



COUNTY OF SONOMA

PERMIT AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

2550 Ventura Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95403
(707) 565-1900 FAX (707) 565-1103

TO: Mark Shorett, ABAG
FROM: Denise Peter, Planner III
DATE: 5/31/2012
SUBJECT: Sonoma County Airport Employment Center PDA

This memo is to request a separate "Employment Center" PDA designation for the Airport portion of our prior Airport/Larkfield PDA application. ABAG planning staff has already indicated support for the Larkfield portion of this proposed PDA as a separate "Rural Investment Area".

Attached is a prior letter (2-29-12) detailing how the Airport area west of Highway 101 meets all of the criteria for the Employment Center PDA, with the exception of the 20-minute transit bus commute headways. Since this letter was written, the SMART Board has approved an additional future rail station at the Airport Business Center (see attached letter of 4-20-12). This area now meets all the criteria for an Employment Center as it fully meets Criteria #2 for "planned fixed rail". Improvements to the SMART rail tracks are now under construction.

Attached are revised graphics showing boundaries for the two separate areas.

Please clarify to the Regional Planning Committee our request to separate the prior Airport/Larkfield PDA application into two separate PDAs of Employment Center and Rural Investment Area, and to include these in the Jobs Housing Connection Scenario.

Thank you for your assistance.

Attachments:

1. Sonoma County Airport Employment Center PDA and Larkfield Rural Investment Area Graphics
2. Letter to Ken Kirkey from Pete Parkinson, 2/29/12
3. Letter to Athena Ullah from Denise Peter, 4/20/12
4. Letter to ABAG Executive Board from Sonoma County Board of Supervisors and Sonoma County Transportation Authority, 5/8/12



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February 29, 2012

Ken Kirkey, ABAG Planning Director
Association of Bay Area Governments
PO Box 2500
Oakland, CA 94604-2050

Re: Sonoma County Application for Airport/Larkfield Priority Development Area (PDA) Designation

Dear Mr. Kirkey,

Thank you and your staff for assisting with our applications for PDA designations in Sonoma County. We have truly appreciated ABAG's efforts to develop alternative place types in the Sustainable Communities Strategy which are more appropriate for the Bay Area's rural counties such as Sonoma.

This letter is written to provide additional context and clarification of the County of Sonoma's application for Priority Development Area designation for the Airport/Larkfield area. We hope that this entire PDA boundary can gain staff's recommendation to the Executive Board on March 15, to support the County's efforts in reducing VMT in this area and support efforts for more sustainable future development.

The County has proposed a dual designation of Employment Center/Rural Town Center which appeared to be the best fit for this unique area split by Highway 101 with jobs to the west and housing with infill potential to the east. Preliminary feedback from ABAG staff indicates concern with meeting all of the criteria for the Employment Center half of this proposed PDA, so this letter will focus just on the portion of this PDA west of Highway 101.

Setting. The approximately 1,400 acre portion of the Airport/Larkfield PDA area west of Highway 101 contains a mixture of office, light industrial, warehouse, commercial and public facility uses. See attached Airport/Larkfield Area Overview and Land Use Graphics. This unincorporated area contained approximately 6,000 jobs in 2009. Development has been in accordance with the Airport Industrial Area Specific Plan, originally adopted in 1987. The Sonoma County Airport occupies about 780 acres, the majority of which is restricted for runway approach protection, leaving a balance of 630 acres of land for private development to the east of the Airport. Approximately one third of the 630 acres of industrial designated land is vacant.

The Sonoma County Airport is the North Bay's only airport providing passenger service and is an important transportation component supporting the local economy. In January, the Board of Supervisors approved a new Airport Master Plan and a package of improvement projects including runway extensions. The Airport Master Plan and Airport Improvement project were heavily supported by the business community, including a petition of support from over 500 local businesses representing essentially all of the major local employers and businesses in the County. The business community hailed the existing and expanded use of the Sonoma County Airport as a vital economic component to growing and attracting new businesses to Sonoma County. Another unique feature of this area is the Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) rail corridor running through the business park. The area is served by Sonoma County Transit with several stops throughout the park in the morning and evening commute hours at 30 – 40 minute headway intervals. The area has been developed with roadways to accommodate a Class II bike lane along the main roadway serving the area (Airport Boulevard).

