

KERN REGIONAL BLUEPRINT PROGRAM TOWN HALL MEETING—PHASE 2

S U M M A R Y R E P O R T

DELANO
October 23, 2007

I. INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday, October 23, 2007, Kern Council of Governments (COG) hosted a Town Hall Meeting for the Kern Regional Blueprint Program at the Delano VFW Memorial Building in Delano. The purpose of the meeting was: (a) to educate participants about the purpose of the Blueprint; (b) to provide results of Phase 1 outreach efforts regarding the visions, values, and top issues for the future; and (c) to present and facilitate discussion and collect input about draft principles and draft illustrative “scenarios” for future growth.

Background

Kern COG is an association of city and county governments primarily created to address regional transportation issues. Its member agencies include the County of Kern and the eleven incorporated cities within the Kern Region and ex-officio members representing Caltrans, Golden Empire Transit District and the Congestion Management Agency.

The Town Hall Meeting is one of a series throughout the Kern Region as part of the Kern Regional Blueprint Program, which is designed to engage policymakers and citizens to create a regional vision and growth principles for the integration of transportation, housing, land use, economic development and environmental protection that will inform local decision-making and guide growth over the next 50 years. **The Kern Regional Blueprint is not a City General Plan or a County Specific Plan; it is a 2050 visioning project designed to complement other planning processes.** Elected officials from the county and each city throughout the Kern region will determine how their jurisdictions will accommodate the regional vision through local decision-making and planning efforts. The Kern Regional Blueprint will also be included as part of the Central California Blueprint Program, which will integrate the outcomes of the Blueprint programs from the seven other Central California counties.

Phase 1 of the outreach process focused on introducing the Blueprint Program, developing a regional vision for the future of the region and its communities, and understanding the participants’ priority issues related to growth. Phase 2 of the process is focused on developing principles for future growth and a preferred

illustrative scenario for development in each sub-region, all of which builds from the regional vision and priority issues developed in Phase 1.

Community Outreach

To build community awareness of and involvement in the Blueprint Program, Kern COG initiated an extensive outreach program as part of these Town Hall Meetings, which will carry and expand into future phases of the process. With outreach and coordination support from Odyssey, a California-based nonprofit organization focused on transportation policy improvements, Kern COG implemented a number of outreach measures to advertise the meeting, including:

- Direct phone calls to a broad range of community-based organizations including business, social service, cultural, and other interests;
- Targeted mail and email of a project newsletter and meeting notice;
- Coordination with government agencies' outreach efforts and networks;
- Inserts in local and community-based newsletters and media publications;
- Media campaign.

These efforts will continue to build Kern COG's outreach database over time, leading to ever-expanding outreach measures in future phases of the process.

Town Hall Meeting Agenda and Format

The Delano meeting was held from 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. at the Delano VFW Memorial Building, 1025 Garces Highway in Delano. Upon entering the meeting facility, participants signed-in and received a nametag and handout materials including an agenda, comment form, and evaluation form (handout materials may be found at www.kerncog.org). Approximately 17 community members representing residents, businesses, local government agencies, and community-based organizations attended the meeting.

Participants then reviewed the "open house" portion of the meeting, which featured display materials of local area maps and data related to existing conditions and future growth projections, as well as other general information from Kern COG. Becky Napier of Kern COG served as the meeting facilitator and initiated the meeting with brief welcoming remarks and an agenda overview. She then recognized local officials in attendance: Phil Newhouse, Community Services Director, City of Delano; Keith Woodcock, Community Development Director, City of Delano; Mike McCabe, Senior Planner, City of Delano; and Phyllis Kraft, City Clerk; City of Delano; and introduced Kern COG Senior Planner, Robert Ball.

Mr. Ball delivered brief introductory remarks describing the relationship of the Blueprint to local planning activities followed by a slideshow presentation that provided an overview of the purpose of, need for, and process for developing the Blueprint. The slideshow included results of the Phase 1 Town Hall Meeting in Delano including the sub-region's visions and values. The slideshow also introduced the draft principles for growth in the Kern region, which provide

guidance and direction about how to manage future growth, as well as illustrative pictures to further describe each principle's meaning and intent.

