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EMPLOYING A PUBLIC POLICY EVALUATIVE FRAMEWORK: AN ANALYSIS OF
DOMESTIC THEME PARK DEVELOPMENT

By

Anthony Gray Houser

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College

Oxford, MS

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Approved By

Advisor: Joseph Holland

Reader: Dr.

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Dedication

To my parents for supporting my crazy Disney obsession all these years.

Acknowledgments

None of this would have been possible without the love and support of my entire family. The encouragement of my advisor Dr. Holland, who set me down this road two years ago. The assistance and knowledge of Disney Imagineer Eddie Sotto and author Len Testa who were always responsive to my many texts and phone calls, the connections of former Imagineer Joe Lanzisero, and the kindness of everyone I interviewed, including former Imagineer Tim Delaney, Lou Mongello, Jim Hill, Eddie Sotto, and Len Testa.

Abstract

The intention of the thesis is to examine the relationship between the development of the Walt Disney Company's theme parks and public policy. Using the Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, California and the Walt Disney World Resort outside of Orlando, Florida as case studies, this thesis will execute a comparative analysis to better understand the relationship between the Walt Disney Company's theme parks and public policy. Using an evaluative framework, this thesis will provide a deeper understanding of how public policy affected the development and the current operations of these theme parks. The driving research question in this thesis is, 'what is the relationship between the Walt Disney Company theme parks and public policy?'

In the next chapter, I will provide background of the development of theme parks. In Chapter 3, I will provide the methodological approach utilized in this thesis. Next, in Chapter 4, I will highlight the findings between the case studies utilizing a policy evaluation framework. Finally, in Chapter 5, I will present a discussion and conclusion.

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A Great Big Beautiful Thesis

Chapter 1: Introduction

Theme parks are uniquely American. Since before the founding of the United States, people gathered in common spaces to participate in shared experiences. Initially, people gathered during the First Great Awakening, a period during the 1730's in which the colonies experienced intense religious fervor. People gathered in open fields and other such places to hear sermons and sing hymns. By the time of the American Revolution, patriots gathered under "Liberty Trees" to discuss the events of the day.

During the industrial revolution, two separate types of communal spaces were created that influenced and grew into the modern theme park industry. The first were the "pleasure parks." These amusements popped up across the country to give the working man, and his family, a place to unwind in pleasant surroundings and, most importantly, to gather with other people and have a collective experience such as a picnic, a performance, or later, even ride a rollercoaster. These parks evolved, adding one or two simple rides, like a carousel.

HersheyPark, located in Hershey, Pennsylvania, opened in 1906, it is one of the few pleasure parks that endured the test of time, and evolved into a modern quasi-theme park. HersheyPark, then styled as "Hershey Park" initially opened with no rides, but over time expanded to include dozens of rides and rollercoasters, and by summer of 2020 opened its first truly themed area, "Chocolate Town," continuing the park's evolution from pleasure park, to amusement park, to theme park.

Meanwhile, on the shores of the East Coast, a number of more advanced boardwalk-based parks were popping up. The heart of this burgeoning industry was Coney Island in New York. Coney Island, at the time, was not simply one park like it is

today, instead it was a large complex that contained many different attractions, amusements, and parks.

The second type of common space were World's Fairs. The World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893 honored the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' 'discovery' of the New World. This fair is famous for a number of things, including the debut of the Ferris Wheel, and the ghastly murders committed by H. H. Holmes, one of America's first serial killers, at his "Murder Castle", which sported such features as affixation chambers, hallways to nowhere, torture chambers, and even large chutes that took bodies from the upper floors to the basement level to be incinerated. Holmes' hotel was located right next to the heart of the Fair, the midway.

One of the standout elements of the Fair was the use of electric lighting, not only was it used for practical lighting on lamp posts, but also for decorative purposes such as the "popcorn" lights on top of buildings. This would prove to be incredibly influential and other parks, including Luna Park, adopted it over the years. It can still be seen today at some of the most visited parks in the world.

The thread that connects Liberty Trees, pleasure parks, World's Fairs, boardwalks, and modern theme and amusement parks is that they are places where large masses of people gather to have a collective experience. While it is true that not everyone in these common spaces experiences a ride or attraction at the exact same time, as they would a speech under a Liberty Tree or a sermon at a religious gathering, they are still having a collective experience. For example, you observe the after effects of a collective experience when you exit an attraction like Rise of the Resistance at Disneyland Park and Disney's Hollywood Studios or Kingda Ka at Six Flags Great

Adventure, where you will see total strangers turn to each other and marvel at what they just experienced together. You can also observe this at parks when something doesn't go as planned. For example, in September 2021, I attended the opening night of Universal Studio's Halloween Horror Nights 30. There was a torrential downpour, everyone in the park got completely soaked. I had to take off my shoes to empty them of water after walking from the parking garage to the front of the park, but the park was electric, you could feel the excitement in the air. Guests became nicer, team members became nicer. There was a sense of comradery between every guest and team member that extended beyond any social divisions. People who would otherwise never speak to each other were talking and laughing and commiserating. We were having a collective experience in a common space. Unfortunately, for many common spaces, time does not stand still, and many common spaces dwindle and die out. However, by the mid twentieth century a small farm turned roadside attraction would become the world's first theme park, changing the themed entertainment industry forever.

Knott's Berry Farm, or 'Knott's', as its diehard fans refer to it, was the first park to attempt to create the immersive spaces that are now the bedrock of theme parks. "Ghost Town," as Walter Knott called his attraction, was designed to complement the adjacent fried chicken restaurant his wife had opened to help support the family through the Great Depression. The theme park featured no rides, and didn't even charge an admission fee, but soon began welcoming thousands of visitors who trekked all the way from Los Angeles to Buena Park, California on dirt roads to get a taste of the Knott's Berry Farm experience.

Among those early guests at ‘Knott’s’ was Walt Disney, who had begun to envision a park that would soon dwarf Knott’s Berry Farm. At the time, Walt was calling his park “Mickey Mouse Park” and was planning to build it on an empty plot of land in Burbank, California. The park would feature a river, complete with a paddle wheeler, a recreation of small-town America, and even a haunted house. The attention to detail, theming, and overall quality of the project would have far surpassed Knott’s Berry Farm. However, this was lost on local policy makers who scoffed at allowing what they saw as a permanent county fair to be built in their town. Walt was undeterred and didn’t even bother attempting to correct them because, as he explained to his loyal animator and early collaborator on the park, Herb Ryman, his ideas had far outgrown the vacant lot.

Walt eventually settled on Anaheim, California after an extensive land search was conducted by Buzz Price of the Stanford Research Institute, who also completed a feasibility study. Walt bought 160 acres in what was at the time orange groves in the middle of nowhere. Town leaders were enthused, and for a time, it looked like Walt would be able to build his park without the interference of local officials and policymakers.

The opening of Disneyland Park on July 17, 1955, and the Disneyland Hotel on October 5, 1955, represented the birth of the modern theme park industry. Theme parks are fundamentally different than amusement or pleasure parks in two key ways. First, theme parks are made up of highly immersive storytelling environments that transport visitors to another place and time. In these spaces, commonly called “lands,” visitors will find equally immersive dining and shopping along with attractions and rides. Importantly,

these rides and attractions are not merely steel monoliths designed to induce thrilling and fun physical sensations like at amusement parks such as Six Flags. They are storytelling machines. Each attraction tells a story that is often structured similarly to literary works. These attractions cost hundreds of millions of dollars to construct and millions more to maintain to “show standards,” meaning an acceptable number of the robotic figures, lighting, and special effects in the attraction are operational. At Disney’s Animal Kingdom, for example, riders on “Expedition Everest - Legend of the Forbidden Mountain” aren’t just riding a rollercoaster, they are joining an expedition to the main basecamp on Mount Everest in Nepal. To get to the basecamp, however, they must board a converted tea train and travel through the Forbidden Mountain, allegedly home to the mythical Yeti. Events transpire, and guests end up taking a wild ride and coming face to face with the beast. At no point during the attraction do guests encounter elements or scenery that would take them out of the story. The specific example of “Expedition Everest - Legend of the Forbidden Mountain” serves to illustrate “thematic integrity,” or the ability of the park to maintain an immersive experience for the riders. In today’s theme park industry, park operators will refuse to construct a new project in areas that do not meet their exact requirements, unlike modern amusement park operators who simply need to find enough open land. This reality forces local officials to create policy that accommodates large park operators. Towns and cities have lost planned projects because they were not accommodating enough.

Second, theme parks are also distinct from amusement parks in that they are destinations where people come from hundreds, or even thousands of miles, trekking across international borders. As such they usually are accompanied by some sort of

resort. Amusement parks are designed to appeal to more local markets, drawing the bulk of their attendance from people within driving distance of the park, amusement parks do not typically feature on site hotels, or an on-site shopping and dining area separate from the park proper. This is why Six Flags or Cedar Fair have dozens of parks in dozens of cities across the country, but Disney and Universal, the two largest. and inarguably the industry leading theme park companies, have only two locations in the United States. Although they often have multiple parks as part of those larger theme park resorts.

