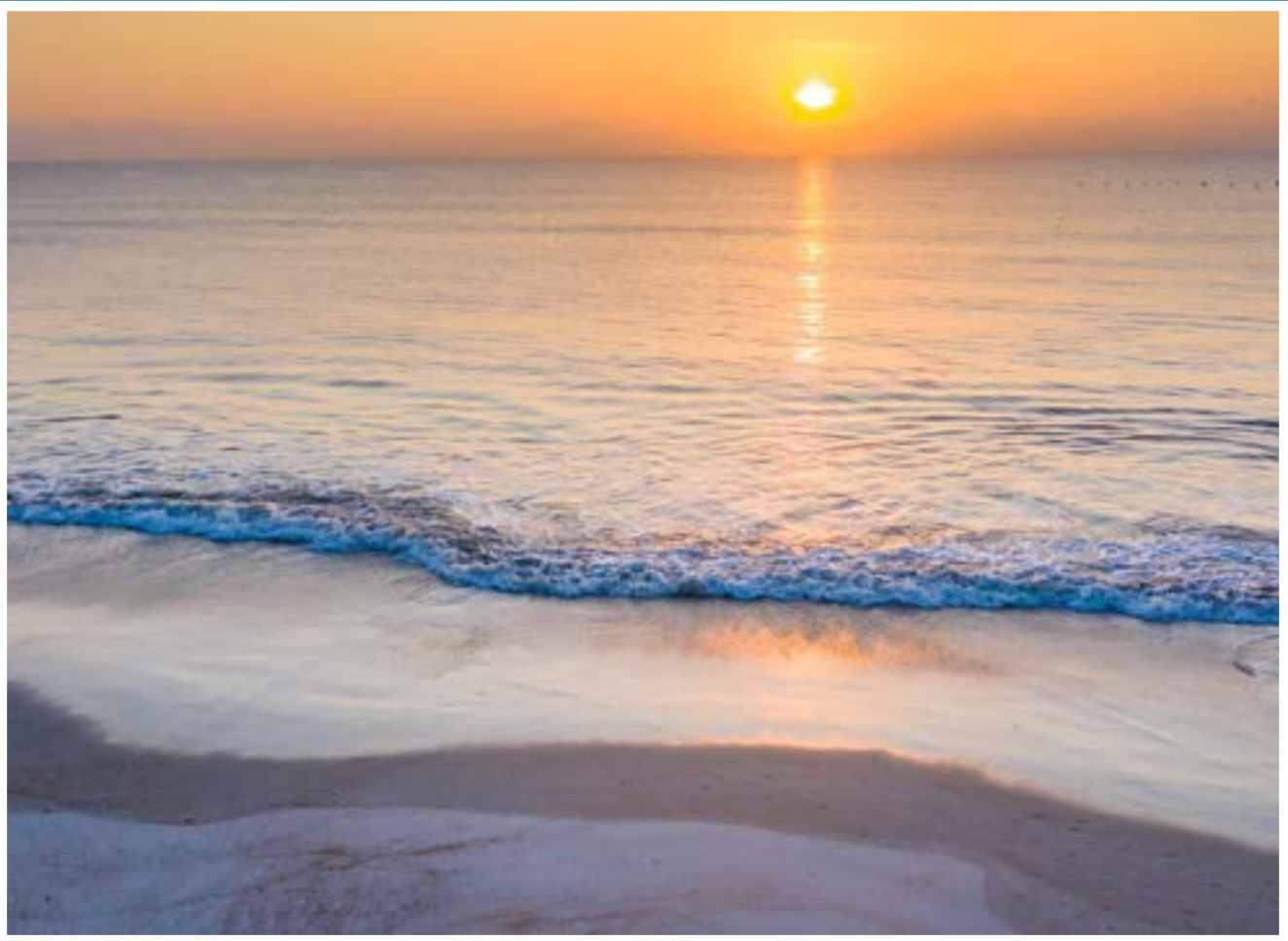




A1A OCEAN ISLANDS TRAIL SCENIC BYWAY

ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN

MAY 2023

Prepared for:

A1A Ocean Islands Trail Scenic Byway

Prepared by:

Halff

Funded by:

Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (FDEO)



May (2023). "A1A Ocean Islands Trail Scenic Byway: Short-Term Organizational Plan." Developed by Halff in partnership with the Northeast Florida Regional Council. Grant funding support provided by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.





INTRODUCTION

The Florida Scenic Highways Program was developed to preserve, maintain, protect, and enhance Florida's outstanding cultural, historic, archeological, recreational, natural, and scenic resources. In 2016, the Florida Scenic Highways Program approved the designation of the A1A Ocean Islands Trail Scenic Byway located in Nassau and Duval counties. Ocean Islands Trail is often referred to as "Florida's First Coast."

Despite successful efforts to formalize a designation, the "Byway" has faced challenges since 2016 because of organizational constraints and limitations. The 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, which is entirely led by volunteers, has not had the capacity to comprehensively promote the assets contained within the Byway and engage the stakeholders who make the Byway such a special place.

The purpose of this organizational plan is to provide Byway Leadership with a concrete and achievable road map for reinventing the structure, outlook, and purpose of the organization over the next 1-2 years. Included in this plan is background information, outcomes from analysis steps, and detailed recommendations to guide the Byway moving forward.

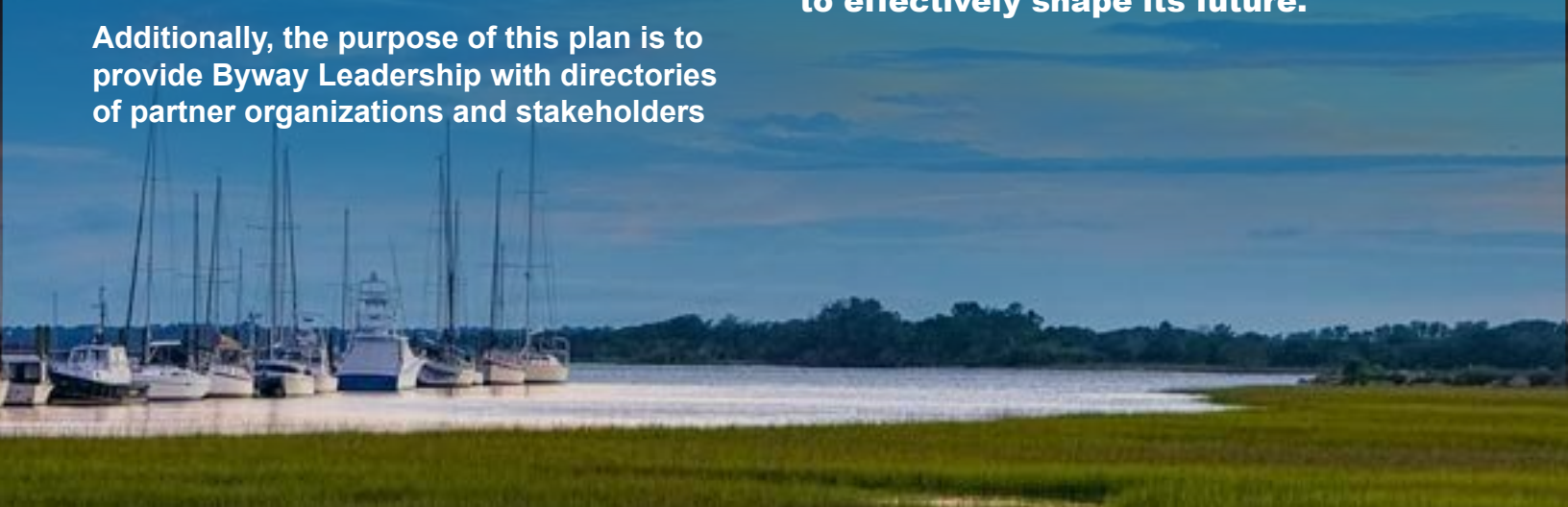
Additionally, the purpose of this plan is to provide Byway Leadership with directories of partner organizations and stakeholders

who can be engaged as further efforts to reinvent the Byway take shape. Grant funding programs are highlighted to showcase possible mechanisms which can be explored in transforming the organization.

This plan would have not been possible without grant funding support from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity. Recognition is also given to the Northeast Florida Regional Council and consultants from Halff who assisted the Byway through this strategic planning process.

What makes the Byway so special are the number of stakeholders and partner organizations actively involved in shaping its future. The objective of this plan is to harmonize the efforts of the Byway with other partner organizations and stakeholders from across Nassau and Duval counties proactively working towards a similar vision.

The success and impacts of the Byway moving into the next decade will ultimately rely on the vision, motivations, and actions of the members responsible for its operations. Success will only be achievable if the people who define the Byway are given the tools, resources, and opportunities to effectively shape its future.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Like many other nonprofit organizations, the A1A Ocean Islands Trail Scenic Byway has faced numerous organizational challenges because of common issues related to leadership succession planning, access to fundraising and grants, volunteer coordination, and more. With volunteerism in the U.S. at an all-time high, and local communities pressed to navigate a complex array of priorities, the challenge at hand relates to building the capacity required to effectively operationalize the Byway's mission and vision.

In building a more sustainable and resilient future for the Byway as an organization, this planning effort launched with a transparent and honest discussion about the challenges have been presented to date. The Byway has been successful in coming up with big picture ideas, but has lacked the operational capabilities and guidance to effectively implement these ideas. Additionally, geography has been an obstacle for the organization because of challenges faced in bringing stakeholders from several communities together to plan for and implement regional changes.

The Byway to date has been managed by a select group of volunteers from local communities who have been guided by passion and commitment, but hindered by capabilities and resources. It was determined that the Byway could potentially disappear as an organization if changes were not made quickly to its leadership structure and approach to organizational management. In transforming challenges to date into future

opportunities, the focus of this planning effort was to identify recommendations and action steps that could assist the Byway in growing new relationships, forging new partnerships, and turning ideas into reality.

Recommendations identified in this plan include, but are not limited to, identifying new candidates for leadership and membership; exploring partnerships with other local and regional organizations; identifying new avenues for fundraising and public outreach; working with local community members to advance regional priorities; and recognizing new opportunities that have yet to be explored. Beyond the recommendations included in this plan, there are numerous partner organizations, stakeholders, and grant opportunities which are highlighted to showcase the many ways in which the Byway can continue to mature as an organization.

Priority themes, summarized on the following page and addressed later in this report, serve to guide the recommendations contained within this plan. The priority themes addressed should be operationalized in sequential order. The most immediate recommendation identified in this plan, which is addressed in Priority Theme 1, is that the Byway must recruit new members to lead the organization and coordinate its efforts moving forward. Once new leadership and membership is recruited, subsequent priority themes can be utilized to structure the work programming efforts of the Byway moving into the next few years and beyond.

PRIORITY THEMES

1. PLAN FOR LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION PLANNING

The Byway needs to energize a new group of leaders to take ownership of the organization and chart a new pathway forward. Leadership recruitment efforts should be focused on individuals with strong ties to local communities through work affiliation, community involvement, and social networks.

2. HARMONIZE BYWAY WITH OTHER LOCAL AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The Byway should consider harmonizing its efforts with the efforts of other organizations proactively working towards common goals and objectives. The Byway should leverage the capabilities and audiences of other organizations through partnership events, collaboration, and public outreach.

3. LEVERAGE EXISTING FUNDRAISING CHANNELS

The Byway should consider broadening its fundraising objectives through targeted outreach with local universities, philanthropic donors, and foundations to bolster operational abilities and expand outreach.

4. BUILD WITH PEOPLE IN MIND

The success of the Byway as an organization is ultimately up to the people shaping and implementing its mission and vision. People need to be prioritized in all aspects of reinventing the organization.

5. EXPLORE NEW HORIZONS

Once a new leadership and membership structure is in place, the Byway should consider broadening its horizons and focus attention on public policy issues related to climate resilience, ecotourism, and land preservation.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This plan would have not been made possible without the technical support and contributions of many organizations and individuals.

Special thanks is given to those listed below.

A1A Ocean Islands Trail Scenic Byway Executive Committee

Cheleene Schembera, Chair, Founding Member

Hon. Sarah Pelican, Vice-Chair, Founding Member

Rich Redik, Treasurer, Founding Member

Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC)

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Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)

Janice Charles, District Scenic Highway Coordinator

Atkins, Inc.

Michael Palozzi, FDOT Byway Planning Consultant

Karen Ford, FDOT Byway Planning Consultant

Champions of the Byway

Hon. Elaine Brown, Mayor, City of Neptune Beach

Hon. Sarah Pelican, Former Mayor, City of Fernandina Beach

Margo Moehring, Regional Community Institute of Northeast Florida





TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACKGROUND.....	1
CONSTRAINTS ANALYSIS.....	11
SWOT ANALYSIS.....	14
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	17
PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS DIRECTORY.....	24
STAKEHOLDERS DIRECTORY.....	42
GRANT FUNDING RESOURCES.....	44
NEXT STEPS.....	53



BACKGROUND



BACKGROUND

Introduction

The A1A Ocean Islands Trail Scenic Byway (the “Byway”) is one of Northeast Florida’s most valued assets when it comes to tourism, economic development, and outdoor recreation. Located in Nassau and Duval counties, the Byway stretches from Fernandina Beach in the north to Jacksonville Beach in the south and covers more than 40 miles of the Northeast Florida’s coastline along the Atlantic Ocean. Contained within the Byway are dozens of vitally important cultural, natural, and economic assets.

