



Please, Mr. Mayor, create a new park.

Trust for Historical Preservation and the National Trust for Historical Preservation, joined the neighborhood and spoke in favor of the city's protecting this parcel by following the historical guidelines at the gateway to the historical district. In theory, Howard Avenue was the boundary line for the historical district but the next block north there were open questions between zoning and the historical guidelines.

The architect's plan called for a 40+ story high-rise, the tallest on Bayshore and completely outside the character of the neighborhood. The project's developer assumed that this project would be readily authorized under the city administration.

The city council convened to listen to the architects give a report on the design of the building which included some very impressive drawings and language to describe how the building would fit into the neighborhood as a pedestrian friendly structure rather than tower over the neighborhood. What was particularly interesting to the neighbors at the city council meeting was that all the city departments: zoning, traffic planning, parks and recreation (who manage the tree ordinances), etc. stepped up to the podium to give the project the rubber stamp of approval to start construc-

## *I Remember When* **A Perfect Place For A Park**

**E**ver had an out-of-town visitor express an interest in looking at the "historical" high-rise condos on Bayshore Boulevard? Without exception, their interest is the older homes of Hyde Park, which are still intact thanks to the historical preservation effort in the "enlightened" era of the 1980's. This grass roots community effort, in partnership with the city, created legislation that designated Hyde Park as a historical district subject to strict guidelines to maintain the historical nature of the community. Hyde Park's period of historical significance was determined to be 1886-1933. Houses built during this period are considered "historical," and they may not be torn down or remodeled outside their original design. This legislation generally worked well enough as the neighbors remolded homes with care and devotion. Hyde Park evolved into a unique neighborhood, not just in the city but also in the state and even the nation. (That being said there were exceptions to this general rule of thumb, and some important structures were lost to the wreck-

ing ball by ambitious owners who wanted to display their new wealth by constructing Palm Beach style houses out of character with the traditional neighborhood.)

However, in the year 2000, there was a proposal before City Council to build a high-rise condominium on the corner of De Soto Avenue and Bayshore Boulevard. The De Soto Avenue residents, along with the Historic Hyde Park Neighborhood Associations and many others combined efforts to preserve this parcel as part of the historical district. The parcel in question had been residential, and the elegant traditional brick home had been demolished (see the pile of bricks photo) just prior to the historical ordinance going into effect in 1988. Even the late Sam Gibbons, along with the Florida





Bricks dug up from the prior home on this site.

tion. All departments confirmed that the project was appropriate for the city even though under further questioning from the city council members each department revealed they hadn't done adequate research on what the impact would be on the community. Many of the neighbors began to suspect that the city was only giving lip service to the Architectural Review Committee (ARC) guidelines and the city was conforming to a political or self-interest reality, which states that "The developer is always right."

After three years of meeting and slight modification of the plans, the case was finally to be decided before a judge who ruled that the structure was inappropriate for the "Historical District," to the joy of the neighbors. However, that joy was short-lived as that decision was eventually reversed on appeal. Many citizens still question why the city attempted to fight the appeal with in-house legal representation instead of hiring legal preservation experts to defend the original decision. The result of the appeal was that the developer regained the right to develop the property, he was compensated for loss of profit on use of his property and, perhaps worst of all, this case would discourage the city of ever giving credence to a community group attempting to restrict development.

What few remember looking back is how dedicated the citizens were in attempting to preserve this jewel entrance to their community. At least temporarily, the citizens were able to uphold the historical guidelines in spite of all the forces working against them.

Unfortunately, at the end of the day, zoning trumped the historical overlay, which was unfortunately very shortsighted but not surprising. Then a strange thing occurred—actually not so strange, as Florida's real estate market has always been cyclical in nature. The market tumbled due to the sub-prime meltdown, and building condominiums in South Tampa was suspended for the next five years. That is no longer the case today. High-rise condominiums are back in vogue, and this property on Bayshore and De Soto Avenue is an attractive site once again.

The good news is that "It is not too late." Mayor Buckhorn has been supporting the purchase of land for parks throughout the city. Perhaps that policy could be extended to Hyde Park? Currently, the lot in question on Bayshore and De Soto is for sale with HR zoning so the costs might be high, but what a great opportunity for the City of Tampa to do something for the community. Currently, there's only one park of any size on the west side of Bayshore Boulevard (Fred Ball Park).

The city walk in downtown Tampa only took 30 years to complete but offers a suggestion of what a civic effort can eventually accomplish to improve an area. Public parks have proven to be a valuable asset for cities, the neighborhoods and their citizens; a few good examples are Portland, Minneapolis and Charleston to name a few.

Here is a unique opportunity for the city of Tampa to do something positive for the neighborhood and the community after abandoning them on this issue in 2008 and permitting zoning to supersede historical guidelines. Let's encourage the City to do the right thing: purchase the parcel and build a park. Create a grand gateway to the Historic Hyde Park District.

Reported by  
**Bayshore Bob,**  
a Hyde Park resident

*Celebrating 24 Years in Business (1993-2017)*

COMMERCIAL • PERSONAL • LIFE • HEALTH

## BRIER GRIEVES

### INSURANCE

*Put our experienced professionals to work for you*

***Rates are down! Call us for a quote.***

**813-876-4166**

**BGAINS.COM**

**3617 HENDERSON BLVD., TAMPA, FL 33609**