

Special edition: October 23 Town Hall Meeting on the proposed Home Depot at Addison & Kimball

Ald. Mell vows to stop Home Depot

- Ald. Richard Mell (33rd) pledges to put hold on all permits, reintroduce zoning amendment at November 6 City Council
- Ald. Vilma Colom (35th) no longer says it's a "done deal"
- IPNA says, "Is this newfound support too little, too late?"



About 200 area residents and businesspeople attended the Town Hall Meeting at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, 3820 N. Spaulding Ave. The overwhelming majority said loud and clear that they're against the idea of a Home Depot at the long-vacant 10.4-acre site.

Photo by Kurt Hedlund

More inside Ald. Mell and the proposed Home Depot • Traffic? The City says it's OK • Town Hall Meeting highlights • Upcoming events • Important phone numbers • Ways for you to get involved

Notable quotables at the Town Hall Meeting

State Representative Rich Bradley (District 20) said, “Home Depot knows they’re trying to shove this down our throats. We’ve read the headlines. If Home Depot goes in there, this will be the epitome of corporate greed and arrogance once again.” Someone in the audience said, “And dirty politics!” Bradley replied, “How true is that?!”

Ald. Vilma Colom (35th) said, “I will support the majority of the people in the new 35th Ward to not go along with the Home Depot project.”

Ald. Richard Mell (33rd) said, “It’s no different if they own the site or don’t own it... [Asked by an IPNA board member what good his letters to various City officials, to block City approval of Home Depot, would do since Home Depot now owns the site] Ah, that’s a good question.”

Mike Cevasco, Executive Director of KEBIC (Kedzie/Elston Business & Industrial Council) presented a proposal for the site on behalf of Jinny Beauty Supply, 3505 N. Kimball Ave. He said, “We’re really working so that there’s an alternative to Home Depot, so the elected officials have something to replace Home Depot if the residents, as they’re inclined to do, make it impossible for Home Depot to come to that site.... It [Jinny Beauty Supply] is probably the best kind of neighbor you could have...low impact on the community. If Jhin stays we add jobs. If Jhin leaves and Home Depot comes, there are probably 260 to 270 full-time jobs of your neighbors at risk.”

Irving Park Neighbors wants to know

Why did Ald. Mell wait to step up for the community?

What he did (and didn’t do) then

In 2001, in response to the 9-to-1 “yes” vote on an advisory referendum on the November 2000 ballot, he introduced a zoning change that would have permitted non-industrial, non-manufacturing development. He did not push aggressively for a hearing and a vote. Nothing happened.

In December 2001, he quietly withdrew a proposed zoning amendment that would have prohibited a home improvement retailer, declaring that “circumstances have changed in my community.” Ald. Mell has explained this by saying, “I heard ‘big box’ was starting to come around again... The devil you know is better than the devil you don’t know.”

So he knew last year that Home Depot was being proposed. That’s no surprise, because according to site plans obtained in a Freedom of Information Act request, the architects working for Home Depot had already been working on the design for months.

What he says now

“I feel obligated to continue to voice my strenuous opposition to this proposed project and to request that you place an ‘Aldermanic Hold’ on any applications for permit with regard to this site.”

October 22, 2002, letter to Commissioner John Roberson, Department of Buildings—one of several letters to City officials he presented at the Town Hall Meeting

Recent developments

Home Depot has purchased the site for \$12.5 million from Rezmar Corporation (and other investors). Rezmar Corporation and the other investors had paid \$7.9 million for the land in September 2001 (surprisingly, even after Mayor Daley had said “no” to Rezmar’s residential proposal).

Also, according to the City’s Permit Application Status website, the permit approval process for Home Depot is well underway.

Now it’s up to Ald. Mell to shut the door he opened.

How's the traffic at Addison & Kimball? The City still says it's OK



Photo by Chris Short

This continues to be one of the biggest reasons our community doesn't want a Home Depot. And Deputy Commissioner Tim Later, Department of Traffic, did not change anyone's mind.

The City's position

"Why we felt comfortable with the results of the [2002] traffic study supporting Home Depot," said Later, "is that in 2001 the City invested over \$1 million for a traffic signal interconnect on Addison from Lake Shore Drive to the Kennedy. Addison Street now has every traffic signal interconnected with fiber-optic wire. This allows us to... program a number of changes remotely.

"We have not quantified that [any improvement]. We do not intend to.

"We are aware that a store as large as Home Depot will add other

traffic, but it is a big step to tell someone they can't develop their property because of traffic volume or congestion."

