

CHAPTER 3 PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

The Kern Council of Governments (Kern COG) is the state affiliate data center for Kern County, and oversees transportation plans, programs, and transportation-related projects for its eleven cities: Arvin, Bakersfield, California City, Delano, Maricopa, McFarland, Ridgecrest, Shafter, Taft, Tehachapi, and Wasco. In addition, Kern COG has oversight of similar plans, programs, and projects within the unincorporated areas of Kern County.

The Kern COG Board adopted a policy to revisit the regional growth forecast every 3-5 years to ensure projections account for the latest growth trends

It is important that forecasts are updated frequently to account for recent trend changes. In 2001 the Kern COG Board adopted a policy to revisit the regional growth forecast every 3-5 years to ensure projections account for the latest growth trends. This timeframe provides stability to the regional environmental process by allowing time for documents to be completed without a major change to the forecast. On March 19, 2020 the Kern COG board adopted a growth forecast update developed by The California Economic Forecast Consulting of Santa Barbara, California. The report documents a sophisticated econometric forecast model used to update the regional growth forecast previously adopted in 2015. The report states,

“This report presents the 2020 update of the Kern COG Regional Growth Forecast, used principally to update the Kern County Regional Transportation Plan. The report provides forecasts for a number of demographic and economic indicators, but the principal elements are:

- *Population*
- *Number of Housing Units*
- *Number of Households, and*
- *Employment*

The forecast of these indicators is largely influenced by economic conditions prevailing in the state and county. Economies which are vibrant and creating jobs will encourage new in-migrants that augment the population. Higher population growth influences the demand for housing, infrastructure, and transportation.”

The next scheduled update will be during the two-year window starting in 2023.

The forecast and planning assumptions process is implemented by joint subcommittees: the Kern COG Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC), the Regional Planning Advisory Committee (RPAC) and the Transportation Modeling Committee (TMC). The Kern COG Board set up the TMC in May 2001 with the adoption of the Transportation Modeling Policy and Procedure. This procedure was re-confirmed with the adoption of a Memorandum of Understanding on Transportation Modeling Coordination between Caltrans, City of Bakersfield, Kern County and Kern COG on January 15, 2004.

The TMC consists of the technical staff from Kern COG member agencies planning and public works departments. The committee is also responsible for sub-area distribution of the growth forecast as well as numerous other regional transportation modeling issues. As part of the development of the SCS, the TMC has been meeting jointly with the RPAC.

GROWTH TRENDS

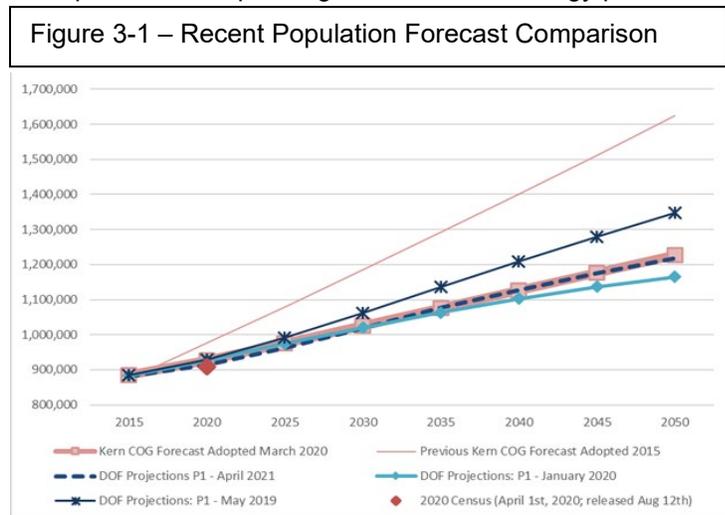
Population in the 8,200-square-mile County of Kern was 909,235 in April 2020 (*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020*). This past decade Kern County’s population increased, on average, by 7,000 per year, over 60% less than the 17,800 people per year from the prior decade 2000 to 2010 including the 3 years of the great recession. Growth in Kern is driven by value-added agriculture, aerospace/defense, energy/natural

resources, transportation logistics/manufacturing, and health care. Early growth last decade was driven by employment in the oil sector and a new renewable energy sector in wind and solar. Kern County's Valley portion of the county produces over 75% of California's in-state oil and 58% of the state's total natural gas. County-wide both commercial scale wind and solar as well as distributed generation solar produces over 12,000 MW of electricity for California as well as local industries. Value added agriculture supported by alternative fuel production such as biodiesel made Kern County in 2016, the largest agricultural producing county in the nation for the first time. Further mission driven expansion at Edwards Air Force Base and China Lake Naval Weapons Station as well as the Mojave Spaceport fueled growth areas outside the Metropolitan Bakersfield area.

