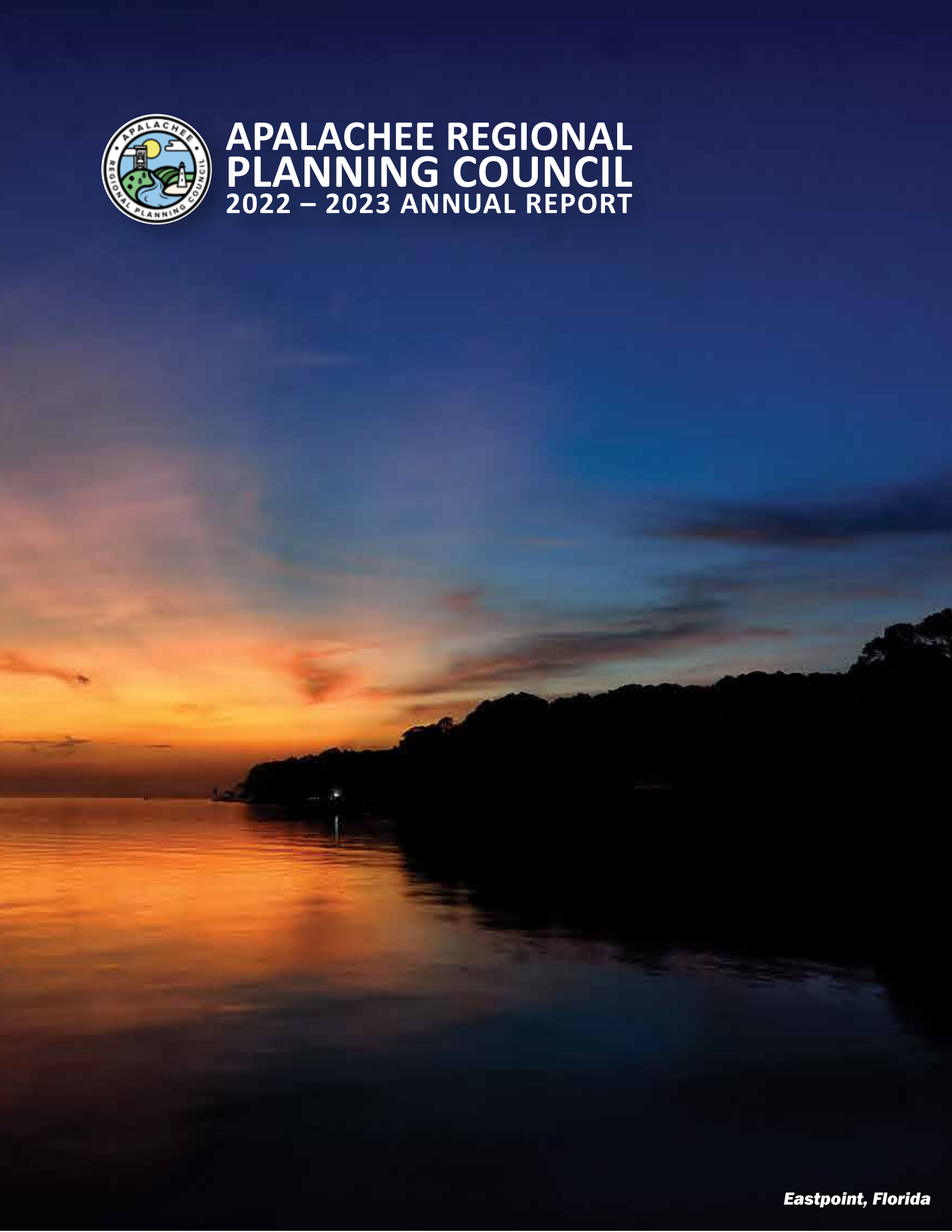




# APALACHEE REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

## 2022 – 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



# LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS REGIONAL IMPACT



**24**  
BOARD  
MEMBERS

ESTABLISHED  
**1977**

**9**  
COUNTIES

**2**  
TIME  
ZONES

**5,855**  
SQUARE MILES

**21**  
STAFF  
MEMBERS

**28**  
MUNICIPALITIES







# NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

**As the Chair of the Apalachee Regional Planning Council, I am delighted to reflect on the remarkable journey of 2022. This year has been a testament to the strength of our collective vision for a vibrant and sustainable region. We've navigated challenges, celebrated successes, and worked hand-in-hand to shape the future of our communities. Our focus on economic development, housing assistance, environmental planning, emergency management, GIS and more has yielded tangible results, showcasing the impact that collaboration and shared commitment can achieve.**

