



Research Triangle Regional Quality Growth Initiative Draft Action Plan

The Research Triangle Regional Quality Growth Initiative seeks to implement the guiding principles and growth scenarios developed by regional stakeholders through the Reality Check visioning exercise and summit in February 2009.

That activity engaged more than 700 business and community representatives from 15 counties in considering how best to accommodate the 1.2 million people and 700,000 jobs expected to be added to the region over the next 20 years. A follow-up summit reported on the results of the exercise and surveyed the summit participants about their top principles for guiding future growth.

Growth Scenarios

Participants at each of the 28 Reality Check tables mapped a unique vision for how growth could develop by placing Legos to indicate preferred locations for future housing and jobs. From their work, three general scenarios emerged:

- ▶ **Clustered growth:** A scenario that placed growth density along new and existing transit corridors, creating jobs and housing balance with more roads, encouraged a diversity of housing choices, reinvestment in urban centers and water protection (mid-range Lego stacks spaced along transit corridors).
- ▶ **Compact growth:** A scenario that concentrated growth in areas with existing development within city centers and small nodes scattered throughout the region with more and improved transit, encouraged mixed use, with equitable amounts of development, and water protection as a priority (taller Lego stacks in fewer select locations).
- ▶ **Dispersed growth:** A scenario that placed more new development on currently in developed areas adding more roads, encouraged mixed use, comprehensive transportation, preservation of open space, transportation and land use link (shorter Lego stacks dispersed across the region).

Attendees of the Results Summit voted for the scenario they considered the best example of quality growth for the region. The Clusters scenario received the most votes, followed by Compact, then Dispersed. Taken together, these scenarios and the individual table results they represent, present a “big picture” to help people understand various options available for quality growth.

Despite differences in scale, scope and location, the three scenarios all have common elements that can help guide an action plan:

- ▶ Improved mass transit.
- ▶ More well-designed, compact and walkable mixed-use development.
- ▶ Sustaining important green spaces and natural resources.
- ▶ Jobs and housing balance.

Guiding Principles

Participants in the Reality Check Summit selected three top guiding principles that should be considered when making decisions that affect how the region will accommodate the growth of people and housing in coming decades.

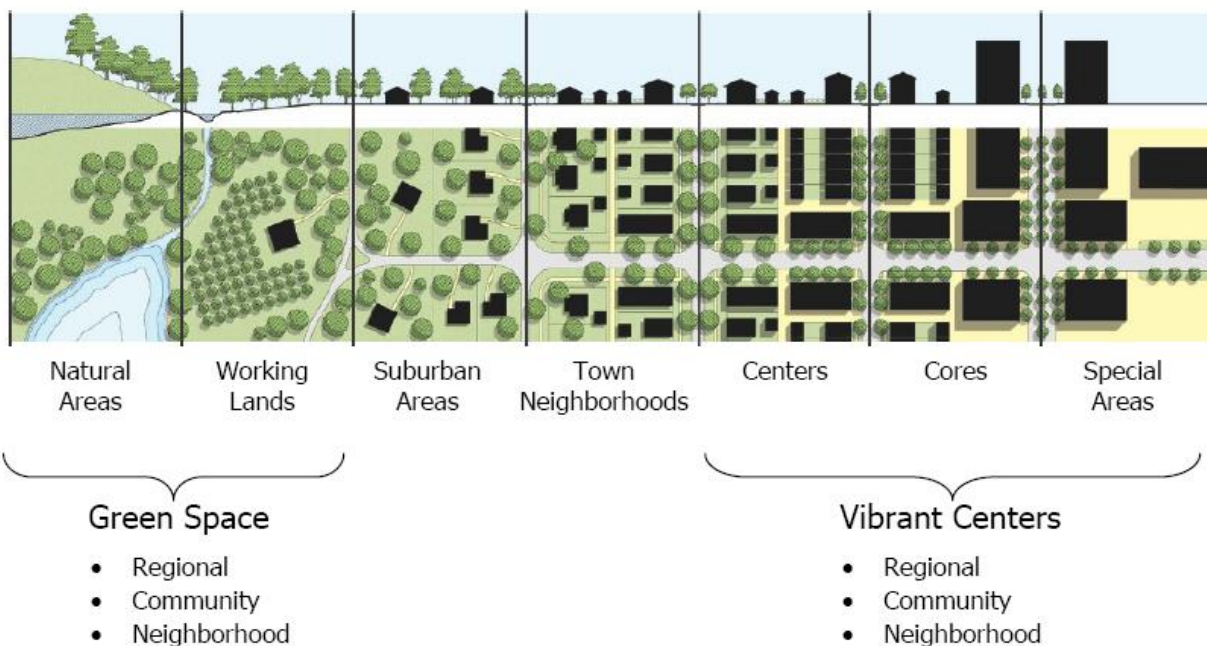
The three guiding principles are:

