

Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
 AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Robert Sapien, Jr.

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: February 16, 2024

Approved



Date

2/16/24

INFORMATION

**SUBJECT: SANTA CLARA COUNTY LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION:
 COUNTYWIDE FIRE SERVICE REVIEW**

The Santa Clara Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) initiated steps to conduct its Countywide Fire Service Review in December 2020, consistent with LAFCO Service Review Policies¹, and subsequently adopted its Countywide Fire Service Review Final Report² on October 4, 2023. On December 19, 2023, LAFCO requested that local agencies within the report provide responses to specific recommendations no later than February 16, 2024. The previous LAFCO Countywide Fire Service Review was adopted on December 15, 2010³.

LAFCO requests that response to recommendations include: 1) agency/organization plan for implementation; 2) timeframe for implementation; and 3) an explanation if agency/organization does not plan to implement. Recommendations to be addressed in the City's response included the following.

#	Table A Recommendations	Report Page #
2	<u>Unit Utilization Hours</u> ⁴ : San Jose, Palo Alto, Gilroy, and CCFD ⁵ all have units with UHUs of over 10%. These agencies should add additional resources to effectively manage the call volume and improve response time performance.	xiii, 25
2A	<u>San Jose Units</u> : 28 engines and medical units exceeding 10% UHU, of which four exceed 20% UHU.	302-303
8	<u>Facility Replacement & Maintenance Plan</u> : Establish a comprehensive facility replacement plan and a maintenance plan for fire stations.	307-344

¹ <https://santaclaralafco.org/resources/policies/service-review-policies>

² <https://santaclaralafco.org/sites/default/files/FireSRReview-FinalReport-2023.pdf>

³ <https://santaclaralafco.org/cities-and-special-districts/service-reviews/second-round/2010-countywide-fire-service-review>

⁴ UHU: Unit Utilization Hours

⁵ CCFD: Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District

8F	San Jose: With 15 of San José Fire Department’s 35 stations being over fifty years old, there should be a more robust facility replacement plan in place.	340, 344, 351
20	AVL Dispatch of Resources: Gilroy, Morgan Hill, San José, Sunnyvale, CCFD, and SCFD ⁶ are not currently utilizing AVL ⁷ technology to dispatch the closest available resource for emergencies. By integrating AVL into the CAD ⁸ system through GIS ⁹ mapping, the system can identify and dispatch the nearest unit to the incident. AVL Dispatch can help improve overall response times, potentially making a significant difference in critical calls. Each of these agencies should implement AVL dispatch in their dispatch center.	xvi, 57

Recommendation #2, 2A - Unit Utilization Hours (UHU): San José, Palo Alto, Gilroy, and CCFD all have units with UHUs of over 10%. These agencies should add additional resources to effectively manage the call volume and improve response time performance and 28 engines and medical units exceeding 10% UHU, of which four exceed 20% UHU.

The LAFCO report identified 28 fire engine companies and medical units exceeding 10% UHU, including four exceeding 20% UHU, based on average number of calls per day and average time per incident. The report offers, “Once UHU reaches 10% for a primary responding unit, the Fire Department will see increased challenges to meet response times due to unavailability for immediate response. The city would need to add resources to that station or reduce call volume to meet response time standards.” The Fire Department (Department) agrees with this LAFCO recommendation and is already taking action to maintain response compliance.

The Department closely monitors response time performance and call volume, previously providing its Fire Department Emergency Response Times Performance Annual Report on October 20, 2022¹⁰ and its Fire Department Call Volume Status Report on March 16, 2023¹¹ to the Public Safety, Finance, and Strategic Support Committee. In 2024, this information will be consolidated into the new Fire Department Operations Annual Report scheduled to be presented to the Public Safety, Finance, and Strategic Support Committee on April 18, 2024¹².

The Department agrees with LAFCO’s findings regarding UHU and the City is taking meaningful action to improve response times, including adding fire stations, augmenting response resources and personnel, and implementing technology solutions. In 2016, the City Council adopted the “Vision 2023” Fire Department Strategic Business Plan and accepted the Fire Department Organizational Review that was directed by City Council and was conducted by a third-party consultant, Citygate Associates, LLC. The

⁶ SCFD: South Santa Clara County Fire Protection District

⁷ AVL: Automatic Vehicle Location

⁸ CAD: Computer Aided Dispatch

⁹ GIS: Geographic Information System

¹⁰ <https://sanjose.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=A&ID=987865&GUID=648E5CC1-AB3B-4167-8204-187F22ABC0FF>

¹¹ <https://sanjose.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=A&ID=1074299&GUID=BAFE712B-A94F-41E9-9198-BFF87C1569A2>

¹² <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/108184/638398922109970000>

organizational review included a standards of cover analysis. In its executive summary, Citygate Associates, LLC offered:

The straightforward problem is that the City's large geography and non-grid road design outside of the older downtown core is simply too large to serve efficiently with a limited number of fire stations. The only way to maintain reasonable emergency unit travel times will be for the City to add more crews (both in the brown out (closed) stations and where a sufficient number of fire stations does not exist) and add at least four to six critically missing fire stations.

