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RK: This is an interview with Ms. Gina Grimes, January 11, 2006. Thanks a lot for taking the time to speak to me.

GG: I’m glad to be here.

RK: What was your position during the Freedman administration?

GG: When I, when I first started with the Freedman administration I was just an Assistant City Attorney. And over the years I was elevated to Chief Assistant City Attorney.

RK: And can you tell us a little about your background, where you’re from?

GG: I was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and went to school, high school here in Florida, and then went to Florida State for a few years, moved back up north, finished my undergraduate at Dukane University in Pittsburg and then came back to Florida and attended Stetson College of Law and that’s what brought me to the Tampa Bay area.

RK: Did you work in private practice before the city hired you?

GG: No, I went right from law school into the Tampa City Attorney’s Office as a legal intern. And once I passed the bar, I was offered a position as an Assistant City Attorney. And at that time, Governor Martinez, then Mayor Martinez was the Mayor of the City. And after about a year, I think or maybe it wasn’t even that long, maybe it was more like six months—he decided to run for Governor and Mayor Freedman was the Chairwoman of City Council, and by virtue of that position she was then elevated to the Mayor. And at the end of his term, she then ran for reelection for her first full term.

RK: And when did you get your promotion?
GG: It was towards the end of Mayor Freedman’s term, I believe it was like in the, in the early ‘90s I believe, mid ‘90s maybe.

RK: What are some of the primary responsibilities of the City Attorney’s Office? I guess there are many.

GG: Most of the years when I worked in the City Attorney’s Office when Mayor Freedman was mayor, I worked in the area of land use and development approvals. And during that time there was a lot of development taking place in the City of Tampa. Right before Martinez left office he annexed part of what we now know is New Tampa. And so right when Mayor Freedman took office, that was a period of time when all of the property owners out in the New Tampa area were applying for development approvals. So I was very much involved in the development approval process for all of the New Tampa area. And there were other parts of the city—older parts of the city that also were undergoing a lot of development at that time, so I was involved in a lot of those different projects and activities.

RK: And who were some of the dominant city staff people that worked in the same field, that worked with you in a sense?

GG: I worked with Pam Aiken who was the City Attorney under Mayor Freedman, and Pam sort of passed the torch to me as far as the zoning and land use work. I worked with some other very talented people in the other departments. Susan Swift was the Director of Zoning at the time, also Gloria Moreda was her Zoning Administrator, and Cindy Harden. Cindy Harden recently worked for the City of Clearwater as their Planning Director, but at the time when she was in the City of Tampa she actually handled all the historic preservation regulations. In fact, I believe under Mayor Freedman is when, when the very first historic district other than Ybor City—the Hyde Park Historic District was first recognized and designated. And Cindy, along with the help of Susan basically established the historic preservation review and approval process for the City of Tampa. And since then of course, we have a couple other historic districts and many, many landmark sites and the, the regulations and the structure of the historic regulations and the review process was established under Mayor Freedman’s administration.

RK: And you worked on that also?

GG: I worked on bits and pieces of that, I wasn’t as involved as Susan and Cindy were but I do remember that at the time, I believe that was like the late ‘80s, they were very—it was a major project, and once it was implemented it seemed to work very smoothly.

RK: Did you have occasion to interact with the Mayor on any of these issues?

GG: Did I have direct contact with her? Yes. A lot of times when Pam Aiken was still City Attorney, she would bring me along to the Senior Staff meetings which of course were chaired by the mayor and attended by all of her senior staff people, and sometimes
they would bring some of their department people to talk about specifics as far as any issues that were priority at the time.

RK: Land use can be very controversial.

GG: Very!

RK: You know better than I. Can you talk a little bit about New Tampa since that’s something you spent a lot of time on as far as different parties had interest there and what they wanted?

GG: One of the very first and probably the biggest development out there of course was Tampa Palms, and I think what’s interesting kind of when you look back is that you go up there now and it is truly like an additional city on top of the city. It’s, it’s just booming out there. Back then, back in the late ‘80s, early ‘90s, it was basically undeveloped. And Tampa Palms was probably the first major—was the first major development out there. And it was also what’s called a DRI, a Development of Regional Impact. And the DRI process was somewhat new in the state of Florida, and the City of Tampa had its share of major DRI’s. We had the Tampa Palms DRI which was basically developed by a gentleman by the name of Ken Goode. Then there were some other major DRI’s out there as well, the Tampa Technology DRI, and the Hunter’s Green DRI, that was another—Hunter’s Green was another residential development. And it was designated as Florida’s first Florida Quality Development—FQD. It was a special designation given to certain DRI’s that implemented certain mitigation measures above and beyond what the statute required. And so under her administration we were awarded basically the first Florida Quality Development DRI, with Hunter’s Green.

