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Land Use Oral History Project
Patel Center for Global Solutions
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Interview with: Frank Starkey
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WM: This is Bill Mansfield from the University of South Florida Special Collections Library, talking to Mr. Frank Starkey in the Starkey Ranch offices in Odessa, Florida, on August 24, 2006.

And, we always get people to start out by having them state their name and telling us when they were born and where they were born. So let her go.

FS: All right. My name is Frank Starkey. I was born February 16, 1969 at St. Joseph's Hospital, in Tampa.

WM: Okay. And tell me what is your current occupation?

FS: I'm a real estate developer. My—um—education was in architecture at Rice University, in Houston, [Texas]. I got an undergraduate degree in architecture and a professional degree (which is called a Bachelor of Architecture) in 1991 and 1993, respectively, both from Rice.

Since 1995 I've been engaged in real estate development with my brother Trey. We are working on a Development of Regional Impact on the Starkey Ranch, which is about twenty-five hundred acres. But up until this point we've been working on a traditional neighborhood development called Longleaf, which is about five hundred and sixty-eight acres on the west end of the ranch.

WM: Okay, well if we could, let's start with Longleaf, because when I talked to your father earlier he said that he sold that land to you and your brother to develop? [See J. B. Starkey, Jr. interview with Bill Mansfield 8-9-06]

FS: Um-huh.

WM: Tell me about the origins of, the genesis of the idea to develop Longleaf as a different sort of subdivision.

FS: I'll start with what Longleaf started off to be, initially. It was the first—ah—when I came back to work with Trey in 1995, shortly thereafter we started talking with John Hudson, who at the time owned Regency Communities, which was a major builder in Pasco County. [He] built in west Pasco, primarily. He later sold his business to Ryland Homes. But at the time, John was the owner of Regency Communities and looking for a piece of property to do a gated golf course, retirement, age-restricted community.

So we started off by talking with John about doing a joint venture wherein John would provide the—would be the exclusive homebuilder and provide up front cash to get the project started. Our family would throw in the land and somehow Trey and I would be involved with the management of the project.

Um—as we got into the land planning of it and running economics it became apparent that in order to make the numbers work—Bill, tell me if I'm going into too much detail or not enough?

WM: No. You're doing fine.

FS: Okay. In order to make the financial side of it work, John really needed to have a certain number of houses to balance the costs of the golf course, and the gate and all of the other amenities.

WM: Um-huh.

FS: There just wasn't enough land. We weren't able to squeeze all of that on to the five hundred and sixty-eight acres that comprises Longleaf. The main boundary was Starkey Boulevard, which is the eastern boundary of Longleaf and separates it from the rest of the ranch.

WM: So there wasn't enough land for the golf course and enough houses to make it worthwhile?

FS: Right.

WM: Okay.

FS: Starkey Boulevard, and there is big power-line easement, or power-line right-of-way next to it, created a big barrier that was difficult to cross. To have the golf course cross that you needed some sort of grade separation for carts. Which means you're either building a road bridge or you're building a cart bridge or a tunnel, which is a major expense. You also probably need some way to get the cars across within the gated system.

So, if you were going to jump across Starkey Boulevard at all, you needed to jump across in a big way. So the land, to the east of the power line, at the time was owned by Dad and other members of our family, including our siblings —as it had come out of Granddad's estate. Where the land that is Longleaf, west of the power line [belonged to] Dad exclusively, the land on the east side we had to deal with other family members now.

The concept there was we had to go so much bigger [that] it kind of made the project need to double in size. So, two-thirds of it would have been the golf course, age-restricted stuff.

Trey and I had always wanted to do— we had been talking for several years about wanting to do a New Urbanist project. So the idea was that the remainder of it would be a New Urbanist project. That deal fell apart, due to some internal dynamics about dealing with the family land. So we really were not able to deal with that.

We were faced with the decision, in 1997, whether to continue with the gated golf course retirement program, with John Hudson. John said “Okay I can do this if I can do it on my own. But there is really not enough room in the pie, so to speak, for the Starkey's to participate. So he would do it, [but only] as a straight land sale. Under some kind of terms, but basically a land sale. So our choice was to sell it to him, or go it on our own and do a different kind of project.

Trey and I, and Mom and Dad [as well], sat down in March of '97 and said, “Here's our choice. We can sell it to somebody who's going to do a good job, but do a conventional project. Or we could do it ourselves and do what we want to do in terms of developing in a New Urbanist fashion.

It was our belief that New Urbanism was the best way to develop that met most of our development goals. So the question was, “Do we do it now or do we wait?” We decided to go ahead and do it now.

WM: Let me ask a couple of questions, if you don't mind.

FS: Sure.

WM: You said that you and your brother had been thinking about New Urbanism and you figured that was the best way to meet your development goals?

FS: Uh-huh

WM: Elaborate on that, if you could please.

FS: Every question you ask I'm probably going to go back another decade or two in time. (laughs)

WM: Well that's sort of post-modern deconstruction anyhow, so that's okay.

FS: (laughs) So we'll keep going back to the roots of things.

Dad, probably told you about growing up on the Ulmerton Ranch and seeing what happened to that.

WM: Um-huh.

FS: During the whole time that Trey and I and our sisters were growing up here, we knew that [the spread of] development coming in this direction was inevitable.

I always tell people the story that when I was going to elementary school, every year on the school bus route between here and New Port Richey, there'd be a new bus stop and a new subdivision. So growth, marching in our direction has been a reality [for] our entire lives. Interestingly, newcomers are more shocked by the growth than we are. Newcomers usually expect us to be just blown away by it. But it's like, "Well, no it's always been thus." (laughs)

So we always knew it was coming in this direction, but Dad really instilled in us a belief that there was a better way to do it and that, "Yes this land probably wasn't going to remain undeveloped for ever, at least not all of it. If there was going to be development on the land we would rather see it done in a good way. And what "good" was, was an idea that developed over time and it still developing today, really.

One of the goals was the "placelessness" and sort of ordinary –not ordinary, that's not a good word.

WM: Nondescript?

FS: Yeah, nondescript is probably more like it. Automobile oriented, everything that people talk about, as [being] bad with [the suburban] sprawl was something that Dad identified yearly on. Mom too. A lot of that goes back to their growing up years.

Mom grew up in northeast St. Pete, in the 40's and 50's. Which was sort of the height of small town American culture. That's the great golden age that everybody hearkens back to. So she understood living in a vibrant community in an urban context. I'd say in a medium density urban context.

Dad grew up on a ranch out in the country but also understood small towns. They both, I think, had a sense that there was something really lacking socially and culturally in the suburban sprawl that was heading our way. They also had a strong sentiment for the natural environment, and I think instilled in us a love and appreciation for that environment. I think we all just kind of grew up just knowing that needed to be protected.

