

September 2020 | Liberty County



DRAFT Liberty County Long-term Recovery Plan

A Strategy for Recovery Following Hurricane Michael

In memory of
Commissioner Dexter Barber
1946 - 2020



The Liberty County Long-Term Recovery Plan is dedicated to Commissioner Dexter Barber in honor of his lifelong service as a true champion for Liberty County and all its residents. Following Hurricane Michael, he worked tirelessly to help his community recover. Commissioner Barber was also a long-standing leader throughout the region serving as a Board Member on the Apalachee Regional Planning Council. His memory will live on in the work we all do every day to make Liberty County an even better community for our families. His mission will continue as this recovery plan transitions from vision to reality.

Acknowledgements

Liberty County Board of County Commissioners

Commissioner Doyle Brown, District 4

Commissioner Dexter Barber, District 2

Commission Chairman Dewayne Branch, District 1

Commission Vice Chairman Jim Johnson, District 3

Commissioner Scott Phillips, District 5

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Executive Summary

On October 10, 2018 Hurricane Michael made landfall west of Liberty County, devastating homes, businesses and the small communities that make up this rural area of North Florida. Significant progress has been made over the past year and everyday things get a little better, restoring hope to the citizens of Liberty County. However, much work remains to be done. Out of disasters comes the opportunity to rebuild back stronger and move the vision of a community forward and Liberty County is committed to seizing this opportunity. The Liberty County Recovery Strategy outlines a new vision for the community moving forward, based on significant stakeholder input from the entire community.

Liberty County is both designated as fiscally constrained and a Rural Area of Opportunity. These designations are given to smaller, rural areas that need an extra boost to stimulate their economy due to the challenges they face including a low median income and in comparison to the State of Florida, high health uninsured population and lower high school graduation rate.

Given the pre-existing challenges faced by Liberty County, Hurricane Michael dealt a significant blow to their livelihoods – including the homes that residents live in and the timber-based agricultural economy that they rely so heavily upon. While Liberty County's population is modest with approximately 3,500 homes, over 12% of their housing stock suffered significant damage requiring extensive repair or replacement and over 450 businesses reported some level of damage to their structure, contents or operations. Based on calculations from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, there remains over \$61 million of estimated unmet needs. In a community with an annual operating budget just north of \$7 million. This is a tremendous amount of unmet need that dwarfs their annual budget by nearly 800%.

To address this critical need, the county is prioritizing the following strategies:

- Remove barriers to resources available to support clearing, replanting and restoring the timber industry.
- Restore and expand of the Calhoun-Liberty Hospital.
- Agricultural diversification to expand opportunities for new crops that have a shorter timeframe for harvest.
- Restore damaged housing stock, following Hurricane Michael.
- Create opportunities to incentivize the development of new single-family homes in a manner that is consistent with community character.
- Critical enhancements to public facilities that are outdated and in need of redevelopment and hardening to withstand future storms including ambulance stations and a new jail.
- Update and expand sewer infrastructure in the City of Bristol to ensure resiliency and offer opportunities for economic growth.
- Seek cost-share match to maximize the return on investment of recovery funding.
- Revitalize downtowns and commercial corridors to help support the growth and expansion of small businesses.

Overview of Liberty County

Liberty County is known for its small-town atmosphere and warm, friendly people who enjoy the spirit and essence of their county's name. While Liberty County is considered a moderate county by land volume, its population (8,365) makes it the least populated county in the State. It is considered a sportsman's paradise and most residents enjoy fishing, hunting, camping, boating, four-wheeling, hiking, cycling and the great outdoors. Nestled between two rivers, the Ochlocknee on the east and the Apalachicola on the west, Liberty County is about an hour from Tallahassee and the City of Panama City. Timberland makes up approximately 90% of the landscape of Liberty County and has the largest landholding of the Apalachicola National Forest. It is presence of this national forest that will forever keep the small-town culture and charm of Liberty County. Liberty County's schools perform extremely well and have been considered A-rated for many years.

The following statistics taken from the U.S. Census Bureau provide a snapshot of Liberty County in comparison to the State of Florida.

U.S Census Data	Liberty County	State of Florida
Median Household Income	\$37,363	\$55,462
Educational Attainment: High School Graduate or Higher	81.4%	88.5%
Homeownership Rate	75.3%	65.9%
Median Value of Housing	\$66,600	\$230,600
Median Gross Rent	\$581	\$1,182
Health Insurance: Uninsured Population	18.5%	13.0%

City of Bristol

Liberty County has one incorporated city, the City of Bristol, which is also the county seat. Today Bristol has a population of just under 1,000 residents. Located near the Apalachicola River and the Calhoun County border at the intersection of state roads 20 and 12, Bristol contains the majority of the County's public resources. Recently the City of Bristol was awarded a \$275,000 grant from the State of Florida to conduct a study that includes an environmental assessment and master site plan, property and building assessments, and beautification plans for a downtown commercial revitalization corridor. This plan has the potential to provide the community with the tools needed to make strategic decisions in building a strong and resilient downtown core which will serve not only the city but the entire county.



Unincorporated Communities

Liberty County has three census designated places. These include Hosford, Lake Mystic, and Sumatra. The county also has seven unincorporated areas including: Estiffanulga, Orange, Rock Bluff, Telogia, White Springs, Wilma, and Woods. The population within these communities as well as Bristol and the county has been consistent since the 2010 Census, with little fluctuation in more recent population surveys.

Hurricane Michael Impacts and Unmet Needs

Overview

This section of the Liberty County Long-term Recovery Plan uses best available data from local, state and federal resources to identify the unmet needs of Liberty County in its recovery from the impacts of Hurricane Michael. To understand the needs that remain in this community, targeted stakeholder interviews were conducted, and a community survey was disseminated. This local feedback has been integrated throughout this entire plan to capture existing conditions and remaining needs.

In summary, the following unmet needs remain in Liberty County:

- Liberty County will need planning support to increase density in targeted areas to support new residential development that is affordable for the workforce in the wake Hurricane Michael.
- Liberty County and the City of Bristol will need long-term assistance with managing grant funding that may come into their community in the wake of Hurricane Michael. This means that funding sources offered by the State will need to include Administrative Fees to allow the communities to hire the support to manage large contracts in accordance with state and federal guidelines.
- Liberty County and the City of Bristol will need additional cost-share support to access other federal long-term recovery resources that are available following major disasters including the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), Rural Infrastructure Fund and programs from the Economic Development Administration.
- Liberty County residents will need technical assistance navigating the funds available to them to replant damaged forestlands. This includes advocacy efforts to help remove barriers like reimbursement processes that require individuals to take out hefty loans to conduct the work with no guarantee for reimbursement.
- The Calhoun-Liberty Hospital will need to be restored and expanded ensure that jobs associated with the healthcare industry are not lost and new jobs can be created to further diversity the economy.
- Commercial Corridors throughout the community, including Downtown Bristol need to be revitalized due to damage caused by Hurricane Michael.
- The Calhoun-Liberty Hospital will need to be restored and expanded ensure that healthcare options are available for residents.
- Mental health and substance abuse services are needed to address the significant rise in crime rates and lower recidivism in the future.
- Additional social services will be needed to support the long-term health needs of the community that have increased as a result of the storm.

- Additional support for the repair and rehabilitation and replacement of owner-occupied homes. This includes the replacement of a likely high number of damaged mobile homes throughout the community and the need for assistance with clouded title issues that result from homes passed down through generations.
- Support for wind mitigation retrofits to existing homes throughout Liberty County that were built prior to more stringent Florida Building Code requirements to ensure the long-term resiliency of housing stock.
- Assistance to support the acquisition and demolition of abandoned homes that are severely damaged from Hurricane Michael to encourage the development of new housing options.
- Consider increasing the number of units per acre in targeted areas to allow for the development of more residential neighborhoods to serve the post-Hurricane Michael demand for housing including the need for rental housing.
- Clear vegetative debris to reduce the significant wildfire threat posed by Hurricane Michael.
- Restore forests and in-town tree canopy throughout the county to enable residents and visitors to enjoy these areas once again and sustain ecotourism opportunities.
- Restore and improve access to rivers through enhancements to boat ramps and associated facilities.



Community Planning and Capacity Impacts and Unmet Needs

Pre-Hurricane Existing Conditions

As the smallest county in the State of Florida, countywide, the capacity for community planning and local government operations is conservative. To augment this capacity, much of the planning and engineering work and local government capacity is supplemented through local vendors like Arrant & Associates, Dewberry Engineering, Melvin Engineering, and the Apalachee Regional Planning Council.

Liberty County and the City of Bristol have both adopted local comprehensive plans and corresponding land development codes which guide growth and development in their communities. However, to-date there has been little visioning and strategic planning for the area as growth has not warranted this type of activity. While the county covers approximately 845 square miles (539,000 acres), the majority of the land (86 percent) is in the Apalachicola National Forest and several State Parks and Wildlife Conservation Areas.¹ This restricts the amount of development that can occur and contributes to the small town charm that people love about this community.

Hurricane Michael Impacts and Recovery Resources

Hurricane Michael overwhelmed the conservative capacity of both local governments, requiring them to bring on additional contractual support as they sifted through insurance claims and FEMA Public Assistance (PA) projects for major repairs to infrastructure and public facilities. Hurricane Michael also brought to light the need to vision for long-term redevelopment from a communitywide perspective as the storm impacted the homes, economy, infrastructure and public facilities of the community. The County received a \$40,000 grant from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity for this purpose and hired the Apalachee Regional Planning Council to assist with developing a Countywide Long-term Recovery Plan. This plan outlines projects and policies that can be carried out by the county to ensure that the community can build back stronger both from an economic and structural perspective.

However, to access the dollars available to the community, additional assistance will be needed to assist with local cost-share. Even with state and federal aid, recovery is expensive and can dramatically affect local budgets. Liberty County has been fortunate to receive a lower cost-share for FEMA Public Assistance funds and additional assistance from the State. However, even with this aid, it may be difficult for the County and City to maximize their opportunities through without matching dollars.

¹ Liberty County Comprehensive Plan, 2011.

Community Planning Local Government Capacity Unmet Needs

The following community planning and local government capacity needs remain throughout Liberty County.

- Liberty County will need planning support to increase density in targeted areas to support new residential development that is affordable for the workforce in the wake Hurricane Michael.
- Liberty County and the City of Bristol will need long-term assistance with managing grant funding that may come into their community in the wake of Hurricane Michael. This means that funding sources offered by the State will need to include Administrative Fees to allow the communities to hire the support to manage large contracts in accordance with state and federal guidelines.
- Liberty County and the City of Bristol will need additional cost-share support to access other federal long-term recovery resources that are available following major disasters including the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), Rural Infrastructure Fund and programs from the Economic Development Administration.
 - *The County is pleased to see that the Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Action Plan for Hurricane Michael includes matching funds for the FEMA HMGP and PA programs.*



Housing Impacts and Unmet Needs

Pre-Hurricane Existing Conditions

Liberty County's small population equates to a little more than 3,500 homes located throughout the county with a median value of \$62,400 per home. This is significantly lower than the statewide median home value of \$178,700 and 40 percent of these homes are valued under \$50,000. However, in 2017 it was reported that only a little more than 2,300 were occupied, meaning that a significant portion of the homes at the time of Hurricane Michael could have been abandoned or unoccupied. Of the occupied homes, 75% were owned by an individual with 25% occupied with renters. Over 50 percent of the housing stock is made of mobile homes with the balance consisting of single-family detached homes. There are less than 100 attached units in the community.²

Due to the age of structures, many of the homes were vulnerable to impacts from high winds. In fact, over 60 percent of all homes were built prior to the enactment of the Florida Building Codes in 1994 that strengthened homes to withstand the impacts of high winds in response to the devastation caused by Hurricane Andrew in 1992. Under current Florida Building Code requirements, new homes must be built to withstand 100 – 130 mile per hour windspeeds depending on where they are in the County.³

Of the land available for development and under government ownership, most of the residential land use in Liberty County is low-density. This requires a potential homebuyer to purchase a larger tract of land in order to be able to develop a home. The scarcity of land and the large lot size requirements can contribute to challenges in building new housing options that are affordable in Liberty County

Hurricane Michael Impacts and Recovery Resources

According to FEMA data, nearly 1,400 applicants registered to seek assistance. If each applicant represents a household, this accounts for approximately 40% of the total homes and over 60% of the occupied homes in the county.⁴ Given the general under-response rate to government surveys like the Census in Liberty County, it is likely that many more individuals may have needed help but chose not to apply for FEMA assistance. The table below reflects the estimated damage received to owner-occupied homes on a scale of minor-low to severe damage. Of the homes estimated to have received damage, nearly 60% could be categorized as major – severe damage, requiring a significant amount of investment to repair the housing stock and potentially bring it into current code compliance.

Estimated Damaged to Owner-Occupied Housing in Liberty County

County	Minor-Low	Minor-High	Major-Low	Major-High	Severe	Grand Total
Liberty	110	131	99	150	130	620

Liberty County received modest support for housing recovery through a variety of resources. The most significant include a generous private donation of \$50,000 from Georgia Pacific, a local employer within the county and the state. In 2019 the State Legislature appropriated a special appropriation for housing recovery through the Hurricane Housing Recovery Program. This program is like the State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) Program but is a one-time large allocation

² <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>

³ <http://libertybocc.com/3-2/building-and-zoning/>

⁴ http://www.floridajobs.org/docs/default-source/office-of-disaster-recovery/hurricane-michael/draft-action-plan_hurricane-michael_3_11_20.pdf?sfvrsn=35c343b0_4

specific for Hurricane Michael Recovery. In addition, the county received both their annual appropriation of SHIP dollars and a small allocation of emergency assistance through the SHIP Program.

Housing Funding Received from the State in 2019

Program	Amount
State Housing Initiatives Partnership	\$350,000
State Housing Initiatives Partnership – Emergency Assistance	\$100,000
Hurricane Housing Recovery Program	\$1,755,000
TOTAL	\$2,205,000

A volunteer-led partnership between Liberty County and citizens of the County resulted in Liberty Strong, a Local Long-term Recovery Group. Liberty Strong works with many non-profit and charitable organizations to provide support for residents who needed assistance making repairs to their homes. This organization has been especially helpful for residents in the community who do not qualify for FEMA and other assistance due to clouded title issues that can result when a home is passed down from one generation to the next without clear documentation.



The tables below from the Unmet Needs Assessment for Hurricane Michael shows the overall housing damage and remaining unmet needs in Liberty County. While these tables are broken out into three distinct sections, they are intended to show the cumulative unmet housing needs throughout the County. These tables show that nearly \$18 million in unmet housing needs remain in Liberty County. When accounting for mitigation needs to ensure that replacement homes are built back to current building codes, this unmet need is increased to nearly \$25 million.

Summary of Unmet Housing Needs in Liberty County

Small Business Administration Verified Loss of All SBA Applicants		
	Count	Value
SBA applicants with a real estate verified loss	223	\$5,812,787
SBA applicants without a real estate verified loss (estimate)	175	\$3,099,600
Total verified loss of FEMA applicants referred to SBA (estimate)	398	\$8,912,387
Estimated Damage to Owner Applicant Dwellings		
	Count	Value
FEMA owner or "not specified" applicants with FEMA inspected real property damage (SBA Multiplier)	609	\$14,924,875
Additional FEMA owner or "not specified" applicants with only FEMA inspected personal property damage (SBA Multiplier) Minor-Low	0	\$
Additional FEMA owner or "not specified" applicants with only FEMA inspected personal property damage (SBA Multiplier) Minor-High	3	\$62,460
Additional FEMA owner or "not specified" applicants with only FEMA inspected personal property damage (SBA Multiplier) Major-Low	0	\$0
Additional FEMA owner or "not specified" applicants with only FEMA inspected personal property damage (SBA Multiplier) Major-High	8	\$332,760
Additional FEMA owner or "not specified" applicants with only FEMA inspected personal property damage (SBA Multiplier) Severe	0	
Total owner or "not specified" applicants without a FEMA Verified Loss (Property or Contents)	540	
Total SBA applicants	398	
Number of SBA Applicants without FEMA REGID	29	
Potential additional owner unmet need population	44	779,328
Losses of FEMA applicants not referred to SBA (estimate)		\$16,099,423
Total verified loss of all homeowner applicants across FEMA and SBA (estimate)		\$25,011,810

Estimated Damage to Rental Applicant Dwellings		
	Count	Value
FEMA owner or "not specified" applicants with FEMA inspected real property damage (SBA Multiplier)	78	\$841,459
Additional FEMA owner or "not specified" applicants with only FEMA inspected personal property damage (SBA Multiplier) Minor-Low	5	\$34,555
Additional FEMA owner or "not specified" applicants with only FEMA inspected personal property damage (SBA Multiplier) Minor-High	4	\$83,280
Additional FEMA owner or "not specified" applicants with only FEMA inspected personal property damage (SBA Multiplier) Major-Low	13	\$497,237
Additional FEMA owner or "not specified" applicants with only FEMA inspected personal property damage (SBA Multiplier) Major-High	26	\$1,081,470
Additional FEMA owner or "not specified" applicants with only FEMA inspected personal property damage (SBA Multiplier) Severe	30	\$1,981,980
Total owner or "not specified" applicants without a FEMA Verified Loss (Property or Contents)	161	
Total SBA Business applicants (landlords) with verified repair, reconstruction, or relocation losses (rental NAICS code 531110)	5	\$186,513
Potential additional renter unmet need population	24	\$425,088
Total verified loss of rental property (estimated)		\$5,131,581
Other Housing Damage Estimates		
	Count	Value
Real estate damage to public housing	28	\$1,270,000
Total verified loss to other housing (estimate)		\$1,270,000
Total housing verified loss (estimate)		\$22,501,004
Accounting for 30% resilience addition		\$29,251,305
Duplication of Benefits		
		Value
FEMA housing assistance payments		\$927,956
SBA Home - Real Property Loans		\$3,397,200
SBA Business Loan Payments to landlords		\$9,200
NFIP Building payments		
State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program		\$100,000
Total benefit		\$4,434,356
Total unmet housing need		\$18,066,647
Account of 30% resilience addition		\$24,816,949

Housing Recovery Unmet Needs

- Additional support for the repair and rehabilitation and replacement of owner-occupied homes. This includes the replacement of a likely high number of damaged mobile homes throughout the community and the need for assistance with clouded title issues that result from homes passed down through generations.
- Support for wind mitigation retrofits to existing homes throughout Liberty County that were built prior to more stringent Florida Building Code requirements to ensure the long-term resiliency of housing stock.
- Assistance to support the acquisition and demolition of abandoned homes that are severely damaged from Hurricane Michael to encourage the development of new housing options.
- Consider increasing the number of units per acre in targeted areas to allow for the development of more residential neighborhoods to serve the post-Hurricane Michael demand for housing including the need for rental housing.



