The Endless Pier:

A Study of Iconic Architecture via the St. Petersburg Pier

by

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Dedication

For Dave, who will always have my endless love.

Acknowledgments

Writing a thesis requires support from an intellectual community, friends, and family. I want to acknowledge them here. First, I am grateful to Dr. Ray Arsenault and Dr. Gary Mormino, who welcomed me into the Florida Studies Program. Thanks to this program, I now see every issue through the lens of a Florida Studies student — a useful backdrop for understanding American history. This project began with a paper I wrote for Dr. Louis Simon's post modernism class. His course stimulated me to ask how architecture reflected cultural values. Dr. Thomas Hallock, my major professor, guided me toward deeper research and showed me how to apply theoretical ideas to my thesis. I am grateful to Dr. Hallock for his unwavering encouragement, his insightful questions, and his insistence on using primary sources, but most of all for expanding my mind. For their careful reading, friendship, and commitment to my project, I am deeply indebted to Thomas L. Brown and Rita Herron Brown -— thank you! My supporters also included my daughters, Katherine and Hilary; my friends, Deborah O'Hearn and Christine Melecci, each of whom encouraged me to reach this goal. Most of all, words cannot express my gratitude to my husband, Dave, without whose love, support, and patience this thesis would not have been possible.

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Abstract

Over the course of more than a century, the St. Petersburg Pier has become the visual symbol of the city. During that period, the pier has gone through three distinct iterations. First came a functional pier for cargo and passengers. In the 1920s, a grand Mediterranean Revival-style Million Dollar Pier was built. In 1967, it was torn down. In the 1970s, a strikingly modern Inverted Pyramid was built on the same spot. Today, the city seeks a new pier that would be “iconic.” However, the meaning of the term has not been made clear by city leaders. By studying the characteristics of iconic architecture around the world, I created an “Iconic Index” to measure the probable iconicity of a proposed new building. St. Petersburg would benefit by considering the lessons learned during this study; that iconic architecture (1) must exemplify the personality of its location, (2) does not have to be extravagant, (3) equals structure plus user experience, and, (4) can only be created when an iconic vision precedes it.

Chapter One: The Endless Pier

St. Petersburg, Florida, has had a series of downtown municipal piers and accompanying structures since 1889. Each pier has been the center of downtown attention for the waterfront city, especially as more and more elaborate structures were built on the end of the Pier. The latest (the Inverted Pyramid) opened in 1973 and is deteriorating; it is also currently closed to the public. Starting in 2009, the city perceived growing problems with its pier structure and formed a Pier Advisory Task Force to consider "multiple re-development alternatives."[1] The committee was to submit their recommendations by 2010. The task force included a Design Subcommittee whose members addressed logistics for improving the Pier functionality, but it did not specify a style. The following year, under the subheading "Relevant Project Examples," the first sentence states: "The Team shall identify comparable and relevant project examples of major waterfront or iconic structures in urban settings similar to the vision for this project."[2]

What were the requirements? As one might expect for a project of this magnitude, there were numerous stipulations and deadlines. However, one

[1] "Pier Advisory Task Force," (City of St. Petersburg, November 18, 2013), http://bit.ly/1tF884Z, 1.
[2] "Stage 1: Registration and Statement of Qualifications (SOQ)," (City of St. Petersburg, November 18, 2013), http://bit.ly/SqPB0q, 1.

requirement stands out among the seventeen listed: “Building should be an iconic structure, a worthy symbol of our great City.”[3]

But the task force made a crucial mistake. They assumed the public would know what an iconic structure looks like. For many residents, the word “iconic” probably meant a traditional, familiar structure such as the Million Dollar Pier was thought to be during its heyday of the 1930s through the 1950s. Such thinking was, in part, credible; a fundamental meaning of an iconic building is that it is reproduced in many iterations. Many other buildings around the world echoed St. Petersburg’s Million Dollar Pier. But that is not the meaning of iconic in the architectural world. If, in 2009, city leaders had run television commercials and radio spots, displayed billboards, and published pictures in major newspapers of examples of what *they* had in mind when they used the word “iconic” for the design, they might have avoided a huge civic controversy. But that didn’t happen. My goal in this thesis is to explore how this confusion over the word *iconic* came to be and what it means for the future of the city.

At the center of the story is Bill Foster, mayor of St. Petersburg (2010–2014) during the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Under better financial circumstances, he might have launched a publicity campaign to rebuild, refresh, or replace the Pier. But this critical element in the process was overlooked — the public, it was thought, didn’t have the educational background to participate in the process. Despite the fact that the word “iconic” was spelled

[3] “St. Petersburg Pier: Request For Qualifications, Stage 1” (City of St. Petersburg, June 15, 2011), http://www.stpete.org/pierdesign/docs/Pier_RFQ.pdf, 16.

out as a design requirement, no one questioned the meaning of the word in relationship to architecture during the visioning period. In many ways, it was the most critical component for a new pier, but the public couldn't define "iconic" nor grasp the effect such a word would ultimately have. City officials believed they understood the meaning of the word — and certainly the architects did; but the subsequent civic battle over the design proves that the general public was surprised by what others considered an iconic design.

Because of their unfamiliarity with architecture, most people did not question the city's decision to raze the Inverted Pyramid and replace it with something new. When the new designs were unveiled, residents were taken aback because they were unprepared for the proposed, bold new structures. Many felt the decision to rebuild the pier was rushed and forced upon them, and they felt excluded from the visioning process. Subsequently, the city wound up wasting millions of dollars and hundreds of professional hours working through a protracted four-year plan that ultimately failed. Had the mayor invited the public into the discussion, things might have been different. In 2011, a majority of residents voted for a new iconic building, The Lens. On August 28, 2013, however, residents voted to cancel the contract with Michael Maltzan Architects to design the next iconic St. Petersburg Pier.

How did the city council get so far into the process just to terminate the plan? In 2009, Mayor Foster probably looked out his window and saw a problem looming on the horizon: What to do about the crumbling approach to the Inverted

Pyramid (1973 Pier)? Pieces of the three-quarter-mile concrete road had chipped off, and rusted steel rebar poked through the supports. Public safety demanded that something be done. Therefore, Foster assembled a 22-member Pier

Figure 1. The Lens (Image Courtesy of City of St. Petersburg, http://bit.ly/1hwWow1).

either to repair or replace the structure. A six-member design subcommittee with expertise in architecture, urban planning, and urban economics worked throughout 2009 without stirring controversy. Even the City Council's 2010 vote to demolish the Inverted Pyramid did not inspire a public outcry at the time. (Later, ex-city council member Kathleen Ford sued the city to save the Inverted Pyramid. Her suit failed, but it emboldened others either to fight to save the Inverted Pyramid and/or to stop the building of The Lens. Those efforts continue somewhat today.) Consequently, the task force solicited proposals with criteria for the ultimate selection, asking especially for iconic landmark designs.[4] Architectural design firms from all over the world submitted their interpretations, and the city reviewed almost thirty proposals. In 2011, the task force narrowed

[4] Ibid., 3.

down the finalists to three concepts — “The Lens,” “The Wave,” and “The Eye” — based on what residents said they *r*

was eager to move forward in

save $1.5 million in public sub

used to support Pier operation

(Remember, at that time some

were facing bankruptcy.). The

force believed that one of the

final designs would solve prob

give residents what they want

pier, and be iconic.

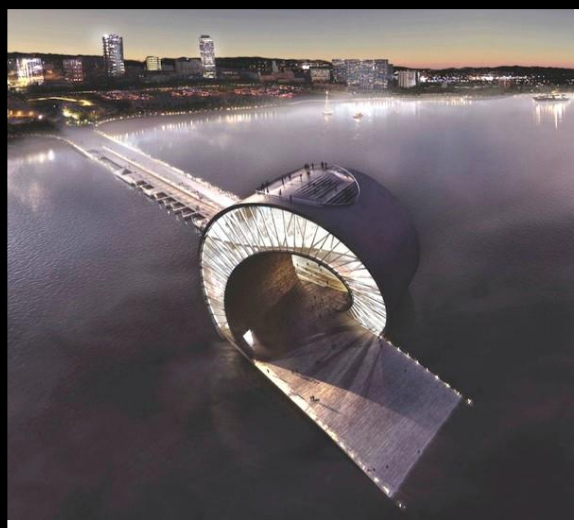

Figure 2. The Wave (Image Courtesy of City of St. Petersburg, http://bit.ly/1hwWow1).

Models of the concepts

public display between Noven December 30, 2011, in an exhibit at the St. Petersburg Museum of ed “Look, Think, Share.” Residents and tourists were invited to pick a spite the fact that all three were iconic buildings (thus, intentionally e), these steps still didn’t generate much comment, despite the vast po ct. At stake was a new, multimillion-dollar project designed to attra d to the city for decades to come, and many in the city were out of to paper reporter Michael Van Sickler wrote: “Wow. This is huge. W re people talking about this?”[5]

[5] Michael Van Sickler, “Interest expe h among architects vying to build St. Petersburg a new Pier,” *St. Petersbu* y 4, 2011, accessed June 2, 2014, http://bit.ly/U88iaF.

By January 2012, Michael Maltzan Architecture's (MMA) design was declared the winner of the popular vote. Called "The Lens," the swooping white

Figure 3. The Eye (Image Courtesy of City of St. Petersburg, http://bit.ly/1hwWow1).

inspired design, The Eye, came in second and third, respectively. When all the votes were tallied, even city officials seemed caught off guard by the result. They suddenly realized that the scope of the project was huge (the $50 million in TIF funds would pay for just Phase One of The Lens), and the city attorney decided it was necessary to draft a new contract from scratch.[6] It would appear that few, if any, were completely cognizant of the implications (and costs) of destroying one pier and building a new one — especially one unlike anything existing anywhere else.

Concurrently, the voices of discontent began to gather and a burst of protest hit as suddenly as a tropical downpour. Within a month, red yard signs demanding that the city *Stop The Lens* began popping up all over town. In fact, many residents when they saw the signs asked, "What's the Lens?" The yard signs intentionally sounded an alarm. Societies use architecture to claim power and, when they are themselves conquered, their loss of status is often reflected

[6] Interview with Lisa Wannemacher (Partner, Wannemacher Jensen Architects), October 10, 2013.

in the built landscape. Conqueri

people destroy the architecture

previous civilization as a means

erasing its existence from recen

memory. Thus, one group claim

space over another even within

block can begin a “holy war” pitt

faction against another. Even a

historian used a religious term w

asked his opinion, “I’m agnostic

comes to the Pier [design],” saic

Wilson to a local professor.

Figure 4. Stop the Lens (Photo by Author).

Furthermore, when the b

and the space it occupies repre

identity of the city, opinions abo n will be polarized. In the past one

hundred years, St. Petersburg’s ecture has been used to erase the

memory of a previous generatio ce it with a new culture. In 1926, a

Mediterranean Revival Pier rein ded Age resort image. The 1973

Inverted Pyramid redefined the e city as youthful and modern. What

will a new iconic pier design say Petersburg into the next millennium?

This question has divided the ci red a crusade of warriors who want to

remodel the existing pier versus ho want to tear it down and rebuild.

This civic war of words might have been avoided if city leaders had been more

Figure 5. Make Lens Not War (Photo by Author).

Petersburg finds itself embroiled in the dispute.

As I address the critical "missing" information in the design selection process and explore how iconic architectural designs have evolved in pier architecture over the past century in St. Petersburg, I will put forth a measure for predicting whether iconic architecture will be a successful fit within the context of a city. First, it's necessary to explain what "iconic architecture" means in a global sense, since St. Petersburg's desire to have an iconic pier is aimed at a global audience of travelers (and, presumably, architectural critics). Following that discussion, I will survey iconic architecture in the state of Florida, since that is the first standard by which an iconic pier in St. Petersburg will be judged.

To discuss the current state of St. Petersburg's Pier requires some background in how architecture has been judged over the ages. The structures that endure for decades, if not centuries, are those that have a special quality. They attract the eye — and they grab the heart. They are not buildings that simply serve a purpose; they are buildings that symbolize a society.

Heart-grabbing Architecture

What is architecture? The question has been asked many times over the centuries, but when famed architect Walter Gropius asked himself the question in 1919, his response was memorable. Architecture, he said, is "surely the crystallized expression of man's noblest thoughts, of his ardor, his human nature, his faith, his religion! …. To have the gift of imagination is more important than all technology, which always adapts itself to man's creative will…. 'Architect,' [is] a name signifying Lord of the Art, who will make gardens of the desert and will heap wonders to the sky."[7]

Gropius raises the prospect that structures can become works of art and that architects can become "lords" of that form of art. In truth, very few buildings qualify as a work of art. Architecture, in the main, is quite basic and utilitarian. Subdivision homes and office parks require an architectural plan, but no design stands out over the many others that exist. Most architecture, thus, is ordinary. Assuming it is structurally sound, the owner can leave it be or raze it; the rest of the community would probably not notice. Yet,

Figure 6. The Chephren Pyramid in Egypt (Photo by Simon Steinberger; Released to Public Domain, http://bit.ly/1n7kkwO).

[7] Ulrich Conrads and Hans G. Sperlich, *The Architecture of Fantasy: Utopian Building and Planning in Modern Times,* trans. Cristiane Casemann Collins and George R. Collins (New York: Fredrick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1962), 137.

[redacted]

Figure 7. The Eiffel Tower (Photo by Gaertringen; Released to Public Domain, http://bit.ly/1i8xzp9).

[redacted] symmetry. These structures challenged the status quo of their times, they were visionary, and they became identified with their locations to such a degree that, today, one cannot image Egypt or France without these architectural icons. Such examples of magical architecture can be found around the globe.

The Colosseum in Rome, a marvel of ancient design and engineering, still reflects the center of Western civilization. [redacted] games staged [redacted] studied for hun[redacted] years (and tod[redacted] recreate in mo[redacted] as *The Gladiat*[redacted] Colosseum wa[redacted] where the grea[redacted] population of R[redacted] could easily re[redacted]

Figure 8. The Colosseum (Photo by Christopher Smy; Released to Public Domain, http://bit.ly/1iJ77sh).

One can imagine that, for Romans, memories were made here — bonding them to the Colosseum in ways that most probably other buildings of the time did not.

The Great Wall of China, dating back to the seventh century B.C., is an

Figure 9. The Great Wall Of China (Photo by Marlies Vringer; Released to Public Domain, http://bit.ly/1iJ7gMg).

opened the gates to worldwide cultural exchange via an East-West trade route. Its amazing length (13,171 miles) was possible because it was built using bricks instead of rammed earth.[8] Here, then, is a structure that used materials in new

[8] Thammy Evans, *The Great Wall of China* (Chalfont St. Peter, Bucks, England: Bradt Travel Guides, 2006), 13.

ways and became, in part, renowned for this inventiveness. When cultures build structures that endure the test of time, serve a special purpose, boost the economy, enhance or define the location and culture, or connect with the emotions of large numbers of people (either home or abroad), architecture rises from the ranks of ordinary structures and becomes iconic.

What is "iconic"? One can begin to appreciate the term by consulting *Oxford English Dictionary*, which lists two top meanings for the word *icon.* First, it is defined as "an image in traditional Byzantine style of Jesus or a holy person that is used ceremonially." Second, it is defined as a "person or thing regarded as a representative symbol of a culture, movement, etc.; someone or something afforded great admiration or respect."[9]

In terms of architecture, Charles Jencks, a widely published expert on iconic architecture, references both definitions when he discussed the concept in 2007.

> The iconic building shares certain aspects both with an iconic object, such as a Byzantine painting of Jesus, and the philosophical definition of an icon, that is, a sign with some factor in common with the thing it represents. On the one hand, to become iconic a building must provide a new and condensed image, be high in figural shape or gestalt, and stand out from the city. On the other hand, to become powerful it must be reminiscent in some ways of unlikely but important metaphors and be a symbol fit to be worshipped, a hard task in a secular society."[10]

This is a worthy starting point for this study.

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[9] "Icon," in *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1317.
[10] Charles Jencks, "An Interview with Architect Charles Jencks," interview by Paul Comstock. *California Literary Review* (online), April 3, 2007: http://bit.ly/1tOHDvU.

Iconic architecture must possess at least two core qualities: (a) it is a new, standout shape, and (b) it is symbolic to the point of attracting a following. Proposed examples of iconic architecture are easy to find. In many cases, we know the name of the person who designed the structure that's being nominated as iconic architecture; in other cases, we don't. There's no Colosseum architect whom people celebrate; yet, as Frank Lloyd Wright once suggested, when someone designs a structure that so well interprets a special time or place, a unique function, or a structural form so artful that it seems poetic, then that architect stands out as "a great original interpreter of his time, his day"[11] — as Gustave Eiffel did, but only after his famous tower took hold of people's hearts. "Starchitects," a relatively new word, aptly describes those who become associated with works of iconic architecture.

At its most powerful, iconic architecture grips the heart. Shah Jahan built the Taj Mahal, in the years between 1632 and 1653, as a monument to his undying love for his wife, Mumtaz Mahal. The tomb combines Persian, Islamic, and Indian styles, and is topped with a massive white marble dome and finial. This building, dedicated to his lost love, has yet to be surpassed. Shah Jahan himself memorialized the red sandstone and white marble mausoleum with these words: "The sight of this mansion creates sorrowing sighs; / And the sun and the moon shed tears from their eyes."[12] His love for his wife created this unique architectural example, but it was the love of thousands of people, from India and

[11] "Frank Lloyd Wright: Quotes," http://bit.ly/1lR2mc8.
[12] "AD [Architecture Daily] Classics: Taj Mahal / Shah Jahan," accessed May 15, 2014, http://bit.ly/1jtsM2j.

beyond, for the monument that elevated it to iconic status. Such examples have become “World Herit

protect natural

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True examples

architecture ar

Figure 10. The Taj Mahal (Photo by Liliana Klatt; Released to Public Domain, http://bit.ly/1n7kXX7).

structures, they

sacred symbol and a culture. Once visited, they are impossible to forget.

Such st architectural world is not conferred by any one person, nor is iconic st ately granted. Iconic status grows as societies grow to know and love The Taj Mahal is centuries old; the Milwaukee Art Museum only c t, even in a short amount of time, some architecture can be seen as bing. Consider these words of St. Petersburg, Florida,

[13] “World Heritage Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), acces 2014, http://bit.ly/1mqoKLh.

author Peter Kageyam[redacted][14]

glimpsed Milwaukee's[redacted]

Kageyama was [redacted]

by the pavilion, [redacted]

by starchitect Sa[redacted]

Calatrava. Kage[redacted]

says the building[redacted]

announces, "We[redacted]

what you expect[redacted]

building demons[redacted]

that Milwaukee [redacted]

Figure 11. The Quadracci Pavilion, Milwaukee Art Museum (Photo by Mark Sadowski; Creative Commons License, http://bit.ly/1ugGRcd).

bold culture bey[redacted]

beer brewery im[redacted]past. Whether a larger number of people over time will agree with Kage[redacted]ulation of the Milwaukee Museum is an open question. Yet his words sh[redacted]al and vibrant certain architectural works can be. When structures[redacted]stand on a geographical site but move into the hearts of people, then a[redacted] measure of iconic stature has been met. However, iconic architectu[redacted]kly become the object of imitation, either in terms of "echoes" built el[redacted] scaled-down reproductions that either emulate, ridicule, or take [redacted]nto new forms.

[14] Peter Kageyama, [redacted] *of Cities* (St. Petersburg, FL: Creative Cities Productions, 2011).

[15] Peter Kageyama, [redacted]f Iconic Architecture," accessed May 15, 2014, http://bit.ly/1lWkpxC

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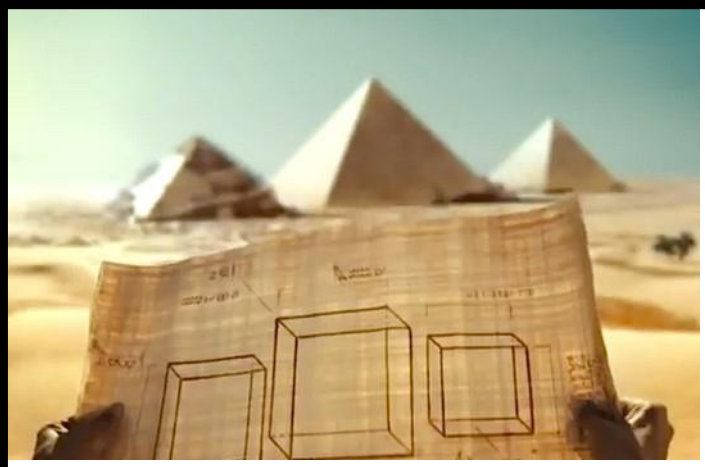

Figure 12. Geico Pyramid "Goof" Ad, The Martin Agency, August 2013, accessed May 28, 2014, http://bit.ly/SSwSvq.

ar that their original concepts are reproduced in

Figure 13. Taj Mahal Lamp (Photo via Elizah Unique Antiques; eBay, http://bit.ly/1pjuifp).

because the icon has been duplicated in reductive ways.

When the great pyramids of Egypt are shown as cube designs that were incorrectly built as triangles in a television ad selling car insurance, one must wonder if the original icon suffers as a result. The Taj M size — holds a splendor that a porcelain lamp

simply can't create; and, pe

numerous scaled-down

reproductions bend the icon

the trite. Lastly, the esteem

might hold for the Eiffel Tow

be lessened when an online

sells salt and pepper shake

image. Of many examples t

be cited in this regard, I cite

three to point out that, when

introduced to the world, an i

Figure 14. "Eiffel Tower Paris France Salt and Pepper Shakers" (Image via Great Finds; Amazon.com, http://amzn.to/1py1qxl).

holds special power and infl vever, an icon can be copied or otherwise

reproduced in so many vari power shrinks simply because the

original concept has becom The cutting edge of the original concept

becomes blunt through over an issue in architecture? Absolutely.

In a later chapter, I w uildings constructed in the United States

that were based on a desig nced a Mediterranean style. So many

buildings were using a "Med Revival" style that it was hard to see any

of them as iconic. In fact, fo ese buildings, we don't even know the

name of the architect as the nly being built as if by cookie cutter rather

than original design.