Of course Granddad set the major example of protecting [the environment] by his donations and gifts and sale to SWIFTMUD [Southwest Florida Water Management

District], to keep a significantly sized piece of Florida wilderness in pristine shape, forever. So those two strains, one is the cultural side of the placelessness of suburbia, to use a cliched term, and the environmental preservation side, to use another cliched term. Those two strains were really part of our fiber as we were growing up.

WM: Um-huh.

FS: So, I think your question was—

WM: You'd talked about you decided going the New Urbanism route would meet your development goals.

FS: So what were those goals?

WM: Yes, what were the development goals?

FS: So the development goals were to preserve the environment and create a place that fostered a real kind of community and fostered meaningful relationships among people. New Urbanism does that. In the way that traditional neighborhoods are designed it's very much about fostering community building.

Let me be more specific about that. [I mean] fostering geographically located communities. You know there is all kinds of talk these days about community. There is the community of bottle-rocket launchers.

WM: (laughs)

FS: There is [a] community of bloggers, there is the gay community, things that are not geographically based. But what New Urbanism is about is geographical communities.

WM: Uh-huh.

FS: Then by implication, when you're constructing more compact development patterns it creates the opportunity to leave nature untouched. And the good thing about that is— There's two different major approaches to environmentally oriented development, as a catchall term.

One is the pretense of "Let's pretend to live like the Indians, and spread out or settlement patterns so we are living on large lots, with lots of nature left on those lots."

This is kind of a 1960's, 1970's idea about "it's environmental if it has got rough stone siding on it, and you can hardly see it in the woods."

The downside to that is that the house may have a light environmental footprint, but every time you want to do anything you've got to get in the car and drive twenty miles to do it.

WM: Well, I was going to ask where did the Indians park their car?

FS: (laughs) Yeah. The Indians didn't park and they didn't drive to work. So it is not really a realistic model. The other model is to cluster our development, our settlement patterns and leave places that are truly untouched as opposed to only lightly touched.

So New Urbanism has the opportunity to leave places that are completely untouched, but are nearby to the settlement patterns so that people who are living in the settled area have, nearby, honest to goodness, untouched wilderness that they can go out and interact with. As opposed to sliced-up abstracted wilderness in the form of a large yard, [that's] not really the same thing.

WM: Just briefly, where were you introduced to notion of New Urbanism? Was that in architect school?

FS: I guess it was—Seaside, [Florida] which was really the initial New Urbanist project that really got that movement started— New Urbanism, with a capital “N” and capital “U.”

That started in 1980, but it started really hitting the press in the early nineties which was when I was finishing up school. I had professors who were colleagues of Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk who were the planners of Seaside.

WM: Say those names again slowly please.

FS: Oh. Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk. DPZ [Duany Plater-Zyberk] is the name of their firm. They designed Seaside and among others started the New Urbanism movement.

So I was aware of it in college but it was not something that was ever really taught or talked about in my training. I did learn urbanism. I learned a lot about urban design and the curriculum at Rice, at the time, was very focused on urban design issues and designing in an urban context—those kinds of things. The title of my professional degree is actually Bachelor of Architecture and Urban Design. Urban design is in there. So I was exposed to the issues, but it's not like I took a class about New Urbanism.

I did do one course that was about new towns. I was always interested in this stuff through college. It was always near and dear [to me] because of what was happening on the ranch.

WM: Um-huh.

FS: So I did do a class that had one other student, with the architectural history professor; looking at the New Town movement, which, in some ways, was the predecessor [of] New Urbanism, but the New Town movement was in the fifties, sixties, and seventies.

WM: So, really it was the impact of Seaside, up near Destin that introduced you to the idea of New Urbanism?

FS: Yeah.

WM: Okay. I just want to make sure that I'm following you. You said the golf course development didn't pan out, so you and your family decided that you could develop this as a New Urban community?

FS: Yeah.

WM: Okay. So tell me about the design process. How you collected your thoughts and organized this community?

FS: The design of a New Urban—well let's see. In '97 is when we started the design. I had gone to a couple of seminars about New Urbanism at Seaside and I'd toured a few New Urban projects. One of which is called Windsor, over near Vero Beach, that was another DPZ project. I called DPZ's office and said, "I'd like to go tour Windsor. How do I get there?"

I was really just calling for directions, cause I'd read about it in a magazine. They said, "You need to call Geoff Ferrell. He's the town architect over there and he'll get you in."

So I called Geoff Ferrell and he gave me the—ah—grand tour. Jeff, at the time was working as the town architect at Windsor. He had worked at DPZ before that and had architectural training. So we had a nice tour and he showed me a good "cook's tour" of the place. That was probably in '95 when I toured the place. That was right when I was first back in Florida.

WM: Um-huh.

FS: And about a year later, I was on his mailing list and he sent out a card [announcing] that he had opened his own firm to do town planning. About a year later we were starting to do our town plan here, so I called Geoff and asked if he would come to do a charrette to lay out Longleaf?

WM: Do a what?

FS: A charrette, I'll explain that.

WM: Okay.

FS: The people who started New Urbanism were architects, as opposed to planners.

WM: Uh-huh.

FS: It's an important difference between New Urbanism and other planning movements. It's much more formally based than policy-based. Most planning movements and the planning profession is all about policy. New Urbanism is much more about form. Policy is secondary. Form is first—building form, street form, blocks, neighborhoods, and even regional form.

In the field of architecture there is a term called charrettes [spelling] C-H-A-R-R-E-T-T-E, which is French for carts. It dates back to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, which was the original architecture school. There is all sorts of lore about what the term means, but over the years it evolved to in architecture school, or even in firms, when you're working on a project getting ready for a deadline and staying up all night and working very intensely on it, it's called a charrette.

The New Urbanists and DPZ kind of started designing projects in a charrette format. So one of the hallmarks of New Urbanism is doing charrettes. In designing a project by charrette means getting all of the clients, the architects and designers, any kind of specialists, whether they are transportation designers or engineers, civil engineers, retail specialists, even marketing people— getting all of the people who are going to be involved in developing a project into the same room at the same time. And over the period of a week or so, sometimes a little longer and sometimes a little shorter, they will design the “bones” of the whole project.

WM: So it's more of a total—planning?

FS: Yeah. It's a total planning workshop that kind of gets most of everything—taken—it kind of front-loads most of the design work. Sometimes it will go into designing actual buildings but at least setting up the architectural tone and the style for the buildings and laying out the streets and deciding which streets will have what kind of character—and all of that.

So Geoff organized a charrette with Armando Montero who is an architect that he had worked with, who is from Miami, and Suzanne Askew Lauter, who is a landscape architect and some other people, Tom Spain, who is a professor at the University of Miami.

We did this charrette to design Longleaf in the summer of 97, maybe June or July. That's where the planning came from.

WM: Um-huh.

FS: That identified the locations of the neighborhoods and the architectural character that we would go for, the arrangement of the green space—the green belt between the neighborhoods, and the architectural code that would govern the design of the houses. That all came out of that charrette. It was all refined over time and continues to be refined, but that was where it started.

WM: So in '97 you all got together and decided—and laid out the plans for the housing types?