Economic Impacts and Unmet Needs

Pre-Hurricane Existing Conditions

Liberty County is located within the Northwest Florida Economic Region. The County is one of ten counties in the Northwest Florida Rural Area of Opportunity (RAO) eligible to offer additional incentives for new and expanding industries through Opportunity Florida. Opportunity Florida promotes positive economic growth in this ten-county region by providing technical assistance to economic development organizations and businesses and by working together with local, regional, and state organizations to market the region to businesses and government officials.

In addition, the County belongs to Florida's Great Northwest (FGN), a larger encompassing regional economic development organization for the Florida Panhandle. The organization is an investor-supported 501(c)(6) not for profit corporation created to promote Northwest Florida for economic growth and diversification, advocate for economic development issues that affect the region, and collaborate to improve regional competitiveness. Florida's Great Northwest accomplishes this in partnership with the state and local economic development organizations, rural regional economic development organization, utility partners, private sector businesses, local government, higher education institutions, workforce boards, and community leaders. More information about what defines this region as a whole and economic opportunities can be found on their [website](#).

The economy of Liberty County employs 2,470 people with the **largest industries** found in:

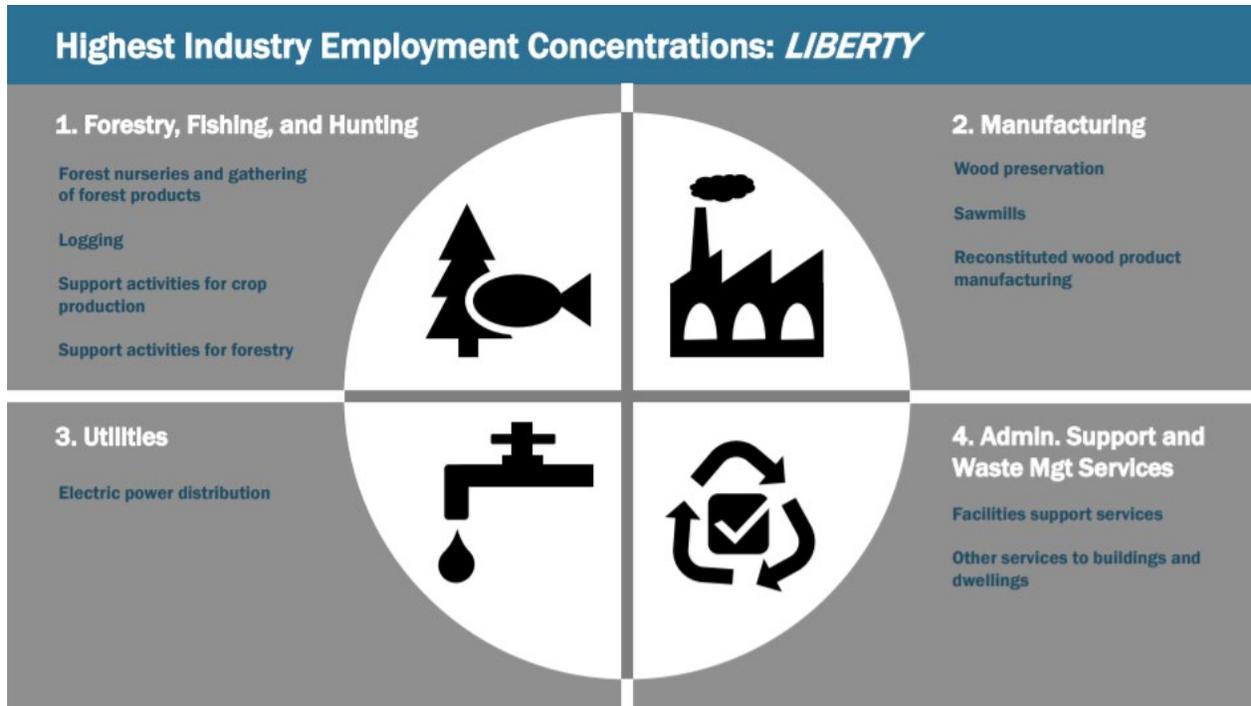
- Public Administration (512 people),
- Health Care & Social Assistance (241 people), and
- Educational Services (234 people).

The **highest paying** industries are:

- Mining, Quarrying, & Oil & Gas Extraction (\$97,604),
- Real Estate & Rental & Leasing (\$52,344), and
- Construction (\$50,551).

In 2015, the top outbound Florida product (by dollars) was Mixed freight with \$63.5B, followed by Pharmaceuticals (\$51.6B) and Electronics (\$41.8B).⁵ The graphic below describes the highest industry employment concentrations in Liberty County, prior to Hurricane Michael.

⁵ <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/liberty-county-fl>



Timber Industry in Liberty County

Nearly all of Liberty County is forested lands (94 percent) with over thirty-five percent of the land in private ownership. Liberty County is one of four counties in the state that is classified as critically dependent upon the timber industry. According to an Economic Impact Analysis conducted by the University of Florida⁶, over half (56 percent) of the total workforce is dependent upon the forestry industry. These beautiful forests represent an industry output of \$322 million, over 1,600 jobs and a tax contribution of approximately \$12 million. The table below describes the total employment contributions of the forested lands, by jobs and industry:

Employment Contribution of Forestlands

Industry	Number of Jobs
Primary Wood Product Manufacturing	970
Forestry Production	357
Converted to Paper Product Manufacturing	284
Biomass Electricity Generation	22
Wholesale Trade Lumber and Wood	3

In addition to contributions to the economy and jobs, many families in Liberty County manage forestland on their own private acres as supplemental income or savings for retirement.

⁶ <https://fred.ifas.ufl.edu/economicimpactanalysis/publications/2016-Forest-industry-and-forest-recreation/>

Healthcare Industry in Liberty County

Healthcare is the second largest industry employer in Liberty County, employing 241 individuals. This industry is tied to the Calhoun-Liberty County Hospital, which is considered a critical access facility by Medicare. This designation is given to hospitals that:

- Have 25 or fewer acute care inpatient beds,
- Are Located more than 35 miles from another hospital,
- Provide 24/7 emergency care, and
- Maintain an annual length of stay of 96 hours or less for acute care patients.

In addition to a place of employment, this hospital serves as a critical healthcare provider for the entire region. Prior to the hurricane, this hospital had significant challenges.

Hurricane Michael Impacts and Recovery Resources

Hurricane Michael inflicted major damage to many businesses in the Florida Panhandle. The storm resulted in substantial damage to commercial structures, destroying their contents and causing significant losses in operating revenues. In the aftermath of the storm, many roads were blocked or washed away by storm surge, flooding, downed trees, power lines and other debris, and power outages were widespread. In the immediate aftermath of the storm, operation of businesses was impossible, and recovery continues to be difficult.

While there is no comprehensive central repository of business damage and loss claims for Hurricane Michael, application data from the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) low-interest disaster loans provide a reliable sample of the type and extent of damage and losses experienced by businesses because of Hurricane Michael.

In Liberty County, only 11 businesses received verified business losses from Hurricane Michael. However, we know that this does not tell the true story of impacts as many businesses chose to not seek SBA assistance and therefore can remain uncounted in total business losses. Using Dunn & Bradstreet registered business information combined with the area that experienced sustained winds of 57 mph or higher in Hurricane Michael can provide a more realistic understanding of losses. Given the widespread impacts to the county, 464 businesses were assumed to have sustained damage due to their location and sustained winds countywide. The table below provides a summary of verified losses and estimated losses, combined with known insurance and SBA loan payouts to calculate the gap that exists between damage received and remaining unmet need. **Liberty County has more than \$61 million remaining in unmet economic need.**

Liberty County Economic Losses and Unmet Needs

Known Damage (SBA Verified Loss)		
	Count	Amount
<i>Structure</i>	11	\$291,553
<i>Contents</i>	9	\$150,503
<i>Operations</i>	4	\$93,300
TOTAL	11	\$535,356
Estimated Damage (D&B Registered Businesses)		
	Count	Amount
<i>Structure</i>	464	\$62,597,555
<i>Contents</i>	464	\$15,701,196
<i>Operations</i>	464	\$15,250,234
TOTAL	464	\$93,548,984
Insurance Payouts		
	Count	Amount
<i>Commercial Structures</i>	159	\$26,850,606
<i>Business Interruptions</i>	275	\$5,428,451
SBA Payouts		
	Count	Amount
<i>Structure</i>	5	\$68,400
<i>Contents</i>	3	\$11,700
<i>Operations</i>	4	\$76,000
TOTAL SBA Payouts	5	\$156,100
<u>TOTAL Estimated Unmet Needs</u>	<u>184</u>	<u>\$61,113,827</u>

In fact, most businesses in Liberty County experienced sustained winds in excess of 73 mph. Given the age of structures in Liberty County, it is likely that many of these businesses suffered significant losses. The table below shows a breakdown of industries (by NAICS code) that experienced in excess of \$3 million in estimated total damages.

Liberty County Industries that Experienced Estimated Losses Over \$3 million

Liberty County Industries	Total Estimated Losses
Other Services and Non-Governmental Organizations	\$13,309,377
Construction	\$9,371,973
Healthcare and Social Assistance	\$8,213,891
Educational Services	\$8,003,424
Retail Trade	\$5,924,430
Administrative and Support/Waste Management/Remediation Services	\$5,250,944
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	\$3,445,434
Accommodation and Food Services	\$3,242,610

Source: Draft Unmet Needs Assessment for Hurricane Michael, 2020.

Impacts to the Timber Industry

The strong winds of Hurricane Michael devastated the forestry and logging industries that contribute to the top two industry employment concentrations in Liberty County. More than 2.8 acres of timber were damaged by Hurricane Michael's powerful winds resulting in catastrophic damage to trees across the county. As state above, Liberty County is one of four counties in the state classified as critically dependent upon the timber industry and second in the state only to Taylor County with 56.8 percent of county employment derived from the forestry industry and over 77 percent of the total Gross State Product.

The decimation of their forestland has crippled this industry for the foreseeable future. The pine species grown in North Florida are a long-term investment that can take 20 – 25 years to mature for harvest. This means that it will be at least two decades before forestland cleared and replanted today will be ready for harvest. This loss of forestland has all but destroyed the top industry in the county, making many residents vulnerable to both job loss and financial insecurity.

There are resources available to help landowners restore forestland such as the USDA Emergency Forest Restoration Program and USDA Crop Loss Grants. However, local landowners and businesses are having difficulty navigating these processes that require a significant investment upfront with the potential for reimbursement on the backend. In addition, the rules related to crop loss grants that could provide aide to locals has not been released.

Impacts to the Healthcare Industry

One of the most critical needs following Hurricane Michael is the regional hospital and the jobs that depend on it. The Calhoun-Liberty Hospital was significantly damaged, threatening the 500+ jobs associated with the healthcare industry. The hospital lost 15 of its 25 beds after 80 percent of the roof was torn off in the winds of Hurricane Michael resulting in the mandate by local building officials that the building must be brought back to code, which requires a new facility. As a designated Critical Access Facility, residents must travel 50 - 65 miles to receive emergency care, making the facility extremely important to the healthcare of Calhoun and Liberty County as well as portions of Jackson and Gulf County. In addition to healthcare access, over 500 healthcare related jobs alone directly and indirectly depend on our operations, and the hospital will not be able to recruit the new industries that the region needs without the ability to provide healthcare. The Calhoun-Liberty Hospital continues to navigate the FEMA Public Assistance process with hopes of securing a replacement facility. Recently, the County was informed that it will receive \$10 million in support through CDBG-DR funding for Hurricane Michael. With this support, the hospital feels hopeful that it will be able to build a facility that will better meet the needs of this region.

Economic Unmet Needs

- Liberty County residents will need technical assistance navigating the funds available to them to replant damaged forestlands. This includes advocacy efforts to help remove barriers like reimbursement processes that require individuals to take out hefty loans to conduct the work with no guarantee for reimbursement.
- The Calhoun-Liberty Hospital will need to be restored and expanded ensure that jobs associated with the healthcare industry are not lost and new jobs can be created to further diversity the economy.
 - *The County is pleased to see that the Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Action Plan for Hurricane Michael includes direct support for the Calhoun-Liberty Hospital.*
- Commercial Corridors throughout the community, including Downtown Bristol need to be revitalized due to damage caused by Hurricane Michael.
- Additional support for the repair and rehabilitation and replacement of owner-occupied homes. This includes the replacement of a likely high number of damaged mobile homes throughout the community and the need for assistance with clouded title issues that result from homes passed down through generations.
- Support for wind mitigation retrofits to existing homes throughout Liberty County that were built prior to more stringent Florida Building Code requirements to ensure the long-term resiliency of housing stock.
- Assistance to support the acquisition and demolition of abandoned homes that are severely damaged from Hurricane Michael to encourage the development of new housing options.
- Consider increasing the number of units per acre in targeted areas to allow for the development of more residential neighborhoods to serve the post-Hurricane Michael demand for housing including the need for rental housing



Infrastructure and Public Facilities Impacts

Pre-Hurricane Michael Existing Conditions

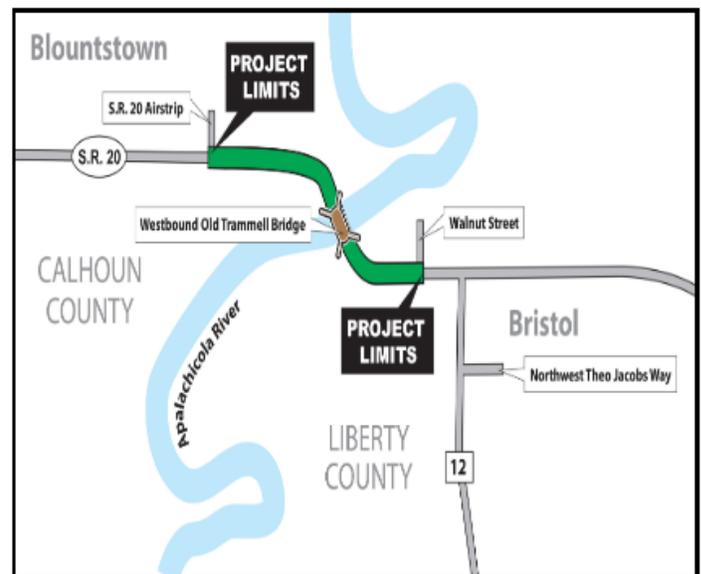
Liberty County, as a largely rural area is serviced mostly by on-site potable water wells and septic systems. However, the City of Bristol has a public wastewater system and there is a water distribution system provided in the communities of Hosford, Telogia, Sumatra, and Estaffanulga.

There are several state roads that crisscross the community including:

- State Road 12,
- State Road 20,
- State Road 65, and
- State Road 267.

The Florida Department of Transportation is currently conducting preliminary design and engineering work on the the SR 20 Trammell Bridge. The intent of this study is to evaluate multiple alternatives relative to the future of the SR 20 Apalachicola River Bridge No. 470029 (Westbound Old Trammell Bridge) and how these alternatives will impact motor vehicle and navigation activities along the project area, as well as identify how the bridge's function provides service to the local community area.⁷ As this older bridge span continues to age, the state is considering tearing it town and combining traffic on the much newer eastbound bridge. Community members are worried about how this significant reduction in road and bridge capacity will affect economic development prospects in the future.

The county is serviced by two main utility providers. Florida Public Utilities provides electric, propane and natural gas and Talquin Electric Cooperative provides electric, potable water and wastewater throughout the community. The county has extremely limited broadband capacity as the alliance that formed to service this area went bankrupt in 2016.



⁷ <https://nwflroads.com/projects/439202-2>

Hurricane Michael Impacts and Recovery Resources

According to data from the Florida Division of Emergency Management, over \$22 million was spent on addressing debris removal, emergency protective measures and impacts to infrastructure. The table below shows the amount of FEMA Public Assistance (PA) funding provided to each category:

FEMA Public Assistance Funds Spent in Liberty County

Public Assistance Category	Total Amount Spent
Category A: Debris Removal	\$3,556,701
Category B: Emergency Protective Measures	\$5,546,129
Category C: Roads and Bridges	\$196,575
Category D: Water Control Facilities	\$11,000
Category E: Buildings and Equipment	\$8,703,288
Category F: Utilities	\$1,211,195
Category G: Parks, Recreation and Other	\$2,488,253
Category Z: Project Management	\$15,001
TOTAL	\$21,728,142

Fortunately, cost share for Categories A, B, and most of Category Z will be covered at 100 percent by FEMA for Hurricane Michael. All other FEMA PA categories remain at a 75 percent Federal/25 percent State cost share; however, this can be reduced in rural areas. Estimating remaining unmet needs across these counties is possible by presuming that all state or local cost shares are “unmet needs”. According the Hurricane Michael Unmet Needs Assessment, there is over \$3 million remaining in unmet needs tied to damages from Hurricane Michael.

In addition to the FEMA PA Program, FEMA offers Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funding for the purposes of hardening infrastructure to withstand the impacts of future disasters. According to data from FEMA as of November of 2019, Liberty County is eligible to receive nearly \$5 million in HMGP funds with a required match of over \$1.6 million. This total amount will likely change in the coming months as the total amount available per county is tied to a formula based on overall FEMA spending on disaster recovery. The State of Florida recently announced plans to use Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery programs to match HMGP funding. This could be a significant resource for Liberty County.

The lack of communication infrastructure following Hurricane Michael was a tremendous need that hampered response and recovery. There are places within the county that lack access to even wireless cell phone signal, which can challenge emergency response efforts. In addition, the lack of broadband capacity throughout the community can make it difficult for businesses and industries who may wish to locate or expand their operations within Liberty County.

Infrastructure Unmet Needs

Remaining infrastructure unmet needs in Liberty County include:

- Cost-share for FEMA Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation Grant Program projects to enable a better return on investment.
 - *The County is pleased to see that the CDBG-DR Action Plan for Hurricane Michael includes the ability to use these dollars to match FEMA PA and HMGP projects.*
- Upgrades and enhancements to wastewater infrastructure throughout the City of Bristol and Liberty County to remedy challenges exacerbated by the storm and enable future growth.
- Upgrades to harden local bridges and other critical infrastructure to better withstand the impacts of wind and flooding.
- Enhancements to communication infrastructure including cell phone networks and broadband capacity to ensure connectivity during emergency response activities and allow for new economic development opportunities.



Health and Social Services Impacts and Unmet Needs

Existing Conditions

Liberty County, a rural community has challenges associated with health and social services that can largely be tied to the high rate of poverty in the community and the cascading impacts that are associated with individuals under a great deal of stress that must make difficult choices every day on prioritizing their resources for daily living. However, unlike some rural counties Liberty County has one of the best school districts in the state. In fact, in 2019, the Florida Department of Education graded the Liberty County School District overall as an A-rated system. This is an improvement over previous years (2014 – 2017) where Liberty County was considered a B-rated school district.⁸

However, based on data presented in the 2018-2021 Community Health Improvement Plan the community recognized its need to continue to make improvements in the areas of:

- Mental health and substance abuse,
- Access to healthcare, and
- Obesity.

