

WHAT IS LAFCO?

1,305
SQUARE MILES

1.9M
2018 POPULATION

2.3M
PROJECTED POPULATION IN 2030

95%
POPULATION LIVING WITHIN
CITY URBAN SERVICE AREAS

15
CITIES

FOR THE GOOD
OF THE WHOLE



Local Agency Formation Commission
of Santa Clara County

The Local Agency
Formation
Commission,
or LAFCO, is a
state mandated
independent
local agency
established to
oversee the
boundaries of
cities and special
districts in Santa
Clara County.

OUR MISSION

The mission of Santa Clara LAFCO is to promote
sustainable growth and good governance in the county by:

- » Preserving agricultural lands and open space;
- » Curbing urban sprawl;
- » Encouraging efficient delivery of services;
- » Exploring and facilitating regional opportunities
for fiscal sustainability; and
- » Promoting public accountability and transparency
of local agencies.

BENEFITING
THE WHOLE
COUNTY

Santa Clara County has a long
history of being exceptional. Today,
tremendous tech growth and the
remaining farmland and open space
are both important elements to
the livability and sustainability of
the county. LAFCO is a preeminent
steward of this diversity and
dynamism, steering growth where
urban services can be delivered
efficiently while protecting vital
working lands and open space.
In these ways, **LAFCO's presence
creates public value across
Santa Clara County, protecting
natural resource lands while
facilitating development of
vibrant communities.**



MINIMIZING COSTS TO
TAXPAYERS FOR GOVERNMENT
SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

LAFCO's actions minimize costs to
taxpayers for infrastructure and
government services by incentivizing
compact infill growth, which results in more
efficient delivery of services.



SAFEGUARDING LOCAL
AIR AND WATER
RESOURCES

LAFCO safeguards local air
and water resources by
preventing the loss of public
assets such as natural and
working lands, which regulate
healthy air and water cycles.

fiscal
resilience

sustainable
growth

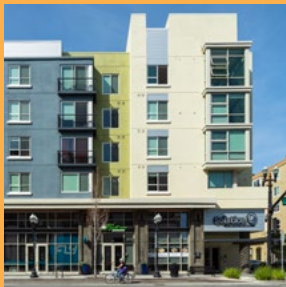


INCREASING THE SUSTAINABILITY
AND LIVABILITY OF COMMUNITIES

LAFCO increases the sustainability and
livability of communities by ensuring
that quality of life is not sacrificed under
pressure of disorderly growth.

SANTA
CLARA
COUNTY

housing



PROMOTING HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

LAFCO promotes housing affordability by
encouraging cities to make the best and most
complete use of their lands, building "within"
rather than "out", and resulting in more cost-
efficient housing options.

transportation



MINIMIZING TRAFFIC

LAFCO minimizes traffic by
promoting orderly growth and
disincentivizing sprawl which
results in fewer cars on the road
and for shorter distances.

open space
and farmlands



PROTECTING OPEN SPACE,
PARKS, HILLSIDES, AND
FARMLANDS

LAFCO protects natural and
working lands by requiring that
urban areas are developed
efficiently and effectively first,
before nearby natural resource
lands are converted into
development.

CAMPBELL
CUPERTINO
GILROY
LOS ALTOS
LOS ALTOS HILLS
LOS GATOS
MILPITAS
MONTE SERENO
MORGAN HILL
MOUNTAIN VIEW
PALO ALTO
SAN JOSE
SANTA CLARA
SARATOGA
SUNNYVALE

26
SPECIAL DISTRICTS

INDEPENDENT DISTRICTS (19)

ALDERCROFT HEIGHTS COUNTY WATER
BURBANK SANITARY
CUPERTINO SANITARY
EL CAMINO HEALTHCARE
GUADALUPE COYOTE RESOURCE CONSERVATION
LAKE CANYON COMMUNITY SERVICES
LION'S GATE COMMUNITY SERVICES
LOMA PRIETA RESOURCE CONSERVATION
MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE
PACHECO PASS WATER*
PURISSIMA HILLS WATER
RANCHO RINCONADA RECREATION AND PARK
SAN MARTIN COUNTY WATER
SANTA CLARA VALLEY OPEN SPACE AUTHORITY
SANTA CLARA VALLEY WATER
SARATOGA CEMETERY
SARATOGA FIRE PROTECTION
SOUTH SANTA CLARA VALLEY MEMORIAL
WEST BAY SANITARY*

