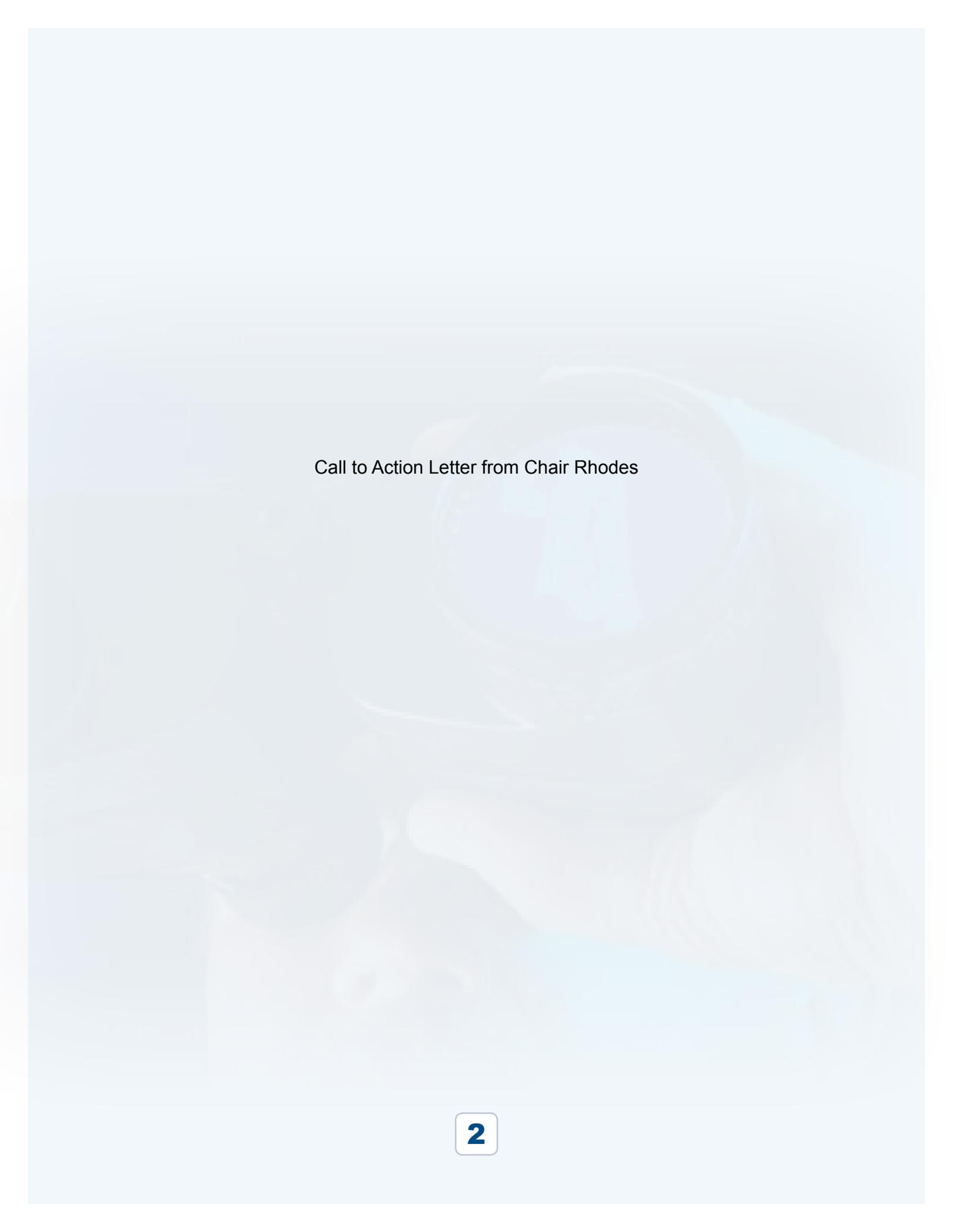




First Coast Vision

September 2011

The Regional Community Institute of Northeast Florida, Inc.



