FPZA

FLORIDA PLANNING AND ZONING ASSOCIATION

Surfcoast Chapter

October 2026
Volume 4

Newsletter

The President's Corner

Happy Fall Surfcoast,

I hope you are all doing well. There's definitely some uncertainty in the air, especially for all our public sector members, so I ask you all to remember to check in with your colleagues from time to time. Thank you everyone as the Chapter is doing the best statewide with annual renewals and has had a steady registration of new members.

Since our last issue the Chapter has been extremely busy. We've hosted multiple lunch and learns, most recently last Friday with a panel discussion on statewide ballot amendment #3. We've hosted another road cleanup and continued our partnership with VCARD with the 2026 Coastal Cleanup. We understand that the overall Chapter membership has also been extremely busy but would love to reengage with those of you haven't been able to get to any chapter events as we strongly value the feedback that we get from the chapter to help shape how we develop our professional development events.

We're two months out from the Chapter's annual gala, so make sure to register and join us for our 18th Annual Gala on Friday December 11th. Awards submissions can be submitted now through November 25, 2026. The Call for Entries is further in this issue, so make sure to get your nominations in. As always we're always looking for sponsorships for the Gala and appreciate all our sponsors.

Michael Hanson,
President

Hey Surfcoasters!

Let us know if you have had a change in your career or life that you would like to communicate to other Surfcoasters for the Members on the Move page. Send the update to our Newsletter Editor at Weedoxie@yahoo.com.

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UPCOMING EVENTS!!!

Fall Regional Forum

- October 16, 2026

Depot Park, Gainesville

Annual Chapter Awards Gala

- December 11, 2026

Halifax River Yacht Club

April 2026 Luncheon Program Overview

Brownfields: From Nightmare to Opportunity

By: John G. Thomson, Chapter Newsletter Editor

Luis Nieves-Ruiz, FAICP, the Director of Economic Development for the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council (ECFRPC), provided an informative overview of brownfields. He started by describing the role of the ECFRPC assisting with brownfield redevelopment and then providing an explanation of what does and does not constitute a brownfield. Luis indicated that the ECFRPC brownfields program was initiated in 2021 with funding assistance totaling $2.1 million impacting over 45 brownfield locations throughout the region. He went over the differences in Florida's vs the EPA brownfield programs.

Luis described a brownfield as an abandoned commercial or industrial site where future use is affected by real or perceived contamination. Cleaning up and reinvesting in the these properties leads to increases in the local tax base, helping with job growth as well as protecting the community. His discussion of the myths and facts of brownfields helped with understanding this concept. For example, brownfields by definition are not superfund sites. Also, a site does not need to be contaminated to be considered brownfield, but its perception as contaminated can be a barrier to redevelopment. Attendees learned that one-third of the brownfield sites assessed with EPA funding were actually free from significant contamination.

After providing the foundation of what is and is not a brownfield, Luis went over the scope of ECFRPC's program including how funding occurs, assistance for both private/public ownership, types of environmental site assessments, and estimating costs for clean-up. He then went through four cases studies of brownfield sites that the ECFRPC has been involved and the assistance provided through its program. If you want to view the luncheon program presentation and listen to the audio, both are available on the chapter's webpage www.fpzasurfcoast.org by navigating to the Events page and scrolling down to Previous 2026 Chapter Events.

Community Service Project Overviews

By: John G. Thomson, Chapter Newsletter Editor

Roadway Cleanup on September 3, 2026

Several FPZA Surfcoast Chapter members once again rolled up their sleeves and put on cleanup gear to give back to the community. The cleanup occurred along the adopted roadway segment adjacent to Orange Camp Road, between South Blue Lake Avenue and Frontage Road in DeLand. The FPZA Chapter is one of the various organizations that have stepped up to provide periodic clean-up for selected roadway segments throughout the county.

The team for this cleanup included Joe Ruiz, Helen LaValley and her husband Roger along with your newsletter editor. The intrepid volunteers took to the roadside, collecting litter and debris to help keep our community clean and beautiful. By the end of the effort, the group had gathered a total of three large bags and a basket of garbage, making a noticeable difference along the route. The FPZA Surfcoast Chapter encourages others to join future schedule cleanup events to help keep our roadways shining!

