

First Coast Vision



October 2011

THE REGIONAL COMMUNITY INSTITUTE OF NORTHEAST FLORIDA, INC.

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A call to action

Northeast Floridians live and compete in a global economy. In this economy, regions will provide the reservoir of resources needed to be competitive. Regions are large enough to provide the resources needed by successful businesses; small enough to allow public and private sectors to develop solid working relationships on a shared identity built on common concerns and opportunities. Almost all of Florida's quality of life challenges, including transportation, land use, conservation and human health, are regional in scale. The issues are too large and complex to be resolved by localities acting on their own.

Northeast Florida's successful Reality Check program poured the foundation for over 300 regional leaders to develop a consensus for greater regional thinking, cooperation, and problem solving.

The Northeast Florida Regional Council asked the Regional Community Institute to build on Reality Check and develop a vision that would provide an aspiration guidepost for growth, economic development, and human health for our region spanning the next 50 years.

The Regional Community Institute is proud and pleased to present First Coast Vision to the Northeast Florida community and to the Regional Council for consideration as it reviews and revises its Strategic Regional Policy Plan.

A vision is not a plan. A vision is a collection of goals and objectives that reflect the choices and values of citizens as to how they want to live. Implementation of the vision ultimately is the job of elected officials, regional organizations, non-profits, and businesses spurred by regional champions.

First Coast Vision is the product of numerous community meetings, workshops and brainstorming, and reflects the thoughts of thousands of First Coast residents. The Regional Community Institute Board merits special recognition. A very special thank you goes to Margo Moehring, the Institute's Executive Director, and to Brian Teeple, the Regional Council's CEO.

On behalf of RCI, we invite you to join us as we begin to implement the vision and continue to refine our collective goals for the future of Northeast Florida. We invite you to become a regional champion.

Sincerely,



Bob Rhodes

October 1, 2011

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?



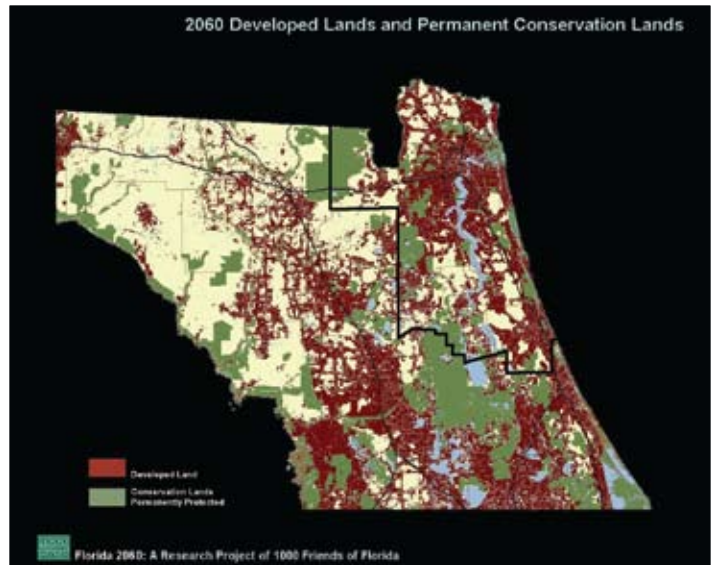
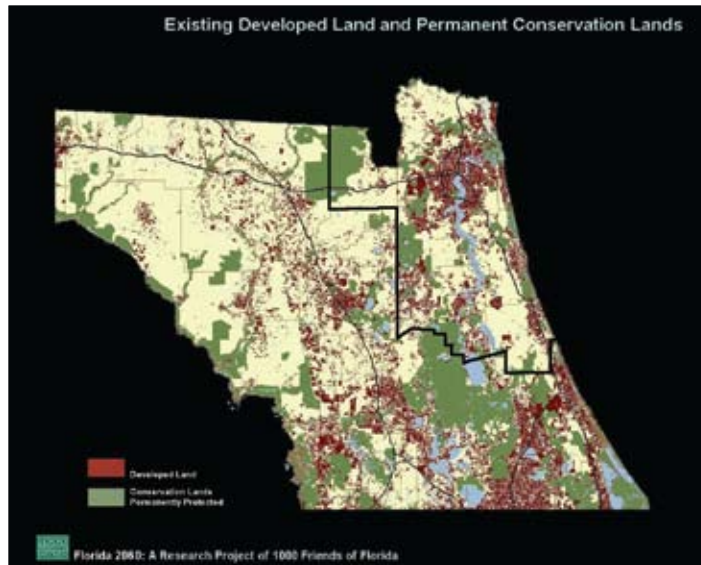
Regional leaders in the First Coast recognized that visioning was needed in the region, and First Coast Vision was born. The Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) created the not-for-

