

**7A**  
**7B**

March 3, 2008

TO: Local Agency Formation Commission

FROM: Executive Officer  
Local Governmental Analyst

SUBJECT: Sphere of Influence and Municipal Service Review: Cities  
(MSR08-07; SR08-07 [A-R])

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

There are eighteen cities within San Diego County that have an estimated combined population of 2,617,053 people (SANDAG, 2008). This is a staggering population figure that places San Diego County as the second most populated county in California, second only to Los Angeles. The cities range in size from the City of Del Mar consisting of 1.9 square miles to the City of San Diego occupying more than 342.57 square miles. The cities also vary considerably in terms of finance. For example, the City of Del Mar has a total operating budget of approximately \$18.8 million, while the City of San Diego's operating budget is approximately \$2.8 billion. This memorandum and the attached Sphere of Influence and Municipal Service Review Data Summary have been prepared to obtain a better understanding of the important services provided by the 18 municipalities in San Diego County.

The data summary will also be used by LAFCO staff to comply with provisions in State Law that require the regular review of spheres of influence and preparation of Municipal Service Reviews. As discussed in this report, spheres of influence are jurisdictional planning tools that depict the probable physical boundaries and service area of local agencies (Government Code Section 56425). There are three common types of sphere designations assigned to cities: (1) spheres that are larger than a city's corporate boundary in anticipation of annexation; (2) spheres that are smaller than a municipal boundary for territory that should be detached from a city and annexed to different city; and/or (3) special study area designations for cities that require the identification and resolution of jurisdictional issues. The requirement to establish spheres of influence has been a State Law for over 30 years and the

emphasis in San Diego County has recently shifted from one of sphere adoption to one of sphere review or update. To remain effective jurisdictional planning tools, spheres need to be reviewed regularly and updated, as necessary.

State Law requires the preparation of Municipal Service Reviews (MSRs) whenever spheres are updated. MSRs cover a broad spectrum of service delivery, operational, and jurisdictional issues. The MSR evaluation requirements are codified in Government Code Section 56430 and cover growth and population projections; present and planned capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services; financial ability of agencies to provide services; opportunities for shared facilities; and accountability for community service needs, including governmental structure and operational efficiencies.

The information contained in the attached data summary was provided by each city in a survey prepared by LAFCO staff in 2007. All of the cities were very cooperative with providing LAFCO staff information during the data collection process. After approval by the Commission, the survey responses will be summarized and incorporated into LAFCO's *Profiles of Cities* publication. The publication is used to obtain a quick snapshot of municipal service and jurisdictional contact information. This publication will become a database of city information that will be easy to update so that it may be of maximum use to the public, other agencies, and the LAFCO staff.

As discussed in various sections of this report, the 18 cities in the County generally provide a range of services adequately within their corporate boundaries. Preparation of this municipal data summary has resulted in several important conclusions. First, many of the cities have indicated that a growing public safety problem pertains to the amount of municipal support that is being provided to address fire protection and emergency medical services needs in unincorporated territory. This problem has been extensively documented and researched in other LAFCO reports. Many of the Cities have also indicated that they have sufficient revenues to support an adequate level of service; however, several cities have noted that they are experiencing financial challenges. Additionally, it is noteworthy that many cities have general plans and capital facility plans to address service provision and development to 2020 and beyond. Through these facility and planning processes, many cities have demonstrated foresight to respond to a changing demographic and economic environment. One particular example involves the Cities of Del Mar and of Solana Beach. These cities have been implementing a fire protection consolidation plan with neighboring jurisdictions. Other cities (e.g. Carlsbad, Chula Vista, Escondido, National City, Oceanside, and San Diego) may also be exploring reorganizations to establish more logical corporate boundaries that conform better to property ownership boundaries and road alignments. The sphere and MSR report also notes that the City of San Marcos is exploring several large annexations. These annexations may trigger a more rigorous sphere review in the future depending on the magnitude of anticipated jurisdictional boundary and sphere changes. Another conclusion contained in this report pertains to the City of El Cajon. The City of El Cajon has experienced some recent service issues related to annexation proposals within its existing sphere. While it is recommended that El Cajon's sphere be reaffirmed, the Commission may also consider an alternative and designate the affected

territory as a special study area. This designation would identify and help resolve related jurisdictional issues. Lastly, the cities of Coronado, Del Mar, Encinitas, Imperial Beach, La Mesa, Lemon Grove, Poway, Santee, Solana Beach, and Vista have indicated that there are no anticipated sphere amendments in the near future and reaffirmation of their current spheres is warranted.

In conclusion, the Commission should accept and approve the *Cities in San Diego County Sphere of Influence and Municipal Service Review Summaries and the Service Review and Sphere of Influence Data Summary*. In addition, the Executive Officer should be directed to prepare the necessary determinations, subject to the recommendations listed below. Maps of the city's corporate boundaries and sphere of influence boundaries are included as exhibits in Attachment A (Cities Spheres of Influence and MSR Data Summary). It is therefore

**RECOMMENDED: That your Commission**

- (1) Find in accordance with the Executive Officer's determination that pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines, the sphere affirmations, special study area(s) and/or minor sphere amendment(s) are not subject to the environmental impact evaluation process because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility for the proposed projects to significantly impact the environment, and the activity is not subject to CEQA;
- (2) Find in accordance with the Executive Officer's determination, that pursuant to §15306 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the municipal service review is not subject to the environmental impact evaluation process because the service review consists of data collection and research that will not result in a disturbance to an environmental resource;
- (3) For the reasons set forth in the *Cities in San Diego County Sphere of Influence and Municipal Service Review Summaries and Service Review and Sphere of Influence Review Data Summary*, affirm the existing larger than city spheres of influence for the cities of Coronado, El Cajon, Encinitas, Lemon Grove, Poway, and Vista and affirm the existing coterminous spheres of influence for the cities of Del Mar, Imperial Beach, La Mesa, Santee, and Solana Beach. In addition to the affirmation of La Mesa's sphere, ratify the exemption approved in 2006, concerning the waived restriction on approving sphere amendments subsequent to a sphere review due to the possibility for septic system failures in certain areas around the City of La Mesa;
- (4) Reaffirm the existing spheres and acknowledge potential future sphere amendments for the larger than city spheres of Chula Vista, Escondido, National City and the coterminous spheres of the cities of Carlsbad, Oceanside, and San Diego;

- (5) Reaffirm the larger than city sphere for the City of San Marcos and acknowledge that a comprehensive sphere review maybe necessary depending on the magnitude of future sphere and jurisdictional changes; and
- (6) Direct the Executive Officer to prepare written Statements of Determinations and associated resolutions.

Respectfully submitted,

MICHAEL D. OTT  
Executive Officer

CLAIRE RILEY  
Local Governmental Analyst

MDO:CR:tjc

**Attachments:**

Attachment A: Cities Sphere of Influence and MSR Data Summary and Maps

Attachment B: City Sphere and MSR Survey Responses