

JULY 2020

# ST. JOHNS COUNTY 2070

**PREPARED BY**

MATANZAS RIVERKEEPER &  
1000 FRIENDS OF FLORIDA



THE COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
FOR NORTHEAST FLORIDA



Citizens 4  
Smart Growth



# BACKGROUND

In 2016, smart growth advocacy group, 1000 Friends of Florida, released the Florida 2070 project. This project established a baseline for land use in Florida, then projected what the state will look like in the year 2070 based on growth trends. The Florida 2070 project reveals that if Florida does not change the way it develops, by 2070 more than a third of Florida's lands will be developed and development-related water demand will more than double. On the other hand, if we promote more compact development patterns and increase protected natural lands, we will save 1.8 million acres of land development and conserve an additional 5.8 million acres of natural and agricultural land.

As the second fastest growing county in the state, St. Johns County is experiencing its fair share of growing pains. Unsustainable growth threatens our environmental resources, our agricultural heritage, and our way of life. In November 2019, Matanzas Riverkeeper partnered with 1000 Friends of Florida for a discussion about growth projections for St. Johns County as well as policy tools that could help to ensure a more sustainable future for our community. We hosted two community workshops to share this information and to gather feedback from residents. On June 23, 2020, our webinar, St. Johns County 2070: What's Next? recapped the results of the St. Johns County 2070 study, shared participant feedback gathered from the workshops, and discussed smart growth policy tools and recommendations.



**SAVING SPECIAL  
PLACES &  
BUILDING BETTER  
COMMUNITIES**

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# ST. JOHNS COUNTY

## AT A GLANCE

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### DEMOGRAPHICS

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**GENERALLY WEALTHY**  
Median household income of \$77K vs. state average of \$53K



**HIGHLY EDUCATED**  
43% of residents have bachelor's degrees vs. state average of 29%



**OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSING**  
78% of county residents own their homes vs. 65% of state residents



**LOW DIVERSITY**  
82% of county residents are white (non-hispanic) vs. 53% statewide

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### LEADING ECONOMIC SECTORS

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- 12.3%** Retail Trade
- 11.3%** Accommodation and Food Service
- 9.7%** Health Care and Social Assistance
- 8.6%** Government
- 8.3%** Real Estate and Rentals

