



North Tustin “Fix Our Zip” advocates want to reinforce community identity

By Sentry Staff

Residents in North Tustin no longer want to share their zip code with portions of Santa Ana, and are gathering support and preparing for the “uphill battle” to convince the post office to give them their own five-digit identifier.

The current zip code – 92705 – used to include North Tustin only. In 1994, the post office moved the northeast portion of Santa Ana into that code. The rationale was reportedly because there were many businesses in that area, and they would get their mail faster if it came through the post office nearest to them. Neither residents nor community leaders were consulted, and North Tustin did not know its zip code was being geographically extended until it was done.

Zip 92705 covers 11 square miles, includes 15,000 housing units, and is one of the largest zip codes in Orange County. Residents want a separate number because insurance companies determine rates via zip code averages. Online statistics are reported based on zip codes, and unincorporated North Tustin wants its own identity.

Why pay more?

During an informational meet-ing held March 25, the Foothill Communities Association (FCA) subcommittee “Fix Our Zip” shared what it had learned about the financial fallout and geographic confusion that results from having a Santa Ana mailing address. For example, a car insured in Villa Park would cost \$130.88 for six months; the same car with the same coverage would cost \$164.38 in North Tustin. A couple who recently moved to the area from Chula Vista reported that their car insurance rates did, in fact, go up.

Crime statistics reported on website realtor.com assign 161 assaults, 114 rapes and 86 murders to 92705. But, the Sheriff’s Department reports that North Tustin alone had only three as-saults, and no

rapes or murders during the same period.

Fix Our Zip research also reveals that emergency vehicles sometimes get lost, looking for an address in Santa Ana that's really in Lemon or Cowan Heights. Business tax documents, jury notices and other "official" mail sent to an address marked "Santa Ana" sometimes gets delayed

Property values also suffer. Fix Our Zip pointed out that homebuyers lose interest when they think a property is in Santa Ana, and that out-of-area agents don't know the difference. "The whole world knows us as Santa Ana," new zip code proponents explain, and that accounts for about 31 percent of lost property sales in North Tustin. The committee reports that some \$36 million in equity has been lost over the last 15 years.

Community focus

The semi-rural community also wants its own identity, separate from urban Santa Ana. "We have nothing against Santa Ana," FCA President Rick Nelson stresses. "We want to build our own brand. North Tustin has a sense of community, and we want a zip code that reflects that – much like Villa Park and Anaheim Hills." In a recent survey conducted by an impartial third party, 76 percent of residents wanted a new zip and 24 percent didn't think it mattered. Those in favor have a long road ahead of them. "The post office doesn't want to make any changes," Nelson said. "This is a multi-year endeavor."

In order for the postmaster to even consider the request, North Tustin must get Congressional support. The group plans to meet with Representatives Mimi Walters and Don Wagner to plead their case. They will also work with county officials to assess the impact of the request.