

I join a number of my friends in condemning the extreme northern-most site that u4boe has purchased for a new high school. It is fraught with problems of student access and greatly contributes, sadly, to urban sprawl. Fortunately, there are other good options, though not without their problems.

I have not seen news nor heard discussion of the use of vacant land near downtown Champaign for location of a new high school/sports facility. There is a sizeable empty tract east of Market St. and north of the railroad tracks. Aside from two or three small businesses and trailer storage space along Market and an Ameren substation, there is nothing there now. Is it a toxic, former coal gas plant site?

There is additional contiguous space that could be incorporated with the purchase of some other occupied properties and use of land across a railroad spur line. A large amount of space could be utilized east of the CN tracks for athletics use. The substation could be walled off, as is done, for example, west of the Pennsylvania Avenue Residence Halls.

The advantages of this site are its proximity to large residential areas, easy access to the businesses in downtown Champaign and a short walk from the downtown transportation center. Several major streets run nearby. An additional amenity is a small park north of Eureka Street, which would be the northern boundary of the school site. To increase the size of the site, a small health/social service facility and several houses could be acquired in the NW corner of the tract.

I would be interested in hearing your comments on this site.

Carl Altstetter

Dear Mr. Altstetter,

We appreciate your continued contributions to our ongoing facilities discussions.

The area around Beardsley Park has been proposed several times as a possible site for Central High School. As you point out, the site has multiple advantages: proximity to large residential areas, easy access to downtown Champaign, and a short walk from the downtown transportation center. Besides, it would be wonderful to find a new use for those vacant plots.

At the Tier Two facilities meeting on 3/10/16, Bruce Knight (Planning & Development Director from the City of Champaign) gave a presentation on various sites that have been considered for a new Central. Here is a link to his presentation: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxSDV2S_tKgALVBCbWnKSE8zanc/view. Slides 24-25 of this presentation deal with the Beardsley Park neighborhood, although not in the exact configuration you describe.

At that meeting, the Tier Two committee expressed considerable reluctance to use eminent domain to clear an area for a new high school. (The Unit 4 Board has also gone on the record as

not wanting to pursue property acquisition through eminent domain.) The number of owners who would have to agree to sell their homes to clear a large enough site was deemed too many. The consequences to residents of decreasing the available amount of affordable housing, as well as the costs to the fabric of the neighborhood, were also discussed. As a result of these discussions, the Tier Two committee decided not to investigate the Beardsley Park site further. You may view the meeting's discussion here: <https://vimeo.com/158648493>.

Thank you for your interest in this process.

Best,
Kathy R.