

# KERN REGIONAL BLUEPRINT PROGRAM TOWN HALL MEETING—PHASE 2

---

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

---

### MCFARLAND October 30, 2007

#### I. INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday, October 30, 2007, Kern Council of Governments (COG) hosted a Town Hall Meeting for the Kern Regional Blueprint Program at the Mouser Center in McFarland. 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; and
- 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 McFarland meeting was held from 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. at the Mouser Center, 100 South 2<sup>nd</sup> Street in McFarland. 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](http://www.kerncog.org)). Approximately 9 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: Gerald Forde, City Manager, City of McFarland; Dennis Martin, Council Member, City of McFarland; Donnie Campbell, Council Member, City of McFarland; Ruben Garza, Planning Commissioner, City of McFarland; and introduced Kern COG Assistant Director, Darrel Hildebrand.

Mr. Hildebrand 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 McFarland 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. After brief introductions among the participants, a facilitator guided participants through a discussion of participants' reactions to the draft principles. As a discussion tool, the facilitator 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 facilitator 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 Kern COG Senior Planner, 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 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 facilitator 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. 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 generally agreed land is a finite resource and space must be used efficiently. There was consensus there needed to be less travel by single occupancy vehicle to improve air quality. Participants also agreed it’s time to rethink the way we build communities and that it was necessary to do planning up front. Communities need to be more walkable, have mixed uses, and provide for better health. They agreed that efficient use of land also reduces the cost of services. Participants agreed that saving agricultural land was important.

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

***Provide a variety of housing choices***

Participants generally agreed the use of compact development and/or mixed use will manage this principle if done correctly. Participants agreed that as citizens age they may want different housing options. Participants also recognize there is a need for workforce housing.

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
1	5	2	0	0





***Provide adequate and equitable services***

Participants agreed this principle was extremely important for growth. Participants agreed this principle and the principle “use and improve existing community assets” will help augment tax revenues. Participants generally agree that parks are where many citizens’ “spend” their vacation. They also agree a community needs good schools and medical services to be vital.

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


***Use and improve existing community assets and infrastructure***

Participants agreed the community needs to have good infrastructure to grow effectively. Participants stated you can't have economic development without adequate infrastructure.

 Major effect	 Moderate effect	 Small effect	 No effect	X Delete
5	3	0	0	0

***Provide a variety of transportation choices***



Participants agreed the biggest community issue with transportation was access on and off of Highway 99. Participants agreed there was a need for a smaller transit bus that traveled to and from Bakersfield more frequently.

 Major effect	 Moderate effect	 Small effect	 No effect	X Delete
2	6	0	0	0

Participants expressed the desire to see a commuter train to Bakersfield by 2050 if there was a network of public transit to access in Bakersfield.

***Enhance economic vitality***

Participants identified a need to link jobs, education and training. Participants agreed there was a critical need for vocational education such as welding, metal shop, wood shop, and auto shop to provide opportunities for people to obtain jobs.

 Major effect	 Moderate effect	 Small effect	 No effect	X Delete
7	1	0	0	0





***Conserve energy and natural resources, and develop alternatives***

Participants stated that most developers are using "green" building techniques. Participants identified the potential to use wind and solar energy. One participant suggested a need for more input from private industry. One participant stated McFarland had no control over this principle and requested it be deleted.

 Major effect	 Moderate effect	 Small effect	 No effect	X Delete
4	3	0	0	1

***Conserve undeveloped land and spaces***

Some participants felt this was not within their control. Other participants felt proper planning would take care of this principle.

 Major effect	 Moderate effect	 Small effect	 No effect	X Delete
1	5	2	0	0

***Increase civic and public engagement***

Participants agreed this principle is critical for proper planning for the future. Participants stated that getting the Hispanic population involved takes a different approach; the whole family must be involved.

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

***Missing principles***

Participants identified the following missing principles:

- More equitable tax split between the city/county.
- Need a truck stop with new interchange to increase tax revenue.

**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 (6)***

Participants who chose the major change scenario expressed the need to start now and plan ahead. They expressed a need for trails that connect, parks for people to use as lot sizes decrease to alleviate the potential for an increase in crime. Participants also chose this scenario because air quality would improve, land and water would be saved and mobility would improve.

***Moderate Change (2)***

Participants chose the moderate change scenario because they thought it was more feasible to attain.

***Some Change (0)***

Participants did not support this scenario.

***No Change (0)***

Participants did not support this scenario.

**ADDITIONAL ISSUES AND COMMENTS**

Participants provided additional comments during the small group discussions and via comment cards.

- Cannot have businesses mixed with residences
- Plan for industrial and residential
- Locate homes near schools so teachers can walk to work
- Block off streets and develop shopping areas
- Remove large trucks in residential areas

