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Report on Redevelopment Projects Orlando, Florida

George W. Simons Jr.

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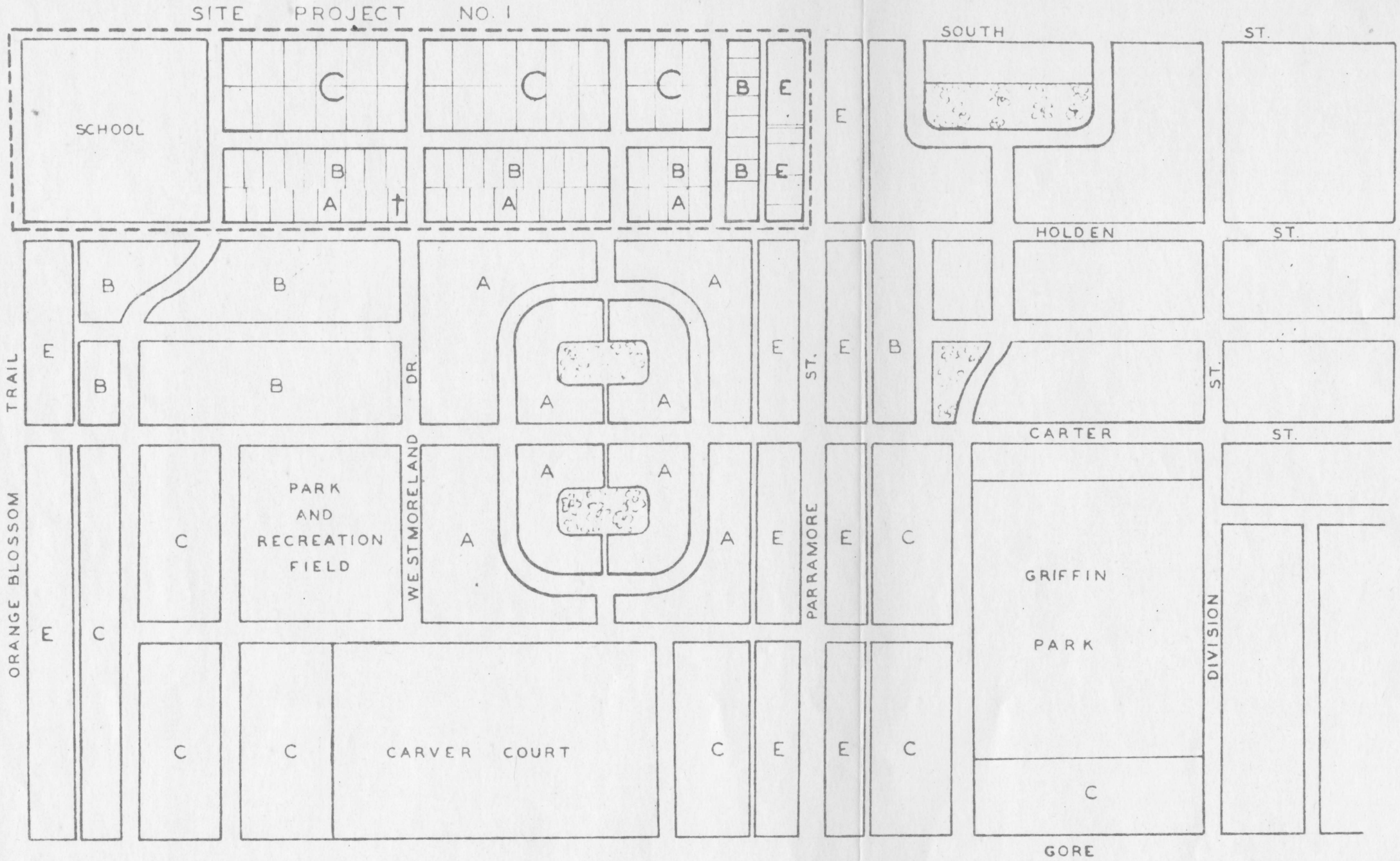
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REPORT ON
REDEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

ORLANDO, FLORIDA
1951

GEORGE W. SIMONS, JR.
PLANNING CONSULTANT

CITY OF ORLANDO FLORIDA



LEGEND

- A - SINGLE FAMILY AREA
- B - DUPLEX FAMILY AREA
- C - MULTI-FAMILY AREA
- E - BUSINESS AREA

PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT OF
AREA BETWEEN SOUTH ST. AND GORE AVE.

