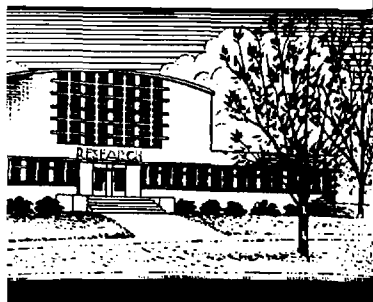
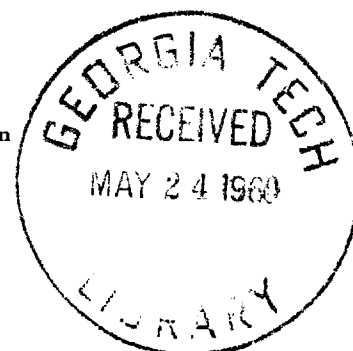


AN ANALYSIS OF THE INDUSTRIAL SITES
OF THE VALDOSTA AREA

Prepared for the
Valdosta and Lowndes County
Chamber of Commerce
Valdosta, Georgia

by
J. R. Peterson



Engineering Experiment Station
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Summary

An industrial site is a tract of land, suitable for a manufacturing plant, over which the community industrial developers have legal control. In other words, community representatives must be able to make binding commitments to a prospect on a tract, before it can be considered a site.

Since the tract must also be suitable for an industrial plant, a plot of land cannot be used just because it is vacant or because it is "available." Except for very large industries which require large acreages, factories require services, roads and perhaps access to one or more railroads. Any plant built by the local people for lease to a company should be near a railroad anyway, whether the company needs rail service or not, since a future potential tenant might need rail service. A site must, consequently, also have these features.

A requirement that is becoming more common all the time is zoning, zoning for industry only--not for industry as well as everything else. In addition, if the site is at least partly prepared, it is much easier to sell than if it is filled with trees or brush. Finally, a plant site should be at least five acres in size.

With these qualifications in mind, it immediately becomes obvious that Valdosta has only one area to show prospects--the East Valdosta Industrial District.

This is a good district with plenty of room and with all services available. However, the location will not suit everyone. Some prospects will want more than one place to choose from; they should have more than one place to choose from. Some will have requirements that cannot be met in this one place.

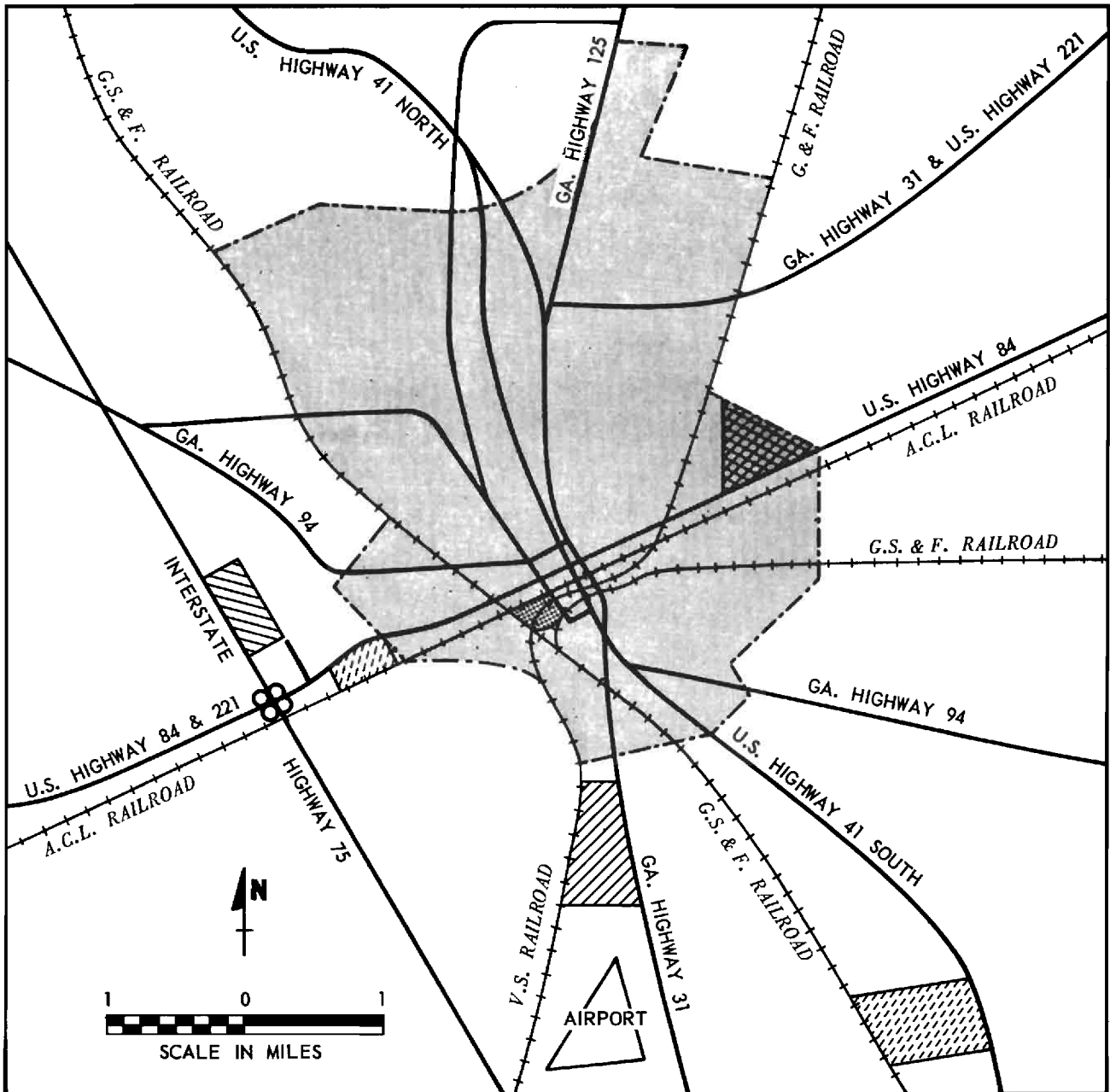
The Chamber of Commerce should have under option several other sites. Especially important will be land on the new limited access highway. If the Chamber of Commerce also had an option on the West Crane Avenue Urban Renewal Area, the community would have another site with excellent rail transportation.