By 2011 Kern was one of the first counties in California to gain back all the jobs lost during the great recession and by 2013 Kern County had the 5th fastest growth rate in California at 1.25%. Four percent (4%) of employment in Kern is in the high-wage oil industry and Kern is consistently one of the top oil producing counties in the nation.¹ When the price of oil dropped more than 75% to \$27 per barrel in 2014, a second recession not experienced elsewhere in the state hit Kern. Kern saw early signs of recovery as the price of oil more than doubled by 2018, however, state discussion of adoption of policies to reduce or eliminate fossil fuel production in California has negatively affected investment in one of the most important sectors high wage sectors of the local economy. Employment remains strong in logistics, renewable energy construction and value-added agriculture, but nothing like what was seen in the prior decade.

Unlike the previous decade when Kern grew by nearly 18,000 people per year, from July 2010 to July 2020 annual population growth ranged from a high of 8,300 in 2012/13 to a low of 2,600 in 2015/16, averaging 7,000 per year since July 2010. In 2020-21 Kern may have experienced its first negative growth year ever due to prison closures and early release of prisoners, people leaving the state due to high housing costs and concerns over the pandemic. The adopted 2015 forecast for the 2018 RTP assumed that the population growth will look more like the prior decade, averaging about 21,900 people per year over the entire forecast time frame from 2015 to 2042. The new adopted forecast for this RTP predicts a significant 51% reduction in population growth compared to prior RTP assumptions (**Figure 3-1**).

As in all parts of California, housing affordability is linked to job growth and Kern is noted for being the most affordable housing market in the state² making Bakersfield a destination for household migration from more expensive markets, like Southern California, that are experiencing a major housing shortage/affordability crisis. The availability of more affordable housing makes Kern a candidate location for satellite offices, and state policies for expanding the renewable energy portfolio continues to provide jobs in this industry and a new streamlined, environmentally protective permit system for oil and gas supports continued permit activity.

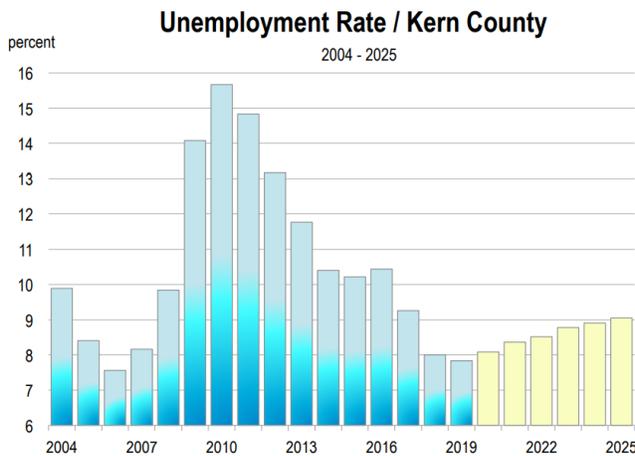


In addition, the growth assumptions include a planned High Speed Rail station for Bakersfield that would provide 55-minute passenger rail service between Kern and L.A. Union Station. This potential connection could eventually bring greater job diversity and housing to Kern County beyond recent and historic growth trends. The question is not if, but when we will see the forecasted growth in Kern. Forecast trends will continue to be adjusted in future RTP updates every four years.

¹ Drilling Info <http://info.drillinginfo.com/half-us-oil-production-comes-20-counties/>, 2014

² Smart Asset, <https://smartasset.com/mortgage/quicken-loans-review#california/most-affordable>, 2017

Figure 3-2 – Unemployment Rate 2004-2025



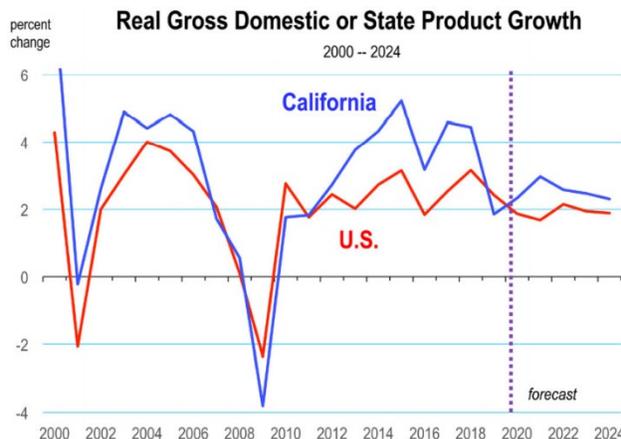
PRIMARY FORECASTS

This section is adapted from the executive summary narrative for the adopted 2020-2050 Regional Growth Forecast prepared by Dr. Mark Schniepp, Director and Chief Economist for California Economic Forecast consulting firm. The charts and data were adopted before the release of the 2020 Census data in August 2021 and prior to any available data on impacts of the pandemic.

SUMMARY OF ECONOMIC CONDITIONS TODAY UNDERLYING THE FORECAST UPDATE

The growth forecast for Kern County indicates that relatively healthy conditions will continue to prevail in the County over the longer term.