And Tampa Tech DRI, I remember, as I was trying to think back in preparation for the interview, we were involved in a major controversy involving the USAA sign out there. It was, at the time, she was working with Colonel Joe House who was an executive with USAA, the insurance company. And they were trying to develop a huge office complex out there. And there was a lot of resistance from the state and the mayor stepped in and kind of shepherded it through the process and eventually the development was approved and now built, and occupied by a lot of employees.

RK: What was the problem the state had?

GG: I believe it had to do with just the size of the development as well as the location and whether or not there was sufficient mitigation of the impacts.

RK: Did the Freedman administration annex any additional territory in New Tampa?

GG: I don’t recall them annexing additional—there might have been bits and pieces. My recollection, it was mostly the Tampa Palms area, the Tampa Technology Park, which was more of an office, retail, DRI—it wasn’t really, it didn’t have the residential component that Tampa Palms had. And then we had the—we had Hidden River
Corporate Park, that was another huge DRI out there, very successful. Probably fully built out and occupied right now. And then we had the Hunter’s Green DRI. Those were the major DRI’s at the time.

RK: Now initially there weren’t many people living there, so I guess you didn’t have citizens involved in formulating the plans?

GG: Not, not like there is to the extent there is today.

RK: Did any of the, I know…

GG: It was, it was raw land back then. Raw land. And there really, there was very little retail. I think she was involved in the approval of the first shopping center out there, the Publix shopping center at the intersection of [County Road] 581 and Amberly [Drive], or Tampa Bay Boulevard—[corrects herself]—Tampa Palms Boulevard. The first shopping center out there, if you go out there now, there’s just, there’s probably ten or fifteen of them along 581.

RK: Did environmental groups get involved at all?

GG: Actually the DRI’s, the way they were written and the way they were approved, and the way they were administered had mitigation requirements that I think addressed all of the environmental issues. And there are huge, thousands of acres that are protected as conservation areas under those DRI’s, so there probably was very little for anybody to complain or object to because of the stringent mitigation measures that were put in all those DRI’s. And I think now those citizens that live out there, they’re very protective of those, of those mitigation requirements and those mitigation areas, and it’s really, it’s really worked out very well in the long run. Because its—actually it’s probably about 20 years since those DRI’s have been in existence now.

RK: What about roles of transportation? That’s been an issue recently, is that something that played a major role in the DRI’s?

GG: Oh those, those types of mitigation measures were significant. And those developers will tell you that they probably, they put millions of dollars into the roadway out there to that major roadway. One of the interesting things too about 581 when I look back on it now is, none of those DRI’s allowed access points right directly onto 581, or if they did, they were very few. And I don’t know if you’ve ever noticed, but there’s—they use more the frontage road concept, and that’s I think helped a lot as far as the capacity of 581 and the traffic on 581. It’s not a situation like you see in the county with Dale Mabry [Road], where there’s access points for every different parcel fronting along that roadway. On 581 they, they were very conservative in limiting the access points onto 581 so you don’t have as much of stop and go traffic, you have more through traffic. And most of the access points are off of internal or frontage roads that lead out to that road, so I think that was, that was significant too. But those developers paid millions in, not just mitigation building roadways, and paying mitigation fees, but they also paid millions in impact fees.
RK: Is Bruce B Downs [Boulevard] 581?

GG: Yes, Bruce B Downs, right.

RK: Were impact fees used for the first time in New Tampa or was the City of Tampa already using them?

GG: I think under Mayor Freedman’s administration is when we first adopted—I know it was in the late ‘80s—we adopted the city’s first transportation impact fee, which has funded, just tremendous amount of roadway improvements throughout the city. And it wasn’t just adopted for the New Tampa area, it was adopted citywide, citywide.

RK: Do you know how the administration viewed New Tampa? Mr. Mayor Martinez, or the next area—was it viewed as an opportunity for the city to expand in terms of population and jobs and potentially tax fees?

GG: I think it was, and I think also it was probably the city’s first experience with developing undeveloped land, and development approvals and the review process that would take place. So it was, it was somewhat of a learning process because there just weren’t those amounts of undeveloped land anywhere else in the city. So conducting and the review process were such large tracks like that, in such large numbers, I want to say Tampa Palms is 5000 acres and 13,000 dwelling units, and retail on top of that. So it was significant and I—that all occurred right when she, when she came into office, so we, we learned quickly on how to administer a development review process.

