

NEFRC

Highlights

Monthly Report of the Northeast Florida Regional Council

March 2009

Reality Check First Coast Town Hall Meetings Brings Communities Together to Examine Regional Growth

The issue of how growth will affect the future of the First Coast Region is one that is of preeminent importance in the minds of many people. It is the driving force behind the upcoming high-profile Regional Visioning exercise “Reality Check First Coast” and it was the foundation of the seven simultaneous “Town Hall Meetings” held throughout the Region on Monday, March 23, 2009. This is the first time simultaneous Town Hall meetings have been attempted in our Region.

Venues in each of the seven counties in Northeast Florida were open to the public from 4:00 pm until 7:30 pm. An excerpt from the Grow Smart Survey was provided to those in attendance. Those who came early could vote in “early polling” efforts. Those who came later were able to do a live polling version of the same survey with other citizens in their community. The results of both were then tallied and communicated to staff at the studios of WJCT public television in Jacksonville. The figures were used to inspire discussion later in the evening during a live broadcast entitled: “Reality Check First Coast: Town Hall Meeting.”

Prior to leaving their local venues to view the Town Hall broadcast via streaming video on the Internet or by digital cable sources, attendees viewed a presentation on Regional Visioning and Reality Check First Coast. The format of the program was then opened up for community discussion where citizens could raise questions, concerns and make their voices heard. Staff from the Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC), as well as members of the Reality Check First Coast Steering Committee, were on hand to facilitate these Town Hall discussions and respond to concerns. Grow Smart Survey results will be summarized and provided to participants in Reality Check First Coast to give them some context of citizen values.

The purpose of the live broadcast was to discuss the results gathered from the survey which focused primarily on land use, conservation and transportation issues.

The survey results were presented to a panel of subject matter experts: Flagler County Commission Chairwoman Milissa Holland; Jacksonville City Councilman Art Graham; Jacksonville attorney Lynn Pappas; and Jacksonville University professor and Executive Director of the Marine Science Research Institute, Dr. Quinton White. The telecast was moderated by NEFRC CEO Brian Teeple.

The survey information is part of the data gathering for the Reality Check First Coast on May 21, 2009, “game day” event, when 300 government, nonprofit and business leaders meet at the St. Johns County Convention Center at World Golf Village and work in groups of 10, laying Lego® bricks on regional maps and determining where growth should go in coming years.

The project is expected to be complete by Fall 2010 and the results may include a growth “compact” representing the will of local people for local governments to consider adopting.

For more information, please contact Margo Moehring at (904) 279-0885 x 161, or visit www.RealityCheckFirstCoast.com.



Brian Teeple, CEO of the Northeast Florida Regional Council, asks for responses to a survey question at the Reality Check First Coast town hall at the WJCT studios in Jacksonville on March 23, 2009.

WILL DICKEY/The Times-Union

THE VENUES

The following venues showed their support of Reality Check First Coast by hosting the Town Hall Meetings:

Baker County

Baker County Extension Office
(Agricultural Center)

Clay County

Clay County Commission
Building

Duval County

WJCT Television Studios

Flagler County

Flagler County Emergency
Operations Center

Nassau County

FCCJ Nassau Campus
Betty P. Cook Center

Putnam County

Putnam County Commission
Putnam County Governmental
Complex

St. Johns County

St. Johns County Utility
Department



Governor Crist announces appointments to the Northeast Florida Regional Council

Governor Charlie Crist announced today the following reappointments and appointments to the Board of Directors of the Northeast Florida Regional Council:

Elaine Brown, of Neptune Beach, Community Development Regional Manager with Wrathall, Hart, and Hunt, succeeding Mary Dungey, appointed for a term beginning March 26, 2009, and ending October 1, 2010.

Jane Miller, of Ponte Vedra, attorney with Hill and Miller PA, succeeding Harry Maxwell, appointed for a term beginning March 26, 2009, and ending October 1, 2010.

Darryl Register, of Glen St. Mary, Executive Director, Baker County Chamber of Commerce, owner, D&D Dairy Inc., succeeding Ginger Barber, appointed for a term beginning March 26, 2009, and ending October 1, 2009.

Kenneth Smallwood, of Orange Park, self-employed commercial real estate agent, succeeding Deidra Franklin, appointed for a term beginning March 26, 2009, and ending October 1, 2010.

Karen Stern, of St. Augustine, Government Affairs Manager with Waste Management, reappointed for a term beginning March 26, 2009, and ending October 1, 2010.

Carol Vallencourt, of Orange Park, member of the Clay County School Board, reappointed for a term beginning March 26, 2009, and ending October 1, 2010.

The Regional Council welcomes its new Gubernatorial Appointees and looks forward to their meaningful contributions as we work towards our goal of "Bringing Communities Together to Advance the Regional Agenda."

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

Reality Check run through prepares participants for game day

Regional Visioning continues to build momentum as we lead up to the Reality Check First Coast exercise on May 21, 2009. Preparation for the event is essential. On March 12, 2009, the Regional Council hosted a run through in preparation for the actual "game day."

The day included scribe and facilitator training, a discussion on the Guidebook and rules of the game; testing of the selection process and other parameters related to the exercise; and feedback on the base map which is still in draft form.



Results from the day were uploaded in real time, which included the 3D Lego® still of the selected table.

An additional "dress rehearsal" prior to the event will be held on April 17, 2009 at the St. Johns County Convention Center at the World Golf Village; the actual venue where Reality Check First Coast will be held.

For more information, please contact Ameera Sayeed at (904) 279-0885 x 151.

Out and About with Regional Council CEO

The month of March 2009 gave numerous opportunities for Council CEO, Brian Teeple, to participate with and address the following organizations:

March 5: Tri-County Agricultural Workshop; St. Johns County

March 11: Putnam Quarterly Economic Development Meeting

March 17: 13th Annual Economic Outlook Conference

March 19: ICSC Idea Exchange

March 19: Northeast Florida League of Cities

March 23: Simultaneous Town Hall Meetings

March 26: Leadership Jacksonville

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy well under way at Regional Council

The Northeast Florida Regional Council is well into the process of developing a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The CEDS is "another tool in the economic development toolbox." Having a CEDS will allow Northeast Florida to become a certified Economic Development District (EDD), which will enable the seven counties within our region to receive funding from the Economic Development Administration.

As part of developing the CEDS, a *steering committee* made up of economic development practitioners, educators, elected officials, and other stakeholders from within the Region has been formed. Chaired by the Honorable Milissa Holland, the steering committee has met twice thus far, and has guided staff in developing the necessary background data, regional economic strengths and weaknesses, and regional economic goals and objectives.

The next steps in developing the CEDS are to identify individual projects throughout the Region that meet the strategic goals and objectives, and to finalize the CEDS document for submittal to the Economic Development Administration in August of this year. It is anticipated that by December of this year the CEDS will be approved by the Economic Development Administration.

Additional information, including agendas and minutes from past meetings, background data, and other economic development website links can be found at www.regi.biz, under "economic development" or you may contact Guy Parola at (904) 279-0885 x 135.