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## Regional Planning Councils A Return on Investment

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*Regional planning councils are Florida's only multipurpose regional entities that plan for and coordinate intergovernmental solutions on multi-jurisdictional issues, support regional economic development, and provide assistance to local governments.*

### SPURRING ECONOMIC GROWTH THROUGH REGIONAL APPROACHES

- **Economic Development Districts:** Regional planning councils are designated as Economic Development Districts by the U.S. Economic Development Administration. From January 2003 to August 2010, the U.S. Economic Development Administration invested \$66 million in 60 projects in the State of Florida to create/retain 13,700 jobs and leverage \$1 billion in private capital investment consistent with Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies developed by regional planning councils serving as Economic Development Districts.
- **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies:** Working with local economic development organizations, local chambers of commerce, and business throughout each of the 11 regions, regional planning councils are updating their five-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies, as required by the U.S. Economic Development Administration, using the Florida Chamber Foundation's Six-Pillars as the organizing framework. These updated strategies will ensure the alignment of these plans with the State of Florida's statewide five-year strategic economic development plan, encouraging a stable and diverse economy, improved living conditions, and prosperity for Floridians.
- **Florida Department of Economic Opportunity Regional Forums:** Through the in-kind donation of staff time and resources, and at no cost to the State, Florida's 11 regional planning councils are collaborating with the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity to host 10 Five-Year Strategic Plan Regional Forums throughout the state, reaching out to over 1,000 Floridians representing economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, workforce boards, education, and private sector business leaders.
- **Leveraging State Funds:** Every dollar invested by the State in FY 2011 through its annual appropriation to the regional planning councils generated 11 dollars in local, federal, and private direct investment to meet regional needs.
- **Revolving Loan Funds:** Some regional planning councils administer a revolving loan fund portfolio composed of federal and state funds to help grow small businesses and create jobs. Over the past 10 years, a total of 150 loans in the amount of \$38.6M have been made, assisting in the creation of over 1,800 jobs. In addition, brownfields revolving loan funds in the amount of \$5.8M have led thus far to the clean-up and redevelopment of nine brownfield sites.
- **Economic Data and Analysis:** Regional planning councils are equipped with state of the art econometric software (REMI – Regional Economic Modeling, Inc.) and have the ability to provide objective economic analysis on policy and investment decisions, often in support of local economic development organizations, helping them compete nationally and globally for investment and skilled personnel, resulting in jobs that are a value added benefit to the community. Over the past 10 years, regional planning councils conducted 420 REMI studies.

- **Broadband Planning:** Regional Planning Councils are undertaking a broadband mapping and planning initiative that will increase broadband access to small cities and rural communities through better data collection and planning, which is essential to diversified economic development and prosperity.
- **Federal Consistency Review:** Over the past 10 years, regional planning councils have provided required Federal Consistency Review to 14,800 projects, ensuring access to hundreds of millions of federal infrastructure and economic development investment dollars annually.

#### **ASSISTING LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

- **Implementation of Community Planning:** Regional planning councils develop and maintain Strategic Regional Policy Plans to guide growth and development focusing on economic development, emergency preparedness, transportation, affordable housing and resources of regional significance. In addition, regional planning councils provide coordination and review of various programs such as Local Government Comprehensive Plans, Developments of Regional Impact and Power Plant Ten-year Siting Plans. Regional planning council reviewers have the regional knowledge to conduct reviews efficiently and provide State agencies reliable regional insight.
- **Local Government Assistance:** Regional planning councils are also a significant source of cost effective, high quality planning experts for communities, providing technical assistance in areas such as: grant writing, mapping, community planning, plan review, procurement, dispute resolution, economic development, marketing, statistical analysis, and information technology. Several regional planning councils provide staff for transportation planning organizations, natural resource planning, and emergency preparedness planning.
- **Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern:** Regional planning councils provide technical support to businesses and economic developers to promote regional job creation strategies and assist in identifying priority, shovel-ready sites for catalyst projects, which serve as economic generators for the growth of a regional target or industry cluster.
- **Geographic Information Systems and Data Clearinghouse:** Regional planning councils are leaders in geographic information systems mapping and data support systems. Many local governments rely on regional planning councils for these services. The data generated is also used by business and development communities, economic development organizations, and state agencies.
- **Economies of Scale:** Cost savings are realized in transportation, land use, and infrastructure when addressed by regional planning councils. A regional approach promotes vibrant economies while reducing unproductive competition among local communities.

