TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

SELECT TENNESSEE
Property Evaluation Program

FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Robertson County

TNECD

AUSTIN CONSULTING

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President and Chief Economic Development Officer
Robertson County Economic Development Board (IDB)

Subject: Robertson County - Select Tennessee Property Evaluation Program Final Report

Overview

The Select Tennessee Property Evaluation Program was created for the purpose of expanding the state's inventory of industrial sites and available industrial buildings. The goal of the program is to help drive economic growth to the state. The program objective is to create a pipeline of properties by identifying real estate that is best aligned for near-term development and that can be cultivated for long-term economy stabilizing investments.

The purpose of this report is to provide stakeholders with insights into Robertson County's portfolio of real estate assets and associated economic development opportunities. These insights provide a basis for focusing local resources on properties that have the greatest potential for business attraction.

Corporate location decisions are routinely derived by finding a favorable balance between a community's strengths and weaknesses – whether perceived or real. At the root of corporate decisions is real estate. A great community will be bypassed if real estate is not ready or near ready for development at the time it is needed.

Communities, like corporations, are dynamic organizations that change in a myriad of ways with time. To remain healthy corporations and communities alike must adapt to new demands. To be successful corporations alter strategies in response to changing customer preferences and shifting operating environments. Likewise, to be attractive for corporate investment communities must recognize changing corporate needs and adjust both real estate and community offerings accordingly.

Behind the Select Tennessee Property Evaluation Program is the desire to provide community stakeholders a rallying point for action. What is started today sets the stage for the future. Stakeholders should read this report with two ideas in mind:

- The report is a general statement about the current suitability of properties within the County for attracting corporate job creating investments, and;
- The report offers a roadmap for a stronger more diversified future economy by prioritizing investigated properties and outlining next steps that will better align Robertson County with investment opportunities.

Methodology

Austin Consulting was selected to conduct property assessments for the Select Tennessee Property Evaluation Program. In March 2015 the exchange of community and property information was initiated between Austin Consulting and Robertson County Economic Development Board (IDB). On April 8th and 9th Austin Consulting representative Don Schjeldahl completed a two-day visit to Robertson County during which time he gathered information on sites proposed by the IDB for industrial development. One building and eight sites were proposed for investigation. Other properties, potential "alternate" candidates, were identified during the field visit and are discussed in this report.

The Austin community/property investigation included meetings with community representatives. The visit schedule was prepared by the IDB and included meetings with:

- Property owners and representatives
- Local economic development officials
- Local employers
- Utility company representatives
- Community planners and permitting officials
- Elected officials
- Workforce development service providers and private personnel agency representatives
- Technical school administrators, community college and training program representatives
- Others involved in local development activities

Austin Consulting professionals have performed nearly 2,000 corporate location assignments over decades representing a broad spectrum of industries and facility types looking at communities across North America. Building on this experience, Austin's Robertson County visit was essentially a simulated professional site selector field investigation, not unlike one conducted for a real corporate site selection client.

In a site selection project Austin's objective is to collect sufficient information about candidate properties, the community, and local and regional economies to determine if the location can adequately support a given corporate investment. In the Select Tennessee Property Evaluation exercise Austin looked at Robertson County through the lens of numerous investment types including: general manufacturing, warehousing/distribution, food processing, data center, and back office/shared services operations, all of which are logical targets for the Middle Tennessee region and Robertson County.

Recommendations contained in this report reflect Austin's experience in assessing the suitability of communities and properties for industrial operations. Austin's assessment incorporates:

