

## M E M O

**DATE:** July 28, 2009  
**TO:** Regional Planning Committee  
**FROM:** Ken Kirkey, Planning Director  
**SUBJECT:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Call Priority Development Area Nominations - Staff Recommendations

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### **Recommended Action**

At the August 5<sup>th</sup> ABAG Regional Planning Committee (RPC) meeting, staff will seek committee approval for recommendations pertaining to Priority Development Area (PDA) nominations submitted by local governments this year. With RPC support, these recommendations will be forwarded to ABAG's Executive Board at its September 17, 2009 meeting for adoption of these areas as part of FOCUS, the San Francisco Bay Area's Regional Blueprint Plan. Staff will also seek committee endorsement for changes to the review process of future PDA designations, including adjustments to the transit service criteria.

### **Background**

FOCUS is a voluntary, incentive-based, multi-agency development and conservation strategy for the San Francisco Bay Area. Priority Development Areas are areas nominated by local governments for adoption by ABAG. Working in partnership with local jurisdictions and its partner regional agencies, ABAG seeks to support the development of the PDAs as complete communities. Complete communities are mixed-use neighborhoods served by transit with shops, parks and other amenities to provide for the day-to-day needs of residents. PDAs are within an existing community, near transit, and are either planned for more housing or there is a vision to create such a plan. There are over 120 Priority Development Areas. The first set of PDAs was adopted by the Executive Board in November 2007 followed by the adoption of additional PDAs in November 2008. A third call for Priority Development Area applications was held this year, providing local governments with another opportunity to nominate areas for adoption. The adopted Priority Development Areas encompass the vast majority of transit-served neighborhoods in the nine county Bay Area.

A variety of incentives have been made available to the Priority Development Areas since the FOCUS program was launched two years ago in the form of planning grants, technical assistance, and capital infrastructure funding. Eighteen PDAs are currently advancing processes to develop specific plans or other neighborhood-level plans. These planning efforts supported by \$7.5 million in funding from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and administered by ABAG and MTC staff represent a significant, strategic effort to advance planning in the PDAs. Additional funding for neighborhood/station area planning will be provided to the PDAs on a competitive basis within the next few years.

Beginning in early July, technical assistance is being provided to PDAs on a competitive basis to support planning efforts (e.g. model ordinances, marketing studies, and parking policies) that will advance implementation of PDA-related plans. PDAs are also well situated to receive capital infrastructure funding from MTC's Transportation for Livable Communities (TLC) program. The recently adopted *Transportation 2035 Plan* allocates \$2.2 billion over 25 years to TLC. The Priority Development Areas have been recognized in funding eligibility criteria related to other programs initiated by MTC, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and ABAG's San Francisco Estuary Project. Priority Development

Areas have also been highly competitive relative to funding from state grant programs that support infill and transit-oriented development (TOD). For example, in mid-July the California Department of Housing and Community Development announced that twenty Bay Area TOD and infill projects located within PDAs had been awarded \$229 million in Proposition 1C-related funding.

**Priority Development Area Applications Received and Recommendations**

The application deadline for submitting a PDA application this year was June 12<sup>th</sup>, and local government resolutions of support were accepted until July 17<sup>th</sup>. Nine PDA applications were received with areas proposed for designation in Benicia, San Rafael, East Palo Alto, San Jose, Pinole, South San Francisco, and Sonoma County. Staff have reviewed the applications received and have summarized the recommendations in the following tables. Areas are reviewed against the following criteria for designation as a PDA:

- The area is within an existing community.
- The area is near existing or planned fixed transit (or served by comparable bus service).
- The area is planned or plans will be developed for more housing.

Designation Criteria Definitions

The following definitions are intended to clarify the designation criteria:

- Area - means the planning area being proposed for designation as a priority development area under the FOCUS program. Since the program seeks to support area or neighborhood-level planning, the recommended area size is 100 acres, which is approximately a ¼ mile radius.
  - A *planned area* has an existing plan that is more detailed than a general plan, such as a specific plan or a neighborhood plan.
  - A *potential area* may be envisioned as a potential planning area that is not currently identified in a plan or may be part of an existing plan that needs changes.
- Location within the existing community – means that the area is within an existing urbanized area, lies within an urban growth boundary or limit line if one is established, and has existing or planned infrastructure to support development that will provide or connect to a range of services and amenities that meet the daily needs of residents making non-motorized modes of transportation an option.
- Developed for more Housing – means the area has plans for a significant increase in housing units, including affordable units, which can also be a part of a mixed use development that provides other daily services, maximizes alternative modes of travel, and makes appropriate land use connections.
- Near Transit – means that the area is typically a half mile from rail stations and ferry terminals, high frequency bus or bus rapid transit corridors.