Lowndes County has many tracts of land that could be good industrial sites. Steps should be taken to make sites of them.

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MAP 1
VALDOSTA'S INDUSTRIAL SITES



-  CITY LIMITS
-  SITE
-  RECOMMENDED SITES
-  RAILROAD OWNED SITES
-  URBAN RENEWAL AREA

What is an Industrial Site?

Most development groups attempt to sell the community only. They do not bother about sites because they say, "We have plenty of sites." However, in only one of more than 50 communities visited in recent months did a town actually have ample sites. In every other case where the claim was made, it turned out that there actually were no sites--no tracts of land which met the requirements discussed below. No sites means no place to put a plant; the community's selling efforts could therefore scarcely be expected to do any good. Moreover, a town which sells both a good site and the community has a distinct advantage over those which sell the community only.

But what is an industrial site?

First of all, an industrial site is a piece of land; but all too often people think that most any piece of land is an industrial site. A site has a great many characteristics which differentiate it from ordinary land.

No matter what else a plot of land has, if the industrial development group does not own it or have an option on the land, it is not an industrial site. It is not a site because the person or group dealing with the industrial prospect cannot make an unequivocal commitment on it. Many a community has sold a company on a particular parcel of land only to find it necessary to try to unsell the prospect when the land could not be obtained. There are a number of possible reasons to prevent the sale of a particular parcel. Very often the owner just does not want to sell. As one owner put it, "I hear they are not making any more land." Sometimes, clear title cannot be obtained; often the land is entailed in an estate. If there are several owners, frequently at least one of them wants to retire on his proceeds and therefore holds out for an excessive price.

The chances are strong that a good community education program can eliminate many of these problems. However, prospects want definite information during the one to two hours they first spend in a community. The only assured price for a site is one given on paper by the owner.

Unless the plant is in the multi-million dollar class and will be self-contained, it will require the usual city services. In other words, the usual utilities should be at the site. A common requirement which is often completely overlooked is that if a plant is to install a sprinkler system,

water must be supplied under pressure from an elevated tank. Therefore, a plant should not be too far from a tank. For most services and utilities, a plant should be inside or close to the city limits. Only a large plant will ordinarily be able to locate far from town and it will ordinarily require a large site. A company building a large plant will also drill a well, build a water tower, etc.

Therefore, ordinarily, small parcels of land away from the city are not sites, although a large parcel might be.

