

CITY OF SAN JOSE
Coyote Valley Specific Plan
Glossary of Terms

COMMONLY USED TERMS
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1. 15% Slope Line

The fifteen percent slope line, as a general planning criterion, defines the limit of encroachment of urban land uses into the hillsides that border the valley floor. Areas above the fifteen percent slope line should remain outside the Urban Service Area boundary.

2. Annexation

Annexation is the process by which real property becomes a part of the City. It entitles the property owner to the wide range of municipal services that the city can provide. In San Jose, annexations are typically “reorganizations,” whereby land is annexed to a city, and simultaneously, detached from special districts, such as fire or sanitary districts.

3. CEQA

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires developers to disclose the potential environmental impacts resulting from the construction of a project. This information helps local officials to make informed decisions about whether to permit discretionary projects and, if so, with what conditions and or mitigation measures.

4. Density

A measure of the number of housing units per acre.

5. “Developed/Improved” Lots

Lots with structures or buildings are considered developed or improved lots.

6. Floor Area Ratio

It is the gross floor area of a structure divided by the total lot area.

7. General Plan

Per State law, the City’s General Plan, San Jose 2020, is the official statement concerning its future character, land use patterns, and quality of development. It is a comprehensive, long-term plan to guide the future development and growth in San Jose. It is the City’s single most important planning document.

The San Jose 2020 General Plan describes the amount, type, and phasing of development needed to achieve the City’s social, economic, and environmental goals. It addresses a wide range of development issues, including housing, traffic, natural resources, land uses and public safety.

Under State law, all subdivisions must be consistent with the communities General Plan.

8. General Plan Designations

General Plan designations identify uses and densities for which individual properties may be used. The San Jose 2020 General Plan’s Land Use/Transportation Diagram shows designated land uses, such as Agriculture and Public Park/Open Space, and illustrates the strong link between land use and the transportation network.

9. Greenline/Urban Growth Boundary

The Greenline/Urban Growth Boundary is a strategy to define the ultimate perimeter of urbanization in San Jose. It sets the limits to urban development, and is intended to define where the City begins and ends and to preserve valuable open space resources. The Urban Growth Boundary reflects the strong, long-lasting commitment to both the City of San Jose and the County of Santa Clara that urban development should only occur within the Urban Service Areas of cities where urban development can safely and reasonably be accommodated and where urban services can efficiently be provided.

10. Intensity of Land Use

For housing, this is measured as the number of housing units per acre. For non-residential uses, this is measured either as the number of employees per acre or the Floor Area Ratio (see separate definition).

11. LAFCO

LAFCO is the Local Agency Formation Commission, which is empowered by state legislation to govern annexations, and changes in the boundaries and organization of cities and special districts.

12. Land Use

Description of what physical structures are actually on a piece of land, as well as what types of activities commonly take place on it. Some land use examples are housing, commercial activities, agriculture, and parkland. Land use planning determines where specific structures/activities should be located.

13. Prezoning

Prezoning is a procedure that establishes zoning for a parcel prior to its annexation. A prezoning does not become effective until the property is annexed to the City of San Jose.

14. Specific Plan

A specific plan is a more detailed land use plan and policy document for a smaller geographic area of the City that serves to further the goals of the General Plan. Specific plans provide detailed direction for development, including the type, location and intensity of uses. They address future public facilities (e.g. parks and schools) and infrastructure (e.g. roads and sewers) needed to support development, as well as a program of implementation measures and a financing plan. Specific plans must comply with explicit requirement of State law and be consistent with the major strategies, goals, and policies of the General Plan. They must also comply with adopted City Council policy and ordinance on Specific Plans.

15. Subdivision

Any division of land for the purpose of sale, lease or finance. All subdivisions must conform to the Zoning Ordinance and the General Plan. No new lot line may create a violation of setbacks, minimum lot size, frontage requirements, or other Zoning Ordinance or General Plan standard.

16. Unincorporated Area

An unincorporated area is real property, which has not been annexed into a city. Unincorporated areas are subject to the County's land use regulations (i.e., County zoning), and generally do not benefit from the various municipal services that are available to those properties annexed into a City.

17. Urban Service Area

The Urban Service Area is the area where a full complement of urban services (e.g. sewer, water, etc.) provided by the City and other public agencies is generally available, and where urban development requiring such services should be located.

18. Urban Services

Urban services refer to services such as police and fire protection, sewage treatment, water supply, and road maintenance. The City of San Jose provides these urban services to developments that are incorporated into the City and within the Urban Service Area boundary.

19. Williamson Act Contract

Williamson Act contracts are used in California to conserve open space and agricultural lands by providing property tax reductions in return for agreements with landowners to keep the land in agriculture or its natural state. Once contracts in place, landowners must apply for non-renewal in order to become eligible to subdivide or change the use of the land to other than those allowed under Williamson Act contracts, also referred to as Williamson Act Compatible Uses List. Under most situations, contracts are not fully terminated for ten years from the approval of application for non-renewal, unless a request for immediate contract cancellation is approved.

20. Zoning

Zoning is the way in which the City establishes the use and development standards of individual properties. The City's Zoning Ordinance provides the land use regulations to carry out the policies set forth in the San Jose 2020 General Plan. Zoning regulates the intensity of land uses, and the height, bulk and setback of structures on a site, and in doing so ensures that land is used in a manner that best serves the health, safety, and general welfare of the entire community.