**Mickey Krivak** [00:00:00] Right here, do you see that recording?

**Tim Donovan** [00:00:03] Let's trying to make sure we record it so I don't have to come back.

**Mickey Krivak** [00:00:05] Yes, that is true.

**Bill Boone** [00:00:06] Alright. My name is Bill Boone, and Mickey Krivak and Lisa Hixson are here, and it is Thursday, June 19th. We're at Case Western and we're interviewing Tim Donovan. So, first of all, Tim, if you could talk to us about what your position is and explain what your responsibilities are overall,.

**Tim Donovan** [00:00:29] Okay. I'm currently director of Ohio Canal Corridor, which is a nonprofit organization that leads the efforts in Cuyahoga County as it regards to the development of what we call the Ohio and Erie Canalway, which is a National Heritage Area. And in that position, I also serve a larger management entity called the Ohio and Erie Canalway Association, which was a nonprofit organization established to manage the federal funding that was available when we had the piece of legislation passed in 1996.

**Bill Boone** [00:01:08] And how did you initially get involved with the Ohio Canal Corridor? I know you became director in 1990?

**Tim Donovan** [00:01:16] Well, I don't think I was called director then. We didn't have enough money. We didn't have enough money to have a paid staff, so I was a consultant. Paid consultant for a couple of years till we got enough money to actually put staff on. I got involved through a person. Tom Yablonsky, who I met in 1987, I believe it was, in the Warehouse District at a fundraiser for the Warehouse District's little art group that now we now know as SPACES. But they had a fundraiser in a space there in the Bradley building. I at that time was a video producer and a writer and knew quite a bit of the artists that lived down in the area there and wanted to get more involved with the neighborhood itself. I was kind of a neighborhood activist in my neighborhood in Brooklyn Centre and had gone through a period of time of spending time establishing a nonprofit group there and actually went and applied for the directorship. And then there came a point in time when I was one of the finalists and the interviewer asked, why would we hire you when we already have you? My answer was, if you don't, you won't. And they didn't. And I went down and said, I can go and help the city in other ways. I don't want to be around when a new director's here overlooking our shoulder. So I went down to the Warehouse District and at that fundraiser, it was actually the day before our Tom officially began as a director of the warehouse district, and ironically, I met his wife at the Coffee Urn and she was telling me how they just moved from Indiana and that her husband was going to be the director. And that was the guy I wanted to meet because I at the time had a number of video ideas that I thought could help the Warehouse District, one about its history, one about what the current vision is and bleeding into a future vision, if you will. So, you know, I palled around with them. And it's funny because I remember Mary at the time saying how they just moved from Indiana, and I'm thinking, hmm, okay, well, I know some people in this town and maybe I can be helpful. And I remember walking around with them as it was like an artist's loft tour, you know, business spaces and residential units. And as I walked around with them, I saw this guy, you know, time he seemed to know a lot of people already. I thought, Geez, you know this guy is a quick read. You know, I didn't even understand it, and as it turns out, years, it took me a couple of years even to realize this, that I went to high school with his brother, and he and I both went to Ignatius and so did Tom. But I didn't know that at the time and really didn't come to understand that for a while later. So I met Tom that day and started to talk to him about some of the ideas I had. And he was excited by 'em, but at the same time didn't have any money, which is a regular feature of nonprofit organizations at certain times in their life. And so the other thing I did, you know, as part of my life, I knew how to throw parties. In fact, I had a very successful Halloween party annually where I'd get four or five hundred people to come. So I felt I had kind of a base of support out there. And I wanted to bring it to a nonprofit cause. I would've brought it to my neighborhood had they hired me, but they didn't, so I said, well, maybe we can get together and I can help you raise some money and then we can go do the video. And so that's how I started to get involved with Tom in the Warehouse District. And after the first meeting, he said, well, if you think this is a big idea for downtown, I got another idea I'm working on. And that was called the North Cuyahoga Valley Corridor at the time. And it was linking the City of Cleveland to the National Park, noting that there was a group in Akron called the Cascade Lock Parks Association that was doing a similar effort between downtown Akron and the National Park. So together we could have, you know, when you combine those two initiatives, had the National Park link to the two major cities, which, by the way, was one of the taglines it used. It used to call itself the great park between, or the park between the two great cities of Cleveland and Akron. But they didn't quite make it there. So over time, and it took a little while for me to try to understand exactly what Tom was talking about, I went on a number of illegal hikes through backyards of industry and everything else, and I kind of got the hiking thing through his associate, Jeff Lennartz. Tom was a planner, so, you know, he had the planning ideas. And as I went about my career, I ended up taking a position after working on three video projects for then Mayor George Voinovich, he invited me to join his staff as he was about to close out his mayoral term for about the last nine months. And I went in there and was able to work. I knew as a video producer that they had just acquired top of the line equipment there, so I was kind of like, hmm. let the fox go and guard the henhouse for a while, and I was able to produce a couple of videos. One of them was actually broadcast nationally. I was able to actually get a free hookup and link with the National League of Cities and fight George Voinovich... I knew politics somewhat. I knew George's underbelly was a thing that he had lying out there with a guy by the name of Feckner who was a drug informant. So we had Bill Bennett come to town about Cities Fight Back Against Drugs Week. I cut a video. It went out nationwide to the League of Cities. And at the same time, the City of Cleveland was faced with the 1990 census. I had worked for the Census Bureau for about twelve years, so I knew how the Census Bureau worked, and they were in receipt of about two hundred fifty, three hundred thousand dollars of foundation funding. And for their match, they said, well, we'll produce a number of in-house products, including a video. And I was the guy to go do the video. And so ultimately I did the video for them, but unfortunately, I couldn't get it done before the term was up and a new mayor came in. So I ended up having to stay in the mayor's office until April of 1990, April 1st, when the census started. And what happened in the interim was, you know, I came to a realization that with a new mayor on board, I wasn't planning to stay in the mayor's office. But, you know, I was a speechwriter. I did special projects. I had no relationship with Mike White. And therefore I thought, well, it's best for him and probably best for me not to be there. So I said to Tom and Jeff Lennartz that, hey, you know, you got a heck of an idea out here for this, whatever you call it, North Cuyahoga Valley Corridor, and could be one of those great ideas that never happened. Give me a whack. Let me see what I can do with this thing. And that's when I took that on and raised money. You know, prior to that, when they, you know, I came to realize two things. One, the Warehouse District wouldn't hire me to raise money for them because they had a guy who was blocking the door who felt that was his area and didn't understand that I was able to raise a party with no money up front. He couldn't believe that. But I had relationships with people and I was able to do that. So I went and did it four Tom's group just to prove to the Warehouse folks, guys that, hey, I can go do this—watch—and raised ten grand for his group one night on the Viaduct after getting a group of my friends together, 20, 25 people, 52 days later we threw a party and raised ten grand and got radio coverage, got a major article on the Plain Dealer. So we took an issue in an organization from, you know, behind the bushes and brought 'em into daylight.

