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Must-Know Contacts in Tampa Bay

By - 1/1/2009

Al Austin — Powerhouse developer and Republican fundraiser

Bill McBride — Former managing partner of Holland and Knight and gubernatorial candidate; plugged in to local business and politics

H. Lee Moffitt — Influential attorney, former speaker of the Florida House of Representatives

Susan MacManus — Much-quoted USF political science professor who's a leading expert on state political scene

Former Gov. Bob Martinez — Now a senior policy advisor — and rainmaker — with Holland & Knight

Ron Weaver — Influential land use attorney with Stearns Weaver

Judy Genshaft — President of USF and active player in business and economic development circles

Louis Miller — executive director of the Hillsborough County Aviation Authority, which runs Tampa International Airport

Cynthia Miller — director of growth management and development for the city of Tampa. Trusted aide to Mayor Iorio.
Married to Louis Miller.

Mark Huey — director of economic and urban development for the city of Tampa.

Richard Wainio — CEO and director of the Port of Tampa

Christine Burdick — executive director, Tampa Downtown Partnership

Frank Sanchez — International business consultant (focusing on Latin American trade); former Clinton administration Transportation official; early and major fundraiser/organizer for Obama in Florida

Mark Sharpe — Hillsborough county commissioner with a focus on economic development; spearheaded the incentive package to bring M2GEN to town; Republican advocate for mass transit and rail

Ed Turanchik — former Hillsborough County Commissioner who spearheaded effort to bring 2012 Olympics to Tampa; now a developer in West Tampa and active in green-building initiatives, urban renewal and mass transit efforts

Sandy MacKinnon — CEO and owner, Yale Lift Trucks; philanthropist well regarded for business sense and community involvement

Stu Rogel — head of Tampa Bay Partnership, regional economic development group

Mary Ann Stiles — Attorney and former general counsel for Associated Industries of Florida with long experience

in state legislative affairs relating to business and workers compensation insurance; advocate for countywide mayor system

Curtis Stokes — young banker and leading figure in NAACP and the black community who's praised for energy and judgment

David Smith — former Tampa city attorney now with Gray, Robinson; expert on land-use issues.

Warren Weathers — well-connected chief deputy property appraiser for Hillsborough County with long institutional perspective of business and housing trends

Jason Busto — "unofficial mayor of West Tampa" who works in the family plumbing business; active in redevelopment of West Tampa, mass transit and clean-energy efforts; advocate for helping local business rather than luring outside firms.

Ben Wacksman — young developer and former county commissioner; a Democrat with ties to Republicans who advocates for mass transit, environmental protection and other issues.

George P. Howell, III — partner at Holland & Knight who spearheaded the creation and funding for the Tampa Bay History Center; well-liked and regarded.

Steve Klasko — energetic dean of the USF medical school and vice-president, Health Sciences Center ; has ambitious plans to create a academic health complex with educational and clinical components

Beth Leytham — PR firm owner with great contacts from her work on area transportation, growth and other issues.

Patrick Manteiga — well-connected editor and publisher of family-owned La Gaceta newspaper in Ybor City, the nation's only trilingual newspaper (English/Spanish/Italian) and oldest minority-owned paper in the U.S.

Tom Lee — builder and former state Senate president; GOP insider.

Rick Garrity — head of the county's Environmental Protection Commission, which regulates air, water and noise pollution; former state DEP official and with great institutional knowledge of state and local regulatory affairs