#### **ENSURING PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY & WELFARE**

- **Statewide Regional Evacuation:** Regional planning councils have special expertise in emergency planning, and in partnership with the Florida Department of Emergency Management, were the first in the nation to prepare a Statewide Regional Evacuation Study using a uniform report format and transportation evacuation modeling program, which was completed in 2010. This Statewide Regional Evacuation Study received national awards from the National Association of Development Organizations, National Association of Regional Councils, American Planning Association, and Florida Planning and Zoning Association.
- **Emergency Preparedness:** Since 1981, in addition to preparing regional evacuation plans, regional planning councils have been preparing Post Disaster Redevelopment Plans, Hazard Mitigation Plans, Continuity of Operations Plans, and Business Disaster Planning Kits.
- **Local Emergency Planning:** Local Emergency Planning Committees are staffed by regional planning councils and provide a direct relationship between the State and local businesses. Regional planning councils provide thousands of hours of training to local first responders annually. Local businesses have developed a trusted working relationship with regional planning council staff.

- **Emergency Response:** Regional planning councils are a source of low cost, high quality planning and training experts that support counties and state agencies when developing a training course or exercise. Regional planning councils provide cost effective training to first responders, both public and private, in the areas of Hazardous Materials, Hazardous Waste, Incident Command, Disaster Response, Pre- and Post-Disaster Planning, Continuity of Operations, and Governance. Several regional planning councils house Regional Domestic Security Task Force planners. Over the past 10 years, regional planning councils have trained more than 50,000 first responders and other emergency management personnel.
- **Small Quantity Hazardous Waste Generators:** The Small Quantity Generator program ensures the proper handling and disposal of hazardous waste generated at the county level. Often smaller counties cannot afford to maintain a program without imposing large fees on local businesses. Many counties have lowered or eliminated fees, because regional planning council programs realize economies of scale, provide businesses a local contact regarding compliance questions and assistance, and provide training and information regarding management of hazardous waste. Over the past 10 years, regional planning councils have conducted close to 7,000 small quantity hazardous waste generator assessments.

### FOSTERING REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

- **Regional Visioning:** Regional planning councils are conveners of regional visions that link economic development, infrastructure, environment, land use, and transportation into long term investment plans. Regional Planning Councils are actively engaged in the following regional visioning activities in partnership with the business community:
  - **2050 How Shall We Grow Regional Vision:** Developed by the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council and MyRegion.Org/Central Florida Partnership, the vision stands for conserving the region's most critical resources; promoting future growth and development in compact urban centers; connecting centers with multi-modal, mixed-use corridors; and, taking pressure off the countryside by increasing the density and intensity of urban centers.
  - **Heartland 2060:** Begun in 2007 by the Central Florida Regional Planning Council and with the leadership of private, public, civic, and environmental organizations, Heartland 2060 is creating a vision for the future of seven counties that enables growth, ensures a vibrant economic and social life, and supports healthy communities, while preserving natural areas, and protecting wildlife and agricultural value.
  - **One Bay: Livable Communities:** One Bay is a diverse partnership of private and public leaders aligned to facilitate a regional visioning process to achieve a sustainable, high quality Tampa Bay region, in which the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council is a partner along with six other regional partners including the Tampa Bay Partnership and Tampa Bay Chapter of the Urban Land Institute.
  - **Reality Check First Coast/First Coast Vision:** The Regional Community Institute, a private, non-profit organization affiliated with the Northeast Florida Regional Council, is building on the work of Reality Check First Coast Vision, which is a vision for growth in the Northeast Florida Region for the next 50 years.
  - **Sustainable Communities Initiative/Southeast Florida Regional Partnership:** This joint effort of the South Florida and Treasure Coast Regional Planning Councils and over 200 public, private, and nonprofit/civic organizations within a seven-county area will result in a Regional Vision and Blueprint for Economic Prosperity. Work is currently being conducted to establish a comprehensive regional plan and identify critical projects and infrastructure to improve sustainability. These work products will be used as a guide to prioritize and focus future local, state, and federal investment and policies. The overarching purpose of the resulting regional plan is to help communities become economically strong and environmentally sustainable.
  - **Sustainable Emerald Coast:** The Committee for a Sustainable Emerald Coast was established in June, 2006. The Committee developed recommendations to enable sustainable growth and

development in the four-county region in the following four areas: Economic Diversity and Prosperity; Environmental Stewardship; Access to Education, Health Care and Culture; and Sustainable Growth and Development. Subsequent to completion of the final plan in 2008, these areas were incorporated into the West Florida Strategic Regional Policy Plan and the Committee now exists as an Advisory Committee to the West Florida Regional Planning Council to monitor and ensure implementation of the recommendations.

