



2014 Sarasota County Sustainable Communities Workshop Discussion Session Results

The final session of the Sustainable Communities Workshop held on October 29, 2014 involved attendee discussions on each of the workshop's session topics: Community Prosperity, Resiliency, Improved Health and Local Food. Participants focused on the topic of most interest to them, brainstormed actions that could be taken to improve community sustainability in those areas and then prioritized their top 4 (two policy actions and two community actions). The full group of workshop attendees then voted on the highest priority items of all the brainstormed possible actions. The voting results are included below, along with the full brainstorm by each discussion group.

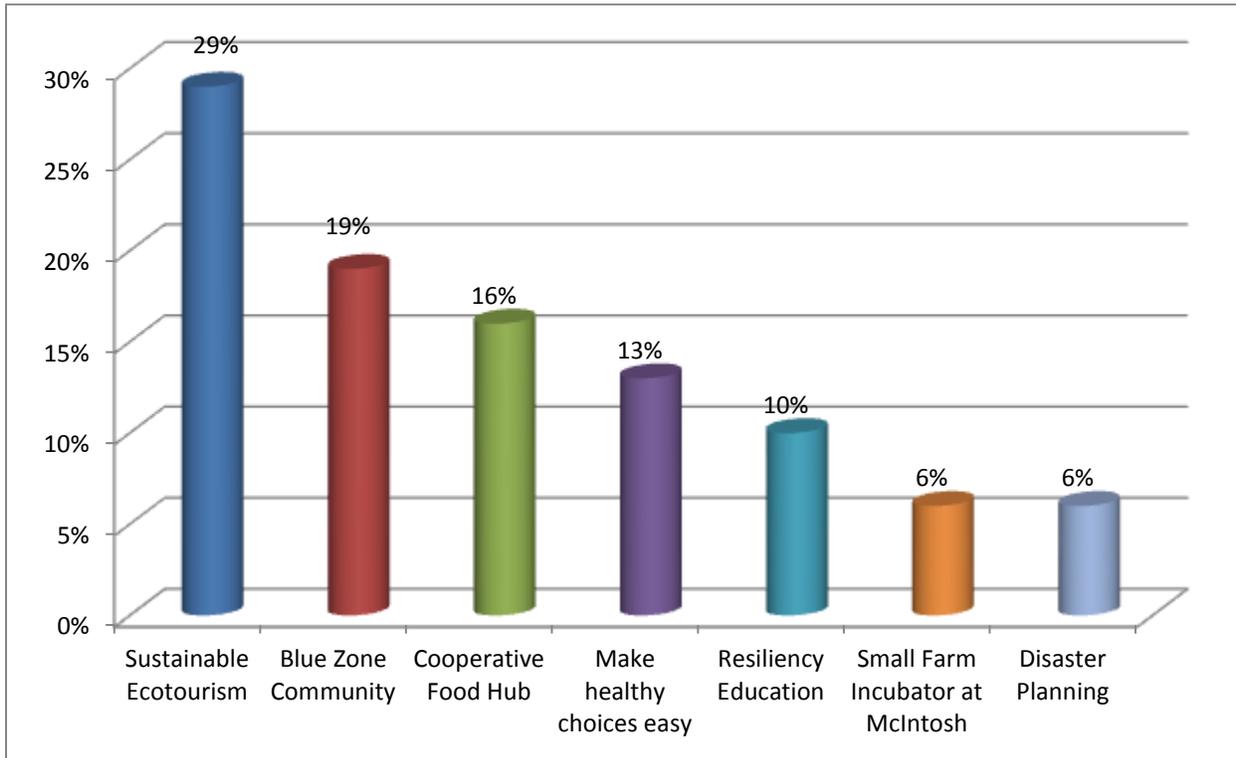
Full Group Voting Results

What is your priority for community action?

The ideas that received the most votes were:

1. Sustainable Eco-Tourism: Non-profit business platform for sustainable ecotourism (29%)
2. Blue Zone Community: Formally commit to become a Blue Zone Community-
<http://www.bluezones.com/services/cities/> (19%)

