

REGIONAL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY NEWSLETTER

CULTIVATING REGIONAL LEADERS



Greetings RLA Alumni,

The 2026 Regional Leadership Academy class is already halfway through the program, and this year's cohort has had the opportunity to experience many of the issues, assets, and partnerships that shape Northeast Florida. As with every RLA class, one of the most valuable parts of the experience has been the relationships being built across counties, professions, and communities. Watching those connections develop continues to reinforce the importance of regional collaboration and leadership.

We are excited to share highlights from the class's journey so far and give you a look at the conversations and experiences that have defined the first half of this year's program.

Tyler Nolen,
Program Director
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PUTNAM COUNTY

The Regional Leadership Academy's Putnam County program day began with a welcome from Mayor Robbie Correa of the City of Palatka and Putnam County Commissioner Larry Harvey. Participants then toured John Theobald Park before joining Ron Mattson of the Putnam County Historical Society for a guided walking tour through downtown Palatka, highlighting the community's rich history and cultural assets. The day concluded with an afternoon visit to Ravine Gardens State Park, where the class explored one of Florida's most unique natural landscapes.



NASSAU COUNTY

In Nassau County, the day began with a tour of the Historic Fernandina Beach Courthouse led by Judge Steven M. Fahlgren. Following the tour, the cohort explored downtown Fernandina Beach on foot, gaining insight into the community's history, culture, and character. Along the way, participants met with representatives from the Port of Fernandina and RYAM to discuss economic development and the role industry plays in Nassau County and the regional economy. The walking tour also included a stop at Fernandina Beach City Hall, where the class met with City Commissioner Genece Minshew and City Manager Sarah Campbell.

The day concluded with presentations from Taco Pope, Nassau County Manager, and members of his staff, with a focus on the American Beach Sewer Conversion Project and the County's approach to tourism and its effects on the local economy, and quality of life.



FLAGLER COUNTY

In Flagler County, the day began with a tour of Princess Place Preserve, where participants explored the area's natural and historical significance. The class was then welcomed by Interim County Administrator Adam Mengel before engaging in presentations from Amy Lukasik on tourism and Jonathan Lord on emergency management. The day provided participants with valuable insight into the role of environmental stewardship, visitor economy initiatives, and emergency preparedness efforts within Flagler County.



WHAT'S NEXT?

REMAINING PROGRAM SCHEDULE

May 27 - St. Johns County

June 24 - RLA Networking Event*

July 29 - Clay County

August 26 - Duval County

*All details for the RLA Networking Event were shared via email, if you have any questions concerning the event or how to register please contact tnolen@nefrc.org

This event is open to RLA Alumni and current participants only!

