Rural Community Investment Areas Description and Criteria

Description

Rural Community Investment Areas are centers and corridors of economic and community activity surrounded by agricultural, resource, or protected conservation lands. These districts present an opportunity to preserve a rural character and scale while integrating a range of housing types, local retail, and cultural and civic activities. In some cases, these elements are already in place, while in others additional planning and investment can help create a more complete community. In addition to a diversity of land uses and an inviting public realm, strong pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between the area and surrounding neighborhoods are key components of Rural Community Investment Areas.

Role in Regional Growth Strategy

Rural Community Investment Areas join Priority Development Areas (PDAs), Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs), and Employment Investment Areas (pending adoption) as central components of the Jobs-Housing Connection growth strategy and other regional efforts to integrate transportation investments with land use planning. Rural Community Investment Areas differ from PDAs in that they are not intended to draw significant amounts of new jobs and housing, but are critical to maintaining the Bay Area's rural areas and reducing vehicle miles travelled (VMT) in these communities. These areas complement PCAs by accommodating much of the (limited) new economic activity and development anticipated in rural areas, reducing development pressure on the greenbelt.

Criteria for Eligibility

- **Location:**
  - Focal point of a distinct community's social, economic, and civic activity; not contiguous with other urban communities
  - Within an established urban growth boundary or comparable policy protected area (e.g. urban service boundary)
  - Within existing urban footprint (excludes non-urbanized land that is not policy protected)

- **Size:**
  - 20-160 gross acres

- **Land Use Mix** (existing or planned)**:**
  - *Commercial:* local-serving retail; cultural and entertainment activities
  - *Civic*: health and social services; plazas and parks; community centers; schools
  - *Residential:* small lot single-family; townhomes; low-rise multi-family, including some ground floor retail

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- **Guidelines for New Development Projects** (existing or planned)**:**
    - Floor Area Ratio: ≤ 1.0 FAR

- **Supportive Local Planning** (existing or planned)**:**
    - Zoning supporting a local-serving commercial and civic/institutional land use mix and a variety of housing options, including senior and affordable housing
    - Identified connectivity improvements, such as pedestrian and bicycle improvements and increased transit service
    - Complete streets ordinance

<u>Funding Opportunities</u>

Staff is proposing that rural Community Investment Areas would be eligible for competitive PDA Planning (up to $250,000) and Technical Assistance grants administered by MTC. In addition, projects that improve the pedestrian environment, enhance access for bicyclists and transit riders, and provide innovative ways to reduce VMT will be eligible for competitive One Bay Area Grant (OBAG) funds reserved for Priority Development Areas (PDAs). The scale and cost of these projects would be consistent with the existing character and planned densities of the rural communities in which investment areas are located. Examples of potential projects include bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements, enhanced community transit service, and plans and ordinances that increase the mix of land use, housing diversity, pedestrian experience, quality of public services, and multi-modal connectivity.

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Table 1. Comparison: Rural PDA[1] and Rural Community Investment Areas Criteria

	Rural PDAs	**Rural Community Investment Areas**
Area Size	None provided	20-160 gross acres
New Project Density	None provided	Up to 1.0 FAR
Location	Existing town centers or corridor; within area with a UGB or comparable policy protection (e.g urban service boundary) in place	Additional requirement that area be within existing urban footprint
Supportive Planning	Being planned for mix of services to reduce VMT and/or a mix of housing with supportive services, as well as greater connectivity	Additional reference to planning for affordable and senior housing
Funding eligibility	Eligible for OBAG PDA-dedicated funds; PDA planning grants (up to $250,000), and technical assistance grants	No change except clarification of scale and intensity of projects eligible for PDA-dedicated OBAG funds

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[1] Rural PDA proposal included in Staff Report submitted to ABAG executive board on 8/30/11. Available at:
http://abag.ca.gov/abag/events/agendas/e091511a-Item%2010.pdf

Table 2. Rural Community Investment Areas
(Specific location and size of some Investment Areas will be adjusted in advance of July 2012 ABAG Executive Board meeting to achieve consistency with criteria indicated above; some may be split into multiple areas to meet criteria)

County	Rural Community Investment Area	Proposal for Approval
Napa	Downtown Napa	Approve as Transit Town Center[2]
Solano	Dixon	Approve
	Rio Vista	Approve
Sonoma	Forestville	Approve with adjustments: size of area
	Guerneville	Approve with adjustments: size of area/number of areas
	Larkfield	Approve with adjustments: size of area
	Graton	Approve with adjustments: size of area
	Penngrove	Approve with adjustments: size of area
	The Springs	Approve with adjustments: size of area/number of areas
San Mateo	MidCoast	Approve with adjustments: size of area/number of areas