Future Development Scenario. The area has a potential for another 12,000 jobs. Due to budget constraints, there are no immediate future plans to shorten the existing 30 – 40 minute bus transit headways during the commute hours. The site is well situated for the improvement of multi-modal transportation options for employees. The focus of SMART at this time is initiating service within two years between San Rafael and Santa Rosa, followed by extension to the Larkspur ferry and Cloverdale. Although a SMART station at the Airport Business Park is not currently part of the approved plan, we expect that passenger rail service for residents near any of the 14 rail stations along the 70 mile SMART corridor to the 6,000+ jobs within the Airport Industrial Area business park will become a high priority in the future, particularly as the economy recovers and additional jobs are created. As the attached Airport Business Park Distance/Direction Graphic shows, 61% of the 6,000 Airport Business Park workers reside only 10 miles away in the Windsor, Larkfield, and Santa Rosa communities. In conjunction with the improvement of the SMART rail corridor, there are plans to construct an adjacent Class I bike path which will provide a bike commuting option for Airport Business Park employees in the future.

Employment Center Criteria. The project meets all of the criteria for PDA designation except the 20 minute headway, as discussed below.

***Employment Center:** Acknowledging the importance of employment location in creating a robust, functional transit network and sustainable regional land use pattern, the Employment Center place type designation is intended for existing non-residential areas with transit service that are planning for more intensive development, including a greater mix of uses and more pedestrian-friendly, vibrant environments. These might include central business districts, redeveloping office parks, or retrofitting commercial corridors or shopping malls.*

1. *The areas currently contain a density of 25 jobs per gross acre or greater than 0.5 FAR or have the plan capacity for this intensity of jobs.*

Response: This criterion is met. Buildout of the over 600 acres of private lands designated for industrial development in the General Plan at current allowed densities and at an FAR of 1.0 would result in over 18,000 jobs using a 50/50 mix of warehouse and industrial land uses and an average employee generation rate of 600 square feet of building area per employee. This calculation includes the existing 6,000 jobs added to development on 200 acres at the FAR and land use mix described above. This would result in nearly 30 jobs per gross acre in the Year 2040.

2. *The areas are currently served by transit or have planned transit service (existing or planned fixed rail, demonstrated high frequency bus with 20 min headways during peak weekday commute hours, or shuttle service to fixed rail) and support other modes of transportation (required Transportation Demand Management, improved walking and biking, and reduced parking requirements)*

Response: This criterion is not met. There are 2 or 3 bus stops in the morning and evening during commute hours 30 to 40 minutes apart. See attached Sonoma County Routes 60 and 62 route schedules. As mentioned previously, over 60% of the business park employees currently live within 10 miles of their job. There is great potential to encourage more transit, bike and future rail trips to reduce single occupant vehicular trips to the work area. A class II bike lane exists along Airport Boulevard, which would connect with a future planned class II bike lane

along Old Redwood Highway and a future class I bike lane along the SMART rail corridor right of way directly linking the Airport Business Center to the communities of Larkfield, Windsor and Santa Rosa. Additionally the potential exists for a rail stop to serve all the residents within walking distance of the 14 future rail stations to the north and south in the future. Obtaining planned Priority Development Area status for this entire Airport/Larkfield PDA would support Sonoma County's efforts to reduce VMT's at this location and create more sustainable development in the future.

3. *The areas are planned for a mix of uses, services, and amenities for employees.*

Response: This criterion is met. The Airport business park area has lodging, a health club, restaurants, service stations, and entertainment uses for employees and customers in accordance with development standards of the Airport Industrial Specific Plan.

4. *The jurisdiction is providing sufficient housing near the employment center to merit resources supporting an exclusively employment development area. The jurisdiction has lower existing jobs per household than the regional average of 1.25 or the jurisdiction has lower future jobs per household in its adopted General Plan than its existing ratio.*

Response: This criterion is met. According to the jobs projections contained in ABAG's January 2012 Focused Growth scenario alternatives for 2040 the unincorporated County has a jobs/household ratio of 0.88 (57,233 jobs 2040/65,278 households), which is below the regional average of 1.25 jobs per household.