The community identified the following key forces and threats that they feel contribute to these challenges:

Key Forces	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drug use• Lack of activities for the youth• Acceptance of fast food as a way of life• Sedentary lifestyle• Unemployment rate• Poverty rate• Budget cuts to Medicaid• Unknown future for Affordable Care Act• Telemedicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Crime• No access to Narcan• Lack of interest in change• Obesity, heart disease and diabetes• Lack of fresh fruit and vegetables• Lack of personal motivation

Hurricane Michael Impacts and Recovery Resources

Hurricanes can have a significant impact on the overall mental and physical health of a community. However, when an entire community is navigating varying levels of prolonged Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, it can sometimes make it difficult for individuals to recognize. The initial impact of surviving the event itself can be traumatic. This is further compounded as individuals move forward with their recovery experiencing displacement from their homes, community groups, frustrating insurance claims processes, unemployment and in some cases grieving the loss of loved ones. Enduring the long-term stress caused by a catastrophic hurricane can be truly overwhelming for those who were

⁸ <http://www.fldoe.org/accountability/accountability-reporting/school-grades/>

considered stable prior to a disaster. This stress can be difficult to measure but often presents itself in the data of unfortunate side effects from stress like increased substance abuse and incarceration rates.

Between 2017 and 2018, Liberty County saw a nearly 60 percent decrease in the total number of arrests – a dramatic decrease, demonstrating the overall improvement of the county.⁹ However, according to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement this progress was decimated in the span of one year. In 2019, Liberty County arrests more than doubled, from 193 arrests in 2018 to 457 arrests in 2019. The County saw the most dramatic increase in violent crimes (114.6% increase) and property crime increased by 50%. Statistics such as these are major indicators of stress in the community, likely due to job loss, displacement and navigating the challenging recovery process.

Prior to Hurricane Michael, it was reported that Liberty County performed worse the State of Florida in the following health indicators that are associated with substance abuse and mental health issues. With no access in the county to psychiatric or substance abuse beds in Liberty County, it can be difficult to treat severe substance abuse and mental health challenges.¹⁰

- Chronic Liver Disease, Cirrhosis Deaths
- Nephritis, Nephritic Syndrome Deaths
- Motor Vehicle Accident Deaths
- Adults with Poor Mental Health 14 of the past 30 days
- Unhealthy Mental Days Interfered w/ADLs
- Alcohol Consumption in Lifetime (Youth)
- Alcohol Consumption in Past 30 days (Youth)
- Binge Drinking (Youth)
- Birth to Mothers aged 10 – 16
- Birth to Mothers aged 15 – 19
- Prenatal care begun late or no prenatal care
- Alcohol-related motor vehicle traffic crashes
- Murder
- Homicide

While the data has not been collected to show how these factors have been affected by Hurricane Michael, it can be expected that the stress of the storm likely increased many of these indicators.

Access to comprehensive, quality health care services is traditionally a struggle for rural communities and is true for Liberty County as well. Access to healthcare is a critical part of increasing the quality of life for residents as it impacts:

- Prevention of disease and disability,
- Preventable hospitalization,
- Overall physical, social and mental health status,
- Detection and treatment of disease and health conditions,
- Preventable death, and
- Life expectancy.

⁹ <https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/FSAC/County-Profiles/Liberty.aspx>

¹⁰ http://www.floridahealth.gov/provider-and-partner-resources/community-partnerships/floridamapp/state-and-community-reports/liberty-county/_documents/Liberty_CHA.pdf

According to data presented in the 2018 Liberty County Health Assessment, there are very few healthcare providers at all within the community and neighboring Calhoun County. The severe damage caused to Calhoun-Liberty hospital and its associated facilities, located in neighboring Calhoun County dealt the final devastating blow to the healthcare infrastructure of this region.

In addition, the hospital has an ancillary clinic that practices family medicine. The building where the clinic is housed is not rated for high winds and must be evacuated during strong summer storms that are frequent in Florida. Without restoration of the hospital and hardening of the clinic, it will be difficult for this community to maintain what little healthcare options available without rebuilding this hospital. The expansion of services offered through the hospital and clinic could serve as a great economic development opportunity for the community's future.

Health and Social Services Unmet Needs

- The Calhoun-Liberty Hospital will need to be restored and expanded ensure that healthcare options are available for residents.
 - *The County is pleased to see that the Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Action Plan for Hurricane Michael includes direct support for the Calhoun-Liberty Hospital.*
- Mental health and substance abuse services are needed to address the significant rise in crime rates and lower recidivism in the future.
- Additional social services will be needed to support the long-term health needs of the community that have increased as a result of the storm.



Natural and Cultural Resource Impacts

Pre-Hurricane Michael Existing Conditions

The natural and cultural significance of Liberty County is one of the county's greatest assets. In fact, according to our interviews and the survey, most residents agree that this the natural beauty and landscape is one of their favorite things about the community. Residents enjoy hunting, fishing, boating, hiking, kayaking and Liberty County offers many opportunities get outside and enjoy nature in solitude. In addition, the rich history of Liberty County spans multiple centuries and there are unique treasures throughout the community that celebrate the cultural significance of this area.

Liberty County is home to the Apalachicola Forest, Torreya State Park, the Nature Conservancy Apalachicola Bluffs and Ravines Preserve, among many more natural treasures. In addition, there are many historically significant places within Liberty County that add to the culture of the community. This includes the Gregory House located within Torreya State Park along with the Otis Hare Archeological Site and the Yon Mound and Village Site.

Hurricane Michael Impacts and Resources

One of the most striking impacts throughout the community that can be seen from driving along its main thoroughfares is the damage to the forests that make up over 80 percent of its landscape. Hurricane Michael uprooted and snapped trees in half throughout the beautiful forests on both public and private lands. This damage will take years to replant to ensure healthy forests in the future. These once beautiful forests now pose a major threat as the dead trees have created significant fuel loads for wildfires that can damage nearby homes and businesses. While there are resources available to help clear debris and replant forests, it will take years to accomplish the clean-up necessary to restore the forests and reduce the wildfire threat to this community.

In addition, the damage to forests and Forest Roads have made access to boat ramps and other recreational opportunities difficult. Without major clean-up and repair efforts, Liberty County's top asset – its natural landscape – will be lost.

Natural and Cultural Resource Unmet Needs

- Clear vegetative debris to reduce the significant wildfire threat posed by Hurricane Michael.
- Restore forests and in-town tree canopy throughout the county to enable residents and visitors to enjoy these areas once again and sustain ecotourism opportunities.
- Restore and improve access to rivers through enhancements to boat ramps and associated facilities.

Community Engagement

Overview

Community engagement is an essential part of any long-term recovery plan. Liberty County used many methods to seek input from the public including setting up booths at a Christmas event, public meetings, a community survey and one-on-one stakeholder meetings. The information we gathered from this input has been integrated into the entire plan and highlighted in the sections below.

Community Events

Community Outreach – Veteran’s Memorial Railroad

On Saturday, December 14 the Apalachee Regional Planning Council set up a booth at the popular Veteran’s Memorial Railroad to get input from citizens on their long-term vision for Liberty County. Community members filled out surveys and were invited to answer the question, “Our Community is a great place to live – how can we make it even better?” Project staff handed out flyers and encouraged residents to participate through the survey or community meetings.

Public Meeting #1

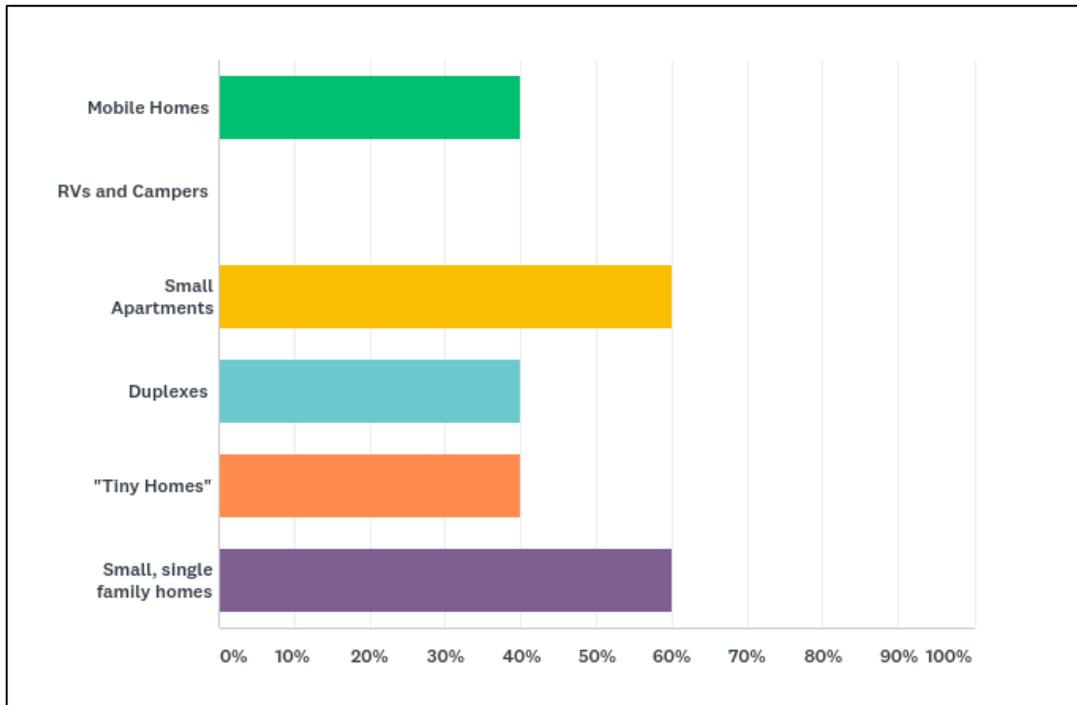
On Monday, January 13 the first Public Meeting was held to discuss ways the community continued to struggle following Hurricane Michael and brainstorm ideas for the future. Attendance was not high for this meeting (only one person attended), leading us to believe that public meetings are likely not the best way to solicit input.

Community Survey

From December of 2019 through March of 2020, the project team solicited responses to a community-wide survey to gather input on future goals of the citizens of Liberty County. The response rate was not high (only eight responses) for this survey, leading us to believe that this would likely not be a great way to gather input from the community. However, the following information was gleaned from this approach.

- Survey respondents felt that their businesses would benefit from a grant to improve the way it looks through façade enhancements.
- To address housing recovery:
 - Seventy-five percent of respondents felt that we need to rebuild and repair the houses the currently exist.
 - Fifty percent of respondents feel that we need more housing choices, including duplexes and small apartments that are more affordable.
 - Fifty percent of respondents feel that we need to allow more housing in our community, agreeing that it is difficult to find land to build homes.
 - Seventy-five percent of respondents felt that we need to build homes in our community or fix up current homes to revitalize neighborhoods.
 - 75 percent of respondents felt that we should partner with non-profits to help those that are struggling to make repairs to their homes.
 - 75 percent felt that we need to provide more affordable housing options for seniors in the community.

Preferred Options for Affordable Housing in the Liberty County



Needs for Job Growth in Liberty County

80 percent of respondents agreed that...
Our community needs a facelift - we need to revitalize buildings and commercial areas.
60 percent of respondents agreed that...
We need assistance to re-establish agricultural timber in our community.
We need more manufacturing in our community.
We need better access to healthcare in our community.
We need more commercial or industrial areas in our community.
40 percent of respondents agreed that...
We need better infrastructure (roads, water, sewer).
We need to improve K-12 educational opportunities in our community.
We need to improve post-secondary (including access to technical schools) educational opportunities in our community.
We should explore nature-based tourism in our community,
We need more housing in our community to support a workforce.
20 percent of respondents agreed that...
We need more agricultural diversity in our community.

Why Residents Love Living in Liberty County

- All respondents stated they loved the beautiful natural forests and the river as well as the low cost of living.
- Sixty percent stated they loved the strong neighborhoods and sense of community as well as the close proximity to nearby cities: Tallahassee and Panama City.
- Forty percent stated they loved the outdoor recreation.
- Other responses included the love of small schools and close-knit church families.

Improvements needed in Liberty County

- Parks
- City-organized activities/events
- Housing
- Music/art community programs

Summary of Stakeholder Meetings

One-on-one meetings with stakeholders in the community provided the most valuable input in the development of the Long-Term Recovery Plan. Over the course of the development of this plan, the project team met with many stakeholders. Their invaluable input has been integrated into all aspects of this plan to understand the unique impacts from Hurricane Michael and how assets can be used to support economic growth. In addition, these stakeholders have been instrumental in identifying new projects that would support the county's use of existing assets for economic growth.

Stakeholders Interviewed

The following individuals were interviewed as part of this planning effort:

- Noah Byler, Dewberry
- Maria Crump, Liberty Strong
- Johnny Eubanks, Liberty County Chamber of Commerce
- Robert Hill, Retired Liberty County
- Jace Ford, Liberty County Emergency Management
- Justin Ford, Dewberry
- Rhonda Lewis, Liberty County Emergency Management
- Donnie Read, Liberty Strong
- Tim Revell, Calhoun-Liberty Hospital Board Member
- Richard Williams, Opportunity Florida
- Commissioner Doyle Brown, Liberty County Board of County Commissioners

Summary of Major Themes and Ideas from Interviews

The following is a summary of major themes and ideas presented over the course of meetings with stakeholders. To help ensure the anonymity of their input, names have not been attributed to the ideas presented.

Community Planning and Capacity Building

- There is a need for more intergovernmental coordination between the city, county and schoolboard to accomplish recovery goals and the vision for the future.

Economic Recovery

- The restoration and expansion of the Calhoun-Liberty Hospital was considered by many stakeholders as the top regional recovery need. In addition, the clinic associated with the hospital needs to be enhanced or hardened against wind impacts. Over 500 jobs depend on this hospital and if not rebuilt it would be a tremendous loss for the entire community.
- There is a need for an alternative to the timber industry and agricultural diversification.
- Downtown Bristol was impacted heavily by Hurricane Michael. Commercial revitalization is needed to support the economic recovery of the community and offer more opportunities for businesses.
- The railroad is a great community asset.
- The Community Center in Altha was destroyed. This is a venue for events and other activities that is not yet back up in operation.
- Smaller landowners that do not have the equipment or funding to clean up properties are struggling to replant timber.
- The Crop Loss Grant could be a great opportunity to continue clean-up, but the rules have not yet been released by the state.
- The Emergency Reforestation Grant period ends in April.
- Over 500 jobs depend on timber in the area.

Infrastructure and Public Facilities

- There is a need to enhance the ambulance service facility in the County
- The infrastructure located in the Rock Bluff and Sweetwater Community in Northwestern Liberty County needs improvements.
- Several bridges within the county need to be replaced.
- The Bristol City Sewer System needs major repairs and enhancements to ensure that it functions properly.
- A new building is needed for government operations that includes a city hall, community center and fire station potentially together as one unit.
- The community needs better connectivity through broadband and there are places without cell phone service. This is a critical need as it affects emergency management, the Sheriff's Department and schools.

Housing

- There is a need for continued repair and rehabilitation of houses damaged from Hurricane Michael, especially in the senior community. Much of this repair work will first require resolving clouded title issues.
- There is a countywide need for more housing options including both owner-occupied homes and rental stock.
- Rents have increased due to the shortage of housing, post-Hurricane Michael.

Natural and Cultural Resources

- Bristol boat ramps and park needs improvement.
- The community ballpark needs more ballparks and would benefit from a splash pad and basketball court.
- The park next to the Civic Center needs to be enhanced with an exit to allow this as a venue for festivals and events in the future.
- Need to restore the tree canopy throughout the community.



Liberty County Vision for the Future

Overview

In the wake of Hurricane Michael, Liberty County chooses to look forward and not backwards, into the future. The County chooses to see the redevelopment that must occur after the storm as an opportunity to create a community that future generations will be proud to call home.

Liberty County Vision for the Future

-  Preserve natural features and assets in the community for residential use and enjoyment from visitors in the region.
-  Support the regrowth of the timber industry for small businesses in the community.
-  Grow the economy and create jobs for the next generation by expanding healthcare opportunities and diversifying agricultural crops.
-  Develop an industrial park and promote manufacturing opportunities that are in line with the character of the community.
-  Create partnerships between local schools and vocational training to develop the workforce in line with targeted industries.
-  Promote homegrown businesses and enhance commercial corridors to create an attractive downtown and commercial areas.
-  Enhance infrastructure throughout the county to address current challenges and allow for future opportunities.
-  Create opportunities for neighborhoods and workforce housing for growing families in the community.
-  Retain and enhance healthcare access to improve the quality of life of residents.

Recovery Projects & Actions

Overview

The Liberty County Long-term Recovery Plan outlines projects that will allow the community to recover from Hurricane Michael and achieve the future vision for the County. These projects have been categorized by topic area and include information that can be used as data to help them vet potential grant opportunities.

Community Planning and Capacity Building Projects and Actions

- Amendments to Local Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code to Encourage Housing that is Affordable

Housing Recovery Projects and Actions

- Conduct an Inventory of Vacant Lots
- Utilize Hurricane Housing Recovery Program for Workforce Housing New Construction
- Acquire Homes through Voluntary Buyouts in Areas that Frequently Flood
- Rebuild Florida Housing Repair and Replacement Outreach to Residents and Landlords

Economic Recovery Projects and Actions

- Calhoun-Liberty Hospital Reconstruction
- Technical Assistance for Crop Loss Grants
- Develop New Industrial Park
- Revitalize Downtown Bristol & Other Commercial Corridors
- Explore Agricultural Diversification in Partnership with UF/IFAS
- Identify Workforce Retraining Opportunities

Infrastructure Projects and Actions

- Acquire & Repurpose Old Juvenile Justice Center
- New Emergency Medical Services facility for Liberty County
- Upgrade & Enhance Communication Infrastructure
- Upgrades & Enhancements to Wastewater Infrastructure in Liberty County and the City of Bristol
- Upgrades to Harden Local Bridges
- Develop a Stormwater Master Plan
- Create a Designated Shelter in Liberty County
- Improve the Liberty County Jail
- Invest in a Thermal Drone for Remote Emergency Response

Health and Social Services Projects and Actions

- Develop Partnership Programs to Address Rising Crime Rates
- Develop Programs to Reduce Recidivism for Inmates in County Jail

Natural and Cultural Resources Recovery Projects and Actions

- Repair Historic Liberty County Courthouse
- Create an Ingress/Egress at Veteran's Memorial Railroad Park

- Develop the Chattahoochee-to-Bristol (C2B) Trail
- Remove Damaged Trees
- Restore Tree Canopy
- Monitor State & Federal Forestry Controlled Burn Efforts
- Repair & Improve Existing Boat Ramps



Community Planning and Capacity Building Projects and Actions

Amendments to Local Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code to Encourage Housing that is Affordable, \$40,000

Summary

Liberty County has one city, Bristol, but there are three census-designated places and numerous unincorporated communities. The County may consider lowering the lot size requirement to allow for more affordable housing choices in the county and the creation of neighborhoods that are affordable for families. The County could strategically determine which areas should allow for smaller lot sizes, without a variance, and which areas should remain “rural” with larger lot size requirements. In addition to this Code change, the County may also consider amending zoning requirements to allow homes with less square footage. This would offer additional choices for housing that is affordable for seniors in Liberty County. In addition to decreased lot sizes, the County may consider allowing multi-family structures and small garden apartments in areas with access to sewer and water to increase the availability of workforce housing. This change would be in conjunction with the lot size change, allowing for increased density in specific areas. While the County does allow for a variance process, developers may not opt to go through this hoop in the process and instead relocate to another county with more favorable development standards. This project has the potential to make the County more competitive and encourages economic development.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Liberty County BOCC

Project Location

Unincorporated areas of Calhoun County

Project Benefits to Homes

Liberty County has identified a need for workforce housing, this code change could incentivize future workforce housing development.

