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[Transcriber's Note: This interview takes place in a restaurant, and there is a considerable amount of background noise. The interview also ends abruptly and in mid-sentence.]

**Robert Kerstein:** —interview with Joe Chillura.

**Joe Chillura:** Play it back so you can hear it.

RK: And as I was going through newspapers articles, your name appeared frequently, while you were on the City Council, mainly. So, what I would like to do is refer to these articles and ask you to explain—

JC: Sure.

RK: —what was going on.

**Waiter:** I got to take (inaudible) so I'll give you a few minutes.

JC: Well, I think—are you all ready to order?

RK: Yes.

JC: Go ahead.

Waiter: Do you want some menus?

RK: During the question of whether the Downtown Development Authority [DDA] should be created or not?

JC: Oh, okay.

RK: And at one point—

JC: Well, that's a good question, 'cause that was my brainchild.

PK: Right, I see that you sponsored and kind of pushed it, and initially it was voted down by the Council by four to three. Mayor [Dick] Greco<sup>1</sup> was the mayor, and I got the impression that he didn't really support you strongly. And you made—

JC: Well, eventually he did.

PK: But initially, at least.

JC: But that's because the Chamber [of Commerce] wanted to be the sponsor of it.

PK: Okay, can you explain that?

JC: Want me to be candid with you on this?

PK: Yeah, yeah. I want to emphasize I'm not going to quote you on anything; it's for information. So please be, yes. I should have said that.

JC: Well, back in those days the Chamber of Commerce, and to this day, they even—you know, their game plan is to try to capture the credit for most of the innovative visionary ideas for the community. And that doesn't necessarily mean anything that I'm for, but anything a lot of people are for. And unless you get their sanction or blessing, they're not going to jump in the bandwagon. They subsequently did get on the bandwagon.

But initially, I ran on a platform of downtown re-development when I ran for City Council, and I had a number of platform issues. One of them was downtown redevelopment; the other one was a tree and landscape law.

With the downtown redevelopment, I spent a great deal of time going to other cities, and the structure that impressed me the most was [Central] Atlanta Progress Incorporated. If you're familiar with that entity, it's manned by the private sector, and there are some pretty high-powered people on it. So, I came back and structured legislation somewhat similar to Atlanta Progress to create a Downtown Development Authority, because I felt that the strategy ought to be implemented by a policy board that dealt with nothing but downtown issues.

[to waiter] *Yo tengo pica dillo.*

Waiter: (replies in Spanish)

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<sup>1</sup> Greco was mayor of Tampa from 1967 to 1974, when he resigned. He was later reelected in 1995, and served until 2003.

JC: So, the ordinance was drafted. Several of the legislators—one of them was Guy Spicola, as I recall—had agreed to sponsor the bill. And then the Chamber got in the middle of it, and the bill was—I withdrew the bill, because I didn't want it to become a political football. They were trying to essentially sabotage it, because they had not been the initiator or the sponsor.

RK: They actually wanted to vote it down, or—?

JC: Oh, no, they just—you know, they have their ways to lobby against things that they're not ready to bite off on. So, it really wasn't passed. The ordinance wasn't really passed until Jan Platt<sup>2</sup> took the bull by the horn after I left the Council, and then it went to the legislature and got passed with the Chamber's blessings. But I had initiated the drive, and I can give you reasons why I thought the Authority was the proper vehicle. I don't know if you know, years later the Authority was abolished.

RK: Right.

JC: Because Bob Martinez,<sup>3</sup> who was mayor, struck a deal with the NCNB Bank people and their developers to build this edifice on the river and this plaza, which was totally contrary to all the things we wanted to do to preserve the waterfront. And the Authority was not consulted on that; he literally bypassed them, made a deal, the Council rubberstamped it, essentially. The NCNB plaza was approved and it's built, and it's been the source of a lot of criticism and controversy because it's totally insensitive to the fabric of downtown and also the waterfront as we envisioned it, and later as we emphasized it to be envisioned on the [Hillsborough County] Planning Commission, which I'm on currently.

But anyway, getting back to your question, the Downtown Development Authority was my brainchild, and I really think that it's still the proper vehicle to channel growth and development. I don't think that the vehicle they choose now, and that's the political process, makes any sense at all.

RK: Now, who did you want—who did you envision serving on it?

JC: It didn't matter. We had structured a composition of membership where some had to live in the downtown, be freeholders, or own property. All the members had to—there had to be a cross-section of people. As I recall, I wanted to be at least one architect on there, and I wanted somebody in the development/real estate business. I don't recall the exact composition, but the legislation addressed it adequately, and I was satisfied with it. But the reason it was abolished is—I believe it was Mayor [Robert] Martinez that abolished it, before [Sandy] Freedman became mayor.<sup>4</sup>

RK: He was kind of wary of the Authority, wasn't he?

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<sup>2</sup> Jan Platt served on the Tampa City Council and the Hillsborough County Commission.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Martinez was mayor of Tampa from 1979 to 1986, when he resigned to run for governor of Florida. Martinez was elected governor in 1987 and served until 1991.

<sup>4</sup> Sandy Freedman was mayor of Tampa from 1986 to 1995.

