

Connecticut

Known Condemnations Benefiting Private Parties⁶⁸

Filed/Authorized Condemnations  1

Legend  = 1

Bridgeport

City officials have been harassing property owners on the Steel Point peninsula for nearly 30 years. In the early 80s, they tried to bring a retail center called HarborPointe to the peninsula, which was already home to several dozen small businesses. The plan failed to materialize. In the early 90s a plan to bring a casino to Steel Point died in the Connecticut Legislature.⁶⁹ Between 1998 and 2000, City officials condemned about a dozen properties, including an oyster harvesting business and a 95-year-old, working-class yachting club, which fought the condemnation and won in the Connecticut Supreme Court. Officials wanted the properties for Harbour Place, another retail project, to be built by private developer Alex Conroy. Approximately a dozen more property owners were also forced to sell under the threat of eminent domain for the project, which failed after Conroy couldn't secure funding.⁷⁰

But Bridgeport leaders aren't ready to give up. Now they are pushing Bridgeport Landing, a 50-acre mixed-use development that officials claim will bring hotels, new residences and office and retail space to the area.⁷¹ The project

⁶⁸ These numbers were compiled from news sources. Many cases go unreported, and news reports often do not specify the number of properties against which condemnations were filed or threatened.

⁶⁹ Dan Stempel, "RCI gets help for Steel Point," *Fairfield County Business Journal*, June 6, 2005, at 1.

⁷⁰ Liam Hegarty, "Businessman condemns Steel Point process," *Fairfield Business County Journal*, October 5, 1998, at 3; "Tallmadge sues Bridgeport over Steel Point move," *Fairfield County Business Journal*, April 17, 2000, at 3; "Court denies Bridgeport's yacht club land grab," *Fairfield County Business Journal*, March 11, 2002, at 1; Dan Stempel, "RCI gets help for Steel Point," *Fairfield County Business Journal*, June 6, 2005, at 1.

⁷¹ "Bridgeport picks RCI to develop Steel Point," *Fairfield County Business Journal*, July 16, 2001, at 1.

depends on taxpayers picking up \$200 million of the \$800 million tab.⁷²

In November 2005, the City Council voted to approve a resolution authorizing the Redevelopment Agency to seize a 14.5-acre former industrial site, owned by United Illuminating Co. that sits along the Pequonnock River and Bridgeport Harbor. Originally, UI had supported the project but, according to UI, City officials reneged on several pieces of an agreement so the company pulled out.⁷³

City officials want to transfer the property to RCI Marine—a private developer selected by former mayor Joseph Ganim who is in jail after an FBI corruption probe—and its partner Midtown Equities.⁷⁴

In February 2006, UI sued the City to prevent its land from being seized.⁷⁵ In May, a Superior Court judge ruled against UI.⁷⁶

72 David Toth, “Bridgeport to seize UI’s Steel Point property,” *Fairfield County Business Journal*, October 24, 2005, at 1.

73 Susan Silvers, “UI property may be seized,” *Connecticut Post*, September 17, 2005, at LOCAL; Daniel Tepfer, “UI sues to prevent Steel Point transfer,” *Connecticut Post*, March 1, 2006, at NEWS.

74 Dan Stempel, “RCI gets help for Steel Point,” *Fairfield County Business Journal*, June 6, 2005, at 1; and David Toth, “Bridgeport to seize UI’s Steel Point property,” *Fairfield County Business Journal*, October 24, 2005, at 1.

75 Daniel Tepfer, “UI sues to prevent Steel Point transfer,” *Connecticut Post*, March 1, 2006, at NEWS.

76 “Court rules Bridgeport can take Steel Point,” *Associated Press*, May 17, 2006.