



Jovan D. Grogan
City Manager

July 8, 2021

Association of Bay Area Governments
375 Beale Street, Suite 800
San Francisco, CA 94105-2066

Re: Concerns Regarding the San Bruno RHNA 6 Allocation

Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) Board and Staff:

The City of San Bruno wishes to express its deep concern regarding ABAG's approval of the San Bruno Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) 6. However, to preserve taxpayer resources, the City has elected not to file a formal appeal. This letter outlines our concerns and requests ABAG and HCD's assistance in the future, as the City of San Bruno works with other regional, state, and federal agencies to allow housing on the sites that ABAG has identified through its RHNA 6 process.

For context, initially, the proposed RHNA 6 allocation for San Bruno was 2,130 housing units. This number represented a substantial increase from the RHNA 5 allocation. Nonetheless, San Bruno understood it reflected the community's fair share of the region's allocation. In December 2020, however, the allocation was increased to 3,165 housing units by ABAG staff. The percentage increase is the most within San Mateo County and second highest within the Bay Area.

Subsequently, City of San Bruno staff met with ABAG staff on several occasions to better understand the justification for this substantial RHNA increase. ABAG staff stated that the increase was due to final Plan Bay Area Blueprint 2050 adjustments and specific consideration of the City's aging shopping centers, Tanforan and Towne Center. Further, ABAG staff noted that while the December 2020 allocation resulted in a significant increase for San Bruno, San Bruno's overall increase from the RHNA 5 allocation to the RHNA 6 allocation is not outsized compared to communities with a similar profile. While we appreciate the overall perspective, we wish to reiterate our position that ABAG'S methodology should have considered existing noise contours and height restrictions over the City's Tanforan and Towne Center shopping centers, which are covered by the San Francisco International (SFO) Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP).

ABAG's previous response to San Bruno's ALUCP concerns has been highlighted in Public Utilities Code - PUC § 21675.1, which provides the San Bruno City Council with the ability to override the housing land use limitation relating to noise compatibility. However, following the discussions with ABAG, we received different direction from HCD staff, who indicated the land area is likely not suitable for housing due to the ALUCP conflict. While HCD staff was sympathetic to San Bruno's situation, and were very responsive to City staff's questions, they noted that a back-up plan to the Tanforan and Town Center housing sites would need to be identified. In addition, SFO staff has expressed concern with housing under the flight path. Further, Caltrans (Aeronautics Division), which has specific ALUCP responsibilities, has submitted written opposition to housing in nearby, less restrictive areas of San Bruno during past land-use planning processes. Thus, the City faces a complicated and frustrating situation due to conflicting regional and state agency policies that hamper the City's ability to submit a compliant Housing Element and meet its RHNA allocation.

Finally, in defense of its RHNA 6 allocations, ABAG has stated that their role is to allocate a community's fair share of the regional housing need and clarified cities and counties can select alternative sites for housing production if a specific parcel identified through the RHNA process cannot accommodate the projected housing units. In this case, however, ABAG increased the allocation specifically due to the large size and potential of these two shopping centers. Similar sites simply do not exist in San Bruno. While it may be feasible for large communities to find alternative sites, it is not feasible in many small to medium size communities that are built out. This is especially true in San Bruno, where there are not alternative sites to accommodate the thousands of estimated units that the RHNA 6 process has allocated to our Tanforan and Towne Center shopping centers.

The City of San Bruno is not a NIMBY (not in my back yard) community. The San Bruno City Council has adopted long-range planning documents including a General Plan and Specific Plans, and San Bruno voters have supported multiple initiatives to increase transit-orientated housing development.

For example, San Bruno adopted a Transit Corridors Plan (TCP) in 2013 and the City voters approved Measure N in November 2014, which removed height and density barriers in a 155-acre area. The amended height restrictions allow an additional 40 feet and 4 stories (up to a maximum of 90 feet and 7 stories in some areas). In addition, the measure eliminated all density maximums for residential uses to allow for new denser housing development around transit centers.

San Bruno's TCP provides a blueprint for the transformation of the City's downtown and adjacent nearby commercial corridors into a walkable, mixed-use district capitalizing on proximity and access to transit. The City is working diligently with various property owners and developers to realize this vision.

In 2019, San Bruno was placed in the spotlight for not supporting a mixed-use development with 425 housing units. However, it is important to note that the primary issue was related to the commercial portion of the project, not the residential units. In 2020, a negotiated revision to the project was approved with more residential units than were initially proposed at a deeper affordability level than required as well as a 45-year requirement to maintain their affordability (as rental or for-sale units if converted to condominiums).

In another display of San Bruno's commitment to incentivizing the development of housing, the City recently hired a consultant to work directly with the current owners and prospective buyers of the Tanforan Mall to prepare a land-use vision that identifies new housing on the site as a priority.

Having analyzed ABAG's RHNA appeal process and determined the significant time and financial commitment involved in pursuing a formal appeal to San Bruno's RHNA 6 allocation, we have elected not to file an appeal in an effort to preserve taxpayer resources. However, the City of San Bruno requests that ABAG re-examine its methodology in light of the aforementioned information and provide an offsetting credit or reduction to the City of San Bruno in future RHNA allocation cycles.

Additionally, the City of San Bruno requests ABAG and HCD's assistance in resolving the ALUCP conflict and opposition we may receive from other regional, state, and federal agencies to allow housing on the sites that ABAG has identified through its RHNA 6 allocation process. We also request ABAG and HCD support of the City's Housing Element, which will rely on new housing development in these shopping center areas.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions or would like to discuss San Bruno's RHNA allocations further, please contact me at citymanager@sanbruno.ca.gov or (650) 616-7056.

Sincerely,



Jovan D. Grogan, City Manager

cc: Dave Vautin, ABAG
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cc: Marisa Prasse, HCD
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San Bruno City Council
San Mateo County Supervisor David Pine
San Mateo County Supervisor Dave Canepa
California State Assemblymember Kevin Mullin
California State Senator Josh Becker
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