But, how, really can anyone judge whether a structure is or isn't iconic? My goals in this thesis are threefold. First, I will review briefly great examples of modern iconic architecture, outside of the state, to provide some of the context for this particular "genre" of architecture — and the fascinating people whose lives have become part of their famed designs. Second, I will propose a way to determine whether a structure deserves iconic status by outlining four tests that acclaimed examples of iconic architecture pass, based on my own research of the field. To demonstrate the efficacy of the four tests, I will review numerous examples of iconic architecture from around Florida. Third and last, I will examine a living case, the Municipal Pier in St. Petersburg. This pier, which has had iconic stature in the past, is now about to be either reborn or recast. What will it take for The Pier to become iconic again? I will address that question in detail.

Iconic Architecture — and Architects

Architecture evolved slowly until the Second Industrial Revolution, which introduced the mass production of steel. The French-Swiss visionary architect Charles-Edouard Jenneret Le Corbusier (soon known by only his last name, Le Corbusier) demanded in 1926 that architecture do something more creative with the new explosion of industrial technology. He said, "There is only one profession and only one, namely architecture in which laziness is enthroned, and in which the reference is always to yesterday."[16] "Corbu," as he was popularly known,

[16] Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (New York: Dover, 1985), 101.

realized that technology was changing the way we live our daily lives. New steel frame technology made it possible to use plate glass windows as a tough outer skin. Buildings became lighter, taller, longer, and later grew into skyscrapers. Yet, he also realized that exceptional architecture must first start with an exceptional *idea:* It must express an internal logic that communicates inspiration in a building.

The architectural term for this is *parti,* or a floor plan of organization. It is the spatial hierarchy — the proportion given to each area that must be specific to the building — right down to the shape of the doorknobs.[17] But it's more than that. If you will, the parti is the idea of the architect expressed in structural form. As spelled out by Bud Dietrich:

> The term "parti pris," usually shortened to "parti," literally translates as "departure point," but in architect lingo it most often refers to the project design's big idea. It signifies an architect's overall guiding idea for a design. As such, a parti typically has less to do with technical, financial and utilitarian issues and more to do with view, massing, scale, transparency, opaqueness and other architectural issues. While not every design starts with a parti pris, it's typically better when it does. The overall guiding idea, or departure point, can strengthen the final outcome, as the design won't become confused.[18]

Le Corbusier's architectural genius was communication, and his designs were imbued with this level of thought. His buildings were more than materials; they were ideas that occupied space. He used the perfection of organized

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[17] Matthew Frederick, *101 Things I Learned in Architecture School* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 14.
[18] Bud Dietrich, "What's the Big Idea? In Architecture, It's the Parti Pris," accessed May 15, 2014, http://bit.ly/1jtBc9S.

geometric space to instill a moral force in his designs, giving birth to a new style — Modernism. The beginning of the Modern Movement was known as the Heroic Period, and it lasted from 1917 to 1928. Corbu was the hero in the Heroic; and he attracted followers such as Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, Philip

Figure 15. Cylindrical Silos in Saint-Romain-sur-Cher (Photo by Daniel Jolivet; Creative Commons License, http://bit.ly/1fXjo6q).

Modernism. Each one of these architects rose to international fame with famous buildings tagged to their individual genius. But as Peter Smithson wrote, “Mies is great, but Corb communicates,” adding that Mies could teach you about good architecture, but “Corb could make you leave home.”[19] Imagine grain elevators — as art? Le Corbusier did.

Cylindrical buildings, like grain elevators, have no front or back so they can be pleasing in the landscape. Naked shapes in architecture represented a radical departure from the decorated square and rectangular spaces that the

[19] Carlos David Jacome Polit, “Quito Master Plan: a Revolution Manifesto: And the Corbusian theories as the Catalyst of the Revolution,” (Thesis for Prof. Cor Wagenaar, 2013), accessed on May 15, 2014, http://bit.ly/1mFjEfK.

public had come to expect. Industrial designs often used cylindrical shapes: planes, trains, and grains.

Walter Gropius also imagined the new possibilities for architecture using flexible material. He opened The Bauhaus School in Germany based on the idea that architecture stemming from pure geometry could be elegant as well as environmental. Between 1919 and 1933, many talented young students enrolled in the school — which actually encompassed a whole new philosophy on city planning stressing environmentalism. In just fourteen years, Gropius had made a name for himself and the school. But when the Nazis rose to power, Gropius, van de Rhoe, and designer László Moholy-Nagy were forced out of Germany.

A testament to the influence of Gropius is that his most gifted pupils followed him to London, where he reestablished the school. He deepened the connection of environmental science to Modern architecture during his brief residence in London. Luminaries such as Van de Rohe and Ian McHarg (professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania) were among those who joined the Bauhaus School. McHarg wrote *Design With Nature,* a book that became an urban planning classic and one that promoted environmentally based Modern architecture.[20]

In 1938, Gropius moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he became a professor at Harvard's School of Art and Architecture. In honor of the Transcendentalist essayist, Henry David Thoreau, Gropius built his home near

[20] Ian L. McHarg, *Design with Nature* (Garden City, N.Y: Natural History Press, 1971).

the famed Walden Pond. He used his teaching position to elevate architecture, saying that, “Good architecture should be a projection of life itself and that implies an intimate knowledge of biological, social, technical and artistic problems.”[21] Thanks to the teachings of Gropius and McHarg, younger architects asked how a building could work within the natural setting. That enlightened attitude represented a huge change in the perception of how designers saw the built environment and especially how it impacted the health of urban dwellers. The interest in environmentalism and architecture coincided with the regionalist movement that swept the United States in the 1930s. Regionalist city planners, Lewis Mumford in particular, warned that new industrialization increased air pollution in cities. As a result, tuberculosis spread; soon people realized that the disease was linked to poor air quality. The smog and overcrowding in urban environments inspired many artists to study the environmental wisdom inherent in the art and rituals of rural indigenous populations – especially those in the South and West. The Regionalist fervor started around 1920 and lasted until the end of World War II. Two noted Regionalist architects with heavy Florida connections are William B. Harvard, Sr., and Paul Rudolph — and both can be shown to be devotees of Gropius as well.

In iconic architecture, it really is a small world.

By 1950, Modern architecture had taken off and skyscrapers dominated urban skylines. Glass towers punctured the clouds. Straight lines, reflective glass

[21] Peter Anker, *From Bauhaus to Ecohouse: A History of Ecological Design* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010), 37.

surfaces, open spaces, and polished stone, such as travertine and marble,

defined cities in the second half of

van de Rohe's Seagram's to

building, built in 1958, conve

gray-suit tone of the era. Va

Rohe, in fact, is credited with

the phrase that defined Mod

"Less is more." Fifty-six year

the Seagram Building ranke

on an educational television

channel's list of the "10 Build

Changed America."[22] The R

House (by Frank Lloyd Wrig

ranked fourth; the Seagram

ranked seventh; Dulles Inte

Airport (by Eero Saarien) ra

eighth; and the Venturi Hous

Robert Venturi) ranked ninth

the buildings on the list were

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architects made lasting chan

Figure 16. The Seagram Building in New York City (Photo by Steve Cadman; Creative Commons License, http://bit.ly/1fCTCtQ).

s a case for the argument that Modernist

rican culture. These iconic structures

[22] "10 Buildings That Changed Am ed May 15, 2014, http://bit.ly/TVWcRZ.

also recall the words of Frank Lloyd Wright (previously quoted) that the best architects must be interpreters of the age in which they live.

If the best iconic architecture makes a lasting impression and accurately reflects the zeitgeist of the age, Modernists concentrated their efforts on the urban environment and overlooked established neighborhood cultures. This blind spot exposed a fissure within Modernism. Furthermore, the person who pointed this out was an unlikely critic. In 1961, a journalist, "housewife," and amateur city planner and activist, Jane Jacobs, published *The Death and Life of American Cities.*[23] She argued that clearing areas that the city had designated as "urban blight" and replacing single-family residences with multi-storied public housing apartment complexes would destroy the fabric of fragile urban communities. She reported that, even though a segment of the population in these areas was desperately poor, because of the diverse levels of income in the neighborhood, those at even the lowest level would find support from long-time residents.

Just five years later, in 1966, Venturi (then a Yale student) published "Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture," supporting the conclusion put forth by Jacobs: the concept that simple architectural solutions could solve complex urban problems was flawed. Venturi builds a strong case that modern life depends on a "complex and contradictory order that is valid and vital for our architecture as an urbanistic whole."[24]

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[23] Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961).
[24] Robert Venturi, "Complexity and Contradicition in Architecture," *The Museum of Modern Art Papers on Architecture Series* (1966; 2nd edition, 1977), accessed May 15, 2014, http://designtheory.fiu.edu/readings/venturi_complexity_complete.pdf, 87.

Architectural theorist and critic, Charles Jencks, says Venturi's paper is the "second major treatise to start defining Postmodern architecture."[25] The publication condemned Modernism and pointed out the hypocrisy that had crept into the movement. For instance, van de Rohe's Seagram Building was said to represent the economic power of a multinational corporation. But the biggest blow to Modernism occurred in 1972 when the city of St. Louis, Missouri, decided to blow up the Pruitt-Igoe Housing Project because it became a monument to the failure of public housing. Jencks cited the event as the date and time of the death

Figure 17. Scene from the Pruitt-Igoe Collapse Series (Photo Courtesy U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research; Released to Public Domain, http://bit.ly/1wR78zh).

[25] Charles Jencks, *The Story of Postmodernism: Five Decades of the Ironic, and Critical in Architecture*, 2nd. ed., (Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, 2012), 23.

By 1973, Postmodernist architecture filled in the void at warp speed. An inaugural example was the Australian Opera House in Sydney, begun in 1957 and still under construction in 1965. The architect, Jørn Utzøn, did not live to see its completion in 1973. However, when finished, it was immediately recognized as an exceptional work of art. UNESCO called it "a daring and visionary experiment that has had an enduring influence."[26] The unique structure even inspired Modern architect, Louis Kahn, to write a Shakespeare-esque love poem that included the line, "The sun did not know how beautiful its light was until it was reflected off this building." The white sails, shells, fish, waves, and other waterfront metaphors became "enigmatic signifiers" for the building, and it is now iconic of Sydney.[27]

In succeeding years, the term "enigmatic signifier" appeared more often in critical reviews of architecture. Jencks invented the term to mean symbolism that is dual coded – a mixture of meanings that both average and elite populations can read. For instance, in classic architecture, a Greek pediment employs a mixture of meanings with the metaphorical reference to Greek mythology (Medusa) framed under a roof pediment. Everyone can understand the cultural references at least on some level. So, when Jencks used the term enigmatic signifier, he was saying that Americans can "read" and understand columns, domes and arches and see symbols of power: this is the architecture of banks and government buildings. In modern architecture, signs and symbols particular

[26] "Sydney Opera House," The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), accessed May 28, 2014, http://bit.ly/TU88DX.
[27] "Happy Birthday Jørn Utzon," accessed April 28, 2014, http://bit.ly/1pqdp2y.

to specific cultures no longer apply. Jencks argued that viewers make their own connections within their cultural experience to read the curves, shiny surfaces,

Figure 18. Sydney Opera House (Photo via PublicDomainPictures; Released to Public Domain, http://bit.ly/1iNHVLe).

e white overlapping gables metaphorically suggest fins, hoods, sails, or shells – things associated with the waterfront. Still the building conveys an artistic phistication and playfulness.

It appears Frank Gehry followed Jørn Utøn's example when he built the uggenheim Museum in 1997 in Bilbao, Spain. The design caused a seismic ift in the world of architecture. Bilbao made a huge media splash in the city d, in effect, transformed an industrial port city into an international tourism

destination. People who before might not have wanted to tour the region were suddenly booking flights. The economic impact of all the new architecture-driven tourism was so powerful that it became known as the "Bilbao Effect."[28] As a result, in the past twenty years, the quest to construct an iconic building has changed the fabric of many cities. Iconic architecture is now assumed to be an investment, and many mayors want a "Gehry" building to draw in tourist dollars. According to Tobias Meyer, the director of contemporary art at Sotheby's, "The I-word works wonders.

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Figure 19. Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain (Photo by Carlos Wilde; Released to Public Domain, http://bit.ly/1ky2kqI).

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world-class fam

e same few artists compete for a limited number of

[28] Charles Jencks, *uilding* (New York: Rizzoli International, 2005), 8.
[29] Ibid.
[30] "10 Buildings Th merica," accessed May 15, 2014, http://bit.ly/TVWcRZ.

multimillion-dollar projects. The result is that starchitects breathe the rarefied air of celebrity status. Gehry's Bilbao not only ignited an economic debate, but it also ignited a fierce theoretical debate among intellectuals questioning the meaning of iconic architecture. In fact, that is the impetus for this thesis. Iconic architecture cannot only be contained within big cities, wide-open spaces, waterfronts, or prairies. More often a shiny twist-shaped building appears in the middle of a city block in a small town. Some are complaining that these bold buildings destroy the character of these towns. As this short review of architecture in modern times suggests, it is hard to separate iconic architecture from those who designed it. Even more difficult is to separate the impact that iconic structures have on people and places.

Iconic — or Distracting — Architecture?

Though the happy outcome of Gehry's Bilbao efforts is now legendary, there are times when attempts at iconic architecture can cause a distracting glare in a city. Not every attempt at iconic architecture achieves fame for the architect and fortune for its host city. Some critics, urban planners, and city council members shield their eyes when someone puts forth an architectural drawing for a bold and dazzling new structure. This is not a new phenomenon. Old iconic buildings, such as the Eiffel Tower, a structure that was first met with indignation, eventually became a point of pride. It sometimes takes a lengthy period to appreciate art.

So how do citizens judge now whether or not to invest in iconic architecture? Such structures cost millions of tax dollars to build — for example, Bilbao cost $100 million. But, as Jencks writes: "[A]fter Bilbao, the trickle of icons became a flood, the mixed metaphors poured through it — the I-word set the market price for landmarks."[31] Thus, many small and medium cities seeking revitalization can find themselves with advocates for iconic architecture as well as fierce opponents to it. Thus, these cities get caught up in the debate. Traditionalists often oppose iconic architecture on the grounds that it costs too much. They argue that the Bilbao effect is too risky and may backfire, making the city a laughingstock.

Nonetheless, iconic architecture remains the most talked-about architecture, perhaps because those designing it discuss the structures in such provocative terms. According to Norwegian designer, Kjetil Thorsen, and New Yorker, Craig Dykers, who together designed the Oslo Opera House (2008), the building had to "successfully manage the complex psychology of public space, it had to include three zones characterized as 'the head' (desks, drawing tables, and computers); 'the stomach' (a commercial kitchen) and 'the hands' (workshops in the back)."[32] The building included many tall windows to take advantage of the view (the eyes?). Keeping in mind that this is a theater, the architects intentionally separated the walkway from the wall edges to create a dramatic entrance. Visitors can watch 650 workers "design sets, build scenery,

[31] Jencks, *Iconic Building*, 12.
[32] David Owen, "The Psychology of Space: Can a Norwegian firm solve the problems of Times Square?" *The New Yorker* (January 21, 2013), 27.

sew costumes, and mix fake blood." A guide who conducts tours of the building

Figure 20. Oslo's Opera House (Photo by VisitOSLO; Creative Commons License, http://bit.ly/1mTCNt3).

Postmodernist designers have increasingly designed whole buildings as one big enigmatic signifier. The exteriors are sculptural and refer to other art; for instance, the sumptuous curves in figure drawings. Le Corbusier was actually an artist as well as architect: he drew elaborate sketches, and his paintings are on display in prominent museums. But architects must also solve problems. Thorsen and Dykers had previously accepted a commission to build a modern replacement for the Library of Alexandria, which burned in 48 B.C. The "main design challenge," Thorsen said, "was to find a way to honor the ancient library's legend without seeming to displace it." The displacement, or the outright erasure,

[33] Ibid., 28.

of history is what cultural critic, Fredric Jameson, fears most about iconic architecture. In 1991, when postmodern architecture was clearly becoming a strong urban and economic trend, Jameson warned that it was erasing all references to the past in the built environment, thus creating the disappearance of a sense of history. He speculated that if contemporary society had begun to live in a perpetual present, the effect would be to make it easier to forget the past.[34]

This debate between the pros and cons of iconic architecture brings me back to the smaller, but intense, issues that have been simmering in St. Petersburg, Florida, for many years. The Inverted Pyramid, for forty years the most iconic building in the city, is a problem. It is decaying. Its Bayside location causes the foundation to corrode with every salty wave. City leaders and citizens must decide what to do.

- Should they return to the past and build a structure reminiscent of what was popular in the 1950s?
- Should they try to revamp the structure in place now?
- Or should they take a stab at something new that strives to be a Floridian version of Gehry's Bilbao museum?

These are not simple questions to answer. It's impossible to discuss St. Petersburg's Pier without reviewing the context of iconic architecture throughout Florida as a whole.

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[34] Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 170.

To do that, it is critical that one have some measure of what is and is not iconic. After my own review of iconic structures around the world, I believe that one must ask four questions to determine whether a Florida building is iconic:

1. Does the building point distinctly away from the status quo and accurately point towards a desired future as expressed by civic values or the current city leadership?
2. Does the building serve a purpose relevant to its exact location?
3. Does the building pass the culture test? For instance, does it add historic, artistic, or local value to the location?
4. Finally, can a building that breaks the comfortable status quo become a beloved icon in a city for residents and tourists alike over the next fifty years?

The St. Petersburg Pier provides an excellent opportunity to apply these measures, because the Pier has been built and rebuilt twice in the same place (but in vastly different iterations) within an eighty-year span. However, other Florida structures have met these tests. Are they iconic?

Chapter Two: The Essence of "Iconic"

> The urbanism of our concern, everyday urbanism, is continually preoccupied with change, that is, with continually adapting the physical milieu to the evolving needs of a changing society.
>
> — *Shadrach Woods, 1968*[1]

The term "iconic architecture" brings up over twenty-six million hits on a Google search (the term "iconic" has ten million more than that!). No surprise, then, that those civic leaders deciding the future of the downtown pier in St. Petersburg have included "iconic" as a requirement for any proposed structure. They obviously desire that any new structure stand out. Time, then, to explore the complicated meaning of the word *iconic* when applied to architecture. Strictly speaking, the word refers to an *icon,* an image that stands for something larger. Originally, the word conveyed the original Greek meaning for ***e****ikōn:* a likeness or image, usually of someone with religious significance. Today, the word is used much more widely, such as a donkey representing the American Democratic party (or, elephant for the Republicans) — or the apple with a bite out of it representing the electronics firm of the same name. Icons are often mentioned as

[1] Eric Mumford, *Defining Urban Design: CIAM Architects and the Formation of a Discipline, 1937–69* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 176.

well in the worlds of sports, entertain

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There is even a 1930s postcar

advertises St. Petersburg's Mu

Pier in overtly religious terms, l

its iconic status.

Fifty years ago, architec

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banks to occupy the corner lots

"read" the exterior of buildings

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architectural cues. For example

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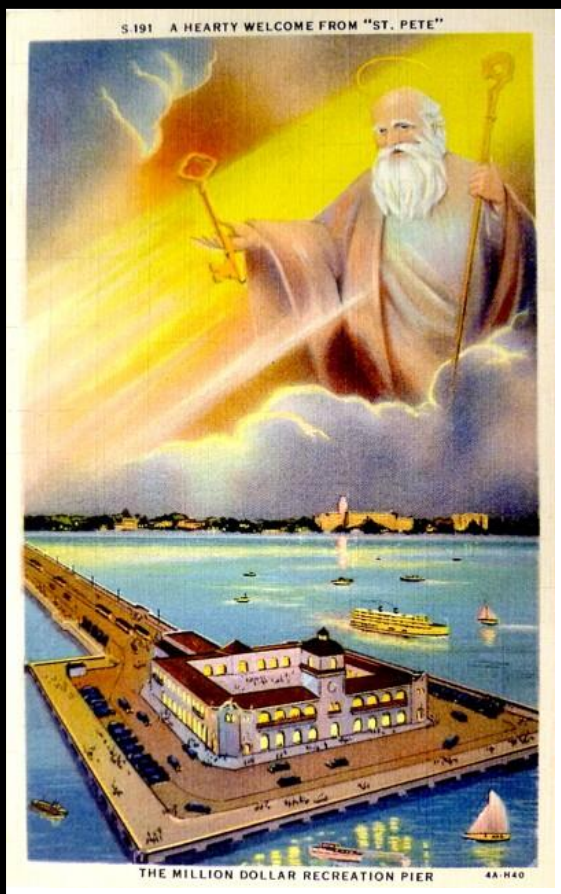

Figure 21. "A Hearty Welcome from 'St. Pete,'" circa 1935 (Image Courtesy of St. Petersburg Museum of History).

saw stained glass windows framed in

a spiritual place. Such familiar cues

we have lived or visited, and they

s as well. Starting around 1980,

first to disrupt our comfort zone to

the changing nature of people's lives.

Visionaries sense fundamental changes in our social environment before the general population does, and they begin to construct the future world; they do not reconstruct the past. The past fifty years have been both stimulating and chaotic; this is perhaps one reason why iconic architecture has become popular. To recall Frank Lloyd Wright, some “poetic” architects have been eager to interpret where society is headed.

Thoughtful and knowledgeable architectural critics have mulled over the proliferating, ever-taller, ever-more sculptural, ever-more spacious iconic buildings. Yet, not every oddly shaped building can be considered an icon. For example, many cities have enormous sports stadiums, libraries, and even parking garages that seldom, if ever, beckon travelers to witness their architectural grandeur. So how do cities determine if there is something special about one building claiming to be iconic over another making the same claim?

Some architectural critics and commentators assess the iconicity of a building based purely on functionalism — how it serves those who dwell within it; some measure it by how well it fits the culture — the ambiance of the community or the aptness of its blending in with the environment. Yet, others gauge it by a viewer’s spontaneous emotional response — whether the building takes away one’s breath or stamps an indelible image in one’s memory. After eighteen months studying iconic architecture and the opinions of many respected cultural critics, I have derived a set of criteria (sixteen measures divided into four categories) to use when trying to classify a building as truly iconic.

Iconic in History

Before explaining my own metrics for iconicity, some historical context on iconic architecture might be helpful. Starting with the transition from the Old World to the New World (which I roughly divide by the year 1500), architecture seems to have traditionally acted as a beacon pointing toward the future. Colosseums, pyramids, and cathedrals could be iconic for how they celebrated the time in which they were built. However, buildings and structures increasingly were seen as a way to bring forth a sense of the future. A widely familiar structure helps to make the point vivid.

