

CHAPTER 8. URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARIES POLICIES

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Urban Growth Boundaries (UGBs) are planning boundaries adopted to establish very long term or permanent limits on potential urban expansion. UGBs have a similar overall purpose as Urban Service Areas (USAs) in that they include lands intended for urban development and protect surrounding natural resource lands. In some cases, an UGB may be adopted solely by act of the legislative body such as a city council or by means of a voter initiative, and in some cases, by a combination of the two. UGBs are not adopted or regulated by LAFCO. UGBs are intended to be amended very infrequently, within the context of a comprehensive general plan update, or by vote of the public, if adopted in that manner.

UGBs have been adopted by some of the cities of Santa Clara County, in conjunction with the County or unilaterally. Some UGBs are essentially coterminous with existing city USAs, while others may include some additional lands deemed appropriate for future consideration of urban growth. Inclusion of additional lands outside a city's USA within an UGB is not meant to convey that such lands are necessarily to be urbanized within a particular time frame, only that such lands may be considered for a city's long-term growth needs if approved for inclusion in a city's USA by LAFCO, in accordance with established LAFCO policy.

UGBs could reduce speculation about the direction and extent of potential urban expansion, helping to promote certainty, urban infill, more stable growth expectations and land use patterns, and better preservation of agricultural and other natural resource lands. Cities such as San Jose and Milpitas, were early adopters of UGBs. Both cities adopted UGBs with a reduced urban footprint and requested corresponding USA retraction to prevent sprawl and curb hillside urban development, promote viewshed preservation, and conserve valley agricultural lands.

8.2 POLICIES

1. LAFCO supports adoption of UGBs that are consistent with LAFCO's goals to prevent sprawl, protect open space and agricultural lands and promote efficient delivery of services. However, an USA remains the definitive, Santa Clara LAFCO-adopted planning boundary indicating whether an area will be potentially annexed and provided with urban services.
2. LAFCO shall recognize any urban growth boundary, urban limit line, "greenline," greenbelt boundary, or other boundary adopted by a city and/or approved by voter initiative that defines the limits of a city's urban development on a long term or permanent basis.

3. LAFCO shall consider these boundaries when reviewing relevant proposals, including annexations or reorganizations over which LAFCO retains review and approval authority, urban service area amendment proposals, sphere of influence amendment proposals, and “out-of-agency service by contract” proposals.
4. LAFCO shall discourage proposals which are inconsistent with an adopted urban growth boundary.