

KERN REGIONAL BLUEPRINT PROGRAM TOWN HALL MEETING—PHASE 2

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

TAFT – MARICOPA – BUTTONWILLOW October 10, 2007

I. INTRODUCTION

On Wednesday, October 10, 2007, Kern Council of Governments (COG) hosted a Town Hall Meeting for the Kern Regional Blueprint Program at The Historic Fort in Taft. 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 Taft meeting was held from 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. at The Historic Fort at 915 North 10th Street in Taft. 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 24 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. Andy Pendoley from Moore Iacofano Goltsman, (MIG) Inc. served as the meeting facilitator and initiated the meeting with brief welcoming remarks and an agenda overview. He then recognized local officials in attendance: Paul Linder, Mayor, City of Taft; Virgil Bell, Mayor, City of Maricopa; Randy Miller, Council Member, City of Taft; Dave Noerr, Council Member, City of Taft; Bob Wilburn, City Manager, City of Maricopa; Teresa Statler, Finance Director, City of Taft; Mike Lee, Planning Director, City of Taft; 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 Taft 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.

Mr. Pendoley 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 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, Senior Planner with Kern COG, 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.

Mr. Pendoley 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. He 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. Mr. Pendoley 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 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 believed this principle would have a major effect on the Taft area, but were torn over whether the impact would be a positive one, with some suggesting that Taft already exhibited enough

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
12	10	1	0	0

compact development. Some participants supported compact development in existing urban and downtown areas and as an option for seniors, young families, and others seeking non single-family home housing types. One participant mentioned that compact development might be a good way to rehabilitate South Taft residential neighborhoods. Other participants identified mixed use, green building techniques, and sustainability as elements in compact neighborhoods and downtowns. Some participants emphasized the need to link all development with sufficient infrastructure.

Provide a variety of housing choices





Most participants favored diversifying housing stock to meet the needs and desires of all ages, income levels, and lifestyles. Specifically, participants suggested that affordable and small-unit

 Major effect	 Moderate effect	 Small effect	 No effect	<i>X Delete</i>
19	3	1	0	0

housing for seniors, young families, and low-income populations are major needs. However, some participants also emphasized that large lot, single-family homes should remain a major part of the housing stock. Some participants also mentioned the need for rehabilitation/improvement programs for older housing stock, to keep it maintained and functional.





Provide adequate and equitable services

Participants indicated a substantial need for medical services, supervision for children and the elderly, and overall financial support. Most commonly requested by participants were a hospital, emergency room, urgent care clinic, and basic medical services, along with the financial and other support necessary to make these services accessible to all populations. Participants also requested additional community resources for the elderly and children, including supervision and organized activities, to support growing senior and youth populations.

 Major effect	 Moderate effect	 Small effect	 No effect	<i>X Delete</i>
23	0	0	0	0





Use and improve existing community assets and infrastructure

Participants enthused about revitalizing downtown via infill development and the reuse of old buildings. While noting the importance of infrastructure improvements to accompany redevelopment plans, participants felt that using and improving existing community assets could be an efficient, charming way to continue development in Taft. Many felt it would improve quality of life and address issues such as absentee landlords. One participant commented that rehabilitation should happen in older residential neighborhoods instead of downtown.

 Major effect	 Moderate effect	 Small effect	 No effect	<i>X Delete</i>
16	7	0	0	0

Provide a variety of transportation choices





Participants noted a range of issues related to local and regional transportation options, but generally supported the community's current transportation planning efforts. Given increasing gas prices and

 Major effect	 Moderate effect	 Small effect	 No effect	<i>X Delete</i>
7	12	3	0	0

more development, participants expressed a need for educating the public now about non-automobile modes of transportation to affect future change. Participants requested improved pedestrian amenities and new pedestrian corridors to encourage walking, as well as a more connected bike trail network in and out of downtown. Some participants noted the importance of State Routes 119 and 33 for intercity travel, which could be opportunities for scenic route designation and general improvements. Additional local and regional transit elements suggested by participants include taxis and bus lines.





Enhance economic vitality

Participants noted a need to build the job base and encourage talented young workers to stay in the community. Participants' specific suggestions included vocational training, education options, meaningful employment, and job diversity. Some participants also noted a need for workforce housing and other services to support an increasingly diverse base of employees. One participant noted a need for an inventory of job opportunities and an assessment of what skill levels are missing among employees and jobs.

 Major effect	 Moderate effect	 Small effect	 No effect	X Delete
13	8	1	0	0





Conserve energy and natural resources, and develop alternatives

Participants expressed the need to be prepared for energy, water, and other environmental issues. Specific preparations included modern technology, green building techniques, and a sense of personal responsibility, all of which would better prepare the community for future resource constraints. Some participants noted that solar power generation is a particularly exciting possibility for this area.

