

**Nassau County 2030 Comprehensive Plan  
Regional Coordination Element**

**Background Data and Analysis**

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## **I. Introduction**

Over the next 20 years, Nassau County, along with the rest of the Northeast Florida region must address a major challenge: how to maintain the region's economic competitiveness while continuing to offer a high quality of life to its citizens and visitors. The University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research BEBR projects that over 500,000 new residents will move to the Jacksonville metropolitan area by 2030 (incl. Clay, Duval, St. Johns and Nassau Counties). The response of local governments to this challenge will have a significant impact on the region's future. The best response will be effective regional collaboration that creates distinctive, economically competitive metropolitan and rural centers.

This element identifies and analyzes regional relationships in the context of the Nassau County Comprehensive Plan. The relationships that exist between local, regional, state and federal government agencies are complex. The efforts of the various units of government must be coordinated in order to minimize duplication, incompatible actions and to promote cooperation, efficiency and responsiveness to the citizens of Nassau County. The element provides an inventory and analysis of existing coordination mechanisms utilized by Nassau County to achieve efficient coordination.

Other elements of this Comprehensive Plan have identified problems, needs and/or opportunities in the existing systems of coordination. The analysis of existing coordinating mechanisms results in recommendations for continued, expanded and new interlocal agreements and other coordination mechanisms such as joint planning area agreements or memoranda of agreement. The last section of this element sets forth goals, planning objectives and corresponding policies to ensure efficient and effective coordination between the County, its municipalities, and other adjacent local governments, regional, state and federal agencies.

Improving government efficiency in the delivery of public facilities and services is the long-term end toward which County regional coordination policies and programs should be directed. The costs of delay and duplication can be avoided by anticipating the need for coordination in order to maximize public resources, identify common goals of coordinating entities, and establish appropriate coordinating mechanisms. Effective interlocal agreements and other regional coordination mechanisms improve efficiency, increase productivity, and reduce costs.

## **II. Recommendations Incorporated from the 2008 EAR & Vision 2032 Final Report**

### **Municipalities**

- Implement a formal process for intergovernmental coordination with the with the municipalities of Hilliard and Callahan via a memorandum or letter of agreement, which establishes specific coordination activities to occur between the County and each municipality on a regular basis. *(EAR, Issue 8: Enhance intergovernmental coordination)*
- Improve coordination and record-keeping of each municipality's annexation activities in accordance with the requirements of Ch. 171 F.S *(EAR, Issue 8: Enhance intergovernmental coordination)*
- Explore the establishment of joint planning areas to address issues for future annexation areas between the County and its municipalities. *(EAR, Issue 8: Enhance intergovernmental coordination)*
- Explore the establishment of a county-wide intergovernmental forum comprised of management staff from participating agencies, that would accomplish the following:
  - Identify of multi-jurisdictional issues;
  - Facilitate the resolution of multi-jurisdictional issues by providing a vehicle for consensus building, research, and discussion;
  - Facilitate the formation countywide positions regarding multi-jurisdictional and growth management issues at the County, Regional, and State level;
  - Providing a forum for discussion of legislative proposals having countywide significance.*(EAR, Issue 8: Enhance intergovernmental coordination)*

### **Adjacent Local Governments**

- Increase formal coordination with adjacent local governments in Florida (i.e. Jacksonville/Duval Co., Baker Co.) and coordinate approaches to common land use and transportation planning issues. *(EAR, Issue 8: Enhance intergovernmental coordination)*
- Engage in regular, informal meetings to coordinate and exchange information with adjacent local governments in Georgia (i.e. Camden County, Charlton County, City of Kingsland, and City of St. Marys) regarding common land use and transportation planning issues. *(EAR, Issue 8: Enhance intergovernmental coordination)*

### **Regional Transportation Planning**

- Continue coordination with North Florida TPO, FDOT and other local agencies to identify potential alternative transportation corridors. *(EAR, Issue 2: Strengthen of long-range transportation planning efforts)*
- Coordinate with FDOT, North Florida TPO, and other agencies to institute a plan for protection and acquisition of rights-of-way to ensure continuity of the roadway network and to protect the existing and future roadway network from development and other encroachments. *(EAR, Issue 2: Strengthen of long-range transportation planning efforts)*
- Coordinate roadway improvements with adjacent counties and the expansion of ports, airports and rail lines. *(EAR, Issue 2: Strengthen of long-range transportation planning efforts)*

- Continue support and involvement in North Florida TPO long-range planning activities and support policies that will specifically direct revenues to fund transit and other alternative transportation improvements. *(EAR, Issue 2: Strengthen of long-range transportation planning efforts)*

### **Economic Development**

- Develop a greater level of coordination and collaboration for countywide economic development efforts by establishing partnerships between public, non-profit and private entities. *(EAR, Issue 3: Promote economic development)*
- Develop strategies to remove and/or address the existing obstacles in developing “shovel-ready” industrial sites to support economic development efforts. Economic development activities move quickly, and this requires the County and its partners to be in a position to meet these challenges in a timely manner. *(EAR, Issue 4: Protect and expand land designated for job generating land uses)*

### **Recreation**

- Establish a committee of community volunteers to coordinate with the Nassau County School Board on a mechanism and plans to provide evening and weekend access to recreation. *(Vision 2032, QOL Issue 4: Recreation and Open Space)*

### **Conservation**

- Cooperate with municipalities, adjacent jurisdictions and private landowners to retain the significant habitats for native wildlife and vegetation. If on-site habitat of threatened or endangered species should be disturbed by new development, similar habitat should be protected with an emphasis on viability by virtue of its size, configuration, and connecting habitat. *(EAR, Issue 6: Preserve environmental resources)*
- Maintain partnerships with organizations such as Florida Communities Trust, the Trust for Public Land (TPL), and other organizations to provide the necessary funds to implement a long-range, financially feasible plan for the identification and acquisition of environmental resources. *(EAR, Issue 6: Preserve environmental resources)*
- Identify state, federal and private funding and technical assistance programs to preserve historically significant housing. *(EAR, Issue 7: Promote a greater diversity of housing types and prices)*

### **Regional Visioning**

- Support greater regional collaboration and participate in efforts undertaken by the Northeast Florida Regional Council to develop a regional vision in the northeast Florida region. *(EAR, Issue 1: Update the future land use plan)*
- Support the recommendations by the Florida Committee for Regional Cooperation in the report, “State Strategies for Regional Cooperation”; to establish a state program to support regional visioning that includes state funding of regional visioning activities. *(EAR, Issue 8: Enhance intergovernmental coordination)*

### **III. Inventory and Assessment of Coordination Efforts**

This section addresses the various local, regional, state, federal and private agencies and organizations with which the County must coordinate on issues involving the development and regulation of land. A short description of the various agencies and areas of coordination for those agencies are provided below.

