



**BLUEPRINT FOR  
IMPROVEMENT II**

**TASK FORCE ON CONSOLIDATED GOVERNMENT**

**2014**

12. Inadequate maintenance of existing infrastructure.
13. Inadequate facilities for bicycles, pedestrians, and individuals with disabilities.

14. Arrangement to provide healthcare through lease of City hospital financially unsustainable.
15. Health and wellness role of county Health Department not integrated in City government.

## THE NEEDS

1. A *single unified* mission for all aspects of local government.
2. A system that promotes effective government through retention and transfer of institutional knowledge.
3. A structure that is responsive to the unique needs of the diverse areas of the City and its citizens.
4. A renewed commitment to the infrastructure promises of consolidation.
5. A consensus on community identity and vision for the consolidated City.
6. A structure that ensures a financially sustainable pension system.
7. Adequate funding to maintain public safety, infrastructure, and quality of life and ensure economic viability.
8. A holistic plan for public health and indigent health care.
9. Continuous implementation of opportunities for increased efficiency and effectiveness.
10. A renewed commitment to the principles of consolidation.

## THE SOLUTIONS

1. Create a permanent commission comprised of representative of all aspects of local government tasked with development of a *single unified* mission and strategic plan for the entire consolidated government, and a way of monitoring and ensuring the Independent Authorities, Constitutional Officers, City Council, Mayor, and all aspects of local government are working toward a common goal.
2. Formally recognize the diversity and importance of neighborhoods as an asset of the City.
3. Develop a holistic plan to meet the current and future public health needs of the City and incorporate the Health Department in the day to day decisions of the City.
4. Adopt changes to strengthen the independence of the Office of General and clarify disputed processes.
5. Establish qualifications to ensure that experienced, qualified professionals are hired to run the administrative and financial aspects of the City, and promote the retention of high-quality and effective individuals who fill those, and other, administrative positions.
6. Require that a percentage of the annual Capital Improvement

## At a Glance

### THE PROBLEMS (GENERAL)

1. Divergent missions and strategic goals between Independent Authorities, Constitutional Officers, City Council, and Mayor resulting in a lack of coordination and missed opportunities for the overall success of the City.
2. A significant loss of continuity, momentum, and institutional knowledge every four years as there is significant turnover in unelected as well as elected positions following City elections.
3. A bureaucratic centralized City government that is unresponsive to the unique needs of the widely varied neighborhoods with distinct identities and issues that comprise this large geographic city, often implementing one size fits all standards and programs.
4. The rationale behind Consolidation is no longer in the forefront as a guiding principle for government decisions.
5. Decentralization of common internal services due to internal charging systems and lack of user control over service quality.
6. Inadequate planning for present and future needs, and failure to implement adopted plans.
7. Promises made, as a part of the consolidation campaign, for infrastructure improvements in urban core neighborhoods have yet to be kept.
8. Poor self-image and lack of clear City identity.
9. Lack of public confidence in local government.
10. Opportunities for increased efficiency and effectiveness are many.

### THE PROBLEMS (SPECIFIC)

1. Unsustainable pension obligations and enormous unfunded liability.
2. Slowdown of economic growth.
3. Large number of deteriorated, vacant, and foreclosed properties.
4. High unemployment rate in certain neighborhoods; high incidence of unskilled labor.
5. High violent crime rate.
6. Discontent with the perceived partiality of the Office of General Counsel.
7. Incomplete water and sewer system in urban neighborhoods.
8. School system challenged by poor image and lower than desired graduation rate.
9. Inadequate funding for staff and operation of libraries and parks.
10. Unpaved and unmaintained roads in urban neighborhoods.
11. Water pollution in St. John's River and its tributary rivers and creeks.

