



2022

Annual Report

2023

LOCAL
KNOWLEDGE

REGIONAL
SOLUTIONS

STATEWIDE
IMPACT

A scenic sunset over a body of water. The sky is filled with vibrant orange, red, and purple clouds. In the foreground, two ducks are swimming on the water. In the background, a fountain with multiple jets of water is illuminated with purple and blue lights. To the right, a tall building is visible against the sunset sky.

The Florida Regional Councils Association is an alliance of Florida's ten Regional Planning Councils and serves to enhance regional collaboration throughout the state.

Our Mission

Leveraging partnerships to build a strong economy
and improve the lives of all Floridians



President's Message

Supporting communities successfully through economic recovery, preparing for the impacts of the next natural disaster, and identifying best practices to create resilience and sustainability for the future, Florida's regional planning councils have led the way this year. In partnership with the US Economic Development Administration, Florida's ten regional planning councils prepared Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDs) which serve as blueprints for economic growth in each region. Each RPC also worked with the Florida Division of Emergency Management (DEM) to ensure first responders have access to training and the forum for collaboration to better prepare for the next emergency response. Along with many locally developed initiatives and activities, each RPC is actively supporting resiliency planning statewide, with five RPCs leading their region's resiliency coalitions.

The Florida Regional Councils Association (FRCA) is a pillar that supports the building and sustaining of partnerships regionally, statewide, and nationally. Through internal coordination among RPCs and collaborative partnerships with associations such as the Florida Association of Counties, Florida League of Cities, Small County Coalition, Florida Chapter of the American Planning Association, Florida Chamber of Commerce, and many non-profit organizations, FRCA fosters effective relationships and delivers programs with state agencies and Florida policymakers.

During this demanding year, it has been my privilege to serve as President of FRCA and work with the Policy Board Members throughout the state to support the critical mission of these multi-disciplinary organizations. Regional planning councils bring local knowledge to create regional solutions and make impacts statewide on the shared problems and unlimited opportunities of Florida's communities. Highly technical and dedicated staff work in each of the 67 counties with local governments, state and Federal agencies, the business community, and citizens to bring a better quality of life to Florida. We proudly bring you this Annual Report that reflects the diverse work of our organizations in the past year.

John Lesman, President
East Central Florida Regional Planning Council
Florida Regional Councils Association



1st VICE PRESIDENT
Commissioner Tray Hawkins
Emerald Coast Regional Council

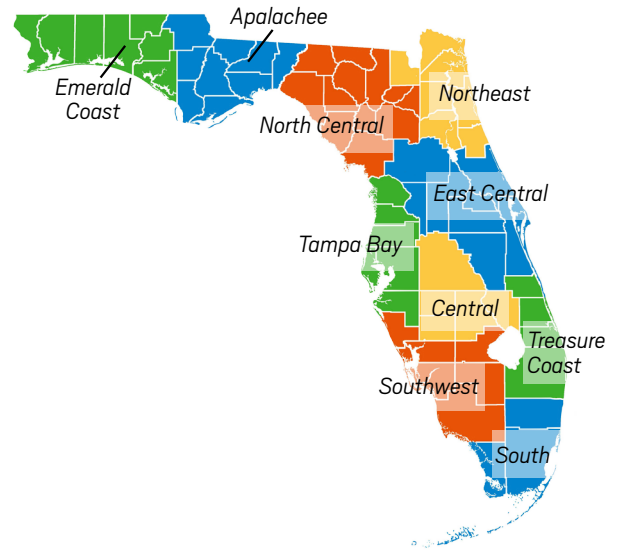


2nd VICE PRESIDENT
Councilman Jeff Hmara
Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council



PAST PRESIDENT
Commissioner Kristin Dozier
Apalachee Regional Planning Council

Policy Board



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Honorable Jack Porter, City of Tallahassee

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Honorable Kelly Owens, Okeechobee County
Jackie Tucker, Gubernatorial Appointee

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John Lesman, Gubernatorial Appointee, President
Honorable Sean Parks, Commissioner, Lake County

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Honorable John Drew, Nassau County
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Honorable Michael Udine, Broward County

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TAMPA BAY REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

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Honorable Jack Mariano, Pasco County
Barbara Sheen Todd, Gubernatorial Appointee

TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

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Reece Parrish, Gubernatorial Appointee
Honorable Doug Smith, Martin County

