

Azusa votes to oust furniture store

By Daniel Tedford, Staff Writer

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AZUSA - The city plans to use eminent domain to oust a furniture store and make way for a restaurant and grocery store.

The City Council voted unanimously Monday to purchase land owned by Roy Fowler and occupied by his business, Furniture Station. The land is adjacent to Corky's Corner at the intersection of Arrow Highway and Azusa Avenue.

"We had made a decision that residential areas would not be subjected to eminent domain, but if you look at the corner, it is the gateway to the city," said Mayor Joe Rocha.

Due to the large number of businesses that want to move into the area at the intersection, the City Council thought it was necessary to go through the eminent domain process, Rocha said.

But each council member made the point they were only approving such measures with the caveat that negotiations with Fowler would continue in hopes of coming to an "equitable" solution, Rocha said.



The city of Azusa has purchased the land around the Furniture Station on the northeast corner of Arrow Highway and Azusa Avenue and is asking the business owner to sell his property pictured Dec. 2, 2008. (SGVN/Staff photo by Leo Jarzomb/SVCITY)

The city has previously identified the land as blighted and has labeled the corner a redevelopment priority.

A third party appraiser may be used to determine how much the city should pay, Rocha said.

In earlier negotiations, a land appraisal done by the city put the land value at \$1.1 million, which was the city's original offer. Fowler asked for \$3.3 million.

Fowler wouldn't allow the city to examine his books to do their own appraisal of the furniture store's value.

The city has said that if an appraisal proved the business and land worth to be around \$3 million, they would still be interested in purchasing the property.

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Fowler wasn't available for comment Tuesday, but in a previous article he said he wanted to stay in business above anything else.

He plans to pass the store on to his son when he retires, Fowler said.

"I have enough money for myself, but I promised my son when he was 9 years old and that is one promise I would like to keep," Fowler said.

Fowler owns another Furniture Station not far from the Azusa store, at 108 Arrow Hwy., Covina.

City officials have previously said they hope to bring in a new restaurant in the spot as well as a small grocery store and other business in the vacant lots that surround it.

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