



Inland News

Report: Wildomar can afford cityhood



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By **JESSICA ZISKO**
The Press-Enterprise

Survey: [Do you agree with the study that concludes Wildomar could afford cityhood if residents vote in November to incorporate? Why or why not?](#)

WILDOMAR - Wildomar would survive financially if it became a city next year and could offer residents services and programs without new fees or taxes, a new study concludes.

The study said Wildomar would turn a meager profit its first year and continue building a reserve to pay for projects such as public buildings and bridges.

Incorporation would also bring increased services in areas such as local government, code enforcement, land-use control and recreation, according to the analysis sought by the Riverside County Local Agency Formation Commission, which determines city boundaries.

The commission will look to the study when it decides May24 whether residents should vote whether to make Wildomar a city. The group could authorize an election for November. With voters' approval, Wildomar would incorporate Jan. 1, 2008.

"Incorporation is a go," said Bob Cashman, a 30-year resident and chairman of the pro-cityhood group Wildomar Incorporation Now. "I don't see anything that would be stopping it."

Dozens of Wildomar residents have worked toward cityhood for years as they have sought more local control over decisions affecting their fast-growing community.

The financial report is a crucial step in the process. Required by law, it determines whether Wildomar can afford at least the same level of service as Riverside County provides.

The 66-page study, written by GST Consulting, a Rancho Santa Margarita financial consulting firm, comes to a different conclusion than a 2004 analysis. That report said incorporation would not be

economically feasible in part because budget troubles at the time caused state officials to redirect vehicle license fees from new cities.

Last fall, Gov. Schwarzenegger signed legislation restoring the fees, which should generate between \$1.3 million and \$3.4 million each year for Wildomar in the first decade, the report said.

"It really makes a difference for an incorporating city," said Riverside County Supervisor Bob Buster, whose jurisdiction includes Wildomar.

A Wildomar city would cover about 24 square miles between Lake Elsinore and Murrieta. About 27,000 people were living in the community as of mid-2006.

The financial report found that Wildomar would have a good mix of homes and businesses as it grows, generating increasing sales and property taxes.

The study estimates Wildomar would bring in about \$11.8 million from taxes and other fees and spend \$11.73 million during its first fiscal year starting in July 2008. Based on its earnings, Wildomar would not owe the county money to make up for lost income, the report said.

In the fiscal year starting in 2016, Wildomar is projected to earn about \$20 million annually and spend about \$18 million. By that time, the city would have built up a reserve of \$8.2 million, the study said.

The group filed a cityhood application in late 2005, three years after Murrieta toyed with annexing part of the community.

Since then, the group has raised \$81,000 to pay for cityhood-related studies, lobbyists, public hearings and application fees. Members are hosting a cityhood update for residents Saturday.

Residents can comment on the cityhood financial report through April 7. Comments should be sent to George Spiliotis, LAFCO Executive Officer, 3850 Vine St., Suite 110, Riverside, CA 92507-4277. Comments also can be faxed to 951-369-8479.

The report is available at the commission's Riverside office or at www.lafco.org

Reach Jessica Zisko at 951-375-3731 or jzisko@PE.com

Numbers Add Up

A fiscal study shows Wildomar can afford becoming a city.

First fiscal year, 2008-09

Revenue: \$11.76 million

Expenditures: \$11.73 million

Fiscal year 2016-17

Revenue: \$20 million

Expenditures: \$18 million

Source: GST Consulting
