

# Alexandria's Housing Plan Hits Barrier

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Staff Reporter

An Alexandria lawyer has challenged the city's right to condemn land he owns for a public housing project, claiming that the site for the project was picked because its inhabitants are Negroes.

Attorney Otto L. Tucker claims in papers filed in Alexandria Circuit Court that condemnation of a house and two lots he owns at 1301 Wythe st. would violate his constitutional right to due process of law.

The Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority seeks to condemn this and other property in a 1½ block area between Madison and Wythe sts. west of Fayette st. to erect a 90-unit housing project for low-income families.

The 1.6-million-dollar project is designed to house families displaced by urban renewal and other municipal projects. About 20 Negro families who live in the area would have to be relocated before construction could begin.

The site is in front of Alexandria's all-Negro Parker Gray High School and its selection drew heavy criticism from Negro leaders before it was approved by the City Council last June.

Tucker claims that the sole reason for the selection of the site was that its inhabitants are Negroes and that "50 per cent of the dwellings are owned by members of the Negro race."

He also contends that in order to condemn properties there, the city must prove the area is a slum, blighted or deteriorated. He said buildings in the area "provide safe and sanitary dwellings."

Next Wednesday, the Housing Authority will ask the Court to appoint condemnation commissions to determine compensation for property owners. Construction of the housing units may begin in April and take a year to complete.

Tucker, who has been active in suits to desegregate schools in Northern Virginia, was unsuccessful in two attempts to have provisions of Alexandria's housing hygiene code declared unconstitutional last year.

He had challenged the city's right to demolish two houses owned by his father at 1415 and 1417 Duke st. The houses were condemned under the slum control ordinance.