Proactive Island Annexation Program Adopted by Santa Clara LAFCo
By Neelima Palacherla, Santa Clara Executive Officer

Encouraging island annexations is not a new concept in Santa Clara County. For over 30 years the cities, County and LAFCo have had policies stating that urban development should occur within cities, that the County must not allow urban uses outside cities’ urban service areas, and that the cities must actively pursue annexation of unincorporated urban islands within their urban service areas.

A few years ago, the County’s Urban Pockets Program, working with cities and island residents, successfully facilitated large island annexations. (Due to budget cuts and other reasons, the County no longer has this program.) State legislation in 2001 allowed urban islands less than 75 acres to be annexed without requiring protest or elections. Last year, the law was expanded to apply to islands up to 150 acres. This provision is available for only two years and will expire at the end of 2006.

Even though this law has been in effect for four years now, it has not yet been used by any of the cities in Santa Clara County. And despite the long standing policies between the County and the cities and past County/cities annexation programs, there still remain several islands in Santa Clara County – about 180 islands within 14 cities.

These islands range in size and are scattered throughout the County, which makes urban service delivery by the County to these areas very inefficient, if not impossible. Residents in islands generally receive fewer and lower levels of urban services for which they may pay the same taxes and fees as those in a city. They also have difficulty getting their neighborhood’s problems addressed by the County or the city as neither jurisdiction is entirely responsible for the issues, and may not have the authority to solve the problems individually. Residents of the islands are unable to vote in city elections and their opinion has little impact on city council land use decisions affecting city neighborhoods surrounding the islands.

Thus, islands lead to disenfranchise-ment from city decisions, inefficient delivery of urban services, and unresponsive local government. While there may be piecemeal solutions to these problems, annexation is a long-term answer to addressing these issues.

There are any number of reasons why the remaining islands have not annexed. Key among them is a combination of factors (whose relative significance varies with each island) that include myths and misinformation surrounding annexation, high level of effort, cost and time required.

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2004 CALAFCO Staff Workshop Highlights

Over 80 staff from 41 LAFCos attended the 2005 CALAFCO Staff Workshop in Bakersfield on April 20-22. Attendees included executive officers, analysts, clerks and attorneys. Several city, county, and association staff also attended the three-day event.

The Workshop featured a variety of general, concurrent, and roundtable discussions. Highlights included general sessions on leadership facilitated by Executive Director Bill Chiat. Alameda EO Lou Ann Texeira led a session on working with the media, and State Board of Equalization research analyst Ralph Davis discussed BOE procedures. Dan Schwarz updated attendees on legislative issues.

Concurrent sessions topics featured: automating databases, experience with MSRs, CEQA, processing applications, LAFCo budgets and audits, and special district financial challenges. Attorneys, EOs, clerks and analysts also held roundtable discussions.

Thanks to our hosts at Kern LAFCo, especially EO Bill Turpin and Clerk Rebecca Moore. Thanks also to the program committee led by Chair José Henríquez from Yolo LAFCo.

Doug Wood presents session on CEQA

Executive Director Bill Chiat facilitates a discussion on leadership

GIS hands-on session at BLM training facility

The Santa Maria-style BBQ was a highlight. CALAFCO Executive Officer Bruce Baracco entertains LAFCo staff (above). Staff enjoys networking opportunity (right).
FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Talking So You’re Heard

Public involvement in local governance decision making is one of the missions of LAFCo. Bringing together the public, local agencies and other stakeholders is a challenging, but critical, role of staff and Commissioners. This column and discussions at the CALAFCO Staff Workshop have explored the role leadership practices play in bringing people together in dialogue and the richer solutions and decisions which can result from those conversations.

The last column explored some of the aspects of being proactive on public issues and pointed out that facts and reasoning are only part of the conversation. Aristotle argued that there are three elements to an argument. Balancing those three elements is critical to ensure that one is heard and understood. One of those elements is ethos—how a message comes across from the audience’s perspective. A part of effective application of ethos includes the choice of language used to send the message.

