

2020-2021

Annual Report

Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam and St. Johns Counties

Bringing Communities Together



Message from the President

Dear friend of NEFRC –

This report on the 2020-21 fiscal year finds our country, our state, and our region in the same challenging times as the past year. The pandemic remains, our labor force is slight, and the economic conditions are ever-changing. Governments in Northeast Florida are confronted with skyrocketing housing demand, growing inequities and critical decisions on how to allocate federal dollars to better their community in the present and in the future.

This past year has served as a turning point for many, forcing us to rethink the way we do business, including making our remote office environment increasingly productive, managing virtual meetings and tweaking our programs and services to meet the changing needs of our member governments. NEFRC has strived to position our programs to be flexible and adapt over the last 18 months and has been successful in the efforts. We have worked diligently to bolster our network of partners, finding new opportunities for collaboration and problem solving.

Economic and community resilience have dominated the NEFRC landscape as a talented group of leaders came together to form the Northeast Florida Economic Resilience Task Force to tackle these problems head on. They listened and learned from leaders across the Region and State, analyzed and debated solutions and put forth a plan that covers a range of issues in terms of our recovery. This plan is being used to brainstorm ways to spend the allocated federal dollars to make immediate impact and to create lasting change in our counties and municipalities. NEFRC is proud to assist with these ongoing efforts.

Information has been at a premium – new programs, funding opportunities, legislation, and the ongoing need for situational awareness. Our Healthcare Coalition program, serving 18 counties in North Florida, has filled the information gap for its nearly 700 healthcare members – providing a broad range of information from weekly updates to training opportunities to assist them in these difficult times.

On the horizon, there are several new opportunities as we stand up our Regional Collaborative initiative – Resilient First Coast, which builds upon the years of collaboration and hard work on sea level rise and coastal resiliency. Strategic economic development planning is also a priority, as our counties are seeing growth and development in new sectors with related infrastructure needs to match the growth.

This work is supported by the Board of Directors of NEFRC, who have remained committed to the organization and have enjoyed watching the agility of the programs over the last year. Staff remains dedicated and determined to make Northeast Florida a better place to live and provide valuable service to our members. NEFRC has persevered together throughout these challenging times.

It has been my pleasure to serve as President and to be a part of a dynamic organization like the Northeast Florida Regional Council. The work will continue under the leadership of Putnam County Commissioner Larry Harvey and I look forward to the undoubtedly great things the Council will achieve under his leadership. I thank the NEFRC's Board of Directors for the opportunity to lead such a dynamic and important organization, and I look forward to continuing my service to the Board in the 2021/2022 year.



Honorable Sean Lynch
President
Mayor, Town of Baldwin

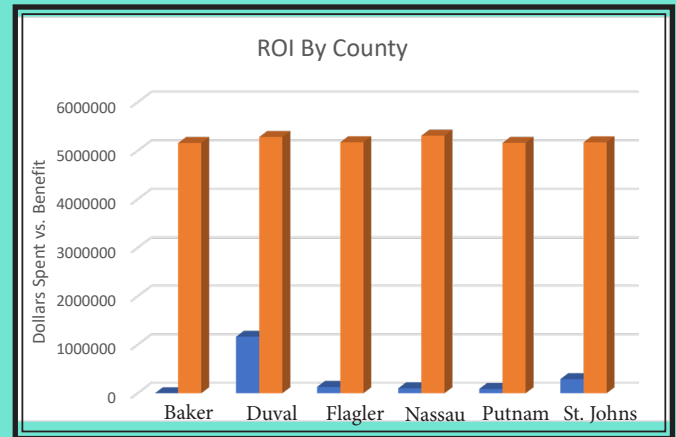


Return On Investment By County

Baker County 153:1 **Nassau County 53:1**
Duval County 5:1 **Putnam County 57:1**
Flagler County 39:1 **St. Johns County 18:1**

\$215,000 in funding provided to regional partners through the Healthcare Coalition's Project Funding program.

Over \$63,000 worth of training to regional emergency personnel provided through the Local Emergency Planning Committee.



