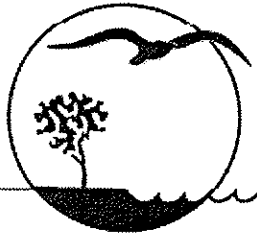


AUDUBON
INTERNATIONAL



Community Baseline

Use this form to conduct a self-assessment of your community in relation to a number of sustainability-related issues and categories. There are no wrong answers.

Don't forget to submit an electronic copy of your completed Community Baseline to: pbronski@auduboninternational.org.

General Information:

Community: Sarasota County, Florida
Date Submitted: _____
Submitted by: Jodi John

Narrative Description:

Please provide a narrative description of your community, resort or campus.

Stretching along the southwest coast of Florida and home of some of the most beautiful beaches in the country, Sarasota County embodies the casual yet thriving lifestyle of a historic resort community. The unique demographics of Sarasota County--nearly one-third of the population is 65 and older--have given the county a reputation for being a place to retire in comfort. However, the county is continually changing and is now much more than that.

Well known to naturalists, seasonal visitors and vacationers, Sarasota's pristine beauty has attracted people for more than a hundred years. When the pressure of rapid growth seemed to threaten the quality of this place, community groups formed to raise public awareness of the need to re-think the future of the environment while enjoying it in the present. Residents are passionate about the natural beauty of their land and water and go to great efforts to protect the place they call home.

Sarasota County's ever-growing, unincorporated population of around 249,601 is over 90 percent Caucasian with a growing population of Hispanic and Latino residents. Unemployment is very low and median family income is relatively high, making the local economy a thriving one. Fifty percent of all employees in the county work for restaurants, hotels and other service sector businesses. Sarasota's ethic supports education and the arts. Residents, both seasonal and permanent, spend much of their time volunteering and engaging in recreational activities such as golfing, boating and visiting the county's 35 miles of public beaches.

Land Use:

1. Land Area of Community/Resort/Campus = 287,412.6 acres (unincorporated portion of Sarasota County)

2. General Approximations: (see below) % rural ___% suburban ___% urban
 Percentage of unincorporated land within the county's urban service area: approx. 27%
Source: Sarasota County Planning Department, 2007

3. Land Use Approximations:

- (see below) % Residential
- ___% Commercial
- ___% Industrial
- ___% Educational
- ___% Agricultural
- ___% Recreational
- ___% Undeveloped Non-agricultural
- ___% Protected Open Space

15.5%	Residential
0.9%	Commercial/Office
0.5%	Industrial
0.5%	Extractive (including mineral and gravel processing)
0.5%	Institutional (including churches, hospitals, nursing homes, union halls and others)
0.3%	Educational Buildings (including public and private schools and colleges)
0.1%	Public Buildings
2.6%	Other Public Facilities (including airports, marinas, bus terminals, railroads and utilities and others)
0.6%	Recreation – Public (including parks, recreational areas and public golf courses)
2.0%	Recreation – Private (including private golf courses, race tracks, bowling alleys, open stadiums, camps and others)
16.4%	Public/Private Conservation & Preservation
17.6%	Intensive Agriculture (including groves, cropland, dairy and swine operations, horse breeding and others)
10.8%	Native Range Agriculture
6.0%	Vacant
25.7%	Other (including wetlands, water bodies, major rivers/bays and unclassified land)
	<i>Note: Land use designations are current as of January 1, 2003 for unincorporated portion of the county Source: Sarasota County Planning Department, 2004</i>

Public Sector Track Members:

Demographics:

- Total Population = 249,601
Source: Population for the unincorporated portion of Sarasota County; Bureau of Economic Business Research, University of Florida, April 2006
- Median Income = \$54,300
Source: Area median income for a family; U.S. Department of HUD, Office of Policy Development & Research, 2004
- Median Home Value = \$255,200
Source: Median sales price for the unincorporated portion of Sarasota County; Sarasota County Comprehensive Plan, November 2006

Facilities (# of):

- Public Schools = 53 total in the Sarasota County School District (approx. 23 within unincorporated county)
Source: Sarasota County Comprehensive Plan, November 2006 & Sarasota County School Board
- Community Centers = 16 total County owned and operated (approx. 11 within unincorporated county)
Source: Sarasota County Parks and Recreation, April 2007
- Parks = 277 total County owned and operated park sites (approx. 267 within unincorporated county)
Source: Sarasota County Comprehensive Plan, November 2006
- Fire Stations = 25 total County owned and operated fire stations (20 within unincorporated county)
Source: Sarasota County Emergency Services, April 2007
- Police Stations = Sheriff: 2 jails; 4 community policing stations (0 jails & 4 community policing stations within unincorporated county)
Source: Sarasota County Sheriff, 2007
- Hospitals = 4 total (2 within unincorporated county)
- Libraries = 8 total County owned and operated (6 within unincorporated county)
Source: Sarasota County Comprehensive Plan, November 2006

Please describe your government's structure (list major departments):

Sarasota County has five constitutional officers that are elected by the public--Clerk of Circuit Court and Comptroller, Property Appraiser, Supervisor of Elections, Sheriff and Tax Collector. The Sarasota County Commission is comprised of five elected officials from each of the five districts in the county. The board employs approximately 2500 full

and part-time individuals in 6 core services and 4 support services as well as administration. Core service areas (major departments) include Public Works, Community Services, Environmental Services, Planning And Development Services, Health And Human Services, and Emergency Services. Support service areas include Communications, Talent and Performance Management, Fiscal Planning and Enterprise Information Technology.

The Sustainability Baseline:

Answer the questions contained within each section as honestly and completely as you can. Don't worry if you don't have as much to say for some questions and categories than others. All SCP members should complete the Sustainability Baseline.

Agriculture (and Natural Resource-based Industries):

Community Perspective:

How important is this issue to and what role does it play for your community?

Agriculture is a major part of Sarasota County's heritage. Orange groves, sod farms, nurseries and cattle farms remain the most prevalent sources of agricultural prosperity in the county. However, most of the agricultural products in the county have historically been exported. Today, agriculture is no longer one of the top industries in the county. Agriculture employs less than one-half percent of the entire working population in Sarasota County (Sarasota County Economic Development Corporation).

Strengths:

What are your community's main assets and strengths in this category?

The University of Florida Sarasota County Extension Office has worked diligently to support the agricultural community and advocate the need for sustainable local food systems. Throughout the region, the Florida West Coast Resource Conservation and Development Council promotes community farm building, agricultural economic development, water resources management and community-identified food and agriculture products. The temperate climate continues to make citrus, cattle and sod farming profitable. Many residents buy locally-grown produce at the popular weekly farmers' market in downtown Sarasota and some community members continually seek out foods that are grown in the area. Also, the Sarasota County Farm Bureau serves as a highly beneficial resource hub for the local farming community.

Challenges:

What concerns, challenges and needs does your community face in this category?

There is a growing need for increased education about sustainable farming through the use of effective fertilization and efficient water usage. It is increasingly important to farm the land in such a way that keeps it healthy and fertile without degrading surrounding water sources or contaminating the soil. Additionally, the rising cost of land has resulted in many farmers selling their open farmland for conversion into housing developments. The county has sought ways to incentivize maintaining agricultural functions in certain areas.

Actions:

What accomplishments have you achieved to date, and what actions and efforts is your community taking to address this issue?

- The Florida West Coast Resource Conservation and Development Council and Sarasota County Government advocated local agriculture through Natural Capitalism Workshops in Sarasota, focusing on creating a solutions-based economy modeled after nature. The Rocky Mountain Institute helped in facilitating these workshops. Sarasota is currently working on a community plan for incorporating natural capitalism into the area's economic base.
- The University of Florida Extension Service in Sarasota County provides major educational resources to the local agricultural community through classes and training regarding efficiency in water use and responsible use of pesticides and fertilizers. The Extension office is holding a Small Farm and Alternative Enterprise Workshop in April 2007 to provide support and much-needed assistance for small farm owners.
- The community-based Food Policy Council met and compiled 30 policy recommendations relating to sustainable agriculture, local food systems and the protection of agricultural land for presentation to the Sarasota County Commission. Representatives to the council included members of the Sarasota County Farm Bureau, the Sarasota County Cattlemen's Association, county government and the Sierra Club. Several of these recommendations were integrated into the county's most recent comprehensive plan.
- The Farm-to-School program has begun to grow in the county's public schools. Booker Middle School has a program for students to learn about farming and a garden for them to grow organic vegetables. The Bay Haven magnet school is using earth boxes to teach sustainable agriculture. Booker High School has developed their program in organic aquaculture by installing a new hydroponic system for students to produce organic tilapia. A pilot project is currently underway to serve student-grown green beans and potatoes in school lunches.
- Community gardens throughout the county serve as a resource for local residents to grow their own fresh foods while building relationships with their neighbors.
- In addition to the downtown Sarasota farmers' market that attracts residents and visitors to purchase fresh locally-grown produce and efforts are being made to organize a farmers market in the southern part of the county. Whole Foods grocery market has also begun to sell locally grown produce in their downtown location, giving local farmers a welcome boost.
- Sarasota County is one of only a few counties to measure its ecological footprint. One of the factors in lowering the ecological footprint includes a sustainable local food system. Sarasota County is working toward developing such a local food system in order to reduce our demands on the earth's limited resources.

- The Mote Marine Laboratory Center for Aquaculture Research and Development has been established to help develop new, innovative and cost-effective systems to produce high-value marine and freshwater fishes and invertebrates, thus promoting sustainable aquaculture in the region.
- The county's comprehensive plan and its 2050 Plan promote the protection of agricultural land and how these lands may be able to tie together other protected lands that would support vibrant wildlife corridors.
- The All Faiths Food Bank will be building a new facility in the area that will include a community kitchen for local farmers to can foods and prepare them for sale in local markets and stores.
- Numerous 4-H and Future Farmers of America clubs throughout the county encourage young people to learn about growing food and raising livestock. Programs like these provide youth with opportunities to understand the need for local food networks.
- In 2003-04 the county worked closely with Monterey Bay Aquarium and Mote Marine Laboratory to host a sustainable seafood stakeholder workshop that resulted in the creation of the Southeast United States Seafood Wallet Guide.

Questions for Thought:

- *Do we value our rural heritage (if a part of the local landscape)?*
- *Are we losing working farms and ranches to development or other land use changes?*
- *Do we promote local farmer's markets?*

Additional Comments:

The county's comprehensive plan outlines several agriculture-related objectives for Sarasota County Government including:

- Preserve and protect agricultural lands.
- Preserve, protect and restore the integrity of the natural environment, historic and archeological resources, and preserve agricultural uses consistent with resource protection.

Economic Development & Tourism:

Community Perspective:

How important is this issue to and what role does it play for your community?

Tourism and construction are two key business sectors in Sarasota County and contribute significantly to the economic stability and vitality of area. The beautiful beaches and warm weather attract visitors from around the world, who enjoy staying in the area's many hotels and condominiums. Ecotourism is an increasingly important attractant for recreation as well. Local museums, galleries and theaters have made Sarasota County a hub for cultural entertainment. Other tourist-related businesses such as fishing suppliers, boat marinas and restaurants benefit greatly from the visitor population, especially in the winter months. Additionally, as more people continue to move to the county, construction and housing development have been industry leaders. As growth occurs, demand for housing has grown, helping construction-related businesses thrive.

Strengths:

What are your community's main assets and strengths in this category?

Unemployment rates in 2006 were extremely low at approximately 2.6%, well below the state average of 3.3% and the national average of 4.6% (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2006). The year-round warm climate and pristine coastline continue to draw thousands of transient visitors to Sarasota County annually and results in a thriving tourism industry. These seasonal residents have a dramatic impact on the economic strength of the area. Community growth and economic prosperity have led to continued construction in both residential and commercial segments. Many active chambers of commerce here continually focus on the economic strength of the county. Additionally, the Economic Development Corporation of Sarasota County has made great strides toward creating a more diverse economy in the area and providing myriad resources to local business owners including startup, expansion and relocation assistance and opportunities for networking with other related businesses.

Challenges:

What concerns, challenges and needs does your community face in this category?

Rising housing costs and a lack of workforce and affordable housing has made it difficult for Sarasota County to attract certain types of new businesses. The relatively high cost of living alongside local wages that have not kept up with inflation have resulted in increased economic disparity. Additionally, a significant population of the county is over 65 and retired. There is a need to further diversify business sectors in the area as well as increase income per capita. The stability of the local economy is highly dependent on a small business demographic as discussed above. Therefore, increasing the range of business and diversity of industry given the local economic profile is a focal effort of local economic development leaders. Export levels of goods and services are falling behind that of other comparable regions by remaining relatively flat. This is potentially hindering economic growth within the community.

Actions:

What accomplishments have you achieved to date, and what actions and efforts is your community taking to address this issue?

