

**YOLO COUNTY  
LOCAL AGENCY FROMATION COMMISSION  
METHODOLOGY GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION  
OF MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEWS AND  
DETERMINATION OF SPHERE OF INFLUENCE REPORTS**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Local agency formation commissions are required to develop substantiating data and determine the "sphere of influence" for each governmental agency within each county (Government Code Section 56425). Each local agency formation commissions is also expected to adopt policies to guide the development and determination of spheres of influence (Government Code Section 56425(a), (d)).

LAFCOs are required to review sphere documents not less than once every five years (Government Code Section 56425(f)). A commission retains the discretion to update a sphere more frequently as appropriate.

In addition, local agency formation commissions must prepare municipal service review plans within the county or other appropriate areas as designated by each commission (Government Code Section 56430). Municipal service review plans are technical studies to review the capability, capacity and ability of agencies to physically and efficiently provide services. A commission is required to conduct the municipal service reviews before, or in conjunction with, but no later than the time it is considering an action to establish or update a sphere of influence (Government Code Section 56430(d)).

Another part of the process that may occur before a sphere of influence is a pre-sphere planning agreement between a county and a city involved with the sphere (Government Code Section 56425(b)). At least 30 days prior to submitting an application to the commission for a determination of a new sphere of influence, or to update an existing sphere of influence for a city, representatives from the city shall meet with county representatives to discuss the proposed sphere, and its boundaries, and explore methods to reach agreement on the boundaries, development standards, and zoning requirements within the sphere to ensure that development within the sphere occurs in a manner that reflects the concerns of the affected city and is accomplished in a manner that promotes the logical and orderly development of areas within the sphere. If no agreement is reached between the city and county within 30 days, the parties may extend the discussions for an additional 30 days.

If an agreement is reached between the city and county regarding the boundaries, development standards, and zoning requirements within the proposed sphere, the agreement shall be forwarded to the commission, and the commission shall consider and the commission shall give great weight to the agreement in the commission's final determination of the city sphere. If the commission's final determination is consistent with the agreement reached between the city and county, the agreement shall be adopted by the both the city and county after a public hearing. Once the agreement has been adopted by the affected local agencies and their respective general plans reflect

that agreement, then any development approved by the county within the sphere shall be consistent with the terms of that agreement.

If no agreement is reached within the 60-day period, the application for a determination of a new sphere of influence or to update an existing sphere may then be submitted to the commission.

Whether or not an agreement is reached, the local agency formation commission retains the discretion to adopt a sphere of influence as it determines to be appropriate under the circumstances, and it must do so and the commission shall consider a sphere of influence for the city consistent with the policies adopted by the commission pursuant to Government Code Section 56425.

Yolo County has four incorporated cities, and 54 special districts. This document sets forth methodology and criteria ("guidelines") to be used to assist the Yolo County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), its staff and interested parties in the process and determination of spheres of influence and service reviews by LAFCO.

### **TYPES OF SPHERES OF INFLUENCE**

Cities and special districts require slightly different approaches to sphere of influence documents. Cities are municipal service providers that are generally created to provide urban services to dense populations at relatively high standard levels. Some special districts, such as community services districts and county service areas can also be created to provide municipal services, but generally on a smaller scale.

Most special districts in Yolo County provide a few specialized services to rural populations and land. For example, the water district services tend to be agriculturally related, as is the Resource Conservation District. Fire districts tend to be volunteer and rural in nature. Most Cemetery districts in Yolo County are primarily rural, but the Davis and Winters Cemetery Districts include the cities of Davis and Winters, respectively.

The agricultural rural nature of unincorporated Yolo County is reflected in the sphere studies for the smaller special districts. The County's slow growth and strong agricultural conservation policies also tend to limit the growth of the special districts as well. This results in three types of sphere studies.

1. Incorporated areas -- Davis, West Sacramento, Woodland, and Winters plan for municipal services for their current populations and any projected growth. LAFCO will prepare the municipal services reviews for each of these entities. The sphere of influence research will include general and specific plan information, and other available research relevant to these spheres to determine the extent and direction of probable, logical and efficient growth for each city.

City spheres of influence will ordinarily determine two boundaries within each sphere. Growth will be anticipated within ten-year and twenty-year timelines. Each will be used to provide realistic and usable information to LAFCO and other interested parties for guiding growth. The end product, then, will be two parameters for cities:

- (a) Ten-year lines/areas that project the immediately foreseeable ongoing growth, and

- (b) Twenty-year lines/areas, which constitute the probable long-term interface between service providers.

(Neither of these lines would demarcate "urban services areas" as described in Government Code Section 56080(a)(2).)

