

ANNUAL REPORT

NORTH CENT
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REGIONAL
PLANNING
COUNCIL

1976



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REPORT**

NORTH CENTRAL
FLORIDA
REGIONAL
PLANNING
COUNCIL **1976**

the council

Officers

Chairman: Jonathan F. Wershow

Vice Chairman: Paul M. Riherd

Secretary-Treasurer: Jerry Scarborough

Executive Committeeman: Glenn O. DuBois

Membership

Alachua County

Thomas Coward

- Jack Durrance
- Perry McGriff, Jr.
- Edwin B. Turlington
- Jonathan F. Wershow

Alachua

- Glenn O. Dubois

Gainesville

Aaron Green

Harold Farmer

Gary Junior

- Bobbie Lisle
- Joseph Little
- Clayton Curtis
- James G. Richardson

High Springs

Cleve A. Blanton

Micanopy

Troy W. Blakely

Bradford County

- E.W. Hodges

Starke

- Harold Epps

Columbia County

Wayne Nettles

- James Montgomery

Lake City

- Paul Roy

Hamilton County

- L.A. Edenfield

Suwannee County

- Jerry Scarborough

Live Oak

S.T. McDowell

Taylor County

- Samuel Osteen

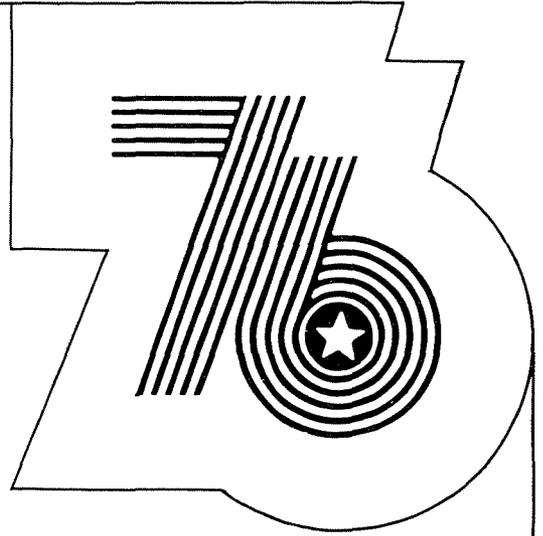
Perry

- T. Andy Bowdoin

Union County

- Paul Riherd

- BOARD OF DIRECTORS



A quarter of a million people occupy the 7,000 square miles of north central Florida. Each of the region's 11 counties and 31 municipalities has unique characteristics but nearly all share similar problems and opportunities.

