


West Virginia

Known Condemnations Benefiting Private Parties⁴³³

Threatened Condemnations  3

Legend  = 1

Charleston

Only months after dropping plans to condemn three properties for a supermarket in the East End in May 2005, the City Council's Urban Renewal Committee voted in December 2005 to hire a consultant to recommend if redevelopment—and, of course, eminent domain for private gain—is worth pursuing in the area.⁴³⁴ As of May 2006, the study has apparently not been publicly released.

Property owners are right to be wary, however, as the City has a history of abusing eminent domain. According to Pat Brown, executive director of the Charleston Urban Renewal Authority (“CURA”), the CURA has seized 523 parcels since the 1960s for 47 projects—28 of them private projects.⁴³⁵ That number does not include properties acquired merely by the threat of eminent domain. The state legislature did pass a new law providing new protections against seizure for economic development—but that won't affect this project as the CURA can still seize property that is “blighted.” And the definition of blight is so broad nearly any property fits the bill. Further, CURA can still seize non-blighted property in a redevelopment area that has been declared blighted.⁴³⁶

⁴³³ 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.

⁴³⁴ Jim Balow, “Plaza East block back in urban renewal plan,” *Charleston Gazette*, December 13, 2005, at 1C.

⁴³⁵ Justin Anderson, “Forced property sales led to many city projects,” *Daily Mail*, May 15, 2006, at <http://www.dailymail.com/news/Business/20060515/> (retrieved May 19, 2006).

⁴³⁶ 2006 HB 4048 (signed into law April 5, 2006).