

2006

West Tampa: Economic development and community engagement within an urban neighborhood

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West Tampa: Economic Development and Community Engagement

Within an Urban Neighborhood

by

Jenna Holzberg

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Anthropology
College of Arts and Science
University of South Florida

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Date of Approval:
November 14, 2006

Keywords: urban revitalization, urban planning strategies,
Latino immigrants, small business owners,
Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all who made possible the success of this thesis research. Thank you to Dr. Susan Greenbaum, my academic advisor in the USF Department of Anthropology, for her constant advice and guidance. To my committee members, Dr. Brent Weisman and Dr. Kevin Yelvington from the USF Department of Anthropology, for their helpful critiques and suggestions during the final thesis writing process. Thank you to the USF Florida Studies Center who provided funding for this research. To Jim Hosler and the Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission for allowing me the opportunity to work with them during the creation and implementation of West Tampa's economic development plan and providing me the support to create an applied research project for the neighborhood of West Tampa and their planning agency. Thank you to Maura Barrios who first introduced me to the beauty and history of West Tampa, her commitment and passion for her community is an inspiration. Thank you to Gaston Riera and Irma Wilcott who welcomed me into their optometry office and introduced me to many of Boliche Blvd.'s Latino small business owners. Thank you to Boliche Blvd. and all its small business owners who were willing to take the time to sit down and talk to me about their opinions and concerns for the neighborhood.

Table of Contents

List of Maps	ii
Abstract	iii
Chapter One	1
Introduction	2
Relevant Theory and Literature	6
West Tampa History (1890's to today)	22
Boliche Boulevard	29
Chapter Two	31
Internship Setting and Research Methods	33
Chapter Three	40
The Planning Commission	41
The West Tampa Economic Development Plan	44
Previous Redevelopment Projects	54
Chapter Four	61
Challenges to the West Tampa Economic Development Plan	62
Alienated Population: Boliche Blvd. and its Latino business owners	64
Reasons for Non-involvement from those Outside Boliche Blvd.	70
Meeting with Boliche Blvd. and the Planning Commission	76
Boliche Blvd. and the West Tampa Economic Development Plan: how it got to this point	79
Chapter Five	88
Next Step: Boliche Blvd.'s place in the West Tampa Economic Development Plan	89
Recommendations	90
Conclusion	94
References Cited	98

List of Maps

Map 1. State of Florida	20
Map 2. Tampa/Hillsborough County Metropolitan Area	21
Map 3. West Tampa Study Area Boundaries	32

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a critical evaluation of the methods of community engagement used by the Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission during the creation and implementation of the West Tampa Economic Development Plan. Data for this research was conducted in West Tampa, a neighborhood in Tampa, Florida.

In the spring of 2005, the Planning Commission began working with the residents, business and property owners in West Tampa to develop the neighborhood's economic development plan. Using the community engagement methods of surveys, mailed and posted community announcements, community meetings, focus groups and interviews, the Planning Commission created an economic development plan which reflected the needs and concerns of the residents, business and property owners and worked to limit their displacement from the redevelopment of the neighborhood. Although these methods were designed to create avenues of participation for all segments of West Tampa's population, the neighborhood's new immigrant, Spanish speaking residents and business owners were not involved in the Planning Commission's community engagement efforts. By focusing specifically in West Tampa's Latino business district, known as "Boliche Boulevard," a long-time nickname given to the area by Tampa's

Cuban immigrants, data from this research identifies the reasons for this population's absence in the creation and implementation of West Tampa's economic development plan.

The use of the traditional anthropological methods of participant observation, semi-structured interviews and archival research revealed the history of Boliche Blvd.'s relationship with West Tampa, the neighborhood's civic institutions and Tampa city government and how these relationships impacted the business owners' willingness and ability to participate in West Tampa's economic development plan. The Planning Commission's limited understanding of the social relationships which exist between Boliche Blvd., West Tampa and the larger City of Tampa impaired their ability to successfully reach this population with their existing community engagement methods.

This research stresses the need for city-county planning agencies to critically evaluate their community engagement efforts when conducting economic development projects in diverse, multi-lingual urban neighborhoods. Community engagement must be tailored to target different language and culture groups in order to achieve successful participation from the entire neighborhood population.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

For many decades, across the United States, urban locations have experienced a series of outward migrations of people moving from the densely populated cities to the comfortable sprawl of the suburbs. Recently there has been a shift away from suburbia back to what is being perceived as the convenience of the urban lifestyle. In the 1960's and 70's, financially mobile middle and upper class individuals and families left the cities; now some of their contemporary counterparts are interested in moving from the suburbs back into urban areas. In order to respond to this social and economic shift, officials and developers in many cities are in search of urban land to develop in order to accommodate this growing population's housing and entertainment needs. Consequently, they have turned towards neighborhoods that for decades have been neglected economically and politically abandoned. Now they have the task of redeveloping their once successful, now "blighted," neighborhoods in an effort to attract the new urbanists migrating from the suburbs.

The City of Tampa, located along the mid-western Gulf coast of the state of Florida, is currently undergoing such a change. Historically a working class, industrial area, Tampa is striving to compete with other cities for the upper-middle class professionals who frequently get drawn to other metropolitan areas, such as Miami. In an effort to attract this population, the City of Tampa is working feverishly to develop its neighborhoods by creating lofts, condos, shopping and entertainment districts. Any "blighted" neighborhood which can be re-developed to produce taxable property more efficiently is being marked for redevelopment, such as the city's Channel District or Central Park Village. Another example of this is Tampa's Riverwalk Project. This

development will provide the City of Tampa a 2.4 mile business, residential and entertainment area along the Hillsborough River, beginning in the Channel District and running north to Tampa Heights (Gedalius 2006a). Although promising to bring much needed revenue into the City of Tampa, this development has cut through residential neighborhoods, taken private property and removed residents under eminent domain. Developments, such as these in the City of Tampa, are creating areas of economic and social affluence which have effectively pushed out lower and middle income individuals and made it virtually impossible for them to afford to live in these redeveloped areas. This is a common urban development tactic which has been used in the redevelopment of inner-city housing projects. Dr. Susan Greenbaum's research of the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development program, HOPE VI, in the City of Tampa reveals how redevelopment and relocation projects place an intrinsic value on different neighborhoods and its residents, disrupt and damage the ties and social support systems – often necessary for survival – among housing project residents and drastically decrease the number of affordable housing units (Greenbaum 2002b:9-10). The HOPE VI program effectively destroys unsightly housing projects and replaces them with low-density “mixed income” housing neighborhoods. Although creating an aesthetically pleasing neighborhood for middle and upper-middle class professionals, the program does not solve the problems of inner-city poverty, affordable housing, access to social services or access to livable-wage paying jobs. HOPE VI is yet another example of how the City of Tampa is forcibly changing its landscape in order to accommodate a higher, more “respectable” class of urban professionals.

The neighborhood of West Tampa is one example of Tampa's many redevelopment projects. It is conveniently located a short distance from the city's downtown and entertainment areas, such as shopping centers and the Raymond James stadium, home of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. The neighborhood is a National Historic District, with many original late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings and homes which provide the area with a quaint, vintage appeal. Once a vibrant and active neighborhood, for the past three decades West Tampa has suffered from economic and infrastructural neglect. Founded in the late nineteenth century as a cigar-making city, West Tampa was a diverse immigrant community with people from Spain, Italy, Cuba and other Caribbean countries. Many of the second and the third generation Latin immigrant descendants, known as Tampeños, still live in West Tampa today. A gateway community for new immigrants since its founding, West Tampa has a large population of Spanish-speaking residents and workers from throughout the Caribbean, Central and South America (see sections *West Tampa History* and *Boliche Blvd.*).

In early 2005, Tampa's mayor, Pam Iorio requested that the Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission create an economic development plan for the neighborhood of West Tampa. Intending to capitalize on the area's cultural and economic potential, the West Tampa Economic Development Plan would promote business and property development while maintaining the culture and history of the community. The neighborhood of West Tampa is conveniently located a short distance from the city's downtown and entertainment areas, such as shopping centers and the Buccaneer's Stadium. Interstate 275, which runs the length of the City of Tampa, cuts through West Tampa allowing for easy on and off traffic when traveling through the city.

The neighborhood is located just north of downtown Tampa, making it a very convenient commute for those who work in the downtown area. The Tampa International Airport is a short ten mile drive from West Tampa which makes the old cigar-city neighborhood an easy stop for tourists as well as short commute for those who work at the airport. A portion of the Hillsborough River borders the east side of the neighborhood with a large park, an ideal place to develop recreational activities.

Since the Mayor's initial request, the Planning Commission has been working with residents, businesses and property owners in West Tampa to create an economic development plan which represents and targets the needs and concerns of the neighborhood residents and business owners. This participatory collaboration is intended to limit the possible negative effects of displacement resulting from the redevelopment of the area. This collaboration has come in the form of mail-out surveys, mailed and locally posted announcements, community meetings, focus groups and resident led committees which target the different goals of the economic development plan. Despite these various engagement methods, West Tampa's large population of Spanish speaking residents, workers and business owners had little participation in the creation and implementation of the development plan

In a diverse community like West Tampa, it is necessary to use various outreach methods to reach the area's entire population. However, with these methods, an understanding of the dynamics of the neighborhood's diverse population is imperative in order to ensure complete participation. How do the new immigrants of West Tampa interact with the larger, older Tampeño community? How do these populations view their community? Do they have similar concerns and goals for their neighborhood?

What has been these populations' historic relationship with city-government development agencies in West Tampa and the City of Tampa? My thesis research has examined these questions in order to understand how the Planning Commission and other city planning agencies can increase community participation in neighborhood economic development plans.

Relevant Theory and Literature

Community participation and engagement

The notion of community participation in urban development projects is a result of the devastating destruction of inner-city neighborhoods during the 1950's and 1960's through the federally mandated projects of urban renewal. Community activists fought against these urban renewal projects, questioned how new urban development would benefit them and their neighbors and demanded their community's involvement in such projects. The use of community participation in local, urban development is now a common practice however the methods of participation vary in technique and success and can challenge or reinforce existing power hierarchies within the neighborhood and the city.

In his essay entitled "Culture and Economic Development," Conrad Phillip Kottak discusses the influence of culture on the success and failures of economic development projects. Although writing specifically about economic development projects conducted by the World Bank in rural communities around the world, his commentary is applicable to economic development projects within urban contexts. The people and communities involved in economic development projects are most likely to

participate, or cooperate, if the project does not “require major changes in their daily lives” (Kottak 1990:724). However, in order to understand what a community’s “daily life” entails, it is necessary to spend time there and talk with the community. Kottak chastised development experts as being more content to speak “with officials rather than smallholders” (1990:725) and they being reluctant to spend time in the community. Within development projects, there are three “levels of culture in development” which the researcher/development expert must be aware of: (1) the local level, which is the everyday lives of the community where the proposed development project is located; (2) the national culture, which for urban development projects in the United States can be applied to the governmental culture of the city, such as the city-wide policies regarding property and/or business taxes and municipal codes which can affect the proposed development project; and (3) the culture of the planners which include the organizational structure of the planning agency and how this affects the direction and implementation of a development plan.

Regarding development projects in the United States, William Peterman argues that despite the fact that community participation has been used in neighborhood revitalization efforts for over twenty years, there is still a disproportionate number of neighborhoods that are failing as a result of ‘grassroots’ participation efforts than those that are succeeding (Peterman 2000:3). He contends that those neighborhoods that do succeed tend to do so as a result of gentrification, thus making the process of community participation obsolete because those who had participated are no longer able to live in the neighborhood. Peterman questions whether grassroots development efforts can

effectively “live up to the challenges given current social, political and environmental realities” (2000:4).

Despite these “realities,” Max Kirsch’s research in the Florida Everglades reveals that grassroot communities continue to fight against these challenges. His research documents how communities in southern Florida have responded and resisted development plans initiated by outside industries and governmental agencies (Kirsch 2003:99-131). The Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) has profitable sugar farming and production, located within a successful real estate and commercial development area. The EAA, once a wildlife wetland, was drained in the 1940’s to produce adequate land for sugar and vegetable farming. Currently, a large number of the labor force are Mayan migrants from Guatemala. Responding to the population growth of the state, the federal government has mandated an Everglades Restoration Project which restores the original landscape of the wetlands while providing the area’s growing developments with clean drinking water. These restoration and development projects drastically affect the workers of the sugar and vegetable farms through their displacement from jobs and housing as well as affecting the funding for agencies which serve this population; thus disrupting many of the workers’ support systems and affecting the community as a whole (Kirsch 2003:121). These development and restorative projects have been closely tied to the national, state and local politics of the area. Despite the federal requirement that all development and restorative projects in the EAA include community-outreach programs, the politics of power and influence among the national, state and local government and private agencies have produced exclusionary practices which have severely limited community involvement and feedback on these projects. Kirsch states:

The contrast between the stated rhetoric of governmental agencies and the action they take are indicative of the contrasts in values and viewpoints among community, environmental and governmental organizations. Industry and government are linked in relationships of power that would, on the surface, seem to overshadow the concerns of other stakeholders (2003:120).

Although development and restorative projects, such as those in the Florida Everglades, are presented as beneficial to the community and surrounding environment, the underlying goals of these projects are for the capitalist profits of the developers and large industries, which greatly influence the politics behind the issue (Kirsch 2003:111-114). Kirsch documents that despite these politics of power and control from the developers, industries and the national, state and local government agencies, the community-based organizations of the EAA have consistently asserted their presence and demands regarding these projects, which has helped lead to changes in the proposed EAA development and restoration plans. His research demonstrates that despite the intense political and economic influences of international, national and state powers, local communities can still assert and effectively demand recognition of their concerns.

When going up against the strength and influence of these larger hegemonic powers - or the formal institutions of political, economic and social power and domination within society - which the success of a local community and/or local organization often hinges upon its leadership. Rhonda Halperin has referred to these local leaders as “social bandits” in her research of Cincinnati’s East End neighborhood and its economic development plan. Social bandits operate on the border of the neighborhood, power, ethical and class systems and work as culture brokers for their

community “with and against the cultures of power and wealth” (Halperin 1999:51). Halperin discusses how the City and its government, or the “urban hegemonic system,” views working-class communities and their local leaders as part of the Third World; a place unknown, foreign and mysterious (Halperin 1999:51). Social bandits function as representatives for their communities, ensuring that their concerns are addressed in community and economic development projects. They must negotiate between the urban hegemonic system of the City’s endless planning meetings, changing of project tasks and their community’s impatient desire to see action and plans implemented. In an effort to get their concerns met, social bandits/community leaders run the risk of alienating themselves from their community through their association with outsiders in the wealth and power system while, at the same time, forcing those in power to recognize and understand the “strength, needs and talents of [their] community” (Halperin 1999:53).