That became clear in a recent report issued by two well-known public polling organizations. The research looked at public perception of land use terminology. With the thousands of messages that bombard us every day, it’s easy for people to misinterpret information. Certainly all of us look at information through our own lenses and determine how we want to interpret what is being said. Even a simple phrase like “urban sprawl” has multiple meanings to different people. There are many terms we regularly use that may have a clear meaning to us, but, as this research shows, are often interpreted differently by the public. So, if better understanding and engagement of the public in your work is an important goal, here are some things to consider in your communication...if you want your message to be heard.

The research was conducted by Public Opinion Strategies and Fairbanks, Maslin, Mandlin & Associates. These are two nationwide polling organizations that span the range of political interests. The poll was conducted on behalf of the Nature Conservancy and the Trust for Public Land in April 2004 of 1,500 likely voters (with a margin of sampling error of +/- 3.5%). One goal of the research was to examine how to translate “policy speak” into everyday language that is understandable to the general electorate. The research also looked at vocabulary that tended to be misinterpreted by those outside of our technical world.

Several excerpts from the report have direct application to terms often used in LAFCo documents and presentations:

- Water: polled as one of the most important conservation and land use issues for the electorate. Focus groups conducted by the researchers found that voters automatically translated “quality” into “supply.” The research suggests stressing “preserving” water quality as voters tend not to view water quality as a problem now; rather, they want to preserve the good water quality they already have.

- Agricultural and Open Space Preservation: were found to be some of the most misinterpreted terms in the study. “Agricultural lands” had little meaning to voters. “Working farms and ranches” or “working family farms” made much more sense to voters. The emphasis is on the term ‘working.’ It is interpreted by the voters as meaning the land is productive and is being used and is not assumed.

In a similar vein, the research found that the terms “open space” or “urban open space” are perceived by voters as empty land, not near them, and not of benefit. Worse, “urban open space” is viewed as a bench between buildings or an abandoned

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The Sphere

TRACKS Around the State

ALAMEDA
Alameda LAFCo continues to work on our three countywide municipal service reviews (MSRs) and sphere updates. In Fall 2004, we completed Volume I – Public Safety Services review, and are nearing completion of the draft Volume II – Utility Services review. We will soon begin collecting data for the third and final review – Volume III – Miscellaneous Services (parks & recreation, library, vector control, mosquito abatement, street maintenance). The MSR process has been enlightening, informative and productive for Alameda LAFCo. Through this process we developed a directory of agencies, a complete set of boundary/SOI maps, and have digitized our maps. At the same time, we have educated ourselves as well as cities, districts and other stakeholders. We plan to complete our MSRs by January 1, 2006.

EL DORADO
El Dorado LAFCo continues its adventure in administrative autonomy, working to sort out details regarding 457 plans (deferred compensation) and PERS retirement issues. CALPERS is reviewing whether persons who regularly work for LAFCo may continue to be considered county employees for retirement programs (either by convention or by contract) or whether the CKH statutes trigger separate agency status under PERS regulations. This could have significant implications for LAFCos who contract for their employees through the County and for those LAFCos who contract for county benefits for their own employees.

El Dorado County finally has a General Plan. A "de facto" land use moratorium lasting almost 10 years will be lifted by late summer, and LAFCO staff is bracing for a tremendous increase in workload as dozens of new development proposals get underway.

The El Dorado Hills incorporation will get to hearing in early June, with revenue neutrality discussions underway now.

MODOC
Modoc LAFCo has continued in our quest to complete the MSRs on deadline. We've re-thought our MSR process and are starting with a basic review and report that will establish a baseline for future MSR and Sphere reviews. We have recently completed a bi-county consolidation of two Resource Conservation Districts. We expect to be busy with clean-up efforts as our MSR review process is uncovering many islands and inappropriate Spheres.