JC: Yeah, because he had to—see, we have a strong mayor form of government, and every mayor that we've had in the city, historically, has wanted to play “Let's Make a Deal,” and they can't make “Let's Make a Deal” when they have to deal with the planning commissions and zoning boards and authorities and what have you. That's my perception. Okay, it may not be accurate, but it's probably a very practical perception.

And so, essentially, the process that's in place now is this ad hoc committee that the mayor has created in my opinion is not workable, because it's too subject to ad hoc decision-making, instead of well-planned thoughtful decision-making. And I believe that something like an authority needs to be put back in place to channel the downtown area.

RK: Did you want them to have power of eminent domain and so on, the Authority itself?

JC: Oh, I don't have any problem with that. I think they must have power of eminent domain.

RK: Should the City Council have to approve it? Was that your view, or not?

JC: I think that the Council—yeah, it was my perception that the City Council would be an appeal board, if the developer and the Authority were at an impasse. You need to have that; otherwise you end up getting the whole damn thing thrown out in the courts. So, you have to have a relief valve, and that relief valve was the legislative body of the Council. And there was also—as I recall, the structure of the Authority had one Council member on it; it was Lee Duncan.<sup>5</sup>

So you want to—you have some specific questions, or—?

RK: Yeah. At one point—

JC: I can go on and give you subjective rationale, or I can just respond to your specific questions, whatever. You know, it'll be up to you.

RK: At one point—I'm trying to find the exact quote. You were having a mini-debate—I believe it was with Mayor Greco, and I wish I had it right in front of me. It was something to the effect that you said that downtown wasn't developing the way it should because of the power brokers downtown, who were kind of—

JC: Well, they were landowners—

RK: Calling the shots. Yeah.

JC: —that had conflicts of interest, who should not have been voting for properties where they stood to gain monetary gain. You know, I'm in the same posture on the Planning Commission. If I'm personally involved with the project, I have to file a disclosure, and

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<sup>5</sup> Lee Duncan was a longtime member of the Tampa City Council, serving nine terms from 1951 to 1991.

ethically I'm bound to abstain from discussion or voting. And I felt that the same thing should apply to any board, particularly a board where you're dealing with real estate and a tremendous appreciation in value.

RK: Was that with reference to DDA after it was already—

JC: That may have been—

RK: See, as I read it—

JC: Recently, when Dick was mayor—the last time Dick was mayor—you know, he resigned in 1974 to go work for DeBartolo [Edward DeBartolo Company]. And then Bill Poe<sup>6</sup> was elected, and that Authority changed hands many times during the time that was—from the time it was initially created to the time it was abolished. And there were a number of people on it that had some severe conflicts of interest.

RK: Like Mr. [Charles] Mendez<sup>7</sup>?

JC: Yeah, he's one of them. And although he goes to my church and I like him and everything else—I mean, you got to know where to draw the line, I think, when it comes to conflict.

RK: So you think this influenced the decision-making in some instances?

JC: Mm-hm.

RK: I spoke to one person who said that Mayor Martinez felt comfortable about having the DDA members who owned property because, therefore, they would be especially interested.

JC: I didn't have any problem with that. I did have a problem with them voting on properties, though, when they stood to gain monetarily. And Mendez demonstrated that more than one occasion, and he got criticized severely by the media, and particularly the editorial board. And he's probably one of the main reasons why the Authority was abolished, because of all the publicity and controversy surrounding; at least that's my opinion.

But the real reason is, though, the chief executive wanted a straight shot to making a development proposal directly to City Council. The Authority was the catalyst in which those recommendations had to be reviewed, analyzed and studied. And I think, Bob—and I'm not criticizing the Governor now, but he had his own agenda. And I supported him for governor; I'm just saying I didn't agree with him at all on that process. I just don't

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<sup>6</sup> William Poe was mayor of Tampa from 1974 to 1979, and the founder of Poe & Associates Insurance Co.

<sup>7</sup> RK is referring to an incident from when the Tampa Convention Center was being developed. The property had to be acquired from several private owners, of whom Mendez was one. Mendez also happened to be on the DDA at the time. This incident is discussed further in Kerstein's book *Politics and Growth in Twentieth-Century Tampa*, pp 201-204.

believe the Mayor's office is the place where you play "Let's Make a Deal" with the development community.

And as we get further into the interview, I'll tell you what my perception is about how to deal with the master plan and downtown development as opposed to the way we're doing it now, and the way the Authority may have been engaged in it.

RK: Okay, good. Just going back a little bit, at one point you criticized Mayor Greco and the whole process dealing with the Quad Block<sup>8</sup>, saying it was being kept a secret to too great a degree. There wasn't a—?

JC: I don't remember that, but it sounds like something I'd do.

RK: Was that your perception that the deal-making on the Quad Block was kept out of the public eye?

JC: Well, the Quad Block was an assembly of—when Charlie Miller was here, you know, Charlie Miller was hired—

RK: I wanted to ask you, is he still in town?

JC: No, I don't think so. When [planning consultant] Charlie Miller was hired to develop a master strategy plan for downtown, it was at my suggestion to the Mayor. Dick and I had a good relationship; you know, our families—Dick's father was my father's best man, so I've known him since I was a kid. So, I had a good strong tie with him, but we did disagree on certain ideological things or *ideological* things—or, as my dad used to say, "Idiot-logical things."