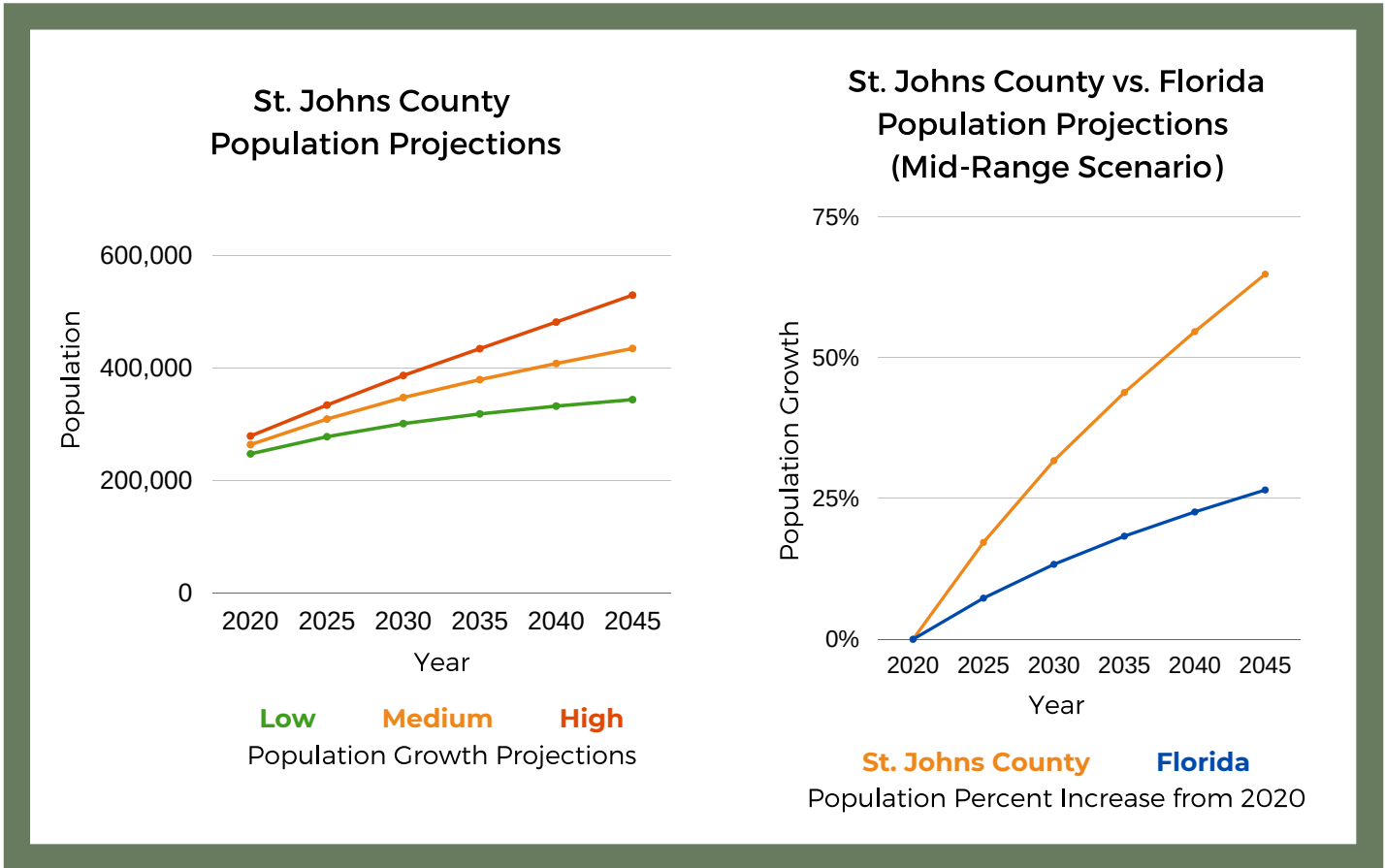


**AGRICULTURE**  
In 2018, the economic contributions of crop, livestock, forestry, and fishery sectors was 1,314 jobs and \$118 million in output

Economic contributions of all ag-related and food industries was 30,511 jobs and \$3.45 billion in output

# ST. JOHNS COUNTY

## GROWTH & PROJECTIONS



### GROWTH PROJECTIONS

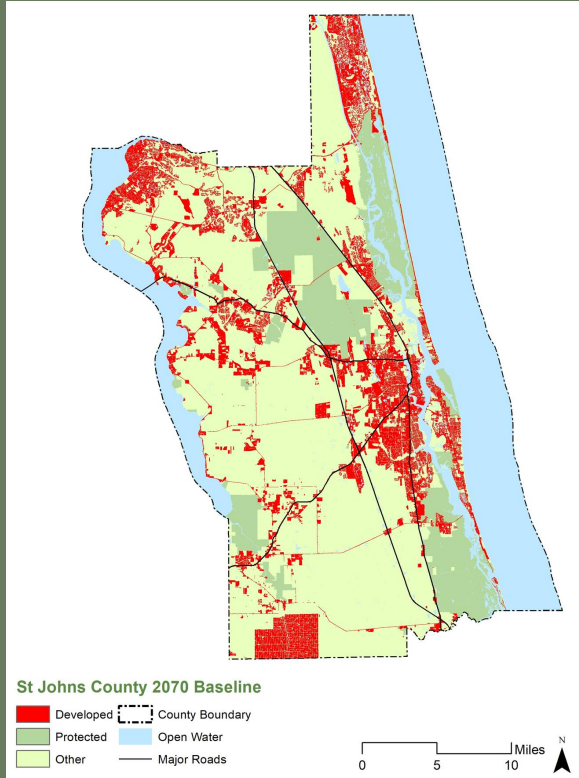
- St. Johns County population grew 39.3% from 2010 to 2019
- Employment increased 108% during 2001-2018
- County real GDP increased 86% during 2001-2018
- Mid-range growth projection is 434,900 for 2045 (65% increase from today)
- High growth projection is 529,700 for 2045 (90% increase from today)
- St. Johns County has the second highest growth rate among Florida counties
- St. Johns County population growth projections outpace state growth projections which have a mid-range projection of 26.5% for 2045

