



TACKLING POVERTY AND INEQUITIES:

REPORT ON LEON COUNTY'S EFFORTS TO ENGAGE, REVITALIZE, AND INVEST IN 32304 NEIGHBORHOODS AND BEYOND



Leon County Board of County Commissioners: (From left) District 3 Commissioner Rick Minor, District 4 Commissioner Brian Welch, District 1 Commissioner Bill Proctor (Chairman), At-Large Commissioner Nick Maddox (Vice Chairman), District 5 Commissioner Kristin Dozier, At-Large Commissioner Carolyn D. Cummings

TABLE OF CONTENTS



Human Services

6



Primary Healthcare

7



Housing

8



Economic Development

9



Library Services

10



LEON COUNTY GOVERNMENT 32304 & BEYOND



BILL PROCTOR
CHAIRMAN, LEON COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS, DISTRICT 1

The report you hold in your hands describes Leon County's long-term, continued support of the 32304 zip code and reflects the four-part 32304 Prosperity for All Summit I called in 2019. During these summits, I brought the decision makers off the dais and into 32304 communities to hear from people experiencing poverty, look them in the eye, and discuss the pathway to success.

Under a shared vision between local government, nonprofit organizations, faith groups, and neighborhoods, we committed to strategies that would increase access to affordable housing, health care, entrepreneurial opportunities, education, and other essential services. And these foundational partnerships are more important than ever as the federal government considers investing millions more in lives and livelihoods, an investment Leon County is eagerly anticipating and ready for.

Since the summit took place, the world has changed considerably with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which continues to disproportionately

impact low-income households. To address the needs of citizens during this challenging time, Leon County Government successfully leveraged more than \$62 million in federal funding through Leon CARES to assist individuals and families, small businesses, human services agencies, and nonprofit organizations. Seventy-three small businesses in the 32304 zip code received \$1.4 million in assistance to keep their business afloat while 1,173 households in the 32304 zip code were awarded \$2.6 million in assistance for past due rent, mortgage, and utility payments – more than any other zip code in Leon County.

The County continues to invest in the lives and livelihoods of residents into 2022. The recent Breaking Bread Together community dinners brought residents and County staff to the table to discuss how to address food insecurity in our community. These conversations resulted in immediate action, including the Board's approval of \$60,000 for the purchase of Second Harvest of the Big Bend's Mobile Pop-Up Pantry Program to bring food to those who need it most.

In the pages ahead, you can read more about investments made by Leon County in the 32304 zip code during the pandemic as well as other actions the County has taken since 2019 and will take in the future to combat poverty and inequity in our community.



VINCENT S. LONG
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

On behalf of Leon County Government, I am pleased to present this report outlining the County's efforts to address poverty and inequity in neighborhoods within the 32304 zip code and beyond. As one of the County's most important priorities, through long-term planning and strategic vision the County continues to support critical programs that promote economic equity and mobility for underserved communities.

The report presents plans developed by neighborhood residents and provides recommendations for next steps to engage with, revitalize, and invest in these neighborhoods and others that have historically experienced social and economic hardship.

Each year, with the leadership of the Board of County Commissioners, Leon County Government invests millions in programs and services to improve the quality of life for citizens that reside in low-income neighborhoods. During the pandemic, the County leveraged more than \$138 million in federal funding through the Leon CARES program to quickly address the community's most urgent needs, from direct assistance to public health and millions of meals. Through the County's targeted service delivery, we reached the communities most in need all while being recognized as Florida's top county for distributing emergency relief during the pandemic.

Leon County Government and its local partners are committed to working with residents to address the specific needs of the community to enhance economic prosperity, improve quality of life, revitalize neighborhoods, and empower residents to build strong, resilient neighborhoods now and in the future.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines Leon County programs, services, initiatives, and events addressing poverty and inequities in communities and neighborhoods that have experienced prolonged economic and social hardship, including Bond, Frenchtown, Griffin Heights, Providence, and South City. The County compiles and analyzes socioeconomic data from U.S. Census tracts and other sources while engaging neighborhood residents to inform program delivery.

Additionally, the report details the continued progress

Leon County will make to improve the neighborhoods in collaboration with community partners, including the neighborhoods themselves.

The following sections of this report provide summaries of the programs and services the County has adopted to provide essential services in the areas of human services, primary health care, housing, economic development, and library services.