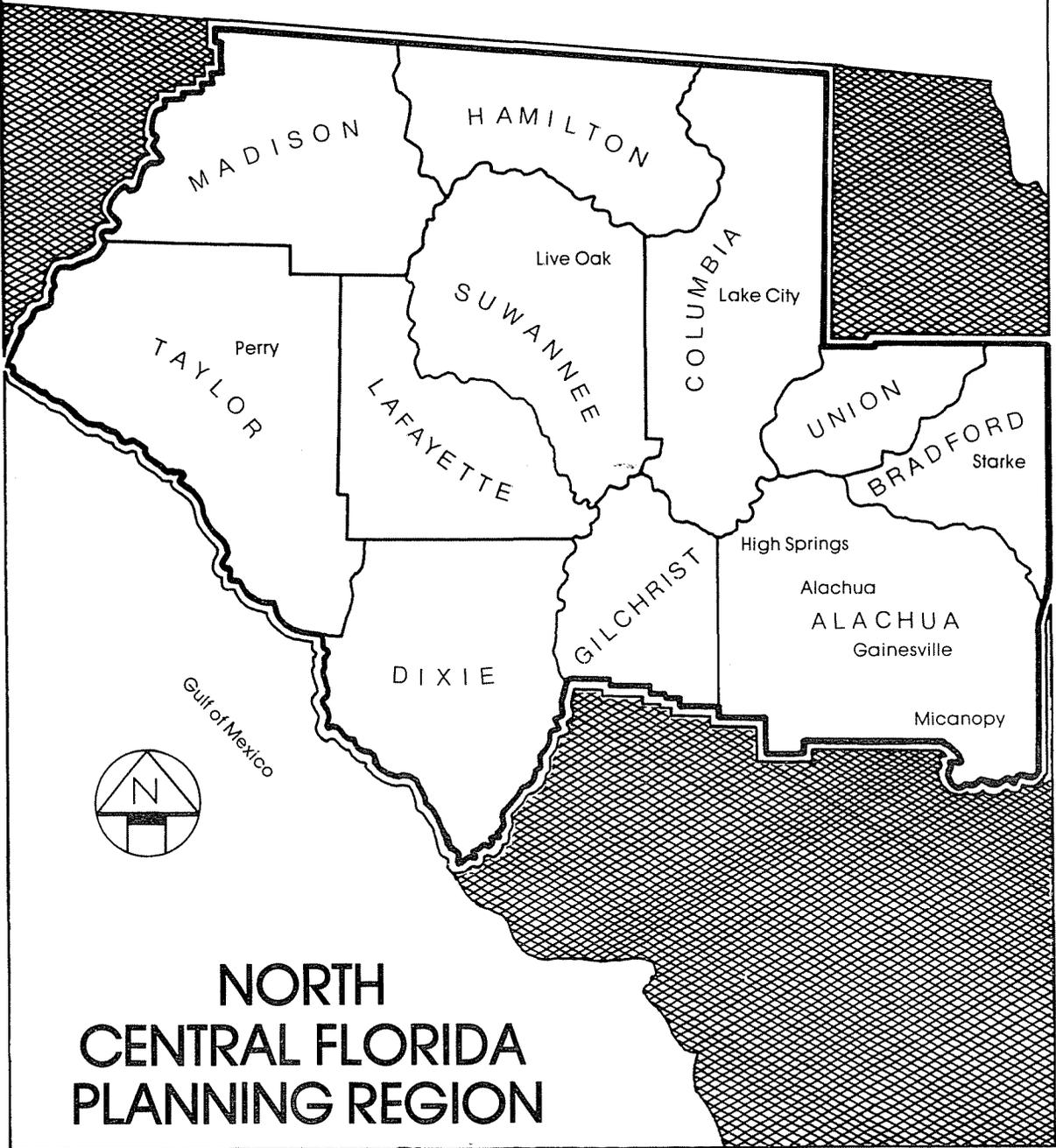
Seven counties and eight cities joined together by interlocal agreement to form the Regional Planning Council. Since they represent almost 90 per cent of the region's population, Council decisions and actions reflect the needs and opinions of most of the people of north central Florida.

Although a number of agencies operate at the regional level in

Florida, planning councils are the only ones structured for the direct involvement of local elected officials. As the 1976 Council chairman, Jon Wershow, said at the May annual meeting, the Council is the means through which local officials can preserve their identity and make their own decisions which are going to affect their own electorate.

In this 1976 Annual Report, programs of the Council are outlined in sections on regional planning, economic development, the environment, coastal zone management, transportation, local planning assistance, criminal justice, project and plan review, communications and budget.

GEORGIA



**NORTH
CENTRAL FLORIDA
PLANNING REGION**

regional planning

Regional planning is the heart of the Council's programs. Members attending the 1976 annual meeting in May affirmed that "regional planning is the main thing the Council is interested in."

The results of data collection and planning for the whole area give officials in each city and county a firm basis for decisions about future growth and development which will affect all. Besides providing an overview of the entire region and pointing up the interdependence of local governments in the area, regional planning data can often be applied directly to projects in which the Council is assisting local and state governments.

In 1975-76, the first year for a regional planning program in the Council, studies were completed on housing and population-economy for each county. The housing study showed the regional percentage of substandard homes to be three

times the state rate and pointed out that tight markets in most counties make it difficult for families to improve their living conditions by moving to another home.

The population-economy study surveyed median income, purchasing power, major employers, the job picture and the flow of money and products, among other things, for each county.