NEFRC Programs

Planning and Technical Assistance

Comprehensive Plan Review
 Transportation Disadvantaged
 Regional Leadership Academy
 Regional Community Institute
 Affordable Housing Policy
 GIS Services
 Local Government Planning Services

Economic Development

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
 REMI Modeling
 Economic Development Administration Grant Technical Assistance

Emergency Preparedness

Hurricane Evacuation Planning
 Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC)
 Hazard Vulnerability Assessment
 Hazardous Waste Management
 Emergency Operations Center Support
 Training and Exercises

Healthcare

The Healthcare Coalition (HCC) Program
 Plan Development
 Training and Exercises
 Healthcare Supply Funding
 Disaster Information Sharing
 Healthcare Resiliency Grant

Resiliency

Northeast Florida Economic Resilience Task Force
 Community Rating System Users Group
 Regional Community Organizations Active in Disasters (COAD)
 Resiliency Mapping Tool
 Technical Assistance for Local Governments

Major Projects

JAXPort Tabletop Intelligence and Full-Scale Exercise

The Emergency Preparedness department implemented a number of exercises this season. The first in-person tabletop exercise occurred on April 29th with approximately 30 individuals from multiple local agencies coming together for an “intelligence” exercise. This event served as a precursor to the full-scale exercise held at JAXPort in May. The exercise focused on intragency cooperation and sharing of information in the face of an immediate threat to the Port.

230+ individuals among local, state and federal partners participated

Following this event, NEFRC staff planned and implemented a full-scale mass casualty exercise at the JAXPort Cruise Terminal on May 12th. Over 200 people participated in the exercise that tested coordination, communication, and operational response capabilities among various federal, state, and local partners. This was the largest exercise to take place in Northeast Florida since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March of 2020.



Northeast Florida Economic Resiliency Task Force

Three Priority Areas:

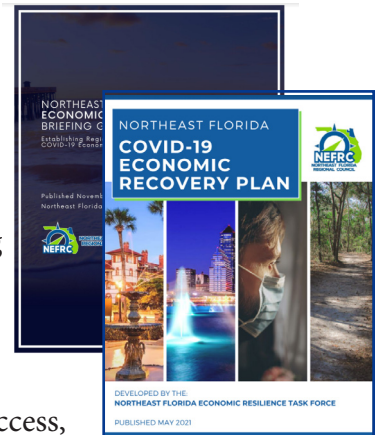
- (1) infrastructure;
- (2) relief and support for small businesses;
- (3) equity.

In 2020, the NEFRC received funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) to assist local governments in responding to COVID-19 economic impacts. The funding was used to establish the “Northeast Florida Economic Resilience Task Force,” a policy group of more than 20 leaders from across the Region representing fields from local governments to private sector companies.

Staff developed and published a 100-page “Task Force Briefing Guide” that provided a comprehensive inventory of data and

information related to economic impacts in each county to stimulate conversation. Utilizing findings from the guide, Task Force meetings focused on three priority areas for COVID-19 recovery: (1) infrastructure; (2) relief and support for small businesses; and (3) equity.

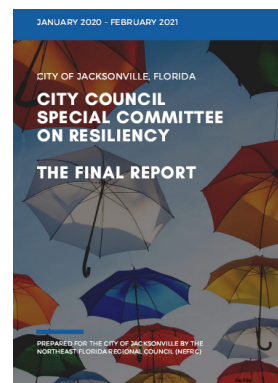
Ultimately the “Northeast Florida COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan” was developed and published in May 2021. Recommendations included expanding affordable broadband access, developing public-private partnerships, strengthening mental health resources, and expanding small business support to rural areas. The NEFRC has begun to operationalize a plan implementation strategy.



Jax Resiliency Committee

Between December 2019 and February 2021, the NEFRC provided technical assistance and advisory support to the City of Jacksonville’s Special Committee on Resiliency. NEFRC staff developed a job description and policy statement for the City’s recently appointed Chief Resiliency Officer, advised City Council members on a routine basis, and produced the charges and structures for three expert subcommittees. NEFRC gave routine presentations on a broad range of topic areas and coordinated guest speaker presentations with representatives from NOAA, FEMA, FDER, and other partner organizations.

