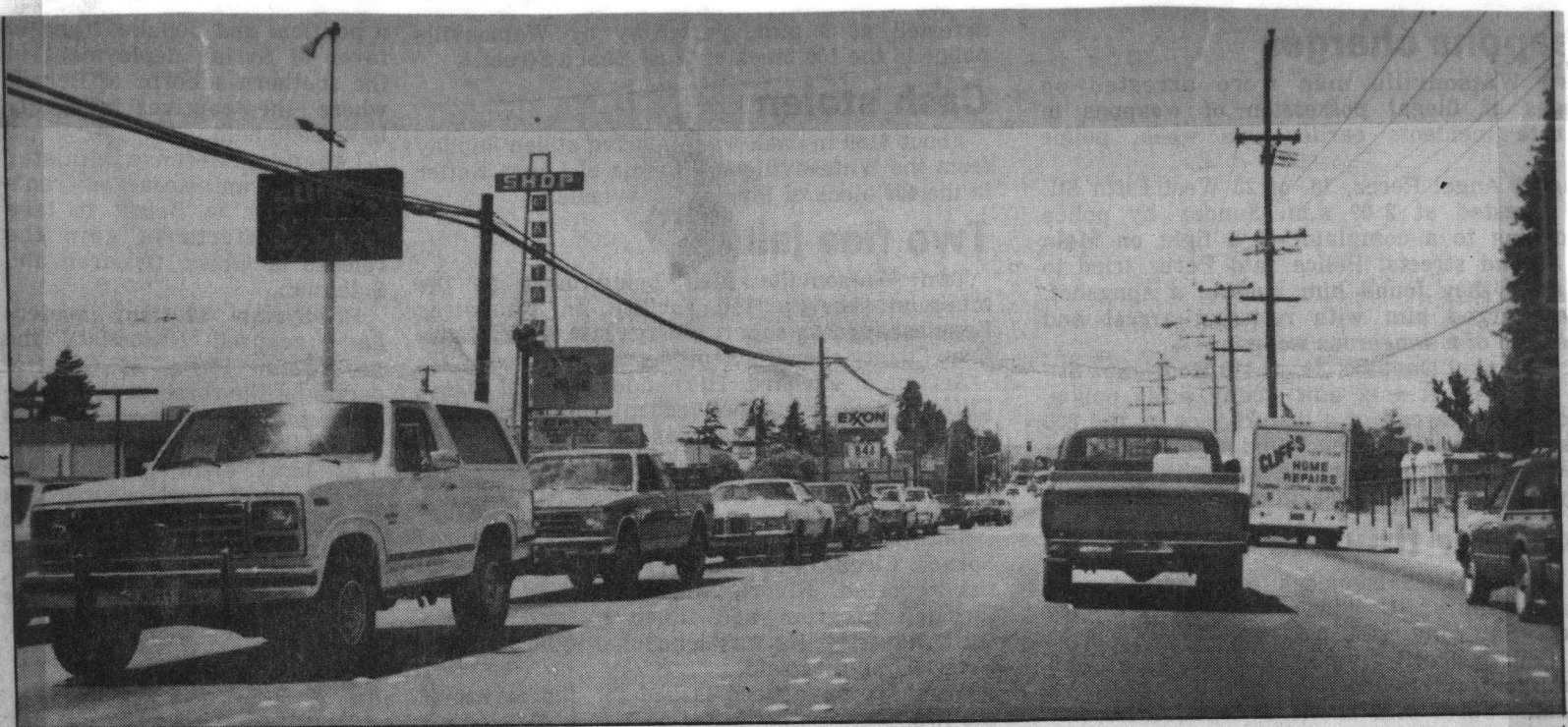


WATSONVILLE
Planning - 1986-1989

REFERENCE



Diane Varni

Driving on Freedom Boulevard these days isn't much different from driving in a big city.

City has its share of urban woes

By NANCY BARR
STAFF WRITER

Watsonville may be considered a small, hick town by most outsiders, but to the person who lives downtown or who drives along Riverside Drive, it's just like living in a big city.