DEPENDENT DISTRICTS (7)

COUNTY SANITATION NO. 2-3
COUNTY LIGHTING SERVICE AREA
LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE
SANTA CLARA COUNTY CENTRAL FIRE
SANTA CLARA COUNTY VECTOR CONTROL
VALLEY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY
WEST VALLEY SANITATION

*lies principally outside Santa Clara County

WHAT DOES LAFCO DO?

LAFCO regulates the boundaries of cities and special districts. Boundary change proposals to LAFCO may include annexations to, or detachments from cities or districts; incorporation of new cities; formation of new districts; dissolution of districts; disincorporation of cities; or other changes such as consolidations and mergers of cities and districts. Cities and districts are required to obtain LAFCO's approval prior to extending services outside of their boundaries. Districts are required to obtain LAFCO's approval prior to exercising their power to provide new or different services.

LAFCO plans for orderly growth and development by considering proposed amendments to urban service areas of cities; and works collaboratively with local agencies on growth, preservation, governance and service issues by conducting service reviews, prior to updating the spheres of influence of cities and special districts once every five years, or as necessary.

HOW DOES LAFCO MAKE DECISIONS?

1. LAFCO receives boundary change application by property owner or registered voter petition, or by local agency resolution.
2. LAFCO staff review the application and give notice of public hearing.
3. LAFCO staff prepare a report with recommendations that consider the CKH Act, and local LAFCO Policies.
4. Commissioners consider public testimony and staff report, and make independent decisions to further the purposes of LAFCO and the interests of the public as a whole.



Local Agency
Formation Commission of
Santa Clara County
777 North First Street, Suite 410
San Jose, CA 95112
SantaClaraLAFCO.org

GET INVOLVED

There are many ways to stay informed and get involved in LAFCO's decision-making process.

UTILIZE THE WEBSITE
The LAFCO website is your resource for policies, application materials, service reviews, project updates, meeting schedules, agendas, reports, and other publications. [SantaClaraLAFCO.org](https://www.santacalarafco.org)

CONTACT OUR STAFF
LAFCO office is open Monday through Friday. Reach us at (408) 993-4705 or lafco@ceo.sccgov.org with questions or to be added to our contact lists.

ATTEND MEETINGS AND EVENTS
LAFCO meetings are open to the public. Visit [SantaClaraLAFCO.org](https://www.santacalarafco.org) for a complete list of meetings and agendas.

FOLLOW US ON TWITTER
[@SantaClaraLAFCO](https://twitter.com/SantaClaraLAFCO)

WHO ARE THE LAFCO COMMISSIONERS?

State law dictates LAFCO composition. In Santa Clara County, LAFCO is composed of seven commissioners:

- » **Two County Supervisors** appointed by the Board of Supervisors
- » **One Council Member from the City of San Jose** appointed by the City Council
- » **One Council Member from any of the other cities** appointed by the Cities Selection Committee
- » **Two Board Members from independent special districts** – one appointed by the Santa Clara Valley Water District, one appointed by the Independent Special District Selection Committee
- » **One Public Member** appointed by the other members of the Commission

Alternate commissioners are appointed for each of the categories.

State law provides that LAFCO commissioners must exercise independent judgment and **represent the interests of the public as a whole** in furthering the purposes of LAFCO and not solely the interests of their appointing authority.

