



# **Reality Check 2.0**

***Collaborative Planning for Future Growth***  
***Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Region | South Carolina***

## **RESULTS & INSIGHTS**

**April 30, 2025**

**BCDC**  **G**  
**BERKELEY-CHARLESTON-DORCHESTER**  
**COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**  
PLANNING, PARTNERSHIP & PROSPERITY

 **Urban Land  
Institute**  
**South Carolina**

# Planning Together, Building Consensus

On April 30, 2025, more than 150 leaders from government, development, business, and nonprofit sectors across Berkeley, Charleston, and Dorchester Counties came together for a collaborative planning exercise to explore how the region can accommodate growth through 2045. Working across jurisdictions and industries, participants gathered around large regional maps and used Lego bricks to represent where 102,000 new households and 140,000 new jobs could be located in the future. Colored string was used to illustrate new transit lines, greenways and conserved spaces, and roads. The process allowed each group to transform their conversations and shared priorities into a collective vision for the region's future.

Through this collaborative process, a remarkable degree of consensus emerged. Across the 15 tables, participants consistently prioritized focusing growth where infrastructure already exists, expanding transportation options, preserving existing community character and natural landscapes, and supporting a greater mix of housing connected to jobs and opportunity. Drawing from a range of perspectives, participants began to coalesce around a shared vision that reflects a commitment to thoughtful growth, stronger connections, and a thriving future for all.

The following pages capture the outcomes of the day and the shared principles that emerged for the region. It highlights the geographic patterns, transportation priorities, greenspace strategies, and development preferences that surfaced most consistently across the 15 tables.

Reality Check 2.0 showed that regional alignment is both possible and powerful. This report marks the next step toward turning that consensus into meaningful action.

**The projected  
regional growth,  
2025-2045**

**102,000**  
**More households**

**140,000**  
**More jobs**

**270,000**  
**New people**

Source: BCDCOG  
Travel Demand Model



*Reality Check 2.0 participants utilized Lego blocks to locate projected household and job growth and colored ribbon for greenway, transit and roadways. (Photo/ Ryan Wilcox, BCDCOG)*





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## EXPLORE MORE ONLINE

Additional resources are available at **RealityCheckBCD.com** including time-lapse satellite imagery, data on job and housing density, and maps of sea-level rise impacts. Visitors can also access the full Reality Check 2.0 Event Guide, explore interactive maps, and stay updated on the latest regional news and progress.

The Reality Check 2.0 Results & Insights was written, researched, designed and published by:



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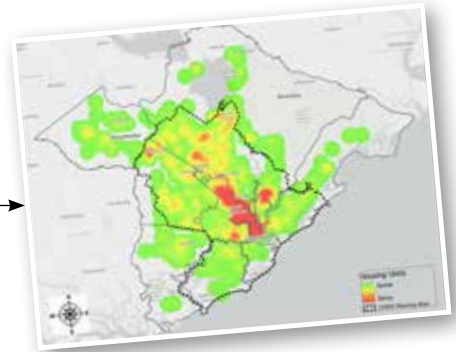
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# Scenes from Reality Check 2.0

The following photos capture moments from Reality Check 2.0, held on April 30, 2025, in the East Montague Room at the North Charleston Coliseum. The agenda featured speakers and panels to inform and inspire, setting the tone for a hands-on collaborative planning session. Attendees also received data on projected growth and maps of development constraints to help guide discussions.

*Photography by Tony Tassarotti, City of North Charleston, unless otherwise noted.*



*City of North Charleston Mayor Reggie Burgess opened Reality Check 2.0 with an inspiring call to be bold and collaborate for the region's future.*



*Reality Check 2.0 Co-Chairs Kerri Forrest of the Coastal Community Foundation (at podium) and Steve Dudash of Navy Yard Charleston brief attendees on the day's agenda and objectives.*



*Sharon Hollis of BCDCOG, shares an update on Lowcountry Rapid Transit (LCRT) and highlights the benefits of transit corridors and transit-oriented development.*



*Kathryn Basha of BCDCOG (at podium) and Kendra Stewart of the Riley Center for Livable Communities present key data on the region's projected growth and its potential impacts. (Photo/BCDCOG)*



*Tom Murphy, former Mayor of Pittsburgh, shares how his city transformed its post-steel economy through bold planning, innovation, and regional collaboration. (Photo/Ryan Wilcox, BCDCOG)*





Attendees signed “The Lowcountry Commitment” banner to show their dedication to regional collaboration, shared priorities, and shaping the future together.



Throughout the morning, attendees gained insights from speakers and examined data highlighting the region's growth, challenges, and opportunities.

## Collaboration in Action





Photos of the collaborative planning tables (continued)



Josh Martin from the City of Charleston (not pictured) moderated a panel on funding for major infrastructure projects featuring (right to left): Fred Dodson Jr. of DreamKey Partners, Nancy Whitworth of OneSpartanburg, Inc., and Ed Crooks of HNTB.

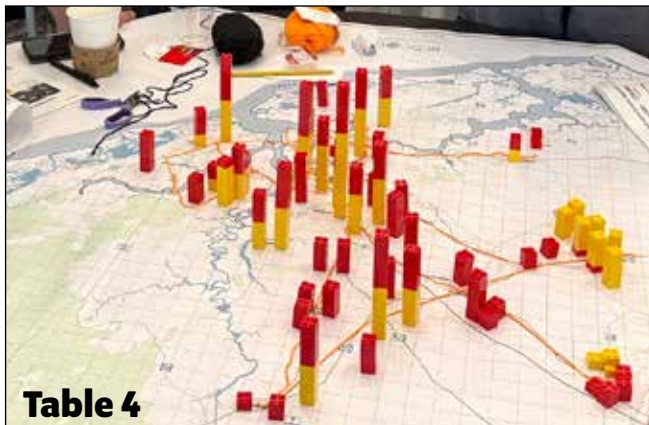
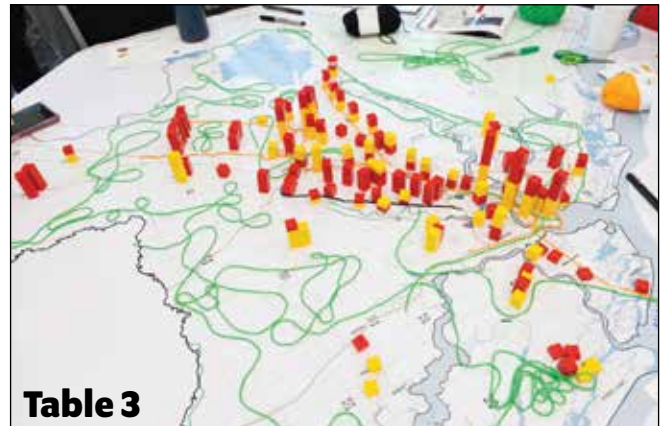
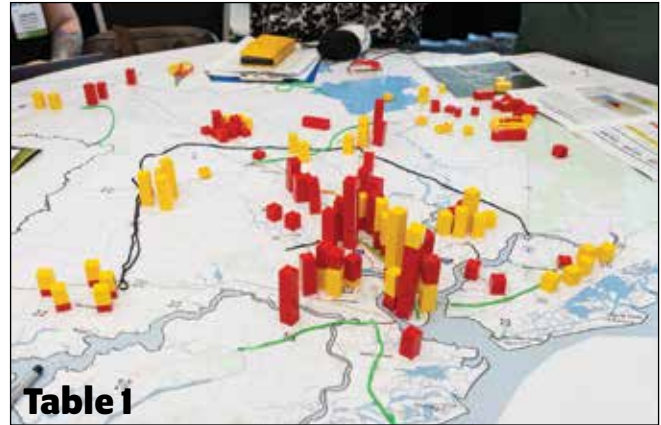
Tom Murphy (left), former Mayor of Pittsburgh, and Steve Dudash of Navy Yard Charleston review insights from the morning's planning session, using live polling to validate shared principles and engage participants in real-time feedback.

City of Charleston Mayor William Cogswell shares remarks during the afternoon's audience feedback session. (Photo/Ryan Wilcox, BCDCOG)

