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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Reality Check First Coast Unveiled to the Region
*Longest range and only seven-county visioning project launched by the
Northeast Florida Regional Council and the Urban Land Institute
along with a host of partners*

JACKSONVILLE, Fla., February 9, 2009 – Reality Check First Coast, the region’s only seven-county visioning project, announced today that it is entering the public involvement phase leading up to the day-long visioning exercise on May 21, 2009. This unprecedented project is an effort in creating a vision for the region for the year 2060. It is the longest range project of its type in the area.

Reality Check is being managed and administered by the Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC), which is tasked with creating working relationships within our seven counties and their 27 municipalities. The program, created and branded by the Urban Land Institute (ULI) has been ‘played’ in other cities, including Tampa, Phoenix, Charleston, Los Angeles and is upcoming in Raleigh-Durham, NC.

“Reality Check is the one-day exercise that we are currently working towards,” said Brian Teeple, CEO of the NEFRC. “But it is the vehicle we are using to take us to the next level of visioning, which includes a long-range implementation and public input phase after the one-day event.”

Project volunteers from all seven counties (Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam, and St. Johns) have been working with NEFRC and ULI staff for more than a year to plan for and gather all of the information and analysis to be used for Reality Check.

Citizens from all of the counties can give the project input in several ways. They are being encouraged to visit <http://realitycheckfirstcoast.com> and take the ‘Grow Smart Survey’, a public input survey designed to determine values in each of the seven counties. In addition, residents can nominate themselves or someone they think is a leader to play in the one-day Reality Check game or attend the result session that follows.

Reality Check First Coast Unveiled to The Region

Page 2

On March 23, 2009, a simultaneous one-night town hall meeting will be held in each of the seven counties. Times and locations will be announced soon. All interested residents will be encouraged to attend and participate by giving feedback on how we should grow as a region.

The day-long event being held in May features 300 government, non-profit and business leaders in tables of 10 placing more than 60,000 Legos® on 30 maps. These maps feature the region as it is currently, and participants place jobs and residents where they believe they are best suited for smart growth. They are also given yarn to represent new transportation corridors and preservation areas. The representative themes from the scenarios are discussed at an afternoon session. Ultimately the scenarios can be combined into a consensus scenario from the exercise, and contrasted to scenarios created from the guiding principle that the participants supported. These give the region a way to visualize their choices for how to grow for the next 50 years..

The plan is for the NEFRC to get all the region's governments and municipalities to one day enter into an agreement (a local government 'compact') that would guide smart growth policies, procedures and approvals for the years ahead.

Other partners of Reality Check include: Cornerstone Regional Development Partnership, the University of North Florida, North Florida TPO, the St. Johns River Water Management District, and the St. Johns River Alliance.

How should we grow? Where will grow?

By the year 2060, 1.6 million additional people will be living in our Region, requiring the addition of new jobs and housing to accommodate this growth. As a region, we have choices to make. Where will development occur? How will we maintain open spaces and our natural resources? What will our transportation and infrastructure needs be? Those questions will be considered at Reality Check First Coast.*

At the Reality Check event, regional leaders will be challenged to rethink where and how to grow the First Coast in a way that adds value to the local economy, while preserving our environment and quality of life. Participants divided into groups of eight to 10 will discuss and allocate housing and job growth throughout the First Coast. The First Coast consists of seven counties, including Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam and St. Johns — and their 27 municipalities.

*To create a regional consensus that includes a variety of viewpoints, participants must reflect both the geography and diversity of the First Coast. **Participants will be selected from nominations and invited to participate in the visioning exercise.** They will represent business, economic development, government, academia, environmental and social services, professional and trade organizations, neighborhood and civic groups, and nonprofit and philanthropic organizations.*

For more information on Reality Check First Coast, contact Maria Coppola with BroadBased Communications at 904-398-7279 or visit <http://realitycheckfirstcoast.com>.