

Ybor City is at a pivotal point, in a prime position to take advantage of its potential. It has almost all the pieces of a traditional neighborhood, many of which remain from its thriving 19th and early 20th century history. Yet after nearly a half century of neglect, followed by narrowly focused attempts at revitalization, numerous significant changes and investments still need to be made to bring in the people, uses, and quality of life services necessary for a fully functioning community.

During the last fifteen or so years, the City of Tampa made allowances to encourage business development in Ybor City. To attract tourists and visitors, Ybor City was given the moniker of an “entertainment district” and a relaxation of zoning laws was permitted to allow nighttime uses such as bars and clubs to act as a stimulant for economic development.

However, what seemed at the time to be a remedy has since become a hindrance. Marketing Ybor as an “entertainment district” has defined it as a single use area. The public perception is that of a place for drinking, rowdiness and roaming young people, an image that is reinforced by the “drinking mall” atmosphere created by the weekend night closure of 7th Avenue. This reputation, as well as actual crime problems, keep many potential visitors away. It has become clear to the City of Tampa that Ybor cannot succeed based on nighttime entertainment alone. At present, there is very limited daytime activity, and the bars contribute to a ghost town appearance until they open at night.

Fortunately, interest in owning a business, working, and living in Ybor City has recently grown. This change is evident in new restaurants, the TECO streetcar line, revitalization of historic buildings, and not least, a significant amount of new housing north and south of the historic core. With its momentum building, Ybor City can soon be at a point of transition to a healthy community with a mix of uses and a spectrum of age groups. What will be required is attention to the recommendations in this report and great effort on the part of all the groups involved.



A revitalized Seventh Avenue at dusk



Infill development on Eighth Avenue

Existing Conditions (Section II)

Current Market Conditions

In the spring of 2004, the Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission released a report with a complete economic and market assessment for Ybor City. A detailed analysis of this report is discussed in Section II. Several of the summary points include:

- A projected population increase from 2032 people in 2000 to 4300 people by 2025.
- A projected employment increase from 8780 to 16,000 by 2025.
- Almost 900,000 residents living within fifteen miles of Ybor City, with a median household income of approximately \$43,000 per year.
- An increase in residential infill development.
- A strong warehouse and light industrial market.
- A growing office market, particularly in small historic buildings.
- A weak retail market.
- Projected growth of Hillsborough County and the Tampa Bay region.
- Recent development in downtown Tampa.
- Continued growth of the Port of Tampa.

Regulatory Environment

To enable the kind of development and quality of life that is desired by the community, various existing ordinances need to be reviewed by the city and amended. These include:

- Wet Zoning policies
- Zoning and Land Use
- Noise
- Parking
- Panhandling and Loitering
- Solid Waste
- Stormwater Management



Activating the night club storefronts

The Community Visioning Process (Section III)

To plan for the future of Ybor City, The Ybor City Development Corporation Visioning Committee decided to elicit a community vision for the area. The community visioning process lasted over a period of several weeks in December 2004. It consisted of many individual and group interviews, and three public meetings, one of which was a daylong workshop to solicit as many ideas as possible. The community reached a consensus of the following issues:

- 7th Avenue must expand and enhance its activity cycle, especially during daytime hours;
- Support additional infill redevelopment of residential units, especially south of 6th Avenue and east of 22nd Street;
- Create more parks and open space;
- Encourage arts and culture;
- Target specific retail markets for appropriate locations;
- Improve transportation linkages;
- Shift focus and marketing effort for events to emphasize daytime activity and historic/cultural heritage;
- Hillsborough Community College’s future growth should be directed along lines that would encourage the students to circulate more widely into the community;
- Improve visitor friendliness and direction;
- Consider centralized management/merchandising for the historic core/7th Avenue;
- Expand wireless technology through Ybor City;
- Enforce existing codes;
- Build more parking and restructure parking methods for visitor friendliness;
- Continued streetscape beautification and crosswalk safety;



A civic plaza at Centro Ybor

The Vision Plan and Recommendations (Sections IV and V)

Implementation of the Community Vision will depend on the following four major areas of focus:

Organization and Management

- Formation of a Community Improvement Team to coordinate the vision plan tasks between YCDC and the City of Tampa and other appropriate agencies
- Formation and administration of a special assessment district for properties within the YC-1 zoning district to help fund community improvements such as a retail tenant lease incentive and a comprehensive parking strategy.

Regulatory Changes

- Enforce existing regulations regarding noise, solid waste, and illegal parking lots;
- Enforce existing building codes;
- Closely monitor wet zonings and consider new restrictions to limit aggressive promotion and the target marketing of younger patrons;
- Keep 7th Avenue open to traffic at all times;
- Reformat parking policies to shift costs from the customers to the property owners;
- Consider additional height and density in certain areas;
- Consider usage fees for disproportionate demand on public services;
- Establish appearance standards for 7th avenue storefronts;

Key Incentives

- Relax height limits for new development;
- Change fee structure for public parking;
- Provide lease rate subsidies for preferred streetfront tenants.

Capital Improvements

The physical elements of the Vision involve carrying out several capital improvement projects. These include:

- Renovation of the plaza/open space at Centro Ybor to form a stronger connection between 7th and 8th Avenues;
- Relocation of visitor's center, and improvement to 16th Street between Centro Ybor and the garage.
- Improvements to Centennial Park, to include a stronger link to 7th Avenue.;
- Construction of a new public parking garage at the eastern end of the historic core;
- Continued reinstatement of brick streets and commensurate streetscape elements, especially along 15th, 21st, and 22nd Streets;
- Grants for façade and storefront improvements to historic structures.

Funding for these improvements is expected to come from a variety of sources. The principal new source of funding proposed here is the levying of a special assessment on properties within the YC-1 district to fund incentives for more a more favorable tenant mix and to provide matching funds for parking improvements and other capital projects. Other funding sources could include state grants that apply to historic areas, as well as federal grants that support transit related projects (the first choice for a proposed new garage would be at the terminus of the streetcar line, opening the possibility of defining it as a transit improvement.

Other funding sources include the continuing stream of tax increment funds, which has in the past funded such items as streetscape improvements and open space enhancements. Some of the projects, such as the changes to the plaza at Centro Ybor, could be funded by private investors as part of a periodic renovation of the property. All of these factors, working in close coordination, will be necessary to complete the vision.