

COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH PLAN
OCTOBER 2018

SANTA
CLARA
LAFCO

Local Agency Formation Commission
of Santa Clara County



**SANTA CLARA LAFCO
COMMUNICATIONS AND
OUTREACH PLAN**

October 2018

Prepared For
Local Agency Formation Commission
of Santa Clara County

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For 55 years, LAFCO has played a vital role in creating livable communities in Santa Clara County by curbing urban sprawl, protecting agricultural and open space lands, and encouraging the efficient delivery of services. In the era of climate change and resiliency planning, LAFCO's role in shaping the county's future has only become more crucial. Yet, LAFCO remains relatively unknown and there is a general lack of understanding for what LAFCO does and why it is important — which hinders the Commission's effectiveness.

The Communications and Outreach Plan represents a groundbreaking effort to address this challenge in a comprehensive manner. Prepared by communication consultants with insights from commissioners, staff and a group of diverse stakeholders, the Plan presents strategies and tools to guide the Commission as it aims to expand understanding of LAFCO's role and responsibility in promoting sustainable growth and good governance, in the county as a whole.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the development of the Communications Plan and we look forward to continuing dialogue as we begin its implementation.

Ken Yeager
Chairperson

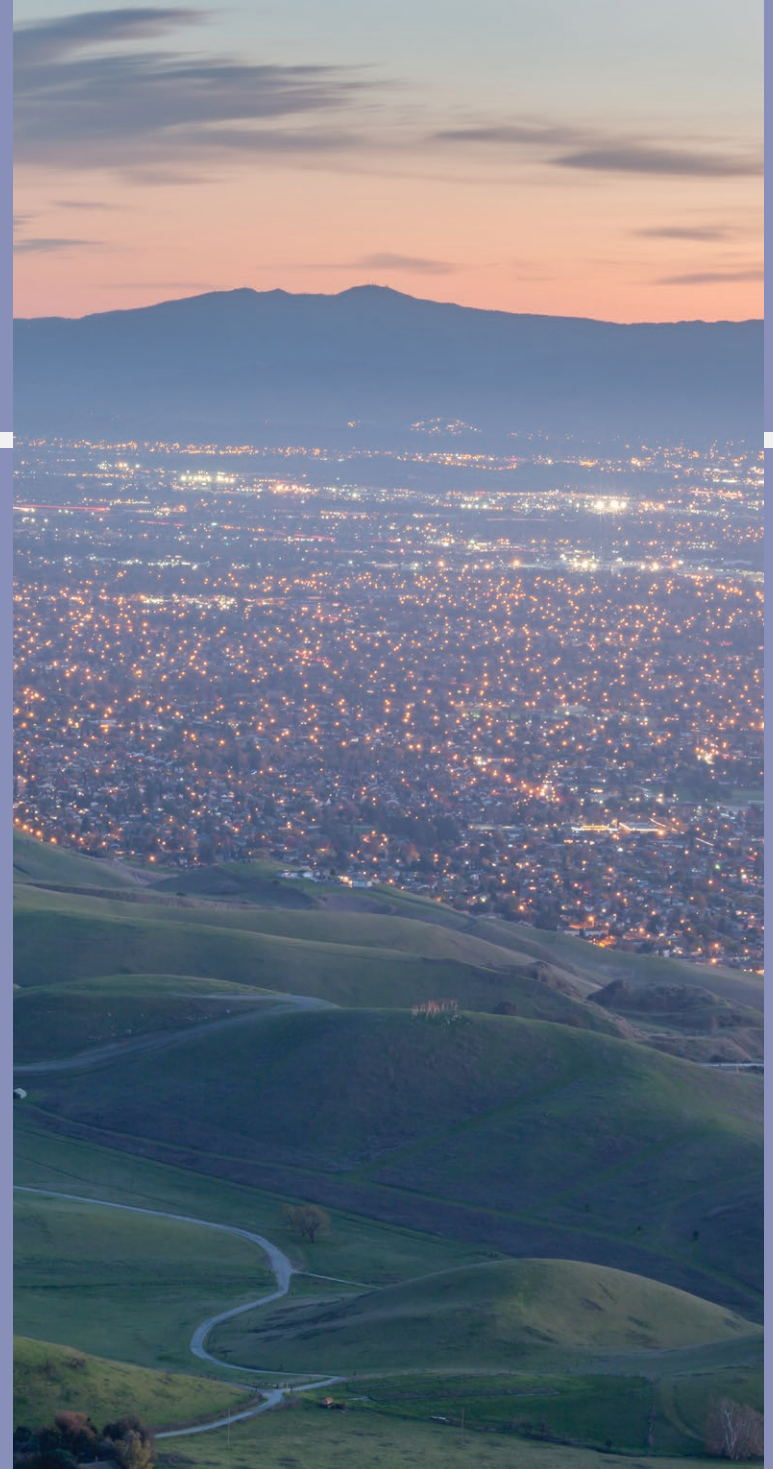
Susan Vicklund Wilson
Vice-Chairperson

This report reflects the findings and recommendations from the research conducted by the consulting team hired to develop this Communications Plan:

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SECTION ONE: **OVERVIEW**

Section One provides some historical context and a brief overview of the process used to develop this plan. It also identifies the core issues and problem statement to be addressed through the recommended set of strategies, actions, and tools that follow.



CONTEXT FOR THE PLAN

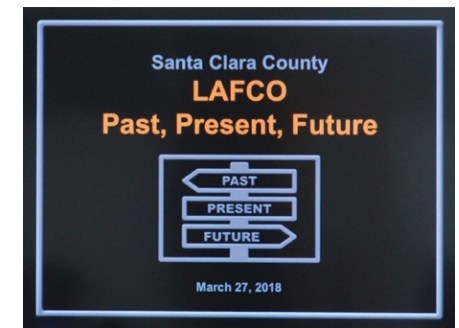


Santa Clara and neighboring Bay Area counties map

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 urban services such as sewer and water lines. Another result was the permanent loss of prime farmland resources, 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 elected officials, with little-to-no strategic planning for the future.

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 entity empowered by the State government, but with locally focused expertise. In 1963, the California Legislature mandated the formation of **Local Agency Formation Commissions**, or LAFCOs, in each county. 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, it is the responsibility of LAFCOs to promote growth that is orderly, with a rational eye set upon the future health of their communities.



The Legislature recognizes that the logical formation and determination of local agency boundaries is an important factor in promoting orderly development and in balancing that development with sometimes competing state interests of discouraging urban sprawl, preserving open-space and prime agricultural lands, and efficiently extending government services.

(Gov. Code §56300.) (Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Government Reorganization Act of 2000; the California State Legislature's renewed statutory mandate for LAFCOs.)

Within its first decade, the Santa Clara County LAFCO coordinated unprecedented agreements between the County government and 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. LAFCO is charged with enforcement and with reconciling often-competing interests in pursuit of a more efficient, more livable, and more sustainable land use pattern.