Economic and community development efforts, which focus on improving the quality-of-life in neighborhoods, often have the negative consequence of gentrification and displacement of the original residents. R. Timothy Sieber analyzes the socio-cultural aspects of gentrification with his research in a New York City neighborhood by examining the ideologies of neighborhood newcomers, or urban pioneers, who actively bring about this gentrification and displacement (Sieber 1987). These newcomers, often young professionals, come into old, working-class, underdeveloped neighborhoods with a vision of change closely tied to their middle and upper-middle class political, social and cultural values (Sieber 1987:54). In his case-study, Sieber discusses how the newcomers actively worked to change the neighborhood’s working-class image according to their suburban neighborhood standards with a disregard to how such changes would affect the

original residents. Using their economic and professional influence, the newcomers advocated for neighborhood development projects which directly produced negative consequences for these original residents. As a consequence of these neighborhood changes, the newcomers created a community exclusive to them and separate from the original residents of the neighborhood. In Sieber's research, the old-timers of this New York City neighborhood, at times, did financially benefit from these newcomer development efforts, those who owned rental properties were able to charge higher rents for their units; many others were able to sell their properties at high prices due to the neighborhood's rising real estate market (1987:61). As the original residents slowly moved out of the neighborhood, many of the area's historic community centers and clubs had to close due to low enrollment and membership. Within this case-study example, the neighborhood experienced a complete socio-economic shift, from a working-class community of multi-generational families which had grown around the area's now defunct industrial shipping yard, to an upper-middle class community of nuclear families and single professionals. Sieber's research illustrates how urban revitalization and re-development efforts often originate from the upper-middle class values of what makes a healthy community and the individualistic objectives of the newcomers. It is through these newcomers ideology of renewal and change and their professional and economic strength that such community re-development efforts are successful. These successful re-development efforts, as defined by the newcomers, effectively eradicate neighborhoods of its original residents and create exclusive neighborhoods of social and economic affluence.

Within the prospect of urban economic development, lies the inevitable consequence of resident displacement. Although economic development plans, like West Tampa's, often include the stated goal of limiting the displacement of the original residents, by proposing residential tax moratoriums or other tax credits to ease the financial burden on residents, the displacement of a neighborhood's original residents is an unavoidable issue and concern. This issue of displacement can cause neighborhood residents to respond in different ways. The development, or economic "reinvestment," of a neighborhood can be perceived as a welcomed change from many residents. Their own property values can increase and allow them to profit greatly from the sale of their home or business, while others can be concerned about their ability to afford to live in their neighborhood where generations of their families have been born and raised. This division among residents can be viewed as stemming from different values; defined by Paul Levy as "community-oriented" versus "market-oriented values" (1980:305). This difference in values, related to the redevelopment of a neighborhood, affects resident-driven efforts to address neighborhood reinvestment and displacement issues. This perspective on the influence of values can be viewed as simplistic because it assumes that individuals and families have the ability to act according to their values, without taking into consideration the economic or social issues which may prohibit them from acting according to these values. It is therefore important for community organizers or planning professionals, who are working with neighborhood residents on community re-development issues, to be aware of value differences as well as the social, cultural and economic composition of a neighborhood, how residents are – or are not – associated with community and city civic institutions and at what point in the

redevelopment/reinvestment process is the neighborhood (Levy 1980:306-309). An understanding of these neighborhood dynamics will allow community organizers and planning professionals to work more successfully with neighborhood residents at addressing the inevitable concerns and issues generated from neighborhood redevelopment.

Many urban neighborhood redevelopment efforts are often initiated by local governmental efforts. Such is the case in West Tampa, with the Mayor of Tampa requesting the City-County Planning Commission to create an economic development plan for the neighborhood. However, with this association of city-government in neighborhood redevelopment efforts, issues related to community participation in the local development efforts become apparent. Carol MacLennan (1995) addresses these issues of institutional and ideological blocks which limit citizen participation in “Democratic Participation: A View from Anthropology.” MacLennan calls for greater anthropological understanding of the circumstances which impede citizen participation in the democratic process, whether it is in national or local elections, policy changes or economic development. Researching institutions of power, such as local city governments, will help to understand how “citizens’ access to formal channels of power are controlled” and if these “administrative barriers are...intentional or not” (MacLennan 1995:61-62). She argues that the ideology of the importance of the economic market within the U.S. value system strongly influences and controls how citizens participate in the country’s democratic system. Just as Caroline B. Brettell argued for anthropologists to understand the historical context of the urban environment (Brettell 2000), MacLennan

discusses the need to include a historical understanding of how institutional and ideological barriers have impacted individuals' participation in the democratic process.

Ethnography in the city

Ethnographies of contemporary urban issues “lack explanatory analyses,” argues Leonard Plotnicov (1991a:103). Although many urban ethnographies present vivid descriptions of topics in contemporary urban development (such as poverty, homelessness, gentrification, drug use/trafficking), Plotnicov believes within these discussions are unclear connections among such issues which results in a lack of “middle-range analyses.” Plotnicov stresses the need to connect these contemporary urban issues in order to illustrate the processes of urban development. By combining the “abstract generalizations” that theory provides with ethnographic data and the processes which have created such contemporary urban issues, would “accurately reflect the complexity of contemporary urban developments, yet also facilitate comparative analysis” (Plotnicov 1991b:117) which will help to understand the processes which can produce urban gentrification and tourism along side poverty and homelessness (Plotnicov 1991a:170). Plotnicov demonstrates this with a middle-range analysis of his research of the development and gentrification in the city of Pittsburgh. He illustrates how the closing of the steel mills lead to the decline of many working-class neighborhoods. As the city began developing its new white-collar industries, such as information-based services, real estate and tourism, downtown development began expanding into the old, once prosperous now impoverished, steel manufacturing neighborhoods. Residents from these old neighborhoods were displaced by the new industrial-businesses emanating from the downtown and the residential development necessary for incoming urban

professionals. The old steel mill neighborhoods were considered ideal for development because of their proximity to Pittsburgh's downtown and their existing infrastructure of empty factories, warehouses and tenements which could be easily converted into pleasing lofts and businesses.

Within this development are the local politics of creating a "livable city," mostly constructed around the middle and upper-middle class values of the urban planners, developers and professionals, often to the detriment of services and programs for the urban poor and homeless. Local, city development is closely tied to the economic development of other cities nationally and abroad. Cities are in competition with each other to attract tourists, large businesses and corporations, therefore urban development and economic success are not only measured by the local business districts but also by a city's national and international relations.

Economic development

The term "economic development" can be difficult to define because of its various meanings to the different constituencies it affects. Traditionally, economists and city developers would use "economic" in reference to "private, capital investment, [in the] business growth sense" (Reese, et.al 2004:3). "Development" can be termed as general economic growth and change, however this definition does not consider the concept of sustainability and the social development of community residents (Reese, et.al 2004:3). Reese and Fasenfest discuss the methodologies of traditional economic development policies where development policies were defined by the identified goal of creating more jobs, which is how success of such traditional economic development policies are measured. They argue for a more critical view of economic development, one

which does not only measure the number of jobs created, but also insures the stability of income growth within the population and provide “increases [in the] local control over market and government operations and increases [in the] economic and political empowerment of all sectors of the community” (Reese et.al 2004:4). These differences between traditional and critical economic development inform how local development projects are evaluated. The mere presence of more jobs may determine success in traditional economic development. The evaluative perspective of critical economic development would consider the types of local jobs that have been generated. If the economic development of an area produced more part-time and low-paying jobs, then the effect will be an increase in the local population of working poor (Reese et.al 2004:8) and would not contribute to the development of the local population or their financial ability to remain in the developing neighborhood.

Economic development design is heavily value laden and political in terms of how development goals are delimited, implemented and evaluated; this is evident by whom and what in a local community is affected by the economic development of the area. Tao and Feiock (2004) analyze the methodologies behind two different economic development plans: the creation of a local enterprise zone and a community redevelopment area. An Enterprise Zone (EZ) program relies on the investment of private businesses to come into the newly established zone, often drawn in by enterprise zone tax credits, and which creates greater employment opportunities for the community. A Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) relies heavily on the government to fund and implement local development projects which focus on local businesses as well as infrastructural development for the community. These two examples illustrate the

differences between private investment and government assistance in local economic development. Tao and Feiock's findings indicate that although EZ and CRA projects are methodologically different, the former being driven by private investment and the latter by the local city government, they often produce the similar result of lowering the number of welfare dependent residents within the re-development area (Tao and Feiock 2004:73). However, this research does not discuss how each economic development plan can affect community residents, such as whether or not welfare recipients found full-time, sustainable employment or if they simply moved out of the area. Nonetheless, Tao and Feiock discuss that the similar end results of these different development plans allow cities to "pursue their policy goals while shaping the [economic development] program design to the constraints of the local political environment" (Tao and Feiock 2004:75). Therefore, if a city government is unable, or unwilling, to allocate city funds to neighborhood economic development projects, there are other development programs which can produce comparable results.

A common characteristic of urban neighborhoods, which have been targeted for economic development, is their unequal economic balance of inflow and outflow. This concept of inflow/outflow is discussed by Jordan S. Yin in "Alternative Economic Base Study Methods for Community Economic Development" (2004). Through a review of the previous research and literature, Yin illustrates of how the income produced in poor, underdeveloped neighborhoods often does not re-circulate back into the community. This situation is due primarily to the practice of rental payments to non-local landlords, resident and business consumer spending outside the neighborhood, non-resident employment at the few existing neighborhood businesses and resident and business credit

payments to financial institutions outside the neighborhood area. In order to improve a neighborhood's unequal economic inflow/outflow, an economic development project must address these multiple and interconnected issues. Beyond the creation of greater job opportunities for local residents, a development plan must encourage the establishment of locally owned businesses and rental properties or a local bank or credit union which can provide loans for reinvestment projects within the community. Before creating a multi-faceted neighborhood economic development plan, Yin stresses the importance of community participation in the economic development process, which will help to ensure that the plan will reflect the neighborhood's needs and the plan's acceptance and use by those within the neighborhood. He also urged an understanding of the existing economy, how the different income generators within the area interact and how to improve those that do not. This will illustrate which community institutions are to be involved and how they are to be connected in the economic development of the neighborhood (Yin 2004:111-112).

The effects of local economic development, both positive and negative, are experienced across all socio-economic sectors within a neighborhood. The literature above offers a critical look at how and why the negative effects of economic development occur and what can be done to combat such effects. The discipline of anthropology offers a unique perspective into examining the practice of local, urban economic development in order to understand how economic, social and political power structures can influence the direction of development projects. This thesis research, on West Tampa's economic development plan, contributes to this understanding by providing insight into the process of the design and implementation of an economic development

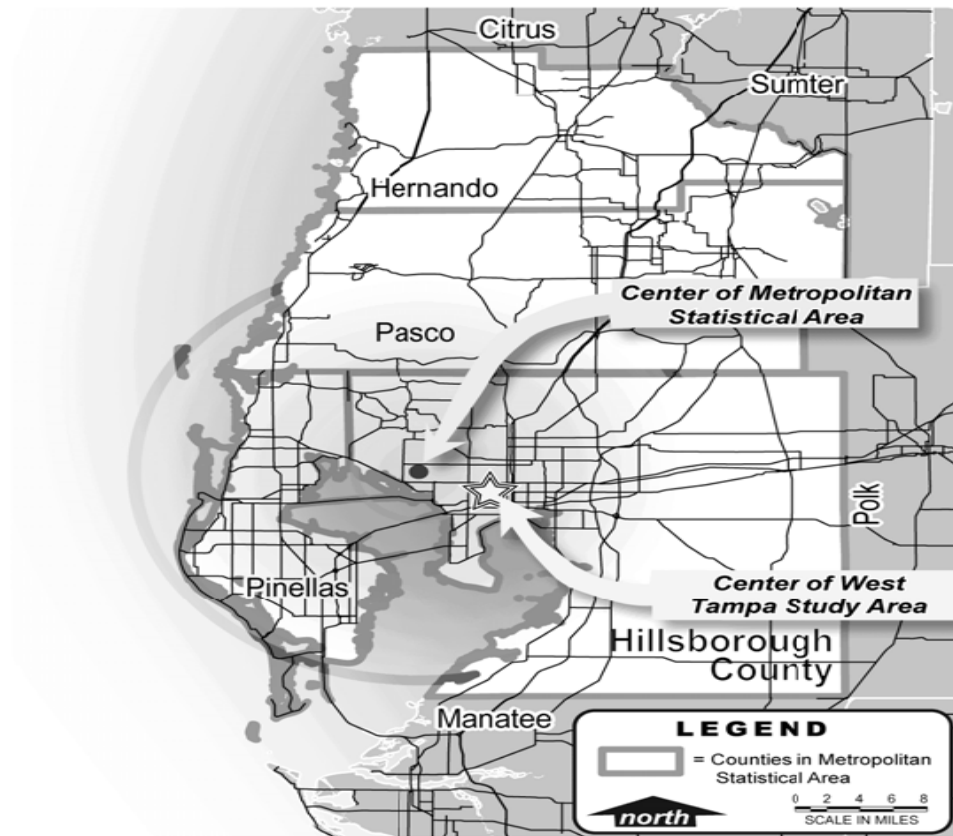
plan and how the economic, social and political power dynamics which exist within the neighborhood of West Tampa , its civic institutions and Tampa city government can be utilized to limit the negative effects of neighborhood re-development.

Map 1: State of Florida



<http://www.birding.com/images/usfl-d.gif>

Map 2. Tampa/Hillsborough County Metropolitan Area



2005 *West Tampa Economic Development Plan. Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission*

West Tampa History (1890's to today)

The history of West Tampa is closely tied to its relationship with Cuba and the success and ultimate demise of the handmade cigar manufacturing industry. The relationship between cigar making and West Tampa begins in Key West, Florida, during the time of Cuba's Ten Year War (1868-1878). At the beginning of the Ten Years War, Cuban cigar manufacturers began moving to the island of Key West, just ninety miles north from Cuba. Many of these cigar manufacturers supported Cuba's independence from Spain, so their move to Florida protected them from persecution and allowed them to support the revolution from a distance (Greenbaum 2002a:58). By using tobacco shipped from Cuba to their factories in Key West, the cigar manufacturers were able to produce their popular Cuban cigars without paying the expensive United States tariffs on imported cigars; thus greatly increasing their profits (Greenbaum 2002a:58). In 1885, Key West cigar manufacturers began moving their factories northward to the City of Tampa in an effort to escape the union strikes and labor unrest among their cigarmakers. One of the first cigar manufacturers to successfully make the move to Tampa was Vicente Martinez Ybor. Striking a deal with several other cigar manufacturers and the Tampa Board of Trade, Ybor began building the cigar manufacturing city known as Ybor City (Greenbaum 2002a:60). As the cigar making industry was beginning to boom in Tampa, a lawyer named Hugh Macfarlane moved into the city and established a law practice. With all the growth and development occurring within Tampa, Macfarlane became interested in real estate, noticing that land values were doubling and tripling within short periods of time (Mendez 1994:2). Wanting to take advantage of this tremendous

investment potential, in 1886 Macfarlane purchased 120 acres of swampland west of the Hillsborough River, on the outskirts of the City of Tampa. After his land purchase, Macfarlane watched as, four miles east of his swampland, Ybor City grew and prospered from the development of new cigar factories and homes. Realizing that his acres of swampland had the potential to produce the same kind of economic success as Ybor City, Macfarlane quickly had his land surveyed and divided into the lay out of a city, with streets, public areas, individual lots and industrial sites (Mendez 1994:2), and so began the city of West Tampa.