Thank you for your continued consideration of Sonoma County's application of the entire Airport/Larkfield proposed Priority Development Area. If I can provide any further information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me at 707-565-1925 or Denise Peter at 565-7385.

Sincerely,



Rete Parkinson, AICP
Director, Permit and Resource Management Department

Attachments:

1. Airport/Larkfield Area Overview Map
2. Airport/Larkfield Land Use Map
3. Airport Business Park Distance/Direction Graphic, US Census LEHD 2009
4. Sonoma County Transit Schedules Routes 60, 62

cc: Board of Supervisors
Denise Peter, Planner III
Jennifer Barrett, Deputy Director, Planning



COUNTY OF SONOMA

PERMIT AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

2550 Ventura Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95403-2829
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April 20, 2012

Athena Ullah
Association of Bay Area Governments
PO Box 2050
Oakland CA 94604-2050

Dear Ms. Ullah,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an initial technical response on the Jobs Housing Connection Scenario, received March 2012. We have reviewed the GIS data and Excel spreadsheets and note that there appears to be some discrepancies between the different sources of data.

The County is in conceptual agreement with the 2040 long term strategy of community-centered, compact growth policies represented in the Jobs Housing Connection Scenario.

Our specific comments on this latest scenario are:

- 1. Priority Development Areas.** It is our understanding that staff has assumed in the JHC scenario that the County's proposed PDA's of: Larkfield, Graton, Sonoma Valley, Penngrove, Forestville, and Guerneville will be approved by the Regional Planning Committee June 6, and the ABAG Executive Board on July 19.

We continue to request that the entire proposed Airport/Larkfield PDA be designated a PDA in the JHC Scenario. We understand that the Airport Business Park portion of our proposed Airport/Larkfield PDA was not recommended by ABAG staff due to a current lack of transit service with 20 minute headways during commute hours.

Please note that on April 19, 2012, the Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) Authority officially announced that the SMART Board of Directors has purchased a site in the Airport Business Park for an additional future train station for passenger service and operations and maintenance facilities. This is a critical first step in providing passenger rail service to serve the thousands of employees in the Airport Business Center Employment Center, and in providing a connection to air passenger service at the Sonoma County Airport. Obtaining PDA status for this area is important in order to be eligible for planning and capital improvements funding that is limited to PDA's. The SMART press release can be viewed at:

<http://main.sonomamarintrain.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/SMART-OMF-Press-Release-4-19-12.pdf>

2. **Total Housing Units and PDA.** We are generally in agreement with the total housing growth rate in Unincorporated Sonoma County from 2010 to 2040 of approximately 186 units/year (5,571 total), as shown on the “Jurisdictions” Sheet of the Jobs-Housing Connection Distribution Detail Excel Workbook, posted on the ABAG Base Camp website in March 2012. We also concur with the use of the average vacancy rate in the unincorporated County of 16% as reported in Census 2010. This vacancy rate reflects the higher percentage of second homes and vacation rentals in the unincorporated area as compared to the Cities.

The total new housing unit projection of 5,571 by 2040 results in a growth rate that is less than our current General Plan 2020 growth rate, and less than what was projected in the Initial Vision Scenario. However, it is more in line with the economic downturn, a general political shift in Sonoma County that calls for growth in Cities and County Urban Service Areas, changes in housing market conditions, and the actual unincorporated County housing unit growth rate as reflected in the State Dept. of Finance annual housing unit count reports for the last decade.

3. **Housing Distribution.** Distribution of housing units is shown in the ABAG JHC Housing Distribution Detail workbook, 3/12, on sheet “All Areas”. We are in agreement with the new housing unit growth for proposed PDA’s on this sheet that reflects the County’s estimated 2010-2040 new housing unit growth (~3,400 units) in our PDA Applications distributed as follows:

- Larkfield: 600
- Graton: 453
- Sonoma Valley: 1,124
- Penngrove: 388
- Forestville: 416
- Guerneville: 425

However, we note the following discrepancy between the following two sheets of this workbook and ask for clarification of which numbers will be used in the JHC Scenario and for the RHNA.

