

Scotts Valley copes with growth

By JOHN BESSA
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SCOTTS VALLEY — When Carl Taylor came to Scotts Valley, back in the early 1940s, he enjoyed life in the great outdoors.

He could hunt deer in the valley, or pull trout from Carbonero Creek.

Camp Evers Store was where residents bought groceries, and 98 kids attended the local school. Dairies straddled the highway.

Now, about 1,400 kids are school-age, the nearest supply of milk is at Safeway, Nob Hill or Zannotto's, and the only shooting you can do is in the video arcade on Mt. Hermon Road.

With home growth that has outpaced that of any other community in the county, and home prices and salaries of residents on the rise, the city has left behind its image as a hunting or fishing spot, and gained one as kin to the affluent communities of the county.

"It's been a pleasure living here, but these Johnny-come-latelys came in and wanted to govern everything," Taylor, 72, complained of the headaches resulting from incorporation in 1966.

When the 50-year resident refers

to Johnny-come-latelys, he means just about everyone in the community.

One-half of the city's 8,615 residents surveyed in the 1990 census said they didn't live there in 1985, according to U.S. Census Bureau data. One-quarter of them said they lived in a different house, and another quarter said they lived in a different county.

As with any growing community, development and its attending problems are high on the list of concerns for residents.

But the town of newcomers isn't shutting its doors, said Michael Shulman, city councilman and former chairman of the Planning Commission. Most residents want to make sure development is done right.

"We don't have a large vocal contingent saying 'stop all development,'" Shulman said. "We probably have some, but they don't come to the meetings."

"I wouldn't say the city or citizens are pro-development. I'd say they are more interested in the quality (of growth)," Shulman said.

According to the city's general plan, the city will be "built out" by the year 2005, Shulman said. If the

three major developments now in the works are developed to their maximum density, that would mean about 15,000 residents in the valley, he said.

Such prospects are keeping the city busy in a game of catch-up, Shulman said.

Past development was haphazard and didn't pay enough attention to transportation, he said, leading to clogged roads in the city during peak hours.

"Really what has hurt Scotts Valley was there was no cohesive plan until the general plan of '86," he said. "By then it was virtually impossible to go back and recreate the transportation structure."

What the plan provides for is the development of three large parcels in the city limits, including the land formerly occupied by Santa's Village, the former Skypark airport site and the Glenwood Estates property, totaling nearly 500 acres.

Shulman said the city will probably end up building homes that are less expensive and denser to accommodate the next wave of new residents.

"There's not that much open space left," Shulman said. "We've got a high supply of \$300,000 hous-

es — we need more in between."

The median home value here in 1990 was \$303,100, compared to the county median of \$256,100. Only three other communities had higher median values — Day Valley, Rio Del Mar and Aptos/La Selva Beach, according to census data.

One area where Scotts Valley hasn't grown is in poverty.

The city has the lowest poverty rate in the county, with 3.8 percent of the population below the poverty lines, compared to the county average of 10.7 percent, according to census data. That comes out to about 327 people.

In keeping with high home prices, rents in Scotts Valley were up there, too, with median rents at \$901 a month, second highest in the county.

"I really like it here, but I live in Santa Cruz," said Renee Alex, who works at Zannotto's market in Scotts Valley but enjoys less expensive housing in Santa Cruz. "I was going to get an apartment here and it was a lot — like \$800 — it was really expensive. A lot of wealthy people live in this town."

Many of those wealthy people make their money outside of Scotts Valley, according to census data.



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

The Vineyard homes, completed in 1992, are typical of Scotts Valley development. As open space shrinks, new houses may be denser and less expensive, officials say.

More than one-third of the workers living in Scotts Valley have jobs outside the county. The mean travel time to work is 28 minutes, according to census data, and 77.1 percent drive to work alone.

"It is very convenient to go to Silicon Valley," said Ken Agarwal, an 11-year resident who used to make the daily drive over Highway 17. "I did not want to come far, yet I wanted to live in a place with such a rural feeling. I still regard it as rural."

Work isn't the only reason resi-

dents leave the city, according to Alex. The skating rink and movie theaters aren't enough for amusement, she said.

"Most of the people who live in Scotts Valley go to Santa Cruz for entertainment," Alex said.

And while there is an abundance of shopping malls and chain stores, the community lacks diversions, Agarwal said.

"Scotts Valley does lack one thing — it lacks a YMCA, or a community recreation facility, especially swimming pools," he said.