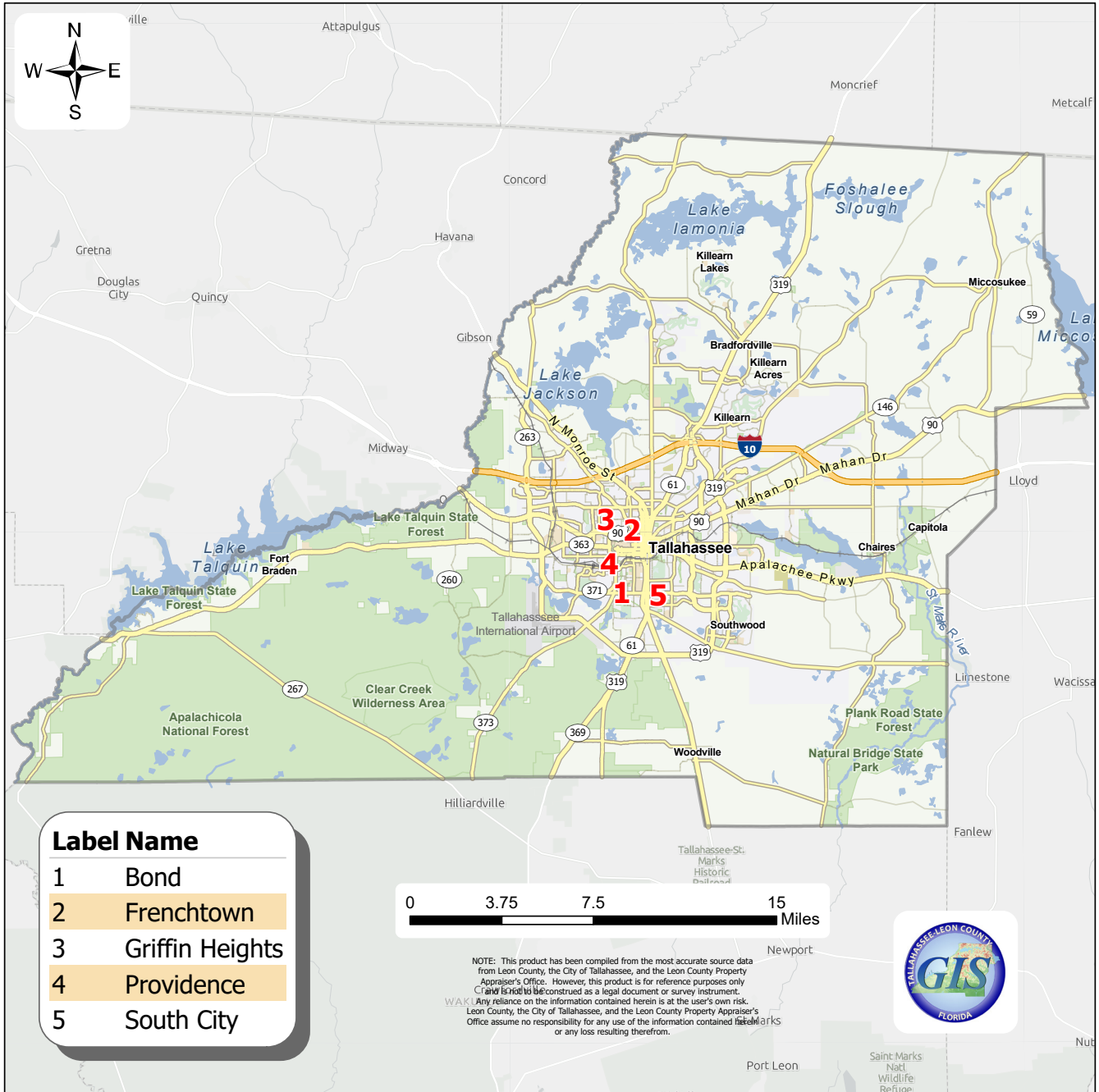
SCHOOLS	School Grade (2022)	% of Kindergarten Ready	% of Level 3 or Above, Florida Standards Assessment, English Language Arts
ELEMENTARY			
Bond	B	32%	36%
Hartsfield	D	36%	31%
John G. Riley	D	16%	30%
Pineview	B	19%	34%
Sabal Palm	C	26%	30%
MIDDLE			
Griffin	C	N/A	24%
Fairview	C	N/A	46%
Nims	C	N/A	25%
Raa	C	N/A	51%
K-8			
Fort Braden	C	39%	34%
District Avg.	B	50%	53%

Educational Benchmarks for 32304 Neighborhoods

These five neighborhoods are zoned for elementary and middle schools that have historically struggled to meet benchmarks for key educational attainment, including kindergarten readiness and reading levels with results lower than the average of the Leon County School District.

