

New Mexico

Known Condemnations Benefiting Private Parties³⁴⁵

Threatened Condemnations  827

Legend  = 100

Rio Rancho

City officials considered declaring Unit 10, a 1,373-acre undeveloped portion of the City, blighted and forcing 827 property owners to sell their investments to a single developer that had yet to be chosen.³⁴⁶ Of 100 property owners attending a December 2005 City Council meeting, most of those who spoke were adamantly opposed to the plan: “I thought I was protected as long as I paid my taxes, worked hard, and obeyed the laws,” said Michelle Nelson. New Mexico Supreme Court Chief Justice Richard Bosson also attended—on behalf of his mother who owns property in Unit 10 that she inherited from her mother.³⁴⁷ Faced with mounting opposition, however, Rio Rancho officials backed off the plan, which called for using eminent domain to seize property from anyone unwilling to sell. In March 2006, Rio Rancho citizens voted the incumbent, Mayor Jim Owens, who championed the plan, out of office in favor of candidate Kevin Jackson, who opposed the use of eminent domain.³⁴⁸

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³⁴⁵ 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.

³⁴⁶ Jakob Schiller, “Rio Rancho delays decision on forcing property sales,” *Albuquerque Tribune*, December 22, 2005; Joshua Akers, “Blighting plan has landowners upset; Unit 10 would be sold to a developer,” *Albuquerque Journal*, December 20, 2005, at 1; Jakob Schiller, “Rio Rancho may condemn land,” *Albuquerque Tribune*, December 20, 2005, at A2.

³⁴⁷ Tom Treweek, “City council tables Unit 10 decision,” *Rio Rancho Observer*, December 27, 2005.

³⁴⁸ Joshua Akers, “18% Turnout for RR vote ‘abysmal’; Incumbent Owen loses race by 290,” *Albuquerque Journal*, March 9, 2006, at 1; Joshua Akers, “Candidate challenges foe to eminent-domain debate,” *Albuquerque Journal*, January 7, 2006, at 1.