “trailerites” with advertisements in specialty magazines and newspapers.³⁵

For retirees, the trailer not only satisfied the affordability needs of those with low/fixed incomes, it also fulfilled the needs of community—friendship, collective recreation, and eventually, political organization. The Wilder’s Park *Newsletter* offers a window into the daily operations of the park and the lives of its residents. Begun by resident Henry Crossley, in 1956, it tracked the park from its fledgling early days through the late 1970s, after the park had become the epicenter of mobile home political consciousness. From the outset, Wilder’s residents worked to create a thriving community. Potluck dinners, card and bingo games, shuffleboard, religious gatherings, and various themed parties marked the social calendar. The newsletter also acted as the voice of the community. Editorials encouraged residents to show out and support the park’s shuffleboard team, which played in a local league against teams from eight other parks.³⁶ Others announced and welcomed the return or departure of seasonal residents, and delicately policed residence’s behavior. For example, articles reminded residents to “check their roof,” pick up trash, or keep their “front yards” free of clutter and debris.³⁷

³⁵ *FT* 2, no. 12 (April 1960): 11-12.

³⁶ Crossley, Editorial, *WPN*, December 3, 1956, WPC, box 1, folder 1.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Editorial, *WPN*, January 6, 1958, WPC, box 1, folder 3.

Normalization

From the late 1950s through the 1970s, mobile homes and parks became some of the most sought after forms of residential shelter in Tampa Bay. Pinellas County led the way. By 1969, Pinellas County, the most densely populated county in the state, listed 23,032 mobile homes—more than twice that of the runner up, nearby Manatee County.³⁸ St. Petersburg, in the early 1960s, had no less than thirty-three mobile home parks operating.³⁹ To be sure, this was not simply a Tampa Bay, or even Florida, phenomenon. According to the U.S. Commerce Department, in 1969 mobile homes comprised 75 percent of the nation's new dwelling units valued under \$15,000.⁴⁰ Mobile homes proved an affordable alternative in a slumping housing market. A downturn in the real estate market throughout parts of the metropolitan area helped fuel both the industry and the consumer's embrace of mobile homes.

St. Petersburg, the city in Pinellas County with the most mobile homes and mobile home parks, serves as a good illustration. Over a seven-year span in the early 1960s, building permits in the city dropped every year, from 4,371 in 1959 to 1,244 in 1966.⁴¹ Overbuilding in the 1950s had driven up land and building costs, and as the development industry underwent a shift that witnessed giant corporate conglomerates

³⁸ Florida led the nation with 141,942 total mobile homes. It also led in the U.S. in total mobile homes shipped from outside manufacturers into the state, with a 1969 total of 26,012, a forty percent gain from the year before. See "Inside the State," *FT* 12, no. 5 (September 1969).

³⁹ There were eight trailer parks involved in the St. Petersburg Trailer Shuffleboard League. According to Irby, about 12 businesses catering mobile homes existed along a "fourteen-block stretch" of Fourth St. N. See Irby, "Trailer Trash," 196.

⁴⁰ *FT* 12, no. 3 (July 1969): 20.

⁴¹ Irby, "Trailer Trash," 195

supplanting small-time merchant builders, residential trailers filled a void in the affordable housing market.⁴² Factory-made, easily transportable, with the potential for high-density land use, trailers made mobile home living a viable alternative for both land developers and residential consumers.⁴³ Small cities and outlying unincorporated areas overburdened by the infrastructural and resource requirements of a rapidly expanding population welcomed the relatively low-demands of the mobile-home park.

Costs made a big difference. For example, as of April 1970, the average mobile home cost \$6,000, or \$8.75 a square foot. By contrast, the average single family (site-built) home then cost about \$20 per square foot. With continued improvements by manufacturers and more attention to detail by park developers, mobile homes offered more amenities and came in bigger sizes, and parks increasingly resembled the traditional subdivision: paved roads, off-street parking, sidewalks, landscaping, permanent recreation facilities (pools, shuffleboard courts), and laundry centers. According to one industry observer, there was a “definite trend toward country-club living.”⁴⁴

This trend occurred throughout the metropolis. Indeed, while St. Petersburg’s share of mobile homes increased during the 1960s, the county as a whole witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of mobile homes and parks. As of 1971, Pinellas County’s 33,603 mobile homes comprised nearly ten percent of all residential dwellings in the county. Manatee County ranked second in the state, with 15,903. Hillsborough

⁴² “Danger in Florida Land Developments,” *FT* 2, no. 6 (September 1959); “Trailer Homesteading Grows,” *FT* 2, no. 12 (April 1960); “Florida Close-ups,” *FT* 3, no. 3 (July 1960).

⁴³ “The Giant Plunge Into Mobile Homes.”

⁴⁴ “Dramatic Changes in Florida Housing,” *FT* 12, no. 12 (April 1970).

(12,439) and Sarasota (10,435) ranked fifth and seventh respectively, giving the Tampa Bay metropolitan area a total of 72,280 mobile homes.⁴⁵ The city with the most mobile homes, St. Petersburg, watched the percentage jump from 2.4 in 1960 to 11.3 percent in 1970.⁴⁶ Smaller cities, such as Clearwater, Dunedin, and Largo, never matched St. Petersburg in total numbers, but they all surpassed the “Sunshine City” in the number of mobile homes as a percentage of the total dwelling units. Put another way, as of 1970, 18.6 percent of Largo’s dwelling units were mobile homes, compared to 16.7 percent in Dunedin and 13.9 percent in Clearwater.⁴⁷

A similar story played out in metropolitan areas throughout the country. For example, in 1968 alone, according to a survey by the Home Manufacturing Association, mobile homes comprised 86 percent of the new “homes” bought for less than \$12,000. A year later, the U.S. Commerce Department estimated that mobile homes accounted for 75 percent of the new “homes” sold for \$15,000 or under.⁴⁸

Over time the success of the mobile home industry encouraged developers historically associated with traditional housing to get into the action. With the economy entering a stagflation period in the late-1960s, and with labor, land, and building material costs remaining high in urban areas, real estate developers big and small largely

⁴⁵ “The Factory Built Home Becomes Florida’s Newest Growth Industry,” *FT* 14, no. 4, (August 1971).

⁴⁶ Irby, “Trailer Trash,” 195

⁴⁷ Housing statistics found in Karl Grismer, *St. Petersburg and Its People*, 210.

⁴⁸ “The Giant Plunge Into Mobile Homes,” 14.

abandoned the low-income, \$15,000 and under, home market.⁴⁹ The real estate industry fixed its collective gaze more intently on the mobile home sector, which had by the early 1970s begun to look more lucrative to the giant real estate conglomerates erecting massive developments and “new towns” across the state. Everyone, from mortgage companies to industrial firms to truck rental companies, wanted in on the action. Ryder Truck systems president said that, “the mobile home segment is the booming area of the home industry.” Notable developers, such as Deltona, and pioneering shell-home builder, Jim Walter, moved into the mobile-home market.⁵⁰

In 1970, President Richard Nixon spoke to Congress as part of his duties outlined under the 1968 Housing and Urban Development Act. The Urban Development Act, a response to the urban unrest of the latter half of the 1960s, had established a ten-year goal of constructing 2.6 million affordable housing units a year.⁵¹ At the time, mobile homes did not count towards the 2.6-million goal, even though the development of mobile homes and parks had been outpacing that of single-family homes. Many Americans, including housing officials, still saw the mobile home as something other than legitimate, permanent, and desirable housing. Not until 1960 did the U.S. census classify mobile homes along with conventional housing. Before then, mobile homes were in the same

⁴⁹ “The Giant Plunge Into Mobile Homes,” 14.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 14; “J. Walter Now in Mobile Homes, Question is, How Deep to Go?” *FT* 12, no. 7 (November 1969).

⁵¹ Following the 1965 Watts riots, the federal government commissioned two studies, the President’s Commission on Urban Problems and the National Commission on Urban Problems, both of which identified a lack of decent housing as major source of urban instability. While the 1949 Housing Act targeted housing for upwardly mobile Americans, the 1968 Act intended to address the conditions of the poor and working class. See Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 208.

category as houseboats and “converted” railroad cars. When Nixon stepped to the podium, the American housing industry had fallen approximately seventeen percent short of its goal. To overcome this deficiency, the Nixon administration included mobile homes, which accounted for more than 90 percent of the new homes costing under \$15,000 in 1970, congratulating Americans and the shelter industry on surpassing the yearly goal. Nixon saw in the mobile home the answer to the nation’s chronic shortage of low-income and affordable housing. The President ordered the FHA to insure mobile homes and hoped their increased popularity would allow for a reduction in subsidies for the more expensive and exclusive conventional home.⁵²

The federal government’s embrace of mobile homes (FHA and HUD) went along way in promoting a form of housing and lifestyle already on the rise. At the local and state level, however, mobile-owners and dwellers faced a continuing struggle against zoning boards, tax officials, and lingering class bias. But in many instances the mobile home park created an atmosphere amenable to resistance. Communities organized around a common lifestyle—retirement—replete with a never-ending array of social options and obligations, a relatively homogenous class composition, and communication networks such as Wilder’s Park *Newsletter* and shuffleboard (recreation) leagues, fostered solidarity and eventually a movement culture determined to fight against “unfair treatment,” a struggle that began in the confines of St. Petersburg’s Wilder’s Park before spreading throughout the state.⁵³

⁵² Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 208.

⁵³ Crossley, “Trailer Tax Question as of Now,” *WPN*, December 22, 1961, WPC, box 1, folder 6.

“Death and Taxes”

The trouble between mobile home owners and St. Petersburg city officials began in 1961, with the election of Nortney P. Cox to the St. Petersburg City Council. Cox, a small-time builder of inexpensive homes, was no stranger to mobile home living. Like so many other WWII veterans, Cox had moved his family from Decatur, Alabama, to St. Petersburg, in 1946. Behind their car, the Coxes towed an 18 x 6 foot residential trailer. The trip was a disaster. Cox “didn’t know how to pull” the trailer, and it “would break down, and had no brakes.” Whatever padding was left on the brakes gave out at the intersection of Fourth Street and Central Avenue. According to Cox, Frank Trotter, the owner of the All States Trailer park, took them in, and for nearly eight months the Cox family made the park their home. Cox eventually moved his family out of the All States and embarked on a career as a homebuilder. But while Cox may have been able to relate to mobile-home dwellers, his trailer tenure as a young and upwardly mobile veteran put him at odds with retirees, none of who had any desire to relocate to a traditional, detached home. Moreover, the industry, and the lifestyle, had evolved and proliferated since Cox coasted into town on fumes towing a trailer nearly twenty years earlier. As of 1961, St. Petersburg alone had 33 mobile parks, with a total of 1,084 mobile homes, representing 2.4 percent of the total dwelling units in the city.⁵⁴ At the state level, mobile homes accounted for 1.3 percent of the total dwelling units.⁵⁵ These numbers vexed suburban homebuilders and only reinforced the city’s national reputation as “God’s Waiting Room.”

⁵⁴ “Inside the State,” *FT* 12, no. 3 (April 1962): 3.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

The slumping real estate economy also convinced Cox that mobile home residents needed to pay more in taxes. As land and construction costs went up, and as real estate conglomerates pushed merchant builders out of the market, residential development in St. Petersburg slowed throughout the first half of the 1960s. Building permits fell every year between 1959 and 1966. As of late 1965, the Federal Housing Administration had foreclosed and taken possession of more than 3,000 homes metro-wide.⁵⁶ At the same time, despite the flagging home-building industry, St. Petersburg, like cities and towns across the metropolis, embarked on several downtown redevelopment programs, such as Waterfront '56" and "Project '61," intended to stimulate economic development and alter the city's reputation as a place where senior citizens went to die.⁵⁷

It was in this climate of soaring land prices and a flagging residential construction industry that Nortney Cox targeted mobile home owners. For him, squeezing money out of mobile-home dwellers offered a solution to what he saw as interrelated problems. "St. Petersburg and all Florida have become a sort of tax welfare state," he claimed. "Our motto should be: 'Send us all your people who are opposed to paying taxes and we'll take care of them. Nothing is sure but death and taxes,' does not apply here. Only death is sure."⁵⁸

With that attitude, between 1961 and 1965, Cox led what amounted to a one-man crusade to make mobile home residents pay a greater share of the local tax burden. It was, as the *St. Petersburg Times* grudgingly admitted, a burden that disproportionately

⁵⁶ Douglas Doubleday, "Everybody's Rooting for FHA Sales," *SPT*, October 3, 1965.

⁵⁷ Dick Bothwell, "How A City Is Moving to Build a New Image," *SPT*, May 1, 1961; John Durant, "A Face-Lifting For Florida's St. Petersburg," *NYT*, November 10, 1963.

⁵⁸ Charles Patrick, "Cox To Propose Trailer Fee," *SPT*, November 30, 1961.

benefitted mobile home dwellers. According to the *Times*, whereas owners of detached homes paid annual real property taxes attached to the values of the land and structure, the state classified mobile homes as vehicles, and thus owners only paid a yearly license tag fee costing \$10 in the early 1960s and rising to about \$14 by the mid 1970s. Fixed additions, like cabanas and carports, faced real property taxation.⁵⁹

Moreover, as Cox and others pointed out, in design and function, mobile homes had come along since the mid 1940s, when Cox and his family pulled into town towing a residential trailer. To begin with, *mobile* homes had become rather immobile. After arriving to their destination via flatbed truck, and once they had been hooked into the sewer and water systems as well as plugged into the electrical grid, these new, bigger, and more permanent mobile homes rarely moved again. The addition of “fixed” amenities, such as cabanas and carports, made the dwelling units themselves increasingly “fixed.” Even more distressing for people like Cox was the cost of these bigger and less mobile trailers. Some of the biggest, from ten-foot to twelve-foot to double wide, cost upwards of ten to fifteen thousand dollars—much more expensive than the average single-family home.⁶⁰

Cox’s proposals tried to address the numerous problems he saw with mobile-home living. After his first suggestion failed to gain traction, he framed the next one in the language of public health, calling for a \$50 annual “inspection fee” to ensure homes and parks were “habitable and sanitary.” In an era of widespread urban renewal, subtly evoking slums and equating mobile homes with blight was not an altogether half-baked

⁵⁹ Editorial, “The Problem With Immobile Homes,” *SPT*, November 30, 1961.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

plan.⁶¹ The newly elected council member also suggested every mobile home owner be required to take their dwelling out on the highway at least once a month to prove it was in fact mobile. While the proposal did not gain traction, the City Manager sent firemen as inspectors into mobile home parks to see how many homes had wheels.⁶²

Mobile-home park owners and dwellers saw Cox's actions less as the policy concerns and imperatives of city building and resource distribution, and more as an attack on their way of life. The Florida Mobile Home Association (FMHA), a trade group formed in the early 1940s and composed of park operators, manufacturers, dealers, and some residents, initiated the pushed back, calling Cox a "headline hunter whose unfortunate activities can deal a crippling blow to the economy of St. Petersburg and Pinellas County."⁶³ The FHMA pointed to the \$3,600,000 a month mobile home residents spent in the local economy, the \$10.50 annual tag fees, the \$10 for bottled gas, and the various fees for water, garbage collection, among others. All in all, the FHMA claimed, living in a mobile home in Pinellas County cost anywhere from \$40 to \$75 a household—a bigger individual contribution to government coffers than the taxes paid on a house valued at \$10,000.⁶⁴ Henry Crossley, founder of the Wilder's Park newsletter, writing in a letter to the editors of the *Times*, pointed out that after adding to his trailer a cabana, which was taxed as real property, his financial burden for the year totaled \$24.43 (\$10.25

⁶¹ Charles Patrick, "Cox To Propose Trailer Fee," *SPT*, November 30, 1961.

⁶² Crossley, *WPN*, December 22, 1961, WPC, box 1, folder 6.

⁶³ Ibid., "Trailer Tax Question as of Now," *WPN*, December 22, 1961. WPC, box 1, folder 6.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

trailer fee and a \$14.18 tax on the cabana).⁶⁵ While the veracity of trailer immobility was impossible to deny, that mobile home dwellers did not pay their fair share in taxes was more difficult to quantify.

While the two sides squared off for nearly four years, it was Cox who ultimately failed to rally the necessary support, even from fellow council members. Gerald Murphy, speaking to a group of mobile-home residents on behalf of the rest of the city council, pledged not to go “half-coxed” on the issue, but suggested he supported action against mobile homes at the state level.⁶⁶ To be sure, a tax increase on mobile homes could potentially lower the tax burden for others. Murphy had a point that the other council members, and the *Times*, seemed to echo. While they agreed mobile home owners needed to pay more in taxes, and that their “homes” were probably no longer *mobile*, they also understood a substantial tax hike might fuel a mass exodus away from the city. Despite efforts to retool the city’s image and kick-start its flagging economy, few city and county leaders, and even fewer merchants catering to mobile homes and the retirement lifestyle, wanted embittered retirees to leave for greener, or at least cheaper, pastures.⁶⁷ Council member G. Harris Graham told mobile home residents they needed to “fight these issues now before the legislature gets going on them.”⁶⁸

And fight they did. As support for Cox failed to materialize, mobile home owners wasted little time in organizing. Initially, news spread through Wilder’s newsletter.

⁶⁵ Henry Crossley, “Letter to the Editor,” *SPT*, December 5, 1961.

⁶⁶ Patrick, “Cox To Propose Trailer Fee.”

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ “Federation of Mobile Home Owners Report,” *WPN*, January 28, 1963, WPC, box 1, folder 6.

Headlines called on park residents to protect their interests. Word also spread through recreation channels, such as the shuffleboard league. Residents formed a non-profit auxiliary to the FMHA, the Federation of Mobile Home Owners (FMO), which held its first meeting in Wilder's Park on April 2, 1962.⁶⁹ Eventually, the FMO doubled as a fraternal-aide society, offering mobile-blood bank services as part of a larger effort to broaden its support for retired trailer dwellers.⁷⁰

The FMO succeeded on two fronts. First, aided by a united population of angry mobile-home dwellers, the St. Petersburg electorate failed to reelect Cox in 1964, ending the councilmen's unilateral war.⁷¹ Victorious at the local level, the FMO turned its sights to the state legislature. Between the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s, the FMO successfully blocked the imposition of a costly "tie-down" law, defeated an attempt to include mobile homes in the category of entities subjected to the state resort tax, and in 1973 forestalled the inclusion of mobile homes in the Manufactured Housing Act of 1973, which would have increased taxes and regulations on mobile home residents. A "Mobile Home Bill of Rights" protected renters from the unscrupulous activities of landlords, such as eviction for anything other than non-payment of rent or a violation of the law "detrimental to safety and welfare, or of park rules." The law also prohibited renters (and residents) from being forced to pay for certain park improvements as well as for equipment used for

⁶⁹ Irby, "Trailer Trash," 196.

