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March will protest city's eminent domain plans

By Anna Bakalis, abakalis@VenturaCountyStar.com

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On Saturday, Moorpark residents and business leaders will march to protest the city's consideration of stretching its eminent domain powers.

This will be the second such protest organized by Jillian Clarke, co-owner of the Cactus Patch restaurant, and the group Citizens For Redevelopment Reform. The group is looking for people who are opposed to the city's plan to reinstate eminent domain.

Under eminent domain, a public agency can acquire private property for public use. The agency must pay fair market value for the property.

Clarke's parents own the Cactus Patch, and, she said, there is concern that the city could use eminent domain, or condemnation, to take over the land where the restaurant has been since 1970.

In Moorpark, the Redevelopment Agency's desire to reinstate its eminent domain power — it lapsed in 2001 — has created strong opposition from the community. The agency is governed by the five City Council members.

In May, a citizen panel voted to recommend the agency keep its previous limited powers that excluded residential properties. But the ultimate vote lies with the City Council. Moorpark is considering acquiring residential properties for urban development.

A joint meeting between the Planning Commission and City Council to discuss the issue was postponed earlier this month and has not been rescheduled. Although city officials have no immediate plans for redevelopment, they do have their eyes set on a particular part of the downtown area.

Moorpark officials have said affordable housing is the main reason they are considering eminent domain. It is unknown if the properties would be sold to a private developer.

The march will start at 10 a.m. and will continue until 1 p.m. Marchers are asked to meet at the empty lot between the Metrolink parking lot and the thrift store "One More Time."

More information is available at <http://www.citizens4redevelopmentreform.org>

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