



# ASSISTANT PLANNING DIRECTOR

## NASSAU COUNTY, FLORIDA

EXECUTIVE  
RECRUITMENT  
PROVIDED BY



# THE COMMUNITY

Tucked into Florida's northeast corner and hugging the Atlantic Ocean along Interstate 95 north of Jacksonville, Nassau County's 726 square miles form the eastern gateway to the Sunshine State.

From pristine beaches and natural preserves to historic landmarks and first-class amenities, the community of over 101,500 residents is among the fastest-growing counties in the country — and it's no surprise. Through land use planning, zoning regulations, and conservation efforts, the county balances growth with environmental stewardship, creating livable communities and enhancing the quality of life for its residents.

Nassau County is a nature lover's paradise, offering 13 miles of pristine beaches, numerous nature trails, and multi-use paths. The county also boasts hundreds of miles of rivers, including the St. Marys, Amelia, and Nassau and their related tributaries. Visitors can explore the historic downtown Fernandina Beach and enjoy award-winning golf courses. Residents have easy access to several state parks — Fort Clinch, Amelia Island, Four Creeks, Ralph E. Simmons, Big Talbot Island, and Little Talbot Island — and landmarks like American Beach, Huguenot Memorial Park, and Cary State Forest. The community has also prioritized creating and preserving green spaces; in 2023 alone, acquisition and development agreements for over 550 acres of public parks were approved.

As one of the oldest counties in Florida, Nassau's rich history stretches back to 1824. Numerous archaeological sites in the county record evidence of prehistoric communities — and Nassau was the site of early European contact, dating to 1562 with the arrival of the French on present-day Amelia Island. The County has seen occupation by the French, English, Spanish, and Americans, as well as action during the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, and local history buffs will enjoy visits to the Amelia Island Museum of History, Amelia Island Lighthouse, and Timucuan Ecological and Historical Preserve.

There are plenty of modern-day pleasures, too. Downtown Fernandina, St. Johns Town Center, San Marco Historic District, and the Shoppes of Avondale offer a mix of big-name brands and local boutiques and standout dining destinations like The Salty Pelican, Espana, The Patio at 5th and Ash, Beech Street Grill, Coast, David's Restaurant, and Salt serve up delicious food and great ambiance. The community also loves getting together to celebrate; popular events include the Annual Shrimp Festival, Amelia Concours d'Elegance, Railroad Days, the Dickens on Center Victorian-inspired holiday festival, and the Northeast Florida Fair.

Proximity to Jacksonville, St. Augustine, and Orlando to the south and Savannah and Charleston to the north provides fantastic cultural opportunities, from zoos, museums, and arboretums to historic churches, professional sports venues, performing arts centers, and airports. Home to just three incorporated municipalities — Fernandina Beach, Hilliard, and Callahan — the needs of the majority of the community's unincorporated areas are the focus for Nassau County.

Area families are well served by the A-rated Nassau County School District, providing K-12 instruction to over 12,600 students across 16 campuses, and private educational options include Amelia Island Montessori School, Faith Christian Academy, Fernandina Beach Christian Academy, St. Michael Academy, The Ogburn School, and Lighthouse Christian School. Nearby higher educational facilities include Florida State College at Jacksonville, University of North Florida, Jacksonville University, Southeastern University, Edward Waters College, Columbia College, Barry University, Keiser University, Chamberlain University, and Webster University.

Medical care is provided by Baptist Medical Center Nassau, which offers a full spectrum of in- and out-patient services and 24-hour emergency care to coastal communities in Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia, as well as UF Health at Wildlight, with additional facilities on the way.

Nassau's median household income is \$90,838, and housing options run from a median-priced mobile home for \$213,500 to a single-family home at \$450,000 or a condo at \$623,000



# GOVERNANCE & ORGANIZATION

A non-charter county with a commission-manager form of government, Nassau County's governing authority is the five-member Nassau County Board of Commissioners. The County is divided into five districts, and elections are held every two years, with commissioners elected at large and serving four-year staggered terms. The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Board are elected by the Board annually.