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Vice Chair, Tom Lanahan, Treasure Coast RPC
Treasurer, Tara McCue, East Central Florida RPC
Immediate Past Chair, Sean Sullivan, Tampa Bay RPC

STAFF

Ronald L. Book, Executive Director
850.224.3427 | 305.510.2000
ron@rlbookpa.com

Rana Brown, Governmental Affairs Consultant
850.224.3427 | 305.510.2000
rana@rlbookpa.com

Denise Imbler, Association Director
850.312.3685 | 850.509.4320
dimbler@arpc.org





2022-2023

By the Numbers

▶ **5**

**METROPOLITAN/
TRANSPORTATION
PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS
STAFFED**

▶ **97**

**ECONOMIC ANALYSES
COMPLETED (REMI)**

▶ **1,427**

**HAZARDOUS MATERIALS
INSPECTIONS OF SMALL
QUANTITY GENERATORS (SQG)**

▶ **174**

**REVOLVING LOAN FUND
APPLICATIONS REVIEWED**

▶ **2,541**

**FIRST RESPONDERS TRAINED
WITH LEPC/HMEP FUNDING**

▶ **1,301,677**

**TRANSPORTATION
DISADVANTAGED
TRIPS PLANNED**

Regional Councils

bring local governments together to solve problems at the regional level and help communities grow.

	Date Established	2023 Regional Population ¹	Governing Board Size	Staff Size (FTE) ²	Square Miles ³	Budget (in millions)
 <p>Apalachee Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Wakulla</p>	Aug. 23, 1977	497,784	27	17	6,757	\$7.6
 <p>Central Florida DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands, Okeechobee, Polk</p>	July 1, 1974	1,002,211	18	21	5,287	\$5.5
 <p>East Central Florida Brevard, Lake, Marion, Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Sumter, Volusia</p>	Feb. 22, 1962	4,617,326	35	18	9,244	\$3.5
 <p>Emerald Coast Bay, Escambia, Holmes, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton, Washington</p>	Oct. 1, 1964	1,071,778	28	28	6,509	\$8.6
 <p>North Central Florida Alachua, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor, Union</p>	May 7, 1969	598,011	45	6	8,660	\$1.57
 <p>Northeast Florida Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam, St. Johns</p>	Feb. 14, 1977	1,933,401	35	16	5,097	\$2.7
 <p>South Florida Broward, Miami-Dade, Monroe</p>	July 1, 1974	4,827,044	19	13	7,492	\$3.3
 <p>Southwest Florida Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Lee, Sarasota</p>	Nov. 8, 1973	1,922,304	36	3	7,278	\$1.0
 <p>Tampa Bay Citrus, Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas</p>	Feb. 16, 1962	3,933,034	44	12	4,998	\$2.7
 <p>Treasure Coast Indian River, Martin, Palm Beach, St. Lucie</p>	Aug. 19, 1976	2,231,974	28	10	4,441	\$2.5

¹Source: Bureau of Economic and Business Research (2023 Estimates)

²FTE means Full-Time Equivalent.

³Total land and water area.

QUALITY OF *Life*

The RPCs assist local communities as they implement community visions and strategies. Brownfields programs across the state work to provide resources that clean up abandoned or underused commercial and industrial sites. Many RPCs also provide other services to enhance the quality of life using GIS mapping and affordable housing initiatives.



“Wills on Wheels” an AARP Community Challenge Provides legal assistance via mobile clinics throughout the Apalachee Region

Apalachee RPC, Legal Services of North Florida, and funding partner AARP

In coordination with county senior citizen agencies, this initiative, dubbed “Wills on Wheels”, provided information on estate planning, end-of-life planning and assistance to help resolve heirs’ property issues. At each clinic, residents were given a presentation covering The Last Will and Testament document, Healthcare Directives and Surrogate Forms, The Living Will document, The Power of Attorney Document, and Guardianship forms. Eligible attendees were provided questionnaires that will be used to draft documents prior to executing them. A total of five initial clinics were held around the region, reaching over 200 residents. Questionnaires are being received and plans are being made to coordinate meetings between the residents and volunteer attorneys for document execution.



