

THE PETITION TO INCORPORATE EAST PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

East Palo Alto is an unincorporated urban community in San Mateo County. Because of its unincorporated status, East Palo Alto is governed by the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, which administers all unincorporated area within the county.

The San Mateo Board of Supervisors is a body five public officials who are elected by the county-at-large. Since East Palo Alto has less than three percent of the total county population, the residents have no significant voice in choosing the elected officials who are responsible for governing the community; in effect, the eighteen thousand residents of East Palo Alto are externally governed wards of San Mateo County.

There is growing community-wide dissatisfaction with local conditions: the physical and social environment; the quality of municipal services (public safety, community planning, public works, and recreation); the limited economic and employment opportunities; the diminishing influence of the Municipal Advisory Council; and the generally ineffective response of county government to local needs. These factors have prompted a revival of local concern about municipal governance in East Palo Alto.

Historically, the first major attempt at local governance was the formation of the East Palo Alto Municipal Advisory Council in 1967. The Municipal Council is empowered by the Board of Supervisors to serve as the quasi-governing body on community affairs. Over the years, the Municipal Council has conscientiously served the community. However, in spite of its accomplishments, the Municipal Council has always been cognizant of the limitations of its advisory status.

It was no surprise, therefore, when in January 1980, the Municipal Council ordered the formation of a Citizens' Committee on Incorporation and appointed its initial membership of twenty-five (25) residents. The Municipal Council was responding to a growing mandate to provide leadership in mobilizing the community to consider the alternative of incorporation.

The East Palo Alto Citizens' Committee on Incorporation (EPACCI) was empowered to coordinate local efforts toward incorporating East Palo Alto into a municipality. During the past two years, EPACCI has raised many thousands of dollars, registered several thousand voters, prepared and submitted an incorporation petition to San Mateo County, and mobilized a broad segment of the community. Its sole purpose has been to marshal the human, financial, and technical resources necessary to incorporate East Palo Alto.

Incorporation is the establishment of a new city. When incorporated, a community elects its own city council and, through its elected officials, controls

land-use, planning and development, city services, and all other municipal affairs. In other words, the city council is responsible for the physical, economic and social development of the community.

City services in East Palo Alto are presently provided by ten special districts and the County of San Mateo. The services are fragmented, uncoordinated, and -- for the most part -- controlled by elected and appointed officials who are not accountable to local residents. The piece-meal approach to providing basic municipal services is one of the major reasons for their inferior quality and why the community exerts so little influence over local public policy. The fragmentation and overlapping of services is the direct result of not having an effective governmental structure to address the salient human needs in East Palo Alto.

Incorporation has been determined to be the best alternative for improving the quality of life in East Palo Alto. It has been reasonably demonstrated that the new city will generate sufficient income from a variety of local, state and federal sources which is more than adequate to pay for the costs of local services. It has been demonstrated that East Palo Alto has a broad base of experienced leadership to chart the future of the new city. It has been demonstrated that the consolidation and coordination of municipal services will substantially improve the vast potential for local economic development. And it has been demonstrated that the advantages of incorporation far outweigh the disadvantages.

Despite arguments to the contrary, it has been established that the incorporation of East Palo Alto is a substantially more viable alternative

than annexation to Menlo Park or the status quo. Incorporation is an idea whose time has come!

East Palo Alto possesses the human and material resources needed to build a great city. It has a promising future and now the opportunity to realize that future through prudent and creative local government.

No longer should East Palo Alto settle for participating in the election of a single Supervisor from outside the community to represent us; we can elect our own city council and still participate in electing the Supervisor.

No longer should East Palo Alto settle for fragmented, inadequate services; we can form a city that provides quality services based upon the principles of efficiency, economy and responsiveness.

No longer should East Palo Alto look to others for solutions to our local problems; we are fully capable of solving them ourselves.

INCORPORATION is the only viable alternative...

- o a locally elected city council
- o local control of planning, land-use and programs
- o more responsive local government
- o improved city services
- o increased local participation and accountability