Macfarlane initially attracted cigar manufactures from Key West by offering them new factories, free rent, building lots and generous financial incentives; such as how the Ellinger Company received sixty building lots and \$5,000 in cash from Macfarlane in 1893 to relocate into West Tampa (Mendez 1994:28). He funded the construction of the Fortune Street Bridge over the Hillsborough River (completed in 1893), which opened up West Tampa to the cigar makers living in Ybor City and connected the area with the major railroads and ports of Tampa. Recruiting workers from Key West and neighboring Ybor City, Macfarlane attracted laborers primarily from Cuba as well as Spain, Italy and other countries in the Caribbean. Although very generous to the cigar manufactures and the infrastructural development of West Tampa, Macfarlane did get returns on his city investments through the Macfarlane Investment Company, which constructed, rented and sold shotgun homes to the city's thousands of cigar workers. By the late of the 1890's, the City of West Tampa had within its boundaries more than 200 cigar factories and over 5,000 cigar makers (Mendez 1994:25). At a speech in 1919 at the Tampa Board of Trade, Macfarlane was quoted as stating, "Within twenty years, the cigar industry

brought an industrial army of 20,000 people who earn and spend in Tampa over \$12 million every year, and her growth during that period was greater than any city in the South” (Mendez 1994:6).

Within the ethnic, immigrant diversity of West Tampa is the history of racial segregation. Although Afro-Cubans and other Afro-Caribbean immigrants in West Tampa lived and worked with the immigrant laborers from Spain, Italy and Cuba, they still lived under the Jim Crow segregation laws of the South. Many African-Americans lived in the northern part of Robert City, a community which boarded West Tampa to the east, along the Hillsborough River. In the 1960’s, this community was completely razed from the City of Tampa’s Urban Renewal projects, displacing thousands of people. In 1941, the North Boulevard Homes housing project was erected along Main Street, just east of Howard Avenue. Over the years, North Boulevard Homes has received hundreds of African American families displaced from the Urban Renewal projects of the 1960’s to today. The oldest public housing project in the city, North Boulevard Homes is a testament to the history of segregation of African Americans and urban development in the United States. The racial segregation of old West Tampa is still present today, with Armenia Avenue separating the African-American families to the east from the old Latin immigrant families to the west.

The early years of West Tampa were marked by revolutionary and progressive leaders. The first mayor of West Tampa, Fernando Figueredo, was a prominent leader in the Cuban independence movement. He served in the Cuban rebel army against Spain during the Ten Years War and became close friends with General Antonio Maceo. Unhappy with the Pacto del Zanjón, which ended the Ten Years War, Figueredo left for

the Dominican Republic to plan with other revolutionaries another uprising against Spain (Mendez 1994:122). To avoid problems with Spain, the Dominican government asked Figueredo and his exiled compatriots to leave the country. Figueredo moved on to Key West, where he found a large Cuban population which carried strong support of Cuba's independence from Spain. At his home in Key West he held meetings with his Cuban revolutionary compatriots, José Martí, José Lamadrid and José Dolores Poyo, and where the Cuban Revolutionary Party (CRP) was formed (Mendez 1994:122). Taking a job in the O'Halloran Cigar Company, Figueredo moved north to West Tampa and thus brought the CRP with him. After the start of the revolution in February 24, 1895, Figueredo worked tirelessly by speaking publicly to the area's cigar workers to raise money and recruit troops. West Tampa and Ybor City cigar workers, avid supporters of Cuba's independence, flocked to hear him speak and joined the ranks of the CRP to be shipped off to the shores of Cuba to fight against Spain. From his revolutionary efforts, Figueredo was a highly respected man within West Tampa. After the city was granted a charter by the state legislature on May 18th, 1895, Figueredo campaigned for the office of mayor and won, a position which he served for two years.

Several years later in 1901, the radical cigar factory lecturer, Francisco Milian, was elected as West Tampa's mayor. During his eight years as mayor, he retained his position as cigar factory lecturer. After one year of being in office, Milian was charged by factory owners as being a labor agitator because he read "Marxist and anti-capitalist viewpoints" to the cigar makers, readings which the workers themselves requested (1994:93). The factory owners, who paid Milian by collecting money from the cigar makers, decided to punish him by changing his method of weekly payment. This insulted

Milian, as well the cigar makers, who walked out of the factory on strike. Shortly thereafter, Milian was taken by Tampa police, escorted out of town, stripped and beaten, put on a steam ship to Cuba and told to never return. As the ship docked in Key West, Milian found help among the area's cigar workers. Through them he was able to contact the Hillsborough County sheriff who guaranteed him protection upon his return to Tampa. After his return, he retained his job as lector and continued to serve as West Tampa's mayor until 1909 (1994:94).

Taking inspiration from the civic and social organizations back home in Cuba, cigar manufacturers and laborers began organizing mutual aid societies for their social and medical needs. By the early 1900's, mutual aid societies served the many different ethnic groups within the cigar industry cities of West Tampa and Ybor City; such as Centro Español, Centro Austoriano, Círculo Cubano, L'Unione Italiana and Sociedad la Unión Martí-Maceo. A modest monthly membership fee provided members medical benefits, supplement wages lost during illness and burial costs. Some societies were able to fund their own hospitals, such as Centro Austoriano and Centro Espanol, where members could have access to unlimited health care (Greenbaum 2002a:155). Besides providing "cradle to the grave" health care, the societies were the social centers for the cigar workers and their families. Many society buildings housed cantinas, theaters and dance halls and held weekly events for their members, such as Saturday night dances (Mendez 1994:164). Baseball was another popular activity in West Tampa. Most of the large cigar factories had their own teams and Sunday baseball games drew crowds in the thousands from the West Tampa and Ybor City communities. Baseball has had very strong tradition in West Tampa and the neighborhood has produced famous players, such

as Baseball Hall of Fame catcher and Chicago White Sox manager Al Lopez, Yankees player and ex-Devil Rays manager Lou Piniella, and St. Louis Cardinals manager Tony La Russa.

Cigar makers in West Tampa were very active in union organizing in the various city factories. The cigar maker unions were powerful forces for the factory owners to reckon with and strikes often shut down cigar production for months at a time. Unions were present in West Tampa since the cigar industry began and strikes were a common occurrence in the cigar industry since the city's founding. Workers have struck for hiring/firing practices (1887), mandating cigar production rules such as the use of scales (1889) or cigar molds (1907) and factory owners' immigration concerns of their workers (1910) (www.cigarsoftampa/strikes). By the 1920's the power of West Tampa's unions were beginning to fade. Factory owners began to lay off key union organizers, which caused the cigar workers to respond by striking. Violence and intimidation was a common practice within the city and active union members were arrested and forcibly deported (Mendez 1994:143). Unwilling to give into the striking union's demands, owners of some of the large factories began implementing automated cigar making machines. Thus, when the strike was over, many workers had no job to return to. This switch to automation and the stock market crash of 1929, was the beginning of the end to the cigar making legacy of West Tampa. Despite the impending demise of the West Tampa's successful cigar industry, the city was incorporated into Tampa on January 1, 1925. World War II took more cigar makers away from the industry to fight overseas and factories struggled to keep workers at home by offering higher wages. However, the business economy of cigar factories was changing. Fewer new cigar factories were

opening and the ones that did, closed their doors after several years. Following the war, many of the young men who returned did not go back to work in the cigar factories that remained, having received employable training during the war and veteran subsidies for higher education and home purchases (Greenbaum 2002a). The final blow to the cigar industry was the United States trade embargo placed against Cuba, which ended the production of Cuban tobacco cigars.

In the 1960's, West Tampa began to change drastically. With the closing of the cigar factories, many of the neighborhood's long-term residents began moving away to suburban areas, like Carrollwood, north of Tampa. As people moved out, many of the local businesses closed down leaving empty store fronts throughout the area. In 1965, Urban Renewal brought devastating effects to neighboring Ybor City where large sections of the neighborhood's homes, businesses and social clubs were torn down. All that remained from this historic area was the business district and other structures deemed historically valuable, which were later re-developed into an entertainment district of bars, clubs and restaurants (Greenbaum 2002a:288). Many of the displaced residents from Ybor City began moving into West Tampa. Later that same year, the housing project of North Boulevard Homes expanded, contributing further to the racial segregation in the neighborhood. In the 1970's, the construction of interstate 275 cut through West Tampa, taking down homes and businesses in its path. Although the interstate did not displace as many residents as the Urban Renewal projects in Ybor City and Robert City, it did physically divide the neighborhood in two and has contributed greatly to the current development and traffic issues affecting West Tampa today.

Despite its losses, West Tampa still retains much its original qualities and charm. Many of the homes in the neighborhood are of original housing stock, such as the cigar makers' wood frame homes from the early 1900's to the 1940's. In October of 1983, areas within West Tampa were designated as a national historic district. This designation was initiated by the Tampa/Hillsborough County Preservation Board of Trustees (Hunt 1985:45) and brought a small victory to West Tampa's community activists working to address the decline of their neighborhood. Although this national designation does not protect West Tampa and its buildings from demolition or infrastructural development not in keeping with the original architecture of the area, it does allow for residents and business owners within the district boundaries to qualify for tax incentives to help restore, preserve or maintain their buildings. The population of West Tampa has declined since the closing of the cigar factories, but many of its current residents have lived in the neighborhood for most, if not all, of their lives. These residents assert to be second or third generation West Tampan; whose families have lived and worked in West Tampa for several generations. Of all the change that has occurred in West Tampa since its founding, its diversity is still present today, with 34.7 percent of the neighborhood population African American and 42.3 percent Latino (Hosler 2005: 19).

Boliche Boulevard

Fidel Castro's rise to power (1959) in Cuba signaled a new wave of Cuban immigrants and exiles into Tampa. Although there were well established Cuban communities in both Ybor City and West Tampa, the new Cubans did not relate well with these first and second generation Cuban immigrants. The new Cuban immigrants were

highly unified in their opposition to the new Cuba government, this contrasted sharply to the old Cubans, many of whom supported socialist ideals and were sympathetic to the goals of Cuba's revolution (Greenbaum 2002a:277). These differences in political ideologies caused separatism between the two Cuban populations and, at times, violent confrontations. Coinciding with the arrival of the new Cubans was the expansion of West Tampa along Columbus Drive. The original western boundary of West Tampa was Habana Avenue but, due to business and population growth, the neighborhood slowly grew past that boundary. West of Habana, along Columbus Drive, a new business community was emerging with stores and restaurants opened by the new Cuban exiled population. This portion of West Tampa, along Columbus Avenue between Habana and Himes, became affectionately termed "Boliche Boulevard" after the popular Cuban dish *boliche*.¹

West Tampa traditionally has been a gateway community for new immigrants, especially from Spanish-speaking countries. Over time, Boliche Blvd. became an enclave for new immigrants coming into Tampa to do their daily shopping as well as a popular location for new immigrants to open small businesses. Today Boliche Blvd. has grown into a thriving business district comprised of several small strip malls with many family-run businesses such as bogedas², botánicas³, cafes, restaurants, pharmacies, bakeries and jewelry/pawn shops. Although many of the business owners along Boliche Blvd. are Cuban, the area has many Latino business owners from the Caribbean, Central and South America.

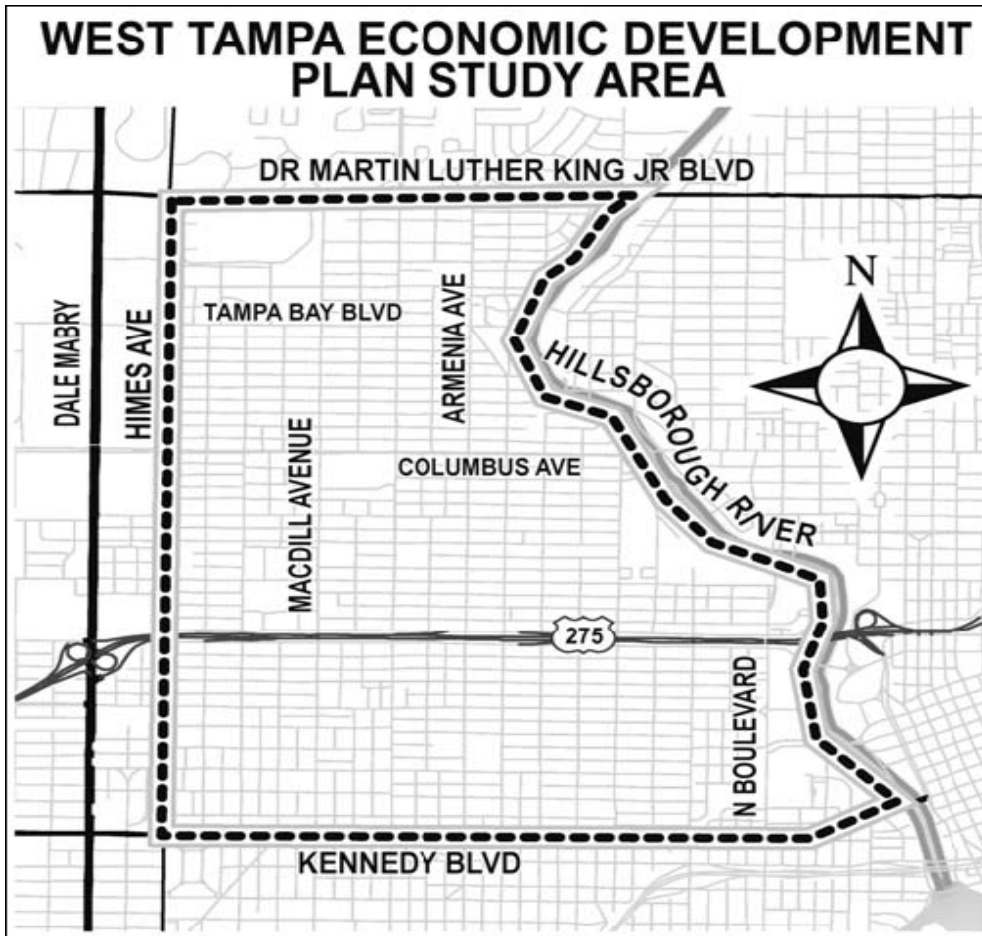
¹ A Cuban pot roast with a chorizo (spicy Spanish sausage) filled center.

² Small grocery store.

³ Shop which sells herbs, charms and other religious and spiritual items typically associated with Santería.

