A JOINT EFFORT TO PROVIDE SOIL SURVEY INFORMATION AND BETTER LAND USE IN A LARGE METRO AREA

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The dawning of a new era of working relationships between those who are responsible for the planning and development of cities, towns, and communities and those who are responsible for the inventory and evaluation of soils is coming about across the Southeast. A joint endeavor in the Greater Gadsden Area in Etowah County, Alabama, by the Gadsden city government and the Soil Conservation Service is a prime example of one of these working relationships. The city of Gadsden is fortunate to have a city engineer and planner who realize the value of having soil information and interpretations before decisions are made on land use.

The project started when the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, in cooperation with the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station and the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries began a progressive soil survey of Etowah County. Realizing the value of the town and county planning section to be contained in the survey report, the city officials in charge of planning and engineering suggested that if the city could facilitate the production of the report, then maybe the soil interpretative section of the report might be available sooner, and in somewhat more detail than it would be in the regular soil survey report of the entire county. The decision was made and agreements reached between SCS and the Gadsden city officials to prepare an interim urban report of the Greater Gadsden Area encompassing approximately 125,000 acres, or roughly about one-third of Etowah County. It was agreed that SCS would begin and concentrate soil mapping within the area, and furnish the soil maps and a manuscript of the urban report along with suitable pictures. The city of Gadsden would “take it from there,” being responsible for publication and cost.

The resulting document is an appealing, valuable report, which both the city of Gadsden and SCS can be proud of. The report, entitled “Soil Properties Related to Urban Development in the Greater Gadsden Area”, was made available to the public about 18 months after the first acre was mapped. It contains background information on the report and how it can be used, and about a dozen pictures on soil uses and soil problems within the area. There is a brief series description on each soil found in the area and four separate tables, rating each mapping unit for 18 different urban uses. The first 100 copies of the report were assembled with prints of the original field sheets, then as the compiled maps become available another 900 copies will be assembled. An attractive, colored, cover picture of some high altitude, infrared photography of the area was used for the front of the report. The city engineer’s office is in charge of distributing the document. All prospective industries visiting the area are given copies of the report, along with other land users.

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