In France during the last half of the nineteenth century, the style of buildings was typified by the Louvre Palace. The Louvre was a regal classical design, one that Napoleon probably would have found very much to his taste. The Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century pushed humanity toward a new way of life. Gustave Eiffel used the 1889 World's Fair to represent the new *futuristic* world by building a tower the same height as an 81-story building.[2] His tower incited plenty of criticism even from artists of the day. Guy de Maupassant called it a "giant and disgraceful elephant."[3] In the words of Ulrich Conrads and Hans G. Sperlich, "Quite some time had to pass before wonder at the engineers' virtuosity had subsided and until these great accomplishments were understood to be not merely technical feats, but actually works of structural beauty, of unique spatial values, capable of inducing a mood — in short, until the emotional content

[2] "Tour Eiffel," Architects, Architecture, Archituul, accessed May 28, 2014, http://bit.ly/1hAsWFi.
[3] Caroline Weber, "Lightning Rods and Sideshows," *The New York Times* (May 29, 2009), accessed May 28, 2014, http://nyti.ms/1mIbzHb.

of this structure could be appreciated." Conrad and Sperlich mention technological achievement, purpose (to point towards new engineering possibilities), emotional content, and finally the time it took to appreciate the tower as more than an engineering stunt. Thus, even artists need the perspective that only comes with time to recognize something of value — they depend on temporal distance.

Another example of iconic visionary architecture that changed the way we define our built environment occurred when Spaniard Antonio Gaudí, in 1898, launched an "extreme attack" on nineteenth-century architecture.[4] He used a new plastic material, concrete, to create a fluid, flexible, "completely cohesive and flowing sculptural form."[5] Scholarly articles have been written about his use of concrete in building the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, Spain. Probably not coincidentally, a new form of painting, Cubism, also emerged at this time that challenged people to imagine a new way of perceiving space.

The revolution in perception continued well into the 20th century. Between 1930 and 1972, students of Bauhaus design felt a moral obligation to transform building practices in industrialized metropolitan centers. Factories, with their air-polluting smokestacks, were zoned out of city centers and replaced with parks and green spaces (which also improved quality of life). The Bauhaus designers valued scientific innovation for the dual advantages of building efficiency and enhanced nature conservation. Buildings were intentionally stripped down to the

[4] Conrads and Sperlich, *Architecture of Fantasy,* 9.
[5] Ibid., 10.

bare bones to expose steel frames. This was called “honest” construction. In a twist from previous attitudes, the placement of the building in its natural surroundings became an integral part of the design (as opposed to making the landscape conform to the building). The Bauhaus approach broke an architectural mold by ignoring the constraints of a city grid. Triangles, circles, glass towers, and rectangles stacked one upon another dominated the landscape. At the beginning, people reacted with anger, resentment, and disgust. Yet, the buildings were not torn down. In fact, cities grew taller, and often doubled the size of their skylines in the reflections of their avant-garde skyscrapers.

City governments seeking low-cost housing were attracted to the simplicity of geometric forms. The architecture made housing efficient, cheap, and healthy places to build for the masses. St. Louis, Missouri, invested so heavily that it became a test case for social transformation through architecture. The Pruitt-Igoe public housing complex situated within the city of St. Louis raised hopes that safe and affordable housing was, at last, achievable. The complex was supposed to be an example for other big cities. Unfortunately, almost immediately after the project opened, the buildings fell into disrepair and eventually became a breeding ground for crime. As a result, it was branded a gigantic failure of the utopian ideals espoused by Modernists. While the demolition was used to mark the end of modern architecture, Modernism died a much slower and prolonged death. The movement faded more than it exploded in the demolition of Pruitt-Igoe.

In time, the sharp corners of geometric design revered by Modernists died — and with them, Functionalism (with a capital "F"). The Institute of Advanced Urban Studies (IAUS) replaced the Bauhaus ethic. A group of thirty-five up-and-coming students filled the void with new ideas of iconic architecture. IAUS, founded in 1963 by Colin Rowe and headed by Peter Eisenman, included now famous designers Zaha Hadid, Rem Koolhaas, and Daniel Libeskind. Theoretically, the students were encouraged to develop their own highly individualized theory of design based on principles stemming from a wider worldview. IAUS students were taught to develop their career by developing their own hero-narrative story.[6] Instead of salvaging the good parts of Modernism, IAUS chose to reinvent iconic architecture. And thus the field split into camps of architects competing for control of the artistic, theoretical, functional, social, and emotional temperament of the times. (They were also competing for state-funded patronage for the buildings of their dreams. Iconic buildings are usually very expensive projects.)[7]

By the 1990s, theorists formed postmodern and post-postmodern camps and each became entangled in lofty rhetoric to define the importance of symbolism, historicism, and functionalism — and how such qualities can be conveyed via the intricacies of design. While somewhat esoteric, an overview of this argument is important in order to demonstrate that iconic architectural design stems from a theoretical base. For the last twenty-plus years, there has been a

[6] Miles Glendinning, *Architecture's Evil Empire?: The Triumph and Tragedy of Global Modernism* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2010), 57.
[7] Ibid., 70.

rather intense debate over what could and should be considered true iconic architecture. Must it fulfill a gra

people with its flash and

architecture or could it go

every boundary of traditio

tastefulness and still be

acceptable? And, beyond

comes these fundamenta

questions: who decides –

what criteria? One archite

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offer a lesson in this.

Dutch architect an

journalist Rem Koolhaas'

book, *Delirious New York*

redefined urban planning

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movement which is, in al

so called Modern Movem

which refuses to discreet

Figure 22. Rem Koolhaus (Featured on “Architectural Scope,” http://bit.ly/1riZ5uB).

m, Expressionism, Surrealism, Dadaism,

“In other words, Manhattanism is a

respect, the opposite and counterpart of the

horibund amalgam of puritanical dogma

y, confronting us daily with its embarrassing

agonies."[8] By 1995, Koolhaas "argued that any kind of ideal urban order was a theatrical sham." He insisted that "progress, identity, the city and the street are things of the past."[9]

In 2003, Koolhaas made a dramatic about-face in a guest editorial for *Wired* entitled "Delirious no more."[10] He called for architecture to provide a real "bridge between the Modernist Form follows Function and incorporating environmental concerns, technology and formal invention as integral to a single discourse."[11] He was reacting to how the language of architectural design has been appropriated by the allure of capitalism — such as the London-based architectural firm that used the acronym "FAT" (Fashion, Architecture, Taste),[12] placing architecture emphatically between fashion and taste. Without ethical boundaries as guideposts, iconic architecture had become a kind of "performance art" within a city.[13] The battle was over structures that might have been iconic had they been of, by, and for the community in which they were located. However, these structures were architectural sore thumbs, sticking out from their surroundings.

One example of this is The Public, an iconic building located within the English Midlands town of West Bromwich, a socioeconomically poor area. The

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[8] Roberto Gargiani, *Rem Koolhaas OMA The Construction of Merveilles,* trans. Stephen Piccolo (Lausanne, Switzerland: Routledge, 2008), 26.
[9] Glendinning, *Architecture's Evil Empire?,* 64.
[10] Rem Koolhaus, "Delirious No More," last modified June 2003, http://wrd.cm/1lSMXrR.
[11] Glendinning, *Architecture's Evil Empire?,* 74.
[12] "The End of FAT: Architecture's Biggest Pranksters Call It Quits — Boyband Style" last modified December 17, 2013, http://bit.ly/SSThZw.
[13] Glendinning, *Architecture's Evil Empire?,* 76.

massive black building distorts the purpose of public art, architecture, social honesty, and financing. Costing sixty-three million pounds (approximately $96 million) to construct, this building (says architectural critic Miles Glendinning) is an example of the alienation of architecture from the culture it supposedly represents. This spectacular building has no practical use within the poor "host"

Figure 23. The Public (Photo by David Waterson; Creative Commons License, http://bit.ly/1llf3gp).

Furthermore, civic leaders within public organizations, community groups, d professionals oversaw its development. Thus, The Public would appear to be uilding designed for someone, but not for the public itself! For Glendinning,

oe Holyoak, "Why this public 'box of old delights' needs to keep some of its meaning," *ningham Post* (online), January 9, 2014, http://bit.ly/1n9zTOW.

the real issue is not that the building tears apart the fabric of this small town; the problem is that it was publically financed. He believes (and fears) that small towns all over the world may follow this example because they feel the capitalistic pressure to brand their cities with iconic architecture.

Required: An Enigmatic Signifier?

As early as 1950, Charles Jencks dubbed LeCorbusier's Ronchamp church (the chapel of Notre Dame du Haut) as iconic based on its smooth, curving shape and its unusual roofline.[15] Corbu did not rely on computer-aided-design programs to render this sculptural building; it is an original work of art and it stands alone as an "enigmatic signifier." That is the essence of the definition of iconic from Jencks: A building must convey something special, something that is almost impossible to talk about. He says, "Ronchamp, without religious iconography (crosses, arches, stained glass windows), is a cosmic celebration."[16] He goes on to say, "It is as if some mystical interpretation existed for every shape and sign while the language, which would unlock their secrets, had been lost."[17] Some feel that this helps to define iconic architecture; others would say that this only confuses the matter more. Nonetheless, there is undeniably something special about Ronchamp. (One can take a virtual tour of the building photographically via http://bit.ly/1mLuLUn.) My sense is that most would label it

[15] Jencks, *The Iconic Building,* 56.
[16] Ibid., 63.
[17] Ibid.

“iconic” because it so distinctly broke with the norms of the time — and, of course, it endured to become a much talked-about and much-visited attraction.

When Jencks introduced the term “enigmatic signifier,” it challenged me to contemplate — and [redacted] quantitatively a[redacted] qualitatively to h[redacted] determine whet[redacted] indeed, iconic. T[redacted] mind, Roncham[redacted] any other struct[redacted] should meet so[redacted] agreed-upon se[redacted] criteria in order [redacted] designated as i[redacted]

Figure 24. Ronchamp, France (Photo by Scarletgreen; Creative Commons License, http://bit.ly/1jzLl4D).

architecture. As[redacted]bout this, a few ideas started to emerge. I asked myself in what v[redacted]amp was iconic. It was easy to fill a page of handwritten not[redacted]rbu’s masterwork pointed to the future of architectural design (curving[redacted]rface — unique for the time). Second, its purpose as a spiritual place h[redacted]ore sacred over time. Third, people seem to have a strong emotiona[redacted]o this building; the image of the building doesn’t easily fade from the m[redacted]one is seeing it via photographic images. Finally, its

design befits its pastoral setting: a grassy, French hillside. It *fits.* All of these elements reinforce the others, giving the building the power of an icon.

Many buildings in Florida have also been called iconic. Yet, a claim that a building is iconic does not necessarily make it so. A review of the past couple of years reveals that I have toured forty-five different “iconic” buildings in Florida. By studying their characteristics, it occurred to me to create an index of iconicity — which also seemed the best way to analyze the intense debate over St. Petersburg’s municipal pier and the decades-long quest to have an iconic structure on St. Petersburg’s waterfront. In the next section, I will provide a jumble of characteristics that, based on my research, invoke the label “iconic.”

Florida Iconic

Finding buildings in Florida that are considered iconic is relatively easy. The Florida chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) issues annual awards and lists its choice of best buildings. The *Orlando Sentinel* also profiles thirty-two images of the “Best Architecture in Florida” (http://bit.ly/1iTto5u). Newer buildings, such as the Tampa Museum of Art, are attracting a great deal of attention, but there are many vintage structures worth inspection. A quick glance around the state proves that Florida has always attracted visionaries looking for a proving ground for their creations. Ubiquitous examples are the numerous vacation resorts originally designed to emulate European castles. This style is known as Mediterranean Revival (“Med Rev”).

However, architects aiming for the iconic often go counter to prevailing trends. When wealthy northerners first discovered south Florida as a tropical getaway, architects rushed to build Med Rev resort hotels on Miami Beach. One developer imagined opulence as excessive as the Palace of Versailles. Think gilded ornate furniture, button-tufted upholstered chairs, tassels on curtain tie-backs, clear crystal chandeliers reflected in the highly polished intricate parquet floors, rooms as large as grand halls, windows framed with silk and damask curtains. This is the image that architect Morris Lapidus knew the developer had in mind when he asked him to design the Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami Beach in a French Provincial style. Lapidus also knew that style was completely wrong for the beach setting. He knew it was outdated, and he knew the developer wanted, beyond all else, an impressive resort. “To begin with, it had to be fabulous, It had to live up to this dream picture, the dream drawn by advertising people,” he said. “All right, I’ll design a fabulous movie set,” said Lapidus to himself.[18] He knew that “Most [people] get their culture not from school, not from their travels, but from the movies, the cinema.”[19] Thus, the Fontainebleau was created with the parti of Lapidus at the top of his mind. He wanted to create the kind of hotel those in the movie world might imagine if they desired to film a script with the ideal beach hotel as the context for the story. “A movie hotel” was the idea that informed the shape and structure of the building.

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[18] John W. Cook and Heinrich Klotz, *Conversations with Architects: Philip Johnson, Kevin Roche, Paul Rudolph, Bertrand Goldberg, Morris Lapidus, Louis Kahn, Charles Moore, Robert Venturi & Denise Scott Brown* (New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1973), 156.
[19] Ibid.

Figure 25. The Fontainebleau (Photo Courtesy of State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, http://bit.ly/1lF1rOM).

Upon seeing the Modernist S-shaped building, which opened in 1954, Frank Lloyd Wright called it an "anthill."[20] Newspapers quickly reprinted his insult. Lapidus defended his design by saying his purpose was to help guests enjoy themselves and to provide a financially viable hotel. In 2012, 2.8 million people voted the Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami Beach the best building in the state of Florida. According to the AIA: "From the bold sweep of its tower to the Baroque curves of its idiosyncratic pedestal base, the Fontainebleau broke the mold of the Miami Beach hotel. The main level, comprising theatrically conceived public spaces and entertainment facilities, was built over a ground-level shopping concourse that fused hotel design with new retailing trends."[21]

[20] Ibid., 155.
[21] "Florida Architecture: 100 Years. 100 Places.," accessed on May 15, 2014, http://bit.ly/1kpxLGs.

What made this building so successful? For one thing, it challenged the status quo of the old world Med Rev style that was popular. It was modern and responded to the culture of the time – the cinema."[22] Lapidus managed to combine seemingly incongruous features in a successful new way, such as putting a "French formal garden right next to a sleek sweeping modern pool deck."[23] The logic behind some of these design decisions is simply profit-driven — "make the customer happy." How did he know he was successful? He measured success in profit revenues. Hotels built by Lapidus continue to attract tourists. His son, Alan Lapidus, said in 1973 that his hotels never lost money.[24] The Fontainebleau Hotel still appeals to the secret desire of the common person who dreams of living a movie star life. That's why it won first place as the most popular building in Florida in 2012.

Hotels have a clear capitalistic purpose, and their design reflects the profit motive. As one might expect, deep-pocketed multinational corporations funded some of the more extreme iconic designs of the 1990s. Public projects, such as college campuses, need the infusion of millions of public dollars for the actual nuts and bolts, beams and foundations to construct the buildings. In the early twentieth century, Florida was treated as open frontier. For the Modernists, the state became a tabula rasa — essentially a rare opportunity for architecture practices to highlight the logic and beauty of designs created to suit the environment. Between 1936 and 1951, the Bauhaus School of designers

[22] Cook and Klotz, *Conversations with Architects,* 156.
[23] Ibid., 155.
[24] Ibid.

followed Lewis Mumford's directive to plant the seeds of a new place-based culture.[25]

Frank Lloyd Wright was one of the first to experiment with architecture that was designed to fit the landscape. Some private religious institutions fund non-profit projects, and Frank Lloyd Wright's "Child of the Sun" structure clearly became an example of iconic Florida. His collection of buildings in Lakeland is now respected as a world-class example of the architect's work. In 1938, Methodist minister and Florida Southern College President, Ludd Myrl Spivey, persuaded Wright to build a "great educational temple" in Lakeland.[26] Between 1941 and 1958, Wright built twelve structures. Each of the campus buildings is designed to take advantage of the environment surrounding Lake Hollingsworth. The geometrically shaped openings on the exterior capture the sun's rays and fill the interior with bright light. Dramatic shadows create interest on the walkways between the buildings. Abstract images referring to the orange groves surrounding Lake Hollingsworth are stamped into the concrete supports.

The design of the Florida Southern campus represents a particular period of regionalism in American history. The architecture made the statement that the building was shaped by the dictates of local traditionalism and an organic sense of place — Child of the Sun represented a balanced and cultivated life, as opposed to a "mine and move" philosophy sweeping cities.[27] The website

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[25] Robert L. Dorman, *Revolt of the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America 1920–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 25.
[26] "Florida Southern College, Frank Lloyd Wright," accessed May 15, 2014, http://bit.ly/1kN8jKE.
[27] Dorman, *Revolt of the Provinces,* 25.

dedicated to this work notes, “Wright felt most college campuses were architectural failures and wanted the opportunity to design an entire campus from scratch. Wright believed his concept of Organic Architecture would unite the individual structures with their environment and as a group enabling them to work together to create a whole better than the sum of its parts.”[28]

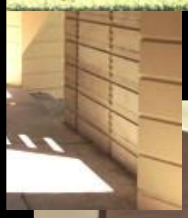

Figure 26. Three
Florida Southern
(Photos by the A

“Florida Southern College cture of Frank Lloyd Wright,” http://bit.ly/1kpC2tm.

President Spivey must have known that the new educational campus would have to be bold to stand out in a remote part of the country — especially since it was competing with the ivy-covered walls of famous northeastern institutions. Most would assess Wright's Florida-based climate design as a resounding success. It did put Lakeland on the map as a new cultural center in Florida. (It ranked eighth on the 2012 listing of AIA's top Florida architecture for the last one hundred years.)

The breakthrough of

the attention of other

designers, including Y

School of Art and

Architecture's Paul Ru

He designed Sarasota

School (1958 to 1960

again, the tropical set

guided the design. "A

esplanade leads up to

monumental south-fa

the sky-lit classroom

Rudolph cited Le Cor

inspiration.

Figure 27. Sarasota High School (Photo Courtesy of Mary Ann Sullivan).

the soaring lobby space, which offers access to the west and the auditorium to the east."[29]

ite d' Habitation" as a principal source of

[29] Christopher Domin and *Paul Rudolph: The Florida Houses* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005)

Rudolph's colleague, William B. Harvard Sr., designed a number of iconic buildings in St. Petersburg. In 1953 he redesigned the Williams Park band shell, and in 1959 he built the Pasadena Community Church. At the time, Pastor Dr. J. Wallace Hamilton implored the board to applaud this "unique" architecture that would "give the [two thousand members] a feeling of being part of the worship service."[30]

In 1965, I. M. Pei designed New College's Residence Halls in Sarasota to

Figure 28. New College (Photo Courtesy of David Pierson).

conversation. It embodies a culture that values open-mindedness and free exchange of ideas. "Rumor has it that Pei designed the dorms to be labyrinth-like. It was said that 'First Years' would get lost and meet other 'First Years' and become friends that way. My friend, Candice, and I actually met that way my first year so there may be something to that. I would

[30] Guy V. Aldrich, *Seven Miles Out: The Story of Pasadena Community Church* (Tampa: Florida Grower Press, 1960), 190.

say the Pei dorms encourage community and interaction whereas the other dorms, while typically nicer, don't have as much of that community."[31] New College is a nationally recognized liberal arts college that has built its reputation on these intellectual principles. Pei's Residence Hall is the pride of the New College campus.

The Iconic Index

Not mentioned in this review of iconic buildings in Florida is the municipal pier in St. Petersburg. That structure (or, in truth, series of structures) is the focus of the rest of this study. The Pier, as an entity, has always had reason to be considered iconic. The location alone of the Pier and its three-quarter-mile extension into Tampa Bay make it a standout. It has always defined the city. The cover of Raymond Arsenault's 1996 book, *St. Petersburg and the Florida Dream, 1888 - 1950* frames the city in this time period by using images of the pier.

Yet the unique story behind the pier is that it is not a single structure. In the early twentieth century, on First Avenue South, it was first a functional pier, a loading dock for Orange Belt Lines Railroad. When F. A. Davis, in 1906, lit it up with a string of incandescent light bulbs, it served as the city's first tourist attraction. In 1926, the pier blossomed into a Med Rev structure, the "Million Dollar Pier," on Second Avenue North. Far from being a loading dock for citrus, it morphed into a community recreational center and a well-advertised symbol for

[31] Interview with Morgan McCabe (New College Graduate, Class of 2014), May 26, 2014.

St. Petersburg as a resort city. Med Rev was replaced in 1973 with a modernist Inverted Pyramid, a design intended to point the city toward a twenty-first century future. Today, the current mayor of St. Petersburg is leading a movement to decide what the next pier should be, which makes this gem of iconic architecture unique in yet another way. The *pier location* has become iconic because of the building and rebuilding of the dreams of the city in new structural forms. I call this an *architectural palimpsest.*

When writing paper was a scarce commodity (as in ancient Greece), it was reused. Writing was "erased" via a bath of milk and oat bran, and then new writing took the place of what was there before. Such reused documents were called palimpsests, and the practice became so widespread that, in 691, a church decree banned such destruction of manuscripts, presumably in the interests of history. In the history of iconic architecture, St. Petersburg's Pier has become an architectural palimpsest — the same ground used for one iconic structure has been reused to erect a new candidate. Just as a palimpsest is a "multi-layered record," the pier location holds the historic memory of the city. Mayors have used it to represent St. Petersburg's cultural identity. Tourists (and local residents) recall family and vacation events, thus nostalgia is ingrained in the very cement. Today, there is a lively debate of what the Pier should be for the St. Petersburg of tomorrow. As a result, the Pier simultaneously holds the past, present, and future image of the city. Few seem to think that the city without a pier structure would be acceptable, but few also like any of the current proposals.

