

Dptos - 1990



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Lucile Aldrich, a longtime Aptos resident, opposes cityhood to forestall developments in Aptos Village, like this one near Nisene Parks State Park.

Aptos: urban or suburban?

Growth renews debate over cityhood

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APTOS — Some say the community of Aptos has grown up.

Located along Highway 1 and rural roads that wind through cozy country as well as modern suburban neighborhoods, Aptos's population has climbed to more than 9,000 residents, according to 1990 census figures.

In the last decade, the population has bloomed by 29 percent, making it one of the fastest growing communities in Santa Cruz County.

Like a child that has reached adulthood, Aptos is ready to make it on its own, according to those who want to see it become a city.

"The area has become urbanized," said attorney Kelly Walker, a supporter of Aptos incorporation. "It's more like a community than just an area of the county. It has become more self-sufficient over the last 10 years."

The latest census portrays Aptos as an area where a large number of homes were built in the last 20 years. Only 5 percent predate 1940.

"With that type of growth, there have been the problems commensurate with growth," Walker said.

Traffic, parking and road deterioration are all issues, he said.

Proponents of cityhood contend that Aptos could incorporate and deal with its problems better than Santa Cruz County can.

"We're looking for local control," Walker said.

If the population were smaller, supporters of cityhood probably wouldn't feel as strongly about incorporation, he said.

The census puts the borders of Aptos at Day Valley in the north, Highway 1 in the south, Freedom Boulevard in the east and Aptos Creek in the west. It shows Aptos is a community where a large number of its workers, 78 percent, are in white-collar professions and earn more than the county median.

The median household income here is \$39,974 while the mean value of homes is \$308,696, among the highest in the county, according to census figures.

Aptos Village, a historic neighborhood established in 1851, is "poised to see more commercial activity," said Ed Newman, spokesman for the partnership that

owns the historic Hotel Bayview in the village.

The area is recovering from the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, which claimed several businesses, and is near the entrance to the popular Forest of the Nisene Marks State Park, he said.

Not all agree that Aptos should become the county's fifth city.

Lucile Aldrich, a longtime resident known as the unofficial mayor of Aptos, opposes incorporation. If it becomes a city, developers would build throughout Aptos, destroying the area's natural beauty, she said. Her neighborhood and the nearby village, for the most part, are the same as they were 30 years ago, she said.

Aldrich, who moved to Aptos in May 1961, said it was an ideal place to raise her three children. It is close to the beach and has places to fish and ride horses, she said.

Many of the new residents in Aptos are also people raising their children, census figures show. Nearly 50 percent of the households are married-couple families — 20 percent of those have children.

Paul Elerick, who worked for IBM Corp. for 30 years and now serves as a technical coordinator at a San Jose firm, moved to Aptos almost 23 years ago because it was a good neighborhood to raise his children.

Like Aldrich, he opposes incorporation. "It's another layer of government," he said, adding that the county has served the community well.

Without Measure J, the county's slow-growth initiative, Aptos would have become even more developed, according to Elerick. Incorporation, he said, would change the "slow growth" attitude and bring with it more people and more industries.

"It would be far more dense," he said.

The two sides may be able to voice their opinions in a June election. Supporters of cityhood have asked the county Board of Supervisors to put the issue on the ballot for an advisory poll to see if the community wants to incorporate.

The Aptos Incorporation Group would pay for the election estimated to cost between \$5,000 and \$10,000, Walker said.

The vote, he said, would let supporters know whether to go ahead and try to raise the approximately \$100,000 needed for an environmental study.