Coastal Cleanup with on September 19, 2026

The FPZA Surfcoast Chapter partnered with the Volusia County Association for Responsible Development (VCARD) for the International Coastal Cleanup. It was held at City Island in Daytona and is part of the International Coastal Cleanup Day to raise awareness about pollution. Several of the chapter members, along with VCARD members, participated in the annual Coastal Cleanup. A specially made t-shirt for the event as well as swag bags were provided to all who participated. After the cleanup, several sponsors, including DMC, LTG, Bechtol Engineering, and Jupiter provided lunch for the participants at the nearby Mc'ks Tavern. Many thanks to all that participated and the sponsors for the luncheon!

October 2026 Luncheon Program Overview

Florida Property Tax Exemption State Constitutional Amendment

By: John G. Thomson, Newsletter Editor

From Left, Lowell Atkinson, Jay Gardner, and Mike McGlothlin

The luncheon program consisted of a panel discussion of the proposed amendment 3 to the state's constitution on the ballot for the November 3, 2026 election. The panel consisted of three speakers including Lowell Atkinson, MPA-PP, of the Florida Housing Coalition, James "Jay" Gardner, Jr., CFA, Flagler County Property Appraiser, and Mike McGlothlin, MBA-PA, Palm Coast City Manager.

Lowell Atkinson started the panel discussion with an overview of what is included in the proposed amendment. In a nutshell, the amendment increases the homestead exemption for non-school taxes to $150,000 in 2027 and $250,000 2028 and adjusts for inflation after that period. It limits the increased homestead exemption for residents as of December 31, 2026 after qualifying for the homestead exemption. New residents applying for the homestead exemption after that date would be required to wait five years to be able to qualify for the increased homestead exemption. Other provisions include the requirements for the legislature to provide a procedure for cities and counties to increase the homestead exemption to the full assessed value, reduce the cap on assessment increases on non-homestead properties from 10% to 5%, and limits on how local governments use property taxes.

Lowell then went over its potential impact on housing in the state. One of these includes shifting the burden from homesteaded to non-homesteaded properties and resulting increases of upwards of 25% costs to renters in Flagler/Volusia counties. Lowell suggested that that there were over other more equitable alternatives to the amendment, such as the concept of a "Circuit Breaker", that limits the property tax burden to the percentage of income.

Next up was James "Jay" Gardner, Jr., who gave his perspective of the amendment from his position as the county's Property Appraiser. One of the key issues he raised was that the amendment does not solve one of the main concerns, which is waste, fraud, and abuse. For example, what one supporter would consider waste could be public libraries but viewed as an important service to another supporter.

Jay also highlighted the provision in the amendment that gives the legislature the authority to increase the homestead exemption up to the full assessed value further impacting the ability of local governments to fund services in the future. Additionally, he indicated that the Florida Taxation and Budget Reform Commission is scheduled to meet next year and could make further recommended changes to local governments finances. Jay reminded the attendees that the recommendations can go direct to ballot without having legislative approval.

Finally, Mike McGlothlin went over how the reductions in property tax revenue will leave the city with two basic choices. The first, how to replace revenue or, the second, what services to reduce or eliminate if the revenue is not replaced. Mike discussed how Palm Coast, as with other local governments, are planning for the worst case scenarios. He stated that reductions in property tax revenues of 14% in the first year and up to 30% in the fifth year will result in the city having to make some difficult choices on how services are provided.

After the speakers concluded with their presentations, the remaining time of the program was spent with discussion between the attendees and the panelists. You can watch a video of the luncheon program at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zE6QcES7_I.

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FPZA Fall Regional Forum

10.16.2026 | GAINSVILLE, FL

REGISTER NOW!

Join fellow planners for a Walking Tour of Depot Park to see how a former brownfield was transformed into a thriving public park through innovative planning and environmental restoration.

