

FOCUS

a development and conservation strategy
for the San Francisco Bay Area



Application Guidelines for Priority Development Area Designation

FOCUS is a regional, incentive-based development and conservation strategy for the San Francisco Bay Area. FOCUS is led by the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission in coordination with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission. It is partially funded by a regional blueprint planning grant from the State of California Business, Transportation, and Housing Agency.

FOCUS is a partnership of four regional agencies.

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I. FOCUS Overview

FOCUS is a regional incentive-based development and conservation strategy for the San Francisco Bay Area. Regional agencies address climate change, transportation, housing, the economy, and other issues that transcend city boundaries but impact all members of the region. FOCUS unites the efforts of four regional agencies into a single program that encourages future population growth in areas near transit and within the communities that surround the San Francisco Bay. Concentrating housing in these areas offers housing and transportation choices for all residents, while helping to reduce traffic, protect the environment, and enhance existing neighborhoods. FOCUS also guides conservation efforts towards the region's most important natural resources.

FOCUS is led by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), with support from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC)—in partnership with congestion management agencies, transit providers and local governments throughout the Bay Area. It is partially funded by a Blueprint Grant from the State of California Business, Transportation, and Housing Agency.

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis for Priority Development Area designation. Priority Development Areas support focused growth by accommodating growth as mixed use, infill development near transit and job centers, with an emphasis on housing. Local governments who meet the application criteria are invited to submit an application for an area within their jurisdiction. Participation in this designation process is voluntary. Applications received are reviewed on a quarterly basis.

The designation of Priority Development Areas informs regional agencies where incentives and assistance are needed to support local efforts in creating complete communities. Regional agencies have developed programs for technical assistance, planning grants, and capital infrastructure funding for which these areas are eligible to apply. This designation helps connect those jurisdictions with funding opportunities, but many of the funding programs are still highly competitive. Those jurisdictions with Priority Development Area goals closely aligned with program criteria can be more successful than other areas. Over 100 Priority Development Areas have been adopted by the ABAG Executive Board. To learn more about the FOCUS Initiative and adopted Priority Development Areas, visit the Focused Growth website at www.bayareavision.org.

II. Eligibility for Applicants and Areas

Any town, city, or county government within the nine county San Francisco Bay Area can apply as the lead applicant for priority area designation. Multiple jurisdictions can submit a joint application for an area. As part of the application, the lead applicant will need to provide a copy of a resolution adopted by the town/city council or board of supervisors showing support for involvement in the FOCUS process. Private and other public entities cannot be lead applicants but can partner with or show support for the lead applicant. In the case of a multiple jurisdiction application for designation of an area, a transit agency or county congestion management agency may be the lead applicant. The lead transit agency or congestion management agency will need to contact regional agency staff for approval, and a resolution from each participating jurisdiction will still be required as part of the application.

Applicants must demonstrate that an area proposed for designation as a priority development area meets all of the following criteria:

- 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 is planning for more housing.

In September 2011, place type criteria for PDAs were added for Rural Town Centers, Rural Mixed Use Corridors, and Employment Centers to make the place type menu available to PDAs more inclusive of opportunities in these areas to advance sustainability. The criteria for each of these Place Types follow:

Rural Town Center/Rural Corridor

The rural place types acknowledge the contribution that rural areas provide on a local and regional scale. Locally they serve as centers for residents, businesses, and commuters to access services needed in the area. Regionally, these centers and corridors may also serve as gateways to tourist destinations focused on the bounty of agricultural lands or recreational areas. Rural Town Centers have focused development around a central part of the town, whereas Rural Corridors have focused development along a main street through the area.

- The areas are existing town centers (not co-terminus with other urban communities) and/or are a along a corridor through a rural area
- The areas encompass or are being planned to include a mix of services to reduce vehicle miles traveled and/or are being planned for more housing with a mix of supportive services
- The areas are being planned for more connectivity (multi-modal improvements, transit for employees and residents, etc.) and increased opportunities for walking and biking.
- Areas have an urban growth boundary or other zoning policy in place, such as an urban service area, to limit sprawling development

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.

- 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
- 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)
- The areas are planned for a mix of uses, services, and amenities for employees
- 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.

Jurisdictions submitting a PDA application will either select a place type from the Station Area Planning Manual¹ or select one of the above place types.

