

July 9, 2008

Sarasota County earns Audubon International Green Community Award

Sarasota County has become the first community in Florida to earn the prestigious Audubon Green Community Award from Audubon International, a non-profit environmental organization headquartered in New York. The award recognizes the county's commitment to local agriculture, the environment, conscientious planning, recreation, resource conservation and alternative and public transportation. It is an intermediate milestone toward earning designation as a Certified Audubon Sustainable Community.

Among its many accomplishments, Sarasota County was honored for:

- Workshops that advocate locally sourced agriculture, a Food Policy Council, a Food-to-School program and downtown farmers markets.
- A government-level Sustainability Resolution, an Environmentally Sensitive Lands protection Program (which has protected more than 27,000 acres since 1994), multiple resolutions to incentivize green building, solar power for traffic lights and other uses, and setting a goal of zero waste sent to the landfill by 2025.
- A shift toward mixed-use developments with live-work-play emphasis, a 2006 Green Development Incentive Resolution, and all new county facilities built to LEED certification standard.
- Twelve miles of rails-to-trails projects and 16 community centers.
- Reduction of the county's ecological footprint, a 40-percent reduction in per capita water consumption, and a 2006 pledge to make county buildings carbon neutral by 2030.
- Ten hybrid buses acquired for the public transit system in 2006 and a Plug-in Hybrid Vehicle Resolution.

Sarasota County will now work with Audubon International to further their ongoing effort to comprehensively integrate sustainability principles into the community's planning, policies and practices, and to measure performance through a series of indicators.

"Sarasota County has shown a strong commitment to embodying the ideals of sustainability: economic vitality, environmental protection and social responsibility," said Peter Bronski, manager of Audubon's Sustainable Communities Program. "The county has established a progressive reputation nationwide in the realm of government sustainability. Audubon International is proud to recognize Sarasota County and to help take its efforts even further."

For more information about Sarasota County's sustainability programs, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 and ask for Natural Resources.