ORANGE
LAFCo just completed its first two “prototype” municipal service reviews involving five cities and nine special districts. The process was designed to ensure that residents and agencies had direct input into identifying challenges and opportunities in their areas over the next 15 to 20 years. Sometimes painful, always intense, never dull – the process took 14 months and included a series of 10 facilitated workshops with affected agencies and residents.

Currently, LAFCo staff and the MSR participants are going through an evaluation of the prototype process. What did we do right? How can we make the process better? (shorten the process!). As we begin our next phase of MSRs, we hope to incorporate the lessons learned from the prototype experiences.

On another front, Orange County is facing development pressures in both the northern and southern portions of the County. (It's no surprise – Orange County is ranked as the 5th most expensive housing market in the nation.) In the City of Brea’s sphere of influence, located in northern Orange County, land that has been in oil production for decades is now ready to convert to another use – housing. In southern Orange County, residential development is also proposed for the last undeveloped land in the County and LAFCo is working with the County, surrounding cities and the landowners to develop a long-term governance plan for the area.

SANTA BARBARA
Bernice "Bernie" Stableford has been appointed as the Public Member of the Santa Barbara LAFCo. She replaces long-time Public Member Tom Umenhoefer who served in that capacity since 1993. Tom was leader not only in Santa Barbara County, but throughout the State serving for several years as an active member of the CALAFCO Executive Board. He and his wife Maria have moved into a new home in Nevada.

Commissioner Stableford, one of 20 applicants for the position, was appointed by unanimous vote of the city, county and district members of the Commission. She and her husband are avocado farmers in the Gaviota Coast portion of Santa Barbara County. Her knowledge of agricultural issues will be of great value as a member of the Commission.
More **TRACKS** Around the State …

**SHASTA**
Shasta LAFCo has been busy this spring! We are working our way through the MSR process – we have several in the works and expect to stay busy with them through the fall. Several large annexations to various agencies that have kept our attention for the last few months. Many special districts are seeing the need to get their boundaries and spheres in order as the growth pressure in the north state continues to climb.

**VENTURA**
Municipal Service Reviews and sphere of influence updates continue to dominate our work. Since January we have approved and made MSR determinations for 14 special districts, including districts that provide recreation and park services, solid waste collection and/or disposal, agricultural drainage, County Service Areas providing road maintenance and/or street lighting services and a unique, geographically isolated community services district. One important result was determining that a CSA established for recreation and park purposes in the early 1990s was non-functional and should be dissolved.

We are conducting MSRs separately from updating spheres, primarily due to CEQA issues. Sphere of influence updates for those districts that were the subject of recently completed MSRs are now underway. By the end of June we expect to be about two-thirds of the way towards completing both MSRs and sphere updates, as necessary, for the 10 cities and 49 special districts in Ventura County.

Commission membership changed in January. John Zaragoza was elevated from city alternate to city member, and Janis Parvin was selected as a new city alternate member. Ted Grandsen was elevated from special district alternate to special district member, and George Lange was elected as a new special district alternate member. Commissioner Grandsen served on the Ventura LAFCo previously as a city member and as a County member. His selection as a special district member brings a wealth of prior experience to LAFCo and he is probably one of only a few Commissioners in the state to participate in a LAFCo “hat trick” of service. Also appointed was Kenneth Hess, formerly the alternate public member, as public member and Louis Cunningham, formerly the public member, as alternate public member.

There have also been recent changes in staff. Kim Uhlich was hired as a full-time Analyst and Teresa Garcia as a new, part-time Office Assistant.

**Kris Berry Takes Reins of Placer LAFCo**
Placer LAFCo has appointed Kristina Berry as its new Executive Officer.

Kris served most recently as Senior Analyst for Monterey LAFCo, a position she held for the past three years. She is a graduate of Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo with a degree in City and Regional Planning and has worked in the field of local planning for almost 20 years, including over 15 years as a planner with Monterey County.