Housing Summit Considers Potential solutions to affordable housing in Martin County, with a desire to ensure that the solutions fit local conditions

Treasure Coast RPC and Housing Solutions Council of Martin County

The Summit was well attended by the public, non-profit organizations, local elected officials, Florida Senator Gayle Harrell, and staff for other state and federal elected officials. Continuing work includes local affordable housing partners information, policy guidance, and support towards resolving this critical economic and social concern.



A Resilient Shoreline Model Ordinance template to support local governments when making updates to local plans and ordinances related to shoreline protection developed for Tampa Bay

Tampa Bay RPC and funding partner the Florida Department of Environmental Protection

The new Resilient Shoreline Model Ordinance template is one of the first of its kind in the state and defines an integrated set of policies to ensure that all types of shoreline protection strategies are designed to be resilient to changing sea levels and tidally influenced flooding through 2070. It also considers both community flood protection benefits and ecological integrity of coastal habitats and shorelines on bay waters and riverine systems. The template will help local governments streamline their review and approval processes and if adopted, will provide guidance to property owners and contractors to create shoreline projects that increase community resilience and improve local habitats and water quality. Visit tbrpc.org/shoreline-model to download the template.



The Central Florida RPC hosted the Central Florida Economic Recovery and Resiliency Workshop | *The workshop provided an opportunity for local policy makers, county administrative staff and economic development planners to discuss the framework for implementation of goals, strategies, and actions the region may pursue to achieve economic recovery and resiliency.*

EMERGENCY Preparedness

Working together, RPCs conduct cooperative statewide projects such as the award winning statewide Regional Evacuation Study, the Energy Assurance Study, and coastal resiliency planning.

A state-wide exercise of Florida's Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams, Mutual Aid Radio Communication teams, FSU's Florida Unmanned Aerial Search team, and the Florida Incident Support Team was hosted at Camp Blanding and the Clay County Emergency Operations Center

East Central Florida RPC, Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) and the Florida State Fire College

The training event simulated a realistic emergency scenario, challenging the participants to coordinate their efforts in a time-sensitive and high-pressure environment. It involved search and rescue, incident management, and austere communications missions. The exercise assessed the effectiveness of each USAR team's operational capabilities, including search and rescue techniques, medical triage, logistical support, and mobile communication. It incorporated many lessons learned from recent real-life events and offered unique technological tools that some participants may not have previously worked with. These full-scale exercises not only serve as valuable training opportunities for all involved but also highlight the importance of ongoing preparedness and continuous improvement in safeguarding communities during times of crisis.



Electric & Propane School Bus First Responder Training helps to ensure public safety continues to be a priority

Southeast Florida Clean Cities Coalition, the South Florida Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) Region 10, Florida Transportation Systems, Inc, and the City of Hollywood Fire Rescue & Beach Safety

According to vehicle registration data, Florida is #2 in the nation for electric vehicle consumers. This trend is expected to continue along with acceleration of other alternative fuel vehicles such as propane, hydrogen, and renewable natural gas. Alternative fuel training for school buses was selected to coincide with Broward County Public School's (BCPS) contract with Blue Bird to supply 60 new electric school buses. The order replaced part of BCPS diesel fleet with zero-emission vehicles through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Volkswagen Mitigation Settlement Trust Fund. This deal marks the largest electric school bus fleet purchase in Blue Bird's history. BCPS also operates the largest propane school bus fleet in the state.



Lessons from a mass casualty incident (MCI) in Las Vegas

Northeast Florida Regional Council's Region 3 Healthcare Coalition, the First Coast Disaster Council, and the Northeast Florida Regional Domestic Security Task Force

Deputy Chief Sasha Larkin and Lieutenant Braden Schrag of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department presented to an audience of over 300 people on the Route 91 Harvest Music Festival mass casualty incident (MCI) that occurred in Las Vegas on October 1, 2017. Attendees came from various professional backgrounds, including elected officials, law enforcement, fire and rescue services, hospitals, healthcare, emergency management, and more. The presenters walked the participants through the shooting incident from start to finish while highlighting operational considerations of managing 20,000+ concertgoers and an unknown gunman. The officers also discussed recovery from an incident of this scale and magnitude. Response organizations and local hospitals endured trauma following the shooting and surge of patients. Programs and resources had to be allocated for mental health and resiliency centers to assist the community with healing from this catastrophic event.

ECONOMIC *Development*

RPCs complete regional economic impact analysis using the nationally recognized REMI software, facilitate Post Disaster Redevelopment Planning, and administer revolving loan funds for small business loans and brownfields redevelopment.



