



The first part of the Palm Coast Development in Flagler County, Fla., where I.T.T. is carving a city for 600,000 people out of the wilderness

# Disputed City: A Huge Wilderness Project in Florida

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In the early morning stillness as herons stalk fish in the shallows of the Matanzas River, the cough of the engines of earthmoving machines can be heard coming from behind the thin green wall of the pine forest of Flagler County.

It is a sound that brings smiles or shudders from the residents of this county (population 4,450) on the Atlantic Coast about 20 miles south of St. Augustine, the oldest city in North America.

For here, behind the screening trees, the continent's newest city is being carved out of the wilderness by a subsidiary of the International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation.

By the turn of the century, according to plans of the I.T.T. Development Corporation, a city with a population equal to New Orleans—about 600,000—will be situated on the banks of the Matanzas. An international sales force of 600, working mainly in the northeastern United States, sold \$65-million worth of home sites in the company's Palm Coast Development in 1973. The goal is to house 600,000 residents by the year 2000.

## Stiff Opposition

It is an ambitious plan for Florida, where entrepreneurs for most of the century have hawked suburban dreams to frozen Northerners, everything from dime-sized houses under water in some inland morass to palatial estates in Palm Beach and Miami.

But the I. T. T. project has run into some stiff opposition from state planners, who called it an environmental disaster that would devastate the state's longest remaining stretch of undeveloped coastline on the Atlantic.

"Two years ago, we thought they were building a dinosaur—an anachronism—years out of date as if enlightened development givers said Joel Kuperberg, director of the Internal Improvement Fund, the state agency responsible for development waterways.

"Here we have the wild-



Mr. and Mrs. Carter Rawlings moved to Palm Coast 10 years ago. Mr. Rawlings said, "The local power people don't want out-of-staters . . . but they'll never stop I.T.T."

mightiest corporation walk into Florida with a plan that is 10 years out of date," Mr. Kuperberg said, explaining why 72,000 acres of Palm Coast's 92,000 acres have not yet been certified by Florida for out-of-state sales.

"They want to build a huge land development like the type that was allowed in the past to ravage the land. I. T. T. built this computerized international sales machine, and then they lose control of it.

## Feeding the 'Monster'

"Got to feed the monster, they keep telling me. Got to get those beans and coffee off the shelf and feed the monster," they say. Well, the monster isn't eating beans and coffee. The computer is designed to eat giant pieces of Florida's natural resources."

I. T. T. officials, on the other hand, sound like the injured party on the subject of environmental protection, and they insist that the corporation is tak-

ing steps to avoid the mistakes made by other large land developers.

"We have agreed to do anything Mr. Kuperberg has asked us to do," said Dr. Norman Young, president of I.T.T. Development. "Certain trees and animals have had to go. You can't put up houses without knocking down trees. Utopia is impossible."

However, he added, low-density cities like Palm Coast that eliminate "the psychosocial pollution" found in crowded cities supersede in importance the wishes of environmentalists "who couldn't agree with each other over what would be acceptable in the first place."

He charged that the development had been maligned by publicity that played up unavoidable environmental intrusions and ignored the many steps taken to safeguard the environment at the expense of profits.

Palm Coast's tree replanting program, he said, is the most

extensive ever undertaken by a private developer, and the corporation has put 15,000 acres inside the state as natural greenlands.

Controversy has marked the project since the land first indirectly in the antitrust settlement by the Nixon Administration in the I.T.T.-Hartford Insurance Company merger.

Moreover, when environmentalists in Florida discuss the power of a large international corporation on Government policy makers, they point that President Nixon did not recommend new controls on the development of water from his environmental message to Congress at about the time I. T. T. began selling land to the public.

## Timber Rights Retained

The corporation acquired most of the rights to 30,000 acres of woodlands in Flagler and Johns Counties through a subsidiary, I. T. T. Ray, which amassed most of the 92,000 acres after World

when property prices were high.

I. T. T., according to Mr. Kuperberg, still holds timber rights on most of the land being sold for home sites, giving its subsidiary company the option to cut trees even after homes have been constructed on the land.

The Palm Coast developers have already leveled hundreds of acres of land, cut canals and dumped up landfill to provide foothold building sites and transformed forests into moonpines with two or three trees per acre. Trees are replaced by new plantings after the homes are prepared, according to I.T.T. spokesmen, but critics contend that esthetic repair work cannot reconstruct the rural ecological balance.

"I was disappointed that they were cutting down so many trees on the property," said Mrs. Gerry Bing, owner of a fishing camp opposite the yacht club and a visitor's welcome center put up by Palm Coast, "but they explained to me they'd need to plant new trees that could take to the landfill."

Mrs. Bing and her late husband moved here 10 years ago from Jacksonville, sharing the dark sand beaches, dark pinyons and inland fishing ponds with other people who preferred the northern Big Scrub country of Florida to the warmer southern half of the peninsula.

The fishing has fallen off, however, since the machines began scraping the Palm Coast tracts and draining the low-lying swamps into the Matanzas River.

"The flats out there are the spawning grounds for trout and bass," Mrs. Bing said, pointing across the river from the fishing camp to the west bank that abuts the I.T.T. property. "If they mess with that land, all the fishing's gone from this river."

"Flagler County never grew in the past because the people who controlled this county didn't want it to grow," said Carter Rawlings, who moved here 10 years ago from Georgia. "The local power people don't want out-of-staters coming in here and telling them what to do. But they'll never stop I.T.T. There's just too much money there to stop them even if they knew how."