LOCATION & TIME

Depot Park at 3:30PM
874 SE 4th Street, Gainesville, FL

AGENDA

- 3:30 – Meet at Pop A Top Boxcar
- 4:00 – Walking Tour
- 5:00 – Panel Discussion
- 6:00 – Happy Hour at Pop A Top Boxcar (cash bar)

COST

$5 for Students | $20 for non-students

CREDITS

2 AICP CM Credits (Pending)

JOIN US IN CELEBRATING
18TH ANNUAL
FPZA AWARDS GALA
DECEMBER 11, 2026
HALIFAX RIVER YACHT CLUB
331 S. BEACH STREET
DAYTONA BEACH, FL 32114
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM
$50.00 per person includes
DINNER & OPEN BAR DURING COCKTAIL HOUR & MUSIC
RSVP and Ticket Purchases at
WWW.FPZASURFCOAST.ORG
FPZA
FLORIDA PLANNING AND ZONING ASSOCIATION
Surfcoast Chapter

ANNUAL AWARDS GALA SPONSORSHIP INFORMATION

Friday, December 11, 2026
Halifax River Yacht Club
Daytona Beach

Overview - What your sponsorship provides to the community

- Supporting a locally active professional planning organization within Flagler and Volusia Counties
- Partnering with local governments and other professional organizations with an interest in planning
- Networking for those interested in planning and to provide continuing professional certification opportunities for planning related professionals
- Educating professionals, public, and elected / appointed officials on planning and zoning practices and issues at an affordable level

Sponsorship Level Benefits

Diamond - $1,000

Four complimentary gala tickets
Full-page ad in all newsletters for 2027

Emerald - $500

Three complimentary gala tickets
Half-page ad in all newsletters for 2027

Platinum - $250

Two complimentary gala tickets
Quarter-page ad in all newsletters for 2027

Gold - $150

One complimentary gala ticket
Business card in all newsletters for 2027

Contact for More Information:
Becky Mendez, Treasurer
FPZA Surfcoast Chapter
(407)314-1794
Email: surfcoastfpza@gmail.com

On-line payment:
Pay on-line at the store tab
www.fpzasurfcoast.org

Mail Payment to:
FPZA Surfcoast Chapter
220 N. Beach Street #2705
Daytona Beach, FL 32115

2026 CALL for ENTRIES

FPZA Surfcoast Chapter 18th Annual Awards

Entry Deadline: November 25, 2026
Awards Ceremony: December 11, 2026

AWARD CATEGORIES

Outstanding Innovation and Design: This award is for the project or development that demonstrates innovation and quality design techniques. Key criteria in selecting the winner in this category will be how the project promotes interest and observance of state of the art planning and zoning practices.

Outstanding Planning Study: This award is given for an outstanding public report, study, written document, ordinance, planning analysis, etc. This category emphasizes results and demonstrates how innovative and state-of-the-art planning methods and practices will facilitate implementation of the plan.

Outstanding Sustainability Initiative: This award is for the project that is leading sustainability efforts within the area of our two Counties. Sustainability practices impact how places are planned, designed, built, used, and maintained. Areas of concern include energy use and efficiency, green infrastructure, resource conservation, transportation choices and impacts, compact development, diversity, and revitalization.

Focus Award: This award is presented to a person who has exemplified outstanding achievement in support of the planning profession within Flagler and Volusia Counties. This award is not limited to FPZA members. FPZA Surfcoast members may suggest nominees and are requested to contact the Awards Chair by the application deadline with the name of the nominee and reasons for the nomination.

Member of the Year: This award is for a Surfcoast member who exemplifies outstanding achievement in support of the planning profession within Flagler and Volusia counties and has been instrumental in the continual success of the chapter. FPZA Surfcoast members may suggest nominees and are requested to contact the Awards Chair by the application deadline with the name of the nominee and reasons for the nomination.

The FPZA Awards Committee reserves the right to categorically reclassify any submittal and to award an Award of Merit, if appropriate.

Award recipients receive one (1) complimentary Gala ticket. Additional tickets or sponsorships may be purchased at www.fpzasurfcoast.org.

2026 CALL for ENTRIES

FPZA Surfcoast Chapter 18th Annual Awards

Entry Deadline: November 25, 2026
Awards Ceremony: December 11, 2026

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Each award entry will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Background: History or context within which the project is significant; indication of expenditure of time, type of personnel, budget, population and size of jurisdiction.
- Innovativeness: Use of an original concept or refinement of an existing technique or procedure.
- Effectiveness: Project/strategy impact on the subject matter.
- Implementation: Project/strategy method or application to the subject matter; adaptability to changing conditions; and consideration or solutions to practical constraints.
- Comprehensiveness: Scope and consideration of project/strategy in relationship to all aspects of the subject matter.
- Clarity: Clearness of the award entry.