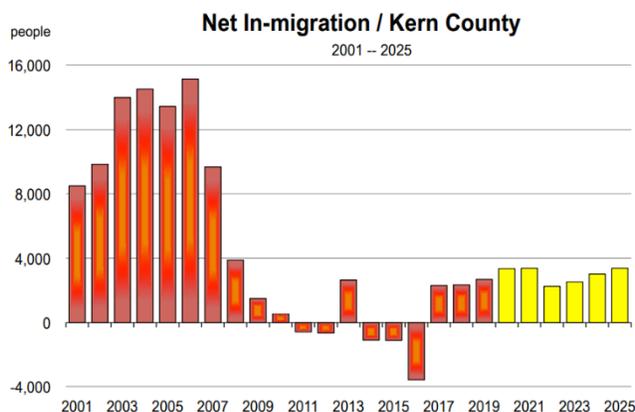
Figure 3-3 – Real Gross Domestic or State Product Growth



Clearly, however, the short term forecast is more beneficial to business and public policy makers because there is a higher degree of accuracy in the forecast over the next few years than over the next 30. Consider the short term forecast of 5 years (Figures 3-2). During this time, a recession in the U.S. economy is anticipated and growth of employment and population in Kern County would be impacted by such an event, just as it has in past recessions afflicting the national stage.

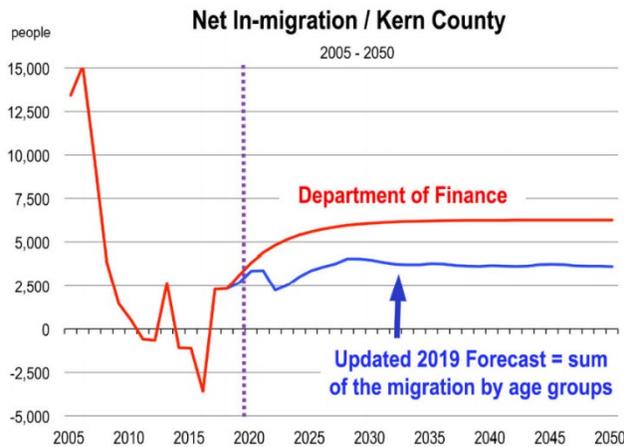
Figure 3-3 shows the outlook for the U.S. economy has growth slowing from 2.1 percent in 2019 to 1.6 percent in 2020, rising to 2.0 percent in 2021. The pandemic is assumed to have created conditions that might lead to GDP growth hovering around 1.0 percent. At this level, the economy becomes vulnerable to an unanticipated shock, even a mild one, which could push the business cycle into contraction. For example, recent state discussion of eliminating oil production has resulted in an additional shock to investment in the oil industry in Kern.

Figure 3-4 – Net In-migration 2001-2025



The state's economy, while not always the case, has moved in tandem with the National economy over the last 10 years. Furthermore, it is likely that any softening or contraction in growth will also impact California in a similar fashion. Moreover, recession in California is also presumed to impact Kern County.

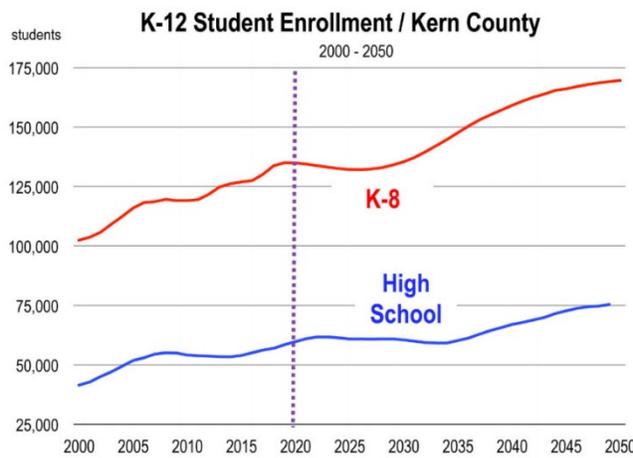
Figure 3-5 – Net In-migration 2001-2025



Consequently, the forecast for employment growth is muted over the next few years relative to the last 5 years in Kern County. Nevertheless, the growth rate is positive and the unemployment rate remains relatively low over this time period.

A slowdown in the California and Kern County economies would typically reduce job opportunities and consequently, the attraction of new in-migrants. Population growth is forecast to slow in California as a result (Figures 3-4 & 5). But in Kern County, because job creation will remain positive and home prices extraordinarily competitive, the forecast for net migration remains consistent with actual levels between 2017 and 2019.

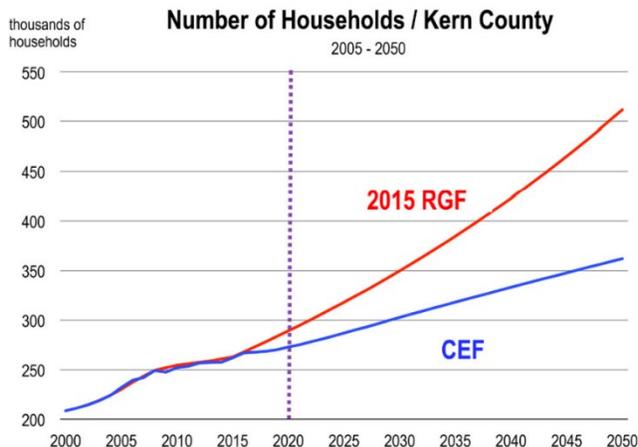
Figure 3-6 – K-12 Student Enrollment 2000 - 2050



This differs from the May 2019 Department of Finance population projection, which assumes that in-migration will suddenly accelerate in 2020, pushing the overall population growth rate much higher.

