

Benton Community Visioning

Project Summary

Caltrans District 9 and Mono County, with assistance from MIG, engaged the small rural community of Benton, California in an extensive community initiative to plan for anticipated growth, development, and associated impacts to public facilities, including the state highway system, specifically US Highway 6 and State Route 120.

The Benton Community Visioning was a proactive process resulting in a community vision statement, guiding principles, and a list of future build-out scenarios. These items will be incorporated into the Mono County General Plan and used by Caltrans to inform future potential rural blueprint planning for the region, including the Regional Transportation Plan, the Mono County General Plan, the Benton Area Plan, and the County Environmental Assessment Report.



Outreach Methods

- Print advertising in local newspapers
- Write and distribute PSA and community calendar announcements to local radio stations
- Workshop announcements: local radio, e-mail, County website



Public Involvement Tools

Graphic Recording

Graphic recording is a hallmark of MIG meeting facilitation in which workshop comments are recorded with colored markers on a large sheet of paper. This method allows participants to see that their comments have been noted, it serves as a useful tool to guide the conversation, and it provides a formal record of the meeting.

Small Group Exercise

MIG designed a land use scenario exercise to solicit resident attitudes towards growth and site-specific preferences for potential growth, circulation improvements and access to recreation. Participants sat around a table with a land use map as a reference and were encouraged to mark areas of concern or opportunity on the map. MIG developed a facilitator's guide that each small group facilitator used to guide the conversation.

Large Group Discussion

Following the small group discussion, meeting attendees reconvened in a large group and

listened to designated "reporters" who shared the results of the small group discussions. These reports highlighted similarities among many of the small group discussions as well as presenting unique ideas. The large group discussion also included an opportunity for participants to "vote" on proposed strategies by holding up colored cards.

Comment Cards

MIG provided comment cards for participants who did not wish to speak publicly. Participants could fill out the cards and turn them in at the workshop itself or mail them afterward.

Environmental Justice Community Involvement

The project team actively engaged the Benton-Paiute Tribe, conducting stakeholder interviews with tribal representatives and promoting workshops to all tribal members. A number of tribal members attended the workshops.



Results

The public involvement process resulted in a clear community vision about how best to plan for future growth while preserving the qualities that residents value most. In addition, the project allowed the community to consider land use and transportation issues within a larger regional context, offering a proactive, "big-picture" approach to concerns at the local level.



Deliverables

Meeting Summaries
Final Project Report
Maps of Preferred Growth