In 1955, Walt Disney and his team of “Imagineers” at WED Inc. (now Walt Disney Imagineering) had no formal or informal policy experience nor did they seek to bring in anyone who did. This lack of foresight led to numerous nuisances that Walt could not stand but ultimately could do little about. For example, due to Disneyland’s immense popularity, a smattering of cheap motels and sideshows began to encroach on the theme park, these outside operations could be seen from inside the park, breaking guests’ immersive experience, this was unacceptable to Walt.

The intention of the thesis is to examine the relationship between the development of the Walt Disney Company’s theme parks and public policy. Using the Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, California and the Walt Disney World Resort outside of Orlando, Florida as case studies, this thesis will execute a comparative analysis to better understand the relationship between the Walt Disney Company’s theme parks and public policy. Using an evaluative framework, this thesis will provide a deeper understanding of how public policy affected the development and the current operations of these theme parks. The driving research question in this thesis is, ‘what is the relationship between the Walt Disney Company theme parks and public policy?’

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Chapter 2: The Background of American Theme Parks

The road to the modern American theme park, and indeed the type of park that America has exported to countries across the globe, is long and circuitous, and in this chapter, I will briefly sketch the journey beginning with the World's Columbian Exposition, which was held in Chicago in 1893. Also known as the 'Chicago World's Fair,' it was held to honor the 400th Anniversary of Columbus' discovery of the Americas. The fair was divided into two areas, one that would be familiar to visitors of previous fairs, and one that was brand new but would become incredibly influential and important to this story. The area that fairgoers would be familiar with was called the White City. It was the more traditional area with its well-manicured lawns, and striking pavilions that housed demonstrations of the latest technological advancements. The other area, and the one that is more central to this research, was the Midway. This area would become a staple of future World's Fairs and would influence boardwalks, amusement parks, and other recreation spaces up to the present day. The star of the Midway is immediately recognizable to amusement park goers today, and almost no park would be complete without one. It was the Ferris Wheel. Created by George Washington Gale Ferris, Jr, the 'Chicago Wheel', as it was sometimes called, was 264 feet tall and was designed to rival the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France, which was constructed for the 1889 Paris Exposition.

The Midway was created by fair organizers who wanted to keep the fair proper, the White City area, free of the sideshows, attractions, and diversions that at previous fairs had encroached on the fairgoers experience. Organizers designed a sophisticated area free of the nuisances that would appeal to the common man. The Encyclopedia of

Chicago puts it this way, “The villages created in the Midway were supposed to provide visitors with glimpses of ‘primitive’ cultures, in contrast with ‘civilization’ as presented in the White City.” The Encyclopedia does note, however, that most visitors went to the Midway for the “entertainment and shopping, enticed by the Ferris Wheel and other attractions and concessions (Encyclopedia of Chicago, 2021).” These fairgoers *experienced* entertainment. The lesson that park designers took from the World’s Columbian Exposition was that potential parkgoers wanted to be entertained above all else, even at the expense of things like manicured landscaping and beautiful buildings. America was now entering the “Golden Age of Amusement Parks.”

While amusements became increasingly popular, policymakers and urban planners still believed that parks should be relegated to the outskirts of cities as they were unappealing and detrimental to property values, and attracted what in the eyes of urban planners and policy makers, were a lower class of consumer who brought with them vice and crime. This created an unfair dichotomy, in which a World’s Fair was a desirable development that was viewed as an engine of economic and community growth. However, amusement parks were viewed as undesirable developments that hampered growth and fostered a negative overall environment. This can in part be explained by social and economic prejudice on the part of policy makers and urban planners, who saw amusement parks’ appeal amongst the working class as a negative rather than a positive, ignoring the economic growth opportunities that come with widespread appeal.

Therefore, as Americans began to work fewer hours and had more disposable income, park operators who sought to seize the moment and construct parks were forced locate their ventures outside of, or on the outskirts of, major cities. They had more

success in finding favorable locations in comparatively smaller, rural areas. The most iconic of all the parks built during the early period of the “Golden Age” was Coney Island in Brooklyn, New York. It was the epitome of the American amusement park at the time. Judith A. Adams writes in “The American Amusement Park Industry: A History of Technology and Thrills” that Coney Island, “never attempted to raise the cultural sophistication of its millions of visitors. The ‘pyrotechnic insanitarium’ provided a release from the swelling pressures of crowded, dingy urban areas as well as increasingly mechanized and regimented industrial work,” Adams also notes that Coney Island was important to America’s assimilation of immigrant workers, saying that “besides generating fun and frolic, [Coney] allowed members of the growing urban working class, many of whom were immigrants or born of immigrant parents, to assimilate and participate in a culture ever more dominated by the machine.”

Coney Island wasn’t always an amusement park, but from its earliest development, it was a place for leisure and relaxation, during the early to mid-nineteenth century, before the development and propagation of new methods of transportation made semi-long and long-distance travel easier and more convenient, Coney Island was home to seaside resorts that catered to upper-middle and high-class patrons. With the advent of new methods of transportations, those customers gradually began to vacation farther and farther away. This loss of visitors led to worsening ecumenic conditions in area, which led to an increase in crime, which itself led to an increase in vigilantism. The Brooklyn Daily Eagle wrote in 1885, “West Brighton ... is sitting in the sand crying and weeping, and the reason that she is crying and weeping is that she has been beautifully slapped in the face during the past two seasons by the respectable people of New York and

Brooklyn (Sullivan).” It was in the midst of this turmoil that West Brighton, now being called Coney Island, began to resemble an amusement park, although at its height Coney Island would actually consist of multiple parks and pleasure piers. This degradation further reenforced in the eyes of the policymakers and urban planners the notion that amusements were a low-class form of entertainment not suitable for their cities and were useful only in placating and distracting the masses.

Also important to the development of the industry were Trolley Parks and Electric Parks, these were more traditional park areas when compared with their boardwalk focused cousins, created by Trolley and Rail Companies whose operators sought to increase ridership at night and on weekends, and in some cases to promote and advertise housing developments. Briefly put, their business model consisted of purchasing land at the end of their trolley route and placing various amusements and recreation areas there, often centered around picnic areas, lush gardens, and merry-go-rounds. These picnic and garden areas partially explain the origin of the latter half of the now billion-dollar industry’s name. Also pioneered there was the placement of tiny electric lights all around the park and surrounding buildings to showcase the wizardry of electricity, this garnered some of the larger parks the nickname “Electric Parks.” (Imaginerding, 2019).

It’s important to note when talking about Coney Island and the Amusement Parks of the “Golden Age” that unlike most modern parks, these didn’t charge admission and weren’t gated, meaning that anyone could visit the park and take in the atmosphere without paying a penny. Instead, parkgoers paid per attraction. This business model was not only positive for the independent vendors who operated within the parks (perhaps the most famous of Coney Island’s vendors was Nathan’s Hotdogs, which traces its origin

back to Coney Island), but also was positive in a more abstract way of perpetuating the idea of amusement parks in the American culture. By the 1920's, there were over 2,000 amusement parks and rollercoasters throughout the United States (Imaginerding, 2019). However, this business model helped to perpetuate the idea among policymakers and urban planners that theme parks were for lower class people who couldn't afford to go elsewhere. Important to note, however, is that the policymakers and urban planners were not incorrect in their assumptions about amusement and theme parks of the time, which did serve primarily as entertainment for the working class and immigrant communities. Parks of this era featured downright dangerous attractions and cruel depictions and exhibits of the disabled, often called "Freak Shows" (Kyriazi, 72).

The driving appeal of all these disparate categories of parks that existed in around the turn of the twentieth century, be they boardwalks, pleasure piers, electric parks, trolley parks, or something different entirely, was that they provided the working class with an escape from the harsh realities of the Gilded Age. Adams notes that Americans had "been faced with progressively worsening social and urban problems, a government lacking moral integrity, a chaotic and competitive working world and the severing of the family unit (Adams, 169)" all within a short period of time. At this time, parks were actually serving an important societal purpose, giving a discontented population an escape valve that wouldn't be otherwise available or as readily accessible. This necessity would be short-lived and the industry would be moving out of the "Golden Age of Amusement Parks" due to a number of new technologies and geopolitical events.

First, the Motion Picture Industry was on the rise at the same time as amusement parks appeared to be dying across the East Coast and Middle America. The idea of the

Nickelodeon was rapidly gaining steam. Nickelodeons were the first dedicated indoor spaces designed to show movies in the United States (Agnew, 28). Named for the price of admission, a nickel, these movie houses posed a real threat to the amusement park industry as they changed consumer habits and better fit in with the wishes of urban planners and policy makers. Instead of going to the local pleasure pier or amusement park once a week for 10 cents or more, consumers could visit the Nickelodeon two or more times a week. Urban planners preferred the Nickelodeon because they took up no more space than a traditional shop and did not require additional infrastructure to be erected.

This new competition from movie theaters seemed to be an insurmountable problem for park operators, but a welcome alternative for urban planners. For a period of time it seemed like the fixed-site amusement park industry was dying off, to be replaced by a combination of Nickelodeons and non-fixed site amusements, namely traveling fairs and circuses which were preferable to urban planners and policymakers due to their temporary nature and their necessitation of being located near railroads on the outskirts of towns and cities.

The industry was on its last legs due to the propagation of movie houses and by the start of the Great Depression, it appeared that Amusement Parks would become a thing of the past as they slowly died off. It would take a major innovation to save the industry, and in 1955 the industry was changed forever due to the opening of Disneyland (which we will discuss in detail in later).