Thus, when St. Petersburg demands that its pier be “iconic,” the critical question — for any building — is: *What makes it iconic?* To assess the state of St. Petersburg’s Pier in a scientific way, I devised an Iconic Index. I believe that the iconicity of any building can only be judged by subjecting it to an array of sixteen questions (both quantitative and qualitative) divided into four groupings. As I proceed with this study of St. Petersburg’s historic Pier, I will be asking the same questions as I might of the Eiffel Tower, the Seagram Building, or the museum in Bilbao, Spain. For a building to be iconic, I believe it must (1) anticipate the future, (2) serve a unique purpose, (3) blend into the local culture, and (4) become an emotional magnet. Allow me to discuss each test in turn.

The Future Test

Does the building use new materials — or existing materials in a new way? Is it like other buildings in other places, or does it challenge the status quo using new artistic designs or materials? Lastly, how much does the building create a sense of never-been-done-before: Is it visionary in response to measureable environmental or social pressure?

The Purpose Test

Does the building exist simply for its own purposes without relation to anything or anyone else around it — or does the building, as it should, engage the community? Do members of the community feel a part of creating it — either with dollars, work, or decoration? Is the funding tied to the city’s economic development and/or to private investors’ goals of creating a healthy community

overall? Does the architecture expand the location to greater accessibility by a wider population — for example, is it accessible by foot?

The Culture Test

Did something historic occur on the site where the building is erected? Is the previous or existing architecture historically significant and, if so, why? Is the structure a source of local pride (or embarrassment?) Is the building itself a winsome or transformative example of public art? Can the building be a public space for family and community events? Is it flexible enough to adapt to changing cultural needs? (For instance, does it encourage food culture? Is there an interesting restaurant? Can food trucks park there?) Or, does the building support the appreciation of marine life? Or water sports? Can patrons access these easily?

The Emotional Test

Is this heart-grabbing architecture? Does the architecture have the potential to be a source of enormous local or regional pride? Is it a place where memories can be made? Is it a place where parents would want to bring their children because it is the site of a meaningful experience?

The Endless Pier

The story of the St. Petersburg Pier — past, present, and future — is a rich one. In Chapter 3, I will explore how and why the original pier was built in 1889 and how it grew. In Chapter 4, I will go back to the 1920s when the Million

Dollar Med Rev Pier dominated the city as it has never done again. What made that structure iconic and, despite that, why was it torn down in 1967 to be replaced six years later? Chapter 5 will analyze the Inverted Pyramid pier, opened in 1973, which was designed to be iconic. In some ways, it certainly was. But how did local citizens and tourists feel about this palimpsest pier? Finally, in Chapter 6, I will profile the current discussions about the fate of the Inverted Pier and examine some of the proposals under review (and some perhaps yet on the drawing board). Chapter 7, as a capstone, is my compendium of resources used to help the reader find more information about iconic architecture both in Florida and around the world.

The future of the pier is still in doubt, but the fact that St. Petersburg can learn from its past attempts at iconic piers (and from the current wisdom about iconic architecture) means that I can perhaps put forward the standards that must be met to make “the next pier” a success.

Chapter Three: Electrifying Paradise

> In 1906, [F. A.] Davis formed the Tampa Bay Transportation Company. In May of that year, the *Philadelphia North American* newspaper reported, "Capitalists in Philadelphia plan to make St. Petersburg one of the most important ports in the South Atlantic States."
>
> — *Will Michaels, 2012*[1]

By 1889, St. Petersburg was attracting investors as readily as California attracted gold miners in 1849. Florida investors, however, didn't have to travel across the continent and start digging deep to strike it rich; they just needed to lay railroad tracks to the waterfront so a steamship could dock to accommodate passengers and cargo. In St. Petersburg, a prosaic pier — wooden pilings, planks, and a modest building — allowed the Orange Belt Railroad to open the rest of the Pinellas Peninsula to further commercial development. Over the next thirty-eight years, this attractive location (and its unremarkable dock) became the "first draft" of an architectural palimpsest on St. Petersburg's waterfront. Though this seemed to be the start of the story, the Pier's history actually began thirty-seven years before that, in 1852.

[1] Will Michaels, *The Making of St. Petersburg* (Charleston, S. Carolina: The History Press, 2012), 77.

Dr. W. C. Van Bibber was a fortunate man indeed. In 1852, for one-hundred dollars, he purchased 140 acres of what he considered to be paradise in Pinellas County, Florida, from the widow of Maximo Hernandez, a fishing guide.[2] By 1885, Van Bibber believed he had discovered yet another fountain of youth. He proclaimed to the American Medical Society Convention in New Orleans that the Pinellas Peninsula was the healthiest place to live on the planet: "Those who have carefully surveyed the entire state, and have [redacted] sub-peninsula and its surroundings, think tha[redacted] the best climate in Florida."[3]

Sitting in the audience was a 40-year-[redacted] Philadelphia medical book publisher and visi[redacted] A. Davis, who suffered from rheumatism. Dav[redacted] doctor ordered him to move to a warmer clim[redacted] he spent that winter on the Pinellas Peninsul[redacted] Tarpon Springs, to be exact. Within three mo[redacted] painful joints were cured and Davis could not[redacted] spread the word that Florida's tropical weath[redacted] cure rheumatism. Davis was also an entrepre[redacted]ig dreams to electrify paradise, but the simple folks of Tarpon Spri[redacted]appreciate his vision. When they rejected his plan to build an elect[redacted]ant, he simply moved his dreams to the then-small village of St. Peters[redacted]otential for generating

Figure 29. F. A. Davis (Courtesy of St. Petersburg Museum of History).

[2] Jane Hurley Young, *Florida's Pinellas Peninsula* (St.[redacted]yron Kennedy and Co.,1984), 21.
[3] Ibid., 47.

electricity seemed perfect for the locale, and the allure of the waterfront dazzled him. The tropical beauty of southern Pinellas County was real, and it was not going to remain a secret if he had anything to do about it. He mobilized Florida's first major direct-mail advertising campaign, sending pamphlets, maps, and poems about Pinellas northward. He even published a booklet entitled "St. Petersburg — the Pleasure City of the South."[4] Because of his relentless efforts, Davis is sometimes credited with having sparked the population explosion that created the modern St. Petersburg. But, actually, that credit belongs to the Pier.

Davis was among many ambitious men who laid the groundwork for the city's infrastructure. However, the most critical link to the development of the city, the pier, deserves most of the credit for attracting widespread attention. While the railroad used the pier on Second Avenue North for commercial interests, people used the pier to sightsee — and fish. Columnist Dick Bothwell, in 1976, said that he thought the city's waterfront development *started* with its original pier.[5]

The bustle of commerce along the pier established the waterfront as the center of activity. Peter Demens (in 1889) brought The Orange Belt Railroad onto the pier; the structure on First Avenue South also included a bathing pavilion and a toboggan slide. But there was more than one pier on the waterfront back then. Not to be outdone, Brantley's Pier, built in 1895 and located just a few blocks away, included a slide and a 34-room pavilion. But it was publisher-entrepreneur Davis who brought the new phenomenon of electricity onto the railroad pier. His

[4] Ibid.
[5] Dick Bothwell, "Early St. Petersburg: Curious Checkboard," *St. Petersburg Times,* October 11, 1976, 3-H.

newly created power company, named St. Petersburg Power and Light

Figure 30. Fisherman Posing with Catch on Railroad Pier (Copyright by and Courtesy of University of South Florida Libraries, http://bit.ly/1ohUDYp).

cated today). It was a nothing more than a wooden building that housed "a iler and steam engine and a 50 watt generator."[6] Yet it was enough to minate the pier, and an even longer one.

Davis replaced the railroad pier with one that extended 3,000 feet into mpa Bay. What was driving Davis? As a promoter, the entrepreneur was rely influenced by the "White City," the 1893 Chicago World's Fair attraction at had been created just six years earlier to demonstrate the magic of electric wer. Davis wanted to produce a spectacle because he was caught up in the

oung, *Florida's Pinellas Peninsula,* 47.

spirit of urban boosterism.[7] In 1906, when it opened, he must have imagined the

Figure 31. The Electric Pier, circa 1915 (Courtesy of St. Petersburg Museum of History).

lectricity was turned on, the pier glowed in the darkness surrounding the bay. Davis's hunch about how the general public might react was right on; the Electric Pier, before World War I, became a major tourist attraction and a symbol of the new St. Petersburg."[8] The illuminated vision that Davis designed and created was a technological marvel at the turn-of-the century. With this theatrical and practical) act, the pier became a powerful city signifier — during the day nd, now, during nighttime as well. The achievement was not without some rawbacks, at least for Davis, as his personal interests on the waterfront raised ome important issues St. Petersburg needed to face, starting with questions bout commercial interests versus public rights.

Raymond Arsenault, *St. Petersburg and the Florida Dream, 1888-1950* (Gainesville: University ress of Florida, 1996), 79.
Ibid., 89.

Who Owns the Waterfront?

Ever since the Electric Pier illuminated the night sky, people started to believe that the popularity of the city's main pier was a safe predictor of the future growth of the city. In twenty-five years, between 1888 and 1913, Dr. Van Bibber's "Health City" had developed the transportation infrastructure to accommodate thousands of visitors. Davis's advertising campaigns enticed tourists to come to St. Petersburg; and the Orange Belt Railway carried them to the Electric Pier, the gateway to the city, where they could step onto a modern streetcar to be transported to the doorstep of a downtown hotel. The city improved in many ways as the need to accommodate popular tr[redacted] Fuller's 1972 book illustrates, wom[redacted] were accustomed to clean boardw[redacted] not have to worry that the hems o[redacted] dresses would be muddied by unp[redacted] streets. The Electric Pier was the [redacted] motivation for wider civic improver[redacted] which, in turn, helped to grow the [redacted] of St. Petersburg. Propelled by its [redacted] city became increasingly modern.

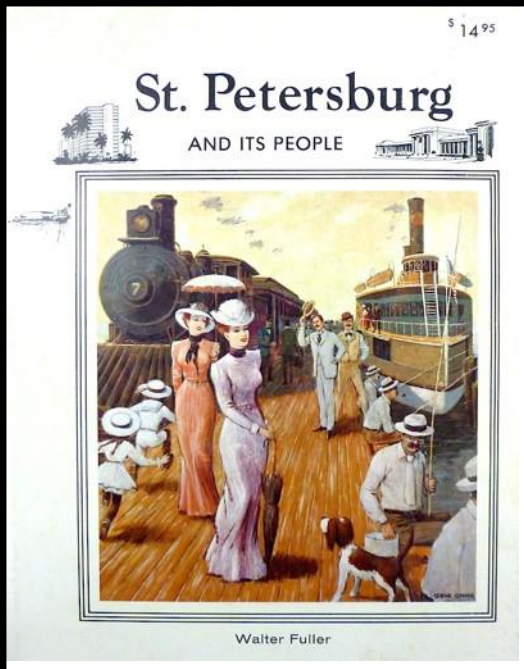

Figure 32. Walter Fuller, *St. Petersburg and Its People* (Apple Valley, Minnesota: Great Outdoors Publishing Company, 1972).

At the time, Davis owned a [redacted] links in the chain of transportation [redacted] infrastructure was part of intercon[redacted]

elements that supported the fledging tourist industry, which included an array of attractions that were developed as St. Petersburg became better known throughout the country. As with any locale that hopes to build a tourism industry, the city was stretching to find more reasons for people to visit while making it easier to travel from one attraction to another.

At the turn of the century, the tourist industry increasingly encroached on the already established industrial-based waterfront. For instance, in 1896, D. F. S. Brantley wanted to dredge a deep-water channel into the open Gulf. He intended to exploit the waterfront by opening it to commercial shipping. At the time, there were at least four piers in the city; it seemed as if every developer wanted to build a pier to support his interests. A brochure from the St. Petersburg Museum of History, *Piering Into the Past Pondering the Future*, notes, "To the consternation of many business minded folks attempting to cash in on docking and pier usage fees, it seemed as if the city had more piers then [sic] pelicans." Those fees (twenty-five dollars)[9] were much more amenable to the wealthy than to the general public. Ironically, Davis, for all his promotion of "Health City," was among the businessmen who opposed public ownership of the waterfront. Davis's influence, however, quickly waned when he was caught in a 1907 recession that forced him into bankruptcy. By 1913, St. Petersburg was much more than a Florida frontier village. In fact, the city was growing so quickly that indiscriminate development was ruining the city's charms and threatening its

[9] Ibid., 80.

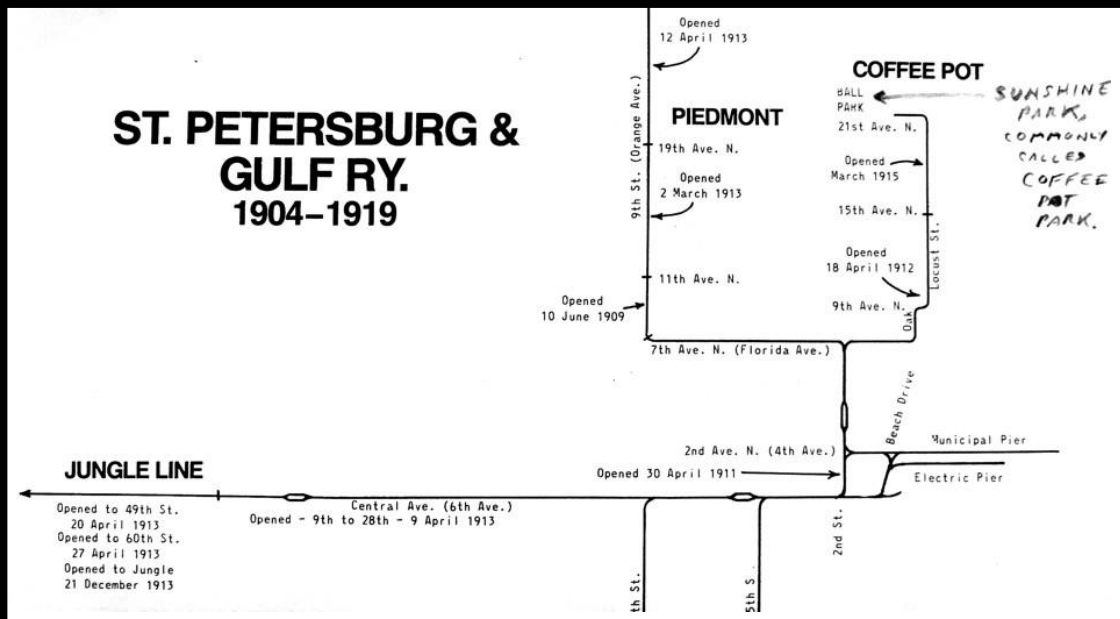

Figure 33. St. Petersburg Waterfront Plan, Around 1904 (from James Buckley, Street Railways of St. Petersburg, Florida [Published by Harold E. Cox, 1983]).

The *St. Petersburg Times* publisher (and amateur painter), William Straub, pearheaded a campaign to reserve as much of the waterfront for a public park s possible. Straub, as many before him, had come to St. Petersburg for health easons in 1899. Four years later, he was so enamored with the waterfront that e painted a huge mural showing all the piers of the day, and his artwork hung in he Pennsylvania Railroad Station in Philadelphia for some time.[10] In 1901, after urchasing the *St. Petersburg Times,* he often wrote editorials to advocate for ublic ownership of the city cove. Straub once wrote, “Here stands the work of odly hands, the flowering peninsula of Pinellas, with her cluster of green islands

Young, *Florida’s Pinellas Peninsula*, 51.

and keys. Like gorgeous strings of emerald and jade, sweeping over the master plan of divine dreams."[11] He was a man bewitched by a lover's beauty and he did not want to see her sullied. No effort was too grand to defend St. Petersburg's waterfront. He founded the board of trade (an early version of the Chamber of Commerce) and urged other wealthy businessmen to join his effort to purchase waterfront lots to protect them from development.

Their efforts received a big boost when the city decided to adopt the "Bayboro decision," which required all commercial uses of the waterfront to relocate into Bayboro Harbor. Straub's editorials persuaded voters to approve a bond issue that provided $43,500 for a new Waterfront Park. Consequently, the Electric Pier was torn down in 1913. However, the Municipal Recreation Pier (or Municipal Pier), built just ten feet away from the Electric Pier, remained. The following year, Waterfront Park (from Fifth Avenue North to Seventh Avenue South) opened as a new public facility.[12] Just to its south was an airport and also in 1914, Tony Jannus flew the first commercial passenger air service from St. Petersburg to Tampa.[13] But, the Municipal Pier still served as the central locus for St. Petersburg. Straub wanted to reserve even more of the waterfront; he believed that creating a "City Beautiful" plan for St. Petersburg was the best way to accomplish his goal. By 1920, he convinced John Nolen, a famous city planner of the day, to draw up citywide plans.

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[11] Bruce R. Stephenson, *Visions of Eden : Environmentalism, Urban Planning, and City Building in St. Petersburg, Florida, 1900-1995* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1997), 12.
[12] Young, *Florida's Pinellas Peninsula*, 51.
[13] Hampton Dunn, *Yesterday's St. Petersburg* (Miami: E.A. Seemann Publishing, Inc., 1973), 59.

A natural disaster delayed his progress — a hurricane hit Tampa Bay in 1921. “The hurricane killed two p

Petersburg. The municipal

the two bridges that linked

beaches to the mainland w

washed away.”[14] The storm

wrecked the Municipal Pier

Railroad Pier, and the city

forced to borrow $10,000 f

local businessman to repai

vital transportation link.[15] T

Figure 34. Nolen's Waterfront Map (Courtesy of City of St. Petersburg, http://www.stpete.org/stpete/NOLEN.pdf).

hurricane created both opp

and conflict. Just how impo pier to the future of St. Petersburg and Pinellas County? And how ey should be invested in something that could be ravaged by yet an ?

The business comm ertainly motivated to restore the Municipal Pier into a functioning struc but the fixes proposed after the hurricane could only be considered te easures. Given the extensive damage, only a complete rebuilding it an attractive tourist site again. That presented an opportunity: V d a new pier, one more elaborate, attractive, and substantial t g before? On the other hand, the

[14] Stephenson, *Visions of Eden,*

[15] Beverly Ann Replogle, “A Brie THE PIERS of the City of St. Petersburg,” (St. Petersburg: The City of St. Peter Metzger, undated).

hurricane destruction also opened the possibility for removing such structures entirely, and that is what John Nolen suggested. In 1923, Nolen presented his

Figure 35. Municipal Pier Damaged by 1921 Hurricane (Courtesy of St. Petersburg Museum of History).

olen suggested that the city should not spend a million dollars to rebuild the er. Nolen took special care to emphasize the importance of restricting evelopment and preserving lands on the outlying barrier islands. He believed at the best investment for attracting tourists was to establish a system of public eserves, especially on the beaches. To prove his point, he included among his des some of the shoreline parks in Monte Carlo, Nice, and Santa Barbara. If . Petersburg followed the example of these successful resort communities, olen assured his listeners, the community would not need a costly pier to draw sitors.[16] Such a point of view was likely to draw debate, as the piers had been a t plus for the city for many years.

Stephenson, *Visions of Eden,* 67.

Pier or no pier, p

started some of th

Eve, 1925, the

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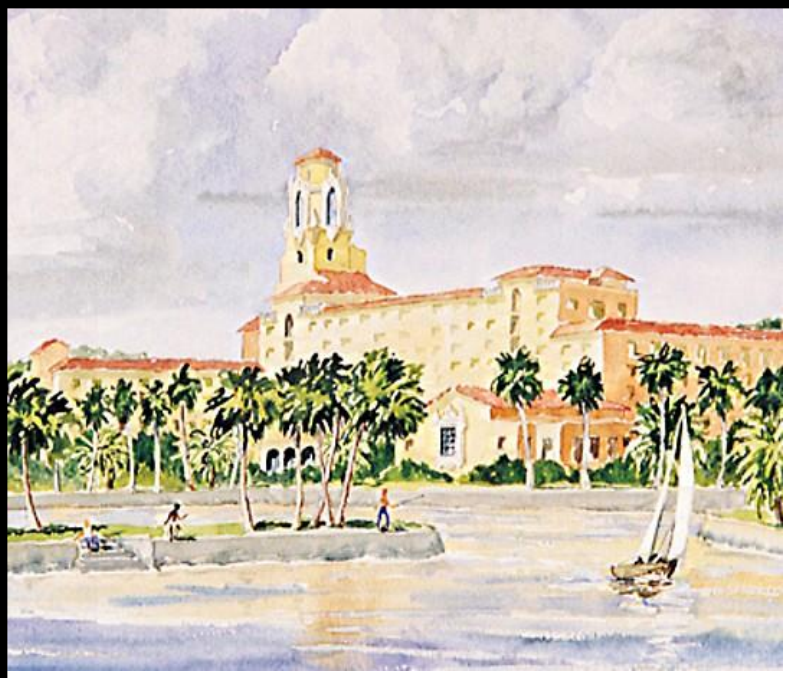

Figure 36. Watercolor Impression of The Vinoy Hotel by Milton Howarth (Courtesy of City of St. Petersburg, http://bit.ly/1i928fe).

of the land boo erty was traded as casually as one might trade livestock. A sho mple is how Laughner acquired his prime waterfront property for the el. As the story goes, while golfing in Laughner's yard, his famous visit onal golfer Walter Hagen, hit a ball that landed in a neighbor's yard ancier and developer, Gene Elliott, also golfing with the two, remark neighbor's yard would make an excellent location for a luxury hotel. No n to hesitate for long, the very next day, the two approached the about buying his property. The neighbor agreed and

was so eager to sell that he signed over the deed to his property on a brown paper bag![17]

Laughner chose Henry Taylor as architect for the Vinoy to reproduce the classic European Beaux-Arts style, which was described by one source as "Moorish arches, tiled cupolas, and Georgian ballrooms."[18] Med Rev was becoming a big business and not just for architectural designers. All of the materials tied to the Mediterranean look and feel were not, of course, handcrafted. What could be prefabricated could be warehoused and shipped to any part of the state as construction commenced on a new Med Rev structure. In 1923, Addison Mizner (himself an architect) sensed this construction supply business was a huge opportunity. He soon opened a factory in Palm Beach to ship pottery, roof and floor tiles, garden, wicker and period furniture, bronze sash, wrought iron, stained and leaded glass windows, reconstructed and ornamental stone, imitation marble, quarry key stone.[19] The fact that Mizner Products, Inc., was advertising well into the 1930s indicates that he had indeed tapped into a sustainable business — all tied to the booming of an architectural style.