**POPULATION GROWTH PROJECTIONS FOR ST. JOHNS COUNTY OUTPACE POPULATION GROWTH PROJECTIONS FOR THE STATE**

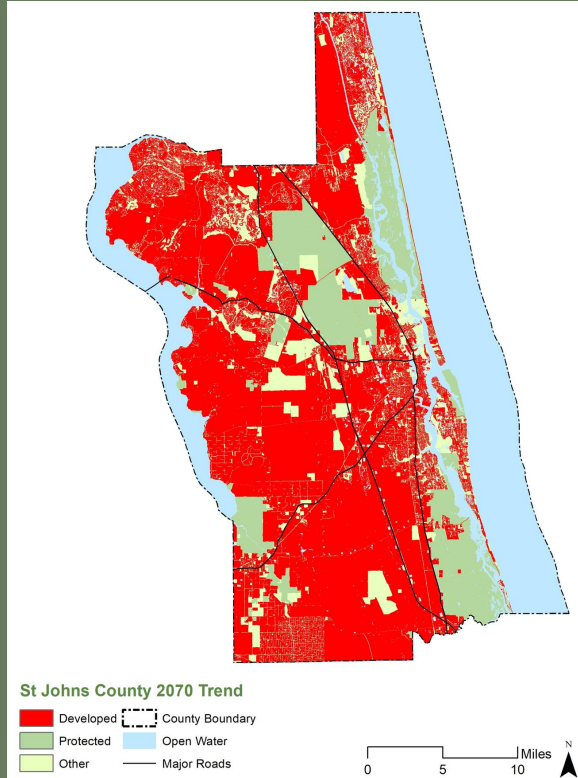
# ST. JOHNS COUNTY

## GROWTH & PROJECTIONS

SJC 2010 BASELINE

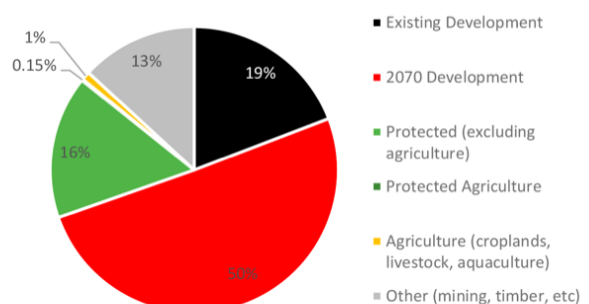
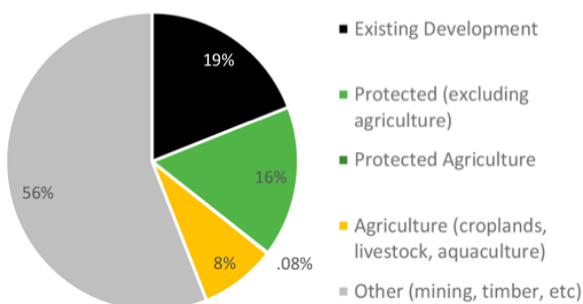


SJC 2070 TREND



St. Johns is one of the fastest growing counties in the United States, roughly doubling its population over the past 15 years. Development has occurred in sprawling patterns, making the impacts of this growth even more severe even with a modest decrease in density. The combination of rapid population growth and sprawling development patterns indicate that without the implementation of smart growth policies, the developed area of

the county is on track to expand from 19% in 2010 to 69% by 2070 as population expands from less than 200,000 to nearly 600,000. Development-related water demand in the county is on track to surge by more than 200% from 2010 to 2070. As the 2070 maps reveal, **aggressive change in the patterns of development is clearly needed if the county's natural lands and waters are to be adequately protected from the impacts of growth.**



For more information on the methodology used to develop these maps, see: the Florida 2070 Technical Report.

# PRINCIPLES OF SMART GROWTH



- Utilize a mix of land uses to cluster businesses and services near homes and jobs
- Provide a wide range of housing options for people of various incomes and ages
- Design distinctive, attractive communities that foster a strong sense of place
- Preserve open spaces, farm land, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
- Compact neighborhood design
- Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
- Provide a variety of transportation choices and make communities walkable
- Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration development decisions

# COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

In November 2019, Matanzas Riverkeeper and 1000 Friends of Florida hosted two community workshops to share this information, to gather feedback from residents, and to host a discussion about policy tools that could help to ensure a more sustainable future for our community. Attendees were asked to participate in a “dot exercise” for various issues in the county.



