

**KERN REGIONAL BLUEPRINT PROGRAM/  
METROPOLITAN BAKERSFIELD  
GENERAL PLAN UPDATE**

**TOWN HALL MEETING**

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**S U M M A R Y   R E P O R T**

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**SOUTHEAST BAKERSFIELD  
May 21, 2007**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

On Monday, May 21, 2007, the County of Kern, City of Bakersfield and Kern Council of Governments (COG) hosted a Town Hall Meeting for the Metropolitan Bakersfield General Plan Update/Kern Regional Blueprint Program at the Martin Luther King Community Center. The purpose of the meeting was: (a) to collect input about what participants viewed as the strengths of Metro Bakersfield; (b) to collect input about what participants viewed as weaknesses or challenges faced in Metro Bakersfield; and (c) to facilitate discussion and collect input about potential long-term solutions to the challenges faced in Metro Bakersfield.

**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.

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. 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. The Kern visioning process will continue through December 2007.

### **Community Outreach**

To build community awareness of and involvement in the Blueprint Program, the County of Kern, City of Bakersfield and Kern COG initiated an outreach program as part of these Town Hall Meetings. Kern COG utilized outreach assistance from Odyssey, a California-based nonprofit organization focused on transportation policy improvements. The County of Kern and City of Bakersfield utilized outreach assistance from Vision 2020, a volunteer organization in Bakersfield, CA. The County of Kern, City of Bakersfield, and Kern COG implemented a number of outreach measures to advertise the meeting, including:

- Targeted mail and email of a 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 Southeast Bakersfield meeting was held from 6:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. at the Martin Luther King 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 (see pages 10 - 13). Participants were then asked to place red and green dots on an aerial photograph to locate where they lived and worked, respectively. Approximately 40 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. Ted James, Director of Planning & Development Services for Kern County initiated the meeting with brief welcoming remarks and agenda overview. Mr. James introduced Bakersfield Planning Director, Jim Movius. Mr. Movius delivered a slideshow presentation that provided an overview, data and the process for developing the General Plan Update for Metro Bakersfield. Mr. Movius then introduced Sheryl Barbich from Vision 2020 who reviewed the format for the small group discussions before dispersing participants to their randomly assigned groups.

After brief introductions among the participants, a facilitator at each small group table guided participants through an open discussion of what participants identified as Bakersfield's strengths and weaknesses/challenges. The facilitator then guided the group through a discussion designed to identify potential solutions to the top three weaknesses chosen by the participants in each small group. The small group facilitators recorded participants' discussion points 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 the small group discussions, participants reconvened in the large group format to hear brief summary reports from a volunteer from each group. Jenna Monterrosa of Moore Iacofano Goltsman 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 14.

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. Copies of these documents may be accessed by contacting Kern COG.

## **II. DISCUSSION: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES/CHALLENGES**

The small group facilitators asked participants to describe what they view as strengths and weaknesses/challenges faced by the Metro Bakersfield region. Participants also identified what they thought were solutions to the top three weaknesses/challenges identified by each group.

### ***Strengths***

- Family atmosphere
- Agricultural and produce production
- Diverse population
- Geographic location
- You can get involved
- Strong faith based
- Affordability
- Centrally Located
  - 4-5 hours to Las Vegas
- Affordable housing (compared to LA)
- Caring community
- Community generosity
- Small town atmosphere

### ***Weaknesses/Challenges***

- Air Quality
- Gang Activity
- Rapid Growth – No Planning
- Transit System
- Traffic Congestion
  - Need public Transportation
  - Too long to get anywhere
- Growth exceeds infrastructure

### ***Solutions***

- Change transit system

- Electeds take responsibility
- Develop up, not out
- Develop rail system
- Electeds take part in transit system and community
- Make city people friendly
  - More sidewalks
- More parent involvement in community
- Better education system
- More PSA's – "Life as it is"
- More life skills mentors
- Carpool
- Alternative fuels
  - Low emissions
  - Cleaner vehicles
- Live close to work
- Less truck traffic
- Forest and range management
- Organic farms
- More bike paths
- Sales tax to improve highways
- Finish roads

### **III. TOP ISSUES FOR THE FUTURE**

Each small group identified the issues of most concern potential solutions. The following table outlines the top nine participant concerns recorded on flip chart pages and submitted on comment forms. Individual tables record summary comments to the top nine identified concerns.

<b>Top Concern Related to Metro Bakersfield's Future</b>	<b>Services Safety &amp; Equity</b>	<b>Traffic/ Mobility</b>	<b>Growth Management</b>	<b>Air Quality</b>	<b>Gangs/Crime</b>	<b>Blight</b>	<b>Education Vocational &amp; Academic</b>	<b>Poverty</b>	<b>Misc. Economic Issues</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>

<b>CONCERN</b>	<b>SUMMARY OF COMMENTS</b>
<b>SERVICES SAFETY &amp; EQUITY</b>	Participants generally identified a lack of accessible recreation facilities and services for “at risk” low income citizens as a concern. Some participants viewed a lack of summer recreational programs for youth as a problem. Participants identified a lack of equal opportunity for prosperity and lack of cultural diversity as a concern. Some felt the law enforcement system needed to be more culturally friendly. Some also felt there was intolerance for alternative life styles. Participants also identified the need for free recycling opportunities.

