

# The Star-Ledger

## A tool for smart growth

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The court decision limiting a municipality's power to seize vacant land for redevelopment has been hailed as a major victory in the battle against eminent domain, but was it? Not according to redevelopment lawyers, who insist that the ruling merely showed the borough needed to make a stronger factual case when it argued that George Gallenthin's land was "not fully productive." The state Supreme Court said Paulsboro needed to provide evidence of "deterioration or stagnation."

The Regional Planning Partnership and other land-use advocates are heartened that the Gallenthin ruling won't necessarily stop eminent domain from being used to promote smart growth, but we are concerned that other efforts in the Public Advocate's Office and the Legislature will. If that happens, our future is at risk. New Jersey is on track to become the first completely built-out state if our growth patterns continue unchecked. One of the best ways to stop sprawl is to revitalize struggling cities and towns.

Land assembly is a major obstacle to redevelopment. Any eminent domain reforms must recognize the value of smart-growth redevelopment. Otherwise, our economy and environment are doomed.

-- Dianne Brake, Trenton

The writer is president of the Regional Planning Partnership.