



Technical Assistance for Local Planning **HOUSING**

Style and Acronym Guide: Regional Housing Technical Assistance (RHTA) Program

This document provides guidance to staff and consultants writing about the Regional Housing Technical Assistance Program. In general, ABAG and MTC use the Associated Press Stylebook and Merriam-Webster Dictionary as their style guide. This document includes detail on common acronyms, punctuation and other things specific to the RHTA program. It also contains links to the RHTA templates and resources. For questions about this content or detail that is not included here, contact Clair McDevitt, cmcdevitt@bayareametro.gov, or Leah Zippert, lzipper@bayareametro.gov.

Templates & Resources

RHTA has produced the following resources for shared use by staff and consultants.

- [RHTA Fact Sheet](#)
- [Brand guidelines and Power Point template](#)
- [The Housing Technical Assistance Portal](#), is home to materials created by ABAG, the State of California, federal partners, local jurisdictions, county collaboratives, professional institutions and nonprofits with focused expertise on increasing housing production and preservation.
- [RHTA Trainings](#), a comprehensive webinar series for local planning and housing staff focused on updates to the Housing Element process.

Acronyms

Acronyms should be spelled out and defined upon the first usage, followed by the acronym in parentheses. For mentions after the first use, the acronym can be used in place of the full name. For example, “the Regional Housing Technical Assistance (RHTA) program.” Avoid overusing acronyms.

AFFH stands for the federal and state requirements to “Affirmatively Further Fair Housing” that are placed on agencies to advance fair and equitable policies that address and correct past racial discrimination. In public-facing documents, spell out and define this term. If appropriate, indicate that it is a statutory requirement, and then use language that is accessible to non-planning professionals, such as “advancing fair housing and ending discriminatory practices.” Don’t use AFFH as a noun. Say, “to address this statutory requirement, we are ...” rather than “to address AFFH, we are...”

BAHFA, or the Bay Area Housing Finance Authority, is a joint agency of MTC and ABAG authorized in 2019 legislation to develop a comprehensive regional strategy for helping local governments tackle the housing crisis on a larger scale through new revenue and policy options.

Balancing Act is an online public engagement platform that allows local governments to hear from members of their community on matters relating to housing and zoning. ABAG is providing licenses and discounts to make this software accessible to jurisdictions.

City Innovate is the name of an online portal that local planners can access to hire consultants from ABAG and MTC's Regional Planning Bench.

HCD stands for the State Department of Housing and Community Development, which is authorized to review housing element updates and RHNA numbers, among other things, to determine whether cities and counties meet state requirements.

HESS Tool, which stands for Housing Element Site Selection, is ABAG's online tool that local government staff may use to identify potential sites in all Bay Area cities and counties for Housing Element site inventories. The tool flags sites that will likely require rezoning to be used under new state laws.

REAP, or Regional Early Action Program, refers to funding provided by the state to both local and regional agencies to assist in complying with state housing laws. You can use this term when referring to grants and funding, but not to the overall program (see RHTA).

RHNA stands for Regional Housing Needs Allocation, a process done every six years called for in state law. HCD determines the total number of new homes that regions in California need to build to meet the housing needs of people at all income levels. ABAG then works with local jurisdictions through its Housing Methodology Committee to distribute a share of this housing need to all cities, towns and counties in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. Each jurisdiction then must update the housing element of its general plan to show locations where housing can be built and the policies and strategies needed to meet the community's needs.

RHTA is the Regional Housing Technical Assistance Program administered by ABAG and funded by the Regional Early Action Program grant from the state's Housing and Community Development department. When referring to our program, use Regional Housing Technical Assistance or RHTA.

TALP, or Technical Assistance for Local Planning, refers to a broader suite of offerings from both ABAG and MTC to help local agencies. Use this term when you are referring to this wider array of programs if it helps to differentiate from RHTA.

Work groups are short-term, topic specific groups of planning staff discussing specific issues over a six-month period. The phrase is two words in all instances.

A note about buzzwords and technical jargon: Plain language is always preferred in writing and presentations. Avoid buzzwords, technical language and acronyms when possible.

Dates and numbers

Spell out numbers one to nine standing alone and in modifiers (two seconds left, eight-hour day, two-minute warning)

Use numerals for numbers 10 and higher.

Do not use superscript with ordinal numbers (21st, 19th)

Spell out fractions less than 1, using hyphens (two-thirds, four-fifths)

Use numerals with percentage point (no hyphen)

Use % symbol; do not spell out percent (so 6% instead of six percent) except at the start of a sentence (Sixty percent of voters report...)

Use numerals with measures of length (3-mile buffer)

Punctuation

Use commas in compound sentences (independent clause, and independent clause)

Use commas between coordinating adjectives (stale, sterilized version NOT stale sterilized version)

Avoid serial commas (a, b and c) but put a comma before the concluding conjunction in a series if an integral element of the series requires a conjunction: *I had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast.*

Hyphenate compound modifiers (i.e. small-business owner)

Use hyphens for ranges, such as Jan. 1-4. (AP Style does not use en dashes.) There should be no spaces surrounding a hyphen.

Put a space on both sides of a dash (em dash) in all uses

Avoid contractions

No hyphens between adverbs ended in -ly and adjective