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Gadsden County – Sustainable Development Plan

The development of a comprehensive sustainability plan for economic development of Gadsden County. This plan includes goals, objectives, strategies, and metrics for enhancing economic, social, and environmental sustainability.



01. Introduction

Gadsden County is located in North Florida, with a county seat in Quincy and six municipalities. It spans over 508 square miles and has a population of 43,826 (as of 2020 Census). Gadsden County is the only majority (over 50%) African-American county in Florida.

With the Trade, Transportation, and Utilities industry being the largest contributor to its employment sector, the county's current demographical and economical challenges underscores the critical need for sustainable development.

02. Objective

This project aims to develop a sustainability plan for economic development in Gadsden County, in cooperation with the Apalachee Regional Planning Council, to preserve natural resources, celebrate cultural diversity, support local economy, and build resilience for future generations.

References

Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Division of Community Development. (2015). Gadsden County Competitive Florida Asset Mapping Report.

Apalachee Regional Planning Council. (2022). Apalachee Regional Economic Development Strategy 2022-2027. Retrieved from <https://www.arpc.org/apalachee-ceds>

Florida Department of Environmental Protection. (2023). Annual Assessment of Florida's Conservation Lands: 2023 Edition, Chapter 1.

03. Methodology

The project methodology involves collecting comprehensive background information about Gadsden County to assess its sustainability. Stakeholder engagement ensures that the sustainability plan reflects community needs, while SMART goals are developed to address identified challenges. Implementation planning and performance monitoring are key components to track progress towards sustainability goals.

- Literature review
- Data Analysis
- Strategy Evaluation
- Community Meetings

04. Results/Findings

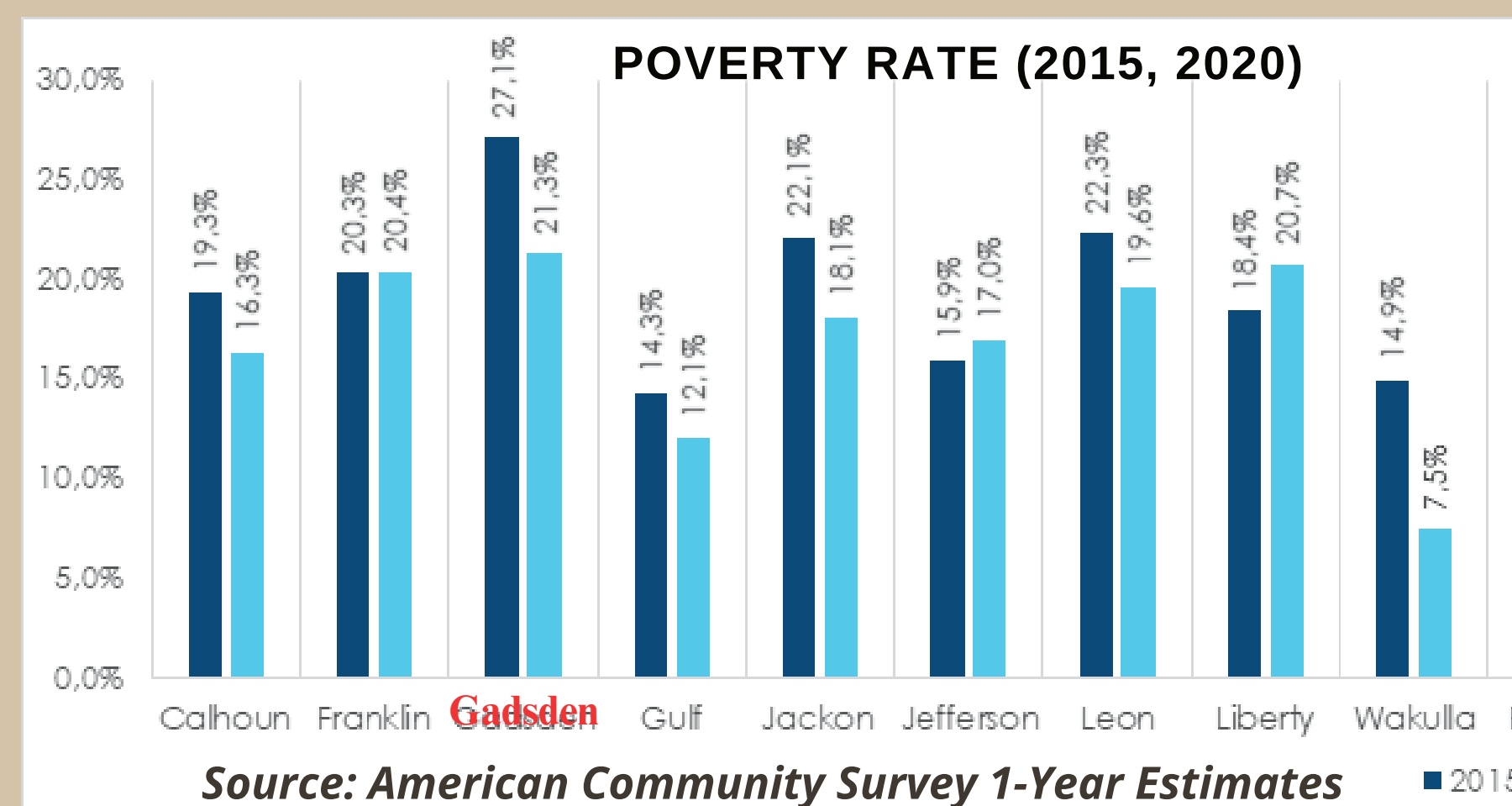
- Not enough partnership between public entities and the community
- Potential for larger educational institutions like FSU to partner with the county
- Need for the agriculture to use sustainable farming practices
- Need of a state support to local businesses
- A lot of great initiatives proposed, they need to be further implemented and promoted.
- Disaster resiliency, preparedness, response, and recovery initiatives