- The Economic Development Corporation of Sarasota County has helped to connect businesses and promote a financially sustainable local economy through the development of cluster groups--networks of like businesses--that are able to share information and resources with each other as well as foster new business sectors for a more diverse economy. Included in these cluster groups are specialty manufacturers and life and environmental sciences, which have joined efforts to work on the concepts of natural capitalism and biomimicry.
- The Economic Development Corporation and the county have prepared a five-year update to its economic development plan for 2004-2008. The economic vision outlined is for the county to foster the formation, expansion and retention of quality jobs and competitive businesses that lead to a diversified, year-round and sustainable economy. The county's goals include maintaining a strong tourism base while reducing the seasonal swings of the county's economy and develop a better connection between economic development, tourism, the arts and workforce development.
- The 82 Degrees Tech group is a product of the Economic Development Corporation's cluster groups that seeks to increase public awareness of the growing technology community in the area, improve the business climate for technology companies by developing critical resources, and facilitate educational/social opportunities for the area's technology companies (Economic Development Corporation of Sarasota County).
- In 2001, *Business Development Outlook* magazine named Sarasota one of "25 Choice Cities" for relocation or expansion, while *Money* magazine ranked the Sarasota area seventh among the "Best Places to Live" in the United States. In 2002, the Sarasota/Bradenton metro area was ranked the 39th "Best Place to Live" of 294 U.S. metro areas by Forbes.com / Milken Institute. In 2003, *Forbes* magazine named Sarasota County the 44th "Best Place to Live and Do Business" out of the largest 150 U.S. metro areas while *Expansion Management* magazine named Sarasota-Bradenton as one of two "four-star" communities in Florida. In 2005, Sarasota-Bradenton-Venice ranked No. 4 on *American Business Journal's* list of the "Hottest Major Metro Areas for Jobs," based on its average unemployment rate of 3.5% and 5.6% job growth rate. (Economic Development Corporation of Sarasota County).
- Numerous general and specialty chambers of commerce throughout the county support businesses by helping to improve the area's business climate and providing valuable assistance to local business owners. Leadership Sarasota County, a program of the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce, offers local business members the opportunity to learn more about how their community works.

- Although ecotourism has long been a part of the local economy, recent land and water conservation efforts both along the coast and inland are increasingly benefiting this unique yet vital business sector. Small businesses that provide products and services for kayaking, fishing and boating benefit tremendously from the regular flow of tourists to the region.
- Throughout Sarasota County, there are countless reuse stores that take donations or deal in consignments. These shops help greatly in keeping many items out of landfills that might otherwise be thrown away. The county has partnered with Habitat for Humanity to create two reuse stores.
- The annual local Efest celebration began in 2005 as a way to bring community members together and highlight green and sustainable businesses, products and initiatives. The festival attracts thousands of visitors and gains a great deal of media attention, giving local businesses a chance to market themselves even more broadly to the community.
- The Home Builders Association of Sarasota County has organized the Green Building Council to encourage local residential and commercial developers to build to green standards. The recent completion of the Tech House has added to their momentum.
- The Sarasota-Manatee Originals organized in September 2003 as a group of local independently owned and operated restaurants in the area. It became Florida's first chapter of the Council of Independent Restaurants of America. The Sarasota-Manatee Originals now has more than 50 active members.
- The county's environmentally preferred procurement policy helps local businesses that offer green products and services with the ability to receive higher rating points on contract bidding.
- Efforts are being made to bring more science- and research-based work to Sarasota County through plans that include the construction of a biological field station.
- The county launched the Green Business Partnership certification program to assist and highlight local businesses that "green" their operations.

Questions for Thought:

- *What are my dominant local industries and/or individual businesses?*
- *Do we encourage businesses that share our local value system?*
- *Do we foster a locally vibrant economy and support local businesses?*
- *Are there opportunities—ecotourism or otherwise—to capitalize economically on our community's natural assets?*

Additional Comments:

The Sarasota County Commission has adopted the following strategic community goals and objectives as related to economic development:

- Promote Economic Opportunity
 - Diversify and increase income per capita
 - Promote workforce development
 - Foster positive business climate
 - Support housing activity

The county's comprehensive plan outlines several economic-related objectives for Sarasota County Government including:

- Encourage the conservation and enhancement of those natural and cultural resources which represent the foundations of the county's retirement, recreation, and tourist oriented economy.
- Maximize employment opportunities for Sarasota County residents.
- Achieve a diversified economic base in Sarasota County to minimize the vulnerability of the local economy to economic fluctuations.

Education:**Community Perspective:**

How important is this issue to and what role does it play for your community?

The Sarasota County community as a whole has long been exceptionally supportive of education, which is undoubtedly a major reason for the success of the public school system. Residents know that education is key to the stability of the area and quality schools help in attracting quality businesses. In addition to a well respected school system for the county's youth, institutions of higher learning foster the development and practical use of knowledge in adults of all ages. In doing so, they contribute to the health and sustainability of the entire community.

Strengths:

What are your community's main assets and strengths in this category?

Sarasota County boasts an extensive network of educational programs for all ages. The highly recognized Sarasota County School District continues to expand and improve as new students arrive in the area. Approximately seven colleges and technical institutes, including New College of Florida (Florida's Honors College), Ringling School of Art and Design, a regional campus of the University of South Florida and Manatee Community College, provide opportunities for higher education to students both from the county and nationwide. Additionally, less formal centers of education are well-established and cover a broad spectrum from history to science: the Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium, the Crowley Historic Museum and Nature Center, G-WIZ science and technology center, Pelican Man's Bird Sanctuary and Education Center and the Florida House Learning Center.

Challenges:

What concerns, challenges and needs does your community face in this category?

Unfortunately, a significant number of young adults educated either in the county's public school system or in any of the areas colleges end up leaving the area once they complete their education. Thus a great deal of investment expended educating the county's youth really ends up benefiting communities in other parts of the state or country. These young professionals and skilled workers leave the area for various reasons including a lack of good paying jobs available or the relatively low number of 20- and 30-year olds in Sarasota County that attract other young professionals.

Actions:

What accomplishments have you achieved to date, and what actions and efforts is your community taking to address this issue?

- The Sarasota County School District has received numerous recognitions and accolades that include:
 - Being rated an "A" district by the State of Florida, with 91% of our schools rated "A" and "B"
 - Improving graduation rate from 63% to 82% since 1999

- Receiving the highest commendation by the Florida Department of Education for professional development training
 - Receiving an exemplary audit report from the state's Auditor General
 - Passing the four-year renewal of the one mill operating referendum
 - Receiving the "Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting" from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) for numerous years
 - Engaging in a pilot project for Concurrency with area jurisdictions
- Every public school has a School Advisory Council composed of parents, educators, business representatives and community leaders. Together they help develop and implement their respective School Improvement Plans.
 - The district offers gifted resource programs in all schools, full-time programs at numerous sites, and a designated full-time school for gifted students at Pine View School in grades 2-12.
 - Nearly \$22 million has been received by the district through competitive and entitlement grants to fund an extended array of creative teaching ideas.
 - A county-wide partnership with the arts community fosters excellence in music, visual arts, dance, theater and media arts education in our schools. Music and art instruction are offered at all grades to create well-rounded students.
 - The Van Wezel Performing Arts Theatre and the school district are members of a select group chosen to participate in the prestigious Partners in Education Program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.
 - Sarasota's students enjoy expanded education opportunities at such distinguished organizations as Mote Marine Laboratory, Selby Gardens, Ringling School of Art & Design, University of South Florida, GWIZ, Sarasota Jungle Gardens and Sarasota County Environmental Services.
 - Twenty-four schools were recognized for their exemplary community involvement, qualifying them for the state's Five Star Award.
 - The school district offers a modified school choice program for those students wishing to attend a school other than their assigned one. A variety of magnet and specialty programs are also offered throughout the district.
 - Three of the county's major foundations work closely with the schools to impact teacher development and student learning. The non-profits jointly funded five years of training improvements for teacher development.
 - The Florida House Learning Center opened in 1994 as a demonstration house for green building and landscaping. Discussions are under way about constructing a new center that would integrate even more of the latest developments in ecologically-friendly and energy-saving technologies. The model Florida yard at

the center also educates residents about landscaping using sustainable products and methods.

- In January 2003, Manatee Community College expanded by opening its Center for Innovation and Technology at Lakewood Ranch Corporate Park on five acres of land donated by Schroeder-Manatee Ranch, the property's developers. The center offers both credit classes and a wide variety of noncredit, personal and professional development and workforce training classes. The facility features classrooms with the latest technologies, computer labs and a 156-seat high-tech auditorium.
- New College of Florida continues to receive recognition as a high quality liberal arts school, including being named by *U.S. News and World Report* as the #1 public liberal arts college in the nation. A number of distinguished speakers have been brought in to discuss various lands and coastal issues.
- The county hosts a variety of educational tours throughout the area including scientists and experts who lead walking tours through environmentally sensitive lands.
- Sarasota County offers a Citizens Academy to local residents interested in learning more about the county's operations and how local government works. This 10-week program is held twice yearly and has helped to educate many citizens on their county government.

Questions for Thought:

- *Do youth of all ages have opportunities for educational advancement?*
- *Do we meet the needs of our population with educational opportunities for all ages?*
- *How do our literacy, high school graduation, etc. rates compare to regional and national averages?*

Additional Comments:

The county's comprehensive plan outlines several education-related objectives for Sarasota County Government including:

- Ensure, in coordination with the Sarasota County School Board, that the Sarasota County Public School system meets the educational needs of present and future populations
- Establish mechanisms designed to coordinate with the Sarasota County School Board, in order to provide, to the greatest extent possible, compatibility between local land use and public school planning.

Environment:**Community Perspective:**

How important is this issue to and what role does it play for your community?

Sarasota County residents have a strong desire to leave a legacy of a beautiful natural environment to future generations, which was clearly evidenced in their responses during a series of 2005 Community Conversations by rating the environment as #1 in their wish list of legacies they would leave. The Gulf of Mexico forms the western boundary of Sarasota County, offering a wealth of diverse wildlife and habitats. The series of barrier islands, the intercoastal waterway, numerous wetlands and the environmentally significant Myakka River Corridor are highly valuable natural resources for their beauty as well as how they shape the community as a whole. Numerous threatened and endangered species including the Florida Scrub-jay and the Gopher Tortoise make their home in the county. As a result, the community has consistently emphasized the need for protecting the environment, twice voting to tax themselves to provide funding for land acquisition; the Sarasota County Commission continues to keep it as a high priority.

Strengths:

What are your community's main assets and strengths in this category?

Sarasota County has long been regarded as a progressive Florida county relative to resource protection. The county's estimated ecological footprint is approximately 2 acres per capita lower than the national average, and awareness about a need to reduce it further are beginning to grow in the community. Twice in the past decade residents have overwhelmingly approved referenda to increase their taxes in order to protect and preserve the beautiful environment in this community. Sarasota County has enacted comprehensive sea turtle and manatee protection ordinances. Preservation of the natural environment is deeply embedded throughout the county's comprehensive plan, going so far as to dedicate an entire chapter to environmental policies and guidelines. Protecting the environment was also a significant driver in the county's long-range growth management plan, the 2050 Plan. The protection of wildlife corridors and open space was established as a high priority in defining 2050 associated development forms. The general community awareness and concern for the environment is evidenced by a long list of accomplishments from water conservation to supporting green building.

Challenges:

What concerns, challenges and needs does your community face in this category?

One of the key reasons why people move to Sarasota County is its natural environment—the Gulf of Mexico, the islands, the beaches, the parks and preserved natural areas. In fact, citizens responded during the Community Conversations that they valued the natural environment over all other aspects of community life. Yet as the population continues to increase, there is a significant impact on the area's land and water resources. Residents continue to purchase large vehicles and drive long distances, which has negative affects not only on the air quality, but also on the quantity of roads that are built. Land values are increasing at very high rates, giving land owners a greater

incentive to develop, sometimes to the detriment of the surrounding environment. A number of the area's precious wildlife species have become threatened and/or endangered largely due to human impact including the Florida Scrub-jay, the Florida Panther, the Eastern Indigo snake, the Gopher Tortoise and the West-Indian Manatee.

Actions:

What accomplishments have you achieved to date, and what actions and efforts is your community taking to address this issue?

- The Sarasota County Commission, along with county administration, has had significant success in preserving the environment for future citizens. In 2006, Sarasota County purchased ten hybrid mass transit buses. The county has joined the AIA's 2030 Challenge by setting benchmarks and committing to be carbon neutral by the year 2030. As one of only a few jurisdictions to measure its ecological footprint, the county is making strides toward improving the average resident's impact on the land.
- The Environmentally Sensitive Lands Protection Program has helped to preserve over 16,000 acres of natural green space since its inception in 1994.
- Since 2002 the Board has passed a number of resolutions committing to incentivizing green building, green housekeeping and pursuing sustainability in its decisions.
- Neighborhood Environmental Stewardship Team (NEST) is a volunteer organization sponsored by Sarasota County to increase awareness of the importance of native habitats and watersheds in our community. The Red Bug Slough Preserve Neighborhood Watch Group was the initial participant in the NEST program, forming in 2002 to help monitor and report illegal sewage dumping and assisting the land manager in providing public access to the site through a partnership with the Science Academy of Booker High School. The success of Red Bug Slough has been carried over and expanded into numerous other NEST projects throughout the county.
- The Board of County Commissioners has adopted the Integrated Pest Management policy, organized around a commitment to using the least toxic practical measures to control vegetative and insect nuisances.
- Sarasota County was designated as Florida's Tree City of the Year in 2005 for the comprehensive efforts of the county's forestry unit including an "Urban Forestry Master Plan" approved by the Sarasota County Commission that outlines a stringent system of fines for certain methods of tree trimming.
- The county's Artificial Reef Program has helped to increase and enhance recreational fishing and SCUBA diving areas as well as to create and restore marine habitat.