**Bill Boone** [00:09:03] Wow. Now, yeah, it's amazing how that began...

**Tim Donovan** [00:09:07] Well, it began before I got there.

**Bill Boone** [00:09:09] From what I can tell you were able to... I guess that leads to my next question is, from then until now, how has the organization changed or grown as a nonprofit group? You know, the budget has gotten bigger and that was probably because of your efforts. But how has it changed over the last eighteen, twenty years?

**Tim Donovan** [00:09:26] Well, I mean, back then they had three board of directors and I got on board and then they had a planner. They had a guy who liked to hike in the woods, a great guy, Jeff Lennartz. Don't get me wrong on this, and you know, a very skilled chemist, but, you know, different skill sets. You could say that, you know, when you matched them all up, they were they were, you know, a complete set. But then again, there was, I don't think, any really good skill set on how to communicate a very complex idea. And it's a very complex idea. It took me a couple of years to get my arms around it. And I don't think I'm an idiot. But at any rate, so I think what I brought to that table was one, communication skills, two, another set of strategic ideas. Tom's a pretty good strategist and I'm a pretty good strategist. And together, I think we we created a team that said, you know, we're going to take this group now has three three board of directors. First thing we did was we created what we called the advisory board, and we were able to go and woo to join that board, all kinds of top names in the city from the head of RTA to, you know, NOACA, to city planning director, county planning. We had the mayors of... Mayor Longo from Garfield Heights, Rich DiGerinomo with some business and industry... And we used to actually put the advisory board list of names on our stationery rather than the board's names because nobody knew the board. It was the advisory board that brought us credibility. And we used the advisory board as a proving ground and started to grow a board of three people, you know, starting to, you know, add some bodies and some minds and some resources to the organization, and today, you know, we we sit at a place where we have about, I think we have seventeen board members, you know, our budget's grown, you know, from when I met 'em, they had ten dollars in the bank. So that's a pretty big leap where you're at three hundred eighty thousand. And to be honest with you, the projects we're involved with their largely off our page. I mean, you know, we've helped raise 19.3 million dollars million for the Towpath Trail. It's not on our budget sheet because we're not managing the project, but it's something that we definitely have helped to do that.

**Bill Boone** [00:11:39] That leads me to another question, maybe a followup, is how if your goals changed as you've growm? I think you just gave one example. You're helping out other groups, nonprofit groups, and are any other examples of how your goals have changed over the years?

