

Uptown College Site Foes Give Their Plan

Seslar, Thomas

Chicago Tribune (1963-Current file); May 25, 1969;

ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Tribune (1849-1988)

pg. N5

Uptown College Site Foes Give Their Plan

BY THOMAS SESLAR

Opponents of proposed use of an 11.5-acre Uptown area as a college site claim they have lined up enough commitments for rehabilitation of the primarily residential section to justify abandonment of the college proposal.

However, members of the Uptown Conservation Community council [C. C. C.] appear unconvinced and are

planning several meetings for study of the commitments. Any urban renewal use of the land—such as that sought by Chicago city college—would require approval by the C. C. C., Chicago city council, and federal officials.

Almost 300 Uptown residents and land owners turned out for the latest C. C. C. discussion of the proposed site area, which contains about 1,700 residents and is bounded by Wilson, Racine, and Montrose avenues, and the Chicago Transit authority elevated tracks.

Opponents Given Chance

The C. C. C. earlier had pledged it would abandon consideration of the college proposal for the site if the Uptown Area People's Planning coalition could produce plans and financing commitments for neighborhood rehabilitation. But, the C. C. C. had not specified what kinds of plans and commitments would be required.

The commitments presented were outlined in the meeting by Rodney Wright, an architect working with the coalition under a Ford Foundation grant to the Community Renewal society, which is sponsored by a group of churches.

Wright, of Rodney Wright & Associates, 450 E. Ohio st., said the commitments for rehabilitating some of the residential structures in the site area and replacing others include:

1. Businesses, individuals, and foundations have pledged money and services equal to \$475,000 for pre-construction planning. Wright said some of these contributors said their offers would depend on whether they could remain anonymous.)

Banking House Cooperates

2. A mortgage banking corporation, Salk, Ward, and Salk, Inc., 11 S. La Salle st., has termed the coalition proposal "economically feasible" and has volunteered to arrange financing if it is correct in its belief that the federal housing administration will insure the loans.

3. Harvey M. Rawson, a developer-



TRIBUNE Staff Photo by Don R. Hall

BIG TURNOUT—A crowd of almost 300 persons and Uptown Conservation Community council members listen while Architect Rodney Wright, of Rodney Wright & Assoc., 450 E. Ohio st., explains why he believes a residential Uptown area can and should be rehabilitated rather than converted to a community college site.

lawyer who is chairman of the board of Realty Company of America, 77 Washington st., has pledged cooperation of his company for any residential development the coalition undertakes although the company has not taken a stand on the college site issue.

Rawson said the company could secure a low-cost federal loan to build a high-rise apartment structure that initially could house displaced residents while any staggered residential construction or rehabilitation proceeded. Rent prices would be controlled by the federal government for 40 years and would be geared to residents' incomes.

4. The Ravenswood-Uptown-Interfaith fellowship, sponsored by 15 churches, has endorsed the coalition's concept of a residential area that would be known as the "Village" and would include the proposed college site. The "Village" would be bounded by Wilson and Montrose avenues, Clark street, and the transit authority tracks.

Property Owners Agree

5. Nine of the 46 property owners in the proposed college site area have agreed to cooperate with the coalition in its planning for residential development. Wright said the nine were the only ones he had contacted so far.

Regardless of who would arrange the financing for residential development of

the proposed college site or the whole "Village," the primary sponsor of the work probably would be a corporate arm of the coalition, Wright said. Attempts would be made to arrange financing for any land owners who might want to rehabilitate or replace their own structures rather than sell them to the coalition corporation, Wright said.

To Minimize Disruption

He told the crowd that the coalition's plan for keeping the area residential would involve staggering construction projects so that few of the present residents even temporarily would have to move out of the area.

Wright's comments were received enthusiastically by about half of the spectators, including members of the Young Patriots street gang who had charged that the C. C. C. and those backing the college site preference wanted to force the poor out of Uptown.

However, Miss Urania P. Damoffe, C. C. C. chairman, said that contention is untrue. She said the C. C. C. has remained objective and only wants to do whatever is determined best for the majority of Uptown residents.

Coalition Proposes Site

The most vocal supporters of each side of the issue claim to represent majority opinion.

Wright and other coalition supporters have proposed an alternative site for

the college, a primarily business area roughly bounded by Catalpa and Foster avenues, Broadway, and the transit authority elevated tracks. However, proponents of the college's first choice for a site claimed the one proposed by the coalition is too far north to serve the Uptown community as well as the first.

After the recent meeting, Miss Damoffe said Wright's discussion of the commitments had been too vague. She said she did not know how much time will be required by the C. C. C. to study the situation and determine whether there is hope for residential redevelopment of the proposed college site.

C. C. C. Wants Clarification

She said the C. C. C. will need to know details about plans and financing.

"I'm not stupid. I know that when you've got a commitment, you've got a commitment, and you don't go hemming and hawing around when somebody asks you to make clear exactly how it would work," Miss Damoffe said.

Wright agreed that the coalition still has much planning to do but said he believed response to coalition goals has been exceptionally good in recent weeks.

He said those who could accomplish the planning and activate the residential work had not shown much interest previously because they assumed there was no hope for blocking Chicago City college's acquisition of the land.



TIME NEEDED—Miss Urania P. Damoffe, Uptown Conservation Community council chairman, announces the council's decision that it needs more time to determine merit of a proposal to rehabilitate a residential Uptown area rather than use it for a new community college.