

KERN REGIONAL BLUEPRINT PROGRAM TOWN HALL MEETING—PHASE 2

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

ARVIN 2050
October 17, 2007

I. INTRODUCTION

On Wednesday, October 17, 2007, Kern Council of Governments (COG) hosted a Town Hall Meeting for the Kern Regional Blueprint Program at the Veterans Hall in Arvin. 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 Taft meeting was held from 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. at the Veterans Hall at 414 4th Street in Arvin. 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 22 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. Esmeralda García from Moore Iacofano Goltsman, (MIG) Inc. served as the meeting facilitator and initiated the meeting with brief welcoming remarks and an agenda overview. She then recognized local officials in attendance: Issac George, Planning Director, City of Arvin; 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 Arvin 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. García then reviewed the format of the small group discussions before convening participants to their randomly assigned 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, Senior Planner with Kern COG, 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. García 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. García facilitated the discussion and also recorded a summary of the reports on large wallgraphic paper at the front of the meeting room, which is attached to this report as photo-reduced copy on page A1.

The following pages summarize comments captured on the wallgraphic and 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 discussed a need for more choices in development types and that more compact development would provide more positive opportunities in land use, particularly for health and accessibility. However, some participants saw how this principle could lead to negative developments as well. Others wanted to make sure that a balance is maintained between development and job opportunities.

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
10	8	0	0	1

Provide a variety of housing choices





Many participants were in favor of diversifying housing stock, particularly to fit the needs and desires of different generations. However, many were concerned about how focusing on housing development might leave out

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
6	6	7	1	0

economic development, which is needed to support people living in any new housing. Overall, participants felt that increasing the variety of housing would have a positive effect on the community, but also emphasized the importance of maintaining the housing types that are currently in place.





Provide adequate and equitable services

Participants expressed significant support for increasing services available in the area, including medical, safety, recreation, and education. Expanding supervision for youth, vocational training, police and fire resources, and medical facilities also received support. A small number of participants expressed concern that increased services require a critical mass of population to support them.

 Major effect	 Moderate effect	 Small effect	 No effect	X Delete
19	0	0	1	0





Use and improve existing community assets and infrastructure

Participants discussed improving infrastructure as a means of rejuvenating areas throughout the city and of improving the city's appearance. Participants noted concerns about water, sewer, and other infrastructure, with many calling for complete reconstruction of some resources. Some participants commented that reuse would be more cost effective than completely starting over.

 Major effect	 Moderate effect	 Small effect	 No effect	X Delete
8	12	0	0	0





Provide a variety of transportation choices

Participants identified a dilemma in the balance between population density, population size, and public transit. Some participants discussed a need for more transit within the city, while others commented about the difficulties of reaching far parts of the city and of not having a critical mass to support the cost of transit. In response, some participants suggested focusing instead on walking and cycling. Participants also addressed handicap accessibility issues, and at least one participant requested express transit service to Bakersfield.

 Major effect	 Moderate effect	 Small effect	 No effect	X Delete
9	4	6	1	0

Enhance economic vitality





Discussion overwhelmingly revolved around a need for more general studies education and skilled job training, which participants stated are necessary

 Major effect	 Moderate effect	 Small effect	 No effect	X Delete
19	0	1	0	0

for better jobs and a better economy. Participants also discussed how important agriculture is to the local economy.





Conserve energy and natural resources, and develop alternatives

Participants emphasized the importance of clean air and water, which would keep people healthier and safer. Additionally, participants identified alternative energy as an opportunity for the area, and some participants emphasized the need to care for the environment overall.

 Major effect	 Moderate effect	 Small effect	 No effect	X Delete
19	1	0	0	0





Conserve undeveloped land and spaces

Some participants recognized a need for slower development and protection of agricultural resources. Others commented that a portion of their community lives off agriculture, which needs to be protected for their well-being.

 Major effect	 Moderate effect	 Small effect	 No effect	X Delete
9	8	2	1	0

Increase civic and public engagement

Participants expressed significant concern about a lack of civic participation in their community, particularly among elected officials and other leaders. Specifically, participants emphasized the need for accurate cultural and other representation among leaders, along with the need for government to assist with financial and other investment in the community.

 Major effect	 Moderate effect	 Small effect	 No effect	X Delete
20	0	0	0	0

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 (8)

Participants who supported this scenario commented that environmental clean-up, protecting the safety of natural resources (e.g. water, air), decreasing time spent in automobiles, and lowering gasoline use were goals that supported major change in the community.

Moderate Change (8)

Participants who supported this scenario commented that growth is inevitable, but moderate change and moderate growth allows for more control over how it happens and results in more choices for community members. Others commented that conserving open space is an important aspect of this scenario.

Some Change (1)

One participant supported this scenario on the notion that housing density should not mix with current single-family development patterns.

No Change (0)

Participants did not support this scenario.

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Use compact, efficient development and/or mixed land uses
 ▶ BUILD "UP" NOT "OUT"

Major	Medium	Local	Neighborhood	Other
10	8			1

Provide a variety of housing choices
 ▶ MEETS NEEDS OF MULT-GENERATIONS

Major	Medium	Local	Neighborhood	Other
6	6	7	1	

Provide adequate and equitable services
 ▶ MEDICAL, SAFETY

Major	Medium	Local	Neighborhood	Other
19			1	

Recreation for youth
 ▶ RECREATION FOR YOUTH
 ▶ EDUCATION-VOCATIONAL
 Use and improve existing community assets and infrastructure
 ▶ IMPROVE CITY'S APPEARANCE
 ▶ MORE COST EFFECTIVE

Major	Medium	Local	Neighborhood	Other
8	12			

Provide a variety of transportation choices
 ▶ WALKABLE ONLY IN CITY
 ▶ NOT ENOUGH POP FOR MASS TRANSIT
 Enhance economic vitality
 ▶ EDUCATION TO SUPPORT LOCAL JOBS

Major	Medium	Local	Neighborhood	Other
9	4	6	1	

Conserve energy and natural resources, and develop alternatives
 ▶ CARE FOR ENVIRONMENT
 ▶ ALTERNATIVE ENERGY
 Enhance economic vitality

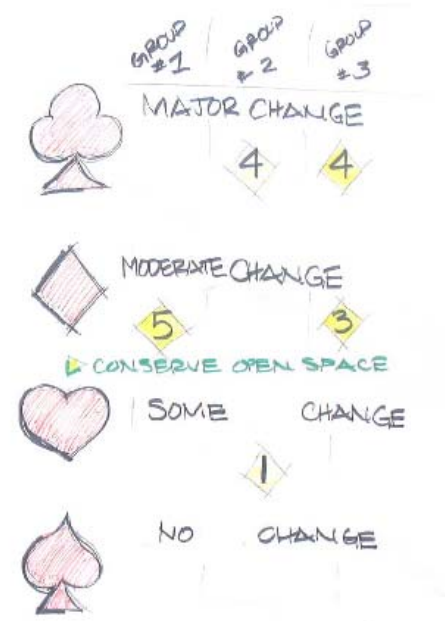
Major	Medium	Local	Neighborhood	Other
19			1	

Conserve undeveloped land and spaces
 ▶ A.G. LAND IMPORTANT !!!

Major	Medium	Local	Neighborhood	Other
9	8	2	1	

Increase civic and public engagement
 ▶ ENSURE PARTICIPATION OF ELECTED OFFICIALS

Major	Medium	Local	Neighborhood	Other
20				



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