THE JOURNAL

ARCHITECTURE / HISTORY / PLACES / PERSPECTIVES



Image: Middleton Tampa Bay archive

Communities, Service, and the Places We Call Home

Reflections from Washington, D.C., Tampa Bay summer traditions, market perspective and a new Rotary year.

MARK MIDDLETON

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FROM THE EDITOR

America at 250: Freedom, Community, and the Places We Call Home



Portrait: Jeremiah Khokhar Photography LLC

A couple of weeks ago, I found myself walking through Washington, D.C., during the National Association of Realtors Legislative Meetings. It's a trip I make a few times each year as part of my work in advocacy, but this visit felt different. Everywhere I looked, preparations were underway for America's 250th anniversary, a milestone that invites all of us to pause and reflect on where we've been, where we are today, and where we're headed as a nation.

Standing near the Capitol, walking the National Mall, and visiting the monuments that tell our nation's story, I was reminded that America's strength has never come solely from its institutions or historic landmarks. It comes from its people and the communities they build. It comes from neighbors helping neighbors, local businesses serving their communities, volunteers giving their time, and families investing in places they are proud to call home.

As I returned to Tampa Bay, I found myself thinking about how fortunate we are to live in a region filled with vibrant cities, unique neighborhoods, and strong communities. Whether it's a 4th of July celebration in a local park, a sunset along the Gulf Coast, a gathering of friends at a favorite restaurant, or a volunteer project that brings people together, these everyday experiences are what transform a location into a community and a house into a home.

This month's edition is inspired by those ideas. You'll find community events happening throughout Tampa Bay, reflections from my recent trip to Washington, insights from our local real estate market, a few favorite places worth exploring, and stories that celebrate the people and places that continue to make our region such an extraordinary place to live.

Thank you for spending a few moments with me each month. As our nation approaches its 250th anniversary, I hope this edition serves as a reminder that the future of America is being written every day in communities just like ours.

AROUND TAMPA BAY

Independence Day on the Waterfront

TAMPA

Freedom Fest aboard the American Victory Ship

July 4, 2026 · Location: American Victory Ship & Museum, 705 Channelside Drive, Tampa

Celebrate America's 250th birthday aboard one of the nation's last fully operational World War II Victory ships. Freedom Fest offers front-row views of Tampa's July 4th Boat Parade and fireworks, along with live entertainment, food trucks, family activities, and a unique opportunity to experience Florida's Official Flagship while honoring our nation's history. It's a memorable way to celebrate Independence Day on Tampa's waterfront.

ST. PETERSBURG

The 4th at the St. Pete Pier

July 4, 2026 · Location: St. Pete Pier, 600 2nd Avenue NE, St. Petersburg

Celebrate America's 250th birthday along one of Tampa Bay's most iconic waterfront destinations. The Fourth at the St. Pete Pier is an all-day celebration featuring live music, family activities, food trucks, local vendors, a craft beer garden, and one of the region's most spectacular fireworks displays over Tampa Bay. Whether you're participating in the Pier Run, exploring Uncle Sam's Market, or simply enjoying the waterfront with family and friends, it's a wonderful way to experience Independence Day in the heart of downtown St. Petersburg.

Archived July 2026 calendar. These events have passed; descriptions reflect the original newsletter.

ON THE ROAD WITH MARK

Walking Through America's Story | Washington, D.C.



Image: Middleton Tampa Bay archive



Image: Middleton Tampa Bay archive

One of the things I enjoy most about my trips to Washington, D.C. is that no matter how many times I visit, there is always something new to discover. While my primary purpose for being there is to participate in the NAR Meetings & advocate for issues important to property owners and homeownership, I always try to carve out a little time to explore the city.

This year, with America approaching its 250th anniversary, the experience felt especially meaningful. Walking along the National Mall, past the Capitol, the Washington Monument, and the many memorials that tell our nation's story, I was reminded of the incredible history that surrounds us. These aren't simply monuments, they are reminders of the people, ideas, and sacrifices that helped shape the country we know today.

One of my favorite traditions has become walking through different neighborhoods and gradually experiencing the city one piece at a time. Over the years, I've wandered through Georgetown, explored the museums, visited the monuments, and discovered corners of Washington that many visitors never see. While I never seem to have as much time as I'd like, there's something rewarding about returning year after year and slowly building a deeper appreciation for the city.

This trip included a walk through Georgetown and around the campus of Georgetown University. The historic architecture, tree-lined streets, and sense of tradition make it one of the most enjoyable places to explore in the city. It serves as a reminder that great communities, whether in Washington or Tampa Bay, are often defined by their history, character, and the people who continue to invest in them.

As our nation prepares to celebrate 250 years of history, I left Washington feeling grateful...not only

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Walking Through America's Story | Washington, D.C.

for the opportunity to participate in the advocacy process, but also for the chance to spend time in a city that tells America's story so well.

Standing before the Lincoln Memorial ...I am always reminded why I believe Abraham Lincoln was the greatest president ever to serve our nation. He led a country deeply divided against itself during its darkest hour, and without his steady hand, unwavering resolve, and extraordinary leadership, the United States may very well have been permanently split into two separate nations. His legacy is a testament to the power of principled leadership in times of crisis.

