

## The New Neck

Sliver of land the size of Manhattan yields widening opportunity, new perils

By Neal Peirce and Curtis Johnson  
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### **Sliver of land the size of Manhattan yields widening opportunity, new perils**

North Charleston Mayor Keith Summey couldn't be more right about the importance of the Neck, and that's partly because, as a zone of opportunity, it's getting bigger. Longtimers think of the Neck as that narrow territory starting at Mount Pleasant Street and ending approximately where Meeting and King streets dissolve into Spruill and Rivers avenues.

The New Neck, fast becoming one of the hottest urban redeveloping areas in the nation, extends northward up to North Charleston's Park Circle. In its new geography, it's a stretch of land as large as Manhattan.

In this region's debate about growth, about where more homes should be built or not built, the New Neck is the best staging ground to demonstrate how more people can live closer to major job centers. It's the proving ground for rebuilding whole neighborhoods without violating the legitimate rights and interests of people already there.

In fact, almost every issue critical to the region's 21st-century success is in play. Here the raw wounds of the region's history are laid bare - industrial pollution including oil refineries and intensive phosphate mining that left "brownfields" in their wake, an interstate road that ran roughshod over historic black neighborhoods, massive job losses and middle-class loss following the Navy Base's closing, and power held by sometimes fiercely competing governments.

Yet the corresponding opportunities are dazzling. Here's a chance to create connected urban neighborhoods with room and prices for everyone who wants to live there. It's a chance to untangle the knotty dilemmas that are wrapped around port expansion, so goods move and people get to jobs efficiently.

It's an opportunity to reclaim industrial wastelands and ride the emerging wave of "green" development for new commercial enterprises. It's a way to create fresh opportunities for long-suffering black neighborhoods. And in a region worried about environmental impact of development on its treasured sea islands, there's enough space in the New Neck for well over 100,000 new residences.

The New Neck is already home to a group of imaginative redevelopment initiatives: the Noisette project in and near the former Charleston Navy Base, the ambitious Magnolia project on the Ashley River, the nostalgic Mixson project, upcoming projects by Ginn Development and others. Massive chunks of brownfield remediation have been undertaken.

Plus, a historic shift in black-white relations is shaping up. At Magnolia, for example, developer Robert Clement's team found historic black neighborhoods deeply suspicious that the new high-rises would drive up property values, and thus, property taxes, forcing out established homeowners. The creative response: a Magnolia fund to cover the homeowners' increased tax bills — a first, as far as we know, in creative developer practice anywhere in the United States.

Black leaders speak with enthusiasm about Magnolia's early outreach to them, asking their input on how the area could and should develop. Developers and city governments across America should take note of the precedent.

But putting a hard squeeze on the New Neck are a bunch of big decisions, all coming at once, with the clock ticking. The size and routing of Interstate 26 road access to the port terminal, the potential of better freight railroad connections — all are in the hands of assorted government agencies and private companies that generally see little need to talk with each other. Here's how the scene of compound dilemmas looked like to outsiders' eyes:

### **Expanding the port**

The Port of Charleston got its permit from the Army Corps of Engineers last April to build a \$600 million expansion of container capacity on a portion of the old Navy base. Preliminary construction is already under way, but outstanding issues remain. Some deal with the issue of fine particulate air pollution, now raising some alarm in the national public health community. But the question of port access still raises concerns:

### **Getting cargo to I-26.**

Up to now it's seemed that the flood of cargo from the new terminal will all go by road — a 1.4-mile access road to I-26, then up the interstate to the north. Concerns about the access road's impact — significant visual, polluted air and noise challenges for the closest neighborhoods — remain.

### **Widening I-26?**

The State Transportation Department is considering a widening of I-26, from the port access road to the Mark Clark, to accommodate the thousands of added trucks that will flow out each day. But some say that's the wrong idea— that the more serious congestion on I-26 is north of the Mark Clark, up to the Ashley Phosphate Road area.

**A rail freight option?** The rail connection seems the most intriguing. Two hard-charging railroad companies own track lines that could serve expanded port cargo — CSX and Norfolk Southern. So far they've not indicated any willingness to work together to sort out where tracks might connect or where spurs might improve connections. Nor has South Carolina Public Railways, which controls some spurs to the main tracks and could be the "honest broker."