- Programs to protect the county's threatened species have been established and continue to receive great community support, including the sea turtle protection ordinance enacted in 1997.
- The 2004 coastal setback code ordinance established a framework for development along the Gulf of Mexico to protect coastal resources by minimizing the impact of the built environment and also to minimize community risk associated with coastal development.
- The Ann Marbut Environment Library is established at the Selby Public Library to provide information and educate local residents about environmental issues that affect Sarasota County and areas beyond.
- The county has adopted an environmentally preferred procurement policy into the code, giving green vendors added preference as well as encouraging "green" purchasing throughout county operations.
- The Keep Sarasota County Beautiful program has been around since 1987, bringing together volunteer residents to clean up and beautify both the built and natural environment.
- The county's Adopt-A-Road program has broadened by getting volunteer groups to adopt a pond, park, shore or spot. Local individuals and community groups commit to cleaning up a designated area and keeping it litter-free.
- The Carefree Learner, a glass-bottomed boat in Sarasota, offers educational programs for school children to help them learn about the marine biology in the Sarasota bays and waterways.
- Numerous active local clubs maintain an environmental focus in advocating the protection of Sarasota County's natural environment.
- The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program and Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program are two of only 28 national estuary programs in the nation. Both programs formulate comprehensive plans to restore and maintain the natural quality of these nationally significant estuaries as well as make recommendations to local, state and federal governments to ensure these bays sustain their vitality.
- Sarasota County uses solar lighting for traffic signals, signage and some safety lighting throughout the areas roads and right-of-ways.
- The county has partnered with Florida Power and Light to become Florida's largest host site for a solar photovoltaic array at a closed landfill site that is being made into a community park.
- Sarasota County is coordinating its water resources through a comprehensive watershed management approach, using stormwater to augment the

community's water supplies and lessen the negative impact of drought on the land.

- The county initiated a recycling program in the late 1980s that later became mandatory for residents, businesses and the construction industry. The county has an excellent rate of waste reduction and has set a goal of zero waste landfilled.
- Sarasota County and other partners created *Discover Natural Sarasota County*, a tabloid guide for residents and visitors to explore the county's natural wonders.
- The county passed a Tree Canopy Protection ordinance to protect trees and vegetation along the area's roads and has the Tree Protection code for protection of trees on private lots slated for development.
- The county worked with Audubon International to create a golf course ordinance for new and remodeled golf courses based around best management practices to reduce the use of chemicals that negatively impact the environment. The ordinance was adopted by the Board of County Commissioners in 2002.
- Sarasota County is an active member of energy and environmental programs with the US Department of Energy and the US Environmental Protection Agency such as Rebuild America, ENERGY STAR and others to help reduce the impact of the community on the natural environment.
- The Celery Fields is a regional stormwater flood control and treatment facility located in the Phillippi Creek Basin. This more than 330 acres of wetland is a favorite venue for birdwatchers and hikers. Hundreds of bird species have been sighted at this park.
- The county promotes the use of native and non-invasive plants and Florida-friendly landscape principles.
- Due to a major drought in the late 1990s, the county worked with area developers to create a water-efficient landscape ordinance that restricts the amount of irrigated sod that is allowed in new development.
- Sarasota County's household hazardous waste program is a convenient way for residents to properly dispose of chemicals. Chemicals meeting certain criteria are then made available for reuse by county residents through a special reuse center. Many other waste reduction initiatives are available to community residents.
- Air and Water Quality Protection administers an underground storage tank program through a separate contract with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. This ensures that sites contaminated with petroleum products are cleaned in accordance with state requirements in order to protect our drinking water supplies and return those sites to their full potential value.

Under this contract, the county conducts annual inspections of facilities with regulated storage tanks, provides technical and fiscal oversight of site assessment and cleanup

Questions for Thought:

- *Do we have problems with pollution—air, water, litter?*
- *In which watershed is our community located?*
- *What primary surface water features (lakes, rivers, etc.) are central to our community's landscape?*
- *Do we have endangered wildlife species, or charismatic megafauna (e.g. bear, wolf, deer, moose) that are important to the regional ecosystem or economy?*
- *Is visibility and human health impacted by degraded air quality (e.g. haze, ozone)*

Additional Comments:

The Sarasota County Commission has adopted the following strategic community goal and objectives related to the environment:

- Safeguard the Environment
 - Ensure safe and sustainable water supply
 - Ensure fishable and swimmable water bodies
 - Ensure sustainable lands and habitat

The county's comprehensive plan outlines several environment-related objectives for Sarasota County Government including:

- Construction activities on or off the shore of the Barrier Islands shall not detrimentally impact the barrier island system.
- Maintain existing access to Gulf and bay waters for a variety of water-dependent activities and if necessary, provide for additional purchases where feasible.
- Improve estuarine water quality.
- Maintain or increase the area and habitat quality of coastal wetlands and marine resources.
- Participate in intergovernmental processes designed to pursue the goals and objectives of the Charlotte Harbor Management Plan.
- Continue to meet the air quality standards established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) through the year 2010.
- Protect the quality and quantity of all jurisdictional waters, recognize the ongoing study efforts, and ensure that the current water quality in the county be improved through the year 2010.
- Protect and conserve surface and groundwater resources.
- Identify, manage and protect all ecological communities and wildlife, especially critical habitats and endangered, threatened and species of special concern identified in official federal, State or international treaty lists.
- Preserve significant areas and representative samples adequate to maintain the functions and values of native habitat.
- Increase the environmental awareness of all county residents.

Governance:**Community Perspective:**

How important is this issue to and what role does it play for your community?

The local elected officials in Sarasota County are widely respected by the public they serve. Most of these leaders, both constitutional officers and county commissioners, have been reelected to their posts for numerous terms. Sixty percent of the respondents in the 2006 Citizen Opinion Survey say the county government does a good or excellent job of communicating its actions and issue positions to the public. Additionally, two-thirds (66%) of respondents stated they either strongly or somewhat agree that county officials give citizens with different viewpoints an equal chance to state their views and concerns. The community places great trust in these individuals, due largely to the fact that the local leaders are committed to engaging their constituents and they are dedicated to the betterment of the community as a whole.

Strengths:

What are your community's main assets and strengths in this category?

Each member of the Sarasota County Commission is highly regarded and respected in the community and each daily strives to work cooperatively toward the betterment of the county. They actively engage county residents by encouraging participation in government processes and always make decisions with their constituents in mind. Sarasota County leaders have a reputation for working together toward solving issues rather than the political squabbling that plagues the boards of so many communities. In 2001, the Sarasota County Commission enacted the civility code, which outlines the expected nature of interaction between the public and the board. The Sarasota County Commission seeks guidance from over 100 citizen advisory boards and panels, thus encouraging active citizen engagement in the governance of their own community.

Challenges:

What concerns, challenges and needs does your community face in this category?

Local government faces the continual challenge of a relatively basic conflict: diverse perspectives among segments of the community and creating a scheme by which public interest can be achieved despite such views. A secondary and related issue is the need for local government to ascertain what is best for the community as a whole or for the future residents of the community in the face of public opposition. This requires the local leaders to be highly effective in their public communication and education about issues so that everyone in the community can be well informed and also to actively engage the community in providing input prior to decisions being made. The latter is critical, especially considering a general suspicion of government by people across the country and the imperative for local leaders to gain public trust in order to be effective.

Actions:

What accomplishments have you achieved to date, and what actions and efforts is your community taking to address this issue?

- In addition to the opportunity for citizens to become engaged with local officials through public forums and e-mail contact, annual citizen surveys help inform leaders of what issues and concerns are priorities for residents. Smaller community focus groups and charrettes have taken place throughout the area to provide the Sarasota County Commission with feedback and input regarding specific projects and local issues.
- In 2006, the Board solicited ideas from the community, through face-to-face contact, mail and the internet, on how revenues from the one-cent sales tax should be spent and the types of projects that should be priorities for funding.
- Access 19, a local television station jointly operated by Sarasota County and the City of Sarasota, provides residents with live feed of public meetings along with a series of other programming designed to keep the community informed and engaged in county programs and other areas of special interest.
- Meetings on Demand is a new feature of the county's website, allowing individuals to watch recorded public meetings and read agendas and minutes, providing further ease of access to the most up-to-date information on government actions.
- Community Conversation forums were hosted by the county administrator between May and August 2005 throughout the county. In each of the six conversations, community participants shared what they most value and the legacy they want to leave for future generations. Values and legacies that rose to the top included environment, arts and culture, smart growth and affordable housing.
- The Citizens' Academy is a learning forum, intended to provide participants with an opportunity to become familiar with Sarasota County Government, to provide them a "tool box" of information to help them navigate through the complex system of government operations and services. Goals of the academy are to improve communications between citizens and government, as well as foster increased citizen involvement.
- The county's Civility Code, adopted by the Sarasota County Commission, establishes the expected nature of public discourse in the community, accommodating and demanding respect for the diverse opinions that serve the democratic ideal of human dignity public conversation.

Questions for Thought:

- *Does our community's leadership—local government, developer, university administration—provide for the public good and respond to their needs?*
- *Does our leadership engage the members of our community?*

Additional Comments:

Public Health:

Community Perspective:

How important is this issue to and what role does it play for your community?

The high percentage of older residents in the area and an economic disparity among county residents requires that health and health care issues always be on the community radar screen. It is important to residents that they have high quality health care facilities and health promotion/risk prevention programs throughout the county for the entire demographic spectrum. This is particularly critical for the county's youth, as the impact of health issues such as asthma, obesity and cancer become more clearly understood. A component of providing social support relates to the natural and built environment and its influence on health and well-being. Access to parks and natural areas, recreational programs, safe and adequate housing near available transit and service providers is critical to maintaining and improving community health. Ensuring these services and affordable options for lower income families and individuals are certainly not overlooked. With the ever-increasing cost of insurance and medical care, nonprofit agencies along with local government are continually striving to address the gap that currently exists.

Strengths:

What are your community's main assets and strengths in this category?

Sarasota County Health & Human Services, in partnership with the State of Florida, provides a wide variety of low-cost health care services to residents in need. The county's health department consists of a team of highly skilled, caring professionals that includes board-certified doctors, dentists, nurse practitioners and language interpreters. The health department goes beyond treating symptoms with its whole-person approach to medicine. The doctors authorize referrals for patients who need specialized medical tests and treatment. The Senior Friendship Centers effectively serve the older population who cannot otherwise afford health care. The county is serviced by four state-of-the-art hospitals, with locations countywide. Sarasota Memorial Hospital received recognition as the top community-owned hospital in the country for heart and heart surgery (*US News & World Report* 2005). However, the community recognizes that medical care is not the only way to focus on public health. The Sarasota County Commission has focused on an enhancing public transit, affordable housing, walkable neighborhood design and other aspects of the built environment that significantly impact public health.

Citizen health depends on many factors, such as clean air and water, appropriate working conditions, social harmony and support, preservation of cultural values and lifestyles, environmental conditions, and economic conditions. The county, in partnership with dozens of nonprofit organizations and businesses, is actively seeking to address each of these public health factors.

Challenges:

What concerns, challenges and needs does your community face in this category?

There is significant challenge in shifting citizens' focus from reactive approaches such as seeking medical attention and care after health issues occur to proactive approaches i.e., living a healthy lifestyle that could prevent many diseases and ailments. Use of reactive approaches and the trends of skyrocketing insurance and medical costs continue to impact local businesses and individuals alike.

In order to create a fully sustainable community, the county recognizes we must champion proactive approaches and inspire residents to actively pursue healthy lifestyles. How to accomplish this when convenience and pace greatly influence behavioral choices is a substantial challenge. Similarly, community design and development form, the general dependence on the automobile, the unknown consequences of genetic engineering and chemical additives in foods, and the prevalence of unhealthy fast-food options impacts our success in this regard. One issue beyond our direct control also impacts community health risk and is a constant concern, namely, possible outbreaks of illnesses such as bird flu at pandemic levels, are a threat due to the ease of global travel and the speed at which such diseases may be spread.

Actions:

What accomplishments have you achieved to date, and what actions and efforts is your community taking to address this issue?

