Council gets City Heights project moving
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Construction of a $42.9 million project with office and retail space, 116 townhomes and a parking garage will begin in City Heights as soon as residents of the area are relocated.

Eight businesses, and tenants of 32 apartments and bungalows, will have to be moved before demolition work can begin early next year.

The complex will be an addition to the $100 million Urban Village, a publicly and privately funded redevelopment project designed to be a model for urban revitalization of blighted neighborhoods on the way up.

The San Diego City Council on Tuesday authorized condemnation of buildings on the block where the center will be built. It is bounded by University and Fairmount avenues and Wightman and 43rd streets. The vote was 6-0 with council members Christine Kehoe and Juan Vargas and Mayor Susan Golding absent.

The majority of the townhomes will be reserved for 45 years for tenants with very low, low or moderate incomes. Space within the six-floor office building is proposed to be leased to nonprofit organizations that will serve City Heights. The garage will have about 400 parking spaces.

This phase of the public-private project will be funded by the Price Charities Foundation and the Weingart Price Fund.

Since the Urban Village project was launched in 1994, a police station, elementary school, recreation center, library and adult education center have been built. A small shopping mall is slated to open next year.

For each phase, the city has taken property by eminent domain, relocating tenants of apartment complexes, rental houses and commercial businesses.

Yesterday, one business owner presented a petition with 150 signatures to the council objecting to the city taking the property to give to a private developer.

Jack McGrory, an official with Price Entities, called the center a "key landmark project" within the Urban Village redevelopment area. He said all tenants will be given "fair relocation benefits." The center is slated to open by summer 2002.

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