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Roger Wehling oral history interview by Robert Kerstein, June 16, 2005

Roger Wehling (Interviewee)

Robert J. Kerstein (Interviewer)

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Sandy Freedman Oral History Project
University of South Florida

Interview with: Roger Wehling
Interviewed by: Robert Kerstein
Location: University of Tampa (Tampa, FL)
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Transcribed by: Rebecca Willman
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Editor's Note: The interviewee has extensively edited this interview.

[Tape 1, Side A]

RK: Roger Wehling, who was Director of Planning for the City of Tampa during the Freedman administration. Thanks for speaking with me.

RW: My pleasure.

RK: During the time that the Freedman administration was in office, part of the responsibility of the planning department that was mandated I believe by the State of Florida, was comprehensive planning?

RW: Yes.

RK: Can you tell me something about how you were head of this effort to formulate the plan—?

RW: Yes.

RK: —can you tell me something about how—what the process was? What the goals were and so on?

RW: OK. Well, it was legislation that was crafted by the Department of Community Affairs. And my involvement started with the legislation itself through our lobbyist, Kathy Betancourt. We spent a good deal of time in Tallahassee helping to shape that legislation. In fact, a couple of provisions we were responsible for getting in [the legislation] was something called “two-tier level service analysis.” And it was scheduled to be a plan that could be amended only once a year. That was expanded to twice a year...based on our recommendation.

And with that, we had some special legislation, that in Hillsborough County, designated the Hillsborough County City County Planning Commission with a responsibility to prepare that plan. The initial draft was...prepared by the Planning Commission. When we

received those [elements], there was a problem with them in that elements like [the] recreational element for example, was written to apply to all four local units of government. The problem with that was we had administered our programs differently [than did the other jurisdictions]. [The] city planning staff took the...direct service elements...such as utilities, water, sewer, recreation, rewrote them within a two-week period. Those [elements] were substituted and...[were the ones] adopted by City Council.

...Subsequently, every local government had to [complete] a five-year update for [the] comprehensive plan. And when it came to those elements, the direct service elements, we took responsibility for drafting the updates and amendments, [and] conducting the workshops. We...transmit[ed] those to the Hillsborough County [city] Planning Commission; they conduct[ed] a series of public workshops on them, and then forward[ed] those elements to City Council for review and adoption.

RK: Can you give an example of some of the elements?

RW: Well there [were] probably close to twenty elements. ...

RK: Did they have a direct impact, or did any of them have a direct impact on service delivery would you say?

RW: Yes. They had a major role. The legislation was written with the premise that local government could no longer issue development permits if they didn't have adequate services in place. ...If you reach the level where...[municipal] services had declined below the standard that you adopted in your plan, then...[basically you had] to deny any new building permits until you could raise the level of service [to the minimum standards].

...[Their]...standards [were good] for ensuring a minimum level of service in...[our] community. But... [were] not good standard[s] for...long range planning. ...[We] went back to the Department of Community Affairs and urged that they allow us to do a two-tier planning [standard]. And that is...[one] level of service standard to be used for issuing development or denying development permits. And...another standard that we could use for longer range planning purposes. DCA accepted that. ...The legislation was amended to allow that. So basically Tampa's approach became something that was implemented statewide.

RK: Now when you say level of service sir, is that the same as service level analysis?

RW: No. ...We use the term service level analysis for something we were doing in-house. ...Before the [state] law had been passed, we were analyzing our services. ...[Which] made it...[easier] for us to comply with the state legislation [on comprehensive planning.] ...We were actually well positioned, more than most communities, in that regard.

RK: And when you looked at service level analysis was this to evaluate adequacy of services? Did it also focus on how services perhaps varied from neighborhood to neighborhood?

RW: ...[Yes] the service level analysis [was developed]...to get a good handle on what existing city conditions were for each service that...[the city] government provided. ...[This] way it tied into the budget process. ...When the decision makers decided where the next dollar was to be spent in each of these areas, they could do it—armed with the information of what the disparity of the services were, at the neighborhood level, [on a] citywide [basis. It was more comprehensive than the comprehensive plan.]

RK: And did they often defer to your analysis?