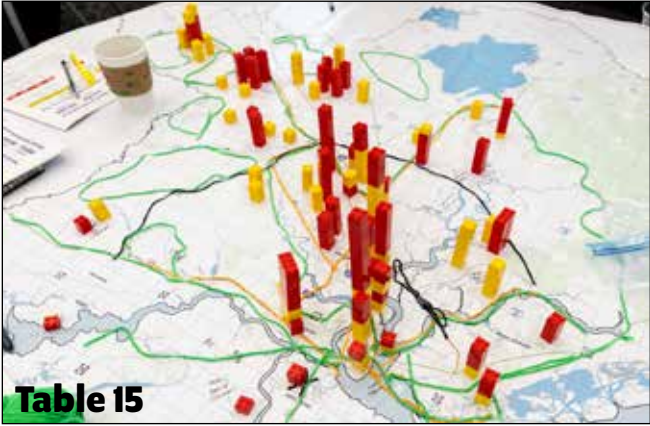
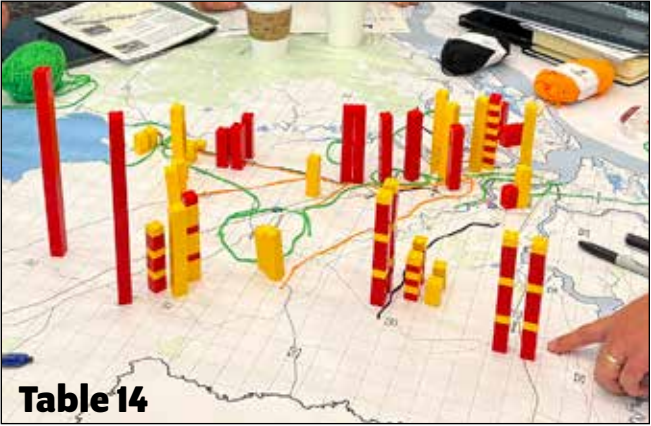
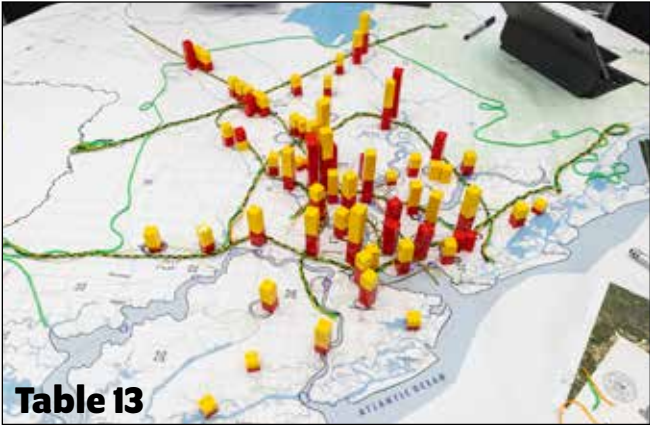
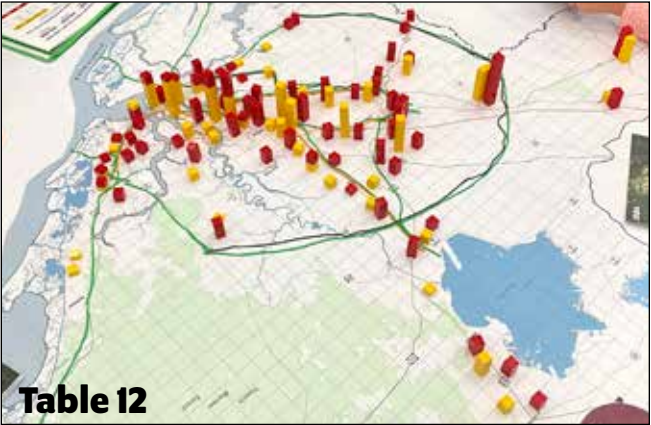
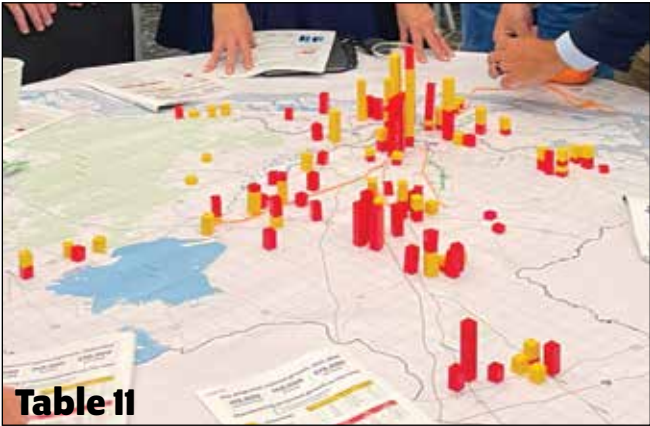
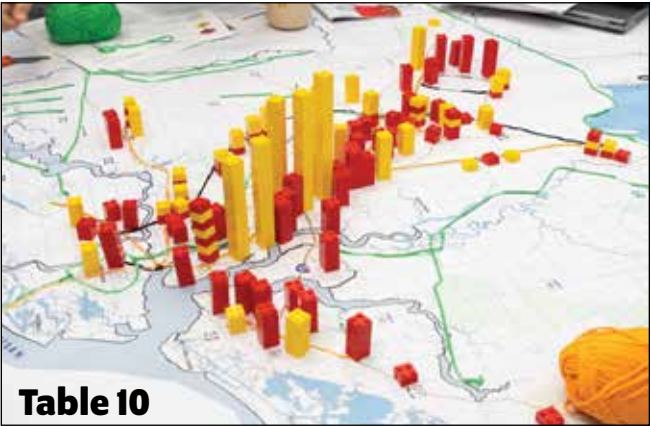


## Table Scenarios At a Glance

During Reality Check 2.0, each of the 15 tables developed a scenario for how the region could accommodate projected growth. Using Lego bricks to represent new households and jobs, and string to map future transit, roads, and greenspace, participants worked collaboratively to visualize their plans. The following photos showcase the diversity of ideas, priorities, and creative thinking that emerged.





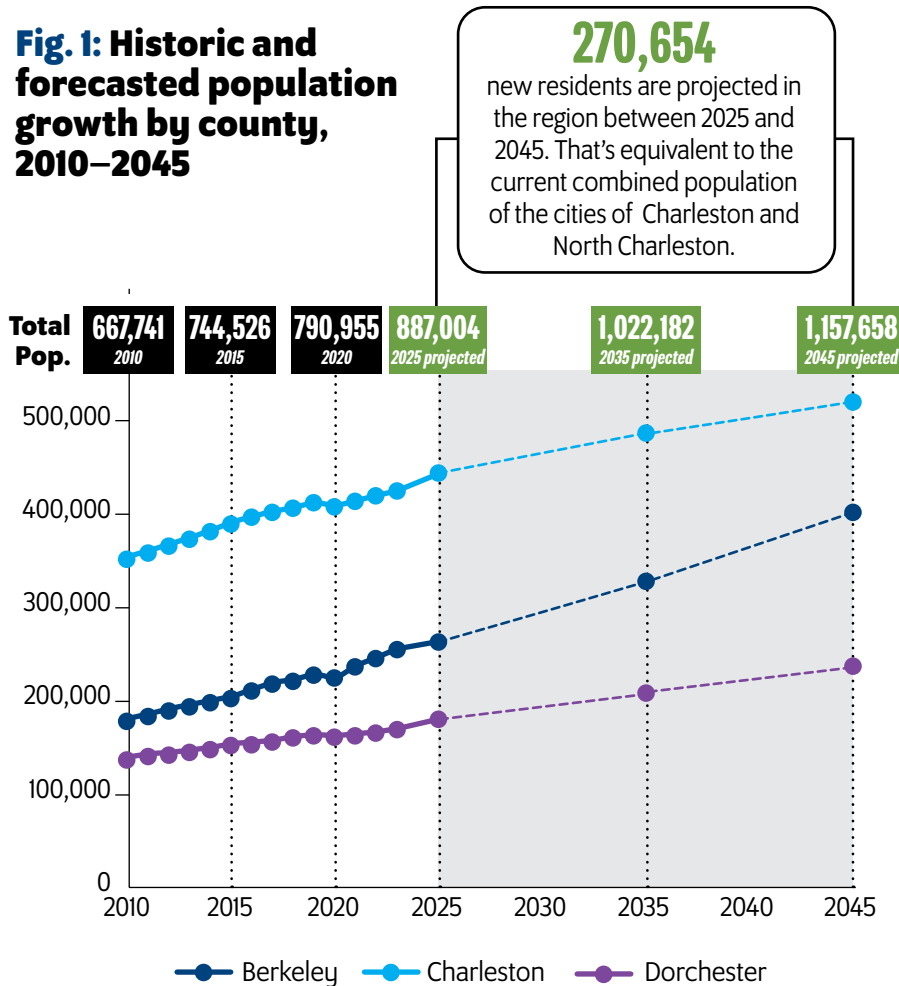




## By the Numbers: The Growth Shaping Our Region

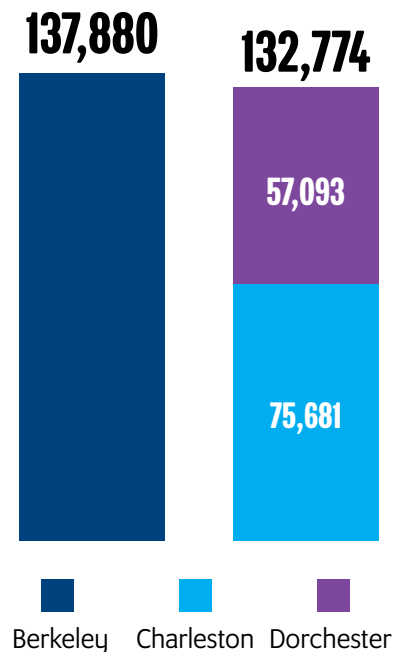
The charts below highlight key data shared during Reality Check 2.0, illustrating the region's projected growth in population and jobs and their impacts on the region. These insights served as the foundation for the collaborative table discussions.

**Fig. 1: Historic and forecasted population growth by county, 2010–2045**

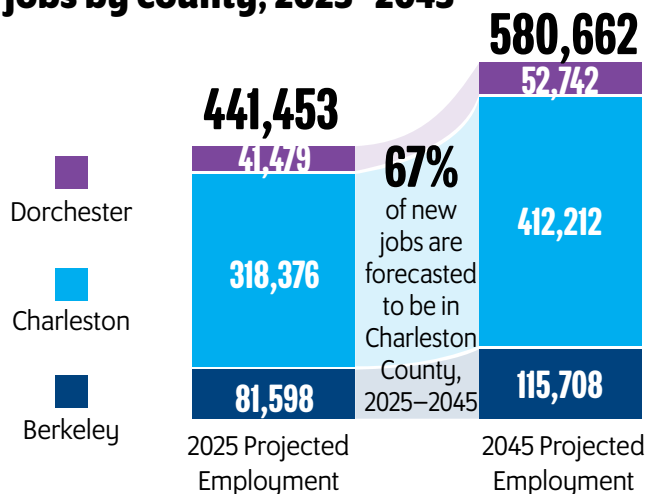


**Fig. 2: Forecasted population growth by county, 2025–2045**

Berkeley County is forecasted to grow by more residents than Charleston and Dorchester Counties combined between 2025 and 2045.

