



TO: Honorable Members of the City Council

FROM: Mayor Arreguín

SUBJECT: Report on Regional Leadership and Goals for 2020

### SUMMARY

In January, Mayor Jesse Arreguín was sworn in as the new President of ABAG for a two-year term. This comes at an important time in our region, with our population expected to grow by 2 million people over the next 20 years, while we face challenges such as housing, homelessness and transportation.

### BACKGROUND

The San Francisco Bay Area is comprised of 101 municipalities and nine counties, and is home to almost 8 million people. It is also home to one of the fastest growing economies in the world. While each city has its own history and laws, no place exists within a bubble. The Bay Area is intertwined, and the decisions on housing, transportation, or the economy in one city has a ripple effect on others. Knowing that jurisdictions have a collective stake in addressing the issues that affect us all, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) was formed in 1961 to promote regional planning and collaboration. Today, ABAG is working with regional partners to address the needs and challenges of the Bay Area, from the affordable housing crisis to rising sea levels.

ABAG is led by an Executive Board comprised of Mayors, Councilmembers and County Supervisors from throughout the nine Bay Area counties. Decisions on the budget and work plan are made by the General Assembly of delegates from each Bay Area city and county. ABAG is truly representative of cities and towns of all sizes, and the goal of the agency is to be a voice for all of our region's local governments.

### FUTURE ACTIONS

ABAG is set to make some big decisions in the coming year concerning the future of the

region. ABAG and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) are developing a 30-year regional land use and transportation plan, also known as Plan Bay Area 2050<sup>1</sup>. This Plan is required by state and federal law to guide transportation investments and meet state climate goals. The goal of Plan Bay Area 2050 is to create a more equitable and resilient future for the region through investments in the local economy, environment, housing and transportation. During Mayor Arreguín's tenure as President, he is committed to working with local and regional representatives throughout the Bay Area in crafting a collaborative plan that the region can get behind. From addressing growing inequities to making us more resilient against the increasing threat of climate change, we must work together as one region if we are to achieve our goals. The ABAG Executive Board and MTC are expected to vote on Plan Bay Area 2050 in June 2021.

ABAG, which helps shape regional housing and land use policy, will become even more involved due to newly enacted state bills. One law of note is Assembly Bill 1487, the San Francisco Bay Area Regional Housing Finance Act, which empowers ABAG and MTC to place a regional measure on the Bay Area ballot for affordable housing funding. While it is common for counties and cities to place such measures on the ballot, it has not been done on a regional scale before, giving us the advantage of working through the regional lens we all know is necessary to truly address our crisis of affordable housing. Such a proposal will help us achieve our regional affordable housing goals and prevent displacement. However, specific zoning and local land use authority will continue to be under the scope of local jurisdictions.

The Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) is a state mandated process of allocating the region's housing need to individual counties and cities. Local governments must update their housing elements, and zoning if necessary, to demonstrate specific sites and regulations to permit the number of RHNA housing units allocated to each jurisdiction. The RHNA is a non-binding decision, but local Housing Elements must be in conformance to the RHNA or face penalty by the state. RHNA is the primary way in which we can measure the creation of new housing in the Bay Area. It is also how we implement state law under the Housing Element, which provides the total number of units that the Bay Area needs to be built. Drafting a RHNA methodology and allocation for the 2022-2030 cycle recently began and is being led by a Housing Methodology Committee, which Mayor Arreguín chairs. Mayor Arreguín will work to make sure that RHNA adoption guides us towards an equitable distribution of housing throughout the region, and addresses decades of past inequities in the production of affordable housing throughout the region. To this end, the state Housing

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.planbayarea.org>

Element law was recently amended to require that the RHNA affirmatively further fair housing. As the Bay Area is facing an unprecedented housing affordability crisis, the RHNA can be a tool to increase opportunity and ensure equity and affordability. No city alone can address this crisis for the entire Bay Area; all of us have a stake.

Recent fires in Northern California have made the impacts of climate change real. Drier temperatures have made our communities more susceptible to fire risk. Berkeley in particular is along the urban-wildland interface and has seen devastating fires in its history. Preparing for and mitigating the risk of wildfire is one of many climate adaptation strategies we must prioritize. We also know that shoreline communities face the growing risk of rising sea levels. This will affect wetlands, park lands, highways and even whole city blocks. Regional planning must account for the threat of sea level rise and investments made in green and grey infrastructure to help reduce the risk of flooding.

The Bay Area and California are leading in climate change research and policy. As the new President of ABAG, Mayor Arreguín will make climate change a priority for our regional planning agency. This means recognizing the climate emergency that exists, and coordinating planning and policy across multiple regional agencies. It also involves policies and funding to decarbonize our buildings, transportation and promote local renewable energy infrastructure in our region.

In addition, homelessness is one of the most visible problems facing our region. While addressing the housing affordability crisis and preventing displacement are key homelessness prevention strategies, the growth of unsheltered homelessness is alarming. Despite the efforts of many cities, including Berkeley, to provide emergency shelter, permanent housing and social services, policy development and programs remain siloed. Some cities are leading the way, and others have done very little, or done more harm through laws pushing homeless out of their borders. Homelessness is a regional challenge and it requires a regional approach. As ABAG President, Mayor Arreguín plans to convene a regional conversation with elected officials and service providers to coordinate our response to homelessness.

The Bay Area is one of the most beautiful places in the world. The diversity of our residents and landscapes makes it an ideal location. Yet we know we face significant challenges that are proven to be a barrier for many to live here. With the Bay Area's population growing by 1% per year, we must make sure that we have the infrastructure and resources needed to keep up with our increasing population. This is what makes ABAG so important. It focuses on the needs of the region while working with local communities to help them achieve our

collective goals.

CONTACT

Mayor Jesse Arreguín

mayor@cityofberkeley.info | 510-981-7100