

Local Engagement: Office Hours

In addition to conducting public digital workshops and telephone town halls, MTC/ABAG staff provided individual member jurisdictions and partner agencies the opportunity to collaborate with staff via an “office hours” program. MTC/ABAG staff were available from mid-July to mid-August for virtual meetings to discuss the Draft Blueprint, providing information and answering questions about the baseline (BASIS) data, the Draft Blueprint inputs (Strategies & Growth Geographies approved for study in February), and the Draft Blueprint outputs.

Staff fulfilled all office hour requests, conducting ten office hours with the following jurisdictions: the cities of Palo Alto, Millbrae, Mountain View, San Francisco, Los Altos, San Anselmo, Brisbane and Piedmont, as well as Solano County and the Sonoma County Transportation Authority. Staff typically provided information about the Plan Bay Area 2050 Blueprint schedule, the Growth Geographies and the land use potential used for model inputs. One common topic across most jurisdictions was the relationship between the Blueprint and the RHNA process, which had not yet reached a consensus point with the Housing Methodology Committee (HMC) at that time.

Staff have summarized the key questions or concerns raised in each office hour meeting, as well as follow-up actions completed or underway.

1. Palo Alto

City staff were interested in the relationship between the Blueprint and RHNA. They were also interested in obtaining more detailed land use data, along with information from the BASIS land use effort. Palo Alto staff wanted to make sure the Blueprint reflects its policy to cap office development, whether further development occurs in single-family residential (R1) or historic areas, and if the models correctly represent the Stanford Research Park.

MTC/ABAG staff provided more detailed information in the form of maps, databases and memos describing the impact of Growth Geographies. Staff also confirmed that office development constraints are appropriately reflected in the baseline land use data; additional meetings may be held as needed.

2. Brisbane

City staff indicated that they believe the Baylands area has capacity for 2,200 units as defined in a city referendum. The development of high-speed rail would also have a significant impact, due to a rail maintenance facility planned on one or more parcels. City staff also noted some specific infrastructure that can't be redeveloped. These are issues that the city believed have persisted since Plan Bay Area 2040.

MTC/ABAG staff provided additional maps, memos describing the importance of Growth Geographies and input data sets showing specific information. An additional meeting will be scheduled with the City, with action items related to confirming that high speed rail and utility parcels are not developed into housing in the Final Blueprint.

3. Mountain View

City staff requested to review its land use data to understand how the BASIS data and the PDA Application information work together. Staff also wanted to know how the growth geography and the Blueprint housing and employment growth affected the RHNA allocations. They also had concerns about the high level of growth expected for the South Bay and whether transportation and school budgets would be able to cope.

MTC/ABAG staff provided additional information in the form of development maps, databases and memos that describe the Growth Geographies. Staff discussed Mountain View's initial comments and are planning to hold another conversation to resolve remaining issues.

4. San Francisco

The discussion with staff focused on the land use information used as an input to the Blueprint models, and the comparison between the draft Blueprint and city land use policies. San Francisco staff asked for more detailed zoning data in order to better understand the methods used in various Blueprint models and how the Blueprint policy alternatives might impact San Francisco.

MTC/ABAG staff provided mapping and database information on the land use inputs. San Francisco staff provided memos describing the importance of the Growth Geographies and describing model methodologies. MTC/ABAG and the City are scheduling a follow-up meeting to discuss these issues more fully.

5. Milpitas

City staff focused on the land use assumptions used in the Blueprint models and saw a potential inconsistency in the growth rates for jobs and housing between Milpitas and North San Jose, Fremont and Union City. Staff wanted to review the land use inputs to the model and noted that a specific area around the Milpitas BART Station is designed to be a job center. They are concerned that the Draft Blueprint will move the city away from jobs/housing balance.

MTC/ABAG staff will provide more detailed input data and is currently analyzing surrounding areas to determine the reason for any differences in growth rates.

6. San Anselmo

City staff were concerned about the level of growth, and, more specifically, their RHNA allocation. Staff questioned San Anselmo's designation as a High Resource Area; they also pointed to Mill Valley's housing growth numbers, which are low, as an indication that something is wrong with their allocation. They also expressed an interest in their employment numbers.

MTC/ABAG staff followed-up with the development potential maps, the schema for the growth framework and confirmed that San Anselmo is a High-Resource Area that meets pre-COVID basic transit frequency requirements, while being a high-resource jurisdiction, Mill Valley does not appear to have any Growth Geographies due to insufficient transit service.

7. Los Altos

City staff were concerned that growth in Santa Clara County is particularly high. They also wanted a better understanding of the RHNA and Blueprint processes.

MTC/ABAG staff discussed the maps that outlined the dwelling unit potential for the city as well as the RHNA process. No follow-up information was requested.

8. Piedmont

City staff wanted to confirm the sources and the accuracy of the inputs into the modeling of the Draft Blueprint and the 2050 households.

MTC/ABAG staff explained the sources of data and provided maps, memos describing the importance of applicable growth geography and data sets showing input data into the models.

9. Solano County

County staff believe that housing growth in unincorporated areas is very high and is likely the result of faulty boundaries between the cities and unincorporated areas that have persisted since Plan Bay Area 2040. They believe that the Fairfield Suisun rail station PDA is not properly assigned; they also feel that the development in Solano County cities' Spheres of Influence and Municipal Service Areas are incorrectly assigned. Staff mentioned that Solano County requires that development can only occur if the land is annexed to a city.

MTC/ABAG staff is researching the boundary issues and has committed to work with the county to ensure that any errors are corrected. To date, it appears that city boundaries are accurate in BASIS/UrbanSim 2.0 and the central question is the handling of growth in county lands within Spheres of Influence of nearby cities. This issue has no impact on the Final Blueprint, but given the Blueprint's potential role in RHNA, it may have standing in the RHNA process. Should Solano County remain a RHNA subregion, this issue could be handled on the county level; however, MTC/ABAG staff wish to also resolve the issue on the regional level in the unlikely case the subregion dissolves.

10. Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA)

SCTA staff wanted to discuss the differences between the growth forecast from the California Department of Finance, the Plan Bay Area 2050 growth forecast and the RHNA process. The county had concerns with the Blueprint forecast for Sonoma County, which they indicate is 50,000 units higher than Plan Bay Area 2040 and 30,000 units higher than their general plan capacity.

MTC/ABAG staff provided development potential maps, a memo describing the growth forecast, and provided data files for the county to review. Staff would note that the overall Regional Growth Forecast is higher this cycle to account for historical underproduction of housing, which also has led to higher county forecasts as well.