Real estate assets are forecast to increase to accommodate population and job growth over the longer term. New housing units augment the existing housing stock, the number of households, and school enrollments: K through 12 and in the county's community colleges, trade schools, and at Cal State Bakersfield (Figures 3-6 & 7).

Figure 3-7 – K-12 Student Enrollment 2000 - 2050



All of these influences drive the forecast of employment. Employment drives net migration. Together with the demographics of the current population, net migration impacts population growth, which ultimately influences the demand for housing. Housing then results in new households require improved transportation infrastructure to move between the workplace, schools, and home.

GROWTH INDUCING INFLUENCES

Clearly, California's High Speed Rail will increase the likelihood for an acceleration in population growth in Kern County. This is especially true when the Bakersfield to Palmdale to Burbank line is completed, as early as 2032. Until then however, the forecast makes no presumption that this line will be completed by then or how it exactly impacts net in-migrating populations. Consequently, the incorporation of the High Speed Rail project on the growth prospects for Kern County is deferred to a future forecast update.

Energy projects have been especially important to the County’s economy over the last 5 years. New solar and wind farms are increasing energy outputs for thousands of California homes. Not many jobs however are being created by these projects.

Housing prices are forecast to remain competitive, meaning that more households will be able to become homeowners in Kern County compared to substantially higher housing cost areas in the coastal areas of California. While technology jobs are not as prolific in the County today compared to the Bay Area and Los Angeles metro regions, professional and scientific service jobs are forecast to increase slowly over time. Currently, there are very high level tech jobs in the East County areas of Ridgecrest, California City, Mojave, Rosamond, and Tehachapi. And these jobs will expand to support the missions at Mojave Spaceport, and military and NASA operations at China Lake Naval Air Station and Edwards Air Force Base.

KERN COUNTY REGIONAL GROWTH FORECASTS TO 2050

Actual information through 2019 was used to produce a 31-year forecast to 2050

Unlike previous forecast updates, most of the indicators were forecast from mathematical models based on local, state, and national economic factors. A macro model of the Kern County economy was used to produce many of the projections. The forecasts of the state and national indicators were taken from the UCLA Anderson Forecast which updates their projections four times per year.

Figure 3-8 – Total Wage/Salary Employment 2000 - 2050

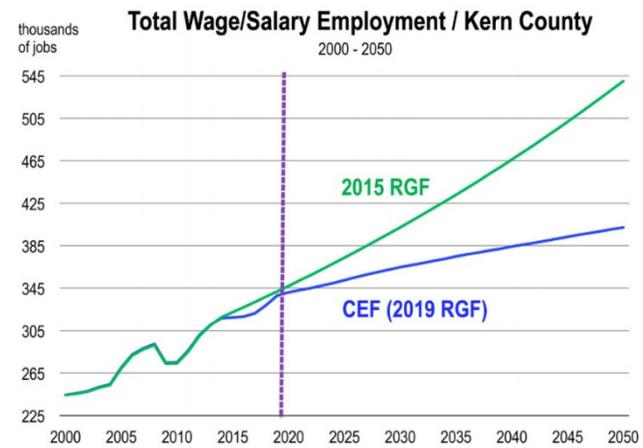
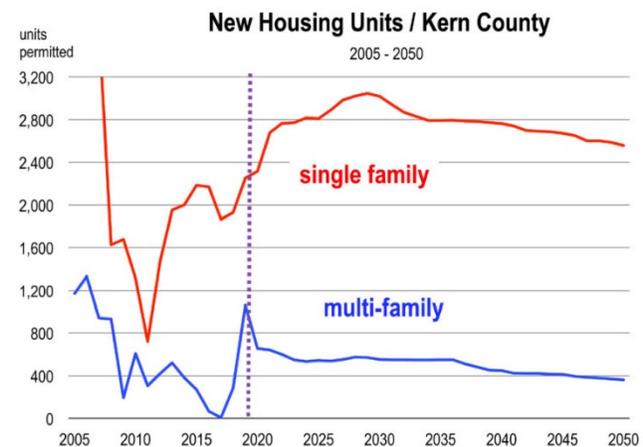


Figure 3-9 – New Housing Units



POPULATION, HOUSEHOLDS AND EMPLOYMENT

The new population forecast has been derived from the simple accounting identity:

Population this year = Population at the beginning of last year + Births during last year – Deaths during last year + net in-migration population during last year. We estimate the last three components of the identity using the Kern County econometric model. The resulting forecast is compared with two other forecasts for context. The two plotted population curves above include the adopted forecast, and the last population forecast from the 2015 Regional Growth Forecast update (by Placeworks), (Figure 3-8).

The development of the household forecast requires a forecast of new housing units. (Figure 3-9) New housing development is therefore forecast along with vacancy rates for the single, multiple, and mobile home housing stock. Because population is significantly lower in the new 2020 forecast, the projection of the number of households is also correspondingly lower.