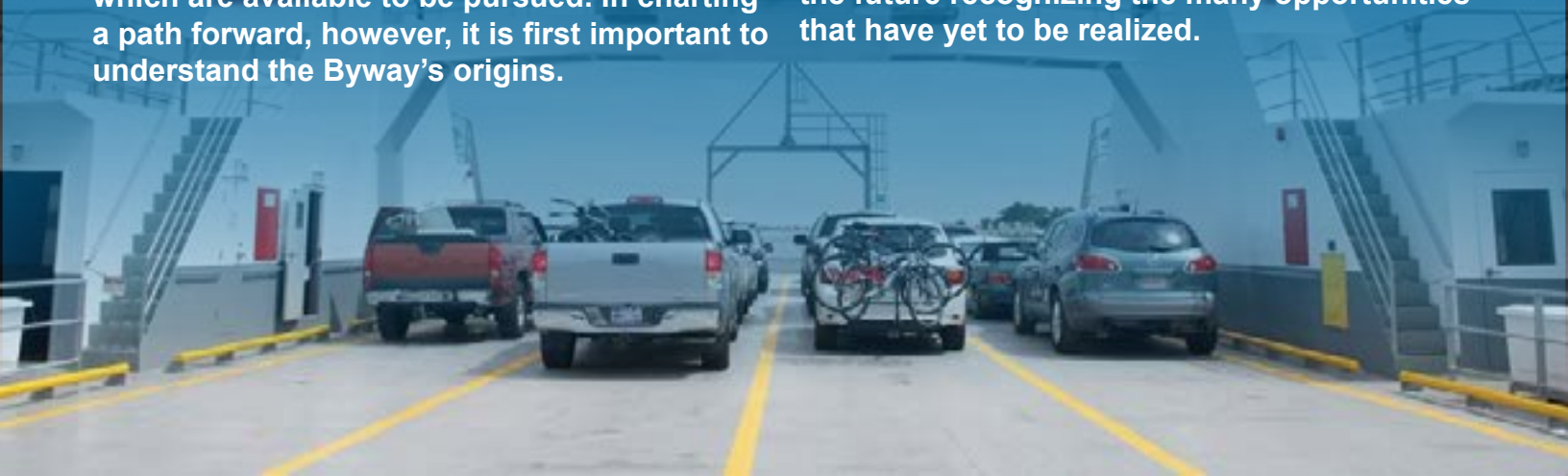
Included within the Byway are small businesses, local and state parks, pristine conservation areas and beaches, and cherished historical sites. To the north includes the historic communities of Fernandina Beach, American Beach, and Amelia Island. Near the middle includes Big and Little Talbot Island State Parks, Huguenot Memorial Park, the St. Johns River, and Mayport Naval Air Station. And finally, to the south, are the vibrant communities of Atlantic Beach, Neptune Beach, and Jacksonville Beach.

The Byway is in a strong position to explore new horizons because of both the successful efforts that have been achieved to date and the number of unexplored opportunities which are available to be pursued. In charting a path forward, however, it is first important to understand the Byway’s origins.

The Byway was formally recognized by the Florida Department of Transportation as one of Florida’s many Scenic Byways in 2016. Strategic planning efforts which resulted in the designation were the product of many years of collaboration amongst stakeholders, local governments, and regional agencies.

Actively involved and remaining leaders of the Byway go as far to maintain that achieving the designation in 2016 was one of their greatest accomplishments. Despite the progress that has been achieved to date, substantial obstacles and limitations still remain when it comes to the success of the Byway as an organization in itself.

The Byway, which maintains a 501(c)(3) nonprofit status, has struggled to maintain its operations in recent years because of numerous organizational constraints. Mainly, the chief obstacle has been that the organization is entirely managed and led by volunteers from local communities. Without full-time staffing support, the challenge relates to advancing the vision, goals, and objectives of the organization while continuing to operate as a volunteer-managed nonprofit. Despite some roadblocks that have been encountered, there is strong hope for the future recognizing the many opportunities that have yet to be realized.



Building a Resilient Future

In reinventing the structure of the Byway as a organization and charting a new pathway forward, the Byway partnered with the Northeast Florida Regional Council in 2022 to apply for grant funding from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity to support the development of an organizational plan. Following the award of grant funds, the Council in collaboration with the Byway, issued a Request for Proposals to solicit the services of a professional consulting firm to develop the plan.

Halff – a full-service engineering, architectural, and planning firm with an office location in Jacksonville – was selected as the consultant to develop the plan. Strategic planning efforts were structured over a three-month timeline between February and April 2023 where consultants engaged Byway Leadership, evaluated constraints and opportunities, and developed an inventory of recommendations which could be pursued over the next 1-2 years.

While the scope of this planning effort could have diverged into many directions - given the breadth of assets contained within the Byway - careful steps were taken to focus the goals and objectives of this project around recommendations applicable to the Byway as an organization. The measurable success and impacts of the Byway moving into the next decade and beyond will ultimately rely on the actions and efforts of stakeholders who “carry the torch” forward.

Purpose of Plan

The purpose of this plan is to provide the Byway with a concrete “road map” of action items which can be quickly and effectively implemented to reinvent the structure of the organization over the short-term. Once a stronger foundation is established, long-range objectives will have to be crafted by members themselves.

Included in this plan is background context and information applicable to the Byway, an overview of analysis steps that were taken to identify constraints and limitations, and an inventory of recommendations which can be pursued. To support the recommendations identified, directories of partner organizations and stakeholders are provided; with the aspiration of connecting the Byway with other similar efforts taking shape across Nassau and Duval counties and the Northeast Florida region as a whole.

This plan is grounded around a series of “priority themes” which reflect commitments to shaping a new future.

Quick Fact: There are a total of 27 Scenic Byways located across Florida with six Byways further designated at the Federal level as National Scenic Byways.



Relevance of the St. Johns Ferry

In reflecting on the history of the Byway, a valuable starting point for understanding its purpose and origins can be found in efforts leading to Save the St. Johns River Ferry. Located in Mayport Village, the St. Johns River Ferry has served an indispensable function to A1A's transportation connectivity for decades.

The St. Johns River Ferry has served the Mayport and Ft. George Island communities since at least 1874. As post-World War II car and tourist culture grew the ferry became part of the roadway designated as Florida State Road A1A. The ferry was operated by the Florida Department of Transportation from the mid-1950s. Once the Broward Bridge was completed in 1989, FDOT began to consider the ferry obsolete and recession of the early 1990's accelerated this narrative. Citizen advocates for the ferry stepped in and "Save the Ferry" became a rallying cry.

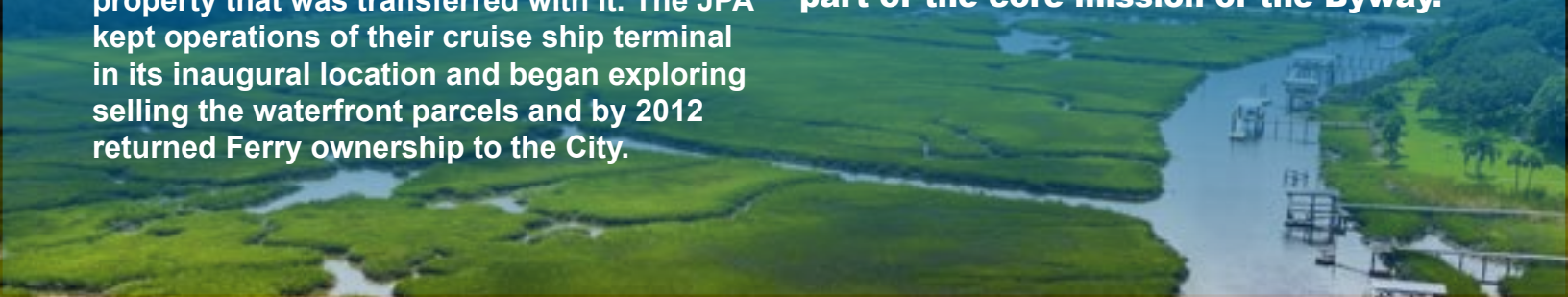
The City of Jacksonville began providing a subsidy for ferry operations. However, despite the best efforts of citizens, FDOT transferred ownership of the ferry to City of Jacksonville in 1997 and the City contracted out ferry operations. Budget concerns and the 2007 Recession re-started the conversation on whether the ferry was obsolete.

Citizens rallied again and the Jacksonville Port Authority took over operation of the ferry and several prime waterfront parcels in Mayport in 2007. The City of Jacksonville provided a subsidy to JPA. At the time the JPA was exploring whether to open a cruise ship terminal in several locations east of Dames Point. Speculation at the time was that JPA only "took" the ferry because of the property that was transferred with it. The JPA kept operations of their cruise ship terminal in its inaugural location and began exploring selling the waterfront parcels and by 2012 returned Ferry ownership to the City.

In 2012 citizen activism surged again, as the City established a Ferry Commission to determine how to best sustain operations. The Ferry Commission was composed of elected officials and community leaders all with a sincere interest in continued ferry service. The Commission discussed the Ferry's role as part of A1A with FDOT during this period, however, those discussions were not fruitful.

The Friends of the St Johns River Ferry began a highly successful "ambassador" program. Ambassador volunteers would meet and greet the public at the ferry landings and on the ferry during crossings. These volunteers would make suggestions on what to visit or where to eat and would take photos of visitors on the ferry. The Friends also held a series of Ferry Fests that engaged the public and built support for continued operations. There was significant coordination between membership and staff of the Ferry Commission and Friends of the St. Johns Ferry.

While efforts applicable to the ferry continued to take shape, stakeholders from the Jacksonville Beaches and Mayport Village came together to develop a comprehensive vision for identifying what additional pathways could be explored. At it's core, the Byway's successful designation effort in 2016 was a reflection of decades of perseverance efforts on the behalf of dedicated stakeholders and Byway stewards committed to both the Byway and sustainable operations of the ferry. The Keep the Ferry Movement directly gave rise to the desire for a scenic highway designation and will always be part of the core mission of the Byway.



The Quest for a Designation & Subsequent Challenges

The quest for scenic highway designation grew out of the hugely successful grassroots “Keep the St Johns River Ferry” movement spearheaded by former Jacksonville City Council Chair, William A. Gulliford, former Jacksonville City Council Chair, Elaine Brown, and dozens of passionate volunteers and community based organizations that mobilized to keep the St Johns River Ferry in service. During the designation process, Elaine Brown served as the prime mover and champion for the AIA Corridor Advisory Group, along with Sarah Pelican, then Mayor of Fernandina, as Co-Chair and Margo Moehring, Managing Director of Policy and Planning, NEFRC, as Secretary.

Following the submission of the AIA OIT Letter of Intent in 2013, the state level FDOT scenic highway program began a major overhaul of the Florida scenic Highway program design and manual that was developed to guide the designation, approval and scenic highway corridor management process. This resulted in mixed signals, uncertainty, delays in the review and approval of documents, loss of interest within the community and conflict with FDOT district and state program staff. Volunteers and advocates for designation became increasingly frustrated, disillusioned and exhausted by the FDOT bureaucratic process, lack of clarity, lack of program resources and post-designation volunteer fundraising expectations. Courtesy NEFRC agency support, “all-in” staff dedication continued to be provided by NEFRC and Margo Moehring.

Concurrent with the final stages of the designation process, the principal and chair was elected Mayor of the City of Neptune Beach and became almost completely inactive though she remained as principal and chair until the end of October 2022. Fernandina Beach mayor, Sarah Pelican, lost her bid for reelection but remained active as

Nassau Co-Chair and Margo Moehring remained as Secretary. Rich Redick, an early ferry and byway advocate who did not participate in the designation process, became Treasurer. Chelly Schembera, a ferry volunteer who was recruited by Elaine Brown, served as Vice President. By this time, the St Johns River Ferry Service was mostly out of harm’s way, thanks to Elaine Brown, JTA, and its new CEO Nathaniel P. Ford, and numerous successful political interventions by Council members Bill Gulliford and John Crescimbeni.

Immediately following the public designation celebration, more volunteers resigned and the leadership group became far less active. After several years, FDOT consultant Atkins, which was also active during the designation process, began to chair subcommittee meetings with the officers who remained committed but no new volunteers were recruited nor was a defined “corridor management entity” established as required by program guidelines. Margo Moehring, NEFRC, continued to be fully engaged throughout this period, performed almost all of the active work, applied for numerous grants and prepared all of the required FDOT reports until she retired. Without the support of Moehring, NEFRC and Atkins, the AIA OIT would have had difficulty meeting minimum FDOT program requirements because so few volunteers remained committed to the program.

After Moehring’s retirement, it was obvious that the volunteers would have to assume far more responsibility. Chelly Schembera agreed to take over as chair/secretary on November 1, 2022 and the Nassau co-chair Sarah Pelican became the Vice Chair. Rich Redick continued in his capacity as Treasurer.

Since the leadership change, the remaining volunteers, serving as an executive committee, have:

- Been much more engaged
- Actively recruited new volunteers
- Printed and distributed brochures
- Developed, tested and completed a generic Florida scenic Highway signage instrument and survey
- Actively and successfully advocated with JTA for a second ferry
- Participated in a dedication ceremony for a new intrinsic resource, The Gulliford Community Center, and demonstrated an AIA OIT developed Geotourist application at the dedication
- Planned and attended a major NFLT environmental stewardship donation project within the byway view shed
- Met with a board member and the executive director of the AIA Scenic and Historic Coastal Byway, Danielle Anderson, to share ideas
- Contacted Visit Florida to inquire about benefits and membership costs
- Most recently, priced open market web design and development services

Rich Redick has also attended numerous face to face meetings as a committee chair and AIA OIT officer with the Mayport Waterfront Partnership (MWP) and champion of Mayport redevelopment, an explicit part of the AIA OIT mission statement.

Moving into the future, it will be vitally important for the Byway to build on the existing examples of success that have already been accomplished. Organizations that prioritize building on existing successes foster a culture of continuous improvement. They establish systems to capture and disseminate best practices, enabling members to learn from one another and build upon each other's achievements. This iterative approach leads to increased efficiency, productivity, and overall organizational success.

As the Byway continues to chart a new pathway forward, members should reflect on the successes that have been achieved to date to evaluate what has worked, what could have worked differently, and what opportunities have been potentially overlooked in the past. Additionally, it will be important to determine where synergies exist within these respective historical efforts and how previous work programming activities can potentially contribute to shaping future directions and projects.

Addressed later in this plan are opportunities applicable to grant funding programs. In evaluating existing accomplishments, grant funding has been a missing link in that the Byway has not successfully tapped into grant programs made available at the state and national levels. As new projects and partnership opportunities are evaluated, grant funding will be critical to both short-term and long-range objectives.

By building upon the strengths, accomplishments, and effective strategies already established, the Byway can amplify its appeal, attract more visitors, and promote economic growth and environmental stewardship in the region.



The Challenge

During a strategic planning session with Halff and Byway Leadership, active members explained that those involved early on were enthusiastic and energized leading into the designation approval process; but participation ultimately waned in the years following the designation.

Because of funding constraints as well as limitations in having an organization led by volunteers, only several individuals remained actively involved with the Byway between 2016 and 2022. A priority moving forward, according to leaders, is to reinvent the organization through member invitations, partnerships, and implementation projects.

While the average tourist or resident might only see the Byway's designation as a sign on a road, the reality of the matter is more complex in that the Byway needs to be structured around a formal Corridor Management Entity if it is to be maintained moving into the future. Since 2016, the Byway has had some partial success with implementation efforts, but overall, there are many available opportunities which have not yet been explored.

In terms of existing successes, the Byway has completed a signage inventory and has also successfully deployed a web application to promote use of A1A by residents and tourists. Other than these items, many big picture ideas have been explored but not yet actually realized. While big picture ideas are worthy of exploring, the task at hand moving forward relates to breaking these ideas down into manageable elements, initiatives, and projects which are achievable and implementable.