From the 1890s, Santa Clara County was known as the Valley of Hearts Delight



Region becomes known as Silicon Valley

1960

642,315 Population

1963

LAFCOs created by State Legislature

1970

1,065,313 Population

1972-1973

Urban Development Policies jointly adopted

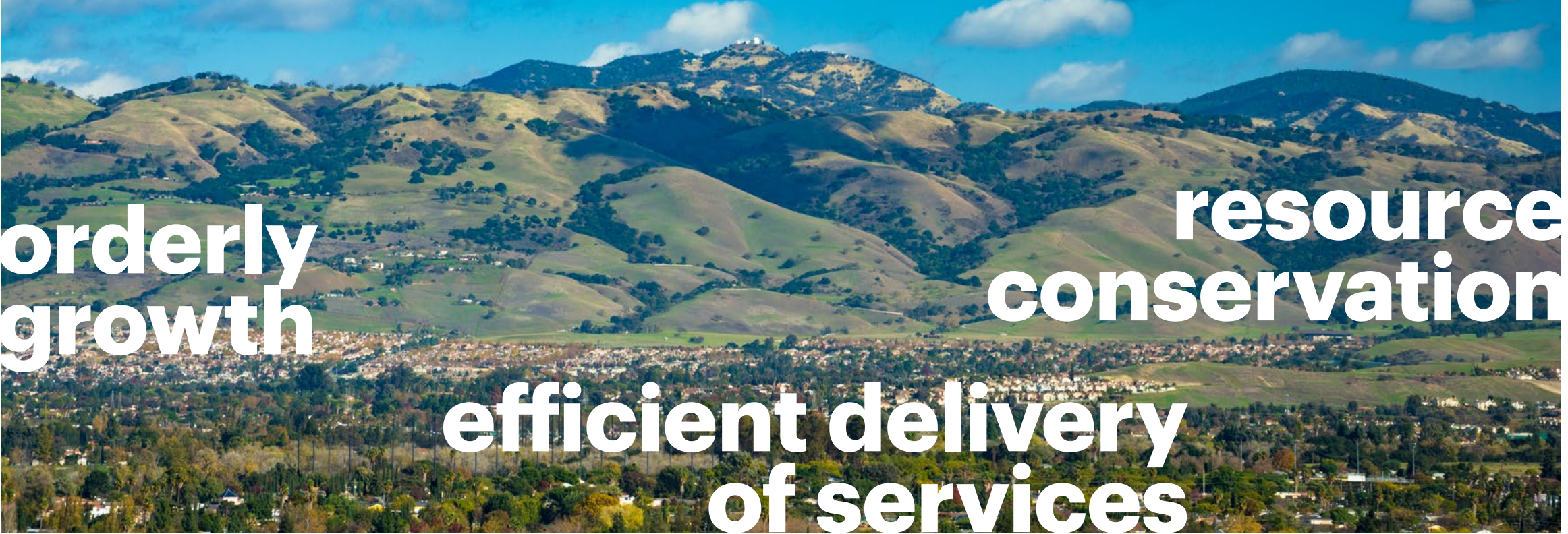
HISTORY AND PURPOSE

POST-WAR SPRAWL
By 1963, the landscape of Santa Clara County was undergoing radical change. The economic, social, and geographic terrains had been shifting in response to a post-war surge of new residents settling in the county. Housing and business development boomed, but the growth was piecemeal and disorderly.

One result of this period was a sprawling suburban area that became difficult and costly to manage and to efficiently provide with urban services such as sewer and water lines. Another result was the permanent loss of prime farmlands, making it difficult for California's largest industry at that time to sustain itself in a previously abundant agricultural valley.

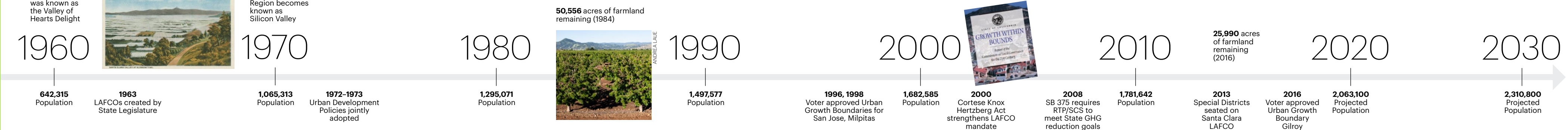
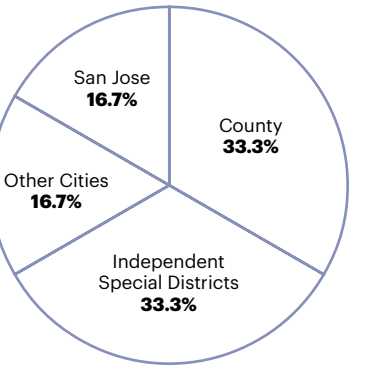
The pattern of growth in post-war Santa Clara County reflected **ad hoc decisions by developers, landowners, and local politicians, with little-to-no strategic planning for the future.**

