



100 Festival Park Avenue  
Jacksonville, FL 32202  
☎ (904) 279-0880  
📠 (904) 279-0881  
🌐 www.nefrc.org  
✉ info@nefrc.org

Serving the communities of Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam and St. Johns Counties

***Bringing Communities Together***

## **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** JUNE 6, 2019

**TO:** NORTHEAST FLORIDA REGIONAL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**THRU:** ELIZABETH PAYNE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER 

**FROM:** MARGO MOEHRING, POLICY DIRECTOR 

**RE:** 2019 STRATEGIC REGIONAL POLICY PLAN ASSESSMENT

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Attached is the 2019 Assessment of the Strategic Regional Policy Plan. This is the first step in the update of the plan. The Assessment will be provided to the State of Florida, several reviewing agencies and other Regional Planning Councils.

### **Proposed Motion**

**Staff respectfully recommends that the Northeast Florida Regional Council Board of Directors approve the 2019 Assessment of the Northeast Florida Strategic Regional Policy Plan, so that plan update may begin.**



# *Strategic Directions and Goals Summary*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

NEFRC MISSION .....	1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	2
STRATEGIC REGIONAL GOALS.....	3

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## NEFRC MISSION

The NEFRC mission is to be a dynamic network of local governance, providing visionary leadership, advocacy, and coordination between counties and local, state, and federal governmental agencies to preserve and enhance the quality of Northeast Florida's economic, natural, built, and social environment by:



Actively serving as a convener of regional issues.



Fostering public awareness of diverse regional issues.



Identifying trends, issues and opportunities for the Region.



Building consensus for Regional solutions through coordination and cooperation.



Providing a regionally focused forum for comprehensive and functional planning.



Furnishing technical and administrative assistance, including grant writing assistance, to local governments and other stakeholders.



Maintaining expertise among staff and pursuing technologies that support the successful implementation of the mission.

Each mission statement above is preceded by an icon that will help identify consistency with the mission as NEFRC implementation strategies are considered.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE SRPP**

The Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP) should serve as a guidebook on coordinated steps to achieve the goals for Northeast Florida included in First Coast Vision<sup>1</sup>. It is a reference guide and data source on most facets of life in the Region and its counties. The Plan is organized around strategic subject areas that are in turn related to the priorities of the State of Florida and the mission of NEFRC.

The Plan contains policy guidelines only where statute requires them. In other cases, it recommends approaches and supports communities in the strategies they choose to achieve regional goals. It identifies regional goals and the intent of NEFRC to regularly track the progress of the Region in achieving them. It is a tool for communities, Local Government managers and staff, and legislators, but not a mandate. NEFRC focused efforts on creating a Plan for the entire Region. We recommend that it be widely read. We will make our best efforts to ensure that it is understood and to assist communities with its utilization.

## **2019 ASSESSMENT OF THE SRPP**

The Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP) can now be assessed to determine the degree to which it has been successful in guiding Northeast Florida towards achieving the goals included in First Coast Vision for the last five years, and it can be reviewed to determine if it still functions as a reference guide and data source on most facets of life in the Region and its counties. A brief assessment has been added to the strategic subject areas that are in turn related to the Six Pillars priorities of the State of Florida and the mission of NEFRC. The assessment notes where Council approaches are consistent with the 2014 goals, and where they have evolved. As the mission statement of NEFRC has changed, the new Strategic Directions and Goals Summary will be updated to reflect the new mission. The Council will be exploring the possibility of adding an Agriculture Element to the SRPP.

## STRATEGIC REGIONAL GOALS

### SIX PILLARS OF FLORIDA'S FUTURE ECONOMY



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The Strategic Regional Policy Plan is structured as the statute<sup>ii</sup> requires, into strategic regional subject areas. In the case of Northeast Florida, there are eight: Demographics and Equity, Communities and Affordable Housing, Economic Development, Emergency Preparedness and Resiliency, Energy, Health, Natural Resources of Regional Significance, and Regional Transportation. All goals and policies in this plan are aligned with the mission of the Northeast Florida Regional Council<sup>iii</sup>, and with the Six Pillars of Florida's Future Economy (see above<sup>iv</sup>). This ensures that the regional plan furthers the State's priorities, and that regional goals are supported by the priorities and abilities of NEFRC.

Each goal is followed by a Pillar Alignment statement, and the initial Implementation Strategy of the NEFRC and its partners. These strategies will be expected to expand and change over the life of the plan. The following are the high-level regional goals that guide the policies and measures found in each of the strategic regional subject area chapters of the SRPP.

