

Jack Murphy, Lou Bozigian, and Norm Rough pose in front of the newly opened Citizens for the Incorporation of Lancaster headquarters. At right, Rough, Bozigian, and secretary Margie Dugger cheer upon receiving Los Angeles County's green light to proceed with cityhood effort.

City Celebrates 40 Years of Incorporation

This is the first of four articles commemorating the City of Lancaster's 40th Anniversary. This first installment looks at the formative years of 1977 - 1987.

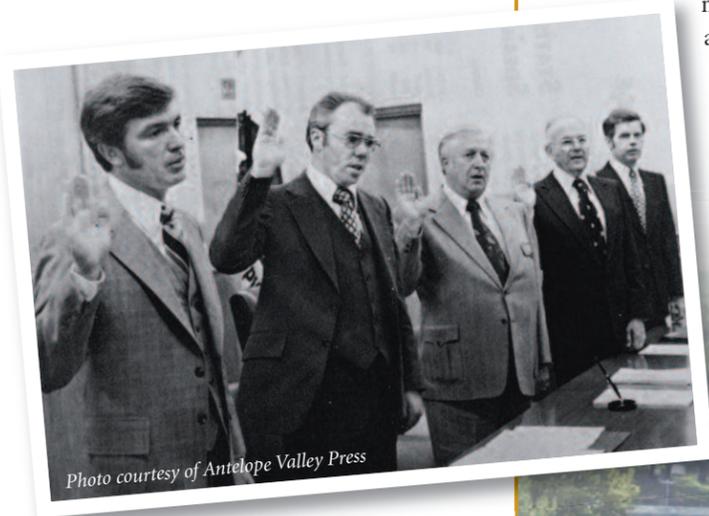
On November 22, 1977, the Antelope Valley community of Lancaster officially became a City. After years of debate and four separate attempts at approving incorporation, voters chose nearly three to one for incorporation. The biggest issue was control. As an unincorporated area of Los Angeles County, many believed the community had been forgotten and thus received fewer benefits from the County.

A group of 200 key supporters, along with eight official committee members, set out to convince local residents that becoming their own municipality offered better opportunities to set their own priorities and control their destiny. This time the argument prevailed, and the City of Lancaster was born.

Longtime cityhood advocate and former Mayor Lou Bozigian shared his thoughts on the election before he passed away in 2016 at the age of 90. "We didn't have much clout with the County. We realized we really needed to get a handle on our future growth."

Stanley Kleiner became the City's first mayor. At the time, Kleiner told the *Antelope Valley Press* – "There was no road map for us to follow. The Council needed to hire employees, open a City Hall, buy its first pencil, and appoint its first commissioners."

During the first year as a City, the Council members had their work cut out for them. They contracted with the Los Angeles County sheriff's and fire departments to provide public safety services. They found funds to develop the City's landmark central park, now known as Sgt. Steve Owen Memorial Park, and transferred ownership of three existing parks.



Pictured above, the City of Lancaster's first City Council takes the oath of office. From left to right, Tim Hayes, Ron Jackson, Stanley Kleiner (Lancaster's first mayor), Forrest Hull, and Fred Hann.

