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Michelson given extension to buy properties

By [Erin Taylor](#)

Last Friday was supposed to mark the deadline set by Richmond Heights for Michelson Development Co. to either close on properties in the Hadley Township redevelopment area or terminate the agreement.

Instead, the city met for an impromptu City Council meeting and approved an emergency measure granting the developer another week - until Friday, Sept. 5 - to complete the deal.

Mayor James Beck said the council would hear comments from the public at a City Council meeting Tuesday, Sept. 2 (after the Journal went to press) at the Richmond Heights Community Center to accommodate expected crowds.

More than 20 residents attended the Aug. 29 meeting. Council members voted 6-1 to move the discussion to closed session because they were discussing documents related to a negotiated contract. The city has the authority to meet in closed session when discussing litigation, real estate transactions or personnel matters.

"We're going into closed session because the financing in today's market is so volatile, we don't want to do anything that could potentially harm the opportunities the developer has," Beck told residents at the meeting.

That upset residents already frustrated by months of delay, inaction and extensions.

"It's our property, and we have nothing to say about it," said Jo Ann Bailey, who owns a home targeted for redevelopment.

Bailey and her husband, Arthur, were supposed to close on their home last November. They, like many of the residents in owner-occupied housing in the redevelopment area, say they're waiting in limbo, unsure if the development ever will go forward and unable to move until they get money for their property.

Michelson is planning a 45-acre mixed-use development on the site of almost 200 homes in the Hadley Township neighborhood. The development as currently planned would include 300,000 square feet of retail space, a 150-room hotel and an office building. The development area is bounded roughly by Hanley Road on the west, Dale Avenue on the north, Laclede Station Road on the east and West Bruno Avenue on the south.

Earlier this month the city approved another emergency ordinance that allowed for a 25 percent reduction of houses for the development area. Of the more than 200 homes originally scheduled for purchase and demolition, only 153 now are targeted.

Council member Gina Mitten cast the lone dissenting vote against the reduction. She said a reduction in housing no longer warrants the project's use of eminent domain and tax

increment financing. The city is offering about \$46 million in public financing, including \$38 million in TIF.

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