- The collaborative state and county efforts of the Health and Human Services offers health clinics for children and adults as well as many other resources for those in lower income brackets. Some of these services include immunizations, HIV/AIDS and other STD services, and public health inspections.
- The Community Health Improvement Partnership, or CHIP, brings together a dynamic collaboration of individuals, not-for-profit organizations, hospitals, and other agencies dedicated to building better health and wellness for Sarasota and Charlotte Counties. CHIP integrates prevention, wellness, and intervention strategies into community-driven health improvement efforts and CHIP empowers local community groups to create tangible, positive change. The goal of CHIP is to improve the physical, mental, social, and environmental health of all citizens and communities in the Sarasota area.
 - Community Health Action Teams (CHATs) and a regional team of health care leaders, social profit agencies and volunteers work together to make this happen through community engagement and solution-building, research and benchmarking, and regional planning and implementation.
 - Local health issues are shaped by regional health systems and policies. To improve regional systems of care, CHIP engages hospital and health care CEOs and other health and human services leaders through the CHIP Leadership Council.
 - Recent successes include seven new health clinics, programs to combat obesity and diabetes and 114 community meetings with more than 2,280 attendees.

- A CHIP Health Scorecard was developed by the Health System Collaboration Committee to guide and monitor efforts to improve health in Sarasota County. The scorecard now includes 33 indicators in different categories of the social and physical environments, health care, health behavior and well-being. The CHIP Health Scorecard will interface with the Sarasota County Balanced Scorecard and the Human Services Advisory Council Policy Framework.
- The Healthy Start program in the County Health Department screens pregnant women and newborn babies to identify risk factors for low birth weight and infant mortality. This free program is available to all residents regardless of income. A team of nurses, social workers and peer counselors assists families in determining their needs and provides counseling, parenting support, childbirth and breastfeeding education, and smoking cessation services.
- The county's Be Smart program provides an annual mammogram screening, breast health education, and follow-up care for qualifying women ages 40 through 49. Be Smart is funded by local grants from the Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice and The Susan G. Komen Cancer Foundation, Florida Suncoast Affiliate.
- The Senior Friendship Centers in Sarasota and Venice provide a variety of health-related services to the older adult population including support services, medical and dental clinics, and healthy meals.
- Sarasota County Mosquito Management Services efforts have proven effective in preventing the spread of disease carried by mosquitoes.
- Efforts are being made to create a more walkable community in order to get people out of their automobiles and walk to their everyday tasks like work, school and shopping. Creating places that are comfortable for pedestrians to move around and gain easy access to the places they need to go enables people to stay healthy and active while going about their daily lives.
- The Newtown Wellness Program is a wide-ranging community health initiative designed to stop the accelerated rate at which African Americans in Sarasota County are dying from diabetes and heart disease. Newtown houses roughly 25 percent of the county's African American population. Sarasota Memorial Hospital worked with other local organizations to obtain a Closing the Gap grant from the Florida Department of Health for the development of the program, which directs the full strength of the hospital's health promotion resources to approximately 3,400 African American residents in Newtown. Services include health screenings, educational programs and classes in specific subjects identified by needs assessments and neighborhood.
- The Family and Consumer Sciences program at the University of Florida-Sarasota County Extension serves to improve families by providing instruction to parents and child care providers to ensure that they have the knowledge necessary to

provide for a caring, loving and nurturing environment for their children. Other elements of this program include nutrition and food safety, money management and providing adequate housing.

- Sarasota County works with the state to provide affordable health insurance for youth under age 19 through Florida Kid Care. The program is made up of four parts: MediKids, Healthy Kids, the Children's Medical Services (CMS) Network for children with special health care needs, and Medicaid for children.
- Pathways to Health is a service of the Sarasota County Health Department that establishes indoor and outdoor walking paths in neighborhoods, at churches, schools, libraries and other places where people get together. Paths are marked by signs that include a route map, path distance in mileage and steps, and health messages that encourage proper, frequent walking.
- In the spring of 2007 Health and Human Services rolled out its new Health in Motion Mobile Medical Unit to take medical services to areas where people otherwise could not access basic health care. The mobile unit is staffed by a clerk and registered nurse. Volunteer physicians and nurses assist with providing services. Future plans include offering a range of tests and screenings, primary health care and post-disaster recovery medical care.
- The PACE EH (Protocol for Accessing Environmental Excellence in Environmental Health) initiative is a process designed to improve decision making by taking a collaborative community-based approach to solving the environmental health concerns of the community. Information gathered from the PACE EH process will be used to enhance the CHIP Health Scorecard as health status of our community is monitored.
- The Health Impact Assessment (HIA) initiative is an effort to develop a local process to consider the health impacts of local policy decisions. An HIA is defined by the World Health Organization as a "combination of procedures or methods by which a policy, program or project may be judged as to the effects it may have on the health of a population."

Questions for Thought:

- *What are health rates (e.g. cancer, heart and lung disease) in our community? Compared to regional and national averages?*
- *Do all segments of our community have access to adequate health care?*

Additional Comments:

The Sarasota County Commission has adopted the following strategic community goal and objectives related to public health:

- Enhance Community Health
 - Promote healthy lifestyles and behaviors
 - Enhance access to health care
 - Promote positive social environment
 - Protect from disease and natural or man-made disasters

Cancer incidence rates in general are slightly higher than state and national rates, which could be due to the community demographic of a large percentage of older residents. In contrast, coronary heart disease death rates are slightly lower than state and national rates.

Housing:

Community Perspective:

How important is this issue to and what role does it play for your community?

In a community where one of the top industries is construction--mainly residential--it is no surprise that housing is a regular hot topic. In the recent past our community has experienced substantial growth and demands for housing. However, more recently in the nation, and locally, we are experiencing slowing construction and correspondingly a high inventory of housing on the market. The surplus housing is in a price range that it is relatively unavailable to service workers and those in a similar economic sector of our community. Housing prices and home insurance have increased dramatically in recent years. The shrinking quantity of workforce and affordable housing has been a major community focus for some time now. In addition to home prices being pushed out of the reach of the low income population, it has become increasingly difficult for essential service workers like teachers, nurses and police officers to afford housing in Sarasota County.

Strengths:

What are your community's main assets and strengths in this category?

There is a high level of awareness of the need for workforce and affordable housing within the community. This has created a sense of urgency to find a solution that will improve the situation not just temporarily, but for the long term.

Additionally, housing developers in the area are more and more embracing the "green" building philosophy, even to the point where they are beginning to build green housing in low-income neighborhoods. The Sarasota County Commission is committed to "green" housing efforts along with seeing the need for demanding affordable housing to be built in the county, consistently evident through ordinances and policies enacted by the board.

Challenges:

What concerns, challenges and needs does your community face in this category?

Affordable workforce housing has become a major challenge in Sarasota County. A number of solutions have been presented and attempted, without measurable success. This problem has also led to a difficulty in attracting businesses that employ mid-salary workers because of the high cost of living. Additionally, because many lower-salary service level workers cannot find housing they can afford, attracting such workers to the area is becoming more and more challenging.

Green building has gained some valuable support among select representatives of the development community; however, it is not uniformly embraced by the home construction industry. This may be attributed in part to unfamiliarity with green building approaches and a lack of confidence in innovative methods. Governments can only provide so many incentives to entice developers to build green. Also, there are no current state mandates requiring developers to implement green building standards into

their operations. Even if such standards were implemented, a lack of general education in both the builder and consumer sectors make it a challenging proposition. In fact, there are over 70 different green building standards across the U.S., creating confusion for consumers and builders alike.

Actions:

What accomplishments have you achieved to date, and what actions and efforts is your community taking to address this issue?

- Several notable area housing developers have embraced green building for their developments. Construction for the first multi-family multi-level complex to receive the Florida Green Building Coalition Green Certification is near completion in downtown Sarasota. In 2006, Vision Homes, based in Sarasota, won numerous awards for their developments of green homes and innovative tech-homes containing cutting-edge energy efficiency and sustainable features.
- A redevelopment project in an economically deprived area of the county is set to begin construction soon, removing a blighted low-income housing project and replacing it with mixed income and "green" housing options.
- Habitat for Humanity has begun plans to begin building multi-family units in the county instead of single-family detached, making it possible for them to provide affordable housing to significantly more families per year.
- The Community Housing Trust of Sarasota County was organized in 2005 to provide voluntary assistance for working families by providing equity funding to permanently reduce the cost of homes for qualified homebuyers by removing the land cost from the purchase price.
- The Sarasota County Commission continually provides incentives for developers who build affordable housing or commit to "green" building including expedited review processes and increased height and/or density allowances.
- The Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice, Florida's largest community foundation, has made the commitment to invest only in housing and non-profit construction projects that meet green building standards.
- The Florida House Learning Center acts as a green home demonstration model for residents and developers by educating the public on interior environmental stewardship and exterior responsible landscaping.
- The Sarasota County Commission has authorized a number of incentives to foster and encourage the development of community housing units. Developers can qualify for impact fee relief, permit fee reduction, density bonuses and expedited processing of Board approved development orders such as rezones and special exceptions.

- In 2007, the board approved an ordinance to establish an operational framework for allocating funding and administering resources from the Community Housing Fund. The ordinance incorporates best practices into a flexible, responsive framework based on the broad principles of creating and preserving the supply of sustainable community housing established in the comprehensive plan.

Questions for Thought:

- *Does our community provide a "housing ladder" permitting upward mobility for potential homeowners?*
- *Do we offer affordable housing for lower income brackets?*
- *Do we foster "green" housing?*

Additional Comments:

The county's comprehensive plan outlines several housing-related objectives for Sarasota County Government including:

- Continue and, where feasible, enhance a local government/public sector association that encourages the private sector to provide an appropriate mix of housing types and to apply innovative planning and design techniques, in both housing structures and land development, and to conserve and preserve natural systems and resources.
- Preserve, conserve and enhance the existing housing stock, including historic structures and sites.
- Take maximum advantage of federal and state incentive and funding programs in order to create maximum housing opportunities for Sarasota County's very low, and lower income households and other households of special needs.
- Continue to encourage the private sector to provide affordable housing for moderate income individuals and families.

Open Space and Land Use:

Community Perspective:

How important is this issue to and what role does it play for your community?

During the 2005 Community Conversations, county residents were asked what they value most and what legacy they want to leave for future generations. Overwhelmingly, the number one answer was the "natural environment." This means protecting the natural landscape and its open spaces as well as managing land to be developed so that it will enhance, not endanger, the environment around it. As a result, the community has supported many efforts to ensure the preservation of mangroves, wetlands, farmlands and other natural areas, as well as the integration of open space requirements into zoning and growth management regulations.

Strengths:

What are your community's main assets and strengths in this category?

Sarasota County residents continually show outstanding support for the protection and preservation of their open spaces and natural environment. Twice in the past decade residents have overwhelmingly approved referenda to increase their taxes in order to protect and preserve the natural landscape. Both through the protection of native habitats and zoning requirements that set aside open space within developments the county works towards an increasingly sustainable community design that has the potential to greatly reduce our ecological footprint. The county's vision is one in which natural areas not only coexist with developed areas but are an integral part of future planned developments. In addition to significant acreage protected by the Oscar Scherer State Park, the Myakka State Park and through the county's Environmentally Sensitive Lands Protection program, open space is required in various zoning designations and is a design feature of the county's 2050 land use plan. This ensures not only the preservation of these lands and their habitats for years to come but a community character and aesthetic that demonstrates the value we place on natural lands.

Challenges:

What concerns, challenges and needs does your community face in this category?

Development in the county has been occurring at a very rapid pace, leading to the ever-increasing valuation of land. This provides incentive for landowners to sell their undeveloped property to developers, who frequently build on greenfields in a typical suburban, yet unsustainable, form. It also contributes to the loss of agricultural lands, that can be both aesthetic and functional open spaces. Regulations and guidelines have been implemented locally to ensure open space is integrated into development; however, this creates conflicts between the county and the regulated community relative to the amount of land they must set aside as either zoning or conservation open space thereby decreasing the developable box and potential revenues. Escalating land value also increases the cost of securing natural lands through public acquisition and thereby reduces the acreage that can be protected with existing public funding. The county has been very successful at entering creative partnerships and securing grants to extend our acquisition capacity. However, although programs exist to ensure land preservation,

application for state and federal funding to support these programs is highly competitive, is administratively intensive and can be difficult to secure.

Actions:

What accomplishments have you achieved to date, and what actions and efforts is your community taking to address this issue?

- The county's Environmentally Sensitive Lands Protection program (ESLPP) has helped in preserving over 16,000 acres across the area. Significant amounts of natural habitat including much of the Myakka River Corridor have been permanently protected. The Land Management Master Plan serves as a comprehensive guide for the natural lands in the county by providing a vision and framework for developing individual management plans for each identified environmentally significant land area.
- In November 2005, voters approved a referendum authorizing the expansion of the county's Land Acquisition Program to include parkland acquisition. The county continually solicits input from the public about lands that should be acquired for future parks.
- The 2003 county golf course ordinance was established to provide a sound, comprehensive and holistic approach to golf course planning, design, construction, operation and management. The main areas addressed by the design and performance standards are water quality, including integrated pest management, water conservation, and natural resources. The ordinance also requires that new golf courses obtain Audubon International's Signature Program certification or meet equivalent standards.
- The Myakka River Protection Zone, enacted by the Sarasota County Commission, regulates development activities within 220 feet of that wild and scenic river.
- The Sarasota County Commission has committed to the principles of smart growth, which includes maintaining open space. The Urban Service Boundary, established in the 1970s, delineated the area in the eastern part of the county, keeping it free from dense development and aiding in the preservation of land.
- Sarasota 2050's land use plan's primary goals are preserving the county's natural, cultural and physical resources and making all neighborhoods, established and new, more livable. Incentive-based and voluntary, not regulation-driven, this proposed addition to the county's comprehensive plan grants density bonuses (increased number of dwelling units allowed) to landowners who preserve open space, agriculture and environmentally sensitive land and build new, compact, mixed-use, walkable developments in appropriate areas.
- The School of Natural Resources at the University of Florida (UF) and the New College of Florida (NCF) in Sarasota have proposed the creation of a land use

institute dedicated to providing global leadership in sustainable land use through targeted research and outreach.

