



Jeff Wheeler/Star Tribune

An administrative law judge says Ken Wren wasn't properly informed of his options when he sold his house to a developer to make way for a mixed-use project in Richfield. Wren, pictured where his house used to stand, could get relocation benefits as a result of the ruling.

Tangled up in eminent domain

A Richfield project prompts a lawsuit over acquisition of private property for redevelopment.

By Dan Wascoe Jr.,
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Ken Wren had to move.

The construction worker didn't realize in 1999 that the house he bought at 7627 Aldrich Av. S. was part of a long-planned redevelopment area in Richfield. But the letters he got from the city and the developer made it clear that he and his

house soon would be gone.

By last June he was. Wren had moved to Bloomington, and his Richfield house was one of seven torn down to make way for Kensington Park, a \$32 million mix of stores, restaurants, townhouses and condos.

Developed by Lyndale Gateway LLC, an affiliate of The Cornerstone Group, the concrete and steel skeleton is going up on the west side of Lyndale Avenue S. between 76th and 77th streets. Businesses and residents are expected to move in this year.

Wren, 29, who had bought his house in 1999 for \$116,900, negotiated a price of \$180,000 with the developer's agent — \$10,000 more than he was orig-

inally offered. He also signed an agreement not to seek relocation benefits. But in an unusual legal twist, he might get them anyway, unless a separate suit nails him for breach of contract.

A recent ruling by George Beck, a Minnesota administrative law judge, says that Wren was not properly informed of his options before signing the agreement. One such option was to hold out and have his property acquired by the city under eminent domain — a process also known as condemnation.

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— Developer has sued Wren, saying he is breaking agreement by seeking benefits.