REDEVELOPMENT AREA NO. 1

GEORGE W. SIMONS, JR.

MEM. AM. SOC. C. E.
MEM. AM. INST. OF PLANNERS
MEM. INST. OF TRAFFIC ENGINEERS

PLANNING AND ZONING
CONSULTANT

HILDEBRANDT BUILDING
JACKSONVILLE 2, FLORIDA
March 28, 1951.

Mr. Colin Murchison, Executive Director,
The Housing Authority of the City of Orlando,
P. O. Box 3746,
Orlando, Florida.

Dear Mr. Murchison:

Attached hereto is my report evaluating the redevelopment areas being considered by your Authority and the City of Orlando under the provisions of Title I of the Housing Act of 1949.

Following a review of the vast amount of data and information assembled by your staff under the able direction of Mr. Franklin Albert and field inspections of the areas, this report was prepared.

I want to thank you for the assistance and cooperation given in making this study and particularly to Mr. Albert who worked untiringly with me. I also want to express to Mr. Herndon and Mr. Flint my thanks and appreciation for the contributions they also made to the study.

Respectfully submitted,

GEORGE W. SIMONS, JR.

GWS:EBB

In its rapid growth parts of the corporate area were developed for a better quality of living than others. Like many other cities, areas "across the tracks" were developed with income producing properties for tenancy by non-whites. Subsequently as industry and commerce expanded these areas "across the tracks" were invaded until today they have become problem areas.

Altho Orlando does not have as high a percentage of non-white population as many other places, its space for the increasing numbers is limited, causing concern among the people and authorities.

To study these areas and plan for their redevelopment along lines consistent with good living is the objective now sought by the Housing Authority working in conjunction with the City officials and other bodies.

This report is an evaluation of conditions found and a consideration of plans whereby the substandard areas can be redeveloped and improved to become better integrated parts of the community as a whole, consistent with the city's plan of growth and development in the future. From these studies and those of the Housing Authority accompanying it, it is hoped that action can be motivated to achieve the objective sought.

LOCATION AND ACCESSIBILITY

Orlando, located in central Florida 148 miles south of Jacksonville, 99 miles northwest of Tampa, and 35 miles west of the east coast, is the county seat of Orange County, one of the principal citrus producing and processing areas of Florida. In 1950, Orange County was the third county in Florida in the number of producing citrus trees.

Orlando is accessible by rail, highway and air. The main line of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad from Jacksonville to Tampa provides direct service to Washington, New York and the northeast and by connection at Jacksonville, to points west and northwest. A branch of the Seaboard Air Line Railroad devoted primarily to the dispatch of freight, operates between Orlando and the main line at Wildwood. The Seaboard also has a line from Orlando to Lake Chass. Two major air lines, Eastern and National, have flights in and out of Orlando to all sections of the south and nation and Federal Highways 17, 92 and 441 radiate north and south from Orlando enabling trucks and passenger vehicles to serve all points - Tampa, Miami, Daytona Beach, Ocala, Gainesville and Jacksonville. The accessibility of Orlando by these various facilities, has contributed substantially to its population growth and the diversification of its economy.

ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

Orlando is the trading, financial and distributing center of a tributary area having an approximate radius of 50-60 miles in central Florida, extending well into a number of neighboring counties all of which are identified with the production and processing of citrus, the growing cattle industry or with agriculture generally (Diagram 1). Altho Orlando is not primarily a city

of factories, it is estimated that more than 243 varied manufacturers employing some 75,000 persons are located in the Greater Orlando area. Because of highways accessible to all points in the rapidly growing and developing tributary area, Orlando has become one of Florida's major wholesale distribution centers - attracting to it many nationally known concerns that formerly operated from other locations in the southeast.