The Board employs a staff of 485 and appoints a County Attorney and County Manager. Other elected officials include the Property Appraiser, Supervisor of Elections, Sheriff, Tax Collector, and Clerk of Courts.

County Manager Taco Pope was appointed in 2020, having previously served Nassau County for almost 15 years in various posts, including Assistant County Manager, Planning & Economic Opportunity Director, Planning Director, and Community Planner. He recruited Marshall Eyerman in the spring of 2021 as Assistant County Manager and Robert Companion, P.E., in the spring of 2022 as Deputy County Manager.

The County's annual budget of approximately \$479 million is supported by an ad valorem millage tax rate of 9.2927, excluding special taxing districts. The organization's employees provide an array of municipal services, with approximately two-thirds of the workforce covered by collective bargaining agreements in the Fire-Rescue and various labor positions.

*Eastern Gateway to the Sunshine State*

## NASSAU COUNTY MISSION

Nassau County will foster the highest quality of life possible for its citizens through a responsive and open government. It will provide services that are effective, in an economical and efficient manner, that not only meet but exceed the expectations of the people of Nassau County.

## TOP EMPLOYERS

Nassau County School District

The Omni Amelia Island

Nassau County Government

The Ritz Carlton Amelia Island

West Rock

Baptist Medical Center Nassau

Federal Aviation Administration

Rayonier Advanced Materials

City of Fernandina Beach

White Oak Conservation



# VISION 2050

Nassau County is in the midst of an 18-month process to bring together county leaders, residents, businesses, and other stakeholders to help define the community's future. The effort seeks to:

- *Boost community pride* by identifying and celebrating the unique history and culture of Nassau County, preserving historic landmarks and sites, and promoting arts, culture, and traditions.
- *Enhance resiliency* by protecting the community's rich supply of natural resources and county assets and developing a comprehensive approach to growth management.
- *Improve accessibility and mobility* throughout the county by evaluating roadway safety and needs, envisioning future networks, and enhancing multimodal access for residents and visitors.
- *Foster community building* by planning for growth that enhances quality of life and community character while supporting prosperity and economic advancement.

## ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT

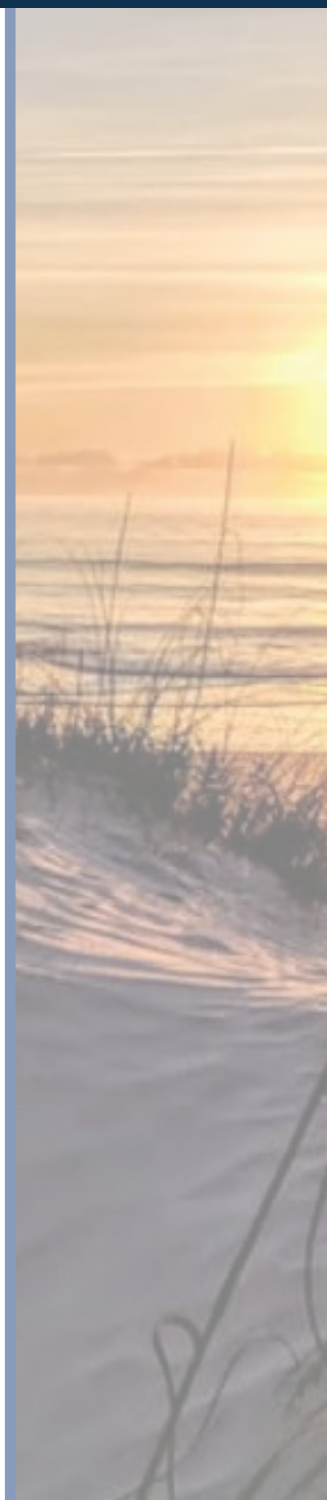
With a team of 10 employees and an annual budget of approximately \$1.4 million, the Planning Department provides technical planning support to the Board of County Commissioners, County Manager, and other County departments; performs the daily operations associated with the implementation of the Land Development Code and Comprehensive Plan and serves as the point of entry for site plan review and other applications for development orders; and encourages the provision of capital infrastructure required to accommodate new growth.