Table 3-1 – Regional Growth Forecast 2010-2050

Year	Population <i>people</i>	Household Population	Number of Households <i>homes</i>	Employment <i>jobs</i>
2010	841,189	800,300	252,200	275,000
2020	927,500	894,900	272,900	341,000
2030	1,025,700	994,000	302,800	364,700
2040	1,126,000	1,095,100	333,200	384,100
2050	1,227,200	1,199,800	362,100	402,200

SUMMARY

The 2020 update in **Table 3-1** presents a more modest long term forecast of demographic and economic indicators for Kern County, compared to the 2015 forecast used in the 2018 RTP. The implication for this is not a downgrade of the potential for a vibrant and growing economy. Rather, it is an adjustment in the forecast.

The adjustment accounts for how the actual economic and demographic indicators moved during the 2015 to 2019 period. They were decidedly lower than the previous forecast levels for those years. This in turn lowered the forecast going forward. Furthermore, for the 2020 forecast, economic factors were taken into consideration for

the development of net migration, housing units, and employment. The principal drivers of these indicators have also been revised lower at both the state and national levels as the economy matures and long term growth moderates.

SUB REGIONAL FORECAST DISTRIBUTIONS

Over the past decade, growth has concentrated in Metropolitan Bakersfield and the communities of Delano, Wasco, Ridgecrest, California City, Arvin, Shafter, Tehachapi, McFarland and the unincorporated communities around Tehachapi, Rosamond and Frazier Park. In addition, strategic growth occurred at Kern’s southern gateway to Los Angeles County involving the Tejon Ranch Commerce Center and related development that supports transportation, logistics, commercial, tourism and other sustainable uses important to the region’s economy.

In Metropolitan Bakersfield, approximately 80% of the new housing has been built on the west side, 40% north of the Kern River and another 40% in the southwest. With completion of a new water delivery system, the northeast has also seen activity.

Up to and after 2035, an increase will be seen in Kern’s southern gateway with significant residential and related commercial/industrial development from Tejon Ranch Projects. The approved Tejon Mountain Village Specific Plan in the mountain areas along I-5 between Frazier Park and Fort Tejon will bring 700 hotel rooms, 160,000 square feet of commercial/retail uses adjacent to I-5, and 3,450 residential units. The approved Grapevine Project will bring 5.1 million square feet of commercial/retail uses and 12,000 residential units in a smart growth master planned community. The jobs housing balance shows that the related Tejon Ranch Commerce Center will provide jobs for the Grapevine project and reduce commutes as well as provide a variety of housing types. The 2022 RTP/SCS planning assumptions and growth forecasts include full buildout of the approved and entitled TRCC, Grapevine, and TMV projects by the end of the planning period. An increase in population growth in Southeast Kern is expected to begin to absorb spillover from the Palmdale/Lancaster market area. This coincides with a planned Metrolink station in Rosamond and potential completion of a high speed rail station in Palmdale. The growth is anticipated to syphon off some of the demand for housing in other areas of the county, consistent with existing long term forecasts.

Over the past two decades, Kern workers commuting to Los Angeles County (3%) have kept pace with the county’s growth rate, reflecting Kern’s self-contained labor market. If you live in Kern, you work in Kern. Of those who commute out of county, most commute to Los Angeles County from communities along the southern edge of the county, such as Rosamond, Tehachapi, and Frazier Park. However, more commuters

live in Los Angeles County and work in Kern than the reverse. Most of the imported workers commute to Edwards AFB, Kern’s largest employer with over 10,000 jobs.

Much of Kern’s employment is dispersed. Consequently, the Metropolitan Bakersfield area experiences a “reverse commute” whereby a segment of workers commute to outlying areas such as farm fields, food processing facilities, warehousing, wind farms, oil fields, prisons, power plants, and government installations. Historically, this reverse commute created a centrifugal force on Metropolitan Bakersfield’s housing development where purchasing housing on the urban fringe often reduces a commuter’s trip, even though it may increase trip lengths for other purposes such as shopping and services. For those working in the metropolitan area, growth in the suburban areas may also be fueled by the attractiveness of newer and perceived better schools.

Table 3-2 provides anticipated population and housing forecasts distribution for the county and its incorporated cities through 2046.

Employment distribution used EDD, InfoUSA data and the U.S. Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD). Both employment and household distributions use the latest planning assumptions from local governments in Kern, including local general plan data shown in **Figure 3-10**.

