

Council Panel Urges 1-Year Restriction on Building Height

By RICHARD SIMON,
Times Staff Writer

A Los Angeles City Council panel Wednesday recommended approval of an ordinance to temporarily restrict the height of apartments and condominiums built next to single-family homes in a large part of Sherman Oaks and sections of North Hollywood and Van Nuys.

The measure, approved 3 to 1 by the Board of Referred Powers, would reduce the height of multiple-family housing projects from a maximum of five stories.

Projects less than 50 feet from a single-family residence would be restricted to two stories. Developments between 50 and 100 feet from a single-family home would be restricted to three stories.

Developments more than 100 feet from a single-family residence are not affected by the proposed ordinance. Their height is already restricted to three to five stories, depending on the zone.

The ordinance was proposed last November by Councilman Zev Yaroslavsky, whose Sherman Oaks-area constituents complained of blocked views, parking and traffic problems, and loss of privacy and sunlight.

It would affect an area roughly north of Ventura Boulevard, east of the San Diego Freeway, west of Colbath Avenue, which is just west of Hazeltine Avenue, and south of the Ventura Freeway. Also affected would be the area north of the Ventura Freeway, east of the San Diego Freeway, west of the Tujunga Wash and south of Magnolia Boulevard.

In Effect for 1 Year

The restrictions would be in effect for one year, with a possible one-year extension, to give city planners time to develop a plan to permanently restrict development of large, multifamily housing projects in the Sherman Oaks area.

Councilwoman Joan Milke Flores, one of four council members on the Board of Referred Powers, cast the only vote against the measure, calling it "elitist." She claimed the restrictions would inhibit the development of low-income housing.

Yaroslavsky, however, scoffed at the suggestion that low-cost housing would be built in affluent Sherman Oaks if there were no height restrictions. Joining Yaroslavsky, who also sits on the board, in supporting the measure were Councilmen Marvin Braude and Hal Bernson.

The proposed ordinance, supported by the Sherman Oaks Homeowners Assn., was opposed by several property owners who want to sell their property for development of apartments or condominiums. They complained that the proposal would reduce their property values.

Herbert Petzold, who lives in a single-family home on Moorpark Street, argued that it would be unfair for the city to restrict development of his property when much of the street on which he lives already has been developed with three-story apartment buildings.

"If you live alongside a three-story apartment, try to sell your house," he told council members.

Critics of the measure also argued that it

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would be more harmful to neighborhoods than helpful. "Reducing the density of new apartments forces individuals to live further away from major commercial centers, thus creating more, not less, traffic congestion," said Richard Wirth, executive director of the Governmental Affairs Council of the Building Industry Assn.

The ordinance empowers the council to grant exemptions to the height restrictions in cases of extreme hardship.

The council previously approved restrictions on building of high-rise apartments for a section of Sherman Oaks south of Ventura Boulevard and the Valley Village neighborhood in North Hollywood

The measure approved Wednesday is the first in the city that would restrict the height of new apartments and condominiums based on their proximity to homes. Backers hope that, if they win approval of the full council and Mayor Tom Bradley for the Sher-

man Oaks measure, they stand a good chance of getting the same restrictions applied citywide.

The Board of Referred Powers was asked to act on the matter by the city's Planning Commission, which normally makes recommendations to the full council on planning issues. The board acts on matters that may pose a conflict of interest for a commissioner. In this case, Planning Commissioner Suzette Neiman has a financial interest in property that would be affected by the ordinance.