U.S. Census Data

- According to U.S. Census data, neighborhoods within the 32304 zip code have the lowest percentage of homeownership (11.6%), lowest median household income (\$21,862), and lowest average home values (\$177,459) compared to other Leon County zip codes.
- Family households in Frenchtown and Griffin Heights have the highest level of family households in poverty in Leon County.
- The U.S. Census considers census tracts with an overall poverty rate of 30% or more as high poverty areas. Leon County's five census tracts with family household poverty rates of over 40% are within the 32304 zip code.





PRIORITY HUMAN SERVICES

Through community partnerships and collaboration, Leon County provides a variety of services that enhance the quality of life of low-income residents and neighborhoods that have historically experienced poverty and economic inequities. Additional investments, like Leon CARES, were made available by Leon County in response to the disproportionate health and economic impact of COVID-19 on low-income neighborhoods.

Community Human Services Partnership (CHSP)

- Leon County, in partnership with the City of Tallahassee, administers CHSP as a joint planning and funding distribution process to provide human services in Tallahassee-Leon County. An additional funding category for homeless services was created in 2021.
- CHSP's Promise Zone category serves residents in high poverty census tracts in the areas of youth services, family services, job training and placement, and health services.
- In the last two years, Leon County and the City of Tallahassee allocated \$1.1 million to the Promise Zone category for programs that serve neighborhoods within the 32304 zip code and beyond.

Leon CARES

- Leon CARES provided more than \$62 million in federal funding to address the needs of the community resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, including more than \$4 million to support the Second Harvest of the Big Bend food bank in purchasing and distributing 3.4 million meals across the community.

Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) Program

- In 2021, the ERA program provided assistance to approximately 3,100 households in Leon County, totaling more than \$15 million, including 887 households in the 32304 zip code which received more than \$3.8 million.
- In 2022, Leon County will administer \$2 million in additional ERA funds to re-certify 2021 program applicants who continue to be eligible for rent and utility assistance and aid support eligible applicants with relocation to a new rental unit, including security deposit, three months' rent, and utilities.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

- Leon County distributed \$6.6 million in ARPA funding to support local human services partners, including Second Harvest of the Big Bend, Legal



CONTINUING PROGRESS ...

Increase Promise Zone Funding in CHSP

Prioritize funding Promise Zone human services programs that align with the action items identified in the Neighborhood First Plans to improve the quality of life of the residents living within the 32304 zip code and beyond.

Services of North Florida, Bond Community Health Center, and the Neighborhood Medical Center.

Breaking Bread Community Dinners

- Leon County, in partnership with Second Harvest of the Big Bend and the Children's Services Council of Leon County, hosted nine neighborhood dinners with citizens to discuss food insecurity and how to address the issue in our community. Approximately 300 citizens attended and shared ideas about the barriers facing those who are food insecure.
- The County is now taking additional steps to address food insecurity in the community, including collaborating with partner organizations to engage the neighborhoods with the highest food insecurity rates and providing additional funding for Second Harvest's Mobile Pop-up Pantry Program.



PRIORITY PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

The Leon County Primary Health Care Program provides uninsured and underinsured Leon County residents access to primary health care, dental health care, mental health care, specialty medical care, and pharmaceutical services. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the County has worked closely with healthcare partners to host pop-up vaccination and testing events and expand access to mental health resources.

Primary Healthcare Program

- Leon County administers \$1.7 million annually for primary care, dental care, and mental health services for uninsured and low-income residents performed through partnerships with Bond Community Health Center, Neighborhood Medical Center, Apalachee Center, Capital Medical Society Foundation/We Care Network, and the Florida A&M University College of Pharmacy.