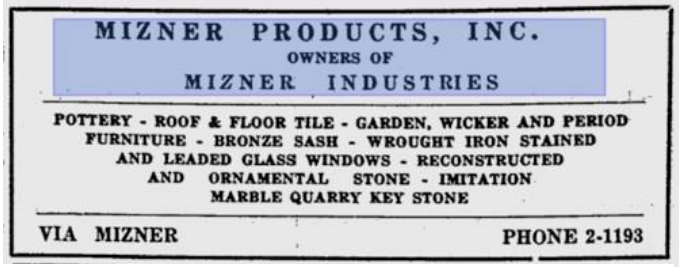

Figure 37. Mizner Products Advertisement (Courtesy of Archives of Palm Beach News, http://bit.ly/1ny8D3j).

[17] Robin Robson Gonzalez, *Souvenir of St. Petersburg*: *Historic Old Northeast Neighborhood Association*. (St. Petersburg: Historic Old Northeast Neighborhood Association, 2008), 27-28.
[18] Stephenson, *Visions of Eden,* 81.
[19] Mizner Products, Inc. Advertisement, *Palm Beach News,* March 4, 1934, 7.

Besides easy access by the Atlantic Coast Railroad, Palm Beach also had an attraction that drew the rich and famous. In 1898, Colonel Edward R. Bradley opened the Palm Beach Club, a gambling casino, despite the fact that gambling was illegal in Florida. In time, it became the longest illegal run of any such casino in the United States.[20] By 1924, on the opposite side of the state, St. Petersburg was looking to the future by building a new pier that would include a casino. Yet a newspaper article ("Passing of the City Pier Viewed With Regret by Town People: Has Been Community Gathering Place Ever Since It Was Built — New One Would Give Greater Opportunity To Study Marine Life") revealed that citizens had dreams that might not include gambling. The first half of the article praised the municipal pier as the town gathering place: "The news of the day and the problems of the day were settled on the pier, the men gathering in one group and the women in another." The article reports that St. Petersburg without a pier is "unbelievable." It also says the pier suffered from the "destructive action of the tornedoes [sic] and barnacles." The reporter refers to an amazing natural phenomenon, the phosphorescent glow that is sometimes visible on the surface of the water at night. Yet, the unnamed author looks forward to the new pier that will be built out of concrete and hopes the "[a]dded interest made possible by the longer and more beautiful pier will make up for the regrets of the passing of the intimate days of the old pier."[21]

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[20] Barbara D. Hoffstot, *Landmark Architecture of Palm Beach*. (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation, 1974), 2-3.
[21] "Passing Of City Pier Viewed With Regret By Town People," *St. Petersburg Times,* April 19,1924, 1.

As mentioned at the end of Chapter Two, for a structure to measure up to the Iconic Index, it must (1) anticipate the future, (2) serve a unique purpose, (3) blend into the local culture, and (4) become an emotional magnet. Given their storied pasts, one might assume that, either the old Railroad Pier, Electric Pier, or Municipal Pier might qualify as an iconic structure. Yet none distinctly pointed away from the past and accurately towards the future. None used new materials nor had anything special about the design. All did, however, serve a purpose relevant to the exact location; in one way or another, each clearly supported fishing, boating, neighborly communication, or transportation into the city. They functioned as important community gathering places; and, as the city's first gateway, the Railroad Pier, especially, had historic cultural value. In fairness, those who built these structures were not aiming to win an architectural prize. If anything, the general locations of the piers took on some iconic stature, but the structures did not.

In 1923 and beyond, a few started thinking about the kind of pier that might become truly iconic. (I doubt they used that word.) Although the *Times* suggests that the community regretted the loss of the old pier, the tone also implies the citizens were looking for a "longer and more beautiful" version. In 1926, the city welcomed a "Million Dollar Pier," the next draft of the endless pier palimpsest. Bolder and bigger than anything that preceded it. It would become ~~the talk of St. Petersburg a~~nd beyond, and many hoped that it would become the icon that would attract waves of tourists and local citizens. The Million Dollar Pier,

in time, became a legend still recalled favorably by some today. Though the term “iconic” was not used, history reveals that the new pier was built with dreams that it might enliven the city with the same architectural magic.

Chapter Four: From Disaster to a Dream

> "It was the same spirit that made the St. Petersburg of yesterday. It was as if the city had just passed through the trying ordeal of a hideous nightmare. But when she awakened from the semi-comatose condition and looked around upon her beauties… there fitted across her countenance the smile which in after years will refuse to come off."
>
> — *St. Petersburg Times* (October 27, 1921)[1]

Florida in 1921 was experiencing a boom. As Jay Barnes has written, "Americans were bursting with new capital. Factory workers made good salaries, farmers became wealthy, and bankers and industrialists made millions…. Northerners discovered they could afford vacations, and they headed south to the bright sunshine of Florida. They traveled in private railroad coaches, shiny new yachts, and caravans of newly purchased automobiles."[2] The boom times, however, were more than a surge of tourists. Land in Florida was being bought and sold at such a furious pace that people "poured millions of dollars into the

[1] Scott Taylor Hartzell, *Voices of America: St Petersburg, An Oral History* (Mount Pleasant, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 51.
[2] Jay Barnes, *Florida's Hurricane History,* 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 103.

state; across the nation, 'Florida fever' w

area there must have been a perva

mood of optimism in the business,

estate, and tourism sectors especia

could possibly derail such unbridle

progress? Mother Nature gave it a

in the form of a hurricane that land

Tarpon Springs and bulleted eastw

When the hurricane of Octo

1921, hit the Tampa Bay area, the

region suffered enormous damage

Petersburg Times reports offered a

assessment: "St. Petersburg Tuesc

swept by the worst tropical storm in

history of the West coast, striking a

STORM St. Petersburg Times EXTRA

St. Petersburg, Fla., Wednesday Morning, Oct. 26, 1921

TROPICAL STORM SWEEPS CITY

Property Damage May Reach $5,000,000; Two Men Die

RUMOR PASS-A-GRILLE WIPED OUT

With property loss estimated at $5,000,000, and two known dead, the water front a sea of debris and sunken ships, St. Petersburg Tuesday was swept by the worst tropical storm in the history of the West coast, striking about 3 o'clock in the morning and lasting until late in the afternoon, unroofing hundreds of hotels, apartment houses and homes, tearing down power lines and isolating the city completely from the outside world.

Communication was completely cut off from Pass-a-Grille, where reports estimated the loss of life from 15 to 150, with the resort under five feet of water.

Figure 38. *St. Petersburg Times* Front Page, October 26, 1921 (Reprinted in Barnes, *Hurricane History,* http://bit.ly/1nNiHWu).

o'clock in the morning and lasting u he afternoon, unroofing hundreds

of hotels, apartment houses and ho g down power lines and isolating

the city completely from the outside an interesting side note, since the

city was without power, the newspa modify the rear wheel of a

motorcycle to power its typesetting in order to publish its report.[5]

[3] Ibid.

[4] "Tropical Storm Sweeps City," *St. Peters* October 26, 1921, 1.

[5] Barnes, *Florida's Hurricane History,* 103

St. Petersburg

offer a lesson i

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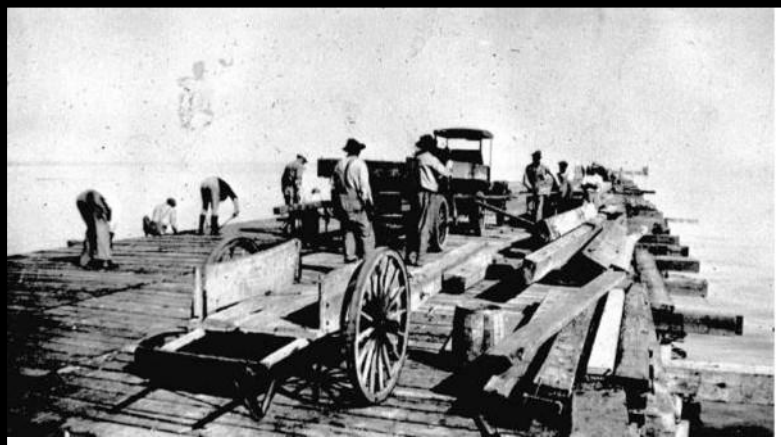

Figure 39. Rebuilding the Pier After the 1921 Hurricane (Photo Courtesy of State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, http://bit.ly/1wytZzt).

e damage was enough that civic leaders soon

ew pier would be needed, but not just *any* pier. Some

f what must have seemed a mega-pier, compared to

tofore. It should also be remembered that, at the time,

ions for the downtown waterfront. In the 1920s, when

4,000 residents, it was not certain that the city

uld afford — a major structure on its pier. Powerful

out investing any money into a new structure, one that

d. Certainly, the eminent city planner, John Nolen,

ike in opposing the building of a new pier. Nolen

purchasing more waterfront for parks, and he said so.

[6] Michaels, *Making* *burg*, 63.
[7] Ibid., 42.

He had seen the destruction of the 1921 hurricane, and he was sure Tampa Bay would experience another hurricane – and suffer the devastation again.

His chief opponent was *Evening Independent* publisher, Major Lew Brown, ("Major" was an honorary title). Brown's dream was to build a pier and casino. He thought the casino, together with the Soreno and Vinoy Hotels, would give the St. Petersburg waterfront an elegance unimaginable a decade earlier.[8] Brown's ideas prevailed. Jon Wilson paid tribute to Brown when he wrote a 1973 encomium to St. Petersburg's "Million Dollar Pier."

> A million-dollar idea: *Evening Independent* editor Lew B. Brown had it back in the 1920s.
>
> Build a pier, he said, a B-I-G pier, such a pier that would flabbergast the doubters and silence all the shouters and put a smirk or two on the natives of this town.
>
> Stick it out, said Major Brown, so far into Tampa Bay the porpoises would curse its very beams, but build that baby so handsome every snow-choked, dust-bound, southern-dreaming would be son of the beach from Atlantic City to Wichita could say to his friends: "You gotta go see what I saw in St. Petersburg."
>
> That's a million-dollar idea.
>
> And St. Petersburg, testing its pubescent muscles for that first surge toward some new life, took that idea like a mullet snapping mayflies.
>
> The City Council, smelling a chance to hop on the early 1920's boom wagon, decided to float a million-dollar bond issue. Local citizens, still missing the old pier washed away by a… hurricane, had already subscribed $300,000 for a new pier, says local historian Walter Fuller. That money was later refunded.
>
> But the Big Idea was on its way.[9]

[8] Stephenson, *Visions of Eden,* 89.
[9] Jon Wilson, "$1-Million Pier Cost $1-Million," *The Evening Independent,* January 17, 1973, 3-E.

Building the Dream

New York engineers, Baker & Baker, won the contract to build the new pier. J. E. Baker, senior member of the firm, may have felt a sting of criticism for potentially taking work away from a local firm. The tone of a 1926 article takes pains to say that Baker had come from Chattanooga, Tennessee, only four years prior to winning the pier contract. It also listed many new structures the firm had built in the area such as the Whitstone Arcade at First Avenue South and Sixth Street and several projects in Pass-a-Grille, among them the mayor's house and an elementary school. Further, the *St. Petersburg Times* reported how Baker & Baker had built structures such as "a great bridge of reinforced concrete across Lake Pontchartrain, connecting New Orleans and Shidell…."[10]

When it came to the Million Dollar Pier, Baker & Baker wanted the citizens to know what they had paid for. Based on figures provided by the company, the newspaper summarized the scope of the construction project.

> It is no toy at the end of the pier. It is a structure of size such as is afforded in very few cities in the world. There are 2,000 cubic yards of concrete, and in building up these walls, 500,000 feet of lumber were used in form construction. The structure has 61 tons of reinforcing steel: it has five carloads of roofing tile: in the work the contractors used 14,000 bags of cement, 1,800 cubic yards of gravel, 1,000 cubic yards of sand. On the walls is a full carload of ornamental stucco, a carload of millwork, including sash, doors, window trim. In the walls are 15 carloads of brick and tile, enough to construct many structures of moderate size, and in the finish of the walls there is a carload of marble chips and quarry tile.[11]

---

[10] "Baker Company Erects Casino: Structure on New Pier Is Designed for Recreation and Pleasure," *St. Petersburg Times,* November 25,1926, section 2, 4.
[11] Ibid.

The superintendent in charge of the project also noted that the Pier was not designed to be a seasonal attraction. “It is designed to serve a population in the southern climes the year round….” he noted, adding, “St. Petersburg has passed the stage where it is and is to be noted only as a winter resort. It is truly an all-year resort, with bordering waters excelled by no other part of the world for beauty and interest, for fine fishing, boating, bathing.” The superintendent called the new pier both “beautiful” and “practical” and a facility that would soon “provide a great auditorium for public gatherings of every kind and size.”[12]

The Pier opened on Thanksgiving Day, November 25, 1926; the event kicked off a weekend of celebration for two big events in the city: the inauguration of the municipal Pier and the Fuller Flying Field.[13] *The Independent* documented the daylong celebration by listing some key statistics. “It was estimated that there were 100,000 persons who visited the new recreation pier today. Crowds started toward the pier early this morning, and a procession of cars blocks long was moving out on the pier even at the time that the dedication ceremonies had concluded. It took nearly half an hour to make the end of the pier in the slow moving line of cars.” The newspaper added, “There was seating capacity for 4,000 persons in the casino and another thousand is estimated to have stood around the sides of the casino. Thousands more were on the lower floor.”[14] It seems fair to say that nothing else had received this kind of welcome in the city. It was a pier to be proud of — and tell others about!

[12] Ibid.
[13] “Two Dedications Set For Today.” *St. Petersburg Times,* November 25, 1926, 1.
[14] “Estimated 100,000 Persons Visit Pier,” *The Independent,* November 25, 1926, 7.

The Federal Works Project Administration guide to Florida described the building as a “steel and concrete structure extending 3,000 feet into Tampa Bay… Among other things, it is the city’s fishing grandstand. Fishing balconies are provided along the pier, feeding the pelicans, gulls and ducks is a popular diversion.”[15] The Million Dollar Pier was impressive. When completed, Baker & Baker exclaimed that “the pier and casino give St. Petersburg the finishing touch as a great, a world-known resort of high class.”[16] Residents must have felt fortunate; just thirty years before, the city had been a backwater village. The B[redacted]

Figure 40. Municipal Recreation Pier, St. Petersburg, Fla. “The Sunshine City”, 1936 (Photo Courtesy of State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, http://bit.ly/1pRQYRg).

[redacted]

al Writers’ Project (WPA), *Florida: A Guide to the Southernmost State,* 1947, (American eries), (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), 265.
Company Erects Casino,” *St. Petersburg Times*, section 2, 4.

The Million Dollar Pier, in terms of style, was not unique. In both Florida and California in the 1920s, according to the Miami Design Preservation League, the Med Re[redacted] so pop[redacted] no sin[redacted] archite[redacted] famou[redacted] this se[redacted] Pier m[redacted] have b[redacted] seen a[redacted] becau[redacted] abund[redacted]

Figure 41. Approach to Million Dollar Pier, circa 1938 (Courtesy of St. Petersburg Museum of History).

copies [redacted]e (however, The Pier was not the first such structure). This style evoke[redacted]orld image, featuring decorative columns, arched windows, clay b[redacted]fs, rough stucco walls, wrought iron and spindle gates guarding picture[redacted]yards." Including bell towers, these characteristics are most distinc[redacted]s style: "archways, awnings, porches, balconies, carved stonew[redacted] stucco walls, clay tiles [sic] roofs, wrought iron fixtures."[18] Image[redacted]e clearly capture the Med Rev look of St. Petersburg's pier.

[17] "Wha[redacted]ean Revival," Miami Design Preservation League, http://bit.ly/TfP5mN.
[18] Ibid.

Senator Park Trammell, who spoke at the opening ceremony, praised the leadership for their "progressiveness." In fact, the Million Dollar Pier was a suitable design choice for St. Petersburg at the time, but was it progressive in the visionary sense? No one was debating that issue in the 1920s, and St. Petersburg seemed collectively appreciative of its presence. Thanks to the railroad and the affordable Model T car, the city had become a popular west-coast vacation destination for the working class. The 1939 *WPA Florida Guide* described a typical gathering: "The second floor is a large ballroom for tourist dances," and "community sing-a-longs, are held each Sunday during the winter." The guide notes that the "towering phosphate elevators and oil storage tanks" on the Port of Tampa can be seen in the distance — injecting a subtle reminder that the destructive forces of industrialization hovered on the horizon just across the bay.[19] In the late 1800s, phosphate mining was a fast-growing industry, making the Port of Tampa a busy shipping destination.

St. Petersburg had just matured into a resort destination, and local leaders wanted to preserve the illusion of wealth and power through Med Rev design. Despite its pretentious, European-echo architecture, there was nothing sophisticated or high-toned about the entertainment at the Municipal Pier Casino. Unlike the Palm Beach Club that became a mecca for illegal gambling, The Pier's casino fostered wholesome pleasures. The formula appealed to residents for many years. For example, a natural (and affordable) attraction, feeding pelicans,

[19] Federal Writers' Project (WPA), *Florida: A Guide to the Southernmost State*, 265.

entertained tourists of all ages until the pier that followed the Million Dollar Pier closed in 2013.

Pelicans on The Pier even inspired a love story. *The St. Petersburg Times* ran a picture story about Cl[redacted] received a special de[redacted] Lester, her admirer in[redacted] Watertown, Connecti[redacted] northern visitor, who h[redacted] trained the pelicans to[redacted] friendly to pier visitors[redacted] apparently didn't wan[redacted] favorite pier pet to thi[redacted] forgotten her.[20] The M[redacted] Dollar Pier was more [redacted] place to feed pelicans[redacted]

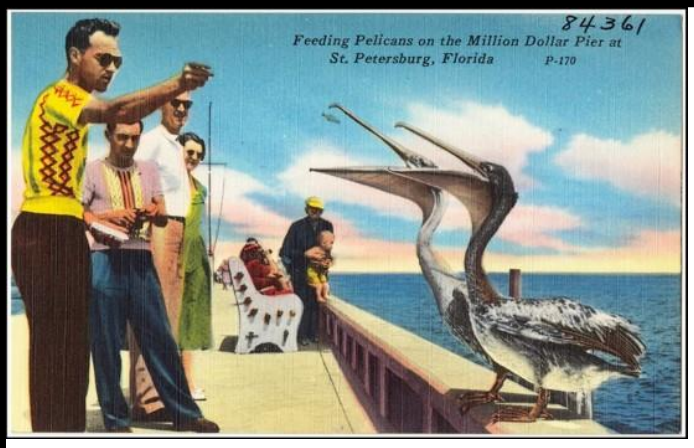

Figure 42. Feeding Pelicans on the Million Dollar Pier at St. Petersburg, Florida, circa 1930–1945 (Image Courtesy of The Tichnor Brothers Collection, Boston Public Library; Creative Commons License, http://bit.ly/1mi45Ye).

[redacted]e home shows featuring exhibits from more than 150 vendors offering t[redacted]ousewares. A Beauticians' League offered manicures, hairdos, a[redacted]auty parlor needs.[21] Hawaiian dancers (perhaps in honor of the balmy [redacted]ation?) and a magician performed as well. Community sing-a-lon[redacted] dances, band performances, USO shows, and vendors at kiosks sell[redacted]sive souvenirs set the daily scene. On

[20] "Pier's 'Glamor Girl' Get[redacted] Week Early," *St. Petersburg Times*, Feburary 9, 1945, 1.
[21] "Pier Is Readied for Hor[redacted] *Petersburg Times*, October 18, 1949, 20.

weekdays, state clubs held potluck suppers, and hosted cards and other board games. It was a community space.

For St. Petersburg residents born after World War II, these experiences left an indelible impression. Going to the pier was a memorable experience because it was a unique setting in a building that most in St. Petersburg had never seen the likes of before. Then, too, it was designed to be a place to go for tourists and local residents alike. Karen Frank moved to St. Petersburg with her family and has lived there since the late 1950s; she confided that she still has fond childhood memories of family outings on The Pier. She recalled that her father would park the car on the deck, and she remembered vendors who had canvas-covered kiosks. She remembers two of her favorite sellers: one sold wind chimes made out of seashells and the other was a glass blower. She was fascinated by the glassblower, who seemed like a magician to her.[22] For many, The Pier itself was a love story.

The Pinnacle and the Fall

Part of the dream that came with the Million Dollar Pier was the opening of a window to create a whole new image for the city. In the 1950s, The Pier became a backdrop for numerous media events. On October 10, 1952, WSUN Channel 38 began broadcasting from the city-owned TV station. Television further reinforced a fantasy Florida message as live-action pictures of tourists

[22] Interview with Karen Frank (St. Petersburg Resident Since 1959), April 13, 2013.

were shown reeling in the catch of the day. The *St. Petersburg Times* confirmed that one fisherman, Freddy Friedewald, went after sharks — exotic proof of the wild environment just off the civilized coast of St. Petersburg. To prove it, the fisherman allegedly landed a 400-pounder, described as a seven-foot set of jaws on one end and powerful whipping tail fin on the other. According to the urban myth, he dragged the shark over a seawall and up to the studio doors of the TV station to show off his catch of the day for viewers.[23] It was not long before the Million Dollar Pier was attracting attention in the media of the day, in some cases, far beyond Florida's shores.

The best publicity for The Pier may have occurred in 1956 when Mayor Samuel Johnson awarded The Pier to Shirley Fry for winning the Wimbledon Tennis match that year. Fry was an American athlete with modest means. Her opponent in the final set was British native, Angela Buxton, whose wealthy father promised her a recreational pier at a seaside resort (presumably in England) if she won Wimbledon. When St. Petersburg Mayor Johnson heard that, "he cabled Fry and told her if she won, she could have St. Pete's own pier." An hour later, Fry cabled the mayor with this message: "Coming to collect my Pier!" Locally, the story ran on the front page of the morning newspaper and featured a large photo of Fry riding down Central Avenue in a convertible, holding a bouquet and beaming with pride as a shower of tickertape streamers rained down from

[23] Dick Bothwell, "Piering into The Future," *St. Petersburg Times,* October 19, 1970, 1-B, 2-B.

above.[24] If one searches on Google for “Coming to Collect My Pier,” the results show that many papers ran the story, including the *Toledo Blade, The Anniston* (Alabama) *Star,* and the Long Beach, California *Independent Press-Telegram.*

As the Million Dollar Pier accumulated more and more press clippings, the city was growing in many different ways, not just with more tourism but with more people moving to the [redacted]. Streetcars were [redacted] disappearing, a[redacted] shopping cente[redacted] air-conditioned [redacted] were part of the[redacted] suburban boom[redacted] many places in[redacted] — and definitel[redacted] Petersburg.[26] E[redacted] the image of th[redacted] resort mecca w[redacted]nd robust pier contrasts sharply with the one the media put forth[redacted]people sit, passengers in a motionless streetcar without destina[redacted]e streets of St. Petersburg. That’s how, in 1958,

Figure 43. The Famous Green Benches on Central Ave. in St. Petersburg (Photo Courtesy of State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, http://bit.ly/1tJgPuY).

