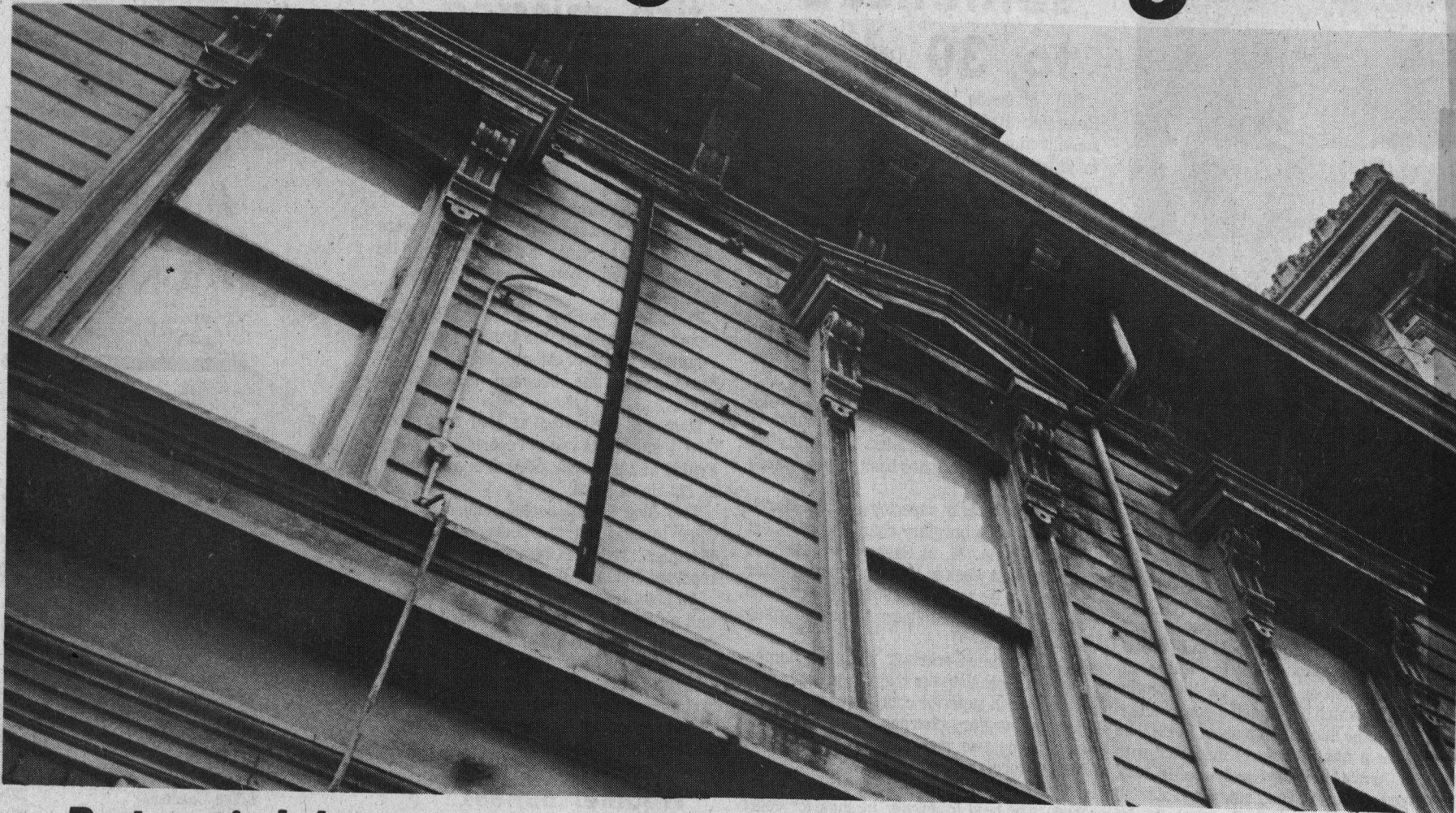


City facing shortage of



usable land

REFERENCE

Potential housing

With the city desperately short of housing, the planning department is looking at a plan to restore empty and condemned apartments, such as those above, found upstairs over many Main St. businesses. Senior city

planner Chuck Rowe thinks the federal government can be persuaded to assist financially in rehabilitating some of these units and he hopes owners of some of the vacant apartments will get in touch with him to investigate the idea.

