The fate of several large-scale development proposals and roadway issues ranked high among those challenges he cited.

"The city of Goleta has significant growing pains, including growth itself," Mr. Rauch said.

More than 1,000 residents signed petitions three years ago supporting annexation to Santa Barbara, and scores turned out last year at an informal meeting held by 2nd District Supervisor Susan Rose to raise hands in favor of joining the city.

But not everyone is so willing. Some affected residents appear fine with the status quo and have expressed concern about their taxes going up after joining Santa Barbara or Goleta.

"No way. No way," said Via Roma resident Muriel Mafrarrigo. "We're happy as we are. I don't want to be involved."

"We are very upset about it," said her neighbor, Mariellen Wathne. "We just don't feel that annexation would be to our benefit. It would work the other way."

Added retiree Barbara Sutcliffe: "I'm on a limited income. I'm afraid that if we were included on either side our taxes would go up drastically."

City officials are waiting to see what will happen.

In Goleta, Councilwoman Jonny Wallis has indicated the city would be happy, if given the chance, to consider annexing the eastern Goleta Valley, but only if residents ask.

In Santa Barbara, "We will be glad to increase our sphere of influence if the people want us to do that," Mayor Marty Blum said Monday. "The city is willing to annex people that want to be annexed. That's the bottom line on it."

HAVE YOUR SAY

The Local Agency Formation Commission will consider the eastern Goleta Valley at 2 p.m. Thursday in the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors Hearing Room, 105 E. Anapamu St.
Future of area between Goleta, Santa Barbara focus of talks

11/4/03

By THOMAS SCHULTZ

NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

Core supporters of a proposal to expand Santa Barbara's sphere of influence -- and eventually its western boundary -- talked strategy Monday around a glass dining room table strewn with paperwork and a big map.

It could be a year before the fate of suburban neighborhoods home to 30,000 people between the cities of Goleta and Santa Barbara is determined by the Local Agency Formation Commission. But residents partial to a future with Santa Barbara have been busy getting ready for a public meeting to be held Thursday, when LAFCO members for the first time since March will take public comment on the matter.

"What we're trying to do is let these commissioners know where we stand," said Steven Engles, a neighborhood organizer and resident of the San Antonio Creek- area foothills. "We're going to bring people to this meeting and have them say, 'This is what we want.'"

The seven-member LAFCO panel, which controls local government boundaries countywide and marks potential areas for cities, in March shelved a request to draw the 93110 and 93111 ZIP code areas, excluding Hope Ranch and Isla Vista, into Santa Barbara's sphere of influence -- legal jargon for areas a city is expected to annex someday.

The request, by a group called the Committee for One, must wait until the commission produces a catalog detailing all the urban services that local jurisdictions provide and whom they serve. For this reason, the new city of Goleta also must wait to receive its initial sphere of influence.

A services review for the eastern Goleta Valley is scheduled to start in March, though LAFCO commissioners might expedite that timeline. When the study is complete, perhaps by sometime next November, LAFCO panelists will decide which city -- if either -- would ultimately get the eastern Goleta Valley.

Mr. Engles and colleagues aligned with the Committee for One and a similar group called the West Santa Barbara Committee claim wide support, noting residents of the area have repeatedly conveyed in surveys and the voting booth that they identify with the lifestyle of Santa Barbara.

"It's a proven, known entity," said committee member Bob Rauch, a management consultant. "The city of Goleta is confronted with a whole lot of challenges."