#### **Federal Agencies**

##### Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

EPA is the lead agency in administering the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), the Clean Air Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Water Pollution Control Act, and the Endangered Species Act. EPA also administers the Superfund hazardous waste site clean-up program and issues hazardous materials restrictions and guidelines. NEPA requires environmental impact assessments for federal projects. The Clean Air Act sets emission standards for pollutants. The Safe Drinking Water Act establishes minimum drinking water standards and standards for the protection of water for public use, including operating standards and quality controls for public water systems. The Water Pollution Control Act relates to the provision of sanitary sewer service and the restoration and/or maintenance of the chemical, biological and physical integrity of the nation's water. The Endangered Species Act creates regulations intended to protect critically endangered species and their habitat. The EPA also has oversight of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program. As authorized by the Clean Water Act, the NPDES program controls water pollution by regulating point sources that discharge pollutants surface waters.

##### Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

FAA regulates the nation's aviation system through licensing of airports and provision of funding for maintenance and enhancement of commercial airline service airports. Federal Aviation Regulation (FAR) Part 150 enables airports to assess aircraft noise impacts on surrounding land uses and implement appropriate mitigation measures. The FAA also regulates height restrictions and land uses near airports and reviews and approves Airport Layout Plans (ALP). The County coordinated with FAA through adoption of height and noise restriction zones surrounding the Fernandina Beach Municipal Airport located in the City of Fernandina Beach and Hilliard Airpark, located in the Town of Hilliard.

##### Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

FEMA works to prepare and effectively respond when a disaster event strikes. Additionally, FEMA works to mitigate the effects of the event before the disaster. FEMA administers the National Flood Insurance Program and is involved in development review in terms of identifying and regulating the development of land in flood prone areas. The program maps areas of special flood hazard using the floodway, 100-year and 500-year flood boundaries. To qualify its homeowners for flood insurance, Nassau County has adopted an ordinance regulating the development of lands in flood prone areas.

##### United States Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE)

The ACOE plans and executes the development and maintenance of water resources, water-related resources, civil works projects, and military projects, including construction and operation of projects for navigation, flood control, shore and beach restoration and protection, hurricane and flood protection, water supply and water quality. An ACOE permit is required for construction

activity in navigable waters, and has permit authority to regulate activities involving discharges of dredged or filled material in all waters of the United States.

#### United States Department of Commerce

*The U.S. Census Bureau* serves as the leading source of quality data about the nation's people and economy. The Bureau produces the decennial Census mandated by the U.S. Constitution as well as other documents such as the The Economic Census, which profiles American business from the national to the local level every five (5) years, and the American Community Survey an on-going sent to a sample of the population with data released annually.

Nassau County will be participating in the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) program, a decennial census geographic partnership program that will allow the Census Bureau to benefit from local knowledge in developing its Master Address File (MAF) for the 2010 Census. Tribal, state, and local governments can contribute to a more complete and accurate census for their community by reviewing and commenting on the list of housing unit and group quarters addresses that the Census Bureau will use to deliver questionnaires within their community.

#### United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

*The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)* is the primary federal agency that works with private landowners to help them conserve, maintain and improve their natural resources. The Agency emphasizes voluntary, science-based conservation; technical assistance; partnerships; incentive-based programs; and cooperative problem solving at the community level.

The *Farmers Home Administration (FmHA)* is a rural credit agency of the USDA that provides a rural rental assistance program and makes loans and grants in rural areas for operating loans, community facilities, including water and waste disposal, and offers loans to further rural business and industrial development.

The *U.S. Forest Service* is an agency of the USDA that manages public lands in national forests and grasslands. The Forest Service is also the largest forestry research organization in the world, and provides technical and financial assistance to state and private forestry agencies.

#### United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

HUD provides block grant funds to the Florida Department of Community Affairs to implement the Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. HUD also administers the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), which provides mortgage insurance on loans for low and moderate income home buyers.

#### United States Department of the Interior

The Department of the Interior administers the National Register of Historic Places. The Secretary of the Interior establishes the standards for rehabilitation of historic structures listed on the National Register. There is a National Register historic district in the unincorporated community of American Beach in Nassau County. The City of Fernandina Beach also has two National Register historic districts.

#### United States Department of Labor

The Department of Labor contains the Small Business Administration and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Small Business Administration provides economic development assistance in the form of loans. The Bureau of Labor Statistics provides economic data.

### United States Department of Transportation (USDOT)

The Department of Transportation administers the nation's transportation policy. The agencies within USDOT include the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Urban Mass Transit Administration (UMTA). The FHWA reviews and approves federally funded highway projects. These projects include primary, secondary and urban system aid, the federal bridge replacement program and the maintenance and widening of federal facilities. Federal highway facilities are operated and maintained by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) as part of the State Highway System. Federal Highway facilities in Nassau County include Interstate 95, U.S. Highway 17, and U.S. Highway 301. The NHTSA shares responsibility with the FHWA for highway safety programs including highway design, construction and maintenance practices.

### United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)

Under the Department of the Interior, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service assesses the impacts on fish and wildlife of all water and related land resource development projects which are federally funded or are constructed under a federal permit or license. FWS establishes and administers regulations and development guidelines for the protection of endangered and threatened species. FWS has conducted a national inventory of wetlands and acquires significant migratory waterfowl habitat and habitat for endangered species as well as for recreation and wilderness areas.

### United States Geological Survey (USGS)

USGS provides topographic, geologic, and hydrologic maps used to identify areas of concern.

## **State Agencies**

### Alcohol Beverages and Tobacco (AB&T)

AB&T issues licenses for the sale of alcohol (both on-premise consumption and package sales). Nassau County must verify that these are permitted by local zoning regulations prior to issuance of the license by AB&T.

### Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DOACS)

The *Division of Forestry* provides wildfire suppression and responds to violation of forest protection laws. The division provides horticultural information and public education. The division also manages three state forests in Nassau County: Cary State Forest, Simmons State Forest and Four Creeks State Forest.

### Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR)

The DBPR licenses contractors, apartment complexes, motels, hotels, transient lodges, and restaurants and other businesses and other entities to sell alcoholic beverages.

### Department of Children and Family Services (DCF)

The DCF requires a license for Child Care, Community Residential Homes (including adult congregate living facilities, Adult Foster Family, Habilitation Centers, Nursing and Group Homes), and Social Service and Rehabilitation Centers.