Green - The county does a great job on this issue  
 Red - The county needs to improve on this issue  
 Blue - This is an important priority for me

## RESULTS OF THE "DOT EXERCISE"



### EDUCATION

Good Job = 74  
 Needs Work = 0  
 High Priority = 8



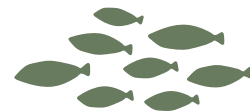
### PUBLIC SAFETY

Good Job = 58  
 Needs Work = 0  
 High Priority = 2



### SOCIAL SERVICES

Good Job = 51  
 Needs Work = 9  
 High Priority = 14



### CLEAN AIR & WATER

Good Job = 13  
 Needs Work = 9  
 High Priority = 40



### ROADS/ TRAFFIC

Good Job = 1  
 Needs Work = 43  
 High Priority = 16



### WATER/ SEWER

Good Job = 5  
 Needs Work = 25  
 High Priority = 17



### GOVT TRANSPARENCY

Good Job = 13  
 Needs Work = 23  
 High Priority = 10



### CONSERVATION LAND

Good Job = 12  
 Needs Work = 20  
 High Priority = 79



### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Good Job = 8  
 Needs Work = 14  
 High Priority = 9



### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Good Job = 2  
 Needs Work = 39  
 High Priority = 28



### GROWTH MANAGEMENT

Good Job = 1  
 Needs Work = 70  
 High Priority = 35

# COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

## CONTINUED

### WHERE IS ST. JOHNS COUNTY EXCELLING?

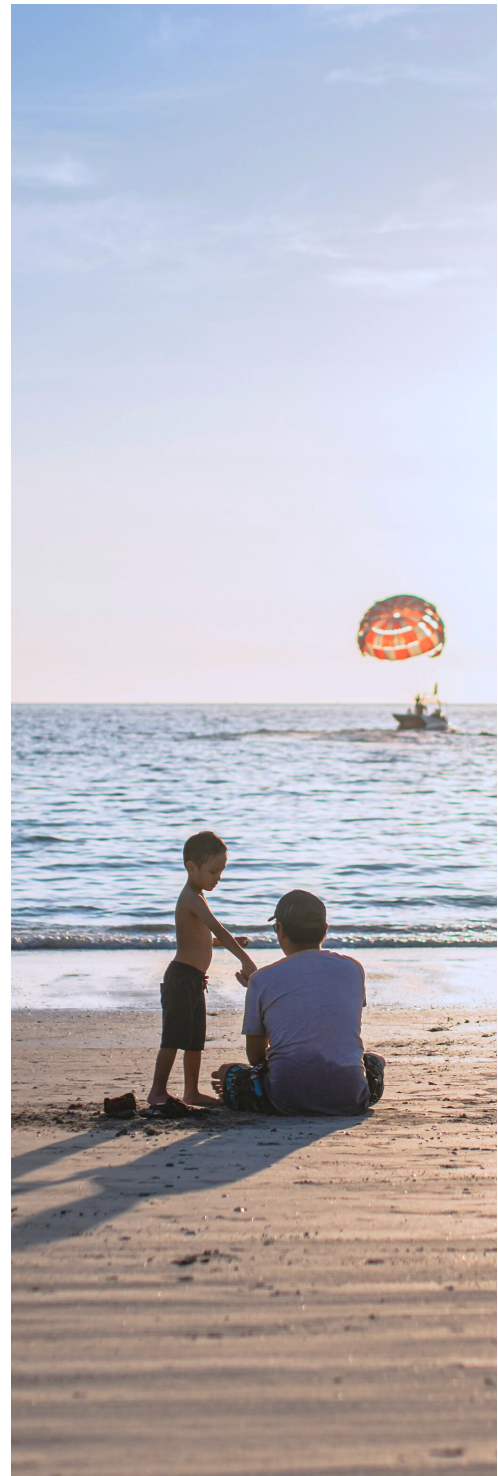
Education  
Public Safety  
Social Services

### WHERE DOES ST. JOHNS COUNTY NEED TO IMPROVE?

Growth Management  
Roads & Traffic  
Affordable Housing  
Water/Sewer (Includes Flooding)

### WHAT ARE IMPORTANT PRIORITIES FOR ST. JOHNS COUNTY RESIDENTS?

Land Conservation/ Green Spaces  
Clean Water & Air  
Growth Management  
Affordable Housing