- ▶ **Transit:** Improve regional transit, matching land use decisions with transit investments.
- ▶ **Vibrant Centers:** Reinvest in city and town centers, promote compact development, density and mixed use, including a balance of jobs and housing.
- ▶ **Green Space:** Define appropriate growth & preservation areas to protect open space, agricultural land and natural resources, especially water supply and quality.

These principles match what was observed at the Reality Check exercise, where tables of participants typically:

- ▶ Identified green places that should be sustained for agriculture, forestry and resource protection.
- ▶ Created vibrant centers of employment and housing.
- ▶ Connected these centers to one another and communities throughout the region with transit.

The following picture shows a simplified spectrum of places within a community. The regional interests identified through Reality Check are most pronounced at the two ends of the spectrum: region-shaping green space such as watersheds, and centers of employment, housing, education and entertainment, such as downtowns, The Research Triangle Park and university campuses.



These centers and green spaces are found at the regional, community and neighborhood scales.

Action Committee

The Quality Growth initiative's goal is to help people and decision-makers sustain the green places they value, create vibrant centers in all our communities where people can live, work, learn and play, and use transit to connect these centers to one another and to communities throughout the region.

To do this, the Action Committee proposes to seek endorsement of the guiding principles and form groups around each principle to pursue four aspects critical to success:

- ▶ Definition and identification of the areas of critical regional interest
- ▶ Analysis of the areas.
- ▶ Visualization of the areas.
- ▶ Engagement of those with interests in the areas.

A fourth group will help “tell the story” about these principles in straightforward, compelling terms and coordinate the endorsement of the guiding principles. Listed below are first drafts of what these groups might do, starting with basic framework issues, then indicating what the subcommittees can do to define, analyze, visualize and engage people on each Guiding Principle.

Barriers & Solutions

The barriers and solutions identified by Reality Check participants demonstrate that our region understands how to approach these challenges and opportunities and are an integral part of action plans developed by the task forces. They are:

- ▶ Maximize existing infrastructure including open space.
- ▶ Address community resistance to emerging types of development and transportation modes with education, workshops and public awareness campaigns.
- ▶ Adopt the three guiding principles as a mechanism to help communities move forward together to promote effective regional cooperation and collaboration.

Task Forces Leading Quality Growth Initiatives

Endorsement and Messaging [Task Force leadership to review and revise]

- ▶ Contact the cities in the 15-county Reality Check region.
- ▶ Develop a city-by-city, county-by-county, or group approach to make Quality Growth presentations, assisted by local Quality Growth Initiative participants and Action Committee members.
- ▶ These presentations might be hosted by local chambers of commerce or the economic development commissions.
- ▶ Follow up with a request to present the guiding principles to their council/commission for adoption. This is going to take support from action committee members.
- ▶ Provide an opportunity for councilors/commissioners to be rewarded as progressive public officials and also promote Quality Growth branding.
- ▶ Follow and publicize “best practices” as they relate to the quality growth and RC and GPs.

