



City Council

Action to Waive First Reading and Approve Introduction of an Ordinance Amending Chapter 8.60 ("Unmanned Aircraft System") of the City Code.

Cory Morgan, Chief of Police
Agenda Item # 3.J, (25-1032)
October 21, 2025

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City of Santa Clara
The Center of What's Possible

Summary

- In August 2015, the City Council approved Ordinance No. 1942 creating Chapter 8.60, "Unmanned Aircraft Systems" of the Santa Clara City Code.
- Prior to 2015, the City had no local framework governing unmanned aircraft use beyond the regulations issued by the FAA.
- Revisions to the City Code are proposed to ensure compliance with updated federal guidance.

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FAA 2023 Fact Sheet



Local governments may regulate takeoff, landing, and ground operations to address safety and privacy.



Local governments may not regulate access to airspace, flight paths, or impose equipment standards that interfere with federal regulations.



Local ordinances must be narrowly tailored and not preempt federal law.

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Proposed Changes

Updating

Updating definitions for "Unmanned Aircraft", "Unmanned Aircraft System", "Major Event", and "Levi's® Stadium".

Removing

Removing weight and design restrictions.

Modifying

Modifying launch and land restrictions within the City.

Revising

Revising flight restrictions below 200 feet above ground level at specific locations.

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Modifying Launch & Land Restrictions

Major Events:

- Within one mile of and within two hours before or after Major Events.
- Levi's® Stadium: Within two miles of and within three hours before or after.
- AND in any City of Santa Clara public park

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Flight Restrictions: Schools & Critical Infrastructure

- Below 200 feet above ground level over:
 - Any public or private school during school hours
 - Critical infrastructure:
 - Emergency services facilities
 - Energy sector facilities

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Exemptions

- Any public safety agency
- Takeoff and landing, as proscribed, may be permitted by the Chief of Police or designee.
 - Owner/Operator ensures that any flight activity complies with all FAA and all other applicable laws and regulations.

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Updating the City Code

Aligns the City Code with FAA's 2023 Fact Sheet.

Addresses risks associated with advancement in drone technology.

Focuses local authority on takeoff and landing zones, public safety and privacy.

Removes provisions susceptible to federal preemption, and enhances coordination with FAA.

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Recommendation

- Waive first reading and approve in the form presented the introduction of an Ordinance amending Chapter 8.60 (“Unmanned Aircraft Systems”) of Title 8 (“Health and Safety”) of the Code of the City of Santa Clara California

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Questions?

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