

REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

A Quarterly Publication of the North Central Florida Regional Planning Council
Fall 1998



CANADIAN DOLLAR-- GOOD AS U.S. GREENBACK--IN "THE ORIGINAL FLORIDA"



Urged on by Task Force member Dean Fowler of Steinhatchee Landing, *The Original Florida Tourism Task Force* has established a **Canadian-at-par** program for the month of January in an effort to attract Canadian tourists to the north central part of the state. The gist

of the program is that the Canadian dollar, whose value has been running less than two-thirds that of the U.S. dollar, will be accepted at the U.S. dollar's value by participating businesses located in *The Original Florida* 11-county region.

Mr. Fowler has increased his occupancy rate from 20% to 80% during the slow winter months in just one year after initiating the program at his resort in 1996. *The Original Florida* promotion group actually started the program last winter, but a late start limited the number of businesses

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A MAPPING GUIDE TO CYCLING "THE ORIGINAL FLORIDA"

As noted in the Winter issue of the Perspective, the Planning Council has been under contract with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District 2, to develop a bicycle facilities map series for The Original Florida. The maps, which cover 12 counties, is intended for local cyclists and travelers in an attempt to increase bicycle riding and touring in this area. The maps will also function as an inventory for the FDOT to continue its goal of interconnected bicycle facilities in north central Florida.

Working with a steering committee comprised of representatives from the *FDOT, the Suwannee River Water Management District, the Withlacoochee*

Regional Planning Council and several citizen volunteers with an interest in bicycles and tourism,

Council staff have inventoried and geographically coded all in-street bicycle facilities in the study area. In addition to bicycle



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GAINESVILLE'S LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTA- TION PLAN

Similar to other rapidly-growing urban areas in the nation, the **City of Gainesville** faces increasing challenges to moving both people and goods efficiently and safely within and around the urban core. The principal agency responding to the challenge is the **Gainesville/Alachua County Urbanized Area Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization (MTPO)**.

The **MTPO**, whose members are made up of the **City of Gainesville** and **Alachua County** elected officials, work in concert with officials of the **Florida Department**



of **Transportation (FDOT)** to plan what, where and when improvements will be needed to serve future needs. Staff support to the **MTPO** is contracted out to the **North Central Florida Regional Planning Council**.

The 20-year plan, required by federal and state law to be updated every five years, bases its recommendations for future improvements on growth trends as expressed in city and county land use plans. The current plan was completed in late 1995. The deadline for completing its update is February 1, 2001.

MORE MTPO NEWS... 1 IN 5 RECEIVES GRANT

The **Federal Transit Administration** recently awarded a \$20,000 grant to the **Gainesville/Alachua County Urbanized Area Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization** to develop strategies to meet locally-identified needs for transporting welfare recipients and other transportation disadvantaged individuals to employment opportunities. The application, completed by Planning Council staff, is one out of a total of five awarded around the nation. The work will be conducted by the **North Central Florida Regional Planning Council**.

ADCO NEWS

For those of you who are interested in low interest, long-term SBA-backed business expansion loans or know someone who is, please note that **Jim Emerson** is now the contact person at the Planning Council. Jim has been in the banking business for over 30 years in Gainesville and the surrounding rural areas, and the Council feels fortunate to have enticed someone with his credentials to fill the position vacated by Blake Harper. **Jim** can be reached at **(352) 955-2199, Extension 107**.

ALACHUA/BRADFORD WAGES COALITION WINS GRANT AWARD

In response to a Request for Proposals (RFP), Planning Council staff assisted the **Coalition** in submitting an application for approximately \$7,000 which will be used to develop strategies for providing transportation services to WAGES clients in **Bradford County** and the rural areas of **Alachua County**. The **Coalition** will be contracting out the work to the **North Central Florida Regional Planning Council**, which will coordinate the work with a similar contract between the **Planning Council** and the **Gainesville/Alachua County Urbanized Area Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization** (see 1 in 5 article above).

DIXIE MAINLINE TRAIL OPENED

An 8-mile scenic trail joining the Town of Suwannee to Shired Island was officially opened to the public at a ceremony held August 14. The trail follows the path of an old logging railway.

The trail was restored by the **US. Fish and Wildlife Service** with planning assistance from the **North Central Florida Economic Development Partnership**. The trail can be walked, biked or driven. It has two observation points along its route, one overlooking Salt Creek near Suwannee, the other at Fishbone Creek near Shired Island.

Directions to and information about the trail can be obtained by calling the **Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge** at (352) 493-0238.



Observation platform overlooking Salt Creek at Dixie Mainline Trail.



CDBG NEWS

Council staff assisted 3 local governments with the development of applications for **El Nino Disaster Recovery Community Development Block Grants**. Applications submitted by the **City of Live Oak** and **Columbia County** are requesting \$350,000 each for the purpose of purchasing those low-to moderate-income, owner-occupied residences which have been flooded in the spring and winter of 1997-98 as a result of El Nino-related storms. **Union County** is requesting \$350,000 to repair roads and drainage structures caused by the El Nino storms.

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participating in the program. This year, early indications are that the number of participating businesses will increase significantly.

WEB PAGES OF INTEREST

North Central Florida Regional Planning Council -
<http://ncfrpc.org>

The Original Florida - **<http://originalflorida.org>**

North Central Florida Economic Development Partnership -
<http://originalfloridabusines.org>

North Central Florida Local Emergency Planning Committee -
<http://www.afn.org/~lepc/>

North Central Florida Areawide Development Co., Inc. -
<http://adco.org>

**(A Mapping Guide *Continued*
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facility information, the maps include information about recreational sites and regional points of interest. The maps will be distributed for free at local bicycle shops, recreational sites, and points of interest throughout the region, with an anticipated distribution date around the first of December. Persons or organizations interested in distributing this map should contact the Planning Council to obtain copies.

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