

SUGGESTIONS AND PROPOSALS
TO
THE HONORABLE GOVERNOR
WILLIAM O'NEILL
FROM
THE CITY OF MIDDLETOWN
REGARDING
THE ARMORY

The City of Middletown desires to take possession of the property known as the State Armory, located on Main Street in the City of Middletown. The State Legislature on June 7, 1984, enacted enabling legislation in the form of Special Act #84-43 which would allow the City of Middletown to take ownership of the Armory once the National Guard had determined that it was no longer interested in using the facility.¹

The City of Middletown through its Municipal Development Committee in anticipation of the Guard transferring its interest in the Armory to the City issued a "Developer's Packet" for Disposition Parcel D-1-B and The State Armory.² On January 28, 1985, the City received a number of responses from interested developers for the project. Eventually the MDC selected Carabetta Enterprises of Meriden, Connecticut to be the developer of parcel D-1-B, and Carabetta Enterprises in conjunction with Mr. Gerard Weitzman as developer for the Armory facility.³

The Weitzman proposal for development of the Armory facility would convert the building into a retail and office building with a complete rehabilitation which would cost in excess of \$2,000,000 and be in accordance with accepted historical rehabilitation practices.⁴

While the Armory on Main Street has been used by the National Guard and the State of Connecticut since 1919, little has been done over the past decades to maintain the structure. At present the roof is in dire need of repair as are several of the interior structural and exterior architectural portions of the building.⁵ The total facility consists of approximately 30,000 square feet of space. The building is land locked in the rear portion with limited access to and from the building to local

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streets.⁶ The building is not being used at the present time due to structural weaknesses caused by water damage to the roof area. During recent heavy floods in Middletown, the City was fortunate to have the assistance of the National Guard sent by Governor William O'Neill at Mayor Garafalo's request. The state of disrepair of the Armory building was such that the military had to ask Mayor Garafalo to find alternate housing for the guardsmen who were sent to help the City during its time of crisis, since the building was judged to be unsafe for their use.

The City of Middletown also recognizes that the National Guard requires a building and land area which would be more suitable to its uses.⁷ The present Armory facility offers no room for expansion and is limited in terms of available space. Even if the State were to spend the millions of dollars necessary to bring the Armory back into proper condition it would end up with a structure that would be less than adequate to meet the space requirements enunciated by the National Guard for its vehicle and personnel needs.

The City of Middletown feels that the National Guard serves an important and useful purpose for the entire State as well as the City of Middletown. Accordingly it is our belief that the National Guard would be better served by the construction of a new facility to be located in Middletown adjacent to existing highway services with potential room for expansion. We understand that there would be a period of transition for the Guard while they would await the construction

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of a new facility. We are aware of the problems inherent with such projects and have given some thought to potential temporary remedies for the National Guard and the State of Connecticut which would improve the Guard's present situation while at the same time not bankrupting the taxpayers of the State or the City to achieve our goal. We are of the opinion that these problems are solvable with the good will and best wishes of both the State of Connecticut and the City of Middletown.

We respectfully propose the following alternatives for examination by the Governor's office and the National Guard:

ALTERNATIVE I

At the present time the U.S. Army Reserve has a facility located off of Mile Lane in the City of Middletown. This facility could provide safe storage for weapons and vehicles while at the same time providing adequate space for training and maneuvers which cannot be undertaken at the Main Street Armory due to the state of disrepair of the drill shed and other facilities. We are aware of the problems of housing two separate military entities (The Guard is not The Reserve and vice versa) under the same roof, however it might be the most economical method available.

It would be acceptable from the public point of view as the present use of the facility is military in nature and off-limits to the general public. The facility on Mile Lane is close to existing highways and conveniently located for area emergencies.

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ALTERNATIVE II

It is our understanding that the Armories in New Britain and Meriden are in excellent condition. The second alternative would be to have the Guard group from Middletown transfer to either one of these facilities until a new facility could be built in Middletown.

