

**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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**SOUTHWEST BAKERSFIELD  
May 31, 2007**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

On Thursday, May 31, 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 Bakersfield Firefighters Association Hall in Bakersfield. 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 Southwest Bakersfield meeting was held from 6:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. at the Bakersfield Firefighters Association Hall, 7400 Wible Road in Bakersfield. Upon entering the meeting facility, participants signed-in and received a nametag and handout materials including an agenda, comment form, evaluation form, and Vision 2020 information (see pages 12 - 15). 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 recognized local officials in attendance: Bakersfield Council Member, Harold Hanson, Bakersfield Council Member, Zack Scrivner, Andy Stanley, Representative for Congressman Kevin McCarthy, and introduced Bakersfield Assistant Planning Director, Jim Eggert. Mr. Eggert delivered a slideshow presentation that provided an overview, data and the process for developing the General Plan Update for Metro Bakersfield. Mr. Eggert 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 16.

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***

- Lowest cost of living in area
- Central Location
- Graffiti removal
- School System
  - Involvement
  - Cost of education
- Proximity to services
- Affordable housing
- Low cost higher learning system
- Small Community
  - Small town feeling
  - “Middle America”
- Agricultural base
- Airport
- Kind People
- Child development services
- Pro Growth
- Pro Business
- Diverse

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

- Air Quality
- Transportation
  - Grade Separation

- Roads need repair
- Lack of parks
  - Community
  - Regional
- Lack of infrastructure planning
- Protection of Resources
- Congestion
- Drug abuse
- Teenage birth rate
- Gang violence
- Lack of improvements
  - Revitalization of neighborhoods
- Police support
- Need additional entry-level housing
- Lack of support by electeds
- Human services support
- Medical resources
- Rapid growth
  - Lack of planning
- Revitalize neighborhoods
- Low educational test scores

### **Solutions**

- Half cent sales tax
  - Prioritize costs
  - Widen roads
  - Finish cross-town freeway
  - Construct beltways
- Fix roads right the first time
  - Educate public of costs/tradeoffs
  - Lower medians
  - Improve safety
- Synchronize signals
- Add improvements to existing parks
  - Buy land for parks
- Incorporate parks in development
- More parks/open space
- Alternate fuels
  - Alternate transportation options (bicycles)
- Traffic impact fees
- Increase availability of public transportation
- Air regulation
- Rideshare
- After school programs
- Intervention at school to prevent gangs/crime
- Positive interaction with police

- On the job training for youth
- Mandate drug testing for those individuals on social services
- Incentives for redevelopment of older areas
- Inform residents of resources
- More activities for youth and families
- Be more selective about development

### **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>Infrastructure Planning</b> | <b>Gangs/Crime</b> | <b>Education Vocational &amp; Academic</b> | <b>Air Quality</b> | <b>Growth Management</b> | <b>Traffic/Mobility</b> | <b>Urban Renewal</b> | <b>Infrastructure Maintenance</b> |
|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|--|--------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>TOTALS</b>  | <b>75</b>                           | <b>67</b>                      | <b>51</b>          | <b>45</b>                                  | <b>43</b>          | <b>32</b>                | <b>32</b>               | <b>27</b>            | <b>24</b>                         |

| <b>CONCERN</b>                      | <b>SUMMARY OF COMMENTS</b>   |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>SERVICES SAFETY &amp; EQUITY</b> | Participants generally agreed there was a lack of cultural community events and entertainment for youth and adults. Some felt there was not enough to do, including shopping opportunities. Some identified a lack of services for seniors and families with children. Some felt there was a lack of family recreational opportunities and parks in certain areas (low income). Participants identified a need for more high quality childcare, after school activities, and services for latch key children. Some identified a need for better (free) recycling programs. Some participants identified a need to overhaul the welfare system. |

| <b>CONCERN</b>                     | <b>SUMMARY OF COMMENTS</b>  |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>INFRASTRUCTURE<br/>PLANNING</b> | <p>Participants generally agreed infrastructure has not kept pace with growth and development. The following areas were identified: freeways, roads, and community parks with pools and sports facilities, classroom capacity/schools, sewers, and landfills. Participants identified the need to incorporate neighborhood parks in new development. Participants expressed an interest in prioritizing top traffic improvements including costs for construction and possible funding options and providing the public with the information.</p> |