Call to Action Letter from Chair Rhodes

Why

First Coast Vision?

The American Heritage Dictionary defines vision, in part, as

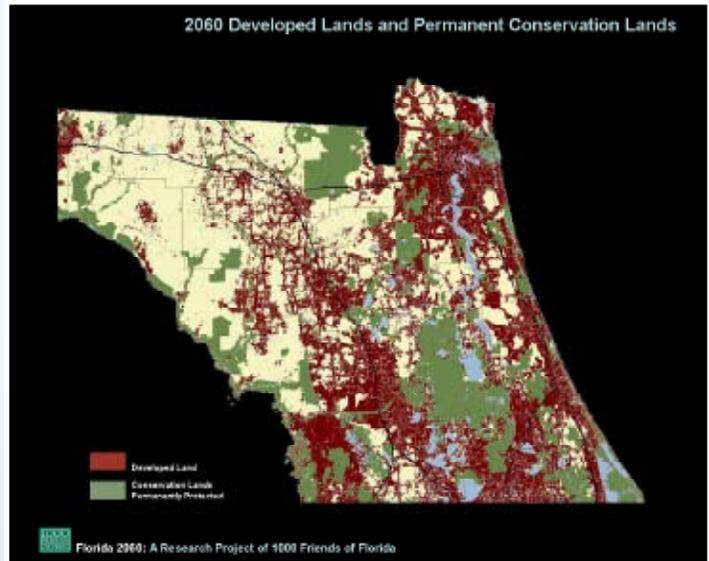
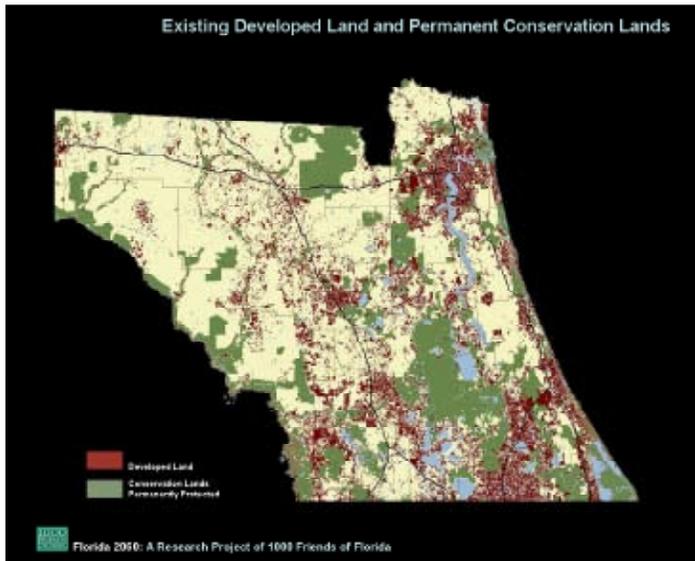
- **Unusual competence in discernment or perception, intelligent foresight**
- **The manner in which one sees or conceives of something**

The First Coast in Northeast Florida, like all of Florida, is at a crossroads. We can grow as we have been growing, and address the consequences of growth after the fact. Congested roads, urban sprawl, infrastructure needs, and environmental concerns are all issues that will need to be addressed if this path is taken. Alternatively, we can develop a vision for the region that will consider current trends and alternative scenarios for future growth, allowing us to choose the path of the region's growth. This kind of intelligent foresight will permit us to conceive of our own future and give us the steps we may take to make it happen - rather than let the future happen to us.

Visions are not regulatory, but outline a future we can aspire to, and help us to measure our success.

What is First Coast Vision?

