

WHY INCORPORATION IS NECESSARY

The reasons behind the proposed incorporation of the Los Altos Foothills are simple ones. Most of us want our area to remain residential, quiet, and reasonably rural. Most of us do not want to witness a piecemeal breakdown of our country residence zoning. Most of us do not want to be absorbed into any of the nearby cities, where we would be outvoted and overwhelmed by their denser populations.

Actually, most of us would also prefer to go on just as we are, in the County, without any more responsibilities, government, or taxes. But that, unfortunately, does not seem possible. The many of us who have followed recent successful attempts to break our zoning, and who have noted how far the planning surveys of nearby cities extend into our foothills, are convinced that incorporation is our only choice if we are to preserve our uniquely beautiful locality and our rural pursuits. The Los Altos Hills comprise one of the most beautiful residential sections in all of California, and one of the most desirable, and one of the most threatened.

A thoughtful look at what has been happening recently will show why prompt action is necessary. Since the war, our region has undergone a vast economic growth. Quiet rural spots in many parts of the Peninsula have disappeared entirely. In five years, 20 percent of the County orchard lands have been taken over by the County itself, chambers of commerce, and even Stanford University, are bending every effort to bring in still more industry, commerce, institutions and population.

In four years our protesting strength has increased from one property owner's association in the Country Club district to five united associations encompassing almost our entire area, but even this united front has failed to match the increasing pressures. Many changes involving quarrying, a resort, institutions, reduced lot sizes, have been made over our strongest protests. Our few successes have been due to constant vigilance and continued opposition at repeated hearings.

Our recent case is a prime example of the growing tendency to favor commercial interests and ignore the property rights of established residents. A 10 acre tract east of Miranda was rezoned, for subdividers, from one acre to quarter acre lots over the combined protests of all the 32 surrounding property owners and all of the five foothill property owner groups. At some hearings our spokesmen have even been called down for presuming to bother the Planning Commission with our protests.

Recent zoning history shows a trend which could result in a complete breakdown of our zoning at any time. Another kind of future we do not want is forecast by planning surveys recently made for Palo Alto and Los Altos. These surveys study and measure all our foothills for extension of urban facilities and controls - the very things so many of us came here to avoid. The Palo Alto survey, in addition, actually excludes rural pursuits - the very things so many of us came here to gain. Obviously, such surveys reveal a desire, if not an intention, to annex, to control.

Our country residence zoning, our rural pursuits, our quiet atmosphere, are important to us – the actual residents of the foothills. It does not seem wise to allow the power of life and death over such things to remain outside our area, in other hands. Though most of us sincerely wish it could be otherwise, it is evident that incorporation *is* the only safe course to follow.

WHAT KIND OF COMMUNITY DO WE WANT

Discussions throughout the Los Altos foothills indicate that we are in general agreement as to the kind of community we want: as little change as possible in our hills – our groves and fringes of trees, our fields and orchards, our roads – as will be consistent with orderly, natural, unhurried, residential growth. A wide and not over-populated community of homes in the country, organized only enough to protect it from what would destroy it. Only such planning, controls, ordinances and services as are absolutely essential.

We want the sun and air and quiet of a community which has given itself enough space to breathe in; the relaxed pace of country life and rural pursuits, and the space and right to keep animals – rabbits, chickens, dogs, sheep, cattle, horses.

We want roads that are content to remain country lanes as long as they are suitable for the residence traffic of our area – we do not want to be forced to rebuild them into highspeed highways to suit non-residential traffic of resorts and quarries.

Most of us in the foothills want at least one acre of land – regardless of what real estate experts and national surveys tell us about weed patches, costs, taxes and work. We want room to walk around our houses without knocking our heads on our neighbors' eaves. We want to listen to the radio when we turn it on, not when our neighbors do. We would rather look over our neighbors' paddocks and over their weed patches than into their windows.

We do not want high speed roads, still more traffic, still more quarrying and trucks, more or bigger resorts, dense subdivisions with standardized house plans and expensive sewer requirements. We do not want more industry and commerce to "broaden the tax base" and all the city controls and facilities required to cope with them. We do not want a full scale police force, a full time council, a city manager. If, someday, some of us think we need markets, gas stations, public buildings, & community center, the rest of us want the right to approve or reject them by actual vote of the majority. We do not want such things imposed upon us by anyone – not by County Government nor by a city next door.