- **Sharing Expertise:** Due to the varying expertise of regional planning councils and their staff, regional planning councils serve on the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI); Enterprise Florida, Inc.'s Stakeholders Council; Florida Chamber Foundation's Six Pillars Caucus; State Emergency Response Commission; Florida Greenways and Trails Council; and Safe Mobility of Life Coalition. Regional planning councils also help shape statewide plans such as the Florida Transportation Plan 2060.
- **Multidisciplinary Viewpoint:** Regional planning councils provide a comprehensive, multidisciplinary view of issues and a forum to address regional issues cooperatively. Potential impacts on the community from development activities are vetted to achieve win-win solutions as council members, which are one-third gubernatorial appointees and two-thirds local elected officials, represent business, government and citizen interests.
- **Collaboration and Dispute Resolution:** Regional planning councils provide a forum for regional collaboration to solve problems and reduce costly inter-jurisdictional disputes. Regional planning councils have convened regional summits and workshops on issues such as workforce housing, response to hurricanes, visioning, and job creation.

#### REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL STATUTORY MANDATES

- **Chapter 186, F.S.**, including the following: providing technical assistance to local governments; engaging in regional planning; administering federal and state grants; developing solutions for problems that are of greater-than-local concern; providing input into state policy development; assisting local governments with activities designed to promote and facilitate economic development; cooperating with federal and state agencies in planning for emergency management; establishing and conducting a cross-acceptance negotiation process with local governments to resolve inconsistencies between applicable plans; coordinating land development and transportation policies that foster region-wide transportation systems; preparing and adopting a Strategic Regional Policy Plan to address regional resources and facilities; establishing by rule a dispute resolution process to reconcile differences on planning and growth management issues; and, providing an annual joint report of activities.
- **Chapter 163, F.S.**, including regional planning councils' roles and responsibilities pertaining to comprehensive planning, and specifically under the Expedited State Review Process and State Coordinating Review Process, the role of regional planning councils in reviewing local government comprehensive plan amendments.
- **Section 253.7828, F.S.**, to recognize the special character of the lands and waters designated by the state as the Cross Florida Greenways State Recreation and Conservation Area and not take any action that would impair its use.
- **Sections 260.0142 and 260.018, F.S.**, to serve on the Florida Greenways and Trails Council, to recognize the special character of publicly owned lands and waters designated by the state as greenways and trails and not take any action that would impair their use, and to identify these lands and waterways in each regional planning council's Strategic Regional Policy Plan.
- **Section 288.0656 and 288.975, F.S.**, to serve on the Rural Economic Development Initiative and to participate in developing and reviewing Military Base Reuse Plans.
- **Section 335.188, F.S.**, to provide input into the development of the Florida Department of Transportation's access control classification system.

- **Section 339.155(5)(b), F.S.**, directing regional planning councils to develop transportation goals and policies as part of the Strategic Regional Policy Plan consistent with the goals and policies of the Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Florida Transportation Plan; and, review urbanized area transportation plans and other planning products and provide the Department of Transportation and respective Metropolitan Planning Organization with written recommendations.
- **Section 378.205(2), F.S.**, to provide comments upon request regarding phosphate mine reclamation.
- **Chapter 380, F.S.**, including regional planning councils' roles and responsibilities pertaining to the Development of Regional Impact Program (e.g., conducting pre-application conferences, review of an application to determine sufficiency, and review notices of proposed change) as well as serving on Resource Planning and Management Committees as designated by the Governor prior to an area being designated an Area of Critical State Concern, and conducting pre-application conferences for Developments of Regional Impact.
- **Chapter 403, F.S.**, including the following: serving on Ecosystem Management Advisory Teams; preparing a report containing recommendations that address the impact on the public of a proposed electrical power plant and the degree to which the electrical power plant is consistent with the applicable provisions of the Strategic Regional Policy Plan; participating in land use and certification hearings regarding a proposed facility; providing a report regarding the impact of a proposed transmission line or corridor; coordinating the Local Hazardous Waste Management Assessments for counties within a regional planning council's jurisdiction that decline to perform this task and assisting the Department of Environmental Protection to coordinate the development of these assessments; designating one or more sites within the region at which a regional hazardous waste storage or treatment facility could be located; and participating in the Expedited Permitting Process.
- **Section 419.001(6), F.S.**, to provide dispute resolution, if requested, for conflicts arising over site selection of community residential homes.
- **Section 420.609, F.S.**, to serve on the Affordable Housing Study Commission.
- **Section 985.682(8), F.S.**, to provide dispute resolution services to reconcile differences on the siting of correctional facilities between the Department of Juvenile Justice, local governments, and private citizens.