

# 106 SUCCESS STORY

## Rebuilding a Highway Reconnects a Divided Historic Community

Tampa, Florida



### THE STORY

Ybor City was founded in the 1880s by cigar manufacturers from Key West, Florida, and grew into a successful town almost entirely populated and owned by immigrants, mainly from Cuba, Spain, and Italy. The city of Tampa annexed Ybor City in 1887, and, for decades, the cigar industry employed thousands of well-paid workers, giving Tampa the nickname “The Cigar City.”

Fifty years ago the coming of the Interstate Highway System through Tampa promised economic revitalization and urban renewal for portions of the city, but for the Ybor City historic district, the new Interstate meant further degradation. Decline in the U.S. manufacture of hand-rolled cigars had already taken a toll on the vibrant multi-cultural community, but Interstate 4 (I-4) cut through the community in the 1950s, removing multiple historic structures and dividing the neighborhood in two. In the 1970s, the part of Ybor City south of I-4 saw something of a renaissance after being placed on the National Register of Historic Places and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1991. Increased investment in the area brought additional brick streets and iron street lamps, originally found in Ybor City, as well as trendy clubs and urban shops to the commercial section. However, the edges of the residential areas bordering I-4 and the section of Ybor City to the north continued to decline.

### THE PROJECT

By the early 1990s, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) were planning an expansion of the original four-lane highway. Although the new plan would remove heavy trucks from city streets and correct other existing problems, Ybor City faced the removal of even more of its historic fabric. In 1991, however, Ybor’s historic significance and the needs of its residents would be in the forefront as highway plans were developed.

### THE 106 PROCESS

FHWA, the federal agency funding this project, was responsible for conducting the

“Major highway improvements often are accused of destroying communities, but in this instance, we’re clearly enhancing one.”

—KEN HARTMANN

District Seven Secretary, Florida DOT  
as reported in *Public Roads*,  
September/October 2004 edition

Photos: Above, 21st and 22nd streets before the project; housing relocated; Right, 2607 N. 19th Street before and after move and renovation (photos courtesy Florida Department of Transportation)

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Section 106 process under the National Historic Preservation Act. Section 106 requires that federal agencies identify historic properties and assess the effects of the projects they carry out, fund, or permit on those properties. Federal agencies also are required to consult with parties that have an interest in the historic property when adverse effects may occur.

Five years of extensive public involvement and close coordination of all the public agencies, including the city, Florida State Historic Preservation Officer, FDOT, FHWA, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) resulted in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that laid the ground work for success in providing needed improvements to the highway while enhancing the surrounding community. An exemplary, interactive public involvement initiative, including bilingual meetings, provided updates on project study results and received recommendations. The resulting MOA had the full support of all parties and implemented innovative steps to mitigate impacts to historic resources. Measures included relocation, rehabilitation, and re-sale of 64 historic structures that otherwise would have been lost. Forty of the relocated structures were placed in the neighborhood north of I-4 to reconnect and rebuild the community where the original Interstate had been put through decades earlier. Others were moved to vacant lots south of I-4, further consolidating the community and enhancing the Ybor City State Museum. The project continues to reap benefits as the proceeds from the sale of the relocated and restored buildings is reinvested in the community through a revolving trust fund.

Photos: From left, Columbus Street streetscape; process of moving a house; the house relocated (photos courtesy Florida Department of Transportation)

**Consulting Parties:**

- Florida Division of FHWA
- Florida State Historic Preservation Officer
- ACHP
- Florida Department of Transportation
- City of Tampa

**THE SUCCESS**

The Section 106 process succeeded through planning, interagency cooperation, context-sensitive design solutions, and strong partnerships between government and the local communities. The project partners' understanding of, and respect for, the public involvement process was evident in their creation of materials for presentation to the public, including a succinct summary of the Section 106 process that was even incorporated into the ACHP's national Section 106 training. An active Cultural Resources Committee, created by the MOA, successfully guided the housing relocation project. Even with the rehabilitation work still underway, all of the homes were sold or under contract, with a waiting list for the remainder. The relocation project became a catalyst for revitalization of the whole community as homeowners in the area began their own rehabilitation projects, which can be seen all around Ybor City.

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For more about Section 106 and the ACHP go to [www.achp.gov](http://www.achp.gov)



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