RW: ...Absolutely yes. In fact our role was expanded [initially] under... Mayor Martinez[’s] administration. During his first year...[he] went through the [normal] budget process. And when it was over he was not sure whether he had been finessed by city departments on what the real needs were. So he and the finance director asked me to come up with a process that, in the subsequent years, would allow them to have a good handle on what the actual conditions and needs were. So that’s when we came up with service level analysis, Mayor Freedman continued that and expanded it, into...[several] other areas. ...

RK: This is now 2005, and there’s much discussion about downtown development and some people wonder whether there’s any plan that’s guiding this development. Did you get involved in downtown planning?

RW: ...Mayor Freedman got very involved in that, and then in turn involved my department in that [process]. Several attempts have been...made previously in other administrations to come up with a downtown plan. One was by the now defunct Downtown Development Association. The Hillsborough County City [County] Planning Commission prepared [another] one. A couple of different consulting firms were retained, but none of them ever...adopted. Mayor Freedman appointed...[a] Blue Ribbon Committee, which was chaired by Parke Wright...who’s now deceased, and [numerous other downtown stakeholders.]

RK: Was he a Lykes Brothers’ executive?

RW: Yes he was. ...It was about a twelve-member committee, and they were all... involved either as landholders or major employers in the downtown district. ...We were [designated by Mayor Freedman as] staff...to that committee and we were charged to [help her committee to] come up with and get adopted the first plan for the downtown district. And, which ultimately was accomplished. ... It was through her initiative and her persistence that it succeeded.

RK: I know it was a long time back but do you remember any of the kind of guiding principles of the plan?

RW: Well yes, there were quite a few. First, I would have to say we started by changing some [of the] land use codes. At that time you could not build housing along the water's edge in downtown. None of that along the Channelside was zoned so housing could be included. It was all industrially zoned...on both sides of the river at the time. So we went about changing the zoning to make the residential...[uses] permissible. ...

RK: And there was industrial zones? You could have office buildings, is that true? But not residential?

RW: Correct. You could not have residential. But you could have very intensive industrial uses in those areas. And a lot of the uses were warehousing. ...It was an appropriate time to make that conversion. It laid the groundwork for what is happening today. Along with some other things that affect the amenities and the aesthetics of the, of those districts.

RK: Were there any height limitations included in that plan or—?

RW: There were height limitations. And...most of those height limitations actually were related to the FAA height standards set on downtown. ...

RK: And as developers are announcing projects today, are they bound by some elements of this downtown plan? Is that still in affect, do you know?

RW: Some of the provisions that were initially adopted were watered down in the subsequent administration under Mayor Greco.

RK: The belief was that they were too restrictive or is that—?

RW: Yes, they were more sympathetic to developers. Developers for the most part fought the adoption of the plan because it raised the minimum standards. It set higher standards for the quality of sidewalks, providing public art, providing public space, some landscaping [and] submitting new construction for design review. [Through] design review...the [city had] standing to take into account architectural features of the buildings. So we were discouraging reflective glass at the ground level, flat box top roofs on the buildings, and a number of [other] things like that.

...The developers were not, were not happy with it. Though almost all of the Class A developers were putting those features in their projects anyway. But they fought, making it a minimum standard or a mandate for development in downtown Tampa.

Mayor Freedman was a remarkable public official. She stood very...[strong on] enforcing those standards. And many of the things you see today I attribute to, to her leadership and her backbone...[for] enforcing...[the] downtown plan.

RK: When the Freedman administration first came in, you had already had a lot of cuts in urban programs accompanying the Reagan administration. Then President Clinton in 1992 proposed, and Congress passed a program which might allocate, did allocate funding for certain cities who applied for money to help engage in urban development. Did Tampa apply for those funds? One name they went by were, was “empowerment funds” I believe.

RW: Yes. In fact Tampa might have been, for a city of its size, the most successful in the nation in securing federal [and state] grants. ... We were very successful. And...the most successful under the Freedman administration and at...[the] time, the federal government had been cutting back its programs. It had cut back...[numerous programs.] ... You...no longer had Model Cities [and] the CDBG, Community Development Block Grant program was being reduced dramatically. There were fewer grants. ...[However, through a budget] President Clinton...developed some targeted grants to help [a few] inner-city neighborhoods. The federal enterprise zone [program]...I don't remember the exact number; [but] it was something like eight cities who were awarded those grants. It was enormously competitive. Tampa was one of the winners of the, of the federal designation. We also concomitantly won a designation for state enterprise zone at the same time. So, we were...very [competitive.]