 Major effect	 Moderate effect	 Small effect	 No effect	X Delete
12	7	3	0	0

Conserve undeveloped land and spaces

Participants expressed less support for this principle for a variety of reasons. Some participants explained that, because the area is surrounded by oil fields and is in the jurisdiction of a variety of state and federal agencies, little can be done to control land uses. Others commented that conserving undeveloped land and spaces would be contrary to growth goals. Some participants commented that there needs to be a balance of individual versus community needs in conserving land.

 Major effect	 Moderate effect	 Small effect	 No effect	X Delete
4	3	8	2	4

Increase civic and public engagement

Participants agreed that early involvement and outreach to increase community involvement would be very valuable. Some participants stressed the need to start young, teaching children to be involved in the community. Others expressed a need for this planning process to be shared with the entire community so that hopefully they get involved.

♣ Major effect	♦ Moderate effect	♥ Small effect	♠ No effect	X Delete
12	9	0	1	0

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 (8)

Participants emphasized that compact development and growth could bring along diversity, an expansion of options, and an opportunity for change that would be good for the community, but that community involvement would be necessary to “do it right.” Participants also discussed the need for vibrancy, local businesses, and affordable infrastructure and energy as integral elements of this scenario.

Moderate Change (11)

More participants preferred this scenario, expressing a need for compact development in some areas of the city and for leaving alone other areas. Participants commented that compact development and mixed use would make sense for downtown and other areas that need more density and diversity in

uses, but residential neighborhoods should remain largely single-family, large lot. Growth is inevitable, and infrastructure and amenities must keep up with demand to service this growth. Some participants noted that, if done correctly, growth doesn't have to damage the environment and can incorporate sustainable and green techniques.

Some Change (1)

Most participants did not support this scenario on the premise that the community needs change, particularly to increase diversity of jobs and housing options.

No Change (0)

Participants did not support this scenario on the basis of poor infrastructure, rising costs, and the loss of open space that might come with expansive development.

ADDITIONAL ISSUES AND COMMENTS

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

- STOP=Shop Taft Only Partners

KERN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
 KERN REGIONAL BLUEPRINT PROGRAM

Town Hall Meeting

TAFT MARI COPA
 BUTTOWILLON
 OCTOBER 10, 2007

Use compact, efficient development and/or mixed land uses

Major	Minor	Local	Neighborhood	Other
12	10	1	0	0

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES
 LINK TO INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

Provide a variety of housing choices

Major	Minor	Local	Neighborhood	Other
19	3	1	0	0

NEED OPTIONS
 DO IT RIGHT!
 QUALITY MIX
 LOW COST OPTIONS

Provide adequate and equitable services

Major	Minor	Local	Neighborhood	Other
23	0	0	0	0

MEDICAL CARE
 EMERGENCY CARE
 URGENT CARE
 ASSISTED LIVING

Use and improve existing community assets, and infrastructure

Major	Minor	Local	Neighborhood	Other
16	7	0	0	0

QUALITY OF LIFE
 ATTRACTOR
 DEFICIENT
 HISTORIC BLDGS → ATTRACTIVE
 - CHARM!

ROAD MAINT./IMPROVEMENT

Major	Minor	Local	Neighborhood	Other
7	12	3	0	0

TRAILS & PATHS
 EFFECTIVE DESIGN

Enhance economic vitality

Major	Minor	Local	Neighborhood	Other
13	8	1	0	0

JOB SKILL LEVELS
 IS WHAT'S MISSING?
 LINK TO INDUSTRY
 NEED WORKFORCE HOUSING

Conserve energy and natural resources, and develop alternatives

Major	Minor	Local	Neighborhood	Other
12	7	3	0	0

BUILD GREEN
 MODERN TECHNOLOGY
 PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Conserve undeveloped land and spaces

Major	Minor	Local	Neighborhood	Other
4	3	8	2	4

SHOULD SUPPORT COMPETITIVENESS

Increase civic and public engagement

Major	Minor	Local	Neighborhood	Other
12	9	0	1	0

NEED MORE INVOLVEMENT
 SHARE THIS INFO WITH WHOLE COMMUNITY!

MAJOR CHANGE 8

PRESERVES ALL OPTIONS & VARIETY
 DIVERSITY!
 AFFORDABLE!
 - INFRASTR.
 - FUEL/ENERGY

MODERATE CHANGE 11

DO IT RIGHT!
 INCLUDE AMENITIES
 NEED SOME OTHERS GROWTH
 RETAINS DOWNTOWN

SOME CHANGE 1

PROMOTE LARGER HOMES
 WE HAVE THE JOBS

NO CHANGE 0

POOR INFRASTRUCTURE



Kern County Council of Governments
 Kern Regional Blueprint Program
 Town Hall Meeting - Taft Areas
 October 10, 2007