## Department of Community Affairs (DCA)

### *Division of Housing and Community Development:*

The Bureau of Community Development provides technical assistance on Americans with Disabilities Act, administers the Community Development Block Grant Program and Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Communities Program, and prepares the Statewide Minimum Building Code.

The Bureau of Community Assistance includes the Community Services Block Grant, Low-Income Emergency Home Repair Program, Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, the Weatherization Assistance Program, State Energy Program, Drug Control and System Improvement Program, and the Local Law Enforcement Block Grants. The DCA, through the Florida Housing Finance Agency, administers the State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) program, which funds affordable housing programs serving very low, low and moderate income households.

### *Division of Community Planning:*

The Bureau of State Planning is responsible for processing Developments of Regional Impact, developing environmental siting and geographic information systems, preparing publications and research, and transportation planning.

The Bureau of Local Planning is responsible for review of local government comprehensive plans for consistency with state regulations and administrative guidelines, review of Developments of Regional Impact and Florida Quality Developments, and administration of Areas of Critical State Concern. The Bureau also provides technical assistance to local governments and, when funded by the Legislature, planning grants.

*Division of Emergency Management:* The Division of Emergency Management controls and coordinates state hazard mitigation efforts to provide for the protection of Florida residents in the event of a disaster, natural or otherwise.

## Department of Education (DOE)

The DOE sets capacity standards for local school boards, provides funds to build or renovate local schools, and offers services for the blind, migrant programs and vocational education.

## Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

The *Division of Air Resources Management* administers the state's air pollution control program and implements the Clean Air Act.

The *Division of Law Enforcement* is responsible for statewide environmental resource law enforcement and providing basic law enforcement services to the state parks, greenways and trails. Activities include environmental education and enforcement; investigation of environmental resource crimes such as abandoned drums and waste tires and illegal dredge and fill activities; responding to natural disasters, civil unrest, hazardous material incidents and oil spills which threaten the environment.

The *Division of Recreation and Parks* operates State Parks in Nassau County and throughout Florida.

The Bureau of Design and Recreation Services handles state park development and renovation and administers the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP) and technical assistance programs for local governments.

The Bureau of Natural and Cultural Resources provides technical support throughout the park system, manages the State Park System's collection of cultural objects, and provides technical support for the design and care of exhibits and interpretation.

The *Division of State Lands* acquires and disposes of lands as directed by the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund. The division administers, manages and maintains the records of all lands held by the Board of Trustees; administers and maintains the geodetic survey requirements for the State of Florida; sets boundary lines for lands owned by the Board of Trustees; identifies and sets ordinary and mean high water boundaries for purposes of sovereignty and land title; and controls aquatic and invasive/exotic plant species on public lands. The division provides oversight for state lands, including more than 7,000 lakes and 4,510 islands of 10 acres or more in size, many of which are located in Nassau County. The division also provides upland leases for educational facilities, vegetable farming, and mineral, oil, and gas exploration.

The *Division of Water Resource Management* is responsible for protecting the quality of Florida's drinking water as well as its rivers, lakes, wetlands, and beaches, and for reclaiming lands after they've been mined for phosphate and other minerals. The division conducts permitting, compliance and enforcement programs for Florida's more than 3,000 domestic and 1,000 industrial wastewater facilities, its 7,000 drinking water systems, and a myriad of wetlands and coastal activities. The division also provides funding each year to local governments and other recipients to build or improve domestic wastewater and drinking water facilities, to restore and re-nourish eroding beaches, to reclaim lands disturbed by mining activities, and to implement stormwater and other non-point source management projects.

The *Division of Waste Management* implements state and federal laws relating to recycling, pollution prevention and solid and hazardous waste management, and regulates and registers aboveground and underground pollutant storage systems. It cleans up sites contaminated with petroleum products, dry cleaning solvents, or other hazardous wastes. The Division works closely with the District Waste Management Programs to implement permitting, compliance and enforcement activities. The Division has three bureaus: Solid and Hazardous Waste, Waste Cleanup, and Petroleum Storage Systems.

The *Office of Greenways and Trails* serves as a clearinghouse for the growing greenways and trails system in Florida. The Office plays the leading role regarding implementation of the Statewide System of Greenways and Trails; serves as staff to the Florida Greenways & Trails Council; provides technical assistance to communities, developers, and landowners; provides information regarding recreational opportunities on greenways and trails in Florida; and develops information and publications to educate the public about the benefits of greenways and trails. The Office also manages the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway, which lies within north central Florida and spans from the Gulf of Mexico to the St. Johns River.

The *Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas* oversees the management of Florida's 41 aquatic preserves, three National Estuarine Research Reserves, one National Marine Sanctuary and the Coral Reef Conservation Program. These protected areas comprise more than 4 million acres of the most valuable submerged lands and select coastal uplands in Florida. Two aquatic preserves, the Forth Clinch State Park Aquatic Preserve and the Nassau River-St. Johns River Marshes Aquatic Preserve are located in waters adjacent to Nassau County.

The *Bureau of Mine Reclamation* is responsible for administration and enforcement of rules related to permitting mining operations and reclamation.

### Department of Health (DOH)

The Nassau County Department of Health licenses mobile home parks and regulates septic tank and drain field installation. The Department also is a participant on the Nassau County Development Review Committee.

### Department of Insurance

The Department has primary responsibility for the investigation of suspicious fires on state-owned property, and provides backup investigation for the unincorporated area. The State Fire Marshal interprets the Fire Code.

### Department of Labor and Employment Security (DLES)

DLES provides job training and vocational rehabilitation. The Department also provides labor and employment statistics such as the ES-202 Report that lists quarterly employment and wage data by industry sector and County.

### Department of State (DOS)

The *Division of Historical Resources* maps and inventories archaeological and historical resources and provides matching grant programs for the protection, restoration and acquisition of historic resources.

### Department of Transportation (FDOT)

FDOT is responsible for the planning, construction, maintenance and access to the state highway system, as well as the State Rail Plan and the Florida Aviation System Plan. FDOT also controls access points and regulates drainage and stormwater runoff as they pertain to the drainage system of State roads. FDOT establishes minimum Level of Service (LOS) standards for Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) facilities and participates in Development of Regional Impact (DRI) and other large-scale development reviews. FDOT is decentralized in accordance with legislative mandates. Each of the districts is managed by a District Secretary. The districts vary in organizational structure, but in general each has major divisions for Administration, Planning, Production and Operations.

