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School proposal gets cold reception

By Kevin Aldridge
 Enquirer staff writer

COLLEGE HILL - Neighborhood leaders are fighting to stop a charter school for "at-risk" youth and dropouts from moving into the vacant CVS Pharmacy site at Hamilton Avenue and North Bend Road.

Some residents argue that a school doesn't belong at the busy intersection in the heart of College Hill's business district. They also say a charter school isn't consistent with the neighborhood's plan for a residential/office/retail development in that area.

"We don't oppose education for young people who need a chance, but this particular spot is not the best spot for a school," said Elizabeth Sherwood, president of the College Hill Forum, the neighborhood council.

White Hat Management Inc., an Akron-based company that operates elementary schools and alternative high schools throughout Ohio - two in Cincinnati - has signed a lease with CVS property owner Tom Hammonds. Hammonds, a Monfort Heights businessman.

Hammond said he sympathizes with the residents of College Hill, but can no longer afford to let his property remain idle. White Hat, which operates a school at one of Hammond's properties in Walnut Hills, is a proven entity, he said.

The College Hill Redevelopment Corporation have been working to revitalize the intersection where three of the four corners are vacant.

In February, the redevelopment corporation unveiled concept drawings of a mixed-use project of shops, offices and condominiums. If the school moves in, "I think people would avoid the area even more," said Ellen Poppleton, assistant manager at College Hill Coffee Company across the street.



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