

# KERN REGIONAL BLUEPRINT PROGRAM TOWN HALL MEETING—PHASE 2

---

## S U M M A R Y   R E P O R T

---

### WASCO November 28, 2007

#### I. INTRODUCTION

On Wednesday, November 28, 2007, Kern Council of Governments (COG) hosted a Town Hall Meeting for the Kern Regional Blueprint Program at the Recreation and Parks District Office in Wasco. 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 Wasco meeting was held from 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. at the Recreation & Parks District Offices, 1280 Poplar Street in Wasco. 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 18 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. Linda Urata 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: Cheryl Wegman, Mayor, City of Wasco; Carl Joe Hively, Council Member, City of Wasco; Ron Mittag, City Manager, City of Wasco; Jake Raper, Planning Director, City of Wasco; Dennis McNamara, Senior Planner, City of Wasco; Zoraida Cruz, Assistant Planner, City of Wasco; Jim Zervis, Finance Director, City of Wasco; Dan Allen, Public Works Director, City of Wasco; 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 Wasco 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. Urata 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. Urata 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. Urata 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***

Some participants thought mixed land uses were not necessary to achieve the community’s goals. Some participants thought suburbs will always be an option. A few participants thought this principle would lead to a cohesive community and reduce the cost of resources. A few participants thought the market would drive this principle; therefore, there was no choice in how the community developed.

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate Effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
7	2	4	0	2





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

Participants expressed the opinion that housing variety does not mean compact development.

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate Effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
9	4	2	0	0





**Provide adequate and equitable services**

Participants unanimously agreed this principle was important. Participants identified a need for better education, medical services including an urgent care facility, public safety services and recreational services.

 Major effect	 Moderate Effect	 Small effect	 No effect	<i>X Delete</i>
15	0	0	0	0





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

Participants generally agreed it would be expensive and difficult to improve the existing downtown areas. Some participants expressed the opinion it would be cheaper to rebuild than to build new.

 Major effect	 Moderate Effect	 Small effect	 No effect	<i>X Delete</i>
7	3	5	0	0





**Provide a variety of transportation choices**

No comments were provided on this principle.

 Major effect	 Moderate Effect	 Small effect	 No effect	<i>X Delete</i>
9	2	3	1	0





**Enhance economic vitality**

Participants agreed there is a need for vocational training within the community.

 Major effect	 Moderate Effect	 Small effect	 No effect	<i>X Delete</i>
9	2	4	0	0





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

Participants generally agreed this principle was important. Participants expressed the need to conserve water, produce solar energy, utilize “green” development concepts and protect agricultural lands to retain food production capability. Participants also agreed air quality is a problem.

 Major effect	 Moderate Effect	 Small effect	 No effect	<i>X Delete</i>
13	1	1	0	0

**Conserve undeveloped land and spaces**

Some participants didn’t agree communities could stay within current boundaries. Participants expressed a need for buffers from dairies and the need for green belts.

 Major effect	 Moderate Effect	 Small effect	 No effect	<i>X Delete</i>
4	2	9	0	0

***Increase civic and public engagement***

Participants collectively agreed public involvement is important, but hard to accomplish. Some participants expressed the opinion there is a large segment of the population that is not represented who may have a different perspective on the issues.

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate Effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	<i>X</i> <i>Delete</i>
<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

***Missing principles***

Participants identified the following missing principles:

- None identified.

**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 (2)***

Participants who selected the major change scenario expressed the opinion there was currently too much growth.

***Moderate Change (5)***

Participants who selected the moderate change scenario expressed the desire to allow growth as resources are available. Participants thought development should go up with open space nearby. Others expressed the opinion that development will occur and preparation is needed.

***Some Change (1)***

The participants who selected the some change scenario thought a small footprint was growth prohibitive.

***No Change (1)***

The participant who selected the no change scenario wanted to retain the rural atmosphere.

**ADDITIONAL ISSUES AND COMMENTS**

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

- City buffers
- Sprawl
- Growth limits
- Dairies
- The principles may work for urban areas but not in rural areas.

