



**ULI
Reality
Check**

A collaborative
regional visioning process
of the Urban Land Institute

Event Update

ULI South Carolina
BERKELEY-CHARLESTON-DORCHESTER

Urban Land Institute is a nonprofit research and education organization committed to providing leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide.



Regional Visioning Begins in the BCD Region

Regional visioning began in the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester region on December 3, 2007, when ULI South Carolina and its partners brought together more than 250 regional, state and national leaders for Reality Check, the area's first-ever region-wide dialogue about how the region should grow. Leaders came together from the political, business, environmental, real estate and civic realms in a unique visioning and dialogue process aimed at helping the region decide how to accommodate growth in ways that are economically, environmentally and socially sustainable so that every new resident, new job and new household enhances the quality of life of every citizen in the region. (Lists of all Reality Check participants are available at realitycheckbcd.com.)

The Context In an interactive, multi-disciplinary and non-advocacy setting, Reality Check participants met to talk about how the region can work together to best meet the challenges and opportunities presented by the 265,000 people, 186,000 jobs, and 128,000 households expected here by 2030. This historic wave of growth presents unique opportunities for a bright future, but regional leaders know that job growth and accompanying housing demands also bring challenges. Cultural and natural resources are threatened. Taxpayers are called upon to fund new roads, sewers, and schools, and funding shortfalls across the region mean many residents endure crowded schools, congested roadways, and impacts to public service providers such as fire, EMT, and police services. Meeting these challenges is complicated by the fact that little coordination exists among the many political entities that make growth and development decisions in the region.

At this critical time, the region is embarking on a first-ever regional planning process, led by the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments (BCDCOG) with the intent of creating a "blueprint" for the future growth of the region. Results from Reality Check will help inform this blueprint, and Reality Check partners will continue to support the regional planning process.

Reality Check History The Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester (BCD) County Reality Check was seven months in the making, but years of work nationally and at the state level enabled the event's success. Developed and supported by the Urban Land Institute (ULI), the BCD Reality Check was led by ULI South Carolina, BCDCOG, and twenty planning partners.

BCD Reality Check is integral to ULI South Carolina's statewide mission, and is the first of several Reality Check events planned for the state. The South Carolina District Council of ULI was formed in 2005 to encourage dialogue on land use and planning throughout the state and to provide tools and a forum by which the state can become better connected. ULI's Reality Check process, having achieved success nationally in furthering such goals, was a natural choice for the South Carolina District Council. In spring of 2007, Reality Check event planning began. To help set the stage for Reality Check, ULI hosted a November public discussion of regional growth issues with speakers Neal Peirce and Curtis Johnson, authors of the *Post and Courier's* extended series on regional growth issues.

The Reality Check Game On December 3rd, more than 150 leaders took part in the morning's regional visioning exercise—the Reality Check "game"—held at the Complex for Economic Development at Trident Technical College. About 250 people participated in the afternoon presentation and wireless instant survey, providing more input on the morning's discussions. Morning participants were assigned to one of 15 working tables to discuss growth issues and how and where the region should grow. After deciding on key principles to guide regional growth, each table "built" a growth scenario on a large-scale map, placing Lego® blocks to represent jobs and households and ribbons to locate new transportation and green space. The focus was on fostering a productive regional

dialogue, with trained facilitators moving the discussion forward on neutral lines and ensuring that all voices were heard.

Consensus Encouragingly, participants discovered much common ground around principles to guide growth, transportation and green space issues, and future growth scenarios.

Consensus Principles to Guide Growth

- Preservation of the region's unique and treasured natural and cultural resources should be an integral part of all growth management discussions and development decisions.
- The region should focus on the development of "live-work-play" communities with a mix of housing types, jobs, and recreational and civic amenities.
- More emphasis should be placed on providing affordable housing within the region.
- The region should promote urban infill and development and encourage higher-density development along existing and augmented transportation corridors.
- Major transportation corridors should become inter-connected, multiway corridors with a mix of vehicle, transit, bicycle and pedestrian mobility options.
- Housing and jobs should be better balanced through the region, allowing people to work and shop closer to home.
- A regional visioning and coordination process should be developed in support of these goals.

Consensus Transportation Principles

- Build a transit network throughout the region (on the existing railway corridor paralleling I-26; through the 526 corridor from West Ashley, Mount Pleasant, Daniel Island; from North Charleston to Goose Creek and Moncks Corner).
- Maximize existing transportation corridors through the addition of multi-modal options, including mass transit and bike and pedestrian ways.
- Focus households and jobs near along existing or new transportation corridors.
- Maximize use of existing railways for cargo and human movement.
- Bring a new regional focus to means and paths for port cargo distribution.

Consensus Green Space Principles

- Use the area's well-defined ecological network as bases for conservation planning.
- Protect the existing green space corridors and cultural assets outside of urbanized areas, particularly west of the Cooper River and east of the Ashley River.
- Integrate and connect green space and active and passive parks at all scales, including state, regional, local and project levels.

Consensus Around Proposed Growth Scenarios In the first few months of 2008, BCDCOG will undertake extensive spatial mapping of each table's work. "Eyeballing" the growth scenarios shows that most participants focused most new households and jobs in and around existing population and transportation centers. Five tables opted for "corridor infill" scenarios, focusing most new growth in existing and augmented transportation corridors. Six laid out "corridor infill with new communities" scenarios with a primary focus on existing corridors, but allocating some households and jobs to new centers throughout the community. Four tables opted for "extended development patterns" employing some corridor infill, but spreading housing and jobs throughout the region. The two scenarios selected by all event participants for further analysis emphasized higher-density, mixed use development near existing population and transportation centers. These scenarios will be fine-tuned and the infrastructure impacts and potential costs associated with them analyzed as part of COG's regional planning process.

Next Steps: Join See 2030 For information about next steps and to find out how you can participate, please go to www.realitycheckbcd.com. Here you'll find more information about how the partnerships and relationships built through Reality Check will continue to strengthen as **See 2030**, a multi-sector alliance to support quality growth in the region. You'll find updates on ULI South Carolina's continuing work to build stakeholder's understanding of and consensus around growth issues, best practices, and the importance of regional visioning and coordination. You'll find updates on BCDCOG's blueprinting and regional planning process at www.bcdkog.com.

Many Thanks! We are grateful to all of you who participated in Reality Check, and to the many who contributed to its tremendous success. To you, our partners, and to all will join us as we move forward, we say thank you for taking this opportunity to build a great future— together.

