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# St. Petersburg Times

## Closing of plant opens doors to other businesses Series: PASCO BUSINESS: DADE CITY; [STATE Edition]

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### Abstract (Document Summary)

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Wesley Chapel fruit shipping company Citrus Country Groves in October bought a large part of the property, including all the frontage on U.S. 301, and started talking major redevelopment. In addition to bringing his operation to north Dade City, company president Jim Guedry said he plans to develop a business park and lease space to other companies.

A deal also moved forward, albeit with a few stumbles, for a hotel to be built on U.S. 301 south of downtown. City officials have said for years a national-chain hotel with meeting space for conferences would be a boon to the city and attract business.

### Full Text (382 words)

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The bombshell business news of 2004 - the closing of the 60-year-old Pasco Beverage plant - ultimately became a welcome and promising development for the future.

The juice processing company in May announced it would close by the end of the year, eliminating about 300 jobs and marking the end of an era in Dade City.

At its peak, the original company known as Pasco Packing had more than 2,000 workers and was considered the largest single citrus processing plant anywhere. The Lykes Brothers company took over control in the 1950s, then sold to a Dallas investment firm in 1999.

Last year, global juice giant Louis Dreyfus Citrus bought it and orchestrated the shutdown.

People in town spoke mournfully of the passage. Among them were Dade City Mayor Hutch Brock, whose father, Pete, spent his career at Lykes Pasco.

But in May the mayor speculated that something good might come of the closing.

Something did.

Wesley Chapel fruit shipping company Citrus Country Groves in October bought a large part of the property, including all the frontage on U.S. 301, and started talking major redevelopment. In addition to bringing his operation to north Dade City, company president Jim Guedry said he plans to develop a business park and lease space to other companies.

Answering a prayer of city officials, Guedry said he would annex into the city and add the industrial site to its tax base.

Other tenants came calling, too.

Cargill Juice North America paid \$539,000 for slightly more than 4 acres, including the Pasco Beverage headquarters office building.

And entrepreneur Brian "Jack" McCully agreed to buy 17 acres, heavy industrial equipment, plus 120 acres of adjacent land with plans to operate his industrial waste cleanup company.

But months later McCully's Florida Southwestern Environmental Inc. had to hand back the land to avoid foreclosure.

A deal also moved forward, albeit with a few stumbles, for a hotel to be built on U.S. 301 south of downtown. City officials have said for years a national-chain hotel with meeting space for conferences would be a boon to the city and attract business.

Atlanta developer Piyush Mulji announced plans to build a Hampton Inn, but tangled with officials over tax breaks. The deal is being ironed out.