**Our successes are not just a testament to the hard work of the Council but also to the engagement and support of our residents and stakeholders. Your voices, ideas, and dedication have been integral to the positive changes we've implemented. As we look to the future, the Apalachee Regional Planning Council remains steadfast in its dedication to inclusive growth and community well-being. I express my sincere gratitude to all who have contributed to our shared accomplishments, and I look forward to the continued journey towards a thriving and sustainable Apalachee Region.**

**Sincerely,**

*Riley D. Jones*

**Commissioner Jones,  
ARPC Chair**

# ARPC PROJECTS PER PROGRAM

**NEW IN 2023!  
GROWTH  
MANAGEMENT**



**2023  
IN A GLANCE**

**33  
RLF LOANS  
ADMINISTERED**

**\$3,378,464  
TOTAL GRANT  
FUNDING**

**39+  
GRANTS  
AWARDED**

**88,635  
TD TRIPS  
PROVIDED**

**86  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
COMMUNITY  
WORKSHOPS**

**15  
LEPC  
TRAININGS**

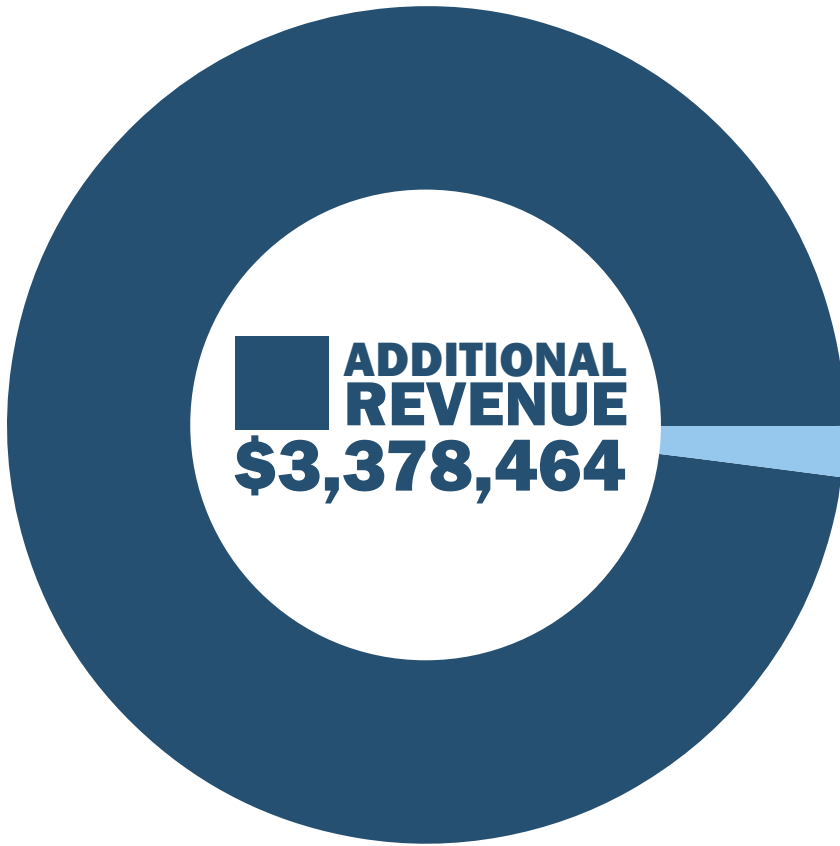


# 2022 REVENUE 2023 SOURCES



## PER SECTOR

- FEDERAL: 2.9%
- STATE: 28.1%
- LOCAL GOVERNMENT: 28%
- NON-PROFITS: 39.8%
- PRIVATE SECTOR: 1.2%



ARPC  
DUES  
\$69,720



## PER PROGRAM

- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: 19%
- EMERGENCY PLANNING: 15%
- ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING: 30%
- HOUSING: 19%
- TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: 6%
- TRANSPORTATION: 11%
- GROWTH MANAGEMENT: .04%

**\$48:1**  
COUNTIES RETURN  
ON 2022  
INVESTMENT  
REGIONALLY





# 2023 APALACHEE REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL 2023 INNOVATIONS

Within Apalachicola Bay, for approximately 12 miles between Eastpoint and Carrabelle, much of Highway 98 lies immediately adjacent to the water's edge. Due to chronic erosion along this shoreline, and the importance of this roadway as a designated Hurricane Evacuation Route, millions of dollars have been spent trying to protect the roadway from erosion damage.

Utilizing funds awarded through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Apalachee Regional Planning Council is leading a project to enhance the habitat along this

section of shoreline with a "living shoreline" project, with the goal of improving ecological productivity and reducing chronic erosion that is threatening the roadway and other coastal infrastructure. Living shorelines (with marshes and/or reefs) help protect adjacent shorelines by reducing wave energy and trapping sediments. In addition to the important role they play in coastal resiliency and shoreline protection, marshes provide necessary habitat for many commercially and recreationally important seafood species like blue crabs, oysters, clams, shrimp, red drum, and seatrout.