The population density downtown and the traffic on Riverside Drive both approximate the conditions of a big city, according to statistics compiled by the city.

The statistics are part of a background report for the committee revising the city's General Plan. While the thrust of the information included in the report — traffic on Riverside and crowded conditions down-

town, for instance — may not be any surprise, the numbers are enlightening, if only to accentuate the impressions people already have of the city.

When we say downtown is crowded, we mean by comparison to every other residential area in the Pajaro Valley. There are almost 13,000 people per square mile in the downtown.

That's right on a par with the population densities of Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia and far more crowded than Los Angeles or San Jose.

It's also more than twice as crowded as the next most dense area in the Pajaro Valley, which is along Green Valley Road, with about 6,000

people per square mile.

The least-densely-populated areas in the Pajaro Valley are around Harkins Slough, Buena Vista and Pinto Lake, all of which have so much undeveloped land surrounding their residential developments that the person-per-square-mile averages are low.

About that traffic on Riverside Drive: There's been an increase of 163 percent in traffic east of Main Street from 1968 to 1980. Those are the years the Planning Department used for comparison.

Although Riverside Drive has shown the most dramatic increase in traffic, it still isn't Watsonville's busiest street.

There should be no question in any motorist's mind which street is — Freedom Boulevard, south of Green Valley Road, served an average of 24,000 cars and trucks a day in 1980.

Next busiest was Main Street (north of Lake Avenue) used by 22,000 cars a day, followed by Riverside Drive (east of Main) and Main Street (north of Freedom Boulevard), each of which is traveled by almost 16,000 vehicles a day.

Don't forget, these figures are all seven years old, so there is undoubtedly more traffic on these streets now, especially on North Main

Street, where there has been intensive development in recent years.

Watsonville is a blue-collar town, with far less than its share of executives and professionals when compared with the rest of the county. Watsonville provides 29 percent of all the county's farming and fishing workers, 23 percent of low-skilled jobs classified as "handlers, cleaners and helpers," 21 percent of the county's machine operators and inspectors and 20 percent of the county's workers in transportation and "material moving".

The percentages of Watsonville residents holding higher-skilled jobs pales by comparison. Only 3 percent of all technicians in the county, 5 percent of the county's professionals, and 8 percent of the county's executives and managers live in Watsonville.

Other comparisons of Watsonville residents with the residents of the rest of the county show marriage and children are more popular in the South County than north.

According to 1980 census data, Watsonville residents make up 12½ percent of the county's total population. Yet, when it comes to young children, 18 percent of all the county's pre-schoolers live in Watsonville.

When it comes to marriage, Watsonville residents account for fewer than 10 percent of the people in the county who have never married.

The five years ending with

1982 saw growth in both the number of farms in Santa Cruz County and the acreage in cultivation. Sixteen farms began operation in those five years, and more than 6,000 acres were added to agricultural production.

During that same period, there was a 28 percent increase in acreage devoted to strawberries. By 1985, more acreage was put into berries, leading to a total of 1,450 acres — a 57 percent increase in 10 years.

As to acreage inside the city, as of 1985 one-third of the land was zoned for housing, 19 percent was zoned for industry, 14 percent was taken up with streets and 9 percent was zoned for commercial use. About 24 percent of the land was in other uses, which could include churches and schools and miscellaneous uses.

Some 670 acres were vacant.

While most Watsonville residents think of Pinto Lake or Kelly Lake for lake recreation, there is a much bigger lake in the area — College Lake.

College Lake covers 220 acres. The problem is, it's only a lake in winter and even then is seldom deep enough for serious recreational use.

Pinto Lake covers about 80 acres and Kelly Lake covers about 70 acres.

The statistics in the report prepared by the Planning Department and quoted in this article come from the department itself, the city's master plan for major streets, the U.S. Census Bureau, the Department of Commerce's U.S. Census of Agriculture and the Santa Cruz County Crop Report.

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