

I.V.: A History — Part II

By Peter Mounteer

A Look Back At Isla Vista's Attempts, Triumphs and Failures regarding Self-Governance, Part II

[FOR "I.V.: A HISTORY — PART I [CLICK HERE](#)]



The Last Isla Vista Community Council, 1987. Formed in 1970, residents were elected to one-year terms annually. They lobbied the County and University in support of community positions. *Photo Courtesy of the Isla Vista Free Press*

Although Isla Vista tried and failed for cityhood in 1973, the I.V. Community Council (IVCC) made several other attempts to give I.V. a more sustainable form of government in the years following.

1972: I.V. Creates Community Services District (CSD)

Other options for self-governance for I.V. also included the 1972 passage of a bill by the California legislature establishing the I.V. College Community Services District (IVCCSD). This action created a community services district (CSD), a small form of independent government that allows a given unincorporated area to tax itself to provide certain services to itself that cannot otherwise be provided by a county government.

According to alumnus Josh Plotke, who acted as a research assistant to the recently released UCSB Foundation Trustees' Advisory Committee on Isla Vista Strategies, I.V. residents pushed for a CSD in hopes of working up to later establishing a city.

“They tried to create a city without calling it a city,” Plotke said. “They tried to create a law with a CSD with more extended powers than CSD law allowed.”

Plotke also said the university was opposed to being included in the IVCCSD, which contributed to its ultimate failure.

“The reason why it failed was the county said they [the CSD] had to include UCSB,” Plotke said. “UCSB at first acted neutral and then hired a publicist and spent \$100,000 for a publicist to fight against this thing.”

In 1972, Plotke said the California state legislature passed a law outlining I.V. as a special legislative district, — or a government created by the legislature to oversee a specific area — which initiated the I.V. Municipal Advisory Council (IVMAC). A municipal advisory council is a body of elected or appointed officials that convene to assess the needs of a given city or county government and recommend specific action. While a CSD can govern by controlling specific services provided to an area, a MAC serves a purely advisory role and has no actual power to provide services.

Despite the formation of the CSD on paper, the IVCCSD was never implemented as it also required the approval of the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) for Santa Barbara County, a state-controlled entity responsible for overseeing the establishment of local governments, which rejected the proposal.



IVCC members seemed to be enjoying themselves at last Monday night's meeting. Maybe they should be: it was their last meeting. From left, Trish Davey, Dave Bearman, Leslie McFadden, Louis Quindlen, and Bob Martin. *Photo from Daily Nexus Archives*

1975: Annexation and Cityhood, Attempts and Failures

Among other efforts following LAFCO's 4-1 rejection of the 1973 cityhood proposal and the failure of IVCCSD included a LAFCO-produced plan to annex I.V., along with then-unincorporated Goleta and Hope Ranch, which were collectively referred to as Goleta Valley to the City of Santa Barbara. The plan would incorporate all three areas as portions of the city of Santa Barbara and greatly expand its municipal borders. The university came out in support of the annexation plan, with then-chancellor Vernon Cheadle stating it would provide “the lowest long term tax rates for the greatest number of citizens.”

The annexation plan was put to an election in March of 1975 that required a majority of voters in both the Goleta Valley area and the City of Santa Barbara to approve the plan. Despite university support for the measure, overwhelming majorities of both I.V. and Santa Barbara residents voted against it and the measure failed.

According to longtime I.V. resident Carmen Lodise's book *Isla Vista: A Citizen's History*, after I.V.'s failure of annexation to Santa Barbara, the IVCC called for a new advisory election, or plebiscite, to determine the best option for a local government for I.V. Options presented were incorporation of I.V. into a city, incorporation of I.V. with Goleta or maintenance of the status quo. The election, held on May 27, 1975, resulted in an overwhelming majority of support for the independent incorporation of I.V. as a city, which at the time had its proposed boundaries include Storke Road, Hollister Avenue and the Venoco Corporation's Platform Holly oil rig.