Basic data in the two studies will contribute to land development and housing plans due for completion in 1977. Natural resources conservation and housing opportunity studies are also scheduled.

The regional planning umbrella covers a number of programs and responsibilities which are dealt with separately on succeeding pages of this report: economic development, coastal zone management and environmental planning; review of proposed projects and proposed state plans.

economic development

Region III, along with the rest of north Florida, is classified as an economically depressed area. Regional employment has been consistently below the statewide mean for a number of years and in 1976 at least six counties' unemployment rates topped the national level.

Bits and pieces of economic booster funds have been channeled into the region in the past year, but millions of federal dollars designated for economic development have so far not been available to local governments of north central Florida.

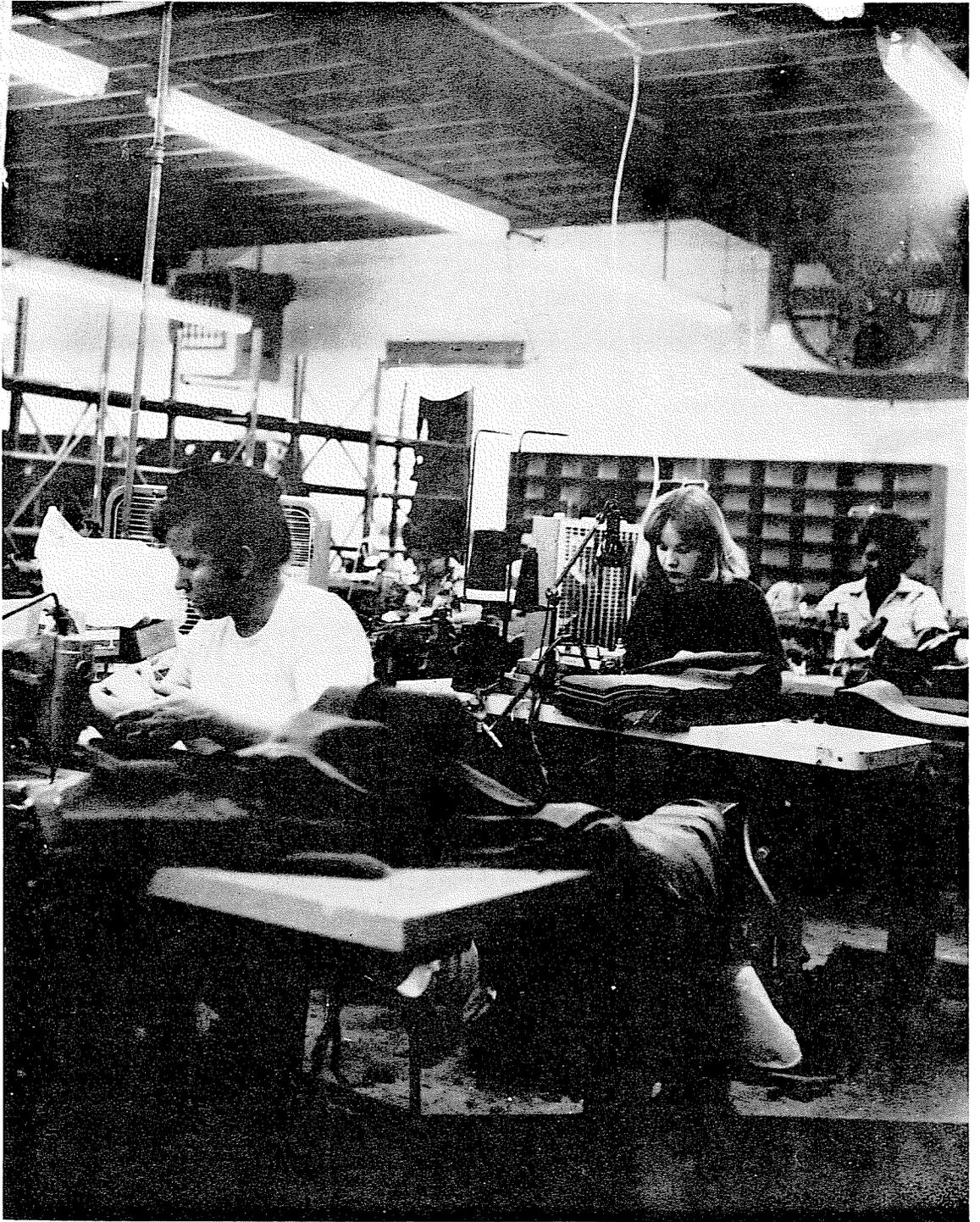
The Council has moved toward a remedy, proposing a reorganization to qualify it for designation as an Economic Development District (EDD). Florida's only existing EDD has received almost half the federal economic development funds allotted so far to the entire state.