RK: And did you have to interact with state officials a lot?

GG: Yes, when you are involved in a DRI review process you work not just with the State Department of Community Affairs, but also the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council. So there’s two levels of state review, at the regional level and at the state level. And we were involved in a lot of interaction with the state level officials on their review of the DRI’s as well.

RK: And what about the county, how—did they play any role at all?

GG: Actually they really didn’t, because once the property was annexed into the city, we had sole jurisdiction over all the development approval. Sometimes now they get involved in, in environmental issues out there on, in areas that abut county jurisdiction that have environmentally sensitive areas. They’ll sometimes interject themselves in the city’s development review process if they think it’s going to impact some of their environmental areas that are, [that] lie just outside of the city boundaries.

RK: What are the, the issues that you’ve dealt with?
GG: One of the other, I think significant issues that I wanted to touch on as far as the development review process and development approvals that took place under Mayor Freedman’s administration was in the—were in the downtown area. I remember her working very closely with Downtown Partnership to work on not just the downtown DRI, which was another area wide DRI. In fact, in the City of Tampa there were two major area wide DRI’s under her watch—it was the downtown DRI and also the Westshore DRI.

RK: And what was the reason for having the area DRI?

GG: The reason you do an area wide DRI is that you can address the impacts and the mitigation for a much larger areas of an entire area, like an entire downtown, or the entire Westshore business district, as opposed to addressing impacts and mitigation on a parcel ownership, parcel by ownership parcel basis. So it’s kind of a way to look at things a little on a larger scale on a more—not I don’t want to say regional scale, but on a broader scale than just parcel by parcel. And it allows all of the, all of the development within that area to contribute collectively towards the mitigation that’s required to address all of the impacts of all the development.

But on the—one, the one project that I worked on downtown that I think was significant, had to do with the downtown development regulations that she implemented. She worked, I worked with Roger Wehling, who at the time was the Director of Planning. And Mayor Freedman directed that we come up with—and we just about did it overnight—with a set up of development regulations for downtown. And given the time frame that we had to work on it and given the product, I thought it, it actually worked out very well. Sometimes when you don’t have a lot of time to work on something it turns out better than if you have too much time.

But we developed a set of regulations that included not just design review of the buildings, but it also, imposed requirements dealing with public art, for all the buildings that were developed downtown; public open space requirements for the buildings downtown. Also, if you were building on a parcel that fronted the river, you had a riverwalk requirement—you were required to construct a riverwalk and there—I mentioned the open space, all those requirements collectively still exist today and finally now you can see some of the products of those regulations which include the riverwalk that is in front of the Marriot. If it weren’t for that regulation on the books, I don’t think the Marriot would have developed a riverwalk like the one that they have developed, and now you see the riverwalk and the specific design guidelines that she implemented for the riverwalk, you now also see carried forward on some of the public parcels that have been developed that include that, that riverwalk concept connecting the riverwalk from parcel to parcel. So I think eventually as those remaining parcels along the river develop or redevelop, you’re going to see tie-ins to the riverwalk and you’re going to see a riverwalk that extends probably all the way up from Stetson down and around the river, around the bend over to where the Convention Center and the Park are, on the water by the Beneficial Bridge.
RK: It appears they’re finally getting some residential downtown…

GG: Right.

RK: Are they also going to be subject to these regulations?

GG: Yeah, all the development downtown. In fact what’s interesting is the development—the downtown development design regulations really haven’t changed very much at all. But they are being administered and implemented now and I think that’s a testament to really the flexibility in those standards and, and the foresight that she had in implementing them at the time. It took a while for development to come downtown but now these regulations that were adopted under her administration are being applied to all these, all this new development downtown, and I think you have much better product than you know, had there been nothing on the books, or had—if there had been something that was just piecemealed. Her approach to looking at it on a broad basis, and implementing, you know, not just design but the open space and the park and the riverwalk components—all those different components together I think you’ll see, as buildings develop, you’ll see the fruits of her labor in that regard.

RK: Do you know what motivated her desire to have these guidelines?