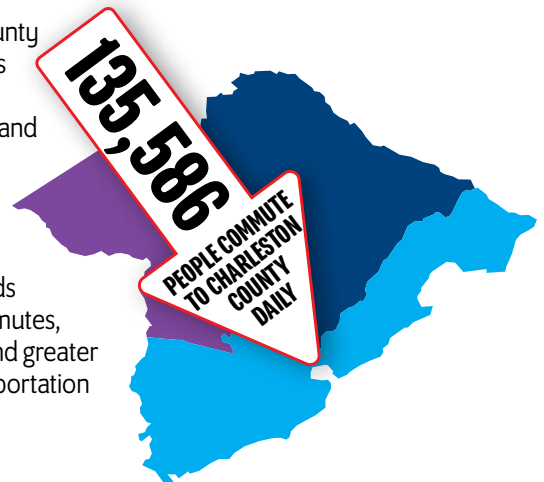


**Fig. 3: Forecasted growth of jobs by county, 2025–2045**



**Fig. 4: Commuter flows by county, 2022**

Charleston County has the region's highest job concentration and housing costs, driving many households to live farther away. This leads to longer commutes, more traffic, and greater strain on transportation infrastructure.



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 ACS, 1-Year Estimates, U.S. Census:OnTheMap and BCDCOG Travel Demand Model

# Building Regional Alignment

Reality Check 2.0 used the following process to identify areas of alignment across all 15 facilitated table discussions. This collaborative analysis informed the Guiding Principles, Barriers to Implementation, and Implementation Strategies outlined on pages 11–13.



## Scribes captured table discussions using a standardized format

A scribe was assigned to each table to document the conversation. Using a standardized Excel form, they recorded key elements of each group's scenario, including guiding principles, transportation solutions, key geographic areas, policy recommendations, next steps for implementation, and barriers to achieving their vision.

## A.I. was utilized to quickly identify common ideas

After each table completed their exercise, scribes submitted their standardized Excel forms to BCDCOG staff. During the lunch break and panel discussion, staff partnered with Mount Pleasant-based AI company Querri to quickly compile and analyze the data. This real-time analysis helped surface recurring themes and areas of alignment emerging across all 15 tables.

Querri

## Real-time audience feedback

Insights generated through Querri's analysis were used to develop live polling questions, allowing attendees to indicate levels of support for the emerging themes in real time. This helped validate areas of alignment and build consensus. Two of the questions and corresponding audience responses are shown to the right.

**Guiding Principle:** Focus on efficient development that maximizes use of existing infrastructure and supports smart growth

### # of responses

- 123** I would like this implemented in appropriate places in the region
- 3** This is good for the region, but not my community
- 2** Not desirable for the region or my community

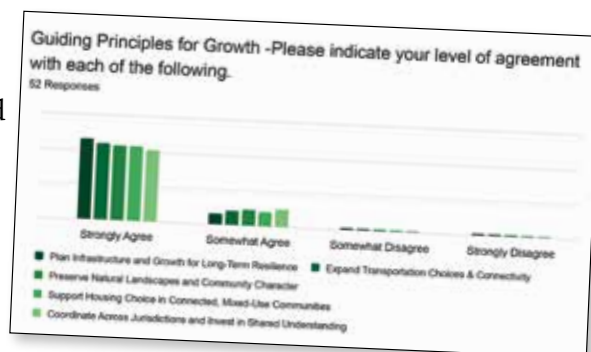
**Guiding Principle:** Strive to improve the efficiency, accessibility, and perception of public transportation

### # of responses

- 102** I would like this implemented in appropriate places in the region
- 0** This is good for the region, but not my community
- 1** Not desirable for the region or my community

## Post-event analysis, drafting, and survey validation

Following the event, BCDCOG staff conducted an in-depth analysis of the scribe worksheets and recorded and mapped Lego block placements to identify additional areas of alignment. Using this input, staff drafted the initial set of Guiding Principles, Barriers to Implementation, and Implementation Strategies. The draft was first reviewed by the Reality Check 2.0 Advisory Committee, then shared in a follow-up survey to all attendees to ensure it accurately reflected the room's discussions. Participant feedback informed the final version, which is presented on the following three pages.





# Guiding Principles for Growth



These five guiding principles reflect the shared values and priorities identified by leaders from across the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester region during Reality Check 2.0. Developed through facilitated discussions and collaborative planning among more than 150 participants from government, business, and nonprofit sectors, the principles are designed to accommodate growth with sensitivity, in balance with the existing environment, established communities and infrastructure, while embracing a thriving and sustainable future.

## 1. Plan Infrastructure and Growth for Long-Term Resilience

Guide growth toward locations already served by roads, utilities, and public facilities with existing or planned capacity. Aim to avoid areas where development would be costly, inefficient, or harmful to the environment and regional connectivity. Focus on land use patterns that reduce infrastructure costs, protect critical systems, and promote long-term environmental and economic resilience.

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## 2. Expand Transportation Choices and Connectivity

Invest in a multimodal transportation network—bus rapid transit, bike and pedestrian infrastructure, connected roadways, and water-based transit—to link people to jobs, services, and each other.

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## 3. Preserve Natural Landscapes and Community Character

Protect the region's natural landscape, communities, and culturally significant sites to safeguard its ecology, open spaces, and heritage while strengthening environmental and community resilience. Maintain regional connectivity through thoughtfully planned greenways and transportation corridors that respect and strengthen these assets rather than divide them.

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## 4. Support Housing Choice in Connected, Mixed-Use Communities

Promote a variety of housing options affordable to all that includes mixed-income, missing middle, rental, and ownership, within walkable, mixed-use areas. Encourage adoption of zoning and land development standards that support greater density and create opportunities for transit oriented development and missing middle housing, two housing forms that are presently limited in the region. Prioritize housing that brings people closer to jobs, services, and opportunities while reducing commute times and infrastructure costs.

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## 5. Coordinate Across Jurisdictions and Invest in Shared Understanding

Establish shared regional frameworks for growth, infrastructure, and conservation—while enabling local governments to tailor implementation to their community's needs. Build alignment by educating leaders, stakeholders, and the public on the long-term benefits of coordinated regional planning.

# Barriers to Implementation



While the Reality Check 2.0 process surfaced strong regional consensus around how the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester region should grow, participants also identified several recurring barriers that could hinder progress. These challenges—drawn from table discussions, policy ideas, and implementation feedback—reflect both structural constraints and political realities. Understanding and addressing these barriers will be essential to succeeding in turning shared priorities into action.

## 1. Public Awareness and Resistance to Change

A lack of public awareness, engagement, or support was cited as a major barrier. Concerns about neighborhood change, housing density, and vocal NIMBY opposition make it difficult to implement housing, transit, and growth strategies—even when regional consensus exists.

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## 2. Housing Affordability and Zoning Limitations

Rising costs, zoning restrictions, and limited housing diversity constrain the region's ability to provide affordable housing where residents do not have increased transportation costs. Local codes often discourage density, mixed-income, or missing middle housing near jobs and major corridors with existing and future transit services.

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## 3. Aging and Insufficient Infrastructure

Growth is limited by outdated or overburdened infrastructure, including roads, utilities, stormwater, and sewer systems. Without reinvestment, these constraints will continue to push growth into less efficient, and less resilient areas.

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## 4. Fragmented Regional Coordination

Jurisdictional silos and inconsistent planning across city and county lines undermine efforts to manage growth effectively. The absence of shared frameworks leads to gaps in infrastructure, housing, and mobility solutions.

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## 5. Limited Funding and Fiscal Tools

The region's ability to invest in infrastructure, transit, and housing is often constrained by limited local funding, limited state-level coordination and authorization, and a lack of familiarity with public-private partnership opportunities.

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## 6. Lack of Political Will and Short-Term Decision-Making

Without strong leadership and a willingness to take long-term action, important but complex solutions may stall in the face of short-term political pressures, risk aversion, or vocal opposition.



# Implementation Strategies

Throughout the Reality Check 2.0 process, participants offered a range of ideas for how to move from vision to action. While barriers such as public resistance, zoning constraints, and infrastructure limitations were acknowledged, many tables also pointed toward practical steps to overcome them. The following strategies reflect the most common and actionable themes shared, offering a path forward to implementing shared growth priorities.

## 1. Build Regional Consensus Through Shared Frameworks

Encourage adoption of voluntary regional planning standards and coordination. Use shared data, performance metrics, and regional studies to help jurisdictions see themselves as part of a larger, connected region, while retaining local control.

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## 2. Support Policy Leadership and Intergovernmental Dialogue

Convene regular forums that bring together elected officials, planners, and civic leaders to align on long-term goals. Equip local champions with messaging and materials to advocate for forward-looking solutions, even in the face of short-term political pressures.

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## 3. Align Infrastructure Investment with Growth Priorities

Prioritize public infrastructure improvements (roads, sewer, stormwater, broadband) in areas designated for infill and corridor-based development. Use these investments to unlock development potential and improve access and efficiency.

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## 4. Utilize Available Funding Tools and Build Capacity for Public-Private Partnerships

Maximize use of existing tools such as multi-county industrial parks (MCIPs) and tax increment financing (TIF) zones to support infrastructure aligned with regional growth. Strengthen understanding of public-private partnerships, explore new models for collaboration, and improve coordination with state partners to expand funding options and deliver complex projects.

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## 5. Modernize Zoning and Land Use Tools

Update local zoning codes to allow for more diverse housing options, higher-density development in appropriate areas, and mixed-use centers near transit. Create model ordinances and toolkits to help municipalities act independently within a shared framework.