NEFRC staff produced the Special Committee’s 92-page final report, which outlines detailed policy recommendations to guide the City’s resiliency strategy.



Statewide Regional Evacuation Plan Study

The Northeast Florida Regional Council, in partnership with the Florida Division of Emergency Management, coordinated the Statewide update to the Regional Evacuation Study Program. This update was multifaceted and used new data and technology to enhance the previously developed award-winning study. These updates included the following:

- 1) *Shelter Inventory* – updates to shelter types and shelter inventory for each county in the Region.
- 2) *Storm Surge Analysis and Evacuations Zones* – used new data provided by the National Hurricane Center to model storm surge across the Region, resulting in validated or amended evacuation zones.
- 3) *Population and Demographics* – updated using the 2019 American Community Survey
- 4) *Behavioral Analysis* – used anonymous cell phone data from Hurricane Matthew (2016), Hurricane Irma (2017), and Hurricane Michael (2018) to determine evacuation actions of people in the State.
- 5) *Evacuation Modeling* – Used new data to determine shelter demand and evacuation timelines for each county in the Region.



Awarded Grants

NEFRC applied for and was awarded a number of grants in the 2020/2021 Fiscal Year. The Council has over \$1.2 million in upcoming regional grant funding. These grants include both Technical Assistance and Competitive Florida grants awarded in Summer 2021.

The Council was the recipient of a three year, \$700,000 Community Development Block Grant Mitigation Planning Grant (CDBG-MIT) through the Department of Economic Opportunity to develop a 'North Florida Resiliency Plan for the Health and Medical Lifeline'. The Plan will enhance the healthcare sector's ability to adapt and recover from impacts associated to flooding, storm surge, and sea level rise.

NEFRC, in partnership with five other Regional Planning Councils, received a CDBG-MIT grant, totaling \$1.5 million dollars, to create a cohesive statewide approach to flood mitigation planning, with a focus on inland communities.

Emergency Preparedness

Training and Exercises

2021 JIA Triennial Exercise - A full-scale exercise was held at JIA in January of 2021. NEFRC staff assisted with planning and implementation of the JAX Triennial Airport Disaster Exercise, providing 120 staff hours of support. The exercise requires a simulated emergency for airports holding a Class I Airport Operating Certificate, to ensure that all personnel having duties and responsibilities under the plan are properly trained.



250+ Emergency Personnel Trained in the 20/21 Fiscal Year

2021 JEA-COJ Hurricane Tabletop Exercise - Planned and implemented the JEA and City of Jacksonville's Annual Hurricane Exercise on May 18, 19, and 20. This exercise brought together the City of Jacksonville's Emergency Preparedness Division and Executive Leadership of JEA to plan for and walk-through different hurricane scenarios.



Local Emergency Planning Committee

The Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC), a program of the NEFRC, was developed pursuant to the Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act. The LEPC is responsible for preparing a regional hazardous materials emergency response plan, serves as a repository for regional hazardous materials information, performs outreach functions to increase hazardous materials awareness, and conducts training and exercises to improve response capabilities to a hazardous materials incident.



Training
provided to **264**
first responders

Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, the NEFL LEPC was still able to conduct multiple training courses for departments in the Region in Fiscal Year 20-21. This included a Hazardous Materials 160-Technician course, two basic propane response courses, and two advanced propane response courses.

As service provided by the NEFRC, staff completes site visits to Hazardous Materials facilities that meet the Environmental Protection Agency's Section 302 threshold limit. The site visits are used to gather information and to provide local first responders and county emergency management with detailed reports on the possible impacts of a hazardous materials release at the specific facility.

