

# ASSOCIATION OF BAY AREA GOVERNMENTS

Representing City and County Governments of the San Francisco Bay Area



**ABAG**

Date: November 19, 2014  
To: ABAG Executive Board  
From: Miriam Chion  
Planning and Research Director  
Subject: **Review of Priority Development Area Criteria**

At the request of the Executive Board and Regional Planning Committee, we are providing an overview of the region's Priority Development Area (PDA) criteria and guidelines.

## PDA Criteria

The existing PDA criteria were established in 2008 as part of the FOCUS Program. The criteria were extensively vetted and ultimately adopted by ABAG's Executive Board. They were revised in 2011 for inclusion in Plan Bay Area. Firstly, a PDA must have a resolution approved by a local jurisdiction responsible for land use. Secondly, a PDA must be located in an area that satisfies the following:

1. Within an existing community
2. Housing growth potential
3. Access to transit

All PDAs are proposed within the urban footprint of existing communities. This is intended to make use of the existing infrastructure and services. All PDAs consider potential housing growth; the planning efforts and housing construction feasibility varies across PDAs according to the local development and planning process and local vision. All PDAs must have access to transit infrastructure, including: 1) ½ mile around an existing rail station or ferry terminal, 2) ½ mile area served by bus route or bus rapid transit(BRT) corridor with a minimum headway of 20 minutes during peak weekday commute periods, or 3) ½ mile within a planned transit station defined in MTC's Resolution 3434.

## PDA Guidelines

Guidelines for PDA size and density were established in key PDA program documents to serve as references for local planners and as measures of quality assurance for the PDA program at-large.

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The PDA application guidelines recommend 100 acres, roughly ¼ mile radius, as an appropriate minimum size for PDAs given that the program seeks to support local area and specific planning. A maximum size of 500 acres has been suggested for specific planning areas applying for MTC PDA Planning Grant funds, however, specific planning areas and associated PDAs do not necessarily share the same boundaries.

PDA density guidelines are described in the Development Guidelines section of the Station Area Planning Manual<sup>1</sup>, which recommends housing and employment development densities by PDA placetype. The manual identifies a range from 20-300 du/ac (dwelling units per acre) as housing density targets, and 1.0-5.0 FAR (floor area ratio) for employment density targets.

Most of the 191 PDAs are within the 100 to 500-acre range. PDA size outliers are largely due to local planning objectives for community and specific plans. These objectives define a broad range of geographies, from neighborhood main street corridors, often less than 100 acres, to institutional re-use parcels spanning more than 500 acres (see attachment 4).

### Recommended Action

At its October 1, 2014 meeting, the Regional Planning Committee adopted a staff recommendation that the Executive Board take the action described below. We respectfully request that the Executive Board:

- Retain the current three PDA criteria without modifications: location within an existing community, housing growth potential and access to transit. These criteria are grounded in a sustainable growth approach to the region and are aligned with the intent of SB 375.
- Retain the density guidelines: They provide general references to local planners on the scale of the neighborhoods and the mix of shops, services and mobility options.
- Revise the size guidelines from a range of 100-500 acres to 40-640 acres, or PDA-boundary alignment with an existing community planning process that connects housing to transit (see attachment 3). After reviewing the size distribution of smaller PDAs, we recommend a 40-acre minimum size to align with the distance of an 1/8 - mile radius around a transit station, which captures a convenient walking distance to transit and allows for a comfortable walking distance to adjacent PDAs and/or transit-serving neighborhoods. We recommend a maximum size of 640 acres to align with roughly a 1-mile radius around a transit station; this minor revision allows a fitter rounding to the transit criteria and standards. This criteria modification additionally broadens the size capture of existing PDAs between 40-640 acres (see attachment 4).

This revision will not affect the status or eligibility of existing PDAs. Upon recommendation by the Regional Planning Committee and adoption by the Executive Board, the updated guidelines will apply to applications for new PDAs and to existing PDAs applying for modifications. The deadline for PDA applications and modifications is June 30, 2015. Application materials can be found here: [http://www.bayareavision.org/pdaapplication/PDA\\_ApplicationForm\\_Jan2014.pdf](http://www.bayareavision.org/pdaapplication/PDA_ApplicationForm_Jan2014.pdf)

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<sup>1</sup> Station Area Planning Manual (Metropolitan Transportation Commission: 2007), pg. 17

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### Attachments

1. Priority Development Area (PDA) List
2. Priority Development Area (Map)
3. Summary PDA Criteria/Guidelines Table
4. PDA Size Graphs