

May 4, 2016

Facilities Committee c/o
Chris Kloppel
President, Board
Champaign School District
703 South New
Champaign, IL 61820

President Kloppel:

I am writing as a homeowner near Edison Middle School. I bought the property at 408 South Elm in 1968 from an older realtor who assured me that I was buying in a stable neighborhood. Her estimate has been very accurate. We have traditional houses many of which were built at the turn of the 20th cy, old trees and brick streets that have changed little. Many houses have been extensively restored to preserve the neighborhood that was created as the City of Champaign expanded to the near south west. I have known some of my neighbors for decades.

What has also been stable is Edison, though it may not have been a middle school when I was first here. I have always thought that having the kids walking to and from school brought a kind of normalcy to the neighborhood. I want to be able to continue to have a positive feeling about having it in the neighborhood.

I have not followed closely the discussions of school locations, the costs of new construction and rehabbing existing buildings, the demographics of existing and future student populations, and the hundreds of other factors that the School Board must consider in making substantial capital commitments, but I can appreciate the complexity of this project. The particular concern that I raise below comes in that context.

I understand that one option for a middle school is to expand Edison in its current location and to do that might require additional land, perhaps an additional half block. There have been options for additional land – the vacant lot at 408 S Prairie, the apartment building on the corner of Randolph and Healey that was recently sold, the quarter block at State and Green, now under construction – that are near Edison and might have been suitable for some school uses. I obviously do not know what consideration the School Board gave to these opportunities. What I do understand as a long time resident is that taking down roughly a dozen existing structures on Prairie, Green and Healey. many of which have been extensively rehabbed over several decades and which are an intrinsic part of this neighborhood is not acceptable. If the School Board chooses to pursue this strategy, it can expect major public resistance from this neighborhood and preservation interests in the general community.

Regards.

Brian L Wallen