

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE POLICIES

A sphere of influence establishes the probably ultimate physical boundaries and service area of each governmental agency within the county. Once adopted, these spheres of influence are to be used by the Commission as one factor in making decision on proposal over which it has jurisdiction and as a basis for recommendations on governmental reorganization. A proposal shall not be approved solely because the area falls within the sphere of influence of an agency.

Sphere of Influence determinations are to be reviewed periodically and changed or updated as circumstances may require in the opinion of LAFCO. Such periodic review should be made approximately every five years.

The Commission will generally apply the following policy guidelines in spheres of influence determinations while also taking into account local conditions and needs.

1. The plans and objectives contained within the adopted General Plans of the cities and the county will be supported. In cases where these plans are inconsistent, the Commission will adopt findings relative to its decision.
2. Community-centered urban development will be encouraged wherever justified on the basis of reduced cost of desired levels of community services, energy conservation, and preservation of agricultural and open space resources.
3. Duplication of authority to perform similar service functions in the same territory will be avoided.
4. Multiple-service agencies will be preferred to a number of limited services districts. In this regard, city provision of multiple services will be preferred where possible because of the substantially broader authority and responsibility to provide services and controls to their constituencies, including land-use planning controls.
5. Where possible, a single larger agency rather than a number of adjacent smaller ones, established for a given service in the same general area, will be preferred.
6. An economically sound base for financing services without including territories which will not benefit from the services will be promoted.
7. Sphere of influence lines shall seek to preserve community identity and boundaries and will urge the political and functional consolidation of local government agencies that cross-cut those affected communities.
8. Sphere of influence lines may be larger or smaller than existing local agency boundaries and may lead to recommendations for changes of organization.
9. Agencies which do not have major impact upon land, road, or capital facilities planning (such as cemetery districts) shall generally have a sphere of influence which is coterminous with their existing jurisdictional boundaries.
10. Agricultural resources and support facilities should be given special consideration in sphere of influence designations. High value agriculture areas, including areas of established crop production, with soils of high agricultural capability should be maintained in agriculture, and in general should not be included in an urban service sphere of influence.
11. The Commission will consider area-wide needs for governmental services and evaluate individual districts serving the area as they relate to the total system of the existing local government in the community and alternative arrangements.

Environmental Review:

A LAFCO sphere of influence determination is subject to review under the provision of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In order to enable environmental considerations to be effectively integrated into a sphere of influence determination, and environmental review will be conducted concurrently with the development of the sphere of influence determination.

Inasmuch as a sphere of influence determination represents the potential extension of the services of a local governmental agency, the environmental impacts associated with a sphere of influence are of a long-range nature. Thus the "Degree of Specificity" of the environmental review reflects the regional nature of a sphere decision. It is necessary of a general nature, focusing on the secondary, indirect impacts associated with the future extension of services within a sphere boundary.

The determination of whether or not an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is necessary for a sphere of influence determination, i.e., the "Level of Significance" associated with a sphere determination, will necessarily vary according to the environmental resources affected by a sphere designation.