

# Next Big Boom Seen in North L.A. County

## Survey Lists Variety of Factors

BY RAY ZEMAN

Times County Bureau Chief

North County—two simple words which in the past have spelled an area of abandoned gold mines, pioneer oil drilling and many hog and turkey farms—loomed Monday in a comprehensive report as the site of Los Angeles' next major boom.

Aircraft plants today, completion of a freeway to the Antelope Valley by the mid-1960s and delivery of Feather River water by 1975 are key factors spelled out in a Regional Planning Commission survey.

North County—a phrase destined to become as well known as Hollywood or San Fernando Valley—includes 2,260 of Los Angeles County's 4,083 square miles.

### Boom Began in 1950

Its boom really began in 1950, when its total population was only 26,085. It more than trebled to 82,950 by January, 1960. By 1980 the Regional Planning Commission believes it will hit 750,000.

By the year 2000 this desert-and-mountain region will complete a half-century jump from 26,085 persons to a new figure of 1,720,000, planners are confident.

Where is North County? It's mainly the upper or northern half of Los Angeles County. It encompasses much of the Antelope Valley, the Newhall-Saugus area and the Acton-Agua Dulce area.

### Early Gold Discovery

It's where historians say the first gold in California really was discovered—in Placerita Canyon in 1842. It's where California's first commercial productive oil well, California Star No. 4, was completed near Newhall in 1875.

It's where Henry M. Newhall acquired the deed to Rancho San Francisco in 1875 and most of its croplands have been held by the Newhall family since through a corporation—the Newhall Land & Farming Co.

North County has had booms before—when the Southern Pacific tunneled through the mountains and completed its line from San Francisco to Los Angeles in 1876. And when the Santa Fe engaged in a passenger rate war with SP after completing tracks via San Bernardino to Los Angeles in 1885.

But it was zoned for practically anything until aircraft plants arrived and the approach of a freeway and water spelled an inevitable economic upheaval.

Supervisor Warren M. Dorn, in whose domain

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North County lies, recalled that it was largely M-3 zoning, which he calls "anything goes," until February, 1957. Then, at Dorn's motion, the Board of Supervisors froze all unzoned land as A-22, or agricultural.

More hog farms, more wrecking yards couldn't move in without specific rezoning.

## Protection Offered

"I thought they'd either hang me or recall me," Dorn commented. "One night when I went to speak at Sulphur Springs School I saw 12 Sheriff's deputies waiting to guard me. A captain asked, 'Will this be enough?'"

It really took two years to complete the rezoning, area by area.

RR—meaning resort and recreation—was a new zoning for mountain areas. A scientific and instrument zone was another.

"We used to build an airport, wait for homes to encroach near it, then see the residents complain and kick the airport out," Dorn said. "Now we have a new zone (M-2½) which forbids anything but compatible industry near the airport. The airport stays."

## Frills Widely Copied

Several of these new zoning frills have been copied on a large scale by other jurisdictions. Washington is using the airport type on all new plans.

Isn't North County fearful of defense contract cutbacks?

"Hardly," replied Dorn. "We break ground tomorrow (Tuesday) at Palmdale for a new Federal Aviation Agency control center for all of Southern California."

"This is being transferred from Los Angeles International Airport and will employ 450 persons . . . North American Aviation has started a B-70 program which will employ 5,000 . . ."

## Factions Work Together

Dorn credited the Antelope Valley Progress Assn. for getting opposing factions to work together. In the old days Palmdale jostled with Lancaster for some industrial plum. Pearblossom might accuse Littlerock of political trickery. A dozen little Chambers of Commerce competed against each other.

Now, co-operating with the Los Angeles Chamber, they're fat.

They know the freeway is being pushed so the valley will be only 35 miles from downtown Los Angeles. They know that the state's Feather River Project will terminate in Antelope Valley at Pearblossom in 1975 in its first phase. From there it will fork out.

As a matter of fact, the Planning Commission says some imported water will be available by 1971 under official estimates.

Nearly 70% of the north county residents own or are buying their homes.

Los Angeles County's population as a whole has been increasing at an average rate near 200,000 a year for several decades. There seems to be no way to prevent it from spilling over the mountains into north county.

The planners say, "It remains the one major reserve of good flat developable land in Southern California."

## Industry Welcomed

The residents welcome industry. They provide ample industrial land, a sizable untapped labor pool, suitable climate.

Edwards Air Force Base, northeast of Lancaster, has more than 30 aircraft and missile contractors.

Air Force Plan 42, north of Palmdale, has six companies testing and improving aircraft.

Edwards and Plant 42 employ thousands today. By 1980 north county's labor force is expected to multiply 10 times to 250,000. The Planning Commission believes plant investments will rise into the hundreds of millions of dollars.

And by the year 2000, it repeats, the 1950 population of 26,085 and the 1960 population of 82,590 will leap to 1,720,000.

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