MARKET PERSPECTIVE

A Local View of Tampa Bay Real Estate



Image: Middleton Tampa Bay archive

One of the reasons I continue to be optimistic about Tampa Bay real estate is that I spend my days talking to the people who are actually making decisions in the market.

What I'm seeing today is very different from the headlines.

Nationally, there seems to be a constant debate about interest rates, affordability, and whether the housing market is slowing down. Here in Tampa Bay, the reality is much more nuanced. The market isn't stalled...it has simply returned to a more normal pace.

For buyers, that's welcome news. Inventory levels have increased across much of Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Pasco counties, giving buyers more choices and more time to evaluate their options. In many cases, buyers can once again negotiate repairs, credits, and terms that would have been nearly impossible just a few years ago.

For sellers, success is still very achievable, but the strategy matters more than ever. The days of simply putting a sign in the yard and expecting multiple offers are largely behind us. Today's buyers are informed, selective, and value conscious. Homes that are priced appropriately, presented professionally, and marketed effectively continue to perform well, while properties that miss the mark often sit longer than expected.

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A Local View of Tampa Bay Real Estate

One of the most interesting trends I'm watching is the growing separation between single-family homes and condominiums. Single-family homes throughout much of Tampa Bay have remained relatively stable, while many condominium communities continue to navigate rising insurance costs, reserve requirements, and changing buyer preferences. As a result, every neighborhood and property type deserves its own analysis rather than broad assumptions about the market as a whole.

I often tell my clients that real estate is ultimately a local business. National headlines may influence sentiment, but housing decisions are made one neighborhood, one family, and one property at a time.

And when I look at the long-term fundamentals that continue to drive our region, our quality of life, strong employment base, expanding infrastructure, world-class waterfronts, vibrant downtown districts, and the simple fact that people continue to want to live here, I remain confident in the future of Tampa Bay.

For those who enjoy diving deeper into the data, I've included a link below to download my complete monthly market report for Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Pasco counties, including detailed statistics for both single-family homes and condominiums.

Historical commentary from the July 2026 newsletter, preserved as originally written. This is not a current market forecast. Consult the dated reports for subsequent market data.

Explore dated Tampa Bay market reports

A CONSIDERED NEXT STEP

Considering Selling Your Home?

If you, or someone you know, are thinking about selling a home, I'd welcome the opportunity to have a conversation. Every successful sale starts with clarity, and understanding the market is the first step in deciding whether now is the right time to move.

Click the button below to learn more about our proven process and marketing system. It would be my honor to provide insight, guidance, and an honest assessment to help you make the best decision for your situation.

Explore our approach to selling

LOCAL FAVORITE

Columbia Restaurant Ybor City

2117 E 7th Avenue, Tampa, FL 33605 · (813) 248-4961



Image: Middleton Tampa Bay archive

Few places tell the story of Tampa quite like the Columbia Restaurant. Founded in 1905 by Cuban immigrant Casimiro Hernandez Sr., what began as a small café serving workers in Ybor City's thriving cigar industry has grown into Florida's oldest restaurant and one of the most iconic dining destinations in the state.

More than a restaurant, the Columbia is a living piece of Tampa Bay history. From its Spanish architecture and hand-painted tiles to its legendary Cuban sandwich and tableside "1905 Salad," every visit feels like a step back in time. As America approaches its 250th anniversary, places like the Columbia remind us that the story of our nation is built by generations of families, entrepreneurs, and communities who helped shape the places we call home.

Whether you're visiting for lunch, dinner, or simply to experience a piece of Tampa's history, the Columbia remains one of my favorite places to share with friends, family, and visitors alike.

Explore the Ybor City community guide

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

A NEW ROTARY YEAR BEGINS



Image: Middleton Tampa Bay archive

Today marks the beginning of a deeply meaningful chapter in my life as I officially begin serving as District Governor for Rotary International District 6950.

Rotary has been one of the great honors of my life because it reminds me that leadership is ultimately about service. Across Citrus, Hernando, Pasco, and Pinellas counties, our district is filled with people who give their time, talent, and resources to make their communities and the world better.

As I begin this year of service, I do so with gratitude, humility, and a renewed commitment to creating lasting impact. My hope is that this Rotary year will strengthen our clubs, inspire new leaders, deepen our friendships, and remind all of us that the work we do together truly matters.

I am deeply honored to serve.

The account above is retained from the original July issue and refers to the start of the 2026–2027 Rotary year.

CLOSING THOUGHT

The places we call home are shaped not only by where we live, but by how we choose to serve, connect, and contribute.

Thank you for taking a few minutes to spend with me each month. In a world that often feels increasingly busy and disconnected, I value the opportunity to stay connected through the stories, places, and communities that make Tampa Bay such a remarkable place to call home.

I hope you found something meaningful in this month's edition, whether it was a local event to attend, a new place to explore, a fresh perspective on our housing market, or a story that inspired you to become more connected to the community around you.

As always, I'm here for you and the people important to you. Whether you have questions about real estate, are considering a move, need a trusted local resource, or simply want to connect, I would be honored to help.

Until next month, thank you for being part of this journey.

Photographs & Credits

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