


Washington

Known Condemnations Benefiting Private Parties ⁴²⁷

Threatened Condemnations  272

Legend  = 100

Renton

City officials are scaring residents of Renton Highlands, a post-World War II neighborhood of 270 single- and multi-family homes, as well as thriving businesses, stretching over 360 acres. At some point the City commissioned a consultant to conduct a “market analysis.” The consultant found that home values in the area tend to be lower than in other parts of the city, which can be used to justify a blight designation, which in turn gives the City authority to use eminent domain.⁴²⁸ Some homes are a little rundown, while other owners have devoted considerable effort into maintaining their homes. Eighty-eight-year-old widow Masaye Sado raised a family in her house, into which she has poured thousands for new plumbing, siding, storm doors, a roof and driveways on either side of her home.⁴²⁹

Although officials are adamant that they have not decided to declare the area blighted “yet,” the City’s web site talks about using eminent domain “as a last resort” and says the free market cannot bring revitalization to the Highlands—a curious accusation given that City officials are actively thwarting residents from

⁴²⁷ 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.

⁴²⁸ Dean A. Radford, “Life on the Highlands: Residents wonder what revitalization will mean for them,” *King County Journal*, May 8, 2006, at <http://www.kingcountyjournal.com/sited/story/html/256925> (retrieved May 31, 2006); Dean A. Radford, “Highlands face a blight future,” *King County Journal*, May 2, 2006, at <http://www.kingcountyjournal.com/sited/story/html/253400> (retrieved May 31, 2006).

⁴²⁹ Dean A. Radford, “Life on the Highlands: Revitalizing without razing,” *King County Journal*, May 8, 2006, at <http://www.kingcountyjournal.com/sited/story/html/256929> (retrieved May 31, 2006).

improving their properties on their own.⁴³⁰ In April 2006, the City Planning Commission proposed to re-zone much of the area, which would make many of the homes “non-conforming” properties. In May 2006, the City Council voted to extend a building moratorium on new developments.⁴³¹

Additionally, officials are talking of creating an “urban village”—a massive residential development—and speak of the hundreds of current owners as an obstacle to be overcome.⁴³²



Inez Petersen

Renton officials have commissioned a study to determine if houses like this are “blighted” and are already talking about creating a new “urban village”—where 270 modest homes already exist.

430 Frequently Asked Questions About Highlands Redevelopment, <http://www.ci.renton.wa.us/ednsp/faq.htm> (retrieved May 31, 2006).

431 Highlands Subarea Proposed Rezones, April 20, 2006, at <http://rentonnet.org/internetapps/files/ednsp/hilands/rezone2.pdf> (retrieved May 31, 2006); Renton City Council Meeting Minutes, May 8, 2006, at <http://www.ci.renton.wa.us/ftp/mi060508.pdf> (retrieved May 31, 2006).

432 Dean A. Radford, “Life on the Highlands: Residents wonder what revitalization will mean for them,” *King County Journal*, May 8, 2006, at <http://www.kingcountyjournal.com/sited/story/html/256925> (retrieved May 31, 2006).