RK: I know that the plan you formulated was very thick—

RW: Yes.

RK: —very intensive in its analysis. Can you recall a process by which you formulated the plan? Because I recall there was several meetings and so on.

RW: We were...[fortunate] in that we already had scheduled before the grant was even announced and had been conducting annually a neighborhood conference [organized by Mayor Freedman.] ... So we started our process and part of being selected for the federal grant was, how well you developed your plan using the neighborhood themselves to come up with a direction for it, [by] setting the goals, objectives and the fundable projects. ...[It] kicked off...as part of that annual neighborhood fair held at the convention center and...[as a result achieved] a great deal of [citizen] participation.

Following that we had an organizational meeting where...[citizens elected] officers and we came up with a meeting place in a community center near Lake and 22nd Street[s]. We...[assisted the] community [to] designate...boundaries, we provided staff support to them, and developed the plan taking our direction from them. And we had had some federal employees in the audience, unknown to us at the time, that had validated just how effectively we involved the community in developing the plan that was ultimately submitted to the federal government...[through the] Department of Housing and Urban Development. That...[observation helped in getting one of the grant awards.]

RK: So that was a very successful effort. Are there any challenges during the administration where you tried to accomplish certain goals and were unable to for one

reason or another?

RW: You know, [laughs] I'm sure there were, there probably in fact, were many. But...I can't recall any. Because...it seemed to me that when we set out to do something we pretty much accomplished it. There may have been some grants that we went after and didn't get, but I don't remember them. All of the big ones it seemed like we succeeded in getting awards. And of course there were many things we would liked to have done in terms of services for neighborhoods, particularly the low-income neighborhoods. There just were never enough resources to get us to some sustainable level of improvement. But even in those cases...I have to say, we had a lot of successes with the resources that we did have.

RK: Periodically the military goes through a process by which it considers downsizing certain bases or even closing certain bases. Did they go through that process during the Freedman administration, did you get involved in the effort to try to keep MacDill open and strong?

RW: Yes. Well, actually it was kind of a bifurcated process. We had one committee headed up by Al Austin whose role it was to try and prevent the base closure itself. ... We worked with another committee. My department provided...staffing to...[a] committee that came up with, should the base be closed, re-use, alternative re-use plans for that site. It was a beautiful piece of property. If it ever became available, there may be a silver lining in it because I believe we could have matched the economic impact with future new uses of that property. So we worked with...another Blue Ribbon Committee, and they came up with three alternatives that we submitted to the federal government. Had the base been closed, then the federal government would have done an environmental impact assessment on each of those alternative plans.

RK: You mentioned Blue Ribbon Committees a couple of times. Is this something that the Freedman administration thought was a good, part of a good, wise process? Did you ever get people outside of government at least to a significant extent to study an issue?

RW: Oh absolutely, and I think she wanted to make sure that it was a plan that was always offered to the elected officials for adoption that passed the acid test of community involvement. And often she made sure that it had the stakeholders involved. So, going back to the downtown plan for just a minute, it was amazing that you had major property owners, General Telephone..., Lykes Brothers, [and] numerous other property owners [such as] Dick Beard, a major Class A office project developer. These kinds of people were on the committee and this was a committee that ended up recommending major reductions in their property rights for the good of the overall development of the downtown district.

And it was amazing that these people were, were not on the other side of the fence fighting [it]. ...Possibly had she not appointed this Blue Ribbon Committee [that held meetings open to the public], they would have been very effective at killing this plan just

as the previous attempts at [it]...[had] not succeed[ed]. So I think it...was the secret to, to her success.

RK: Not far from downtown is Channelside area that has again, announced recently—developers announced projects there and some have already been completed. Did planning for Channelside also commence during Freedman’s administration?

RW: Yes that was another [of her] initiative[s]...[to] come up with a plan for Channelside—the Aquarium had taken off but there was not a real concept that could guide funding decisions on the part of the city in terms of what its participation might be in that district. There was no concept guiding our land regulatory...responsibilities. So we came up, again working with a very active group of property owners and tenants in that area;...a general plan for the Channelside district. ...It started with one simple thing of renaming the 7th Street to Channelside, as it’s known today.