Aside from whether the land is inside or outside the city, location is important in other respects. Industry does not like to locate in residential neighborhoods. Plants ought to be in industrial zones from which other land uses are excluded. Too often industrial zoning has meant that such zones permitted industry and also anything else. Zoning that permits residences to grow up around a plant is really not zoning; the plant is very likely to be something of a nuisance to the residents who eventually force the plant to move. Such zoning also fails in one of its main purposes--that of keeping the value of land up. Neither residents nor industry will pay much for land that does not exclude the other.

Industrial zones should, of course, be in the proper locations themselves, locations determined by economics. A good city plan will almost automatically result in good zoning. In most communities the landmark of industrial zones is the railroad track. This does not mean that all plants want rail sidings. It does mean, however, that railroad areas are industrial and/or warehouse areas. Many companies will not require access to rail, but if a Lowndes County group builds a plant to lease to a company, that particular company might not always be in that building. If the community must at some future time find another occupant, a lessee will be much easier to locate if rail service can be provided. Therefore, plants built for lease should be on railroad sites, or at least where a rail siding can be provided. Industrial zoning will eliminate the necessity for a company to buy far more land than it needs in order to establish its own buffer zone. Good industrial land is not common.

Except under special circumstances, a site should be fairly level, but well drained and cleared. Communities that do not have cleared land to show a prospect are likely to have poor success in convincing a prospect that a particular scrub and tree covered hill will make a good site once it

is graded. People have a great deal of difficulty in visualizing a plant on unprepared land. Furthermore, the prospect might be right in thinking a plant could not be put on a piece of land. Grading costs could be far too high.

The Valdosta and Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce will probably not run into these difficulties itself, but the Chamber of Commerce has not always had the opportunity to deal with prospects. At least twice the Chamber has not been advised about prospects until the prospects had moved on.

A working rule in site selection is that a plant site should contain five to eight times the area that will be under the roof. This extra space includes room for off-street parking, outside storage, rail siding and possible expansion. However, many companies today want 20 to 30 times as much land as will be under a roof, to provide themselves with their own industrial zoning. The general attitude is that land will never be cheaper than when the plant is first established, and it therefore pays to obtain in the beginning all the land that will ever be required.

A good rule of thumb is to have no sites under five acres in size. Occasionally, a plant requires less, but land is the cheapest item involved in building a plant and the company will be far better off with too much land than too little.

It will be noted that the original plans for the East Valdosta Industrial District seem to be made for parcels of land smaller than five acres, but each plant in the district has used just about five acres.

Care should be taken to assure that pieces of land that would make good industrial sites are not converted to some alternate use. A school was built on one of the best sites in one of Georgia's larger cities. This is not to say that the school should not have been built; but a school does not need and in fact should not be on, 30 acres between a main highway and a main line of a railroad. Good sites are not common--they are rare, and should be protected accordingly.

East Valdosta Industrial District

To the east of the Georgia and Florida Railroad and bordering U. S. Highway 84 on the north is a 150 acre industrial district just inside the eastern city limits. Approximately 70 acres of this district are still available. In addition, the city is filling in a large acreage of low land on the northern edge of the district, thus constantly increasing the size of the district.