- A biological field station is in the planning stages to be constructed at a county-owned site.
- The county's Comprehensive Plan outlines the process for public acquisition of lands with high environmental significance through fee-simple purchase, purchase of conservation easements or purchase of development rights. Incentives to landowners can also be enacted to protect the environment and preserve native habitats through techniques including, but not limited to, tax relief, increased flexibility in site development, cluster housing and the ability to transfer development rights.
- Sarasota County's zoning code regulations have established minimum open space requirements for specific types of developments such as planned development districts and future urban development overlay districts.
- In 1997, the Sarasota County Commission adopted land development regulations that established requirements for the management of preserved natural areas in private developments.
- Land throughout the county has been acquired and protected by numerous state agencies including the Department of Forestry and the Department of Environmental Protection. Currently approximately 38,852 acres of land in the county is protected under the state park and forest systems.
- At present, 220 conservation easements have been secured and mapped as a part of the county's permitting process.

Questions for Thought:

- *Are we losing open space and other natural areas?*
- *Do we have a program to permanently protect high priority open space areas?*
- *Are land use patterns changing in desirable or undesirable ways in our community?*

Additional Comments:

The county's comprehensive plan illustrates a commitment to preservation of open space and other natural areas, including several land use-related objectives for Sarasota County Government:

- Coordinate future land uses and provision of urban services with the protection of environmental resources.
- Exceed the current acreage of public beaches and dunes through the year 2010 in accordance with policies established in the Recreation and Open Space Plan.
- Protect environmentally sensitive lands, conserve natural resources, protect floodplains, maintain water quality, and open space, and conserve and protect historic and archeological resources.

- Protect the quality and integrity of established residential neighborhoods from adjacent incompatible development.
- Coordinate land use designations with soil and topographic characteristics, the protection of historical and natural resources, existing land uses, and the availability of public facilities.
- Ensure that adequate public facilities are available concurrent with the impact of development.
- Establish and implement planning programs that will address development and redevelopment opportunities.
- Conserve, protect, maintain, and, where necessary, restore the natural resources of Sarasota County to ensure their continued high quality and critical value to the quality of life in the county.
- When land development involves the conversion of native habitat, the county's open space requirements shall be fulfilled first with preservation and conservation areas, then with other allowable types of open space. Native habitat to be conserved shall be based on percentage of required open space applied to the total acreage of existing native habitat on-site.

Planning, Zoning, Building & Development:

Community Perspective:

How important is this issue to and what role does it play for your community?

For the past five years, citizens have responded in the county's annual survey that they believe the number one issue facing Sarasota County is "population growth/development." Development has become such a major concern because of its significant and visible impact on the quality of life for every individual in the county. Smart growth principles such as new urbanism, transit-oriented design and neighborhood planning are being promoted by more and more community members every day.

Strengths:

What are your community's main assets and strengths in this category?

Local government and other agencies have been able to bring in highly respected experts in smart growth, conservation design, transit-oriented design and new urbanism. These experts have been able to provide invaluable guidance to community leaders and residents, further benefiting the county's efforts for becoming a "smart growth" place. The 2050 Plan—a part of the county's comprehensive plan—establishes the strategy for development outside the current urban service boundary. This plan outlines village-style development in sustainable smart growth patterns, ending the pattern of ill-planned sprawl.

Challenges:

What concerns, challenges and needs does your community face in this category?

Suburban sprawl has been the area's pattern of development for a number of decades. The traditional regulations that the county has in place continue to allow this type of development in many areas. As the community changes and wants to see more mixed use development, past development practices must experience a transformation. The county commission has acted to steer the momentum toward mixed use; however, the developers hold a great deal of power to achieve this paradigm shift. Although there is potential for their profits and marketability to increase through building sustainable, it will nonetheless take community impetus and public partnership to make it happen. The community needs to seek those features and the county can facilitate the shift toward innovation.

Actions:

What accomplishments have you achieved to date, and what actions and efforts is your community taking to address this issue?

- The county is moving toward a new framework for planning by developing form-based codes. This will allow for better planned mixed-use developments in particular parts of the county and create areas of work-live-play synergy.

- In 2006, the Green Development Incentive Resolution established an incentive for green development through expedited permitting approval processes. As a result, more and more developers are deciding to go "green." By early 2007, there were over 80 private, community and government developments in the county, either under construction or have been completed, that are certified as "green" buildings.
- The county has joined FDEP and the University of Central Florida to design build and monitor the region's first green roof, which will be installed on the Osprey Public Library. The county has also made a commitment to building all their new facilities to LEED-certified standards.
- The 2050 Plan is a part of the comprehensive plan that provides a framework for sustainable development throughout the county. Redevelopment efforts within the urban landscape are also beginning to be designed within patterns of smart growth, making better places to live into the future.
- Plans are being made to begin integrating community charrettes into different areas of town ripe for redevelopment. This would make it possible for citizens to have their voice heard and help develop the plan for how their community will look as well as work to influence the way developers build.
- The private sector has begun to take ownership of green building education in the community. WCI Communities has a green education room in their model green home, Lakewood Ranch has installed a green construction display and demonstration landscaping at their welcome center, and the Homebuilders Association Green Building Council has begun to do more outreach to their membership of over 50 individuals.
- In 2005, the first green-building incentives program in the state was implemented by the Sarasota County Commission. Incentives such as expedited permitting and permitting fee refunds to builders and developers who commit to build to Florida Green Building Coalition standards.
- The Ringling School of Art and Design has organized tours of the county's various green buildings to educate students on how green design works. In October 2006, the school hosted an international summit promoting green interior design.
- The county built and continues to operate the Florida House Learning Center, which serves as a model "green" home and landscape design to educate visitors on sustainable living practices. Free classes on green design and green living are regularly offered to the public.
- Sarasota County was selected to host two international green building design and construction conferences in 2006.

- The county has built two U.S. Green Building Certified LEED Gold buildings—a library and an office complex—and has 17 more green buildings, including a fire station and another library, in the planning and design stages.
- The county has one ENERGY STAR-rated building, ranking in the top 20% of energy efficient buildings in the nation.
- In 2006, county staff and other partners organized a Sustainable Communities Workshop for more than 150 attendees. The workshop focus was on low impact development, zero-energy buildings and homes and plug-in hybrid/electric vehicles (PHEVs).
- Low impact development alternatives are being developed for amendment of the county's Land Development Regulations.

Questions for Thought:

- *Do we have a plan in place to direct future development in desirable ways?*
- *Do we encourage "green" building?*
- *Do we provide incentives for building "sustainably?"*
- *Is our community's master plan consistent with principles of sustainability?*
- *Are land use codes or regulations in need of revision or updating?*

Additional Comments:

The county's comprehensive plan outlines development-related objectives for Sarasota County Government such as:

- Construction activities on or off the shore of the Barrier Islands shall not detrimentally impact the barrier island system.
- Protect the quality and integrity of established residential neighborhoods from adjacent incompatible development.
- Ensure that adequate public facilities are available concurrent with the impact of development.
- Promote the orderly development and redevelopment of the land uses needed to accommodate the projected population growth to the extent such growth is financially feasible and consistent with the other goals of the Comprehensive Plan and the quality of life of the people of Sarasota County.
- Provide guidelines for the regulation of residential, commercial, office, industrial, warehousing and institutional land uses.
- Establish and implement planning programs which will address development and redevelopment opportunities.

Population:**Community Perspective:**

How important is this issue to and what role does it play for your community?

From a 1950 population of 28,827, the resident numbers have increased more than tenfold to 311,043 in 1997. Current population counts reach nearly 380,000. In addition an estimated 60,000 additional seasonal residents and visitors spend at least a portion of the winter in Sarasota County. The dramatic population increase in recent years has changed the historically comfortable beachside resort-like character of the area.

Although population is expected to continue its increase, the rate at which it has been occurring will likely slow in the future. For five years in a row, residents responding to the annual citizen survey stated that the most important issue facing Sarasota County is "population growth/new development." Sarasota County is also unique in that 29% of the population is over the age of 65, while the U.S. average for this age bracket is 12%. These percentages are not expected to change dramatically in years to come.

Strengths:

What are your community's main assets and strengths in this category?

The increasing population has led to more widespread community discussions about residents' vision for the future. Population growth in the county has resulted in shortages of affordable and workforce housing, increased development and increased congestion. As a result, residents have come together to develop well thought-out plans and goals for the future of their community as opposed to sitting idly by and just letting things happen. Preservation of the community character relative to natural environment along with growth and development have been recurring themes in these visioning discussions. Additionally, since Sarasota County is not completely built out it is possible for population growth to continue in a more sustainable way. As smart growth practices continue to thrive in the county, residential areas to accommodate newcomers can be planned wisely managing such negative impacts as traffic congestion more effectively.

Challenges:

What concerns, challenges and needs does your community face in this category?

There is persistent difference of opinion between residents who want to see population growth occur and those who would like it to remain stable. This social conflict creates differing values and priorities among county citizens. Increased population growth in the area has led to traffic congestion and a need for changing transportation strategies along with an increasing difficulty in making sure our local natural and energy resources (i.e. water, etc) can sustain the population growth. Higher density means a change in landscape for certain neighborhoods, and some residents do not want such change. On the other hand growth is seen as positive for those who focus on tax-base and economic issues, as well as those who do not share the same vision relative to community aesthetics. Another challenge is that at present, there is a disproportionate percentage of citizens over the age of 65 relative to the United States average. The county is already facing complex demographic issues associated with an aging population. The

community is face-to-face with some of the complexities of aging: challenges of income, social security, Medicare, Medicaid and prescription costs.

Actions:

What accomplishments have you achieved to date, and what actions and efforts is your community taking to address this issue?

- The county and cities have made great efforts to engage citizens in shaping their future. The 2005 Community Conversations brought individuals together to talk about the kind of legacy they want to leave for future residents, whether or not population continues to increase.
- The 2050 Plan, adopted by the Board of County Commissioners, has outlined where new growth beyond the Urban Service Boundary will occur and what form this development should take. This plan outlines a smart growth pattern to shape where new future population will grow.
- Since population growth is expected to occur in the county, the Comprehensive Plan has integrated principles that reflect a desire to expand in a sustainable way.
- The county is making efforts to expand the community's understanding of the ecological footprint and what that means in light of a continually growing population.
- The Roadmap to Sustainability has been developed by Sarasota County as a tool to focus on the community's future direction while it continues to grow and the strategies by which it will remain sustainable in light of increasing population.

Questions for Thought:

- *Is our population rising, falling or steady?*
- *Is our community's population changing in desirable ways?*
- *How do we want our community to look in the future (e.g. bigger, smaller, stay the same)?*

Additional Comments:

The county's comprehensive plan outlines several population-related objectives for Sarasota County Government including:

- Ensure that sufficient acreage is available to accommodate the projected population growth.

Public Safety & Emergency Management:

Community Perspective:

How important is this issue to and what role does it play for your community?

The crime rate in Sarasota County is very low compared to the Florida average and has been decreasing for several years now (Florida Department of Law Enforcement). Concern with crime continues to be ranked low on annual citizen surveys. However, the county is located in a high risk area for hurricanes, making disaster preparedness a high community priority. Community residents realize the important role of fire, EMT, police and emergency management services year round, especially during hurricane season. Lifeguard operations ensure the safety of tourists and residents on more than 36 miles of beaches along the Gulf Coast. Wildfires are also a risk in certain parts of the county.

Strengths:

What are your community's main assets and strengths in this category?

Significant coordination occurs daily between the Sheriff's department, Emergency Operations and the Fire/EMT department. By using integrated data communications systems, each division of the public safety and emergency management operations can work together to address issues most effectively. The Emergency Operations Center, located in the county administration building, provides a fortified headquarters where agencies gather during hurricanes and other emergency situations and manage coordinated and cooperative operations. The county's Neighborhood Point of Distribution (NPOD) strategy ensures essential provisions are distributed in the most effective way immediately following a disaster. The heart attack survival rate in Sarasota County is significantly higher than the national average, due in part to highly effective EMT personnel and low emergency response times. The Sarasota County FIREWISE Coalition works to mitigate the effects of wildfires by identifying areas where there is risk and developing effective wildfire management strategies. Additionally, Sarasota County is a regional provider of emergency support, especially during the 2004 hurricane season when the Florida Gulf Coast was affected by numerous storms.