“Coming as she does from Monterey County, Ms. Berry brings a tremendous amount of understanding of the types of issues that arise in a changing and growing county,” Chairman Bill Santucci stated. “We were impressed by her experience with LAFCo and her enthusiasm for this position and for working in Placer County.”

Kris assumed her position on May 2. She commented, “I am honored to be appointed to this position by the Commission and I look forward to serving the citizens of Placer County.” Kris’s predecessor, Scott Finley, has returned to the Placer County Counsel’s Office to work as a deputy county counsel on land use and other matters. He will continue to serve as LAFCo Counsel.

**DEADLINE**
For the next issue of The Sphere
15 July 2005
Submit articles to wchiat@calafco.org

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**The Sphere**
Island Annexations
(continued from Page 1)

for the annexation process, lack of information on annexation process/impacts, residents’ preference for the county’s lower development standards and less rigorous review processes, and lack of political will or leadership to tackle the issue.

Recently, though, some cities in our county have expressed a renewed interest in annexing their islands. LAFCo is taking advantage of the momentum created by this interest and the availability of the streamlined annexation process, by taking an active role in facilitating island annexations. In doing so, LAFCo is fulfilling its mission of encouraging the efficient provision of services and promoting orderly growth and development.

In February, LAFCo adopted island annexation policies aimed at encouraging cities to annex the remaining unincorporated islands. The policies require LAFCo to work collaboratively with the cities and the County and facilitate island annexations by identifying and minimizing impediments to island annexations. In order to kick start discussions of island annexations, LAFCo is holding workshops for city staff and is providing information on the annexation process including flow charts, sample resolutions, public hearing notices and checklists.

In addition to providing cities with incentives for annexations, LAFCo policies also encourage the cities to complete annexation of islands less than 150 acres and to plan and initiate annexations of larger islands before seeking to expand their urban service areas.

To view these policies, go to our website at www.santaclara.lafco.ca.gov. We will keep you posted on the outcome of our program and policies. For now, we have been successful at drawing the cities’ and the County’s attention to the issue of eliminating islands.

LAFCo is taking advantage of the momentum created by this interest ... by taking an active role in facilitating island annexations.

CALAFCO Board of Directors
Changes and Appointments to the Board

At its January meeting, the CALAFCO Board of Directors elected Jerry Gladbach to the Board. Mr. Gladbach will complete the term created by Ron Wootton’s departure from the Board. Jerry is a Commissioner from Los Angeles LAFCo, serving as a special district member of the Commission. He is a Board member of the Castaic Lake Water Agency. In addition to CALAFCO, Jerry serves as president of the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA).

CALAFCO Board member Harry Martin recently lost his appointment to Napa LAFCo, and therefore his seat on the CALAFCO Board. Mr. Martin was an active Board member and is particularly remembered for his role in hosting the successful San Francisco CALAFCO Conference. The Board and membership appreciate Harry’s many contributions to the organization. Since Harry’s term expires this fall, the Board of Directors decided to leave his seat vacant until the Conference.

Board Plans June Strategic Planning Retreat

The Board of Directors is holding its biannual strategic planning retreat in conjunction with its June Board meeting. The retreat is scheduled for Thursday, June 23 beginning at noon in Sacramento. The Board last held a strategic retreat in July 2003. The retreat provides an opportunity for Board members and staff to reflect on the progress of CALAFCO and set future priorities and goals for policies and member services.
Community Services District Law Clears Senate
SB 135 Directs LAFCos to Inventory Current CSD Services by End of Year

After months of work by a coalition of stakeholders, the rewrite of the Community Services District law (Gov’t Code §61000 et seq.) passed both the Senate Local Government Committee and the full Senate on unanimous votes. The rewrite streamlines the law from over 300 sections to under 150 sections, and brings it into consistency with existing laws and processes. The original law, written in 1955, had changed little since it was originally enacted. Of particular interest to LAFCos was bringing the law into alignment with Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg.

