



# The Claremont Institute

## Center for Constitutional Jurisprudence

March 31, 2006

Letters to the Editor  
Long Beach Press Telegram  
604 Pine Ave.  
Long Beach, CA 90844

Dear Editors:

Your editorial, *Cancel the Wreckers* (March 29), embraces a bit too readily the Redevelopment Agency's spin on the Filipino Baptist church matter, ignoring the actual facts in the process.

First, the Church was promised by the Agency that it would not be forced to move until a suitable alternative location to continue its ministry had been found. The Agency never kept this promise and then falsely claimed that the Church agreed to sell. The letter supposedly containing that agreement states just the opposite: "The church . . . voted not to vacate the property until the City has abided by its promise to find and prepare a suitable place for the church to transfer." Your paper has a copy of that letter, so it is inexcusable that your editorial would accept as fact the RDA's false contention to the contrary.

Second, although the Church's objections to forced relocation has never been about money, the current valuation of the Church property was derived by an independent appraiser, so your contention that the property "probably wouldn't be worth half that much on a good day" is also incorrect, as is the suggestion that this was an inflated figure because the Church purchased the property just four years ago "for only \$255,000." The law requires payment of "just compensation," defined as the current fair market value. As you know, property values throughout all of Long Beach have skyrocketed over the past four years, and the Church's property is no exception. But the relevant issue is whether \$855,000 for their existing Church could get them anything comparable. The only property that the City has identified as a viable relocation alternative is available for \$1.5 million—well beyond the financial reach of this small congregation. Your paper has documentation of all this, too, yet chose to accept the Agency's false spin instead.

Third, you contend that the Church knew what it was getting into by buying property in a redevelopment area. Half of the City is in redevelopment areas; if your view were to prevail, no one would be willing to buy anything in those areas, nor should the Church have given any consideration to the alternative properties the City claims to have found for it—80% of which were also in redevelopment areas.

Finally, you should know that the Church has offered to remodel its facility to match whatever architectural standards are adopted by the adjoining residential development, but cannot do so without the permission of the City. If the physical attributes of the Church were far below the neighborhood's rising standards (they're actually not), blame would rest with the City, not the Church.

Sincerely,

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