Challenges:

What concerns, challenges and needs does your community face in this category?

Increasing community growth means that the addition of emergency response facilities becomes more and more important. And with such a large land area to cover, managing the location and operations of fire/EMT stations is vital. Keeping response times low while navigating through an increasingly complex road system and new housing developments is a difficult task to manage. As growth and development occurs, the county and cities must coordinate budgets and plans so that the necessary personnel and facilities can be dedicated appropriately. The high percentage of older residents results in increased pressure on emergency responders. Another challenge is helping low-income residents find primary health care through the health department or other programs as opposed to using emergency services as their primary care provider.

Actions:

What accomplishments have you achieved to date, and what actions and efforts is your community taking to address this issue?

- The Sarasota County S.A.L.T. (Seniors and Law Enforcement Together) Council works as an advisory group to the Sarasota County Sheriff and the Sarasota Chief of Police to develop, expand and implement effective crime prevention and educational programs.
- In 2006, the cardiac arrest survival rate for residents receiving care from EMT was over 30%, well above the national average. Overall, residents are highly satisfied with the response time and service provided by fire/EMT.
- As development continues, additional fire/EMT stations are established. A station recently became functional in a part of the county that had seen a great deal of growth, with no station nearby. Response times to that area have since then decreased from around 7 minutes to 5 minutes. All new stations are being built to LEED-certification standards.
- In preparation for hurricane season, a network of local agencies has coordinated efforts to address a possible disaster. Emergency Operations staff works year round to ensure that, in the event of a hurricane, sufficient infrastructure exists for evacuation, health care and food provision are ready to be addressed, and all other related needs are coordinated and ready.
- Sarasota County Emergency Management provides Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training for local businesses, community groups and citizens of Sarasota County. CERT training teaches residents the decision-making and physical skills so they can offer immediate assistance to family members, neighbors and business associates in an efficient and effective manner in the initial hours following a disaster.
- The Sarasota County FIREWISE Coalition was officially formed on August 22, 2001, in Sarasota County by Emergency Services. The FIREWISE Coalition coordinated and developed a strategic approach to land management and wild fire mitigation. This group comes together monthly to identify and work cooperatively on the areas of the county where the highest risks of wild land fire may occur, and to continually educate the community in the benefits of being a FIREWISE community.
- The Sarasota Emergency Radio Club (SERC) was incorporated in 1977, with a charter to provide communications support to the community during times of emergency or special events. SERC members are FCC-licensed, amateur radio operators or individuals interested in becoming amateur radio operators.
- The Sarasota County Auxiliary Communications Service, Inc., (ACS) provides emergency communications for the Red Cross and Sarasota County Emergency Management. ACS makes possible the effective management and

utilization of personnel in support of civil defense and disaster response and recovery.

- Sarasota K-9 Search and Rescue, Inc. (SSAR) is a group of highly trained volunteers who help in the location of missing persons.
- The Community Traffic Safety Team (CTST) is a group of local city, county, and state agencies, private industries and citizens who meet monthly to reduce both the number and severity of traffic crashes in the county. The group makes suggestions and recommendations to officials with Sarasota County and the Florida Department of Transportation.
- Sarasota County has established an employee emergency role registration program to identify areas where county staff can best use their knowledge and skills to assist the community during a disaster.
- The Neighborhood Point of Distribution (NPOD) program was established to address the immediate needs of community residents directly following a disaster such as a hurricane. NPOD stations are set up in neighborhoods throughout the county so that residents only need to travel a short distance to get water, ice, food and other necessities.
- Sarasota County serves as a regional provider of emergency support when needed, especially during the hurricane season.
- As a result of 2004's four hurricane events, Sarasota County non-profit agencies:
 - Recognized the need to coordinate various agency efforts during emergency conditions
 - Now run the shelters, help write the policies, and train and plan emergency response with government as a partner
 - Have a task force composed of the Red Cross, Salvation Army, schools, hospitals and churches to ensure smooth evacuations from the threat of hurricane

Questions for Thought:

- *How are crime rates in our community?*
- *Do we provide adequate police, fire and EMT services?*
- *What is the average emergency call response time? Compared to regional or national averages?*

Additional Comments:

The county's comprehensive plan outlines several population-related objectives for Sarasota County Government including:

- Reduce hurricane evacuation times for each storm category so that total evacuation times do not exceed 14 hours by the year 2010, and assist the general public in meeting their responsibility to evacuate in the event of a hurricane.
- Provide new hurricane shelter facilities and the expansion of existing facilities.

Since 2003, the crime rate in Sarasota County has decreased at a rate higher than the state of Florida.

Recreation:**Community Perspective:**

How important is this issue to and what role does it play for your community?

Sarasota County's moderate year-round weather and the beautiful natural landscape offer both permanent residents and tourists alike almost unlimited opportunities for recreation. With around 240 parks, over a dozen public beaches, equestrian facilities, and numerous boat launches, tennis courts and golf courses, the citizens of Sarasota County take great pride in the quality of their recreational spaces. In addition to abundant active outdoor activities, residents and visitors can find plentiful opportunities to participate in the arts, gardening, antiquing and social clubs. Since much of the population is retired and their daily activities are often unscripted and without obligation, recreation plays a major role in the lives of many residents.

Strengths:

What are your community's main assets and strengths in this category?

Sarasota County offers a wide variety of organized and informal recreational opportunities for all ages. Activities available in the area include boating, birding, fishing, tennis, swimming, biking and kayaking to name a few. Golfing is one of the most widespread recreational activities in the area--there are around 1,000 holes of golf countywide. The county's extensive and well-managed park system and focus along with a focus on environmental protection means that residents always have quality places to play. The Oscar Scherer State Park and Myakka River State Park provide visitors with an extensive natural setting for hiking and other outdoor activities. The county's many historical and cultural attractions, including a variety of theaters and galleries, provide opportunities for people to pursue their interests and learn about the rich heritage of the Florida Gulf Coast. Residents both young and old have access to classes, clubs and groups focusing on performance art, writing, sports, arts and crafts, photography and gardening, giving people countless opportunities to pursue their diverse recreational interests. The county has programs through public libraries, the history center, Florida House Learning Center, numerous community centers and which further enhance the recreational opportunities in Sarasota County.

Challenges:

What concerns, challenges and needs does your community face in this category?

Recreational activities enhance the overall social, physical and emotional health of the community, and it is important to make sure are sufficient opportunities for people of all ages and walks of life. Since the natural environment is central to so many of the area's recreational opportunities, it is important for these resources to be preserved, extended and well maintained.

Actions:

What accomplishments have you achieved to date, and what actions and efforts is your community taking to address this issue?

- The Rails-to-Trails program managed by Sarasota County, when completed, will result in a 12-mile bike/walking path along the former CSX railroad corridor was purchased by the county several years ago. Not only will this offer residents additional recreational opportunities, it will help preserve a part of the county's history during the height of the railroad boom.
- The county's parks and recreation department continually works to expand the areas' natural spaces through acquiring land and designating new parks such as the recently opened park Red Bug Slough Preserve with its more than 70 acres of native forest and waterway nestled between several residential neighborhoods. The Neighborhood Parkland Acquisition Program referendum was recently enacted, providing funding for acquisition of neighborhood parks.
- In addition to protecting large wildlife corridors and rare habitats, the Environmentally Sensitive Land Program creates public access opportunities to natural area lands for activities such as hiking, biking, fishing, horseback riding and bird watching.
- The 16 community centers across Sarasota County are hosts to events and activities for residents of all ages to enjoy. Dancing, musical performances, games and sports are just a few of the many activities available at the community centers operated by both public and non-profit entities.
- Numerous YMCA facilities throughout the county provide residents of all ages with a variety of recreational opportunities including swimming, camps and fitness classes.
- After-school programs such as Girls, Inc. and the Boys and Girls Club seek to empower youth by participating in positive activities such as sports and fitness opportunities, fine arts classes, educational tutoring and mentoring. These programs are helping Sarasota County's youth become vital members of the community as they gain life skills and learn to respect themselves and those around them.
- The Cincinnati Reds hold their spring training in Sarasota, giving residents and visitors the opportunity to enjoy major league professional baseball without having to travel to Tampa or Miami.

Questions for Thought:

- *Do we provide a diversity of recreational opportunities for all segments and ages of our community?*

Additional Comments:

The county's comprehensive plan outlines several parks and recreation-related objectives for Sarasota County Government including:

- Acquire, develop, maintain and protect parks and recreation facilities, consistent with the needs of Sarasota County's population, as determined by the county's recreation levels of service, through the year 2010.
- Ensure that recreational lands and facilities are compatible with surrounding land uses and the natural environment in accordance with the Environment Chapter, through the year 2010.
- Improve access to parks and recreation facilities for all Sarasota County residents, through the year 2010.
- Ensure that parks, recreation facilities, and recreational open spaces are economically feasible to develop, operate, protect and maintain
- Maintain, and improve where possible, coordination with other county boards and agencies, the county's municipalities, the region and the state in the development and provision of parks and recreation facilities.

Resource Use:**Community Perspective:**

How important is this issue to and what role does it play for your community?

As a component of preserving and protecting the environment, the community has begun to invest more and more into the reduction of resource use. Whether it be in the local government's decisions to purchase hybrid vehicles and become carbon neutral or in local developers' commitment to building "green" or in residents determining to using energy-efficient light bulbs and reducing water usage, Sarasota County is dedicated to being good stewards of the resources available. As residents and leaders gain a greater understanding of how their resource use impacts everyone, present and future, greater efforts to utilize these limited resources wisely are taking place.

Strengths:

What are your community's main assets and strengths in this category?

The county government has made it their commitment to set an example for the community regarding the wise use of energy and other natural resources. Therefore, in addition to encouraging residents and developers to save energy and protect resources, the county has put policies and goals in place so they can "walk the talk." Resources and incentives are also being provided by numerous agencies to make alternative energy and green building all the more commonplace. Local leaders recognize and embrace these vital components of community sustainability. Area partnerships between organizations like the Economic Development Corporation of Sarasota County, New College and Mote Marine Laboratory have become strong, bringing key community leaders together to promote sustainable living practices.

Challenges:

What concerns, challenges and needs does your community face in this category?

Financial constraints make it difficult for many people to invest in energy-saving practices such as solar energy for homes and hybrid-electric vehicles due to high up-front costs.

The established society today across the United States depends heavily on the use of the automobile. In addition, SUVs and other large vehicles are some of the most popular car choices. This car-focused culture impacts the environment through consumption of fossil fuels as well as land for roads and parking lots. In order to shift to more prevalent resource conservation, planning focused on collocation of people and services and acceptance of hybrid and smaller vehicles as well as use of public transportation need to increase.

Actions:

What accomplishments have you achieved to date, and what actions and efforts is your community taking to address this issue?

- Sarasota County has calculated the community's ecological footprint to determine where we as a community are able and willing to set priorities and goals to become more sustainable. Sarasota County's 2003 footprint data shows that our footprint is 22.2 acres per capita, slightly smaller than the average U.S. citizen's 24 acres per capita. The county has joined with other local agencies and individuals to educate residents about the need to decrease the ecological footprint of county residents through the use of alternative energy sources, water conservation and the purchase of green products.
- The county takes a holistic approach to watershed management, conservation and protection (instead of a programmatic approach engendered in stormwater, wastewater, water supply, etc. as separate functions), including its water conservation and golf course maintenance ordinances. The watershed management comprehensive plan is an implementation tool for linking all the county's water systems together. Extensive work has been done to develop detailed floodplain models and digital maps, recognized by both the Southwest Florida Water Management District and the Federal Emergency Management Agency as the working model for the future of floodplain management at both the regional and national levels. This program was also the recipient of the 2002 James Lee Whitt Local Award for Excellence from the Association of State Floodplain Managers. This modeling has resulted in a number of watershed management projects, each one uniquely addressing the issues and challenges of individual watersheds.
- The county is continually working to expand citizen participation in the residential and commercial recycling program to help decrease the amount of waste deposited into the landfill. Since 1995, recycling programs for materials such as recycled paint, ammunition, batteries, electronics, motor oil and office supplies have been added. Efforts are underway to boost the construction and demolition recycling program; carpet recycling is expected to be available soon.
- Plans for a methane gas recovery program at the county's landfill are currently under way.
- County residents have reduced drinking water consumption per capita by 40 percent in the past few years.
- In 2003, the Sarasota County Commission approved the first code language in the nation advocating environmentally preferred procurement evidenced in the purchase of least toxic janitorial products, hybrid vehicles, recycled content paper, Energy Star-rated computers and high-performance building products and materials.
- In 2006, Sarasota County was the first county in the nation to commit to the American Institute of Architect's 2030 Challenge to become a carbon-neutral

organization by the year 2030. Efforts have already begun to achieve this goal through implementing green procurement standards, using non-toxic cleaning supplies and constructing green buildings.