District Two, in Northeast Florida, is home to more than 1.7 million residents. Its 18 counties cover nearly 12,000 square miles. Travelers on the state highway system log more than 40.6 million miles daily. Two major transit authorities, assisted by the FDOT, operate in the district. The area is served by two deep-water ports, three major rail lines, and 144 public and private airports. The District headquarters is located in Lake City (Columbia County) and the District also maintains the Jacksonville Urban Office.

### Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

The FWC is responsible for fish and wildlife resources and provides enforcement for regulations regarding littering and illegal dumping. In conjunction with Rayonier, FWC is co-manager of the 14,000 acre Nassau Wildlife Management Area (WMA) located in central Nassau County.

### Public Service Commission (PSC)

The PSC regulates the rate structure for electricity, telephone service, gas, water and wastewater, cable television, energy conservation programs and power plant siting.

## **Regional Agencies**

### Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC)

Comprised of seven counties, the NEFRC provides opportunities for both formal and informal coordination. The NEFRC is responsible for the preparation of the Strategic Regional Policy Plan, and participates in ongoing state programs including Development of Regional Impact review, Local Government Comprehensive Plan review, Local Emergency Planning and Regional Clearing House. The regional clearinghouse reviews applications for funding and programs to ensure coordination and consistency with local government and comprehensive regional plans. Coordination offered by the NEFRC includes the regional dispute resolution process. This is a mandatory procedure, pursuant to Sec. 186.509, Florida Statutes, for parties to sit down face-to-face in an attempt to reach a mutually beneficial resolution to inter-jurisdictional disputes regarding certain growth management issues. In 2008, NEFRC, in conjunction with the Urban Land Institute, began a process for the creation of a regional vision for Northeast Florida. This regional visioning effort is described in detail below.

### St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD)

The water management district regulates the management and storage of surface waters, well construction, stormwater discharge, dredge and fill, and water shortages. The district reviews applicant submittals for individual and general permits and issues or denies individual and general permits for surface water systems. The jurisdiction of SJRWMD includes all of Nassau County. In accordance with state law, SJRWMD also provides technical assistance to local governments through their on-line resources, the Watershed Action Volunteers (WAV) collaboration and other means. SJRWMD is required by statute to prepare and update a Water Supply Assessment and District Water Supply Plan at least every five years. Nassau County must coordinate its growth management efforts, including the expansion of municipal or regional water and wastewater systems with the regional water supply plan established by SJRWMD.

### North Florida Transportation Planning Organization

The North Florida Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) is the independent regional transportation planning agency for Duval County and urbanized or transitional areas in Clay, Nassau and St. Johns Counties. It is funded by federal and state grants and local assessment of member municipalities and transportation agencies. The North Florida TPO Board is comprised of elected officials and transportation agency representatives. Currently, the TPO has fifteen voting members, including one Nassau County Commissioner and a representative from the Nassau County Ocean, Highway and Port Authority.

In coordination with its agency members and partners, The TPO develops plans and programs to guide the region's transportation planning process including the Long Range Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program. The TPO also conducts studies and provides a regional forum for identifying and addressing transportation issues. In addition to these planning and programming tasks, the TPO addresses immediate needs by overseeing the delivery of services to the transportation disadvantaged and providing direct services to commuters and employers.

## **Independent Authorities**

### JEA

JEA is an independent authority originally created by the consolidation of city and county governments in Jacksonville in 1967. It's original function was to own, operate and manage the electric system of the City of Jacksonville. In 1997, the water and sewer systems operated by the city also became part of JEA's utility service offerings. Today, JEA is the largest community-owned utility in Florida, utilizing 150 artesian wells tapping the Floridian Aquifer to serve over 300,000 water customers in the northeast Florida region. The JEA board of directors is comprised of seven members who are appointed by the mayor of Jacksonville and approved by the Jacksonville City Council.

JEA's Nassau (Lofton Oaks) Grid serves as a regional provider of potable water and sanitary sewer in Nassau County. Although JEA's designated service area includes all of Nassau County except Amelia Island, its present facilities are limited to those purchased from United Water in 2001 which serve the eastern part of the county. Detailed descriptions of these facilities and existing service areas can be found in the Public Facilities Element.

### Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA)

The Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA) is an independent authority that is charged with providing high quality regional transit services and roadway infrastructure connecting Northeast Florida. A merger in 1971 of the original Jacksonville Expressway Authority and several private bus companies paved the way for the creation of the Jacksonville Transportation Authority as it is known today.

Working closely with the Florida Department of Transportation and the City of Jacksonville, JTA develops and implements construction plans to improve traffic flow in Northeast Florida. Funded by a half-cent sales tax approved in 1988 as a result of the elimination of tolls, JTA manages construction projects on state- and city-owned roadways (those projects, however, are not maintained by JTA).

Although JTA is not presently involved in any projects in Nassau County, planning has recently begun for a northern extension of the First Coast Outer Beltway. The proposed northern Beltway will loop north of Interstate 10 and Jacksonville International Airport to continue on into Nassau County and connect with Interstate 95, completing a toll road that will eventually encircle Jacksonville. The northern Beltway could generate more economic development in the area by allowing greater access to northern Duval and Nassau Counties.

JTA is also currently undertaking an extensive study that will examine and determine the feasibility of using commuter rail as a transit option here in Northeast Florida. The study includes two possible stations in Nassau County in the Yulee and Hedges areas.

### Ocean Highway and Port Authority of Nassau County

The Ocean Highway and Port Authority of Nassau County serves as the governing body for the Port of Fernandina. The Port of Fernandina is a natural deep water port that provides terminal service to pulp and paper mills located throughout Florida and the southeast. The Port also supports a number of independent container lines serving Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Authority has policy-making, budgeting and general oversight responsibilities for all port activities. It is governed by five elected commissioners that serve staggered four year terms. Since 1990, the Authority has employed Nassau Terminals, LLC, a private port operator company, to manage, market, and administer the port under the terms of an operating agreement. The Authority does not have the power to tax, and must rely on the financial viability of individual

improvement projects to pay for the cost of its operations. The Authority may acquire property or property interests through negotiation or condemnation; set tariffs; enter into secure agreements with governmental entities; incur indebtedness; plan, develop or lease its properties; and regulate land use and buildings on Port lands.

#### Amelia Island Tourist Development Board

The Amelia Island Tourist Development Council (AITDC) oversees the development and marketing of Amelia Island as a world-class tourism destination. Created by the Nassau County Board of County Commissioners in 1988, the AITDC is responsible for the expenditure of revenues received from the levy and imposition of the tourism development tax. Serving as the umbrella organization for the tourism industry, the mission of the Tourist Development Council is to serve the citizens and businesses of Amelia Island/Fernandina Beach by maximizing the economic impact of tourism and thus enhancing the quality of life. By doing so, the AITDC strives to raise the awareness and importance of tourism to the economic development of Amelia Island.

