

NEFLRIC

Highlights

Monthly Report of the Northeast Florida Regional Council

May 2006

Council launches Affordable Housing Task Force

The affordable housing situation in Northeast Florida which was once considered a mere inconvenience by the residents of the region has now escalated to a virtual crisis. With growing emphasis on the topic, the Northeast Florida Regional Council has embraced the importance of addressing the issue and finding methods of dealing with what is most important to the communities in which we live and work.

Earlier in 2006, Council president, Commissioner Karen Stern appeared on the First Coast Forum television show entitled "Home \$weet Home" and gave a regional perspective on the matter. Additionally, through the research and contribution from each of its member counties, it was determined that each county within the region also places extreme emphasis on the topic of affordable housing. This was evidence in the recent release of the *2006 Northeast Florida Regional Council Legislative Priorities* publication which was used in promoting the matters of greatest concern to the Legislature in the recent Legislative Session. In August, the Council will partner with St. Johns County to present the 9th Annual Northeast Florida Cooperation Summit, entitled "Affordable Workforce Housing...and the roads that take us home." So with such interest in, and concern for the subject the Council has launched the Northeast Florida Affordable Housing Task Force.

The Task Force held its Kick Off on Monday, May 8 in the Board Room of the Northeast Florida Regional Council. The informal meeting was an opportunity to gather together Task Force members and other key players who are involved in the Affordable Housing issue that affects all of the communities throughout the region.



From left to right: Tom Crawford, Mike Brown and Harry Maxwell share viewpoints regarding affordable housing in our region at the recent Task Force Kick Off.

Chaired by Council President, Commissioner Karen Stern, the Kick Off covered a variety of topics from how affordable housing fits into regional legislative priorities, the goals of the Task Force, and planning for upcoming events, methods and tactics to address the issue. Council CEO Brian Teeple presented a segment of the regional perspective and Planning and Development Administrator Mike Brown shared a State Housing Legislation Summary.

The Task Force is one of many subject-related efforts of the Council to address attainable workforce housing in our communities. Guests of the kick off included representatives from each county within the Northeast Florida region, as well as those from home builders associations, housing authorities, elected officials and members of the media.

For more information, please contact Mike Brown, at (904) 279-0885 X 135.

Emergency Preparedness drill equips region for natural disaster or attack

Emergency and law enforcement officials from federal, state and local agencies in 13 counties gathered Monday, May 22, in Jacksonville for a training exercise designed to prepare for a natural disaster or terrorist attack. The exercise was executed, in part, by the staff of the Council's emergency preparedness program area.

The drill for the Northeast Florida Regional Domestic Security Task Force also included representatives of the Duval County Health Department, hospitals, the Red Cross, JEA and officials from fire/rescue and law enforcement

departments who teamed up to prepare for catastrophes that would require a regional response.

About 150 participants representing nearly 35 responding agencies worked through simulations to respond to emergencies in Duval, Clay, Alachua and Marion counties.

Agency heads met in a conference room at the Emergency Operations Center downtown, communicating and coordinating and gathering information to be shared with the public. A field exercise is scheduled for October.

For more information, please contact Ed Preston at (904) 279-0885 X 155.

Healthy Start and Magnolia Project featured in USA Today as part of quality prenatal care

The Healthy Start Coalition of Northeast Florida, an affiliate of the Northeast Florida Regional Council, received national attention in the month of May for an article published in *USA Today*. The concept of the article was that one of the most important times for prenatal care is when a woman isn't even pregnant.

The article cited new recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and called this phase in the life of any woman who could conceive — not just those planning on getting pregnant — “preconception.” The recommendations, were published in the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, and emphasized that by the time a woman gets pregnant, it may be too late to ensure that she and her baby are as healthy as possible.

According to *USA Today*, the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition recognized in the late 1990s that preconception care represented an overlooked opportunity to lower rates of infant mortality. In Jacksonville, blacks' infant mortality rate was about 2½ times higher than whites' according to Executive Director Carol Brady. The gap was widest in five ZIP codes on the city's north side.

That observation gave rise to the Coalition's CDC-funded Magnolia Project, a storefront clinic in which a nurse-midwife sees women who live in those areas of the city. Brady acknowledges that preconception care is a “hard sell” for women who, even if sexually active and not using birth control, don't think they'll ever get pregnant. The tactic utilized to attract the most participants in the project encompasses repackaging it as a “well-woman health package.”

Women with a previous complicated pregnancy also meet regularly for at least a year with members of the Magnolia Project's case management team, made up of a nurse, social worker and community health workers. Brady also said that if they do get pregnant again, they'll have a better shot of having a good birth outcome.

The project's most successful outreach effort has been free pregnancy testing at health fairs, in church parking lots and even at the bus station. The Magnolia Project is more interested in the 70% who test negative than those with a positive outcome. That is considered the perfect intervention opportunity.

For more information, please contact Carol Brady at (904) 279-0885 X 140.

Looking Ahead

June 8, 2006 - First Coast Transportation & Land Use Summit; held at UNF

June 12, 2006 - Leadership Jacksonville / NEFRC Summit; held at UNF

June 29 - 30, 2006 - Florida Regional Councils Association (FRCA) / Florida Association of Counties Annual Conference; held at Marco Island, Florida

July 19 - 21, 2006 - Environmental Permitting Short Course; held in Orlando

August 9, 2006 - The 9th Annual Northeast Florida Regional Cooperation Summit: Affordable Workforce Housing...and the roads that lead us home; held at the World Golf Village

August 10 - 11, 2006 - FRCA/Florida League of Cities Annual Conference; held in Jacksonville

September 11 - 12, 2006 - Opening Retreat for the Northeast Florida Regional Leadership Academy; held at the World Golf Village