⁷⁰ "Federation and Blood Bank," *WPN*, December 27, 1969, WPC, box 2, folder 1.

⁷¹ Crossley, "The Federation Needs You—You Need the Federation," *WPN*, December 3, 1977, WPC, box, folder 9.

maintenance, while also shielding buyers from unscrupulous dealers, “unfair and deceptive trade practices,” and shoddy construction, among other measures.⁷²

With the FMO acting as one of the most powerful residential lobbying arms in the state, local laws went from punishing mobile-home living, or at least treating it with ambivalence, to protecting and promoting the lifestyle. The details of two ordinances considered by the Clearwater City Council, in 1976, illustrate the ways in which the reputations of mobile homes and their owners and occupiers had changed. The first bill established a “mobile home park board with the power to regulate several facets of mobile home living.” The seven-member board had duties such as:

(1) Give tenants the right to organize and bargain collectively over rent increases, park rules and conditions, leases and other matters (2) investigate complaints, review leases upon request and conduct mediation or binding arbitration proceedings (3) seek a resolution from the commission addressing mobile home problems if the board decides that an emergency situation exists (4) Create a hearing panel to resolve disputes that have reached an impasse in board hearings.⁷³

The second ordinance protected the residents in the event the park owner wanted to sell. Historically, park owners who rented lots to mobile-home owners could sell to a developer at a moment’s notice, or file for a re-zoning, leaving residents in the lurch. But park residents, so they claimed, occupied a unique position because they owned the housing units, just not the land. When park owners abruptly sold the land, residents had to incur the sudden and high cost of relocation and endured exorbitant rent increases in the new parks and owner “abuse.” The ordinance recognized this unique situation and

⁷² Crossley, “The Federation Needs You—You Need the Federation.”

⁷³ Vernon Kirby, “Clearwater to Consider Ordinance to Protect Mobile Home Owners,” *SPT*, May 1, 1976.

mandated park owners to get permission from residents (not sure what percentage) before selling the park. It also put the park owner on the hook for relocation fees, either by buying residents' trailers or paying the moving costs. Nearby cities such as Dunedin had already passed similar ordinances.⁷⁴

The HUD and FHA's embrace of mobile homes, the struggles of the FMO and analogous groups in other cities and states, helped rationalized the mobile home as just one of the legitimate shelter options available to Americans. Mobile homes and mobile-home parks comprised more than ten percent of the residential dwellings in the metropolitan area. Mobile-home owners flexed considerable political muscle at the city, county, and state levels, as represented by the legislative victories won by the FMO. Efforts to re-imagine the civic reputations in cities such as St. Petersburg met with limited success. While new buildings replaced old ones, and new neighborhoods supplanted agricultural lands, the influx of retirees continued, and the expansion of mobile-home living continued apace.⁷⁵

Mobile homes and parks transformed the physical, political, and cultural landscape in postwar Tampa Bay. Retirees and upwardly mobile families found in mobile homes affordable housing and community. Like many of the traditional suburban subdivisions, mobile homes and parks featured built-in amenities and recreational and commercial facilities. Unlike many subdivisions with detached, single-family housing, mobile home parks often featured built-in social structures and a population committed to

⁷⁴ Kirby, "Clearwater to Consider Ordinance to Protect Mobile Home Owners," *SPT*, May 1, 1976.

⁷⁵ Arthur D. Bernhardt, et al., *Structure, Operation, Performance, and Development Trends of the Mobile Home Industry VI*, Department of Housing and Urban Development, July 15, 1975.

community formation. Wilder's and others offered a full schedule of recreational activities, from weekly potluck dinners, to shuffleboard tournaments, to card games and arts-and-craft nights.

A consistent influx of retirees fueled the steady proliferation of amenity-rich mobile-home parks. By the early 1980s, there were more than 80,000 mobile homes in the metropolitan area, accounting for roughly ten percent of all of the housing units.⁷⁶ The lifestyle created new commercial markets targeting old age and trailer living. Out of the mobile-home community and solidarity over anti-taxation, moreover, came political consciousness oriented around the special residential needs of working-class retirement. While mobile homes and parks became the most popular and affordable residential options in Tampa Bay, developers simultaneously pioneered other forms of retirement living: the age-restricted community and the condominium.

The following sections explore the metropolitan histories of these relatively novel forms of residential shelter.

II. Age-Restricted Retirement Communities

The advent of the age-restricted retirement community coincided with emergence and popularization of mobile homes and condominiums. Along with mobile home parks and condominiums, retirement communities embodied the new era of residential development and ultimately became the template for the exclusive and comprehensively planned gated communities of the 1980s and 1990s.

⁷⁶ Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council, *Regional Housing Plan Guide*, Revised, December, 1982.

In terms of planning and property ownership, the retirement community of Sun City Center utilized the tools of common ownership and community-association governance. Like condominiums and the higher-end trailer park subdivisions, moreover, they eventually featured a bevy of recreational and leisure amenities that specifically catered to a demographic with lots of time on its hands.⁷⁷

In terms of function and design, Webb's Sun City Center resembled in significant ways the all-black residential village to its north. Built on the metropolitan fringe, in an area eventually surrounded by subdivisions and commercial complexes, Sun City Center offered residents a complete residential experience that included single-family homes, leisure and recreational amenities, and commercial facilities. Like the founders of Progress Village, moreover, Webb envisioned a community built on the principles of demographic homogeneity and social engineering. But unlike its more controversial neighbor, Sun City Center established a blueprint later followed by other developers of retirement communities, condominium builders, and eventually, exclusive gated neighborhoods. Most notably, it introduced legal "age-restrictions" as a means of controlling the residential experience and ensuring demographic homogeneity. Ironically, as racial discrimination in housing became illegal, segregating the residential landscape along the lines of age became perfectly acceptable, and lawful, for developers and HOAs. The elderly and predominantly white retirees that relocated to the metropolitan area's most popular retirement community, Sun City Center, did not simply buy a residential dwelling in a master-planned subdivision, they invested their money into a complete residential experience that promised to satisfy the communal and emotional and

⁷⁷ Trolander, *From Sun City to the Villages*, 2.

recreational needs of its residents.⁷⁸ These communities, moreover, reflected trends in residential living that proliferated throughout the metropolitan Sunbelt.

Sun City Center

On 12,000 acres of ranchland about twenty miles south of Progress Village, Dell Webb, and his company, Dell Webb Inc., pioneered the age-restricted retirement community in Tampa Bay. In terms of function and design, Webb's Sun City Center resembled in significant ways the all-black residential village to its north. Built on the metropolitan fringe, in an area eventually surrounded by subdivisions and commercial complexes, Sun City Center offered residents a complete residential experience that included single-family homes, leisure and recreational amenities, and commercial facilities. Like the founders of Progress Village, moreover, Webb envisioned a community built on the principles of demographic homogeneity and social engineering. But unlike its more controversial neighbor, Sun City Center established a blueprint later followed by other developers of retirement communities, condominium builders, and eventually, exclusive gated neighborhoods.

Webb arrived in Tampa Bay a seasoned designer and developer of hotels in Las Vegas and later the original age-restricted Sun City, in Arizona, built in the late-1950s.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Historian Judith has argued the advent of age-restricted has two major consequences for residential living: popularized the golf-course community and served as type of social engineering. Variations on the age-restricted retirement community sprouted throughout the South and Southwest. Trolander provides excellent overviews of some of the more famous developers and their communities, including Ross Cortese and his numerous retirement communities in California and Florida. See Trolander, *From Sun City to the Villages*, 2.

⁷⁹ Findlay, *Magic Lands*, 171.

The company purchased 12,000 acres of cattle ranch along the Little Manatee River in southern Hillsborough County, overlapping the towns of Ruskin and Wimauma, tucked between U.S. highways 41 and 301.⁸⁰

Buying the property proved easier than naming the new development. Sun City, the name of the developer's Arizona project, seemed a perfect fit for a retirement center in the "Sunshine State." But after purchasing more than 1,200 acres in 1960, the project began inauspiciously when the name "Sun City" stirred controversy. The problem was that a nearby town already had the name. Nearly forty years earlier, in 1925, at the height of the Florida land boom, a man by the name of H.C. Swearington relocated to Florida and attempted to develop a "moving picture city"—a "Hollywood South"—along the banks of the Little Manatee River.⁸¹ While Swearington's dream never materialized, the little town that had emerged went by the name Sun City, and when Webb arrived, it refused to give up its name. Sun City, in the years since it's founding, had earned a reputation as a "chrysanthemum center," and residents felt that recognition would suffer if Webb had his way. Instead, Webb settled on the name Sun City Center (SCC).⁸² Two similarly named places just down the road from each other would be a source of confusion for years to come. Later, as SCC gained popularity and attracted more residents, visitors and potential buyers mixed-up the two communities. Moreover, before the interstate arrived, highway 301 was the only route out of Tampa to SCC. On more

⁸⁰ Trolander, *From Sun City to the Villages*, 19.

⁸¹ For more on the "Second Florida Land Boom," see the first chapter of this study. Also see Mormino, *Land of Sunshine*, 45.

⁸² Francis Fitzgerald, "A Reporter at Large," *The New Yorker*, April 25, 1983, 70.

than a few occasions, drivers reached the original Sun City only to turn back frustrated and disappointed.⁸³

The twelve thousand acres gave Webb plenty of space to realize his vision of an exclusive and amenity-rich subdivision that catered only to middle-class retirees. The master plan called for detached single-family homes that came in one of eighteen different designs, commercial facilities, and recreational amenities that included a golf course, swimming pool, and clubhouse—all of which the developers finished before the first residents arrived in August 1962. “There’s no point in trying to sell futures to a guy who is 65 years old,” explained Thomas Breen, the vice-president of the Webb Corporation.⁸⁴ What he would sell them was a residential experience geared towards a new, post-professional demographic. Webb employed the term “active-adult” to suggest a dynamic and fulfilling lifestyle. For the uninitiated, sales agents, rechristened “retirement counselors,” were there to help show a prospective buyer around, or perhaps show a new resident to the arts and crafts room, renamed the “room of self expression.”⁸⁵

From its inception until the late-1960s, SCC evolved into a common interest development not too unlike the condominium. The project’s marketing juggled the tensions between individualism and community. Sales brochures touted the “independence of having your very own town.” But it was a “collective” independence

⁸³ Dave McCally, “Sun City Center: Something New Under the Sun for Retirees,” *Tampa Bay History* 14, no. 1 (Spring/Summer, 1992).

⁸⁴ Advertisement, “Dell Webb’s Sun City Center,” *Tampa Tribune*, December 31, 1961; “A Place in the Sun,” *Time* 80, issue 5, August 31, 1962.

⁸⁵ “Sun City Center. . . Three Years Later,” *SPT*, January 10, 1965.

“reserved exclusively for folks lucky enough to be fifty or more, and their adult partners.”⁸⁶

Like the condominium, life in SCC entailed compulsory membership in the community association, which later became a legally recognized homeowner association that managed the common areas and enforced the restrictive covenants, of which the most important was the age restriction.⁸⁷ Together the HOA and the amenities of an “active-adult” lifestyle offered a built-in social structure that nurtured community formation and provided a vehicle for the resolution of homeowner discontent. There were numerous times in the decades after SCC opened that the HOA protested incidents of developer deception and mismanagement and, on one particular occasion, successfully shut down the construction of aesthetically incongruous homes nearby.⁸⁸

The fortunes of SCC tracked closely the cyclical real estate economy and the pace of retiree in-migration to the metropolitan area. Increased competition from other retirement communities, many of them in more centrally located areas, slowed the community’s growth. But by the early 1970s, SCC contained nearly 2,500 residents and had blossomed into a thriving and popular community.⁸⁹ A 1973 piece in *Time* magazine portrayed SCC, with its street signs cautioning motorists to “drive slowly, grandparents playing,” as a haven of senior-citizen sexuality and promiscuity.⁹⁰ A woman interviewed

⁸⁶ “Sun City Center. . . Three Years Later,” *SPT*, January 10, 1965.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Mark Gale, “Sun City Residents Firm in multi-family Opposition,” *Tampa Tribune*, June 23, 1973.

⁸⁹ “The ‘70’s Could Be a Tampa Decade” *FT* 15, no. 5 (September 1972).

⁹⁰ “Romance and the Aged,” *Time* 101 (June 4, 1973): 50.

in the article explained that she and her boyfriend considered SCC a residential “utopia.”⁹¹

Echoing that sentiment in her 1983 ethnographic profile, journalist Francis Fitzgerald called Sun City Center a “world unto itself.”⁹² When Fitzgerald embarked on her investigation of what she called the “visionary communities remaking the American dream,” SCC featured a supermarket, four restaurants, multiple banks and S&Ls, a brokerage firm, five churches, and a post office. Visitors stayed in the Sun City Inn. While the bulk of the commercial facilities lined state highway 301, the stores catering to SCC residents tended to be more expensive and thus beyond the economic reach of residents of nearby communities, many of whom were Mexican migrant farmworkers and SCC employees.⁹³ This maintained an air of exclusivity and privacy, even though such stores were open to anyone who could afford to shop in them.

As a “world unto itself,” SCC eventually boasted, like the more exclusive mobile-home parks and condominium complexes, extensive recreational options and facilities, as well as a built-in social life. The Town Hall recreation center, with its white columned buildings and “low red-tiled roofs,” featured shuffleboard courts, lawn bowling greens, and a swimming pool. A nearby building boasted an indoor pool, exercise room, billiard room, card room, and areas for arts and crafts and a wood shop.⁹⁴

⁹¹ “Romance and the Aged,” *Time* 101 (June 4, 1973): 50.

⁹² Francis Fitzgerald, *Cities on a Hill: A Brilliant Exploration of Visionary Communities Remaking the American Dream* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 215.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 215.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 215.

A professional social manager kept residents busy with a full schedule of activities. Aside from arts and crafts projects such as pottery and weaving and decoupage, residents attended regularly scheduled dances and social gatherings held in the auditorium. According to Bess Melvin, a resident and part-time public relations worker for SCC's management company:

Sun City Center isn't like the stereotypes of a retirement community. The usual thought is that you lose your usefulness. You sit back and rock in your rocking chair, and life slows to a stop. But the people here aren't looking for that. Sun City Center has a hundred and thirty clubs and activities. We've got a stamp club, a poetry club, a softball club, a garden club—I could go on and on and on—as well as active branches of the Rotary, the Kiwanis, the Women's Club, and that sort of thing. The residents form their own clubs and a Civic Association, so if you've got a particular talent or social concern you can always find an opportunity to develop it. Many people take up painting, and we have some really fine artists here.⁹⁵

By the time Fitzgerald published her ethnographic portrait of SCC, the age-restricted retirement community was only one of many residential options for elderly retirees. “On Top of the World,” in Clearwater, offered retirees the same amenities but in a more urban and centrally located setting.⁹⁶ Apartment and condominium complexes also targeted the age-restricted, “active-lifestyle” market. Like that of the shelter industry more generally, overbuilding eventually glutted the market for age-restricted retirement communities.⁹⁷ At the same time, healthcare companies and hospitals got in on the action.

⁹⁵ Melvin quotes in Fitzgerald, *Cities on a Hill*, 216.

⁹⁶ Trolander, *From Sun City to the Villages*, 31.

⁹⁷ Bernice Stengle, “As More Retirees Find They Can't Afford to Live in Posh Communities, Developers Are Worried s Retirement Housing Tumbles,” *SPT*, January 30, 1989.

For example, in 1989, St. Joseph's hospital in Tampa purchased Knox Village and turned it into a combined retirement community and assisted-living facility.⁹⁸

Like Fitzgerald's *Cities on a Hill*, historians see SCC and its imitators as a radical break from the past in terms of community design, function, and composition. John Findley has said Sun City Arizona "redefined retirement."⁹⁹ However, this study has shown that the model for Sun City Center first emerged at the southern tip of the Pinellas Peninsula. Indeed, Dell Webb and his associates built a privatized and legally age-restricted version of St. Petersburg. Like the "Sunshine City," SCC sold a lifestyle, yet the private exclusivity created a more controlled and managed built and social environment. Residents in SCC did not simply buy a house in a resort-style city; they invested in a residential experience.

"Condomania"¹⁰⁰

In the 1977 novel *Condominium*, John D. MacDonald tells the story of the Golden Sands condominium development, situated somewhere just south of metropolitan Tampa Bay, overlooking the Gulf of Mexico.¹⁰¹ The residents all seem to be enjoying the "Florida Dream" when word leaks that another developer has planned to build a

⁹⁸ Stengle, "As More Retirees Find They Can't Afford to Live in Posh Communities, Developers Are Worried s Retirement Housing Tumbles."

⁹⁹ Findlay, *Magic Lands*, 174.

¹⁰⁰ *Florida Trend* magazine coined the term in an article entitled "Condomania—The Craze Intensifies," *FT*, 15, no. 6 (October 1972): 36.

¹⁰¹ John D. McDondald, *Condominium* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippencot and Co., 1977), 12. For more on MacDonald, see Jack E. Davis, "Sharp Prose for Green: John D. MacDonald and the First Ecological Novel," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 87, no. 4 (Spring 2009): 484-508.

condominium complex on a stretch of land separating Golden Sands from the beach—a sliver of property most of the Golden Sands residents had been told was a right-of-way and would never be developed.¹⁰² The specter of a new complex sent waves of panic throughout Golden Sands. What about the view of the white-sand beach, the incandescent salt water lapping the shore, and the peace of mind such a leisurely lifestyle entailed? What about the upcoming months of obstreperous construction and the addition of hundreds if not thousands of more people? The residents of Golden Sands had been sold a bill of goods, and while they knew it, there was little they could do once they had signed a contract to buy the condo unit.¹⁰³

Later in the book, as a hurricane bears down on the Florida Gulf Coast, efforts to block the new development took a backseat to evacuation efforts. The threat of losing the waterfront residential experience faded as total destruction loomed overhead. When the storm finally made landfall, Golden Sands crumbled amid the swirling winds and pounding rain. For the residents, it was the end of a hellish residential experience marked by unscrupulous real estate operations, deceptive advertising, shoddy construction, and inclement weather—the nightmarish underbelly of the postwar retirement dream.

McDonald, a former Tampa Bay resident best known for his series of Travis McGhee mystery novels, was one of the first to produce a trenchant critique of the condominium form of property ownership and the lifestyle it ostensibly entailed. *Condominium* captures the mood of many Americans in a reactionary moment. The long postwar boom had crested, and the political-economic and social malaise of the mid-

¹⁰² Arsenault, “Is there a Florida Dream?”

¹⁰³ MacDonald, *Condominium*, 105.

1970s had begun to take its toll on the Florida retirement dream. In-migration to the state dropped off in the mid 1970s.¹⁰⁴ In metropolitan areas like Tampa Bay, construction slowed. The number of housing starts dropped, as did the values of building permits.¹⁰⁵ Economic indexes told only part of the story. Residential property owners faced numerous “crises” that threatened to upend their plans, from potable water shortages to air and water pollution. Condominium dwellers, meanwhile, experienced a host of problems that reflected the general mood of uneasiness.

