

# Recreation & Health Snap Shot

We have the power to build healthy communities for the next generation.

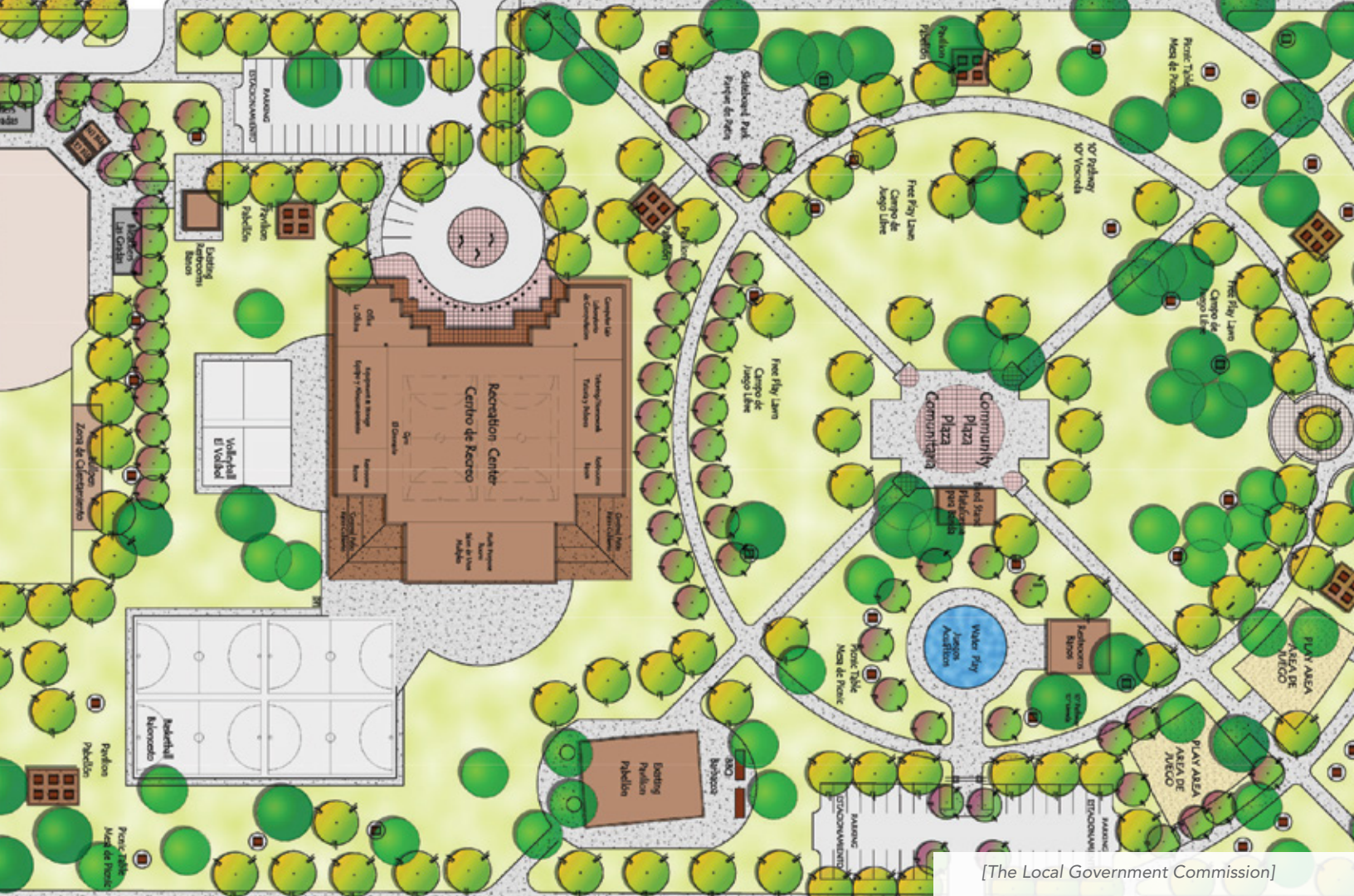
## Health Happens In Neighborhoods

Recreation and Health are TOP priorities for Building Healthy Communities South Kern. Creating healthy neighborhoods means increasing the number of safe places to walk and play, promoting physical activity, and building community.