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.

Why First Coast Vision?

The images from “An Alternative Future” speak for themselves.



The 2060 trend image on the right 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 can best be addressed by meaningful state, regional and local cooperation and coordination. 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 (RCI)

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. RCI undertakes policy initiatives at the request of the NEFRC. 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 Planning 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 Reality Check, 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).

Region First 2060, the partnership that put on Reality Check First Coast, is committed to implementing the Guiding Principles, while RCI has been committed to creating First Coast Vision. These are complementary efforts.

First Coast Vision

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. These goals, objectives and measures are important work products of the visioning process, and are included in the resource library at www.firstcoastvision.com.

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. RCI has been surveying the public on their opinions about regional issues and visioning since 2009. 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, 2011 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.

Preferred Growth Pattern

Four regional growth patterns (Multiple Growth Centers, Urban Compact, Corridor, Dispersed) were created at Reality Check First Coast, the seven County Checks, and the two Generation Check exercises. These growth patterns were the subject of a public growth pattern preference survey, taken by over 1,300 participants in 2010 and 2011 at public presentations or on-line. 96% of respondents rejected the 2060 trend growth pattern depicted on page 5. 40% preferred the Multiple Growth Center pattern, 24% preferred the Urban Compact pattern and 23%

preferred the Corridor pattern. These preferences were used to create the First Coast Vision images. The images of the preferred growth pattern shown on the cover and page 7 depict a region in 2060 that has located new jobs and housing in existing centers, grown along transportation corridors, added jobs to all counties, and preserved an extensive network of open spaces, all with an emphasis on connecting these assets to minimize public investment and maximize the choices our region provides to its residents and businesses.

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

designers. One version of the image adorns the cover of First Coast Vision, the other appears below. First Coast Vision offers these images as a way to picture the First Coast in 2060, but local governments will ultimately decide where growth will go.