But the story of the condominium begins more than a decade earlier, in the early 1960s, when the metropolitan real estate economy entered its first significant downturn since the slight dip immediately after the WWII. As this section details, beginning in the 1960s, the condominium changed the ways Americans owned property, retired, and created and experienced community. Rising “mushroom-like,” as one publication observed, almost out of nowhere, condominiums and condominium complexes proliferated upwards and across the metropolitan landscape.¹⁰⁶ In so doing, the condominium popularized a new form of collective property ownership—the common interest development— and pseudo-private community government, in the form of some type of homeowner association (HOA).

¹⁰⁴ “Growth Spurt Continues in Southwest Florida,” *FT* 22, no. 12, April 1980.

¹⁰⁵ “Waiting for the Downturn,” *FT* 22, no. 9 (January 1980).

¹⁰⁶ *FT* 13, no 6, October 1970)

Condominiums catered to a variety of demographics, but especially retirees, whether seasonal “snowbirds” or fulltime residents.¹⁰⁷ Most condominium complexes, moreover, mirrored and catalyzed the political fragmentation of the modern metropolis. Condominium associations functioned as pseudo-private governments that not only oversaw the operations of the CID but also managed the behavior of individual residents. The condo association—and the community it represented (even if manufactured)—became one more layer in the hierarchy of metropolitan political organization.¹⁰⁸

The condominium form of ownership was the latest trend in a long history of collective limitations on individual private property. Along with age-restricted retirement communities, it paved the way for common interest developments (CIDs) of single-family homes and homeowner associations for non-retirees.

Condominiums *as physical structures* also transformed the built environment. While developers built condominiums of many different shapes and sizes across the metropolis, the waterfront high-rise has come to dominate popular imagination. Along the Gulf Beaches extending between Northern Pinellas (Tarpon Springs) and Pinellas Point (St. Petersburg), condos formed a multi-story concrete buffer. Filling up vertically vacant space was not the only “natural” manipulation. Condominiums, and waterfront property more generally, were vulnerable to various natural “problems,” such as sand erosion and storms. Throughout the postwar era, millions of dollars in local, state, and federal money went towards seafloor dredging and filling, beach re-nourishment, and

¹⁰⁷ Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council, *Regional Housing Plan Guide*. Revised, December 1982, 12.

¹⁰⁸ Chapter four details in greater depth the common interest development, homeowners associations, and community development districts.

sea-wall construction. This transformation of the residential built environment signified many of the major cultural, political, and spatial changes occurring throughout the postwar era, and oriented the landscape toward real estate consumption, leisure, and retirement.

“Condominio”

When in 1958 Sydney Colen built the first condominium in Florida, the Oaks in Clearwater, he had no idea he was pioneering what would become one of the most popular modes of residential living conceived in the postwar era.¹⁰⁹ He did not even know how to pronounce the word condominium. For Colen, a developer of retirement communities and residential subdivisions, the Oaks represented his first foray into constructing multi-family residential units. By the late-1950s, real-estate conglomerates had begun to push small merchant-builders out of the market, and Colen saw a future in more modest, higher density developments.¹¹⁰

After a little research, he decided against building a cooperative apartment, known as the co-op, then the most common form of apartment living. The co-op first gained traction in eighteenth-century Manhattan, where a number of affluent families tested the waters of collective ownership.¹¹¹ Property ownership in a cooperative apartment took an unusual form. Residents in an apartment did not own an individual

¹⁰⁹ “Clearview Oaks Co-operative Apartments,” *SPT*, March 30, 1963; Elizabeth Whitney, “Communal Housing,” *SPT*, August 14, 1966; The first condominium in the United States opened in New York in 1881. Lasner, *The High Life*, 178.

¹¹⁰ Elizabeth Whitney, “Communal Housing,” *SPT*, August 14, 1966.

¹¹¹ Lasner, *The High Life*, 24.

unit. Instead, residents owned stock in a corporation that owned the building, including all of the units and the common areas. Individuals received a proprietary lease on a particular unit.¹¹² While the benefits of co-op living were many, the form of ownership later frustrated builders and buyers alike.

The popularity of cooperative apartments rose and fell until after WWII, when residential developers in the South and Southwest began targeting a new and burgeoning demographic, the elderly retiree. Historians credit Ross Cortese with pioneering the cooperative-retirement lifestyle in the postwar era. Cortese accurately sensed that retirees who had relocated from the cities of the Midwest and Northeast would embrace the co-op's affordability and inexpensive upkeep.

The unscrupulous practices of co-op developers in the 1920s had left a sour taste in Colen's mouth (and, he felt, in the mouth's of consumers) and, to be sure, the term "cooperative" evoked images of Soviet collectivism and violent property appropriation. Perhaps, then, it only made sense that Colen unwittingly helped launch a new era in American property ownership—one with deep roots in republican democracy.

Indeed, the condominium dates back nearly 2,500 years, to the Romans. In Latin, the name "condominium" means "joint ownership."¹¹³ Yet not until the nineteenth century, in the crowded urban areas of London and Paris, did the condo form of ownership reemerge in the modern era. Despite its popularity abroad, at the end of WWII most American real estate developers had never heard of the condominium.

¹¹² Lasner, *The High Life*, 178.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 178.

When the cost of land and construction rose in the late-1950s, real estate developers in Florida sought ways to do more with less. The builders of cooperative apartments and other types of multi-family dwellings found it on the islands of Hawaii and Puerto Rico, where, like the Tampa Bay area, salable real estate came at a premium. It was Puerto Rico's 1958 Horizontal Property Act that first gained the attention of Florida developer Brown L. Whatley.¹¹⁴ For Whatley, the act contained a legal instrument known as "condominio" that promised to revolutionize cooperative living and cultural ideas about collectively owned private property.

Indeed, "condominio" solved a problem with property ownership that had plagued cooperative living since its inception. Under traditional common law, the boundaries of real property extended vertically into the ground and upwards into the sky as far as the eye could see. Therefore, multi-story cooperative apartment buildings with separate residential units stacked atop each other proved legally problematic. Owners of apartment coops did not own their individual units. Instead, they owned stock in a corporation that owned the apartment building and common areas, and received a "proprietary lease" for an individual unit.¹¹⁵

By contrast, "condominio" provided for individual ownership of a specific unit while retaining the legal concept of "tenancy in common." It did this by splitting property into multiple "fees," which effectively allowed for the enclosure, and subsequent mortgaging, of a block of air. As Matthew Lasner has explained, this arrangement gave

¹¹⁴ Brown L. Whatley, "Condominium in Florida," *FT* 5, no. 5 (September 1962).

¹¹⁵ Whatley, "Condominium in Florida."

“multiple parties” the ability to “own...distinct” and “undivided (and undividable) shares of a single property.”¹¹⁶

While Colen may have built and sold the state’s first condominium, it was Brown, a prominent Florida mortgage lender and one-time president of the Mortgage Bankers Association, who introduced the concept of “condominio” to the American mainland. Along with a group of Florida developers, Whatley spent several years lobbying the Florida legislature and pressuring congress to authorize a version of “condominio” in the United States.

The condominium was, at least on the surface, a better investment. Owners held title to a specific unit, which could serve as mortgage collateral while also making the unit more salable.¹¹⁷ Moreover, proof of ownership in the form of a deed or title carried an emotional satisfaction for the buyer and a level of legitimacy with insurers and lending institutions that a proprietary lease could never do.¹¹⁸ A condominium association functioned the same way as a homeowner association. Members elected a board, paid monthly or yearly dues, and owned the common areas, from recreation facilities to elevators and hallways. The condo association gave residents a form of instant, non-optional community.¹¹⁹ But as discussed later, it also provided a strong sense of local control, however illusory, enriching the residential experience, especially for retirees new to the area and who had not found their bearings.

¹¹⁶ Lasner, *High Life*, 178.

¹¹⁷ “What’s Happening in Florida Real Estate?” *FT* 7, no. 2 (June 1964): 22.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹¹⁹ McKenzie, *Privatopia*, 20.

The exclusivity of the condo and the co-op was one of the main attractions for residents, especially for retirees. But other related factors drew people in. The condo signified a particular lifestyle—one of leisure and recreation. After years of hard work, raising children, and paying their dues in the Midwest and Northeast, retirees relocated to Florida to relax and enjoy their post-work and post-parenting life. No more lawns to mow. No more shoveling snow in the mornings to unstick your car. If anything went wrong, paid professionals stepped in and repaired and maintained the buildings and commonly owned grounds.

Efforts paid off in 1961, when Congress included a special section for condominiums in the Housing Act of 1961, extending FHA insurance to the new legal mode of shelter ownership. It was not until two years later, however, that Florida passed the enabling legislation (Condominium Act of 1963) that launched a new era in residential housing.¹²⁰ Four more years later, the state extended its \$5,000 homeowner exemption to condominium owners.¹²¹ Together, these two legislative initiatives made condominiums one of the most popular forms of residential housing throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

Florida's enabling legislation, together with FHA mortgage insurance, catalyzed an explosion in condominium development.¹²² While co-ops remained popular, condominiums soon surpassed it in quantity and numbers of residents. The epicenter of

¹²⁰ The Florida Condominium Act of 1963 was established “as enabling legislation designed to give statutory recognition to air right conveyances.” Gary A. Poliakoff, “The Florida Condominium Act,” *Nova Law Review* 16, no. 1 (1991): 476.

¹²¹ “Condominiums—a New Lifestyle,” *FT* 13, no. 6 (October 1970).

¹²² “Condomania—The Craze Intensifies,” *FT* 15, no. 6 (October 1972): 36.

the state's condo construction, indeed the nation's, was the counties of Southeast Florida. Dade and Palm Beach counties combined—home to resort-vacation-retirement cities such as Miami, Miami Beach, Fort Lauderdale, and West Palm Beach, and known by boosters as the Gold Coast—had a total of 106,000 condo units by the start of the 1970s. In 1971 alone, when the condo craze hit its peak, 23,000 units entered the regional market. The area's condominium growth earned it the title “Condo Coast.”¹²³

Condominium development in West-Central Florida initially lagged behind the Florida Gold Coast. With cheaper costs for land and building materials, and with mobile homes providing an affordable and low-maintenance alternative to stand-alone homes, Tampa Bay developers were slow to embrace the condominium.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, the residential real estate industry made up for lost time, and by the end of the 1960s condominiums had become a significant part of Tampa Bay's residential built environment. At the dawn of the 1970s, Florida led the nation with approximately 1,250 condos and 50,000 apartments, and in Tampa Bay the condominium outpaced all other forms of residential development.¹²⁵ Pinellas County, with its miles of intra-coastal and gulf frontage, experienced the bulk of the area's condominium growth. A 1971 FHA study of condominium complexes (with five or more units) found approximately 3,685 condos (2,718 of them sold), compared with 2,447 single-family dwellings (2,290 sold) built that year.¹²⁶

¹²³ “Dramatic Changes in Florida Housing.”

¹²⁴ “Multi-Family Housing Need Far Exceeds Building Pace,” *FT* 13, no. 6 (October 1970).

¹²⁵ “Condominiums—a New Lifestyle,” *FT* 13, no. 6 (October 1970).

Developers built condominiums in many shapes and sizes and targeted different consumer demographics throughout metropolitan Tampa Bay. Condominiums generally differed along the lines of class, geography, and lifestyle, elements that often but not always intersected. Waterfront condos, whether on the Gulf coast or inter-coastal waterways, catered to the beach-going and boating types—the retiree described in *Condominium*. The condominium-building spree, accompanied by an increase in apartments and hotels, occurred along the entire Pinellas Gulf coast, replacing an older era of beach shanties and shacks. Along with the many single-family mansions going up, the physical transformations along the coast reflected the shifts in the ways Americans lived and experienced community. On Clearwater Beach, the twelve-story Continental Towers, with condos and apartments units, and featuring a bevy of amenities, including a sauna, card room, gym, library, and pool, overlooked the Gulf and became the tallest building on the barrier island.¹²⁷ At the exclusive Sea Castle condominiums, built in 1976, a waterfront development with five “imaginative” floor plans to choose from, with units ranging in size from 740 to 1,594 sq. feet, many with “beautiful views” of “magnificent sunsets” and a bevy of other amenities, residents paid no less than \$23,500 for a unit.¹²⁸ The U.S. Steel Corporation moved into the shelter business and by building thousands of condominium units in high-rise structures, virtually “colonized” a strip of barrier islands known as Sand Key, just south of Clearwater Beach.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ “Condos Set the Pace in Pinellas Building,” *FT* 14, no. 2 (July 1971).

¹²⁷ “Clearwater Beach Waterfront Booming,” *FT* 13, no. 3 (July 1970).

¹²⁸ “Advertisement,” *SPT*, April 12, 1976.

While waterfront condos and those on the beach attracted affluent retirees, as well as those keen on boating and beach going, mid- and low-rise “suburban” complexes, many of them “handsome, ultra-modern and individualistic dwellings,” populated the interior.¹³⁰ Imperial Homes Corp. built a \$2 million condominium “village” in Clearwater consisting of 122 units on seven acres. The units ranged in price from \$16,000 to \$22,500.¹³¹ The sprawling complexes largely populated by elderly retirees generally featured more built-in lifestyle options. Clearwater’s Cove Cay contained an 18-hole golf course, described in promotional literature as “reminiscent of the famed Pebble Beach course in California.”¹³² Developers in Tarpon Springs, a small town in northern Pinellas County well known for its high number of Greek inhabitants, built Innisbrook, a “plush paradise for golfers,” which in addition to an 18-hole gold course, included a private beach, swimming pool, multiple lakes, and 1,200 low-rise and decentralized condominium units.¹³³ A project known as Five Towns was the first condominium complex to offer a medical clinic and cafeteria that catered to the diet of senior citizens.¹³⁴ Set in a suburban section of north St. Petersburg, Five Towns featured eight

¹²⁹ “Dramatic Changes in Florida Housing”; Fred W. Wright Jr., “Gulf Beaches Deserve the Eyes of the Innocent,” *SPT*, April 12, 1976.

¹³⁰ Jean Miller ““Little House on the Water Will Cost a Pretty Penny,” *SPT*, April 12, 1976.

¹³¹ *FT* 14, no. 9 (February 1972).

¹³² *FT* 15, no. 6 (October 1972): 42.

¹³³ “Dramatic Changes in Florida Housing.”

¹³⁴ *FT* 15, no. 6 (October 1972): 42.

buildings and units ranging from \$18,995 (one bedroom, one bath) to \$36,395 (two bedrooms, two bath).¹³⁵

As they did on the Gulf beaches, condominiums proved an ideal form of shelter for urban downtowns, where land values had skyrocketed since the 1960s and where the need for high-density housing was greatest. Along with new commercial high-rises, condominiums became familiar sites in the metropolitan area's numerous downtowns, from St. Petersburg to Clearwater to Tampa. For example, in St. Petersburg, Bayfront Tower Inc., a 29-story complex, valued at \$12.8 million, contained 260 residential units.¹³⁶ It offered exclusive shelter and community in a downtown setting. With 24-hour security, a heated pool, fitness club, billiard room, restaurant and bar, and valet parking, Bayfront Tower was the ultimate in luxury living. A one-bedroom and one and a half bath unit in 1976 cost \$50k while a three-bedroom, three-bath unit fetched upwards of \$167k.¹³⁷ In Tampa, the Sunshine State Service Corp., a wholly owned subsidiary of First Federal Savings and Loan, spent \$3.3 million to build on two nine-story towers with a total of 56 luxury condominium units.¹³⁸ By the late-1970s, on the beaches lining Pinellas County, older waterfront condos went for \$120k and up, while interior units averaged \$25k. On St. Petersburg Beach, in a condo complex without views of the Gulf, costs ranged from \$48k for a standard unit to \$100k for a penthouse.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Miller, "“Little House on the Water Will Cost a Pretty Penny.”"

¹³⁶ "Loan Approved For 29-story St. Pete Condo," *FT* 14, no 2 (July 1971: 74.

¹³⁷ Ibid; Miller, "“Little House on the Water Will Cost a Pretty Penny.”"

¹³⁸ "Loan Approved For 29-Story St. Pete Condo," 74.

¹³⁹ Miller, "“Little House on the Water’ Will Cost a Pretty Penny.”"

Despite their popularity among developers and buyers, like many new consumer products, the condominium form of property ownership entailed pitfalls and problems, most which did not take long to surface. As the residents of the fictional Golden Sands experienced shortly after arriving, condominium ownership did not always live up to the promises found in the glossy promotional brochures. Hidden fees vexed buyers on fixed incomes. Shoddy construction frustrated residents and made their dwellings vulnerable to the Gulf Coast's predictably violent storms.

Redolent of the real estate scams of the 1920s and 1950s, abuses by developers ran rampant over an ill-informed consumer base. But in the heady days of "condomania," the principle of caveat emptor—"buyer beware"—shielded all but the worst offenders. While state agencies offered some protection for buyers of traditional homes, the condominium industry was, until the mid-1970s, a wild and wooly residential frontier.¹⁴⁰

Like the story of the failed Trump Tower project discussed earlier, many developers took down payments and, without lifting a hammer, absconded with the deposit, never to be heard from again. Other times, purchasers fell victim to "gross misrepresentation" in marketing and advertising, and arrived to find the product they had purchased looked nothing like the artistic and architectural renditions they had seen. In other cases, unwitting retirees had already moved into their new units before learning they had been bamboozled. For example, developers often "withheld" crucial documents, such as the declaration of condominium and bylaws, covenants, and/or management contracts, until residents had signed purchase agreements.¹⁴¹ Often buried within these

¹⁴⁰ Elizabeth Whitney, "Condominium Boom Finds Few Controls," *SPT*, April 7, 1969.

¹⁴¹ Whitney, "Condominium Boom Finds Few Controls."

documents were escalation clauses, expensive maintenance contracts, and deceptive land leases.

Many of the problems were rooted in the new legal relationships created by condos and condo associations. Because developers did not necessarily make substantial profits on the building and selling units—in many cases, the federal government classified the condominium developer as a dealer, and therefore the government taxed the profits of each unit, usually at a higher rate than other forms of income—they created legal instruments such as the “leasehold estate” and the recreation and maintenance contracts with escalation clauses to squeeze profits out of condominiums. A “leasehold estate” was a land lease, usually for 99 years, to be paid by the condo association members (unit owners), in addition to monthly maintenance and/or recreation fees. Although anticipated by buyers, maintenance and recreation fees created a bevy of frustrations among condo owners. Complaints flooded into the state about “token” recreation facilities hardly big enough to accommodate the residents. What is more, many of these recreation and maintenance fees contained escalation clauses, pegging residents’ monthly dues to inflation. Such clauses became a serious point of contention when the economy began a slow dive in the mid-1970s. In other cases, developers, or the entity that held the management/recreation lease, had the right to sell it for a profit, leaving the fund unable to cover regular maintenance costs. Condominium buyers, many living on fixed incomes, felt tricked and taken advantage of.¹⁴²

As the popularity of condominiums spread, so too did word about the rampant deception on the part of developers. Major newspapers and magazines, such as the *New*

¹⁴² Whitney, “Condominium Boom Finds Few Controls.”