The Planning Department is led by Elizabeth Backe, AICP. Director Backe combines servant leadership qualities, with a strong technical skill set that has been sharpened through her experience working in Hillsborough County (Tampa), Gaithersburg, Maryland, and most recently as the Director of Planning and Transportation at the Southern Georgia Regional Commission where she provided professional planning leadership for 18 counties. Director Backe has the passion, drive and knowledge to inspire experienced planners, challenge the technically savvy, and nurture young planners to be the next cohort of strong professional planners that take leadership positions in the County.

Department staff also maintain a demographic profile of Nassau County; provide information on the County's development standards and procedures to developers, investors, and the general public; and liaise with advisory boards, governmental agencies, and the private sector to position the County to capitalize on economic development opportunities in keeping with the desired quality of life. In addition to the Board of County Commissioners, the team works closely with the Planning and Zoning Board, Conditional Use and Variance Board, Economic Development Board, Amelia Island Tree Commission, and Affordable Housing Advisory Committee.

### VISION 2032 STATEMENT

Nassau County is committed to managing growth and creating sustainable economic development in a way that maintains and improves the quality of life and unique character of the communities by utilizing its strengths – the people, the abundance of unspoiled natural resources, and its strategic location as the “Eastern Gateway to Florida.”



# RECENT ACCOLADES

The successful candidates will join an award-winning Planning Department. Recent honors include:

**State Award for ‘Preservation Communications/Media’ for Historic Preservation**

Florida Trust for Historic Preservation-2024  
Citizen’s Guide to Preserving Historic Places in Nassau County

**Regional Award for Excellence in Affordable Housing**

Northeast Florida Regional Council-2023  
Tiny Home Development Program

**State ‘Award of Excellence’ for Best Practices**

American Planning Association, Florida Chapter-2022  
Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan

**State ‘Award of Merit’ in Neighborhood Planning**

American Planning Association, Florida Chapter-2022  
Timber to Tides Initiative (SR200/A1A Corridor Master Plan)

**Regional Award for ‘Partner of the Year’**

North Florida Land Trust-2022  
Conservation Land Acquisition and Management (CLAM) Program

**Regional Award for Excellence in Community Engagement**

Florida Planning & Zoning Association-2022  
American Beach Cultural Heritage Enhancement Plan

**Regional Award for Excellence in Environmental/Natural Resources**

Florida Planning & Zoning Association-2022  
Western Nassau Heritage Preservation Project

**Regional Outstanding Public Impact Award Florida**

Planning & Zoning Association-2022  
Westside Regional Park

**State Award for Outstanding Sustainability Project**

Florida Planning & Zoning Association-2021  
Timber to Tides Initiative (SR200/A1A Corridor Master Plan)

**Regional Award for Excellence in Planning & Growth Management**

Northeast Florida Regional Council-2021  
Timber to Tides Initiative (SR200/A1A Corridor Master Plan)

**Regional Award for Excellence in Environmental Stewardship**

Northeast Florida Regional Council-2020  
Conservation Land Acquisition & Management Program