**BUILDING HEALTHY  
COMMUNITIES**  
CONSTRUYENDO COMUNIDADES SALUDABLES  
SOUTH KERN · SUR DE KERN

health  
happens  
here   
In Neighborhoods



[The Local Government Commission]

# Why Focus On Recreation?

**M**ovement and physical activity are important for getting and staying fit, and creating healthy communities! When counties and cities engage residents in envisioning and planning, families are more likely to take ownership of their community. Families who have access to well-maintained safe parks and safe streets, which promote walking and biking, are more likely to be physically active, resulting in healthier individuals and communities. Healthy individuals have less risk of chronic disease and improved mental health. Beyond individual benefits, parks and safe streets strengthen communities by improving air quality, improving community aesthetics, and promoting social bonds.

## Who lives in South Kern?

- Roughly 40% of the population is 19 years old or younger.
- Nearly half of all residents (47.6%), regardless of age, live below 150% of the federal poverty line.
- Most South Kern residents are Latino (79%).
- More than one in three residents (39%) was born outside of the United States.
- Approximately one in three residents is undocumented.

## Did You Know?

There are two parks in Lamont, three in Greenfield, three in Arvin, and one in Weedpatch. These nine parks serve the South Kern area, which has about 76,000 residents. There are four park jurisdictions in South Kern responsible for park upkeep and decision making. Unfortunately, our parks have been subject to drastic budget cuts in recent years due to budget fluctuations and varying priorities.

# Why Focus On Parks?

**P**arks, trails, and recreational facilities provide a wide variety of opportunities for physical activity and are vital in improving the overall health and wellness of communities. Safe public spaces, accessible to people of all abilities, ages, socio-economic backgrounds, and ethnicities are essential to combating obesity and physical inactivity. Public parks and recreation agencies not only create healthy communities, but also improve the physical environments in which we live.



## Where Are We Now?

- Just **58%** of children feel safe in their neighborhood park.
- Just **16%** of children feel their nearby park or playground is safe at night.
- Less than half of South Kern students are able to pass all six testing areas of the California Fitness test.
- More than one in three adults (**38%**) is overweight.
- More than one in four adults (**26%**) is obese.



# Youth at Work: Beautiful Parks, Healthy Communities

In 2010, South Kern youth noticed an excess of cigarettes and litter in their parks prompting them to launch the "Beautiful Parks, Healthy Communities" campaign. Youth volunteers began taking back their parks through community clean-ups, but they had a greater goal: to ensure that residents have safe and clean spaces to play and be physically active. In 2014, the Kern County Board of Supervisors and the Arvin City Council passed ordinances presented by South Kern youth which limit and/or ban tobacco and alcohol use in South Kern parks. Through this youth-led advocacy, community mobilization, and a partnership between law enforcement and Parks and Recreation administrators, parks in South Kern are seeing a resurgence.

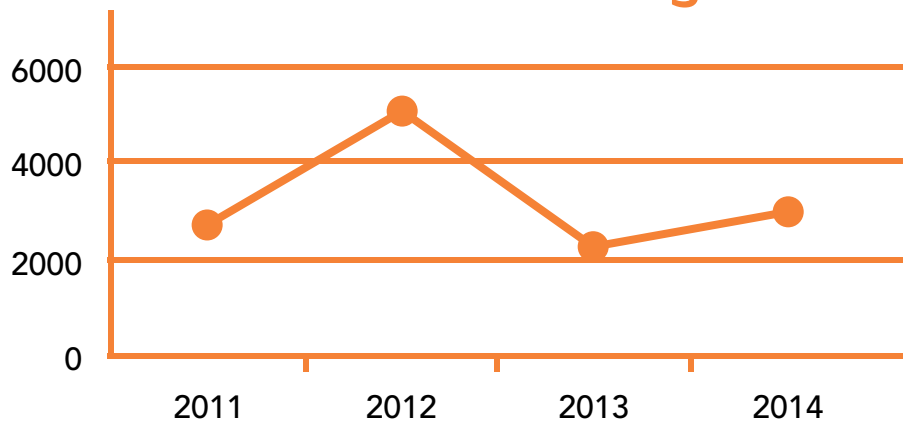


South Kern youth celebrating the Beautiful Parks, Healthy Communities victory.