York Times, *U.S. News and World Report*, *Reader's Digest*, and television programs such as *60 Minutes*, ran stinging investigative reports about the industries unregulated abuses. *St. Petersburg Times* journalist Elizabeth Whitney tirelessly aired the industry's dirty secrets and called on the state to safeguard residential consumers. Lawsuits filed by angry condo association members wound through the state's weak regulatory apparatus.¹⁴³

But until the early 1970s, there was little that duped condominium buyers could do beyond waiting patiently for judges and lawyers to interpret the arcane nuances of condominium law. State watchdog groups kept a close eye on improprieties in the traditional housing market. The Florida Real Estate Commission protected the average homebuyer, and the Florida Land Sales Board looked out for potential buyers exploring the Florida market. At the federal level, the Securities and Exchange Commission protected real estate investors.¹⁴⁴ But in the late 1960s, the condominium market was the unregulated frontier of the residential shelter industry. To combat the abuses, the state legislature made slight changes to the 1963 Condominium Act nearly every year after its passage.¹⁴⁵ But the tweaks were negligible, and fraud and unscrupulous business practices continued mostly unabated into the early 1970s, when the state finally took meaningful steps towards regulating the industry.¹⁴⁶

A 1971 amendment to the state condo law required "minimal disclosures" of details in the management and maintenance contract (as recorded by the state) be made to

¹⁴³ Whitney, "Condominium Boom Finds Few Controls."

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Poliakoff, "The Florida Condominium Act," 472.

¹⁴⁶ Whitney, "Condo pacts: Worst-Read Best Seller."

the prospective buyer before any contract signing. Another change allowed condominium associations to cancel contracts made by developers once the association took official ownership of the properties. Still, critics considered the amendment changes too weak to protect consumers.¹⁴⁷ A year later, the state legislature responded to increased pressure from condo owners and real estate groups by forming the Florida Condominium Commission, an eighteen-member investigative committee tasked with studying the condominium industry and recommending new legislation. The Godfather of Florida's condominium legislation, Brown L. Whatley, headed the commission.¹⁴⁸

A 1974 public hearing that attracted roughly 300 condominium owners, developers, and members of the Florida Condominium Commission, perfectly encapsulates the disillusionment among retired residents. During the hearing, as residents one-by-one took to the microphone to air their grievances, developer Dennis Strickland responded defensively: "I thought we were providing the senior citizens with a very nice way of life," he said. "All the comforts of home without the responsibilities." Strickland felt slighted and misunderstood: "Now I sit here and I hear that the builder is some kind of an S.O.B. I borrowed a million dollars to build my last condominium. I stood to lose every dime I ever made in 25 years in St. Petersburg in the building business if it failed." Even with the financial risk, Strickland recalled, his company had always offered buyers the opportunity to review in full the any and all legal documents. "We used to beg buyers to take them home to read," he said, "but not more than two percent ever did." While there was no way to verify Strickland's claim, a bold audience member nevertheless

¹⁴⁷ Poliakoff, "The Florida Condominium Act," 475.

¹⁴⁸ "Condomania—the Craze Intensifies."

explained why it was a moot point. “You know why no one reads them? Because they’re that thick,” he said, making a three-inch wide frame with his fingers. John Foltz, an attorney in attendance, buttressed the point: “I don’t think layman could read the condo documents and understand them anyway, because even lawyers argue about what they say.” Another lawyer, Jack Harris, seconded the thought: “The condo contract is a law specialty.” He continued, “Condos are different than normal real estate transactions. The public should attempt to find someone who has made some study of this.”¹⁴⁹

Over the next few years, many of the commission’s recommendations—including full disclosure of contractual information regarding recreation and maintenance leases, tighter deposit regulations, and protections against faulty construction, among others—became law.¹⁵⁰ The state institutionalized these new protections with the formation, in 1975, of the Florida Division of Land Sales and Condominiums, a regulatory watchdog agency that by the end of the 1980s had grown into what one analyst described as a “complete regulatory agency with rule-making and enforcement authority.” Although future court decisions would continue to inform revisions to the state’s original condominium law, the creation of the Florida Division of Land Sales and Condominiums (later, the Division established a distinct bureau to cover condominiums and mobile homes) represented the state legislature’s commitment to protecting residential consumers and signaled a sharp turn away from the laissez-faire land policies of decades past.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Whitney, “Condo pacts: Worst-Read Best Seller.”

¹⁵⁰ Poliakoff, “The Florida Condominium Act,” 475.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 476.

The state's new regulatory muscle was most effective when it targeted a process that became known as "condo conversion," the practice of developers and/or apartment-complex owners turning rental units into salable condominiums. The conversion process allowed the condominium market to meet consumer demand without having to actually build more structures. In Tampa Bay, the process heated up in the late-1970s, with more than 7,000 conversions in the last two years of the decade alone. Real estate firms from as far away as Canada swept in to the area to purchase apartment complexes and convert them into condominiums. But while condominium conversion proved to be a boon for real estate development companies—one broker in the late-1970s estimated the costs to acquire an apartment complex had risen about ten percent, while re-sale markup, in some cases, exceeded 90 percent—it also led to a rash of improprieties that negatively effected developers and consumers alike.¹⁵² Elderly couples renting apartments on a budget found themselves facing difficult choices—either buy their unit or find a place to live as soon as possible—neither of which proved to be practical options.

For example, in 1979, the Bureau of Compliance of the Division of Florida Land Sales and Condominiums began investigating the Broadwater Harbor Apartments, a 20-unit rental apartment in the 3700 block of 46th Ave. S., in St. Petersburg. The Grant Motor Company had recently purchased the apartment facility and set about converting the units into condominiums. With the profitability of recreation leases greater than that of renting apartment units, without the landlord and management duties, and with construction costs of new structures increasingly high, "going condo," known as condo conversion, had become popular option for companies like the Grant Motor Company,

¹⁵² Ben Schneider, "Florida Condominium Conversions Buffet Retirees," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 1980, 2.

which only recently had embarked on its “first venture into purely real estate business.”

The Bureau of Compliance found two improprieties in the Grant’s condo conversion efforts. In a letter outlining the company’s plans, Grant gave tenants 120 days to be out of their respective apartments. By law, however, tenants have two options: stay for the remainder of their lease; or be out within 120 days, whichever was longer. “They said we had 120 days,” said tenant Mrs. Frank Sonberg. “Our Lease wasn’t up until October (three months later). It really put us out.” According to Barry Longman, supervisor of condos for the Division of Florida Land Sales and Condominiums, “If the tenants have a year left on their lease, then the tenant can stay a year. A notice of intent to convert (to a condo) can’t usurp the contractual obligation of a lease.”¹⁵³ Grant eventually sent out representatives to inform tenants of the company’s error. “Two men came in and asked when we’d leave and did we want to buy,” remembered Mrs. Sonberg. “It was a sales pitch.”¹⁵⁴

But even the “sales pitch” was questionable under the law. The Grant Motor Company had failed to register with the Division and therefore was technically not supposed to be pitching or selling anything related to real estate. Yet, while the Division was succeeding in helping Broadwater’s tenants, the state agency had little regulatory or police power beyond remedies like a “cease and desist” order.¹⁵⁵

“Condomania” eventually fell victim to overbuilding and a glutted market. The metropolitan area’s abundant real estate, condo profitability, and a steady stream of in-

¹⁵³ Elizabeth Whitney, “Apparent Improprieties in ‘Going Condo’ to Be Investigated,” *SPT*, May 21, 1979.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

migrants created an unsustainable boom. At the end of the 1960s, condominiums went up at the same rate as traditional single-family homes. Within five years, many parts of the metropolis joined the rest of the nation in a struggle against monetary inflation that took a severe toll on residential construction and consumption.¹⁵⁶

Rapid condo conversion, once an effective means of precluding market lags because of its instant availability, now overburdened a market replete with plenty of units to sell but lacking buyers. Unable to wait out the downturn, developers made another modification to the multi-family residential experience. This time, however, the new living arrangement targeted vacationers and part-time residents.

Interval Ownership: Sharing Time and Splitting Space in the Fourth Dimension

The real estate industry found a corrective to the glutted market in the French Alps, where a resort developer pioneered what became known as the “time-share.” Instead of finding buyers able to afford the many unsold and unoccupied units, the “time-share” allowed any number of people to buy a single condominium and share it. To be clear, the time-share was not a residential lifestyle option. It was a vacation experience, often one enjoyed by couples and families otherwise unable to afford even a short sojourn in the Tampa Bay area. Time-shares, moreover, did not appreciate in value, and therefore purchasers did not view them as investments.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ “Waiting for the downturn.”

¹⁵⁷ Consumers are actually purchasing a vacation. The resale market usually discounts the developer’s marketing, promotion, and administrative expenses, usually reducing the resell cost at least 50 percent. There is also usually a sales commission ranging from ten to twenty-five percent. See Whitney, “Apparent Improprieties.”

When in the late-1970s the real estate market rebounded and the building spree picked up pace, resort developers began using the time-share to sell vacation experiences at places such as Disney World, which by the 1980s had become the world's most popular tourist destination. That developers could quickly convert condominiums into shareable vacation experiences speaks to how much the condo culture itself already resembled resort-style living. Like the age-restricted retirement communities and mobile home parks, condos became a physical expression of the postwar transformations in residential shelter.

Mobile homes, condominiums, and age-restricted retirement communities transformed the nature of residential living while playing an important role in the growth and expansion of metropolitan Tampa Bay. Mobile homes and condominiums attracted more than just retirees, but the novelties inherent in these forms of residential shelter became most apparent in the ways they affected retirees. Along with the age-restricted retirement communities, they offered "instant" bonding and a built-in social structure. Condominiums and age-restricted communities popularized collective forms of property ownership that later informed the design and development of private gated-communities. Together, mobile homes and mobile-home parks, condominium complexes, and age-restricted retirement communities democratized retirement by making it available to working- and lower-middle class Americans. At the same time, however, the racial demographics of mobile-home parks, condos, and retirement communities reflected, and in turn reproduced, historical patterns of social fragmentation. In Tampa Bay, new legal forms of discrimination, specifically age restrictions, coupled with the advent of

condominium associations and other forms of hyper-local governance, helped foster the formation of racially and generationally homogenous communities.

Furthermore, the advent and proliferation of mobile homes and parks, condominiums, and age-restricted communities fueled metropolitan growth and expansion, often in unexpected ways. Condominium towers reflected the rising costs of land and building materials, as developers and municipalities moved to squeeze more profits and tax revenues out of smaller plots of land. Similarly, dredge-and-fill projects turned increased the buildable acreage, thereby satisfying the insatiable demand for waterfront real estate.

The entire concept was about new forms of land enclosure. Dredge and fill operations transformed the sea floor into salable real estate. Condominiums legally bounded blocks of air and made them available for purchase. Time-shares, while not a permanent residential option, divided property in the fourth dimension. Together, the shelter revolution changed the ways people bought and owned residential property while at the same time altering the designs and experience of residential community.

Chapter 5: The Private Life

Shortly after moving into Tampa Palms, a sprawling residential community in northwest Hillsborough County, Melba Williams felt compelled to act. To be sure, Williams admired her new community. “It’s just one of the best community developments I’ve ever seen,” she explained.¹ The designers and developers of Tampa Palms had tried to ensure as much. By the time Williams and her family arrived, residents enjoyed access to any number of recreational and entertainment amenities, schools, retail shops, and restaurants. Through homeowner associations and community development districts residents participated in pseudo-private government. For Williams, however, even as she acknowledged that her new community was “very complete,” something was missing.²

So she, like so many other suburban homeowners of the era, organized her neighbors. But unlike grassroots “slow-growth” proponents, the water warriors, or anti-bussers, the issue de jour for Williams and her cohort concerned the acquisition of a county library branch.³ Within a few weeks, Williams and more than ninety residents of nearby communities had formed the Northwest Community Council. Securing a county library branch was no foregone conclusion. Residents of the exclusive Clair Mel

¹ Robert Keefe, “Betting on New Tampa’s Future,” *SPT*, September 20, 1993.

² Jennifer Orsi, “Area Hopes New Name Will Bring New Identity,” *SPT*, April 16, 1993.

³ Bo Whitby, “Do You Want library nearby? Be or Buy,” *SPT*, June 1, 1993.

neighborhood, just north of Progress Village, had spent years lobbying the county for a library branch.⁴ The new community group worried about identity. At least on this particular issue, its collective interests transcended the walls and boundaries of Tampa Palms and other private suburban cities. But *where* were they? Members hailed from Hunter's Green, then in unincorporated Hillsborough County, as well as Meadow Pointe, across the Pasco County line.⁵ Despite the diversity of addresses, the name "Northwest Community Council" lacked specificity. Searching for something more "romantic," the council changed its name to the "New Tampa Community Council."⁶ Eventually the name "New Tampa" caught on. Signs and census takers soon designated "New Tampa" as an actual place, if not legally its own city. As the *old* Tampa floundered in its cyclical renewal attempts, "New Tampa" became a novel alternative—all of the promises of Tampa Bay living, without the density, the traffic snarls, and only for a short while longer, without a library branch.

The formation of the New Tampa Community Council, and the organization's successful campaign to acquire the library, illustrates the contradictions of place making and space making in metropolitan Tampa Bay. As chapter one detailed, by the 1980s, the work of boosters at multiple levels of governance projected an image of a uniform and

⁴ Whitby, "Do You Want library nearby? Be or Buy."

⁵ Keefe, "Betting on New Tampa's Future."

⁶ Orsi, "Area Hopes New Name Will Bring New Identity."

identifiable “Tampa Bay” that had gained widespread cultural currency. Underneath the discursive banner of metropolitan “Tampa Bay,” however, Hillsborough and Pinellas and Pasco Counties, cities such as St. Petersburg and Tampa, and unincorporated areas such as Brandon and Countryside, vied for relevancy, political power, and their own unique sense of place. At the same time, developers, designers, and residents, as they had throughout the postwar period, actively created and promoted a variety of places over time. But such places, existing as a combination of cognitive and cultural conceptions, were never static, and the very forces of economic growth and in-migration that helped create them also threatened their existence.

Tampa Palms was one of these places. As this chapter demonstrates, the conceptualization and development of Tampa Palms occurred within a particular era of metropolitan history. It sought to provide an exclusive, amenity-rich, leisure-based residential experience. In this way, Tampa Palms and similar communities built in the 1980s and 1990s resembled the more exclusive trailer parks, age-restricted retirement communities, and the 1950s- and 1960s-era, master-planned, FHA-insured subdivisions, including Progress Village. But they also differed in significant ways from their suburban predecessors. Developers deployed legal instruments of collective property ownership that borrowed from the template established by the condominium. As in the more expensive condominium complexes, the majority of residents lived in neighborhoods guarded by walls and private security guards and governed themselves through Community Development Districts (CDD) and homeowner associations. Indeed, Tampa Palms represented the suburbanization of the condominium, the application of common

interest developments (CID) to the conventional subdivision and the single-family, detached home.

Writing in the 1980s, social critics assailed the “walled cities” and “gated communities” then emerging on the metropolitan peripheries and charged these seemingly novel residential forms with a variety of crimes against metropolitan life, ranging from the intensification of residential segregation and the privatization of the public sphere.⁷ More recently, the term “gated community” has become a popular catchall term signifying residential exclusivity at the cost of social fragmentation.⁸

But as Melba Williams’ crusade for metropolitan identity illustrates, social and spatial fragmentation had its limits. Instead of narrowing, social obligations vacillated between the particular and the general, between the county and the city, and the neighborhood and the metropolis. At the same time, with every wave of in-migration and every generation of urban reinvention, *places* became ever more tenuous, and a “sense of place” increasingly difficult to feel.

The Perils of Placeness

In the early 1980s, the land north of Temple Terrace and the University of South Florida, in Hillsborough County, remained some of the last undeveloped stretches of land in Hillsborough County. After a minor recession in the mid-1970s, the long postwar boom reached unprecedented levels. The population of the Tampa-St. Petersburg SMSA

⁷ Louv, *America II*; Snyder, *Fortress America*; Low, *Behind the Gates*; Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic*; and McKenzie, *Privatopia*; and Frug, “Legal Technology”; Davis, *City of Quartz*, especially the chapter “Fortress L.A.”

⁸ Scott E. Nonnemaker, “Living Behind Bars?: An Investigation of Gated Communities in New Tampa, Florida,” (master’s thesis, the University of South Florida, 2009).

(Pinellas, Hillsborough, and Pasco Counties) increased by forty percent in the decade before 1980, reaching a total of 1,569,781.⁹ In 1979, the metropolitan real estate market had the fifth highest volume in the country.¹⁰ By the end of that year, moreover, the Tampa-St. Petersburg SMSA was the fastest growing metropolitan area in Florida.¹¹ Within five years the population total would climb to 1.8 million. Pinellas County alone counted 800,000 residents.¹²

A metropolitan economy increasingly tied to rates of in-migration and real estate development welcomed the influx of people. But for the millions of people who already lived in the metropolitan area, rapid population growth and a dynamic construction industry represented not the area's lifeblood but instead signaled its undoing. The unintended consequences of metropolitanization manifested in many ways. More people meant more cars, tighter traffic snarls, longer lines, endless construction, and higher volumes of pollution. In the early 1980s, more than a decade after an oil spill in Old Tampa Bay, the Hillsborough County health department declared the Hillsborough River unfit for swimming due to the high sewage content.¹³

⁹ U.S. Bureau of Census, *1980 Census of Population and Housing: Florida*, Table 2; Bernard and Rice, "Introduction," *Sunbelt Cities*, 8.

¹⁰ "Florida is Hot—In More Ways Than One," *SPT*, September 14, 1980.

¹¹ "Growth Spurt Continues in Southwest Florida" *FT* 22, no. 12 (April 1980): 117.

¹² Stephenson, *Visions*, 176.