The City has steadily advanced its Strategic Business Plan and implemented recommendations provided in the Organizational Review, including restoration of resources previously eliminated due to budget action; restoring Engine 30, Engine 34, and Engine 35; and ending brownouts. On November 6, 2018, San José voters passed Measure T – The Disaster Preparedness, Public Safety, and Infrastructure Bond which authorized the City to issue up to \$650 million in general obligation bonds to fund emergency and disaster responses, infrastructure, and roads. Measure T dedicated \$180.9 million towards infrastructure and facility improvements within the Public Safety City Service Area, enabling the planning and construction of new Fire Station 37, Fire Station 32, Fire Station 36, and the addition of a landside bay at the relocated and newly constructed Fire Station 20 at San José Mineta International Airport which enabled placement of Rescue Medic 20 to reinforce resourcing in the downtown area. Fire Engine 37 went into service May 10, 2022, and Fire Station 32 and Fire Station 36 will be staffed upon completion.

In addition to restoring resources and adding fire stations, the Department has advanced several other impactful initiatives to address call volume and response time challenges, including improved mapping and routing on emergency response vehicles; citywide traffic light emergency vehicle signal preemption service; modernized fire station alerting systems citywide, leveraging business intelligence tools to provide focus on actionable performance data; increased overtime for added resources at peak periods; adopted “early dispatch” procedures to alert responders sooner; and altered alarm responses to increase resource availability.

Although significant progress has been made, call volume continues to rise. Since the adoption of the Department's Strategic Business Plan in 2016, call volume has increased more than 25%, from 87,033 in fiscal year 2015-2016 to 109,136 in fiscal year 2022-2023. Now, in the targeted checkpoint year of the “Vision 2023” Plan, the Department will seek to generate a revised organizational review and standards of cover analysis to guide future strategies to reduce excessive UHU and improve response times.

Recommendation #8 - Facility Replacement & Maintenance Plan: Establish a comprehensive facility replacement plan and a maintenance plan for fire stations.

The Department of Public Works obtained third party facility condition assessments in 2015 and 2017 for Fire Stations 1 through 31. These assessments provided recommendations on conditions, maintenance, and replacement of specific systems and building elements of each fire station evaluated. The Department's Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Adopted Capital Improvement Program budget of approximately \$13.8 million is funded through a set allocation of the City's construction and conveyance tax proceeds

aimed towards the continued improvement of fire facilities, including station infrastructure, fire apparatus, technology, and ancillary equipment needs.

In April 2022, the Department of Public Works performed an assessment and reported its results to the Transportation and Environment Committee on the status of the City’s deferred maintenance project backlog, which was inclusive of facility improvements pertaining to the Department¹³. The Department continues to use its discretion when directing its capital funds towards the ongoing backlog of infrastructure needs identified for immediate and forthcoming investment, including HVAC improvements, roof and floor replacements, as well as facility refreshes and upgrades. As noted in the LAFCO final report, the Department’s current Capital Improvement Plan has identified two facilities for remodel. The Department will continue to identify future remediation projects for fire stations beyond the recommended service life, subject to available funds and future City Council direction.

Recommendation #8F - Facility Replacement: With 15 of San Jose Fire Department’s 35 stations being over fifty years old, there should be a more robust facility replacement plan in place.

The Department generally agrees with the LAFCO assessment of facilities. As previously noted, the City’s Fire Station 20, located at the San José Mineta International Airport, was recently relocated and replaced utilizing Measure T bond proceeds. The replacement of Fire Station 8 is under construction and the replacement of Fire Station 23 is in its planning stages for acquiring a location in North San José. Funding for both fire station relocations intend to utilize the remaining Measure T bond proceeds, however future funding discussions will be initiated to ensure a successful project delivery and completion.

