

# LAFCo Common Terms

## *Curtesy of San Diego LAFCo*

*(Official LAFCo definitions are codified in Government Code Section 56010 through 56081)*

**Annexation:** The inclusion of territory in a city or special district.

**Change of organization:** An alteration of government structure, including: city incorporation; district formation; annexation to, or detachment from a city or district; city disincorporation; district dissolution; city or district consolidation; or merger or establishment of a subsidiary district.

**Conducting authority:** The Local Agency Formation Commission of the principal county of the entity proposing a change of organization or reorganization, unless another conducting authority is specified by law. Pursuant to a delegation of power from the Commission, the Executive Officer may also perform any function of the conducting authority.

**Consolidation:** The uniting or joining of two or more cities, or two or more districts located in the same county into a single new successor city or successor district.

**Contiguous:** In the case of annexation, territory adjacent to an agency to which annexation is proposed. Territory is not contiguous if the only contiguity is based upon a strip of land more than 300 feet long and less than 200 feet wide.

**Dependent special district:** A special district whose board of directors is another legislative body, such as a city council or board of supervisors. Also see special district.

**Detachment:** The removal of territory from a city or district.

**Disincorporation:** The termination of the existence of a city.

**Dissolution:** The termination of the existence of a district.

**Formation:** The creation of a district.

**Incorporation:** The creation of a city.

**Independent special district:** A special district that has a directly elected board of directors. Also see special district.

**Inhabited territory:** Territory within which 12 or more registered voters reside.

**Initiating petition:** A document signed either by registered voters or landowners that requests LAFCO to consider a change of organization or reorganization.

**Island:** Unincorporated territory substantially surrounded by a city, or territory surrounded by a city on one or more sides and the Pacific Ocean on the remaining sides.

**Merger:** The termination of the existence of a district, and the assumption of the district's responsibilities by a city.

**Prime agricultural land:** An area of land that has not been developed for a use other than agriculture and meets certain criteria related to soil classification or crop and livestock carrying capacity.

**Reorganization:** Two or more changes of organization initiated in a single proposal.

**Special district:** A local governmental agency formed pursuant to general law of the state or special act.

**Special reorganization:** A reorganization that includes the detachment of territory from a city and the incorporation of the entire detached territory as a city.

**Sphere of influence:** A plan for the probable physical boundaries and service areas of a city or district.

**Sphere of influence amendment:** The changing or modification of an adopted sphere of influence.

**\*Sphere of Influence designations:** San Diego LAFCO has adopted six types of sphere of influence designations:

- 1) **Coterminous:** A sphere may be designated for a city or special district that is the same as its existing boundaries if there is no anticipated need for services outside the boundaries of the agency, or if there is insufficient information to support inclusion of additional territory within the sphere.
- 2) **Larger-than-agency:** A sphere may be designated for a city or special district that is larger than its existing boundaries if there is a need for services beyond its boundaries.
- 3) **Smaller-than-agency:** An agency may be designated a sphere that encompasses less territory than its existing boundaries if there is no need for services from the agency in the affected territory, or if the territory is included in the sphere of another agency.
- 4) **Zero:** A zero sphere, which includes no territory, may be designated for an agency, usually a special district. A zero sphere assumes that the public service responsibility and function of the agency should ultimately be reassigned to another agency.

5) **Service specific:** An agency may be assigned a sphere of influence that only encompasses a specific service if the service is not needed throughout the agency.

6) **Special study area:** A special study area may be designated if insufficient information exists to make a sphere determination.

**Sphere of influence determinations:** In establishing a sphere of influence, the Commission must consider and prepare written determinations related to present and planned land uses, need and capacity of public facilities, and existence of social and economic communities of interest.

**Sphere of influence time frame:** In establishing a sphere of influence, particular emphasis is placed on projected service demands for the next 10-15 years. This is consistent with the time frames of the land use and public service plans of the affected agencies (e.g., general plans, capital improvement plans, district service plans, etc.).

**Subsidiary district:** A district of limited powers for which a city council is designated as the ex officio board of directors of the district. At least 70% of the district's land area and number of registered voters must be within the city limits for a district to become a subsidiary district.

**Uninhabited territory:** Territory within which less than 12 registered voters reside.

## Planning Terms:

---

**Coastal plan:** A local plan prepared by cities and counties lying within the coastal zone. Until the local coastal plans are certified, the California Coastal Commission issues coastal development permits.

**Community plan:** A focused planning policy document that is part of a general plan. The community plan addresses a particular region within the overall planning area of an agency and is adopted in the same manner as a general plan. Also called area plan.

**Easement:** A less-than-fee interest that includes selected rights, or grants the holder the right to prevent certain land uses. A property owner retains ownership and the rights other than those expressly limited by the easement. Easements may be granted for a number of reasons, including access, public utilities, conservation, open-space, and scenic purposes.

**General plan:** A document containing a statement of development policies including a diagram and text setting forth the objectives of the plan. The general plan must include certain state mandated elements related to land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open-space, noise, and safety.

**Prezoning:** The primary instrument for implementing the general plan. Prezoning divides a community into districts or "zones" that specify the permitted/prohibited land uses for territory outside a city's corporate limits. Prezoning has no regulatory effect until the property is annexed. Also see zoning.

**Specific plan:** A policy statement and implementation tool that is used to address a single project or planning problem. Specific plans contain concrete standards and development criteria that supplement those of the general plan.

**Urban limit line:** A planning boundary established by a city or county that shows the limits of urban development (i.e., development greater than one residence per acre). Also referred to as urban development area, urban development boundary, etc.

**Zoning:** The primary instrument for implementing the general plan. Zoning divides a community into districts or "zones" that specify the permitted/prohibited land uses.