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## 6. Educate and Engage the Public

Develop a regional campaign to build public understanding around the benefits of compact, connected development that offers a variety of housing options and supports vibrant, mixed-use communities that will accommodate forecasted growth. Use storytelling, visuals, and data to clarify how strategic growth enhances affordability, reduces congestion, and preserves the Lowcountry's character.

# Where Participants Guided Growth

During the collaborative planning exercise, participants used yellow Lego blocks to indicate where new households should be located and red blocks to represent new job centers. To promote regional thinking, the maps intentionally excluded jurisdictional boundaries. Taller stacks of Lego blocks on any given grid cell reflected higher concentrations of housing, jobs, or both. Much like the process used to define the Guiding Principles, Barriers to Implementation, and Implementation Strategies, a strong degree of consensus emerged. Across the tables, a majority of the participants prioritized directing growth toward infill areas where infrastructure already exists and where increased density could support transit and other essential services.



## Representing projected growth on the map

Below is a portion of the density information provided to the attendees to guide their Lego block placement.




**= Households**

**Each yellow Lego**  
equals 640 households, or ½ per acre.

**Each table**  
has 160 yellow Lego bricks, for a total of 102,000 new households.

**Each grid cell on the map equaled  
2 square miles, or 1280 acres**

No. of Legos	No. of Households	Household Density	Households Per Acre
1	640	Very Low	0.5
8	5,120	Low/Medium	4
16	10,240	Medium	8
30	19,200	Medium/High	15
48	30,720	High	24



**= Jobs**

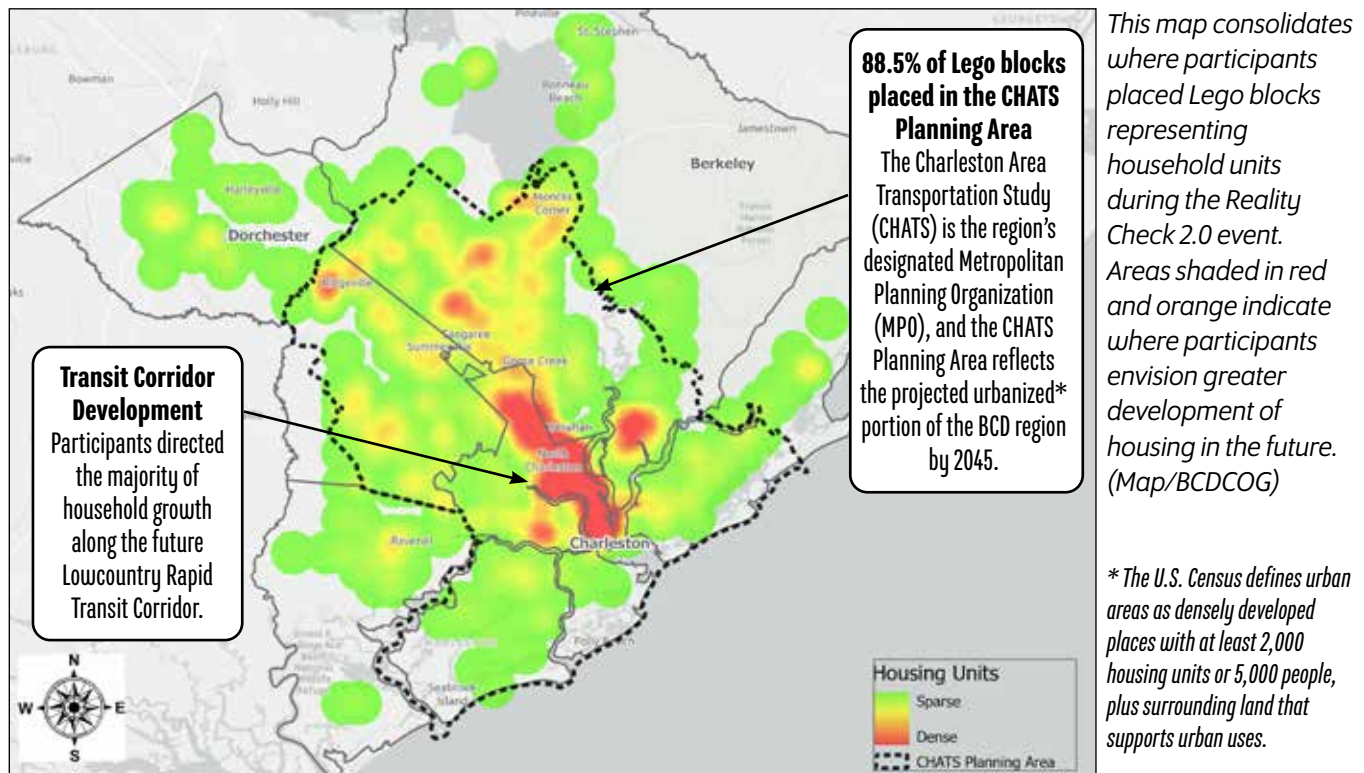
**Each red Lego**  
equals 640 jobs, or ½ per acre.

**Each table**  
has 219 red Lego bricks, for a total of 140,000 new jobs.

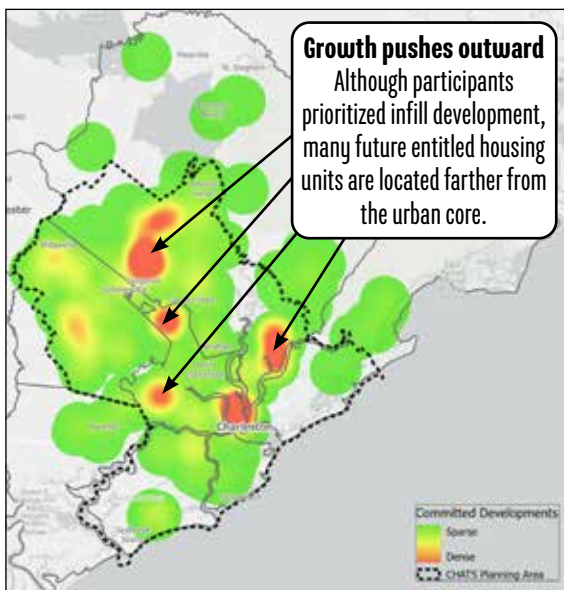
No. of Legos	No. of Jobs	Job Density	Jobs Per Acre
1	640	Very Low	0.5
12 - 23	7,680 - 14,720	Low	6 - 11.5
24 - 47	15,360 - 30,080	Medium	12 - 23.5
48 - 99	30,720 - 63,360	High	24 - 49.5
100+	More than 64,000	Very High	+50



## Map 1: Where Reality Check 2.0 participants envisioned future household growth



## Map 2: Committed housing development in the BCD Region

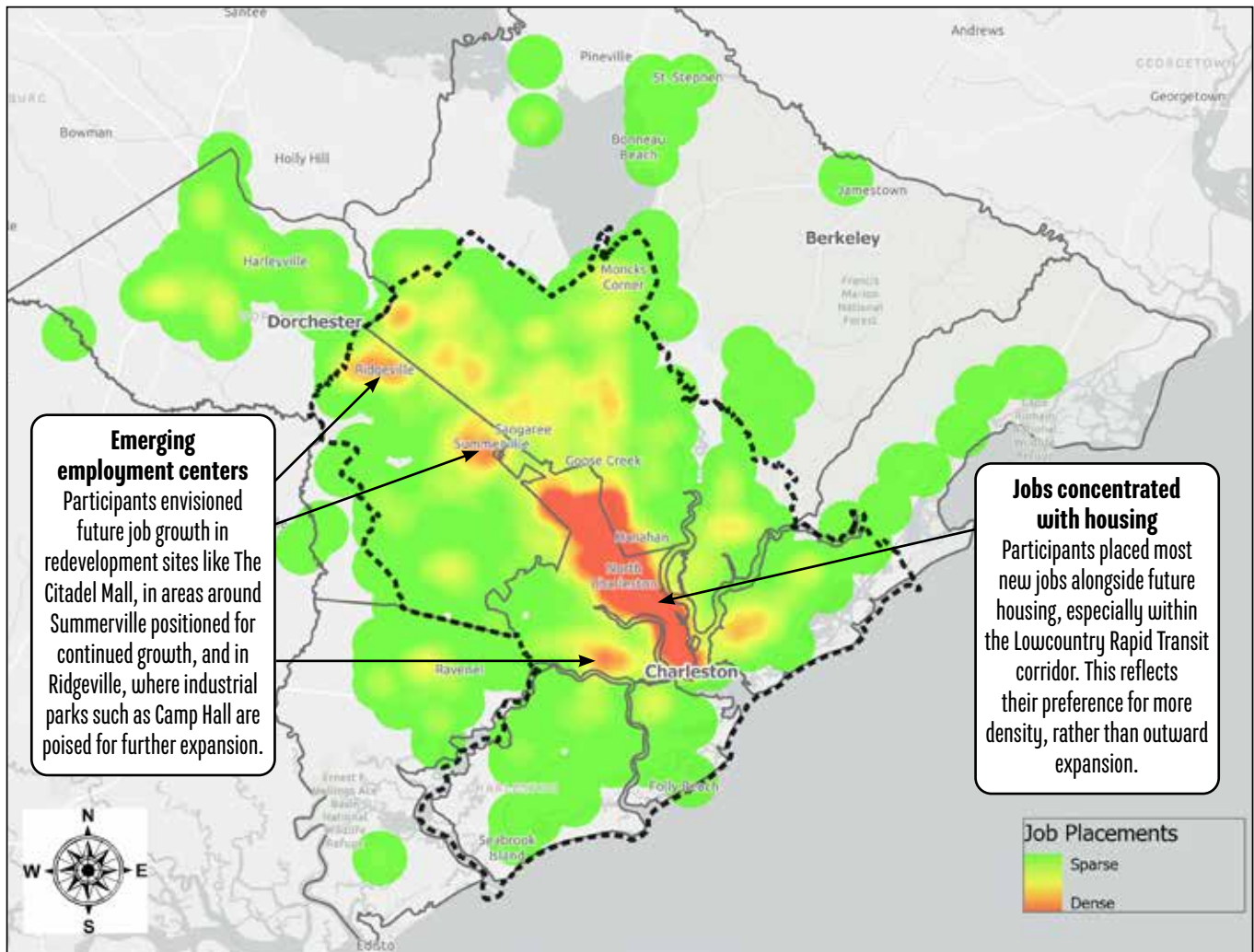


*This map highlights where housing units have been already been entitled. Participants envisioned significantly more growth in the Rivers Ave. corridor than current entitlements reflect. (Map/BCDCOG)*