[24] Gary Shelton, “S[redacted]s Shirley Fry once reigned at Wimbledon,” *St. Petersburg Times*, June 21, 2013, 1C

[25] Information from[redacted]y Arsenault (University of South Florida), July 10, 2014.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Maria D Vesperi[redacted] *Benches: Growing Old in a New Downtown*, ed. Roger Sanjeck (New York: Cornel[redacted]ess, 1985), 41.

Holiday Magazine characterized the city. It must have hurt (a lot); perhaps the characterization rang true. Those who knew the city for the last six decades will share many stories about sleepy St. Pete (even into the early 1960s), full of somnolent senior citizens and not much else. City officials began a campaign to rid the city of the "stigma of green benches" — national media had targeted the green benches as visible symbols of "God's waiting room."[28] St. Petersburg's leaders wanted people to see the city as "heavenly" already — and with a pier!

Unfortunately, going into the 1960s, the once-vibrant Million Dollar Pier had become, to many, merely the next thing to do after sitting on a green bench in the sun during the day. Most of the first wave of retirees who helped to swell the population of the city had grown too old to engage in an active lifestyle. Gary Pierson recalled a familiar scene as a teenager, "I worked at Sanborn's Music Store on Central Avenue, and green benches were on the sidewalk in front of the store. I can tell you, those benches were always full. The Million Dollar Pier was the destination for most retirees at the time." He remembered busloads of elderly people would arrive to start the day by visiting the Central Avenue shopping district in late morning. They would eat at the five-and-dime lunch counter, sit on the green benches and socialize, and then ride the bus to the Million Dollar Pier for an evening of free entertainment. "It was a whole lifestyle, and it was their ritual," said Pierson.[29] Maria Vesperi confirms Pierson's memory, "By most accounts, the 1926-vintage 'Old Pier' was shabby and rambling but always

[28] Ibid.
[29] Interview with Gary Pierson (St. Petersburg Resident, 1959–1968), November 7, 2013.

crowded — a great social gathering place for retirees."[30] Vesperi also notes that downtown St. Petersburg was becoming an issue. The hot spots were in the suburban areas; young people, especially, avoided going downtown as there were "too many old people" and there was "nothing to do."[31] In 1967, the Million Dollar Pier marked the forty-first anniversary of its opening — only, now, there were to be no celebrations, only dim views of a storied structure that had lost its luster. Civic leaders decided this symbol of a leisurely retirement damaged the image of the city and was holding back progress.

Mayor Herman Goldner and Republican Congressman William Cramer were law partners in 1949 in a St. Petersburg firm. Goldner, who held a master's degree in business administration from Harvard University, had the reputation of being a good problem solver. A strong leader, he served four terms as mayor beginning in the 1950s. He was proactive and founded the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council after other parts of Florida suffered extensive property damage as a result of the hurricanes of the 1960s. He pushed Pinellas County to install a severe weather early warning system, but the proposal failed for lack of $1,000 in funding. However, for many of same reasons the Million Dollar Pier was built in the 1920s (to give the city a central place for people to meet and greet both residents and tourists, to present a modern-progressive image to the world, and to resuscitate the sagging fortunes of the downtown area), Mayor Goldner started the campaign to replace the Million Dollar Pier, claiming it suffered too much

[30] Vesperi, *City of Green Benches,* 41.
[31] Ibid, 38-39.

cumulative damage from the effects of wave action during the 1960s and that the cost of repairs wasn't justified. In August 1967, The Pier was demolished, leaving a clean slate where a beloved symbol had stood for forty years.

Much of the argument in today's debate circles back to this moment. Many long-time residents insist that it was an architectural tragedy that the building was not restored. Its champions argue that it represented the bedrock of the city and was a cornerstone of St. Petersburg's history, and that is reason enough for it to have been preserved. One of the best summaries of the last days of the Million Dollar Pier was published as a reassessment in the January, 2012, issue of *St. Petersburg Downtown Newsletter.* Nevin D. Sitler, Director of Education and Outreach at the St. Petersburg Museum of History, writes: "After 41 years of operation and subsequent disrepair, time and toil had demanded replacement. For four decades this monument to excesses and indulgence hosted ballroom dances, choir sing-a-longs, card parties and any other event a leisured population demanded."

Sitler recounts the lack of protest when plans were announced to tear down the once-beloved pier. He begins by noting the pier's legacy: "As journalist Paul Schnitt reported of the breaking story: "The 'Million Dollar Pier' was the pride of Florida's West Coast… it was a shimmering spear in Tampa Bay, and the pride of St. Petersburg… and was the center to the city's appeal to tourists." Sitler details why efforts to save the pier were underwhelming and asks some tough questions:

> While citizens today recall with admiration and wistful remembrance, the dissent regarding the structure's August 1967 destruction was less than astonishing. Editorials appeared in the Independent [sic] and the Times [sic], proclaiming sentimental shock. Just how loud or lazy the Save our Pier program was can be summarized by the minuscule 600 petition signatures presented to City Council. Not to mention the failure of any person to take City Councilmen [sic] Allison up on his willingness to reconsider by securing a $50,000 lease on the property.
>
> Within a week destruction bids were announced and the pier met its demise, however the pier head would remain nothing more than a paved park for the next five years. Interestingly, the looming and essentially undisclosed piece of the puzzle came to be the question of why? Why destroy the pier's recreational structures during the summer months when dancing and fishing could be at full swing? And many wanted to know why there were no plans already on hand as to the next phase of St. Petersburg's landmark?[32]

Was It Iconic?

Mayor Goldner planned to revitalize St. Petersburg using federal urban renewal funds in order to repackage the city as "Funderful St. Pete."[33] But the next layer of palimpsest of the pier location would not open for another six years. This gave residents a lot of time to think about what was lost with the Million Dollar Pier and what it would take to make that downtown location magnetic again. In my view, the iconicity of a building is determined by whether it (1) anticipates the future, (2) serves a unique purpose, (3) blends into the local culture, and (4) becomes an emotional magnet. By the latter three standards,

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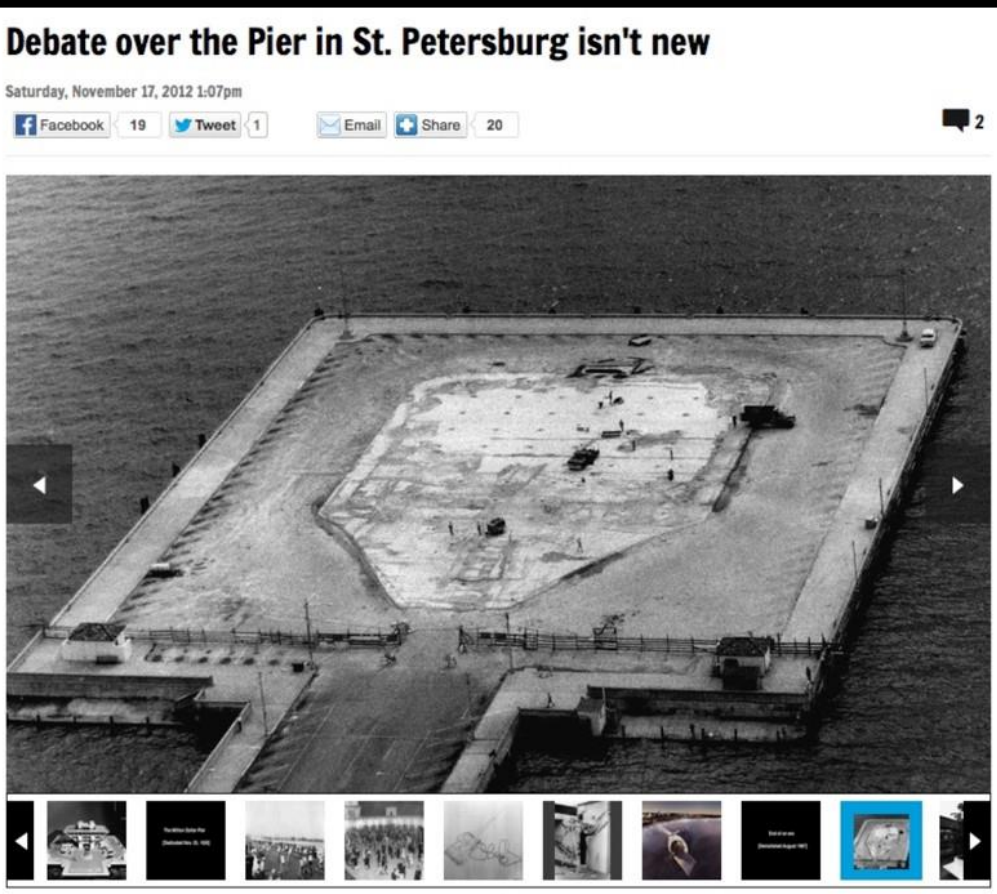
[32] Nevin D. Sitler, "Piering Into The Past, Pondering The Future," *St. Petersburg Downtown Newsletter,* January 2012, 1, 3.
[33] Gary R Mormino, *Land of Sunshine: State of Dreams* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008), 137.

many could claim that the Million Dollar Pier pier was iconic. I fully agree that it was a unique structure (in the city), one that served as a popular cultural center, generating fond memories for thousands of visitors.

However, like the numerous McDonald's restaurants that were being



Debate over the Pier in St. Petersburg isn't new

Saturday, November 17, 2012 1:07pm

Facebook 19 Tweet 1 Email Share 20 2

A beloved city institution is deemed beyond repair, a demolition date is set, longtime city residents are upset and designers bring forth fanciful ideas for a future landmark. Then, as deadlines loom and funds run out, the chosen idea gets scaled back. Check out this visual history of St. Pete's Pier and head over to our online store to purchase historical prints at: http://tampabay.mycapture.com/mycapture /folder.asp?event=1664254&CategoryID=78758

Figure 44. "Debate over the Pier in St. Petersburg isn't new,"*Tampa Bay Times* (online), November 17, 2012, http://bit.ly/1oz8yIX.

future test: There were many Mediterranean Revival structures built in the 1920s; some are still extant. Had the Million Dollar Pier survived, it would have become a retrospective artifact, a walk-down-memory-lane kind of building that, perhaps, would still attract a crowd. However, the leaders of St. Petersburg in the 1960s wanted a unique attraction for the young. Reviewing newspaper accounts from the time, I doubt that they thought that refurbishing a 1920s building would ever be a magnet for a youthful demographic. Regardless, it would not have become an example of iconic architecture. The major fault with the Million Dollar Pier is that it did not anticipate the future; it actually symbolized the status quo of 1920's fad architecture, one cookie from a much-copied cutter.

Nonetheless, one can still find many who pine for that wonderful building. D. M. Miller, for one, writes, "In the old days, maybe 50 years ago or so, the main tourist attraction in downtown St Pete was what they called 'The Million Dollar Pier'. [sic] It still fascinates me after all these years."[34] While it is fun to conjecture how a Bilbao-like building might have been received in 1926, the real value of the Million Dollar Pier to the history of St. Petersburg is that the version that replaced it was quite the opposite of Med Rev. It was bold, different, avant garde, and daring. People wanted a pier to steer St. Petersburg into the future.

It would be a rocky ride.

[34] D. M. Miller, "St. Petersburg Million Dollar Pier," *Florida Backroads Travel,* http://bit.ly/1mVrGQ4.

Chapter Five: In Desperate Pursuit of a New Look

> I get up in front of my company and say look at the I.M. Pei pyramid at the Louvre. It has become one of the most iconic structures. The reality is the current pier is not the Louvre.
>
> — *Mindy Grossman, CEO, Home Shopping Network*[1]

In August, 1967, St. Petersburg's Million Dollar Pier faded into memory. While some say the building was a jewel, others say it was a relic. In either case, once the debris was removed, it left a clean slate. The next iteration of the pier was still six years from making its début on the waterfront. That time gap gave civic leaders a chance to fantasize about the possibilities. For sure, they did not want an updated Med Rev structure. That era and that style of building had passed. What were their dreams?

News clippings from 1968 to 1969 show that city officials entertained big dreams. A local architectural firm, Harvard Jolly Architecture, had already been hired to come up with a solid proposal for a new pier. At the same time, Mayor Don Spicer urged the city council to seriously consider an alternative plan. A designer named Attillo Puglisi wanted to lease the pier and the surrounding

[1]Mindy Grossman, "Tampa Bay executives see waterfront as key to St. Pete's future," *Tampa Bay Business Journal* (August 23, 2013), accessed June 11, 2014, http://bit.ly/TM2VgS.

waters for an amusement park-sized attraction. His proposal included “a large man-made island beyond the pier head, a 200-room hotel, a restaurant for 3,000 with floating dining areas over a live coral display, a glass mosaic boardwalk, a 200 room motel with individual cabanas on the beach and a protected water area to be used for both recreation and oceanographic experiments.”[2] Dr. Robert Smith, director of the Florida Institute of Oceanography at Bayboro Harbor, endorsed the idea. The city council agreed to write a cancellation clause into their contract with Harvard Jolly if the plan passed a feasibility study. It didn’t.

A brief review of the history of hurricanes in Tampa Bay could have perhaps saved city leaders some decision-making time. The 1921 hurricane that caused so much damage should have been an ample reminder of the folly of Puglisi’s plan — an exposed pier might not be a wise place to reside during an overnight hurricane. Still, it was obvious that long-time residents looked at the tabula rasa of the empty lot that was once the Million Dollar Pier and pined for something even better, something that was as magnetic as the Med Rev structure was at the height of its popularity. The city was ready for a compelling vision.

Local architect, William B. Harvard, Sr., had that vision. He had studied the patch of submerged limestone that had to support a large building. The small footing restricted the options. Harvard, however, imagined that a building shaped like a giant inverted pyramid could solve many problems. The bulk of the building

[2] “Puglisi Pier Plan Study Due In Month,” *Evening Independent*, May 17, 1969, http://bit.ly/1kPSHqo.

would be above the water and the deck would giv

downtown from the waterfront; then, too, it v

block the waterfront view for people in the c

St. Petersburg, such a vision was sure to be

bold, new — even iconic. For several years

the city was pier-less, Harvard was at the d

board, working on the concept. With no rea

competition from other architectural firms (a

given that Harvard was locally known and w

liked), his vision was accepted and his visio

under construction by the summer of 1970.

Figure 45. William B. Harvard, Sr. (Photo Courtesy of Archives of Harvard Jolly Architecture).

The shape of the new pier created a

houette against the blue

sky. “The Pier” was the official name for the

ut so many have called it

the “Inverted Pyramid” that I will often obse

ition here. When people

first saw the outline of the new city landmar

cisely what the city

wanted: It got their attention. A sample of s

omments suggests that

the city was headed for trouble: “a monstros

usly balancing itself on

the end of the Municipal Pier … burn the da

we want our Million

Dollar Pier back….”[3]

Naturally, after waiting for so long wi

nce of the design, when it

finally arose, people focused on the inverte

shape. To Harvard, the

[3] Jack McClintock, “Architect Bill Harvard and His Ey

r,” *St. Petersburg Times (Floridian)*, September 9, 1973, 24.

Figure 46. The Pier Under Construction (Photo Courtesy of Archives of Harvard Jolly Architecture).

uncomfortable because it was unique.[4] That said, it is hard to imagine that Harvard, at least, was not aware of similar structures already built.

One need only view The Katimavik (Inuit for "Gathering Place") at Expo 67 in Montreal, Canada, to question The Pier's iconicity. (The current website arguing for the preservation of the Inverted Pyramid concedes the fact that Harvard's design might not have been as much a breakthrough as some believed at the time: "Even though our Inverted Pyramid is the only one on Earth that was constructed over water, or more like an island connected by a bridge, there are other Inverted Pyramids all over the world. Perhaps the inspiration for our Inverted Pyramid was the Geisel Library at the University of California — San Diego, completed in 1970 by William Pereira of San Francisco's Trans-America

[4] Interview with William B. Harvard, Jr., August 13, 2013.

Pyramid Tower fame.")[5] However, Harvard could not have been more correct when he said that the Inverted Pyramid was unique for St. Petersburg. Seemingly, no one could recall seeing anything like it anywhere else in Florida.

There is little doubt that, given the restrictions of building a large structure on a relatively small parcel of land jutting out into the water, both the design and construction were something to appreciate rather than jeer. According to those who want to keep The Pier, it is an engineering marvel, "a five-story building that maximized multi-use interior space while requiring a minimal foundational support": "Harvard enlisted the talents of structural engineer Erwin Reiss, well-known throughout the industry for his innovative use of design and materials to construct bridges that provide more than a century of service."[6]

By January 13, 1973, when The Pier opened, Harvard — a confident guy who wore a bow tie, a big smile, and had skin as tough as leather — was ebullient.[7] If people missed the fake Spanish castle (the Million Dollar Pier), he said that was just too bad. Med Rev belonged to a bygone era; the Roaring Twenties were long over as was the architecture of that time. It was now 1973, and Modernism had taken hold in most cities. Harvard's tough attitude was typical of Bauhaus designers who used emotional and judgmental language to describe their work. They talked about the "honest" use of materials. That word meant many things. It meant exposing the structural members of the building and

[5] "History of the St. Petersburg Pier & Inverted Pyramid," accessed June 12, 2014, http://bit.ly/1ofOCiw.
[6] Ibid.
[7] McClintock, "Architect Bill Harvard," cover.

integrating the building into its natural surroundings. Designer Frank Lloyd Wright became famous for his dramatic, beautiful, and progressive residential architecture without altering the natural topography. In 1935, he demonstrated

Figure 47. Fallingwater House (Photo by Pablo Sanchez; Creative Commons License, http://bit.ly/1kuiyz6).

site and strategically built his famous home, “Falling Water,” to prove that it could be done. Harvard’s Inverted Pyramid was to become part of the waterscape also.

Harvard admired Frank Lloyd Wright from the start of Harvard’s career. Furthermore, Harvard was a long-time student of Bauhaus. He counted himself among the designers who could conceptualize a new way of seeing space as one continuous vision instead of compartmentalized boxes. This was a very progressive idea at the time. Mass-produced steel made it possible to use plate-glass windows all around the pier structure; this created a transparent yet structurally sound wall. It also gave the illusion of continuous space, from the outside of the building to the inside. It was

a new model and Harvard didn't expect the public to understand the architectural concept immediately, as he revealed in one comment: "Concept and design changes were happening then, and an architect could do more or less what he felt was right, not having clients say, 'I want colonial columns' even though this was a commercial [or residential] structure that didn't call for them. Architecture had a vitality because of the Bauhaus influence of (Walter) Gropius at Harvard (University) and Mies (van der Rohe) in Chicago."[8]

Doing "more or less what he felt was right" is another way of saying that Harvard was an early example of the starchitects mentioned in an earlier chapter. When the personality of the architect is injected into a design, one can interpret the structure (at least, in part) by the ideals, goals, and personality of the man or woman who designed it. Harvard built his career based on new cultural ideas, and the Inverted Pyramid was thus the first pier in the history of St. Petersburg that should have been forever linked to the architect who designed it. He believed it was his duty to lead St. Petersburg into the modern era. Ironically, his legacy has been almost forgotten despite being the city's hero of Modern architecture.

St. Petersburg's Starchitect

What prompted Harvard to build such an eye-grabbing building? Who, exactly, was the person behind the Inverted Pyramid? One of Harvard's most

[8] Ibid., 24.

important qualifications was that he was a native Floridian. He was born in 1911 in tiny Waldo, Florida, but grew up in Tampa and Sarasota. As an eighteen-year-old University of Cincinnati student, he chose to study architecture because exciting things were going on in the field.[9] The stock market crashed in 1929; and with it, Harvard's family suffered a double misfortune with the sudden death of his father. The family could no longer afford to support his university studies, and he was forced to withdraw in his sophomore year. Furthermore, he had to help his mother move to Miami so she could be closer to her family. It appeared that his career had ended before it began.

Harvard, however, had at least one lucky break. In the mid-1930s, Miami was a hotbed of new building, and there was a demand for architects. A family connection helped the ambitious twenty-three-year-old land a job with the Miami builder Lawrence Murray Dixon. Between 1934 and 1941, Dixon was in the midst of a construction boom. Harvard, even if he was an apprentice architect, was working for an influential Miami designer. In 1930, Dixon[10] must have needed more skilled architects. He offered Harvard the chance to take the state license exam, which he passed.[11] Soon, Harvard started his own firm in St. Petersburg. Though regretful that he had not graduated from college, he was a motivated person and never stopped studying.[12] He loved architecture, as is evidenced by that fact that all three of his children joined the profession, eventually working in

[9] Interview with William B. Harvard, Jr.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.

their father's firm (Harvard Jolly). Whether to become an architect "wasn't a choice," said William Harvard, Jr., who describes his father even today as "complex" and a "taskmaster." William Harvard, Sr., kept abreast of the newest developments in the field and read widely. He was excited about new ideas as well as about spirituality. He was also an artist and pianist. At the age of sixty-five, he finally graduated from the University of South Florida with a degree in fine arts.[13]

In the mid-1930s, Harvard became aware of a recent German émigré who was shaking up American architecture by challenging old ideas. Walter Gropius advocated a new type of building methodology using principles of geometry, calling his theory of architecture the "Bauhaus School." Gropius talked about honest architecture — an honest use of construction materials, an honest approach to problem solving, and honest functionalism. Harvard's own affection for "honest" architecture meshed perfectly, and he became an architectural zealot for the movement. He moved to St. Petersburg in 1938 because he believed it would be a growing area, ripe with opportunities to design new kinds of buildings, both residential and commercial. He made an excellent bet. In just four years, between 1938 and 1941, he had already made a name for himself. He had drawn plans for the Tides hotel, St. Peter's Parish House, the Coca-Cola building and the Cameo apartments in Pass-a-Grille.[14] With each new architectural triumph, his name became more well known, not only in St.