By the late 1950's and early 1960's policymakers and urban planner's opinions of fixed-site amusement and theme parks had radically changed due to the success and quality of Disneyland. By the mid-twentieth century, having an amusement park was

every public official's dream. Heads turned across the nation as Anaheim, California, the home of Disneyland, experienced rapid economic development at an unthinkable speed. Suddenly a town that was entirely orange groves became a smattering of motels, shops, service stations and more overnight. Policymakers now recognized that parks were not meccas of vice, poverty, and depravity, but instead economic drivers that could put their city on the map and drive tourism levels sky-high.

This sudden change of heart on the part of policymakers and urban planners was quickly capitalized on by perspective park owners and for every success there were multiple failures. Policymakers soon realized that while their town might become the home to the next roaring success like the original Six Flags in Texas, it also had the very real potential to become the home of the next abject failure like Freedomland U.S.A., which was located in New York City (Virginto, 268). This realization on the part of urban planners and policymakers recreated the mentality of turn of the century. Policymakers, simply replaced World's Fairs with parks built by previously successful companies or well-heeled park operators who could withstand a rough opening while their creative people worked out the kinks and improved the park. The logic being that having the next "Disneyland" would be fantastic, but having your town be home to the "Land of Oz" theme park less so.

Weariness on the part of city leaders, however, is not completely unfounded, as the recipe for success in the theme and amusement park industry is ethereal and sometimes not even fully understood by the biggest players. In fact, it wasn't until 2016 that the first truly comprehensive guide on theme park design principles was published, "Theme Park Design" by David Younger, which accomplished Imagineer and themed

experience designer Eddie Sotto called, “an E Ticket” and his equally accomplished Disneyland Paris colleague, Imagineer Tim Delaney called. “The most comprehensive book in experiential design” and “the gold standard for the themed design industry.” Large conglomerates with endless bank accounts and access to the best resources have failed time and time again. One example is MGM’s “MGM Grand Adventures Theme Park.” This park seemed to be a surefire hit, it was backed by a large company and was even located off the Las Vegas Strip adjacent to the MGM Grand hotel and casino. The 33-acre park only operated as a theme park from 1993 to 2001 (Strow). MGM’s failure and that of similar parks was obvious from the start to theme park designers and insiders, all of whom have a deep, internalized understanding of the mystical creative process and of theme park design principles, but the failure came as a complete shock to policymakers and urban planners who looked at the project through an economic and policy lens using economic impact reports and raw data. This weariness of the unknown and a lack of design knowledge on the part of policymakers and government officials has caused them to only trust major industry leaders such as Disney, Universal, and Six Flags and occasionally allow proposals from industry veterans who for a large portion of their career worked for one or more of the major firms. This barrier to entry not only holds back the theme park industry as a whole, but also hampers potential economic growth in communities. It is therefore imperative that policymakers and local government leaders looking to develop theme and amusement parks in their area go back to the birth of the modern industry and learn from history, not just on a macro-level, but also on an ‘in the weeds’ design level.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Case studies, according to Borg (2004), involve “systematically gathering enough information about a particular person, social setting, event, or group to permit the researcher to effectively understand how the subject operates or functions (Borg, 251).” Case studies do this by following a methodological approach and integrating multiple “data-gathering measures.” Data used can include, but is not limited to, documents, personal accounts of events both written and oral, in-depth interviews, and participant observation. This approach allows the researcher to have a wholistic view of the event, person, or situation. This, in turn allows him or her to “capture various nuances, patterns, and more latent elements that other research approaches might overlook (252).”

Borg, further goes on to highlight the applicability of the case study in many fields, a small sampling of which he directly names, including medicine, business, psychology, and law among others. In the field of public administration, one noted case study was completed by researchers Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow on the Cuban Missile Crisis, and while we aren't dealing with nuclear proliferation in this study, we are still firmly in the realm of public administration. Closer to home, case studies have been used to explore household budgeting in the United States in 1999, and more recently in Kettl's 2007 case study regarding the Department of Homeland Security.

Case studies must also integrate a research strategy that uses triangulation of data in support of an event or phenomenon. This can be achieved by utilizing many different data sources. Fielding and Fielding (1986) note that data triangulation is not just a combination of disparate data points, but rather an effort to interrelate different data points to offset any threats to their individual merits. Denzin (1978) indicates that there

are multiple methods of data triangulation, as quoted in Burg, 2004:

Data triangulation has three subtypes: (a) time, (b) space, and (c) person. Person analysis, in turn, has three levels: (a) aggregate, (b) interactive, and (c) collectivity. Investigator triangulation consists of using multiple rather than single observers of the same object. Theory triangulation consists of using multiple rather than simple perspectives in relation to the same set of objects. Methodological triangulation can entail within-method triangulation and between-method triangulation. (p. 5-6)

Burg notes the importance of interviews and personal documents in uncovering the root causes of various events and phenomena. Others, such as Yin, point out that methodological techniques can also include documents, archival records, direct observations, participant observation, and examination of physical artifacts. Breaking documents out, one finds that it is a broad category that can include items like diaries and journals, letters, various memoranda, printed material like newspapers, and other perinate text or writing. These documents can then be used to support or refute facts found from other sources.

Interviews provide a rich wealth of knowledge as well. These purposeful conversations can allow for up-close perspective by unique sources that may held the researcher peel back layers of truth that would not necessarily be contained in documents. This is in part because interviews are a two-way conversation where the researcher can receive clarification and is able to probe the subject more readily than in any other data point. This is not to discount the importance of other data points, however. Sources like archival records can also be useful, according to Holland, “these data can provide researchers with unobtrusive approaches for gathering and verifying evidence (77).”

Evaluative Framework

When evaluating policy, case studies can be particularly useful. As one looks backward,

they can best see how to improve processes going forward. This is especially apparent when constructing projects that involve large amounts of private and public capital to be spent on their development, and many factors go into the decision-making process. For the purposes of this study, I will be utilizing five key metrics to evaluate success:

- Effectiveness: the likelihood of achieving the completion of a project.
- Efficiency: the amount of time and money it takes to complete a project compared to other comparable constructions.
- Political Feasibility: the extent to which elected officials accept and support a development.
- Administrative Feasibility, the likelihood that the local government and the private companies can work together to achieve goals with minimal friction.

See the chart below which is adapted from Kraft and Furlong.

Methodological Design

Criterion	Definition	Interview Questions
Effectiveness	The likelihood of achieving the completion of a project.	1. The Walt Disney Company has developed a number of properties in many places and countries around the world. Could you outline the general development process?
Efficiency	The achievement of program goals or benefits in relationship to the costs. Least cost for a given benefit or the largest benefit for a given cost.	1. How did the development process differ regarding the projects in California versus Florida.
Political feasibility	The extent to which elected officials accept and support a development.	1. How does the necessity of getting local government officials and the public “on board” affect and complicate the development of projects? 2. Could you speak about the Long Beach Project, as a competitor to Anaheim, and it’s relating to the existing Disneyland Resort? 3. Could you speak about the process to develop a second gate for Disneyland as well as working with the city to

		<p>enhance the Resort District in Anaheim?</p> <p>1. How did this process differ from constructing comparable projects in Florida?</p> <p>4. How do local officials and local governments' needs and wishes factor into the development process. Does this affect the "Blue Sky" conceptual development?</p>
Administrative Feasibility	The likelihood that the local government and the private companies can work together to achieve goals with minimal friction	1. Could you speak about the unique governmental situation of Walt Disney World in Florida?

In conducting this case study, I will be conducting a literature review, looking at both academic, cultural, and historical sources relating to policy planning, economic development, and Disney parks history. The synthesis of these three distinct genres of literature will help to paint a more complete picture of Disneyland and Walt Disney World's separate, but intertwined development and growth paths. Because the development of both resorts was driven in large part by the creative teams at Disney, this case study will fuse the creative and design decisions together with the policy choices made by the other arms of the Disney organization.

I will also conduct interviews with Disney historians, influencers, and former employees of the Walt Disney Company and Walt Disney Imagineering who were influential in the process of developing Disney properties in the United States and around the world, including noted authors, company insiders, journalists, and a former Walt Disney Imagineering Vice President of Design who was instrumental in the expansion and development of both Walt Disney World and Disneyland, and led projects through all stages of ideation, approval, construction, and opening. It is important to note that historically the creative and design professionals led Walt Disney Imagineering and the

Disney Parks divisions, and all decisions flowed through them. It was and is typical that creative professionals would be the very people interfacing with policymakers and local leaders to complete projects.

Chapter 4: Findings

Walter Elias Disney

Although he was born in Chicago, Illinois on December 5, 1901, Walt always considered Marceline, Missouri, where he had lived for just a few short years as a young child to be his true hometown. His father, Elias Disney, tried his hand at many occupations throughout his life, achieving little success. For a time, he owned a newspaper delivery route in Kansas City, Missouri. At one point, Elias tried his hand at making soda that he hoped would inspire people to join him as fierce prohibitionist. In Marceline, however, Elias decided to become a farmer. Farm work was hard but Walt, being a young child, just thought it was plain fun. He loved the simple farm life, the small-town feel, and most especially, the trains that pulled through town. Walt loved trains. He loved the idea that he could hop on a train and go *anywhere* he wanted. He loved them so much that when he made it big in Hollywood, he constructed the Carolwood Pacific Railroad in his backyard. Walt's backyard railroad was 1:8 scale, with 2,615 feet of track. Walt loved his backyard train, but, as with most things in his life, he quickly began to dream bigger.