Concluded Later, "There needs to be pretty convincing evidence that traffic will not just be somewhat worse, but that it would pretty much break down. And that we don't believe is the case."

A few inconvenient facts—the 2002 traffic study:

- Says the Home Depot should have minimal impact—but traffic counts are 10 times more than a residential development
- Recommends eliminating street parking on Kimball north of Addison—for more parking headaches on nearby residential streets
- Gives substantially lower traffic counts and delay times than in a 2001 study—result? a "better" rating during peak times

More notable quotables

Rick Baumgartner of Lee Lumber said, "Home Depot is predatory. We've been targeted... Companies can expect Home Depot managers to go in our parking lots, take names and numbers of trucks who do business with us, give them free power tools, already have an account set up with special terms—just to get them away from the competitive businesses in the area.

"Home Depot puts on a wonderful front. Yes, they do some community-oriented things, but they are very, very predatory... You don't want this country coming down to four or five big chains and... no choice of where to buy."

From residents in the open forum:

"If it [traffic] ends at the Kennedy Expressway, we have a bottleneck going into Addison... back to Kedzie. So just because you have the fiber-optic cable or whatever—it's not happening."

"Traffic now between 4 and 7 in the evening going west... you see people sitting there reading the newspaper... In the morning going east... you see women are putting on makeup, combing their hair, drinking coffee. If Home Depot goes in there, what is going to happen?"

"We'll be there if the bulldozers come!"

Tell Aldermen Mell and Colom today that you're counting on them to deliver.

Alderman Mell (33rd)

Ward phone: 773-478-8040

Email: rmell@cityofchicago.org

Alderman Colom (35th)

Ward phone: 773-276-3535

Email: vcolum@cityofchicago.org

CAPS* meetings and more

November 13 (Wednesday) 7:00 p.m.

Beat 1732 CAPS meeting—always the second Wednesday of the month—for area between Addison and Belmont, Pulaski to Kimball, and for area between Irving Park and Addison, Kedvale to Kimball

Athletic Field Park Fieldhouse, 3546 W. Addison Street

November 14 (Thursday) 7:00 p.m.

Beat 1733 CAPS meeting—always the second Thursday of the month—for area east of Kimball to the river, between Irving Park and Belmont

Uhlich Home, 3730 N. California Avenue

November 16 (Saturday) 12–1:30 p.m.

Free-Throw Competition (free)

Independence Park, 3945 N. Springfield Avenue

*Community Alternative Policing Strategy

Any December events your neighbors should know about?

Please submit calendar items by *November 21*. Mail to IPNA, 3911 N. St. Louis Avenue, Chicago 60618; email to ipnanews@yahoo.com; or fax to 773-913-2798.

Important phone numbers

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|----------------------------------|--------------|
| Emergency | 911 |
| Non-Emergency | 311 |
| Graffiti Removal Hotline | 311 |
| 17th Police District | 312-744-8346 |
| 17th District Community Policing | 312-744-3780 |
| 33rd Ward Office | 773-478-8040 |
| 35th Ward Office | 773-276-3535 |
| U.S. Representative, 4th | 773-509-0999 |
| State Representative, 20th | 773-583-3338 |
| Independence Library | 312-744-0900 |
| Animal Care and Control | 312-744-1406 |
| Poison Control Hotline | 800-942-5969 |
| Illegal Conversions | 312-746-6000 |

A few words about us

Irving Park Neighbors Association (IPNA) is a volunteer community organization of residents, renters as well as homeowners, between Irving Park and Addison, Central Park and Kedzie.

Founded in May 2000, IPNA seeks to improve the neighborhood by working toward goals that are supported by a majority of the community. IPNA has no affiliations with any political party or elected official, and has applied for federal and state non-profit status.

3911 N. St. Louis Avenue

Chicago, IL 60618

Voice 312-583-3197

Fax 773-913-2798

ipnanews@yahoo.com

Lots of ways for you to help IPNA do more

- Design and maintain the upcoming IPNA website. This is an excellent opportunity for someone who'd like to get more experience and build his or her portfolio.
- Help plan and coordinate strategies and tactics, actions and events.
- Distribute monthly newsletters and special flyers—one block or many.
- Make phone calls from time to time.
- Coordinate occasional mailings.
- Organize and update our database.
- Other skills and talents you'd like to share? Just let us know.

How would you like to help make our neighborhood an even better one? Have some ideas we didn't mention?

Call 312-583-3197 today.