- Program Budget is set aside for infrastructure projects to remedy unfulfilled promises from consolidation.
7. Implement and strengthen provisions of adopted plans and policies that protect the St. John's River, its tributaries, and the natural environment.
  8. Eliminate internal service charges and move toward a system of shared services.
  9. Follow the recommendation of the Pension Reform Task Force as to governance of the Police and Fire Pension Fund.

the term. Since the budget cycle (preparation in late spring, submission to Council early July, review in August, adoption in September) is based on tax assessment deadlines and state law, a change in election timing would permit greater understanding of the process prior to the first budget cycle of a term. The timing of the adoption of the annual actuarial report and assumptions by the Police and Fire Pension Board is also a major budget challenge at present. Each of these examples, and many more we uncovered, present opportunities for improvement.

Other recommendations that help to achieve greater efficiency and/or effectiveness will be identified with the letters EE.

6. **Consistency with the Intent & Goals of Consolidation:** In the 45 years since consolidation, laws, ordinances, rules, regulations, and practices have been adopted that are inconsistent with the intent and goals of consolidation. These departures should be examined to determine if they are necessary or appropriate deviations or if changes should be made to return to the structure and intent of voters when consolidation was adopted. Recommendations were made as to those identified, but other examples exist and all arms of local government should consider the impact of future decisions on consolidation. (Consolidation "C")

**Some of the recommendations designed to address this concern include:**

- i. The creation of special taxing districts, other than geographically limited Tax Increment Districts, are contrary to consolidation and should be approved only after other options have been exhausted.
- ii. The Charter should be amended to separate the Office of General Counsel from the Executive Branch, to clarify roles and responsibilities of Legislative Counsel and the General Counsel, to clarify appointment and confirmation processes, to provide a mechanism for removal, and to clarify other details of the function of the Office.
- iii. Thirteen votes should be required for the City Council to override a Mayoral budgetary line item veto.
- iv. A consistent dedicated percentage (to be determined by Council) of the annual capital improvement budget should be allocated to projects that complete infrastructure in urban areas, as promised at the time of consolidation.

Our study of the history of consolidation, and its underpinnings, goals and intent was enlightening and shaped further review. The content of the Blueprint for Improvement is largely unknown to current elected officials and administrators, yet clearly relevant to current decisions. It appears that the virtues of consolidation, and the details of the originally conceived structure, remained in the forefront of governmental decision-making and largely unchanged for the first 20 or 25 years after adoption. Since that time, there has been a gradual but significant departure from that structure and its goals. This review is an opportunity for renewed commitment and a reminder that the gradual creep toward pre-consolidation silos of authority creates its own set of problems.

One obvious example is the current referendum to create an independent library funding district. The Children's Commission, UF Health as operator of our public hospital, and a comprehensive park study commission have all similarly advocated for independent funding increments. Other examples concerned the appointment of the General Counsel and operation of the Office of

General Counsel, as well as separation of powers and checks and balance issues that surfaced in our review.

Finally, the promise of urban services and the assurance that no one would be taxed for services they did not receive was a major selling point of consolidation and the concept incorporated in the Charter in the distinction between Urban Service Districts and the General Service District. Yet, many neighborhoods still do not have basic public services, such as City water and sewer services, paved roads, and functioning storm water systems, and a renewed commitment to the promise of fundamental governmental services for all is in order.

As stated in the Blueprint:

*If we are to prosper as an economic area, as a community of the future, as individuals in pursuit of our goals in life we must insure that our core city is viable and able to speak to the world as a living testimony of our accomplishments. To settle for anything less will inevitably lead to a compounding of our community problems and the infliction of further personal hardships on our citizens as individuals.*

Other recommendations that help to achieve greater consistency with the intent and goals of Consolidation will be identified with the letter C.

- 7. Public Trust & Confidence in Government:** In the course of our review of the current structure and operation of consolidated government, we identified a number of Charter provisions, ordinances, rules, and regulations that are vague or should be updated to increase transparency, reflect current practice, and ultimately increase the public's trust in government. The restoration of public confidence in local government was a cornerstone of consolidation, and every effort must be made to achieve and maintain that goal. (Public Trust "PT")

**Some of the recommendations designed to address this concern include:**

- i. The Jacksonville Public Library should be allowed to retain, in their departmental budget, fines collected from their customers.
- ii. The City Council should establish by ordinance the scoring criteria for Capital Improvement Projects; the annual CIP should list the number of years a project has been on the list; CIP prioritization should occur in a public meeting and after an opportunity has been afforded to the public for input.
- iii. Article 19 Collective Bargaining has been superseded by state law and should be removed from the charter to avoid confusion and conflict with Chapter 447 Florida Statutes .