Table 3-2: Growth Trends for Kern County and Selected Communities

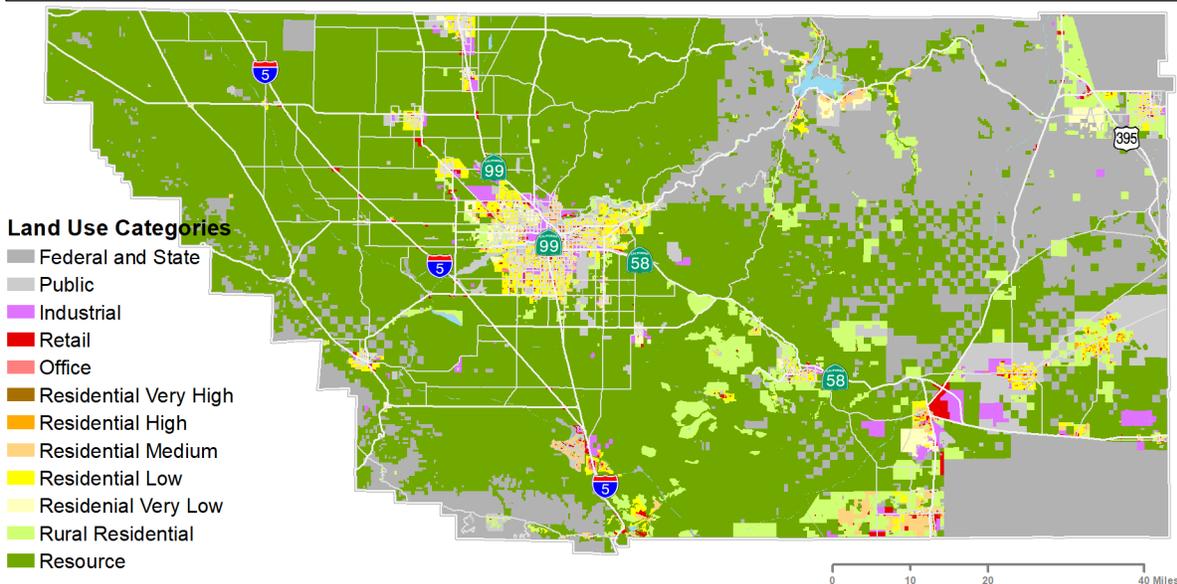
								1980-2020		2020-2046	
								Historic Growth		Forecast Growth	
Community	Census	Census	Census	Census	Census	Forecast	Forecast	Average Annual		Average Annual	
	Year	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2035	2046	Rate	Increase	Rate
Kern County											
Population	403,089	543,477	661,653	839,600	909,235	1,076,000	1,200,000	2.0%	12,421	1.0%	10,600
Group Quarters	8,385	15,148	29,970	36,575	28,704	32,490	28,680	3.0%	499	0.0%	-1
Households	139,881	181,480	208,655	254,610	281,498	318,180	350,720	1.7%	3,475	0.8%	2,637
Employment	166,901	214,668	232,461	274,900	334,800	374,780	395,110	1.7%	4,120	0.6%	2,298
Metro Bakersfield											
Population	228,000	329,100	409,800	578,300	598,428	700,600	772,800	2.3%	9,090	1.0%	6,643
Group Quarters	2,000	3,100	4,400	3,900	5,240	5,900	5,200	2.3%	80	0.0%	-2
Households	89,500	120,000	134,100	176,600	187,362	209,000	229,200	1.8%	2,402	0.8%	1,594
Employment	99,200	136,700	158,500	183,700	211,235	229,300	239,500	1.8%	2,749	0.5%	1,077
Arvin											
Population	6,863	9,286	12,956	19,304	19,495	23,600	25,700	2.5%	310	1.0%	236
Group Quarters	19	107	71	349	91	100	100	3.8%	2	0.4%	0
Households	1,946	2,385	3,010	4,228	4,753	5,500	5,900	2.2%	69	0.8%	44
Employment	2,338	3,190	3,800	3,600	4,585	5,000	5,300	1.6%	55	0.6%	27
Bakersfield											
Population	105,611	174,820	247,057	347,483	403,455	507,400	590,100	3.2%	7,309	1.4%	7,110
Group Quarters	1,709	2,669	3,813	3,395	4,093	4,600	4,100	2.1%	59	0.0%	0
Households	39,602	62,516	83,441	111,132	127,864	151,700	174,100	2.8%	2,166	1.2%	1,761
Employment	49,249	77,610	118,100	137,700	143,449	166,100	181,200	2.6%	2,312	0.9%	1,438
California City											
Population	2,743	5,955	8,385	14,120	14,973	16,700	17,600	4.1%	300	0.6%	100
Group Quarters	0	0	58	2,614	2,065	2,300	2,100	100.0%	51	0.1%	1
Households	990	2,119	3,067	4,102	4,628	4,900	5,200	3.7%	89	0.4%	22
Employment	1,395	2,750	3,700	4,400	4,719	4,600	5,100	2.9%	82	0.3%	15