But again, it was also an area that was not zoned for residential [and] that was changed. The plan itself...had the—I think the power of showing that government saw a future in this district [and] it was going to be very supportive. [This] made it easier for investors to come in and be pioneers...[of] redevelopment [in] this district.

RK: The Port Authority owned some of the land, and—

RW: And they too became a very important player. They started looking at the[ir] property, not just for maritime use, but for, for other complimentary...[non-traditional] uses of the property.

RK: So they were cooperative in terms of working on this Channelside area?

RW: Yes. The Channelside shopping district itself could not have been...[accomplished] without the Port looking differently at some of...its property.

RK: Did you ever have to work directly or respond directly to City Council people? How did the chain of command work so to speak? Or channel of communications?

RW: Well I worked directly with City Council on issues involving city planning. But always...coordinating [closely] with the Mayor the Chief of Staff and my supervisor, ...[the] Director of Finance.

RK: Who was that?

RW: That was Lou Russo. ...I worked closely with the executive decision makers...prior to any visit with City Council. So I always felt like I was at City Council knowing what the administration’s position was on an issue, and not just freelancing it. ...It worked well that way. I never had any problem. I was never sent over [to City Council] to do anything that I found disagreeable or [that I] did not agree with. So I was very fortunate in terms of the administration that I...[worked] with.

RK: Tampa has a strong mayor system.

RW: Yes.

RK: Do you agree with the notion that the mayor has clearly more authority than any other individual and more than the City Council? Or is it more split? Or divided?

RW: Well, I think in terms of the things that City Council has the power to act on, and approve, I would say it's split. They really have to work in a partnership. And the Mayor can't get anything accomplished unless they're on the same page. But, but as far as the administration of government, clearly it's a strong mayor form of government, which is great for people like myself. As a department head you can get clear decisions and can move quickly. And your ability to provide input and get decisions is vastly improved when you're dealing with one person empowered to make a decision on the spot if they feel like it.

RK: You mentioned before when we discussed the comprehensive plan, the Hillsborough County Planning Commission?

RW: Yes.

RK: That has responsibility for planning for the entire county, including—

RW: Right

RK: —the municipalities of Tampa, Temple Terrace and Plant City. Is [there] any way you can discuss the kind of division of responsibilities between you as the head planner for the city and this planning commission?

RW: ...I started to work for the city in 1972. And at that time when...[others] were hired to create a planning component within the city department that administered federal programs. That included the Model Cities program at that time. And the federal government mandated that you [had to] have direct planning in support of the expenditure of those funds.

...Prior to...[our] being hired, [the city] had contracted with the planning commission and they, they were not happy with the service. So they....

RK: Sir was this, I'm sorry, was this Mayor Greco's administration?

RW: This was Mayor Greco's administration.

RK: It was his first administration?

RW: His first administration. ...This [function] was created in the department called the

Metropolitan Development Agency. We got very active in working with city departments and assessing conditions in low-income neighborhoods,...[which is what] we focused on. ...We developed projects that were recommended for funding with the Model Cities funds and [we] administer[ed] those projects as well.

The Planning Commission chose to, I think, be threatened by the fact that we were in existence. ...The mayor that followed Mayor Greco was Bill Poe. And we made presentations to him on needs analysis in the low-income neighborhoods before we recommended to him expenditures of the Model Cities [inaudible]. ...As it turns out, he was so impressed with that, that he said he wanted us to provide those planning services on a citywide basis for all of the funds that he was responsible for. So he abolished planning in...that agency, and created the Department of City Planning and moved us [physically] into City Hall.

At that point the tension with the Planning Commission grew, because we had a new role that had not been defined by state legislation, [as theirs had.] ...We really took a very active role in providing direct planning support to the Mayor and...[to] city departments who...I think, [viewed us as] a very valuable resource to city departments. And so that led probably to some friction with the Planning Commission [that has ensued] over the years. Our roles were generally defined. Where the state legislation defined [Planning Commission] responsibilities, we respected that and in many cases tried to augment and help them...[be] even more responsive to the needs of city government.