So, we disagreed on a number of issues, but I think we were both extremely interested in promoting the downtown development move that really started when Dick was mayor. Regardless of who's taking credit for it now, Greco was one of the unsung heroes, because it was during his second term as mayor that the whole thrust of downtown development and re-development started. The impetus was during his second term as mayor, so you have to give him a lot of credit for that.

The Quad Block was assembled at the suggestion of Charlie Miller, who was hired—I had suggested to Dick that we needed to have a master plan of development. To this day, we don't have one. Miller was hired. The Planning Commission—I was on City Council back in those days. The Planning Commission was to create an Urban Design Division, which never really came to fruition.

We now have one; a fellow named Booth has been hired by [Planning Committee Director] Bob Hunter, at Ben Withers's and my strong suggestion. Ben is a colleague of mine on the Planning Commission; we've been extremely vociferous in pushing Bob to

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<sup>8</sup> The Quad Block, located in the heart of Tampa's old downtown, south of Kennedy Boulevard, was the name of the area that would eventually become the pedestrian mall on Franklin Street.

hire someone to start an urban design division within the structure of the Planning Commission so we could be the—serve as a catalyst for all the municipalities and the unincorporated area for urban design issues. Okay, so it's only until now. Subtract 1974 from 1988, how many years is that?

RK: Fourteen.

JC: Fourteen years later that we really have an Urban Design Division that looks like it's going to get off the ground. But anyway, the Urban Design Division of the Planning Commission was to be the support arm of Miller's strategy to develop a downtown plan. So Miller lasted a few years, he got the establishment rattled, and eventually he left. I'm not sure Charlie was the right guy for the job; I think he was a well intentioned guy, and I think to some degree he did a lot of good. At least he presented a forum for the need for a downtown master plan.

RK: You know what was going on concerning the Quad Block when they wanted to get Hyatt [Regency Hotel]? I was told that they had a commitment from [TECO executive, Byrne] Litschgi, or whatever his name is, in seventy-three [1973] or so, but then the deal didn't go off, I guess partly because the recession. Then at one point, according to the newspaper articles, Poe was considering and Litschgi was considering having the Hyatt by Curtis Hixon [Hall]. And then all of a sudden this—I say all of a sudden, just based upon newspaper articles—it went back to the Quad Block, which is where Mr. [GTE President, George] Gage and those people wanted it to begin with. Do you have any idea what was going on there?

JC: No, except that it wasn't going on in the public's eye. But the idea of assembling, you know, four blocks and closing the streets off really wasn't a bad idea, and it was at best a difficult task to pull off because of the financing. Now, supposedly if it weren't for Gage and Bill Poe and people like that that were directly involved with assembling that Quad Block, it probably would have never become a reality. But really, the guy that initiated it, as I recall, was Miller.

RK: As a planner?

JC: Yeah, as a planner. And the idea was to minimize the amount of eminent domain proceedings, ownership problems that you have with disassembling property.

Waiter: *Señor*, are you done with your salad?

RK Yes.

JC: So, I don't know what was going on, to answer your question about the first location. It was my perception that that was always the key location, the one that made the most sense, because it was sort of right off the center of action, if you will. You know, the Quad Block is really not the center of downtown, but it's probably somewhat askew from the real center of activity, which I still believe is probably—maybe the first block north of



Kennedy [Boulevard], on the mall; that's probably the pivot.

But then, years later, you know, Harbor Island [development] became a reality, and the Crosstown Expressway was built. You know, I was on the Downtown Development Commission before I ran for City Council, and we took some pretty strong stands against the expressway slicing downtown in half. But it was too late; the thing was all kind of pre-determined. To this day, I think that the Crosstown Expressway has been a hindrance to the logical development of downtown south and north of the expressway.

RK: What was the Downtown Development Commission?

JC: It was the pioneering board before the Downtown Development Authority.

RK: I see. As far as the Curtis—

JC: We set up the framework for the Authority.

RK: Okay.

JC: Lee Moffitt<sup>9</sup> was on it; Mike Shay, who was my attorney at the time, was on it. I was on it. We were kind of a controversial group, because we were taking some pretty strong stands on things we thought would hinder the logical evolution of the downtown movement.

RK: Mayor Greco supported a performing arts center of some type, and came out publicly for it. Why didn't it—

JC: Right where it is now.

RK: Why didn't it get going at that time?

JC: Because he left office.

RK: Oh, it might have come sooner if—

JC: They did a complete 360 degree [turn] when Poe became mayor. Then when Bob Martinez got elected mayor, it came right back to where Dick had originally envisioned it to be.

Originally, the performing arts hall was going to be a government center. It was going to be a mixed-use facility. I had convinced Dick that we needed to get students from the University of Florida involved to do seven mock projects. We funded them five thousand dollars, and we got the—one of my old professors was Harry Merritt. We got Harry Merritt at the University of Florida to head up a graduate design team. They came down

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<sup>9</sup> H. Lee Moffitt was Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives in the 1970s and 1980s. The H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute at USF is named for him.

here and built models and came up with concepts of this performing arts/government center, mainly because—and I don't mind telling you this; I didn't have a great deal of faith—and this has got to be off the record—

RK: It is.

