

*** DRAFT # 2 ***

**JACKSONVILLE REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
PRESS RELEASE**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**JAXUSA PARTNERSHIP AND NORTHEAST FLORIDA REGIONAL
COUNCIL LAUNCH INNOVATE NORTHEAST FLORIDA PROJECT**
*Northeast Florida Residents and Businesses Invited to Complete Online Survey
and Share Opinions on Region's Future Economy*

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (Aug. 31, 2011) – [JAXUSA Partnership](#), formerly known as Cornerstone Regional Development Partnership, and the Northeast Florida Regional Council launched the Innovate Northeast Florida website and officially kicked-off the project today. The website, www.innovatenortheastflorida.com, provides an overview of the project and invites residents and businesses to voice opinions about Northeast Florida's future economy through a brief online survey.

“The strategies resulting from this study will lead to our region's most targeted economic development initiative,” said Innovate Northeast Florida co-chair Bob Rhodes, an attorney with Foley & Lardner. “To ensure that Innovate Northeast Florida represents the vision of all residents of our region, we want everyone to participate in the survey.”

As part of the study, organizers are conducting focus groups and one-on-one interviews with government, civic and business leaders today through Friday, Sept. 2. Announced earlier this year and funded by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and WorkSource, the study will help the region's economic development

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organizations identify the most promising business sectors that will stimulate future economic growth and create detailed marketing and business development implementation plans to grow those industries in the region.

“This project will ensure the alignment between our economic development efforts and workforce strategy,” said Innovate Northeast Florida co-chair Elaine Johnson of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Florida, who also chairs WorkSource. “We need to have the right talent with the right skill-set ready when attracting companies to the region.”

The survey takes approximately 10 minutes to complete. In addition, business managers and owners are invited to also answer a short set of questions related to the area’s business climate. The business survey follows the resident survey and takes another five to 10 minutes to complete.

The deadline to complete the survey is Oct. 1, 2011. All survey responses will remain confidential, and no individual surveys will be shared with any outside parties. A summary of the survey results will be posted on the Innovate Northeast Florida website in November. Additionally, the website will be updated regularly with project news and reports. The Innovate Northeast Florida strategy is expected to be finalized in March 2012 and presented to the public in April 2012.

A team of national consultants are helping to facilitate the strategy, including Avalanche Consulting, McCallum Sweeney Consulting, the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning and Infinity Global Solutions.

“The study will allow us to focus our efforts on recruiting the top performing sub-clusters within the industries that currently dominate Northeast Florida,” said Amy Holloway, president of Avalanche Consulting. “We will also look at how the existing

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targets are evolving and what new sectors will play a role in the region's future economy."

A link to the online survey and more information about Innovate Northeast Florida is available at www.innovatenortheastflorida.com.

About the Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce

The [Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce](http://www.OpportunityJacksonville.com) is the business membership organization whose purpose is to drive quality economic growth in Northeast Florida to make this region the best place to live, work and play.

www.OpportunityJacksonville.com.

About JAXUSA Partnership

[JAXUSA Partnership](#) is a regional economic development partnership comprised of almost 200 top private sector investors in Northeast Florida in partnership with the Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce, JEDC, JEA, JAXPORT, JAA, JTA, WorkSource and the regional county partners – Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam and St. Johns counties.

About the Northeast Florida Regional Council

The Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) is a dynamic network of local governance, serving seven counties - Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Putnam, Nassau and St. Johns – and their 27 municipalities. NEFRC provides visionary leadership and coordination between counties and governmental agencies to preserve and enhance

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the quality of Northeast Florida's natural, man-made, economic, and social environment.

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