

2 High-Rise Debates Delay Vote on Zoning Guidelines

By BOB POOL, *Times Staff Writer*

Disputes over two Woodland Hills high-rise projects stalled the adoption Thursday of far-ranging zoning guidelines that will direct the growth of the West San Fernando Valley into the 21st Century.

Los Angeles city planners said they need more time to investigate disputes surrounding a seven-building office project proposed for Warner Ridge and twin 13-story towers planned for the intersection of Ventura and Topanga Canyon boulevards before settling on a final version of the guidelines.

City officials are being required by state legislation and a court order to redraw zoning maps to make all zoning in the city conform with Los Angeles' master plan by next March.

The proposed West Valley zoning calls for about 77% of the area to be used for housing, 12% for parks and schools and 11% for commercial and industrial uses. Except for sections of Ventura Boulevard and Warner Center, where six-story buildings are allowed, the plan generally imposes a three-story height restriction on new buildings.

High-rise opponents have charged that the even-taller buildings proposed for Warner Ridge and Ventura-Topanga would be inconsistent with neighboring developments and zoning.

Housing Instead of Offices Sought

A 26-year-old neighborhood of 1,300 single-family houses sits next to the 21½-acre Warner Ridge office building site at the northeast corner of DeSoto Avenue and Oxnard Street. Homeowners have urged that a low-density custom-home tract be built there instead of office buildings up to seven stories high.

A low-rise commercial district adjoins the 7½-acre Thrifty Drugs-Hamburger Hamlet shopping center site at the northeast corner of Ventura and Topanga Canyon boulevards, where members of the Warner family hope eventually to build their twin towers.

They obtained an exemption to a special six-story Ventura Boulevard height limit that went into effect in 1983 and are seeking a similar waiver from the six-floor limit in the proposed new zoning.

Cindy Misczkowski, chief aide to City Councilman Marvin Braude and a major force behind the 1983 height restriction, Thursday urged planners to limit the Warners' building height.

Equal floor space could be obtained in six stories without turning the Woodland Hills corner into a "Warner Center kind of major development," Misczkowski said.

But H. Randall Stoke, a lawyer representing the Warners, argued that their long-range proposals for the site conform with the city's land-use plan. Other Warner representatives have contended that the family has planned since 1956 to build a high-rise project there eventually, and that the longstanding plans should be recognized.

The commission asked its staff to study previous agreements covering the Warner site before its panel again takes up the zoning issue in two weeks.

Homeowners Hire Attorney

Planners said they will also use the time to look into a contention by neighboring homeowners that the separate Warner Ridge office project would be a "regional" commercial development instead of a "neighborhood" commercial project. The former would be considered incompatible with adjoining homes.

The residents hired an attorney to press that claim in hopes of blocking a pair of zone changes and an amendment to the city master plan needed by Warner Ridge's owner, a partnership of the Spound Co. of Los Angeles and the Johnson Wax Development Corp.

"It seems to me to be spot zoning"—a mixture of incongruous developments—said nearby homeowner Richard Morton, a critic of the office proposal. "I don't think we should have to put up with this sort of thing."

Neighbor Julie Raskoff said, "People who have lived here 30 years are being asked to yield to people from 1900 Avenue of the Stars who bought their land a year or so ago," referring to developer Jack Spound's business address.

Spound urged commissioners to let the proposed zoning reflect his project. He said that specifics of his proposed \$150-million development will be "discussed and thoroughly analyzed" when a recently completed environmental impact report is reviewed by the city.