

# 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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### SHAFTER November 27, 2007

#### I. INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday, November 27, 2007, Kern Council of Governments (COG) hosted a Town Hall Meeting for the Kern Regional Blueprint Program at the Shafter Veterans Building in Shafter. 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 Shafter meeting was held from 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. at the Shafter Veterans Building, 309 California Avenue in Shafter. 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. Linda Urata 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: Fran Florez, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Shafter; Jon Johnston, Council Member, City of Shafter; Barbara Craig, Planning Commissioner, City of Shafter; John Guinn, City Manager, City of Shafter; Jo Barrick, Administrative Services Director, City of Shafter; Brent Green, Business and Economic Development Director, City of Shafter; 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 Shafter 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. Urata then reviewed the format of the small group discussions before convening participants to their small 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 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. Urata 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. Urata facilitated the discussion and also recorded a summary of the reports on flip chart pages at the front of the meeting room.

The following pages summarize comments captured on the 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 agreed efficient development is important and there is a need for senior housing and housing for young families. Participants also agreed retaining the town history especially in the downtown was important to the community. Participants expressed the opinion that work and services need to be within a short distance of each other and senior housing should be close to the downtown with easy access to services. Participants also expressed the desire to have a walkable community and agreed walls built around developments don’t encourage walking and biking.

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate Effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

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





Participants generally agreed housing is needed for all walks of life and all socio-economic groups. Some participants expressed the desire to consider planned unit development concepts.

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate Effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Some participants expressed the opinion that Shafter may not have a market for condominiums/townhouses, but apartments are needed. Participants also expressed a need for first-time home buyer programs and FHA/VA loan programs.

***Provide adequate and equitable services***





Participants agreed there is a need for medical services/doctors within the community and expressed a desire to have a hospital. Participants agreed education, recreation, parks and cultural opportunities are also very important.

 Major effect	 Moderate Effect	 Small effect	 No effect	<i>X Delete</i>
<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Participants expressed the need for people to feel safe in their community; therefore, public safety services are vital. Some participants expressed the desire for one-stop government and social services within the community.

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





Participants agreed there was a need to rehabilitate existing housing stock and a need for infill development. Some participants liked the idea of multiuse development downtown but stated it would be a challenge to accomplish.

 Major effect	 Moderate Effect	 Small effect	 No effect	<i>X Delete</i>
<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Participants expressed the need to extend the sewer system. Some participants expressed the opinion that this principle was important, but felt education was more important.

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





Participants generally agreed public transit is important and linked to air quality, gas prices and road construction. Some participants expressed the opinion that transportation choices within the

 Major effect	 Moderate Effect	 Small effect	 No effect	<i>X Delete</i>
<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

community were not as important as transportation between the communities of Shafter and Bakersfield. Some participants expressed the desire to build new developments that are pedestrian friendly. Other participants expressed the desire to have a high speed rail station in Shafter.

***Enhance economic vitality***





Some participants agreed there are enough jobs in the community, but job training is lacking. Participants generally agreed vocational education is important and expressed the desire for more vocational training opportunities in schools. Participants expressed the

 Major effect	 Moderate Effect	 Small effect	 No effect	<i>X Delete</i>
<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

desire to expand shopping opportunities within the community. Some participants expressed the opinion that some industries such as dairies and prisons have negative impacts that far outweigh the positive impacts.





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

Participants expressed the need to utilize alternative energy in new developments. Some participants expressed the opinion the “green” concept is the new trend, but needs to be the reality.

 Major effect	 Moderate Effect	 Small effect	 No effect	<i>X Delete</i>
<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>





***Conserve undeveloped land and spaces***

Participants agreed this principle is important, but think Shafter has addressed it at the local level. Some participants expressed the opinion that property rights take precedence.

 Major effect	 Moderate Effect	 Small effect	 No effect	<i>X Delete</i>
<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

***Increase civic and public engagement***

Participants collectively agreed public involvement is important, but hard to accomplish. Some participants expressed the opinion there is a large segment of the population that is not represented who may have a different perspective on the issues.

 Major effect	 Moderate Effect	 Small effect	 No effect	<i>X Delete</i>
<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

***Missing principles***

Participants identified the following missing principles:

- One stop center for training, jobs and education.

**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 (5)***

Participants who selected the major change scenario expressed the opinion that if the housing stock currently on the ground in the valley, and the housing stock already authorized but not built are taken into consideration; major change is needed to change the footprint. Participants also recognized the population is aging and alternatives to large lot development are needed.

#### ***Moderate Change (4)***

Participants who selected the moderate change scenario were of the opinion that this scenario was probably a more pragmatic approach to change. They also recognized this scenario provided more mixed use development.

#### ***Some Change (3)***

Participants who selected the some change scenario expressed the opinion that this scenario provides a better transition to change.

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

Participants did not support this scenario. Participants expressed the opinion that reality cannot be ignored and we can't retain the status quo.

### **ADDITIONAL ISSUES AND COMMENTS**

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

- Bakersfield and Shafter need to stop fighting and realize they are "in the same boat". Together they will float to new heights, or sink to new depths!
- When will we ever begin the conversation with regard to population? No one wants to broach this subject. And yet...there is not one problem, not one, that we face as a society that will be solved, mitigated, or helped in any way by an ever increasing population!
- The market and the property owners will ultimately decide what gets built. No amount of planning can change that.
- I would like to see the school and city bring a one-stop center for training, jobs & education.

