

**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

SANTA CLARA  
**LAFCO**

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.**

**fiscal resilience**

**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.

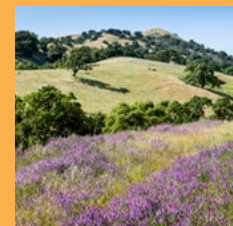


CITY OF SAN JOSE

**environment**

**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.



ANDREA LAJUE

**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.



SERGIO RUIZ

**SANTA CLARA COUNTY**

**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.



VTA

**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.

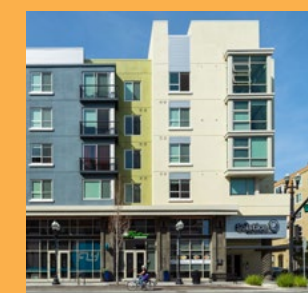


ANDREA LAJUE

**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.



SERGIO RUIZ

28  
SPECIAL DISTRICTS

**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 (9)**

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

\*lies principally outside Santa Clara County

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



## 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. 2. 3. 4.

LAFCO receives boundary change application by property owner or registered voter petition, or by local agency resolution.

LAFCO staff review the application and give notice of public hearing.

LAFCO staff prepare a report with recommendations that consider the CKH Act, and local LAFCO Policies.

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](http://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](http://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.

1960  
From the 1890s, Santa Clara County was known as the Valley of Hearts Delight



1970  
Region becomes known as Silicon Valley

1972-1973  
Urban Development Policies jointly adopted

1980  
1,295,071 Population

50,556 acres of farmland remaining (1984)



1990  
1,497,577 Population

1996, 1998  
Voter approved Urban Growth Boundaries for San Jose, Milpitas

2000  
1,682,585 Population



2000  
Cortese Knox Hertzberg Act strengthens LAFCO mandate

2008  
SB 375 requires RTP/SCS to meet State GHG reduction goals

2010  
1,781,642 Population

2013  
25,990 acres of farmland remaining (2016)

2013  
Special Districts seated on Santa Clara LAFCO

2016  
Voter approved Urban Growth Boundary Gilroy

2020  
2,063,100 Projected Population

2030  
2,310,800 Projected Population

## 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.

### 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,

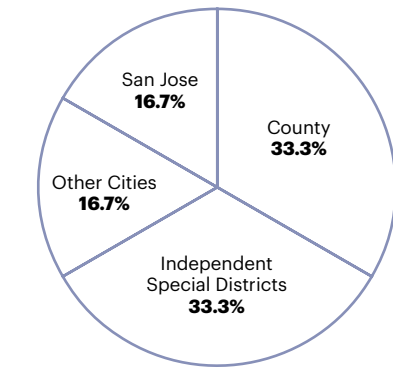
Atlanta and Houston experienced similar booms, but without regulatory bodies such as LAFCO they have resulted in some of the least efficient and least walkable metropolises – and they are now actively struggling to make up for past oversight.

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.

## 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.



orderly growth

resource conservation  
efficient delivery of services

