

Block bank's closing

As regular customers of the Bank of America in East Palo Alto, we find the announcement of its closing disappointing and the reason given for its closing absurd.

First, the loss of the bank will greatly inconvenience East Palo Alto residents and the members of its business community who have come to rely on its service. Once again we will be forced to go "across the freeway" for an essential service.

Secondly, with the momentum steadily building for incorporation, the bank's relocation will deprive the community of a tax base essential to the incorporation effort and may unfairly discourage other businesses from locating here.

Third, the assertion by the bank's management that violent attacks upon its customers are a major reason for the closing just doesn't ring true. We have utilized the bank's services frequently over the past five years and not once have we been accosted. Not once have we heard other customers complain of this alleged crime wave or express any fears about doing business at the bank.

When one considers that (1) the sher-

iff's substation is literally in the bank's back yard, and (2) in the past year there have been only four crimes committed at or near the bank (i.e. two purse snatches, one unarmed robbery, and one forgery, per Lt. Frank, San Mateo County Sheriff's Department), this assertion of constant violent attacks on the bank's patrons simply cannot be supported, and, in fact, smacks of racism.

In the past, many people outside of the community have tended to view East Palo Alto as an undesirable place to live and work so that an allegation of a "crime wave," without more, might have been accepted by the public to justify the bank's action. Fortunately, this myth about the East Palo Alto community has been dispelled in recent years with the move into the area of professional businesses, the growth of real estate development, the rising support for incorporation, and the general enlightenment of the public. As a result, we cannot sit idly by and accept this explanation as justification for the bank's sudden departure.

If the real reason for the bank's closing is fiscal inability to survive, then investigation into its management is warranted, particularly in light of the facts that the only other bank in the community has no plans to dismantle its operation, and East Palo Alto's first savings and loan will soon open its doors. Hopefully, residents of the community and patrons of the bank will push for an immediate inquiry and if possible, take appropriate steps to block this proposed move.

LaDoris and Gary Cordell
EAST PALO ALTO