The Gulf Corps team has been busy harvesting, transporting, and propagating *Sporobolus alterniflorus*. These plants will constitute the bulk of the plant matter that is used in the project. The plants will be planted in areas that have the lowest amount of wave energy, and should have the best chance of surviving a hurricane, for our project area.

ARPC has awarded the construction contract for the Franklin-98 project to locally-based North Florida Construction, and construction operations and materials staging began on October 9, 2023.

The limestone materials are loaded onto 40x20 foot barges by an excavator. The materials are then taken from the loading zone in Eastpoint to the project site. The deployment method allows for materials to be efficiently placed without disturbing submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) or damaging uplands with tracked vehicles. Additionally, the minimized amount of construction equipment along the shoulder and right of way will reduce traffic congestion along the project area.

Reefs will be placed in shallow water, less than six feet. Excavators will be used from the barges to position the materials. Turbidity curtains, materials that contain disturbed sediments that are suspended in the water, and aerial imaging will be used to minimize damages to SAV and ensure accuracy of materials placement. The reefs are marked with an RTK GPS unit, ensuring accuracy to the centimeter. Stakes are placed to demarcate the placement area, and the edges marked and mapped once in place. The construction of the reefs will take place over the fall and winter 2023-2024.

Once the low-profile reefs are constructed, a marsh will be constructed behind them. The marsh will primarily be comprised of *Spartina alterniflora*. The combination of the marsh and reefs will benefit the local ecology through providing enhanced habitat that has been preempted by seawall in many locations along the project area. The enhancements will also help to offset erosion and catch sediment, increasing shoreline resiliency.