[13] Ibid.
[14] McClintock, "Architect Bill Harvard," 24.

Petersburg but in the region. Other architects, as well, were taking note of Harvard's designs.

Even his experience in World War II advanced his architectural thinking. He enlisted in the army in 1941 and served as a base engineer at the Atlanta Army Air Field. He was later stationed in Okinawa and Saipan, where he experienced combat. The tropical climate, the building styles, and the efficient operation of the Army Corp of Engineers impressed him.[15] When he returned from the service, he found an even greater culture of collaboration. Many open-minded, eager, young designers gravitated to Florida during the 1940s and 1950s. In 1941, Frank Lloyd Wright (at the age of seventy-four) completed the first of many buildings at Florida Southern College. Other Bauhaus designers experimented with innovative, open-space designs on Florida's west coast, especially in Sarasota. Paul Rudolph, for one, specialized in adapting the vernacular style to sophisticated beach houses. He used Sarasota as an experimental lab to test the concepts of Modernism in residential architecture. Sarasota offered "a certain freedom that was exquisite."[16] Architects were experimenting with new materials to build small vacation houses in the vernacular style, often situated on small building lots to take advantage of the tropical breezes. The customer was often a wealthy northern client who wanted a sophisticated summer home. Architects of this generation enjoyed an unusual period of freedom to apply some of their most progressive ideas to residential

[15] Interview with William B. Harvard, Jr.
[16] Domin and King, *Paul Rudolph,* 24.

architecture, and Harvard was in communication and emulated architectural thought leaders such as Rudolph.

St. Petersburg's

clients, too. It was

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His son recalls, "

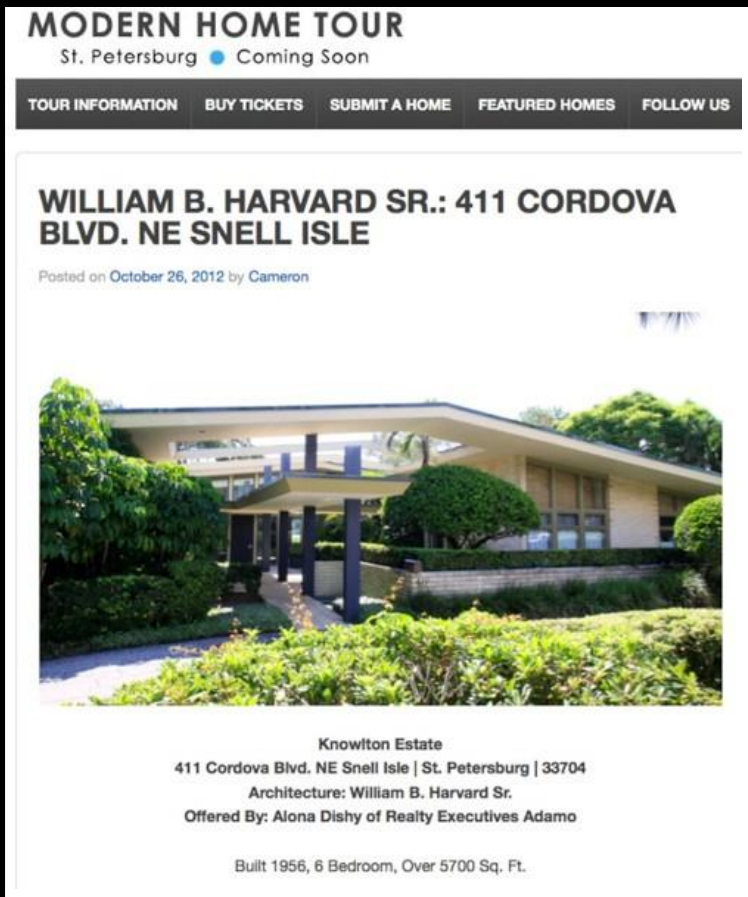

Figure 48. A Harvard Custom Home (Courtesy of Modern Home Tour, http://bit.ly/1lg5HAP).

nobbed with members of the Yacht Club, and he

progressive Modernist designer to St. Petersburg's

nes on trendy Snell Isle and along Coffee Pot Bayou.

patience for buyers who wanted to direct the

design. He knew what he wanted and he would get up and leave [a client meeting] if he or she asked for something that he [Harvard] didn't agree with." Furthermore, he had no patience for the Mediterranean Revival style, which he regarded (architecturally) as the equivalent of comfort food. It was not long before Harvard moved from residential to larger-scale projects.

How Harvard Changed St. Petersburg

In his book, *Florida Modern*, Jan Hochism includes William B. Harvard,

Figure 49. Busch Gardens Hospitality House in Tampa, Florida (Photo Courtesy of State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, http://bit.ly/Uyy1cO).

aesthetic of pre-air-conditioned homes. In another imaginative move, after a hurricane hit the Gulf of Mexico in 1950, he built an experimental beach house on stilts and with convertible louvers and doors. Harvard, however, made a name for himself with his public architecture. As with the Busch Gardens Hospitality

[17] Jan Hochstim, *Florida Modern* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2004), 218.

House, he created his own signature style: the “folded roof.” Today, his buildings are easily recognizable by this dramatic roofline. Most importantly, his public architecture represented the shifting culture of the 1950s and 1960s; among some of his contributions are St. Petersburg’s main library, Derby Lane, St.

Figure 50. Williams Park Band Shell (Photo by Author).

trademarks: He liked steep, repeating A-frame shapes, likely for several reasons. The roof of any building is the overhead plane, and it is a major design element. It shelters from inclement weather such as sun, rain, and hail; and it defines the interior spaces. The roof plane sets the proportions of the structure and determines how weight is carried across space; thus, it can appear to fly into space. Most likely, Harvard also liked an A-frame roof to make a statement.

Harvard wanted to create a sense of drama with the new 56-foot blue-green roof announcing the city’s first modern public structure, the Williams Park Band Shell. Adhering to the Bauhaus dictum that the best architecture should

help solve a problem, Harvard approached the design with that in mind. The problem was how to make the band shell functional in a quickly changing tropical environment. In 1953, *Architectural Forum* reviewed the structure and wrote that "the tent shape makes sense because the sun is very low in the winter (which meant pulling down the tips of the roof on the east and west sides), because the rain squalls are sudden (which meant the need for a real, sheltering cover), and because the acoustics demanded a raised roof toward the south…. What seeming eccentricity remains is amply justified by the city's demand that the structure express the 'sunshine' theme."[18]

The band shell met with poor reviews at first. It wasn't the traditional band shell. One person said, "It looks like a pile of girders in a junkyard. It doesn't look like any kind of band shell I ever saw before."[19] Yet, such comments did not deter Harvard one bit. He insisted that his band shell was a modern, iconic, and logical replacement of its generic half-dome predecessor. Even today, almost seventy years later, the website for the firm that Harvard founded says that the band shell was a "breakthrough in our thinking," and quotes an unnamed journalist who said it "broke the crust of tradition downtown for all local designers."[20] Harvard's band shell project won numerous awards throughout 1954; and thirty years later, it won a coveted Test of Time Award from the American Institute of Architects.[21]

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[18] "Band shell under a glass tent: "It keeps out sun and rain, produces optimum reverberation," *Architectural Forum* 99 (November 1953), 119.
[19] McClintock, "Architect Bill Harvard," 21.
[20] "History," Harvard Jolly Architecture, accessed June 12, 2014, http://bit.ly/1hRSTWQ.
[21] Ibid.

Perhaps the most outstanding example of Harvard's influence on the area (pre-Inverted Pyramid), is the Pasadena Community Church in St. Petersburg. In 1959, Harvard took on the challenge of building a new church and music venue that would accommodate 2,000 parishioners. The half-million dollar project required more than 450 tons of steel to support the folded roof. As with his dismissal of Med Rev designs, Harvard also chose to do away with the traditional church design with columns framing the front door and a single steeple. This was not just a decision based on architectural preference. Part of Harvard's design considerations had to take into account that the church to be built was the inspiration of Dr. J. Wallace Hamilton.

Hamilton accepted the leadership of Pasadena Community Church (located seven miles from downtown St. Petersburg) in 1930, which was under construction and was designed in the Med Rev style. After the collapse of the Florida boom, the church walls were left without plaster; and only rough flooring was installed over the sanctuary and in the Sunday school.[22] The 126 parishioners sat in folding chairs for the services. In time, a Med Rev structure was completed and, by 1938, Hamilton was so popular that he drew overflow crowds to his services and had to install outdoor speakers for the worshipers. The lawn was called "Radio Park," and in the 1940s, the church soon became known as the "drive-in church."[23] Over the years, the church building was expanded; but, clearly, to accommodate the crowds, a very large sanctuary was

[22] Guy V. Aldrich, *Seven Miles Out: The Story of Pasadena Community Church, St. Petersburg, FL 1924–1960* (Tampa, Florida: Grower Press, 1960), 18.
[23] Pasadena Community Church Archives Commission, "Did you know…", January, 2012.

needed. By 1956, th

began turning to bu

church. Church boa

members interviewe

several architects a

surprise of some, M

Harvard was award

contract.[24]

Figure 51. Pasadena Community "Drive-in" Church, 1947 (Photo by Joseph Janney Steinmetz, Courtesy of State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, http://bit.ly/1qdzmCh).

His approach

concerned many pe

the structure went u

soaring arches were as daring innovations — not churchy at all — some said, distracti rchy."[25] But Harvard had an advocate in Hamilton, who defended the b s first sermon in the newly completed church, entitled, "What Mak ?" (March 13, 1961):[26]

> I want in this rvice to express our sincere gratitude for this building, for t s who designed it, for the many skilled hands that shaped it. Th honest building with five hundred tons of steel up there holding ound…. Certainly there is no sacred reason why architects in h century should do all their thinking in the thirteenth, or ch in Florida should look like a church in Massachuse Florida we should utilize our sunshine, bring in the gold of the su n of the grass, the blue of God's sky and the temple of nat temple of God….

[24] Aldrich, *Seven Miles*

[25] Ibid., 207.

[26] Ibid., 206.

More than 7,000 people were in attendance on March 20, 1961, when the new church was consecrated. Thirty years later, *Florida Architect* honored

Figure 52. Pasadena Community Church (Photo by Author).

copper fascia over the six-foot wide glass exterior walls and a standing seam metal roof which was painted to visually blend the existing buildings' Spanish tile roofs. The sanctuary has not been at all altered since construction in 1960."[27] The church seems to have stood the physical, cultural, emotional, and future test of time. The building still stands out as an exemplar of its period.

The Inverted Pier

The Florida Southwest Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) visited St. Petersburg on May 11, 2013, to pay homage to the Williams Park Band Shell and the Pasadena Community Church. Mostly, they came to pay homage to Harvard's signature project, the Inverted Pyramid. At the time,

[27] "Test of Time Award: Pasadena Community Church, St. Petersburg Florida," *Florida Architect* 37, no. 6 (1990): 22–23.

word was that the controversial building was to be torn down imminently (it wasn't); however, its future was in doubt and the members had hastily organized a caravan to see Harvard's works one more time. As I watched the group, it was obvious that its mood turned more and more somber as the members realized that this *could be* the last time they would be able to see the upside down pyramid.[28]

Tear down the Inverted Pyramid?

How could that be?

The answer to those questions requires that we rewind the clock thirty-eight years, to 1969. Harvard, the man who had built his reputation on designing new city landmarks known for pointing to the future, was asked to envision a future culture for St. Petersburg's downtown waterfront and to symbolize that vision in a new pier proposal. In the 1960s, American culture had entered a new era. This is the decade when President John F. Kennedy challenged Americans to put a man on the moon; Andy Warhol was making art from a Campbell's soup can; the first James Bond movie tantalized the world with its mesh of mystery and technology; Martin Luther King, Jr., shared his dream with millions of people; and Star Trek inaugurated "future studies" as popular dialogue.

One could add many more events to this list, but it's clear that city planners and architects were just starting to feel the shock waves of the twenty-first century just thirty years away. At the age of sixty-two, Harvard was chosen

[28] Victor J. Latavish, Director, AIA, AIASWFEVENTS, message to author, May 3, 2013.

for the important assignment of building a new pier for St. Petersburg. In retrospect, he may have underestimated the magnitude of change in the world of architecture that occurred throughout that decade.

The shift against Modern architecture started with the publication of a book by urban critic, journalist and amateur city planner, Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities.*[29] When it was published in 1962, it delivered the first deathblow. She argued that Modernists (who were educated in the 1930s) assumed people would stay in one place. Furthermore, Jacobs was no fan of the federal program for urban renewal as a way to ease social ills. She argued that it was too simplistic to believe people of the twentieth-century, automobile-based culture would choose to stay in a declining neighborhood, especially when government-financed home mortgages encouraged people to move into the suburbs. The 1960s were also not very kind to starchitects. The myth of the "hero-architect" looked suspect as people noticed that architects had become celebrities. In 1967, theorist Guy Debord famously punched a hole in the myth. In his analysis, *The Society of the Spectacle,* he asserted that the Modernist claims of architecture were fundamentally hypocritical. He declared, "All social reality had now been commodified and reduced to illusory, advertisement-like imagery."[30] Debord singled out Frank Lloyd Wright as the quintessential flamboyant, image-led, self-mythologizing artistic personality.[31]

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[29] Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities.*
[30] Glendinning, *Architecture's evil empire?,* 33.
[31] Ibid, 34.

Moving into the 1970s, the assault on Modernists intensified. The biggest blow came from Paul Rudolph's protégé, Robert Venturi and his wife, Denise

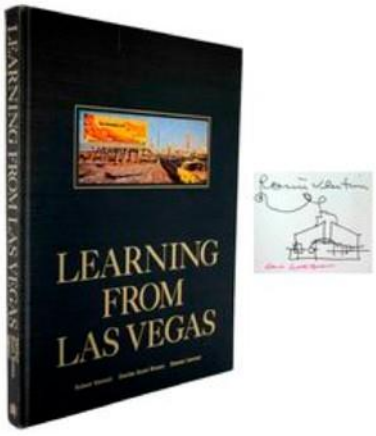

Figure 53. 1972 Edition of *Learning From Las Vegas* Now Sells for $2,500.00, Raptis Rare Books, http://bit.ly/1luqbtW.

irreverent authors shocked the world of architecture with their critique of Rudolph's Crawford Manor, a New Haven, Connecticut, apartment house. Since 1958, Rudolph's buildings had come to define the standard of Bauhaus architecture. The authors selected Crawford Manor, because they said, it represented how modern architecture had gone wrong. They wrote: "Our criticism of Crawford Manor and the buildings it stands for is not moralistic, nor is it concerned with so-called honesty in architecture or lack of correspondence between substance and image per se…. We criticize Crawford Manor, not for 'dishonesty,' but for irrelevance today."[32] Further, they argued that Modern architecture translated into elitism. Venturi famously summed up his argument with a counter to Meis Van de Rhoe's "Less is more" by declaring, "Less is a bore." He continued, "When Modern architects righteously abandoned ornament on buildings, they unconsciously designed buildings that *were*

[32] Robert Venturi, Steven Izenour and Denise Scott Brown, *Learning From Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form*, 8th ed. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1972), 101.

ornament."[33] The book was published by The MIT Press; in its overview of the book, it says: "*Learning from Las Vegas* created a healthy controversy on its appearance in 1972, calling for architects to be more receptive to the tastes and values of 'common' people and less immodest in their erections of 'heroic,' self-aggrandizing monuments."[34] The authors questioned every principle of Modern architecture, and their book unleashed a pent-up frustration with the moralistic tone of the style.

Passé Before It Opened?

Harvard designed a Bauhaus building set to open the same year Modernism was declared dead. From the moment the dramatic outline of the Inverted pyramid went up, the building seemed to be the Rodney Dangerfield of architecture: It got no respect. Harvard's building seems to have been star-crossed from the very beginning — not because of a design fault, but more likely due to poor timing. As Jencks has claimed, Modernism ended with the explosion that brought down the Pruitt Igoe Housing Project, in St. Louis, Missouri, in July 1972.[35] Just six months later, the long-awaited spectacular replacement for the Million Dollar Pier opened on January 13, 1973.

The Pier's opening day was a chilly one, with temperatures in the fifties. The Grand Opening drew an enthusiastic crowd for fireworks, a parade, free

[33] Ibid.,163.
[34] Overview to *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form,* The MIT Press, http://bit.ly/1pZlQ2T.
[35] Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, 6th ed., (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1991), 23.

food, and thirty-seven marching bands[36] provided music for the ceremony. A banner hung from the top deck of the pier urging visitors to “Let yourself go!”[37] That gala event, certainly pumped by the media and by the natural curiosity of people to see what the odd-looking structure was all about, may have been the highlight of its popularity. Too soon, it became painfully clear that people could not find e

Figure 54. The Pier In 2008 (Photo by Ebyabe; Creative Commons License, http://bit.ly/1p1NMUc).

re the building opened, a gallery exhibition of models, nd renderings of several architectural proposed projects were on ampa Bay Art Center. The *St. Petersburg Times* art and

[36] “T s With a Parade,” *Evening Independent,* January 13, 1973, 4-A.
[37] “F o Fireworks, Parade, Eats,” *Evening Independent,* January 11, 1973, 4.

architectural critic, Charles Benbow, noted that the new "Municipal Pier building benefits from an isolated location where it can be as exhibitionistic as it wishes to be…." He says the design helped solve a difficult problem of location.[38] Dick Bothwell, also of the *St. Petersburg Times,* described the structure as sitting on "the great reddish-brown girders [that] angle sharply out from four great support pylons — each composed of 21 pilings going 70 feet down to rock." Bothwell predicted that the roof deck (20,000 square feet, 60 feet above water) would be "a very popular destination." He noted that it was "almost twice as tall as the old Casino building and what a view!"[39] With the *Times* in the lead, the media seems to have done its best to build excitement for the new downtown tourist attraction.

But after opening ceremonies, people seemed disinterested; and most didn't return. Three years later, Harvard defended the shape: "People may think it's a forced shape. But the concept is so logical there is nothing forced about it."[40] He said he did not want The Pier to obstruct the waterfront view from the mainland.[41] Yet, soon after the opening hurrahs (and justifications), people turned a deaf ear to arguments defending architecture that was functional, sculptural, simple, and honest. Those words belonged to a different era.

If one scans the headlines related to the Inverted Pyramid over the rest of the decade, an ugly but distinct pattern quickly emerges. Accolades were few; criticisms were numerous. The root of the problem was, essentially, an

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[38] Charles Benbow*, "*Space for Comment: Architecture Review," *St. Petersburg Times*, May 27 1971, 1-D.
[39] Bothwell, "Piering into the Future," 1-B.
[40] McClintock, "Architect Bill Harvard," 24.
[41] Ibid.

insufficient supply of visitors and tourists. By May of 1974, news stories were being written that The Pier was not profitable.[42] By 1978, one headline pondered, "Is the sun rising or setting over controversial pier?"[43] That same year, The Pier was renamed "Pier Place" and a new ribbon cutting was arranged. Said the related headine: "Grand Opening: It's Now Pier Place, and Fireworks will mark a new beginning today."[44] By 1981, news writers were saying that it was devolving as an attraction, like its design — from wide popularity (represented by the wide top) to narrow current interest (its slender bottom).[45]

In the article in May 1981, Blanchard Jolly (who became a partner in Harvard Jolly Architecture in 1961) claimed that there was still substantial support for the Inverted Pyramid: "We find 50 percent of the people like us and 50 percent don't."[46] That same year, The *St. Petersburg Times* commissioned architectural historian, lecturer and award-winning critic from the *Washington Post,* Wolf Von Eckardt, to offer his opinion. Von Eckardt, who had authored several books on city planning, pronounced the Inverted Pyramid design, "architectural aerobatics."[47] That same year, City Council member, Peter England, upon emerging from a restaurant where the failure of The Pier was the topic of discussion, looked down Second Avenue and noticed that it was

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[42] Elizabeth Whitney, "Paradoxical Pier: A Jewel In Need of Profit's Polish," *St. Petersburg Times*, May 27, 1974, 6-B.
[43] Nancy Hubble, "Is the sun rising or setting over controversial pier?" *St. Petersburg Times*, January 7, 1978, 1-B.
[44] Kelly Scott, "Grand Opening: It's now Pier Place, and fireworks will help mark a new beginning today," *St. Petersburg Times*, January 7, 1978, 3-B.
[45] James Harper, "The Pier: Its function may be starting to conform to its design," *St. Petersburg Times*, May 17, 1981, 1-B–4-B.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

shrouded in fog. “Look, it’s disappeared…. Wouldn’t it be nice if it were that easy?"[48] England may soon get his wish as the Inverted Pyramid’s continued existence is in grave doubt. A front-page story by Waveney Ann Moore in the *Times* in May 2013 is titled “Requiem for an icon.”[49] The Pier has gained the reputation of being a white elephant, costing the city of St. Petersburg hundreds of thousands of dollars per year to maintain — even while its status is debated in the community and in the press. It is doubtful that an icon of architecture would have suffered this same fate. Yet, it’s worth asking the question.

Was It Iconic?

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Harvard confidently looked toward the future and envisioned his concept of a *Wow!* structure. Looking back, one might consider the chilly weather on the opening day of Harvard’s Inverted Pyramid as a dark omen. The fact that people, even during its honeymoon period, could not seem to warm up to this building demonstrates to me that it failed the purpose test — to attract a crowd and keep ‘em coming back for more. An iconic structure must be an attractor to endure. Yet, year after year, The Pier stirred the wrong kind of publicity.

Across the bay from St. Petersburg and in its own requiem for the Inverted Pyramid, *The Tampa Tribune* explains the demise of the pier in dollars-and-cents terms:

[48] Ibid.
[49] Waveney Ann Moore, “Requiem for an icon, *Tampa Bay Times*, May 26, 2013, 1-A.