## Consensus on infill development

Participants prioritized directing new development to already developed or underutilized areas rather than outward expansion (Map 1). 88.5% of all Lego blocks representing future households were placed within the Charleston Area Transportation Study (CHATS) Planning Area, the region's projected urbanized area by 2045. CHATS, the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the region, is staffed by the BCDCOG and guides long-range transportation planning. Comparing participant-placed housing growth (Map 1) with existing approved developments (Map 2), the most notable gap is along the Rivers Avenue corridor. Despite being the most commonly selected area for future housing, it lacks the existing entitlements to accommodate this growth. This highlights the need for incentives that guide growth toward areas with existing infrastructure rather than those that require expansion. This consensus around infill development supports many of the Guiding Principles and infrastructure priorities voiced by participants, such as the emphasis of multimodal corridors and expanded transit and housing options.

### Map 3: Where Reality Check 2.0 participants envisioned future job growth



This map shows where participants placed Lego blocks representing where future jobs will be located during the Reality Check 2.0 event. Areas shaded in red and orange indicate the greatest consensus for future employment centers. (Map/BCDCOG)

#### Future employment centers

Similar to household growth, participants directed 88% of projected job growth within the CHATS Planning Area (see page 15 for CHATS definition). This vision of infill development for both households and jobs creates the opportunity for a future where more people live closer to where they work, reducing commute times and generating the density needed to support alternative transportation options such as expanded transit, walking, and biking. Many tables emphasized creating areas where living, working, and playing

are concentrated as a way to reduce congestion and improve quality of life by placing jobs, housing, and amenities within the same areas. It is also important to note that Berkeley and Dorchester counties have significant capacity to grow large industrial, manufacturing, and logistics employers due to available land and an existing supply of industrial buildings. These expanding employment centers can diversify and strengthen the regional economy, while helping alleviate infrastructure pressures by bringing high-wage job opportunities to the outer portions of the region.



## Example Growth Scenarios

Members of the Reality Check 2.0 Advisory Committee selected three of the 15 tables to represent the diversity of growth scenarios that were created. Representatives from each of these tables presented their solutions from the podium, highlighting the Guiding Principles that shaped their approach to accommodating projected growth. During live polling, 56% of attendees agreed that the selected scenarios “reflect a good range of choices,” while 40% felt “we need more dramatic change,” and 4% responded that “the changes shown are too dramatic.”

**48%**  
of attendees  
preferred this  
scenario



**Table 2: Birds Nest**

**Guiding Principles:**

- Connectivity
- Access
- Focus growth around public transport
- Create new job centers
- Repurpose existing developments
- Focus conservation - where not to develop



**Table 13: Multimodal Nodes & Density**

**Guiding Principles:**

- Maximizing ALL transportation modes
- Growth based on utility/infrastructure capacity availability
- Direct Development on higher ground
- Increase diverse housing types & building types.
- Support shared regional growth by encouraging all municipalities to update codes and plans. Prioritize infrastructure and recreation funding for communities that actively accommodate growth, and adjust support where alignment is lacking.



**Table 15: Manifest Destiny**

**Guiding Principles:**

- TOD, expand transit corridors
- Public/private Partnership (Communication and Regional Collaboration)
- Focus employment along Transit corridors and major roadways
- improve connectivity of residential areas to potential business centers
- Address the missing middle housing policies and implementation
- Creating a desirable space around live-work centers (greenways, parks, etc.)
- Having sustainable growth and maintain quality of life

# Connecting Communities, Guiding Growth

Reality Check 2.0 participants used string to illustrate new or expanded roadways, transit lines, greenways, and conserved areas. Their visions revealed both common priorities and the challenges of how to accommodate growth. This section highlights the most frequently proposed ideas and the patterns that emerged across all 15 tables.

## Black String = Roads

Represents new or expanded regional roadways, including highways, widened roads, and new corridors.

## Orange String = Transit/Bus Rapid Transit

Identifies new regional transit corridors, whether within existing roads or dedicated routes.

## Green String = Greenways and Green Space

Marks new parks, greenways, or wildlife corridors, including connections between existing green spaces.

## Combination of Black, Orange & Green Ribbons = Shared Transportation Corridors

Indicates corridors combining roadways, greenways and transit, such as Bus Rapid Transit alongside roadway and pedestrian enhancements.

## How new roads shape growth patterns

Before placing a single Lego brick, Table 5 focused on building an extensive network of new and enhanced roads, transit connections, and greenways. Like many other tables, they emphasized that planning and investing in infrastructure should precede development. Compared to other groups, Table 5 proposed the most expansive road development. This enabled them to distribute new households and employment centers more widely across the map, which decreased density and pushed development into previously undeveloped areas. The scenario emphasizes the challenge of having costly infrastructure expansion that can support growth in new areas.

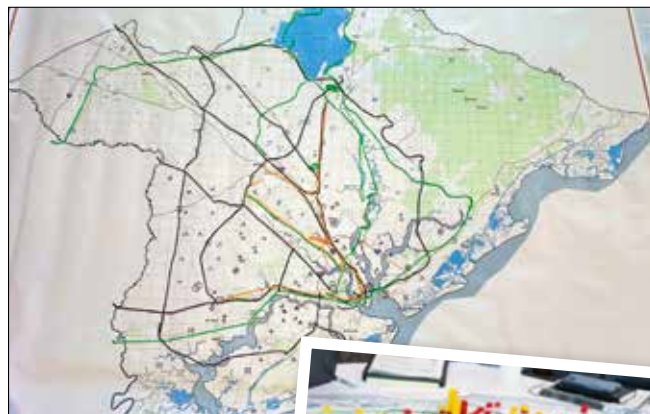


Table 5 proposed an extensive network of new and enhanced roads. (Photos/Tony Tassarotti, City of North Charleston)



Table 2 emphasized conservation by concentrating growth in existing corridors.

## Conservation leads to balanced growth

In contrast to Table 5's outward expansion, Table 2 took a conservation-focused approach and preserved the vast majority of land outside the region's main urban corridor. Rather than adding new roads, participants prioritized investment in transit and greenways, concentrating both household and job growth along these corridors. When presented alongside two other scenarios, Table 2's plan was voted the most preferred growth solution by attendees in a real-time poll. This shows the strong support among attendees for conservation, while encouraging strategic, transit-oriented development.



## Most recommended infrastructure improvements

### Expanding multimodal corridors is a regional priority

When attendees were surveyed via a live poll on which transportation solution would have the most positive impact for our region, “focus on multimodal corridors” was the decisive choice. No other table exemplified the concept of multimodal corridors more than Table 13, who meticulously braided the three colors of string together to create extensive regional connectivity via roads, transit, and greenways.

This preference aligns with the South Carolina Department of Transportation’s Complete Streets policy, which prioritizes safe and connected infrastructure for all users. According to Smart Growth America, investments in multimodal corridors have proven more cost-effective over time by increasing transportation choices, reducing congestion, and improving access to jobs and services. Multimodal networks also support economic development and public health by enabling active transportation and reducing vehicle miles traveled. The strong support from attendees reflects a growing recognition that our region’s future mobility would benefit from increasing multimodal corridors in the region.

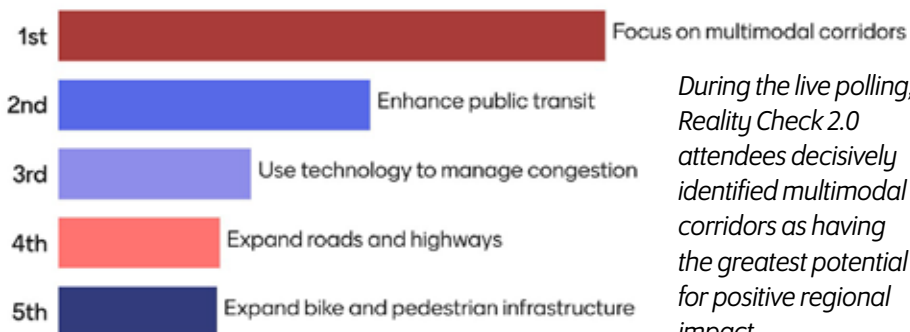


Table 13 braided the three colors of string together to represent multimodal corridors. (Photo/Tony Tassarotti, City of North Charleston)



The inclusion of pedestrian infrastructure on the Ravenel Bridge was debated at the time of construction. It has since become a popular route for both walkers and cyclists. (Photo/File)

**Below are five transportation solutions from the event. Which one would have the most positive impact for our region.**



During the live polling, Reality Check 2.0 attendees decisively identified multimodal corridors as having the greatest potential for positive regional impact.

Did you know  
**\$4 billion**  
 of transportation  
 construction is  
 already funded in our  
 region over the next  
 5 years?