Actions to Support Project

- Review zoning code and zoning maps to identify areas where increased lot coverage would be consistent with current uses.
- Develop code changes.

Potential Funding Sources

- DEO Community Planning Technical Assistance Grants

Housing Recovery Projects and Actions

Vacant Lot Inventory, \$10,000

Summary

Workforce Housing is a priority for Liberty County, however addressing that challenge can be done in a variety of ways. As previously discussed, making Code adjustments to create a developer-friendly environment is just one example. Another recommendation is to conduct a city/county-owned vacant lot inventory as a resource for contractors with the focus on workforce development. It can be challenging to bring developers or contractors into your region for workforce housing projects, however taking the guesswork out of finding available and shovel-ready properties can be an incentive for development.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Liberty County, City of Bristol, Apalachee Regional Planning Council

Project Location

Countywide

Project Benefits to Homes

Liberty County has identified a need for workforce housing, a vacant lot inventory for contractors and developers could incentivize future workforce housing development.

Actions to Support Project

- Determine how the information will be shared with contractors and providers.
- Consider contracting with Apalachee Regional Planning Council or a private consulting firm to collect the information and develop the dissemination process. Options include hard-copy materials and online.

Potential Funding Sources

- DEO Community Planning Technical Assistance Grants

Utilize Hurricane Housing Recovery Program for Workforce Housing New Construction,

Summary

Liberty County has been the recipient of funds through the Hurricane Housing Recovery Program in response to Hurricane Michael. HHRP funding is almost identical to the State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) program, but is a one-time special appropriation following disasters. The county could consider using this funding for construction activities to build new, attractive workforce housing in the community. Currently, the Liberty County Local Housing Assistance Plan (LHAP) does not include this as a strategy, but through an amendment a new construction strategy could be added to construct new homes in the community. This could be done on vacant city and county-owned lots or in partnership with a for-profit or not-for-profit developer. Implementing a new construction strategy for the first time can be challenging. If the community pursues this project, it is recommended that they contact the Florida Housing Coalition for technical assistance.

In developing an arsenal of resources and incentives for developers and contractors, the addition of funding is invaluable and can provide a tangible leg up on other areas who lack those resources.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Liberty County

Project Location

Countywide

Project Benefits to Homes

Liberty County has identified a need for workforce housing, funding availability to supplement costs for contractors and developers could incentivize future workforce housing development.

Actions to Support Project

- Reach out to the Florida Housing Coalition for technical assistance on new construction strategies.
- Review other county [LHAPs](#) for sample strategy language.
- Consider watching this [webinar](#) on new construction strategies to determine if this is a good fit for the community.
- Reach out to local developers and non-profits in the region to find potential partners and gauge interest for a new construction strategy.

Potential Funding Sources

- Hurricane Housing Recovery Program
- State Housing Initiatives Partnership

Acquire Homes through Voluntary Buyouts in Areas that Frequently Flood

Summary

Portions of Liberty County are subject to flooding which can have a devastating effect on the places people call home. Recognizing this risk, the Florida Division of Emergency Management has recommended that communities focus on acquisition of properties without flood insurance in a Special Flood Hazard Area. In response to this recommendation, the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity created a \$27 million Voluntary Home Buyout Program through the Hurricane Michael CDBG-DR Action Plan. Cities and counties will be eligible to receive up to \$5 million to acquire homes in high risk flood areas. Property acquired through this program can then be used to alleviate flooding on other properties through infrastructure improvements or stormwater retention ponds. This property can also be used to create recreational space within the community.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Liberty County BOCC, The City of Bristol

Project Location

Special Flood Hazard Area

Project Benefits to Low- and Moderate-Income Households

Will relocate residents from areas vulnerable to flood to safer ground. Property can then be used to further alleviate flooding from nearby property or as a recreational space.

Actions to Support Project

- Liberty County might consider coordinating with the City of Bristol on this program. If the total value of property to be acquired throughout the county does not exceed \$5 million, a combined application could be developed, and resources could be leveraged.
- Using recent flood maps, the County could inventory residential properties that are at risk to flood and those that meet LMI criteria, as 75 percent of the funding allocated must be spent to address the needs of LMI.
- To understand how the program may be structured, the City could review applications and guidelines released for a similar program launched after [Hurricane Irma](#).
- Reach out to potential candidates to determine their willingness to participate in the program and monitor the launch of this opportunity on the [DEO website](#).

Potential Funding Sources

- CDBG-DR Hurricane Michael: Voluntary Home Buyout Program
- Hazard Mitigation Grant Program
- Hurricane Loss Mitigation Program

Rebuild Florida Housing Repair and Replacement Outreach to Residents and Landlords

The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity has committed to the implementation of a state-managed Housing Repair and Replacement Program (HRRP) in the Hurricane Michael CDBG-DR Action Plan. Nearly \$250 million in funding will be spent to repair and replace homes that received damage from Hurricane Michael through the Rebuild Florida Program. Most of this funding will go to address the needs of Low- to Moderate-Income (LMI) residents who earn no more than 80 percent of the Area Median Income. The following activities will be allowed under this program:

- Repairs to, reconstruction or replacement of housing units damaged by Hurricane Michael, much may include bringing the home into code compliance and mitigation against future storm impacts, including elevation.
- The completion of work to homes that have been partially repaired.
- Repairs to, or replacement of, manufactured, modular and mobile homes impacted by Hurricane Michael.
- Assistance to address clouded title issues that may be hampering the repair or replacement of homes.

The maximum amount of funding that can be awarded for a home replacement is \$350,000 – significantly higher than traditional housing rehabilitations programs funded through the State Housing Initiatives Partnership. This could be a major opportunity to improve the modest income housing stock for both homeowners and renters in the community. Eligible applicants include homeowners and owners of rental properties, including Public Housing Authorities, whose primary residence sustained damage from Hurricane Michael and property owners of rental housing.

At the time of the completion of this plan, the HRRP program had not yet been opened for Hurricane Michael. However, interested parties can check the [DEO website](#) for the most up-to-date information or [sign-up for updates](#) on Rebuild Florida.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, City of Bristol, Liberty Strong, Liberty County BOCC.

Project Location

Countywide.

Project Benefits to Low- and Moderate-Income Households

Homeowners with damaged or condemned properties due to Hurricane Michael can utilize CDBG-DR to recover. This recommended marketing and education process will help inform and encourage eligible applicants to take advantage of the program.

Actions to Support Project

- Monitor the launch of Rebuild Florida for Hurricane Michael impacted communities.
- To understand how this program may work, employees can visit the current program website that showcases housing programs in place following Hurricane Irma. While policies may change, it is likely that much of the information will be similar.
- Work with DEO to acquire educational material on CDBG-DR to provide to property owners.
- Have a point of contact within the County or a partner dedicated to Liberty Strong educated in the program and available to answer any questions from local citizens. Ensure this person's information is widely available to encourage outreach.
- In partnership with the Liberty County SHIP administrator, contact local homeowners known to have sustained damage in Hurricane Michael to educate them on their options with CDBG-DR and encourage them to apply.

Economic Recovery Projects and Actions

Calhoun-Liberty Hospital Reconstruction, \$30,000,000

Summary

Calhoun-Liberty Hospital, while in Calhoun County, is a joint facility and serves the surrounding areas of Calhoun, Liberty, Gulf, and Jackson counties. The Hospital is a critical institution in the region and was badly impacted by Hurricane Michael. Over 80% of the roof was torn off, now replaced by a temporary roof. Water-damaged areas, such as the main lobby and lab, were forced to close and relocate. For months, the Hospital was closed for inpatient services and has seen an increase in uninsured patients since the storm. While the Hospital will get some funding from FEMA, it will not be enough to replace the facility up to the codes and regulations for hospitals. Prior to Hurricane Michael, there was an emergency room Expansion planned, using a \$1 million grant. This effort has now been postponed due to the need to replace the facility. The hospital creates over 500 jobs in the community and the loss of this facility would be devastating from both a health access and economic perspective. This project recommends the complete reconstruction of the Calhoun-Liberty Hospital following the damage from Hurricane Michael. This effort would include the replacement and enhancement of the Calhoun-Liberty Hospital, clinic, and EMS facilities to provide better access to healthcare and opportunities for expanded services to residents in the region. This project could assist with Calhoun-Liberty Hospital retaining valuable jobs as well as create new job opportunities for the region.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Calhoun-Liberty Hospital Board of Directors

Project Location

20370 Burns Ave, Blountstown, FL 32424, New Facility – TBD

Project Benefits to Homes

Access to critical and continuing care facilities is a significant consideration for current and future residents. Ensuring the survival of Calhoun-Liberty Hospital will likely help to support future economic and community development. In addition, this hospital primarily services low- and moderate-income individuals.

Actions to Support Project

- Finalize FEMA PA process to secure funding for replacement facility.
- Acquire property for new hospital location.
- Develop detailed site plans that include costs for the new hospital, healthcare clinic and EMS facility.
- Evaluate all funding sources currently allocated to support the project and define clear scopes of work that ensure that there documented proof of no duplication of benefits.

Technical Assistance for Crop Loss Grants

Summary

The timber industry in Florida was devastated by Hurricane Michael. Over a year later, the industry is still needing recovery assistance from state and federal funding to clean up the fallen timber and prepare for new plantings. Liberty County may consider providing space and outreach for the Florida Forest Service to assist with one-on-one assistance to help landowners and those in the timber industry navigate the resources available to them for recovery. Specifically, this service should focus on small landowners that do not have the equipment or resources to clean-up properties and replace timber crops with Crop Loss Grants.

During this process, the County could also collect information on the most immediate needs of the industry and advocate for them to the State to help enact policies that will most benefit the industry. These recommendations to the State would likely include advocating for clear, easy-to-navigate systems for first-time grant writers and managers. This information should be conveyed to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Florida Forest Service and Florida Division of Emergency Management.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Liberty County

Project Location

Countywide

Actions to Support Project

- Consider evaluating some of these resources:
 - [USDA Disaster Survey](#)
 - [USDA Disaster Assistance Programs](#)
 - [Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services grants](#)
- Stay in contact with the [Florida Department of Emergency Management](#) and USDA to be aware when the grant application becomes available for the disaster recovery program specific for Florida, Georgia, and Alabama.
- Offer group and individual training on available programs, walking through the grant process from application to final reporting.

Develop New Industrial Park

Summary

In 2019, the Florida Legislature created a specific appropriation for the Rural Infrastructure Fund (RIF) (Section 288.0655(6), Florida Statutes) for projects in Calhoun, Gadsden, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty and Washington counties. These funds were designated to help communities restore their economies after the impacts of Hurricane Michael. Administered by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, the RIF provides funding to local governments for infrastructure projects in rural communities to encourage job creation and business investment, and to strengthen and diversify rural economies.

Liberty County received \$290,000 to conduct studies that will assist in determining the necessary infrastructure and best location for an industrial park development to attract businesses to the community. Project activities include a preliminary engineering report, wetlands and archaeological review and site layout of the industrial park.

Once the feasibility study is complete, additional funding will be needed to support the development of infrastructure to attract new industries to Liberty County. The County may consider preparing for the completion of that study by laying the groundwork for identifying funding resources and conducting initial industry outreach.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Liberty County Chamber of Commerce

Project Location

TBD, Liberty County

Actions to Support Project

- Upon completion of study, work with regional partners (like Opportunity Florida) to determine infrastructure needs
- Begin identifying funding for site purchase, development, and marketing.
- Work with [Duke Energy](#), Enterprise Florida and other partners with resources to evaluate the readiness of the site to support light and heavy industrial activity.

Potential Funding Sources

- Public/Private Partnerships
- CDBG-DR General Infrastructure Program
- Rural Job Growth Grant
- Rural Infrastructure Fund
- Annual CDBG Economic Development funding
- Coronavirus Relief CDBG funding

Revitalize Downtown Bristol & Other Commercial Corridors

Summary

Liberty County sustained significant damage from Hurricane Michael and has been slow to recover due to lack of resources, local contractors, and funding. This project recommends a focused initiative on revitalizing the commercial corridors in Liberty County, specifically Downtown Bristol, to address remaining damage from Hurricane Michael and attract new small businesses to these areas.

Liberty County may consider themselves a partner with existing commercial businesses in an effort to rehabilitate, revitalize, and incentivize the region. This could include efforts such as training on which resources are available for existing businesses to rehabilitate their structures; identifying match dollars for existing grants; beautifying the public spaces along the corridors through sidewalks, plantings, and wayfinding; and offering incentives for new businesses to locate in these areas.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Liberty County, City of Bristol, Private Business Owners along Corridor

Project Location

Countywide, Commercial Corridors

Actions to Support Project

- Identify which structures along the corridors are still damaged from Hurricane Michael and need financial assistance to initiate repairs. Work with business owners to understand their options in repair from the hurricane.
- Contract with an engineering or planning firm to develop a streetscape project along the commercial corridors.
- Identify funding sources for streetscape efforts.
- Identify incentives for future business owners or developers. Options may include:
- Expedited Process of Development Approvals
- Ongoing Regulatory Review Process
- Impact fee Modifications, Waivers, or Reimbursement
- Inventory of Lands for Affordable Housing

Potential Funding Sources

- CDBG-DR Hometown Revitalization Program
- Rural Job Growth Grant
- Rural Infrastructure Fund
- Annual CDBG Economic Development funding
- Coronavirus Relief CDBG funding

Explore Agricultural Diversification in Partnership with UF/IFAS

Summary

Agricultural diversification is the reallocation of some, or all, of a farm's productive resources, such as land, capital, farm equipment and labor to other products. Factors leading to decisions to diversify are many, but include: reducing risk, responding to changing consumer demands or changing government policy, and/or responding to external shocks. In making decisions about diversification farmers need to consider whether income generated by new farm enterprises will be greater than the existing activities, with similar or less risk. In the case of Liberty County, many timber farmers may need to consider alternative crop options to get a faster return on investment on their property.

Liberty County could consider partnering with UF/IFAS to develop agricultural diversification strategies and training for small landowners impacted by Hurricane Michael, specifically timber farmers. The University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) is a federal-state-county partnership dedicated to developing knowledge in agriculture, human and natural resources, and the life sciences, and enhancing and sustaining the quality of human life by making that information accessible. The Liberty County extension office is located in Bristol.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: UF IFAS, Liberty County, Small Landowners

Project Location

Countywide

Actions to Support Project

- Liberty County and UF/IFAS could initially meet and discuss options for agricultural diversification for timber landowners.
- After developing strategies, the partners could create training for timber landowners on steps to implement agricultural diversification.

Potential Funding Sources

- USDA Crop Loss Grants
- Farm Bill Programs and Grants

Identify Workforce Retraining Opportunities

Summary

Liberty County has identified a need to retrain those who have been negatively impacted by the loss of timber industry due to Hurricane Michael and are out of work. Liberty County could consider partnering with vocational and technical colleges on workforce retraining opportunities, focusing on those areas most lacking in the county such as healthcare and construction related. The partnership could include the addition of a satellite campus in Liberty County located in a school or other existing building or marketing online programs with apprenticeship opportunities.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Calhoun-Liberty County Hospital, CareerSource Chipola, Liberty County School District, North Florida Technical College

Project Location

Countywide

Actions to Support Project

- Work with local employers to identify most urgent workforce needs. The retraining initiative will likely be more successful if there is the potential for immediate employment post-graduation.
- Meet with regional technical colleges to identify who best fits the needs of Liberty County residents and who is most interested in partnering.
- Consider providing scholarships to adult students entering the program or solicit funding from local businesses who will benefit from trained skilled workers exiting the program.

Potential Funding Sources

- CDBG-DR Workforce Recovery Training Program
- EDA Public Works and Development Facilities Program



Infrastructure and Public Facilities Projects and Actions

Acquire & Repurpose Old Juvenile Justice Center

Summary

The State currently owns a vacant former Juvenile Justice Facility in Liberty County. It survived Hurricane Michael with minimal damage and could be repurposed into a county or city-owned facility for future use. Liberty County could consider working with the State to request that the facility be donated for a specific public use, for example a jail, detention center, community center or county government office complex. The County could also consider economic development options for the property. An example of where this has recently occurred is at the old Dozier School for Boys in Marianna, Florida. Jackson County was successful in getting this property deeded back to the local government to be repurposed into a commercial and industrial park.

To evaluate this option, the County will need to work with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Division of State Lands along with the Department of Juvenile Justice. Ultimately, the deeding of the property to the county may require approval by the Governor and Cabinet sitting as the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Liberty County Sheriff's Office, Liberty County, Liberty County BOCC

Project Location

29841 Liberty Wilderness Road, Sumatra, FL 32335

Actions to Support Project

- Contact the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice to determine opportunities for acquiring the vacant property for use as a County public facility.
- Identify potential uses and most urgent need for the structure, as well as what uses best fit the current layout and capacity of the building.

Potential Funding Sources

- Deeding of Property to the County by the State

New Emergency Medical Services facility for Liberty County, \$400,000

Summary

The Emergency Medical Services (EMS) facility in Bristol, Liberty County is aging and needs to be renovated and upgraded to meet current codes and standards. Currently the building is located downtown and can hold one ambulance. This means that additional ambulances must be parked outside in areas that are not climate controlled, which can present an issue when responding to an emergency. The County may consider relocating the EMS facility to a new location to allow for expansion, if the current location is constrained. More information on EMS rules and statutes are available on the [Florida Department of Health's website](#).

