

EAST PALO ALTO CITIZENS' COMMITTEE ON INCORPORATION
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A POSITION STATEMENT
CALLING FOR AN INCORPORATION ELECTION IN
EAST PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA ON NOVEMBER 3, 1981

On behalf of the resident voters of East Palo Alto, California who have provided a written endorsement of their desire to participate in an incorporation election, the East Palo Alto Citizens' Committee on Incorporation (EPACCI) hereby petitions the San Mateo Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) and the San Mateo Board of Supervisors to consider and approve the incorporation application submitted to the San Mateo LAFCo on April 10, 1981, and to accordingly take such action so as to ensure that the matter is placed on the ballot for decision by the electorate on November 3, 1981.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

East Palo Alto is an unincorporated, multi-ethnic, suburban community located in the southeastern corner of San Mateo County, California. It is a bayside community covering approximately two and one-half (2 1/2) square miles that is bounded by Palo Alto, Menlo Park and the San Francisco Bay. The legal boundary of East Palo Alto is coterminous with San Mateo County Service Area 5, which includes U.S. Census Tracts 6118, 6119, 6120 and 6121.

The current boundary of East Palo Alto is the direct result of the detachment of valuable properties from the unincorporated territory by San Mateo County. These properties were annexed to the City of Menlo Park (Belle Haven, 1948, and the Kavanaugh Industrial Park, 1960) and to Santa Clara County/Palo Alto (Airport-Marina, 1959).

As an unincorporated community, East Palo Alto is governed by the San Mateo Board of Supervisors, who are empowered by the state to administer all unincorporated territory in the county. The Board of Supervisors is a body of five (5) public officials elected by the resident voters of San Mateo County. Since East Palo Alto has such a small percentage of the county electorate, its residents have no decisive voice in choosing the Board of Supervisors and, consequently, no decisive voice in community governance. In effect, the residents of East Palo Alto are political wards of San Mateo County. There is no direct representative control of local government.

There is considerable evidence of community-wide concern about the fragmentation, quality and adequacy of local governmental services -- community planning, public safety, public works, parks and recreation, sanitation, and other basic municipal services. There is concern about the local environment and the physical character of the community. There is also concern about the diminishing authority of the East Palo Alto Municipal Council and the responsiveness of county government to local needs. These concerns have prompted a local initiative and popular campaign for the incorporation of East Palo Alto.

Historically, the establishment of the Alta Park Council signaled a desire on the part of East Palo Altoans for representative participation in community governance. Formed in the 1960's, the Alta Park Council was a group of local residents who informally advised the Board of Supervisors on community affairs. This group was accorded quasi-advisory status and exercised informal authority on behalf of the community of East Palo Alto.

In 1967, the Board of Supervisors established the East Palo Alto Municipal Council, who are empowered to officially advise the Board on matters concerning East Palo Alto. Since its formation, the Municipal Council has conscientiously served in an advisory capacity. However, in spite of the Council's relatively productive and cooperative relationship with the Board, East Palo Altoans -- on the whole -- are cognizant of the limitations ^{imposed by} of its advisory status.

It was no surprise, therefore, that the Municipal Council ordered the formation of a Citizens' Committee on Incorporation in January, 1980. The Municipal Council was responding to a popular mandate for the formal consideration of incorporation.

Incorporation is not a new idea in East Palo Alto. It is simply an idea whose time has come. Various incorporation studies were prepared with the support of the Municipal Council in 1969 (Henderson et. al.), in 1977 (Gillis et. al.), and in 1979 (Angus McDonald & Associates). Of these studies, only the Angus McDonald "East Palo Alto Fiscal Analysis" concluded that incorporation was fiscally infeasible and this conclusion has been conditionally reversed by its authors.

East Palo Alto is at a crossroads. A significant percentage of the resident voters are petitioning the County of San Mateo to authorize an incorporation election in order that East Palo Altoans can, in the American tradition, decide on incorporation at the ballot box.

EAST PALO ALTO CITIZENS' COMMITTEE ON INCORPORATION (EPACCI)

The East Palo Alto Citizens' Committee on Incorporation, known as EPACCI, was formed by the East Palo Alto Municipal Council on January 15, 1980. EPACCI is a citizens' group that is empowered to coordinate a study of the legal, fiscal and organizational alternatives for the incorporation of East Palo Alto, and to file an incorporation application with San Mateo County. By mutual agreement, the EPACCI functions independently of, but in cooperation with, the East Palo Alto Municipal Council.

The EPACCI is organized into five (5) subcommittees under the direction of a Coordinating Committee. The five (5) subcommittees and their functions are as follows:

- Incorporation Application Committee: to prepare and file an incorporation application with San Mateo County, including a municipal organization plan for the proposed new city, a three-year projection of revenues and expenditures with recommended annual budgets, and an analysis of the Environmental Impact Report issued by the San Mateo LAFCo on the "Sphere of Influence Study".
- Voter Registration Committee: to increase the number of registered voters to a minimum of 10,000 so as to ensure broad community participation on the ballot question in November, 1981.
- Education Committee: to increase public awareness about the pros and cons of incorporation through the dissemination of information about the legal, fiscal and organizational alternatives for the incorporation of East Palo Alto.
- Publicity Committee: to produce and distribute a variety of public informational materials to create an informed public on the issue of incorporation.
- Fund Raising Committee: to raise sufficient funds to ensure the accomplishment of the tasks outlined above.

