

# Lobbied Council Flip-Flops on Builder Curbs

By RICHARD SIMON, Times Staff Writer

In a surprising turnaround, the Los Angeles City Council balked Tuesday at approving an ordinance imposing temporary building restrictions on the Valley Village area of North Hollywood, appearing to doom the measure.

By a 10-1 vote, the council sent the proposal back to the Planning and Environment Committee for further study. Councilman Joel Wachs, who authored the measure, then declared it dead.

Wachs attributed the council's action to last-minute lobbying by ex-Councilman Arthur K. Snyder, who urged council members to defeat the proposal.

"The only thing that has changed since the first vote is reapportionment and Arthur Snyder becoming involved," said Wachs, who represents part of Valley Village. The ordinance, which would limit the height of new buildings in the area to two stories, was tentatively approved by the council Sept. 17 on a 10-2 vote.

Snyder said he was hired a week ago by a developer who is seeking to build an apartment complex on Riverside Drive in the Valley Village area and who wanted an exemption from the building restrictions.

Snyder said he was pleased that Wachs attributed the council turnaround to his lobbying. "That's a very nice of him," the former councilman said.

## Wachs Cites Favors Owed

Wachs contended that Snyder persuaded a number of council members, including Hal Bernson and John Ferraro, to withdraw their support for the ordinance. "A lot of them owe him favors," Wachs said.

A final vote on the measure had been delayed until Tuesday to give Ferraro, who gained part of the Valley Village area in the council's recent redistricting, time to study the issue.

The area is south of Burbank Boulevard, west of the Hollywood Freeway, east of the Tujunga Wash next to Coldwater Canyon Boulevard and north of the Ventura Freeway.

Ferraro said Tuesday that he supports the building limits, but voted to send the measure back to committee because "the votes are not here to support the moratorium."

Ten votes were required for approval.

Bernson said a review of the issues, including those brought to his attention by Snyder, prompted him to decide that the proposal was a bad idea.

Wachs introduced the measure last March while the area was entirely in his district. He was responding to homeowner complaints about parking problems, traffic congestion and blocked views from construction of five-story apartment buildings next to their single-family residences.

Although called a moratorium, the measure would not ban building in the three-square-mile Valley Village area. Rather, it would severely restrict construction until city planners could conduct public hearings on new, permanent development limits.

The measure would restrict construction to the lowest density allowed under existing zoning and would limit all new buildings to two stories. It also would limit the square footage of commercial development to 1½ times the size of the lot.

Critics of the measure contended it was overly broad.

## New Proposal Due Nov. 14

Bernson, who previously voted for the measure, said he learned that the ordinance would restrict building in areas that are already intensely developed with apartments, such as a section of Riverside Drive near the Hollywood Freeway where Snyder's client owns property.

Bernson, who serves on the Planning and Environment Committee, said the committee would reexamine the ordinance with an eye toward exempting areas where intense development has already occurred. The committee was instructed to report back to the full council with a new proposal

on Nov. 14.

Wachs and Councilman Zev Yaroslavsky, who also gained part of the area in the redistricting, expressed skepticism that a building moratorium with exemptions would do any good. Nonetheless, they supported sending the measure back to committee.

About a dozen people from each side spoke at a public hearing before the council vote. Both sides claimed that the value of their property was the main issue.

Opponents contended that the measure would reduce the value of their land by limiting its development potential. They also argued that it would be unfair to deny them the right to build apartments when most of the surrounding land has been intensely developed.

Brian Meldon told the council that his mother "has no means of support" and "will probably end up on welfare because you're trying to take away the value of her

property."

Supporting the proposed restrictions, Betty Biza said it is too late to save her Gentry Avenue house from the ill effects of construction of an apartment house next door, "but it isn't too late for other people in our area."

"We desperately need your assistance to keep our neighborhood from being boxed in by these high-rise apartment buildings," she said.

"As we look out of our window, every day this [apartment house] wall rises high and higher. And, when it goes up to five stories . . . we're going to lose our sun. We're going to lose the value of our property."

Tuesday's hearing featured a rare council appearance by Planning Commissioner Suzette Neiman, who spoke against the building restrictions.

"I don't think it's fair," she said. "You have to give some consideration to areas which are totally developed with R-3 and R-4," embracing apartments and condominiums, "and there are only two properties remaining that are R-1," meaning single-family residential.

Casting the lone vote against sending the matter back to committee was Councilman Gilbert W. Lindsay, who said he was prepared to vote against the moratorium.

Tom Paterson, president of the North Hollywood Residents Assn., said he is not ready to give up on the building restrictions. "We obviously have to lobby council people more intensely," he said.

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