Regional leaders in the First Coast recognized that visioning was needed in the region, and First Coast Vision was born. The Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) created the not-for-profit Regional Community Institute of Northeast Florida, Inc. (RCI) for the purpose of determining the current State of the Region and establishing a vision for growth and development in the seven county region for the next fifty years. RCI began efforts with the assumption that the region would grow by 1.6 million people (more than double the 2005 population) and at least 650,000 jobs. We used data from a May 2007 study created by a partnership of 1000 Friends of Florida, the University of Florida, the University of Central Florida, and the University of Pennsylvania called "An Alternative Future, Florida in the 21st Century 2020 2040 2060" to establish the current trend. While our visioning efforts make clear that the assumptions used in "An Alternative Future" and those used to estimate population growth in First Coast Vision are simply estimates and should not be used to make infrastructure decisions, they are helpful in visualizing what our region might look like if our population doubles. The images from "An Alternative Future" speak for themselves.



The 2060 trend image highlights three of the components of visioning that cross local government boundaries and are intrinsically regional: conservation, land use, and transportation. These issues are inherently regional and not best left to either local or state planning. Our region is worth the effort to choose its future.

Ever since the world became connected and mobile enough that people and businesses no longer decide to move to a town or city, but to a region, regional visioning has become more prevalent. In fact, regions that began visioning years ago, often precipitated by a perception of risk of loss of competitiveness or quality of life, are starting to see the benefits of their intelligent foresight. You only need to look to regions such as Central Texas or the Research Triangle in North Carolina, or States like Utah, to see that choosing the future can focus a region on economic growth. Jim Sellen, a planner who has been heavily involved in regional visioning efforts throughout the state of Florida, told a First Coast Vision Town Hall meeting audience that visions can become self-fulfilling prophecies. If they make the connection to economic development and excite the larger community into sharing the vision, citizens will own the vision and make it happen.

A vision is an opportunity to stand back and think about how a region could be in the future. It is an opportunity to think about how we want to live, and how we want our children to live. It includes measures, to help us assess our progress at achieving our vision. It does not have to be constrained by today's funding or regulatory realities, because it is a vision. Those who believe in visioning believe we have the power to change those things that could keep our region from becoming what we want it to be.

A vision is not a document that requires change, it can only inspire it. It provides a vision for how our region might function in the future, and we hope there will be much consensus in the region around the need to change and the principles that should guide this change. If we have found the right vision for our future for the next 50 years, it will become the self-fulfilling prophecy that Mr. Sellen describes. It will require us to measure our success and when our results indicate a change in direction is needed, we must have the courage and intelligent foresight to adapt.

First Coast Vision: How did we get here?

The Regional Community Institute

Our organization is made up of members of the NEFRC Board and over 100 leaders who have graduated since 2005 from the Northeast Florida Regional Leadership Academy. To coordinate regional visioning, one of the first steps we took was to partner with NEFRC, the Urban Land Institute, the St. Johns Water Management District, the North Florida Transportation Organization, the Cornerstone Regional Development Partnership, the St. Johns River Alliance, and the University of North Florida.

Reality Check First Coast and Region First 2060

Regional visioning efforts kicked off with Reality Check First Coast in May 2009. 300 leaders came together at that exercise and rejected the status quo. They created six Guiding Principles, recommended to guide how we develop and grow for the next 50 years, and four Growth Patterns, that could describe the way that we grow. Since then, the Lego® brick and yarn visioning exercise has been repeated in each of the seven counties of the region (County Checks), as well as in two youth-only forums (Generation Check and Generation Check 2011).

Since Reality Check First Coast, a lot has been happening. Region First 2060, the partnership that put on Reality Check First Coast, is committed to implementing the Guiding Principles. They sponsored a “Sustainable First Coast Workshop” in May 2010 and co-sponsored the St. Johns River Summit in September 2010. Events continue to further explore how to implement the Guiding Principles in the First Coast.

First Coast Vision: Getting Started

Our mission is the creation of First Coast Vision, a vision for growth and development in the seven county region for the next fifty years, and measuring success once the vision is complete. Using data from Reality Check First Coast and other sources, RCI committees worked during 2010 on recommending what to measure and the goals and objectives for a 2060 vision.