SUBMITTAL PROCEDURES

1. A cover letter that states the name of the nomination, the award that is sought, the name of the recipient(s), the name, phone number, address and email of the applicant.
2. A brief summary to be used for ceremony purposes, if selected (100 words or less).
3. A narrative of the nomination that clearly demonstrates the evaluation criteria, as outlined above (1,000 words or less).
4. Images that illustrate the nomination in JPEG and please label them (3 or less and no more than 1 MB each).
5. There are no entry fees and all award entries must be submitted via email ONLY per the size requirements outlined above. Any hard copy submittals sent via mail will not be accepted.
6. Submit applications to surfcoastfpza@gmail.com. For more information, please contact Becky Mendez, Chapter Treasurer at (407)314-1794 or mailto:rmplanningaicp@gmail.com

PLANNER PROFILE

The FPZA Surfcoast Chapter Introduces:
Allie Femiano , Environmental Planner for Palm Coast

Give us a little background on where you are from, and how you arrived here. *I was born and raised in Rochester, Upstate New York, in a small town called Hilton, located along Lake Ontario. After high school, I moved to Daytona Beach, Florida, where I earned my A.A. in Environmental Science from Daytona State College. Around this time, COVID-19 disrupted my plans for continuing my education, so I began volunteering and eventually working at the Marine Science Center in Ponce Inlet. During my time there, I had the opportunity to participate in sea turtle releases, which was an incredibly rewarding experience. I became inspired by the resilience of nature and gained a deeper appreciation for the impact we have on our environment.*

I later moved to Tampa, Florida, to complete my bachelor's degree in biology with a minor in Animal Science. After graduating, I moved back to the Daytona Beach area to be closer to my parents and currently live in Port Orange. As a rapidly developing city, Palm Coast has a lot to offer an environmental planner, and I am excited about the opportunity to contribute to its growth while helping protect and preserve the natural environment.

Tell us about your family. *My parents live in Daytona Beach, and my brother lives in Panama City Beach, FL.*

How did you become a planner? *My path to planning started with my interest in the environment and wildlife. Being involved with sea turtle releases and seeing firsthand the relationship between people and the natural environment really influenced the direction I wanted to take my career.*

As I learned more about environmental issues, I realized I wanted to find a way to combine my science background with community development. Planning felt like the perfect intersection of those interests. It gives me the opportunity to help communities grow while also considering how that growth affects natural resources and the environment.

What responses do people give when you tell them you are a planner? *When I tell people that I am a planner, I typically clarify that I specialize in environmental planning. This helps provide a better understanding of my profession while also highlighting my area of expertise and personal interest.*

What improvements would you like to see in the community where you live and work? *I would love to see more environmental beautification throughout the community, along with more spaces that thoughtfully incorporate and showcase Florida's natural landscape. I think there is a great opportunity to create attractive, welcoming spaces while still preserving the unique character of the natural environment.*

What are your hobbies and how do you enjoy spending your free time? *My hobbies center around being active, adventurous, and creative. I enjoy spending time in nature, working out, exploring new cities and countries, creating artwork, and spending time with my dog, Skyy.*

What is your favorite part of your job? *My favorite part of my job is being able to look at development from an environmental perspective and help find ways for growth and conservation to coexist. Palm Coast is a rapidly growing community with a unique natural landscape, so there are many opportunities to incorporate environmental considerations into the planning process.*

I also enjoy that every project is different. Planning allows me to work with a variety of people, projects, and environmental considerations, so I am constantly learning and seeing how my work can contribute to the community.

What is the least favorite part of your job? *One of the more challenging parts of my job is balancing competing interests. Development, environmental protection, property rights, community needs, and regulations can sometimes point in different directions. It can be challenging to find solutions that address all those factors while still supporting responsible growth.*

That challenge is also an important part of planning, though, because it encourages me to think creatively and look for ways to find a balance between development and environmental stewardship.