### **DEMOGRAPHICS AND EQUITY**

**Goal:** Progress toward achieving our goals should have a positive impact on the ability of all of Counties in the Region to prosper and all of the residents in the Region to achieve their

personal goals. We will look for residents of modest means to spend less of their incomes on housing and transportation, and for mobility for all to access jobs and those things that impact quality of life.

**Pillar Alignment:** All Six

**NEFRC Implementation Strategy:** NEFRC will expand its role as a data clearinghouse, both by annual release of measures that track the progress of the many policies in this plan, by gathering and disseminating information helpful to communities in the Region, and by maintaining such information when it proves to be helpful to communities in the Region. NEFRC will not duplicate, but will refine or fill in gaps if they exist in the data reported by our partners such as Northeast Florida Counts<sup>v</sup>, Jacksonville Civic Council, Inc.<sup>vi</sup>, and the Florida Scorecard<sup>vii</sup> where necessary to measure the success of plan goals and the Region.



**2019 Assessment:** Of the data-sharing mechanisms in place in 2014 in Northeast Florida, only the Florida Scorecard remains. The Florida Regional Councils Association has updated its reporting to make it more relevant. NEFRC found that many of the metrics included in the 2014 SRPP did not change frequently enough to report annually, making it difficult to report trends. What has proven more helpful is coordination among regional councils to report the same metrics related to economic development, and to report the data points that are most meaningful to each region based on the issues it faces.

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## **COMMUNITIES AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

**Goal:** Each local government is encouraged to take the lessons learned from visioning, the public preference for multiple growth centers, the corridor map from the Regional Transportation Study Commission<sup>viii</sup>, the opportunities and challenges raised by resources of regional significance and the desires of their residents and determine where new growth should go, ideally in locations allowing it to take advantage of existing infrastructure, be mixed use, compact and connected to other centers. These mixed use growth and redevelopment centers are supported in all seven Counties and have the potential to increase transit ridership, reduce car dependency, maintain water and air quality and conserve water. Once these locations are chosen, governments should do all they can to support quality development there that will appreciate in value and achieve multiple community and economic goals.

**Goal:** A safe, sanitary, efficient and resilient housing supply that provides lifestyle choice (agricultural, rural, suburban, and urban) and affordable options for all income, age and

ability groups, equitably placed in vibrant, viable and accessible communities throughout the region.

**Pillar Alignment:** Quality of Life and Quality Places, Business Climate and Competitiveness

**NEFRC Implementation Strategy:** NEFRC will provide support to communities if they wish to assist with the consideration of where to encourage growth, based on what we have learned with them through visioning efforts. In consultation with local governments and communities, NEFRC will seek funding through brownfields assessment grants to determine the issues and opportunities presented by sites that may be perceived as having the potential for contamination if they are in areas considered potentially desirable for redevelopment. Once local governments and communities have determined where they support growth centers, NEFRC will convene its regional, state, and other partners, and advocate to support and connect growth in the chosen locations, so that regional systems support growth centers.



**2019 Assessment:** While some communities in Northeast Florida have brownfields programs, NEFRC does not yet have one. Communities, such as Nassau County, have embraced the idea of planning for growth centers. Their success will hopefully add to the best practice local examples that will help other communities to know that growth visions can be realized. Regional collaborations such as the Regional Transit Working Group and Smart region efforts demonstrate that we can come together as a region to create regional systems that support growth centers. The NEFRC Affordable Housing Committee has created an Affordable Housing Needs Plan and is working with partners such as the Urban Land Institute and the Northeast Florida Builders Association on determining where the region can add value to affordable housing efforts. Focus on this subject is strong.

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## ***ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT***

**Goal:** View all policy through the lens of the Six Pillars of Florida's Future Economy. Each of the policies in this plan and all of the actions of the NEFRC will be reviewed based on their relevance to our future, and this includes a broad definition of the assets that drive our regional economy. We will not create a new plan for economic development, but will join the region in support of the goals and policies identified by Innovate Northeast Florida<sup>ix</sup> and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

**Goal:** Northeast Florida's economic development strategies, consistent with Federal guidelines, are set with partners and new policy is not set by NEFRC. NEFRC's goal is to ensure that the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy<sup>x</sup> is a five-year strategy that reflects economic development planning on a regional and county level, and that the region is always positioned to collaborate to maximize funding opportunities.