Even without EDD status for the region, some local governments were assisted by the Council in 1976 with successful applications for economic development funds. The

Coastal Plains Regional Commission awarded \$250,000 to four projects; the Economic Development Administration approved two projects totalling \$400,000; and \$7,204,000 of new public works appropriations released late in the year was awarded for projects in the region.

Part of the Council's 1976 work program involved economic planning and data collection. The Division of State Planning and the federal-state Coastal Plains Regional Commission are cooperating to develop a state public investment plan. The Council provided several services in connection with it: identification of major economic centers and significant regional features affecting economic growth; goals and objectives; a regional plan including priorities for 45 proposed projects; socio-economic information and local opinion.

Basic economic data for each of the 11 counties was collected for a Population-Economy Study, one of the first undertakings in the Council's regional planning activity.



coastal zone

North central Florida's coastal zone lies in Dixie and Taylor Counties, areas of fairly sparse settlement not yet faced with the problems of crowding and burgeoning development threatening other sections of the Gulf and Atlantic seashores.

But Dixie and Taylor do face the problem of underemployment and the need for more jobs to maintain a healthy living standard for residents.

Achieving this while protecting valuable natural systems and the now-excellent quality of the area's water, air and vegetation is the goal of coastal zone planning for this region.

The Council entered into this planning in late 1975 after



environment

The environmental assets of north central Florida — plentiful water, clean air, open spaces, unique natural systems — attract people to the area. The more people, however, the more those assets are threatened and the more important environmental planning becomes.

During 1976, the Council began a region-wide natural resources study.

Also, the Council executive committee suggested nominees for one of 10 state committees organized to develop a state energy conservation plan.

The primary environmental effort of the year, however, concerned water quality. Twenty-five local governments, representing 98 per cent of the region's population, supported a Council application that it be named by Governor Askew as the water quality planning agency for north central Florida. Awaiting action

successfully petitioning the state Bureau of Coastal Zone Planning for local involvement.

During 1976 the RPC has coordinated the work of coastal zone advisory committees in both counties, prepared area maps and completed an environmental quality analysis, identifying critical and problem areas.

Planning work for the zone was mostly complete as the year ended

and official public review of the state's recommendations was pending. Through the Council, local governments and local citizens have an active role in the state plan as it affects their own area.

Decisions are yet to be made on the means of putting the plan, once completed, into effect. "Who" and "how" were the unresolved questions of Florida's coastal zone management effort as 1976 ended.



since March, the application was still pending as the year ended, primarily because of a lack of federal funds to support the planning work.

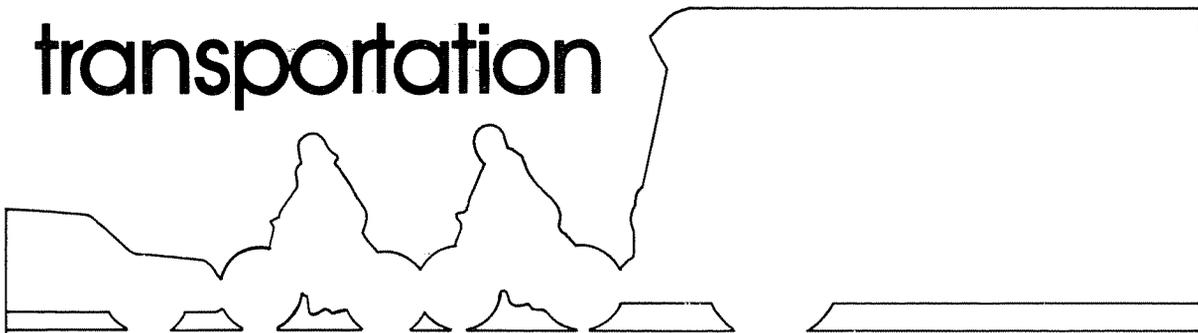
Meanwhile, responsibility for Region III areawide water quality planning remained with the state Department of Environmental Regulation rather than with the local governments of the region.