**FRANKLIN 98**  
Protecting community. conserving the coast.

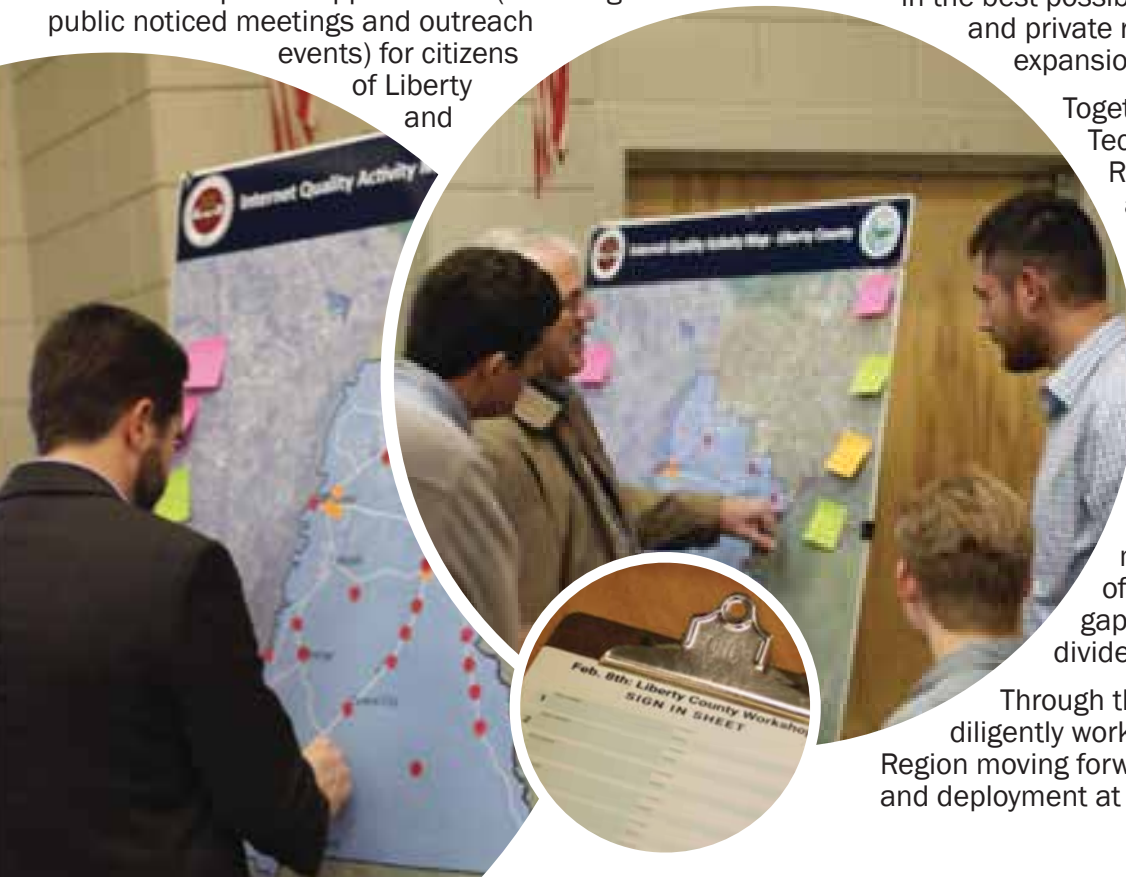


# 2023 APALACHEE REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL INNOVATIONS

Ensuring equitable access to fast and reliable internet service greatly improves quality of life, providing access to government services, telehealth and distance learning, as well as enhanced public safety and economic development opportunities. Yet, as technology continues to advance, many rural communities continue to see a widening of the digital divide. Creating digital equity through widespread broadband internet access is vital for civic and cultural engagement, commerce and employment, education, healthcare, emergency preparedness, and other essential services. As this issue comes to the forefront of discussions among local governments, businesses, and other stakeholders, Apalachee Regional Planning Council (ARPC) is committed to ensuring that the nine-county Apalachee Region is able to address current limitations and barriers, and assist communities in developing and implementing a plan that will promote equitable, high-speed internet access.

In partnership with the Florida State University (FSU) Barney Planning & Development Lab, ARPC completed a Broadband Feasibility Study for both Liberty and Wakulla counties. Funded through the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity's (DEO) Rural Infrastructure Fund (RIF) grant program, the studies focused on determining areas of insufficient broadband infrastructure, identifying potential service providers, and determining the needed improvements and associated costs in order to subsequently seek out funding for construction of broadband infrastructure. Community input remained a high priority throughout the project, and staff provided a total of 25 in-person opportunities (including public noticed meetings and outreach

events) for citizens of Liberty and



Wakulla counties to provide feedback regarding broadband internet accessibility and affordability.

Rural counties often face many challenges in providing reliable and affordable broadband internet access to all residents and essential community buildings, such as libraries or schools. Information gathered during the feasibility study fieldwork identified these difficulties, which include State of Florida regulations, funding, lengthy implementation, lack of internet service providers, and insufficient data. Staff developed several strategies to help overcome these barriers. Formulated from market research, case studies, and public input, these strategies will assist local governments in determining the best path forward for broadband implementation.

As rural counties generally have a smaller population and more limited government resources than their urban counterparts, collaboration among rural communities throughout the Apalachee Region is essential to achieving wide-spread broadband access. Recognizing the increased benefits of addressing this issue as a Region, ARPC applied for and received funding through the Florida DEO Community Planning Technical Assistance (CPTA) grant program to establish a Regional Technology Planning Team and create an accompanying Regional Broadband Plan and Map. This project represents a natural extension of recent and on-going local- and state-level broadband planning efforts by serving to fill the gap and align efforts between state and local planning projects—such as the feasibility studies in Liberty and Wakulla counties—to ensure that the predominantly rural, nine-county Apalachee Region of Northwest Florida is in the best possible position to access state, federal, and private resources for broadband network expansion.

Together, the Apalachee Regional Technology Planning Team created a Regional Broadband Plan to serve as a guide for local decision makers in expanding broadband internet coverage in their communities, and outline steps for future projects to expand access and forecast future challenges in the construction and operation of the anticipated broadband infrastructure. In addition, ARPC staff developed a digital, interactive, regional broadband map for use in the ongoing process of understanding needs and filling gaps in the Apalachee Region's digital divide.

Through the highlighted projects, ARPC is diligently working to keep the entire Apalachee Region moving forward with broadband assessment and deployment at an effective and sustainable pace.



# 2023 APALACHEE REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL 2023 INNOVATIONS

Through his work with the ARPC Housing and Community Development Program, Donald Morgan discovered many community members face barriers in receiving housing recovery funds due to lack of proper wills and other various legal documents. In an effort to address this need, Mr. Morgan, on behalf of Apalachee Regional Planning Council, applied for the AARP Community Challenge Grant.

The AARP Community Challenge Grant provides small grants to fund quick-action projects that can help communities become more livable for people of all ages. Funds are awarded to projects across the country, helping urban, rural and suburban communities make immediate improvements and jumpstart long-term progress to support residents of all ages.

Enduring a competitive application cycle, Apalachee Regional Planning Council was awarded AARP Community Challenge funds in the amount of \$20,000 and partnered with Legal Services of North Florida to activate the “Wills on Wheels” initiative. Traveling throughout the Apalachee Region, these free, mobile clinics offered legal assistance including but not limited to simple wills, healthcare directives, power of attorney, last will and testament, and deeds. Five initial legal clinics have been completed in Calhoun, Gulf, Jackson, Liberty, and Wakulla counties. Collectively, the five clinics drew over 200 participants! Services were made available via mobile legal clinics throughout the Region by coordinating with participating county senior citizen agencies.

