

Levy, however, said Lincoln Square has the type of diversity and accessibility to public transportation he wanted for the school.

Rivers said, if the site is approved, WALDO would talk to officials at Welles Park, a nearby martial arts school and a yoga school about providing recreational activities for the school.

## Ward watch

Mell pushes pushcart ban and business plan

By PATRICK BUTLER

Staff Writer

A long-awaited anti-vendor ordinance and a redevelopment plan for the Kedzie/Avenue/Irving Park Road area should both be approved at the City Council's April 16 meeting, Ald. Richard Mell (33rd) promised last week.

Mell told his 33rd Ward Advisory Council's Thursday, March 20, meeting at Horner Park, 2740 W. Montrose Ave., that the city Law Department recently signed off on an ordinance allowing Streets and Sanitation workers to seize the carts of any food peddlers found operating in the ward.

The proposed ordinance would require violators to pay a \$300 fine, plus moving and storage fees to get their carts back. According to the ordinance, any carts not redeemed within 30 days of a court hearing would be disposed of as unclaimed property.

Mell said the ordinance would take effect 30 days after passage by the City Council, "which means it should finally be in place by the middle of May."

An ordinance banning food push carts in the 33rd Ward was first passed a year ago, but never enforced because city lawyers had "constitutional concerns" about the provision allowing violators' carts to be confiscated.

On an unrelated issue, Mell said he expects the Kedzie/Irving Park redevelopment proposal to "sail through" the next City Council meeting.

The project, which Mell said last month was on a "fast track," would allow the city to buy much of the south side of the 3100 block of West Irving Park Road and sell it for redevelopment.

Mell and other city officials have mentioned Delray Farms as a possible buyer.

Redevelopment of that area would not only give the local economy a shot in the arm, but perhaps make it easier to get the CTA to restore bus service on Kedzie Avenue.

Mell said he doesn't expect the usual "once every 15 minutes" service, but would be satisfied with hourly service, "as long as people could depend on it."

While the details still have to be worked out, Mell said, "at least the CTA has been talking to us."

Mell also promised to "look into" the possibility of changing the zoning of the southwest corner of Kimball Avenue and Addison Street from commercial to residential to prevent a Home Depot store from going in at that location.

"But I don't think we can get away with it at this point," he admitted.

Mell promised to explore other possible alternatives with members of the Greater Independence Park

Neighborhood Association after GIPNA's Harold Turrentine said a Home Depot at that location would not only hurt the three or four hardware stores already in the area, but create major traffic problems, especially on game days at Wrigley Field.

Turrentine said that while he thought that site ``would be perfect for some nice town houses,' he'd settle for another factory.

``Anything but a retail establishment,' he added.

The site had originally been occupied by a paper manufacturer, but the zoning was changed when Builders' Square bought the several-acre site, planning to put up a new store. The property went back on the market after Builders' Square changed its mind, said Mell aide Tina Butler.

## Town Hall sting nets 143 arrests

### Uptown, Lake View residents praise cops

By PATRICK BUTLER

Staff Writer

Thirteen Town Hall (23rd) District Tactical Unit officers were personally commended by Mayor Richard Daley and Police Supt. Matt Rodriguez for their role in busting 143 local drug peddlers during a yearlong undercover operation.

Twenty of 22 suspects who have already gone to trial have been found guilty, said Sgt. Joseph Drasutis, who supervised ``Operation Crackdown" and credits the high conviction rate to the way the controlled buys were conducted with marked money.

``It's hard for a court to argue when you've got the suspect with the marked money" and the arresting officer has the drugs, with backup officers as witnesses, Drasutis said.

But what made Operation Crackdown unique was that it couldn't have happened without the CAPS (Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy) program, 23rd District Cmdr. Joseph DeLopez and Area 3 Deputy Chief James Maurer agreed.

Residents of the north end of the Town Hall Police District went to the CAPS-sponsored beat meetings and complained of drug trafficking on their blocks, DeLopez and Maurer said.

Those tips gave police enough information to set up the yearlong sting in trouble spots along the 4500 block of North Magnolia Avenue, around Truman College at Broadway and Wilson Avenue, and near Arai Middle School at Wilson Avenue and Sheridan Road, Rodriguez said.

Three officers, Lorne Porter, Hasan Al-Amin, and Michael Yzaguirre, posing as dope addicts, made the buys with backup from the other 10 team members (who in some cases used vacant apartments made available by local landlords for surveillance), said Rodriguez, noting, ``The assignment was sometimes dangerous" and never easy.

All three, noting that their undercover days are over because of the testimony they have given in court, said that, while there were some close calls (like when a few of the dealers began suspecting Porter might be a cop), they were never really worried.

``When you've got the kind of good people backing you up like we had, you're not really concerned," Al-Amin said.

``We had a signal we were to use if we got into trouble, but we never had to use it," Yzaguirre said, adding that