

2009

REALITY CHECK

North Carolina Triangle Region



PLANNING FOR GROWTH

PARTICIPANTS PLACING JOBS AND HOUSING

280 stakeholders participated in the February 24th Triangle Regional Reality Check exercise hosted by ULI Triangle and Triangle Tomorrow.

Image courtesy of Joe Meno

Highlights

Guiding Principles

Participants in the Reality Check Results Summit selected three top guiding principles:

- ✓ **Transit:** Improve regional transit, match land use decisions with transit investments
- ✓ **Vibrant Centers:** Reinvest in city and town centers, promote compact development, density and mixed use, including a balance of jobs and housing
- ✓ **Green Space and Natural Resources:** Define appropriate growth and preservation areas to protect open space, agricultural land and natural resources, especially water supply and quality



Photo: Nikhil Kulkarni

These principles match what was observed at the Reality Check exercise where tables typically:

- ✓ Identified green places that should be sustained for agriculture, forestry, and resource protection
- ✓ Created vibrant centers of employment and housing, and
- ✓ Connected these centers to one another and communities throughout the region with transit.

OVERVIEW OF THE REALITY CHECK PROCESS

On February 24th, 2009, approximately 280 regional stakeholders and leaders gathered at the Raleigh Convention Center to take part in the Research Triangle Regional Reality Check exercise, hosted by ULI Triangle and Triangle Tomorrow. These participants gathered around 28 tables to create models of the future of the region, based on their values and projected regional growth by 2030.

Each table was given a set of Legos that represented future growth in jobs and housing that will be necessary to accommodate 1.2 million new residents and 700,000 new jobs. Table members

discussed various strategies and issues as they decided how to place the Legos on their maps. Each table also placed transit lines, road improvements, and areas of preserved open space.

After the exercise, each table's maps and Legos were entered into an analysis tool called CommunityViz. This tool allowed the Reality Check organizers to determine where there were areas of agreement and disagreement among tables, and to do analysis of three themes that emerged with respect to several indicators. The results were presented on February 27th to a group of about 500 stakeholders, and are summarized here.

Next Steps: Translating Ideas into Action

The results of Reality Check, including the polling, will be used to kick off a long range planning and implementation process to help leaders and residents envision alternative growth scenarios for the future. A plan for implementing the results of the Reality Check exercise and Results Summit is outlined below. Please contact ULI Triangle or Triangle Tomorrow if you are interested in being involved in the implementation phase.



I. Form Reality Check Action Committee. The Committee will be led by Triangle Tomorrow with close participation of ULI Triangle. The Committee will advise the Triangle Tomorrow board about what needs to be done throughout the first stages of implementation and beyond. Guiding Principles, based on the Reality Check exercise and Results Summit, will be presented to cities and counties in the region for endorsement and adoption.

II. Create a “Reality Check Quality Growth Initiative” of Triangle Tomorrow. The Reality Check Quality Growth Initiative will organize a diverse and representative group of government, business, and civic leaders to:

- ✓ Address the three top guiding principles for quality growth based on the Reality Check exercise and the Summit voting results.
- ✓ Organize a task force to address each of the three priorities over the next year. Alternatively, they could collaborate with existing organizations whose missions address one of these growth priorities. They would develop recommendations to the Triangle Tomorrow board and create action steps to be implemented by city/county government, with business, civic and citizen support to help this implementation.

- ✓ The Reality Check Action Committee will agree on and address barriers to, and solutions for, quality growth (from the Reality Check exercise and Summit) through educational and outreach initiatives. ULI Triangle will present workshops, forums and other educational programs which address the barriers.

The Reality Check Action Committee will help citizens and decision-makers sustain the green places they value, create vibrant centers in our communities where people can live, work, learn and play and use transit to connect these centers to one another and communities throughout the region.

Please visit www.realitycheck2009.org or contact ULI Triangle or Triangle Tomorrow (listed below) for more information or to become involved.

The Action Committee will seek endorsement of the Guiding Principles and form three task forces around each principle to pursue aspects critical to success in achieving the principles:

- I. Definition and identification of the areas of critical regional interest
- II. Analysis of these areas
- III. Visualization of these areas
- IV. Engagement of those with interests in these areas.