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Liberty County EMS Coordinator and Liberty County BOCC

Project Location

12503 NW Virginia G Weaver St, Bristol, FL 32321

Project Benefits to Homes

Access to efficient and reactive EMS care is a significant consideration for current and future residents. Ensuring the continued success of an EMS facility in Liberty County will likely help to support future economic and community development.

Actions to Support Project

- Review the required rules and regulations for EMS facilities and determine which updates are necessary at the existing location.
- Determine if it is more efficient and economical to relocate the EMS facility rather than improve the existing location.

Potential Funding Sources

- CDBG-DR Hurricane Michael General Infrastructure Repair Program
- USDA Community Facilities Loans and Grants

Upgrade & Enhance Communication Infrastructure

Summary

Communication infrastructure refers to the backbone of the communications system upon which various broadcasting and telecommunication services are operated. This can be built from copper cable, fiber, or wireless technologies utilizing the radio frequency spectrum, such as microwave and satellite.

Liberty County may consider investigating ways to update communication infrastructure for cell phone networks, broadband capacity, and radio communication both during emergency response and to support economic development. Specifically, improved communication infrastructure within the Apalachicola National Forest is needed. It is critical that in times of natural disasters or some other emergency, that there is a reliable network of digital communication throughout the county.

This project suggests upgrading and enhancing communication infrastructure to better position Liberty County for the future. Jobs and schools are going increasingly digital, and not having access to technology can limit the potential for growth, both in population and commercial businesses. This project could include a regional partnership on broadband infrastructure to offer more opportunities for home businesses, schools and new industries.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Liberty County

Project Location

Countywide

Project Benefits to Homes

Homes that do not have access to the internet are unattractive to current and future homeowners. By treating connectivity as a necessary utility within the county, Liberty County will be better poised to attract new residents, developers, and businesses.

Actions to Support Project

- Meet with primary providers in the county to identify where they serve, gaps in service, and what incentives would be needed to expand into areas with unmet need.
- Identify funding resources and incentive opportunities. For example, the City of Tallahassee offered its utility poles as shareable space to MetroNet in order to expand fiber throughout the City.

Potential Funding Sources

- CDBG-DR Hurricane Michael General Infrastructure Repair Program.
- USDA ReConnect Loan & Grant Program

Upgrades & Enhancements to Wastewater Infrastructure in Liberty County and the City of Bristol

Summary

Liberty County and the City of Bristol may consider enhancing the County and City wastewater system. Maintaining wastewater collection infrastructure – pump stations, force mains, and sewers – is an integral component of the proper management of a treatment system and critical to preventing illegal wastewater releases. Effective preventive maintenance programs have been shown to significantly reduce the frequency and volume of untreated sewage discharges, help communities plan for the future and save money on emergency response. This is especially important if there are unincorporated areas in the County interested in connecting to the existing system.

The costs of infrastructure maintenance and repair can be high, but these costs will only continue to mount as aging or maxed-out infrastructures continue to erode. With the average cost to replace a major sewer line at one million dollars per mile, wastewater collection and treatment facilities can be the most expensive infrastructure for many communities. When these systems fail due to age or maintenance issues, fines can add to the cost of repair or replacement.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Liberty County, City of Bristol

Project Location

Citywide and Countywide

Project Benefits to Homes

Aging wastewater systems can lead to failing systems, resulting in costly repairs and impacts to houses and businesses. By maintaining a regular evaluation process, the City and County will avoid these impacts to citizens.

Actions to Support Project

- Work with a licensed inspector to evaluate the collections system and provide recommendations on necessary maintenance and repairs.

Potential Funding Sources

- Florida Small Cities CDBG Program
- Coronavirus Relief CDBG Funding
- EDA Public Works and Development Facilities Program
- USDA Rural Development
- Florida Rural Water Association
- Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund
- Small Community Wastewater Construction Grants Program

Upgrades to Harden Local Bridges

Summary

Following Hurricane Michael, Liberty County had many local bridges that were structurally weakened or destroyed. The County may consider taking advantage of existing disaster relief resources to harden local bridges, mitigating potential future damage and strengthening the infrastructure of the county.

The U.S. Department of Transportation has determined that the country has too many existing bridges that need replacing or upgrading, rehabilitating or retrofiting. As these structures are aging, they are more susceptible to damage in storms as well as impacts from daily wear and tear.

The most typical deficiencies for old bridges are usually one of the following: insufficient live load capacity, narrow traffic lanes, low clearance, need for more traffic lanes or shoulders, unsafe structural materials or connections. In most cases, there is a combination of two or more of these items. While the need for additional traffic lanes can sometimes be addressed with a new parallel bridge, most of the other issues require structural modifications to, or complete replacement of, the existing structure.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Liberty County

Project Location

Countywide

Project Benefits to Homes

Some homes may be only accessible by bridge or may only be able to access emergency shelters by bridge. It is critical to ensure a safe route of passage by strengthening bridges throughout the County.

Actions to Support Project

- Inventory the existing bridges in Liberty County and hire a structural engineer to determine the safety rating of the bridge as well as recommended improvements.
- Prioritize the project list based on need and level of service.
- Develop an implementation plan with phases to complete the project.

Potential Funding Sources

- CDBG-DR Hurricane General Infrastructure Repair Program
- Hazard Mitigation Grant Program

Stormwater Master Plan

Summary

Liberty County may consider developing a stormwater master plan with detailed projects to address improvements needed to reduce flooding within Bristol and targeted flood areas within Liberty County. The goal of stormwater planning is to protect or maintain the health of streams, lakes and aquatic life as well as to provide opportunities for human uses of water by mitigating the effects of built development. Stormwater master plans can prevent problems from happening either by mitigating impacts before they create problems or by avoiding the creation of problems, and prevention is usually cheaper than restoration.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Liberty County, City of Bristol

Project Location

Countywide

Project Benefits to Homes

Proactive stormwater management planning and mitigation efforts protects and/or prepares houses for future flooding events.

Actions to Support Project

- Contract with a stormwater management consulting firm to develop a comprehensive stormwater master plan with detailed list of projects, budgets, prioritization, and implementation timeline.

Potential Funding Sources

- CDBG-DR Hurricane Michael Planning Program
- Northwest Florida Water Management Grant



Designated Shelter in Liberty County, \$1 million

Summary

Liberty County typically utilizes W.R. Tolar School as the primary emergency shelter. This shelter does not meet the requirements of a special needs storm shelter. To meet the needs of the county in the event of future storms, it is Liberty County could construct a designated shelter with a plan for appropriate staffing for future storms.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Liberty County, Liberty County School District, Liberty County Emergency Management

Project Location

To be determined

Project Benefits to Homes

Having a secure and well-prepared storm shelter in the case of a natural disaster provides a safe place for residents if their homes are compromised.

Actions to Support Project

- Liberty County could first identify property that would be a suitable and centralized location for the shelter. This property should be well outside the flood zone, flat, and easily accessible.
- Contract with an engineering firm to create the designs of the project and manage implementation using the [guidelines](#) published by Florida Division of Emergency Management.
- Partner with the [American Red Cross](#) to get the shelter certified and potentially staffed by ARC volunteers.
- Work with Liberty County Emergency Management and Liberty County School District to identify and train staff for the shelter in the event of an emergency.

Potential Funding Sources

- CDBG-DR Hurricane Michael General Infrastructure Repair Program (in conjunction with a school or another public facility repair).
- Hurricane Loss Mitigation Program

Liberty County Jail, \$2,150,000

Summary

Liberty County Jail is a short-term security detention center located in Bristol. The jail is run by the Liberty County Sheriff's Offices and houses adult inmates who are awaiting trial or sentencing. The jail facility is aging and not code compliant. A new facility is needed to ensure it can withstand wind damage from future natural disasters and decrease the potential need for evacuation of inmates.

According to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service, it costs \$43,000 per bed to build a new jail. This project recommends increasing the current capacity to 50 beds. The Liberty County Sheriff's Office has already identified property for the new facility and is now securing funding. The facility is owned by the Liberty County Board of County Commissioners.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Liberty County Sheriff's Office, Liberty County, City of Bristol, Liberty County BOCC

Project Location

10818 FL-20, Bristol, FL 32321

Actions to Support Project

- Property has been identified for the new jail, ensure the use will meet all zoning requirements. Determine the cost of purchasing property. Partner with Liberty County BOCC as the future owner of the facility.
- Work with an engineering firm to design and manage the construction project. Ensure the new facility will meet all code requirements as well as anticipate any future increase in use or expansion of services.

Potential Funding Sources

- CDBG-DR Hurricane Michael General Infrastructure Repair Program
- USDA Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program



Thermal Drone, \$10,000

Summary

There has been a recent trend in utilizing drones outside of media and recreation use. A thermal imaging camera on a drone turns it into a powerful tool, which can be used in many sectors from construction, mining, electrical, surveillance, firefighting, search and rescue. Thermal drones that use vision imaging cameras have many positive uses by detecting heat coming from almost all objects and materials turning them into images and video. Drones equipped with thermal imaging cameras can cover large areas much faster than ground crews and can be deployed much quicker and at a fraction of the cost than traditional manned aircraft. While the scientific details of how thermal imaging works is quite complex, the reality is that modern thermal cameras are extremely easy to use. The images are very clear and easy to understand, requiring little training or interpretation, making them very effective tools. Liberty County may consider the purchase of a thermal drone to use in response efforts after a disaster to survey and document damage. Given the extensive large expanses of public and private forestland within the county, it is difficult to survey property quickly and efficiently after a disaster with limited local emergency management staff and capacity.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Liberty County Emergency Management

Project Location

Countywide

Project Benefits to Homes

Homes that are located in remote areas may be difficult to reach after a natural disaster due to flooding or fallen trees. This drone would have the capability of identifying residents who may be trapped inside homes or on property, allowing rescue teams to prioritize search and rescue for those homes where there is the greatest need.

Actions to Support Project

According to [DSLR Pros](#), the best safety and rescue thermal drone options are:

- DSLRPros Matrice 210 + XT2 Public Safety Thermal Kit
- Matrice 200 First Responder Thermal Kit
- DSLRPros Matrice 200 Public Safety Thermal Kit
- DJI Matrice 300 RTK Drone
- Inspire 1 First Responder Thermal Kit
- DSLRPros Inspire 1 Public Safety Thermal Kit
- DJI Inspire 1 Thermal Value Bundle
- DJI Mavic 2 Enterprise Dual Drone
- DJI Mavic 2 Enterprise Drone

There are a wide variety of Thermal cameras and drone options available. Liberty County may first research the options and identify which drone best fits their needs and specifications.

Potential Funding Sources

- Emergency Management Performance Grant Program
- State Homeland Security Grant Program

Health and Social Services Projects and Actions

Develop Partnership Programs to Address Rising Crime Rates

Summary

Liberty County had an 111% increase in violent crimes in 2019 compared to 2018. The greatest increase was in aggravated assault, which increased by 183%. This increase may be associated with the post-traumatic stress and displacement following Hurricane Michael. Additional crime rate data is available in [an FDLE report](#). In addition to violent crimes, Liberty County has experienced increased drug and substance abuse among residents. Like the crime statistics, these trends may be a result of post-traumatic stress, displacement following Hurricane Michael, and job loss from the timber industry. The County may consider partnering with mental and behavioral health providers to determine which programs are available for residents and if there is a need for additional programs. The providers and County can then work together to promote these programs and encourage residents to take advantage of them. The County may also consider offering scholarships or sponsoring group programs to increase accessibility for low income residents as well as offer to provide host site locations throughout the County to ease travel distances and remove additional barriers to participation.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Liberty County, Mental and Behavioral Health Providers, Florida Department of Health, Liberty County Sheriff's Office, Capital Area Community Action Agency

Project Location

Countywide

Project Benefits to Homes

Increased crime rates can have a negative impact on home values and interest from future homeowners to purchase in an area with increasing crime. Addressing these trends before they continue will mitigate potential long-term impacts.

Actions to Support Project

- Work with Florida Department of Health to identify mental and behavioral health providers in the area.
- Develop a task force to focus on determining what programs exist, what gaps exist and potential programs to fill them, and how to reach all populations within the County.
- Identify funding resources or partner with non-profits who would donate their space for programming.

Potential Funding Sources

- Community Services Block Grant Funding
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Grant Funding for Disaster Recovery

Develop Programs to Reduce Recidivism for Inmates in County Jail

Summary

Jail recidivism refers to the percentage of former prisoners who are rearrested for a similar offense. The term is frequently used in conjunction with repeated criminal behavior and substance abuse. Recidivism is measured by criminal acts that resulted in rearrest, reconviction or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a short period following the prisoner's release. Liberty County may consider developing programs aimed at reducing recidivism for inmates in the County Jail. Ways to reduce recidivism include: encouraging inmates to develop marketable job skills; prioritizing mental health treatment for inmates; ensuring inmates receive appropriate substance abuse treatment; helping inmates maintain family ties while incarcerated; and equipping inmates with information and resources as they return to the community.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Liberty County, Liberty County Sheriff's Office, Capital Area Community Action Agency

Potential Supporting Partners: Florida Department of Corrections, Florida Department of Health

Project Location

Countywide

Actions to Support Project

- Identify what programs that the Liberty County Sheriff's Office is currently offering inmates to help prepare them for release.
- Work with the Department of Corrections to develop additional programs as needed.
- Partner with local and regional companies to develop a work program for inmates, providing training in skills they can use once released. Consider identifying a list of businesses that will hire employees with a criminal record and match released inmates to these positions as available.

Potential Funding Sources

- Community Services Block Grant Funding
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Grant Funding for Disaster Recovery

Natural and Cultural Resources Projects and Actions

Repair Historic Liberty County Courthouse, \$200,000

Summary

The Liberty County Courthouse was built in 1942 in Bristol. The building was damaged in Hurricane Michael, including roof and water damage. FEMA Public Assistance (PA) has covered some of the repairs, however, there remain needs beyond what that grant will cover. The County may consider identifying grant resources to restore the Liberty County Courthouse as a historic and cultural resource in the community.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Liberty County BOCC

Project Location

10818 NW, FL-20, Bristol, FL 32321

Actions to Support Project

- Work with a preservationist engineer to develop plans to restore and rehabilitate the historic structure.
- Identify funding sources to implement the project, with the engineering firm acting as the construction management entity.

Potential Funding Sources

- Department of State Historic Preservation Grant Program
- Department of State Hurricane Michael Grant Program



Ingress/Egress at Veteran's Memorial Railroad Park

Summary

The Veteran's Memorial Railroad Park is a great county facility that is currently a large attraction around the holidays when volunteers turn the park into a Winter Wonderland light display and take visitors around by steam engine train. This Railroad consists of three, two-foot gauge trains which travel around the perimeter of the park (over one mile of track) for the delight of families from throughout the Panhandle as well as Alabama and Georgia.

The trains consist of a diesel replica, known as "Ole Faithful – Red White Blue;" " No. 59," a replica of a coal fired steam locomotive; and the Crown jewel of the Railroad, an authentic, restored, coal-fired steam engine. All of these antique park trains are one- third the size of full-size locomotives of the past. The trains are operated by volunteers who come together throughout the year to provide a unique experience for families. The volunteers provide train rides for special reservations, (birthday parties, school field trips), free public run days (second Saturday of each month) and for Halloween, "Ghost Train" and Christmas, "Polar Bear Express" events. While regionally known and well-visited, this park could be a perfect location for other festivals and events throughout the year to celebrate the heritage of Liberty County.

In addition to entertainment and recreation, the park served as a staging area during Hurricane Michael and could be enhanced to serve in this capacity again for emergency personnel. To better accommodate traffic, the County may consider acquiring adjacent land to allow a separate access point that provides both an ingress and egress from the park. This will allow for better flow of traffic, improved visitor safety, and expand the use and capacity of the park for special events.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Liberty County BOCC

Project Location

10561 NW Theo Jacobs Way, Bristol, FL 32321

Actions to Support Project

- Identify which adjacent property owners would be interested in selling to increase transportation options for ingress/egress to the park.
- Work with a transportation planner or engineer to determine the most efficient and effective vehicular route through the park.
- Identify funding resources and purchase property. Ensure development will meet all zoning and use requirements.
- Hire a contractor to implement the project.

Potential Funding Sources

- Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program

Chattahoochee-to-Bristol (C2B) Trail

Summary

The Apalachee Regional Planning Council (ARPC) developed a feasibility study for a trail from Chattahoochee to Bristol. The trail has been a grassroots effort that came to life after the Highway 90 Corridor Study highlighted many of the assets in the area and the ability of a linkage through extensive public lands. The new trail would hopefully add economic vigor to a rural and underserved area utilizing the incredible terrain and endemic species found in the distinct Apalachicola River Bluffs and Ravines area.

The C2B trail would hug the eastern bank of the Apalachicola River, running through private and public lands in Gadsden and Liberty counties following the topography of bluffs and ravines of the Apalachicola River. Some of the larger landowners would include The Nature Conservancy, the Northwest Florida Water Management District, City of Chattahoochee, and Torreya State Park. The proposed trail is a designated Opportunity Trail by the Florida Office of Greenways & Trails.

ARPC staff has continued to work with local stakeholders to move forward with this effort and Liberty County could be an important partner in the process of supporting the trail's development. ARPC staff is collaborating with Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) staff to develop criteria needed to utilize the rest area on I-10. ARPC staff is also working with Torreya Park staff to potentially integrate the C2B Trail into the Park's Unit Management Plan. Current efforts are underway by federal, state, and regional entities to identify next steps.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Liberty County, Gadsden County, ARPC, FDOT, Torreya State Park

Project Location

Countywide

Project Benefits to Homes

The establishment of a trail along the length of the county will not only be an attraction for visitors but will also be a factor for future residents interested in living in an area with abundant access to natural resources.

Actions to Support Project

- Continue to meet with landowners to determine potential use of the eastern bank of the Apalachicola River for the trail.
- Partner with advocacy groups committed to expanding recreational opportunities throughout the panhandle. Also work with tourism efforts to highlight the trail.
- Identify funding resources and determine the long-term maintenance costs associated with the trail as well as who is responsible for maintenance.

Potential Funding Sources

- As identified in next steps working with federal, state and regional entities.

Remove Damaged Trees

Summary

Following Hurricane Michael, there was significant damage to trees throughout Liberty County. Many that had fallen have already been removed, however the County could consider taking an inventory of damaged trees that still pose a risk. Damaged standing trees can be a threat to nearby homes, businesses, powerlines, and roadways. The trees may be weakened enough to fall during a high windstorm, resulting in future damage. After taking an inventory of those trees most at risk, the County can consider resources available for private properties to remove the trees, help in removing, and remove those on public property. When working with private property owners, consider recommending professional tree removal services to manage the process.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Liberty County

Project Location

Countywide. Parts of this project is located in a Low- to Moderate-Income area with more than 50% percent of individuals in the community meeting LMI criteria.