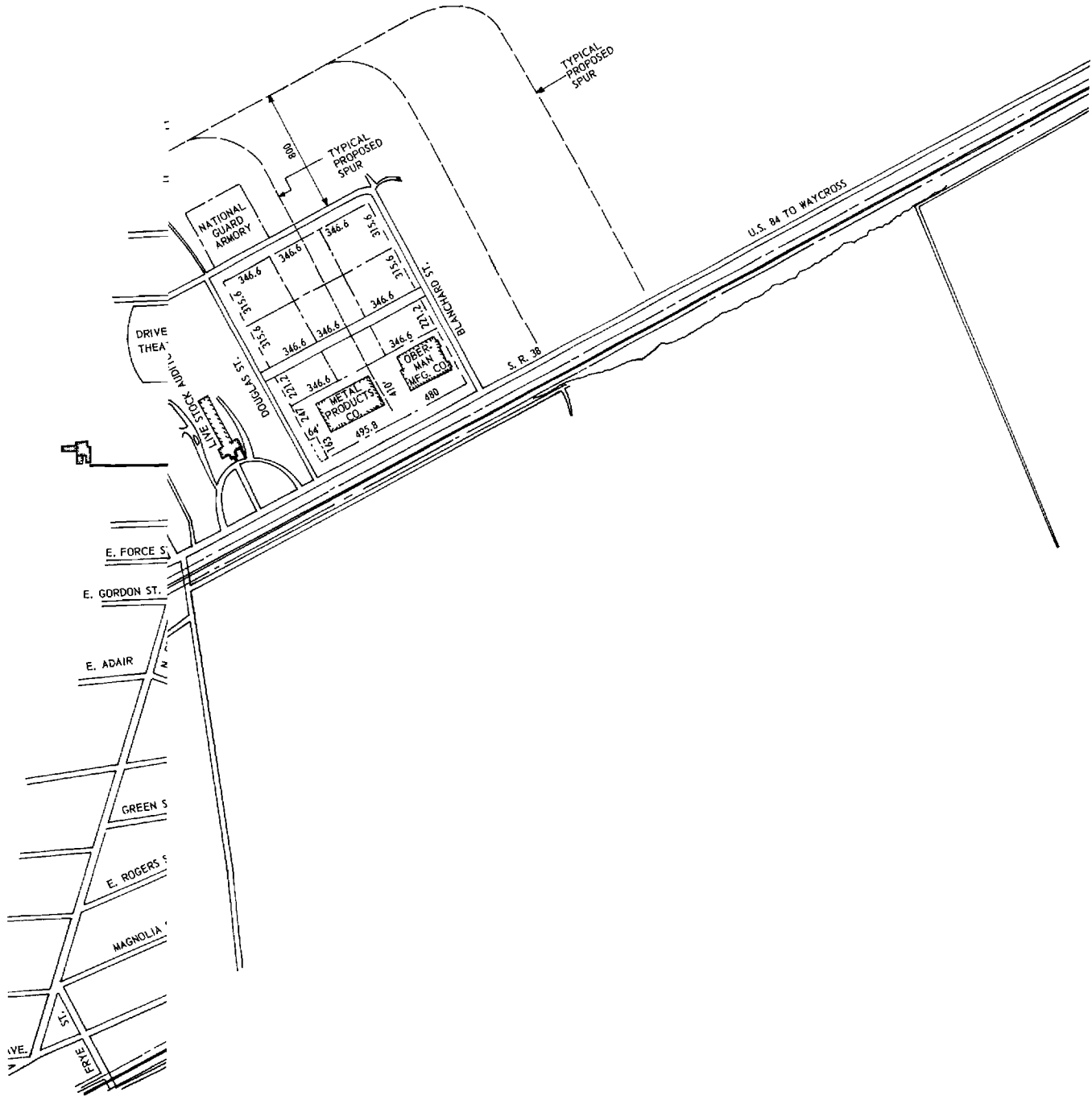
The district has as yet no rail service, but it has not yet needed it. The district is bordered on the south and the west by railroads and a spur can be run in easily. The Georgia and Florida Railroad has submitted a proposal for the furnishing of rail spurs to the district (see Map 2) when such spurs are required.

The area is level and most of it is well drained. A topographic map is available for this district.

Certain parts of the area may not be as useful as others. A housing development on the edge of the district could restrict the industrial uses near the residences, but there is no shortage of industrial land at a distance from the housing. If the livestock auditorium could be moved elsewhere the district would have a great deal more highway frontage. In addition, in order to make the best use of the land behind Oberman Manufacturing Company and Metal Products Company, Progress Street might have to be closed or moved.

This is certainly the best industrial area Valdosta has at present.

MAP 2
EAST VALDOSTA INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT



West Crane Avenue Urban Renewal Area

Part of this area has been set aside for industry. It has the potential for an excellent, though small, industrial section. (See Map 3.) It must, however, be kept flexible. Flexibility in this case could very well involve the consolidation of parcels of land or of parts of parcels, more than the subdivision of parcels. Perhaps the closing of streets or the movement of track would be involved.

In addition, in order for this area to reach its maximum potential, a definite price must be placed on each parcel. Prospects do not want to negotiate for sites, nor do they usually need to. They just move on to a town where a satisfactory commitment can be secured.