According to *Isla Vista: A Citizen's History*, the UC Board of Regents was split in its opinion on cityhood for I.V., with at least five regents supporting the proposal. The university, Lodise writes, was opposed to cityhood.

Following the results of the May, 1975 plebiscite, IVCC made another submission for independent cityhood to LAFCO in 1975 backed with support from the university, which LAFCO rejected again in February of 1976 on a 4-1 vote, citing concerns over the financial feasibility of an incorporated I.V.

Reasons Behind Failure of I.V. Cityhood

Lodise said he blames the political motivations of the LAFCO members for not approving I.V. cityhood, as the four no votes all came from Republicans on LAFCO, while the only yes coming from a Democrat.

"The wrap was that I.V. was not financially feasible," Lodise said. "In reality, it was Republicans [on LAFCO] defeating the town because it [I.V.] was overwhelmingly Democratic."

Plotke said LAFCO could not approve those proposals because various fiscal analyses have found I.V. cityhood to be unrealistic.

"I.V. is a big financial drain. It's a small tax space with a dense population that means increased expenses," Plotke said. "It would be illegal for LAFCO to approve a city."

Lodise's *Isla Vista: A Citizen's History* states that concerns over financial feasibility of I.V. as a city were misguided but important for the Republicans on LAFCO. Lodise writes that LAFCO was commonly thought to produce numbers on the expenditures a proposed city would make, when in practice such figures are typically determined by the city's first city council.

Lodise also states that LAFCO had no authority to use financial feasibility as a criteria in determining the viability of incorporation for a given area.

I.V. Self-Governance Burns Out

For the next few years the only governmental entities existing in I.V. were those related to IVCC and the I.V. Parks and Recreation District (IVRPD). The IVRPD oversaw the growth of new parks in I.V. beginning in 1975, adding 14 new parks to a list that originally included Anisq'Oyo Park on Embarcadero Del Mar, "Dogshit" Park along Del Playa Drive and Children's Park on Picasso Rd.

Despite this growth, little in the way of additional self-governance campaigns materialized in the years between 1975 and 1982.

According to Lodise's *Isla Vista: A Citizen's History*, years of tension between the residents of I.V. and Goleta over representation on the Goleta Water Board, which provided water services to both unincorporated areas, contributed to renewed fervor for cityhood for I.V.

The 1982 IVCC election saw a slate of candidates elected who supported independent cityhood for I.V. and opposed an incorporation plan that included Goleta, which was supported by IVCC executive director John Buttny, who promptly resigned after the election. Also in 1982, the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors refused to contribute its portion of funds to the IVCC, a loss of about \$10,000. Shortly thereafter, the university, also a key

provider of funds to IVCC, also discontinued its funding of the council, an amount of about \$9,000, according to Lodise. Funding for the council by the Board of Regents also ended entirely in 1982 after a steady decline from its peak in 1971.

Despite the funding cuts, the IVCC pressed on with a cityhood proposal, filing it with LAFCO in 1984 which was again rejected in a 4-1 vote. The council lasted for several more years, but without funding went defunct in 1987.

According to Plotke, after the IVCC and IVMAC lost funding, prompting residents to push for a CSD to try and recover some form of self-governance for the I.V. However, he said, proponents realized that funding for a CSD could not be started until long after the IVCC and IVMAC disappeared, which effectively ended the self-governance movement.

“They found that there was going to be a gap in funding from the time the funding [for IVCC and IVMAC] was cut off to a time a CSD could be established,” Plotke said.

According to longtime I.V. resident, local business owner and alumnus Jay Freeman, self-governance talks went on hiatus for over a decade after the defeat of IVCC and IVMAC. He said the group of activists who had helped initiate all the prior movements had lost energy.

“I think they burned out,” Freeman said. “When they burned out, there was no one there to make this happen in the same way that they did.”

Self-governance options for I.V. did not become a prominent part of local politics again for over another decade, when Goleta moved to incorporate in 2001.

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