The Importance of Public Input

Getting the input of as many residents of the region as possible is important to us and to creating a First Coast Vision that we all can believe in. The draft goals and objectives for the vision were released for public input in late January 2011. First Coast Vision Town Hall meetings were held during February and March in each of the seven counties in the region to gather public input on the goals and objectives and to poll the public on their preferred growth pattern.

What could the First Coast look like?

We sponsored a design competition to create an image to illustrate First Coast Vision. The image was formed by the preferred growth pattern, the goals and objectives of First Coast Vision, the results of public input, and the creative minds of the designer(s) at XXXXXX. First Coast Vision offers this image as a way to picture the First Coast in 2060, but local governments will ultimately decide where growth will go. Our measures will help us track how our region is doing at accomplishing our goals.

What could the First Coast be like?

A Region of Communities

Our region will grow and develop in a pattern that allows for agricultural, rural, suburban, and urban lifestyles. New and existing growth centers will cluster in areas supported by local governments and will include jobs, amenities and housing close to each other, and provide transportation options to connect people to centers and centers to each other. New and improved communities will be designed to meet the needs of people at all stages of life and to encourage health and access to the resources of the region. Our region is healthy, because our people have a healthy lifestyle and have access to quality health services.



Our communities are designed, and our older communities are retrofitted as they evolve, to be walkable, to include a mix of uses, and to provide mobility options, so that residents can easily choose safe and healthy ways to get around.

A range of housing choices is available, affordable and works for all our residents.

Communities are built with the needs of a lifetime in mind, so that the First Coast is a desirable region to grow up, to learn, to work and to play, and to age in happiness and health.

We recognize the importance of large developments to help us to achieve our vision. We partner with those who create such developments so that their dreams are incorporated into the region's fabric as they are planned, built, occupied, and become part of our community.

Northeast Florida leadership recognizes that transportation efficiency and costs are an important element in housing affordability. A regional transit system provides affordable transportation options for the region's residents, while an emphasis on mixed-use communities with a balance of housing and job-generating land uses reduces the need for long commutes and provides for neighborhood supporting services.

Well designed communities promote active lifestyles and physical activity, which in turn reduce chronic disease and poor health outcomes. Parks are located within walking distance of most of our residents, and we consider this goal as we locate new parks and new residential development.

Measures: # LGs with increased walkscores as compared to baseline
LGs with "green" LDRs
LGs with Universal Design LDRs
Ownership/rental housing mix
units owned public housing (not including special needs or elderly)
New DRI AH policy by 2013, then # affordable units enabled through the new policy

A Resilient Region

Planning for the safety and health of our residents is a first consideration. This includes ensuring that our residents are safe in their daily lives and that they can withstand emergencies, including those where evacuation and sheltering is required. It also includes establishing resiliency in the built environment, so that buildings and infrastructure can weather storms and emergencies. We are committed to determining the impact of climate change in the region, mitigating for impacts if we project them, and adapting if required.

Our region will be one where our citizens feel safe in their neighborhoods. This perception of safety translates into vibrant communities with residents who interact with each other and spend time outdoors engaged in a variety of recreational pursuits.

Our communities and buildings are resilient, safe, and free from environmental hazards that can be detrimental to health.

A safe transportation network gives pedestrians and bicyclists equal priority with motor vehicles. Roadways are designed to minimize conflicts between motor vehicles and bicycles or pedestrians, therefore resulting in safe travels regardless of transportation mode.

Our region is prepared to respond to and recover from the impacts of all hazards.

Our population is educated about their vulnerability to emergencies and their best options in the event of an emergency, with communication methods that are efficient and effective.

Once we have determined the impact of climate change on Northeast Florida, we will determine which of our assets (people and built environment) are vulnerable, establish a

plan so that we know what actions to take to address the impacts of climate change, if any, and mitigate the impacts whenever we can. If we identify impacts, we will take climate change adaptation into account in all planning, design, and infrastructure investment decisions made in the region.