**Areas Not Recommended for Adoption:**

The following PDA applications are not being recommended for adoption. These areas are as follows:

Area	Jurisdiction	Recommended Designation	Notes
Northern Gateway	Benicia, City of	Do not designate	Lacks sufficient transit,
Airport/Larkfield	Sonoma County	Do not designate	Lacks sufficient transit
Russian River/West County	Sonoma County	Do not designate	Lacks sufficient transit
The Springs, Sonoma Valley	Sonoma County	Do not designate	Lacks sufficient transit

In addition to having very limited bus service or none at all, the above areas do not appear to have capacity for a significant increase in housing units, as part of a mixed use development that provides other daily services. It should be noted that a few of the PDAs that have been previously adopted lack existing high frequency transit. However, these PDAs either encompass the location of a future station area identified as part of MTC's Resolution 3434 or the areas have 30-minute headways (service frequencies) to a regional transit center during peak hour commutes. These adopted PDAs with relatively modest existing transit service have other criteria-related attributes including existing walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods or the potential for such a neighborhood providing for a significant increase in housing units to maximize alternative modes of travel, and provide appropriate land use connections.

As described above, the existing designated PDAs encompass most of this region's transit-served, infill neighborhoods. Correspondingly, the PDAs provide a very solid base for strategic investments that leverages the region's transit infrastructure and strengthens its existing communities. PDAs will clearly serve as a central component of SB375. However, staff recognizes the importance of smart growth planning in the region for areas that are not appropriate for designation as FOCUS Priority Development Area or Priority Conservation Area (PCAs) - near-term land conservation opportunities. Those areas will require important policy consideration related to implementing SB375 in the Bay Area.

***Areas Recommended for Adoption:***

The following areas are being recommended for designation as PDAs:

<b>Area</b>	<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Recommended Designation</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Appian Way Corridor	Pinole, City of	Potential	Specific plan underway
Civic Center/North San Rafael Town Center	San Rafael, City of	Planned	
Ravenswood Business District and 4 Corners	East Palo Alto, City of	Potential	Station Area Plan Underway
South San Francisco Downtown	South San Francisco, City of	Potential	Pending adoption of new zoning
Cottle Transit Village and Shopping Center	San Jose, City of	Planned	

Areas recommended for adoption are categorized as Planned and Potential PDAs. Planned PDAs have both an adopted neighborhood-level land use plan and a resolution of support from the respective city council or county board. Planned PDAs are given priority for capital infrastructure funding due to their readiness for implementation. Both Planned and Potential PDAs are eligible for planning grants and technical assistance. The Executive Board has empowered staff to advance PDAs from the Potential category to the Planned category upon completion of a neighborhood-level plan and or council resolution.

**Proposed Changes to Review Process and Criteria for Designating Future PDA Applications**

***Proposed Review Process***

Given that most of the transit-served areas in the San Francisco Bay Area are now designated as PDAs, staff recommends that future PDA applications be accepted on a rolling basis, reviewed quarterly, and submitted to the RPC and Executive Board for approval of the designation recommendation. This process would replace a formal call for applications on a yearly basis. Both of these proposed changes are intended to provide clarity for local jurisdictions that will be considering whether or not to submit PDA nominations in the future.

***Proposed Transit Service Criteria***

In the interest of providing clarity regarding the criteria for Priority Development Areas, staff recommends that transit service currently defined as “the area is typically a half mile from rail stations and ferry terminals, high frequency bus or bus rapid transit corridors” be revised. Staff recommends that a Priority Development Area be defined relative to transit as typically a half-mile from rail stations and ferry terminals, bus or bus rapid transit corridors with minimum headways (service provided) every twenty minutes during peak weekday commute periods.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Staff is seeking the endorsement of the following recommendations for adoption by the Executive Board on September 17, 2009:

- The list of new Planned and Potential PDAs recommended for adoption
- The proposed process for accepting, reviewing and designating future PDA applications
- The proposed revision and clarification of the PDA transit-service criteria