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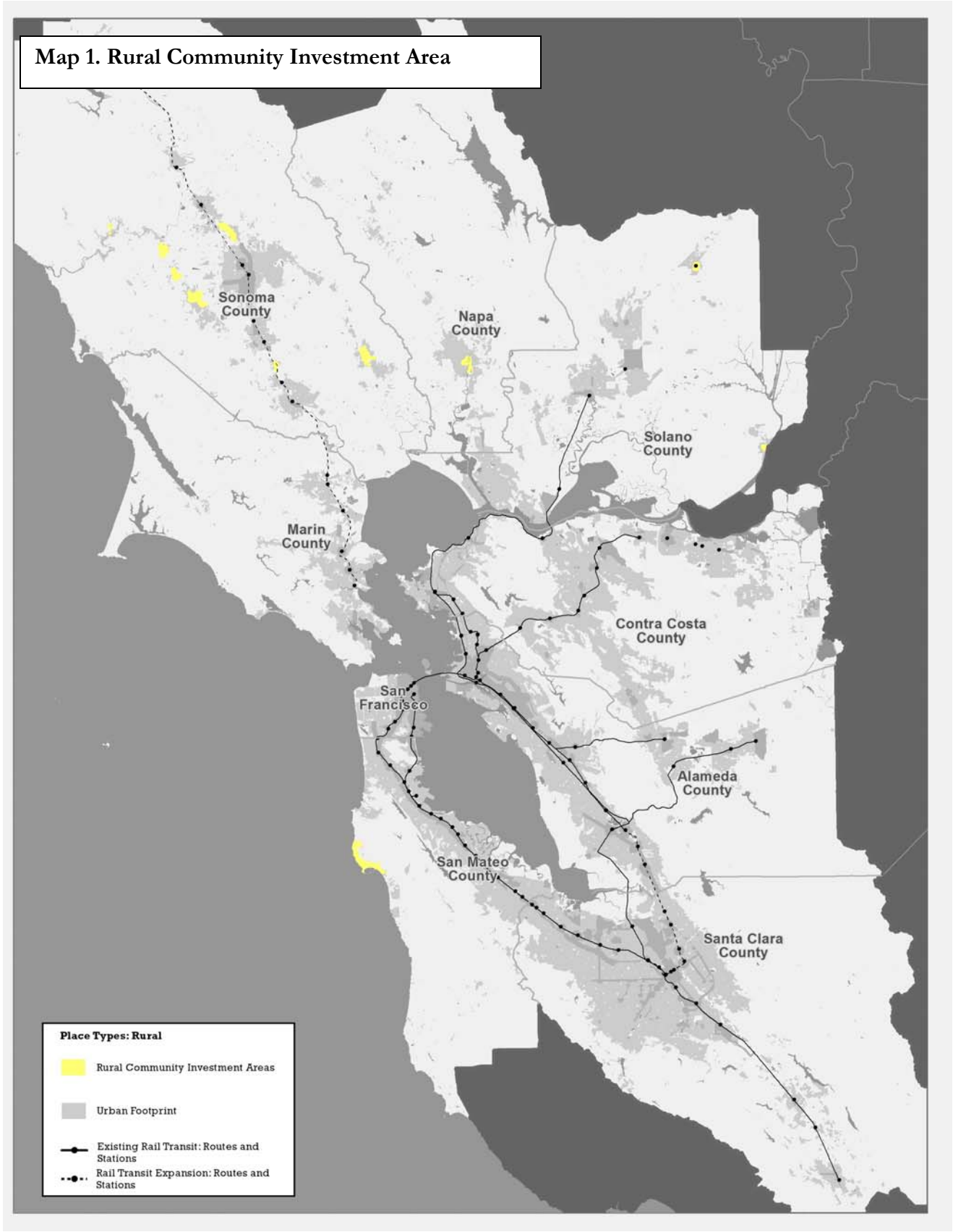
[2] See attached letter from City of Napa indicating request for re-designation as Transit Town Center


Map 1. Rural Community Investment Area
Sonoma County
Napa County
Solano County
Marin County
Contra Costa County
San Francisco
Alameda County
San Mateo County
Santa Clara County
Place Types: Rural
Rural Community Investment Areas
Urban Footprint
Existing Rail Transit: Routes and Stations
Rail Transit Expansion: Routes and Stations