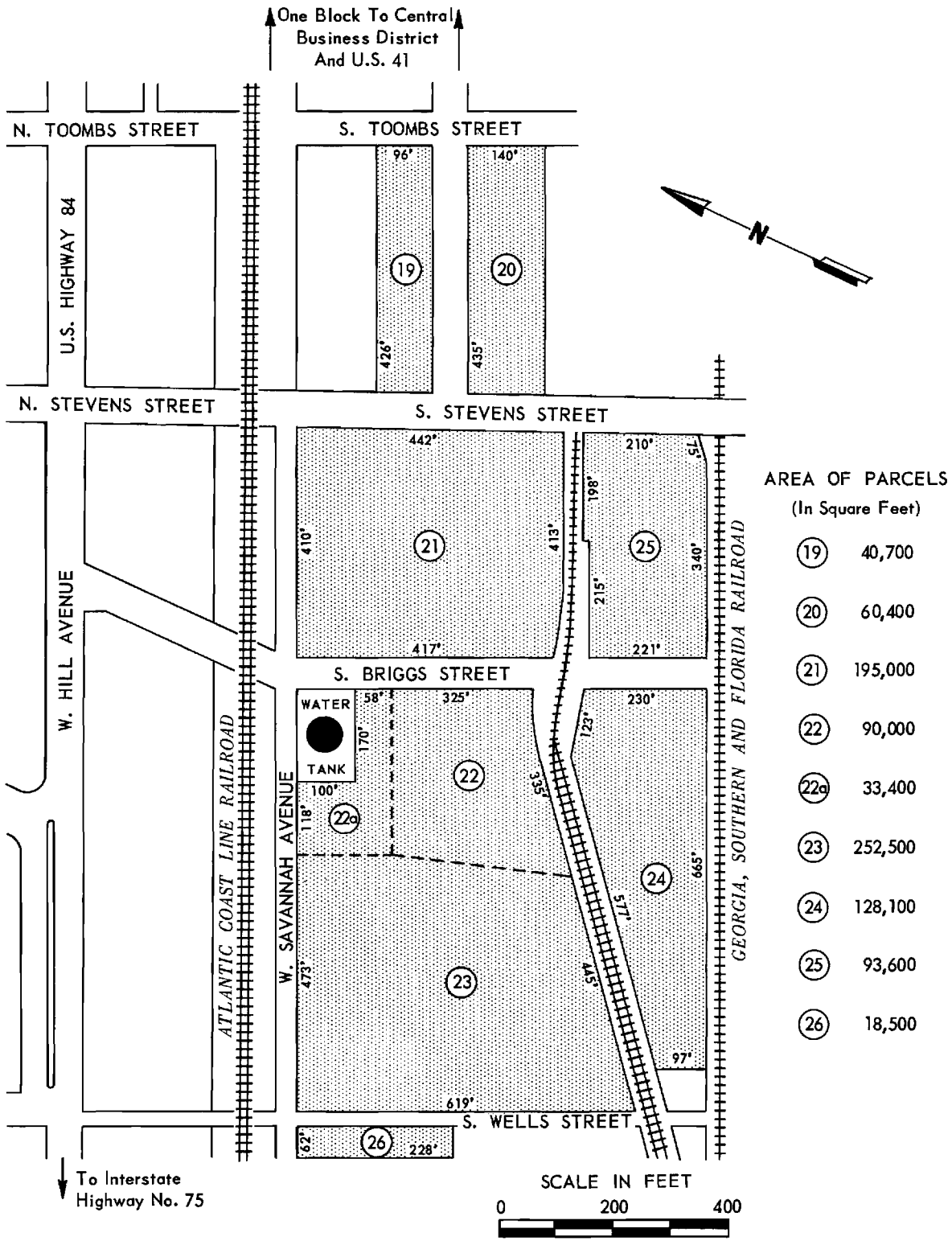
The entire industrial part of the urban renewal area consists of nine parcels totaling only about 20 acres, an average of slightly over two acres per parcel. Few industries want less than five acres. Parcels 19, 20 and 26 will probably be best used for off-street parking for plants in the other parcels, although parcel 20 could be used for warehousing. Parcel 22a should probably be part of 22 or of 23. It could hardly be used separately.

The location of the area is good. All of Valdosta's railroads serve the area and a north-south artery runs through it. The main east-west highway is just north of it.

Unfortunately, the area is not available in the accepted sense. If a company wished to buy part or all of it, several months would elapse before the company would know whether it owned the land. In the meantime, the company would have deposit money tied up. Good as the property is, it is doubtful that many companies would find the land attractive enough to wait out negotiations. It is too easy to find good sites for which immediate commitments can be made.