Hazardous Materials

41 Hazardous Waste
Generator Facility Visits
37 Chemical Facility
Vulnerability Assessments

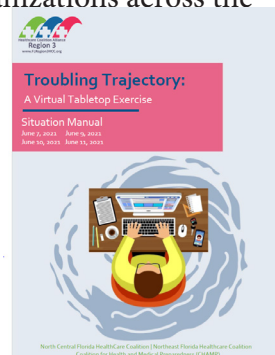
NEFRC staff completes the Small Quantity Generator program for Baker and Nassau Counties through a contract with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. The annual work program for hazardous waste site visits and facility outreach has been completed and final reports have been delivered to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Healthcare Coalition

735 members,
494 facilities,
18 counties

The Healthcare Coalition (HCC) program, managed by the NEFRC through a contract with the Florida Department of Health, continued to grow in membership and activities throughout the extended COVID-19 response. The HCC's program mission is to achieve a health and medical system that is efficient and resilient in an emergency, and this is achieved through planning, training, equipping and exercising. The activities of the program adjusted to meet the needs of its healthcare members, while growing to more than **735 members** representing 494 facilities or organizations across the 18-county area.

Planning activities this year included the development of a regional Infectious Disease Response Plan, Supply Chain Integrity Strategy, and a Pediatric Surge Plan. Training opportunities offered a virtual lunch-and-learn series on a wide range of topics including Disasters with Disabilities, Government Roles in Medical Response and Healthcare Facility Preparedness. Prior to the beginning of hurricane season, a tabletop exercise, Troubling Trajectory, allowed 139 members from all healthcare sectors to review plans and discuss challenges that may be faced as a result a local tropical system landfall.



The HCC program provided \$215,000.00 in funding through its annual Project Funding process. This funding is intended to help healthcare members fill organizational gaps that will increase the capabilities of the regional healthcare system. Projects completed this year varied from the purchase of a variety of healthcare response equipment to the development of virtual training classes and podcasts.



The collaborative efforts of the HCC program continued to increase capabilities in healthcare response. These successes provided the foundation for the regional healthcare system's successful response to the most recent surge in COVID-19 hospitalizations and the challenges faced during severe weather events.

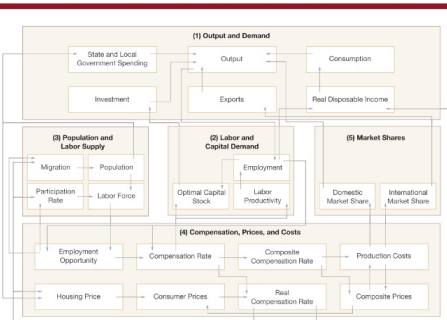
Economic Development

NEFRC is the designated Economic Development District for the US Economic Development Administration (EDA), providing technical assistance for the development of federal and state grant applications. NEFRC receives EDA funding to develop and maintain the Region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), ensuring that all regional stakeholders are aligned in their economic development efforts.

NEFRC also licenses REMI economic modeling software, which is used to forecast the potential results of economic development projects at the request of members. During the COVID pandemic, it has also been used to forecast the economic impacts of the shutdown and project potential concerns and opportunities during the recovery process. The Spring Update found that recovery is proceeding faster in Northeast Florida than in the State and the nation as a whole, but there will likely be long lasting changes to the Region's economy.

More than **46** REMI reports were produced for various entities around the Region

REMI Model Linkages (Excluding Economic Geography Linkages)



NEFRC is currently planning to prepare a new version of the CEDS in 2022, and working with several regional governments on EDA grant applications to be filed by the end of 2021.

NEFRC staff also assisted JAXUSA in forecasting local economic impacts for proposed projects, including Project Dumbo, the corporate relocation of Dunn & Bradstreet, and the Lot J project proposed for downtown Jacksonville. Staff produced impact reports that were delivered during discussions of potential projects.



Transportation Disadvantaged

The NEFRC is the “Designated Official Planning Agency” for transportation disadvantaged programs in the seven-county Region. This entails selecting and evaluating the entities that provide para-transit service, assisting with coordination between services, and staffing the Local Coordinating Boards that oversee the service. The Transportation Disadvantaged Program insures the availability of efficient, cost-effective, and quality transportation services for transportation disadvantaged persons.



