



A Review of Northeast Florida's Recovery from Hurricane Irma, 2017-2021

On September 11, 2017, Hurricane Irma struck Northeast Florida. Along its path it knocked out power to more than half of JEA customers and caused flooding on a scale that the city has not seen in more than half a century, surpassing what was experienced during Hurricane Dora in 1964. It left thousands of homes along the St. Johns River and its many tributaries damaged and, in many cases, uninhabitable. More than 118,000 households registered for assistance with FEMA in Duval and Nassau counties. Nearly 1 in 3 households was substantially impacted by the storm.

The Formation of the NFLTRO

In response to the devastation Irma left behind, the **Northeast Florida Long Term Recovery Organization (NFLTRO)** was created in December of 2017 to support faith-based, non-profit, governmental, business and other community-based organizations working toward providing a coordinated long-term recovery effort for those Duval and Nassau County residents severely impacted by the storm, the first such initiative of its kind in Northeast Florida.

Governed by a newly minted Board and bylaws and with the Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida, Inc., serving as its fiscal sponsor, the essential role of the NFLTRO at the outset was to serve as a collaborative for the more than 30 local agencies committed to working together to assist in long term recovery. Its overarching goal was to reduce the occurrence of duplicated services so as to effectively and expediently assist individuals and families in restoring their homes and lives. All participating agencies agreed to a Participating Agency Agreement and contributed constructively in the NFLTRO and honor its mission and guiding principles.

In the summer of 2018, the NFLTRO received matching grants from the **American Red Cross** and **Volunteer Florida** to hire Raelyn Means as full-time administrator to coordinate the efforts of the long-term recovery partners. Committees and a regular meeting cadence were established, and the recovery effort moved forward.

Early Accomplishments

Because FEMA waived a governmental assessment of the overall damage, the NFLTRO in May 2018 engaged **World Renew Disaster Response Services**, an international aid organization with expertise in response and recovery efforts, to conduct a full needs assessment to understand the overall impact of the storm and the remaining long-term recovery needs that existed. World Renew conducted 211 household surveys, resulting in an estimated recovery cost of \$3,912,538, which was likely only a fraction of the actual need given the number of FEMA registrations. The majority of these costs were related to rebuilding and repair.

During that same timeframe, **Endeavors**, a disaster case management organization, was awarded a contract by **Volunteer Florida** to engage twenty case managers to assist families in Northeast Florida that had remaining unmet needs from the storm. The scope of their assistance ranged from working to secure funds via grants and insurance payouts to redirecting families to the appropriate NFLTRO agencies for repairs.

Highlights of the first year in recovery included the following:

- Numerous outreach events to reach individuals in need of assistance in conjunction with the needs assessment survey World Renew Disaster Response Services conducted.
- NFLTRO partners, including Builders Care, Catholic Charities, Endeavors, Jewish Community & Family Services, Salvation Army, Three Rivers Legal Services, and others, assisted more than 4,200 families in securing the necessary resources to make their homes livable again.
- 7,346 volunteer hours contributed by groups including AmeriCorps, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and Presbyterian Social Ministries, resulting in the repair of an additional 123 homes in 2018, with more than 2,100 volunteer hours contributed in 2019.
- More than 530 households with property declared by FEMA as major damage or destroyed, received \$1.6 million cash assistance from the American Red Cross individual assistance program.

The Creation of the Unmet Needs Roundtable

Getting help would be the best thing in the world. It would be a weight lifted off everybody. – Sandrener W., Single mother of 5. Cost of Repairs: \$21,600

For individuals with the financial means and/or flood insurance policies recovery came relatively quickly. However, not all families were so fortunate. Many low to moderate income households were either uninsured or underinsured, with limited finances and little to no savings. Having exhausted all other means of assistance for these families the NFLTRO established the Unmet Needs

Roundtable (UNR), made up of members of the NFLTRO's Executive Committee, with the goal of addressing the needs of the vulnerable populations identified via the needs-assessment process established by the Case Management Committee. They identified the following groups as a priority:

- Households with residents over 60 years of age
- Households with persons with disabilities
- Low income generally defined as 200% of federal poverty level
- Households with minors
- Unemployed due to disaster

While assistance was available to any vulnerable household in Duval or Nassau Counties identified by Endeavors, the majority of unmet needs were found in Jacksonville's Urban Core.

