

Homeowners Win Fight In Zone Change

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Staff Writer

VISTA — Angry Mar Vista Drive residents were calmed last night when they learned commercial building on the road leading to their homes would be slowed, and perhaps stopped.

Residents opposed a zone change at the Mar Vista freeway exit from residential to commercial. Such a zone change, they told the City Council, would ruin their neighborhood's rural atmosphere.

The council denied Tijico Vista, Inc.'s request for the change. Instead, the city will study Mar Vista Drive and five other freeway exits in Vista to determine what the zoning should be. The study could take nine months. Planning

Director Bill Gutgesell said.

The Tijico corporation, owners of the Hilltop Motel, wanted both the zone change, and a variance to Vista's sign ordinance. The variance would allow a large sign pointing the way to the motel. The sign would be four by six feet, said Vernon Peltzer, Tijico's lawyer, while the city's sign ordinance says directional signs can be only two square feet.

But the issue did not involve only the sign, Councilman Bernard Rappoport pointed out in a proposal that the issue be studied. A zone change would open the area to future requests for rezoning, he said.

"I find it hard to believe that this is based only on the sign," Rappoport said. "This opens (the area) up to

requests to rezone the other four corners."

At least one zone change proponent said he wanted to place a hotel and restaurant on his three acres. M.S. "Skip" Merrill owns land at the corner closest to the freeway. The land is "now getting ripe" for development, he said.

"Some people," Merrill said, "don't want this (zone change), because, when they walk their dogs, they want to see (the land) vacant from now to eternity."

However, Peltzer claimed the zone change "would not set a precedent." Rather, the land should have been rezoned so it would conform with Vista's general plan, the attorney said. He opposed the suggested study, saying

three studies at the Mar Vista exit had already been done.

"Red herrings have continually been dragged across to confuse the issue," he complained. The motel owners merely wanted a sign pointing customers "to the front door," and a zone change on their property.

"We're not talking about further commercialization," he argued. "We're not talking about increased traffic. We're not talking about gas stations." The sign, he said, would ease traffic dangers on narrow Mar Vista Drive. But, Peltzer added, he realized neighbors were opposed. A petition with 50 signatures against the motel owners' request was given to the council.

Merrill still owns land in San Diego in 1977

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