

NEFLRIC

Highlights

Monthly Report of the Northeast Florida Regional Council

January 2006

Council President participates in televised forum to examine regional solutions for affordable housing crisis

The Northeast Florida Regional Council was pleased to be a part of the January 19 WJCT telecast entitled "First Coast Forum: Home \$weet Home." The forum was designed to examine the critical issue of affordable workforce housing facing our communities. The Council was well represented by the President of our Board, Commissioner Karen Stern, as she shared some views from a regional perspective.

The program focused on communities within Northeast Florida and emphasized that the region has a large and growing middle and lower middle class that is rapidly being priced out of the "American Dream." In the past two years, housing costs have risen on average 67 percent, while median income in the region has grown only 12 percent. The issue is multi-faceted. Developers, regional planners, housing commissions, and government all play a role.

This was the focus of a 90-minute live telecast which featured Council President, Commissioner Karen Stern and other noted authorities, who had a vested interest in the topic of affordable/workforce housing. The broad scope of the program was to define affordable housing for the working middle class, and open a dialog that could lead to some possible solutions to a growing problem.

Commissioner Stern gave a regional perspective of the issue and articulated many aspects as she assessed, "In the past, affordable housing was only a local issue requiring local resolution. We are now dealing with an affordable housing crisis, when it was previously just an affordable housing inconvenience. However, now it has escalated to an issue that can best be addressed and resolved at the regional level."

She was joined by fellow panelists: Carlton Jones is a developer who served on a JCCI study task force on affordable housing; Tom Crawford, St Johns County Planning Commission; Kerri Stewart, Interim Executive Director of the Jacksonville Housing Commission; Ron Allen, Director of the Institute for Financial Studies at FCCJ and WJCT Reporter Joshua Stewart. The forum was moderated by WJCT News Director Tom Patton.



Council President, Commissioner Karen Stern, at the WJCT television studios where she appeared on the First Coast Forum episode: "Home \$weet Home" which examined the regional impact of the affordable housing crisis in Northeast Florida.



The panel for the Forum was made up of authorities from throughout Northeast Florida ranging from developers to housing experts.

The program aired live from 8-9:30 p.m. on WJCT TV and 89.9 radio, and was rebroadcast on January 22. It will be simulcast on 89.9FM for each broadcast.

In compliment to this project, Mike Brown, Planning and Development Administrator, was interviewed as part of a radio documentary which aired immediately preceding the telecast. He was part of the show called "Perspectives" and the documentary title was "The Cost of Affordable Living." For more information, please visit the WJCT Web site at www.wjct.org or contact Michael Hadden at (904) 279-0885 X 104.

Regional Council hosts Bosnian Legislative Delegation to examine regional perspectives

The Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) partnered today with the International Visitor Corps of Jacksonville (IVCJ) in hosting a special legislative delegation from Bosnia.

Members of the delegation included Mr. Petar Dokic, Founder and President, Opposition Socialist Party, Republika Srpska (SPRS) Bosnia-Herzegovina; Mr. Slavko Matic, Speaker, Federation House of Peoples, Bosnia-Herzegovina; Mr. Muhamed Ibrahimovic, Speaker, Federation House of Representatives, Bosnia-Herzegovina; and Mr. Tarik Sadovic, Member, Republic of Srpska National Assembly, Banja Luka Bosnia-Herzegovina. Accompanied by two Department of State Language Officers serving as interpreters, the delegation spent the morning in the offices of the NEFRC.

In a presentation on regional perspectives given by Council CEO, Brian Teeple, the delegates were introduced to details regarding the Northeast Florida region including regional growth effects, the rate of regional growth, projected growth, population densities, and labor force issues. A time of reciprocated questions and answers followed the presentation.

Despite the language barrier and other aspects of diversity which could have presented a barrier between the local regional entity and the delegates from Southeastern Europe, Teeple concluded that a very valuable lesson was learned through the meeting, "The things we have in common are much more significant than the things that divide us."

Among the goals of the IVCJ are facilitating relationships to aid economic development in Northeast Florida and in the visitor's home country, fostering international understanding and building a basis for world peace and sending international visitors back home with a better understanding of the history and the heritage of the United States. With this focus, combined with the NEFRC participation in this endeavor, steps were truly taken towards achieving the Council's slogan of "bringing communities together."

For more information, contact Brian Teeple, at (904) 279-0885 X 103.



Council staff provides geographic information system training

The Council has recently provided computer training to over 65 employees of the Jacksonville Electric Authority (JEA). Keith Joiner, GIS Manager for the Council is an authorized ESRI Arc GIS Instructor and was able to conduct the training at the JEA headquarters in downtown Jacksonville.

The training is an example of the value-added services provided to the Council's member counties.

If your organization is interested in GIS training please contact Keith Joiner at (904) 279-0885 X 125.

LEPC focuses a week on HAZMAT Awareness

During the week of January 22 – 28, 2006, the Local Emergency Planning of the Council participated in "Hazardous Materials Awareness Week," promoting a "Culture of Preparedness." The Florida Division of Emergency Management, partnered with the Local Emergency Planning Committees throughout the state, to hold educational and training events throughout the state during this important week.

For more information on the activities conducted during the week, please contact Heather Golightly at (904) 279-0885 X 113.