JC: I didn't have a great deal of faith in the architects that had been selected and I wanted to see some ideas come forward, so I convinced the Mayor to get the graduate school involved. And they generated a number of really interesting solutions, right where it is now. And after—of course, Dick lost interest in being mayor and left, and then the thing just kept bouncing from one mayor to the next, and it finally ended up where it is.

RK: Is anything—

JC: Through the bond issue, as you recall. You remember there was a bond issue? It was voted on and defeated, and then the administration—

RK: The sales tax?

JC: No, this was a special bond issue to build the performing arts hall. It failed at the polls, and then the bond issue was passed by the City Council and the Mayor.

RK: One point is that vote on [an] extra penny sales tax for a year that failed by a lot for the performing arts center. There is also a bond issue that failed? I see.

JC: Yup.

RK: Were Greco and Poe and Martinez equally pro-growth or pro-development, as you perceive them?

JC: All mayors have been. Don't let any of them fool you. And there's nothing wrong with that, as long as you're sensitive to the dynamics of growth.

RK: Were any of them—you, according to the newspaper, campaigned partly on a platform of managed growth. Were any of them more sympathetic to that than others?

JC: Not in my opinion, no.

RK: What about the present mayor?

JC: I served with her. I think that her heart is in that direction, but I don't think that her training and her mindset can comprehend what all of that means. And I think the people she surrounded herself with are a bunch of "yes-people" that don't have the courage to tell her that maybe what she wants to do is wrong and to think about an alternative course.

RK: Wade Stephens might have been different on that, you know?

JC: Yeah. Wade was probably a strong—he's a strong personality, and that's probably where they ran into a lot of it, is that he was trying to channel that in a direction that was contrary to hers. Both of them really didn't have any technical training to understand what all that meant, so that was another factor that may have led to that schism in their personalities.<sup>10</sup>

RK: The planning department is playing a more major role now, isn't it?

JC: Planning—

RK: Mr. [Planning Director, Roger] Wehling's group planning.

JC: Yeah, they're playing a more active role. I'm not really impressed, though, that they have the credentials and the talent to deal with the issues that we're talking about. I think—my vision was, or idea or concept was, to create this urban design division, and we would serve as the catalyst. We would be the planning arm for those activities to occur.

Now, the Mayor is extremely resistant to that because, as I said, we have a strong mayor form of government, and sometimes that becomes a trip in egomania instead of what's best and good for the community. See, the problem with our structure is that we've allowed—the strong mayor form of government has allowed too many mayors to treat the city like it's their own private business, and it really isn't. It's the public's business, and it's the public's downtown, and it's the public's community.

So, you have to have an entity in place that's going to provide that continuity. You can't continue—we can't continue to rely on one mayor that happens to be understanding of managed growth and development; and then four years later or eight years later we have another mayor that's more into social reform; and then another eight years later we have a mayor that's a capital improvements fanatic. There's no continuity, in my opinion that allows the managed growth process to occur.

RK: And that's why you need a—that's why you wanted the Authority, a strong Authority.

JC: I wanted a strong Authority in place because, one, it was non-political, or as non-political—certainly a lot more non-political than the politicians making the decisions, although they should be the appeal board, and I still believe that. And I'm speaking, I think, with a degree of authority, because I've been on both sides of the fence, so it's not like I'm on the outside criticizing the internal governmental structure. Because I may not have the years behind me that some of the others have, but in four years, believe me, I've learned the system well. I don't need to be there for a hundred years to learn how the

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<sup>10</sup> Wade Stephens was a former *Tampa Tribune* editorial writer whom Freedman appointed director of strategic planning. He resigned four months after his appointment. Both Stephens and Freedman said in interviews that his "style" was a problem, without offering specifics or more explanation.

system works.

RK: Were there any splits on the Council when you were there, as far as more managed growth as supposed to just pro-development?

JC: Yeah, there were people who were getting lobbied. It took us almost eight months to pass the tree ordinance, for example; they got lobbied heavily by the development and homebuilders industry.

RK: And at that point—when you say development industry, this is before the Texas people came in? Who were the major developers?

JC: Well, it was—there were a lot of forerunners to the Texas crowd. And they were already down here sowing their oats, so to speak, before what you see now, the obvious high-profile development. But they were already down here buying land quietly, even in those days.

RK: Who were some of the major ones?

JC: Well, some of the major ones was—well, the First National Bank built a building. The Quad Block group was another one; that was probably the largest at the time. Jason Doran<sup>11</sup> was beginning to look at Tampa. I think Lincoln Properties<sup>12</sup> was in a very embryonic stage; they were beginning to look. I don't recall—I think the most visible ones, though, were probably the banks. The banks actually were not developers per se, but they went out and hired the architects and developer as a team, whereas now the developer comes in and puts up their assembly of buildings and then looks for a prime tenant.

RK: So the banks actually initiated some projects? I didn't know that.

JC: Some of the projects, I think, were initiated by the banks. You know the Marine Bank downtown, I guess, was—you know, it was named the Marine Bank, but it was a spec office building. It was developed by (inaudible); Jimmy Robbins was the architect. As I recall, that's one of the early new buildings downtown that I didn't think was a particularly good building.

But some of the things that occurred in those days were—I guess the most visible was the Quad Block. That was the one that sort of was where it began to take off.

RK: The local banking community was described to me, as it was in the early seventies [1970s] and mid seventies [1970s], as quite conservative. Is that your perception?

