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Diverse Eastern Shore Stakeholders to Discuss Affordable Housing, Jobs, Growth Patterns ***Guidebook Distributed to May 25th Attendees***

May 19, 2006 (Cambridge, Md.) – A special 94-page **Reality Check Plus** Guidebook for the Eastern Shore that provides detailed demographic and trends data was provided today on the **Reality Check Plus** website for the 160 elected officials, government staff and community, civic and business leaders from nine Eastern Shore counties who will be attending the **Reality Check Plus** exercise at the Hyatt Hotel in Cambridge on **Thursday, May 25th, 2006**. Planned and hosted by a unique coalition of nearly 150 nonprofit, community and private sector organizations statewide, the May 25th **Reality Check Plus** event will explore and foster collective visioning about growth on the Eastern Shore and in the state overall. Participants are being asked to familiarize themselves with the guidebook in advance of the regional event to inform their decision making, and also to bring their copies that day.

Using data compiled by the Maryland Department of Planning, the National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education at the University of Maryland and Salisbury University, the **Reality Check Plus** Guidebook provides background information about Maryland overall as well as demographic, housing, jobs and environmental data for the Eastern Shore. “The Guidebook will provide a vital framework for the dialogue and negotiations that will happen on May 25th as part of the **Reality Check Plus** morning exercise and for the implementation discussions that will be a major focus of the afternoon public session,” said Dru Schmidt-Perkins, executive director of 1000 Friends of Maryland and chair of the Implementation Committee for **Reality Check Plus**. “It’s essential that the participants have real-time data to assist them with making meaningful decisions throughout the day. The Guidebook provides exactly that.” The Guidebook can be downloaded from the **Reality Check Plus** website at http://www.realitycheckmaryland.org/Eastern_Shore_Guidebook.php.

Reality Check Plus is a day-long exercise in two parts:

- During the morning, a total of 300 individuals — including elected officials, government staff and community, civic and business leaders from throughout the Eastern Shore — will participate in an exercise using blocks to represent the increment of new homes and jobs projected to come to the nine-county region by 2030. Invitees from across the Eastern Shore were selected by the Eastern Shore **Reality Check Plus** organizing committee specifically to represent all stakeholder interests throughout Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico and Worcester counties.
- The afternoon session is **open to the public** and begins **at noon** (including lunch). With a major focus being the implications of growth and the implementation of a common vision, the afternoon sessions will also include a report on the results of an invitation-only growth-visioning exercise to be held earlier that morning. In addition, it will feature a keynote address by Russell Brinsfield, Executive Director of the Maryland Center for Agro-Ecology, a coalition of agricultural, environmental, forestry, business, educational, government and other leaders dedicated to enhancing Maryland's farms, forests and other "working lands" through research, education and policy programs. Brinsfield has coauthored numerous publications focusing on ways to minimize the impact of agriculture on our natural resources. He manages the Brinsfield family farms, is mayor of Vienna, Maryland, and is cofounder and current Board of Directors member of the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy. The cost of attending the public afternoon sessions is \$40 per person including lunch. Interested attendees can register by calling 1.800.321.5011. Alternatively, registration is available via fax or mail; visit http://www.realitycheckmaryland.org/easternshore_region.php (see “Event Information” page) for detailed instructions. (The fee may be waived for individuals for whom cost prevents their attendance; call 410.889.4112 for more information.)

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The May 25th Eastern Shore exercise is one of four regional exercises that will take place in May and June on the Eastern Shore and in Western Maryland, in Central Maryland and in Southern Maryland. The results from each regional event will provide the basis for a statewide vision for growth, and a subsequent report that 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 nearly 150 sponsors and supporting organizations is guiding this effort, including the Home Builders Association of Maryland, the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, The Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment, the Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, The American Institute of Architects - Baltimore, the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, the Greater Baltimore Committee, St. Mary's College and the Mid-Shore Community Foundation, among many others.

"The Lincoln Institute views **Reality Check Plus** as a pioneering and promising strategy for improving land use policy across an entire state," said Armando Carbonell with the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, a nonprofit and tax-exempt educational institution founded in 1974 to improve the quality of public debate and decisions in the areas of land policy and land-related taxation. "It is pleased to be a major supporter of this important demonstrative work."

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 or Jack Lynn at 703.683.2996. Our website, www.realitycheckmaryland.org, provides additional information about both the overall **Reality Check Plus** exercise concept and specifically the May 25th Eastern Shore event.

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