In the 2020-2021 Fiscal Year, Council staff procured the Baker County Council on Aging, the Ride Solution, and the St. Johns County Council on Aging for respective 5-year terms as the community transportation coordinators for their counties, beginning July 2021. Staff created a 5-year Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan (TDSP) for Baker, Putnam, and St. Johns County and updated the TDSP for Nassau County.

The Council assisted Nassau with the evaluation of its service and the coordination of its grants. Staff also obtained a HOPE grant to support planning for citizen transportation to jobs in the Region. Lastly, the Council quarterly convened the Region's Transportation

Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Boards and supported them in overseeing this work.

The NEFRC, together with the Jacksonville Transportation Authority, hosts the Regional Transit Working Group, a voluntary collaborative working on a regional system for transit in Northeast Florida.



Resiliency

The NEFRC Resiliency Program has evolved considerably over the past year in light of the coastal resiliency developments taking place across the Region and the economic impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

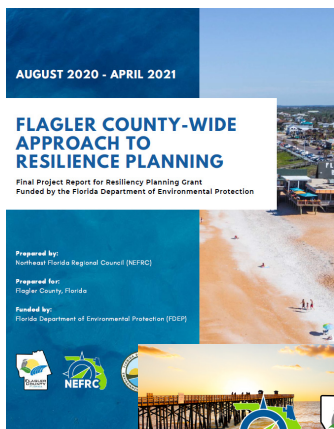
The NEFRC continues to provide technical advisory support to military resiliency efforts being facilitated across the Region. Since 2020, the Council has served as a steering committee member of the Mayport Naval Air Station's Transportation Resiliency Study being carried out by the North Florida TPO and RS&H. Over the past two years, the NEFRC has also provided advisory support to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on components of the Northeast Florida Focus Area of the South Atlantic Coastal Study. Through these efforts, the objective has been to strengthen the resilience of local communities and military installations to the hazards of flooding, sea level rise, and storm surge.



The NEFRC recently partnered with the North Florida Land Trust on a Sentinel Landscape pre-proposal which aims to designate Northeast Florida as a federally-recognized landscape. The Sentinel Landscapes Partnership is a coalition of federal agencies, state and local governments, and non-governmental organizations that works with private landowners to advance sustainable land management practices around military installations and ranges. If funding moves forward, the Northeast Florida Sentinel Landscape will be anchored by Camp Blanding Joint Training Center and also will include the other Jacksonville area installations: Naval Station Mayport and Naval Air Station Jacksonville and its Special Areas (Navy Outlying Landing Field Whitehouse and the Pinecastle Range Complex). The pre-proposal was approved in June 2021 with a submitted final proposal in August of 2021.

The NEFRC is in partnership discussion with the PEW Charitable Trust and Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability (SERPPAS) on an upcoming planning initiative focused on developing a comprehensive plan to conserve and restore salt marsh along the South Atlantic. Northeast Florida will be an area of priority within the plan. Moving into the next year, more developments are soon to be announced.

In addition to these efforts, the NEFRC Resiliency Program continues to support local governments through grant funding assistance, public outreach, and advisory support. Through state funding opportunities, more resiliency planning initiatives are beyond the horizon.



One of these efforts included a Peril of Flood project in Flagler County. The Council assisted the County in developing a draft approach to resilience planning through local stakeholder workshops both with government officials and with the community. NEFRC also provided each jurisdiction with model comprehensive plan language and GIS maps for Coastal High Hazard Area/Adaptation Action Area. The comprehensive plan language was modeled after that used in the plan previously adopted by the City of Flagler Beach. Finally, NEFRC staff produced a final report summarizing the planning process and all lessons learned.



Planning



Comprehensive Planning

The NEFRC provided review reports for over 40 transmittal large scale and text amendments over the last fiscal year. These staff review reports provide the NEFRC Board of Directors access to best practices and identify trends impacting the Northeast Florida Region.