> By the mid-1980s, The Pier was struggling. The city sued Marriott in the late-1970s, claiming it hadn't lived up to its management contract. The city has changed management companies several times since.
>
> As now, rent from tenants did not cover the costs of running and managing the property, said Nevin Sitler, a local historian with the St. Petersburg Museum of History.
>
> Gift shops, snack bars and restaurants and an open-air putt-putt business came and went.[50]

Michael Van Sickler, writing for the *St. Petersburg Times,* reported on August 18, 2010, that it took less than 120 minutes for civic leaders to make a major decision: "In a Wednesday workshop that lasted less than two hours, the City Council endorsed Mayor Bill Foster's recommendation to demolish the icon and start from scratch."[51]

Since it fell from favor, developers, planning experts, and architects have approached the City claiming they know how to revitalize the Inverted Pyramid into a "brand new" building through some sort of renovation. Their offers have not been met with anything close to overwhelming enthusiasm. This city landmark, the one that was supposed to say "Funderful St. Pete!" should have embodied excitement. It barely inspired curiosity. People will put aside their skepticism for a chance to visit an iconic building — they want to find out what all the excitement and praise are about. Time and again, the Inverted Pyramid failed to stir the emotions of enough people. It was never heart-grabbing.

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[50] Christopher O'Donnell, "St. Pete prepares for life without its inverted pyramid pier," *The Tampa Tribune,* updated May 31, 2013, http://bit.ly/1q6xiMp.
[51] Michael Van Sickler, "Inverted pyramid at the Pier in St. Petersburg headed for wrecking ball," *Tampa Bay Times,* August 18, 2010 (online), http://bit.ly/1oWFATk.

As a result, over the past forty years, city leaders have found themselves desperately searching for just the right pier architecture to draw crowds and keep them coming back. Rockne Krebs's laser light display showed promise – but then fizzled out.[52] (Laser artist Krebs won a $20,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to create a light show especially for The Pier. The laser worked for only two weeks.) Other suitors seem to have the wrong kind of cultural idea in mind. For example, Bob Hoffman, a real estate investor from Orlando, tried to persuade city officials that a Playboy Club on the Pier would be better for attracting business than the St. Petersburg International Folk Fair Society.[53] Harvard's *Wow!* turned into a ho-hum.

One should not see The Pier as a total failure. As for how well it blended into the local culture, one would have to rate it a plus. Harvard paved the way for a culture of Modernism in St. Petersburg. He challenged the status quo, and many of his buildings are still in use today. The Pasadena Community Church is thriving, and it is a city landmark. Harvard's other public building, the Williams Park Band Shell, attracts homeless people and discourages city workers and tourists from using the park. Still, the American Institute of Architects also found it worthy of its Test of Time Award. Harvard's signature architecture does represent a unique mid-twentieth century Modernism. Furthermore, The Pier is a classic example of Bauhaus architecture, and a surprising landmark in a tropical resort town.

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[52] Peter Gallagher, "Green beam is a lemon," *St. Petersburg Times (Floridian),* March 21, 1977, 1–8-D.
[53] James Harper, "Playboy at the pier idea pushed," *St. Petersburg Times,* August, 13, 1980, 1-B.

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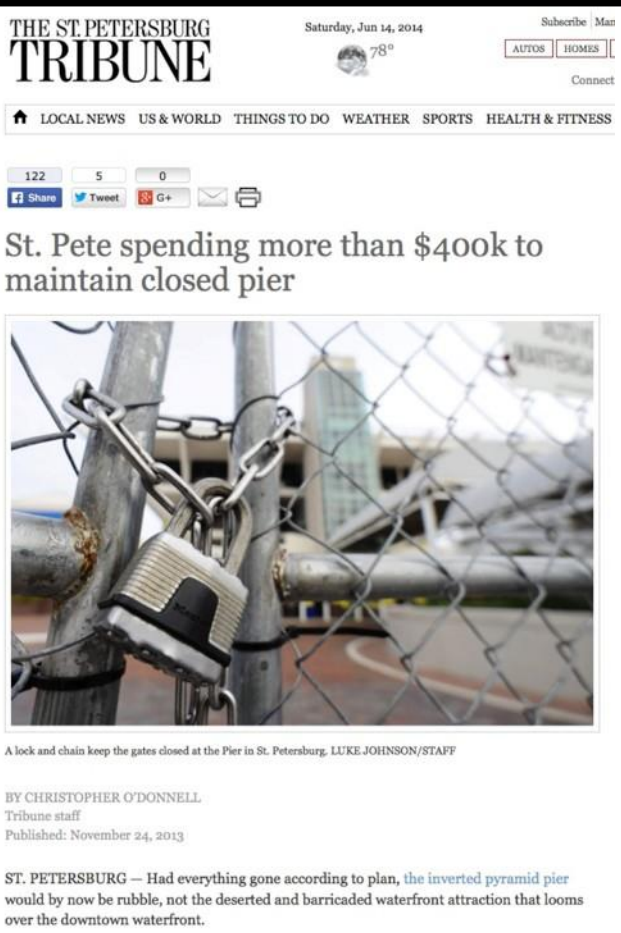
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St. Pete spending more than $400k to maintain closed pier

A lock and chain keep the gates closed at the Pier in St. Petersburg. LUKE JOHNSON/STAFF

BY CHRISTOPHER O'DONNELL
Tribune staff
Published: November 24, 2013

ST. PETERSBURG — Had everything gone according to plan, the inverted pyramid pier would by now be rubble, not the deserted and barricaded waterfront attraction that looms over the downtown waterfront.

Figure 55. The Pier, Now Closed, *The St. Petersburg Tribune,* June 14, 2104, http://bit.ly/1xXVmU2.

nates have been bandied about. Some say a

than $50 million; some say less.[54] St.

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nt — and what they are willing to pay for. In

[54] Waveney Ann Moore, "As o ws louder against the Lens, the new St. Petersburg Pier, alternate VoteOnThePier estioned," *Tampa Bay Times,* June 23, 2012 (online), http://bit.ly/1lbMrUR.

my own interviews with dozens of people about the fate of the Inverted Pyramid and the prospect of yet another iteration of The Pier, I have found a full range of opinions. Some couldn't care less about the current pier and would prefer something new — just not what has been proposed. Some want to preserve The Pier because it, too, provided some fond memories — graduations, weddings, and the like. Still others believe Harvard's pier should be saved on preservationist grounds. After all, Harvard's legacy is bound to grow, they argue. How can St. Petersburg even think about tearing down his most significant achievement?

Perhaps the most important iconicity test for this building lies in this question: *Did it anticipate the future and clearly point away from the status quo?* Definitely, my view is that the answer is no. The purpose of The Pier was to be the city land-mark *that would point toward the future*. Ironically, the Bauhaus style of architecture, by 1973, was actually past its prime by about ten years. When it opened, the Inverted Pyramid looked dated and simply odd to the younger generation. Many of the futuristic values it professed didn't hold true. Will Michaels, a well-known local historian, was interviewed by Van Sickler when the City Council voted to tear down the current pier.

> Ditching the Pier's distinct look may prove costly, said Will Michaels, who sat on the task force and is the former president of St. Petersburg Preservation.
>
> "My first preference was to save the building," said Michaels, who is president of the Council of Neighborhood Associations of South Pinellas County. "It's the city's logo. It's become the brand of our community. But

each pier building represents a generation. So maybe there's a new look that will reflect St. Petersburg's heritage and past, while also representing its future."[55]

Michaels said those words on August 18, 2010. Almost four years later, St. Petersburg remains in desperate pursuit of that "new look."

[55] Van Sickler, "Inverted pyramid at the Pier."

Chapter Six: On a Clear Day, You Can See Iconic

The most important question is what does the community want?

— Rick Kriseman, in 2006, on St. Petersburg's pier[1]

In my opening for this thesis, I asserted that iconic architecture is heart grabbing. The situation around today's downtown St. Petersburg pier is heart breaking. On August 28, 2013, St. Petersburg voters decided to end their contract with Michael Maltzan to build the new, earlier-approved pier, the Lens. Recent polls indicate that relatively few want to keep the Inverted Pyramid, which was to be torn down, only to be saved by a change of mayors going into 2014 and calls for a new study by a new civic committee. If there were a scoreboard for this important issue of providing St. Petersburg with an iconic pier, there would be no winners.

Those who favor the Inverted Pyramid are in the minority and seem to have little chance of seeing the existing structure restored or renovated. For a time, Maltzan's room-sized, handcrafted model of The Lens still took up floor space in the Wannemacher Jensen Architects office (the St. Petersburg

[1] Rick Kriseman, "The Pier," http://bit.ly/1i3pxVm.

architectural firm hired to partner with the Michael Maltzan Architects), a painful reminder of four years of wasted work, at great financial cost as well. Advocates for the Lens know the concept is dead. The plan today is for a group of citizens and professionals, appointed by Mayor Rick Kriseman, to study options for a new pier over a three-month period (with civic input), then pick eight architects to propose design concepts from which a public vote will select the top three. At that point, the mayor's group will select what will become the next iteration of the pier palimpsest. Approimxately $46 million remain in the fund originally designated to build the Lens.[2] With that capital, the quest for an iconic pier will begin anew.

While the current pier seems to many to be a white elephant, there are points of common ground on which to build a new pier. In 2013, the Urban Land Institute (ULI), a non-profit group, analyzed the city's Waterfront Master Plan, at the request of then mayor, Bill Foster. On October 4, 2013, while the city was still smarting from disagreements over the Lens, ULI presented its findings via a panel of speakers at an open meeting at the Vinoy Hotel.[3] The experts reinforced points that seem beyond debate. First, they acknowledged that St. Petersburg is an increasingly vibrant and desirable place to live. It has all the ingredients necessary to attract a higher-income, younger demographic. They also stressed the powerful combination of elements that have made the downtown waterfront

[2] John Rogers, "St Pete mayor unveils new roadmap for new pier," May, 29, 2014, http://bit.ly/1p8tOp3.
[3] Presentation and discussion of "Analysis of St. Petersburg's Downtown Waterfront Master Plan," Urban Land Institute, Oct. 4, 2013.

attractive to a wide array of visitors: the Bayboro Harbor science and technology hub, the University of South Florida St. Petersburg (USFSP) campus, Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital, the United States Geological Survey, the USF College Marine Science Center, and the Poynter Institute. One strong ULI recommendation was that the Bayboro area be designated as the "innovation

Figure 56. White Elephant (Courtesy of the artist, Dorothy Sabean).

business world and not just the tourism industry. Combined with already existing and appealing hotels and restaurants, all that the waterfront seems to lack is a popular structure where other pier buildings have stood. (The panel, however, did not address that controversy.)

Perhaps it didn't have to. The fate of The Pier has proven to be central to any conversation involving St. Petersburg's downtown waterfront, and any building constructed on that iconic location should be a magnetic reason for people to visit the city. According to an Opinionworks survey commissioned by the city of St. Petersburg to identify preferences for the new pier, "80 percent of voters believe the Pier 'should have an iconic or landmark design that people across the country will recognize and that our City can be proud of.' Nearly two-thirds (64%) *strongly agree* that the Pier should be iconic in its design."[4] As others have noted before, St. Petersburg's waterfront is a "sacred space."

Given the strategic importance attached to the pier location and after many years of disillusion with the current pier structure as well as intense debate over new pier proposals, what "iconic" means to St. Petersburg's leaders and residents remains ambiguous. (Curiously, an online search of "iconic St. Petersburg Pier" yields some 9,000 hits. However, an aggressive check of a number of the links finds that, while the phrase is widely used, a definition of the term cannot be found. Everyone seems comfortable with simply leaving the term as an abstraction.) The city has yet to find a proposal that cements popular opinion around a structure that would be as compelling as the Eiffel Tower to Paris or the Australian Opera House to Sydney. Architecture designed for a sacred place carries with it a heavy burden — and that gets to the crux of the problem surrounding St. Petersburg's municipal pier. As I have proposed, there

[4] Steve Raabe, President, OpinionWorks, LLC, "Voter Preferences for a New City Pier," City of St. Petersburg, December 12, 2013 http://www.stpete.org/docs/St__Pete_Voter_Survey_Summary_12_2013.pdf.

are tests for architectural iconicity; and, thus, St. Petersburg must find — or better define — an architectural concept to connect its residents and tourists through the powers of place, purpose, and culture and to last at least seventy years into the future.

Lessons Learned

My studies of iconic architecture, especially as they relate to The Pier in St. Petersburg, have led me to a set of conclusions. While each of the following points is worthy of additional research, I will conclude this paper with what strikes me as significant to those involved in conceptualizing and drafting the blueprints for the next downtown pier.

Iconic architecture must exemplify the special personality of its location.

One point of an icon is to identify a city by its visual significance. The current pier fails to do that. Often, when a view of the Inverted Pyramid is shown on nationally broadcast events, commentators will say the view is of Tampa Bay. As noted in the previous chapter, the design was not iconic enough. In 1955, Oscar Niemeyer designed a very similar building for the Museum of Modern Art in Caracas, Venezuela,[5] and other inverted pyramid shapes have been built in other cities. St. Petersburg's Inverted Pyramid was not the first, but that point is

[5] Ulrich Conrads and Hans G. Sperlich, Trans. Edited and expanded by Christiane Casemann Collins and George R. Collins, *The Architecture of Fantasy: Utopian Building and Planning in Modern Times.* 2nd ed. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc. Publishers 1962). 94 – 95.

secondary to the real problem with the structure. The Inverted Pyramid does not exemplify what is unique about St. Petersburg. *Design alone cannot create iconicity.* A striking pier could help differentiate St. Petersburg from Tampa (or any other city) on the international stage. If the next pier does not signify what is unique about the city, it will probably suffer the same fate as the Inverted Pyramid soon after it is built: It rapidly will be seen as a building that may be different from what was there before, but it will not shout to the city and the world that *this* is what St. Petersburg is all about. Visitors may be abundant at the start, but the crowds will dissipate soon thereafter. The costs will exceed the benefits, at which point the appeals for a new structure will begin.

To his credit, Josh Boatwright — during the heated debate and just before the public vote over The Lens proposal — did try to tackle the iconicity of The Lens design. He interviewed a number of architectural experts, all of whom said that it was unusual for a popular vote to be used to decide whether to build an iconic building. “The majority of so-called ‘iconic’ buildings constructed in modern times has either been funded privately or was selected by juries of experts and elected officials, said Richard Guy Wilson, chair of the architectural history department at the University of Virginia,” Boatwright reported. “There’s good reason to believe many of those famous structures would never have been built if they’d been decided by popular vote.”[6] I am more optimistic. If an iconic vision is put forth with ample discussion of its benefits, costs and potential for boosting

[6] Josh Boatwright, “As St. Pete learns with Lens, building icon isn’t easy,” *The Tampa Tribune,* August 23, 2013, http://bit.ly/1ybZVdz.

city tourism, it might be that the proposal would meet with more than adequate support. Key to this, of course, is demonstrating to the city how the new structure would boost its identity.

Iconic architecture does not have to be extravagant.

The Eye, The Lens, The Wave — if any had been built, the cost would have been great. As noted, The Lens quickly lost its appeal to the citizenry when it was revealed that its $50 million price was only for the first phase. These concepts were, without doubt, futuristic. It's not at all clear, however, that any were iconic. And that may be the core reason why St. Petersburg, in the end, voted down what could have been considered as an extravagant use of taxpayer money to subsidize what some regarded as an architect's pet project. The Opinionworks study found that forty-three percent of respondents thought the Lens design was *worse* than that of the Inverted Pyramid.[7] If citizens are drawn to the designer more than to the design, a proposed building can easily be seen as an ego-driven boondoggle for its starchitect.

When one compares recent proposals for the St. Petersburg Pier to what other cities have done, it helps to put the issue into perspective. *Tampa Bay Times* reporter, Waveney Ann Moore, who has covered The Pier debate from the start, surveyed other famous city piers undergoing renovation. Her reporting provides context for some extravagant pier ideas and some simpler ones. For

[7] Steve Raabe, President, OpinionWorks, LLC, "Voter Preferences for a New City Pier." City of St. Petersburg, December 12, 2013, http://www.stpete.org/docs/St__Pete_Voter_Survey_Summary_12_2013.pdf.

example, the Santa Monica Pier, also a city landmark, has struggled to find its purpose. The city invested in a two-acre, privately owned Pacific Park (including a $1.5 million Ferris wheel). That pier is attracting seven million people a year. Yet, Jim Harris, deputy director of the Santa Monica Pier Corporation and resident historian, says the real draw "is the ability to walk over the ocean in a beautiful Southern California location."[8] Another example is Pier 39 in San Francisco (which is one of numerous piers on its waterfront, not all of which are designed for tourism). It brought in a reported $230 million for the city and twelve to fourteen million visitors in 2012, said Renee Dunn Martin, spokeswoman for the Port of San Francisco. The sea lions, carousel, aquarium, and sightseeing cruises are the main attractors.[9] Lastly, the Race Street Pier in Philadelphia was designed as a simple picnic park. Its "wow" factor is a solar-powered light show charged by over 200 LED blocks embedded into the paving. Philadelphia taxpayers contributed $6.5 million to build it, and public input actually enhanced the final design.

Moore provides examples of other waterfront piers; one theme that seemed to connect many of the successful pier projects is that each respective city chose to build on the innate ability of waterfronts to attract people to their natural beauty. The successful piers all add access to the water for fishing, walking, and biking — all simple pleasures. And, while many relish the allure of fine dining on a pier, it's important to note that cities such as Daytona Beach only

[8] Waveney Ann Moore, "In deciding what to do with the Pier, St. Petersburg could find ideas in iconic locales. Sources of Inspiration," *Tampa Bay Times,* January 5, 2014, 1-B.
[9] Ibid. 7-B.

spent $6 million to renovate its pier. Augmenting the City's investment was the addition of a restaurant, Joe's Crab Shack, which financed another $2 million for more renovations. St. Petersburg may well need a pier that costs multiple million dollar bonds to construct, but it should not do so unless such an investment is required to ensure the iconicity of the new structure.

IA = S + E.

Earlier, I noted that iconicity is often identifiable by the number of reproductions of the concept that can be found. Those Eiffel Tower salt and pepper shakers, on one hand, cheapen the image of the original. On the other hand, they honor it. One thing is certain, however: Any city that hopes to boost its reputation in the world by building another Eiffel Tower — even if the city replicated every dimension (the elevator to the top, the restaurant, the laser light show at night) — would fail. The reason for that, I believe, is that iconic architecture = structure + experience (IA = S + E).

Two scholars in this field, Glendinning and Jencks, repeatedly mention the Sydney Opera House in their books as a quintessential example of iconic architecture. They point out how the seashell forms of the roof conjure images that relate to the waterfront (waves, shells, sails, fish scales): it's compelling because people grasp the intent of the architect immediately. Thus, the structure of the building cannot be denied or even minimized. The structure makes a powerful statement in and of itself.

Yet, the parti (the driving idea behind a building) was to unite the feel of Sydney's waterfront with its cultural heritage and future. In other words, the Sydney Opera House had to be something *to be experienced*, not just a subject for a camera lens. Thus, the inside of the building had to be as vital as the symbolism of the structure. Indeed, if one reads the description of the building by Australia's Department of the Environment, one can quickly discern how the importance of the structure expands when merged with the importance of experiencing it firsthand. "…[T]he roofs resemble billowing sails and the whole ensemble has a singular freedom of form. The two halls have their stage set to the south which maximizes views of the harbour from the northern foyers and from the glass-walled passages as the public passes around to the northern end…. The building is entered from the southern forecourt and a wide sweeping set of stairs, which makes for a grand approach on foot…."[10]

When proposed and built, the structure was controversial and costly. Because an iconic vision challenges the status quo, it never will be universally popular. Ideally, there are enough forward-looking people to endorse the architect's design. Time will reveal whether the combined strength of *seeing and experiencing* the structure has made it iconic, a symbol for the city that fuses its purpose with the culture of the community and with the hearts of all who embrace it. In an interesting contrast to the Inverted Pyramid pier, in October 2013, the opera house celebrated its fortieth anniversary without any proposals to tear it

[10] "Description," Sydney Opera House, 2 Circular Quay East, Sydney, NSW, Australia, http://bit.ly/1vqVF7Q.

down. Why would anyone want to? That iconic building is forever a part of Sydney.

Only an iconic vision can lead to iconic architecture.

It is unfortunate that St. Petersburg does not have a pier structure today that has increased in its iconic value over forty years in existence. That does not mean it cannot have such a pier forty (or seventy!) years from now. Civic leaders and many of those surveyed are asking that the next pier be “iconic.” However, listening to the extended, multi-year public debate underscores, for me, the lack of agreement about what an iconic building is. Much like popular calls for “good government” or “honest politicians” — or even a “balanced budget” — the reason why people often disagree regardless of what is proposed is that the proverbial devil lies in the proposal details.

Most people seem to equate iconicity with futuristic design. Yes, iconic architecture anticipates the future, but it also does much more than that. An iconic building serves a purpose that engages the community, blends in as well as symbolically represents the culture of the location, and triggers an emotional bond via the interconnection between the structure and how one feels when experiencing it. In the past twenty years, iconic architecture has been used to define cities all over the world. By providing samples of successful iconic architecture from around the world, Florida, the Tampa Bay area, and St. Petersburg, I have proposed a set of tests that can be used to predict the probable success of the next iconic pier or any other building that aspires to be

iconic. I had hoped to test my “iconic index” on the selection for the next Pier; that selection is still months away (at best) and is under the guidance of a twenty-one member committee whose process is still being ascertained. Then again, perhaps this situation is an optimistic one. Since The Pier has been an architectural palimpsest since the late 1800s, St. Petersburg has the advantage of applying its own pier history to any proposed new pier. Then, too, given the rejection of its current pier as well as three other avant-garde proposals, the City knows what it does *not* want.

While it is true that the proposals, debates, and studies for the right iconic pier for St. Petersburg seem endless, such happenings will likely never end until the vision for what the City wants and needs is sharply defined and keenly endorsed. This does not mean that the City should avoid taking any action until there is unanimous support for whatever’s proposed; that will never happen. It does mean that arriving at an iconic vision must begin by defining “iconic.” *What’s special about the St. Petersburg waterfront? What do its residents most want to experience when they come to The Pier? What would make someone in Paris want to leave the Eiffel Tower and visit the city? What kind of building would be, as Jencks has stated, an “enigmatic signifier” for the city, a building that begins to reveal the true heart of the community?* Answer those questions and it will be a clear day for St. Petersburg, and the form and feel for an iconic pier will appear at last.

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