JC: Yeah, they always have been. And I think that's natural, and I don't think that's any surprise or ever should be. The banking institutions have always taken a conservative

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<sup>11</sup> The Doran Jason Group, a South Florida-based real estate firm founded in 1972 by Doran A. Jason.

<sup>12</sup> The Lincoln Property Group, a Texas-based development firm.

posture. The Quad Block was a conservative development; there's nothing really avant-garde or revolutionary about it.

RK: I mean, conservative even as far as reluctance to support downtown development.

JC: Yeah, I think so. I think there was a conservative vein in the local yokels, so to speak; that's why the outside entrepreneur has found this to be such fertile soil, because of the conservative nature of the people that are here.

RK: And who would have been the major powers who were here already that were relatively conservative?

JC: Chester Ferguson; Henry Toland, who was with the Exchange Bank; Fred Church with First—Freedom Federal [Savings and Loan Association], in those days. Although Fred—Fred was a guy that went to the Mayor and gave him a hundred thousand dollars, and told Mayor Greco that he could use that money as long as it was for a downtown project. So Dick came to me and wanted to know what we ought to do, and I says, "We ought to build a mall with that." But he says, "Well, how far could we go with a hundred thousand?" I says, "Well, there's a Legacy of Parks grant program at the national level that's available." And we had talked to Gary Smith—I don't know if you know Gary or not, but Gary was—

RK: He was head of grants?

JC: Assistant director of the MPA, the Metropolitan Planning—I mean, Model Cities Program back in those days. But Gary was well tuned in on the grants that were available at the federal level. So I went to Gary, and I said, "How can we match this hundred thousand?" We found a Legacy of Parks grant, which Gary put together. Gary, incidentally, later became chief of staff under Governor [Robert] Graham and spearheaded his campaign, and also Jimmy Carter's campaign into his first try at presidency in one of the Southern states, I don't recall [which one].

But anyway, Gary got the grant for us and we were able to multiply the hundred to two hundred thousand, and that's how the [Franklin Street] mall got off the ground. But Fred Church made that money available. So, even though he took a very conservative posture, the money was used, I thought, for a good cause, even though the mall really didn't get built to the degree of quality that it should have been. And I use the example of the mall, but—you know the Quad Block, we were trying to achieve that level of quality in the mall. But two hundred thousand dollars, they spent more than that in Minneapolis in the Nicollet Mall—have you ever heard of the Nicollet Mall in Minneapolis?

RK: No.

JC: Well, we spent two hundred thousand for like six blocks, they spent over two hundred [thousand] just to do one block, just to show you how far we had to spread the dollars. But the mall served as sort of a catalyst to get this movement going, and the performing

arts hall, the Quad Block, a number of the projects. As I said, Dick was the unsung hero, because all of those occurred during that administration. I didn't get any credit, except in the newspaper. I really wasn't looking for any; I just wanted to fulfill my campaign promise, which I did, ultimately. But there were a lot of things that happened back then, back in the early seventies [1970s].

RK: You mentioned the Chamber before, I suppose, how they wanted credit for—

JC: Well, they wanted credit, yeah. They wanted credit to sponsor the Downtown Development Authority. And it really didn't matter to me who the hell got credit; it's just that they were making it a political football. They were lobbying the legislators, and it got to be a real hassle, it really did.

RK: They were lobbying for it or against it?

JC: Against it, because there were some things in it they didn't want.

RK: Oh, there were particular things they disagreed with.

JC: But the bottom line is they wanted to sponsor it.

RK: Mr. Bacon and Mr.—I forget the other person that came up with the plan for the mall, right, downtown and the Franklin Street Mall?

JC: Ed[mund] Bacon?

RK: Yeah.

JC: No. No, that was my idea.

RK: Oh, I'm sorry. But as far as the consultants, didn't they actually draw up a plan? I don't mean—

JC: That was years later. You got to remember, the mall was built during my term on the Council.

RK: Okay. And you initiated that idea?

JC: Right. Ed Bacon didn't come down here for a decade later.

RK: I see.

JC: Ed Bacon is from Philadelphia; he's a nationally known planner, and he's been down here on occasion.

RK: Okay. I'm sorry.

JC: And he was hired by a group of local entrepreneurs to develop a new vision for downtown.

RK: I see. Okay, so when you—

JC: We've had a lot of people. [Architect] John Portman's been down here. There's a lot of people that have been down here, but there hasn't been a vehicle or an entity in place to allow those things to happen. It's been a political football, is what it's been. You know, the bottom line is that the politicians have gotten their hands in it to the point where nothing can happen.

RK: Just because too many people are involved?

JC: Too many political decisions being made, that's my opinion. There's probably ten people in this community as knowledgeable as I am that would be willing to debate that, and I'd love to sit on the forum and debate it with them, because I can demonstrate very clearly that it's been a political football from the beginning.

RK: Can you give just an example or two?

JC: Yeah. The fact that the Downtown Development Authority was abolished is living proof that it's a political football. That the chief executive—and I'm not picking on the current mayor. The chief executives historically have wanted a laissez-faire state to make decisions, which is a normal reaction by any one that's a neo-political type, okay?

RK: When you say "laissez-faire state," what do you mean?

JC: They don't want to have to deal with guidelines and plans and design standards and all those good things.

RK: I see.