Source: BCDG

## Most recommended infrastructure improvements (continued)

### A clear call for increased regional transit

Every table at Reality Check 2.0 recommended expanding public transit options and increasing utilization. Many followed a similar approach to Table 15 (right), which used the orange string to represent an extension of the planned Lowcountry Rapid Transit (LCRT) system. Their vision included extensions along the Highway 52 corridor toward Moncks Corner, which is an area already under evaluation by BCDCOG. They also envisioned service to Lincolnville, Summerville, and St. George via Highway 78. Table 15's design also enhanced east-west connections from West Ashley to Mount Pleasant, to create a public transit system with regional reach. Reality Check 2.0 attendees were aligned in the belief that expanding premium transit is essential to managing growth, improving connectivity, and increasing access to opportunity across the region.



Table 15 used orange ribbon to show their vision of a significantly expanded LCRT system to serve the region. (Photo/BCDCOG)



Lowcountry Rapid Transit (LCRT) will be South Carolina's first bus rapid transit system, spanning 21.3 miles. With frequent service, dedicated lanes, and modern amenities, LCRT will connect communities, key destinations, and job centers while improving mobility with park-and-rides, pedestrian access, and real-time updates. (Rendering and map/BCDCOG)



**Most recommended infrastructure improvements (continued)****Greenways and conservation**

One of Table 8's (below) guiding principles was "expanded greenways and conserved/preserved lands." Reflecting that vision, their scenario included an extensive network of greenways that connected conserved areas and followed major traffic corridors. The region has begun to make progress in advancing greenway infrastructure. Two examples currently under construction include the Main Road Corridor project, which will feature a shared-use path connecting Johns Island to the West Ashley Greenway and existing paths on Bees Ferry Road and Glenn McConnell Parkway. The Ashley River Crossing will add a pedestrian and bicycle bridge linking West Ashley to Downtown Charleston. Together, these projects will create a continuous route from Johns Island to the Charleston Peninsula. Throughout the exercise, many tables envisioned greenways extending through rural areas, such as a connection from Lake Moultrie to St. George. With much of this land still undeveloped, early planning and preservation could make these long-distance connections achievable before growth begins to take shape.



Green string marks Table 8's vision for widespread greenway connections and land conservation across the region. (Photo/BCDCOG)

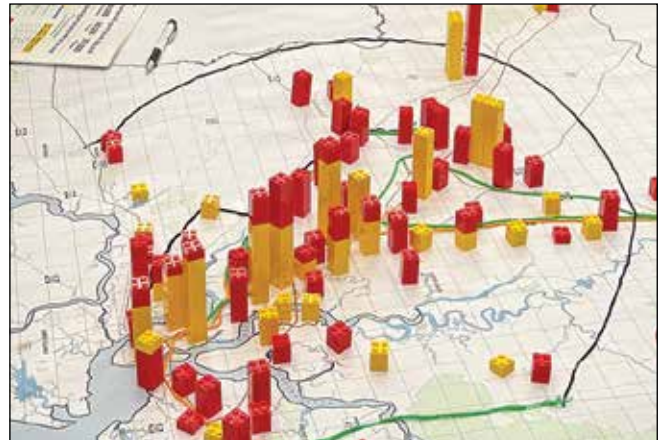


Table 12 used black ribbon to map a potential outer loop, connecting key communities while diverting traffic from high-congestion corridors. (Photo/BCDCOG)

**Proposed regional outer loop**

Several tables proposed an outer loop concept to improve regional connectivity that would link Ravenel, Summerville, Moncks Corner, and Mount Pleasant. A common approach was to expand existing roadways to accommodate additional connectivity. For example, the loop could utilize Route 165 from Ravenel, connecting to Route 17A in Summerville, continuing north to Moncks Corner, then turning south on Highway 402 to link with Highway 41 and ultimately reaching Mount Pleasant and U.S. 17. This potential loop would help divert traffic from the region's most congested corridors.

**20% of tables recommended expanding ferry service**

The region is currently served by a limited water taxi system connecting the Charleston peninsula to Mount Pleasant, along with a secondary service linking Charleston and Daniel Island. As population and development expand along key waterfront areas, including the Navy Yard Charleston and future Battery Park projects in North Charleston, as well as the Magnolia and Union Pier developments in Downtown Charleston, the region may reach the critical mass needed to support expanded water transit and make it a practical option for commuters.



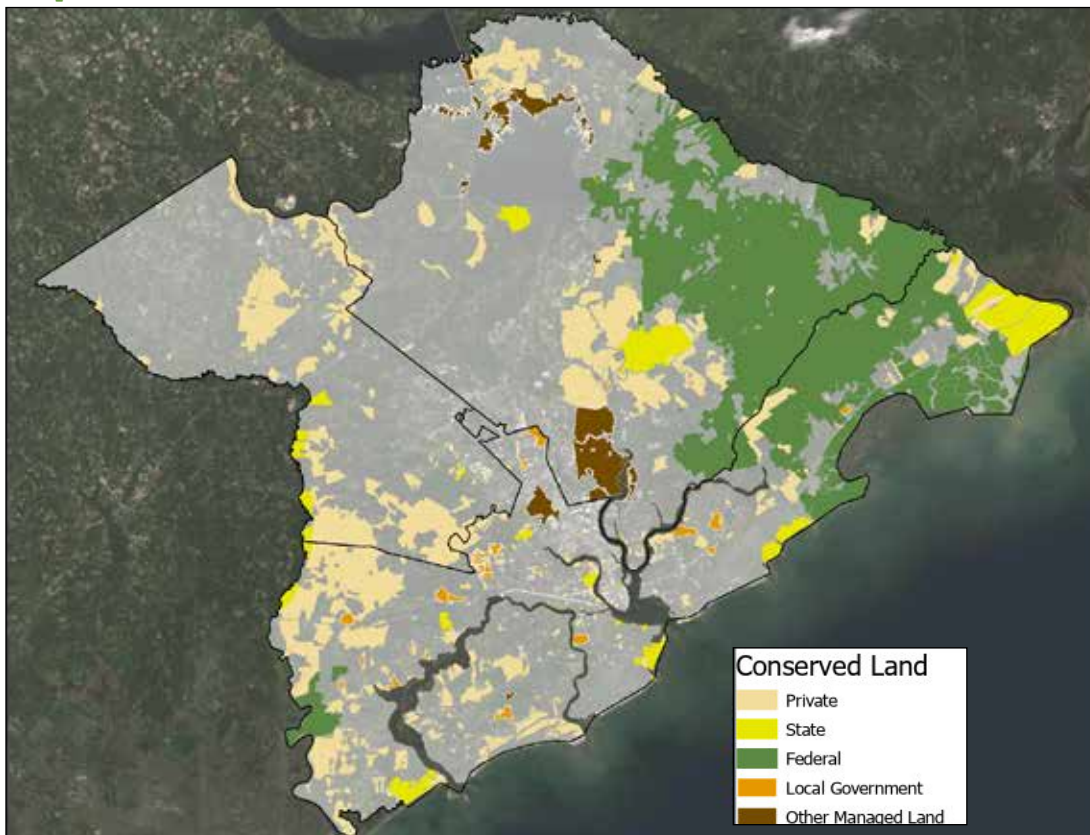
# Reality Check:

## Constraints, Risks and Opportunities

From conserved lands and critical habitats to the realities of sea level rise, storm impacts, and infrastructure limitations, many factors will shape how participants' vision becomes reality. At the same time, opportunities such as revitalization within Opportunity Zones and greater use of public-private partnerships to fund major infrastructure projects can provide viable paths towards achieving the region's vision for accommodating growth. The following pages explore some of these considerations that will influence how the vision from Reality Check 2.0 can be put into practice.

**For additional information and resources, visit [www.RealityCheckBCD.com](http://www.RealityCheckBCD.com).**

### Map 4: Conservation land



*This map shows conserved and managed lands across the region that help define growth boundaries and influence where future development can occur.  
(Map/BCDCOG)*

### Conserved lands and preserving habitats

Reality Check 2.0 participants showed a clear preference for future growth that favors infill development rather than outward sprawl and consumption of greenfields. Because of the region's coastal location, growth has increasingly pushed north and west into previously undeveloped lands. Conserved areas such as the 259,000-acre Francis Marion National Forest serve as natural

growth boundaries. Berkeley, Charleston, and Dorchester Counties each have voter-approved greenbelt funds that provide a dedicated tool to conserve critical lands which can concurrently guide development where supportive infrastructure exists. Strategically applied, greenbelt funds are a tool to balance growth with conservation, protecting the region's natural assets while fostering thriving, connected communities.



## Map 5: Impact of 1-foot sea level rise

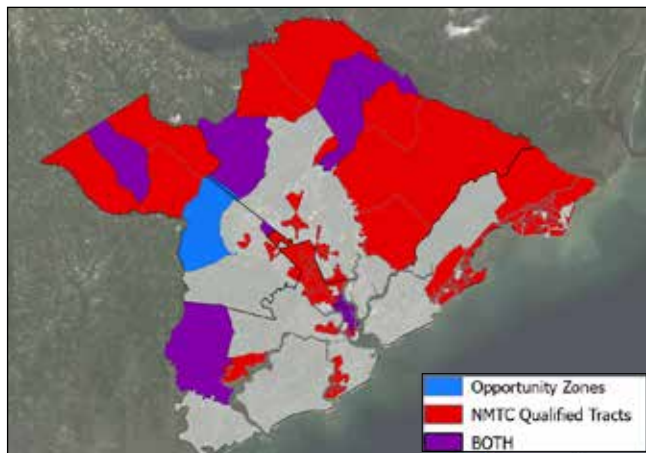


Climate models from NOAA and others project 13 to 16 inches of sea-level rise by 2050. This map uses NOAA's 1-foot rise scenario to reflect these projections and help visualize future coastal risk. (Map/BCDCOG)

## Growth and water

Expanding neighborhoods, job centers, and infrastructure often overlap with areas prone to tidal flooding, storm surge, and impacts of heavy rainfall. In some communities, drainage systems are already at capacity, and future development could worsen vulnerabilities. Addressing these realities will require a regional approach that directs growth away from high-risk areas while investing in stormwater systems and resilient infrastructure. As water is an issue that does not adhere to jurisdictional boundaries, coordinated regional planning will be critical and can lead to more comprehensive and cost-effective solutions. Such coordination can protect communities, safeguard investments, and guide growth in ways that strengthen the region's long-term resilience.

