

Council vs. Planners on Zoning Request

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The City Council is squarely lined up against the best judgment of professional city planners and the Planning Commission in the long dispute over development of the former John Carroll Ranch in Granada Hills.

The issue may be decided today by the council.

The question is whether to develop the area into apartments or single-family homes. Professional planners say it should be for homes. Some residents in the area apparently agree.

But a developer's proposal to build apartments there has the backing of the area's councilman, Robert Wilkinson, and of an apparent majority of the council.

The council has a long tradition of voting for the area representative's wishes in zoning cases. On the other hand, 10 votes will be needed to get it approved, because of the Planning Commission's opposition.

Development of the 9.5 acres on the southwest corner of Chatsworth St. and Hayvenhurst Ave. has worried neighbors since 1963 when City Council denied an appeal by Carroll for apartment zoning.

Alfred Mann, the applicant in the current rezoning case, proposes developing the land with 40 two-story residential buildings containing 200 units. It reportedly represents a \$3.5 million investment.

'Spot Zoning'

The Planning Commission has consistently supported homeowners who want development to follow the city's master land use plan, which would allow 44 single-family homes on the 9.5 acres.

"It would represent spot zoning of the worst kind," said one homeowner in protesting the ordinance which would change the zoning from agricultural to (T) R3-1 (three-story apartments) and (T) RS-1.

Apartments would be buffered by single-family homes on the periphery except on the boundary between the apartments and Granada Hills Park.

The council by an 11-1 vote, overrode the Planning Commission 18 months ago in directing the city attorney to prepare the ordinance. The applicant for the ordinance was Sam Gilbert.

Commission Opposed

The case became tangled with the subsequent application by Mann for a conditional use permit which spells out specifications for the apartment development.

The commission, as it did with the still unpassed ordinance, recommended denial of the permit.

The denial was ordered despite the reluctant recommendation of a Planning Department exami-

ner that a conditional use be approved for 160 units instead of the 200 requested by Mann.

The examiner admitted to the commission that the pending ordinance was a coercive factor in his recommendation for the 160 units.

2 Postponements

The council postponed action on the original ordinance last Monday for one week because of a council Planning Committee session scheduled to act on the conditional use application Tuesday. The committee in turn postponed action until the council takes up the ordinance again today.

Barring a move for postponement, which sometimes happens when zoning matters become too complicated, the council should resolve the ordinance dilemma today.

Despite the 11-1 vote in 1967, some councilmen indicated last week that they may be shifting their position.

Braude's Position

"Until I hear some justification for multiple I would rescind the entire action taken by the council," Councilman Marvin Braude told his colleagues. "If I made a mistake, I want to correct it."

ZONING REQUEST

Philip Krakover, legislative advocate representing the applicant, reminded the councilmen that they acknowledged the need for more multiple housing in the area with that 11-1 vote.

Walter Adolphson said the Granada Hills Chamber of Commerce supported the development when he was president in 1967 and still supports it.

John Mitchell, 16546 Kingsbury St., and Edwin A. Young, 16802 Germain St., gave the views of residents opposing the project.

Hurt Neighborhood

Mitchell claims 80 modern homes representing an investment of \$2.5 million would be adversely affected.

"This represents the biggest investment of our lives," he said. "It would be virtually impossible to sell houses facing the property. This would represent an intrusion into a single-family, well-developed neighborhood."

Councilman John Gibson, chairman of the council Planning Committee, conceded that "this is a most difficult one."

City Planner Thomas Golden said that the commission and the staff believe, "this property seemed to cry out for RS (single family, 44 houses). There is adequate undeveloped R-3 in this community."

'Reject Ordinance'

Golden renewed the commission recommendation that the master land use plan be followed and the ordinance rejected.

"By reason of the development in this neighborhood, it would introduce an incompatible use, said Golden. "We think the master plan is correct and should be followed."

Councilman Edmund D. Edelman, who voted against the project, said the development goes far beyond the planned population density for the area. It means 700 persons in an area planned for 120, he said.

Wilkinson's Position

Wilkinson favors apartment development on the interior of the site, with single family homes on all sides except where the apartments face the park.

This is essentially the proposal of the developer and the council has a long reciprocal tradition of acting favorably on the recommendation of the area councilman, regardless of what the professional planners say.

As one councilman put it recently, but not for attribution to him:

"The taxpayers could save a lot of money by just doing away with the Planning Department, period."