As previously reported, in addition to streamlining and rearranging the law for ease and consistency, the revised law does a number of things to clarify the intent, powers, procedures and oversight of CSDs.

**Intent.** The current law does not contain any intent or policy from the Legislature on the purpose of CSDs. The revision makes it clear that CSDs can fulfill four roles:

- A **permanent form** of governance that can provide locally adequate levels of public facilities and services
- A form of governance for **combining two or more special districts** that serve overlapping or adjoining territory
- A form of governance that can serve as **alternative to incorporation** of a new city
- A **transitional form** of governance as the community approaches cityhood

In addition, the new law strongly encourages independent CSDs, requiring LAFCos to condition an election on the question of independence in the event of the formation of a dependent CSD.

**Powers.** Current law allows CSDs to provide 17 types of services. An additional 15 or so services are authorized by special provisions to certain districts. In order to meet the revised intent of the law, the stakeholder Working Group felt it was important that CSDs be able to be provide a broad range of 32 services and facilities … virtually any service that any special district can provide. These become latent powers of the CSD. LAFCo is the ultimate decision maker in determining what services a CSD will be authorized to provide.

CALAFCO, along with all of our peer associations, has taken a support position on the legislation. In addition, a number of LAFCos have written letters of support for SB 135 which have been much appreciated by the Senate Local Government Committee members and staff.

**Next Steps.** The CSD Working Group is meeting again in Sacramento on 3 June to address suggested amendments to the bill. SB 135 is expected to be heard by the Assembly Local Government Committee on 29 June. Please direct any questions to CALAFCO’s representatives on the Working Group: Executive Director Bill Chiat and San Luis Obispo Executive Officer Paul Hood.

**Determining Active Powers of CSDs — LAFCo’s Role**

SB 135 defines “latent powers” as those services and facilities that LAFCo determines a CSD did not provide before January 1, 2006 (proposed §61002[h]). The proposed law links LAFCo’s determination to the adoption of an amended sphere of influence for the CSD (§56425[h]). In other words, once a LAFCo inventories the services an existing CSD provides, the rest become latent powers – even if the CSD may have been previously authorized to provide that service or facility, but had not provided it before 1 January 2006.

Beginning on 1 January 2006 any new CSD and existing CSDs must obtain LAFCo approval before activating any latent power.
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY
Commission Releases County Split Report

By Bob Braitman, Santa Barbara Executive Officer

Previously, The Sphere reported on the voter-initiated proposal to split Santa Barbara County into the northern “Mission County” and remnant southern Santa Barbara County.

State law specifies that if a petition is signed by at least 25% of the registered voters in a proposed new county, that proposal must be presented to the voters. But before that happens the Governor is required to appoint a five-member County Formation Review Commission.

Unlike local government reorganizations where LAFCo may approve or deny, the County Formation Review Commission’s authority is limited to such matters as allocating the County’s assets and debts and producing a report to inform the voters. The Commission has just concluded its analysis with a 500-page report released last month.

The Commission concluded that splitting the county is feasible but, due to disparities in costs and revenues:

Upon its formation in 2006, Mission County would not be able to provide services at the level that now exists. In order to overcome an estimated $30 million revenue shortfall that would result in separating from the existing county, taxes would have to increase or levels of service would have to decrease.

After the new county petition was submitted, there was a change in the composition of the Board of Supervisors. New Supervisor Brooks Firestone is perceived by many North County residents as having interests more closely aligned with theirs. His election may have taken some of the “steam” out of the proposal to split the county.

Regardless of events occurring after the petition was certified, the county split must still go to the voters. That election is scheduled for June 2006. A successful county split requires a double voter majority: a majority of those voting in the new county and a majority of those voting in the entire county must each favor the proposition for it to become reality.

Note: If and when it is formed the new county will have its own LAFCo…but it is a little early for staff members to be polishing their resumes for the Executive Officer position.