Mental Health Care

- Leon County invests nearly \$1 million annually in mental health services, with an additional \$321,000 in federal funding in 2021.
- Since 2020, Leon County has increased its investment in mental health care through enhanced partnerships with 2-1-1 Big Bend and the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) in Leon County.
 - » In August 2020, Leon County funded the new Mental Health Navigators at 2-1-1 to quickly connect vulnerable individuals with resources via phone.
 - » In December 2020, as recommended by the Mental Health Council of the Big Bend, Leon County established a Behavioral Health Navigator at FDOH to serve as the liaison between high-impact communities and community groups to facilitate information about mental health services and referrals to mental health providers.
- On July 16, 2022, the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (formerly the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) launched across the U.S. as the new three-digit dialing code for people to access mental health services.
 - » Veterans can press “1” after dialing 9-8-8 to connect directly to the Veterans Crisis Lifeline which serves veterans, service members, National Guard and Reserve members, and those who support them.
- The County will continue to leverage federal funds and local partnerships to support school-based and community mental health services and programs.



CONTINUING PROGRESS ...

Invest in Mental Health Outreach

Conduct approximately three outreach events annually on mental health services in neighborhoods within the 32304 zip code in partnership with the City, the Florida Department of Health in Leon County, and the Mental Health Council of the Big Bend.

COVID-19 Testing

- In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Leon County allocated \$2.8 million to support the efforts of local Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and health care providers.
- The County continues to meet with partners bi-weekly to receive updates on the spread of COVID-19 in the community and to support the needs of the providers.



PRIORITY HOUSING

Leon County has partnered with the City of Tallahassee, the Housing Finance Authority (HFA) of Leon County, and the Tallahassee Lenders Consortium (TLC) to preserve and increase the stock of affordable housing and homeownership in neighborhoods that have experienced decades of distress.

Community Land Trust

- The County, City, and TLC partnered in 2020 to establish the Community Land Trust (CLT) of Tallahassee and Leon County to provide greater access to homeownership for low-income households as well as create an inventory of homes to remain affordable in perpetuity.
- The CLT of Tallahassee and Leon County will soon begin construction on a single-family home in Griffin Heights on land donated by the County.
- The County will donate five additional properties to the CLT to construct new single-family homes in the Griffin Heights and Frenchtown neighborhoods.

Emergency Home Repair

- The County's Emergency Housing Repair Program provides financial assistance for repairs to address immediate health and/or safety hazards.
- In partnership with the HFA of Leon County, the County recently expanded its Emergency Home Repair Program to include mobile homes within the City limits to preserve and improve the condition of the homes of low-income households.
- With the recent expansion of the County's Emergency Home Repair Program, eligible low-income residents within the City limits now have access to emergency repairs.

Increase and Improve Affordable Rental Units

- Over the last two years, the County has preserved and/or expanded the number of affordable rental units for low-income residents in partnership with the HFA of Leon County.
- Approximately 378 affordable rental units in the South City neighborhood have been preserved and/or expanded due to the County's authorization for bond financing, totaling more than \$43 million.
- On July 12, 2022, the Board approved an interlocal agreement with the City of Tallahassee on the use of the State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP) program authorizing County funds to be utilized in concert with City SHIP funds to build affordable



CONTINUING PROGRESS ...

Expand Local Partnerships

Partner with the City of Tallahassee to develop, implement, and expand Neighborhood First Plans for neighborhoods within the 32304 zip code by evaluating opportunities to align current County programs with the plans in areas such as affordable housing and healthcare.

housing primarily within neighborhoods identified in the City's Neighborhood First Program within the 32304 zip code.

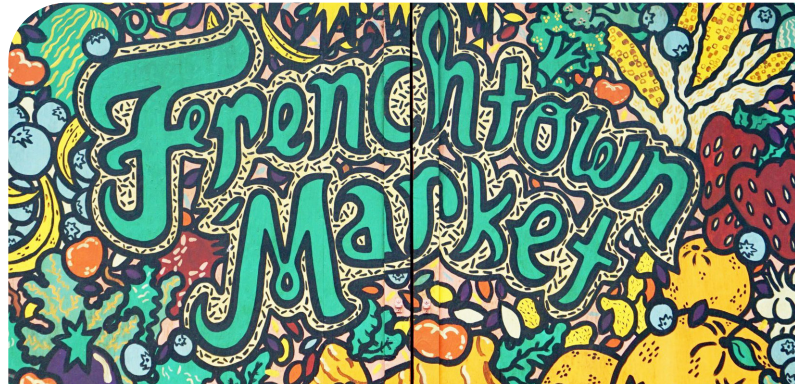


PRIORITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Leon County has led the effort to bring economic prosperity to neighborhoods that have historically experienced poverty and inequity through investments in infrastructure and minority-owned businesses.

