

# NEFRC Highlights

Monthly Report of the Northeast Florida Regional Council

February 2009

## Reality Check First Coast garners media attention through press conference

Reality Check First Coast, the Region's only seven-county visioning project, announced at a Press Conference held at the University of North Florida on February 9, 2009, 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 First Coast (RCFC) 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 most recently 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 also 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 [www.realitycheckfirstcoast.com](http://www.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 have been able to nominate themselves or someone they think is a leader to play in the one-day Reality Check game, on May 21, 2009, or attend the result session that follows.

On March 23, 2009, a one-night simultaneous town hall meeting will be held in each of the Region's seven counties. 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 on May 21, features 300 government, non-profit and business leaders in tables of 10 placing more than 50,000 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 principles that the participants supported. These give the region a way to visualize their choices for how to grow over the next 50 years..



Other partners of RCFC include: Cornerstone Regional Development Partnership, the University of North Florida, North Florida Transportation Planning Organization, the St. Johns River Water Management District, and the St. Johns River Alliance.

For more information, please contact Margo Moehring at (904) 279-0885 x 161.



City of Palm Coast Mayor Jon Netts, who is a member of the NEFRC Board of Directors, is interviewed by the media at the Reality Check First Coast press conference.

## County Planning Directors convene at Regional Council for quarterly meeting

Planning Directors from the seven counties in the Northeast Florida Region met for a quarterly meeting hosted by the Northeast Florida Regional Council on February 9, 2009.

Topics of the meeting included a Transportation Disadvantaged Program update, Regionalization Pilot Program, Medicaid discussion as well as other topics of Regional interest. These meetings have become standing quarterly meetings which are an effective opportunity for Planning Directors throughout the Region to share ideas and information on the matters that affect communities in Northeast Florida.

For more information, please contact Ed Lehman at (904) 279-0885 x 130.

## Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee is launched by Regional Council

On February 20, 2009, the first Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee meeting was held at the St. Johns County Agricultural Center in St. Augustine, Florida.

A CEDS is a plan that brings together the public and private sectors in the creation of an economic development roadmap to diversify and strengthen regional economies. Economic Development Administration (EDA) funds the creation of such plans through a matching grant program. The planning timeframe is five (5) years and there are requirements for updates every five years and annual monitoring.

Northeast Florida is not yet a certified Economic Development District. This designation provides economic development practitioners with another "tool in their toolbox" as they consider projects and funding mechanisms. Specifically, the Economic Development Agency of the federal Department of Commerce considers project funding requests only from Regions that can demonstrate consistency with a regional economic development strategy. An approved CEDS allows our entire seven county Region (Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam, and St. Johns Counties) to be included in the Economic Development District and eligible for EDA funding. With this in mind, the Regional Council is moving forward with plans to secure this status. The recent CEDS meeting was one of several that will help to achieve this goal.

The Regional Data Overview portion of the meeting covered topics including demographics, education, infrastructure / utilities, employment, economy, transportation and ports.

In addition, a Website has been created to serve as a repository for economic development background data for the Region, for posting information about meetings and a location to provide the public with a forum to input its concerns or opinions regarding our Regional economy.

The next meeting of the CEDS Committee will be held at the St. Johns County Agricultural Center on Friday, March 27, 2009.

For more information, please contact Guy Parola at (904) 279-0885 x 135.

## Northeast Florida Regional Council represented at 2009 Conference of Regions

The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) serves as the national voice for Regionalism. NARC advocates for and provides services to its member Councils of Government (COGs) and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs).

NARC hosts the annual National Conference of Regions (formerly known as the Washington Policy Conference) in Washington, D.C. for regional councils, metropolitan planning organizations, their leaders and board members, professional staff and local elected officials. The conference draws a national audience consisting of elected city, county and state officials, diverse professionals, academics and private sector representatives. The National Conference of Regions is the forum that NARC uses to determine key policy issues and a legislative agenda on topics of relevance and importance to executive directors and local elected officials representing regional organizations and boards. The National Conference of Regions is a national meeting of organizations and individuals engaged in regional collaboration that focuses on federal policies and programs that impact regions throughout the country.

The 2009 National Conference of Regions, "Building Regional Opportunities: New Administration, New Congress," focused on changes in the 111th Congress and the new administration, priority policy issues, pending federal legislation, and the impact on regions. Keynote speakers and plenary sessions examined transportation reauthorization, national water policy, workforce development in the new economy, and climate change. Four open sessions and committee meetings on the four key NARC issues areas - transportation, economic and community development, homeland security and the environment - determined NARC's 2009 legislative priorities and positions. The conference agenda also included an annual membership meeting and Board elections.

Regional Council CEO, Brian Teeple, represented the Northeast Florida Regional Council at the Conference held in Washington DC on February 22-24, 2009. His participation in the Conference of Regions was preceded by his attendance at the Annual Metropolitan Regions Forum also held in DC.

For more information, please contact Brian Teeple at (904) 279-0885 x 104.



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Building Regional Communities  
National Association of Regional Councils™

## Emergency Management is the topic of recent Leadership Series Program

Program four of the Northeast Florida Regional Leadership Series (RLS) was held on February 11, 2009, at the Northeast Florida Regional Council and was dedicated to the topic of Emergency Management (EM).

Attendees, many of whom are seeking graduate status for the Class of 2009 for the Northeast Florida Regional Leadership Academy (RLA), were treated to an extensive overview of many different aspects of how the Region prepares for a natural or manmade disaster.

Steve Letro, Chief Meteorologist of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), presented on the topic of "Hurricane Myths and Legends" and was followed by a Regional and local view of emergency management by Flagler County EM Coordinator, Scott West. Bill Dion, Emergency Services Director for the Northeast Chapter of the American Red Cross, also gave a presentation on the defining moments in the history of the Red Cross and a general overview of all services available to citizens in the Region.

Emergency Preparedness Chief Marty Senterfitt, with the City of Jacksonville, shared the reality of Regional evacuation with those in attendance.

Regional Council staffers facilitated an overview of the general emergency preparedness structure in Northeast Florida, gave a presentation on Regional Evacuation Studies and executed an interactive tabletop exercise simulating a school invasion emergency.

Program five of the RLS will address the topics of Housing and Healthcare within the Northeast Florida Region and will be held at the Regional Council on March 11, 2009.

For more information, please contact Mike Hadden at (904) 279-0885 x 104.

