

# 39 New Cities Formed Since 1953 in State

By VINCENT THOMAS  
Assemblyman

**COMMUNITY SERVICES**, such as fire and police protection, water supply, recreational facilities and others can be provided by a number of different types of governmental agencies under California law. During the past half century your legislature has authorized by law the establishment of many different kinds of special districts, some of which are limited to performing one service, some of which have broader powers. About 2900 such districts have been set up within the State, other than school and irrigation. But, ever since California was admitted to the Union, the primary suppliers of community services have been the cities of the State, now grown to more than 330 in number. They serve more people, and money the law are multi-function agencies, not limited to single duties. But while the number of districts grew by leaps and bounds during the first part of this century, since 1953, however, a total of 39 new California cities have been incorporated. During the preceding quarter century, only 38 were set up.

**THIS STARTLING** increase in the number of new municipalities during recent years has created some sizeable and troublesome problems in local government. The Assembly interim committee on municipal and county government has begun an intensive investigation of these problems, and just recently held the first of a series of public hearings to gather information.

The committee was told that a number of factors have combined to encourage incorporation of cities. For one thing, the number of new residents and new homes has grown so rapidly, especially in suburban areas, that demand for community services has sky-rocketed, though it is evident that new residents are not always willing to join existing cities. Again, under fairly new state laws, a number of revenue sources can be shared in by new cities, thus reducing the property taxes otherwise needed to support them.

**STILL ANOTHER** reason given to the group for the recent increase in number of cities is the heavy tax burden imposed in some areas by overlapping special districts, each created to perform one community service. In many cases, residents have determined a new city can perform many services at real savings in cost.

One of the most important reasons for the establishment of new cities in many instances has been the fact that a new city can control planning and zoning within its boundaries, and can thus preserve the distinctive nature of a particular community. Allied to this reason is the fact that a new city provides a government on the spot.

**WITNESSES INFORMED** the committee that there are serious problems connected with incorporation. One is the now open competition between various local governments, for the "business" of serving new communities. Another is the long "dry spell" which a new city must undergo before it receives tax revenues. A third is the difficulty of collecting accurate data upon which to decide whether to form a new city.

From the testimony, it was a parent that the first problem will require considerable study. As for the second, it was suggested that a state revolving loan fund be set up to help newly created cities. On the third, it was proposed that the job of the local planning advisory committee, a group made up of seven local officials under state law, be enlarged so it can do an unbiased fact finding study for any community interested in forming a city.

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