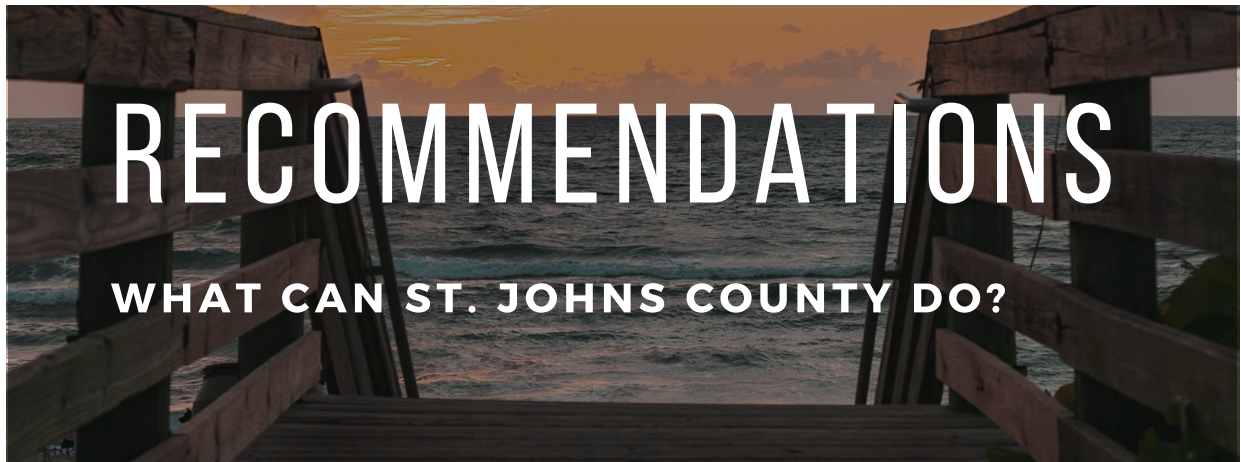




# RECOMMENDATIONS

## HOW DO WE BUILD BETTER COMMUNITIES IN ST. JOHNS COUNTY?

- Include mixture of homes, shops, schools and offices within close proximity in new development and implement adaptive reuse to revitalize and retrofit existing development
- Encourage a range of housing choices to ensure affordability
- Configure new development and retrofit existing development for multiple transportation options, including walking, biking and public transportation
- Minimize sprawl and cluster high density development to minimize infrastructure costs
- Invest in community centers that establish a sense of place, encourage alternative transportation, and generate tax revenue
- Implement policies and programs to protect sensitive environmental areas and resources



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## WHAT CAN ST. JOHNS COUNTY DO?

### **REQUIRE A SUPER-MAJORITY APPROVAL FOR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND LAND USE CHANGES**

St. Johns County's Comprehensive Plan guides and controls development in our community and is implemented through the Land Development Code. Unfortunately, frequent changes to these regulations undermine their purpose to maintain a clear, consistent plan for the future of our county. St. Johns County should implement stronger scrutiny of developer-based Comprehensive Plan amendments and require a super-majority approval for Comprehensive Plan amendments, rezonings, and variances.

### **PROVIDE ROBUST TRAINING SESSIONS FOR STAFF AND LEADERSHIP ON THE ECONOMIC COST OF SPRAWL**

County staff is responsible for vetting development applications and presenting information to the County Commission. Staff should be provided with continuing education regarding smart growth tools and policies to inform their analysis of development applications.

### **ESTABLISH URBAN SERVICE BOUNDARIES**

Creating development clusters and promoting infill development promotes fiscally responsible development by utilizing existing infrastructure such as roads and sewer lines. Creating an urban service boundary would minimize sprawl by delineating where higher density future development should occur thereby minimizing future costs for infrastructure repairs and updates.

### **INCENTIVIZE INFILL DEVELOPMENT AT HIGHER DENSITIES**

Instead of sprawling into rural and undeveloped lands, more effort should be applied towards redevelopment and revitalization - particularly at higher density. This method of development saves taxpayer money by utilizing existing infrastructure, restores viability to older areas, and accommodates population growth by creating high density, high tax revenues areas, while preserving distant rural and natural areas.

# ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

## RECOMMENDATIONS



- Resurrect the County's Land Acquisition and Management Program (LAMP)
- Create incentives and provide funding for landowners to conserve agricultural property
- Create an Aquifer Recharge Overlay District in the Pellicer basin
- Adopt robust impervious surface limitations outside urban areas
- Require Florida Friendly Landscaping techniques and prohibit new developments from installing St. Augustine sod
- Adopt an ordinance that prohibits fertilizing with nitrogen between June and September and ban phosphorus fertilizer

ST. JOHNS COUNTY 2070

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FOR MORE  
INFORMATION  
VISIT:

[WWW.1000FOF.ORG/COUNTY/  
STJOHNS/](http://WWW.1000FOF.ORG/COUNTY/STJOHNS/)