Greater Frenchtown/Southside Community Redevelopment Area (CRA)

- The Greater Frenchtown/Southside CRA was created by the City in coordination with the County to revitalize neighborhoods and commerce within the boundaries that include the Bond, Frenchtown, and South City neighborhoods.
- Over the last few years, the County has contributed an average of \$2 million annually to the CRA for the construction of sidewalks, streetscape improvements, and development of affordable housing, including single-family housing and multifamily housing projects.
- These projects are anticipated to attract private sector investments that will spur economic growth in the neighborhoods.



Leon Works Programs

- The Leon Works programs, including the Leon Works Expo and the Junior Apprenticeship Program, promote skilled career fields with high workforce demand to local youth in partnership with Leon County Schools.
 - » The annual Leon Works Expo is a one-day event that connects employers and academic institutions with hundreds of local students to provide opportunities for individuals to explore skilled careers.
 - » The Junior Apprenticeship Program is an opportunity for Leon County high school juniors and seniors to prepare for a skilled career – those jobs requiring more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree.
 - » Over half of these students in the Junior Apprenticeship Program are from low-income families or live in high-poverty neighborhoods.



CONTINUING PROGRESS ...

Invest in Neighborhood-Based Economic Development

Support the purchase and renovation of an abandoned commercial building located at 1309 Alabama Street to increase access to healthy and affordable food in the Griffin Heights neighborhood as part of their Neighborhood First Plan.

SmartSteps Micro-Loan Program

- To increase access to capital for minority businesses, the County partnered with the FAMU Federal Credit Union (FAMU FCU) to establish a multi-million-dollar microloan program for Black-, minority-, and women-owned businesses.
- Leon County committed \$2.5 million for the program with a \$250,000 match from FAMU FCU.
- Approximately 30% of the loans awarded thus far have been to businesses located in the 32304 zip code.



PRIORITY LIBRARY SERVICES

The LeRoy Collins Leon County Public Library System offers essential programming and services that contribute to the well-being and lifelong learning of Leon County. With input from citizens, the Library underwent an extensive re-envisioning process that helped identify the changing roles of public libraries and prioritized the needs and interests of the community.

Essential Libraries Initiative

- Leon County launched the Essential Libraries Initiative in June 2021 to provide guidance as the Library develops new programs that represent and appeal to the diverse needs of the community.
- Through the initiative, the Library provides key programs and services that focus on Literacy & Lifelong Learning, Business & Workforce Development, Civic & Community Engagement, and Arts & Humanities.
- The Library hired a Community Resources Specialist to connect citizens with government programs and community-based services.
- To increase digital connection, the Library circulates hot spots. Citizens also have access to computers and laptops.
- Furthering Leon County's commitment to sustainability, the Library offers a Seed Library program in the fall and spring. The Seed Library promotes fruit, vegetable, and herb seed planting and encourages residents to grow their own nutritious food.
- The Library of Things provides residents access to tools, electronics, indoor and outdoor games, musical instruments, and more.
- For students in grades K-8, the Library provides one-on-one tutoring through Homework Hub.



CONTINUING PROGRESS ...

Develop Library Programs in Line with Community Needs

Collaborate with the City of Tallahassee to develop programming that aligns with the Neighborhood First Plans, including implementing a neighborhood-based reading and STEAM mentoring program for youth and increasing the number of items available through the Library of Things.



OUR VALUE PROPOSITION

What You Get as a Taxpayer and a Stakeholder in our Community

Leon County Government leverages partnerships, embraces efficiency and innovation, and demands performance to the benefit of our taxpayers. We actively engage our citizens, not only as taxpayers, but as stakeholders and co-creators of our community – providing meaningful opportunities to capitalize on their talents in making important decisions and shaping our community for future generations.



Leon County Wants to Know How We Can Serve You

To learn more about Leon County's housing and human services programs, call **(850) 606-1900** or visit **LeonCountyFL.gov/HSCP**

To serve on a Citizen Committee, call **(850) 606-5300** or visit **LeonCountyFL.gov/Committees**

To provide feedback or make a service request, call **(850) 606-5300** or visit **LeonCountyFL.gov/CitizensConnect**



**LEON COUNTY
GOVERNMENT**

People Focused. Performance Driven.

Office of Human Services & Community Partnerships
615 Paul Russell Road | Tallahassee, FL 32301