## Map 6: Opportunity Zones and New Market Tax Credits



Map/BCDCOG

## Leveraging Incentive Tools

Federal programs such as New Market Tax Credits (NMTC) and Opportunity Zones (OZ) can play an important role in incentivizing where growth occurs. NMTC supports investment in low-income communities by reducing federal tax liability for investors, while OZ provide tax advantages for reinvesting capital gains into designated areas. Both tools can attract private capital to projects that expand housing, create jobs, and revitalize neighborhoods. These programs offer opportunities to align private investment with Reality Checks Guiding Principles.

## Go to RealityCheckBCD.com

Dive deeper into the data with resources such as:

- Time-lapse satellite imagery of the region
- Current job and housing density maps
- Projected effects of sea level rise
- The Reality Check 2.0 Event Guide
- Latest news and updates



# Density and Infill Development

Reality Check 2.0 participants overwhelmingly prioritized infill development over outward expansion.

Achieving this vision will require higher-density growth patterns that make efficient use of land and infrastructure. Density is a critical tool for creating vibrant, connected communities that advance many of the Guiding Principles of Reality Check 2.0.

## How density supports the Guiding Principles

### Multimodal Transportation

Mixed-use density creates the ridership base needed for expanded transit and supports walkable, bikeable neighborhoods.

### Housing Choice

Compact development enables a broader mix of housing types, including missing-middle and mixed-income options.

### Environmental Preservation

Concentrating growth reduces pressure to develop rural and natural areas.

### Connected Communities

Mixed-use density that blends employment and residential development supports local businesses, and strengthens the sense of community.

## Visualizing density

At the event, participants used Lego bricks to represent households and jobs at varying levels of density. These photos demonstrated how density can accommodate projected growth.



### Low Density

1 Unit per Acre

Photo/Beaufort, S.C.



### Medium Density

10.7 Units per Acre

Photo/Charleston, S.C.



### High Density

85 Units per Acre

Photo/Charleston, S.C.



Photo/Daniel Island, S.C.

**Mixed-use development** integrates both residential and businesses that both serve the neighborhood and offer employment opportunities for residents. Mixed-use density housing options, such as apartments and condominiums, provide a built-in customer base for businesses. Offices, restaurants, and services create walkable destinations, reducing reliance on cars and encouraging community interaction.



## Conclusion: From Shared Vision to Shared Action

**R**eality Check 2.0 showed that leaders from government, business, development, and nonprofit sectors can align on how the region should grow. Participants prioritized infill development, investment in multimodal transportation, preservation of natural and cultural assets, and balancing housing and job growth.



*Photo/Tony Tassarotti,  
City of North Charleston*

### A foundation for continued regional collaboration

The maps, guiding principles, and strategies developed during the table exercises offer a starting point for regional conversations. This document summarizes the combined expertise, values, and aspirations of participants from across jurisdictions and industries. The results suggest that growth and conservation are not competing goals, but complementary priorities.

### Maintaining momentum

The success of Reality Check 2.0 was built on collaboration and shared purpose. Carrying this vision forward will require continued collaboration among local governments, regional agencies, private-sector partners, developers, nonprofits, and community members. Land use policies, zoning regulations, infrastructure investments, and development plans will need to align more closely with the priorities identified through the Reality Check process.

### A call to action

The task now is to carry the consensus of Reality Check 2.0 into action. By working across jurisdictions and sectors, the region can transform this shared vision into tangible results that protect natural resources, expand connectivity, and foster thriving communities across the Lowcountry.

### Five Key Takeaways from Reality Check 2.0

#### 1. Strong support for infill development

Nearly 89% of future household and job growth envisioned by participants was located in the CHATS Planning Area, where infrastructure either already exists or is part of long range transportation planning.

#### 2. Multimodal transportation is a regional priority

Tables overwhelmingly recommended expanding transit, bike, and pedestrian networks to connect communities and reduce reliance on cars.

#### 3. Growth and conservation can coexist

Participants emphasized protecting natural and cultural resources while directing growth to areas that can support it.

#### 4. Aligning policy with vision is essential

Zoning, land use, and infrastructure planning will need to reflect the guiding principles and growth scenarios developed at the event.

#### 5. Collaboration must continue

The consensus built at Reality Check 2.0 is a foundation which will take ongoing dialogue and cooperation that will be critical to implementation.

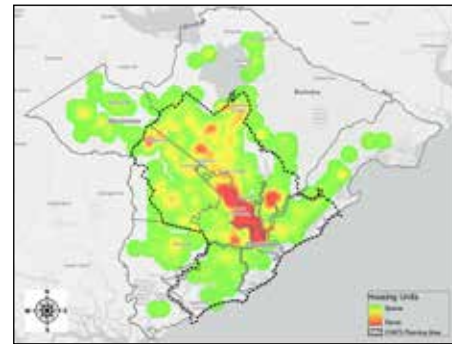
# Next Steps

The region must build on the ideas, priorities, and consensus developed during Reality Check 2.0 and continue the collaborative approach into implementation.



## 1. Put the report to work

Utilize the findings, maps, and strategies in this report to inform local planning, policy discussions, and investment decisions.



## 2. Share the findings

Presentations will be scheduled with local councils, boards, and community groups to continue building alignment and collaboration.



## 3. Build partnerships

Work with organizations positioned to help advance Reality Check 2.0 principles into action through projects, policies, and investments.



## 4. Host Reality Check 2.1

Build momentum by bringing attendees back together and welcoming new participants to track progress and highlight opportunities for action.

**For more information, request a presentation  
or explore how to get involved, contact:**

Ryan Wilcox  
ryanw@bcdcog.com | 843.529.2709

**Go to [RealityCheckBCD.com](http://RealityCheckBCD.com)**  
to stay up to date, get involved and access the  
event guide, interactive maps and data.



# Acknowledgments

Reality Check 2.0 was made possible by the dedication and collaboration of many. Thank you to the speakers who inspired with their perspectives, the facilitators and scribes who guided and recorded table discussions, and the morning and afternoon attendees who brought their expertise, willingness to build consensus, and vision to the conversation. Appreciation is also extended to the Advisory Committee for their work and to the sponsors for their support. The success of Reality Check 2.0 is an example of what is possible when the region comes together with a shared commitment to its future.

## Speakers

*The speakers brought deep expertise in planning, development, and policy, offering valuable insights to guide the day's discussions.*

Kathryn Basha, *Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments*  
Mayor Reggie Burgess, *City of North Charleston*  
Fred Dodson, Jr., *DreamKey Partners*  
Steve Dudash, *Navy Yard Charleston*  
Kerri Forrest, *Coastal Community Foundation*  
Sharon Hollis, *Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments*

Josh Martin, *City of Charleston*  
Tom Murphy, *Urban Development Advisors LLC*  
Kendra Stewart, *Riley Center for Livable Communities at the College of Charleston*  
Nancy P. Whitworth, *OneSpartanburg, Inc.*

## Facilitators and Scribes

*Each table was assigned a facilitator to guide the discussion and a scribe to document key insights. Together, they ensured conversations stayed focused and were captured for analysis.*

### FACILITATORS

Tamara Avery, *Charleston County*  
Amy Barrett, *King Street BID*  
Adelaide Bates, *The Shi Institute for Sustainable Communities*  
Win Carlisle, *Charleston County*  
Megan Clark, *BCDCOG*  
Kristen Crane, *Town of James Island*  
Charles Drayton, *Town of Sullivans Island*  
Joel Evans, *Charleston County*  
Niki Grimball, *Charleston County*  
Tim Macholl, *City of North Charleston*  
Andrea Melocik-White, *Charleston County*  
Jessi Shuler, *Town of Summerville*  
Wyatt Stitely, *BCDCOG*  
Jennifer Werking, *Charleston County*  
Kendra Wise, *City of Goose Creek*

### SCRIBES

Autum Blanchard, *College of Charleston*  
Monica Eustace, *Charleston County*  
Rafael Guerra, *College of Charleston*  
Emma Hall, *City of Goose Creek*  
Catherine Holmes, *College of Charleston*  
Kit Lowery, *College of Charleston*  
Kerlyn Mondesir, *College of Charleston*  
Joseph Morris, *City of Goose Creek*  
Joseph O'Callaghan, *Surculus Design*  
Emily Pigott, *Charleston County*  
Erin Solka, *College of Charleston*  
Peter Stone, *Town of Mount Pleasant*  
Meg Thompson, *City of North Charleston*  
Treasure Washington, *Town of Summerville*  
Heather Zeidler, *College of Charleston*

# Morning Attendees

*Morning attendees from government, development, nonprofit, and business sectors participated in the collaborative planning exercise. They worked in cross-sector teams to plan for the regions projected growth.*