**Tim Donovan** [00:11:56] Yeah, well, I think that in essence, we've always thought of the group as one whose primary mission was facilitation. And there's an old story about, you ever hear about the rock soup, the guys who go to town, they go town to town, and they say, hey, we're going to get everybody together. We're going to build a great big dinner for the town. And they bring a rock. So you get water, they throw the rock in the water, everybody brings the vegetables, everything else, the meat, and they cook it up into a big stew. They all eat it. They're all happy, everybody's wonderful. And at the end, when it's all drained, there's a rock at the bottom and the guy picks it up and goes to the next town and does it all over again. It's kind of like what we do in a way. You know, we're kind of like bring the rock to the table. Maybe it's a little simplified in that manner. but, you know, at the end of the day, in a perfect world, we don't want to really own anything if we can help it. You know, we don't want to be necessarily the primary responsibilities of managing, you know, large pieces of land or anything else. We always are asking the question, whose job is it anyway? You know, whose, if we're going to build a new park and a trail, whose job around here would it be to help build it, manage it, et cetera? And some of those questions have found different answers over time. And depending on the place where you're asking the question, there's always different partnership-type structures that get developed and they evolve and in and of themselves. But primarily, I think we, you know, we have a pretty big vision. You know, it's a vision of, you know, physical development. It's a vision that includes interpretive programing. It's a vision that has a very, what'll be, I think, even an evolving and strengthening marketing component to it. We play with, play with is probably the wrong word, but we utilize different programs in terms of funding sources. And that's why we've gone after and became a National Scenic Byway, because as I wrote two grants, we're sitting on nearly eight hundred thousand dollars now to help implement an identity signage plan that'll help the whole of the Canalway. So, you know, we're pretty strategic.

**Bill Boone** [00:14:10] I guess going along with that, the Byway, also the Canalway was considered a National Heritage Area...

**Tim Donovan** [00:14:18] Mm hmm.

**Bill Boone** [00:14:19] In the mid-'90s? What kind of role did you play with that?

**Tim Donovan** [00:14:22] Well, it's actually Tom that identified the opportunity of creating a National Heritage Area. Again, his... He was well-steeped as an urban planner and a planner in general. I think he had some environmental planning background as well. And so, you know, when he started to think about, you know, how do you make these connections and what kinds of systems or programs are out there to help you complete this, he was aware of the fact that there was a National Heritage Area designated in Illinois. And there is a fellow up there called Jerry Adelmann, and Tom had talked to him—talked about him, I don't know if he talked to him—but I know one day I did. I just picked up the phone and said, hey, I'm thinking about getting involved with this and you've done it. Tell me about what you're doing. So I have a... I'm still trying to understand what it is we were trying to get done. I figured, well, if this guy has done this and we're talking about becoming one of these, what are they? And tell me, let me pick your mind. And it was a good conversation. And ever since then, Jerry's has been somebody, you know, on a semi-regular basis I could reach out to and talk about different issues and projects. But, yeah, you know, we were actually, I think, benefited greatly by a change in personnel. Sometimes things like this, you know, time helps you. And in this case, it's how... It's helped us. I could tell. I could cite a number of examples where this is proven true. And one of them is the superintendent of the National Park. When John Debo became the new superintendent, there was a sea change in terms of how they looked at this project because it was... The "they" was he, and he understood, you know, issues like industrial heritage. He had experience from his Park Service duties there and the different sites he was associated with. And I remember we got him on the Goodtime, you know, within a couple of weeks when he got in town, and he went down the river and we got, he got off the boat, he goes, I don't know if you guys know what you have here. And then we said, well, I think we kind of do. That's why we brought you down the river, you know. And so he said, oh okay, maybe you guys are smarter and I think you are. And ultimately, you know, we started to pitch John this idea. And it was interesting because at the time, the Cuyahoga Valley National Park was in the middle of an exercise to write its own history. They have a big book, The Green Little Miracle [A Green Shrouded Miracle] or something like that. And something I didn't know at that time but obviously came to learn was that once upon a time when they were doing the legislation for the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, there was a young congressman named Ralph Regula who tried to insert an amendment to that bill that would have created a Scenic River from its northern boundary at Rockside Road to the lake and would have created a recreational corridor following the Ohio and Erie Canal or Ohio Canal from the end of the boundary south all the way down to Zoar, Ohio. So he had a, you know, a construct, if you will, and what ultimately became a framework for the National Heritage Area. Now, unfortunately, I think the Congress and the Park Service had a hard enough time understanding how the National Park was going to play any role in the City of Cleveland, you know, when Cleveland was mentioned. So adding those amendments ultimately didn't succeed. But it was good to know that there was somebody out there and now somebody how many years later who had grown in stature in his own right, who was a friend of the National Park and who, you know, would understand why you would want to go do something like this. And so John obviously saw that because he was reading the history and he was able to go get some funding and bring some planners into the formula here to do a feasibility study, if you will, for the National Her... well, it became now the National Heritage Area. And at the same time, we were just wrapping up a study done by the County Planning Commission on what was called the North Cuyahoga Valley Corridor. And so it was kind of like, in a way, good timing. They were... The Park Service planners were able to take our study and integrate it readily into, you know, their planning. So in other words, they didn't have to do any work. They... Trust me, it was a pretty seminal document, the North Cuyahoga Vallety Corridor study, way beyond the stuff they were going to be dealing with. And they had a group in place, an advocacy group, because one of the things that you need is, you know, you want this to be grass... Grown from the grass up, not grown down. You don't wanna be a top-down project for success. So they were able to spend their time south of the park, not only in trying to analyze, you know, the possibilities, but to try to find people who ultimately they could bring together and create another advocacy group down there. And they did. And it's Ohio and Erie Canal Corridor Coalition, or it's called the Canalway Coalition today. So, you know, it was dynamic in that respect. When we got done with the feasibility study at the time, by that time, you know, I was, you know, director. I even had a staff person, and the other group had just gotten together. But, you know, I all remember us all being in a room in Hines Hill and saying, Okay, where do we go from here? And the suggestion was, we need to mount a campaign. We need to get a legislative campaign. We need to write a bill, and we need to push our congressional delegation to pass it. And so our organization took on the task of running the campaign. I mean, we got support letters together. We put a little booklet that, you know, now it there's a law, how do you create a law? You know, it was like the ABCs of lawmaking. It included all kinds of benefits that would be cited, you know, if we were to designate this, from economic development, the quality of life, to recreation, the health, et cetera. And we got a hit list of people we wanted letters from and including municipalities and townships, resolutions of support. And we did mailings and we did follow ups. And in the end, we created quite a binder of support and even reached down into things. And it's kind of an interesting little story. And I knew a teacher. And so he, you know, as part of his lesson plans, wanted to talk about the Canal and he talked about the Canal and then he talked about what might be the future of the Canal. And he had his students write letters, and it was Regula who used to... He found one of them, I guess, to be one of his favorite letters... Is he would go to hearings and read it aloud. So, you know, it's always the power of children's voices sometimes that can help you win the day.