Of the citrus producing lands in Florida, more than 30% thereof lie within the Orlando tributary trade area, exclusive of Polk County, which fact in itself contributes substantially to the diversified economy of Orange County and Orlando.

There are also located within the Orlando trade area and contributing to its economy such major communities as Winter Park (seat of Rollins College), Winter Garden (center of vegetable and citrus production), Leesburg (citrus production and processing), Sanford (celery, cabbage and lettuce producing center and Saint Johns River port), Deland (seat of Stetson University), Kissimmee (cattle industry) and many other smaller places, each contributing its part to the economy of the whole. There are nearly twenty incorporated cities and towns within a fifty mile radius of Orlando.

In addition to the agricultural and other resources of its tributary area, Orlando is one of the principal centers of tourist attraction and activity in Florida. In a region of favorable climatic conditions, innumerable lakes for fishing and other available facilities for entertaining tourists, the tourist industry contributes immeasurably to the economy of both the city and region. From the annual influx of tourists many permanent residents are acquired who retire to and settle in this area to engage in agriculture or other productive pursuits.

POPULATION GROWTH

Orlando has experienced a remarkable and steady population growth since the turn of the century, from a population of 2,481 in 1900 to a population of 51,826 (tentative) in 1950 (Diagram 1). Since 1920 the population has multiplied more than 5.5 times and since 1930 it has nearly doubled. According to the State Census of 1945, about 28% (13,916) of the population of Orlando was negro; in Orange County the percentage of negroes to the population of the county was about 22%. During World War II an Army Air Base located at Orlando contributed appreciably to the growth of the community and its economy. Altho inactivated after the war this post is currently being re-activated. Also immediately to the south of Orlando in the vicinity of Pine Castle another defense activity is now being established. These activities will add further to the population growth and characteristics of the area and contribute to its economy.

The population of the supporting area tributary to Orlando, exclusive of Orange County, has likewise experienced a remarkable growth since 1920, in which year the adjoining counties of Seminole, Brevard, Lake and Osceola had a population of 39,430. The 1950 population of these counties had increased 240%, to 96,055.

The strategic location of Orlando in central Florida together with the development and enhancement of the tributary resources will continue to be reflected in the growth and development of the city and its improved economy.

GENERAL PATTERN OF AREA GROWTH

Orlando has been for years popularly alluded to as the "City Beautiful" because of its many attractive homes and landscaped yards, its profusion of old and fine trees and its many small lakes within the corporate area. Since 1921 it has experienced several successive extensions of its corporate limits, the most comprehensive being between 1921 and 1925, further successive additions were made in 1926, 1936, 1947, 1950 and 1951 (Diagram 2). To the north-east the city limits of Orlando and Winter Park are co-terminus.

In its successive expansions (Diagram 2), Orlando has adhered closely to the basic gridiron pattern which is broken however where subdivisions and streets have been developed around the many lakes. In some portions of the city recent subdividers have sought to break away from the older gridiron pattern.

Altho the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad nearly bisected the original city gridiron into east and west halves, recent extensions to the east have modified this balance and now slightly more of the city lies east of the railroad than west. The Seaboard Air Line Railroad from the west however divides only that portion of Orlando lying west of the Coast Line right-of-way.

DISTRIBUTION OF LAND USES

From the beginning, and even now, the rights-of-way of the two rail lines have been decisive factors in determining the land use pattern of the city. Industry and commerce have consistently utilized those lands adjacent to and near rail lines. And within more recent years major highways have been effective in the distribution and extent of commercial and industrial uses.

Prior to 1920 when Orlando was still in the small town class, the Atlantic Coast Line passenger terminal was located in the central business district at Church Street and Depot Place and the Seaboard station on Central Avenue. These two establishments contributed to a concentration of commerce and industry in the areas adjacent to them.

