

MEMORANDUM

TO: Roger L. Stancil, Town Manager

FROM: J.B Culpepper, Planning Director
David Bonk, Long Range and Transportation Planning Manager

SUBJECT: Response to Petition: Reality Check Guiding Principles

DATE: February 22, 2010

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to respond to a request that the Council endorse the North Carolina Triangle Region Reality Check Guiding Principles.

BACKGROUND

On September 14, 2009 the Council reviewed a petition (Attachment 1) requesting endorsement of the Triangle Region Reality Check Guiding Principles. The petition was referred to the Manager and to the Sustainable Community Visioning Task Force.

In February, 2009 Urban Land Institute Triangle and Triangle Tomorrow hosted a series of meetings intended to develop and test alternative land use development scenarios for the 13 county Research Triangle Region. On February 27, 2009 these scenarios were presented to stakeholders from around the region. The stakeholders were asked to vote on their preference for the different development scenarios. (Attachment 2)

The stakeholder meeting prioritized the three development scenarios and agreed to create a Reality Check Action Committee to advise the Triangle Tomorrow organization on next steps and solicit endorsement from local governments for the Guiding Principles.

DISCUSSION

The Reality Check process identified and analyzed three different regional land use development scenarios. These included:

- Clustered Scenario: Develop in nodes with density along new and existing transit corridors. Encourage mixed use development and reinvest in urban areas to create a balance of jobs and housing.
- Compact Scenario: Concentrate growth in existing centers, while encouraging equitable development throughout the region. Mixed use development would be encouraged in clusters along major roads with a focus on protecting water quality.

- Dispersed Scenario: Allocate less future development in existing high density areas, adding growth to towns throughout the region, creating job centers and residential zones. Growth would link land use to transportation and encourage mixed use design.

The three scenarios were designed to include the common elements of improved transit, well designed compact mixed use development, creation of a jobs/housing balance and identification of green space and natural resources. Each scenario was analyzed to assess its impact on a range of criteria, including implementation cost and travel behavior.

The results of the analysis were presented to stakeholders from throughout the Triangle Region on February 27, 2009. The stakeholders were asked to vote on which scenario they favored. The Clustered Scenario received the most votes, followed by Compact and then Dispersed. The stakeholders also agreed to form an Action Committee to seek endorsement of the Guiding Principles from local governments. These Guiding Principles include:

- Transit: Improve regional transit, match land use decisions with transit investment.
- 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 water quality.

We believe the Guiding Principles proposed by the Reality Check process are consistent with policies already included in the Chapel Hill 2000 Comprehensive Plan and various small area plans adopted by the Town Council.

NEXT STEPS

The Reality Check stakeholders meeting also agreed to form three task forces to undertake additional activities. These included:

- Definition and identification of the areas of critical regional interest.
- Analysis and visualization of these areas.
- Engagement of those with interests in these areas.

The organizers of Reality Check are also hosting additional meetings to review progress on the implementation of the various initiatives. They have scheduled a meeting for February 24, 2010, 3-4:30 pm to provide updates on these initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend the Council adopt the attached Resolution endorsing the Triangle Region Reality Check Guiding Principles.

Sustainable Community Visioning Task Force: (Attachment 3) The Sustainable Community Visioning Task Force recommended the Council endorse the Reality Check Guiding Principles with the provision that Chapel Hill is free to further define and add detail to these broad principles as appropriate for local situations and conditions.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Citizen Petition (p. 5).
2. Reality Check Results Report (p. 11).
3. Sustainable Community Visioning Task Force Recommendation (p. 15).