

REGIONAL HOUSING NEEDS ALLOCATION



TO: Housing Methodology Committee
FR: Deputy Executive Director, Policy
RE: Revised HMC Decision Making Framework

DATE: November 7, 2019

Overview

The Housing Methodology Committee (HMC) has been convened to advise ABAG staff on the RHNA allocation methodology for the 6th RHNA cycle (2022-2030), and to ensure the methodology and resulting allocation meet statutory requirements and are consistent with the development pattern included in Plan Bay Area 2050.

The HMC is a key part of ABAG's approach to creating the RHNA allocation methodology. Through the HMC, ABAG staff seek to facilitate dialogue and information sharing in order to enable coordinated action to address the Bay Area's housing challenges.

HMC meetings will be primarily focused on creating space for respectful dialogue and opportunities for those with dissenting opinions to share their perspectives and be heard. That said, some form of group decision making will likely be necessary to move through decision points and arrive at a helpful methodology recommendation for ABAG staff.

This memo provides an overview of the proposed decision-making framework to support the newly convened 6th RHNA cycle, including adjustments made in response to feedback provided by HMC members at the October 18 meeting.

HMC Discussion and Feedback

At their October 18 meeting, HMC members engaged in a robust discussion about the pros and cons of the proposed modified "consensus" decision-making framework.

The following summarizes comments heard from HMC members:

- Members were generally in favor of a discussion-centered decision-making framework.
- Members shared that the "fist of five" voting technique was unnecessarily complicated and should be simplified.
- Members expressed a preference for a decision-making framework that would require conversation in cases where a significant number of members were opposed to or not enthusiastic about a decision.
- Members proposed a simplified voting technique with three options. For example, "I can't live with it," "I can live with it," and "I love it."

During the conversation on October 18, ABAG staff shared that one of staff's priorities is having a way to communicate a range of opinions expressed at HMC meetings when bringing items to the ABAG Regional Planning Committee or ABAG Executive Board for approval.

Updated Framework

ABAG staff incorporated feedback from HMC members to update the proposed decision-making framework. However, staff recommend continuing to use a modified consensus decision-making model, and that is reflected in this proposed update. Given the size of the committee, a process that required full consensus for all decisions would be very time consuming. This modified consensus approach encourages discussion and dialogue to maximize agreement while ensuring that decisions favored by the majority of the group can move forward.

With these adjustments, decision making might look like the following:

- Members will be provided with three cards that they can use to share their feedback visually when a decision point is called:
 - A green card shows you strongly agree or support the decision
 - A yellow card shows you have reservations but are not completely opposed to the decision
 - A red card shows that you strongly disagree or oppose the decision
- For any decision to advance, HMC members will need to show a majority of green cards, with up to nine red cards visible.
- If nine red cards are visible, the decision would be considered paused. More discussion is necessary to arrive at a "consensus" vote where eight or fewer members are requesting the pause. If that is not possible, the facilitator will urge the committee to move on.
- If fewer than nine red cards are visible and there appear to be more yellow cards than green, the decision would be considered paused. More discussion is necessary to arrive at a "consensus" result where the majority of HMC members are in agreement. If that is not possible, the facilitator will urge the committee to move on.
- HMC members who show a red card will take on responsibility for working to find a mutually agreeable solution for the entire group through the discussion that follows the pause vote. This includes contributing ideas to any ensuing discussion that would help them or other colleagues showing red cards move towards a yellow or green card.
- The option to "stand aside" is available to any HMC member who does not consent but is unwilling to take on finding a mutually agreeable solution or does not want to participate in the decision for any reason.
- Cards will be provided with printed words "red," "yellow," and "green" to improve visual accessibility.

ABAG Staff's Role in Decision Making

Because the HMC's ultimate goal is a methodology recommendation to ABAG staff, ABAG staff can weigh in on potential decisions before they are made. In particular, this is necessary to ensure there is significant staff bandwidth to accommodate research tasks in advance of the next HMC meeting. ABAG staff can let the HMC know that a request could not be reasonably accommodated, thus deferring action on the potential decision.