The principal retail business district of Orlando has always been located on Orange Avenue, east of the Atlantic Coast Line. Whereas most of the retail commercial activity was confined to Orange Avenue prior to 1920, since then the retail business district has expanded considerably, especially to the north along Orange Avenue and across the tracks westerly along Central Avenue and Church Street (Diagram 3).

Industrial development, as stated before, has followed the railroads. In the northern part of the city, between lakes Ivanhoe and Highlands, in the vicinity of the Water and Power plants, north thereof along Orange Avenue and the railroad an area of small industries has been developed and similarly along the Seaboard Air Line and Robinson Avenue and adjacent areas other industrial areas have opened up.

By far the greatest portion of the land area east of the railroad, excepting the central business district, is devoted to residential uses - with most of the development being of the better quality. The older residential areas adjacent to the central business district, east of the tracks, are gradually yielding to commercial expansion, to boarding or rooming houses and to apartment house construction. The quality of this changing area however has not yet declined to a status of slums, altho in spots it has been considerably blighted.

West of the tracks (A. C. L.) and north of Amelia Avenue the predominant land use again is residential in character.

Altho there are relatively few non-white dwellings in scattered areas east of the tracks (A. C. L.) by far the greatest concentration of non-whites is west of the tracks and south of Amelia Avenue.

SURVEY AREA

As a result of a series of observations made by the staff of the Housing Authority an area in the southwest quadrant of the city (Diagram 3) was selected for further study because of its existing housing conditions, adverse social conditions and its mixed and changing uses (Diagram 4). It is the one section of the city which the Authority thought would respond most readily and acceptably to a redevelopment operation.

This area of approximately 715 acres (7% of the corporate area) is one of diverse and changing uses. Those portions north of Church Street and east of Division Street (Diagram 4) are the locations of many industrial and expanding commercial activities. Excluding the industrial, commercial and public uses, about one-third of the northern portion is occupied by white residents and the remainder by non-whites. Diagram 4 shows how the respective portions of the area as a whole are occupied by whites and non-whites.

According to the zoning plan, effective as of November, 1949, the predominant land use classification of the whole area is Industrial. In the northern portion (Diagram 5) several blocks are classified for residential use and in the southern portion a considerable area is likewise classified for residential, multi-family, use. In this latter area two of the non-white housing projects (Carver Court and Griffin Homes) are located (Diagram 4).

A special census of the Bureau of the Census indicated that there were 12,471 non-white residents within the entire city. In the study area considered by

the Housing Authority, there are resident more than 12,000 of the total non-white population of the city plus 1,515 white residents which means that more than 25% of the 1950 population reside in 7% of the city's corporate area. And further, more than 98% of the non-white population lives in this area. Another 250 non-whites live in Washington Shores, a private non-white subdivision west of the study area and in other scattered sections of the city.

Surrounding and extending thru the study area are a number of major traffic arteries, according to the Arterial Street Plan of the city (Diagram 6). Its western boundary is the Orange Blossom Trail (U. S. 441 and 17), one of the most heavily traveled north and south streets in the city bordered for most of its length by promiscuous business. The northern boundary is Amelia Avenue and its southern, Gore Avenue. Traversing the area north and south are Westmoreland Drive, Parramore, Division and Hughey Streets of which Parramore Street is a local business area for tributary non-white residents. East and west the principal streets traversing the area are Robinson, Washington, Central, Church, Jackson, Holden and Carter and of these Carter street is the location of scattered non-white businesses. The principal streets named above are improved with either brick or other hard surface treatment. Very few of the access streets however are improved.

Church Street and Central Avenue westerly from the central business district are developing into primary business thoroughfares and in all probability, the land lying between them now occupied by dwellings will ultimately be absorbed by commercial, semi-commercial or industrial uses. Commercial and industrial activity is especially active in this area and in the whole area north of Church Street. Currently, practically all the area east of Division Street to the railroad - the eastern boundary of the area - between Robinson

Street on the north and South Street on the south is now devoted to commerce or industry (Diagram 7).