2. Municipal-like Special Districts - Community services districts and county service areas that provide various types of municipal services to unincorporated communities will also have ten and twenty-year sphere boundaries as described for the cities. LAFCO will again review the municipal services plan for each of these entities, as well as general and specific plan information and other available research relevant to these spheres, and determine the extent and direction of probable, logical and efficient growth for each district.
3. Rural Special Districts - The remaining special districts do not have municipal level services to review. The municipal service reviews will be used to determine what type of services the district is expected to provide and the extent to which it is actually able to do so.

For these special districts, the spheres will delineate the service capability and expansion capacity of the agency. The ten-year line will represent the ability of the district to provide services within ten years. The twenty-year line will show the long-term expectations of influence, impact, and control. The sphere may have only one line depending on the projections for the district and the ability to provide services.

## **CRITERIA**

### **Municipal Services Review**

In conducting a municipal service review, LAFCO will comprehensively review all of the agencies that provide the identified service or services within the designated geographic area. For each geographic area that LAFCO determines to be appropriate for an analysis of the service or services to be reviewed, LAFCO shall prepare a written statement of its determinations with respect to each of the following:

1. Infrastructure needs or deficiencies.
2. Growth and population projections for the affected area.
3. Financing constraints and opportunities.
4. Cost avoidance opportunities.
5. Opportunities for rate restructuring.
6. Opportunities for shared facilities.
7. Government structure options, including advantages and disadvantages of consolidation or reorganization of service providers.
8. Evaluation of management efficiencies.
9. Local accountability and governance.

### **Spheres Of Influence**

In determining the sphere of influence of each local agency, LAFCO will consider and prepare a written statement of its determinations with respect to each of the following:

1. The present and planned land uses in the area, including agricultural and open-space lands.
2. The present and probable need for public facilities and services in the area.
3. The present capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services that the agency provide or is authorized to provide.
4. The existence of any social or economic communities of interest in the area if LAFCO determines that they are relevant to the agency.

LAFCO will consider the following criteria when studying and determining the spheres of influence for the cities and special districts within the County of Yolo (including but not limited to identifying the short-term and long-term sphere of influence lines):

1. Retention and strengthening of community identities, as well as increasing efficiency and conserving resources, by providing essential services within a framework of controlled growth.
2. Identification of the county's prime agricultural land and protection of this land through all available devices, such as including controlling the provision of services, requiring infill development first, and preferring non-prime land for growth. Other open-space resources such as stream banks, flood plains, and present and future recreation areas should also be protected for public benefit.
3. Creation of realistic and controlled, yet flexible, planning areas into which anticipated services can be expanded, as growth requires and as the communities' resources provide.
4. Provision of infrastructure systems such as streets, sewers, water, open space for parks and recreation as a product of growth, rather than growth inducing.
5. Encouragement of city annexation or incorporation as a means of supplying the full range of urban services as required.
6. Evaluation of the availability and need for basic services in each community and forecast these to meet anticipated population growth, and recommend creation, expansion, consolidation and/or reorganization of districts when need for such change is indicated.

County and city general and specific plans are basic documents that can be used to develop both the ten-year and twenty-year lines. In addition, general and specific plans for the county and its cities are continuously in the process of being reviewed and updated. A base of data needed to meet the criteria for the sphere boundaries often is available or can be extrapolated from planning work as it is completed. It will also be necessary to correlate the growth and service data to verify the information used in the planning studies.

## **METHODOLOGY**

When adopting, amending, or updating a sphere of influence, LAFCO shall do all of the following:

1. Require the relevant city(ies) or district(s) to file written statements with LAFCO specifying the functions or classes of services provided by the agency (ies).
2. Establish the nature, location, and extent of any functions or classes of services provided by the existing agency (ies).

Both the service areas and the final boundaries call for different types and degrees of data.

## ANALYSIS

### 1. Incorporated Areas and Municipal-Like Special Districts

#### A. Ten-Year Lines

The information needed to establish the boundaries for on-going growth during the next 10 years is as follows:

##### (1) Land Demand for Growth

The data necessary to establish the amount of land (beyond existing boundaries) needed to accommodate the growth projected for determining both the ten-year and the twenty-year growth areas. While this will furnish the net bulk requirement, additional studies, such as histories of subdivisions, developments, and annexations, and the location and importance of existing open space and agricultural lands, will be needed to indicate the probable location and direction of growth. The data obtained will be organized into schedules at ten-year intervals showing population growth projections for each area and acreage required to satisfy this growth based on present and projected densities. Subtraction of existing undeveloped land capable of development which is already within the city will furnish a net requirement for "new" land. Spot maps and density factors, when available, will assist in interpreting growth data.

