

Council Approves North Hollywood High-Density Limits

Valley Village Restrictions Voted

By RICHARD SIMON, *Times Staff Writer*

Responding to homeowners' complaints about high-density development in their single-family residential neighborhood, the Los Angeles City Council on Wednesday tentatively approved an ordinance severely restricting development in the Valley Village area of North Hollywood.

The measure, approved on a 10-2 vote, is expected to receive final approval from the council next week, then go to Mayor Tom Bradley. The mayor has taken no position on the ordinance, which has been opposed by the Planning Commission.

Although called a building moratorium, the measure does not ban construction. Rather, it restricts construction to the lowest density allowed under existing zoning and limits all new buildings to two stories.

The measure also limits square footage of commercial development to 1½ times the size of the lot. That provision may become unnecessary, however, if voters approve Proposition U, an initiative on the November ballot that would permanently restrict most commercial development in the city to 1½ times the lot size.

Supporters said the measure approved Wednesday is intended to give city planners time to draft a new development plan for the three-square-mile area, which is bounded by Burbank Boulevard on the north, the Hollywood Freeway on the east, the Ventura Freeway on the south and the flood control channel next to Coldwater Canyon Boulevard on the west.

Clamor From Homeowners

Councilman Joel Wachs introduced the ordinance in March in response to complaints from Valley Village homeowners of blocked views, parking problems and traffic congestion because of the apartments and condominiums built in single-family neighborhoods. There is no height limit in many areas of Valley Village and homeowners have complained of five-story apartment buildings being built near them.

"There's a building going up that's going to cut off a friend of mine's view. He's going to be in the shade all day long," homeowner Al Heino told the council during a public hearing Wednesday. "He's not going to see the morning sun, or the evening sun. . . . His grass is not going to grow. This is what uncontrolled construction has done to not only one, but several of our homes in the Valley Village area."

Councilman Ernani Bernardi, who voted against the moratorium, said it would prevent property owners from making the most profitable use of their land.

"I've had some of these things happen in my district where just very modest income families have lived in the area for years," Bernardi said. "They've had single-family homes on R-3 (zoned for apartments and condominiums) property, and, for some of them, that's the only source of funds that's going to be available to them when they're about ready to retire."

Wachs introduced the measure while the area was entirely in his district. Under a redistricting approved by the council last week, Wachs still represents most of the area, but parts of it are in the districts of Councilmen John Ferraro and Zev Yaroslavsky. Yaroslavsky supported the ordinance, whereas Ferraro was absent for the vote.

Wachs said proponents of the measure have been "reasonable. . . . They haven't said, 'no more building.'" He argued that residents simply want to prevent unrestricted construction while a new development plan is being prepared.

"You got to put a halt to it [high-rise development] before it's too late," he said.

Wachs promised that the citizens' advisory committee that will prepare the development plan will be balanced, including opponents of more restrictive zoning.

Planning Commissioner Suzette Neiman said the commission last summer voted to oppose the moratorium on a 3-1 vote. She said the commission had already rolled back the zoning in the area and felt any additional controls would be unnecessary and unfair.

In an interview, however, Neiman, a Bradley appointee, said she would not urge the mayor to veto the ordinance. "You have to save the veto for really big things," she said.