Community							1980-2020		2020-2046		
							Historic Growth		Forecast Growth		
	Year	Census 1980	Census 1990	Census 2000	Census 2010	Census 2020	Forecast 2035	Forecast 2046	Average Annual Rate	Average Annual Increase	Average Annual Rate
Delano											
Population	16,491	22,762	38,824	53,041	51,428	59,400	61,200	2.8%	857	0.7%	372
Group Quarters	147	77	5,057	10,897	8,359	9,500	8,400	9.4%	202	0.0%	2
Households	4,912	6,236	8,409	10,260	11,113	12,300	13,010	2.0%	152	0.6%	72
Employment	5,756	7,640	10,800	12,600	13,474	16,300	16,400	2.1%	189	0.7%	111
Maricopa											
Population	946	1,193	1,111	1,154	1,026	1,050	1,080	0.2%	2	0.2%	2
Group Quarters	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Households	338	416	404	414	372	380	390	0.2%	1	0.2%	1
Employment	447	469	476	500	580	600	600	0.6%	3	0.1%	1
McFarland											
Population	5,151	7,005	9,618	12,707	14,161	14,800	16,950	2.5%	221	0.7%	106
Group Quarters	4	66	1,069	1,221	396	400	400	10.7%	10	0.0%	0
Households	1,399	1,685	1,990	2,599	3,345	3,500	4,000	2.1%	48	0.7%	25
Employment	1,623	1,950	2,800	3,300	5,521	8,200	8,400	3.0%	96	1.6%	110
Ridgecrest											
Population	15,929	28,295	24,927	27,616	27,959	31,500	34,950	1.4%	295	0.8%	266
Group Quarters	0	694	309	196	290	300	300	100.0%	7	0.1%	0
Households	5,762	10,349	9,826	10,781	11,186	12,100	13,240	1.6%	133	0.6%	78
Employment	7,622	13,710	12,300	13,300	10,674	11,700	13,200	0.8%	75	0.8%	96
Shafter											
Population	7,010	8,409	12,731	16,988	19,953	28,700	37,050	2.5%	318	2.3%	651
Group Quarters	117	28	647	665	785	890	780	4.6%	16	0.0%	0
Households	2,284	2,558	3,292	4,230	5,204	7,300	9,470	2.0%	72	2.3%	163
Employment	2,707	3,010	4,000	4,700	16,121	19,600	23,300	4.3%	329	1.4%	273
Taft											
Population	5,316	5,902	6,400	9,327	8,546	9,800	10,620	1.2%	79	0.8%	79
Group Quarters	123	139	559	2,955	1,620	1,800	1,600	6.1%	37	0.0%	-1
Households	2,096	2,209	2,233	2,254	2,379	2,700	2,960	0.3%	7	0.8%	22
Employment	2,401	2,590	2,600	3,000	3,690	3,900	4,200	1.0%	32	0.5%	19
Tehachapi											
Population	4,126	5,791	10,957	14,414	12,939	15,500	16,890	2.8%	216	1.0%	151
Group Quarters	0	25	4,399	5,927	3,640	4,100	3,600	100.0%	89	0.0%	-2
Households	1,534	2,335	2,533	3,121	3,526	4,100	4,540	2.0%	49	1.0%	39
Employment	1,773	2,390	2,600	3,000	3,026	3,100	3,700	1.3%	31	0.8%	26
Wasco											
Population	9,613	12,412	21,263	25,545	27,047	31,000	32,890	2.5%	428	0.7%	223
Group Quarters	0	18	6,219	5,720	4,379	5,000	4,400	100.0%	107	0.0%	1
Households	3,001	3,471	3,971	5,131	6,109	6,800	7,330	1.7%	76	0.7%	47
Employment	3,498	4,130	5,400	6,300	10,767	11,600	12,700	2.7%	178	0.6%	74
Unincorporated											
Population	223,290	261,647	264,111	297,901	308,253	336,600	341,540	0.8%	2,085	0.4%	1,268
Group Quarters	6,262	11,025	7,769	2,636	2,986	3,500	2,900	-1.8%	-80	-0.1%	-3
Households	75,947	85,201	86,474	96,358	101,019	106,900	110,580	0.7%	615	0.3%	364

Community	Year							1980-2020		2020-2046		
		Census	Census	Census	Census	Census	Forecast	Forecast	Historic Growth		Forecast Growth	
		1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2035	2046	Average Annual		Average Annual	
		Rate	Increase	Rate	Increase							
Employment		88,092	95,229	66,361	119,900	118,194	124,080	121,010	0.7%	739	0.1%	107
Population of Major Unincorporated Communities												
Bear Valley Springs		n.a.	1,593	4,232	5,172	5,592	6,800	7,700	4.6%	149	1.2%	83
Benton Park		n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	5,333	5,400	5,400	n.a.	n.a.	0.05%	3
East Bakersfield		n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	9,749	9,800	9,870	n.a.	n.a.	0.05%	5
East Niles		n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	28,390	28,600	28,740	n.a.	n.a.	0.05%	14
Golden Hills		n.a.	5,423	7,434	8,656	9,578	10,800	11,830	2.1%	155	0.8%	88
Greenacres		5,381	7,379	n.a.	5,566	5,496	5,500	5,560	0.1%	3	0.05%	3
Hillcrest		n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	10,528	10,600	10,660	n.a.	n.a.	0.05%	5
La Cresta		n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	8,787	8,900	8,900	n.a.	n.a.	0.05%	4
Lamont		9,616	11,517	13,296	15,120	14,049	15,100	15,870	1.0%	121	0.5%	71
Oildale		23,382	26,553	27,885	32,684	36,135	37,600	38,650	1.2%	347	0.3%	99
Potomac Park		n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	9,164	9,200	9,280	n.a.	n.a.	0.0%	5
Rosamond		2,869	7,430	14,349	18,150	20,961	24,600	27,460	5.3%	492	1.1%	255
Rosedale		n.a.	4,673	8,445	14,058	18,639	22,100	24,800	5.0%	522	1.1%	242