If rail could work, there might be a way for trains to haul the port's cargo directly by train to an intermodal site further inland, such as Summerville, or even on longer-distance trains headed to major distribution points across the Southeast U.S.

Up to now, the Port Authority has shown little public interest in a train option, because it believes trucks involve less repeat handling of cargo (and thus less expense). Still, rail is an alternative that cries out for an inventive solution — a prospect we'll return to in our article next week focused on region-wide transportation issues.

### **Local rail at last?**

In another big decision affecting the future of the Neck, there's a solid case, in already-complete feasibility studies, for commuter rail service running from Summerville to job centers in North Charleston and through the New Neck to the peninsula, potentially a serious reliever for rush-hour traffic. But how would it relate to major freight movement by rail? Only some serious study would tell, we suspect. We'll take a more careful look at commuter rail in next week's article, focused specifically on transportation.

### **"Truck trains."**

Another idea for getting shipments out from the port comes from Paul Nelson, the now retired founding head of the College of Charleston's Global Logistics and Transportation Center. He suggests another kind of "train," a tractor as the locomotive, a series of standard truck trailers in tow. Nelson recommends a roadway exclusively for freight-grade trucks, connected into I-26 with a flyover and kept separate from autos in the center median of the interstate. Our transportation article will take this up.

## **The "grand spine" option.**

Couldn't today's dull, grimy entrance into historic Charleston be improved? There's been talk in recent years of a grand boulevard for King Street, or even more likely, Meeting Street, connecting to the redeveloped areas in the New Neck and on to North Charleston.

The historic oak-lined entrance boulevard that Frederick Law Olmsted praised could return to life. And the new roadway, first suggested by residents of the area, could reknit black neighborhoods that were decimated by the interstate's construction in the 1960s. It could be a "healing highway," the Rev. Sydney Davis of the Greater Charleston Empowerment Corp. has suggested.

Initially, such a "grand spine" was seen as single project, concurrent with truncating I-26 as it approaches the city. Mayors Joe Riley and Keith Summey, developer Robert Clement, church leaders and the Coastal Conservation League all endorsed the idea of lowering and realigning the two-mile stretch of I-26 between Cosgrove Avenue and Mount Pleasant Street.

Recent reports that this section of I-26 is structurally sound now make that less likely. But the case for a radically improved, people-friendly entrance to the city — perhaps Meeting Street for tourists, King Street for truck traffic, running from as far north as Cosgrove, remains.

There's no real long-term reason for the interstate to enter the city; other regions, with far more through-traffic than Charleston — San Francisco, Portland, Milwaukee, for example — are starting to learn that stretches of supposedly "indispensable" interstate are, in fact, not needed.

## **Turning concrete arteries into neighborly boulevards**

Even with redevelopment now under way, Rivers and East Montague avenues are way out of scale as connecting streets. And though they're not crowded, they intimidate any serious prospects for real density of neighborhood shops and offices. These roadways were designed primarily to move cars and trucks through as rapidly as possible. We heard developers talking about how both could be assets to the community, transformed into tree-lined boulevards. They could possibly even shrink to one lane of traffic each way, with curb cuts for turns, so that traffic would move at less-intimidating speeds. Such changes, say advocates, could be key to creating truly desirable neighborhoods.

## **A collision of deciders**

Here's the problem: Each of these issues, opportunities and threats is being deliberated separately by some different arm of government or private industry. The region's in serious danger of ending up with a hodgepodge of decisions that don't add up, or worse, directly collide.

The reason's clear: What the port decides about truck versus rail use, or where intermodal facilities get located, impacts the whole transportation grid and whether eternal gridlock is inevitable on I-26.

When the state's Department of Transportation gives a green or red light on a proposed highway move, the impacts ricochet through the region. Other regulatory bodies get to set rules on critical environmental issues such as closed containers or open cars for raw materials. Charleston and North Charleston are busy approving new neighborhoods, committing themselves to critical street, curb and water pipe decisions, though they're often in the dark as to whether some highway or port decision will undercut their investment of the peoples' dollars.

The region's major planning organization, the Dorchester, Berkeley and Charleston Council of Governments, has the basic tools, and also the staff expertise, to pull these various strands of decisions together. But any decision the COG makes can be overridden in a heartbeat by the port, the state Transportation Department, or any local government.