Recommendation #20 - AVL Dispatch of Resources: Gilroy, Morgan Hill, San José, Sunnyvale, CCFD, and SCFD are not currently utilizing Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) technology to dispatch the closest available resource for emergencies. By integrating AVL into the CAD system through GIS mapping, the system can identify and dispatch the nearest unit to the incident. AVL Dispatch can help improve overall response times, potentially making a significant difference in critical calls. Each of these agencies should implement AVL dispatch in their dispatch center.

The Department is committed to advancing its Closest Unit Dispatch Initiative which will leverage its computer aided dispatch system and emergency response vehicle automatic vehicle locator (AVL) equipment to select and dispatch the closest appropriate resource(s) to emergencies. This initiative is well underway with necessary equipment already in place and an expected completion in the fall of 2024. Once implemented, the Department will monitor data to ensure that this initiative results in a positive impact on response time performance.

#	Table B Recommendations	Report Page #
2-5, 13-18	<u>Addressing Areas Lacking an Identified Local Fire Service Provider</u> : Ensure that all territory in the County lies within the boundaries of a local fire protection provider (Areas 4, 5, 6, 7, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20).	82-83, 86-87, 90-93, 538-539, 598-599

¹³ <https://sanjose.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=10670242&GUID=65E8DF85-E099-4633-8C00-FF8FAD6694B8>

Recommendations #2-5, 13-18 - Addressing Areas Lacking an Identified Local Fire Service Provider: Ensure that all territories in the County lie within the boundaries of a local fire protection provider (Areas 4, 5, 6, 7, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20).

The LAFCO report identifies 33 distinct areas totaling over 539 square miles without a dedicated provider, with 10 of these areas totaling 60.24 square miles within the San José sphere of influence (SOI). The largest of these areas identified are in the east foothills and further into the Diablo Range, including those identified as areas 4, 5, 6, and 7. Areas identified as 15 and 16 are located in Coyote Valley and areas 17, 18, 19 and 20 are located in the west foothills, south Los Gatos, and Almaden. The Department provides emergency response services to approximately 27 square miles of unincorporated areas under the Zone 1 agreement between the City of San José and County of Santa Clara. Unincorporated areas outside of the areas explicitly defined Zone 1 agreement include areas where a local fire service provider is not identified.

Area	Square Miles	Land Use	Current Initial Responder	Necessity/ Fire Hazard	LAFCO Recommendation
4	3.1	Hillside with residences on 1+acre.	San José FD	SRA ¹⁴ - Hillside development with ~30 residences and equine facilities.	Annexation by CCFD ¹⁵ - with SOI expansion and contract with San José.
5	0.33	Hillside with ranch and 1 residence	San José FD/ CAL FIRE	SRA- One residence	Annexation by CCFD with SOI expansion and contract with San José.
6	0.27	Agricultural with orchard, Hillside with residences	San José FD/ CAL FIRE	SRA- Three residence	Annexation by CCFD with SOI expansion and contract with San José.
7	38.9	Agricultural ranchlands and Hillside, United Technologies Corp. Closed Facility (HAZMAT site)	San José FD/ CAL FIRE and contracts	SRA—few structures	Annexation by CCFD of the northern half and annexation by SCFD of southern half with SOI expansions and contract service by San José or CAL FIRE
15	0.26	Hillside, agricultural	San José FD	SRA, no structures	Annexation by CCFD with SOI expansion and contract

¹⁴ SRA: State Responsibility Area

		no structures (1 parcel)			service by San José for consistency of response with all territory in the region regardless of city SOI.
16	0.23	Hillside with residence and agricultural activities (1 parcel)	San José FD	SRA, few structures	Annexation by CCFD with SOI expansion and contract service by San José for consistency of response with all territory in the region regardless of city SOI.
17	6.73	Calero Reservoir County Park, and Hillside with ~10 residences	Likely San José FD	SRA, few structures, regional park	Annexation by SCFD with SOI expansion and contract service by San José for consistency of response with all territory in the region regardless of city SOI. Identify funding structure for emergency services in County parks.
18	9.2	Hillside with ~11 Residences, Almaden Quicksilver County Park, Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve	Likely San José FD	SRA, few structures, regional park	Annexation by SCFD ¹⁶ with SOI expansion and contract service by San José for consistency of response with all territory in the region regardless of city SOI. Identify funding structure for emergency services in County parks.
19	0.17	Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve	Likely San José FD	SRA, no structures, open space	Midpen ensure structure in place with provider for fire suppression of fires on district properties until CAL FIRE is on scene. Annexation by SCFD with SOI expansion and contract service by San José for consistency of response with all territory in the region regardless of city SOI. Identify funding structure for emergency services in recreational areas.

