

Tax Revenue Reveals Local Shopper Habits

By John Rico

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PLUS AND MINUS OF A BEDROOM COMMUNITY - Many times we hear Vacaville residents expressing themselves about the rapid growth here in immediate years past. Without going back too far, 31 years to be exact, residents in 1950 were well satisfied with the 3,169 people living here. Today that figures is around the 42,000 mark.

Accelerated construction into the rural areas contiguous to the city of Vacaville is proof that many families prefer the solitude of open space.

Almost to a person, a survey would show that residents not only in Vacaville, but every other city across the nation, prefer the bedroom community aspect. They frown on too many neighbors; too many industrial plants; congested traffic on streets; and in general John Q. Public wants breathing room.

But, there are liabilities which go with a bedroom community. That has become more noticeable in California since Proposition 13 provided a hefty tax cut to home owners, depriving cities of funds needed for everyday operating and maintenance expenses.

Let's take a look at just what happens when a city fails to maintain a proper income source. Frankly, that's the position Vacaville finds itself in today. It is a disappointing situation and one which needs stimulus to avoid decay.

In the first quarter of 1981, according to figures provided by the state Board of Equalization, the 695 business firms here which add sales tax to purchases, had total sales for the period amounting to \$31,165,000. The disappointing aspect of this report is the fact that in the previous quarter (the last three months of 1980), total sales here were at \$36 million. The 1981 figure reflects a drop of nearly \$5 million in a three-month period.

As a comparison, total taxable sales from the 933 business firms in Fairfield was at \$61,759,000 for the first quarter of 1981, as compared to approximately \$61.5 for the previous quarter or an increase of about \$300,000.

Woodland stores showed a substantial drop in the 1981 first quarter, down to \$40.2 million from the \$45.5 million in the previous quarter. Davis was also down, \$30 million compared to \$29 million. Also showing a slight drop was Vallejo, from \$80.5 million to \$80.3.

There's more than a "so what" attitude in accepting these figures. It all boils down to good, hard cash. For the fiscal year, July 1, 1980 to June 30, 1981, Vacaville received \$1,482,713 as its share from the sales and use taxes. This compares with \$2,688,161 taken in by the city of Fairfield for the same period. It is interesting to note the value of a healthy business community, and figures will show that sales per capita in Vacaville for the first quarter of 1981 were alarmingly low.

Taking Vacaville's official Census Bureau 1980 figure of 41,931 and allocating the \$31,165,000 in 1981 first quarter sales, the per capita expenditure comes out to \$743. It must be remembered that sales tax is not collected on groceries.

Using this same formula for Fairfield, the 57,611 residents spent \$61,759,000 for the first quarter of 1981, or a per capita total of \$1,072. A person need not be a mathematician to arrive at the reason for the Fairfield figures.

It is surprising to note that per capita sales in Vallejo for the quarter were at \$1,120. The 71,710 residents there spent \$80,323,000 on taxable items.

In the recently issued Solano County Economic Development and Real Estate Report, there are many interesting figures and charts. In a report on the civilian work force it is noted that the largest employment is among men and women in age brackets 25 to 34. It is estimated that in 1981 total Solano employment in all industries, including agriculture, would be around the 73,900 figure, with only 2,700 of that number being classified as farm laborers.

The largest single category is government, with projected employment at 25,800, including 14,000 holding down federal jobs and 11,700 working for state and local governments. The report discloses 88.6 percent of the county work force finds employment within the county, and 10.6 percent travel to other points.

Back in 1900, when the main highway traveled down Fairfield's Texas Street, motorists had to look twice or they would have missed the town. Fairfield had a population of 800 people at that time, while "booming" Vacaville claimed 1,220.

Let's review briefly what has transpired since that day at the turn of the century. In the 50-year period from 1900 to 1950, Fairfield grew at an annual rate of 46 people to reach a total of 3,118. In that same span, Vacaville had 40 newcomers each year to reach a total of 3,169.

Then the population explosions took place, both in Fairfield and Vacaville. From 1950 to 1980, Fairfield grew to a total population of 57,611, for an average annual growth in the 30-year period of 1,817 residents. In that same period, Vacaville grew to a total of

41,931, or an annual average of 1,239 new heads.

Today every city in California is seeking industry, which in turn offers employment. With the constantly increasing part being taken by women in the work force, cities know that added industry must be a target point if mass unemployment is to be averted.

The Solano County Economic and Real Estate Report predicts that by the year 1985 there will be 19,400 county residents commuting to jobs outside the county, while only 10,970 workers from other counties will come to Solano for employment. The report indicates that 5,400 Solano workers will be commuting to Contra Costa County to find employment and only 2,500 residents of Contra Costa County will be coming to Solano.

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