

RESILIENCY: Adaptation, Response and Recovery

Resiliency should inform everything we do in Northeast Florida. Economic resiliency is inherent in the Elevate Northeast Florida report, so that will not be repeated here. Resiliency to natural disasters and climate change has become a focus during the 2014-2019 CEDS planning period, and will be even more of a focus going forward.

The Business Case for Resiliency

Northeast Florida identified climate change as an action item in its 2011 “First Coast Vision”. The Northeast Florida Regional Council gathered public and partner input and identified sea level rise as the place to start the research and community conversation. The Regional Community Institute, a non-profit think tank that does policy work for the Council, convened its Emergency Preparedness Committee to address sea level rise, and issued their Summary and Regional Action Plan in 2013. After much discussion, the Committee identified guiding principles:

1. Their mantra: The world is changing. We work to position Northeast Florida to thrive in that change.
2. Develop regional assumptions for level of rise immediately, while keeping an eye on the science. They realized that they could spend a great deal of time on these discussions, and recognized that their policy role was best served by simply getting started. The assumptions since that time have been 1’ to 3’ of rise by 2060, and 3’ to 6’ by 2110.
3. Leadership in Northeast Florida must come from the business sector. The 2013 Plan described a Public/Private Regional Resiliency Committee (P2R2) of the Council. The idea was to recruit open minded leaders in their fields, not to focus on experts in adaptation.

The P2R2 Committee began meeting in 2014. They reviewed what was already happening in Northeast Florida, and found:

1. Work being done on alternative fuels for fleets, vessels and personal vehicles;
2. A robust green building and green retrofit movement;
3. Local governments that were considering resiliency in infrastructure and stormwater management plans;
4. Conservationists with strong data on the resiliency services provided by existing natural areas; and
5. The U.S. Navy, the region’s largest employer, had implemented a green infrastructure policy for years, providing hometown examples of how these approaches work in Northeast Florida.

This was encouraging, as P2R2 did not have to start a movement, it was simply aligning with ongoing initiatives and adding another set of business perspectives. The P2R2 Committee launched its work in 2015 with an Op Ed in the Florida Times Union in May and a celebration of its first round of action items at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Jacksonville in July. Since the launch, the Committee has recruited partner organizations and smart and dedicated volunteers to help it answer questions and provide guidance for those who are trying to build a safer and more resilient Northeast Florida. Actions taken to date include a design challenge to consider

what, how and where to rebuild after a devastating storm, a brochure on how to build resiliently in our region, an exercise to explore ways to pay for the cost of resilient investment, and tools to add resiliency to the curriculum banks use to teach financial literacy. All of the Committee's work is included on their website at <http://www.rcinef.org/P2R2.html>.

P2R2 Adaptation Action 2019 and Beyond: How to Build, Where to Build, and Where Not to Build Back

P2R2 is currently focused on three areas:

1. They mapped Pre-FIRM buildings, as the vulnerability of these buildings to flood is unknown. The mapping showed enough of these to indicate that Northeast Florida had to learn how to build resiliently as it chose development sites and built new buildings, and also how to retrofit, and pay for the improvements, to existing older buildings. Education on "how to build" will follow this work.
2. In partnership with the Council and the seven counties of Northeast Florida, they are pursuing a regional evacuation plan.
3. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation will shortly complete a coastal resilience assessment of the St. Johns River watershed, which includes most of Northeast Florida. This will provide a broad range of useful baseline data. Once this is complete, regional partners will meet to determine what data is needed for the various types of decisions to be made regarding resiliency issues. They will determine what data and/or analysis gaps exist, if any, and will work together to develop an approach to close the gaps. Funding has been obtained from EDA to complete the regional vulnerability assessment and then to begin the community conversation on where to build and where not to build back.

Response and Recovery

Implementing disaster strategies involve four essential steps, see Figure 1.

In order to assure that preparations of the Region will be adequate to assist businesses in responding to and recovering from emergencies and disasters, Florida's economic development organizations are key partners to help create and maintain a comprehensive emergency management program. Economic development organizations are positioned to coordinate with state, county, and local government, workforce, tourism and other business support agencies and organizations, as well as private agencies that have a role in emergency management.

The strategic intent is to provide local, state, and federal assistance to affected businesses in the Region in a comprehensive, coordinated, unified, and expedited manner to restore business operations and economic stability as quickly as possible.

Figure 1. Four Steps of Implementation



Business, Industry and Economic Stabilization Responsibilities

Enterprise Florida

- Act as liaison between state government and agencies and economic development organizations.
- Provide economic development organizations with a template for an Emergency Management Plan consistent with the state CEMP.
- Assist economic development organizations with access to business resources from state agencies.
- Communicate disaster updates to economic development organizations on an as needed basis (e.g., daily, weekly).
- Encourage economic development organizations to participate in conducting Business Damage Surveys.
- Supply economic development organizations with business disaster information and guidance upon request.

Economic Development Organizations

- Coordinate with the SBDC's and county government along with other sources of business damage impact information to ensure that information is provided to the county regarding the overall physical and economic damages to the business community, as well as business preparedness, response and recovery matters, before, during and after the emergency or disaster.
- Coordinate with county government and other sources of business damage impact information to determine general business needs and to determine the desire and need of the community to request

activation of the Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Program and/or Business Assistance Centers and workshops.

- Coordinate with the local SBDC's efforts to support public education, press releases, media interviews, and distribution of printed materials that describe the available resources and business assistance initiatives, including Business Assistance Centers and workshops that are being activated in region.
- Coordinate with SBDCs to facilitate pre and post disaster event workshops for educating and training businesses in disaster preparation, business continuity planning, and recovery.
- Provide business recovery assistance to businesses in all industry sectors in the region through networks of state, regional, and local partners.