Walt always had to be working on his next big project. For example, First, it was Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, who, put simply was Disney's first hit cartoon character who was 'stolen' from Walt by his distributor, Universal Pictures, it was this loss that propelled Walt and his good friend and animation partner, Ub Iwerks, to create Mickey Mouse who starred in the first synchronized sound cartoon, *Steamboat Willie*. After experimenting with sound, Walt created the first color cartoon. When he tired of that, he created the first full length animated movie, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. He tinkered with animation a while, but then moved on to live action pictures. Put simply,

Walt was never one to sit still, always chasing the next frontier. The question that plagued Walt during the late 1940s and early 1950s was simple: where do you go from live action movies? Walt thought the next frontier was a physical place – a place with a train.

Disneyland

Development Overview

As Walt saw it, he had two problems, his desire for a train larger than his miniature backyard railroad and a need to create some sort of tourist attraction in the Los Angeles, California area. Contrary to the official company history and the story that Walt told countless times when he was asked about how he came up with Disneyland, the park wasn't totally conceived of in a eureka moment while sitting on a bench while his two daughters rode the carousel at Griffin Park near his home. That was simply the moment he decided that "the Park" was something he *had* to do. This was not a business concept to him, it was a calling. Walt had been thinking about building a park for years and, always a fan of research, set out to learn everything about the amusement industry. Fortunately for Walt, he would not have to travel very far.

Beverly Park Kiddleland in Los Angeles opened in 1946 on less than an acre of land leased from the Beverly Oil Company, owned by David Bradley and his wife Bernice, who left her job as the head of Walt Disney's story research department (the group of Disney employees that were tasked with scouring literature and history to come up with ideas that could be turned into the next Disney animated film). When Walt heard about Bernice and her husband's new venture, he saw the perfect opportunity to gather information to inform his next big idea. Beverly Park wasn't themed and definitely fell into the 'extinct' category after Disneyland opened, but Walt spent hours there, both

picking David's brain and watching the guests. Walt quickly found that David was a perfectionist, like him. David felt that the park should be spotless and that riders should feel good while they rode the rides, not like they were being demeaned. He felt that "an appealing ride must tie together participation of the customer, make the customer feel comfortable and still be an adventure (LA Times)." When developing Disneyland in the 1950's Walt would bring David on as a consultant for his park. Perfectionists were a rare breed in the amusement industry at the time. Most parks were dirty, cheap, and potentially unsafe, at least as far as Walt was concerned.

Walt's first idea was to be called "Mickey Mouse Park" and would be located across the street from the Disney Studio in Burbank, California. Walt's "Mickey Mouse Park" was different from the Disneyland that opened in 1955 or the one that we know today, it was the prototype. Many elements of Disneyland did show up in the park, such as a recreation of small-town America, inspired by Marceline, a paddle-wheeler that circled a man-made river, a haunted house, and most importantly for Walt, a train that traveled throughout the whole park. The closest analogue to Mickey Mouse Park is early Frontierland at Disneyland Park. As Walt and his trusted animator Herb Ryman developed the park, Walt began to dream bigger. When the time came to present Mickey Mouse Park to the Burbank City Council (Walt wanted to buy or lease an adjacent piece of land to use for the park's 'total buildout,' the term used for the completed attraction and ancillary infrastructure such as roads, back of house areas, hotels, and other miscellaneous structures that is usually completed in phases) Walt was rejected. The Council members feared a "carnival atmosphere." Walt could not convince them that his park was going to be *different*, he knew he had to show it. Walt would later say, "that's

the thing I've found that you have to prove things to people. Very few people you can run into and tell them an idea and get them to go along with you. They can't see the potential in things, you know. So, I've felt all along, all through my career, that instead of talking to someone about something, I'd go ahead and make something, then show it to them (The Imagineering Story).”

The naysayers inside of Walt Disney Productions, including Walt's wife, Lillian, and his brother/business partner, Roy O. Disney, hoped that the city council's rejection would be the end of “Walt's screwy idea” (The Disneyland Story). It wasn't. By the end of the meeting with the City Council, Walt had made up his mind, he no longer wanted to build his park in Burbank, his idea was just getting bigger and bigger, and he'd need more land and a larger team. To that end, he created a new company, which unlike his Studio, would be owned only by himself and his two daughters, that would be tasked with designing and building his park. He named the company WED Enterprises, the name being a reference his initials, and got to work poaching talent from the Studio. Simultaneously, he hired Buzz Price, of the Stanford Research Institute (no affiliation with Stanford University) to find the ideal location for his park and conduct feasibility study. Buzz Price would determine that a small orange growing town called Anaheim, twenty-five miles away from Los Angeles, would be the perfect place.

At the time there was nothing but orange groves in Anaheim, which made the land acquisition process relatively easy and inexpensive but made everything else exponentially harder and, seemingly, crazier. At this point everyone but Walt thought that this idea had gone from stupid and ill-advised to absolutely insane. ‘You want to build a major tourist attraction in the middle of nowhere? There isn't even paved road to the

site.’

Walt again turned to Herb Ryman and reportedly, with tears in his eyes, begged Ryman to help him sketch out his dream so he could have something to show people before they wrote him off as nuts. Ryman agreed, and what followed has become known amongst Disney historians and fans as “The Lost Weekend.” Walt stayed by Ryman’s side day and night, delivering him hamburgers and milkshakes from the Studio commissary, all the while describing his vision while Ryman sketched. Ryman’s drawing convinced a still skeptical Roy to fly to New York City, drawings in hand, to pitch the idea to bankers and anyone with money. None of them agreed to put up a single cent. Roy pitched hard, after all, his brother had made him a millionaire many times over and was betting everything on this park, even selling his home in Palm Springs and cashing out a life insurance policy. Walt later recalled that he “even had to sell [his] home in Palm Springs to use that money to get this thing to a point where I could show people what it would be.” In the end, Roy managed to get one company to agree to invest in Disneyland, the American Broadcasting Company.

ABC, which constantly came in dead last in the ratings, needed a hit, the answer to their programming woes would come when Roy O. Disney approached them about investing in a thing called Disneyland. ABC agreed, they would invest in Walt’s Park in exchange for a percentage of ownership, and most importantly for their network, a TV show starring Walt Disney. By the time the ink was dry, Disneyland would be jointly owned by Walt Disney Productions and the ABC, each with a 34.8% interest, Western Printing and Lithographing would have a 13.79% interest. Walt Disney personally retained 17.25%.

Disneyland (renamed as Disneyland Park in 2001) opened on July 17, 1955, had welcomed its millionth guest by September 8th of that same year (Pimentel, OC Register). The park was a massive success. This success not only grew the park itself as new attractions and amusements would be added at a breakneck pace, but it also grew the town of Anaheim and Orange County. In 1955, the year the park opened Anaheim, California was home to 14,000 people, by 1961, six years after the opening of Disneyland, Anaheim was home to 104,184 people. By 1967 the Anaheim Convention Center was opened next door to Disneyland, and a major league baseball team called the town home. Another illustrative example of the rapid economic growth in Anaheim as a result of the park was the number of hotel rooms. In 1955 there were 60 motel/hotel *rooms* in the Anaheim area, by the end of that same year, Disneyland was fielding 800 or more inquires a day about lodging (Anaheim Bulletin). Outside operators flooded the area around Disneyland with neon-lit motels and gas stations. This was the best case scenario of the city, but the worst case for Walt. He detested that his kingdom was being encroached on, he especially hated that some of the business were visible from inside Tomorrowland and aboard his beloved Disneyland Railroad. He went so far as to call this new tourism district a “second-rate Las Vegas.”

Over the next eleven years, Walt would work to expand his park. The first major expansion would open in 1959, with Vice President Richard Nixon in attendance. That year, Walt would introduce the first tubular steel rollercoaster, a submarine attraction, and the Western Hemisphere’s first daily operating monorail, which would eventually connect Disneyland Park to the Disneyland Hotel. Walt would later add the park’s first new land “New Orleans Square,” and begin a complete rebuild of Tomorrowland before

his death in 1966. Walt's team of Imagineers would honor him by continuing their work, opening the new Tomorrowland and two of the most popular Disney attractions ever in New Orleans Square, Pirates of the Caribbean, and The Haunted Mansion.

In a short time, however, the Imagineers had exhausted all of the ideas and dreams Walt had left them with for Disneyland and would need to look both inward and to wider popular culture for fresh ideas. It was at this point that the second generation of Imagineers came into their own, no one epitomized his generation more than Tony Baxter. Tony had got his start before the death of Walt Disney scooping ice cream on Main Street, U.S.A., but would eventually join the vaunted ranks of the Imagineers, helping to propel Disneyland into its third decade with the creation of Big Thunder Mountain, a steel rollercoaster that kept the park relevant and popular with a fickle teen demographic. By the 1980's, an internal shakeup brought two new leaders to the Disney Organization, Michael Eisner as CEO, and Frank Wells as President. They quickly tasked the Imagineers with pushing the envelope even further, when Tony, fresh off his Fantasyland overhaul that added new attractions and beatified the very heart of Disneyland, suggested they partner with George Lucas to construct a Star Wars themed attraction, Michael and Frank immediately got on board. Star Tours, as the attraction would go on to be called, would be the first non-Disney property to be represented with an attraction in Disneyland. The attraction was a hit, guests waited in four-hour lines and thought the wait was worth it, the park even remained open for 60 straight hours to celebrate (The Imagineering Story and The Disneyland Story).

