

FOCUS



SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA VISION

In 2002, regional agencies, local governments, and community groups in the San Francisco Bay Area created a Vision for the region to collaboratively address housing and traffic problems while improving the quality of life for all residents. The aim of the Vision is to concentrate future growth near transit and in the existing communities that surround the San Francisco Bay, enhancing existing neighborhoods and providing housing and transportation choices for all residents.

FOCUSING OUR VISION (FOCUS)

FOCUS, short for the *Focusing Our Vision* initiative, advances the Vision. FOCUS is a regional planning initiative spearheaded by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), in coordination with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC). 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 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, regional agencies are working together with local governments to create a specific and shared concept of where growth can best be accommodated and what areas need protection in the region. Local and regional partners will identify areas that are priorities for development and conservation and work to direct existing and future incentives to these areas. Interested local governments will have the option to apply to the regional agencies for Priority Development and Conservation Area designations. Only willing jurisdictions will receive priority area designations.

PLATFORM FOR REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

FOCUS serves as a platform for engaging San Francisco Bay Area local governments and stakeholders in a regional dialogue around accommodating growth and protecting natural areas. The FOCUS Technical Advisory Committee serves as the key forum supporting this regional dialogue. The Committee is comprised of representatives for each of the region's nine counties from cities and counties and stakeholder groups representing affordable housing, economic development, the environment, environmental justice, social equity, and transportation interests. Regional agencies have also held a stakeholder conference, a series of county-wide local government forums, and made presentations to a variety of interest groups. More venues for engaging the region's diverse groups will be sought and established as agreements on regional priorities take shape.

DESIGNATION OF PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT AREAS

All local governments are invited to participate in the FOCUS process and apply to designate Priority Development Areas. An open application process will allow each jurisdiction to nominate areas that fit at least three basic criteria: 1) areas within an existing community, 2) areas near existing or planned fixed transit or served by comparable bus capacity, and 3) areas planned or in the planning process for more housing.

Applications will be available on regional agencies' websites beginning April 19, 2007. The submission deadline for the first round of applications is June 29, 2007.

After all applications are received, local and regional staff will review the development vision for these areas and ensure that the basic criteria are met. The Priority Development Areas will be presented to the ABAG General Assembly for adoption on October 26, 2007.

DESIGNATION OF PRIORITY CONSERVATION AREAS

Regional agencies are working with the Green Vision group, a coalition of regional and local open space organizations, to identify areas that are priorities for conservation efforts. FOCUS will collaborate with local governments to determine Priority Conservation Areas, based upon local plans and the results of the Green Vision project. All local governments interested in having Priority Conservation Area Designations will have the option of applying at a later date.

INCENTIVES

Regional agencies are working to align many existing and future financial incentives for local governments that have designated priority areas. Potential sources include future funding from MTC's Transportation for Livable Communities and Housing Incentive Program, as well as additional discretionary transportation funds from MTC's Regional Transportation Plan 2009 Update. The State is also considering aligning funding from the recently passed housing and resource bonds to regional priorities, potentially including FOCUS priority areas.

LONG-TERM REGIONAL STRATEGY

FOCUS is a long-term strategy, and new sources of incentives are likely to arise in the future that will be available to Priority Development and Conservation Areas. The intention of FOCUS is to target areas for development and conservation incentives for the next few decades. If a city 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 cities to apply for priority area designations if they do not participate in the first round of applications.

ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE

Priority areas will also be focal points for regional agency efforts. Regional agencies will offer services to assist local governments with priority area planning and development activities. These services will include technical and outreach assistance, networking assistance, and best practices information.

www.bayareavision.org/focus
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