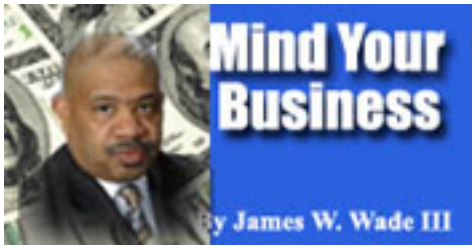

Now people are stepping into the Horseshoe Casino through the same doors to a different look, but still with a great collection of nice chandeliers.

Cleveland memories mean a better economy

Cleveland got another economic boost with Marine Week. Over 700 active Marines coming into the city, not including the retired Marines, meant more money for hotels, restaurants, and yes even the Horseshoe Casino.

“This has been a good economic boost for this city,” said New Orleans visitor John Mackel. Dow ntown seemed to be alive and well again. Spending time on
Public Square
gives you that excitement of a city on the rise. One time, I wrote that after 6 p.m. everyday, downtown seem like a ghost town.

Even with all the great department stores and Woolworths gone, the area is now jumping with establishments like the casino, Cadillac Ranch, and the House of Blues to name a few. After all the years of me entering Burger King and then Wendy's, you now have a gigantic bowling alley (The Corner Alley) on 4th and Euclid.

Just recently a traffic study proposed disposing of the slice of Ontario Street that cuts through Public Square
, creating two bigger park areas by combining quadrants now separated by four lanes of pavement.

The Group Plan (commissioned by Mayor Jackson to study possible reconfigurations of Public Square's traffic flow) hired a consultant who concluded that Ontario, which cuts north-south through the square, could be closed with little effect on car and bus traffic.

This proposed plan will add to the new look of downtownCleveland. With City Council being out for the summer, we have to wait for more discussion on this.

The hotel business has to get ready for not only the casino guests, but the Medical Mart guests coming, and now Cleveland has decided to compete for the Super Bowl. After losing the Cleveland Centre Hotel on St. Clair, there is talk about another hotel opening across the street.

The school board's spacious but decaying headquarters at 1380 East Sixth St. downtown is under consideration for being converted into a nice hotel. The building is structurally sound, according to district consultant Weston Development Co. and the Cleveland architecture firm of Ubiquitous Design Ltd., which collaborated on the latest study. The plan would save the district operating costs of nearly $5.2 million over five years and $13.3 million over 10 years, according to Weston estimates.

A city once called "The Mistake on the Lake" in reference to its financial difficulties, struggling professional sports teams, and the notorious 1969 fire on the Cuyahoga River can be called, "The comeback city," if we continuously work to shed the former nickname.
Cleveland was once a booming city with industry and a culture that attracted hope-filled people from all around the world. Today, the city's population is less than half of what it was in its prime and ranks as one of the poorest big cities in the United States.

Even as I walk through downtown Cleveland, I still look around and names from the past jump out like Rosenblums, Halle's, F.W. Woolworth, *May Co., Higbee's,* Bond Clothes and many more *key landmarks.* The loss of 150,000 manufacturing jobs over the last two decades further contributed to the image of decline relative to Cleveland. The same town that once launched GE and Standard Oil rated as one of the worst three largest American cities to start a company from 1990 to 2002.

If you are around my age (50ish) it was a treat to eat at The Forum Cafeteria before going to the Hippodrome or the Embassy on Euclid to watch a movie. Even with the evolution of Corporate America, I still see these stores I grew up with when I walk around downtown. Cleveland has shrunk because its job base declined. Not only does the city need to attract new businesses, but it needs to lower taxes. Property, personal and corporate income taxes should be cut. A low sales tax results in more sales.

I have seen my fun places downtown become big corporate office locations. PNC Bank now occupies the area where Bond and the movie theater space was on Euclid. In the 1990s, reinvestment sparked a renaissance that continues today with commercial and residential developments planned over the next few years. There is over $2 billion in residential and commercial developments slated over the next few years for the Cleveland area—the same Cleveland area that saw much of its population fly to the surrounding suburbs in the latter half of the 20th Century.

I could go to Higbee's and remember going through the revolving doors from Public Square, then feeling the air conditioning cool me off as I walked the long main aisle with it's array of crystal chandeliers. Hard to believe this great place had 10 floors with the famous Silver Grille, the Winter Garden Restaurant, The Pronto Room and the (Twigbee Shop) on the top. These were my great memories of one of the cities greatest stores.

Now people are stepping into the Horseshoe Casino through the same doors to a different look, but still with a great collection of nice chandeliers. This multi million dollar renovation has helped Cleveland's economy. I had the pleasure of visiting Higbee's, Halle's and The May Co. in the late 1970s, and they were all great, individual stores, each with their own strengths. There are a number of books about Clev
eland
's department stores,
Euclid Avenue
, and Higbee's.
I would recommend them to anyone who wants to go further into what downtown used to be.

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Comments and questions are welcome but, because of the volume of mail, personal responses are not always possible. Please note that comments or questions may be used in a future column.