In short, we like our rural atmosphere, and most of us are perfectly willing to get along without city conveniences in order to keep it.

The only way to be sure of our future is to take hold of it and plan it ourselves. The costs are modest enough – less than if we annexed to a city, and probably less than if we remain in the County. The responsibility of running our own government would be a welcome substitute for the continuous zoning worries and hazards so many of us have been facing – something gratifying and constructive rather than frustrating and destructive.

We can build in our agricultural businesses and hobbies permanently, our horse ranches, riding schools, nurseries, orchards, chickens, cattle. We can build in a stable and paddock for Junior's horse and the legal right for Junior to go on keeping a horse. We can even build in a little space for the meadow larks and the quail. We can build a friendly town meeting kind of a community, with a neighbor from down the road on the council and control in our own hands, where it belongs.

HOW CAN WE BE SURE THAT "POLITICIANS" IN OUR OWN AREA WILL NOT GAIN CONTROL, AND BRING ABOUT THE VERY THINGS WE SEEK TO AVOID?

A number of residents have raised this question. Part of the answer is given above: we can presume that councilmen living here and personally well known to many of us would naturally be more concerned with our local affairs which stems not from a presumption, but from actual study of the results of incorporation elsewhere.

Experience in other Bay Area communities shows dramatically that, when incorporation is achieved early enough, before divergent interests make themselves felt, a community retains the atmosphere its incorporators planned for it. On the other hand, when incorporation takes place after commercial interests have become established, the "parade towards progress" becomes inexorable - the incorporation itself actually seems to become a vehicle for the divergent interests. Compare on the one hand such purely residential communities as Hillsboro, Atherton, Piedmont, Ross, with any number of cities which started out with the idea of preserving rural atmosphere, but too late. Those we elect to our council will all be fellow residents with rural pursuits of their own, who share our desire to preserve our unique atmosphere. Furthermore, they will be responsible only to the voters of the area, not to any divergent interests.

GOVERNMENT, TAXES, CHANGES

Taxes

An incorporated community of our own, with all of its essential benefits, is possible for an increase of about 4% in our total property taxes. On the other hand, if we do not incorporate, our County taxes could be increased under the new State law permitting special taxing of unincorporated areas supposedly getting more than their share of county expenditures.

Government

Government can be minimum and still provide all the services we need or want. Under California law we can incorporate only as a 'sixth class city', no other form is provided. We can, however, call our community a "town". A five man council is mandatory, elected from among our neighbors, but honorary service without pay is customary in towns like ours. One paid employee can handle all routine matters. Professional and secretarial services can be engaged as needed. Most government services remain under the County, either automatically, with no change whatsoever, or by contract with the County. Basic terms have been established by the County Executive, the County Council, and the Sheriff, in conferences with the Incorporation Legal Committee.

No Change at All

School districts, fire district, the Purissima Water District, Health Department, lighting districts, Flood Control, mosquito abatement, water supply, sewage disposal, refuse collection and any taxes or costs due to them will be completely unaffected by incorporation. Likewise, the County Tax Rate and the County Assessed Valuations will be completely unaffected by incorporation,

Little Change

Building inspection and tax assessment and collection will be continued by the County, under contract.

Important Changes

County zoning classifications, lot sizes, uses and as much of the County Zoning Law as is applicable, will remain in effect. Some large property owners have indicated a wish to have their properties zoned for two acres or more. Areas currently in lots of less than one acre will not be rezoned unless their owners specifically request it. Our own council will be in a position to give much closer and more sympathetic attention to zoning problems than can now be hoped for,

Policing can be by the Sheriff, under contract with the County. General protection will be about the same as now, (answering emergency calls and patrolling) but we can have additional traffic patrol to control our heavy weekend resort traffic and quarry trucking if we wish. Our own traffic ordinances can be designed to suit and to protect our "country lane" type of roads, to stop overloading and reduce accidents. Fines will go to the County. Only if actual cost of service improvements exceed fines, will there be a charge to our town.

