

TO: ABAG Administrative Committee  
FROM: Therese W. McMillan, Executive Director  
SUBJECT: City of Pleasant Hill RHNA Appeal Final Determination

DATE: November 12, 2021

## **RHNA Background**

The [Regional Housing Needs Allocation \(RHNA\)](#) is the state-mandated process to identify the number of housing units (by affordability level) that each jurisdiction must accommodate in the Housing Element of its General Plan. The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) determined Bay Area communities must plan for 441,176 new housing units from 2023 to 2031.

ABAG convened an ad hoc [Housing Methodology Committee \(HMC\)](#) from October 2019 to September 2020 to advise staff on the methodology for allocating a share of the region's total housing need to every local government in the Bay Area. The allocation must meet the [statutory objectives](#) identified in Housing Element Law and be consistent with [Plan Bay Area 2050](#). The HMC included local elected officials and staff as well as regional stakeholders to facilitate sharing of diverse viewpoints across multiple sectors.

The ABAG Executive Board approved the Proposed RHNA Methodology in October 2020 and held a [public comment period](#) from October 25 to November 27 and conducted a public hearing at the November 12, 2020 meeting of the ABAG Regional Planning Committee. After considering comments received, the ABAG Executive Board approved the Draft RHNA Methodology in January 2021. As required by law, ABAG submitted the Draft RHNA Methodology to HCD for its review. On April 12, 2021, [HCD sent ABAG a letter](#) confirming the Draft RHNA Methodology furthers the RHNA objectives.

On May 20, 2021, the ABAG Executive Board approved the final RHNA Methodology and draft allocations, which are described in detail in the [Draft RHNA Plan](#). Release of the draft RHNA allocations in May 2021 initiated the [appeals phase of the RHNA process](#).

## **ABAG RHNA Appeals Process**

At its meeting on May 20, 2021, the ABAG Executive Board approved the [ABAG 2023-2031 RHNA Appeals Procedures](#). The Appeals Procedures provide an overview of existing law and the statutory procedures and bases for an appeal, as outlined in [Government Code Section 65584.05](#), and outline ABAG's policies for conducting the required public hearing for considering appeals. The ABAG Executive Board also delegated authority to the ABAG Administrative Committee to conduct the public hearing and to make the final determinations on the RHNA appeals.

On May 25, 2021, ABAG notified the city/town manager or county administrator and planning or community development director of each local jurisdiction, HCD, and members of the public about the adoption of the draft RHNA allocations and the initiation of the appeals period. The email to jurisdictions included a link to the *ABAG 2023-2031 RHNA Appeals Procedures* on the ABAG website.

ABAG received 28 appeals from Bay Area jurisdictions during the 45-day appeals period from May 25, 2021 to July 9, 2021. On July 16, 2021, ABAG posted all [appeal materials received from local jurisdictions](#) on its website and distributed them to the city/town manager or county administrator and planning or community development director of each local jurisdiction, HCD, and members of the public consistent with Government Code Section 65584.05(c).

During the public comment period from July 16, 2021 to August 30, 2021, ABAG received nearly 450 comments from local jurisdictions, HCD, regional stakeholders, and members of the public on the 28 appeals submitted. On September 1, ABAG posted [all comments received during the comment period](#) on its website and distributed them along with the public hearing schedule to the city/town manager or county administrator and planning or community development director of each local jurisdiction, HCD, and members of the public. This notification ensured that each jurisdiction that submitted an appeal was provided notice of the schedule for the public hearing at least 21 days in advance, consistent with Government Code Section 65584.05(d). Between August 29, 2021 and September 3, 2021, legal notices were posted on the ABAG website and published in multiple languages in newspapers in each of the nine counties of the Bay Area, announcing the dates of the public hearing.

The ABAG Administrative Committee conducted the public hearing to consider the RHNA appeals at six meetings on the following dates:

- [September 24, 2021](#)
- [September 29, 2021](#)
- [October 8, 2021](#)
- [October 15, 2021](#)
- [October 22, 2021](#)
- [October 29, 2021](#).

### **ABAG Administrative Committee Hearing and Review**

The City of Pleasant Hill requests the reduction of its Draft RHNA Allocation by 1,019 units. The City of Pleasant Hill's appeal was heard by the ABAG Administrative Committee on September 24, 2021, at a noticed public hearing. The City of Pleasant Hill, HCD, other local jurisdictions, and the public had the opportunity to submit comments related to the appeal. The materials related to the City of Pleasant Hill's appeal, including appeal documents submitted by the jurisdiction, the ABAG-MTC staff response, and public comments received about this appeal during the

RHNA appeals comment period, are available on the MTC Legistar page at <https://mtc.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5143153&GUID=63F0CCFB-A49F-4150-B412-488FCBC4A78E&Options=&Search=>. Additional comments on RHNA Appeals are available at:

- <https://mtc.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=9824315&GUID=7E48C1E6-441A-4AFE-B464-2CA74C73B5B4>
- <https://mtc.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=9836540&GUID=1603966E-228B-4907-AA28-6F50249DC3AD>
- <https://mtc.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=AO&ID=106683&GUID=11d21ca8-c7fe-42b2-b6d2-bf4125769321&N= SXRIbSA2LCBIYW5kb3V0IFB1Ym xpYyBD b21tZW50>

Per ABAG's adopted 2023-2031 RHNA Appeals Procedures, the City of Pleasant Hill had an opportunity to present the bases for its appeal and information to support its arguments to the committee. The City of Pleasant Hill presentation was followed by a response from ABAG-MTC staff, consistent with the information provided in its written staff report (**Attachment 1**). Then, the applicant could respond to the arguments or evidence that ABAG-MTC staff presented.

After these presentations, members of the public had an opportunity to provide oral comments prior to discussion by members of the Administrative Committee. Following their deliberations, members of the committee took a preliminary vote on the City of Pleasant Hill's appeal. The Administrative Committee considered the documents submitted by the City of Pleasant Hill, the ABAG-MTC staff report, testimony of those providing public comments prior to the close of the hearing and comments made by City of Pleasant Hill and ABAG staff prior to the close of the hearing, and written public comments, which are incorporated herein by reference.

Video of this day of the public hearing is available at:

[http://baha.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=1&clip\\_id=9330](http://baha.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=1&clip_id=9330). A certified transcript of the proceedings from this day of the public hearing is available at: <https://abag.ca.gov/tools-resources/digital-library/9-24-21-rhna-trial-day-1-certifiedpdf>.

### **ABAG Administrative Committee Decision**

Based upon ABAG's adoption of the final RHNA methodology and the 2023-2031 RHNA Appeals Procedures and the process that led thereto; all testimony and all documents and comments submitted by the City of Pleasant Hill, HCD, other local jurisdictions, and the public prior to the close of the hearing; and the ABAG-MTC staff report, the ABAG Administrative Committee denies the appeal on the bases set forth in the staff report. The key arguments are summarized as follows:

- *Regarding Issue #1: Airport Safety Development Restriction* – Government Code Section 65584.04(e)(2)(B) states ABAG may not limit its consideration of suitable housing sites to

a jurisdiction's existing zoning and land use restrictions and must consider the potential for increased residential development under alternative zoning ordinances and land use restrictions and jurisdictions must consider underutilized land, opportunities for infill development, and increased residential densities as a component of available land for housing. The Plan Bay Area 2050 Final Blueprint and final RHNA methodology align with restrictions imposed by Buchanan Airport safety zones and adequately considers the development limitations raised in the appeal. No household growth is forecasted in safety zones where residential development is prohibited. The growth forecasted in Safety Zone 4 is adjacent to existing residential and within the 4-story height limit.

- *Regarding Issue #2: Lack of Available Land* – Government Code Section 65584.04(e)(2)(B) states ABAG may not limit consideration of suitable housing sites to a jurisdiction's existing zoning and land use restrictions and must consider potential for increased residential development under alternative zoning ordinances and land use restrictions and jurisdictions must consider underutilized land, opportunities for infill development, and increased residential densities as a component of available land for housing. Pleasant Hill does not provide evidence it is unable to consider underutilization of sites, increased densities, and other planning tools to accommodate its assigned need. The RHNA Methodology incorporates each jurisdiction's jobs-housing relationship through use of the Plan Bay Area 2050 Final Blueprint as the baseline allocation.
- *Regarding Issue #3: Drought* – Government Code Section 65584.04(e)(2)(A) states ABAG must consider opportunities and constraints to development of housing due to "lack of capacity for sewer or water service due to federal or state laws, regulations or regulatory actions, or supply and distribution decisions made by a sewer or water service provider other than the local jurisdiction that preclude the jurisdiction from providing necessary infrastructure for additional development during the planning period." Although Pleasant Hill indicates that Contra Costa Water District's Urban Water Management Plan does not analyze the impact of household growth resulting from RHNA, the City has not demonstrated it is precluded from accommodating its RHNA allocation because of a decision by its water service provider.
- *Regarding Issue #4, Issue #5, Issue #6, and Issue #7: RHNA Methodology Does Not Further RHNA Objectives* – These arguments challenge the Final RHNA Methodology adopted by ABAG and approved by HCD, and thus fall outside the scope of the appeals process. HCD has authority to determine if the RHNA methodology furthers the statutory objectives and HCD found that ABAG's methodology does further the objectives.

## **Conclusion**

For the foregoing reasons and based on the full record before the ABAG Administrative Committee at the close of the public hearing (which the Committee has taken into consideration

in rendering its decision and conclusion), the ABAG Administrative Committee hereby denies the City of Pleasant Hill's appeal and finds that the City of Pleasant Hill's RHNA allocation is consistent with the RHNA statute pursuant to Section 65584.05(e)(1).