Attendees commented that these clinics were very informative and helpful. Many attendees said the clinics opened their eyes to legal matters they were previously unaware of. Citizens left the clinics with more information regarding next steps, as well as an increased peace of mind.

The ARPC looks forward to working around the Region to provide these services! Please contact Donald Morgan at 850 312 3708 for further information.

## WILLS ON WHEELS



## REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

### **ARPC SERVES AS THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT (EDD) FOR THE 9-COUNTY APALACHEE REGION.**

An EDD is a designated planning office that is funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration (EDA) to provide technical assistance with application preparation, processing, award administration, and identification of regional funding opportunities. The primary functions of the Apalachee EDD include:

- **Preparing, updating, and maintaining the Regional Economic Development Strategy.**
- **Assisting with the implementation of goals and strategies identified in the Regional Economic Development Strategy.**
- **Provide technical assistance to local governments, economic development organizations, and other stakeholders.**

ARPC staff recently finalized the 2022-2027 Regional Economic Development Strategy, which can be found on the ARPC website at [www.arpc.org](http://www.arpc.org). This Strategy will serve as a guideline for EDA investment over the next five-year time frame. Annual updates will occur during the summer to provide space for any needed additions or modifications moving forward.





# THE WINNER IS... APALACHEE REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL!

Apalachee Regional Planning Council received the 2023 Best Workplaces for Commuters Award (BWC), an innovative membership program that provides qualified Workplaces, Universities, and Sites with national recognition and an elite designation for offering outstanding commuter benefits, such as free or low cost bus passes and vanpool fares, and strong telework programs.

Contact ARPC for more information regarding BWC, or for assistance regarding commuter services through the RideOn program.



ARPC staff competed in Working Well's 2023 Corporate Cup Challenge and placed 4th among the co-ed teams!



Apalachee Regional Planning Council received the 2023 Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Award from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) for the following projects:

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

Apalachee Regional Planning Council (ARPC) is committed to ensuring that the nine-county Apalachee Region is able to address current limitations and barriers, and assist the Region in developing and implementing a plan that will promote equitable, high-speed internet access. The awarded projects listed above focused on determining areas of insufficient broadband infrastructure, identifying potential service providers, and determining the needed improvements and associated costs in order to subsequently seek out funding for construction of broadband infrastructure. In addition, ARPC staff utilized the data gathered to develop a digital, interactive, regional broadband map for use in the ongoing process of understanding needs and filling gaps in the Apalachee Region's digital divide.

NADO is a Washington, DC-based membership association of regional development organizations that promotes programs and policies that strengthen local governments, communities, and economies through regional cooperation, program delivery, and comprehensive strategies. The Impact Awards program recognizes regional development organizations and their partners for improving the economic and community competitiveness of our nation's regions and local communities.

# APALACHEE REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL BOARD MEMBERS

## CALHOUN COUNTY

Darryl O'Bryan  
Sheila Blackburn

*County Commissioner*  
*Councilwoman, City of Blountstown*

## FRANKLIN COUNTY

Ricky Jones  
Sebrina Brown

*County Commissioner*  
*Commissioner, City of Carrabelle*

## GADSDEN COUNTY

Brenda Holt  
Evelyn Goldwire  
Henry Grant

*County Commissioner*  
*Mayor, City of Gretna*  
*Governor's Appointee*

## GULF COUNTY

Sandy Quinn, Jr.  
Johnny Paul  
Michael Hammond

*County Commissioner*  
*Commissioner, City of Wewahitchka*  
*Governor's Appointee*

## JACKSON COUNTY

Jim Peacock  
Kim Applewhite

*County Commissioner*  
*Councilwoman, Town of Grand Ridge*

## JEFFERSON COUNTY

Stephen Walker  
John Jones

*County Commissioner*  
*Councilman, City of Monticello*

## LEON COUNTY

Rick Minor  
Jack Porter  
Lisa Miller

*County Commissioner*  
*Commissioner, City of Tallahassee*  
*Governor's Appointee*

## LIBERTY COUNTY

Doyle Brown  
James Kersey  
Davis Stoutamire

*County Commissioner*  
*Mayor, City of Bristol*  
*Governor's Appointee*

## WAKULLA COUNTY

Quincee Messersmith  
Gail Gilman

*County Commissioner*  
*Mayor, City of St. Marks*

## EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Kristin Morris  
Darryl Boudreau  
Tanya Branton  
Diane Scholz

*Fl. Dept. of Environmental Protection*  
*NW Fl. Water Management District*  
*Fl. Dept. of Transportation*  
*Florida Commerce*