- The county's water efficiency ordinance focuses on irrigation system efficiency and limiting landscape plants requiring the most supplemental irrigation in new construction and extensive remodeling.
- Sarasota County has two US Green Building Coalition Gold LEED-certified buildings--North Sarasota Public Library and the Twin Lakes Office Complex--and has committed to constructing all its new facilities to Gold or Platinum LEED-certified standards.
- In 2004, Sarasota County's North Port High school was the first K-12 school to have a natural gas-powered hydrogen fuel cell installed. The school also debuted the U.S. Department of Energy's Hydrogen Energy Curriculum.
- In 2006, the National Association of Counties recognized Sarasota County for the large number of employee pledges signed to change one light bulb in their homes to use a more energy-efficient compact fluorescent bulb. Although honored as the mid-size county with the most pledges in this campaign, county staff signed twice as many total pledges as a county more than double its population.
- In 2006, Florida Power and Light announced it would be installing a 250-kW solar photovoltaic system at Rothenbach Park in Sarasota. Under the program, residential customers can purchase the renewable energy produced by the system at an extra cost each month.
- Sarasota County joined with the U.S. Department of Energy's Rebuild America program, a network of community-based partnerships that have made commitments to energy conservation. This network serves to connect people and ideas to find solutions for energy-related issues.
- Sarasota County was the first community in the country to join the National Renewable Energy Laboratory's "Renewable Community" program. This demonstration project integrates the use of rooftop photovoltaic (PV) systems on super high-efficiency homes with plug-in hybrid vehicles.
- The county is developing an Energy Management Master Plan to establish goals for energy efficiency and sustainability within county services.
- The county enacted the golf course ordinance in 2003, requiring all new golf courses to meet Audubon International standards for overall responsible design and maintenance.
- The county is committed to building its hybrid fleet and has plans to move toward only purchasing hybrid vehicles.

- Sarasota County Environmental Services teamed with Community Services to provide free compost and mulch for Sarasota County residents available at four county parks. This compost and mulch is processed from the yard-waste curbside collection program of Sarasota County residents.
- Hazardous Waste Management offers a program to assist businesses properly dispose of their hazardous waste, which includes all non-profit organizations, churches, schools, apartment and/or condominium management groups, commercial property owners, landlords and government agencies.
- Project Green Sweep has been designed to give small businesses and other organizations located in Sarasota County a responsible, cost-effective method to properly dispose of small quantities of hazardous waste.
- • The Re-Uz-It Shop inventory comes from items brought into the county's Household Chemical Collection Centers. Rather than pay a hazardous waste company to dispose of these products, the county opened a shop where county residents and businesses could receive them free of charge.

Questions for Thought:

- *How does our community's resource use (e.g. energy, water) compare to regional or national averages?*
- *Where does our drinking water come from? Where does our electricity come from?*
- *Do we explore new technologies and encourage a shift towards more sustainable uses of our resources (e.g. shift from fossil fuel to alternative energies; shift in how we steward our water resources)?*
- *How much waste do we send to the landfill? How much do we recycle?*

Additional Comments:

The county's comprehensive plan outlines several historic-related objectives for Sarasota County Government including:

- Sanitary sewer service shall be provided to Sarasota County residents through the continual evolution of a centralized regional wastewater collection and treatment system, and shall be provided in a safe, clean, efficient, economical, and environmentally sound manner, concurrent with urban development.
- Continue to explore and use alternative and supplemental water resources to conserve and replace the use of traditional potable water supplies.
- Develop and adopt guidelines for the construction and management of golf courses to reduce or eliminate the use of sub-surface wells as irrigation sources and encourage the use of secondary treated wastewater for irrigation.
- Protect the functions of natural ground water recharge areas, natural drainage features, and surface water bodies.
- Ensure that a dependable, environmentally safe means to dispose of solid waste is available for all residences and businesses.

- Maximize landfill capacity and promote the reuse of resources by continuing to meet or exceed State recycling goals and other mandates related to solid waste reduction.
- Provide a stormwater management system which protects property from flooding while providing for the preservation of the natural resources, functions and values; and, maintaining or improving the quality of surface water run-off.
- Potable water service shall be provided to Sarasota County residents through the continual evolution of a centralized regional supply, treatment, and distribution system, and shall be provided in a safe, clean, efficient, economical, and environmentally sound manner, concurrent with urban development.

Society:**Community Perspective:**

How important is this issue to and what role does it play for your community?

The residents of Sarasota County place a high value on the arts and the rich cultural history of the area. Numerous theatres, fine art galleries and historic architecture are some of the community's greatest assets. The Sarasota School of Architecture was born here in the 1940s, putting the county on the design world map. The Ringling Museum of Art is recognized as the official State Art Museum of Florida, featuring a large collection of European paintings and Asian art. The Ringling estate also includes the famous Cà d'Zan, a vintage waterfront mansion restored in 2002. Additionally, Sarasota was the long-time winter home of the Ringling Brothers & Barnum and Bailey Circus, firmly engraining the whimsical nature of the circus into the community. Sarasota County citizens certainly take great pride in their cultural heritage.

In 2005, the poverty rate in Sarasota County was just over 9%, below the national poverty rate of 13%. However, this is an increase from the 2000 rate of less than 8%. The residents of the county maintain awareness of the issues of poverty and homelessness, and local non-profit organizations have become leaders in finding solutions to some of the immediate problems resulting from poverty.

Strengths:

What are your community's main assets and strengths in this category?

Sarasota County is known as a cultural capital of Florida, with the arts established as one of the cornerstones of the area's heritage. Cultural attractions like the Ringling Museum of Art and the Van Wezel Performing Arts Theatre bring patrons from across the country to enjoy significant collections of fine art and experience world-renowned musicians, performance artists and theatre productions. The county's rich history is easily evidenced at Historic Spanish Point, the Ringling Circus Museum, the recently restored Venice Railroad Depot, the Burns Court district, the old County Administration Building, and many more historic locations throughout the county. The Sarasota County History Center actively seeks to maintain and preserve the local history of the area to benefit area residents for generations to come.

Many non-profit organizations have worked hard to combat homelessness and poverty in Sarasota County. The Salvation Army and All Faiths Food Bank are just two of the most active and influential agencies. Additionally, Sarasota County's Health and Human Services looks to provide low-cost health care and other essential services that many of the county's needy would otherwise be unable to afford.

Challenges:

What concerns, challenges and needs does your community face in this category?

The poverty rate in Sarasota has slowly been rising since 2000. Although still not up to state or national rates, it is increasingly becoming an issue in the county and needs to be addressed before it can worsen. For several years now, area wages have not kept up

with inflation, making it difficult for some families and individuals to maintain a consistent quality of life. This issue is not easily addressed, since much has to do with the free market and private business interests.

Actions:

What accomplishments have you achieved to date, and what actions and efforts is your community taking to address this issue?

- Sarasota County has helped protect dozens of historically significant sites through the Historic Preservation Program and voluntary historic designation. The Sarasota County History Center has worked to preserve county-related materials such as newspapers, journals, photographs, maps, architectural drawings and books to help residents better understand the county's heritage.
- The historic Asolo Theater, America's only 18th century European theater, has recently been restored at the Ringling Museum estate. It now serves as a venue for world-class performances and a cultural resource for the Ringling Museum and the Florida State University Center for the Performing Arts.
- The Salvation Army area headquarters in downtown Sarasota offer shelter and a variety of services to families and individuals in need of shelter, assistance getting out of debt or counseling. Each year, hundreds of people are helped to get back on their feet economically, socially and emotionally through the aid of the Salvation Army.
- The All Faiths Food Bank coordinates the distribution of approximately 2.5 million pounds of food a year through its not-for-profit agency partners who operate feeding/hunger relief programs in Sarasota and DeSoto Counties. Volunteers process and store food solicited from the community at the food bank's 20,000 square-foot warehouse on Cattlemen Road in Sarasota. Using food bank trucks, supplies are distributed to not-for-profit agencies offering hunger relief in the area.
- Sarasota County's Health and Human Services provides clinics and medical bill payment for residents unable to afford insurance in order to help improve the quality of life of the poor in the county.
- The Community Action Agency Board works in partnership with public organizations to design, develop and maintain the availability and accessibility of human services for individuals with incomes at or below 125% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, so that they may achieve and maintain productive and self-sustaining lives and enhance the quality of life in our community that depends upon productive, well-functioning citizens.
- The Community Alliance is a community-based partnership comprised of residents and supported by Sarasota County Health Department staff who work to improve the coordination, quality and utilization of health and human services in Sarasota County.

- Senior Friendship Centers have served the elderly in the community for over 30 years, providing needy seniors with access to services such as affordable health care and healthy meals.

Questions for Thought:

- *What are poverty and homeless rates in our community?*
- *Do we value and preserve historical and cultural aspects of our community and local culture?*
- *Do we provide adequate social services for our community members?*

Additional Comments:

The county's comprehensive plan outlines historic-related objectives for Sarasota County Government including:

- Identify and evaluate Sarasota County's historic resources on both public and private lands.
- Develop and maintain the historic resource data management system to promote responsiveness to patron requests, public education and efficiency in reviewing development applications.
- Establish and expand educational and public outreach programs to promote the protection of historic resources.
- Ensure protection, conservation, rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historically significant resources in Sarasota County.
- Provide for the preservation and management of prehistoric and historic sites owned by the county (such as those on the T. Mabry Carlton, Jr. Memorial Reserve, the Pinelands Reserve, the Keith-Prodie property, the Hermitage at Blind Pass, Indian Mound Park, the courthouse and the county administration center) as well as those sites purchased by the county in the future.
- Preserve, protect and restore the integrity of the natural environment, historic and archeological resources, and preserve agricultural uses consistent with resource protection.

Volunteerism & Civic Engagement:

Community Perspective:

How important is this issue to and what role does it play for your community?

In a community where many residents are retired, volunteering is an essential part of the vibrancy and quality of the county. There are countless opportunities to volunteer—from hospitals and libraries to parks and the arts—and volunteers make many of the county's services possible. Sarasota citizens address critical needs, raise money for charity, tax themselves to support education and the environment, and take personal responsibility for the community of today and tomorrow. Civic indicators show that:

- 80% of voting age population is registered to vote (above the 71% US average)
- 65% of voting age population voted in 2004 election (above the 59% US average)
- 40% of adults volunteer

Additionally, the Sarasota County 2005 Opinion Survey found that:

- 78% of the respondents stated that they share a sense of local community pride
- 54% said they actively participate in the community
- 69% believe they are responsible to create a sense of community

Strengths:

What are your community's main assets and strengths in this category?

There is a significant number of civic and volunteer organizations in Sarasota County. The retired status of a large portion of the population allows many residents to volunteer throughout the community. "Friends" volunteer groups provide a great deal of voluntary assistance to county operations such as libraries, parks and historical sites. A number of volunteer organizations were key to the county being recognized as a 2006 All-America County. Social clubs help in bringing awareness to community needs, and civic organizations including Rotary and Kiwanis are highly active in the area. Nonprofit organizations like Volunteer Sarasota and SCOPE (Sarasota County Openly Plans For Excellence) offer residents the ability to volunteer for service projects or participate in group studies on societal issues in Sarasota.

Challenges:

What concerns, challenges and needs does your community face in this category?

Even though the community is very active in volunteering, there still is a portion of the population that remains disconnected from civic activity. Turnout for local elections has been declining in Sarasota County since 2000 (SCOPE). Encouraging people to become engaged in local organizations and volunteer opportunities can also be a challenge when many people have various other demands on their time and attention, including seasonal residents who are here 50% or less of the year.

Actions:

What accomplishments have you achieved to date, and what actions and efforts is your community taking to address this issue?

- SCOPE (Sarasota County Openly Plans For Excellence) is a local nonprofit agency whose goal is to engage the community in planning for excellence through a process of open dialogue and impartial research, to establish priorities, propose solutions and monitor change to enhance the quality of life in Sarasota County. They organize community discussions and bring citizens together to plan for the future so that the county will be a great place to live in years to come. SCOPE has totaled over 850 volunteers logging in over 12,500 hours of service.
- Sarasota County was named an All-America County in 2006 as a result of the work of several volunteer programs including the Neighborhood Environmental Stewardship Team, a group that raises awareness of natural habitats and the need to protect them, and Home Computers for Sarasota Schools, a program that receives donated computer system and provides them to area children who would otherwise be unable to afford one at home.
- The Lake Sarasota Community Building program kicked off in February 2006 and has been so successful in bringing neighbors together to work toward improving their community; it is now serving as a model for similar programs in other Sarasota County neighborhoods.
- Since 2003, more than 100 projects in 94 neighborhoods submitted and received matching grants from the county for neighborhood improvements. Examples include:
 - Beautification and park enhancements
 - Safety and traffic improvements
 - Improved pathways and lighting
- From October 2004 to September 2005, 9,782 volunteers logged 168,500 hours providing support with local government. The Friends of the Library led this list with more than 116,000 hours. Mote Marine, a non-profit dedicated to excellence in marine science, has 1,400 volunteers per year – equivalent to 95 full-time employees. Habitat for Humanity builds 23 houses per year and recently committed to a \$1.3 million project.
- The Friendship Volunteer Center is a program of Senior Friendship Centers providing volunteer placement for more than 491 community agencies throughout Sarasota County. In 2005, active volunteers of all ages were connected using their talents and interests to create meaningful and worthwhile community engagement with an equivalent value of \$1.3 million. The Friendship Volunteer Center estimates 5,600 volunteers annually contribute to nearly 500 nonprofit organizations.
- Sarasota County's community foundations provide millions of dollars of community support each year. Local non-profit contributions in 2005 were:
 - \$1,222,456 -- Selby Foundation
 - \$6,207,950 -- Gulf Coast Community Foundation
 - \$6,812,279 -- Sarasota Memorial Healthcare Foundation
 - \$5,300,000 -- Community Foundation of Sarasota County

- Local chapters of environmental advocacy groups such as the Sierra Club, Manasota-88, Coalition to Stop Children's Exposure to Pesticides, NEST and Audubon Society are very active, promoting ecological stewardship and individual accountability for the future of Sarasota's environment.
- Keep Sarasota County Beautiful is a countywide program that brings community volunteers together to promote a sense of pride in local neighborhoods by cleaning up debris and trash. The program's volunteers also engage in educational activities and programs to change disposal habits.
- Friends of the Myakka River and Friends of the Oscar Sherer State Park are groups dedicated to environmental education and the protection, preservation and support of these valuable natural parklands.
- The Sarasota County Commission has more than 100 advisory boards and councils, each focusing on a particular issue, such as air and water quality or economic development. Citizens are appointed to the county advisory boards by the commission and serve actively to influence better community decisions.

