

## Sierra Madre resident will vote on eminent domain

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SIERRA MADRE - A ballot measure seeking to ban the use of eminent domain for private purposes will go before voters in April.

City Council members have agreed to put the measure on the ballot for April's City Council elections. Supported by council members, it would prohibit officials in this development-wary town from seizing property in order to turn it over to a private developer.

"Taking one person's private property to hand it to another is morally questionable, to say the least," Councilman John Buchanan said at Tuesday's meeting.

"It's always seemed fundamentally unfair to me that a city, for no rationale, at all would be able to take over one's property and hand that over to a developer," Councilman Joe Mosca said.

The idea for the eminent domain ban was first brought up in council over a year ago - a reaction to a 2005 U.S. Supreme Court decision that allowed cities to transfer land from one private owner to another for the purpose of economic development, Councilman Don Watts said Wednesday.

"This has been a long time coming," Watts said. "It's

been batted around a lot, but we never really got around to it. Basically, we wanted to get it on the next ballot."

Officials also plan to adopt a similar ordinance in January by council action. Such an ordinance could be overturned by future councils, however, prompting the need for a stronger voter-approved measure, officials said.

"I think everybody who owns property in town would feel it would be in their interest," Watts said. "Sierra Madre's kind of conservative in terms of its ideas about changes."

The ballot measure would also prevent the city from funding or cooperating with the use of eminent domain by any other city agency, such as the Redevelopment Agency, Watts said. No part of it applies to the use of eminent domain for public purposes.

The measure is modelled after one passed in the city of Yorba Linda in 2008, which prohibited eminent domain for private purposes.

In 2007, Arcadia voters banned the use of eminent domain in that city's downtown redevelopment area.

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