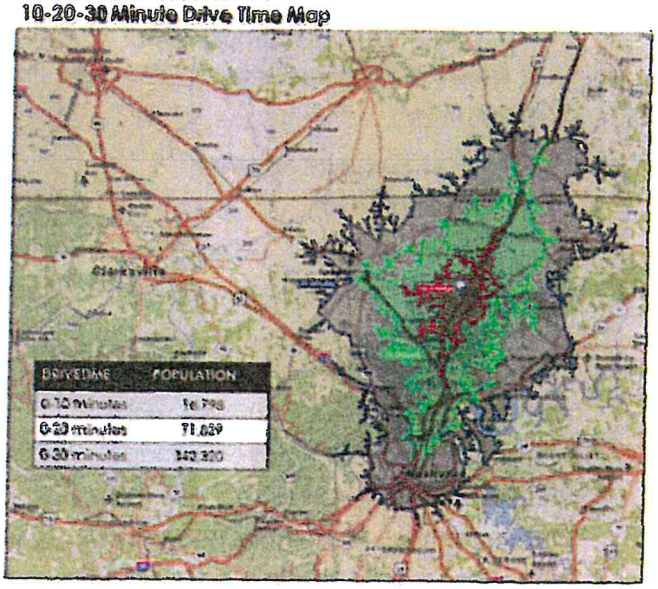
- Property readiness for development including utility services, road access, zoning, and environmental/geo-technical attributes
- Neighborhood attributes including site access, neighboring land uses, site curb appeal, and local development trends

- Community attributes including quality/reliability/capacity of utility systems, workforce readiness and training resources, growth trends, land use planning, quality of place, and overall community engagement in economic development
- Regional attributes including existing and planned transportation infrastructure, population growth trends, the nature and distribution of job creation, and availability of developable land

Whitehouse Area Development Trends

Development is coming to the White House area and there is little Robertson County needs to do beyond supporting White House in their efforts to plan for growth. The White House area is, and will be for the foreseeable future, in the strongest position within Robertson County with respect to availability of workforce in support of industrial development. The drive time map at right shows 16,700+ and 71,800+ within 10 and 20 minute drives respectively. Supported by direct access to I-65, nearly 350,000 people are within a 30 minute drive of White House. No other location in Robertson County comes close to these numbers.

White House Industrial Site
10-20-30 Minute Drive Time Map



Transportation access works both ways. People living in White House can reach employment centers in Nashville with a relatively short commute. This is the force that lies behind a wave of residential subdivision development in the White House area over the last decade. White House can expect this trend to continue and in the process create a larger workforce that could potentially support local job growth.

White House is feeling development pressures including congested roads and increasing demand for utility services. City officials are addressing these challenges by funding infrastructure improvements and at the same time working on the downtown redevelopment plan.

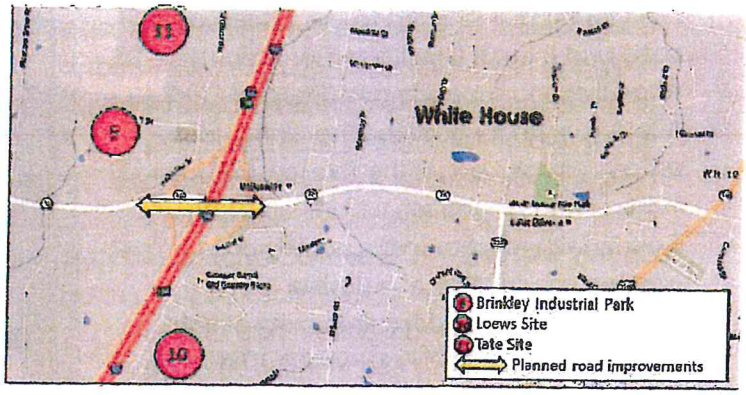
White House Community Recommendations:

- Continue efforts to work on quality of place initiatives that will be attractive to next generation job creating investments. With corporations favoring locations that can deliver quality-of-place as a hedge on attracting and retaining skilled workers, the White House downtown redevelopment initiative is an important undertaking and should be supported by Robertson County.
- Planned improvements to the I-65/Highway 76 interchange will address current congestion issues. Local officials should continue to monitor growth trends in the area and invest in utility infrastructure needs ahead of the curve. This will help White House to stay on the radar for job creating investment opportunities.
- Looking long term the current inventory of industrial property will be insufficient to meet future growth demands. Start now to identify and make ready land for a high quality mixed use industrial/office/advanced technology park in the area.

