

PORTRAIT OF LAKEWOOD -- TWO YEARS AFTER INCORPORATION

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City Administrator



It is nearly two years since the citizens of Lakewood voted, on March 9, 1954, to incorporate their brand new community. The effective date of incorporation was April 16, 1954, and the official population at that time, as recognized by the State of California, was 71,316. By this action it became the largest community ever to incorporate in the history of North America. Since then more than 2,000 new homes have been built and occupied within the city limits, bringing the total number of homes to over 17,000. Lakewood, therefore, had all of the problems and opportunities of a very large city immediately upon its inception.

Why did Lakewood elect to contract for most of its municipal services rather than to organize in the usual old-line city fashion? The incorporators of Lakewood after considerable study and consultation with other municipal officials and the county of Los Angeles, proposed the contract plan of municipal government. Their primary purpose was to eliminate the duplication of municipal type services and to provide the necessary services.

Contracting with the county by the other 45 cities has been done for many years, particularly in the fields of assessment, tax collection, health, building inspection, and animal regulation. The incorporators of Lakewood, however, proposed also to include contracts with the sheriff's office for police protection and

the road department and county engineer for all engineering and road construction and maintenance services. (See accompanying box for explanation of services.)

How Much Does It Cost?

The 14 contracts which we have with the county and the three contracts we have with the Lakewood Park, Recreation & Parkway District are all based on a full reimbursement to the contracting agency and yet each agreement varies because of the cost elements involved in the various departments or the activities. The three principal county contracts which Lakewood has entered into, unlike other cities, are agreements with the Sheriff for general law enforcement and traffic enforcement and one with the road department for street maintenance and construction. An explanation of these will be made in the following paragraphs, and information on the details of the other contracts may be obtained by writing to the author.

From the beginning it has been the council's policy to operate the city with a minimum of personnel, while recognizing the need for a nucleus of administrative, financial, clerical, and secretarial staff. Accordingly, shortly after incorporation

the following were appointed: city attorney, city administrator, city clerk, deputy city clerk, secretary to planning commission, a secretary to the city administrator, and a special assistant to the city administrator who handles public relations and information.

The Lakewood Plan is working very well and even exceeding the expectations of its proponents. Once the contracts have been approved and the terms and conditions agreed to, the services involved are performed by the contract agents under the direction of the city administrator, who orders the work done in the same way that he would in a normal municipal operation even though the department heads are contractual agents rather than full-time city employees. In terms of routine street maintenance items, such as when there is a hole in the street, a street light is out, or there is a flooding problem, the city administrator or his assistant calls the street maintenance foreman and orders the work done, and this is accomplished within 24 hours.

Many questions have been asked about the level of service, as some people believe that the city under the contractual plan would receive a lesser level of service. There has been no great demand on the part of the citizens for an increased level of municipal service because there was a high level of municipal service furnished by the county prior to incorporation. Increased service was not a fac-

Top of page: The city of Lakewood today is still an imposing array of residences. The boundaries of the city roughly parallel the main east-west streets near the top and bottom of the picture.



tor in urging the incorporation of Lakewood. However, local control of the level of service was a factor, and some changes have been made to increase the level of service by action of the city council. For example, the street sweeping schedule was increased from bi-monthly to semi-monthly. The street construction and street widening program has been stepped up recently and, although most of Lakewood's streets are in good condition, we are pursuing an intensive program to maintain them in such condition.

You will note in the accompanying schedule of Comparative Property Tax Rates that it has been financially advantageous for Lakewood to incorporate rather than to remain as an unincorporated community. The property tax rate for all normal municipal functions is 22¢ less in 1955 than it was in 1953, prior to incorporation. This reduction in property tax rates was accomplished by using other municipal revenues to pay the cost of our street lighting, effecting an average reduction of 44¢ on the tax bills. The prospect for 1956 is a further reduction of at least 20¢ in the tax rate. This new advantage, of course, is a result of the uniform sales tax bill, which will net Lakewood \$460,000 a year.

Low Enforcement

Under the general law enforcement contract, which provides for radio car patrol service, Lakewood pays to the county an amount equivalent to our collections on fines and forfeitures. In addition to this, as indicated previously, we have separate contracts for traffic enforcement, bicycle licensing, business license investigation and enforcement, taxi cab investigation, etc. In each of these latter contracts we pay all of the costs, both di-

Lakewood's official family. Seated (l. to r.): Councilmen Gene Nebeker, Robert Baker, Mayor Angelo Jacoboni, George Nys, Jr., and William Burns. Standing: City Attorney John Todd, Executive Secretary Guy Hallerly, City Clerk Nile Birch and City Administrator Robert Andersen.

HOW DOES LAKEWOOD FURNISH MUNICIPAL SERVICES?

- I. Remain in special districts and have the same type of service continued, as follows:
 - A. Fire Protection District
 - B. Public Library District
 - C. Sewer Maintenance District
 - D. Lighting Maintenance District (city pays entire cost, hence no tax)
 - E. Park, Recreation & Parkway District (parkway panels maintenance)
- II. Hire a minimum staff to provide central clerical, finance, and administrative direction, supervision, and coordination.
- III. Contract with other jurisdictions:
 - A. The county of Los Angeles for the following services:
 1. Road maintenance and construction
 2. General law enforcement
 3. Traffic law enforcement
 4. County jail services
 5. Health services
 6. Animal regulation
 7. District Attorney (prosecuting attorney)
 8. Planning technicians and zoning experts
 9. Assessing
 10. Tax collecting
 11. Building inspection services
 12. General services:
 - a. Business license enforcement
 - b. Taxi cab investigations
 - c. Civil defense
 13. Industrial waste
 14. Ambulance services
 - B. The Lakewood Park, Recreation & Parkway District for the following services:
 1. Roadside tree maintenance
 2. Recreation supervision
 3. Park maintenance

rect and indirect, involved in the operation as well as a departmental overhead rate and a county-wide overhead rate. In the case of the sheriff's office, the departmental overhead rate is approximately 27 percent this year, and the county-wide overhead rate is eight percent.

