

**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
STATE OF FLORIDA
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**

THIS MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT (“MOA”) is made and entered into by and between the State of Florida, Department of Economic Opportunity (“DEO”), and The City of Freeport in Walton County (“City”). DEO and the City are sometimes referred to herein individually as a “Party” and collectively as “the Parties.”

I. Background and Purpose of MOA

- A. The purpose of this MOA is to document the terms and conditions of the implementation of the Northwest Rural Area of Opportunity (RAO), formerly the Northwest Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern (RACEC), designation.
- B. The Governor of Florida recognizes that successful rural communities are essential to the overall success of the State of Florida’s economy and quality of life, yet many rural communities struggle to maintain, support or enhance job creation activities and to generate revenues for critical government services.
- C. Florida’s Legislature also recognizes that rural communities continue to face extraordinary challenges in their efforts to significantly improve their economies, and as such, section 288.0656, Florida Statutes (F.S.), establishes the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) within the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) and authorizes the participation of State and regional organizations in this initiative. Paragraph 288.0656 (7)(a), F.S. (2015), provides for the designation of up to three Rural Areas of Opportunity (RAO’s) (formerly Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern (RACEC’s) under F.S., 1999-2013). RAO’s are rural communities that have been adversely affected by extraordinary economic events, severe or chronic distress, or a natural disaster or that present a unique economic development opportunity of regional impact.
- D. Pursuant to subsection 288.0656 (7), F.S., representatives of the State and regional agencies and organizations comprising the REDI met on January 16, 2015 and recommended the re-designation of the Northwest region composed of Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Wakulla, and Washington counties and the communities of the City of Freeport in Walton County. On July 8, 2015, Governor Rick Scott signed Executive Order 15-133 which re-designated the area for another five-year term with an expiration date of July 8, 2020.

II. The Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI)

- A. REDI is a proactive, multi-agency effort responsible for coordinating and focusing efforts and resources of State and regional agencies on problems which affect the fiscal, economic, and community viability of Florida's economically distressed rural communities.
- B. REDI works with local governments, community-based organizations, and private organizations on the growth and development of these communities to find ways to enhance the local economy and resolve issues while balancing local environmental and growth management needs.
- C. Participating REDI representatives:
 - 1. must have comprehensive knowledge of their agencies' functions, both regulatory and service in nature, and of the State's economic goals, policies, and programs;
 - 2. act as the primary point of contact for their agencies on issues and projects relating to economically distressed rural communities;
 - 3. ensure prompt and effective response to problems arising with regard to rural issues;
 - 4. work closely with other REDI representatives in the identification of opportunities for preferential awards of program funds and allowances, and waiver of program requirements, when necessary, to encourage and facilitate long-term private capital investment and job creation;
 - 5. review and evaluate statutes and rules for adverse impact on rural communities and the development of alternative proposals to mitigate that impact;
 - 6. undertake outreach, capacity-building, and other advocacy efforts to improve conditions in rural communities;
 - 7. ensure each district office or facility of their agencies is informed about REDI;
 - 8. provide assistance throughout their agencies in the implementation of REDI activities;
 - 9. recognize counties and communities designated as a RAO are eligible for a reduction or waiver of financial match of state grants and permit fees; and
 - 10. recognize designated RAO's are priority assignments for REDI, per paragraph 288.0656(7)(a), F.S.
- D. On a case-by-case basis, REDI may recommend to the Governor waivers of criteria, requirements or similar provisions of any economic development incentive. Such incentives shall include, but not be limited to:
 - 1. the Qualified Targeted Industry Tax Refund Program under section 288.106, F.S.,
 - 2. the Quick Response Training Program under section 288.047, F.S.,
 - 3. the WAGES Quick Response Training Program under subsection 288.047(8), F.S.,
 - 4. the Economic Development Transportation Fund under section 339.2821, F.S.,
 - 5. the Brownfield Bonus Tax Program under section 288.107, F.S., and
 - 6. the Rural Job Tax Credit Program under sections 212.098 and 220.1895, F.S.

- E. Paragraph 288.0656(7)(c), F.S., states: “each rural area of opportunity may designate catalyst projects, provided that each catalyst project is: specifically recommended by REDI, identified as a catalyst project by Enterprise Florida, Inc. [EFI], and confirmed as a catalyst project by the department [DEO]. All state agencies and departments shall use all available tools and resources to the extent permissible by law to promote the creation and development of each catalyst project and the development of catalyst sites.”
- F. REDI reviews the RAO designation and may recommend the designation of the area, counties, or municipalities be terminated or continued based upon performance under this MOA.