Last spring a first bid for full collaboration came from a newly formed Ashley-Cooper Alliance initiated by

such major development companies as the I'On Group, Magnolia and Ginn, top planners (Keane & Co.) and the Coastal Conservation League.

Mayors Riley and Summey took part in a critical workshop on the future of the New Neck. Initially, there was real hope this alliance could galvanize governments, state and local, plus the port and the railroads, to all work together. But neither the port, nor the railways, nor the state Transportation Department showed any desire to join the search for collaborative solutions.

And the transportation issues aren't the whole story. Respectful accommodations need to be reached with black communities, some on land held by their ancestors since the post-Civil War Reconstruction era. And the Neck, notwithstanding its image, has areas of often-abused but salvageable nature to be protected: marshes that provide habitat for wildlife, as well as soft, relaxing scenes to enjoy — streams winding through the lowlands, plus all the varieties of river shoreline. Once destroyed, these watery assets, the birthright of the Lowcountry, are too rarely restored.

The harsh truth is that every one of those values is at risk from the way decisions are typically made in the region. Unless the parties can gather around a table, exchange views and research findings and work to fashion "win-win" decisions rather than "I have the power and you obey" edicts, the future of the New Neck is bracketed with dark question marks.

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# New Neighborhoods: Breakthroughs where least expected

Neal Peirce and Curtis Johnson  
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Never an upscale part of the Charleston region, troubled by low-income concentrations, the Neck and adjacent North Area were eclipsed by recent decades of pell-mell growth onto forests, farms and other open areas from Mount Pleasant to Moncks Corner.

But surprise: Today there's no place in the three counties more alive with interesting development and redevelopment experiments — some of cutting-edge quality.

For a quick view, one need only witness the revival of neighborhoods around North Charleston's historic Park Circle. But the resurgence of the entire Neck covers a raft of new developments — all increasingly important for the region's future, given how close they are to the highest concentration of jobs in an era of packed highways and soaring fuel prices that make long commutes look less feasible.

Inspired perhaps by the very desolation of large parts of the Neck and north, the developers have been setting their sights high, trying to envision communities that wouldn't just be commercial successes but represent true healing, reflecting the best soil remediation, architecture, town plans, energy conservation, "green design" and effective community outreach.

"John L. Knott Jr.'s Noisette Co. not only bought redevelopment rights to 300 acres of the old Navy base but undertook, for the city, a detailed analysis and redevelopment plan for a 3,000-acre swath of North Charleston, including the town's historic center at Park Circle." With high crime rates and 70 percent of housing units vacant in some sections, the challenges were immense.

But the Noisette survey didn't stop with the negative physical and social conditions; instead through many neighborhood meetings, residents were briefed on the 1,000-year history of the land, from the plantation era; to the brave, early 20th-century efforts to create a model "English garden city" on Park Circle; to the great shipbuilding and Navy Yard enterprises of the

Navy Yard enterprises of the 20th century; and the letdown when the base finally closed in the 1990s.

Residents were encouraged to tell their own stories, then to project their own visions of the area's future. The Michaux Conservancy and Land Trust was formed to restore Noisette Creek as a natural park with an education center linked to local schools, encouraging students to become land stewards. A HUB Academy, the first minority employment business program in South Carolina, was formed; last year it graduated its first 14 firms. Noisette also began a re-entry program for the hundreds of prison inmates who return to the region each year, lacking skills, rejected by employers, in desperate need of a fresh start.

As for the former Charleston Naval Base, the firm has aimed to draw creative industries — designers, artists, planners, environmentally conscious builders and engineers.

Critics have asserted that the redevelopment on the base has been much slower than Noisette promised, that roadway and basic infrastructure work have lagged, both undercapitalized, and that North Charleston government hasn't gotten its money's worth out of the firm's development work. These issues were the focus of The Post and Courier series in 2006. As outside writers, we're not in a position to judge on-the-

ground performance, but we can report that Noisette's goals of community outreach, historic context and long-term sustainability are leagues ahead of standard U.S. development practice.

The nationally known commercial real estate giant Cushman & Wakefield recently agreed to help Noisette market its properties at the former base. Tenants have filtered in, including last spring's sale of a major site on the old Navy base to WPC, a geotechnical engineering firm specializing in testing and remediation of soils, lead paints and asbestos, environmental site assessments and the like.

Simultaneously, North Charleston City Hall has directed demolition of a big share of the city's most unsightly, rotted old buildings, making way for an influx of new single-family, owner-occupied homes together with new business sites.