Such planning is known as "208" in reference to a section of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972. Another

section, "201", concerns wastewater treatment facilities. It says that only those local governments which follow a wastewater facilities plan will be eligible for federal funds to build such facilities.

Fifteen of 31 municipalities in the region are involved in 201 planning or construction. Planning programs are recommended for three others. The Council actively participated in the Alachua County facilities plan development by providing data to the consulting firm in charge.

transportation



Adoption of a 20-year road plan in October climaxed the first phase of the Gainesville Urban Area Transportation Study (GUATS), which has been coordinated by the Planning Council since its beginning in 1971.

The GUATS program apparently became the first in Florida to complete all requirements for full federal certification, which was pending as the year ended. Such certification would make the region's population center eligible to continue receiving federal highway funds.

Periodic monitoring will keep the plan up-to-date between major revisions.

GUATS began reorganizing late in the year to meet new federal requirements for a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), composed mostly of local city and county elected officials. Technical and Citizens Advisory Committees which helped guide GUATS in the past are expected to continue functioning with the MPO.

Outside the urban area, the Council collected data in conjunction with the Lake City Florida Department of Transportation office for successful

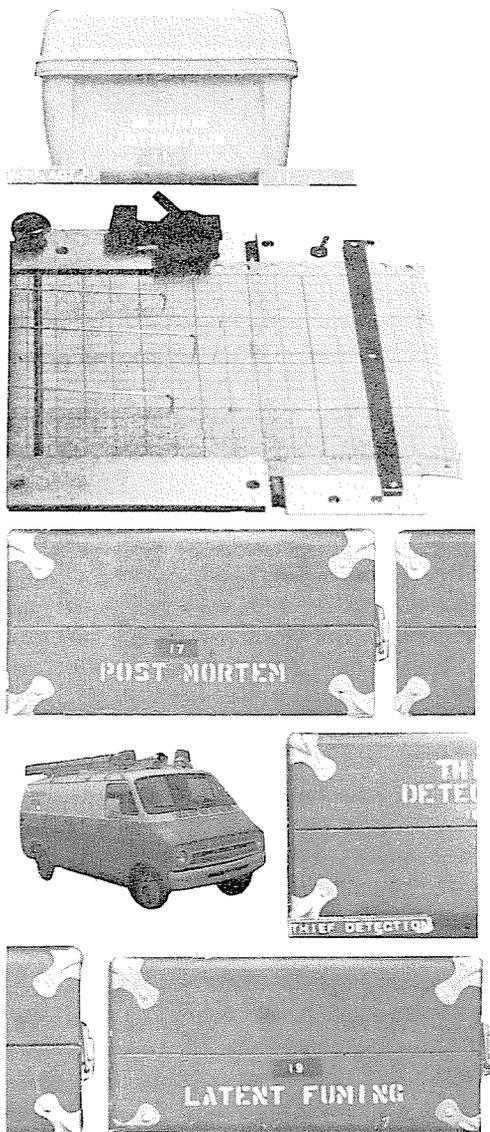
application by the state to have Columbia-Hamilton-Suwannee Counties named an economic growth area and become eligible for federal funding of development highway projects. Grants awarded within the three counties during 1976 were between \$2.5 and \$3 million for several widening, resurfacing and four-laning projects.

