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A “Reality Check” for the Puget Sound Region

Real growth projections. Real transportation challenges.
Real impact on our carbon footprint.

Groundbreaking ULI Seattle event to convene more than 250 leaders on April 30; Program to reignite and reinvigorate solutions on growth and transportation’s impact on our environment

SEATTLE – February 22, 2008 – What if a population mass the size of the entire Portland metropolitan area moved to King, Pierce, Snohomish and Kitsap counties?

By 2040, it will.

According to the Puget Sound Regional Council, our region’s population will increase by 1.7 million people over the next 32 years.

The question is: Are we ready?

We know we’re not—and it’s time for a reality check.

One Region, Three Priorities: Reality Check Event Convenes Leaders to Ignite Action

Growth. Transportation. Environment. Together, they represent three of our region’s most hotly-debated issues. Taken separately, they each come with an army of advocates, opponents, challenges and ideas for solutions.

When checked against reality, they are all interwoven, mutually-dependent and in dire need of a game plan that provides tangible insight into each, while working toward a solution that will truly spark action.

On April 30, 2008, more than 250 leaders from across four counties will convene to do just that.

The Urban Land Institute Seattle District Council, together with Puget Sound Regional Council, University of Washington, Enterprise Community Partners, Cascade Land Conservancy, Futurewise and Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties, will host a day-long event on April 30th called *Reality Check* (www.realitycheck2008.org).

The event will serve as a catalyst for participation by political, business, development, community and environmental leaders in the region’s first-ever workshop designed to generate hands-on awareness—and action—surrounding crucial growth and transportation challenges, as well as analyze their cumulative impact on our region’s carbon footprint and our environment.

Reality Check will identify the serious ramifications of growth trends in King, Snohomish, Pierce and Kitsap Counties, and focus on regional issues including quality growth, transportation, workforce housing, sustainability and conservation.

“No challenge in our region is greater than the challenge of growth,” said ULI Reality Check Seattle co-chair, Pat Callahan. “We’re taking this bold step together to ensure the significant work that lies ahead starts now. Simply put, we cannot take the risk of waiting any longer.”

Puget Sound Region’s Unique Challenge Requires Immediate Action

Our region’s growth constraints are so unique that there is likely no similar scenario for any region in the United States or beyond.

Consider this:

- The Cascade Mountain Range, Puget Sound and Lake Washington provide geographical constraints that naturally squeeze our region’s growth.
- Our state’s legally-binding Growth Management Act and urban growth boundaries add additional land use constraints that naturally direct us to more compact, dense communities in order to preserve and protect our cherished natural landscapes.

From snarled commutes, booming growth in cities large and small and the looming realities of our region’s environmental carrying capacity, growth issues have been catapulted to the forefront of legislation, initiatives and voters’ minds.

Let’s take a look back:

- Since 1990, the median prices for a home in King, Pierce, Snohomish and Kitsap Counties have skyrocketed.
 - In King County, the median home price has increased from \$140,000 in 1990 to \$472,000 in 2007.
- According to the Puget Sound Regional Council, our region’s population has increased by nearly 1.2 million people since 1980. In that same time frame, the average total vehicle miles traveled on a weekday in the Puget Sound region increased by more than 45 million – topping 81,534,000 in 2006. To put this in perspective: our population has increased by 57 percent while vehicle miles traveled increased by 124 percent in just over 25 years.

The impact on everyday life is real

- Our region’s critical workforce--firefighters, teachers, nurses, laborers--must continue to live farther and farther outside the cities where they work simply to afford day-to-day life.
- The negative impacts of poor development choices on climate change are increasingly apparent as greenhouse gas accumulations contribute to global warming with potentially catastrophic consequences. In 2007, King County alone generated 23 million metric tons of carbon dioxide—the weight equivalent of 4.2 million adult male elephants.

“Managing our impending growth represents a true crisis on a regional and global level,” said Gene Duvernoy, ULI Reality Check co-chair and Cascade Land Conservancy president. “We need to work together. We need to find a solution. This effort provides the data, partners and momentum to do just that.”

Putting tough decisions in OUR hands: Reality Check participants take action on growth, transportation

Designed to gain attention, further understanding and galvanize action for regional planning and transportation investment, *Reality Check* will engage key private, public and civic sector leaders from across a four-county area in collaboratively analyzing and developing alternative growth scenarios for our rapidly growing region.

Here's how it works:

In the tactile exercise based on actual demographic and economic data from PSRC, eight players at each of the 32 tables representing diverse locations and backgrounds across the region, will use colored LEGOs and ribbons that represent new jobs, households and various transportation options—allowing participants to make careful decisions about serving our pending growth.

- The program is based on a successful format first implemented in cities like Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. in which audience members, including members of the media and others are encouraged to view the discussions.
- Growth and mobility plans created within the roundtable discussions will then be analyzed for carbon emissions. An afternoon “results” portion of the exercise followed by a panel discussion of key decision makers. A critical component of the analysis will be a special “carbon footprint” component designed to demonstrate the projected carbon emissions resulting from a few representative tables.

Data Derived from Reality Check Event Used to Launch Implementation Action

The information will then be used as part of an action-oriented, four-county leadership effort spearheaded by ULI Seattle, Puget Sound Regional Council, University of Washington, Enterprise Community Partners, Cascade Land Conservancy, Futurewise, and Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties.

An action plan, objectives and timeline will be announced at the conclusion of the April 30th event.

For more information about Reality Check, please contact ULI Seattle Executive Director Kelly Mann at (206) 254-5625 or kmann@uli.org. You can also learn more by visiting our Reality Check website at www.realitycheck2008.org, or the ULI Seattle website at www.seattle.uli.org.

About Reality Check

The Seattle District Council of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) is committed to fulfilling ULI's mission at the local level by creating and assuming leadership on regional land use issues. On April 30, 2008, ULI Seattle, Puget Sound Regional Council, University of Washington, Enterprise Community Partners and other prominent area organizations will convene a diverse group of community stakeholders and policy leaders for *Reality Check*, a one-day participatory GIS-based exercise similar to those recently completed in Los Angeles, Utah, Sacramento, and Washington, D.C. Approximately 250 regional political, business, development, community, and environmental leaders will be invited to analyze and develop alternative growth scenarios for our rapidly growing region, and to make tough decisions about transportation investment to serve this growth. The objective of *Reality Check* is to gain attention, further understanding, and galvanize action for regional planning and transportation investment to deal with the serious ramifications of growth trends in King, Snohomish, Pierce, and Kitsap Counties.

About ULI Seattle

The Urban Land Institute (www.uli.org) is a nonprofit research and education organization supported by its members. Founded in 1936, the institute has more than 37,000 members worldwide representing the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines, working in private enterprises and public service. ULI facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information and experience among local, national and international industry leaders and policy makers dedicated to creating better places. The mission of ULI is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. ULI members commit to the best in land use policy and practice. ULI Seattle brings the resources of ULI to our community. For more information, visit www.seattle.uli.org.

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