The membership of EPACCI is extensive, consisting of active and supporting members -- mostly long time residents of East Palo Alto representing public agencies, homeowners, churches, businesses, seniors and youth. Several hundreds are currently involved in implementing the various tasks of the subcommittees.

EAST PALO ALTO DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

East Palo Alto had the most rapid population growth during the 1950's. From approximately 1,000 persons in 1925, the population increased to 2,000 persons in 1940, to 8,000 persons in 1950, and to 20,000 persons in 1960.

**Much of the basic information on the demography of East Palo Alto has been derived from the U.S. Census, primarily the 1970 census since data from the 1980 census is not available. The source documents were the "Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Menlo Park/East Palo Alto and Districts Sphere of Influence Study" prepared by LAFCo staff and the "Report Supporting Application for Incorporation Election in East Palo Alto" prepared by the Stanford Research Institute International.

During the 1950-1960 decade, the population more than doubled with most of the growth occurring in U.S. Census Tracts 6118, 6119, and 6120.

The 1970 census reported a population of 17,837, of which sixty-one percent (61%) was Black, twenty-seven percent (27%) caucasian, seven percent (7%) Hispanic, and five percent (5%) other non-white. The preliminary data for the 1980 census indicates a current population of approximately 18,000 persons.

East Palo Alto has a relatively young population and also a significant population of single-parent families, seniors and various ethnic minorities. Many of the households have comparatively modest incomes. In 1970, the median family income in East Palo Alto was approximately seventy-one percent (71%) of the median family income for San Mateo County.

The 1970 census reported that there were approximately 6,400 households in East Palo Alto. U.S. Census Tracts 6118, 6119, and 6120 had eighty-one percent (81%) single-family dwellings, of which fifty-three percent (53%) were owner occupied. U.S. Census Tract 6121 had eighty-four percent (84%) multi-family dwellings, of which ninety-two percent (92%) were renter-occupied. Construction of the Bayshore Freeway (U.S. Highway 101) appears to have given impetus to the existing pattern of high density, largely non-minority apartment dwellings in U.S. Census Tract 6121, and predominantly single-family, largely minority dwellings in U.S. Census Tracts 6118, 6119, and 6120.

These demographic factors have important implications for municipal planning, economic development, and the delivery of basic public services in East Palo Alto. The unincorporated territory of East Palo Alto has a rich history, a diverse population, and significant potential for rebuilding its economic and social infrastructure through incorporation of a municipality.

THE CASE FOR INCORPORATION

For more than a decade, East Palo Altoans have been raising the question of municipal incorporation. Throughout this period, the community has been propagandized -- both from without and within -- about its fiscal instability and the lack of an adequate tax base to support municipal government. Fortunately, this propaganda has been objectively challenged and determined to be without foundation.

Based upon the enclosed report prepared by the Stanford Research Institute International ("Report Supporting Application for Incorporation Election in East Palo Alto"), it has been demonstrated that East Palo Alto has more than adequate potential revenues to sustain public services at the same or higher levels than are now provided by San Mateo County and the various special districts. Furthermore, there is substantial evidence to indicate that neighborhood revitalization is underway in East Palo Alto, that constructive development programs are in place, and that overall socio-economic decline has been reversed.

Therefore, the petitioners reasonably conclude that incorporation is not only fiscally feasible, but the most viable fiscal alternative for the unincorporated territory of East Palo Alto.

For more than a decade, East Palo Altoans have been raising the question of direct representative control of local government. Throughout this period, the community has been propagandized about the lack of indigenous leadership for managing its own affairs. Fortunately, this propaganda has also been challenged and determined to be without foundation.

Given the rich governmental experience of the East Palo Alto Municipal Council and the special districts, as well as the comparatively extensive local participation in civic affairs by a broad cross-section of residents, the community of East Palo Alto has generated a wealth of human resources

and leadership with the unequivocal capability and capacity to organize and manage the proposed new city.

Therefore, the petitioners reasonably conclude that incorporation is not only politically feasible, but the most viable political alternative for the unincorporated territory of East Palo Alto.

For more than a decade, East Palo Altoans have been questioning the adequacy of municipal services. Throughout this period, the community has been propagandized about the quality of such services and the responsiveness of county government to local needs.

The basic evidence is that East Palo Alto does not receive public services comparable to those of any incorporated municipality in San Mateo County. In fact, public services are fragmented in that they are provided by eight special districts and various departments of San Mateo County. This piecemeal approach to providing services is a basic reason for their comparatively inferior quality. The fragmentation and overlapping of public services is the direct result of not having an effective governmental structure for their organization, management and delivery.

Therefore, the petitioners reasonably conclude that incorporation is not only functionally feasible, but the most viable organizational alternative for the delivery of public services based upon the principles of efficiency, economy, and responsiveness to local needs.

It is becoming increasingly clear that incorporation affords the best opportunity for improving the quality of life in East Palo Alto, and for extending its vast potential for economic growth and social revitalization. East Palo Alto possesses the human and material resources needed to build a great city. We are petitioning for the legal authority to chart our own future and to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

There is but one fundamental question, namely, if the community of East

Palo Alto is to genuinely rebuild and establish a foundation for long-term productive development, who is better suited for guiding and channeling this development than the residents of East Palo Alto themselves. Incorporation is fiscally, politically and organizationally feasible. It is an idea whose time has come.

What is basically required is that East Palo Alto obtain the legal jurisdiction under a new city government to rebuild and rebound. Let us hope that this message -- so basic to the American tradition -- will not be forgotten when the final decision on East Palo Alto is rendered.