III. The Participating Community

- A. Pursuant to paragraph 288.0656(7)(b), F.S., and Executive Order 15-133, designation as a RAO shall be contingent upon the execution of a MOA between DEO and the governing bodies of the counties and the municipalities included within the area. Such MOAs shall specify the terms and conditions of the designations and the duties and responsibilities of the counties and municipalities.
- B. The City agrees that fulfillment of the following duties and responsibilities, as reasonably determined by REDI, are required for recommendation by REDI for continued designation as a RAO.
- C. The City shall:
 - 1. designate a specific contact person from among City elected or appointed officials to serve as a point of contact in all matters and activities relating to the Northwest RAO;
 - 2. designate a specific person from a non-profit organization actively engaged in economic development within the City, to serve as the as single point of contact to represent and provide input on all economic development matters and activities relating to the Northwest RAO, and to receive and process leads and referrals from EFI;
 - 3. include contact information for designees on Exhibit A, attached hereto, (these designees may be the same designee to serve as the representative to other similar organizations); the City shall inform DEO in writing by either mail or email of any changes to the specified persons within ten business days of the change;
 - 4. in order to help build knowledge and skillsets required to compete more effectively for job creating projects, ensure one or both of the designated representatives

participate in at least two economic development training events offered by DEO, EFI, FEDC, utility companies, and/or other state or national recognized economic development organizations during the term of this MOA; and

5. in order to facilitate the retention and expansion of existing businesses as well as the recruitment of new businesses, ensure one or both of the designated representatives:
 - a) work closely with the designated County point of contact to gather information on available buildings and sites for inclusion in statewide and regional databases, including but not limited to, those developed by EFI (www.enterpriseflorida.com/find-properties), Florida Power and Light, Duke Energy, or regional organizations such as Opportunity Florida and Florida's Great Northwest, and
 - b) work closely with the designated County point of contact to provide DEO with an overview and timeline of the City permitting process, plan approval and business licensing requirements within 180 days of the execution of this MOA.

IV. Implementation and Duration

- A. Pursuant to Executive Order #15-133, the designation of the Northwest RAO affecting the counties of Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Wakulla and Washington and the City of Freeport in Walton County shall be in effect for five years and will expire on July 8, 2020.
- B. REDI may recommend the RAO designation and this MOA be terminated or continued based on performance under this MOA.
- C. This MOA shall take effect immediately upon full and proper execution by all Parties, and supersedes and replaces any and all previous such RACEC and RAO agreement(s) between the Parties.
- D. This MOA shall expire on July 8, 2020 unless terminated earlier.
- E. Both Parties shall review this MOA annually. If revisions are needed, notification shall be given to both Parties in writing of the specific changes desired with the proposed amendment language and the reasons for the revisions. With the mutual consent of both Parties, the proposed changes shall become effective when both Parties have duly executed an amendment to this MOA.
- F. The City may terminate this MOA at any time upon written notice to DEO.
- G. Designation as a RAO is, by statute and Executive Order, contingent upon execution of a MOA between the Parties. REDI shall recommend the RAO designation be

terminated if this MOA is not duly executed or if this MOA is terminated and another MOA is not timely and duly executed in its place.

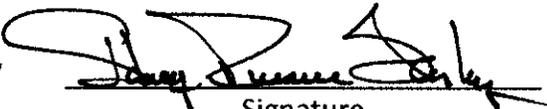
V. EXECUTION

I have read the above MOA and the Exhibit thereto and understand each section and paragraph.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, and in consideration of the mutual covenants set forth above and in the Exhibit hereto, the Parties have caused to be executed this MOA by their undersigned officials duly authorized.

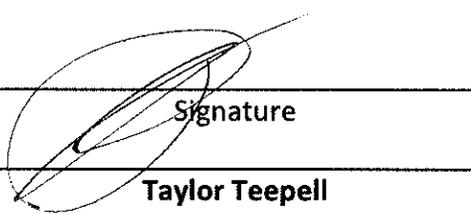
CITY OF FREEPORT

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

By 
Signature

Sidney R. Barley
Title Mayor

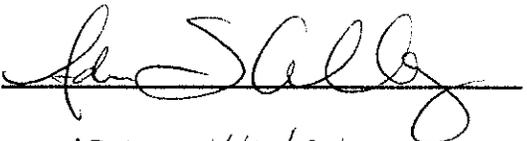
Mayor
Date 10-31-16

By 
Signature

Taylor Teepell
Title Director,
Division of Community
Development
Date 11/16/16

Approved as to form and legal sufficiency, subject only to full and proper execution by the Parties.

**OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**

By: 
Approved Date: 11/16/2016