##### (2) Water and Sewer Availability

The ability of each community to provide water and sewer to its service area will be a controlling factor for both the ten and twenty-year lines. This determination for both areas can usually be concluded at one time. Any agency proposing new development must show the availability of water supplies adequate for projected needs into the future. Sphere of Influence revisions and amendments will need to review water availability before including new territory in a city or municipal special district.

Water and sewer mains should be either readily available or planned to be extended within the ten-year line. The existing or planned mains of the respective agencies will furnish this information, based on demand generated and subject to the

present or revised general plans and zoning ordinances. This data should also furnish the base from which to assess availability to the urban boundaries projected for the twenty-year line.

Services will not be required to be immediately available for any of the area. An examination of plans for future capital expenditures by the responsible agency will furnish evidence for decisions on whether the service can reasonably be expected to be extended to the area in ten-years.

(3) Willingness and Ability to Extend Community Services

The willingness and capability of the community to provide services as growth proceeds are two of the factors determining the urban area's future. The ability to provide extension of services should include sufficient revenue for the services required following the proposed boundary change. Data involving police and fire protection, educational facilities, drainage, libraries, health services, solid waste management and other urban-type services which might be needed by the different communities should be analyzed. The study should determine present and projected fire protection, the efficiency and ability for expansion; the flood control effectiveness and its extension to the service and boundary areas; provision for parks and recreation to the expansion area; elementary and high schools and community colleges, existing and planned; solid waste disposal; and any other needed services of a specialized nature to meet individual community needs.

(4) Regional Housing Needs

The sphere study should also consider the agency 's policies and approaches to meet its fair share of regional housing needs, if applicable. The agency under review should provide information supporting and explaining how it intends to accommodate and provide necessary governmental services for persons and families of all incomes in the most efficient and effective manner. This information is especially important if the agency proposes or is anticipated to have additional growth through the expansion of its present boundaries.

(5) Growth Incentives and Obstructions

Positive or negative factors regarding growth must be catalogued. Agency policies, expectations, and commitments, involving such factors as existing or planned freeway, road, or public transportation systems, shopping centers, educational facilities, industrial locations, and state and regional park acquisition and development plans that normally affect the amount and direction of growth should be included in the study.

Natural obstacles to growth, including flood plains, unsuitable soils, waterways, etc. restrict expansion into certain areas. "Man-made"

obstructions such as roads and highways, Williamson Act preserves, present and planned open-space areas for recreation and parks or buffer zones, need to be analyzed and mapped. If surface supply or ground water safe yield appear not adequate, the service cannot reasonably be expected to be extended. Further, it may be local policy not to extend such services or otherwise to control or deter growth. These and other possible growth control policies must be examined as limiting factors.

(6) Material From Planning Departments

Land use designations and maps, special district maps, and school locations must be collected and organized and related to the study areas. The history of annexations to cities and special districts demonstrate when and where growth has already occurred and should be referred to as available.

(7) Agricultural Land and Open Space

LAFCO has adopted an Agricultural Conservation Policy that states:

"Agriculture is a vital and essential part of the Yolo County economy and environment. Agriculture shapes the way Yolo County residents and visitors view themselves and the quality of their lives. Accordingly, boundary changes for urban development should only be proposed, evaluated, and approved in a manner which, to the fullest extent feasible, is consistent with the continuing growth and vitality of agriculture within the county."

All spheres will be written with full review and consideration of the adopted Agricultural Conservation Policy as adopted by LAFCO. In addition, the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment model adopted by LAFCO will also be applied in all cases as appropriate.

(8) Availability of Services

An assessment must be made of the willingness and feasibility of present and future agencies to extend services by agency, for example water capacity and availability, sewers and wastewater treatment facilities, as well as fire, police, drainage, recreation, landscaping maintenance, public utilities, and any other identified requirements within the projected boundary.

(9) Compatibility of Present Legal Boundaries

Existing legal boundaries in and around each community are to be mapped and analyzed as an aid to drawing lines. Special district boundaries, assessor parcels, city boundaries and any other appropriate legal boundaries should be reviewed. Any planned extension of these areas, including planned capital expansions, should be noted.

(10) Boundaries

The current agency limits should be included in the sphere; however, if circumstances exist that make development of, or provision of services to certain areas unlikely, analysis of removing that area from the agency should be prepared.

(11) Census Districts

Census information is important for all these analyses. Agency boundaries can often be used in conjunction with the census lines in order to provide a firm statistical base for each community.

(12) Socioeconomic Interdependency

When information is available from field trips, county planning department, other county agencies and local leaders, the extent of economic, social and political influence of the community upon its surrounding area should be evaluated.