Our region has reached a balance by mitigating for the effects of climate change on sea level rise that have been observed as well as planning for adaptation to future effects.

Our region does its full part to maintain a familiar climate.

Measures: # LGs with safe street LDRs
Asthma rate
accidents by mode: vehicle, bike, ped
regional disaster exercises per year
Special needs registration #
Shelter need and shelter capacity
regional domestic security exercises
Vulnerability maps by 2012
Annual survey results on public understanding of emergency options and procedures
Haz Mat penalties
Regional average clearance time
(After Vulnerability Maps) # buildings replaced in vulnerable areas
Substandard housing #s?
Climate Change Impact study by 2013.
Include Seal Level rise projections, if identified, in Vulnerability Maps by 2013
If required, adaptation plan by 2015, monitored annually

A Region that Values all People

We seek to eliminate achievement gaps and provide equity of opportunity, so all of the people in Northeast Florida have access to jobs and can build wealth as the region prospers. We recognize that transportation and housing costs must be considered when families pursue prosperity, and we consider how our residents will efficiently and affordably get to jobs when we locate job growth. We pursue diversity and inclusion as we locate housing and create and strengthen neighborhoods, so that all residents have multiple options on where to live and what lifestyle to choose.

A robust economy serves the needs of residents with jobs that pay well and provide a full range of benefits. This economic well-being translates into a population with positive emotional and physical outcomes that result in increased productivity.

There is access in all neighborhoods to physical activity, which is a key component for reduction of chronic disease and poor health outcomes.

The region provides good access to quality health care and health-supportive services, including mental health services, regardless of location or socioeconomic status. A regional multi-modal transportation network ensures physical access to services, while a robust network of social services ensures meaningful access.

Our region provides viable lifestyle choices to all, including agricultural, rural, suburban and urban.

All of our residents have access to a first-tier education system at all levels throughout the region with curriculum that is oriented towards both current and future business and industry needs and lifelong learning.

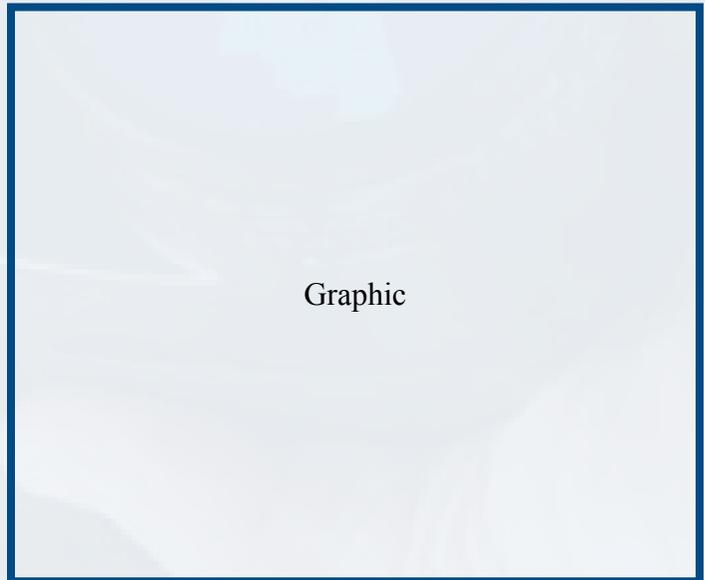
A regional transportation network provides opportunities for residents without a car to travel to a wide range of employment.

Mixed-use communities integrate residential and employment-generating land

uses to reduce the need to travel great distances for work.

A diversity of residents live in centers which offer a diversity of jobs, schools, homes, civic, cultural and faith-based uses, recreation, services and amenities.

Our communities provide housing choices for residents at all income levels, and do not force concentrations of poverty.



