

OUR TOWN

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OPINION

EDITORIAL

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A Win-Win To Emulate

It's not just a good idea. It's one worth repeating in other parts of the city.

That's our reaction to news from the Upper East Side, where Hunter College and the Department of Education are thinking about switching properties. Under the proposal, Hunter would get the property currently known as the Julia Richman educational complex, creating much-needed space for science programs at a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 54

A Good Idea, Well Worth Stealing

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

school where a reputation for achievement in the sciences is already impressive. The city, in turn, would get a brand-new school building — on Hunter's dollar — in a different spot.

The Richman complex, though stately, is an aging facility and expensive to maintain. It just has undergone millions of dollars in emergency repairs, an ominous sign that it would need further investments. Getting a state-of-the-art facility for free, specifically designed to meet the needs of existing schools, seems like a good bet.

None of this means to disparage the existing programs in residence at the Richman complex, where many educators have done a markedly impressive job of sharing space and building relation-

ships with the surrounding community. That is a tradition that Hunter should emulate. Certainly it's worth noting that this school complex has been a shining example of small schools at their best.

Under Hunter's proposal, the college could consolidate its campus and build an up-to-date science center so that it can continue to attract excellent faculty members and give students fine educational opportunities. We just hope that Hunter will be sensitive to an East Side community that has reason to be wary when hearing about further institutional development.

This looks like a win-win, and it's a blueprint for the rest of the city. And it's well past time that the city encouraged efforts, whether from private developers or from existing public universities, to

play a part in the solution to what has been a long-term capital problem in our schools. And that problem is: there is not enough space, and what exists is outdated.

The would-be Hunter effort should be replicated on the West Side, where Columbia University built a school for the children of its faculty and staffers and then held a lottery for spots to be held by others in the community. That was a small step toward the kind of innovations we would like to see, downtown and uptown, where great educational institutions in this city could and should do more to help out during a schools crisis. This is a town in desperate need of more seats for students, not to mention help with quite literally crumbling classrooms.