CHAPTER TWO

Map 3. West Tampa Study Area Boundaries



2005 *West Tampa Economic Development Plan. Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission.*

Internship Setting and Research Methods

I originally learned about the West Tampa Economic Development Plan through Maura Barrios, a historian, activist and leader in the West Tampa community. Jim Hosler, from the City-County Planning Commission, had been in contact with her regarding the neighborhood's redevelopment plan, because of the support and influence she carries within the community. She suggested that Hosler may be interested in my help and expertise with this project and she arranged for us to meet at one of the economic development plan's community meetings. Hosler agreed to create an internship for me within West Tampa's development plan. In August of 2005, I began assisting at the Planning Commission's community meetings, performing small clerical tasks and figuring out my thesis research focus. I chose to focus my research on how the Planning Commission can improve its engagement methods to ensure successful participation and inclusion from all sections of West Tampa's diverse population. After attending several community meetings, I became aware that few - if any - individuals from West Tampa's recent immigrant, Spanish-speaking population were attending the community meetings. Despite the fact that Hosler, and others involved in the economic development plan, frequently commented on the unique diversity within West Tampa and how the neighborhood has been a receiving area for new immigrants since its founding, there were no representatives from this new immigrant population participating in the community meetings or in the creation of the neighborhood's economic development plan. Looking specifically at the new immigrant Latino community in West Tampa, I began to investigate why this population was not actively participating in the neighborhood economic development plan and what could be done to recruit their

participation in this and future neighborhood development projects. Several months after I started working with the Planning Commission, the Latino business owners on Boliche Blvd. contacted Jim Hosler about their concern as to why they had not received information about the economic development plan and expressed interest in getting involved. This opened the door for me to gain access to this population and my research narrowed down from West Tampa's recent immigrant Spanish-speaking population to the small business owners on Boliche Blvd within this immigrant population.

Research Methods

I used traditional anthropological methods to conduct my thesis research: participant observation, interviews and archival research. Participant observation is “useful in identifying important behaviors, events and people for further investigation” (Schensul et.al. 1999:97). This method was critical to my thesis research and allowed me to create a specific focus to the research plan. Through my attendance and participation at the economic development plan community meetings, I noticed the absence of West Tampa's new immigrant residents. The West Tampa Economic Development Plan was to be drafted through resident and business owner participation at these community meetings. Using criterion sampling, “establish[ing a] criteria for studying select individuals,” I began observing which population within West Tampa was under-represented at the economic development plan's community meetings (Creswell 1998:120). It became strikingly apparent that the absence of the new immigrant Spanish-speaking population at these community meetings meant an absence of their needs and concerns to be incorporated into the development plan. This observation led me to

narrow my research focus from all residents and business owners within West Tampa to the neighborhood's population of recent immigrant, monolingual Spanish-speakers.

Through participant observation, I spent many hours at meetings related to West Tampa's economic development plan in the West Tampa community, Tampa City Council and the Hillsborough County Board of Commissioners. These meetings provided insight into the process of how a neighborhood economic development plan is created and implemented, as well as provided opportunities to meet individuals, both from the community and city government, involved in West Tampa's economic development plan. The community meetings offered important insight into the creation of the neighborhood economic development plan because it identified which individuals and organizations from West Tampa were involved in the plan, and which goals and strategies from the original plan were being targeted over others.

The West Tampa meetings which I most frequently attended were the initial community meetings and the subsequent committee meetings which were meant to help initiate the economic development plan's implementation. In March 2005, I began attending the West Tampa community meetings arranged by the Planning Commission for the neighborhood's economic development plan. Most meetings were held in the evenings during the week and lasted from one and one-half to three hours. There were usually around thirty to fifty people at each meeting. These meetings functioned as one of the principal methods of community engagement used by the Planning Commission in the drafting of the WTEDP. It was at these meetings where Jim Hosler presented and discussed with the community possible goals and strategies for the development plan. After the final plan was drafted, the Planning Commission asked West Tampa

community members to volunteer to become part of the sub-committees within the economic development plan. These sub-committees would be involved in the implementation of the different goals and strategies within the WTEDP. I attended many of these sub-committee meetings, which gave insight into how the Planning Commission maintained contact with the West Tampa community during the implementation stage of the economic development plan.

Interviews were conducted with representatives of local West Tampa organizations involved in the creation and implementation of the development plan, Latino small business owners along Boliche Blvd. and individuals from Tampa city and Hillsborough County government, such as City Council members and employees from the Planning Commission. As a USF graduate student and intern with the Planning Commission, gaining access to these city and county government workers for interviews was an easy task. Many had worked with interns from the university in the past and were very accommodating at scheduling one-on-one or telephone interviews. However, gaining access to the Boliche Blvd. business owners was more difficult. Being an outsider to this community, I had to rely on the Planning Commission to provide me with entrée into Boliche Blvd. Several months after the Boliche Blvd. business owners had contacted the Planning Commission to question them about their absence in the neighborhood's development plan, I finally secured a contact name and phone number to one of the area's community leaders. This community leader was the gatekeeper to Boliche Blvd., "an individual who is a member of or has insider status with cultural group" and was my "initial contact" in the area who was able to lead me to other informants (Creswell 1998:117). Through his informant referrals I utilized reputational

case selection, or network sampling, by using the gatekeeper's community knowledge "to identify suitable people...to [include in the research] study" (Schensul1999:240). After explaining the topic of my research to the gatekeeper, he introduced me to other business owners along Boliche Blvd. who would be interested in being interviewed for my research.

From interviews I was able to determine the role, or lack thereof, that each organization and individual had within West Tampa's economic development plan. The interviews with Boliche Blvd.'s small business owners revealed the variety of issues which have limited their participation in West Tampa's economic development plan. Information obtained from these interviews, and those from the local organizations, illustrated the social and economic relationships that exist among the different ethnic and linguistic groups within West Tampa and how these relationships influence their communication with each other and their ability and willingness to participate in the economic development plan. During this research, there were a total of 14 interviews conducted: two with Planning Commission employees, two with Tampa City Council members, one with a West Tampa Chamber of Commerce representative, one with a West Tampa business owner outside of the Boliche Blvd. business district and eight interviews with Boliche Blvd. business owners. The majority of these interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Two interviews were not recorded because one of the participants did not want an audio recorder used during the interview and the other because, due to scheduling conflicts, the interview had to be conducted over the telephone. In both of these cases, notes were taken during the interview in lieu of recording and transcribing.

Archival research was conducted by reviewing local newspaper articles and previous West Tampa neighborhood development plans. Newspaper articles about West Tampa and its economic development plan provided the descriptive image of West Tampa that was being marketed to the public by local media sources. This image, presented by the newspapers, helped to inform my analysis of the data. A review of previous neighborhood development plans demonstrated how community development efforts have progressed and changed over the past twenty-five years to thirty years in West Tampa.

IRB process and research ethics

This thesis research was conducted according to the Code of Ethics from the American Anthropological Association and the Society for Applied Anthropology, which guided my ethical obligations to the people and organizations with whom I worked with in the Planning Commission and the neighborhood of West Tampa.

It was necessary to obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval prior to beginning my thesis research in West Tampa. The University of South Florida's IRB office oversees all university research which involves human subjects in order to ensure the ethical treatment of participants involved in the research process. The process of receiving IRB approval consisted of securing a faculty advisor for the research, Dr. Susan Greenbaum from the Department of Anthropology, completing the IRB form of initial review, which detailed how the recruitment and participation of the research subjects would be managed so as to maintain participants' anonymity, and created informed consent forms, which detailed to the participants why and how they were asked to participate in the research and how their anonymity would be maintained. The informed

consent documents were presented to research participants before their interviews were conducted. In order to include monolingual Spanish-speaking West Tampa business owners in the research study, the informed consent document was translated from English to Spanish and a bilingual English-Spanish translator was provided during such interviews. All documents were sent to the IRB office for approval before research could begin.

CHAPTER THREE

The Planning Commission

The Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission is the only planning agency which serves the Hillsborough County area. Enacted by the Florida State Legislature, the City-County Planning Commission functions as a recommendation body to government organizations (Laws of Florida, Ch. 97-351). The Planning Commission's recommendations help to monitor the progress of the county's comprehensive development plan however, the real decision making power is within the hands of the Board of County Commissioners and Tampa's City Council. Requests for economic development plans are brought to the Planning Commission by powerful city or county government offices; such as West Tampa's economic development plan being requested by the Mayor of Tampa. Development plans which the Planning Commission creates must be approved by the Board of County Commissioners and the City Council where the development plan is located. Once approved, funding for the various projects within the plan are subject to more approvals by the County Commissioners and City Council. Although these projects are part of a comprehensive economic development plan, they are often approached as stand-alone, independent projects.

City and county funding for neighborhood development projects is frequently contingent on the neighborhood's political influence, lobbying success with the commissioners and council members and attendance at County Commission and City Council meetings. Kristina Dunman's research in Tampa's Southeast Seminole Heights neighborhood illustrates how residents were able to persuade City Council, through vocal attendance at meetings and influence with council members, to fund two traffic calming studies in their neighborhood within a six-month period during 2005 (Dunman N.d).

Council member Rose Ferlita, who was up for council re-election in 2006, owns a pharmacy business in the Seminole Heights neighborhood and quickly responded to the resident's requests and helped to insure the funding and execution of both traffic studies. In West Tampa, requests for a traffic calming study on Howard and Armenia Avenues had fallen on deaf ears despite the presence of long-term neighborhood resident, Mary Alvarez, on Tampa's City Council. When this issue had been discussed at City Council and County Commission meetings, there was little or no presence from West Tampa residents or business owners. Although Alvarez has advocated for a neighborhood traffic calming study, the absence of a neighborhood presence at these meetings had been a detriment to the project; perhaps as well as Alvarez's lack of political aggression due to her not seeking re-election to City Council in 2006.

The Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission is located in downtown Tampa. Its mission to provide a "vision for improving the quality of life of the community...its staff serve as agents within the community to promote and coordinate the involvement of all citizens in comprehensive planning, public participation, growth management and environmental protection." The Commission works to develop long-range plans involving "land use, zoning requests and development of regional impact (DRI) proposals, provide citizen land use counseling and monitor and evaluate comprehensive plans and capital improvement programs" (<http://www.theplanningcommission.org/index.htm>). It has developed and implemented economic development plans throughout the City of Tampa, in the neighborhoods of Tampa Heights, Seminole Heights and Sulphur Springs. It has helped develop the city comprehensive plans of Tampa, Plant City and Temple Terrace and the county

comprehensive plan of Hillsborough County. On the board of the Planning Commission are ten citizen commissioners appointed by the Hillsborough County Board of Commissioners, Tampa City Council and the governing bodies from Tampa, Temple Terrace, Plant City and Hillsborough County (Laws of Florida, Ch. 97-351). These commissioners oversee the Planning Commission and all projects are conducted by the agency's executive director and planning staff.

Economic development plans, initiated by the Planning Commission in Tampa's neighborhoods, have used the development benefits of Community Redevelopment Areas (CRA) and tax increment finance plans. For a neighborhood to be designated as a CRA, it must be labeled "slum and blighted." Florida Statutes, Chapter 163.340, delineate the characteristics that a neighborhood must possess in order to be declared such a label. Once designated as a CRA, the "slum and blighted" neighborhood qualifies for tax increment finance (TIF), which a neighborhood can utilize for no more than thirty years. A TIF allows neighborhood tax monies to be levied specifically toward redevelopment efforts, thus providing guaranteed project funds. This levied money comes out of the neighborhood taxes which would typically go to city and county agencies. As the property values within the redeveloping neighborhood increase, this increase in tax revenues is not received by the city and the county. If the city council or the county commissioners do not consider a neighborhood to be "slum and blighted," then a CRA or a TIF cannot be established, thus ensuring the city and county's receipt of future neighborhood tax revenue dollars. In the economic development plan of West Tampa, the Planning Commission did not approach Tampa City Council or the Board of County Commissioners for a CRA designation. Although West Tampa did not receive the

negative label of “slum and blight,” it must now appeal to the city council and county commissioners for individual development project funding, or generate the funds internally within the neighborhood.

The West Tampa Economic Development Plan

Goals of the economic development plan

In the past ten years, outside property developers and real estate investors have increased their interest in West Tampa. The historic nature of the community, with its towering old cigar factories, architecturally dramatic social clubs, early 20th century wood frame houses and its convenient central location close to downtown, shopping and other entertainment areas, have all made West Tampa a logical place for urban redevelopment to occur. This is evident in the other development projects which have occurred along side the neighborhood’s economic development plan; such as the proposal to re-develop West Tampa’s historic Fort Homer Hesterly Armory into a farmers market, residential and entertainment area and the bid to restore and convert the historic social club, Centro Español, into a social service and community center.

Intending to capitalize on the potential for neighborhood redevelopment, as well as following the request from the West Tampa Community Development Corporation, the mayor of Tampa, Pam Iorio, asked the Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission to create an economic development plan for the neighborhood of West Tampa. The Planning Commission designed a participatory planning process which was intended to include West Tampa residents and business owners in the creation and implementation of the neighborhood’s economic development plan.

Working with the West Tampa Community Development Corporation, the West Tampa Chamber of Commerce and the West Tampa Cultural Society, the Planning Commission drew up an economic development plan for West Tampa, based largely on public input from West Tampa community members. The main goals of the economic development plan are to:

- Increase business growth within the community.
- Effectively manage property development.
- Maintain historic structures.
- Maintain the availability of affordable housing.

Increase business growth

Many businesses within West Tampa are small, privately owned “mom and pop” stores. The steady increase in neighborhood property values has had a serious effect on the livelihood of such businesses. Unlike residential properties, business properties do not have a 3 percent property tax increase cap per year. Therefore, if the value of a business owner’s property doubles in one year, their property taxes will double as well. This makes it difficult for many small businesses to remain open. Rising real estate values permeate business costs for all kinds of small establishments. The fate of the West Tampa business NoHo Bistro illustrates this problem. Only about two years old, this neighborhood restaurant serves lunch and caters to the surrounding community. As of summer 2005, their monthly rent for the 1,000 square foot establishment was \$935. When their lease expired at the end of the year, their monthly rent increased to \$2,000. The original owner of the property where NoHo rents purchased the building for \$53,000 in 1990. In 2004, the new building owner purchased the property for \$200,000 (Thurston

2005). For a small restaurant like NoHo, which makes roughly \$85 per day during lunch and \$150 per day in catering, such an increase in rental cost will make it virtually impossible to remain open. The consequence of this increase is that NoHo Bistro has been forced to relocate to a more affordable location.

Effectively manage property development

Residential properties have been experiencing similar difficulties. Property values have increased, making it difficult for those in the lower income bracket to afford to purchase a home within West Tampa. Rental costs have also risen as a response to these property value increases. Reflecting the growing interest from outside property developers and real estate investors, West Tampa has experienced a steady increase in property values. This increase in property values can be perceived as an asset to the neighborhood because current residents can sell their property for higher values. With higher property values, new residents moving into the neighborhood will have larger incomes which new businesses in the neighborhood can capitalize upon and help develop existing business districts. However, this increase in values can and has affected the community negatively. Many homeowners in West Tampa's national historic district have complained that they cannot afford the rising property taxes. This situation makes it difficult for many residents to afford their homes. Although residents have the option of selling their property for increased values, the affect is that moderate income individuals and families can no longer afford to live in the neighborhood. For a neighborhood which has historically had a high rate of homeownership for working class and moderate income families, the increased property values has changed the demographics of the neighborhood, created a community of economic affluence and had displaced residents

who cannot afford the neighborhood's new cost-of-living. The purpose of the economic development plan is to capitalize on the strengths and assets in the community while working to minimize the negative effects of urban development and gentrification.