ALTERNATIVE III

At present there are seven vacant buildings located in Middletown at Connecticut Valley Hospital. The following is a listing of the vacant buildings:

RUSSELL HALL	54,368 sq. ft.
WEEKS HALL	73,954 sq. ft.
STANLEY HALL	73,080 sq. ft.
NOBLE HALL	21,690 sq. ft.
WOODWARD HALL	79,964 sq. ft.
SHEPHERD HOME	24,016 sq. ft.
DUTTON HOME	28,945 sq. ft.

Dutton home is utilized as a temporary shelter for the homeless and as a security center for C.V.H.

Shepherd Home is used on occasion for State Police and Fire Fighting training purposes. It is the most adaptable for Armory purposes and is somewhat isolated from the remainder of the facility. Shepherd Home also has convenient access to Route 9.

As the facilities at C.V.H. belong to the State of Connecticut no external financing would have to be undertaken or any leasing with private parties entered into for any period of time.

ALTERNATIVE IV

The City of Middletown, Board of Education owns a facility known as Eckersley Hall. The building is located off of Route 17 near Durant Street in a private neighborhood. It is being used at present for supply storage for the Board of Education but is due for sale shortly as a building to be rehabilitated by the private sector after a public competition. The building is located on approximately 45,000 sq. ft. of land with an adjacent parking facility. It would be an easy building to secure by fencing, and weapons could be secured at little extra cost by slight modifications to internal structure of the building.

The building, which was once a school has two levels; an English basement and one upper floor with approxiamtely 16,000 square feet of usable space.

The procedure to acquire the facility on a temporary basis would require the following action:

- 1) Middletown Board of Education turns the building over to the City;
- 2) The City through its Municipal Development Committee would negotiate a lease with the State of Connecticut;
- 3) The Common Council would vote to approve the lease agreement which would then be signed by the Mayor.

ALTERNATIVE V

A site exists within Middletown which is privately owned which meets or exceeds the present National Guard needs on a temporary basis.

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A total of 3.18 acres of land or 138,520 square feet is available at this site. There are several buildings and sheds located there whose total square footage is in excess of 11,000 square feet. One of the buildings is a warehouse facility which would accommodate the Guards' vehicle storage needs. It also contains mechanical hoists which could be leased along with the facility which would make vehicle repair easier for the National Guard. Advantages to this site are :

- 1) Ample space and land area for National Guard needs;
- 2) Office facility next to warehouse provides easy security for weapons storage;
- 3) Modern building with concrete deck provides excellent vehicle storage and repair area;
- 4) Close to major traffic arteries and not in a crowded neighborhood.

We believe that the above five alternatives show that there are ways to temporarily house the National Guard however, it must be pointed out that the City of Middletown would like to insure that any Armory facility which would be built to replace the Armory on Main Street would be built in the Middletown area. To that end we would like to make clear to the State of Connecticut that efforts to find suitable space alternatives are already under way and the City of Middletown will pursue those alternatives in an effort to achieve its goal of revitalizing downtown while keeping the Guard in Middletown.

FOOTNOTES

1. Exact language was "vacated and declared the property surplus".
Special Act 84-43.
2. "Developer's Packet" A two stage project Disposition Parcel
D-1-B and THE STATE ARMORY" issue November 1984 with return
date January 28, 1985.
3. Preliminary Designation made March 4, 1985 for River's Bend
Apartments and THE ARMORY by Resolution #32, 1985, City of
Middletown Common Council.
4. Developer's Kit, "THE ARMORY".
5. SMITH EDWARDS report for detailed problems.
6. Easement across land owned by Pelton's Inc. owned by Gerard
Weitzman then onto Metro Lane owned by Metro Square, Inc.
Richard Bronson, developer.
7. National Guard has informed the Mayor of the City of Middletown
and its authorized representatives that it would require land
and buildings far in excess of available Armory property.
8. See map of C.V.H. property attached for location and comparative
size of buildings mentioned at page 4 Alternative III.