

## GLOSSARY

**Affected territory:** Any territory for which a change of organization or reorganization, or change of a sphere of influence, is proposed or ordered.

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

**Brown Act.** See **Ralph M. Brown Act**.

**California Coastal Act.** A law (California Public Resources Code Section 30000 *et seq*) enacted by the California State Legislature and Governor in 1976 intended to manage the conservation and development of coastal resources through a long-term comprehensive planning program. Development within the Coastal Zone is subject to additional regulation (beyond local zoning controls) pursuant to coastal plans that are adopted by the State Coastal Commission as well as local cities and counties along the California coast. See [California Coastal Act](#).

**California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”):** A law (Public Resources Code Section 21000 *et seq*) enacted by the California State Legislature and Governor in 1972 which requires that local agencies consider environmental impacts prior to approving a project. LAFCO decisions are subject to CEQA.

**Categorical exemption (“CE”):** An environmental clearance pursuant to CEQA. As defined in CEQA, a list of classes of projects which have been determined by the Secretary of Resources not to have a significant effect on the environment. A project which is identified on this list is exempt from the provisions of CEQA if it meets all of the requirements for the exemption. See also **California Environmental Quality Act**.

**Change of organization:** A modification of the local government structure, such as the incorporation of a new city; formation of a new special district; annexation of territory to, or a detachment of territory from, a city or special district; disincorporation of a city; dissolution of a special district; consolidation of two or more special districts; consolidation of two or more cities; merger of a city and special district; establishment of a subsidiary district; the exercise of new types of services by a special district; or removal of the authority of a special district to provide a specific type of service. See also **Reorganization**.

**Commission:** A Local Agency Formation Commission (“LAFCO”).

**Community plan:** A focused planning policy document that is part of a General Plan. A community plan addresses a particular region within a city or county. Community plans are also known as area plans or district plans.

**Conducting authority:** The Commission of the principal county, or the commission’s executive officer when authorized by the commission, when exercising its responsibility to conduct protest proceedings following approval by the commission of a change of organization or reorganization, unless another conducting authority is specified by law.

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

**Contiguous:** Territory adjacent to territory within the local agency. 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 at its narrowest width, that width to be exclusive of highways.

**Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000:** A 2000 California State law (Government Code Section 56000 *et seq*) that is the primary law that governs LAFCOs. The Act defines the authority, responsibilities, and procedures which LAFCOs must follow in the formation and modification of local government boundaries.

See Guide to the Cortese Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act.

**Coterminous sphere of influence:** A sphere of influence for a city or special district that includes the same territory as the boundaries of that city or special district. A coterminous sphere of influence is adopted if there is no anticipated need for services outside the boundaries of a city or special district, or if there is insufficient information to support inclusion of additional territory within the sphere.

**Dependent special district:** A special district whose board of directors consists, in whole or in part, of ex-officio members who are officers of another legislative body, such as a city council or board of supervisors. See also **Special district**.

**Detachment:** The exclusion, deletion, or removal from a city or special district of any portion of the territory of that city or district.

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

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

**Environmental clearance:** An action adopted by a State or local agency pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act. Environmental clearances may include an environmental impact report, or a negative declaration, or a mitigated negative declaration, or a statutory exemption or a categorical exemption. See also **California Environmental Quality Act**.

**Environmental impact report (“EIR”):** An environmental clearance pursuant to CEQA. An EIR is an informational document that provides public agencies and the general public with detailed information about the effect which a proposed project may have on the environment and identifies alternatives and measures to avoid or mitigate those impacts where feasible. See also **California Environmental Quality Act**.

**Easement:** An easement is a right to use another’s real property for a particular purpose, granted by the property-owner who retains other rights of ownership. Easements may be granted for a number of reasons, including access, public utilities, conservation, and open space.

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

**General Plan:** A jurisdiction’s basic planning document that lays out the future of the city’s (or county’s) long-term physical development in general terms defined in policies and objectives. State law

requires that every city and county have a General Plan, and that it contain seven mandated elements: circulation, conservation, housing, land use, noise, open space, and safety.

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

**Independent special district:** A special district that has a legislative body all of whose members are elected directly by registered voters or landowners within the district. *See also 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 that is surrounded or substantially surrounded by a city to which annexation is proposed or by the city and a county boundary or the Pacific Ocean; or unincorporated territory that is surrounded by the city to which annexation is proposed and adjacent cities.

**Larger Than Sphere of Influence:** A Sphere of influence which is larger than the boundary of the involved city or special district.

**Local agency:** A city, county, or special district.

**Local Coastal Plan ("LCP"):** A local plan adopted by a city or county lying within the coastal zone, and certified by the State Coastal Commission, that governs land-use within the Coastal Zone within said city or county. *See also California Coastal Act.*

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

**Mitigated negative declaration:** An environmental clearance pursuant to CEQA. A negative declaration prepared for a project that includes revisions to the project which mitigate identified potentially significant effects on the environment to a point where no significant effect on the environment would occur. *See also California Environmental Quality Act.*

**Negative declaration:** An environmental clearance pursuant to CEQA. A written statement briefly describing the reasons that a proposed project which is not exempt from CEQA will not have a significant effect on the environment and therefore does not require the preparation of an environmental impact report. *See also California Environmental Quality Act.*

**Prezoning:** A city's designation for unincorporated territory outside the city's limits for the purpose of determining zoning that will apply to the property upon annexation to the city. LAFCO requires prezoning prior to approving annexation of territory into a city.

**Principal Act:** The law under which a special district was formed (i.e., County Sanitation District Act).

**Ralph M. Brown Act (“Brown Act”):** A law (Government Code Section 54950 *et seq*) commonly known as the State’s “sunshine” or “open meeting law.” The Brown Act details the requirements to be followed by local public agencies (including LAFCO’s) in conducting their public meetings and insure that agendas, staff reports, and related documents are accessible to the public which has the right to attend and participate in the agency’s decision-making process.

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

**Resolution of Application:** The document adopted by a local agency or school district initiating a change of organization or reorganization.

**Special district:** An agency of the State, formed pursuant to general law or special act, for the local performance of governmental or proprietary functions within limited boundaries. See also **Dependent special district** and **Independent special district**.

**Specific plan:** A special set of development standards that apply to a particular geographical area in a city or county, often for one large project.

**Sphere of influence:** A plan for the probable physical boundaries and service area of city or special district, as determined by the Commission.

**Uninhabited territory:** Territory within which less than 12 registered voters reside. While residents may live in the area, under State Law it is nevertheless considered “uninhabited” so long as there are fewer than 12 registered voters.

**Zero sphere of influence:** A sphere of influence that includes no territory. The Commission’s adoption of a zero sphere of influence assumes that the responsibilities of that agency should ultimately be re-assigned to another public agency.

**Zoning:** The primary instrument for implementing a local jurisdiction’s General Plan. Zoning divides all land in a city or county into zones and further specifies the permitted uses and required standards in each zone.