- Measures: % of residents covered by health insurance
- Commute times
- Diabetes rate
- Obesity rate
- Primary care doctors as compared to population
- BEBR readiness for college
- Job/housing ratio in 5 largest employment centers in the region
- % income spent on housing

A Region that Prospers

Northeast Florida has assets that many regions would envy, including deep water ports, intersecting interstate highways, viable agriculture, and a breathtaking natural environment. We reject the traditional mindset that keeping these assets to ourselves will preserve our quality of life. Instead, we celebrate our assets, invest in and capitalize on them, and preserve our natural environment because we recognize its value.

Northeast Florida capitalizes on its deep water ports, airports and rail/roadway connections to the nation through the continued improvement and expansion of infrastructure, including centralized systems for water, sewer, fiber optics (high speed internet), electric and natural gas distribution, and alternative and renewable energy.

Job centers are dispersed throughout the region, ensuring that each person has an opportunity for employment within proximity to where they live. Through its multi-modal transportation framework, the region recognizes and encourages the link between transportation, access to employment, and economic development.

Agriculture and working waterfront are two of the clear assets of the region and part of its identity, and we protect and nurture them, recognizing that loss of their viability would be a loss for the entire region.

The health care sector is a key component of Northeast Florida's economic base. In addition to

hospitals, clinics, doctor's offices and other health sector facilities that serve Northeast Florida residents, the region has attracted and retained nationally recognized research and learning hospitals and medical technology industries as a result of its first-tier colleges and universities and positive business climate.

Leadership and public policy enable a vibrant, diverse and competitive environment to flourish. This environment is safe and predictable, both as a place to live and as a business investment.

Our region nurtures small business, is home to many large businesses, and is one of the most attractive regions for Fortune 500 company headquarters.

Partnerships extend beyond our region to make us competitive on both a national and international level.

If technology can help us to improve quality of life in the region, we embrace it.

Measures: Non- residential vacancy rate
small businesses
fortune 500 companies with headquarters in the region
businesses established each year
health sector employees
Job/housing ratio in 5 largest employment centers in the region
Business survey: Satisfaction by employers with mobility for employees and goods
Acres in working waterfront
Acres in Agriculture
Partnerships beyond the region
Regional Atlas by 2012, annual searches/downloads thereafter

A Region that Conserves and Preserves

Nowhere are our assets more obvious than in our natural environment and we embrace the challenge of ensuring that they are protected for the long term.

We maximize water conservation by domestic, agricultural, industrial, and commercial users. We will eliminate the use of potable water as an irrigation source and encourage the widespread use of “Florida Friendly” landscaping requirements, so that demand on the Floridan aquifer and nutrient pollution in waterways are both reduced.

Leaders and residents of the region understand the concept of green infrastructure, an interconnected system of natural lands and built infrastructure, undeveloped lands, natural resource areas, recreational lands, and working lands, and value it. They recognize that the integrity of eco-systems is as valuable to the region as economic growth, and they insist that best practices, technologies, and tools to balance these priorities are used by all communities in the region.

All water bodies meet water quality standards. The St. Johns River is considered in every land use decision made in the region. As a highly visible resource that helps to define the region,

our local governments and government agencies ensure that decision makers are provided with sufficient data to determine whether the river will be impacted: positively, negatively, or not at all by their actions.

A permanent, extensive, and connected system of publicly accessible natural lands includes greenways and trails and other recreational opportunities that promote physical activity. Exercise is routine in the region, and its impact is felt in the trend towards improving health of our residents, including reducing rates of chronic diseases.

Our region maintains good air quality by keeping carbon emissions low as a result of improvements to the transportation network and more efficient energy use by consumers of energy. A regional transit system, transit-oriented development and more compact development patterns, including redevelopment along transit corridors, results in reduced vehicle miles traveled and reduced regional carbon footprint.

Measures: # LGs that assess impact on S.J. River in land use decisions
VMT per capita
Average water use per capita
water bodies that meet water quality standards
Green Infrastructure Map by 2012. Track change in use within GI areas annually thereafter.
Heart Disease rate
Inventory GGE by 2013
GGE mitigation program complete by 2015, monitored annually

A Mobile Region

We link land use with resources and mobility. We provide mobility choices to our residents and businesses. We fund mobility and maintain capacity. We provide medical and general mobility to all our residents, including the transportation disadvantaged.

