

Foreword

Southern California's sleeping inland giant is awakening with a vengeance. Inevitably, this was going to happen. In time it now.

Since World War II, Southern California has been making two mistakes. Every year, the Rose Parade is held under blue skies while most of America thunders. Every year, a new crop of movie fluffers our lifestyle to an envious world. No wonder the earth is seemingly tilted this way with thousands of families rolling into the Southland every year. By definition, they are risk takers, and they have made the region a cauldron of entrepreneurial energy.

Despite our incredible diversity, each generation of instant Southern Californians, and by now, two generations of our children, share one insatiable thirst: home ownership. In the frustration of social planners and NIMBYs, this powerful impulse has caused the Southland to annually gobble up hundreds of acres of undeveloped dirt. First, the region ate central Los Angeles. Then, in succession, it gobbled up the San Fernando Valley, San Gabriel Valley and Orange County. Now, the Inland Empire is the focus of attention.

Act I: People Arrive.

Like a Hollywood film, this process has a script. Act I stars residential developers. Given Southern California's insatiable need for modestly priced homes, they are in a never-ending quest for the affordable land to fill it. By 1978, much of Los Angeles and Orange counties were filled with homes and lot prices were rising. This forced builders into western Inland Empire cities like Chino, Ontario, Corona and Rancho Cucamonga. By 1980, rising land costs in San Diego County pushed them into Temecula and Murrieta. Today, modest income families are scanning affordable home ads in Banning Park, Perris, Hemet-San Jacinto and the Victor Valley. The next generation will likely be looking in outlying places like Banning, Yucca Valley, Desert Hot Springs and Aguanga.

What can stop this migration? Southern California's housing demand could be reduced by importing Indian's weather, forcing our children to live in Texas, or telling the world not to want our liberties. Alternatively, coastal living could be made cheaper than inland homes by dredging the Pacific Ocean or convincing families to move up not out ... tough sells with our gorgeous beaches, wonderful climate and shady ground. Not in a free society, this story has no obvious end.



2nd Avenue, Upland, California

What impact is this process having on the Inland Empire's population? According to the Southern California Association of Governments, the region will have added 1.56 million people from 2000-2020. That is more growth than the Census Bureau forecasts for 45 states! Only California, Texas and Florida will add more people! Georgia and Washington will roughly match the inland area.

Once people start arriving in the Inland Empire's various zones, they need to be fed, clothed, educated, served and protected. This creates jobs for "local" retail clerks, barbers, bankers, teachers and police officers. This is how a community's permanent job base gets started ... with roughly one "population-serving" position for each five new residents. Where does the money come from to support these activities? Therein lies the difficulty for places in Act I of their history.

Local economies are two-tiered operations much like gold mining towns in the Old West. There, the miners dug up the gold and sold it to the rest of the world for cash. The money they brought to town, in turn, was spent supporting "local" general stores and saloons. Expand the gold mines and you have boom towns; exhaust them and you have a ghost town. Who are the gold miners in an Act I community? The commuters who drive long distances to work and bring home their pay checks. Without that money, there would be no initial "local" population-based jobs.