



Property law raises bar for development

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ILLINOIS -- Local governments trying to condemn property to make way for private development will have heightened standards to meet under a new eminent domain law signed Friday by Gov. Rod Blagojevich.

The new law raises the burden of proof for local governments seeking to condemn property for private economic development, requiring that officials prove the land is blighted and necessary for a public purpose.

Illinois passed the legislation in the wake of a controversial U.S. Supreme Court decision that said local governments could seize private land for economic development if it was part of a broader redevelopment plan.

Supporters said a change in Illinois' laws was necessary to protect the rights of property owners, but many municipal officials opposed the legislation because they said it could hamper redevelopment efforts.

Under the law, local governments must also reimburse property owners for moving expenses, and in some cases, legal fees.

The law will take effect Jan. 1 but will not affect land seizures for public uses such as roads or bridges.

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