Tony would go on to 'wow' guests two years later when, in 1989, he led the development of Splash Mountain of the land it sat in, Critter Country. Splash Mountain

combined a traditional log flume attraction with the classic Disney Park elements of Audio-Animatronics, elaborate theming, and catchy music. The attraction opened 34 years to the day of the park it called home. It was around this time that the Disney executives and Imagineers got serious about what they saw as the logical evolution of Disneyland: a second gate. Note that “gate” is an industry term that is synonymous with ticketed-entry theme park. The idea was to develop Disneyland into a multiday destination on par with Walt Disney World, which by this time had been open since 1971, with two parks, multiple resort hotels, and on-site shopping and dining. This time, however, building in Anaheim wouldn’t be easy and Disney would need to deftly play local officials to extract maximum benefits. This was done by announcing that Disney was prepared to build a \$1 billion dollar park in either Anaheim, California *or* Long Beach, California and letting the cities duke it out in the form of incentives to Disney. Disney CEO Michael Esnier, put it bluntly, “It depends a lot on which community wants us more (Fulton and Kopetman, LA Times 1990).” The Long Beach Project would have been called Port Disney and would have been a five hotel, one theme park resort in the LA Harbor area.

The true intention of the Long Beach project has likely been lost to history, was it all an elaborate ruse to get Anaheim to give concessions or was it an actual proposal? When I asked numerous inside sources about the seriousness of the project during interviews (see the Appendix) they gave me conflicting answers, with the caveat being that they did not directly work on the “Port Disney” project. It was hinted to me by one interviewee that Walt Disney Imagineering may have entertained the idea of doing both, announcing them as a coemption, getting concessions from Anaheim, and then building

both. It should be dully noted however, that Imagineering entertains many ideas, regardless of their practicality or an actual desire from corporate leadership.

While Anaheim and Long Beach battled for projects, the Imagineers continued to develop their original Magic Kingdom, adding an entirely new land “Mickey’s Toontown” to the park in 1992. Toontown would be interesting for a number of different design reasons that bear mentioning here, primarily the fact that it was the first Disneyland land to be constructed outside of the park’s famous berm, a giant wall of dirt and landscaping erected around Disneyland’s permeameter that was designed to keep the real world out of sight and mind. 1995, would bring about the still-popular Indiana Jones Adventure attraction in Adventureland.

By the early nineties, the area surrounding Disneyland was becoming even more seedy than it was when Walt called it a “second-rate Las Vegas” and Disney pressured the city of Anaheim to beautify the area, as well as grant it regulatory permission to build its second gate. The city did both, dividing the Disneyland Resort into three distinct zones of use, ‘theme park’, ‘hotel’, ‘parking’, and ‘retail, dining, and entertainment’ paving the way for Disney to begin work on transforming the Disneyland park into the Disneyland Resort.

After discarding the idea for a west coast Epcot, called WestCOT, Disney decided to build a park that celebrated the wonder of California, calling it Disney’s California Adventure. Alongside the new park would sit the Grand Californian Hotel, Anaheim’s first luxury hotel that would feature its own dedicated entrance to the new park, and the Downtown Disney shopping and dining district. The entire expansion cost was reportedly around \$1.1 billion dollars (which in the theme park industry is rather low). When the

new expansion finally opened on February 8, 2001, guests were not pleased. Many felt the park was built on the cheap and criticized what they perceived to be the lackluster number of rides and attractions, the over-emphasis on shopping and dining, the lack of Disney characters, and low-quality theming. Former Disney CEO, Bob Iger, called the park a brand retraction and would make upgrading the park a major priority once he took the reins of the company from Michael Eisner in 2005. 2005 was also a significant year for Disneyland because it marked the resort's 50th anniversary, to celebrate Disney threw the "Happiest Homecoming on Earth," a yearlong celebration of the beloved park and resort.

On October 17, 2007, Disney announced a \$1.1 billion dollar overhaul of the struggling Disney's California Adventure park (which would be rechristened "Disney California Adventure"), the overhaul redid almost every area of the park, infusing the park with more timeless Disney whimsy, for example the park got its own nighttime spectacular "World of Color" an elaborate fountain and mist-screen show on the park's Paradise Pier lagoon, a brand new entrance area themed around the 1920's Hollywood Walt Disney lived in, and the first ever Disney single-themed land, Cars Land, based off the popular PIXAR film "Cars." The renovation was completed in 2012, as the resort looked ahead to its 60th Anniversary, which itself would bring new enhancements to both parks in 2015, but nothing could compare with what was to come.

Star Wars was coming to Disneyland like it never had before, with its own themed land, to prepare the park for what was anticipated to be the resort's largest-ever crowd influx, Disney embarked on a number of new projects to enhance the overall resort experience, including a new transportation hub and entrance on the Resort's east side.

This proved controversial because it would effectively bypass the third-party businesses on Harbor Boulevard that relied on Disneyland to generate customers. These businesses embarked on a public policy and public relations campaign in an effort to force the city to reject Disney's proposal. The campaign worked amid already souring relations between Disneyland and the city of Anaheim (Martin, LA Times). Closer to home, Disney also embarked on Project Stardust, which was designed not only to freshen Disneyland Park up, and also make the park more navigable and crowd-friendly. Disney spent millions of dollars making planters just a few inches smaller and moving benches around. Project Stardust would be complete by the time the first phase of Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge opened in 2019 (the land's signature attraction would not open until January of 2020).

It was around that time that Disney planners noticed a novel virus named COVID-19. On March 12, Disney announced that they would close their domestic theme parks through the end of the month. Both Disneyland Park and Disney California Adventure closed on March 14, 2020, for what was believed to be a two-week closure. Guests would not reenter Disneyland for 412 days. The parks would attempt to reopen on July 17, 2020, but ultimately remained closed due to orders from California Governor Gavin Newsom.

Disneyland reopened to a changed world on May 3, 2021. Guests lined up overnight to be the among the first to reenter the park. The relationship with the city of Anaheim had changed also due the lack of income due to the Resort's COVID-19 closure, the now humbled mayor and city council appeared ready to resume cooperation with the Disney. Taking advantage of this unique opportunity, Disneyland launched "Disneyland Forward" a multi-stage public planning effort designed to ensure that they would never again need city approval to change zoning and other impediments on their

property (Martin, LA Times).

Effectiveness

The development of Disneyland has been remarkably effective from the moment Buzz Price and Walt Disney decided to construct the park in Anaheim. Initially, the inertia that pulled the project to the finish line was Walt Disney himself. He had a relentless drive when it came to seeing Disneyland through. He personally interfaced with town leaders, who for the most part left him alone to do what he pleased, in part because they understood the potential economic activity Disneyland could bring to their community, and perhaps in part because Walt didn't ask much of them, not even to improve the roads around the park; opening day guests drove down dirt roads to reach the site. Walt even cashed a personal life insurance policy and sold his home in Palm Springs to help finance his park. Legend has it that he paid for the Mark Twain Riverboat literally out of his own wallet.

Walt could not be stopped, and when the project proved to be a success, his brother Roy and his other business partners, joined him in pushing the park forward. One example of Walt's unique ability to get what he wanted from Anaheim city officials is what's known as the "Disney Cone" (Pimentel, OC Register). Put in place by the city in 1964, the "Disney Cone" is a series of height contours that limit the height of buildings in the area around Disneyland. Buildings in the immediate vicinity of the park can have a maximum height of 75 feet, with gradual increases allowed the further from the park one goes. This was done to preserve sightlines, which is an industry term that refers what a park guest can see from any given area, to maintain immersion there can be no intrusions, therefore a 90-foot hotel across the street from a park is breaking the park's sightlines. In

fact, when a new development is being constructed inside the Disney Cone, developers are required to fly a height balloon equal to the structure's maximum height, so professional "spotters" can methodically walk around Disneyland and ensure that the building won't be seen. Len Testa, founder of TouringPlans.com and co-author of the "Unofficial Guide to Walt Disney World" and contributor to the "Unofficial Guide to Disneyland," who was interviewed for this thesis, notes the close working relationship Disney has with local governments saying,

"Disney has worked hand-in-hand with the local government to make sure that the process goes as smoothly as possible ... California is much more hands-on when it comes to regulating Disney's activities, especially since Disneyland is bordered on all sides by both residential and commercial development in a way that they're not in Florida. California takes a much more hands-on approach ... everything from permitting to sight lines of things in the parks."

Tim Delaney, former Creative Executive at Walt Disney Imagineering who was instrumental in developing Disneyland's second gate, Disney California Adventure concurs, saying,

"Walt Disney himself lamented the fact that he didn't have more money to buy more property around there because he really didn't like the hotels that came up all around, which were Harbor and Kinsella Boulevards, that sprouted up all around Disneyland. And they were making money off of Walt, and so he is the one that drew everyone down to this area, which was just wide-open property, wide open orange fields. So, they made concessions ... but hopefully these situations, it's in Anaheim's best interest to make the entire city as appealing as it possibly can, which is also of benefit to Disney. Everybody has to work together."