20	1.05	Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve	Likely San José FD	SRA, no structures, open space	Midpen ensure structure in place with provider for fire suppression of fires on district properties until CAL FIRE is on scene. Annexation by SCFD with SOI expansion and contract services by San José FD for consistency of response with all territory. Identify funding structure for emergency services in recreational areas.
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All areas in the table above draw response resources from San José when emergencies occur. When CAL FIRE is unavailable or are not staffing the area fire stations outside of the wildfire season, the Department is often the only agency that responds, a burden that is not accounted for in the Zone 1 agreement or in mutual aid agreements. Responses to these areas often pull resources miles from home fire stations, leaving them unavailable to respond to emergencies within their designated response areas. The Department agrees with the LAFCO recommendations to ensure that all territory in the county lies within the boundaries of a local fire protection provider; however, annexations would be at the County’s discretion.

NEXT STEPS

The City appreciates LAFCO’s efforts to generate the Countywide Fire Service Review Final Report. All information in the report will be captured and opportunities for improved local and regional services will be further evaluated. The City’s response to LAFCO is included in the **Attachment - City of San José Response to the Countywide Fire Service Review Final Report**. The Department will continue to advance efforts to overcome known operational and infrastructure challenges and will seek to conduct a revised organizational review toward establishing priorities for the coming years.



ROBERT SAPIEN, JR.
Fire Chief, Fire Department

For questions, please contact Robert Sapien, Jr., Fire Chief, at robert.sapien@sanjoseca.gov or (408) 794-6952.

Attachment: City of San José Response to the Countywide Fire Service Review Final Report





San José Fire Department

February 12, 2024

Local Area Formation Commission of Santa Clara County
 c/o Noel Dunia, Assistant Executive Officer
 777 North First Street, Suite 410
 San Jose, CA 95112

RE: CITY OF SAN JOSÉ RESPONSE TO THE COUNTYWIDE FIRE SERVICE REVIEW FINAL REPORT

Dear Local Agency Formation Commission of Santa Clara County:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and respond to the Santa Clara County Local Agency Formation Commission's (LAFCO) Countywide Fire Service Review Final Report as adopted on October 4, 2023. Herein, please find the City of San José's (City) responses to items as requested by LAFCO including Table A items 2, 2A, 8, 8F, and 20, and Table B areas 4, 5, 6, 7, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20.

CITY OF SAN JOSÉ RESPONSES REQUESTED BY LAFCO IN TABLE A		
LAFCO Recommendation	City Response	Timeframe for Implementation
2., 2A. Unit Utilization Hours	The City recognizes the unit utilization hours in excess of 10 hours and 20 hours for some resources. In recent years, the City has taken several meaningful actions to keep pace with service demand, including adding fire station response areas at Fire Station 20 and Fire Station 37, and planning construction of new Fire Station 32 and Fire Station 36. Each of these new Fire Stations will include deployment of new fire companies. Going forward, the City will continue to monitor unity utilization hours and response time performance and continue to pursue opportunities for improvement.	Ongoing
8., 8F. Facility Replacement & Maintenance Planning	The City's Fire Station 20 at Mineta San José International Airport was recently relocated and replaced. A replacement Fire Station 8 is under construction, and Fire Station 23 replacement is in planning. The City obtained third party facility	Ongoing

	condition assessments in 2015 and 2017 for Fire Stations 1 through 31. These documents guide prioritization of maintenance and replacement and will be revised as necessary.	
20. AVL Dispatch of Resource	The City is in the process of implementing this recommendation.	Fall 2024

CITY OF SAN JOSE RESPONSES REQUESTED BY LAFCO IN TABLE B		
LAFCO Recommendation	City Response	Timeframe for Implementation
Area 4, 5, 6, 7, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20	The Department agrees with the LAFCO recommendations to ensure that all territory in the County lies within the boundaries of a local fire protection provider; however, for the areas identified for comment by San José, require recommended annexations would be at the County’s and fire district’s discretion.	Unknown

The City of San José appreciates LAFCO’s efforts that generated Countywide Fire Service Review Final Report.

Any questions regarding this response may be directed to Robert Sapien, Jr., Fire Chief at robert.sapien@sanjoseca.gov.



ROBERT SAPIEN, JR.
Fire Chief, Fire Department