A UNIQUE LOCAL AGENCY
Similar land use dynamics were being experienced across California. In response, the State Legislature sought a solution. A steward was required to oversee growth, an independent entity empowered by the State government, but with local expertise. In 1963, the California Legislature mandated the formation of county-level Local Agency Formation Commissions, or LAFCOs. The power to regulate local government boundaries is exclusive to the State, but since 1963, under regularly revisited state law, the Legislature charges LAFCOs to carry out this authority. As such, LAFCOs are the **Legislature's watchdog institutions.**



HOW IS LAFCO FUNDED?

State law requires the county, cities, and special districts to fund LAFCO costs in proportion to their representation on the Commission.



BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Within its first decade, the Santa Clara LAFCO coordinated unprecedented agreements between the County and the cities within it. These agreements were known as the Urban Development Policies and established cross-sector collaboration in pursuit of compact growth and sustaining the quality of life that attracted so many to call this area their new home. Cities, the County and LAFCO made important mutual commitments, adopting "urban service area" boundaries, projecting orderly growth patterns into the future. These agreements, unique to Santa Clara County, vested an increased responsibility in LAFCO, charged with enforcement and with reconciling often-competing interests in pursuit of a more efficient, more livable, and more sustainable land use pattern.

The Urban Development Policies can be summarized as follows:

- 1. Urban development should occur only on lands annexed to cities – and not within unincorporated areas, urban or rural.
- 2. Urban expansion should occur in an orderly, planned manner – with the cities responsible for planning and providing services to urban development, within explicitly adopted "urban service areas" whose expansion is subject to LAFCO approval.
- 3. Urban unincorporated islands should eventually be annexed into their surrounding cities – so that the cities have urban service responsibilities and land use authority over all lands within their urban service area boundaries.

STEWARDED THE FUTURE

Over the past 55 years, Santa Clara LAFCO has been a stalwart for growth that is compact and well-managed. LAFCO's influence has in turn protected the Valley's agricultural lands as well as its open spaces and public resources. Managing urban boundaries also directly improves the efficiency of urban services and infrastructure, passing on cost-effectiveness to local taxpayers.

Meanwhile, since the creation of LAFCOs, Santa Clara County's population has nearly tripled. LAFCO's presence has encouraged in-fill development, walkability, and transit-oriented development in the County. Without LAFCO, this landscape would be a patchwork quilt of low-density, ineffectively-serviced residential neighborhoods and isolated, no-longer-viable farmland. Sprawling Phoenix,

Atlanta and Houston experienced similar booms, but without regulatory bodies such as LAFCO they have resulted in some of the least efficient and least walkable metropolises – and they are now actively struggling to make up for past oversight.

By order of the State, LAFCOs are charged with stewarding the future of their counties.

In Santa Clara County, LAFCO has curbed the loss of agricultural lands, encouraged the densification and walkability of our cities, increased regional climate resilience, and promoted the cost-effective delivery of services that are funded by taxpayers.

THINKING AHEAD

Today, a new dynamism characterizes Santa Clara County. Population growth is expected to continue, with the total shortly cresting over two million and adding some 300,000 more by 2030. Already, housing affordability is at an all-time low, and daily traffic is at an all-time high. Through its planning and regulatory powers, and its state mandate to guide urban development patterns, LAFCO will look out for the public interest and help ameliorate these challenges, sustaining the quality of life that has brought such prosperity to Santa Clara County.