Crime has dropped sharply. At least some share of the credit, Noisette's defenders say, should go to the firm for its early involvement, helping to break the stigma that had threatened North Charleston's future.

The Magnolia development, on the Ashley River at the Charleston-North Charleston line, is groundbreaking in a different way. Here's land that for years was an ugly brownfield of vacant lots littered with empty cargo containers, the hulks of ruined old boats, all zoned heavy industrial, legally mired in several dozen separate land holdings. Small wonder Charleston Mayor Joe Riley turned to Robert Clement, a buyer/remediator of contaminated real estate, to try a project there. By all accounts, Clement has worked miracles by beginning to turn this proverbial sow's ear of largely abandoned land into a silk purse of modern New Urbanist residential development expected to offer residents marsh and river views.

Along the way, Clement recruited, then got, critical underwriting from Cherokee Investment Properties, a deep-pocketed North Carolina-based firm recognized for its expertise in turning around environmentally damaged lands. Clement also consulted extensively with historic black communities on the site — communities cut asunder by Interstate 26, forever fighting to survive. "Our approach," says Clement, "was inclusion, inclusion, inclusion — keeping everyone informed."

He successfully kept both Riley's and Summey's blessing. He made it clear it would take years to make the entire development crystallize. Finally, Clement has aimed at green settings, residential and business (perhaps biomedical companies offering jobs on site.) "We want to be a real sprawl-buster and perhaps bring the middle class to the heart of the region," he told us.

In that ambition, he's joined by Vince Graham, developer of the very successful (but originally contentious) I'On New Urbanist project in Mount Pleasant. Ground broke last spring on Graham's new community, Mixson Avenue, close to Park Circle.

Designed by Charleston's Keane & Co., it's to include 950 homes on 44 acres, not far from the density of old Charleston. The project will include European-style narrow streets that are well connected to the local grid — the very antithesis, of course, of today's sprawling subdivisions and gated communities. There were virtually zero local objections to the Mixson plan, Graham reports.

House prices are set to start in the \$140,000 range, an attractive price breakthrough for New Urbanist projects, which so far (in the I'On project and Daniel Island, for example) have been much pricier.

The message is clear: Today's Neck, benefiting from cutting-edge new design and so far spared the high land prices registered elsewhere in the region, is positioned to offer Charlestonians both affordability and high quality.

And it's not hard to spot common threads running through these developments: respect for historic Charleston architecture and natural settings, openness to neighborhoods of mixed income and races, and restorative "green" ideas.

It might be accidental, but clearly fortuitous, that the Clemson University Restoration Institute has secured land and is planning major expansion on a section of the former Navy base. The Institute's goal is to foster

restoration industries and technology, from materials engineering to historic preservation. When you think about it, that's sound economics — 94 cents of every construction dollar now spent in the nation is on repairing and reviving existing infrastructure and landscapes.

The Clemson Institute's ambition is nothing less than to make Charleston and South Carolina known as the "restoration knowledge capital of the world."

How Charlestonian, we had to conclude, and how fitting for the New Neck.

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# A Promising New Economy

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All by itself, the dramatic change in the residential landscape bursting on the New Neck would put it at center stage in the region's growth. But there are even more reasons for optimism. Just check out the fast-expanding business development and federal investments in the zone formerly occupied by the Naval base.

"Shipyards are notoriously poor in converting from public to private," says Richard Gregory of Charleston Marine Manufacturing Corp. "They're old, and usually have a history of a lot of manufacturing so there's contamination." Nonetheless Gregory and his associates went after the old shipyard industrial complex, with its industrial piers and dry docks, as soon as it became available.

The firm now known as CMMC set out to create a marine cluster of businesses. The plan became reality, and today they have 36 tenants ranging from the large operations of Detyens Shipyard to a design center for high-level furniture. Of course there's Teddy Turner's Boat Repair, but also an emerging major manufacturer of mine-resistant vehicles. Filling the spaces are mostly small companies, with CMMC playing a kind of incubator role.

And just south of the shipyards are the properties that once held the old Naval base. The Navy closed the base, but former Senator Fritz Hollings made sure that the federal government didn't disappear. In addition to the passport center for the eastern half of the United States, there's a cluster of buildings dedicated to law-enforcement training programs, plus the Naval Weapons Station and the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command (SPAWAR).