FS: (Nods head—affirmative)

WM: So how did you—I guess the question I want to ask is [about] your interaction with the local—um—I can't think of the term.

FS: Regulators?

WM: Right, the county government, and the state government I suppose.

FS: We didn't really have anything to do with state, because we were not a DRI sized project. We had environmental permits from SWIFTMUD to get. And I guess there are DEP [Department of Environmental Protection permits] for the sewer system, and wastewater and storm water and whatever those things are.

But we didn't really have to go to Tallahassee, so to speak. There were state level agencies involved but it wasn't like going to DCA [Department of Community Affairs].

The county government, at that time, in stark contrast as to how they are today, had a pretty hands-off attitude about regulating the form of development. There's a zoning classification called MPUD, which stands for Master Planned Unit Development.

WM: Master Plan what?

FS: [Master Planned] Unit Development. That when you read the intent paragraph, at the beginning of that zoning category, it says, paraphrased, "This zoning category is to give developers the flexibility to do something different than from what we're used to seeing." The main thing about MPUD's is that it allowed a developer to propose alternates of design standards, that were different from the regular land development regulations that govern set-backs and street widths and building types and all of the formal things of development.

So we used the MPUD process to get our permits, because one of the big things about New Urbanism, or urbanism is that it doesn't fit the land development regulations and zoning codes that were put in place in the twentieth century in jurisdictions all across the country.

In order to get around that you have to either seek a whole bunch of variances, in the case of the MPUD, we were able to do it through alternative design standards. The County was pretty—um—they believed us when we said "this was a better form of development and it makes charming little streets and the mixing of uses is good and having apartments above the shops is a development pattern we should go back to." Having slightly smaller lots, with community parks in exchange for that lot savings was a good thing.

WM: More public space in exchange for less private space?

FS: Yeah, exactly.

Um—having alleys behind the houses is a good thing because it restores architecture to houses on the street. Raising the floor elevations and putting front porches on houses is a good thing. All of these things working together foster a community and that's a good thing for society. Having narrower streets is an important part of that recipe. Your street standards in the land development codes are too wide, so we need to be able to have narrower streets. [We requested] all of these kinds of things.

There were a few [items that the County questioned].

Our colleagues, doing New Urbanism across the country and across the state in different jurisdictions mostly had horror stories about getting permits to do this stuff that was technically illegal. Even though it had been done for hundreds of years before zoning came into place. We'd heard all of these horror stories about how hard it was to get the fire marshal to sign off on narrow streets and all these things.

We didn't have that much of a problem in Pasco County. They were pretty—they were willing to work with us. They were open to the ideas and also, frankly, they were not [taking] a [position] to stand in the way of a developer who is willing to put their own money at risk.

WM: You said there were [a] few points of contention with the County?

FS: Minor things. What was usually the most onerous problem that other developers ran into was the fire marshal. [He] wanted to have streets [where] he could drive biggest fire truck known to man, without having to slow down or put it in reverse at any point, ever. And who can argue with the fire chief because he is about saving lives? And who can argue against saving lives?

So we expected this big [resistance] from the fire chief. He had one point that he made, there were some intersections of alleys with one-way streets that needed to be wider. Which was a good point, and yes, you still need to be able to get fire trucks through. The question is, just how fast? So that was not really a point of contention. That was a point of feedback. It wasn't anything we really had an argument about.

WM: You said that the County, the board that regulates—I guess it would be the [Board of] County Commissioners?

FS: Yeah, and the DRC, the Development Review Commission

WM: Okay. You said they didn't offer any opposition. Was that because they didn't understand it or because you all were putting up your own money for this? How would you explain that?

FS: Um—I think there was starting to be enough press about New Urbanism that they knew enough that they liked it. I think they trusted us because we were local, born and raised here—we weren't carpetbaggers, so to speak. So I think there was a level of personal trust there.

Tape 1, side 1 ends; side 2 begins.

FS: Then I think—you know—there was probably a component of it that it was just. “It’s your money.” As long as we’re looking after the health safety and welfare of the citizens in general [we’re not concerned]. If people want to buy that’s great, but if not that’s your problem more than it is ours. You’re probably not going to continue if it doesn’t work. And if it doesn’t work—who are we to stand in your way?”

I’m just kind of guessing but just knowing what we knew about the [Board]. ‘Cause we knew all of those people personally and they knew us. I think there is a certain level of trust there that is not altogether common in those regulator/regulated relationships.

WM: Okay. One of the things I read in that article is that there—well—okay so the regulatory part of county government was fine with this. What about the building community—what kind of reaction did you get?

FS: That was a harder sell, frankly.

WM: Tell me about that.

FS: The—um—homebuilders are—because of the dynamics of that business, not really of that market, but of that business, homebuilders tend to be pretty conservative, when it comes to developing new products. By extension of that concept, the development community tends to be pretty conservative when it comes to developing new products. A lot of that is because the model of market study is to look at what has sold to predict what will sell.

WM: Um-huh.

FS: Whereas most industries don’t really work that way. If all of our industries worked that way we’d never have any innovation. You wouldn’t be recording this on a [mini disc recorder]. It’d still be on stone tablets, I don’t know. (laughs)

WM: (laughs)

FS: But the home building and development community are pretty conservative about developing new stuff. So the industry has distilled, especially in this particular market, the home building typologies down to basically one [type of house]—the three/two split-plan. Which is a three-bedroom, two-bathroom [floor plan], where the master bedroom is on one side, the living areas are in the center of the house and the other two bedrooms are

on the other side. And the garage is on one side or the other. It's a highly distilled building type that has been built a zillion times. Most homebuilders are used to manipulating that type and their designs [vary] in very minor ways. But they've all got a portfolio of ten to a hundred versions of this type that they are used to building.

So they didn't have the [house type] to sell [for] a lot that had an alley in the back. The second you presented them with an alley-loaded lot, they were starting over with a blank piece of paper. That's not a very comfortable place for them to be. Their expertise is, usually, either in marketing or customer service, or it's in construction, but it's not in design.

WM: Um-huh.

FS: So design, to builders is a big investment of time and it's a big risk, in terms of market acceptance. That's just a fundamental issue on each residential lot.

On top of that there's all these other crazy things, at the time crazy things about our community—village greens, narrow streets, picket fences. We wanted the floor elevations to all be raised two to three feet. We wanted front porches on everything. They thought front porches were cute but they thought they were just an added cost. They didn't think that the customers would really credit any value to that. So they couldn't really add that to their sales price. To them it was a cost item but not an increased sales price item.

They saw the same thing with raised floor elevation. It was too outside of their normal box, of what they were used to selling.

WM: I have to ask this question. Wasn't that really reverting back to an older house plan?

FS: Yeah, but these guys didn't build [with] those old house plans. So it's not like they had them still sitting in their cabinets from 1920. 'Cause it really had been since before the Depression that any of this stuff was really built.

