

## Foster City... Its Beginning

The family partnership of T. Jack Foster & Sons in 1960 acquired the four square miles known as Brewer Island to build a complete new town. This land had been reclaimed from the Bay some sixty years earlier, when, under a reclamation district proceeding, levees were built in the mud flats adjacent to San Mateo and the enclosed area was permitted to dry. It was put into cultivation and was a vast hay field at the time of acquisition by the Fosters.

While the future government of the area was uncertain and no one knew if it might incorporate or annex to San Mateo or remain perhaps indefinitely in its unincorporated state, the Fosters named the area Foster City to express the new town design concept they envisioned for the development. A model of the early design is on display in the lobby of the Foster Building, although the buildings may look different, the original concept has remained substantially unchanged which was to develop a balanced community able to function physically, economically, and socially to meet the needs and desires of its residents.

The only access to the island from San Mateo was on Third Avenue, which was the approach to the old San Mateo/Hayward Bridge, which has at that time the toll station on the west side of the Bay. One of the first decisions was to construct a bridge at Hillsdale Boulevard, thereby providing the second point of access from San Mateo to Foster City. The third point of access came when the State built the 19th Avenue Freeway as the approach to the new San Mateo/Hayward Bridge. The new bridge eliminated the lift section over the deep water channel, and the toll plaza was moved to the east side of the Bay in this reconstruction. A section of the old bridge remains today as Werder Pier.

A massive construction operation was necessary to convert the land to a new city. Eighteen million cubic yards of fill were necessary to provide gradient for the storm water runoff and cover for the utility lines as well as support for the buildings. Two hundred and thirty acres of lagoons had to be created to collect the storm water and hold it for pumping into the Bay. Water had to be brought to Foster City through the City of San Mateo from the San Francisco water system at Crystal Springs Road. A complete sewage treatment plant was built with an outfall line carrying the treated effluent over a mile out into the Bay at the deepest part of the channel.



1964



1984

To pay these enormous costs and to operate the city during the early years prior to incorporation or annexation, the State created the Estero Municipal Improvement District. Since there were no residents, the State gave the land owner the right to vote in this District and to authorize the bond issues and to elect the directors. The legislation provided for a gradual turnover of control to the residents as they began occupying the city. In 1967, the Legislature amended this Act in order to accelerate this takeover.

Enough of the land was prepared and utilities extended that construction of homes could commence in late 1963. By the Spring of 1964, these homes were ready for occupancy and the first families started moving in. The growth of Foster City has continued without interruption and at accelerating rates until today it is over three-quarters of the way toward its ultimate population goal of 30,000.

T. Jack Foster died in 1968, convinced of the ultimate success of his great venture. His sons continued the development as before with large sales of land to other builders and developers. Finally, in 1970, they sold the remaining vacant land, both developed and undeveloped, to Centex West, Incorporated, a subsidiary of Centex Corporation of Dallas.

By 1971 there were more than 10,000 residents, and they voted to incorporate as a city. Since then, public facilities, commercial development, and new homes have continued to be built.

In 1972, the City opened a new City Hall. In 1974, the recreation center opened at Central Park on the shores of the Lagoon. In 1976, the fourth and last of the bridges crossing the Foster City lagoon system was completed and it was named the Bicentennial Bridge. A new Police Station located at 1030 East Hillsdale Boulevard was dedicated in March 1985.

Foster City has existed 23 years since the first homes were built. Different approaches to varying needs are obvious when comparing newer neighborhoods to the older ones. Foster City, unlike most communities, maintains overall control of both the concept and design of new construction. Through these procedures, Foster City can be sure development proceeds in an orderly manner with the added advantage that it is designed for today's market.

Those who were sure Foster City would fail have been disappointed. Foster City lives, grows and is strengthening into a community in which its residents have both faith and pride.

NOTE: A photo/text history of Foster City entitled "A New Town Comes of Age: Foster City, California" was published in 1985. This 96-page book can be purchased at the Chamber office, 1125 E. Hillsdale Blvd., Suite 116, Foster City 94404. For additional information, call 573-7600.