<b>CONCERN</b>	<b>SUMMARY OF COMMENTS</b>
<b>TRAFFIC/ MOBILITY</b>	Participants generally agreed traffic congestion was an issue and identified the need for better public transportation. Some participants felt planning needed to be done for a light rail system. Participants identified the need to complete the Westside Parkway, Highway 58 and Highway 178. Some felt there needed to be more mixed use and higher density living opportunities. Participants also identified the need for better synchronization of traffic signals. Participants identified the need to pass the ½ cent sales tax for transportation.

<b>CONCERN</b>	<b>SUMMARY OF COMMENTS</b>
<b>GROWTH MANAGEMENT</b>	Participants generally agreed Metro Bakersfield is primarily low density with increasing sprawl development. Some felt there had been rapid growth without sufficient planning. Some identified the need for “Smart Growth” and higher density planning. Some felt that allowing homes to be built where there is no commercial development (grocery stores, etc.) is an issue. Some participants felt there needed to be growth boundaries. Some participants felt there were too many gated communities.

<b>CONCERN</b>	<b>SUMMARY OF COMMENTS</b>
<b>AIR QUALITY</b>	Participants agreed that air quality was an issue. Participants identified the need for improved transit service, affordable alternative fuels and energy, and less truck traffic. Some participants felt communities should be more walkable with businesses nearby. Some identified the need to live closer to where you work. Some participants felt the biggest polluters needed to be identified and regulated. Some participants felt growth should be slowed.

<b>CONCERN</b>	<b>SUMMARY OF COMMENTS</b>
<b>GANGS/ CRIME</b>	Participants generally agreed gang violence, crime and illegal drug availability was a problem. Participants felt there needed to be more of a focus on K-6 education, support for strengthening families, and community mentoring. Some participants identified the need for educational collaboration for job skills and a focus on teaching trades in schools. Some identified a need for more recreational opportunities and some felt there needed to be more police officers.

<b>CONCERN</b>	<b>SUMMARY OF COMMENTS</b>
<b>BLIGHT</b>	Participants generally agreed there were a number of blighted neighborhoods in Metro Bakersfield. Participants also identified graffiti as a problem. Some identified a lack of sidewalks, infrastructure and empty buildings as an issue in some areas. Some participants felt that confined animal facilities were creating odor problems.

<b>CONCERN</b>	<b>SUMMARY OF COMMENTS</b>
<b>EDUCATION VOCATIONAL &amp; ACADEMIC</b>	Participants identified a lack of skilled nurses, occupational preparation (exposure to potential jobs), and no vocational programs in high school as a concern. Some participants felt low performing K-12 schools need more resources. Some participants felt the average educational attainment of the population was a concern. Many participants felt a lack of higher paying jobs in the area created a “brain drain” (educated population leaving the area).

<b>CONCERN</b>	<b>SUMMARY OF COMMENTS</b>
<b>POVERTY</b>	Participants generally agreed poverty is a concern. Some identified the rate of unemployment as a contributor to poverty. Some participants felt there was growing divide between the wealthy and the working poor.

<b>CONCERN</b>	<b>SUMMARY OF COMMENTS</b>
<b>MISC. ECONOMIC ISSUES</b>	The prison system is a large part of Kern's economy, and some participants felt this was a negative. Some participants identified the lack of competitive wages as an issue. Some participants felt big business was not regulated sufficiently; others felt there were too many fast food facilities.

## **ADDITIONAL CONCERNS**

The following concerns were identified including the number of votes received by the groups:

- |                                    |    |
|------------------------------------|----|
| • Infrastructure Planning          | 17 |
| • Agriculture/Habitat Preservation | 17 |
| • Growth Affecting Public Services | 13 |
| • Walkable/Bikeable                | 7  |
| • Health                           | 6  |
| • Infrastructure Maintenance       | 3  |
| • Landscape/Trees/Maintenance      | 3  |
| • Homeless                         | 1  |

Participants provided the following additional comments via comment cards:

### **Affordable Housing**

- Providing enough affordable housing will be a challenge

### **Water**

- Water conservation is a challenge

### **Miscellaneous Comments**

- Connections need to be made between the problems with Bakersfield and the causes/reasons for the problems.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

The following pages contain handouts and presentation materials featured at the meeting and described in the summary report.

- Agenda
- Comment Form
- Evaluation Form
- Wallgraphic



## **COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS**

### **METROPOLITAN BAKERSFIELD GENERAL PLAN UPDATE**

# **A G E N D A**

May 2007

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- I. Presentation: The General Plan Update.....Why Now?
- II. Small Group Discussions
  - a. Strengths, Weaknesses, and Vision
  - b. Prioritizing Issues
- IV. Large Group Discussion
  - a. Reports from Small Group Discussions
- V. Next Steps

*Close*



**METROPOLITAN BAKERSFIELD**  
**GENERAL PLAN UPDATE**  
**COMMUNITY MEETINGS**  
**MAY 2007**

**C O M M E N T F O R M**

Thank you for participating in this process! **Your comments are important to us, so please use this form to provide written comments about the discussion topics and any other issues.** Please submit your completed form at the end of the meeting to the registration table. Otherwise, you may mail this form within one week of this meeting to: Planning Department, City of Bakersfield, 1715 Chester Avenue, Bakersfield, California 93301.