Timeframe: 18 months–2 years with progress review every 3 months

Leadership: Ken Eudy, Sig Hutchinson, Rosemary Waldorf, all members of Action Committee, Triangle Tomorrow board and ULI Triangle

Transit: [Task Force leadership to review and revise]



- ▶ Develop a Reality Check Action Committee subcommittee focused on transit and related land use, engaging participants among others.
- ▶ Identify organizations currently addressing transit, how they work together and if Reality Check can serve as a forum for transit supportive land use dialogue and education.
- ▶ Support the STAC recommendations for regional transit.
- ▶ Support the local option funding source as the primary transit funding source, with State funding complementing local sources.
- ▶ Assist the development of regional citizen based coalitions to support transit referenda.
- ▶ Assist Triangle Transit in marketing and messaging as needed to secure support for improved transit options and funding.
- ▶ Education – ULI Triangle

Timeframe: 18 months to 2 years. Task Force to set milestones.

Leadership: Joe Milazzo, David King, Jeff Merritt

Vibrant Centers [Task Force leadership to review and revise]



- ▶ Develop a subcommittee focused on the ingredients of vibrant centers: well-designed compact and walkable mixed-use development. (Compact walkable development is defined as existing and new development at intensities that can make a center “transit-ready” as defined by the region’s station area development guidelines)
- ▶ Identify organizations that are currently addressing walkable mixed-use development, how they work together and what gaps the initiative can help fill.
- ▶ Define regional, community and neighborhood centers and identify existing centers, centers proposed in existing plans, and possible centers indicated by Reality Check results.
- ▶ Undertake tasks that help answer such questions as, “how intense are the different proposed centers? What is the mix of housing and jobs? How much of the region's future jobs and housing could be accommodated in centers?”
- ▶ Undertake tasks that help answer such questions as, “what might these different types of centers look like.”
- ▶ Host forums in partnership with communities and regional organizations to address the ingredients of walkable mixed-use development in their cities.
- ▶ Support community plans, standards, incentives and educational efforts that support existing and new well-designed compact, mixed use walkable development in designated regional, community and neighborhood centers.
- ▶ ULI Triangle host forums and workshops that work with developers to focus compact mixed use development in appropriate centers.

Timeframe: 18 months – 2 years. Task Force to set milestones.

Leadership: Jim Anderson, John Hodges-Copple, Liz Rooks, Rosemary Waldorf

Green Space [Task Force leadership to review and revise]



- ▶ Develop a subcommittee focused on green space and natural resources.
- ▶ Identify organizations that are currently addressing green space, water resources, and other environmental issues, how they work together and what gap the initiative can fill.
- ▶ Update Triangle Land Conservancy’s “Greenprint” with assistance from Quality Growth Initiative participants from all counties.
- ▶ Lead on the future of our water sources – partner with N.C. Division of Water Resources to create regional awareness about the quantity of water available and its source in our region.
- ▶ Create awareness and/or dialogue about the coordination, or lack thereof, of water source management in our region.
- ▶ Education – ULI Triangle

Timeframe: 18 months–2 years. Task Force to set milestones

Leadership: Kevin Brice, Sig Hutchinson

Note: Task Forces should include participants from the Reality Check visioning exercise and summit as well as others who interested in these quality growth topics.

About the Initiative

The Research Triangle Regional Quality Growth Initiative grew from the results of Reality Check, a visioning exercise in February 2009. It was organized by Triangle Tomorrow, a program of the Research Triangle Regional Partnership, and the Triangle District Council of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) using ULI methodology.

The 15-county region of the initiative includes the 13 counties of the Research Triangle Region (Chatham, Durham, Franklin, Granville, Harnett, Johnston, Lee, Moore, Orange, Person, Vance, Wake and Warren) plus neighboring Alamance and Wilson, which have close economic ties to the region and significant worker commuting.

For more information or to get involved, contact:

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