Ms. Napier then reviewed the format of the small group discussions before convening participants to their small groups. After brief introductions among the participants, a facilitator at each small group table guided participants through a discussion of participants' reactions to the draft principles. As a discussion tool, the facilitators introduced a "card game," which is designed to allow participants to share their beliefs of how effective each principle would be in achieving the visions for future growth. The small group facilitators recorded participants' discussion points and the card game tallies during the small group discussion on flip chart pages, and participants also recorded comments on their own comment forms, all of which are summarized in the following pages of this report.

Following this small group discussion, participants heard a brief presentation from Robert Ball regarding draft "scenarios" for future growth in the sub-region. Mr. Ball explained that each of the four scenarios represented varying levels of compact development, or the amount of development that is focused on existing urban areas. He also provided data regarding performance measures for each scenario, including the relative change in air quality, energy use, water consumption, and other measures.

Ms. Napier then asked participants to reconvene in their small groups to review the scenarios and data in more detail, which were provided as handouts and on large posters at each small group table. She asked that each participant indicate their preferred scenario and to share their ideas and reasons as part of the small group discussion. The small group facilitators guided these discussions and recorded comments on the flip chart pages, and participants also recorded comments on their own comment forms, all of which are summarized in the following pages of this report.

Participants then reconvened in the large group format to hear brief summary reports from a volunteer from each group regarding the Draft Principles and scenarios. Ms. Napier facilitated the discussion and also recorded a summary of the reports on flip chart pages at the front of the meeting room.

The following pages summarize comments captured on the flip chart pages from the small group discussions, as well as those submitted by participants on comment forms. Original copies of these documents are on file with Kern COG.

II. DISCUSSION: DRAFT PRINCIPLES

Participants discussed the draft principles in terms of their beliefs of how effective each would be in achieving the visions and values for future growth. The small

group facilitators asked participants to provide any overall comments about draft principles, and then proceeded to review each principle in turn.

Each participant received a set of five cards as part of the “card game.” The facilitator explained that the suited cards represent levels of effectiveness in achieving the visions for future growth. The suited cards were labeled as:

- ♠ **Spades** represent “No effect”
- ♥ **Hearts** represent “Small effect”
- ♦ **Diamonds** represent “Moderate effect”
- ♣ **Clubs** represent “Major effect”
- “X” represents “Delete this principle”

As the small group facilitator introduced a draft principle, each participant raised the card that represented his belief in the effectiveness of the principle. After tallying the results on the flip chart pages, the facilitator asked participants to comment on why they played their respective cards, which the facilitator recorded on the flip chart pages. The facilitator also encouraged participants to record their card play and associated comments on their comment form. Following is a summary of card game results and participants’ comments on each principle:

Use compact, efficient development and/or mixed land uses

Participants agreed they wanted to keep the small town feel and have a variety of living choices. They also believe a mix of land uses is critical. Participants voiced the need for housing, shopping and services to be in close proximity.

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate Effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
8	4	0	0	1

Participants also expressed the need to preserve open space, agriculture, and provide more choice in housing options including temporary housing.

Provide a variety of housing choices





Most participants suggested that a variety of housing choices is necessary for all age groups within the community. Some suggested that development should promote walking for a healthier community. Other participants

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate Effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
12	1	0	0	0

suggested that housing should be planned to minimize space requirements and maintain quality of life. Several participants voiced a need for workforce housing.





Provide adequate and equitable services

Participants generally agreed this principle was essential for a good quality of life. Participants identified a need for improved safety, education, and medical services. Some participants suggested a need for more entertainment and recreation within the community. Other identified a need for vocational training.