And you can't just go into Seminole Heights and take those floor plans because family dynamics have changed. People want bigger rooms, more storage; so it really was a trick to develop new floor plans for it. That was kind of the fundamental push back. Once you got past that, the builders that were willing to look at it were very—you know—it was a high-risk thing for them.

There were two sets of builders we were able to talk to. The first set were national builders, like David Weekley and Morrison, both of whom had built in Celebration which at that time was the first big-scale production housing TND or Traditional Neighborhood Development. So they were the only builders that did have product on their shelves that they could build in Longleaf, with alley-loaded lots and stuff.

They still were companies who, for the most part, built that three/two-split plan. But their decision was there were two New Urbanist projects on the boards in the Tampa Bay area. One of them was in Westchase, which at the time was the fastest selling master-planned community in the Bay area for several years running. [It] had very strong value appreciation and was a very well managed project by an established development company. The other project that they had to choose from was Longleaf, which was a new project, much further out from downtown. A much more “out-there” location and market, being run by two young guys who hadn’t run a [big] project before. To them it was an easy decision [to go to Westchase.]

Those guys said, “Thank you. We like you, but we’re going to go over here with our dice roll [take a chance with the more experienced business].” They weren’t going to roll the dice on two of these projects at the same time in the Bay area.

The other group of builders that we were able to talk to were local production builders. They weren’t the “pick-up truck” builders that built twelve houses a year. These were guys who built fifty to three hundred houses a year—um—on a production scale. But they weren’t big regional builders they were local production builders.

WM: Now would a production builder be kind of like an assembly line? Would it involve pre-fabricated parts?

FS: Not pre-fabricated, but much more, “These are our floor plans, pick one of those and we’ll build it.”

WM: But sort of an assembly line thought?

FS: Kind of. Yeah—loosely that’s a closer analogy. As opposed to a custom builder who starts with a customer and a blank piece of paper. A production builder, by definition (FS questions WM about the time and length of the interview) they build volume, repetitively, where the custom builder builds one house once.

WM: Okay.

FS: But these are smaller builders and they do an amount of customization. There’s also the term, “semi-custom,” which is halfway between a production builder and a custom builder. They might start with a customer with a stock floor plan and then make changes to that stock floor plan. But they are not starting with a blank piece of paper and drawing it from the ground up.

WM: Okay. So you attracted a small production builder?

FS: There were three local production builders who were willing to take the risk to develop new products and come into this crazy project, that’s who we ended up with in the first round.

WM: Okay. One of the things I read in the paper said something about a threatened lawsuit about builders perhaps contesting some of the design plans?

You look puzzled. That doesn't sound familiar?

FS: That doesn't ring a bell.

WM: Okay. Perhaps I [misremembered] it or the paper got it wrong. The notes I took said, "In May Pasco County was threatened with a lawsuit from builders."

FS: Oh—yeah. Let's flash forward ten years. The county is going through a bunch of comprehensive land use changes—comp-plan changes. One of those changes has to do with rural protection areas where they want to require traditional neighborhood development. Kind of like what St. Lucie County was doing, but not quite as sophisticated. They were wanting to require TND standards up there.

Some of the people who lead the Pasco Builders Association threatened to sue the county over those requirements. It's sort of—the way it came across in the article was—it was part of the picture but didn't really explain the whole thing. We weren't involved in it. In fact we resigned from the PBA [Pasco Builders Association] when they made that threat. We didn't want to be a part of that. We didn't think that was the way to go about winning friends and influencing people.

WM: Okay. So that is completely separate and apart from Longleaf?

FS: Right.

WM: Anyhow, back to our story, you got the local builders to come on board with the community, to build the houses?

FS: Yeah.

WM: Okay. What came next?

FS: Well—how long have you got [for this interview]? (laughs)

WM: I brought another disc with me. So if we fill this one up, we can start filling up the other one.

FS: What direction do you want to go. I can give you the whole history of Longleaf, but that would probably take three days. So—

WM: I haven't got that kind of time.

FS: (laughs) Okay.

WM: I guess—

FS: We did have pushback from—we had a lot of things we had to overcome with the builders about the design of the houses and about getting them to understand what the whole project was about.

That was a challenge. For the most part, I think we got them there on the exterior design of the houses, in terms of their functional aspects. They weren't very great architects and they weren't very great designers. None of them used real architects. They used design services or in-house design.

I shouldn't say that. I don't mean to slight their design services. They didn't use architects that were used to working in this typology, with the garage in back.

What I discovered was that they had all designed houses dozens of times. They had designed [their houses], built them and sold them. So I didn't feel like I could teach them anything about how to do that better, on the interior plan. I knew that I had to change what they were designing on the exterior of the houses. I had to teach them about why a porch has to be eight feet deep and that a five foot deep porch isn't worth fooling with, cause you can't sit on it. But I thought I'd leave the interior floor plans up to them.

What I didn't realize was that while they were pretty facile in manipulating the floor plans of a three/two split-plan, where the locations of the rooms are already set and all you're doing is adding an angle here and niche there and an arched doorway there.

They weren't able to start with a new typology and figure out how to arrange the rooms. That's over simplifying it, but they were really at a loss for how to make good product floor plan decisions in a new building typology that was just different from the three/two split-plan [that they were accustomed to].

It was also different from our narrowest lots to our widest lots. You have very different constraints on those different lots. So, "How do you get from the garage to the kitchen?" is a whole different [question] when the garage is in the back, instead of the front. And I insisted on having living rooms, or dining rooms—you know public, the living spaces of the house, [some of which] needed to be on the front of the house.

But how do you get that on the front of the house when—Floridians are used to having their living room overlooking their pool in the back. There is away to solve that but they didn't know it. That was one of my first lessons, "Oh, they can't do this." (laughs)

Then the next challenge was getting the buyers to understand it. There was a lot of education required to teach buyers who are used to driving into a subdivision with a "spine-road" [and] making a right turn to go into the pod where the houses were all fifty feet wide and cost \$150,000. Or, turning left to go to a pod where the houses were all forty feet wide and cost \$120,000. You know the next pod down was the pool. You know—[the subdivisions] were pretty straightforward and they had gone into twenty-five

of these subdivisions the weekend before and then they go into Longleaf and are presented with something completely different.

There's a village green with cars parked on the street. The garages are nowhere to be seen. There're front porches, which are really cute, but the prices are a lot higher and the lots look a lot smaller. "Why am I paying \$175,000.00 for fifteen-hundred square feet?" –I don't know that those are real numbers—"When I can pay \$150,000 for two-thousand square feet in that subdivision down the road?"

Some buyers drove in and immediately "got it." Some buyers drove in and immediately drove out. Some buyers drove in three, four, eight, nine, ten times before they really understood it and then they loved it.

WM: Um-huh.

FS: People were not generally neutral about Longleaf. They either really loved it or they really disliked it. Or they really loved it—but for somebody else. They said, "That's really cute but I could never live that way." But it was a marketing challenge to explain all of these new features outside the house. Before you even got to the fact that [when] they walk in the front door they are not going to be looking straight through the living room to the pool, they are going to be looking at a different floor plan, that is not just like the twenty [houses] they went [into] in the other subdivisions.

