

Porter, Douglas R. *Eminent Domain: An Important Tool for Community Revitalization*. Urban Land Institute, 2007.

The following is a case study excerpted from a report by a nonprofit research and education organization specializing in land use and real estate development.

The Freetown neighborhood in Greenville was developed in the 1880s. . . . The neighborhood declined over the years: housing became little more than shacks, [and] cracked sidewalks and worn pavement were the norm. . . . Residents appealed to the Greenville County Redevelopment Authority for help.

Today, Freetown is a different place after undergoing a complete makeover that replaced decaying housing and junk-strewn lots with 80 affordable new homes and ten rehabilitated residences; neighborhood street, water, and sewer infrastructure also was upgraded. One of the most dramatic improvements is a new \$600,000 community center—equipped with a full-sized gymnasium, meeting rooms, and a kitchen—that replaced a small U.S. Army barracks building previously used as the neighborhood center.

The redevelopment authority accomplished all this beginning in 1998 by acquiring blighted properties in order to assemble buildable sites for new homes. Acquisitions included a 54-unit apartment complex that . . . was torn down and replaced by more than a dozen new single-family homes. Most new houses in Freetown have about 1,100 square feet of space and are valued at less than \$75,000.

The authority used the power of eminent domain to acquire only two holdout properties and to clear title to abandoned and tax-delinquent properties. Relocation grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$20,000 helped residents make downpayments on new homes. Having completed a carefully phased redevelopment program in 2006, the authority successfully returned more than one-third of the displaced households to the Freetown community, which now numbers about 200 families.