



EVAN WILLIAMS / FLORIDA WEEKLY

Scrap metal and old tires wait in Garden St. Iron & Metal's yard to be hauled to steel mills.

METAL

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"I think (the thefts) are still occurring," said Fort Myers interim Police Chief Doug Baker. "We're working closely with (Weber's scrap yard, Garden St.). We have people selling stolen cars. It's guardrails, drainspouts, A/C units, manhole covers. It's just a variety of weirdo type stuff."

Although the prices paid for scrap metal receded this September (unprepared steel garnered \$6.50 per 100 pounds last week), Weber expects the days of record highs to return next year. Then, he predicts, builders worldwide — especially in China and India — may start needing more metal material again. Now those economies, which were growing at a breakneck pace until near the Beijing Olympics, have slowed.

"Foreign countries are running out of money," Weber said. "They're tightening their belts."

Luke Pride, president of Pride Industries, Inc., a St. Petersburg-based company which sells galvanized steel, agreed that demands from China and India drove prices up, then down. "China and India ... have hit their recession," he said.

Copper remained about even throughout the summer and is now at \$2.75 per pound; clean, extruded aluminum gets 75 cents per pound.

"Before the prices dropped, we were lined up out on the street," Garden St. Manager John Hoving said. "It was just the sheer volume of the lines."

Lines still extended out into the street at the scrap yard on Metro last Saturday. People hauled in a random variety of old farm equipment, lawn chairs, frames of cars, poles and other things to be weighed.

Inside the 25-acre compound, broken parts piled two and three stories high. Workers sorted by metal type and product, and the Auto Shredder ground up whole cars in about 17 seconds.

Goodwill Industries, which accepts donated vehicles on Fowler Street in Fort Myers, hasn't gotten enough vehicles this year since people are taking them to scrap yards instead, said Titled Goods Manager Bob Grande. Garden St. pays \$8.50 per 100 pounds

for scrap cars as of this printing.

Metal collector Davis, of Metal Recycling & Salvage, however, was not among the crowd at the Garden St. scrap yard last weekend. He avoids the Saturday lines and instead searches for metal scraps near his home in Cape Coral or wherever they may be found.

Some of the neighbors and police in the area recognize Davis' red van, he said, adding he only picks up metal that's set out by the curb, which is considered public domain. If you leave the metal sitting in your driveway or elsewhere, he might leave a business card in your door.

Davis' van holds about 1,000 pounds of metal at a time, and he said it will need new shocks and struts soon.

He likes being able to set his own hours and said it feels good to make the money. Recently he was able to give his daughter \$10 to go to the prom.

"This is my bread and butter," said Davis, who has been a collector of "treasures" since he was 11: metal, baseball cards, old comics. "I used to call it a hobby. Now it's for survival, basically."

He and other scrap collectors sometimes circle the neighborhood trying to find the metal, like drivers in a crowded parking lot waiting for a spot. "It's getting harder because everybody's doing it," Davis said. "It's a world of its own." ■

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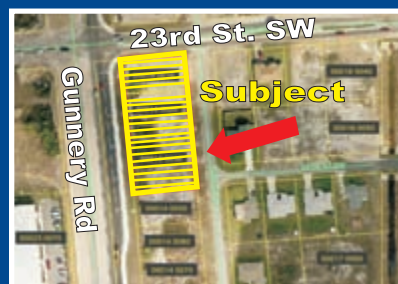
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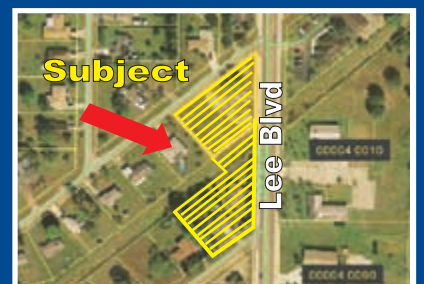
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- Zoned CN-3
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- Near Hwy. 82 & Daniels Parkway.

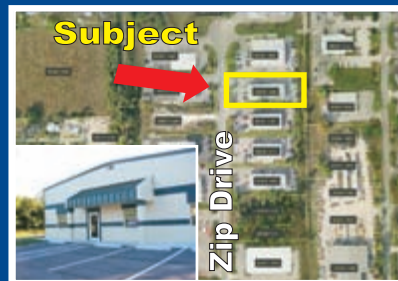
Offered at: \$385,000



Property Details:

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- 71,431 Sq.ft.
- Water & Sewer
- 2 homes w/ conversion potential
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