

# Opinion

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## Sentinel Editorial

# Growth Challenge

The latest population forecasts by the State Department of Finance present an imposing challenge to local governments.

The state says Santa Cruz County may have a population of 310,300 persons by the year 2000 compared to the present population of 164,500.

While the growth seems somewhat high, it would be somewhat less than what appears to be taking place at the present.

Utilizing past data, the county's growth increased by 20 per cent from 1970 to 1975, reflecting a numerical growth of about 5000 persons a year.

In the past two years, using state information, the growth has been at the rate of about 7,600 persons a year. Using a 23-year period in the state long range forecast, the growth would average about 6,300 persons a year.

There is no question that when you consider that we have water problems due to the drought, horrendous traffic congestion due to our failure to keep transportation facilities in pace with vehicle registration growth, it is easy to become somewhat aghast that our population may almost double in the next 20 or so years.

We are inclined to believe the forecast may be on the high side, but our opinion is just as hazy as any long range approach to what may happen in the decades ahead.

But the real problem is not whether we are happy about what may occur, but rather what we can do to accommodate the present population of the county and the future needs of the citizenry.

Growth effects from the development of the University of California campus have pretty much ended, at least for the present time due to the reduction of development on the campus.

The same situation may not apply to enrollment at

Cabrillo College although one could assume that most of the Cabrillo growth may occur with students now living in the area even though such an assumption would not be true in recent years.

The basic growth in the county has taken place simply by the fact that more and more people want to live here.

While it is possible that the growth rate may be reduced if the amenities of life here are adversely affected by the growth, this reaction has not been the case in the past few years.

Thus, it becomes incumbent upon local governments to move ahead towards meeting the demands of the increased population.

It becomes imperative that we improve our facilities to serve the people. We cannot ignore the need for a safe level of water service, of improved transportation facilities, including transit development and an improvement to our surface transportation system.

We must do a better job of providing adequate services in sanitation, in solid waste collections and the myriad of services essential to the well being of the citizenry.

The current trend toward greater residential development outside of the areas provided with urban services will make the task even more difficult.

But, perhaps, the greatest challenge on all is to maintain a balanced development which will allow the county (and the cities) to be financially able to meet the needs of all the people, all of the time.

Economic growth must be commensurate with population growth. We cannot risk of the dangers of a community which only the wealthy can afford.

Thus, it is imperative that the general balance which exists fairly well today be maintained for the future, a factor that has been overlooked too often recently.

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