

SANTA CRUZ LAFCO STANDARDS FOR EVALUATING PROPOSALS

Pursuant to Government Code Section §56375(i), Santa Cruz LAFCO has established various standards for the evaluation of proposals. This Section of the LAFCO Handbook sets forth those standards, as adopted by the Commission, in association with relevant LAFCO policy statements.

The standards set forth in this Section of the LAFCO Handbook shall be used by Santa Cruz LAFCO in evaluating all proposals that come before the Commission. The Commission shall also follow the policies set forth in this Section of the LAFCO Handbook when the Commission makes determinations on the proposals that come before it.

POLICY 1.1: CONSISTENCY WITH SPHERES

All changes of organization shall be consistent with adopted spheres of influence of affected agencies.

Standard 1.1.1:

Consistency shall be determined by a LAFCO finding of consistency with the sphere of influence maps and policies adopted by LAFCO for the affected agencies.

POLICY 1.2: NEED FOR SERVICES

Any proposal involving annexations, incorporations, and formations shall not be approved unless it demonstrates a need for the additional services to be provided to the area; while all proposals involving detachments, disincorporations, and dissolutions shall not be approved unless the proponent demonstrates that the subject services are not needed or can be provided as well by another agency or private organization.

Standard 1.2.1:

For proposals concerning cities, need shall be established by:

- a) An adopted rezoning, consistent with the city general plan, that shows current or future development at a density that will require urban services such as sanitary sewer and water and,
- b) A city growth rate and pattern that the subject area will developed within 5 years.

Standard 1.2.2:

For proposals concerning water and sewer district annexations, need shall be established by lack of services to existing urban land uses, or

a building permit application or allocation for a single-family dwelling or, for a larger project, by:

- a) Tentative or final land use entitlement (tentative subdivision map, use permit, etc.) conditioned on obtaining water or sewer service and,
- b) A growth rate and pattern that the subject area will be developed within 5 years.

Standard 1.2.3:

For proposals concerning the extension of other services by annexation, incorporation, or district formation, need shall be established by the applicable general plan land use designations and the service levels specified for the subject area in the applicable general plan.

Standard 1.2.4:

For proposals involving the discontinuation of services, lack of need shall be established by:

- a) No serious effects on the current users of the service due to discontinuation and,
- b) No projected serious effects on the uses that can be expected to occur in the next 5 years based upon the applicable general plan and projected growth rates and patterns.

Standard 1.2.5:

In reviewing proposals, LAFCO shall consider:

- 1) The "population" in the proposal area to be the population recorded in the last biennial or special census unless the proponent or affected agency can present updated or more detailed information which LAFCO determines to be more accurate,
- 2) The "population density" to be the population divided by the acreage, and
- 3) The "per capita assessed valuation" to be the full cash value of all the property in a proposal area (as set be by the last secured property tax roll) divided by the population.

POLICY 1.3: GENERAL PLANS

In cases of overlapping plans, LAFCO shall make a determination of which general plan best carries out the policies of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act.

Standard 1.3.1:

Generally, LAFCO will presume to favor a city's general plan inside the sphere of influence adopted for the city by LAFCO, and the county's general plan elsewhere. It is the proponent's responsibility to prove any exception by referring to the policies of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act.

POLICY 1.4: IN-FILL DEVELOPMENT

In order to avoid further urban sprawl, LAFCO shall encourage in-fill development in urban areas and annexations of areas inside the city sphere of influence.

POLICY 1.5: PROVISION OF SERVICES

In order for LAFCO to approve a change of organization, the proponent shall demonstrate that the subject services can be provided in a timely manner and at a reasonable cost.

Standard 1.5.1:

It is the general policy of the Commission to disapprove annexations to water and sewer agencies (including cities that provide either service) while there is a connection moratorium or other similar service limitation involving the subject water or sewer service. The Commission will consider exceptions to this general policy on a case-by-case basis. The Commission may approve an annexation that meets one or more of the following criteria:

- 1) To replace a private water source that has failed, such as a well that has gone dry. New service connections shall not be sized to accommodate more intensive development.
- 2) To replace a septic system that has failed. New service connections shall not be sized to accommodate more intensive development.
- 3) To implement a transfer of service between two existing agencies in a manner that is consistent with the adopted Spheres of Influence of those agencies.

- 4) To change a boundary, in a manner consistent with an adopted Sphere of Influence, so that an agency boundary does not divide a property that could only be conveyed under a single deed.

