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Diverse Central Maryland Stakeholders to Discuss on Affordable Housing, Jobs, Growth Patterns Guidebook Distributed to June 9th Attendees

May 22, 2006 (Baltimore, Md.) – A special 94-page **Reality Check Plus** Guidebook for Central Maryland that provides detailed demographic and trends data was provided today on the **Reality Check Plus** website to the 150 elected officials, government staff and community, civic and business leaders from seven Central Maryland counties and the City of Baltimore who will be attending the **Reality Check Plus** exercise at the Baltimore Convention Center on **Friday, June 9th, 2006**. Planned and hosted by a unique coalition of nearly 150 nonprofit, community and private sector organizations statewide, the June 9th **Reality Check Plus** event will explore and foster collective visioning about growth in Central Maryland 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 the University of Maryland – Baltimore County, the **Reality Check Plus** Guidebook provides background information about Maryland overall as well as demographic, housing, jobs and environmental data for Central Maryland. “The Guidebook will provide a vital framework for the dialogue and negotiations that will happen on June 9th 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/central_region_guidebook.php.

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

- During the morning, a total of 150 individuals — including elected officials, government staff and community, civic and business leaders from throughout Central Maryland — will participate in an exercise using blocks to represent the increment of new homes and jobs projected to come to the four-county region by 2030. Invitees from across Central Maryland were selected by the Central Maryland **Reality Check Plus** organizing committee specifically to represent all stakeholder interests throughout Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties.
- The afternoon session is **open to the public** and starts **at 1:30pm**. 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 Ed McMahon, a nationally renowned authority on sustainable development, land conservation and urban design at the nonprofit Urban Land Institute in Washington, D.C. The cost of attending the public afternoon sessions is \$75 per person for business/private interests and \$25 for non-profit and public sector organizations. Interested attendees can register by calling 1.800.321.5011. Alternatively, registration is available via fax or mail; visit http://www.realitycheckmaryland.org/central_region.php (see the “Event Information” page) for more detailed instructions.

The June 9th Central Regional 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 – 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.

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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, St. Mary's College, the Citizens Planning and Housing Association, the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the Maryland chapter of the American Planning Association, the Maryland Center for Agro-Ecology, the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, the Greater Baltimore Committee, Westside Renaissance, the Greater Washington Board of Trade, and the Interfaith Housing Alliance, 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, Bryce Turner at 410.837.2727 or Petey Green at 240.882.2637. Our website, www.realitycheckmaryland.org, provides additional information about both the overall **Reality Check *Plus*** exercise concept and specifically the June 9th Central Region event.

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