A fourth task force will focus on communicating the principles in straightforward, compelling terms.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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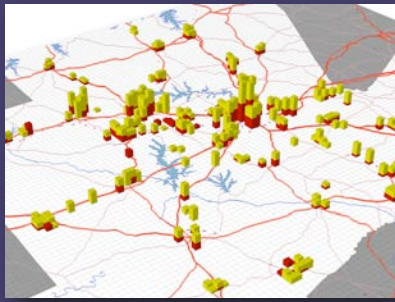


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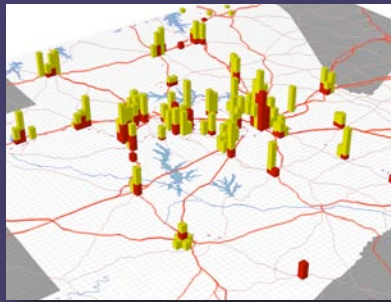


The Three Scenarios: Strategies for Connecting the Region



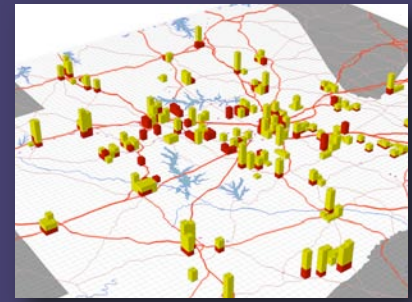
CLUSTERED SCENARIO

- ✓ Density along new & existing transit corridors
- ✓ Develop in nodes
- ✓ Encourage mixed use development
- ✓ Reinvest in urban centers
- ✓ Create a balance of jobs and housing



COMPACT SCENARIO

- ✓ Concentrate growth in existing centers
- ✓ Place mixed use in areas of growth
- ✓ Encourage equitable development throughout region
- ✓ Develop in clusters along major roads
- ✓ Protect water quality



DISPERSED SCENARIO

- ✓ Place less development in existing high density areas
- ✓ Add growth to towns throughout the region
- ✓ Add job centers and residential zones
- ✓ Encourage mixed use
- ✓ Link land use to transportation

Although each of the 28 table groups created their own unique map, common themes and strategies emerged. For example, many tables focused on centering development around transit nodes and corridors. The Reality Check organizers identified three scenarios that represented similar strategies employed by other tables. Some analyses and comparisons of the impacts among the three scenarios are presented in the charts on this page.

The three tables showed some differences. For example, the

Dispersed scenario placed more transit, while the Clustered scenario added more roads (see below). The Dispersed scenario placed more new development on currently undeveloped areas, whereas the Compact scenario concentrated growth in areas with existing development, increasing density in developed areas compared to the other two scenarios.

The Results Summit attendees voted on the one scenario that would be the best example of quality growth for the region. The Clustered Scenario received the most votes, followed by

Compact, and then Dispersed. These scenarios help the region understand various options available for quality growth. Taken together, the three scenarios have common elements that will help guide future action:

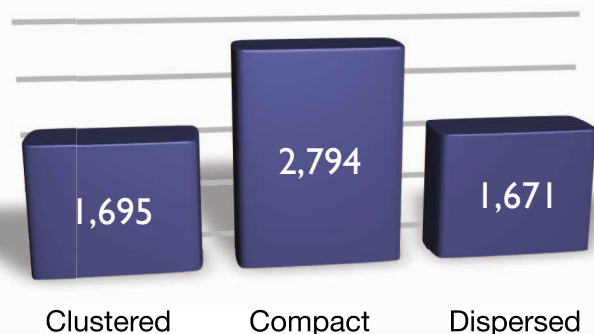
- ✓ Improved Transit
- ✓ Well-Designed Compact, Mixed-Use Development
- ✓ Green Spaces and Natural Resources
- ✓ Jobs/Housing Balance

IMPROVED ROADS & TRANSIT



■ Road Costs ■ Transit Costs (billions)
Suggested transportation investments overlapped with recent recommendations from the Special Transit Advisory Commission on improving transit in the region.