Population pressure among major problems

By KEN McLAUGHLIN

Save for a small amount of land zoned for light industry, Watsonville will run out of developable land in 10 years, according to a city planning department study which was sent to planning commissioners yesterday.

Assuming the growth rates projected in the study are correct, available general industrial land will be used up in four to six years. Land zoned for residential use will be gone in 10 years. Only land available for light industry will last "at least ten years."

The study predicts that the industrial expansion growth rate will remain at about 5 per cent until 1980. After that it will slow to approximately 3.5 per cent. Between 1985 and 1990, it will drop to about 2.5 per cent.

Population, the report says, will grow 3.3 per cent a year until 1980, slow to 3 per cent by 1980 and decrease to 2.5 per cent by 1985.

By 1980, the report says, Watsonville's population will jump to 20,490 from today's estimated 18,000. By 1985, the population is expected to be about 23,750; in 1990, 27,090.

If the above figures hold true, the city will need 35 to 40 acres of more residential land each year. The report says that there are only 450 acres of vacant residential land in the city, not all of it lending itself to easy development.

Presently within Watsonville, there are 450 acres zoned for general industry and 180 acres zoned for light industry. Only 14 per cent of general industry land is vacant, leaving 63 acres for expansion. However, 88 per cent of the light industry land is vacant, leaving 154 acres for future needs.

The report also concludes that "Watsonville, to a certain extent, is becoming a bedroom community.

One of the major reasons for this is the relative availability of housing in Watsonville compared to the Santa Cruz and Monterey areas. Notes the report: "Fort Ord's recent expansion and Monterey's water (main) moratorium have especially accentuated this problem."

The availability of low-cost retirement homes attracting the elderly who have been traditionally attracted to the Santa Cruz area is listed as another reason.

"Watsonville is conveniently close to Santa Cruz, but with more low-cost housing opportunities," says the report.

Another reason listed is the relative availability of jobs in Watsonville due to recent industrial expansion, "attracting unemployed persons from other areas."

Mexican immigrants joining their families here is also given as a cause for the city's population jump.

"In general," the report says, "many people are choosing to live in smaller areas and moving away from big cities."

One of the main purposes of the report was to help city officials decide whether government action is necessary to channel development to areas which would otherwise be undevelopable.

"During the past five years Watsonville has grown more rapidly than at any time since the post-depression boom in the 1930's. Because the city is growing so rapidly, it is more important than ever that a well-designed land-use growth pattern is achieved," says the report.

The report adds that "one of the most effective mechanisms for achieving such a growth pattern is governmental aid in the provision of utilities, road access or other capital improvements."

Also suggested is the annexation of areas of "ready development potential" as well as areas that appear less developable but could be made useful by providing more utilities.

The report predicts that the amount of land used for purposes other than industry and housing will remain stable.

"Watsonville already has an established commercial, educational and recreational center (i.e. the downtown)," the report says. "Expansions in commercial facilities are likely to occur in small amounts accompanying major residential developments serving as a neighborhood facility."

Out of the 450 acres that are available for residential use, the report says 300 acres are subject to "major constraints, assuming the city enforces the following policies adopted in various city documents."

The restrictions the reports list are mostly environmental. Development in flood prone areas, it notes, must be severely restricted. The same goes for development of prime agricultural land.

Another important environmental concern is noise pollution. Says the report: "Residential development should be kept away from the airport."

Noise constraints also limit residential development near the freeway, state routes and industrial areas.

Most of the available residential land lies in the northwest portion of the city, the area generally bounded by Airport Blvd., Freedom Blvd. and Highway 129.