Table 1. Final Voting Results on Priority Community Action

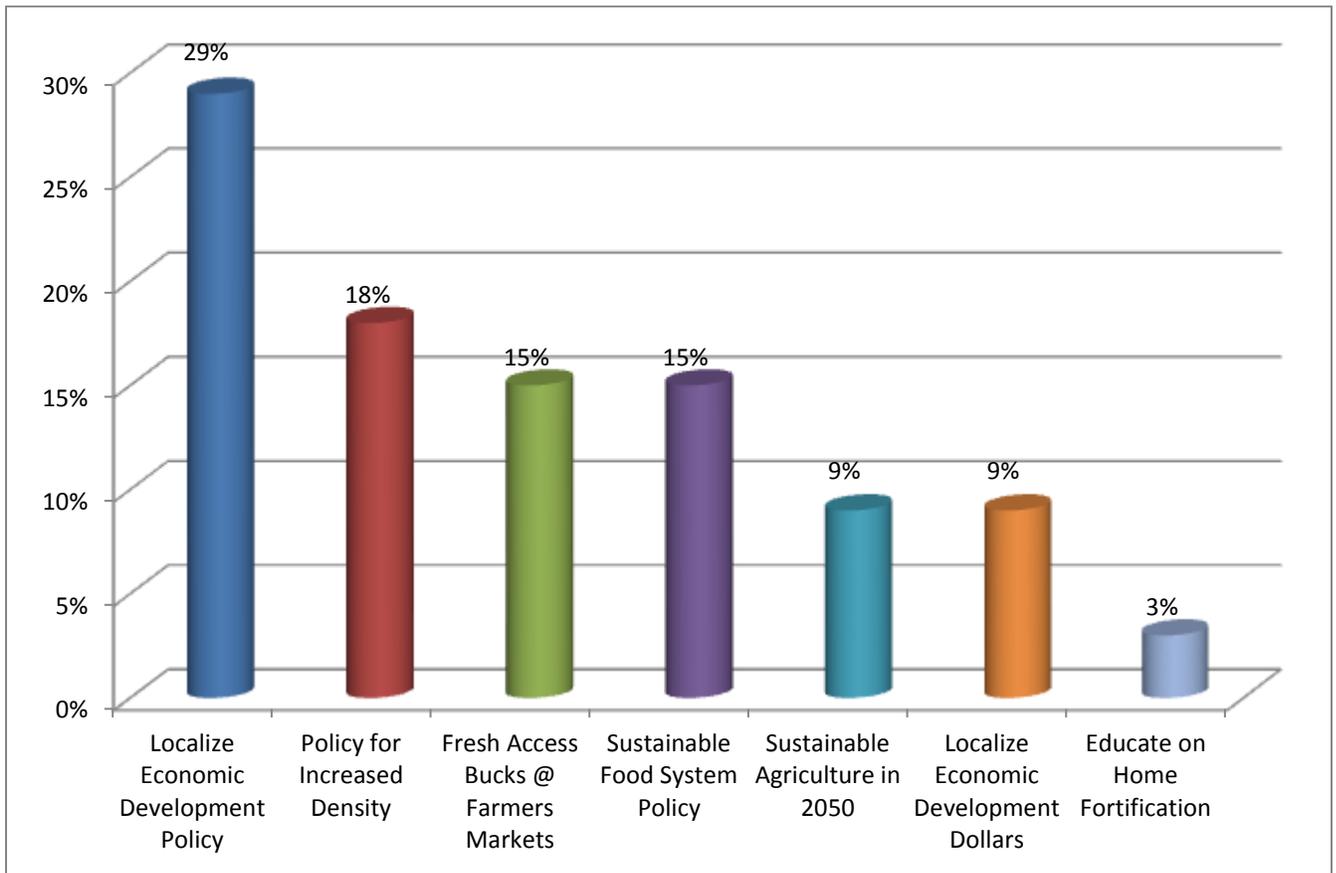


What is your priority for policy action?

The ideas that received the most votes were:

1. Localize Economic Development Policy: Change economic development policy to a focus on local business (29%; plus a similar item- Rethink how we spend economic development dollars, which got an additional 9%= 38%)
2. Policy for Increased Density (18%)

Table 2. Final Voting Results on Priority Policy Action



Discussion Group Results:

Below is the full brainstorm of each discussion group, as captured by the facilitator.

Community Prosperity Group

(Listed in order of priority, with the number of votes from the within-group prioritization process indicated)

Policy Actions

- Rethink how we spend economic development dollars (keep local ownership) - both government and EDC- more localized. E.g. tax incentives for local purchasing (>60% expenditures gets rebate) (7)
- Policy for Increased Density: mixed use; reduce sprawl; vertical growth rather than horizontal; redevelopment. (4)
- Public-owned vacant lots/ open space turned into gardens: portable if lot ends up needing to be used. City/ county provide infrastructure on public lands. Focused in food deserts. (3)

- Allow establishment of carrying capacity for our public lands: to understand impact of growing tourism industry and guidelines for how industry can be eyes on the resource; shift of use on certain lands for recovery (1)
- Policy to ensure/ increase certified green buildings (1)
- Policy changes to allow sale of produce from within residential zoning. E.g. Neighborhood farmer's market. Like a small corner store in residential areas.
- Local procurement policies: change to be stronger in support of local business and remove loophole
- Adopt LID Manual
- Make it more difficult for developers to just clear the land with intense landscaping. Like Plum Creek example presented at workshop. Or they need to replace what they took away.
- Food policy changes to: allow growing in empty lots; chickens; etc...

