

NEERIC

Highlights

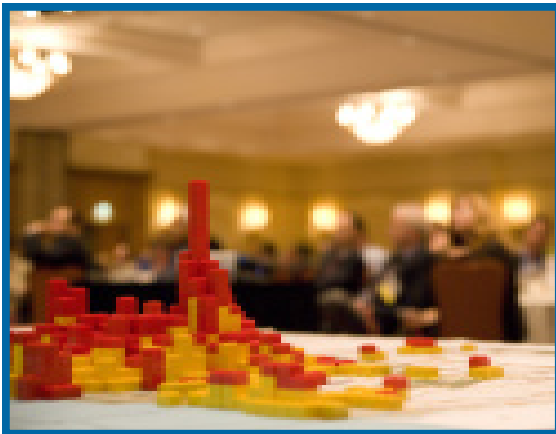
Monthly Report of the Northeast Florida Regional Council

May 2009

Reality Check First Coast: building our Regional Future one Lego® at a time

The culmination of eighteen months of planning, surveying and collaboration occurred on Thursday, May 21, 2009, when the Region experienced “Reality Check First Coast” (RCFC).

With a focus on what we want our future to look like, RCFC gathered together a group of more than 300 regional leaders from the public, private and nonprofit sectors to begin the process of creating a vision for the Region through the year 2060.



The participants were divided into 30 groups of 10 members and were given a cumulative total of 50,000 Lego® bricks to plan growth and development on a large scale map of the Region. They used yarn in three different colors to represent regional road ways, new regional transit systems and natural open space areas.



Morning keynote speaker, Ed McMahon, Urban Land Institute Charles Fraser Senior Resident Fellow for Sustainable Development, gave a dynamic presentation encouraging the Region to look ahead to the future with an emphasis on working together and on identifying the keys to Regional visioning.

The afternoon results and analysis session featured Marilee Utter of Citiventure Associates of Denver, a company that plans public-private partnerships. Former Jacksonville Mayor and current President of the University of North Florida, John Delaney, also participated in the program by sharing an overview of his morning experience at RCFC.

Governor Charlie Crist attended the event to extend his support for Reality Check First Coast as well as to sign three new laws he believes will boost the State and Regional economy.



The day's event was called a “grass tops” exercise, meaning it was for the regional leaders. However, in the implementation phase, the Reality Check First Coast program will be taken “on the road” in a smaller scale to teach the Region's counties, the grass roots. The scenarios that were discussed at the May 21st “Game Day” will be discussed with the communities of the Region, with the intent of refining Guiding Principles everyone can agree upon.

Bringing Communities Together to Advance the Regional Agenda

The county exercises will take place this fall in Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam and St. Johns counties. Those exercises will enlarge the circle of thought, talk and goal-setting.



Former Jacksonville Mayor and current President of the University of North Florida, John Delaney, participated in the morning session (above) and shared the results with the group in the afternoon.

To further address the “next steps” process of RCFC, Bob Rhodes, Chairman of the Regional Community Institute of Northeast Florida (RCI), reminded everyone that while visioning is good, “implementation is priceless.” He released the title – “Region First 2060” which will be a branding of RCFC moving forward. Rhodes further shared the plan for moving forward with the results of RCFC which included continued analysis focusing primarily on environment, land use and mobility; the publication of a final published report; visioning sessions in each county within the Region and ultimately input to the Northeast Florida Regional Council in assisting to update the Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP).

Those who attended the afternoon session were also able to participate in a live polling process, which posed significant questions related to the topic of future growth and allowed them to provide real-time input in answering the questions. The event concluded

with comments from Suzanne Cartwright, Director of Land Use Programs for the Urban Land Institute. Cartwright reminded attendees that growth is inevitable in the First Coast’s seven counties and 27 municipalities and commended the group on its commitment to plan for it.



Polling devices from Extreme Meetings allowed afternoon attendees to provide live, real-time feedback on Regional issues of concerns via interactive polling.

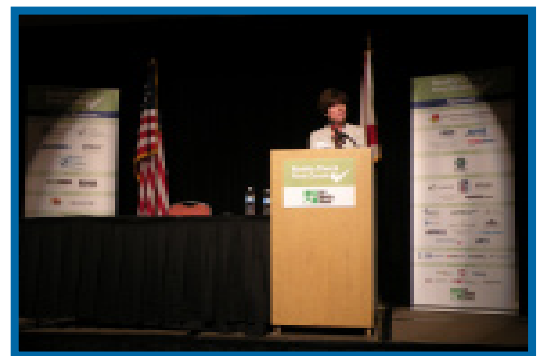
Participant polling recommended that over the next 50 years, Northeast Florida’s two main priorities should be to preserve its natural assets and to create self-sustaining communities containing both housing and commercial development. No single “vision” emerged, but conversations about the region’s future were started, with the promise of future dialogues on planning and development of the First Coast.

Although Reality Check First Coast was a partnership between Urban Land Institute (ULI) North Florida District Council, Northeast Florida Re-

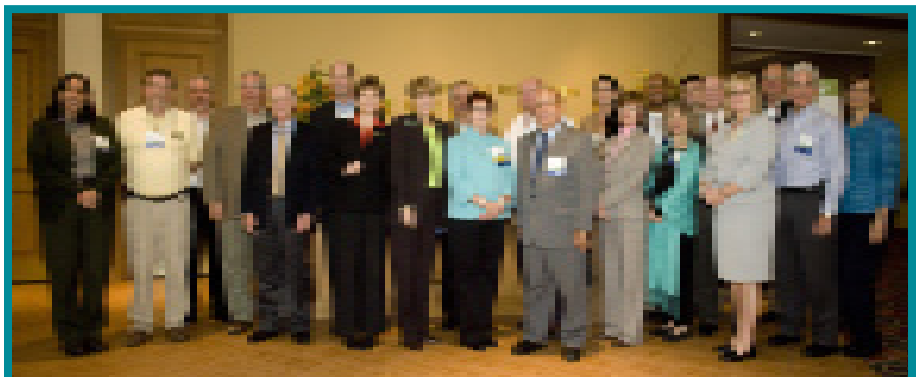
gional Council, Cornerstone Regional Development Partnership, University of North Florida, St. Johns River Water Management District, North Florida Transportation Organization and the St. Johns River Alliance, it could not have taken place without the generous support of sponsors and over 200 individuals who volunteered their time to ensure its success.

For a list of all sponsors and for follow up information regarding Reality Check First Coast, please visit www.RealityCheckFirstCoast.com.

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



Suzanne Cartwright, Director of Land Use Programs for the Urban Land Institute closed out the afternoon results session with a challenge for smart management of future growth.



Pictured above, members of the Reality Check First Coast Steering Committee; Regional Leaders from business, economic development, government, academia, environmental and social services, professional and trade organizations, neighborhood and civic groups, and nonprofit and philanthropic organizations that were essential in the planning and execution of “Game Day” and beyond.