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**REGIONAL: Vista move worth watching**

By North County Times Opinion staff

An issue brews in San Diego's North County that all Californians ought to keep an eye on.

Specifically, the city of Vista's plans to double its existing 2,106-acre redevelopment area.

Vista's leaders have been good stewards of the public interests regarding redevelopment.

However, declaring any property part of a redevelopment district does have an impact (for good or bad) on existing property values. It also enhances the city's ability to use one of its heavier hammers: power to seize property through eminent domain, a use-of-force broadened by the U.S. Supreme Court a few years ago.

Vista proposes to rope into the redevelopment district land that now is mostly older residential areas, unnerving more than a few homeowners, as reported Friday and Sunday.

Officials offer reassurances to residents that they will never take property from unwilling homeowners.

They also note that the redevelopment project's plan prohibits taking residentially zoned land through eminent domain.

They offer further reassurances that the neighborhoods' inclusion in the project area is to help make those areas nicer.

Their reassurances aren't worth the next election, however.

Vista resembles many other California cities: It has an elected five-member city council, including an elected mayor. Among other duties, the council sets or revises plans and laws, appoints members to various city panels, and approves projects and zoning changes. And yes, those five people also serve as the city's redevelopment commission. Two are up for re-election in November.

Fancy that: The group that oversees the redevelopment district (and virtually everything it does) can also change properties' zoning. And it also is the elected body that can invoke eminent domain powers.

Even without using that canon (or cannon), there's an issue of perspective: What the council-as-commission sees as "improvements" (think sidewalks, curbs), some residents may not. Indeed, many of them like the semirural ambience that woody, winding, narrow streets provide.

What this council says it will or won't do works for us now; it has given us every reason to trust its members.

Regardless of how reassuring their words are, though, they will be meaningless if a future council says "never mind."

On the Web:

[VISTA: Homeowners wary of redevelopment plans](#)

[VISTA: Redevelopment advisory group yet to meet](#)