

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.**



CITY OF SAN JOSE

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.



ANDREA LAUE

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



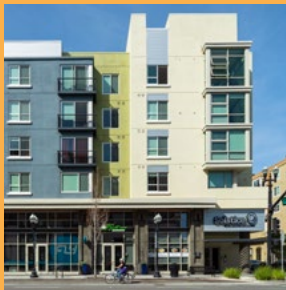
SERGIO RUIZ

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



SERGIO RUIZ

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



VTA

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



ANDREA LAUE

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.

26  
SPECIAL DISTRICTS

INDEPENDENT DISTRICTS (19)

- ALDERCROFT HEIGHTS COUNTY WATER
- BURBANK SANITARY
- CUPERTINO SANITARY
- EL CAMINO HEALTHCARE
- LAKE CANYON COMMUNITY SERVICES
- LION'S GATE COMMUNITY SERVICES
- LOMA PRIETA RESOURCE CONSERVATION
- MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE
- NORTH SANTA CLARA RESOURCE CONSERVATION
- 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 PROTECTION
- SANTA CLARA COUNTY MOSQUITO & 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.

SANTA CLARA LAFCO

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://SantaClaraLAFCO.org)

CONTACT OUR STAFF  
LAFCO office is open Monday through Friday. Reach us at (408) 993-4705 or [lafco@ceo.sccgov.org](mailto: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://SantaClaraLAFCO.org) for a complete list of meetings and agendas.

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

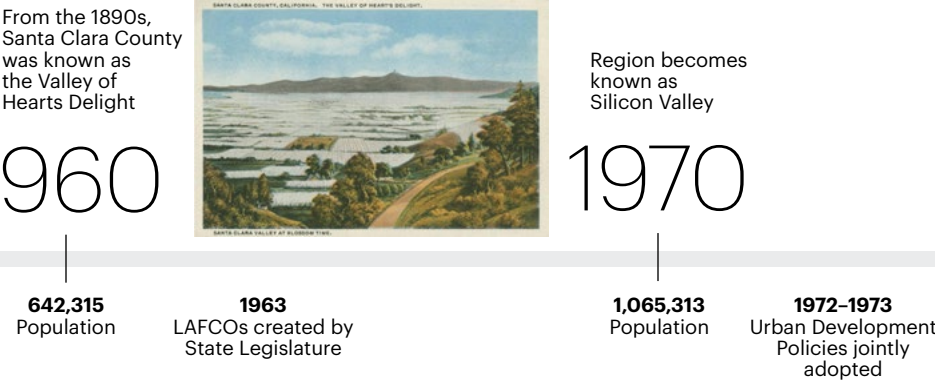
WHO ARE THE LAFCO COMMISSIONERS?

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.



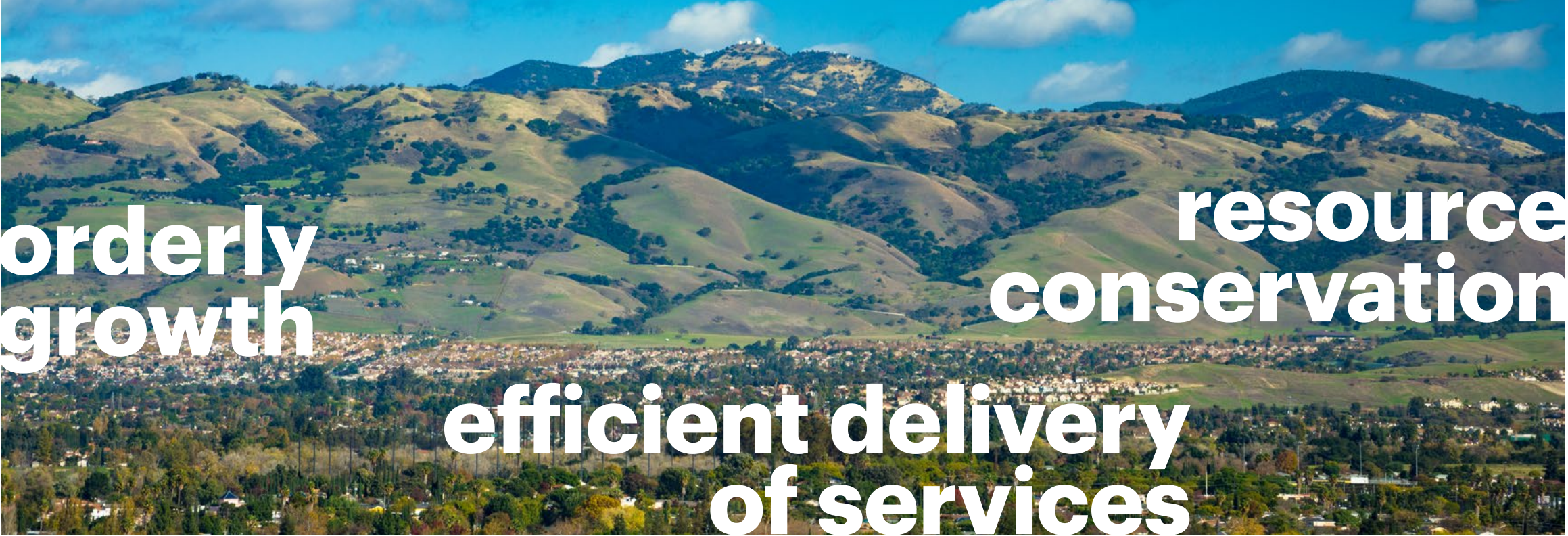
HISTORY AND PURPOSE

**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.

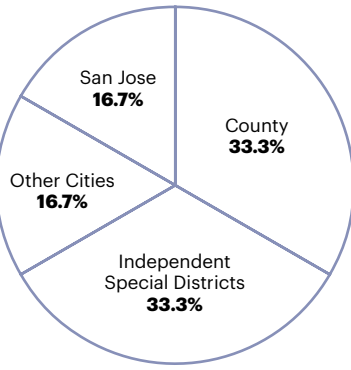
**A UNIQUE LOCAL AGENCY**  
Similar land use dynamics were being experienced across California. In response, the State Legislature sought a solution. A steward was required to oversee growth, an independent entity empowered by the State government, but with local expertise. In 1963, the California Legislature 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.

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.



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.