The Solution

To overcome the challenges discussed, core objectives must be focused around: (a) identifying new members to carry the torch of the organization moving forward; (b) building new partnerships to promote the Byway; and (c) identifying fundraising and grant channels for improving the financial health and vibrancy of the organization.

Fortunately for the Byway, Northeast Florida's nonprofit and foundation landscape is stronger than ever before with dozens of organizations all actively working to shape a similar vision and future for Nassau and Duval counties. Additionally, there are a number of individuals actively involved in local government, business, and neighborhood affairs across these local communities.

The most immediate step that the Byway must take to secure a foundation for its future is to reinvent the membership structure of the organization. Once new members are identified and recruited, next steps must be focused on leveraging the networks and relationships of these individuals to broaden the region's understanding of the Byway and determine which partnerships can be leveraged to advance the overall mission.

Organizations like the Timucuan Parks Foundation, North Florida Land Trust, and St. Johns Riverkeeper, for example, are each well known for hosting community outreach and education events which have historically resulted in successful fundraising and donor recruitment outcomes. The Byway should leverage the experiences of these partners.

What Does Success Look Like?

In reflecting on the challenges facing the A1A Ocean Islands Trail Scenic Byway, one question that is presented relates to what a successful model looks like. Across Florida and other parts of the U.S., there are many scenic byways each with unique and distinct challenges. In looking elsewhere, one model that might be worthy of consideration can be found on the Gulf Coast of Florida.

According to the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council (TBRPC), “The Courtney Campbell Scenic Highway and Trail are symbols of the collaboration of local, regional and state governmental agencies, public- and private-sector partners. Hundreds daily enjoy the beaches, boat launch, vistas and fishing opportunities along this 9.5-mile causeway across Old Tampa Bay.”

While the TBRPC is the Corridor Management Entity responsible for this Scenic Highway, it has delegated programmatic initiatives to a Corridor Advisory Committee (CAC) which is comprised of representatives from all local government and planning agencies that touch the highway. The work of the CAC is primarily accomplished via its alliance of volunteers representing businesses, government groups, and citizens.

In viewing the Courtney Campbell Scenic Highway as a successful model, one takeaway is that the organization has been effective because of the direct participation of area local governments and agencies. Additionally, entities like the Tampa Bay Estuary Program are active participants in meetings. Recent meeting agendas and minutes from this Scenic Highway have addressed major infrastructure efforts underway and periodic accomplishments.

The takeaway from the model highlighted is that the A1A Ocean Islands Trail Scenic Byway should consider better incorporating local governments, regional agencies, and other organizations into its leadership and membership structure. By providing local governments and organizations with a seat at the table, there will be stronger opportunities presented to collaborate, plan for, and implement transformative changes.

One other model of success to consider can be found in the A1A Scenic and Historic Coastal Byway located in St. Johns and Flagler Counties. This Byway goes a step further in that it is led by a formal Board of Directors comprised of an Executive Committee, Directors, Partners, and number of subcommittees. The Board is made possible by an organization referred to as “Friends of A1A.”

“Director” seats comprised on the Board are provided for St. Johns and Flagler Counties as well as the City of Flagler Beach and specific communities. According to Friends of A1A, “The organization is composed of volunteer citizens who collaborate with municipalities, government agencies and other civic groups to improve facilities, amenities and promote interpretive stories about the area’s intrinsic resources including nature, culture, recreation, archaeology, scenery, and history.”

As the A1A Ocean Islands Trail Scenic Byway forms a new Executive Committee and membership structure, individuals from Byways near and far should be invited to local meetings to share stories on what has worked well elsewhere and vice-versa.

Beyond the specific models of success highlighted previously, there are additional Scenic Byway organizations in Florida that can serve as models.

Indian River Lagoon National Scenic Byway

The Indian River Lagoon National Scenic Byway runs along Florida's east coast from New Smyrna Beach to Palm Bay. The organization is a nonprofit that works to promote and preserve the natural, cultural, and historic resources of the byway. They provide visitor services, develop educational programs, and work with local communities and businesses to support sustainable tourism practices. They also have a strong emphasis on environmental conservation and preservation efforts.

Big Bend Scenic Byway

The Big Bend Scenic Byway runs along Florida's Gulf Coast from St. Marks to Apalachicola. The organization is a nonprofit that works to promote and preserve the natural, cultural, and historic resources of the byway. They provide visitor services, develop educational programs, and work with local communities and businesses to support sustainable tourism practices. They also have a strong focus on outdoor recreation and environmental conservation efforts.

Florida Keys Scenic Highway

The Florida Keys Scenic Highway runs along the Florida Keys from Key Largo to Key West. The organization is a nonprofit that works to promote and preserve the natural, cultural, and historic resources of the byway. They provide visitor services, develop educational programs, and work with local communities and businesses to support sustainable tourism practices. They also have a strong emphasis on environmental conservation and preservation efforts, including coral reef restoration projects.

The Tamiami Trail Scenic Highway

The Tamiami Trail Scenic Highway runs along US 41 in South Florida, from Miami to Naples. The organization is a nonprofit that works to promote and preserve the natural and cultural resources of the byway, including the unique ecosystem of the Everglades. They offer educational programs and events, promote local businesses, and encourage sustainable tourism practices.

Black Bear Scenic Byway

This byway runs through the Ocala National Forest in central Florida, offering visitors a chance to see Florida's iconic black bears in their natural habitat. The byway also passes by the historic community of Paisley and the Juniper Springs Recreation Area.

These scenic byway organizations in Florida share a common vision of promoting and preserving the unique natural and cultural resources of their regions, and working with local communities and businesses to create sustainable tourism opportunities. By engaging with visitors, educating them about the local environment and history, and promoting responsible travel practices, these organizations have worked successfully to ensure the long-term viability of their regions as attractive and sustainable tourism destinations.

The most important takeaway from these Florida models is that each respective organization is focused on the issue areas of concern that are locally relevant and applicable. The A1A Ocean Islands Trail Scenic Byway should consider what is of most importance locally and focus attention on topics of concern where the most value can be added.

In evaluating additional models of success that exist outside of Florida, there are many scenic byway organizations across the U.S. where possible lessons and insights can be obtained. Below are a few examples:

Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation

The Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation is a nonprofit organization that supports the Blue Ridge Parkway, a scenic byway that runs through Virginia and North Carolina. The foundation has been successful in raising funds to support the preservation and maintenance of the parkway's natural and cultural resources, as well as developing programs and initiatives to enhance the visitor experience.

Great River Road Interpretive Center

The Great River Road Interpretive Center is a nonprofit organization that promotes the Great River Road, a scenic byway that follows the Mississippi River through 10 states. The organization has been successful in developing educational programs and exhibits that highlight the cultural, historical, and natural resources of the region.

Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area

The Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area is a nonprofit organization that promotes the scenic byway that runs through south-central Alaska. The organization has been successful in working with local communities and businesses to develop sustainable tourism practices that support the byway while preserving the natural environment.

Utah Scenic Byways

Utah Scenic Byways is a nonprofit organization that promotes the scenic byways

in Utah. The organization has been successful in developing interpretive materials and educational programs that highlight the natural and cultural resources of the byways, as well as supporting local communities and businesses through tourism.

Ohio National Scenic Byway Foundation

The Ohio National Scenic Byway Foundation is a nonprofit organization that supports the scenic byways in Ohio. The organization has been successful in developing partnerships with local communities and businesses to promote sustainable tourism practices, as well as supporting conservation and preservation efforts along the byways.

Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona

The Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona is a nonprofit organization that supports the historic Route 66, a scenic byway that runs through eight states. The organization works to preserve and promote the history and culture of Route 66, as well as support local communities and businesses along the route.

America's Byways Resource Center

America's Byways Resource Center is a nonprofit organization that supports the national scenic byways program in the U.S. The organization provides resources and tools to help byway organizations promote and preserve their byways, as well as coordinate efforts at the national level.

These Scenic Byway organizations have been successful in promoting and preserving the natural, cultural, and historic resources of their respective byways while supporting sustainable tourism practices and engaging with local communities.

In evaluating the efforts of the scenic byway organizations highlighted, there are many best practices that each of these respective organizations have followed in achieving success.

These best practices include:

Collaborate with local communities:

Work with local communities to ensure that the Byway reflects the unique character and heritage of the area.

Preserve and protect natural and cultural resources:

Protect the scenic, historic, cultural, and natural resources along the Byway and promote their sustainable use.

Provide high-quality visitor experiences:

Create opportunities for visitors to engage with the natural and cultural resources along the Byway, and provide interpretive and educational materials to enhance their experience.

Foster economic development:

Promote the Byway as a destination, attract visitors, and support the local economy through tourism and related activities.

Ensure safety and accessibility:

Maintain the Byway to ensure it is safe and accessible for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists.

Monitor and evaluate performance:

Regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of Byway management practices and adjust strategies accordingly to achieve goals and objectives.

A scenic byway organization should function as a nonprofit organization that works to promote and preserve the natural, cultural, and historic resources of the byway while engaging with local communities and businesses to support sustainable tourism practices.

Scenic byway organizations should work to develop partnerships with local communities and businesses to promote sustainable tourism practices that support the byway while preserving the natural environment and cultural resources. This can include working with local governments and businesses to develop visitor services, as well as supporting initiatives that promote conservation and preservation efforts along the byway.

A scenic byway organization should work to manage and preserve the natural, cultural, and historic resources of the byway through partnerships with local governments, nonprofit organizations, and other stakeholders. This can include implementing conservation and preservation measures, conducting research and monitoring efforts, and providing educational programs to promote public awareness and engagement.

Overall, a scenic byway organization should function as a collaborative and inclusive entity that works to promote and preserve the unique characteristics of the Byway while supporting sustainable tourism practices and engaging with local communities and businesses.

CONSTRAINTS ANALYSIS



CONSTRAINTS ANALYSIS

Existing Constraints Analysis

Early objectives of this planning process were focused on evaluating the existing constraints and limitations facing the Byway as an organization managed by volunteers. The process began with a preliminary review of existing materials including the 2016 Byway Management Plan.

Byway Management Plan Review

Halff reviewed the 2016 Byway Management Plan and assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the contents contained within the plan. Overall, the plan provides comprehensive details applicable to respective Byway elements like roadway conditions, resources and assets, as well as operational components.

Where the Byway Management Plan could improve relates to the goals, objectives, and strategies contained within the goals and objectives section. As a non-profit organization led and managed by volunteers, it is Halff's opinion that Byway goals and objectives need to be refined so that ultimate strategies are feasible, practicable, and effective. Objective 1.1, for example, is focused on developing a plan to contact and motivate key leaders in Duval and Nassau counties but does not provide an inventory of who those key leaders are.

To further illustrate these constraints, Strategies 1.1.5 and 1.1.6 are focused on encouraging businesses to be involved with the Byway but again does not identify who those businesses are. Motivating key leaders across Duval and Nassau counties to participate and become more involved can be an achievable task if clear priorities are established to guide outreach efforts.

As it pertains to the Byway's organizational structure, responsibilities are not articulated well enough in the current Byway Management Plan. Halff recommends developing an organizational chart that clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of each member, their action items, and articulates organizational relationships. This will help to clearly communicate to each member what their responsibilities are as it relates to achieving the organization's stated goals and objectives.

Halff also recommends that the Byway consider more specific and concise metrics when it comes to measuring success, impact, and performance. Metrics contained within the Byway Management Plan are poorly defined and do not allow for accurate monitoring and evaluation.



Regarding fundraising, for example, establishing more concise metrics with specific target amounts, number of pledges, and associated timetables for achieving financial goals will allow the Byway to better monitor and evaluate the progress of meeting stated goals and objectives more effectively. Metrics should be concise and anchored by the Byway's mission and purpose. Having less metrics with more achievable targets will enable the Byway to assign tasks more effectively to volunteers and measure performance.

Finally, it is Halff's opinion that certain strategies and actions should be prioritized over others. Prioritizing actions like networking, fundraising, and membership growth, for example, can increase the Byway's capacity to advance broader outreach, programmatic, and project opportunities.

Preliminary Insights from Byway Leadership

Halff met with the Byway Executive Committee comprised of Cheleene Schembera, Rich Redick, and Sarah Pelican on 2/27/2023 at NEFRC offices in Downtown Jacksonville. Consultants from Halff included Sean Lahav, Lisa King, Lara Diettrich, and Raymond Deschler.

Byway members provided historical insights applicable to the Byway's designation in 2016 as well as insights related to existing challenges and future priorities. Ms. Schembera explained that the designation was made possible through the efforts of individuals like Mayor Elaine Brown from Neptune Beach who worked on the pursuit of a designation between 2012 and 2016.

Mr. Redick explained how he created a nonprofit organization to originally help with the designation. At the core of the designation efforts were three groups including Save the St. Johns River Ferry, the Mayport Waterfront Partnership, and the A1A Ocean Islands Trail Scenic Byway Designation Group. Much of the impetus for the designation had to do with local efforts to protect the St. Johns River Ferry and preserve its operations.

All members agreed that one of their proudest accomplishments was getting the designation approved. Those involved early on were enthusiastic and energized leading into the approval process; but participation ultimately waned in the years following the designation. Because of funding constraints as well as limitations in having an organization led by volunteers, only several individuals remained actively involved with the Byway between 2016 and 2022.

Looking into the future, members discussed possible partnership opportunities and individuals who should be contacted. Thus far, the following individuals/entities have agreed to serve on the new Corridor Management Entity: North Florida Land Trust; Mayor of Jacksonville Beach Chris Hoffman and Beaches Museum and History Center Executive Director; City of Jacksonville Beach; City of Neptune Beach; City of Atlantic Beach; former Neptune Beach Mayor Harriett Pruitt; Friends of the St Johns River Ferry Executive Director Val Bostwick; Olivia Hoblit, Regional Manager, Innisfree Hotels and immediate past President of the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association; and Nassau County Commissioner John Martin.



A discussion later followed on possible leverage points the Byway could explore to initiate more formal partnerships with area local governments.

On the topic of climate resilience, for example, it was noted that this might be an opportunity to get both elected officials and government staff to the table. Given the presence of Mayport Naval Air Station, there might also be opportunities to bring the U.S. Navy into these discussions as both a formal partner and champion advocate.

Ms. Schembera emphasized that the Byway as an organization needs to be restructured and that the Byway must find ways to address underserved and/or undervalued portions of the Byway (i.e., Mayport, segments in Fernandina Beach). Another goal is to advance fundraising and public outreach priorities in collaboration with like-minded organizations and local businesses.