**Regional Award for Excellence in Planning & Growth Management**

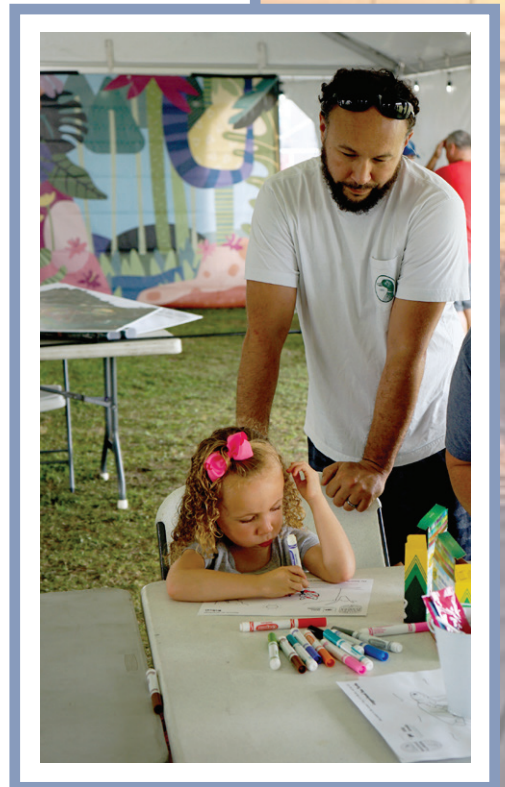
Northeast Florida Regional Council-2020  
Western Nassau Heritage Preservation Project (WNHP)

**Regional Award for Excellence in Community Engagement**

Florida Planning & Zoning Association-2019  
Western Nassau Heritage Preservation Project (WNHP)

**State ‘Award of Merit’ for Best Practices in Community Planning**

American Planning Association, Florida Chapter-2018  
William Burgess Mixed Use Activity District (WBD)

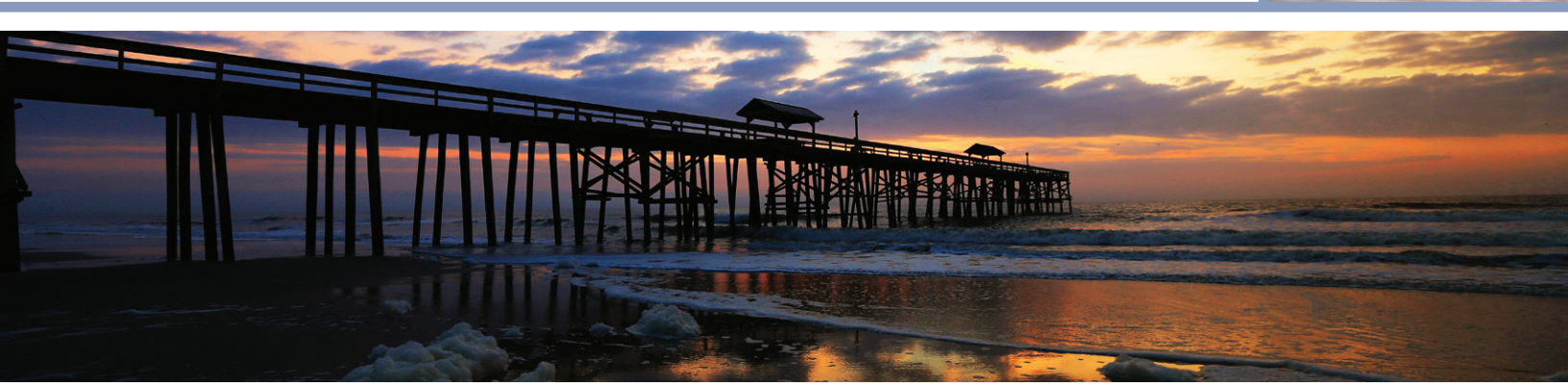
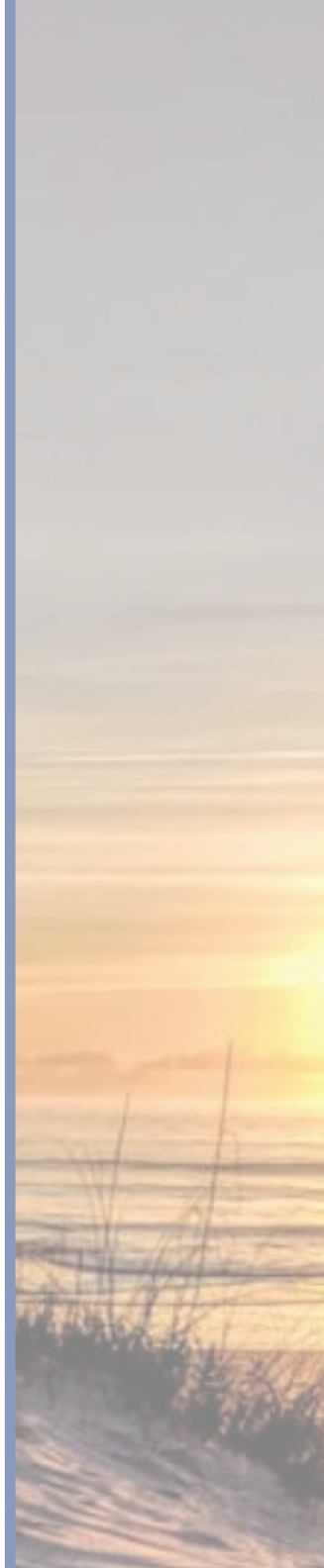