For more information contact Bob Braitman, Santa Barbara LAFCo, or visit the website at: http://missioncountyformation.org.

League Offers Incorp/Annex VLF-Gap Fix

CALAFCO Board Supports Legislation

As a result of the budget agreement last year and the subsequent passage of Prop 1A, the State instituted a property tax exchange for the loss of Vehicle License Fees (VLF) revenues. The action, however, created a gap in funding for new incorporations and annexations of inhabited areas—making such options financially infeasible.

After months of work, the League of Cities Revenue and Taxation Policy Committee recommended a formula which redirects part of the city portion of the remaining VLF to be redistributed to cities based on population growth (through incorporation, annexation, or other means such as infill or increased density). The formula would be recalculated annually to recognize new cities and cities which take on additional population. The formula also contains a provision for a five-year “bump” in revenues for newly incorporated cities. This funding formula has no effect on the county portion of the VLF.

At its April meeting, the CALAFCO Board of Directors met with League staff and reviewed the proposal. The Board voted to support the League’s VLF fix bill once introduced in the Legislature (most likely AB 1602 as an urgency bill). The Board based its support on the importance of having these governance options available to LAFCos and local communities for encouraging growth within urban areas. The Board did not comment on the particular formula recommended.

Details of the League’s proposal are available in the April Board meeting packet at: www.calafco.org/resources.
News from Sacramento

Current Legislation Affects LAFCos

This year, five bills were introduced that would amend the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization (CKH) Act of 2000. AB 1746 (Salinas) is a LAFCo omnibus bill sponsored by CALAFCO. Its provisions are detailed in the April legislative report to the Board of Directors. You can find this report at http://calafco.org/leg.htm.

SB 135 (Kehoe) is the annual Senate Local Government Committee rewrite of a local government act. This year, the Committee is tackling Community Services District Law. A thorough explanation of this bill is provided elsewhere in this edition of The Sphere. The Board of Directors supports SB 135. The Board of Directors also supports SB 1100 (Perata). This bill clarifies that there is a 21-day noticing requirement to the California Department of Forestry (CDF) for proposals involving fire districts in State Responsibility Areas.

AB 797 (Wolk) would prohibit consideration by LAFCos of spheres or proposals involving the primary zone of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. (This bill would affect five LAFCos: Contra Costa, Solano, San Joaquin, Sonoma, and Yolo.) The Board of Directors has adopted an “oppose unless amended” and staff is drafting an amendment that would allow LAFCos and the Delta Protection Commission to consult and make certain there are not special circumstances that warrant a LAFCO action in the primary zone. AB 1140 (Dymally) would provide that, subject to any constitutional requirements, only registered voters who reside within the territory of a district that provides services to that voter may vote in an election conducted by or on behalf of the district. The Board of Directors opposes this bill.

In addition to bills affecting the CKH Act, staff is monitoring a number of bills of interest to the CALAFCO family. To learn more, review the latest postings at http://calafco.org/leg.htm.
Board Revamps Associate Member Program

At its April meeting, the CALAFCO Board of Directors approved an overhaul of the Associate Member program. The Board recognized Associate Members as an important part of the CALAFCO family. They provide operational assistance and advice to member LAFCOs, support CALAFCO in its educational mission, and serve as a resource to community groups interested in local governance issues. Associate Members include members of the public, public agencies, businesses, associations, and educational institutions that support the goals and work of LAFCo. As the work and exposure of CALAFCO and member LAFCos continue to grow, so does the opportunity for Associate Members to participate in the organization.

Over the years, CALAFCO has maintained a dozen or so Associate Members and provided a minimal level of services to those members. With the new program approved by the Board, the advantages for Associate Members have been significantly increased.

Enhanced benefits include increased exposure through the CALAFCO website (which is undergoing renovation); increased referrals from CALAFCO and LAFCOs to members of the public or other agencies seeking the resources of Associate Members; access to CALAFCO newsletters, member-only areas of the website, and the general list-serve; and member registration rates for conferences and workshops. The box highlights the benefits of membership!

