

Merced County
LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION
(LAFCo)

Policies and Procedures

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CHAPTER I: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MERCED COUNTY LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION (LAFCo)

A. HISTORY AND LEGISLATIVE INTENT

Since the end of World War II, California has experienced a rapid increase in population, resulting in an extraordinary development boom and inefficient land use through the sporadic formation of cities and special service districts. As the demand for housing and municipal services increased, more agricultural land was converted to urban uses, resulting in a significant change to the conventional purpose and structure of local government. Special districts became more prevalent outside of municipalities, causing a decreased revenue base for cities, which in turn began annexing more territory than traditionally had been done in the past. This type of annexation led to premature, unplanned development and irregular city boundaries.

In 1959, Governor Edmund G. Brown, Sr., created the *Commission on Metropolitan Area Problems* to study and make recommendations on the “misuse of land resources” and the growing complexity of overlapping, local governmental jurisdictions. The Commission’s recommendation on local government reorganization was introduced in the Legislature in 1963, resulting in the creation of the Local Agency Formation Commission, or LAFCOs, operating in each county except San Francisco.

“The legislature recognizes that the logical formation and determination of local agency boundaries is an important factor in promoting orderly development and in balancing such development with sometimes competing state interests of discouraging urban sprawl, preserving open space and prime and prime agricultural lands, and efficiently extending governmental services. The legislature also recognizes that providing housing for persons and families of all incomes is an important factor in promoting orderly development.”

B. AUTHORITY

The Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) is an independent commission created by the State to promote the wise use of land resources while providing for the present and future needs of a community. LAFCO Commissioners have a responsibility to exercise their independent judgment while making decisions concerning appropriate local governmental boundary and service providers.

LAFCOs follow guidelines which are codified within the Cortese/Knox/Hertzberg Act.

C. MERCED COUNTY LAFCO GOALS

To guide their decisions, the Merced LAFCO Commission has adopted the following four goals:

1. Planned, well ordered, efficient development patterns
2. Governmental services are delivered efficiently and effectively
3. The need to provide for urban development is balanced with the conservation of open space and prime agricultural lands
4. Urban land use patterns maximize the opportunity for local jurisdictions to provide their fair share of regional housing needs for all income levels