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### Trinity Uptown officials threaten to seize land

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FORT WORTH — For the first time, officials are prepared to use **eminent domain** to seize property for Trinity Uptown, a \$909 million flood control and economic development project.

At Wednesday's Trinity River Vision Authority meeting, board members unanimously approved moving forward to acquire through condemnation four parcels along North Henderson Street and North Main Street.

The Tarrant Regional Water District board, which oversees the authority and actually has **eminent domain** powers, must also approve moving forward with seizing the property.

Steve Christian, the water district's property director, said **eminent domain** authority is being exercised because officials could not reach agreement with the property owners and they need to acquire the land to keep Trinity Uptown on schedule. The project stretches from the near north side to Gateway Park and is scheduled to be completed in 2021.

If the water district board approves using **eminent domain**, then a lawsuit would be filed in a county court-at-law, where a judge would appoint three commissioners to hear testimony and rule on what the property is worth.

Christian said the water district will continue negotiations until a court date.

#### 'Take it or leave it'

The son of Stafford Page, one of the property owners facing condemnation proceedings, said there has been little negotiation.

"As far as I know, the offer they gave us really was not open for negotiation," said Mike Page, 53, whose family built the building at 1035 N.Henderson St. in 1967. "It was take it or leave it," he said.

Trinity River Vision offered \$467,000 for 0.1818 of an acre owned by Stafford Page, which officials say has been appraised as fair market value.

The property, which has a wholesale automobile business, Commercial Motors, is listed at \$321,906, according to the Tarrant Appraisal District.


Page said his family could still operate the business if a portion of the property is taken, but he said it would be impossible to sell the remainder.

"What we'll be left with is a piece of property that is not worth anything," Page said. "We'll be grandfathered in as long as we own it. But if we ever tried to sell it with all of the zoning regulations they've put in, we would have to demolish the building and it would be nearly impossible to build anything else with all of the setbacks and beautification required."

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The Page family is trying to obtain a second appraisal to present to the water district and has hired Austin attorney Steve Adler to represent them.

Trinity River Vision is also trying to acquire two tracts near 930 N. Henderson St. owned by Bernard and Jack Rubin and the Rubin Children Partnership. For portions of the two tracts, totaling 5.6 acres, Trinity River Vision offered \$2.3 million.

Because they are taking portions of the two tracts, it was difficult to determine the appraisal district's valuations.

Trinity River Vision officials also offered \$1.6 million to the Texas Refinery Corp. for 0.565 of an acre at 841 N. Houston St. and 2.952 acres at 909 N. Main St.

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