# ARPC STAFF MEMBERS

CHRIS RIETOW  
Executive Director

MONICA PITTS  
Finance & Human Resources Director

KWENTIN EASTBERG  
Deputy Director

JOSH ADAMS  
Environmental Planning Manager

EVAN BLYTHE  
Environmental Project Manager

BEN CHANDLER  
Transportation Planning Manager

MELISSA FRANKLIN  
Communications Coordinator

DENISE IMBLER  
Special Projects Director

JULIETTE KEARCE  
Finance & Administrative Assistant

MARION KNOWLES  
Intern

DIVINA LADE  
GIS Planning Manager

CHRISTIAN LEVINGS  
Emergency Planning Manager

PAT MAURER  
Commuter Assistance Coordinator

DONALD MORGAN  
Growth Management Director

RICHARD MCCRAW  
Senior Planner

CAROLINE SMITH  
Economic Development Planning Manager

MARCUS THOMPkins  
Associate Planner, Housing

ELIZABETH TODAK  
Big Bend Healthcare Coalition Coordinator

AMBER TYRIE  
Housing Programs Manager

ALEX VALDES  
Economic Development Planner

DARBY WEBB  
Intern



# ABOUT THE APALACHEE REGION

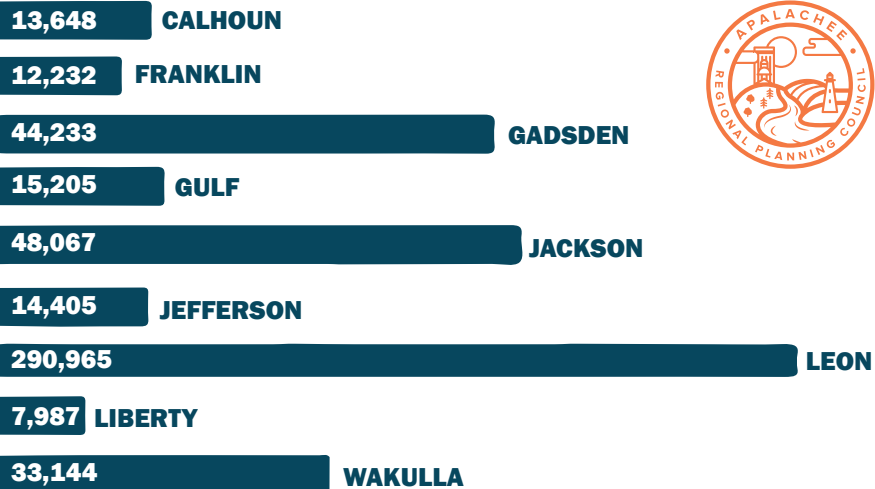
| COUNTY     | MEDIAN AGE | HOUSEHOLD INCOME* | PROPERTY VALUE* | HOME OWNERSHIP |
|------------|------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| CALHOUN:   | 41.7       | \$38,098          | \$103,100       | 79.3%          |
| FRANKLIN:  | 47.2       | \$52,679          | \$198,500       | 78.2%          |
| GADSDEN:   | 41.7       | \$42,661          | \$105,600       | 73.2%          |
| GULF:      | 46         | \$53,812          | \$190,700       | 78.5%          |
| JACKSON:   | 42.3       | \$43,416          | \$104,800       | 73%            |
| JEFFERSON: | 47.2       | \$53,080          | \$153,400       | 76.4%          |
| LEON:      | 31.6       | \$57,539          | \$223,400       | 52.7%          |
| LIBERTY:   | 39.5       | \$42,438          | \$102,500       | 78.8%          |
| WAKULLA    | 42.6       | \$72,941          | \$182,400       | 83.6%          |

\*MEDIAN

## #EMPLOYED BY LOCAL ECONOMY IN THOUSANDS

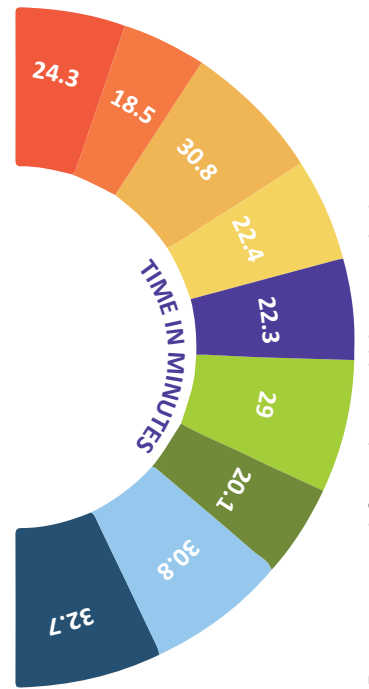
**CALHOUN 4.75**  
**FRANKLIN 4.35**  
**GADSDEN 16.8**  
**GULF 5.28**  
**JACKSON 16.4**  
**JEFFERSON 5.85**  
**LEON 149**  
**LIBERTY 2.5**  
**WAKULLA 14.9**

