

# 2019 County Overview

## St. Johns County, Florida

### Ponte Vedra Coalition

April 29, 2019

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St. Johns County Administrator





## Introduction

# St. Johns County



3

## Introduction

Recent  
Successes

Current  
Challenges

Summary

### □ **Introductory Comments:**

- This is an important time in the County's history.
- One that will establish community direction for years to come.
- Known as one of the best places to live in Florida and the U.S.
- Eighth fastest growing county in the United States.
- Took a lot of hard work on behalf of many dedicated people and organizations.
- Increasingly challenging to maintain quality of life.
- Citizen engagement will be crucial to identifying solutions.



# St. Johns County

4

## Introduction

Recent  
Successes

Current  
Challenges

Summary

- **Ranked highest quality of life in Florida:**
  - Highest ranked school system in the state.
  - Healthiest county in the state.
  - Crime rate well below state average.
  - Vibrant local economy experiencing continued growth.
  - Financially-sound County with AA+ bond rating.
  - Award-winning libraries and recreational amenities.
  - Diverse arts and culture opportunities and venues.
  - Abundant natural resources including beautiful beaches.



## Recent Successes



# Economic Development

6

Introduction

**Recent  
Successes**

Current  
Challenges

Summary

- **Non-residential development is one of the highest priorities of the County Commission as it diversifies the County's tax base.**
  - Lowest unemployment rate in Florida.
  - First for retail expansion and commercial development in NE Florida.
  - First for business growth in Florida.
  - Most incoming retail and business investments in Florida.
  - Wealthiest County in Florida.
  - First in purchasing power/affordability in Florida, 28<sup>th</sup> nationally.
  - Third most financially healthy place in Florida.
  - First overall investment index in Florida, 11<sup>th</sup> nationally.



# Economic Development

7

Introduction

**Recent  
Successes**

Current  
Challenges

Summary

- **Since establishing an Economic Development Department in 2011, the County has attracted quality corporate partners.**
  - Northrop Grumman – Center of Excellence
  - Advanced Disposal – Relocated Headquarters
  - D.R. Horton – Regional Headquarters
  - Rulon International – Corporate Headquarter Expansion
  - 2G Energy – U.S. Headquarters
  - PGA TOUR Expansion – International Headquarters
- **12<sup>th</sup> highest average wage County in the State; 6.85 percent increase between 2016 and 2017.**



# Economic Development

8

Introduction

**Recent  
Successes**

Current  
Challenges

Summary

- **Durbin Park is a large-scale retail, office, and residential development in Northwest St. Johns County along I-95.**
  - 1,600-acre mixed use complex with hotel.
  - Projected annual sales tax of \$25 million.
  - Projected annual ad valorem tax of \$3 million.
- **Phase One opened with Walmart, Home Depot, GATE, Chase Bank, Smoothie King, Verizon Wireless, Mattress Firm.**
- **Phase Two will include Bass Pro Shops and other major retailers, making Durbin Park larger than Town Center when complete.**





# Utilities

9

Introduction

**Recent  
Successes**

Current  
Challenges

Summary

## □ **Ponte Vedra Water Reclamation Facility:**

- Projected to be complete summer 2020.
- A \$32 million infrastructure investment that consolidates three aging Ponte Vedra wastewater treatment plants.
- Minimizes environmental impacts, reduces maintenance costs, and increases sustainability.
- Serving numerous communities including Marsh Landing, Sawgrass Players Club, Sawgrass Country Club, and The Plantation at Ponte Vedra Beach as well as parts of A1A south of Mickler Road.



# Arts and Cultural Events

10

Introduction

**Recent  
Successes**

Current  
Challenges

Summary

- **St. Augustine Amphitheatre and Ponte Vedra Concert Hall having record years:**
  - Recently expanded Amphitheatre capacity to more than 4,000 seats.
  - Amphitheatre held 65 ticketed events in 2018.
  - Weekly Saturday Farmers Market, bi-weekly Tuesday Night Markets, free community events, and various high school and college graduations.
  - Ponte Vedra Concert Hall has come a long way, improvements planned.
  - Concert Hall held 129 ticketed events in 2018.
- **Expanded Art in Public Spaces program:**
  - Modest beginning 10 years ago.
  - Initial focus on local artists and now includes state and national artists.



## Current Challenges



# Hurricane Recovery

12

Introduction

Recent  
Successes

**Current  
Challenges**

Summary

## □ Hurricanes Matthew and Irma:

- St. Johns County is currently in third year of recovery from two major hurricanes that resulted in total damage in excess of \$200 million.
- County working to recover \$74 million.
  - Matthew - \$41 M | Reimbursed - \$15 M.
  - Irma - \$33 M | Reimbursed - \$12 M.
- Many projects now coming under construction including beach walkovers, Mickler's Beachfront Park, Old A1A and Summer Haven, etc. with recovery projected to continue well past 2020.
- Rebuild St. Johns Intake Center currently open with more than 400 applicants impacted by Hurricane Matthew and more than \$21 million in federal funding for recovery assistance.



