


a *VenturaCountyStar.com* blog

Making Waves

Envisioning Ventura County's future

By

[Marie Lakin](#)

on September 26, 2009 3:41 AM Share: 



WHAT WILL Ventura County be like in the year 2035 with an estimated 200,000 more people and how can we start planning for it today?

That is the task participants were charged with last week at the first of [Compact for a Sustainable Ventura County's](#) citizen workshops. The Compact is a broad partnership of the 10 cities, the county and various agencies, along with the Southern California Association of Governments, which funded the exercise.

The workshop was led by Ted Knowlton of the [Planning Center](#) who ran through a series of questions for the group before we began a mapping exercise. The consensus? Most of us felt with that with 200,000 more people, the quality of our lives would likely suffer.

According to [baseline projections for 2035](#) on the group's website, the hours lost to traffic congestion will increase by 166 percent and carbon dioxide emissions from automobiles will go up 129 percent. We'll need almost \$1 billion in new local infrastructure projects to handle the population.

And so we began in small groups to tackle the task of what urban planners should do to make life in the future comfortable for residents.

With a [map of the county](#) spread out before us which tracked where development and protected open space lies, we were given paper tokens for future housing and commercial areas, along with colored tapes for transit, freeways and hiking trails.

OUR GROUP decided to invest in more mass transit opportunities with town centers situated near transit stations. These areas would encompass living, shopping and high-wage centers in one spot. To do this we had to trade in most of our single-family home tokens, a decision that didn't sit well with everyone in the group. We didn't add major highways, but added connector roads instead to alleviate congestion on major thoroughfares and freeways.

The exercise was a bit like playing Monopoly and just like that drawn-out game, we didn't quite get finished before it was our time to present.

Our Ventura workshop was just one of several scheduled throughout the county last week and next. Our input will be compiled and will help shape future planning decisions. It was a good learning experience for everyone.

What is apparent is that our single-car commuter lifestyle is not sustainable. New federal and state laws will also change the way we plan. And the sooner we change our existing mindset the better.