"At first we were like, oh, we're going to pass an ordinance and everyone is going to be on board with it and then right away you find out it's not that easy."

*~Christian Romo, Youth Leader*

## Volume of Cigarette Butts Collected, DiGiorgio Park



[Kern County Public Health Services Department]

# Arvin's Measure L

In 2008, Arvin residents voted to increase local sales tax to improve their community. Residents advocated for some of these funds to improve parks and recreation areas. Some of the upcoming improvements include:

- 1 A concrete driveway and fencing improvements to the baseball backstop at Kovacevich Park.
- 2 Access ramps and sidewalk installation near the Monroe St. and Hood St. intersection.
- 3 Improvement to Smotherman Park's retention basin.
- 4 \$12,000 for skate park maintenance and improvements.

## What Have We Accomplished With Parks?

- Updated four Master Park plans - DiGiorgio, Lamont, Rexland Acres, and Weedpatch Parks - a shared vision among residents and agencies for promoting safe spaces for families to be active.
- Planted 200 trees in South Kern parks that will improve air quality by reducing ozone and particulates.
- Approved by the Kern County Board of Supervisors: a permit-based ordinance that limits the use of alcohol at DiGiorgio and Rexland Acres Parks.
- Approved by the Kern County Board of Supervisors: smoking zones that limit smoking to parking lots at DiGiorgio, Lamont, and Rexland Acres Parks.
- Approved by Arvin City Council: policy banning tobacco use in public parks.
- Secured \$15,000 in county funding to install awnings and recycled rubber mats for fitness classes.
- Advocated for and secured nearly \$500,000 for Rexland Acres Park improvements:
  - Added a walking path
  - Repaved the basketball court
  - Repaved the parking lot
  - Installed new lighting
  - Installed playground equipment

### Rexland Acres Park



For every \$1 TCE invested in Rexland Acres Park,

South Kern leveraged \$21 in state funds amounting to a 2000% return on investment.

# Why Places To Walk and Bike Are Important

When communities invest in walking and biking, it not only reduces vehicle miles (which, in turn reduces air pollution), it also helps prevent obesity and chronic disease by promoting physical activity. Less pollution itself yields health benefits by lowering the risk for asthma and certain types of cancers. Among youth, asthma is a leading cause of school absenteeism, so when asthma risk declines, student achievement and graduation rates increase. Asthma is also a leading contributor to adults missing work; reducing adult asthma would improve productivity and the local economy. And, residents save money when communities are walkable and bike-able because these modes of transportation cost less than traveling in a car or truck.

More than \$200,000 in grant funds improved safety for middle school students.



Path to Mountain View Middle School BEFORE Transportation Development Act funding.



Path to Mountain View Middle School AFTER Transportation Development Act funding.

## Did You Know?

When compared to other California cities of similar size, in 2010 Arvin had the highest rate of child pedestrian fatalities for youth under 15 years of age, and ranked second for all pedestrian fatalities amongst 107 cities of similar size.

*[Statewide Integrated Traffic Reporting System]*



## Tour de Force: Arvin Youth Taking the Lead

In 2013 Bike Bakersfield opened their first satellite location on Bear Mountain Boulevard in Arvin. Not only does the “Bike Kitchen” fill a local gap – there are no bicycle shops within 20 miles – it is teaching South Kern youth how to use tools and practice bike safety, as well as provide a positive social network. In just the few short months they have been operating, Bike Bakersfield is building youth advocates, organizing structured monthly rides, and working with youth to identify their greatest concerns related to bicycling and safety.

Youth advocates are collaborating with the City of Arvin to develop the first Arvin Bike Master Plan, and together with Bike Bakersfield, to prioritize \$70,000 in city funding. Youth are also working with Arvin High School to move the bike rack to a safer location.

