

Publication: Fountain Valley View;Date: Nov. 22, 2007;Section: Police Blotter;Page: 7



Looking 50 years back and forward

As Fountain Valley celebrates its 50th birthday this year, we are not only celebrating our past and present but also looking forward to our future. As this area has evolved from a rural agricultural community to part of a highly urbanized area, we've gone from dusty two-lane roads with a section of the Red Car trolley line to busy freeways and six-lane streets, with constant change along the way and a future that will include more changes.

Our City Council recently approved an expansion of the Orange Coast Memorial Medical Center campus. Fifty years ago, this piece of land was part of a farm. Thirty years ago, it was a piece of the Fountain Valley Drive-in. Recently, it was two-story office buildings. Now it's slated to become a six-story patient care pavilion.

Where we once pumped all of our water from artesian wells, the Orange County Water District is about to open the world's largest water purification plant in Fountain Valley that recycles our used water back into our groundwater basin so we can keep reusing the water instead of letting it drain into the ocean.

Most of our housing was built during the '60s and '70s as affordable family housing for young families commuting to Long Beach and Los Angeles. Now our homes are priced out of the market for middle-class families, and more people commute to Orange County from Los Angeles than from Orange County to Los Angeles.

What do we see for the future?

First, our climate and location will continue to make Fountain Valley a great place to live. Projections forecast an imbalance between supply and demand for energy and water, which will result in escalating prices and changes in the way we live. Yet our temperate climate will make homes in this area even more attractive since we do not have to spend much on heating and cooling our homes.

Over time, our landscaping will change from an East Coast model to be more efficient, using a palette of water-wise California plants that can survive on very little water. We will live much more efficiently and more sustainably.

Transportation will remain a tremendous challenge. I recently visited Sweden to attend a convention on advanced transportation systems, and it appears possible we may transition in the future from our almost-complete reliance on gasoline-powered automobiles to far more energy-efficient systems.

The Swedish government and many local cities there are looking seriously at what they call pod cars – lightweight, elevated cars that run point-to-point on a grid above our existing streets. Imagine walking a few blocks and entering a station where you can board a private two- to four-passenger car that takes you directly to the mall, the stadium, the hospital or your school, non-stop, with no parking hassles or traffic jams.

A system like this could be powered primarily by solar energy at low cost so that each of our households will have fewer autos, and we will be able to take many of our trips without backing the family car out of the garage. One great benefit to better transportation would be a better use of the large quantities of land we use for parking our cars throughout society everywhere we go.

Demographers project we will be living at higher density, with more people per household and more homes per acre. We have seen this change occurring slowly as more of our households include grandparents, parents and kids, and the state allows people to build second units on their property.

However, this change will come at a very gradual pace because our neighborhoods are so stable, and most people choose to live in their homes as long as they possibly can.

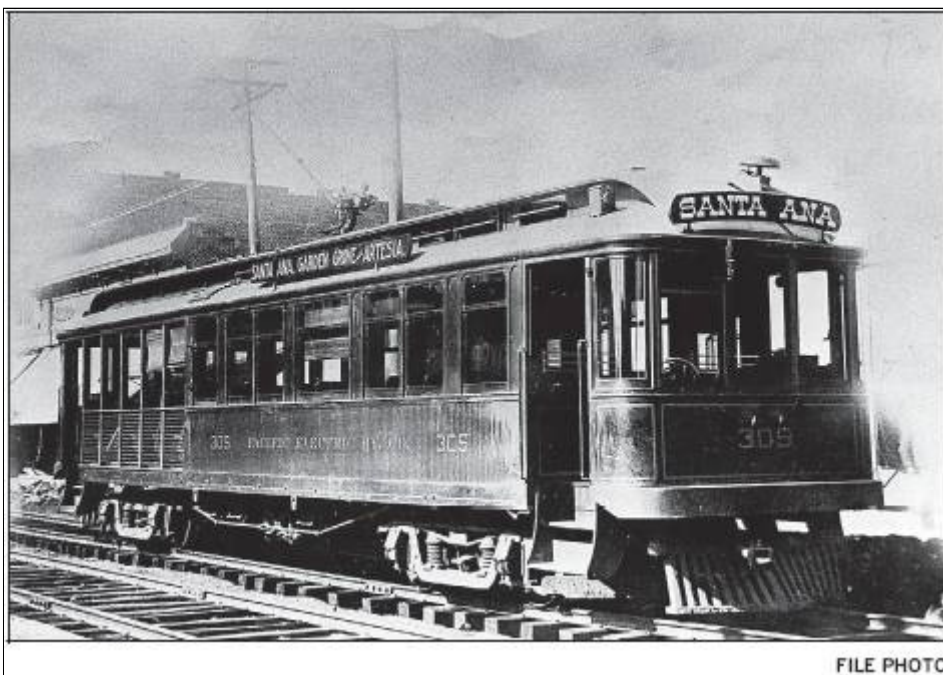
Computer technology has dramatically changed the way that we work, shop and communicate, and all of this technology will continue to progress in the future. It's likely we will see evolution over time in many of our commercial and industrial areas of the city as they are rebuilt for changing needs.

Will our city 50 years from now be as different from the present as our present was from what was here 50 years ago? It's possible, but I'm projecting that Fountain Valley will still be a "Nice Place to Live."

Gus Ayer is the mayor of Fountain Valley.



GUS AYER MAYOR'S VIEW



FILE PHOTO

THE PAST: An early mode of transportation here was the Red Car trolley.



THE FUTURE? Roy Reynolds of Fountain Valley promotes the use of small pods on elevated rails to get around.