In the northeast corner of the area (Diagram 7) are publicly owned grounds occupied by the Exposition, U. S. Department of Agriculture, City Park and the Municipal Auditorium separated however from the remainder of the area by the Seaboard Air Line and a fringe of commerce and industry along Robinson Avenue. Within the area as a whole is an elementary school for whites (Central Avenue near Westmoreland Drive), a High School for non-whites (corner Washington and Parramore) and an elementary school for non-whites on Orange Blossom Trail between South and Holden Streets (Diagram 7). A new additional school for non-whites is now being built on the latter site. At the southwest corner of Carter Street and Westmoreland Drive is a public base ball plant for non-whites. Scattered thruout the southern half of the area, more particularly south of Church Street, are located many churches of its non-white residents.

The entire area included in the study is accessible to and served by water supply lines of the city and by sewerage.

By its predominant land uses the study area can be divided definitely into three parts, (1) a northern portion devoted to residential uses, (2) a central and eastern portion devoted to commerce and industry and (3) a southern portion, south of South Street, devoted to residential uses (Diagram 7).

In its studies of the problem area the Authority considered the following factors in addition to those already referred to (status of zoning, streets, availability of utilities, distribution of uses and race occupancy): (1) dilapidation, prevalence and extent of substandard housing, (2) incidence of crime and delinquency as reflected by arrests and court cases, (3) health of inhabitants as reflected by incidence of tuberculosis and (4) incidence of fires.

A review of these various considerations shows conclusively that this area is a decided economic and social liability to the City of Orlando and Orange County, justifying the belief of the Authority that it is an area in which rehabilitation and redevelopment should be initiated and in which it can be undertaken effectively and profitably.

HOUSING IN THE AREA

The Special Census of 1950, made by the U. S. Bureau of the Census for the Housing Authority, disclosed the presence of 3,983 occupied substandard dwelling units in the city as a whole (1,429 white and 2,554 non-white) of which 21.6% were dilapidated structurally (12.1% of the whites and 26.9% of the non-whites). In the problem area under consideration there are 3,957 dwelling units, 2,070 standard and 1,887 substandard from which it is apparent that of the 3,983 substandard dwelling units in the city as a whole, 1,887 or 47.6% are located in the study area and further, of the 3,957 dwelling units, 18.3% are occupied by whites (726) and 81.6% by non-whites (3,231). The substandard white dwellings are all located mainly north of Church Street and east of Division Street (Diagram 4).

Diagram 8 shows the distribution of substandard dwellings and the prevalence of structural dilapidation in the study area. Altho conditions of dwellings south of South Street and north of Washington Street are the worst, those in the former area affect more people and extend over a larger area. In that portion of the southern area bounded by South Street on the north, Division Street on the east, Gore on the South and Orange Blossom Trail on the west, there are 1,505 dwelling units all occupied by non-whites, 38% of all the total dwelling units in the whole area. Of these, 809 dwelling units

or 54% are substandard or stated otherwise, nearly 43% of all the substandard dwellings in the whole area are located in this southern segment (Diagram 8).

DELINQUENCY, CRIME AND ARRESTS

Substandard, dilapidated and inadequate housing is universally associated with juvenile delinquency, crime and the consequences thereof. In the year 1949 of a total of 288 cases relating to the delinquency and dependency of children, in the City of Orlando, 63% (183) had their origin in the study area.

In the months of June, July and August, 1949, when the number of outside visitors in Orlando was at a minimum the records of the Orlando Police Department show that 58% of the arrests (335) in the city involved persons residing in the study area and according to records of the Sheriff's office of Orange County, 42% of the arrests made by the Sheriff's office (93) came from this area.

HEALTH

The official records of the Orange County Health Department indicate that 126 (38%) of the total known 325 tuberculosis cases in the city of Orlando, reside in the study area. In addition to these known cases there are probably many more cases not detected or inactive.

