

KERN REGIONAL BLUEPRINT PROGRAM TOWN HALL MEETING—PHASE 2

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

EAST BAKERSFIELD SENIOR CENTER January 29, 2008

I. INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday, January 29, 2008, Kern Council of Governments (COG) hosted a Town Hall Meeting for the Kern Regional Blueprint Program at the East Bakersfield Senior Center. 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 East Bakersfield meeting was held from 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. at the East Bakersfield Senior Center, 2101 Ridge Road in Bakersfield. 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 29 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: Ken Weir, Council Member Ward 3, City of Bakersfield; Jim Movius, Planning Director, City of Bakersfield; Jim Eggert, Assistant Planning Director, City of Bakersfield; Scott Denney, Supervising Planner, County of Kern; Karen Northcutt, Consultant, City of Bakersfield/County of Kern; 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 Meetings in Metro Bakersfield including a list of participant's growth concerns for the future. 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 vision 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 generally agreed the use of compact development would use land and other resources more efficiently and improve air quality. Participants also agreed that compact development could lead to more efficient public transit, more walkability, and more convenient access to stores, parks, etc. Some participants wanted more redevelopment and infill development. One participant identified the need to consider child care needs when constructing new communities or redesigning existing communities. Some participants suggested wide streets were a selling point in Bakersfield. They expressed concern that compactness would lead to narrower streets that weren’t safe.

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
15	10	1	0	0

Provide a variety of housing choices

Most participants suggested that a mix of housing choices is necessary for all income levels, age groups, and social and racial groups within the community. They felt it was a quality of life

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
14	11	0	0	0

issue to have a mix of decent/quality housing choices. Some participants suggested that this principle is market driven and that implementation by government is difficult. Some participants suggested that having affordable housing with no landlord on site to monitor and enforce regulations is a negative. People expressed the need for citizens to take pride in their community.

Provide adequate and equitable services

Participants generally expressed a desire to maintain and or/enhance quality education, child care, affordable health care and parks and open space within the community. A few participants felt poor neighborhoods are underserved. One participant suggested Metro Bakersfield needed a unified parks and recreation district.

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
26	0	0	0	0

Use and improve existing community assets and infrastructure

Participants expressed a desire to redevelop existing housing and commercial developments. Some participants expressed the need to recognize the value of historical places. Participants discussed the Baker Street redevelopment project and expressed excitement for the project but wondered if the development would remain affordable. Participants generally agreed there needs to be transparency in the development of these types of projects and a focus on not repeating poor quality developments.

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
18	7	1	0	0

Provide a variety of transportation choices

Participants generally agreed this principle would have a positive effect on air quality. Participants suggested the current transit system is ineffective and could be improved by having more direct routes.

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
18	5	2	0	0

Participants agreed the single occupancy vehicle attitude needed to be changed for this principle to be effective. Participants expressed the opinion that transportation variety follows compact development such as transit villages. Some participants identified the need for high speed rail.

Enhance economic vitality





Participants expressed the opinion that there was a disconnect between higher education and local

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
10	14	1	0	0

industry i.e. agriculture and petroleum. Specifically, participants discussed that the highest education center in the community, CSUB, doesn't focus educational options on agriculture or oil. Some participants identified the need for improved employment opportunities for youth. Some suggested using mentorships as a way to assist economic vitality within the community.





Conserve energy and natural resources, and develop alternatives

Participants identified water as a critical natural resource and expressed the need to preserve quality resources. Participants expressed a desire to develop alternative energy sources such as solar, wind, and bio-fuels. One participant suggested that a municipal solar utility should be established. One participant discussed the need to take advantage of dairies and use manure as an energy source. One participant suggested that bio-fuels should be limited because it affects the food supply and consumer costs.

 Major effect	 Moderate effect	 Small effect	 No effect	X Delete
19	6	0	0	0





Conserve undeveloped land and spaces

Participants recognized the importance to Kern County and the nation of maintaining the military air space in eastern Kern County. Others felt the Bakersfield Air Park also provides an important service. Participants generally wanted to avoid overdeveloping agricultural lands. They also wanted to protect natural habitat and the Kern bluffs. One participant identified the Kern River Plan as a tool to preserve and restore the lower Kern River through Bakersfield. Some participants identified a need for more parks and recreational areas.

 Major effect	 Moderate effect	 Small effect	 No effect	X Delete
16	8	1	0	0

Increase civic and public engagement

Participants collectively agreed there was a need to get the public involved. Participants suggested use of the internet, television and message boards as a way to engage the public. Other participants suggested going to neighborhood school cafeterias, church halls, and community centers. A few participants identified the need to involve young people in the plan via student planning seminars. Participants generally agreed that people wanted to see results of their input within a reasonable period of time.

 Major effect	 Moderate effect	 Small effect	 No effect	X Delete
14	6	3	0	1

Missing principles

Participants identified the following missing principles:

- Develop/attract industrial base.
- Provide affordable childcare and after school activities for youth.
- High speed rail.
- Teen mentorship.

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 (12)

Some participants who selected the major change scenario felt there was a need for major change but felt that it wasn't realistic. Participants also expressed that they would be for major change if it was done correctly. Some were against tearing down existing neighborhoods. Participants identified a need to plan for and implement road construction before demand occurs. Some that voted for major change did not want to mix too many multifamily dwellings in single family neighborhoods due to the perceived potential for increased crime.

Moderate Change (10)

Participants who selected the moderate change scenario felt major change was unrealistic or too dense. They expressed the need for realistic change based on the demographics.

Some Change (2)

Some participants expressed that they would like to have a middle ground between moderate change and some change. Others suggested they wanted single family homes, affordable homes and to maintain what open space and green we have.

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.

- The density options were great. How do we get votes and decision makers support?
- Probably a socio-political change needed before there can be a structural change. This may occur as the population makeup changes from new blood infusion.
- Compact growth creates even more traffic.
- Transit is a good idea for others but it's not for me.