Maintain historic structures

The historic character of West Tampa has been cited frequently as one of the strengths of the community. West Tampa has a very dynamic and rich history, which is reflected in the historic structures of the old cigar factories, store fronts and wood-frame “shotgun” homes that are throughout the community. Maintaining these structures for both residential and business use is important in the re-development of the community. Although maintenance is specific to historic buildings, the structural maintenance and development of new buildings must be in keeping with the historic nature of the buildings within the community. This is particularly relevant for the national historic district within the neighborhood. Homeowners and business owners within this historic district qualify for a number of federal, state, county and city tax credits and loans to be used towards the maintenance and/or restoration of their historic buildings.

Although West Tampa has a designated national historic district, there are many advocates within the neighborhood petitioning for the establishment of a local historic district. Unlike the national historic district, a local historic designation provides greater protection against the alteration or destruction of properties within the historic district. However, this protection also limits the ability of home and business owners to make any structural changes both inside and outside their building. Tampa's Architectural Review Board has very stringent building guidelines in the city's local historic districts, such as the use of specific materials which can be very costly for moderate income families living

in the historic district. Although the development of West Tampa is contingent on the maintenance and preservation of the neighborhood's historic buildings, this effort is a costly financial obstacle for many residents and business owners and has been met with vocal resistance from the community.

Maintain the availability of affordable housing

The maintenance of affordable housing within West Tampa is a very important component of the re-development of the neighborhood. Roughly 25 percent of residents in West Tampa live at or below the poverty line. The development of West Tampa has a strong negative effect on this population because the increase in property values makes it virtually impossible for this population to have access to affordable housing. This is an issue that is affecting all neighborhoods within the City of Tampa as well as the state of Florida. The statewide increase in housing prices has more than surpassed the increase in family income; median home prices within the state between 2002 and 2005 increased by over 70 percent, while median family income increased a mere 1.4 percent (Gedalius 2006b). Within Tampa, the average single family home price in 2005 was \$201,700 while the median income for a family of four was \$54,400, causing a challenge for families with other expenses, credit card debt and student loan payments (Gedalius 2006b). One in four families in Hillsborough County spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs. These numbers illustrate the importance for the City of Tampa to insure affordable housing within its neighborhoods, especially during this period of rapid growth and development. This is a housing issue which not only affects low and moderate income residents, but families which make up to \$100,000 a year. West Tampa has been experiencing this escalation of home values in recent years but individual

developers within the neighborhood have taken strides to ensure the availability of affordable homes. Ed Turanchik of InTown Homes is in the process of building 80 units of affordable housing within the neighborhood. Although the InTown Homes project does not solve the problem of escalating property values, it does ensure the presence of affordable housing within the neighborhood of West Tampa.

Methods of Community Engagement

These goals (increase business growth within the community, effectively manage property development, maintain historic structures and maintain the availability of affordable housing) cover issues which were identified as priorities by the residents, business and property owners of West Tampa. The Planning Commission's methods of involving the community in the development and implementation of the plan consisted of mail-out surveys, mailed and locally posted announcements, community meetings, focus groups and resident led committees. The Planning Commission's initial contact with West Tampa was through the neighborhood's civic organizations of the West Tampa Chamber of Commerce, the West Tampa Community Development Corporation and the West Tampa Cultural Society. These organizations' work and connections in West Tampa helped the Planning Commission coordinate the initial outreach in the neighborhood regarding the area's economic development plan.

Surveys mailed to all West Tampa residents and business owners asked questions related to their concerns about the neighborhood, what they would like to see changed and what they considered to be the area's strengths and weaknesses. Interviews with business owners and focus groups with West Tampa neighborhood representatives; City and County government agencies, non-profit organizations and state and federal

legislative aides; West Tampa developers, architects and business owners; West Tampa Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors; West Tampa developers, architects and business owners; and City of Tampa staff (Consensus Builders, Inc. WTEDP Public Involvement 2005) were conducted in order to discuss these topics at greater length, with one Spanish-language focus group for the monolingual Spanish-speaking residents in West Tampa. The results from the surveys, interviews and focus groups were then compiled and presented to the neighborhood at community meetings where people were able to vote on which concerns and goals they considered most relevant to incorporate into the neighborhood's economic development plan.

The drafting of the economic development plan was done by Jim Hosler from the Planning Commission. Using the concerns and goals identified by the community and the historical and demographic research conducted by the Planning Commission staff and interns, Hosler wrote up West Tampa's economic development plan. After a series of meetings in the community, Tampa City Council and the Board of Hillsborough County Commissioners, the plan was officially approved for implementation in October of 2005.

To begin the implementation process, sub-committees were established which targeted the various tasks of the development plan. These sub-committees were the:

- Transportation and Land Use Committee
- Arts, Culture and Historic Preservation Committee
- Workforce, Economic and Community Development Committee.

These committees were run by individuals from West Tampa; small business owners, residents and staff from the local civic organizations. On these committees were also key city government employees, such as the City of Tampa neighborhood liaisons and

community redevelopment area managers. These sub-committees, staffed with volunteers from the West Tampa neighborhood and city staff personnel, known as the West Tampa Volunteers, have been in charge of implementing and monitoring the goals of the West Tampa Economic Development Plan.

Within each sub-committee of the economic development plan are different projects and goals to be targeted for the implementation of the plan, some of which would be implemented and funded locally within West Tampa with the remainder to be funded and implemented by the city, county or state government. The goals of the Land Use and Transportation Committee were defined as:

- Use the comprehensive plan and the land development code to vigorously encourage urban redevelopment in West Tampa. **
- Establish an affordable local historic district that includes cash and other incentives for compliance. **
- Investigate options to limit the financial burden on existing residents and businesses of increases in costs that result from redevelopment. **
- Re-examine the West Tampa Overlay District. **
- Capitalize on the resources of the Hillsborough River
- Fund the maintenance of existing infrastructure and public education programs designed to help preserve existing infrastructure. **
- Make the Howard and Armenia [business] Corridor support the redevelopment of West Tampa. **
- Complete an analysis and implement the results for improving all the business corridors identified in the West Tampa Economic Development Plan. **

- Fund and implement a transit plan that allows West Tampa to develop as a mid-density residential and commercial alternative to Tampa Bay.

(West Tampa Volunteers 2005b)

(** items are projects and goals which the West Tampa Volunteers identified as to be funded and implemented by the city, county or state government.)

The projects and goals of the Workforce/Community and Economic Development Committee were defined as:

- Identify workforce development needs in West Tampa and work to address those needs.
- Establish and reinforce community and faith-based neighborhood development and assistance efforts.
- Develop a coordinated and cooperative grant-writing talent pool – improve the share of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. **
- Develop and produce the entire range of marketing materials and information possible from the West Tampa Economic Development Plan and other relevant data sources.
- Investigate options to limit the financial burden on existing businesses of increased costs that result from redevelopment. **
- Work to encourage governments and institutions to use available land to foster investment. **
- Work with the City to apply to the Department of Community Affairs for a “Mainstreet” designation for the Howard, Armenia, Main Street business core. **

- Work with all business support groups, including the Small Business Information Center, to provide assistance to existing and prospective West Tampa businesses.**
- Develop merchant's associations where appropriate along business corridors.
- Investigate the feasibility/need for a hispanice-language based merchant association in West Tampa.

(West Tampa Volunteer 2005c)

(** items are projects and goals which the West Tampa Volunteers identified as to be funded and implemented by the city, county or state government.)

The projects and goals of the Arts & Culture Committee were defined as:

- Work through local groups to create frequent periodic festivals and events that market West Tampa's arts, culture and sports resources.
- Work through the appropriate institutions to help the redevelopment of the Centro Español Building as a West Tampa Cultural Center. **
- Work to support the redevelopment of the Fort Homer Hesterly Armory site as a wealth-creating, international center for creative industries.
- Encourage local groups that work to develop and preserve West Tampa's arts, cultural and sports resources.
- Find and develop a physical space for the display and discussion of West Tampa's historical and emerging creative industries. **
- Market West Tampa's potential as a regional training center for creative industries of all types.

(West Tampa Volunteer 2005a)

(** items are projects and goals which the West Tampa Volunteers identified as to be funded and implemented by the city, county or state government.)

Previous redevelopment projects

The economic development plan for West Tampa is the first of its kind in the neighborhood. In previous years, West Tampa has experienced other redevelopment efforts which had modest successes and failures. The West Tampa Community Revitalization Planning Project (1979) was a neighborhood development project initiated through the Tampa Community Design Center (TCDC), a non-profit organization of architects, planners and design professionals whose mission was to “upgrade the quality of the built environment” for “communities which cannot otherwise obtain such services” (Pardee 1981:8). At the onset of the project, research was conducted by TCDC staff and volunteers about West Tampa’s retail and consumer economics, social and health services, identification of architecturally and historically significant buildings and a study of commercial business facades (Pardee 1981:13). This information helped to inform the direction of development within the neighborhood’s Community Revitalization Project. Many staff and volunteers within the TCDC were architects, which influenced this project to be focused on the physical and environmental development over the neighborhood’s social or economic development. The TCDC began working with the West Tampa Chamber of Commerce in order to target the residents and business owners within West Tampa’s “physically deteriorated area.” However, businesses associated with the West Tampa Chamber were not located within TCDC’s target area, which made

it difficult for the TCDC to gain knowledge and understanding of the revitalization project's target beneficiaries (Pardee 1981:29).

One of the difficulties encountered by this revitalization project was how the various and different communities which existed, and still do exist, within West Tampa do or do not work together to help implement the project. Michael Pardee describes this concept in his thesis research of West Tampa. Using Marcis Pelly Effrat's five criteria to define community he states that "West Tampa can be said to comprise one geographic community, five or more communities of shared values, and even larger number of independent personal support networks [and] four or five communities of shared social status" (Pardee 1981:30). Pardee's "multidimensional definition of community" in West Tampa lead to an understanding of the various factors which influence how the residents and business owners in the neighborhood "act together as a community" (1981:31) and influence the success or failure of a revitalization project. A result of the West Tampa Community Revitalization Planning Project was a comprehensive final planning document which discussed the TCDC's research findings and recommended development projects for the revitalization of the neighborhood. The inability of the TCDC's interdisciplinary team to share and understand the collected neighborhood research data and the general lack of broad-based engagement and participation from community residents and businesses, produced a lack of coherence among the revitalization recommendations and did not adequately reflect the needs of the community (Pardee 1981:81-88).

The collaboration between West Tampa and the TCDC continued with the establishment of the West Tampa Revitalization Corporation (1980), whose mission was

to “improve service delivery in the West Tampa community and to promote decent housing and economic development” without resident displacement (Hunt 1985:44). In 1983, the West Tampa Revitalization Corporation (WTRC) began a community exterior paint project which was intended to improve the physical appearance of the neighborhood, thus utilizing the similar goals of “physical and environmental development” in West Tampa’s previous Community Revitalization Planning Project. However, unlike the previous planning project, the exterior paint project incorporated neighborhood social development by promoting cooperation and involvement by West Tampa residents in the project through the WTRC. Difficulties encountered during this project was lack of resident involvement due to a weak presence of WTRC in the neighborhood (Hunt 1985:71), contentious relationships between TCDC staff and residents (Hunt 1985:69), strained relationships among the different neighborhood and city organizations involved in the project (Hunt 1985:70) and unilateral project decisions made by members and staff of the WTRC and TCDC (Hunt 1985:72). As a result of these challenges, the WTRC was only able to complete a pilot of the exterior paint project on one neighborhood block of West Tampa.

Almost a decade later (1991), junior city council member Linda Saul-Sena came into West Tampa with an offer to assist the neighborhood in addressing the problems and concerns of residents and business owners. Prior to this, Saul-Sena was a member of the TCDC and involved in the West Tampa’s exterior paint project. In 1991, she began by organizing a meeting with West Tampa’s various social service and religious organizations, local businesses and the Tampa Police Department to ask how she could help work with them in the redevelopment of the neighborhood. Research was organized

and conducted by students from the University of South Florida's business school, which was used to determine the needs of the neighborhood residents. Her redevelopment efforts achieved some success, with the establishment of a local bank in West Tampa to serve residents and provide start up loans for small businesses. After working for four years as the chair on these projects, Saul-Sena stepped down but there were no local residents, businesses or organizations interested in taking her place. Although she had worked with many people within the neighborhood on coordinating and implementing the revitalization project, no one was interested in chairing future projects. This apparent disinterest from the community could have been related to their lack of ownership of the projects; Saul-Sena was an outsider who originally initiated the redevelopment efforts. Residents were also skeptical of involvement from city government in development projects because there had been many unrealized promises and failed projects by local government in West Tampa in the past. Saul-Sena stated "I think that people had felt that the city goes out and makes promises and doesn't really deliver. I think they see the city as more regulatory than really helpful." The presence of a city council member chairing neighborhood redevelopment projects did not endear trust and participation. As discussed previously by Pardee (1981), the issue of multiple communities in West Tampa, each with different experiences and opinions about their neighborhood, affected Saul-Sena's West Tampa projects. There was a general lack of cohesion among residents and business owners in their ability to work together on the neighborhood redevelopment projects.

Despite the problems with these previous development plans, the plans did provide a good starting point for the Planning Commission in their community outreach

and drafting of the economic development plan for West Tampa. Many of the neighborhood issues and project goals which were identified from the neighborhood development plans from the 1970s through the 1990s were still prevalent and important to the neighborhood of West Tampa when the Planning Commission began working there in 2005.

Unlike these previous development projects, the West Tampa Economic Development Plan has been more successful at accomplishing its goals. At a City Council meeting, a member of the council congratulated Jim Hosler and the Planning Commission on West Tampa's development plan stating, "I participated in previous efforts. But, but we never made the strides that you have made now. And I feel like, the, you know, it's all aligning and this area is getting attention and the resources and the support that it needs. And you are weaving together those energies." In comparison to previous plans, the West Tampa Economic Development Plan has created a working alliance between community residents, business owners, local organizations and the city government to accomplish its goals and projects. Previous plans did not establish these kinds of connections. These relationships allow for greater communication among the different levels of the community and the city staff involved in the plan. This is important for the success of the plan because it insures that the concerns and goals defined by the West Tampa residents and business owners are maintained by the different levels involved.

As described previously, the neighborhood of West Tampa was founded around handmade cigar production. Its history, as a cigar city, has been commonly marketed to the public for both tourism and historic preservation purposes and many community members involved in the plan are very reminiscent and nostalgic of the West Tampa of

the past (such as “A Ride with E.J.” in *Cigar City Magazine*, July/August 2006). Elderly residents involved in the plan often reminisce about the old cigar city days and their desire to have this re-development plan bring back those times; one resident has reflected on the West Tampa of the past as a “true neighborhood.” This sentiment of the “true neighborhood” with “mom and pop stores” where everything one need was located within walking distance, was very influential in the creation of the neighborhood’s economic development plan. The majority of the initial projects from the plan have focused on West Tampa’s history and past by concentrating the current business and residential re-development effort in West Tampa’s historic district; the original cigar city area. This is also reflected in the plan’s goals to restore and adapt the old, vacant social club of Centro Español into a community center and encourage the establishment of small, family run stores.