FIRE INCIDENCE

In 1949 the Fire Department of the city made 503 runs of which 143 or 28% originated in the study area.

SUMMARY

Field inspections in the area together with the foregoing data from official city and county sources reveal conditions that are not conducive to good living, judged either from the standpoint of improved citizenship or acceptable standards of housing. The classification of much of the area as Industrial and its gradual occupation for such uses is affecting much of its value and usefulness as a site for dwellings. The trend toward industry and commerce is also accelerating the incidence of blight and formation of slums. Even tho the size of lots and pattern of building is not yet conducive to excessive congestion, the physical conditions of structures is not consistent with good housing standards; slum conditions do prevail. Schools are available for both whites and non-whites but with one exception the sites are inadequate in size and outside the limited facilities provided at the Housing projects and the schools there are no public recreation areas or parks available to the residents. At the southwest corner of Carter Street and Westmoreland Drive there is a Community Building for the use of the tributary residents. That a terrific economic waste is being imposed on the governments of Orlando and Orange County because of these inadequate provisions and existing housing conditions, is apparent. Because of these conditions in the aggregate the Housing Authority selected this study area as one justifying redevelopment.

REDEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Altho the city of Orlando is primarily a city of homes and a trading and servicing center for a considerable tributary area, its importance as a site of distribution and diversified manufacturing establishments is increasing, and pursuant to the city's plan of development many of the latter establishments will be channelled into the area under consideration. The directional trend of residential development in the Orlando area is restricting industrial, transportation and distribution activities into a minimum number of desirable areas, one located along North Orange Avenue between Orlando and Winter Park, a second outside of but adjoining the city along the Orange Blossom Trail west of the city, a third in the Pine Castle area south of the city and a fourth, the area being considered herein, which is within the city strategically located with respect to the central business and other commercial districts. As noted previously (Diagram 3) this area is largely zoned industrial and commercial and into it many industries and wholesale distribution concerns have already located (Diagram 7). The area however could be improved advantageously for industry and commerce and its livability for people enhanced greatly, all in accord with the various provisions of the development plan of the city.

REDEVELOPMENT AREA NO. 2

Altho much of the whole area has been zoned for industrial and commercial uses, most of this development to date has been limited to that portion north of Church Street and east of Division Street along the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad (Diagram 7). Scattered among the industrial and commercial uses however, are many blighted and slum dwellings that should be relocated to enable a further commercial-industrial expansion and utilization of the area.

Under any broad policy of redevelopment consistent with the over-all plan of city growth and development, land uses in this northern portion should be restricted to industrial and commercial expansion which would require the ultimate demolition of many substandard dwellings and the relocation of the families elsewhere. Such a policy should also require a revision of the present zoning ordinance to exclude from the area any further residential construction.

This proposal is predicated primarily on the trends of development and the changing character in uses the area has been experiencing and also, because the Seaboard Air Line Railroad now serves that portion of the area north of Robinson Avenue and if necessary or desirable for future development, its trackage could be extended to serve areas south of Robinson Avenue. The location of trucking terminals and warehouses in this area further accentuates the changing character from a standpoint of transportation. The allocation of this northern portion of the study area to industry, transportation and commerce would yield added space for future needs and growth in a strategic location (Diagram 9).

In any plans of redevelopment affecting the study area as a whole, Division Street should be widened on its west side into a primary artery between Robinson Avenue on the north and South Street on the south. This would entail the demolition and reconstruction of considerable commercial property between Church Street and Central Avenue and the utilization of some properties adjoining Division Street, south of Church Street, now occupied by dwellings which are among the worst slums of the city. Also, plans for the redevelopment of the area between Washington and Church Streets, west of the Atlantic Coast Line, should explore the possibilities of land utilization for off street parking facilities easily accessible to the Orange Avenue-Church Street central business district.

The redevelopment of the street and use pattern north of Church Street involving a number of existing commercial and industrial structures may be remote because of material and building restrictions so currently it would be most advisable to direct attention to the redevelopment of that portion of the area south of South Street which is predominantly residential in character and which is arbitrarily designated as Redevelopment Area No. 1 (Diagram 9).