The Apalachee Regional Broadband Plan and Map will ensure that the predominantly rural, nine-county Apalachee Region is in the best possible position to access state, federal, and private resources for broadband network expansion
Apalachee RPC and the Florida State University Barnebey Planning & Development Lab, with funding partner FloridaCommerce

As technology continues to advance, many rural communities are working to close the digital divide and create digital equity through widespread broadband internet access. The Study focuses on determining areas of insufficient broadband infrastructure, identifying potential service providers, and determining the needed improvements and associated costs for construction of broadband infrastructure. Community input remained a high priority throughout the project, and staff provided 25 in-person opportunities for citizens of Liberty and Wakulla counties to provide feedback on broadband internet accessibility and affordability.



Regional Planning Councils Receive EDA Disaster Recovery Funding
Central Florida, East Central Florida, Southwest Florida and Tampa Bay Regional Planning Councils with funding partner Economic Development Administration

The impacts of Hurricanes Ian and Nicole were experienced statewide with long-term recovery efforts continuing on for the foreseeable future. With these funds each region now has a Disaster Recovery Coordinator to support long-term economic recovery and resiliency activities.



East Central Florida RPC Develops Economic Strategy for City of Palm Bay
The East Central Florida RPC economic development staff researched and developed the City of Palm Bay Economic Strategic Plan. An analysis was conducted to analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to the economic development pillars — People, Places, and Prosperity. A Strategies and Recommendations Report was completed in 2022 and included actions the city can undertake to further economic development and potential funding sources to implement those actions.



The Central Florida RPC and the City of Lakeland created an Award-Winning Leaner Comprehensive Plan
Central Florida RPC and City of Lakeland

Originally adopted in 1991, the City of Lakeland Comprehensive Plan contained more than 700 pages of text. To make it more user friendly, the updated Plan was reduced by more than 500 pages and reflects the citizens' vision for their community. All areas of Lakeland were engaged to determine what is important to residents of all incomes, all neighborhoods, and all ethnicities.

The Central Florida RPC drafted amendments to the Plan to unite community visioning and comprehensive planning to guide and balance the future economic, social, physical, environmental, and fiscal management of development and redevelopment of Lakeland. The Plan provides the philosophy and goals, objectives and policies that establish consistency with other City adopted regulations including the City of Lakeland Land Development Code and is consistent with Florida Statutory requirements.

In anticipation of a nationally branded fishing resort developing nearby, the Town of Welaka developed a vision of its downtown and plan for economic development.

Northeast Florida RC and Town of Welaka, funding partner FloridaCommerce

Through a series of six meetings, the Town of Welaka Downtown Vision was developed and included project priorities and various funding mechanisms providing a guiding document for future development.

The Northeast Florida RC designed an engagement process that was participative, appealing, and transparent. The foundation of the process was a visual preference survey that allowed town residents to vote on what architectural elements and styles they preferred using Mentimeter, a tool that allows for quantifiable feedback. Residents were presented with several architectural elements and styles such as single-story versus two-story buildings, log cabin, coastal, or board and batten designs as well as green infrastructure options and golf cart and bike paths.



\$38 Million to Support the Shrimp Industry Recovery in Southwest Florida

Southwest Florida RPC

More than 75% of the pink shrimp harvested in the United States comes from the west coast of Florida. San Carlos Island, located in the Southwest Florida region, serves as a primary site for shrimpers to sell their catch and refuel. Hurricane Ian severely impacted not only the shrimp boat fleet in the region, but also the facilities used by shrimpers along the Gulf Coast. Prior to Hurricane Ian, more than 50 shrimp boats made up the harvesting industry fleet; today only 10 boats remain in operation. All docks on San Carlos Island were lost along with many of the support facilities including worker housing. To assist in recovery efforts, the Southwest Florida RPC wrote grants totaling over \$38 million. As they recover, the local shrimpers are considering more resilient practices for rebuilding docks, support facilities, and worker housing.



Transportation

RPCs participate in the Transportation Disadvantaged program, as staff to local Metropolitan/ Transportation Planning Organizations, and provide planning services for Complete Streets, Safe Routes to Schools, and Greenways and Trails.