Disney's level of effectiveness after the death of Walt Disney has ebbed and flowed as the city government has changed hands. For example, in 2017, Disneyland's plans to build a new transportation hub, dubbed the "Eastern Gateway," between Interstate 5 and Harbor Boulevard was shot down by the city after a prolonged campaign by small businesses located on Harbor Boulevard who stood to lose large amounts of foot traffic

due to the project (Niles, Theme Park Insider). Micechat.com, one of the internet's oldest independently operated Disneyland focused website, referred to the disagreement as "one of the worst political arguments in their 63 year old history together (Lutz, Micechat.com)."

The era of bad feelings between Anaheim and Disney came to an end due to the COVID-19 pandemic's devastating impact on the Anaheim economy, and more specifically the 412-day closure of the city's largest employer and tax payer, Disneyland. Although Disney's planned "Disneyland Forward" public planning campaign appears to be remarkably effective at this moment, only time will tell if this renewed era of Effectiveness for the Disneyland Resort will last.

Efficiency

Disneyland's development history has been marked by reasonable efficiency from the beginning. The time and cost to construct the park in the 1950s was remarkable on both fronts. Construction was completed in one year and at a cost of \$17 million dollars, which although it was triple the original budget, can be regarded as a success simply because nothing like Disneyland had ever been constructed at this scale before, making budgeting difficult to the point of near impossibility. Disneyland continued to expand at a breakneck pace in its earliest decades. Cost increased as the quality of the projects increased, but they were still completed, for the most part, within reasonable time frames. New Orleans Square, the park's first completely new land, was completed in five years. Note that it had to be built inside of a working theme park and that no loud work could be done during the park's operating hours. The land cost \$18 million dollars to construct. Tim Delaney notes the increased difficulty in construction over time, due to the increased

development in the area surrounding Disneyland and local regulations, saying,

“Yeah. Well, building DCA was a challenge. The way I describe the building of DCA, because it was in the middle of a fully developed city and it was a 100 acre square is basically what we had to develop, because that was the size of the parking lot, I characterized it as we were building a ship in a bottle. You have to glue the parts of the ship in a bottle, because you had to bring everything in and take everything out.”

When one considers the increased difficulty of constructing inside of a fully developed city that strictly controls every aspect of the development and construction process, it becomes apparent that the rate of efficiency must be considered on a relative curve. It's not so much that Disney has become less efficient on their own, it's more than a confluence of unique circumstances came together to make them less efficient. Walt, foreseeing issues like these even back in the 1960s, made the decision to right old wrongs and build his second park in Florida.

Political Feasibility

Disneyland has always enjoyed support from officials within the local Anaheim city government, although more recently there have been rifts in the relationship between the two. Anaheim officials uniquely understand the impact Disneyland could have on their town when Walt Disney initially approached them during the early 1950s; they understood the surge of economic development that would occur if Disneyland was a success. Therefore, they had every interest in accommodating Walt, whether it was renaming a street or letting him pick the park's address, 1313 Harbor Boulevard (chosen because the thirteenth letter in the alphabet is M, so 1313 is MM, the initials of Mickey Mouse). As mentioned previously, they even imposed height limitations on *everything* that surrounds Disneyland to increase the fantasy of the park in 1964.

This period of good relations continued with the city happily obliging Disney's

request to beatify the area surrounding the Disneyland Resort, which was at the time, rather seedy, it wasn't a place you'd like to wander around at night. This cleaning up of Harbor Boulevard was part of Disney's requirements for building their second California-based theme park in Anaheim rather than Long Beach, California.

Disney deftly played Anaheim off Long Beach, announcing that they would either build WestCOT (a west coast version of EPCOT, the second theme park at Walt Disney World) in Anaheim or Port Disney (a theme park and resort complex) in Long Beach. The approximate cost of either project was \$1 billion for the new park alone. Disney CEO Michael Eisner commented that which project got built would "depend a lot on which community wants us more (Fulton and Kopetman, LA Times)." As mentioned previously in the above overview of Disneyland Resort history, I could not ascertain just how serious Disney leadership was about actually building Port Disney. We do however know that the project moved through multiple stages of the creative and design processes at Walt Disney Imagineering, and that the company produced and disseminated material advocating on behalf of the project in the Long Beach community. Regardless of Disney's seriousness in pursuing the Port Disney project, they were successful at convincing city officials to bow to their whims. Anaheim city mayor Fred Hunter promised to do "almost anything" to keep Disney in Anaheim (Fulton, LA Times). Len Testa concurred,

I looked at that as Disney putting a couple of Imagineers on doing some concept art, but basically as a bargaining chip to Anaheim, saying, "If Anaheim doesn't give us what we want, we're just going to do it in Long Beach," basically pitting one city government or municipality against another ... And for a variety of reasons. Number one, they're so far apart that it would have been difficult to convince tourists to make the trip from one place to the other. Long Beach and Anaheim are, on a bad day, an hour apart. No one's going to do that. It's not like they were building across the street where you could have walked there. I always

look at that as a threat rather than something they were really interested in doing.

It's only more recently that rifts began to appear in the relationship between Disney and the city of Anaheim. One salient example is the previously discussed "Eastern Gateway" project, which was derailed by other local businesses and served as a reminder to Disney that public officials were not their employees. This new equilibrium of Disneyland existing in a city that doesn't bend to their every whim did not last long, as the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically shifted the balance of power in Anaheim back in Disney's favor due to a loss in tax revenue for the city and widespread unemployment for its citizens. Disney is now embarking on a multi-year public planning campaign with a goal of re-zoning their property as a mixed-use development to ensure that they never again have to go through City Hall to expand resort infrastructure.

Administrative Feasibility

Disney and the city of Anaheim typically work well together and can easily and with minimal friction achieve Disney's objectives. Part of this is due to Disney being such a large organization that all they need from the city of Anaheim is a green light. The biggest hurdle they seem to face is the no different from any other business in the city, jumping through the procedural hoops of getting permits paid and approved. Granted, they can throw their weight around and use well placed donations and other such things that most businesses don't access to just by virtue of how large they are.

Walt Disney World

Development Overview

Walt and WED Enterprises would task Buzz Price with finding an ideal location for an East Coast Disneyland, except that calling it a 'Disneyland' was not grand enough,

it was not going to be a Land, it was going to a World. A whole Disney World, located in the middle of Central Florida just off of Interstate 4, outside a sleepy town called Orlando.

Walt had big plans for his “Florida Project,” as it was called among the small circle of Imagineers that were aware of the top-secret operation, it was to be composed of not only a theme park and multiple hotels, but also an Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow, or an E.P.C.O.T., which was to be Walt’s first venture into the public policy realm. Walt wanted to take the lessons he and his team had learned while building Disneyland and use them to create a futuristic, utopian community that would serve as a shining beacon of the United States Free Market System. E.P.C.O.T. was, to Walt, the centerpiece of his Floridian resort, so much so that the theme park was really just an afterthought or a way to bring in tourists so he could show off his fancy city.

Unfortunately, early into the development of Disney World, Walt was diagnosed with lung cancer and experienced a rapid health decline. The diagnosis, which was a closely held secret at Walt Disney Productions, only made Walt work faster. In December of 1966, days after his birthday, Walt would leave his studio for the last time and check himself into the St. Joseph Hospital across the street from the Disney Lot. From his hospital bed, Walt continued to draw up plans for Florida.

On the night of December 15, 1966, Walt sent his wife Lillian home from the hospital, insisting that he was feeling stronger. His older brother Roy, however, stayed behind and sat his kid brother’s bedside while Walt pointed up at the acoustical ceiling tiles in the ceiling and took his brother through every minute detail of Disney World, from the wastewater treatment plants to the route the monorail would take. Walt made his

brother promise that he would push forward on the Florida Project. When Roy said he would try, Walt responded that that was not good enough, he had to promise him. That morning, with his big brother at his side, Walt Disney would die. He was 65 years old. The completion of Disney World would fall to Roy.

Roy and Imagineers barely had time to grieve. They determined that the best way to honor Walt was to complete his final dream, Disney World, which they would rename Walt Disney World in his honor. Before he passed, however, Walt had filmed a video to be shown to the Florida State Legislature and to potential sponsors outlining his vision. Roy and the Imagineers quickly realized that E.P.C.O.T. was going to be nearly impossible without Walt, and therefore it should be saved for phase two of construction. Phase one would consist of the underlying infrastructure, the Magic Kingdom Park, and the Polynesian and Contemporary resort hotels. Roy realized that the film his brother made could be used to gain unprecedented concessions out of the Florida state legislature under the guise of it all be necessary for the futuristic city of E.P.C.O.T. to function, even if internally the future of the E.P.C.O.T. project was being gravely questioned.