Table: New Housing Units 2010-2040 Unincorporated Sonoma County

	JHC Housing Distribution Detail Workbook, 3/12	
	Jurisdictions Sheet	All Areas Sheet
PDA's	2,801	3,398
Non-PDA's	2,770	357
Total	5,571	3,755

In order to maintain the total of 5,571 new units with 3,398 located in PDA’s, the non-PDA new housing units for the unincorporated area should be approximately 2,173 units.

We will need additional time to comment on the distribution of housing units outside of PDA's as we do not have the corresponding mapping information for the "All Areas" sheet. We believe that new unit and household growth is anticipated to be low in the County's Coastal-Gualala area which has a very high vacancy rate due to a high percentage of second homes and vacation rentals in this area, and a very low growth rate due to lack of public services and large minimum parcel sizes with little subdivision potential. We have no reason to believe that vacancy rates in this area will significantly decrease, the trend over the last decade is an increasing use of the housing stock for vacation rentals or second homes.

It also appears that the housing distribution provided in the ABAG GIS data for Traffic Analysis Zones, may not correlate well with the data provided in the JHC Housing Distribution Detail Workbook, 3/12. Based on a preliminary review of the GIS data in map form, it appears there is too much growth projected in the very large TAZ encompassing the northwestern part of Sonoma County, including the Coastal Zone.

It is our understanding that new housing units within City Urban Growth Boundaries, even if not now annexed to the City, are allocated in the future to that City's 2010-2040 new housing unit count. For example, there are large islands of unincorporated area within the City of Santa Rosa's Urban Growth Boundary. Projected new housing units in these "County islands" should appear as new housing units for the City of Santa Rosa. Please confirm that this methodology was used consistently with all the Cities.

3. **Jobs.** Our review has focused on the ABAG JHC Employment Distribution Detail Workbook, 3/12. A general comparison of the total Countywide 2010 jobs base was made with the Census LEHD On The Map report. The total 2010 base jobs numbers appear to be within an acceptable range.

The ABAG JHC Employment Distribution Workbook does not appear to have internal inconsistencies between different sheets of the workbook as was noted for the Housing Distribution workbook.

The jobs projected between 2010 to 2040 for all of Sonoma County are:

Table: New Jobs Unincorporated Sonoma County

	JHC Employment Distribution Detail Workbook, 3/12	
	Jurisdictions Sheet	SSA Areas Sheet
PDA's	9,010	
Non-PDA's	6,790	
Total	15,800	15,801

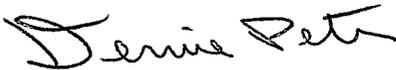
In general, we note that the unincorporated areas of Sonoma County which provide a strong agricultural jobs base for the wine industry include: Dry Creek Valley, Alexander Valley, Sonoma Valley, and the Russian River Valley. Sonoma County has over 300 wineries which provide thousands of jobs in the agricultural sector. There is also a strong recreation and visitor-serving commercial jobs base to serve

visitors to wine country. The "SSA Details" sheet of the ABAG JHD Employment Distribution Details Workbook shows a loss of 427 jobs in the ag sector between 2010 and 2040, and an existing 2010 ag jobs base of 5,391. The existing ag jobs base appears to be within an acceptable range, however, we don't feel there will be a loss of jobs in the County in the Ag Sector. We would like some additional time to assess this as well as the distribution of jobs in the "ArtRecOther" category.

It appears that the jobs distribution provided in the ABAG GIS data, distributed by Traffic Analysis Zone, may not correlate well with the data provided in the JHC Employment Distribution Detail Workbook, 3/12. Based on a preliminary review of the GIS data in map form, it appears there is too much job growth projected in the very large TAZ encompassing the northwestern part of Sonoma County, including the Coastal Zone, and an incorrect projection of job loss in the Dry Creek Valley area of the County which has one of the County's highest concentrations of wineries. We have no reason to believe that there will be a loss of jobs in that area. We would like to have corresponding GIS mapping data for all the geographies represented in the various table of data.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We look forward to further working with ABAG staff to clarify which data sets will be used for the final SCS scenario and RHNA, and further commenting on jobs and housing distribution with additional mapping detail.