Sources: 1980-2020 (April) data from U.S. Bureau of the Census; "n.a." = data not available. 2010-2020 Employment (January) Employment Data from CA Economic Development Dept.; Major unincorporated communities are Census designated places with population over 5,000; population from the 2020 Census. 2020-2046 (July) Kern COG growth forecast by Regional Statistical Areas (RSA), presented to the Kern COG Regional Planning Advisory Committee July 2020. Forecasts for unincorporated communities use the growth rate for the RSA with adjustments for annexation factors. Note: Community trends are subject to periodic annexation and de-annexation activity, population includes prisons.; Planning assumptions have been adjusted to reflect mitigation commitments and project variability in unincorporated areas.

Figure 3-10: Generalized Kern County Regional Land Use Map



CHANGING ETHNIC MAKEUP

The Kern region has a Hispanic/Latino ethnic majority of 55% of the total population in 2020, however Hispanic can also be of any race according to the Census. Non-Hispanic Whites account for 31% of the

population, down from 50% in 2000. The rise and shift in population makeup in the Kern region is primarily because of births along with an influx of new immigrants. Black, Asian, American Indian, and other populations make up 5.1%, 4.8%, .6% and .6% respectively. Population growth in Kern mirrors the rest of the state, which is one of the most diverse in the nation. Population growth results from large net increases in three population groups: aging baby boomers, their young children - the echo-boomers - and immigrants, mostly from Mexico and Central America. 3.1% of those who do not self-identify as Hispanic consider themselves as being of 2 or more races, up from 1.5% in 2000, on course to potentially be the third largest ethnic group by 2050 based on current trends.

LAND USE NEXUS

The Metropolitan Bakersfield General Plan Land Use Element contains a program that encourages infill development and designates key transportation corridors that support land use intensification, thereby allowing transit-compatible development. The livable communities component identifies specific incentives to encourage infill development and a more flexible mix of land uses that reduces the overall number of vehicle trips as well as the average length of trips. The element also distinguishes geographic limits (i.e., service area boundaries) that Golden Empire Transit serves in the metropolitan area.

Older sprawling low-density development, with widely separated land uses, creates extra vehicular trip-making and longer trip lengths for all trip categories. For the most part, residents in these low-density areas are unable to walk to shopping, recreation, or entertainment; they must use their automobiles for these trips. This extra travel also has detrimental effects on the community's air quality and livability. Residents will spend more time in traffic and have less time for more enjoyable activities.

The Kern County General Plan (the county areas outside the 409 square miles of the Metropolitan Bakersfield Plan) includes policies to incentivize residential development into developed cities and unincorporated communities as well as the development of smart growth communities. While the major population center remains the City of Bakersfield and the Metropolitan Bakersfield General Plan area, industries that cannot be placed in an urban core or need to be adjacent to I-5, SR 99 and SR 58 access are appropriately sited in the Kern County General Plan areas. These industries include oil, renewable energy, processing facilities for chemicals, alternative fuels, food products and logistics. New developments for residential have not been cited in the Kern County General Plan as low density isolated developments since 2009. With the exception of the Tejon Ranch projects, which incorporate smart growth and job housing balances principles, the county has emphasized renewable energy, oil permitting, industrial and commercial developments. Infill for unincorporated communities is provided in locations near parks, schools and that have public sewer and water.

Many of Kern COG's member agencies' land use elements have incorporated policies and programs that support development and forecasted development patterns which maximize the efficient use of land and promote reduced vehicle trips by encouraging the following: balanced jobs and housing, walkable spaces, infill development, mixed use development, and/or development along transit routes.

After 2035, limitations in groundwater availability county wide will be reflected in slower population growth and more compact development. The results of the Sustainability Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) required Sustainability Plans will be more compact development with alternative lower water use (such as solar) that may not be available for agricultural use. While traditionally these lands have been converted to residential and commercial uses, the need for water balancing under the new law will restrict those uses. Infill development and existing approved projects will provide for growth areas, rather than the creation of new areas.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES STRATEGY

The Kern Region's Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) supports a forecasted development pattern and corresponding transportation network that encourages the location of housing near jobs and

transportation corridors to reduce regional passenger vehicle travel and resulting emissions while providing sufficient and affordable housing options to accommodate a growing population and preserving Kern County's agricultural economic base, sensitive habitats, and resource areas. This strategy is focused on changing the character of traditional low-density sprawl to create community centers throughout the region composed of targeted mixes of housing and employment. Economic pursuits such as oil production, agriculture, renewable energy, aerospace and military are the basis for dispersed rural centers and strategic locations for developments within the county that are unlike other areas of the State. Accordingly, unique strategies are needed to support Kern's economic, transportation and other needs. This uniqueness is reflected in the General Plans and programs of Kern County's local governments. For additional discussion, see Chapter 4, Sustainable Communities Strategy.