B. Twenty-Year Lines

The twenty-year line will usually be larger than the ten-year line. However, there may be situations that will result in recommendations to reduce existing spheres. Whatever recommendations are made, they should reflect the probable long-term configuration of the agency. These studies must be conducted with the realization, however, that no boundary is static.

To determine the full limits of community growth for the twenty-year line the same criteria used to establish the ten-year line will be used, but applying longer term expectations based on, in part, population projections and service abilities for the future.

2. Rural Special Districts

The previously discussed factors for incorporated areas will be applied, as appropriate, to unincorporated areas, together with the following additional factors:

- A. Recognizable natural or manmade topographic boundaries that tend to bind an area into a geographic unit.
- B. Examination of services and political boundaries that lend identity, including but not limited to postal zones, school, library, sewer, water, census, fire, parks and recreation, and waste disposal.
- C. Examination of the identified services furnished by the special district compared to those furnished by the County.
- D. Projected ability to provide existing services, possible need for additional services in the near future and ability to receive more efficient services through mutual aide, consolidation, reorganization or other structural organization changes.

## **POPULATION PROJECTIONS**

Ten-year and twenty-year lines will consider population projections of the agency under consideration. This will provide some flexibility to the local agency for planning growth. The ten-year line area will be limited to the acreage that reasonably can be expected to develop fairly soon, based on current policies and trends. The twenty-year line area will reflect a maximum outlook for eventual expansion.

## **LOCATING THE BOUNDARIES**

The manner in which the final lines are drawn is the key to general acceptance of the policy that is involved. Location of the boundaries guide LAFCO to important policies affecting annexation, creation of special districts, the extension of urban services, and incorporation. The final maps that will appear for each review agency will be general guidance documents only. Precise interpretation will be on a case by case basis. The following guidelines will be used both in the delineation of the boundaries and in their interpretation:

1. Where the sphere boundary follows a street, road, highway or railroad it will be interpreted to follow the complete right-of-way for that thoroughfare the entire road or street.
2. When sphere boundaries are not located on streets, roads, highways, or railroads, they are intended to follow man-made boundaries (in particular, assessor parcel lines), or natural boundaries (rivers, irrigation and navigation channels, natural drainage basins and flood channels, flood control levees, etc.).
3. When these aids are not present, the method of determining the boundary will be explained on the map or subsequently determined by LAFCO as the need arises.

## **OTHER YOLO LAFCO POLICIES**

LAFCO has adopted Standards of Evaluation for boundary changes, an Agricultural Conservation Policy and a Land Evaluation and Site Assessment model by which proposals are examined. These policies and relevant considerations will be incorporated into the preparation of both the Municipal Service Reviews and Sphere of Influence studies.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommendations involving policy changes, legal boundary adjustments, changes in governmental form, and proposals for implementation of the recommendations, will be developed in cooperation with the cities, county, special districts and other affected agencies. Need for changes will appear as the studies progress. The staff will keep a file covering each proposal, including at least the following:

1. The area, agency or subject involved
2. The originating source of the issue, what caused the issue
3. The nature of each identified problem and proposed solution

The spheres will be provided, in draft, to the affected agencies and other interested parties before presentation to LAFCO. Final recommendations will be made after consultation with area residents, landowners, and agency leaders.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

For each document, citizen participation will be established sufficiently early to assure local comment. This input shall be received from members of the communities, landowners affected by recommendations, and any other residents of the area as well as any staff or volunteer of the agency under review. Discussions with the leaders of all entities will be used to identify initial problem areas, and obtain the agencies' growth plans and service capabilities.

The purpose and implications of the study and the information contribution of local leaders will be emphasized in these discussions. Through these interviews, the sphere of influence boundaries will endeavor to be consistent not only with LAFCO policy, but in the best interest of the subject agency and its inhabitants.

### **LAFCO ACTION**

Final decisions on the sphere of influence boundaries will be determined by the Local Agency Formation Commission at a duly noticed public hearing. LAFCO will make the final determination of the actual sphere lines, based on staff analysis, public input, and other relevant factors.

### **REVIEWS**

Government Code Section 56425(f) requires that each sphere of influence be reviewed every five years. This review period does not preclude LAFCO, agencies or other interested parties from requesting an earlier update for any sphere of influence if needed prior to the five-year timeframe.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Yolo County municipal service reviews and spheres of influence will be prepared for all governmental agencies under LAFCO purview. The basis for the spheres will be the information gathered from general and specific plans, census data, any special or historical data, and community and agency input. The evaluations will also include the application of other policies adopted by LAFCO.