“Our hope is to improve our air quality and Bike Bakersfield is a perfect fit for Arvin. The way our city is designed, it’s perfect for riding a bike.”

~Salvador Partida,  
Committee for a Better Arvin

“It’s all about healthy living, making sure we exercise and we get out there and we do everything we can to have a healthy lifestyle.”

~Jason Cater,  
Executive Director of Bike Bakersfield

## What Have We Accomplished With Bikeability/Walkability?

- Advocated for and received over \$250,000 through the Transportation Development Act to construct sidewalks, curbs, and gutters on the west side of Highway 184 from DiGiorgio Road to Panama Road.
- Secured nearly \$400,000 from Safe Routes to School to connect Habecker Road to Hall Road by adding sidewalks, curbs, and gutters.
- Secured \$70,000 to address bike infrastructure needs.
- Established the Arvin Bike Kitchen to raise awareness about alternatives to driving, to promote biking as a way to increase physical activity, and to support youth advocates.
- Increased advocacy to implement components of Kern County’s Sustainable Communities Strategy and Regional Transportation Plan that furthers public health equity for South Kern.
- Created a master plan for the main streets of Arvin, Lamont, and Weedpatch, “Community Revitalization Strategies”, for improving safety and mobility.

# Recreation Strengthens Communities

Recreation activities create community. Public communal spaces and shared activities foster networks of support for youth and families. One of the ways Building Healthy Communities South Kern has grown community is through awarding annual mini-grants. Given to numerous organizations, resident groups and local agencies, these grants have strengthened community by:

**Promoting activity:** assisting with summer sports camps, purchasing equipment and uniforms for local recreation leagues, and purchasing instruments for a traditional dance group.

**Promoting community:** assisting groups in graffiti removal from public spaces, purchasing playground equipment, replacing broken equipment at a Senior Center, and supporting local community gardens.

**Promoting health:** providing training dollars to expand the capacity of local groups, providing supplies for programs that address teen pregnancy, and providing materials to promote health-oriented events.

## Working From the Bottom: The Women of Greenfield

What started as an informal social network of women has become an organized grass roots community initiative. Now known as the Greenfield Walking Group, members have been improving not only their own health, but also the health of their entire community. Wanting a safe and clean space for exercise, group members decided to do something about the condition of their neighborhood park. They have worked with law enforcement to increase patrols around the park, engaged the Parks and Recreation Department to repair and improve facilities, and enlisted nearby residents to establish neighborhood watch groups. By putting all these steps in place, the community feels safer and more people have returned to the parks. Fitness is not the only aspect of health that the Greenfield Walking Group addresses. They also:

- Oversee the Greenfield community garden.
- Coordinate nutrition classes for parents and children.
- Assist the communities of Arvin and Lamont in establishing similar groups.
- Hold workshops on topics such as domestic violence, suicide and illness with members of Kern County Promotora Network.
- Work with their school district to:
  - ▶ Ensure healthy meal options.
  - ▶ Improve student safety going to and from school.
  - ▶ Reduce bullying.

## Evolution of the Greenfield Walking Group



**“The community is more committed to making changes and the leaders that emerged from this group are improving their community.” ~Greenfield Walking Group member**





**“Live the Challenge”** was started in 2011 to launch Building Healthy Communities South Kern. What was planned to be a one-time event is now in its fifth year. Each year, over 200 community members of all ages take a 100-day pledge committing to a healthier lifestyle. These pledges have inspired community members to establish walking and exercise groups, adopt healthier eating practices, and spend more play time with their children involving physical activity. These healthy changes are becoming habits that last well beyond 100 days. Individual changes led to a

recognition and advocacy for improvements to public parks and streets and two new community gardens that make it easier for families and children to keep their promise and live the challenge! At the culmination of 100 days, the community celebrates their achievements by participating in a 5/10K Fun Run/Walk that has children, youth, and adults running and walking through the bread basket of the country!