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

Meanwhile, since the formation of LAFCO, Santa Clara County's population has doubled. 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 productive agricultural lands, encouraged the densification and walkability of our cities, increased regional climate resilience, and ensured the cost-effective delivery of services that are funded by taxpayers.

Today, a new dynamism characterizes Santa Clara County. **Population growth** is expected to continue in the County, 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 authority, and its State mandate to guide urban development

patterns, LAFCO will look out for the public interest and ameliorate these challenges.

In response to ever-more shifts in the county landscape, a renewed focus on the important role of LAFCO is needed. The purpose of this Communications and Outreach Plan is to better articulate the mandate of LAFCO and to enhance its effectiveness. A well-understood and effective LAFCO will result in more resilient working lands and public open space lands, increased efficiency of local government, and development optimized for livability, sustaining the quality of life that has brought such prosperity to Santa Clara County.

We are grateful to the commissioners, our twelve interviewees, and to the public workshop attendees for their time and insights — essential to the development of this plan.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

Through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process, LAFCO retained us as a consultant team to prepare and help implement a Communications and Outreach Plan. As LAFCO's consultant team, we initiated the development of this plan with a discovery phase, through which we sought to grasp the full history of LAFCO, and to better understand barriers and opportunities for its improved effectiveness.



This process consisted of the following steps:

- » Review of existing communications and media for Santa Clara LAFCO;
- » Survey of current Santa Clara LAFCO Commissioners;
- » Interviews with twelve, diverse, external LAFCO stakeholders;
- » Meetings with current LAFCO staff;
- » Public Workshop with LAFCO Commissioners.

We worked with LAFCO staff to develop a list of key stakeholders to interview. We sought to gather external perspectives on LAFCO's work that were as diverse as possible. We began by using the stakeholder map, gleaned insights and opinions from across a wide spectrum of perspectives from farmers and realtors, LAFCO applicants and environmental advocates, elected officials and local administrators. We focused on those who had interacted with Santa Clara LAFCO directly and whose views would be informed by first-hand exposure to the agency. Twelve interviews in total were conducted.

During our stakeholder interviews and survey of current LAFCO Commissioners we looked for outreach and communications-related opportunities, while also working to better understand the appropriate audiences for this plan. In the Commissioner survey we asked questions such as, "How would you like the public to think of LAFCO and its work in Santa Clara County?" and "Who do you believe are the most important target audiences for LAFCO's communications planning?" These inquiries led to our identification of four **key target stakeholder audiences** for this plan:

- » Current and future Santa Clara LAFCO Commissioners;
- » Elected officials and staff of the County, Cities and Special Districts in Santa Clara County;
- » Landowners, including farmers and developers, in Santa Clara County; and
- » The general public of Santa Clara County.

SANTA CLARA LAFCO STAKEHOLDERS

LAFCO COMMISSIONERS

- County (2, plus 1 alternate)
- Cities (1, plus 1 alternate)
- City of San Jose (1, plus 1 alternate)
- Special Districts (2, plus 1 alternate)
- Public (1, plus 1 alternate)

LAFCO STAFF

INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

COUNTY

- Board of Supervisors
- Planning Commissioners
- County Executive's Office
- Planning Department
- Department of Environmental Health
- Ag. Commissioner's Office
- Roads and Airports Department
- Public Health Department
- Office of Supportive Housing
- Office of Economic Development
- Office of County Counsel
- Surveyor's Office
- Assessor's Office
- Controller—Treasurer Department
- Recorder's Office

CITIES (15)

- Council Members
- Planning Commissioners
- City Managers
- Planning Directors
- Public Works Directors
- City Attorneys
- Cities Association of Santa Clara County

OTHER ENTITIES

- Private Water Companies
- Mutual Water Companies
- Stanford University
- Moffett Field
- Civil Grand Jury

PUBLIC

SPECIAL DISTRICTS (28)

- Board Members
- General Managers
- Board Clerks
- Special Districts Association of Santa Clara County

REGIONAL AGENCIES

- MTC
- ABAG
- BAAQMD
- SWRCB—Division 17

MEDIA

- San Jose Mercury News
- Gilroy Dispatch
- Morgan Hill Times
- Silicon Valley Business Journal
- Metro
- Other Community Papers

INTEREST GROUPS

- San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research (SPUR)
- Greenbelt Alliance
- Sierra Club
- Audubon Society
- Committee for Green Foothills
- Save Open Space Gilroy
- Morgan Hill Thrive
- San Martin Neighborhood Alliance
- American Farmland Trust
- Santa Clara County Farm Bureau
- Food System Alliance—Santa Clara County
- League of Women Voters
- Chambers of Commerce
- The Silicon Valley Organization
- Joint Venture Silicon Valley
- Silicon Valley Leadership Group
- Building Industries Association
- Developers/Real Estate Brokers
- Property Owners
- Farmers and Ranchers
- Local Rotaries

ISSUE #1: Lack of a clear and accurate understanding of what LAFCO represents.

Most of the recommendations in this Plan are equally useful in addressing all audiences, while some are more specifically targeted. In **Section Three**, we frame suggested strategies and actions in the context of questions that directly address these four stakeholder groups, but many of those identified strategies are widely applicable as well.

The discovery phase yielded a number of insights, which we honed into **four key issues**. We presented and discussed our findings in a public workshop for current Santa Clara Commissioners, through which we gained additional insights. We synthesized the need and occasion for this plan into a problem statement. From these key issues and problem statement, we have built out the rest of this plan into three primary components: opportunities and messages organized into four overarching themes; more targeted strategies and actions in consideration of the four key audiences; and a suite of tools and recommendations for implementation.

What follows in this section are the four elemental issues we address in this plan and our guiding problem statement.

Whether it is the purpose of LAFCO as an agency, the role of its staff, or the prerogative of its Commissioners, there is an evident lack of clarity and accuracy in perceptions of LAFCO. Without clarity, expectations become unwieldy to manage, leading to avoidable frustration and disappointments. Some perceive LAFCO to consist of unelected officials with too much power over underrepresented constituencies. The motives and roles of Commissioners and staff are sometimes questioned and viewed with skepticism. The perceived delineation of roles and coordination (or lack thereof) among regional/local land use agencies and policies is muddled at best. In sum, misperceptions proliferate in the absence of a clear and accurate understanding of LAFCO's mandate. Without a strategy for effectively communicating what LAFCO represents, an environment is created where expectations become misaligned and the subsequent three issues also take root.

In brief:

- » Lack of clarity and accuracy in perceptions of LAFCO;
- » Expectations become unwieldy to manage, leading to avoidable frustration and disappointments;
- » Motives and roles of Commissioners and staff are questioned and viewed with skepticism;
- » Misperceptions proliferate in absence of clear and accurate understanding of LAFCO's mandate;
- » Expectations become misaligned and the subsequent three issues also take root.