¹ Station Area Planning Manual:
http://www.mtc.ca.gov/planning/smart_growth/stations/Station_Area_Planning_Manual_Nov07.pdf

III. 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 planning, the recommended area size is 100 acres, which is approximately a ¼ mile radius.

- A *planned area* is part of an existing plan that is more specific than a general plan, such as a specific plan or an area 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.

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.

Housing – means the area has plans for a significant increase in housing units to a minimum density of the selected place type from the Station Area Planning Manual, 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 (1) the area around an existing rail station or ferry terminal (typically a half-mile around the station), (2) the area served by a bus or bus rapid transit corridor with minimum headways of 20 minutes during peak weekday commute periods, or (3) the area defined as a planned transit station by MTC's Resolution 3434.

IV. Application Review Process

Applications received will be reviewed on a quarterly basis. The quarters for the year include: January to March, April to June, July to September, and October to December. Applications received within a quarter will be reviewed at the start of a new quarter. For instance, the review process for an application received in February will begin in April.

Applying to Become a PDA

For new PDAs, the application review process involves the following steps:

1. Upon receipt, applications will be checked for completeness and eligibility.
2. FOCUS staff will recommend designation of eligible areas as a Planned or Potential Priority Development Area based on the planning status for the area's development vision and submission of the supporting local government resolution. To qualify for Planned PDA Status, the plan for the area should:
 - a. Include a map designating the land uses for the plan area
 - b. Identify densities/development intensities for plan land uses
 - c. Include implementing actions/an implementation plan
3. If staff recommends designation as a Planned PDA, the applicant will be asked to complete a PDA Assessment Survey, to provide more detailed information about the priority area.
4. Staff recommendations will be presented to ABAG's Regional Planning Committee (RPC) for approval and then to ABAG's Executive Board for regional adoption.

Changing the Status of an Existing PDA

To change the status of a PDA from Potential to Planned, contact the FOCUS Staff person for your jurisdiction. He or she will review the adopted plan to ensure that it:

1. Includes a map designating the land uses for the plan area
2. Identifies densities/development intensities for plan land uses
3. Includes implementing actions/an implementation plan

Applicants for a status change will be asked to complete a PDA Assessment Survey. Upon review of the plan and the completed PDA Assessment Survey, FOCUS Staff will submit the revision request to the ABAG Planning Director for approval. This revision does not need to be approved by the RPC or Executive Board.

Revisions to an Existing PDA

To revise an existing PDA, contact the FOCUS Staff person for your jurisdiction. The applicant will be asked to submit an updated application (map, narrative, jobs and housing numbers, etc.) to provide accurate and up-to-date information about the revised area.

If the revision is to a Potential PDA, then the applicant should submit an updated infrastructure budget. If the revision is to a Planned PDA, then the applicant should submit an updated PDA Assessment Survey. A new resolution is not required.

Requests to revise an existing PDA will be reviewed by the FOCUS Staff for your jurisdiction, who will assess whether the revised PDA will:

1. Result in a recognizable “neighborhood,” as identified by the local jurisdiction or planning done to date
2. Remain consistent with the PDA eligibility criteria

After review by FOCUS Staff, the revision request will be submitted to the ABAG Planning Director for approval. This change does not need to be approved by the RPC or Executive Board.

V. Application Form and Submission Instructions

The following are the basic steps in accessing and submitting an application:

1. Download an electronic version of the application (Application for Priority Development Area Designation) from the FOCUS website: www.bayareavision.org
2. After reviewing the application requirements, contact the ABAG Regional Planner for your jurisdiction and discuss the goals for the proposed area. These contacts are listed on the FOCUS website at <http://www.bayareavision.org/initiatives/contacts.html>.
3. Fill out an application and compile the documents requested in the application form for **each** area. A sample local government resolution, Excel files for entering information about infrastructure needs and funding sources, and the Station Area Planning Manual are also available on the FOCUS website.
4. Submit an electronic version of the application form and associated documents requested in the application for each area to FOCUS@abag.ca.gov.
5. Mail one hard copy of the application and attachments for each area to the Association of Bay Area Governments, Attn: Jackie Reinhart, P.O. Box 2050, Oakland, CA 94604-2050.

VI. Contact Information

For questions regarding the application, please contact Jackie Reinhart, ABAG Regional Planner, at JackieR@abag.ca.gov or 510-464-7994.