Preliminary Insights from Atkins/FDOT

Following Halff's engagement with the Byway Executive Committee, a meeting was facilitated with staff from Atkins later on 2/27/2023 to gain external insights.

Atkins is a consulting firm who has been involved with FDOT's statewide Scenic Byway efforts. Staff from Atkins who participated in this meeting included Michael Palozzi and Karen Ford. Janice Charles from FDOT also participated. Halff's staff in attendance included Sean Lahav, Lara Diettrich, and Raymond Deschler.

Mr. Palozzi began the meeting by explaining that there are currently 27 Byways within Florida. Atkins works with about half of these

organizations through a continuing services contract with FDOT. He noted that there is often limited coordination between Byway organizations which is something that could be improved moving into the future.

According to Mr. Palozzi, the most successful Byway organizations are those which balance the interests and priorities of local governments, businesses, and volunteers.

Leading into 2016, Atkins assisted the A1A Ocean Islands Trail Scenic Byway in achieving its successful designation. According to Atkins, efforts applicable to Save the St. Johns River Ferry were crucial to the application process. Once the Ferry obtained needed funding, however, Byway efforts diminished as involved parties became less involved.

Mr. Palozzi maintains that a key challenge for the Byway is finding volunteers who can do the "on-the-ground" work. When it comes to building partnerships, hosting events, and raising funds, for example, there are substantial limitations that must be overcome. Despite these limitations, however, there are successful Scenic Byway models that exist in Florida and elsewhere across the U.S. which should be sought after for lessons learned.

Outcomes from the SWOT analyses conducted as part of these meetings are provided in the next section.



SWOT ANALYSIS



SWOT ANALYSIS

To develop a better understanding of both the challenges facing the Byway and opportunities available to the organization, respective SWOT analyses were conducted with Byway Leadership and staff from FDOT and Atkins.

SWOT stands for:

Strengths which are internal to the organization and represent what the Byway is doing well.

Weaknesses which are also internal to the organization but highlight operational challenges.

Opportunities which are external to the organization and highlight possible strategies or partnerships that can be pursued.

Threats which are external to the organization and highlight possible variables that can negatively interfere with operations.

A SWOT Analysis is one planning tool available to non-profit organizations during strategic planning processes. Outcomes from this analysis paint a clear and concise picture of where the Byway stands as of today and some of the steps that should be taking in reshaping the organization.

While a SWOT Analysis is valuable from a planning perspective, it should be noted that not all stakeholder perspectives are captured in this exercise. To build on the outcomes from this exercise, Byway members should consider other means like digital surveys

and engagement events to determine what additional perspectives are out there and what types of opportunities can potentially be explored. The underlying objective of the SWOT is to establish baseline context around the core issues facing the Byway.

Based on outcomes made possible by these analyses, a few notable takeaways become clear:

- 1. The Byway has been successful in coming up with big picture ideas, but has lacked the operational capabilities to implement those ideas.**
- 2. Geography is both a threat and opportunity for the Byway in that cross-jurisdictional engagement is necessary yet difficult to manage and coordinate.**
- 3. Funding is one of the most critical missing links for the Byway in that the non-profit lacks the financial resources needed to promote public outreach and awareness.**
- 4. There are substantial chances of the Byway sunseting as an organization if efforts are not made to increase, expand, and diversify membership, including leadership.**

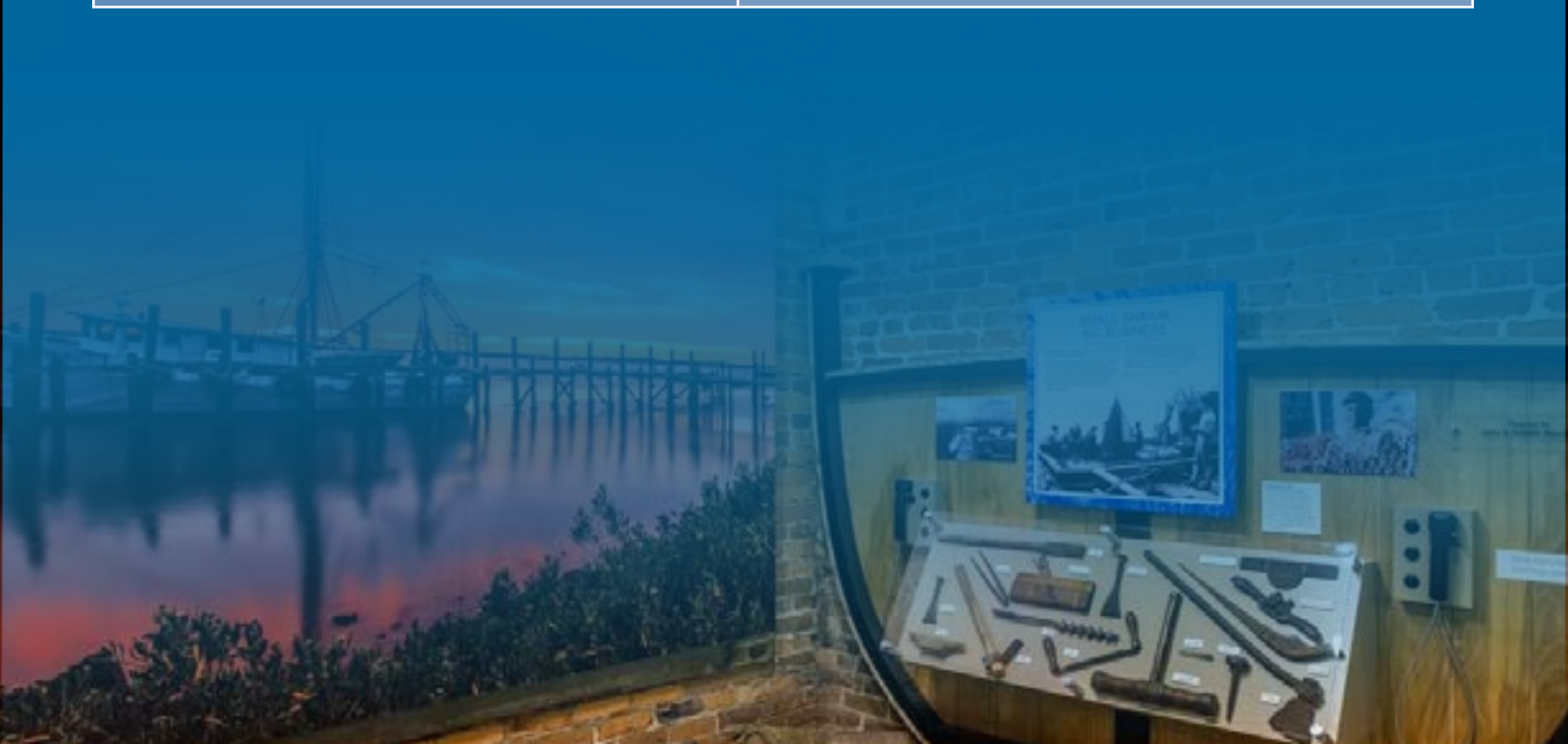
Detailed SWOT Analysis outcomes are provided on the following pages.

Byway Leadership SWOT Analysis (2/27/2023)

Strengths	Weaknesses
<i>The designation itself.</i> <i>The core group is still together.</i> <i>Virtual technology has made meetings more accessible.</i> <i>Many great resources and actors are contained within the Byway.</i> <i>501(c)(3) nonprofit status.</i> <i>The Byway is more than 40 miles long and there is an abundance of assets.</i>	<i>The geographic size of the Byway makes marketing efforts more complex.</i> <i>There is a generational gap in current leadership where successions plans are not yet in place.</i> <i>Representation from government and business partners is still lacking.</i> <i>Not enough funds in place to comprehensively promote the Byway.</i>
Opportunities	Threats
<i>Exploring new organizational structure.</i> <i>Finding ways to leverage climate resilience efforts to engage in more formal partnerships with local governments.</i> <i>Exploring ways to participate in regional discussions on ecotourism.</i> <i>Partnering with organizations like Visit Jacksonville, Visit Florida, and 1000 Friends of Florida.</i> <i>Obtaining funding to support the retention of a part-time or full-time staff member.</i> <i>Hosting an artist competition to help develop new logo.</i>	<i>Chance of organization disappearing if Byway does not increase and expand membership.</i> <i>Lack of grant funding programs that directly support staff and project management components.</i> <i>Lack of fundraising channels to effectively raise needed capital to advance Byway goals and objectives.</i> <i>Ill-defined metrics which are difficult to evaluate and monitor.</i> <i>Lack of formal support from local governments.</i>

FDOT/Atkins SWOT Analysis (2/27/2023)

Strengths	Weaknesses
• <i>Byway has the support of FDOT, something that many nonprofits do not have.</i> • <i>Completed a signage effort.</i> • <i>Strong preexisting relationships with elected officials.</i> • <i>Byway is actively charting a new vision.</i>	• <i>Byway has not necessarily been effective in downscaling big picture ideas into achievable and actionable efforts.</i> • <i>Byway does not currently have robust funds in place which has caused personal money from members to be spent on outreach efforts.</i>
Opportunities	Threats
• <i>Partnering with local universities to have students work on projects. This has been done by other Byways.</i> • <i>Identifying opportunities to get the youth and next generation of leaders involved.</i> • <i>Identifying foundations to help with fundraising priorities.</i>	• <i>Atkins is limited in how they can support because of scope constraints with FDOT.</i> • <i>Volunteerism in the U.S. is at an all-time low and many folks are not interested.</i> • <i>Scenic Byway Designation might disappear if leadership succession plans are not developed.</i>



RECOMMENDATIONS



RECOMMENDATIONS

Following multiple strategic planning sessions, additional research was conducted to identify, refine, and provide recommendations. It should be noted, as in the title of this plan, that these are short-term recommendations intended to be implemented over the next 1-2 years.

Building on identified lessons from the planning process, a set of **priority themes** were developed to guide the structure and intent of these recommendations.

The 5 Priority Themes are as follows:

1. Plan for Leadership Succession Planning

2. Harmonize Byway with Other Local and Regional Organizations

3. Leverage Existing Fundraising Channels

4. Build with People in Mind

5. Explore New Horizons

Contained within each of these themes are recommendations provided in order of priority and impact. It should be emphasized that the goal of these recommendations is to establish a baseline foundation for informing the ultimate actions and choices of Byway members themselves. The purpose is to set direction for the ship rather than dive into every detail of how the ship will be rowed.

Recognizing the limited operational capabilities of the Byway as of today, implementation objectives should be focused on membership expansion and recruitment before all else. Bringing new leaders to the table quickly will enable the Byway to begin its path of charting a new vision.

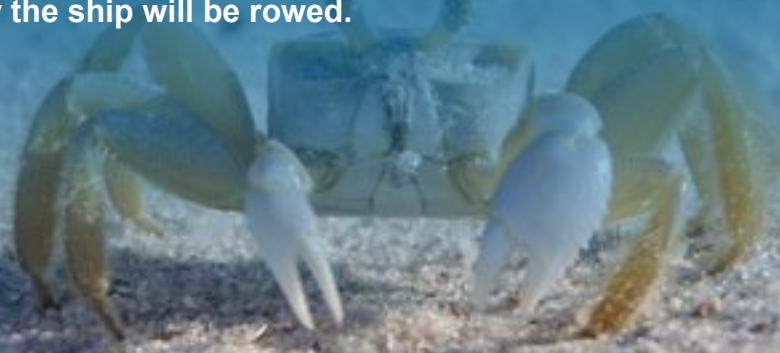
Leadership is a critical component of what the future holds in store. The Byway must identify and recruit new leaders who are energized, motivated, and capable of transforming the organization. Leadership must balance the perspectives of local government, business, and the nonprofit sectors.

Themes 1 and 2 should be operationalized as soon as possible so that momentum is substantially generated.

Themes 3 through 5, while still achievable in the short-term, can be maximized and bolstered when new members are provided the opportunity to contribute.

Once a new membership list is finalized and new members are recruited, certain recommendations contained within this plan can be utilized to structure the work program and agendas of subsequent meetings to take place with new members.

The following pages provide details applicable to the contents and direction of each recommendation.



THEME 1: PLAN FOR LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION PLANNING

PLANNING HORIZON: IMMEDIATE

The Byway needs to energize a new group of leaders to take ownership of the organization and chart a new pathway forward. Leadership recruitment efforts should be focused on individuals with strong ties to local communities through work affiliation, community involvement, and social networks.

1.1 Identify New Candidates for Membership

Leveraging the Stakeholder Directory contained within this plan, the Byway should identify attractive candidates with strong local connections for membership recruitment. In the identification of members, an effort should be made to identify candidates from a diverse array of professional, industry, and community backgrounds. Of most importance, immediate steps should be focused on identifying new leaders to carry the torch of the organization.

1.2 Ensure Regional Representation

Membership recruitment efforts should be focused around ensuring regional representation. The final membership structure should include individuals from Nassau and Duval Counties, Fernandina Beach, Atlantic Beach, Neptune Beach, and Jacksonville Beach. The Byway should consider establishing permanent seats for representatives from the NEFRC, Mayport NAS, the North Florida TPO, SJRWMD, and FDEP. Bringing state and regional agencies as well as military partners to the table will open up new opportunities and horizons. This will be an especially important factor in future grant funding efforts.

1.3 Establish New Executive Committee

To launch the implementation of this plan, a new Executive Committee should be established. Seats should be given to a Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer/ Historian, Fundraising Lead, and Partnerships Lead. It is recommended that a detailed organizational chart be developed that clearly depicts the roles and responsibilities of Executive Committee members. The Executive Committee, once established, should utilize this plan to begin work programming. Later in the future, the Byway should consider establishing additional committees and working groups to address specific work program elements.

THEME 2: HARMONIZE BYWAY WITH OTHER LOCAL AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

PLANNING HORIZON: SHORT-TERM

The Byway should consider harmonizing its efforts with the efforts of other organizations proactively working towards common goals and objectives. The Byway should leverage the capabilities and audiences of other organizations through partnership events, collaboration, and public outreach.

2.1 Explore Partnership with UNF

UNF's Environmental Leadership Program (ELP) matches undergraduate students with nonprofit partners where selected students work on community-focused projects. These students are paid by UNF for their services. The Byway should partner with UNF to have an undergraduate student work on a semester project focused on creating a new Byway website and developing the materials to be contained within the website. UNF's Master of Public Administration program also has the capability of connecting graduate students with internship and directed independent study opportunities which directly support community and nonprofit partners. These programs at UNF should be leveraged to the greatest extent feasible to gain momentum on public outreach.