GG: I think at the time, every, as—every administration has dealt with, not just Mayor Freedman, but subsequent administrations—pressure to start something downtown. Because our downtown really hasn’t developed as quickly as other parts of our city, and the question is always, why? And her master plan for the downtown and her downtown development design regulations are I think now finally coming to fruition and I think you’re going to see the product downtown, especially the urban design guidelines that she’s implemented are going to turn out a much better product, had she not looked at it on such a broad basis.

RK: Did—were developers upset at all at any of these guidelines?

GG: There—not—you know, I don’t really recall there being any, any, if—much if any opposition to the downtown development design regulations. I recall that the downtown partnership was in support of it. But I think…

RK: What’s downtown partnership?

GG: It—it was a group of business people that formed just a partnership that sort of monitor issues that effect the downtown area. And at the time, they were in support of those types of design regulations because they were—actually at the time they were interested in supporting anything that would help bring development and building downtown.

RK: Was Jim Cloar the director then?
GG: No, I think it was—I don’t even know if they had a director at the time. You know, an employee director. They had a chairperson—I want to say it was Parke Wright, but I could be wrong about that…

RK: Did you…

GG: But I believe that’s who it was.

RK: Really?

GG: [Sounds in agreement]. And also, along the same lines is, she also implemented—drafted and implemented the Channel District design regulations which were much like the downtown design regulations, but not as detailed not as comprehensive. Because at that point in time, back in the early ‘90s, it wasn’t anticipated the Channel District would develop at the pace that it is now. And I think that what she was trying to do was to really encourage, even more so than downtown—but encourage reinvestment in the Channel District. At the time it was more of a warehouse district then. But her design regulations for the Channel District were modeled much the same as they were for the downtown, where they had the design rate—urban design component and didn’t have the public art and the public open space contributions I think that the downtown design regulations can take. But it was along those same lines. And all that development that’s underway right now is all being reviewed to determine compliance with her Channel District design regulations.

RK: Was the Port Authority involved with those regulations at all?

GG: Actually the Port Authority was a separate DRI.

RK: Oh.

GG: So they kind of had their own development approvals. They really didn’t—it, they probably were vested from the Channel District design regulations and they, they really were considered like as separate development form the rest of the Channel District.

RK: Was there….

GG: But I’m sure that, I know that the Aquarium and the Channel District—the retail complex is what has helped spur a lot of the residential development in the Channel District.

RK: Did you look at any other cities when you formulated the design guidelines?

GG: I don’t know if Roger Wehling, if he compared it to other cities. Probably so, I don’t recall specifically, but I think we were just trying to create what they thought was
appropriate for our downtown and didn’t so much study other cities. I think it was just modeled just to fit that unique area. Especially with the river. There were—I failed to mention there were a couple other restrictions that she had built into the downtown development regulations. Those dealt with view corridors on the ends of various streets. She wanted to protect the views that people had as they drove down the streets downtown; the views they had of the water and of the, of the river, and places like UT [University of Tampa] actually. She wanted to make sure that at the ends of those streets, where they dead ended into the river, or those parcels that you know, butted the river and where the streets dead ended into those parcels, she wanted to make sure that those view corridors were protected, so there’s restrictions in the downtown regulations that deal with protection of the view corridors too.

RK: What other issues?

GG: I think also worth mentioning is the Westshore DRI because that also is another area that’s building up very quickly and if it weren’t for the Westshore DRI that was adopted under her administration, you wouldn’t have I don’t think the rapid pace of development that you have over there. The benefit to a DRI like that is that everybody who builds within the DRI has the benefit of the capacity that was approved under that DRI, meaning you know, X number of square feet of office, and of retail and of residential. You just draw down on that capacity that’s basically pre-approved, and the mitigation that you have to pay for that capacity, for that building that you conduct is already set out in this DRI, so it’s already pre-planned—if you want to build X amount of office, this is what you pay in mitigation. And that, just having that kind of information and that kind of security that you can build and, and plan for, and you know, you know how to plan for your—the cost of your mitigation, because it’s already predetermined, something like that is invaluable to developers when they know that they don’t have to go through their own separate development review and approval process, so…

RK: When you say mitigation, that involves traffic and what else?

GG: It can, it can—it involves mitigation of all impacts: it’s water, sewer, storm water, traffic. Not schools, but police, fire, parks, all of that—all of those kinds of impacts that are felt when a development goes forward or addressed in mitigation was provided for these development approvals, these area wide DRI’s. Both for Westshore and for downtown.

RK: Did you interact closely with some of the developers who were active downtown or Westshore?