ANNUAL REDUCED VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED PER HOUSEHOLD



Transportation investments and density affect the number of vehicles miles traveled (and therefore greenhouse gas emissions) per household in each scenario. This graph shows VMT reduction from the current average.

Synthesis of Tables: Areas of Consensus and Areas of Challenge

After the Reality Check exercise on February 24th, the results of all 28 tables were synthesized and pulled into CommunityViz. This provided a method for analyzing areas of strong agreement (where most tables placed Legos) and areas of less agreement (where few tables placed Legos). Areas where there was not as much agreement will warrant additional conversation and analysis.



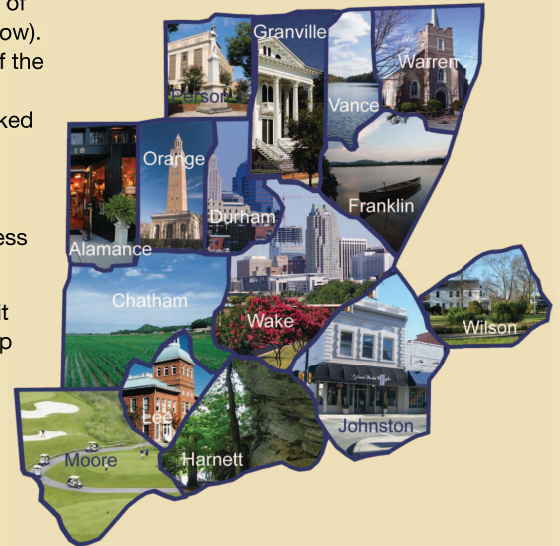
A high level of agreement was evident during the brainstorming exercise on guiding principles and how these translate into jobs and housing Legos being placed on the map. Eighty-six percent of the tables picked transit as one of their top three guiding principles. Fifty-seven percent of the tables had mixed-use development as a top principle, emphasizing the desire for communities that are walkable, bikeable and safe; and enhance the character of the region. Half of the tables listed protection of resources (water, farmland, and open space) as a top priority with access to these

On February 27th, a Results Summit was held to gather the Reality Check participants and additional interested stakeholders to see the results of the exercise and vote on priorities.

Over 500 participants attended from 15 counties (at right) and a cross-section of the region's population (see graph below). An analysis summarizing the results of the exercise were presented. With this knowledge, participants were then asked to vote on, items such as: the guiding principles identified by the tables, barriers to regional visioning and planning, as well as solutions to address these challenges.

Voting results showed that the Summit participants largely agreed with the top guiding principles identified during the Reality Check exercise.

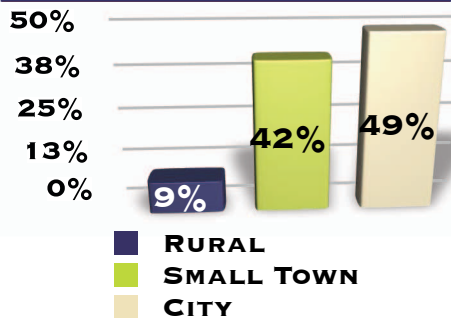
In addition, several barriers emerged as priorities to address--Lack of Funding for Infrastructure and Lack of Regional Cooperation and Collaboration. Transit-Oriented Development and Education were well-supported solutions for quality growth.



amenities also mentioned. In addition, fifty percent of the tables emphasized the importance of reinvesting in urban centers, utilizing existing infrastructure, and looking for opportunities for infill. There were common patterns of development at most of the tables with people placing

jobs and housing in existing areas of development and along major transportation corridors. Furthermore, there was considerable overlap where tables placed green string representing areas to preserve open space.

Who Participated?



Participants in the Summit represented a cross-section of the region, with people from rural, small town, and urban areas, as well as a diversity of professions and interests.

Barriers and Solutions

The barriers and solutions identified match up with each other in a way that indicates that the region understands how to approach challenges and opportunities. They also indicated what actions should be an integral part of plans developed for the future, including:

- ✓ Maximizing existing infrastructure including open space
- ✓ Addressing community resistance to emerging types of development and transportation modes with education, workshops, and public awareness campaigns
- ✓ Promoting effective regional cooperation and collaboration by adopting the Reality Check Guiding Principles