Roy's gamble paid off and soon Disney would be given unprecedented governmental authority. The Reedy Creek Improvement District was created to encompass the Walt Disney World property, within the Improvement District they would be two cities Lake Buena Vista and Reedy Creek that would be created. These cities would have the standard powers given to an incorporated city in addition to the ability to issue tax-free bonds. The entire district would be immune from any current or future county or state land-use laws. In fact the only areas where Disney would be forced to abide by state and county laws and regulations would be the payment of property taxes

and elevator inspections (Fogleson, Married to the Mouse). This was the first time in state history, and possibly in United States history, where a corporation would be given governing authority over a portion of a state. With the Reedy Creek Improvement District having been formed, Disney set about building their kingdom.

Disney was starting from scratch, all there was in there 27,000 acres was seemingly unusable swamp land. Disney made quick work of installing utilities, power supply, and roads. Once the infrastructure was built work could begin on the resort itself. When the resort opens on October 1, 1971, guests could visit the Magic Kingdom Park and stay at either the Polynesian resort or the Contemporary Resort both connected to the park by monorail. Various other recreational activities were available including fishing, camping, boating, and so forth. Magic Kingdom Park meanwhile played it safe. Most all of the opening day attractions were also found at Disneyland. There was a castle, there was Peter Pan's Flight, "it's a small world" was there too, and so was The Haunted Mansion. But one attraction was missing, and guests took note; Pirates of the Caribbean, was among the headliner attractions at the west coast park, but was absent on here, why? The Imagineers thought that guests on the East Coast, wouldn't be interested in something so close to home, instead they were planning a Western River Expedition to fill the void. It didn't matter, guests still wanted the pirates. In 1973, two years after the park opened guests got their wish with the addition of Caribbean Plaza and its signature "Pirates of the Caribbean" boat ride to Adventureland (Passport to Dreams). The ability to open a new headline attraction in just two years was only possible due to the streamlining allowed by the Reedy Creek Improvement District, after all Disney got to approve their own permits and set their own building codes. This streamlining would be a

common theme throughout the development of Walt Disney World. By 1975 Tomorrowland which states have an expansion with the opening of Space Mountain, The GE carousel of Progress, and the WEDWay PeopleMover. The following year saw the opening of the resort's first waterpark River Country, located near the Fort Wilderness campground.

It was at this time that the Disney organization, who had also lost Roy just months after the opening of Walt Disney World, turned their attention to the E.P.C.O.T. question. By this point they had realized that the policy problems associated with running a city were not something they were equipped to handle, so they set out to build a new development that would embody the spirit of Walt's idea. What they landed on was a fusion of a tech expo and a multinational festival, sort of a preeminent World's Fair. The park would be divided into two distinct sections, Future World and World Showcase. Future World was where guests could get a glimpse at emerging technologies and explore pavilions dedicated to various sectors of the economy and modern American life such as agriculture, energy, transportation, as well as the concepts of global history and imagination (WDWInfo). World Showcase was where guests could explore various countries pavilions, including Mexico, the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, and the host country, the United States.

The new park, simply called EPCOT Center, would open on October 1, 1982. It was around this time that the Disney company came under siege by corporate raider Saul Steinberg, this lead to an ouster of current management, headed by Walt's son-in-law, and the installation of Michael Eisner and Frank Wells by Roy's son Roy E. Disney (Stewart, DisneyWar). Michael and Frank had a different vision for what Disney World.

They were bullish on building new hotels and timeshares and even open to the possibility of building more parks. The first expansion to be opened under the new administration was the Living Seas pavilion at EPCOT Center, the design of which was led by Tim Delaney, and more expansion would follow with the opening of Norway at World Showcase, the Grand Floridian Resort and Spa, and Disney's Caribbean Beach Resort in 1988.

The following year the resort would debut its third theme park, Disney-MGM Studios which would combine a working movie studio with a theme park area. The park would prove to be immensely popular and there was a rush to open more attractions to deal with high demand. That same year Disney opened their Typhoon Lagoon waterpark and the Pleasure Island nightclub and entertainment district. In 1990 Disney would open four more hotels near EPCOT, and in 1991 introduced the Disney Vacation Club timeshare program and its Old Key West Resort.

1994 brought about the most terrifying edition yet to Disney-MGM Studios with the opening of the Twilight Zone Tower of Terror along with three more hotels. The next year would see the resort's third water park open Blizzard Beach along with the debut of the Disney Wedding Pavilion across the Seven Seas Lagoon from Magic Kingdom. 1996 would see the first ever park name change in Walt Disney World history when EPCOT Center was simplified to Epcot. Also, in that year Disney opened a new hotel, an educational retreat known as the Disney Institute, Fantasia Gardens Mini Golf, all in honor of the resort's 25th anniversary.

1997 would be the year in which Disney opened just one hotel, along with a sports complex, and Downtown Disney West Side. The next year would see the opening

of DisneyQuest, a multi-floor interactive VR arcade, and Walt Disney World's fourth theme park, Disney's Animal Kingdom, spearheaded by legendary Imagineer Joe Rohde. Animal Kingdom is a unique park for a number of reasons, paramount being the inclusion of live animals into the park experience, although Disney would insist that the park was not a zoo, even going so far as to come up with a fake word to help get the message across. The park also is unique in that it has a distinctive "Joe Rohde flair" in a way that no other park besides the Magic Kingdom can feel like it 'belongs' to a specific individual.

The period after the opening of Animal Kingdom, which continues through today, has been one of continual expansion within existing parks as no new park has yet been constructed after Animal Kingdom. Although the resort has added 12 new hotels scattered across property and has closed the resort's original water park. Particularly noteworthy additions to the resort the intervening years include Expedition Everest: Legend of the Forbidden Mountain at Animal Kingdom, which opened as the world's most expensive rollercoaster ever constructed, the largest ever single-land expansion in Fantasyland at Magic Kingdom, the opening of Pandora – The World of Avatar also at Animal Kingdom, and the opening of Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge at Disney's Hollywood Studios (the new name of what was once called Disney-MGM Studios).

The outbreak of COVID-19 affected the operation of Walt Disney World, with the resort being closed from March to July of 2020. Disney also decided to cut capital expenditures which necessitated the cancelation and delay of some previously announced expansions. Walt Disney World is currently celebrating its 50th anniversary with the debut of new nighttime entertainment, two new rollercoasters, and more. Disney has also

opened a one-of-a-kind resort experience called Star Wars: Galactic Starcruiser, where guests are invited to live out their own Star Wars adventure for 2 days/2 nights.

Effectiveness

Walt Disney World's development has been marked by effectiveness, due in large part to the creation of the Reedy Creek Improvement District. In 1965, Walt Disney selected the current site of the resort after flying over the area and seeing the intersection of Interstate 4 and the then-under-construction Florida Turnpike, along with the McCoy Airforce Base (now the Orlando International Airport) (Orlando Sentinel, Walt Disney World at 50). After seeing the site, Walt and his team set out to secretly acquire the 27,000 acres. They treated the operation like a spy mission, working with former CIA operative, whose name is still unknown, who is believed to have been the paymaster behind the botched Bay of Pigs invasion (Goldberg, 12). Among the measures they took to protect their secret included flying circuitous routes, never flying to Orlando directly from Los Angeles; they used fake names and even created a number of shell companies to actually purchase the land. Some of the company names were designed to throw intrepid citizens off the trail, such as the Latin-American Development Corporation, and others, such as Ayefour Corporation, were just inside jokes. Lou Mongello, author of three books about Walt Disney World, seven audio guides to Magic Kingdom Park, and hosts a podcast that was awarded best travel podcast for nine consecutive years and has reached the #1 spot overall on Apple Podcasts, said this:

When The Disney Company in secret was purchasing thousands and thousands of acres in Central Florida, it was really unbeknownst to anyone, because they were able to do it using false aliases for individuals, shell corporations, a lot of sleight of hand and trickery so that nobody knew The Disney Company was buying this property, so as not to escalate the prices exponentially.

In 1966, all of the shell companies, which were in actuality wholly owned subsidiaries of Walt Disney Productions petitioned the Circuit Court of the Ninth Judicial Circuit to create the Reedy Creek Drainage District, it was approved under Section 298 of the Florida Statutes (History, rcid.org). The following year on May 12, 1967, the governor of Florida created the self-governing district by signing three statutes into law. Disney then got to work making the property buildable and building the underlying infrastructure.

The fact that almost any interaction with a government official when developing or operating the Walt Disney World resort is at most a rubber stamp, and at least going through an individual who is literally on their payroll, the only thing holding them back from completing a project is their own willingness to see it through.

Efficiency

Disney receives no assistance building and maintaining the district from the state or federal government and is entirely responsible for all roads, sewage, power, and other infrastructure needs. Disney accepts the financial drawbacks because of the level of flexibility and efficiency the arrangement gives them. The arrangement also gives Disney a number of interesting abilities, such as the ability to build a nuclear power plant without first seeking state approval, however legislation has been passed on the federal level that requires any such power plant to receive federal approval.

Len Testa agrees with this assessment of the district, saying,

The Reedy Creek Improvement District was something that Disney asked for from both Florida and from the federal government in the middle 1960s after they had bought 28,000 acres in Central Florida. What it allowed them to do was to essentially act as a local government just for the property that they owned. That means that they could control the roads, they could control every aspect of the decision-making around housing, around infrastructure development, around taxation, around voting ... I'm like 99 percent sure they actually have the ability to build their own nuclear power plant if they wanted to. Yeah, I'm pretty sure it's

there. Basically, they could run that as their own little kingdom without having to go to the state to get approval for every little thing. I think it's unique. I think it's the only agreement of its kind in the United States. It's a remarkable amount of power. The documentation that backs it up is many thousands of pages long.