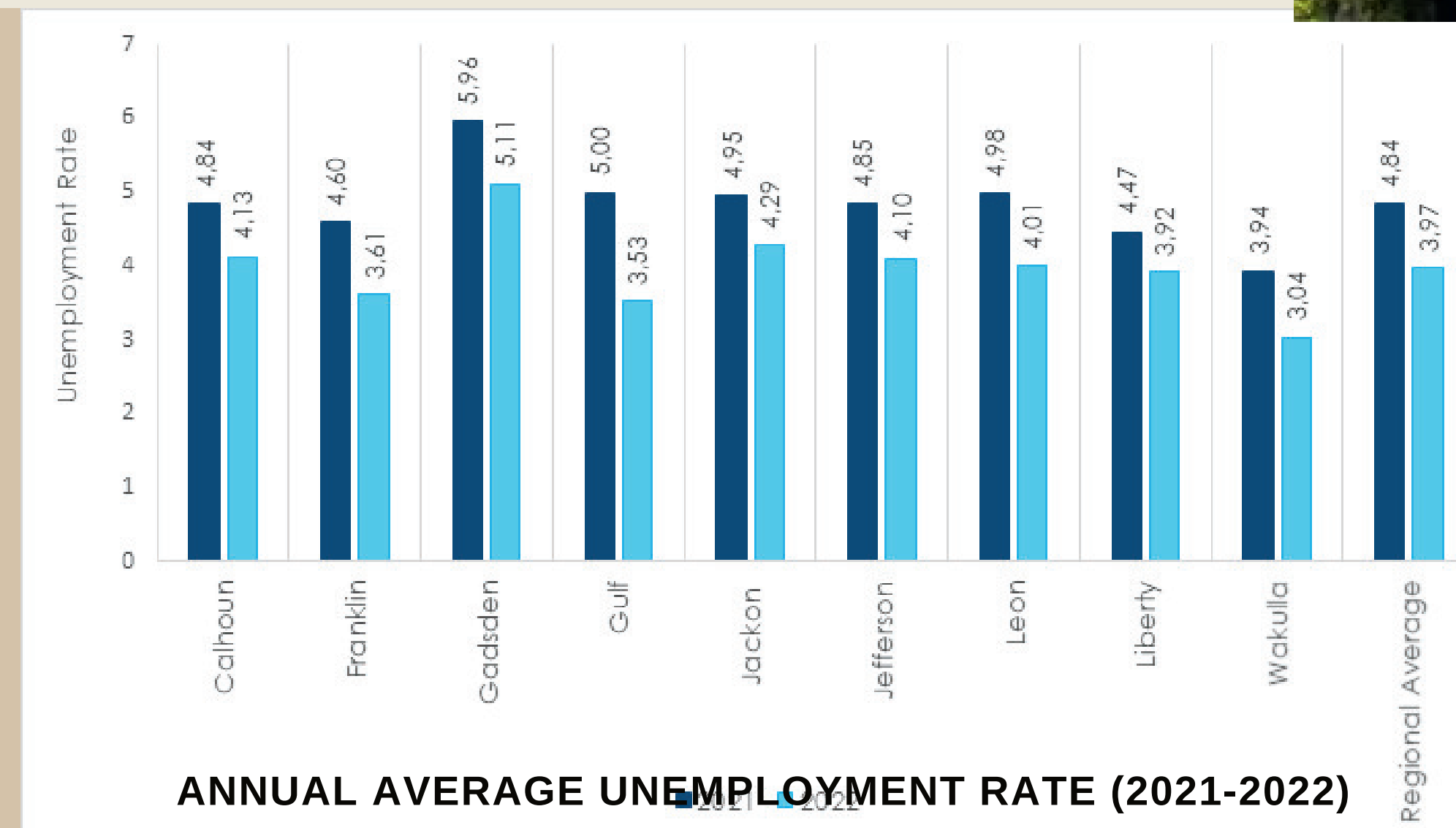
Apalachicola River, Florida

05. Analysis

Analysis of the current state of sustainability in the county based on the main environmental, social, and economic indicators reveals a significant deviation in the social aspect of sustainable development. Specifically, Gadsden County has the highest **poverty rate** and **unemployment rate** (2021-2022), as well as **the lowest school district grades** and economic well-being index and innovation index among all other counties in the Apalachee region.



Among the economic indicators, the high level of unemployment and the declining population rate are of interest, resulting in a reduction in the workforce. This indicates that primary efforts need to be directed towards maintaining these aspects of sustainable development.



ECONOMIC WELL-BEING INDEX RANKING (2022)

The Economic Well-Being Index is a subset of the Innovation Index, which focuses on aspects of a local economy that are tied to quality of life and sustainability. Gadsden County has the worst scores in the Apalachee Region.

| County | Score | Median | Rank of 3110 |
|------------------|-------|--------|--------------|
| Calhoun | 122.2 | 132 | 2108 |
| Franklin | 132.4 | 132 | 1474 |
| Gadsden | 108.2 | 132 | 2802 |
| Gulf | 151.6 | 132 | 376 |
| Jackson | 118.2 | 132 | 2323 |
| Jefferson | 132.8 | 132 | 1448 |
| Leon | 139.1 | 132 | 1054 |
| Liberty | 124.7 | 132 | 1966 |
| Wakulla | 153.8 | 132 | 286 |
| Apalachee Region | 110.1 | | |

Source: StatsAmerica

06. Conclusion

Given Gadsden County's socioeconomic challenges, the sustainability plan should focus on tackling disparities through strategies like targeted workforce development, small business support, and education investments. By addressing regional challenges such as industry diversification and infrastructure resilience, the plan can boost economic resilience in Gadsden County and the Apalachee region.

