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OHIO BOARD OF REGENTS TO DECIDE EMINENT DOMAINT ISSUE NEXT MONTH

DAYTON, Ohio, June 16, 1989—The Ohio Board of Regents will decide next month whether the University of Dayton's plan to redevelop and control student-rental property in the neighborhood surrounding the campus "is in the public interest" and whether UD has fulfilled all the requirements of Ohio law to enable it to acquire privately owned property through the power of eminent domain.

At a public hearing before the Board of Regents' capital and finance committee on June 15, University officials presented UD's three-phased Environmental Design Plan. The plan looks more than three decades into the future with proposals for expanded academic facilities, improved student housing, a formal campus entrance, distinct campus boundaries, a student athletic and recreational complex, and consolidated parking.

In its application to the Board of Regents, UD officials asked for the right to appropriate 114 properties from John T. Ross, the largest private landlord in the neighborhood. UD officials and Ross have been negotiating a selling price for his properties but have reached an impasse over fair market value. UD officials are petitioning for the right to purchase any number of the properties at a market value that will be determined in a civil proceeding.

"More than 90 percent of the University of Dayton's undergraduate student body lives on or in the area immediately surrounding the campus. UD is a residential school, and the quality of student life is integral to the mission of the University and essential to its continued development," said Brother Bernard J. Ploeger, vice
president for administration. "It is also the University's judgment that direct control of student-housing facilities will help prevent conflicts with neighbors in the area and enhance community relations.

"The neighbors and parents of students hold the University responsible for the quality of life in the neighborhood, and we can't make any response to those expectations unless we own the property," he said.

UD currently owns one-third of the student housing units in the neighborhood. The University's Environmental Design Plan, which has met with wide approval from neighborhood interest groups and city officials, calls for the purchase of property in the area bounded by Irving, Alberta and Chambers Streets. University officials are talking with other landlords and the approximately dozen owner-residents who live in the neighborhood about purchasing their property.

"We're not asking any of the owner-occupants to leave," Ploeger said. "We've expressed our interest in purchasing their property when they decide they no longer desire to live in the neighborhood."

UD officials plan to upgrade, furnish and maintain any newly acquired houses, with improvements ranging from weatherproofing to asbestos removal. In later phases of the design plan, UD plans to replace some of the oldest homes with furnished duplex houses and apartments.

The University of Dayton is a private, co-educational school founded and sponsored by the Society of Mary (a Roman Catholic teaching order). UD is the largest independent university in Ohio and the ninth largest Catholic university in the nation. Approximately 11,000 graduate and undergraduate students currently attend UD.

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