- 57% Urban Core
- 13% Greater Arlington
- 11% Nassau County
- 9% Outer Rim
- 6% Southwest
- 2% Beaches
- 2% Southeast

Endeavors, as the primary case manager, assessed the home damage and worked with its Construction Manager to estimate repair costs, which were included in the case presented to the Unmet Needs Roundtable. Each case was reviewed by NFLTRO's Case Management Committee and if there were not other resources available to make the repairs, the case was considered by the members of the Unmet Needs Roundtable. Following approval by the UNR, licensed and insured local contractors were

engaged to accomplish the work under the supervision of the construction manager. The NFLTRO's Construction Committee developed standards and an oversight process to ensure work performed meets the FEMA habitability standard of a safe, sanitary and functional condition. We want to recognize the outstanding efforts of our four construction management organizations: **Grace and Truth Community Development Corporation, Metro North Community Development Corporation, Nassau Public Private Partnership, and Northwest Jacksonville Community Development Corporation.** These neighborhood-based organizations have often gone above and beyond to facilitate repairs for the impacted households and now have established a relationship with the households should needs arise in the future.

In the first year of the Unmet Needs Roundtable, 63 families in Duval and Nassau Counties who had no other resources benefited from home repairs, making their homes safe, sanitary and secure. The average cost of repair had been \$14,900. Additionally, the following demographics are representative of the families served:

- Average Age of Primary Homeowner: 68 years old (70% over 60)
- Average Household Size: 1.91 (over half live alone)
- Average Annual Income: \$17,609
- % with a documented medical need or disability: 45%

When it started raining, it brought tears to my eyes because there was no water coming inside. Putting that roof on was better than if I had won the lottery! --Harold L., 71 years old, Jacksonville. Cost of Repairs: \$17,724

This work was accomplished through local donations as well as the Salvation Army statewide recovery program, which was able to pay contractors directly up to \$15,000 per home repair case. Local funding was leveraged with the Salvation Army's \$513,000 financial investment for a total of \$899,479.16 in individual home repair recovery costs.

In May 2020, the NFLTRO was awarded a significant grant from Volunteer Florida's Florida Disaster Fund to continue the work of the Unmet Needs Roundtable. The grant, which required a 50% local match, leveraged \$485,000 to serve 38 more families, bringing the UNR's total number served to 101 households, at a community investment of \$1.4 million.

The NFLTRO, through its Unmet Needs Roundtable as well as through the work of several partners who directly assisted families, invested more than \$3.4 million into the recovery of Hurricane Irma survivors.

Hear directly from homeowners and learn more about our efforts in this short video:

[Help our Neighbors in Need \(duvaldisasterrecovery.org\)](https://duvaldisasterrecovery.org)

UNR Supporters

The UNR home repair program set a goal to serve 100 families prior to sunsetting the recovery effort. This was a bold goal but we are pleased that we will actually exceed it this summer (2021). This would not be possible without the generous support of numerous corporations, financial institutions, and charitable organizations.

I thank you all for coming and trying to help me out. It's a blessing. I didn't think anyone around here cares, but I know you all care. --James J., 88 years old, Korean war veteran. Cost of Repairs: \$15,940

American Red Cross
Bank of America
bestbet

Community First Credit Union
Community Foundation of Northeast Florida

Edna Sproull Williams Foundation
Florida Blue
Florida Capital Bank
Gary Chartrand
Iberia Bank
Mandarin Rotary
Presbyterian Disaster Assistance
Dr. Todd Sack

Smith, Hulsey & Busey
United Way of Northeast Florida
Volunteer Florida Florida Disaster Fund
VyStar Credit Union
Wayne and Delores Weaver
Week of Compassion
Wells Fargo

Recognition

As further testament to the efficacy of our network, the NFLTRO was awarded the **2019 Local Focus Lasting Impact™ Collective Power Award**, given to an unstoppable collaborative team of local nonprofits, funders, government, business, and/or community leaders that have gone beyond serving a population and implemented systemic and sustainable improvements that solved big problems. In January 2020, the NFLTRO received the **Regional Award for Excellence in Quality of Life** from the Northeast Florida Regional Council. Being selected for both of these awards was a result of the incredible work of our partner organizations as they address the unmet needs of Hurricane Irma survivors.