JC: You know, you can't design a building without complying with a code. How in the hell can you design a downtown without a plan?

RK: Is Mayor Freedman pro-plan? Maybe I just had the wrong impression.

JC: I don't think so. I think mentally she is.

RK: Yeah, but not—no.

JC: I don't think that the—I think the desire is there.

RK: Yes, I see.

JC: The ability to grasp the concepts and the planning precepts that you have to have a thorough understanding of are not there. Now, you can surround yourself with those people, but I don't see that happening. And, you know, I supported her in the last election. I'm being academically—I'm critiquing her in a constructive way.

RK: I understand, I understand.

JC: And that's probably true of all our mayors, from back to the days of Curtis Hixon.<sup>13</sup> See, every mayor wants to build an empire for himself or herself. They want to put up buildings and they want plaques up there and they want to see visible progress. And what you really need to have is a living plan, a plan that has some built in flexibility and ability to evolve. You cannot continue to make the decisions on an ad hoc basis. And that's what we've done over the last fifteen to twenty years. There have been all kinds of good attempts made, but no continuity.

Look at the river, for example. The Hillsborough River is one of our primary resources. One of the reasons Tampa is here is because of—many reasons, but geography: the bay, the river. The river serves as a corridor of commerce, you know, to deliver goods to the warehousing facilities along the way. And yet, we've totally neglected that. If you got to San Antonio [Texas], the [San Antonio] River has become a tremendous resource for tourism. And I've got photos of it; I just came from San Antonio.

RK: I heard it's beautiful.

JC: As a matter of fact, we have an annual awards program that I'm on this year. I started that on the Planning Commission, and last year's chairman assigned it to a committee. This year I'm back on it. We're going to try to get Henry Cisneros here, the Mayor of San Antonio.<sup>14</sup>

RK: Oh, really? He's stepping down, isn't he?

JC: Yeah, he's stepping down; apparently he's been playing around over there. But he's a tremendous speaker, full of vitality, and he's also an urban planner. So, we want him to come down here to share some of the strategies that he used in San Antonio.

RK: That'll be interesting. I'd like to see that.

JC: So you need to keep up with when—we're not sure yet. We're meeting Thursday to get our committee going on the awards program.

RK: I'd like to see that.

JC: But Henry will be our speaker, and he'll be a good one to listen to.

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<sup>13</sup> Curtis Hixon (1891-1956) was mayor of Tampa from 1943 to 1956. He was also on the Tampa City Council and the Hillsborough County Commission.

<sup>14</sup> Cisneros was mayor of San Antonio from 1981 to 1989. He was also the U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development from 1993 to 1997.



RK: Were you—I think it's before your time—

JC: You know Henry Cisneros; you've heard of him? He was one of [Walter] Mondale's choices before he picked Geraldine Ferraro to run for him as vice-president [in 1984]. He's really a sharp cookie, very astute, very bright.

RK Yeah, I'd really like to see him. Were you involved or knowledgeable concerning the urban renewal decisions? You spoke about ad hoc decision-making.

JC: We were the urban renewal board.

RK: "We" being?

JC: City Council was.

RK: Okay. Now, does that include, for example, the—

Waiter: I spoke to you in Spanish because you sound like you know Spanish.

JC: You're not hungry now?

Waiter: What'd he say? (inaudible)

JC: You don't want some dessert or coffee?

RK: Coffee, yes.

Waiter: *Cubano? Americano?*

**Unidentified man:** *Cubano.*

Waiter: *Solo, o con leche?*

Unidentified man: *Solo.*

RK: Same.

JC: I'm going to have the brewed decaf.

Waiter: How about some dessert, gentlemen? Some Spanish cream? You're in good shape. I hope when I get to be your age I look half as good as you, I'll be okay.

Unidentified man: Thank you.

JC: Well, how do you know he's old? He's only twenty-nine.

Waiter: Well, then, he's had a bad life. I know your face from somewhere; you look very familiar—

*pause in recording*

JC: Are you interviewing Terrell [Sessums]<sup>15</sup>?

RK: Yeah.

JC: Yeah, he's another one; you know. Terrell is one of the really sharp minds of this city.

RK: Yeah, I know.

JC: I have a lot of admiration for him.

RK: He's president of the Board of Trustees at the University of Tampa. I know how bright he is.

JC: Yeah, he was very instrumental when he was on the Board of Regents, helping us get our School of Architecture started. So when you tell him, tell him that I was very complimentary of him.

RK: (laughs) I will.

JC: Terrell's one of my heroes.

RK: Yeah, I think he's—

Unidentified man: He's a good guy.

JC: Yeah, he really is.

RK: Concerning urban renewal, we had three different urban renewal—[to waiter] thank you, thanks a lot—sections: the downtown, as you know; Ybor; and Maryland Plaza, by Nuccio Parkway. And I just can't figure out—I have fifty pages of notes from newspaper articles. Who were the basic people involved in decision-making, in terms of designation of the sites and terms—?

JC: Okay, let me tell you a little bit about urban renewal. There was an urban renewal board that was in place that was abolished, and I'm trying to remember who some of the board members were.

RK: Mr. [A.R.] Ragsdale was it.

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<sup>15</sup> T. Terrell Sessums was a member of the Florida House of Representatives from 1963 to 1974, and was Speaker of the House during his last term.

