

Times editorials



MARILYN MICHAELS | Special to the Times

The Tampa Bay History Center tells the story of Florida and the region from early hunters to today.

A civic success story

The striking architecture of the new Tampa Bay History Center that opens today is a welcome addition to downtown Tampa's main tourist strip. But that is just the most superficial of its contributions. Its cultural exhibits are a rich lens on 12,000 years of Florida history. And the center offers a valuable lesson in how civic projects should be done.

The 60,000-square foot facility in the Channel District will attract tourists and residents alike. Downtown Tampa has no prettier spot than the waterfront park leading to the decked, glass foyer of the history center. It is a signature destination that will reshape Tampa's cultural appeal. The center tells the story of Florida

and the region from early hunters and European explorers to the rise of immigrant cities, the cigar trade and the bay area of today.

How the center came about is a remarkable success story in its own right. The city of Tampa, Hillsborough County, the state and private donors all contributed. Donors raised money for

an endowment to ensure the center's educational mission. And civic leaders J. Thomas Touchton and George Howell committed to guide the center from the drawing board to completion.

The result is a facility that is a source of pride — a product of true collaboration and civic ambition. The only question: Where to apply that model next?