Mass transit planning by the Council continued with the second annual technical studies grant in 1976, keeping the Gainesville urban area eligible to receive capital and operating funds for the Regional Transit System.

Council work on an update of the five-year transit plan included a survey of bus passengers on every route.

The Council reviewed the state's Aviation Systems Plan early in the year, approving it on recommendation of the regional Aviation Advisory Committee. Priorities for state and federal aviation funding will be set according to the plan, which recommends locations and characteristics for new airports and suggests the expansion of existing ones.

criminal justice



Criminal justice officials were encouraged as 1976 began by a crime rate decrease recorded in Alachua County, a High Crime Incidence (HCI) area, for the first time in a decade.

Some of the credit for the decrease went to the Planning Council, which concentrated funds from the federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) in certain problem areas. Grants for improved police record-keeping and reporting systems also helped increase the clearance rate of specific crimes.

Outside the HCI, most LEAA funds have been channeled by the Council toward improvements in police communications equipment and planning for new jails. Bradford and Suwannee Counties prepared new jail plans which were certified by the National Clearinghouse on Correctional Architecture and Planning subject to conditions the counties were working to meet.

Priorities for spending \$300,000 to \$400,000 allocated each year to this region from LEAA funds are recommended to the Planning Council by a 19-member Criminal Justice Advisory Committee. It includes representatives from the police, courts, corrections and citizenry.

Congress debated the future of LEAA during 1976, voting to reduce its appropriations by seven per cent but deciding to continue the program at least through 1980. In the coming year, the focus will be on combatting juvenile delinquency and improving the courts system.

local planning assistance

The Council completed or began contract work for four counties and four cities in 1976 to help them meet the requirements of the state's Local Government Comprehensive Planning Act. Others, including Lafayette and Taylor Counties, requested cost estimates for the work and were considering contracts with the Council.

Alachua County became the first local government in this region to submit a part of its comprehensive plan to the state and Council for review. The next step will be setting up a capital improvement schedule and budget for the first six years of the plan's implementation.

Contractual items completed during the year for Union County included studies on planning procedures, physiography, population-economy, existing land use and structural conditions; and plans for land use and housing.

The Council will do the same work for the City of High Springs, excluding a housing plan but including a transportation plan. Refinements in the land use plans for Bradford County and the City of Starke were scheduled prior to development of community facilities plans for them. The Council contract

with the City of Micanopy calls for community facilities planning and elements on conservation, housing and intergovernmental coordination.

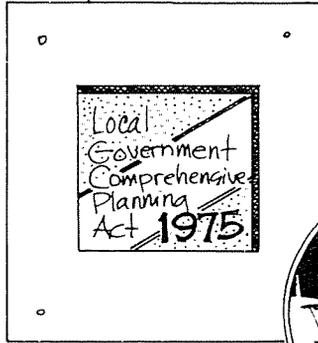
Hamilton County's contract calls for completion of remaining items required by the planning act: community facilities plan; conservation, intergovernmental coordination and public improvements programs and budget. The City of Hawthorne is on its way toward fulfilling all requirements of the act through a one-year Council work program.

In response to other requests by local governments in 1976, the Council finished a housing study for Perry as part of its community development program; devised alternative county-wide road numbering systems for consideration by the Bradford County Commission; gave technical assistance in zoning to Alachua County.

Six local governments asked Council help in applying for community development block grants from HUD. Three of these submitted in 1976 were approved, as well as one of four applications prepared by other governments in the region. New block grant pre-applications were underway as 1976 ended.

communications

n c f r p c newsletter



In Live Oak

*Dinner Meeting
Of Full Council
Is February 24*



*dinner meet-
ing will
be in
Live Oak
Feb. 24*

**ANNUAL
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NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA
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Eight non-technical publications were issued in 1976 in an effort to keep members and other interested groups and individuals aware of the broad range and progress of Council activities.

These included the quarterly newsletter, two special reports, the annual report of the Council and the annual report of the Gainesville Urban Area Transportation Study.