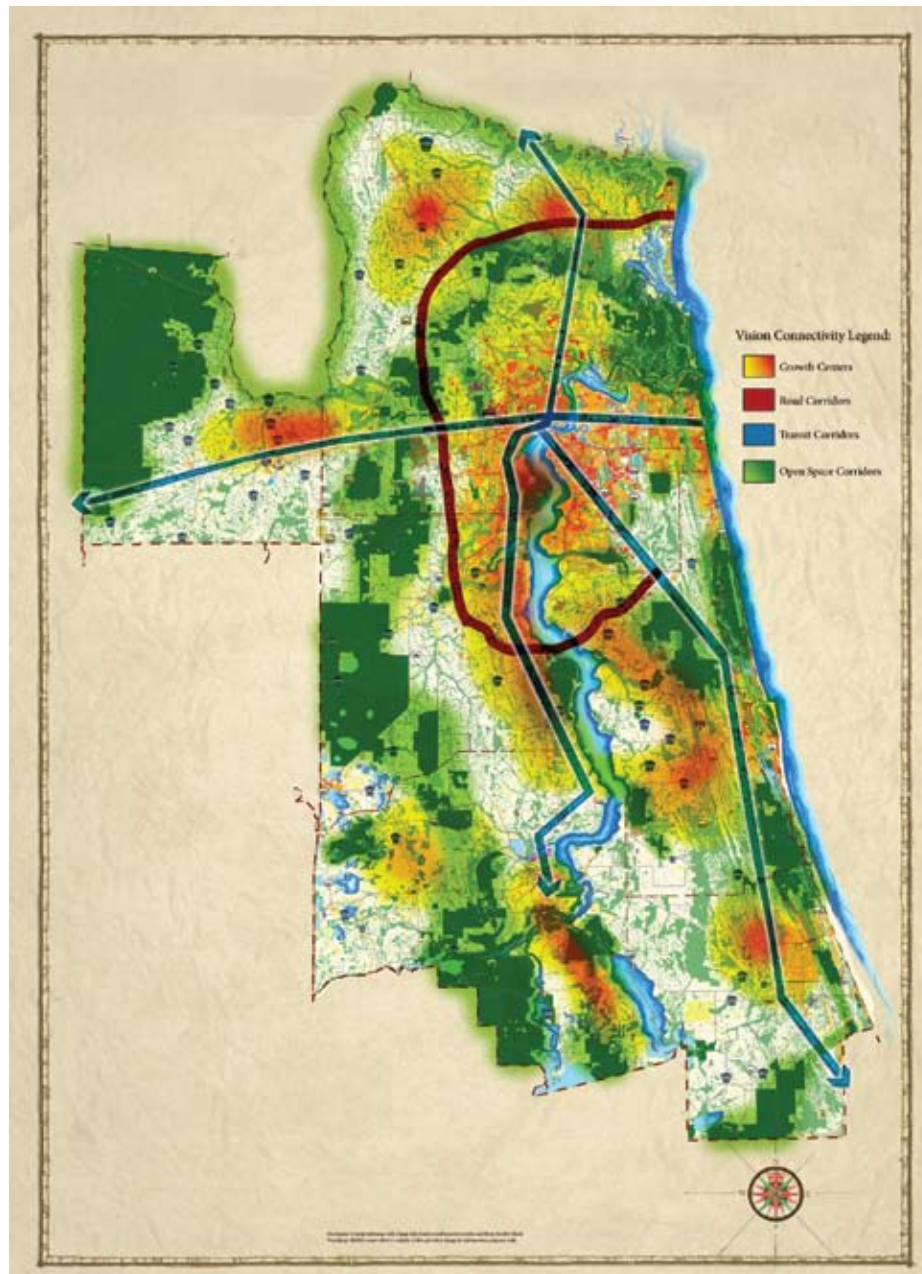


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How will we know if we are successful?

Our measures will help us track how our region is doing at accomplishing our goals.

What could the First Coast be like?

Our Vision for Prosperity

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.



Princess Place Preserve

What could the First Coast be like?

Our Vision for Community

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.

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.



Green Cove Springs

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,

are located within walking distance of most of our residents, and we consider this goal as we locate new parks and new residential development.

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

What could the First Coast be like?

Our Vision for Resiliency

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 are 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.



American Beach

What could the First Coast be like?

Our Vision for 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.



Ravine State Gardens

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.

What could the First Coast be like?

Our Vision for Nature

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 inter-connected 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.



John M. Bethea State Forest in Baker County

What could the First Coast be like?

Our Vision for Mobility

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.



Dames Point Bridge

Where do we go from here?

The Regional Community Institute is providing First Coast Vision to the Northeast Florida Regional Council to inform dialogue on the future of Northeast Florida and the update to the Strategic Regional Policy Plan. We are including a set of metrics to establish a baseline and to measure our success, and the detailed goals and objectives drafted by our experts and vetted by the public. We stand ready to participate in the following action items at the request of the Regional Council, and we welcome a future where we are all part of a movement to achieve our vision.

Action Items

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 noted below 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.