A major goal of consolidation was to reduce voter apathy, increase the ability of the electorate to pinpoint responsibility, and increase understanding of and confidence in local government. Unfortunately, voter turnout in local elections remains lower than hoped. Public confidence in local government is certainly higher than in the state or federal governments, but public trust and confidence remains a challenge.

Due to time constraints, the committee was unable to complete research on specific issues such as gravel road maintenance, alley maintenance, Better Jacksonville Plan projects, and infrastructure capital maintenance responsibilities. They obtained, but did not analyze, the terms of the transfer of water and sewer to JEA. These questions are worthy of further investigation and study by City Council.

**Recommendations:**

*Ordinance Code Change:*

1. Amend the Ordinance Code to require that a specified percentage of appropriated spending and authorized borrowing for the annual Capital Improvement Program budget be specifically used for projects in pre-consolidation urban areas that were promised but not delivered, such as roads, water lines, sewer lines, storm water drainage, and streetlights. (NE)(PI)
2. Amend the Ordinance Code to require appropriate independent authorities with responsibility for carrying out capital improvements projects in the pre-consolidated urban areas of the City to assess the unmet CIP needs in those areas and set aside an annual amount of their CIP budgets to address those unmet needs. (NE)(PI)

## Infrastructure

### Issue:

The promise of urban services and the assurance that no one would be taxed for services they did not receive was a major selling point of consolidation. The concept was incorporated in the Charter in the distinction between Urban Service Districts and the General Service District. Yet, many services remain incomplete today, especially in older, less affluent urban neighborhoods, and a renewed commitment is in order.

- Infrastructure in urban core neighborhoods is not being adequately maintained.
- In many older urban areas, water and sewer lines have not been installed, storm water management is inadequate to prevent flooding, and some roads remain unpaved contrary to promises of consolidation that these services would be provided.
- Who is responsible for installation of new or improved infrastructure? Who is responsible for maintenance and capital replacement projects? The City? JEA? The property owner? What were the terms under which water and sewer were transferred to JEA? As to roads, should we maintain gravel roads? Should the City maintain alleys?
- How should priorities be established going forward? How should these improvements be funded?
- What is the status of unfinished Better Jacksonville Plan projects? Are they included in the Capital Improvement Program plan? Should they be?

### Background:

As the Task Force investigated the needs of neighborhoods, it became clear that in many older neighborhoods that were part of the former city, promises were made to gain the residents' support for the consolidation of county and city governments. Included in these promises were paved roads, streetlights, water and sewer lines, and flood prevention. Today, there are miles of unpaved roads, hundreds if not thousands of homes and many businesses that do not have water lines available, and a similar number using septic tanks due to a lack of sewer service. Maintenance of infrastructure in older neighborhoods was also a concern. There are reports of sinking and deteriorating storm sewers and sanitary sewers in a number of urban areas. It is noteworthy that many of these neighborhoods have high minority populations and high rates of poverty. As we heard from representatives of JEA and the City, it was clear that neither took responsibility for fulfillment of these promises.

It should be mentioned that not all neighborhoods or individuals on wells and septic systems want to connect to JEA service lines. Whether for reasons of cost or preference, experience has shown that even when lines are available many property owners will not connect. And in some more rural areas, it makes no sense to extend service lines. In short, each neighborhood has a different set of priorities. In order to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach, but at the same time seeking to ensure promises to urban neighborhoods are finally kept, a standardized percentage of the Capital Improvement Program funds should be allocated on an annual basis for the purpose of completing projects that were promised as part of consolidation, but have yet to be delivered.