Regional Stormwater Resilience Pilot Plan guides long range planning

Emerald Coast RC and Florida-Alabama Transportation Planning Organization (TPO)

Stormwater runoff is one of the most impactful environmental issues affecting northwest Florida. The Emerald Coast RC under the Florida-Alabama Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) is excited to be developing a Regional Stormwater Resilience Pilot Plan using Transportation Management Area (TMA) funds.

The Stormwater Resilience Pilot Plan will identify local stormwater needs and assets, focusing on impacts of projects currently included in the TPO's 20-year Long-Range Transportation Plan. The goal is to develop a process by which local governments can work with FDOT during the early planning stage to develop projects with multiple community-based benefits. This stormwater pilot project will achieve three primary goals: development of a process for identifying and aligning TPO, FDOT, and community stormwater priorities/needs; identification of up to three sites where regional stormwater parks can be designed to meet both FDOT and community stormwater needs; and the development of conceptual layout/plans for the regional stormwater parks identified, including proposed project estimates.

Gainesville Metropolitan Area Multimodal Level of Service Report identifies unmet transportation system needs and develop priority projects for the Gainesville Metropolitan Area

North Central Florida RPC

The North Central Florida RPC provided staff support services to the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization (MTPO) for the Gainesville Urbanized Area—an interlocal agreement organization among the City of Gainesville, Alachua County and the Florida Department of Transportation. As part of the services provided, the North Central Florida RPC staff annually prepares the Gainesville Metropolitan Area Multimodal Level of Service Report. The Service Report provides level of service analysis for automotive/highway, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit modes of travel in the Gainesville Metropolitan Area. Council staff compiled and analyzed FDOT, City, and County traffic count data in preparing the Service Report. The bicycle, pedestrian and transit levels of service estimates of all functionally classified collector and arterial roadways within the Gainesville Metropolitan Area are provided in the report.

The Service Report enables the North Central Florida RPC, in partnership with the MTPO, to identify unmet transportation system needs and develop priority projects to enhance the operational efficiency of the transportation system for the Gainesville Metropolitan Area.

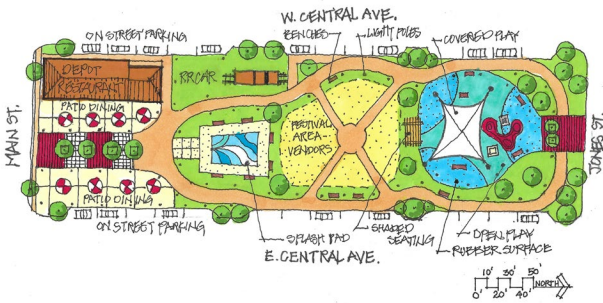


ECRC Transportation Director Mary Beth Washnock presenting the Rural Regional Transportation Plan (RRTP), a pilot project developed with the Florida Department of Transportation. The RRTP interactive map can be found at: <http://www.ecrc.org/RRTPMAP>.

REGIONAL *Convening*

RPCs serve as regional conveners. They lead community and regional vision efforts, engage the public in a variety of plans and programs, and maintain Strategic Regional Policy Plans.

The Central Florida RPC, in partnership with the City of Bowling Green in Hardee County, developed a downtown vision and action plan to create connections and help build Downtown Bowling Green into a thriving area
Central Florida RPC and the City of Bowling Green with funding partner FloridaCommerce



The Imagine Bowling Green: Downtown Vision and Action Plan is an innovative, community-vision directed approach to the development of a Downtown Master Plan and Land Development Code amendments for implementation that promotes economic development in the community, delivers safe and convenient mobility options, provides connections within the City and beyond its borders, and works to maintain an attractive and environmentally friendly community. The planning process recognized the downtown area will not thrive without connections to other places within the city and beyond the city's limits, and identified projects and policies and the foundation for creating economic recovery and resiliency in the downtown while respecting the area's history and cultural identity.

Community leaders from public, nonprofit, and private sectors engaged in action-oriented conversations around implementing Low Impact Development (LID) in East Central Florida.

East Central Florida RPC and partners from the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Services and Volusia County

The half-day workshop identified key challenges to implementing LID and Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI). Break-out groups brainstormed strategies to improve water quality and reduce flooding through resilient, nature-based stormwater solutions. Additionally, mechanisms and incentives to incorporate and emphasize LID in site planning and stormwater management were discussed. The workshop was hosted at Volusia County's Lyonia Environmental Center, a hands-on educational attraction that helped highlight the need for nature-based, low-impact standards. Next, the partnership will review the workshop findings with the goal of helping local governments and entities throughout Florida implement LID and GSI principles including presentation of workshop highlights, draft LID ordinances, and companion LID Implementation Guidebook to regional stakeholders for feedback.