RK: There's another organization that's area wide, called the MPO, Metropolitan Planning Organization—?

RW: Yes.

RK: —that focuses on transportation? Did you interact with them as well?

RW: Not very often. I did on a project by project basis. If there was a major thoroughfare being improved and it was in a neighborhood or a district that we were already working with the neighborhood on, ...[we coordinated with] them. [We] often assigned time for [our] architect to help them with urban design issues and the aesthetic issues for their transportation improvements. They generally welcomed that assistance. But...[the city's] transportation department...worked directly with the MPO. We worked with both of those organizations when it came to preparing the transportation element in the comprehensive plan, [which is]...probably when we were the most involved with the MPO.

We generally took the product from the MPO planning process and integrated it into the comp plan to meet—the state requirement's...not [of] the Department of Community Affairs, which often were not [always] compatible or identical to Florida DOT's requirement.

RK: This must sound like an odd question, but during the Freedman administration you and the budget department were in the same, administrative unit, is that correct? Or your, you reported to that, the budget, is that correct?

RW: I reported to the Finance Director—

RK: Finance.

RW: —which included the budget officer, the chief accountant and the business and occupational licensing department.

RK: Now was that new with the Freedman administration? Or that was the structure prior to it as well.

RW: That was the original structure. It was never changed while I was there. I liked it because it helped integrate [the] planning and budgeting process, which I thought was critical. ...Otherwise you're doing planning for the sake of planning if you can't tie into the resource allocation process. ...

[End Tape 1, Side A]

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[Tape 1, Side B]

RK: —that planning and budgeting was in the same administrative unit.

RW: Oh absolutely. It could not have been a better organizational decision. So we, the planning director and the budget officer reported to the same person. So it was very easy for us to integrate planning into the budgeting process and to have plans implemented through resource allocation decisions. And vice versa—budget was in a better position to rationalize its recommendations for resource allocations, because they had a stronger basis... grounded in...needs assessment. Something...[more justifiable than the] “squeaky wheel” approach to resource allocation or just [a] flat percentage change across the board without much analysis.

RK: So a lot of times when people think about a city planning department, they think exclusively of land use. But obviously what you did was much, much broader than that.

RW: Oh yes, ...much broader. In fact the day to day zoning decisions, the administration of zoning, was done by another department. So we were not tied up in that. But we were responsible along with the Planning Commission for the land use element in the comprehensive plan, which guided those zoning decisions. So we didn't need to be involved in the day-to-day administration. ...[As a result] we were able to operate with a...small[er] staff and [still] have a great impact.

RK: And your staff had how many people?

RW: It was never more than 10. Which I thought was fairly significant for a city this size and the amount of responsibilities we had.

RK: So you felt you had ample resources, generally speaking?

RW: I always felt like I could have used another person or two. But...I had as good a staff as anyone could have asked for. So we, we were always able to, I think, accomplish what we were asked to do.

RK: Many people interested in urban design and urban aesthetics; you had an urban design person on your staff, is that true?

RW: That's true.

RK: Was this a major focus of the Freedman administration, the importance of urban design? And maybe connected [to] that, perhaps, public art?

RW: Yes. We added a staff architect under Mayor Freedman's administration when we undertook the [downtown] land use planning process. I had the architect intimately involved in coming up with the design standards for the downtown district [and] working with the [blue ribbon] committees. And these were very intensive working sessions—numerous ones over a period of a year. And when it was finally adopted, typically that responsibility [of design review] would have gone to the department that administers the zoning regulations and building permits. ...

But the committee recommended that the oversight for downtown be placed with this architect and with City Planning. So we ended up having the lead role in design review of all new construction projects in the downtown district. So even the development community had a very favorable impression of our design...[standards].

RK: Did you get involved with public art as well, was that as—?

RW: Yes, that was one of the provisions that was in that downtown plan. And...[I] have to say it was sold at the beginning of the process. We took the committee to visit some other communities. And one of them happened to be Portland, Oregon, ...[which] has an outstanding outdoor public art collection and program. So riding back on the plane it was...[decided that] Tampa needed something like this. ...We drafted provisions for them; [which] they ultimately recommended [to] the City Council and got it adopted. So public art used to be a requirement only for publicly funded projects. It was expanded to include all private development downtown, and required that a certain amount of public art be spent on art that was placed outdoors or [indoors that] could be seen from the street.