| <b>CONCERN</b>          | <b>SUMMARY OF COMMENTS</b>  |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>GANGS/<br/>CRIME</b> | <p>Participants generally agreed gang violence and illegal drug activity was a problem. Some participants identified domestic violence and child abuse as a concern. Participants identified the need for early intervention/education and mentoring programs. Some participants thought big brother and big sister programs could help. Some participants expressed a desire for the police department to build a more positive relationship in the community to encourage trust. Participants agreed the community needed to work together to solve problems.</p> |

| <b>CONCERN</b>                                     | <b>SUMMARY OF COMMENTS</b>   |
|--|--|
| <b>EDUCATION<br/>VOCATIONAL<br/>&amp; ACADEMIC</b> | Some participants identified the lack of vocational education in schools as a weakness. Some participants expressed concern with K-12 education, high dropout rates, low-test scores, low graduation rates, and the perceived disparity of school resources. Participants expressed concern with the need for nurses and teachers in Kern County. Some participants expressed the desire for better education programs to curb teen pregnancy rates. |

| <b>CONCERN</b>         | <b>SUMMARY OF COMMENTS</b>  |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>AIR<br/>QUALITY</b> | Participants identified air quality as poor. Participants identified the following as potential solutions: alternative fuels, solar/wind power, green building, smart homes, replacement of old diesel engines, use of hybrid vehicles, and more open space with trees. Participants expressed an interest in increased density and a reduction in sprawl as another potential solution. Participants also expressed a desire for carpool lanes, improving public transportation, and increasing bicycle use. Some identified the potential for utilizing environmentally friendly farming techniques. A few participants wanted to ban leaf blowers, incandescent lights, and dairies. |

| <b>CONCERN</b>               | <b>SUMMARY OF COMMENTS</b>  |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>GROWTH<br/>MANAGEMENT</b> | <p>Some participants expressed a concern that Metro Bakersfield was growing too fast creating what they identified as urban sprawl. Some expressed a concern that too much new housing was being built. Some participants expressed a desire for multi-use commercial/residential and infill development. Participants generally agreed with the concept of being more selective about what is allowed and keeping special interest groups from making decisions for Bakersfield. A few participants wanted a cap on development.</p> |

| <b>CONCERN</b>               | <b>SUMMARY OF COMMENTS</b>   |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>TRAFFIC/<br/>MOBILITY</b> | <p>Participants generally agreed traffic was an issue and identified the need for better circulation. Participants identified the need for a cross-town freeway. Most agreed traffic signals needed to be synchronized and public transportation improved. Participants identified the need to pass the ½ cent sales tax for transportation and the desire for higher developer impact fees. Many participants wanted a cross-town freeway built and roads widened to accommodate today's traffic.</p> |

| <b>CONCERN</b>       | <b>SUMMARY OF COMMENTS</b>  |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>URBAN RENEWAL</b> | Participants agreed revitalization was needed in older, historically low-income areas of Metro Bakersfield. Some felt there should be incentives for redevelopment in older neighborhoods. Participants generally agreed with continuing to revitalize downtown. Some participants expressed a desire for a more attractive urban core. |

| <b>CONCERN</b>                    | <b>SUMMARY OF COMMENTS</b>   |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>INFRASTRUCTURE MAINTENANCE</b> | Participants generally agreed improvements were needed to existing parks. Other participants identified the need for better bike and pedestrian facilities. Some participants expressed the desire for better road maintenance and the need to fix roads correctly the first time. |

## **ADDITIONAL CONCERNS**

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

- Growth Affecting Public Services      21
- Agriculture/Habitat Preservation      20
- Health      19
- Blight      17
- Misc. Economic Issues      10
- Walkable/Bikeable      7
- Housing      6
- Landscape/Trees/Maintenance      5
- Water      5
- Poverty      4
- Homeless      2

Participants provided the following additional comments via comment cards:

### **Water**

- Designate land appropriate for ground water banking
- Water recycling programs for all sections

### **Recycling Programs**

- Recycle all materials possible (mandatory curbside for business & residential)
- Disposal of sewage sludge away from farmland and water bank areas

### **Miscellaneous Comments**

- Need more high quality child care centers
- Need more high quality education programs
- Keep our agricultural
- Social services needs improvement
- Rethink cement islands and current road philosophy that cement islands make a better looking and safer road

## **APPENDIX**

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
- II. Presentation: The General Plan Update.....Why Now?
- III. 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: \_\_\_\_\_

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*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*

