Monsanto

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DATE: May 22, 1992

SUBJ: Rush City Buyout

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Attached please find an article on the Rush City Buyout.

Loren W. Wassell

/ad

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ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

ST. LOUIS/FRIDAY

• FRIDAY, MAY 22, 1992

Rush City Appeals For Relief

Tour Set To Show Plight Of E. St. Louis Residents

By Roy Malone
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

A community activist is planning a "show-and-tell tour" of the Rush City area of East St. Louis to underscore his belief that homeowners there are being neglected by city officials and treated unfairly by two chemical companies that are buying up land there.

The companies are the Ethyl Petroleum Additives Division of the Ethyl Corp. and the Big River Zinc Corp., the Post-Dispatch learned Thursday. Both are in the Sauget industrial complex.

The Rev. Buck Jones said last week that 60 percent of Rush City had been bought and the parcels placed in a secret land trust.

Since 1985, the chemical firms have refused to negotiate on a buyout proposal, a lawsuit against them went nowhere and a plan by East St. Louis officials to relocate Rush City residents fell through.

The area has lost hundreds of residents over the last 10 years. Fewer than 200 people and 100 structures remain.

Now, the remaining residents say they are being offered low amounts for their homes — or get no offers at all.

Jones, who heads Project HOPE, said residents were being frequently driven from their homes by noxious fumes. He said they were being paid about $4,000 for their homes, with some getting as little as $2,000.

The tour Saturday will "show that homes in Rush City are worth more than $2,000 and that Rush City has been abandoned and neglected by officials of the city of East St. Louis," Jones said.

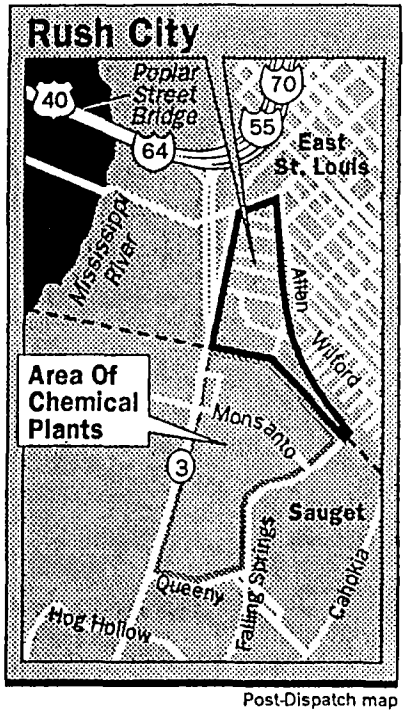
Steve Lechner, who heads a real-estate firm in Clayton, said the parcels were being put in a land trust as he acquired them. Executives of Ethyl and Big River Zinc said that the offers represented the going rate and that some owners had gotten far more than $4,000. They said the land would be used for a buffer zone.

The Rev. James F. Hall says Monsanto Co. offered to buy his land several years ago, but the amount would not cover the cost of moving his house to another site.

Hall said former Mayor Carl E. Officer had urged residents to sell to the chemical companies, saying the city would relocate residents to new housing on the other side of town. "It was called 'a house for a house,'" Hall said. "But nothing ever happened."

In 1984, a $63 million lawsuit was filed against the chemical firms on behalf of 400 residents. But the plaintiffs' lawyer later withdrew, saying the suit was too costly to pursue.

The Rev. Richard Cosey, who moved from Rush City after the lawsuit was dropped, said: "I thought we would get something out of it. They let the fumes out. The people had to go to the hospital. They admitted their errors. We didn't even get anything for it being a nuisance."



Post-Dispatch map

Mayor Gordon D. Bush said Thursday that he would work with residents "to improve their situation," whether it means getting more for their homes or improving city services.

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