RK: There's a lot of discussion about flooding in Tampa, South Tampa for example, but obviously the problem isn't confined there. Did you as a planner also have to deal with issues such as storm water?

RW: Not, not really. We worked with the [city] department developing the storm water element in the comprehensive plan. It identified needs and set some development standards for permitting and...set some long-range [capital planning] standards. But those long-range standards for that functional area just weren't achievable with the revenues that we were projecting for the next 20 years. So the areas that today suffer from flooding conditions are very difficult to solve [financially]. They're usually in the low lying areas...[where] gravity doesn't work well and the bay backs up into during high tide storm conditions. ...Some of the localized problems are enormously cost inefficient to solve. We worked with the department...[to meet the minimum requirements of the Comp Plan.]

RK: I know the mayor took different heads of departments to neighborhood meetings. Did you often attend these meetings?

RW: Yes.

RK: Is there any way you can generalize about the type of grievances that citizens had?

RW: I think it ran the whole gamut and quite often we would brief the mayor before we'd go to those neighborhoods on what we knew to be the condition of the neighborhood based on the data we had. And quite often the neighborhoods were validating that we did have a good handle on...the conditions [that] were substandard in those neighborhoods and [in] need [of] funding.

Take Park and Recreation—through our program, she was armed with information where not only did she know which neighborhoods did and did not have parks, but the ones that did, what the conditions were. Were they substandard? Was it a ball field below official minimum dimensions? Did it have restrooms? Did it have equipment rooms? Did it serve all age groups and if it did, what was the condition of the...[facilities]? ...

So she really had far more information than they knew about when she went into neighborhoods, she just did not have financial [resources to solve] all those problems [on a short-term basis].

RK: Do you have any memory, and again, I know this is a long time ago, about what people in South Tampa would be saying, as compared to those in East Tampa in terms of the major issues that came up?

RW: No doubt they were different. I have to be honest, I don't remember all of them now. But South Tampa issues were often with traffic [and] drainage. The inner city areas were much different—the needs were quite often in terms of law enforcement. Often drainage [was common in both.] ... You would hear the need for more recreation facilities and...for more social services and...you almost never heard in South Tampa neighborhoods—with some exceptions [such as] Port Tampa. ...But...that's to be

expected. ...[Some]...higher income neighborhoods were usually subdivisions that... [had]...amenities [built into the initial development project.]

RK: The Freedman administration devoted a lot of effort to affordable housing. Did your department get involved with that?

RW: We got involved in terms of attracting grants. But it was administered by the Department of Housing. ...[Much] of the community development block grant monies funded housing. And we—back in the Model City era, ...were very involved in it. And then we were pulled out of that by Mayor Poe's administration...[but] got increasingly more involved under Mayor Freedman. That's where she used the service level analysis process...[exceptionally] well, ...in housing.

And in her first year, she sat...[with the housing] department...and went over their production standards and how much money was [being expended]...per unit of housing provided. ...She quantified what it would be in the second, third and fourth years [of her administration and that it would be]...a condition of continued employment. That department became enormously creative and turned it around. [Consequently] they won several awards from HUD and Department of Community Affairs for their innovative approaches to housing. She accomplished that by using the service level analysis. She set measurable standards for them [to accomplish] and a process to revisit...[it] annually and before the [start of the annual] budget process. ...

RK: Was this primarily the Mayor's Challenge Fund that you're referring to?

RW: No, [but] that was one of the innovations they came up with, [which] was to leverage the block grant funds by challenging businesses to contribute. And so instead of making a one-for-one direct loan to an end user, they used the money as a bad debt reserve to guarantee loans made by the banks who would take a chance in going into neighborhoods that—if you will, they may have redlined informally, and weren't making many loans. With the guarantee...[through this] this bad debt reserve escrow, ...[banks] were willing to use their own money to go in and make home improvement...and new construction loans in these lower income neighborhoods.

RK: Did your department endure an analysis of lending—or I think you used the term “redlining” during the Freedman administration?