The South Florida and Treasure Coast RPCs held their Annual Joint Meeting at the Long Key Natural Area and Nature Center in Davie, Florida.

The meeting featured updates from state and local experts on the 2023 Florida Legislative Session; Florida's Coral Reef Protection and Restoration initiatives and federal coral reef legislation; Marine Research Hub; Southeast Florida Restoration and Flood Control Planning and Projects; Proposed state affordable housing legislation; and Statewide water infrastructure challenges and opportunities.

Awards & Partners

2023 NADO Impact Awards

Apalachee Regional Planning Council

- *Apalachee Regional Broadband Planning Project*
- *Wakulla County Broadband Feasibility Study*
- *Liberty County Broadband Feasibility Study*

Central Florida Regional Planning Council

- *Imagine Bowling Green: A Downtown Vision and Action Plan*

East Central Florida Regional Planning Council

- *Palm Bay Economic Development Strategic Plan*
- *Low Impact Development (LID) Implementation Ordinance Recommendations*
- *R2C Risk & Vulnerability Assessment*

North Central Florida Regional Planning Council

Visit Natural North Florida Regional Tourism Marketing Campaign

Northeast Florida Regional Council

- *Town of Welaka Downtown Vision*

South Florida Regional Planning Council

- *Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund*

Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council

- *US 19 Corridor Development Opportunities Project*
- *The Regional Resiliency Action Plan (RRAP)*

2023 National Association of Regional Councils

Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council

Major Metros Achievement Award for Development of the Tampa Bay Regional Resiliency Action Plan.



The National Association of Regional Councils presented its 2023 Leadership and Achievement Awards on June 6th during an awards ceremony held at the NARC 57th Annual Conference & Exhibition. The Tampa Bay RPC won an Achievement Award for its Regional Resiliency Action Plan.

2023 American Planning Association, Florida Chapter

Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council

- *Florida Chapter Award of Merit for the Resilient Ready Tampa Bay project.*

STATEWIDE PARTNERS





2507 Callaway Road, Suite 100
Tallahassee, FL 32303
850-488-6211 | flregionalcouncils.org

**APALACHEE
REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL**

Executive Director: Chris N. Rietow
2507 Callaway Road, Suite 100
Tallahassee, FL 32303
850.488.6211 | arpc.org

**CENTRAL FLORIDA
REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL**

Executive Director: Jennifer Codo-Salisbury
555 East Church Street
Bartow, FL 33830
863.534.7130 | cfrpc.org

**EAST CENTRAL FLORIDA
REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL**

Executive Director: Tara McCue
LYNX Building, 4th Floor,
455 North Garland Ave., Orlando, FL 32801
407.245.0300 | ecfrc.org

**EMERALD COAST
REGIONAL COUNCIL**

Executive Director: Austin L. Mount
4081 East Olive Rd., Suite A,
Pensacola, FL 32514
850.332.7976 | ecrc.org

**NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA
REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL**

Executive Director: Scott R. Koons
2009 Northwest 67th Place
Gainesville, FL 32653
352.955.2200 | ncfrc.org

**NORTHEAST FLORIDA
REGIONAL COUNCIL**

Executive Director: Elizabeth Payne
100 Festival Park Avenue
Jacksonville, FL 32202
904.279.0880 | nefrc.org

**SOUTH FLORIDA
REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL**

Executive Director: Isabel Cosio Carballo
1 Oakwood Blvd, Suite 250
Hollywood, FL 33020
954.924.3653 | sfregionalcouncil.org

**SOUTHWEST FLORIDA
REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL**

Executive Director: Margaret A. Wuerstle
1406 SW 8th Place
Cape Coral, FL 33991
844.988.8244 | swfrpc.org

**TAMPA BAY
REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL**

Executive Director: Wren Krahl
4000 Gateway Centre Blvd., Suite 100
Pinellas Park, FL 33782
727.570.5151 | tbrpc.org

**TREASURE COAST
REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL**

Executive Director: Thomas J. Lanahan
421 Southwest Camden Avenue
Stuart, FL 34994
772.221.4060 | tcrpc.org