Comprehensive Plan Policy issues noted this year include:

- The addition of Accessory Dwelling Units as an Accessory Use within the Low-Density Residential Land Use Category for the City of Jacksonville;
- The revision of and addition of goals, objectives, and policies to address the City of Jacksonville's Adaption Action Area (AAA);
- The use of the respective Comprehensive Plan to ensure large scale sites are recognized in the Plan itself
- Several jurisdictions inclusion of a Private Property Right Element to address the additional requirement of House Bill 59.

Technical Assistance

The NEFRC worked with the Town of Beverly Beach in their Evaluation and Appraisal Report (E.A.R.) Amendment for the Town's Comprehensive Plan. Proposed changes to the Comprehensive Plan address the recommendations of the May 2019 FDOT Pedestrian Safety Study of SR A1A(Oceanshore Boulevard) and the Peril of Flood changes required by Florida Statutes, Section 163.3178(2)(f) in cooperation with a Flagler County Approach. The NEFRC will assist the Town through the adoption phase of this process. The Council assisted in the adoption phase of the Town of Callahan's Comprehensive Plan E.A.R. Amendment for the their Comprehensive Plan in November 2020.

The NEFRC has been awarded two DEO Community Planning Technical Assistance Grants to assist four small communities. One grant will assist the Town of Baldwin with the creation of a community vision to develop a future land use map that will address development within and near the Town's limits. The second grant will assist three communities in Putnam County in drafting Evaluation and Review amendments to their current Comprehensive Plan and the NEFRC will assist the respective communities through the entire EAR process.

Regional Leadership Academy / Regional Community Institute



NEFRC runs the Regional Leadership Academy, a program that, since 2005, has taken leaders from the broad spectrum of Northeast Florida society, government and business and exposed them to the issues facing the Region and the great things happening in each of our Counties. Due to COVID-19, the program was suspended in 2020 but has resumed with the class of 2021.



RLA Class of 2019 at NAS Jax

When the leaders graduate, they become members of the Regional Community Institute, a non-profit "think tank" that assists NEFRC with policy issues. The Institute is responsible for First Coast Vision, the guiding document for the Strategic Regional Policy Plan, and has had input into NEFRC work on sea level rise, thriving small business, water quantity and quality, and regional tourism. They have recently gathered metrics related to quality of life in Northeast Florida and are working with partners to engage the Region in tracking the metrics and engaging the community to ensure a thriving Region.



Affordable Housing

The Council was awarded a Community Development Technical Assistance Grant to produce a comprehensive update to its Affordable Housing Needs Plan. Due to the development of various challenges since the last plan was published – including the impact of hurricanes and COVID-19 – the need for a comprehensive update is more critical now than ever.

This plan aims to identify regional gaps in affordable housing options that if addressed, would improve the ability to provide affordable housing for all income, age, and ability groups. For this plan:

Background data on affordable housing will be reviewed, updated, and analyzed with an emphasis on its regional context.

We will work with local authorities to gather and review data on current and past affordable housing initiatives, as well as inventory best practices.

Each county will be surveyed to determine what is currently being done to address the affordable housing needs in their areas, and community workshops will be held in each county to gather stakeholder input.



Action items will be developed for the Northeast Florida Region that aim to address preexisting and newly identified regional gaps in affordable housing options. The Council's Affordable Housing Committee will be convened to oversee the plan update and the implementation of the plan's recommendations. Regional partners, such as the Urban Land Institute's Revitalization and Affordable Housing Task Force, the St. Johns Housing Partnership, and local State Housing Initiatives Partnership coordinators, will also be a vital part of this process.

