

# Los Angeles Daily News

## **Neighbors want new strip club shut down**

**By James Nash**

**Staff Writer**

**Monday, September 15, 2003** - On the day before the Los Angeles City Council considers tougher rules on strip clubs, activists from North Hollywood vowed Monday to take legal action if necessary to close an all-nude club that opened last weekend near Valley Plaza.

The neighborhood activists said VIP Showgirls should not be able to operate near a storefront church, two child-care centers and two planned public schools.

Joined by Westside activists who have battled nude clubs in their neighborhoods, the North Hollywood residents held a news conference to call on city officials to pass the proposed regulations on strip clubs and to shut down VIP Showgirls.

"There are already strip clubs in the North Hollywood area," said Diann Corral, president of the Midtown North Hollywood Neighborhood Council. "Bringing more in is really disheartening."

A lawyer for VIP Showgirls, which promotes itself as an "upscale gentleman's club," said the residents' concerns are unfounded.

Attorney Roger Jon Diamond said club owner Glen Smith is committed to running a safe, high-end club with no alcohol and minimal effects on neighboring businesses and on El Templo de David Ministerio de Restauracion, a storefront church located about 400 feet away.

"If a school were to ever go in, my client would make every effort to ensure that there was no contact between the schoolchildren and the club," Diamond said. "I also question the need to insulate a church from an adult cabaret."

An attorney for the church, Enrique Zuniga, said he would sue if necessary to enforce a city ordinance prohibiting adult businesses within 500 feet of religious institutions. City officials said the ordinance was not applied to the VIP Showgirls club because El Templo de David was in a building zoned for commercial, rather than religious, use.

"The city of Los Angeles is working against the voice of the people by allowing an adult entertainment business, a sexually explicit business, to operate within 500 feet of a church," Zuniga said.

Councilwoman Wendy Greuel and Los Angeles Unified School District board member Jon Lauritzen, who represent the Valley Plaza area, said they have asked attorneys for the city and the school district to explore legal options for shutting down VIP Showgirls.

The strip club opened Friday night without a permanent Los Angeles Police Department permit to operate, but it is allowed to operate temporarily until a panel of hearing officers rules on its application for a police permit. At a hearing last month, dozens of residents spoke against granting the permit.

Opponents of the VIP Showgirls club and Westside strip clubs have been lobbying City Council members to vote today for an ordinance that would require security guards at all times the club is open and would ban VIP rooms that are separated from the main strip club area. The new regulations also would require adult businesses to reapply for permits annually, rather than receive open-ended city permits.

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