Esther Adams, *Center for Heirs' Property*  
 Jordan Amaker, *Lowcountry Local First*  
 David Baggs, *Charleston Southern University*  
 Cody Baker, *Bushy Park*  
 Maury Baker, *Trident Health System*  
 Scott Barhight, *Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce*  
 Jeff Baxter, *Cityvolve*  
 Zach Bearden, *Origin Development Partners*  
 Dorothea Bernique, *Increasing HOPE*  
 Rita Berry, *Greater Summerville/Dorchester Chamber of Commerce*  
 Jennifer Bihl, *Bihl Engineering*  
 Katie Blum, *East West Partners*  
 Matt Brady, *Town of Mount Pleasant*  
 Daniel Brock, *HNTB*  
 Jason Brown, *Charleston Regional Development Alliance*  
 Michael Brown, *City of North Charleston Council*  
 Mark Buono, *College of Charleston*  
 Mayor Reggie Burgess, *City of North Charleston*  
 Adrian Cain, *Charleston Home Builders Association*  
 Matt Campbell, *Iskagna*  
 Ryan Castle, *Charleston Trident Association of Realtors*  
 Abraham Champagne, *WSP*  
 Amanda Childers, *Town of Harleyville*  
 C. David Chinnis, *Dorchester County Council*  
 Allen Clum, *Mount Pleasant Waterworks*  
 Mayor William Cogswell, *City of Charleston*  
 Gary Collins, *SeamonWhiteside*  
 Johnnie Cribb, *Berkeley County Council*  
 Jason Crowley, *Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation*  
 Brenda Davis, *Town of Harleyville Council*  
 Ashley Demosthenes, *Lowcountry Land Trust*  
 Dan Doyle, *The Beach Company*  
 Christine Durant, *Charleston County*  
 Melissa Enos-Sims, *City of Goose Creek*  
 Kerri Forrest, *Coastal Community Foundation*  
 Carter France, *Town of Moncks Corner*

Chris Fraser, *Avison Young*  
 Brent Gibaldo, *Brookfield Residential*  
 David Ginn, *Charleston Regional Development Alliance*  
 Jesse Goodwin, *MUSC*  
 Andy Gowder, *Austen & Gowder*  
 Miriam Green, *Town of Awendaw*  
 John Grisillo, *Charleston Trident Association of Realtors*  
 DJ Hampton, *Trident United Way*  
 Miller Harper, *Beemok Capital, LLC*  
 Mayor Kevin Hart, *Town of St. George*  
 Winslow Hastie, *Historic Charleston Foundation*  
 Bryan Havir, *Dorchester County*  
 Mayor Will Haynie, *Town of Mount Pleasant*  
 Kevin Hedgpeth, *City of Hanahan Council*  
 Brian Hicks, *Post and Courier*  
 Sharon Hollis, *BCDCOG*  
 Jenny Honeycutt, *Charleston County Council*  
 Ray Huff, *Clemson University*  
 Laura Hyatt, *Town of Mount Pleasant Council*  
 Bob Jackson, *Town of Summerville Council*  
 Merle Johnson, *Charleston County Economic Development*  
 Ryan Johnson, *City of North Charleston*  
 F.A. Johnson, *Charleston Redevelopment Corporation*  
 Alvin T. Johnson, Jr., *ATJ Engineering, LTD.*  
 Jeff Johnston, *SMHA*  
 Chris Kahler, *Summerville Commission of Public Works*  
 Danny Kassis, *Dominion Energy*  
 Anna Kimelblatt, *Coastal Conservation League*  
 Alexis Kiser, *City of Goose Creek*  
 Craig Logan, *Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce*  
 Adam MacConnell, *City of North Charleston*  
 Chris Magaldi, *Thomas & Hutton Engineering*  
 Todd Martin, *Joint Base Charleston*  
 Chappy McKay, *Trident Construction*  
 Logan McVey, *City of Charleston*  
 Shannon Meder, *HNTB*



Ned Miller, *Navy Yard Charleston*  
 Robert Morgan, *HomesUrban*  
 Christopher Morgan, *City of Charleston*  
 Julie Mote, *Mesa Land Services*  
 Jim O'Connor, *JMT*  
 Gopi Omraju, *MUSC*  
 Mayor Patrick O'Neil, *Town of Sullivan's Island*  
 Scott Parker, *DesignWorks*  
 Paul Patrick, *College of Charleston*  
 Mayor Phillip Pounds, *City of Isle of Palms*  
 Todd Powel, *Weyerhaeuser*  
 Daniel Prentice, *Charleston County School District*  
 Mayor Christie Rainwater, *City of Hanahan*  
 Rhett Reidenbach, *Reveer Group*  
 Robert Reilly, *Hill Construction*  
 Kiera Reinertsen, *Dorchester County*  
 Michael Sally, *City of Hanahan Council*  
 Torrey Saunders, *Coastal Conservation League*  
 Dan Scheaffer, *LS3P Associates*  
 Nathan Schutte, *McMillan Pazdan Smith Architecture*  
 Mike Seekings, *CARTA/City of Charleston*  
 Allison Simmons, *Berkeley County*

Scott Slatton, *Town of Summerville*  
 Jack Smith, *Nelson Mullins*  
 Courtney Soler, *City of Hanahan*  
 Jenna Stephens, *City of Folly Beach*  
 Erin Stevens, *Surculus*  
 Kendra Stewart, *Riley Center for  
Livable Communities*  
 Marianne Sutherland, *Kimley-Horn*  
 Mike Tinkey, *Town of Mount Pleasant Council*  
 Brian Turner, *Preservation Society of Charleston*  
 Bradford Watson, *Clemson Architecture Center  
Charleston (Cigar Factory)*  
 Jay Weaver, *Navy Yard Charleston*  
 Robert Wehrman, *Charleston County Council*  
 Barry Whalen, *HLA*  
 Melvin Williams, *Terracon*  
 Henrietta Woodward, *Community First Land Trust*  
 Webb Wright, *ABC News 4*  
 Kristen Wurster, *Charleston County*  
 Allie Zamfir, *Tesatura Capital*  
 Katie Zimmerman, *Charleston Moves*

## Afternoon Attendees

*Afternoon attendees were invited to provide additional perspectives and validate the outcomes of the morning planning exercise. Their input helped refine regional priorities and build consensus around shared growth strategies.*

Janet Bates, *JE Dunn Construction*  
 Radia Baxter, *ULI SC REDI Grad/Community Organizer*  
 Jacquie Berger, *Lowcountry Local First*  
 Master Bines, *EXP Realty/ULI SC REDI Grad*  
 Jay Byrd, *ATT*  
 Patryce Campbell, *Carolina One/ULI SC REDI Grad*  
 Diamond Curry, *Charleston Metro  
Chamber of Commerce*  
 Herbert Drayton, *Hi-Mark Capital*  
 Amber Gant, *SC Works Trident*  
 Natalie Hauff, *Charleston County Public Library*  
 Dan Head, *Senator Lindsey Graham's Office*  
 Sean Holleran, *Southern First*  
 Kaitlyn Illsley, *Senator Tim Scott's Office*  
 Stacey Lindbergh, *Lowcountry Digital Equity Coalition*

Noah Longest, *Congresswoman Nancy Mace's Office*  
 Marc Marchant, *LS3P*  
 Michael Mathis, *City of Charleston*  
 Christopher Morgan, *City of Charleston*  
 Bob O'Neil, *Riley Center for Livable Communities*  
 Chris Price, *PrimeSouth Group*  
 Andrella Pusha, *Carolina One/ULI SC REDI Grad*  
 Scott Rostance, *S.C. Dept. of Employment  
and Workforce*  
 Cindi Rourk, *Climb Fund*  
 Leslie Skardon, *Sustain SC*  
 Crystal Smalls, *Metanoia/ULI SC REDI Grad*  
 Stephanie Spies, *City of Hanahan*  
 Chad Vail, *Charleston County School District CTE*  
 Jeff Vinzani, *Graybill Lansche & Vinzani*

# Thank You

Reality Check 2.0 would not have been possible without the generous contribution of time, knowledge, resources, and personal energy of the following people and organizations.

.....

## Reality Check 2.0, Co-chairs

Steve Dudash, *Navy Yard Charleston, Urban Land Institute – SC District Council Chair*

Kerri Forrest, *Coastal Community Foundation*

Ron Mitchum, *Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments*

## Reality Check 2.0, Advisory Committee

Kathryn Basha, *Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments*

Dorothea Bernique, *Increasing H.O.P.E.*

Scott Barhight, *Charleston Chamber*

Matt Brady, *Town of Mount Pleasant*

Daniel Brock, *HNTB*

Jason Brown, *Charleston Regional Development Alliance*

Adrian Cain, *Charleston Home Builders Association*

Abraham Champagne, *WSP*

Megan Clark, *Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments*

Marie Delcioppo, *SMHa*

Josh Dix, *Charleston Trident Association of Realtors*

Robin Hargett, *Urban Land Institute*

Peter LaMotte, *Chernoff Newman*

Craig Logan, *Charleston Chamber*

Logan McVey, *City of Charleston*

Ali Moriarty, *Riley Center for Livable Communities at College of Charleston*

Shelby Shumard, *Riley Center for Livable Communities at College of Charleston*

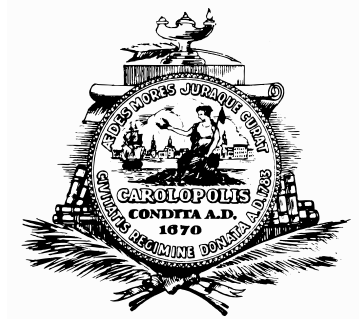
Kendra Stewart, *Riley Center for Livable Communities at College of Charleston*

Ryan Wilcox, *Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments*



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The background is a blue-tinted map of the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester region in South Carolina. Overlaid on the map are numerous 3D bar charts of varying heights, some with different colored segments. Hand-drawn white lines and circles are scattered across the map, particularly around the bar charts. Road labels such as 17A, 32, 78, 64, 61, 7, 700, and 171 are visible. Place names like LINCOLNVILLE, GOOSE CREEK, MAYAN, CHARLESTON, and JAMES ISLAND are also present. The text 'Multi Model' is written in a handwritten style in the upper left.

# **Reality Check 2.0**

**Collaborative Planning for Future Growth**  
Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Region | South Carolina

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