We have a lot to explain to buyers, which made the selling process a lot longer. But once buyers moved in—the experience was—I think the buyers kind of self-selected, especially in the early years. So we had people move in who were really excited about building community and really excited about all of the new friends they were going to make. Subsequently our first group of buyers were instantly fast-friends and this really strong, close-knit community was started right off the bat.

That changed as the place grew bigger. More people moved in and it became less strange. More people moved in because they thought it was a good investment, or moved in because they thought it would be good to be near the school, more moved in for reasons less compelling [than building a community]. Not that they didn't still feel strongly about the concept, but they weren't as zealously committed to the kind of pioneering spirit of Longleaf that some of the earlier ones were. So that sense of community slowly diluted over time. But it is still, I would submit, much stronger than any other subdivision.

WM: That was my next question. You said that people seemed to either love it or hate it?

FS: Um-huh.

WM: You mentioned the strong sense of community as being one of the attractive aspects. What were some of the other things that people liked about the Longleaf Community?

FS: They liked the houses. They liked the privacy they can have in their back yard. Ironically, the conceit of suburbanism—suburban sprawly-houses with a three/two split-plan—is that you have all of this privacy. But in fact you very often don't. Unless your house backs up to a swamp you have neighbors in your backyard. You're exposed to your neighbors a lot more. The way the houses in Longleaf were laid out—with out going into the details of it, creates an entirely private back yard and a front side that is much more civically interactive than a big garage with a driveway in the front would be. People liked that.

They liked that you could walk places and the walk was interesting. They liked having the school and pre-school in there. They liked the idea of the downtown, with the shops that they could walk to.

In fact it's ironic, in conventional subdivisions it's fairly common for the developer to leave a parcel [of land] up at the front, up on the main road, for commercial development. When they go to develop that, the residents in the subdivision scream in protest. They hate it and they are all mad because there is going to be development. They perceive [that the commercial development will bring crime and damage their property values] and all this bad stuff.

In Longleaf, because everybody understands how the commercial is integrated in the neighborhood and they bought there hoping that commercial [property] would be there as an amenity. They are actually mad at us that the commercial hasn't been built faster. (chuckles)

When we finally did build the commercial I think some people have actually boycotted it. They're mad at us because there is not more of it. Which is moronic to me.

WM: Put a Wal-Mart in there and see what happens!

FS: (Laughs) Yeah! I guess they are driving down to Wal-Mart instead.

WM: But is the commercial aspect of Longleaf there yet or in the process of moving in?

FS: We've got our first retail building—retail and apartment (mixed use building) is opened, has been open for about a year now. We've got six businesses in it. There was a general store that went out of business earlier this year. But there is a women's boutique, a hair salon, a jewelry store, a dry cleaner, a cigar bar, [and] one regular office user, in that building. Then there is a catering and take-out, hot meals, they are working on their finish-out right now.

And then there's another building, about the same size, that's planned for across the street. There is some commercial done, more to come.

WM: Okay, so that the community ends-up being within walking distance of these services is some of the appeal?

FS: Yeah.

WM: All right, and you said that people hated it. One of the reason's they did was that it was just different and didn't meet their preconception of what a community should be. Can you think of other reason why they didn't like Longleaf?

FS: The one we would always hear the most is that they perceived that the houses were too close together and the lots were too small.

Fact of the matter is that the houses are not really closer together nor are the lots appreciably smaller than most of the other contemporary subdivisions that are being built. But I think, people—the houses are closer to the street. In the early stages of construction of a neighborhood, when there's a lot of empty lots, when there is a lot of open space, the houses that are built appear closer together because there is all of this open space next to them. Once the neighborhood is built out and there is not all of that open space next to it; it looks right. But in the early stages, which is when [we were] getting [those] reactions, it looks that way.

Some people just don't want to be involved with their neighbors. They don't want to be in a place where there is an expectation of community involvement. Some people are just anti-social to some extent. They don't like that idea. They are worried about the “Gladys Kravitz” [a character from “Bewitched” a television sitcom who personified the stereotype of a nosey neighbor] of the neighborhood being in their business all the time.

WM: (laugh) Right. So how close is Longleaf to completion? Or being built-out, or whatever the term is?

FS: There are a little over three hundred homes [that are] built and occupied. There're about three hundred more lots that are developed right now, with houses that are under construction and just starting to be opened, sold and occupied. That's a total of six hundred. Then there is about six hundred more dwelling units left to go after that. [That includes] multi-family single family and some large lots too.

WM: Um-huh.

FS: So—ah—we're a quarter done with houses, half done with lots and about a quarter done with the commercial.

WM: One of the [articles] I read about New Urbanism and the mixture of different kinds of people. I guess economic [integration] is what you're looking for—how has that developed at Longleaf?

FS: The main way to develop that is through housing types and sizes and lot sizes. We've got now four, pretty simple attached products—the traditional term is town homes. Those range in size from about thirteen hundred square feet, up to eighteen hundred square feet.

Then we've got small, medium and large and extra large single-family homes, on small, medium, large and extra large lots. Then we've got apartments above the retail down town. Eventually those may become condominiums, but for now they are apartments.

Then another thing we have is—we've included zoning to allow people to have accessory dwelling units—garage apartments—granny flats—whatever term you want to call it—on their lot. That creates sort of noticeable (but harder to track) stratum of housing price. Those are limited in size to no more than seven hundred and fifty square feet. They're not going to be bigger than a one-bedroom apartment. More often than not they are really no more than a studio.

We've got several families that have in-laws who live in those and some others that have them rented out. Some just have them as bonus rooms or game rooms for the kids, or whatever. Craft rooms, studios.

WM: What kind of diversity is there in Longleaf, [and] I mean ethnically and economically?

FS: I think there is a fair degree of economic diversity. There are some people who moved-in in the early years, before the real estate market went crazy in the last couple of years. [They] probably kind of squeaked in and now they couldn't afford to buy a new house in there now.

And there are some people who sailed in, because they loved it and bought the biggest house they could find and it still wasn't as much as they could have afforded if they had wanted more. Some people have pretty lavish houses and some people have pretty modest houses.

[There is] far less ethnic diversity than I would like, frankly. And less than you would expect. Although Pasco has historically been extremely white, compared to [the surrounding counties.] Several years ago I was a member of the Tampa Bay Leadership Class. We visited one of the [public] high schools in Pasco County all of the people that were from Pinellas and Hillsborough County were freaked out that there were no black students walking around. They were [asking] "Where are the black kids? There are none here. That is so weird." They are used to [having] much higher African American populations [in their schools].

That's the way Pasco is. Pasco has always been extremely, kind of spookily white. That's starting to change. I still don't think we have any African Americans living in Longleaf. This just shocked me, but—we have a couple of Asians [living there]. I don't even know about Latinos. There are a couple of Latinos, but I think they are second- or third-generation American citizens, so they're not—[Longleaf] is surprisingly not diverse.