GG: Yeah, as—whenever a developer comes in and applies for either a DRI approval or an amendment to a DRI, they worked with city staff as far as filing the application and the review process, and then negotiating to the point where you draft what’s called a development order, where you set out what all the mitigation is and what all the development entitlements are.
RK: And they generally have an attorney, or…?

GG: Yes.

RK: Can you recall any of the major developers who made a difference?

GG: Let’s see, you have—you had in Hidden River Corporate Park, you had Steve Meyers who I know that Mayor Freedman worked with very closely and thought very highly of. And he’s actually still involved in the, in the development process, he works for a company now called Highwoods, it’s very successful. His project, Hidden River Corporate Park was very successful. One of the owners out there is a fellow by the name of Joe Taggart who also is still involved in the development business right now. I think he has basically his own business, does his own individual projects, probably not on the scale of Hidden River, but—Ron Rotella, who was involved in the Westshore DRI, he worked for the Westshore alliance, and they were considered “master developer” of the, for the Westshore DRI. Some of the attorneys’ I worked with over the years that represented these developers—you had Jake Varn, at the time he worked for a firm—Carlton Fields. You had Tim Johnson, he was one of the founding partners at Johnson Blakely out of Clearwater. You had Cynthia Henderson who was an attorney who eventually was named by Governor Bush to head up one of his departments in Tallahassee—I think she’s now a lobbyist in Tallahassee. You had had Dave Mechanic, who’s still an attorney representing developers in the city….

RK: Was Mr. Weaver involved?

GG: Mr. Weaver, he was involved in probably more so downtown than New Tampa or Westshore. He represents and still represents developers that build downtown.

RK: Did you usually have cooperative relationships with these…?

GG: Yeah, I think we did, yeah, with all of them.

RK: At one point the administration—you might not have been involved with this—recommended an increase in impact fees. And at least some of the business community and development community had a problem with these increases—they protested. Were you involved with that at all?

GG: Probably on the fringes of that. Pam Aiken I think was directly involved in drafting the impact fee ordinance and working with the engineers that provided us with the methodology behind and the costs, estimates behind the impact fees. She worked more closely I think with the mayor on that than I did. But considering what impact fees are in other areas, I think ours is very competitive. [The] City of Tampa’s was very competitive with other areas, so, I—they might have complained at the time, but not for long.
RK: Any other major issues that you—?

GG: I know we touched on the historic preservation, but that probably was something that, that wasn’t at the time, it wasn’t controversial—it has become controversial in some aspects over the years since then, but I think probably the work involved in developing historic preservation guidelines maybe didn’t receive the recognition that it should have at the time when it was being done, but it’s—there’s a lot of work involved in something like that. And it really is, we’ve come now to see a very sensitive issue, you know, preservation versus property rights, you know, there—you have to be careful in the balance, that you, that you draw whenever you develop those kinds of regulations because both sides have valid points.

The other thing we did—one other thing I’ll mention very quickly that we did under Mayor Freedman was adopting concurrency regulations, I’m not sure if you’re familiar with the concept of concurrency, but it’s similar to DRI mitigation. And basically what it was, was a mandate by the state back in the late ‘80s, or early ‘90s that every local government adopt regulations that prohibit development to go forward unless there’s adequate capacity concurrent with the development, and that’s where the term concurrency comes from. And right now we see it as a significant issue with regard to schools, because what’s happening is development is outpacing the school facilities that we have available in Hillsborough County, and right now the County Commission and the school board are wrestling with to stop or slow development approvals because of the inadequate, inadequate school facilities that we have available to serve all of the students that will result from all that development.

But back in the early ‘90s, when that mandate first came down from the state, that every local government adopt concurrency regulations, Mayor Freedman working with our office, engaged Steve Siebert, who eventually became the Secretary of the State Department of Community Affairs. And we worked with him in drafting and implementing the city’s concurrency regulations. And they’ve been in existence for 16 years now, and really there’s never been a concurrency problem in the City of Tampa, which I think speaks well of Mr. Siebert and her choice in him, in developing the city’s concurrency regulations. But that was, that was—that concept was you know, all new at the time. Right now it’s probably familiar to a lot of people, but at the time we were you know, starting from scratch in developing a set of regulations and a process where we could ensure to the state that we wouldn’t approve a development unless there were facilities, infrastructure facilities available to serve that development.

RK: And did the concurrency drive the need for impact fees to any extent?