ISSUE #2: Perception that LAFCO's role is to 'just say no'.

There is a perception among stakeholders, both favorably and unfavorably, that LAFCO's role within regional land use dynamics is to 'just say no'. For some this is a strategic advantage and strength of the entity, something written into the legislative purpose of LAFCOs. For others this is the basis of a critique targeted at the Staff's implementation of LAFCO processes and policies. From some perspectives, there is a belief that LAFCO promotes no growth rather than orderly growth, and that it is not open for collaboration. So much of how LAFCO's role is perceived has to do with the vantage point of the stakeholder, but there is an important opportunity to emphasize the public benefits of LAFCO functions and policies. By focusing on the mission and mandate outlined in Issue #1, as well as the positive vision outlined in Issue #4, less skepticism and pressure will be visited upon LAFCO itself as an agency. This perception also indicates a need for increased facetime and familiarity with staff. Distrust and misunderstandings are bred in ignorance, not only of mission and vision, but also of those perceived to be working behind the scenes.

In brief:

- » Role seen both as strategic advantage and strength, and as critique targeting implementation of processes and policies;
- » Belief that LAFCO promotes 'no growth' rather than 'orderly growth';
- » Opportunity to emphasize public benefits of LAFCO functions and policies;
- » Indicates a need for increased face time and familiarity with staff and Commissioners;
- » Distrust proliferates in absence of clear and accurate understanding of LAFCO's mandate.



ISSUE #3: Need for increased institutional 'culture'.



Directly and indirectly, our stakeholder groups pointed to a lack of resiliency and consistency within the Commission, an overall 'culture' deficit, in the institutional sense. Often seen as a secondary component to the workplace, especially in government, culture radiates across the work itself and can create feedback loops that impact other agency goals. An institutional culture is reflected outward in the form of resiliency and consistency, reinforcing mission and mandate, clarity of expectations, credibility and trust. Strong internal cultures encourage leadership and empower agencies with a sense of purpose. There is great potential benefit in having a strong internal culture for Santa Clara LAFCO as an agency.

In the absence of institutional culture, LAFCO misses several important opportunities. By design, the Commission is intended to be diverse in its makeup and to see turnover, but the lack of a consistent sense of what it means to be a Commissioner and what they are charged with can feed into an unstable dynamic more prone to politicization. Without a strong, identifiable role and voice among Commissioners, LAFCO's outward facing credibility and legitimacy are left at increased risk, which also puts undue pressure on LAFCO staff. Given that the final authority in the LAFCO structure lies with the Commission's actions, those who make up this body deserve to inherit and pass on an uncompromising sense for the mandate, policies and processes of LAFCO.

In brief:

- » **Lack of resiliency and consistency within Commission, institutional 'culture' deficit;**
- » **Lack of understanding for Commissioners feeds unstable dynamic prone to politicization;**
- » **In absence of identifiable role/voice among Commissioners, LAFCO's credibility/legitimacy is at increased risk;**
- » **This puts undue pressure on LAFCO staff and policies;**
- » **Commissioners deserve to inherit and pass on an uncompromising sense for LAFCO mandate/policies/processes.**

ISSUE #4: Need for articulating a positive regional vision under LAFCO principles.

While comprehension and perceptions of LAFCO varied, we heard from nearly every respondent that LAFCO is an important and necessary entity for Santa Clara County. We heard from many that LAFCO has “resulted in a lot of good over the years”. However so much of this “good” is an absence of development, and the presence of some elusive and intangible benefits, such as government efficiency, access to open space, and improved quality of life. Unlike development, unlike public parks, there is no roadside signage or physical manifestation of LAFCO’s work. It is difficult to grasp the counterfactual of a world without LAFCO.

The mission and vision behind LAFCO needs to be better articulated. All stakeholders seemed to yearn for an integration of the whole County, but there were widely varying visions for how that might occur. Some stakeholders concerned with housing and economic development believe that there is a simple equation at play: The region needs housing, and peri-urban farmland is where there is still room. Breaking through this narrative is difficult and will require a concise articulation of smart growth principles and a positive vision for the region’s future under such dynamics. This vision ought to be made personal for all County residents. Ideally this vision is shared and coordinated amongst other groups and agencies, in order to leverage off of one another for a broader reach.

In brief:

- » **Unanimous that LAFCO is important/necessary entity for County;**
- » **Difficult to grasp the counterfactual of a world without LAFCO;**
- » **The mission and vision behind LAFCO needs to be better articulated;**
- » **Many believe a simple equation is at play: region needs housing and the only “room” left is within farmland — breaking through this narrative is difficult;**
- » **A different, positive vision for region’s future under smart growth dynamics is required.**



PROBLEM STATEMENT

LAFCO plays a vital role in creating **livable, sustainable communities** in Santa Clara County. However, among key stakeholders such as local agencies and community members, **expectations** for LAFCO processes and responsibilities are not clear, and **comprehension** of the LAFCO mandate is lacking. In order to better fulfill LAFCO's role and **create a new narrative**, a coordinated strategy and an implementation plan for outreach and communications is needed.

SECTION TWO: **MESSAGES**

The primary goal of this Plan, as highlighted in the problem statement, is to create a new LAFCO narrative in order to better fulfill its mission. The first step toward this goal is to address the lack of a clear and accurate understanding of the mandate and mission behind LAFCO, what LAFCO represents. The path to ameliorate this concern is to help all of LAFCO's stakeholders fully understand LAFCO's purpose, why it was created, what it has accomplished over 55 years, and the importance of its role today. This section of the Plan presents four broad messages and opportunities, intended for incorporation across all communications and outreach to all audiences.



MESSAGE #1:

LAFCO Thinks Ahead

OPPORTUNITY:

Proactively convey LAFCO's *function*, in addition to what LAFCO *represents*.

The **mission** of LAFCO is to promote orderly growth and development in Santa Clara 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 to improve governance.

In other words, **it is LAFCO's mandate to think ahead.** LAFCO was created in California to make hard decisions that ensure collective needs will be met and future generations can prosper. **It is LAFCO's job to fulfill a vision for the future of the County.** Amidst tremendous growth, the urgency of short-term demands has led to unsustainable patterns of development. LAFCO works to meet public needs without the inefficiencies of sprawl, without irrevocably losing agricultural lands and open space.

LAFCO is charged with reconciling often-competing interests in pursuit of a more efficient, more livable, and more sustainable growth pattern.

