Date: 12/3/2014

To: Regional Planning Committee

From: Mark Shorett and Vinita Goyal, Regional Planners

Subject: **Regional Placemaking Initiative**

This memo provides an overview of the new regional placemaking initiative, a description of the workshop that will take place at the December 3rd RPC meeting, and a proposal to include placemaking as an element of the Plan Bay Area 2017.

This is coming a year after we had a placemaking session at the Regional Planning Committee. In attachment 3, we are including two reference documents: (a) Last year's presentation by Greg Tung, Approaches to Placemaking in Priority Development Areas, as a reminder of what we discussed last time; and (b) Chapter 1 of the book Happy City by Charles Montgomery (2013) as a simple short story of urban design and policy.

Regional Placemaking Initiative

The growth pattern adopted in Plan Bay Area reflects a growing trend toward reinvestment in existing downtowns and neighborhoods, demand for housing and workplaces with access to amenities and a variety of transportation options, and local planning to stimulate infill and transit-oriented development. Nearly 80% of new housing in the Plan is projected to take place in Priority Development Areas (PDAs)—locally nominated districts envisioned for additional homes and jobs. To date, regional collaboration around PDAs has focused on two key issues: job and housing growth. The update to Plan Bay Area provides an opportunity to add a third dimension to the discussion: Placemaking. We have heard repeatedly from RPC and Executive Board members that *how* our communities grow is of equal importance to *how much* our communities grow. The details of our streets, parks, buildings, and plazas influence our health, economy, and ability to maintain and create cultural practices and traditions.

Placemaking is the process of shaping streets, public spaces, and buildings. It involves policy-making, planning, design, and construction. It also involves everyone that lives and works in a place. Once a place is constructed, it is continuously shaped by its users. A community park can be a field for pick-up sports games one day, the setting for a farmer's market the next, and a

stage for a music festival the next. A school campus can act as a learning center during the day and a community center during evening and weekend hours. And industrial and commercial buildings can respond to economic changes through retrofits to accommodate different kinds of tenants.

How well these places adapt, and how they impact health and levels of opportunity are connected to decisions made by a wide range of players, particularly elected officials and local staff. Different solutions work in different communities, reflecting the region's diversity. Through a regional discussion, we will identify some common elements of successful placemaking and find concrete ways to integrate successful practices into our regional framework for growth—adding a third dimension to complement regional planning for housing and job growth. The Regional Planning Committee is playing a key role in guiding this discussion and proposing and providing feedback on strategies.

The Regional Placemaking Initiative has been shaped by a **working group** made up of experts in urban design, community planning, and real estate development. This group is led by RPC vice-chair Anu Natarajan and ABAG Executive Board vice-president David Rabbitt. The working group had four sessions in 2014 to frame core challenges, identify key tasks and designed the RPC workshop. The working group will meet in the Spring 2015 to guide the production of the Regional Placemaking Report by summer 2015.

The working group has identified several areas of work:

- Economic development
- Community ownership and inclusion
- Effective public involvement
- Elements of a complete community

Based on input from the working group, staff has identified the following tasks:

- The **workshop** during the December 3 RPC meeting. Working group members will make presentations on a key placemaking issue, followed by moderated small group discussions identifying challenges, opportunities and strategies for creating successful communities.
- A Placemaking **Report** released in Spring/Early Summer of 2015 responding to input from the RPC workshop, the insights of working group members, and additional research. This will identify opportunities to integrate placemaking into the 2017 update to Plan Bay Area and into regional planning initiatives.
- Proposal to **integrate** placemaking into Plan Bay Area 2017
- Ongoing **research and community engagement.** ABAG can leverage the region's wealth of design and academic resources to provide technical assistance to jurisdictions undertaking complex placemaking efforts, and to help identify replicable practices to share with local planners, the RPC and the Executive Board. These do not require expenditure of additional resources, and include the following:

- Videos compiled by San Francisco State planning studio that capture the diversity of the region's public spaces and potentially replicable approaches. These "place stories" will be highlighted on the ABAG website and presented at the beginning of the December 3 RPC meeting. Additional place stories can be added to highlight communities throughout the Bay Area
- An urban design studio with the UC-Davis school of Landscape Architecture in key sites in Priority Development Areas along the San Pablo Corridor between North Oakland and Pinole.
- Participation in the UC-Berkeley's Center for Cities and Schools' Y-PLAN program through a client project with students from Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) focused on 1-2 East Bay PDAs.
- A studio with the UC-Berkeley Department of City and Regional Planning in a location to be determined.

Placemaking Workshop December 3

The purpose of the workshop is to discuss the concerns about placemaking and the ongoing strategies across the region from various perspectives. The working group will provide key ideas to invite insightful discussions in small groups. The insights of this workshop will be part of the Regional Placemaking Report. The workshop will include the following:

- ***Context for the Regional Placemaking Initiative*** – Miriam Chion, ABAG Planning and Research Director (5 minutes)

- ***Placemaking examples in the Bay Area*** - Video by San Francisco State University students (10 minutes)

- ***What can Placemaking do for you?*** Five members of the placemaking working group will address this question from various perspectives (25 minutes):
    a. *PlaceMaking through economic development lenses* - Anu Natrajan, RPC Vice Chair
    b. *Places as eco –systems* - Steve Dostart,
    c. *Intentionality* - Greg Tung,
    d. *Ownership of places* - Fernando Marti
    e. *Participation in the construction of places* - Michael Rios, UC Davis

- ***Engagement, challenges and strategies in the development of good places*** - Group discussions (35 minutes)

- ***What can you do for PlaceMaking?*** - David Rabbitt, Supervisor Sonoma County (5 minutes)

- ***Placemaking in Plan Bay Area 2017*** – RPC discussion (15 minutes)

Requested Action

The Regional Planning Committee recommends to the ABAG Executive Board the inclusion of placemaking as an element of Plan Bay Area 2017.

Attachments

Attachment 1. Biographies of Working Group Members
Attachment 2. Placemaking examples in the Bay Area: San Francisco State University students project
Attachment 3. Reference documents:
3.a. Approaches to Placemaking in Priority Development Areas by Greg Tung, December 2013
3.b. Happy City, Chapter 1 by Charles Montgomery, 2013