## POPULATION



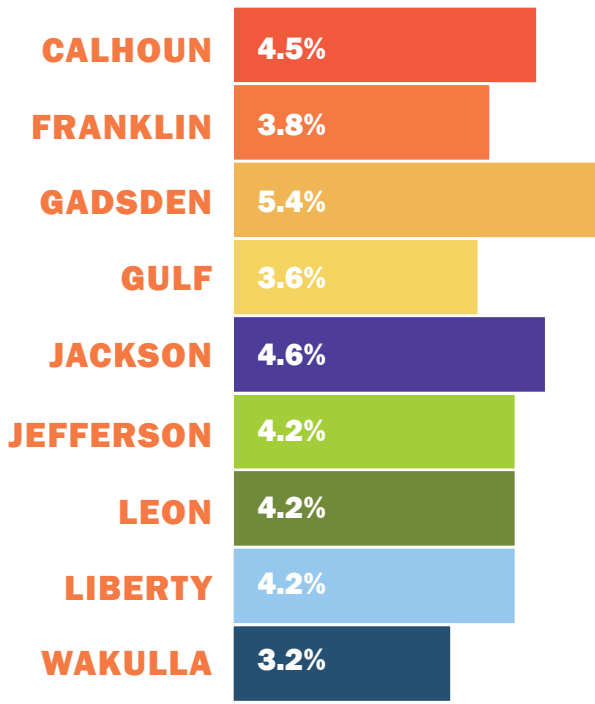
## AVERAGE COMMUTE

- CALHOUN** ■
- FRANKLIN** ■
- GADSDEN** ■
- GULF** ■
- JACKSON** ■
- JEFFERSON** ■
- LEON** ■
- LIBERTY** ■
- WAKULLA** ■

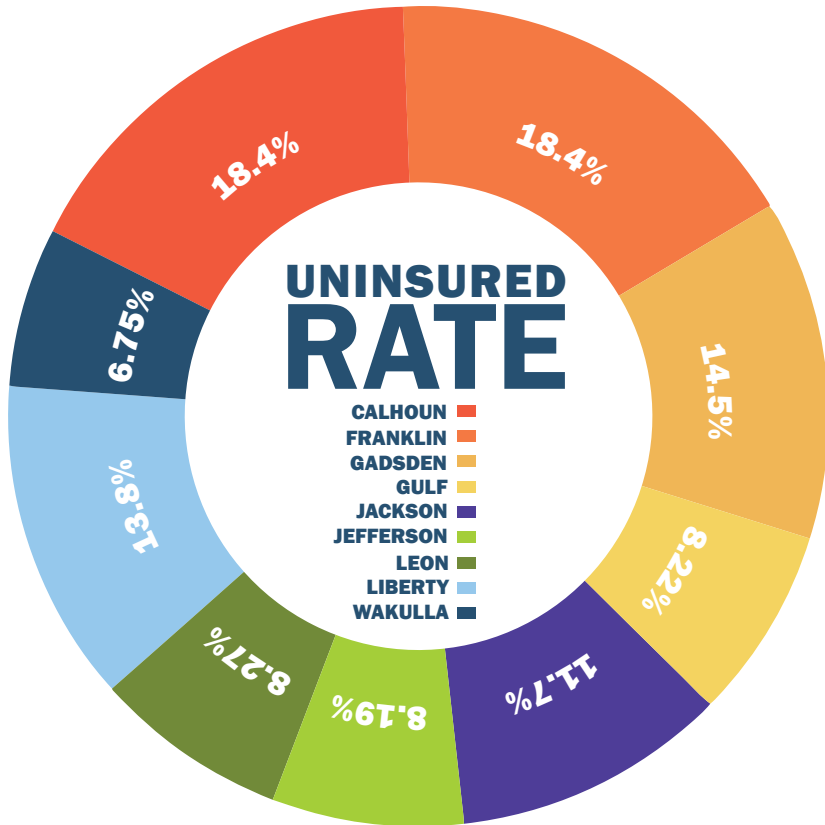
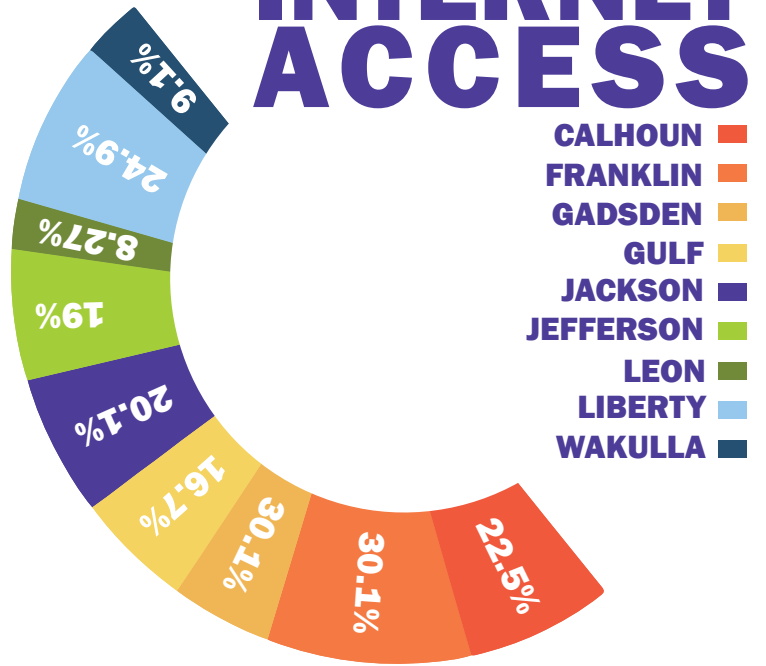