CALAFCO staff is currently developing marketing materials for the Associate Member Program. LAFCOs have provided an extensive list of potential members. The Board is asking all staff and Commissioners to assist in encouraging associate membership.

Expanding Associate Membership not only involves more people in the work of CALAFCO but also provides an important financial base to allow us to expand and enhance services for all members. Later this spring Associate Membership brochures will be sent to all member LAFCos. Your assistance in recruiting members — agencies; businesses; institutions — is much appreciated!

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**CALAFCO ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIPS**

**2005-2006**

**Gold Associate**

$1,000 annual dues

- Prominent listing, including display of company logo, on the CALAFCO website with a link to the company website.
- Four issues of the CALAFCO newsletter with a free business card size ad in each newsletter.
- Listing, including display of company logo, in the CALAFCO membership directory.
- Listing, including display of company logo, in all CALAFCO conference and workshop programs.
- Designation as a CALAFCO member service provider for the distribution of RFQ/RFP by member LAFCos.
- Referrals from CALAFCO staff.
- Subscription to email list for general CALAFCO information.
- Access to the member reserved section of the CALAFCO web site.
- Member registration rates at conferences and workshops.

**Silver Associate**

$300 annual dues

- Listing on the CALAFCO web site and membership directory.
- Four issues of the CALAFCO newsletter.
- Designation as a CALAFCO member service provider for the distribution of RFQ/RFP by member LAFCos.
- Referrals from CALAFCO staff.
- Subscription to email list for general CALAFCO information.
- Access to the member reserved section of the CALAFCO web site.
- Member registration rates at conferences and workshops.

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**A Special Thank You to CALAFCO Associate Members**

- Beverly Burr Consulting
- City of Fontana
- Cotton/Bridges Associates
- County Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles
- Dudek & Associates
- Economic & Planning Systems, Inc.
- Emergency Services Consulting, Inc.
- Graichen Consulting
- Keller/Wegley Engineering
- Moore Iacofano Goltsman, Inc.
- Rancho Mission Viejo
- The Willdan Group of Companies
- Wootton Land Consultants
Talking So You’re Heard
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lot. Rather, the research suggests using the term “natural areas” instead.

Several other terms surfaced as ones to avoid because their meanings are interpreted differently by voters: “undeveloped land” (is land that has not been developed yet); “green space” (can imply water guzzling grass); or “natural landscapes” (too close to landscaping which people equated to xeriscaping).

- **Sprawl** rated weakest of anything tested as a reason to protect land from development. Only in traditionally more liberal urban areas did the term resonate. “Poorly planned growth” made better sense to voters. Researchers suggest stressing ‘planning’ in terms of growth. Voters, they found, view growth as inevitable, but want it well-planned, responsible, and not negatively impacting their overall quality of life.

- **Easement** was found to evoke feelings of being forced into doing (or not doing) something with part of one’s land. The research pointed to terms such as “land preservation agreements” or “land protection agreements” as more acceptable language for describing or labeling easements. The research found—as most staff and Commissioners are aware—that the permanent nature of most easements causes friction among voters. In the focus groups, voters empathized more with the future land owner or heir rather than being concerned about the value of the easement for future generations or even themselves as taxpayers.

While we’re on the subject, of interest to LAFCo is an additional study conducted by Fairbanks, Maslin, Maullin & Associates regarding California voters’ perception of growth management in the state.

Highlights of the study include:

- A plurality of voters believes that their community is growing too fast (45% too fast; 45% about right or don’t know; 10% too slow)
- Voters are split on the consequences of growth (44% positive; 12% mixed or don’t know; 44% negative)
- Most voters give their Board of Supervisors only a fair or poor rating for managing growth and development (4% excellent; 28% good; 39% fair; 19% poor; 10% don’t know)
- Voters think current planning for growth allows too much development instead of protecting land, air and water (44% planning goes too far in allowing development; 31% planning strikes a good balance in allowing development and protecting resources; 16% planning goes too far in preventing development in order to protect resources; 9% don’t know)

California voters are clearly interested in growth management issues. Using understandable language will help make the conversion a richer discussion of the real issues.