Len also notes that Disney has taken measures to ensure that those that live in the district, such as residents of their luxury home development, Golden Oak, where homes start at \$2.5 million dollars, cannot vote for local officials, or change local law.

They've also restricted the land within Florida so that even if there are residents in Florida, they don't have voting rights in the Reedy Creek Improvement District. For example, things like the homes at Golden Oak are specifically excluded from voting to incorporate or disincorporate or elect a mayor of the Reedy Creek Improvement District. They don't have voting rights, even though they live in Walt Disney World.

Without these unique governmental powers, Disney would be unable to have developed Walt Disney World, both initially and via expansions, as quickly and with minimal friction. Len Testa also notes that Disney reduces the cost of construction by way of setting the fees to file permits to a trivial amount. He notes that they could build an entire theme park land with only a single \$25 permit.

Political Feasibility

Historically the state of Florida and its officials have been very accepting and supportive of Walt Disney World's development. This was because they understood what their urban planning counterparts 70 years prior did not; that a theme park, especially a multi-park complex like Walt Disney World could transform a small, sleepy town into a major urban center. They understood that by welcoming Disney into their region they would be generating untold billions of dollars in additional economic activity and development.

Len Testa had this to say about the functional role that local and state officials can

play when working with Disney:

The Florida legislature is generally pretty positive towards Disney because of the number of jobs that they provide, whereas California looks at it differently. California looks at it and says, "You've got all this money. You have a social obligation to your workers." Florida would be like, "Thank you for providing the jobs. Do whatever you want." California would say, "With the amount of money you have comes more responsibility." They're two different philosophies on how you treat big companies.

Len's point that local and state officials do not have much of an impact on the development of operation is not just by choice, the Reedy Creek Improvement District's structure prevents them from interfering.

Administrative Feasibility

Out of all the metrics discussed in this chapter this particular metric, administrative feasibility, is the one that I need the least space to explain and to give examples of because Disney literally is the local government at Walt Disney World and has autonomy on almost everything that affect the development of the resort with the possible exception of elevator inspections. They are allowed to build their own roads, sewage, telephone systems, water, and power. They also maintain their own paramedic service and fire department. In a lot of ways the Reedy Creek Improvement District might as well be its own independent territory separate from Florida.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Comparative Analysis Introduction

Comparing the development of both the Disneyland Resort and the Walt Disney World Resort is straight forward in some ways, both were developed and are operated by the same company, most of the individuals who worked on one also worked on the other, but it is, in other ways, difficult due to the differences in the regulatory environment in the states and municipalities that they reside in, and of course, in their scale and scope. After all, Walt Disney World is the size of San Francisco and was built on a literal swamp, while Disney land fits comfortably inside of a large city block in a town that was previously known for its orange groves.

Effectiveness

Both Walt Disney World and Disneyland have been remarkably effective in achieving their overall development goal. This was especially true in the case of Disneyland during the life of Walt Disney and up until the late 2010's, it was at this time where Disney's ability to be effective in working with the city began to wane somewhat, best exemplified when the city of Anaheim moved to block the development of a new transportation hub and hotel at the resort; however the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting period of economic hardship in Anaheim seems to have allowed Disney to be even more effective than they have at any point in recent memory, although it is unknown how long those burst of effectiveness will last.

Walt Disney World, on the other hand, has maintained its ability to be effective due to the Reedy Creek Improvement District. It should be noted that Walt Disney World has a higher peak rate of efficiency than Disneyland does. Walt Disney World also

benefits from being one of the largest employers and taxpayers in the entire state of Florida, giving Disney considerably more sway there, than in California, a state filled with large employers and corporate giants. Walt Disney World has never had a planned expansion cancelled by the local government, which cannot be said for Disneyland; this is because Walt Disney World *is* the local government, meaning that any announced project that fails to materialize is solely the fault of Disney alone. Walt Disney World has had its fair share of announced but later cancelled projects throughout its fifty-year history.

Efficiency

Efficiency at Disney is often closely tied to effectiveness; therefore, it should not be a surprise that Walt Disney World is more efficient than Disneyland. While everything Disney builds anywhere must go through a governmental approval process, in Florida Disney is the government, making any permits and approvals a rubber stamp. In California, however, that is not the case. They must go through the same process and red tape that every other business must go through, with no shortcuts. Therefore, it's surprising to some that projects at Walt Disney World can sometimes move slower than projects in California, this is not due to red tape, it's simply Disney management spreading costs out over multiple financial quarters or allocating money or time in a novel manner. Disneyland, however, is smaller and therefore any construction is more disrupting to day-to-day operations and the guest experience, because in most every case, adding something means removing a previous restaurant, shop, or attraction, thereby reducing park capacity.

Political Feasibility

Disneyland has always had more issues than Walt Disney World when dealing with local governments, policymakers, and other officials, primarily by virtue of its location in the middle of a large city and therefore being subject to city, county, and state supervision and laws. These laws and decisions are made by politicians that have real constituents whose views might not always line up with Disney's needs, therefore occasionally putting Disneyland in the uncomfortable position of being at odds with their host city.

In Florida, however, this is a non-issue, there Disney has their own fiefdom where they alone are the only constituent and therefore have license to do just about anything they desire, whether it's bulldozing thousands of acres of wetlands to build a new theme park, land, or hotel or even making all of the road signs on property purple, red, and yellow. All things they could never even dream of getting away with in California.

Administrative Feasibility

When comparing the two resorts it's in this metric administrative feasibility where Disneyland and Walt Disney World seem the most different. At Disneyland, Disney is forced to work with the state and local government in Anaheim to do or build just about anything on their property. For example, in the late 1990s, when Disney was in the process of expanding Disneyland into a two-park resort, Disney had to go to the city to have portions of their property rezoned. This took time and a money as well as political and popular support. In Florida at Walt Disney World, Disney is the government and therefore any processes they have to go through to re-zone an area, for instance, are simply rubber stamps.

But it does not stop with re-zoning, this lack of red tape and governmental

oversight extends to almost everything on Walt Disney World property, except for elevator inspections. Sometimes, Disney's standards and practices are even more rigorous than the state of Florida's are. For example, before Disney built the Magic Kingdom, the state of Florida had weak building codes, but Disney did not. They instituted their own building codes, which were later adopted by the state of Florida as the state's official codes.

Themes and Trends

In the approximately 65 years that The Walt Disney Company has been constructing and operating their parks and resorts many things have remained constant, such as a commitment to excellence in theming and customer service, a bullish pace of expansion and a desire to "obsolete themselves." Some trends have emerged however that show a progressively more complicated development process, especially in California, where Disney went from being able to do pretty much whatever they wanted in the 1950s to, 60 years later in the 2010s, have difficulty gaining permission from the city to build a parking garage. What could be the cause of this trend? I would say that Disney is a victim of their own success, having drawn large numbers of people and businesses to Anaheim, who's interests over time shifted away from Disney's. The larger population meant that the city had to institute more formal processes in every area of governance, deals and agreements could no longer be made by Walt or Roy (or whomever else might oversee the company) with the mayor with a handshake. Red tape emerged, and the businesses that only exist because of Disney and residents that moved there to take part in the Disney-driven economic boom decide to bite the hand that feeds them. This was especially apparent during the COVID-19 crisis, which reminded

everyone in Anaheim, the citizens, the businesses, and the city itself how reliant they truly are on Disneyland and led to a new era of good feelings which continues to the present, although there is no telling how long it will last.

Another trend that becomes apparent is the power of Disney to draw businesses into their community and create cities out of orange groves or swampland. No one would argue that Orlando would have developed to the extent it has today without the construction of Walt Disney World. Anaheim likely would have become just another segment in the urban sprawl of the Los Angeles metro area, and certainly would not have the vibrant tourism and cultural industry and cache that it enjoys today.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The theme park industry has come a long way over the past 200 years and has proven itself to be adaptable to changing times and circumstances, and has become, in Orlando, Anaheim and elsewhere, a vital part of localities and states economies and tourism industries. It's an industry that most people and policymakers don't give much thought to perhaps because there isn't one in every city and state but should not be dismissed or written off as inconsequential. If nothing else, the development of these parks, especially the Disney Parks, can provide policymakers with an adaptable guide to the impact of large-scale developments in small, underdeveloped communities, and serve a warning on how they should prepare in the face of large developments; how to prepare for a mass influx of new visitors, residents, and businesses. Walt Disney World shows how a hands-off approach on the part of local leaders and policymakers can be successful and lead to massive growth when dealing with large scale developments from reputable companies.

Finally, looking at the entire history of the industry, we see an evolution in the minds of officials, urban planners, and policymakers, who initially decried the construction of parks and amusements in their communities but now quite literally beg for one to set up shop in their town. We see how Walt's "screwy idea," as his brother Roy initially put it, has developed into a billion-dollar, multinational industry and how Walt's parks have become, as former Imagineer Eddie Sotto says, "America's greatest cultural export." Kings, Queens, and Emperors, Prime Ministers, Presidents, and Premiers have all over the years flocked to Disneyland and left begging Disney to set up shop in their country.

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