Project Benefits to Homes

Damaged trees are at higher risk of falling in another wind event, potentially impacting homes and residents. However, the cost to remove trees can be a barrier for some homeowners. Through a potential partnership with the County to assist in the process, homes and homeowners could be protected from future damage.

Actions to Support Project

- Hire a professional service to inventory damaged trees in the county, focusing on those areas near homes, commercial structures, powerlines, and roadways.
- Prioritize identified damaged trees based on severity of damage.
- Identify funding resources, for public and private entities, supporting tree removal.
- Work with private landowners to provide resources and technical assistance during tree removal process.

Potential Funding Sources

- State Housing Initiatives Partnership (Under a Disaster Recovery Strategy. Amendments to the LHAP may be required, if the community feels that this is a good use of these funds on private property. The County is encouraged to work with the Florida Housing Finance Corporation to understand if this option is available for their community.)

Restore Tree Canopy

Summary

Liberty County is abundant with natural beauty, stretching from the Ochlockonee to the Apalachicola River and home to multiple parks, including the Apalachicola National Forest. While still beautiful, these natural assets were heavily impacted by Hurricane Michael and many areas are still flattened from downed trees.

Liberty County may consider supporting efforts to restore the tree canopy on public lands to restore the natural beauty of the county. The County may also encourage private landowners to undergo similar effort on their property.

These efforts can include replanting trees, removing damaged trees to allow for new growth, and removing debris from the ground floor.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Liberty County, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Forest Service

Project Location

Countywide

Actions to Support Project

- [Arbor Day Foundation](#) hosted tree distribution days in Marianna, Panama City, and Panama City Beach to support tree plantings and restoration of the canopy.
- Identify potential partners to support tree replanting on public or private lands. Determine which public areas were hit the hardest and need assistance in recovery.
- Implement in phases and publicize the events as a best practice for private businesses and homeowners to follow.

Potential Funding Sources

- TD Green Space Grants
- Regional Private Donations



Monitor State & Federal Forestry Controlled Burn Efforts

Summary

Controlled burning, also known as prescribed burning, involves setting planned fires to maintain the health of a forest. Controlled burns are lit for a number of reasons. By ridding a forest of dead leaves, tree limbs, and other debris, a prescribed burn can help prevent a destructive wildfire. Controlled burns can also reduce insect populations and destroy invasive plants. In addition, fire can be rejuvenating. It returns nutrients to the soil in the ashes of vegetation that could otherwise take years to decompose. And after a fire, the additional sunlight and open space in a forest can help young trees and other plants start to grow.

While controlled burns are healthy for forests, they must be carefully planned to avoid wildfires. With increased debris and vegetation after Hurricane Michael in many of the forests in Liberty County, there is an increased risk associated with the burns. Liberty County may consider ways to work collaboratively with state and federal forestry-controlled burn efforts to help reduce the chance of wildfire due to the increased debris. This effort could include additional preventative measures around the perimeter of the burn as well as having resources on hand if the burn were to start getting out of control.

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Florida Forest Service, National Forest Service, Liberty County

Project Location

Countywide

Actions to Support Project

- Meet with State and Federal Forestry Services to have a firm timeline of anticipated burns and a map of the proposed areas. Offer resources from the County to help mitigate any anticipated challenges.
- Review areas planned for a burn prior to the burning to remove any risky debris, especially if there is unnatural debris that may burn differently.
- Be on site during the burns with resources available to assist if there are any unanticipated challenges.



Repair & Improve Existing Boat Ramps

Summary

Given its location between the Apalachee River and Ochlockonee River, as well as containing numerous other creeks, streams, and lakes, Liberty County has numerous public boat ramps for recreational use. While some of these are managed by FWC, others are owned by the County.

This project recommends the repair and enhancements of existing boat ramps for better public access to waterways both as a benefit for local residents as well as to attract nature-loving tourists.

Project Type

Public Facilities

Project Sponsors

Potential Primary Sponsor: Liberty County

Potential Supporting Partners: FWC

Project Location

Countywide

Project Benefits to Homes

Homes will benefit by having safe and accessible access to the water near the neighborhood.

Actions to Support Project

- Inventory all publicly accessible boat ramps in the County and assess their condition.
- Prioritize the ramps based on popularity and need for repair.
- Identify funding resources and develop an implementation plan.
- Market available ramps on the county website and regional tourism website.

Potential Funding Sources

- Florida Boating Improvement Program

Implementation Strategy

Funding resources have been included in project descriptions throughout the Liberty County Long-term Recovery Plan. This implementation strategy is a compilation of additional information on each of the funding sources listed with links for guidance on how to access these dollars.

Community Planning and Capacity Building Resources

Florida Department of Economic Opportunity: Community Planning Technical Assistance Grants

[Community Planning Technical Assistance Grants](#) provide counties, municipalities and regional planning councils the opportunity to create innovative plans and development strategies to promote a diverse economy, vibrant rural and suburban areas and meet the requirements of the Community Planning Act, while protecting environmentally sensitive areas. Understanding that many Florida communities are impacted by hurricanes, CPTA grants may also be used for disaster recovery or resiliency planning and economic development. The county, municipality or regional planning council develops projects that generally relate to community planning and economic development strategies that implement the requirements in the Community Planning Act. DEO encourages communities impacted by hurricanes Irma and/or Michael to apply for projects related to disaster recovery or resiliency. Previous grant projects include, but are not limited to: visual imaging for public projects; community redevelopment area plans and land development regulations; sea level rise impacts to stormwater outfalls in the Indian River Lagoon; amendments to comprehensive plans and land development regulations; and master plans for recreation, neighborhoods, infrastructure, urban design, etc. Applicants are encouraged to seek funding for innovative, creative or unique approaches to planning and development.

Housing Recovery Resources

State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program

Florida Housing administers the [State Housing Initiatives Partnership program](#) (SHIP), which provides funds to local governments as an incentive to create partnerships that produce and preserve affordable homeownership and multifamily housing. The program was designed to serve very low, low- and moderate-income families.

Liberty County typically receives \$350,000 annually through this program. In order to participate, local governments must establish a [local housing assistance program](#) by ordinance; develop a local housing assistance plan and housing incentive strategy; amend land development regulations or establish local policies to implement the incentive strategies; form partnerships and combine resources in order to reduce housing costs; and ensure that rent or mortgage payments

within the targeted areas do not exceed 30 percent of the area median income limits, unless authorized by the mortgage lender.

SHIP dollars may be used to fund emergency repairs, new construction, rehabilitation, down payment and closing cost assistance, impact fees, construction and gap financing, mortgage buy-downs, acquisition of property for affordable housing, matching dollars for federal housing grants and programs, and homeownership counseling.

A minimum of 65 percent of the funds must be spent on eligible homeownership activities; a minimum of 75 percent of funds must be spent on eligible construction activities; at least 30 percent of the funds must be reserved for very-low income households (up to 50 percent of the area median income or AMI); an additional 30 percent must be reserved for low income households (up to 80 percent of AMI); and the remaining funds may be reserved for households up to 140 percent of AMI. No more than 10 percent of SHIP funds may be used for administrative expenses.

Hurricane Housing Recovery Program

In 2019, the Florida Legislature appropriated \$65 million in Hurricane Housing Recovery Program (HHRP) dollars for the SHIP-eligible local governments affected by Hurricane Michael. The 2020 budget contains additional funding for this program, but at the time of this plan the budget had not yet been adopted. This funding is very similar to SHIP funding with additional flexibility granted for disaster recovery. Since this funding is directly allocated to local governments, there is no application process. For more information on the HHRP program and the ways that it can be used consult the [Florida Housing Coalition guidebook](#) on housing disaster recovery.

Economic Development and Infrastructure Resources

Florida Job Growth Grant Fund

The [Florida Job Growth Grant Fund](#) is an economic development program designed to promote public infrastructure and workforce training across the state. Proposals are reviewed by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) and Enterprise Florida, Inc. (EFI) and chosen by the Governor to meet the demand for workforce or infrastructure needs in the community they are awarded to.

In 2019-20, the agency will be able to provide \$40 million for projects that focus on rapidly developing a highly-skilled workforce and on infrastructure initiatives that attract businesses, create jobs and promote economic growth. Workforce training projects will provide Floridians with transferable, sustainable workforce skills applicable to more than a single employer, and for equipment associated with these programs. Public infrastructure projects can include transportation and utilities needed to support economic development.

Rural Infrastructure Fund

The purpose of the [Rural Infrastructure Fund](#) Grant is to facilitate the planning, preparing, and financing of traditional economic development or nature-based tourism infrastructure projects that encourage job creation and capital investment in rural communities. The Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) may award up to 40 percent of total costs for catalyst site projects, and no more than 30 percent of total costs for projects in rural counties that are not located on designated catalyst sites. The three types of grants available under the program are as follows:

Total Project Participation Grants - Up to 30 percent of the total infrastructure project costs related to specific job-creating opportunities; and up to 40 percent of the total infrastructure project costs related to specific job-creating opportunities for projects located on a designated catalyst site.

Infrastructure Feasibility Grants - Funding for infrastructure feasibility studies, design, and engineering or other planning and preparation activities that will help facilitate the location or expansion of specific job-creating opportunities. Grant awards are dependent on the number of jobs a business commits to create; and project location.

- \$50,000 (max.) for projects creating at least 100 jobs
- \$150,000 (max.) for projects creating at least 300 jobs
- \$300,000 (max.) for projects in a Rural Area of Opportunity (RAO)

Preclearance Review Grants - This grant is used to help local governments access resources available pursuant to section 403.973(18), Florida Statutes, (Expedited permitting; comprehensive plan amendments). Grants may be used for surveys, feasibility studies and other activities related to the identification and preclearance review of land use modifications. Available funding and the required match is dependent on the location of the project and the degree to which administrative and consultant expenses are minimized.

- \$75,000 (max.) with a 50 percent local match
- \$300,000 (max.) with a 33 percent local match for activities in a RAO.

CDBG-DR Hurricane Michael: General Infrastructure Repair Program

The [Hurricane Michael CDBG-DR Action Plan](#) includes over \$340 million dedicated to a general infrastructure program for areas impacted by Hurricane Michael. This funding can be used to:

- Restore infrastructure damaged by Hurricane Michael (such as water and sewer facilities, streets, removal of debris, drainage, bridges, etc.).
-
- Demolish and rehabilitate publicly or privately owned commercial or industrial buildings.
- Renourish protective coastal dune systems and state beaches.
-
- Repair damaged buildings that are essential to the health, safety and welfare of a community when repairs to these buildings constitutes an urgent need (this can include police stations, fire stations, parks and recreational centers, community and senior centers, hospitals, clinics, schools and educational facilities and other public properties).
-
- Repair water lines and systems, sewer lines and systems, drainage, and flood mitigation systems.

Eligible projects must demonstrate tie-back to Hurricane Michael damage and must not duplicate benefits received from other grant sources including the FEMA Public Assistance (PA) Program. However, this funding can be used as match for other grant sources including FEMA PA and the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). Competitive projects will also demonstrate how they:

- Support low- and moderate-income (LMI) housing needs,
- Primarily serve LMI populations, or
- Address an urgent need in the community.

As CDBG-DR funding must primarily address the needs of the LMI community, DEO will give priority to applications that meet this criterion. At the time of development of this plan, this program had not yet been launched. However, the City can check the [DEO website](#) for more up-to-date information or get an understanding of potential program requirements by reviewing the guidance released for a [similar program launched after Hurricane Irma](#).

Florida Small Cities CDBG Program

The [Florida Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program](#) is a competitive grant program that awards funds to eligible cities, counties, towns and villages. There are approximately 249 eligible communities in Florida. To be eligible for the Small Cities CDBG Program, a city must have a population under 50,000, and a county's population must be under 200,000. The Program awards subgrants in four categories: Economic Development, Neighborhood Revitalization, Housing Rehabilitation, and Commercial Revitalization. Infrastructure projects are often funded through Economic Development, Commercial Revitalization and Neighborhood Revitalization.

CDBG – Coronavirus Relief Funding

The CARES Act appropriated \$154.7 million to the State of Florida to assist communities with bolstering their COVID-19 response and relief efforts to help low-income families and vulnerable citizens. The City of Apalachicola will be eligible for a little over half of this funding which will be administered by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity likely through a competitive application cycle. DEO is currently awaiting additional guidance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for more insight on how these funds may be able to help local governments respond to COVID-19 and its long-term impacts.

CDBG-DR Hurricane Michael: Hometown Revitalization Program

The [Hurricane Michael CDBG-DR Action Plan](#) includes over \$60 million dedicated to a general infrastructure program for areas impacted by Hurricane Michael. This funding can be used for:

- Public facility improvements, including streetscapes, lighting, sidewalks and other physical improvements to commercial areas.
- Acquisition, demolition, site preparation or rehabilitation of commercial structures carried out by a unit of local government.
- Assistance to small businesses for rehabilitation and physical improvements to their places of business.
- Façade improvements to private or public structures in commercial areas.

Eligible projects must demonstrate tie-back to Hurricane Michael damage and must not duplicate benefits received from other grant sources including the FEMA Public Assistance (PA) Program. Competitive projects will also demonstrate how they:

- Primarily serve LMI populations,
- Aid in the prevention or elimination of slums or blight, or
- Address an urgent need in the community.

As CDBG-DR funding must primarily address the needs of the LMI community, DEO will give priority to applications that meet this criterion. At the time of development of this plan, this program had not yet been launched. However, the County can check the [DEO website](#) for more up-to-date information. This is the first time that DEO has implemented a program of this kind therefore there is no precedent to research as an example. The County may consider the basic requirements for a Commercial Revitalization grant through the Small Cities CDBG program as a resource.

USDA Crop Loss Grants

In May of 2020, the State of Florida signed an agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to administer \$380.7 million in grant funding to help Florida's timber industry recover following Hurricane Michael. This is the first time that Florida has received this type of federal assistance following a disaster. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACCS) and Florida Forest Service will help administer this grant that will likely be housed within the Florida Division of Emergency Management (DEM). While very little official information is available on this grant and how it can be accessed by the agricultural community at this time, it is likely that the Florida Forest Service will provide technical assistance to individual land owners affected in the area. They may work with timber producers to verify their timber loss and help landowners with documentation of loss. Timber producers may be expected to receive funding as soon as this fall with funding providing relief to both timber producers and farmers whose irrigation infrastructure was damaged by Hurricane Michael. The County should monitor the DACCS and DEM websites in the coming months for more information.

Florida Farm Bill Programs and Grants

There are many programs available for both farmers and organizations through the [Farm Bill](#) to support agricultural activities. This includes programs for:

- Beginning and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers
- Conservation and Environment
- Credit and Crop Insurance
- Food Safety
- Healthy Food Access
- Local and Regional Food Systems
- Organic Production
- Renewable Energy
- Rural Development
- Sustainable and Organic Research

CDBG-DR Hurricane Michael: Workforce Recovery Training Program

The \$8 million Workforce Recovery Training Program managed by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity will select entities to deliver workforce training services through a competitive application cycle to implement training programs that may include, but not be limited to:

- Roofing
- Masonry
- Carpentry
- Concrete finishing
- Plumbing
- HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning)
- Electricity
- Heavy equipment operations
- Flooring installation/Carpet laying

- Glass/window installation
- Plastering
- Welding, and
- Customized training tailored to the needs of the specific economic revitalization needs of a region.

Eligible entities include local workforce development boards, educational institutions, and technical centers. Awards will range from \$200,000 to \$3 million. While this program is included in the CDBG-DR Action Plan for Hurricane Michael, the details have not yet been released. To understand how the State may operate this program, interested applicants should view [a similar program](#) released after Hurricane Irma.

EDA Public Works and Development Facilities Program

The [EDA Public Works Program](#) empowers distressed communities in economic decline to revitalize, expand, and upgrade their physical infrastructure to attract new industry, encourage business expansion, diversify local economies, and generate or retain long-term, private sector jobs and investment. In many cases, public works projects are used to upgrade or expand an area's economic infrastructure to support the next generation of industry or commerce. Whenever possible, this program seeks to redevelop existing facilities and industrial/commercial locations. EDA encourages such redevelopment projects because they promote sustainable economic development by taking advantage of readily available infrastructure and markets.

The Public Works and Economic Development Program supports locally developed projects that long-term economic self-sufficiency and global competitiveness. Examples of past infrastructure investments include water and sewer facilities, industrial access roads, rail spurs, port improvements, skill-training facilities, technology-related infrastructure, as well as the demolition, renovation, and construction of publicly owned facilities.

USDA Rural Development

Loans and grants are available for construction of public water and wastewater facilities, as well as for other municipal projects, from the [US Department of Agriculture's Rural Development](#). A community must have a population of less than 10,000 to qualify. The applicant must be an incorporated body or be organized as a private, nonprofit corporation. Grants for as much as 75% of project costs may be awarded for projects which pertain to public health, public safety, or environmental improvement depending on the income level and need within the community. Rural Development prioritizes projects based on the assessment of need for the project and the financial capabilities of the applicant. The proportions of loan and grant vary depending on the agency's overall assessment of a project.

USDA ReConnect Loan and Grant Program

The Broadband ReConnect Program furnishes loans and grants to provide funds for the cost of construction, improvement, or acquisition of facilities and equipment needed to provide broadband services in eligible rural areas. This opportunity most recently provided grants, grant/loan combinations and low-interest loans. The ReConnect Program offers unique federal financing and funding options in the form of loans, grants, and loan/grant combinations to facilitate broadband deployment in areas of rural America that don't currently have sufficient access to broadband, defined by the law as 10 Mbps (megabits per second) downstream and 1 Mbps upstream.

- The entities considered eligible to apply for assistance under the ReConnect Program included:
- Cooperatives, non-profits, or mutual associations
- For-profit corporations or limited liability companies

- States, local governments, or any agency, subdivision, instrumentality, or political subdivision thereof
- A territory or possession of the United States
- An Indian tribe (as defined in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. § 450b)).

Northwest Florida Water Management Grant

The [Northwest Florida Water Management District](#) provides or assists in developing funding opportunities for projects that help protect, maintain, or improve water resources. When available, project funding may be awarded to local governments, utilities, agricultural producers, and other entities. In general, projects of interest must benefit one or more of the District's core mission areas, including:

- Water supply: alternative water supply development, water resource development, or water conservation.
- Water quality: stormwater, wastewater, or other projects that improve water quality and/or provide a reduction in nutrient loading to a waterbody.
- Natural systems: acquisition and restoration of measurable resource benefits to streams, lakes, wetlands, springs, or aquifers.
- Flood protection: structural and non-structural flood protection or abatement projects.

Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund

The [Clean Water State Revolving Fund \(CWSRF\)](#) program provides low-interest loans for planning, designing and constructing water pollution control facilities under Chapter 62-503, F.A.C. The department receives requests for funding throughout the year for wastewater, stormwater, and certain energy and other types of projects. The information gathered in the request is used to establish project priorities for listing projects in order of priority for funding at the beginning of each fiscal year and each quarter, thereafter, as funds are available.

Funds are made available for Planning Loans, Design Loans and Construction Loans. Small, disadvantaged communities may also be eligible for grants, which, once qualified, can significantly reduce the amount owed on a CWSRF loan. The loan terms include a 20-year amortization and low-interest rates. Financing rates vary based on the median household income, the poverty index, and the unemployment index, but average less than 50 percent of the market rate.

Florida Rural Water Association

[Florida Rural Water Association's](#) primary purpose is to assist water and wastewater systems with every phase of the water and wastewater operations. The Funding Group meets on a quarterly basis, at which time each project submitted during the quarter will be reviewed and the appropriate funding authority will contact the applicant.

Small Community Wastewater Construction Grants Program

The [Small Community Wastewater Construction Grants \(SCWCG\) Program](#) grant program assists small communities and wastewater authorities in planning, designing and constructing wastewater management facilities under Chapter 62-505, F.A.C. An eligible small community must be a municipality, county or authority with a total population of 10,000 or less and have a per capita income (PCI) less than the state of Florida average PCI. Projects shall compete separately for planning, design, and construction grants.

The highest priority is given to projects that address a public health risk and projects that are included in a Basin Management Action Plan. The grant percentage is determined by the sponsor's affordability index and is 70, 80 or 90

percent of the loan amount up to 25 percent of the funds available during the fiscal year. All projects must receive a Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan to receive these grant funds.

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Loans and grants and grants are available for construction of public water and wastewater facilities, as well as for other municipal projects, from the [US Department of Agriculture's Rural Development](#). A community must have a population of less than 10,000 to qualify. The applicant must be an incorporated body or be organized as a private, nonprofit corporation. Grants for as much as 75% of project costs may be awarded for projects which pertain to public health, public health, public safety, or environmental improvement depending on the income level and need within the community. Rural Development prioritizes projects based on the assessment of need for the project and the financial capabilities of the applicant. The proportions of loan and grant vary depending on the agency's overall assessment of a project.

Hurricane Loss Mitigation Program

The Florida's Division of Emergency Management created the [Hurricane Loss Mitigation Program](#) to act as a specialized, state-funded mitigation program aimed at minimizing damages caused by hurricanes. The program began as an active response to the devastation brought by Hurricane Andrew, specifically to the insurance market in the State of Florida. With an annual budget of \$7 million, provided by the Florida Hurricane Catastrophe Trust Fund, the program is funding activities that promote property resiliency through retrofits made to residential, commercial, and mobile home properties, the promotion of public education and public information, and through hurricane research activities.

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program

The [Hazard Mitigation Grant Program](#) is authorized by Section 404 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act. It is a partnership that is designed to assist states, local governments, private non-profit organizations and Indian Tribes in implementing long-term hazard mitigation measures following a major disaster declaration.

Although the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program is federally funded, the program is administered by the Florida Division of Emergency Management. The process of selecting eligible mitigation projects to be submitted for funding consideration has been delegated to each county's Local Mitigation Strategy Working Group (LMSWG) in accordance with 27P-22 of the Florida Administrative Code.

State Homeland Security Grant Program

The [State Homeland Security Program](#) (SHSP) is a core assistance program that provides funds to build capabilities at the State, local, tribal, and territorial levels, to enhance our national resilience to absorb disruptions and rapidly recover from incidents both natural and manmade as well as to implement the goals and objectives included in State homeland security strategies and initiatives in their State Preparedness Report (SPR).

Activities implemented under SHSP must support terrorism preparedness by building or enhancing capabilities that relate to the prevention of, protection from, mitigation of, response to, and recovery from terrorism in order to be considered eligible. However, many capabilities which support terrorism preparedness simultaneously support preparedness for other hazards. Grantees must demonstrate this dual-use quality for any activities implemented under this program that are not explicitly focused on terrorism preparedness.

Emergency Management Performance Grant

The purpose of the [Emergency Management Performance Grant](#) (EMPG) Program is to provide Federal funds to states to assist state, local, territorial, and tribal governments in preparing for all hazards. The EMPG Program supports a comprehensive, all-hazard emergency preparedness system by building and sustaining the core capabilities contained in the Goal.

In developing applications for the FY 2019 EMPG program, recipients should consider funding projects that address areas for improvement as they relate to emergency management capabilities, including: (1) Logistics & Distribution Management Planning; (2) Evacuation Plan/Annex; (3) Disaster Financial Management; (4) Catastrophic Disaster Housing; (5) Resilient Communications; (6) Emerging Threats, including Cybersecurity; and (7) Lifelines.

Department of State Historic Preservation Grant Program

The [Historic Preservation Grants Program](#) allocates state funds appropriated by the Legislature and federal funds apportioned to the state by the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, for the preservation and protection of the state's historic and archaeological sites and properties. The program is administered by the Division of Historical Resources, Florida Department of State and is governed by rules in Chapter 1A-39, Florida Administrative Code and Section 267.0617, Florida Statutes.

Two types of grants are awarded through this program: Small Matching Grants and Special Category Grants.

Emergency Management Performance Grant

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Health and Social Services Resources

Community Services Block Grant Funding

The [Community Services Block Grant Program](#) (CSBG) provides federal funds to designated local governments and non-profit agencies called Community Action Agencies to assist eligible low-income households in attaining the skills, knowledge, and motivation necessary to achieve self-sufficiency. The agencies may provide a variety of antipoverty services such as emergency health, food, housing, day care, transportation assistance; housing counseling; financial management assistance; nutrition programs including federal surplus food distribution, community gardening projects, food banks, job counseling, placement and training services, and homeless prevention programs. Ninety percent of the CSBG program funds are allocated to the state's existing network of Community Action Agencies.

The Disaster Relief Appropriations Act of 2019 appropriated approximately \$25 million in CSBG – Disaster Relief Supplemental Funds to be awarded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Community Services to assist with “necessary expenses directly related to the consequences” of presidentially-declared disasters in 2018 and

2019. A total of \$6.4 million of these funds have been allocated to Florida and will be administered by the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), Division of Community Development. This supplemental funding is intended to provide community services to Floridians impacted by Hurricane Michael

This is a formula-based grant and is not competitive. The [Capital Area Community Action Agency](#) serves as the Community Action Agency for Liberty County.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Grant Funding for Disaster Recovery

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities. After major disasters, this agency often receives funding to support mental health recovery efforts. More information on grant programs available can be found on their [website](#).



Natural and Cultural Resources

TD Green Space Grants

[TD Green Space Grants](#) support green infrastructure development, tree planting, forestry stewardship, and community green space expansion as a way to advance environmental and economic benefits toward a low-carbon economy. Through the program, municipalities in the United States and Canada are eligible to receive \$20,000 (USD) - \$25,000 (CAD) grants in support of local forestry projects in areas of great need within a community.

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The [Historic Preservation Grants Program](#) allocates state funds appropriated by the Legislature and federal funds apportioned to the state by the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, for the preservation and protection of the state's historic and archaeological sites and properties. The program is administered by the Division of Historical Resources, Florida Department of State and is governed by rules in Chapter 1A-39, Florida Administrative Code and Section 267.0617, Florida Statutes.

Two types of grants are awarded through this program: Small Matching Grants and Special Category Grants. Please see the respective pages for further information. FY2023 Application Cycle is expected to be available in spring 2021.

Department of State Hurricane Michael Fund Grant Program

The Hurricane Michael Fund Grant Program is a newly created program for the eleven (11) Hurricane Michael impacted counties in the Florida Panhandle to allow entities in those locations to apply for grants for historical, cultural, and natural sites and structures.

Funding for this program is provided by the National Park Service (NPS) pursuant to its Hurricane Michael Fund Grant Program for historic preservation projects providing relief to damages in areas that have received a major disaster declaration as a result of Hurricane Michael.

NPS awarded over \$8 Million to Florida's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to fund subgrants for recovery, repair, and disaster mitigation activities directed at historic properties damaged during Hurricane Michael. Once Governor Ron DeSantis has signed the 2020-2021 budget, DHR will release the grant application and eligibility requirements. Because the state budget for this upcoming fiscal year is awaiting final approval, we are helping communities, nonprofits, and other entities prepare to apply for this grant program.

The [DHR website](#) contains important information on the Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria Grant Program (HIM). This was an earlier special grant program funded after Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria to assist cultural and historical sites with assessment, repairs, and retrofitting from those storms and for future storms. The final information and documents for the Hurricane Michael Fund Grant program have not yet been released, but in the meantime, the earlier requirements are being used as a general guide. There will be a short turnaround time for submitting your grant applications, probably only 30 days once DHR opens the application window. Please feel free to reach out to us for advice and assistance.

Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection administers grants to local governments through the [Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program](#) (FRDAP). This competitive, reimbursement grant program provides financial assistance for acquisition or development of land for public outdoor recreation. Eligible participants include all

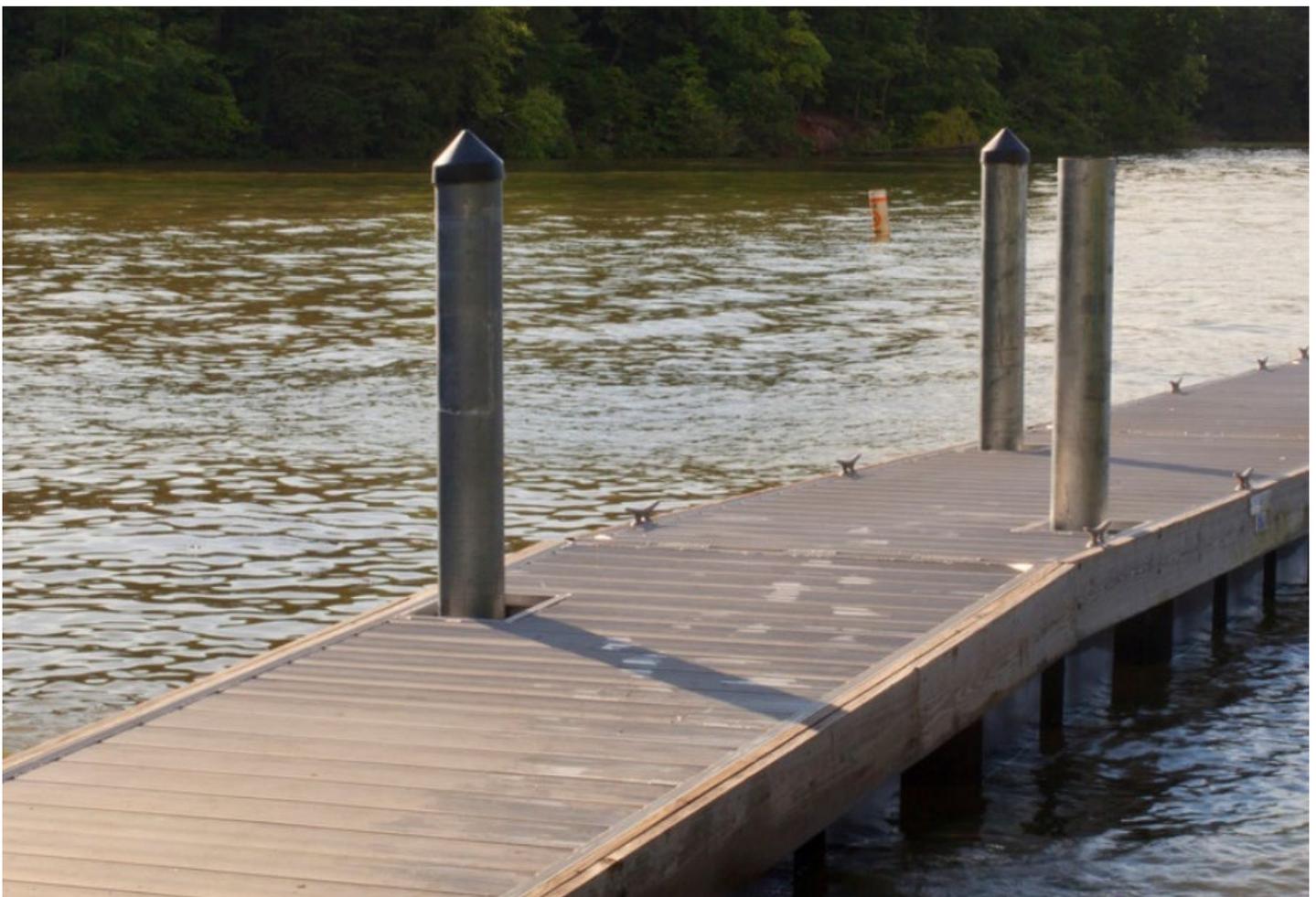
county governments, municipalities in Florida and other legally constituted local governmental entities with the responsibility for providing outdoor recreational sites and facilities for the general public. The maximum grant request may not exceed \$200,000.00. As a community covered under the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) Program, Liberty County can apply for a waiver of match requirements.

Florida Boating Improvement Program

The [Florida Boating Improvement Program](#) provides funding through competitive grants for boating access projects and other boating-related activities on coastal and/or inland waters of Florida. Eligible program participants include county governments, municipalities and other governmental entities of the state of Florida

Eligible uses of program funds include:

- Boat ramps; lifts and hoists; marine railways; and other public launching facilities
- Piers, docks and other mooring facilities
- Recreational channel marking and other uniform waterway markers
- Derelict vessel removal
- Boating education
- Economic development initiatives that promote boating
- Other local boating-related activities that enhance boating access for recreational boaters



Appendices

Appendix A: Liberty County Plans

In the process of developing and preparing a long-term recovery plan for Liberty County, it is necessary and prudent to examine any past countywide planning efforts and previously identified project needs. As Liberty County is seeking to recover from the devastation of Hurricane Michael, this planning effort affords an opportunity to review and examine past plans and ascertain the need to update and augment those plans and project future needs. The following report details known established plans and strategies for meeting the needs of Liberty County. This information will be used to further assess countywide unmet needs.

Liberty County Comprehensive Plan (EAR, ESR, CIE)

Overview

The purpose of the local comprehensive plan is to provide a blueprint for future development in Liberty County. Below is a breakdown of existing land uses in Liberty County

Land Use	Acreage
Rural Village and Mixed Use-Suburban Residential	12,800
Public Preservation	328,830
Industrial and State Prison	270
Conservation	45,000
Agriculture	150,000
TOTAL	539,600

The following things were highlighted as the best parts of the community:

- Prison (inmate labor), Georgia Pacific, timber industry
- Natural resources, rural character
- Low density, jobs
- People, environment and stable employment

The following things were highlighted as things that need improvement:

- More industry, increase tax base, more affordable housing
- More jobs for current residents
- More jobs for youth entering workforce

The following things were highlighted as actions that need to be taken:

- Need to subdivide more property, providing more property at one unit per acre instead of the current one unit per 10 acres.
- Attract more jobs at a higher pay with benefits
- Create new land use categories for one unit per 1 acre, 1 unit per three acres and 1 unit per 5 acres.
- Promote ecotourism

The following things were highlighted as major issues:

- Lack of resources for planning and intergovernmental programs
- Lack of implementation and control of the plan and planning processes
- Weak intergovernmental Coordination Programs
- Need for more economic development
- Protection of viable economically stable agriculture
- Need for an updated new concurrency management system

In 2019, the following changes were made to the County's Comprehensive Plan to allow for more economic development:

- Amended the industrial land use category to expand the types of uses including heavy manufacturing, storage, distribution, sawmills, mining, solid waste management, processing and recycling: waste to fuel plants, wastewater treatment facilities, potable water facilities, utilities and other types of infrastructure and other typical industrial uses. Smaller-scale, commercial uses, such as gas stations and convenience stores may be allowed as a secondary use to support existing or planned industrial development and other nearby uses. Timber may be harvested as an adjunct to clearing land for development.

Potential Projects Listed in Capital Improvements Element

Capital Improvements Element for the 2012 – 2025 Comprehensive Plan

Project Name	Funding Amount	Project Source
2014-2015		
Freeman Road Resurfacing	\$427,865	FDOT
Old Post Road	\$508,072	FDOT
Burnt Bridge Road	\$985,123	FDOT
Chester Street Sidewalk	\$324,500	FDOT
River Park, Phase 1	\$50,000	FRDAP
Hosford Park	\$400,000	Legislative Appropriation
Hosford/Telogia Water System	\$75,000	Legislative Appropriation
Hosford/Telogia Water System Well #3	\$263,000	Northwest Florida WMD
CR 12 Sidewalk Design	\$41,160	FDOT
2015-2016		
Kever Road	\$833,902	FDOT
CR 379 Loop	\$1,146,983	FDOT
Lake Mystic Church Road	\$492,381	FDOT
CR 120	\$99,767	FDOT
Rock Bluff Park Acquisition	\$50,000	FRDAP
Sumatra Park	\$50,000	FRDAP
2016-2017		
Chester Street Sidewalk, Phase 2 Design	\$34,800	FDOT
2017-2018		
CR 267	\$923,239	FDOT
Hoecake Road	\$1,749,638	FDOT
Neal Subdivision Road	\$1,089,990	FDOT
2018-2019		
Chester Street Sidewalk, Phase 2 Construction	\$379,556	FDOT
CR 12 Sidewalk Construction	\$324,939	FDOT

Liberty County Local Mitigation Strategy 2016

Overview

The purpose of mitigation planning is for state, local, and Indian tribal governments to identify the natural hazards that impact them, to identify actions and activities to reduce any losses from those hazards, and to establish a coordinated process to implement the plan, taking advantage of a wide range of resources. Hazard mitigation is any sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to human life and property from hazards. Liberty County is threatened by a number of different natural hazards that endanger the health and safety of the population of the county. Thus, jeopardizing its economic vitality and imperil the quality of its environment. This Local Mitigation Strategy Plan has been used to assess the vulnerabilities of the facilities and jurisdictions of Liberty County to the impacts of future disasters involving those hazards.

Goals, Objective or Policies/Actions

The goal of having an established Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) as an ongoing process will make hazard mitigation part of the daily functioning of Liberty County. This plan will serve as a bridge between local governments' programs, plans, and policies including the comprehensive growth management plan, comprehensive emergency management plan, land development regulations, and relevant codes and ordinances for effective floodplain management. The main goal of this plan is to identify and assess the risk and vulnerability to various natural disasters the County and its municipalities face, and then develop local strategies to reduce the impact of future disasters.