**References:**
Fairbanks, Maslin, Maullin & Associates, 1999 Harrison St., Suite 1290, Oakland, CA 94612 or 2425 Colorado Ave., Suite 180, Santa Monica, CA 90404.

A copy of the California study is available on the Local Government Commission website at www.lgc.org/freepub/land_use/presentations.

There will be detailed sessions and a mobile workshop on planned growth management and working farm and natural area preservation at the CALAFCO Annual Conference, September 6-9, 2005 in Monterey.

**Useful Web Sites**

Here are a few more websites that have been reported as good LAFCo resources. Please let us know if you find others.

**Local Government Commission** [www.lgc.org](http://www.lgc.org)

The LGC is a non-profit organization working to build livable communities. The website is loaded with resource and reference materials on sustainable urban planning and development, including the Ahwahnee Principles.

**Institute for Local Government** [www.ilsg.org](http://www.ilsg.org)

ILG is a source of research and information for California’s local officials. Although the nonprofit research arm of the League of Cities, the Institute's extensive materials help city, county and special district officials.
CALAFCO ANNUAL CONFERENCE SET
2005 Monterey Conference Promises Extensive Educational Program

Though September seems a long way off, the 2005 CALAFCO Conference Committee has been hard at work preparing for an exceptional conference. Under the leadership of Board members Susan Wilson, Matt Gourley, and Roger Anderson, the committee has been firming up the program and arranging facilities and events in Monterey.

Guiding the conference planning is the theme “Charting a Course Today, Lighting the Way Tomorrow.” Inspired by the beautifully preserved fresnel lighthouse lens at the Monterey Maritime Museum, the committee members are lining up a wide range of presenters.

The 2005 Conference features popular sessions and events from previous conferences, along with several new ones. The committee has focused on providing a rich educational program as well as networking opportunities for Commissioners and staff.

Among the highlights:

- **Four general sessions** featuring leading speakers on growth and agriculture, special districts, LAFCo’s role in regional growth, and water issues
- **Keynote address** from prominent architect and urban planner, Barry J. Long, Jr., principal of Urban Design Associates, Pittsburg, PA—responsible for the Fort Ord reuse design and a number of high profile revitalization and mixed use projects in California and across the country
- **All new Mobile Workshop** on Wednesday featuring field trips to a number of sites that exemplify LAFCo work in protecting agriculture and open space
- **CALAFCO Gala dinner and dance** at the Monterey Maritime Museum
- **Special tours and events** for spouses and guests

Mark your calendars now to attend the Conference. Watch for more information this summer!

**PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS**

**Tuesday 6 September**
Hospitality Room & LAFCo Wine Competition

**Wednesday 7 September**
Mobile Workshop* (begins at 8:00 a.m.)
Changing Hats: LAFCo 101 (begins at noon)
General Session (begins at 2:00 p.m.)
Six Concurrent Sessions
CALAFCO Gala at the Maritime Museum

**Thursday 8 September**
LAFCo Forums
CALAFCO Business Meeting
Ten Concurrent Sessions
Luncheon and Keynote
Two General Sessions

**Friday 9 September**
Regional Meetings
Two General Sessions (concludes at 11:45 a.m.)

* Limited seating — additional registration fee.
Leaves at 8:00 a.m.

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**Not too early to make your hotel reservations!**

CALAFCO has arranged an outstanding rate at the conference hotel—The Portola Plaza Hotel. Just $84 per night. And that rate is available the weekends before and after the conference too! Make your reservations now at 888-222-5851 or 831-649-4511.

Come on Tuesday and enjoy the wine competition and be ready for the Wednesday Mobile Workshop.