



## CITY OF THE FUTURE

*Like a precocious child, the brand new city of Lakewood  
has startled its elders by trying something new in the field of government  
— and making it work.*

From barren fields to suburb to city in little more than four years is the short short story of Los Angeles County's newest and most unorthodox municipality — youthful, vigorous, confident Lakewood.

Located between Long Beach and Downey, the new city was already half grown when it entered the world last April, larger in population than San Bernardino or Santa Barbara. In fact, with its nearly 70,000 inhabitants, it was the largest incorporation in California history. Without industries, railroads or tourist attractions, it is not a city in the traditional

sense — it's more like a great neighborhood of 15,000 homes, whose young owners (average adult male age is 32) decided to take their local political destiny into their own hands.

The city of Lakewood is actually a part of the greater community of Lakewood, part of which joined the city of Long Beach in 1953 and another section of which is still unincorporated. All this land, laying to the north and east of Signal Hill, once belonged to the 17,000-acre Rancho Los Cerritos which was granted by the King of Spain to Don Manuel Nieto in 1794. A century later, the Bixby family ac-

# Lakewood's Example in Local Government

## May Set the Course For Future Cities



Lakewood's energetic five-man city council, led by Mayor Angelo Iacoboni (center), is attracting widespread attention by employing the new city's novel "contract" form of government. Instead of spending huge sums to set up municipal departments, the city merely contracts with the County of Los Angeles to provide most of the public services. Other California communities, which have been reluctant to incorporate because of the expense, have been heartened by Lakewood's financial success.

quired a major portion of the Rancho and formed the Bixby Investment Company, which dominated the real estate field in the Long Beach area for half a century.

As early as 1904, however, the Bixbys sold a good part of the Lakewood area to the Montana Land Company, which held ownership of the land until the recent housing boom. In 1933 the Lakewood Country Club was built, beginning the real estate development in the area, and two years later the first classes were held at the Lakewood campus of Long Beach City College.

### Biggest Boom Started in 1950

The war and construction of the big Douglas Aircraft plant at Lakewood Boulevard and Carson Street brought the first big housing boom to the area. But the war boom was eclipsed by the expansive developments which took place beginning in 1950. Subdividers had a field day, plotting out their community with geometric precision, clearing away the dull brown fields and bringing to life a great, glittering picture of modern Americana seemingly overnight.

The intense population increase soon brought the demand for better public services, and the ultimate question of incorporation or annexation to the neighboring city of Long Beach. Soon petitions for annexation were being circulated from house to house, up and down the hundreds of streets of the vast Lakewood community. The majority of the 22,000 residents living south of Wardlow Road, as well as those living in the older settlement of Lakewood Village, liked the idea and voted to annex. But annexation was stubbornly fought by those living north of Carson on the basis that they would have more direct control over local government and tax money if they incorporated themselves. Through this struggle last year this spirited group of citizens developed a common cause, and a community entity began to take form.

Opponents of incorporation threw back their challenge with the old question: How can a new city buy land, construct buildings and equipment, support an employee force and provide adequate municipal services without levying a prohibitive tax? Surely, annexation to an already established city like Long Beach would be far easier on the taxpayers' pocketbooks, they said.

### Contract Method Devised

The city boosters came up with an answer that has since caught the fascinated attention of civic leaders all up and down the State of California, and, indeed, across the nation. Their plan was simplicity itself. The new city would have no large payroll, no capital outlay. Instead it would contract with the County of Los Angeles to provide most of the municipal services such as road maintenance, police, health services, building inspection. In addition, the city would get its fire protection, sewer maintenance, flood control and certain other services from the County on a tax assessment district basis. No city bureaucracy, no large buildings, no fleets of cars, no pension funds—a plan that leaves the city government free to do only what it was created for—to govern.

After residents voted for incorporation and the municipal government was set into operation, the plan, now known widely as "the Lakewood Plan," worked like a charm. The County was highly pleased with the arrangement, as were the residents. The revenue picture was the most heartening of all. By incorporating, the city became eligible to receive directly its share of state taxes on gasoline, automobile licenses and liquor licenses, which amount to more than \$500,000 per year. That, plus local taxes (the property tax rate is only 29 cents per \$100), will give the city about \$724,000 a year income, and the budget is only slightly more than \$500,000.

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In the past, our people have worked closely with subdividers in keeping up with the service requirements of the expanding territory. Now, as a sign of the times, we deal very often with city officials. C. R. Baldwin, left, manager at Downey, checks over some new figures with Lakewood City Administrator Robert Andersen.



As far as telephone service is concerned, the new city is divided among three exchanges, the Long Beach and Downey Exchanges of our company, and the Compton Exchange of the Pacific company. Future expansion is expected to take place to the east of the present community.

So, with only six employees and in less than eight months, the new city has brought home rule to its inhabitants, improved municipal services, and boasts an unappropriated reserve surplus of \$200,000 in the bank. As time goes on, and the needs arise, city planners expect to contract with the County for more and improved services, and at the same time, save the taxpayers more money by consolidating assessment districts.

### New City Sets an Example

The Lakewood Plan is a bold answer to a vexing problem created by the post-war housing boom. Dozens of new suburban communities have yearned for local self government, yet were checked by the threat of high costs. Annexation to an older, established city seemed to be the best compromise for many of these communities, despite the fact that in many cases the seat of their new government was as far removed as had been the County. In the past 15 years, 2,500,000 people have moved into Los Angeles County, but until this year not a single new city was incorporated. Now Lakewood has come along to blaze a new trail.

While many unincorporated communities are watching and studying the Lakewood experiment, others, heartened by the new city's success, are acting. Downey, a great, growing residential area just to the north, is having an incorporation election on December 7. Rosemead, in the San Gabriel Valley, has also filed its petitions with the County and should have an election soon. Several other communities throughout Cali-

fornia are in various stages of planning to become cities, stimulated by the revolutionary Lakewood Plan.

### Three Exchanges Serve Lakewood

Regarding telephone service, the city of Lakewood is divided among three exchanges: the Long Beach and Downey exchanges of our company and the Compton exchange of the Pacific company. The challenge of providing adequate telephone service, of course, has been common to the entire Lakewood community, most of which is served out of our Lakewood central office of the Long Beach exchange. The spectacular growth of the area since the war created great problems for us, as is to be expected in any abnormal situation. But our efforts to catch up and keep up with the population growth and demand for services met with remarkable success, largely because of good planning and coordination with subdividers.

The growth of the Lakewood community is reflected in the comparison of station counts over the past decade in the Lakewood central office area. On September 30, 1944 there were 1225 primary stations. On September 30 of this year there were 18,593. By 1974 we expect to have over 27,000 primary stations operating in the same area. Local leaders expect that future growth will spread to the east, past the San Gabriel River, adding new thousands of homes to the sprawling amorphism known as Lakewood.

And while this expansion is going on, it can likewise be expected that the new city of Lakewood, off to such an auspicious start on its municipal career, will grow proportionately, playing an ever greater role in the future of southeastern Los Angeles County.