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## “Plot to Plate”

Due to concerns regarding the quality of produce at their local markets, Committee for a Better Arvin (CBA) became interested in improving residents’ access to healthy and nutritious food. At the same time, they wanted to increase economic opportunities for community residents, who are predominantly Latino farmworkers. Almost three years ago, CBA obtained authorization from the City of Arvin to establish a one acre community garden. The Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment worked with CBA to access water, create a Memorandum of Understanding for land use, and purchase insurance. There are now 36 families (100 residents) participating as members of the community garden. Last summer, the garden produced more than the families were able to consume. As a result, this year they are working with the County to acquire the necessary permits to sell the excess produce. A second garden, located in Greenfield, was established on half an acre where 20 families are benefiting from fresh produce, the opportunity to be more active, and additional income from surplus garden yields.



## What Have We Accomplished With Community Building?

- Established two community gardens which make it easier for families and children to make healthy food choices.
- Created a catalog which identifies fitness activities throughout South Kern, along with location, cost, and contact information. Many of these groups are informal and are free of charge.
- Structured morning and evening fitness classes in three parks.
- Installed murals in three South Kern parks.
- Updated General Plan for City of Arvin, marking the first time it has included a health component in all policy framework and becoming one of a few cities in the State to do so.

# What Have We Accomplished?

Over the last three years, Building Healthy Communities South Kern has developed RESIDENT and YOUTH POWER to be leaders and advocates for their communities. Residents are informing and participating in decision-making processes that impact the health of their community by ensuring that parks and streets are safe places for South Kern families.

## Parks

- Approved by the Kern County Board of Supervisors: a permit-based ordinance that limits the use of alcohol at DiGiorgio and Rexland Acres Parks.
- Approved by the Kern County Board of Supervisors: designated smoking zones that limit smoking to parking lots at DiGiorgio, Lamont, and Rexland Acres Parks.
- Updated Master Park plans for DiGiorgio, Lamont, Rexland Acres, and Weedpatch Parks.
- Planted 200 trees in South Kern parks that will improve air quality by reducing ozone and particulates.
- Secured funding for recyclable mats and shade area for fitness classes.
- Advocated for and secured nearly \$500,000 for Rexland Acres Park improvements.
- Secured \$30,000 KaBOOM! grant for a playground in Lamont Park.
- Approved by the Arvin City Council: an ordinance that bans tobacco use in public parks.
- Secured \$12,000 for skate park improvements by the Arvin youth advocates.
- Secured \$70,000 from the City of Arvin for bike infrastructure improvements.

## Bikeability/ Walkability

- Secured over \$250,000 through the Transportation Development Act to construct sidewalks, curbs, and gutters to the west side of Highway 184 from DiGiorgio Road to Panama Road.
- Secured nearly \$400,000 from Safe Routes to School to connect Habecker Road to Hall Road by adding sidewalks, curbs, and gutters.
- Established the Arvin Bike Kitchen, raising awareness of alternatives to driving and promoting biking to increase physical activity, and building youth leaders.
- Increased advocacy to implement components of Kern County's Sustainable Communities Strategy and Regional Transportation Plan.
- Created Community Revitalization Strategies for improving safety and mobility in Arvin, Lamont, and Weedpatch.
- Secured nearly \$700,000 in ATP funds for sidewalk improvements in Arvin.

## Community Building

- Established two community gardens in Arvin and Greenfield.
- Created a catalog which identifies fitness activities throughout South Kern.
- Structured morning and evening fitness classes in three parks.
- Installed three murals: DiGiorgio, Lamont, and San Diego Parks.
- Updated General Plan for City of Arvin to include a health component.
- Leveraged \$600,000 from the State to provide water filters and water vending machines for the City of Arvin.
- Increased safe water access and consumption through the installation of 60 water bottle filling stations throughout South Kern, including in local schools, parks, libraries, health clinics, and other community spaces.

Children born in neighborhoods with safe parks, fresh produce and clean drinking water can live up to 20 years longer than those born in less advantaged neighborhoods. In communities with poverty, poor air quality, stores that promote liquor and junk food, and a lack of sidewalks or parks, residents are much less likely to be healthy.