Sincerely,



Denise Peter, AICP
Planner III

Attachments:

1. LEHD Census Report Sonoma County All Jobs 2010
2. 4/13/11 letter to Ken Kirkey re: Initial Vision Scenario Comments
3. 2/29/12 letter to Ken Kirkey re: Airport/Larkfield PDA

COUNTY OF SONOMA
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May 8, 2012

Mark Luce, President
ABAG Executive Board
Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG)
PO Box 2050
Oakland, CA 94604-2050

Re: Support for Rural Place Types in Unincorporated Sonoma County

Dear Mr. Luce,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide further comment on the Jobs Housing Connection Scenario as it relates to consideration of Rural Place Types. On March 15 the Executive Board deferred action on Rural Place Type proposals (with the exception of Benicia and Dixon). We understand this was primarily in response to concerns with the proposed Midcoast Priority Development Area (PDA) in unincorporated San Mateo County's Coastal Zone.

ABAG staff has indicated that the Unincorporated Sonoma County PDA applications have been assumed in the Draft Jobs Housing Connection (JHC) Scenario, which we believe is appropriate. We understand that further consideration of the Rural Place Type Priority Development Areas will occur at the upcoming June 6 Regional Planning Committee meeting and final action will occur at the July 19 ABAG Executive Board meeting.

The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors and the Sonoma County Transportation Authority/Regional Climate Protection Authority urge the Executive Board to support Sonoma County's PDA applications as Rural Place Types and ensure they are included in the adopted JHC Scenario. These applications include the following places:

- Airport/Larkfield
- Forestville
- Graton
- Guerneville
- Penngrove
- Sonoma Valley – The Springs

As you are aware, including these places within the growth strategy envisioned in the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) provides additional program and funding opportunities to assist local governments in transforming these places into more complete communities that are less auto-dependent. These opportunities include the OneBayArea Grant (OBAG) and other planning, technical assistance and affordable housing funds.

As local agencies, we strongly support including these communities as appropriate places for future compact infill development in our rural/suburban county context. Incentivizing infill and mixed use development while enhancing the unique flavor and fabric of these communities should be an essential component in an SCS that reflects the diversity of community scale that is found throughout the Bay Area. These places are not appropriate for the higher densities of urban PDAs, but they should not be left out of the SCS process. The SCS should provide policy guidance and incentives for suburban sprawl repair and the transformation of existing rural neighborhoods into more complete communities with multi-modal road networks and linkages to County-wide and regional bikeways and transit systems.

We envision our proposed Rural Place Type PDAs as opportunities to work with communities to develop plans and improvements that, over the next 30 years, will transform these places with densities and mobility options more akin to a walkable/bikable European village surrounded by greenbelts, linked with bike trails, and at densities that support of more frequent transit service. At the same time, retaining the smaller scale of these places is also essential.

All of our proposed PDA places are served by public sewer and water and contained within Urban Service boundaries that are hard-wired into the County's General Plan. The County and all nine city General Plans have strong compact growth policies that focus urban development within the cities and, in a more limited way, within the unincorporated Urban Service Areas. Urban development outside these areas is largely non-existent.

We see the investment opportunities connected with PDA designation as essential to realizing our vision of encouraging sustainable development within unincorporated Urban Service Areas in several ways:

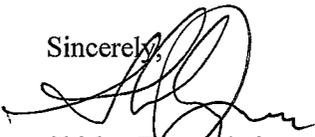
- Providing specific plan funding to work with citizens to identify: infill opportunities, appropriate building prototypes and densities, a balanced mix of land uses, "complete street" modifications, appropriate location and design of transit facilities to encourage ridership, zoning amendments to allow more live/work and job opportunities.
- Infrastructure funding for complete street improvements.
- Completion of local and regional bike networks.
- Improvement of the transit system to provide more frequent service between PDA's and regional employment centers, schools, recreation sites and shopping areas.

Having these areas recognized in the JHC as places where focused growth can occur and, most importantly, eligible for the incentives available to PDAs, will help us in our current efforts to make these communities more complete, sustainable and less auto dependent.

We ask that you support the designation of our six proposed applications in unincorporated Urban Service Areas as Rural Place Type PDAs.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Shirlee Zane, Chair
Sonoma County Board of Supervisors



Valerie Brown, Chair
SCTA/RCPA

cc: Board of Supervisors
SCTA/RCPA Board Members