In looking ahead, **LAFCO works for a smarter future.** It is LAFCO's job to understand and learn from past mistakes to ensure future progress, by guiding when and where growth occurs. LAFCO's actions facilitate sustainable growth and continued prosperity in the County, without sacrificing smart use of land and public resource efficiency. LAFCO fosters cross-sector collaboration in pursuit of policies that sustain quality of life for all who call this County home. LAFCO works to manage expectations from all stakeholders so that they may anticipate how to work within LAFCO policies and effectively plan ahead themselves. LAFCO envisions a better future and is here to help local governments to grow and plan accordingly. **LAFCO is thinking ahead, and it encourages others to think ahead too.**

MESSAGE #2:

LAFCO is Unique; a Local Steward of Public Good

OPPORTUNITY:

Facilitate increased *familiarity* with LAFCO staff, Commissioners, and its State-mandated processes; Reinforce a strong voice and an easily identifiable, consistent role for LAFCO and a strong internal culture for Santa Clara LAFCO as an agency.

LAFCO is a unique public agency; for example it is the **only local agency with a state mandate to protect agricultural lands**. LAFCO operates exclusively at the local level, while its powers and decision-making processes follow directly from State law. **The California Legislature formed LAFCOs as local stewards** and continues to empower them with the authority to directly oversee local agency boundaries, ensuring a balance of growth, development, and land conservation. The sole objective of the processes and people behind LAFCO is to uphold the State mandate for public stewardship.

The people behind LAFCO consist of Commissioners and Staff. **Other than the public member, LAFCO Commissioners are local elected officials who represent the entire County in upholding the LAFCO mandate.** Distinct from their roles as elected officials, LAFCO Commissioners bear the responsibility of representing all county residents. It is the unique duty of LAFCO Commissioners to evaluate decisions

weighing impacts upon the public and county as a whole. LAFCO is staffed by professionals who work to make recommendations that the Commissioners deliberate over in all decision-making processes according to State-dictated procedures that ensure a transparent, public participation process. Similarly, LAFCO policies are adopted by the Commissioners at public meetings with ample opportunity for public participation. **LAFCO actions are taken by publicly elected officials and one public member, seated as Commissioners,** and LAFCO actions take place at public meetings with opportunity for input. LAFCO Staff and Commissioners carry a long history and a strong track record for demonstrating consistency and principled decision-making. **Together, the people and processes behind LAFCO foster good stewardship of public resources.**

MESSAGE #3:

LAFCO Creates Public Value

OPPORTUNITY:

Capture how LAFCO's work yields *real public benefits* for the County and position LAFCO to own this narrative.

One role of LAFCO is to facilitate future growth dynamics that result in the preservation of open space and farmlands. LAFCO is a powerful public tool for forward-thinking and responsible oversight, yet the value of LAFCO spreads far beyond individual actions and policies. Vital public benefits are at the core of LAFCO's work, and **it is in part due to LAFCO that quality of life in Santa Clara County has remained so high through such dramatic changes and growth.** LAFCO's mission clearly states what it is mandated to do, but the collective 'why' behind LAFCO lies in the public benefits accrued from its presence.

LAFCO's work yields many public benefits, which include:

- » **Minimizing traffic;**
- » **Promoting housing affordability;**
- » **Protecting open space, and farmland;**
- » **Safeguarding air and water resources;**
- » **Increasing the sustainability and livability of communities; while also**
- » **Minimizing costs to taxpayers for government services and infrastructure.**

LAFCO minimizes traffic by promoting orderly growth and disincentivizing sprawl, which results in shorter trips and fewer cars on the road. 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-effective housing options. LAFCO protects open space and working lands by requiring that urban areas are developed efficiently and effectively first, before nearby farmlands and open space are converted for development. LAFCO safeguards local air and water resources by preventing the loss of natural resources such as open space and working lands, which help support healthy air and water cycles. LAFCO increases the sustainability and livability of communities by ensuring that quality of life is not sacrificed under pressure of disorderly growth. 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. In these ways, **LAFCO's presence creates public value across Santa Clara County, protecting natural resources while facilitating development of vibrant communities.**

MESSAGE #4:

LAFCO Works for the Good of the Whole County

OPPORTUNITY:

Articulate a vision for the county as an *interdependent, resilient whole*, and LAFCO as its responsible steward.

From its agricultural roots to its technological present, 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. The county benefits from a mixed use of its lands and their interrelated relationships. **LAFCO is the preeminent steward of this diversity and dynamism**, steering growth where urban services can be delivered efficiently while protecting vital working lands and open space. Many local policy decisions benefit certain groups at the present or future cost of others within the county. **It is LAFCO's job to carefully consider all sides and to sustain the health and vitality of the county as a whole**, protecting and enhancing its dynamic attributes.

Given its role, **LAFCO assumes a unique position to articulate a vision for the county as an interdependent, resilient whole** — a county that values both technology and agriculture, urban development and open space. LAFCO illuminates the mutually beneficial connections between conservation and sustainable growth, working lands and dynamic urban areas. Through an abiding commitment to its State mandate, LAFCO's presence has enabled the continued economic prosperity of Santa Clara County while sustaining the qualities that have brought such prosperity to the region and that make it such a desirable place to live, work and play. In other words, **LAFCO works for the good of the whole county.**

