

KERN REGIONAL BLUEPRINT PROGRAM TOWN HALL MEETING—PHASE 2

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

LAMONT October 16, 2007

I. INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday, October 16, 2007, Kern Council of Governments (COG) hosted a Town Hall Meeting for the Kern Regional Blueprint Program at the David Head Center in the community of Lamont. 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 community's 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 community's 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 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

The Lamont meeting also included targeted outreach to local Latino community members with the support of the Dolores Huerta Foundation. 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 Lamont meeting was held from 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. at the David Head Center, 10300 San Diego Street in Lamont. The meeting was conducted entirely in Spanish, with English translation provided for Kern COG staff members during the presentation and group discussion portions of the meeting. 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. Ms. García recognized Camilla Chavez from the Dolores Huerta Foundation and thanked her for the outreach assistance for the meeting. She then introduced Raquel Pacheco of Kern COG.

Ms. Pacheco 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 Lamont 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 community's 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 Ms. Pacheco regarding draft "scenarios" for future growth in the sub-region. Ms. Pacheco 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. She 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.

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 community’s vision 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 community’s vision 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:

Draft Principles	♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
Use compact, efficient development and/or mixed land uses	3	16	0	0	0
Provide a variety of housing choices	10	10	1	0	0
Provide adequate and equitable services	19	1	1	0	0
Use and improve existing community assets and infrastructure	0	2	2	0	0
Provide a variety of transportation choices	17	2	2	0	0
Enhance economic vitality	18	3	0	0	0
Conserve energy and natural resources, and develop alternatives	17	1	3	0	0

Conserve undeveloped land and spaces	10	1	10	0	0
Increase civic and public engagement	18	1	1	0	0

Overall, participants suggested that adequate and equitable access to services, housing and economic opportunities are important, particularly among under-represented or low-income community members. Many participants stressed the need to support youth with education and recreation facilities and programs. Regarding compact development, participants generally supported focusing growth in current urbanized areas, but many emphasized the need to continue to provide other development opportunities such as agricultural property or ranch-style development. Participants also indicated the need to increase the number of affordable housing opportunities.

III. DISCUSSION: DRAFT SCENARIOS

Following Ms. Pacheco’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 community’s vision 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.

Participants’ scenario choices ranged from “major” to “small” change, but none chose “no” change. Overall, participants indicated that planning for future growth is important to the livability and quality-of-life in local communities. Specifically, many

♣ Major change	♦ Moderate change	♥ Small change	♠ No change
6	9	7	0

participants indicated that such planning is important to improving air quality in the region, which many participants find to be poor in their communities. Other participants indicated the importance of water in long range planning, particularly

to address drinking water contamination, adequate irrigation for agriculture, and locating communities in flood control zones

