

# Vacant school may become DWI facility

By SHAWN HUBLER  
Citizen Phoenix Bureau

PHOENIX — The "most promising site so far" for a facility to house Southern Arizona's drunken drivers is a vacant junior high school near Barrio Anita downtown, state corrections officials said yesterday.

Spring Junior High School, at 300 W. Second St., so far has drawn only preliminary scrutiny from the state Department of Corrections, which was given \$700,000 in its 1983-84 budget to find a 100-bed DWI facility in Tucson.

The facility is needed to house people being sentenced under the state's new, stricter DWI law.

Corrections spokesman John Turner said the school — now being used as a warehouse by Tucson Unified School District — is "the best thing we've looked at so far."

Public officials who represent that area were lukewarm toward the idea.

"I don't want to take a knee-jerk approach to it," said state Sen. Jaime Gutierrez, D-Tucson, whose West Side district includes the Spring neighborhood. "I don't have problems with an urban facility per se. But that neighborhood is one that is in transition right now, and therefore politically weak. I need to look at who's going to be affected."

Gutierrez said the area — once filled with mostly Hispanic residents — has become more industrialized in recent years. Highway and other construction decimated the barrio that once existed there, leaving a community that is still residential, but which now includes small businesses and light industry.

A DWI facility might provide jobs for Tucson, "but not necessarily for the West Side," Gutierrez said. "The state doesn't have a great record for hiring minorities. Negotiations will also have to include some assurance that overcrowding in other prisons won't cause a spillover (of hard-core offenders) into the facility."

"But if you're going to have a prison, you can't have a better inmate than a DWI offender," he said. "They'll come in, do their time and maybe clean up the neighborhood a little (through mandatory restitution programs)."

Turner said the department has studied six or seven sites, including a vacant labor union hall on Tucson's West Side, facilities on the grounds of the Southern Arizona Bible College in Miracle Valley and an expansion of the Arizona Correctional Training Center on South Wilmot Road.

The Bible College has been rejected as a site, Turner said. Among other considerations, the buildings there are tied up in a 25-year lease, he said.

The other sites are still being studied, he said. However, the corrections officials are looking for a site that is not only easily convertible, but also is close to the families, counselors and jobs of the DWI offenders.

State lawmakers who are helping to locate the facility say the union hall would be tougher to convert, and the Wilmot facility may be too far from the city.

"The Spring school is large (50,000 square feet), it has showers and toi-

lets and an existing administrative area," Turner said. "We also might not get as much community resistance in that neighborhood as we might in other areas."

A state senator who serves on the Appropriations Committee, on which the Corrections Department would have to rely for funding, was careful to stress that any site must first run the gauntlet of local approval and public hearings.

"We've been trying to keep it (the state's interest) quiet, because we're afraid someone will say we're trying to ramrod it through," said Sen. John T. Mawhinney, R-Tucson.

The facility will probably not be chosen finally until late 1983 or early 1984, and will not go into use until spring or summer of next year, he added.

Gutierrez said he will poll residents of the neighborhood.

"John says this is tentative, but I know how these so-called tentative things go," he said. "I'm going to be talking to the folks this week."

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At least one Spring neighborhood resident was in favor of the facility last night.

The Rev. Gerald M. Cote of Holy Family Catholic Church, on the same block as the school, said that if the DWI offenders will receive counseling, "then I'd like to get personally involved."

"I'm an alcoholic myself, and an active member of Alcoholics Anonymous" the 54-year-old priest said. "My feeling is that incarceration is not the answer. But alcoholism can be treated, and if these people are going to get some rehabilitation, I'd like to help."

Cote said, however, that he could not speak for the whole neighborhood.

"I'm sure there will be some negative reaction," he said. "We've been hit a lot in this neighborhood by burglars, and I myself feel a little negative about having an element here that might worsen the crime problem. But then again, maybe a facility like that will get us better police protection."

The idea drew criticism from Jose Ruiz, whose son attends nearby Davis Bilingual Learning Center, and who said he plans to circulate a petition during the next school year to reopen Spring as a bilingual junior high school. Ruiz said Barrio Anita needs a school more than a drunken-driver facility.

"We're not talking about just drunk drivers," he said. "We're talking about hard-core alcoholics. It can have a negative impact on the community."

Spring was closed in 1978 as part of a TUSD court-ordered desegregation plan. District voters authorized its sale last May, but TUSD officials said they have yet to receive a decent offer for the building.

Jack Murrieta, assistant superintendent for general services at TUSD, said he showed the building to Mawhinney and a group of corrections officials two weeks ago, but that the discussions were "purely exploratory."

However, he said, if the state offers to lease or buy the building, "it would be better than any offer we've received so far, from a financial and economic point of view."

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"TUCSON CITIZEN"

# Decided, board says

By MARY P. BUSTAMANTE  
Citizen Staff Writer

"No concrete plans have been made to convert the former Spring Junior High School building into a jail for drunken drivers and anyone who wants to use the building will have to check with area residents first, the Tucson Unified School District board president said last night.

Thomas Castillo tried to calm fears among people who live in the West Side neighborhood who are upset that the Department of Corrections is interested in using the building for a 100-bed facility for drunken drivers.

"Spring is still in the hands of the district, not in the control of any other agencies," Castillo told about 80 residents who met with board members last night.

State officials made arrangements to look at the school earlier this month and that is all that has been done, Castillo said.

The junior high building, at 300 W. Second St., is used as a district warehouse.

"Anyone interested in using Spring Junior High should meet with the neighborhood first and resolve any differences which may exist before they come to the board to make a request," Castillo said.

Castillo had stated earlier that the district "has no proposal at all" for the school and only put it on last night's agenda because of the concern from neighbors living in the area bounded by Speedway Boulevard on the north, Sixth Street on the south, Stone Avenue on the east and Main Avenue on the west.

Daniel Fourwinds, of Community House, Inc., was booed by the audience when he proposed that Spring facilities be used to help Tucson's homeless people.

But Sean Bruner, a spokesman from the Spring Neighborhood Association, said that the area already is home for the Salvation Army, seven churches and two halfway houses, including one for juveniles and one for senior citizens. "The burden is not being distributed evenly," he

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Citizen photo by Xavier Gallegos

Daniel Lennon Scoblink, 2½, was part of the protest

## DWI plan for Spring opposed

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said.

"The state has been schizophrenic about this," Bruner added. "First they tell you these people are so dangerous that they have to be put in a state corrections facility, and then they turn around and say they're just ordinary folks that should be housed in the community."

Other residents talked of the historic value of the old school, at which Arizona's first decision to desegregate was made in 1951.

"This is an historical and legendary site," said Morgan Maxwell Sr., who for 28 years was principal at the school, both when it was strictly for black children and then when it was desegregated. "Any future use of the school should be that of an educational facility," Maxwell said.

Steven Leal told the board that the area was "a community —

that's more than a neighborhood. We share an understanding of ourselves and a notion of the good life."

He said any use of the school should enhance the area, not debilitate it.

Bruner said after the meeting that he was satisfied that the board had listened to what the residents were saying.

He said that now the association might solicit something compatible to the neighborhood and the district.

"Demographics of the neighborhood have changed since its closure. More non-minorities have come into the area and so have young people with kids," he said, implying that the school perhaps should become a school again.

Another neighbor had suggested that the facility be used by the district as a bilingual center or as a magnet school, which would attract students throughout the city.

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