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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Charlotte Housing Justice Coalition Responds to REBIC Talking Points

Community-driven development is what the Real Estate and Building Industry Coalition (REBIC) works against, while we at the Charlotte Housing Justice Coalition believe that community-led development is the only way forward. By opposing *any* reference to Community Benefit Agreements in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan, REBIC has made it clear that it stands against the interests of historically marginalized and economically neglected communities.

Developers in this city have reaped tremendous tax benefits and received large public subsidies at the expense of Black and Brown residents in Charlotte's Crescent while giving nothing in return but displacement and gentrification.

We release this document to stake our position and refute REBIC's ill-informed and misleading talking points released on March 3rd.

The talking points from REBIC were sent to City Planning and members of the Charlotte City Council regarding the City's 2040 Comprehensive Plan. While much of the media narrative regarding the 2040 Plan has focused most intensely on the ability for developers to increase density, REBIC's talking points are much more concerned with the potential impacts that the 2040 Plan will have on their ability to develop the Charlotte area in *their* image.

The following are REBIC's talking points underlined and bolded followed by the Charlotte Housing Justice Coalition's response:

- **Delay the public hearing on the Charlotte 2040 Comprehensive Plan:** We echo this concern but this is due to the fact that the Plan, as written, could fundamentally change the landscape for how development functions in Charlotte. We don't believe that there has been robust engagement from the City with communities about the potential impact of the Plan. While REBIC may disagree with some of the more ambitious goals of the Plan, they have no issue with this Plan's ability to streamline development so that their members no longer have to file rezoning petitions and open themselves up to a legislative process.
- **Conflicts Between Goals and Objectives:** In REBIC's talking points, they are most concerned with how the City's ambitious goal of 10 minute neighborhoods will ultimately impact their ability to make communities the way they see fit. The 2040 Plan wants to ensure that all neighborhoods are able to have walkable neighborhoods with access to grocery stores and a variety of amenities. This is vital for many underserved communities in the Crescent of Charlotte who live in areas where amenities are distant,

grocery stores are scarce and access to transit is a long trek. There are legitimate contradictions within the 2040 Plan but these are based around the equity that the City hopes to achieve which will be undermined, if the Plan is adopted and implemented as is, by a more expedient zoning process, making land use decisions much less democratic and creating public spaces that are actually hostile to the public (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design [CPTED], Privately Owned Public Open Spaces [POPOS], etc)

- **Economic Analysis Missing:** REBIC calls for an economic impact study that “should include, at minimum, any assessment of potential job losses, decreases in property values, and limitations on the ability to pursue future economic development opportunities.” Despite their concern, the 2040 Plan is still a pro-growth plan. Yet, it aims to spread the wealth that has been generated (and will be generated) by the City’s publicly funded corporate relocations to the taxpayers who have essentially fueled economic growth at the expense of public services. The mention of potential job losses by REBIC is just plain fear-mongering especially when the Plan specifically aims in Goal 8 to continue to pursue economic development opportunities and even strengthen already growing sectors that may impact communities (specifically logistics). The possible decrease in property values REBIC mentions would actually be a benefit to those who have long been locked out of social mobility due to housing instability caused by skyrocketing rents and home prices. REBIC’s ask for more economic analysis on the 2040 Plan is essentially nothing more than a request to determine how it will affect their bottom line. Meanwhile, working class Charlotteans have had to live with the detrimental economic impact of pro-development groups like REBIC and their members effectively driving rents and property values to a point of never-ending crisis.
- **Some Recommendations Are Illegal:** This talking point specifically references community benefits agreements, inclusionary zoning and impact fees as illegal policy recommendations. Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) are not, in fact, illegal. They are private contracts entered into between communities and developers in order for neighborhoods to be able to make their impact on land use decisions. Inclusionary zoning is not legal in North Carolina and has been stuck in committee at the NCGA for years but its passage, with strong support from the City of Charlotte, would ultimately force developers to include affordable housing in developments within particular zoning districts. Impact fees, like inclusionary zoning districts, need required state approval but this is a policy recommendation worth considering especially since development is adding to the strain on infrastructure. Ultimately, REBIC is, once again, concerned with items in the 2040 Plan that aim to make more demands on developers who have long driven rents and home valuations to the point where Charlotte is growing increasingly unaffordable for working class residents.
- **Lack of Input:** REBIC is concerned that their input isn’t being taken into account within the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. This, despite the fact that they are the special interest group that City Government has admittedly met with the most in crafting the 2040 Plan.

They are also concerned that the 2040 Plan is driven by community members rather than “experts” in the field of development to make proper land use decisions. However, residents know what’s best for their communities. They know that it’s dangerous to put industrial sites on top of critical watersheds. They know that they are being actively bulldozed, steamrolled and talked over when it comes to concerns of gentrification. If anything, the 2040 Comprehensive Plan lacks stronger *community* input with strengthened commitments to CBAs and other mechanisms that would democratize planning. It’s these “experts” in development after all who are contributing to an inequitable city.

We ask that the Charlotte City Council and the City of Charlotte Planning and Zoning staff actually strengthen the language regarding CBAs. For too long Charlotte has catered to the whims of private development and profit to the detriment of its citizens. The only way forward is for communities to have the power of self-determination in land use decisions so that all communities in Charlotte are healthy, safe and affordable. We need a Comprehensive Plan that is for the many and not the wealthy few.