2.2 Participate in Regional Working Groups

There are currently a number of active working groups and steering committees across Northeast Florida focused on priorities related to ecotourism, outdoor recreation, economic development, and climate resilience. The Byway, should at a minimum, participate in the NEFRC's Working Group on Ecotourism and Trails which is currently evaluating regional trends, patterns, and opportunities. The Byway should also work to identify opportunities to collaborate with entities like the North Florida TPO and JTA on regional priorities.

2.3 Collaborate with Partner Organizations

Organizations like the North Florida Land Trust and St. Johns Riverkeeper routinely host and facilitate educational and networking events which are excellent avenues for fundraising, public outreach, and messaging. Leveraging the Partner Organizations Directory contained within this plan, the Byway should evaluate where existing relationships are and which additional relationships are worth exploring based on mutually beneficial gains.

THEME 3: LEVERAGE EXISTING FUNDRAISING CHANNELS

PLANNING HORIZON: MEDIUM-TERM

The Byway should consider broadening its fundraising objectives through targeted outreach with local universities, philanthropic donors, and foundations to bolster operational abilities and expand outreach. Local media networks should also be leveraged.

3.1 Develop Fundraising Plan with Specific Metrics

Fundraising efforts will only be successful if clear, specific, and concise metrics are developed to inform priorities. The Byway, in collaboration with new members, should develop a plan of action for raising necessary funds. Leadership should meet with organizations like the North Florida Land Trust, St. Johns Riverkeeper, and Timucuan Parks Foundation to learn about regional best practices for fundraising and model on existing successes. The Byway should leverage the existing philanthropic networks of these organizations to launch preliminary fundraising initiatives.

3.2 Launch Public Outreach Campaign

Building on previous recommendations - like the idea of having a UNF student create a new Byway website - the Byway should explore developing and launching a public outreach campaign focused on promoting a broader understanding of the Byway across Northeast Florida and letting local businesses and residents know how they can become involved. Public outreach tools can include, but are not limited to, media op-eds, guest radio and television appearances, educational flyers, and more. Possible media avenues include WJCT, First Coast Connect with Melissa Ross, The Florida-Times Union, Fernandina Observer, and First Coast Living.

3.3 Collaborate with Partners on Fundraising Events

When it comes to fundraising, measurable outcomes can be achieved when organizations work together and share resources. As alluded to throughout this plan, the Byway should leverage the capabilities and audiences of partner organizations to maximize and bolster fundraising objectives. Rather than bear all responsibility for hosting a fundraising event, the Byway should consider tagging along on existing fundraising events hosted by partners.

THEME 4: BUILD WITH PEOPLE IN MIND

PLANNING HORIZON: MEDIUM-TERM

The success of the Byway as an organization is ultimately up to the people shaping and implementing its mission and vision. People need to be prioritized in all aspects of reinventing the organization.

4.1 Make Small Businesses a Focal Point

Small businesses are at the heart of what makes the Byway such a dynamic and vibrant place. Throughout all stages of the Byway's future growth and direction, small businesses should be promoted, valued, and cherished as important economic, cultural, and recreational assets. The Byway should explore avenues for involving small business owners in shaping the future direction of the organization. The Byway should also explore ways in which small businesses can be better promoted to tourists and residents alike.

4.2 Host Charity Events to Support Local Causes

One avenue for spreading local and regional awareness of the Byway while also making an impact can be through the hosting of charity events. Whether it be through a 5-K run, car show, local concert, or movie in the park series, there are many ways to bring people together. If these events were to be hosted or sponsored by the Byway in the future, helping a local charity or cause along the way holds potential to forge new connections and make a difference.

4.3 Facilitate Regional Discussions and Allow New Members to Collaboratively Shape Future Vision

Recognizing the widespread geography of the Byway, the Executive Committee should consider ways to diversify engagement across many areas. One way of achieving this could be through looking at the Byway in terms of individual segments with distinct priorities. These respective segments could include Fernandina Beach and Amelia Island, The Talbot Islands and Mayport, and the Beaches. Once geographical considerations are clearly realized, efforts should be made to rotate Executive Committee meeting locations and invite individuals from these respective segments to speak and interact when the location aligns with where they reside. Means for virtual engagement should be pursued as to encourage more widespread geographical participation.

THEME 5: EXPLORE NEW HORIZONS

PLANNING HORIZON: LONG-TERM

Once a new leadership and membership structure is in place, the Byway should consider broadening its horizons and focus attention on public policy issues related to climate resilience, ecotourism, and land preservation.

5.1 Recognize the Opportunity of Climate Resilience

The topic of climate resilience has gained substantial attention across Florida and other parts of the U.S. over the past decade. In Northeast Florida, issues related to flooding, storm surge, and sea level rise have been brought to the forefront of public attention because of recent storm events like Matthew and Irma. In response to these threats, all municipalities and counties contained within the Byway have launched efforts to evaluate vulnerabilities, plan for climate adaptation, and implement projects. The Byway should consider the topic of climate resilience in its work programming - recognizing the threats that have been presented historically from storm events and risks presented in the future because of sea level rise.

5.2 Partner with Mayport Naval Air Station (NAS)

Mayport Naval Air Station is a vitally important asset to the City of Jacksonville, Northeast Florida region, and U.S. as a whole. The Byway should consider engaging Mayport NAS in efforts focused around land conservation, sustainability, and resilience. While a formal partnership might not turn out necessary, launching these types of collaborative discussions might pave the way for new ideas and horizons.

5.3 Pursue Grant Funding

Leveraging the Grant Funding Resources provided as part of this plan, the Byway should determine which grant opportunities and programs are most viable for consideration. In certain circumstances, the Byway might be eligible to pursue state and federal grants on its own. In other circumstances, the Byway should view itself as a convener and facilitator for helping local governments secure funding for planning and implementation projects. The Byway should consider applying to the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program for technical assistance and planning. The Byway should also actively participate in the North Florida TPO's meetings and activities and "be in the room" when project prioritization takes place.

Additional Recommendations

In addition to the recommendations within each priority theme, additional recommendations were identified as part of this process. These recommendations address specific implementation activities that can be pursued once resources are in place and a foundation is solidified.

A1. FIND WAYS TO BETTER PROMOTE THE BYWAY'S EXISTING GEOTOURIST APPLICATION

One of the Byway's existing successes relates to the development and deployment of a Geotourist web application. The Byway should consider additional avenues for promoting this application. The Timucuan Parks Foundation, for example, recently formalized a partnership with Humana to develop a GO365 initiative which promotes access to parks as a way to reduce obesity and mental health concerns. Individuals who participate in the program are able to accumulate points which can provide healthcare rewards and incentives. The Byway should consider speaking with the Timucuan Parks Foundation to identify if any synergies can be explored.

A2. EXPLORE THE CREATION OF A BYWAY AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

An important step moving into the future is for the Byway to identify and recruit ambassadors to champion the Byway across Duval and Nassau Counties. Ambassadors could serve a valuable role at events and fundraising meetings and could actively promote the Byway in their own communities.

A3. PROVIDE ROUTINE UPDATES TO ELECTED COMMISSIONS

Based on Halff's understanding, local governments and elected commissions were

very much engaged in the years leading up to the Byway's designation. In the years following, however, this level of engagement ultimately waned. The Byway should consider launching a public outreach campaign to elected officials. This will serve as a valuable opportunity to get community leaders to the table. Updates should be made on a routine and periodic basis.

A4. LEARN FROM THE EXPERIENCES OF OTHER BYWAY PROGRAMS

While immediate objectives should be focused locally, a long-range opportunity that the Byway should consider relates to tapping into the wisdom and knowledge of other Byway programs, boards, and committees. Leaders and members from other areas could be invited to share their individual perspectives. Additionally, leadership should seek out opportunities to attend conferences and participate in statewide and national scenic byway discussions so that examples of success from elsewhere can be identified and modeled after.

A5. RECOGNIZE THAT SUCCESS IS AN INCREMENTAL JOURNEY

While perhaps more of a philosophical recommendation, leadership must recognize that success will only be achieved over time through incremental steps. The Byway itself will be experienced by many generations to come and tapping into the perspectives of these new generations will be an important part of the process. While the big picture will always remain important, small changes and efforts will ultimately result in a more effective program and organization.

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS DIRECTORY



PARTNER DIRECTORY

Opportunities for Collaboration

Now that recommendations have been provided, the goal of remaining sections contained within this plan is focused on providing the Byway with directories of partner organizations and stakeholders who can assist in collaboratively shaping a new future for the organization.

Collaboration is a key to success because the future of the Byway will only be realized through fruitful dialogue and partnerships with stakeholders from across the Byway's landscape. Even beyond the spatial extent of the Byway, there are organizations active all across Northeast Florida; many of which can also be of assistance.

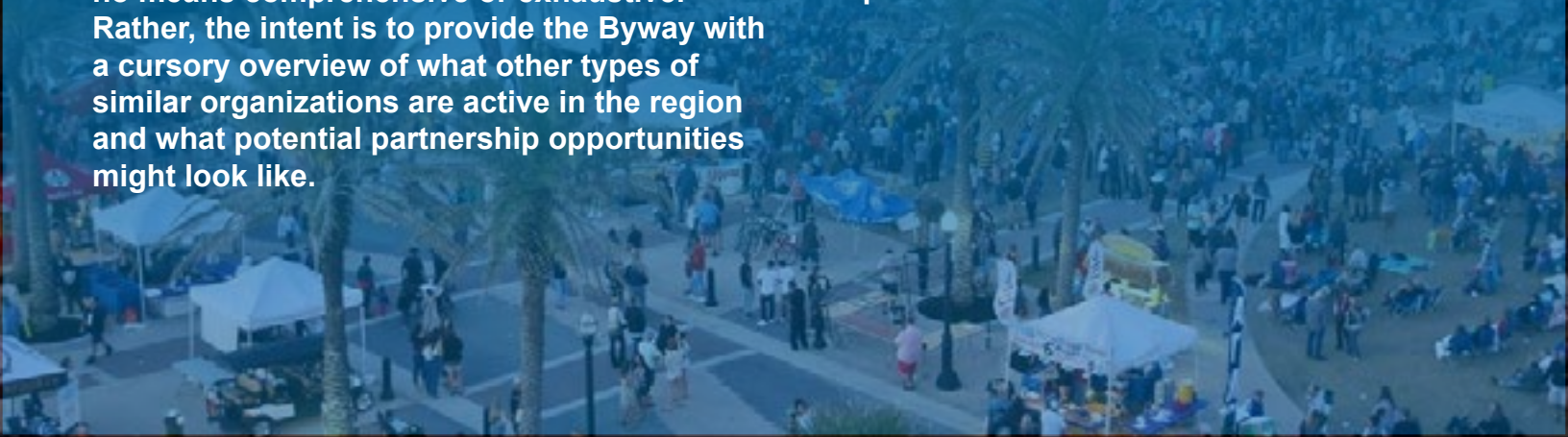
Provided within this Partner Organizations Directory are pages dedicated to respective organizations active across Duval and Nassau Counties. The objective of this directory is to provide the Byway with an inventory of partner organizations, what the missions of these organizations are, who can be contacted, and what types of partnership and promotion opportunities might be available to explore.

It should be noted that this directory is by no means comprehensive or exhaustive. Rather, the intent is to provide the Byway with a cursory overview of what other types of similar organizations are active in the region and what potential partnership opportunities might look like.

Specific organizations like the St. Johns Riverkeeper, North Florida Land Trust, and Public Trust Law hold tremendous potential to assist the Byway in its efforts because of widespread networking abilities, an awareness of local and regional issues, and strong public outreach capacities. Most importantly, these organizations have an actual stake in the future of the Byway when it comes down to issues like land conservation, environmental awareness, water quality, and sustainable ecotourism.

As the Byway navigates this partner organizations directory, it will be important to consider strategic objectives and how each partner organization can maximize and bolster these objectives over both short-term and long-range horizons. Elements related to ecotourism, sustainability, resilience, transportation, parks access, and economic development should all be factored into these discussions as new partnership opportunities are explored.

This directory is strictly limited to private and non-profit organizations. Contact information for local government staff and public agencies is provided in the stakeholder directory contained within the next section of this plan.



St. Johns RIVERKEEPER

St. Johns RIVERKEEPER is a privately-funded, independent, and trusted voice for the St. Johns River and the public to whom it belongs. They are a 501(c)(3) organization and rely on the support of members, donors, and volunteers to accomplish its mission.

Contacts

Lisa Rinaman – Riverkeeper

Office: (904) 256-7591

lisa@stjohnsriverkeeper.org

Jimmy Orth – Executive Director

Mobile: (904) 485-0164

Office: (904) 256-7591

jimmy@stjohnsriverkeeper.org

Partnership and Promotion Opportunities

The RIVERKEEPER hosts a number of community events throughout the year. These include clean ups, ecotours, and community meetings and social gatherings. The RIVERKEEPER hosts a bi-monthly membership meeting. This is an ideal event for the Byway to attend and possibly present to key members. The RIVERKEEPER also publishes a quarterly newsletter. A short article included in one of their upcoming newsletters that outlines Byway and potential volunteer opportunities would be beneficial.

www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org/



Public Trust Law

The primary purpose of the Public Trust is to invoke the law to protect the lands, waters, wildlife, and natural resources of Northeast Florida.

Environmental threats to Northeast Florida's special places often require immediate action. The Public Trust has an established record of swiftly and effectively responding to protect imperiled public resources, using community action, education, and targeted advocacy.

Contacts

John Henry November – Executive Director
john@publictrustlaw.org

Remy Sidelsky Vann – Conservation Director
romy@publictrustlaw.org

Partnership and Promotion Opportunities

Public Trust Law offers formal partnership agreements with other organizations and appears to have a volunteer network. The Byway should consider a partnership arrangement to harness volunteer networks and to collaborate on initiatives and outreach events.

www.publictrustlaw.org/



North Florida Land Trust

The North Florida Land Trust was founded in 1999 and is a local land conservation 501(c)3 organization focused on preserving and enhancing our quality of life by protecting North Florida's irreplaceable natural environment. They have a core service area of 7 counties in Northeast Florida which includes Nassau and Duval Counties.

Contacts

General Inquiries – info@nflt.org

Lee Anderson Louy – Director of Philanthropic Services
landersonlouy@nflt.org

Partnership and Promotion Opportunities

The North Florida Land Trust hosts a variety of events each year; these include outdoor activities, public presentations, and social gatherings. The Byway should participate and support these events through speaking engagements, event support, and sponsorship.

www.nflt.org/category/events/

The North Florida Land Trust also publishes a quarterly newsletter. The Byway should coordinate with the Land Trust to publish an informational piece in an upcoming newsletter.

www.nflt.org/category/newsletter/



National Parks Service

A patchwork of public land on both sides of the St. Johns River in Jacksonville, the Timucuan Preserve, which is managed by the National Parks Service, encompasses sites of historic, cultural, and ecological interest scattered between Amelia Island and Mayport.

