

Kenton Mulls Forced Property Acquisitions

North Portland neighborhood may accept condemnation to lure business developments

BY LEE PERLMAN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The merits and demerits of condemning property for public use—the acquisition of land against the owner's will—is being considered for parts of the Interstate Urban Renewal District in north Portland.

The Kenton Neighborhood Association will voice its opinion on the issue at 7 p.m. on Wednesday,

March 12 at the Kenton Firehouse Community Center, 8105 N. Brandon Ave.

Last month, a proposal to permit condemnation in the district's Overlook neighborhood was defeated by a vote of 75 to 41.

Condemnation was also rejected when the district was established for the construction of a Max light rail line in 2000.

Community activists such as Harold Williams, Pauline Bradford and Gary Hampton argued against it—citing the use of eminent domain to dislocate thousands of people for the I-5 freeway, Memorial Coliseum and the proposed expansion of Emanuel Hospital.

The Kenton proposal would allow condemnation within the Kenton Downtown Plan District,

an irregularly shaped area following parts of North Denver and Interstate avenues and Willis, Argyle and Hunt streets.

Unlike Overlook, which specifically forbade condemnation of residences, the Kenton proposal would allow seizure of some residential properties.

Larry Mills of the Kenton neighborhood calls condemnation "a

necessary tool" to help the Portland Development Commission acquire under-utilized property, to encourage development and revitalize the area.

Without it, he said, "If there are property owners who want to charge speculative prices and engage in gouging, it could have a dampening effect on revitalization. You could achieve significant goals

and never use condemnation, but the fact that you have it to use brings prices back to reality."

Vivian Smith, a hairdresser and 45-year Kenton resident, disagrees.

"I don't think it's fair to take property away from a small business person and give it to a big

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PHOTO BY DAVID PLECHL/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Northeast Portland lawmaker Jackie Dingfelder reaches out to Kim Thomas of the Oregon Food Bank during a Hunger Summit in Salem. Dingfelder fasted from sunrise to sunset last Wednesday to dramatize the plight of the hungry.

Feeding Oregon's Hungry

continued ▲ from Front

that long-term solution at a Thursday afternoon Hunger Summit.

Kulongowski invited Oregon Food Bank representatives to outline the challenges Oregon faces and encouraged business owners and activists to find solutions and money.

"I'm going to raise this (issue) every chance I get," Kulongowski

said. "No child in this state deserves to go to bed hungry."

The governor also invited Jez Anderson to share her story of growing up hungry in a small timber town. Anderson looked forward to two food box days a month.

"Hunger is the rock bottom level at which our society makes choices about who we are, and who we leave behind," Anderson said.

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