## ABOUT THE POSITION

Under the direction of the Planning Director, the Assistant Planning Director is responsible for a wide range of policy initiatives and the daily operations of the Planning Department, supervising a team of professionals supporting the Planning and Zoning Board, Conditional Use and Variance Board, Economic Development Board, and Board of County Commissioners.

The role handles researching, analyzing, and drafting policy with broad implications to the County's Code of Ordinances and Comprehensive Plan; responding to policy initiatives by local municipalities, regional/metropolitan bodies and State agencies/districts; researching and analyzing legislative initiatives at both the local and State level; assisting in project management of both current and long-range plans and other policy matters as directed by the Planning Director; and helping bridge the gap between planning theory, policy creation, and implementation. Other essential duties include:

- Conducting planning studies to address relevant issues and standards and recommending updates/revisions of regulations and the requirements of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Assisting in the processing and management of development-related applications submitted in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code of Nassau County, including the review and analysis of land development proposals, site plans, plats, engineering plans, comprehensive plan amendments, rezonings and the research and preparation of reports and memoranda for consideration by applicable boards and committees
- Recommending new and revised policies, codes, ordinances, and regulations and preparing draft ordinances and amendments to ordinances and standards.
- Coordinating public outreach initiatives and community engagement and proactively nurturing public participation and grassroots consensus building.
- Networking with local, regional, state, and national partners to further the goals and objectives of Nassau County and updating local policy to match best practices in a wide variety of subject areas.
- Helping facilitate the Development Review Committee, including project review, meeting with designers and property owners, and performing the requisite administrative tasks.
- Providing policy guidance to County boards and other County and municipal staff in preparing legislation, regulations, and other documents.
- Coordinating planning efforts with consulting firms as requested and managing consultants, ensuring quality production of commissioned studies and reports.
- Providing the NFIP-CRS Coordinator with expert policy advice and drafting policies to implement and strengthen floodplain management and resiliency within Nassau County.
- Preparing and administering various grants related to Planning Department activities.
- Acting in an executive capacity in the absence of the director.



# OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

The greatest challenge facing Nassau County is also the County's greatest opportunity: growth. Nassau is the 46th fastest-growing county in the country, and the Florida Bureau of Economic and Business Research predicts it will be the sixth fastest-growing county in the State of Florida by 2035, with a projected population of over 148,000.

In addition, according to Lightcast's 2022 Talent Attraction Scorecard, Nassau County ranked #1 in the Nation for Net Migration and Talent Attraction for counties with a population of less than 100,000. Nassau County has worked diligently with local and regional partners as part of the Jacksonville Metro Area to position itself as an economic powerhouse of the future, and high-profile projects underway include Wildlight and its commerce park, Crawford Diamond Industrial Park, and two major medical facilities.

