

Greetings:

I've called Saint Petersburg home for more than five decades, residing just outside the Historic Gas Plant District near Lake Maggiore Shores. Growing up, I didn't know anyone from the District or did not realize they lived there. I vividly remember driving through, heading north on 16th Street South, seeing homes in varying states of repair. The dilapidated Laurel Park public housing complex sticks out in my memory, along with the relocation of its tenants in the early '90s.

Opinions on the District's vibrancy vary, but I believe many relocated residents found better living situations. We must acknowledge the trauma of displacement, especially considering the racial climate and redlining in Saint Petersburg's past.

The Tampa Bay Rays didn't create the District's history; they inherited broken promises and spirits. Their commitment to redeveloping it, along with staying in Saint Petersburg, shows a willingness to take on ambitious plans.

The past can't be erased, but the proposed Woodson African American Museum of Florida at the District's entrance pays homage to its history. It will preserve the stories of Cooper's Quarters, Methodist Town, Peppertown, Jamestown, and Little Egypt, shedding light on the truth.

The redevelopment, with a modern ballpark, hotels, public spaces, housing, and businesses, promises tax revenue, local jobs, and potential tourism. Critics focus on financial doubts, but I see the Rays/Hines proposal as brave and promising.

As a community member seeking positivity, I believe it's time to leave past disappointments behind and honor the Historic Gas Plant District's people and land with intention. Rays up!

D. E. White

Danny E. White, President|Founder
RaceWithoutIsm, Inc
racewithoutism.com
727.346.8830