KEY MESSAGES

LAFCO Thinks Ahead

LAFCO is Unique; a Local Steward of Public Good

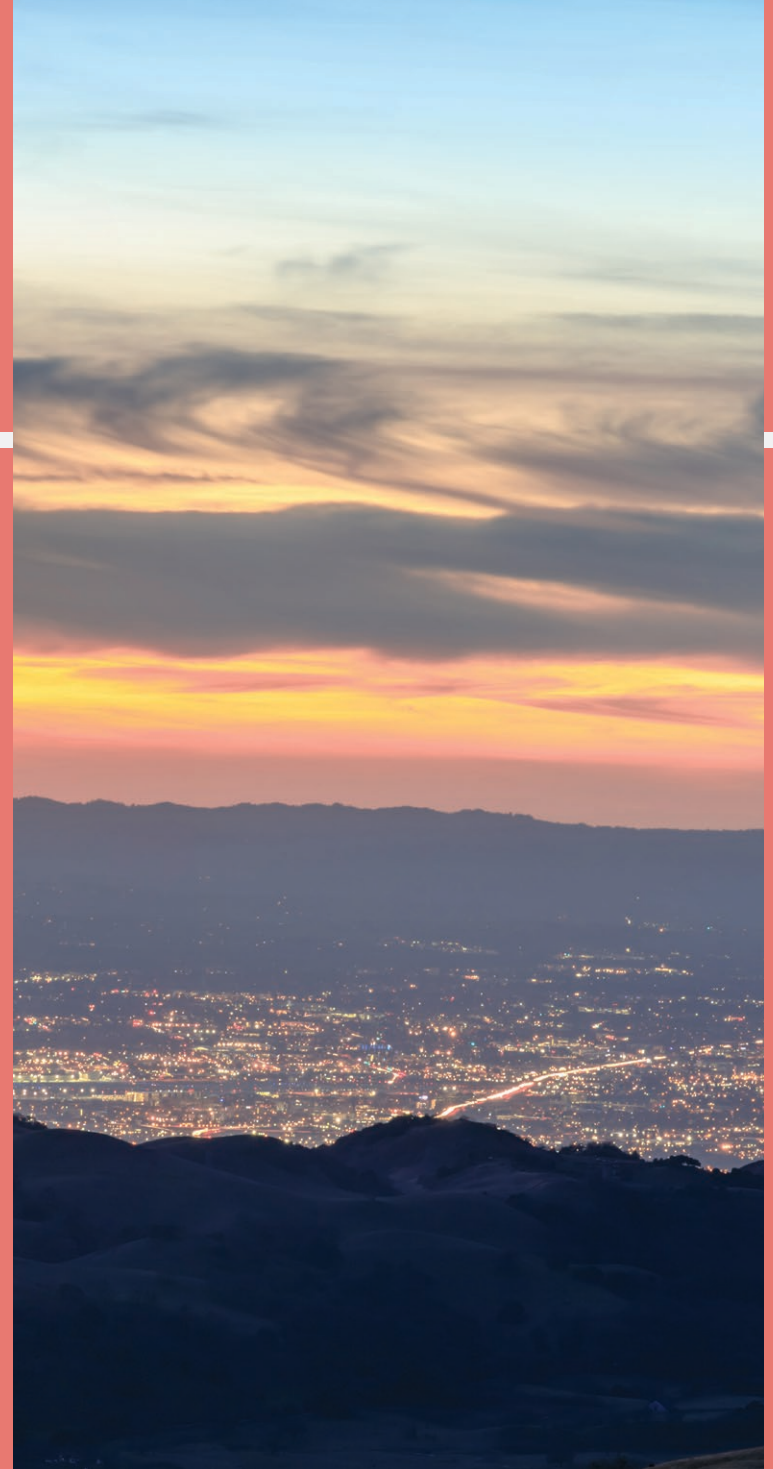
LAFCO Creates Public Value

LAFCO Works for the Good of the Whole County

SECTION THREE: **STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS**

The strategies and actions presented in Section Three are aimed at addressing the issues identified in Section One.

This section is intended to focus suggested strategies and actions within the context of the four target stakeholder audiences, guided by “How might we...” questions. These strategies and actions are based on broader goals for enhancing communications with each group of stakeholders, but many of these recommendations are applicable to multiple stakeholder groups.



How might we assist present and future Commissioners in serving the mission of LAFCO?

RECOMMENDED STRATEGY

Advance a strong internal culture for Commissioners and ensure that they are empowered to engage all audiences on the importance of LAFCO's role and to translate how LAFCO's work sustains quality of life across the County.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. UPDATE AND PROVIDE ORIENTATION PROGRAM FOR NEW COMMISSIONERS.

Staff currently conducts an orientation program to educate incoming Commissioners about the history of LAFCO, its State mandate, its policies, the role of Commissioners and Staff, and the process for review of applications. Update the current presentation used for this orientation program to include the new narrative resulting from this Plan. This orientation program will ensure that the Commissioners fully understand LAFCO's mission and how LAFCO functions, and provide the background necessary to serve on the Commission.

2. CREATE A PLEDGE FOR COMMISSIONERS.

Develop a pledge for Commissioners to take at their first Commission meeting, through which they acknowledge the understanding of their role to further the mission of LAFCO and the importance of their leadership in representing LAFCO. Establish standard protocols for administering the pledge and incorporate into the existing bylaws.

3. CREATE A WELCOME-PACKET FOR NEW COMMISSIONERS.

Update the current welcome packet containing the facts about LAFCO, its mission and mandate, its policies and bylaws, the role and expectations for Commissioners, how it fulfills its mission, and talking points for all audiences. This will serve as a reference for all Commissioners and help commissioners manage expectations in working with the County, cities, special districts, landowners and the public.

4. CONDUCT PERIODIC STUDY SESSIONS/ WORKSHOPS WITH COMMISSIONERS.

Continue to organize study sessions or workshops that can be held prior to Commission meetings as needed, to keep Commissioners up to date on changes in State, regional, and local planning and policy, as well as other trends in land use and local governance that are of interest to Santa Clara LAFCO. LAFCO staff will schedule and organize these workshops, inviting guest speakers relevant to the workshop topics.

5. ACKNOWLEDGE THE LEADERSHIP ROLE OF LAFCO COMMISSIONERS.

Make announcements through LAFCO newsletters and in local media on changes to the Commission to promote new leadership and raise general awareness about the important role the Commission serves. Continue to host events to welcome new Commissioners and recognize outgoing Commissioners.

6. ENLIST COMMISSIONERS' PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY OUTREACH THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA.

Encourage Commissioners to engage their constituents using their existing social media accounts to post announcements about LAFCO meetings, links to newsletters and news in local media, retweet LAFCO posts and events relevant to LAFCO.

How might we facilitate greater alignment between LAFCO and other **local government bodies** in the effort to curb sprawl, preserve agricultural lands and open space, and encourage efficient delivery of services?

RECOMMENDED STRATEGY

Engage all relevant elected officials and staff on common challenges and opportunities, laying out clearly where, when, and how LAFCO can assist local government to realize regional goals.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

7. HIGHLIGHT LAFCO'S URBAN DEVELOPMENT POLICIES.

Feature the current Urban Development Policies (which were developed and adopted jointly by the County, Cities and LAFCO in 1971) in new communications, by highlighting the policies themselves as well as the process by which they were created, to more effectively communicate their purpose and their unique value in serving Santa Clara County.

8. MEET WITH NEW CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS AND PLANNING STAFF.

Organize periodic meetings triggered by turnover of elected officials and planning staff in select cities with potential LAFCO applications to educate them about LAFCO's mandate, policies, and the State legislative guidance for the Commission. These meetings will also provide the opportunity to proactively address potential impending applications to LAFCO and manage expectations for the application process. Continue to attend standing or regular meetings of local agency staff and/or elected officials.

9. PUBLICIZE THE RESULTS OF SERVICE REVIEWS.

Promote the results of Service Reviews through LAFCO newsletters, annual reports and periodically in the local media to communicate the ways that LAFCO is encouraging the efficient delivery of services and the cost of those services to taxpayers.

10. CREATE FACT SHEETS ON LAFCO DECISION MAKING PROCESS AND OTHER RELEVANT SUBJECTS.

Create a diagram and fact sheet that outlines the application process to LAFCO. Explicitly state what LAFCO governs and how LAFCO makes decisions on applications that are presented to the Commission. Create other fact sheets on topics such as island annexations, best practices for transparency and accountability, infill development, agricultural preservation etc.

11. MAIL A PACKAGE OF THE NEW COMMUNICATIONS MATERIALS TO ELECTED OFFICIALS AND STAFF IN THE CITIES, SPECIAL DISTRICTS AND THE COUNTY.

Share the "What is LAFCO?" brochure and new edition of the County and Cities Boundaries Map with elected officials and staff with a cover letter that explains the intent for better communications and shared outcomes.