Leading the nation in talent attraction is a key indicator of the community's potential, and the Planning Department plays a critical role in improving Nassau's competitiveness on a national and global scale.

Other opportunities and challenges these positions will enjoy in the years ahead include:

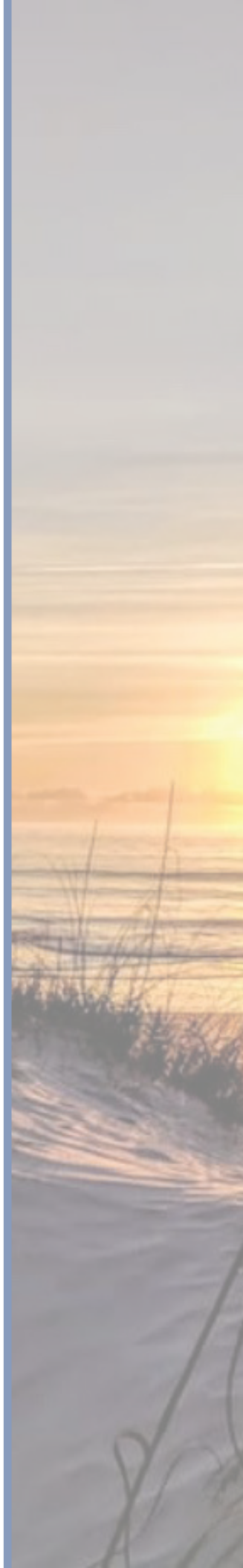
*Culture of Excellence and Support of Planning:* Over the past several years, Nassau County has been recognized in the Northeast Florida Region and across the State of Florida as a leader in public sector planning. Nassau County offers an energetic, high-capacity, proactive, forward-leaning urban planning professional the opportunity to engage in meaningful work. The culture of excellence is facilitated through strong support from the community, elected officials, and the County's executive management team.

*Implementation of Award-Winning Plans:* Since 2018, Nassau County has executed several forward-leaning planning initiatives. Incoming Planning Department staff will have the opportunity to help implement several award-winning master plans, including a 24,000-acre Florida Community Planning Act (2011) Sector Plan/Stewardship District, one of a half-dozen in the State of Florida. Plans and projects in their implementation phase include:

- Conservation Land Acquisition and Management (CLAM) Program
- Parks, Recreation, & Open Space Master Plan (PROSMP)
- Timber to Tides Initiative (SR200/A1A Corridor Master Plan)
- Countywide Mobility Plan
- American Beach Community Master Plan
- East Nassau Community Planning Area Sector Plan and Stewardship District
- William Burgess District Context and Connectivity Blueprint
- Western Nassau Heritage Preservation Project and Community Vision Plan
- The Prosper Nassau Initiative and the Nassau Prosperity Alliance
- Thomas Creek Drainage Basin Resiliency Initiative

*New Planning Initiatives:* While some planning professionals may shy away from the workload, the right team will be thrilled to know meaningful planning assignments have been identified beyond the day-to-day work. These initiatives will shape the community on a generational scale:

- As part of celebrating the County's bicentennial (December 1824-2024), execute a new countywide visioning exercise with a planning horizon of 2050.
- After adopting the Vision 2050 plan, rewrite/amend the County's Comprehensive Plan to reflect the 2050 planning horizon and update applicable regulatory documents.



## IDEAL CANDIDATE

Nassau County, Florida, is looking for a skilled and innovative consensus-builder with a collaborative spirit and a commitment to community development to take on the role of Assistant Planning Director. The right fit for this position is charismatic and upbeat, adapts well to change, and is dedicated to producing exceptional work, drawing input from diverse community stakeholders to create complex, high-profile projects while maintaining the attention to detail necessary for the daily tasks of a modern planning department.