This vision of West Tampa being the “old” Latin cigar city is not necessarily shared by all members of the neighborhood. West Tampa has a longstanding African-American community, with residents and local business owners who have been influential community leaders during Jim Crow segregation and the Civil Rights movement in Tampa. This community’s historic business area of Main Street is located within the historic district of West Tampa, which will receive the initial push of business redevelopment for the neighborhood. However, because of the historic segregation of West Tampa’s Latin and African-American community, this vision of the Latin old cigar city does not strongly resonate with many members of West Tampa’s African-American residents and business owners. Consequently, many of the African American residents within this area of West Tampa are often vocal opponents to local historic preservation

efforts, such as the designation of a local historic district, because of the lack of their community's presence in West Tampa's local history.

Although not a historic community, like West Tampa's African Americans and Tampeños, the Latin American new immigrant community of West Tampa has had a presence in the area since the 1960's. This recent immigrant population is affected by the neighborhood's re-development plan because their businesses reside outside the community's historic district. Consequently, much of the proposed projects of West Tampa's economic development plan did not include this new immigrant business area. Although the neighborhood redevelopment may offer the Boliche Blvd. community benefits, such as an increase in property values or an increase in potential customers due to more people moving into the neighborhood, many of the business owners believed that their exclusion from the redevelopment plan would not offer them any benefits. The plan had been drafted without their input so their neighborhood concerns were not explicitly addressed.

CHAPTER FOUR

Challenges to the West Tampa Economic Development Plan

The Planning Commission was well aware of the ethnic and linguistic diversity within West Tampa and they constructed their methods of community engagement so as to target the entire diverse population of the neighborhood. As Jim Hosler, team leader and research of West Tampa's economic development plan, stated, "I found that it's best to use multiple means" in the methods of engaging the West Tampa community. As described previously, the Planning Commission mailed out surveys, conducted interviews, focus groups and meetings with West Tampa community members to ensure their concerns and goals for the neighborhood were reflected in the economic development plan. Despite this variety of methods, the new immigrant Spanish-speaking population had little if any presence in the planning of the development plan. Although the Planning Commission appeared to make a conscious effort to involve the entire West Tampa community, their participation methods succeeded in alienating this new immigrant population. As far as I have seen, all meeting announcements posted and mailed throughout the community were written in English, with a small line at the bottom in Spanish asking them to call a phone number if they had any questions. This English-only method of engaging the West Tampa community did not reach a large portion of the neighborhood's Spanish-speaking population. According to U.S. Census records, 35 percent of Spanish-speaking households in West Tampa are linguistically isolated, meaning all family members speak English "less than very well" and "have difficulty with English" (2000 Census of Population and Housing 2003:35). The Planning Commission did make a one time effort to reach this population when they mailed out a Spanish meeting announcement advertising a Spanish language focus group. This

particular focus group had a similar attendance rate as the other English-language focus groups, of about seven or eight residents and business owners. However, after the Spanish-language focus group, there was no follow up with those individuals who participated or future Spanish-language meetings.

For the creation and implementation of West Tampa's development plan, the Planning Commission worked directly with the local civic organizations the West Tampa Chamber of Commerce (WTCC), the West Tampa Community Development Corporation (WTCDC) and the West Tampa Cultural Society (WTCS). These organizations assisted the Planning Commission with outreach into the neighborhood in an effort to generate local participation and support. These organizations also provided support in the implementation of the economic development plan, with the WTCS applying for city and county grants for neighborhood development projects and the WTCDC organizing neighborhood workshops on topics related to affordable housing and job-skill training. The WTCC functioned as a liaison for the Planning Commission to the area's local businesses. In many cases the Chamber represented the local businesses and spoke on their behalf during community and sub-committee meetings. However, the WTCC's association with the Boliche Blvd. businesses was minimal at best. This lack of association can be related to the limited communication and understand which exists between "old" West Tampa (the historic area) and "new" West Tampa (Boliche Blvd). As one Tampeño had commented during an interview, Boliche Blvd. "seems to be a community in its own," another Tampeño commented during an interview that "for the older generation of immigrant residents, Boliche Blvd. is the new West Tampa and we [Tampeños] don't know much about them." This sentiment of differentiation and

exclusion affects the businesses on Boliche Blvd. because the civic institutions in West Tampa have not made an effort to target or recruit members from this new immigrant business community. Without representation from the local civic institutions involved in the creation and implementation of the economic development plan, the Boliche Blvd. businesses had limited knowledge of the plan and were excluded from the proposed benefits of West Tampa's economic development plan.

Alienated population: Boliche Boulevard and its Latino business owners

History of Boliche Boulevard: the gateway community in West Tampa

The area of Boliche Blvd. is much younger than historic West Tampa. In the 1940's, Columbus Avenue (previously known as Michigan Avenue) was extended beyond MacDill; the former official western edge of West Tampa. Stretching beyond this original boundary, the paved road of Columbus Avenue developed into West Tampa's second economic center; second to the Howard/Armenia and Main Street business district. Businesses expanded slowly, lining the street and were soon replaced with small, one and two story strip malls which contained various small businesses. In the early 1960's, many Cuban asylum seekers and refugees came into Florida leaving Castro's dictatorship. West Tampa, and particularly Boliche Blvd., became an area where many of these Cubans settled. As described previously, the older area of West Tampa contained many first and second generation Cuban immigrant families. Although from the same country, the older generation immigrant families did not have the same political, social and economic experiences as the recent immigrants who left Cuba under Castro's dictatorship. Consequently, as these recent immigrants began living and

working in the “new” West Tampa, the area began to develop into a hotbed of anti-Castro sentiment. Some of these newly arrived Cubans began opening businesses, such as restaurants and bodegas, which catered to the new Cuban population. La Teresita, one of Tampa’s most famous restaurants, was founded during this time and is still serving some of the city’s best Cuban food today. Shortly after the rush of Cuban arrivals in the 1960’s, Columbian immigrants began coming into West Tampa and were drawn to the Latino businesses along Boliche Blvd. At this point in time, Boliche Blvd. had established itself as a strong Latino business district and has, over the years, attracted immigrants from all over Latin America to shop and open new businesses. The area has frequently been compared to Miami’s famous Calle Ocho in Little Habana, a place where you can buy whatever you need and never hear a word of English. A Columbian-born Boliche Blvd. business owner described the area as:

To me I think this [Boliche Blvd.] is like Calle Ocho in Miami. Calle Ocho have the more Hispanic speaking businesses there...If you walk along this Boliche Blvd. you are going to find everything you want. You are going to find wireless phones, La Teresita which is a supermarket ... that sells the food that every different ethnic group eats...You are going to find insurances, you just name it, lawyer, bakeries, banks, everything.

Description of Boliche Boulevard today

Today the area of Boliche Blvd. is comprised of several small strip malls with a total of about 60 businesses. There are restaurants, bodegas, pawn/jewelry shops, party stores, botánicas, travel agencies, cafés, clothing stores, bakeries, pharmacies and a small cigar factory and store. Although this area is considered the “new” West Tampa, its

business owners have many of the same concerns as the rest of the “old” West Tampa community. The roads and sidewalks are badly in need of re-paving and store fronts have broken or missing business signs. There is a perceived high crime rate in the area and poor night lighting in the streets compounds the residents’ and business owners’ fear of crime, causing many of the business owners interviewed to state that the area needs more street lighting and better police security; with one business owner describing how robberies in the area happen “at the end of the day when the shops are empty.” Business owners on Boliche Blvd. frequently mentioned the need to beautify the area because it is located very close to the Raymond James Stadium, the airport and large shopping malls. One business owner stated, during an interview, that for Boliche Blvd. being “a central place in West Tampa, and a main artery to go to places like the stadium and other places, people are not giving it the importance that it deserves.” This is echoed in the sentiment of another business owner, “Boliche Blvd is close to very important places, like the Buccaneers Stadium. So there are many people going through the area but need higher class businesses to attract more people...for example, if you want to go to a nice place to eat, you have to go outside the area.” Traffic frequently speeds through Columbus Avenue, making it dangerous for pedestrians shopping and doing business in the area. Interestingly, these concerns from Boliche Blvd. are the same concerns of business owners and residents in “old” West Tampa along the historic business district of Howard, Armenia and Main Street. Although “old” and “new” West Tampa are considered two separate and distinct communities, they are afflicted by the same problems and their residents and business owners have similar concerns. Despite these similar problems and concerns, these two areas have had a history of disassociation which has marginalized

Boliche Blvd's involvement, influence and benefit from West Tampa's economic development plan.

Differences between Boliche Blvd. and West Tampa: language, location and connection to local history

Over the years, as new immigrants began coming into Boliche Blvd. to open businesses, the area's Cuban business owners from the 1960's provided assistance to these new immigrants in establishing small businesses, helping them secure retail locations on the boulevard and negotiate business licenses with the city. This support among the business owners still exists today with many of the older, established business owners providing Spanish/English translation with landlords and for other issues. Although often argued within the City of Tampa that there are no language barriers, due to the bilingual staff within all sections of city government, there is still a noticeable language difference between Boliche Blvd. and the rest of West Tampa. It has often been described that someone can walk through Boliche Blvd. and never hear a word of English. Spanish is the language of this area and consequently many of the business owners and their employees do not speak English. Although there are many bilingual services offered within the City of Tampa, the business owners' and residents' monolingual Spanish becomes an issue when virtually all community meetings and communications regarding the area's economic development plan are in English.

Boliche Blvd. is located outside the national historic district of West Tampa. In order for an area to be considered a national historic district, 75 percent of the area's original housing stock must still be standing and that housing stock must be over 50 years old. Because of Boliche Blvd.'s young history, it does not qualify for a historic district

status. The neighborhood's other business district, the Howard/Armenia and Main Street corridor, is located within this national historic district. Consequently, much of the neighborhood's economic development plan is in the historic area, specifically along this old business corridor. The fact that Boliche Blvd. is located outside the national historic district boundaries is not the reason why there has been a general exclusion of this area. Rather, it is the fact that the historic "old" West Tampa area and its business district are well integrated into many of the established local institutions, such as the West Tampa Community Development Corporation and the West Tampa Chamber of Commerce. These local civic institutions have served West Tampa for roughly 20 years and came about during much of the original community development efforts during the 1970's and 1980's and during the establishment of the national historic district. Since these local institutions have been around, there has been little effort made to reach out to the Boliche Blvd. business area. A representative from the West Tampa Chamber of Commerce, during an interview, reflected upon the small businesses on Boliche Blvd. as businesses which cannot afford or do not have the interest in joining the Chamber,

Now as you go down the street, you see these small businesses. Some of them, you're experiencing a scenario at a private residences where they don't talk to you. In some cases, I look at the business and our yearly dues are a \$150 a year... There are many [businesses] that I pass because I don't know if they would qualify, which is in a sense my fault, maybe I should stop. But hey, I could be going all day...

A consequence of this is that the business owners on Boliche Blvd. do not have representation within these established local institutions, which have played pivotal roles in the creation and implementation of West Tampa's economic development plan.

A large portion of the West Tampa Economic Development Plan is devoted to the recognition and preservation of the neighborhood's history. One of the three sub-committees for the plan is focused exclusively on this topic – the Arts, Culture and Historic Preservation Committee. Much of West Tampa's documented history is related to cigar manufacturing and the neighborhood's Latin immigrant roots. Residents of West Tampa have worked hard to document and preserve their neighborhood's history in books, documentaries and websites. As described previously, many of the first, second and third generation residents in West Tampa often speak with nostalgia about the old days of West Tampa. It is this concept of community which is driving the direction of West Tampa's economic development plan. This strong connection with the past and the importance it plays in the future direction of West Tampa does not resonate with many people along Boliche Blvd. An obvious reason for this is the fact that many of these business owners do not have the same historical ties that the generational residents of West Tampa have with the neighborhood. Although many, if not all, business owners along Boliche Blvd. want to see positive development and change brought to their neighborhood, this vision of development is not based within the discourse of West Tampa's past. Many of these business owners have mentioned that Boliche Blvd. has historically been neglected and in need of infrastructural development, their experience of "the past" is not an image which should set the standard for the future.

Reasons for Non-involvement from those outside Boliche Blvd.

In the fall of 2005, six months after the Planning Commission came into West Tampa, the economic development plan, they received news that a group of business owners on Columbus Avenue felt that they had been excluded from the development that was beginning to take place in their neighborhood. At this point, West Tampa's economic development plan had been fully drafted, about to be approved by Tampa's City Council and the sub-committees were beginning to be assigned to the plan's various tasks and goals. When the Planning Commission received the message about these business owners, they scheduled a community meeting in October of 2005 for the business owners to discuss the plan, answer their questions and try to get them involved in the implementation of the plan's goals. Although the Planning Commission responded to this population's concerns by holding a community meeting, the outcome was unsuccessful in soliciting participation from the Boliche Blvd. business owners in the neighborhood economic development plan.

The Planning Commission facilitated their community outreach through a variety of methods but despite these various methods there has been very little, if any involvement from the Boliche Blvd. business owners. It has been asserted repeatedly by the Planning Commission and the local civic institutions involved in the plan that there has always been communication with this population regarding the neighborhood's economic development plan but they have chosen not to participate for one reason or the other. Those outside the Boliche Blvd. area, such as the Planning Commission and the local neighborhood civic institutions, have offered various reasons for this population's lack of involvement.

Language

Within the government offices of the City of Tampa, it has been argued that there are no language barriers for city residents to get involved in neighborhood projects. One city council member discussed how there are many Spanish speakers in all parts of the city government and monolingual Spanish speakers can and should come out to city government meetings and speak up. Although there are many bi-lingual Spanish speakers working within Tampa's city government, all public city government meetings are conducted in English, making it difficult for Spanish-speaking city residents to understand and participate in the meetings public comment. This exclusive English only method of conducting meetings was also practiced during the community meetings for West Tampa's economic development plan, which distanced the already strained interactions and relations between Boliche Blvd. and the rest of West Tampa. The Planning Commission and others recognize that the monolingual Spanish of many of the business owners was an obstacle in engaging participation. Despite this recognition of a potential language barrier, very little was done on their part to address the barrier. Only one Spanish-speaking focus group meeting was held for West Tampa's Spanish-speaking population and no follow up was done with those participants to ensure that their comments and concerns were adequately incorporated into the plan. This is unlike the English-speaking focus groups and meetings, where residents and business owners could continually participate and attend meetings in order to stay informed about the progress of the plan and provide feedback on the plan's development. This limited, one-time offering of a Spanish-speaking meeting helped to ensure the non-participating from West Tampa's Spanish-speaking community.

From home countries with politically repressive regimes

Planning Commission representatives and others involved in West Tampa's economic development plan, it has been alluded that many of Boliche Blvd. business owners come from countries with politically repressive regimes and that these experiences from their home countries have tainted their perception of government involvement in community development projects. During a conversation with a Planning Commission representative working in West Tampa, he mentioned that some of the Boliche Blvd. business owners come from countries where being involved with government is "not considered to be a good thing" due to the history of political repression in these countries. A lawyer involved in the neighborhood's development plan during an interview commented that many of these business owners "come from countries where the government isn't always your friend and isn't always responsive to you – in fact brings you trouble." This reasoning is interesting because it illustrates an overall lack of knowledge about the business owners on Boliche Blvd. It is correct that some of these business owners come from countries where association with government can be dangerous, such as Cuba, Colombia or even Mexico. However there are also business owners from the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, countries which do not qualify as being politically dangerous or repressive, although it can be argued that the United States' territorial hold of Puerto Rico is itself politically repressive. It has also been postulated from the Planning Commission that the practice of citizen involvement in local development in these business owners' home countries is not practiced. The Planning Commission's team leader for West Tampa's economic development plan, has stated during an interview:

I don't know where those businesses come from, their countries. If the concept of planning, if the concept of where you can sit down as a community and work through a process in a public forum where everybody is inclusive and come up with ideas and present it to government and the government reacts, which is what happens here. I don't think a lot of them come from countries where that happens.