To maintain one traffic car 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with one man during the day and two men at night, our traffic detail consists of one sergeant and seven deputy sheriffs. If another car is added next year it will mean another 7 men and a car, giving us a total of 15 employees required to man two cars.

It may appear that one, or even two, traffic cars around the clock is insufficient for a city of 71,000 population and 135 miles of paved streets, but we are fortunate in Lakewood to have wide streets for all of our major thoroughfares, adequate signalization and an abundance of service roads paralleling the major city streets and more than adequate off-street parking. Also, the need for law enforcement is not as great because the conditions leading to police problems do not exist in Lakewood to as great a degree as they do in some cities. For example, we do not have dance halls, movie theaters, or industrial buildings and equipment in the city.

The level of law enforcement service is naturally related to the accident and crime rate. An extremely effective street lighting construction program built at the subdivider's expense, and paid for by the people when they bought their homes, has been a wonderful help in keeping the accident rate low. Having a well-lighted city not only adds to the after-dark appearance, but also has been a material factor in keeping the crime rate low.

Other Public Safety

In addition to our contract with the Sheriff for both traffic and general law enforcement, the city contracts with the county for building inspection service and for civil defense. Immediately after incorporation the council also elected to remain in the County Fire Protection District. You will note from the tax rate chart, we have been paying approximately 60¢ per \$100 assessed valuation for fire protection. In Lakewood's case this means \$240,000 a year for fire protection.

We have found that it has been a financial advantage to remain in the Fire Protection District as we were able to get a reduction in our fire insurance classification from a class 6 to class 4. This has meant a 14 percent reduction in fire insurance rates effective August 16, 1955 as a result of an over-all survey by the National Board of Fire Underwriters.

Lakewood is a city of approximately seven square miles and is surrounded by four fire stations just outside the city limits. One of these stations physically located outside the city limits is actually less than 3/4 of a mile from our central business district. The County Fire District has plans for building at least one station within the city limits during 1956. The fire protection service rendered by the County Consolidated Fire Protection District has been excellent, and the decision to remain in the District has proved to be sound.

Lakewood has its own planning commission as required by the Government Code. One employee co-ordinates the planning activities and acts as secretary to the commission. There have been 24 subdivision maps filed and approved by the commission since incorporation. The city has an agreement with the County Regional Planning Commission whereby we can utilize the services of the staff members who are expert in zoning, advance planning, design, and map making, on a cost plus overhead basis.

Street Maintenance

Our contract with the county road department is the third principal contract we have entered into unlike other cities. For all of our street maintenance and construction work we are paying all of the

COMPARATIVE PROPERTY TAX RATES			
	Before Incorporation 1955	After Incorporation 1954	After 1955
NORMAL MUNICIPAL FUNCTIONS			
A. Those over which Lakewood has a measure of control or where the city may elect to withdraw:			
City of Lakewood	0	.2900	.2800
Lighting Maintenance Districts (rates ranged from .25 to .81, but averaged)	.4357	.00	0
County Road District	.0334	.00	0
County Public Library	.0765	.0851	.0852
Consolidated Fire Protection District	.6118	.5992	.6057
Sewer Maintenance District	.0350	.0123	.0284
B. Those administered by their own governing boards:			
Lakewood Park, Recreation & Parkway District	.4636	.4290	.4408
Mosquito Abatement District (Southeast)	.0147	.0121	.0099
Sanitation District No. 3	.1724	.1669	.1734
TOTAL TAX RATE FOR NORMAL MUNICIPAL FUNCTIONS	\$1.8431	\$1.5926	\$1.6234
NON-CITY FUNCTIONS			
A. Special districts over which the city has no control:			
Metropolitan Water District	0	0	.4400
B. County wide districts, governed by Board of Supervisors:			
Los Angeles County General Government	1.6988	1.7778	2.0118
Flood Control	.5411	.3006	.2947
Water Conservation	.0500	.0500	.0500
Total Tax Rate for County Gov't.	\$2.0899	\$2.1284	\$2.3565
C. Schools (Long Beach Unified School District)	\$2.6723	\$2.6674	\$2.8605
TOTAL TAX RATE FOR NON-CITY FUNCTIONS	\$4.7622	\$4.7958	\$5.6570
⊕ Obligation assumed by city of Lakewood			
⊙ Automatically abolished by incorporation			

direct and indirect costs, plus 15 percent overhead. This contract is working well in all phases of the maintenance program and is progressing satisfactorily on the construction phase of our road department contract.

Located in the road department of the county is the traffic-lighting division and we also take advantage of their services under this contract. The traffic section gives us engineering help and advice on the planning of traffic control devices, and the lighting section superintends our entire street lighting program.

Is It Permanent?

The question most frequently asked is

whether the plan is to be permanent. Based on nearly two years' experience, we would say that it is very much a permanent arrangement. Financially, the contractual plan is a savings to both the city and the county because of the elimination of duplication, and the city is absorbing a portion of the county overhead while paying for that overhead on an as-needed basis. We feel that the contractual plan is of mutual advantage financially, and that the permanency of this type of arrangement will eventually be decided on the basis of whether it is more economical to contract with the county or other agencies, or to create city departments with a full complement of employees.