Most of these sites are directly tied to the indigenous people of this region, the Timucua, and their interactions with the Europeans who attempted to settle here. Formally known as the the Timucuan Ecological and Historical Preserve, this is a well-interpreted National Park, with signage filling in the mysteries that surround this region's long and storied history.

Contact

Chris Hughes – Superintendent

chris_hughes@nps.gov

Phone: (904) 221-5568

Partnership and Promotion Opportunities

The preserve hosts a number of outdoor events and activities throughout the year. The Byway would benefit from periodically attending and sponsoring these events.



Florida State Parks

Little Talbot Island is one of a handful of undeveloped barrier islands remaining in Northeast Florida. Boasting more than 5 miles of pristine beaches and 3 miles of bike trails, Little Talbot offers untouched natural beauty and diverse ecosystems for visitors to explore.

Located on one of Northeast Florida's unique sea islands, Big Talbot Island State Park is primarily a natural preserve, providing a premier location for nature study, bird-watching and photography.

Both Little and Big Talbot Island State Parks are managed and administered through Florida State Parks.

Contact

Michelle Waterman – Park Manager

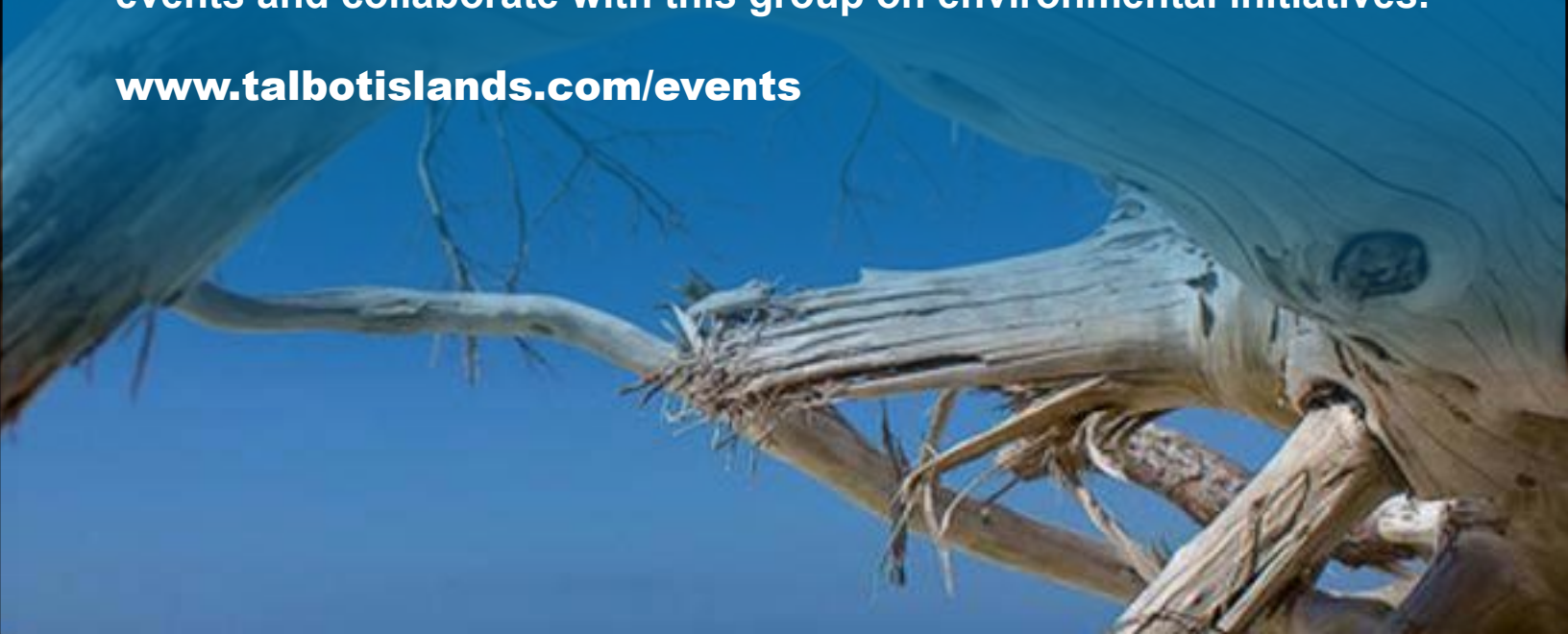
Michelle.Waterman@FloridaDEP.gov

Phone: 904-251-2320

Partnership and Promotion Opportunities

Friends of Talbot Islands State Parks is a citizen support organization that supports the park through outreach, programming, and volunteerism. They host a number of events and activities throughout the year and are a possible volunteer source. The Byway should attend events and collaborate with this group on environmental initiatives.

www.talbotislands.com/events



Visit Jacksonville

Visit Jacksonville is the official travel information resource for the Jacksonville area. It puts all the information you need about Jacksonville and the beaches right at your fingertips.

Visit Jacksonville is a *Destinations International* accredited Destination Marketing Organization contracted since 1996 by the Duval County Tourist Development Council (TDC) to champion the growth of leisure and business tourism in Jacksonville.

Contact

Michael Corrigan – President & CEO

Phone: (904) 421-9150

mcorrigan@visitjacksonville.com

Partnership and Promotion Opportunities

The Byway should collaborate with Visit Jacksonville to promote the Byway's assets and businesses as a must-see tourist destination. Visit Jacksonville is an extensive travel information resource for the area and offers a variety of ways businesses/locations can promote themselves. The Byway would benefit immensely from having a Visit Jacksonville staff member on its Executive Committee.

www.visitjacksonville.com/



Beaches Watch

Beaches Watch is a non-partisan nonprofit civic organization whose mission is to promote educated and productive citizen involvement in local and state government decisions that affect the future of our Northeast Florida beaches communities.

They achieve this mission by raising, monitoring, and researching issues; providing factual issue information to the general public and government officials; encouraging citizen participation in the solutions to beaches growth and quality of life issues and organizing citizens for action.

Contact

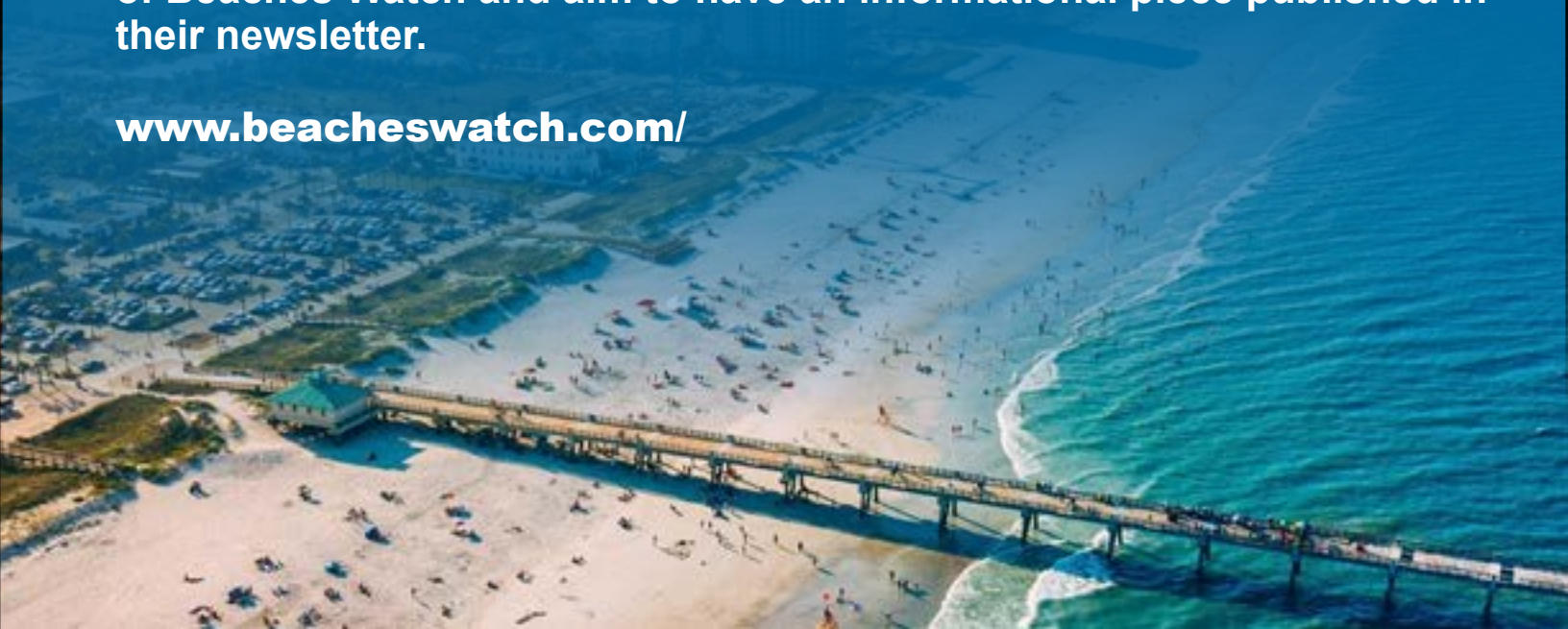
info@beacheswatch.com

Phone: (904) 878-0435

Partnership and Promotion Opportunities

Beaches Watch meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month in the Community Room of the Beaches Branch Library unless otherwise stated. The meetings are open to the public and include a guest speaker and discussion of the current issues for our beaches communities. The Byway should request to be a guest speaker at an upcoming meeting. The Byway should also become an official member of Beaches Watch and aim to have an informational piece published in their newsletter.

www.beacheswatch.com/



University of North Florida

The Institute of Environmental Research and Education (IERE) serves students and faculty from all UNF colleges. IERE programs and scholarships are 100% funded by donors and grants.

IERE was originally founded as the Environmental Center in 2004 by Dr. Ray Bowman, UNF Professor Emeritus of Chemistry and one of the founding faculty members. Dr. Bowman was responsible for securing internal support from UNF administration, which paved the way for the Center's success.

After nearly two decades of expansion, the Environmental Center became the Institute of Environmental Research and Education in 2021. In addition to changing its name, IERE also has a growing focus on expanding environmental research and education at UNF.

Contact

(904) 620-5804
environment@unf.edu

Partnership and Promotion Opportunities

A collaboration between the Byway and UNF through their IERE environmental leadership program would allow for students to gain real world experience applying their background and skills to help advance the Byway's goals and objectives. Possible projects could include website design, public outreach, and more.

www.unf.edu/environment/

UNIVERSITY of
NORTH
FLORIDA



City of Jacksonville Parks

The City of Jacksonville's Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services serves diverse populations of all ages and abilities through parks, recreation activities and programs, conservation and marine resources, senior services, social services, disabled services, and extension services.

The department provides the day-to-day management and oversight for one of the largest, diverse, and unique urban park systems in the nation with over 400 park and recreational sites within the city limits consisting of a variety of parks, open spaces, trails, athletic programs and facilities, community and senior centers, beaches, golf courses, aquatic facilities, boat and kayak launches, nature preserves, along with an amphitheater, arboretum and an equestrian center. Recreation programs and activities are available year-round for our park users of all ages and abilities.

Contact

Daryl Joseph – Parks Director

Phone: (904) 255-7907

DJoseph@coj.net

Partnership and Promotion opportunities

The COJ Parks Department has a parks partnership program to facilitate private support of the Duval counties expansive park system.

www.coj.net/departments/parks-and-recreation



Jacksonville Environmental Protection Board (JEPB)

The City of Jacksonville's Environmental Protection Board (EPB) receives its authority from Chapter 73, Ordinance Code, and Chapters 360 et sequence, Ordinance Code. Although many of the functions of the EPB are regulatory in nature, the EPB is charged with educating citizens regarding environmental matters. To this end, the EPB developed an extensive public outreach program that includes involvement in sponsoring environmental conferences as well as being very involved in local Earth Day Committee and associated events annually.

The EPB is also involved in sponsoring environmental education events at the Museum of Science and History (MOSH) and the Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens; educational outreach with business, civic and social groups; and makes presentations to school groups from pre-k through college students and to all types of community organizations.

Contact

James Richardson – EPB Administrator
epb@coj.net

Partnership and Promotion Opportunities

JEPB hosts monthly meeting and other specialty events such as the Annual Environmental Symposium hosted at UNF. Collaboration and speaking opportunities may exist.

www.coj.net/departments/neighborhoods/environmental-quality/environmental-protection/events

Timucuan Parks Foundation

The Timucuan Parks Foundation (TPF) is the 501(c)(3) charity supporting more than 23 wild parks and preserves located in the greater Jacksonville area. They keep these natural and historical environments protected, valued, and celebrated.

They are committed to supporting local city, state, and national parks through raising local and national awareness and in telling the historical story of North Florida.