To make this a real industrial area it would have to be purchased by a non-profit group and held for industry. Such arrangement, once completed, would make the land immediately available at a definite price.

MAP 3
WEST CRANE AVENUE URBAN RENEWAL AREA



Other Sites

Some companies might not want to be in industrial districts, or they might want to be on a particular railroad or highway. It is therefore wise to have individual parcels of land under option.

There are many other good parcels of land in Valdosta proper that have been offered by their owners as industrial sites, and which would make good sites if they were under option to the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber of Commerce should institute a program to obtain options on several individual parcels of land that would be good plant sites.

The Atlantic Coast Line Railroad has 75 acres west of town between the railroad and the main highway and adjoining an eight inch natural gas line. (See Map 1.) This parcel is very close to the interchange for the interstate highway. However, no price is available on this property.

The Southern Railway has 162 acres south of Valdosta between the Georgia, Southern, and Florida Railway and U. S. Highway 41. (See Map 1.) This property is quite a distance from town, but a plot that size probably should be.

Recommended Additional Sites

The bypass around Valdosta for U. S. Highway 84 may never be built. In any case there will be no interchange between the interstate highway and the bypass.

Since the bypass itself might never be built and since even if it is, it will carry no traffic off U. S. Highway 75, an industrial district on the bypass would have no special advantage over districts in several other places. On the other hand, a district on Highway 75 would have the advantage of being able to offer several prestige sites where the plants could be seen by all the people traveling the interstate highway. It seems likely that the best land outside the city for an industrial park will be north of U. S. Highway 84 and west of Boone Road. This would be land fronting on U. S. Highway 75 near the railroad. An eight inch natural gas main passes the property.

This land could offer excellent prestige sites on the limited access highway near the interchange.

However, it would be necessary to assure that services were provided to the area to convert it from farmland to an industrial site. It also would be necessary to gain control over the land. It is possible, of course, that the land cannot be purchased, in which case it is not a site. Nor is it a site if water cannot be furnished under pressure. This pressure requires elevated storage. Therefore, either the city must supply the water from its own system or arrangements must be made to build an elevated water tank of at least 75,000 gallons capacity on the site, with a well and pump to supply it. It is possible, of course, that the city can supply the water, but not the necessary pressure. In such a case only the pump and the water tank would be needed. A water tank might very well be the only answer in any case if the acreage obtained were large enough to permit the building of several plants.

It would also be necessary to determine whether or not a railroad siding can cross the pipeline and what the railroad's policy would be in this situation. Naturally, the railroad would be more interested in a large acreage than in a small acreage if there is a probability of putting several rail-using plants on it. This leads to the question of how much flood-free acreage can be obtained on the interstate highway.

It should be emphasized here that good industrial land does not require land on the interchange. In fact, land on the interchange itself is probably too valuable for use as part of an industrial district.

Plans for such an industrial district fronting on Highway 75 should include a service road into the area from Highway 84.

A short distance south of the city limits adjoining State Highway 31 and the Valdosta-Southern Railway is a tract of land that could be a good location for companies which do not need or wish to be on the interstate highway. The area has good frontage on the highway and on the railroad. (See Map 1.)

There are approximately 200 acres in the plot, but on the north end, part of a ponded area extends into the tract and a power line crosses near the highway and on the south end the tract slopes into a creek bottom. These exclusions would leave at least 150 acres, however, and all utilities except natural gas could be made available.

The proximity of this tract to the airport would enhance the value of the property. It would be a good site if it were optioned to the Chamber of Commerce.

Conclusions

In view of the fact that Valdosta can meet the requirements set forth for a site in only one location, the East Valdosta Industrial District, steps should be taken immediately to obtain a variety of sites to show prospects. There have been many pieces of land the owners have stated to be "available," but the people dealing with the prospect are not in a position to quote a firm price. If the industrial developers have legal control of the land, they can quote a price. This ability is a valuable selling tool in any case, even when the prospect does not ask a price. It convinces the prospect that you are working in a businesslike way.

Therefore, the Valdosta and Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce should have options on several sites. These options could be most important on the limited access highway.

Where the urban renewal area is concerned, a site will likely be feasible only if it is purchased locally for resale to industry. The land has a number of valuable features. For instance, a plant can establish there on two railroads. But the land is not available as it is now.

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