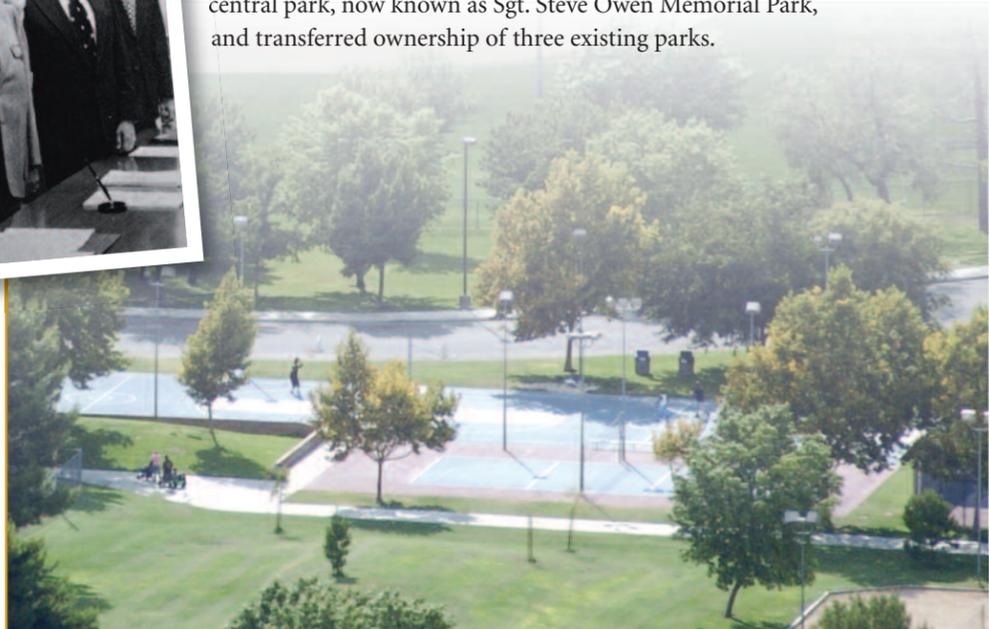


Photo courtesy of Antelope Valley Press

The Space Shuttle Columbia travels down 10th Street East toward Edwards Air Force Base in March 1979.

Early in 1979, the City's Redevelopment Agency was launched. This agency was instrumental in the creation of much of the City's key infrastructure.

That same year, Vern Lawson was hired as Lancaster's first City Manager. "It was an exciting time. I was a young man, fresh out of school with big ideas. Fortunately, our first City Council was filled with people who were committed to our community and had the vision to make remarkable things happen quickly," said Lawson, the City's current Director of Economic Development.

At the time, Lancaster had a population of less than 65,000 people. The City had cash on hand of just slightly more than \$4,000 with fixed assets of nearly \$510,000.

Throughout the '80s, the City geared up for growth. Staff developed Lancaster's first master plan, issued nearly \$40 million in bonds to help fund residential mortgages, and grew its balance sheet to show more than \$6 million in fixed assets.

After moving from place to place throughout downtown, in 1984,



Lancaster's current City Hall was acquired from Southern California Edison, remodeled and expanded. The new City Hall officially opened for business in December of that year.

Also during this time, a downtown beautification project was undertaken to add new decorative streetlights, shade trees, and pavers in crosswalks. These elements remained until The BLVD project reimagined the downtown area in 2010.

During the first decade of incorporation, Lancaster doubled in size from 48,000 residents in 1980 to 97,000 by 1990. These formative years set precedence by which the City continues to flourish: fiscal responsibility, strong city services, a proactive, pro-business economic climate, and creation of a family-friendly community where all ages can enjoy Lancaster life.

In the next issue of Outlook: The City grows up... 1987-1997.

1977-1987

- 1977**
 - City of Lancaster incorporated
- 1978**
 - El Dorado Park, Jane Reynolds Park, Webber Pool, and Mariposa Park transferred to City
 - Construction of Lancaster City Park (now Sgt. Steve Owen Memorial Park) begins
- 1979**
 - City population reaches more than 64,000
 - Redevelopment Agency established
- 1980**
 - Lancaster's first General Plan adopted
 - Redevelopment Agency issues nearly \$40 million in bonds to help finance residential growth
 - Lancaster City Park opens
- 1981**
 - Lancaster Business Park developed
 - City publishes first Activity Guide and hosts a number of community events
- 1982**
 - Initial residential development standards adopted
 - More than \$4 million in public projects completed
 - Jane Reynolds Park restored after devastating fire
- 1983**
 - Lou Bozigian becomes mayor
 - Eastside Pool opens
 - First *Outlook* magazine is published
- 1984**
 - City approves Lancaster Commerce Center, future home of Target and many other retailers
 - City Hall moves to current Fern Avenue location
- 1985**
 - Redevelopment Agency funds \$5.4 million to help create infrastructure for the Amargosa Project area
 - City hosts its first Fourth of July event at the Antelope Valley Fairgrounds
 - Lancaster Museum/Art Gallery opens
- 1986**
 - City receives its first of many statewide Helen Putnam Awards for cooperative agreements creating new facilities
- 1987**
 - City adopts initial commercial development standards
 - Eastside Park opens (now Deputy Pierre W. Bain Park)
 - City celebrates 10th anniversary