What are the goals you hope to attain in your planning? *My biggest goal is to help create a community where people can thrive while the natural environment is preserved and incorporated into the way we grow. I would like to contribute to thoughtful development that takes advantage of Florida's natural landscape rather than working against it.*

On a local level, I hope to see more opportunities for environmental beautification, preservation of natural areas, and public spaces that connect people with nature. Ultimately, I want my work as an environmental planner to help Palm Coast grow in a way that is sustainable, intentional, and respectful of the environment that makes the community unique.

SURFCOAST MEMBERS ON THE MOVE

Scott Ashley. Scott is retiring after a long and storied career with Volusia County's Growth and Resource Department. Scott currently serves as the Zoning Manager for the county as well as previously serving as President of the FPZA Surfcoast Chapter. Scott's last day with the county will be November 30, 2026. I had the pleasure of working with my good friend Scott during my 17 years with the county prior to my retirement. Welcome to the club!

Emily Kunkel. Emily was recently recognized by the City of DeLand for going above and beyond for her efforts with the update to the city's Land Development regulations. She is a Senior Planner and the Historic Resource Coordinator for the city. Well done!

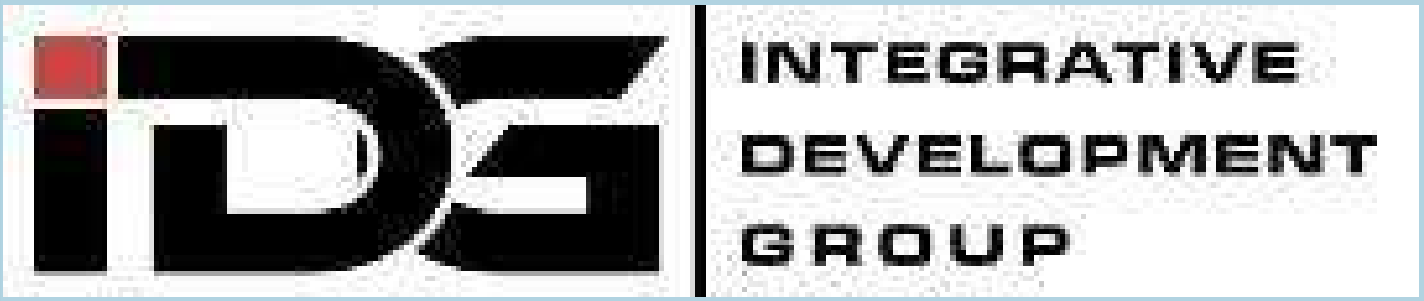
Colleen Miles. Colleen is celebrating the recent birth of her grand daughter Penelope Parker Jordan born May 19, 2026 to parents Alexandra and Tony Jordan. Congratulations grandma!

Phong Nguyen. Phong has stepped up to be the Interim Community Development Manager for the City of Palm Coast after his recent promotion to the Deputy Community Development Director for the city. Best of luck with your new role!

Welcome to Our New FPZA Surfcoaster Members:

- *Kaitlyn Apgar, City of Daytona Beach*
- *Brooke Samman, City of Daytona Beach*
- *Alexsandra Femiano, City of Palm Coast*

Thank You to our 2026 Diamond Sponsors!



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LDRG

LAND DEVELOPMENT RESOURCE GROUP

ICI HOMES®

The Surfcoast Chapter of FPZA promotes cooperation among official planning and zoning boards or commissions, civic bodies, citizens, technicians and students interested in planning and zoning throughout Volusia County.

SURFCOAST CHAPTER OFFICERS FOR 2026

Michael Hanson, AICP * President
Merylene Thomas, AICP * Vice President
Rebekah Cottle * Secretary
Becky Mendez, AICP * Treasurer
John G. Thomson, AICP * Newsletter Editor
Danalee Petyk, AICP * Professional Development Officer
Colleen Miles * Immediate Past President

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Helen LaValley
Natasia Lunceford
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Joseph Ruiz

CHAPTER STATE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Michael Hanson, AICP
Helen LaValley
Natasia Lunceford

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Treasurer's Report

Becky Mendez, AICP

Fiscal Year 2026 started January 1, 2026, with a beginning balance of $7,469.75. The ending balance as of September 30, 2026, was $9,539.70, which included $6,370.47 in revenue and $4,298.49 in expenses, for a net profit of $2071.98 year-to-date.