¹³ *The Tampa Tribune*, June 19, 1981. The tanker spilled 10,000 gallons of oil into Tampa Bay. See "Oil Cleanup Pushed in Tampa Bay After Spill by Greek Tanker," *NYT*, February 16, 1970.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the ranks of community organizations and neighborhood groups swelled with each passing “crisis.”¹⁴ At various points, residents in Brandon, Lutz, Keystone, and Sun City Center grew unhappy with county services and considered forming their own cities.¹⁵ At the same time, Dunedin and Palm Harbor residents organized to protest the erection of a 77-acre industrial park.¹⁶ Likewise, a condominium project on the Pinellas Bay Way drew the ire of residents, state and city planners, and developers—all of who occupied different positions in the struggle to create and sustain viable and discernable places.¹⁷

The currents of homeowner disaffection intersected an environmental planning movement that since at least the late 1960s had given serious consideration to how to manage and control the area’s growth without curtailing private property rights and limiting the very forces that had built and sustained metropolitan expansion. Bolstered by examples of successful experiments with comprehensive planning at the municipal levels, Florida lawmakers began looking more favorably at the prospects of statewide comprehensive planning. Historically, proposed comprehensive planning schemes rarely survived the redbaiting and fear mongering espoused by an array of anti-planning interests at all levels of politics.¹⁸ But occasional bouts of water shortages—an issue that

¹⁴ “Florida Phosphate Pollution Stir Alarm,” *NYT*, June 24, 1976.

¹⁵ Jeffrey Good, “County to Discuss Incorporation in Angry Rural Areas,” *SPT*, May 4, 1987.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Mauer, “Residents Protest Proposed Industrial Park on Curley Road,” *SPT*, January 1, 1985.

¹⁷ Whitney, “Condo Pacts: Worst-Read Best Seller.”

¹⁸ Stephenson, *Visions*, specifically Chapters One through Five.

often transcended spatial boundaries—eventually legitimized large-scale planning measures.

Whether the millions of postwar transplants to the Tampa Bay knew it or not, unlimited access to water had been a precarious proposition since at least the Twenties. During the boom, St. Petersburg detected saltwater in the aquifer that provided the city with its supply of potable water.¹⁹ The city contracted with Pasco and Hillsborough counties to develop well fields and provide the city with clean drinking water.²⁰ Tampa experienced similar problems and to resolve the issue built a water-purification plant along the Hillsborough River.²¹ The onrush of in-migration and the near-constant construction between the 1950s and 1980s exacerbated the metropolitan area's water problems. The well fields of Pasco County, once dozens of miles away from highly populated settlements, had by the 1970s become encircled by residential subdivisions, all of which had their own water demands, not only for drinking but also for construction and yard maintenance.²² The problems of water shortages and contamination afflicting the metropolis reached a crisis point in the 1970s, in what became known as the "water wars."²³

A legally and politically fragmented metropolis made a difficult task out of solving the conflicts over water usage and accessibility. Early efforts to reign in what one

¹⁹ Stephenson, *Visions*, 144.

²⁰ "Stopping the Pinellas Sprawl," *SPT*, July 7, 1989.

²¹ "Green Swamp: Key to Florida's Water Future?" *FT* 2, no. 2 (May 1959): 25.

²² *FT* 2, no. 2 (May 1959); "Falling Victim to It's Own Success," *FT* (Spring 1990).

²³ Jacob B. Stowers, "Water Wars: Will They Ever End?" in *Growth Management Short Course*, Florida Chamber of Commerce (Tallahassee, 1995), 562.

public official called “barely contained chaos” resulted in the creation of the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council and the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD), one of several state-run water management districts intended to resolve conflicts that overlapped municipal and county boundaries. The SWFWMD governed water usage and distribution in metropolitan Tampa Bay.²⁴

In the early 1970s, the state passed a water- and land-management act that established what are known as Direct Regional Impact Zones (DRIs).²⁵ The creation of DRIs added another regulatory layer to the development process. The law forced developers of large-scale residential communities and commercial centers to commission environmental studies of the proposed development site before receiving building permit authorization. Similarly, before fueling up the dredging machines and putting them to work, developers needed approval from the U.S. Army Corp. of Engineers.²⁶

Counties implemented their own land-use laws to curtail growth. Hillsborough County’s “greenbelt law” tried to pump the brakes on new construction projects by keeping property taxes low on land zoned for agricultural use. The law, also known as the “agricultural exemption,” operated on the logic that if unable to afford the property taxes on unimproved land assessed according to its commercial value, farmers and other landowners would sell out to a developer, fueling speculation and sprawl. The more likely consequence of the law, however, was that developers who already owned the

²⁴ “Falling Victim to It’s Own Success,” *FT* (Spring 1990).

²⁵ Shimberg interview.

²⁶ Florida Land Design and Engineering Inc., *Application for Certification As a Florida Quality Development* July 11, 1986, 1.

future sites of communities could pay low taxes until the land was economically viable to develop.²⁷

The myriad movements against unrestrained growth formed a loose-knit coalition that aimed for what Mike Davis rather cynically referred to as “slow-growth.”²⁸ While never constituting one big, organized movement, the slow-growth phenomenon represented a paradigm shift in governmental and homeowner attitudes about the possibilities of comprehensive planning. Environmental regulations that limited the pace and scale of growth, once dismissed as a collectivist threat to private property rights, became the last line of defense in the protection of residential property values and community cohesion. Urban geographer David Harvey described this phenomenon as social resistance to the “perpetual perishing” of place.²⁹

Tampa Palms

Trends in urban and residential community design responded to the new regulatory climate. The region’s “land giants,” companies such as Deltona, Lamonte-Shimberg, and U.S. Home, among others, moved away from developing sprawling acres of affordable tract housing and re-christened themselves as the designers and planners of exclusive and complete residential experiences.³⁰ With large capital outlays, staffs of

²⁷ Martin Dykman, “Milking Florida’s Sacred Cow,” *SPT*, January 2, 1992.

²⁸ Davis, *City of Quartz*, 156.

²⁹ David Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996): 261.

³⁰ Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council, *The Housing Industry in the Tampa Bay Region: Performance and Potential*, April 1972, 7.

professional managers, planners, and research and development departments, these companies were also better positioned to negotiate the complicated and expensive permitting process and oversee the construction of massive yet environmentally friendly communities.³¹

It was one of these companies, Deltona, who in the late-1970s and early-1980s determined to turn its 5,000 acres in northwest Hillsborough County into a world-class residential community. The company had made a name for itself during the 1950s and 1960s as one of Florida's premier subdivision builders, best known for sprawling "New Towns" and modest-sized projects of affordable tract housing, (all available on installment plans) such as Spring Hill, just north of Tampa Bay.³² In the early 1970s, the company's reputation took a hit in a series of clashes with environmental regulators concerning the company's project on Marco Island, just south of Tampa Bay.³³

With its land holdings in northern Hillsborough County, which the company had owned since the 1960s, Deltona looked to work with, and not against, environmental regulations.³⁴ The property's geography and topography made it a particular concern of environmentalists and county regulators. Bounded on three sides by creeks, with the

³¹ They distanced themselves from their smaller competitors and accused them of butchering the land and only seeking quick returns. The big conglomerates looked differently at environmental/planning regulations. They often castigated the small-time merchant builders as "land butchers," "curbstoners," and fly-by-nighters." The big cats embraced the "science" of planning. According to McKenzie, the large builders "largely created and dictated the process of public planning." See McKenzie, *Privatopia*, 30.

³² Seth Lubove, "Deltona Drops Homebuilding Business" *Miami Herald*, August 15, 1984; Bernice Stengle, "Developer hopes to build large mall at Tampa Palms," *SPT*, 1987; "Danger in Florida Land Developments," *FT* 2, no. 6 (September 1959).

³³ Seth Lubove, "Battered Deltona Fights Back With Tampa Palms," *MH*, May 28, 1984.

³⁴ Lubove, "Deltona Drops Homebuilding Business."

Hillsborough River serving as the southern border, the pre-developed land consisted of marshland and swamps and stretches of longleaf pine forest and prairies.³⁵ The property's eastern border lined up against a 17,000-acre state water and environmental conservation area that formed the watershed for the Hillsborough River.³⁶

But after navigating the county permitting maze, which entailed Deltona commissioning a multi-year environmental study of the area, the Hillsborough County Commission approved the project in October 1980.³⁷ By industry standards, the new project, Tampa Palms, was one of the most ambitious residential community projects of its time and the largest ever green lighted by the county: four building phases over twenty years, across 5,400 acres, with 2,600 dwelling units, 30,000 residents or more; and numerous shopping centers, industrial and commercial parks, and recreational facilities that included a golf course, open green spaces, and man-made lakes.³⁸

The project garnered critical acclaim even before construction crews began work on the first home. The American Planning Association, in 1984, gave its annual “planning award” to Tampa Palms. That same year, the community won the National Association of Homebuilders award for the best master-planned community, besting

³⁵ Richard W. Estabrook and Christine L. Newman, “The Deltona Project: Cultural Resource Management in the Hillsborough River Basin,” *The Florida Anthropologist* 49, no. 4, December 1994, University of Florida, Digital Archives, 180. Accessed June 19, 2016.

³⁶ The Good Property Company, *Tampa Palms: Proposed Master Plan Revisions* (June 5, 1985), 2.

³⁷ Florida Land Design and Engineering Inc., *Application for Certification As a Florida Quality Development* (July 11, 1986): 4.

³⁸ The Good Property Company, *Tampa Palms: Proposed Master Plan Revisions*, 3.

more than 1000 other entries.³⁹ The pomp and circumstance surrounding the project's groundbreaking reflected not only the lofty expectations for Tampa Palms, but also a residual cultural reverence for ambitious residential real estate projects and developers.

At the groundbreaking ceremony, Florida Lt. Governor Wayne Mixon, along with Hillsborough County Commission Chairman Rodney Colson, held shovels and smiled at the cameras. Following the ceremony, a helicopter whisked them downtown to an opening reception, where guests had watched a live-feed of the ceremony while waiting to honor the various parties responsible for the new development.⁴⁰ The speculative praise heaped on Tampa Palms, however, belied Deltona's financial instability. For the years between 1982 and 1983 the company posted a total loss of more than \$30 million.⁴¹ Deltona founder Frank Mackle was an experienced developer and knew the cyclical nature of the real estate game. But as of mid-decade with his development business continuing to hemorrhage funds, Mackle and Deltona unloaded the award-winning community.

With Tampa Palms the sum of approved permits, an entrance, and a few paved roads, swashbuckling real-estate huckster Ken Good swooped in to bail out the conceptual community.⁴² Before coming to Tampa, Good, the son of small-town Kansas

³⁹ *Tampa Bay Magazine*, May-June 1987, 90.

⁴⁰ The story of the groundbreaking ceremony comes from the Mackle Company website. See <http://www.themacklecompany.com/femjrstorypublic/23-deltona-1985-1986.htm>

⁴¹ According to Seth Lubove, Deltona had been on a "losing streak" since 1981, a year when the company reported a \$4.8 million profit. In 1982, with interest rates peaking, Deltona lost \$19.2 million. In 1983 it lost \$11.6 million. See Seth Lubove, "Deltona Posts \$3-million Loss," *MH*, May 10, 1984.

minister, cut his teeth in the Denver real estate industry, lending money and developing homes.⁴³ After falling out with his partners in Colorado, later revealed in federal court to be the result of dubious lending practices, Good went to Tampa Bay for many of the same reasons millions of others went there: to start anew and make a buck in the real estate game. When Good set his sights on Tampa Palms, in his words the “best piece of dirt” east of the Mississippi, he reached a deal with Deltona to buy the property for \$38 million.⁴⁴

After purchasing Tampa Palms, the Good Property Co. tweaked the already ambitious designs.⁴⁵ Under the corporate guise of Gulfstream Development Co., Good and his design team embraced the latest trends in landscape architecture and environmental planning. The Tampa Palms Master Plan envisioned a “complete community” that included a variety of residential options, commercial and professional complexes, and an abundance of recreational facilities—all blended with the aesthetics of a “natural” preserve.⁴⁶ Theoretically, residents would never have to leave the community for anything.

Tampa Palms’ designers drew inspiration from theme-park style simulation and privatization and a Progressive-era conservationist sensibility. The community’s designers/planners did not have to look far for models. At nearby Busch Gardens, which

⁴² The Good Property Company, *Tampa Palms: Proposed Master Plan Revisions*, 1; Seth Lubove, “Deltona Sells Tampa Palms Development,” *MH*, January 10, 1985.

⁴³ Stengle, “Good Fortune.”

⁴⁴ *Tampa Bay Magazine*, May-June, 1987, 90.

⁴⁵ The Good Property Company, *Tampa Palms: Proposed Master Plan Revisions*, 4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 2; *Tampa Bay Magazine*, May-June 1987, 90.

opened in unincorporated Hillsborough County in 1959, guests toured by locomotive a man-made African Sahara, dubbed the “Dark Continent,” replete with gazelles and zebras and lions and crocodiles (the Serengeti opened in 1965).⁴⁷ Later in Orlando Walt Disney perfected the process of buying thousands of acres of swampland and wooded areas and transforming them into safe and consumer-friendly simulations of urban and rural spaces.⁴⁸ Like the regional metropolitan mall, or the domed multi-purpose sports arena, the high-tech amusement park forged a trend in architectural and urban design that replicated a version of the outside world without the problems associated with metropolitan life. Whether Main Street downtown, the “Wild West,” or the African Serengeti, the messiness of history flattens, contemporary social strife ceases to exist, and the line blurs between public and private, between the quotidian and the escapist fantasy.⁴⁹

Tampa Palms’ visionaries tried to erase the line altogether. The project’s blending of the “natural” and residential landscape reflected the community-building industry’s

⁴⁷ Claude Sitton, “Florida Land Fever Becomes Epidemic; Lots Sold by Mail,” *NYT*, May 17, 1959.

⁴⁸ Disney’s Epcot Center was originally supposed to be private residential community, but the plan never came to fruition. Eventually, the company opened its own gated common interest development, Celebration. See Frank Roost, “Synergy City: How Times Square and Celebration are Integrated into Disney’s Marketing Cycle,” in *Rethinking Disney: Private Control, Public Dimension*, ed. Mike Budd and Max H. Kirsch (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2005), 275; and Andrew Ross, *The Celebration Chronicles: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Property Value in Disney’s New Town* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999).

⁴⁹ Margaret Crawford, “The World in a Shopping Mall,” in *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, ed. Michael Sorkin (New York: Hills and Wang, 1992); Greg Siegel, “Disneyfication, the Stadium, and the Politics of Ambience,” in *Rethinking Disney: Private Control, Public Dimension*, ed. Mike Budd and Max H. Kirsch (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2005), 299-323.

successful appropriation and integration of Progressive-era conservationist and preservationist ideas. Much like the turn-of-the-century national parks, “preservation” most significantly entailed, in the words of Tampa Palms project manager Chuck Courtney, a “commitment to controlling the environment” and thereby curating the residential experience.⁵⁰ While the conservation programs removed from the market vulnerable wetlands, the design of Tampa Palms aimed less to protect the public commons and more to create a garden-like private city where “nature” functioned economically, aesthetically, and affectively.⁵¹

After razing woodlands and reshaping the topography, a process that included altering drainage patterns and molding lakes and ponds out of disorderly swamps, Good imported and planted thousands of indigenous trees, plants, and flowers—from blue irises to white water lilies to yellow cannas, which attracted birds and other wildlife and scrubbed pollutants from the air.⁵² The man-made lakes and ponds came stocked with “native wetland plants and fish.” The woodlands doubled as parks, and lakes as sites for

⁵⁰ Quote in *Tampa Bay Magazine*, May-June 1987, 90.

⁵¹ The Good Property Company, *Tampa Palms: Proposed Master Plan Revisions*, 3. For more on the social construction and commodification of nature, see Anne Whiston Sprin, “Constructing Nature: The Legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted,” in *Uncommon Ground*, ed. William Cronon (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 91-113; and Susan G. Davis, *Spectacular Nature: Corporate Culture and the Sea World Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). For more on Olmsted and landscape architecture, see Cynthia Zaitzevsky, *Frederick Law Olmsted and the Boston Park System* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1982); Galen Cranz, *The Politics of Park Design: A History of Urban Parks in America* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989); David Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City from Nineteenth Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); and Irving D. Fisher, *Frederick Law Olmsted and the City Planning Movement in the United States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1986).

⁵² The Good Property Company, *Tampa Palms: Proposed Master Plan Revisions*, 3; *Tampa Bay Magazine*, May-June 1987, 89.

boating enthusiasts, and the wetlands and ponds as fishing holes. Jogging and bike paths wended their way through the natural preserve.⁵³

When the development opened, home and escape, stood next door. An 18-hole “championship” golf course snaked its way between “clusters” of neighborhoods bearing names such as Cambridge and the Reserve, where large single-family homes—“executive mansions”—anchored cul-de-sacs, sat tucked behind protective walls, and ranged in price from \$300,000 to \$1 million.⁵⁴ “Homes” came in a variety of forms. The neighborhood of Faircrest offered numerous models from a variety of builders, including Mediterranean-style townhomes that began in the \$60,000 range and single-family homes starting in the low \$100,000s.⁵⁵ Depending on income, residents could purchase a unit on one of several artificial lakes, along the golf course, or fronting the nature preserve.⁵⁶ The “village” of Asbury at Tampa Palms featured Mediterranean-Style homes with 3,375 sq. feet, costing \$300,000.⁵⁷

Promotional materials boasted about its “indigenous Florida” architecture, from wood columns and metal roofs painted in light colors to reflect heat, to ceiling fans that ensured “cross ventilation and energy efficiency.” They also promised residents, despite

⁵³ *Tampa Bay Magazine*, May-June 1987, 89.

⁵⁴ *Tampa Bay Magazine*, May-June, 1987; and Alex Tyler III, “Growing Pains in the Sunshine State” *Fortune* (August 17, 1987).

⁵⁵ “Gulfstream Ad for Tampa Palms,” *Tampa Bay Magazine*, May-June 1987, 89.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 89. Numerous Bay area builder-developers, ranging from Coastal Equity and Development, Schaeffer Homes, and Gulfstream (Good’s company), among several others, helped give the community its eclectic residential built environment. See Stengle, “Good Fortune.”

⁵⁷ Sue Usberghi, “Model Home Center Nears Completion,” *SPT*, July 7, 1991.

Tampa Palm’s massive scope, every effort had been made to create a “feeling of community.”⁵⁸

Tampa Palms offered the traditional recreational amenities, including facilities for swimming, tennis, baseball, and soccer. The project’s crown jewel, a fifty-five thousand square-foot country club, bespoke exclusivity and its broader objectives: the creation of an all-inclusive, resort-style residential experience.⁵⁹

Tampa Palms served as a prototype for nearby planned communities. As the first homes went up in Tampa Palms moved, nearby Hunter’s Green opened, in 1987. Two years later, the regional regulatory apparatus, including Hillsborough County, approved the design plans for WestChase, a middle-class community built in a pseudo-New Urbanist style.⁶⁰ These planned communities differed little from Tampa Palms in terms of function and design.