Most fascinating is Project Seahawk (its more pedestrian name is Charleston Harbor Operations Center). Authorized by Congress after 9/11, Seahawk is aimed at developing and testing systems to detect and prevent terrorism. It also might be a model for intergovernmental cooperation — combining the U.S. Department of Justice with the Coast Guard, the Immigration and Customs divisions of the Department of Commerce; these federal agencies are matched with staff from state, county and city level law enforcement agencies. They sit side by side, share the same data and attend the same meetings.

The still-expanding Seahawk programs include software and devices to monitor all incoming ships and detect any nuclear or radiological content in the millions of containers arriving each year. They're working on ways to increase security at every point of handing off cargo until it's on a rail car or truck headed for its destination.

There are 354 ports in the United States. Every one of them has a vital interest in the pioneering work of Seahawk. Deputy Director Frank Gutierrez says his phone is rarely idle these days. And Congress continues to debate the means and timing of spreading what's been learned to other ports, especially those considered most strategic to the daily flow of goods.

So significant is Seahawk that when Angelou Economics completed a study of the region's economic prospects, one major cluster of future economic activity cited was Advanced Security. Already a multibillion dollar industry nationally, it can only get bigger in this century — from advanced surveillance techniques to biometric access tools to more sophisticated intelligence software.

Charleston has the right laboratory, having the sixth-largest port, the remaining Navy and Air Force installations, along with low electric energy costs and competitive salaries. Plus, the vaunted reputation for

good living continues to draw a crowd, many of them highly educated professionals. With the right investments in education at home and creating better access to graduate engineering programs, the region could be poised for national leadership in security. Another marker in the map of the New Neck.

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# The Port and the Environment:

Collision course or not?

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## Collision course or not?

The grand new expansion of the Port of Charleston is said to have dazzling economic pluses. But what about the environment and public health?

Charleston-area business and political leaders have embraced the mega-port operation, adding three major new berths for freight-bearing ships and more than doubling the containers processed each year as a prime economic opportunity.

Charles Van Rysselberge, CEO of the Greater Charleston Chamber of Commerce, notes his organization was formed in 1773, the first chamber in the United States, to increase trade through the port.

It has played a major role in obtaining permits for the port expansion of three new berths for freight-bearing ships, a move expected to add 1.4 million more

20-foot containers processed each year, essentially doubling the Port of Charleston's volume. With equal enthusiasm, the chamber and its business allies have lobbied for state funding (\$300 million) to construct a mile-long access road from the former Charleston Naval Base site to Interstate 26.

Port activity already enriches the area by \$3.5 billion a year, and the only way to go is up, says Van Rysselberge. The statewide benefit from trade is pegged as high as \$23 billion. As commerce with Asian nations increases, backers see the Charleston port expansion as a critical step in maintaining a competitive position, even if South Carolina and Georgia follow through on intentions to add capacity jointly at the mouth of the Savannah River.

South Carolina State Ports Authority President/CEO Bernard Groseclose told us port operations support more than 300,000 trade-related jobs in South Carolina, with about 60,000 in the Charleston region. Charleston has 600 direct State Ports Authority jobs, 1,200 longshoremen, seven stevedore companies, freight-forwarding houses and the like, with per-capita wages relatively high. Some 400 private-sector maritime-related firms in Charleston employ thousands of people.

It takes some chutzpah to question all this in a free-enterprise state where government tries hard to be business's partner. But state Sen. Robert Ford has raised repeated questions about air pollution generated by port operations, asking the ports authority to undertake cleanup operations and consider ways to shift cargo from trucks to less-polluting trains.

Hold the Port, a grass-roots organization asserting it represents more than 500 North Charleston and Charleston residents and business owners, has raised continued concerns about increased air pollution the port expansion might trigger. And the Coastal Conservation League has made a virtual crusade of opposing the port expansion based on air-quality concerns.

The controversy is rooted in the reality that all port phases are highly dependent on the burning of diesel fuel for the engines that drive cargo ships, trucks and trains. It's been known for years that tiny diesel particulates, inhaled and lodged in people's lungs, can cause asthma — a disease that already afflicts 20 million

Americans, including 9 million children, who are especially susceptible.

But some 2,000 peer-reviewed studies, in the New England Journal of Medicine and elsewhere, suggest the particulates remain permanently lodged in peoples' lungs and lead directly to significantly elevated levels of lung cancer and premature deaths from cardiac disease.