**Bill Boone** [00:21:17] Now, during that effort, and maybe even continuing on, part of your issue would probably have to educate citizens, civic leaders, about this major milestone at that time to make it a National Heritage Area and all the things that were going on there. How do you convince people that this is an important thing for their area, that this is really a great thing that occurred in the mid '90s and continuing on? I'm sure you have to convince civic leaders, business people, and citizens all the time. What do you tell them?

**Tim Donovan** [00:21:52] Well, I mean, the good news now is that we actually have some stuff out there on the ground. So it's, it becomes a little different argument. You can go and show them something.

**Bill Boone** [00:22:04] Yeah.

**Tim Donovan** [00:22:05] And we actually benefited a little bit from that in the fact that the National Park was able to build the Towpath Trail within the National Park. You know, that was done by 1993, and so as we are going toward legislation, we were able to take people out in that park. And by then, you know, that was an immediate success, the Towpath Trail was. And even the Scenic Railroad, which started to become, you know, evolved from kind of a hobbyist venture into a legitimate kind of excursion rail service, that started to become more professional as well. And, you know, we realized the Scenic Byway program was out there and we went after it and we, by, you know, 1993, we were getting ready to apply for state and then federal Scenic Byway status and actually won the state status in June of '96 and became a state Scenic Byway prior to a National Heritage Area. So, you know, it's interesting, as we, you know, it took us two times to win the designation. The first year we got stuff in there in 1993, and it was actually a blessing in disguise in terms of reflection, because we didn't pass. You know, it was a year that the only piece of legislation that Congress considered in an election year post their summer recess was going to be NAFTA. But we got a call from the floor of Congress saying that, hey, we can get you that National, or that National Heritage Area designation. That's the good news. The bad news is you won't get any money. And we said no thanks. We'll take tee the ball up again in the next Congress. And so we missed the first one and when we went back to assess what was good or bad about our effort, the thing that we found out was that we had followed the model of all the prior heritage areas, which had a commission structure to manage it. And the commissions were appointed by such people as the state DOT, and it had a lot of state involvement in it. And then he had some local involvement with chambers of commerce and tourism and et cetera. But what we found out was that every day in Washington, they were decommissioning these commissions. And so that was, you know, it made us get back in a room, and I remember having a conversation with my compatriot down in Akron, Dan Rice, and I said to him, you know why, you know, if I think about it, why are we doing this anyway? We're giving this very complex idea to a bunch of bureaucrats who aren't going to understand what it is we're trying to get done. We've brought it this far. We should own it. And so when we rewrote the legislation, we put the nonprofit management group in there and said... You know at the time we were, our two organizations were meeting regularly on what we call a seamless agreement to just try to make sure that we were coordinating, you know, our issues and efforts together, north and south. So we used that committee to help engender this new organization. So it's, you know, it's kind of an interesting task there today. Did that answer your question?