Meeting Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Meeting Location: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Please provide any comments related to the slideshow presentation.

2. What do you like most about your community?

3. What are the major areas or issues for improvement in your community?

**PLEASE TURN OVER**

4. When you envision your community in the year 2050, what are some of its **MOST POSITIVE** aspects?

5. When you envision your community in the year 2050, what are some of its **BIGGEST CHALLENGES**?

6. Please share any additional comments about the project.

**METROPOLITAN BAKERSFIELD  
GENERAL PLAN UPDATE  
COMMUNITY MEETINGS MAY 2007**

**MEETING EVALUATION FORM**

Thank you for participating in this meeting! **Your comments are important to us, so please use this form to evaluate the meeting.**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Meeting Location: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What did you like about the meeting?
  
2. What did you not like about the meeting?

3. Please rate the following aspects of the meeting:

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
A. Slideshow presentation and information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Small group open discussion: vision & values	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Small group discussion: solutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. Large group discussion & small group reports	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E. Overall meeting design	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
F. The meeting addressed issues important to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
G. I was able to provide input and it was recorded.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
H. I would participate in a future meeting.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes		<input type="checkbox"/> No	

Please write any additional comments on the above items on the back of this form.

4. Please help us determine the success of our community outreach efforts by telling us a bit about yourself:

**Gender**

Female   
Male

**Age group:**

Under 18     60-69  
 18-29     70-79  
 30-39     80-89  
 40-49     90-99  
 50-59

**Ethnicity:**

White or Caucasian     Asian  
 Hispanic or Latino     American Indian  
 Black or African American     Two or more races  
 Pacific Islander     Other

5. I attended this meeting and provided input *primarily* as a(n):

Resident   
Member of the business community   
Government Employee   
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

6. I heard about this meeting through:

Newspaper article in: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email from an organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Flier received in the mail  
 Newsletter article in: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please submit your completed form at the end of the meeting to the registration table, or mail within one week to: Planning Department, City of Bakersfield, 1715 Chester Avenue, Bakersfield, CA 93301*

Greater Bakersfield  
**VISION 2020**  
COMMUNITY WORKSHOP  
MAY 21, 2007

**NEXT MEETINGS**

• SOUTHWEST - MAY 31, 2007  
BAKERSFIELD FIREFIGHTERS  
ASSOCIATION HALL  
7400 WIBLE ROAD  
6:00 - 8:30 PM

**STRENGTHS**

- ↳ FAMILY ATMOS.
- ↳ AG & PRODUCE PRODUCTION
- ↳ POPULATION - DIVERSE
- ↳ GEO. LOCATION
- ↳ YOU CAN GET INVOLVED
- ↳ STRONG FAITH BASED
- ↳ AFFORDABILITY ✓ 4-5 HRS TO LAS VEGAS
- ↳ CENTRALLY LOCATED - MORE THAN LA.
- ↳ AFFORDABLE HOUSING - MORE THAN LA.
- ↳ "A CARING COMMUNITY"
- ↳ COMM. GENEROSITY
- ↳ SMALL TOWN ATMOSPHERE
- ↳ CENTRALITY - LOCATION

**CHALLENGES**

- ↳ AIR QUALITY - POOR ✓
- ↳ GANG ACTIVITY ✓
- ↳ RAPID GROWTH - NO PLANNING
- ↳ TRANSIT SYSTEM
- ↳ TRAFFIC CONGESTION ✓ <sup>NEED PUBLIC TRANSP.</sup> TOO LONG TO GET ANYWHERE
- ↳ GROWTH EXCEEDS INFRASTRUCTURE

**SOLUTIONS**

- ↳ CHANGE TRANSIT SYSTEM
- ↳ ELECTEDS TAKE RESP.
- ↳ DEV. UP, NOT OUT
- ↳ DEV. RAIL SYSTEM
- ↳ ELECTEDS TAKE PART IN TRANSIT SYSTEM & COMM.
- ↳ MAKE CITY PEOPLE FRIENDLY - MORE SIDEWALKS
- ↳ MORE PARENT INVOLVEMENT #COMM.
- ↳ BETTER EDUC. SYSTEM
- ↳ MORE PSA'S - "LIFE AS IT IS"
- ↳ MORE MENTORS - LIFE SKILLS
- ↳ CARPOOL
- ↳ ALT. FUELS - LOW EMISSIONS - CLEANER VEHICLES
- ↳ LIVE CLOSE TO WORK
- ↳ LESS TRUCK TRAFFIC
- ↳ FOREST & RANGE MGMT
- ↳ ORGANIC FARMS
- ↳ MORE BIKE PATHS
- ↳ SALES TAX TO IMPROVE HWYS
- ↳ FINISH ROADS

