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# Petition opposes college's lot sale

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FREEHOLD BUREAU

MIDDLETOWN — About 900 people have signed a petition directed at the Township Committee, opposing Brookdale Community College's plan to auction off a lot that could be used for business.

The college's 5.88-acre lot is at Phalanx and Newman Springs roads in the township's Lincroft section. It is zoned for business use, but residents argue the area is already too congested and that commercial use was not what the previous owners had intended when they sold the property to Monmouth County more than 30 years ago.

Nevertheless, the college will be accepting bids for the lot at 2 p.m. today.

No formal action will be taken until the college trustees meet July 7.

"We have a critical need for a student life center on campus and there is a lack of state and local funding," said Louise Horgan of the college president's office. "With the sale of the land Brookdale can self-finance the project at no cost to taxpayers because the proceeds would go directly toward the student life center." The college hasn't said how much it hopes to realize from the sale.

The lot is separated from the rest of the two-year college's campus by a realigned Phalanx Road.

The college tract's previous

owners, the Thompson family, wanted their property to be used for educational and recreational purposes. In 1961, Geraldine Thompson expressed that she wanted to turn the family estate into a county park, according to the college history, "The Triangle of Land," published by the Association of American University Women in 1977. Thompson was quoted as saying, "I would like nothing better than to know that Brookdale in the future would be an open place for children and for animals because they have a place here, too."

According to the terms of Thompson's will, the county authorized the purchase of the 221-acre estate in 1967, just days before Thompson's death.

Neighbors said that when they purchased their homes, it was understood that the property would be used by the college or preserved as open space.

"I am sure the owners didn't sell the property to Brookdale so the college would turn around and sell it for commercial use," said Lincroft resident George Toop, who also purchased his property from the Thompson estate in 1949.

Toop suggests keeping the lot as open space for a park because, he said, Lincroft needs one. He also offered to provide landscaping services, a flag pole, benches and a fountain.

In 1994, the lot in question was rezoned from residential to commercial, said Tim Anfuso, the Middletown Township planner. The B-1 business zone allows for neighborhood commercial village uses, which means it's appropriate for personal services, such as a small office building or bank, Anfuso said. It would not be suitable for a fast-food restaurant or hotel, he said.

Lincroft is becoming a drive-through town and "losing our whole sense of community," said Mary Ellen Hintz, who lives near the college. Brookdale, as a public institution rather than a private entity, should be more considerate of its neighbors, she said, and work to discourage more traffic rather than encourage it.

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