GG: Actually impact fees predated concurrency, but just—

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Tape 1, Side B]
RK: So we were speaking about concurrency—
GG: Right, I was saying that the misconception that a lot of people have about concurrency and impact fees they think that if they pay their impact fees that they meet concurrency, and while impact fees can pay for part of the, the impact that you have on the infrastructure facilities, it doesn’t pay for all of it. It doesn’t mean you’re concurrent. Because concurrency means there are adequate facilities, infrastructure facilities in place to serve your development. And while you might pay an impact fee, that doesn’t mean that you’ve fully mitigated for the impacts of your development proposal. Impact fees will only pay for a part of the impacts that your development may have on the infrastructure facilities. So concurrency is like above and beyond impact fees.

RK: Does the city coordinate with the county at all regarding concurrency?

GG: No. Every jurisdiction is required to implement it’s own concurrency ordinance of concurrent—we called our “a concurrency management system.” And we developed, we developed different points along the development process where a determination would be made whether or not you have—there were adequate facilities available to serve your development. And once you reach certain stages of the development or review and approval process, then that capacity on those infrastructure facilities would be effectively reserved for your development. So it was just working through the process and when was it fair to reserve capacity, and when was it too, too soon to reserve capacity for the various developments and the development approvals. So, the county’s concurrency process is separate entirely from the cities.

RK: Did the city coordinate with the county in any land use issues?

GG: Not that I recall under the Freedman administration. When you have separate local governments like that—well today there are intergovernmental coordination requirements under comprehensive planning concepts. At that time, the intergovernmental coordination really wasn’t at the forefront, I don’t even think it was a requirement under the comp plan at that point in time. Because that’s really when comp planning—comprehensive planning was first being implemented, the DRI regulations were first being implemented, concurrency was first implemented. So I think all the local governments were just struggling to get those processes in place and they were happy to get it done in their own jurisdiction and really, at the time, I think it probably would have been overwhelming to require them at the same time to coordinate with other local governments and have that kind of coordination. Maybe now, now that things have settled down and these regulations have been in place for a while there’s, there’s more opportunity for intergovernmental coordination.

RK: We were speaking—you were speaking about historic preservation, the conflict between preservation and property rights. Were you involved with the controversy regarding those two buildings on Madison, owned by I guess, the Lykes brothers?
GG: No. I wasn’t, I wasn’t the Assistant City Attorney involved in that. That was Barbara Vaka. She actually represented the ARC and Barrio Latino Commission on historic preservation issues. But the private attorney working on that was David Mechanic. And he at the time, worked for McFarlane Ferguson, who represented the Lykes brothers—their offices were actually in that building.

RK: I guess that was the most controversial as far as preservation?

GG: Yeah, actually that occurred at the very end of Mayor Freedman’s term, and it carried over into Mayor Greco’s term. There was a big lawsuit that was filed over it, and actually ended up being a settlement. It’s now referred to as the Lykes settlement that separates the historic designations process from the historic architectural review process. So now those are considered to be—that was the big controversy in that matter is that the question of designation and architectural review were kind of mixed and now they’re considered to be two wholly separate processes that are actually administered by two separate sets of staff people. Because the thought process was that you should first consider designation and then look at issues such as architectural review and that it—in that case, one of the primary issues was economic feasibility of the rehabilitation of that structure. And they’ve—they’re claim was that before the city and the ARC even considered historic significance, they were already, they had already—they jumped the gun and were already looking at the issue of economic feasibility of the rehabilitation. And the, the Lykes brothers at the time though that that—those processes should have been considered separately.

RK: So the City does things differently now because of that lawsuit?

GG: Oh yeah. Still those, those restrictions and separation of powers are still in place.

RK: And were they awarded by a judge or were they worked out?

GG: It was worked out by a settlement agreement, and then subsequently City Council had to adopt regulations that actually implemented the settlement agreement.

RK: And can they ever change?

GG: That’s an interesting question, a lot of people ask that question all the time, she always wants to, to make changes to the Lykes settlement. I think by virtue of that fact that it was a settlement agreement, the city’s contractually obligated to adhere to those processes. If someone could get the two parties back together and agree to amend it, probably the process could be amended.

RK: Do—?

GG: Go ahead—no—
RK: Did you have to appear often before City Council?

GG: Because City Council is primarily responsible for development approvals and I was involved in all the land use issues, I appeared in front of City Council quite often on land use and zoning issues.

RK: Sometimes public officials get characterized as more or less “pro-planning” or “pro-development”—I know that that’s not a fair you know, distinction in a sense, but did City Council have both represented? In other words, some wanted more regulations on developers, some less?