### **Adjacent Local Governments**

#### City of Jacksonville (Duval County)

The consolidated City of Jacksonville is the dominant urban center of the Northeast Florida region. Consolidated with Duval County government in 1968, it is one of a small handful of consolidated city/counties in the United States. Covering over 840 square miles, it is the largest city in land area in the contiguous United States encompassing the vast majority of Duval County. Only the small municipalities of Atlantic Beach, Neptune Beach, Jacksonville Beach, and Baldwin remain independent from the consolidated government. Jacksonville is the most populous city in the region, surrounded by Nassau County to the north, Baker County to the west, Clay and St. Johns Counties to the south. In 2008, Duval County was estimated to have a population of 914,948.

As the population center for the region, Jacksonville has historically been the economic engine for the area, providing jobs in a wide range of categories. The U.S. Navy employs over 40,000 people with a major presence at two facilities, Naval Air Station Jacksonville and Mayport Naval Station. With a location that provides access to two interstate roadways, an international airport and deepwater port, Jacksonville has had a long history of being a major distribution center for manufactured goods or those taken from bulk and sent throughout the southeast. Another significant source of jobs in the area has been the financial and insurance industries. While historical trends have led to most new development in Jacksonville occurring in its southeast quadrant, factors such as the conversion of the former Naval Air Station Cecil Field to an industrial area; the expansion of seaport and airport facilities; and growing traffic congestion issues in the southeast have encouraged new development to move to the north, northwest and southwest areas of Jacksonville, closer to Nassau County.

#### Baker County

Baker County is a rural county that borders the extreme southwestern portion of Nassau County. The county is approximately 585 square miles in land area with an estimated 2008 population of 26,164. The City of Macclenny, the county seat, is the largest municipality in the county, with an estimated 2008 population of 6,032. The only other municipality in the county is the extremely small town of Glen St. Mary, with an estimated 2008 population of 503. Large portions of eastern Baker County lie within the Osceola National Forest, John M. Bethea State Forest and the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge.

Recently, Baker County has attempted to grow its economy by attracting overflow industrial jobs from Jacksonville. As part of this strategy, Baker County has adopted an urban services boundary

in the eastern area of the County to focus development along the corridor formed by Interstate 10 and U.S. Highway 90.

### Camden County, Georgia

Camden County is a transitioning rural county that borders Nassau County to the north along the St. Marys River, which also forms the state line between Florida and Georgia. The county is approximately 630 square miles in land area with an estimated 2008 population of 47,641. The City of St. Marys, located on the river, is the largest municipality in the county, with an estimated 2008 population of 16,763. Other municipalities in the county include the City of Kingsland, with an estimated 2008 population of 13,659 and the small City of Woodbine, which serves as the county seat and has an estimated 2008 population of 1,365.

The eastern coast of Camden County is home to the Cumberland Island National Seashore, which preserves most of Cumberland Island, the largest of Georgia's barrier islands. The seashore features unspoiled beaches and dunes, marshes, and freshwater lakes. In addition to the natural features, the seashore includes historic properties, such as the ruins of the Dungeness mansion and the Plum Orchard estate. The island is only accessible by boat. The visitor center and boat access to the island are located in St. Marys. Public access via the ferry is limited.

The Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base is also located in Camden County. This 16,000 acre facility is one of the Navy's primary submarine bases on the East Coast. The base currently employs approximately 9,000 military and civilian personnel, with many of these making their home in Nassau County.

### Charlton County, Georgia

Charlton County is a rural county that borders Nassau County to the north along the St. Marys River, which also forms the state line between Florida and Georgia. The county is approximately 781 square miles in land area with an estimated 2008 population of 26,164. The City of Folkston, the county seat, is the largest municipality in the county, with an estimated 2008 population of 3,231. The only other municipality in the county is the small City of Homeland, with an estimated 2008 population of 792. Large portions of western Charlton County lie within the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge.

### Coastal Georgia Regional Development Center (CGRDC)

In the State of Georgia, Regional Development Centers (RDCs) are multi-county planning and development agencies serving municipal and county governments in different areas of a state, similar to the Regional Councils in Florida. The Coastal Georgia Regional Development Center (CGRDC) represents the interests of ten member counties along the Georgia coast, including Camden County (note: Charlton County is a member of the Southeast Georgia RDC).

Considered the second fastest growing region in the state, coastal Georgia's growth rate is second only to the Atlanta region. The 5,000 square mile region is home to a current population of about 600,000 people and contains four urban centers including Savannah (Chatham County), Statesboro (Bulloch County), Hinesville (Liberty County) and Brunswick (Glynn County). The later area includes the barrier islands of St. Simons Island, Sea Island and Jekyll Island.

## **School District**

The School District of Nassau County operates and administers all public schools in Nassau County and approves The County maintains and interlocal agreement with the School District which was updated its in August 2008 to incorporate mandatory provisions for school concurrency and the adoption of the Public School Facilities Element. The School District adopts a district-wide five (5) -year school building work program that is incorporated by reference into the Public School Facilities Element and updated on an annual basis.

## **Municipalities**

There are three incorporated municipalities in Nassau County. The largest of these is the *City of Fernandina Beach*, located on the northern end of Amelia Island. Its covers approximately 11 square miles of land area and had an estimated 2008 population of 11,610. There are two small municipalities located in the western part of the county: the *Town of Hilliard*, which covers approximately 5 square miles with an estimated 2008 population of 2,921; and the *Town of Callahan*, which covers approximately 1 square mile with an estimated 2008 population of 1,058. Each municipality operates its own water and wastewater system. Details on the size and scope of these systems can be found in the Public Facilities Element.

The County has written interlocal agreements with each of the municipalities regarding the provision of public school facilities (school concurrency). The County presently maintains separate interlocal agreements with the City of Fernandina Beach regarding the parks and recreation facilities and the collection of transportation impact fees. The County Administrator's office has primary responsibility for maintaining interlocal agreements with support of various County Departments.

## **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)**

### Economic Development Organizations

The *Nassau County Economic Development Board (NCEDB)* is a non-profit organization formed in 1995 as a public-private partnership to provide leadership and develop policies and programs that will foster a diversified and financially strong business community, which will enhance the quality of life in Nassau County. NCEDB staff members provide assistance with site selection, zoning permitting, and other issues to new and existing businesses.

