

Detroit taxpayers to foot \$20-million bill

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Detroit taxpayers are on the hook for another \$20 million — on top of the \$13.7 million they've already paid — for a 6.3-acre parcel of riverfront property the city seized in 2000, under a ruling released Wednesday by the state Court of Appeals.

The appeals court sided with a Wayne County jury, which two and a half years ago found the value of the parcel owned by **Detroit Plaza LP** was about double what Detroit paid when the property was condemned as part of a riverfront redevelopment project.

The court also ordered the city to pay for the property owners' attorneys and expert witness fees, bringing the total additional obligation to about \$20 million, said Jerome Pesick, a Birmingham lawyer who represented Detroit Plaza.

The parcel lies just east of the Renaissance Center and is now part of a waterfront park project, Pesick said. City officials pursued purchase of the property for several years, and included it in plans by former Mayor Dennis Archer for riverfront casinos, but sought condemnation for general redevelopment in 1999.

Pesick said Detroit had opportunities to obtain the property for less than the amount awarded in court, including a pretrial evaluation of \$20 million total accepted by the Detroit Plaza group. But the city declined to do so, he said.

Matt Allen, press secretary for Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, declined comment on the case Wednesday afternoon, saying it has yet to be reviewed by city attorneys.

Detroit could ask the appeals court to reconsider or seek additional review by the Michigan Supreme Court.

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