Between January 1, 1986 and the time the service limitation is totally lifted, the Commission shall limit the annexations so that the number of cumulative connections made under the above exemption criteria do not exceed 1% of the total agency's flow (as expressed in equivalent single family dwelling units) in service on January 1, 1986.

An additional criterion, not subject to the 1% cumulative impact limitation is as follows:

- 5) To provide facilities or funding that will allow the agency to lift its service limitation.

POLICY 1.6: STAGED GROWTH

For large projects, the Commission shall encourage plans for staged growth.

POLICY 2.1: NUMBER OF AGENCIES

Proposals, where feasible, should minimize the number of local agencies and promote the use of multi-purpose agencies.

Standard 2.1.1:

New or consolidated service shall be provided by one of the following agencies in the descending order of preference:

- a) Annexation to an existing city,
- b) Annexation to an existing district of which the Board of Supervisors is the governing body,
- c) Annexation to an existing multi-purpose district,
- d) Annexation to another existing district,
- e) Formation of a new county service area,
- f) Incorporation of a new city,
- g) Formation of a new multi-purpose district,

h) Formation of a new single-purpose district.

Standard 2.1.2:

The Commission will promote and approve district consolidations, where feasible.

POLICY 2.2: LOGICAL BOUNDARIES

LAFCO shall promote more logical agency boundaries.

Standard 2.2.1:

To the greatest possible extent, boundaries shall follow existing political boundaries, natural features (such as ridges, and watercourses), and constructed features (such as railroad tracks).

Standard 2.2.2:

Boundary lines shall be located so that entire road rights-of-way are placed within the same jurisdiction as the properties fronting on the road.

Standard 2.2.3:

Boundaries should avoid dividing an existing identifiable community, commercial district, or other area having social or economic homogeneity. Where such divisions are proposed, the proponents shall justify exceptions to this standard.

Standard 2.2.4:

The creation of boundaries that divide assessment parcels shall be avoided whenever possible. If the proposed boundary divides assessment parcels, the proponent must justify to the Commission the necessity for such a division. If the Commission approves the proposal, the Commission may condition the approval upon obtaining a boundary adjustment or lot split from a city or county.

Standard 2.2.5:

Boundaries should not be drawn so as to create an island or strip either within the proposed territory or immediately adjacent to it. Where such an island or strip is proposed, the proponent must justify reasons for non-conformance with this standard.

Standard 2.2.6:

Where feasible, city and related district boundary changes should occur concurrently to avoid an irregular pattern of boundaries.

POLICY 2.3: FINANCIALLY DESIRABLE AREAS

The sole inclusion of financially desirable areas in a jurisdiction shall be avoided.

POLICY 2.4: OVERALL EFFECTS

The Commission shall consider the effects of a proposed action on adjacent areas, mutual social and economic interests, and on local governmental structure.

Standard 2.4.1:

For city annexation proposals, if the city has more jobs than places for workers to live (jobs to employed residents ratio greater than 1.00), then a proposal which will directly result in urban development including new permanent employment may only be approved if sufficient land is designated for residential uses in the city's general plan to create a jobs/housing balance.

POLICY 2.5: PREZONING

The Commission shall require prezoning for all city annexations so that the potential effects of the proposals can be evaluated by the Commission and known to the affected citizens.

POLICY 3.1: PRIME AGRICULTURAL LANDS

Urban growth shall be guided away from prime agricultural lands, unless such action would not promote planned, orderly, efficient development of an area.

Standard 3.1.1:

A change of organization is considered to promote the planned, orderly, and efficient development of an area when:

- a) It is consistent with the spheres of influence maps and policies adopted by LAFCO for the affected agencies.
- b) It conforms to all other policies and standards contained herein.

POLICY 3.2: INFILL

LAFCO shall encourage the urbanization of vacant lands and non-prime agricultural lands within an agency's jurisdiction and within an agency's sphere of influence before the urbanization of lands outside the jurisdiction and outside the sphere of influence, and shall encourage detachments of prime agricultural lands and other open space lands from cities, water districts, and sewer districts if consistent with the adopted sphere of influence of the affected agency.

Standard 3.2.1:

The priorities for urbanization are:

- 1) Open-space lands within existing boundaries,
- 2) Open-space lands within an adopted sphere of influence,
- 3) Prime agricultural lands within existing boundaries,
- 4) Prime agricultural lands within an adopted sphere of influence.

Standard 3.2.2:

Proposals involving urbanization of prime agricultural lands within adopted spheres of influence shall not be approved unless it can be demonstrated that:

- a) There is insufficient land in the market area for the type of land use proposed,
- b) There is no vacant land in the subject jurisdiction available for that kind of use.