Contact

Mark Middlebrook – Executive Director

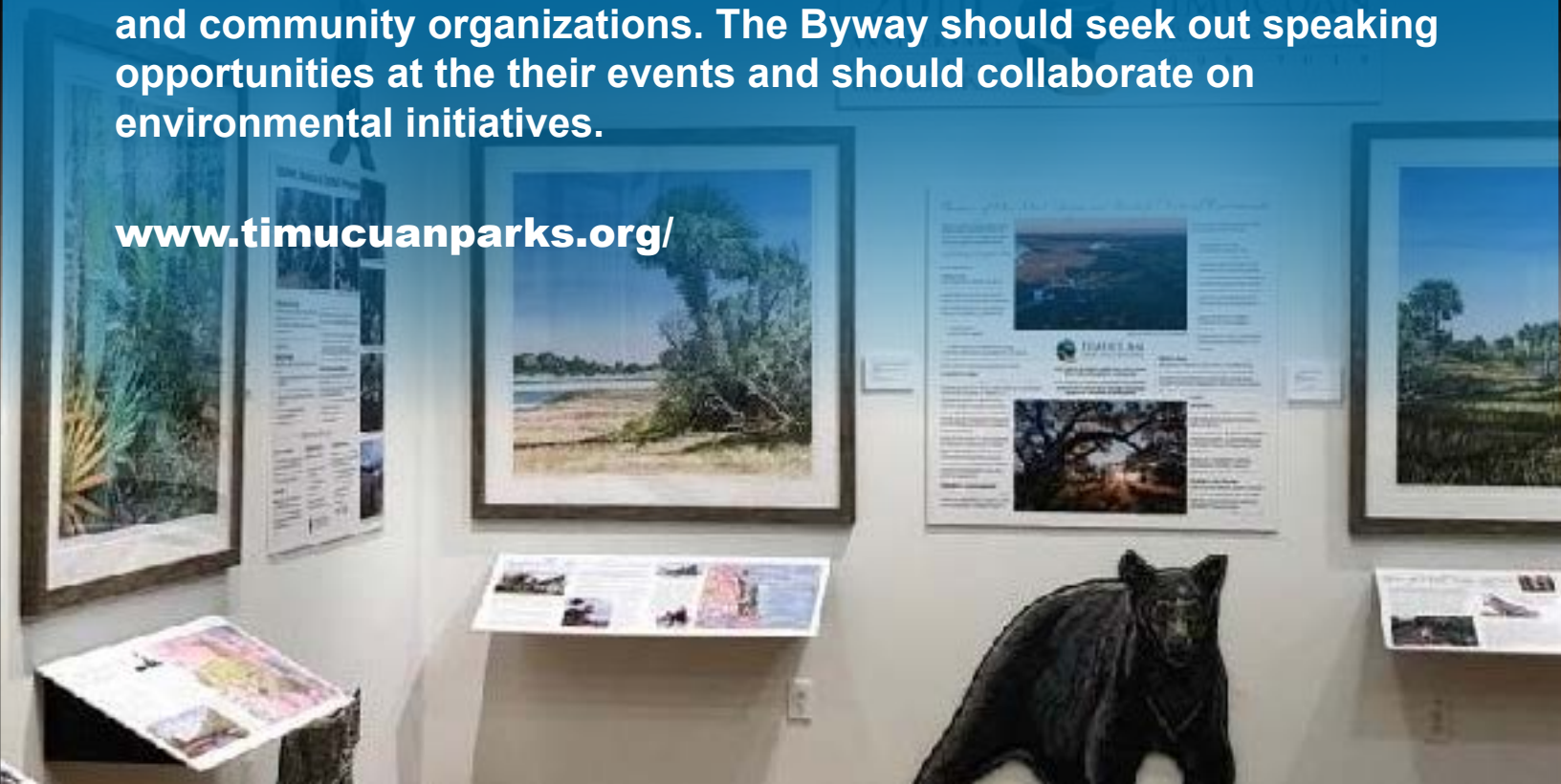
Phone: (904) 374-1107

info@timucuanparks.org

Partnership and Promotion Opportunities

The Timucuan Parks Foundation hosts a variety outreach events and outdoor activities throughout the year. They also have a large of network volunteers and provide small grants to park partners and community organizations. The Byway should seek out speaking opportunities at the their events and should collaborate on environmental initiatives.

www.timucuanparks.org/



Groundwork Jacksonville

The mission of Groundwork Jacksonville is to bring about the sustained regeneration, improvement and management of the physical environment by developing community-based partnerships which empower people, businesses and organizations to promote environmental, economic, and social well-being. Its mission has been formally adopted by its governing board and is shared with the other 21 Groundwork Trusts across the country.

Contact

Kay Ehas – CEO
kay@groundworkjacksonville.org

Partnership and Promotion Opportunities

GWJax organizes a number of events including clean ups, 5k runs, and educational/outreach events that the Byway could pursue involvement in. GWJax also runs volunteer and training programs through its green team initiative. They also offer personal and organization/corporate level memberships.

<https://www.groundworkjacksonville.org/events/>

<https://www.groundworkjacksonville.org/support/membership/>



Beaches Museum of History

No matter your age, or whether you're a guest visiting the area or a proud resident of Jacksonville's beach communities (Mayport, Neptune Beach, Jax Beach, Atlantic Beach, Ponte Vedra, and Palm Valley), the Beaches Museum provides something for all.

Its diverse range of experiences offered — events, exhibits, archives, and more — give life to the vibrant history and culture of the area. With each visit to the Beaches Museum, explore the past, present, and future of Jacksonville's beach communities, as well as what makes each community unique and what binds us together.

Contact

Christine Hoffman – Executive Director

Phone: 904 -241-5657 ext. 113

General enquiries – info@beachesmuseum.com

Partnership and Promotion Opportunities

The Beaches Museum of History hosts several events each month.

The Byway should pursue speaking and other community engagement opportunities at these events.

<https://www.beachesmuseum.org/events/>



Amelia Island Museum of History

The Amelia Island Museum of History sees itself as the caretakers and disseminators of Amelia Island's exciting local history, which it shares not only through a wonderful variety of exhibits, but also by providing a multitude of programs throughout the community for all ages. The Museum also protects and shares local history with genealogists, homeowners, and authors by providing a modern research facility.

Contact

Phyllis Davis – Executive Director

Phone: (904) 261 - 7378 ext. 101

phyllis@ameliamuseum.org

Partnership and Promotion Opportunities

The Amelia Island Museum of History offers several types of events: two monthly educational series, a number of annual fund-raisers and several community-oriented event opportunities, along with other special one-time events.

<https://ameliamuseum.org/calendar/>



American Beach Museum

Much like American Beach itself, the A.L. Lewis Museum rose from the imagination of what could be, if only willed into existence. With a focus on American Beach from 1935 to present, the A.L. Lewis Museum celebrates the triumph of residents and visitors over segregation and other forms of racial discrimination and disfranchisement.

The A.L. Lewis Museum's mission is to document and interpret the rich tradition and legacy of African Americans' ingenuity, perseverance, and achievements. Through its exhibits and programs, they honor African Americans as agents of change in the development of African-American and American society.

Contact

(904) 510-7036
info@allewismuseum.org

Partnership Opportunities

American Beach Museum periodically holds events. The Byway should inquire about speaking opportunities at such events as well other collaborations.

<https://allewismuseum.org/events/>



Fort Clinch State Park

A well-preserved Civil War era fort and beautiful natural surroundings make up Fort Clinch State Park with daily tours, trails, biking and hiking, beachcombing, sunbathing, swimming, and surf fishing. Two campgrounds, one at the beach and another at the river, offer overnight accommodations with full facilities.

Contact

Heath Alboher – Park Manager

Phone: (904) 277-7233

Heath.Alboher@FloridaDEP.gov

Partnership and Promotion Opportunities

There are a number of events held each month at Fort Clinch State Park. Speaking and engagement opportunities may exist.

Friends of Fort Clinch (FOFC) is a non-profit citizen support organization that supports the park through fundraising and grant acquisitions, the enabling of restoration projects, special events, and educational programming.

The Byway should seek out speaking opportunities and other collaborations with FOFC, as they are a major stakeholder and facilitator of community engagement at Fort Clinch.

<https://www.fortclinch.org/>



Amelia Island Conservation Network

Amelia Island Conservation Network (AICN) was founded in 2019. AICN began as a roundtable of major conservation groups and organizations in Amelia Island and its surrounding areas committed to developing highly-coordinated conservation and preservation movements focused on protecting natural resources, marine, ocean, and wildlife. AICN also serves as a facilitator of strategic action and a constant conservation presence in the community.

Contact

Jason Allgood

jason.allgood@dep.state.fl.us

Partnership and Promotion opportunities

AICN is a network of local conservation focused groups. These groups are an excellent source for volunteers in the Amelia Island area. OIT should join this network to tap into its volunteer base and coordinate on environmental initiatives.

<https://ameliaislandconservationnetwork.com/>



STAKEHOLDERS DIRECTORY



STAKEHOLDERS DIRECTORY

Nassau County Local Government Staff

Name	Title	Affiliation	Email
Lorelei Jacobs	Grants Administrator	City of Fernandina Beach	ljacobs@fbfl.org
Kelly Gibson	Planning Director	City of Fernandina Beach	kgibson@fbfl.org
Andre Desilet	Stormwater Director	City of Fernandina Beach	adesilet@fbfl.org
Taco Pope	County Manager	Nassau County	tpope@nassaucountyfl.com
Holly Coyle	Interim Planning Director	Nassau County	hcoyle@nassaucountyfl.com
Gabriel Qunitas	Assistant Planning Director	Nassau County	gqunitas@nassaucountyfl.com
Marshall Eyerman	Assistant County Manager	Nassau County	meyerman@nassaucountyfl.com

Duval County Local Government Staff

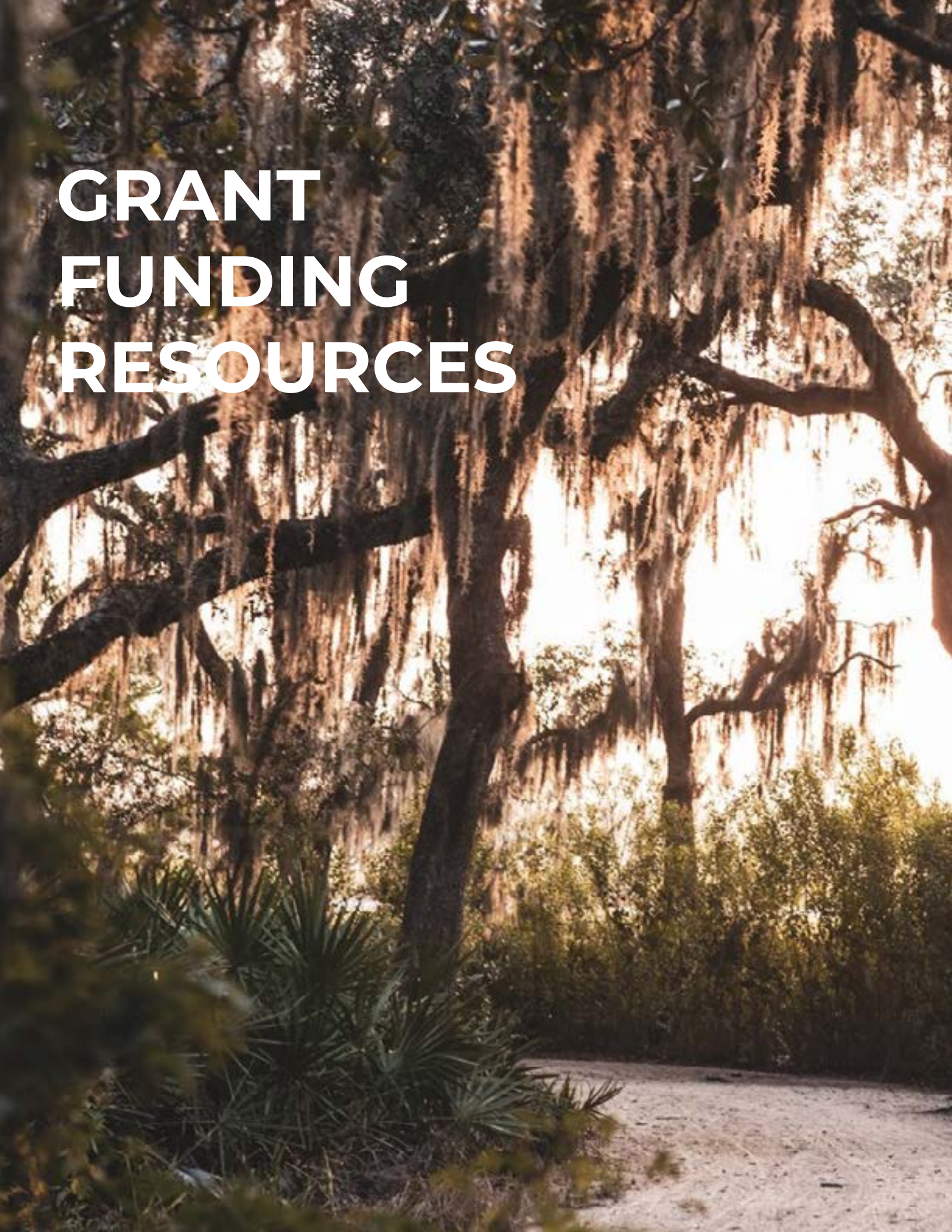
Name	Title	Affiliation	Email
Anne Coglianese	Chief Resilience Officer	City of Jacksonville	acoglianese@coj.net
James Richardson	EPB Administrator	City of Jacksonville	epb@coj.net
Kristen Reed	Community Planning Chief	City of Jacksonville	KReed@coj.net
Bill Killingsworth	Planning Director	City of Jacksonville	billk@coj.net
Colin Moore	Chief Resilience Officer	City of Neptune Beach	colinmoore@nbfl.us
Kevin Hogencamp	Deputy City Manager	City of Atlantic Beach	khogencamp@coab.us
Steve Swann	City Engineer	City of Atlantic Beach	sswan@coab.us
Brian Broedell	Principal Planner	City of Atlantic Beach	bbroedell@coab.us
Heather Ireland	Planning Director	City of Jacksonville Beach	hireland@jaxbchfl.net

Governmental Agency Contacts

Name	Title	Affiliation	Email
Jeff Sheffield	Executive Director	North Florida TPO	jsheffield@northfloridatpo.com
Clark Letter	Director, Planning	North Florida TPO	cletter@northfloridatpo.com
Elizabeth De Jesus	Programs Manager	North Florida TPO	edejesus@northfloridatpo.com
Tom Frick	Chief Resilience Officer	SJRWMD	tfrick@sjrwmd.com
Doug Conkey	Intergovernmental Coordinator	SJRWMD	dconkey@sjrwmd.com
Aundra Wallace	President	JAXUSA	awallace@jaxusa.org
Daniel Davis	President and CEO	JAXCHAMBER	Daniel.Davis@myjaxchamber.com
Kathy Sutton	Beaches Division Director	JAXCHAMBER	Kathy.Sutton@myjaxchamber.com
Sherri Mitchell	Executive Director	Nassau EDB	sherri@nassauflorida.com
Nathaniel Ford	Executive Director	JTA	nford@jtafl.com
Alexander Traversa	Program Manager	JTA	atraversa@jtafla.com

Nonprofit and University Contacts

Name	Title	Affiliation	Email
Anne Marie Moquin	Founder	Beaches Go Green	annemarie@beachesgogreen.org
Maria Mark	President	Beaches Watch	mariadmark@gmail.com
Kay Ehas	CEO	Groundwork Jacksonville	kay@groundworkjacksonville.org
Dr. Quint White	Professor	Jacksonville University	qwhite@ju.edu
John November	Executive Director	Public Trust Law	john@publictrustlaw.org
Romy Vann	Conservation Director	Public Trust Law	romy@publictrustlaw.org
Clayton Levins	Executive Director	Smart North Florida	clevins@smartnorthflorida.org
Jimmy Orth	Executive Director	St. Johns Riverkeeper	jorth@ju.edu
Lisa Rinaman	Riverkeeper	St. Johns Riverkeeper	lisa@stjohnsriverkeeper.org
Mark Middlebrook	Executive Director	Timucuan Parks Foundation	markmiddlebrook@gmail.com
Dr. Josh Gellers	Professor	University of North Florida	josh.gellers@unf.edu
Dr. Erin Largo Wight	Professor	University of North Florida	largo.wight@unf.edu
Brendan Rivers	Lead Reporter	ADAPT Florida (WJCT)	brivers@wjct.org
Melissa Ross	Host	First Coast Connect (WJCT)	mross@wjct.org
Nancy Powell	Executive Director	Scenic Jacksonville	nancy@scenicjax.org
Lee Anderson	Dir. of Philanthropy	North Florida Land Trust	landersonlou@nflt.org

A large, dark tree trunk and branches are silhouetted against a warm, golden background. Spanish moss hangs in long, thick strands from the branches, creating a dense, textured curtain. The lighting is soft and warm, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. In the foreground, there are some green plants, possibly agave or yucca, and a sandy path or ground is visible at the bottom right.