How might we aid **landowners** in better understanding **LAFCO's mandate and policies** in relation to their lands?

RECOMMENDED STRATEGY

Proactively manage expectations from landowners and developers around the role of LAFCO, making its policies and processes accessible and legible.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

12. CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE PRE-APPLICATIONS MEETINGS PRIOR TO APPLICATION SUBMITTAL.

Proactively explain policies at an early stage in the application process to manage expectations and understanding of policies, process and costs for applicants, and create a dialogue prior to application.

13. PROVIDE PRESENTATIONS ON LAFCO'S MANDATE AND POLICIES.

Continue to make presentations at City Council meetings and attend public workshops during cities' long-range planning efforts (such as General Plan updates) to help city officials and staff, landowners and communities better understand LAFCO's mission, mandate and process for decision-making.



How might we engage a public audience, to better understand the importance of LAFCO's role in improving the quality of life in Santa Clara County?

RECOMMENDED STRATEGY

Position LAFCO as a steward of public benefits and future livability in Santa Clara County.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

14. HOLD A PUBLIC WORKSHOP.

Invite the public to attend a workshop to present what LAFCO does and why it matters to the public. Also show how LAFCO supports other regional and local planning efforts and contributes to the quality of life in the county as a whole. Distribute new communications materials and engage the public in dialogue around issues relevant to LAFCO.

15. CREATE A PUBLIC EXHIBIT.

An exhibit that visually displays the new narrative can support a formal presentation at a public workshop as well as for other public events. It can be put on display in public spaces (City Hall, schools, public libraries) to raise awareness about the role and value of LAFCO to everyone in the County.

16. DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS WITH ORGANIZATIONS WITH GOALS COMMON TO LAFCO.

Continue to engage representatives of local organizations and citizens who can highlight the value of LAFCO's role in the County and help educate and enlist their membership to further engage the public.

17. CREATE AND USE A TWITTER ACCOUNT FOR @SANTACLARALAFCO.

"Take a seat at the digital roundtable" by participating in social media to be more visible, engaged and engaging with stakeholder organizations and individuals. Follow other relevant agencies, organizations, elected officials, and public figures; retweet posts that are in line with LAFCO policies and principles, and use the account to post meeting announcements, links to newsletters and resources, make statements on important policy decisions, and share examples of positive planning policy and outcomes in action.

18. LAUNCH TARGETED SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS.

To attract attention to the positive outcomes from LAFCO's work in Santa Clara, selectively launch small social media campaigns using hashtags appropriate to a specific project or issue.

19. BUILD A NEW SANTA CLARA LAFCO WEBSITE.

Create a new website built around the messaging outlined in this plan and redesign the site using the new Santa Clara LAFCO identity. The website is the primary portal for distributing information to all stakeholders and should reflect the strategies and story outlined in this plan as well as the recommended principles of putting forward a message that is positive, personal, proactive and accessible.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Here are a few guiding principles for delivering messaging to any of LAFCO's diverse stakeholders. These are broad suggestions on tone and posture to guide some best practices for LAFCO communications and outreach. Overtime, these principles for delivering the new narrative will help develop a collective 'voice' that all LAFCO representatives can own, build a stronger culture within LAFCO, and facilitate better communications with all audiences.

BE POSITIVE

- » Make explicit what LAFCO says "yes" to — e.g. orderly growth, infill development near transit and jobs, minimizing impacts on infrastructure and traffic, protection of open space and agricultural lands, climate resiliency, efficient delivery of public services and deployment of taxpayer dollars.
- » Recognize that we would not have the "good" that we have if LAFCO did not say "no".

BE PERSONAL

- » Demonstrate how LAFCO listens and is responsive to community concerns while managing expectations of key stakeholders and staying aligned with its own mission and mandate.
- » Translate the benefits of what LAFCO does into language that aligns with how the public perceives and values quality of life in the county.

BE PROACTIVE

- » Assertively extend LAFCO communications and outreach.
- » Engage the public on the role of LAFCO, the benefits of creating livable, sustainable communities and minimizing the costs of services and infrastructure.

BE ACCESSIBLE

- » Communicate with all audiences using simple, clear language.
- » Be direct about what LAFCO can and cannot approve within its mission and mandate to potential applicants, in advance of the application process.

SECTION FOUR: **TOOLS**

This section of the plan offers recommendations for the tools needed to deliver on the above strategies. Some of these tools are broadly applicable, designed for addressing all audiences, while others target specific goals and audiences.



IDENTITY



SANTA CLARA LAFCO IDENTITY

The following are objectives for updating the LAFCO identify and communications tools and templates.

- Unique, recognizable logo/wordmark
- Distinct color palette
- Distinct photo/illustration style
- Distinct fonts and typography for all communications
- Strong supporting design elements, grids, layouts
- Consistent naming of organization
- Consistent presentation of high-level messaging across materials

This new identity was designed to replace the current LAFCO logo. The new identity incorporates the name 'Santa Clara' into a proprietary wordmark to distinguish this LAFCO from others in the State. The gradation of colors used to illustrate the word LAFCO suggests its future focus and conveys a clean and contemporary image. The combination of fonts and colors in this wordmark create a distinct identity that is simple, recognizable and timeless. Specifications for using the new identity in black and white as well as full color are provided in the Style Guide.

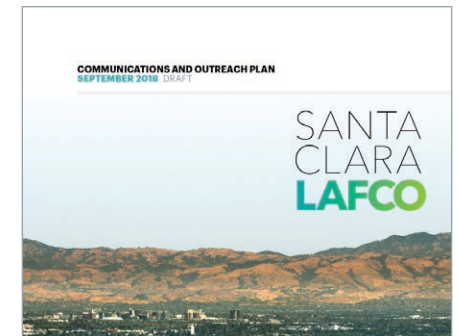
STATIONERY

The new identity for Santa Clara LAFCO is reflected in the redesign of the LAFCO business cards and letterhead. The design is straightforward and professional, without excessive design elements or costly printing techniques which would be inappropriate for a public agency.



STYLE GUIDE

Guidelines for application of the new identity and visual style elements — including a selection of secondary fonts, colors and other graphic elements — help direct the extension of the identity into all communications produced in-house, as well as with outside vendors, to maintain consistency and visual integrity of the identity over time.