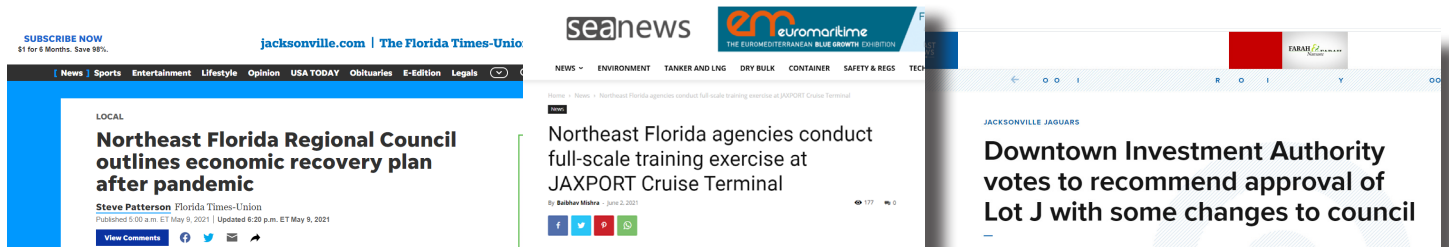
The Council continues to stay apprised of pragmatic affordable housing solutions and has conveyed that information to stakeholders via its affordable housing newsletter and its work through the Northeast Florida Economic Resilience Task Force.

Communications & Public Relations

Press Releases - 7 Media Coverage - 21 Press Coverage - 28

Despite the continued challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the NEFRC has continued to make an effort to promote its work, partnerships and initiatives in Northeast Florida. The Council's work continues to attract the attention of the press and multi-media outlets across the Region and further afield.

Council programs including resiliency, economic development and the Region 3 Healthcare Coalition continue to draw attention for the efforts they are making to improve the quality of life for citizens in our area. The Council's JAXPort full-scale exercise even attracted the attention of overseas publications.



2020 Regional Awards for Excellence Winners

Affordable Housing:

***Workforce Housing Designation Program
(St. Johns County)***

Economic Development and Tourism:

Baker County Chamber of Commerce

Healthcare Emergency Preparedness:

First Coast Disaster Council

Environmental Stewardship:

***Nassau County Conservation Land Acquisition
& Management Program***

Planning and Growth Management:

***Western Nassau Heritage Preservation Vision
Book
and***

***City of Bunnell Master Utility Plan
(Putnam County)***

Public Safety:

***Project Save Lives
(Duval County)***

Adaptive Reuse:

***Azalea City Brewing
(Putnam County)***

Transportation:

TPO Path Forward- 2045

Quality of Life:

***Northeast Florida Long Term Recovery
Organization
(Duval County)***

Resiliency:

***City of Palm Coast Floodplain and Stormwater
Management Program
(Flagler County)***

**Regional Leadership
Award:**

***Mike Clark
(Duval County)***



NEFRC Staff

- Beth Payne - CEO
- Donna Starling - CFO
- Sheron Forde - Executive Assistant
- Margo Moehring - Managing Director - Policy and Planning
- Eric Anderson - Emergency Preparedness Manager
- Leigh Wilsey - Healthcare Coalition Program Manager
- Tyler Nolen - Regional Planner - Emergency Preparedness
- Robert Jordan - Regional Planner
- Nick Cole - Regional Planner
- Jack Shad - Regional Planner
- Kate Haigh - Communications Specialist
- Sean Lahav - Resiliency Coordinator
- Carol Main - Accounting/Administrative Assistant

Our Mission

The mission of the NEFRC is to celebrate the unique assets of Northeast Florida and to engage its people, businesses, governments and organizations. In doing so we communicate issues, convene stakeholders, collaborate with others, calculate and analyze, and construct solutions.



Baker County



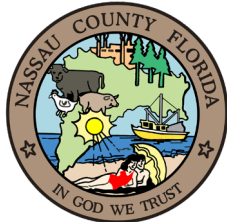
Clay County



Duval County



Flagler County



Nassau County



Putnam County



St. Johns County

2020-2021 Officers

The Board of Directors of the Northeast Florida Regional Council is comprised of 35 members: two thirds elected officials and one-third gubernatorial appointees. They provide the Council with the insight and tools to make critical decisions that affect the quality of life within our Region. The Council officers include the President, the First Vice President, the Second Vice President and the Secretary/Treasurer. The leadership of the Board turns over every October, with the start of a new fiscal year.



Hon. Sean Lynch
President
Duval County



Hon. Larry Harvey
First Vice President
Putnam County



Hon. Randy DeFoor
Second Vice President
Duval County



Mr. Darryl Register
Secretary/Treasurer
Baker County

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Visit us online at nefrc.org