Community Actions

- Food Hub- create as a cooperative (6)
- Non-profit business platform for sustainable ecotourism – multi-day all inclusive eco-tours; opportunity for community guides to join platform if meet sustainability criteria (SEC project). Brand our area as an eco-tourism destination. Marketing dollars for tourism. Broad community effort. Generate business. Corporate partners representing different related categories (transportation, food, hotels, outfitters) (5)
- Community-led program to encourage local buying (local points program like in Portland, buy local campaign, etc...). (4)
- Developer and realtor outreach on green building strategies. Continuing education program incorporate sustainability classes as mandatory. (1)
- Invest in more gardens: urban gardens, then sell food at markets and restaurants.
- Local financing: debit cards & CDs: work with local banks to provide loans. Micro-loans. Slow money.

Community Resiliency Group

Policy Actions

- Change economic development policy to a focus on local business
- Sarasota County should better educate public about how to fortify house to minimize damage from a storm event
- How to help people who have physical or medical events make their home resilient, possibly personal resiliency
- Encourage Associations to allow for and encourage resiliency, especially those homeowners who want to be self-reliant
- Encourage Sarasota County to mandate Associations retrofit of units to be eco-friendly, possibly as a condition of property transfer

Community Actions

- Educate homeowners about resiliency
- Individually, plan for how to deal with disaster and move forward

Improved Health Group

Policy Actions

- Sustainable food system policy for the county
- Consumer education and healthy food labeling/practices

Community Actions

- Consumer empowerment to make the healthy choice the easy choice
- Blue zone community

Local Food Group

Top Policy Actions

1. Promote Sustainable Agriculture through 2050 Plan
2. Get Fresh Access Bucks into More Farmers Markets

Top Community Actions:

1. Develop a Small Farm Incubator at McIntosh Middle School
2. Develop a Food Hub

Details and Other Ideas:

- Farm incubator: 20 acres in front of McIntosh Middle School could be used for this. Need discussions with the school system. Have already discussed with School Food and Nutrition Services, including feeding the produce into the school lunch program.
- QR codes on food to tell consumers where it came from: Something like this already exists for fish, using iPads at restaurants. Similar system with Gaia Herbs. Also, Sarasota Grown label can be used for this. This could be especially useful for organic farms that aren't certified.
- Get more farms going: Access to land is critical. Food can be grown almost everywhere.
- Let community gardens sell their produce at farmers' markets: This is allowed in other communities. A law change in the 90's may be preventing this.

- Get Fresh Access Bucks for the Sarasota Farmers Market. Central Sarasota Farmers Market and Phillippi Farmhouse Market too. Barriers: independent markets, perceptions of changes in customers, whole market/ all vendors' buy in. Sarasota Farmers Market has an EBT machine, but need whole market to come on board to get the double-value incentive. Staffing shouldn't be an obstacle because additional funds are available for this.
- Change the development paradigm: Need bigger ideas. A shift in development priorities. Plan for the future, not the past. It takes a while to make this happen. 2050 Plan was aiming in this direction, but no inclusion of sustainable agriculture in it.
- Getting HOAs and private developments to support edible gardening. Landscapers could get it started, to be maintained by residents. This is happening at Turtle Rock. 47 raised bed gardens on Pine Avenue in Anna Maria, to be expanded to Lakewood Ranch soon. How about golf courses? Bobby Jones?
- Access to inexpensive protein and vegetables. Food hub aggregation and distribution could accomplish this. Need investment to support this. How to jump-start it? Slow Money is one possibility.
- Kitchen incubator. Somebody is already doing this – she is a baker and vendor at the Sarasota Farmers Market. Interest from others.
- Institutional purchasing of local foods. Johns Hopkins in Baltimore is a great example of this. This also ties-in with the idea of an incubator farm at McIntosh Middle School. Start with small steps and building on successes.
- Get chefs involved. The USF Culinary Lab could be a resource for this.
- Get more community gardens started. Use perma-blitzes to engage community members.