

Highlights of Half-way to the Community's Vision for 2020

The most important highlight of progress in the past ten years, is that the “Vision 2020 mindset” continues to pervade and influence many of the decisions taken in the community. However, to actually track progress, in 2010, a Vision 2020 task force inventoried all the work done by the community over the past ten years to implement the community's Vision for the year 2020. Here are some of the highlights of that progress, and some of the specifics left to do:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Various groups and programs have been created to help build on Kern County's existing economic base. The programs include the Permit Advisory Group, the Alliance for Women in Energy, the Energy Association, Independence High School's Energy Academy, and Taft College's Energy Program.
- Specialized STEM and alternative and conventional energy academies such as the Independence High School Energy Academy and the South High MS3 program have been implemented to provide students with specialized education.
- With industry support, an occupational safety and health curriculum has been developed as a program option in the Environmental Resource Management major at Cal State University, Bakersfield.
- California State University Bakersfield's Career Development Center was expanded to assume responsibility for internships and student service learning and has been renamed the Center for Community Engagement and Career Education.
- Ready to Star pre-K program developed to create a pipeline for skilled workforce of the future

What's Left to Do:

- Continue efforts to develop high level research and post graduate programs in the areas of high-tech and agriculture that connect to local industries.

EDUCATION

- Established core competencies and universal standards for pre-k through 12.
- Achieved seamless transition through grade levels.
- Target Reading First Collaborative resulted in a renewed focus on the Community Reading Program and partnership with United Way.
- Ready to Start pre-K program developed to create a pipeline for skilled workforce of the future – program which originated in Economic Development.
- First Five Kern provides kits to all new parents to help them with family literacy issues.
- U-PLANit, website created by Kern County Superintendent of Schools (KCSOS), offers college and career information to middle school students. KCSOS works with local industry and businesses to promote the skills needed and opportunities available in the Central Valley for key industries.

What's Left to Do:

- Continue to raise expectations for preparing kids for kindergarten and college.
- Focus on encouraging kids to read and involving their parents
- Continue to look for ways to use school facilities in non-traditional times, in order to maximize their utilization.

QUALITY OF LIFE

- San Joaquin Valley Clean Cities Coalition indicates an annual growth rate of 17% in use of alternative fuel or zero emission vehicles in Bakersfield.
- 100% of GET busses are CNG (Compressed Natural Gas)
- Additional recreational activities have been provided through parks: Yokuts, Aera Park – baseball fields, Riverwalk, River Oaks Park, Mill Creek
- Cultural activities and events have increased through events sponsored by the Bakersfield Museum of Art and the Arts Council of Kern. These include, but are not limited to Harlem Renaissance, Colors of China, Hobos to Street People. Day of the Dead, Japanese art, and Western Art. Other multi cultural activities exist throughout the County.
- Celebration of multicultural diversity in parks has also increased and includes, but is not limited to Beale Band Concerts, Gospel Fest, Cinco de Mayo festival, KRABfest, and Central Park Farmers Market. Mill Creek continues to serve as a nucleus for many of these events.
- Master lists of events and activities for youth are being published and shared through coordination between the Chamber of Commerce, Board of Trade, The Bakersfield Californian, North of the River Chamber, Family Magazine and many other organizations.
- State mandates have encouraged and improved alternatives to agriculture burn alternatives. The common practice is to turn the weeds and row crop for in-place decomposition.
- The Tree foundation has planted over 12,000 trees in public locations since 1994. The Metropolitan General Plan incorporates these elements. Private parking lots and commercial developments are required to meet planning standards of 30% shade at maturity.
- Bakersfield Police Department (BPD) has designed and implemented an effective model for community policing. BPD continues to expand their successful neighborhood watch program and incorporate crime analysis and statistics to target areas, issues, and to direct patrols.
- The BPD Crime Prevention unit has also expanded the business watch program where it allows networks with businesses within specific areas and industries.
- The Graffiti Task Force, a collaboration of important stakeholders, focuses on identification and removal of graffiti to prevent crime and maintain aesthetics for our community.
- Several public landscaping projects such as roundabouts and streetscapes have been implemented (i.e. Garces Circle and Oildale Community Improvements-North Chester Streetscape – multipurpose, 34th St., Memorial Medical Plaza streetscape improvements).
- Universal trash pick up has become mandatory. Universal curbside household recycling is not required, but available at a reasonable cost to everyone in the greater Bakersfield area.

