
Developer drops eminent-domain bid

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A developer planning a shopping center on the old Timken Co. property no longer will ask Columbus to force the sale of 200 homes near the project.

"The eminent-domain stuff is off the table," said Gary Guglielmi, Columbus' economic development manager. "So he is going to focus on the Timken Co. site itself."

To that end, Jerome Solove plans to ask the state for a \$3 million grant to clean up the site off E. 5th Avenue.

Solove backed off plans to acquire the homes through eminent domain after residents of the Milo-Grogan neighborhood and community leaders opposed that plan, as did the city.

Guglielmi said it's his understanding Solove has talked to "some big-box retailers" about the site. A draft of plans for the site listed a grocery store, card shop, bakery, fresh-produce market, pharmacy and other uses.

Solove still would like to buy property east of Cleveland Avenue, but now plans to talk one-on-one with homeowners.

Solove had talked about moving residents from the west side of I-71 to the east side. That would allow his development to abut the freeway.

He said he is applying for the state grant because it's not economically feasible to develop the site without public help.

He will apply for the grant through the city. Guglielmi said he expects the Columbus City Council to vote on the application this month.

Councilwoman Mary Jo Hudson said she's glad Solove is dropping his eminent-domain push. "I don't think it should be used for that type of development."

Rick Mann, who leads the Milo-Grogan Area Commission, echoed Hudson's comments. Mann's Milo Arts Center sits in the area that Solove has eyed.

"My greatest concern was for my neighbors," Mann said. "It is a bad deal for somebody 85 years old who has lived in the same house for 65 years."

The Milo-Grogan Revitalization Corp. had supported Solove's plan.

Meanwhile, 5th Avenue Lumber has been talking with Solove about buying some of the Timken property to expand that business.

"We just need more space," said Bill Cady, 5th Avenue Lumber's general manager. Cady and Guglielmi said the company has talked about adding 20 jobs.

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