

NEFLC Highlights

Monthly Report of the Northeast Florida Regional Council

February 2008

Regional Council launches regional visioning effort in collaboration with Urban Land Institute and “Reality Check” initiative

One of the most significant focuses for the future of the Northeast Florida Regional Council is regional visioning. Part of our visioning efforts include the establishment of the Regional Community Institute of Northeast Florida, Inc. (RCI) which was established in 2005 as a 501c3 organization under the Regional Council's auspices.

The RCI will be partnering with the Urban Land Institute (ULI) on Reality Check, a collaborative regional visioning process that will examine how we may accommodate the long-term growth we anticipate in our region. Reality Check is a visioning exercise that engages regional leaders in a regional dialogue on growth issues. It allows participants

working in diverse groups of 8-10 regional leaders to allocate expected growth using chips or legos on large scale regional maps. It is an exercise that asks the pertinent questions: *How* should we grow? *Where* should we grow? The solutions developed by each group can be compared against current trends and plans and/or be aggregated with the other group's growth scenarios into an average solution for analysis purposes.

The exercise is designed to provide a region-wide awareness of the level of growth that is expected; to recognize the legitimate points of view of different stakeholders; and to lay the foundation for the development of a concrete list of next steps to assure quality growth to meet the region's needs in the future. Reality Check is a useful and innovative way to raise the profile of regional visioning.

The ULI Jacksonville District Council invited Suzanne Cartwright, a Reality Check expert, to visit the area on Monday, February 11, 2008, to initiate the use of this program. Regional Council representatives met with the ULI Jacksonville District Council to discuss Reality Check and gave Ms. Cartwright an overview of the Northeast Florida Region. The Council also hosted a meeting of the Region's Planning Directors and agency representatives, to allow them to get an overview of Reality Check at the earliest possible stage, and to allow ULI to benefit from their input into how it will work best in Northeast Florida.

When the enthusiasm for regionalism and good planning that our community's bring to the table is mixed with the energy and professional resources of ULI, we will have a combination that will jump start the visioning process. For more information, please contact Margo Moehring at (904) 279-0885 x 161.

CEO represents Regional Council at National Conference of Regions

On February 4-6, 2008, Council CEO Brian Teeple attended the 2008 National Conference of Regions - *“Regions: The Building Blocks to a Sustainable Nation.”*

This year's conference, hosted by the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC), featured the regional role and federal outlook on significant policy areas that will dominate the 2008 legislative year, Presidential race and beyond. Furthermore, it explored in detail, the federal fiscal future, SAFETEA-LU reauthorization, water infrastructure and resources; regional development in a global economy; and energy policy and innovations, as well as the possible outcome of the 2008 Presidential race.

Topics of the conference also addressed rural and urban coordination in federal legislation and promoted engaged dialogue of nationally recognized experts, Congressional members and staff, and other DC Associations to discuss important topics that are shaping regions.

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



Regional Leadership Academy program day addressed the blend of education and affordable housing

The Northeast Florida Regional Leadership Academy resumed its class activity after the New Year's break by convening in Nassua County at the Betty P. Cook Center at Florida Community College at Jacksonville. The topic of the day was a unique blending of education and affordable housing.

Speakers included Lynn Pappas, representing the Florida Board of Governors State Univeristy System, who spoke on the challenges of higher education funding; Martha Cox of Family Foundations, Inc., who shared the importance of educating first time homebuyers; Wight Greger of the Housing and Neighborhoods Department of the City of Jacksonville who shared findings of the City's affordable housing task force; and Cathy Whatley who as a realtor and member of the Northeast Association of Realtors shared the benefits of employer as-sisted housing.

The best practices group of class participants concluded the day with an assessment of best practices withint the region and beyond for what was a successful day. The next Program Day of the Leadership Academy will be on Wednesday, March 12, 2008, at the Ravines State Gardens in Palatka where the topic will be the environment and water resouces.

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



GIS technology used to assist underprivileged children's organization

In a unique use for Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Regional Council staff recently used this technology to assist The Bridge of Northeast Florida, Inc. (The Bridge) in a mapping population project.

Staff created a map that plotted the children's' residences within census tracts. The Bridge reported that this information was extremely beneficial in assisting them to see the result of which tracts are more or less heavily represented by its clients. This information will also be productive in acquiring future grants and funding that will promote the work and the mission of The Bridge.

The Bridge is dedicated to the development of healthy, productive, self-sufficient youth and families by providing comprehensive educational, social and health programs to children, youth and families in need.

For more information, contact Jonathan Goyings at (904) 279-0885 X 163.



Courses held at Council offices to assist in promoting housing education

The Regional Council continues to embrace the importance of affordable housing with the region. In an effort to promote education of the topic, Council offices will be opening to the Florida Housing Coalition which will be facilitating two upcoming workshops to educate the public as part of the State Housing Intitiave Program (SHIP).

Income Compliance and Program Management will be held on March 11, 2008 at the Council. This course looks beyond a list of rules and regulations to help the participants understand the basis and reasoning for program requirements. The deeper knowledge helps participants as they consider on how to calculate different situations. The trainers draw on the experience of participants to discuss topics like improving the application process and establishing quality control for the income qualification process. It addresses program implementation issues, involving SHIP expenditures, file management and preparation for monitoring.

Understanding the Income Qualification Process will be held April 8, 2008.

This course is an intensive session on the details of qualifying and certifying income eligibility for the SHIP program. Covered topics include taking the application, computing anticipated household income, acceptable forms of verifying income, the importance of properly certifying income, file documentation, and record keeping.

For more information, please contact Debbie Balevre at (904) 279-0885 X 152.