What's Left to Do:

- Air quality to continue to be a high priority!
- Provide easier public access to the Kern River bottom at Beach Park by creating entrances to safe areas of the River.
- Encourage developers to create a water park in downtown Metro Bakersfield. Although this is currently not in place, several spray parks are in operation throughout the City.
- Encourage usage of alternative fuel in low or zero emission vehicles in Greater Bakersfield.
- Launch a campaign to get each person in Greater Bakersfield to plant 5 trees.
- Create 20 major tree covered corridors that connect to and include the Kern River Parkway, safe bike paths and GET Bus routes by 2020.
- Create a master landscaping plan for the Kern River corridor.
- Develop a green landscaped river shoreline along the Kern River at Beach park that includes recreational uses.

- Integrate a anti-litter campaign to educate kids on littering and implement high school and community service programs.
- Adopt a universal curbside household recycling program keeping costs reasonable for residents and business owners.

DOWNTOWN, HEART OF THE CITY

- Mill Creek Project –riverwalk connects down to California Avenue, from Central Parl.
- Downtown Trolley working, including a historic tour of downtown
- New Federal Courthouse under construction
- Padre Hotel Renovation: a positive re-development and anchor to downtown
- Parks: Progress on landscaping & street scapeing down Chester Avenue
- Investment in improving parking
- Directed policing and use of crime analysis stats

What's Left to Do:

- Extend the Mill Creek philosophy to East and West
- Re-develop downtown!
- Parking: continue to create more parking downtown that is free and accessible. Create large parking structures that are open 24 hours to provide overlapping uses. Include island parking, park and ride perimeter parking.

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION:

- Vision 2020 elements were incorporated in the update of the 2002 Metro General Plan update, and are being included in the current update . This is critical as it is the blue print for moving forward and makes legislative structure.
- Meadows Field Airport – Thomas Terminal: New terminal and upgrades including, but not limited to the second runway was extended to 11,000ft., signage, community artwork added and other 7th standard improvements will help spur growth.
- City and County planning departments do meet and communicate to ensure consistent ordinances when appropriate.
- City has identified the location for the high-speed rail station and submitted the proposal to the state.
- Active annexation activity (County islands are being incorporated into the City. City has incorporated the Fairgrounds and all of Union Ave. Most new developments are being incorporated before construction).
- The City's impact fee program includes fee reductions for infill development.
- A wide area traffic study is available for developers to use, eliminating the need for additional studies in the areas of the downtown core.
- Landscaped bike path from Lake Ming to Enos Lane

What's Left to Do

- To have a truly connected bike path system as development continues to focus on pedestrian pathways and routes.
- The City and County continue to focus on the principles of Smart Growth through the General Plan.
- Provide resources and/or literature to residents who desire to meet stricter code requirements and/or address violations.
- Community collaborations/organizations continue to aid homeowners with correcting code violations
- Complete bike path from Enos Lane to Buena Vista Lake
- Gap analysis on bike path – create North-South linkages

- White Lane South bound on-ramp is attractively landscaped. The other ten Hwy 99 on-ramps and off-ramps either have mature trees with minimal landscaping or just weeds.
- More signs directing travelers to the airport

YOUTH AND FAMILY

- Development of Chamber of Commerce's Youth Leadership program
- Grants that continue the community based policing
- Child care included within the general plans
- One-stop for foster youth services and Dream Cafe
- Seniors: Kern Senior Council (accredited collaborative of seniors focused on advocacy)
- Ongoing networking between major service providers, law enforcement, etc.

What's left to do

- Weather the storm! Maintain the structure of programs that are successful with measurable outcomes of programs so they are still in place in 2015 in a better economic climate.
- Create a partnership with GET and City parks to transport children during summer time.

IMAGE

- Did the research and developed branding for the community.
- Developed new website, www.lifeinbakersfield.com, and revisited in 2009 to provide videos and other recruiting material
- New Welcome to Bakersfield monument signs
- Brand, logo, tag line developed on the truths from feedback
- 10 years of people consistently meeting with enthusiasm (volunteers)
- Ongoing efforts...
 - Website
 - Real-estate signs
 - Video loop & PSAs for hotels
 - Trolley historic tours
 - I Love Bakersfield window clings

What's Left to Do

- Image committee is ongoing and looking for new ways to highlight
- Always the intent to measurably improve
- Continue to fight against stereotypes of the community