But not for lack of trying. (laughs)

WM: The people, who live in Longleaf, do they commute out to St. Pete, and New Port Richey and Tampa to work?

FS: Yeah.

WM: So it is still sort of a commuter community?

FS: Yeah, it pretty much is. There are a number of people who work out of their homes, who have home-based businesses. A lot of people work nearby—you know they don't have real long commutes. There is one office building in Longleaf that's twenty-two thousand square feet, that [houses] an engineering firm. There is one man who lives in Longleaf who used to work there—he was a landscape architect that worked for that engineering firm, quit to open his own practice and then eventually quit that, and now works for another engineering firm down in Tampa. Then they have another guy who works for FDC [Florida Design Consultants] who lives in Longleaf. Those are the ones that I know of. There might be a couple of more.

So there are people who understand it's an opportunity to live and work close to home.

WM: So what do you see for the future of Longleaf? I mean best-case scenario and worst-case scenario?

FS: In terms of what?

WM: Of its—um—continued growth, or maybe a better question would be the spread of the concept of New Urbanism.

FS: I think the idea of New Urbanism is spreading pretty quickly. It's grown significantly since we started Longleaf. I mean Longleaf is still one of the early projects, nation wide. It wasn't one of the first-generation [of New Urban developments] but it was the first-generation of [the] next-generation projects, and larger projects.

But since then—I think the list of projects was forty, nation-wide when we started, then it was two hundred. Now it's thirteen hundred or something like that. I mean it's growing exponentially.

I think that as development regulation pressures increase, in different jurisdictions around the country and as land costs and development costs increase and as energy costs increase—

Tape 1 ends; Tape 2 begins.

FS:—the natural tendency for all settlements is to densify over time. Whether it's a village or a small town or a big city, or a metropolis. Overtime they always densify.

Cities don't become less dense—I mean they became less dense in the twentieth century, but that was unnatural because of the cars and some other economic and political [events] that were pushing that. But the way that humans settle, left to their own devices, we have a tendency to densify.

In the current land-use regulation environment that tendency to densify is really being accelerated. As development costs, material cost and energy costs (which are all interrelated) go up then—as things densify you can't take the suburban model and densify it and have it still be pleasant or workable. (I don't think it works, even if it is low density, but if you densify it, it just takes a bad thing and makes it worse.)

So you can't just take a six hundred-acre subdivision, at three units to the acre and make it ten units to the acre and have it still work. You have to change the form. I think New Urbansim is the answer to changing that form. There also needs to be a change in the transportation patterns, which is directly tied to our energy consumption and New Urbanism is the best answer to that. I think over time, [to answer your question] it has to force itself into being what it is.

Right now it is sort of a political hot potato. It gets the label of New Urbamism, which is a good thing to some people and it's a stigma to others. People talk about—well—

Development is a very emotional topic in general. But on a rational basis urban forms are time tested over millennia, not just decades or centuries. It's the way that humans settled and it's the way that we live.

Our primary transportation mode is at the bottom of our legs and not parked in the garage.

WM: (laughs)

FS: We've tried this experiment with cars. We're learning and will learn that regardless of what energy costs; it's just not a workable model to pattern our settlement after. I think that New Urbanism will grow.

In terms of what will happen with Longleaf, I think the good thing about [New] Urbanism is that it gets better as it gets built-out. The residents are mad because it hasn't built out faster. They understand that it gets better the more there is. The more houses that are there the more neighbors there are to support the community. The more buyers there are to support the businesses. It all really gets better with age. So as Longleaf builds-out more business will come in and be able to thrive. The place will be built-out so that places that are empty spaces now, that make other things look funny, that make the houses look too close together, as those get filled in with buildings that are useful and create nice urban places it gets better.

I think the long range—you know—the build-out scenario is much better than it is today.

WM: So it sounds like you're optimistic about the prospects of Longleaf and the whole concept of New Urbanism.

FS: Yes.

WM: Okay. Well let me ask a question that is completely different. I've talked to your father about his perspective on the land and what it means. He told me about your grandfather's perspective on the land and what it means. How would you say that your vision of what land means differs from your father's [vision]? Do you see it differently than he does?

FS: Yes I do. I think—I guess I bring the social and cultural side back to it. To me the value of the land—it has intrinsic value as a natural system and a natural environment and all of that. But to me there is a great potential value in the interaction between the humans and [the land]. The benefits—Laura frames it in mutual benefits between humans and the environment. We benefit from each other. [See Laura Starkey interview with Bill Mansfield 8-9-06.]

Besides land management I'm not so strong on—I don't know if the environment has to benefit from us, beside just to mitigate our own screwing it up. But I do think we have a great benefit to gain from an experience and interaction on a daily and ordinary level.

National Parks, for example, are a phenomenal resource and a wonderful thing. Everybody should see the Grand Canyon at some point in their lives [as well as] Yosemite and the Great Smokey Mountains and all of those places. But those are sort of once in a lifetime experiences.

WM: The exception?

FS: Yeah. You also need to have a patch of woods where you run into frogs and the trees and know when a tree falls. It's just [a] part of your daily life and your daily fiber. That's what we had as kids, growing up on this piece of property.

From my own personal [perspective]—I was the youngest of the four kids and I'm the farthest apart from them in age. They're all pretty close together in age and I was a lot younger. I didn't have as many playmates in the area when I was growing up. So I had this fantastic sixteen thousand acres back yard, but I didn't have buddies to play with.

WM: Um-huh.

FS: When I'd go visit my friends who lived in subdivisions in New Port Richey I was always jealous. I was jealous of them because they had neighbors who lived within a couple of blocks. They could ride their bikes to [visit], and one of them might have a pool or there might be a community pool. There was this whole social network that I lacked, [by living] out here. So Longleaf and New Urbanism, for me, has been an opportunity for me to present the best of those two worlds to future generations.

To take the experience that I had of “playing in the mud,” on a daily basis, not just on vacation, and mix that with the benefit of having neighbors and friends, places to go and people to share it with, a community to be a part of.

WM: Um-huh

FS: So that’s my vision. I think Dad’s vision has been more about the intrinsic value of that nature. He has been very—his land management style and his cattle ranching style—his agricultural practices, I perceive as being very interactive with the environment. That’s kind of a higher level from what I’m talking about—you know—the “toes in the mud”—um—you know—he’s dealing with the best land management is also the best agricultural management. Throughout his career he’s worked towards agricultural sustainability and environmental sustainability at the same time. I guess I’m looking toward sustainable development patterns and environmental sustainability at the same time. Sort of a different angle on the same thing.

WM: When you all proposed doing Longleaf—I talked to your father and he said he hated the idea of development. I think it was the land down around Largo that got developed and he said that just “broke his heart.” So when you came to him to talk about developing the land, what kind of reaction did you get?

