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Public Invited to Discuss Implications of Projected Regional Growth

Washington Post Columnist Roger K. Lewis to Keynote Afternoon Session

April 24, 2006 (Hughesville, Md.) – A unique statewide coalition of more than 100 organizations known as **Reality Check Plus** today invited the public to register and attend a series of afternoon sessions to explore and foster collective visioning about growth in Southern Maryland and in the state overall.

This three-county regional event, which starts **at 1:30pm on Thursday, June 15th, 2006**, will feature a keynote address by *The Washington Post's* Roger K. Lewis. Since 1984, his award-winning column on architecture and urban design, "Shaping the City," has appeared weekly and bi-weekly in the *Post*. He is a practicing architect and a professor of architecture at University of Maryland's School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, which he helped to start. His numerous articles on architecture, planning and urban design, historic preservation, housing, zoning, and public policy affecting the built environment appear regularly in national journals, periodicals, anthologies and encyclopedias. His "Shaping the City" cartoons, in addition to appearing continually in books and other regional and national publications, have been the subject of several exhibitions, including one at The National Building Museum in Washington, DC.

The afternoon sessions, to be held at the Somerset Gymnasium Athletic Arena at St. Mary's College in St. Mary's City, will focus on the implications of growth and the implementation of a common vision. It will also include a report on the results of an invitation-only growth-visioning exercise to be held earlier that morning. A total of 160 individuals — including elected officials, government staff and community, civic and business leaders from throughout Southern Maryland — will participate in that exercise using blocks to represent the increment of new homes and jobs projected to come to the three-county region by 2030. Invitees from across Southern Maryland were selected by the Southern Maryland **Reality Check Plus** organizing committee specifically to represent all stakeholder interests throughout Charles, St. Mary's and Calvert counties. To the extent possible, the invitation list was further balanced by race, gender and other factors to ensure that a balance of stakeholder views and interests are reflected among the morning exercise participants. Invitations for the morning session were mailed the week of April 9th.

The cost of attending the public afternoon sessions is \$15 per person. Interested attendees can register by calling 1.800.321.5011. Alternatively, registration is available via fax or mail; visit http://www.realitycheckmaryland.org/southern_region.php (see the "Event Information" page) for more detailed instructions. (The fee will be waived for individuals for whom cost prevents their attendance; call 410.889.4112 for more information.)

The June 15th Southern Maryland exercise is one of four regional **Reality Check Plus** exercises that will take place in May and June on the Eastern Shore and in Western Maryland, Central Maryland (Baltimore/Washington Corridor) and Southern Maryland. The results from each regional event will provide the basis for a statewide vision for growth, and a subsequent report will compare this vision with existing development trends and identify the implications of our current patterns of development. Led statewide by the Urban Land Institute's Baltimore District Council, the University of Maryland's National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education, and 1000 Friends of Maryland, **Reality Check Plus** will bring together a diverse group of organizations and various stakeholders, including politicians, developers, environmentalists, and business and civic leaders to consider Maryland's future growth.

A broad-based coalition of more than 100 sponsors and supporting organizations is guiding this effort, including the Home Builders Association of Maryland, the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, St. Mary's College, Marrick Properties, the Maryland chapter of the American Planning Association, the Maryland Center for Agro-Ecology, the Greater Baltimore Committee, and the Interfaith Housing Alliance, among many others.

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A number of other jurisdictions around the country have already launched local or regional visioning exercises – Envision Utah in the Salt Lake City region; Blueprint in Sacramento, California; and Reality Check in Los Angeles, Dallas-Ft. Worth and Washington, D.C. What distinguishes **Reality Check Plus** from previous visioning exercises in Maryland is that it is privately led, statewide and action-oriented.

For more information about **Reality Check Plus**, contact Beth Offenbacher at 703.933.0520, ext. 202, Frank Jaklitsch at 240.375.4550 or Eugene Lauer at 301.741.1776. Our website, www.realitycheckmaryland.org, provides additional information about both the overall **Reality Check Plus** exercise concept and specifically the June 15th Southern Region event.

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