GG: I guess that’s a matter of perspective. I think that, I think over the years they were pretty balanced as far as individuals that were pro-development versus individuals that were—I wouldn’t say any of them were ever, I don’t recall any of them really being anti-development. Some were more conservative than others, but it was pretty balanced over the years.

RK: Would any of that stick out in terms really be concerned about planning issues and regulatory issues?

GG: Any council members?

RK: Yes, yes.

GG: Probably Linda Saul-Sena has been the most vocal on planning because she’s—as she will tell you, a former planner, or she used to be a planner, she’s still a planner. She maybe doesn’t call herself that, but she is. She was probably the most noble if any—worthy or vocal, on the issue, and the concepts of planning. Most of the other—one of the other Council members I recall had a background in that area. A lot of them were small business owners, couple lawyers over the years. None I recall being planners other than Linda.

RK: Now the City Council has a major say in land use as you just noted. Tampa’s known as a “strong mayor system” regarding land use, in other words, does the mayor and the administration kind of set the tone, or is City Council dominant?

GG: The administration definitely sets the tone whenever there is a development proposal. In any kind of development agreement with a developer, it is within the mayor’s purview to develop that agreement, negotiate that agreement and then present the agreement to council for their approval. So you have both the executive branch and the legislative branch that are involved in the process that check and balances this, but the administration of the strong mayor would be responsible for developing the proposal, negotiating it, drafting it, putting you know, pen to paper. And then it would be really up to council to vote it up or down. It really isn’t up to them to renegotiate it. Some of them try to, but it, it really was within the mayor’s purview to develop it and propose the development plan, and up to them to vote it up or down.
RK: And that emanates from the City Charter?

GG: Right, right, right.

RK: Did generally, I believe—is it true that usually City Council did support the administration?

GG: I think so. I think Mayor Freedman—Mayor Freedman more so probably than Greco, was careful about council overstepping their boundaries as far as their powers versus the mayor’s powers. Greco pretty much let council do whatever they want and didn’t worry about it. Well she was more I think in tune to what the Charter said, and was careful not to let council step too far beyond what its powers were. But I think that the council supported almost the majority of her proposals whenever she presented them.

She was, I remember one thing that she said that I think was interesting and certainly I found to be true over the years, and that’s that she didn’t—she made very infrequent appearances at council to ask them for anything. And the reason for that was so that when she did go down there, that it would be—they would know that it was a matter of significance and priority to her. And it would give it a certain level of importance, so I think she was very protective of and conservative about her appearances at council and only went down there in person to ask them for something when it was something that was really significant or important. And I think people did take notice of that. It’s kind of supply and demand sort of thing. It was valued, her appearance at council was valued and recognized more than let’s say with Greco. He just, he you know, frequently appeared at council just to address them.

RK: Did you have to interact at all with any neighborhood groups?

GG: Sure. Over the years, yeah. They in fact—I’m sure if you’ve talked to Steve Labour, have you?—

RK: Yes.

GG: That you heard a lot about the neighborhood element which was, we were probably one of the first jurisdictions in the State of Florida to have a neighborhood element as a component of our comprehensive plan. But neighborhood empowerment definitely came to be under the Freedman administration. With her recognition not just of neighborhood associations, but development of the neighborhood liaison and her city administration—

RK: And so you, I’m sorry.

GG: We worked, yeah, we worked with the neighborhood groups after that.

RK: And did they impact land use decisions at all in their neighborhood?
GG: You know it was very informal initially. Again, as I mentioned, the comp planning process first came to be in the late ‘80s, early ‘90s, and so people, individuals would come out whenever there was a development proposal in their neighborhood, and either object or support. But as time went on under the Freedman administration and neighborhood groups were actually formally recognized, I think they appeared more as, you know, as an entity as a whole appearing in front of council or, or working with the administration on issues that were important to their entire neighborhood and not just to them as an individual. So we worked with a lot of the neighborhood groups. We worked—I worked a lot and still work with Margaret Vizzi who I think everybody recognizes as the first neighborhood activist in the City of Tampa, or one of the first anyway. In fact I sit on the Citywide Review Committee with her right now. So she’s still active in, in land use issues.

RK: So this whole emphasis on fostering neighborhood organizations is clearly something you saw during your time in—with the city?