Road construction and maintenance (of County roads only) must be assumed by our new town, but this will not cause an increase in taxes. All costs can be met with the State refunds of Gas Taxes and Motor Vehicle License Fees, and all work can be contracted for with private firms or with the County. If we keep our roads as they are now, adopt protective ordinances, and concentrate reconstruction to eliminate points of heaviest repair, we can continue to keep our road costs down, State refunds are on a per capita basis, hence road improvement can be stepped up as our population increases. The cost of new roads for land development will be born by the developers.

THE TOWN BUDGET

Several residents have suggested that the proposed government structure may be inadequate, and the Town Budget too low. We must remember, however, that the new town will have to administer only a few of our services; most of them remain with the County. Also, our town services will be, by our own choice, absolutely minimum because we want to keep our community as free as possible from ordinances, controls and other governmental problems we believe are unnecessary and inappropriate to country living.

The Incorporation Committee has consulted many informed people — experts in government, consulting engineers, business men, officials in County and City departments. Their opinion is that we can have frugality in our government as long as we insist on it. It is simply up to us.

Revenue

State Refunds;
 Gasoline Taxes----- \$10,290
 License Fees----- 16,110
 Utility Franchise----- 1,250
 Building Permits----- 750
 New Town Property Taxes 14,500
 Total Revenue \$42,900

Expenditures

Roads----- \$26,400
 Paid Employee----- 5,000
 Professional assistance 4,500
 Rent, Insurance
 Miscellaneous----- 3,500
 Reserve----- 3,500
 Total Expenditures----- \$42,900

Statistics

Area----- 9.5 square miles County roads----- 29 miles
 Population-- about 2,500 Registered voters-- 1,167

For State Refund purposes the "gas tax" population is three times the number of registered voters, or 3,501.

Gas Tax Refund — 1954 rate — \$2.94 per capita — total about \$10,290.

License Fee Refund—1954 rate — \$4.61 — total about \$16,110.

Total Assessed Valuation of our area — 1953----- \$3,933,890
 1954----- 4,814,680
 1955----- 5,700,000

The new Town Taxes of \$14,500 required, work out to a rate of about 25 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation — an increase of about 4% over our present total tax rate of about \$6.00 per \$100 of assessed valuation. The Town Tax Rate should decrease as our population increases.

INCORPORATION PROCEDURE

Step 1. Technical approval of boundaries by the County. This has been done.

Step 2. Petition requesting the County to hold an election. This will be circulated very soon. The signatures of at least 25% of all the property owners representing at least 25% of the total assessed land valuation (not including buildings) of the area are required. For properties jointly held all of the owners must sign.

Step 3. Boundaries hearings by the Board of Supervisors. Property owners on the boundaries may ask to be left out of the new Town. Hearings will be during the next several months.

Step 4. Election. The County will set the date, which should be before the end of this year. A majority vote of the registered voters is required. Our first council would be elected at the same time.

HOW CAN WE ALL PARTICIPATE?

The initial work of the Incorporation movement, covering more than two years, has been done: fact finding and planning by the original Incorporation Committee; discussion and checking and advice by the larger General Committee. A lot of mileage will be put in by those who will carry the Petition.

It remains, however, for all foothill property owners and residents to carefully study incorporation; to discuss it with neighbors, to suggest and later to select the final name for our community, and to nominate and later to elect our first council.

Name. We must have a name on the Petition. For expediency, the name most frequently mentioned will be used - "Los Altos Hills". Many other names have been proposed, however, and to assure the best choice, appropriate names will be investigated, discussed and voted on during the interval between Petition and Election. Other names already suggested: Purissima Hills (historic), Los Altos Chicos (little heights), Los Altos del Oestos (western hills), San Antonio Hills (historic). One friend has proposed, half seriously that the name should really be Los Statos Quos! Make your own suggestion on your Straw Ballot.

Council. We are very fortunate in having, in our foothills, more than enough capable, responsible people to assure a steady succession of excellent Councils. We should begin nominations now so that a final list of nominees will be ready for the Election. If you would be willing to serve on the Council, please don't let modesty forbid.

Incorporation Fund. Those who wish may contribute to the fund required to defray the cost of the booklet, the Petition, publication of notices which must precede the Election, and other expense items. The total is expected to be about \$2,000. A record of all contributions will be kept and any surplus prorated and refunded. Make checks payable to "Foothills Incorporation Committee" and mail in your Straw Ballot envelope.

Straw Ballot. Please fill in and mail as soon as possible.