The region has an efficient regional transportation network and incorporates coordination of land uses and transportation efforts to support the higher density areas of the region which are oriented towards transit.

Land use and transportation policies incentivize development types that allow for mobility choices.

High per capita transit ridership steadily reduces car and fossil fuel dependency.

Centers of population and jobs are well-connected to limit commute times for most residents and provide opportunities for all residents of the region to work if they choose.

Local governments and stakeholders of the region coordinate funding efforts to maximize efficiencies that allow for mobility choices for residents of the region. This includes collaboration on maintenance and operation of

a regional transportation system that serves the suburban and urban parts of the region, with ways for rural residents to connect.

Transportation funding in the region is reliable, equitable, efficient and affordable.

A safe, efficient, well funded, and well maintained regional road network meets the requirements of population and economic growth and meets the challenges of transition away from fossil fuels to alternative energy. The road network is designed and maintained to be complementary to the regional transit network, and to all modes of transport and travel, including safe walking and biking.

Affordable mobility options other than the private car are available for all of our residents that do not own a car. Transit is affordable and provides service that is safe, reliable, and convenient to all people at all stages of life.

Measures: % income spent on transportation
Public \$ spent on transit (capital and maintenance)
Public \$ spent on roads (capital and maintenance)
LGs with TOD LDRs
of population served by transit route (1/2 mile buffer)
residents that are TD eligible
households without a car
transportation projects implemented through public/private partnerships

Where do we go from here?

Partnership For Change:

- RCI will convene experts in the region to design and recommend a Regional Housing Assistance Mechanism to transition the region to an all voucher system, and away from owned public housing. This will not apply to senior or special needs housing. The group will also propose to NEFRC a housing review methodology for significant developments.
- NEFRC will assemble a set of vulnerability maps for the region. RCI will convene experts from the region to determine climate change impact, and, if indicated, mitigation and adaptation plans.
- NEFRC will gather data from across the region and assemble a Regional Atlas. This will be a series of images, lists and maps that identify environmentally sensitive lands, built and planned major roadways, commercial and industrial lands, military bases, residential lands, and other land uses. The vulnerability maps and green infrastructure maps will be part of the Atlas. Local governments can use the Regional Atlas as a guide to coordinate planning efforts, prioritize public expenditures and facilitate economic development.
- RCI will convene experts in the region to develop the Regional Green Infrastructure, an interconnected system of natural and built infrastructure, undeveloped lands, natural resource areas, recreational lands, and working lands.
- RCI will work with the Regional Transportation Study Commission to create and implement an efficient Multi-modal Transportation Framework to move people and goods, and support the infrastructure investments needed to make it work.

The Implementation Plan

Goals: By September 2013, every resident is familiar with First Coast Vision. Every civic and business group in the region has First Coast Vision as a recurring agenda item, and has a person in the organization that can do the update for the group. RCI is the pre-eminent and umbrella organization that ensures consistency of message among other entities doing related work on the future of the Northeast Florida.

SET THE FOUNDATION

- ❖ NEFRC President Brown addresses each County Commission in July and August. Message is threefold: Who NEFRC is and why it is important. Issues of importance to NEFRC. Setup First Coast Vision as the next big thing.
- ❖ RCI Board recruits a slate of additional potential board members, and they are considered by RCI members. Additions to the Board, if approved, may be made at the June or September 2011 meetings.

- ❖ In September or October 2011, press conference launches First Coast Vision and announces that Region First 2060 has melded into this effort.