 Major effect	 Moderate Effect	 Small effect	 No effect	<i>X Delete</i>
12	1	0	0	0





Use and improve existing community assets and infrastructure

Participants generally agreed there was a need to redevelop existing assets and rehabilitate existing infrastructure. Participants identified the need for timely code enforcement for businesses and individuals and the need to build an attractive appearance for commercial. Some participants expressed a need to protect the historical personality of the community. Some participants expressed the need to educate business and youth about code enforcement.

 Major effect	 Moderate Effect	 Small effect	 No effect	<i>X Delete</i>
12	1	0	0	0





Provide a variety of transportation choices

Participants generally agreed this principle would help improve air quality and ensure mobility. Some participants suggested there was a need for carpooling. Some participants believed this principle was lower in priority because the community already had a good transportation system. Some participants recognized that this principle could become more of a priority with the rising cost of gasoline.

 Major effect	 Moderate Effect	 Small effect	 No effect	<i>X Delete</i>
8	5	0	0	0





Enhance economic vitality

Participants collectively agreed this principle was critical to community survival. Participants recognize there is leakage of sales tax revenue to other cities because of lack of shopping and entertainment opportunities within the community. Some participants felt young people were leaving the community for good paying jobs. Others identified the need to tie education to community need.

 Major effect	 Moderate Effect	 Small effect	 No effect	<i>X Delete</i>
13	0	0	0	0





Conserve energy and natural resources, and develop alternatives

Participants identified water as the natural resource critical to the community. Some identified the need for use of solar energy, wind energy, and hydrogen fuels.

 Major effect	 Moderate Effect	 Small effect	 No effect	<i>X Delete</i>
13	0	0	0	0





Conserve undeveloped land and spaces

Participants recognized the importance of saving agricultural land and protecting open space. Some participants felt there would not be enough water if agricultural land was developed.

 Major effect	 Moderate Effect	 Small effect	 No effect	<i>X Delete</i>
8	4	1	0	0

Increase civic and public engagement

Participants collectively agreed there was a need to get the public involved. Participants identified a lack of leadership on the part of elected officials (cronyism). Participants also concluded that citizens are afraid to speak up due to a fear of reprisal. One participant identified a need for community gathering spots and for elected officials to go where the population is centered.

 Major effect	 Moderate Effect	 Small effect	 No effect	<i>X Delete</i>
13	0	0	0	0

Missing principles

Participants identified the following missing principles:

- Health principle – if it’s part of another principle, needs to be more specifically identified.
- Noise principle – create a peaceful community where you can hear the crickets.

III. DISCUSSION: DRAFT SCENARIOS

Following Mr. Ball’s presentation of the draft scenarios and associated performance measures for the sub-region, participants indicated their preferences for the draft scenario of compact development and associated performance measures that best reflect the visions for growth and appropriate level of implementation of the draft principles. The four scenario options included:

- **No change**, or maintaining development patterns as projected in today’s local land use planning policies
- **Some change**, or some increase in compact development

- **Moderate change**, or a moderate increase in compact development
- **Major change**, or a major increase in compact development

After tallying participant's preferences for scenarios, the small group facilitator asked participants to comment on their choices, which the facilitator recorded on the flip chart pages. The facilitator also encouraged participants to record their scenario choice and associated comments on their comment form. Following is a summary of participants' scenario choices (with tallies noted next to the scenario names) and comments:

Major Change (3)

Participants who selected the major change scenario considered it the best way to protect quality of life, manage growth, improve community walkability and reduce auto use. Others identified it as the best use of existing infrastructure at the lowest price. Some participants identified the preservation of agricultural land, water resources and food security.

Moderate Change (8)

Participants who selected the moderate change scenario expressed the need to identify what the ultimate goal is and address it through ongoing, eventual change. They felt major change was unrealistic. Participants expressed a desire to preserve open space and agricultural land. Participants also selected the moderate approach and suggested it was vital for jobs, health, walkability and reduced auto use.

Some Change (1)

No comments were provided.

No Change (0)

Participants did not support this scenario. Some identified the proliferation of drugs, crime and graffiti under this scenario. Others stated this scenario would lead to a dead community with no life in the town center.