**Bill Boone** [00:25:14] I think you did.

**Tim Donovan** [00:25:15] Okay. Never know where I'm going with this. Coffee? No.

**Bill Boone** [00:25:22] Moving on to West Creek.

**Tim Donovan** [00:25:23] Mmm.

**Bill Boone** [00:25:24] How did West Creek become involved in the Canalway? Can you give us a little history on that?What was your role in that? What are your thoughts?

**Tim Donovan** [00:25:35] Well, you know, again, going back to Tom Yablonsky, I was aware of that time, had some some interests and some past dealings with the City of Parma over trying to create a park down there along West Creek. Knew it. Didn't... Could never get it in the boundary study of either the North Cuyahoga Valley Corridor study by the County Planning Commission. By the time I got there, they had already done the boundary and they ended at Rockside Road, and it was very weird, you know, narrow boundary there. And I couldn't get 'em to push the boundary out. And in the National Park Service, when they did their feasibility study, I tried to get them to push their boundaries further out. Remember, they didn't do any work in Cuyahoga County, kind of to be pretty frank about it, and they said, no, we're just gonna accept what they did. We're not going to do any more than that. So I knew in my heart and in my mind that when we had a National Heritage Area and we went to go to do the boundary that we weren't going to use the ones in those two plants, because to me, they didn't, they didn't make the sense that I thought this boundary should make. And so when we had the legislation passed in 1996, it was called, within the legislation, it was mandated that you do what's called the water management plan, which would be a plan that includes a very heavy interaction with public, public process. And one of the chief things that plan asked for was a boundary. And so you opened the door to ask people, you know, what should this be, how should people use it, and what should be included and not included? And it was a bit of art and science. I mean, in some respects, you know, you go and, you know, now you have GPS mapping and everything else, you're able to take all kinds of historic resources and put dots on a map, and then you got natural things and you color them in and, you know, you layer these kinds of this information on maps and you start to have a color start to appear. And then, you know, that's kind of the science of it, I guess. And then the art of it becomes trying to figure out a road or something 'cause you need a road usually, you know, for people to associate it with. Well, during the time that we were doing that, Dave Vasarhelyi from the National Park and some citizens in Parma had gotten together to rediscover this, you know, hopeful resource there. And obviously, the mayor at the time had a golf course plan in his mind. And I knew Dave, you know, I got to know him through, you know, being in the national park, and I became aware of what they were doing. And they obviously knew what we were doing and they organized quite well. I think I hooked them up with Bobbi Reichtell, who also had some experience in terms of turning Metroparks around on an idea. That's a whole other story but, you know, part of what I'm supposed to do in life, I think, is connect people. And so in doing that, you know, those guys are very good at what they do. So they were able to not only mount the campaign, but they understood getting the political support letters in there from the congressmen on down. And I think it was not a hard case to make that West Creek could and should be included as a major tributary. There was history with the Canal along it. And so I certainly supported that as we drew the boundary maps up. After that, you know, they were not an official nonprofit, so I remember Dave coming to me and asking if we could be a fiscal agent as they went after grants early on, and I said, absolutely. And so we became their fiscal agent early on, and then once they got all their paperwork cleared, they were able to take on their own fiscal responsibility and they've done a great job. I'd say my relationship with them is one, you know, in the beginning, I was kind of an adviser. You know, we talked strategically about different things. I'm still here, you know, if we need help. But, you know, to be honest, they do a fine job in and of themselves, so it's not like a caretaking position at all. They've done some magnanimous things there.

**Bill Boone** [00:29:47] You said one of your key roles is making connections.

**Tim Donovan** [00:29:51] Mm hmm.

**Bill Boone** [00:29:51] And I think you've been a part of a lot of these issues and a lot of them by Tom. Why do you think West Creek... because once the petition drive went, it seems like it was wildly successful...

**Tim Donovan** [00:30:01] Mm hmm.

**Bill Boone** [00:30:01] After that initial proposal with the golf course. Why do you think they were so successful in this case as opposed to maybe some other times where it's a harder argument?