The latter went to some 34,000 homes as a tabloid insert in a weekday edition of the Gainesville Sun. About 750 persons received the newsletters and special reports, while some 1500 copies of the annual report were distributed.

The 1976 communications program

also included preparation of a slide show on regional planning and updating of another one on the RPC's structure and activity. A NCFRPC slide program explaining the state's Local Government Comprehensive Planning Act was used by eight other councils and the Florida Farm Bureau, all of which asked for copies.

A continuous communications effort of the Council in which many staff members share is discussion or explanation of Council programs, state and federal requirements, new laws, grant possibilities and other topics with concerned local governments or civic groups.

project reviews

Local governments in the Planning Council act directly to help decide the future of the region by reviewing proposals for federally-financed projects, large regional developments and state plans.

Most reviews by the Council clearinghouse committee involved applications for federal funds (the A-95 process). In 1975-76, the committee processed 164, an increase of 31% over the previous fiscal year. The applications' value was \$28,065,360.

In the first quarter of 1976-77, the review load continued to increase as the committee dealt with 46 applications totalling \$21,566,097.

Most of the year's applications were for housing and community development projects, followed in frequency by criminal justice and health proposals. Ten of the region's 11 counties and 14 of the 31 cities submitted A-95 applications in the fiscal year.

State law calls for review of any large development which will affect the citizens of more than one county. In

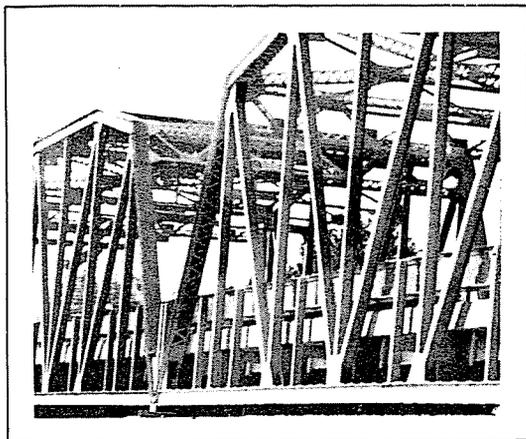
1975-76 the Council reviewed two such Developments of Regional Impact: the Janis Ranch community in Alachua-Marion Counties and an electric transmission line in Bradford, Baker, Nassau and Duval Counties.

So far in the 1976-77 fiscal year, only one DRI application has been filed: a proposal by the University of Florida for a coliseum.

Comments on ten proposed elements of the state's comprehensive plan were forwarded to Tallahassee by the Council Board of Directors in 1976 after review by Council committees.

The elements were health, recreation-leisure, social services, land development, housing, growth, economic development, transportation, agriculture and education. North central Florida is being used as a demonstration area by the state to show how the state land development plan can be related to a region.

All levels of planning come together in the Council review process as local government members balance the goals of cities and counties with those for the region and the state.



financial statement

1975-76 REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL REVENUES (\$506,301)

Federal	\$ 246,009	(48.6%)
State	98,238	(19.4%)
Alachua County	71,759	(14.1%)
Gainesville	24,222	(4.8%)
Perry	5,976	(1.2%)
Columbia County	5,846	(1.1%)
Suwannee County	4,411	(0.9%)
Bradford County	3,924	(0.8%)
Union County	14,432	(2.8%)
Lake City	2,675	(0.5%)
Hamilton County	2,049	(0.4%)
Starke	1,654	(0.3%)
Hawthorne	1,607	(0.3%)
Taylor County	1,604	(0.3%)
Alachua	750	(0.2%)
High Springs	750	(0.2%)
Micanopy	750	(0.2%)
Other	19,642	(3.9%)

1975-76 ACTUAL EXPENDITURES (\$489,485)

Regional Planning and Reviews	\$229,944	(47.0%)
Local Planning Assistance	94,849	(19.4%)
GUATS (Transportation Study)	69,968	(14.3%)
Criminal Justice	40,941	(8.3%)
Carpool	26,778	(5.5%)
Mass Transit	25,000	(5.1%)
Other	2,005	(0.4%)

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