

Location Key In Robin Approach



'Rocky' Robin

Ground-breaking ceremonies Thursday for the proposed \$25-million office park on Kaliste Saloom Road provided another indication of the strength and growth of the Lafayette economy. It also represented a milestone in the career of Roland L. (Rocky) Robin, Lafayette real estate consultant, who has pioneered a unique approach to providing ideal locations for commercial developers.

Joseph C. Canizaro of New Orleans, who is building the giant office complex in a joint venture with Asma, Ltd.—members of the Saloom family of Lafayette—has called 24.6 acre site “the finest site in Lafayette for such a development.” It was Robin who located the property and whose sophisticated studies convinced the developer that it would be the ideal site. He also worked with the Saloom family in assuring them that the office complex would constitute wise and beneficial use of their property.

Judge Kaliste Saloom, Jr., president of Asma, Ltd., says Robin played a crucial role in the project from the beginning. “Both sides recognized the difficulty of his role and the great contribution he made,” Saloom says. “His ‘never-say-fail’ attitude kept negotiations moving to a successful conclusion.”

Playing a key role in the bringing together of developer and land-owner is only one aspect for the multifaceted approach Robin has brought to real estate consultation. His stock in trade is his proven ability to go into any area, and through sophisticated techniques of research and evaluation, find that exact piece of property which will guarantee the greatest potential market for his client's products or services. Then, it is his function to arrange for the acquisition of that property in a manner which is equally beneficial to the owner and the potential user.

Among those companies or their franchisees for whom he has provided winning locations are Mr. Gatti's Pizza, Popeye's Fried Chicken, Taco Bell, Arby's, Dobb's House, Eckerd Drugs, Shoe Corporation of America, Omelette Shoppe and Pasta House.

The client list also includes Chart House, Inc., which in addition to being the largest franchisee in the Burger King system, operates two major steak house chains. Before establishing his own company, Robin served as vice-president of real estate and construction for Chart House, guiding that department during the company's greatest growth period and setting records for delivering productive sites that still stand within the company.

It was during his tenure with Chart House, Inc. that Robin began developing and refining methods and techniques for evaluating potential sites, and a phi-

tenure with the company, had this observation:

“Rocky has a unique talent for finding productive locations. Many of the most profitable restaurants in our chain are successful, to a large degree, because Rocky was able to locate and secure the ideal sites.”

“The key to success with any individual location,” Robin says, “whether it be a fast food or sit down restaurant, shopping center, mall or office complex, is doing a statistical study of the city and the area. Whatever the type site selection you are involved in, the basis of success is doing the groundwork.”

“This involves a study of the total life style of the city or area where you anticipate acquiring a location. You must research and understand the direction, nature and potential of the city's growth. We also consider factors that might not have been considered important in the past. This includes the history and culture of the area, the availability of community facilities such as lodging, health care, educational institutions, churches, communication and transportation. These factors are important not only in assessing market potential, but also in projecting availability of desirable employees.

“Then, getting down to the hard data on which we project customer count and sales potential, we look at such things as industrial development, population, labor analysis, effective buying income and per-household retail

customer into proximity with the business we anticipate placing on the site in question. We make thorough studies of competitive locations.

“Then we look at the demographic makeup of the area from which we expect to draw customers. We determine the median age, the median income, spendable income, and other factors which would influence buying habits.

“Only after this kind of groundwork can we point to a piece of property and say ‘we believe this would be a choice location for your business’.

“After the company is convinced we have located a site that will meet their requirements, we begin the process of bringing together the company and the landowner. Frequently the ideal site is not being offered for sale.

Many of these developers now find great benefit in having available to them Robin's widely-recognized professional skills. They include Edward J. DeBartolo, a major international developer. Also, landowners interested in development of their property find Robin's easy access to major developers highly beneficial.

Robin's clients are quick to praise his expertise. George Daniels, franchisee of “Mr. Gatti's” restaurants, called his work “outstanding.” “He recently acquired for us what has proved to be the two or three best locations in the United States.”

Guy Lowe, New Orleans financier and a franchisee of “The Omelette Shoppe” chain, called Robin's work “incredible.” “I've never seen anyone produce a site for a restaurant with that kind of professionalism.” Robin, he said, “is a hell of a real estate man.”

Unique Approach In Finding Site

losophy which centered around his determination that all parties to any transaction would reap maximum benefits.

B. I. Moody, III, Chart House vice-chairman of the board, who was president and chief executive officer during Robin's

sales.

“Zeroing in on particular sites, we analyze traffic counts and traffic patterns in the designated area. We look at surrounding retail trade zone to see what shopping centers or other facilities might bring the potential