White House Area Sites

Three White House area properties were submitted by the IDB for consideration:

- Brinkley Industrial Park (#9)
- Lowes Site (#10)
- Tate Site (#11)

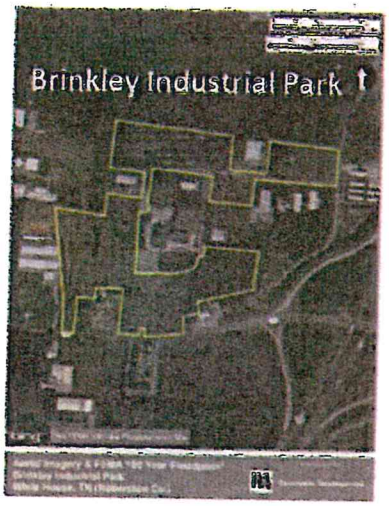


The properties are well positioned for job shops, light manufacturing, and other operations that do not require a high profile setting that may be sought to support a polished corporate image. The properties are functionally adequate and are worthy of the IDB's support.

The residential commercial heart of the city will likely remain east of I-65 for the foreseeable future. The Lowes Site is an isolated industrial development (see map below) east of I-65. Given the likely increase in residential and commercial development in the White House area, it is hard to conceive of open properties to the east and south of the Lowes Site ever becoming industrial. Consequently, the Lowes Site will remain an isolated and nonconforming use.

On the other hand, the area west of I-65 has already developed a significant industrial base including the Brinkley Industrial Park and Tate Site. I-65 as a separator of commercial/residential from industrial land has benefits to the community including the separation of truck from passenger vehicle traffic, and other land use conflicts.

White House Area Sites



Brinkley Industrial Park (#9)

General description	The Brinkley Industrial Park is a mixture of small light industrial and commercials services facilities.
Total acreage	41 vacant acres are spread out across the industrial park in small parcels.
Ownership	Private
Developable acreage	TBD
Topography	Mostly flat
Transportation access	South Court Drive and Industrial Drive lead back to TN-76 and I-65 access. Planned road work along TN-76 will to dramatically improve access to the Brinkley Industrial Park.
Current Zoning	Industrial
Utility infrastructure (electric power, natural gas, water, wastewater, telecommunications)	All utilities are located in the industrial park reportedly with line sizes sufficient to supply light industrial operations. Service to individual sites within the park not provided: • Electric – Cumberland Electric • Natural Gas – Piedmont Gas • Water – White House Utility District • Sewer – White House Utility District
Land Costs	Not provided
High level assessment of potential environmental risks (past uses, possible streams/wetlands, etc.)	No obvious environmental concerns. Further investigation required to verify conditions.

Brinkley Industrial Park Advantages

- Well suited to small facilities for low profile light industrial and service support businesses.

Brinkley Industrial Park Weaknesses

- Poor road access. Planned improvements will help remedy this concern.
- Absence of design guidelines makes this a less attractive development compared to planned industrial parks.

Brinkley Industrial Park

Light industrial development of buildings and roadways of mixed design and construction standards. Current poor road access will be remedied with planned road work along TN-76.

White House: Lowes Site (#10)