Both consisted of approximately 2,000 acres, offered “clusters” of residential neighborhoods with homes designed and erected by a variety of master homebuilders, and featured abundant recreational amenities, the centerpiece of which was a “championship” golf course and exclusive and members-only clubhouse.⁶¹ Both won

⁵⁸ City of Tampa, Ordinance No. 2013-145, www.tampagov.net; Deltona Development Corporation, *Tampa Palms Master Plan*, 1980; “Deltona’s Tampa Palms—Tampa’s latest addition,” *Florida Builder*, October 1984.

⁵⁹ Gulfstream Ad for Tampa Palms, *Tampa Bay Magazine*, May-June, 1987.

⁶⁰ Westchase, “Articles of Incorporation,” *WCA Approved Residential Guidelines*; John Craddock, “As Project Evolves, Costs Rise,” *SPT*, August 30, 1992.

⁶¹ Florida Land Design and Engineering, Inc., *Application for Certification As a Florida Quality Development*, July 11, 1986, 1.

awards for their master plans.⁶² And, like Tampa Palms, both communities sought to “preserve” ecologically sensitive terrain while incorporating “nature” into the residential experience.⁶³

Hunter’s Greene’s golf course, according to paperwork filed with the county and the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council, was “designed to integrate as much as possible the environmentally sensitive wetlands and natural vegetation existing on the site.”⁶⁴ As part of its bid to emphasize “environmental awareness,” Westchase offered residents natural gas, recycled water for irrigation, and multiple nature preserves linked by boardwalks and bike paths.⁶⁵ While planning associations lauded these communities’ innovative master plans, social critics lambasted the exclusivity and physical isolation of the latest era in community planning and development. Walls and buffers and barriers literally separated class, taste, and style, and limited access to residents who called none of these communities home. These pseudo-private cities, along with other master-planned communities opening in the area, placed an emphasis on exclusivity and security. Walls, or “natural buffers,” encircled the most exclusive neighborhoods, and private security sentinels monitored the gated entrance and egress.⁶⁶

⁶² *SPT*, December 20, 1992.

⁶³ Ibid; Usberghi, “Model Home Center Nears Completion”; John Craddock, “As Project Evolves, Costs Rise,” *SPT*, August 30, 1992.

⁶⁴ Florida Land Design and Engineering Inc., *Application for Certification As a Florida Quality Development*, July 11, 1986, 5.

⁶⁵ Craddock, “As Project Evolves, Costs Rise.”

⁶⁶ *Tampa Bay Magazine*, May-June, 1987, 90; Florida Land Design and Engineering, Inc., *Application for Certification As a Florida Quality Development* (July 11, 1986): 7.

Behind the gates, however, another characteristic signified a deeper transformation occurring in residential living that the term “gated community” fails to capture. Indeed, Tampa Palms and analogous planned communities operated under the auspices of a Community Development District, a modification of the common interest development and another evolution in the history of collectively owned private property and pseudo-private governance.

Community Development Districts and the Evolution of Private Government

Only after moving into Meadow Point did Sam Ogden learn of the community’s annual homeowner fee, which topped \$700 and threatened to derail his stay in what he proudly considered a safe, amenity-rich, and, until then, affordable residential experience. Ogden’s homeowner fee mainly went towards paying down bonds issued by the Meadow Pointe Community Development District (CDD) to finance various community improvements, from re-paving roads to upgrading sewers and bridges, among numerous other tasks.⁶⁷ By the early 1990s, condominium owners had become inured to these kinds of payments. Many, especially retirees, even preferred the benefits they entailed.⁶⁸ But Ogden was not retired, and his freestanding, single-family home was not a condominium nor was it a cooperative apartment. But in significant ways Meadow Pointe, as well as Tampa Palms, Hunter’s Green, Cheval West, and five other CDDs in the metropolitan area, more closely resembled a condominium community than a traditional suburban subdivision.

⁶⁷ John Craddock, “For Homeowners, CDD Spells Rules, Assessments,” *SPT*, October 25, 1992.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

The state of Florida authorized the use of the CDD in 1980, within a context of soaring land and construction costs and an increasingly empowered environmental regulatory apparatus. Community developers successfully adapted to the dictates of DRIs by appropriating the discourse of environmental protection and redesigning the affluent subdivision. But restrictive regulations increased the already expensive costs of doing business and prolonged the community-building process. Counties and municipalities, moreover, had struggled for decades with the problems of encouraging, while simultaneously controlling, growth and development. Efforts to consolidate city-county government never attracted enough support, and the more conventional legal mechanism, such as incorporation and annexation, no longer held the potential they once did.⁶⁹

The CDD provided a solution. Counties and cities approved the formation of a CDD as a way to shift the conventional functions and costs of public government to a pseudo-private entity. As Sam Ogden learned the hard way, CDDs financed their own operations by selling bonds to pay for services and infrastructure improvements. Moreover, CDDs contained provisions for zoning exceptions that allowed for the development of smaller but more densely built communities. By clustering various modes of shelter, such as condominiums, town-homes, and single-family homes, developers could build and sell more dwelling units per acre. Cash-strapped developers embraced the new arrangement because it allowed them to bypass lenders and pass on the costs of building and governing a residential community to the residents. Counties and cities

⁶⁹ “Florida Cities: Crisis and Confusion,” *FT 15*, no. 4 (August 1972): 34, 36.

benefitted from the higher per-acre property tax revenue while having to pay little to nothing in return.⁷⁰

The CDD rationalized the partial privatization of public functions in other significant ways. Residents voted on and elected a five-person board to operate the CDD. While it varied by community, each CDD contained some form of homeowner association that was in charge of enforcing the deed restrictions and by-laws and exerted considerable control over the ways residents used their private property (for simplicity and clarity, I will hereafter refer to these sundry groups collectively as an HOA). For example, HOA bylaws restricted residential behavior in substantial ways. At Westchase, the residential guidelines regulated a variety of uses of private property, from exterior decorations to house colors to exterior modifications—number and size of hedges; types of trees; strain of sod; fence size, length, and color; and personal care: “all front yard and corner lots shall be maintained in a neat and orderly appearance by regular pruning.”⁷¹ Residents of Hunter’s Green had to seek permission from the Design Review Board before making any external changes to their homes or altering the landscaping.⁷² Ultimately, the CDD worked to achieve the same objective as its precursors: the protection of private property values and the preservation of an ideal residential experience.⁷³

⁷⁰ Craddock, “For Homeowners, CDD Spells Rules, Assessments.”

⁷¹ Westchase Bylaws; “Florida-Friendly Landscaping Guidelines,” *WCA Approved Residential Guidelines*.

⁷² Florida Land Design and Engineering, Inc., *Application for Certification As a Florida Quality Development*, July 11, 1986, 6.

⁷³ Mckenzie, *Privatopia*, 8; Also Ross, *The Celebration Chronicles*.

Membership in a CDD and its attendant associations fulfilled the imperatives of private property, community, and local democracy. For residents, HOA membership fostered community growth through the formation of an extended network of dues-paying members who ostensibly shared political and cultural interests. Participation in an HOA also served an implicit protest function. Whereas cities and counties spent taxpayer money on an array of oft-controversial goods and services, HOA members paid monthly fees that the association reinvested in the community. An HOA allowed residents to be more selective regarding which public services they needed from the county or local municipality. To be sure, property taxes still helped fill government coffers, but HOAs, particularly those in unincorporated areas, worked hard to ensure low property taxes and spent money in ways intended to benefit residents and the community as a whole—a community that ended at the legal boundaries of the CDD.

Another evolution in the instruments of private property protection and neighborhood exclusion, the CDD and the HOA suited the era's emergent neoliberal political-economic order.⁷⁴ As legal scholars and urban historians have pointed out, the popularization and proliferation of common interest developments, whether condominiums or community development districts, represented the pseudo-privatization of local government. In most cases, private property rights supersede public zoning concerns. Residential “tax assessments” (homeowner dues) only benefit the legally designated community, in an arrangement governed by the laws of contract as opposed to

⁷⁴ One of Harvey's main critiques of “neoliberalism” is that it promotes, and consequently seeks to naturalize, the privatization of public spaces. See *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.

those of public taxation.⁷⁵ Public governments embraced such privatization as a means of providing better and more efficient community services. Even the protection of environmentally sensitive public lands came under the authority of collective private ownership. For example, in Tampa Palms and Hunter's Green, the covenants and deed restrictions that "ran with the land" contained provisions that precluded the development of adjacent wetlands in perpetuity.⁷⁶ The same legal instruments historically responsible for discriminating against ethnic minorities became a primary mechanism in the struggle against unbridled development and environmental depredation.

Nevertheless, the CDD helped fuel the social and political and spatial fragmentation of the metropolis. Residential settlement dispersed to the metropolitan margins, and as cities and their respective downtowns worked to reinvent their reputations and stimulate their economies, outlying communities erected walls and formed private governments. As roads and interstates and boosters created and imagined a place known as Tampa Bay, developers and communities and concentrations of communities carved out their own islands on the landscape.

The most affluent residents of Tampa Palms and Hunter's Green and Westchase positioned themselves behind walls, largely paid for, and governed, themselves. The advent and proliferation of CDDs and their attendant HOAs splintered the metropolitan landscape into even smaller fragments of social organization, what one critic has called

⁷⁵ Gerald Frug, "The Legal Technology of Exclusion in Metropolitan America," in *The New Suburban History*, ed. Tom Sugrue and Kevin Kruse (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006): 208.

⁷⁶ Florida Land Design and Engineering, Inc., *Application for Certification As a Florida Quality Development* July 11, 1986, 1.

“little platoons of society.”⁷⁷ But, try as they may, they could not escape fully their broader obligations of citizenship. The New Tampa Community Council’s struggle to attract a county library branch illustrates this point. Beyond the issue of the library, the residents of gated communities drove atop county and state roads, airports, federally funded interstate highways, enjoyed local beaches, and rooted for the area’s professional sports teams, among other metropolitan amenities. And despite the efforts of HOA bylaws, the residents of CDDs could not escape the regional economy, which transcended the most restrictive walls.

New Tampa?

When the deregulated savings and loan industry went belly up in the late-1980s, and era of cheap money and rampant growth came to a temporary halt, Tampa Palms’ steady start slowed just long enough to upend Kenneth Good’s best-laid plans.⁷⁸ As he had in Denver, Good played fast and loose with easy money. After borrowing more than half of the \$38 million to buy Tampa Palms, he immediately used his new acquisition as collateral to secure loans for other projects, including \$200 million to purchase Gulfstream Land Development Corp.⁷⁹ Good established himself as a high-profile mover

⁷⁷ In the excellent *Age of Fracture*, historian Daniel Rodgers uses Edmund Burke’s phrase “little platoons of society” to describe American intellectual and cultural fragmenting in the last third of the twentieth century. See the chapter, “Little Platoons of Society.” Cohen’s *A Consumer’s Republic* makes a similar point about how postwar residential development increased the processes of social dislocation and fragmentation. For more on the decline of “social capital,” see Robert D. Putnam’s *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001).

⁷⁸ Brian Murphy, “Developer’s Rise and Fall Paralleled the Fortunes of Savings and Loans,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 26, 1990.

and shaker in Tampa Bay. He spent lavishly, buying silk suits, vacation homes in Vail and Denver, and could be seen cruising around the metropolitan area in his new Maserati.⁸⁰ By the end of the decade, with hundreds of homes selling in Tampa Palms, and with projects ongoing across the South, from Richmond to Dallas to Tampa Bay, Good had earned a reputation as the “Donald Trump of Florida.”⁸¹ His network of political and social connections spread wide, if not deep. Such connections yielded early successes. Extensive promotion and business recruitment landed the area a USAA regional branch. The Tampa Palms championship golf course hosted national tournaments.⁸²

But most consequentially, he wracked up an untenable debt-load.⁸³ Unable to come up with the more than half of the money, Good financed the project and used it as collateral in the acquisition of Gulfstream Land Development, the corporate vehicle he planned to use to transform marshland and woodlands into Tampa Palms.⁸⁴

But Tampa Palms and its developer were not immune to the vagaries of the national and metropolitan economy. The trouble began at the national level with the savings-and-loan crisis, and when the effects reached the metropolitan area in the late

⁷⁹ The funds came from three places: \$90 million from Citicorp, \$70 million from an S&L coalition led by Florida Savings and Loan Assoc. and \$70 million in bonds sold by Good’s NY-based investment banking firm, Donaldson, Lufkin, and Jenrette. See Stengle, “Good Fortune.”

⁸⁰ Murphy, “Developer's Rise and Fall.”

⁸¹ Stengle, “Good Fortune.”

⁸² Tom Brew, “Tampa Palms Working to Put on a Good Show,” *SPT*, August 16, 1987.

⁸³ Michael Huber, “Silverado Figure Helped Sink Florida Firm,” *MH*, May 25, 1990.

⁸⁴ Murphy, “Developer's Rise and Fall.”

1980s, Ken Good's debt load became untenable. Critics had sounded the alarm, but in the heady days of the unregulated 1980s, few listened. Yet the signs were there. Although Tampa Palms' sales remained steady in its first two years of operation, home starts throughout the rest of the metropolitan area during the same span dropped by thirty percent.⁸⁵ As of April 1990 Good could no longer afford the more than \$2-million a month he paid on an outstanding debt of more than \$200 million.⁸⁶ He eventually reached a settlement with his creditors, agreeing to swap Tampa Palms, Gulfstream Land Development Co., and other properties.⁸⁷ A special House investigative committee summoned him to testify about his role in the collapse of Silverado, a Denver-based lending institution with links to Neil Bush's Colorado oil business.⁸⁸ Shortly thereafter, Barnett Bank repossessed Good's Tampa Palms home.⁸⁹ By the end of the year, Ken Good's Florida dream was over. At the beginning of November, a sign dangled from the entrance to Tampa Palms: "Kenneth Good Estate Liquidation Sale Today." Residents from across the metropolis flocked to the sale, some to find a deal, others simply for peak inside the inner sanctum of a disgraced public figure.⁹⁰

Ken Good was a better visionary than he was a businessman. He was right about the area's potential for growth. He just could not keep the creditors at bay long enough to

⁸⁵ Stengle, "Good Fortune."

⁸⁶ Murphy, "Developer's Rise and Fall."

⁸⁷ Bernice Stengle, "Lenders take over Gulfstream," *SPT*, March 1, 1990.

⁸⁸ Stengle, "Good Fortune."

⁸⁹ Bernice Stengle "Good Losing Mansion in Foreclosure," *SPT*, August 19, 1989.

⁹⁰ Janita Poe, "Sale is More Than Most Bargain For," *SPT*, November 5, 1990.

see it come to fruition. Indeed, the fate of New Tampa turned around in short order. By the time Williams and her cohort formed the community Council, New Tampa encompassed more than thirty square-miles and overlapped two counties and contained more than 16,000 residents.⁹¹ A year earlier, sixteen percent of the single-family homes built in Hillsborough County went up in one of four New Tampa neighborhoods, Pebble Creek, Tampa Palms, Hunter's Green, or Cross Creek.⁹² At one point construction crews could hardly keep up with building pace.⁹³ The nearby Hidden River Corporate Park attracted regional branches of Salomon Bros. and Great Western. Observers likened the growth to that of the Carrollwood area twenty-five years earlier.⁹⁴

The advent of the private suburban city occurred within a specific era in metropolitan history. Environmental concerns about destructive and poorly planned development led, beginning in the mid-1970s, to the implementation of state and county planning guidelines that altered the residential development industry. Within this context, the private communities of Tampa Palms, Hunter's Green, and Westchase evolved. Like their predecessors, they offered an amenity-rich, leisure-based residential lifestyle. Gates and walls not only signified class exclusivity, they served as actual physical barriers that reified class and social divisions and inscribed them on the landscape. The CDD and HOA created private domain of political space. But as this project demonstrates, this

⁹¹ *SPT*, August 20, 1994.

⁹² Keefe, "Betting on New Tampa's Future."

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Keefe, "Betting on New Tampa's Future."

process of residential fragmentation along lines of class and lifestyle predates the rise of gated communities.

Writing in the late-1990s and early 2000s, commentators found few redeeming qualities in the new trend of private suburban cities. Scholars argue that these new types of communities intensify residential segregation along class and racial lines. Critics also blame the gated community for facilitating a decline in community and with eroding Americans' sense of social obligation.⁹⁵ The use of instruments such as CIDs, CDDs, and HOAs, moreover, not only isolated people spatially but also legally and politically. The system of private governance represented by CDDs and HOAs partially supplanted the power and influence of democratically governed cities and counties.⁹⁶

But, as the story of Melba Williams and the advent of the New Tampa Community Council suggests, the death of social capital by gated community has been exaggerated. Instead, Tampa Bay residents living in private suburbs reoriented their sense of social obligation and redefined suburban community.

⁹⁵ Louv, *America II*; Snyder, *Fortress America*; Low, *Behind the Gates*; Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic*; McKenzie, *Privatopia*; and Frug, "Legal Technology."

⁹⁶ McKenzie, *Privatopia*, 30.

**Chapter 6:
The “Clearwater Conspiracy”: The Church of Scientology, Urban Redevelopment,
and Community Change, 1975-1993.**

In 1993, the same year that Melba Williams and her neighbors from nearby suburban communities coined the name “New Tampa,” the Internal Revenue Service (I.R.S.) made an announcement that held significant implications for the metropolitan area. After battling the Church of Scientology (COS) for decades over taxation, the federal agency declared that it was time to raise the white flag: the I.R.S would no longer challenge the COS’s religious tax exemption.¹

The COS hailed it as a historic day. Embattled church president David Miscavige declared that the ruling paved the way for the COS’s “infinite expansion.”² For many residents of Clearwater, however, the announcement was hardly anything to celebrate, as it effectively ended any chance of recouping from the church decades of unpaid city and county property taxes. Even more significantly, the religious exemption legitimized the COS’s plan, begun in the mid-1970s, to “take over” the city and build something akin to its own private town, what it awkwardly referred to later as its “Spiritual Mecca.”³

Today, the American public is generally well informed about the church’s shady dealings, dubious theology, and alleged labor and civil rights abuses. Millions of people have replayed the video of a bug-eyed and seemingly possessed Tom Cruise leaping on

¹ Wayne Garcia, “IRS: Scientology is tax-exempt religion,” *SPT*, October 13, 1993.

² “Ruling by I.R.S. leaves doubt,” *SPT*, October 16, 1993.

³ “Scientology: An In-depth profile,” 5.

Oprah Winfrey's couch to proclaim his love for his wife and recent Scientology convert, Katie Holmes.⁴ More recently, the COS, along with its Clearwater operation, has been the subject of a critically acclaimed documentary film and a hit, tell-all reality show.⁵

Renewed interest in America's most infamous religious organization has buttressed the popular narrative that the organization is little more than a religious front for a highly profitable and perfidious purveyor of self-help services and peddler of specious remedies for physical and psychological maladies. Nothing in this chapter will suggest otherwise.

(But) Beneath the sensational headlines and tales of dastardly deeds, however, lies another story, one exceedingly more American and quintessentially of the postwar Sunbelt.