JC: Right, he was one of them. They were abolished, and the City Council then became the urban renewal board, but by that time all of the so-called urban renewal programs, which were dubbed “urban removal,” particularly in Ybor City; a lot of the historic structures were literally demolished. So urban renewal literally was urban removal in Tampa. And it was really a miserable failure here. In other communities, it was a high success.

RK: How do you account—

JC: But all of the real character and fabric of Ybor City and parts of West Tampa was destroyed as a result of the urban renewal movement.

Unidentified man: It destroyed the civilization, moved people out.

JC: The whole damn Latin culture in Ybor City was annihilated because of urban renewal.

RK: And what brought this about? I mean, everyone agrees it was a fiasco.

JC: No sensitivity to restoration and renovation and existing projects and identifying landmarks. It wasn't until a few years ago that we had a landmark ordinance on the books. They were leveling historic buildings in this community by the fifties [1950s].

Unidentified man: Nero made the same mistake.<sup>16</sup>

JC: Nero made the same mistake in Rome.

Unidentified man: He just listened to his architects and said, “Look at this beautiful plan!”

JC: [talking about lunch] I put my damn olive oil on my—

Unidentified man: In order to build a beautiful plan you've got to destroy Rome that is to build the Rome of the plans.

JC: Yeah, that's true.

RK: But who are the advisors here? That's what I can't figure out, who were the decision makers?

Unidentified man: Got me. I wasn't here.

JC: The urban renewal board.

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<sup>16</sup> Nero, emperor of Rome from 54 to 68 CE. During his reign there were numerous construction projects, many to rebuild the damage done by the Great Fire of Rome in 64 CE.

RK: Yeah, more than the mayors, right?

JC: Well, they identified, and of course that urban renewal movement started during the Nuccio administration.

RK: Yeah.

JC: Nick was my cousin, incidentally. And there were a lot of areas that were targeted, because they wanted to—see, the idea was they were going to go in and wipe out all these older homes and then create land at a fair—at a reasonable market value and encourage developers to come in and rebuild and redevelop those areas. And that backfired, because when they destroyed all those structures, they all of a sudden killed the marketability of that land. And even today, Ybor City has a lot of vacant land that—

(talking about lunch) You know, could I have another one of these? I made the mistake of putting my—this had olive oil on it.

RK: Didn't, for example, the Latins in Ybor have spokespeople that—

JC: But it happened so fast that they didn't have time to react to it.

RK: And where did most of the people go, blacks and Latins?

JC: They dispersed all over the community.

RK: Wherever they could find a place?

[Transcriber's note: During this portion of the interview, RK, JC, the unidentified man, and the waiter are having multiple conversations.]

Unidentified man: There was a lot of blacks. And besides that—one of them was World War II (inaudible) the black community disseminated into (inaudible) instead of being contained in a ghetto. (inaudible) World War II—the dissemination (inaudible).

RK: Stared to move out of the—Ybor?

JC: (to waiter) Oh, good, thank you. I had olive oil on my darn spoon, and it got in the coffee.

Unidentified man: (inaudible) family.

Waiter: I think I mentioned a couple of times—

JC: Where did you grow up at?

Waiter: I'm from Ybor City, but I grew up on Park, Twenty-Eighth [Avenue] and Fifteenth [Street].

JC: Twenty-Eighth?

Waiter: (inaudible) near Gomez Garage, Dixie and (inaudible).

JC: Dixie, yeah.

Waiter: That was my old neighborhood.

Unidentified man: It's just like the blocks in New York.

JC: I forgot the people that used to own Dixie.

Unidentified man: You want to go back in history.

Waiter: (inaudible) you know, at the (inaudible). You know, we're not that far apart in age are we?

JC: No, I'm forty-eight.

Unidentified man: The word "ghetto" itself comes from a little island off of Venice.

Waiter: Are you? What did I tell you?

JC: How old are you?

RK: I didn't know that.

Unidentified man: Yes. That island—

Waiter: She works for me.

JC: Yeah.

Waiter: See how I told you, got to (inaudible)? I remember you.

Unidentified man: The people, the Jews—you know, they—in Italy back there in Venice —

Waiter: I haven't seen nobody to tell you, but I know you come here at least.

JC: Yeah.

Unidentified man: In Columbus's time in the fourteenth and fifteenth century—

Waiter: You get older, the place is still there. It's good to see you, really. Take care.  
(inaudible).

Unidentified man: —they had a policy of—well, they didn't like Jews, the Christians, and so if you (inaudible), they'd put you on this island called a *ghetto*.<sup>17</sup>

RK: So some of the Latin middle class had already moved out, when Ybor's—?

Unidentified man: That's a concept of mine. I think Ybor City was sort of an economic ghetto—you know, just like Little Italy up in New York [City].

JC: There were a lot of Italians and Spaniards and Cubans. It supported the cigar industry.

Unidentified man: They came here because they had a commonality of the language.

JC: And they merged there.

Unidentified man: But as you succeed—suppose you are a person who has children. Your children want to build homes. If they have the money, they go to (inaudible); they have a little bit more help.

RK: Sure.

Unidentified man: And that's not unique to Ybor City.

RK: Right, right.

Unidentified man: That's unique to every city in the United States of America, its downtown core. The people that are there disseminated into the surrounding suburbia—

RK: Sure, sure.