REDEVELOPMENT AREA NO. 1

The area south of Church Street, more specifically south of South Street, should be redeveloped for dwelling purposes for non-whites. Diagram 8 reflects that in this southern portion of the study area are found the principal concentrations of substandard, dilapidated housing and also, the principal sources of the diverse evils resulting from substandard housing - crime, delinquency and disease.

A redevelopment plan of this area could provide most of the fundamental requisites of a self-contained neighborhood consistent with the city's plan of development - elementary school, neighborhood shopping, playgrounds, athletic field and neighborhood center, surrounded by major arterial highways. By design and zoning of uses it could also accommodate many of the tenants to be relocated by the redevelopment of the northern portion referred to above.

In this area now occupied predominantly by an accumulation of single family substandard dwellings are located the two housing projects (Carver Court and Griffin Park), the new enlarged elementary school for non-whites, a baseball field and a comparatively new Neighborhood Community Building. A portion of the area east of Division Street would be devoted to industry and commercial uses for which it is now zoned but with the exception that no

industries contributing to noises, dust, fumes, odors, vibrations, emanations or other objectionable products would be permissible.

Redevelopment Area No. 1 is easily accessible to all sources of employment in the greater Orlando area (Diagram 3) and to the various trading or shopping centers. The area is also served by water, sewerage and power services and transportation facilities to the remainder of the city. Altho topographically the area is comparatively level it has two low spots which may influence the drainage problem and design of the ultimate area pattern.

Diagram 10 suggests a tentative treatment of Redevelopment Area No. 1. The new land uses in the redeveloped area would be distributed between residential, commercial and public. Because single family structures are now predominant, a considerable portion of the area should be devoted to that type of use but adjacent to commercial blocks and the two housing projects multiple family dwellings could be located. All commercial uses within the area should be concentrated on Parramore Street and to the east side of the Orange Blossom Trail. According to the proposed plan (Diagram 10) the Base Ball Park would be enlarged and be converted into a neighborhood park and recreation field for adults and teen-agers. On this block the Community Center is now located. Within several blocks small open spaces would be provided as play lots or playgrounds for the use of neighborhood children. The street plan of the city and traffic movements would be modified so far as consistent with the city's plan so as to direct the greatest volumes of traffic around the area. Such a plan of development as here suggested would convert this area into an asset yet be consistent with the city's plan of development.

PROJECT SITE NO. 1

Redevelopment Area No. 1, as a whole, is too large to be included in a single redevelopment operation therefore a portion of it has been selected for immediate consideration and designated arbitrarily herein as Project Site Area No. 1 (Diagram 10), lying between South and Holden Streets and between the school property on the west and Parramore Street. This particular area of fourteen blocks was selected for consideration first because of its physical and tenancy status. In it are 322 dwelling units occupied by 318 primary family groups, of which 223 units are tenant occupied. 67% (215) of the dwelling units in the area are substandard and 40% (130) dilapidated structurally. It was also given first consideration because of its proximity to the elementary school - a focal point in the neighborhood life and because its redevelopment will respond most readily to single family development which the market can absorb now. Then too, this area was selected because its development first will act as a definite barrier to industrial and commercial invasion from the area to the north, which was discussed earlier. And finally, this area was selected because the preponderance of single family development should be confined to the northern part of Redevelopment Area No. 1. That portion south of Carter Street around the Housing projects and in the rear of commercial properties will be allocated to multiple family uses. Diagram 10 shows roughly how the uses will be distributed.

In Project Site Area No. 1 is one substantial church structure in process of construction that will be retained.

Studies made by the engineers and appraisers, accompanying this report, show that this area can be developed and marketed as an initial unit of the broader, larger plan of redevelopment to follow. It is near the school, churches, recreation and transportation facilities and has utilities available to it.

DUO TANG
No 58
MADE IN U.S.A.