**Tim Donovan** [00:30:11] Well, first of all, they're, you know, they're not a small city, so it's not like they don't have resources there.

**Bill Boone** [00:30:16] Right.

**Tim Donovan** [00:30:16] Two, I think that if you think about the original argument, which was a golf course versus this, golf courses have obviously a niche group of supporters. They're called golfers. And, you know, they're not the majority of population. And therefore, you know, you have all the other folks who, you know, if you offer them an alternative, then this is your property, do you want it for the golfers or you want it for yourself? And by the way, they were smart because when they first came out, they didn't ask for money. They just asked for... Why don't you just support this idea? Because, by the way, we already own some of the land, so therefore that's your land and could be used for something else. So...

**Bill Boone** [00:31:04] So that always helps when you go ask for money.

**Tim Donovan** [00:31:06] Right. In the beginning, that... And that helped get some councilpeople on board. So strategically it was the right move to make and then, you know, once they did see the success there, they were able to turn around then and ask for money, you know, at the right time, understanding fire levies and police levies and schools and libraries and try to fit the, you know, target the right election cycle and go back again and win that. So that was good as well. So, yeah, they... I think they had a good strategic one-two punch there. And I think it was the right time, you know. I mean, it was at a time when nationally the economy was well off, you know, it'd probably be a little harder sell today. So timing sometimes is everything. And the other thing is, I think, you know, the promise that perhaps if we can do this, we can woo Cleveland Metroparks. It wasn't, you know, a promise that Cleveland Metroparks made, but it was out there as part of the, again, strategic analysis and the campaign that would say do this and we might be able to get this done. So it worked.

**Bill Boone** [00:32:15] Overall, for your career at the Ohio Canal Corridor, what do you think—and I think we've touched on a couple of them already, but what do you think are some of the key accomplishments of the last twenty years that you can really hang your hat on and say I'm really proud of this moment or this accomplishment?

**Tim Donovan** [00:32:33] Yeah, okay. Well, I think getting these designations is obviously something that not everybody can do, and we should be proud of doing that. I think we've been pretty successful in raising money. You know, it's not on our book, as I said before, but, you know, I think the, you know, and in order to get in that position, we've had to steadily make the case and convince more and more people that this was an idea whose time has come and who should get the support. And that's, you know, from the councilmen all the way up. And, you know, so we've had success over time on that. I think one of the things that we certainly would point to would be the development of this TIF district off Steelyard Commons that we were able to work with... First of all, see the opportunity. It's clear as day. We're not taking any tax relief, so therefore you're gonna pay all your taxes, you know. Then under... going back to understand the legislation that allows tax incremental financing districts and understanding how to apply that toward this project, getting both the city to buy into it and the council. So that's like twenty-two mayors and all. You got the real mayor and they got the other twenty-one who are "mayors" of their own wards, and then get it done over a change in administration where one was against the other and Steelyard was kind of caught in the throat, if you will, of a political battle. So even though we could say, hey, we're making lemonade out of lemons here, even if you're against Steelyard or Wal-Mart or whatever you want to make here. So I think that was very good because, you know... Well, the other thing in association with that, you know, after doing all kinds of studies about this Towpath Trail and getting it done in Cleveland, we were able to come up with a structure that we call the Towpath Trail Partnership Committee. Now, admittedly, it's loose and there's, you know, it doesn't address everything with the, you know, correct T and dot the I for every single issue you can think of. But it put in place a committee with valuable allies from ODOT to NOACA to National Park to Cleveland Metroparks to the county with their engineer and their planning and commissioners, the City of Cleveland, and then our organization. And through that compact, if you will, we were able to get the county engineer to sign on the build a Towpath Trail. And that's the first time in the state that a county engineer will do that. So that's, you know, kind of groundbreaking to get that done [crosstalk]. Well, in the last few years, yeah, we had to have, you know, I mean, the prosecutor's office had to vet it. You know, could they do this? Is this part of what their legal standing is? And they vetted it on the right side or some... They can't use road tax as match, so we had to go get other money. Getting a 6.5 million-dollar earmark in the transportation bill, which was a rollercoaster ride in and of itself, where those figures dipped as low as 1.2 million the day before the bill was passed. So, you know, being on the phone with Congress, with senators, with any ally that... Like, I knew a guy who was a very good friend of George Voinovich, who served as an aide, and I called him up and said, hey, can you do this for me? And this guy, we used to eat breakfast with him all the time, you know, can you put the call in? Can you let 'em know? And, you know, at the end of the day, we had 6.5 million of no-match money, which allows us now to put that in the engineering and design without interruption. So we'll march down that Valley with it. But, you know, we couldn't get another penny of federal dollars if we didn't have local match. So the TIF really helped to break that one. And then, you know, even more recently now we've been successful twice in the state capital bill, 1.9 million and now five hundred thousand. And in both occasions, I will say to you that our success on that has come through the efforts of Ohio Canal Corridor. The 1.9 million was put in by the governor, the last governor, Governor Taft, not anybody locally, and just happenstantially, the week before that bill was put together, I was able to do a little bike ride with the governor when he awarded us the 425,000-dollar check for a grant I wrote for Clean Ohio Trail funds, and on my bike ride I thanked him for everything he did and reminded hi that we have a 2.1-million-dollar request in for state capital and anything he could do to help would be greatly appreciated. I found out afterwards he's the guy who put it in.