GRANT FUNDING RESOURCES

GRANT RESOURCES

Creating a Funding Strategy

The challenge that the Byway faces in attracting grant funding is that its leadership and members are seeking to plan, program, and develop a transportation corridor that they neither manage or own. In that way, the challenge that faces the Byway is like the situation faced by Groundwork Jacksonville in planning for and implementing the Emerald Trail project. Grants are available to plan, program, develop, and protect the A1A Ocean Islands Trail Scenic Byway, and the Executive Committee plays an important role in planning, programming, and advocating for development of the trail.

Planning should be a clear priority. The National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program, while not a direct grant, provides key technical assistance to develop a plan of action for Byway programming and activation and development. Halff reached out to them and confirmed that the Byway is eligible for this assistance and the NPS has indicated that they would work with the Byway to develop the application for assistance which is due March of next year.

This program would be a logical first step and would inform other possible applications to the Coastal Partnership Initiative and Community Planning Technical Assistance programs for additional planning funds. It is important to note that for many of these programs local governments are the only eligible applicant – in that way the Byway's location in five separate jurisdictions can be viewed as an advantage.

Many of the programs identified will fund trail planning and the key missing link – the segment of the Timucuan Trail between the Ft. George Island River and across the Ferry to Hanna Park which is yet unplanned. This segment has been identified in the SUN Trail section of the North Florida TPO's Annual List of Priority Projects (LOPP).

The most important role that Byway leadership can play is to monitor the activities of the NFTPO and to advocate for inclusion of this project as a funded project in the LOPP during their annual process. NFTPO prioritizations tend to be set by “who is in the room.” The Byway needs to establish being in the room as a priority.

Some of the opportunities for funding that have been identified are intermittent and unpredictable. The Byway should prioritize advocating for the development of plans and construction estimates so that when these intermittent opportunities become available, they can be seized. An example of this intermittent funding is the Scenic Byway Discretionary Grant that was available last year for the first time in ten years, and CDBG-DR, CDBG-MIT, and HMGP which are only available after presidentially declared disasters. Scenic Byway Discretionary funds can fund trailhead and trailside facilities.

Protecting the Byway, particularly the vulnerable and scenic link that runs along the River in Mayport should be a long-term priority.

Community Planning Technical Assistance (CPTA)

Funding Agency: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity

Project Type: Planning

Usually Due: Spring

Eligible Applicants: Local Governments

Maximum Award: \$75,000

Match: N/A

Eligible Projects: Planning projects that relate to economic development and/or anything covered in community planning documents including recreation, disaster recovery and community resiliency.

Coastal Partnership Initiative (CPI)

Funding Agency: Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Project Type: Planning/Programming/Development

Usually Due: September

Eligible Applicants: 501(c)(3) and Local Governments

Maximum Award: \$30k planning, \$60k construction

Match: 50/50

Eligible Projects: Access to Coastal Resources, Working Waterfronts

Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance

Funding Agency: National Park Service

Project Type: Planning

Usually Due: March

Eligible Applicants: 501(c)(3) and Local Governments

Maximum Award: N/A

Match: N/A

Eligible Projects: Assists communities and public land managers in developing or restoring parks, conservation areas, rivers, and wildlife habitats, as well as creating outdoor recreation opportunities and programs that engage future generations in the outdoors. NPS does not provide financial assistance or monetary grants. As a collaborative partner, they provide professional services to help achieve conservation and outdoor recreation project vision.

National Scenic Byways Foundation Microgrants

Funding Agency: National Scenic Byways Foundation

Project Type: Programming

Usually Due: Intermittent, last due 2021

Eligible Applicants: 501(c)(3)

Maximum Award: \$2,000

Match: N/A

Eligible Projects: Volunteer projects

Federal Lands Access Grant (FLAP)

Funding Agency: Federal Highway Administration

Project Type: Development

Usually Due: Anticipated 2025

Eligible Applicants: Local Governments

Maximum Award: \$1,000,000

Match: Currently, no match required.

Eligible Projects: Provisions for pedestrians and bicycles, roadside rest areas, wayfinding markers, landscaping.

Florida Recreational Trails Grant

Funding Agency: Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Project Type: Development

Usually Due: Fall

Eligible Applicants: Local Governments

Maximum Award: \$500,000

Match: Required, percentage is scored.

Eligible Projects: Development of trailside and trailhead facilities



Scenic Byways Discretionary Grant

Funding Agency: Federal Highway Administration

Project Type: Development

Usually Due: Intermittent based on federal appropriation, generally every 10 years, last available 2022.

Eligible Applicant: Florida Department of Transportation

Maximum Award: No ceiling, but floor of \$500,000. In the last cycle, the total funding pool was \$22 million, and FHA expected to make 40-50 awards.

Match: 20% of total project costs.

Eligible Projects:

- Development and implementation of corridor management plans
- Safety improvements to accommodate increased traffic changes
- Construction of facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists, rest areas, turnouts, highway shoulder improvements, overlooks, and interpretive facilities
- Improvements that enhance access to areas for the purpose of recreation, including water-related recreation
- Protection of scenic, historical, cultural, natural, and archaeological resources in areas adjacent to Byway
- Development and provision of tourist information to the public, including interpretive information
- Development and implementation of marketing program

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

Funding Agency: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity

Project Type: Development

Usually Due: Spring

Eligible Applicants: Local Governments

Maximum Award: \$100,000

Match: N/A

Eligible Projects: CDBG funds may be used for the acquisition, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, or installation of public improvements or public facilities. Must serve low to moderate income neighborhoods.

Transportation Alternatives Program

Funding Agency: North Florida Transportation Planning Organization

Project Type: Development

Usually Due: The “Annual List of Priority Projects (LOPP)” which includes TAP projects is developed starting in January and adopted in March annually. Each year it prioritizes and adds projects to be begun five years in the future.

Eligible Applicants: Local Governments

Maximum Award: N/A

Match: N/A

Eligible Projects: Trail improvements

SUN Trail

Funding Agency: Florida Department of Transportation

Project Type: Development

Usually Due: Generally every 2 years, last cycle in 2022

Eligible Applicants: Local Governments

Maximum Award: Indeterminate

Match: If proposed trail exceeds 12 foot width, match is required.

Eligible Projects: Funds to all phases of project development including: preliminary and environmental planning; design; acquisition of real property/land/right-of-way (ROW); new construction, reconstruction or resurfacing of trail surfaces or bridges and maintenance (e.g. obligations for pavement, drainage, land stabilization and safety controls).

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)

Funding Agency: Florida Division of Emergency Management

Project Type: Protection/Redevelopment

Usually Due: Intermittent Post-Disaster

Eligible Applicants: Local Governments

Maximum Award: Limited by size of allocation.

Match: 25%

Eligible Projects: Planning, Flood Protection, Retrofitting, Construction

Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR)

Funding Agency: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity

Project Type: Protection/Redevelopment

Usually Due: Intermittent Post-Disaster

Eligible Applicants: Local Governments

Maximum Award: Limited by size of allocation.

Match: Match required and scored.

Eligible Projects: Capital disaster recovery projects not covered by the FEMA Public Assistance Program. Priorities established by State in Action Plan and vary by disaster. However, in the Hurricane Michael cycle there was a Hometown Revitalization category that covered sidewalk improvements.

Community Development Block Grant - Mitigation (CDBG-MIT)

Funding Agency: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity

Project Type: Protection/Redevelopment

Usually Due: Intermittent Post-Disaster

Eligible Applicants: Local Governments

Maximum Award: Limited by size of allocation.

Match: Match required and scored.

Eligible Projects: Mitigation projects not covered by the FEMA

FEMA'S Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC)

Funding Agency: Florida Division of Emergency Management

Project Type: Protection/Redevelopment

Usually Due: November

Eligible Applicants: Local Governments

Maximum Award: \$10,000,000

Match: 25%

Eligible Projects: Mitigation projects that protect community lifelines. Transportation is a community lifeline.

Resilient Florida Implementation Grant (RF)

Funding Agency: Florida Department of Environmental Opportunity

Project Type: Protection/Redevelopment

Usually Due: September

Eligible Applicants: Local Governments

Maximum Award: No defined maximum award

Match: 50/50

Eligible Projects: Facilities identified as critical in a Vulnerability Assessment including transportation assets and evacuation routes as well as natural, cultural and historical resources including conservation lands, parks, shorelines, surface waters, wetlands and historical and cultural assets.

NEXT STEPS



NEXT STEPS

Moving into the Future

Now that this short-term organizational plan has been developed, next steps moving forward are critical to both short-term and long-range objectives. With the resources provided by this plan now in hand, Byway Leadership should work quickly to begin the process of “passing the torch” to the next generation of leaders.

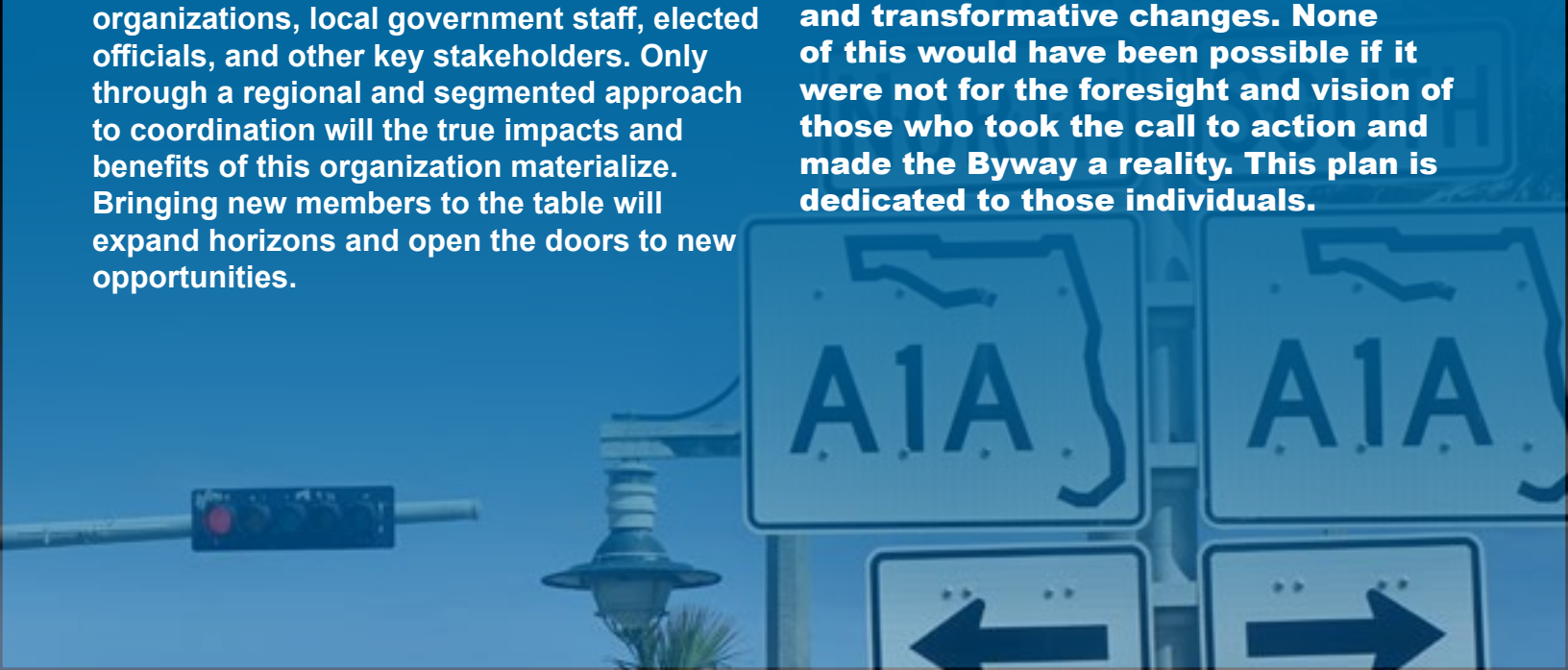
Rather than think of this process as passing the torch, current leadership should view this journey from the lens of “sharing the torch” so that institutional knowledge and lessons learned over the past decade can be integrated into future directions. While the task at hand might seem like a daunting challenge, incremental steps and changes to the organization will lead to measurable and transformative impacts over time. If there is anything to be learned from this process it is that collaboration is a key element to success.

If the Byway is to be effective as an organization moving forward, it will have to leverage and rely on the support of partner organizations, local government staff, elected officials, and other key stakeholders. Only through a regional and segmented approach to coordination will the true impacts and benefits of this organization materialize. Bringing new members to the table will expand horizons and open the doors to new opportunities.

One other important takeaway is that leadership was a critical component of what made the Byway possible to begin with. Local community members and leaders have worked tirelessly over the past several decades to preserve, maintain, and promote the Byway and its important assets like the St. Johns River Ferry.

While historical efforts applicable to the Byway were mostly informed and inspired by a sense of urgency (i.e., when the stakes were high), an important challenge moving forward is to identify ways to keep the momentum moving when there is no crisis in sight. As the State of Florida continues to deal with climate related impacts like flooding and sea level rise, however, it will also be important for the Byway as an organization to recognize the substantial capabilities it might hold to address these critical issues.

No matter what the future holds in store, the Byway is in a strategic position to bring people together to plan for and implement meaningful and transformative changes. None of this would have been possible if it were not for the foresight and vision of those who took the call to action and made the Byway a reality. This plan is dedicated to those individuals.





May (2023). "A1A Ocean Islands Trail Scenic Byway: Short-Term Organizational Plan." Developed by Halff in partnership with the Northeast Florida Regional Council. Grant funding support provided by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.