Unidentified man: —as they improved their economic situation.

RK: So, Ybor was already changed.

Unidentified man: (inaudible)

RK: Ybor had already changed quite a bit by the time urban renewal came from what it had been.

Unidentified man: It was a community held together because of transportation, economic,

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<sup>17</sup> This is referring to the Venetian Ghetto, the area to which Venetian Jews were restricted from 1515 to 1797. The word “ghetto” means “foundry,” and comes from the two sections, the Ghetto Vecchio and the Ghetto Nuovo, which were originally foundries.

language—

JC: In much the same way that West Tampa is held together now by the Hispanic influence: you know, they all made a guild; they have their own community there. And the same thing happened with the cigar factories in the West Tampa area. Ybor City was no different.

What was wrong with urban renewal, though, was that they went in there and undermined the whole damn culture and destroyed the very thing that held the community together, and that was the sense of community. And that sense of community that was prevalent there—'cause I remember my dad used to tell me stories about—and I'm sure his dad too, because they were in business in Ybor City. Like, Saturday night, all of the different cultures would merge on East Broadway [Avenue] there and bring their goods and socialize and meet in the different clubs. It was a real sense of community that was lost when urban renewal destroyed that base there, that housing stock that was prevalent.

Unidentified man: It's a delicate sense, just like in New Orleans.

RK: Sure.

Unidentified man: New Orleans's French Quarter was—because that didn't happen there. You know, they kept that up—when they went in with urban renewal, they just—

RK: Knocked it down.

Unidentified man: And took out the people. You cannot have a civilization without civilians.

RK: But that just seems so ironic, because Mayor Nuccio got a lot of electoral support in Ybor City and West Tampa, right?

JC: Mm-hm.

RK: But he initiated, I think, to some degree, the urban renewal.

JC: Yeah, he did. But it all—it was actually initiated—the initiative came from the federal level, and then the cities were targeted, just like Model Cities were targeted. And one of the fellows that you need to interview, if you want a little different perspective on historical perspective, is Tony Pizzo.

RK: Yeah, I know he's very knowledgeable.

JC: Historian. You need to talk to him.

RK: I know.

JC: Particularly about urban renewal; he's particularly knowledgeable about the Latin influence in Tampa and what happened in the early days of Ybor City.

RK: Yeah, I was reading an article about urban renewal and Ybor, and he was involved initially, as far as doing some survey of the housing stock and so forth.

JC: Yeah, well, he's more of a historian, so you're going to get a historian's perspective and you're going to get a planner's, architect's perspective, and then you're going to get the people that actually lived there can give you their different flavor for what they perceived to happen. But the bottom line is that they destroyed the lifeline, the support system for Ybor City, and that's housing, the housing stock that was there. It's simply too damn inconvenient for people to try to do that again, you know, from a remote location.

Unidentified man: But, Joe, it isn't just the planners that did that; it's also the automobile.

JC: Yeah, the automobile was a great influence.

Unidentified man: The automobile made people mobile, and because of that they want to go to—when they build new homes, they want to go to new homes.

RK: So, the vast, vast majority of people living in Ybor worked there in the cigar factories, the vast majority.

Unidentified man: Yes, but that was ninety years ago.

RK: But what about by 1950?

Unidentified man: No, absolutely not.

RK: Where did many of them work?

Unidentified man: They did different things. My father was there, and he worked—had his store. And the stores in the 1950s was a vibrant place where they had customers. When they start coming in and taking off the parking—

JC: Spoto's Men's Shop was pretty well known.

Unidentified man: You know, they took off the parking and planted trees on the main drag. That's really bad, see, because people are in their automobiles and they want to drive to the store, park a car, and go in and shop.

JC: See, this is—

Unidentified man: It's not a matter of planting trees.

RK: Right.



Unidentified man: Planting trees is death to the business. Do you want customers? They want a place to park their automobiles.

RK: Yeah, sure.

JC: They want to park in front of the stores, too. And what urban renewal did is they created the best parking lots, people parked way remote and then walked to their shops, and that just didn't work.

RK: Oh, really?

Unidentified man: Didn't work.

JC: Because the lifestyle back then was that you got off the car in front of the shop you wanted to go to and bought your groceries or your goods, and got back in the car and took off.

RK: So there are some other things going on I don't know exactly, like Mr. [William] MacInnes, the TECO [Tampa Electric Company] gentleman.

JC: Yeah. Mr. Mac, we called him.

RK: Yeah, I guess he was a real big mover in the community.<sup>18</sup> He headed some corporation that bought up a bunch of land, urban renewal land, and kind of sat on it for a while, and I don't know what happened. I don't know if he sold it back to the city. I'm not quite sure.

JC: Well, Tampa Electric has just finished one of their regional facilities right there in Ybor City.

RK: Right, by the—

JC: Ninety percent complete, I guess. But I think that—who was it? Paul Rudolph was asked to summarize the twentieth century; Paul Rudolph was a famous architect. And I think his response was it was the century of movement. You know, he said that movement was what the twentieth century was all about, and that ability to move—

*end of interview*

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<sup>18</sup> MacInnes had a number of very influential positions and memberships aside from TECO, leading the Chamber of Commerce and the Committee of 100, and serving on the Exchange National Bank's board.