**Bill Boone** [00:37:26] Wow.

**Tim Donovan** [00:37:26] So locally, five hundred thousand in the last round here. I do know that there was a priority list put together by a city and the county. There's a priority list put together by the chamber, Greater Cleveland Partnership. I know the Towpath Trail was neither of those two lists. I know I went down there and advocated for it and we asked for 1.5. We got five hundred thousand.

**Bill Boone** [00:37:47] It's interesting because you would think that a Republican governor of Ohio wouldn't be as sympathetic to the cause, and in this case...

**Tim Donovan** [00:37:56] Well, he was a bike rider. He loved trails. You know, he did the Clean Ohio Fund. I mean, you know, not everything Taft did was bad.

**Bill Boone** [00:38:04] Right. [laughs].

**Tim Donovan** [00:38:04] You know, and I always say, you got to you got to give people that credit, their just due, and that's the one thing that I think he should be credited with because that was a fabulous program.

**Bill Boone** [00:38:14] I think you were already moving in this direction and that leads into how do you see the future? What are some of the obstacles and some of the things that are going on in the next five or ten years?

**Tim Donovan** [00:38:24] Well, you know...

**Bill Boone** [00:38:25] The last, what, five miles?

**Tim Donovan** [00:38:27] Six, yeah.

**Bill Boone** [00:38:28] Six miles?

**Tim Donovan** [00:38:29] Well, I mean, you know, money is always gonna be an issue in any project, you know, and the state of the economy as national to state to local, you know, I mean, it's... There's always that factor. So you never know what's going to be up ahead and all the other things you have to compete with. You know, again, looking back, there was a time when there was a mayor named Mike White, and when I had dealings with his cabinet, I could not meet them at City Hall. I used to have to meet them after work. We called it the back porch meetings. And we would meet at various... Because we knew 'em. You know, they were friendly to us, and we wanted to educate 'em further and get them to become our ally. But we also knew that the mayor didn't buy into it, understand it, whatever. And so, you know, when I think of that today, every Monday, I hold a meeting at City Hall and City Planning that includes a chief of staff, his minions, the people that work for him, Planning department, Parks department. And when I need 'em, I can call in Engineering, Community Development, even the Police chief. I know that. I mean, it's like, you know, it's come a long way and it's a different day in Cleveland. And even this mayor now who, you know, has to deal with a lot of issues and problems, finds money in his budgets to help lever the other money that we need to get in order to create and build not only the trail, but Canal Basin Park and some of the neighborhood connectors that we're working on. So, you know, it's come a long, long way. And as Tip O'Neill said, all politics is local, and so when you're dealing in the City of Cleveland, you've got to have that city, you know, leading the parade. And right now we've got them leading the parade. So that's a tremendous sea change.

**Bill Boone** [00:40:29] The political the cooperation is amazing. Have business leaders who are being affected by this been as cooperative?