In California, many communities are making our children unhealthy. In South Kern, the community faces many struggles including poverty, unhealthy air, unemployment, and low educational attainment. Living in South Kern should not predict how long you live....but it does.

# What We Are Working To Achieve

## By 2020,

- Local recreation opportunities in South Kern will provide adequate, coordinated, and culturally appropriate recreation opportunities for residents and youth to be active.
- Local recreation facilities, as well as shared and multi-purpose spaces in South Kern, will provide adequate, safe, and affordable access for residents and promote active, healthy lifestyles.
- Recreation spaces, neighborhoods, and streets in South Kern will be clean and safe for residents and youth to increase walkability.

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## What is BHC?

Building Healthy Communities is a comprehensive community initiative that is creating a revolution in the way Californians think about and support health in their communities. Residents are proving that they can make health happen in their neighborhoods with prevention—and in doing so, they are creating a brighter future for their children. In South Kern, over 2,000 residents, youth, businesses and organizations are leading the Building Healthy Communities South Kern (BHC-SK) effort to positively change the health of our communities through a shared vision, goals and action plan. Residents in Arvin, Lamont, Weedpatch, and the unincorporated areas of Greenfield are proving that we have the power to build healthy communities for the next generation.

Inspired in 2009 by the California Endowment, a private foundation, BHC-SK is promoting healthy change in the areas of:



**Economic Development:**  
Creating a vibrant local economy.



**Education:**  
Improving pre-K to adult education.



**Environment:**  
Creating a healthy environment with clean air and water.



**Health:**  
Increasing access to a better health care system.



**Recreation:**  
Improving recreation activities, facilities, and parks.

**health happens here**  
In Neighborhoods

Although making real change can be difficult, our children deserve clean water, healthy food, safe places to learn and play, and access to health care so they can live long and healthy lives. People who live, work and play in South Kern are proving that we have the power to make health happen in our communities.

# How Do I Get Involved In BHC-SK?

## What's Next?

- The County will apply for Active Transportation Program funding to complete a trail between Lamont and Weedpatch.
- Install mural in Rexland Acres Park.
- Development of Arvin's Master Bike Plan.
- Seek opportunities for additional skate parks in South Kern.
- Explore funding sources for on-going park maintenance and upkeep for parks that are not in County jurisdiction.

## Contact Information

We have the power to build healthy communities for the next generation. Let's work together to improve our communities and create a brighter future for our children. Join the BHC-SK initiative and help us build healthy communities.

To get involved, call 661-845-2724 or visit [www.healthysouthkern.org](http://www.healthysouthkern.org)  
Lamont Weedpatch Family Resource Center/Lamont School District  
7839 Burgundy Avenue, Lamont, CA 93241

 Find us on  
**Facebook**  
[www.facebook.com/BHCSK](http://www.facebook.com/BHCSK)

## Partners

- Adelante Coalition
- AmeriCorps Mentoring Program
- Arts Council of Kern
- Arvin High School Friday Night Live
- Arvin Library
- Arvin Police Department
- Bear Mountain Parks and Recreation
- Bike Arvin/Bike Bakersfield
- Boys and Girls Clubs of Kern County
- Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment
- Centro de Unidad Popular Benito Juarez, Inc.
- City of Bakersfield
- Committee for a Better Arvin
- Dolores Huerta Foundation
- Faith in Action
- Golden Valley Interact Club
- Greenfield Sports Association
- Greenfield Walking Group
- HOPE Now
- Kern County 5th District Supervisor's Office
- Kern County Library (Arvin/Lamont Branch)
- Kern County Mental Health
- Kern County Parks and Recreation
- Kern County Public Health Department
- Kern County Public Health's Tobacco Free Kern
- Kern County Sheriff's Office
- Lamont School District
- Local Government Commission
- New American Media
- Tony Hawk Foundation
- Youth Leadership Institute

**Our vision:** everyone who lives, works and plays in South Kern partnering to create a health, safe and clean community that embraces our cultures and fosters opportunity for all residents, especially youth, to develop their full potential.