RW: No, we did that under—I think it was under Mayor Greco's term. If not, it was under Mayor Poe's. We did that and collected data from the banks and it was a way to convey a message to them that the law...was on the books—[and] there, would be people like us looking at the lending patterns, and trying to put teeth into it. It may have helped. I don't know for sure. But that's why we undertook the study.

RK: You entered city government in 19—

RW: '72.

RK: 1972. And you stayed—when did you retire?

RW: '97, so I was there—

RK: I know you're not retired, you're still working in the private sector.

RW: Yes. [I worked] 25 years...for the City of Tampa.

RK: So that's a wonderful, wonderfully long time period. Is there any way that you can summarize the changes that you were able to perceive during this time period? In terms of what you were responsible for, whether it be changes in processes, or achievements, any—I know it's a tough question.

RW: Well I would say during the early years, during Model Cities programs and—I have to say it's probably one of my most satisfying years because we had a large amount of federal funds to be spent each year and I liked how we went about it. We systematically looked at needs before we ever decided how these funds should be spent. So it was a good basis for...[allocating] money where the need was the greatest. ...I think we did...[a] lot of good in a number of low-income neighborhoods. And there were some very creative people that worked during that time.

And then when we were reorganized in the city planning, I think probably just the process of planning itself being a function of city government. Before it was just something that was done by an outside agency on a, on a very peripheral type of basis. So city planning being [placed] under the finance director, [and]...integrated into the resource allocation process...[which] was very significant...[as was the initiation of] this service level analysis process.

...When the State required comprehensive planning of all of the governments statewide, I think that was very significant. We were involved in that, and I...[believe] helped the city make the most of that process. And...[our plans] were always approved...and [our plans would breeze right through when most other jurisdiction's plans were being objected to by the state, calling for rewrites.] So we felt like we knew what we were doing and had the support of the administration to do it correctly. ...

And then in terms of things that I personally take a lot of pride in, I'd have to say the downtown plan was one of them. ...It was needed, it—we...changed from being accommodating to...[everything] developer[s] coming in [wanted] from out of the state... [We] set a standard and asked them to...[meet it.] Mayor Freedman...ask[ed first] *what you can do for the community before you ask for help from us*. It did not endear her with the development community, and others that they influenced [but it has made a significant difference in the quality of downtown development, both private and public.]

A great example was a bank, a Canadian bank coming in that selected a piece of property on the downtown...[water] front. [They] wanted to put in a bank that looked like the

Washington Monument. ...A very sterile project. ...And they didn't want to put in any Riverwalk, any amenities, no landscaping, no public art, no design review. She held fast and that's the site today...[for the proposed] Trump Tower that has all of those...[amenities] plus. So, I was happy to be involved in her effort...[It has] [It was her plan that created the 15 foot setback for the Riverwalk.]

RK: Were you involved in the effort to get the hotel, along with the Convention Center, or to serve the Convention Center business?

RW: Yes, ...peripherally. ...[This effort was] headed up by committees—I wasn't the lead staff to those committees. So, we provided some support, but frankly not an awful lot. When...proposals [came] in, we evaluated them, organized them, packaged them for the committee to review and make their decisions. ...[We were not asked to] make any...recommendations. ...

RK: Can you fill us in on what you've done since you left the city? You're still a young man.

RW: Well I left at my son's urging. And went to work for him in his business, he has [started] a small little niche where he does background screening [called Zaeplex Legal Reports]. It's a business he started [while in college] that he's very successful at. He wanted me to help him with marketing. He had some revenue goals he wanted to meet and we met those, and he's now far exceeding them. ...I enjoy working with him and watching him succeed.

RK: Do you have any overriding impression of how the private sector differs from the public? In terms of your experience?

RW: Well, no, I don't. I think the way we went about our business, the work ethic in city government; ...those same work ethics apply in the private sector. And for me there's not a lot of difference. When I managed the planning department, ...[we were] give[n] assignments to each staff member in writing that said what [was] expected and how many hours they were allotted to bring that project...[to conclusion]. The supervision and communication throughout the process [is]...not any different than [it is in] the private sector. We managed government business [in planning] similar to the way a private firm would. So I have to say it's very similar as far as I'm concerned.

RK: Thank you very, very much for speaking with me sir.

RW: ...Thank you, [it's] my pleasure.