GG: Right. And you know what’s interesting too, is some developers think of it as like, by recognizing and empowering neighborhoods, it was an impediment to development. But actually when you—now that I’m on the other side and I represent developers, actually it really isn’t. Actually it facilitates development approvals because there is a recognized entity to which you can go and present your development proposal and get feedback, address concerns so that when you go in front of the local government for your formal development approval, you have an idea as to what the collective group in the area wants or doesn’t want. And so rather than trying to address issues on a shotgun approach where people just randomly show up at council or the County Commission and object, you can you know, you can know in advance and you can—there can be an identified group that you can go to and present your project to, and I think it, in the end, it facilitates development approvals as opposed to serving in some kind of impediment to them. You might not always like the answer they give you, but at least there’s a defined process that you can go through. And I think a lot of times developers, they appreciate that. They appreciate an answer even if it’s a “no,” better than just no answer at all.

RK: That’s interesting. Can I just ask a couple more questions?

GG: Sure.

RK: How would you characterize Mayor Freedman’s mayoral style, style of leadership?

GG: I think [if] there was one word I would use to characterize her and her administration I think it would be “sincerity.” In all my years in dealing with all the different elected officials that I’ve dealt with, she’s probably one of the most sincere people that I’ve ever met. She’s—it just doesn’t exist anymore among elected officials to have an individual that is genuinely sincere about positions they take. And she never took a position for purposes of her own agenda or any kind of self-serving reasons, it was always—she always had the interests of the citizens and, and the constituents at the fore front. And she never—she was not egotistical, she wasn’t power driven, she had no—I don’t, I never
thought, I never thought she had any kind of really aspirations beyond being the mayor, you know. She was like Greco in that regard—they cared a lot about the City of Tampa, and it wasn’t in their view, a stepping stone to anything else. They just wanted to do a really good job at being the mayor of the City of Tampa, and they, they were—she was very sincere in that concern, and that goal.

And her style was, in my view, I thought it was—I don’t want to say laid back, but she wasn’t interested in running departments like you see some elected officials now a days, they want to micromanage things. She was very deferential to her department heads, she always displayed a lot of confidence in their abilities, and let them run their own departments. She might have said things to them about different issues, but she never got involved in you know, their decisions to hire people, fire people, you know, how to run their department—she let them run their own departments. And I think that’s the way it should be for a mayor. There are more broad issues and bigger issues that they need to be worried about, than you know, hiring and firing decisions and running departments and worrying about how departments are structured and that sort of thing. I think when you get into that level of micromanaging you’re not, you’re not looking at the broader policy based issues that you should be looking at when you’re a mayor. And I think she was very, she was very deferential with all of her, all of her department heads and employees.

RK: You were there just for short period during the Martinez administration or—?

GG: Yeah, I believe, I came—I came to the city in ’85, and I think she became mayor in summer of ’85, if I’m—maybe it was longer—maybe it was year. Maybe it was summer of ’86. So—It was a short period of time.

RK: Okay. And did you stay on during the Greco administration?

GG: Yes I did.

RK: Okay, can you—

GG: I even stayed on through the Iorio administration.

RK: Oh, geez, Okay. [laughs]

GG: I’ve been through four mayors.

RK: Well that’s significant. And this is just one final question if you don’t mind. You have historical perspective of sorts, how would—what would you say about the Freedman administration in terms of kind of, the evolution of Tampa—using any criteria you want. In other words, when people look back 50 years from now, potentially, what might they say about this administration?

GG: I think that it would be growth. If it wasn’t for her leadership and developing, the various land use regulations that she developed and administering the, the DRI’s that she
did, that you wouldn’t see what I think is the responsible growth that you have in the City of Tampa. And I think if, from my standpoint, that’s an important part of her legacy is growth. It was talked about more in the Greco administration, but actually the groundwork was all laid in the Freedman administration.

RK: That’s so interesting to me because you used to read in the paper sometimes for example that some of the growth communities so to speak, development community felt that she went too far in terms of regulations.

GG: They always think that, they always think that. Usually you know, they think that they’re—there’s always some degree of truth in both sides positions, and she laid the groundwork for all the growth that’s taking place now. She’s the one that issued most of the—all of the development approvals were issued under her administration. They were—some of them were simply amended under the Greco administration, and—but the development approvals themselves occurred under her administration. And his administration really administered those development approvals, but, but she laid the groundwork. Her administration was the one that actually reviewed the development proposals and issued the development approvals, so.

RK: For?

GG: For all the growth you see taking place now.

RK: Well that’s interesting.

Well thank you very, very much.

GG: Sure.

RK: I know how busy you are, so it was nice that you could come by.

GG: Thanks.