**Pillar Alignment:** All Six

**NEFRC Implementation Strategy:** The Plan itself is an economic development tool. Economic Development is first and foremost an individual county initiative in which each county develops and implements its own plan. In support of this planning, the regional plan includes basic data on the Region, as well as regional trends in population growth, competitiveness, employment, work force education levels, and agriculture. It includes tools such as shift/share analysis and location quotient analysis for the Region. NEFRC may add and maintain additional information useful to local governments through its data clearinghouse function. During the life of the plan, NEFRC will reconvene leaders in the Region to update the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and bring it into alignment with the Six Pillars.



**2019 Assessment:** NEFRC has recently updated its Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and it contains data related to the six pillars. The Economic Development Element of the Plan will be updated to reflect the 2019-2024 CEDS.

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### ***EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCY***

**Goal:** A resilient and safe region that is prepared for a coordinated and effective response to all hazards in emergencies and is prepared to adapt to change to remain resilient and safe in the long term.

**Pillar Alignment:** Innovation and Economic Development

**NEFRC Implementation Strategy:** Businesses will not locate or expand in a Region that is not planning for the long term. Consistent with its mission to convene on regional issues and to assist local governments in addressing them, NEFRC has commissioned a work program on the vulnerability of Northeast Florida to Sea Level Rise with its policy work group, the Regional Community Institute of Northeast Florida, Inc.<sup>xi</sup> That group will work with local governments and make recommendations on regional policies and initiatives when it reports back to NEFRC in September, 2013. NEFRC will continue and expand its work with partners on hazard mitigation, emergency evacuation, post disaster redevelopment, regional domestic security, and hazardous materials emergency preparedness to strengthen the resiliency of the Region<sup>xii</sup>.



**2019 Assessment:** NEFRC has made steady progress using the mechanism of the Public/Private Regional Resiliency Committee, a business- focused Committee of the Council that provides leadership on action items related to adaptation. Upcoming highlights include additional work on deciding how best to build and retrofit resiliently in Northeast Florida, and the launch of a regional exposure analysis. The analysis and a public survey to assess

what residents and businesses know about our vulnerabilities and what approaches they recommend to address them, will form the basis of community conversations on what to do in each community. The Council continues to staff effective programs on preparedness within Region and has maintained a strong training and exercise program. A Regional Evacuation Strategy document is under development and the Council's Resiliency Coordinator is focusing on efforts in mitigation and resiliency.

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## **ENERGY**

**Goal:** A region that is flexible, innovative and takes full advantage of the diversity of potential energy sources, especially local sources. We will not wait for federal or state guidance or mandates to act if action can benefit the region. We acknowledge that, as a region vulnerable to natural disasters, resiliency and redundancy in energy, both in motor fuel and power, can set us apart from regions that choose not to address these issues that can be of large impact to business and residents.

**Pillar Alignment:** Infrastructure and Growth Leadership

**NEFRC Implementation Strategy:** NEFRC will build on the work currently underway by the Regional Councils toward enhanced energy resiliency<sup>xiii</sup>. The Council will convene a broad group of stakeholders to develop implementation strategies to reduce per capita energy consumption and diversify energy sources while maintaining quality of life.

**2019 Assessment:** A Clean Cities Coalition of partners hosted by the North Florida Transportation Planning Organization, local deep water ports, producers of alternative energy sources for vehicles and vessels, and the military have shown leadership in energy innovation in Northeast Florida.

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## **HEALTH**

**Goal:** The Region supports local and regional efforts to ensure that the region's residents have access to a healthy lifestyle and good health care. NEFRC supports our partners in seeking improvement in health outcomes throughout the region.

**Pillar Alignment:** Civic and Governance Systems, Quality of Life and Quality Places

**NEFRC Implementation Strategy:** NEFRC will enhance its strategic alliance with the Health Planning Council of Northeast Florida, Inc.<sup>xiv</sup> (HPC) by the execution of a Memorandum of Understanding. NEFRC will leverage initiatives with the HPC particularly in the built environment and health interface, data development and maintenance and public outreach and education.

**2019 Assessment:** NEFRC has a Memorandum of Understanding with both health planning councils in Northeast Florida.

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## ***NATURAL RESOURCES OF REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE***

**Goal:** Northeast Florida recognizes that some resources have the potential to impact more than one jurisdiction, and their viability is of concern to the Region. NEFRC promotes the protection of these resources, as contained on the Natural Resources of Regional Significance list.

**Goal:** The Regional Green Infrastructure is an interconnected system of natural and built infrastructure, undeveloped lands and incorporates natural resource areas, recreational lands, and working lands. The Region recognizes the value of the Regional Green Infrastructure and measures it, and consistent with the spirit of green infrastructure, incorporates commercially viable forest land, cropland, natural resources and recreational facilities into this category, which is an important part of the fabric and future of Northeast Florida.

