

Tighter Zoning Ordinance OKd by Councilmen

Restrictions and Special Conditions on Property Development Imposed

BY ERWIN BAKER
Times Staff Writer

A basic change in city planning procedure which proponents claim will bring honesty to certain zoning practices was approved by the City Council Friday after a three-year controversy.

By a vote of 9 to 5, the council adopted and sent to Mayor Sam Yorty a Q (for qualified zoning) ordinance which:

—Restricts the development of property to a specific use or limited range of uses rather than for any use now permitted in a zone.

—Specifies special conditions for the proposed development in keeping with the character of surrounding property.

—Requires that unless the development occurs within one year, with a possible one-year extension, the property reverts to its original classification.

Victory for Nowell

Yorty has indicated he will sign the ordinance, the passage of which represented a major victory for its floor leader, Councilman Louis R. Nowell.

He and other backers of the ordinance argued that it was a weapon to force "pinpointing" of actual land use.

Nowell pointed out, for example, that there are more than 200 uses now permitted in the C-2 (retail and manufacturing) category.

It includes, among others, service stations, auto repair and painting, billiard halls and second-hand stores.

Presently, he said, there is no way the city can require the applicant to build what he proposed on his application. Often, he complained, a "for sale" sign is posted on property "the day after" a zone change is approved.

'Make People Honest'

Councilman Donald D. Lorenzen said this is a "momentous" problem in the West San Fernando Valley, which he represents.

"Our problems will continue until we make people honest on what they are going to do," he said.

Opposition came from Councilmen James B. Potter Jr., Edmund D. Edelman and Marvin Braude, all of whose districts include mountain and hillside areas.

At public hearings on the controversial issue, representatives of mountain and hillside organizations vigorously opposed the ordinance, claiming one of its chief evils would be spot zoning.

Potter insisted the ordinance would loosen rather than tighten the zoning ordinance, as contended by backers.

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He asked the council to await the Planning Department's revised zoning ordinance, expected later this year, before taking any action.

Edelman argued that zoning should not be considered on the basis of "what people say they will do."

To investigate each case, he said, would create a "tremendous administrative problem" for the Planning and Building and Safety departments. Planning endorsed the ordinance.

Braude maintained that Los Angeles has been "perfecting a great zoning system" which "for the most part has been corruption-proof and immune to abuses."

"There have been some abuses, such as too many gas stations," he said, "but overall the system works."

With the ordinance, he warned, the city would be "abandoning the rule of law" and substituting "individual judgment on individual parcels" which could result in "people never knowing what they have" and lead to "great chaos in the history of the city."

The roll call: For — Councilmen Nowell, Lorenzen, John Ferraro, Ernani Bernardi, Billy G. Mills, Robert M. Wilkinson, Arthur K. Snyder, John S. Gibson Jr. and Councilwoman Pat Russell.

Against — Councilmen Edelman, Braude, Potter, Gilbert W. Lindsay and Robert J. Stevenson.

Councilman Thomas Bradley was absent.