In Clearwater, the church built its own pseudo-private world interspersed throughout downtown and in the immediately outlying suburban areas. The COS's city-building efforts entailed urban redevelopment and reinvention, a low-wage service economy, a culture of anti-taxation, unscrupulous business practices, and the erection of pseudo-private town oriented around satisfying residents' social, physical, and psychological needs and desires.

⁴ See the 2005 incident here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znsXA2aTXCE>

⁵ The documentary, "Going Clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief, (2015)," based on the best-selling book of the same name, essentially synthesizes decades of journalistic reporting on the church's sordid inner sanctum and unscrupulous business dealings, including that of the Pulitzer prize-winning series published by the *St. Petersburg Times*. A new reality show starring ex-Scientologist Leah Remini, based on her book, co-written with Rebecca Paley, *Troublemaker: Surviving Hollywood and Scientology* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2016), joins a long list of tell-all memoirs by ex-members.

“*Going Clear*”⁶

Science fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard founded the Church of Scientology in the early 1950s after an initial foray into the science of mental help, *Dianetics*, failed to gain widespread commercial appeal and was ridiculed by the professional establishment.⁷ Hubbard’s new “religion,” Scientology, promised to rid individuals of deeply embedded memories, known as “engrams,” which caused emotional and psychological distress. Church counselors and trainers used E-meters, a device that amounted to a glorified lie-detector machine, to “audit” church members and rid them of latent engrams.⁸ In an era that historians of religion describe as a “spiritual marketplace,” Scientology’s blend of psychoanalysis, Eastern spiritualism, and occultism gained popularity on college campuses throughout California in the 1950s and 1960s.⁹ It also proved highly profitable. So much so, that in 1969 the church’s California-based operation, later known as the “mother church,” lost its tax-exempt status when a Federal Appeals Court in San

⁶ The COS uses the term “clear” to describe a member who has successfully exorcised their latent “engrams.” Lawrence Wright uses the term “going clear” as the title of his recent book about the church. See *Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood, and the Prison of Belief* (New York: Vintage Press, 2013); For a more measured analysis that focuses primarily on the church’s theological evolution, see Hugh B. Urban’s *Scientology: A History of a New Religion* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013).

⁷ “Scientology,” 4.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁹ Robert S. Ellwood, *The Fifties Spiritual Marketplace: American Religion in a Decade of Conflict* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997); Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

Francisco determined that Hubbard had used money collected by the church's California branches to enrich himself and his family.¹⁰

Documents later released by the I.R.S show that the church took in roughly \$300 million a year in auditing and training fees. In 1974, eleven church franchises with tax-exempt status, including branches in the United Kingdom, collected a reported \$3.3 million and paid nearly \$850,000 in "tithes" to the Church of Scientology of California. Nine of those branches had deposits totaling roughly \$1 million in overseas accounts. The I.R.S. claimed the church owed more than a million dollars (\$1,150,458) on almost nine million (\$8,684,542) in gross receipts for three years (1970-1972), including an added \$287,614 penalty. But the church refused to pay. Under federal investigation for tax evasion, Hubbard disappeared from public eye and spent years in exile before reappearing in Clearwater.¹¹

The struggle over legal status and corporate taxes informed the church's furtive entry into Clearwater. Under the corporate guise of a pair of innocuously named shell corporations, Southern Development and Leasing and the United Churches of Florida, the COS went on a property-buying spree, first purchasing the historic Ft. Harrison Hotel for \$2.3 million and soon after an old bank building across the street for \$550,000 cash. Southern Development promptly sold the property to United Churches of Florida for one dollar. Later, when asked about the surreptitious nature of the transaction, church officials claimed that they were simply trying to avoid any negative publicity, especially

¹⁰ "Scientology," 4.

¹¹ Ibid., 4.

in light of its ongoing troubles in California and with the federal government.¹² To this day, no one can explain why the state legislature granted the church a “consumer’s exemption.”

Buying property under the guise of a dummy company not only kept the church’s identity hidden, if only temporarily, it also served as a means of avoiding speculative price hikes by sellers. The Walt Disney Corporation had done something similar in the early 1960s when it used multiple shell corporations to buy the more than 30,000 acres that eventually became the Magic Kingdom.¹³

When the Church of Scientology relocated its base of operation to the Florida Gulf Coast in the mid-1970s, it had to deal with the slumping metropolitan economy. After a booming 1960s and early 1970s, slowed as the nation entered a recession in 1974.¹⁴ A year later the rate of in-migration to the area dropped by 50 percent.¹⁵ The downturn was particularly acute in Pinellas County and its second largest city, Clearwater. Pinellas—which by the early 1970s had become Florida’s most densely populated county, with more than 600,000 people packed into twenty-four municipalities totaling 600 square miles—grew at a rate hovering just above one percent for the years 1976 to 1979.¹⁶

¹² “Scientology,” 5.

¹³ Richard Foglesong, *Married to the Mouse: Walt Disney World and Orlando* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003): 5; Carl Hiaasen, *Team Rodent: How Disney Devours the World* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998): 2.

¹⁴ “Growth Spurt Continues in Southwest Florida.”

¹⁵ “St. Petersburg Building at year’s lowest pace,” *SPT*, November 7, 1975.

¹⁶ Charles Stafford, “Pinellas: state’s most crowded county—by far,” *SPT*, June 1, 1978.

Downtown Clearwater reflected the economic malaise. The dispersal of development away from the downtown to the county and metropolitan peripheries had diminished the downtown's economic and cultural vitality.¹⁷ Supplanted by "suburban downtowns" like Countryside and Tyrone, its commercial infrastructure struggled to attract patrons.¹⁸ People drove through, not to, the downtown's deteriorating and drab built environment on their way to the Gulf Beaches or the intra-coastal waterway.

"Going Clear" in Clearwater

Clearwater Mayor Gabe Cazares was one of the first to notice the city's newest resident. Sitting in his office one morning in the first few weeks of January 1976, he witnessed a peculiar scene: armed guards atop the roof of the historic Ft. Harrison Hotel. From his office window Cazares could see the guards making their rounds like clockwork. Residents witnessed people clad in military-style uniforms walking between the Fort Harrison and the old bank building across the street. The mayor was beside himself. His city's economy was trending downward along with the rest of the metropolitan area, and now what he called the town's "prized institution" had once again become "an armed fortress."¹⁹

¹⁷ Doran Levin, "Florida home building slows in February," *SPT*, April 1, 1978; "Two Shopping Centers Planned; six-theater movie complex in one," *SPT*, January 1, 1980; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census Tracts: Tampa-St. Petersburg, 1940-1990*; City of Clearwater. Downtown Development Board. *Minutes of the Downtown Development Board*. 1988-1993.

¹⁸ White, "Suburban Downtowns: Real Estate Hybrids Are in Full Bloom."

¹⁹ Mark Sableman, a reporter for the *Clearwater Sun*, first reported this story on January 29, 1976. See "Armed Hotel Men Get Church Review," *Clearwater Sun*, January 29, 1976.

It did not take long for journalists at the *St. Petersburg Times* and *Clearwater Sun* to uncover the true identity of the United Churches of Florida. But even before the story broke, Scientology spokesperson, Rev. Arthur Maren, publicly announced that the United Churches of Florida was indeed a front group for the Church of Scientology. Maren met with Cazares and assured him that the church meant no harm. By cloaking its entry into the city, explained Maren, the church hoped to avoid any unnecessary negative publicity. The meeting was the first of many regarding the Church and its affairs in Clearwater and represented the opening salvo in a decades long fight between the COS, the city of Clearwater, and Pinellas County over property taxes and the religious and business operations of the church.

In the following months, Cazares and fellow public officials remained leery, and the mayor ramped up his public criticisms. As local journalists dug deeper into the church's sordid past and ongoing legal troubles with the I.R.S., the Church steadfastly denied allegations of wrongdoing and set about building its "Spiritual Mecca."²⁰

Any doubt about the church's intentions in Clearwater disappeared in 1978, however, when the FBI caught several church members breaking into the I.R.S headquarters in Washington, D.C., trying to steal government documents related to the church. The FBI report of the incident told a story seemingly ripped from the pages of one of Hubbard's science fiction stories. Not only had church members attempted to break into I.R.S. headquarters and steal sensitive documents.²¹ Under the auspices of its paramilitary wing, the Guardian's Office, it had implemented "Operation Goldmine," a

²⁰ "Scientology," 5.

²¹ Ibid., 5.

plan to “takeover” of the city of Clearwater. The Guardian’s Office considered Clearwater a city that “could be bought,” and its officials were instructed to infiltrate the power structure and ward off “any potential threat by taking control of key points in the Clearwater area.” “Covert agents” secured jobs at places such as the *Clearwater Sun*, the Greater Clearwater Chamber of Commerce, local law firms, and other community agencies.²²

The COS’s plan to “take over” the city included a campaign to silence political and journalistic dissent. The Guardian’s office prepared an extensive “enemies list” that included Cazares, reporters and staff members from both the *Sun* and the *Times*, as well as local radio personality, Robert Snyder.²³ Mayor Gabe Cazares was a primary target. After a failed effort to frame Cazares in a hit-and-run car accident in Washington D.C., (which before the truth was revealed cost Cazares his bid for a congressional seat) the church implemented a campaign of harassment, calling his house at odd hours in an effort to convince his wife of the existence of an extramarital affair, as well as an attempt to falsify documents that falsely showed the mayor was already married in his native Mexico.²⁴

One of the more disturbing plots that never came fruition involved County Property Appraiser Ron Schultz. Documents released by the FBI show that the church considered framing Schultz as a pedophile. The plan was for the United Churches of Clearwater to ingratiate itself in the community by offering to help the city with

²² “Scientology,” 8.

²³ Ibid., 8.

²⁴ Ibid., 8.

beautifying Clearwater City Park. A church member would photograph the park and report back to the city that it was full of “undesirables.” Later, the church planned to announce that it had discovered Schultz, in the park, molesting young girls. Regardless of the veracity of the claim, the ensuing media attention threatened to ruin Schultz’s career.²⁵ As a way to control the public narrative, the church even considered trying to buy the *Sun*, a plan it dubbed “Operation China Shop.”²⁶ The plan never went into action, but revelations like these exacerbated local fears. To some, the church’s militarized aesthetic and science-fiction-themed theology evoked images of Soviet world domination and millenarian eschatology.

Paranoia pervaded parts of the city, as residents worried about a cult in their midst. That same year, renowned cult leader Jim Jones and his followers had committed suicide in British Guyana by drinking cyanide-spiked Kool-Aid. Articles and exposés in the *Times* and in the *Sun* fueled the hysteria. To the dismay of metropolitan boosters, the rest of the nation paid attention. A 1980 “Special Report” by the *Times* won the newspaper a Pulitzer Prize. That same year, “60 Minutes” brought the story into the homes of people across the country with its piece on the “Clearwater Conspiracy.” For the city and the surrounding metropolitan area, the “60 Minutes” episode complemented a rash of public relations nightmares afflicting Tampa Bay.²⁷

²⁵ “Scientology,” 7.

²⁶ A related plan, “Sunrise Mission,” consisted of members of the Guardian’s Office doing extensive research on the newspaper’s financial history, its main advertisers, and the value of its real estate holdings. See “Operation China Shop,” internal church memo; Craig Robertson, “Scientologists planned to buy the Sun,” *SPT*, December 1, 1979.

²⁷ PBS. “The Clearwater Conspiracy.” *60 Minutes*.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xtXUz07cYSS> (accessed December, 2013).

Almost overnight a counter movement formed against the church. Op-Eds poured into the *Times* and the *Sun*. Residents organized protest marches.²⁸ Cars adorned with anti-Scientology bumper stickers passed slowly through downtown as passengers pointed and gawked at Scientologists walking among the church's property holdings. Others honked their horns at the churchgoers.²⁹ Anti Scientology groups sprung up, such as "Save Sparkling Clearwater," led by county commissioner Richard Tenney.³⁰

The church pushed back. It staged its own public protests. When *Sun* editor Ron Stuart suggested a commercial boycott by the citizenry, the church likened the move to Hitler's "Don't buy from the Jews" campaign and marched down Myrtle Avenue wearing Nazi regalia.³¹ Using a tactic that became its calling card, the COS tapped its vast financial resources to strong-arm its less affluent critics. Not only did it refuse to pay its 1977 property tax bill. It also filed \$1 million libel lawsuits against the *Times* and Gabe Carazares.³² Local residents wanted answers. County and city officials wanted the added tax revenue. And the church wanted to be left alone.

With tensions threatening to boil over in 1982, the city's new mayor, Charles Lecher, hosted and televised a 5-day public forum intended to challenge the legitimacy of

²⁸ Op-Ed, "On Scientology, it's time for citizens to be heard," *SPT*, December 1, 1979.

²⁹ "Editor: Letter to the People," *SPT*, February 14, 1990.

³⁰ Craig Robertson and Deborah Blum, "Clearwater May Eye Restrictions Following Anti-Scientology Rallies," *SPT*, January 1, 1980.

³¹ Brad Rogers, "Scientologists March," *SPT*, November 30, 1979; Stephen Koff, "Changing Strategy" Church of Scientology now steps right up to controversy," *SPT*, December 23, 1988.

³² The city taped the five days of hearings and they can be viewed on YouTube. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KgKni85tiHE&list=PLB8A8C6C0BFB607D1>

the Church of Scientology. One by one, ex-members took the stand and testified before a legally powerless coterie of public officials about the church's nefarious activities. Stories of violence and unsanitary health conditions—maggot-infested food fed to staff members, undisclosed disease outbreaks at the Ft. Harrison—filled the ad hoc “courtroom.” From the sensational tales of physical and psychological abuse perpetrated by church officials another narrative crystallized: the Church was a business entity specializing in the production and distribution of self-help services and its relocation to Tampa Bay was a deliberate ploy to shelter church revenue from the federal government. Even Hubbard's son, Ron DeWolf, testified that his father's primary objective in turning Dianetics into a religion was to avoid paying taxes.³³ Clearwater—a city that “could be owned”—seemed the perfect place to situate the enterprise.³⁴

As the case against the COS heard no serious challenge. Church representation made only a brief appearance, when its local counsel, Paul Johnson, took to the dais to denounce the proceedings as a “witch hunt.”³⁵ As it had since its earliest days in the 1950s, the church branded its detractors as liars and conspirators, and its ex-members as disgruntled and emotionally and psychologically unstable.³⁶ But city officials had heard all they needed to hear to determine that the COS's lucrative business practices and dubious religious training disqualified it from tax exemptions. A city report on the

³³ See City of Clearwater, Public Access, 1982. hearings <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KgKni85tiHE&list=PLB8A8C6C0BFB6071>

³⁴ Quote from ex-member Larry Brown, found in Janet Reitman, *Inside Scientology*, 192.

³⁵ City of Clearwater, Public Access <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KgKni85tiHE&list=PLB8A8C6C0BFB6071>

³⁶ Ibid.

hearings concluded: “The church of Scientology has engaged in a public relations campaign to present itself to the citizens of Clearwater as a legitimate, law-abiding, nonprofit religious organization while actually operating...in disregard and in violation of civil and criminal laws.”³⁷ The report, like the public hearing, carried no legal weight, especially with regards to the church’s corporate status. And thus the city sought alternative ways to tax one of its most affluent property owners.

A year later, in the wake of the public hearing, the city enacted an ordinance that attempted to squeeze money out of the church by regulating charitable solicitations. The ordinance “required charitable organizations that wished to solicit funds in Clearwater to register with the city, maintain certain records, disclose the sources and uses of their contributions, refrain from engaging in fraudulent solicitation practices, and submit to a investigation by the city attorney on the complaint of more than ten individuals.”³⁸ With the ordinance, the city hoped to get a look at the church’s books and to prove once and for all that the Flag Service Organization was no more than an offshoot of the California-based operation. After passing the ordinance, however, the city drew the ire of the ecumenical community. Even before the Church of Scientology retaliated legally, a group of churches, led by the local chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, sued to enjoin the ordinance. The COS later joined the lawsuit as co-plaintiffs.³⁹

³⁷City of Clearwater, Public Access
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KgKni85tiHE&list=PLB8A8C6C0BFB607D1>

³⁸ *Church of Scientology Flag Service Org., Inc. v. City of Clearwater, et al.* 777 F.2d (4th Cir. of Appeals. 1985); Curtis Krueger, “Donations are open, judge rules,” *SPT*, February 8, 1991.

³⁹ *Church of Scientology Flag Service Org., Inc., v. City of Clearwater*, 1983.

While the city eventually won the case, it took more than a decade, and by the time the verdict came down, the I.R.S. was on the verge of rendering it a moot point.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, the church, already adept at reinventing itself, adopted a more conciliatory approach to its relationship with the city and the public.⁴¹ First, in 1981 the church reached a settlement with Pinellas County Property Appraiser, Ron Schultz, and agreed to pay its 1977 property tax bill. The COS also made overtures aimed at distracting the public's attention away from the tax controversy, by opening the doors of the lavishly remodeled Ft. Harrison Hotel and by donating to local charities. Church spokesman Richard Haworth served as an ambassador to the community, making regular appearances on local radio and television shows. Through their efforts—what the church called “community revitalization”—the COS legitimized its presence in Clearwater, though at the same time it further antagonized its most ardent opponents.⁴²

The COS's “community revitalization” program entailed a type of urban expansion and community formation that amounted to the development of a postindustrial company town, what the COS later called its “Spiritual Mecca.”⁴³ It paid

⁴⁰ Curtis Krueger, “Clearwater to discuss records disclosure law,” *SPT*, February 19, 1991.

⁴¹ Journalist Janet Reitman contends that much of Scientology's success as a religion and as a business depended on its ability to transform itself. For example, after a federal court ruling in 1973 determined that the church could no longer claim nor market the E-meter as a tool for curing diseases, the church reoriented its services around mental health and self-help services and products. See Janet Reitman, *Inside Scientology: The Story of America's Most Secretive Religion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011), 195–196.

⁴² “Scientology,” 5; Koff, “Changing strategy.”

⁴³ *Ibid.*

nearly \$6 million for five buildings in 1979, including three hotels and motels—the Sandcastle Motel, the former Quality Inn, the Heart of Clearwater motel—and three other buildings to be used for various church activities.⁴⁴ The hotels and motels housed employees and visitors.

Two years later, in 1981, the church officially incorporated its Clearwater operation as the Flag Service Organization. The Flag became the church's primary tax shelter for its nationwide enterprises. By the mid 1980s it owned ten properties worth an estimated \$11 million.⁴⁵ Pinellas County denied the Flag Service a tax-exemption, but it did not matter. The COS refused to pay property taxes on its ever-expanding holdings.⁴⁶ As of 1993, the county claimed the church owed more than \$4.5 million in back taxes.⁴⁷

Free from any property-tax obligations, the COS church went on another impressive building and remodeling spree and expanded its landholdings. "Community revitalization" meant, in the words of church spokesperson Huberto Fontana, extensive "upgrading."⁴⁸ In May 1990 it unveiled the newly renovated, \$7 million, 44-room Sandcastle Motel. The motel, as well as another structure on the same site, housed church

⁴⁴ "Scientology," 5; Koff, "Changing strategy."