The *Amelia Island-Fernandina Beach-Yulee (AIFBY) Chamber of Commerce* and *Greater Nassau Chamber of Commerce* are membership-based associations of businesses, professional leaders and individuals working to sustain a favorable business climate that enables existing and new businesses to prosper. The AIFBY Chamber provided significant funding for the County's Vision 2032 plan and both chambers have been supportive of efforts to implement the recommendations of the vision.

### Conservation Organizations

*The Nature Conservancy* is a non-profit organization that pursues non-confrontational, pragmatic, market-based solutions to conservation challenges, primarily allocating and designing funding sources for conservation. The Conservancy works collaboratively with partners—communities, businesses, government agencies, multilateral institutions, individuals and other non-profit organizations.

The Conservancy has helped protect more than 123,000 acres in the northeast Florida region. Working with partners across political boundaries, the Conservancy addresses threats to the St.

Marys River, supporting healthy river management and protecting buffers along the corridor. Using state grant funds, the Conservancy was hired by the County to produce a feasibility study for a conservation land acquisition program for the County in 2007. The recommendations of this study will be integrated into the Conservation and Recreation & Open Space Elements of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

*The Trust for Public Land (TPL)* is a national, nonprofit, land conservation organization that conserves land for people to enjoy as parks, community gardens, historic sites, rural lands, and other natural places, ensuring livable communities for generations to come.

TPL helps local government agencies and community residents to define conservation priorities, identify lands to be protected and plan networks of conserved land that meet public need; identify and raise funds for conservation from federal, state, local, and philanthropic sources; structure, negotiate, and complete land transactions; and shares knowledge of conservation issues and techniques to improve the practice of conservation and promote its public benefits.

TPL has been very active in many Northeast Florida conservation efforts. In Nassau County, TPL has purchased the oceanfront Evans' Rendezvous nightclub in the historic unincorporated community of American Beach. The building has been vacant for many years, and the vision of TPL and the County is to restore the Rendezvous as the cultural center of American Beach so visitors and residents alike will be able to enjoy the community's sense of natural and cultural history.

*The North Florida Land Trust* is a local, non-governmental, non-profit organization funded largely by membership contributions. The Land Trust works closely with private landowners and other public agencies at all levels of government, nonprofit partners, and foundations. Presently, 104 acres are owned by the North Florida Land Trust and three acres are protected by conservation easements. Since its founding in 1999, North Florida Land Trust has protected more than 800 acres of beautiful, productive and environmentally significant land in and around Northeast Florida.

The North Florida Land Trust, in partnership with Nassau County, applied for a Florida Communities Trust grant this year to help acquire the Yokowe Preserve, a parcel of land bordering the Nassau River at US 17 and the Nassau/Duval county line. The property could provide a connection to the Timucuan Preserve. It contains critical watershed marshlands and could also, in the future, accommodate a boat access to the river. North Florida Land Trust received agreements from the landowners, that if a grant application is approved, they will donate ten percent of the project price to the North Florida Land Trust to increase the potential for acquisition by the state.

The Trust is also seeking a conservation easement on 160 acres from a 345 acre parcel with approximately 5,000 feet of frontage on the St. Mary's River, This property has ecological importance, with a diverse riparian habitat including relatively mature and pristine floodplain forest with freshwater streams and sloughs. The subject property contains a large floodplain lake and several plant species of special concern and property provides natural habitat for the American alligator and wood duck, and potential habitat for Florida black bear.

### Public-Private Partnerships

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are increasingly important in shaping the economy, environment and quality of life in a community. They include a diverse group of organizations that represent a wide range interests including business, economic development, environmental and social services, academia, professional and trade organizations, neighborhood and civic groups,

and nonprofit and philanthropic organizations. Although there are far too many potential organizations to list and also innumerable ways in which they may cooperate and interact with local government, it is important to recognize the role such organizations play in the community and the opportunities for partnership with the public sector.

Public-private partnership models should be considered for their long term potential as a model for structuring, funding and operating public facilities. The model is often useful in situations where the public sector may control or have access to land resources but lack funding for capital or operating costs, while private sector entities may lack land resources have the capacity and motivation to provide needed capital and sustainable operations capacity.

#### **IV. Problems and Needs Identified in the Comprehensive Plan**

In accordance with 9J-5.015(2), this section analyzes the effectiveness of the existing coordination mechanisms and identifies specific problems and needs within the comprehensive plan that would benefit from improved or additional regional coordination.

##### **Joint Planning Areas**

New policies recommend that the County consider joint planning areas with the City of Fernandina Beach, the Town of Hilliard and the Town of Callahan. Joint planning areas are established through a joint planning agreement between the city and county. Joint planning agreements are interlocal agreements that spell out advance how land use decisions, service provision and jurisdictional control will be handled. There are a number of items that may be appropriate for a joint planning area agreement including: future annexation areas; identification of police, fire and rescue areas; identification of infrastructure service and utility territorial areas; joint land use map or compatibility matrix and implementation of joint land development regulations; development permitting jurisdiction; revenue sharing; provisions for dispute resolution; identification of potential joint grant opportunities; and reciprocal notice of development applications.

Section 163.3177(6) (h) 1.e., Florida Statutes (F.S.), requires that local comprehensive plans contain an intergovernmental coordination element which expressly provides “procedures to identify and implement joint planning areas, especially for the purpose of annexation and joint infrastructure service areas.” Section 163.3171(3), F.S. requires that a public hearing be held prior to adoption. Joint planning areas must be implemented through a contract in the form of an interlocal agreement. In the absence of such an agreement, Ch. 171, Florida Statutes requires that the County’s Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and land development regulations will remain in full force for annexed lands until and amendment to the municipalities’ comprehensive plan is adopted.

The first step to identifying and implementing a joint planning area agreement is for the municipality and County to cooperate in the preparation of a special area land use plan that will identify the boundary of the joint planning area, define infrastructure service areas, future annexation areas and appropriate criteria, specify revenue sharing, include recommendations for land development regulations including concurrency management and specify a process for review of proposed development and establish permitting jurisdiction. The next step is to amend the comprehensive plans of the City and County by depicting the joint planning area on the future land use maps. The comprehensive plans should also establish development standards and specify a process for review and approval of proposed development. The next step is to adopt a joint planning agreement that must be submitted with the proposed comprehensive plan amendments. The agreement will implement the comprehensive plan amendments. The agreement must state its duration, which should be the same as the planning timeframe of the City and County comprehensive plans.