RCI BOARD STRATEGY

- ❖ After the September 2010 RCI Board meeting, the RCI Board meets in January, March, June and with the annual meeting in September, 2012. During 2012, Board members have two roles:
- ❖ Each Board member agrees to “adopt” one or two local governments in the region, so that all are assigned. Cross county outreach is encouraged. This task includes signing a letter to the county or local government commission, asking for permission to address the commission on First Coast Vision. The Board member pitches First Coast Vision (staff will generate a letters, powerpoint and handout), presents them with a draft letter and/or resolution of support, and makes themselves available for followup with the local government.
- ❖ Each member agrees to “Champion”. Champions are responsible in late 2011 for recruiting, briefing, sponsoring and teaming up with another Champion not already on the Board who has access to a broad-based constituency in the region. (Broad-based means the business community in Clay County, the health sector in the region, the Hispanic business community in the region, or the transportation disadvantaged in the region, for example, rather than members of my Rotary or my church.) Board member and Champion form a team and design and implement a strategy to bring in that constituency during 2012. In September 2012, the new Champion brings in another Champion with a new constituency, and repeats the approach until September 2013.

RCI MEMBER STRATEGY

- ❖ Three Ad Hoc Committees are created, chaired by RCI members assigned by the Board and populated at the Chair’s discretion, with at least one representative from each county. These committees create and recommend to the Board the deliverables identified as implementation plans in First Coast Vision.
 - Atlas Mapping (including vulnerability maps, green infrastructure and transportation framework)
 - Climate Change
 - Housing Policy

RCI STAFF STRATEGIES

- ❖ RCI Staff coordinates with Cornerstone and ULI on a Regional Summit, with a focus on First Coast Vision and Economic Development. (See ULI publication “Finding Certainty in Uncertain Times” for content ideas) Target audience is regional leaders, with the specific goal of recruiting Business Champions. An annual summit is held thereafter.
- ❖ RCI Staff coordinates a drumbeat team of volunteers, to staff civic meetings and events and to do presentations to large employers. These events are communicated using facebook.
- ❖ RCI Staff coordinates with UNF and JU (tentative) to do brief “elevator speech” videos to be used on the website, posted on YouTube, shared.
- ❖ RCI Staff coordinates First Coast Vision: Look into it! This is a program available to individuals that agree to do one thing that supports the Vision, from a list posted on the website. Once they have signed on electronically, they can download a paper image of sunglasses to post in the window of their home or on the door of their office. This indicates their commitment to making First Coast Vision a reality and their willingness to talk about it with others.

Who are we?

RCI Board Members:

As of March, 2011, the following regional leaders serve on the RCI Board:

- Mr. Bob Rhodes, Foley & Lardner, LLP, Chair
- Mr. Michael Boyle, Vice Chair
- Ms. Linda Myers, CPA, Partner, Myers Resources, LLC, Secretary/Treasurer
- Ms. Carol Brady, Executive Director, NE Florida Healthy Start Coalition, Inc.
- Ms. Robin K. Burchfield, President, St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce
- Hon. Doug Conkey, Clay County Board of County Commissioners
- Ms. Shannon Eller, Government Affairs Coordinator, JTA
- Dr. Dawn Emerick, Executive Director, Health Planning Council of Northeast Florida, Inc.
- Hon. Art Graham, Florida Public Service Commission
- Mr. Wilfredo J. Gonzalez, District Director, US Small Business Administration
- Ms. Kellie Jo Kilberg, IOM, CCE, President/CEO, Clay County Chamber of Commerce
- Hon. Chip Laibl, Commissioner, Putnam County Board of County Commissioners
- Hon. Jon Netts, Mayor, City of Palm Coast
- Hon. Bob Page, Mayor, City of Green Cove Springs
- Ms. Mary Alice Phelan, Director of Community Relations, St. Vincent's HealthCare
- Ms. Sherrie Raulerson, Superintendent, Baker County School District
- Mr. David Reed, Conservation Coordinator, JEA
- Mr. Harold Rutledge, President/CEO, The Rutledge Group
- Dr. Quinton White, Executive Director, Marine Science Research Institute, Jacksonville University

First Coast Vision Sponsors



First Coast Vision Volunteers

For more information or to learn how you can get involved, go to www.firstcoastvision.com.