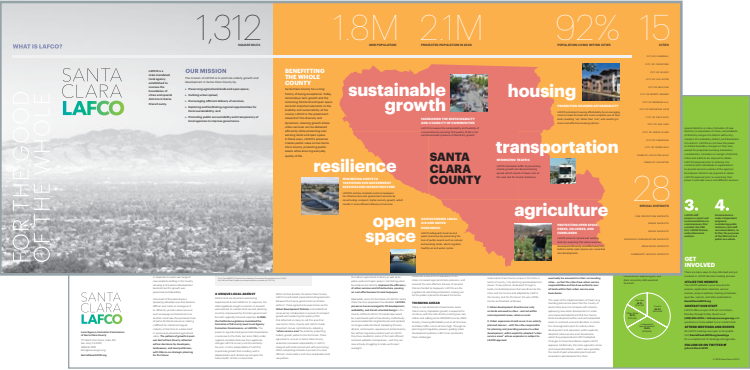
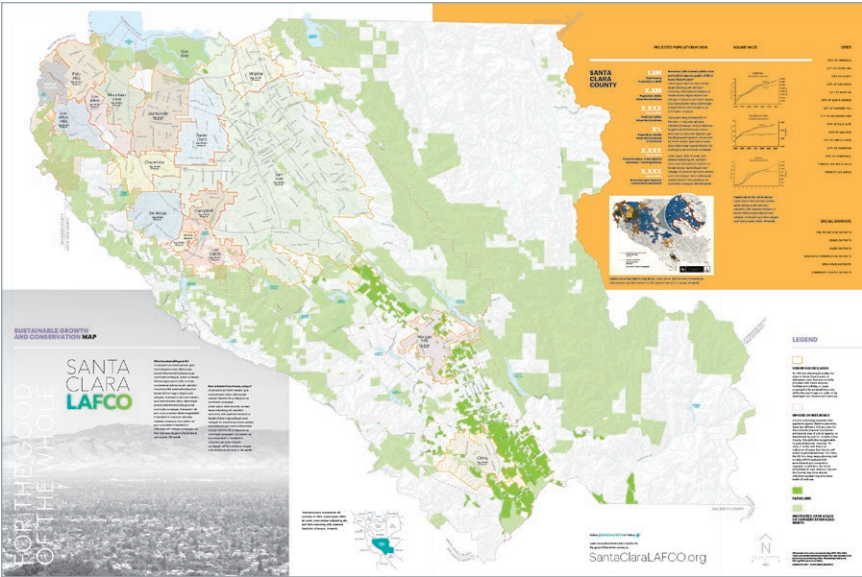
BROCHURES

WHAT IS LAFCO?

This is the primary communications tool for Santa Clara LAFCO which can be used to educate all audiences about the history of LAFCO’s mission and mandate, the Commissioners’ role in upholding the mandate, how it functions, and what it has accomplished over 50 years in Santa Clara County. It also features the new narrative about what is unique to Santa Clara County and how LAFCO thinks ahead to create public value for the good of the county as a whole.

COUNTY AND CITIES BOUNDARIES MAP

An updated version of the current County and Cities Boundaries Map is designed as a complementary tool to the What is LAFCO? brochure. It can be used as a stand-alone document or handed out in conjunction with the brochure. The map will also depict farmlands and open space, other graphics and narrative to describe how development and conservation are integral to each other, population growth, statistics, urban development policies, and historic context.



Visuals shown in this section are for concept only.

TEMPLATES

In addition to the printed brochures described above, the following design templates are provided for new communications tools that are developed and produced in house. These tools can be targeted to individual audiences or for specific announcements to augment the general messages included in the public facing brochures.

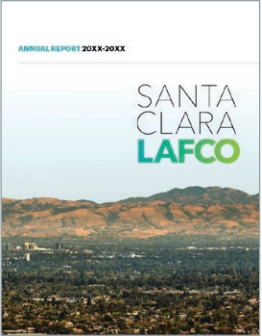
FACT SHEETS

A template to direct both content organization and design for a series of Fact Sheets is provided as a part of this plan. These can be used to provide detailed information about relevant topics to specific audiences. They will also provide the flexibility for Staff to update information and create Fact Sheets for new topics on a periodic basis. LAFCO Staff will be responsible for developing the content and implementing these materials.



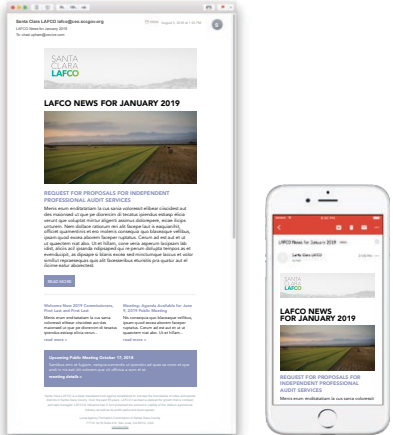
ANNUAL REPORT

An updated design template for Annual Reports applying the new logo and visual/style elements is provided as a part of this plan, along with recommendations for content to include in future reports. LAFCO Staff will be responsible for developing the content and implementing these materials.



NEWSLETTER/ANNOUNCEMENTS

A template for the design of a new digital newsletter is provided as a part of this plan. This new template can be distributed to all audiences, including the current list of recipients for regular LAFCO meeting announcements and agendas. Content can include announcements for changes to the Commission, upcoming presentations and meetings, reports on Service Reviews, links to newly published annual reports, and other timely notices and news.



Visuals shown in this section are for concept only.

WEBSITE

*not included in current contract

An audit of the current website and recommended changes to update the current site, or the potential to build a new website, is included as a part of this plan. Other LAFCO websites have been analyzed to provide a useful standard of comparison to create the recommendations outlined.

Primary website recommendations include:

- Update or redesign website to be responsive for optimal viewing and navigation on mobile devices
- Update or redesign website to integrate strong new identity and narrative
- Integrate most important messages and dynamic content (meetings, etc.) on website home page
- Use up-to-date navigation structure and content management system for ease of use and maintenance
- Use an analytics tool to measure website traffic, most-frequently visited pages and downloads
- Build foundation to anticipate digital communication needs of the organization for the next 5+ years including paperless workflows, security, evolving messaging, document archives, and maintenance requirements
- Add content to align with best practices for public agency transparency

NEW LAFCO WEBSITE*

The LAFCO website is the primary portal for distributing information to all stakeholders and should reflect the new narrative and identity, as well as the recommended principles of putting forward a message that is positive, personal, proactive and accessible. Given that the current website is 5 years old, a new website built with current technology is recommended to achieve LAFCO's goals for better communications and functionality.

PRESENTATIONS

*not included in current contract

In-person presentations are one of the most effective ways to share the Santa Clara LAFCO story to the constituents that are most interested and engaged in the work of LAFCO. These types of presentations provide an appropriate platform for engaging LAFCO's audiences in the full narrative as described by the themes outlined in this plan, as well as its background and history of accomplishments. Making presentations to small targeted groups also allows for an exchange of ideas, facilitating a more transparent and friendly dialogue.

Design of compelling presentations typically begins with an outline and storyboard, gathering and organizing all important topics and supporting visual concepts, considering length, pacing, and impact of presentation, whether self-guided or presented by a speaker. The storyboard is then built out into a full design presentation with clear hierarchy of messages and effective images, charts and diagrams. By outlining, storyboarding and designing updated presentations, the LAFCO messages can be presented in a way that is clear and memorable.

