



Making ULI Reality Check Richmond a Reality

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On May 14, 2013, a group of 300 diverse community leaders will take part in providing their voices to the future of Richmond at ULI Richmond's Reality Check. ULI Reality Check Richmond has been in the planning stages for well over a year, and hundreds of volunteers will convene at the Siegel Center at Virginia Commonwealth University to participate with the 300 community leaders in this one day event.

Population Growth

In the next 20 years, Virginia is expected to see a 23% growth in population from approximately eight million to almost 10 million people. In that same period, the Richmond Metropolitan Statistical Area is expected to grow almost 28% by adding over 330,000 people. As the population increases, so does the need for housing and jobs. As an example, over the next 20 years, it is projected that an additional 112,842 housing units will be needed to accommodate this additional population growth in the Richmond region alone. That means more than 5,600 homes per year will need to be added over the next 20 years.

The participants and volunteers at ULI Richmond Reality Check will attempt to tackle the question of how to plan for this anticipated population growth in Richmond by developing a set of principles that will guide where future jobs, housing and infrastructure should be placed in the region to accommodate this growth.

What is Reality Check?

Reality Check is sponsored by ULI Richmond and is a one day visioning exercise to bring together Richmond's regional political, environmental, civic, non-profit, development, and community leaders to build consensus on where the projected growth in housing and jobs over the next 20 years should be located across the region.

How Does Reality Check Work?

The cornerstone of the day is a game. Thirty tables of 10 regional leaders have a map of the region that shows where current housing, employment, and road infrastructure are located. There are no jurisdictional lines on the map, but it covers the areas within the City of Richmond, the Town of Ashland, and the Counties of Charles City, Chesterfield, Hanover, Henrico, Goochland, New Kent, and Powhatan. Based on the guiding principles developed by that table, each table locates future jobs and housing, represented by Legos ®, on the map.

Reality Check includes a diverse group of game participants in order to recognize the legitimate points of view of different stakeholders. It also provides for greater region-wide public awareness of the growth that is expected with an outcome of thoughtful solutions. Participants are forced to make decisions about density, growth, and change in the region. The visioning exercise forces participants to see the connection between the choices made to accommodate growth and the resulting consequences, whether intended or unintended.

ULI Preparation

ULI Richmond has prepared for this event by hosting five educational seminars throughout 2012. John W. Martin, President and CEO of the Southeastern Institute of Research and a leading expert on trends and different U.S. generations, moderated the first three programs. John shared his analysis of the needs and wants of the Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y prior to each panel discussion. The first program, "The Richmond Region's Changing Housing Needs," was held on February 17, 2012 at Williams Mullen. Senior planning officials from the City of Richmond and Chesterfield, Hanover and Henrico Counties discussed their respective policy choices in response to the shift in demographic trends, housing affordability and geographic areas targeted for housing growth over the next 10-15 years.

The second program on Infrastructure and Transportation was held on April 3, 2012 at Williams Mullen. Compared to many other U.S. cities, Metro Richmond area residents currently enjoy an unprecedented quality of life with a relatively modest cost of living. This includes one of the shortest work commutes in the state (in both miles and length of time) and reasonable utility costs for water, gas, and electricity. As RVA's population grows, however, more and more pressures will be placed on all of our region's core infrastructure, related services, and related cost of delivery. In this second part of ULI's pre-Reality

Check series, ULI examined the tradeoffs and related issues in maintaining the high quality of our transportation and utilities infrastructure that we enjoy today.

The third program was held on June 5, 2012 at Williams Mullen and discussed the Impact of Regional Land Use Decisions on Economic Development. This panel of regional planners discussed the economic impact of regional land use decisions, the ways in which current housing and transportation accommodate current and future job opportunities, the barriers that will keep us from growing in economic sectors where we currently excel, the financial impact of various patterns of growth and the current land use conditions in the region.

Ed McMahon, a ULI Fellow, presented at Williams Mullen on August 16, 2012 the benefits of Reality Check, what it has meant to other regions, why a regional visioning exercise is important, and the impact it can have for the Richmond Region.

In the final leg of the educational series, Jon Eisen of The Eisen Group, and a nationally known speaker, led a discussion at Hirschler Fleischer entitled “Leading Our Region – Keys to Economic Growth in the New Economy”. Mr. Eisen discussed the changing population, demographics and economy and the need for flexibility to respond to an ever-changing marketplace. He also outlined the concept that each locality’s policies and goals have a direct and immediate impact on growth in that community and that, to grow and to encourage investment, a locality needs to get a correct balance between growth and control.

Post-Implementation

Upon the conclusion of Reality Check, a report will be issued outlining the general conclusions and goals reached by the 300 participants describing how best to accommodate the anticipated growth in the Richmond region. However, this will not simply be another report to be placed on the shelf. ULI Richmond will then embark on a two year program to engage our community’s various stakeholders in action to accomplish the goals and vision set forth in this exercise. It has been done successfully in other regions, and ULI Richmond is looking forward to creating the same positive impact on Richmond.

For more information visit <http://richmond.uli.org/reality-check/>

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