

Location: Ventura County – Ventura County Civic Alliance

Issue: **Ventura County's** "Compact" - Transportation and Land Use

Methodology: Facilitated Dialogues

CSC: 2008 Common Sense Grant Recipient

The goal of the Compact project, for which grant funds are sought, is to create a blueprint for the future of Ventura County that embodies the "three E" principles of sustainability - social equity, economic viability, and healthy environment. At its core is a process of broad civic engagement to identify common values, develop a shared vision, and establish a process for carrying out this vision that is supported by residents, businesses, civic leaders and policymakers alike.

Phase 1 of the project (2007) brought together community members from around the county in three workshops to consider alternative future growth scenarios and to identify key guiding principles. Phase 2, for which VCCA is seeking support from CSC, will begin in late 2008 and continue through 2009. The goal of Phase 2 is to develop consensus around a common vision, based on community input and feedback from Phase 1, and to create a Compact, or voluntary agreement, that will be endorsed by cities and the county, establishing policies and actions for achieving this vision.

The CSC grant will be used to support VCCA staff in carrying out media activities, developing materials, and setting up and conducting four major sub-regional meetings throughout the county for the purpose of explaining specific future regional development scenarios (developed by an expert consultant) that include achieving California greenhouse gas emissions goals within our larger vision, and for receiving community input on the preferred scenario(s).

Citizen engagement is the heart of the Compact process, and a core Alliance value. Creating consensus around a common vision for the future is only possible through a process where citizens are informed, energized and engaged through regional meetings challenging them to think about and create their preferred future.

Ventura County is perhaps the only county in California, or indeed throughout the West, that has affected a comprehensive moratorium on sprawl development to protect the open space and agricultural lands surrounding its cities, in spite of being perched on the edge of a major and rapidly growing metropolitan area. But Ventura County continues to experience the same growing population and housing pressures as the rest of the state. Moreover, rising awareness of global climate change and the connections between the land use, transportation, energy, and the environment, is driving an increased interest here both in cross-jurisdictional regional planning and in grassroots citizen action to

take control of the future of our communities; that awareness rests in the core reason the Civic Alliance was created and has been nurtured for six years.