SANTA CLARA LAFCO PRESENTATION — COMMISSION, COUNTY, CITIES AND SPECIAL DISTRICTS*

A new PowerPoint presentation should be developed to reflect LAFCO's new identity and narrative. The same core story can be used for the orientation program of new Commissioners as well as for presentations to elected officials and staff of the County, Cities and Special Districts, with the addition of custom modules developed for each individual audience as needed. Preparing an outline, storyboard, and simple design format will ensure the document is useful and stands out as an exemplary resource for commissioners.

SANTA CLARA LAFCO PRESENTATION — GENERAL PUBLIC*

A separate presentation should be developed for purposes of presenting LAFCO's story to the general public, addressing the concerns and values of County citizens and LAFCO's role in creating public benefits and enhancing the quality of life throughout the County.

EXHIBITS*

A series of exhibits should be developed to tell the LAFCO story for temporary display in public spaces around the County such as City Hall, public libraries and schools. Exhibits may take the form of a series of large 24"x36" or 30"x45" re-useable mounted posters for display on walls or easels, pop-up banner stands, or other similar formats for temporary or semi-permanent installation.

MEDIA

*not included in current contract

Protocols should be developed for publishing regular activity from the Commission, including appointment of new Commissioners and acknowledgement of outgoing Commissioners, profiles of local issues, as well as outcomes of Service Reviews. Referencing the guiding principles in this plan will help guide development of press releases, interview statements, and responses to individual and media inquiries.

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS*

Strategies for a social media campaign can be developed for specific issues or projects as needed to facilitate an open, honest dialogue of the issues and reinforce LAFCO's mission and the Commissioners' leadership role. To start, LAFCO can establish a Twitter account for ongoing engagement with local stakeholders on relevant topics. Retweeting positive messages of other local agencies and organizations can serve to keep LAFCO visible and reinforce the mission and mandate of LAFCO.

TOOLS FOR COMMISSIONERS

*not included in current contract

NEW COMMISSIONER PLEDGE

A single page pledge for Commissioners to sign in acknowledgement of the understanding of their role in representing LAFCO as a Commissioner, is included as a part of this plan.

COMMISSIONERS WELCOME PACKET*

A welcome packet for all Commissioners should be developed to summarize the facts about LAFCO, its mission and mandate, the role and expectations for Commissioners, how it fulfills its mission working with the County, Cities and Special Districts, landowners and the public, a summary of the 4 messaging themes outlined in this plan and talking points for all audiences. This will serve as an easy reference for Commissioners and ensure consistency across all communications.

SECTION FIVE: **PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION**

This section summarizes the recommended tools and activities into a schedule for implementation with the goal of completing the Plan implementation over a 12 month period following its final publication. Implementation of these tools and activities will largely fall to LAFCO staff, with the support of consultants to provide high level strategy and design as well as the ongoing leadership of LAFCO Commissioners.



IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

INCLUDED WITH PLAN

Communications Tools

- » Identity
- » Style Guide
- » Stationery Package
- » “What is LAFCO?” Brochure
- » County and Cities Boundaries Map
- » Commissioners’ Pledge
- » Website Recommendations
- » Templates for:
 - Fact Sheets
 - Digital Newsletter
 - Annual Report

TOOLS

- » Prepare Identity / logo
- » Prepare Style Guide
- » Prepare Stationery Package
- » Prepare “What is LAFCO?” Brochure
- » Prepare County & Cities Boundary Map
- » Draft Commissioners’ Pledge
- » Template for Fact Sheets
- » Template for Digital Newsletter
- » Template for Annual Report
- » Website Upgrade Recommendations
- » Prepare Annual Report
- » Identify topics, prioritize and prepare Fact Sheets
- » Update New Commissioner Orientation Presentation*
- » Prepare New Commissioner Welcome Packet
- » Prepare Public Exhibits*
- » Update LAFCO Website*

Implementers:

Timeframe:

Consultant / Staff	Completed
Consultant	Completed
Consultant	Completed
Consultant / Staff	In progress
Consultant / Staff	In progress
Consultant	Completed
Consultant	Completed
Consultant	Completed
Consultant	Completed
Staff	Fall of each year
Staff	Ongoing
Consultant / Staff	Winter 2018
Staff	Winter 2018
Consultant	TBD
Consultant / Staff	TBD

*not included in current contract

ACTIVITIES

- » Incorporate protocols for administering Commissioners' pledge into LAFCO bylaws
- » Administer the Pledge for Commissioners
- » Conduct new Commissioner orientation and provide welcome packet
- » Media announcement for change in Commissioners
- » Distribute communications materials (brochure and map) to local agencies and key stakeholders
- » Set up a LAFCO Twitter account and establish protocols
- » Use existing social media platform to share/promote LAFCO feeds
- » Develop an annual public communications calendar
- » Conduct study sessions for Commissioners
- » Meet with city elected officials and planning staff
- » Attend standing meetings of cities / County and special districts staff / elected officials
- » Meet with partner organizations, interest groups or interested parties
- » Publicize service review reports through newsletters
- » Conduct pre-application meetings
- » Provide presentations on LAFCO mandate and policies
- » Organize a public exhibit
- » Develop partnerships with organizations with goals common to LAFCO
- » Launch targeted social media campaigns

Implementers:

Staff / Commission
Commission
Staff
Staff
Staff
Staff
Commissioners
Staff
Staff
Staff
Staff
Staff
Staff
Staff
Staff
Staff
Staff
Staff
Staff

Timeframe:

Winter 2018
As needed
As needed
As needed
TBD
TBD
TBD
Spring of each year
As needed
As needed
As needed
As needed
As needed
As needed
As needed
As needed
As needed
As needed
TBD

EVALUATION OF PLAN

The effectiveness of the communications tools, outreach strategies and activities as outlined above will be evaluated over the next three years, from December 2019 - December 2021. As the outcomes of this Plan toward the goal of creating a new narrative will be largely qualitative and difficult to measure through metrics, we recommend that LAFCO staff tracks more general feedback throughout the year, including (but not limited to):

- » **Ongoing responses to communications tools;**
- » **Informal surveys in follow up to meetings;**
- » **General inquiries from stakeholders groups;**
- » **Media and press reports;**
- » **Feedback from LAFCOs in other counties;**
- » **Analytics from outgoing email announcements, website traffic and social media campaigns.**

This feedback can be organized and shared with Commissioners periodically for further input. An annual survey of current Commissioners focused on communications and outreach is another effective means to gather insights that will help refine messaging and communications strategies over time, with the continued goal to raise awareness about the value of Santa Clara LAFCO, and to help LAFCO better fulfill its role in the county.

We would like to acknowledge the contributions made by the LAFCO Commissioners and Staff in the creation of this Communications Plan.

**SANTA CLARA LAFCO
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Susan Vicklund Wilson, Vice Chairperson

Sequoia Hall

Sergio Jimenez

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