In response to the particulate concerns, ports on the West Coast and elsewhere have recently undertaken a range of pollution-reducing measures, among them providing plug-in shore power for ships at dock, changing some yard equipment to biodiesel and adding catalytic converters to diesel engines.

The State Ports Authority has received environmental permits for its big port expansion. And last March, it announced a major cleanup agreement with the state's Department of Health and Environmental Control. Measures included a new, albeit short-term, particulate monitoring station, an emissions inventory and cleaner engines in replacing older equipment. The port promised to at least evaluate use of cleaner fuels, such as biodiesel or ultra-low sulfur diesel, and use of ship-to-shore electric power for ships at berth. "A cleaner environment and economic development are mutually acceptable goals," said Groseclose.

The clear problem is that the target of what's safe is shifting. In December, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency dropped its acceptable level for particulates from 65 to 35 micrograms of fine-particulate matter per cubic meter of air. Independent experts, including the Harvard School of Public Health, say the 35-microgram level is still far too high. One recent study, including 65,000 women in 36 cities, showed every increase of 10 units of particulate micrograms, starting at 0, raised the risk of fatal cardiovascular disease by about 75 percent. Charleston's rating — officially 28 micrograms in 2004-06, 32 micrograms in more recent readings — recently won it an "F" rating from the American Lung Association.

The Coastal Conservation League says the port should reduce all its fine particulates by 50 percent within five years, and 80 percent to 90 percent in a decade. The organization has appealed the new port terminal's environmental permits. Even the official environmental impact statement, argues League director Dana Beach, indicates the terminal will generate fine particulate matter 30 percent in excess of the federal standard. Plus, the impact statement gauges only fine-particulate emissions at the terminal; when a truck leaves the terminal, or a ship leaves a berth, the exhaust is not shown.

All the added onshore cargo handling is planned by truck, which is substantially more polluting than rail. The environmental impact statement indicates the terminal will generate 7,000 truck trips a day. Assuming 12-hour-a-day operations, that translates to an added truck every 6 seconds. The rigs would first pass through North Charleston, including Union Heights, an old and beleaguered African-American neighborhood. Then they would crowd onto I-26, a highway already notorious for its tie-ups, where 40 percent of the traffic already is big trucks.

I-26, already stressed, would fall to an "F" — most serious congestion — level of service. The state Transportation Department is discussing adding two lanes to I-26 from the access road to the Mark Clark, though critics say the most serious congestion is north of I-526 anyway.

Beach argues the new terminal shouldn't be built at all, that there's plenty of port activity in Charleston already and that the new terminal proposed in Jasper County could handle all the state's projected cargo increase.

Byron Miller, spokesman for the SPA, replies that the terminals in Charleston and Jasper County, "while competitive in many regards, ... are complementary," chiefly because some two-thirds of Savannah's cargo is related to Asia while Charleston has a significant North European market. The Charleston port expansion, he argues, has been extensively debated and every state and federal environmental resource agency has studied and signed off on the plan.

Beach asserts, in turn, that given the recent findings of higher-than-previously-known fine particulate health impacts, public health in the Neck and surrounding areas would be seriously endangered. The particulate issue could even, he argues, trigger a "cascade of abandonment" of Neck residences and throw a long

shadow across the Neck's much-praised new residential redevelopment projects.

Who's right? Readers should judge for themselves.

Though it is hard to argue that each and every port operation suggested is automatically good. A prime case in point: the manner in which the Houston-based energy giant, Kinder-Morgan, imports large quantities of coal from South America, largely Venezuela, from a landing near the Port of Charleston's expansion site. The coal is then loaded onto trains, running straight through North Charleston streets on its way to power plants in the Carolinas and Georgia.

Now Kinder-Morgan wants to triple its imports. The inevitable cost: more dust that fouls buildings and boats. Plus a clear danger of spreading the health-imperiling fine particulates. Not to mention the long, new trains stopping traffic for eight minutes five times a day at Meeting Street.

One would expect an alert Charleston region to object strongly — selfishly — because of the coal trains' health perils and blighting impact but also as a global citizen. Coal triggers more globe-warming greenhouse gas emissions than any other energy source; cheaper imported coal arguably just delays market signals favoring wind, solar and other renewable energy sources.

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