

# KERN REGIONAL BLUEPRINT PROGRAM TOWN HALL MEETING—PHASE 2

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

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**DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. COMMUNITY CENTER  
January 30, 2008**

### I. INTRODUCTION

On Wednesday, January 30, 2008, Kern Council of Governments (COG) hosted a Town Hall Meeting for the Kern Regional Blueprint Program at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community 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 Metro Bakersfield meeting was held from 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center, 1000 South Owens Street 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](http://www.kerncog.org)). Approximately 15 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: Jim Movius, Planning Director, City of Bakersfield; 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. After brief introductions among the participants, facilitators 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 facilitators recorded participants' discussion points and the card game tallies during the 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 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.

Participants reviewed the scenarios and data in more detail, which were provided as handouts and on large posters at each small group table. Participants were asked to indicate their preferred scenario and to share their ideas and reasons as part of the group discussion. The 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. 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 there was a need to build up infrastructure in existing neighborhoods. Participants agreed with the concept of preserving agricultural lands.

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Participants suggested that urbanization can produce the negative outcome of encouraging separate societies/communities and isolated neighborhoods. One participant expressed the opinion that the community has walkable (Stockdale), but that the South East is not walkable.

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

Participants generally felt there currently is a mix of housing choices and that developers build to sell to the current market demand.

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Participants generally agreed that as the community grows, there will be a need for a mix of housing choices.

***Provide adequate and equitable services***

Participants agreed that services are not equitable everywhere in Metro Bakersfield. When

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

services/resources are not available within one’s neighborhood, citizens are required to travel to get the basics. Some participants stated that if basic services cannot be offered in an area, the area should not be developed.

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

One participant felt this principle would have a small effect unless other issues are addressed first.

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
10	2	1	0	0

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

Participants generally agreed population density is required for this principle to be successful.

Participants also identified the necessity for senior citizen transportation. Participants

generally agreed that funding for public transit and new bus routes should be attached to development/growth.

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
10	3	0	0	0

***Enhance economic vitality***

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
12	1	0	0	0

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

Participants agreed resources must be valued and wasting resources costs the consumer. Participants also recognized that the more people you add, the more demand/strain/competition there is for existing resources.

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

***Conserve undeveloped land and spaces***

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
10	2	1	0	0

***Increase civic and public engagement***

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

***Missing principles***

Participants identified the following missing principles:

- Need for administrative follow-up to ensure objectives care carried out in the future.
- Need an information dissemination plan.
  - Church announcements
  - Billboards
  - Message Boards
  - Variety of media
  - Mailers
- Bring in more participants and newcomers
  - Churches
  - Each person establish a personal network
  - Walk neighborhoods

**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 (4)***

Participants who selected the major change scenario recognized that as population increases throughout the world, demand on resources will be too great. People will have to learn to lessen their impact to conserve resources, remain economically viable, and maintain affordability. Participants felt variety can have benefits & be beautiful.

### ***Moderate Change (7)***

Participants who selected the moderate change scenario expressed the opinion that they wanted to maintain the community identify and major change went to far. They also expressed the opinion that landowners, developers and the market will decide how development occurs unless there is the political will to change it. Developing political will takes organizing which takes communication and communication takes passion and a desire to express a unified position.

### ***Some Change (1)***

The participant that chose the some change scenario expressed that he/she wanted to know what is going on all along the way. He/she was afraid development would be done wrong and he/she didn't trust that anything would happen.

### ***No Change (0)***

Participants did not support this scenario.

### ***Additional Comments***

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

- County and City need a disaster plan that is available to all.
- Change needs to happen and can happen in a county in the U.S., but little will occur if the people within this very department that have computers and an income, will not sit down tomorrow morning and develop new things like a blog.
- Compact growth creates more traffic.
- Transit is a good idea for others but it's not for me.