# Beach Renourishment

13

Introduction

Recent  
Successes

**Current  
Challenges**

Summary

- **Maintaining beaches remains high priority:**
  - All 42 miles of coastline, dunes, and facilities impacted.
  - Estimated cost to repair in excess of \$100 million.
  - Leveraging federal and state funds for repairs.
  - New funding mechanisms include an MSTU and bed tax reallocation.
  - Project Partnership Agreement with ACOE to renourish SPV/Vilano.
  - ACOE Ponte Vedra renourishment study underway.



# Growth Management

14

Introduction

Recent  
Successes

**Current  
Challenges**

Summary

- **Commission striving to balance growth with community sentiment versus regulations and state law.**
  - Third fastest growing county in Florida, eighth fastest in U.S.
  - Legally can't stop growth, nor would it be advisable.
  - Many land entitlements approved 10-20 years ago.
  - Encouraging quality growth, right time, right place.
- **Increased emphasis on economic development and commercial growth.**
  - Reduced impact fees and eliminated concurrency requirements for non-residential development.



# Public Safety

15

Introduction

Recent  
Successes

**Current  
Challenges**

Summary

- **St. Johns County Fire Rescue:**
  - Combined Station 5 – Opening in June.
  - Northwest Station – Under construction.
  - Southwest Station – Site identification underway.
  - St. Augustine Beach Station – In need of replacement/relocation.
- **St. Johns County Sheriff's Office:**
  - Southwest command center – Opening in June, within Fire Station 5.
  - Training facility/communications center – Design phase.
  - Northwest command center – Under consideration.
  - Additional personnel needs, etc. – Requests pending.



# Library System

16

Introduction

Recent  
Successes

**Current  
Challenges**

Summary

- **Ongoing community requests for additional library facilities and services exist throughout the County.**
  - Ponte Vedra Beach library renovation recently completed and Bartram Trail renovation underway with completion projected for September.
  - Many branches have outdated equipment and require technology upgrades and improvements to serve library users.
  - Library System Master Plan currently underway with service and programming needs identified across the County, specifically in the Nocatee and World Golf Village areas.





# Parks and Recreation

17

Introduction

Recent  
Successes

**Current  
Challenges**

Summary

- **Ongoing community demand for increased Parks and Recreation services, programs, and facilities exist countywide.**
  - Parks and Recreation Master Plan underway to comprehensively address long-term needs.
  - New athletic field requests throughout County, particularly in Northwest and Northeast.
  - Community demand for spring break, summer, and other camps far exceeds current capacity.
  - Resident and visitor requests for boat ramp improvements, expansions, and acquisitions.
  - Many parks in need of upgraded/new/repared playgrounds, equipment, and facilities.



# Golf Course Renovation

18

Introduction

Recent  
Successes

**Current  
Challenges**

Summary

## □ St. Johns Golf Club RFP:

- Nine holes closed in 2007, no longer in use, and currently requiring maintenance and funding.
- Property values of more than 500 homes potentially impacted.
- Proposed plan is to sell unused property and utilize proceeds to reinvest in the course, including drainage and irrigation systems.
- Benefits would allow the County to retain an asset while protecting existing home values and increasing property tax revenue.
- Potential to reduce/eliminate General Fund subsidy.
- Public-private partnership currently in negotiation and anticipated to be brought before the Commission this summer.



# Hastings Community

19

Introduction

Recent  
Successes

**Current  
Challenges**

Summary

- **Dissolution of Hastings one year later:**
  - Town of Hastings residents voted to dissolve the municipality in November 2017, with dissolution occurring in March 2018.
  - Per State law, the County absorbed the Town and its associated assets, debts, liabilities, and service requirements.
  - Benefits to Hastings-area residents include lower taxes, lower utility rates, and improved service levels.
  - Since dissolution, County has undertaken several capital improvements, increased code enforcement, and retained all employees.
  - County condemned former Civic Center as unsafe structure, and subsequently demolished the building early this year.
  - Total \$3-4 million expenditure/investment to date.



## Summary



# Need for New Revenues

21

Introduction

Recent  
Successes

Current  
Challenges

**Summary**

- **New revenues will be necessary to meet long-term needs of the County if our quality of life is to be maintained.**
  - County has one of the lowest combined taxing structures in Florida.
  - The affects of property tax reform have limited the effectiveness of ad valorem growth as a revenue source.
  - Commission exploring fee-for-service model in lieu of other revenue increases.
    - New boat ramp, beach parking, increased parks and recreation, and potential library fees.
  - Fee-for-service model would generate additional revenues for operations and maintenance, not sustainable for long-term capital needs.



# Community Engagement

22

Introduction

Recent  
Successes

Current  
Challenges

**Summary**

- **The Question: What level of programs and services is the community willing and able to pay for over the next few years?**
  - Community needs to engage in meaningful dialogue with the Commission regarding service and programming delivery.
  - Without community input, Commission is often in the position of guessing what community wants and is willing to pay for in the future.
  - Important for residents to participate in local government because how “the question” is answered will affect the County for decades.

# Contact Information



23

**For additional information visit:  
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