Regardless of the business owners' country of origin, many of them have had years of experience living, working and owning businesses in the United States. Some of these business owners have been on Boliche Blvd. for as little as two years, while others have been there for as many thirty years. Those who have been on Boliche for only a few years have owned other businesses for as long as twenty years in other cities in the United States before moving to the area. It is through this experience, as a business owner in the United States, which has influenced their desire - or lack thereof - to participate in community development efforts with Tampa city government. Many business owners have complained about the general neglect and history of broken promises they believe their neighborhood has experienced from Tampa city government. It has been through this experience as a business owner in Tampa and their frustration working with the city's government which has influenced their desire to participate in West Tampa's economic development plan.

Maintain "comfy" environment of home country

Boliche Blvd. has been repeatedly described as the Tampa's equivalent of Miami's Calle Ocho and an area which caters to Tampa's Latino population. Because of this, it has been contended that the business owners on Boliche Blvd. do not want to get

involved in the re-development of the area because they want to maintain its appeal to the area's Latino population. During an interview, the same Planning Commission team leader stated:

The people on Boliche Blvd. today are simply filling a niche that someone else filled the last generation and someone else will fill the next generation. Hopefully, there will always be a place for Boliche Blvd in West Tampa because it houses the niche of first generation restaurants, clothing stores, music stores, etc. that serve the new immigrant population...it isn't a problem that they are distant, it just is because it is necessary for them to keep the distance in order to make their clientele feel comfy.

Some of the businesses on Boliche do cater specifically to Latinos, such as La Teresita's bodega which has grocery and toiletry products from all over Latin America. However, there are many businesses which do not, such as the restaurants, bakeries, cafes, banks, an optometry office and cigar shop. The cigar shop owner described his clientele as "95 percent of my business [is] not with Hispanics," the optometry office has a bilingual staff which serves both Latino and non-Latino clients and one of the local Cuban restaurants is a favorite lunch spot for a diversity of people. To offer this assumption that business owners do not want to be involved in the possible development of the area in order to maintain its rustic, "homey" feel is racist in its assumption that Latino business owners and customers would prefer to have a run-down, aging business district because this environment apparently reminds them nostalgically of home. On the contrary, all business owners interviewed repeatedly stated that they want and need the area re-developed. As one business owner described to me, Boliche Blvd. is an area that

has been forgotten; it is like development has stopped. Another business owner offered a similar description of the area as “West Tampa is a place that was forgotten. Even though it’s important, people are not paying enough attention to it. It just needs revitalization.”

Skepticism

Since the late 1970’s, West Tampa has experienced various community development projects; all of which had similar and rarely realized goals. Tampa city council member, Linda Saul-Sena, recalled how her work in West Tampa during the 1980’s was received with reluctance and skepticism from many of the residents, she believed that, “the people in West Tampa had been disappointed by government so many times in the past, they were deeply skeptical of what I [a city council member] would do.” After many years of failed promises from city government officials, many West Tampa residents at first did not believe her participation in their neighborhood was genuine. This skepticism of city government’s honest cooperation, which plagued much of West Tampa’s early community development projects, is present within the Boliche Blvd. business community. This city council member has described how over the past ten years, Tampa’s city government has worked hard to enforce its building and business codes and new business licenses. Whereas in previous years this city council member described business licensing and code enforcement as “always kind of a good ol’ boy, slap on the back, ‘Oh that’s just fine!’ And now we [city government] are serious...And some of the, particularly older folk, are just aghast that we are actually making them do this stuff.” Tampa’s city government is getting more serious with Tampa’s small businesses, which is reflected in the complaints by many of Boliche Blvd.’s business

owners about increases in various business code violations. This heightened negative presence of city government workers within the Boliche Blvd. area has, what some believe, produced a distrustful and resentful feeling by the businesses owners to the city government.

Meeting with Boliche Blvd. and the Planning Commission

In October of 2005, the West Tampa Chamber of Commerce was approached by two lawyers from Boliche Blvd. stating that the business owners from that area were concerned that they had not been notified or involved in the economic development plan for West Tampa. A representative from the West Tampa Chamber of Commerce spoke with the Planning Commission and immediately arranged a community meeting for the Boliche Blvd. business owners with various city employees, such as city council members, city neighborhood liaisons and West Tampa's local police representatives. A few weeks earlier, Gaston Riera, co-owner of Irma's Optical, had read a newspaper article and learned of the proposed economic development plan of West Tampa for the first time. Having worked in the same business on Boliche Blvd. for over 15 years and having provided assistance to many other small businesses in the area during that time, Riera was very concerned that Boliche Blvd. would be neglected in the final design of the economic development plan. He spoke to business owners along Boliche and sent out letters announcing the upcoming community meeting with the Planning Commission. On the night of the meeting, 20 to 30 Boliche Blvd. business owners showed up at La Teresita Restaurant to voice their concerns about their section of West Tampa.

At the meeting, the Planning Commission representatives discussed the proposed economic development plan and highlighted its different projects and goals, what had been addressed and what had yet to be completed. The business owners raised their concerns regarding the numerous code violations and subsequent fines they had received from the city. They were also concerned about the appearance of the street and sidewalks and asked if and how the City of Tampa could address its deteriorating appearance. Leading the small business owners, Riera proposed the possibility of establishing a West Tampa Hispanic Chamber of Commerce which would serve the Boliche Blvd. business owners. The West Tampa Chamber of Commerce pushed for the business owners to join the Chamber, whether individually or as a large group. At the close of the meeting, many people from the Planning Commission and the City seemed satisfied and believed that they had opened the door for the Boliche Blvd. business owners to actively participate in West Tampa's economic development plan. However, the same feeling about the meeting was not shared among the small business owners.

Despite the apparent success of this meeting, many of the business owners who attended walked away very dissatisfied and frustrated. One business owner described to me his disappointment about the lack of any real outcome from the meeting by stating how the one thing that he expected to happen was that future meetings would become more constant and regular, but apparently people have just forgotten about having more. He said that despite this meeting there was no follow through of action. Although the Planning Commission did an excellent job at describing the area's economic development plan, it was clear to the business owners that most, if not all, of the described community development projects were being focused outside Boliche Blvd. If the plan was already

drafted, ready to be implemented and there was virtually no presence of Boliche Blvd. in the plan, why would the business owners want to participate? As one business owner said to me:

Don't tell me to go to a meeting to let me know okay, this is what we got for the people is over there [old West Tampa]...It is like you making a party and you telling me that we are going to have this and that and you aren't going to be invited. Why the heck are you going to be talking to me about something that I am not going to be part of?

Since that meeting, there was little action taken by both the Planning Commission and the Boliche Blvd. business owners to get involved in West Tampa's economic development plan. The Planning Commission continued to send out mailings and emails about upcoming community meetings and sub-committee events however no one from the Boliche Blvd. area attended. For many of the business owners, they were waiting to hear from Riera as to what will happen next, such as whether or not they will start a separate Latino arm of the West Tampa Chamber of Commerce. The Planning Commission believed that they had opened the lines of communication for Boliche Blvd. to be involved, however Jim Hosler, the Commission representative who worked on West Tampa's economic development plan commented to me in an email:

At some point in time during the public involvement process, one needs to ask – “How many times do I have to ask these people to get involved? Why is it that they don't want to get involved? Is it me, or is it them, both?”...How much time do I take from the people who want to help in order to engage those that may be

hanging back due to something as simple as grease traps in their restaurants that are out of code?

Boliche Blvd. and the West Tampa Economic Development Plan: how it got to this point

Despite the apparent attempts by the Planning Commission to put out their best efforts to involve all parts of the West Tampa community, there was an obvious lack of participation from the Latino community in the neighborhood. Even after the meeting at La Teresita with the Latino business owners on Boliche Blvd., the Planning Commission and the West Tampa Volunteers were still unable to get this group of people to join into the implementation process of the neighborhood's economic development plan. Why, despite these attempts, were the Boliche Blvd. business owners reluctant, and some even unwilling, to participate in this economic development plan? For many of these business owners, it seems that their relationship and experience with Tampa city government and the local politics of West Tampa had greatly influenced their decisions to not participate.

City government and discrimination

For many of the business owners, their skepticism about getting involved with Tampa city government has largely to do with their own personal experiences with the City. Many of the business owners discussed their confusion as to why this area of West Tampa has been neglected for so long. As one business owner commented "that for [Boliche Blvd.] being a central place in West Tampa, and a main artery to go to places like the stadium and other places, people are not giving it the importance that it deserves...this area is forgotten. It is like development has stopped. This piece is just

forgotten.” According to the business owners, there has been very little, if any, work done by the city to address the various issues and concerns they have for the area; namely traffic, poorly paved and lit streets and unappealing building facades. In regards to this issue of city government neglect, several business owners spoke specifically about the discrimination that they believe exists in Tampa city government. One business owner stated that the city’s government views “we Hispanics, we [are] worth the penny. Even though we pay good taxes, but we are not considered in the privileged historic district... And that is why I say we are the bastards here. We are the child bastards in a big rich family where only the rich people, our rich brothers on the other side [benefit].” Another business owner expressed his frustration with the lack of development on Boliche Blvd. by discussing the business owner’s city tax payments. “You see, we the Spanish, we pay taxes, same with everybody else. And we have the right... But many people believe we are indigent...But you see, I believe our people deserve something better.” This issue of discrimination is a difficult topic to explore because it is not overtly practiced within the halls of Tampa city government. However it is a very real concern and reason that many of Boliche Blvd.’s business owners use to explain the area’s lack of development. However, the previous quote from a representative from the Planning Commission explaining the business owners’ non-participation as a method to maintain the undeveloped quality of the neighborhood “to make their clientele feel comfy” contains the racist assumption that all of Latin America and the Caribbean is infrastructurally underdeveloped and people from these countries prefer this look. It is this assumption which has helped guide the Planning Commission in its lack of engagement with West Tampa’s Spanish speaking population.

City government and broken promises

Along with this issue of overall neglect by city government, many of the business owners along Boliche Blvd. have become exasperated by the constant broken promises offered to them by the local politicians. One business owner stated with exasperation that, “we are Hispanics. During the elections, before the elections, all the politicians come. They say, ‘You vote me, we going to help.’ And after they get elected, they don’t do anything...many promise from many politicians, and we never get it.” Interestingly, this is the same issue which initially limited the involvement by West Tampa residents in the 1990’s during the West Tampa Community Revitalization Program’s paint project. The city council member involved on that project described that “the people in West Tampa had been disappointed by government so many times in the past, they were deeply skeptical of what I would do.” For many of these business owners, they view the West Tampa Economic Development Plan and the Planning Commission’s meeting at La Teresita as all talk with no action, something which they have experienced countless times by numerous local city politicians.

Confusion of Tampa city government

Despite the fact that Boliche Blvd. has been historically neglected by the City of Tampa, the business owners still must deal with the city on many issues related to their small business, such as code enforcement violations and business licenses. These forced interactions with city government and its staff are often confusing and difficult for many of the business owners, especially if they are not proficient in English. Irma Wilcutt, who has owned a business on Boliche Blvd. for over fifteen years, stated that whenever the new business owners experience problems “they call us, they come here. Every time they

have a problem, they come here to see what we can do for them.” She blames the bureaucracy associated with Tampa’s city government for the confusion that many of the other business owners face. However, this confusion is not only felt by the business owners on Boliche Blvd. During the meeting at La Teresita, Wilcott approached one of the city council members present and questioned her about whether Boliche Blvd. was a city or a county road. She asked, “when we have businesses, if we have problems and we have inspectors that come. If I have a problem who do I go to, the county or the city? Who do I go to?! She couldn’t tell me...So, if they’re [city-government employees] confused, and they run the city, can you image how the merchants are?”

City government and language

There are staff within Tampa city government who have contended that there are no language barriers which block or limit the participation of mono-lingual Spanish speakers in getting involved or getting the help they need from Tampa’s city government. When the Planning Commission and the city staff held their community meeting with the Boliche Blvd. business owners at La Teresita, the meeting was conducted in English, although a Spanish translator was provided and offered full translation of the meeting. However, one business owner pointed out that the majority of those present at the meeting were Spanish speakers, he said, “they had 99% Spanish speaking people and all the people in front there were speaking in English!” As described in the section *Reason for Non-involvement – Language* (page 71), all of Tampa city government’s public meetings are conducted in English which makes it difficult for non-English speakers to participate. Although a translator was provided during the Boliche Blvd. meeting, a language hierarchy was clearly established for those present. Although the majority of

the individuals who attended were Spanish speakers the meeting was conducted in English, the official language of Tampa city government; the language of power within the City of Tampa as well in the neighborhood of West Tampa.

Local West Tampa politics and social relations

The differences between the “new” West Tampa of Boliche Blvd. and the “old” West Tampa has been discussed previously in the section *Challenges to the West Tampa Economic Development Plan* (page 62). These perspectives of difference have excluded many Boliche Blvd. businesses from the civic institutions which serve West Tampa and connect the neighborhood with Tampa city government, such as the West Tampa Chamber of Commerce. In regards to the Planning Commission and the neighborhood’s economic development plan, the Chamber has served as a representative voice for West Tampa’s businesses. However, many of the businesses on Boliche Blvd. are not associated with the Chamber and have, over time, developed their own informal business support association among each other. Despite repeated statements by the Planning Commission and the Chamber that the Boliche Blvd. business owners would benefit from joining the West Tampa Chamber of Commerce by getting their concerns properly represented within the implementation of the neighborhood’s economic development plan, the Chamber has made no attempt to go out into the neighborhood to speak with the Boliche Blvd. business owners and the business owners are not joining the Chamber on their own. One community meeting will not repair the historic disassociation between the Boliche Blvd. and the “old” West Tampa civic institutions. Especially when the meeting reinforced many of the business owners’ perspectives and opinions about the “old” West Tampa, such as how “old” West Tampa is the area which is “nice” and where

previous development projects have been concentrated while the “new” West Tampa has always been “ignored” and is a place where development has stopped. This perception of neglected by the City of Tampa has only been reinforced by the neighborhood’s economic development plan, with the plan’s initial focus on the “old” West Tampa business district of Howard/Armenia and Main Street. Because the Boliche Blvd. business district does not have strong ties or associations with the “old” West Tampa civic institutions, the concerns and goals of West Tampa’s economic development plan were focused in “old” West Tampa where there was strong and active representation and participation. The community meeting at La Teresita ‘opened the door’ for Boliche Blvd.’s participation in the neighborhood’s economic development plan but the business owners do not want to join into the implementation efforts because their neighborhood concerns and goals have not been addressed in the plan’s current implementation projects.