##### **Regional Transportation Planning**

Regional coordination is an important factor in planning for the most cost-efficient improvements of the traffic circulation system. Policies in the Transportation Element require the County to coordinate with pertinent local, state, regional, and federal agencies for an integrated, cost effective transportation system. Accompanying implementation policies include coordination with surrounding counties and municipalities within the County and the FDOT to ensure the effective application of available revenue; reviewing the traffic circulation plans of the County’s municipalities; continued coordination with the Northeast Florida Regional Planning Council with regard to regional and long range planning policies.

The County's transportation system is comprised of state, county and local roads; rail lines maintained by CSX, Norfolk Southern, and First Coast Railroad; a deepwater port facility (Port of Fernandina), and x general aviation airport facilities. The Transportation Element stresses the importance of transportation planning having a regional scope and coordinated with other aspects of the overall planning process. The County has written interlocal agreements in effect with the incorporated areas of the County related to transportation needs including maintenance responsibility for certain roadways. Continuous coordination is important to ensure that land development policies and street alignments be compatible with those adopted by adjoining or nearby jurisdictions.

Since the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has financial responsibility for maintaining and improving state roads, the County should review the transportation improvement plans and programs prepared by FDOT. The County needs to determine the consistency of the plans with County plans and provide comments to the FDOT regarding inconsistent issues, projected needs and concerns regarding the maintenance of the drainage system along state-maintained roads.

### **Coordinated School Facilities Planning**

The passage of SB 360 in 2005 required local governments to create a public school facilities element to implement school concurrency (although the penalty of disallowing plan amendments until adoption was removed by SB 360(2009)). The public school facilities element must be consistent with the plans of other local governments. Additionally, local governments and school boards must enter into interlocal agreements. The County adopted a Public School Facilities Element in July 2008 and updated its interlocal agreement with the School District in August 2008.

### **Coordinated Potable Water/Sanitary Sewer Planning**

With the exception of Nassau Amelia Utilities, which serves the unincorporated areas on the south end of Amelia Island, Nassau County does not, itself, provide central water/sewer service to County residents. JEA serves as a regional provider for Nassau County, with facilities located in the eastern part of the County. Policies in the Public Facilities Element require that the siting, permitting and water quality (discharge for sewage systems) meet the current DEP standards, which has promulgated rules regulating wastewater treatment facilities under Chapter 62-600, F.A.C. According to these rules, DEP regulates facilities that treat wastewater flows exceeding 10,000 gallons per day for establishments, or flows exceeding 5,000 gallons per day for commercial establishments, and when the sewage contains industrial or toxic or hazardous chemical wastes. Inspections of the facilities in Nassau County are conducted by the FDEP Northeast District Office in Jacksonville.

The second agency responsible for regulating wastewater treatment facilities is the Florida Department of Health (DOH) which regulates the installation of septic tanks and drain fields according to rules adopted in Chapter 64E-6, F.A.C. The Public Facilities Element includes policies that stipulate that no septic tank or other onsite sewage disposal system shall be installed until a permit has been obtained from the DOH.

### **Coordinated Recreation Planning**

The abundant recreational facilities in Nassau County include county parks, municipal parks, state parks, three State Forests, and a public Wildlife Management Area. Many of these regional parks and facilities are used by both county residents and visitors from outside the county or the state.

Policies in the Recreation and Open Space Element recommend that the County enter into interlocal agreements with the County's municipalities and encourage coordination with state

agencies to commit to meeting the recreational needs of county and regional residents and visitors.

## **V. Growth and Development in Surrounding Areas**

### Jacksonville/Duval County

Nassau County is part of the Northeast Florida region which includes Clay, Duval, Nassau, Baker and St. Johns counties. While Jacksonville/Duval County remains the center of population in the region, Nassau and the other surrounding counties are growing relatively faster. Jacksonville's percentage of the regional population has declined over the past several decades. This trend will continue and accelerate. In 1990, Jacksonville comprised 86% of the population of the region. By 2000, Jacksonville's share of the population had decreased to 71% and is projected to be only 63% of the region in 2030.

The shift in regional population is further documented by reviewing figures on regional commuting. As the counties surrounding Jacksonville begin to grow at a faster rate, one issue that will need to be considered is the impact this growth will have on the regional transportation network. According to Jacksonville's 2005 Mayor's Growth Management Task Force, examination of 2005 and 2010 commuting patterns indicates that the majority of commuting will continue to be from outlying counties to work destinations in Jacksonville.

Since the mid 1990's, Jacksonville has sought to encourage new development in the north and northwest areas of Duval County. Between 2001 and 2007, Jacksonville's north planning district, adjacent to Nassau County's southern border, had the fastest rate of population growth in the City. Due to recent economic conditions, several proposed master-planned developments in the north and northwest areas, including the now defunct Timucuan and Brent's Cove DRI proposals, have been abandoned or broken into smaller projects.

The new port facilities constructed in 2008 by Jacksonville Port Authority (JAXPORT) will enable northeast Florida businesses to export directly to nations throughout Asia - opening a huge new consumer market for them, giving them an opportunity to boost sales. This, along with planned expansions of the Panama Canal to be completed by 2014, will make northeast Florida more attractive for a host of businesses to grow operations in this region by enabling local companies to export directly to Asian markets, or easily receive goods directly from Asia. These advantages will create new opportunities in manufacturing, distribution and warehousing, all linked to trade with these new markets. Related rail infrastructure improvements planned by Jacksonville-based CSX railroad will make Nassau County more attractive to warehouse and distribution facilities that can take advantage of the new rail to points north.

Many areas bordering Nassau County in Jacksonville have been acquired for conservation and recreation use through Preservation Project Jacksonville (PPJ), an ambitious land acquisition program begun by former Mayor John Delaney in 1999. Through PPJ and its partners, Jacksonville has acquired more than 50,000 acres of preservation parkland with thousands of acres open for visitors to explore. Today the project is moving into a phase to provide public access to these areas while continuing to protect the lands.

### Baker County

In May 2008 Baker County adopted a FLUM amendment (series 08-D1) concurrently with the DRI development order for the 3,200-acre Cedar Creek DRI. The approved development program for the Cedar Creek DRI includes 5,500 age-restricted residential dwelling units (4,000 detached single-family units, 1,375 attached single-family units, and 125 multifamily units), 500,000 square feet of commercial, and 300,000 square feet of office.