**TOTAL POPULATION OF APALACHEE REGION**  
**479,886**

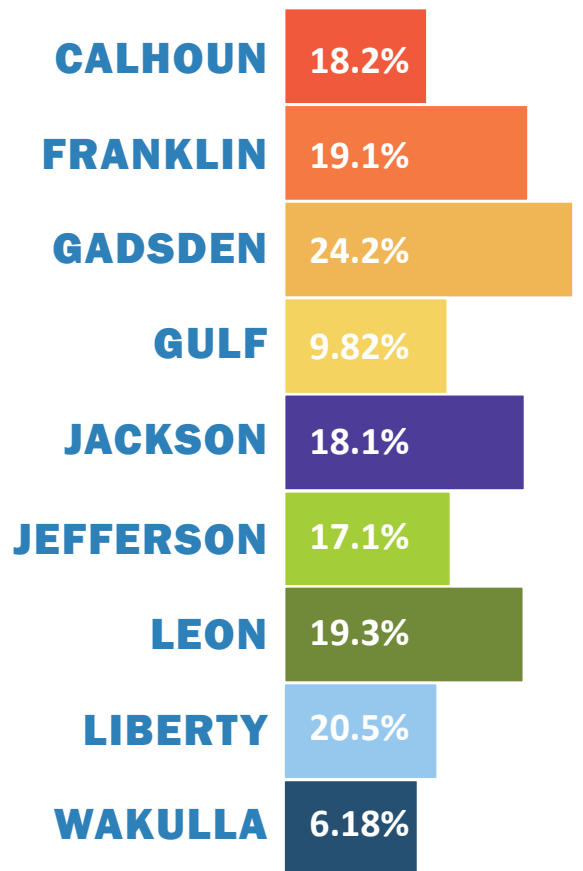
# UNEMPLOYMENT



# HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT INTERNET ACCESS



# POVERTY RATE



# HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT COMPUTER, TABLET, OR SMARTPHONE







# FESTIVALS AROUND THE REGION

## JANUARY

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Oyster Cook-Off - Franklin County

## FEBURARY

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Florida Riverfest - Calhoun County

Annual Robert Wise Chili Cookoff - Franklin County

Field Day Music Festival - Leon County

## MARCH

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Three Rivers State Park Pirate  
& Heritage Festival - Jackson County

North Florida VegFest - Leon County

## APRIL

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North Florida Wildflower Festival - Calhoun County

SGI Brewfest - Franklin County

Carrabelle Riverfront Festival - Franklin County

Chain of Parks Art Festival - Leon County

Pride in the Plaza - Leon County

Springtime Tallahassee - Leon County

Sopchoppy Worm Gruntin' Festival - Wakulla County

## MAY

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Havana Reggaeifest - Gadsden County

Tupelo Honey Festival - Gulf County

## JUNE

---

Watermelon Festival - Jefferson County

## AUGUST

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Tallahassee Beer Festival - Leon County

## SEPTEMBER

---

Experience Asia - Leon County

## OCTOBER

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Goat Day - Calhoun County

## NOVEMBER

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Florida Seafood Festival - Franklin County

Greek Food Festival - Leon County

## DECEMBER

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Festival of Lights - Leon County