The relationship between “new” and “old” West Tampa and the overall skepticism and distrust of Tampa city government, has strongly influenced the Boliche Blvd. business owners’ desire to participate in the neighborhood’s economic development plan. However, it is important to clarify that Boliche Blvd. is not a homogeneous population where everyone shares the same values and ideas. The lawyers of the Boliche Blvd. business owners, who initially come forward to the West Tampa Chamber of Commerce to discuss the business owners’ concerns about the neighborhood’s economic development plan, had noticed that many of these business owners did not share the desire to mobilize and actively participate in West Tampa’s

plan. During their interview, the lawyers described how many of the business owners reacted to the plan:

Not everyone wanted quite the extensive re-development efforts which come with these [economic development] plans...Folks were worried that they would have to do beautification efforts and spend a lot of money to get their businesses with the right awnings and you know all that kind of stuff that goes along with it... We had a couple of businesses that ran into some trouble with some city code folks and we were able to assist them in getting extension with grease traps and so forth. That, I think, addressed some of their [business owners] concerns with having their voices heard, as well as brought it to their attention, it's not all a great thing. You might have to have some money spent to have to get in line.

There seemed to be a difference among the business owners who wanted to invest the time and money into participating in the West Tampa Economic Development Plan and those who, once their initial questions were answered, did not want to get involved in the plan.

Unlike the observations expressed by the lawyers, many of the business owners interviewed on Boliche Blvd. consistently mention that the business owners were unified in their desire to participate in the change that the economic development plan could bring to their neighborhood. Many were even willing to invest extra money into their businesses if it will contribute to the overall redevelopment of the area. Such as one restaurant owner stating to me during an interview, "If I don't need to put too much money, it doesn't matter for me. And I guess for the other people too. You know what I'm saying, it costs you time and money but...then you are going to have your pay back.

The people are going to come here.” However, another business owner made an interesting observation which reflected what the Boliche Blvd. lawyers initially stated. Although the business owners along Boliche Blvd. believe that there needs to be changes made to their business district, he noticed that there was no sense of unity and solidarity among the business owners outside of this issue. He expressed that business owners seem to be only concerned about themselves and in competition with each other. This was unlike his experiences in the north, where he owned a business for 20 years, where neighboring business owners would often visit with each other after they closed their shops for the day. This created a sense of solidarity among the businesses and helped the owners work together. This business owner believed that if the other businesses on Boliche Blvd. came together to help each other, things would get better in the area. Although there is an informal business help/support system within Boliche Blvd., it is mainly among the older, bilingual business owners assisting the younger and newer Spanish-speaking business owners to negotiate various business issues. Other than this, there does not appear to be much other support or interaction between the businesses. During interviews, when asked specifically if the business owners have talked to each other about their development concerns in the area, the majority of them replied no. This response illustrates that although these business owners share a common desire for the redevelopment of the business district, there is not much interaction and communication among the owners to help facilitate such a change.

The history of Boliche Blvd.’s association with West Tampa and Tampa’s city government has strongly influenced the business owners’ ability and desire to participate in the neighborhood’s economic development plan. The issues related to city

government discrimination, politician's broken promises, confusion navigating through the bureaucracy of the city's government, language barriers and the social and political relationships within the neighborhood of West Tampa have produced an environment which is unappealing for many of the Boliche Blvd. business owners to participate. It is these issues which the Planning Commission failed to address or take into consideration when they conducted their community engagement process. Despite these issues, the Planning Commission is not to be solely blamed for the lack of progress on Boliche Blvd.'s development. The fact that the business owners were not coherently organized made it difficult for them to independently come together after the community meeting at La Teresita and draft an official list of community concerns which the Planning Commission could, potentially, incorporate into the neighborhood's economic development plan. However, years of being ignored and disappointment with Tampa's city government did not offer the business owners much hope for their concerns being met with the West Tampa Economic Development Plan.

CHAPTER FIVE

Next step - Boliche Blvd.'s place in the West Tampa Economic Development Plan

The Planning Commission contends that there is space within West Tampa's economic development plan for the Boliche Blvd. business owners to participate. In order for these business owners' concerns to be incorporated into the economic development plan, the Commission has stated that Boliche Blvd. needs to draft a list of concerns and neighborhood goals they would like to have targeted by the West Tampa Economic Development Plan. For over a year, since the meeting in October 2005, there has been no follow up taken by the Planning Commission to ensure this list gets drafted or incorporated into the neighborhood plan. The Boliche Blvd. business owners have not come together to work on drafting this neighborhood list. The Planning Commission and the West Tampa Chamber of Commerce have stated that "the ball would be in their [Boliche Blvd.'s] court," therefore they are waiting for the Boliche Blvd. business owners to make the next step in participating and joining up with the West Tampa Volunteers. Ironically, Gaston Riera and Irma Wilcott, the Boliche Blvd. business owners who initially organized the area's businesses around this issue of the economic development plan, are waiting to hear from Jim Hosler and the Planning Commission. Both Riera and Wilcott have repeatedly stated, "We aren't doing anything now, we are waiting to see what happens." The other business owners on Boliche Blvd. are also waiting, they are waiting to hear from Riera and Wilcott about the next business owner meeting or their next course of action regarding neighborhood plan. In short, nothing – as far as Boliche Blvd.'s participation – has happened since the initial community meeting at La Teresita. With everyone waiting for the other person to "do something" or "make the next move" with the economic development plan, it is clear that there was obvious

miscommunication and lack of adequate follow-up. The Planning Commission rapidly organized the community meeting for Boliche Blvd. once they discovered that this population had felt excluded from the design and implementation of the economic development plan. Their quick response was impressive, bringing in many representatives from within the city to help answer the business owners' questions. However, following this meeting, there was no clear direction established as to what the next step would be to get representatives from Boliche Blvd. involved in the implementation of the economic development plan. It seems that the Planning Commission assumed that by providing a community meeting specifically for Boliche Blvd. they would solve the problem of this populations' lack of involvement. However, this meeting did not undo the history of Boliche Blvd.'s relationship with the rest of West Tampa and its past experiences with city government and other local institutions. The community meeting in October of 2005 was a quick fix for a much larger problem which the Planning Commission did not fully understand.

Recommendations

This thesis research has evaluated the community engagement methods used by the Planning Commission in West Tampa's economic development plan. The results of this evaluation have produced recommendations for the Planning Commission that can be applied to future economic development plans in West Tampa and other culturally and linguistically diverse neighborhoods within Hillsborough County.

One of the most notable issues which affected the Boliche Blvd. business owners in their willingness and ability to participate in West Tampa's economic development

plan was the business owners' estrangement from the rest of West Tampa and its civic institutions. The West Tampa Chamber of Commerce must take steps to go out into the Boliche Blvd. business district and begin building relationships with the area's business owners. During interviews, many business owners stated that they had never been approached by the West Tampa Chamber of Commerce. One business owner stated, with resentment, that "I have been here 15 or 16 years with my company, never have I been approached by the West Tampa Chamber of Commerce to be a member. I am a member of the Ybor City Chamber of Commerce because I receive more response [from them]." By establishing contact with the Boliche Blvd. business owners, the West Tampa Chamber of Commerce can provide access for these business owners to the development projects occurring within the neighborhood. During interviews with Riera and Wilcott, they both discussed the possibility of establishing a West Tampa Hispanic Chamber of Commerce which would serve the numerous Latino owned businesses on Boliche Blvd. and the other areas of West Tampa. This Hispanic Chamber could function as a wing of the West Tampa Chamber, directly serving the needs of the neighborhood's Latino business owners while connecting them to West Tampa neighborhood's development projects from which they can benefit. This association among the Chamber(s) and all of West Tampa's business owners will allow for greater ease in the creation and implementation of future development projects because there will be increased communication and connection among the different business districts within the neighborhood.

Although the Planning Commission was well aware of the cultural and linguistic diversity within West Tampa, the Commission did not make an adequate effort to reach

out to the neighborhood's monolingual Spanish-speaking residents and business owners. It is necessary for the Planning Commission to re-evaluate their methods of community engagement when conducting economic development plans in such diverse neighborhoods. With future development efforts in West Tampa or other linguistically diverse neighborhoods, the Planning Commission must make an effort to adapt and translate all of their community outreach materials (posted announcements, mailings, surveys, community meetings and focus groups) so as to adequately reach the neighborhood's entire population. Future development efforts in West Tampa must include clearly written and posted neighborhood community meeting announcements in both English and Spanish and more bilingual or Spanish-language meetings should be scheduled for the monolingual Spanish-speaking residents and business owners of the neighborhood. This will increase the opportunities for this population's involvement in the creation and implementation of future development plans and provide appropriate follow-up to ensure that this population's concerns and goals are being addressed in their neighborhood's plan.

The success of future development projects within West Tampa does not rest solely on the Planning Commission or the neighborhood's civic institutions; the neighborhood residents and business owners are also responsible in ensuring the progress of their neighborhood's development. Boliche Blvd.'s business owners want development to occur in their business district and they expect the city and county government to play a role in such development efforts. However, the area's community leaders must do more than just wait for the Planning Commission to tell them what will

be their next course of action. Jim Hosler is quoted previously on page 79 discussing a planner's frustration when attempting to work with the community:

At some point in time during the public involvement process, one needs to ask – “How many times do I have to ask these people to get involved? Why is it that they don't want to get involved? Is it me, or is it them, both?” ...How much time do I take from the people who want to help in order to engage those that may be hanging back due to something as simple as grease traps in their restaurants that are out of code?

This is a very prevalent issue which city planners confront when conducting neighborhood outreach and engagement work. Is it unreasonable to expect that all segments of a local population will be successfully reached and involved in neighborhood redevelopment plans? Often times these planners must move forward with those from the community who are involved in order for development efforts to be implemented. Working to reach members of the community who are “hanging back” may take too much time and effort and may impede the implementation process. However, it is important for neighborhood planners and community outreach workers to understand that the residents and business owners in a neighborhood whom are not responding to engagement efforts are doing so due to political, economic and social issues. Although these residents and business owners may hold the same values as those participating for community redevelopment and growth, these issues can severely limit their ability and desire to participate in local development efforts. When neighborhood planners and community development workers do not address these issues in a critical way, they

reinforce the institutional and social structures which maintain the marginalization of these populations.

Conclusion

Urban neighborhood redevelopment is a process which affects many individuals, families, businesses and local institutions. Often targeting once prosperous, now struggling, neighborhoods around the downtown city centers, these areas are developed in order to accommodate incoming urban professionals and cater to their neighborhood aesthetic and entertainment needs. These efforts often result in the redevelopment of a neighborhood in a way which is not economically or socially accommodating for its original residents. The end result is often the neighborhood displacement of many poor and working class families, small businesses and civic institutions. However, this displacement is not a blatant agenda of neighborhood development projects and cities make attempts to limit this during the development process; often accomplished through resident involvement in the design and implementation of neighborhood development plans. The West Tampa Economic Development Plan is an example of neighborhood participation in a local economic development plan. This research has demonstrated that despite attempts made to generate involvement from local residents and business owners in West Tampa, there were challenges encountered which limited the involvement of many within the neighborhood. It was the “social, political and environmental realities” of West Tampa, and the City of Tampa, that affected the grassroots participation of the Boliche Blvd. business owners in their neighborhood’s economic development plan (Peterman 2000:4). Without a comprehensive understanding of the real-life, social

environment of the neighborhood, the Planning Commission was unable to reach the neighborhood's large population of recent immigrant, Spanish speakers. The result of which was the exclusion of this population's neighborhood development concerns and goals in West Tampa's economic development plan.

The focus of this research covered only a portion of West Tampa's Spanish-speaking recent immigrant population, the small business owners on Boliche Blvd. Within this Spanish-speaking recent immigrant population, there is much social and economic difference which impacts how the population engages, or does not engage, with West Tampa's economic development plan. The small business owners on Boliche Blvd. provided an opportunity to understand how this larger Spanish-speaking recent immigrant population can be affected by local development projects. This research demonstrates the necessity to critically evaluate engagement methods in future economic development plans, which is especially relevant for neighborhoods that are ethnically and linguistically diverse.

It was critical for the Planning Commission to have a historical understanding of the Boliche Blvd. business district's relationship with the rest of West Tampa. When conducting research within immigrant communities in the urban areas within the United States, anthropologist Caroline B. Brettell argues that it is beneficial to understand the "city as context." She states that "each city constitutes a particular social and economic field that has been shaped as much by history as by present-day local, regional, national and often global forces" (Brettell 2000:131). An understanding of the history of Boliche Blvd. and how this history can strengthen or weaken any existing or potential relationships between the rest of West Tampa and the larger City of Tampa could help to

inform how the Planning Commission targets their engagement of this population.

Boliche Blvd's historically strained relationship with "old" West Tampa has influenced the area's lack of association with West Tampa's civic institutions. These institutions played a key role in the outreach and creation of West Tampa's economic development plan and Boliche Blvd's disassociation with them lead to it's exclusion in the development plan.

Jane Jacobs' concept of "street neighborhoods" can be applied to Boliche Blvd. in that street neighborhoods can have strong social connections and internal support however, they can lack political power outside in the broader context of the city (Peterman 2000:41). In order for a street neighborhood to achieve a degree of influence or control on the issues which affect them, they must have a connection to the larger political powers. This connection is what was lacking for Boliche Blvd. versus the rest of West Tampa. Without an association with the West Tampa Chamber of Commerce, Boliche' Blvd.'s business concerns were not represented within West Tampa's economic development plan. Boliche Blvd.'s lack of political power was also evident in the area's interaction with Tampa's city government. Language barriers have greatly impeded monolingual Spanish-speakers from participating in public City Council and County Commission meetings. This language barrier was reinforced in the West Tampa community meetings which were conducted to generate resident and business owner participation in the neighborhood's economic development plan. The Blvd.'s business owners' infrequent and negative interactions with city government employees have lead to distrust, which has not engendered a desire for the business owners to participate in a city government-affiliated neighborhood development plan.

Future neighborhood development efforts in West Tampa must take into consideration these issues imbedded within the social fabric of the neighborhood. West Tampa's civic institutions must recognize their contribution to the marginalization of the neighborhood's recent immigrant population and make efforts to foster relationships among themselves and the population's residents and business owners. This attempt to repair the strained existing social relations between "new" and "old" West Tampa will begin to address the barriers which have limited the monolingual Spanish-speaking population's participation in the civic and governmental institutions within West Tampa and the City of Tampa. The Planning Commission and the City of Tampa government must re-examine their avenues for citizen involvement and participation. The Planning Commission and Tampa city government can be regarded as "mediating institutions" for many of the new immigrant business owners on Boliche Blvd. Louise Lamphere describes these "mediating institutions" as a means to "channel larger political and economic forces into settings that have impact on the lives of individuals...and mediate interaction between newcomers and established residents" (Lamphere 1992:3-4). These institutions are formally and hierarchically organized and can function as a way to marginalize new immigrant groups. Challenging the structure of how these institutions are organized can help bring in those that have been excluded socially, economically and politically. The Planning Commission's re-examination of their existing community engagement methods is a step in that this direction. Although not challenging the core structure of their institution it does force them to reconsider the different dynamics of an "active citizen" and operationalize how all such citizens can be integrated into the process of economic development.

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