General description	The Lowes Site partially wraps around the Lowes industrial operation. Property to the east is being developed as high density residential. Property immediately to the north is a church.
Total acreage	47 acres
Ownership	Multiple private owners
Developable acreage	To be determined. Odd site configuration, setbacks from residential land uses, and a possible wetland/intermittent stream will likely reduce developable acreage.
Topography	Flat
Transportation access	Site is currently accessed via a driveway owned by the adjoining property, however, a finger of the property does reach out to Hester Drive and can be developed as an access road. Hester Drive, which is now the only access road to the site, dead ends at the property. A secondary access road to North Sage Road may be possible via a finger of land at the southeast corner of the site. Hester Road also serves non-industrial uses including a church, hotel and restaurants. Access to Hester Drive from TN-76 is prone to congestion and is under study for improvement.
Current Zoning	Industrial
Utility infrastructure (electric power, natural gas, water, wastewater, telecommunications)	All utilities are at the site reportedly with line sizes sufficient to supply light industrial operations. • Electric – Cumberland Electric • Natural Gas – Piedmont Gas – 4" line • Water – White House Utility District – 10" line • Sewer – White House Utility District – 6" line Rapid residential and commercial services growth in the White House area is absorbing excess capacity. System upgrades will likely be required in the future in order to support expected residential, commercial, as well as industrial growth.
Land Costs	Price of property not provided
High level assessment of potential environmental risks (past uses, possible streams/wetlands, etc.)	A wetland and intermittent stream appears to cross the southeastern one third of the property. Further study is required.

Lowes Site Advantages

- Largely flat property ready for development
- Located close to I-65.
- Property is close to worker housing and restaurant/shopping amenities for employees.

Lowes Site

Lowes Site Weaknesses

- TN-76 / I-64 interchange is prone to congestion making access to/from Hester Road difficult at times. Planned road improvements should alleviate this concern.
- Lack of secondary access is a risk factor as operations could be interrupted if Hester Road closes for any reason. A secondary access point is possible though use of North Sage and Sage Roads would involve travel through high density residential area and commercial districts.
- Road serving the site, Hester Road, is shared by a church, restaurants and hotel traffic which are in conflict with heavy truck traffic.
- High density residential development on the east side of the property opens the door to possible restrictions for use of the Lowes property.
- Irregular shape of property and possible wetlands will limit developable acreage.
- The lack of an asking price for the land is a red-flag for many corporate real estate executives as it may mean land owners may drive-up the price when interest is shown in the property.

Lowes Site Recommendations

- Develop design guidelines, including setback and screening requirements, which will ensure adjacent residential and church properties are not negatively impacted by development.
- Assess the extent of wetland/intermittent stream presence on the property to determine the actual amount of property that can be developed
- Push to ensure that road improvements along TN-76 at Hester Road support easy ingress/egress for vehicles serving the Lowes Site.
- Look for a secondary access route, preferably one that does not pass through residential and retail areas of the community.

Tate Site (#11)

The Tate Site is located west of I-65 and north of TN-76 just off Industrial Drive. The property is served by Center Street, a dead end road with a large industrial friendly cul-de-sac. The 21+/- acre site appears to be well suited for both light and heavy industrial uses. Neighboring operations are largely metal buildings used for heavy industrial manufacturing and include outside storage of materials and equipment. Screening requirements are apparently not present or not enforced.

Tate Site

Road access improvements will make this a more attractive property for industrial development.

General description	Property is located in district of heavy and light industrial operations. Property is slightly rectangular and is likely suitable for a large array of project types. Site is currently wooded.
Total acreage	21 acres
Ownership	Private
Developable acreage	Further study required to determine developable acreage
Topography	Mostly flat
Transportation access	Center Street leads o Industrial Drive which leads to TN-76 and I-65 access. Planned road work along TN-76 will dramatically improve access to the Brinkley Industrial Park.
Current Zoning	Industrial
Utility infrastructure (electric power, natural gas, water, wastewater, telecommunications)	All utilities are reported to be available with line sizes sufficient to supply light industrial operations: • Electric – Cumberland Electric • Natural Gas – Piedmont Gas • Water – White House Utility District • Sewer – White House Utility District
Land Costs	Not provided
High level assessment of potential environmental risks (past uses, possible streams/wetlands, etc.)	No obvious environmental concerns. Further investigation required to verify conditions.

Tate Site Advantages

- Rectangular site suited for industrial operations
- Industrial grade road (Center Street) serving the property

Tate Site Weaknesses

- Surrounding development is not attractive including facilities with outside storage. These set a tone of the area as a low profile, heavy industrial setting.

Tate Site Recommendations

- Investigate site environmental and geotechnical conditions to determine if the whole property is suitable for development.