

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the Santa Clara Valley Wildfire Protection, Clean Water and Open Space Act?

- In September 2025, proponents of the proposed “Santa Clara Valley Wildfire Protection, Clean Water and Open Space Act” filed with the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, a notice of intent to circulate an initiative within the Open Space Authority’s jurisdiction to enact a parcel tax to provide funding to the Open Space Authority for open space-related purposes.
- On February 10, 2026, the Santa Clara County Registrar of Voters (“ROV”) certified that the proponents had gathered sufficient signatures to qualify the Initiative for placement on the ballot.
- At its February 26, 2026, meeting the Authority Governing Board will decide whether to place the Initiative on the ballot for either the June 2, 2026 ballot or the November 3, 2026 ballot.
- The Initiative states that it seeks to provide funding to safeguard, restore, maintain and manage a growing network of protected open space, wildlife habitat, water resources, and agricultural lands in the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority’s jurisdiction to sustain the health of communities and the natural environment.
- If approved by a majority of voters, the Initiative would impose an annual special parcel tax of 2 cents per building square foot, with a maximum tax cap per parcel of \$7,500 and exemptions for senior citizens and specified low-income property owners.
- The average single family residence would pay roughly \$32 annually. Owners of parcels with large building square footages (such as large commercial and industrial uses) would pay more.
- In total, the Initiative would generate approximately \$17 million annually for use by the Authority for the purposes and activities set forth in the Initiative. The specified purposes and activities include:
  - restoring open space, natural resources, waterways
  - conserving, stewarding and maintaining open space and agricultural lands for public benefit
  - reducing wildfire risk
  - protecting drinking water sources such as rivers, creeks and streams from pollution
  - addressing vandalism and litter in natural open space areas
  - maintaining and restoring wildlife habitats and corridors
  - protecting farms and healthy local food sources
  - opening new protected lands to the public

## Frequently Asked Questions

- The Initiative appears to be closely patterned after the draft expenditure plan and feasibility analysis that the Open Space Authority had been developing since 2023.

### **What is the relationship between the Open Space Authority and the proposed Initiative ?**

- State law authorizes voters within the OSA's jurisdiction to propose citizen initiatives and gather signatures on them after filing with the Authority a notice of intent to do so along with the text of the proposed initiative.
- The Authority is a governmental agency. It does not have the power or authority to gather signatures on initiative petitions.
- While the proponents appear to have patterned their Initiative based on a draft potential tax measure under consideration by the Open Space Authority, the Authority played no role in proposing or gathering signatures on the Initiative.
- State law dictates the steps that the Authority was required to take in processing the Initiative.
- Specifically, in response to the proponents submission of signatures on the Initiative on January 5, 2026, the Authority's Clerk verified that the proponents had submitted sufficient signatures to potentially qualify the Initiative for the ballot. The next step was to verify whether a sufficient number of these signatures are valid under state law. The Authority contracted with the County Registrar of Voters ("ROV") to perform this signature verification process.
- On February 10, 2026, the ROV verified that the requisite number of signatures are valid and that the Initiative qualifies for the ballot.
- At its February 26, 2026, meeting the Authority Governing Board will decide whether to place the Initiative on the ballot for either the June 2, 2026 ballot or the November 3, 2026 ballot.
- Voter-sponsored initiatives patterned after tax proposals under consideration by local governments have become an increasingly common phenomenon in the past few years. Voter-sponsored tax initiatives are subject to a lower voter-threshold (simple majority of 50% plus one) rather than the two-thirds voter approval requirement for board-sponsored special taxes.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **How would the Initiative's funding be spent ? How is the Initiative different from Measure Q / T ?**

- The Initiative proposes a similar method of allocating and administering its revenues as the Authority currently uses to administer funding from Measures Q and T. It requires the Authority Board to annually distribute the revenue generated to fund the programs of the types specified in the Initiative. Up to 25% of the revenues shall be made available for the Authority's Urban Grant Program.
- Like Measures Q and T, the Initiative proposes a "uniform" parcel tax. However, unlike Measures Q and T, in which every parcel pays the same flat rate of \$24.00 per parcel, this measure would apply a uniform tax rate tax of two cents per building square foot. So the greater the square footage of a residence or building, the greater the tax, subject to a maximum tax of \$7,500 per parcel.
- As building square footage and density of homes and businesses increase over time, the tax would generate additional funding in contrast to the flat parcel tax imposed by Measures Q and T.
- The Initiative also authorizes, but does not require, the Authority Governing Board to annually adjust the amount of the special parcel tax in accordance with the consumer price index.

### **How long would the Initiative's tax last ?**

The Initiative specifies the special parcel tax would continue until ended by voters.

### **How is the Open Space Authority currently funded and how is the funding monitored ?**

- The Authority is currently funded by a \$24 per parcel flat tax approved by voters in 2014 (Measure Q) and extended by voters with no increase in 2020 (Measure T). The Authority also is funded by a \$12 per parcel benefit assessment adopted in 1994. Together these sources of funding generate approximately \$12 million annually.
- Measures Q and T require that an independent citizens' oversight committee (Expenditure Plan Oversight Committee) provide oversight and annual accountability reports to the Open Space Authority Board of Directors on how the funds are spent. The Initiative also requires oversight by an independent oversight committee.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Why did the Open Space Authority determine that additional funding is needed?

- Since 2011, the amount of land the Open Space Authority manages on behalf of the public in the Santa Clara Valley has increased from 12,000 acres to 30,000 acres. In addition, the cost of maintaining these lands has risen substantially, even on a per acre basis.

### How would the Initiative's funding be distributed across communities in the jurisdiction?

- The Initiative directs that the Open Space Authority expend its proceeds in a manner that is informed by the *Santa Clara Valley Greenprint*. Published in 2014 and available on our website, the *Greenprint* guides the agency's land protection efforts within ten conservation focus areas.
- Primary among the conservation priorities is Coyote Valley, where the Authority and its agency and nonprofit partners continue to protect lands that are otherwise at threat of development.
- In addition, through its Urban Grant Program, the Authority Board has distributed funding for projects throughout San Jose, Milpitas, Campbell, Santa Clara, and Morgan Hill. The Initiative provides for enhancing and expanding the Urban Grants Program, with funding made available through a competitive grants program designed to reward a diversity of projects and geographies.