FS: That’s an interesting question. He was—for doing what we did with Longleaf. He was glad to see that it was [Traditional Neighborhood Design] and not the [standard subdivision]. If you go down to the Ulmerton Ranch, where he grew up, it’s all three/two split-plans. It really is one of the most “placeless places” I’ve ever seen.

I’ve actually gone down there to try and find the house [he grew-up in]. The house he grew-up [in] is still there on the corner, but the rest of it—it’s hard to even find your way around in that area. It’s really a placeless place. So I understand what he’s talking about.

He was glad to see us do what we were doing and he understood the ideas behind what we were doing. Still, I think it breaks his heart to see the houses in the pastures that he cleared by hand. So I think he has much more mixed feelings about it. I don’t want to speak for him. But I think, at the end of the day, it’s hard for him to see it happen. But he’s pretty pragmatic too and understands—I think if he had a choice he would have left it all alone.

(Recorder is paused)

WM: Let me turn this thing back on. But, anyhow, you said your father was more ambivalent about developing Longleaf than you were?

FS: Yeah, not to be semantic but [he was] not so much ambivalent [but had] mixed emotions.

WM: When I talked with him he mentioned the next phase, of developing Starkey Ranch. That was large enough to require the DRI planning on that. Where would you want to start in telling me about that?

FS: Well it's really a kind of extension of the same idea of Longleaf. And when we started Longleaf one of the major goals there was to figure out how to do New Urbanism. To learn about it and do a test run, on a number of levels, for the rest of the ranch. It was really kind of a dress rehearsal for the main corpus of the ranch development.

Beneficially, it was excellent that we did that. I'm really glad that we didn't decide to just sell it to be another conventional project and defer that learning curve. It was a steep learning curve that we had to [start] sooner or later. I'm glad we got it out of the way when we were still—ah—younger than we are now. (laughs)

But that being said, what's different about the Starkey Ranch is that the land is owned by Dad and three of us four kids and two cousins.

WM: So that's the Starkey Land Company?

FS: Correct. Starkey Land Company was formed by taking what were a number of disparate ownerships of different pieces of land and throwing them all into one land holding company, with prorated shares among everybody. One sister didn't want to be a part of it, so we bought her out as part of that process. Instead of a bunch of different pieces fruit, we have one smoothie.

WM: Okay.

FS: At the same time, as a family, as the Starkey Land Company, board of directors, which is those people I mentioned before, we went through an intentional strategic planning process to develop our own mission statement and goals and values and operating systems, reporting structures and accountability and all of that stuff.

Whereas Longleaf was Trey and me doing the management of the project, with financial support from Mom and Dad, this is now Trey and me managing a project with—well financial support from the whole family but we also have more people to answer to.

WM: Um-huh.

FS: But we also have a larger overall vision to answer to as well, a more clarified overall vision. That vision is really threefold. I don't know if Dad told you our mission statement the other day?

WM: Actually he didn't mention that.

FS: Alright, our consultants told us that we all needed a to recite this at the drop of a hat, but I'm the only one that does (so far). (Quoting the mission statement) "To maintain a

family legacy of foresight and partnership with the land, balancing environmental, social and financial stewardship.” It’s one of those great mission statements where almost every word in that sentence is very loaded and meaningful.

It kind of comes down to the three-legged stool of financial, social and environmental stewardship. It is interesting, in the past six months I’ve been to a number of seminars or presentations on development regulations and I’ve read articles [in] Urban Land Institute magazines, talking about that three-legged stool. Environmental sustainability, economic sustainability, social sustainability—people have different terms for those three things but basically that’s kind of the three things that everybody is taking about now.

So on the environmental side we’re planning a significant new chunk of conservation land. On the social side we’re planning a New Urbanist built form, which inherently fosters authentic community. On the financial side, we’re balancing all of that in a way that is economically beneficial to us, but also sustainable.

So that’s kind of where we started on the project. We started the planning process with that in mind. What we came up with [is mapped out on] this master plan up here, on the wall (referring to the map). There are basically five major neighborhood areas that are more complete neighborhoods.

Geographically they are bigger than the neighborhoods that are in Longleaf. That’s just because of the way the geography of the ranch laid out. We were able to get a full-sized pedestrian shed which is a half-mile diameter circle for each neighborhood.

When you look at the land with those goals in mind the plan kind of makes itself. Then we put together a consulting team to help us pull all of that together in the best way possible.

WM: That—I want to say Grandy—?

FS: Glatting-Jackson?

WM: Glatting-Jackson, okay.

FS: Glatting-Jackson is the planning team, planning firm and the environmental consultant. Some of the transportation planning is in there. Then Florida Design Consultants, which is the firm that has their office on Longleaf, did the civil engineering and transportation planning. And Ben Harrill is our legal counsel. Then there is geo-technical and all kinds of other [consultants]. There are a few other consultants that are part of that team as well.

WM: Okay. Your father mentioned the DRI, the larger plan about how this will impact the community. I’d be curious to know about your interaction with the county government to get this off the ground. It seems like they’d have the potential to help you or hinder you in this.

FS: You should probably ask me this question again in a year. We're about a third of the way through the DRI process. So far it's been the——You start off by negotiating in written documents back and forth with all of the various agencies that have any kind of jurisdiction anywhere near here.

WM: Could you go over those various agencies?

FS: Department of Transportation, Department of Community Affairs, Department of Environmental Protection, Army Corps of Engineers, Hillsborough County, Pinellas County, Pasco County—ah—Regional Planning Council—ah—School Board.

WM: Is SWIFTMUD in there somewhere?

FS: SWIFTMUD, yep. And any others you can think of are probably in there. (laughs)

WM: Okay.

FS: And the Regional Planning Council coordinates, kind of administrates the formal correspondence, but basically everybody makes comments on the application.

The application has to deal with all sorts of different—like twenty-eight different questions—that have to be answered. Everything from whether your impact is on roads, the natural environment, storm-water, affordable housing, schools, fire, water, sewer, parks—every level of infrastructure and environment, what are your impacts going to be?

You have to quantify that and study it and measure it. Then they provide their input.

WM: That's a big question to answer.

FS: Yeah (chuckles) It's twenty-eight very big questions to answer. (Referring to bookshelf) These three-inch [thick] green binders are applications and responses. Each level of response gets to be a thicker and thicker document. So we go through that with all of the regulatory agencies.

Once that's done we really get down to the brass tacks of negotiations with Pasco County. We haven't started that yet, so we really don't know how that it's going to go. Pasco, in the last several years, has become notorious—statewide—for being extremely difficult to deal with. For making unreasonable demands and [having unreasonable] expectations.

This isn't going into the newspaper anytime soon is it? (laughs)

WM: No. Like I said, when you read over the transcript, if you want this stricken from the record we can do this.

FS: If it is not going to be listened to for five years, I don't care. But if it is going to be in the newspaper next week I do care.

WM: No it's not going to be in the newspaper.