Create a set of vulnerability maps for the region. Bring together leadership and experts from the region to determine climate change impact, and, if indicated, mitigation and adaptation plans.

Convene leadership and 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.

Assemble leadership and experts in the region to study and review the feasibility of a Regional Housing Assistance Mechanism to transition the region to an all voucher system, and away from government-owned or subsidized public housing. This will not apply to senior or special needs housing. This group will also propose a housing review methodology for significant developments to NEFRC.

Foster the relationships developed through the visioning process with partners who support the health of our region. This includes measuring outcomes related to growth management planning by including health metrics, ensuring that organizations



Bridge of Lions

that support a healthy region are always at the table when vision implementation is discussed, and considering the impact of decisions impacting the future of our region on the health of those who live and work in Northeast Florida.

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.

Participate in initiatives that convene regional leadership and build on the relationships that have been developed during the visioning process. Our local governments must decide how First Coast Vision can be incorporated into their communities. Provide education, support and encouragement to help them as they consider their futures.

Who is responsible?

We all have a role in the future of the First Coast. The Northeast Florida Regional Council will choose and coordinate the action steps. They will pursue funding to address the action steps and to use the policy work accomplished by First Coast Vision to create a Strategic Regional Policy Plan that is accepted by the region as the guideline to achieve our vision for the future. They will ask RCI to undertake policy initiatives as needed. If funding is not obtained, NEFRC will use the same approach that

RCI has used since its inception: good ideas come from our residents, and our residents are best able to see them achieved. The volunteer network established during Reality Check First Coast and continued through First Coast Vision has never been stronger, and as we change our focus to include education, can only get larger.

As the band Timbuk3 sang in 1986, "The future's so bright, we've got to wear shades!"

Who are we?

RCI Board Members:

As of September, 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. Elaine Brown, Government Affairs Director, Killashee Investments
- Hon. Doug Conkey, Clay County Board of County Commissioners
- Ms. Shannon Eller, Government and Public Relations Officer, 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, Kilberg and Associates
- Hon. Jon Netts, Mayor, City of Palm Coast
- Hon. Bob Page, Mayor, City of Green Cove Springs
- Ms. Mary Alice Phelan, Director/Community Relations, St. Vincent's HealthCare
- 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

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Affordable Housing

Mr. Sid Ansbacher
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Mr. Tom Crawford
Ms. Wight Greger
Mr. Carlton Jones
Mr. G. Hollea Rachal
Ms. Denise Wallace
Ms. Carol Worsham

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Mr. Brad Thoburn

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Mr. Wally Conway
Ms. Claire Goforth
Dr. J. David Lambert
Mr. Allen Tilley

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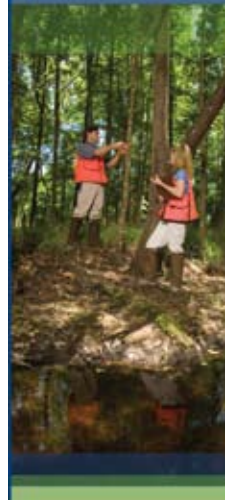
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Our **U.S. Forest Resources** group, headquartered in Fernandina Beach, sustainably manages more than 2 million acres in nine states.

TerraPointe Services, our real estate subsidiary, works with communities to help plan responsibly for the future and offers a mixture of development, conservation and recreation properties.

With our Corporate Headquarters in Jacksonville, we're proud of our long history in Northeast Florida.



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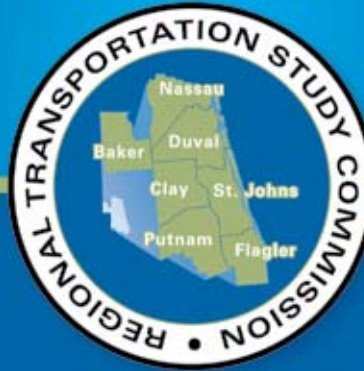
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