⁴⁵ "Realtor..." *SPT*, January 1, 1985.

⁴⁶ The county denied a request for tax exemption, arguing the Flag Service Organization was actually a front group for the mother church in California, which at the time had lost its federal tax exemption. The church denied the charges and refused to pay any taxes. See "Scientology," 5.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁸ Curtis Krueger, "Scientologists spruce up space, Sandcastle Motel gets new look," *SPT*, July 31, 1990; Curtis Krueger, "Scientologists plan historical museum," *SPT*, July 31, 1990.

members from around the world for three to four weeks at a time. The Sandcastle site was part resort, part planned community, and part rehabilitation center. It featured a pool and fitness center, a man-made lagoon fully stocked with fish, and a dining hall that overlooked the crystalline St. Joseph's Sound, a small inlet that separated the coast from the outlying barrier islands and the Gulf of Mexico. The facility was also technologically advanced. Air conditioning had already tamed Central Florida's oppressive heat, and, by installing windows that regulated incoming sunlight, the church could control the length of the day.⁴⁹

The church also renovated the old bank building it had purchased in 1975, and built a \$1 million, 5,000 sq. foot Scientology museum inside. It remodeled the Hubbard College of Improvement, and after complaints from neighbors about its shabby exterior and of interior overcrowding, the church retrofitted the Hacienda Gardens apartment complex. The church also leased four floors, 38,000 square feet, of the downtown Coachman building.

The crown jewel of its redevelopment efforts was the new training center built on the site of the locally renowned Gray Moss Inn, which stood directly across from the Fort Harrison hotel; it was also the city's oldest building.⁵⁰ Eventually, the church tore down the old inn and erected the new \$40 million, 70,000 sq. foot Technical Delivery Building that included a gold-domed roof, 175 counseling rooms, 19 classrooms, a bookstore open to the public, and an above ground crosswalk that connected it with the Ft. Harrison

⁴⁹ Bob Henderson, "Scientology Building Impressive Inside and Out," *SPT*, August 13, 1993. For more on Florida and air conditioning, see Arsenault, "The End of the Long Hot Summer."

⁵⁰ Curtis Krueger, "Gray Moss Inn sold, buyer a mystery," *SPT*, September 18, 1990.

Hotel.⁵¹ As of the early 1990s, the church owned more than 25 buildings, valued at an estimated \$25 million.⁵² Its holdings consisted of numerous other businesses (some owned by the church, others privately owned by individual members), from consulting firms to nightclubs in Tampa and Clearwater to parochial schools, and an array of former hotel and motel facilities used to house members and transient guests, which by the late-1980s included a bevy of A-list Hollywood celebrities.⁵³ And yet, even with the church's public relations overhaul throughout the 1980s, it was unable to shake the social stigma.

As it turned out, the church's willingness to pay its tax bill for 1977 was a one-time goodwill offering. The tax fight with county and city officials continued for nearly twenty years. Former Clearwater mayor and longtime church foe Gabe Cazares continued his crusade, participating in rallies and publicly calling for an I.R.S. probe into the "Flag Org."⁵⁴

Along the way, the church became a political tool in local and regional elections. In 1988 State Rep. Tom Woodruff sent out a campaign flier that identified his opponent in the Republican Primary, Jeff Huenink, as a Scientologist. Woodruff had shoddy evidence, and both Huenink and the church denied it.⁵⁵ Two years later, Rita Garvey defeated Don Winner in the Clearwater mayoral race after Winner admitted to accepting

⁵¹ Wayne Garcia, "Counseling Center Redesigned," *SPT*, April 5, 1993.

⁵² Curtis Krueger, "Religion as a Tool of Politics," *SPT*, June 29, 1990.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Curtis Krueger, "Ex-Clearwater Mayor Wants Crackdown on Scientologists," *SPT*, January 5, 1990.

⁵⁵ Krueger, "Religion as a Tool of Politics."

\$700 in radio advertisements from a business with Scientology ties.⁵⁶ Other political contests that year involved similar smear attempts. That same year, Cazares, now the Pinellas Democratic Chairman, accused Republican Governor Bob Martinez of pandering to Scientologists because he dedicated a nursery that had received contributions from the church. State representative Trish Muscarella, in an interview, voiced her objections to incumbent Rep. Gerald S. “Jerry” Rehm because of his “connections” to Scientology. Rehm denied any connections.

Intrepid reporting by the *Times* kept the church in the public eye. A Pulitzer-prize winning exposé painted a picture of a multi-billion dollar business enterprise that manipulated and intimidated its members into submission.⁵⁷

Indeed, selling services made the church lots of money. An I.R.S probe in the early 1990s painted a picture of highly profitable business entity. Documents revealed that 12.5 hours of Scientology counseling cost nearly \$8,000, and that the Flag Service Organization had an operating budget of \$26 million a year and sent about \$200,000 a week to the mother church in Los Angeles as well as millions more to affiliated organizations for promotional and educational supplies.⁵⁸ Locally, church members opened private businesses, ranging from consulting firms to nightclubs in Tampa and

⁵⁶ Curtis Krueger, “Election Pundits Wrong, Garvey Won Mayor’s Post with 59 percent of the Vote,” *SPT*, March 15, 1990.

⁵⁷ “Scientology,” 5.

⁵⁸ Curtis Krueger, “Scientologists, I.R.S., in Dispute over Millions,” *SPT*, February 4, 1990.

Clearwater to real estate firms to two parochial schools, the True School and Jefferson Academy—all of which contributed tithes to the church coffers.⁵⁹

The membership roster populated by A-list Hollywood celebrities who sang the church's praises, the millions of dollars in property acquisition and redevelopment, and its glossy magazine that circulated throughout the city, obscured a darker side of corporate capital accumulation. Records obtained by the I.R.S in one of its many investigations revealed that the church housed many of its roughly 600 employees in substandard housing, and paid them a small monetary stipend, anywhere from twenty-four to thirty dollars a week plus room and board and a modest commission. Records for 1987 show the church paid its employees an average of \$3,319 a year, or \$64 a week.⁶⁰ Member-workers stayed in one of one of the retrofitted hotels and rode to and from work in a white van emblazoned with the Flag Service Org. logo. By the early 1990s, when the church's property holdings consisted of (#) buildings valued at nearly \$25 million, khaki-clad members walking in groups between church buildings became the most common site downtown.⁶¹

For a brief moment in the early 1990s, the city thought it had finally cornered the church. That year a federal appellate court upheld the city's 1983/4 ordinance regulating charitable solicitations by non-profit groups. The ordinance required local non-profits

⁵⁹ School faculty denied having anything other than personal affiliations with the church, but a school brochure listed "child auditing" as one of its services. The schools, moreover, paid handsome royalties to employ the "Hubbard Management" method. See "Scientology," 5.

⁶⁰ Krueger, "Scientologists, I.R.S., in Dispute over Millions."

⁶¹ Ibid.

that solicited money from more than one person to open their books and disclose financial information to city officials. The ruling, however, did not apply to fees paid for auditing and training. A federal judge in 1989 had determined such payments were in fact “fees for services” and thus could not be written off as tax-exempt charitable donations.

Scientology officials in Clearwater viewed the latest ruling on the local ordinance as a victory and celebrated even as city leaders. The church argued that since the ordinance ruling did not cover auditing and training fees, and since that was the primary source of “donations” received by the church, that the court ruling really did not apply to them. While non-profits like the Marine Science Center and the United Way worried about the added administrative burden, the Church of Scientology claimed victory. “That’s the whole of Scientology,” explained Heber Jentzsch, regarding training and auditing. “That’s really what we do.”⁶²

The contradictions were not lost on city attorney Howard Zimmet. If receiving fees for auditing was, according to the U.S. Supreme Court, tantamount to earning fees for services provided, was the church not admitting that it was in fact predominantly a commercial enterprise? The city certainly thought so. But before another round of legal wrangling wended its way through the legal system, the I.R.S. rendered the debate moot.

Conclusion

As the Tampa Bay metropolitan area experienced an economic recession in the early 1990s, public officials and local residents liked to blame the church and its by-now expansive presence downtown for the area’s inability to attract new commercial

⁶² Krueger, “Donations Are Open, Judge Rules.”

investment. It was an old narrative. Indeed, since the arrival of the church in 1975, members of the city's various redevelopment boards and commissions lamented the changing face of the downtown area and had failed to stem the tide of departing businesses.⁶³ Businesses serving nearby residential communities and tourists had moved out, and restaurants and retail outlets catering to professionals and businesses had replaced them. Residents and public officials were outraged that so many Scientology related businesses had opened downtown, and many accused the church of scaring away tenants and potential investors.⁶⁴

In truth, while the substantial presence of the church and its members may have made some potential investors uneasy, downtown Clearwater's economic woes reflected the geographical reorientation of growth and development within the metropolis. Indeed, the growth of outlying areas, made possible by the construction of new interstate extensions and restrictive zoning and annexation laws that splintered Tampa Bay into more than 30 municipalities and unincorporated areas, rendered downtown Clearwater as just one of many nodes within a fragmented metropolitan expanse. Downtown Clearwater was not alone. Urban centers throughout the metropolis, from downtown Tampa to

⁶³ Downtown Development Board, *Minutes of the Downtown Development Board*, 1988-1993; Curtis Krueger, "Stores Give Way as Area Evolves," *SPT*, April 16, 1990.

⁶⁴ A 1989 economic impact study financed by the COS reported that the church spent \$22.3 million a year locally, its members, both residents and visitors, accounted for \$8.4 million in spending, and the church itself was responsible for adding 2,300 jobs to the area, including staff members and individuals working at Scientology affiliated enterprises. The study concluded: "The stabilizing presence of the church and its many of-of-town visitors on downtown Clearwater is particularly important, as it makes this area a very attractive place for new businesses, particularly retail and restaurant establishments, to locate." See Micro Economics, Ltd., "The Economic Impact of the Church of Scientology on the Greater Clearwater Metropolitan Area," *Economic Impact Study*, 1989.

downtown St. Petersburg, initiated urban revitalization projects as a means to stimulate commercial activity and to compete with outlying shopping malls and entertainment complexes.⁶⁵

There was little anyone could do about the downtown's primary property owner and facilitator of urban development and redevelopment. The Church of Scientology had a constitutional right to operate in Clearwater, and without an I.R.S. investigation into the finances and commercial activities of the Flag Service Organization, and with the church stonewalling all legal attempts to collect back taxes, the county and the city had few options but to continuing suing the church.

Eventually, after a decade of pleas from the likes of former Clearwater mayor Gabe Cazares, the I.R.S. went after the Flag Service Organization, with a four-year probe in 1989.⁶⁶ In April 1990, U.S. Magistrate Elizabeth Jenkins ordered the church to hand over documents to the I.R.S., including deeds and leases, financial statements and transactions, salary information, tuition schedules, as well as documents pertaining to financial transactions with other Scientology organizations for the years 1985, 1986, and 1987.⁶⁷ The church counter sued and asked for documents the I.R.S. had on the church. The church claimed that it has been unfairly targeted and harassed by the I.R.S. for 30

⁶⁵ Levin, "Florida home building slows in February;" "Two Shopping Centers Planned;" U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census Tracts: Tampa-St. Petersburg, 1940-1990*; City of Clearwater, Downtown Development Board. *Minutes of the Downtown Development Board*. 1988-1993.

⁶⁶ Krueger, "Scientologists, I.R.S., in Dispute Over Millions."

⁶⁷ Curtis Krueger, "Scientology ruling favors IRS," *SPT*, April 18, 1990.

years.⁶⁸ The I.R.S had sent the church more than 3,500 documents, but the church wanted more.⁶⁹

In 1993 the I.R.S ended the probe it had begun four years earlier and announced that it had determined the Flag Service Organization, as well as the Church of Scientology more generally, to be a tax-exempt religion.⁷⁰ Local church opponents were incredulous.

With the tax laws seemingly on their side, the Flag Service Organization recommitted itself to public relations, and shortly thereafter settled with the Pinellas County property appraisers office, and agreeing to pay county property taxes on all or part of its property holdings that were not specifically used for religious purposes. The agreement ended 30 years of costly lawsuits. Despite persistent and deep-seated community misgivings, citizens of Clearwater, as well as many others throughout Tampa Bay, have come to accept the church's presence as a source of growth and stability in a metropolitan area increasingly dependent on real estate production and reproduction. As former downtown development board chairwoman, Elise K. Winters, observed a few years after the I.R.S ruling: "You can either treat them like a bogeyman and give downtown to them or you can treat them like any other property owner. "You've got to decide," she continued, "if you want downtown to succeed or if you want to nurse old grudges."⁷¹

⁶⁸ "Church Seeks I.R.S. Documents," *SPT*, April 28, 1990.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Garcia, "IRS: Scientology is Tax-Exempt religion."

⁷¹ Douglas Frantz, "Religion's Search for a Home Base," *NYT*, December 1, 1997.

On the surface, the story of the COS's efforts to build its spiritual headquarters in Clearwater, Florida, appears unique and particular to the area. Viewed through the lens of the history of metropolitan development in the postwar Sunbelt, however, the Church of Scientology emerges as an overlooked but significant force in the urban transformations taking place in the postwar Sunbelt. The Church of Scientology understood what it was doing when it relocated to the Florida Gulf Coast. Clearwater in the last quarter of the twentieth century was not just home to white, sandy beaches and sun soaked palm trees. It was a place where people and businesses could find affordable real estate, expanding markets, low taxes, cheap labor, and a fresh start. Most importantly, it was a city that "could be bought."⁷² After arriving in Clearwater, the church, in the span of twenty-five years, expanded its thriving, multinational corporation that specialized in the production of self-help services. To do this, it built its own private community, replete with dorm-style apartments for its employees, a transportation system to shuttle workers and visiting members, schools, hotels and motels, and an assortment of other affiliated commercial enterprises. Like so many corporate real estate developers during this era, the church constructed a community that catered to its residents' needs, whether material, spiritual, or economic. Such a community, moreover, aimed to create a world free from the many problems afflicting urban America—a world, as John Travolta once put it, "without criminality...without war...without insanity."⁷³ In this way, the COS's "Spiritual Mecca" in Clearwater resembled places like Sun City Center, On Top of the World, and Tampa Palms.

⁷² Scientology," 5.

⁷³ Quote in *Going Clear*. Film. Directed by Alex Gibney. HBO Documentary Films. New York, 2015.

And just like those places, the church and its members' attempts to escape into their own private world encountered the practical limits of metropolitan connectedness. While the Flag Service Org. shirked its responsibilities to the public treasury, its members traversed metropolitan roads, enjoyed public recreational facilities, and patronized business establishments unaffiliated with the COS. Acting as private citizens, moreover, church officials and members purchased homes on which they paid property taxes and consumer goods on which they paid sales tax.

Many of the same political and cultural conflicts continue to this day. News outlets, especially the *Tampa Bay Times* (formerly the *St. Petersburg Times*), continue to investigate the internal workings and nefarious misdeeds behind the walls of Scientology's "Spiritual Headquarters." For many in Clearwater, the wounds of the late twentieth century have yet to heal, and debates still rage over whether or not Scientology is a legitimate religion.

Recently, the COS announced plans to expand its \$260 million empire downtown by developing a "master retail district." For decades, critics and opponents, unable to legally oust the church from the city, had pointed to the absence of social life downtown as an example of the religious organization's negative economic impact. To be sure, there was no denying that the COS's "upgrading" efforts had successfully renewed much of the downtown's deteriorating built environment. But while redevelopment enhanced the COS's wealth and power, most non-parishioners benefitted from the aesthetic improvements and the attendant increases in property values. As of 2017, approximately 75 percent of the COS's Clearwater landholdings remained off the county and city property tax rolls and therefore contributed nothing to the public treasury. For

metropolitan residents unaffiliated with the church, downtown Clearwater was an eerie and nearly empty urban zone that stood between the suburbs and the beach. The efforts to build and operate a retail district open to everyone can be understood as another attempt by the church to rationalize its presence and silence its critics through economic growth. To quell fears of its latest round of territorial expansion, church spokesperson Ben Shaw explained that currently the COS has no intentions of expanding its religious “campus.” But locals are skeptical. As it did in 1975, the COS’s recent property acquisitions were accomplished under the guise of multiple shell LLCs. The lack of transparency recalls an earlier era—a recollection exacerbated by the media’s renewed interest in the COS phenomenon. With little recourse, incredulous residents and city officials, whether at city hall or at the Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce, can only wait and see if their beloved downtown will ever again compete with St. Petersburg and Tampa.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Tracey McManus, “Scientology Plans Control of Downtown Clearwater for Retail Makeover,” *SPT*, March 6, 2017.

Epilogue

In 2005, Jay Magnar put a \$130,000 down payment on a waterfront condominium in Tampa, Florida, that promised to be the finest in luxury living. With the area's residential market humming, the project's developers needed to distinguish it from the dozens of other condos underway. They turned to real estate tycoon and television personality Donald Trump and asked to lease the rights to his name. The future U.S. president agreed. Trump, along with his new wife, Melania, flew to Tampa to attend the product launch. In his characteristically hyperbolic style, Trump promised that the project would be "so spectacular that it will redefine both Tampa's skyline and the market's expectations of luxury."¹ But the condominium project soon hit snags that would delay its completion indefinitely. Engineers discovered that below the site's surface the limestone bedrock was uneven and likely to collapse into a sinkhole. Costly redesigns coincided with an economic slowdown. The developers began to panic. To make matters worse, Trump demanded more money before cutting ties altogether, a move that officially ended the hope of realizing Trump Tower Tampa.

Investors, including Jay, lost anywhere from a hundred thousand dollars to a couple of million. "I didn't know people could take your money and not build the building," recalled a confounded Jay Magner.² But as this study has shown, dubious

¹ Susan Taylor Martin, "Buyers Still Feel Burned by Donald Trump After Tampa Condo Tower," *SPT*, July 13, 2015.

² Ibid.

condominium projects and shady real estate developers were a major part of the area's history. Put simply, condos had "redefined the skyline" before. But the rise of the condominium was only one part of broader revolution in residential living that shaped the growth of metropolitan Tampa Bay and changed the ways in which people bought, owned, and experienced residential shelter. From the 1920s to the 1980s, boosters, real estate developers, and transplants transformed a small cluster of urban concentrations into one of the fastest growing and most dynamic metropolitan areas in the country. Boosters sold a dream of affordable resort-style living. Residential builder-developers physically created the places where millions of people, from elderly retirees to young families on the make, lived out versions and variations of that dream.

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