FS: (laughs) I'm mostly being facetious, but—

WM: Well who would you negotiate with, planning commission, the county commissioners?

FS: The County Administrator is really who it comes down to.

WM: Okay.

FS: Most of this has to do with the way—John Gallagher is the Pasco County Administrator and he is the longest tenured county administrator in the state. [He] does a good job, but he micro-manages to a certain degree. He also has been getting pretty horsy, requiring things of DRIs and developers that—he really doesn't have a leg to stand on to require.

Sometimes he's being unreasonable and sometimes he's just fighting back the developers who are being unreasonable. What we keep hearing from people is that it is a pretty arduous process. He ends up extracting a lot more than he ought to be able to, but nobody stands up and says, "No," because it's just not worth it.

WM: Is that kind of attitude—does that hinder development?

FS: That's a good question. Development hasn't been very slow in Pasco County, in spite of that attitude. That's a whole topic in itself. Probably it doesn't hinder it enough to stop it. His attitude is probably, "The county needs to get what it can out of this development, before it just rolls over us."

Thinking as a disinterested citizen, I think he probably does the right thing, although it may run down the line of being legally defensible in terms of what's regulatory—you know what the rules say he can't extract. But I think the rules could probably stand to be stronger. He's just kind of ringing that alarm.

So he and the county—but it mostly comes up to him—have a reputation for being pretty difficult to deal with. That being said, he has stated on numerous occasions that he really likes our project and that he really likes Connerton, which is another project in the middle of the county. I think the reason he likes our project is because he trusts the developers on a personal level.

WM: The Starkeys being the developers?

FS: Yeah—well we're the applicant at this point. And in the case of Connerton the developer is Terra Brook. But I think both of these projects have development aspects that he likes. He likes the New Urbanism that we're doing. He knows that we're committed to environmental preservation. He knows that we're committed to doing the right thing and that what we're doing will be a good thing in the county.

And I know he feels the same way about Connerton. To the extent that makes things easier for us, we don't know. (laughs) One would hope that if he really likes the project—not if he likes us, but if he likes the project then he should make it easier for the project to get through.

He may also take the attitude that, "Your project is going to make you a lot of money. Why shouldn't I get something that benefits the county out of it?" So we don't know what that's going to be like but everybody says it's pretty difficult, or at a minimum very expensive.

WM: You said he'd make you do something that [will benefit] the county. Could you [elaborate on that?]

FS: Oh, getting sites for county facilities, like fire stations or libraries or building major road improvements, off site. Usually the biggest expense that DRI's have to deal with is the transportation impacts, mitigation. Usually what it comes down to is the county wants to get roads built. DRI's are a nice big fat juicy check that gets some big roads built. Sometimes he might push that.

WM: So that the developer would end-up building the road rather than the county or the Department of Transportation?

FS: Right.

WM: Okay.

FS: The pretense of the DRI is that your project is so big that it has this regional impact. Before you come in here and have this regional impact and expect the rest of the region to absorb that impact, you need to mitigate that impact. Whether it's building roads to handle the traffic that you're going to be creating by all of these new people that are living and working on your project and driving to and from.

So building roads is the biggest one. If you're going to be negatively—if you're building a power plant, for example which is another type of DRI, that's going to be belching black smoke into the sky with great environmental impact, you need to mitigate somehow. Whatever the impact, the pretext is that you're somehow mitigating that as part of your project, rather than the county at large absorbing that.

WM: Okay. So you are halfway through the DRI process?

FS: (Nods head—affirmative)

WM: Your father talked about when you were proposing Starkey Ranch you had some of the neighboring landowners come in to discuss the project with them. Tell me about those meetings.

FS: We didn't really have meetings. We had a public presentation after we did a design charrette—there's that word again—for the Town Center neighborhood, which is from here to Gunn Highway, basically. We had a public presentation that we just opened up to the general public. And after we got our master plan done and were getting close to submitting the original DRI application, we had an open house and invited the general public. We never really had formalized meetings with the adjacent landowners; our main adjacent landowner is SWIFTMUD. They own the majority of our perimeter.

WM: What kind of turnout did you have for the open houses?

FS: Oh, about a hundred to [a] hundred-twenty people for each of them.

WM: That's a pretty good turnout. Who were they? Who came? Were they friends looking for free food or what?

FS: (laughs) Some were looking for free food and—you know some were people that we know in the community that were interested in seeing what we're doing. Both of those open houses were held in Longleaf, so there were Longleaf residents that came to see what was going on. A few people who live in surrounding areas [came].

The feedback that we got was generally very positive. We didn't get any negative feedback that said, "This is terrible. You shouldn't be doing it."

The feedback that we got was constructive criticism. Ironic things like—it's funny because two of the basic things of New Urbanism are having taller buildings, not skyscrapers but not having everything be one story—

Tape 2, side ends; side 2 begins.

FS: —And trying to downplay the predominance of the automobile. Not fill-up every square inch with parking lots and things. And some of the comments we got were, "It's great, just don't do multi-story buildings and make sure there is plenty of parking." (laughs)

WM: (laughs)

FS: Which is basically somebody who didn't really get it. But that was as bad as any comment that we got.

WM: Why the negative reaction against multi-story buildings?

FS: I think that was just a general suburban bias. I think [that was] somebody who associated multi-story buildings with something negative. But I really don't know.

WM: Okay. But I had to ask. Anyhow, the Starkey Ranch project is still in its formative stages?

FS: Um-huh.

WM: What kind of pressure do you have from real estate agents? You know, people looking to buy the land.

FS: We've had that pressure forever. We've had people code-calling us forever. Dad had it and when Trey started working here in '85, he started taking those calls. I get them sometime if people push the wrong extension number. We're not looking to sell but we've answered that question so many times we don't even think about it. (laughs)

But the answer is: Yes, there has always been a lot of pressure. We'll occasionally entertain some larger development companies that have come in with a pretty [good offer]. We've listened to some "songs and dances." We've been flown to different parts of the country to see projects by different developers. We've had a few dances, but we've not signed on with anybody.

WM: Okay. Well I've been throwing questions at you for about the past two hours. Is there anything you want to comment on that I haven't asked about?

FS: Not really. I'm kind of talked out. But you're welcome to ask some more.

WM: No, I'm about talked out myself. And there comes a point in interviews where you reach the point of diminishing returns, where you just get tired from talking and tired from listening, if that's possible.

FS: I understand.

WM: I always remind people that the information you've shared with me is going to be deposited in the Special Collections of the University of South Florida Library and be available for people doing research on land-use policy and development practices.

WM: In order for these researchers to have access to this information there is a release form that I have to ask you to sign.

FS: Um-huh.

WM: I always like to put that on the tape.

FS: That's fine. I'll be happy to sign.

WM: And thanks for taking the time to talk to me. I've really enjoyed this.

Also, I've been photographing everybody I've interviewed. Do you have any objections to that?

FS: Nope.

WM: Okay great. Well let me stop this thing.

end of interview