**Pillar Alignment:** Quality of Life and Quality Places

**NEFRC Implementation Strategy:** NEFRC will expand its data sets to track Regional Green Infrastructure as it is defined in Northeast Florida. After setting a baseline with the SRPP, NEFRC will track the overall acreage of agriculture, aquifer recharge areas, floodplains, recreational lands, silviculture and wetlands. While many of these lands are privately owned and their use is up to landowners, local jurisdictions and regulatory agencies, overall they comprise systems that provide environmental benefits, and they may offset the need to invest in public built infrastructure. Tracking this data will give the Region a clear picture of the trends impacting green infrastructure and the choices it has as to ways to ensure healthy and plentiful natural resources. NEFRC will also track built green infrastructure, both on private lands and in municipal projects, as a way to identify demonstration projects, gather lessons learned and share best practices for communities in the Region. NEFRC will convene its partners as necessary to consider the long-term viability of natural resources of regional significance, and assist them to meet their goals while ensuring the quality of life for residents and future residents of Northeast Florida.

**2019 Assessment:** NEFRC will update the mapping of Regional Green Infrastructure as part of the Plan update. It will continue to evaluate the potential for impacts on natural resources of regional significance as it reviews comprehensive plan amendments, and will continue to partner in support of green infrastructure, especially as such projects also support resiliency.



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**REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION**

**Goal:** Create efficient connectivity within the Region, and with state, national, and global economies. Include centers of population and jobs that are well-connected, limit commute times for most residents and provide opportunities for all residents of the region to work if they choose. Northeast Florida makes development of regional employment centers and infrastructure a first priority, politically and fiscally.

**Goal:** In order to promote a diversified and vibrant regional economy, the Region supports an efficient multi-modal transportation framework to move people and goods, and NEFRC and its partners support over time the infrastructure investments needed to make it work. The framework maintains an environment that includes mobility options to move goods and people to support business and industry.

**Pillar Alignment:** Innovation and Economic Development

**NEFRC Implementation Strategy:** NEFRC will work with the newly created Regional Transportation Authority<sup>xv</sup> to further the development of new sources of mobility funding necessary to support a regional multi-modal transportation framework.

**2019 Assessment:** NEFRC now works with the Regional Transit Working Group, as the Regional Transportation Commission has ended its work. Discussions are underway regarding a regional fare collection system, resource sharing and coordination of transit services.



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**2014 REFERENCES OUTSIDE THE SRPP**

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- i For more about First Coast Vision, visit <http://www.firstcoastvision.com>.
- ii The statutory requirements for Strategic Regional Policy Plans are found at 27E-5.001 F.A.C.
- iii For more about the Northeast Florida Regional Council, visit <http://www.nefrc.org>.
- iv More information about the “Six Pillars of Florida’s Future Economy”, visit <http://www.flfoundation.org>.
- v Northeast Florida Counts is a data source provided by mostly health sector partners on the state of six of the seven counties in Northeast Florida. It is accessed at <http://www.nefloridacounts.org>.
- vi The Jacksonville Civic Council, Inc. provides interactive data and maps at their site at <http://www.jcci.org>.
- vii The Florida Chamber of Commerce provides a scorecard of data organized around the “Six Pillars”. See iv above. Find the Scorecard at <http://www.thefloridascorecard.com>.
- viii The Regional Transportation Study Commission report is available at <http://www.northfloridartsc.com>.
- ix The Innovate Northeast Florida report and strategies may be found at <http://www.innovatenortheastflorida.com>.
- x The Federal requirements for Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies and Economic Development Districts may be found in Chapter III of the Economic Development Administration, Department of Commerce regulations 13 CFR, Part 303 and 304.
- xi More information about the Regional Community Institute is available at <http://www.rcinef.org>.
- xii Details of NEFRC work on regional emergency preparedness are available at <http://www.nefrc.org>.
- xiii A summary of work done in North Florida on energy policy is available at <http://www.nefrc.org/Energy-in-North-Florida.htm>.
- xiv More information on this partner organization may be found at <http://www.hpcnef.org>.
- xv The Regional Transportation Authority is a recommendation of the Regional Transportation Study Commission report. See viii above.

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## **HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE OUR GOALS AND HOW WILL WE RECOGNIZE SUCCESS?**

Policies, metrics, trends and conditions, and significant resources and facilities for the region and in each of the subject areas above are summarized in the strategic regional subject area chapters of the SRPP, along with an outline of how the Regional Council coordinates its activities, and a glossary of terms. Terms defined in the glossary are indicated by italics.