The Future of Response and Recovery

The NFLTRO's experience and continued success in facilitating recovery is a prime example of the importance of a well-coordinated disaster network. Although the NFLTRO was created in 2017 to respond specifically to Irma, leaders have appreciated the need to establish a permanent year-round collaboration among government, social service agencies and businesses to promote mitigation and preparedness activities, efficiently respond to all hazards and establish long term recovery programs. Building on the trust and cooperation among NFLTRO organizations, and consistent with emergency management best practices, the **Duval COAD (Community Organizations Active in Disaster)** was formed. The initial member organizations of the Duval COAD formally approved Bylaws on June 17, 2020 and an Executive Committee and Officers on July 1, 2020. The Duval COAD is a coalition of government, nonprofits and businesses that brings hope and fosters more effective preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery for Duval County residents in times of disaster. The NFLTRO by joint resolution became a committee of the Duval COAD, and future long-term recovery efforts will be coordinated through the COAD. Disaster services take coordination, money and time, and the hope with any disaster is that tragedy and hardships can be transformed into opportunities for neighborhood investment and more resilient and livable communities.

NFLTRO Participating Agencies

A community's recovery from a disaster is not possible without the efforts of many individuals and organizations. We are especially grateful to Will Prioleau and his team of twenty case managers at Endeavors, who worked with hundreds of families not only here in Jacksonville, but also in numerous surrounding counties. We also thank the many partners, individuals, and supporters who have dedicated their time and energy toward ensuring families were able to regain a safe, secure home.

Ability Housing
American Red Cross of Northeast Florida
Baptist Health

Barnabas Center
Catholic Charities
Clay SafetyNet Alliance

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Florida
ElderSource
Endeavors
Family Foundations of Northeast Florida, Inc.
Feeding Northeast Florida
Florida Conference United Methodist Church
Florida Department of Children & Families
FL Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Network
Grace and Truth CDC
Habitat for Humanity of Jacksonville, Inc.
Hunger Fight
Jax Metro/Self-Help Credit Union
Jessie Ball duPont Fund
Jewish Family & Community Services, Inc.
LISC Jacksonville
Metro North CDC
Modular Life Solutions

Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida
Northeast Florida Builders Association
Builders Care Inc.
Northwest Jacksonville CDC
Presbyterian Social Ministries
Rotary District 6970
St. Paul AME Disaster Relief Ministry
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day
Saints, Jacksonville East Stake
The Community Foundation for Northeast FL
The Elevated Studio, Inc.
The Independent Resource Living Center
The Salvation Army of Northeast Florida
Three Rivers Legal Services
Transforming Communities CDC
United Way of Northeast Florida
Wealth Watchers, Inc.

NFLTRO Executive Committee

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|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Michael Boylan, Chair | John Sapora, Vice-Chair |
| Angie Leatherbury, Secretary | Jim Pellot, Treasurer* |
| Cari Ladd, At-Large | Thomas Larson, At-Large |

Past Members: Deirdre Conner, Michelle Foster, Anita Hassell, Steve Kelley, Liz Lawrence, Elizabeth Lufrano, Karen Millard, Janet Owens, Paul Tutwiler

Staff: Raelyn Means, Administrator

Jim Pellot passed away February 24, 2021. The Jacksonville City Council’s Special Committee on Resiliency offered the following tribute to him as a part of its final, published report.

One individual who would truly appreciate the collaborative and forward-thinking nature of this work was Jim Pellot. Jim was a volunteer extraordinaire when it came to disaster assistance. For many years he played a major role in the work of the Florida Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Network where he organized and led many mission trips to rebuild homes in communities throughout the state, devastated by disaster. Most recently, until his passing, he served as the Treasurer of the Northeast Florida Long Term Recovery Organization. The NFLTRO was established in December 2017 to support faith-based, non-profit, governmental, business and other community-based organizations working toward providing a coordinated long-term recovery effort in response to Hurricane Irma. Through its efforts it successfully assisted more than 4,200 families in securing the necessary resources and or repairs to make their homes livable again. While never one to seek recognition or acclaim for his tireless efforts I believe he would be deeply humbled by the individual acknowledgement of being just one of many doing this kind of work.

*Michael Boylan
Council Member (District 6)*