Questions for Thought:

- *Are members of our community active in community service and volunteering?*
- *Do we have active civic organizations (e.g. Rotary, Kiwanis, Key clubs)?*

Additional Comments:

The Sarasota County Commission has adopted the following strategic community goal and objectives related to the society:

- Preserve and Enhance Neighborhoods
 - Promote neighborhood safety
 - Enhance neighborhood character and value
 - Promote neighborhood leadership
- The Sarasota County 2005 Opinion Survey stated:
 - 78% of the respondents stated that they share a sense of local community pride
 - 54% said they actively participate in the community
 - 69% believe they are responsible to create a sense of community

Transportation:

Community Perspective:

How important is this issue to and what role does it play for your community?

In recent years, traffic congestion has become more of an issue for many county residents. More cars on the roads and increased congestion negatively impact residents' quality of life, noise pollution, air quality, and the overall feel of the community. Therefore, the community is exploring ways that these problems might be mitigated. Although public transportation has still not been fully utilized as a feasible alternative for many people in the county, ridership and demand for expanded bus service is continually increasing. The community has also begun to understand the principles of multi-modal and transit-oriented design, helping make the county a better place to live.

Strengths:

What are your community's main assets and strengths in this category?

Local residents are quite supportive of road projects in the county, even when it means increasing taxes to pay for them, such as the approval of the infrastructure surtax in 1997. This support plays a significant role in the success of the county roads program. The Sarasota County Area Transit system runs routes seven days a week, providing quality public transportation services to residents countywide. Interstate 75 acts as a connector between the St. Petersburg/Tampa metropolis to the north and Port Charlotte/Fort Myers area to the south, creating easy access for daily commuters and tourists to areas all over Southwest Florida.

Challenges:

What concerns, challenges and needs does your community face in this category?

Increasing roadway congestion has become one of the biggest concerns to Sarasota County residents. The influx of seasonal residents and visitors also brings added traffic. A major challenge facing the county is making the transition to multi-modal development with opportunities for residents to walk, ride bikes or take public transportation as opposed to car-only design. Other challenges include encouraging residents to use alternative forms of transportation and developing comprehensive strategies that could help in reducing the average worker commute time from 21 minutes.

Actions:

What accomplishments have you achieved to date, and what actions and efforts is your community taking to address this issue?

- Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) has begun to replace its fleet with hybrid buses, with the acquisition of 10 hybrids in 2006. Recent enhancements to the system led to increased hours of operation, higher frequency of trips on certain routes and better connectivity with the bus system for Manatee County, our neighbor to the north. Recently, SCAT received recognition as the "Top Transportation Provider" in the 2006

Sarasota Herald-Tribune Readers' Choice Awards, beating out a number of private bus and limousine operators for this honor.

- The Sarasota County Commission, along with county staff, is working toward creating growth regulations that integrate multi-modal transit options into future developments. This includes making developments, large or small, friendly for pedestrians, bikers, bus riders and cars. Fully integrated transit-oriented design is a goal for future development throughout the urban areas of the county.
- The 2050 Plan is designed to create walkable communities throughout Sarasota County, which means cul-de-sacs and other design forms that discourage pedestrianism are no longer going to be considered favorably through the county's permitting process.
- A recently approved large-scale, mixed-use development contains plans to integrate a trolley system that would link with nearby residential neighborhoods.
- The county is seeking to add more hybrids to its fleet, with an ultimate goal of having a fleet entirely made up of hybrid vehicles. Additionally, the county's hybrids display prominent signage, advertising the benefits of hybrid cars as employees drive throughout the community.

Questions for Thought:

- *What is the average commute time to work?*
- *Do we provide options for alternative or public transportation (e.g. bus, rail, bicycle, pedestrian)?*
- *Are we meeting the transportation needs in our community and adequately addressing traffic and other related issues?*

Additional Comments:

The Sarasota County Commission has adopted the following strategic community goal and objectives related to transportation:

- Enhance Movement of People and Services
 - Improve commuting
 - Enhance infrastructure
 - Promote public transit
 - Improve vehicle efficiency

The county's comprehensive plan outlines several transportation-related objectives for Sarasota County Government including:

- Development of a future thoroughfare system, consistent with the adopted Future Thoroughfare Plan and Maps, proposed population densities, housing and employment patterns, and land uses, shall be based on the Future Land Use Plan and coordinated with the plans of adjacent jurisdictions.

- Sarasota County shall provide for the protection and acquisition of existing and future rights-of-way including mass transit rights-of-way and exclusive mass transit corridors.
- Sarasota County shall provide for a safe, convenient and energy efficient multi-modal transportation system.
- The Transportation Plan shall enable county residents the opportunity to live and travel utilizing an integrated, intermodal transportation system.
- All traffic circulation plans and programs, as well as aviation, port and rail plans and programs, shall be coordinated with the plans and programs of the State, the Region, the local Metropolitan Planning Organization and other local jurisdictions.
- Existing neighborhood environments, their cohesion and integrity, shall be specifically considered in the development of the Year 2020 Future Thoroughfare Plan, and in individual roadway projects.
- Consider the aesthetics of roadway corridors in the development of roadway projects.
- Maintain a formal method of evaluating route performance.
- Continue and improve coordination of public transportation service to both the general public and the special needs of the transportation disadvantaged with adjacent communities, the Community Transportation Coordinator, the Sarasota County Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board, other transportation providers, the Florida Department of Transportation and the Sarasota-Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization.
- Coordinate land use planning and land development based upon existing major trip generators or attractors, safe and convenient transit terminals with the provision of public transit service.
- Investigate and consider implementing alternative programs to fund public transit.
- Encourage and support the implementation of improvements proposed by the Sarasota-Bradenton Airport Master Plan, and the Venice Municipal Airport Master Plan through the year 2020.
- Develop implementation strategies to address intermodal terminals and access to aviation facilities.
- Encourage the use of rail lines as an alternative means of transporting passengers and freight.

Additional Comments:

Please use this page for adding any additional comments about your community not included in the previous sections.

(FROM PAGE 1)

LAND USE

2. General Approximations: ___% rural ___% suburban ___% urban

Response:

The county does not define land uses in terms of suburban vs. urban; however, we can offer the following overview of the county's land area:

Area in incorporated municipalities: 22.0%

Area in unincorporated county: 78.0%

Percentage of land within the county's urban service area: 23.9%

(FROM PAGE 2)

Please describe your government's structure (list major departments):

Response:

Sarasota County has five constitutional officers that are elected by the public--clerk of circuit court and comptroller, property appraiser, supervisor of elections, sheriff and tax collector. The Sarasota County Commission is composed of five elected officials from each of the five districts in the county. The Board employs approximately 2500 full and part-time individuals in six core services and four support services as well as administration. Core service areas include public works, community services, environmental services, planning and development services, health and human services, and emergency services. Support service areas include communications, talent and performance management, fiscal planning and enterprise information technology.

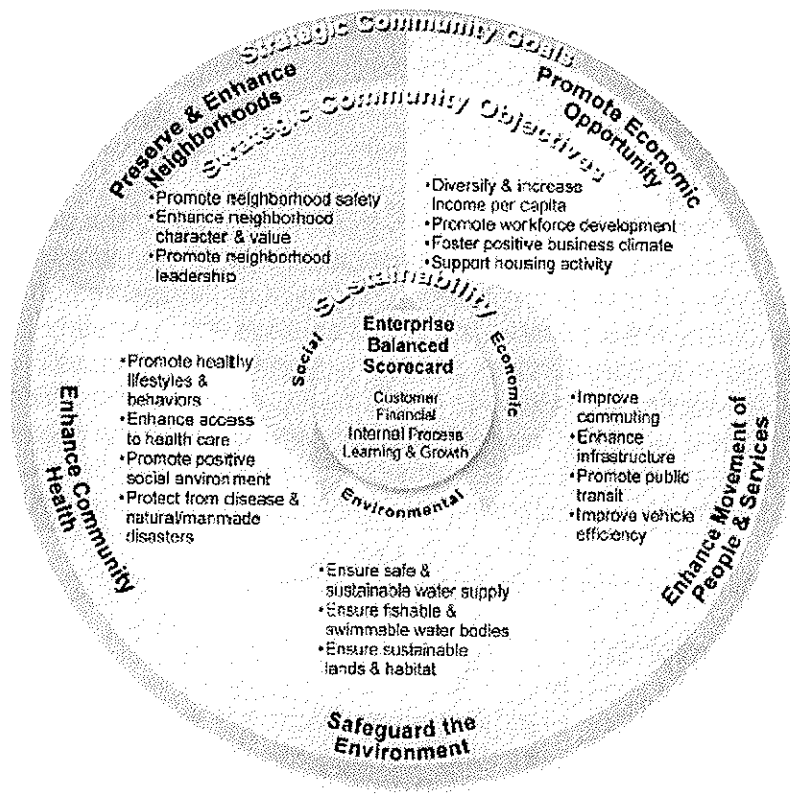
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

As government representatives, Sarasota County leadership and staff are responsible for listening to the community and supporting its values. Sustainability was established as a priority in both the Sarasota County Commission's strategic plan and the County Comprehensive Plan. It was reaffirmed by the community in conversations held in summer 2005. This strong community support positions the county well to lead efforts to reverse the damaging effects of environmental degradation and climate change within the jurisdiction, and to influence others to follow this example.

In October 2006, the county administrator rolled out Sarasota County *Roadmap to Sustainability*. The *Roadmap* serves not only as an inventory of many existing programs but, more importantly, it is a framework for the implementation of other programs necessary to fulfill the county's commitment to sustainability. It is an outline of the county's goals for the future.

Sarasota County has made great efforts to become a model of sustainability for communities around the world. The county has had the privilege of hosting delegates from China, Russia and other cities and counties across the nation to showcase Sarasota's accomplishments in areas such as green building, land and water preservation and alternative energy. State, national and international educational presentations have been given by county leaders to universities, trade associations and professional organizations. Workshops on topics from energy efficiency to sustainable community design are continually being held in and/or hosted by Sarasota County.

The county has created an Enterprise Balanced Scorecard approach to providing community services that includes a Community Strategic Focus graphic that depicts its five goals (and related objectives). At the center is "sustainability"—balancing social, economic and environmental components.



Enterprise Management Education Series
Enterprise Planning Sequence, Module #2: Understanding Balanced Scorecard and Enterprise Strategic Planning

Various tools and resources have been created that assist with documenting and communicating Sarasota County Government and the community's sustainability accomplishments and include:

1. History of Sarasota County Government's Efforts
2. Roadmap to Sustainability
3. Sarasota County's Comprehensive Plan
4. Sustainability Resolution
5. Urban Forestry Master Plan
6. Urban Ecosystem Analysis
7. Canopy Road Designation Ordinance
8. Environmentally Sensitive Lands Protection Program
9. Myakka River Wild and Scenic Protection Zone Ordinance
10. Golf Course Design Standards
11. Coastal Setback Ordinance
12. Sea Turtle Protection Ordinance
13. Manatee Protection Ordinance
14. Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance
15. Ecological Footprint Analysis
16. Mandatory Solid Waste and Recycling Ordinance
17. Green Building Resolution
18. Green Development Resolution
19. Green Housekeeping Policy
20. Integrated Pest Management Program
21. Street Tree Protection Ordinance
22. Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle Resolution
23. Environmentally Preferred Procurement language in code
24. It's All About Choices DVD (English and Russian)
25. County Administration's discussion with staff on their role in integrating sustainability principles into work efforts
26. County created Efest to promote businesses that sell green products
27. County created Green Business Certification Program to promote the reduction of ecological impacts by businesses
28. County has hosted numerous workshops for local attendees as well as presented at many local, state, national and international forums.