GOAL: Identify and Assess the Risk and Vulnerability to Various Natural Disasters

Action:

- The Liberty County LMS Committee constructed a Hazard Risk and Vulnerability Assessment to define the type and previous occurrences of the natural hazards, the probability, the location, vulnerability extent, and the impact of the natural hazards that affect the county and its municipalities.
- The Liberty County LMS Committee also provided a risk assessment, which is based on existing authorities, policies, programs, and resources and its ability to expand on and improve these existing structures.

GOAL: Increase Public and Private Sectors awareness and support for hazard mitigation in Liberty County.

Action:

- Advertise in local media outlets future meetings of the LMS Committee/Workgroup and solicit their continued support and input into the long-term mitigation planning efforts in Liberty County.
- Develop and promote outreach strategies designed to educate residents and visitors to Liberty County of local hazards, their associated risk and vulnerabilities, and applicable mitigation actions.
- Establish an ongoing education and outreach effort to educate elected officials and community leaders on the importance of hazard mitigation and hazards facing Liberty County.

GOAL: Work to Integrate the Mitigation Process Within Liberty County Government.

Action:

- Maintain records of hazard incidents, maps, GIS data, and other information that can assist in mitigation planning efforts.
- Work with City and County authorities to identify needed revisions to policies, local development regulations and ordinances relation to mitigation; update list of vulnerable community assets and critical facilities; update hazard maps; develop initiatives to address unmet needs; match source funding

GOAL: Maximize Mitigation Opportunities

Action:

- Review funding sources on a regular basis.
- Communicate funding opportunities among City, County and other officials for the purpose of leveraging resources.
- Pursue alternative funding sources where possible.
- Emphasize the importance of record keeping for the purposes of capturing mitigation opportunities.

GOAL: Improve Interagency Communication and Coordination

Action:

- Cross train local personnel in order to better leverage resources
- Communicate with County Department heads to discuss issues
- Work to get agencies on the same communication system and work to have them upgraded.
- Improve communication infrastructure.

GOAL: Reduce Critical Facility Risk and Vulnerability

Action:

- Work to maintain and update critical facilities, and ensure projects reflect efforts to reduce vulnerabilities.
- Pursue projects, which will ensure critical facility operability during emergencies.

GOAL: Reduce Vulnerability to Natural Hazards Within the Liberty Community

Action:

- Mitigation through prevention – Discourage development and specific activity in hazardous areas
- Mitigation through strength – Engage in projects, which strengthen the building and infrastructure inventory against natural hazards.
- Mitigation through removal – Work to remove existing building and infrastructure inventory from hazardous areas where appropriate.
- Holistic Mitigation – Mitigation initiatives should mitigate all significant vulnerabilities wherever practical.

Mitigation Project Possibilities

- Improve drainage systems and provide erosion control

- Wind retrofit critical facilities that provide essential services
- Construct a new school that will meet American Red Cross standards
- Wind mitigation of mobile homes and residences
- Upgrade water systems to ensure operability during disasters

Local Mitigation Strategies (LMS) Committee/Workforce Responsibilities

- Official decisions regarding the planning process
- Determining the priority and approving the proposed mitigation project for each jurisdiction
- Deleting projects that are no longer applicable for implementation
- Coordinating the technical analysis and planning activities
- Hazard Identification and Vulnerability Assessment
- Receiving and coordinating the mitigation projects

Supporting Data

- Liberty County is the least populous county in Florida and ranks 67th.
- Liberty County is the most forested area with timberlands cover more than 90% of its area.
- The top major employers in Liberty County is forestry or wood products companies.
- Since September 2004, Liberty County has had 8 disaster declarations that have required individual assistance, public assistance, or both. Of which 7 of them were from hurricane and tropical storm events.
- Every year, the boat ramp in Estiffanulga is impacted from shoreline erosion and has to be mitigated or repaired from the slough and bend in the Apalachicola River from “outside lake” to the “boat ramp in Estiffanulga” approximately ½ mile.



Appendix B: Liberty County Assets for Economic Development

Local Businesses

The Calhoun Liberty Journal

11493 Summers Rd, Bristol, FL 32321

Located in Bristol and serving Liberty and Calhoun counties, the Calhoun Liberty Journal is a weekly newspaper with daily online news and a social media presence. The Journal provides primarily local and regional news, including public notices, public meeting minutes, school announcements, and events.

Apalachee Restaurant

10536 FL-20, Bristol, FL 32321

Despite being the smallest county in Florida, Liberty County has a few local establishments that attract visitors and locals alike! The Apalachee Restaurant in Bristol is a local, family owned restaurant with traditional southern food and a warm atmosphere!



Snowbird Motel

10758 FL-20, Bristol, FL 32321

For visitors, the Snowbird Motel, also located in Bristol, is a great option just a couple blocks from the Apalachee Restaurant to stay a few nights and explore all that Liberty County has to offer! With a convenient downtown location, the Motel offers affordable rates while providing walkable access to downtown Bristol and easy driving access to the natural and historic assets in the area.

Erma Jean's Antiques & Gifts

21539 NE Chester St, Hosford, FL 32334

As a charming, southern county, Liberty has an abundance of unique and specialized shops and businesses. Erma Jean's Antiques & Gifts is a local store owned by two retired sisters and located in a historic home in Hosford. The shop has a combination of antiques, gifts, and bakery offerings from Gloria Jean's Sweets.

Bee Wild Raw Honey

15761 NW, County Rd 379, Bristol, FL 32321

Bee Wild Raw Honey is another family owned and operated business, with 25 years of experience perfecting the production of Tupelo Honey. Bee Wild Raw Honey brings honey straight from the hive to your table. The beekeeper tending to the bees is the same person bottling and packaging the honey! Located just outside of Bristol, they travel regional to festivals and markets. The shop has an online store and sells wholesale.



Ramsey's Piggly Wiggly

11325 FL-20, Bristol, FL 32321

A locally owned, full-service grocery store located in downtown Bristol. A national company, there are more than 600 Piggly Wiggly stores serving communities in 17 states. All Piggly Wiggly stores are independently owned and operated and are located primarily throughout the Southeast and as far north as Wisconsin. Given the franchise flexibility, the local Piggly Wiggly has local and regional products available for purchase and provides an invaluable asset to both residents and tourists.

Specialized Services & Businesses

Liberty County has an abundance of entrepreneurs running small businesses and providing services in towns and throughout the county. Steve & Duggar's Barber Shop (19123 FL-12, Bristol, FL 32321) and Myrlene's Beauty Shop (10675 FL-20, Bristol, FL 32321) are two examples of locally owned businesses providing services that keep residents from leaving the community due to unmet needs. Supporting these business owners is critical for the future sustainability and success of Bristol and Liberty County.

C.W. Roberts Contracting, Inc.

14921 FL-20, Hosford, FL 32334

Founded in 1976, C.W. Roberts Contracting, Inc. (CWR) is the premier highway contractor in Florida, specializing in asphalt paving. They have ten locations throughout Florida, including the Tallahassee Operations Office in Hosford. Their Tallahassee Operations office provides asphalt, base courses, clearing, grading, storm drainage, and subgrade services to the surrounding area. Partnering with regional, state-wide, or national businesses like CWR can provide the capacity and financial support the county needs in developing economic development strategies.

Parks & Natural Resources

Apalachicola National Forest

Over half of Liberty County is part of the Apalachicola National Forest. It is the largest forest in Florida, with an abundance of freshwater streams, rivers, lakes, and natural springs. It encompasses 632,890 acres and is the only national forest located in the Florida Panhandle. The National Forest provides water and land-based outdoors activities such as off-road biking, hiking, swimming, boating, hunting, fishing, horse-back riding, and off-road ATV usage.



Apalachee Savannahs Scenic Byway

Located within the Apalachicola National Forest, the Apalachicola Savannahs, home to the Apalachee Savannahs Scenic Byway, are sub-tropical grasslands scattered with longleaf pine trees and covered with drought-resistant undergrowth. The byway begins 9 miles south of Bristol on State Road 12. From State Road 12, the route continues on State Road 379 heading south to the town of Sumatra. Visitors will travel through the flat-to-gently rolling terrain with an opportunity to visit Camel Lake, Big Gully Creek Landing, and more.

Big Gully Creek Landing

From Big Gully Landing, with its native-surfaced boat ramp, boaters can follow Equaloxic Creek six miles to the Apalachicola River. This primitive camping area serves as a hunt camp during the winter hunting season. Additionally, there are fishing opportunities, nature viewing, and water activities.

Camel Lake Recreation Area

Surrounding one of the few crystal-clear lakes in the Apalachicola National Forest, Camel Lake Recreation Area provides a quiet place to relax and take in the beauty of the longleaf pine forest. The highlights of this recreation area are the ten-site campground, suitable for RVs or tents, as well as the day-use recreation area with its picnic tables, picnic shelter, and beach for swimming.

Apalachicola River

Forming the western boundary of Liberty County and the Apalachicola National Forest, the Apalachicola River is a wide, sinuous river rolling down to Apalachicola Bay. This river has the highest diversity of freshwater fish species in the state, leading to some of the best fishing in Florida's Panhandle. The numerous creeks and tributaries feeding into the Apalachicola offer scenic runs with deep, quiet pools. There are multiple opportunities for fishing, nature viewing, and water activities along the river.



Florida National Scenic Trail

The Florida National Scenic Trail, better known as the Florida Trail, is a federally designated, non-motorized recreation trail that meanders approximately 1,300 miles across some of the most beautiful, unique landscapes in the entire country. There are multiple trailheads within Liberty County going through the Apalachicola National Forest, with a total of 74 miles of the Florida Trail going through the Forest.



Torreya State Park

2576 NW Torreya Park Rd., Bristol Florida 32321

Developed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, Torreya is popular for camping, hiking, bird watching, and picnicking. The expert craftsmanship of the CCC workers can still be seen today in the re-construction of the circa 1840s Historic Gregory House, the beautiful Stone Bridge on the old "Federal Highway", or the original CCC Barracks. The park is named for an extremely rare species of Torreya tree that only grows on the bluffs along the Apalachicola River. Today, the park plays a critical role in preserving unique plant and animal species and natural communities that are of regional importance, and protecting the water quality of the Apalachicola River, which feeds the Apalachicola Bay. Although the landscape has changed since Hurricane Michael, the park continues to provide the public with exceptional scenic vistas, hiking, camping, and picnicking areas.

Historic & Cultural Resources

Gregory House

2576 NW Torreya Park Rd., Bristol, Florida 32321

Listed for its Greek Revival architecture and military significance, the Gregory House is a beautiful Southern mansion built in 1849 by prominent Calhoun County Planter Jason Gregory. It originally stood across the Apalachicola River from the park at Ocheesee Landing and was relocated to Torreys State Park in 1935. When first built it stood atop five-foot high brick pillars, an architectural feature that kept the interior of the home safe from the annual floods of the Apalachicola River. The House is now an interpretive museum and is open for tours daily.



Otis Hare Archeological Site

The Otis Hare Archeological Site (also known as the Owen House Site) is a historic site near Bristol, at mile 73 on the east side of the Apalachicola River. On July 26, 1989, it was added to the U.S. National Register of Historic Places. It has largely unknown prehistoric significance as a camp and is associated with Swift Creek and Weeden island.

Yon Mound and Village Site

Bristol, Florida

The Yon Mound and Village Site is a prehistoric archaeological site located two miles west of Bristol on the east bank of the Apalachicola River. The site was occupied by peoples of the Fort Walton Culture, a regional variation of the Mississippian culture. On December 15, 1978, it was added to the U.S. National Register of Historic Places. It is believed to be a prehistoric funeral location and burial ground and is currently privately owned.

Healthcare

10971 NW Spring St, Bristol, FL 32321

The Florida Department of Health has one clinic in Bristol. The Clinical & Nutritional Services program protects the health and well-being of Liberty County residents. This is accomplished with community health initiatives and a variety of clinical health services including: family planning, pregnancy testing, screenings, and immunizations. The clinic also offers wellness programs and education services.

PanCare of Florida, Inc.

11033 NW State Road 20, Bristol, Florida 32321

PanCare of Florida, Inc. (a.k.a. PanCare Health) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization based in Panama City. They operate Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) in Bay, Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Walton, and Washington counties to primarily serve people on Medicaid, Medicare, and those who are uninsured on a sliding scale. Their Community Health Centers provide primary and urgent care, as well as dental care and mental health support. Their Community Health Centers are currently in Blountstown, Bonifay, Bristol, Bruce, Carrabelle, Chipley, Freeport, Marianna, Panama City, Port St. Joe, Wewahitchka and Youngstown, Florida. The Bristol clinic offers primary care, urgent care, School Physicals, EKGs, Blood Screenings, minor stitches, and more.



Bristol Dental Clinic

12761 NW Pea Ridge Rd., Bristol, Florida 32321

Bristol Dental Clinic has been in operation since 1978 and specializes in general dentistry, with a focus on improving overall oral health for their patients. With a team of two dentists and multiple dental hygienists, they provide an invaluable asset to not only Liberty County, but surrounding cities, such as Blountstown, Port St. Joe, Apalachicola, Tallahassee, Panama City, Crawfordville, Youngstown, and Wewahitchka.

Liberty Community Health Care, Inc.

17316 NE SR 65, Hosford, Florida

Liberty Community Health Care is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to bringing quality healthcare to rural and underserved areas. They offer primary care services to residents and have multiple advanced registered nurse practitioners (ARNPs) accepting patients. They accept most major insurance providers as well as Medicaid and Medicare.

Apalachee Center

13888 Northwest CR 12, Bristol, Florida 32321

For over half a century, Apalachee Center has been dedicated to helping the individuals and families of North Florida recover from emotional, psychiatric, and substance abuse crises. Apalachee Center was organized in 1948 as the Human Relations Institute of Leon County, and has since expanded to include offices in seven additional counties across 5500 square miles. Apalachee Center is a private, not-for-profit organization governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. Their services range from acute inpatient psychiatric evaluation and treatment, through residential and intensive home-based services, to outpatient psychotherapy and medication management.



Industry & Manufacturing

Rex Lumber

P.O. Box 610, 18601 NW County Road 12, Bristol, FL 32321

Rex Lumber has been manufacturing forest products since the 1920s, and in the 1970s Southern Yellow Pine lumber became their main product. They built the North Florida Lumber, Inc. in Bristol in 1980. The mill started production in 1981. Also, in 1980 North Florida Woodlands, Inc. was formed to procure timber for the Bristol mill. In 1986 Apalachee Pole Company, Inc. was created. APC manufactures utility poles and pilings, treating with CCA (Chromated Copper Arsenate). Rex Transportation has also diversified to include Rex Transportation, a well-established flatbed trucking and custom pole transport company primarily engaged in the reliable and safe delivery of southern yellow pine dimensional lumber and custom pole/piling products manufactured by the Rex Lumber mills and Apalachee Pole Company.



Georgia-Pacific - Hosford

12995 FL-65, Hosford, FL 32334

Georgia-Pacific is one of the world's leading makers of tissue, pulp, packaging, building products and related chemicals. The company includes many household brands, such as Brawny® paper towels, Quilted Northern® bath tissue and Dixie® cups and tableware. In the construction business, they also develop gypsum panels and other quality building materials. Additionally, they contribute to aerospace, through mining or facilities management. The facility in Hosford produces oriented strand boards, used in



flooring and other building applications. Horsford burns by-products as fuel, saving non-renewable fossil fuels. Leveraging this company's resources, connections, and contributions to the county can be instrumental in future economic growth.

Industrial Park Development Study

Liberty County recently received a \$290,000 grant from the State of Florida to conduct studies that will assist in determining the necessary infrastructure and best location for an industrial park development to attract businesses to the community. Project activities include a preliminary engineering report, wetlands and archaeological review and site layout of the industrial park.

Organizations

Liberty County Chamber of Commerce

P.O. Box 523, Bristol, FL 32321

The Liberty County Chamber of Commerce supports local businesses and tourism by providing information on the county, communities, businesses, and natural resources. The website includes member business contact information, business development resources, and news announcements. The Chamber is well connected to the pulse of the county and a strong partner in economic development initiatives.

Liberty County Florida Arts Council

P.O. Box 399, Bristol, FL 32321

The Liberty County Arts Council, established by the Board of County Commissioners, has served the children and families of Liberty County since 2003 by providing a variety of artistic disciplines. Events are sponsored in part by Liberty County Board of Commissioners, Florida Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, The Florida Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Twin Oaks Juvenile Development, Inc.

P. O. Box 409, Hosford, FL 32334

Located in the heart of the Apalachicola National Forest, Twin Oaks Academy serves 12 males, ages 10 to 13, as a non-secure commitment program specifically designed for young adjudicated males who need mental health overlay services and continuous care services. Continuous care services include transitional planning and in-home counseling services while the youth is in the program and for three months following the youth's release from the program. Priority for commitment placement is given to youth from the North Region so the continuous care services can be provided more readily. The Apalachicola Forest Youth Camp is also located in Hosford and serves boys and girls ages 8-18 years old. Apalachicola Forest Youth Camp provides comprehensive programming to juveniles who have been charged with a felony or delinquent acts or violations of



law, and who, due to mental illness or intellectual disabilities, are found by the court to be incompetent to proceed, and committed to the Department of Children and Families.

Infrastructure

Liberty County is centrally located within the Florida Panhandle with easy access to Georgia, Alabama, and North Florida. Crisscrossed by major roads and highways, the county quickly links businesses to Florida's and the country's interstate system. This includes State Road 20 which connects the county to Tallahassee and Panama City as well as State Road 12, providing a quick link to Interstate 10 and U.S. 90 to the north. Additionally, AN Railroad runs through Liberty County, a class 11 carrier, traveling north-south through the county. Its principal terminal is in Port St. Joe and it joins CSX Railroad at Chattahoochee to the north.



Education

Liberty County School District includes Liberty County High School, Hosford Junior High, W.R. Tolar School, and Early Learning Center. The Liberty County High School is in Bristol and is the only high school in Liberty County with approximately 325 students from Hosford Junior High in Hosford and W.R. Tolar School in Bristol. The school has a state rating of A. Hosford Elementary Junior High School is located in Hosford and has a school rating of B. W. R. Tolar K-8 School is located in Bristol and has a school rating of B. Liberty County's Pre-K Center includes care and instruction for over 420 students.



Large Available Parcels

In consideration of opportunities for county growth, the following large parcels of land are current available in Liberty County:

- 000 SW CR 22, Bristol, 32321 - \$831,000 - 277 acres
- County Road 67, Telogia, 32360 - \$330,993 - 207 acres
- Highway 20, Hosford, 32334 - \$350,000 - 106 acres
- NW Parley Sunshine Shuler Rd., Bristol, 32321 - \$299,000 - 89 acres
- Hosford, 32334 - \$90,000 - 75 acres
- FL 20, Hosford, 32334 - \$180,000 - 60 acres