

Position Paper - City of Atlanta

Acquisition of Land by Southern Railway
in the Model Cities Area of Atlanta

I. Introduction

A. Purpose

This statement reflects the concerns of the following operating agencies with regard to expansion plans of Southern Railway:

1. Model Cities Program
2. Atlanta Parks Department
3. Atlanta Planning Department
4. Atlanta Housing Authority
5. Atlanta Public Works Department

B. Scope

It is limited to these major areas:

1. Land Use and Housing
2. Transportation
3. Relocation of Families
4. Pittman Park Acquisition
5. Inconsistency with Major Planning Efforts
6. Conclusions

II. Areas of Concern

A. Land Use & Housing

1. Result. Industrial land use will increase through the enlarged yard facilities while residential and park acreage will decline.
2. Effect. Under present plans the resulting increase in heavy industrial activity threatens the stability of the remaining residential neighborhood. Residential property values will decline since living close to a railroad storage

yard is undesirable. Without proper planning there will be an increase in the structural deterioration of homes adjacent to the yard.

B. Transportation

1. Result. Railroad activity will increase above existing levels and the proposed yard limits will dead end various local streets.

2. Effect.

(a) Dead-End Streets

The expansion, as proposed, will cut-off seven streets in the Pittsburgh Neighborhood. These streets and the number of structures which will be located on the resulting dead-end streets are:

1) Windsor Street -	0 structures
2) Garibaldi Street -	12 structures
3) Gardner Street -	1 structure
4) Ira Street -	4 structures
5) Rockwell Street -	0 structures
6) Smith Street -	16 structures
7) Berckele Street -	6 structures

39 structures

On these same seven streets, as presently existing, there are 11 structures on the dead-end portions of the streets.

It will have to be determined if any of the proposed dead-end streets are of sufficient length to necessitate a turn around. If one is needed, then additional properties may have to be acquired to provide the turn around.

The expansion of Southern Railway, as proposed, includes portions of several streets. To

implement this plan, it will be necessary for the City to abandon parts of these streets. A public hearing will have to be held to determine if these streets should be abandoned.

(b) McDaniel Street Crossing

The principal connector between the Pittsburgh and Mechanicsville Neighborhoods is McDaniel Street. This street presently crosses the Southern Railway tracks at-grade. When trains are coming to or leaving the storage yards, McDaniel Street is often blocked for relatively long periods of time.

To eliminate these long delays, a proposal has been made to construct an underpass under McDaniel Street. Total cost of this project as estimated by Public Works Department is \$1,050,000. This does not include right-of-way damage or relocating water lines. To accomplish this project, three or four tracks will have to be killed during construction. This will be difficult since increased train traffic past McDaniel Street will occur if the existing storage yard is expanded. No date for construction of this underpass has been set. If this project is not implemented, the increased train traffic from the proposed storage yard will further increase the long delays at the at-grade crossing.

(c) Fortress Avenue Crossing

Fortress Avenue also connects the Pittsburgh and Mechanicsville Neighborhoods. Since this street does not lead to any major streets and since it crosses the Southern Railway tracks at-grade, Fortress Avenue is not heavily used. Also, trains are parked at times across Fortress Avenue discouraging use of the street.

The increased train traffic resulting from expanded yard facilities will all but eliminate the use of Fortress Avenue. There are no plans at this time to improve Fortress Avenue.

C. Relocation

1. Result. The proposed land acquisition will affect about 100 families.
2. Effect. These people must move without being paid the allowances received by urban renewal displacees: moving expenses and differential payments. They will not be eligible for temporary housing presently being provided by the Atlanta Housing Authority. And their exodus will further contribute to the city's current deficiency in standard housing units for people of such low income. Consequently, the forced movement of such a large number of people by an agency with public responsibility does not reflect recent trends to finance and provide direct housing assistance to such groups, nor does it reflect the present trend of business to become involved in the human problems it creates.

D. Pittman Park Acquisition

1. Result. A portion of Pittman Park must be acquired for railroad use while adjacent residential and industrial property will be acquired and added to the remaining park site. The gymnasium, swimming pool, and tennis courts will have to be demolished and reconstructed; financing is being provided by Southern Railway.
2. Effect. Pittman Park comes closest to being the most ideal recreation and park facility in the entire Atlanta system. It has been blessed with a fairly complete list of physical facilities, as well as a real outstanding staff. Pittman Park lies within what is referred to as a Neighborhood Service Area Number 20, as defined by the Atlanta

Parks and Recreation 1983 Plan. Due to the fact that the Parks Department does not wish to relocate large numbers of people adjacent to the park, they have abandoned any thought of having a full-fledged community park in this neighborhood. A community park consists of not less than twenty-five acres and obviously many, many people would be dislocated. Thus, they have proposed to convert Pittman into an "expanded neighborhood park" by adding about three acres. The Planning Department has recommended that they acquire the brickyard to bring up the acreage total but their own design staff opposes this particular direction of expansion. The Park's position, specifically, with Southern Railway System is that, if the park must be bothered, there must be full and rapid replacement of all facilities interfered with and these facilities must be bigger and better and more modern than the existing facilities. Equally important, the project must not violate the superior philosophy of Model Cities.

E. Inconsistency with Major Planning Efforts

1. Result. The expansion of industrial uses in this area is not consistent with existing city plans for the area including the following:
 - a. 1983 Parks and Recreation Plan
 - b. NDP Plan for Model Cities
 - c. 1983 Land Use Plan for Atlanta
 - d. Model Cities Land Use Plan and Five Year Comprehensive Plan.

2. Effect. All city plans are interrelated, some more so than others. The Pittman Park service area and plans for recreation program expansion is contingent upon the preservation of Pittsburgh as a residential community. Business areas, schools, parks and rehabilitation areas are proposed because of the relationship of these land uses to surrounding uses. The inclusion of an industrial use in this area - without proper consideration and control - will nullify the past years of work that the city

has committed to this neighborhood - not to mention the cost of this work and the involvement of residents working to better their own environment.

For example, the Housing Authority's concern is to determine whether or not the Southern Railway expansion plans are consistent with the Neighborhood Development Program plans prepared by each of the six Model Cities neighborhood resident committees and their planning consultants in conjunction with the staff of the City Planning Department, the Model Cities staff and the Atlanta Housing Authority. Federal and local funds are being provided to carry out these plans which are approved by the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the City of Atlanta and the Federal Government. Contractual agreements preclude the City from taking any actions such as rezoning or closing of streets which are contrary to the plans approved by the City, the Federal Government and the Housing Authority.

III. Alternative Considerations

On the basis of an analysis of proposed plans, two major conclusions have been formulated.

- A. Selection of Another Site. The foregoing concerns can be minimized if the railroad expanded north and east - into the existing industrial area of Mechanicsville - instead of south and west into a park and established residential neighborhood. This direction will eliminate a large, unsightly and rat infested junkyard and also relocate only a handful of families as opposed to the 100 presently affected.
- B. Involvement of Railroad with Agencies Responsible for Planning. The utilizing of any site for Railroad expansion can be found only if the railroad and city agencies develop a closer working relationship than has existed to this point.