**Tim Donovan** [00:40:34] Well, if you want to measure that just in terms of the project, for example, when Cleveland Metroparks built the extension from Rockside Road all the way to Harvard, it ended up being about a 300-acre park, you know, greenway element with that, and of those 300 acres, I think they paid for three, which means the rest of them were either donated or they were put at a dollar-a-year lease. As we're moving that project now north of Harvard, we're having the same conversations with folks. People want to donate land. They, you know, we've got an easement through Steelyard. Beyond the TIF, he built the trail. I kind of told him, you can leave it as dirt if you want, and we'll come back about five years from now and we'll make, you know, your shopping center will look like a dust kingdom as we, you know, start to build the trail or for pennies on a dollar you could probably build that trail for us because you got guys out there doing a whole power center here. He saw the wisdom of that and he put a million dollars of his own money in to build that trail because he's got two tunnels with it. So, you know, if you measure it in terms of those issues, I said it's, I would say it's tremendous. In terms of corporate leadership on a nonprofit level, you know, we always had an idea that, you know, we lead a very complicated life in projects and with no offense given or taken on this statement, it's hard to get the corporate heads of state to understand what you're doing. You know, if you're going to build a museum, you're going to put a box here and there's going to be stuff inside. You can explain that pretty simply. When you start to try to explain a project that has so many entangled webs and weaves to it, three transportation systems, interpretation framework, communications plan, it has identity to it and subidentities, these guys, their eyes glaze over quickly. So we've always felt that we should go for what we call the young lions, you know, the folks making their way up and they have a little bit more time maybe. You know, their interests might be a little different given their place in life. And so we try to tap into those folks. And then, you know, we've been successful in doing that. We've had some good young lion leaders, as it were. That being said, you know, in the end we've done a tremendous job on raising funds in the public sector. I do think that we have to do a better job in the private sector 'cause it all ain't going to be done with with public money. But hopefully, you know, it's easier when you go to them and say, let's add the Towpath and Canal Basin, and that's 77 million dollars right there. If I can go to them on a day to say we've got, you know, 60 percent of that money already in place and we think we'll get another 10. Fill in the blank for us. You know, make this thing a reality and put your name on a window or whatever you need here.

**Bill Boone** [00:43:37] So it's nice when you can get that momentum already going.

**Tim Donovan** [00:43:38] Right, right.

**Bill Boone** [00:43:38] So they jump on board. That will lead me to my last question. Mickey, I'll give you a chance to jump in if you have anything else and final thoughts by you. You know, I was going to put this at the beginning, but I think it's more interesting to put it at the end. They often say your childhood influences your personal or professional decisions as an adult. Do you think your childhood affected the professional path that you eventually decided to take?

**Tim Donovan** [00:44:05] How do you define childhood?

**Bill Boone** [00:44:08] Well... [laughs].

**Tim Donovan** [00:44:10] I still think I'm a kid at heart here, you know, I'm...

**Bill Boone** [00:44:14] I'll make it very broad spectrum.

**Tim Donovan** [00:44:18] Well, hmmm. Because, you know, I mean, just childhood end at the age of 12?

**Bill Boone** [00:44:22] We'll say...

**Mickey Krivak** [00:44:23] It's growing up.

**Bill Boone** [00:44:24] Growing up overall. You know, I really didn't know you had as many things going on in your earlier life. It's different being in the mayor's office or working in your production, and include what you will.

**Tim Donovan** [00:44:38] Well, yeah, you know, it's interesting because they just did a little piece onTom and I in our high school alumni magazine, you know, and sometimes reporters had the story written before they even ask you a question. And this was one of those times. And they thought... They said, yeah, we really want to know, you know, you know, did Tim, you know, did he grow up, was he hiking and his family take them to national parks and is that how this happened?

**Bill Boone** [00:45:07] But they want to know.

**Tim Donovan** [00:45:08] Yeah, they, oh, they want to... They figure they already wrote it, so they just want to affirm it. And that wasn't the case at all. You know, I'm a child of an urban experience here, and it's... My interest in this project comes, I think, from two, on two different levels. On one level, I like ideas. You know, I don't mind complicated things. In fact, I my mind works on complicated levels. I like to interconnect things. So those are... That's a world I don't mind living in. You know, some people I think would get frustrated by it. I kind of enjoy it in a way. The second thing is I have a deep affection and care for the city. I grew up in the city of Cleveland, and I was attracted to this project because I see how this can benefit the city I love. And the idea here is to reposition some of its core where, you know, settlement first happened in some of those early neighborhoods around the Valley and the lake, and to reinvigorate that with these systems of trails, et cetera, to have people recover the sense of history and the sense of accomplishment that has happened here so they can use that in terms of how they feel about their future. I think we've done a lot here. And, you know, we're always looking at a glass, and the glass will always be, you know, it's never going to be full and overflowing, you know, in life. It just doesn't happen. So you're always going to have to interpret is it half full or half empty? And I just want to get us all to the point to understand it's half full. You know, it's not half empty.

**Bill Boone** [00:46:49] Do you have anything else?

**Mickey Krivak** [00:46:50] I don't think so. Do you live in Cleveland, right?

**Tim Donovan** [00:46:51] Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, I live by the zoo.

**Mickey Krivak** [00:46:53] Do you?

**Tim Donovan** [00:46:54] Mm hmm. I moved up from West Park to live closer to the Valley. It's one of the times my parents wanted to I think, get me institutionalized. But you know...

**Mickey Krivak** [00:47:03] [Laughs]

**Bill Boone** [00:47:06] Is there anything you'd like to add?

**Tim Donovan** [00:47:08] No, I think you guys have covered it well. What's the... What do you think the object of the... You can turn the interview thing off now...