



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.

The goals of FOCUS are to:

- Strengthen and support existing communities
- Create compact, healthy communities with a diversity of housing, jobs, activities, and services to meet the daily needs of residents
- Increase housing choices
- Improve housing affordability
- Increase transportation efficiency and choices
- Protect and steward natural habitat, open space, and agricultural land
- Improve social and economic equity
- Promote economic and fiscal health
- Conserve resources, promote sustainability, and improve environmental quality
- Protect public health and safety.

Voluntary Process for Willing Jurisdictions

In the FOCUS process, local governments partner with regional agencies to create a specific and shared concept of where growth can best be accommodated and what areas need protection in the region. Local governments have identified areas that are priorities for development and conservation. The region supports their efforts by working to direct existing and future incentives to these areas. Only willing jurisdictions receive priority area designations. Non-government organizations can nominate conservation areas, but they should demonstrate that they have local government support.

Platform for Regional Engagement

FOCUS offers a platform for engaging San Francisco Bay Area local governments and stakeholders in a regional dialogue around accommodating growth and protecting natural areas. Regional agencies have held a stakeholder conference, a series of county-wide local government forums, and three policy-based discussions around the economy, the environment, and social equity. The FOCUS Working Group was instrumental in garnering broad input on the program's development from local governments and stakeholders who represent affordable housing, economic development, the

environment, environmental justice, social equity, and transportation interests. Going forward, Priority Development Area representatives will meet regularly to share best practices information and FOCUS staff will continue to be engaged in a variety of outreach meetings throughout the region.

Designation of Priority Development Areas

In November 2007, the ABAG Executive Board adopted over 100 Priority Development Areas, representing fifty local-government jurisdictions. These areas are: 1) within an existing community, 2) near existing or planned fixed transit or served by comparable bus service, and 3) planned or in the planning process for more housing. To date, \$7.5 million has been made available to Priority Development Areas for Station Area Planning grants and \$10 million in additional grants will be available in coming years.

Designation of Priority Conservation Areas

There were over 100 areas nominated to be Priority Conservation Areas. Areas were selected as Priority Conservation Areas based on criteria related to regional significance, level of consensus, and urgency for protection. Nominations were reviewed by a panel of open space experts from each of the region's nine counties as well as other stakeholder representatives from regional economic development and housing interests. Priority Conservation Areas were adopted by the ABAG Executive Board in July, 2008. These areas represent opportunities for land conservation within the next five years.

Long-term Regional Strategy

FOCUS is a long-term strategy, and regional agencies are working to direct many existing and future financial incentives to Priority Development and Conservation Areas. In addition to planning funds currently available, potential sources also include discretionary transportation funds from MTC's Regional Transportation Plan 2009 Update. In allocating funding from the recently-passed housing and resource bonds, the State has also shown support for regional priorities, including FOCUS priority areas.

The intention of FOCUS is to target areas for development and conservation incentives for the next few decades. If a Priority Development Area does not receive incentives in the first round, it will remain eligible for future rounds of funding, as available. There will also be opportunities for other jurisdictions to apply for priority area designations.

Additional Assistance

Priority areas are also focal points for regional agency efforts. In addition to financial assistance, regional agencies offer services to assist local governments with planning and development activities in Priority Development Areas. These services include technical assistance, networking opportunities, and best practices information. ABAG has also been able to provide support to local planning processes to address issues of displacement from new development near transit areas.

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