This position requires a deep understanding of the County's methods, procedures, and policies relevant to the Assistant Planning Director's duties, as well as an in-depth knowledge of the functions and interactions of County and governmental agencies. The candidate must be well-versed in planning-related laws, ordinances, standards, regulations, and best practices and have a solid grounding in urban planning disciplines, including demographics, land use development, economics, economic development, zoning, and the codes and regulations overseeing permitting activities.

County leaders are seeking a dynamic and creative professional with a successful track record in community planning and project management. The selected candidate will be a hands-on team-builder with the technical expertise to tackle important assignments, contribute to public policy development, and mentor staff planners and consultants. They should be capable of making well-informed decisions, providing training and support to colleagues and employees in other departments, and setting and achieving daily, short-term, and long-term project goals. Compiling and analyzing information to produce clear, concise reports and records is also essential.

Candidates should excel at organizing and prioritizing work activities, continually learning and applying new skills to enhance job performance and efficiency, and building effective relationships with colleagues throughout the County, area property owners and builders, planning professionals, and the public.

The ideal candidate will be eager to embrace the opportunity to join a dynamic team of professionals dedicated to guiding a rapidly evolving coastal community in crafting forward-looking public policy while establishing programs and systems to meet the day-to-day needs of residents. They should be passionate about Nassau County's future, deeply invested in the community, and willing to dedicate the time and effort needed to be effective.

Ultimately, the County's future is shaped by the staff's collective efforts; the Assistant Planning Director will help foster a collaborative, people-focused, and community-driven approach to governance that prioritizes quality of life, fiscal and economic resilience, and long-term sustainability.



## EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE

This role requires a bachelor's degree in urban planning, public policy, urban design, landscape architecture, architecture, or a related field, with a master's degree preferred.

Candidates should also have eight years of relevant professional planning experience in a municipal or public sector environment, including experience and responsibilities for policy development, research and analysis, interpretation, and elected/appointed official support. Supervisory experience is also required; certification through the American Institute of Certified Planners is a plus.



# COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

Nassau County is offering a salary range of \$83,250-\$126,675 for this position alongside a comprehensive benefits package including medical, dental, vision, basic life, and short- and long-term disability insurance plans with health benefits (employee only) paid at 100% by the County. The organization also offers a 60% subsidy for health care to cover family or dependents, and full-time employees enjoy 13 paid holidays and 180 hours of paid time off annually.

Nassau County participates in the Florida Retirement System, featuring a 3% employee contribution, and an optional 457 deferred compensation plan.

# APPLICATION PROCESS

[Please apply online](#)

For more information on this position, contact:

**David Tuan, Senior Vice President**

[DavidTuan@GovernmentResource.com](mailto:DavidTuan@GovernmentResource.com)

701-570-3519



Nassau County is an Equal Opportunity Employer and values diversity in its workforce. Applicants selected as finalists for these positions will be subject to a comprehensive background check. The successful candidates must secure valid Florida driver's licenses within a reasonable period following appointment. Pursuant to the Florida Public Records Act, all applications are subject to public disclosure upon receipt of a public records request; however, public record requests regarding candidates are not expected for these positions during the recruitment process.

Nassau County is a drug-free workplace. Nassau County values the service veterans and their family members have given to our country, and the County supports the hiring of returning service members, military spouses, and their family members. As such, these positions are eligible for Veterans' Preference in accordance with applicable laws.

# RESOURCES

**Nassau County**

[nassaucountyfl.com](http://nassaucountyfl.com)

**Nassau County Planning Department**

[nassaucountyfl.com/107/Planning-Department](http://nassaucountyfl.com/107/Planning-Department)

**Interim Strategic Plan**

[nassaucountyfl.com/1282/Strategic-Plan](http://nassaucountyfl.com/1282/Strategic-Plan)

**Nassau County Economic Development Board**

[nassauflorida.com](http://nassauflorida.com)

**Amelia Island Tourist Development Council**

[ameliaislandtdc.com](http://ameliaislandtdc.com)

**Nassau County Chamber of Commerce**

[islandchamber.com](http://islandchamber.com)

