

# Live Oak—From Farming Area To Talk Of Cityhood

By BRUCE McPHERSON  
Sentinel Staff Writer

Live Oak, an unincorporated area that has seen a great change in land uses since the early part of the century, now finds itself in the middle of a land "freeze."

Once mainly an agricultural sector, it is now approaching predominantly commercial and residential uses.

The "freeze," to continue until March, 1970 (unless extended), originally was granted last March when discussions of annexation began focusing on the five-square-mile section bordered by Highway 1 and the bay, and the city limits of Santa Cruz and Capitola.

Under the "freeze," annexations in the 41st Avenue area cannot take place until the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFC) makes a decision on where the ultimate boundaries

of Santa Cruz and Capitola will be.

LAFC executive director Ed Hanna said the "freeze" also was ordered to give Live Oak residents a chance to digest the UCSC feasibility study of a Mid-County city from Live Oak to La Selva Beach.

Hanna added the "freeze" does not affect proposals for incorporation. And just this week, directors of the Live Oak Improvement Association asked LAFC for forms necessary to move ahead with incorporation procedures (for a city that would also include Santa Cruz Gardens). Hanna said applications for incorporation "may legitimately be brought before LAFC at any time (this has not been done yet), freeze or not."

Live Oak has not been subject to such conditions before, but it may have been expected when

one observes the changes in the area over the years.

Originally, the area consisted of orchards, vegetable and berry farms and some dairy ranches.

This type of farming gave way to the poultry business in the 1930s to 1950s.

"In about 1948," said Ed Koch, county director of the UC Agricultural Extension Service, "there were about 200 poultry ranches each with about 2000 birds in the county, and I would guess Live Oak had more than half of them."

However, increased labor costs and a decrease in income forced small farmers at first, and later larger landholders, to move to the valley (Gilroy), according to Koch.

Coupled with the residential impact that began about 1950, farmers who needed large parcels of land in order to farm

at a profit, looked for greener pastures.

Now, Koch said the largest agricultural uses in the area are for bulb, mushroom and flower production, since these types of farms don't require as much land space.

The UCSC mid-County Incorporation feasibility study completed this year shows that as of August, 1962, only 7 per cent of Live Oak's land use is for "agriculture, greenspace." other percentage figures at that time were: vacant-40; public-4; residential-30; industrial-4; retail or commercial-15.

Koch says that agriculture in Live Oak "is just about dead now. I would estimate about 3 per cent of the land is being used for agriculture."

The only vegetable farmer in the area with 20 or more acres is Emilio Maggiolo. He came to the area in 1924 and recalls

taking crops to the farmers exchange for sale at Knight and Bulkhead Streets at North Pacific Avenue. "We used to barter foods at the market too," he said.

He added, "I guess the second generation found the five-day, eight-hour-a-day work week more enticing than farming. When I first came here, there weren't many people here and we weren't talking about annexation either."

The names of Moran, Corcoran, Woods, Thompson, which remain as place names, were big names in an earlier agricultural era, according to lifelong Live Oak resident Ray Amaya. He is a descendant of the Francisco Rodriguez family that was granted the territory by the Mexican government in 1834.

Mrs. Ethel Brookshire, who has resided in Live Oak for

years, is another who remembers it as a farming community. She said the Santa Cruz-Live Oak Grange was formed in 1932 and most of its members were farmers and school teachers "who wanted to help in community affairs."

She was reminded of the changes over the years when her daughter, Vanda Caldwell, said, "Since 1963, people been unable to bring in horses in the area."

This is true. The county, following adoption of its 1961 General Plan, developed a precise zoning plan for Live Oak in 1963 that included an increase in residential, commercial and industrial uses. Although there may still be some cattle grazing in agricultural areas along 41st Avenue, it is a violation for one to have a horse, sheep or other type of livestock in the

more densely populated (residential) areas of Live Oak.

The county has developed a zoning plan which senior planner Henry Baker describes as, "A device that shows what is there today and what will probably be there in 1990."

Its farms and ranches almost extinct now, Live Oak, with its favorable weather conditions, is certain to develop as a more densely populated area in the future.

And of course, commercial uses are sure to be on the rise with the eventual development of 41st Avenue.

Said Maggiolo with a recollection of the past, "Farming is a good life, but a rough one. Many of us have been caught in the price squeeze and had to move. Live Oak has changed a great deal since I first came here."