

# More Office Space, Larger Staff Needed By Assessor's Office, Survey Claims

Santa Cruz county's assessor operates an efficient department using modern methods but is hindered by inadequate office space and a need for a larger appraisal staff, a survey conducted for the state board of equalization points out.

The study, made last summer, was released today by County Assessor Harold Kane.

The report put special emphasis on three areas to improve local efficiency:

1. Office space should be increased and integrated.
2. Original map tracings should be brought up-to-date.
3. Population growth creates a demand for a larger appraisal staff.

The assessor's office is located in three separate buildings in downtown Santa Cruz. All clerical operations are situated in the courthouse but it is divided into two locations separated by the main hallway.

Appraisal operations are located in a separate building across from the courthouse while the drafting department is in a building three blocks away.

"It takes little imagination to envision the lost time and unnecessary expense involved in walking from one location to another," says Howard Childs, specialist who made the survey for the board of equalization.

"The total space of the four separate areas is not only deficient in functional utility but the gross area of 4125 square feet is inadequate.

"We estimate the current space needs to be 4610 square feet."

The department should be situated in a single location in order that costly, inconvenient personnel movements between separate offices may be avoided.

Although the cadastral maps are of excellent quality and the indexes to 98 map books are adequate, the original tracings have not been updated since 1953, according to Childs.

In order that counter maps may be protected from further deterioration, a program should be immediately instituted to bring the existing original tracings up to date.

The report recommends using a photographic process utilizing the existing counter set of maps.

In the next four years, the appraisal staff should be increased from 15 to 27 members, including a chief appraiser, four associate appraisers, an associate auditor-appraiser and two auditor-appraisers.

Childs said the staff workload should be re-analyzed in four years to determine if more personnel are needed.

A larger staff is needed to maintain the present high quality of the assessment roll. Increased expenditure for more personnel is justified by the continuing need for an equitable distribution of the tax obligation in the county, the report states.

Other recommendations made in the report include:

—discontinuance of the "key-line" which briefly describes parcels.

—assessor's office should retain its own punch-card operators.

—tax collecting duties of unsecured taxes should be turned over to the county tax collector.

—appraisal clerks should be hired to relieve appraisers of clerical work they now do which cannot be handled by regular clerks.

—assessment equalization should be maintained at current levels.

—valuation of standing timber should be undertaken at an early date.

—office space should be allowed for gradual expansion to 5810 square feet by 1970.

—salaries for appraisers should not be determined by the size or wealth of the county because appraisers in small counties must have the qualifications as those in the large ones.

—the assessor's budget should be increased significantly to improve appraisal records.

The state board had the survey made on Kane's request.