

# L.A. Decisions on Condos May Hint New Policy

The city Planning Commission denied one West Side condominium conversion plan and postponed two others after deciding to look closely at the cumulative effect on the environment of the increasingly popular condominiums.

The results of the commission meeting last week may mark a tightening of city policy, since in recent months only a handful of conversion projects have been denied by the commission.

The idea of slowing down conversions by looking at their cumulative environmental effect under the California Environmental Quality Act came from a West Los Angeles apartment tenant.

Commissioner Suzette Neiman said during the Van Nuys meeting that she wished she had thought of applying CEQA to conversion projects.

City officials say they are increasingly concerned about converting apartment houses into individually-owned condominium units. For one thing, the high-price condos are out of the average renters' reach financially. Another criticism is that developers typically must eliminate several housing units in an apartment building to create the extra parking space required for a condominium plan.

Until Thursday's meeting, the city has passed over the CEQA ruling in considering condominium plans, reasoning that individual projects had no environmental impact.

However, Debbie Braver, spokesman for some of the tenants at 12030 Rochester Ave., West Los Angeles,

disputed that policy in an eight-page letter to the commission. She wrote that the low vacancy rate on the West Side and the large numbers of conversions reduce available housing in the area—and CEQA defines the housing supply as part of the environment. Half the conversions in the city are in West Side neighborhoods, she wrote.

The commission will decide whether or not to sponsor a study on the cumulative effects of conversion at its Aug. 11 meeting.

The Commission voted to determine whether to grant the Rochester tenants' appeal of the city's decision to allow conversion of their apartments at the same meeting in August.

The commission ruled that the question of cumulative impact also might be involved in another case to be heard at August meeting. That case involves 97 units located at 11750 Sunset Blvd., Pacific Palisades.

One of the Pacific Palisades tenants has appealed a decision by the Planning Department to grant permission to convert to the building's owner.

The commission will discuss its decision in the Pacific Palisades case at its Aug. 3 meeting.

A third appeal, brought by the owner of a 15-unit apartment on the southeast corner of Burton Way and Willaman Drive, Beverly Hills—ap-

pealing the Planning Department's previous denial of a conversion plan—was denied last week.

This decision was based on what one commission member called the only criteria which the group can use under its present rules in determining whether to grant conversions—adequate parking space and adequate relocation plans for some tenants.

The Beverly Hills parking plans were inadequate, the commission decided, and it was not feasible to relocate the elderly tenants of the building.

J.S. Krueger, who presided in the absence of commission President Daniel Garcia, called the current rules of the commission inadequate to govern condo conversions.

Dep. City Atty. Steve Amerikaner told the commission that in his opinion the group has an obligation to determine whether CEQA's environmental effect regulations are met in each case, even though neither the owners nor the tenants raised the issue at a public hearing.

The Rochester building postponement was agreed to by Ely Dromy, a partner who is part-owner of the building.

Dromy said, however, that he and his partners had purchased the building last February and were losing money because of the city's rent control regulations and he said he had hoped to save the investment by converting to condominiums.

One of the tenants, he said, has never paid him any rent.