In 2009, a FLUM amendment (series 08-2) was adopted for 1056.5 acres of agricultural land which border the subject property to the west along the Baker-Nassau county line. This amendment would create 710 acres of industrial, 40 acres of commercial, and 475 acres of conservation land uses. This amendment is to facilitate the development of an industrial park that

will contain a maximum of 6,000,000 square feet of industrial uses, 300,000 square feet of commercial development, 190 hotel rooms, and 475 acres of conservation lands. Among the improvements required to develop this project to its potential is the design and construction of a new interchange with Interstate 10. The feasibility of an interchange at this location is presently under review by FDOT. If constructed, the interchange would eventually provide connection to parallel east-west road corridors which will provide alternatives to I-10. This amendment borders Nassau County to the east, and is adjacent to a FLUM amendment proposed in Nassau County that will change approximately 487.19 acres from Agriculture to Industrial and Commercial land uses. The property is located in the far southwestern corner of the County, bordering U.S. Route 90 and the CSX railroad to the north and Interstate 10 to the south.

#### Camden & Charlton Counties, Georgia

Although relatively small in size, the adjacent Georgia counties, particularly Camden County, have the potential for growth and development that may have a significant impact on Nassau County.

The Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base is located in Camden County, Georgia, near the Florida-Georgia border adjacent to Nassau County. The 2005 BRAC recommended for closure of the New London Naval Submarine Base in Connecticut, however, lobbying efforts have so far succeeded in keeping that base open. Nonetheless, the 16,000 acre Kings Bay facility has become one of the Navy's most important submarine bases. The base currently employs approximately 9,000 military and civilian personnel. It is likely that, considering the potential for growth on vacant land on the base, additional personnel may be transferred to Kings Bay in the future.

In anticipation of such growth, a planned development known as The Villages of Kingsland recent sought local and state approvals for development on 15,000 acres recently annexed into the City of Kingsland in Camden County, west of U.S. 17 and north of SR 40. On the 15,000 acres, of which approximately one-third is wetlands, the developer had planned to build approximately 40,000 residential units, 13.5 million square feet of industrial development, and 9.5 million square feet for commercial use. Economic considerations have presently put this project on hold, however, and it has not completed the Georgia Development of Regional Impact review as of July 2009.

## **VI. Regional Visioning**

The Northeast Florida region, like all of Florida, is at a crossroads. Congested roads, urban sprawl, infrastructure needs and environmental concerns are all issues that will need to be addressed if the regional economy and quality of life are to be sustained. Regional visioning has emerged as a dynamic and important tool for building regional consensus related to growth issues. It can develop a vision for the region that will consider current trends, consider alternative scenarios for future growth and choose the path that the region's growth will take. The goal of regional visioning efforts is to provide intelligent foresight will allow the residents and leaders to conceive of the region's future instead of reacting to development impacts after the fact.

### Century Commission for a Sustainable Florida

In 2005, the Legislature enacted Section 163.3247, Florida Statutes, creating the Century Commission for a Sustainable Florida. The Commission was created as a standing body to help the citizens of this state envision and plan their collective future, with an eye towards both 25 and 50 year horizons. Sustainability has been described as leaving Florida for our children no worse than we inherited it for ourselves.

The Commission's First Annual Report notes that Florida's population is projected to increase from approximately 18 million to 27.5 million over the next 25 years, and double in 50 years. Unless such growth is planned wisely, suburban sprawl, transportation congestion, coastal densification, habitat fragmentation, and reduced agricultural land will be the inevitable result of this population increase. Land that should be protected will be lost forever unless it is identified soon and protected.

In Florida, the 1000 Friends of Florida and the Century Commission have expanded the dialogue on trend analysis and regional visioning. The Florida Department of Community Affairs is supportive of regional visioning, and several areas of the State have prepared regional visions, including the Tampa, Orlando, Emerald Coast and South Florida regions. Northeast Florida will soon join this group.

### Reality Check First Coast

On May 21, 2009, Reality Check First Coast brought nearly 300 leaders from the public, private and nonprofit sectors together to discuss, analyze and develop alternative growth scenarios for the Northeast Florida region.

ULI's Reality Check is a participatory visioning exercise is designed to raise awareness of projected levels of region-wide growth and to lay the foundation for the development of a concrete list of next steps to meet the region's future job, housing, transportation, infrastructure and recreation needs. The exercise is designed to provide a region-wide awareness of the level of growth that is expected; to recognize the legitimate points of view of different stakeholders; and to lay the foundation for the development of a concrete list of next steps to assure quality growth in meeting the region's needs for the future. While each visioning exercise and process is different, the overall education and awareness-raising goals of Reality Check have the power to create a regional dialogue that results in consensus on where and how the region will grow over the next 50 or so years.

The scenarios developed through Reality Check First Coast will be discussed at meetings with the community in each county. Ultimately, they will be synthesized into a single scenario and reflected, along with information from other visioning efforts, in a regional vision.

## First Coast Vision

The Northeast Florida Regional Council has created the non-profit Regional Community Institute of Northeast Florida, Inc. to help guide the creation of the First Coast Vision, a regional vision for the future of the seven-county Northeast Florida region. The Regional Community Institute was formed for the purpose of visioning, regional education and monitoring of regional trends. Work began in January, 2008 on the regional initiatives associated with the First Coast Vision process.

The Reality Check exercise served as the high-profile kickoff to a multi-year visioning process that will cover a wide range of regional topics and ultimately result in an update to the Regional Council's guiding policies, the Strategic Regional Policy Plan. The Northeast Florida Regional Council will provide administration, staffing, data and mapping in support of the Reality Check exercise, and will partner long-term with ULI North Florida on monitoring and implementation.

The staff of the Northeast Florida Regional Council and the Regional Community Institute will work with the ULI Jacksonville District Council after the Reality Check exercise to track progress of implementation efforts using agreed upon benchmarks and indicators. Concurrently, visioning exercises and staff analysis concerning identified issue areas will be ongoing and may result in new or revised benchmarks and indicators. Local governments will be approached to ask them to agree to make their best efforts to implement the Vision. The combination of visions and data, and a public input process, will culminate in 2012 with the update to the Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP) to which local comprehensive plans are required to conform. The Regional Community Institute will continue to monitor and update the list of regional indicators and benchmarks that come out of all visioning and data analysis efforts, and will serve as a resource for long-term implementation of the guiding principles established by the First Coast Vision.

## **VI. Consistency with the Strategic Regional Policy Plan**

Each element of the County's 2030 Comprehensive Plan was reviewed for consistency with the Northeast Florida Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP) goals, objectives and policies (see Appendix H). Growth and development in the 2030 Plan are considered consistent with and complement the SRPP.

## **VII. Areas of Critical State Concern**

Nassau County contains no areas of Critical State Concern as defined in 380.05 Florida Statutes.